

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

November 2004

The Chinese in McMinnville

Matt Worrix and Marilyn Dell Worrix presented a very insightful view into our history at our October general meeting. As owners of the old Fenton building on the 500 block of 3rd Street, their discovery began in 1993. As only the second owners of the building, many of the historical artifacts had been retained in storage in their building, which was erected in 1908. They found Chinese characters on the walls, which were later translated to show that the basement had at one time been a restaurant.

Matt started researching in earnest. He found that the Chinese population in Oregon was 10,000 in 1890, but that number dropped to 2,000 by 1930. Most came from the Guangdong Province, escaping war and poverty. Most of these were peasants, to whom \$800 in U.S. currency was considered enough of a fortune to allow them to return to their native land and live in comfort in their native land.

Most of these individuals were young men, coming over on a credit-payment ticket, which was organized by the Chinese. The two month long trip from China to Oregon cost about \$50. That these workers missed their homeland, their culture and their loved-ones goes without saying. They took the most dangerous and labor intensive jobs. The Chinese represented 60% of all miners in Oregon in the 1870's. Chinese-operated service and support businesses blossomed when the mining heyday ended, and many of these Chinese later worked on railroad construction. When the Sierra mountains were crossed with steel rails, 14,000 Chinese worked at the task six days a week, dawn to dusk. When blasting was required in some areas of hard rock, it was a Chinese worker who was lowered down in a basket to fill and tamp the holes with blasting powder. From this dangerous job we got the term "a Chinaman's chance in Hell".

In the 1870's the U.S. saw a major depression, and labor unions picked on Chinese workers, many of whom were forced into less favorable work, including fishing activities and working seasonal crops here in Oregon. Ah Bing, a worker in Milwaukie, nurtured and refined what we now know as the Bing Cherry. The Chinese also built roads and canals, drained swamps, and worked in the logging industry.

A 1927 study disclosed the fact that only 11% of Oregonians would call a Chinese person a friend. Many Oregon cities enacted ordinances banning these people from living in or operating business inside corporate limits, and McMinnville was no exception. It took the 1964 Civil Rights Act to nullify this situation across our nation. Some of the most basic services available to our citizens were denied the Chinese. Chinese Tongs were actually started to serve their people in a benevolent manner.

Tongs around the country operated brothels, gambling parlors, opium dens, and even trafficked in Chinese "slave girls." The Tong wars erupted in several large cities around the country in the '20's, and it took years for peace to take hold within the Chinese communities.

The restaurant in McMinnville was active between 1908 and about 1920, and Matt & Marilyn have restored many of the rooms to their former conditions. There were a number of stoves, sinks and washtubs and of course dining facilities. The occupation in the basement covers about 9,000 square feet, about 2,500 square feet of which is dirt floor. There was also a room where travelers could sleep.

They found no evidence of any Chinese women living in McMinnville during these years.

Matt & Marilyn continue to develop and restore their Chinese restaurant, hoping someday to make public tours available. There are many obstacles in the path of this goal, not the least of which are various building codes.

Marilyn also spoke briefly regarding the Oregon Cultural Trust. She serves on the Board of this organization, which was created by then Governor John Kitzhaber and the Legislature to increase support for our culture via incentives for the development of new funds and resources as well as to otherwise advance, preserve and stabilize our cultural resources. Marilyn mentioned the tax credit given to donors. The Trust hopes to have an endowment of \$200 million by the year 2012, and this endowment is allowing the distribution of more than \$90 million throughout the state.

Matt & Marilyn were able to show our attendees dozens of photos of their historic Chinese establishment, and their efforts were much appreciated. We hope to hear more on this subject in the future from this energetic couple.

Change in Museum Operations

Due to a lack of volunteers willing to step forward to fill in with operations at our museum facilities, the Board of Directors agreed to open only on Saturdays. However, the facilities will be open on Saturday for six hours, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This change will start on Saturday, November 13th.

At several of our monthly meetings our Volunteer Coordinators have asked folks to volunteer, but the response has been somewhat less than overwhelming. In making this change, the Board also noted that in the past many Sundays saw no visitors at the Museum at all.

No decision has been reached on the summer schedule yet, but if volunteers are not found, the Museum will quite likely not be open on Fridays.

The Yamhill County Historical Society is a nonprofit tax exempt educational and public service corporation established to protect, preserve and share the history and heritage of Yamhill County

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Newsletter

Dan Linscheid 843
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Car Pool Coordinator

Joanne Watts 835
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MUSEUM HOURS

November 13 - May 31:
Sat. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

or

By Appointment

(Friday openings after
May 31st depends on
finding volunteers)

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Board Meeting Highlights

The October 11th meeting was held in the Yamhill County Public Works Auditorium.

Before the business meeting *Debbie Clark* presented a proposition to the YCHS to take over the Lafayette Cemetery property. She laid out the offer and what she thinks will happen if we accept the offer. She will return at a later date with all the details after consultation with an attorney. This would not commit YCHS to any maintenance or obligation except to keep the property in the hands of a non profit organization. It was agreed to take this into serious consideration with approval of a satisfactory contract. Carol Reid gave the Treasurer's Report, indicating a beginning balance of \$5,113, deposits of \$3639, and expenses of \$2,768, resulting in a balance of \$5985. Correspondence Secretary Marj Owens reported communicating with eight contacts during the month. Volunteer Co-Chair Carol is working on an operations manual. A museum report was given, reporting nearing the end of the textiles preservation activities (labeling all boxes) and preparation for the Harvest Fest. The Health Department has been contacted concerning food service during that event. We will be reinstalling the plexiglass windows on the Church soon, using work-release helpers, but we will need to purchase weatherproofing tape before that happens. Consideration is being given to changing all exterior door locks at our Museum facilities, but this may need to wait for the next budget year. Kathy Peck gave a report on the recent meeting of the Oregon Museum Association held at the Evergreen Aviation Museum. Shirley is getting quotes on treating the barn for our infestation of wood devouring bugs. We are awaiting an answer from Cherina Hart (CPA) concerning her bill, before it is paid. The nominating committee is meeting tonight. Frank, Shirley, Ken Williams and Carol Reid will meet soon concerning our next budget. Any consideration of bringing the Y.C. Genealogists files into our current facilities is currently on hold. The 60' x 60' storage building on the 5 acre site is now under construction. Kathy gave a Tea Party update, and will make another announcement and answer questions at the General Meeting tonight. It was agreed that we need to install an answering machine at the Museum phone, alerting callers to our new days and hours of operation. Annita Linscheid, Secretary.
(full minutes are posted in the Museum)

Harvest Festival Enjoyed by many !

This year saw some major changes in the way we handled our Harvest Festival, and these changers were well received by attendees. People traveled from far and wide to join in the festivities. Here is a list of some of the places they came from: Haines, Alaska, Boise and Teton Valley, Idaho, Longview and Vancouver, Washington, and from Medford, Florence, Enterprise, Waldport and Eugene, Oregon. Lois Brooks reported on one precocious five year-old girl who, while visiting the Barn, not only knew the names of most of the items she spotted, she also recited the function of most of them, even before Ed Roghair could give his normal narrative on them!

Victorian Tea Party

As mentioned at our last meeting, we will be holding 2 tea settings on December 11th, times to be announced. One of the conditions for attendees is that they bring along a non-member, and a small tour of our museum will be held as part of the party.



Please mark your calendar for this event. If you have card tables and/or Christmas decorations (plum or Burgundy colored) which can be used for the event please call Carol Reid or Kathy Peck.

A hundred years ago, supper was normally served at 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., and having tea, served along with light sandwiches and broths in the late afternoon helped ward off hunger. Teas were either High or Low, with the wealthy more commonly serving the Low version, which revolved around its presentation and conversation. The working class might enjoy a High Tea, which resembled a meal, including meats, vegetables, cookies, fruit, and of course, tea. If young ladies were present, they learned etiquette as well as how to remove their white gloves without biting their fingers.

We were saddened to note the recent passing of member and friend Juanita Axtell. Born October 11, 1924, she married to Bill Axtell on September 15, 1973. She was attending our monthly meetings until recently and was always a very friendly and soft-spoken proponent of our society. She will be missed by all of us.

By Jim Lockett

Our first settlers found the Yamhill River to be a welcome ready-made highway. Boats would zig-zag around the obstacles as far as Lafayette. Loggers like to float logs down to Carlton from almost 50 miles above the mouth of the river. This "stream," more so than the roads or trails, afforded a reliable means of transportation to down-river market outlets. The Oregonian reported in 1865; "So much rain falls that it is difficult to keep the roads in repair." The paper went on to say that "most farmers from the interior who haul their produce to the Willamette river for the market, complain that the roads are in bad condition at the most important season of the year -- just when their produce is ready for market." In any event, the river was important to those early settlers.

In 1850 a flatboat made trips on the river as far as Lafayette. James D Miller owned this boat and was making a fortune until the first steamer, the "Hoosier," made it's trip up the Yamhill. From then on the steamboats ruled the river until the railroads ran them out of business. One of the great stories tells of a group of farmers along the Yamhill River building their own boat...the sternwheeler, "Elk." It was placed in service late in 1857. It was soon discovered that the farmers were not the best boat builders. Shortly after the Elk was launched in ran into real trouble; exploding just east of the mouth of the Yamhill River. The story goes that it "blew Captain George Jerome so high into the air that he avowed that while coming down he looked through the steamer's stack and saw the engineer, "Bas" Miller, sitting on the river bank!" The Captain landed in a cottonwood tree and suffered little injury. For years afterwards pilots and captains on the Willamette took special pains to point out this remarkable tree to tourists. Not one person on the boat was seriously injured.

But not all was peaceful along the river. Loggers found the cheapest way to move their logs was by water. W.A. Howe, doing business under the name of the Carlton Lumber Company, cut his logs upstream on the North Yamhill. He would build a splash dam, dump the logs into the pond, then release the flood gates and let the rush of water carry the logs downstream. Sometimes the floating logs caused damage to property along the stream, resulting in conflict of rights between land owners and the public maintenance of the river as an "open Highway."

Enter D. P. Trullinger arriving in Oregon in 1848 and settling near Yamhill. About 1870 he built a grist mill west of town on the old Yamhill-Tillamook stage route. There already was a small dam on the river which he rebuilt. He then used the fall of the water to turn his turbine water wheels. In 1900, his son, Carl S. Trullinger, decided to make use of the water power that was wasted at night..

He obtained a generator, produced electricity when the mill was not running, and sold it to the people in the area.

With these improvements you can guess what happened when the logs were released upstream and were washed down to and over the dam. The destruction was



complete..

Trullingers Mill Dam on N. Yamhill

Trullinger sued Howe for the damage. However, the legal results were not to his expectations. Judge William Galloway decreed that the North Yamhill River, from the splash dams to its mouth, is a navigable river and a public highway and should therefore not be obstructed. He went on to say that the plaintiff, D.P. Trullinger, had a right to maintain and operate his dam but it must be modified to allow for the free use of the river. Also, that defendant, W.A. Howe, be allowed to maintain and operate his splash dams, but must be responsible for any damages.

Later that year, Howe was back before the judge. He sought a court order "directing the plaintiffs to obey the decree." It seems that Trullinger had raised his dam enough so that the logs were slowed and would not go over the dam. Howe had sent six million feet of logs down the river and they lay in the backwaters of the dam, unable to cross the barrier with its new height. Trullingers were ordered to make a gate in the middle of the dam for the passage of the logs and they were fined \$50 for contempt of court.

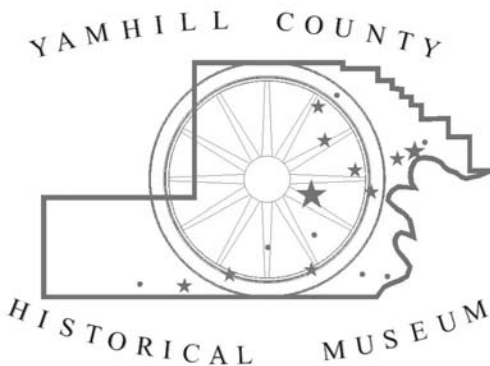
Trullinger appealed the case to the Supreme Court. In October of 1908, a decision was granted, reversing the circuit court decision. Howe was ordered to forever restrain from using and operating his splash dams. The court felt the problem was solved. However, Trullinger tried to reopen the case because logs continued to be floated down river and were causing serious damage. This battle went on until neither business could compete with larger companies. Both were forced out of business and the battle was settled in an economic way, but surely not to the satisfaction of either party.

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Calendar of Events

Board of Directors: 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, November 9th. Our next **regular monthly meeting** will be held Tuesday, **November 9th** at 6:30 p.m. Both meetings will be held at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, McMinnville. Our program will be given by Jim Lockett, on "Indian Ladies".

Victorian Tea: December 11th at the Museum, please mark your calendar. If you have card tables and/or Christmas decorations (plum or Burgundy colored) which can be used for the event please call Carol Reid or Kathy Peck.

New Members/Renewals: We welcome new member Sally Stacy of Wilsonville, and renewing members George & Maxine Williams, Barbara Koch, Gary Booth, Don Rivara, the Yamhill County Commissioners and the Allen County (PA) Public Library.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES Effective May 31, 2002

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Friend	\$50+
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$100+
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Builder	\$250+
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Benefactor	\$500+

Please make checks payable to the Yamhill County Historical Society. Annual membership gifts are tax deductible.

Members receive the Westside newsletter and access to our research library free of charge. We are an all volunteer organization, and are constantly on the lookout for new helpers. If you can assist us in any way, financially or with your time or talents, it will be greatly appreciated. If you are not sure if you have paid your membership dues, please contact Carol Reid at 472-9631, or **check your mailing label, which should show this information also. (The month and year indicate your "paid through" period according to our records.)** If you see a colored notice inside your newsletter, you're at the end of your membership term!