

# The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

September 2000

## August Board Meeting Highlights

August 8, 2000 at the Log Building - Lafayette. Membership / Financial: Lila left the following report of activity: One correction of address, two new members - Jeanie Fryer and Katherine Huitt, one renewal - Irene Oates, and one deceased. Volunteer Chair, Maxine Williams reports summer hours still in effect. Oregon Historical Society: The Quarterlies have arrived. All of our members receive free admission to the museum in Portland and a 10% discount at the gift store. Be sure to present your YCHS membership card! Our group will continue to receive the Quarterlies and copies of Spectator. Building Committee: General member Ben Frum and board members Dan Linscheid and Francis Dummer will serve on this committee. This committee needs to discuss the old kitchen to present some alternatives to the Board. AV Section is being studied by Marjorie and Shirley V. Need table and chairs. A VCR has been donated. Shirley V. will send a "thank you" to the donor in Margie's absence. Wheelchair Access: The back door at the museum needs some rubber stripping/wedge to allow wheel chairs easy access. Printing expenses: Many good comments have been received for the last issue. A suggestion to use ESD printing was made, but put on hold until after the out-come of the consolidation of ESD's is made. Painting bid: \$7,200 was bid to replace lost shingles, scrape walls, wash walls, prime, paint, and labor. Eileen called and the jail crew may be able to scrape the building. Timing is a factor. Shirley will check again on the bid to be sure it includes the paint and how much of the bid was for scraping off the old paint. Power washing is also a concern. Electricity (Barn) Bid: Shirley will check. New Business: A Screen Door with locks has been installed at the back door of the museum. The cost was \$249.87. A motion was made by Francis and seconded by Shirley M. to approve payment for this project. Motion passed. A major concern for the Board is an operation manual/directory for Museum volunteers. Shirley V. will start this process and will need help to get a manual ready for volunteers to know where items are located and what the procedures are for the museum operation. Each Board member needs to put in writing the processes they use in working at the museum. Note items that are needed or would be helpful in keeping our museum a special place to visit. Lila needs an assistant to learn the financial/membership process. Other business: Shirley V. sent a letter about Phil Sheridan's desk which has been offered to YCHS, but details are sketchy. The Arts Alliance program will be the same day as our October Harvest Festival. Does any one know about the Oregon Bear Man of Yamhill County? Bats are back in the Museum! Next board meeting: 5:00 pm Tues. Sept. 12, Sheridan at Trinity Lutheran Church. Potluck at 6:30 pm. Respectfully submitted, Shirley McDaniel, Co-Secretary.

## Volunteer Service Recognized

The Prudential Foundation recently honored Shirley Venhaus with a Community Champions Rising Star Award for volunteer service with our organization. With the award was a \$250 check contributed to the Society. Additionally, First State Realty broker Mary Baker contributed \$100 in similar recognition. This money will be set aside for our audio/visual and oral histories programs.

Good work Shirley! It's great to have dedicated and caring folks volunteering their time and efforts in nurturing a sense of history in our citizens. It has been said that our volunteers are among our greatest resources, and without them our cause could not flourish.

## President's Message

Busy summer: so many things to do and so little time to do them in. Members have related some of their summer activities: moving to a new home, traveling for pleasure and business, and visiting with relatives. The special event for my family was the wedding of our granddaughter, Tonya Venhaus to David Rath. It was held at "His Hiding Place" retreat outside Lafayette, OR. It was a wonderful, fun time with the wedding party playing soccer. I don't seem to recall when Gene & I got married that the event was considered "fun"!!! It was a pleasure to see familiar faces at the picnic, and it was nice to be in the Amity park. Having cover, water, electricity and the little house out yonder makes it a lot more comfortable. Thanks to Opal for setting up and Ilene for making the facility available. Our general meetings will begin again September 12th. Barbara Knutson has some great programs set up for us to enjoy in the coming year.

A reminder about the Harvest Festival, October 14th. This is a good time to bring friends & family members as guests to see the museum. We will be having a "fun day", AKA cleaning day prior to this event. We can use everyone's help. This date will be announced soon. Joanne Watts will be calling for finger food donations and help for that event. Unless I'm mistaken this is our "4th annual" Harvest Festival: our plan is to have electricity in the barn by then. This will make it a much nicer building to visit and work in. See you in September. Sincerely, Shirley Venhaus

## Contest Winners

Ed and Peggy Roghair won the contest of guessing the objects in the display case at the Museum. They were successful in identifying 44 of the 50 historical items. Good Work!. Second place winners were Ivan Nuxoll of McMinnville and Elaine Atkins of Naples, Florida. Some of the more difficult to identify items included Tonsil Remover, an early hearing aid, a safety razor blade sharpener and a blue print maker. These were real stumpers for most contestants.. Thanks for entering. Eileen Lewis.

## Books Sold on Ebay

Olive Johnson submitted six books which were determined to be surplus or unneeded for our goals, and they were recently placed on the cyber-auction block eBay. Four of the six sold for bids totaling slightly over \$35. eBay charges a small insertion fee for their services, and postage ate up about \$7 of the proceeds, but it was interesting to see the bids on these items slowly rise.

A police officer with the City of Philomath (OR) ended up with the 1976 thesis on Philomath College, and a young man in Beverly, Washington outbid the competition on "Kittitas Frontiersmen", saying he will give it to his girlfriend, whose family has lived in that area since the 1870's.

We hope to continue with this method of generating revenues with eBay auctions, since one can never tell who is out there just waiting for an item which we may not consider important, but the bidders look at as a treasure....

*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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472-7328

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Olive Merry Johnson  
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**Newsletter**

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Joanne Watts  
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**MUSEUM HOURS**

Sept 1 to May 31:  
Sat-Sun 1 to 4 PM

or

By Appointment

605 Market Street  
Lafayette Oregon  
Phone: 864-2308

**ANNUAL DUES**

\$10.00 Individual  
\$17.00 Family  
\$125.00 Life

Mail to:

Financial Secty  
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97128

**September General Meeting  
& Potluck Dinner**

Our September meeting will be held at the Trinity Lutheran Church, 311 S.E. Schley St. in Sheridan. Member Phyllis Turner will be presenting "Tales of the Highlands", a history of a community in rural Sheridan. Please mark your calendars now for this meeting and plan on bringing along a guest or two with table service and potluck fare.

**Picnic a Success**

Attendees at our picnic in the Amity Park on August 19th did not allow a few raindrops to dampen their spirits. Nearly thirty members and guests enjoyed great food and lively conversation. A few flying insects tried to partake of the scrumptious food also, but were defeated in their efforts.

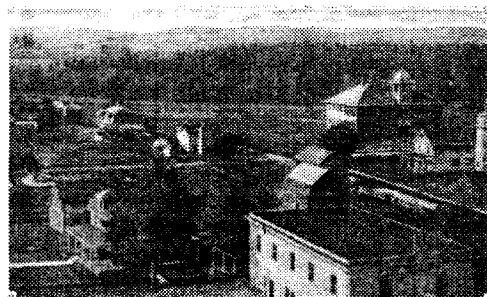
**Harvest Festival Planned**

October 14th is the date set aside for our Harvest Festival this year, and it is approaching rapidly! Last years efforts were well attended and we nearly ran out of food. Volunteers will again be contacting the musicians for their help, and we'll try to arrange for that popular hay-ride again. The period costumes helped draw people in last year, and a good time was had by all, so please plan on attending next month and help make this our best Harvest Festival yet.



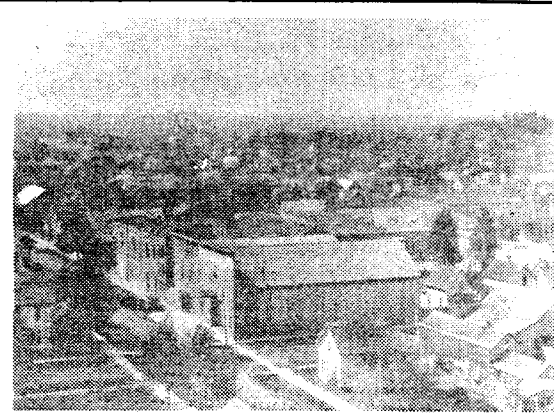
**Entering Willamina— Date unknown**

The photos on this page are among several dozen which will soon be added to our photo gallery, so if you are on-line, be sure and stop by....



**Birds Eye View—Carlton— 1912**

This picture was part of a promotional booklet published by local merchants to foster growth in Carlton. Can you identify any of the buildings?



**Birds-eye view—McMinnville**

Taken from the County Courthouse in 1896, looking southwesterly.

**Interesting Historical Tidbits:**

Eleanor Mitchell spends a lot of time in her research efforts, and she submitted the following newspaper articles, which have been awaiting space for insertion in our newsletter:

*Oregonian*, January 1, 1873: McMinnville claims a population of 500 persons, a select school, a college, three churches, two merchant flouring mills—one steam and the other water— of two run of burs each, capable or turning out 200 barrels of flour per day, and which are constantly running, a fine sash, door, and planing mill, four dry goods stores, two drug stores, one harness shop, two boot and shoemaker shops—one of them merchant, and keeps a large and well assorted stock on had constantly, three blacksmith shops, two of which are running two fires each all of the time, one cabinet shop, one wagon shop, one butcher shop, one hotel and other boarding houses, one saloon, a livery stable, and a photographic gallery, a barber shop and a China wash house, and all of these are doing a good business.

November 21, 1871: J.B. Harker has started up his large flouring mill at Dayton. The railroad surveyors have reached Oakland in Douglas County. The Circuit Court is in session in Yamhill County, with over sixty cases on the docket. J.J. Burton of North Yamhill, while out shooting geese last week, met a serious accident. His gun burst and destroyed most of one of his hands. Nine years ago a man crossed the Yamhill river at Dayton, and having no money to pay his ferriage said he would pay next time he crossed. Last week he crossed again and kept his word. F.M. Stow of Yamhill County was killed last week by a falling tree. He was clearing some land by burning the trees down. One of them falling unexpectedly, it caught him before he could get out of the way, breaking both legs, a thigh, his back and crushing his skull. He was an old citizen of Yamhill and leaves a large family.

The December 11, 1871 *Oregonian* contains a lengthy letter to the editor by "an old pioneer" who was very dissatisfied with the name change of the Willamette River from Walamet. He maintained this change was brought about by the newspapers, and lamented the loss of the original name.

## GEORGE GAY AND HIS BRICK HOUSE BY Jim Lockett

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George Gay was famous for his "Old Brick House." Early in the '40s he worked some local clay by foot, molded it, built a kiln to bake it and constructed a large two story brick house. This house was in Yamhill County with one wall running along the present Polk County line about a mile west of River Road. It was the first brick building in the Oregon Territory.

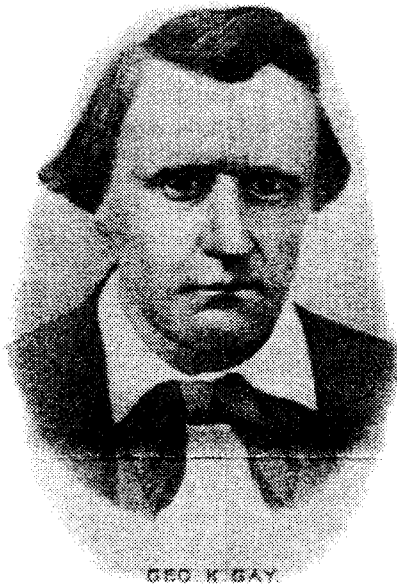
Lt. Charles Wilkes, during his two year exploration for the United States, spent time in Oregon. It was customary for visiting dignitaries to visit George Gay and Lt. Wilkes was no exception. He writes: "We passed one or two brick-kilns, and finally reached the new residence of George Gay, one of the most remote on this side of the river. George had reached home with his wife and two children not long before us. His dwelling was to all appearance a good shanty, which contains all his valuables. George is of that lazy kind of lounging figure so peculiar to a backwoodsman or Indian. He has a pretty and useful Indian wife, who does his bidding, takes care of his children and horses, and guards his household and property. George is a useful member of society in this small community; he gelds and marks cattle, breaks horses in, tames cows for milking, and assists in finding and driving cattle.... few things are deemed by hire impossibilities. He is full as much of an Indian in habits as a white man can be ... ..He has with this many good points. I have seen him, while traveling with me, dart off for a half a mile to assist a poor Indian boy who was unable to catch his horse, lasso the horse, put the boy on, and return at full gallop. All of this was done in a way that showed it to be his every-day practice; and his general character throughout the settlement is, that George is ever ready to help those in trouble."

George Gay's house was a general resort for travelers and emigrants in those early days. His hospitality, while rude, was unbounded. On a moment's notice he would slaughter a cow to feed his guests. Guests were known to stay a week at a time.

However, Gay's time wasn't limited to fun and games. He also entertained the leaders in this new land. During the '40s he hosted meetings where serious discussions took place that lead to the Provisional Government. In March of 1843, a meeting was called to devise a means to protect the stock of the settlers. Gay was one of a committee of 12 to consider measures for the Civil and Military protection of the colony. This lead to the Champoeg meeting of May 2, 1843 when the settlers voted for a Provisional Government. George Gay was one of the "Men of Champoeg" whose names are on the historical marker at Champoeg State Park.

James Nesmith has Gay arriving in Oregon for the first time in 1835 with John Turner's overland party of eight men from California. Four of them were killed when attacked by Indians on the Rogue river. The others were wounded se-

verely. Dr. William Bailey, one of the four, took a tomahawk blow in the jaw that left him disfigured for life. The survivors managed to get away from the Indians and traveled north. They wandered, half starved, subsisting on "horse beef," snails and insects. They finally found help at the Lee Mission and Fort Vancouver. On the way, Gay made moccasins from his own buckskin pants to replace his companion's worn-out shoes. He arrived at Fort Vancouver practically naked. (It was reported that the mosquitoes, along the Columbia River left their mark!) George Gay returned up the Willamette River and claimed his land just south and to the west of present Wheatland.



The following year he decided to join Ewing Young and 20 other men to buy and drive cattle from California to Oregon. They went with Lt. William Slacum on a chartered boat to San Francisco, purchased their cattle (wild Spanish Longhorns), and headed north. When they arrived in Rogue River country, George Gay decided to get revenge for the Indian attack of the year before. So, when an Indian with a native boy walked into their camp, Gay shot and killed the Indian. The boy escaped, told his tribe what happened, and the warriors gave chase. Several cattle were killed and George received a painful wound from an arrow in his back which he lived with for 5 years before he found a doctor to remove it. Young reprimanded Gay. This led to mutiny and the cattle drive was almost lost. However, Young's strong leadership held the group together and the drive was completed.

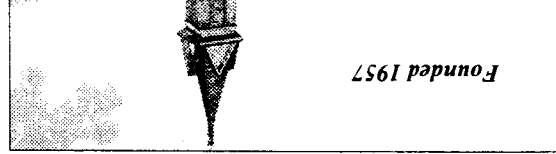
Of course, new cattle in the Valley broke Hudson Bay Company's power over the farmers. The policy of the Company had been to just "loan" the cows to the settlers but all the calves had to be returned. Now the settlers had the freedom to increase their herds and wealth.

About this time, George Gay married Louise Tchehalis, who had 2 children. They had 4 or 5 more of their own. George married 2 more times and had at least 3 more children. His last wife was the daughter of Madame Marie Dorion, wife of Pierre Dorion, who was with the Hunt Party of 1814. She and her 2 children were the only survivors of a small trapping expedition in Idaho. They had spent the winter in the snows of the Blue Mountains, existing on the flesh of her butchered horses.

James Nesmith described Gay as: "A man known as a handsome, athletic man of powerful physical organization, combined with great activity, kind and gentle in his deportment but always carried a dash of bon homme (French word meaning good natured simplicity), being as fine a horseman as ever be strode a steed and as expert a vaquero as ever swung a lasso."

As sailor, fur trapper, mountain man, Indian fighter, frontiersman, statesman and early Yamhill County settler, George Kirby Gay's life is the "stuff" of which movies are made.

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*YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY*

## YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*September 2000 Calendar of Events*

**Tuesday September 12th, 5:00 PM**

Board of Directors - Sheridan Trinity Lutheran Church

**Tuesday September 12th, 6:30 PM**

General Meeting & Potluck Dinner—Sheridan Trinity Lutheran Church

Bring your Own Table Service - Guests Always Welcome

*(See page 2 for details)*