

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

September 2001

From our President

Welcome back from a short, fast summer. One day I was buying flowers to plant and the next school supplies were being stocked in stores. Your members of the Board and Friends of the Society have been busy. Fifteen month calendars are being prepared and will be available for sale at the Harvest Festival. Plan on purchasing several for Christmas gifts. They will have historical photographs with important dates for upcoming events. I tried to get them to put my birthday on it but, alas, no luck! We are in the process of putting the "Church" on the National Historical Register. Anyone with facts about the history of the building, please contact either Marjorie Owens or myself. Being on the register will allow us to receive the matching funds for painting the church. Committees are being formed to see if the Society should set up an Endowment Program, and to address other financial problems we are experiencing.

We do appreciate the new volunteers at the Museum Complex. We hope more people will take advantage of the learning process of volunteering at the Museum and will continue to help out during the winter season. Work continues towards making the Harvest Festival in October an enjoyable event. The "Battle of the Bats" continues in the Log Museum. We are very generous and allow them use of the belfry in the Church but they do not seem to be content with that. Thanks to Morgan for his attempts to convince them that they can't be in the log building. We had a nice picnic in Amity. Thanks to those responsible for setting up the park. Looking forward to seeing you at the regular meeting in September. Guess I'll go watch the grass grow. Sincerely, Shirley

A Pheasant Tale

We recently received a beautiful donation from the estate of Bernice McElroy. She lived caddie-corner from the barn museum in Lafayette. The large "picture" of a family of pheasants contains the mounted fowl beautifully presented with a natural background. The depth of the display adds an essence of realism not seen in a normal painting or photograph.

It was mostly through the efforts of **Janie Joeckel** and **Barbara Knutson** that we were able to gain this for our collection.

Barbara approached Mrs. McElroy a couple of years ago and asked if she would be willing to donate the picture to the Museum. The elderly Mrs. McElroy graciously said yes to the request. When she recently passed away, leaving no children, Janie kept a watchful eye on the activities of the estate and when the time was right, the wishes of Mrs. McElroy were brought to light and the picture was relocated to the log building where it is now on display in the main downstairs room. Thanks, ladies!

Board Highlights

The Board met on August 14th at the Log Building. Among the more pressing issues discussed was the application to get the Poling Church on the national Historic Registry... **Marjorie Owens** continues to work on this. **Barbara Doyle's** second grant application may be amended prior to submission: Shirley will discuss several changes with Barbara. Our Endowment and Investment Committee has not scheduled a meeting yet, but may soon (**Francis Dummer, Betty White & Ken Williams**). Dan presented a draft of the 2002 calendar and received the support of the Board to proceed with publication. This will include all scheduled events for the period of October of this year through December of 2002. The signs for the Log Building and the Church were discussed—J.J. Burton has proposed painting these, but details on final costs are still being negotiated. The continuing problem with bats in our facilities was discussed... Shirley will contact Morgan to see if anything can be done on this. **Ben Frum** checked with A & E Safe & Alarm concerning an easier method of arming and disarming the security system in the museum buildings: this matter will be discussed more in future Board meetings. Due to a flat tire, **Bob Rankin** was unable to drive his Model T in the Lafayette Heritage Days Parade. He had offered to attach our new banners to the sides of his car in support of YCHS. Our annual picnic in the Amity Park was attended by 25-30 people. **Barbara Hinman** submitted a letter relating to her knowledge of painting structures, as we anticipate painting our church museum next year.

St. James Visit

On June 8th Carol Bacon brought her 4th graders from St. James School to visit the Museum. This, Ed says, is his favorite school as the children are always eager, attentive, and respectful.

Carol Bacon was bringing her class to the museum when Ruth Stoller guided the students and there was just the church building to tour.

Our reward for showing school children through our facility is the feedback from them in the "Thank You" letters they send us. The large group of 4th graders from Cook School who visited May 30th thought we had a lot of "cool" things and that we were good at our jobs as volunteers. Their favorite items seemed to be the button collection in the Church, the bearskin rug in the log house and the bike in the barn with the humongous front wheel and tiny back wheel.

The letters these children wrote are in a blue folder in the log building. You might want to take the time to read them. Oh, yes, there seemed to be a rumor that the church is haunted so one little girl was "watching her back". Another child called herself "the Artist" and well she might as she sketched items amazingly well as she passed through the buildings.—submitted by the Volunteers

OFFICERS - 2001

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MUSEUM HOURS

June 1 thru August 31
Fri-Sat-Sun 1 to 4 P.M.
or
By Appointment

605 Market Street
Lafayette Oregon
Phone: 864-2308

ANNUAL DUES

\$10.00 Individual
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McMinnville OR
97128

**September Meeting
& Potluck Dinner**

Our September meeting will be held at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Sheridan at 6:30 p.m. on the 11th of September. Our guest speaker will be Carla Burdon, who will be re-telling some of her Grandfather's Civil War tales. The Trinity Lutheran Church is located at 311 SE Schley Street at the intersection with Sheridan Road. Please invite a friend and join us for great food and fellowship. Please bring pot-luck fare and your own tableware.

Amity Picnic a success

Between 25 and 30 people attended our annual picnic in the Amity Park. The weather cooperated by giving us a sunny day. **George Williams** was recovering from surgery on his foot, but this did not slow him down very much.



Barbara Hinman, who was raised in the area, brought to the picnic a wonderful picture of Amity, taken during a parade held on July 4th, 1912, for inclusion on our historic photos website at <http://www/sites.onlinemac.com>.

2002 YCHS Calendar in the works

A new calendar will be made available at our Harvest Festival, containing the remaining 3 months of 2001 and all of 2002. The cost is yet to be determined, and there will only be 50 copies printed, until we know what kind of demand to anticipate.

The wall calendars will contain gray-scale historic photos for each month, from different towns and cities around our county. The dates of all of our scheduled events will be indelibly imprinted for each month.

There will be sufficient space for you to write in notes and reminders for each day.

This will be a new project for the society, and we hope this will help us boost revenues. These will make a perfect gift for that special someone with an interest in our local history.

Calendar of events—2002

Our program director, **Barbara Knutson**, has completed our meeting and events schedule for the remainder of this and all of next year:

Date	Location	City
9/11	Trinity Lutheran Church	Sheridan
10/9	Friends Center	Newberg
11/13	Dayton Christian Church	Dayton
12/11	Seventh Day Adv. Church	McM
1/8	" " " "	"
2/12	" " " "	"
3/12	Public Works Auditorium	McM
4/9	Amity Grade School	Amity
5/14	Public Works Auditorium	McM.
6/29	Antique Roadshow at our Museum	
8/3	Annual Picnic in the park	Amity
9/10	Trinity Lutheran Church	Sheridan
10/14	Public Works Auditorium	McM
11/12	Seventh Day Adv. Church	McM.
12/9	Seventh Day Adv. Church	McM.

Special note is made of the meeting in Newberg in October. Please make a special effort to attend this meeting.

Barbara does an excellent job putting these events (and speakers) together and her efforts are much appreciated.

Another Plea for Help!

If you've visited the museum lately, you no doubt noticed the dry rot on the riser board on the entry step to the Log museum.

We are in need of someone with carpentry skills, some ambition, and some time to replace this board with a new one. We'd like to have this installed and painted matching green prior to our Harvest Festival in October.

Please call Shirley at 472-7328 if you would be willing to take this on.

Volunteers Needed

Ben Frum, one of our newest museum volunteers and co-chair of the volunteer committee, is looking for more than a few good volunteers. Ben and **Eileen Lewis**, the other co-chair, have been struggling to keep our facilities open this summer. Ben has even talked his mother, **Barbara Frum**, into becoming a volunteer.

We are always in "recruiting mode" with this committee, so if you can spare one afternoon a month, please contact Ben at 472-7953 or Eileen at 835-7531. We cannot stress the importance of our volunteers to our organization. It can be slow at times and exhilarating at others, but the rewards benefit both the volunteer, our patrons, and our Historical Society. Please help us out with this if you can.

In 1860 Lafayette's population was 426 and McMinnville's 445. Both towns wanted to be the center of the upper Willamette Valley. The events of the next few years would decide which town was to win. Lafayette was the county seat and had a good water route to Oregon City. The "falls", now mere ripples, stopped boat traffic to McMinnville except during high water. However, McMinnville had a grist mill and provided schools, shops, and promises of a good future.

Two events were very important in the life of these two communities. Mr. Perkins, a very ambitious man with lots of good ideas for Lafayette, had been murdered along the trail from California. This was a great loss to Lafayette and to Yamhill County. One basic need for the development of a community is people who believe in the location of the town. (Human belief about an area may be the most important part of the development of a site). Mr. Perkins seemed to believe in the Lafayette site and his death left no one to carry on that work.

The second event occurred when Mr. Newby convinced Mr. Joe Gaston to bring his railroad to McMinnville and bypass Lafayette. Mr. Gaston was the President of the Willamette Valley Railway and was very impressed with Mr. Newby's presentation. Mr. Newby offered \$100,000 dollars in cash, materials, and labor if Mr. Gaston would meet the McMinnville request. He was very pleased to do this and asked Mr. Newby to serve on the Board of Directors of the Railroad. The railroad, of course, would replace the river transportation and take the shipping trade away from Lafayette. It would also add new jobs for the McMinnville people. In the 1860s the railroad was to become the fastest and most efficient means of transportation and McMinnville was to be on the main line. By 1870 McMinnville was twice the size of Lafayette with almost 1200 people.

Ruth Stoller, probably the person that knew more about the history of McMinnville than anyone else, wrote about the town as it was in 1871. (See "Old Yamhill" by The Yamhill County Historical Society, pg 50). She quoted the West Side Newspaper as follows: "McMinnville is geographically the center of the county; surrounded by grain growing country accessible by water and prospectively on the line of the Willamette Valley Railway with a fine water power to use and still larger one in process of construction, it claims to be the future commercial center of the West Side. The business of the place supports 5 general merchandise stores, 2 drug stores, 2 wagon shops, 4 blacksmith shops, 2 shoemakers, 1 furniture store, 1 barber shop, 1 saloon, 1 hotel, 2 boarding houses, 1 livery stable, 1 photographer, 2 doctors, 1 dentist, 2 lawyers, 1 general agent, 1 jeweler and watch maker, 1 butcher shop, 1 tin store, 1 saddle shop, 1 glover. There are two flouring mills, 1 steam and one water; 1 planer, sash and door factory, 1 warehouse, 1 college building in which a first class Academy is sustained, 2 churches, Cumberland Presbyterian and Christian, 1 Public hall, Lodges of Masons, Odd Fellows and Good Templers, and one newspaper - The West Side published every Tuesday, at \$2 per annum, in advance".

Water power for the one mill was from a ditch that Mr. Newby planned and dug. The ditch, or mill stream, ran from Baker Creek past Hill Road to the present City Park. Mr. Newby was also having a ditch, or canal, dug from Willamina Creek to McMinnville. This would have given good water transportation for freight from the farms in the Sheridan area to McMinnville. A mistake in the height of the canal and legal problems in the Sheridan area stopped this canal just east of Sheridan. Mr. Newby and his friends were working hard to develop jobs for people in McMinnville. The loss of this canal cost Mr. Newby a lot of money. However, his work to get the railroad would more than make up for the losses.

With the railroad coming to town, the business people saw a need for banking services. People had to go to Portland to

get to a bank and many times they would buy their supplies there before coming home. The merchants wanted to provide banking services so people would not have to travel to Portland and would be more likely to spend their money at home. It is money spent at home that supports community jobs and services so it was important to have a bank. The arrival of the bank is a very interesting story.

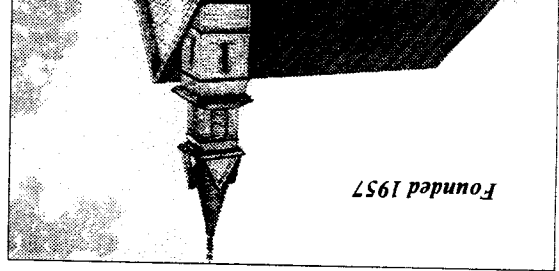
Jacob and Eliza Wortman came over the Oregon Trail in 1844 and had spent the next 40 years as merchants, farmers, and investors in Oregon City and Benton County. They had been very successful in their business with all the family working hard. Mrs. Wortman could run a store and was very wise in the investment of the family money. She was very helpful to her husband and family. It was in 1883 that the family decided to sell out and divide their resources. One son became a business man in Portland (Olds, Wortman and King), one a college professor at Yale, and one a noted surgeon. However, the eldest son, John, and his father and mother decided to become bankers. After exploring all the possible sites for a bank they chose Lafayette.

It was a nice summer day in 1883 when John and Jacob Wortman headed to Lafayette to establish their banking business. Upon talking to property owners and merchants, they found that they were not welcome. Since many of the residents of Lafayette were county employees paid monthly with warrants, the merchants were doing very well cashing these at a steep discount. They felt a bank would deprive them of this extra income. Discouraged, the Wortmans headed for home. However, some business men in McMinnville had heard about the would-be bankers and headed out to catch them. Lucky for McMinnville they did. The Wortmans were invited to consider establishing their bank there. The people of McMinnville offered the Wortmans a brick building on the corner of 3rd and Davis. They also promised to encourage all the people to use the bank. Thus the First National Bank of McMinnville opened its doors in 1884.

Now that McMinnville had some industry, services, a good route (railroad), and banking some citizens decided that it was time to move the county seat from Lafayette to McMinnville. A committee was formed to promote the removal of the court house and jail from Lafayette to McMinnville in 1887. As soon as the people could get their buggies through the mud in the spring, they set out to convince the rest of the county to vote for this move. That is, all the county except Lafayette who didn't realize what was happening until one month before the election. In spite of a lot of hard work on Lafayette's part, the voters voted in favor of the move even though it meant spending a lot of money for new buildings. In 1888 a new court house and jail were erected at a cost of \$70,000 and McMinnville became the county seat and the center of governmental services. It had taken 40 years but McMinnville was now established and ready to take its place as a major city in Oregon.

1888 was important for other reasons. This was when the town also brought water and electricity to each house and establishment. Fire and police protection were established, and Columbus School was being built in 1892 to meet the growing need for schools. By 1890 there were 365 people in Lafayette and 1368 in McMinnville.

There were many years of hard feelings about this but in the past few years citizens in both towns have worked to provide good living conditions in the whole area. The years from 1888 to the present are a story of strong people building an excellent community to live in and to raise and educate children. By 2000 there were about 2500 people in Lafayette and about 25,000 in McMinnville. The people of each area are sharing schooling of their children, business contacts, church matters, and recreational activities.



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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fall 2001 Calendar of Events

Board of Directors - Tuesday , September 11th, 5:00 PM
Trinity Lutheran Church—Sheridan

Monthly Meeting & Potluck—September 11th
Trinity Lutheran Church—Sheridan
(See page 2 for details)

Harvest Festival—Saturday, October 13th at Museum
(more details inside)

Visit our Historical Photograph Album at <http://www.co.yamhill.or.us> and our
YCHS website at <http://www.sites.onlinemac.com/history>