

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

September 1997

1997 YCHS PICNIC HUGE SUCCESS



O.M. Johnson photo

Seated second from the left, Dorothy Miller is surrounded by family and friends joining in her 90th birthday celebration

With full cooperation from the weather, the annual YCHS picnic held this year at the Amity City Park on August 9th drew a large number of members and their guests. Highlight of the day was celebration of YCHS benefactress Dorothy Miller's 90th birthday. After congratulations everyone enjoyed topping off hearty helpings of potluck picnic fare with a slice of her birthday cake.

Also YCHS president Shirley Venhaus continued her tradition of passing out special "awards" to various members in recognition of their service to the organization. Nearly all of this year's presentations were some form or application of bubble gum which drew several amusing remarks from the crowd.

"HERITAGE RECYCLING" REPORT

Of necessity this issue of the *WEST SIDE* will be in headed for the mails about the time patrons begin arriving for the YCHS gigantic August 23rd YCHS rummage sale. Therefore a full report of the event, as well publication of the quilt drawing winner, will have to wait until the October issue. However, if early inquiries regarding our handbill claim of offering "plain and not so plain stuff" are any indicator, action around and about the bargain tables will have been brisk indeed.

Net proceeds of the "Heritage Recycling" sale have been dedicated toward maintenance of the museums and the Board of Directors at their August meeting decided the funds should be used to construct a badly needed walkway between the Poling Church and Miller Museum buildings. George Williams has already drawn up plans for the project and hopefully a contractor can be hired before winter.

Also, President Shirley Venhaus wishes to extend her thanks to all those members who answered the call to make this fund-raiser a success. A sale of such magnitude requires a lot of time and effort beforehand to sort, clean, price and otherwise prepare the merchandise, not to mention setting up the site itself on sale day along with assisting and checking out customers. Thanks again to all.



O.M. Johnson photo

Ken and Barbara Knutson engage in a bit of conversation during the picnic while in the background Crystal Riley and others fill their plates.

IN REMEMBRANCE

This past summer saw our roster treated rather badly as we note the recent passing of four valued members:

Jonas Jonasson
Robert Payne

Dick Miller
Sandy Syphers

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

OFFICERS - 1997

President

Shirley Venhaus
472-7328

VP/Program

Barbara Knutson
843-2069

Secretary

Betty Baltzell
472-7746

Treasurer

Don Crawford
434-9843

Financial Secretary

Lila Jackson
472-8510

Corres. Secretary

Delores Robertson
538-0767

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James Vincent
472-7239

John White
665-5376

Ed Roghair
472-6909

Robert Kuykendall
662-3354

Volunteer Coordinator

Maxine Williams
472-4547

Librarian

Olive Johnson
472-6070

Newsletter

John White
665-5376

Publicity

Elaine Rohse
472-6827

MUSEUM HOURS

June 1 to Aug 31:
Wed-Sun 1 to 4 PM

Sept 1 to May 31:
Sat-Sun 1 to 4 PM
or
By Appointment

ANNUAL DUES

\$7.50 per person

Mail to:
Financial Secty
2430 North Baker
McMinnville OR

97128



O. M. Johnson photo

Twila Byrnes models a period fur neckpiece offered for sale at the recent "Heritage Recycling" event

TWILA BYRNES - MASTER TEACHER

When groups of school children visit the museum, Twila is almost always on hand. She not only guides the youngsters about, but through her skill and experience as a teacher, Twila is able to get them involved in a real learning experience about bygone life and times. Visiting students, teachers and accompanying parents all depart expressing well earned praise in appreciation of an enriching presentation.

Born and raised in the community of Yamhill, Twila spent many years teaching in several parts of Oregon before retiring and returning to her home town. She and her husband Harry joined the Yamhill County Historical Society about ten years ago and since then they have been active in the organization. Harry, a former logger, has helped keep the trees on the museum property under control and both are always willing volunteers for Society activities.

.....Maxine Williams

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members and hope to see them at the September 9th potluck in Sheridan:

Tyra T. Hutchens - Beaverton
Gloria Lutz - McMinnville

YCHS HARVEST FESTIVAL SET FOR OCTOBER 25th

Intending to show off our facilities, make county residents more aware of our activities and provide an opportunity to recruit new members, we will be holding an "open house" on Saturday October 25th. The festivities will include demonstrations of quilting, weaving, lace-making, other old time crafts, tours of the museum buildings, refreshments and perhaps a bit of good old foot-stomping fiddle music to really liven things up.

All members are encouraged to participate in what should be just a plain good time ... and don't forget to bring some guests along with you.

SEPTEMBER MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER

To start off the new season we will be gathering at 6:30 PM, Tuesday, September 9th in the Sheridan American Legion Hall. The building is situated one block north of Main Street (Hwy 18 Bypass) on Bridge Street (just turn right at the traffic light if coming from the direction of McMinnville).

Speaker for the evening will be Yamhill County Surveyor and YCHS member Dan Linscheid who will relate some of his many interesting experiences in locating old donation land claim boundary and corner markers throughout the county. Dan's extensive work in uncovering these old monuments recently earned him recognition as 'Surveyor of the Year' by his peers throughout the state.

In case there are some who may have forgotten over the summer, remember to bring individual table services in addition to potluck fare. As always, guests are welcome and encouraged to attend.

SURPRISE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Over forty friends and relatives of Olive Merry Johnson gathered in the YCHS Miller Log Museum on the afternoon of Saturday July 5th to honor her with a surprise birthday party. Although on duty at the museum that day, she was kept busy in the Poling Church office while preparations went on quietly next door. When finally escorted to the party, her expression left little doubt the deception was successful.

At the right Olive Johnson prepares to blow out the candles on her birthday cake.



B. White photo

Remember, A Red Dot on Your Address Label Means Your Dues are Due

A BRIEF HISTORY OF YAMHILL COUNTY COURTHOUSES

By Dan Linscheid

PART I - The Lafayette Era

In December of 1846, Joel Perkins, founder of Lafayette, laid out the townsite and persuaded the House of Representatives of the Provisional Government to declare it as the seat of Yamhill County. In the years 1846-50, the various courts were convened in a large, unused room in Hawn's tavern, since no courthouse existed at the time. By 1850, various lots around the town of Lafayette were sold to allow the county to purchase a courthouse from Lem Scott for \$800. This building was at the corner of Third and Jefferson, and had originally been built to serve as a country store or warehouse. It seated about 100 people, and had old-fashioned columns fronting Third street. Tragically, it burned down in the last week of January, 1857. Some land and probate records were rescued, but District, Probate and all Commissioners journals were lost. One of the first orders of business for the Board of Commissioners was to direct the Clerk to purchase new books for keeping records of proceedings. Arson was suspected, but never confirmed.

In September of 1857, a petition was received, signed by 396 voters, calling for an election to relocate the seat of county government. In April of 1858, W.T. Newby (founder of McMinnville) proposed giving 5 acres or 140 lots to the county if McMinnville was chosen as site of the new courthouse. Joel Palmer (founder of Dayton), along with others from his town, proposed giving 32 lots plus \$800 towards the new courthouse.

On August 4th, 1858, all three county commissioners (J.R. Bean, Mark Sawyer and Robert Henderson) resigned, effective immediately, after scheduling an election to determine their replacements. The record is silent regarding the reason for this action... could it have been due to frustrations arising from dealing with the courthouse replacement?

This same month, Lafayette was chosen by the people to be the site of the new courthouse. Court was being held in the second story of James R. McBride's house in Lafayette, rented for \$100 per year. The District Clerk, Probate Judge and County Clerk were given notice to relocate their respective offices to this temporary site.

During all the lengthy bickering about replacing the courthouse, someone apparently challenged the legality of renting space for court proceedings, and the board of commissioners acquired a bond indemnifying the county in case they were found to be renting a courthouse illegally.

Medorem Crawford was appointed by the board to call for furnished plans and specifications for the new court house, advertising in the "Hillsborough" Argus, the Salem Statesman

and the Portland Oregonian in October of 1858. By December, an architect had been paid for plans and specifications, and the Superintendent of common schools was ordered to sell all school lands to the highest bidders for a minimum of \$ 5 per acre to help fund the proposed structure. Also, bids were advertised for a new fireproof brick courthouse. Rush Mendenhall was given the nod to construct the new building in February of 1859 for \$ 14,875.

The new courthouse was completed, and the various offices were relocated to it on February 11th, 1860. Apparently the main courtroom was used for various social functions, as witnessed by the following entry:

"It is hereby ordered by this Court that the Courtroom be not in the future used for the purpose of Dancing shows, Negro Minstrels, Balls or other like amusements and the Sheriff is hereby required to not permit any person or persons to have use of said room for any of the purposes above named."

The 1/4/1871 date of this order helps us to read between the lines....The Sheriff's office at the time was the "room nearest the front of the stairs in the courthouse".

Problems with this courthouse lingered on into the mid-1870's. There was a dispute regarding the original sale of lots in 1850 for the

first courthouse, and the county was threatened with a lawsuit relating to a cloud in the title of property purportedly owned by one Bartlett Whitlow. In the words of the board, "the title of the whole townsite is liable to be involved in almost endless litigation" due to this dispute. Mr. Whitlow was paid \$ 125 for his interest in the townsite and the case went away.

By 1877 crime was becoming a major concern in the county, and the need for a new jail became a priority. It was built during the fall and winter of 1877- 78, by F.M. Vanderpool for \$ 5,900, to include 2 iron cells. It was located across Jefferson Street from the northwest corner of the courthouse.

It was about this time that various problems began cropping up regarding the maintenance of the courthouse and grounds. For example, a September 1883 entry reads "The Sheriff be and hereby is directed to remove the pump from the well at the courthouse and have a good and sufficient curb windlass rope and bucket placed therein". There can be little doubt that these problems fueled another effort to relocate the courthouse by the fall of 1887, when the Oregon Legislature ordered a county wide election be held to determine the seat of county government in Yamhill County.

.....to be continued

McMinnville was the selected site, and in April of 1888, Hiram Tucker deeded a 200' x 180' lot in McMinnville for the new court-



YCHS photo

Courthouse erected at Lafayette during 1859-60.
The two story building resembling a house at the left is the county jail

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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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September 1997 Calendar of Events

Tuesday, September 9th, 5:00 PM

Board of Directors - Sheridan American Legion Hall

Tuesday September 9th, 6:30 PM

Potluck Dinner - Sheridan American Legion Hall

Bring Your Own Table Service Guests Always Welcome

(See page 2 for Program Details)



Worth putting on your agenda.....

The Oregon Historical Society's annual "Wintering-In" festivities to be held
Saturday and Sunday September 27th & 28th at Howell Territorial Park on Sauvie Island.
Take a picnic lunch and be prepared for a fun day.

YCHS member Eileen Crawley's 85th birthday party at the Amity Methodist Church
Saturday September 27th from 1:30 to 4:00 PM. Everyone welcome.