

# The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

November 1997

## A FOUNDING MEMBER RETURNS AND RECALLS

Dorothy Gunness, now residing at Pacific City where she enjoys fishing from the deck of her home, presented the program for the October 14th meeting at the McMinnville Community Christian Church. Given carte-blanche to speak upon any subject of her choice, She began by briefly recounting the history of her family as an illustration of the importance of preserving local heritage. Her great grandfather, Jacob Wortman, and her grandfather, John Wortman, came to Yamhill County in 1883 to successfully open and operate the First National Bank of McMinnville

Actively interested in family and local history since her teens, Dorothy was a natural to be tapped as a founding member of the Yamhill County Historical Society when the organization was formed in 1957. She also served as the second president of the group during those fledgling years (still active Bob Kuykendall was the first). Her many early experiences with the Society included riding about McMinnville with Linfield Professor Ralph Storey to identify and record historic landmarks, organizing cemetery surveys, interviewing pioneer descendants and searching for a museum site. Taking the audience through the Society's formative period, Dorothy again returned to her family to conclude with anecdotes related to her grandfather John and father Frank Wortman.

A standing ovation testified to appreciation of an outstanding presentation.



B. White photo

Dorothy Wortman Gunness

## TELEPHONE INSTALLED IN CHURCH

Continuing our efforts to become more accessible to the public, this past month a telephone was installed in the office of the Poling Church building. Incoming calls will be received at the museum during open hours or forwarded to Shirley's home when closed. The number is **864-2308** and our listing in the directory is "The Yamhill County Museum". The addition of this telephone should make it more convenient for the public to contact us and be more quickly referred to the proper person for assistance.

## CAR POOLING

With shorter days and nastier weather now upon us, it becomes more difficult for some of our members to drive to the monthly potluck meetings. Those of you who would be willing to share a ride by bringing someone from your neighborhood are asked to call **472-7328**. Likewise anyone wishing to secure transportation to a meeting should also call to get matched up with a driver. Our programs and potluck dinners are just too good for anyone to miss only because of a lack of means to attend.

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

First and foremost I want to thank all those who pitched in with help on the recent Heritage Recycling Sale. The funds raised from that project have completely covered the cost of constructing badly needed sidewalks between buildings at our museum complex. Details of the new walkways appear elsewhere in this *WEST SIDE* issue, but my point here is that with the assistance of sufficient able and willing volunteers working on the sale, we did get things done. Similarly, the goal for the October 25th 'Harvest Festival', is to increase community awareness of our Society and to recruit new members in the process. Although this issue must be at the printer before the 'Festival' actually takes place, I am again certain the membership will be reported as coming through in fine fashion.

Now then, amid our recent successes one point can easily be overlooked: It is the same fairly small core group of members who are carrying the load for both special events and regular routine activities! If we are to continue our prosperity we must expand upon this fragile base now!

At a recent meeting, the Board of Directors

opted to increase the number of week-end volunteers on duty at the museums from two to at least three and preferably four each day. This was done because we not only now have three buildings open to the public, but the number of visitors and researchers seems to be steadily on the increase. Also with winter months coming on, the possibility arises that some of the regulars driving from a distance might be delayed or unable to make it at all because of weather.

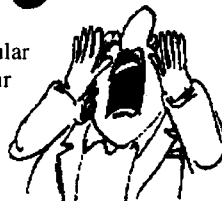
All of this adds up to an immediate need for a few fresh faces to step forward and help at the museum for only three hours on either a Saturday or Sunday just once a month. There is

always something to be done even if no visitors are on hand. A check list of small chores exists that will suit just about anyone's abilities and productively occupy their time. No prior experience is required

and newer volunteers will always be working their shifts with older hands available. Remember, our museums are the sum of what each and every one of us puts into them. **Call Museum Volunteer Coordinator Maxine Williams today at 472-4547** Try it; I think you'll find you like it.

Thanks for your continued support .....Shirley

# Volunteers!



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**

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843-2069

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Betty Baltzell  
472-7746

**Treasurer**

Don Crawford  
434-9843

**Financial Secretary**

Lila Jackson  
472-8510

**Corres. Secretary**

Delores Robertson  
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James Vincent  
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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  
Scott (l) and Mark (r) Fery

**THE FERY BROTHERS**

Those visiting the YCHS museums on Saturdays or attending one of the special events held there are sure to notice one or both these young lads helping their grandmother, Olive Merry Johnson, conduct her affairs of librarian and ex-officio curator. Whether it be running an errand, moving heavier items or performing one of the many less glamorous chores that arise, the brothers may be counted upon to complete the appointed task willingly and well. Without question, they are a valuable asset to the Society.

Descendants of W. D. and Elsie Warmington, the boys are the fourth generation to reside on the family farm located very near what was once the center of activities in the short-lived town of St. Joseph. Scott attends McMinnville High where he earned recognition on the scholastic honor roll this past spring and is currently engaged with football activities. Mark is enrolled at Patton Middle School and has become seriously involved with elective computer-related studies there.

We salute two fine young men who recently became full members of the Yamhill County Historical Society in their own names.

**FIRST FALL TOUR**

All week it had rained and showered but on Friday September 19th the sun shone brightly on 47 Wascher School students as they walked over to tour the museum. This is the largest group we have handled for a student tour but with two teachers, Mrs. Lutz and Mrs. Stastny, along with several parents, everything went quite smoothly.

Ed Roghair again explained the wonders in the barn. Lois Brooks gave a history lesson on the contents and use of the Miller Museum. With so many artifacts in the Poling Church Museum Twila Byrnes highlighted the memorabilia that fit the curriculum studied by these 9 to 12 year olds.

The children arrived promptly at 9:30 and returned to Wascher School in time for lunch at noon. We thank them for their good attitude, behavior and courtesy.

.....Twila Byrnes

**THE WALKS ARE IN!**

On Thursday October 16th as the sun was just beginning to shine, a crew headed by Mike Bowlin of Bowlin Concrete in Dayton arrived on the job at the YCHS museum complex. Grading began immediately followed by setting forms and laying a rock base. Then came the actual concrete pour and by 4:00 PM trowelling was finished and the job completed.

These walks are such a welcome addition and even beautiful - if the word applies. No longer must visitors and members contend with slippery and uneven ground between our buildings thanks entirely to funds raised by our Heritage Recycling sale.

Mike Bowlin remained at the site late into the evening until the concrete was firmly set up. Several of Lafayette's younger citizens had been closely watching the project and Mike had an idea of what might be on their minds. The only tracks left for posterity appear to be paw prints.

.....Shirley Venhaus

**NOVEMBER PROGRAM & POTLUCK DINNER**

The YCHS gathering will begin at **6:30 PM Tuesday November 11th in the Society's Miller Log Museum on Sixth and Market Streets in Lafayette.** Following potluck dinner John White will present a slide program featuring photos of many bygone post offices that were located around the county as they appeared when operating in their own buildings, stores or private homes. Guests are always welcome and don't forget your table service.

**NEW MEMBERS**

The following new members are welcomed and we hope to see them soon at Society gatherings:

Betty Comfort - Dundee  
Cathy Edwards - McMinnville  
Mrs. Harold P. Lehman - Amity  
Jean Scheer - McMinnville

**TELEPHONE COMMITTEE**

The Telephone Committee is now up and running. With a few key people dispersed about the county it now becomes a fairly easy matter to pass information quickly and efficiently to our members. Several of those on the committee are also finding the activity offers an excellent means to meet new people, visit with old friends and stay abreast of the latest neighborhood happenings.

Only the Carlton area now remains unrepresented (is there a volunteer out there?) along with a few members residing well out of the area who might be contacted by mail should an occasion arise.

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

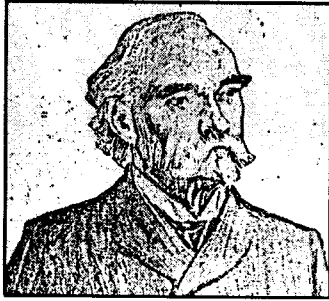
This program is now moving along quite well. If you know of a candidate for interview (or are one yourself), call Kathleen Mitchell at **474-0534**.

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

## JOHN R. McBRIDE - "THAT DAMNED YAMHILL REPUBLICAN"

By John White

Born August 22 1832 in Franklin County Missouri, John Rogers Mc Bride accompanied his father, the venerable Dr. James McBride, on the overland journey to Oregon in 1846. The family soon settled on Dr. McBride's claim about 2 miles west of where the town of Carlton stands today so as to be near the area's then major trade center located at the falls of the Yamhill River.



Spokane Review  
John R. McBride - c.1900

The young John McBride had received a basic primary education prior to departing Missouri and built upon this under the direction of W. L. Adams who taught in a log cabin school established on Dr. McBride's claim. Showing an aptitude toward the field, John soon began "reading the law" and in 1853, when he became eligible on his 21st birthday, was accepted before the bar of the Oregon Territorial Supreme Court. He hung out his shingle in Lafayette as a practicing attorney and soon became active on the local political scene as both an organizer and orator.

On August 20 1856 John McBride appeared as a delegate to a meeting held in Albany for the purpose of organizing the Republican Party in Oregon. Being one of the more articulate of those attending, he was selected to formally draft several of the measures adopted by the caucus. The articles he composed contained compelling phrases such as "Resolved that we fling our banner to the breeze inscribed 'Free Speech, Free Labor and Fremont!'"<sup>1</sup> The Republican party may have had some distance to go before receiving widespread public support, but John R. McBride had established himself as a player on the Oregon political scene.

He was the only Republican to attend the Oregon Constitution Convention in 1857 where he introduced a strong and apparently unpopular anti-slavery provision<sup>2</sup> which was soundly defeated by a vote of 41 to 9. Undaunted, McBride continued his efforts to have Oregon accepted into the Union with uncompromising "free

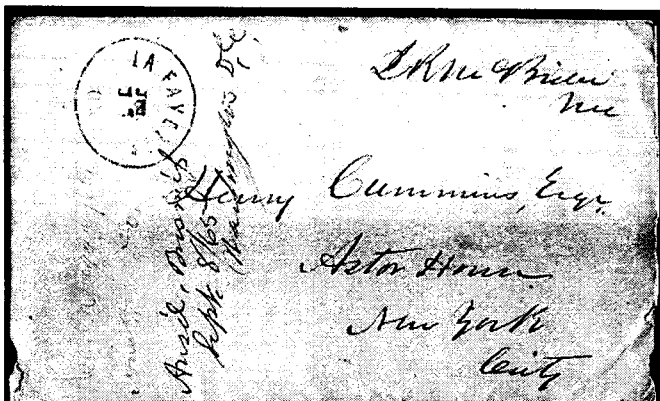
state" status. Standing upon this liberal platform he ran for Oregon's first seat in Congress, but lost the November 1858 election to Lafayette Grover, an old guard Democrat who would later serve the state as both Governor and U.S. Senator.

McBride was again nominated to run for Congress by the Union Party<sup>3</sup> at its April 9 1862 convention. By then the Civil War as well under way and he campaigned hard favoring the cause of an undivided Union. His eloquent remarks before the legislature on September 13 1862 resulted in adoption without dissent of resolutions declaring the rebellion to be an "unjustifiable, inexcusable and wicked attempt to overthrow and subdue the best and wisest government ever devised by man". With this firm stance he easily won election as the first Republican Congressman from Oregon and took the office in April of 1863.

During his term in Washington D.C. he gained favor with the administration for his unwavering support of President Lincoln's policies, while from a constituency standpoint his most memorable efforts were directed toward location of a U.S. mint at The Dalles. Home front support for the latter project was less than expected however as Portland financial interests felt any mint in Oregon should be situated in that city or not at all. The proposal thus failed causing McBride concern over continuing a career in elective office. When his Congressional term expired in March 1865 he accepted an appointment from President Lincoln as Chief Justice of the Idaho Territorial Supreme Court, the governing body of that new territory.

Joining McBride in Idaho were cronies Alleck Smith on the Supreme Court. William Daniels as Territorial Secretary and, in 1866, David Ballard became Governor placing control of the territorial government in the hands of what would quickly become irreverently known as the "Yamhill Bunch". Many of those settling in the new Idaho Territory were former Confederates looking to make a fresh start after the war and several bitterly remembered McBride's earlier fiery and flamboyant speeches condemning the secession. Thus he was labeled "That Damned Yamhill Republican" by a leading Boise newspaper.

Finally having enough of public service, he established himself in a private law practice in Salt Lake City in 1870. Gaining a reputation for being a shrewd specialist in mining law, he later moved to Spokane when the still operating mining stock exchange opened in that city. It was there he passed away quietly on July 20 1904.



Author's collection


Envelope addressed to New York posted July 19 1865 at Lafayette Oregon bearing the free franking endorsement "J. R. McBride / mc". Although mailed after expiration of his term in Congress, and before officially assuming Idaho Supreme Court duties, McBride was apparently able to convince Lafayette postmaster and fellow Republican James Hembree that he was still entitled to the free franking privilege.

### Footnotes:

1. The newly formed Republican Party advanced John Charles Fremont, former explorer, Mexican War hero and California senator for U.S. President in 1856. It was perhaps because of Fremont's (and McBride's) strong abolitionist views that the party was dubbed the "Radical Republicans" during its early years.

2. In order to maintain an arbitrary national "balance" Oregon had to be considered a "free state" when petitioning for admission to the Union. McBride's proposal was simple and forthright total anti-slavery, but the Constitution Convention opted for a compromise that rejected slavery by declaring blacks already residing in Oregon to be "free" while banning further immigration of "Negroes and mulattoes" either free or slave.

3. Many of in the new Republican Party who were trying to shed the "radical" label joined forces with a number of Democrats dissatisfied with the leadership of Stephen Douglas to form the "Union Party". This was merely a temporary political expedient having no intent of being a lasting organization.



Since 1960

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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**YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

*November 1997 Calendar of Events*

**Tuesday, November 11th, 5:00 PM**

Board of Directors - Miller Log Museum - Lafayette

**Tuesday November 11th, 6:30 PM**

Potluck Dinner - Miller Log Museum - Sixth & Market Streets -Lafayette

*Bring Your Own Table Service      Guests Always Welcome*

*(See page 2 for Program Details)*