

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

January 1998

151 YEARS OF AMITY METHODIST CHURCH HISTORY TOLD

Appropriately the venue for the YCHS December potluck dinner and meeting was also the subject of the program as Opal Lahley, a lifelong third generation member of the congregation, recounted events in the history of the oldest Methodist church in Yamhill County. Her Grandfather, E. W. Rea, was a trustee and instrumental in constructing a larger second church building in 1892. Gertie Rea Richter, Opal's mother, served as organist, pianist and music director for a great many years while her father, H. J. Richter looked after affairs as a trustee. At a very young age Opal began playing the piano at services in accompaniment to her mother and now regularly continues at the organ herself.

The first meeting house was located on the south side of present day Church Street facing the school square. The second church was erected on the Enos Williams D.L.C. at the intersection of Nursery and Goucher Streets, serving the congregation until 1918 when it was destroyed by fire. Opal's father, who discovered the blaze, was able to salvage only the bible and pulpit which are still in use by the present (third) church at Nursery and Getchel Streets. At the conclusion everyone was invited into the sanctuary to view the outstanding stained glass windows for which this church is well known.

Throughout the program Opal's pride in and dedication toward her church were quite apparent, resulting in a very pleasant evening for all attending.



B. White photo
Opal Lahley displays her book
"150 years of the Amity United Methodist Church".

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



1997 was quite a year wasn't it?

Throughout the spring and early summer, corners of the museum buildings were looking like Fibber McGee's famous closet as we rounded up all sorts of items for the Heritage Recycling Sale. On the morning of August 23rd we opened for business and at the end of the day a very weary group

counted up sales of slightly over \$2000. Added to this was a sum of \$531 gained by the sale of raffle tickets on a donated quilt. With this money, and some dedicated memorial funds and donations, we were able to construct the badly needed walkways around the museum buildings and convert former utility space in the Miller Log Museum into a fully working kitchen.

The opportunity to test the new kitchen came October 25th with our Harvest Festival celebration. The objective was to make the community more aware of the YCHS and its activities. With well over 150 guests signing in, I think we reached that goal and didn't we have a good time doing it?

There just isn't enough space here to individually thank all the wonderful people who contributed so much to the Society over this past year. There are the Board of Directors along with the other officers that look after our routine business and keep us going, all the museum volunteers who take their turn as hosts, those who maintain the artifacts inside the museums as well as the grounds outside and, last but certainly not least, all the wonderful members that can always be counted upon to help out when its needed. Thank you so much one and all.

What's ahead for 1998? The biggest project on the agenda will be relocating ESD's covered wagon and the building that it occupies. Our major responsibility will be to maintain and display the wagon once it is set up in Lafayette, but we will have to

coordinate the move, and with the help of Wayne Moore, this is where I plan to concentrate most all my effort for the year. A pet project of mine, the oral history program, should be hitting high gear soon and we expect our library of taped interviews to be greatly expanded by this time next year. Also you will read elsewhere in this newsletter about developing some long range plans for making the most effective use of all three (four, counting the covered wagon shed) buildings in our museum complex. And of course the year wouldn't be complete without another Harvest Festival would it?

Again I want to thank all the great folks who helped the YCHS accomplish everything we did in 1997 and I'm looking forward to working with you to make 1998 just as successful.

.....Shirley

AG LADIES MEMORIAL GIFT RECEIVED

At a recent luncheon meeting of the Women for Agriculture of Yamhill County, YCHS President Shirley Venhaus accepted a cash gift of \$200 on behalf of our society. The contribution was presented as memorials to two of that organizations recently departed members; Esther Cugler and Dorothy Schutz (Dorothy was also a YCHS member). These funds will be dedicated for improvements to the YCHS barn building and/or upgrading the agricultural equipment displays and Ed Roghair, our superintendent of barn operations, is presently determining the most appropriate use. The Women for Agriculture present these awards to organizations or individuals they believe support or preserve the heritage of the county's agricultural industry. We thank them for the gift and consider ourselves fortunate to have been considered a worthy recipient.

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

Board of Directors

John White
665-5376

Ed Roghair
472-6909

Robert Kuykendall
662-3354

Dan Linscheid
843-2625

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

DEPENDABLE JIM VINCENT RETIRES FROM THE YCHS BOARD

Elected to the Board of Directors ten years ago to fill a vacancy, Jim opted this past month not to run for a third term, passing the responsibilities on to Dan Linscheid.

Jim has always been a Yamhill County resident, attending Mac Hi and, after a tour of duty during WWII, working 35 years for the Post Office. It was while on this job he was described as "One of the most dependable and conscientious carriers I have ever known" by his superior, McMinnville Assistant Postmaster Charles Jackson.

Along with his wife Mary, Jim became interested around 1979 in the YCHS through reading the newsletter with its stories of bygone times then written by Roma Sitton and Ruth Stoller. Following



B. White Photo
James Vincent

retirement in 1983 he and Mary began taking an active part in Society activities and have rarely missed a meeting since.

Jim's reputation for being reliable on the job carried over to his service on the YCHS Board of Directors. He could always be counted upon to be present and take an active part in discussion of whatever matters were at hand.

Although he has retired from the Board, we're certain Jim will continue to take an active interest in Society activities and to this we can

only add: **Thanks Jim for a job very well done!**

.....Maxine Williams (w/Lila Jackson & Olive Johnson)

NEW MEMBERS

It is with pleasure we welcome the following new members and trust they will become regulars at our monthly potlucks.

Nancy Phillips - Portland
Annita L. Linscheid - Sheridan

WAGON MASTER SELECTED

At the December 9th Board of Directors meeting President Shirley announced local realtor and recently joined YCHS member Wayne Moore will be assisting with the project of moving the Yamhill County ESD's covered wagon along with its building from the County Fairgrounds to Lafayette. A considerable amount of cooperation from several local organizations and agencies will be required to accomplish the task and she is confident Moore has the required "Trail Boss" credentials to get the job done..

MUSEUM NEWS

Some discussion at the last Board meeting centered around the possibility of making optimum use of our facilities now that we have three buildings, considerable artifact holdings and what appears to be a growing number of visitors. It was also noted that as the museum has expanded, its function, as well as the interests of visitors, have changed and the present time might be an ideal opportunity to review operations with the idea of developing plans to meet our needs now and for the future. Since we are all volunteers with no formal training in museum management, it was decided to consult with the technical support service available to us as affiliate members of the Oregon Historical Society. As a result, Mr. Rick Read, successor to Ron Brentano as the OHS Field Services Coordinator, has been contacted and will meet for a discussion with YCHS directors and key museum personnel in mid-January.

JANUARY 1998 MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER

The first meeting of the new year will be 6:30 PM Tuesday January 13th at the Community Christian Church, 2831 North Newby Street in McMinnville. Presenting the program for the evening will be Jerry Smith of Sheridan who will tell of his pioneer forbears, the Conner and Elias Buhl families. This promises to be another interesting evening, so, in addition to potluck fare and table service, why not bring a guest with you?

OFFICERS ELECTED

At its January 9th regular meeting the general membership elected by acclamation the slate of candidates presented by the Nominating Committee. Those elected were Barbara Knutson, Vice President; Lila Jackson, Financial Secretary; Delores Robertson, Corresponding Secretary; Dan Linscheid, Director. The terms of office are for two years each except the director position which is for four years.

QUILTING BEES AT THE MILLER LOG MUSEUM

Through an arrangement approved by the YCHS board of directors, the Piecemakers Quilt Guild of McMinnville will soon be holding their gatherings on the second floor of the Miller Log building. This will allow the quilters an opportunity to leave their frame and other equipment set up between sessions while providing an educational "work in progress" display for the museum at the same time. In return for use of the space, the Guild will donate its completed handiwork to the YCHS to use as a fund raiser as was done with their quilt raffled at the recent Heritage Festival. This should be an arrangement having much mutual benefit.

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

THE YAMHILL COAL MINE

by John White

At the close of the last century John Goeser and his wife Amy were working their 160 acre farm about 3½ miles northeast of Yamhill on Laughlin Road. In May 1898 their son William was engaged in the task of cleaning out a hillside spring on the place when he made a remarkable discovery. Under the scrub growth surrounding the spring appeared an outcropping of lignite coal. Digging about a bit further Will noted the deposit seemed to gain in size as it drifted further down and deeper into the hillside.

Over the course of the next several months Will followed the slender vein by excavating a tunnel into the hill using only pick and shovel for tools. At first the work was not too difficult, but as the tunnel grew longer, removal of excavated earth became more difficult and provisions to prevent cave-ins required increasing effort which slowed the overall project considerably. By the time Goeser's hand-dug tunnel had penetrated a distance of about 80 feet, another serious problem arose. Large volumes of water from the spring that had been responsible for the original coal discovery were now flowing unchecked into the hole. Clearly, if operations were to continue and a profitable mine eventually developed, more sophisticated equipment and expertise would be required.

The Goeser family negotiated an arrangement with the Portland Coal and Development Company early in 1901 and by July of that year professional mining operations were begun on the site. A provision of the agreement stipulated that Will Goeser was to be hired by PC&DCo as "Foreman of Construction", but it would be William Stedman and later a Captain Spiery, both veteran mining superintendents, who would actually direct and oversee all aspects of the operation. Except for one or two experienced miners acting as lead men, the balance of the twelve man crew were laborers hired locally for a wage of \$1.50 per ten hour work day.

A diversion channel soon removed the water problem, a nearby stand of fir trees provided a stockpile of timbers that would be required for shoring within the mine and finally, steel rails to accommodate a mule-drawn cart shuttling in and out of the mine were laid. Although the quality of coal so far recovered was marginal and in rather small quantity, Mr. Stedman noted several geological factors which led him to believe a major deposit of marketable fuel could possibly be located much deeper into the hillside and his crew began drilling generally following the direction taken by the exposed vein.

By June of 1902, at a cost of \$9000.00, excavations had been extended about 1000 feet underground with more than 1300 feet of track laid for the mule cart. (*The greater length of track was required to insure tailings and rubble from the mine would be dumped well away from the Goeser's orchard - a provident plan as it later turned out*). A second tunnel branched off from the original about 200 feet from the entrance tracing another vein also thought to eventually lead into the expected major deposit. With two points of access, Mr Stedman reasoned when the principal concentration was located, coal extraction could be expedited considerably and therefore be more profitable.

As work progressed samples being taken were changing from a softer consistency having a brownish black color to harder and shiny black specimens of much higher quality. In the opinion of a few experts, the grade of some samples approached that of coal then being found in Australia and Japan - some of the finest in the world! These encouraging prospects also enticed the Southern Pacific Railroad to investigate the possibility of establishing a spur line from the vicinity of Cove Orchard on its main West Side line over to the mine site. Certain that a major deposit of high grade fuel now lay close at hand, PC&DCo management increased



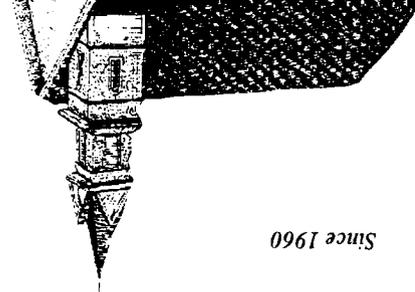
Photo from Author's Collection
Entrance to the Goeser Coal Mine near Yamhill as it appeared during the peak of activity in 1902

the labor force to eighteen men and reduced the work day to nine hours as an added incentive.

As the weeks rolled by however it became increasingly apparent that those premium samples had been extracted from a few isolated small pockets. Once past these points the vein began opening up as expected, but the quality was well below any profitable level. Work continued at an increased wage of \$1.75 per nine hour day, but with a crew reduced to six or eight men. Finally in 1903 operations ceased entirely and the mine was permanently closed.

The story does not end here. Sometime during 1902 a drill had become firmly stuck in hard rock and when finally extracted it was discovered its six diamond bit tips had been broken off and remained solidly imbedded in the stone. Not long after the mine closed a rumor circulated, aided by some encouragement from the *North Yamhill Record* newspaper, that "six diamonds as big as hazelnuts" still lay abandoned down in the hole. Numerous recovery schemes were devised but those thinking of salvaging what they believed might be a fortune in six precious stones were disappointed to learn drill tips consist of a cluster of quite small industrial grade diamonds, not a single large gem. Also, to further discourage amateur treasure hunters from trespassing on Goeser's property, PC&DCo released the information that the original purchase price had been less than \$100.00 per tip.

Sometime during 1904 the pile of rubble containing many tons of low grade coal tailings hauled from the mine became ignited, probably by spontaneous combustion. Since fires of this type are extremely difficult to extinguish and in this case no serious threat was posed to surroundings, the fire was allowed to smolder itself out - a process eventually requiring almost two years! When finally cooled the residual ash and slag resembled finely crushed rock in character and was of an extremely bright orange-red color. This material was discovered to be excellent for surfacing unpaved roads so the saga of Will Goeser's coal mine was extended for a bit longer through several scarlet hued byways in the vicinity of North Yamhill and the upper Chehalem Valley.



Since 1960

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Lafayette OR 97127

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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
January 1998 Calendar of Events

Tuesday, January 13th, 5:00 PM

Board of Directors - Community Christian Church - McMinnville

Tuesday January 13th, 6:30 PM

Potluck Dinner - Community Christian Church - McMinnville
2831 North Newby Street

Bring Your Own Table Service Guests Always Welcome
(See page 2 for Program Details)