

# The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

April 1999



Speaker Lee Lau

B. White photo

## TWO COLORFUL LIVES EXAMINED

YCHS member Lee Lau, a former Sheridan resident now of Stayton, presented a program devoted to highlights in the lives of Oregon poet laureate Sam Simpson and his father Ben. She began with a reading of a recently discovered, and until then unknown, early Sam Simpson poem entitled 'the Old U.S. Customs House' written while he was residing in Astoria.

Noting that no biography of Sam could be complete without including his father, Lee recounted the activities of the elder Simpson from his arrival in the Oregon country in 1846 through his participation in the Cayuse Indian War and later successful business endeavors, elections to the Legislature and long career in a number of appointed public service positions; all of which had a profound impact upon his son.

Sam began his journalism career when Ben owned the *Oregon Statesman* for a brief period in 1866 and placed him, along with his brother Sylvester, in charge. His initial editorial was provocative and politically oriented, a general style which he maintained throughout his long newspaper career. In sharp contrast Sam's acclaimed poetry was often sensitive and incisive.

It is quite obvious Ms. Lau has conducted extensive research into the Simpson family and her comprehensive look into the lives of two remarkable Oregonians was indeed appreciated by all attending.

## COMMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi everyone. Have definitely decided "it is easier to get older than it is to get wiser", but I'm working on it. Another thought on that is "when did my wild oats turn to prunes and bran?". I seem to be having trouble concentrating on a topic for my letter. OK on to the business at hand:

This is the last newsletter before the "County Awareness Day" to be held May 8th from 10 to 4. we will need volunteers to assist the visitors that day and donate finger foods. We are proud of our museum and look forward to the chance to show it off. The telephone committee may contact you or just let us know how you would like to help.

Wednesday March 24th a crew including Eileen, Cathy and Julie

went to work on the upstairs in the church museum. For those who have never ventured there, it has never been a pleasant place to be. The walls were not in good shape and they were a dirty pink color. Also there was no order to the disorder. Well things are changing. The new storage shelves are in place and thanks to the ladies the dirty pink is being replaced by a nice shade of off-white. Plans are to completely list, pack and put in place all items to be put in storage. The main purpose is to be able to locate any item at any time. Now this is no easy task. We need all the help we can get to complete this project. If you can, please contact Maxine, Eileen, Olive, Shirley or any of the ladies who work at the museum on a regular basis or show up any Saturday or Sunday from 1 to 4.

.....Shirley

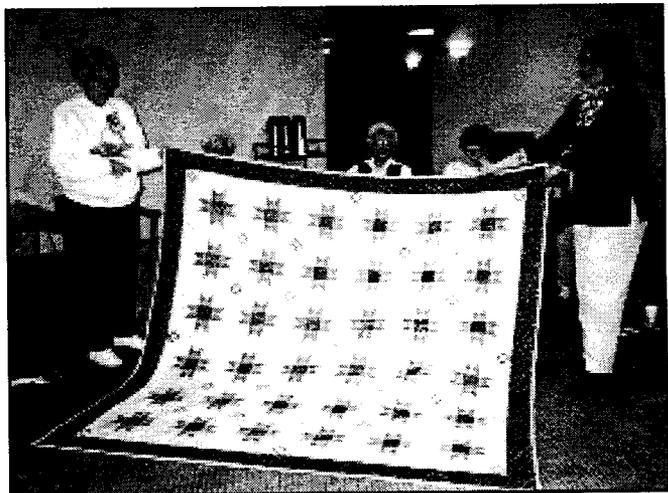
## COMPLETED QUILT PRESENTED

The Piecemakers Quilt Guild of McMinnville recently presented the Society with their generous donation of the handmade work many of us had admired during its construction over the past several months on the second floor of the Miller Log Museum. Done in shades of blue and employing the "Ohio Star" pattern this quilt is completely hand cut, pieced and sewn.

A formal unveiling will occur at the Quilt Workshop Saturday April 24th at the McMinnville Senior Center, 2250 NE McDaniel Lane, which will feature both quilting demonstrations and displays. A luncheon will also be served in return for a donation at the door.

Following display at the workshop, the quilt will be on view at the Miller Log Museum until our October 16th Harvest Festival celebration at which time it will be raffled off for the benefit of the Society. At its March 9th meeting the Board of Directors resolved the proceeds are to be dedicated to partially offset costs for the new sidewalk between the church and log museum buildings.

**Tickets are priced at \$1.00 each or six for \$5.00**



Members of the McMinnville Piecemakers Quilt Guild present their handiwork done in the "Ohio Star" pattern

*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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**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  
2430 North Baker  
McMinnville OR

971

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B. White photo

Shirley McDaniel displays her  
ever-present smile

who lives in Portland and works at the Reed College library.

**MEET THE SECRETARY**

Growing up just across the county line at Cherry Grove, Shirley McDaniel attended school in that community and later went to Gaston High School. After completing her education at Oregon College of Education (now Western Oregon State University) in Monmouth, she embarked upon a teaching career at the Newberg Central School. After three years Shirley moved to the McMinnville school system to teach the second grade at Columbus School for a year followed by a thirty year term with first graders at Adams School.

In 1991 she retired from teaching and now devotes her time to handiwork and reading. After taking lessons in Belgium Shirley has become an accomplished bobbin lacemaker and maintains an interest in quilting, knitting, crocheting and tatting. Shirley and her husband Byron, a retired food processor, live on a hazelnut farm out Pike Road from Yamhill. The couple has one son, Mark,

**TWO SCHOOL GROUPS TOUR MUSEUM DURING MARCH**

The museum was recently visited by two school groups and we were happy to have them take advantage of the facility. Conducting activities for the youngsters were YCHS guides Lois Brooks, Twila Byrnes and Ed Roghair.

On March 10th Nancy Payne from Memorial School brought her "English as a Second Language" class of eighteen 5th and 6th graders. They were accompanied by five adults who were mostly bilingual but did not have to translate for the children who seemed to have no communication problem. They just needed a little help in spelling as they filled out a question sheet prepared by their teacher.

The following week Ken and Barbara Knutson came along with Rosanna Miller's 4th grade class from Chapman School in Sheridan. About fifteen lively boys and girls came prepared to enhance their knowledge of the Oregon Trail and pioneer life. One could tell they already knew of the sun bonnets, homemade butter, straw ticks and Wagons West.

Mrs. Miller returned home with one of our new activity books for children entitled "Symbols of Oregon" that we are trying to introduce to the schools. The book is published by the Oregon Historical Society and well worth the \$3.00 price...less if purchased in quantity.

.....Twila Byrnes

**NOTES FROM HERE & THERE**

\* No more muddy shoes. The old stones leading to the back of the church building have been replaced with a new sidewalk.

\* Those attending the Ewing Young Tree dedication ceremony are reminded that parking will be extremely limited. Car-pooling is recommended.

\* Mike Eells, the lad who built our new arbor, will be on hand with his parents at the April meeting to receive our award of appreciation.

**APRIL GENERAL MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER**

The YCHS meeting for April 1999 will be at the **Bible Baptist Church at 5th and Market Streets in Lafayette** (one block south of the museum on Market Street) at **6:30 pm on April 13th**. Speaker for the evening will be Dr. Dow Poling, son of the late Dean of Men at Oregon State University, who will deliver a program devoted to memoirs of his prominent family and their place in Oregon history.

As always, members are asked to bring their own table service along with a potluck offering and, if possible, a guest or two..

**NEW MEMBERS**

Nancy Falk - Kent Washington  
Cecilia Fraser - Sheridan  
Jerold Lynch - Beaverton

**LIFE MEMBERS**

Julie Amen - Salem  
Barbara Hinman - Newberg

**GARDEN & GROUNDS NEWS**

With the coming of the spring season chief digger Ruth Crawford and her troops are hard at work preparing the grounds for what promises to be quite a colorful array of flowers later this year. The irrigation system has been installed and should really prove its worth during the hot weather.

Ruth also reports she has received some memorial donations to be used for the rose garden. This certainly seems to be an appropriate and lasting way to remember a friend or loved one. Anyone wishing to make such a memorial donation my contact the Financial Secretary with the request.

**CORRECTION**

In the memoriams of the March 1999 *WEST SIDE*, the name of member Lena Winter was incorrectly shown as "Leona". We sincerely apologize for the error.

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

## THE MURDER TRIAL OF JOSEPH COXON

By John White

It all began on the evening of February 4 1873 when Benjamin Hasbrook, a successful farmer in the South Yamhill district, was murdered in the corral between his barn and granary. The weapon had been a shotgun loaded with buckshot and fired at very close range. Over the course of the next several days Sheriff Robert Bird was able to piece together a case against Hasbrook's hired man, Joseph Coxon, based upon evidence found at the scene, testimony of several neighbors and a hunch that perhaps something more than an employer/employee relationship existed between Coxon and Mrs. Hasbrook.

The trial began Monday April 28 1873 with Judge Bonham presiding. The courthouse at Lafayette was packed to capacity with spectators and many others took advantage of a warm spring day by picnicking on the grounds outside. Jury selection moved along quickly and by early afternoon testimony began.

First to testify was Mrs. Hasbrook. She stated that about 8:00 o'clock on the evening in question Coxon, who had been out, burst into the house in a hurry stating he had heard a strange noise near the barn and was going to investigate. She continued by saying that a moment later a loud scream was heard in the house and she had urged her husband to hurry up as it sounded as if Coxon was in distress. Mr. Hasbrook went out immediately and barely a minute or two later a gunshot was heard coming from the darkness. She said Joe Coxon soon appeared at the door stating that he was not hurt but "poor Ben is".

Under cross examination Mrs. Hasbrook testified her husband had left the house unarmed, but that he did keep a shotgun in the granary as that structure also served as a deer stand. She also stated that upon learning her husband had been shot, but not at the time knowing the extent of his injury, she had remained in the house rather than going to him.

A neighbor, Mr. Sleppy, testified that Joe Coxon told him right after the incident that two men had jumped him beside the granary and thrown him to the ground whereupon he yelled for help from the house. Sleppy said Coxon was unable to determine if the intruders were white or Indian because of darkness. He also said Coxon had told him one of the men shot Hasbrook from a kneeling position behind the corral fence and then ran down the slope while the other intruder made off in the opposite direction. Coxon pointed to a spot about 15 feet from Hasbrook's body where he said he had been located when the fatal shot was fired. Sleppy also stated he saw tracks leading down the hill, but could find no trace of any going the other way. Although the ground around the granary and barn was muddy, he said Coxon's clothes showed very little to indicate he had been thrown to the ground. He also found wadding from a shotgun shell near the corral fence where the shot was alleged to have been fired.

The next witness was Jeremiah Lamson who arrived at the Hasbrook place not long after Mr. Sleppy. He noted the tracks going downhill away from the scene were quite similar to footprints made by Coxon. When confronted with this suggestion Coxon stated he had chased one of the intruders down the hill and was near the bottom of the slope when he heard the shot fired. He also said that Coxon described one of the assailants as possibly being a local man named Higley. Further, the shotgun Ben Hasbrook kept in the granary turned up missing.

Dr. Fields testified that a single shotgun wound was the cause of death and that the shot removed from the body was of the same type as found in Hasbrook's ammunition supply. It was therefore believed he had been shot with his own gun.

The next witness was George Stephens who stated Coxon told him one of the intruders had stabbed him slightly before throwing

him to the ground, but he did not show the wound. Stephens also noted little mud on Coxon's clothes except for some at one knee.

Eli Branson, another neighbor who arrived at the scene about 9:00 pm on the night of the murder, testified that Coxon told him a man burst out of the granary and threw him to the ground and held him there whereupon he yelled for help. When Mr. Hasbrook responded, the other man shot him from a kneeling position behind the corral fence. The descriptions Coxon offered closely resembled those of Higley and another local man named Osborn.

Frank Young testified he found only one set of tracks leading down the hill, pointing out that if Coxon had chased someone in that direction there should have been two sets.

The testimony of Edmond Lamson came next. He stated that on the night of the murder Coxon had told him he couldn't tell if the assailants were white or Indian, but the following morning Coxon seemed fairly certain it was Higley and Osborn who had done the deed. Lamson also corroborated the testimony of others concerning the lack of mud on Coxon's clothing.

Wilson Booth stated he found Hasbrook's shotgun in some thick brush the following morning. It appeared to have been recently fired. He also stated it was nearly impossible for someone fleeing the murder scene as described by Coxon to have thrown it where it was found.

Also arriving the following morning, William Walling testified that the area about the granary and corral showed no footprints other than those of Coxon and the victim Hasbrook and what seemed to be a knee print was noted near the spot where the shot apparently was fired. He stated Coxon was still wearing the same coat and trousers he wore the previous evening and he saw little mud on his clothing except at one knee.

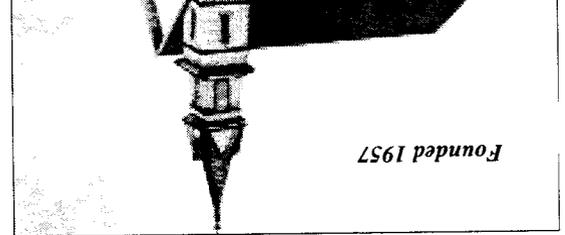
Additional testimony was received from Joseph Brisbine, J. W. Branson, a Mr. Patty and others all of which substantiated that given earlier by others. Sheriff Bird was the final witness stating that all the earlier testimony concurred with his investigation and that Higbey and Osborn, who Coxon claimed may have been the murderers, both were able to satisfactorily account for themselves on the evening in question.

The situation for Joe Coxon was rather bleak at this point. A number of respected members of the community testified he had changed his story at least three times, although claiming to have been thrown down in a muddy area there was little or no mud seen on his clothing and there were no tracks other than his or the victim's found at the scene. Coupling this with a rumor that he may have been having an affair with Mrs. Hasbrook, Coxon surely seemed guilty. He did not testify in his own defense.

In order to assist the jury, Judge Bonham prepared three pages of complicated written instructions noting the various degrees of murder along with numerous evidence elements to be considered in reaching their decision. When the jury returned the entire courtroom was stunned and outraged by a "Not Guilty" verdict!

Individual jury members explained they had no choice as Judge Bonham's instructions seemed to state that a motive must be shown to convict on a murder charge. The possible motive of an affair with Mrs. Hasbrook was never mentioned in testimony and therefore could not be considered. Had the subject arisen, they all agreed their verdict would probably have been different.

Joe Coxon wisely dropped from sight the following day and was never seen or heard from again. Mrs. Hasbrook remained on the farm for a while and was reported to have later remarried. By popular demand Judge Bonham thereafter kept his jury instructions quite a bit shorter and considerably less technical



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## *YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY*

### **YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY** *April 1999 Calendar of Events*

**Wednesday April 7th - 11:00 AM**

Dedication of Ewing Young Heritage Tree - Chehalem Valley  
(See "Notes" on page 2)

**Tuesday April 13th - 5:00 PM**

Board of Directors - Bible Baptist Church - Lafayette

**Tuesday April 13th - 6:30 PM**

General Meeting & Potluck Dinner- Bible Baptist Church - Lafayette  
Bring your Own Table Service - Guests Always Welcome  
(See page 2 for details)

**Saturday April 24th - 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

Quilt Displays - McMinnville Senior Center - 2250 NE McDaniel Lane  
(See page 1 for details)

**Saturday May 8th - 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

County Awareness Day - YCHS Museum Complex  
(Civic Leaders and V.I.P. Reception)