

# The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

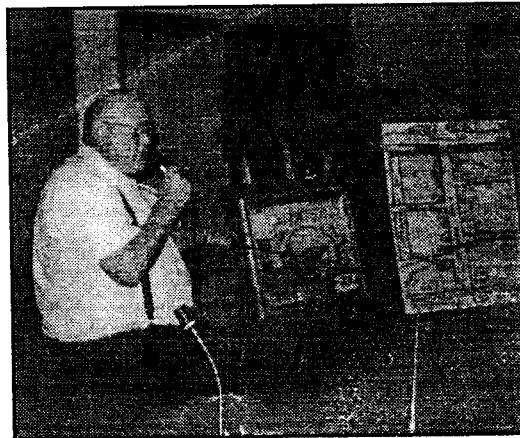
October 1999

## SHERIDAN HISTORY UNFOLDS WITH PICTURES

Dick Jordan, a Sheridan resident and businessman, was the featured speaker at the Society's September 14th meeting at the First Christian Church in that city. For a number of years Mr. Jordan has been collecting and researching old photographs of Sheridan and took this occasion to share many of them with the approximately fifty members and guests attending. Displaying and describing an enlargement of the original, he would call attention to relevant maps or research notes on the reverse and then circulate the item around the audience.

From the 1880s through the 1920s there is hardly a facet of the Sheridan community development left uncovered in Jordan's extensive collection. During this period the town suffered at least three major fires with the worst by far occurring on July 18th 1913 when the major portion of the business district was destroyed. Numerous "before" and "after" photographs related to this disaster gave testimony to the town's resiliency and resolve to rebuild.

To say Dick Jordan's collection is expansive is an understatement and we thank him for sharing it with us.



Dick Jordan points to a map of Sheridan's business dis-

## PUMPKINSEED'S DOUGLAS-FIR TREES

On the eighth of September 1999, a circle of Douglas-fir trees planted by Edward J. "Pumpkinseed" Smith around a twenty acre forest clearing was added to the Yamhill County Heritage Tree Inventory. The person nominating these historically significant trees was Elizabeth Mendenhall of Willamina.

The trees are located about ten air miles northwest of Willamina on Smith's old homestead. His 160 acre claim granted under the Homestead Act of 1862 is now part of the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation.

A typical tree as measured by our tree committee is 35 inches in diameter and reaches a height of 150 feet. Many of the trees have branches down to the ground indicating they grew in the open.

Smith had a distinguished military career first in the Spanish-American War and later with the China relief expedition. His claim became official on November 3 1916 with receipt of a patent signed by President Woodrow Wilson. It is not known how Smith got the nickname "Pumpkinseed", although Chan Mendenhall of Willamina Creek recalled that it was given him by some of the local people

The country around Smith's claim was a part of the great Nestucca fire of the 1840s. Approximately 300,000 acres of superlative coniferous forest were killed in this fire and for several decades hundreds of thousands of snags remained standing in testimony of the devastation.

.....George Williams

## LAFAYETTE HERITAGE DAYS POSTER AND ESSAY CONTEST

This year in conjunction with its festivities, the Lafayette Heritage Days committee sponsored a contest for students at the Wascher Elementary School in that city. Three YCHS members who are also former educators were asked to judge the entries. Their report follows:

The three of us- Twila Byrnes, Shirley McDaniel and I- found judging the twenty seven posters and fourteen essays submitted by the Wascher students difficult, but also a delight (they were almost all very well done).

The posters, created by second graders who wrote short essays to go with them, were colorful and represented some aspect of bygone days in Lafayette. Fourth and fifth graders produced longer essays dealing with Lafayette history. While several of these contained short biographies of Josephine Wascher for whom their school is named, they were quite diverse in other facts covered.

Winners read their essays Saturday, August 14th during the Heritage Days celebration with emcee Dena Rosenberg making the introductions and afterward passing out the awards. Two first place winners received \$25 each, second place \$15 each third place \$10 each and \$5 apiece for those whose posters received honorable mention. McDonald's Restaurant awarded a \$2 gift certificate to every entrant and the judges, along with YCHS president Shirley Venhaus received lovely African violets.

.....Lois Brooks

## HARVEST FESTIVAL COMING UP SATURDAY OCTOBER 16th - 10 am to 4 pm

Just a plain old fashioned good time is the theme for the third annual YCHS Harvest Festival. Among the festivities will be demonstrations of homespun crafts, live music by the Swing Shift Band plus the Old Time Fiddlers along with mule-drawn wagon rides, refreshments and much, much more.

This is principal event we have to inform the public of who we are and what we do. Support the Society by attending and helping out, preferably dressed in vintage clothing (any period 1850 to 1950 will do nicely). It will be an interesting and rewarding (and fun) experience - guaranteed.

*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  
97128

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

My message this month is short and to the point!!

We must have more volunteers present at the museum during the times we are open to the public. From September through May this is only 1:00 to 4:00 pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Hosting visitors to the museum, is a fun and interesting thing to do and new volunteers would work with more experienced people.

The Society has worked hard to maintain and improve our facilities, but the fact is clear that without more volunteers we cannot keep the museum open!! At this time only a handful are carrying the load for all of us.

CALL MAXINE WILLIAMS TODAY AT 472-4547 WITH YOUR OFFER TO HELP.

Thanks

.....Shirley

**NEW (DIFFERENT) DISPLAY AT THE MUSEUM**

The large display case in the Poling Church building has taken on a new look thanks to the efforts of Eileen Lewis and Julie Amen. Pooling their talents, these two ladies have skillfully recreated a rural classroom atmosphere of the late 19th century. This exhibit replaces another having a military theme also set up by these two to celebrate this past Memorial Day. Also, they have promised an interesting new touch or two will be added for the upcoming Harvest Festival.

With new exhibits popping up on a more regular basis, members should visit the museum more often (along with family or friends) to see what Eileen and Julie have been up to. You'll be glad you did.

**OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER**

The cafeteria\* of the new Amity Grade School located on Rice Lane (to the left as you enter Amity from McMinnville) will be the venue for the meeting at **6:30 pm Tuesday October 12th.**

Speaker for the evening will be forester Bob Zybeck who will discuss the history of fires and floods in Yamhill County. A recognized expert and published author in his field, Bob will punctuate his presentation with slides, maps and old photos.

Guests are always welcome and don't forget your table service and potluck offering. (\* Note: Another organization will be meeting in the school auditorium, so be sure to head for the cafeteria).

**QUILT DRAWING COMING UP**

Time is growing short for those wishing to purchase tickets on the hand sewn "Ohio Star" quilt donated by the McMinnville "Piecemakers" quilting group. The quilt is presently displayed on the first floor of the Miller Log Museum and the lucky winner will be drawn at the Harvest Festival October 16th. Tickets are \$1.00 each or six for \$5.00. Remember, you can't win without a ticket.

**BY-LAWS REVISION**

A final review of the proposed revised by-laws was conducted at the September 14th meeting of the Board of Directors. Copies of the document will be included with the November 1999 WEST SIDE and a full membership vote will be held in conjunction with the annual Election of Officers at the general meeting on December 14th.

**NEW MEMBER**

We welcome the following new member from a pioneer North Yamhill family:

Dr. Norris H. Perkins - Portland

**ROOF REPORT**

The new roof project scheduled for the Poling Church was delayed briefly in order to obtain a color that would most closely match that of the shingles on the belfry roof (which are not being replaced). Project coordinator Dan Linscheid reports the work should begin soon and hopefully be completed before the Harvest Festival.

**SURPLUS OHS QUARTERLY JOURNALS FOR SALE**

In addition to recently receiving a large number of old Oregon Historical Society Quarterly Journals, the YCHS holdings of these important reference works have been consolidated on the Stoller Library shelves. The net result is a number of duplicates will be offered for sale at modest prices during the October 16th Harvest Festival. These prized publications contain two to four articles each written by leading historians covering every aspect of Oregon history and are seldom found in quantity at used book stores. Certainly an excellent opportunity to add to your personal library at a reasonable cost.

**MEMBER CRAFTS DISPLAY**

Under the direction of Twila Byrnes a display case on the second floor of the Miller Log Museum has been set aside to provide members with the opportunity to exhibit their particular home making crafts or handiwork on a rotating basis. The first to take advantage was Shirley McDaniel, who presented several examples of her bobbin lace-making expertise before she entered them in the county fair. Up next are a number of hand knit items produced by Betty White. While the articles themselves are not old or historic, the skills employed to produce them are and certainly worthy of preservation. To include your handiwork, call Twila at 662-3589.

## A FAMOUS TENT SHOW VISITS YAMHILL COUNTY IN 1912

by John White

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Kit Carson Wild West Show that once entertained in places like Madison Square Garden, lost its appeal in the major cities and had taken to the road with a series of one-night-stands across rural America. When the show took a 1912 circuit through the Pacific Northwest it bore little resemblance to the original in glamour and in many respects was in reality merely another huckster carnival.

Residents of McMinnville and the surrounding area had seen tent shows, as they were called then, before, but this one with its Wild West theme featuring trick riding, marksmanship demonstrations and re-enacted Indian battles was something new to them and anxiously awaited. McMinnville police chief Pete Peterson was also anticipating its arrival, but from an entirely different perspective.

Word had reached Chief Peterson from Goldendale Washington, where the Kit Carson show had recently played, that authorities there considered it to be the most dishonest they had ever encountered. Many citizens reported the loss of five or ten dollars through sleight of hand short-changing by ticket sellers while others lost as much as fifty dollars to the time honored shell game. With the aid of several armed and angry deputies, the sheriff there had been able to recover nearly two thousand dollars swindled by the show, but this was believed to be only a fraction of the actual losses. Chief Peterson was determined Yamhill County patrons would be better protected.

Following a parade from the railroad depot, the show opened its matinee performance in McMinnville to rather mixed reviews as reported in the August 2nd 1912 *Telephone-Register*:

*"There was a good deal of Indian and cowboy riding and shooting that was not generally appreciated, but there was some really good work in the line of flying trapeese, tight rope walking, tumbling and strong-arm performances. It is hard to understand why showmen all seem to think it essential to burden their shows with stunts bordering on the lewd and indecent, and in this respect this show was no exception in some of its side attractions. At best, the tent show business is a hard life, and the primary purpose of all connected with its management is to get your money, and to do this they give you some performances of merit and a great many fakes under false pretenses"*

As for the swindling concerns, with one major exception, there seems to have been very few complaints lodged and these rendered by what is best described as extremely gullible individuals. Chief Peterson had thwarted much fraud and deceit by deputizing dozens of husky men who wore large shiny badges and positioning them so as to be looking over the shoulder of almost every barker and huckster connected with the show. As successful as this tactic was however, it did little to keep retired farmer Bernhard Frieson from losing a considerable sum.

In town, Frieson had met up with a fellow who claimed to have just been fired from the Wild West show and was bitter about not having received what pay was due him. Following some libation, the fellow indicated he had a scheme to recoup his wages and that Frieson could help him pull it off. The scheme involved Frieson withdrawing \$1500 from his bank and meeting a third gentleman at the railroad station. This third person would escort Frieson into the private rail car of the Wild West Show manager for a "three card monte" game. Armed with supposedly inside information supplied by his new friend, enabling him to correctly spot the proper card to win, Frieson would then gather in another \$1500 which would be split with the former show employee.

Of course it all went according to plan up to the point of cor-

rectly selecting the winning card. No sooner had Frieson realized he had lost, the lights went out and all the money was gone. The next morning the show manager was questioned at length about the affair that took place in his quarters, but he claimed no knowledge of it or the perpetrators. He did however speculate that bad publicity could hurt his gate receipts and offered to pay Frieson \$400 in return for a pledge not to mention the matter again. The swindled ex farmer agreed thus cutting his loss to \$1100.

Such was rural life when the carnival came to town.

**KIT CARSON**

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AND

**Trained Wild Animal Exhibition**

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**The Largest Wild West Show on Earth**

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MANAGER OF TRAINED WILD ANIMALS

A Cosmopolitan collection of cow boys and girls, vaqueros, senoritas, grandda rursle, champions of the lariat, rough riders, pony express, veterans, daring athletes, combat clowns, thrilling Indian fights and war dancers.

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Introducing a vast and motley herd of Indians, Scouts, rappers and soldiers that actually took active part in the last three brave stand and hopeless struggle the noble red skin made for his freedom and rights.

**Two Performances Daily, Rain or Shine**

Afternoon at 2. Evening at 8.

Doors open one hour earlier.

WATERPROOF CANVAS. CANNOT LEAK.

Grand Gold Glittering free Street Parade two miles long. 10 a. m. daily on the main thoroughfares.

BIG FREE EXHIBITIONS ON SHOW GROUNDS

Immediately After the Parade

Bring in Your Bad Horses and Mules

Our cow boys will ride them free of charge. \$25.00 will be paid to any person bringing a horse or mule they cannot ride.

**McMinnville, Tues., July 30**

Founded 1957



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**YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

## YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*October 1999 Calendar of Events*

**Tuesday October 12th - 5:00 PM**

Board of Directors - Amity Grade School

**Tuesday October 12th, 6:30 PM**

General Meeting & Potluck Dinner- Amity Grade School

Bring your Own Table Service - Guests Always Welcome

*(See page 2 for details)*

**Saturday October 16th, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

YCHS HARVEST FESTIVAL - Museum Complex

Sixth and Market Streets - Lafayette

The general public is invited to enjoy a plain old fashioned "Good Time"  
as guests of the Yamhill County Historical Society