

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

December 1999

Author and Local Historian Jim Lockett presented an excellent program on early Christians and Churches in Yamhill County at our November meeting. He has been studying this matter for years, and found a new information source in a book by Jerry Rushford, a professor at Pepperdine University, titled "Christians on the Oregon Trail". Some of the earliest religious establishments in the area were called Campbellites, named for Thomas and Alexander Campbell. By 1832, there were about 25,000 members in the Christian Church in America. The name Campbellites was seen as a slur by church members, and was called a "reproachful epitaph" by Alexander Campbell. Nevertheless, the name stuck, and is even mentioned in various history books. Jim mentioned many of the early church members in Yamhill County by name. James McBride came over the trail in 1846 with his wife and 10 children. They had 5 more children later in Oregon. His homestead was diagonal from where Carlton Packing is now located. Also mentioned were William & Sarah Newby, the Hembree families, Joel Jordan, Alexander Blevins, Sebastian Adams, Daniel Matheneys sons, Lynn and Peter Burnett. Joel Hendricks and James McBride were two of the first men in our area to begin making preaching rounds at various settler's cabins.



The impact that these early Christians had in our history is inescapable. Governors of Idaho and California, many highly esteemed doctors, lawyers and judges and other respected men and women were among those who were taught by some of these earliest preachers, such as Peter Burnett, Joel Hendricks, and James McBride. We thank Jim Lockett for an interesting and thought-provoking presentation. For those who missed the meeting, a video tape of the program in VHS format is available for checkout at the museum to members.

Follow-up on the 1999 Harvest Festival

Good food! Good help! Good time! A belated thank-you to all the generous members who donated food for the harvest festival. With what Olive Johnson had kept frozen from a previous occasion (thank-you so much, Olive), we had just enough to keep the table abundantly supplied.

Help from Byron McDaniel in setting up, and the exceedingly efficient assistance of Ruth Williams, Jean

Scheer, Betty Brown, Barbara Hinman (whose outfit added a touch of elegance to the kitchen), and Maxine-the-great-sandwich-maker-Williams in arranging goodie trays; and Patsy Miller, Margaret Brixey, and Linda-floor-scrubber-non-pereil-Johnson in helping with clean-up, the refreshments were a grand success. Special thanks to all of you, including Farrel Fuerst who came but wasn't needed, so helped out in another area. Annita Linscheid and Lois Brooks

President's Message

We never realize what a big part someone occupies in a group until you try to fill a vacancy. John White will be missed for so many things. Thanks to Dan Linscheid and several others the newsletter should be in the mail at the usual time. We will be asking members for help in continuing this work: perhaps ideas for articles, comments of happenings and events, plus a group to help label and mail the finished letter. It was a pleasure to hold

our last meeting at the Seventh Day Adventist Church on Old Sheridan Road. It is a wonderful facility and the Pastor was kind to welcome us. We will meet there again in December. Don't forget your "Show 'n Tell" items. This is the last newsletter before Christmas and the beginning of the year 2000. I wish you and yours the best of Holidays and a wonderful New Year. With Love - Shirley

In Memory - John White

On Sunday, November 11th, John White, noted local historian, author and YCHS Board Member passed away. We offer our deepest condolences to his wife Betty and the family. John will be missed in many ways. Next month's newsletter will contain an article about John, his ties to Yamhill County, and his tireless efforts on behalf of our Society.

Heritage Tree Proposal

Ben Frum, who is replacing George Williams as county coordinator for our Heritage Trees program, is researching the giant Walnut tree on Cleo and Pat Latham's farm for possible nomination as a Heritage Tree. This tree was planted in 1870, and has grown to a diameter of 6 foot 9 inches!

Officers - 1999President

Shirley Venhaus
472-7328

VP/Program

Barbara Knutson
843-2069

Secretary

Shirley McDaniel
662-3528
Eileen Crawley
835-3673

Treasurer

Betty Brown
472-7100

Financial Secretary

Lila Jackson
472-8510

Corres. Secretary

Marjorie Owens
843-3081

Board of Directors

Ed Roghair
472-6909
Robert Kuykendall
662-3354

Dan Linscheid

843-2625

John White

665-5376

Volunteer Coordinator

Maxine Williams
472-4547

Librarian

Olive Merry Johnson
472-6070

Newsletter (temporarily)

Dan Linscheid &
Shirley Venhaus

Car Pool Coordinator

Joanne Watts
835-5893

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 Life

Mail to:

Financial Secretary

2430 North Baker

McMinnville, OR

97128

©1999 YCHS

**DECEMBER MEETING
AND PUTLUCK DINNER**

Our December meeting will be held again at the Seventh Day Adventist Church at 1500 Old Sheridan Road in McMinnville on December 14th at 6:30 p.m. This is our annual "show and tell" meeting with a Christmas theme, so please bring something from your past and tell us why it brings you special memories. Please remember to bring your favorite dish and tableware.

OF SPECIAL NOTE:

Ken and Barbara Knutson will be visiting in Baltimore and New York City, where they will visit their daughter, Dr. Solveig Holmquist. Dr. Holmquist will be directing 5 choirs at Carnegie Hall, one of which is her own "Festival Chorale". What an honor! Congratulations to Ken and Barbara.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members and hope to become acquainted with them at future Society functions:

Maynard Drawson - Salem

Carolyn Staples - Newberg

David Wu - Washington, DC

Avis Frein - Portland

Lynne Sanders - Lafayette

Mary Jo Cann - McMinnville

Stepheni Moore - Lafayette

Barbara Farmer - Yamhill

New Life Members

Matt & Molly Dunckel

Shea Venhaus

Passed Away

Our Condolences to the family of Zola Yates. Cards can be sent to 23133 NW Kutch Rd., Yamhill, OR 97148

Also

Victor Lee Allen, Great Grandson of Daniel Sanders Holman and Martha Burnett Holman recently passed away. His niece, Lene Holland of Columbia, MO has submitted a \$25 check to our Society in his memory.

Give the gift that keeps on giving. For that "Special Person", give them a year's membership to the Yamhill County Historical Society. Contact Lila Jackson and she will send a special gift card in your name.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first brick house constructed west of the Rockies was built by George Gay in about 1843. He came to the Willamette Valley in 1835. One corner of his house would later define the line between Yamhill and Polk Counties.

VOLUNTEERS

These are the folks who have recently volunteered their time and effort at the museum... their help is much appreciated:

Twila Burns Olive Johnson Thelma Shuck

Maxine & George Williams Marjorie Owens

Barbara & Kenneth Knutson Lila Jackson

Lois Brooks Jim & Rita Lockett Patsy Miller

Dan & Annita Linscheid George Camplair Joanne Ross Betty

Baltzell Farrel Fuerst Margaret Bixler

Ed & Peggy Roghair Mina Hansen Ruth Williams

Lila Myers Eileen Lewis Shirley & Bob Kuykendall

Joanne Watts Shirley McDaniel Georgina Duba Julie Amon

Apologies to any we've missed. Please thank these folks if you

see them, and consider helping as a volunteer yourself. (Call Maxine Williams at 472-4547)



There are "50" Historical Items on display in the large case in the Church Building Museum. We are having a contest to see how many items you can correctly identify. The prize for the winner will be one years fully paid membership to the Historical Society. Stop in during regular museum hours and test your knowledge. Thanks to Eileen and Julie for this fun idea.

During our Harvest Festival we were honored to have U.S. Rep. David Wu and his family visit our museum and join in on the fun. He enjoyed himself and was enthused enough to become a new member. David & Shirley Venhaus pictured



It is interesting to imagine how Christmas might have been for the emigrants arriving in Oregon those first rainy winters. The great wagon trains would take 5 or 6 months along the trail and would usually arrive at the Falls (Oregon City) sometime in November. They had suffered through terrible rafting down the Columbia or rugged trips over mountain passes. Arriving in November they found rain, mud, and very few places for shelter. Most continued to live in their tents and out of their wagons.

While they had some resources to purchase food and supplies there were no stores that could accommodate them. The Hudson Bay Company had a post at Oregon City but their practice was not to sell to the emigrants. Company policy was to discourage settlement. However, Dr John McLoughlin felt his Company needed to be of help to the Americans. He would loan them some necessary supplies; usually a few sacks of wheat. The Joseph and Mary Hess family did not arrive in Oregon City until late in December.

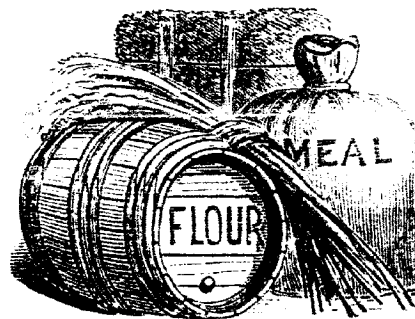
They continued on to Chehalem Valley to settle just Northwest of present Newberg on Christmas Eve of 1843. Christmas was not on their minds. They had five children ranging in age from 10 months to 6 years and were on their own to provide food and shelter. We're sure Dr. McLaughlin loaned them enough wheat to get them through the winter and Joseph was a good hunter. Charlotte Matheny Kirkwood, daughter of Daniel and Mary Matheny, tells of that first winter and of a later Christmas. Charlotte was the youngest of seven and had kept a fairly complete diary of her experiences.

She reports: "...We reached the Hudson's Bay Company Post. The rain had fallen on us all day and we were cold and wet--everything that we had was wet. But there was no shelter for us there. Every cranny was filled to overflowing with the families who had made the trip successfully by raft." Daniel Matheny was able to rent a "room" after a few days which became home for the Mathenys the rest of the winter. The first winter was a bitter hard one for the family. They were very grateful when Dr. McLoughlin "loaned" them wheat. That first winter they ate boiled wheat, wheat mush, or "fried over" wheat three times a day for three months.

They would scorch the wheat and grind it for coffee. During those first years survival was the only important objective for these emigrants. However we know that Christmas was being celebrated by

the more established families. This included Dr. John McLoughlin, whom records show was chastised for having such lavish and expensive Christmas parties. Both the Whitmans and the Lee Missions celebrated Christmas with an extra sermon, a feast and some gift exchange. George Gay, who had built a large brick home in the early 40's, was known to have great parties, especially for his French-Canadian friends from across the Willamette river, but nothing was found about Christmas.

In 1845 the Mathenys moved to what is now Wheatland which had been part of the Old Jason Lee Mission. They moved into a nice home which had been built for Dr. David Leslie. It was a big "hewed-log" house, well finished with cedar lumber that the missionaries had shipped around Cape Horn. It had good sawed floors, two brick fireplaces and plenty of bedrooms. There were barns and granaries, forty acres of land and fences around the property. By 1849, the California gold rush was improving everybody's life. Tramp vessels were plying up and down the coast and stores were opening at many places.



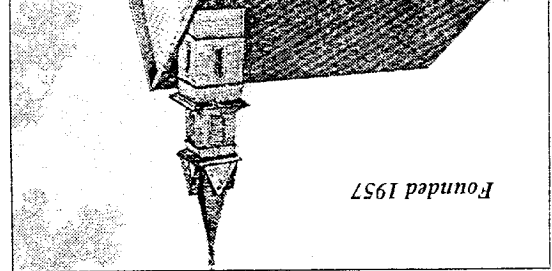
Prices were more reasonable and most had plenty to eat and wear. Daniel and Mary Matheny decided to throw a big Christmas Party. Charlotte reports; "Mother did not say 'John, come and bring your wife,' or 'Mary, come and bring your children.' She just sent word and it was given out in meetings or passed from one to another so that everybody in the valley was asked to Matheny's for Christmas dinner. There were not so very many in our country even then, but more than a hundred came. "For weeks. Mother planned and prepared for the big dinner. A beef was put up to fatten, hogs were killed and the hams cured, a row of yellow cheese had been turned and greased every day for weeks. Dishes and kettles were borrowed from our neighbors and the women came in to help. There were great iron kettles of chicken dumplings, and a young pig roasted on a spit over the hardwood coals in our fireplace that could hold a four foot log. Our new smokehouse had a raised dirt fireplace where we cooked in a huge brass kettle.

Barbecued meat was a great delicacy, and had a flavor that was all its own. It was cooked in a deep pit and took a long time. The pit was dug several days before the time set for the feast--then large rocks were thrown into the pit, and a roaring fire built on top of them. The fire was kept going for three days, till the rocks at the bottom of it were at a white heat and the heap of smaller stones piled around the opening of the pit were red and glowing. Cutting up a beef is a nice trick. One needs to get just exactly the tight proportions of lean and fat, and exactly the right size to each piece. Then it has to be seasoned and packed into clean canvas bags. Then the hot rocks at the bottom of the pit were covered with leaves, and the bags of meat were thrown in. More leaves covered the bags, and the hot rocks at the mouth of the pit were shoveled on top. "It would take twenty to thirty hours to cook. About ten o'clock of the day of the feast, men would throw out the top earth and get the meat ready for the table. "Louise Eads came from across the river to bake the johnnycakes--no one in all the country could do them half so good.

She baked them on a board tilted on edge in front of the open fire. The cornmeal and eggs and butter had to be in just exactly the right proportion, and patted just so on the Johnny board. No dusting of flour or rubbing of butter was possible the cake must stick tightly to the tilted board--so turning them over was really quite a trick.

When baked on both sides to a rich golden brown, they were not just johnnycakes, they were really, truly *Johnny Cakes*. Louise baked all morning and stacked them in the chimney corner to keep them hot, their buttery edges sizzling and frying in the heat. I have often eaten, but not with enjoyment, a slice of soggy cornbread that was served to me as johnnycake. ...and dear me, but I wished that those cooks could have tasted one of the cakes that Louise Eads baked in front of our fire.

Mother had dried tomato pie and dried blackberry pie, pickles and jam and preserves, and big kettles of potatoes mashed with sour cream and butter. The tables were spread in our big living room that Mother had decorated with evergreens. Someone would say grace, and then everyone would eat all that he could, knowing full well that there would be a piece of meat to take home to the ones who could not come. Even the Indians from away over on the Grande Ronde came squaws, papooses, hungry dogs and all--and everyone had all he wanted and the party lasted till well into the night.



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #3
Lafayette Oregon

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 484
Lafayette Oregon 97127

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
December 1999 Calendar of Events

Tuesday December 14th, 5:00 PM
Board of Directors - Seventh Day Adventist Church - McMinnville

Tuesday December 14th, 6:30 PM
General Meeting & Potluck Dinner - Seventh Day Adventist Church - McMinnville
Bring your own Table Service - Guests Always Welcome
(See page 2 for details)