

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

DATE: TUESDAY FEBRUARY 9, 1982 12:00 Noon  
PLACE: AMITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, NURSERY ST., AMITY, OREGON  
POTLUCK: Bring your own service  
PROGRAM: Florence Patty Kirkwood on the history of the Amity area

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MUSEUM NEWS

We are glad that the weather has settled. On Jan. 12th there was a group of seniors from a club at Eugene that came to the museum. They also visited the Hoover house in Newberg and a winery. They were a jolly group and had to see our complete collection. Some had lived on farms and knew all the tool collection. We, as a group, need to make tours to see what other museums have to offer.

Our program at Amity will be the same as we planned last month. Sorry the weather made us cancel. There are very few visitors this time of year on Saturday and Sundays. We will have lots of clean up work later this spring. We will especially need to work in the tool display area. There is rearranging to do and we need to complete the blacksmith shop.

We also need a renter for the house next to the museum. Would like an older couple. We have had a few donations to our book fund. Many thanks. People are asking when it will be off the press.

Call 472-7935 for appointments anytime.

ROMA SITTON

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HISTORY NOTES

Submitted by Ruth Stoller

We have been reading in the newspapers about the controversy over the McPhee land fill site near Newberg. Few people realize the historic impact of the site. We, as a historical society, should be aware of it.

The land fill site is actually an extension of the Greater Willamette Post site, which is just across the river on the Marion County side. In January of 1814 when the Willamette Post flooded, the Northwest Fur Company planned to move the post to the site of the present pulp mill in Newberg. The move was never made, but because of the projected move, we have the first detailed written description of a part of the Willamette Valley. That description was of the area included in the land fill site. Alexander Henry crossed to the north bank of the Willamette, just east of the present St. Paul bridge. Here are his exact words written on January 24, 1814: (words in parentheses are mine)

"At twelve I crossed the river (the boat was tied up on the south bank of the river just north of the Post) in company with Messrs. Wm. Henry, Stuart, and Matthews..... We debarked, passed the range of wood adjoining the river, and came to the open country beyond. The country is pleasant, thinly

shaded with oak, pine, liard, alder, soft maple, ash, hazel, etc. (They continued on, probably following Hess Creek to the proposed building site.) We returned by an old Indian path through the woods along the river. The alders are very large, there are hazel trees as thick as a man's thigh. The oaks are large... (and have) an uncommon number of stout irregular branches, the ends of which are encumbered with tufts of small green leaves the size of a crow's nest or larger (mistletoe). There are cedars here and many other kinds of wood with which I am unacquainted. In summer, I am told, there are fine large blackberries, delicious black raspberries, and several other sorts of berries, all of which come to perfection in their season. In the woods, the ground is thickly covered with ferns and other weeds, through which deer have paths in every direction. The soil appears good, especially along the river, and would answer well for gardens."

It is almost exactly 168 years since Henry wrote that description-- and the change along the river at this place has not been extensive, only the cultivation of the land that Henry predicted in his journal.

With the coming of the Hudson Bay Company into the area during the 1820's, this land took on added historic significance. It became the starting point for the southern fur brigades. Supplies were brought by water and men and horses came overland from Ft. Vancouver, across the Tualatin plains, past Wapato Lake and down the Chehalem Valley to the north bank of the Willamette. Here they camped and got ready to leave for the Umpqua and California. Horses were pastured and often left to graze for days. Horses became wild and difficult to retrieve. In time the whole area here became known as Wild Horse Prairie--- a name that continued in use until after the settlers arrived. These encampments were made on the Yamhill County side of the river because the brigades followed the west side of the Willamette Valley on their way south. They proceeded up the Chehalem Valley to the west and met the North-South trail at the head of the valley.

David Douglas, the famous British Naturalist, for whom our Douglas fir is named, camped with the fur brigades in this vicinity at two different times. Both times he studied the flora and fauna of this area. It was on his first visit here in 1825 that he saw the seeds of the sugar pine tree os southern Oregon. The next year he made his famous trip to the Umpqua in search of the huge cones of this pine tree, staying almost a week in this area waiting for the brigade to assemble.

The fact that it is an estension of the Willamette Post site should afford this area some kind of immunity, but it is also, along with Ft. Astoria, one of the oldest historic spots in Oregon. It precedes Champoeg by many years.

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1982 DUES

Dues for membership (\$3.00 per individual) can be mailed to Mrs. Evelyn Nieman, 1501 S. Baker St., McMinnville, Oregon 97128. Please note that State affiliate dues (Oregon Historical Society) have increased to \$10.00 per year.

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**TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS**

Mail to: YAMHILL Co. HISTORICAL Society, P.O. Box 484, LACAYETTE, OR 97127

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