

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Date: Tuesday November 13, 1984 7:00 p.m.
Location: Sheridan American Legion Hall, Yamhill and Bridge St., Sheridan
Potluck: Bring your own service
Program: Barbara Knutson of Sheridan will be organizing the program

MUSEUM NEWS

Our new quilt rack to display eight quilts was built and donated by Jack Greiner of McMinnville, retired school teacher of manual training. We appreciate your generous donation.

Marie Winters and I went to a meeting of the Grass Roots Historical Society at the Brunk House in Polk County. It was a pleasure to see all they have done to restore the old house and gather all the articles of the home and time that the Brunk's lived there. They are doing a fantastic job. We also went to Monmouth in the afternoon to visit another old home donated to the Polk County Historical Society. Dr. Gentle having been a professor at the college. It is being restored to hold meetings, weddings, etc. We are being the host for this meeting in January. We will have lunch at the Senior Center and will tour the museum in the afternoon.

We are short of visitors this time of year. Many thanks for the volunteers on the weekends. Call 472-7935 for an appointment anytime.

ROMA SITTON

HISTORY NOTES (submitted by Ruth Stoller)

(This is another one of the Oregon Folklore studies done by the Federal Writers' Project under the Works Progress Administration of the 1930s. This one was done by Andrew C. Sherbert of Portland, Oregon. He interviewed W.H. Hembree on April 25, 1938. W. H. Hembree was a grandson of Joel J. Hembree of Yamhill County. Although he does not mention it in the interview, young Hembrees father and mother separated when he was very small and he was raised by his mothers family. The older brothers that he mentions in the narrative were really his uncles. His father, Huston Hembree appears to have gone to Missouri for a while, but returned to Oregon in later years. Part of the interview relates to the famous Blue Bucket Mine of eastern Oregon.)

I was born in Monmouth, Polk County, Oregon, October 7, 1864, and was christened William Harry Hembree. My father's name was Houston Hembree. He was named for the illustrious Sam Houston and was born in Texas, though his family later moved to Missouri. My mother's name was Amanda Bowman and she was born in Iowa, coming to Oregon in 1848. My father left Missouri for Oregon in one of the first emigrant trains of the great migration of the 1840's arriving in the Willamette Valley sometime in 1843. The train that my father came to Oregon with is said to have been the first "wheels" ever to make the entire journey from the east to The Dalles.

The wagon train of which my father and his kinfolds were members was more fortunate than the parties which followed the old Oregon Trail in the years immediately after. The Indians did not trouble the earlier emigrants, were friendly in fact, according to accounts given me by my father. It was not until the later emigrants came through that the Indians began to attack traveler--in 1844, 1845, and thereafter. Father's train arrived at The Dalles with exactly the same number of members as it had when it left Missouri. There had been, however, a death and a birth en route, both occurring simultaneously at a place now called Liberty Rock, Idaho. The one who died was a second cousin of mine, whose name I have forgotten. The child that was born was my aunt, Nancy Hembree.

Though there had been gold stampedes, land grants from the government, and all sorts of empire building activities in Oregon after my father arrived from the east, he had not yet struck it rich when I squalled into the scene 20 years later. When I am asked to recall incidents of my early life and to describe the games we played in my childhood, I can truthfully answer that there was no childhood, in the sense meant. There were no games. All that I remember about my childhood is "work", work, and work. Work, long before the sun came up. Work, long after the sun had set. When I was eight years old I was doing real labor--labor that today would draw a man's wages. Union working hours? Sit down strikes? Such things were not dreamed of then.

My father and older brothers used to make shingles every day in the week except Sunday. They made them by hand, riving them out of cedar bolts with a tool called a "frow". If you've never seen one, a frow is a steel, wedge-shaped cleaver-like blade with a sharp edge, with a handle set at right angles from one end of the blade. You hit the frow with a mallet, driving through the shingle bolt, cleaving the bolt with the grain of the wood. Only the best, the very best straight-grained cedar was used for these shingles. The manufactured shingles of today have a useful life of about ten years or so, but I'm willing to wager that some of the shingles my family made--if there was any possible way of identifying them--are still giving service somewhere in Oregon. They were made to be practically everlasting.

(To be continued.)