

# The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

September 2002

## Alexander McLeod Presentation

Bringing history to life, Al LePage, Executive Director of the National Coast Trail Association gave an excellent presentation on Alexander McLeod, Hudson Bay Company chief trader. Dressed in period clothing and speaking with a heavy Scottish accent, Al played the part of Mr. McLeod with convincing realism.

McLeod was born in Montreal about 1782. By 1825 he was exiled from the East coast of America to the Columbia Department of the Hudson Bay Company, where he worked under chief factor John McLoughlin. McLeod was assigned the south central coast of Oregon, while Peter Skein Ogden was assigned East of the Cascade Range of mountains. Their job was to lead fur brigades and trade with the local native American tribes.

Holding a fistful of beads, the reincarnated McLeod said "Aye, the way we got furs was to entice the Indians and other such traders with beads, shiny metal buttons, blankets, and dentalia shells". The trades usually involved soft beaver hides and land otter pelts.

Proud of his status as a British citizen, he poked fun at American mountain men, who did not "make tea on the trail". In the summer of 1826, he left Fort Vancouver, Washington: two groups set out from the fort, one by water, the other by horseback. Meeting up at Oregon City, they jointly traveled down the Willamette Valley to near where the Yamhill and Willamette rivers join, and headed westerly into the Yamhill valley. His journey took him through the coast range to the ocean, and thence southerly to what is now Florence. Along the trip, the men found plenty of fish and wildlife to keep themselves well fed.

Of the Oregon Coast, McLeod said "Aye, 'tis a beautiful coast, but quite rocky and rugged". LePage had numerous color slides of the trip, which despite best attempts, could not hide the effects of modern-day development. The expedition finished with the return to the fort by August 18th, two days ahead of the scheduled return.

McLeod relied on many Indian trails for much of the journey. He refused to name places after himself, which was accepted practice of explorers in his day. Instead, he would listen to the names the natives gave points of interest, and try to apply their pronunciation to the place names in his diary. He married a Cree Indian, with whom he eventually had seven children. On his passing, he left her 5,000 pounds.

Al had numerous items on display, such as Beaver hides and a land otter pelt, cooking utensils, clothing, as well as copies of the earliest maps, which were not much help on this particular journey. We thank Al, the West Coast Trails Association and West Coast Bank, which sponsors these presentations many times each summer. Many of the attendees waited around after the presentation to feel, hold and wonder over the items Al brought along to bring this bit of history closer to home for us. Thanks again, Al.

## From our President

Hi Folks, What a busy summer. As usual it went by all to quickly and it is "Back to School" for the younger folks. The Historical Society has been busy. The "Treasures In The Attic" fund raiser was a great success. Ninety five people registered and three appraisers worked all day. Income from this event was over \$900. I would like to personally thank everyone who worked so hard to make this happen. Special thanks go to Joanne Watts and Barbara Doyle. These funds have been designated to be used for repairs on the Church.

The special evening spent with Oregon Coast explorer Alexander McLeod aka Al LePage was well attended and very enjoyable. The annual picnic held in the Amity Park furnished lots of good food and a very pleasant afternoon. The Board chose one of the hottest afternoons to visit with Ray Kauer at his home near Amity to view his collection of antique tractors and farm equipment. It would be wonderful to be able to combine our collection with his in some convenient location. Just dreaming!!

The reprint of "Old Yamhill" has been completed and are now available for sale at the Museum. A new book containing over 300 photos of Historic Yamhill County is being put together under the auspices of the Historical Society and the Newberg Graphic. It is being printed by a company based in Vancouver, WA. Watch for further announcement on this....

We received verbal information from the Preservation Office in Salem that we have been approved for the National Historical Site and therefore qualify for the matching funds to have the Church painted. Work will begin as soon as this is in writing. We also are applying for grants to assist us in the placement of visqueen under the building, rewiring and insulation of the Church. "Share Day", sponsored by George Fox University will be utilized to clean up the museum yard and flower gardens. This will be on Sept. 11th, 2002. You may receive a call from Patsy Miller for lending of garden tools and equipment. Don't forget the "Harvest Festival" and put your orders in for the new Calendars for the year 2003. Remember, Support Your Society!!! Hope to see you in September at our General Meeting in Sheridan. Shirley



At Left: Picnic-goers enjoy YCHS annual event at the Amity City Park in August.

*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*

**OFFICERS - 2002**

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Shirley Venhaus  
472-7328

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Barbara Knutson  
843-2069

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662-3528  
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835-3673

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472-7100

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Librarian

Olive Merry Johnson  
472-6070

Newsletter

Dan Linscheid 843  
-2625

Car Pool Coordinator

Joanne Watts 835  
-5893

**MUSEUM HOURS**

**September 1 - May 31:**  
Sat-Sun 1 to 4 PM

**June 1—August 30:**  
Fri-Sat-Sun 1 to 4 PM  
or  
By Appointment

605 Market Street  
Lafayette Oregon  
Phone: 864-2308

Websites: YCHS is at  
http://  
sites.onlinemac.com/  
history & historic  
photo gallery is at

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YCHS



Crystal Rilee taken by surprise following Al LePage's show on Alexander McLeod. We hope she can forgive the photographer !



Appraising an antique clock during "Treasures in the Attic" on June 29th.

**Nomadic Teacher Program reaches milestone**

The Nomadic Teacher completed its first year quite successfully. We, Jack Davis and myself, gave 158 presentations in all the public elementary schools in Yamhill County except Carlton. And we got into a few schools nearby in other counties.

Students enjoyed the programs - especially the hands-on parts, and learned some things they didn't get in the regular classroom presentations. More people learned about YCHS - for many it meant learning that YCHS exists.

And the historical society benefited financially - \$790. Now Barbara is waiting to get news about applications (that she wrote and submitted) to fund this year's program.

Barbara Doyle

**Three very generous women**

The Board of Directors of Yamhill County Historical Society wants to publicly thank three very generous women for the time and expertise that they donated to the historical society's antiques appraisal day on June 29th.

Lea Burcham from McMinnville Antique Gallery, Kathy Crawford from Miss Dollys Girls in Yamhill and Colleen Wilcox from McMinnville spent more than five hours each answering questions such as: "How old is it?", "What is it made of?", "Is it authentic?", "What is it worth?" Several people learned that they do indeed have a really valuable treasure

Ninety-five guests brought their treasures to this event. Designed to be a fundraiser, it brought in more than \$900 for the historical society. That money will help pay for repairs to the society's Poling church building.



Lea Burcham appraises antiques at our June 29th "Treasures in the Attic" event at our Museum in Lafayette.

**Meeting Notice**

The OREGON HISTORICAL CEMETERIES ASSOCIATION will hold their state-wide fall meeting at the **Amity Grade School** on Saturday, October 19, 2002.

**Scheduled Events**

10-12: business meeting and program  
12:00: sack lunch beverages provided)

1:00: tour of the Amity Cemetery

During the tour the Sons of the Confederacy will mark the graves of the confederate soldiers buried in Amity. They come in period costume. Their ceremony will include a rifle salute and a speech.

This is all open to the public. Our members are invited to have a table for book sales, etc.

### Visitations

A unique group of students visited our museum on Tuesday, April 23rd. Twelve home-schooled children from the Amity and McMinnville areas, accompanied by their teacher/mother/driver, came to see us on their monthly field trip. They had all been to OMSI and the local Air Museum on previous trips. This group also meets once a week at a church where gym facilities allow them social and sport activity.

The youngest child claimed to be an almost first grader. A couple others were definite about their grade placement but most were non-graded. Cherry Danelson, who arranged this outing, informed us that the students work in units and when they have mastered one level they move on to the next. This sounds like a great way to expose children to learning in a non-abrasive atmosphere.

Each child left with a sample of Joanne Watts' homemade soap to try out on a dirty sock or T-shirt. The teacher/mother left with a promise to return again to browse. Lois, Ed and Twila.

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Seventy-one fourth graders with teachers and escorts visited the museum recently to wind up this school year. On May 30th Mr. Klein and Mrs. Nelson brought 50 children from Cook School. They arrived at nine and ate a sack lunch in the Play Park before returning to McMinnville. One of the little girls recognized a picture of a lady in the back room of the church as the same one in the hall of her school for whom it is named.

On June 7th Carol Bacon came with her 21 children from St. James School. This class also ate sack lunches in the Park. One little boy was pleased to announce that Roma Sitton was his great aunt.

All the children left with a sample of Joanne Watts' homemade soap. Lois, Ed and Twila.

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The following undated letter was received in the late spring. It is indicative of sentiments regarding visitations by students as reported above.

Grandhaven Elementary School  
McMinnville, Oregon

Dear Yamhill County Historical Society,

We wanted to thank you for volunteering your time to show and explain the Yamhill Museum to us. The students really enjoyed seeing everything and learning about every little thing you explained. It was truly awesome to see. The students also wanted to thank you and their letters are enclosed. We've spread the word about your incredible Museum! Thanks again for having us!

Sincerely,

Noelle Kroese  
Gloria Lutz

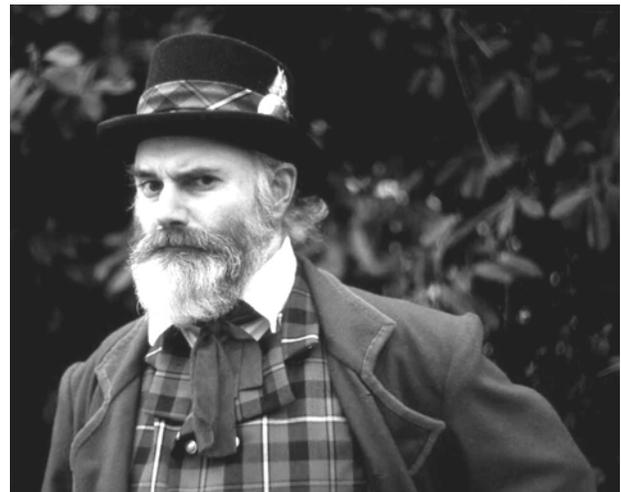
### Crystal Rilee Celebrates 87th Birthday

What a blast! One hundred ninety guests can attest that sharing in Crystal Rilee's 87th birthday celebration was two hours of pure delight.

In a lovely setting, the Hawaiian luau (everyone had a lei and the pig was roasted in a pit), obviously required a lot of work on the part of Crystal and her neighbors and relatives, but tired as she must have been she rose to the occasion, and though her grass skirt was no longer wearable, she and others entertained with an impromptu hula. Led by a talented dancer, they were accompanied by musician friends from Wahiawa, Oahu, where Crystal worked in 1937. These Hawaiians, who now live in Oregon, played and sang during the entire party.

Paper pineapples adorned the tables, the food was delectable including the lovely cake; and Crystal, wearing her crown aplomb, never sat on her throne as she kept circulating among her friends, making sure all were having a good time. Among guests from far and near were a Texan, folks from Salem, and a ninety year old lady from Salishan.

In all she received 101 perennial plants to set out, so next year when the mock orange blooms for her birthday, she'll also have a lovely garden of flowers.



Al LePage, acting the part of Alexander McLeod, Hudson Bay Chief Trader under Dr. John McLoughlin. See page 1 for details.

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**NOTE: membership is down again, as it usually is during the summer months. Please check to the date on your mailing label to make sure this is won't be your last issue.... We want to keep you as an active member !**

**Your Board is active during the summer months—  
here are summarized minutes of recent Board meetings**

**May 14, 2002**

Historical Society members are asked to record the volunteer hours donated to the Society. These are counted as assets to the Society in applications for grants. Hours donated on paper work, in gathering items for our fund-raisers, working on the newsletter, and such can be counted. Members can add them to the sign-in sheet each month. Eileen will compile them once a month. Volunteer hours are worth \$15.37 per hour. Treasurer's Report: Betty Brown presented printed reports. April income \$727.15; total expenses \$1,067.12; net -\$407.47. Advice from the bank representative is to sit tight for the next 18-24 months on investments, an endowment is not advised, however development of a Foundation is encouraged. Financial/Membership Chair: Lila Jackson reported three renewals. The new fee schedule is in effect.

Eileen Lewis reports Kathy Peck, the Green Thumb, worker is putting accession numbers in the computer - a big job. Sorting continues, there are many items/boxes to be sorted. Old Business: Barbara Doyle is working with Shirley to get firm bids for church repair, as these have to be submitted for securing a grant. Barbara Hinman's fencing project is on hold, as the board has changed its mind and is looking at the least up-keep way of having a fence.

New Business: Shirley and Eileen reported on the conference held in Newport. Funds: Application deadlines are coming up. Tracking of donations, replies, personal calls, is important for donations. Lila will continue her lists and expand them a bit. Gloria Lutz has volunteered to work on the Covered Wagon project. Improvements: Members are asked to think about suggestions for how we can make improvements to the museum complex to keep it updated for Yamhill County community use. Virtual Tours are possible. Shirley McDaniel

**June 12, 2002**

Treasurer's Report: Betty Brown presented printed reports. May income \$1,202.86; total expenses \$896.65; net \$306.21. The report was accepted. Financial/Membership: Lila Jackson reported four renewals. Correspondence Secretary: Marjorie Owens answered four informational requests. Volunteer Chair: Eileen Lewis reports Kathy Peck, the Green Thumb worker is continuing her work on putting the inventory check into the computer. The June volunteer list is filled. We need a few for July. Volunteer sheets need to be put out at each location and the volunteer booklet needs to be revised and made available. Old Business: Treasurers in the Attic - set-up will be Friday, June 28th at 1:00. Old Yamhill books will be sold for \$20.00. It was voted to approve promoting membership by selling Old Yamhill, with a new membership, for \$15.00 vs regular \$20.00. Church repairs: 1st priority: insulate under church building and lay visqueen. Dan moved to do the Farnham bid rewiring and check on the smaller dehumidifier. Francis seconded. Motion passed. Paint bid will be let at the July board meeting. Pottersfield Cemetery: The stone is in place Calendar Bid: Dan got a bid of \$4.34 each for a twelve month calendar. . 2003 Harvest Festival date will be October 11, 2003. Lafayette's celebration, "United Lafayette", will be August 10, 2002.

New Business: Nomadic Teacher: \$155 has been earned for the society by Barbara Doyle. A grant of \$500 from the Oregon Community Foundation is for (1) the Nomadic teacher program and (2) for repairs. P.G.E. will average out our electric bill. Shirley V. will check on how the averaging is done. The Travel Information Council is planning a new sign for the Glacier Rock on #18. The YCHS has been asked to help with the dedication in May of 2003. Newsletter: Francis moved,

**July 10, 2002**

Treasurer' Report: Betty Brown circulated written reports showing June income as \$504.07; total expenses of \$259.39 and net income of \$244.68. Report was approved on motion of Dan Linscheid. Lila Jackson reported receiving \$250 from County Commissioners -- she sent a thank you with the receipt. Display at the Court House not to be changed until September. Volunteer Chair Eileen enlisted Dan's help in bringing the baby buggies down from the high cabinet.

Old Business: Treasures in the Attic report given by President Shirley: 95 people registered; three appraisers worked, two staying until after 5:00. Income of \$943. plus \$16.75 donations for food. Sold 4 OLD YAMILLS and 1 \$50 membership. Book Sales: 250 Old Yamhills were delivered and a supply will be taken with invoice to The Book Shop. Repairs to the Church are still pending. Calendars: Dan Linscheid reported they are at Lazerquick, and are to sell for \$7.

New Business: Newberg Graphic (Joe Petcho) and a company from Vancouver are doing a Pictorial History of Yamhill County, using pictures from our files. Retroactive approval was given to Shirley to use the \$500 from the Malcolm Marquis grant (Oregon Arts Commission Foundation) for the printing costs on motion of Barbara Knutson. Eileen Lewis requested a check for \$40 (\$20 to be returned) for the use of Amity Park for the picnic.

Meeting adjourned and Jim Lockett joined the two Shirleys, Eileen Lewis, Ed Roghair, and Barbara Knutson for a tour of Ray Kauer's collection of old farm machinery. Barbara Knutson, Secretary Pro Tem

**August 13, 2002 - 6:00 PM**

Roll Call: The minutes of the July meeting were corrected to read in the fourth paragraph: " The \$500 from the Malcolm Marquis grant through the Oregon Arts Commission Foundation was transferred from the general account to the Nomadic Teacher section as per the grant request." Approved as corrected. Treasurer's Report: Betty presented printed reports. July income \$1,574.78; total expenses \$416.67; net \$1,158.11. Financial/Membership: Lila reported one renewal. We now have 205 members (29 are in arrears and 55 are life members). Eileen Lewis sold \$200 worth of our books. Some of our books are being sold at The Book Shop. We have sold all of our copies of the Willamina book. Her mother will celebrate her 90th birthday on September 7 at the Amity Methodist Church from 1:00 to 3:00. Old Business: The Pictorial Project is completed. Church: Painting - scrape, prime, and paint - \$4,000 from our funds and \$4,000 from the grant. Electrical: a grant will be applied for this. Insulation - another grant. Visqueen: Volunteer and donation. Bats: (they are back) area must be cleaned and construction wire put up. They are also in the Log Building again. Harvest Festival: Oct. 12: So far - Mules; Advertising needed; Glen Watts - cream separator; exhibit our quilts (must use white gloves); Crafters and perhaps the Arts Alliance.

New Business: Fund Raiser Suggestions: Treasure's in the Attic in 2004 or 2005. Century Farm's Tour - Check out Morris Farm, Yamhill, Bob Laughlin Farm, and we have a notebook listing farms. Barns of Yamhill County. Share Dav: (September 11) Rock Garden. Garden work needs to be done. Plumbing repair: in Log Building - \$65. Room dividers: have been donated. Discussion of best uses for them. Steam boat on the north bank of the North Yamhill. Donation: A foot operated ironer. Needed: an electric typewriter or a good manual one. Shirley M moved, seconded by Marjorie, to look at setting up the computer for email, based on costs and funding. Motion passed. Shirley McDaniel

by Jim Lockett

Three families of "Hembrees" made the trek across the plains with the 1843 Great Emigrant Wagon Train. They were the Joel J. Hembrees, the Absalom J. Hembrees and their Uncle Andrew T. Hembree and his family. Joel Jordan Hembree and some of his family's experiences as emigrants and pioneers provide the subject for this chapter.

Joel J. Hembree was born in South Carolina on Dec. 7, 1804. At age 21, he married Sarah (Sally) in McMinnville, Tennessee, where they had seven sons-Albert, Isham, James Thomas, John, Lafayette, Waman Clark and Joel Jasper.

As seemed usual for the people in those frontier days, the Joel Hembrees, along with others, moved west to Missouri in 1837. Here they started a new farm and had their eighth son, Huston. For the next six years, this was home. However, times were bad and the land was not as good as they had hoped. About this time, the Linn Bill, sponsored by Missouri Senator, Lewis R. Linn, came before the U.S. Senate and passed. This bill would give 640 acres of Pacific Northwest land to each male over eighteen, plus 160 acres to his wife and to each child. What a great time to have a large family! They would receive 2080 acres of free land! However, this bill failed in the House but a comparable law soon passed with somewhat less generous land allotments. The Hembrees, along with many other restless frontiersmen, had "Oregon Fever." All the talk was about "free" land and the "Eden" they would find there. Soon, family and friends were preparing to move West!

Besides Joel J. and his family of ten, the Oregon bound "Hembree" clan included Absalom's and Andrew's families and, interestingly enough, the Newys and the McGareys-friends from their old home town of McMinnville, Tennessee. The Newby group included William and Sarah, Sarah's mother and father (Martha Thomasson and G. W. McGarey), her brother (Garrett W. McGarey) and her sister (Elizabeth McGarey). Friends and family provided support and gave strength and comfort during the next few years.

On May 22, 1843, the first migration got under way. Peter Burnett was elected captain of the train. (He was to become the first governor of California.) He supervised the development of regulations that hopefully, would provide good discipline on the way West. Mountain man, John Gantt, was elected guide, and bachelor, James Nesmith (later to be a U. S. Senator from Oregon), was elected orderly sergeant. Nesmith said there were "254 men and 111 wagons ready for duty!" (It is interesting to note that Waman Hembree, 14-year-old son of Joel and Sarah, became the youngest driver to take oxen and a wagon over the complete Oregon Trail. This youth was credited by his family for doing a "man's job" as well as any man. Certainly, this experience was valuable in helping Waman become a successful business man and contributor to the livability in McMinnville, Oregon.)

It isn't too surprising, considering the independent nature of the emigrants, that extreme discord developed within three weeks on the trail. Burnett resigned and the train broke into two groups-the "Martin Train" was the "Light Column" without cattle, and the "Applegate Train" became the legendary "Cow Column." Our friends, the Hembree and Newby clans, went with Jesse Applegate.

By the middle of July, 1843, this first great migration rolled into Fort Laramie. What a sight! Both trains stopped there for a time to rest and trade. All around the fort were circles of wagons with stock spreading out from them. Large tepee villages dotted the low surrounding hills. Indians and traders intermingled with the emigrants amid the corrals of white-topped wagons. It was a wondrous sight to behold! One Indian Chief lamented, as he pointed to the east, "Are there still any whites remaining there?"

As the wagons proceeded on over "very bad roads" through the red soil of Wyoming, Joel Justin Hembree, age 6, fell from the tongue of the wagon. The iron rimmed wheels ran over his body, injuring him severely. He survived until two o'clock that afternoon. This was the first death on the train and everyone was shocked. Here by the trail, little Joel Justin Hembree was laid to rest. Friends comforted the family, especially the mother, Sarah, who was in her ninth month of pregnancy. Several offered prayers -including missionary, Marcus Whitman. William Newby fixed a headstone with "J. Hembree 1843" on it. (In typical Newby printing, the "4" was carved backwards.) A dresser drawer was placed over the upper body with short branches of trees covering the lower part. Earth and rocks were placed over the grave, with the headstone Newby carved, placed on top.

There is an interesting sequel to this burial. The grave seemingly disappeared as no one seemed to know where it was located. In 1961-118 years later-the landowner, Mr. Edwards, decided to make a pond to retain water for his cattle. As he was cleaning out an area, the "J Hembree" headstone was exposed. Mr. Edwards was sure he had unearthed an emigrant grave so asked Oregon Trail historians to inspect the grave and move it to higher ground. It was Joel's grave and is now in a safe, secure location, protected by a fence on private property. This was accomplished through the efforts of the OREGON AND CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION. (See Overland Journal, Spring 1985 for complete story and pictures.)

An even more interesting sequel of interest to Yamhill County residents, concerns Roma Sitton. Knowing she was part of the Hembree family, we arranged to spend one morning as her guest at the Sitton family "Century Farm." She told us many interesting stories and enthusiastically shared family pictures with the two of us. Roma was able to tell us about Joel's death and that his mother gave birth to a little girl a week after losing Joel. The Hembree wagon, jolting along the trail, pulled out of line as Sarah went into labor. Dr. Whitman stopped by to help as he knew of the coming birth. He was worried about Sarah and her recent bereavement. A healthy girl was welcomed into this family of boys. She was named "Nancy Jane." Wonder of wonders, this baby girl was Roma Sitton's grandmother!! How much closer can the Great Emigration of 1843 come to us than that.

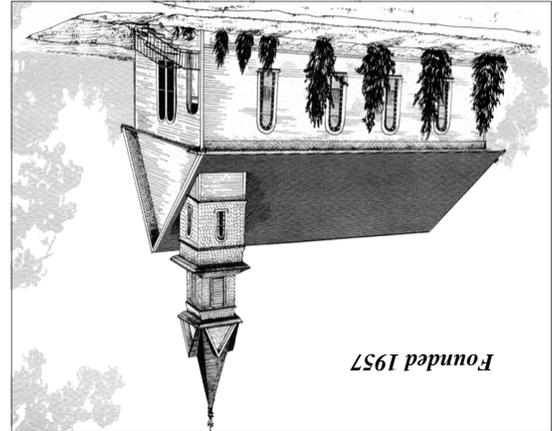
The Hembrees, making the rest of the trip with no more than the expected problems, settled in Yamhill County, Oregon. The Joel J. Hembree donation land claim is generally section thirty-five halfway between St. Joe and Carlton. Andrew Hembree's claim was in section thirty-four and Absalom Hembree had part of twenty-three and twenty-four.

Joel and Sarah Hembree developed a fine farm, had three more children, and enjoyed seeing them grow to fine adults. Sarah, who represents the true meaning of the phrase "pioneer stock," passed away in 1855 and Joel in 1868.

One of the interesting discoveries we're making while researching the Oregon Trail, concerns the large number of emigrants from the first wagon trains that settled in or near McMinnville, Oregon. Thirty settled on the land and another twenty-nine showed up on the 1850 census. This count does not include women and children-just men age 16 or older. We have about fifty-four names listed as heads of families. Some of these are: David Matheny, William Garrison, Miles Carey, John Pennington, Madison Malone, Ephrian Ford, Thomas Owen and John Cox.



Dated Material - Address Correction Requested



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

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

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES**

**Effective May 31, 2002**

- Individual \$15
- Family \$25
- Friend \$50+
- Supporter \$100+
- Community Builder \$250+
- Community Benefactor \$500+

Please make checks payable to the Yamhill County Historical Society. Annual membership gifts are tax deductible.

Members receive the Westside newsletter and access to our research library free of charge. We are an all volunteer organization, and are constantly on the lookout for new helpers. If you can assist us in any way, financially or with your time or talents, it will be greatly appreciated. If you are not sure if you have paid your membership dues, please contact Lila Jackson at 472-8510. Alternatively, check your mailing label, which should show this information also.

**YAMHILL COUNTY  
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

*Meeting Notice*

**Board of Directors - Sept. 10, 5:00 pm**  
**Monthly Meeting & Potluck—Sept. 10, 6:30**  
**Both at Trinity Lutheran Church, 311 SE**  
**Schley St., Sheridan**

Our September Program will feature Darrell Jones, retired Sheridan Postman, on early Postal Memorabilia. Please join us for dinner; bring potluck fare and your own eating utensils.

*We Hope to See you There!*