

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

December 2000

The Continuing Saga of Pumpkinseed Smith

Due to an unfortunate chain of events, the scheduled program speakers for our November meeting were unable to attend. George Williams, having heard of this possibility, was more than eager to share some more of his research on Pumpkinseed Smith and his homestead. Edward J. Smith was born in May, 1876 and died in December, 1935, having served in the Spanish American War and the Navy. Elizabeth Ward Mendenhall of Willamina nominated the 80-to-85 year old trees to our Heritage Tree Program. No one knows how Mr. Smith got the nickname "Pumpkinseed", but it was not unusual for pioneering homesteading bachelors to be given unique names in rural Yamhill County. Maxine Williams can recall visiting Mr. Smith with her father in 1928. Thank you, George for being willing and able to fill in with this program with very little notice!

From the President

Greetings everyone. Last month I spent some time reading and thinking about the wonderful piano that we have at the museum. It was purchased by a prominent businessman from Lafayette for his daughter, Eva Burbank. The piano was manufactured in Washington, New Jersey, brought around Cape Horn and delivered to their home in Lafayette by ox team. Eva's piano teacher stated that she was "the most talented young pianist in the state." Eva had many attributes of a princess, her parents were wealthy and they lived in a castle of a home in Lafayette, an imposing multi-story white house approached by a long lane. Eva was an only child. On August 2, 1880, the 19 year old drowned in the Pacific Ocean on an outing with friends. Her parents never recovered from their grief and never allowed anyone to play their daughter's piano after her death. Eva's body was never found. A marker over an empty grave in the Lafayette Masonic cemetery commemorates the memory of the Lafayette "princess".

Her parents are buried nearby. "Lost in the deep, deep sea", a song composed in her honor was published in 1881. My thoughts were to have the piano tuned and played at our next harvest festival. It just seemed a shame for the piano not to be enjoyed. I could envision the song being played by a McMinnville artist in honor of Eva. There were two problems with this idea: the age of the piano requires special instruments for tuning plus the fact there is a broken bridge and the dampers are in bad condition and would need much time consuming repair. Thus the cost could be quite a lot. The other reason was some of the members recall a promise being made to the donor that the piano would not be played. I still feel it would be wonderful to be able to restore this piano and have a pianist play the song dedicated to Eva, but alas, we will respect the request and the Eva's piano will remain silent. On a happier thought: May you have the best of Holidays and a Happy New Year. Sincerely, Shirley.

Board Meeting Highlights—November 14, 2000

Treasurer's Report: Betty presented a report to the Board. October income was \$298.25; expenses \$1,315.43, which included \$127.47 admin., \$74.25 building, \$105.16 newsletter, and a professional accounting fee of \$375.00. Membership/Financial: Lila reported for the last two months 13 renewals, 2 life members, and the loss of 2 members, Helen Webb and Frank Morgan. Annita Linscheid, requesting in Dan's absence, asked Board approval to send a reminder newsletter to the summertime non-renewals, reminding them of the expiration of dues. Corresponding Secretary: Marjorie sent four family information requests, a sympathy card to Frank Morgan's family and a get-well card to Dorothy Miller. Volunteer Chair: Maxine will have a large calendar at the December meeting for volunteers to sign up on. A check list will be put up on the wall showing things to do every month. Old Business: Wiring is almost complete at the barn. The bid was \$2,795, of which \$2190 has been paid, with the balance due upon completion. Harvest Festival Wrap-up: Thank you notes were sent to 9 crafters and 3 others. Jack Boersma will bring an old sewing machine for use at next year's festival. Investments: the \$14,000 for last year's roof replacement came from the Franklin Fund. A CD will come due in June to replace these funds. Francis Dummer will serve on a financial committee with Dan, Betty, and Shirley Venhaus to study the best use of our funds. Audio/Visual: Income of \$1,100 for this project - we have spent \$149.09 for the TV/VCR. Additionally, a digital camera has been purchased for \$700 and a video camera is on loan from Lila. Dan will run these cameras at meetings. Pictures of members' anniversaries and birthdays will be taken each month and put in an Anniversary and Birthday Book. Maintenance of Log Building: Materials have cost \$198.90. Morgan Maghee is donating his labor on this. Election: Ken will present the slate and ask for nominations from the floor. A vote will be held at the General Meeting. Installation will be at the end of the December meeting. New Business: Cleaning gutters and cutting vines will cost \$400. Moss treatment is also needed. Book binding: Three years worth of newsletter were bound for \$24. It was moved and approved to not open the Museum on holidays if they occur during our regular Museum hours. Piano Project: The donor of the piano asked that the piano not be played out of memory/honor of Eva Burbank, who drowned in 1880. Front doors: member Betty White will pay for the replacement of the doors (about \$1425). Silent Auction of 1959 copy of newspaper will be held at this meeting. Plans will begin on improvements to the museum by checking with the city of Lafayette. Funding programs to be dedicated for these improvements will be needed. Marjorie moved and Shirley M. seconded this plan of action. Motion passed. Publication: All copies of Old Yamhill are gone. Shirley Venhaus will check into having some more printed. Respectfully submitted, Shirley McDaniel, Co-Secretary.

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 - 2000

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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

**December General Meeting
and Potluck Dinner**

Our meeting this month will be held on Tuesday, December 12th at 6:30 p.m. in the Seventh Day Adventist Church in McMinnville, 1500 Old Sheridan Road. This is our annual "show and tell" meeting with a Christmas theme, so please bring something special from your past and share your memories with the attendees. Please remember to bring your favorite dish and tableware. Guests always welcome!

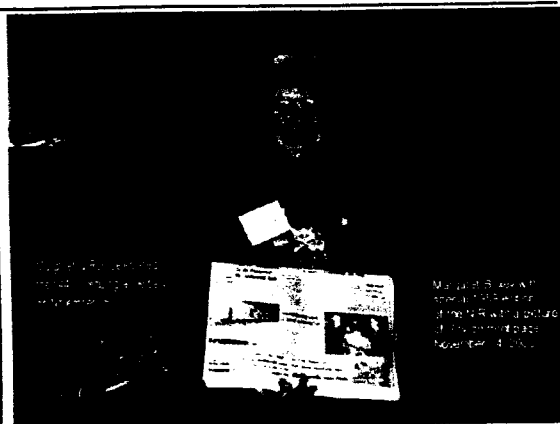
Digital Camera Purchased

At last months Board meeting, Dan Linscheid was authorized to purchase a digital camera for use on Society photos. A 3.1 megapixel Canon camera has been purchased, capable of holding over 100 photos at resolution of 1600x1200 pixels. A USB cable allows transfer of the images to a computer, where they can be enhanced as needed and saved or printed. Several old surplus books were photographed and placed on the cyber-auction block at eBay recently. Attendees having anniversaries or birthdays who attend our monthly meetings will also have their photo taken, and it will be printed and placed in a special book for display. The camera is available for any YCHS use and will be stored in the Log Building Museum.

**Church Museum Improvements
under evaluation**

After Ben Friemark met with Lila Jackson and Dan Linscheid last month to discuss the replacement of the front doors for the Church, he was shown the rear addition to the building, which has been the subject of some discussion lately by the Building Committee. Upon review of the structural deficiencies, he remarked "you really won't need to give much more thought to the demolition of this addition... it will very shortly fall down all by itself". This has prompted increased interest in evaluating potential improvements, money always being of primary concern. The city of Lafayette will soon be contacted to determine if the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or city building requirements and regulations will allow further planning. Ben suggested construction of a two-story extension of the existing structure and roofline, to extend to the building set-back line. He roughly calculated a minimum cost of \$55,000 for any such improvement, but cautioned that it could go much higher than that. Dan has taken measurements and will prepare draft plans for evaluation at the December meeting by the Board, based in part on the input received from the city.

Web sites: Our official website is located at <http://www.onlinemac.com/users/dlin>. This site contains links for genealogists to other sites as well as census, cemetery records, Donation Land Claim and Biographical data on many of our pioneering families. Our historical photo album is located at <http://www.co.yamhill.or.us>. Contact Dan Linscheid at dlin@onlinemac.com with comments or requests.



Bi-Centennial Edition Newspaper Sold

At our November meeting, bidding was fast and furious for the 1959 News-Register special edition issue, shown being held above by Margaret Brixey. Kathy Krieger of Gaston was the high bidder at \$15. The money received from this will go toward our Audio/Visual fund. Congratulations Kathy!
On a side note, Margaret and Roy Brixey celebrated their 44th anniversary on November 25th. The edition Margaret is holding contained a photograph of Roy on the front page. Also celebrating this month was Barbara Mitchell (a birthday).



Can any of you recognize the mystery ladies indicated above? Here's a clue... this photo was taken about 1927, in front of the Yamhill Christian Church. Their names are give at the top of page 4. The full photo was donated to the Society during our Harvest Festival and is on display in the Church Museum.

Note: the four characters in brackets to the right of your name on the address label indicate the year (1st 2 digits) and month (final 2 digits) our records show you last paid your membership dues. If those numbers show it's been more than a year, this may be your last issue of the newsletter. A 90 day grace period has been approved by the Board: thereafter, sorry, but we cannot continue to send out newsletters. For those having date codes of [9908] or earlier on the label, this is a reminder to you.... and thanks for understanding.

One of the most touching Christmas stories comes from "The Empire Builders" by Robert Ormond Case. While not a Yamhill County story it represents many of the conditions and hardships endured by the early emigrants. This story appeared in "The Ladies Home Journal" of Dec. 1948. While details are meager, Robert Case's story is considered an accurate recreation of "A Christmas with the Sager Children."

These seven children, the oldest being 14 and the youngest a babe in arms, were orphaned on the Oregon Trail in 1844. Cathy, the third child, was 11 years old. Being the oldest girl, she assumed the role of the mother. When the wagon train reached the Umatilla River, Captain Shaw took the Sager children over to the Whitman Mission and left them in Marcus and Narcissa's care. The Whitmans fell in love with these children and decided to adopt them.

Elizabeth Sager reported that "Dr. Whitman was a very genial, kindly man. He was fond of romping with us children, and we did not feel at all in awe of him as we did of Mrs. Whitman. She did all the disciplining in the family.

On Christmas eve of 1845 the Sager children were lonesome for their folks and wanted to spend some time alone. They asked permission to sit up by the fire for a while to visit. The Whitmans had a big day planned for Christmas, including a sermon from the good Doctor, a large dinner and the baptism of some Indian children, so they were told to go on to bed.

Cathy was lying there awake, her leg still painful from the broken bone she suffered on the trail, listening to the wind blow through the trees. Suddenly, she heard footsteps. It was Johnny, asking her if she was awake. Soon, all seven children were huddled around the dying coals in the fireplace. Robert Case believes the conversation may have gone something like this: "Well," Johnny said, clearing his throat, "we're all here. Just a mess of orphans, without any home. Now what?" And, as far as they knew, no one had given them the least amount of thought on that Christmas eve. It was a lonely time for the Sager children. But Cathy wanted them to be thankful for what they did have.

"Sh-h," Cathy said. "We mustn't let the Whitmans hear us. Don't feel badly, Johnny. We're all together. They take care of us. They give us food. They give us a place to sleep.

"Wait, Johnny." Francis said in a low voice. "We're going to do some pretending. Aren't we, Cathy?" (Francis was the second oldest and a boy).

Cathy asked them all to just stop for a few minutes and think about their Mother. What were her last words to them before she died at Fort Laramie? "You're going to be hungry sometimes, my dears. You'll be thirsty and cold....

But don't be lonely, will you? I'll be near by, wherever you are. Remember that, won't you, Cathy?"

"Somebody will look out for you. They'll learn to love you. You're good boys and girls. Cathy will have to be the little mother for a while. She's so little yet - and crippled - to do it alone. You'll help, won't you, Francis?"

"Cathy...they're liable to be pretty lonely on Christmas Eve. It'll be the first time we are not all together. But I'll be there with you. I'll be near by. Remember that, Cathy...wherever you are.

Cozy around the fire, the boys needed reassurance from Cathy that, yes, even though their Mother couldn't answer, she was close by. The seven began to feel her presence. They even thought they saw the seven stockings hung by the fire, just like it had been back home. They were beginning to feel like a family for the first time.

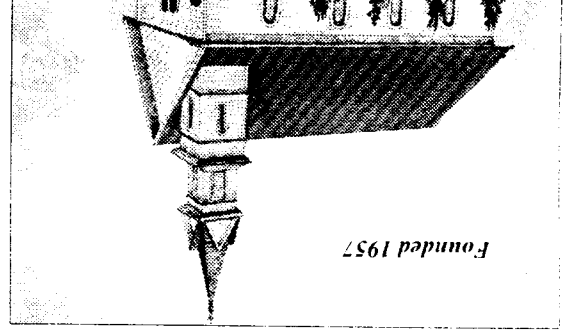
Dr. Whitman heard the children and woke Narcissa to tell her what was going on and that he wanted to be a part of it. He had brought surprises back from Walla Walla that he planned to give them the next day. She had some apples and brown sugar taffy, so they got busy, found some stockings, filled them and took them down to hang on the fireplace. They knew the children were watching but they pretended not to see them. They talked about the gifts and how much they cared for the children, naming each one and citing an example of their worth. The children couldn't believe what they were seeing and hearing. They felt warmer than ever.

After the Whitmans retired back to bed, Cathy kept on rocking the baby. She asked Johnny if those were real stockings. Johnny said, "yes," and told Cathy that she was a regular "magician." Cathy said, "Isn't there something you want to tell mother, now?"

"That's right," Johnny said. He was quiet for a minute, then he cleared his throat and said, "We're getting along all right, Mom. Don't you worry about us. We're doing fine." Then he said in a lower voice, "Merry Christmas, Mom...wherever you are."

The "Sager Christmas Story" takes place at Waiilatpu near present Walla Walla, Washington. This was the location of the Whitman Mission run by Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. While the Whitmans provided a home for the orphans there were still hard times ahead.

During the Whitman Massacre the two older boys, John, 16 years old and Francis, 15 years old, were killed. Louisa was 6 years old and died during the Whitman captivity, and the baby, Henrietta, age 3, was murdered in California in 1870 at the age of 26. Catherine died in 1919 at the age of 84. Elizabeth in 1925 at the age of 88 and Matilda in 1925 at the age of 86.



Founded 1957

2000

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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

December 2000 Calendar of Events

Tuesday, December 12, 5:00 PM

Board of Directors - Seventh Day Adventist Church, McMinnville

Tuesday December 12, 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)

Elma Shuck on the left, Twila Byrnes on the right.... Two tireless volunteers within our Society.