

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

February 1999

A SAMPLING OF TREASURES FROM ROMA'S ATTIC

Readers may remember that in an earlier issue we reported the Society had received the donation of Roma Sitton's private collection of artifacts and that four energetic members were hard at work sorting and cataloging the many items. With their task now well under way, they took the opportunity of our January 12th potluck and meeting to share some of their findings.

Lois Brooks opened the program by introducing and extending our thanks to Roma's daughter, Nada Dyer, who was present. She also recognized Scott and Mark Fery for their able assistance in moving the many boxes containing the collection to our museum and praised her coworkers for their tolerance of chilly working conditions in the old church kitchen space.

Probably Roma's most prized possession, a wagon jack that was carried to Oregon by her ancestors in 1843, was the first item Lois presented. Following this was a selection of old tin containers and lunch boxes.

Next, Shirley Kuykendall involved the audience in a showing of picture post cards accumulated by Roma during her vacation trips to the Southwest. Several other items were displayed including an 1896 framed portrait of Roma and a Jordan "Anti Profanity" straight razor.

Twila Byrnes then showed a copper hot water bottle manufactured by a McMinnville tinsmith in the early 1900s and read from a letter verifying its origin. Then came display of a large washday products collection. All in original wrapping were early examples of Fels Naptha and Bon Ami plus such less familiar brands as Wolf Soap, H & H Cleaner, Big Boy, Goblin Soap, Grampa's Wonder Pine Tar Soap and several more. Bluing balls and miniature irons rounded out the collection.

The final presentation was by Maxine Williams who passed



B. White photo
Left to right: Shirley Kuykendall, Lois Brooks, Twila Byrnes and Maxine Williams display a few of the many interesting artifacts they discovered while cataloging Roma's collection.

around several items of unknown purpose in hopes someone might identify them. Lamp chimney cleaner, clothing beater, can opener and bottle washer were some of the suggestions advanced from the audience for a few of the articles.

It was an interesting and entertaining program that was well appreciated by the large number who attended. The four ladies are certainly doing a marvelous job in organizing these collections, of which they showed only a small part, and we look forward to several future full displays at the museum.

SPREADING THE WORD

by President Shirley Venhaus

It was my pleasure to speak to two non-profit groups in the last 30 days. Public speaking is not my forte but given a subject such as the Yamhill County Historical Society and the museum, I can find a lot to say.

In December I was a guest of the Yamhill County Women for Agriculture. My task was made easier by following the County Farm Bureau agent. This is the group that donated money toward remodeling of the barn.

The second group meeting I attended was the Newberg Rotary Club which was held at George Fox University. This is a large group of people dedicated to the betterment of their community. It was a pleasure to speak to this group. The only person who had ever been to the museum was Terry Girt, who having asked me to attend also wanted a full tour of our facilities so he could say he had been there. He was so impressed with what the Society has done to preserve and display Yamhill County history. The group had a lot of questions and expressed a desire to learn more about

our facilities. Larry Bohnsack from the McMinnville KLYC 1260 radio station was present. It was reported that he had nice things to say about us the next morning on his radio program. I want to thank Terry for lunch and the opportunity to speak with his group.

Twila Byrnes stopped in to discuss her interest in working with the retired teachers group and acquainting them with our museum. Anyone who has the opportunity to discuss our merits with anyone or a group, please do so. The non-profit groups are a huge source we should be using. They usually welcome anyone who wishes to discuss the museum. You are welcome to use the poster that is now on the bulletin board in the log museum. We have brochures and sample newsletters you can make available. The point is: WE HAVE A WONDERFUL FACILITY. SPREAD THE WORD !!!

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

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472-7328

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Car Pool Coordinator

Joanne Waits
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
\$125.00 Life

Mail to:

Financial Secty
2430 North Baker
McMinnville OR
97128

IN MEMORIAM

It is with regret we mark the passing of:

Past President
GENE ERVIN

Long standing life member
GALE VINTON

California member & supporter
WALTER WADE

"DETOURED" GIFT

It had been the intent of Vice President Barbara Knutson to present President Shirley Venhaus with a gift of appreciation at the December general meeting. This plan went awry when the handsomely wrapped box intended for Shirley was misplaced amid the Knutson family Christmas presents. It all became sorted out however when the family opened their gifts; allowing Barbara to make a delayed presentation at the January meeting.

In keeping with Shirley's well-known affection for those little buildings out back, she received a scale model privvy, calendars featuring pictures of distinctive bippies and a book entitled "Nature Calls - the Charm of Outhouses".

WHAT'S NEW AT THE MUSEUM

Last month's appeal for a vacuum cleaner resulted in a donation from Maxine Williams. (*We only asked for one, but shouldn't we have two?*)

A glass display case has been set up in the Miller log museum containing a number of articles from the Roma Sitton collection.

Cost estimates for wiring and heating of the barn building are being sought. This is part of the plan to make that building more suitable for our needs.

Also looking into costs is groundskeeper Ruth Crawford who would like to install irrigation to reduce the many summer hours spent in watering.

New filing cabinets and an "annex" upstairs have given the Stoller Library a new look.

Ideas are being solicited for setting up a permanent period kitchen/laundry display in the old church kitchen area.

At the right, Eileen Lewis welcomes a couple of visitors to the museum. This mule team and their owner were giving rides in the neighborhood during the week before Christmas and decided to stop for a look around. An invitation has been extended to the 'skinner' to bring his mules and rig back for next fall's Harvest Festival.



M. Hansen photo

FEBRUARY MEETING & POTLUCK DINNER

The **Community Christian Church at 2831 NE Newby Street in McMinnville** will be the site of the meeting on **February 9th**. Potluck dinner will begin at **6:30 pm** followed by what promises to be an interesting presentation entitled "A walk on the beach from Astoria to Yachats" offered by Thelma McKibben of Sheridan. Guests are always welcome, so why not bring a friend along with your table service and potluck contribution?

NEW MEMBERS

Roeli Goddik - Dayton

Converted to Life Membership:

Michael Boundy - McMinnville

HANDIWORK EXHIBITS

At the January general meeting Laura Compton gave a brief presentation of the Crafters and Home-making Skills program she will be undertaking at the museum. An essential element in getting underway will be rotating exhibits of YCHS members' handiwork. There are a great many knitters, crocheters, tatters, needlepointers, quilters, ruggers and persons skilled in many other homespun crafts among us, why not put a few examples of your craft on temporary display at the museum for us all to enjoy? For more information contact **Laura Compton**, 6995 Webfoot Road SE, Dayton - (503) 864-4682.

COMMITTEES BEING SET UP

As a result of the study conducted by the Board of Directors over the past several months, two very important committees are being established. First is a **Budget Committee** to develop both long and short term financial priorities. The other is a **By-Laws Committee** organized to update our rules of order and bring them into line with current needs and requirements. Anyone wishing to assist their Society by serving on one of these committees is urged to contact Shirley or one of the other officers.

Remember, A Red Dot on Your Address Label Means Your Dues are Due

THE PEOPLE'S PROTECTIVE TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

by John White

By the mid 1870's transportation on the Willamette River had become a near monopoly with the Oregon Steam Navigation Co. virtually in total control of all freight and passenger traffic. As a result, freight rates from McMinnville to Portland doubled from \$3.00 to \$6.00 per ton between 1874 and 1876. In the minds of farmers and businessmen throughout the Willamette Valley, such charges were exorbitant and intended only to deliver excessive profits to greedy Portland investors. To combat this situation, an occasional smaller locally financed venture was undertaken. One of these was the People's Protective Transportation Co., a river steamer company headquartered at McMinnville.

On July 13th 1876 a group of McMinnville businessmen composed of J.W. Cowis, H. G. Burns, B. F. Hartman, W. T. Newby, J. S. Hibbs and G. W. Burnett filed articles of incorporation for this company with the State of Oregon. The stated scope of operations was "construction of one or more steam boats and the transportation of freight and passengers on the Yamhill, Willamette and Columbia Rivers from any point on either [sic] of the above named rivers to the Pacific Ocean". The amount of capital stock was set at \$25,000 gold coin with shares valued at \$25.00 each. The company's elected officers were Henry Warren, president; J. C. Cooper, secretary; with H. Warren, W. McChristman, W. T. Newby, J. K. Sampson and W. Savage serving as directors.

The first order of business for the new company was to build a steamboat capable of navigating the Yamhill River as far upstream as Dayton on a regular basis and continuing on to Lafayette and McMinnville during the three to four months each year when water depth would permit. This commission was awarded to William Mullins, a master boatbuilder at Canemah. Named the *McMINNVILLE*, the vessel was designed to be 132 feet long with a width of 28 feet and draft of slightly less than 5 feet. There would be two decks and the passenger accommodations were to "rival any presently in existence". The intent was not only to offer reasonable freight rates to the Portland market, but capture much of the increasing passenger traffic over that route as well.

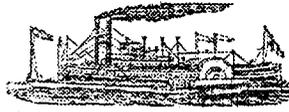
The *McMINNVILLE* was launched during November 1876 with outfitting, trials and documentation completed on February 3rd 1877. Captain J. B. Sanborn, a veteran steamboater from Coeur d'Alene, took command and preparations for a gala maiden voyage up the Willamette and Yamhill Rivers to McMinnville were well underway.

On Sunday February 11th at 5:30 pm Captain Sanborn departed the Portland wharf with a large party of stockholders and various dignitaries on board. The run to the locks at Oregon City took only an hour and a half. Once upstream of the falls at Canemah, the new steamer was docked and the passengers disembarked for dinner and lodgings.

The voyage continued the following morning with many brief Willamette River stops on the way. Easily passing over the mud bar at the mouth of the Yamhill River, the *McMINNVILLE* reached

The People's Protective Transportation Company's

STEAMER



"McMINNVILLE."

Will leave Portland for Dayton, (also Lafayette and McMinnville, when the water will permit), on Mondays and Wednesdays, returning on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

To Lincoln, Salem and Independence on Fridays.

Will carry heavy freight at \$2.00 per ton between Dayton and Portland. Passengers, \$1.00.

People patronize your own boat.

Apply on board the boat, at the PORTLAND wharf, Portland, or to the Company's Office, McMinnville, for freight or information.

J. C. COOPER, Secy.

The advertisement above appeared in the July 10, 1877 Yamhill County Re-

porter the Dayton waterfront at noon whereupon William Newby ceremoniously blew the boat's whistle and proclaimed to the assembled crowd that a great new era of river transportation had now arrived. A similar incident took place when the vessel reached Lafayette and there was much cheering and waving from landings all along the entire route. Upon arrival at McMinnville the new steamer was loudly greeted by almost the entire population many of whom swarmed aboard during the speeches and ceremonies.

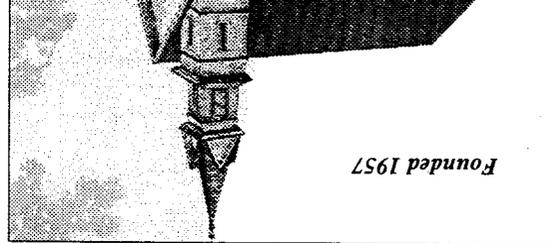
Newspaper accounts of the event noted passenger accommodations as being "neat and handsomely furnished". The ladies compartment was described as "a perfect gem of a parlor with the best of carpeting, and cushions". The staterooms were described as "equally superb" adding "the gents smoking room is small, but lacks nothing in convenience and neatness". Clearly the owners intended to attract the passenger trade with first rate accommodations and a low fare (\$1.00 from McMinnville to Portland).

However, the real challenge lay in providing a much lower freight rate than the well established competition and generate a profit in the process. In what was a very bold move for the times, the PPTCo slashed tariffs to \$2.00 per ton from the previous \$6.00 charged by OSN! At this lower rate, the *McMINNVILLE* seldom carried less than a full capacity of cargo in either direction.

On August 10 1877 the People's Protective Transportation Co. purchased a second steamer, the *S. T. CHURCH*, from another independent operation at Oregon City. A bit larger than the *McMINNVILLE* at 154 feet as well as having nearly a foot greater draft, the *CHURCH* did not participate in the Yamhill trade, but was kept quite busy serving ports on the mid Willamette River. One of the previous owners, James D. Miller, was its first captain who was replaced by L. E. Pratt a few months later.

The established interests were, at least for a while, willing to put up with a little upstart local competition here and there, but with two steamers now operating, the People's Protective Transportation Co. was posing a threat to their control. Some docks and landings on the Willamette soon became "closed" to the Yamhill group. Also cargo contracts were cancelled or rates severely undercut as extreme competitive pressure was applied. By January 1879 the PPTCo., in order to salvage something for stockholders, was forced to give in and sell its operation to the rival Oregon Steam Navigation Co.

The Steamer *S. T. CHURCH* continued in Willamette River service until the late 1880s when it was scrapped as being too slow and expensive to operate. Railroad magnate Henry Villard later took over the Oregon Steam Navigation Co. in his effort to monopolize all transportation in the Pacific Northwest. The once proud PPTCo. flagship *McMINNVILLE* was again sold in 1880 to Villard's Oregon Railway & Navigation Co and on December 3 1881 was set afire and abandoned at Portland.



Founded 1957

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

February 1999 Calendar of Events

Tuesday February 9th, 5:00 PM

Board of Directors - Community Christian Church - McMinnville

Tuesday February 9th, 6:30 PM

General Meeting & Potluck Dinner - Community Christian Church
(2831 NE Newby Street)

Bring your Own Table Service - Guests Always Welcome
(See page 2 for details)