

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

April 1997

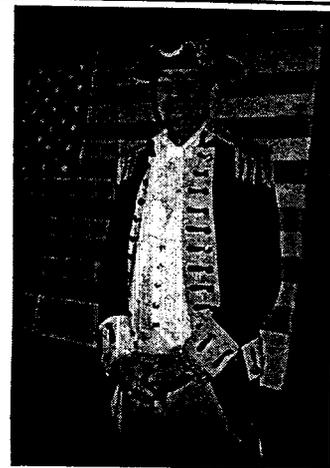
SO PROUDLY SHE WAVES

Those attending the March potluck at Amity were treated to a stimulating program delivered by retired U. S. Navy Commander Stanley Miller of Turner Oregon. He began with a brief history of the National Sojourners Masonic order which is comprised of active and retired U.S. military officers that are dedicated to encouragement and perpetuation of patriotism.

The program itself, *Building Our Flag*, traced the history of our national colors from the authorizing enactment in 1776 by the Continental Congress through addition of the 50th star in 1959. While Cmdr. Miller related the historic and symbolic significance of each element, his wife overlaid that

particular component upon a specially designed display board. Interspersed were little known items of interest such as five point stars being selected because a seamstress employing a certain fold, could produce a perfect example using only a single scissor cut.

With recorded strains of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* playing in the background, Cmdr. Miller concluded his remarks by recounting several proud moments of U. S. history in which the flag played an important role. The audience responded with a standing ovation in appreciation of a truly inspiring presentation.

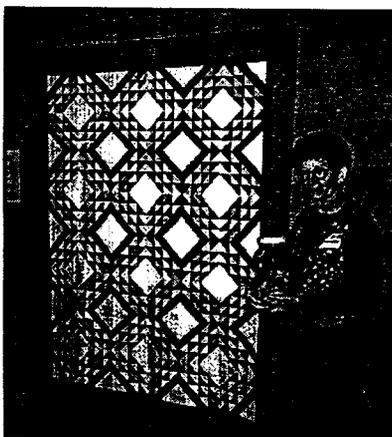


Cmdr. Miller dressed as Colonial Naval Officer.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm sure we all welcomed spring and the bright skies. Everyone seemed happier and I think the drivers on the highway were even nicer. Amazing what "blue skies" can do.

WORK DAY on March 21st was very productive. The usual crew of faithful workers showed up with cleaning supplies and ready to go to work. The COUNTY INMATES arrived and did a wonderful job on the yard. Thanks to the efforts of RUTH CRAWFORD the flower garden, border plants and bushes are taking hold and making such a difference in the



Ruth Crawford displays the handmade quilt to be raffled by YCHS August 23rd. Tickets are \$1.00 each or six for \$5.00.

overall appearance of the museum. The UTILITY ROOM in the Log Museum was emptied so the carpenter, Bill Fox, could begin work on the new kitchen. This includes a wall and door to divide off the furnace and water heater plus cupboards and a sink (with water) along the wall. Thanks to the ROMA SITTON MEMORIAL and a small grant from the Oregon Tourism Commission, we are able to do this major part now. We are in need of a smaller refrigerator, a microwave and a small hot plate of some kind. Cupboards on the opposite wall will be installed when we have more funds. The project is starting immediately, and we look forward to the convenience of not having to get water from the bathroom.

A meeting is scheduled with new member Kathleen Mitchell to begin organizing the ORAL HISTORY program. Please remember to give us the names of people we need to interview. It is very helpful if you are willing to interview your own family.. If you need tapes, recorders, release forms or anything we can help you with, please call.

In the next newsletter you will receive official notice to begin using the new back door to the church. I realize there is no cover at the door when it is raining, but I believe avoiding the back stairs will be a much better arrangement. We will re-key the old door and it will be on instant alarm. I will do my best to see that everyone gets a new key.

The Organizational meeting for both our 1997 summer events was held on March 21st. The FOUNDING DAY CELEBRATION will be held Saturday July 5th from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at the museum. The purpose is to increase community awareness and membership for the Society. The second event is THE HERITAGE RECYCLE (Garage Sale), fund raiser to be held Saturday August 23rd from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. People are already bringing donated items to the museum. We have some exclusions, so call if you have questions or watch for more information in the newsletter. Large items can be delivered to my home address. We need chairpeople and workers. It's time to get involved again. Look what we have done with money from our last fund raiser.

Attractive room dividers have been placed around the RUTH STOLLER RESEARCH LIBRARY. Stop in and see for yourself.

We have missed Delores Robertson at our meetings and work days. She is busy caring for her father-in-law who suffered a bad fall. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.

See you at Willamina. ...Shirley

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 - 1997**President**

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472-6070

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Elaine Rohse
472-6827

MUSEUM HOURS

June 1 to Aug 31:
Wed-Sun 1 to 4 PM

Sept 1 to May 31:
Sat-Sun 1 to 4 PM
or

By Appointment

ANNUAL DUES

\$7.50 per person

Mail to:
Financial Secty
2430 North Baker
McMinnville OR

MUSEUM ASSOCIATION MEETING

The Oregon Museum Association held its spring meeting March 3rd at George Fox University. Attending from YCHS were Shirley Venhaus, Elma Shuck, Delores Robertson, Betty and Jack White, Lois Brooks and Kathleen Mitchell. A choice of seminars was offered; either a writing workshop or a discussion group dealing with exhibit content and controversy. Although aimed at larger facilities having full time staffs, the YCHS group did glean several useful tips and ideas that could be applied at our museum,

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to report the following new members joined us this past month and look forward to greeting them at the April potluck:

Julie Amen - Salem
Holly Gardner - Dayton

SUMMER MUSEUM HOURS

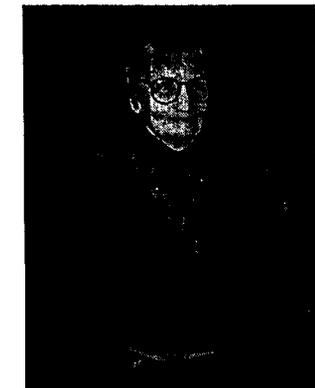
Now that Spring is here, can Summer (and extended hours at the museum) be far behind? Volunteer Coordinator Maxine Williams will soon be circulating a sign up sheet. Don't miss the opportunity.

"HERITAGE RECYCLE" ITEMS

It's not too soon to bring in your donations. We do not want junk. Items must be clean and in serviceable condition. Suggesting a price or value might also be helpful. Clothing other than vintage apparel or jeans and sweatshirts will not be accepted. Donations may be deposited at the museum or larger items left at Shirley Venhaus' home (call first). Also help for pricing will be needed. Call 472-7328.

PRESENTING BARBARA KNUTSON

Since January 1989 Barbara has been serving as Vice President and Program Chairman. We are so fortunate she took on this responsibility and has provided the Society with such a variety of interesting and entertaining speakers for our monthly meetings. She is good at this job because she is a native of Yamhill County and knows so many of the local residents and events that have made history here over the years. Being involved in the Society is also a family affair, Barbara's Mother, Nell Brandt, was a charter member and early vice president. Husband Ken can be seen at our monthly meetings setting up chairs, making coffee, helping with food service and cleaning up afterward. Both put in time at the museum during the summer and are ready to help with almost any activity. What would we do without them? Maxine Williams



Barbara Knutson

APRIL POTLUCK DINNER & GENERAL MEETING

The Rebekah Hall in Willamina will be the site for the potluck at 6:30PM on April 8th. Speaker for the evening will be Carla Burdon who will continue readings from the eloquent Civil War letters written by her husband's great-grandfather Sawtelle. Also, Program Chairperson Barbara Knutson informs the larger room will now be available, so don't hesitate to bring a guest or two. The Rebekah Hall is located on "D" Street one block south of East Main Street in Willamina (on the left just across the railroad tracks).

TWO NEW BOOKS

'*Last Harvest*' by John Schmitz relates the story of Dayton's once extensive Alderman Farms along with a brief biography of food baron Urie Alderman. 29 pages, soft bound, available at Putt's Market in Dayton for \$3.50.

'*Origins of Yamhill County Road Names*' by Dan Linscheid and F. Elise Swan. Reissue of a 1994 work originally published in far too few copies. Contains numerous tidbits of Yamhill County lore. 50 pages, soft bound, available at the YCHS museum for \$3.00

COUNTY FAIR PRIZE

Once again the YCHS will be offering a \$15.00 cash prize for the painting or drawing best depicting Yamhill County history shown at the 1997 county fair. The dates are July 31st through August 2nd. For more information call 434-7524

CENTURY FARM NOMINATIONS

Applications for designation during 1997 are now being taken by the Oregon Historical Society, 1200 SW Park Avenue, Portland OR 97205. To qualify, the farm must have been operated continuously by the same family for at least 100 years. For details call Ron Brentano (503) 306-5215.

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

SOME HOT TIMES IN OLD SHERIDAN

by John White

Over a 46 year span between 1888 and 1934, the business district of Sheridan has been destroyed, or nearly so, by fire on four different occasions. Due to a regional high rate of wooden construction, nearly every community in the Northwest has seen at least one major fire sometime during its early days, but few have suffered as many as Sheridan.

The first incident occurred on January 12th 1888 on the east side of South Bridge Street when fire broke out in a warehouse attached to Charles L. Worthington's store. From there the flames quickly spread to totally engulf all ten structures in the block between First (now Harney) Street and the river. Surviving accounts offer little more detail concerning the event although a newspaper clipping of unknown origin found in the Ruth Stoller files concludes "...It has been feared for some time that all the carousing carried on at the Worthington store would end in a conflagration."

Following rebuilding of the burned out business block the City Council authorized formation of a two brigade volunteer fire department in 1893. A \$10,000 bond issue was passed in 1904 to construct a municipal water system and in 1905 the City purchased two horse-drawn carts along with 800 feet of fire hose. Little did the town realize how severely taxed these resources would soon become.

About 5:45 PM on the evening of July 18th 1913 in a restaurant situated on South Bridge Street about where the Select Market stands today the cook was attempting to refill a kerosene grille while it remained lit and in operation. Not surprisingly fumes quickly ignited sending flames to the ceiling. Almost instantly the kitchen was completely ablaze and within moments the entire building was fully involved. The other structures in the block were of wooden frame construction, situated close together with several built over a broad drainage ditch. This space underneath provided unlimited draft for a raging fire that soon erupted throughout the entire block.

As the volunteer fire department arrived the fire was leaping north across First (Harney) Street. Minutes later it vaulted to the west side of Bridge Street. Fire hose attached to a hydrant at First and Bridge began smoldering in the burning debris, became useless and had to be abandoned. A



South Bridge Street before 1913 fire.

hardware store containing a stock of explosives caught fire causing considerable concern for safety of the firefighters. Every able-bodied man in town, as well as many nearby farmers, fought the spreading blaze valiantly for hours, but it was not until well equipped volunteers from Carlton, McMinnville and Willamina arrived that the tide slowly began to turn. By dawn only small spot fires remained, but every structure on both sides of South Bridge Street from the railroad tracks north to the river lay totally destroyed! In all, 56 buildings had been involved to some extent with losses estimated at a staggering (for the time) sum of \$305,500. Of this amount only about \$88,000 was recovered from insurance.

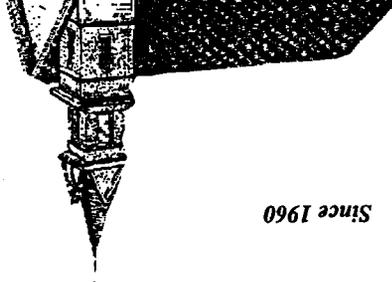
The business district north of the river came in for its share of devastation on June 3rd 1922 when fire broke out in an unoccupied loft on the north side of Main Street near Bridge about 2:00 AM. Fanned by a strong breeze, the flames spread swiftly eastward and sent sparks flying well across the river to endanger buildings just rebuilt after the 1913 fire, as well as those opposite on Main Street. Firefighters from Willamina and McMinnville assisted the local department for nearly three hours to bring the blaze under control. Between Bridge and Hill Streets the north side of Main now lay mostly in ruins. On the east side of Hill, the Catholic Church suffered some damage as well. In addition, the Sheridan-Willamina Telephone Company facility, then on the east side of Bridge Street, had been destroyed causing loss of service for the entire community.

The fourth fire disaster occurred during 1934 destroying the business section on the north bank of the river mainly to the east of Bridge Street. Many of these buildings had been erected during the 1860's and were among the oldest then remaining in Sheridan. Built out over the river these old frame structures created the same fire accelerating under-draft situation that helped level the south side in 1913 and, adding to their combustibility, contained floors that had been soaked in oil to reduce dust.

On each of these four occasions Sheridan has been able to quickly rebuild from the ashes leading some to comment the town's name might well be changed to "Phoenix".



South Bridge Street shortly following 1913 fire.



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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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April 1997 Calendar of Events

Tuesday, 8th, 5:00 PM

Board of Directors - Rebekah Hall - Willamina

Tuesday 8th, 6:30 PM

Potluck Dinner - Rebekah Hall - Willamina

Bring Your Own Table Service Guests Always Welcome

(See page 2 for Program Details)

Friday May 2nd 9:00 AM

Work Day (All Hands) - YCHS Museums - Lafayette

Friday May 2nd, 1:00 PM

Planning & Coordination Meeting - Founding Day & "Heritage Recycle" Projects