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 - 2001

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472-7328

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843-2069

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835-3673

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Ben Frum
472-7953

Librarian
Olive Merry Johnson
472-6070

Newsletter
Dan Linscheid
843-2625

Car Pool Coordinator
Joanne Watts
835-5893

MUSEUM HOURS
June 1 thru August 31
Fri-Sat-Sun 1 to 4 PM
or
By Appointment

603 Market Street
Lafayette Oregon
Phone: 864-2308

ANNUAL DUES
$10.00 Individual
$17.00 Family
$25.00 Life

Mail to:
Financial Secretary
2430 North Baker
McMinnville OR
97128

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YCHS

Board Highlights

May: Treasurer Betty Brown reported the monthly financial activities to the present Board members. Lila Jackson reported 2 new and 6 renewal members. Four donations were received in the name of Mary Vincent. Maxine Williams officially resigned from her position as Volunteer Chairperson, and thanks were extended to her for her efforts. The alarm system in the Church Museum is again operational. Shirley reported receiving a $7,320 grant from the Family Trust Fund, Trust Management Services. The schools will be the beneficiaries of this grant, via a historical education program being formulated. Another grant is being proposed to assist in a new coat of paint for the Church. The Board is evaluating costs to have a couple of signs painted, one for the Church and one for the Barn, both of which are sadly in need of help.

Pest control is becoming a problem and Shirley is looking into bids for services. Memorial donations need careful handling; these should have a special section, showing how much and from whom the monies were received, how the money was spent, etc. Dan will be preparing calendars containing photographs of early times in the county, as well as scheduled events. These will be sold at a slight profit to help build our funds. It was suggested we remove the ivy at the front of the Church. We will not be sponsoring a project at the Yamhill County Fair this year. Discussion was held regarding establishing a fixed research fee for those requiring special endeavors. Many museums now operate in this manner to help defray costs.

Thanks were given to Shirley and Eileen for attending the Oregon Heritage Conference in Bend. These ladies learned much about the business of operating and funding museums. Dan will check into making postcards from some of our old photos.

June: Betty Brown reported to the Board members on the financial activities for the past month. It was suggested that we not pull out from our Putnum (Mutual) funds in anticipation that they rebound. It was moved and approved to roll the $14,000 CD which matures in June into a money market account to keep the society solvent for the next several months. Ben Frum has volunteered to be our Volunteer Chairperson, filling the vacancy created by Maxine's resignation last month. Eileen will assist Ben in this effort. As funds are in short supply, discussion was held to help build up our reserves. Suggestions included an Antique Road Show to be held next summer. Five to ten appraisers would be brought in to determine values of various antiques, and the public and our members would pay a modest fee for this appraisal.

(Minutes cont.) This matter will be discussed further at the July meeting. Another suggestion was to hold a Historical Yard Sale, wherein duplicate items in our collection could be sold off in some manner.

New signs (see May minutes at left) will cost about $250. It was moved and approved to hold off on these signs until we become more solvent later in the month. Our Summer Picnic will be held August 4th at the Amity City Park. It was moved and seconded to authorize Dan to purchase software which will allow the creation of the historical photo-calendar mentioned in last month's minutes. The pest exterminator is scheduled to apply pesticides on June 12th. The State Historical Preservation Grant will come in at $4,650. YCHS will pay half of the painting bill of $9,300, using said grant for the match. The Oregon Heritage Commission Grant of $252.53 will be used for the sign painting needs. Lila suggested approaching Joe Azzarelli for assistance with some grant writing. It was moved and seconded to invite Dan Corrigan to our July meeting to discuss setting up an endowment fund, with no plans to make a decision at that time.

Dan discussed computer options: it will be easier and much more convenient to simply place databases on floppy discs for sale than it would be to set up and maintain a special computer for public use at the museum.

John Terry, historical writer for the Oregonian, recently wrote an article which mentioned Joel Perkins, founder of Lafayette. Dan contacted him with some additional information and John responded that he plans on writing a whole article specifically on Joel. Dan will copy and forward our bio file on Joel to John in the near future.

Standing in front of the new church museum doors are the two people most responsible for the beautiful hardiwork. Betty White paid for the doors and all associated costs, including a new deadbolt. David Liebelt performed the carpentry, and it took him several trips to make final adjustments and get it "just right". Thanks Betty and David!

New Website Address

Our new address for the Yamhill County WebGen and Historical Society is http://www.sites.onlinemac.com. Thanks go to Onlinemac for providing this to our organization at no cost.
On September 26, 1849, the Oregon Legislature enacted a general law providing for the construction of bridges under the purview of County Government. Probate courts were given authority to evaluate which bridges could be built and maintained by the county. If a petition, signed by twenty or more “householders” was submitted for a bridge the court was obliged to give consideration of the matter and issue an order. If a bridge was deemed appropriate, the court appointed a bridge commissioner to oversee the new construction. The law further goes on to state that the bridge commissioner was authorized to “take, or cause to be taken from the adjoining or most convenient lands, such quantity of rock and timber as may be necessary for the building or repairing of such bridge.” The landowners affected by this were to be compensated for damages.

By the early 1850s the territorial legislature authorized the establishment of several toll bridge companies, among which was the Yamhill Bridge Corporation. The stockholders met in August of 1851, with Matthew P. Deady as the secretary. He was later to become renowned as a jurist and member of the Oregon Supreme Court. He proposed adoption of a by-law amendment which would prohibit stockholders from having financial interest in the construction of the structure, in hopes that confidence in the project would grow. The company was able to raise $5,000 by subscription to aide in startup costs. In the following month, an $8,000 contract was let to Messrs. Webber & Wren of Portland for the Yamhill Toll Bridge. The plans called for a double track bridge, each to be ten feet wide. This was the first such bridge in Oregon, although the design was common on the east coast.

The abutments were of hewn timber, connected by long bolts and filled with earth. The work was delayed for various reasons, and by November only the northerly abutment was completed. This structure was forty-seven feet above low water, twenty-four feet wide at the front and thirty-five feet across at the rear. By New Year’s Day, 1852, the south abutment was completed and stringers were set out across supporting falsework. A January freshet washed away the southerly abutment, a huge disappointment to the community and the stockholders. The bridge was not completed until the fall of 1852. The Statesman reported at that time that the bridge was “beyond the reach of floods.”

The completion of the Lafayette bridge was somewhat of a milestone in Oregon history. The cost alone set it apart from earlier territorial bridges, and it was a truss span, meaning that it was self-supporting, very unusual for the time. It would be ten years before any comparable span was constructed in the state. We may never know if this structure was of the covered variety, since details are very sketchy.

The plat of the Town of Lafayette, dated 1849, shows a bridge across the Yamhill near the site of the current crossing. This plat was reconstructed by Ahio S. Watt from memory in 1865, the original having been destroyed by the 1857 Courthouse fire. Was the 1852 structure actually across the river at the southerly end of Bridge Street near the Lafayette Commons? We may never know the answer to this question. As grand as this bridge was, it did not fare long in our temperamental Oregon weather: flooding in the fall of 1857 destroyed it. No photos of this bridge have ever been discovered.

That most of our early bridges were covered is probably not subject to much debate. Constructing a roof over the deck protected the structure from the elements. There has been some debate about the reason for covering bridges in other parts of the nation. The reasons sometimes given for this vary from not allowing a team of horses to see the water below and just off to the side of them as they traverse the bridge to keeping ice and snow off the tracks, since horses might panic on such a slippery surface.

Even though we have only about a dozen photos of covered bridges crossing streams and rivers in our county, we know there were at least several dozen such structures scattered throughout the area. There are still over 120 bridges on the county road system today, about half as many as there were in 1930. Many have been replaced with culverts of various size and composition.
YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Summer 2001 Calendar of Events

Board of Directors - Tuesday, July 10th, 1:00 PM at Log Museum

Annual Picnic—Saturday, August 4th, Noon at the Amity City Park
(Potluck fare, bring your own table service)

Watt’s Threshing Bee—August 12th, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.
(Potluck fare, 2 p.m., bring your own table service.
16600 S.W. Christensen Road, Southwest of Amity.
Call 835-1393, Pam or Cliff Watts for more info)