

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

Summer 2001

Scroggin Family—Sheridan

Our May general meeting program was presented by Lee Lau of Stayton on the Scroggin family, owners of the first bank in Sheridan. This family, of Scottish descent, came to Sheridan in 1865. The father, Pleasant, was known as P.M. Scroggin. He and his wife had nine children, and they purchased the C.B. Graves D.L.C., where the Federal Corrections Facility is located today. The Scroggin School was located on the north side of their property near the cemetery. In 1892, son Steve Scroggin, who worked for Jacob Wortman in a McMinnville bank, started organizing the first Sheridan bank. In these early years, paper being hard to find and bankers having reputations as tight-fisted businessmen, the sole ledger book was "recycled" at the end of each year... all entries erased and ready for a fresh start! This first bank was destroyed in the 1913 fire. The second bank was replaced in the early 1950s. When this third bank was being built, many gold coins were unearthed, having lain hidden in the unexcavated ground since the 1913 fire.

Lee had many tales about her Scroggin relatives, some tragic and some very humorous, including a tale of a holdup at the bank. It seems that Steve's wife Lena took a lover, and some time after the turn of the last century these lovers decided to rob the Sheridan bank. Steve not only disarmed them, he actually chased them down the streets of Sheridan, waving the gun after them. A fascinating program, and we are indebted to Lee for her memories and research.

Cook School Visit

Ed Roghair, Twila Byrnes, and I spent the morning of May 30th guiding two fourth grade classes from Cook School, McMinnville, through our three museum buildings. This was a large group of eager, interested students, fifty-five in all, accompanied by two teachers, one student teacher and at least ten other adults.

We were kept very busy answering questions and trying to keep them positioned so that every student could see the items being pointed out. One small girl amazed us with two very accurate and detailed drawings she made along with the notes she was taking.

This school group had just left to have lunch in the park when two young women rode up on their bikes and asked if they could take a quick tour of the log building. They said they were on a 30 mile ride, so I asked how far they'd already come, and one of the ladies laughed and said "one block". - Lois Brooks

From our President

Hi everyone. Eileen Lewis and I had an opportunity to attend the "Oregon Heritage Conference" May 3rd through the 5th in Bend. I have attended other conferences but this was the first time I saw panels, classes and group discussions concerning problems and solutions for the smaller museum. Topics included "The Future of Historical Organizations in America," "The Native American perspective on Arts, Culture and Heritage," "The Importance of Working With Other Groups," "Developing Life Histories" and how to write grants, leave a legacy and how to establish an endowment program.

We recently received two grants, one for a special school program and the other for matching funds to allow us to paint the church museum. These are exciting times for our Historical Society.

June 1st was the first Friday the Museum was open from 1 to 4 p.m. We desperately need volunteers to assist us in keeping the museum open to the public. There is always something that needs to be done at the museum. If you have an area of expertise or some special interest you would like to work with, let us know. Please set aside one afternoon a month to help out and learn about the workings of our museum. I hope you have a pleasant summer, and look forward to seeing you at our picnic in Amity in August. Sincerely, Shirley Venhaus, President.

Happy 100th Birthday to Bessie Cornie

June 22nd will be the 100 year mark for member Bessie Cornie. She has long been active in our society and is now the subject of a three page article in the "St. Luke's Flock Newsletter" published by the United Methodist Church. This article focuses on her devotion to the Church, family and community. She and her husband Claude moved here in 1935 from back east, settling on Grand Island. She first worked in McMinnville at the Wells Lamont Glove Factory. She and Claude bought a restaurant in Yamhill, and after selling it, they bought the Parvay Restaurant in McMinnville. It had the only ice cream machine in the county, and they prospered until Adams became a one-way street and ruined their business. Bessie worked in various restaurants and motels during the '50s and '60s.

Bessie moved to Alterra Villas two years ago. She still attends Sunday services. When asked the secret to her longevity, she replied "I just live day by day."

We will start a bio file on Bessie in our reference library, with this three page article being the 1st entry, as it contains many tidbits of historical interest. Happy Birthday, Bessie... we wish you the best....

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MUSEUM HOURS

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

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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 Armit 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 handiwork. 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."



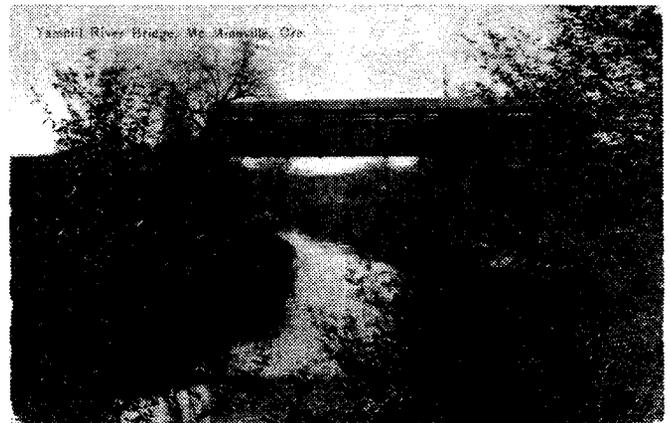
The completion of the Lafayette bridge was somewhat of a milestone in Oregon history. The cost alone set it apart from earlier territorial bridges, and it was a truss span, meaning that it was self-supporting, very unusual for the time. It would be ten years before any comparable span was constructed 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.



These side by side photos are of the same bridge... the one over the S. Yamhill on Dayton Avenue, McMinnville. It was replaced in 1951 by the existing 990-foot concrete and timber span leading to Three Mile Lane.

The photo at the top shows the Newberg Bridge over the Willamette as it neared completion in November of 1913. The contract was administered by the State before the Highway Department was fully formed and operational. This bridge now carries only water pipes, and is deteriorating rapidly.



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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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)