

BYGONE TIMES

A Newsletter of the TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

June, 2000

Sharon Nesbit, Editor, 665-0423

Vintage Evening celebrates Return to Edgefield June 7

On Wednesday, June 7, Troutdale Historical Society celebrates ten good years of McMenamins Edgefield with the first pouring Poor Farm Pinot Gris, a specially labeled, estate bottled wine toasting the happy convergence of beer-brewing brothers and a scrappy little historical society.

In May 1990, Verne Jones returned to Edgefield for the first time in eight years. The former administrator gingerly climbed to the west veranda, which dangled from the wall by a few splintered boards, eyed the hole in the floor above and said, "This place is going to hell in a hand basket."

Jones was wrong. By that time, Edgefield had begun a turnaround, though it was not evident on the surface. Mike and Brian McMenamin had purchased the rotting county poor farm a few months earlier. Patrick McNurney was tearing away the blackberry vines and hoping that the building would still stand. And the black rabbit, which would be Edgefield's signature bunny, popped into a hole in the old de-lousing building.

When Jones began work at Edgefield it was the county poor farm, home for the ailing, infirm and disabled and forgotten. On his last day in 1982, with the place closed and the last frail lady carried gently away, Jones walked to the top floor and rang the farm bell a final time. A few days later, someone stole the bell. Edgefield began its descent in that proverbial basket.



By the time the Troutdale Historical Society trudged down to the county court house to declare Edgefield a historical treasure, the place was a mess, its interior vandalized, the pipes frozen, paint peeling. County commissioners laughed. Tear it down, everyone said. It's rubble. But we latched on to the belief that the buildings were important. For four and one-half years, we skirmished -- retreating, attacking, often winning a round by dumb luck. Two separate demolition permits were issued for Edgefield. But our society put up more road blocks.

Those efforts bought time for Mike McMenamin to discover Edgefield. When he stood in front of the buildings on Halsey Street for the first time, he said it was the biggest surprise of his life. McMenamins reversed Edgefield's downward spiral, a piece at a time. First, a winery, then a brewery, then the Power Station.

Our fund raising event from 6 to 9:30 p.m. includes feasting and an auction in Blackberry Hall, for \$50 a person. To join the party, telephone 661-2164. Or, if you can't attend, buy some Poor Farm Pinot Gris knowing that the Troutdale Historical Society gets a donation for each bottle. Historical societies can always use a few bucks to finance the next scrap.



Ice Cream Social June 3 & 4 will dedicate shop and time line

Join us 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the first weekend of June for our 32nd annual ice cream social. Music in the park both afternoons from 1 to 4. Strawberries and ice cream. Banana splits. 17 craft vendors. Events at the Harlow House. A plant sale.

In addition, we dedicate our new time line and the Dick Jones workshop in the barn at noon on Sunday June 4 with refreshments and remembrance. Please attend to remember the work of Dick Jones in building our barn and our efforts to continue what he started.

CALENDAR/ June

Sat. and Sun., June 3 & 4, 11 a.m.- 5 p.m.

Annual Ice Cream Social

Glenn Otto Community Park, Harlow House and Barn, Rail Depot Museum and End of the Line Museum store.

Sun., June 4, noon

Time line & Work shop dedication

Barn museum

Wed, June 7, 6 to 9:30 p.m.

A Vintage Evening at the Poor Farm

Dinner, auction and wine for the 10th anniversary of McMenamin Edgefield.

Board of Directors

Wednesday, May 31, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, July 5, 7 p.m.

In the barn. All members welcome

Beginning Sat., June 3, Summer Hours:

Harlow House

Wed-Sat., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sun., 1-4 p.m.

Rail depot & museum store

Tues-Sat., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sun., 1-4 p.m.

Good News Dept.

Thanks to member **Frieda Ryland**, who works for PGE, we have a \$500 grant for the purposes of restoring and framing Louis Harlow's 1898 University of Oregon Law School diploma. Curator **Mary Bryson** and her volunteers agreed that framing and conservation would be a goal for the 100th birthday of the Harlow House. PGE permits its employees to apply for grants on behalf of organizations where they work as volunteers.

Curator **Mary Bryson** and a group that has come to be known as the **Tuesday Ladies** have inventoried, accounted for and described the location of every artifact on the top floor of the Harlow House. The Tuesday ladies include **Jean Holman, Mona Mitchoff and Barbara Welsh**.

Steve Saari, a railroad buff who made the contacts that helped us get our caboose is reupholstering the seats in the caboose. We need a stable stair entry and a few other items before we can open it to the public.

Val Lantz is seeking a grant that we hope will provide sufficient money to pour the sidewalks and handicapped access pads on the grounds around the Harlow House and the barn.

Our **Third Annual Tea & Tour**, chaired by **Jean Hybskmann**, struck a gorgeous window of beautiful weather at the Columbia Gorge home of **Ed and Phyllis Thiemann**. It was a beautiful event with tables set by **Mary Bryson, Jean Holman, Dorothy Sturges, Ann Klinger, Frieda Ryland, Melissa Switzer, Dawn Hudson, Tannis Richard and Jean Hybskmann**. **Carole Klinger** was taken ill the week before and could not preside at her table but attended to see the show.

Also thanks to **Beverly Klock** who discovered that reading tea leaves began in Scotland and arrived brogue and all. To **Rebecca Beachell** for her art work on the invitations, as well as Historian **Sharon Nesbit** and in the wings, **Christina Balsiger, Judy Dow, Penny VanBeek, Mona Mitchoff, Tori Cox, Kay Struckman, Ed Thiemann and Jerry Hybskmann**.

And, of course to our guests, who attend, enjoy and make us glad.

Corbett Fire Dept. hosts breakfast

Fire District #14 at Corbett hosts its old-fashioned firehouse breakfast in conjunction with antique car clubs touring the historic highway on June 10 from 10 a.m. to noon.

At about 9:30 a.m., antique fire engines will meet old cars at Lewis and Clark Park escorting them to the fire station at 36930 Historic Columbia River Highway in Corbett.

The department plans rides in fire equipment, lots of stuff for kids and a tour of Pat Brother's historic home at Bridal Veil. The event provides money for the Ferd Riehl scholarship given to a graduating high school senior who wants to study fire science. Tickets cost \$4 for adults, \$2.50 for children 10 and younger.

Charter member Edna Alexander

Edna Alexander, a charter member of the Troutdale Historical Society since our beginnings 32 years ago, died April 24 at the age of 85.

She and her family, including sisters Nancy Cox and Sue Davis, came to the Troutdale area from Oklahoma. At a recent Troutdale meeting on this second wave of pioneers, Nancy Cox remembered the awe the family had for the fruit that grew in Oregon and that their mother, Lucretia Seyler, even tried to can strawberries.

Edna married Lloyd Alexander in 1937. She worked as a clerk at Troutdale's Red and White Store, wrote articles for the Outlook, ran the kitchen at Troutdale Grade School and then JDH, and finally at the new Reynolds High, retiring in 1980. Edna never failed to make a bounty of delicious pies for our Harlow House pie sales.

She is survived by her sisters and daughter, Nedra Palmquist of Gresham and Faye Jackson of Boring, 11 grandchildren and 20-great-grandchildren. Her family suggest memorials to the Troutdale Historical Society.

Please post your ice cream social poster in a prominent spot.

Treasurer's report

Pat Smith & Carnetta Boyd	
Operating Fund	\$ 10,981.93
Barn account	4,458.92
Director's Fund	5,000.00
Capital Imp. Fund	7,346.40
Endowment Fund	42,331.10

Summerfest parade, picnic on July 15

Troutdale Historical Society always participates in the city's Summerfest parade and picnic, this year on July 15.

If you have thoughts or ideas on a float for the parade or some theme to follow, get in touch, 661-2164.

Barnstorm committee works on Lewis & Clark

Members of the Barnstorm Committee -- the group that works on exhibits in our barn museum -- have decided to proceed with the first step in creating a Lewis and Clark exhibit for the forthcoming Bicentennial of the expedition.

The committee is excited about the idea of natural history exhibit exploring the plants and animals the explorer found here, especially on their return journey. The party spent many days in the area and wrote extensively about what they hunted and observed.

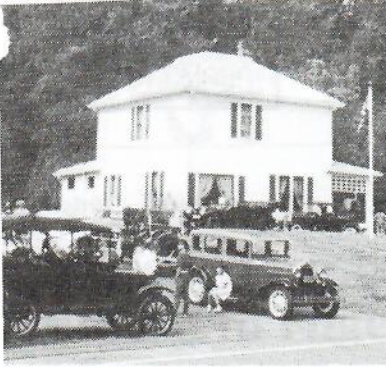
A new member of the group is board member Terry Smoke. Other barnstorm committee members are Bob Strebin, Len Otto, David Ripma, Mike Dubesa and Sharon Nesbit. If you are a Lewis and Clark buff and want to join the group, telephone 661-2164.

For a good time, call Adrienne, 663-0895

Adrienne Clausen is filling holes in our museum host schedule for the summer months. The pleasure of meeting visitors and telling our story is indeed, a good time. If you would like to help, please call her.

Harlow House -- 100 years

(This concludes a series on the history of the people who lived in the Harlow House.)



After the death of Mabel Evans in 1979, the Harlow House and the grounds were included in a park bond issue, largely due to the influence of Sam Cox, and approved for purchase by the voters of Troutdale. The land became a Troutdale City Park. The buildings on the site are the property of

the Troutdale Historical Society. The house was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, the same year the society paid off the mortgage on the home.

The state historic preservation committee was especially pleased with the intact interior of the home, the fact that the original fir paneling is unpainted and the kitchen is so close to the original.

Improvements to the home in the 20 years since our purchase include three exterior paint jobs. The first paint job took 72 tubes of caulk to seal the siding in the house and was supervised by Ted Schulte. The wood paneling inside has been restored to the original finish with removal of layers of old varnish. The upstairs hall received new walls and wall paper. Interiors and floors were painted, with the exception of three rooms with original wall paper. The kitchen floor has been replaced. Construction and installation of custom-made wooden storm windows helped insulate the house, and insulation was placed where possible. The front porch has undergone repairs and some restoration. The installation of a small kitchen on the back porch allows space for events and our volunteers. A new furnace and air conditioning system was recently installed. Some shoring up and repair of beams and supports on the east side of the house was also done. (Fred Harlow propped the corners of the house on cedar stumps.)

The gazebo was added to the grounds after it was rescued from a flood at Depot Park in the late 1970s as a memorial to Ada Cox, Sam Cox's sister. Our flagpole, a gift of Dalton Williams, remembers Alex Jones. And the barn was completed in 1998 after a 10-year construction project. The original Harlow barn was on the other side of the home to the north and was struck by lightning and burned in the 1930s. A number of local folk say the lightning was drawn to a moonshine still inside.

Since the purchase by the city, three sets of caretakers lived in the home. Ken and Linda Grassman, the first caretakers, are now working in a mission in Mexico. Our second caretakers were Dennis and Barbara Grahn, are now living in Palo Alto, Calif., where Dennis teaches and does research at Stanford University. Their son, Matt, was born while they lived at the Harlow House.

The final caretaker was Kim Schilling who lived alone in the house and worked very hard to make it beautiful.

Mary Bryson named Member of Year



The board of directors of the Troutdale Historical Society voted Curator Mary Bryson our member of the year. With luck, the award will be presented to her May 21 before she happens to see this newsletter.

The picture shows Mary in the middle of things at last year's Tea and Tour at the home of Pat Brothers. From left to right, Jean Hybskmann, Mary and Frieda Ryland, three women who have created some lovely events for our organization.

Mary came to work as our museum creator, a second career, after retiring as an English teacher at Gresham High. Though she says she is not organized, she took on the difficult task of cataloging our collection of artifacts, making sure that our previous cataloging work is correct, and, in short, tracking down everything and putting a number on it.

More than that, she answers the phone, fields problems and keeps a lot of balls in the air when she is working in our museum office. She created a treasure hunt for children who visit our museum and will soon write a study guide for teachers to use when their classes visit our Troutdale time line.

She and her Tuesday ladies recently inventoried every item on the top floor of the Harlow House. Most recently she portrayed Clara Larsson in our April living history program on Troutdale's two women mayors.

Her presence in our museums is a gift of time, energy and fun.

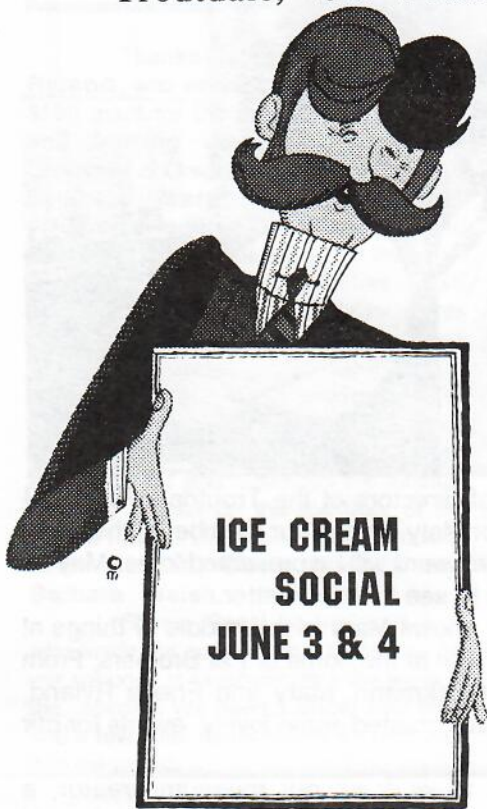
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Census at Bridal Veil

Any day now, the last remnants of the mill town of Bridal Veil will be demolished. Connie Purvis recently gave us a copy of the 1900 census of that community. At the turn of the century, the average resident there was 16. Most were born outside of Oregon. Two-thirds of the population were men, a third women. Women in the census district married in their late teens or early 20s. Only 13 percent married after their 25th birthday. There were no divorces and only less than 10 percent were widowed. The average family had 3 children. Two-thirds of the mothers had had at least one child die.

Troutdale Historical
Society
104 S.E. Kibling Street
Troutdale, OR 97060

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**A story from the memoirs
of Walter Nasmyth:**

During the 1930s my brother Herb and I used to walk from Troutdale to the county Farm to visit a couple of elderly men we had become acquainted with. We would sit on a bench among the large fir trees on the east side of the building and watch the elderly people feed the many gray squirrels that inhabited the small park-like area.

That was where we made the acquaintance of an elderly black man by the name of A.C. Spicer, or Acey Spicer. He told us he had been an Olympic swimmer in his youth and, of course, Herb and I took every word he uttered as the gospel truth when he told us of his swimming exploits.

Mr. Spicer's favorite pastime during the summer months was to walk from the County Farm to the Sandy River Bridge where he would sit all afternoon and watch the swimmers. Of course, we kids would

The swimmer

try our utmost to get him to swim with us but to no avail.

In those days our mother was most reluctant to allow us to go down to the river alone with no one to watch over us while we were swimming. All we had to tell her was that Acey would be there, then everything was fine and we were allowed to head for the river.

Our friendship with Mr. Spicer continued on through the spring and summer as we continued to listen to the tales of his exploits. Then one day in late summer, during the "dog days" of August, Acey showed up at the river in a tank-type swim suit.

The walk from the farm to the Sandy in 100-degree weather was enough to convince the old gentleman to at last venture into the water. All the kids at the river that day gathered around as Acey entered the water, anticipating a great swimming

exhibition. He waded into the water until it was just over his knees, then he lay down in the shallow water.

We kids watched in great anticipation as Acey floundered about in the shallow water making swimming motions, but he adamantly refused to move into deeper water. As we watched it became abundantly clear that Mr. Spicer could not swim a stroke. Good grief, what a group of disillusioned young people stood on the river bank that day!

Following that afternoon at the river, we never told our mother the facts about Acey's swimming ability for that would have ended our swimming in the river alone for the summer. She never knew for years that Acey's swimming ability was a figment of his imagination. A sad but true tale of one of the County Farm's guests.