

# BY GONE TIMES



## Upcoming Events Mark Your Calendars!

**Oct. 5, 6:30 p.m.**  
Tour of the county jail at  
Edgefield, Limited to 20  
people. Contact  
Sharon Nesbit

**Oct. 20, 2 p.m.**  
Mable Evans Reunion & Tea  
at the Harlow House Muse-  
um for former students

**Oct. 29, 7 p.m.**  
Sharon Nesbit speaks at  
Power Station on Troutdale  
and Prohibition

**Oct. 31, 5 p.m.**  
Halloween witches at the  
Depot Museum

**Sunday, Nov. 17, 2 p.m.**  
Oral History/Interview of  
Korean Veterans

**Saturday, Dec 7, 11 a.m.  
— 4 p.m.**  
Christmas Open House at  
the Harlow House Museum

October 2013

**Oct. 20, 2 p.m. Barn and Harlow House:**

### **Growing up in Troutdale**

**Mabel Evans' piano students and Scott Cunningham's boyhood**

We have a double header planned for our Sunday, Oct. 20 meeting, 2 p.m., at the barn and Harlow House.

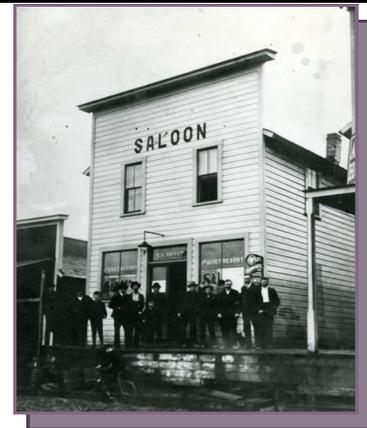
First we hope to see, photograph and record the students of Mabel Evans who came to the house for piano lessons. They come by the museum all the time to say they studied there, but wouldn't you know, we didn't write down any names. So if you can show up at 2 p.m., we'll take a photograph and record a memory.

At about 2:30 p.m. we will adjourn to the barn to listen to some of the growing-up tales of Scott Cunningham, former president of the Troutdale Historical Society. Scott recently wrote his biography for our records, but this time we are looking for tales of his boyhood and adventures on growing up in Troutdale.

Afterward, refreshments and conversation. Please join us for a pleasant afternoon.

### **"Booze, Bootleggers, and Bad Deeds: Mayor Clara Larrson and Prohibition in Troutdale"**

Sharon Nesbit talks on Troutdale, its saloons, its bootleggers, the lady mayor who had to shut the saloons down, and all the shenanigans in between at McMenamins Edgefield History pub, 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 29. No charge, but it helps to come early to get a set.



### **Our solid gold volunteers:**

At the mystery dinner: Pat & Pat Brothers, Ed and Phyllis Thiemann, Jean Holman, Barbara Welsh, Jean and Jerry Hybskmann, Janice Falkenstein and Nicole Damon; In the library: Sharon Nesbit, and Julie Stewart; On the Bull Run Tour: Helen Wand.

**Come in to the Depot and buy your Historic Highway  
Calendar!**

## River Readings: Kid volunteers take Sandy River Readings

By Len Otto

In the late 1950s or early 1960s, a man knocked on the door of the Otto household in Troutdale, a knock that would change the Otto family morning routine for as long as we lived by the river. The man, from the National Weather Service, had a request to make of our mother, Helen Otto. "It would," he said, "be a wonderful educational experience for your children to take river readings for the NWS. Furthermore," he added, "it would help us, the National Weather Service know how the river level correlates to rainfall amounts in the canyon."

That is how it came to be that on the Troutdale Bridge sits a river gauge, used by the Otto children to measure river levels from roughly the late 1950s to 1977 or '78 when youngest child Neal went off to college. The reading was done by lowering a brass weight on a cable until it touched the surface of the water, at which time we noted the number on a little meter and took it back to the house to be recorded on a spreadsheet, sent in monthly to the NWS by Mom. The reading, to the tenth of a foot, probably helped all of us with decimals later. There was only one block of time when the readings were missed, and that was when we had to evacuate in December of 1964 during what we now refer to as the Christmas Floods.

During that event, however, Mom had us take river readings about once an hour right up to the point we were forced to evacuate due to the river rising too high. She dutifully called in the readings to the man who set up the gauge in the first place. He was very, very excited about the data he was receiving from Mom during that period, though he also was concerned about us. Around December 23<sup>rd</sup> we were forced to evacuate; that's another story for another time. Mary does not remember making readings regularly, though she knew how to do it. It is likely that she was called into service on occasion. She refers to younger sibling Neal as a "very Capable boy," perhaps because he saved her from having to go out in the cold, windy mornings.



From about 1969 until he left for college in the fall of 1978, Neal did take the readings; he notes, though, that it is being very generous to say they were regular. He felt it was a pain in the rear to take the river readings, and by the time he was in high school, some VERY large gaps appeared in those spreadsheets. As a guess, he heard a lot about that from Mom, who took "duty" very seriously, being the former Army nurse that she was. Or maybe it was the Catholic guilt thing. One positive thing we all remember about taking the river readings was the early morning wild-life that we saw, the ducks, the fish, the blue herons, an occasional otter, and many other cool critters. My strongest memory related to the gauge, next to the flood of 1964, was one of the east wind. I had gone out to take the river reading on a cold, cold morning, near freezing (or maybe it only felt that way), all bundled up in my warmest.

My warmest included a faux-fur lined cap with ear flaps. I was emotionally bonded with that cap; it was like a favorite sweater, only worn on my head. Perhaps too much information, but it even smelled like me.

Anyway, on my way back to the house, the wind ripped the cap right off my head, where gravity took over, dropping it into the river below.

I remember clambering from the walkway over the rail to the roadway, a piece of cake for a reasonably fit young lad. I watched my beloved cap float downriver and out of sight. I guess I hoped that the cap somehow would catch in an eddy and reach the shore; it was not to happen. I was devastated, perhaps an overreaction, but one not uncommon for an adolescent teen bonded with a piece of clothing. Not many outside of the Otto family knew what that box on the bridge represented: a piece of scientific instrumentation provided by the National Weather Service, and thousands of pieces of data gathered by the Otto children. While it sometimes was a chore, there always was a sense of the river readings being done for science. Somewhere within the archives of the National Weather Service sits a log of those readings, written in the childish scrawl of Joann, Ken, Len, Mary, and Neal Otto.



**We are all historians. If you have a story to share with our newsletter, write it down, pencil or computer, and send it to us. It gets a free editing from Sharon Nesbit. A picture is great. And then, in addition to use in the newsletter, your memory is saved for our historical society files.**

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## Mystery dinner guests—Sept. 15



Left: Lawanna Smith as Jezebel: middle:, Julie Stewart as Three Feathers: right, Sue Handy as Lucy Calhoun, and Helen Wand as Mel Easton.

## Historic Highway

### Exhibit:

## Road was built, torn apart ... and built again

By Julie Stewart

America has always been about starting anew; immigrants, refugees, and pioneers have been doing it for a couple hundred years now. When we get tired of something or it appears to be wearing out or becoming obsolete, we move on to something newer or flashier: think iPhone 3, 4, and 5.

When the Historic Columbia River Highway officially opened in 1916, it provided the public “a passport to the gorge”. The Oregon Highway Commission called it “one of the most scenic highways in existence.” In 1957, Frank Sterett, a staff photographer for *The Oregonian*, wrote that in 1915 his neighbors had a White Steamer that required lighting a fire in the pilot light under the boiler in the car before it would get up enough steam to run.

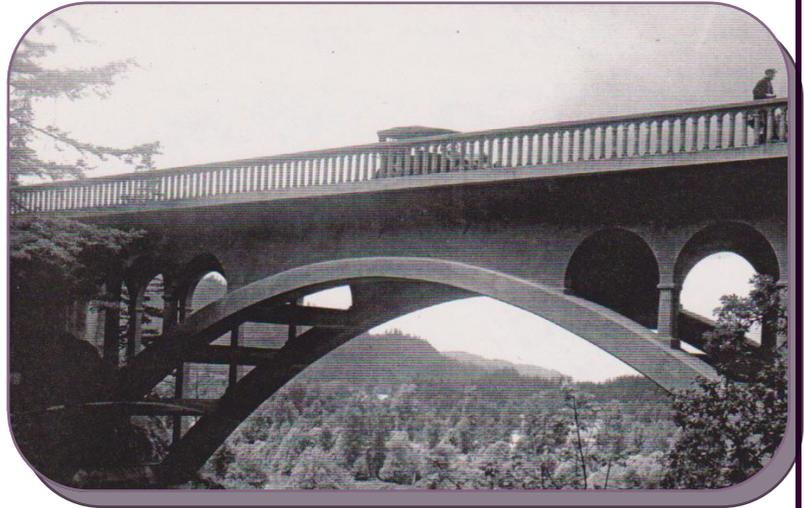
For safety the whole family went out to the garage and pushed the car out to the driveway before lighting the fire. A trip to Multnomah Falls in those days could take an

entire day since the posted speed was 25, but with all the other families enjoying the new highway, “a guy was doing good if he could go ten” on that short strip of paved road. The roadway was an instant success, but it just couldn’t accommodate large trucks and buses or provide a quick trip to a destination east of the falls area.

After 20 years, sections of the highway began to fade. In the 1930s, portions of the road were destroyed to make way for Bonneville Dam. In the late 1940s, construction started on a water-level highway through the Gorge, leading to the abandonment of several sections of Lancaster’s road. By the 1960s, safety concerns caused transportation officials to fill and close the Mosier and Mitchell Point tunnels. In 1967, four-lane Interstate 80N (now Interstate 84) was completed, connecting Portland and The Dalles.

By the early 1980s some people recognized the need to preserve Lancaster’s “King of Roads”, and efforts were launched to “Remember, Restore, Reconnect” abandoned or destroyed portions of the original highway. Restoration efforts were triggered by an historic survey of the road, preservation documents prepared by state highway historians, efforts by the Historic Preservation League of Oregon and bicycle enthusiasts, and finally, creation of the Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway. The founder of the latter organization is Jeanette Kloos, who serves on our exhibit committee. The road is now designated a “scenic by-way”. Sections of the highway were recently graded and repaved; the restoration and clearing of tunnels that had been filled in with rock were completed, and 67 of the original 77 miles of the road have been restored either for bicycle paths or hiking routes.

Three of the Mosier Tunnels have been reopened; it is possible to go from Troutdale to Cascade Locks on bike without risking one’s life on I-84, and the trail that dead-ended at Moffett Creek Bridge has been extended and reconnected with other portions of the trail. Jeanette Kloos says, “We have made progress, but work needs to be done.” Their extraordinary work will be part of our centennial exhibit at the Barn Museum, slated to open in early 2015.



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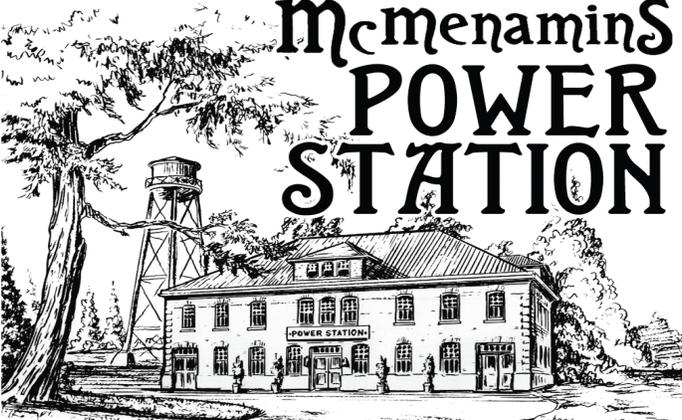
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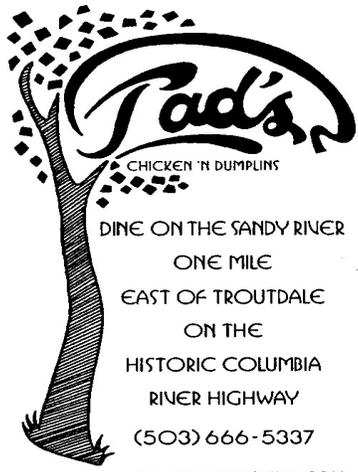


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**Mission Statement:** To gather, preserve and make available material relating to the history of the community of Troutdale, the Sandy River, the Columbia River Gorge and nearby area: To stimulate interest in and knowledge of, the locality's past.

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