

FEB., 1993

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE SOCIETY HISTORY...

In February, 1978, the Troutdale Historical Society published a history of its first 10 years. In February of 1988, we wrote our 20-year history. Now it is time to mark 25 years, one quarter of a century.

Twenty-five years, building an organization for the future and saving the past.

THE FIRST TEN YEARS - THE TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It might not have happened if Glenn Otto hadn't been in jail. In 1968, (in his official capacity as mayor of Troutdale) Otto found old papers and ledgers stacked in the basement jail of Troutdale City Hall. It dawned on him that no local effort was being made to preserve Troutdale's history.

On Feb. 28, 1968, more than a dozen local residents met in city hall and decided to do something about preserving the city's colorful history by founding the Troutdale Historical Society. The Troutdale city council gave \$35 to help the new society and the Troutdale Lions paid the postage for a city-wide newsletter. By March, 63 charter members had signed up. Erick Enquist (deceased) spoke at that first meeting about his Columbia River fishwheel business. The first officers were: Marilyn Oakes, president; Ray Moore (deceased) vice president; Joe Lucas, treasurer; and Sharon Nesbit, secretary.

In April, the late Vic Kyle became the first local resident to donate artifacts, an ox yoke and a set of pioneer kettles said to have come over the Oregon Trail. That was the start of a mad scramble to locate places to store museum items.

Ice Cream Social Begins

In June of that year we hosted a simple little ice cream social as a daytime get-together for our members. Three-hundred people came for ice cream, music and an old-fashioned good time. In subsequent years that simple party grew to include almost 600 people. (It is now a two-day festival that in 1991 drew more than 1,300 people.)

In 1969, Bob Sturges was president. He initiated the practice of sending monthly newsletters. During the presidency of the late Don Vorpahl in 1970, we were deep in the study of the Oregon Trail with historian Clare Belsher. From 1971 to 1975, it was a matter of "keeping up with Jones."

Highlights of the presidency of Alex Jones included: erection of a state historical marker in 1971 with the cooperation of L.E. (Bud) George of the state highway department (that marker was recently restored and relocated at the Troutdale Rail Depot); two years of work from 1971 to 1973 to remodel and open a concrete block building in the city park for use as a museum; a historic and colorful ceremony in 1972 to receive a Civil War cannonball from the Erickson family; the 1972 publication of a cookbook of pioneer recipes; and, finally, the start of our traditional and delicious potluck dinners.





(The potluck dinner proposal was not really Jones' idea--the first dinner was held in his honor for his years as president. The idea originated by our next president, Sam Cox, who has never passed up a free meal.) Cox needed a lot of nourishment because the nation's Bicentennial was on us in 1976 and he led the campaign to have Troutdale named a Bicentennial City. It was that year that the society spearheaded an effort to preserve, move and restore the Troutdale Rail Depot. We also won a second prize for our float in the Fourth of July parade at Corbett, observed the 98th birthday of the late Wiley Wilson and led hundreds of people through our museum.

By 1976, we had accumulated \$2,300 in the bank and talk began of adding an addition to our museum as a memorial to the late Dick Knarr and other deceased members who had brightened our history with first-person recollections of early-day Troutdale.

Thanks to help from the federally-funded Comprehensive Employment and Training Act construction began in the summer of 1977 with Ted Schulte supervising. The CETA program also gave us two full-time employees for our museum, curator Bert Whalen and typist Pauline Holcomb, (now deceased) and it provided the boost necessary to complete restoration of the depot, which was dedicated in November, 1977.

Heading into its 11th year, the Society continued on-going projects, which included aiding and encouraging historical preservation of the downtown business area, expanding and improving exhibits in both the park museum and the rail depot and gathering history for a book on Troutdale.

THE SECOND DECADE - THE TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The second decade of the society will probably go down in history as the Harlow House or the Sam Cox decade. The City of Troutdale's need for our museum building in the park for use as a caretaker's residence, resulted in a trade in 1979. We exchanged our old museum for a down payment on the Harlow House, which the city purchased after the death of its last occupant, Mabel Evans.

In October 1979, with only a week's notice, we moved out of our museum into a house that had been sitting empty for a year, was covered with soot from a furnace backfire and had no heat or hot water or overhead lights.

With Cox leading the effort, we scrubbed and fixed and insulated and installed caretakers. Ken and Linda Grassman, lived there six weeks without hot water and were roused out of their beds on their first night by the Troutdale police.

Ted Schulte personally did much of the original restoration work. New Year's Day, 1980, found him and Steve Kenney sliding around on the roof fixing a leak. Having been told by his wife, Lois, "not to get up on that roof", Ted was dismayed when his picture appeared in the newspaper showing him doing just that.

Christmas Open Houses Begin

In 1980, we began the first of our popular live interviews, taping Morris and Gladys McGinnis for the oral history collection. And that year was the first time we decorated the Harlow House for Christmas. The star attraction was the restored wood stove, which we found in pieces in the basement.

Some 700 people came to the ice cream social that year. At Sam's suggestion we had a plant sale, which was a huge success. That summer we argued unsuccessfully to save the old maple trees in front of the Buxton home. The site is now covered by Northeast 257th Avenue.

By December of 1981 we added steaming hot wassail to our Christmas celebration, decided to build a gazebo at the Harlow House with money donated to the Ada Cox memorial and a month later opened our 1982 meetings with a discussion of moonshiner Nettie Connett.

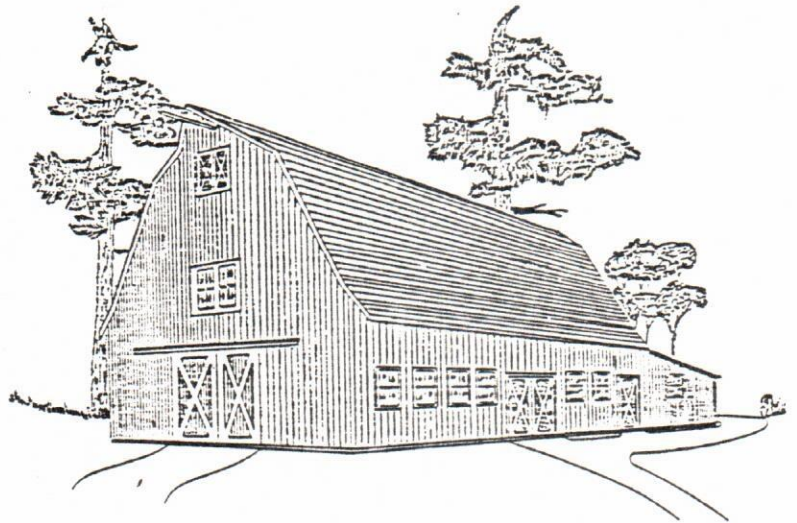
That year Multnomah County closed Edgefield Manor and we fell heir to three truckloads of items and a new volunteer, Curt Kaiser, who helped us catalog them. We roasted Bob Sturges at the conclusion of his 10 years as mayor of Troutdale with a sit-down dinner for 100 that earned \$500 toward our Harlow House mortgage. Sam Cox was elected mayor of Troutdale that November, 1982, and continued in his job as historical society president.

In 1983, we heard Helen Althaus read for a second time to our group the letter her great-grandmother wrote home about her trip over the Oregon Trail. It became a book in 1987.

Our 15th anniversary was a slide show of Troutdale's buildings as they appeared in 1972 and as they looked 10 years later in 1983. Our officers were: Sam Cox, President; Alex Jones, vice president; Helen Otto, secretary and Ted Schulte, treasurer.

Dreaming Of A Barn

It was in 1983 that we first began to dream of building a barn back of the Harlow House for display of agricultural equipment and to hold items like our fire equipment, which was stored in the basement of the Harlow House. Vera Strebin decided it was high time we collected photos of all the mayors of Troutdale. Curt Kaiser prepared a nomination to place the Harlow House on the National Register of Historic Places. It became official on Feb. 16, 1984.



That year we earned \$3,000 to help pay our mortgage. And we had our first fall pie sale on the front porch of the Harlow House. That, as well as our ice cream social and our booth at the city picnic, helped pay the bills.

We added a Membership Secretary, Lois Schulte, to our list of workers, just to keep up with growth of our society.

In 1984, we added the children from Sweetbriar School to our walking history tours, an event that Troutdale children had experienced for a number of years. Highlight of every tour is a reenactment of the Great Troutdale Pool Hall Robbery.

In January, 1985, we filled Troutdale City Hall for a program on the city's gas stations and began a system of rotating exhibits at the Harlow House so that something in the museum is always new and fresh. The following month was our celebration of Troutdale mayors when we dedicated the portraits of 22 men and women who had served the city since 1907. In March we had a spring luncheon and an old-fashioned fashion show. Cathy Hamme took over the plant sale at the June ice cream social and that summer she volunteered as groundskeeper at the Harlow House, starting a tradition of bright floral displays that draw many people just to see the yard.

Home Tour Started

We also had our first home tour, a tour of historic houses in the Columbia River Gorge, the biggest fund raiser in our history. And John Nasmyth, determined that we build our barn, began making substantial donations to the barn fund. It was that year, too, that we held our first Troutdale Grade School reunion and packed city hall to the rafters for a slide show of historic photos on the Columbia River Highway.

In Feb. 1986, we kicked off a campaign to pay the \$4,400 owing on the Harlow House mortgage. At the same time, we launched a campaign to convince Multnomah County not to demolish Edgefield Manor. We also joined other service clubs in sponsoring Troutdale bingo and held a second Columbia Gorge home tour. Our membership by June, 1986, was 335.

Donations of \$100 each started coming in as we neared our goal of paying off the Harlow House mortgage.



It happened in December, 1986, and we had a mortgage burning ceremony the following January, a dream of nearly 20 years come true. The Harlow House was first mentioned as a possibility for a city museum when that first small group got together back in 1968.

Not content, Sam Cox, still mayor and historical society president, launched a campaign in 1987 to sign up 500 members by our 20th anniversary in February 1988. We had 360 at that point.

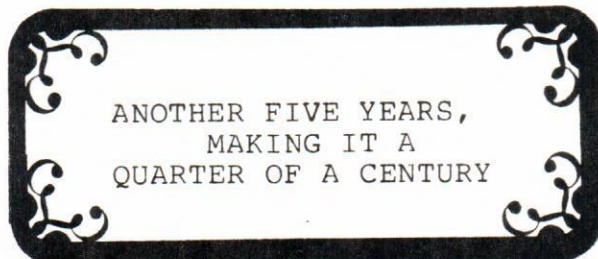
That same year we continued the battle for Edgefield Manor, rented the house for a fashion photo session for Fred Meyer clothing, toured Troutdale country homes, and found a Harlow House putterer in Dick Jones. Volunteers, under the direction of Doris Caramella, worked two days a week at the depot museum, playing host to summer visitors and answering two important questions: Are we on the Columbia River Highway? and Where are the restrooms?

Living History Exhibited

In September, 1987, we began our year with a living history exhibit at the Harlow House pie social with Cathy Hamme portraying Laura Harlow. We cooked dinner for 100 people at the Troutdale School reunion, prepared a list of historic sites for an update of the city's historic sites inventory, participated in the implementation of Troutdale's downtown plan emphasizing the city's historic buildings, produced a cinnamon and apple Christmas theme at the Harlow House, hired a professional museum consultant to prepare a plan for the

administration of our historic collections and resolved to begin work on our barn.

Facing a third decade, the Troutdale Historical Society planned completion of our barn museum, with both it and the Harlow House open five days a week. The society still looked forward to a book of Troutdale history and began to realize that the event enjoyed in the last 20 years had become part of traditions. We vowed to celebrate Troutdale as it was and bring the joy of those lively times of the past to those here in the present.



By the society's 20th anniversary, in February 1988, the membership numbered 504, we got an aluminum Christmas tree to add to our collection of artifacts, which were being recataloged, and Irene Douglass Waldo who had entertained us at many a meeting with both piano playing and eccentricity, died in Portland.

That spring Gene Bui began planning an August Troutdale Trek for a bus trip to Hood River and a train ride on the Mount Hood Railway. It would be the first of many treks to historical sites in Oregon and Washington.

Serious talk began that year about having a barn-raising in the summer. The society had \$25,000 saved. It would cost an estimated \$40,000 to put up the shell of the structure and enclose it. And contractor Dave Traxler was willing to do the job at no profit to himself. On July 6, John Nasmyth holding a beribboned shove turned the first shovelful of dirt in the yard south of the Harlow House to start the barn. He also provided the construction loan of \$15,000 necessary to complete the shell. The total cost was estimated to be \$84,000 for a building that would tell school children and newcomers what Troutdale was like when celery, strawberries, flowers and vegetables were grown here. The concrete floor was poured in August of that year. Dick Jones, a red bandanna wrapped around his head, took on the job of supervising barn construction. An excavation bill was \$10,000 more than expected. Rankin Davis (deceased) figured all we needed to make up the deficit were 100 people willing to give \$100 each.

The \$100 checks started coming, their donors being made part of a century cub. The Troutdale Lions, who helped the society organize 20 years before, gave \$500. A \$7,500 donation from Burns Bros. put the roof on the barn and their company logo was the first burned into a beam of the barn.

Also that summer, we hired our first paid curator/host, Cynthia Howe.

Early in 1989 we honored Tad's Chicken N' Dumplings as our historic site of the year remembering its days as a road house on the Columbia River Highway. Alex Jones, still an active and vital member, gave \$400 to paint the barn "provided it was red." John Nasmyth and June McGinnis Sherman celebrated their marriage at our February meeting. We began our practice of inviting local historical societies to join us for our May meeting, that year hosting the event with a dramatic presentation about the life of Mother Joseph, Sister of Providence. Rich and Dorothy Kerlake began their tradition of annually cooking a brunch to benefit the barn fund.

Sadie Riley, who was seen that year hauling a garbage can on her motorcycle to an historical society event, was named our member of the

year. Members of the year automatically became part of the Board of Trustees, which meets once a year to set goals for our society.

We had our third Columbia Gorge home tour that year, a monster rummage sale in October under the leadership of Marge Schmunk, which eared \$1,700 for our barn. The gloomy news was that our on-going fight to save Edgefield Manor was not going well. No one bid on the property when it was put up for sale in a national auction.

We filled city hall in January 1990 to discuss Troutdale's days as Celery Capital of the World and to note that fact in a plaque at Burns Bros. Truck Stop, which sits on the site of the celery fields. As a step toward hiring a paid director for the society, Sharon Nesbit was given a \$100 a month token fee for directorial duties.

We named our loft in the barn the John Nasmyth Loft in recognition of John's substantial contributions and his enthusiasm for the project. The rear work room was given the name of the Dick Jones Workshop honoring Jones for his hours of effort on the building.

As Dick said to the volunteers who helped him, "Thank you, until you're better paid."

Beginning Harvest Faire

Our biggest fund-raiser in history, our 1990 Harvest Faire and Auction, made about \$9,000 and involved such a crush of people that Judy Jones was forced to serve up chicken and dumplings from Tad's on stork plates left over from her daughter's baby shower. It was the impetus we needed to get the barn painted that fall and Alex Jones got the honor of putting the first and last brushload on. When Alex applied that first brush of paint to the bare barn, he turned around and said to us, "If you guys think I'm painting this whole barn, you're crazy." A series of fall work days saw most of the paint on the barn. The crew included Bill Stone who had recovered from hurting his knee, the first on-the-job injury in the barn.

In February of that year we observed the 100th anniversary of the platting of the town of Troutdale by Celestia Harlow, widow of Capt. John Harlow.

Our best news in the historic preservation department was that McMenamin's Pubs and Breweries purchased the Multnomah County farm buildings and 12 acres for the creation of Edgefield Village, a pub, hotel and restaurant facility. It ended a more than four year fight to save the strucure and we celebrated with a special meeting at Edgefield in the spring of 1991 for a tour and a sample of Troutdale-brewed brew. We also began regular consultations with the McMenamin staff on the history of the farm and its buildings.

Also new in 1991 was the creation of our steering committee to supervise the ice cream social and Harvest Faire. It was a group that discovered it traveled best on its stomachs. Meetings were most successful when accompanied by a fattening dessert. The ice cream social that year would be a big one, a two-day event coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the Columbia River Highway. Sam Cox, still our president, was one of the models and looked splendid in a top hat.



At the Harlow House, Lynda Harvey was curator/host. Volunteers hosted the museum on Sundays at the Harlow House and on Saturdays and Sundays at the depot. Others worked on the flower beds as part of the Green Thumb brigade.

Alex Jones died in the summer of 1991. His last of many gifts to our society was a third of his estate, a contribution that brought our endowment fund over the \$10,000 mark. Alex had wished to see the barn red before he died and that did happen. The endowment fund exists to be certain that it will be open to the public. His picture appeared on our first membership roster.

The second annual Harvest Faire was followed by the opening of McMenemy's Power Station in the old power plant at Edgefield Manor.

We began 1992 with a celebration of 100 years of Troutdale School at its site on the hilltop. And serious effort began on hiring a paid director by setting up a new dues level called the Director's Club.

We spent a February afternoon at Sweet Brier farm as guests of David Ripma who placed his historic farm home on the city historic sites list. Two other benefactors, Jacques Renard and Bob Jacobs, came forward and volunteered to put the electric wiring in our barn. With help from Ed Ashley and Dick Jones, who took time out to have bypass surgery, the barn was fully electrified by summer.

We held a Light Up the Sky event, with sirens and flashing lights to mark the presence of electricity.

That year we took stock in our barn and discovered that about \$30,000 would be necessary to complete it, not very much considering that we had raised \$80,000 in cash, donations, services and labor since the project started. Our contributions to the barn came from 203 individual donors, two organizations, 23 business and corporations, one foundation and the hands of 52 different volunteers.

We remembered the words of former Oregon Historical Society director Tom Vaughan, who years before had told us, "Choose no small projects. Always bite off more than you can chew. It makes you grow."

Our 1992 Harvest Faire drew 2,500 guests and earned about \$6,000. We sold \$800 worth of homemade pie, a reminder of those early-day pie socials on the Harlow House front porch.

In October we hired our first paid director, Ellen Brothers, freeing volunteer director Sharon Nesbit to return to her work as historian of the society.

As 1992 drew to a close, we began our study of the 1993 sesquicentennial of the Oregon Trail, looking forward to seeing our Oregon Trail markers at the Columbia Gorge Factory Outlet Stores and the Harlow House.

For each new event, however, the society continues to honor tradition. There are children who believe that the only "real" Santa appears at the Harlow House at Christmas. There are people who mark their years between banana splits eaten at ice cream socials or the fried onions from our booth at the city picnic. Almost every day some new visitor comes to the Harlow House or stops at the rail depot.

We begin our 26th year remembering our past, dealing positively with the present and planning for the future.



OUR CHARTER MEMBERS...

(* Denotes deceased) Edna H. Alexander, Emil Carow *, Georgia Mae Carow, Beryl P. Cook, Ada Cox *, Clara Cox *, Nancy Cox, Sam Cox, Rankin Davis *, Sue Davis, Louise Dix, Luella Dix *, Robert Dix, Teresa Doolittle *, Mary Ray Eaton *, Jack Evans *, Mabel Evans *, Arthur A. Heimstra *, Justa L. Hewitt *, Mary Hughes, Robert Hughes *, Laura A. Imthurn *, Charles V. Jackson *, Mary Knarr *, Richard Knarr *, Barbara Lampert, Don Lampert, Evelyn Lampert *, Nora Lewis *, William Lewis *, Dorothy Lucas *, Joe Lucas, Arthur Matches *, Marjorie Matches *, Miriam McGinnis *, Roy Meger, Ray Moore *, Sharon Nesbit, Marilyn Oakes, Glenn E. Otto, Helen Otto, Dale Parsons *, Margaret Parsons, Olive Parsons *, Ethel Peterson, Marlin Pope *, Martine Rathman, Vernon Rathman, George Schatz *, Louise Schatz *, Arthur Scofield, Emily Scofield, Frank Simons, Irene Simons, Alfred Stoeckel, Margaret Stoeckel, Kay Struckman, Dorothy Sturges, Robert M. Sturges, Don Vorpahl *, Laura Vorpahl, I.B. Wand and Truly Wright.
Succession of Historical Society presidents

TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENTS:

Marilyn Oakes
Feb. 1968 to Feb. 1969

Robert Sturges
Feb. 1969 to Feb. 1970

Don Vorpahl
Feb. 1970 to Feb. 1971

Alex Jones
Feb. 1971 to Feb. 1975

Sam Cox
Feb. 1975 to Feb. 1993

