

BYGONE TIMES

A Newsletter of the TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November, 2000

Editor, Sharon Nesbit, 503-665-0423

Brothers Nasmyth, the rascals, on growing up in Troutdale

Live interview: Sunday, Nov. 19,
2 p.m., Troutdale City Hall

Much of our sense of growing up in Troutdale in the 1930s comes from the Nasmyth family, the recollections of the late John Nasmyth, and more recently his little brothers, Walter and Herb.

(Because Ike and June Handy plan a trip, we swapped interview dates for oral history programs, moving the Nasmyths up and rescheduling the Handys for April.)

Walter Nasmyth wrote a priceless record of his early years in Troutdale, slipping down an icy hill on his way to the outhouse, characters from the county farm, working for local nurserymen and a job at the Troutdale airport.

The Nasmyth home on the highway near Buxton Ave.



He was born in Troutdale to John and Bertha Nasmyth in 1926. Herb was born in 1923. They seemed destined to high spirits and hijinks and their tales supply much of the zest that seasons our history.

Join us for their vivid recollections, as well a business meeting to consider a proposal to increase our dues.

Christmas at Harlow House opens on December 2

In case your December newsletter arrives late in the holiday mail rush, make note of our opening day of Christmas at the Harlow House, noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 2.

This year "The Writes of Winter," recognizes our large collection of vintage Christmas cards. Our ornaments are replicas of those old-fashioned cards in our collection, tied with bows to hang from the tree.

For our opening reception Dec. 2, bring a plate of cookies to share. Santa Claus is always there that first day, so bring a kid to share the joy.

Calendar

November/December

Board of Directors Meeting
Wed., Nov. 1, 7 p.m.

In the barn.

Interview, Herb & Walter Nasmyth

Sun., Nov. 19, 2 p.m.

Live interview in Troutdale City Hall.

Harlow House Decorating

Wed., Nov. 29, 9 a.m.

Christmas at Harlow House

Sat., Dec. 2, noon to 4 p.m.

House open Saturday & Sunday, 1-4 p.m. through December, except Christmas Eve

Board of Directors Meeting

Wed., Dec. 6, 7 p.m.

In the barn



Welcome to Laura Newton, our first full-time director

It seems a good omen that the Troutdale Historical Society's first full-time director is named Laura and works in Laura Harlow's house.

Laura Newton, who started work Nov. 1, joined our historical society in May after finding us on our web site. She had wanted to volunteer because she is earning her degree in history (to graduate next May) and wanted to put in some volunteer time with a local historical society.

Laura was then working as an admissions assistant and special events coordinator for the athletic department at Warner Pacific College where she is studying for her degree. Her skills in administration, managing an alumni data base, event planning and, most of all, her interest in history, seem tailor-made for our organization.

It is a big effort, taking on our first full-time salary, but it was time to be honest about our needs. As President David Ripma said, "We have had part-time directors, but we were always asking them to work full-time."

Part of the funds to pay a full-time director came to us from Bonnie Irwin, Helen Althaus, Jeanne Pulliam, June Nasmyth, Bob & Louise Dix and the Larson Legacy. We thank these gracious donors for the boost to make this happen.

Christmas Story



*CAPTURING
CHRISTMAS PAST
1934-1941*

*by Ginger Harlow
Allen*

There are no Kodak moments of Christmases the first eleven years of my life, but the pictures engraved in my mind are as vivid as any snapshot

Money was scarce in The Depression during the first few years of the life for I was born in 1930. It wasn't that we lost money on the stock market or had been thrown out of work, although economic times did make jobs harder to come by for Dale Parsons, mother's brother, who still lived at home. No, we were the perennial poor. Mother (Faye Parsons Harlow) took a perverse pleasure, and made it a point of honor, when she told us, "The Depression didn't affect our family, we were poor during the prior prosperity."

We celebrated Christmases the six years before my father (Sam Harlow) died, but of those I have only a dim memory. My recollections begin with the Christmas Eves spent at my Aunt Eunice's (McNeel Robinson) Troutdale home. After our father's death Bonnie and I moved from Gladstone to Troutdale to live permanently with Nanaw (Mary McNeel Parsons, widow of Newt Parsons) and Dale, while mother settled in Portland to go to Hastings Business School and find a job to support the three of us. Now, added to the usual expenses, were mother's board, room and tuition fees.

Money or no money, the family traditionally determined some holiday celebration should take place each year, so a couple days before Christmas the subject of a tree was broached.

Perhaps there were Christmas tree lots in Troutdale but it never occurred to us to buy one; we lived in the midst of a plethora of

evergreens. Dale and Uncle Clarence (Parsons, broth-in-law to Nanaw) gathered the equipment for the tree cutting event; an ax and hand saw for felling the tree and a couple of ropes to secure it to the roof of the car. Nanaw, Bonnie and I made sandwiches and packed a picnic lunch.

Our first choice for a tree expedition was eastward via the only road then available, the Columbia River Highway, where we all anticipated the hairpin turn east of Vista House. Other years we searched up through Springdale and Corbett to Larch Mountain, or once I recall, we made the day-long trip around the Mount Hood Loop Highway. When the tree was spotted the two men chopped it down and wrestled with the ropes to tie it to the vehicle roof. If the weather was good, and it was often clear and crisp, we ate lunch on a roadside picnic table. If it rained, we hurried back to the house and in a holiday mood, picnicked on the round oak table in the dining room.

Our home was comfortable and appeared warm because of the 4-foot cherry wainscoting encircling the living room walls. It was anything but warm however. The house had little, if any, insulation and no central heating. It was heated by an oil stove in the living room and a wood cook stove in the kitchen. To keep warm in winter, one had to be resourceful. The wind blows mercilessly through the gorge and Troutdale is directly in its path. In the late fall, it was a seasonal ritual to unearth the old bed sheets, torn in strips and cut to size, stuffing them between the window panes and window jams. The cold east wind and the Christmas holidays often arrived at the same time.

Before commercial tree stands were plentiful, a stand was two cross pieces of wood pounded into the trunk. While Dale and Uncle Clarence secured the tree, Bonnie and I helped rearrange the furniture. The sparsely furnished living room, about 12-by-14-feet with a 9-foot ceiling, easily held a 6-foot tree in front of the two single paned windows. From those windows in December, one looked north to the

winter-frosted foothills of the snow-capped Cascades.

From a hidden corner in the dilapidated woodshed came the fruit-shaped tree lights and a few precious ornaments. (The only surviving bauble from those early days is a two-inch skiing snowman with one broken ski.)

Nanaw, or mother, if she was visiting for a weekend, helped pop corn and with a darning needle and thread, we strung the snow-white kernels into swags to drape from branch to branch around the tree. Dale was in charge of affixing the lights and after the garlands were in place, Nanaw, Mother, Bonnie and I hung the decorations, it was time to add the silver strands of

rain. This thoroughly tedious job

Bonnie

and I quickly

tired of.

That left three

adults to

finish. But

Dale, too,



soon tired and with a wicked glint in his eyes he'd step back from the tree and unceremoniously toss a handful of rain at the back branches and quickly disappear.

Nanaw was Scotch-Irish and from a conservative Presbyterian background so Santa Claus was not an issue. Christmas was a religious holiday. One of Nanaw's few possessions was her prized heirloom table-size creche, complete with wooden stable, Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus, the three kings, a couple of shepherds, some sheep, several cows and two or three angels. The angels and stable animals, she said, were not old family pieces but had been bought more recently at Woolworth's five and dime. Never mind, the creche sat center stage amongst greenery on the sofa table behind the couch.

(Ginger Harlow Allen, Harlow family genealogist, adds this memory to our history. This story concludes next month.

Big crowd fills old Cedar School

More than 60 people crowded into the old Cedar School on Troutdale Road in October for our annual school reunion.

We owe thanks to Colleen and Mark Kelsey for their gracious hospitality and to the many friends and former students of the school who showed up to share their memories. Len Otto conducted the round of reminiscences. Charles Jennings did the video taping. Among those present, former teachers Crystal Bayley and Deborah Snyder and her student, Bonnie Townsend Irwin.

If you are interested in purchasing a video of the event, please call our historical society office, 503-661-2164, and get your name on a list. The videos cost about \$15 and we will notify you when they are ready.

Please note changes in our annual program

Due to travel plans and other changes, we announce some alterations in the Troutdale Historical Society Calendar for 2000-2001 sent to you in your September newsletter.

November 19

Because of the travel of Ike and June Handy, we switched our oral history interview programs. Brothers Walt and Herb Nasmyth will be present in November. The Handys have been scheduled for April 15.

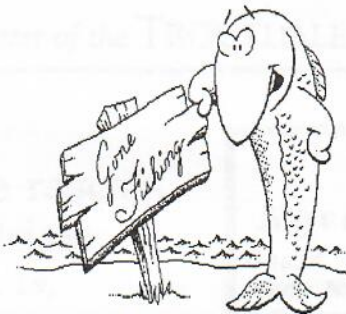
January 21, 2001

More travel cancelled plans for our antique appraisal program. Instead, we will remember Bridal Veil, with new material on logging in that area, in a slide program from Chuck Rollins and Steve Lehl. A similar program presented in the old Springdale school drew a large crowd. The Jan. 21 meeting, previously announced for Glenn Otto Community Park, is moved to Troutdale City Hall.

May 5, 2001 Tea & Tour

Avid Tea & Tour fans, the likely date of our spring tea and home tour will be Saturday, May 5, 2001. Save the date.

Capt. Harlow's Carp do more damage than once thought



In October we conducted more than eight tours with about 400 people visiting our museums to learn Troutdale lore. One of the favorite stories is about Capt. Harlow and his scheme to import, raise and sell carp to Portland restaurants.

We always tell people we are happy the old captain first raised trout in his ponds in the 'dale' resulting in a name far more euphonious than Carpdale.

As the story goes, thousands of the the captain's carp fry escaped the Troutdale ponds to fill northwest waters with the "cockroach" of fish. While that was bad enough, we learned recently in Rick Rubin's history, "Naked Against the Rain, The People of the Lower Columbia River, 1770-1830," that the carp eliminated a valuable native plant.

Rubin notes that wapato, choice food of the Chinookan people along the Columbia, was destroyed by the carp population. "Carp feed by taking bottom soil into their mouths," Rubin wrote. "This kills vegetation, clouds the water, and destroys the habitat of numerous native species...the carp ate every wapato out of every marsh the fish could reach, which was every one that ever flooded. There remain a few tiny patches of wapato, but the vast beds disappeared and with them people's memory of this excellent and flavorful bulb.

Thank you to Tad's

Judy Jones and the folks at Tad's shared their proceeds from the sale of chicken n' dumplings at Harvest Faire. Her generous check brings our earnings from our fall festival to about \$5,000. What a gift. Thank you.

Namedroppers

Many thanks to **Jean & Jerry Hybskman** for donation of a microwave oven. Our old microwave in the Harlow House, used by the volunteers to make tea and coffee, was so low-powered **Curator Mary Bryson** threatened to declare it an artifact...For lack of a better name, we call them Tuesday Ladies, volunteers who meet at the Harlow House each Tuesday to help with inventory, new exhibits, whatever. They include **Jean Holman, Barbara Welsh, Mona Mitchoff & Jean Hybskmann**. Last week they took down our 100th birthday clothing exhibit and now are making plans for a different winter display...The Tuesday Ladies can be unreliable. One day they all arrived at the Harlow House and took off in a single car to Maryhill for peaches and lunch out...Best wishes to **Carnetta Boyd** who leaves our employ to form her own business, **Koalaty Business Services**. During her tenure, Carnetta straightened out our tangled phone system and installed and donated a faster computer...If you want a video of our historical program on **Blue Lake Park**, please call our office at 503-661-2164. The price is \$15, send \$2 more and we'll mail it to you...Forty-three people joined us for our trek to Washington County Oct. 7. Even those mediocre on the subject of rocks enjoyed the Rice Mineral and Rock Museum. Our thanks to **Bob Strebin** for suggesting it and to **Dave Ripma** for wine and song on the road home...Volunteers brave enough to brave rain joined us Oct. 21 for a trek through Troutdale. The rain stopped just as **Sharon Nesbit** set out and it was sunny by the time the group arrived at the barn for refreshments and toasts...Attending were **Jim Cook, Helen Wand, Bob Strebin, Jack & Roberta Burns, Sharon Petri, Doneva Shepard, Jean Holman** and at the barn with coffee and cheer, **Mary Bryson**.. Harvest Faire volunteers missed last month: **June Jones, John Fappas, Bob Mitchoff, Dan DeGraw & Leona Balch**.

In memory

Margaret Eddington,

Troutdale's only antique dealer for nearly two decades, died last month. Proprietor of Heritage Antiques, she sometimes gave us goods from her store for our Granny's Attic sale.

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

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Growing up in Troutdale



The Nasmyth Brothers Nov. 19

Winter hosts needed for Harlow House

Harlow House museum is open Saturday and Sunday afternoons, 1-4 p.m. throughout the winter. We need hosts willing to greet visitors at the house one day a month.

While it is quiet at the Harlow House in the winter, and sometimes no one comes, it's a good time to catch up on the Sunday paper, or browse our historic photo collection, or just write letters. And the guests who come are so pleased to find us home.

If you can help, telephone Adrienne Clausen 503-663-0895.

Coffee pot donated

Our thanks to Mary Kuni for the gift of an insulated 30-cup percolator to use for our events. And our apologies. It was left at the house without a name on it and we were at a loss as to whom to thank.

Letters from Newt

Dec. 27, 1914

I guess we will all be working for the Union Pacific after the first of the year. they say the U.P. are going to take over the O.W.R. & N. (Oregon Washington Railway and Navigation) and the O.S.L. (Oregon Short Line?) the first of the year, and everything will be U.P. so your new pass may be just one pass from Havensville to Troutdale, all the engines and cars and all stationary so they will be restinseled (restenciled) and printed UP. I am kind of glad of it and it will make the O.R.T. stronger, that will make the U.P. from Portland to Chicago...that will be some railroad wont it?

Newt Parsons worked at the Troutdale Rail Depot first for the Oregon Washington Railroad and navigation Company and later for Union Pacific. His wife, Mary, and children Faye and Dale, visited their family in the east while he stayed behind writing lonesome letters on the depot typewriter. The letters became part of the family treasure after Newt died in 1918 in the Spanish Flu epidemic. His daughter, Faye, would marry Sam Harlow.

Fairview to Have Motor Bus Service

Motor stage stage service will be provided for residents of Fairview and Troutdale as soon as formal orders can be issued and the schedules arranged, it was announced Wednesday afternoon at the weekly conference of the Oregon Public Services Commission. Permit to supply the service was granted the Dunthorpe Transit company over the protest of the Gresham Stages, the latter contending that in supplying this service, the Dunthorpe line would run over Baseline Road and thus encroach on their service.

Fairview and Troutdale have been without adequate service, except that provided by buses operating over the Columbia River Highway to Hood River and The Dalles, since the trolley car service was abandoned by the Portland Electric Power Company.

**From The Portland Telegram,
July 21, 1927.**