

Life *in the* Valley

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Scotts Mills is seen looking east about 1915. In addition to businesses and homes, a prune dryer can be seen across Butte Creek in Clackamas County.

JAMES EATON / SCOTTS MILLS AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Events to commemorate centennial of Scotts Mills

ANDY ZIMMERMAN
SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

SCOTTS MILLS – Scotts Mills was home to a flour mill, sawmills and a vibrant prune industry when residents decided to incorporate 100 years ago.

The industries that brought many families to the area have gone, but the city and its hometown pride endure. On Aug. 14, residents will gather to celebrate its first century as an incorporated city.

The festivities will be in conjunction with the homecoming potluck, which has been an annual tradition since 1932, said Margaret Gersch, the president of the Scotts Mills Area Historical Society.

There will be horse-drawn wagon rides, vintage cars, farm equipment and fire trucks on display. There also will be a children's fishing contest, and the fire station and the historical museum will be open for visitors.

Books about the city as well as commemorative coins will be sold to benefit the historical society.

Members of the Marion County Sheriff's Office will participate in the 11:30 a.m. dedication of the old Scotts Mills jail, which is adjacent to the historical museum. The potluck picnic begins at 12:30 p.m. in the city park and the anniversary program will follow at 1:30 p.m.

A quilt show will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 13, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 14, in the Grange hall.

Descendants of the city's namesakes, Robert Hall Scott and Thomas Scott, are expected to visit Scotts Mills and participate in the day's events.

Although settlement of the area predates the arrival of the Scotts, who came in 1866, the brothers and their descendants were instrumental in the development of the area. They ran flour and sawmills. Thomas Scott also was the community's first postmaster.

Charles Scott oversaw the removal of the wooden dam on Butte Creek in 1917, and he was the city's first mayor.

Around the time Scotts Mills incorporated, the community also had a hotel and a box factory. A bank followed in 1920, according to "Scotts Mills: A Pictorial History" by Lois E. Helvey Ray and Judith Sanders Chapman.

More changes came about during the next two decades: Flour and feed production ended in 1931, the bank was a victim of the Depression and closed, the hotel was demolished and Scotts Mills High School graduated its last class in 1943. The covered bridge over Butte Creek was replaced with a new bridge in 1951, the book said.

If you wanted a drink during those turbulent times, you were out of luck in Scotts Mills: The town was dry — an influence of Quaker settlers — from



The Shepard House Hotel in Scotts Mills was built in the early 1890s. It was demolished by the 1930s.

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The Scotts Mills grist mill is seen on Butte Creek in 1894.

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1917-65, when courts overturned the law, according to an April 29, 1969, Oregon Statesman story.

Alcohol wasn't even allowed in the home, as it was written into every property deed, Gersch said.

World War II also played a role in the transformation of Scotts Mills.

"There were two lumber mills right in town," Gersch said. "And they were affiliated with not just the mill but the cutting and everything that went with it, so there were a lot of people working

in those industries then. During World War II, a lot of people went out of town and started working in the shipyards, as that was the thing to be doing."

Not everything has changed in Scotts Mills. Many homes from city's early days are still there today, as is the bank building, which now is home to the post office. The 1894 Friends Church remains, as does the 1897 Christian Church, which now houses the historical society's museum.

The historical society has been pre-

If you go

What: City of Scotts Mills Centennial Celebration

When: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 14

Where: Downtown Scotts Mills, Scotts Mills City Park

Information: Lydia Stoddard, (503) 873-5295, lydia.stoddard@yahoo.com; Margaret Gersch, (503) 873-6596; or Jim Hays, jimwhays@yahoo.com

servicing the history of Scotts Mills since 1974. Items on display include the first sewing machine in the area, school desks and an early school flagpole, as well as photos of many of the early homes and families in the area, all of which can be seen Aug. 14.

Residents "really gelled together to make it a good event," Gersch said. "They're working like troopers. They have pride in the town. That's one thing I like about the town. People are community spirited."

Andy Zimmerman is a former Statesman Journal copy editor who writes a column about local history twice per month. You can contact him with comments or suggestions for future stories at SJTimeCapsule@gmail.com.