

# The Good Old Days

By Tobie Finzel

## Museum News

With the slightly warmer and occasionally sunnier weather, we have welcomed the return of visitors who are bicycling in the area. It's always fun to show the museum to those who are exploring the area for the first time. That is not to say that local visitors aren't equally welcome. We have many visitors who tell us they have lived here for years and have never been inside.

One day, a young man about twelve years old came into the museum. "I've lived here all my life and never been in to see this," he said. It happened that he was a descendant of Clark and Melissa Parker who were the first to settle here in 1874, so it was especially rewarding to show him all the Parker family pictures we have on display.

We were saddened to learn of Norbert Pelster's passing at 100 years of age. Norbert used to visit the museum regularly and enjoyed telling tales of his days working at Oregon-American Lumber. During the Great Depression the mill suspended operations from 1933 to 1936.

Norbert was one of the few people kept on the payroll as a security guard. He regaled us with many stories

of his duties as a night watchman during those years. How we wish we had recorded those stories! We miss him and extend our condolences to the entire Pelster family.

The Museum board welcomes a new and enthusiastic new volunteer, Angela Bettencourt. She recently received her training and will be holding the museum open at least one Sunday per month. As always, we appreciate our volunteers and invite you to become one, too!

## Depression-era Reminiscences from Bob New, VHS 1947

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, jobs were almost nonexistent. The Oregon-American mill didn't reopen until 1936, and Bob remembers that men would show up at the gate of the re-opened Oregon-American Lumber Company and stand around each morning, hoping they might be hired for a job, any job.

There was a man in Vernonia who walked each day from the top of Corey Hill to the mill for many weeks, bringing his lunch in case someone didn't show up for work and he could get a day's wages. He eventually did get a coveted permanent job in 1938.

A 1934 Vernonia Eagle article

listed the forty young men from the Vernonia area who were stationed at the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp near Mist. There were many Depression-era programs established to help address the widespread unemployment; the CCC was designed to put young men to work on public projects including forest fire suppression. They received lodging, meals and a paycheck - most of which had to be sent home to help their families - in exchange for their work. The article noted that these local men were lucky to be stationed so near their homes as this was not often the case.

## From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell was a long-time resident who had a farm in the Upper Nehalem Valley between Natal and Pittsburg. Each year from 1906 until 1955, he kept a regular diary of his activities. Here's what Virgil wrote during the changeable weather of March 1914, his original spelling intact:

*Monday, March 16: Plowed a piece down by the river for potatoes and finished 4:30. Some peddlars here over night. Bright and fine all day.*

*Tuesday, March 17: Plowed the piece back of orchard by the river. Dave & Booth were here for dinner. Awful warm all day. Inez & I went over to Elliott place and got some cattle out in evening.*

*Wednesday, March 18: Went over*

*to Elliott place and plowed all day for Bill Brown. Awful hot all day. Saturday, March 21: Plowed over on the Elliott place all day. Very good all day. Ed. Webster & Kelly were here for dinner.*

*Wednesday, March 24: Built some fence over across the river. Snowed and rained all day and was a terrible bad day. Went over to Elliott place in afternoon and got Chief.*

*Friday, March 27: Took a sow up to the hoar at Tuckers. Started up at 8 and got home 12:45 P.M. Snowed and stormed terrible all day.*

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at 511 E. Bridge Street and is open from 1:00-4:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays (excluding holidays) all year. From June through mid-September, the museum is also open on Fridays from 1:00-4:00 PM. There is no charge for admission but donations are always welcome. Become a member of the museum for an annual \$5 fee to receive the periodic newsletter, and if you are a Facebook user, check out the new Vernonia Pioneer Museum page created by Bill Langmaid. The museum volunteers are always pleased to enlist additional volunteers to help hold the museum open and assist in other ways. Please stop by and let one of the volunteers know of your interest in helping out.

## Oregon Senior Spelling Bee

Many older adults enjoy playing with words and are good spellers, but did you know that there is an Oregon Senior Spelling Bee especially for people 50 years of age and up? This year's event, Oregon's 16th annual senior spelling bee, will be held on Saturday, April 13, at the Heritage Center of the Sisters of Holy Names in Lake Oswego. Starting time will be 1:00 PM

A national senior spelling bee, sponsored by AARP and held each year in Cheyenne, Wyoming, has been in existence for about 17 years, but very few states host a similar contest. This is probably a factor in the success of Oregon contestants, who have returned home with four first place trophies, plus several more second and third place trophies!

The Oregon Senior Spelling Bee starts with a written competition of 75 words presented in three rounds of 25 words each, followed by a break with refreshments for contestants and guests. Competition resumes with an oral round and concludes

with the presentation of trophies to the top three finishers. The first place winner is offered financial assistance to attend the AARP National Spelling Bee in Cheyenne, which will be held on July 13, 2013.

The all-volunteer Oregon Spelling Bee Board hosts this event which has proven to be both entertaining and stimulating. The relaxed atmosphere of the Oregon State Bee provides a great way for seniors to have fun while challenging themselves. The Board is made up mostly of participants who have won the Oregon Bee in the past years, including four Vernonians: Noni Andersen, Tobie Finzel, Carol Sawyer and Audeen Wagner.

For more information or a registration form, call Audeen Wagner at 503-429-9700, or Tobie Finzel at 503-705-2173. The entry fee of \$12.00 is non-refundable. Participants may also register on the day of the event. Spectators are welcome.

## Golfing Season to Begin

By "The Gopher"

April 3<sup>rd</sup> will mark the beginning of the 2013 season of the Vernonia Men's Club.

Wednesday night play is scheduled to begin April 3<sup>rd</sup>, followed by a general meeting.

This year's membership dues will be \$45. This will help fund our Oregon Golf Association Membership, and various tournaments.

This year's "Spring Handicap Tournament" is scheduled for Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup>. For


Tournament Information contact Tournament Directors Nick Zavales or Dave Seidleman.

Our group ranges in skill level, from professional, to really terrible (I proudly reside in the latter group), and most in between. Regardless of your ability level, we welcome all who would join us for a season of fun and camaraderie.

The Vernonia Men's Club is dedicated to promoting the joy of golf, the education of golfers on the rules and etiquette of golf, for the betterment of the game.

Vernonia's Voice is published on the 1st and 3rd Thursday.  
Our next issue will be April 4.

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