

The Good Old Days

By Tobie Finzel

Museum News

If you passed by the museum on April 6th, you would have seen a dozen or so young people hard at work moving and removing plants, pulling weeds, edging flower beds, and tearing out the wooden sidewalk in front of the museum so that a new concrete walk can be put in. The museum was delighted to have several of the Sierra Service Project volunteers help us get on top of what had seemed like an overwhelming task. We thank Pat Stacklie for her part in bringing this program to Vernonia.

Stop by and see our newly framed photographs of Vernona Cherrington, for whom the town was named, and her granddaughter who visited here in 1992. We also have lovely new frames on two Malmsten family portraits, all thanks to a grant from Mark and Helen Greathouse and the fine work done by Grey Dawn Gallery and Archive Photo Restoration.

Early Day Telephone Service

It's hard to imagine a time when home telephones were rare and calling a friend required the help of a telephone operator. Without an operator connecting a caller to his or her desired desti-

nation, there could be no completed telephone call. Although Cad and Dow Keasey had set up a telephone line between Pittsburg and St. Helens in 1902 and a few direct telephone lines between members of some Vernonia families were in use in the early 1900s, it wasn't until 1922 that the Nehalem Telephone Company was established and an office built. A two bedroom apartment at the back of the office housed the chief operator so that she could oversee daily operations and be present in case a problem arose. There was also a cot behind the telephone switchboard for the night operator who was permitted to nap between the infrequent nighttime calls.

Even by the 1940s, not every home had a telephone. Marvin Turner (VHS 1945), whose mother was Chief Operator of what was by then the West Coast Telephone Company, wrote a brief reminiscence about those days. According to Marv, if a long distance call came in for someone without a phone, the operator usually knew someone nearby who could be asked to take a message or ask the person to come to the telephone office to receive or place the call. The operators knew nearly everybody in town, so if a long distance call came in for someone who was away from his or her home or office phone, the opera-

tors would track the person down. This happened frequently with the people at the mill office who often had to be away from their desks. The Oregon-American Lumber Mill staff was so appreciative of the extra service that they always presented the operators with flowers and candy at Christmas time.

By the 1950s, direct distance dialing became the standard, and the Vernonia office was closed with operations moving to Forest Grove. The telephone office was torn down and replaced with the concrete building which houses the automated central telephone switch that serves the Upper Nehalem Valley today.

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 are a few excerpts from April 1917:

Wednesday, April 4: Fixed the telephone line over the river first thing in morning. Done several little jobs during the day. Fair day rained just a very little.

Thursday, April 12: Went up to Pittsburg to look after the sheep first thing in morning. Built a chicken brooder. Rained a little all day.

Wednesday, April 18: Went up to Vernonia 6:30 A.M. and returned 9:30 with my sheep shearing machine. Done several little jobs during the day. Pretty fair day, rained just a little.

Saturday, April 21: Mr. Gessell and I left 6:10 A.M. and got to St. Helens 11:10. Bids opened on St. Helens - Pittsburg road improvement 2 P.M. We left St. Helens 4:10 P.M. and got over to the dance in Vernonia 10 P.M. Left dance 2 A.M. and got home 3:45. Very good day.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at E. 511 Bridge Street and is open from 1 to 4 pm on Saturdays and Sundays (excluding holidays) all year. From June through mid-September, the museum is also open on Fridays from 1 - 4 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.

Opportunity for County Dairy Princess

Columbia County chapter of the Dairy Women's Association is now accepting applications for candidates for County Dairy Princess Ambassador. To enter, a girl must be at least sixteen and a high school Junior, but not over 23 years of age as of June 1, 2013. Candidates must be a resident of Oregon at least one year prior to the contest, unless they are currently a full-time student in a college outside of Oregon. She must be single, never married, nor pregnant or have a child; and if not living at home, must NOT be co-habiting with anyone.

Candidates must also qualify in ONE of these areas: (a) lived or worked on a dairy farm or facility at some time; (b) be the daughter of anyone employed on an op-

erating dairy farm, (c) anyone who is employed or an owner of a milk processing plant or distributor, (d) or any person employed in a dairy related industry. (e) A member or former member of 4-H or FFA that raised or showed a dairy product.

A successful candidate must be willing to represent Columbia County at the State Dairy Princess Ambassador contest in January 2014, travel throughout the county and state April thru September promoting healthy nutrition, which includes Dairy products and awareness about the Dairy industry. Training for these activities is provided to candidates by the Oregon Dairy Women. Questions or qualified candidates can be directed to Diane Larson at (503) 312-6130 by Friday, April 12, 2013.

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Donations toward a scholarship for outgoing Dairy Princess Ambassador, Mikela Heimuller, are now being accepted. Anyone can contribute a tax free scholarship donation for Mikela. Contact Diane Larson at (503)312-6130 by May 1, 2013.

Columbia County Dairy Women vend at local events and festivals to raise funds in support of scholarship awards now available to ANY graduating high school senior from Columbia County. An essay about a Dairy related topic is required. Scholarship applications may be picked up at any high school in the County or contact Diane Larson at (503) 312-6130. Applications are due by May 1, 2013.

May 21, 2013 Election Candidates

Candidates for the May 21, 2013 election have filed.

For Vernonia School Board Director there are four seats up for elections. Incumbents have filed and are running unopposed for three positions: Jim Krahn for Position 1, Ernie Smith for Position 4 and Cari Levenseller for Position 5. There is no candidate filed for Director 6.

For the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District Board of Directors, Ben Davis is running for Position 1, and Luke Ellis and Michael Demeter have both filed to run for Position 5.


For the Mist-Birkenfeld

Rural Fire Protection District Board of Directors, all candidates are running unopposed: Joan Marie Jones for Position 2, William C. Dejager for Position 3 and Patricia Wright for Position 4. There is no candidate filed for Position 5.

For the Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District Board of Directors there are four candidates filed for three positions. Connie Budge of Rainier is running for Zone 2, Henry B. Heimuller of St. Helens is running for Zone 3 and Tyler Miller and Robert Anderson, both of Scappoose are running for Zone 5.

Vernonia's Voice is published on the 1st and 3rd Thursday. Our next issue will be May 2.

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