

# The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

## Museum Notes

By the time this issue of *Vernonia's Voice* is published, we should have a new sidewalk started along the front of the museum. We'll give appropriate kudos to our volunteer helpers next month, but for now we'll express our gratitude in advance to the Vernonia Freewheelers and Alan Hein for offering their needed skills and willingness to help us get this done!

We are also grateful to our new volunteer, Julie Prohaska, who held the museum open on a recent Sunday and has committed one shift per month to help us staff our three day per week summer schedule. We are truly in need of additional volunteers to help in this way. You don't need to know anything about Vernonia history – we have lots of resource materials and forms that a visitor with specific questions can fill out and leave for us to research. All we ask is a willingness to unlock the doors, turn on the lights and greet guests for one (or more!) three hour shift on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays. Stop by during our open hours, leave a voice message at 503.429.3713 or email [vernoniamuseum@gmail.com](mailto:vernoniamuseum@gmail.com) if you can help in this way. We would so appreciate the help.

## Early Community Organizations

When Vernonia had a forest products and agriculture-based economy, nearly all of its residents were able to work in local lumber mills or the businesses that sold groceries, gasoline, automobiles, hardware, and other supplies and services. Without the frenetic schedules that seem to define modern life, evenings were often spent at home or with friends, perhaps playing cards or musical instruments, and dances were a mainstay of Saturday nights.

The Vernonia and Natal Granges were both established in 1901 to serve

farm families for both social activities and community service as well as to be part of the collective voice of farmers nationally. Besides hosting dances and picnics, these granges donated to local and national charities, worked on building roads in the area and helped needy families. The Winema Grange in Birkenfeld was established in 1924 but no longer operates. During the Kerry Logging Company days, it was said to be one of the largest granges in the county. Its building in Birkenfeld once served both as the grange hall and the local school and was owned jointly by the two entities. Natal, Vernonia and seven other granges still remain active in Columbia County albeit with much smaller membership rosters than the hundreds each once had.

The American Legion Post No. 119 was started in 1924 after a group of World War I (then known as the Great War) veterans were sharing their service stories at Jack Carkin's Tailor Shop. They received the charter in 1925 and by then had seventeen charter and new members. By 1927, it had grown to its record high of 308 members. That same year, they built the hall on Adams Street where the post and Vernonia Cares now operate. Over the years, Post No. 119 has performed a variety of services to the community including purchase of an ambulance and inhalator/resuscitator for emergency medical services; hosted dances, picnics and junior and senior gem clubs; built an airfield in Riverview (Mist Drive area); and many other projects for the good of the community, state and nation.

As we noted in our March column about the Study Club, the huge population boom brought on by the construction of the Oregon-American Lumber Mill in the early 1920s also resulted in a growth in civic-oriented fraternal societies. Unlike the Granges, the lodge organizations had exclusively male or

female memberships. The Odd Fellows Lodge received its charter in 1921 and its sister organization, the Rebekah Lodge, was instituted in 1924. The Masonic Fraternity and its female counterpart, Eastern Star, were organized in 1924. Their Order of Rainbows for Girls began in 1928. The Knights of Pythias Lodge was chartered in 1923 and by 1926 the Pythian Sisters established their Temple. Until construction of the Masonic Temple on Jefferson Avenue north of Bridge Street in 1928 and the Odd Fellows Hall in 1921 on North Street (currently home of Nehalem Valley Bible Church), meetings were held in the Vernonia Grange Hall as were the meetings of Knights of Pythias and the Pythian Sisters.

Membership in all of the fraternal organizations shrank markedly during the Great Depression, but participation resumed in the 1940s through the 1960s when jobs that required commuting and other factors once again led to their decline locally.

*(Note: The information in this article comes from a special edition of the Vernonia Eagle published in 1966 to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of Vernonia's official charter in 1891)*

## From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell (1887-1963) was a longtime resident whose family 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. In his younger years he wrote frequently of the dances at the local Grange halls in Natal and Vernonia and was active in his later years in the Masonic Lodge; his two sons, DeLoss and Melvin, were also Masons and his wife, Inez, was a Rebekah.

**Thursday, June 18, 1908:** Went down to Fishhawk in the buggy. Started down at 8 and got down there at 12. Got back home at 3:45. Rained most all day. Received a postal from Francis. A.E. was

arrested.

**Saturday, June 20:** Went over to Eliotts in the morning and Jim and I thought we would go down to the doings at the Grange Hall. Went down in the buggy. Went down as far as Fishhawk after the doings. Got home about 8:30. Rained most all day.

**Sunday, June 21:** Started down to Mist to the ball game between Vernonia and Mist at 8:30. Went down in the buggy. Got to Mist about 10:30. The score was 10 to 16 in favor of Vernonia. We played a little bit after the game. Got home at 6:30. Sprinkled a little.

**Tuesday, June 23:** Went out to Clatskanie in the buggy. Started out at 4:25 and got to Clatskanie at 8. Started back at 12:15 and got home at 6 P.M. Pretty warm day. Received a dandy postal from Francis.

**Wednesday, June 24:** Washed the buggy. Went up on East Fork and got Daisy. Took the team down in the afternoon and graded road for Emery Mills. Pretty warm day. Got home at 6:45. Received a postal from Francis.

*The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at 511 E. 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 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.*

## SAFE Receives \$25,000 Grant

SAFE of Columbia County is the recipient of a \$25,000 grant from The Oregon Community Foundation to further its development and outreach efforts. This award enables SAFE to continue its mission: We empower our community to live safe, healthy lives free from abuse.

SAFE stands for Support, Advocacy, Freedom and Empowerment. The agency meets the needs of those affected by domestic and sexual violence by providing 24 hour crisis response, ongoing advocacy, counseling and safety planning for survivors as well as prevention education throughout the community. SAFE recently changed its name from Columbia County Women's Resource Center and has been serving Columbia County since 1979.

The mission of The Oregon Community Foundation is to improve life in Oregon and promote effective philanthropy. OCF works with individuals, families, businesses, and organizations to create charitable funds to support the community causes they care about. Through these funds OCF awards more than \$60 million annually in grants and scholarships.

The foundation makes grants through an application process that involves local citizens in the review and evaluation of requests for funds. Application materials are available through the foundation's Portland office. Individuals or businesses interested in

establishing a fund may contact the Portland office at 1221 SW Yamhill, Suite 100, Portland OR 97205, 503.227.6846 or visit [www.oregoncf.org](http://www.oregoncf.org)

SAFE relies heavily on the support of donations from community partners like The Oregon Community Foundation as well as individual local donors and volunteers. New Volunteer Advocate Training will begin June 20th. This 40 hour training meets statewide requirements for anyone in direct service advocacy for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Those

interested in volunteering can contact Katie Troha, DVSA Advocate and Volunteer Coordinator: (503) 397-7110.

For more information about the organization, contact Naaman Cordova-Muenzberg, Executive Director: (503) 397-7110.

If you or someone you know is seeking services related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking, call the 24/7 Crisis Line: 503-397-6161 or (toll free) 1-866-397-6161.

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