

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Fish Tales

Even with the near-record dry summer, the brief rains in mid-September brought the salmon back to Rock Creek to spawn just in time for Vernonia's Salmon Festival. Thanks to Maggie Peyton, Director of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, Claudia Chinook, the walk-through salmon, also paid a call. Maggie recently came upon an article about early-day fishing and the need for clear streams that she shared with Council members, one of whom gave me a copy of the fascinating story. This writer doesn't know when it was written or the author's maiden name; if any reader can supply additional information to the museum on the source of this article or the author, it would be appreciated.

Dora Marlin (presumably her married name) was born in 1916 and at eight years of age moved with her parents and four sisters to a 160 acre farm on Deer Creek and Little Deer Creek near Natal. She attended Mist School and later Vernonia High School. Her father was a dairy farmer, and the 160 acres of virgin fir and cedar only had forty partially cleared acres on which they grew crops to feed the family, their cattle and other farm animals. As was true for many, fishing and hunting provided most of the family's protein as their only cash income was from the cream they sold to the Raven Dairy in Portland.

Dora was the only one of her sisters who loved to fish, and so she was allowed to get out of her regular farm chores save one when the salmon runs began. Before first light, she took a lantern to the barn and chopped up carrots, turnips and other root crops to put in wooden buckets for each cow. She then got hay from the hay-mow and grain and molasses from wooden buckets in the barn. A rich diet for the cows meant high butterfat-content cream which brought a higher price. This required chore complete, Dora went off to fish with a pole crafted by her father from strong maple wood. She had to be careful with her fishing line and hooks as these had to be purchased with the family's

scarce cash.

Dora happily fished along the many miles of streams near their farm. She caught trout, steelhead, and several species of salmon: Silvers, Jack, Chinook and a hook-nosed variety. She once even caught a sturgeon. It was not unusual to catch 35 or more fish a day, the runs were so bountiful then. Her mother taught the girls to preserve the fish in a variety of ways. With no electricity for refrigeration or freezing, fish were smoked, canned in jars or pickled. A Finnish woman from the neighboring farm taught Dora's mother how to pickle the fish for storage in wooden barrels. Crawfish were caught with a piece of meat on a string and then eaten fresh as were the bright red salmon eggs that her mother cooked in a cream sauce.

The family had a large smokehouse and used wild cherry and vine maple wood to produce the smoke. In addition to the fish, they cured pork, beef, lamb, elk, deer, and bear. Their land also provided root crops, apples, filberts, and seasonal vegetables while the forest gave them wild fruits: blackcaps, huckleberries, evergreen blackberries, elderberries for jelly, salmonberries, thimbleberries, and wild hazelnuts. As Dora stated, they had plenty to eat, just not a lot of money.

The biggest fish that Dora ever caught was a 54 pound Chinook the year she was twelve. Her story goes into great detail about her long battle with that salmon, and in later years, her own husband and sons thought it was just another one of her fish stories. Once, when her sons were ten and twelve, the family went up to the old homestead during a salmon run. The remaining resident in the area was the son of their Finnish neighbors, the Kauppis, who still lived on his parents' farm. Dora led her family to Little Deer Creek where she showed them how she used to catch fish with her bare hands. She stood still in rubber boots with her feet apart until a salmon swum between her legs. She grabbed it by the tail and flipped it onto the bank. Her family was amazed as she did this several times. They finally realized that her fish tales were indeed true.

From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell (1887-1963) was a long-time 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. By the 1920s his entries were shorter and not as frequent, but he continued to document the weather and his activities regarding farm and paid work, fishing, hunting, and leisure activities.

Friday, September 29, 1922: Picked evergreen berries and made some wine. Cloudy most of day.

Sunday, October 1, 1922: Was around home all day. Ed & Edna here. Very good day.

Tuesday, October 3, 1922: Put connecting rod in drag saw. Sawed wood P.M. Pretty good day.

Saturday, October 7, 1922: Hauled some wood to East Fork Camp. Bright fine day.

Wednesday, October 18, 1922: Finished plowing out potatoes Elliott place. Very good day.

Saturday, October 21, 1922: Hunting forenoon. Took Lewey Nelson to Birkenfeld P.M. Very fine day.

Sunday, October 22, 1922: Picked apples A.M. Took ride above Vernonia 1 mile P.M. Dinner party in pasture. Very fine 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 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.

Invitation: Health Center's Grand Opening October 25

The Vernonia Health Center's new Carolyn Keasey Memorial Building is open for business at 1005 Cougar Street. It's the result of a multiple year effort by the Vernonia Health Center Board (VHCB) to develop a plan and raise money to build a new facility out of the floodplain so that Vernonia and the Upper Nehalem Valley region can continue to have local access to medical care. Designed to incorporate a team/multiple provider-model, the goal is to create a true medical home in Vernonia. Primary care is provided in partnership with the Public Health Foundation of Columbia County and Pacific

University. The Vernonia Health Center Board will bring additional services to the new facility to improve health care in Vernonia, so stay tuned for updates.

Designed by Scott Edwards Architects, the project was managed by Joan Jasper, and built by Five Star Builders overseen by Clint Jackson and Al Jenkins. It's situated on land owned by the City of Vernonia for which the Vernonia Health Center Board has a fifty-year lease.

The facility is completely paid for, there was no direct cost to the community, and the VHCB is completely debt free. Private foundations provided

the bulk of the money. FEMA buyout money and funding from Providence via the donation campaign they held after the 2007 flood provided the rest of the funding. With deep gratitude we acknowledge the assistance of the following:

Meyer Memorial Trust

\$300,000

The Ford Family Foundation

\$250,000

The Collins Foundation

\$100,000

Oregon Community Foundation

\$35,000

Providence donation campaign

\$191,000

Samuel S. Johnson Foundation

\$5,000 (which Senator Betsy Johnson herself brought to the Groundbreaking Ceremony)

FEMA Buyout

\$171,000

(A Big Thank you to the Community Action Team group for their work on this.)

Your Vernonia Health Center Board, a completely volunteer entity, worked long and hard to keep costs down while building a modern flexible facility. The VCHB and local volunteers through the Master Gardener program, locally spearheaded by Heather Lewis, Jim and Marie Krahn, Dr. Thiringer, and many others provided the native, low maintenance landscaping. Volunteers from the board, community, the Public Health Foundation, and Pacific University students did the move from the old to the new facility.

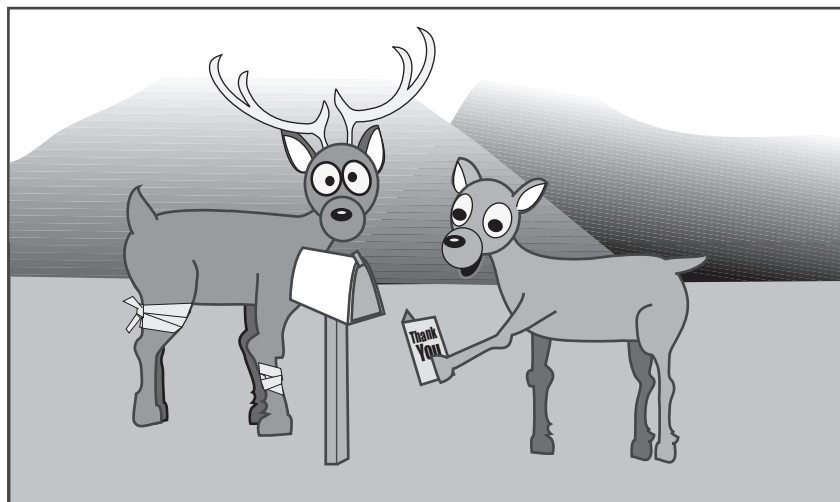
Special guests will be attending the official Grand Opening celebration on October 25th from 11:00 to 3:00. Tours will be available. The Vernonia Health Center Board encourages the community to come and celebrate another step forward in the rebuilding of Vernonia.

Terry's Gym



JOIN
THE TEAM!

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