

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Museum News

We wish everyone the best for Christmas, the other December holidays and the New Year. If you're looking for a last minute gift for someone with Vernonia connections, stop by the museum during our open hours, Saturdays and Sundays from 1 – 4 pm. We have copies of both books on Vernonia history and music CDs by Hobe Kytr and Timberbound as well as a selection of DVDs of photos and videos of Vernonia events. The Vernonia books are also on sale at R&S Market (formerly Sentry).

We also want to thank our members, donors, visitors, and volunteers for helping us keep Vernonia history alive and accessible. Thanks to Mike Snow of ArtAttack! we'll soon have a new sign in the outdoor equipment shed thanking those who helped make our two most recent projects possible.

The Malmsten Family in Vernonia, Part 2

After his return to Vernonia from the odd jobs he'd taken in the St. Helens area, Franklin continued to work his homestead. By 1895, his father, Olof, had proved up his own homestead and decided to return to Minnesota. Franklin and his brother Otto accompanied him on the long walk to St. Helens, each carrying a suitcase weighing from fifty to seventy-five pounds. They took a steamboat to Portland where Olof boarded the train to St. Paul. Otto and Franklin returned to Vernonia on foot.

Franklin resumed timber falling and other odd jobs around Vernonia. He befriended Dorr Keasey, grandson of Eden Keasey whose land claim was five miles up Rock Creek; much of that land remains in the Keasey family to this day. Franklin and Dorr worked together in a local sawmill. When the engineer at the mill was fired for not keeping the steam power steady, Franklin got the job as both engineer and fireman.

Franklin went back to logging for a short time with Frank Brown, a former sheriff from Maine. He next took a job as a dump cart driver on a new railroad that was being built between Rainier and Astoria and Seaside followed by a stint with Northern Pacific near Warren. When his parents, his brother Sidney, and Olof's brother Andrew, re-

turned to Vernonia in December 1897, Franklin rejoined his family. Olof and his wife, Louisa, bought seven acres on two adjoining lots on the Nehalem River by what is now Mist Drive. The family lived in an existing home that burned in later years; the barn they built still stands at Farmwoman's Nursery.

Franklin, still a bachelor, wasn't sure about remaining in Oregon; in April 1898 he returned to the family farms in Minnesota where he partnered with his brother, Elon. He traded half interest in his Vernonia quarter section for half interest in Elon's farm equipment. They farmed both Malmsten family farms until Olof sold them in 1902; the brothers then rented nearby properties and continued farming.

Two weeks after Franklin returned to Minnesota, his brother Charles came to Vernonia and filed for 160 acres on Pebble Creek Road. Elon married in 1899, and Franklin attended the state agricultural college in St. Paul where he studied agriculture, animal husbandry, mathematics, and steam engineering. He then went to a business school in Minneapolis for a three month course in bookkeeping, arithmetic and language. Shortly after the sale of the family farms, Franklin visited Iowa and met Bessie Anderson to whom he was married in 1903. His wedding coat and their wedding picture are among the Malmsten artifacts on display at the Vernonia Pioneer Museum.

Franklin harvested the 1903 crop on the rented farm and moved to Swea City, Iowa, where he went into partnership with his brother-in-law in a hardware business. Franklin and Bessie came to Vernonia in late 1906 with their baby daughter, Hazel, to visit his parents who had not yet met his wife or child. They decided to remain in Vernonia. Franklin sold his share of the hardware business, and Bessie and Hazel returned briefly to Iowa to sell the household goods that they didn't ship to Oregon.

In 1907 Franklin decided to build a saw mill with his three brothers (Charles, Sidney and Elon, the last brother to come to Oregon) and a Mr. Hurt. They called their business "Vernonia Lumber and Fuel." The mill was located near where the New Hong Kong Restaurant stands today. With all the brothers and parents now in Vernonia, they set up a telephone line between

their homes and let other neighbors join in. At first known informally as "The Swede Line," it became the foundation of the Nehalem Telephone Company.

Part 3 will complete our brief history of the Malmsten Family in our January column.

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. It appears that a woman named Alice was his sweetheart in 1906 and 1907 but, as usual, the details are definitely lacking! At the end of his 1907 diary, Virgil noted that he had sent 38 post cards to Alice in 1906 through January 15, 1907, and 23 leather post cards.

Friday, December 20: Went down to the Pringle School House in the morning and took one of the library books down. Also hunted for some pheasants. Pretty fair day but awful cold.

Tuesday, December 24: Started down for the shooting match at Natal at 9 and got back at 4:30. Had a pretty good time. Started for Vernonia doings at 6 and got back at 12:30. Had a pretty good time. Did not rain any all day but cold. Received two postals from Alice. Got 7 altogether.

Wednesday, December 25: Did not do much but stay in the house all day because it rained awful hard all day. Received a postal from Dee.

Thursday, December 26: Went up to Pittsburg the first thing in the morning to

mail some letters. Pretty fair day. Sent a postal to Alice. Received a note from Alice asking me down next Saturday night. The mail has not been over from Clatskanie since Monday.

Saturday, December 28: Went down to Pringles in the morning and heard the phonograph for a while. Snowed a little and a terrible bad day. Received a short letter from Alice. Started down to Petersons at 6:45 p.m. and had one of the best times I have had for a long time. Got home at 2:30 a.m.

Tuesday, December 31: Was getting ready for the dance at Vernonia most of morning. Started for Vernonia at 3 p.m. Got there at 4. Alice was my partner for the evening. Had a fair time. Left the dance at 3:30 a.m. and got home at 5:30. Slept till 9. Myrtle and Henry came.

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.



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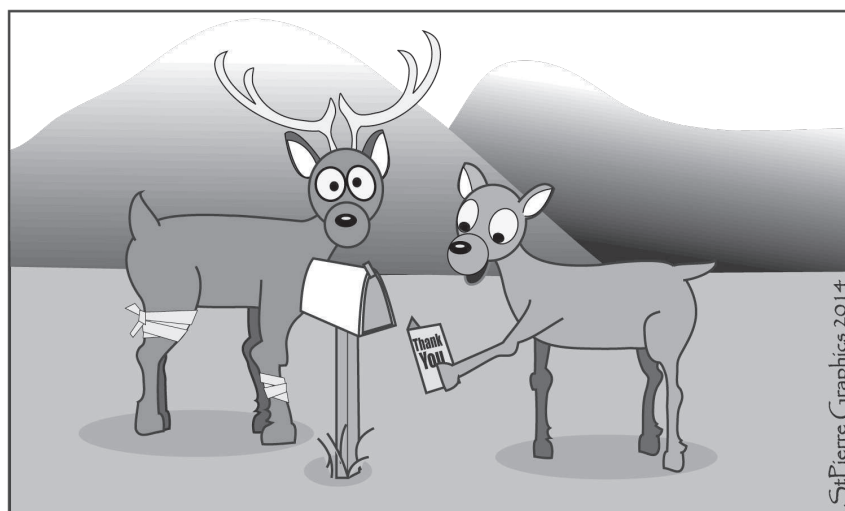
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