

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

The Malmsten Family in Vernonia, Part 3

Olof Malmsten was a strong and healthy man well into his eighties. He worked at his blacksmithing trade until near the end of his life. He had a paralyzing stroke in June, 1910, and a second, fatal stroke in November of that year at age 85. He is buried in the Vernonia Pioneer Cemetery. His wife, Louisa, is buried next to him. She died seven years later in November 1917.

Four of the five Malmsten brothers - Franklin, Charles, Sidney, and Elon - and Mr. Hurt operated the mill they established in 1907 for several years but business at Vernonia Lumber and Fuel was slow and money was scarce. Mr. Hurt was the first to sell his share, then the brothers one by one until everyone but Franklin had sold out. In 1922 Oregon-American Lumber bought most of that site for the new sawmill that would bring big changes to Vernonia. O-A also acquired several acres of Franklin's pasture land north of the Nehalem River to create the huge mill pond now known as Vernonia Lake.

Vernonia's population soared from 150 to over 2,000 as soon as word of the future mill and the jobs it would provide became known. During this period, Vernonia was the fastest growing city in Oregon. With so many people coming to town to seek employment and no hotel to accommodate them, Franklin built the Vernonia Hotel in 1921 on Bridge Street where the Senior Center currently stands. The hotel boasted the first running water and electric lights in town. A small power generating plant at the dam on Rock Creek provided the electricity. Only downtown Vernonia had this luxury that eliminated the daily task of cleaning and filling kerosene lamps.

Father Olof, brother Otto and Franklin were also instrumental in building the Evangelical Church in Vernonia. The first church was located north of Bridge Street on Jefferson. The church outgrew its space and in 1925 built a new structure, today known as Grace Family Fellowship, on State and A Streets, right across the street from Charles Malmsten's home. The first church's steeple taken down, the

remaining building was converted into the Cherry Tree Apartments.

Franklin and Bessie ran the Vernonia Hotel for a few years before leasing it to other managers. A man of many talents, Franklin served on the city council in the early 1920s. He also built a service station and garage near the corner of Bridge and State. When the O-A mill closed during the Great Depression, many people moved away to seek employment elsewhere. Franklin and Bessie stayed, however, and Franklin worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1933 to 1936, the years of the mill closure.

They remained in Vernonia until 1947 when they built a home in the Cedar Mill area of Portland next to their daughter, Kathryn, and near their son Marshall. Along with their sister, Hazel, all three of Franklin and Bessie's children graduated from Vernonia High School. Otto and Louisa's other sons also moved away from Vernonia, but the family's history is interwoven with much of the town's early years. Their legacy remains in the church they helped build and the beautiful barn on Mist Drive.

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. One hundred years ago this month, Virgil had business with the regional Game Warden regarding some game violators. Farm chores continued as usual.

Friday, January 15, 1915: Worked around the barn pretty much all day. Pet had a calf 10:30 A.M. A little snow on early in the morning but bright and dandy balance of the day.

Monday, January 18: Took the hides off of two sheep that died first thing in morning. Frost in morning but bright and dandy all day.

Sunday, January 24: Went over to Elliott place in forenoon. C.W. Loughery, Game Warden, came 11 A.M. and stayed overnight. Nellie Deeds was up for a little while. Frozen awful hard in morning but bright and fine all day.

Monday, January 25: C.W. Loughery, Game Warden, and I left 8:20 A.M. Went up to Vernonia and on up to Smiths and stayed overnight. Frozen hard in

morning but bright and fine balance of day. Got up there 3:30.

Tuesday, January 26: Left Smiths 8 A.M. Walked down and got here 11:30 A.M. Frozen considerable in morning but very good balance of day.

During the next two weeks, Virgil made multiple trips to St. Helens, apparently to appear as a witness in the game violation case.

Thursday, February 4: Left 7:30 A.M. and got to Houlton 1:30. Fair in forenoon but rained considerable in afternoon.

Friday, February 5: Was in St. Helens all day. Received a subpoena about 1 P.M. to serve on the Mrs. Foreman jury but was not called up. Rained awful hard all day.

Saturday, February 6: Left Houlton 4 A.M. and got home 9 A.M. Went up to Vernonia 10:30 and returned 2 P.M. Very good all day. Received my new Game Warden Commission and Star 609 for 1915.

Monday, February 8: Garfield and I left 6 A.M. and got to St. Helens 12. Listened to a case in Circuit Court in afternoon. Very good most all day.

Tuesday, February 9: Was a witness

before the Grand Jury at St. Helens in forenoon. Left Houlton 1:25 and got home 6:30. Bright and dandy all day.

Friday, February 12: Just fooled around most all day. Sheriff Stanwood took the game violators out to St. Helens. Very good all day. C.W. Loughery came late in evening and stayed overnight.

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.






Open Air Market Seeks Public Input

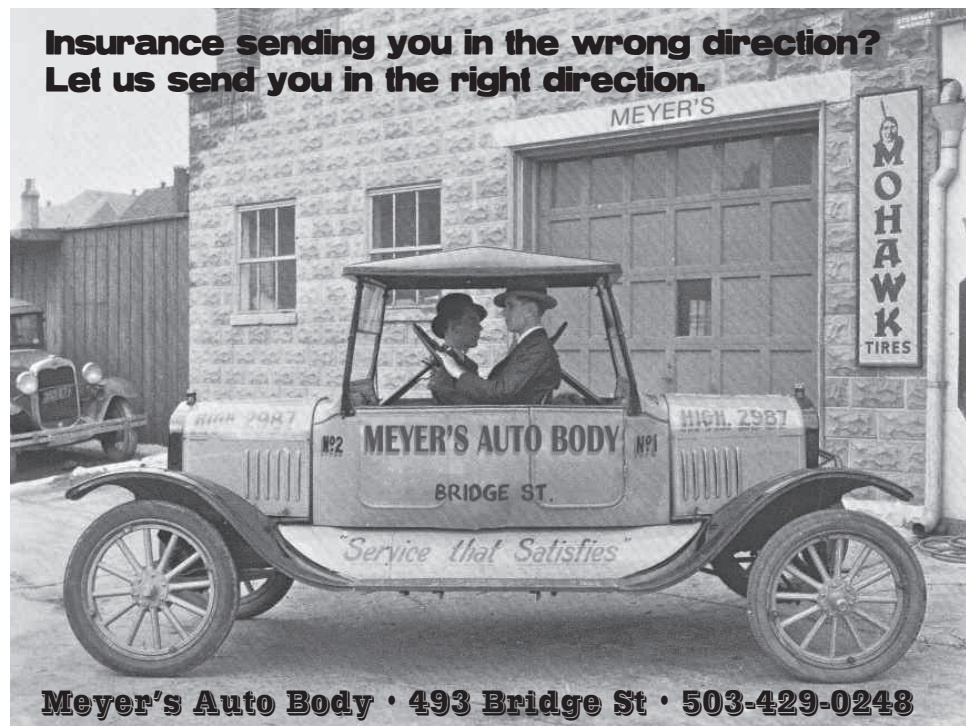


Open Air Market Potluck

Where - Vernonia Grange
When - Jan 17th at 1-4pm
Why - get public input
RSVP - Rachel@rangelights.com
Bill@rangelights.com
or by calling 503-429-0438



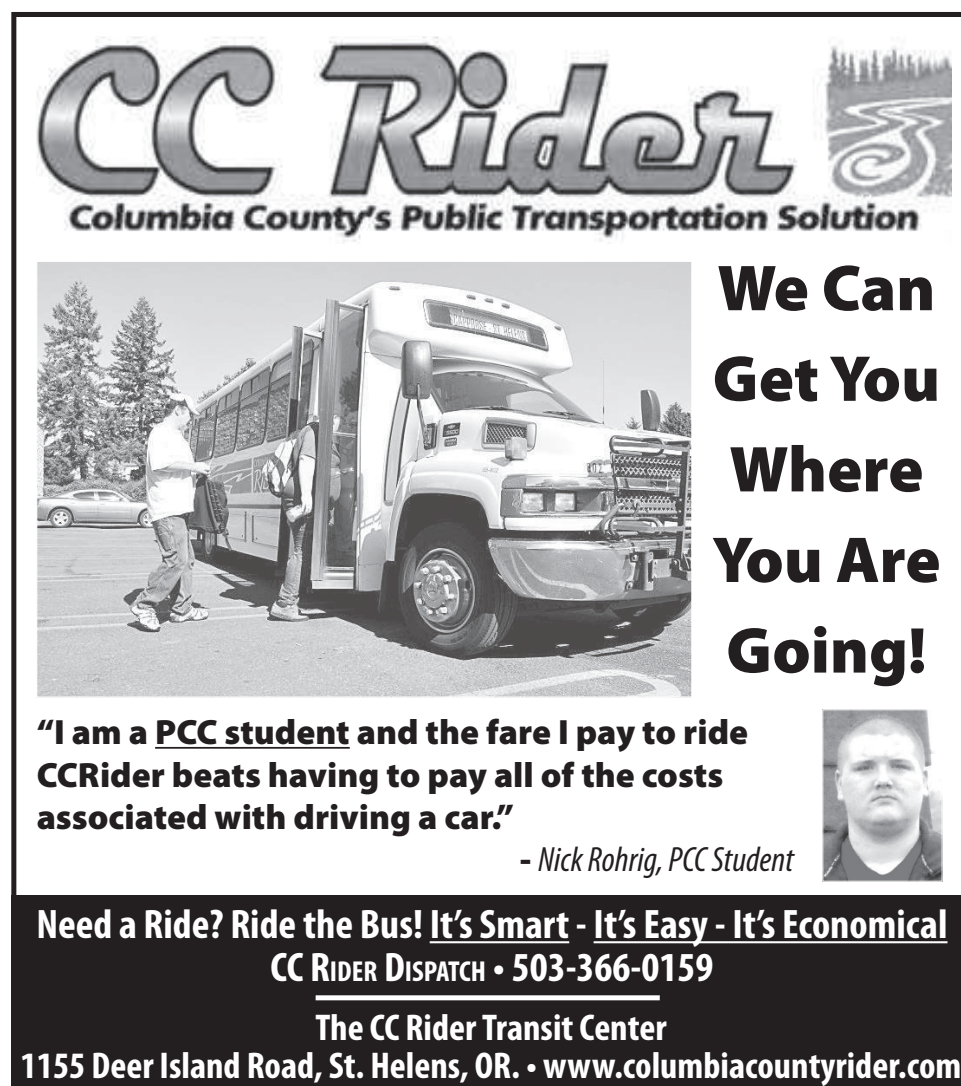


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