

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

The History of a Barn

For a city with a relatively short history, tracing locations and ownerships of properties is still a daunting task. From its start in 1874 through the present time, properties have been bought, sold and subdivided many times. Structures have been built, burned down or replaced. Routes have changed and the railroads have all come and gone. The names of many streets and roads have similarly changed over time. As a result, tracing the ownership of one particular building provides a challenging exercise.

Over the past year, Janelle Thomas Cedergreen, Bill Weed, other members of the Weed family, and this writer have engaged in a long series of emails regarding the history of the beautiful Farmwoman's Barn north of the Green Bridge on Mist Drive. Lorna Poetter, current owner of the property and proprietor of Farmwoman's Nursery, also engaged in the discussion. In order to set the record straight, Janelle compiled the dialogue in a file for the library and museum. We've summarized the research for this month's column.

Bill Weed, a descendant of two Vernonia pioneer families, the Van Blaricoms and the Weeds, is an amateur historian who researches his family heritage extensively and graciously shares the results with other members of his family and with the museum. In his work to determine the location of the original Van Blaricom properties, he contacted Janelle Cedergreen, daughter of Guy Thomas who was General Manager at West Oregon Electric for many years. The Thomas's lived on part of Henry Van Blaricom's land claim from 1955 to 1974. The barn in question has been referred to by many names over the years depending on who owned the property. Who built the barn and when was the topic of discussion because of conflicting information in various publications.

The extended Van Blaricom family arrived in Vernonia in 1874 shortly after the Clark Parker family settled in the vicinity of present-day Heather Lane.

Henry Van Blaricom filed a claim and built a home on 80 acres from the east bank of the Nehalem River to beyond what is now Mist Drive/Highway 47 North. Other family members (John and Hiram Van Blaricom, the Bakers and the Sheeleys) settled on both sides of Rock Creek in what became downtown Vernonia.

In 1879, Henry's daughter Emma married Judson Weed at her family's homestead. Leading the cow Emma's parents gave the couple as a wedding present, their honeymoon journey was the five mile walk from her family home to his homestead on Timber Route. The Weed descendants still revere the barn as a family landmark.

Henry never perfected his Vernonia claim and moved to Cowlitz County, Washington, in 1885. He apparently sold the land to John Price who received a land patent for Henry's 80 acres and an adjacent 80 acre parcel to the east in 1886. By the late 1890s, seven acres of Henry's original homestead belonged to Olof Malmsten. Although we presume they built the property's house, it was definitely the Malmsten family who built the barn around 1900. Lorna Poetter has a photograph taken of the family standing in front of the just-completed structure. The museum also has photos of the barn and the home which later burned down.

The Thomas's bought their home from the Olin family in 1955; the property has been further subdivided since that time. We have yet to document the owners between the Malmstens and the Olins, but with its hand-hewn beams, mortise and tenon joints, and wide plank floors, the barn remains a historically significant structure worthy of admiration.

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. We don't have the backstory on the wagon he salvages in the entries below.

Monday, February 15, 1915: Butchered a hog first thing in morning. Went over to Elliott place, also found where the wagon had been thrown into the river up at Pittsburg. Pretty cold early in morning but bright and dandy during the day.

Tuesday, February 16: Cut the hog up first thing in morning. Did not do much of anything balance of day. Very good all day.

Friday, February 19: Inez and I left 10:30 and got up to Smiths 2:45 P.M. Very good all day.

Saturday, February 20: Left Smiths 9 A.M. rode down to Vernonia, walked on down to Al Parkers. There found a boat in a drift and rode on down in it. Rained a little all day. Got home 1:15 P.M.

Sunday, February 21: Went up to Pittsburg in forenoon and got the wagon wheels out of the river. Just fooled around in afternoon. Pretty good most of day. Came down from Pittsburg in boat.

Monday, February 22: Went over to Elliott place first thing in morning. Oiled the heavy harness. Rained just a very little most all day.

Tuesday, February 23: Brought the light wagon wheels down from Pittsburg. Pretty fair most all day.

Wednesday, February 24: Went over to Elliott place and got a piece of timber to make a double tree out of. Went over the harness again with oil. Fair in forenoon but rained considerable all afternoon.

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. We now have a page on the Vernonia Hands on Art website, www.vernoniahands-on-art.org If you are a Facebook user, check out the Vernonia Pioneer Museum page. 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.

PCC Columbia County Update

- In November, PCC was awarded a planning grant from the Ford Family Foundation to explore how our Future Connect program model could be implemented in rural communities in PCC's district, including Columbia County. Future Connect is a scholarship and support program that provides low income/first generation college students with support to access and succeed in college. PCC staff will reach out to stakeholders in Columbia County and western Washington County over the next year to learn how Future Connect might be implemented in rural communities. To learn more about this exceptional program, please visit <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/future-connect/>.
- Vernonia High School has started a Distance Learning Program through PCC which allows students to earn both high school and college credits simultaneously. It began last fall as a pilot program and successfully engaged 16 students in a college-level writing course. The goal is to develop the program and offer a diverse array of classes. This program, supported by Vernonia School District and offered at no cost to participating students, is an excellent opportunity to get a running start at college-level work.
- Always eager to recycle usable goods, Rock Creek Campus made its second major surplus donation to Vernonia Schools in November. The school received 21 computer tables, 50 overhead storage bins, one ADA standing desk and 12 Dell flat screen

- monitors. The donation was valued at \$11,600. Rock Creek made an earlier donation to Vernonia in May. The value of that delivery of 85 computers and 47 flat screen monitors was assessed at \$17,450. The total Rock Creek surplus donation to Vernonia Schools in 2014 was \$29,050.
- PCC's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) has had success in Columbia County. According to SBDC faculty member Leslie Hildula, she has met regularly with four clients from South Columbia County. Two are from Scappoose, one from St. Helens and one from Warren. As a result, one client has expanded her shop and is

- offering new products and services this spring. Another professional services client, working out of a home office, has doubled her sales. A third client has improved his operations and is slowly improving his marketing efforts. The fourth client, a graduate of our Small Business Management program, enrolled in Advanced SBM and is now meeting with that program's adviser in Portland. For more information on the SBDC program, please contact Leslie at 503-939-8648 or at hildulal@gmail.com. The program web site is at www.bizcenter.org/PCC.
- Kudos to April Long, the Scappoose resident who earned a two-year degree in

- aviation maintenance technology at the Rock Creek Campus. She is now a full-time employee working for The Boeing Company in Gresham. She started her new job in January. Last summer, April was one of 12 PCC students selected for a paid internship sponsored by the company. We wish her all the best.
- A small number of people have volunteered and others have been nominated to serve on the proposed PCC Center Community Advisory Board. We will accept additional names for consideration until February 13. Please forward names and contact information to Janis.nichols@pcc.edu.

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