

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Early Post Offices, Part One

A patron recently came to the museum in a quest for postmarks from early day and preferably defunct post offices in the area. We showed him an article on the early area post offices from the Vernonia Centennial (1991) special edition compiled by Dirk and Noni Andersen, former publishers of *The Independent*. The Andersen's credited Robb Wilson for his extensive research for the articles in this paper, *Vernonia – The First 100 Years*. We will base this and next month's articles about the early post offices on this research in addition to our own.

For the first four years of its existence, the community we now call Vernonia was isolated by the dense forests and rugged terrain that encircled the Upper Nehalem Valley. Mail for the area was primarily sent to Mountindale and brought in when a resident passed that way into the valley. In January 1878, the US Post Office granted an office to the new little town which had chosen the name "Vernona" for early settler Ozias Cherrington's daughter. Somewhere in the application process, an "I" was inserted, and the new post office and town became Vernonia. David Baker, the first postmaster, set up the office in his homestead cabin located where the second Vernonia High School once stood.

During this same time period, a new road was built between the valley and St. Helens. Once a week, mail was transported on foot or horseback between the two towns. After the first year, Hiram Van Blaricom succeeded Mr. Campbell, the first carrier, and carried the mail for four years. Following Baker's nine year tenure as postmaster, nine others held this title until 1918 when Emil Messing assumed the position. Messing was postmaster until his retirement in 1954.

He erected the first post office building on Madison Street and a larger one in the 1920s to accommodate the surge in population due to the new lumber mill. A few years later, the post office moved to a building on Bridge Street where it shared space with a drug store and later to the former gas and electric building on Bridge and Park Place. In 1954, a modern post office structure was built on Jefferson Street. It was destroyed by fire in 1974 and replaced with the post office we have today, the only one in the 97064 ZIP code.

Eden Keasey applied for a post office on his farm in 1890, five miles out from Vernonia on what was then known as Rock Creek Road, to serve the homesteaders who lived in that area. Mr. Keasey served as postmaster until 1923 when the office moved four miles out to the newly constructed town of Keasey at the end of the public rail line. It served that town and nearby logging camps until 1955. By then, the decades of logging operations had depleted the old growth timber in the area and the camps closed. The former town is now on private property, and new timber grows where the railway station, homes and the post office once stood.

Established the same day as Vernonia, the Clear Creek Post Office existed for just over a year in a house that stood on the site of what is now the North Cemetery on Clear Creek Road off Timber Road. A few miles south and granted twenty-one years later, the Kist Post Office operated from 1899 until 1912. The Kist community was named for the man who had homesteaded the land along the Nehalem River. Mr. Kist is said to have perished in a snow storm while traveling from Buxton towards his home.

We will continue with the early post offices next month. If anyone has

old letters or postcards postmarked from the early post offices in our area, the museum would love to be able to scan them for our records.

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. Among his many endeavors, Powell carried the mail between St. Helens and the Upper Nehalem in the early 1900s.

Friday, May 18, 1906: Ploughed the patch for rutabagas. Rained quite a little in morning. Went to Vernonia in afternoon. This is the last day of school, the children took exams yesterday and today. F.J. Peterson and Messing were up this way in wagon.

Saturday, May 19: Carried the mail. Grange day at Natal. Got a good fill when got back to Grange Hall. Mr. W.D. Cast came over. Rained quite a bit in afternoon.

Sunday, May 20: Went down to Natal to ball game between Natal and Vernonia, score 11 to 12 in favor of Natal. Rained a little in morning. Dandy old time coming and going to game.

Monday, May 21: Hauled pickets for yard fence in morning. Harrowed the ground for corn and wheat in afternoon. Rained quite

hard in afternoon. Went to Vernonia in night after Dr. Hatfield for Armstrong's but he did not come. Got home at 2 A.M.

Tuesday, May 22: Carried the U.S. Mail. Grace and Miss Alderman went out to St. Helens. Rained very hard all afternoon.

Wednesday, May 23: Sawed wood in morning and fixed river fence in afternoon. Planted corn, squashes, beets, etc. Good bright day and looks like rain is over.

Thursday, May 24: Carried the mail. Made flying trip coming home. Got back at 2:45.

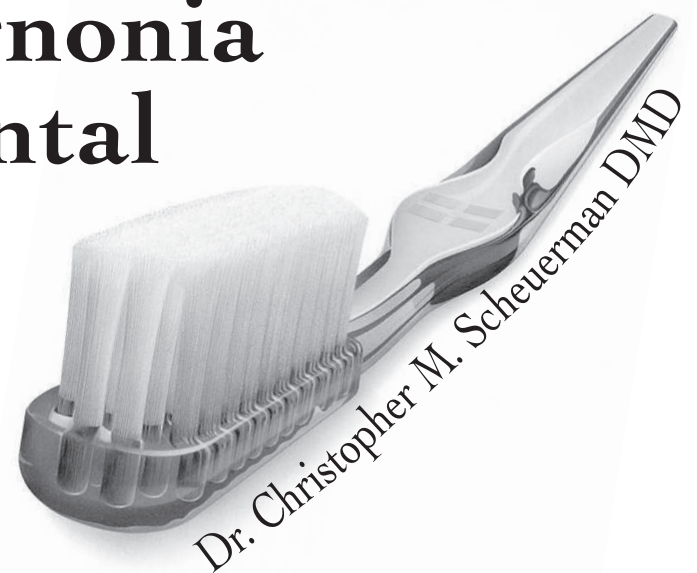
The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at E. 511 Bridge Street and is open from 1 to 4 pm on Saturdays and Sundays (excluding holidays) all year. From June through mid-September, the museum is also open on Fridays from 1 – 4 pm. There is no charge for admission but donations are always welcome. Become 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.vernonia-handsonart.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.

School Board Considers Proposal to Sponsor Oregon Virtual Education *continued from page 3*

minor administrative duties required by the District. In order to become the sponsoring district, Vernonia would need to create an additional Charter School within the current Vernonia School District.

The School Board asked district administrators to prepare for a Public Hearing on Thursday, May 19, 2016 to consider the offer.

Vernonia Dental



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