

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Newspapers of the Upper Nehalem, Part Two

Last month we discussed the *Nehalem Valley Journal*, *Weekly Sentinel* and the *Vernonia Eagle*, weekly papers that focused coverage on the Upper Nehalem in succession from 1889 to 1974. Jerry Moore and a partner purchased the *Scappoose Spotlight* and *Vernonia Eagle* in 1970 from Marvin Kamholz. Moore quickly bought out his partner then continued to operate the two papers as separate enterprises until September 1974. At that point he merged the papers into the *Columbia Herald*. Just seven months later, Moore died of a heart attack. The *Herald* ceased publication a year later.

Other weekly or semi-monthly papers serving the Upper Nehalem Valley followed for varying lengths of time. The *Vernonia News Weekly* was launched April 29, 1976, with William G. Rhoades at the helm. Other Rhoades family members comprised the staff with Wayne Rhoades as editor and William C. Rhoades the advertising manager. It struggled to obtain advertisers in the beginning, but by October of 1977 had grown to the eleventh largest paper in the state, but by July 1978 it ceased publication. News of the last Mass at the old St. Mary's Catholic Church on Corey Hill and the dedication of the new sanctuary on Missouri Street on July 9 dominated the news in the last two editions. The *Weekly's* office was on the east corner of the Joy Theater block, now the new home of Vernonia Florist.

The first edition of the *Vernonia Freedom* was published November 16, 1978. Ned Mawhirter was the publisher and editor with Jenelle Wiggins, formerly of the *Eagle* staff, as reporter for the weekly publication. Initially mailed free to each house in the Upper Nehalem, the publisher wanted the paper to promote local businesses and present news pertinent to local residents. Their editorial policy was to be informational and not express opinions or take sides on issues. Arnold and Mary's Western Auto, now Vernonia True Value, was an early advertiser, as was Brunsmann's True Value Hardware. Mike's Tavern – now All in Pub – offered free pool on Monday nights. Vernonia Market Place, now R&S Market, took out a full page ad.

A number of stories in the first edition cover people who still reside in Vernonia. The front page feature story covered fall mushrooming and has a picture of Jim Buxton heading off into the woods with mushroom buckets in hand. Another front page story reported the fire that destroyed Sally and Del Harrison's home while they were away at a Loggers football game in Chiloquin. The Loggers won that game and qualified to advance to the semifinals. Tim McLeod scored a touchdown in the fourth quarter, and Chris Cota made a safety that cinched the final score. The Harrisons found a temporary home in a Gene Weller

remodel, and caring townspeople gave Del and Sally a shower at Washington Grade School with household items and a money tree.

We are still researching the final publication date of the *Freedom*, but another biweekly publication began in 1982 titled *Country Echoes*, *Viewpoint from the Nehalem Valley*. Reproduced by mimeograph on 8½ by 11 paper, its multiple pages stapled, it carried advertising, classified ads, articles about city business and items of local interest. The staff for this "non-profit newsletter printed for the benefit of the community" included Marilyn Van Winkle, Pat Stacklie, Valerie De Witt, Cherie Califf, Joan Washam and Louise Hamnett. The museum has a number of the editions in its archives as one of the former resident curators, John Stofiel, was a subscriber. Two articles from 1983 and early 1984 cover the formation of Vernonia Cares, and the January 20, 1984, issue announced Pat Ray's promotion from Assistant Manager to Manager at the Vernonia Branch of U.S. Bank. An October 1, 1982, article noted the passing of long time bank manager Ralph Bergerson. As with the *Freedom*, we don't have the last publication date for *Country Echoes*.

Next month's column will feature newspapers from the mid-1980s to the present.

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. The friendship with Ada Fisher whom he met September 15 at the Natal Grange continued. We don't know the details about the dentistry he experienced. Novocain had first been synthesized the prior year, but nitrous oxide (laughing gas) was long in use. What may have been available to Vernonia dentists of the day must be a matter for speculation.

Monday, October 15, 1906: Rained awful hard all day. Fixed up the barn a little bit and also put some hogs up to fatten. Mailed postal to Geroge. Went up to Pittsburg in the evening and got the mail. Just one month ago today I visited Natal Grange No. 302.

Tuesday, October 16: Went up to Vernonia in the morning and got a calf at Lon Emmons place. Rained awful hard all day. Got home from Vernonia at 2:30 P.M. Mailed a postal card to Ada. Certainly remember one month ago today.

Wednesday, October 17: Went up to Pittsburg and fished all day. Caught 20 trout and one salmon. The salmon were not running very thick. Rained pretty hard most of

the day.

Saturday, October 20: Went down to Mist horseback. Got to Mist at 10:30. Mailed an aluminion (sic) postal card to Ada. Grange day at Natal. Very bright and clear all day. Got back from Mist at 3:15. Came up with Albert the mail carrier.

Sunday, October 21: Went down to Natal Grange Hall about noon in the buggy. George F. came up. Fine and bright all day. Got back home about 5 P.M. George and I started back for their place at 11:15 P.M. Awful cold going down we might near froze. Got down to Fishers about 1:30 A.M. Coldest night we have had yet this fall. Ada went out to Clatskanie today.

Monday, October 22: Left Fishers at 10:30 A.M. Came up home in one hour and 27 minutes. Came from Mist bridge home in one hour and seven minutes. Got home at 11:58 A.M. Very bright and clear all day. Sawed down a tree for wood in the afternoon. Dr. Hiatt of Vernonia stopped over night.

Tuesday, October 23: Had

my teeth fixed, had three pulled and four filled. Will have the rest filled in front tomorrow. Rained a little in the afternoon. Got postal card from Effie and E.M.H.

Wednesday, October 24: Had the rest of my teeth fixed had four gold fillings put in front. Finished fixing my teeth about noon. Sawed a little wood in the afternoon. Cloudy and looks very much like rain.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at 511 E. 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.vernoniahansonart.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.

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Paid for State Senator Betsy Johnson