

# The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

## The Total Eclipse of 1918

With the current focus on the August 21, 2017 total eclipse across a swath of Oregon, Vernonia Pioneer Museum Association (VPMA) Board Secretary, Barbara Larsen, serendipitously found some handwritten letters written to Mrs. John Stofiel, once resident curator along with her husband, John, of the Vernonia museum. One section vividly recalled the eclipse of June 8, 1918.

Youngest of several children, Otto Hackenberg was born in 1909 to a German couple who had a farm about three miles from Apiary. In a letter dated November 24, 1976, he wrote: "Early in 1918 I was quite elated when we learned that there was to be a total eclipse of the sun on June 8th starting about 2:30 P.M. standard time. Yes, 1918 was the year daylight 'wasting' time got started, but we were on the right time. That day, while a little cloudy, it could be seen most of the time and about 4 P.M. it was total.

"I ran in the house to check the time, too dark to see anything in the house but light enough to see outside. I ran to the chicken house to see all the chickens on the roost; the cows came to the barn. By the time I came back, it was starting to come back and the sun looked like a new moon, just before and after. We will soon have another one, February 26, 1979, in the morning. This will be the last total one till 2017 in the continental U.S. and that one should be total here or not far from here.

"This is a decade of sun eclipses; we have had three so far in it, all

cloudy when they occurred. There will be a small partial one in October 1977 and another one in 1984." Otto's interests also extended to other astronomical occurrences. Otto was only a baby when the spectacular close passing of Halley's Comet occurred in 1910. He continued the letter by relating something a former neighbor said when he was young: "Mr. Bailey told me about Halley's Comet and told me I might live to see it. We now have ten years more to wait. I have seen two comets in 1957 and a real large one in March 1971." Sadly, Otto passed away in 1985, a year before the comet's return. The upside is that the 1986 comet was so much further away than it was in 1910, it was not easily seen.

"Since this eclipse of 1918 I have paid close attention to the almanac's planetary positions, eclipses, etc. In Fall 1940, all five visible planets were in the evening S.W. sky. I was told that no one living at that time would ever live to see that again."

We would have liked to share Virgil Powell's June 8, 1918 diary entry with his comment on the eclipse. Unfortunately, the 1918 diary was missing from the collection before the Stofiels started the monumental project of typing up all of his diaries in the 1960s.

Let's hope that the weather for the eclipse next week will be clear!

### 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. Summer was the season for camp meetings, evangelistic

gatherings held in a tent or outdoors and often lasting several days. Virgil attended these every summer while he was a young man, perhaps as much for the social as the religious aspects.

*Wednesday, August 14, 1907: Did not do much of anything during the day. Started down the river at 6 and took Alice up to camp meeting in Vernonia. Got back home at 2:30. Had a dandy time.*

*Friday, August 16: Started for Clatskanie at 6:20 and got to Clatskanie at 10. Stayed in C. till 12:30. Had a dandy time, had picture taken and mailed some postals to Alice. Saw Allie on my way back. Got home at 5:15. Awful hot all day.*

*Saturday, August 17: Did not do much of anything. Went up to camp meeting in the evening. Claws also went up with me in the buggy. Got home about 11. Pretty hot all day. Grange day at Natal. Got a letter from 55131 (Note: This was long before ZIP codes, and we can only speculate that it may have been a secret pen pal).*

*Sunday, August 18: Went up to camp meeting about 10 and stayed all day. Had a fine time. Played ball in afternoon. Vernonia vs Mist, score 25 to 26 in favor of Vernonia. Awful hot all day. This was the last night of camp meeting.*

*Tuesday, August 20: Bound grain all day and you bet*

*good and tired when night comes. Awful hot all day. Received a postal from Allie.*

*Thursday, August 22: Worked in grain all day. Finished in ash field and commenced on the other. Sent a letter to 55131. Pretty warm all day. Went down the river horse-back after supper as far as Dave K. and got home about 9.*

*Friday, August 23: Worked in grain all day. Awful hot all day. Worked after supper till 8. I certainly remember one month ago today. Wonder if A.G.P. does. (Note: July 23 was the night he spent in Peterson's barn after an evening with Alice G. Peterson and her family. We'll leave speculation to our readers.)*

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.vernonia-handsonart.org](http://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.

## Washington County Photo Contest *continued from page 4*

announced via social media and e-mail on October 6, 2017.

For more information visit: [www.swcd.net](http://www.swcd.net) All photos must be submitted by 5:00 pm on September 30, 2017. Any photos submitted after that date will not be eligible.

All photos must be e-mailed to: [Chantel.Huff@tualatinswcd.org](mailto:Chantel.Huff@tualatinswcd.org)

### Requirements:

- Must be a photo taken in Washington County.

- Must be your own original work.
- All photos must be in original format, no editing or altering the original, unless cropping out any excess background.
- Must be a recent photo taken after January 2017.
- Must include your first and last name, e-mail, date the photo was taken, description of what is happening in the photo, size of photo and location of the photo.
- There is a maximum of 5 entries per person. Please fill out one entry form per

photo.

- All photos must be submitted in jpeg format and be no larger than 7200 x 9000 ppi.
- If there is anyone in the photo you must fill out the Photo Release Form.
- All participants must fill out the Permission to Reprint Form.

Questions by E-mail: [Chantel.Huff@tualatinswcd.org](mailto:Chantel.Huff@tualatinswcd.org). Please do not contact us about the status of entries or judging.

Where do you read the Voice? Show us where you have traveled. Submit your photo with a brief description by email to: [scott@vernoniasvoice.com](mailto:scott@vernoniasvoice.com)

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