



Housing history

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-ObsERVER

An arch of fragrant wisteria frames the front entrance at Brunk House. The gardens and historical house were on display Saturday during the annual Blossom Drive.

Brunk House off Highway 22 in Polk County offers a glimpse of life on a farm in the early 1900s

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-ObsERVER

INDEPENDENCE — Want to see what life was like in the Willamette Valley in the early 1900s?

An example is not too far away, just off Highway 22 near the Highway 51 intersection at what is known as “Brunk House.”

Formerly a pioneer home to a family of 14, the house is now under ownership of the Polk County Historical Society. The nonprofit group uses it as a historical demonstration of life on a farm from 1895 to 1920.

During the last 40 years, the house has been carefully restored. More artifacts are found at the house regularly, including an impressive collection of seashells discovered recently.

Those finds are cleaned and put on display in an effort to record the history of the home’s former residents, and what life was like in Polk County of yesteryear.

On Saturday, the historical society held one of two all-day annual open houses during the Blossom Drive.

Visitors were treated to tours of each room and a retelling of the Brunk story.

Harrison and Emily Brunk and their 12 children were the first to live in the house, which was built in 1861.

The couple left Missouri in 1849, with five children in



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-ObsERVER
Brunk House features displays such as this kitchen utensil collection throughout the house. The collection includes clothing, household tools and farm equipment.

tow, during the contentious years before the breakout of the Civil War. Local historians believe that atmosphere of conflict led to the family’s move to Oregon.

“It’s probably a reasonable conclusion that they were seeking a new beginning,” said open house volunteer Linda Grund-Clampit, “a new community without all the conflict.”

Three generations of Brunks lived in the two-story home that doesn’t seem big enough for 14 people. That is the first lesson visitors learn at Brunk House.

Harrison and Emily had the “master bedroom” downstairs — not much bigger than the bed it contains — and the children, seven girls and five boys, shared two larger rooms upstairs.

In 1891, Harrison and Emily’s youngest son, Thomas W. Brunk, purchased the home.

The last Brunk to live in the house before it was donated to the Polk County Historical Society in 1975 was Thomas Earl Brunk.

He was born in 1893 and died in 1974.

Named a Century Farm in

1959, the home was added to the National Register of Historic Sites in 1975.

Some of the furnishings and decor are original to the house, while other items represent the time period.

The historical society and Polk County OSU Master Gardeners hold weekly work parties to keep the grounds, house and collection ready for visitors.

“They have restored the house to what was typical of farmers who were doing well at the time,” Grund-Clampit said. “The people who come every week are very dedicated. It’s a labor of love.”



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-ObsERVER
Open house visitors were greeted with plants and trees in bloom at Brunk House on Saturday’s Blossom Drive.

Pioneer homestead

What: Harrison Brunk House.
Where: Off Highway 22 near its intersection with Highway 51.
When: Weekly open houses every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon. The house also will be open the second Saturday of the month from noon to 4 p.m. the remainder of the year.
Of note: Brunk House hosts a “cider press” to celebrate harvest in the fall.
For more information: Jo Ann King, 503-838-6603.

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Sudoku
Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆

Solution on Page 3A

				2			9
							5
		5				2	
1	8					4	
6		1					2
		9	4	5	1		
1		7	3	9			5
	5	6		7			4
8		2					9

Row →
Three-by-three square →
Column ↓

4	3	2	8	1	6	7	5	9
5	6	9	3	7	4	8	1	2
1	7	8	9	5	2	4	6	3
3	4	7	2	8	5	6	9	1
2	1	6	7	4	9	3	8	5
9	8	5	1	6	3	2	7	4
7	9	1	4	3	8	5	2	6
8	5	3	6	2	1	9	4	7
6	2	4	5	9	7	1	3	8

How to do Sudoku
Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in every column, row, and three-by-three square. See example above.

By Ben Arnoldy
The Christian Science Monitor