

# Oregon's first pioneer

## Calvin Tibbets is topic at History and Hops speaker series event

By Rebecca Herren  
Seaside Signal

Portland author Jerry Sutherland's research and discovery into pioneer Calvin Tibbets is a work in progress.

He first became fascinated with Tibbets when his father, Art Sutherland, saw the name in a historical article and decided to do a little genealogy research given that Jerry's mother's maiden name was Tibbetts. No relationship was found, but Sutherland continued the research into Tibbets as a man who traveled to Oregon with a specific goal: to settle here permanently and make it part of the emerging United States landscape.

Sutherland, who spoke at the History and Hops speaker series at the Seaside Brewing Co. Thursday, Feb. 23, explained how sometimes the research was challenging due to the many ways the name is spelled — most commonly, he said, is T-i-b-b-e-t-t-s and T-i-b-b-i-t-s. "It wasn't until I found documents signed by him that I knew what the correct spelling was."

### Oregon in 1832

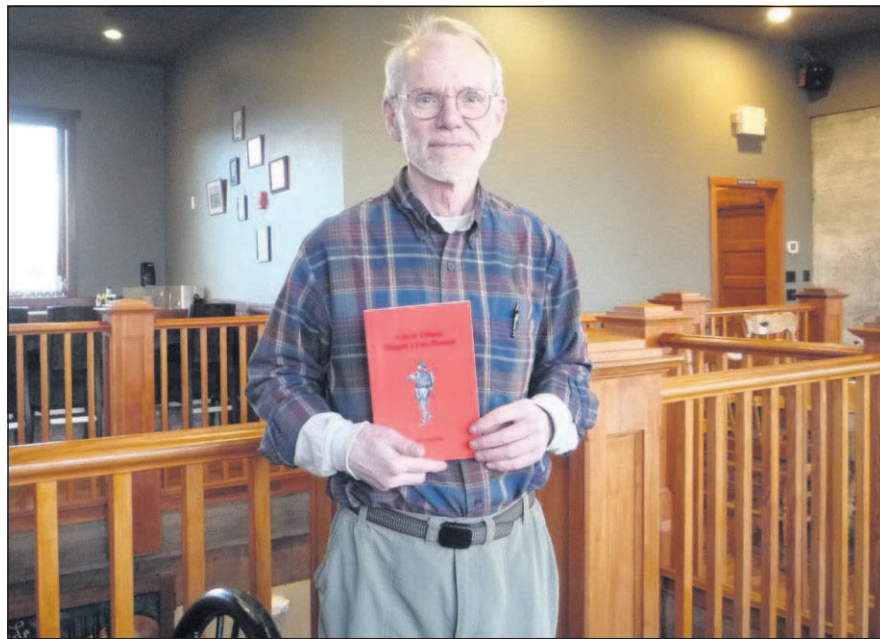
When Tibbets traveled to Oregon in 1832, the area was still contested between Great Britain and the United States. Hudson's Bay Co. had practical control over the entire region and its French-Canadian employees were preparing to develop farms along the Willamette River upon their retirement. "The only Americans in Oregon before Tibbets were sailors, fur trappers, explorers and scientists," he said.

His book "Calvin Tibbets: Oregon's First Pioneer" begins with Nathaniel Wyeth and 11 American men meeting Hudson's Bay Co. chief factor John McLoughlin, who realized he had competition for the region, if as he suspected, Wyeth along with Hall Kelley would succeed in their plans to build a colony in Oregon, a subject of dispute with the British. "Many early settlers came to Oregon to get free land and they weren't going to get it if Britain took over because at that point in time it was all mutually owned between Great Britain and the United States," said Sutherland.

Wyeth and Kelley would fail in their ventures, but Tibbets, being one of the men they brought to Oregon, would become an Oregon pioneer by forging good relationships with his Canadian neighbors and native tribes, even living on a Native American diet in order to pave the way for other Americans to follow.

### Fascination

Sutherland said the more he learns about Tibbets, the more fascinated he



Author Jerry Sutherland giving a presentation on Oregon's first pioneer Calvin Tibbets who initiated the building of the first gristmill in Clatsop County.

## 'The only Americans in Oregon before Tibbets were sailors, fur trappers, explorers and scientists.'

Author Jerry Sutherland

becomes, delving into the many layers of the man. He discovered that Tibbets was part of a team to build a gristmill in Clatsop County.

Ewing Young and Solomon Smith had established a gristmill at Chehalem Creek around 1838. After moving back to Clatsop Plains, it was "so obvious they wanted that here," said Sutherland, adding the need was confirmed by documented evidence of early pioneers who traveled the Oregon Trail had used coffee mills and spring poles to grind their grains. So, the need for a gristmill on the Clatsop Plains was great in the eyes of Young, Smith and Tibbets.

In 1845, Thomas Owens, Edward Williams, Elbridge Trask, William Perry and Tibbets, who had formed the Wahoni Milling Co., built the mill at the south end of Clatsop Plains near the mouth of the Neawanna. The mill operated for only a couple of years. According to Sutherland, the gristmill failed because "Clatsop Plains wasn't suitable to grow crops," adding it was then converted to a lumber mill.

Finding the mill's whereabouts also proved to be a challenge for Sutherland, given that the landscape had drastically changed and landmarks, not survey tools, were used to measure property

boundaries as he pointed out showing a land survey from 1856. For example, the area known as the Necanicum Estuary, Necanicum River, Neawanna Creek and Neacoxie Creek were all known then as Neacoxie; the former being referred to as branches of the Neacoxie.

Sutherland noted there had been a dozen or more names associated with the mills, and upon further searching, had discovered a connection between the Tibbets gristmill and the Gearhart family. Phillip Gearhart built a home and farm for his family near the gristmill by Mill Creek, in an area north and east of the estuary. Gearhart's daughter Sarah married Frank Byrd, who later built a mill at what is now known as Thompson Falls.

Tibbets died of cholera in 1849. From his book, Sutherland wrote, "Tibbets would have had no impact on Oregon history if he had not first been captivated by Kelly's vision of colonizing Oregon ... He endured hunger, illness and other physical and emotional hardships of life in the wild." Once his fellow settlers came in sufficient numbers, they were able to "wrest control of Oregon from Great Britain."

If any American were to be named Oregon's first pioneer, Sutherland strongly believes Tibbets deserves that honor.

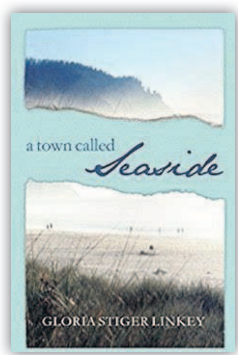
## A look back at 'A Town Called Seaside'

Delve into the history of Seaside on Saturday, March 25, at 1 p.m. with local author Gloria Linkey. The event is sponsored by the Friends of the Seaside Library and will take place in the Community Room. There will also be book sales and signings.

The town of Seaside isn't very big. It boasts 6,500 full-time residents but gains an enormous boost in population every summer. Thousands flock to its beaches, restaurants, and art galleries.

In "A Town Called Seaside", author and historian

Gloria Linkey will be our tour guide as she takes us through Seaside's origins as a summer resort town in the 1940s to the thriving tourist attraction the town has become today. Linkey's research conjures up beautiful images of pre-World War II bygone days, where people walked the "Prom" in fine attire, and went to the state-of-the-art aquarium. Families



could also spend an afternoon watching Lone Ranger serials at one of Seaside's two movie houses as well as participating in a variety of events that befitted a summer destination.

While Linkey preserves Seaside's past, she also demonstrates how the town has grown and changed for the better. She shows how city government and the Cham-

ber of Commerce changed the town's status from strictly a summer destination to a year round resort.

Linkey is a past president of the Seaside Museum and Historical society, and a member of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. She is the author of "Native American Women: Three Who Changed History" and "Abby Rescues Animals."

Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway. For more information call 503-738-6742 or visit www.seasidelibrary.org

## Wright comes to Council via Planning Commission

Wright from Page 1A

Councilors Tita Montero, Randy Frank, Dana Phillips and Mayor Barber voted for Wright. Seth Morrissey voted for Stacey. Horning was absent.

"This was a tough, tough decision, to have such four incredible candidates come before us," Phillips said. "All of you did such an incredible

job interviewing. I would hope some of you would step up to the Planning Commission."

Frank said, "For Steve, maybe we should consider a stipulation for incoming councilors that they work to fill vacancies on the committees and boards in their first year," Frank added.

After the meeting, Barber said Wright's regular atten-

dance at council meetings was a big factor in his decision.

"We felt like he would be the least difficult to up-ramp," Barber said. "His kind of style of leadership and function really fit well with the rest of the council. He's a finance guy, too. None of us on the board have that particular skill set."

Wright said his priorities include housing, tsunami

preparation and placing a focus on the city's past.

"I have an affinity for the history of Seaside," Wright said. "All those things can come together and I can make Seaside an even better place to live. I just love it. This is home for me now."

Wright will be sworn in at the first council meeting in March.

## Seaside looks to implement 'Safe Routes to School'

Program from Page 1A

"We are taking baby steps," McDowell says. Once the neighborhood needs are assessed, he can apply for grant funding through Safe Routes to School.

The Way to Wellville and its sponsor the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization support healthy activities and exercise for all residents.

### Pulling it all together

With a bond measure passing for a new school campus in the Seaside Heights, area, it is a great time to work on Safe Routes to School, Roley says.

"It not only builds healthy kids, but builds healthy communities to have all these different entities come together and say, 'This is a wonderful community we live in,' and maximize collaboratively our resources instead of doing things independently," Roley says.

Ferguson says only \$500,000 a year is dedicated to Safe Routes to School in Oregon. This is not enough to build sidewalks and sponsor safety programs. She encourages people to advocate by asking the Legislature to include Safe Routes in the next transportation budget. For Every Kid coalition is asking the Oregon Legislature for \$16 million a year. You

can sign a petition on the website: <http://ourhealthystreets.org/for-every-kid-main/>

### Volunteer opportunity

National Walk and Bike to School Day is May 10, an opportunity to have a kickoff event for Seaside's Safe Routes to School.

To volunteer or receive more information, call Fry at 503-861-5360 or email her at [shasia@ridethebus.org](mailto:shasia@ridethebus.org).

For information about Safe Routes to School, see <http://bit.ly/W2Wsaferoutes>, or The Street Trust at <http://bit.ly/W2Wstreettrust>.

## Gearhart to hold session on video poker permit

### Owner's appeal to be heard by council

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Video poker will be on the agenda for the City Council in April as councilors decide whether to permit four lottery machines in a new brew pub.

A special session was held Feb. 15 to determine the next step as Gearhart hears an appeal by property owner Terry Lowenberg of a Planning Commission decision blocking the machines in his brew pub.

Lowenberg, who closed the former Gearhart Grocery in Decem-

ber, received a permit for his brew pub at 599 Pacific Way last spring.

In December, he sought to add four video lottery machines.

Lowenberg said he needed the machines to make his proposed brew pub profitable.

The city responded that installation of four poker lottery machines will devote space to "adult-only activity" that may operate in conflict with surrounding properties. "The machines encourage drinking and conflict with the family-friendly character described in the original proposal," City Planner Carole Connell wrote in a staff report.

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