

Community

Museum Piece

By Robb Wilson, Curator
Columbia County Historical Society Museum

This past summer, I noticed a sight so common a few decades ago that it was rarely noticed, but is rarely seen today. I think that a few old souls resting in their graves had smiles and were tickled to no end to think that this was taking place. What I observed was that the son of a late shingle weaver replaced the roof on his family home, not with the all-too-popular and convenient tar paper type roofs seen everywhere today, but replaced it with REAL CEDAR SHAKES! I'll bet it was the only roof replaced this year with cedar. How nice to see it!

There were some repairs on shingle and shake roofs in the area, but many other roofs that were replaced this past season were fitted with metal or the composition roofing. I would guess that many factors prevent folks from replacing with cedar—cost, insurance and availability.

Availability is not what it once was. This area was once thick with old growth Western Red Cedar, and shakes and shingles were made everywhere. Homesteaders made all of their own roofing, splitting cedar shakes for their own needs and oftentimes selling extras as one of the first cash products shipped from the Nehalem Valley to the cities. With the railroad passing through the thriving hamlet of Timber, just a dozen miles to the south, wagons would be loaded up and then relieved of their loads at the train docks, providing an income for the locals. It was the area's first broad-based export industry!

Many shingle and shake mills were in operation after the turn of the century and operated up into the fifties. During the 1960s and '70s a couple of mills operated; through the '80s and into today there is only one long-established mill still operating locally. Cedar mills that once dotted the landscape, with smoke constantly curling skyward, are now things of the past.

"It's hard to find the right kind of cedar to make good shingles or shakes these days," said an old timer, as he sat on a stool with a bolt of cedar in front of him. With a wooden mallet he had fashioned from a chunk of vinemaple, he hit a froe and sliced a thin flat shake off, turned the bolt upside down and did another slice, turning the bolt with each slice to make a tapered shake.

"These are only 12 inch shakes, not much good. In the old days we would make 'Barn' shakes up to 36 inches long. But then good cedar was everywhere!" He told me, too, how there were a lot of little mills producing shingles and shakes all around the woods here.

"Why, the roof on my house has been there since the late forties. I did replace the porch roof a few years back and have had to patch a few spots here and there," he said. The shingles used on his place were hand split, not cut or sawn. There was a mill near here that steamed the cedar bolts and, when they were soft as butter, used a blade to cut them perfectly thin, he added. That is the only operation of this sort I've heard about, as all of the shingle mills I've known made "sawn shingles" to get that even thickness.

Last month I was talking about old barns and how they were made entirely from cedar. I've seen more examples, lately, of some big barns and small buildings too, made from cedar, with the posts all being split and the siding made like shakes, only with six foot pieces.

In fact, at an estate sale out Keasey Route last month, a whole homestead cabin that was built over a hundred years ago and carefully taken apart 30 years ago was sold to someone from Washington state. It was made entirely from split cedar and had three foot shakes for the roof and siding. Too bad it is now gone!

When the first settler, Clark Parker, came to the area, he and another man from down the valley, named Tucker, built a split cedar cabin so Parker could bring his family to live here in the Riverview area. Cedar was important to the survival of early settlers as it is a versatile wood and burns readily, too. When the folks were clearing land for fields to farm, they slashed and burned the old growth fir trees to get rid of them, but the cedars were always used. Easily split, they were used for zig zag fencing, buildings and whatever came to mind.

The Indians were dependent upon cedar for their needs too, lodges, canoes, long boats, totems, baskets, bowls, tools, etc., were fashioned from this light and aromatic wood.

Today you cannot find an old growth cedar tree in the area, but there are thousands of young cedars growing everywhere!

Museum 511 E. Bridge St., Vernonia
Summer Hours: (June-Sept.) Thursday, Friday, Saturday,
noon to 4:00 p.m. Sundays, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. or by app't.
Phone: (503) 429-3713

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Senior News

By Patricia Olson

We had to to it, didn't we? We just HAD to complain of no rain. OK. Now we have it and are we happy? Well, a little. It was pretty dry out there.

The ol' flu bug continues to make its rounds but doesn't stay long. Jac Ramsay is recovering well from her recent foot surgery and will have the other one done as soon as the first one is sufficiently healed.

We welcome our new librarian, Ferris Sylvester. He brings with him many years experience in the field, as assistant in the Vernonia Public Library, a position he still holds.

The Senior Picnic was enjoyed by many on September 26th. The band, Golden Oldie, entertained the entire day. Good friends and good fellowship were enjoyed by all.

October birthdays being celebrated are: Pam Cook and Richard Baker, 10th; Nellie Anderson, 12th; Mercedes Proehl, 18th; Barbara Sturdevant, 24th; Dori Halvorson, 28th. Happy Birthday to all.

On October 30th we will come to the Center in costume, at least that is the plan. Come on, you cowards! We encourage our guests to do the same. It'll be fun!

We hope to have several activities cooking during the winter season. Perhaps a dance, some speakers, a winter picnic? Send us a few suggestions.

The food has taken on a new, heartier trend with the colder weather. Stews, beans and ham...whatever your fa-

vorite winter fare may be, we probably have it.

Beat the winter blues with a good book, a few hands of cards, a friendly chat with friends or sewing on a quilt. We have it all. One of our guests recently told us that the Center is the IT place in town now.

Holiday-related items will be appearing in the Flea Market as the various holidays approach. Try us first and save \$\$\$\$.

Have a safe Hallowe'en and watch out for all the little ghosts and goblins. Try meeting them at the door with a smile and a camera. They don't stay little for very long.

Fall Fair festivities at Christian Church

Vernonia's annual Fall Fair Carnival will be celebrated Saturday, October 31, 7-8:30 p.m. at the Vernonia Christian Church.

The fun is all free, and will feature a cup cake walk, dart toss, fish pond, ring toss, dice toss, and many more.

Annual meeting for Friends of B-V Trail

The Friends of the Banks/Vernonia Linear Trail will hold their annual meeting Oct. 22, at the Brown Derby Restaurant in Banks. A no-host dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m., with the meeting to follow.

Church Bulletin Bloopers

The audience is asked to remain seated until the end of the recession.

Welcome Additions

Brett A Elliott

Brett Anthony Elliott was born Oct. 8, 1998, at St. Vincent Hospital in Portland. He weighed seven lbs., six oz. and was 20 inches long. Brett is the first child of Jolene and Craig Elliott of Vernonia.

Grandparents are Steve and Lynn Stegmann of Vernonia and Janet and Dan Bowman of Dundee.

Great-grandparents are Walter and Bernadine Stegmann, and Gertrude Lucius, all of Solon Springs, Wisconsin, Robert and Gertrude Norton of Salem, and Nelma Peterson of Louis, Texas.

Gavin J. Ceballos

Gavin Jack Ceballos was born Oct. 10, 1998, at Meridian Park Hospital in Tualatin, to Jeffrey and Shannon Ceballos of Beaverton. He weighed seven lbs., four oz. and was 19-3/4 inches long.

Grandparents are Mary Anne Odam of McMinnville, Michael and Brenda Anderson of Olympia, Wash., and Tony and Maret May of McMinnville.

Great grandparents are Jack Odam and Larry and Lorraine Borst, all of Vernonia, Perna Heintz of Dallas, Walter and Sally May of Salem, and Donna Sanders of Falls City.



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