

Vernonia Story Tells Problems Encountered by Committee

(Note: The Vernonia chamber of commerce industrial committee prepared the following information relative to this area in advance of the state department of planning and development meeting at Tillamook September 17. An outline of the brief was presented verbally at that time and the full article was filed with the department. It is presented here to give readers an idea of some of the problems faced by this committee in the highly competitive field of seeking new industry for the area.)

The following is a brief summary leading up to the present status of Vernonia and the Upper Nehalem Valley:

There has always been a pall of pessimism hanging over the Upper Nehalem Valley because of the fact that rumors were always started to the effect that the mill would shut down maybe next year, maybe the following year, maybe three, maybe five.

In the Spring of 1934 the General Manager of the Long Bell Lumber Company, Vernonia Branch, along with the County assessor and a representative from the State Tax Commission met with the Liens one evening and told the club of a thirty month writ-off that they had secured from the County, State and Federal governments on their recent purchase of the Oregon American Company. This was a considerable blow to the Upper Nehalem Valley businessmen and workers because the fast writ-off was indicative of the amount of time that they felt they had left to operate. In the wake of this shocking news, a group of businessmen banded together and formed the Vernonia Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has, in the last four years, contacted, processed, dealt with any and all types of business enterprises that we heard of, or could find out about. Of the many contacts that have been made during this time, we have met with very little success, as all communities are, likewise, vying for new industry.

In the Upper Nehalem Valley the shock was more terrific than it would be in other communities were they have diversified industry. The now International Paper Company, which bought out Long-Bell, hired at peak operating time approximately 700 employees in the woods and in the mill. This was the Upper Valley's major payroll.

The Chamber has been successful in starting a candle factory, which is progressing very nicely, however, it does not hire over five people, and was, further, successful in getting the Smithwick Concrete Products Company to establish their aggregate kiln at their mining site close to Vernonia, which will employ about twenty.

Needless to say, the two small industries lack a whole lot of employing the 700 employed by the large mill operation.

On Wednesday, September 11, the last log was drawn into the sawmill and now the mill will apparently operate with 200 employees for one more month, then no payroll whatsoever.

Shortly after the Chamber of Commerce was formed, it was felt that a survey was necessary to determine what resources were available in the Vernonia area. Members of the staff of Lewis and Clark college were approached to help in making the survey. Professor Phillip J. McAllister of the Business Administration Department headed the survey. Working with the college group were local volunteers. This group prepared a survey which includes information on manpower, raw materials and many other items. This survey cost the Chamber ap-

proximately \$400.00. As a result of the survey, we found our area to be lacking in certain areas. It is this group of deficiencies which we wish to discuss today. These are some of the most important problems in our area today and in some measure have made it difficult to attract industry to our area.

Roads and highways in our area of the Upper Nehalem Valley create a major problem. The few state and county roads are narrow, rough and obsolete for modern transportation requirements.

Vernonia lies near the center of the proposed Highway 99W Alternate which runs from McMinville on the South to Kelso, Washington on the North. To those of us living in the Upper Nehalem Valley the proposed highway means faster, better transportation to the North and to the South. To the people living in Tillamook and Lincoln Counties, it will mean a route which will save many miles, and dollars, when they are sending their products North into Washington. Since this route intercepts important arteries such as the Wilson River Highway, and the Sunset Highway, which run inland toward Portland from the coast, it will tend to siphon off from the already extremely crowded Portland area through traffic which would only add to the congestion.

With the improvement of Highway 30, this route would also make possible easy access from the Willamette Valley to the Lower Columbia River area.

New and improved roads in this area would open to tourist traffic the beautiful Nehalem Valley and the mountain valleys of the Coast Range.

The key portion of this road program in Northwest Oregon is not an expensive highway. Highway Commission estimates place the cost of this 80 mile highway at between \$4,000,000 and \$5,000,000. This money would build up the deficient portions of the highway to safe standards for many years.

Industry which might locate in this area has looked at the lack of roads and has left for other regions. Only last week we were informed that a certain industry was settling in another location where highways were better. The other location is farther from many of the markets for the particular product than is Vernonia but the roads were a major factor in its not settling in Vernonia.

The counties in our area need help in improving and maintaining county roads. They are short on funds and trained man power. Perhaps the state could assist them in setting up construction and maintenance plans which would let the counties know which is most important in bringing the roads up to date. On county roads we find most of our transportation problems. It is 27 miles from Vernonia to the county seat at St. Helens. It takes one hour driving time to make the 27 miles. The distance from Vernonia to Portland is 46 miles. This can be easily driven in less than one hour. When it is easier to go to other towns than our county seat, the economy of the county we live in is suffering due to the condition of the roads.

A road such as Highway 99W Alternate would be of considerable value as a military road in case of National emergency. This route, for the most part, stays clear of major military targets but is readily accessible to them. With this in mind, it would be valuable as an alternate military road far enough away from military targets to be out of the way and yet close enough to serve its requirements.

Water is another item which needs greater study and possible remedial action. The Nehalem River is, like all rivers in the Coast range, essentially a rain river. The result is that we have either feast or famine. In winter when we need little water, we have too much. In summer, when water is used in large quantities for agriculture and other uses we do not even have enough flow to properly support fish life.

If agriculture is to expand in the Nehalem Valley, water is required so that the farmers can raise crops that can compete on an equal basis with crops from other states and areas. The increased food requirements of the United States will make it mandatory that all agriculture areas be developed to their fullest. If the water resources were to be

checked, the number of water withdrawal permits on the Nehalem would undoubtedly be found to be greater than the total amount of water flowing. If all right were used at once there would be no water and the few fish left in the low water would be dead in the stream bed.

In June, 1936, a Field Examination was made of the Upper Nehalem Watershed by a number of local, state and federal agencies. As is always done, this survey was of a brief, two-day, nature in which a group of experts checked over the area. Essentially, the results arrived at indicated that the existing law under which the investigation was made would not apply. However the report indicates further investigation should be made. Little credit was given in the report to the benefits accruing to the area if a program of water storage was inaugurated beyond those from irrigation and flood control.

We have been told that this area suffers from a shortage of water. However, annually approximately 400,000 to 500,000 acre feet of water flow past Vernonia. A portion of this water properly stored would provide sufficient water for all agricultural and industrial use needs for many years.

Recreation possibilities in the Nehalem Valley are numerous and include such phases as undeveloped sites for overnight parks and picnic areas, rock and fossil deposits, fish and game and areas suitable for trail riding.

Some development has taken place in establishing picnic areas, but there is a need for more such sites than those already in use. There are no developed camp sites such as the state has established in other sections of Oregon where campers can spend the night or several days. Because of poor highway conditions on the proposed 99W Alternate route, this area does not participate to any appreciable extent in tourist trade, Oregon's third largest industry.

The development of recreation is hindered again because of the lack of water during summer months which hindered abundant fish life, which, in turn, would be remedied by a dam on the Upper Nehalem river designed to restrain heavy winter flow and permit gradual run-off during the dry summer months.

Extensive rock and fossil deposits are located in the area and considerable attention has been given in encouraging "rock hounds" to avail themselves of these deposits.

To properly develop the valley recreationally a much improved highway and conservation of water resources are necessary and in both instances this community is in need of state leadership because these projects cannot be handled from the local level.

Forest and forest products make up the most important single item in the Upper Nehalem Valley. In fact one might say that all other types of enterprise are secondary to the enterprises directly connected with our forests. To date these forests have been both a blessing and a sorrow. The forests bless the area with its first large scale industry. In the valley are remainders of Clark and Wilson, Oregon-American, Birkenfeld Lumber Co. and many others both large and small. We have abandoned shingle mills and terrible signs of forest fires. All this is behind us. A new class of forest operator has moved in to join us. In this new group are Crown-Zellerbach, Longview Fibre, Kaiser Gypsum (Firtex Division) International Paper and the State of Oregon itself. All these new groups have abandoned the old "cut-out and get-out" technique. They follow the idea "trees forever". We are in hearty agreement with their slogan. We know what the old attitude did to us. However, we are not certain that they bring us all blessings with their operations. These various groups own in excess of 76 per cent of the land in the Upper Nehalem Valley. This 76 per cent comes to the total of 171,000 acres of a total of 229,000 acres. If they carried on their processing in the valley we would feel more kindly toward such a situation although wondering at the great control they have over our economy. However, they carry on the processing in other towns far removed from our area. Therefore, we are subsidiary to these areas and must be satisfied

to see our industrial potential and experienced workers drained away to other communities. We have trees coming on, we have experienced labor, we have industrial sites and rail and truck transportation but we see our industrial potential moved out. This we must have to have a sound economic future. We need help to determine how the timber processing in this great area can be kept in the vicinity of the timber growth. When the initial steps in processing are done, a whole industry based on timber waste can be built but this can not be done at the present time utilizing wastes left in the forests following logging. We need new processes to utilize the logging wastes so that profitable industries may be established.

Further resources surveys would help us to know better exactly what we have to offer. We have collected and filed much material regarding our raw materials and resources. This material is of great value in contacting and discussing our Valley with potential industrial developers. The problem we are faced with is that we lack money and help to keep the information current and valid. We know we have certain raw materials but in most cases we know nothing else regarding these raw materials. We know little of the actual potential in mineral resources in our area. We know we have deposits of a large number of minerals. We have not been able to gather information regarding the future potential of these minerals. The deposits we are most blessed with are various ores of iron and aluminum plus large amounts of low grade coal on which some development work has taken place. There are large deposits of shale suitable for the manufacture of expanded shale for lightweight concrete. Two of these deposits have been developed but a number of additional deposits are available. We are willing to work for further knowledge regarding these items but do not have the man-power or money to properly study these resources.

Market surveys for possible products are needed. Again we run head-on into the problem of how to gather the information. Much of the information regarding specific products can be easily obtained but in some fields the information is not so readily available or has not been compiled. When this condition occurs the community has not the resources available to gamble on the cost of such a market survey. We are in that position at the present time in the field of charcoal. General indications are that a good market is available in charcoal but specific information has not been available. Present trends show a growing interest in charcoal production with a rapid market increase developing. Washington and California interests show a strong inclination toward entering the market but to date we have not been able to compile sufficient information to attempt to encourage available capital to enter the field. The Department of Planning would help all small communities if such information were compiled. Much of such work could possibly be carried on by research projects at the State Colleges and University.

Most important to us at the moment would be the calling together of a task force made up of the various interested County, State, Federal agencies and local business leaders to study the entire picture of the lost industry in Vernonia. The purpose would be to find methods to develop replacement industry for the area and to ease as much as possible the dislocation resulting in the closing of so much of the community payroll. Such a group could gather basic facts and information related to the situation which would make possible a quicker and better solution of the problems arising from closure of industry in other Oregon towns. We know other towns will be so affected and a program now toward saving Vernonia could help a number of other Oregon towns now and in the future.

In closing we would like to state that along with the other communities in the state we are interested in more equitable freight rates and in the best possible tax program which can be laid out. We also feel that more

power is needed. However, others can do a much better job of discussing the merits and demerits of such issues. Our problem is one of seeing our traditional way of life which was wrapped up in lumber disappearing. We want to help ourselves but we need help and ideas. These can make ours a stronger and better community for the entire state of Oregon.

Classes See Fire Truck

Wednesday morning, C. L. Johnson and Bob Carl took the rural fire truck to the Washington school grounds where they explained how it works to students of the fourth grade classes taught by Mrs. Mathilde Berger-son and Mrs. Rose Steen.

Fire Prevention Check Suggested

The best time to think about fire on your farm is before it happens, advises County Extension Agent, Don Coin Walrod.

Those who give it some thought beforehand are least likely to have a fire, he says. And he offers this special Fire Prevention Week list of fire considerations to think about:

1. Know how to call the fire department; post your fire department number and exchange at the telephone. Make sure your fire department is familiar with the layout of your farm, house and barn exits, and location of water supplies. In Vernonia, the fire department number is HA 9-3131.
2. Check condition of heating equipment including chimneys and flues. Make all repairs necessary for safe operation.
3. Check electric wiring for heat and loads—replace worn and inadequate wiring; use only 15 ampere fuses unless a circuit has been specially designed for larger loads.
4. Your fire fighting tools should be easily accessible in an emergency. Have ladders always ready for escape and fighting roof fires.
5. Have the right extinguishers in the right places. Check them frequently and recharge; protect from freezing where necessary.
6. Make sure water supplies are accessible for fire fighting.

Extension Unit Officers Trained

Eighty-six unit officers and committee chairmen representing the 19 home extension units in Columbia county gathered at Fern Hill Grange hall September 30 for a training session. Mrs. Norman Hansen, Mist, chairman of the county home extension committee, presided. Mrs. F. Beeler, Warren, county committee secretary-treasurer, had charge of registration.

The meeting opened with group singing led by Mrs. Ernest Harris of Yankton accompanied by Mrs. John Rauch of Fern Hill. Mrs. Hansen stated the purpose of the meeting and the county extension agent, Mrs. Margaret Ailyn, spoke on the extension program as applied to Columbia county.

The group then broke up into committees with a county committee chairman leading the discussion in each committee. These chairmen are as follows: Mrs. E. Avis, Columbia City, 4-H; Mrs. Charles Mikesch, Scappoose, A.C.W.W.; Mrs. John Rauch, Fern Hill, Azalea House; Mrs. J. McClung, Delena, Health and Safety; Mrs. M. Meyer, Timber route, Citizenship and Research; Mrs. F. Beeler, Warren, Secretary and Publicity.

Each committee worked out suggestions and recommendations for its phase of the current year home extension program.

Students to Hear Band

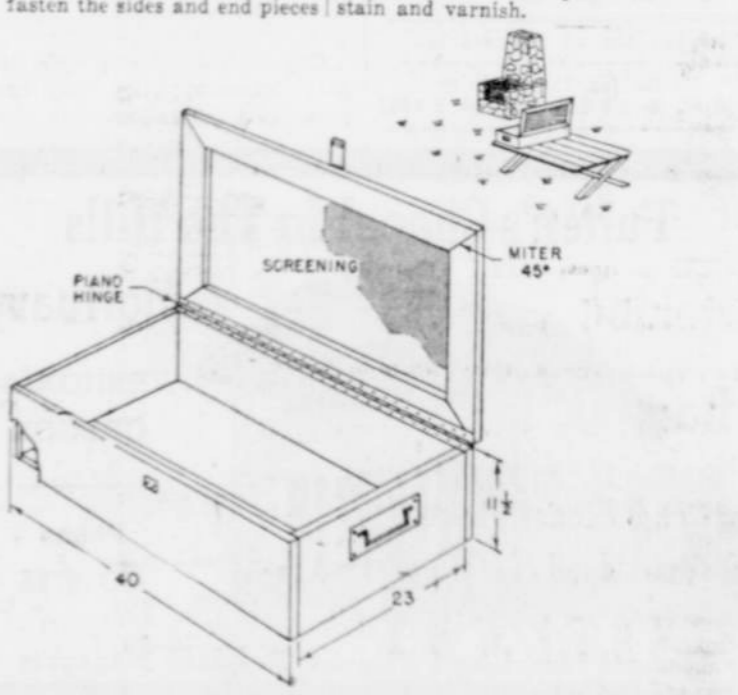
Wm. B. Johnson, band instructor in the Vernonia schools, will take about 75 band students from the grade and high schools to Portland Friday to hear the U.S. Navy band.

HERE'S HOW...

MAKE A PICNIC HAMPER

Carrying food and utensils for a picnic can be much easier if all the items are placed in one container. The hamper shown is basic and can be modified with separators and/or compartments. Make the hamper using 1 by 12-inch lumber for the top. Use a miter box for the angle cuts and help cut square ends. When assembling the project, fasten the sides and end pieces

on the outside edge of the bottom with glue and No. 10 wood screws, 2 inches long. The top is assembled with glue and No. 9 screws 3 inches long. The screening is attached to the upper side of the frame. Use a piano hinge to attach the top to the box. Add carrying handles and a lock and hasp to secure the top when closed. Sand smooth and paint or stain and varnish.



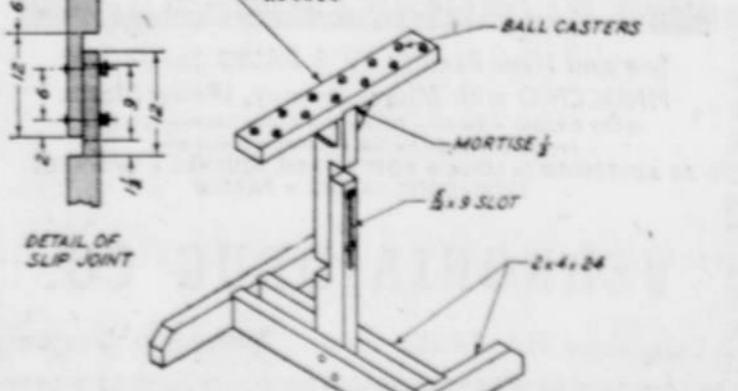
MAKE A SAW TABLE EXTENSION

A valuable addition to the home workshop with a power table saw is an adjustable saw table extension or support for long timber.

Make the support from 2 by 4-inch lumber. Cut the lower vertical piece so that the support will be the same height as the saw table, with allowance for adjustments up or down.

Cut a slot as shown in the lower vertical member. Bore holes 5/16 inch in diameter in

the upper vertical member and join vertical members with 5/16 by 4 1/2-inch carriage bolts with large washers and wing nuts. Cut mortises 3/4 inch deep and assemble pieces as shown, with glue and 3-inch No. 10 wood screws. Attach vertical member to base with 5/16 by 5 1/2-inch carriage bolts. Install diagonal braces, cut from 2 by 4's, under the top. Mount twelve large roller-ball casters staggered on the top.



THE VERNONIA EAGLE
Marvin Kamholz
Editor and Publisher
Official Newspaper of
Vernonia, Oregon

Entered as second class mail matter, August 4, 1922 at the post office in Vernonia, Oregon under the act of March 3, 1879. Subscription price \$3.00 yearly in the Nehalem Valley. Elsewhere \$3.50.

NATIONAL EDITORIAL ASSOCIATION
AFFILIATE MEMBER
Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association