Transporting one of the largest artifacts in the CHM collection, the 100-year-old John Deere wagon, required a great deal of innovative thinking.

In early March, CHM volunteers Pat Cross and Nat Jaeggli designed and built a wheeled sled for the wagon to permanently rest on. The sled acted as a support base during the wagon’s transit between museum buildings and will allow for easier movement of the wagon while creating exhibits, never having to use the wagon’s own fragile wheels.

In order to move the wagon out of the old museum building, the front doors and door frame had to be removed. Two crews worked simultaneously. While Rigo Hinojosa and Gold Coast Security workers dismantled the doors and frame, Cross and Jaeggli and museum staff securing the wagon to the sled. With great care, the sled was eased through the doorway with 1-inch clearance on either side. While the door frame, doors and security system were reinstalled, the wagon/sled was pulled onto the tilted bed of North Bend Towing’s flatbed truck via cables. Once secured, the wagon was driven to the new building and unloaded through the large barn door into the lower exhibit hall.

General contractor Scott Partney’s amazing workmen secured the wagon/sled to a forklift and lifted it above the railing on the mezzanine. Once the load was moved forward, it was set on jacks and slowly lowered safely into place on the second floor. Only then did all involved exhale and cheer their collective success.

Collection Manager Vicki Wiese’s advice after the successful move - “Don’t try this at home!”

To see a short video, go to the Facebook page of Coos History Museum, and scroll down to “Videos” on the left.
As anyone who attended CHM’s Off the Pallet event knows, a mezzanine bridges the main exhibit hall. That space gives us another thousand square feet to tell more stories of Coos County and the South Coast.

The first of those stories will be about agriculture as a business and a way of living for farm families and rural neighborhoods. The exhibit we’re adapting to tell this story was produced for the National Endowment for the Humanities to travel nationally through a program called NEH On the Road. After a record-setting run, that exhibit is retiring here in Coos Bay and will form the backbone of our interpretation of regional farm life.

The exhibit – entitled Farm Life: A Century of Change of the Farm Families and Their Neighbors – examines what it means for a family to live and work on the land. The exhibit is divided into four sections: the farmhouse, fields, barn and gathering places in the larger community. In each section, photographs, objects and labels tell the story of life on a farm.

Through these items and other interactive pieces, audiences who view Farm Life learn about the social, economic and cultural framework of farms and their surrounding communities. Though the starting place is a Chippewa Valley, Wisconsin, farmstead around 1950, universal themes of family and community are addressed, touching on issues that resonate with farming and non-farming viewers alike.

The 20th century brought profound changes for farm families and their neighbors. In 1900, 42 percent of the United States population worked in agriculture, but, by 2000, less than two percent of the population was involved in farm production. Through generations of dramatic economic and social change, some families have maintained their connections to farming, their land and the rural communities in which they live and work.

The exhibit traveled around America for more than seven years, from 2005 to 2012. It engaged visitors at 40 venues in 24 states. It traveled as far east as Easton, Maryland, and as far west as Dublin, California. It journeyed the country corner to corner, from Moses Lake, Washington, to Ocala, Florida. Its travels even included one stop in Oregon, at the Hood River Historical Museum.

The National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame in Kansas hosted it, as did the San Diego County Fair in Del Mar. More than a million people saw it. It stayed on the road longer than any other NEH On the Road exhibit ever has. How did it end up retiring here?

CHM Director Frank Smoot helped develop the idea and wrote the content (what museums call “label text”), and when it retired, Frank had first dibs. Farm Life will fill the CHM mezzanine for a relatively short time, no more than a year, and then another exhibit will take its place.

What will become of Farm Life then? Will it travel in retirement? Maybe. But, if not, the clever, adaptable casework will be the museum’s to keep – and to adapt to other content and tell other compelling stories.

---

Staff members Vicki Wiese and Michelle Nash unpack one of 11 crates of exhibit materials. The “Farm Life” story will be told from the national and local perspective.
The Organic Conversion

By Bill Mast

Coos County has a long history of dairying, going back to the arrival of the first cows in 1853 when Alfred Collver drove a herd overland from the Umpqua Valley on the Roseburg Trail to the Coos Bay area. Later that same year, Christopher Long brought cows onto his homestead near present-day Bandon. A dairy industry soon developed with farmers selling butter and surplus fluid milk to logging camps and individual households.

As dairy farming expanded, markets in San Francisco opened for Coos County products. In 1870, Anson and Elizabeth Rodgers established the county’s first cheese factory on their Coos River farm. Others soon followed the Rodgers’ lead. For most of the 19th century, dairy farmers produced butter and cheese on their own farms. In the late 1880s, centrally located creameries and cheese factories began replacing farmstead cheese and butter-making. By the early 20th century, off-farm facilities manufactured virtually all cheese and butter in Coos County.

The marketing of fluid milk expanded along with the county’s population. Dairy farmers sold milk in one- or five-gallon pails, often establishing routes and hauling their product on hand carts or horse-drawn wagons. In 1906, George Ross Sr. and George Black opened the first bottling plant in the county, followed by J. W. Russell and Sons in 1907. Within a few years, small, on-farm bottling plants served every town in the area. Large processors and retailers gradually replaced the farmer/bottler. The last small-scale milk bottler, Gordon Ross’ Cherry Grove Dairy, closed in the late 1980s.

Dairy farming grew throughout the early 20th century. By 1950, the Coos County dairy herd numbered 16,000 cows on 500 dairy farms. By the mid-1950s, dairy farm numbers began to drop. Low prices, high capital costs, opportunities for high-wage off-farm jobs, a younger generation choosing not to farm, and the conversion from 10-gallon cans to refrigerated bulk tanks all contributed to this decline. Former dairies were consolidated into larger farms, converted to beef or sheep production or, depending on location, reverted to either forest or wetlands. By 1990, fewer than 40 dairies remained.

Alarmed by the disappearance of so many of their colleagues, dairy farmers began exploring ways to increase the viability of their operations. One of the options considered was organic production. Modern-day organic farming started in England during the late 1930s, the brainchild of Sir Albert and Gabrielle Howard. In 1940, J. I. Rodale established an organic farm in Pennsylvania, and eventually became head of the Rodale Institute, which promoted organic agriculture in the U.S. For the next 50 years, “organic” became somewhat of a confusing term in this country, with many certifying agencies and individual farmers having their own definitions.

In 1990, Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act as part of the 1990 Farm Bill. The legislation set up a 15-member board with seven sub-committees to develop a “National List of Approved and Prohibited Substances”. The Board also determined what types of farming practices were approved for organic production. As part of a political deal with food processors and retailers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed not to regulate the word “natural” in exchange for regulating “organic”. To this day, the word “natural”, when used to describe food, has no legal definition.

In 1997, Arago dairy farmers Doug and Sharon Sinko became the first certified organic dairy in the Pacific Northwest. They shipped their milk to Portland where it was processed into fluid milk for sale in local stores. The premium price they received soon convinced other local dairymen to follow. Early converts to organic dairying included Tom and Diane Brown of Myrtle Point, Bob and Nanette Ross in Lee Valley, and the Shull dairy in Coquille. Within ten years, all but two dairy farms in the county were certified organic.

Attaining organic certification is a rather long and involved process. Land must be managed under organic regulations for three years prior to certification, and cows for one year which is concurrent with the third year of land certification. The certification process can be financially stressful since farmers operate under strict organic rules.
while selling in the conventional market. Oregon Tilth acts as the certifying agency for farmers in Coos County.

Organic rules prohibit the application to the land of any fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides derived from petrochemicals. Any seed used must be certified organic. Genetically modified organisms are prohibited both on the land and for use with livestock. No hormones to promote growth and milk production can be used. Organic standards do not allow for antibiotic use, except as a life-saving measure. Animals treated with antibiotics lose their certification and must be removed from the herd. (Cows treated with antibiotics under conventional rules have their milk discarded during treatment and for 2 – 5 days after.) Cows must graze at least 120 days per year. Any purchased feed must come from certified organic farms and processors. Organic farmers undergo annual certification inspections and keep detailed records of all inputs used and when and where grazing occurred. Violations of organic standards can result in the revoking of a farm's certification.

Substances allowed in organic agriculture include lime and bone meal for soils, pyrethrin (flower-based) insecticides, and herbal remedies for animal health. All vaccinations are also allowed. The USDA publishes an annually-updated list of approved products and substances for organic use. Biological controls, such as beneficial insects, and cultural practices, including crop rotation and nitrogen-fixing legumes, are encouraged. Manure applied to the land acts as the primary fertilizer.

County organic dairies market their milk through Organic Valley Co-operative, headquartered in LaFarge, Wisconsin. There are over 1,800 co-op farms in 32 states and three Canadian provinces, making it the world’s largest organic co-operative. Organic Valley does not operate any processing plants on the West Coast, but contract with other processors to handle their milk. Darigold processes about 95% of Coos County milk in its Portland facility. Nancy’s Yogurt in Springfield purchases the remainder. Organic regulations allow for organic milk to be processed in the same plants as conventional milk, providing that the organic milk is “first run” during the day’s processing.

Ten dairy farms – nine organic and one conventional – remain in Coos County today. They range in size from 100 cows to nearly 1,000, with a total cow population of around 4,000. The conventional dairy supplies milk to Face Rock Creamery in Bandon. Coos County’s long grazing season and mild climate fit the organic model quite well. Farmers have a large enough land base to produce a major proportion of their own feed, thus minimizing one of the major expenses in organic dairying. In most cases, the premium price for organic milk offsets the higher costs involved. Although there have been occasions where conventional milk was at or near the organic price, organic dairies generally receive a 40-50% price premium. Due to depressed conventional prices at the moment, organic prices are more than double those of conventional milk.

Doug and Sharon Sinko’s pioneering spirit in 1997 has resulted in Coos County becoming a major player in organic dairy production on the West Coast. The compatibility of local conditions to the organic model has offset the disadvantages of geographic location that has plagued Coos County agriculture in the past.

Bill Mast of Lee Valley in southern Coos County retired from the dairy business in 2011 and spent two years researching his 2013 book “Coos County Agriculture: A Short History.” Mast serves as on the CCHS Board of Trustees.
Welcome
New and Renewing Members
Dec 1, 2014 – March 15, 2015

Note: Life Members to be listed in next issue of Waterways.

New Benefactors
Finlayson, Cindy
Rueger, Gregory & Barbara
Wegner, John & Beth

Renewing Benefactors
Burgher, Wm & Corliss
Cooper, Robert & Beverly
Farr, Linda & Jay
Ivy, Donald
Janke, Paul & Patricia
Macy, Robt
Mattecheck, Wm & Hillery
Montalbano, Jim & Ellen
Poole, Arthur & Toni
Straus, Roger
Veldstra, Brad

New Businesses
Georgia Bunn Studios, LLC
MacKevel MD, Carla
Treez
Yellow Cab Taxi

Renewing Businesses
Betty Kay Charters
Burles, John S, CPA
Coos Bay Grocery Outlet
Coos Bay Yacht Club
Coquille Animal Hospital
Gold Coast Truck Repair
Honda World
Huggins Insurance
Lee Valley Dairy
Lesan, Jerry & Darla
Lone Rock Timber Mgmt
Pekny, Frank & Helen
Riggs, Kayvon & Paula
Taylor, R Georgia
Terry, Ted & Carolyn

Cody Skoff works in the library to pack up the Victor West photo albums.

New Family
Abel, Bryan & Linda
Argenta, Kelly
Batdorff, James & Alfreda
Callery, Martin & Suzy
Cooper, Jon & Catherine
Shindler

Crane, Dave
Crippsins, Robert
Emm, Joan
Gibson, Michael & Linda
Gochnour, Kristina
Goodman, Jay & Suzanne
Groves, Julie
Hargens, Randy & Mary Jane
Grant

Hogan, Mike & Cindy
Rawlings
Jackson, Nicole & Brian
Gumbs
Johnson, Roger & Ellen
Juroan, David & Susan
Kenyon, George & Karen
Luther, Char
Main, Mike & Sharon
Nasby, Dean & Shelley
Neill, Joe & Maria
Robertson, Daniel & Mary
Rudder, Richard & Wendy
Smith, Don & Jeanne
Socomon, Allen & Jean
Adamson

Stevenson, Calum & Barb
Swanson, Bruce & Barbara
Taylor, Barb & Steven Fowler
Vaughn, Mike
Washburn, Mike & Eura
Weyer, Pat & Ruth

Renewing Family
Ahuna, George & Eva
Anderson, Michael & Janet
Hagge

Archard, Sam & Sandi
Barton, Jon & Patricia
Batthrick, Ray & Sherry
Bauer, Ken & Diane
Beauchamp, Carol
Beckett, Art & Janna
Bjorkquist-Holmes, Susan
Blom, Don & Renee
Bonk, Robt & Joyce
Borcher, Patricia
Brend, Orlin & Toni Ann
Bunch, Wilton
Chadwick/Southgage

Clarke, Jim & Nancy
Close, Larry and Pat
Conner, Carlton & Janell
Cook, Joe & Anne
Cooney, Hannah
Corrao, Robt & Susan
Corrigan, Randall
David, Karen & Bruce
Davis, Harry & Victoria
DeJong, Pamela
DeLeon, Adrian & Jenni
Denton, Ken & Cathy
Douthit, Nathan & Eva
Dugger, Glenn & Kathi
Durrer, Michael & Jan
Fereday, James

Fischer, Suzanne
Flaxel, Benton
Fox, Rick
Gebhardt, Dan & Bonnie
Gehlert, Gary & Janet
Gill, Dick & Mary
Goche’, Rick
Goude, Dennis & Judy
Gould, David & Donna
Graham, Steven & Debra
Granger, Robt & Julie
Graves, James & Suzanne
Graybill, Mike
Gregor, Gary & Martha
Greif, Michael & Marti
Greif, Steve & Joan
Griffin, Thomas & Barbara
Harpole, Ronald & Joan
Henke, Joe & Rachel
Hess, Larry & Patricia
Hoffman, Jack & Lucy
Holland, Tristan & Colleen
Hooper, Steve & Jan
Howard, Chuck & Mary
Huggins, Robert & Janet
Johnson, Larry & Cindy
Juul, Rudy & Mary Jo
Karavanich, Kipp & Vickie
Keller, Diana
Kelley, John & Bette
Kendricks, Wm & Joan
Kinney, Herb & Bettie
Lagesse, Philip & Lisa
Leberti, Louis & Kathleen
Littlefield, Jon & Lee
Lunde, David
Mahaffy, Robt
Mast, Dan & Lisa
McKillop, Patricia & David
Lunde
McMichael, Don & Sharon

Pedro, Robt & Shirley
Petterson, Mark & Linda
Pettie, Al & Marion
Pitz, Kevin & Kathy
Pogue, Donald & Joanne
Poitra, Dorothy
Pratt, Ken & Betty
Prouy, Sally J
Quinn, Michael & Lindi
Recken, Sarah & Robert
Sanasso
Roberts, Steven
Roblan, Arnie & Arlene
Ross, Gordon & Wilma
Rueger, Gregory & Barbara
Sasser, Brent & Lindsey
Sharplees, Caspar & Kate
Shoji, Gene & Crystal
Simon, Gary & Diane
Solomon, Lola
Stebbins, Mike & Mary Lou
Stickler, Barbara & Dean
Sweatt, Dana & Linda
Swenson, Ed & Judy
Terry, Patrick
Terwilliger, Nora
Teyler, Bob & Sharon
Tinker, George & Carole
Underwood, Bill & Barbara
Ventgen, Carol & George
Verger, James & Diane
Vernon, Roger & Maren
Wentzel, Rocky & Jill
Wiese-Segal, Stacey & Kevin
Wirth, Bart & Sue
Woods, Dareld & Shirley
Wright, Will & Doreen
Younker, Tom & Diana
Youst, Lionel & Hilda
Zarder, Kurt & Dianne

Means, Steve
Metzger, Ron & Kathy
Michel, John & Gary Salcedo
Miller, Steve and Linda
Morrison, Len
Muenchrath, John & Mary
Murray, Wayne & Carol
Newhouse, Kathryn
Noffsinger, Gary & Virginia
Nored, Richard
Nowlin, Thomas & Susan
Oliva, George & Marcia
Ortemiller, Dennis & Susan
Parker, Joy
Payton, Lynda
Don Richwine
scanning the Victor West Collection. Don's wife Carol helps with research library. She describes and does data entry of ledgers, books, yearbooks, and other documents.

New Accessions

Derbyshire, Graham & Ramsay – Scrapbooks, photographs, menus, programs, souvenir, and newspaper
Goude, Dennis & Judy – Photographs
Green, Sally & Jerry – Map
Kaufman, Bev – Shoes, plaque, and photograph
Koreiva, MJ – Items related to Egyptian Theatre re-opening
Shearer, Rick – Scripts and souvenirs related to “Without Limits”
Shellabarger, Phil – Model Airplane
Soules, Becky – Souvenir
Spring, John – Photographs and photo albums
Tyler, Donna – Newsletter
February 14 was a day of celebration at the Coos History Museum. Not only was it Valentine’s Day and Oregon’s anniversary of statehood, but the CHM also celebrated the first public viewing of the new building on Front Street in Coos Bay.

Museum staff members Michelle Nash and Tabetha Myatt spearheaded the event with the help of a cadre of over 30 volunteers who shared information about volunteer opportunities at the CHM. Volunteers donated a total of 115 hours for the event.

Though exhibit cases and displays have not yet been installed, over 350 guests toured the new facility and talked with staff, volunteers and special presenters – Scott Partney, general contractor for the building and foreman Darren Jones; Mike Crow, local architect and museum representative on the building project; and Don Ivy, tribal chief of the Coquille Indian Tribe who supervised the tribal youth involved in the cedar-planked walls of the Welcoming Gallery.

Truckloads of artifact storage boxes were on view, many still wrapped on the wooden pallets with many others already organized and stored according to a detailed plan. One storage room on the tour features four banks of compact shelving which, with the turn of a dial, can be moved along tracks in the floor to separate the rows of shelves for easy access. Each bank of shelving is 14.5 feet in length and six shelves high.

Guests received Pallet passports that were stamped along the tour of the building and redeemed for an event button. CHM member Rick Shearer donated the event buttons. Pizzas were delivered from Dave’s Pizza to accompany tastings donated by 7 Devils’ Brewery samples or other beverages.

The fund-raiser garnered nearly $3,400 in revenue including 37 new and renewing memberships.

Enthusiasm for the new building and its potential as a regional center for county residents and visitors was apparent throughout the afternoon of the event. Much work is still ahead as the move progresses and exhibits are prepared. Thanks to all for attending and making the event an overwhelming success.
Calendar of Events

April 15  CCHS Board meeting, 4 pm, Coos History Museum
April 18  Lionel Youst: Local Labor History, 10 am, Coos History Museum
April 18  Hot Archaeology/Cool Geology New Approaches for Dating Rock Art, Hales Center for the Performing Arts, SOCC, 7–8 pm
May 1    Civil War Connections, 5–8 pm, MHS; activities, crafts, presentations. Info:cbcemetery@gmail.com
May 20   CCHS Board meeting, 4 pm, Coos History Museum
May 22-24 BBQ, Blues and Brews, The Mill Casino
May 31   Coos History Museum Opening!
May 31   United Veterans’ Memorial Day Parade, 11 am, downtown Coos Bay
May 31   Re-dedication 100th Anniversary Sailor-Soldier Monument, 1:30 pm, Marshfield Pioneer Cemetery

Waterways is the quarterly publication of the Coos County Historical Society.

Funding for this newsletter is generously provided by Ann Collins who serves on the CCHS Board of Trustees.