

# WATERWAYS

COOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • SUMMER 2016 • WWW.COOSHISTORY.ORG

## Annual Meeting June 11th

All Coos County Historical Society members are invited to the Annual Meeting of the Society set for Saturday, June 11, from 10:00-11:00 am. The meeting will be held at the museum in the Sprague Gallery (community room) of the Coos History Museum. There is no admission to the event and refreshments will be served. Members will be able to tour the exhibits for free and see our newest artifact addition: the Fresnel lens from the Cape Arago Lighthouse.

This is the 125th annual meeting of the CCHS...an event that traces its beginnings to the

founding of the Coos-Curry Pioneer Association in 1891. At the gathering, members will be asked to ratify the nomination of next year's officers of the Board of Trustees: **Bill Mast** (president), **Carol Ventgen** (vice-president), **Anne Guerin** (secretary), and **Karen O'Donnell** (treasurer). Staff and board members will present information about current museum operations and **Joe Slack** will preview a short slide show about the upcoming November ballot measure for a county history fund. In addition, the board will honor two CCHS

members who have recently retired from the Board. **Jerry Phillips**, author of a book on the Elliott State Forest, member of the curatorial committee, and frequent history presenter, will be given an award for his contributions to the preservation of local history. **Barbara Taylor** will be given an award for her volunteer service to the Historical Society. Taylor served on the board for many years and acted as the organization's treasurer during many critical years when fundraising for the new museum took place. We hope to see you there!

## South County History Tour

By Anne Guerin

Join the Coos County Historical Society on a tour of historic ranches in south Coos County on Saturday, July 9th. Participants will ride a bus tour through Myrtle Point and Powers led by **Bill Mast**, **Anne Guerin**, and representatives of the Coquille Tribe as a fundraiser for the Coos History Museum. The cost to reserve a seat is \$20 per person. Participants must pay in advance. Reservations may be made in person at the Coos History Museum, by phone at 541-756-6320, or by mail at 1210 N. Front Street, Coos Bay, OR 97420. The tour is limited to 50 seats so book early!

The itinerary is as follows: Meet at the Myrtle Point Logging Museum, open at 9:00 a.m., to view their exhibits. The tour bus leaves from the Logging Museum at 10:00 and will then travel to Powers to visit the pioneer Wagner House and the Railroad/Logging Museum. After that we will travel eleven miles up Salmon Creek Road to Eckley and the historic Dement Ranch. Lunch will be provided by the Dement Ranch, in association with the Country Natural Beef co-op. We'll return down Salmon Creek Road to the historic Powers Ranch and the old Guerin homestead and get back to Myrtle Point in the late afternoon.

# Personnel Changes at the CHM

By Bill Mast

Coos History Museum Executive Director **Frank Smoot** has resigned his post to accept a similar position in his home state of Wisconsin. The Coos County Historical Society Board of Trustees accepted his resignation, effective May 15th, at their April meeting. Smoot had served as Executive Director at the Museum since November 2013.

Smoot's time at the Museum included construction of the new facility, design of the exhibit hall, and building of the exhibits, culminating in a September 16, 2015 grand opening attended by **Governor Kate Brown**. Since opening, the Museum has become a center of community activity with educational programs, social events, musical performances, and the winter Farmers Market.

Upon announcing his resignation, Smoot issued the following statement; "My wife and I have had a grand

time helping build the Coos History Museum from the ground up. When we showed up here, it was a set of pilings and an idea. To me, the seed seems well germinated. Probably the most important decision we made here at the Museum was to have the voices of people to serve as the backbone for telling the stories the Museum tells. Coos County has various histories, seen differently from different peoples and perspectives. We wanted the unique voices of these many people to shine. The staff has taken to this idea like ducks to water, and I know they'll carry it on. But maybe even more than staff, the Museum can't run without its volunteers, and we'll miss them terribly."

Board President **Bill Mast** commented: "We are very grateful to Frank for all he's accomplished in taking the Museum through this difficult but rewarding transition. The impressive facility you see on the Coos

Bay waterfront is in no small part a result of his efforts."

A committee of the Trustees is currently finishing a search for an interim director and hopes to have a permanent director hired by the end of the summer.

**Valerie Caskey** will remain in the Bay Area and continue her fine work as the Museum Store Manager. Caskey will also assume the part-time duties of Rental Coordinator from **Kim Schmutzler** who, for the past eight months, has done a tremendous job of creating a good operational system for marketing and scheduling three rooms available for rent at the CHM. The board also announces that **Bay Area Enterprises** has been hired to take on the custodial duties at the museum, replacing **Scott Mayfield**. The Board appreciates the efforts of Schmutzler and Mayfield for pioneering their roles at the new museum.

## Museum Education

By Amy Pollicino

The public is invited to learn the art of basket weaving at the Coos History Museum with a class starting on June 9th. Every Thursday during the summer from 1 to 4 p.m., class participants will work with **Colleen Moen** who will teach basic basket weaving techniques using local materials. There is a \$10 registration fee for the class.

The Knot Club meets at the museum every Tuesday from 2 to 4 pm. Expert or novice, all are welcome to come to this free skill-sharing club. Practice knots that humans have been tying for centuries.

CHM staff and volunteers have recently completed the 5th Grade education program again this spring. Students from Gold Beach to Florence and in-between were given a tour of the CHM and the nearby Marshfield

Sun Printing Museum. They also participated in a living history program where they heard from volunteer docents who portrayed firemen, ironworkers, creamery workers, fish packers, and ferry boat operators who once worked along Front Street in Marshfield. Thank you **Joe Stoffel, Peter Mason, Bonnie Hudson, Eva Varga, Steve Greif, Ron Miranda, Kendra Larson, Valerie Caskey, and John Engels**. Volunteers at the Marshfield Sun Printing Museum included **Don Blom, Lionel Youst, and George Tinker**.

For two Sunday evenings in May, museum patrons were treated to a unique musical education program. The **Doodad Shanty Boys**, a local group, sang songs from the sea and educated the public about life at sea for navy men, merchants, and whalers.

### Coos County Historical Society

#### Staff

Collections Manager: Vicki Wiese  
Assistant Collections Manager: Michelle Nash  
Education Coordinator: Amy Pollicino  
Rentals Coordinator and  
Store Manager: Valerie Caskey  
Bookkeeper: Terri Knight  
Maintenance: Bay Area Enterprises  
Volunteer Coordinators: Arlene Roblan  
and Sally Prouty

#### Board of Trustees

President: Bill Mast  
Vice-President: Jon Littlefield  
Secretary: Anne Guerin  
Treasurer: Karen O'Donnell  
Trustees: Toni Ann Brend, Ann Collins,  
Steve Greif, Jan Hooper, Darla Lesan,  
Toni Poole, Sally Prouty, Arlene Roblan,  
Carl Siminow, Joe Slack, Barb Taylor,  
Carol Ventgen

#### Museum

Open Tuesday thru Sunday, 10-6  
Adults = \$7, Children 5-17 = \$3  
Family Maximum: \$17  
AARP and AAA discounts  
Free to members and active-duty service  
541.756.6320, [www.cooshistory.org](http://www.cooshistory.org)

# Special Benches at the CHM

By Bill Mast

The four wooden benches located throughout the Coos History Museum have attracted a fair amount of attention over the ten months since the building opened. The wood to construct the three myrtlewood and one black walnut bench was donated by the family of **Hollis and Anna Mast** of Lee Valley. The story behind the wood may be of interest to Historical Society members.

The history of the black walnut begins with my Grandfather, **Webb Mast**, born in 1868 in Watauga County, North Carolina. In 1872, young Webb, along with his parents, brothers, and 74 other members of the Hayes, Wagner, Land, Shull, Harmon, and Mast families, boarded "immigrant cars" on the Transcontinental Railroad to make the trip to Oregon. Immigrant cars were special boxcars a family could rent for all of their people and possessions. They were enticed to Oregon by letters from David Wagner, who had settled near the future site of Powers in 1870. Mr. Wagner convinced them that economic prospects in the wilds of Coos County were brighter than those in the post-Civil War Appalachia area.

Webb's parents established a farm on the North Fork of the Coquille River in 1873. He grew up there, and, along with his brother Hardee, assumed management of the farm. He continued the life of a farmer until he found himself approaching 40 years of age and still single. Seeing no prospects locally, he began perusing the personal ads in his mother's *Ladies Home Journal*. One which interested him belonged to a young woman named **Bessie Dernburger** from Belleville, West

Virginia. The two soon began a lively correspondence lasting nearly a year. By 1908, Webb finally saved enough money to buy a train ticket to West Virginia. He arrived in Belleville via a rather circuitous route through Iowa, Alabama, and South Carolina. Unbeknownst to Miss Dernburger, Mr. Mast had perused more than one personal ad.

When my Grandfather finally arrived in West Virginia, he was quite taken by Bessie. He proposed, she accepted, and later that year he met her in Portland where they married. Among her possessions she brought with her were several seedlings of the black walnut tree. Upon arriving in Lee Valley, she planted the seedlings and they grew and prospered. She moved into the family home with her new husband, brother-in-law, his wife and three children, and a mother-in-law. Despite the lack of privacy, they managed to have two children, **Helen and Ben Webb**.

By 1917, brothers Webb and Hardee decided to split the acreage. Webb began building a new homestead across the river, having a barn constructed in 1917 and a new house in 1918, both of which still stand today. They moved in just in time for their third child, **Hollis**, to be born early in 1919. Bessie continued to set out seedlings produced by the original trees, and she and Webb remained happily married until his death in 1951. The black walnut in the small bench near the front desk of the Museum was milled from the descendants of those first seedlings brought by my Grandmother.

The story of the myrtlewood benches involves my father, Hollis. For many years, he supplemented his farm income by logging myrtle



*Webb and Bessie Mast stand in front of their home in 1948.*

trees and having them sawn into lumber at **Norlan Gant's** sawmill, a few miles downstream near Fox Bridge. He would then sell lumber to several of the myrtlewood factories up and down the coast. Over the years, he would save especially high quality boards and store them in the basement of his parents' home, with the intention of being a woodworker in his retirement years. However, my Father was not the retiring type, and the boards lay unused in the basement for nearly 50 years. It was at this time that my brother, sister, and I decided to donate a portion of the wood to the Museum for others to enjoy as benches. Shop students at Marshfield High School under the direction of **Tom Hull** finished the wood and constructed the metal frames, resulting in the finished product you see today.

# Exhibit Updates

By Steve Greif

Exhibits, both interior and exterior, continue to evolve at the Coos History Museum. New to the Welcoming Gallery near the front desk is a boat built by folks at the Coos Bay Boat Building Center. Construction of the vessel came from unique plans they found for a 1930 Coos Bay skiff. In the main exhibit hall, the Fresnel lens from the Cape Arago Lighthouse is now on permanent loan from the U.S. Coast Guard. A small rotating light inside the lens gives the visitor an idea of how the lens operated. Scott Partney Construction crafted the exhibit case for the lens. Thanks to Coast Guard personnel for assistance in moving both the lens and 1930 skiff.

Exhibit cases that were in the Welcoming Gallery have been moved into the main hall. Native American tools and baskets will continue to be on display there and new artifacts about logging in the area will soon be shown in the Uplands section of the hall. A new iPad video screen now shows how Native Americans carved dugout canoes like the one the CHM has on display.

One of the last of the “Mosquito Fleet”, the *Welcome*, is now on display on the museum’s south plaza. A crew from West Coast Contractors moved the vessel in May (see photo). The *Welcome* carried milk cans down the Coos River to creameries in Marshfield as well as school children and other passengers. Museum staff will soon devise a plan to stabilize this large artifact and slowly bring it back to a good condition.

West Coast Contractors also helped museum staff move a section of the McCullough Bridge into place near the museum’s entrance (see photo). The railing, a donation of **John and Teri Whitty**, came from the historic bridge built in 1936 which recently has undergone extensive renovation. The propeller from the *New Carissa* has also found a temporary home. It is located near the museum’s parking lot entrance and shows the extensive damage done from the 1999 shipwreck.

Finally, **Kyle Daniels** and his crew from Clean Cut Landscape continue to work on the bio-swales that collect rainfall runoff from the CHM property. Rock, soil, and plants in the bio-swales will naturally filter rainwater prior to its return to our bay.



*Volunteers from the North Bend Coast Guard Station helped move the Cape Arago lens and the 1930 Skiff into the CHM.*



*Thank you to West Coast Contractors, the Boat Building Center, and members of the Coos Bay City Council for their work in moving the Welcome to our plaza on April 19th. (l to r): Nick Jansen, Mike Vaughn, Tom Leahy, Tim Smith, Richie Biesanz, Bob Moberly, Nate Clausen, Rob Daniels. Not pictured project manager Tom Koenig.*



*A crew from West Coast Contractors moved an old section of the McCullough Bridge into position.*

# HISTORY FUND ON THE BALLOT

By Carol Ventgen

The Coos History Museum board announces an opportunity for county voters to give our museum a new, steady form of funding when they cast their ballots in the general election next November. After months of planning, eight history museums in the county seek creation of a Coos County Historical Fund. The proposal would guarantee funding for all eight museums in Coos County, from the Wagner House in Powers to the Coos History Museum on the waters of Coos Bay. It would cover operation expenses for the Bandon Historical Society, the Coos Fairgrounds Museum and the Logging Museum in Myrtle Point, the Coquille Valley Museum, the Marshfield Sun Printing Museum and the Oregon Coast Historical Railway Museum.

For a modest amount, 10 cents per \$1,000 in real estate valuation, all of those museums will be able to supplement the donations, memberships, and store sales on which they depend with a tax for the purpose of providing core funding for staff, utilities, and other fixed costs. That modest tax rate represents a yearly cost of \$10 on a house assessed at \$100,000. A bonus is that all Coos County residents and their families will get free admission to all eight history museums, always, if the measure passes. Parents could share their heritage with their kids at no cost. The levy would also allow the museums to be open more hours during the day.

“Coos County voters will have a chance to strengthen all of our history museums to provide for

improved access and sustainable service, to improve the entire fabric of our county as a whole,” says Joe Slack, the Coos History Museum board member who headed up the grassroots countywide planning group. “Strengthened by the new funding, our museums will be able to contribute to regional prosperity and promote tourism by drawing in more visitors, and to create a more thriving, vibrant, and diverse cultural life for Coos County residents. The museums’ ability to expand their educational programs for children with the new funding will present an exciting opportunity for life-long learning.”

CHM members will read more about this important ballot measure in our fall edition of *Waterways*.

## ROLL CALL

### New Business Members

Goddard Energy Company  
Southwestern OR Community College  
The World newspaper

### Renewing Business Members

Betty Kay Charters  
Coastal Paper & Supply  
Coos Bay Grocery Outlet  
Coos Bay Yacht Club  
Jordan Cove LNG, LLC  
Nasburg - Huggins Insurance  
Stebbins & Coffey  
Topits, Marilyn

### New Family Members

Abel, Daniel & Roberta  
Butler, Barbara  
Contois, James & Tana  
Ekern, Bill & Yvonne  
Foss, Ann  
Gagnon, Mark  
Haan, Kevin & Corey  
Hastings, William & Carole

Jensen, Andie  
Lance, Adrienne & Clifford  
Lantz, Glenn & Valerie  
Larkin, Ray & Lisa  
Lindahl, Dennis  
Luce, Patterson  
Main, Craig & Shari  
Manship, Kyle & Kate  
McGrady, Barney  
Milburn, Scott  
Palmer, Brandi M  
Potter, Rondi  
Rioux, Brenda  
Rodriguez, Kristin  
Rosenberger, Michael  
Shepard, Lee & Chris White  
Slechta, Sara & Marty  
Thrift, Diane & Clyde  
Vicklund, Arnold

### Renewing Family Members

Barton, Jon & Patricia  
Batdorff, James & Alfreda  
Beauchamp, Carol  
Booth, Barbara & George Nixon  
Brainard, Michael  
Brainard, Warren & Janet  
Fernandez, Leo & Mary

Followell, Laurie  
Gillespie, Michael & Jan  
Goude, Dennis & Judy  
Graves, James & Suzanne  
Hatcher, Craig & Jamie  
Holland, Tristan & Colleen  
Johnson, Roger & Ellen  
Jordan, Dave & Susan  
Kearns, Paul & Jill  
Laird, David  
Leberti, Louis & Kathleen  
Matson, Lucille  
McMichael, Don & Sharon  
Michel, John & Gary Salcedo  
Moore, James & Charlene  
Morrison, Len  
Pedro, Robt & Shirley  
Pratt, Ken & Betty  
Tedder, Ken & Nancy  
Underwood, Bill & Barbara  
Vernon, Roger & Maren  
Wiese-Segal, Stacey  
Wirth, Bart & Sue

### New Individual Members

Bereson, Jo  
Cribb, Barbara  
Howeth, Lee

Hunt, Patricia  
Wells, Sharon

### Renewing Individual Members

Griffin, Kim S.  
Hodgin, Katherine  
Jorgensen, Korey  
Miles, James & Patsy  
Ohman, Betty  
Verger, Joanne

### Operating Donations

Coos Sand N Sea Quilters  
Greif, Steve & Joan  
Heath, Micheal & Ann  
Ohman, Betty  
Pedro, Robt & Shirley  
Snyder, Amanda  
Uno, John  
Wiese-Segal, Stacey

### Memorial Donations

Linda Bufton in memory of  
Dick Mohn  
Annette Reher in memory of  
Barbara Systma  
The Rivermen in memory of  
Barbara Systma



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## Calendar of Events

see [www.cooshistory.org](http://www.cooshistory.org)  
for more information

**Knot Club:** every Tuesday of each month  
(2 - 4 pm) at CHM

**June 9:** first meeting of the **Basket Weaving Class**  
(1-4 pm) at CHM, (every Thursday afternoon  
thereafter)

**June 11:** **Annual Meeting** (10-11 am) at CHM

**June 15:** **Board of Trustees meeting**  
(4 pm) at CHM

**July 4:** View the City of CB fireworks from  
the CHM

**July 9:** **South County History Tour**  
(leave MP Logging Museum at 10am)

## Quilt Raffle

By Toni Poole

Recently a beautiful quilt was donated to the CHM for a fundraiser. **Laura Dorbuck** and the **Coos Sand & Sea Quilters** created the quilt for a raffle to benefit museum operations. It is currently on display in the museum lobby. Raffle tickets are only \$1 or six for \$5 and are available at the museum's front desk. The raffle drawing will take place during the Bay Area Fun Festival on September 18, 2016. Thank you, quilters!

## WATERWAYS

*is the quarterly publication  
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and sent to all members.*

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on the CCHS Board of Trustees.*