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., 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, 106
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
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 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.

Webb and Bessie Mast stand in front of their home in 1948.
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.
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
Slecha, Sara & Marty
Thrift, Diane & Clyde
Vicklund, Arnold
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

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

New Individual Members
Bereson, Jo
Cribb, Barbara
Howeth, Lee
Hunt, Patricia
Wells, Sharon

Memorial Donations
Linda Burton in memory of Dick Mohn
Annette Reher in memory of Barbara Systma
The Rivermen in memory of Barbara Systma
Calendar of Events

see 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
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