

# WATERWAYS

COOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • WINTER 2020-21 • WWW.COOSHISTORY.ORG

## 2020 Coos County Historical Society Annual Awards

Each year the Historical Society Board of Trustees presents plaques to people who have helped preserve South Coast history and/or served the Society. We are proud to announce this year's winners who received their awards in October.

### **The Nathan Douthit Local Historian Award**

is given annually to a person who has made significant contributions to the preservation of history in our area.

Douthit served the Coos Historical Society for many years, became a founder and officer of the Marshfield Sun Printing Museum, and has authored several books on local history. This year's winner is Bert Dunn.

**Bert Dunn** is a graduate of Coquille High School and went on to get a degree at Oregon State University. He has a love of local history and volunteered to work on exhibits with the museum in Springfield, OR, where he current resides. In his research using old newspapers, Bert was inspired to raise money to digitize historic newspapers from his hometown of Coquille. He helped raise thousands of dollars and now decades of Coquille newspapers are easily accessible and searchable by the public as a result. In 2019, Dunn and two co-authors researched the history of Coquille and published *Images of America: Coquille, Oregon*. Bert has also helped the Coos History Museum identify photographs of the Coquille area in our collection.

The **Martha Butler Service Award** is given to a person or persons who have provided exceptional assistance or service to the Coos County Historical Society or museum. Mrs. Butler made a substantial donation to the Coos County Historical Society in 1999 that provided the seed money to build the new Coos History Museum by 2015. This year's co-winners are Arlene Roblan and Toni Ann Brend.

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# President's Message



Ryan Hogan

I hope this edition of *Waterways* finds you and your family happy and healthy. I've been struggling to determine the best way to say "good-bye" to 2020. So much so, that I know I'm stressing out our editor, **Anne Guerin**, by getting down to the deadline to submit this article. Rather than focusing on the impacts the pandemic had on our

daily lives and local businesses or any of the other polarizing events that occurred last year, I thought I'd reflect on many of the CHM successes.

Although we were forced to close our doors for much of 2020, our educational programming was able to reach a much broader audience with the use of Zoom. **Marcia Hart** and her staff worked tirelessly to ensure CHM continued to engage and educate our community by strengthening our

education programming.

Another success of 2020 is the elimination of our New Market Tax Credit. We now own the museum building! We held a mortgage-burning ceremony (socially-distanced, of course) that was followed by a week filled with great historical discussions from members of our local community. This week of entertainment and education culminated in our first ever virtual auction.

All-in-all, I'm excited to see what 2021 brings and will possibly never utter the words "2020" again. But I'm so grateful for our community members and leaders that stayed positive and by our side, our excellent staff and volunteers for their continued dedication, and our board for their steady vision.

Be well and stay safe.

## Jessica Bacon joins CHM Board of Trustees

Born and raised on the Oregon Coast, **Jessica Bacon** has had a lifelong love of local history, traditions, and culture. As a financial advisor, small business owner and business consultant, she has developed considerable knowledge of management practices to the Small Business Development Center at Southwestern. She has a good eye for catching areas where improvement can happen.

She would like to see a continuation of the education opportunities the Coos History Museum provides, as well as helping to ensure that our history is not lost to the ages and is kept for generations to come. Jessica believes in the vision of CHM and is excited to help the museum reach its goals in any way she can.



## First Tuesday Talks (first half of 2021)

Tuesday Talks will be held on-line, using Zoom, until the pandemic eases. Check our website at [www.cooshistory.org](http://www.cooshistory.org) for up-to-date information and registration.

February 2: **Zachary Stocks** – Executive Director, Oregon Black

Pioneers presenting *Oregon's Black History: 450 Years in 45 Minutes*

March 2: **Patty Whereat Phillips** – Linguist, Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI); and **Ashley Russell** – Water Protection Specialist and Cultural Assistant, CTCLUSI presenting *Influential Indigenous Women of Coos Bay: A Cultural History*

April 6: **Tim Novotny** – Communications Manager, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission presenting *ODCC: Enhancing the Image of Oregon Dungeness Crab*

May 4: **Kara J. Long** – Executive Director/Theatre Manager, Egyptian Theatre presenting *The History and Mystery Behind the Egyptian Theatre*

June 1: **John Goodell** – Director of Outreach and Community Relations, Elakha Alliance and **Don Ivy** – Board Member, Elakha Alliance (including CHM Board and Chief of the Coquille Indian Tribe) presenting *The Return of Sea Otters: Considering the Ecological and Cultural Dimensions of Restoration*

## Coos County Historical Society

### Staff

Executive Director: Marcia Hart

Curator: TBA

Education Coordinator & Community

Engagement: Ariel Peasley

Store Manager: Valerie Caskey

Visitor Services Assistant: Becca Hill

Bookkeeper: Terri Knight

### Board of Trustees

President: Ryan Hogan

Vice-President: David Laird

Secretary: Anne Guerin

Treasurer: John Bacon

Trustees: Jessica Bacon, Steve Greif,

Don Ivy, Courtney Krossman,

Bill Mast, Tina Mendizabal,

Alissa Pruess, Sara Stephens

### Museum Admission

Normal open hours: Tuesday thru Saturday, 10-5. Check our website for Covid updates.

Adults = \$7, Children 5-17 = \$3

Family Maximum: \$17

AARP, AAA, and senior discounts.

Free admission to CCHS members,

NARM program members, and

active-duty military.

541.756.6320, [www.cooshistory.org](http://www.cooshistory.org)



# Museum Research Room Busy

By Steven Greif

Over 30 research requests were fulfilled by Coos History Museum volunteers during September, October, and November in 2020. As might be expected, many patrons email, write, or phone the museum asking for help finding information on family members. But there are many other requests that are not genealogical.

Each request presents volunteers with historical challenges. Volunteers get research questions from home buyers and real estate agents for information on their new purchases or prospective properties. "Found objects" (an old soda bottle, some glass-plate negatives, a piece of logging equipment) is another common category of requests for information.

Volunteers **Steve Greif, Tom Orsi, John Engels, Richard Whitwer** and **Pat Cross** have helped a number of people who are creating exhibits or writing books or articles. An author for the online magazine at [www.BeachConnection.com](http://www.BeachConnection.com) was researching a 1920s auto camp at North Bend. CHM helped the director of the Paleontology Research Institution at Ithaca, NY, who is putting together an exhibit on women who assisted the U.S. Military Geology Unit in identifying where balloon bombs came from in WWII. The Oregon Department of Transportation needed information on Powers, OR, prior to undertaking a sidewalk project there. One historian needed photos of an American fishing vessel that interacted with Russian vessels off

the Oregon Coast during the Cold War. Another wanted information for a state survey of historic homes.

The museum is also assisting the Oregon Travel Information Council to create a new historical roadside marker near the old Beaver Hill Mines. And have you noticed that the Tioga Hotel in Coos Bay is getting a facelift? Our volunteers provided the businessmen on that project with historic photos to guide their remodel.

The research room is also a small source of revenue. Fees have been established for work that our volunteers conduct after a half-hour of free research and for photos that are requested. This fiscal year alone the research room has provided over \$1300 in revenue.

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## ... Annual Awards

*(continued from Page 1)*

**Arlene Roblan** and her husband, Arnie, moved to Coos Bay in 1972. Arlene completed her education at Oregon State University and the University of Oregon. She taught elementary school for several years and became an administrator in 1997, retiring in 2013. She became a CHM Board member the following year and has served as Education Committee Chair for six years. With her team, Arlene put a great effort into re-designing and updating the museum's education program. She has also put in hours of her time to physically deliver the content to local students, especially this past year when the museum did not have an Education Coordinator on staff for many months. Arlene has also done wonderful work on museum board fundraising events and has volunteered with other community organizations.

**Toni Ann Brend** was born and raised in Coos County with deep roots of generations of Coquille Tribal ancestors. Besides being a devoted mother, she earned a nursing degree and was very involved in tribal leadership positions. Toni Ann served over 17 years on the tribal council and for years taught young people jewelry, beading, and basketry to keep alive the cultural artistry of her tribe. She served several terms on the board of the Coos History Museum and represented her tribe well in that position. Brend helped out with

the museum's 4th Grade Indian Education program, headed the Governance Committee, and produced fine crafts for museum fundraisers. Toni Ann passed away in February of 2020. Accepting the honor for Toni Ann was her son, **Scott Lafevre**.

*The **Mary Banks Granger Maritime History Award** is given to a person or persons who contributes to the preservation of maritime-related history. Mary, the daughter of shipbuilder Robert Banks, and the Granger Family have preserved the history of the Kruse & Banks Shipbuilding Company of North Bend and have donated generously to the museum. This year's winner is Roger Ott.*

**Roger Ott** grew up in an Allegany family that worked on the Coos River for several generations. He attended Coos River High School and later worked for the Melowest Creamery and Weyerhaeuser. Roger has often shared his collection of historic photos of the "Mosquito Fleet" with the public. Together with his old schoolmate **Lionel Youst** (a previous CCHS award winner), Ott has made numerous presentations on the history of Coos River water transportation for the Coos History Museum, the Coos Bay Public Library, and the Coos County OSU Extension Service. Most recently he contributed to a video history of the Elliott State Forest for the SWOCC Forestry Department. Ott recalls piloting the *Welcome* with his father when he was just a boy over 80 years ago.

# Elgin Heimer, Myrtle Point's Pied Piper

By Anne Guerin

*Foreword:* Many words have been written about this legendary and much-loved figure in Myrtle Point's history, all of them for publication before and after his death in 1982, age 88. This piece about Heimer (no one called him Elgin) reflects my early memories of many hours spent with him when he was still a rancher in the 1940s and then later after he moved into Myrtle Point. As a memoir, it focuses on those years of Heimer as a playmate for a little girl growing up on a cattle ranch south of town.

By the time I hit adolescence, he quit coming. But until then, a 50+ year old man was my best friend. A uniqueness of my childhood on a cattle ranch outside Myrtle Point, Oregon, included an eccentric neighbor named Elgin Heimer, who lived on his own ranch across the Middle Fork of the Coquille River from our Bull Pasture. My earliest memory of him is the sound of his voice calling to me from across that water, my name repeated over and over in a high-pitched warble. I would call his name back, thrilled to know that he would soon be walking up our road for another afternoon of roaming the hills.

To fill an obvious void, Heimer "adopted" me when I arrived in 1946. Here was a little girl with golden curls just across the river, a little girl who came to adore him and happily anticipate his visits, which occurred with great regularity. I had my own void to fill, living somewhat isolated from other children and having an older sister who disdained me as a playmate. Along with my real friend Heimer, I had a dozen imaginary friends to fill my solitary hours. Oddly enough, those "friends" were all grown males with unusual names, such as Dr. Whirpens, Visigoth, and Twilligo. It is only now as I write this that I see the parallel between Heimer and the nature of the imaginary playmates, all grown men.

There was a simplicity to Heimer's life and style. He always wore a tan shirt and trousers with suspenders and sturdy lace-up boots. He was either naturally bald or shaved his head completely. I recall being fascinated with how shiny his scalp was in the sun, but his head was usually covered by a brown felt hat, later a lacquered red felt hat with buttons and various objects for ornamentation. Across his shoulder he slung a



*Elgin Heimer in his later years, ready to entertain children at the Coos County Fair. (Myrtle Point Herald, 10/6/11)*

white, cotton sack that carried items of much interest: a bag of Kraft caramels to share with my sister and me, an assortment of homemade toys, wild hazelnuts in season, etc.

The white sack was a useful item for a man who owned no vehicle and never learned to drive. Whatever needed to be packed around ended up in that white sack. When he needed items in town, off he trudged for the six miles round trip, accepting rides as they were offered.

Heimer and I wandered through the hills on the Guerin Ranch on sunny days, many times reaching the ridgeline where old Hank's Mill was located, with its inviting pile of sawdust providing the fun of rolling down repeatedly, Heimer rolling along merrily with me. Then we would seek out the marshy bog where he would find the reeds to make whistles or to weave into crude baskets. Or on windy days, he would fly his self-constructed kite, with the string wound around a piece of wood notched at both ends to keep it in place. Heimer was in tune with his natural surroundings and able to name the plants around us, recognize a certain bird's trilling notes, locate the area to glean another item to transform into a play object. He had a quiet, good-natured, and kindly way

about him that was absolutely magnetic to a small child.

Then Heimer sold his place and moved to town around 1950. My disappointment was somewhat assuaged by his Saturday visits, when he would walk the three miles from town to the ranch for his weekly visit, always packing the white sack with the Kraft caramels inside. As I matured and gained other interests, Heimer's visits became less frequent, and

then they stopped. I had my horses, school, and ranch jobs to fill my days, and I must have seemed less enchanted with spending time with Heimer, whose eccentricities became more pronounced with his own aging and the move to town, where he encountered many other children to entertain.

There were spinning tops, a coil of twine that magically grew knots while hidden away, a cane with a rubber ball on the end to balance on the toe of his boot, balls to juggle, a notched propeller that would spin different directions on voice command, and a yo-yo to masterfully manipulate. Performing a very steady headstand was another part of his repertoire that awed the bystanders. Now it was the children of Myrtle Point who became Heimer's family. When Mom, Dad, my sister and I stopped in town to visit Heimer, as a young teen, I would feel somewhat awkward, no longer knowing how to relate to this strange man, who looked odd and behaved so differently from all the other men I knew. He continued to wear the tan uniform, but now spotted with splotches of paint, and the red cap now adorned with frogs and reflectors along with the buttons. A hangman's noose of cleverly tied rope substituted for a tie around his neck.

For example, on one visit, Dad remarked on the hue of Heimer's skin, which was visibly tinged a yellow/orange from a binge of eating a massive amount of carrots and carrot juice. Another time his body odor was strangely strong from his period of gorging on a pig he had butchered.

Some time in the late 1940s, Heimer cut an album that he gave to my mother and me, an album that I no longer have the technology to play. He wrote the lyrics to a song that seemed to reflect his strong feelings for Mother, and on the other side was his poem written for me, delivered in his singsong fashion. What I can recall of the treasured poem follows:

"Of all the people both great and small,  
Is one I love the best of all  
The whole world over and back again,  
The one most dear to my heart is Anne"

By the time of his death at 88, Heimer had a legacy in the community, becoming known as the Pied Piper of Myrtle Point, and had entertained generations of small children, his favorite age group. His oft-quoted poem speaks to his love of children:

"I count that day a happy one,  
a day that's been worthwhile,  
if I through some kindly thought or deed,  
have caused a child to smile."



*In the early summer of 1946, my family gathered for a picnic on the Middle Fork of the Coquille River. (L-R) Charles (Doc) Guerin, Elgin Heimer holding baby Anne, Priscilla Guerin, Dorothy Guerin, Ella May Dillingham, and Tom Guerin holding Cheryl.*

*Postscript:* Heimer was born in Cheyenne County, Nebraska, in 1894, into the Herboldsheimer family of 13 children, moving to the Myrtle Point area in 1926, according to an article in the *Myrtle Point Herald*. As many immigrants did, at some point Heimer shortened his last name, "Americanizing" it. We always knew him as a lifelong bachelor who never returned to Nebraska for a visit. Asked by a reporter once why he never married, Heimer wryly responded that he had fallen in love many, many times. Countless hours of checkers and chess played with friends occupied some of his time when he lived in a bare and basic plywood finished home of between 500-600 square feet, heated with a wood stove. He left his estate to the Flora M. Laird Library, partially enhanced by bequeathing mineral rights on property in Nebraska, and his home to the community.

I would like to thank the librarians at the Flora M. Laird Library for their generous loan of an extensive file devoted to Heimer memorabilia.



*Braige  
To make my body a  
temple pure  
wherein I dwell serene  
To care for the things  
that shall endure  
The simple sweet and  
clean  
Elgin Heimer*

*Heimer in his elder years,  
with his hand-written poem:  
To make my body a temple pure  
wherein I dwell serene  
to care for the things  
that shall endure  
the simple sweet and clean*

# Membership Roll Call October-December 2020

## Renewed Individual

Arnold, Glennora  
Beauchemin, Rhoda  
Blasco, Chris  
Chilla, Barbara  
Cummings, Heide  
Ferrara, Pamela  
Fox, Stacy  
Glasgow, Joan  
Greif, Nadiene  
Grenell, Norman  
Hagge, Janet  
Harrold, Sarah  
Heap, Katie  
Hunt, Judith  
Koreiva, MJ  
Major, Vonnie  
Miles, Patsy  
Pruhsmeier, Karen  
Raper, Elaine  
Shoji, Crystal  
Sisk, Russ Ann  
Spencer Kellogg

Wilskey, Joanne

## Renewed Household

Boise, Ron & Linda  
Chadwick, Jerry  
Clarke, Jim & Nancy  
Corrigan, Randal  
Edd, Kim  
Fischer, Suzanne  
Greif, Andrew & Jessica  
Hobson, Shaun & Anne  
Hoffman, Jack & Lucy  
Jennings, Julia  
Kamrau, Bob  
Kohler, Eric & Mary  
Layport, Jim & Alice  
Mahaffy, Robt  
Maxfield, Lloyd & Kileen  
Messerle, Ken & Lola  
Meynink, John  
Miranda, Ron & Carol  
Morrison, Leonard & Diane  
Nored, Richard  
Nowlin, Thomas & Susan

Potter, Rondi  
Pratt, Marilyn  
Rieber, Roger  
Robt & Dawn Benck  
Rocha, Judy  
Ryan, Margaret  
Sasser, Brent & Lindsey  
Stickler, Barbara  
Walter Hogan  
Wheeler, Mary Sue  
Woods, Allen

## Renewed Friend

Johnson, Roger & Ellen  
Cornell, Chas & Barbara  
Costello, Don Owen  
Cross, Pat  
Gehlert, Gary & Janet  
Golder, Lee & Sharon  
Gould, David & Donna  
Groben, Scott & Elizabeth  
Halvor, Paul & Marilyn  
Hart, Bob & Marcia  
Jensen, Wilbur & Judy

Kendrick, William & Joan  
Kerriden, Kay  
Kramer, George  
Littrell, Steven & Becky  
Mendizabal, Susanna  
Metzger, Ron & Kathy  
Moffitt, Christine  
Orsi, Tom  
Sharp, Gary  
Sheridan, Virginia  
Solarz, Greg & Susie  
Tanac, Wesley & Dianne  
Taylor, Michael & Barbara

## Renewed Business

Honda World  
Koontz Machine & Welding  
Maya Graphics, LLC

## Renewed Benefactor

Greif, Steve & Joan  
Prouty, Sally J  
Roblan, Arnie & Arlene

Woods, Steven & Jeanne

## Renewed Curator

Blom, Don

## New Individual

Giles, Marty  
Harrold, Sarah  
Sears, Arica  
Vollstedt, Christy

## New Household

Bevanmarquez, Jean  
Dorn, Richard  
Drake, Barbara  
Lucas, Michael  
Pratt, Marilyn

Whitwer, Sharon  
Winders, Mark & Libbie

## New Friend

Bacon, John  
Brower, Charles  
Schmidt, Lori  
Whitty, Michael & Jan

## New Business

Coos Bay North Bend VCB



*Christmas spirit at the CHM, courtesy of used lights from Friends of Shore Acres. Photos by Steve Greif*

## **DONATIONS** 4th Quarter 2020

*Thank you to all on this list for your generous contributions.*

Robbin Anderson  
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Sharon Whitwer  
Steven & Jeri Wilgers  
Jennifer Wirsing  
George & Betsy Wright

## In Memory Of:

Marianna Mattecheck  
(Lynn Mattecheck)  
Tom & Dorothy Guerin  
(Anne Guerin & Cheryl Griffith)

# COOS HISTORY MUSEUM

We are  
always looking  
for volunteers  
to help out  
at the museum.

Contact Valerie Caskey  
at  
[volunteercoordinator@  
cooshistory.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@cooshistory.org)

or call  
541-756-6320  
for more information.

## Is it time to purchase or renew your annual membership? Make a donation?

### Annual Fee:

- Student (\$15)
- Individual (\$35)
- Household (\$50)
- Friend (\$100)
- Benefactor (\$250)
- Historian (\$500)
- Curator (\$1,000)
- Business membership (\$100 or above)
- Donation \$\_\_\_\_\_

Membership has its rewards in shopping locally. Show your membership card when you shop at **Tru Furniture, Truffles!, Katrina Kathleen's, and Benetti's** to receive **10% OFF** regular prices.

At the Friend level and up, you can now receive an additional new benefit – membership in the North American Reciprocal Museums program with free admission to 1,013+ museums across the U.S. A link to the list of NARM members is posted on our website and available for review at our front desk.

Your annual membership becomes active from date of purchase.

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, send information about events via email.

Send information about volunteering and gifting.

If your VISA/MasterCard/DiscoveryCard is by mail: Card Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 3-digit Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

## Exploring Education

*“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” – Aristotle*

by Ariel Peasley

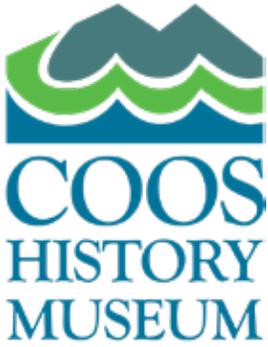
**Hello:** While the museum continues to experience many changes, we are eager to continue engaging our community through our favored programs such as *First Tuesday Talks, Unlimited Book Club, Explorer's Club, Local History Class, and more in the next year.* While the journey certainly has not been easy, the past year has given us the opportunity to learn and grow in positive ways that will continue into the future. We are excited for the possibilities the new year holds and we hope you are too. Don't forget to check our webpage <https://cooshistory.org/education/> for updates, and as always, feel free to email the Education and Community Engagement Coordinator, **Ariel Peasley**, at [education@cooshistory.org](mailto:education@cooshistory.org) with any questions, comments, or suggestions.

**Upcoming Events:** It's not too late to join the *Local History Class* which began on January 4th, presented by local historian and CHM volunteer **Steve Greif**. This year's class, *Lives of Our Days* features not-so-famous, but interesting people in Coos County history. Even if you join late, registrants will receive access to recordings of each class so you will not miss a thing. February kicks off the first half of our 2021 *First Tuesday Talks*

lineup. Be sure to take a look at the events calendar or the “Education” webpage for more information and to sign up for these events. We will continue to offer these programs over Zoom, but look forward to the day when we can resume in-person. Until then, feel free to send us an email or give us a call if you need assistance in attending a virtual program.

**Featured:** The Coos History Museum has been working with the City of Coos Bay as well as other community members and organizations to create an opportunity for the establishment of an **Alonzo Tucker Memorial** in Coos Bay. It has been decided that the memorial will be placed at the Coos History Museum in the form of an historical marker provided by the Equal Justice Initiative with help from the Oregon Remembrance Project. Community input such as yours is deeply important to us and vital to this process, so please visit our webpage at <https://cooshistory.org/alonzo-tucker/> to read the Alonzo Tucker Task Force Newsletter and participate in the Alonzo Tucker Memorial Survey.

Here's to a new year, new possibilities, and new knowledge.



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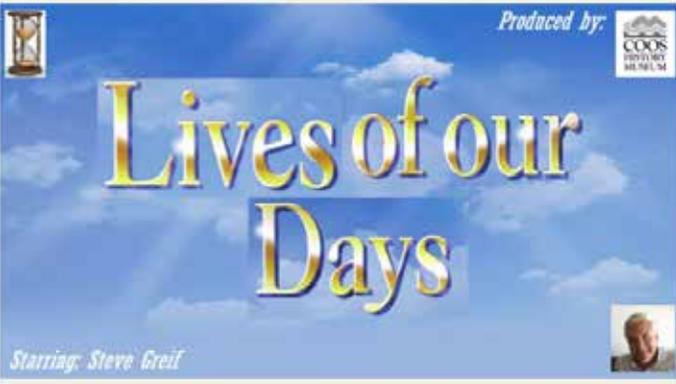
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## Local History Class

January 4 - March 1, 2021 at 6:30 PM / Course Fee: \$50



Produced by: 



Lives of our Days

Starring: Steve Greif 

*"This year's class will focus on not-so-famous people who once lived on Oregon's South Coast. Their "ordinary" lives present a glimpse into the past of our community to give us fun examples of how times have changed."*

Registration can be found at:  
<https://cooshistory.org/events/local-history-class/>

\*Go to our website to learn about a bonus for CHM members and more...



### Visitor Counts since January 2, 2020

Despite being closed for nearly six months last year, we still managed to host 2,127 visitors from 36 states and three countries: China, England, and France. After the holiday break, starting January 6, the museum reopened with the following schedule: Tuesday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. We look forward to welcoming you back.

## WATERWAYS

is the  
quarterly publication  
of the  
Coos County  
Historical Society  
and sent to all members.

Funding for this  
newsletter is  
generously provided by  
**Ann Collins.**