

Silverton Country Historical Society

Museum and Office 428 South Water Street



Silverton's Historic Buildings

This past year we've written about several of Silverton's buildings and the businesses they housed. We'll end the year with some interesting tidbits of information about some of the others. The following information was taken from the Silverton Commercial Historic District notebook circa 1987:

Did you know that:

- The Inman Building (SE corner of 1st and Oak) started out as a 2-story building in 1925. Problems arose when they tried to dig a basement. It was discovered that A.G. Steelhammer had poured a mix of concrete, horseshoes and gravel over the dirt floor of his pioneer blacksmith shop located on that site since 1866.
- The building on Oak St., address 207 – 209 was built in 1914 for Henry Schmidbauer's Silverton Bakery. Two of his bread knives are at the museum, his name stamped on the blade.
- 211 Oak St. was built in 1942. It was the second site of J.C. Penney's. Their first location in Silverton was at 107 N. Water. My generation remembers Fish's Bakery at 107 N. Water. Fish's first location was across the street.
- The Towne House, 203 E. Main, was actually the site of Brooks and Steelhammer Pharmacy and a dry goods store. Brooks Drug started in the 1880's but the current building, or portions of it were built around 1903. The building has been extensively altered. Geo. Steelhammer (son of A.G., the pioneer blacksmith) eventually bought out John Brooks and became Steelhammer's Rexall Drug. Yours truly worked there in the 1950's, behind the soda fountain. I worked for Harry Carson Jr. whose father had married Letty Steelhammer. Pity the poor folk who had to grow up in a town that didn't have a soda fountain. Steelhammer's, the home of the *Chocolate Mess* and no, that was not my nickname nor did it reflect my skill at scooping ice cream. I've never heard of any other place that made chocolate messes....basically an upside-down chocolate sundae. No whipping cream, no cherry, no nuts. I can't, for the life of me, think of why it tasted so much better than a right-side-up sundae. But it did!
- Right next door to Steelhammer's was the meat market. First it was Bock's Meat Market and then, about 1925, a new building to house The Valley Meat Market, 209 E. Main. Henry Bock got into trouble during WW I when he told one of his customers that Germany had better meat than America.



Main Street, North Side 1950



First and Main Street S.W. Corner, 1889

The brick building, 218 E. Main, on the SW corner of 1st and E. Main Streets contains parts of some of the oldest building material in Silverton. The original, first brick building was erected on this site in 1868 for John Davenport and James Madison Brown. Davenport, Brown and Earhard Wolfard ran their business, probably a mercantile store, until 1873 when they sold it to Coolidge & McClaine. The Oddfellows (IOOF) owned the second floor. In 1900 a fire destroyed a large part of the original brick building, leaving only the exterior walls. Re-built almost immediately, B.R. Bentson soon moved into the first floor and ran his mercantile store for a number of years. In 1905, Coolidge & McClaine deeded the second floor to the Oddfellows who, ten years later, built a three-story addition onto the back of the building for extra space. According to the Sanborn maps, they had a reception room on the second floor and a banquet room on the third. Later businesses, following Bentson's included a Director Department Store #3, circa 1925 and Weiby's Clothing Store during the 1940s to '60s.

Carolyn Hutton

Message from the President

Our annual meeting and elections are just after the holidays and I would like to remind everyone to come to the meeting being held again at the Oak Street Church, 502 Oak Street, on the 23rd of January at 2pm. Our program will include the raffle of the Oregon 150 blanket and some short stories told by Gordon Munro.

We are still taking nominations for President, Treasurer and board members to serve this coming term. As Carolyn has so aptly stated in her Curator's report, the help we have so needed and appreciated, it takes many volunteers to keep this running and we need to introduce and train new help to continue the many tasks of our organization and museum for the future. I hope to see you there.



Larry Thomas

Excerpts from: Recollections About Their Father, Julius Alm and Silverton (1862-1944)

As told in 1958 by the twins Bertha Alm and Dena Alm Moorhead

Julius Alm was born in Norway in 1862 and came to Silverton in 1893. He had a long and successful career in the grocery business. Julius and wife Carrie, raised 9 children in a home on West Hill also known as Liberty Hill, that over looked the main part of Silverton. Julius Alm took his responsibility as a leading citizen seriously. He was very active in civic, business and fraternal organizations and wrote newspaper articles in the local newspaper for the Norwegian community and also to publicize Silverton. At various times he headed the Chamber of Commerce, was a member of the city council, the Masonic Lodge and the Sons of Norway. He was also President of the Silverton Hospital, served on the school board, and was a member of the White Shrine and Elk lodges in Salem. Both Julius and Carrie were active in Eastern Star and supported the local Lutheran Church.

The Alm home was often the scene of big family gatherings of their children, grandchildren and friends. The home was well known for the U.S. flag that flew from its 50-foot tall mast at the front of the house. Beginning in 1902, every Sunday and legal holiday Julius raised a large U.S. flag on the pole. Moreover, on special occasions, such as a birth in the family, the Norwegian flag was also flown under the U.S. flag. Two U.S. flags flew from the pole when the twins were born.

Christmas

“When we were small children, our father at Christmas would play Santa Claus. He would slip up to the third floor and roll boxes of presents down two floors of stairs, while mother kept us waiting in the dining room. Unbeknownst to us, he would then place our presents on the tree in the sitting room. He was very generous with his gifts. He would then go outside and come in to the house by another door. Mother would then rush us off to bed where we had to wait until Christmas Day. As soon as we awakened, we rushed down to the tree. The twins' presents were duplicates, but the rest of the children had their choice. There was always a stocking hung for each child which held a stick of stove wood to remind us of good behavior, candy to sweeten our tastes, and an orange. Although the twins birthday was December 23rd their holiday gifts were both well remembered.



Our Own Special Santa Claus

A few years ago, SCHS began receiving on-going financial contributions from an SCHS member and Portland area businessman. I have to admit, this continued support has been a gigantic help to our little organization. Over the years we have sent thank you letters and always kept him well informed of all of our projects and activities...however, we really felt this man deserved some sort of public recognition for his extraordinary generosity. But would he want his philanthropy broadcast? Did he prefer to remain anonymous? And just who was he???

Well, I tried to find out something more about our benefactor by searching the web...I learned that he is an entrepreneur from the word go and has not always had an easy life. A widower, he was raising three small children by himself until he married current wife Pam who now runs his businesses with him. He started his most recognizable business in 1977..... I'm sure most of you have heard of City Liquidators, located on the east side of the river in Portland. They specialize in reasonably priced office furniture and general merchandise with a delightfully unpredictable assortment of toys, tools and treasures added to the mix. I have always loved browsing among the desks, chairs, tables and rows of quirky home furnishings. We found a wonderful, affordable old wooden file cabinet for my daughter's home office there. Walt and his wife, Pam, have succeeded in providing a shopping experience with a personality of its own.

But I found nothing that explained Walt's connection to Silverton..... A few months ago, I decided to just get in touch with him to ask him right out. His office suggested I fax some questions – I did, but busy person that he is, he only had time to jot down a few answers saying he would try to respond later. I did learn that he lived in Silverton from 1937 to 1943 and attended Eugene Field School. I have since heard that the few years he and his family spent here were good, even though times were difficult. The town was open and friendly and apparently this stayed in his memory.

I don't have a photograph of our patron—I suppose I could do some more searching and find one.....but that's o.k. Actually, I prefer the image of him that I have in my mind.....a jolly, white-bearded man in a red, fur-trimmed suit, surrounded by a team of elves. Yep, that's it--our own special Santa Clause. That's how I see Walt Pelett!



Merry Christmas, Walt. And thank you.

Christmas at Silverton High

By Caroline B. *

The SHS Informant, December 21, 1932

'Twas Christmas day at Silverton High.
You could feel it in the air,
Even the fair Miss Schroeder had some holly in her hair.
Then all of a sudden from the office,
Then all of a sudden from the office,
Ringing loud and clear,
Came a carol from Mr. Kramer
To spread 'round Christmas Cheer.

Mr. Wells with a sprightly step,
Came running toward Miss Chase.
She was standing 'neath [the] mistletoe,
And a blush spread o'er her face.
Miss Spenker smiled as she read a card,
She said it came from the mail.
"Which male is that?" Miss Sinclair cried.
But she did not give detail.

"Merry Christmas"! said Miss Elliot cheerfully,
"Same to you," said Mr. Delay,
Because everyone was happy on that Christmas Day.

*Couldn't read last name.

Curator's Corner

The end of another year, so much accomplished. I'll begin with what I usually start with, the most recent donations to our collection:

- A photograph of a large group of men standing on the steps of a large building; the ones in front holding a pennant that says "OVC". Written on the back is "Arthur W. Simmons, Silverton, Oregon U.S.A.". We think this is "Doc" Simmons who was a veterinarian in town back in the 1930's. There's no way of knowing which of the men he is so we need to make inquiries and/or research. This photo was found in a house on N. Water St.
- We were also given a booklet titled "This Old House on Macleay Road" written by Susan Bell. Technically it's outside our Silverton Country boundaries but we accepted it because of its connection to the Palmer family. Eldon Johnson donated a lumber marking pen and the end of a 1 3/4 x 3 3/4 stamped with Silver Falls from Silver Falls Timber Co. It was probably milled in the 1940's but it still isn't a full 2 x 4. We've had a total of 44 donors and 219 items accessioned into the collection. An itemized list will be available at the annual meeting in January.

There is much more to be thankful for:

- The addition of new volunteers who come down, just about every Tuesday and help Chris Schwab, Shelly Vandehey, Robin Anderson and myself with various projects: A big thank you to Amy McKinley and Gary Ohren for helping get a lot done that wouldn't get done otherwise, or would take a whole lot longer!
 - A salute to all the hosts who donated their time to open the museum on week-ends: Jack Hande, Dolores Blust, Marsha and Tom Worthen, Norman English, Nellie and Ed Graves, Glen Cunningham, Joan Sprug, Wanda Casey, Ray and Kathy Hunter, and Linda McKay. Chris Schwab and Ruth Kaser filled in on extra Saturdays and when we were short of help.
 - For you volunteers who helped with the school tours, please take a bow: Jack, Norman, Dolores, Kathy, Linda, Chris, Joan, Robin, Barbara Dettwyler, Paula McKinley, and Marilyn Frick. A very grateful Thank You.
 - The Marion Cultural Development Corp. that awarded us a \$1000 grant for protecting more of our collection in archival safe boxes.
 - Getting the hospital bed cleaned up and painted. Thanks, Gary. Getting the leak fixed in the Doctor's Room. Thanks, Gary. Now we can finish painting and re-arrange the display.
- The two wooden file cabinets given to us when the high school moved to its new campus. Someone said "those look historical" and sure enough, it's easy to imagine them in the 1915 Washington Irving building.



In 2009, the museum had 394 visitors, probably more; there are always a few who don't sign in. That's not counting the 154 grade school students who came through on tours.

The Observation Post Dedication was appreciated by all who attended. The Boy Scouts presented the flag and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack Hande was our speaker because of his advocacy for all things history and his personal experience with watch-

ing for aircraft during the war. He thanked the many volunteers who worked on getting the Post moved but especially Larry Thomas, who almost single-handedly orchestrated the move and the re-construction of the building. The Historical Society owes him a huge debt of gratitude for making this project happen. Last but not least, Dolores Herr Blust unveiled the plaque dedicating the Post to the memory of her uncle and aunt, Bill and Virginia Herr. Without the donation from their Living Trust, we would not have the building or all the wonderful memories it has inspired.

There. It's been a really productive year. I think I'll sit down for a moment and wipe my brow.

Carolyn Hutton



Dolores Herr Blust and Carolyn Hutton

The Last Present on the Tree
By Lee Snare

As we grow older we seem to have a tendency to reflect on past Christmases. I suppose it is because we have a twelve-year-old granddaughter that the memories of my twelfth year are so vivid now.

As we sat around the pretty lit tree I could imagine the awe and bewilderment that my own grandparents might have had, had they been by the tree as we opened our gifts. To my Gran, a stainless steel fry pan would certainly not compare to her cast iron skillet. Why would you want a hair dryer when you could brush your hair dry or go outside and let the breeze do the job? And for what would you ever use a food processor? Granddad would be transformed to another world with a moto-sanding tool, a snake light, a hand-held graphic design calculator, a 1250 disk for a computer...or even, what is a computer? Boxer shorts that glow in the dark, a VCR tape, or one sterling earring for an 18-year-old boy. All these things would surely belong in a foreign country.

My life at twelve was very simple compared to today. Practical gifts of p.j.'s, hankies, and underwear would top the list. Autograph books, a five-year diary, and roller skates were all a luxury. This past Christmas I thought back to the gift I really wanted when I was twelve.

The depression was beginning to become a memory for some. President Roosevelt had plans that made work available to many; therefore, more expensive gifts were showing up under the trees. I was a free spirited youngster but there were two things most of my friends had that were missing in my life. One was a bicycle and the other was a father that went to work to make money. My father died when I was three and all our income that came in was not designed for a bike.

When the 1936 Fall Sears Catalog came out with all those many toy pages, it didn't take me long to spot my heart's desire, there on page 657 – lower right-hand corner. It was a 26" girls bicycle with a white wicker basket on the handlebar. This was now a must in my life...or surely, I would die.

Starting in late October that page was left open and I would express all my wonderful reasons why I should have that certain bike...the one on page 657. My fingers had run across this necessary in my life item so often that the ink was beginning to smear. But I knew that my pitch needed to be made periodically. After all, my 50-year old mom was getting old and I would be able to run all those errands for her, if I had a bike.

The bike idea began to slip from my mind later in the Fall. I was beginning to realize now that boys were not as bad as they seemed to be in the 6th grade.

Our Christmas was a very happy one because we were such a close-knit family. Togetherness was the highlight of this Holiday when we could all get together and celebrate the birth of Jesus. After all the gifts were opened, I remember my mom saying there was still a present for me on the tree. I didn't see any more packages; but high on top of one of the branches was an envelope. It had my name on it. Inside I found an almost obliterated piece of paper. In the corner it said 'page 657.' There, cut out, was my bike with a note from Mom. "Here is the very bike you wanted," it read. I knew in my heart that it was out of the question for me to have the bike, but my mom taught me to have a sense of humor. I was not hurt by it and we all had a good laugh. When I received that gift I knew she really did listen to me. What more proof of love could a chatty twelve year old have than to know she has really been heard? And isn't Christmas a special time of love?

I did finally own my first and only bicycle when I was forty-five years old. And my mom smiled down from Heaven.





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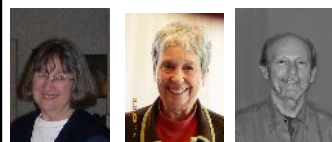
Thank you to our new and renewing members!
Andy and Rhonda Bellando
Jay Sorgen
Rufus and Kay LaLone
Tom and Marsha Worthen
Marvin Thompson
Tom and Barbara Pelett
Susy Riches
Aileen Conrad

Thank you to—
Nancy Bleakney for her donation in memory of Ed Martin

Remember the Oregon Cultural Trust in your end-of-year giving!
www.culturaltrust.org for more information.

Please don't forget to renew your SCHS Membership!

Carolyn Chris Larry



Your newsletter staff

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Your Name Here!