

# Silverton Country Historical Society

Museum and Office 428 South Water Street



Since 2012 marks the 100th anniversary of Oregon granting women the right to vote, we have decided to dedicate this year's newsletters to some of the noted women throughout Silverton's history. This month our feature story is on Florinda Geer, Homer Davenport's mother.

## Florinda Geer Davenport

Sadly, we really don't have much information about Flora Geer. In fact, practically everything we do know is only in relation to the men in her life. She was R.C. Geer's daughter, Timothy Davenport's wife and Homer Davenport's mother. And yet, there is an image of a determined woman that emerges, however faint.



Flora was born on September 3, 1839 to Ralph C. Geer and Mary Willard Geer. In 1847, in order to "find a healthful country in which to live," Ralph sold his farm in Knox County, Illinois, and started west across America. The family, including the 8-year old Flora, joined a group led by Joel Palmer that ultimately was made up of 99 wagons and about 400 people. R.C., who carried several varieties of fruit tree

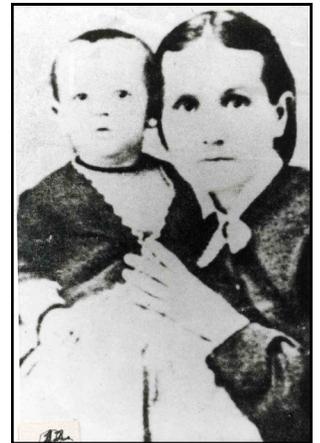
seed, settled in the Waldo Hills and established a thriving pear and apple nursery.

So, it was here that Flora grew up, enduring all the hardships of those times and was formed into a strong young woman. There is a story about Flora that lives on today. In 1854, 15-year-old Florinda went riding with her uncle and needed something to use to "encourage" her mount. A switch was cut off a cottonwood tree for her to use as a whip. Upon returning to the Geer farm, Flora "planted" the switch in the ground to see if it would grow. The sprout did take hold and today the tree is around 90 feet tall and has a circumference of around 18 feet. In 1986, the tree was designated Marion county's first Heritage Tree.

It wasn't long after, that Flora won the heart of Timothy

Davenport, neighboring farmer, surveyor and future politician, and they married in November of 1854.

Soon Flora gave birth to 3 children, but one daughter, Olive, and an infant son both died. Then, in 1867, during her pregnancy with Homer, Flora discovered the political cartoons of Thomas Nast in the magazine Harper's Weekly. When Homer was born, she was convinced that this child would become as famous as Nast. She took what she felt were steps to ensure that he would live up to his potential, providing him with a healthful diet and special activities to encourage him. By the age of 3 1/2 Homer was showing artistic talent, but an outbreak of small pox attacked the community taking Flora's life. Her deathbed wish was that Homer be given every opportunity to develop his skills as a cartoonist. To that end Timothy soon moved his family from the farm to the town of Silverton, where hopefully there existed more advantages. Of course, Flora was right and Homer went on to become one of the most influential political cartoonists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Flora was buried on the farm, but eventual owners removed her headstone and those of her two deceased children, piling them in a fence row. In later years, Homer was able to retrieve her headstone and had it erected on his farm in New Jersey. How sad it is, though, to realize that the last resting place of this strong woman who was so positive of her son's future, is lost, probably forever.

Chris Schwab

## Program for Monday, March 21, 2011 History of the Pipe Organ in Silverton, Oregon

**7:00 p.m.—Silverton Museum**

For the month of March we are excited to present a program on the history of the pipe organ in Silverton, with our host for the evening, Silverton native, Christopher Wicks. Christopher has been an enthusiastic musician all his life, beginning with learning piano as a small boy and moving on, at the age of twelve, to the position of organist at his church. In his young lifetime, Christopher has traveled and performed from Mt. Angel to Portland, and in New York, Montreal, Paris and Vienna.



He will enlighten us on the story of the organ in the area, from the earliest reed organ in Oregon City to the first pipe organ to be installed in Silverton at Trinity Lutheran Church. Other noted organs resided at Immanuel Lutheran Church, the First Christian Church and St. Paul's Catholic Church.

We will also have an opportunity to listen to a CD performance of Christopher playing some of his own compositions performed on Trinity Lutheran's organ.

I hope you can join us for this very special presentation.



### Oregon Cultural Trust Reports Increased Donations

The Oregon Cultural Trust reports calendar year 2010 donations of \$3,817,417, a two percent increase over 2009.

Christine D'Arcy, executive director of the Trust said, "The Cultural Trust is working as intended: a public-private partnership that increases support of cultural nonprofits at the heart of every Oregon community. The fact that \$3.8 million was contributed to the Cultural Trust in 2010 means that at least that much - and likely much more - was contributed directly to school foundations, rural art centers, historical societies, nonprofit galleries and museums, public broadcasters, and creative nonprofits of all kinds. Oregon's cultural tax credit works as a powerful incentive to increase giving to cultural nonprofits. "

Trust Manager Kimberly Howard challenges Oregonians to give by June 30, saying, "Forty-two cents of every dollar donated to the Trust returns to the community as grants (with 58 cents remaining in the permanent endowment). Since Trust grants are made possible entirely by people who donate to the fund, donors can directly increase 2011-12 grant making to \$1.7 million (from 2008's record \$1.65 million), if they give an additional \$600,000 by June 30."

Donations can be made any time during the year at [www.culturaltrust.org](http://www.culturaltrust.org).

**Oregon's arts, heritage, humanities.**

**1,200 reasons to give. One very generous reward.**

**Claim yours at [www.culturaltrust.org](http://www.culturaltrust.org).**

"Orpheus Capor" from Bigglesby. Photo: Jerry Moussard © 2009, courtesy Image Theatre



**Oregon  
Cultural  
Trust**

## Dime Toss Booth at Strawberry Festival!! But We Need Your Help.....

The Historical Society Board has decided to again run the ever-popular Dime Toss concession at the Strawberry Festival and Homer Davenport Days this summer. The Dime Toss booth is now ours, by the way, having been given to us by the HDD committee.

That means we're looking for donations of containers and we need everybody's help in order to be ready for the Strawberry Festival on Father's Day in June. So hurry, hurry, start cleaning out the cupboards, basement and garage, looking for what you can donate. Also keep your eye out at yard sales for containers you can pick up for us. We'll need all sorts of containers that a dime will land in. Bring glasses, vases, coffee or tea cups, ceramic bowls, even punch bowls. And we have decided, yes, to include wine glasses and beer mugs -- if a child lands a coin in one, he or she can pick out something else to take home.

Drop off your donations at the museum on Tuesdays, Saturdays or Sundays when we're open. You can also drop off items at my home, 211 Welch St., Silverton, down the hill from the hospital. (Leave it on our porch if no one answers your knock.)

Thanking you all in advance for your generosity and support,

*Kathy Hunter*



Keith Dwayne Kaser  
March 3, 1938—March 5, 2011

Almost everyone in town knew Keith Kaser, but very few knew his name or anything about him. He was such a familiar figure, walking through town, stopping to retrieve stray cigarette butts, or giving that familiar shrug with upturned palms, glancing skyward to make an observation on the weather and the seagulls, or lack thereof, to anyone he met. Keith is gone now, and that distinctive piece of Silverton's fabric is gone and cannot be patched.



Rick Ernst  
March 5, 1953—March 2, 2011

Rick was another Silverton native that lots of people might not have known, but if you read the Letters to the Editor of the Silverton Appeal, you knew who he was and what he thought! Very sad to see him go; he will be sorely missed.

## L.C. Eastman, A Lasting Influence

This is a story about a man who brought his family to Silverton 103 years ago and stayed to have a lasting impact on the town, and the business community and to this day his name remains on a Silverton business.

His name was Eastman: Lester Calvin Eastman, mostly known as L. C.; he was referred to in one article as 'Cory'. He was born in 1882 in Kansas, one of five children. By the time he was 8 or 9 years old his parents had moved their family to Castle Rock, Washington. He received the rest of his schooling there and went on to teach for a while. His parents hoped for him to achieve a white collar job so they were probably disappointed when, answering an innate call for tinkering, a.k.a mechanics, he found a job with "the largest heating plant this side of the Mississippi." That job was in Portland and, I suspect, he learned he had a flair for business.

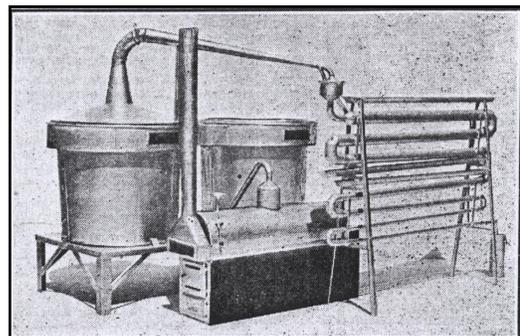
He married in 1905 and based on the poems and songs pasted in his scrapbook, Myrtle Brewer was the love of his life. They are both buried in Castle Rock.

In 1907 he was sent to Silverton to install a piece of machinery in the Silverton Lumber Co. mill that was just being built. He apparently liked what he saw of the town. The following year, he decided to strike out on his own as a businessman, despite some harsh economic times. He moved his wife to Silverton into a little house part way up West hill. That's where their two children were born, Norman and Winifred 'Billie'. His next big move was to purchase the heating and sheet metal business of P.L. Blackerby, located on S. Water St.

By 1912 his brother Austin had moved to town and joined the business. They became the Eastman Bros. and when, two years later they had built a large plant, just over the bridge on W. Main St., (the same site as today's Towne Square Park) they called it the Silverton Blow Pipe Co. They called their product The SiBloCo after having a contest to name it. In 1920 they added a foundry and four years after that, in 1924, they had expanded once more to a new site down by the Depot; currently the site of The Furniture Outlet on N. Water. Before they began manufacturing at the new site they had a 'grand ball'. Apparently inviting the whole town to dance in the huge space, three hundred people attended and there was still

room for many more, according to an article in the Silverton Appeal.

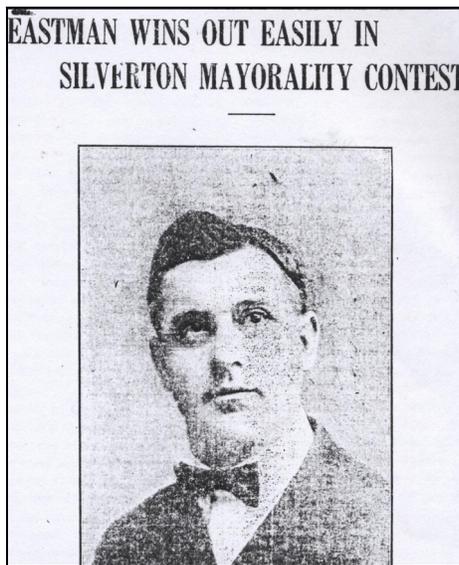
To read various articles about the Eastman products, one begins to get a sense of the Eastman Bros. innovations and the scope of their business skill. Their furnaces, fire chutes (remember the chute on the outside of the Washington Irving Building?), peppermint stills and playground equipment were sold from Washington to California and as far east as Utah.



Eastman Brothers mint still, built in 1926

They operated for twenty years at this site and then, his brother gone from the business, L.C. retired as well; selling the business to D.E. Cooper and Son of Salem.

I'm not sure just when L.C.'s son Norman took over the business or started an off shoot of his own called Eastman Metal Works. An article in the Silverton Appeal talks about him building a plant on Fiske St. and moving the company back to the west side of the town. By that time a motor company had moved into the old Eastman plant that fronted W. Main. Stan & Jeanette Olafson bought the company along with George Smith in 1963 and ran it for 34 years when it was sold to Roth's Heating of Canby. It's now known as Eastman Heating & Sheet Metal, Inc.



Mayor L.C. Eastman, write in candidate in 1922

L.C. Eastman's impact on the community was almost as great as the benefits of his business on Silverton's economy. He must have been a complex man with multiple interests. Growing up in Castle Rock, he played baseball...and got good write-ups from the sports editor. He was elected mayor of Silverton six times, from Nov. 1920 to Jan. 1933. In the mayor's race of 1922, he was a write-in candidate, put there by the Women's Civic Club who started a campaign for him two weeks before the election. He received 477 write-in votes and won.

Sprinkled throughout his scrapbook are many clippings of his activities as a referee for both boxing and wrestling. (He probably developed a pretty thick skin after serving 12 years as mayor.)

He belonged to the Mason's and to the Knights of Pythias. One article gives him credit for helping bring the murderers of Police Officer H.J. Iverson to justice, stating that he received a state commendation for his 'outstanding work'.

In retirement he made miniature copper vases and utensils. His grandson, John Slocum, has a miniature trinket box, beautifully decorated with copper detailing as well as his grandfather's scrapbook which he generously loaned us last September.

L.C. 'Cory' Eastman lives on in that scrapbook. He died October 9, 1956.

*Carolyn Hutton*

**Attention Members!!**

We still need volunteer hosts for the 3rd Saturday and also the occasional 5th Sunday. Please call the Museum at 503-873-7070 if you can spare just 3 hours once a month. And of course, we still have the curator position open! Thank you!



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**WWW.SILVERTONMUSEUM.COM**



Children in front of L.C. Eastman home on W. Main Street.

Your S.C.H.S. Board

Ray Hunter	President
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Norm English	Vice- Pres.
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Rufus LaLone	Treasurer
<b>Vacant</b>	Curator
Kathy Hunter	Membership
Molly Murphy	
Robin Anderson	
Marsha Worthen	
Kay LaLone	

Thank you to our new and renewing members!

Jeff and Cindy Lampa	MiniStorall (Kim and Candace Haakenson)	
Glenn Cunningham	Marlene Hanson	Chris Schwab
Cloreta Kaser	Carolyn Hutton	Luanne Crail
Susan Beale	Holger and Suzi Uhl	

And thank you to these generous donors!!

Linda Ann Grodrian, Rebecca Grodrian Painter and Nancy Grodrian Vasek  
 Tom and Barbara Pelett  
 The Silverton Community Charity Ball

**If you received an overdue notice with your newsletter, we appreciate your prompt response.**

**Thank you!**