

Silverton Country Historical Society

Museum and Office 428 South Water Street



The Blackerby Building

By Fred Parkinson

As I learn more about Silverton history, the more I enjoy researching older buildings in town, both structures that are still here today, as well as those that have been lost to us through fire, so-called progress, or for other reasons.

I marvel at the grand old homes, both large and small, that still grace some of the older neighborhoods in town. I wish I was old enough to remember the large farmhouse Ai Coolidge built on West Main Street that was set back from the street. Although he owned much of the property in the area, the lot the house was built on extended all the way back from Main Street to what would eventually become Apple Street, although it wouldn't be put in for years. The house was taken down in the early 1960's to make way for two duplexes. Additionally, I'm in awe of the old commercial buildings still standing, such as the old Silverton Service Station and the Palace Theater, on opposite corners of Oak and North Water, as well as the H L Stiff Furniture Building, on the corner of East Main and North First Streets, which has recently been painted.

And then, of course, there are those structures that are no longer with us. Notable among these are the Silverton Hotel on Oak Street that burned in 1922, the Opera House at Oak and North Water Streets that burned spectacularly in 1935, and the Jonas Byberg building on North Water Street, removed years ago to make way for the new post office.

Although the Palace Theater is an architectural marvel in itself, I sometimes find myself sitting on one of the public benches on Water Street, imagining the huge white Opera House standing on the corner, extending from Oak to High Streets and occupying a solid one third of the entire block.

I remember walking home from school past the Byberg building on North Water Street, admiring its modern, sleek lines, with a little bit of art deco thrown in for good measure.



Blackerby Building 1955

A smaller, but still noteworthy edifice once stood creekside on South Water at the west end of Lewis Street. It was known as the Blackerby Building. The structure is a fine example of late Victorian architecture, with its distinctive tall and narrow bow windows on the second floor. It had a set of stairs on the south side leading up to the second floor offices. It was built by Dr A.F. Blackerby, probably around 1900, as a location for his dental office. At the site of the Blackerby building, a towering oak tree now stands watch over the foot bridge across Silver Creek. It is adjacent to the "Bobbie" mural.

Arthur Frank Blackerby (known as Frank, rather than Arthur) was the son of the first doctor to locate in Silverton, J.M. Blackerby. His father would ride all over the area on horseback, carrying his medical supplies and treating patients in need. The younger Dr. Blackerby started his dental practice in Silverton in 1886. Sometime after he opened his office, he built the structure that would house his dental office for many years on the second floor.

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

According to a March, 1960 article in the Silverton Appeal-Tribune, old-timers in town recalled the Blackerby waiting room was: ***“furnished in the Victorian style, with its bright green sofa, its pictures of waterfall and mountain, and the office with its barber-like dental chair, the glass door equipment cabinet, and last but not least the smell of cocaine which was used to soften the final jolt or coup de grace as an unwanted cuspid hit the floor.”***

My, how times have changed!

In addition to his dental practice, Dr Blackerby served at various times as postmaster and County Assessor. He was also active in Republican Party politics and was an enthusiastic fifty-five year member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. He was very knowledgeable about Silverton history, especially in the era of Homer Davenport. After providing dental services to the community for over forty years, Dr Blackerby passed away on January 19, 1934. For those trivia buffs out there, I find it very ironic that Dr. Blackerby's father, J.M. Blackerby, also passed away on January 19, but in a different year.



Blackerby Building at the end of Lewis Street, 1955



Blackerby Building location today

The first floor of the building was rented out to various businesses and offices. Through the years tenants included an electrical contractor, a lawyer, a plumber, a real estate dealer, and a shoe repair shop.

According to the 1960 article, while living in the building during the mid 1940's, J.E Hosmer, a controversial figure in town for many years and co-founder and former President of the old Liberal University, attempted to establish “Silverton University”, using the entire building, in order to prepare for what he referred to as the “new era.”

An undated newspaper clip (probably from the Appeal-Tribune) indicates that Hosmer was: ***“contemplating beginning classes at the building formerly occupied by the Johnson Plumbing shop, giving instructions in ‘Universal Mental Liberty,’ that he would later construct a ‘Temple,’ and would publish a paper, probably under the name of a former publication edited by himself, ‘That Torch of Reason.’”***

J.E. Hosmer died in 1946, his last dream unfulfilled. Whether or not his “temple” was the same as the proposed “Silverton University” is not known, but it stands to reason that the two are connected.

During its waning years in the late 1950's, the building was an apartment house, known as the Tower Apartments, specializing in “rooms for rent.” It fell into general disrepair and was in serious danger of collapsing and sliding down into Silver Creek. In 1960, Tony Sacher was given the opportunity to raze the building in exchange for the salvage lumber. He used the recycled wood to build so-called “strawberry cabins” for the use of migrant workers on his farm.

And thus ends the saga of one of Silverton's most unique buildings. Silverton is a small community with an abundance of architectural delights, ranging from buildings downtown with the builder's name on them (Ames, Alm, Wolf etc) to the fine old neighborhoods that contain homes of a bygone era. It's all out there, if you want to see it.

From the President...**Take care of our future museum display, OK...?**

We don't often think of the things we use regularly day-to-day as museum pieces, but they certainly could be. Here's what I mean. That old soup ladle, hand mixer, butter churn, egg scale, knitting needle, hand saw, spark plug wrench, rocking chair, or family photograph that you see in the museum was probably once a part of the every-day life of someone living in this community. Whom-ever it was that those items belonged to likely never thought that any of those

items would one day be on display for others to see, especially in a museum setting.

And so it carries on, day-to-day, year-to-year, many years hence. Just think about all the objects that you use regularly. Years from now, that lamp you bought new years ago, the desk you purchased when you moved into your first house, the table cloth you placed on your dining room table every time there was a special family get-together, the little corner cabinet that you stored your books, magazines, or CD's in, any or all of them might become some treasured family heirloom, fit for a museum.

It could happen. Future generations of 3rd graders may visit our museum, and one of our volunteers will be explaining how this or that worked in years past to those curious young minds, and it may have started out belonging to you in earlier times. Treat your museum-pieces tenderly, and others may be able to enjoy them after you're gone.

This month, we began our Traveling Exhibit, a table-top case containing some featured portion of our museum display. During the hours of the First Friday event in Silverton, we had a table set up in the Green Store located in the old Wolf Building. We featured photographs, artifacts, and even an article about Fischer Flouring Mills, which was located at the edge of the downtown area from 1854 through 1933. We had about a dozen visitors to the display, and Chris Schwab and I had a nice time showcasing our museum for those few hours. Next month, we will be displaying Homer Davenport items in our display in front of the Radio Shack store. We're looking for volunteers to sit with the display and answer questions. If any of you would like to help, or if you are available for future traveling displays, kindly contact one of the board members and we can get you on the schedule. It really is fun!

And speaking of volunteering, since our museum thrives because of volunteers, please consider stepping forward and helping in any way that you can. There's always plenty to do, and your help benefits the community by providing a nice look at a piece of our heritage.

Norm

Silverton Country Museum - History in the Making

**Museum—Out and About!**

SCHS President Norm English, hosted the Museum's new traveling display at the Silverton Green Store on First Friday, July 6. Featured this month were photos, stories and artifacts pertaining to Fischer's Flouring Mill. It was a great opportunity to greet old friends and meet new people who stopped by to learn more about the Museum and its collections. Look for us First Friday in August at Radio Shack.

Homer Davenport Community Festival!

SCHS Dime Toss at the Festival Again This Year!

The Dime Toss booth is ready to be hauled out of hiding in the museum basement, the Hunter garage is a treasure-trove of containers, many of them donated by YOU -- thanks! -- and a sink of soapy water lies in wait for unsuspecting containers in need of a good washing up.

The Homer Davenport Community Festival, or Homer Days for short, is just around the bend. Can you spare some time to help with this SCHS fundraiser? Muscular types are helpful for set up and take down, while any sex or age is welcome to run the booth during the festival in Coolidge-McClaine Park.

Contact Chair Kathy Hunter, phone 503-873-0159 or email hunter476@frontier.com, with your preference for job and time. Two people on a shift at the booth, so couples, join up together! Enlist teens or neighbors who'd be good at this. It's really fun to coax the fairgoers to take a risk and try their luck at winning that cute piggy bank, lovely tea cup/saucer or colorful vase.



Thursday, Aug. 1—Set up between 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. (Call for time)

Friday, Aug. 3—Shifts: noon-2 p.m. 2-4 p.m. 4-6 p.m. 6-8 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 4 (The busiest day) - Shifts: 10 a.m.-noon noon-2 p.m. 2-4 p.m. 4-6 p.m. 6-8 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 5—Shifts: 10 a.m.-noon noon-2 p.m. 2-4 p.m. 4-6 p.m.

Take down immediately at closing, 6 p.m.

Two of Silverton's distinctive downtown buildings recently received new exterior paint—unless you subscribe to the newsletter on-line and in color, you will have to get yourself downtown to see them in person in order to appreciate their bright new look!



Ames Building/People's Bank/Larsen & Flynn
100 S. Water Street



Wray Furniture/Stiff's Furniture
301 N. First Street

Remember: **You** play a part in keeping our Museum a strong presence in the community—we are only as effective as our volunteer base. As of today we have 12 wonderful people committed to working one afternoon month in order to keep staffing the Museum with two people on both Saturday and Sunday. If you do the math, it takes at least 16 (more in months with an extra Saturday or Sunday). This means asking volunteers to double up and, occasionally, even having to close the Museum. So—if you can share **just 3 hours** a month – please call Jan Long, 503-873-7070. No experience required—just a desire to share the story of Silverton with anyone who cares.

Historic Silver Falls Days—Saturday and Sunday, July 14 & 15, 2012



Left: A portion of our display in the Main Lodge at Silver Falls State Park.

Right: The Museum's youngest volunteer, 8-year old Natasha Fink, helps arrange museum items in the display case.



The Life of Vesper Geer—Film Screenings

Michael Turner, Artist-in-Residence at GeerCrest Farm and Historical Society, has produced his first feature-length documentary, *The Life of Vesper Geer*. Constructed entirely of archival materials, we can see the twentieth century pass through the photographs, letters and journals of this ordinary woman who always knew where home was.

Upcoming Screenings:

Saturday, July 28—St. Edward's Episcopal Church, 211 West Center Street in Silverton - Seating beginning at 6:30 pm with showing of the film at 7 pm. Light refreshments and child care available. Donations will be accepted. Michael Turner will be present to answer questions afterward.

Sunday, July 29—The Clinton Street Theater, Portland, 7 pm

Tuesday, July 31—Old St. Francis School, 700 NW Bond Street, Bend, Oregon, 6 pm

For more information, contact Michael Turner at (310) 874-9011 or www.geercrest.org
 SCHS has a limited number of copies of the film available for sale—\$12.00

Stayton Historic Home Open House

The Charles and Martha Brown House, located at 425 N. First Ave., Stayton, will open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., July 28. Built in 1903, the Queen Anne Victorian served over the years as a residence, hospital and boarding house. The open house will feature a student art exhibit in the front parlor, which focuses on the architectural details and charm of the Brown House. Other exhibits include photographs that show the house during its hospital years and images of the Brown family. Visitors touring the house will see the restoration progress underway as well. For more information call (503) 769-8860.

The Gordon House Tenth Annual "*A Taste of Frank Lloyd Wright*" fundraiser will be held on Sunday, August 12, from 3 – 6 p.m. at the Gordon House at 869 West Main Street next door to The Oregon Garden and Resort in Historic Silverton.

Oregon chefs team up with Willamette Valley farmers, wineries, and brewers to provide food, drink, and family fun with friends.

Tickets are \$30 per person or \$50 for two and \$60 for a family. All proceeds benefit the Gordon House. For more information and to make reservations call—503/874-6006 or visit www.thegordonhouse.org.



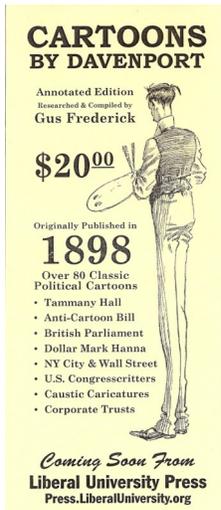


428 SOUTH WATER STREET
SILVERTON OR 97381

OFFICE PHONE 503-873-7070
EMAIL US
SILVERTON.MUSEUM@LIVE.COM

WWW.SILVERTONMUSEUM.COM

Cartoons—New Edition!



The new 2nd edition of
Cartoons by Davenport
Compiled by Gus Frederick
Book signing and sale at
the Museum on Saturday,
August 4th,
Noon to 2 pm.

Thank you to our new and
renewing members—

Linda McKay
Herb and Bee Lay
Beth Davisson
Mary Ellen McCleary Fleck
Rudy Castillo
Tracy and Doug Duerst
Carolyn Simmons
Tim and Cheryl Erickson
Larry Brown
Charles and Judy Traaen

And **Thank you** to these additional
donations!

Tom Pelett
Pam Berger
Phyllis Haberly Burson
Charles and Judy Traaen

The value of the support of our members
cannot be adequately measured.

Your S.C.H.S. Board

Norm English	President
Ray Hunter	Past-Pres.
Vacant	Vice-Pres.
Chris Schwab	Secretary
Tracy Duerst	Treasurer
Jan Long	Curator
Kathy Hunter	Membership
Molly Murphy	
Marsha Worthen	
Kay LaLone	

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

Thank you!