

Silverton Country Historical Society

Museum and Office 428 South Water Street



Veteran's Day Display at the Museum

Currently on display at the museum are several items from our veteran's collection, including WWI and WWII uniforms, hats, helmets, medals, photographs and scrapbooks. The display will be in place until Sunday, November 11. Be sure to visit this tribute to our fallen heroes.



Gary Ohren prepares a soldier's uniform for display



WWI uniform that belonged to Scott McPike



WWI soldier



Whatzit? Program

Monday, November 19, 7 pm at the Museum

Your chance to stump your friends from the museum! Bring an item to be identified.....or not.....
Curiosities to share are welcome.



From The President. . .

Silverton has a few memorials around town worth noting. Each is an interesting piece of history in its own right. Even though most of these memorials are not under the control of the Silverton Country Historical Society, the stories behind them provide a historical legacy for us to be proud of. They include the following:



Civil War Memorial in Coolidge-McClaine Park

Probably many of you are aware of the rather larger upright Civil War memorial that is located in the city park, placed along one of the pathways with the following inscription,

**ERECTED IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE
TO THE HEROES OF
1861 TO 1865
BY GEO H. THOMAS, W.R.C No. 9
SILVERTON, ORE. FEB. 12, 1924
LEST WE FORGET**

There are no individual names inscribed on the memorial stone, and it is not known whether any soldiers with a Silverton connection actually were Civil War casualties, but nonetheless, it is a nice tribute to any who actually fought in that conflict.

H.D. & Rebecca Mount Memorial

In 1936, as the Silverton Hospital was getting ready to expand at its facility on North Water Street, Rebecca Stevens Mount, who with her late husband H.D. Mount and family had lived in a stately house at the top of Liberty Hill for a number of years, suddenly passed away. Her son, prominent Oregon City physician Guy Mount, who was born in Silverton, agreed to sell the Mount property that included a large vacant lot next door to the house, to the Silverton Hospital Association so a brand-new facility could be built. The terms of the sale stipulated that the hospital “dedicate the grove on said premises as an H.D and Rebecca Mount Memorial Park, and suitably mark it as such to be used in conjunction with the hospital to be erected on said premises. . .” For many years, a large stone with a simple plaque attached to it sat just south of the hospital building near a grove of trees and inscribed simply with,

H.D. MOUNT

During the expansion of the hospital a few years ago, the rock, plaque, and most of the oak trees were removed to make room for an additional wing. The plaque itself still remains in the hospital archives, awaiting placement in a suitable location in the outdoor garden currently being designed. It is hoped that it will be in place soon, so the Mount family’s wishes can continue to be honored as originally indicated.

Leo Rumely III Memorial

Also in the Coolidge-McClaine Park, on the wading pool near the overlook to Silver Creek and the foot-bridge, is a plaque with the following inscription,

**THIS FOUNTAIN
IS IN REMEMBRANCE OF
LEO MARTIN RUMELY III
OCT. 27, 1955 SEP. 16, 1988
DEDICATED BY THE EMPLOYEES
OF THE CITY OF SILVERTON
AND FRIENDS**

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Veteran’s Memorial

In front of the museum, where the flagpole with the brickwork around it, there sits a granite marker with the following inscription,

**Dedicated to those who
offered their lives that
Freedom, Justice, Democracy
MIGHT ENDURE
August 4, 2001**

The Silverton Country Historical Society recently began the process of adding a Silverton Veteran’s War Memorial to the area where the above marker is, to include all the known names of casualties with a Silverton connection, a total of 44 names of soldiers who lost their lives during the 20th century.

Homer C. Davenport Memorial Marker

Even though this marker is located in the historic Silverton Cemetery on McClaine Street where he is buried, I included this memorial, since it is worth viewing for its size, prominence, and the historical value of this beloved Silverton character; it has the following inscription on it,

**HOMER CALVIN DAVENPORT
1867 - 1912
Dedicated by his friends to the memory of
Oregon’s world-renowned cartoonist**

When you have the opportunity, check these memorials out and enjoy a little piece of Silverton history. *Norm English*

Silverton Country Museum - History in the Making

Disaster Plan Development Underway

The SCHS Board fully understands its responsibility in the preservation and protection of the objects in its collection, and for that reason, we are taking steps to develop a comprehensive disaster plan. Cataloguing and documentation of our artifacts, an important part of any preparedness plan, has been ongoing since the museum’s inception; we are now in the process of performing a risk assessment, also a vital piece of such an effort. We recognize that all the items in the museum are important; however, it is recommended by our advisors that we identify the major items that would be considered a top priority for rescue in the case of a disaster. We would like your help with this—please inform us what 2 or 3 artifacts you feel would fall into this category. You can send us an e-mail with your thoughts and suggestions to Silverton.museum@live.com or drop a note to us at SCHS, 428 S. Water Street, Silverton OR 97381. Thank you for your help.

**The Life of Vesper Geer—Documentary
Upcoming showings**



Nov. 8, 2012: Wilsonville Public Library in Wilsonville, Oregon at 6:00 PM.
Nov. 14: Western Oregon University, Hamersly Library Rm. 107 in Monmouth Oregon at 6:00 pm
Dec. 3: Mission Theater (McMenamin's History Pub) in Portland, Oregon at 7:00 PM.

Also coming in November will be showings at the newly reopened Palace Theater in Silverton.

Searching for Sophie By Gus Frederick

As most researchers know, in the course of one trail of data, other bits and pieces pop-up, often leading in a variety of directions. The story of one such branch is the interesting yet ultimately sad story of Sophie Wolf.

That name in Silverton is synonymous with the “Wolf Building” one of our more prominent historic structures in town. Named for Austrian immigrant Adolf Wolf, who commissioned the building in 1891, to house his hardware store. Later known as “Adolf Wolf and Son,” it then passed into the Ames family for two generations, finally ending up as Hande Hardware until its restoration into the suite of shops that we know today.

Adolf and his wife Fannie had three kids; sons Julian and Louis, and daughter Sophie. All were born and raised in Silverton, but ended up in Portland at Riverview cemetery. Sophie was the first to arrive on that hillside.

I first became aware of her by chance through my research relating to Silverton’s short-lived Liberal University of Oregon that existed between 1896 and 1903. A photograph of the 1899 faculty contained several long time Silverton names, including Homer Davenport’s sister Alice, his cousin Pearl Geer who co-founded the school, and Miss Sophie Wolf. She was listed as an Instructor of “*Piano, Elocution, and English Literature.*”



Back Row, L-R: Louis Raush, Bookkeeping, etc.; Pearl W. Geer, M.G.H. Secretary & Lecturer. Third Row: Katie Mattesan, Librarian; Alice Davenport, Shorthand & Type-writer; Minnie Preston, Primary & Kindergarten; Emily L. Wakeman, Girl's Matron. Second Row: J.E. Hosmer, PhD., B.S.D., President; A.A. Leonard, M.D. M.E., Anatomy, Physiology, Hygiene, Electricity; Thaddeus B. Wakeman, History, Society, Law, Ethics. Front Row: Lora Ames, Physiology, Hygiene; Minnie P. Hosmer, I.S.B.S.D., History, English, Botany, Music; Sophie Wolf, Piano, Elocution, English Literature; Clara Wakeman, Art, (Photo courtesy SCHS)

A Salem Statesman newspaper clipping from the late 1940s in the Geer family archives whet my curiosity further. It was an interview with Pearl Geer, who was in the area for a Geer Family reunion. In it, Mr. Geer, then an actor of stage and screen known as “Willard Cary,” relates his early days in the area with several interesting facts:

"I lived on a Waldo Hills farm," says Mr. Geer, "until I was 16. The farm was sold and I went to Burns in the Harney valley where my father, Cal Geer, had a hardware store. Later I returned to Silverton, worked for the Adolph Wolf store and married the boss' daughter, Sophie Wolf.

"Then I started out to study medicine along with my brother-in-law. Louis Wolf. I didn't stay with it, but Louis did. When Admiral Robert E. Peary organized his North Pole expedition in 1905 a ship's doctor was needed. I got Louis a job."

This sort of information really got the juices going. So I decided to search for Sophie herself. The first “hit” was from a short notice in the New York Times, dated January 10, 1907. The title was “Flashlight Startles Wedding Party.” The lead paragraph was a true “mind blower”:

Miss Sophie Wolf and Earl Willard Geer of Silverton, Oregon, were married yesterday in the reception room of the City Hall by Mayor McClellan. Mr. Geer is a cousin of Homer Davenport, the cartoonist, and the latter was one of the witnesses to the ceremony. Louis J. Wolf being the other. Just as the Mayor finished the brief ceremony a photographer set off a flashlight, which caused every one present, including the bride and bridegroom, to jump, and the Mayor's lost words binding the two together were lost In a general laugh.



The bride is the sister of Dr. L.J. Wolf, surgeon to the Peary Arctic expedition. She refused to marry while the safety of her brother was in doubt, and the bridegroom kept a close lookout on the surmises as to the arrival of the explorers. As soon as the first cable from Greenland reported the return of the Roosevelt, he telegraphed at once to Silverton: "Louis safe. Name the day."

Besides the obvious error in Geer's name, this short piece fills in the blanks of the previous Statesman article. It also points out another error; that Pearl and Louis obviously attended medical school prior to his marrying Sophie. A lesson in cross-checking sources! The "Roosevelt" was a reference to Peary's ship, and the "Flashlight" was the supplemental light photographers used, most likely a tray of magnesium "flash" powder, as the first practical flash "bulbs" were not available until the 1920s. To have that picture! More searching.

Nevertheless, this situation caused one of those "human interest" sensations journalists still love. I have subsequently found several other stories along the theme of how *"Peary's trip caused sweethearts to separate for many months."*

The next search result was much more somber: From the Oregon State Archives Website, a listing of the death in Portland of one "Sophie Wolf Gur." The date was February 28, 1908, a little over a year after the Flashlight Wedding. No cause of death was listed, and no other mention of Sophie after that, besides Pearl's Statesman quote. Geer Family genealogist Barb Lokting confirmed Mrs. Geer's death date, but had no other details.

Fast-forward to October, 2012 and "National Archives Month," at the Oregon State Archives. Fellow researcher Mr. Fred Parkinson and I attended their open house and tour. One of the items they mentioned that they had on hand was a statewide collection of death certificates, filed by year and county. So it was a relatively quick process to find Sophie's.

As I suspected, "Gur" was really "Geer" hand-written in a tight cursive, with "Geer" added to the right later in pencil. Cause of death was listed as "Cancer of the breast which spread to [the] lungs." Her Doctor, James F. Bell was listed as having cared for her from December 28 of 1907 until her death at 6:30 p.m. two months later at St. Vincent's hospital in Portland.

It also notes that she had been living in Silverton for nine weeks prior to that, presumably at her Father and Mother's house, now located on North Water Street in Silverton. Also on the death certificate, the place of burial was listed as Riverview Cemetery in Portland, on March 1, 1908. This was two days after Sophie's passing, as 1908 was a leap year.

Since I was going to Portland later that same day, I decided to swing by Riverview on the chance that I could locate her marker. Once there, the sprawling grounds seemed to go on forever! However, the office was open, and Julie "Burt" Hendrix, the Cemetery Administrator, made copies of the plot map, burial application signed by Adolf Wolf and cemetery deed.



The Riverview deed lists that Adolf paid \$150 for the family plot, which eventually filled up later with himself, wife Fannie, Julian and eventually in 1944, Dr. Louis and his wife. Sophie was first however.

These sorts of facts, while filling in missing details, also force one to remember that these were once real people. I try and visualize what these folks were going through at the time. Parents naturally expect their children to out live them. To lose a daughter in the prime of life a year after her marriage to her long-time sweetheart must have been devastating. And one can only imagine the grief Pearl Geer felt, as his soul mate slipped from him.

Besides being National Archives Month, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease. As a result of that final fact, Sophie's story has a bit of extra relevance.



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Just a reminder...at The Frank Lloyd Wright Gordon House—Michael Gibbons—“Oregon’s White Oaks Inside & Out” - Art Show & Sale—through October 31
For more information contact: The Gordon House—
P.O. BOX 1207 SILVERTON, OR 97381-0056.
503-874-6006 www.thegordonhouse.org

Museum closing for the season.....

Your museum will be closing on November 12th for the season. Volunteers use this time to work on collection preservation, cleaning the museum and research. Your help is always welcome! We will open again February 2013.

Thank you to our new and renewing members—

Citizens Bank	Nancy Rose	Victoria Delaney
Barbara Marquam	Gail Joseph	Steve and Cheryl Wareham
Norma Halseth	Pat Gemaehlich	Janet Slawson
Barbara Dettwyler	Ed and Karen McKenzie	Vern and Pat Wolfard

And **Thank you** for this additional donation!
Ray and Sally Hollemon

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

Your S.C.H.S. Board

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

Thank you!