

Silverton Country Historical Society

Museum and Office 428 South Water Street



Nancy's Mysteries – Part I Mary Delle's Missed Trip By Gus Frederick

Historic research is full of surprises. In the course of tracking down facts, often more facts are discovered, which sometimes greatly exceed the original facts that set off the initial search. The life and times of Silverton's favorite son Homer Davenport is a case in point.

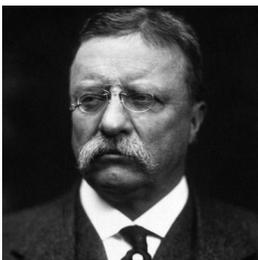
In this case, I was intrigued by several comments Homer's niece and SCHS benefactor Nancy Havens Rose made. She participated in a "living history" video produced by Carolyn Hutton and Larry Thomas. Carolyn visited Mrs. Rose at her home in Seattle, and asked a number of relevant questions relating to her famous uncle, her mother, Mary Delle Davenport and certain aspects of Silverton itself.

In watching the DVD, available for viewing to SCHS members, several comments that Nancy made have provided fodder for further investigation—and future stories for this publication! The first was the tale of how her mother, Mary Delle, was invited by Homer to go to Europe on one of his lecture tours. However, she contracted scarlet fever and had to stay behind in New York City, in the brownstone home of Homer's mysterious girlfriend, Zadah Howard Reakirt.

In 1907 after years in an unhappy marriage, the Davenports agreed to a separation. Eventually this led to Homer filing for divorce, and a budding romance with Mrs. Reakirt, a divorcee "of means" that shared Homer's interest in art and Arabian horses.

It was after this period that the story Nancy recounted of the missed European trip had to occur. I myself had not found anything in the material I have examined so far, so I was left to examine the facts, as slim as they were.

Mary Delle's trip East and her stay with Zadah were strong clues, as they indicated a period between 1908 to 1911. Several other comments made on the DVD offered indirect clues. She also mentioned a "Western Trip with Colonel Roosevelt," in which Homer and his father, T.W. Davenport were on. That is a different, yet exciting story in its own right, and occurred in late August and early September of 1910.



As luck would have it, Roosevelt's life has been extensively documented—literally day-by-day—with these data available online from several Websites. I found the Western trip dates buried within the "Roosevelt Itinerary" from the T.R. Almanac Website. But I also found several other mentions of Davenport during 1910.

The first comes from "*Impressions of Theodore Roosevelt*," a biography of the Colonel by Lawrence F. Abbott, and written in 1922. In the third chapter, he recounts Roosevelt's return to the United States after more than a year abroad. After his term ended, T.R. went first to Africa on safari, then on an extended lecture tour of Europe, before returning to his

home at Oyster Bay. The author recounts Roosevelt saying at one point:

"My political career is ended. No man in American public life has ever reached the crest of the wave as I appear to have done without the wave's breaking and engulfing him. Remember Dewey."

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Admiral George Dewey, the Spanish American War Naval leader, known as the hero of Manila Bay, fell from public grace when he deeded the house his adoring public bought for him in Washington, D.C., to his new wife. The “public” (through the newspapers), lambasted the former hero for this “transgression” to the point that Admiral and Mrs. Dewey seriously considered leaving the country. Mr. Abbott then refers to the return trip in an anecdote, prefaced by the following:

“Coming back on the steamer from Southampton to New York in June of that year [1910], the usual entertainment given in the salon, for the benefit of some seamen's fund or other, took the form of a "chalk talk" by the late Homer Davenport, then one of the foremost of American newspaper cartoonists.”



He goes on to recount Davenport telling the story of his famous “Lest We Forget” cartoon that he did during the Dewey kerfuffle, which turned public sentiment back towards the Admiral’s favor. Roosevelt asked Davenport if the story was true, which he assured the ex-president that it was.

Good story, but more importantly, it gave the dates and the ship on which Homer returned from his own Lecture tour: June 10 on the S.S. Kaiserin Auguste Victoria out of Southampton, England, arriving in New York harbor on June 17.

But when did he leave? This bit of information’s arrival, like much in the Homer story, was of the serendipitous nature. I had talked to Ms. Sieglinde Smith at one of my lectures, and gave her my card. In the course of her own research, she forwarded me an obscure reference to Davenport that filled in that gap somewhat.

It was from *The Pacific Coast Architect*, a professional journal targeting Northwest architects, dated April, 1911. Under the heading “*Address of E. M. Lazarus Before Portland Architectural Club*,” Mr. Lazarus recounts meeting up with Davenport at sea the previous year:

“Sailing from New York late in May last, I crossed over with a fellow Oregonian. Homer Davenport, whose love of Oregon, and Silverton in particular, has been instrumental in heralding its fame from the land of where rolls the Oregon to the Bedouin tribes in far Arabia. For where his cartoons are known and admired, so is his love for his home town.”



Lazarus, an avid horse racing fan, went on to recount that upon reaching England, the two attended the Derby at Epsom Downs, one of England’s fancier race tracks. But it also gives us the out going trip. Further research will hopefully yield a hard date as well as the ship’s name. Full versions of both of these accounts are posted on The Davenport Project Website, <http://davenport.liberaluniversity.org/>, and will be updated as more information comes to light.

As a side note, Edward M. Lazarus was a prominent Portland architect who designed the famous “Vista House” at Crown Point overlooking the Columbia River Gorge, as well as many other public and private buildings around Oregon.

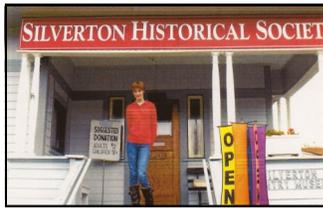
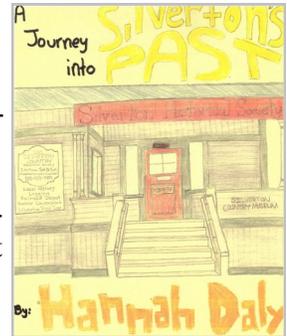
In subsequent parts to this series, I will examine two additional “Nancy Mysteries,” that our research team at The Davenport Project are working on.

Part II will detail the “Western Trip with the Colonel,” in which Nancy tells us that Homer and his father joined Colonel Roosevelt on what many consider was his come-back tour in preparation to the “Bull Moose” campaign in 1912. Why would the Davenports be on this trip? We have that answer and more!

Part III looks at the fate of the Davenport home on South Water Street. Local lore and a newspaper account report that it was torn down in the mid-1920s to make room for the Silverton Armory building. However, Nancy recounts a visit to the “Old Place” with her mother and sister in 1931, more than five years after the Armory was built. Hmmm. Stay tuned!

New Books at the Museum!

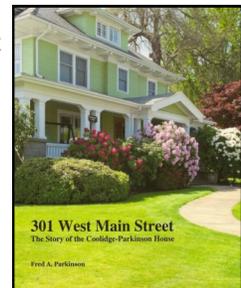
Recently we were pleased to receive copies of two books prepared and self-published by area authors. The first one is called “A Journey into Silverton’s Past,” which was an Advanced Literature Class project by Mark Twain 8th Grader (and my neighbor!), Hannah Daly. What began as an assignment to interview citizens of a certain age who had lived their lives in Silverton, Hannah turned the experience into a love letter to Silverton and it’s history. She spoke to several long time residents and wove their experiences into a narrative that compared what life was like in the mid-Twentieth Century to what today’s young people face. Hannah comments that “it was a fantastic experience for me. Not only did the project help me learn about Silverton’s past, improve my writing skills, and come out of my social shell a bit for the interviews, but it was also enjoyable and worthwhile.”



Recognizing the importance of collecting oral histories Hannah added: “...even though they only show a glimpse into a person’s life, (they) tell a great deal about the person and the times they were living in.” She also vowed that she “would try to keep good notes, pictures and memories, so I have grand stories to share.....as the people I interviewed did with me.”

In her introduction, Hannah got it right when she wrote that the museum is like a library.... “in a sense that it is a place where stories are kept.....stories that are true stories of Silverton’s past. However, these stories aren’t kept in books and documents alone. Most of the stories are kept as memories associated with certain historical objects. The Silverton Museum is a memory library.” Be sure to ask to look at this special book on your next visit to the museum, and feel positive about our future generations!

The second book that joined our collection, we would like to take full credit for, but of course we can’t, even though we have provided a nurturing backdrop for its prolific and articulate author, Fred A. Parkinson. The book is titled, “301 West Main Street, The Story of the Coolidge-Parkinson House.” Fred writes, “what began as an article for the Silverton Country Historical Society Newsletter ultimately blossomed into a full-fledged historical treatment of this house.” As expected, the work is beautifully written and the photographs painstakingly researched.



On the occasion of the home’s 100th birthday, Fred dedicates this history to his parents, Fred and Nola Parkinson: “To those who have given so much to our family....”

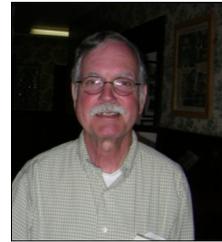
Fred details the home’s builder, Eva Coolidge, on her own a fascinating story, and goes on to relate stories about the Fresh Air bed and the subsequent owners of the home, including the Woodards, the Prestons and others, then describes the house as only a resident can. It is a lovely story about Silverton history and one of its most stately and recognizable homes. Contact Fred if you are interested in purchasing a copy.

SCHS Member Picnic—Coolidge McClaine Park—Section No. 8—Look for the signs!
 Saturday August 24th—12:30 till we’re done visiting
 Bring a couple of dishes to share—salad, main and/or dessert.
 We will provide beverages and table service.

From the President...

WE ARE UNDERWAY...

I presented the proposal for the Silverton War Veterans Memorial to the City Council on July 1, and the idea and basic concept were approved. Now begins the really hard work, that of getting the word out (the publicity), and the fund-raising efforts. This will likely be a two-phase project, with the first phase getting the memorial in place at Town Square Park, moving some of the vegetation to more appropriate places in the park, and building a walkway of paver stones and likely placing a granite bench there as well.

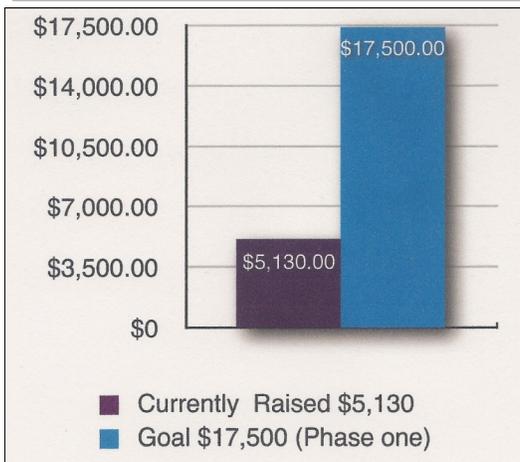


The initial phase is estimated to cost \$17,000 - \$18,000, and letters to service clubs in Silverton, and to veteran's organizations in the area and perhaps in other parts of the state will go out soon, likely before the end of this month. We'll also be working with the Silverton Appeal and Our Town to publicize our efforts. It's exciting to finally be working on commemorating the 46 servicemen from the Silverton area who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom. In remembering these men, we pay them the honor they deserve and learn that FREEDOM ISN'T FREE!



A rough design of the proposed Silverton War Veterans Memorial

Silverton War Veterans Memorial Fundraising



So, pass the word along to those you know that the effort is underway, and also consider contributing to this effort in whatever way you're able; we still need about \$12,000 - \$13,000 in order to fully fund this first phase. Also let others know that if they are aware of anyone from Silverton who died during the Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, or the Iraq or Afghanistan wars, please contact us with the information on that individual, so they can be included in the memorial. Thanks to everyone in advance for helping us with this amazing effort. We are hoping to get this first phase completed at least by Memorial Day 2014.

—Norm

More Upcoming History Events

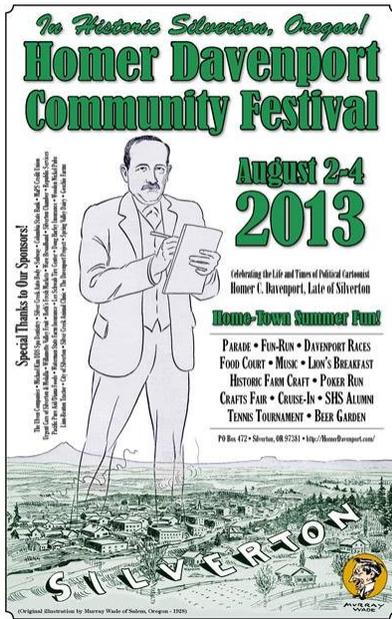
August 2, 3, 4—Homer Davenport Days.....Look for our Coin Toss Booth in the park!
Hours: Friday— Noon to 8 pm; Saturday—10 am to 8 pm; Sunday—10 am to 6 pm
Museum will be open Saturday—Noon to 4 pm; Saturday—1 to 4 pm

August 24—SCHS picnic at Coolidge McClaine Park, 12:30 p.m. (More on Page 3)

September 21—Preservation Workshop — “Caring for Your Treasures: A Different Kind of Road Show”
 at The Gordon House at the Oregon Garden

October 19 (Saturday) — Silverton Area History Book Fair at Seven Brides - Definitely a “Can’t Miss” - All your favorite Silverton area authors, photographers, illustrators and editors in one place with their books. Great opportunity to visit and have them sign their works.

Homer Davenport Community Festival Almost Here!



SCHS's **Coin Toss Booth** will again be in the Park with the rest of the festivities. Be sure to come find us and try your hand at winning that special object. We'll have lots of dimes on hand! We are still taking donations of glassware and of course, we will need lots of volunteers to help man (and woman) the booth. Coin Toss earnings go toward improvements to the Museum. This year we are looking at upgrading the Museum's "vintage" wiring. If you have glassware or would like to help, please call Kathy Hunter at (503)873-0159 or the Museum at (503)873-7070. It is truly a lot of fun and is a chance to see just about everyone who comes to the festival. Your help is greatly appreciated!



Also, as the Musuem will be open extra hours, volunteers will be needed to serve as hosts. Call Jan at 503-873-7896 if you would like to help. Thank you!

Images From the South Water Street Walking Tour, Saturday, June 22
A very warm and informative day!



Board Member Profile—Ruth Kaser

Ruth's parents migrated to Oregon from Nebraska because of effects of the dust bowl. She attended Eugene Field school until her family moved to Waldo Hills and then went to Victor Point, graduating from Silverton High School as did her future husband, Fred. After attending Pacific University and Mt Angel College and graduating with a degree in history, she and Fred settled on their farm in Marquam in the 1960s, where they raised four children. They now have seven grandchildren as well. Over the years, Ruth taught school, was a caseworker for the State and lastly for about 25 years she was a travel agent in Canby and Molalla. Nowadays, she and Fred travel as much as possible and enjoy golf and music.



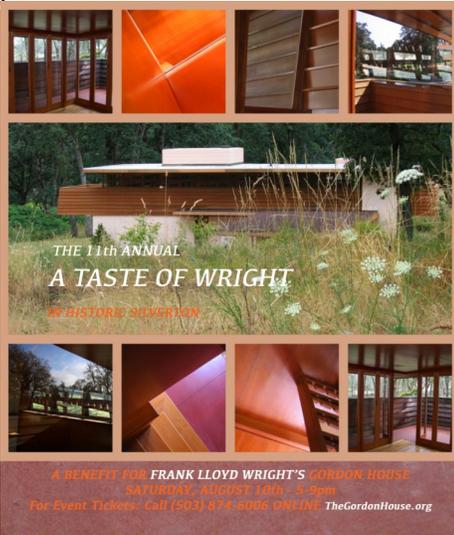
Every photograph we have of Ruth shows her working on a museum project! We are so fortunate to have Ruth and her experience, common sense and dedication on our board.



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HOMER DAVENPORT COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

August 3,4,5

**HELP YOUR MUSEUM
DURING THE FESTIVAL!**

Call now to volunteer:

Kathy Hunter—(503) 873-0159

Jan Long—503 873-7896

Chris Schwab—(503) 873-4529

Your S.C.H.S. Board

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Ruth Kaser	
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Thank you to our new and renewing members—
Your support is what keeps us going!

Christopher Wicks
Ed and Julie Bowles
Jack and Lurlyn Long

Mary Ellen Fleck
Larsen-Flynn Insurance
Tom Dill and AnnMarie Neil

And a very special **thank you** to Norm English his generous donation to our Veterans' Memorial Fund.

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