

# Silverton Country Historical Society

*Established in 1974*

*Forty Years of History in the Making*



Museum and Office  
428 South Water Street

## Circuit Chautauqua in Silverton

By Fred A. Parkinson



The first day of Chautauqua is here! Or more accurately, the first day of Chautauqua *week* is here..... The date was Sunday, July 9, 1916 and the excitement in the small community had been building ever since the first Chautauqua gathering ever to be held in Silverton was announced. Along with this excitement, there had been no small amount of trepidation that the event, to be held July 9-14, 1916, might not be a success. Numerous local citizens had put up a monetary guarantee to the company providing the Chautauqua to ensure a minimum number of ticket sales.

Circuit Chautauqua was essentially the third iteration of the Chautauqua movement, named for Lake Chautauqua in upstate New York. Organized in the 1870s, Chautauqua was a predominantly American cultural tradition that emphasized the general advancement of adult education, initially emphasizing religious training; ultimately evolving into much broader areas of education, entertainment and enlightenment. The first sessions were held at the Chautauqua Institute on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in New York State. Later, many communities throughout the United States eventually established their own permanent Chautauqua organizations. As the expenses for these organizations increased, "circuit Chautauqua" was developed in 1904 as a sort of traveling road show, providing professionally developed programs at a reasonable cost to communities along the circuit route.

The Silverton Chautauqua was managed by the Ellison-White Chautauqua Bureau, based in Portland, Oregon. One of the largest organizations of its kind, it provided organizational and logistical support for the Silverton Chautauqua. These activities included advance publicity, advertising, and setting up the large circus type tent in which the programs would be held. Perhaps most importantly, Ellison-White hired the Chautauqua "talent", the various lecturers and other performers who would provide the entertainment.



Site of First Chautauqua in Parkside Addition

Local resident F.E Callister was the general chairman in charge of planning for Chautauqua week. Other local citizens active on various committees included Reber Allen, George Steelhammer, Dr. C.W. Keene, Percy Brown, George Hubbs, and Julius Alm.

*Continued on Page 3*



Continued from Page 1

The first Chautauqua tent was set up in the relatively new Parkside Addition on undeveloped lots owned by prominent local citizen Eva Coolidge, by then President of Coolidge and McClaine Bank. These lots were situated at the north end of the block currently bordered by Coolidge Street, Apple Avenue, and Jerome Street. The July 14, 1916 edition of the *Silverton Appeal* reported “The Chautauqua tents were placed on Miss Coolidges’ (sic) lots on Coolidge Street. It is ideal (sic) spot.”

As Chautauqua approached, the July 7, 1916 *Silverton Appeal* devoted almost the entire front page to Chautauqua week, displaying large graphics at the top and bottom of the page. The schedule of events was displayed prominently in the center of the page, complete with a typesetting error that listed the year as 1816 instead of 1916.

The arrival of Chautauqua in Silverton was highly anticipated. Highlighting the support of the local business community, the *Daily Capital Journal* in Salem reported “The large tent (is) being filled both afternoon and evening, with the greater number of the business houses closed during each afternoon throughout Chautauqua week.”

A typical day during Chautauqua week involved morning, afternoon, and evening sessions. Each 9:00am morning session involved the “Junior Chautauqua”, children performing “Organizing King Arthur’s Court.” The afternoon would showcase both a musical act and a lecture beginning at 2:30pm and 3:00pm respectively. The same would occur during the evening sessions, beginning at 7:30pm and 8:15pm. Patrons could purchase admittance a la carte for the morning, afternoon, and evening gatherings. Prices ranged from 15¢ for the Children’s Chautauqua morning sessions to a high of 75¢, with the majority costing 35¢ or 50¢, for the afternoon and evening events. People could also purchase season tickets that would allow admittance to any performance on any of the six days of Chautauqua week.

Lecturers, also known as “platform speakers”, included Victor Murdock, Ernest J. Silas, and Arthur A. Franzke. Musical acts included Witepakie’s Hungarian Orchestra, mezzo-contralto Madam Fay Morvilus, The Gullotta Trio, and the Boston Lyric Opera Company.

S. Platt Jones, humorist and impressionist, performed on Sunday night. The July 14, 1916 *Silverton Appeal* reported “His jokes were supremely funny and his impersonations of characters great ..... But underneath the jokes and permeating everything the humorist said, was a vein of helpful uplifting and moral sentiment. He was greatly enjoyed.” The *Appeal* was not always complimentary toward the performers. It also reported “Tuesday afternoon and evening the Lyric Operatic Company presented their musical program. This was considered by many the least attractive of any.”

The first Silverton Chautauqua concluded on Friday night, July 14, 1916. During the closing events Chautauqua Superintendent C. A. Matteson offered his appreciation to the citizens of Silverton for their warm welcome of the Chautauqua entertainers. According to the July 21, 1916 issue of the *Silverton Appeal* “He specially mentioned Miss Coolidge who had given freeuse (sic) of the land for the tent; the Silverton Lumber Co., who donated lumber; the P.R.L. & P. Co., who gave free lights, Mr. Hyett for the delightful auto rides.....”

As it turned out, the original guarantors of the event need not have worried as Chautauqua week was a complete success. The *Appeal* reported in headlines: “**Obligations All Met**”, “**Guarantors of Chautauqua Come Through Without a Scratch.**” and “**Money Over.**” The article announced that a contract had been signed to bring Chautauqua to Silverton again the following summer, as would occur for several subsequent years. As the Great Depression approached, the Chautauqua movement petered out during the 1920s due partly to the influence of the new medium of radio, but that’s a story for another time.



## Gallon House Bridge Model On Loan to the Museum!



A recent loan to the museum is a scale model of the Gallon House Covered Bridge. The model was built by Robert Boersma (who is now 83 years of age) and loaned to the Museum by his family to be on display through 2016, the 100th anniversary of the construction of the original wooden covered bridge. The real 84-foot long bridge spans Abiqua Creek on Gallon House Road just north of town. It derived its name during prohibition when it was a meeting place for bootleggers and moonshiners. The bridge was swept off its footings in the December 1964 flood, but was restored immediately after. This amazing model stands 7 feet long and approximately 18 inches high. A mirror underneath allows for better

viewing of the trusses and underpinnings. Mr. Boersma, a carpenter by profession, was a member of the Covered Bridge Society.

Be sure to come see it on display in the Depot!

## Oregon Archives Crawl—Portland Saturday, October 18, 2014

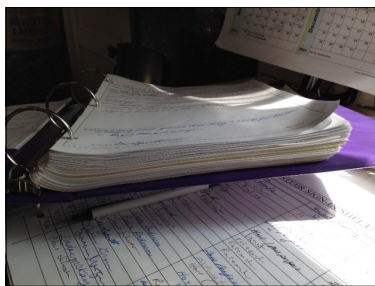


You are invited to join us as we participate in the 4th Oregon Archives Crawl October 18th, from 10 am to 3 pm in celebration of Oregon Archives Month. You can take a few short walks and visit with representatives of thirty organizations in three locations just waiting to provide you with history and archives goodies! The locations are the Portland Archives and Records Center, the Multnomah County Central Library and the Oregon Historical Society. At each location there will be a variety of activities to choose from so you might want to start

early. The Silverton country Historical Society will have a table at the Oregon Historical Society.

For more information check this link: [http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?](http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=51811&a=499788)

[c=51811&a=499788](http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=51811&a=499788)



What's this you ask? This is the notebook where we file requests for information, research assistance, general questions to try to answer...over 50 for 2013 and more than that already for the first 10 months of 2014...and these are just the ones we remember to write up and file! Anything from family history, photo identification, house or building histories, legend tracking—people will stop in to ask questions; plus we are asked on our Facebook page or we get phone calls and e-mails. People find us and we do our best to answer. The term “history detective” is not just a phrase!

## Curator Search is On!!

Current curator, Jan Long, is reluctantly stepping down because of ever-increasing family responsibilities, so we are searching again for someone who loves Silverton and enjoys history. We have a small, but dedicated, group of volunteers, many of whom are also responsible for other activities in the Historical Society, and who just need someone to provide direction to keep the museum running well. Think it over and then if you would like to help, contact us at [Silverton.museum@live.com](mailto:Silverton.museum@live.com) or 503-873-7070. You would be working with the nicest group of people in Silverton, if I do say so myself!!

---

---

Thank you, Jan!



**Note to Jan:** Though sorely tempted, I did not use my favorite photo of you!!

## SCHS picnic at the beautiful home of Rufus and Kay LaLone—





428 SOUTH WATER STREET  
SILVERTON OR 97381

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

**WWW.SILVERTONMUSEUM.ORG**

**Thank you** to our new and renewing members—

Your support is what keeps us going!

Ross Curtis    Mike Gabe    Jean Tomison Kennedy  
Nancy Rose (Timothy Davenport's granddaughter who tells us she is 92 and still walking 2 miles a day!)

**Thank you** to these generous donors:

**War Memorial Plaza—Silverton Fallen Heroes Donors—**

Jack Allen	American Legion Post #7	Denny Chapman
Lydia Cisneros	Jeff and Carol Fritsche	Marc Gossack
Jacquelin Gossack	Edward Gossack	Daryl Gossack
Daniel Gossack	Roger and Annette Greenfield	Fay Jorgenson
Willa Lewis	James Loftis	Ed McKenzie
Thomas Meyer	Mt. Angel Oktoberfest	John Paul Nelson
Russell Newell	Gary and Nancy Ohren	Owen Osteen
Fred and Nola Parkinson	Small Town Coffee	
Richard and Karen Williams	Shirley and William Wood	
Raymond and Gayle Gregory	Homer Davenport Days, Inc.	
Unisource Manufacturing, Inc.		

And to all who have given anonymously or contributed via the collection containers through out town! We apologize if we have omitted anyone.

**Your S.C.H.S. Board**

Norm English	President
Ray Hunter	Past-Pres.
Molly Murphy	Vice-Pres.
Chris Schwab	Secretary
Tracy Duerst	Treasurer
<b>Your Name Here</b>	Curator
Robin Anderson	Asst. Curator
Kathy Hunter	Membership
Marsha Worthen	
Kay LaLone	
Ruth Kaser	
Fred A. Parkinson	

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