

# Silverton Country Historical Society

Established in 1974  
Over Forty Years of History in the Making



Museum and Office  
428 South Water Street

## The Year of June Drake!

*In recognition of June Drake's valuable contributions to the history of Silverton, this year's newsletters will be featuring excerpts from a series of articles June wrote in the 1950's, along with Ed Woare, for the Silverton Appeal Tribune. This one was written in **March of 1950** about an earlier time in Silverton's history.*

### Silver Creek Was Full of Interest in Pioneer Days—By J.D. Drake

*(Note—the accompanying photos are from a slightly later date than the time Drake is referring to.)*

Long before the advent of automobiles and the movie theaters, Silverton's main attraction in the winter time was watching Silver Creek. When the waters of the stream running through the town were high and swirling and splashing spray as they poured over the Ames dam, crowds used to gather on the Main street bridge for a sight of the stream's fury. All were dressed, men, women and kids, in their rain togs most of them holding the usual umbrella so prevalent in Oregon 50 years ago.

The big attraction was the drive of saw logs on their way to a lumber mill some three miles down stream.

At that time there were three sawmills using this water way to transport logs to the mills. J.H. Lichty's mill was located three miles down stream in the Pudding river bottom adjacent to the then Silverton-Salem road.

The Johnson and Ek mill was on the north bank of Silver Creek, now Cowing's addition in Silverton. Erwin's mill was two miles upstream where logs were stored in a pond created by back water from a dam across the stream which was put in to power the mill. This mill was built by James Smith and John Barger in 1846 and later acquired by G.B. Erwin who also operated a flour mill there.



Johnson and Ek boomed their logs in a pond along the side of Silver Creek made by a dam across the stream by the Oregon Milling company. Logs for these sawmills were cut on the flats near Silver Creek and drawn over skid roads by ox teams to the water's edge and piled up. When the water rose to the flood stage logs were rolled in and carried by the water to their destination. Rafting of logs had to be carried out in the winter or early spring while there was plenty of water. Each mill had storage ponds and a boom across the stream to guide the logs through a narrow sorting gap. All logs were branded in the woods and the boom men of the various mills sorted out their own logs.

The steep hillsides of Silver Creek's fine timber were not logged until the gas age, as great power was essential for this type of logging.

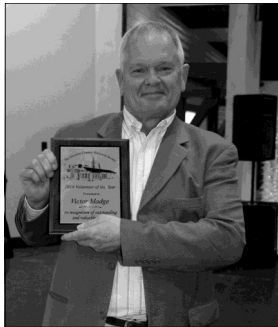
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## SCHS Annual Meeting—January 21, 2017

Our annual meeting was held at the Senior Center. This is always one of our favorite events. It is a chance to get reacquainted with our membership and to share what we have been doing over the last year. Plus—we always have cookies!! This year's program was an update on our Podium Plaque project by Gus Frederick. We also presented our Volunteer of the Year award to our dynamic President, Victor Madge.



### 2016 SCHS Volunteer of the Year—Victor Madge



It should come as no surprise to those who know Victor and have worked with him, that he has been chosen SCHS volunteer of the year...

As he presided over his first board meeting, he encouraged us....no, challenged us...to brainstorm ideas that would bring Silverton history “out of the books and on to the streets.” He then proceeded to put words into action as he launched our historic podium plaque project -- placing metal plaques etched with historic photos and text, in historic sites around town to show how that place appeared in the past. As you know, the first two have been installed already and we have plans and funding for six more!

There quickly followed his energetic goal of completing the long-planned community amphitheater in the area behind the Library parking lot. Many volunteers accomplished the grading, filling and planting of grass seed. While not an official SCHS project, we did provide some funding to help out....we plan to add a podium plaque to this location in the future and possibly oversee the construction of a Silverton History Timeline wall above it. This will be an excellent area for history oriented programs along with other community activities.

He called in the services of Joy Sears from the State Historic Preservation Office to assess the historic DeSart arches in the Park and is lobbying the City to work on preserving this icon. First step was to find volunteers to give this ‘front door’ to the park a thorough cleaning. We are searching to find grants and other funding to continue the preservation process.

A study of the observation post showed deterioration in the siding, window panes that need caulking and because it is placed on concrete, there is evidence of dry rot at the bottom of the walls. He has commanded a volunteer to help raise the structure to add pressure treated supports as a first step. I guarantee, he's not done with us yet!

Well....I could go on, but you get the idea. And, anyway, I'm exhausted.....as we all are! Congratulations, Victor!!

Special thanks to Gus Frederick, and also on many occasions to Fred Parkinson, who take so many of the illuminating photographs that help make our newsletter so much more interesting!!





Two SCHS Volunteers extraordinaire, Fred Parkinson and Gus Frederick, hosted our table at the recent Volunteer Fair sponsored by the Silverton Senior Center. This was a great opportunity to learn more about Silverton's volunteer groups. We really enjoy letting the community know more about us!

### *June Drake—Continued from Page 1*

In the latter part of February 1890, there was lots of snow at the headwaters of Silver Creek. Heavy rains accompanied by warm Chinook winds melted the snow, quickly sending the waters of the stream to an all-time high. In those days there were no buildings on West main street near the old covered bridge which spanned the stream. The high water of that year reached nearly to the point where the Methodist church is now standing.

This extra high water as well as the logs riding the crest attracted the populace. On this particular occasion people seemed to be uneasy as the water was menacing. Late in the evening a man came running down the street shouting "Save the bridge, Johnsons' logs have broken loose!"

Citizens, sensing the danger of the bridge being torn out by the onrush of thousands of logs jamming the stream from bank to bank, rang the city fire bell to call all available people to do all that was possible to save the structure as this was the only crossing in town except the railroad bridge.

As I recall the scene it was only short time until a solid jam of great logs was rolling over the dam just up stream from the bridge. Some piled up by the side of the dam being held by the back wash. Men with pile poles, assisted by others holding lanterns aloft guided the logs as best they could, between the bents of the bridge approach, in an effort to keep them from jamming.

I was a small boy then living where the former Ames hardware store now stands, This was a block away from the dam and across the street from the bridge. It was so dark that we could see little—but the shouting of men, the roar of the turbulent water and the booming of the logs at the dam will never be forgotten by those present on that hectic night.

It was learned the next day that a tree, limbs and all, had been blown into the stream above Erwin's mill, choked the narrow sorting passage and stopped the run of logs. The boom finally broke loose and with the accumulation of logs, bore down onto the Johnson boom tearing that loose and all the impounded logs.

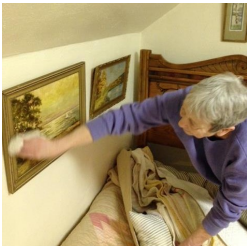
The Lichty mill operators caught the runaway logs on the Pudding river flats and bought them from their owners.

The Johnson and Ek mills moved to the Silverton Hills and the Erwin mill soon passed into the hands of several different owners and finally was dismantled in 1903, when an electric plant was built where Dr. Teter now has his fine home.



## Curator's Corner

An amazing thing happened Wednesday, February 22—some wonderful people who really care about our museum came to get down and dirty and do some house cleaning. I am so gratified by the willingness for our volunteers to give of their time and energy to keep our museum looking beautiful and also to keep the museum moving ahead. A huge 'thank you' to Chris Schwab, Norm English, Kathy Hunter, Fred Parkinson, Linda McKay, Ruth Kaser and also the ongoing work of Gary Ohren. When I am hosting, many times the people who visit compliment the way that the museum is kept and that our volunteers are so well informed and helpful. Our doors will once again be open each weekend beginning the first weekend in March and all displays are in tip top condition.



One of my favorite shows is Sunday Morning which is seen on CBS from 7:00 am to 8:30 am each Sunday. There is usually an opinion section that invites different people to share their ideas on a lot of topics. Several weeks ago a guest was asked to share her opinion of the word 'curator'. That word took on a whole new meaning a little over a year and a half ago for me. Since working at the museum, every time I hear the word I cringe just a bit feeling the weight of my position. The gist of the piece was not just to define the real meaning of curator but more over how the word usage has changed, or at least its use over time. Originally, it was a clergyman who assisted a vicar or rector in the care of souls. Later, it was meant to be a person who took care of museums and or libraries. Today, everything is 'curated'. One example that was given is Martha Stewart saying that she has curated several articles to be used to decorate or for use in the kitchen. Curator has gone from a noun to a verb in many ways; however, I like to

think of the word as a noun and that the person who is 'curating' is caring for the 'soul' of what is important in Silverton History, not just collecting things. For example, about four weeks ago I received a call from a gentleman in Ohio who was looking for information about his second cousins who lived here in Silverton. When he was a child his family had driven from Ohio to visit his mother's first cousins family. He had a wonderful time and had very fond memories of the visit and Silverton. He had tried to track down those cousins and had come up against a brick wall and on a whim looked up the museum's number and got a hold of me. What a gift his call was for me because it gave me a new 'friend' but also the chance to work as a curator. I felt that I had really done the work of that old and ancient meaning of curator.

*Judy Lowery*



Happy volunteers pictured here at last month's official opening of the Seventh Annual Willamette Heritage Invitational Exhibit which runs until **April 15, 2017**. SCHS is highlighting the heroic impact June Drake had on the Silver Creek Falls area.





## SCHS Dime Toss—Homer Davenport Community Festival!!

It's never too early for us to start planning for our major "fun"—and "fund"—raiser—The SCHS Dime Toss, held every year during the Homer Davenport Community Festival.

We start NOW collecting fun glass and ceramic items to serve as enticing targets for our friends and their dimes! If you have any items you have left over from yard sales or things you just want to get rid of...you can drop them off at the Museum any Saturday or Sunday between 1 and 4 pm or give us a call at 503-873-4529 and we'll come pick them up. Thanks in advance!

Also, after many years, Dime Toss Chair and Chief Cheerleader, Kathy Hunter, is going to step down. We would love to find some one who could take over the coordination of the activities that go into making this a successful project. She actually has it down to a fine science, so if you are interested in stepping up to help, give us a call at 503-873-7070 or email us at [silverton.museum@live.com](mailto:silverton.museum@live.com).

## GeerCrest Farm Presents!

This year GeerCrest Farm is offering family style dinners on the 3rd Saturdays of the month during select months in 2017. What better way than sharing a meal to connect again with the local community! And what a splendid opportunity to visit this local historic, working, teaching farm. Today, with two buildings on the National Register of Historic Places and an Oregon Heritage Tree on the site, GeerCrest has passed to the fifth generation. In the spirit of the family that founded it, come see us again! More information can be found on our website [www.geercrest.org/events](http://www.geercrest.org/events) or on the Facebook Events Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1272077542879503/>



## Welcome New Board Member—Mark English

Hello, my name is Mark English. A lifelong Oregonian, I was born in Salem, and raised in Silverton where I spent the first 18 years of my life, graduating from SUHS in 1992. Currently I live in Salem with my wife of six years, Sarah, and my two daughters, Adelaide age 3 ½ and Olive age 5 months.



My interest in history began in junior high at Mark Twain while a student of Larry Todd who was the first person to show me how interesting and relevant an understanding of history is to making "sense" of the world. After high school I attended several colleges finally ending up at the University of Oregon where I graduated with a B.A. in Japanese History in 1997.

My areas of historical interest include local and the Pacific Northwest, oral narratives, Japanese Late 19th Century on, as well as American; especially the New Deal programs Civilian Conservation Corps and Federal Writers Project.

Since college I volunteered and worked for the Friends of Salem Public Library as Board President and as Bookstore Manager for many years. I also worked at an area homeless shelter. Most recently over the past 13 years I have worked at an online book company in quality control, data entry and shipping.

My interests besides my family include listening to Old Time Radio Programs and many types of music, reading, collage and bookbinding as well as pitching horseshoes and collecting paper ephemera.

(Next Issue—Meet Russ Gould!)



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*Celebrating Over 40 Years in the Community*

**WWW.SILVERTONMUSEUM.ORG**

**Thank you to our new and renewing members and generous donors and to anyone who has given anonymously to the Museum or any of its projects—**

Chris Schwab	Rick and Pat Lewis	Jeff and Cindy Lampa
Fred and Ruth Kaser	Russ Gould	Barbara Marquam
Jack Hande	Aileen Conrad	Jeanette and Brent Dreyer
Eric and Anna Wareham	Aurelio and Maria Castillo	
Lisbeth Claus and Robert Hector	Judy Lowery	

Thank you to our most recent donors to the **Historic Podium Plaque Program—**

The Robert and Marilyn Dedrick Family	Ellen DeGeorge
Charles and Sandy Lobdell	Mary Ann Woodard Miles
(Joining Walter Pelett, and Edward “Jack” and Frances Geer)	

This very exciting project has earned so much community support.....we are always accepting donations for sponsorship of new plaques.

**We truly appreciate your support!!**

What's this street corner and why is it pictured here?? When you figure out where it is, watch that intersection for an exciting new addition!



Here is a hint!



**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!**