

Silverton Country Historical Society

Established in 1974

Over Forty Years of History in the Making



Museum and Office
428 South Water Street

The Silverton Recreation Center

Part 1

By Fred A. Parkinson

Editor's note: With this issue, we begin a three part series on the Silverton Recreation Center, a place for teens to gather during the 1950s.

On November 14, 1947 an open letter from the Silverton Junior Women's Club to local citizens was published on the front page of the *Silverton Appeal-Tribune*. Contained within the letter's 835 words was a plea to establish some kind of Recreation "Plant" for the young people of Silverton. After lamenting the lack of "good, clean fun" available, the letter asked: "How about a center where a skating rink, bowling allies (sic), duckpins, dancing, games of skill and other amusements might be maintained?"

Eventually a Silverton Recreation Association was formed, but it dealt exclusively with outdoor activities during the summer months. There was still a perceived need for a year round place where kids could go to get off the streets during their leisure time.

It's not known where the original concept for Silverton's recreation center originated, but, according to a January 4, 1949 newspaper article, it may have evolved through the efforts of long time Silverton residents Reber and Lora Allen. Several months earlier, in the August 27, 1948 edition of the *Silverton Appeal-Tribune*, an item appeared that stated: "Ted Tofte, former owner of the Oak street grocery has announced plans of opening a recreation center and confexionery (sic) in a new building to be built by Reber Allen on Oak Street adjoining the former Worden building." Tofte would operate the center with a partner, I. H. McDonald, the current owner of the Oak street grocery.

According to Tofte, the one story, pumice block building measuring 37 ½ x 64 feet would include a confectionary and soft drink counter, as well as games he hoped would be "a wholesome place for young people as well as old to spend their time."

Thus begins the story of the Silverton Recreation Center, "The Rec" or "The Rec Hall," as it came to be known. During its existence the center would have highs and lows, as well as two temporary closures and a constant change in ownership, having no fewer than seven owners during its twelve year run.

Welcome

Grand Opening

**Silverton's New, Modern
Recreation Center**

208 Oak Street

FRIDAY, JAN. 7th
at 3 p.m.

FREE COFFEE, DONUTS AND GIFTS

- ICE CREAM, CONFECTIONS
- LIGHT LUNCHES, MILKSHAKES
- FOUNTAIN SERVICE, WAFFLES
- 4 POOL TABLES
- 2 SNOOKER TABLES
- SHUFFLE BOARD
- BOOTHS

Open to young and old alike

E. T. Tofte and I. H. McDonald, Props.

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Curator's Corner

This has been one of the most exciting months that I have ever lived through. With the Homer Davenport Days and the eclipse the same weekend as the Silverton Art Fair, the museum was full of visitors. My usual Sunday afternoon of hosting is slow to say the least but not the two Sundays that I spent this month.



One of the most gratifying lesson learned from those who came to visit was how unique and beautiful our little town is and how gracious our people are to those from out of town. I want to share a couple of stories from those two Sundays. The first Sunday of the month I had people who were passing through Silverton and happened to stumble on the Homer Davenport celebration. Seeing our sign in the park they came over and were taken with the way that our history is told throughout the museum. Several times they would come back to find me to compliment the beautiful and well planned story of Silverton in every room. A huge thank you to all the volunteers who over time have made this such an inviting place to see

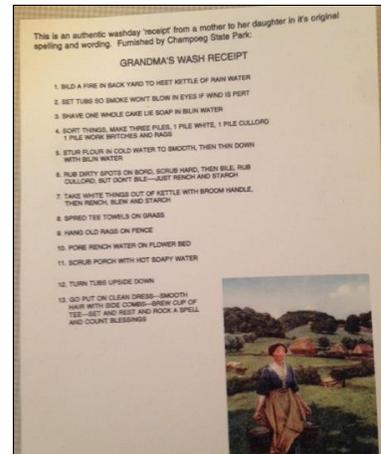
the history of our town. Just as they were leaving the gentleman said, and I quote: "There are other museums that are much larger and have more money that are not nearly as well planned out as this one."

My other Sunday to host was the weekend of the Art Fair. The town was buzzing because of the eclipse and the door to the museum hardly ever shut. The visitors were from all over and I had a wonderful time talking with them. One couple brought their small daughter in so that she could see what made Silverton Silverton. The father's family had immigrated from Italy soon after the war and he felt that it is very important to keep our history alive. Earlier in the afternoon I had two other visitors whose parents had also immigrated from Italy and they shared the same thoughts as well.

We do a wonderful job of keeping our history alive and for that I am very humbled by all the work that so many of you put into our museum. The cutest remarks of the day came when the little girl had to use the bathroom. They were in there for quite awhile and I was worried that she had gotten ill. Finally, they came out—and she asked me if I knew how to make soap. The Museum bathroom has a display of early 'housewife' chores and cleaning supplies and her father had explained to her that in the olden days the mother had to make her own soap. Where is the washing machine? She asked. The river, he said. We all laughed. But it gave him the chance to tell how his grandmother, who remained in Italy, had told him at a young age how she had to go to the river to wash the week's clothes, and then carry them up a hill to the house to hang out to dry. Wet clothes in a basket on top of her head. All I could say was that I will not be grumpy about the two loads of clothes I have to do tomorrow.



Judy Lowery



(Continued from Page 1)

The Silverton Recreation Center held its grand opening at 208 Oak Street on Friday, January 7, 1949. The facility featured four pool tables, two snooker tables, a shuffleboard set (provided by local entrepreneur Vic David), and a music box (jukebox), as well as booths for the enjoyment of ice cream, confections, light lunches, milk shakes, fountain service and waffles. Free coffee, donuts, and gifts were handed out at the event, which proved to be a huge success.

The Rec Center had double front doors flanked by large windows. Just inside, to left of the front doors, was a line of five booths. Each semicircular booth was large enough to seat six people comfortably, had a high back and featured a peanut shaped chrome table with a marbled linoleum top. Directly in front of the front door was a horseshoe shaped counter where food and beverages were prepared and served. Some people remember the Rec had the best French fries, as well as great cherry cokes. The pool tables, snooker tables and shuffleboard set were at the rear of the building. Pinball machines had been added to the mix of amusements by the mid-1950s.

The Rec Center did very little advertising, perhaps because it didn't need to due to the big crowds in the early days. Only four newspaper ads and one yearbook ad have been found. The first ad, published in the *Silverton Appeal-Tribune* on January 7, 1949, announced the grand opening of "Silverton's New, Modern Recreation Center." The following week, an ad was bought thanking the citizens of Silverton "for your Wonderful Response!" to the grand opening. During its first year in operation, the center took out an ad in the 1949 *Silvertonia*, the local high school yearbook. Other than these three initial ads, only two more newspaper ads have turned up. They both announced the change in the Recreation Center's management, first to the Sherk and then to the Tellefson families. After 1951, no further ads have been found.

The Rec Center had been in business for only one year and three months when the first ownership change occurred in March 1950. Ted Tofte (I. H. McDonald having sold his interest in the center to Tofte four months earlier) sold the business to Mr. and Mrs. Leon Sherk of Portland. It's not known what changes, if any, were made to the business.

The Rec was a fun place to hang out. A group of kids would often go there with their guitars to hang out, gathered around a bench at the end of the row of booths, strumming and singing along. One day, a group of kids were at their usual place when an older guy named Johnny Duncan approached them and asked if he could play guitar with them. The kids were young and hadn't been playing the guitar for very long and so were very impressed with how well Johnny could play and sing. Johnny Duncan went on to become a well-known country singer.

In June 1951, after a two week closure, the Rec Center was sold again. The June 29, 1951 *Silverton Appeal-Tribune* reported that the center had been sold to Mr. and Mrs. Hobart Tellefson of Sweet Home, Oregon. For those keeping score, as of June 1951, the Rec had been in operation for only two and a half years and was about to have its third different owner. A frequent change in ownership would continue to plague the Silverton Recreation Center for its entire existence. As it turned out, Hobart and Edith Tellefson would end up having the longest tenure of any Rec Center owner at three years, six months.

*(Continued on Page 5)*

Homer Davenport Community Festival—2017

In spite of some extraordinarily hot weather, the SCHS Dime Toss booth was a great success. Please keep us in mind next year when we ask for volunteers. You will not be sorry!



All set up and ready to go!



Controlling the crowds!



This young lady tried dime after dime to win this teapot. As her supply finally ran out, she reluctantly started to step away—only to find a dime on the ground. She tossed it...and, “clink”—she won it!!! You should have heard the cheers!!



Go ahead, give it a try.



These two had a great time!

Also featured — the display of the 2017 Cartoon Contest entries; the four recently acquired original Homer Davenport cartoons; and two of the Historical Society’s new “Podium Plaques.”



Bob and Marilyn Dedrick stand next to their sponsored plaque of Eugene Field School.



Oregon State Senator Lew Frederick (D-Portland) views an original Homer Davenport cartoon, at the opening reception of the 2017 Homer Davenport International Cartoon Contest during the Homer Davenport Community Festival. Senator Frederick was joined as a Cartoon Contest Judge by Dr. David Lewis and State Representative Rick Lewis (R-Silverton). For more information go to: <https://www.facebook.com/davenportdays/>

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Playing pool was one of the primary activities at the Rec. One day, a young patron of the center was playing pool by himself when a small group of older men came in. They were probably in their forties. They challenged the kid to a game of pool, which he accepted. The boy beat them handily. No money was given to the winner. However, the loser did pay to play the game which in those days was charged by the minute. The center charged 1¢ per minute of table time. There was a two minute grace period so that if a game took twelve minutes to play, the charge would still be 10¢, but at thirteen minutes the charge would be 15¢. Needless to say, the young boy, who was only fourteen years old, had the supreme satisfaction of getting a free game of pool after having bested people more than twice his age, a vivid memory the now senior citizen has held for more than sixty years.

Part 2 to be continued in the next issue of the Newsletter.....

These latest plaques will be installed soon! Look for them around town....



Thank you to Edward (Jack) and Frances Geer, Mrs. Doug DeGeorge, the Robert and Marilyn Dedrick family, and Mary Ann Woodard Miles.

Welcome our latest addition to Museum Publications—
Silverton Power Women!



Featured are Silverton's own Flora Davenport, Polly Coon-Price, Eva Coolidge, Flora Hoblitt, Zetta Schlador and Helen Kleeb. Each card features a photograph and brief biography. For now the cards are available at the Museum but will soon be at locations around town.



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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—

Bill Kleeman	Norma Halseth	Carolyn Simmons
Beth Negrey	Richard Engeman	Susy Riches
Bob and Donna Eberle	Ed and Karen McKenzie	
John and Carmen Smith	Charlotte and Carolyn Mueller	

And thank you to Mylrea Estell for her contribution toward the framing of the recently added original Homer Davenport Cartoons.

We truly appreciate your support!!

SCHS Picnic

Coolidge-McClaine Park

Rain or shine—Look for our sign

Saturday, September 9, 2017

Noon—till we're done!

Plates, eating utensils and beverages provided.

Just bring your favorite dish or two and share in the fun.



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!