

# Silverton Country Historical Society

Established in 1974

Over Forty Years of History in the Making



Museum and Office  
428 South Water Street

In this issue of the newsletter we are beginning a three-part series on Silverton’s Air Circus in 1929. You will want to make sure your dues are current so you won’t miss a word!

## The Circus Comes to Silverton, The Air Circus That Is.....

Part 1

By Fred A. Parkinson

“Five Ring Circus Positively Coming” announced a headline on the front page of the August 19, 1927 *Silverton Tribune*. Young children undoubtedly daydreamed about the circus coming to town as they envisioned the rare white elephant appearing during the unprecedented five-ring circus. Perhaps the kids imagined performing the same incredible feats as the lion-tamer, gymnasts, or high-wire artists. Or, perhaps they fantasized at the many zebras, camels, horses, and other animals scheduled to perform their intricate routines. Although most adults also eagerly anticipated the arrival of the circus, they were just as thrilled by the large banner headline emblazoned across top of the front page.

While the traditional circus was indeed coming to nearby Salem, the larger headline in the *Tribune* proclaimed: “Silverton Will be “Up-in-the-Air” Sunday.” The “circus” Silvertonians went to see on that summer day was actually Silverton’s first Air Circus, which took place on Sunday, August 21, 1927. Enthusiastic families rode or walked to the spacious open field at the northwest edge of Silverton for the event. However, instead of filing into a huge tent to be “under the big top,” spectators were urged to “look up.”

It was the “golden age of aviation,” the period between the end of WWI in 1918 and the beginning of WWII in 1939; an era made possible, in part, by an abundance of inexpensive surplus WWI aircraft. The period was driven by lucrative prize money for competitive air racing, as well as for various record-breaking aeronautical “firsts.” This era also produced the familiar “barnstorming” pilot, those intrepid “birdmen” who traveled around the country demonstrating their aerial prowess.

Exactly three months to the day before the air circus, Charles Lindbergh landed in Paris, as the first pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic. Thirteen months later, Amelia Earhart would gain lasting fame as the first woman to ride in an airplane across the same ocean. Luminaries such as these were the rock stars of the time.

Numerous airfields, many sponsored by local American Legion posts, were established around the United States during this period to take advantage of the developing world of aviation. In Silverton, this effort was spearheaded by the Legion’s Delbert Reeves Post Number 7. The August 5, 1927, *Silverton Appeal* recounted: “Thus far the American Legion Post in this city is the only active post in the state of Oregon to manifest sufficient interest in the future of aviation to provide a standard aviation field.” Silverton became one of the first small cities in Oregon to establish a landing field for air travel use as the American Legion put considerable funds into the project with the expectation that it would prove to be “a big asset to the city.”

## SILVERTON'S

### FIRST AIR CIRCUS

**SUNDAY, AUG. 21**

Sunday, August 21, Silverton, Oregon, is going to hold its first air circus. Planes from different parts of Oregon and Washington will take part in this carnival. A parachute jump, wing walking, air races and stunt flying will be part of the day's entertainment. An invitation is extended everyone to attend. Free airplane rides to those holding the lucky numbers. Drawings every hour. Silverton is only one and a half hours drive from Portland. Take the main Pacific highway to Woodburn, then ten miles east.

PROGRAM STARTS 1 P. M.

Stunt Flying : Air Races : Thrills  
PARACHUTE JUMP

FREE AIRPLANE RIDES (EVERY HOUR)  
CITY SWIMMING POOL OPEN TO PUBLIC

Aviation Ball!

Grand aviation ball Saturday night in the Silverton armory. AL OWENS, formerly with VAC MEYERS BRUNSWICK ORCHESTRA and his eight masters, will furnish the music.

SUNDAY'S PROGRAM

- 1—40-mile race—OX 5 motors.
- 2—Dead stick landing contest.
- 3—Stunt flying.
- 4—10-mile race—OX 5 motors.
- 5—Parachute jump.
- 6—Wing walking.

Note to Pilots

All of the Oregon, Washington and the west are invited to take part in the circus. Free gas and oil for all ships—sleeping accommodations and meals afforded pilots. All ships may participate in passenger carrying with no field charge. Cash prizes and cups for each event.

SPONSORED BY  
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ADMISSION 25c

*Continued on Page 3*

## Curator's Corner

May has been a really busy time for the museum with school tours and painting. The reason I bring up the painting is because with two of the tours we had the painters working on the museum at the same time the students visited. It gave us many of those 'teachable moments'.

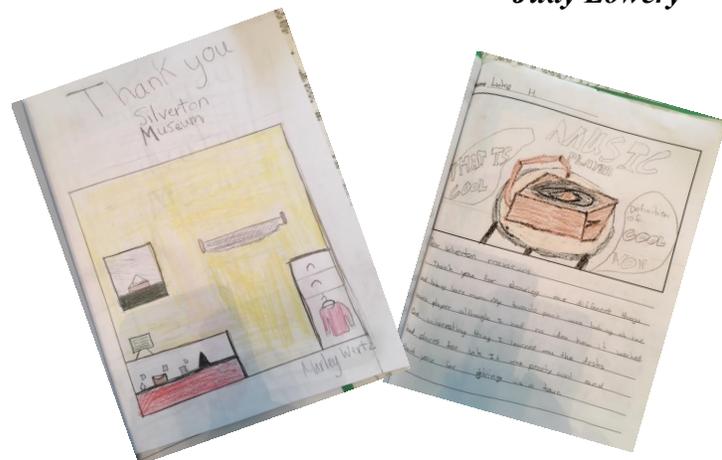


The first week of May we hosted the five classrooms of third grade students from Robert Frost School. The classes attending were: Mrs. Clum's with 25 students and 9 adults; Mrs. Amano's with 24 students and 9 adults; Mrs. Gilliam's 24 students and 9 adult; Mrs. Durschmidt's with 27 students and 9 adults and Mrs. Rosenblad's with 30 students and 12 adults. Those classes have put together booklets of 'thank you letters' which I have left out in the museum for visitors to enjoy. On Friday of that week, Mrs. Miller's class from Evergreen School brought her 20 students and chaperons for a morning tour. May 10<sup>th</sup> brought Cindy Ziesemer's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class from Victor Point School with 28 students and 9 adults. Then on Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> Dawn Roth brought the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from Pratum for a tour. There were 32 students with that tour and five adult chaperons.

All of the tours were enjoyable and we received so many compliments about the knowledge of the 'docents' as they guided the tours. I have to say that these tours could never be done without the help of our volunteers and the knowledge that each of them brings adds so much to each tour. This year each of the schools asked if it would be possible to have the observation post open and we were able to have that happen. I would like to mention those wonderful volunteers who helped to make these school tours so successful—they are: **Chris Schwab, Fred Parkinson, Ruth Kaser, Carolyn Hutton, Norm English, Tracy Duerst, Russ Gould**, and a special guest volunteer, **MaryAnn Miles**. MaryAnn 'manned' the observation post for the May 15<sup>th</sup> tour and was able to give an insight into her early remembrances of the post and the importance of knowing your history.

I am always so pleased to hear the comments from the students as they go through the museum, but the comments coming from the chaperons are the ones that I take to heart. Over and over again we heard, 'I will have to come back, there is just so much to see and so little time.' Yes, please do come back!

*Judy Lowery*



*Continued from Page 1*

Local Legion member Jop Morgan, a former US Army flyer, directed an aviation committee tasked with locating and purchasing a site for an airfield. A seventy-five-acre tract of land at the northwest edge of town, owned by long-time Silverton physician Dr. C.W. Keene, provided a suitable location for the airfield. After the site was purchased, American Legion members, under the supervision of Jop Morgan and Casper "Cap" Towe, worked hard to turn the land into a premier airfield. An account at the time reported: "It is the intention to have the field plowed and sown with golf green grass which is highly suitable to the safety of landing aeroplanes." Unfortunately, the airfield remained a dirt strip on the day of the air circus.

The 2,000-foot square field was designated a four-point landing field, which meant planes could land from any one of the four points of the compass. It became one of the finest airfields in the entire state by the time work on the field concluded. This effort received attention from Portland's Aero Club, which offered support for future aviation endeavors and helped provide flyers for the air circus.

The first air circus in Silverton coincided with the dedication of the American Legion airfield, as listed in the paper, "to the future of aviation in the state of Oregon." The primary sponsor of the event was the American Legion, with support from the local Chamber of Commerce and the Aero Club of Portland.



According to the *Silverton Appeal*, around thirty aviators spent Saturday and Sunday in Silverton. This group included many pilots from Pearson Airfield in Vancouver, Washington, as well as others from Portland and the Willamette Valley. Noteworthy in this group were brothers Tex and Dick Rankin, well-known Oregon aviators, and aerial "daredevil" Harold (or Fred) Groves of [Coeur d'Alene](#), Idaho. The out-of-town invitees boarded overnight at the homes of Legionnaires and other local residents. Many of them took their meals

at Cunninghams's Eat Shop on East Main Street.

A formation of planes toured the Willamette Valley Saturday afternoon, dropping leaflets to publicize the "Aviation Ball," a dance held at the Silverton Armory the night before the air circus with proceeds benefiting further development of the airfield. Music was provided by Al Owens and His Eight Masters.

**In Part 2 (the next newsletter)** pilots dazzle the crowd at Silverton's first Air Circus.

## Silverton's Newest Mural



Silverton muralist, Lori (Webb) Rodrigues, is working on a new mural which features Silverton photographer and conservationist, June Drake. The mural is located on the front of the Ames building, the former site of Larson and Flynn Insurance. Work started last year, but poor weather conditions delayed its finalizing till now. Once it is completed a dedication ceremony will be planned for later this summer.

Lori's painting serves to demonstrate the impact Drake had on our community by chronicling its story from the people and their daily activities to the establishment of Silver Falls State Park.

## Summer in Silverton 2018 Calendar Coming Events!

**Silverton Hills Strawberry Festival—Sunday, June 17, 2018 (Fathers’ Day)**  
Strawberries, entertainment and fun—\$6

**Second Annual Fisher Mill Music Fest—Saturday, July 21, 2018**  
At the Old Mill Park Amphitheater, behind the library parking lot on South Water Street. A great lineup of Bluegrass. Rock and Folk bands. All ages welcome, \$5 suggested donation. Food, beer wine and soft drinks will be available from local vendors. Bring the family for a picnic, bring your friends and a blanket or lawn chair and enjoy a warm summer afternoon and evening of great music beside Silver Creek!

**Historic Silver Falls Days, Silver Falls State Park—Saturday and Sunday, July 7th and 8th—from 10 am to 4 pm**  
Old-fashioned games, storytelling, historic displays and reenactments, antique logging demonstrations.

**Homer Davenport Community Festival—August 3,4,5**  
A celebration held in honor of all things Davenport and Silverton!  
Special attraction: **SCHS Dime toss Booth!!!**  
(We love your donations of unwanted glassware for this, our biggest fund raiser of the year—**and** of course it’s an unequaled opportunity to have a grand time tossing dimes to win valuable (?) items. Lots of fun—and your donations make it even better!)



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### Memorial Day 2018 event at Town Square Park Fallen Heroes Memorial

Two new names added to the existing monument.



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### Trivia questions taken from 1991-92 Senior English Class issue of Fox Tymes.

How well do you know Silverton? By Raggie Clites

Who are these streets named after?

Schlador, Drake, Barger, Welch, McCaine, Steelhammer, Keene

Zetta Schlador, Silverton’s first and only woman mayor; June Drake, our premier photographer and Fielding “Jake” McClaine, banker; George Steelhammer (probably) prominent druggist and business- man, Dr. Clarence Keene)

Excerpts from a recent donation of CCC Camp 611 Newsletters to our archives. Thank you. Gus Frederick!

## 611 TATTLER

Volume 1 / Number 4

Camp Silver Creek Falls - Wednesday, August 14, 1935

### CAMP IMPROVEMENTS REPIDLY(sic) NEARING COMPLETION UNDER GUIDANCE OF CAPT

Camp construction is rapidly nearing completion and Camp Silver Creek Falls is becoming the show camp of the district under the able leadership and supervision of Captain Stambaugh. In a recent inspection, Major Pillsbury of Vancouver Barracks, was very pleased with the appearance and cleanliness of the camp. The barracks particularly came in for praise from the inspector. The Captain says, "Let's keep up the good work."

Only a small amount of work remains to be done to finish the camp, and this is efficiently and rapidly being rushed to completion by Captain Stambaugh. He has, obtained plywood, batting, and other building materials for the interior work, and has plans, which when completed, will make of Company 611 one of the best in the district.

### PLYWOOD INTERIORS BEAUTIFY ROOMS

Sheets of plywood., strips of batting, four foot lengths of wainscoating, and gallons of varnish have transformed the interiors of the Mess and Rec Halls, Education Building, Office and Officers quarters into places of real beauty.

The general method used in all buildings, is to cover the lower walls with four foot lengths of double stripped wainscoating, then plywood from the top of that to the ceiling. Plywood is used in most of the rooms for ceilings, hiding the rafters and shingles. Three inch batting strips are then placed over the seams and cracks, and several coats of varnish applied as a finishing touch.

### COMPANY 611 TO HOLD DANCE IN SILVERTON ARMORY; FIRST ONE HELD OUT OF CAMP EXPENSE NECESSITATES CHANGE

The Silverton Armory will be the scene of Company 611's first out-of-camp dance here Friday night, Aug 16. Due to the large attendance expected, judging by the response to the company's first two free dances, held in camp, it was decided to rent the largest hall attainable. No decorations will be used. Because of the expense of renting the hall, paying for a city permit, and hiring the orchestra, it will not be possible to make this a free dance. A nominal charge of 25 cents for men, and 10 cents for women will be made for all who attend.

Ed Lain's 7 piece orchestra, the Silverton Eagles, has been secured and dancing is expected to last from 9 until after 12, unless attendance makes it possible to run an added half hour. Extra duty men from camp will be MPs, as no car parkers, table carriers, and decorators will be needed. Enough trucks to carry all men who buy tickets in camp will be furnished.

And from the "Rotogravure" page—





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*Celebrating Over 40 Years in the Community*

**WWW.SILVERTONMUSEUM.ORG**

**Thank you to our new and renewing members,  
our generous donors and to anyone who has  
given anonymously to the Museum or any of its projects.  
You're the best!!—**

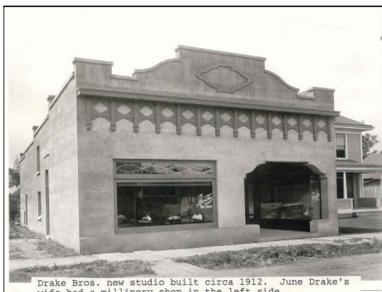
Carol Rickard	Nancy Korda	Patti Linduist
Bill Predeek	Jan Foraker	Susy Riches
Tracy Duerst	Gus Frederick	Diane Roubal
Citizen's Bank	Margo Drake Walker	Dave Laycock

**We are so grateful for the support of all our members and donors!!**

And thank you to Judy's Party for a grant to help us archivally frame our Digerness cartoons!

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

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Drake Bros. new studio built circa 1912. June Drake's wife had a millinery shop in the left side

**Pictured here is a photograph of June Drake's studio on N. Water Street. You can contact us about sponsoring this image, or any of the others that we are considering, on one of our Historic Pedestals that you have seen around town. This is a fantastic way to play a role in preserving Silverton's history. (Eight more plaques are being planned—donors welcome!)**

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