

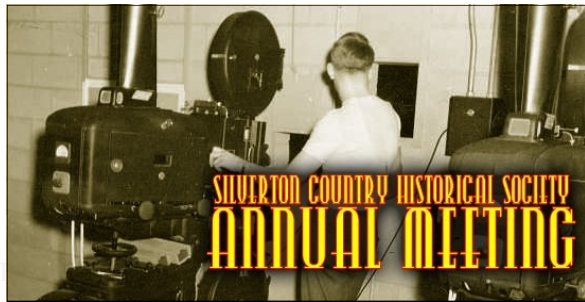
Silverton Country Historical Society

Established in 1974

Over Forty-five Years of History in the Making



*Museum and Office
428 South Water Street*



Saturday, January 18, 2020
1 to 3pm
Silverton Senior Center

The Society's Annual Meeting is a good way to become familiar with the goals and activities of the Silverton Country Historical Society. This year, we return to the Silverton Senior Center, 115 Westfield Street.

The first part of the meeting will be the business portion with reports on membership, finances and election of new officers and board members, as well as updates on Society projects

The program this year will be a showing of two classic Silverton-produced movies from the Roaring Twenties, as well as some other more recent films. Relive the excitement of the movie magic as our town's past is revealed in motion, as well as some surprise features from the community. The films will be projected on the screen in the Silverton Senior Center's Great Room, with audio comprised of period popular music.

You don't need to be a member to attend and enjoy, but...you can be a part of this marvelous Museum and show your support. Membership forms will be on hand. And following the program there will be refreshments and time to visit. **We hope to see you there!**

If you have questions, please call us at 503-873-7070, e-mail us at silverton.museum@live.com, or contact any of our current board members.

Slate of Officers presented for election for 2020--2022

- President—Gus Frederick
- Vice-President—Fred Parkinson
- Secretary—Chris Schwab
- Treasurer—Tracy Duerst

Board Members presented for election, 2020-2022

- Nicholas Coffey
- Russ Gould

Mysteries at the Museum

By Fred A. Parkinson

“The historic document is dated March 21, 1916. It contains two 8 ½ x 13-inch sheets of paper and two 8 ½ x 7-inch sheets that are clipped inside a 9 x 14-inch brown document cover. The fragile pages are buff-colored with age since they are just over one-hundred years old. They contain a list of names with a dollar amount beside each. It has been folded into quarters like a legal document, although it is not one. However, these remarkable pages could be considered one of the most important documents in the town’s economic history. The town’s success would have certainly been much different in the early twentieth century if the document had never been created.”

This is what an introduction to Silverton history might have been like if it had been featured on the Travel Channel program *Mysteries at the Museum*. The show profiles several historic artifacts per episode by giving a physical description of the item and then delving into its backstory.

Since Silverton’s founding in 1854, the town’s economy had been agriculturally based, bolstered in 1880 by the arrival of the railroad that allowed convenient shipping of goods. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the economy slowly shifted from being agriculturally based to having timber play an increasingly significant role in the community. This was due in large part to the close proximity of both the railroad for shipping and timber for harvesting. As the forests of the Northwest (what we now know as the upper Midwest) were logged off, lumber companies shifted their efforts to the unharvested forests of the Pacific Northwest. Since Silverton’s founding, there had been a few small lumber mills in the Silverton area. The first large-scale lumber mill in Silverton, the Silverton Lumber Company, began operations in 1907 on property at the north end of Mill Street. By 1913 the company employed around 300 men at the mill and logging camps.

In 1912 a new company, that would become three times larger than the Silverton Lumber Company, was incorporated as the Silver Falls Timber Company (SFTC), with headquarters in Portland. The company harvested timber and then sent logs to facilities throughout the Willamette Valley for milling. In 1913 operations moved to the Silverton area and by 1916 the firm had decided to site a new mill at Silverton. Like large companies today that look for business concessions from the local community, the Silver Falls Timber Company sought certain things as well, namely construction of a paved road into the mill site located northeast of the Silverton Lumber Company, and also certain water rights for the property. These issues were soon worked out with the City.



The local Commercial Club (the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce) set up a committee to interact with the company to discuss matters concerning the new lumber mill. The committee was comprised of George Hubbs, chairman, C. W. Keene, L. H. Fischer, E.S. Porter and Attorney, Custer E. Ross. The purchase price for the mill site soon evolved as a point of contention. The 143-acre tract just north of Silverton was owned by J. Wolfard & Co., a prominent general merchandise business in Silverton. The asking price was \$225 per acre, but the SFTC was only willing to pay \$200 per acre for the land. An evening meeting of the Commercial Club was held on March 21, 1916 at which time the difference in price was announced.

Members of the club soon stepped up to pledge the difference between the asking and purchase prices, a deal finalized when John Wolfard lowered the asking price to \$215 per acre.

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A list was written up from which a typewritten sheet was prepared showing names and amounts of the initial pledges. The sheet was titled: **Silverton, Oregon, March 21st, 1916. SUBSCRIPTIONS to deficiency fund in Mill site deal between the Silver Falls Timber Co. and J. Wolfard and Co.** In an extraordinary display of community spirit, and even though he had reduced the purchase price for the property, John Wolfard contributed \$500 to the fund, a huge amount at the time. Other large contributors included Coolidge and McClaine (\$500), People's Bank (\$200), Fischers Mill (\$200), and Sam Ames (\$100). For reference, \$1 in 1916 is worth \$24.39 in 2019 dollars, so John Wolfard's initial contribution was worth the equivalent of \$12,195 in today's dollars. Other contributors included a who's who of the Silverton business community including P. L. Brown, Julius Alm, M. G. Cooley, G. W. Steelhammer, A. Wolf and Son, R.E. Kleinsorge and A. W. Simmons. More subscribers were soon added to the initial list, many of whom pledged \$5, worth over \$120 in today's dollars.

While the effort made by the business community was substantial, the deficiency fund subscribers knew it would be well worth it to bring a business to Silverton that was willing to construct a \$400,000 sawmill and then employ 350 to 500 men at the mill, with another 350 to 400 men working in the logging camps to supply the mill. The Silver Falls Timber Company mill began operations in March 1917, becoming the largest employer in town and turning out 225,000 feet of lumber during a ten hour shift.



The first thirty years of the twentieth century, and especially the period between 1915 and 1929, were economic boom times in Silverton, spurred on by the presence of the two mills. As a result of increased economic activity, many substantial commercial and government buildings that still exist today were built during this time. These include the Armory (now Community Center), City Hall, and the Hubbs (Hartman) Building on South Water Street, the Inman Building at the corner of Oak and North First, the Worden Building at Oak and North Water, the new Coolidge and McClaine Bank (Citizen's Bank) building on East Main Street, and the Masonic Lodge at East Main and North First Streets. This era also saw an influx of immigrants to the Silverton area,

arriving primarily from Scandinavian countries, especially Norway, by way of the upper Midwest. Many of these new Silvertonians would ultimately find work at the mills. This influx of new residents led to a tremendous home building surge, resulting in the construction of numerous craftsman bungalows, especially in those neighborhoods adjacent to the mills. By the mid-1920s, the population of Silverton had risen from 1,200 in 1905 to 4,000 in 1924. To accommodate this expansive growth, improvements to the local infrastructure were undertaken. These included paving many streets, upgrading bridges, and modernizing water and sewer systems.

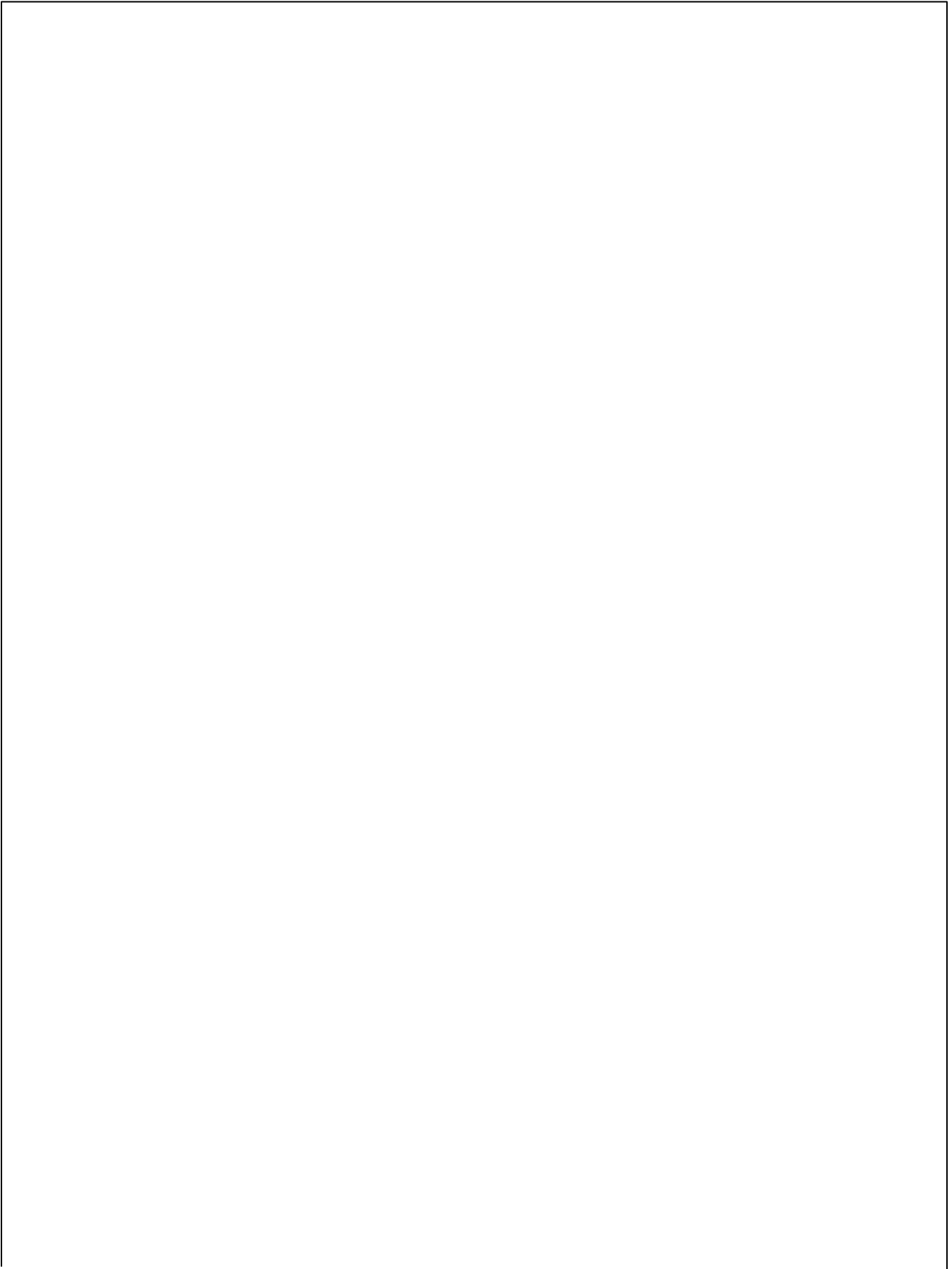
And, as the host of *Mysteries at the Museum* might say at the end of a segment on Silverton.....

“From an agricultural market based economy to an industrialized lumber town, the little community of Silverton enjoyed a brisk economy during the first part of the twentieth century. An important catalyst to this prosperity was a group of businessmen who put up their hard earned cash to ensure their city’s future. The historic document detailing this event, complete with signatures of some of Silverton’s early prominent citizens, is available for viewing in a research file at the Silverton Country Historical Society Museum, located in Silverton, Oregon.”

Now all we need is for someone to film the segment!

Dear members: we have been gradually transitioning our membership due dates so that they will all be up for renewal at the first of each year. (The advantage for you is, that several memberships have gotten an extra month or two!) Hopefully, this will not cause confusion....it will certainly make it easier for us (and hopefully, you) to keep track of our memberships. Please call us with your questions: 503-873-7070.

And as always, we are so very grateful to all of you for your support!





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SILVERTON.MUSEUM@LIVE.COM

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!!

Diane Hill	Susan Meyer Morgan	Bill Kleeman
Jane Jones	Carol Rickard	Candace Pressnall
Emily Komyate	Charles and Judy Traaen	Daniel Froehlich
Carrie Caster	Vicki Griggs	Fred Parkinson
Christopher Davie	Betty Layne	
Bob and Marilyn Dedrick	Walt and Pamela Pelett	

In Memory of Doris Hartley:

Carol Hartley Dale Miller Gayle Oneil Judith Richardson

In Memory of Delora Guyer:

Ron and Jane Jones

Your S.C.H.S. Board

Victor Madge	President
Norm English	Past-Pres.
Gus Frederick	Vice-Pres.
Chris Schwab	Secretary
Tracy Duerst	Treasurer
Judy Lowery	Curator
Kathy Hunter	Membership
Fred Parkinson	
Ruth Kaser	
Corey Christensen	
Russ Gould	

Coming January 24 through April 18 - Willamette Heritage Invitational Event



Join the Club!

The exhibit will focus on the history of clubs and social organizations in the Mid-Willamette Valley. From fraternal organizations, to service groups to kid's associations — clubs help shape our identity, widen our network and form community.

SCHS will again be participating!

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