

Silverton Country Historical Society

Established in 1974

Over Forty-five Years of History in the Making



Museum and Office
428 South Water Street

Moved Three Times.....and Still Standing!

By Fred A. Parkinson

Polly Lavinia Crandall Coon Price is generally acknowledged as the “Founding Mother” of Silverton. Born in 1825 and married to teacher Thomas Coon in 1845, she arrived in Silverton with her young daughter in 1852. Her husband, who had preceded her to Oregon, took out a donation land claim that included the current business core of Silverton. After Coon’s death in 1854, Polly had a portion of the claim surveyed to form the initial fourteen-block plat of what would come to be called Silverton.

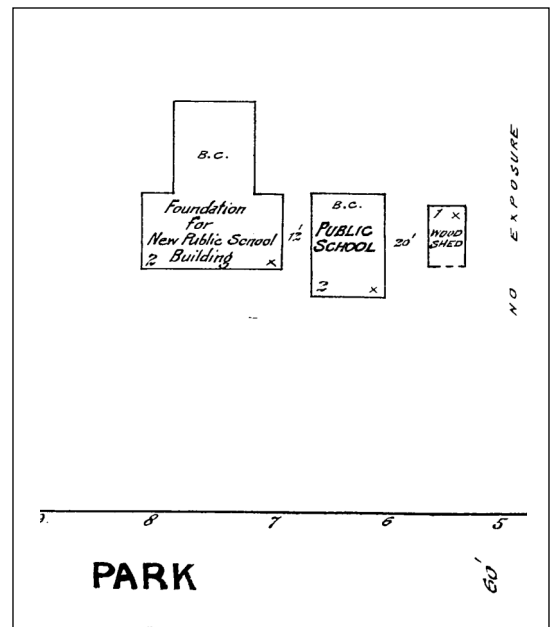
A piece of property is situated at the north end of the Thomas Coon claim, just north of downtown Silverton that has a unique history associated with it. This block is currently defined by “A” Street, North First Street, Park Street, and North Water Streets. Up until 2019, when the venerable Eugene Field School was razed, a Silverton school had occupied that lot for over 150 years.

In 1862, a two-room, two-story, wood frame schoolhouse was built in the south half of the block. It wasn’t the first school building in Silverton, however. Three other buildings, long since gone, were used for school facilities prior to 1862. The first was near the end of North Water Street at Grant. The second was located near the site of the current Palace Theater on Oak Street and the third was located on the site of the current Twilight Court Apartments down South Water Street just past Adams Avenue.

As the years rolled by, Silverton added more students, indicating a need for additional school facilities. In 1890, this need led to the erection of a new six-room, two-story public school. The August 1890 Sanborn Map depicts a “Foundation for New Public School Building” located next to the 1862 school building.

After the new public school was completed, J. K. Buff, flamboyant teacher and house mover, relocated the old schoolhouse to the N. E. corner of North First and Park Streets, a distance of 170 feet, as shown on the May 1892 Sanborn map. This is the site of the First Christian Church today. This would be the first of three moves for the old school building, which had been purchased by the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) as their meeting hall. The newly built public school remained in use well into the twentieth century.

Silverton’s need for additional classrooms continued to grow in the early years of the twentieth century. A dedicated high school building was built in 1907 on the N.E. corner of North First and



Curator's Corner

Last week several issues of the Silverton Appeal Tribune arrived at the museum. Chris had been contacted by a gentleman, Nick Peetz from Clarksville Tennessee, asking if we were interested in them; after saying yes, he sent them. Many of those issues Chris has used in the Veterans display currently at the museum. The issues are several from 1942 and 1943, and after going through them I found that two of the 1943 issues were ones that we were missing in our collection, so I was a very happy camper. I want to share some of the 'happenings' from October 1942 and October 1943, just a mere 78 and 77 years ago. The headlines on the front page of both issues are about the Bond Drive during the war. The October 9, 1942 issues headline I found amazing since it showed just how successful our small community and that of Mt. Angel were in that drive. Being an historian, sort of, I knew how much the government relied on the sale of War Bonds, but the amount pledged in our small of Silverton was \$75,752.75 (Mt. Angel pledged \$8, 568.75). The total for Marion County was \$225,321.50. Those of you who are good at math will probably be able to adjust that to today's value. The best that I could find is that \$100.00 would equal what \$1600.00 is in today's dollar. For the effort of the KOIN Victory bond harvest the town was gifted with a celebration, parade and visiting celebrates. The article gives credit to those who directed the drive with a special shout out to 'Dr. Loar for his untiring effort in soliciting pledges among the rural people.'



The headline for the October 8, 1943 was again about the war bond sales which reached \$621,000.00. This drive did not bring a huge celebration to Silverton as the previous year had and the small article noted that accompanied the head line read: 'Final figures in Silverton's Third War Loan drive obtained this week totaled \$621,593 Jack Spencer, city chairman, revealed.' It goes on the say: 'Actual sales made in the community amounted to \$316,000 or \$76,000.00 over the quota of \$240,000.00'. The difference was made up by the utilities operating in Silverton. Even though a world war was raging around the globe things still continued to move along in a more normal way.



On the same front page was a much longer article, actually almost four times longer, about **Fall Hunting Season Soon in Full Swing**. Since there was gasoline rationing and acute shortage of ammunition plus general shortages of all sorts, there were some 'clouds' on the horizon for the opening of hunting season in Oregon. Hunters would be have to be satisfied to hunt deer in the coast range and they did open up the Tillamook burn area which had been

closed to hunting for several years. Those who hunt deer probably know that many folks from our area like to hunt in the Central and Eastern part of the state, however those areas were closed to hunters due to military maneuvers. Remember, gas rationing also played a huge role in how far one could travel to hunt. We are a resilient people--just as life moved along in Silverton during the Second World War, we also try on a daily basis to continue to move along during these times and make the most of our daily lives. Stay safe everyone.

Judy Lowery

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Park Streets. Construction of the new high school could not begin, however, until something was done with the 1862 schoolhouse that had been moved to the build site fifteen years earlier and was currently owned by the GAR. The hall subsequently made its second move, finishing up at the east end of High Street, to sit perpendicular to Third Street.

A new high school building was built in 1915 just to the north of the current high school on the east side of North First Street, leaving the old high school to become the junior high school.

So, by 1921, Silverton had three public schools in operation, creating an “Education Campus” straddling North First Street near downtown. These schools included the 1890 Elementary, the 1907 Junior High, and the 1915 High Schools. Perhaps to keep everything straight, in January 1922, two of the three schools were given names of famous literary figures. The elementary school became the Emerson School, named after Ralph Waldo Emerson and the junior high became the Washington Irving School. For some reason, the 1915 High School was not renamed, probably because it was simply known as Silverton High School.

This came at a time when, once again, more school rooms were needed in the rapidly growing community of Silverton. The situation eased somewhat in 1921 when a new one-story elementary school, soon to be named Eugene Field School, was planned for the big lot where Emerson School was located. Before construction began, Emerson School, which would continue to operate as a school, was moved to the extreme N.E. corner of the block, at the corner of North First and “A” streets. Unfortunately, in late December 1924, Emerson School burned to the ground in a spectacular blaze. Fighting the fire was hampered by freezing temperatures, rendering fire hydrants unusable.

Meanwhile, the trusty old 1862 school building that had stood at the end of High Street since 1907 was preparing for its third and final move. The lot on which the building resided was soon to be the site of a planned Knights of Pythias Hall. Once again, the old school would have to be moved to allow new construction. The Pythians purchased the building from the GAR and subsequently sold it to the Royal Neighbors of America. The June 16, 1922 *Silverton Appeal* described a change of ownership of the old school building by reporting: “The Royal Neighbor Club has bought the G. A. R. hall and are (sic) having it moved onto the Baxter lot nearby its present location. The hall will be remodeled and used for a lodge hall.” This third and final move was a short one of only about twenty feet to the adjacent lot. It was noteworthy, however, because, in addition to being relocated, the building was also rotated 90 degrees to sit parallel to Third Street where the Street turned into essentially a one lane road.



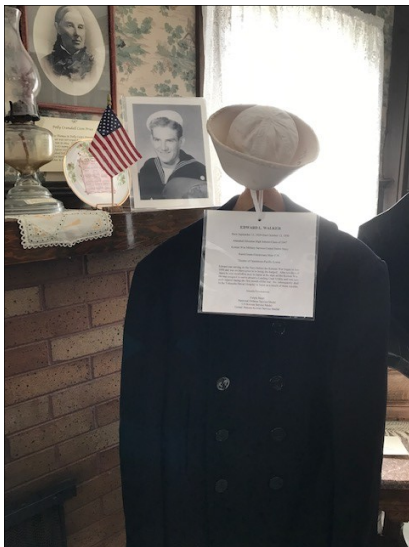
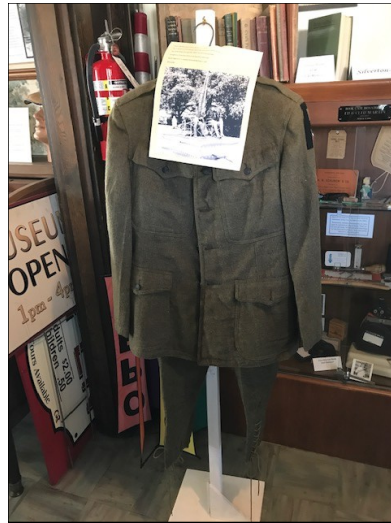
And there the old schoolhouse rests today, perhaps showing its age, tucked away on one of the few gravel streets left near the original fourteen-block Silverton town plat. Until at least the late-1950s, the building served as the Royal Neighbors of America hall, with large “RNA” Letters painted under the gable above the south entrance. Since then, it has remained a meeting place for various organizations. If the durable old schoolhouse can withstand three different moves, the last occurring close to 100 years ago, there’s a good chance the oldest building still standing in Silverton will last for many more years and will perhaps have a new lease on life in the future.

The Museum will remain open until Veterans’ Day, November 15, 2020. We will then close for the season, with plans to open up again in February or March of 2021. Stay healthy, everyone, and we hope to see you then!

Honoring Those Who Served

Every year for Veterans Day, we set up a display of uniforms that have been donated to the Historical Society. The large share of this collection is made up of uniforms worn by Silverton men and women who served during war time. We are honored to have at least one uniform or part of a uniform of every branch of the service and a representation of the battles from WWI to Korea. Arranging this display is one of the most satisfying and moving exhibit we prepare. We also place items in the Living Room display case that reflect on our soldiers and the varied services.

This year we are featuring many of the large group photographs along with several individual or smaller groups that represent Those Who Served. We hope you will have an opportunity to visit us before we close After Veterans' Day.



Behind the Scenes at the Museum - Even in “Lockdown”

Most of you are aware that one of Judy’s main tasks as curator, is the receiving and cataloging of items newly donated to the museum—even in this unusual time of isolation. This is no easy task, by any means and maybe a little more difficult now. Every donation must be verified as to origin and age, evaluated for relevance to Silverton history, scrutinized for condition, and so on. And probably most importantly--considering if we have room for it. Then, the Board, acting on Judy’s recommendation, must approve or deny its accessioning. Recently, of course donations have been limited, but if approval is needed, Judy works with the Board via email.

Now that we have a computerized acquisitions program, each item is then photographed, and thoroughly described as it is entered into the database. There are several search parameters that are added to help us with the documentation as well. It’s time-consuming work, but very important.

Judy also has to assure that there are volunteers on hand to keep the museum open on Saturdays and Sundays so we can be able to welcome any visitors. There have been a few--and everyone has been understanding of the need to follow the coronavirus protocols. During a “normal” season, we also need extra volunteers to act as guides for school groups, organizations or family reunions. As expected, staffing the Museum has been more of a challenge lately as fewer people are available; but we are closing soon for the winter and our skeleton crew can take a much needed break.

And of course, there is the “Book.” The Book contains a collection of requests we get from individuals, groups, businesses, other museums, etc., by way of telephone, email, drop-ins, even gossip. Everything from helping find the history of a house, a family name, Silverton landmarks, a photograph, an old crime or just general curiosity about Silverton. Judy, with help from a dedicated group of very nosey people, will look through files, telephone books, old newspapers, history books, maps, scrapbooks—sometimes we are very successful, other times not so much. But we keep the requests on file because someday we will be looking for something else entirely and find what we were looking for weeks ago!

Then there is of course, the usual cleaning, arranging displays, organizing collections and maintaining resource materials.

So, as you can see, there is plenty to keep Curator and friends plenty busy, even in “lock down”.....

Palace Theater



Silverton residents were saddened recently to see this announcement on the marquee of our beloved local theater. Owners Stu Rasmussen and Roger Paulson have decided “with great sadness we must announce our withdrawal from the Silverton entertainment scene.” The historic Palace Theater in Silverton first opened in 1936, and was a 'state of the art' movie theatre--its original art deco period character has been an important part of Silverton history. Local residents have been sharing memories of the afternoons and evenings spent in this landmark building.

All may not be lost, however, as a local couple, Rachele and Erik Gonterman, have agreed to take over operations. They shared the following message to the town: “We have come to love the building, and downtown. When it started to become apparent that the theater was going to need new operators we decided we wanted the opportunity to be able to bring the Palace back from some long term neglect and go in a more community oriented direction. We are excited for this new venture.”

We most certainly wish them the best of luck!



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Celebrating Over 45 Years in the Community

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**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!!**

Herb and Bee Lay Gail and Bob Joseph
Molly Murphy Margo Drake Walker
Larry Thomas Nancy Rose

In memory of Doris Hartley - The Hartley Family



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

Chris, Judy and Fred (pictured before coronavirus
isolation), have been continuing to meet weekly to
make sure everything at the Museum is running
smoothly.

**(Remember membership renewals were all
due in January--
but it's not too late to renew!!)**

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