

# Silverton Country Historical Society

Established in 1974

Over Forty-five Years of History in the Making



Museum and Office  
428 South Water Street

## One Photo, A Different Post Office Corner

By Fred A. Parkinson

A photograph at our museum depicts four men in individual horse and buggies in front of a white frame building with a “Silverton Post Office” sign hanging over the wooden boardwalk in front.

“1911 Water + Oak sts (sic)” is handwritten in the lower left-hand corner of the photo to identify its location in Silverton. I’ve always liked this photo, but had never really thought about the description. I noticed the word “Oak” and had always thought about a similar wood-frame building that housed the Diggerness general store at the corner of Oak and North First Streets for many years that has long since been taken down.



I had occasion to examine the photo in more detail recently. There was something about it that gnawed at me. Something was just not sitting right. And then it hit me.... the photo has been misidentified as depicting the intersection of (North) Water and Oak Streets.

## Curator's Corner It Takes A Village

Over this last year I have really begun to truly understand that it really does take a village to keep things as normal as possible. As the collections manager for the museum I have been working along with Chris and Fred to keep things rolling along. People still ask for information about the town's history and the origins of their homes and much more. I do not know how we would be able to provide this help to folks if it not for the dedication of these two people. Now we are open for visitors as of the second week in April and I am very grateful for that, but it did mean that the museum would need to be tidied up a bit.



I had set a date for the 'cleaning crew' to come to help and once the date was set I had a slight medical issue and was not able to help. But because of the 'village' that supports our museum they went ahead and did all the heavy lifting.

Carolyn Hutton, Pam Lindholm Levy (who traveled from Portland to help), Ruth Kaser and of course Chris took on that task. These merry maids worked to make sure that when folks come to visit they will see sparkling display cases, clean floors, no cob webs which will make their visits pleasantly informative.



Every year Chris and I think of a new display for the large case in the living room. Last year we received a donation from Linda Hollin Zollner, the cousin of Kenneth Hollin. The donation was a collection of Ken's miniature furniture made from paper. We felt that this extraordinary collection should be one that needed to be on display. Chris asked Clara Feller, the daughter of Dan Feller a teacher at Silver Crest School and who is interested in history, to come and help put up the display. Once again, I was unable to help and was delighted that the two of them forged ahead and developed a beautiful display. Kenneth Hollin's furniture is on the first shelf and Mary Rulh Dodds doll houses are on the bottom shelf of that display case. I encourage everyone who is able to come and enjoy these two displays by such talented artists. Kenneth graduated from the University of Oregon in interior design and worked in California in that field. Mrs. Dodds was the wife of Dr. Norman Dodds and is also the artist that created the First Lady dolls that we have on display during election years.



As we open again, and hopefully are able to remain open for the public, I need to thank each of those who volunteer to host each weekend: Jack Hande, Carol Rickard, Carolyn Hutton, Pam Lindholm Levy, Fred Parkinson, Chris Schwab, Nellie Graves, Susan Morgan, Kathy Hunter, Linda McKay and Ruth Kaser. Also a big shout out to Gary Ohren our local maintenance man. Fred Parkinson has also been very busy building the museum a new computer that will update all of our information and has spent hours on that project. A huge thank you Fred.

Yes! It takes a village!

*Judy Lowery*

*Continued from Page 1*

### **One Photo, A Different Post Office Corner (Cont.)**

I decided to try and find the accurate location, not to prove a point, but, rather, to ensure accuracy for future researchers.

I don't know when the description was put on the photo, but it looks like it was written with a flair pen at some point and not written directly onto the negative, which would have made the writing appear white. I had no reason to believe the year the photo was taken was wrong. Accordingly, 1911 was my starting point in my research.

What was the corner of Water and Oak Streets like in 1911? It was one of the most prominent corners in town because of the Porter and Adams Opera House, built in 1905 and the largest building ever built in Silverton to that point in terms of its footprint. It covered the entire western third of the block bounded by N. Water, High, N. First, and Oak Streets. In addition to the central auditorium, numerous small businesses lined the ground floor on North Water and Oak Streets.

But what if the date written on the photo was wrong? To test this theory, the 1903 Sanborn map was consulted that showed no structures on that corner. It seemed inconceivable that the post office could be built after 1903, only to be taken down by 1905 to build the opera house, which we know definitely stood at that location from 1905 until 1935.

So, "Water and Oak" has been conclusively ruled out as the location shown in the photo. But where is the actual location?

I have studied many topics relating to Silverton history over the years, research that has been greatly enhanced by the Historical Society's acquisition of many years of hard copy Silverton newspapers. As a result of my journeys through history, I have retained several hundred newspaper articles that contributed to whatever I was researching, as well as finding other unrelated, yet fascinating, articles. Most of these articles find their way into museum files. It is within these secondary articles, one retained a few years ago and one retained recently, that reveal the correct location shown in the photo.

A March 24, 1950 *Silverton Appeal-Tribune* article, written by Ed Woare, details a brief history of Silverton Post Office locations. Ed Woare, as did June Drake, contributed numerous columns in the early 1950s to the paper dealing with Silverton history in the run-up to the 1954 centennial celebration. He stated: "Dr. A.F. Blackerby was postmaster later when the post office was at the corner of South Water and Lewis Streets where the OK welding shop is now." According to a 1950 Silverton phone book, the OK Rubber Welder's Shop was located at 113 South Water Street on that same corner. This article goes on to acknowledge the first two rural mail carriers, Reber Allen (who was named Postmaster in April 1911) and Will Moores. They were later joined by Wm. H. Town and Otto Buff on the rural mail delivery routes. Could the individuals pictured in the photo be these four men? At this point, we don't know.

A sign showing "Jones the Photographer" is clearly seen attached to the adjacent building at the far left of the photo. William Jones was an early Silverton photographer, pre-dating June Drake.

As with many older structures lost during the 1950s and 1960s, a vintage building at 109 South Water street was being dismantled, according to a July 31, 1959 article in the *Silverton Appeal-Tribune*. The article reported: "The roof is being torn off the ancient structure..... near the corner of South Water and Lewis Streets starting a complete dismantling job."

*Continued on Page 4*

*Continued from Page 3*

### One Photo, A Different Post Office Corner (Cont.)

In detailing the history of the building, the article stated that Jones had built a second story onto the building, owned by his father-in-law, T.R. Blackerby, to house his photography studio. This story implies the location of the photography gallery is right next to the Post Office location on South Water Street at the corner with Lewis Street.

Since there is written evidence that both the Jones Gallery and the Post Office were on South Water Street and photographic evidence that the two buildings were next to each other, I'm confident this photo depicts the N.E. corner of South Water and Lewis Streets and not the corner of (North) Water and Oak Streets.

It's not known why the wrong location was written on the photo. It could have been written years after the photo was taken by someone with a failing memory. Or, it could have just been a slip of the pen, so-to-speak. Regardless of the reason, it is incumbent on researchers to strive for historical accuracy and to correct wrong information when it's discovered, so researchers that follow won't perpetuate flawed information. For researchers like me, who have a special interest in historic Silverton architecture, accuracy matters.

Or, as others might say "Location, location, location."

### An Ice Storm Miracle

I don't know how many of you saw the devastation that was Coolidge-McClain Park a few weeks ago, but it was a sad sight for sure. So it was with trepidation that I ventured over to check the Leo Martin Rumely Fountain that has been undergoing a beautiful mosaic restoration over the last couple of years. The photo below on the left shows what I saw.....Fearfully, I went closer.....Unbelievably, that tree had draped itself over the fountain, missing every vital point! Also pictured below is the fountain today. A beautiful survivor of an incredibly destructive time.



### Marlin Hutton January 22, 1939—February 2, 2021



We are saddened to share the passing of Silverton native and Historical Society favorite, Marlin Hutton. This gentle giant was married to our Carolyn Hutton and what a wonderful pair they were. If we needed some creative photography work, Carolyn would set Marlin on it. There is evidence of his handiwork all through the museum. His sense of humor and dedication to Silverton's history will be sorely missed.

Carolyn and Marlin, with camera ever at the ready, at a Museum yard sale.

### More Photos From Our Main Display—



### Volunteer Hosts and Hostesses Needed

As we reopen for the 2021 season, please think of us as you consider volunteer opportunities. Our greatest need is people to help keep the museum open on the weekends throughout the summer—a shift is just *three hours, one weekend day a month*. No experience is required (we **do** provide some training, tho)...only an appreciation of Silverton and its history. And many resources are available to help you learn all you need about that history. Often visitors can provide many stories about Silverton’s past that we didn’t know!



Mainly it is an opportunity to meet interesting people, spend some time looking at wonderful old photographs, and, maybe most importantly, escape today’s world for a brief period! Think it over and give us a call at 503-873-7070 or email us at [silverton.museum@live.com](mailto:silverton.museum@live.com). We are on Facebook as well (Silverton Country Historical Society).

We’d love to have you join us!!



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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!!***

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**In Memory of Marlin Hutton** - Nancy Bleakney  
**In Memory of Jamea French** - Carmen and John Smith  
**For the Museum** - Edward "Jack" Geer  
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