

# Silverton Country Historical Society

Established in 1974

Over Forty-five Years of History in the Making



Museum and Office  
428 South Water Street

A bit of a refresher course.....

## Recalls the Early Start of Our City

By J.D. Drake

(Member Silverton Centennial Association and Local Historian)

Silverton Appeal-Tribune, November 20, 1953

As the people of Silverton become aware of the fact that we are going to hold a 100th anniversary here in Silverton in 1954, the question is asked, "Just what are we going to celebrate?"

Is the platting of Silverton, when we were incorporated, or what?

The celebration is to celebrate the meagre beginning of Silverton in 1854 when John Barger and his son-in-law, James Smith, build a burr-type flour mill on the north bank of Silver Creek at about what is now 410 South Water street.

At the same time E.M. Wait and a Mr. Holland built a small general store across the road from the mill in property where the Silverton Appeal-Tribune now stands. E.M. Wait succeeded in securing a post office on Nov. 16, 1[8]46, which was called Silver Creek.

The name of this post office was changed to Silverton, July 16, 1855, with Chas. Miller as postmaster.

About this time Polly Price Crandil (sic) platted a town site of 14 blocks on land taken up by Thomas L. Coon (Claim No. 63, Donation Certificate No. 3941, Settlement, Sept. 9, 1853) which was called Silverton. The plat was surveyed by T.W. Davenport, Homer Davenport's father. From this humble beginning Silverton fast became a trading center for the surrounding community.



Ai Coolidge in 1855 moved his two story store building to Silverton from Milford, two miles south, that had previously been established there. This building was placed at the southeast corner of Water and Main streets on lot no. 1 in block no. 1

which Mr. Coolidge had purchased for \$20.

From the above historical facts you see that Silverton actually began in 1854 but was not called Silverton until 1855.



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**Early Settlers Didn't Bother About Bridges**

By J.D. Drake

Silverton-Appeal Tribune, June 2, 1859

Before a settlement was started where Silverton now is, there were three fords used to cross Silver Creek, as there were no bridges on any of the streams in those pioneering days. Travel was a struggle in the winter and not too good in the summer. One of those fords was near the Geiser addition and was still used as late as 1911 or until the James street bridge was built....Another ford was in the back of the Drake Bros. studio, 303 N. Water street, and the third one was at the end of Oak street where Mack's pool hall now stands.

This ford is still quite visible on the west bank of Silver Creek. Many immigrant trains crossed these old fords. Both T.W. Davenport and Dr. Blackerby related to me stories of these crossings and I have seen the James street crossing used many times.

*Continued on Page 4*

## Curator's Corner

In the past we have received some outstanding accessions that connect our museum to the businesses and community services of the past and present. One such was a donation from Warren Levecke who has made it possible for our visitors to see the equipment that his wife, Audrey Levecke used as she worked at the Silverton Hospital as an anesthetist. Both she and her husband worked at the Silverton Hospital for almost 35 years.



Audrey began her work in Silverton in October of 1952. She had graduated from Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane, Washington as a nurse anesthetist and Silverton was one of the opportunities that opened up after graduation. Before that she had enrolled in the Army Nurse Cadet program. She then worked for a few years as a ward nurse before entering the program to become a nurse anesthetist. A rather 'cute' story is that her interview was conducted in Silverton's operating

room by Dr. Virgil Pettit and Board President 'Doc' Arthur Simmons, both of whom were wearing street clothes. I truly do not think that could ever happen in today's world.

Audrey retired in 1987 after serving her Silverton community and other small rural hospitals. Warren was the Chief of Laboratory Services and served as Silverton Blood Drawing Chairman for the Willamette Chapter of the Red Cross for over twenty-two years. Audrey had many funny stories about her time at the Silverton Hospital, many of them involving Ruth Barber who had served as the Hospital Superintendent. One was a story about Audrey having dinner with Ruth who asked her what she was going to do after dinner and Audrey replied that she was going to stop by the hospital to check on the schedule for the next day. Ruth told her "That's what I like about you. You're nosey, just like me!" Their friendship remained for many years.

When Audrey began working at the hospital in 1952 the hospital was still using the old, white ceramic vessels in the operating room and at the bedside. She worked to change over to the corrosion-resistant metal bedpans and basins which had been the norm elsewhere for many years. After having worked at Silverton Hospital for ten years she worked as a 'free-lance' nurse anesthetist at several hospitals for another twenty-five years. Recalling why she took a job at a small country hospital she said, 'it looked like it needed another mother, and I decided to stick around.' We are very grateful to her husband Warren for donating her equipment which gave me a chance to tell her story. Her display is in our 'doctor's room' upstairs in the museum. Please come and check it out.



*Judy Lowery*

**Remember — Volunteers are always needed...to help host at the Museum or to help with our Dime Toss Booth at the Homer Davenport Community Festival!**

**Give us a call at 503-873-7070**

### A Volunteer's Perspective Nellie Graves



Nellie is one of our most dedicated advocates here at the Museum. She has encouraged more people to visit the Museum and has probably singlehandedly brought in more new members than anyone else! She wanted to share this anecdote from her recent shift:

“I volunteer at the Silverton Museum on the fourth Saturday of the month. This past Saturday, April 24th, we had three young high school students from Aumsville come in to visit the museum. They were such nice young men, so interested in the history. They took pictures and they seemed to really enjoy it. I gave one of them the booklet, “When Silverton Was Young,” and told him to share it and maybe write a book report on it. It made me feel so good to see the interest they had in the history of Silverton. We do have some great kids growing up.”

And, thankyou Nellie—we have some great volunteers!!

### Historical Society Plans for the Summer



It appears the Homer Davenport Community Festival is a GO!!.....! We have continued to collect glassware for the dime toss the past several months, so we are more than ready.

In fact, as a bit of enticement, I must add that when Silverton Flower Shop retired, they gladly donated many decorative pieces that are perfect for carefully tossed dimes! See you there—August 6-8, 2021!



### Mary Ann Miles October 29, 1934—May 5, 2021

We were saddened to learn of the recent passing of Mary Ann Woodard Miles. Mary Ann lived most of her life in Silverton and was a SHS graduate in 1952. Active in her community, she also worked many years at Mark Twain and Robert Frost Schools. In the summer of 2015, she participated in a Willamette Heritage Center celebration along with other Historical Society members, sharing stories of their days at the local WWII Observation Post. Mary Ann also generously helped us remember the 1915 High School Building by donating for the installation of a commemorative history plaque. Our sincere condolences go out to her family: son Bill and daughters Patti Tischer and Tracy Duerst.



*Continued from Page 1*  
**Early Settlers Didn't Bother About Bridges**  
 By June Drake —*Continued*

One story concerning an incident that happened at one of these crossings was responsible for the naming of the stream. I have heard the story told since boyhood.

In the early days, a man riding horseback crossed the stream while the water was rather high and met with a catastrophe. It seems that his horse slipped and was swept off it's feet. Both horse and rider, after a hard struggle, made shore. This man was carrying a lot of silver coins in a saddle bag on the horn of his saddle which was swept away in the current. The silver was strewn along the stream.

After this incident, the stream was known as Silver Creek.

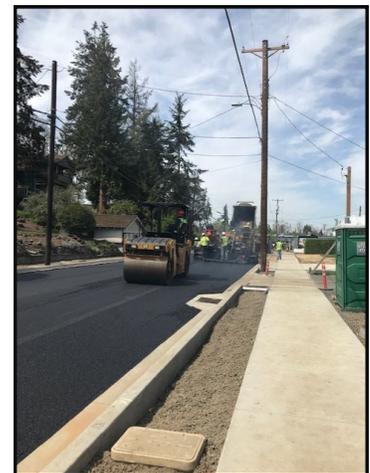
**The Silverton Appeal, Friday, December 23, 1910**  
**(From our so you think, times are bad now file.....)**

**Wild Rumors Do Injustice**  
**People Become Alarmed and Shun Silverton on Account of False Reports**

Rumors galore have been in the air in alarming quantities concerning smallpox in Silverton for several days, and the worst part of it is that they were not confined to local territory. Word has been passed all along the line that Silverton had been quarantined and no one allowed to either come or go. Just how this report received its start will probably never be known, but it was started just the same and was a great deal more contagious than the disease itself. Some have suggested that it was started by residents of other towns for the purpose of diverting trade from us to them.

This theory sounds rather harsh, but as a matter of fact this has been done to some extent whether on purpose or by accident. It has been reported that if a person goes to Portland and gives his address as Silverton on the hotel register he will be refused the hospitality usually accorded the public. If this be true it is about the silliest dope ever dealt out by anyone to anyone. Articles have appeared in both the Oregonian and Journal contradicting the quarantine story and if people were not continually looking for something bad about our town they could be better informed as to the facts in the case.

**McClaine Street Over the Years.....**



## A Silverton Love Letter

(Or what really makes me want to be an Historical Society volunteer)

I'm not from here. In fact, I like to say that I married into this family called "Silverton." So, even tho I feel like I've lived here all my life, I really haven't. And that is an important distinction in a small town like this. But I believe I'm *close* to being a native. My husband and his family and even their families grew up here. Not prominent families, mind you. But FROM here. Doesn't really matter if they were bankers or storeowners. People know you, when you are FROM here. They may treat the bank officer or business owner a little differently, but they still know who you are. And they know your parents and your aunts and uncles and most of your cousins. This makes for that thing they call community. I love it.



Anyway, even tho I am not from here, like I said, marrying into Silverton is close enough. I remember when we got engaged, the Appeal (the Apple Peel) published my picture, but the heading was "Cordell Schwab to Wed." 18-point type. Oh, yeah, they did mention me, like, in paragraph three. Stories like that were news in those days. Like "Mr. And Mrs. So and So are here from North Dakota visiting their nephew and his wife, Mr. And Mrs. Local Silvertonite. They arrived last Wednesday and will be staying through the 21<sup>st</sup>." Or how about, "Joe and Mary Smith sold their home on Center Street to David and Lucy Jones. The Smiths will be moving to Eugene where Joe Smith was transferred with the ODOT." Remember that stuff???

Even a short-timer like me has stories from when this little burg was REALLY little.

For example, once, shortly after we had moved here, I dropped off several letters at the old post office on North Water Street and walked the few blocks to my husband's office on South Water Street to say hello. As I walked in the door, he was just hanging up the phone. "The Post Office called," he said. "You need to go back and put more postage on those letters you just mailed."

Another time I was in line at the old Commercial Bank and the teller picked up the ringing phone. "Uh-huh," she said after glancing over her shoulder at the drive-up window, "Yeah, OK. I will. That all? OK. 'Bye.'" She then walked over to the pickup truck sitting at the window. "Bill, your wife called. She wants you to stop at the store on your way home and pick up some milk."

So, where was I going with this? Aha. Even tho I am not FROM here, I live here now—and have for over 40 years. I shop at the local Roth's and Safeway, I have overdue books at the library, I can't let a Thursday go by without reading the Appeal and I have to check Silverton Connections frequently. I love sitting on my porch and watching the fascinating array of people making their way to Homer Days or the Fine Art Festival. Or even just families strolling to the park. You might not know them...but somehow you do....

While Silverton is growing like crazy and it's getting harder and harder to recognize people who drive by when I go out walking in the evenings (maybe I should wear my glasses..), at its core, this small town is still just that. A wonderful, charming small town. I live here, love it here and I like to share why. (Even tho most of you who ARE from here know this stuff already...).



Now, while things like I recalled from my early days might not happen that often, other things do. Incredible things. Like the outpouring of support for a family that lost its home to fire. Like the car washes and spaghetti feeds to raise money for families facing serious illness or school field trips. Like being able to recognize the construction workers who make our main streets beautiful or the firefighters who work 20 hour days to protect us. Like the simple "Hello" you get from someone when you walk down the street or push a cart at the grocery store. At its heart this little 150 plus-year old town is still just a small town. Thank goodness.

*Chris Schwab (Old Timer Wanna-Be)*

***Silverton Country Historical Society Museum  
Open Saturday and Sundays, 1 to 4 pm***



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*Celebrating Over 45 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!!***

Sally and Mike Gauvin  
Diane Hill  
Nicole Parkinson Winnen  
Bruce and Paula Kaser

Janis Carroll  
Linda McClure Wiley  
Trish and Craig Jensen  
John Burke

**In Memory of Marlin Hutton**

Larry and Carol Zetterberg  
Pam Lindholm Levy

**For the Good of the Museum**

Jack Hande

**We are so grateful for the support of all our members and donors!!  
Remember: Membership renewals are all due December 31**



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