

Brooks Historical Society Newsletter

January 2015 Vol I

[http://www.oregonpioneers.com/marion/
BrooksHistoricalSociety.htm](http://www.oregonpioneers.com/marion/BrooksHistoricalSociety.htm)

MISSION STATEMENT

The objective of the Brooks Historical Society and Depot Museum is to educate and stimulate an interest in and knowledge of the history of Brooks, Oregon, and the surrounding areas.

Ghost Towns of the Brooks/Gervais Area

Did you, or some of your relatives live in a Brooks/Gervais area community that has long disappeared? On June 18, 2016, from 10 am to 3 pm, Brooks Historical Society will highlight the Ghost Towns of the Brooks/Gervais area. These are communities that have faded away as the major transportation routes changed from rivers, to railroads to roads, and as the economy changed in the area.

Members and the general public are welcome to join us for short presentations on Fairfield, Laurence/North

Howell, Deweyville, Pioneer, Parkersville, Waconda, St. Louis, and Skunkville. After the presentations, you will have an opportunity to look at our photos, newspaper clippings and articles, and add your own information.

There will be a potluck lunch at noon. We hope to be able to identify these forgotten communities with a sign at their location, in cooperation with Marion County Road department. For more information, contact Dorene at 503-393-2053

New References at the Museum

The **McIlwain family history** from Dan Groah

The **Schlechter family genealogy** back to the 1700's, available soon from Marilyn Schlechter Barner

Timeline of Oregon Counties Carl Barner provides a timeline of Oregon Counties . It visually shows how the Oregon Counties evolved from just a few to all 36 counties by 1916.



Fairfield School built 1857, picture taken 1956. *Photo from SPLHPC

Fairfield—Forgotten Town and River Landing

On the East side of the Willamette River, on a high bluff overlooking where the river channel is split by Grand Island was the location of Fairfield, Oregon. Consisting of landings on the lower level and eventually a town on the bluff, Fairfield was one of the first of many landings built along the banks of the Willamette to take the grain from French Prairie north to markets. The other landings were more temporary, were easily washed out by the floodwaters, and offered no storage. Champoege was the next most convenient spot to French Prairie but it was far to the north.

As early as 1836, retired employees of Dr. John McLoughlin, Hudson's Bay factor, built a rough



Site of Pioneer Catholic Church at Fairfield— * Pictures Courtesy of the Salem Public Library Historic Photographs Collections (SPLHPC)

Information from Oregon Historical Society publications, and the book Willamette Landings.

log church on a site that at least one authority asserts was the site of Fairfield in later times. The church was used only briefly, and then the center for worship transferred to St. Paul. Another rough church was built in 1872 but dismantled in the 1940's.

By 1865 there were eight blocks platted, each block with eight lots each. Fairfield had three stores, a saloon, a blacksmith shop and a cooperage. A store built in 1856 later served as the Fairfield Grange hall. There was a hotel, but it failed for lack of patronage. A school was built in 1857 but use was suspended in 1948 because the building was considered to have been unsafe. The Schoolhouse occupied three different sites during its 90 year life.

As Oregon City and Salem grew, and the roads were improved and some corduroyed, people relied more on roads to take them to the more populous cities. The railroads had come through French Prairie on the east in the 1870s, allowing other small towns to sprout up, such as Gervais. By the 1880's Fairfield's population lagged to 50. By 1910, the census reported 26 people in Fairfield. Wheat was beginning to be replaced with orchards, and sheep grazed where wheat fields had stood. The Oregon Electric Railroad was constructed, and more good roads for truck transportation were created.

On March 5, 1939, the town of Fairfield petitioned for vacation of the plat. Many of the buildings had already been moved for other uses, or torn down for use of their materials, or simply decayed on the spot. No buildings remain on the site.

Caboose Reference Library and Meeting Room Project

A private donor has offered an S & P caboose to BHS .

It has aging red siding, but the inside is modernized into a large room which would be suitable as a meeting



room and reference room for BHS members. The plan is to place it on a siding to the east of the Brooks Depot. The move will be difficult due to the size of the caboose, and its cupola and trucks (wheels) that may have to be removed before placing on a trailer.

If you would like to help lay track for the siding, or provide donations to offset the cost of the move, contact Dorene Standish.

Two BHS Members Honored at APMA Annual Meeting.

At the Antique Powerland Museum Association annual meeting, two BHS members were honored with letters of appreciation: Frank Cunningham for his volunteer work, particularly in clearing landscaping along the entrance road to Powerland, and to Dorene Standish for her work on the French Prairie Heritage Rose Garden and the Farmhouse project.

Our 2015 Year in Review:

BHS Celebration June 16, 2015

“French Families Live Through their Heirs” with presentations by descendants of French Pioneer families of our area, potluck lunch, and French-Canadian trapper music

Provided breakfast, lunch, drinks and snacks during the following Antique Powerland events: Branch 15 Swap meet, Steam-Up the last weekend of July and the first weekend of August, the Pacific NW Truck Show the third weekend in August, and Family Day in September.

Participated in the **Steam-Up Quilt Show** by raffling a quilt and having doll size quilts for sale.

Open for tours during scheduled events at Antique Powerland, and by appointment and on Saturdays from April through September from 10 am to 2 pm.

At the Brooks Historical Annual meeting on November 7

We honored Adele Egan for her contributions with a slide show, photo album, and cake. The 2016 elected officers are listed on the back page of this newsletter.



Adele Egan and her photo album

Brooks Historical Society

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Brooks Historical Society

Membership

Adult Member ----- \$15.00

Student Membership ----- \$ 5.00
(Elementary and High School)

Business Membership ----- \$35.00

Donation ----- \$_____

Name:

Address:

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Checks should be written to:

Brooks Historical Society

Mail to:

PO Box 9265

Brooks, OR 97305

Videos, Books, & Research Collections for

sale: Visit our website at [http://](http://www.oregonpioneers.com/marion/BrooksHistoricalSociety.htm)

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BHS Officers and Board

President - Louis Sowa

Vice-President - Dan Groah

Treasurer - Dorene Standish

Recording Secretary - Vicki Cunningham

Correspondence Secretary - Marilyn Barner

Board - Position 1- Bob Brown

Position 2- Leah Duda

Position 3- Frank Cunningham

Position 4 - June Gibson

Meetings

The Brooks Historical Society meets at the Brooks Depot Museum at 10 am the first Saturday of the month.

Directions to the museum at Antique Powerland:

From I-5 - take Exit 263 -- go west approx. 1/4 mile to: Antique Powerland, 3995 Brooklake Road, Brooks, OR 97303

Interested in Antique Powerland?

Visit antiquepowerland.com