

Brooks Historical Society Newsletter

July 2021

<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.

Check out the BHS
Facebook page.



Changes in Our Depot



In a recent meeting, Brooks Historical Society members voted to completely rearrange and refurbish the inside of their Brooks Depot Museum. We plan to have more focused exhibits that tell a story, with a “hands-on” activity for kids at each exhibit. We will also include a Research Corner with more resources for further study, and access to our own research library.

This year, our museum remains closed while we begin this project. Plan to visit us next year to see the changes!

Steam-Up News

The Great Oregon Steam-Up, 50th year is on this year! Get your tickets online and join the fun. Visit the Antique Powerland Website, antiquepowerland.com for the link to tickets.

While you are on campus, plan to visit our popular Used Book Sale in tents

outside our Depot museum during Steam-Up!

You won't find a better deal or a wider selection anywhere else on campus! Again this year, the pump organ will be available for playing by passers-by. Access to our building will be limited to members during Steam-Up.

You can visit with our volunteers and get your Kids Passport stamp at the Farmhouse Museum. From our depot, just head south past the Dezotell building through the white picket fence at the French Prairie Heritage Rose Garden, to the Farm House Museum. There you will see two rooms set up as a 1920s farmhouse kitchen and parlor. This is a great opportunity to see this often overlooked corner of the grounds.

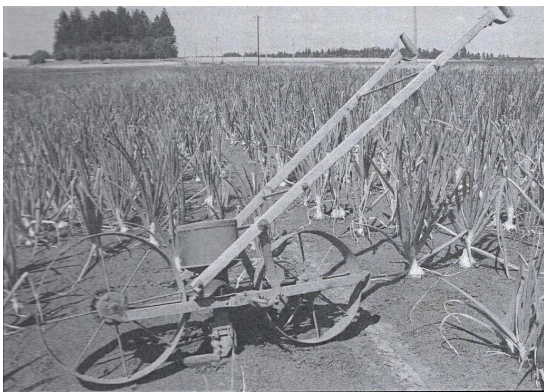


Rose Garden and Farmhouse Museum

Changes in Brooks Area Agriculture - *by Dan Groah*

In the Spring of the year, when I go out to get the morning paper, I can hear the “clack-clack” of metal cleats on a Caterpillar tractor about a half mile away on Lake Labish. Some farmer has not yet changed to a newer machine with the synthetic rubber-like tracks that are quieter. When they do, I will miss the metal track sound. Another sound that is long gone is the roar of the rotary engine of the Stearman bi-plane that was used as a crop duster. When one of those aircraft was working near our home it became a 90 decibel alarm clock around 5:30 in the morning. The newer spray planes cover the same ground, but I don’t awake by slapping my hands over my ears because of the sudden screaming sound.

In my research for this article, I found that some changes in farming in our area are driven by increasing labor costs, new regulations and competition from other farming areas. In the 1950s, I worked as a farm laborer for a dollar an hour. On the home farm, I mostly worked for free. To-day, the state’s minimum wage laws can determine what is paid per hour.



One row onion planter of the 1920s

In the beginning, onions were planted by a hand operated device that planted one row at a time. Today a machine can plant fourteen rows at a time. Onion harvesting, packing and shipping have all seen new machines and techniques to cut down on labor and other competitive

costs. It’s not just onions. Most all area crops have had to improve production techniques to survive. Yet, with all these changes, some crops have faded away.

In the 1950s, our family raised Ever-



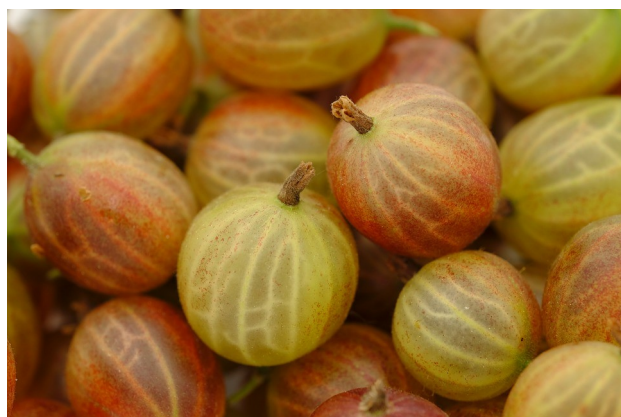
green Blackberries, Boysenberries and Loganberries. Loganberries were very popular in the early twentieth century. This berry was popular for desserts, such as pies. Aspinwall farms, west of Brooks, dried loganberries and created a loganberry fruit juice. These were

very popular for some years. Loganberries and Boysenberries continue to have a steady but smaller following, and Blackberries are still around. However, in the mid nineteen fifties, Marion berries were developed and introduced in the Brooks area and that berry seems to lead the pack in popularity now.

One crop was mostly lost to politics. Before World War Two, the Japanese-American population of Lake Labish raised celery. Their produce was in high demand. This success was due to the constant time-consuming care invested in the plant growth. In 1942, the Japanese-Americans and their elder relatives, some of whom were still Japanese citizens, were removed to relocation camps. With the Japanese people gone from Lake Labish, their celery production stopped. Later, some small celery contracts were put out by the Norpac company.

Another berry that was grown for many years was Gooseberries. They never had a strong following like Strawberries, but it held on a while. Gooseberries

seemed to be favored by older generations. Gooseberry desserts were not carried on with younger families. Canneries



Gooseberries

stopped taking them. For some time, Honeywood Winery in Salem made Gooseberry Wine. With the increase in wine grapes in the Willamette Valley, Honeywood Winery quit taking Gooseberries. As with other less popular fruits, Gooseberries are still grown and sold on a limited scale but they are not as they used to be.

Unlike today, when one farming family owns or rents hundreds of acres of land, in the 1940s and 1950s there were mostly small farms. Ours is a small farm on which today we rent out the tillable land to grass seed farmers. In the 1950s, besides cane berries, we raised strawberries. If you drove around the midvalley then, you would have seen dozens of strawberry fields. The berries were picked by migrant families. We housed three families during the picking season. Also, adults and children came out from town to pick. Regulations came along that restricted who could pick berries and under what conditions. Child pickers were forbidden.

I once counted thirteen things that could hinder production. Most of those were brought on by mother nature. One spring day, I went with one of our migrant families to pick strawberries on a neighbor's farm. Marinus Schaap had planted a new strawberry variety called Siletz. These were large berries. Many were larger than a walnut. I could pick a carrier

full in just a few minutes. As an added incentive, when you turned in your carrier, you were given a shiny new quarter dollar instead of a paper ticket. By noon I had picked nearly fifty carriers full. At one o'clock a localized, but powerful hail storm arrived and destroyed the whole crop with pea to marble sized hail.

Competition from Mexico and central California, where strawberries ripened earlier affected the price and farmers looked for other crops that paid better. In a few years, strawberries became so scarce that local Strawberry Festivals had to search for them.

In the 1950s, Raymond Jefferson operated a peppermint still across the road from our house. Cut peppermint was trucked in and pitch-forked into large tubs where the oil was cooked out of the plants. Foreign production cut into local peppermint acreage. I still harvest walnuts as a hobby from our orchard. English walnuts in the mid-valley used to have a commercial presence but California trees get a higher yield.



Drying flax in the field

Flax was grown in and around Brooks and seemed to peak with increased demand during World War II but lower-priced foreign flax stymied local production.

Additional information on the history of local farming and current production practices can be obtained from a series of books produced by The Sons of Labish organization and can be purchased at the Brooks Historical Museum at Powerland Heritage Park.

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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Phone

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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

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Vice-President - Dan Groah

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Correspondence Secretary - Marilyn Barner

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Position 2- Leah Duda

Position 3- Sharon Shelton

Position 4 - Carl Barner

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 Powerland

Heritage Park: From I-5 - take Exit 263 -- go west approx. 1/4 mile to: Powerland Heritage Park, 3995 Brooklake Road NE, Brooks, OR 97303. We are in Building 6.

Interested in Powerland Heritage Park?

Visit antiquepowerland.com