

BHS Newsletter

April 2023

<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.

North Howell, Fairfield, Gervais, Quinaby, Waconda, Parkersville, St. Louis, Lake Labish

Check out the BHS
Facebook page.



Opening Day at the Brooks Depot Museum.

About 50 visitors toured our museum on opening day for our museum and for Powerland Heritage Park, Saturday, April 1. They were treated to several new exhibits.



An onion exhibit sponsored by the Western Oregon Onion Growers Association is now on the South wall of the freight room, replacing the hops exhibit from last year. We are expanding the Japanese Farmers of Lake Labish exhibit, with specific research on community leader Roy Fakuda, and his experiences before during and after internment. Come see our changes!

Brooks Celebration Day June 17

Onions will be the focus of our annual Brooks Historical Celebration Day on Saturday, June 17, with *free admission* to Powerland Heritage Park that day. We plan lots of onion related displays and activities, with a talk by local onion grower Greg Bennett. We will be taking bids on the impressive onion picture on display in the museum and award it to the high bidder at the end of the season. We will keep you posted on our plans on [Facebook](#).

S.T.E.A.M.'d Up 4 Kids

S.T.E.A.M.'d Up 4 Kids, now an annual event, will be held Saturday, May 20, from 9 am to 4 pm. Get ready for a fun-filled day of hands-on STEAM activities, including building crafts, visiting fun museums, riding a trolley (an additional cost for the trolley rides) and seeing huge steam engines and tractors in action. Plus you can enjoy wagon rides, rope making, corn shucking, and other old time skills.

You can see the oldest-known unrestored school bus in the United States, and the oldest-known Caterpillar diesel tractor in the world. All of this is only \$6 per adult with kids 12 and under getting in FREE. **Brooks Historical** will provide our popular 9-patch quilt squares, gluing fabric on paper. We will also make onion flower prints, by stamping onions and painting milk stems on paper, and applying heat. Y'all come!

How Mint Came to the Brooks Area

By Dan Groah

Peppermint, was first cultivated in England around 1750. By the time of the American revolution, mint came to North America.

At first, peppermint was a garden plant. However, by 1790 it was being cultivated commercially in the new state of Massachusetts. Americans and their culture soon



Peppermint

began the westward movement. Around 1814 Archibald Burnett, a Yankee peddler, set out with mint rootstock to the then far reaches of the west in New York state. By 1833 cultivated peppermint reached Ohio and then Michigan in 1835.

By this time demand had increased, both domestic and English. This prompted the expansion of acreages and new



Peppermint is a perennial aromatic herb with erect, square, branched stems. Leaves are arranged on the stem in opposite pairs. Illustration: Kathy Merrifield, in the OSU Extension Service publication EM EM 9018-E December 2010.

techniques to meet the demand.

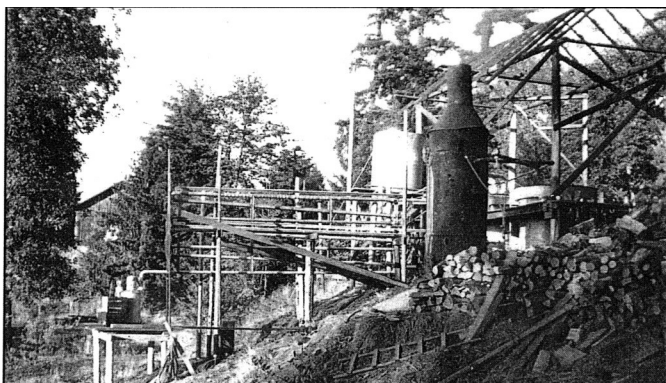
The end of the nineteenth century saw new methods of cultivation, new mint varieties and the advent of steam to distill the plants to release oil. Mint production soared, creating overproduction that soon brought prices down. In the winter of 1899-1900 upper Midwest fields suffered devastating frosts. Many farmers went broke.

In the eighteen-nineties, a soap dealer named William Wrigley began toying with chewing gum. By 1910 Doublemint gum flavored with peppermint oil was the nation's favorite. Other gum makers followed with mint oil gums. Soon toothpaste companies added mint flavoring to their products. Demand for peppermint went up but bad weather continued to plague the upper Midwest. Mint was tried in the southern U.S. but soils weren't right and there was a continuous contamination of "odoriferous weeds."

In 1903 Oliver Todd tried growing peppermint in the real far west in Idaho with some success but lack of suitable land made him look elsewhere. In 1909, Oliver went to Oregon. Here he found good soil in the Willamette bottoms near Albany. Mr. Todd built a distillery and sold peppermint roots to other farmers. Mint acreages expanded to Jefferson, Crabtree, Stayton and then Lake Labish in 1917. Also, in that year the Willamette Valley Mint Growers Association was formed.

By 1925 Japanese demand of American mint rose and prices for mint oil went up. The demand for more rootstock followed. C.J. Moison of Gervais sold 17,000 sacks of mint roots from twenty acres. This many sacks would plant 350 new acres. In 1926 and 1927 E.A and J.O. Hayes planted 700 acres at Lake Labish. Also, in 1926, Carl Johnson and A.L. Kostenborder farmed mint oil on land owned by Harper and Jones. Their harvest went as high as 105 pounds of oil per acre. After expenses Johnson and Kostenborder made a profit of \$425 per acre.

The next forty years saw mint production



The last of the peppermint stills on Lake Labish was owned and operated by Raymond Jefferson, late 1930s to late 1960s.

go up and down as farmers dealt with plant diseases and variable market prices. In the mid nineteen sixties, Philip and J.C. Beilke of Brooks decided to raise peppermint and purchased nuclear rootstock from Oregon State College that was certified “verticillium wilt” free. In 1967, the Beilkes bought a mint still near Echo, Oregon and moved it to Brooks.

For nearly thirty years the Beilke family farmed peppermint until 1993 when mint prices took a downturn due to foreign im-



Beilke Mint Distiller at Brooks

ports. However, mint never went away. Today there is still some production near Brooks and the mid-Willamette Valley.

Sources:

American Essence by James E. Landing

Department of Geography- University of Illinois at Chicago Circle: 1969

Sons of Labish: Farmers Tell Their Story page 48

Sons of Labish: The Pioneers of Lake Labish page 14

Sons of Labish: Lake Labish·Early Landowners and Events photo of Jefferson Mint Still page 41

What Happened to the North Deck?

On your next visit, you may notice that the north deck of the Brooks Depot has been removed. It was decayed to the point of being dangerous, and so several volunteers removed it one weekend. We plan to replace the deck and include both stairs and a ramp for access. This is part of our plan to open that north door eventually, as the major access point for our museum.

News of the Gervais High School Reunion

The organizers of this reunion state that it will occur on July 20, 2024. Not this year, but next year! It will be at the Mt. Angel Festhalle from 4:00 to 9:30 pm.

Welcome New Member

Jeff Milligan of Quinaby

Used Book Sale Back Again

When books can be safely left out in a tent without *too much rain*, we will again erect our tent full of used books. As before, they will be 50 cents for hard backs and 25 cents for paper backs, with discounts for bulk purchases. We usually leave it up until persistent rains threaten *again*, so hopefully through September.



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:

City/State/zip:

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

President - Jim Rogers

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Board - Position 1- Louis Sowa

Position 2- Leah Duda

Position 3- Michelle Duchateau

Position 4 - Open

Meetings

The Brooks Historical Society meets at the Dezotell Building at 9 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