

# Benton County Genealogical Society

## NEWSLETTER



Located in Philomath, Oregon  
Founded in 1971 in Corvallis, Oregon

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<https://www.bcgs-oregon.org>

### From the President

*Hi everyone, I hope this finds you well, safe and ready for spring. May you be able to find an appointment for your vaccines as soon as possible as I understand it is a challenge.*

*We don't yet have an opening date for our group; however, with the vaccines being done we can hope for the best. Take care,*

Sincerely, George Davidson

### What's Inside

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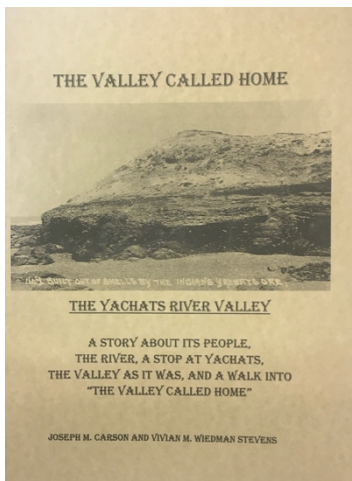
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## New Book in the Library!

We recently received a new book about the Yachats area from a generous Portland citizen. The book is ***The Valley Called Home: The Yachats River Valley***. It's filled with the stories of many of the families who came to the Yachats Valley to start a new life by working hard to make it so. Each family's story is filled with photos, and you'll find a good map of the area with locations of the farms and ranches. I enjoyed reading the book. So, if any of you have a connection to the Yachats area, you can check the book out as soon as the library reopens.



I was glad that the authors included the original people who lived in the valley. They also told the story of how the land was taken from the original people by the Federal government.

It's a story worth knowing. If you want to understand more of the story, the BCGS library has my book, *Fine Words and Promises*, about the Coast Reservation with a chapter devoted to the Alsea Sub-Agency.

Sue Van Laere

## Finding My Family in WPA Records

By Linda Olsen

I feel very fortunate to live in the area where four generations of my family have lived. In the early 1940s Mark Phinney conducted the WPA records survey for Benton County and Leslie Haskins for Linn County. I've gathered several family WPA records rich with detail and names of siblings and parents and where some were born. Some told stories that confirmed family stories I had always heard. One even detailed how her husband's family smuggled rifles in their wagon as they traveled from Missouri to Oregon during the Civil War. Who knew? That was not a family story I had ever heard.

Writers were employed as part of Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" designed to put people back to work—such as the Works Project Administration. The WPA records for Benton County were kept in the Corvallis Library early in 1980 and probably had been there for ages. Having them accessible now from our own BCGS website and our own BCGS Library makes it so easy to find the WPA record for my individual family members. Also a name search may reveal names of my relatives mentioned in someone else's WPA record.

When I searched for other WPA records in other states, I could find none. I would like to know how to find WPA records in other states, specifically Missouri, Virginia, and New York. Surely Oregon wasn't the only state to gather this written historical information.

**Example: WPA interview, by Mark Phinney, 1940s:  
Mrs. Eva GIBBS COON [My Great grandmother's sister]**

Mrs. COON was interviewed in her home in the village of Bellfountain (Route 1, Monroe.) Like so many of the descendants of the first settlers she had neglected the stories of the early times until it was too late to get information. She said:

"My parents were Winfield SCOTT GIBBS and Keziah HENDERSON. They came from Missouri in 1853. Grandfather Perman HENDERSON was captain of the train of sixty-three wagons. There was no actual fighting with the Indians, but often they were in danger. The cholera hit the train and an Uncle and Aunt of mine died.

"My parents were married in 1863, and lived on a claim adjoining HENDERSON's, a few miles south of Philomath. I was born in 1864. My brothers and sisters were, Hattie (Mrs. BAUMGARTNER), Rachel (Mrs. COON), Marrow, Cate, William, Laura, Cordelia and Perman, who was named for his grandfather HENDERSON. Father served for a time with the volunteers in the Rogue River Indian War.

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"I first went to school at the Independent schoolhouse when John B. HORNER was teacher. Belle SKIPTON, who afterward became Mrs. John B. HORNER, was one of the pupils. I remember one time Mr. HORNER had to discipline her. He had her by the arm trying to shake her and she was crying. She was a big girl then. There was one boy who was especially unruly. John HORNER used to string him up by the thumbs. He would tie strings to his thumbs, turn his face to the wall, draw his spread arms up until he had to stand on tip-toe, and keep him there for a considerable time. The boy was a brother of Ed L. SHARPE who used to write rhymed prose for the Corvallis Gazette-Times.

"After the first year I went to school at Beaver Creek. The teachers I remember there were Mr. RANDALLS, Belle SKIPTON who was now Mrs. HORNER, Mr. FULLER and Mr. REASONER.

"In 1888 I married Thomas M. COON, who died in 1929. Our children were Bertha (Mrs. DAMEILLE), Dora (Mrs. THOMPSON), Emma (Mrs. HINTON), Maud (Mrs. LAMB), Marvin, Minnie who died young. Pearl (Mrs. ROUNDSTONE), Elsie (Mrs. PIERCE), and Fannie (Mrs. ELLES). My son Marvin was for years engaged in the saw mill business in Benton County.

"My husband's people came from Missouri in 1862 to escape military service. They were sympathizers of the South, and were in danger of being drafted into the Federal army. There were restrictions on taking guns and powder out of the states and sometimes the trains were unable to smuggle enough for their own protection but my husband's folks were able to get away with some guns. The family consisted of George Kelly COON, his wife Catherine, and their children, Abram, Thomas, George, Martin, Mary (Mrs. HERBERT), and Lydia (Mrs. DAVIS). They settled on a donation land claim a few miles south of Philomath near Beaver Creek.

"The chief social diversions when I was a girl were preaching at the schoolhouses, dancing, and singing schools. Different denominations used to hold services from time to time. Andy WILLIAMS used to teach the singing schools.

"The dances I attended were always well behaved. If there was any sign of drinking or rowdyism father would say, "Girls get your cloaks; we're going home." And we knew there was no appeal from that decision.

"I have enjoyed living, and enjoy it still".

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*Heirlooms/Memorabilia Stories -- Next Four Pages*

**Taking the time to put together a story of something that you cherish brings light to the life of the person who first owned it.**

## My Dad is Out-foxed

The buffet looks a little worse for wear, and it would never be a find on the Antiques' Roadshow, but it has a wonderful family story.

My mom liked the style of the buffet in the dining room of my childhood home that she called "Early Attic." Today, we would probably call the style "Country" furniture. My dad was always on the lookout for old-fashioned furniture that my mom might like. Mostly Mom collected practical pieces such as dressers. Usually the furniture was made somewhere in the West in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Sometimes Mom refinished her "Early Attic" finds, but she never got around to doing the buffet.

In the mid-1950s my dad's job took him to farms in the Willamette Valley. One day when he was visiting one of the farmers in his program he saw the buffet sitting on the covered porch. He knew my mom would love this interesting piece of furniture, so he asked the farmer, "What are you planning to do with this buffet?"

"We don't want it anymore, so we'll get rid of it eventually," he replied.

"I'll give you \$15.00\* for it," my dad replied.

The farmer started laughing, "I heard you were really good at making deals. You didn't even try to bargain with me, I would have given it to you for \$5.00\*."

I especially love this story because when someone made a comment about the buffet, my dad would tell the story about how he'd been outfoxed by the farmer.

For many years the buffet sat in the dining room of my folks' home. When we moved my mother to care a facility and we cleared out her house, I discovered, to my surprise, that my brothers and sister all said that our mom wanted me to have the buffet. She'd never said anything to me, and I couldn't imagine where we would put it in our home. But my husband, Jim, thought it would fit in our dining room. I had my doubts, but he measured and put down two nickels on the floor to indicate how much space it needed. For several days we walked around the two nickels, and we decided we could live with the buffet.

However, when we moved into our current smaller home, there was no place for it. I asked my children if one of them would like it, and our daughter said she would. So, we moved it to her home where it looks very nice in her dining room. It was difficult for me to let the buffet go, but I realized what I loved the most about it was the story about how it came into our family.

Now my husband and I are downsizing and as I go through my possessions and decide to pass them on, sometimes it's difficult to part with them. But often now for me, the best part of the object is story. I can keep the stories, and pass them on to whoever ends up with my prized possession.

\*In 1955, \$15 was worth \$138 and \$5 was worth \$46 in today's currency

**Judy Rycraft Juntunen**

**February 2013 - Revised November 2018**



## The Recipe Box

Above on the left is the recipe box that my father made for my mother. The recipes in the box are wonderful, but there's another reason to share this photo. This box is a reminder of how they saw life: "Where there's a will, there's a way." The following is what my mother wrote about the box:



*Dad made this box for me just before Susan was born. He had no tools except a hammer and a saw and they weren't even his. They belonged to Grandpa Winkler. I think he used a screwdriver and hammer to cut out the groove for the top to slide in.*

*The only recipes I had were the ones I copied from relatives, couldn't afford recipe cards so I made my own from cracker boxes & paper. Then my mom sent me a Betty Crocker cookbook, more of a pamphlet type. I really treasured that because it was the only cookbook I had & I most assuredly didn't know how to cook.*

*When Susan was a baby & sitting up, there was nothing for her to play with so I'd give her my cookbook to look at the bright pictures. Over the years it just gradually went to pieces. I made the 2 egg cake so many times I finally had to copy the recipe on paper. Sometime try making a cake from scratch doing all the creaming and mixing by hand. That was work!"*

*Marge Simmons Winkler*



*Bill Winkler and Susan, Willows, California 1945*

Dad went on to become a master carpenter and furniture maker as well as being foreman on many building sites in our hometown, Lexington, Nebraska. My sisters, brother and I are the happy owners of the pieces of furniture he built for us over the years. He was a perfectionist in anything he did down to the smallest detail.

He once built a bed for my sister Sharon's young daughter. Sharon's husband tried to take the bed apart so it would be easier to move. He worked and worked to find where it was fastened together. Finally he found small dots filled with putty that was the color of the bed and sanded down so it was almost invisible. That was our Dad!

As for Mom, no wonder I like to cook and bake. I started early!

Shared by Sue Van Laere





## The Prize

Shared by Mary Dean Snelling

How could Gertrude French, a young girl barely 10 years old, be so excited to receive the prize!

The contest sponsored by a hardware store in Montrose, Colorado in 1914, involved taking a survey of the brand of cast iron wood stove being used by the households.

Gertrude went from door to door inquiring about which brand of wood stove was being used, Quick Meal or Majestic. Sometimes her good friend, Helen Dunbar, would help her. Gertrude would canvas people on one side of the street and Helen on the other side.

Gertrude called distant households from the wooden family phone on the wall. Being short she used a chair to stand on in order to reach the phone. She gathered in total 370 names and became the winner of the prize, a child's-sized woodstove which was exactly like the full-sized Quick Meal stove except for size. Wood could be burned in it so it could actually be used to cook. In addition to the stove, cast iron cookware came with it – frying pan, kettle, 3-piece waffle iron, and griddle. It was a much loved stove and an unforgettable experience for this little girl who worked diligently at collecting stove brand names of Montrose residents.

Where did the child-sized wood stove end up?

When the French family left Colorado and returned to their home in Michigan the little wood stove traveled on the train with them. After arriving in Michigan a decision was made not to stay, but to move to California for greater opportunities. Her father said that a small farming community, where he had previously been a farmer, was not a good place to be during a depression. Sadly, the little stove was left behind in Michigan. For over 40 years it remained there. Sometimes sitting outside in the elements.

On one of her cousin's visit to California she told him the story of the stove. After he returned home, she soon received a surprise. He had a wooden box built and shipped the stove to her in California. She was thrilled. It was like a long lost friend had returned.

It now sits in our house in Oregon and I still need to do some more restoration work on it. Haven't lighted a fire in it yet!!! 😊

Continued on page 7

## The Rest of the Story

The lucky (and smart) little Gertrude French was my mother

**LUCKY CONTESTANTS**

Little Gertrude French, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. E. French, was declared the most proficient in the art of getting names of users of Majestic and Quick Meal ranges in the contest carried on by the Lathrop Hardware company recently, and for her efforts the little lady was presented with a miniature Quick Meal range with all the utensils that go with it. She secured 370 names. Anna French, daughter of Mrs. Maggie French, was a close second with 367 names and the company has decided to present her with a similar gift for her efforts. The stoves are exact duplicates of the big range that mother uses and have all the needed cooking utensils. The two little girls are not relatives. Several other little aadies secured a large number of names in the contest.

Montrose Daily Press, Volume VII,  
Number 105, November 4, 1914  
Wednesday  
<https://www.coloradohistoricnews.com/papers.org>



Small-sized Cookware for child's-sized Quick Meal Wood Stove

### Editor's Thoughts

Thank you to all who make our newsletter a pleasing and informative paper to read each month. Personally, I love to read about real peoples' experiences. So, know that I'm grateful for the time you take to put together a story to share from your own and your ancestors' lives. Keep up the good work!

*I'd also like to hear what you would like to see in the newsletter. Please send me your ideas. Let's brainstorm together.*

Thanks, Sue

# Learning Opportunities

**Oklahoma Genealogical Society** Free program Monday 4:00 PST, March 1, 2021

**"I Have a Civil War Ancestor . . . Now What?" via Webinar**

Speaker: Brian Rhinehart, professional genealogist and speaker.

Monthly programs are free for members and non-members alike, but we encourage you to join! Your membership dues help us to provide more and better resources for the genealogical community.

<https://okgensoc.org> to register

**Thanks to Mary Dean**

## The Genealogical Forum of Oregon

Is celebrating their 75th Anniversary with a Virtual Open House. Between March 27th and April 3rd they will present 18 different programs. The URL below has the registration information, program schedule, titles of programs and names of presenters below.

<https://gfo.org/learn/open-house.html>

**Thanks to former BCGS President Margaret Fox via Linda Olsen!**

### The **Colorado Genealogical Society:**

Free seminar by Crista Cowen, Professional Genealogist who has worked for Ancestry since 2004. She is also known as The Barefoot Genealogist.

Date: Friday, 23 April 2021 and Saturday, 24 April 2021

Friday seminar: Using DNA.

Saturday seminar: Getting the most out of Ancestry.

You need to register for each day.

<https://www.cogensoc.us/seminar.php>

**Thanks to Mary Dean**



Benton County Genealogical Society

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#### Appointed Positions

**Membership:** OPEN

**Librarian:** OPEN

**Programs:** OPEN

**Historian:** OPEN

**Photographer:** OPEN

**Audit:** Connie Patterson

**Refreshments:** Pegge Gee

**Host:** Kathryn Moss

**Research:** Lois Courtney

**Book Sales:** Maridee Symons

**Website:** George Davidson

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