

Great News from President George!

Hello everyone, we are going to resume our monthly meetings.

Benton County Historical Society (Museum)
1101 Main St. (2nd floor) Philomath OR
97370 - 10:30 AM-12 Noon, Saturday March 12th.

No program - a get-together group. I hope you may be able to attend and enjoy the opportunity to get out of the house as we try to resume our group meetings after a 2 year absence .

Please mask up while inside the building.
Your support is greatly appreciated .

Sincerely,
George Davidson, Pres. BCGS

Benton County Genealogical Society

NEWSLETTER



Located in Philomath, Oregon

Founded in 1971 in Corvallis, Oregon

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



What's Inside?

Page 1: Free classes on Genealogical Forum of Oregon's website!

Page 2: Ann Bateman shares a letter from her ancestor's time in the Civil War.

Page 3: Andersonville Prisoner Shelters; The Grange Movement from 1875 to the present

Pages 4 to 7: Linda Olsen shares her ancestors' long attachment to the Willamette Grange Hall in south Corvallis, one of five Granges in Benton County.

Page 8: Info on Rootstech next week. It's free!

The Genealogical Forum of Oregon invites you to join them online with free classes at their Annual Open House. Each class requires its own advance registration. Registration: <https://gfo.org/learn/open-house.html>

23 FREE CLASSES

2022 GFO VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

March 26-April 2

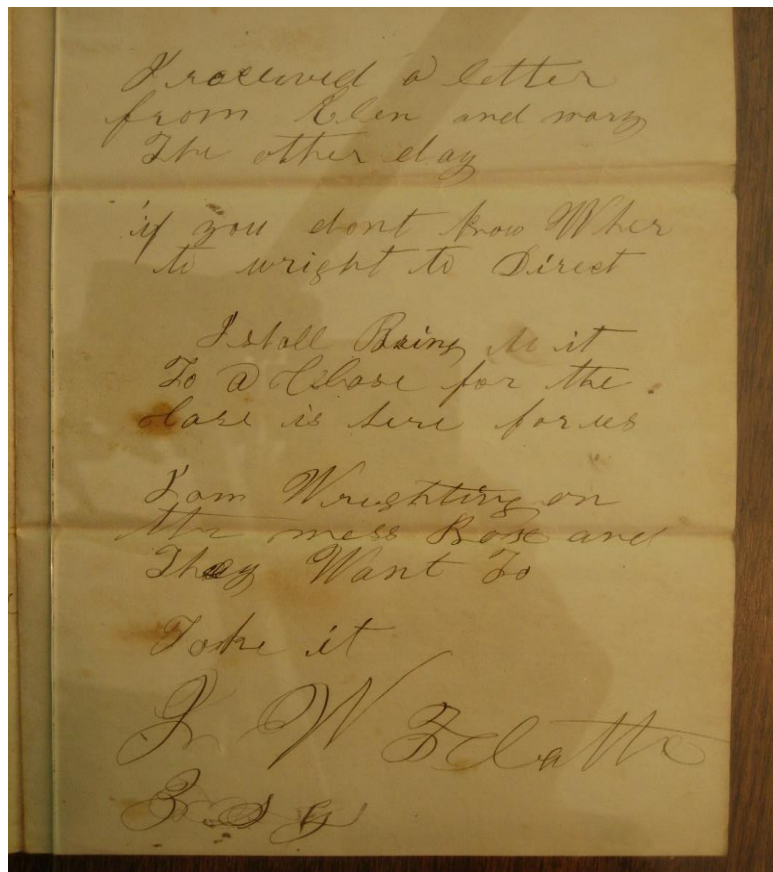
Register Today!

Calling All Genealogists and Your Ancestors!

In the February 2022 newsletter, we put most of our time looking into ancestors and the U.S. Civil War.

BCGS member, Ann Bateman, is sharing an ancestor who wrote many letters to family during his service to the Union (the North.)

My great-great grandfather, John William Flathers, from Richland Township, Iowa, served in the Iowa 28th Infantry. He was a prolific letter writer. One of my second cousins is in possession of over 200 of his letters and we are fortunate to have copies of them. He wrote of illnesses, camp food, and battles. He shared news of other soldiers from his home area whom he encountered so news could be shared with their families. He thanked senders for candy and requested postage stamps. Attached is part of one letter he sent home. He closes his letter with "I am wrighting [sic] on the mess box and they want to take it." Ultimately JW was imprisoned at Andersonville and finally released in July 1865.



This is a page of one of John William Flather's letters.

Information about Andersonville is on page 3

ANDERSONVILLE PRISONER SHELTERS

Prisoner diaries and memoirs document seven common types of shelters:

1. Tent flies made by attaching two blankets to a ridgepole
2. Crude lean-tos made by piecing together strips of cloth onto a pole frame
3. A kind of teepee made by draping a blanket over a short vertical pole
4. Aimple [sic?] holes dug vertically into the ground
5. Holes that were dug down and then sideways to create small caves
6. Adobe-like structures made with mud bricks roofed with a blanket, overcoat or blouse
7. Huts made of split pine boards

Of the 45,000 Union soldiers imprisoned in Andersonville, nearly 13,000 died.

To learn more about Andersonville:

<https://www.nps.gov/ande/learn/historyculture/prisoner-shelter.htm>



The homes of Andersonville

The Grange Movement from 1875 to the Present

Most of us have seen Grange Halls around the countryside. Benton County has a surprising number of them. However, we shouldn't be surprised. Benton County was and still is a perfect place to work on the land.

In 1867 a Minnesota farmer and activist, Oliver Hudson Kelley, began helping farmers by bringing them together to work out some of their concerns. Then the financial crisis of 1873 gave farmers even more problems such as falling crop prices, increase in railroad fees to ship crops to the states, high prices for items that a farmer couldn't do without such as seeds, new farm equipment and food on the table.

More and more farmers, both men and women, became members. The Grange quickly became "a social organization that encourages families to band together to promote the economic and political wellbeing of the community and agriculture."

For more information, see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Grange_of_the_Order_of_Patrons_of_Husbandry

Starting on page 4 Linda Olsen is sharing the story of her Coon ancestors who, for many years, were members of the Willamette Grange Hall on Greenberry Rd south of Corvallis. Jughead hat. In the 50's, kids decorated with lots of special pins.

Benton County's Grange Halls

Willamette #52 27555 Greenberry Rd, Corvallis

Marys River #685 24707 Grange Hall Rd, Philomath

Fairmount #252 835 North Albany Rd, Albany

Hope #269 27373 Alsea Deadwood Hwy, Alsea

Summit #432 19854 Summit Hwy, Summit

Written for the Willamette Community and Grange Hall Memory Book

Remembering My Coon Family -- Happy times Gathering Together.

by Linda Green Olsen, great granddaughter of George W. and Rachael Gibbs Coon

George Washington and Rachael Gibbs Coon and their children are remembered here.



Esther's Beloved Grandparents, George Washington and Rachael Shariotta Gibbs Coon
Photo taken for their 50th wedding anniversary October 26, 1934, Corvallis, Oregon

Some of their ten children were born in south Benton County around Monroe and some in Linn County near Halsey. G.W. Coon was born in Missouri, and farmed as did his father, George Kelly Coon, who came from Virginia. Rachael Gibbs was born near Beaver Creek south of Philomath. A full description of this hard working and fun loving family is revealed in "[A Coon's Tale](#)" by Thomas L. and Valda Coon. As one of many Oregon pioneer families, the Coon family loved coming together with relatives, friends and neighbors to visit and catch up with the latest news and renew friendships.

As the children grew older the desire to continue the family reunion tradition remained strong. Sometimes the reunions would just be a few families that lived closer together. By 1960 the youngest Coon sibling of the ten kids had passed away as well as G. W. and Rachael Coon. Mildred and Eva were the ones to spur their siblings into action and were the major organizers of the family reunions. The Willamette Grange Hall south of Corvallis was an old familiar site centrally located for most of those attending. The large Grange Hall half basement with kitchen facilities and many tables and chairs was the best choice for a large crowd. A date was chosen to accommodate all of the nine remaining Coon siblings and their families. It was decided that everyone would bring their own plates and utensils to cut down on the labor and the cost. Meat would be provided and everyone else was asked to bring a side dish or a dessert. All the other details were distributed among those able to help. The





plans were made, and the invitations were sent out by mail or phone.

Walking into the large Grange Hall half basement, the voices of many people laughing, having a good time visiting, the aroma of the food cooking in the kitchen, and the warmth and happiness of everyone there was a lot for a teenager to take in. I had been to some reunions before, but never with so many people. Some folks I knew but I kept asking my mother who the other people were and how they were related to us. Sometimes she didn't know. Even my grandmother didn't know all of them.

The food that everyone brought was filling up the service bar that divided the kitchen from the tables and chairs. Some of the desserts had to be taken back to the cars to wait until there was more room to set them out. One of the members stood to say grace and make announcements since they last met then the eating would commence. Actually the eating and the visiting went on all afternoon. No one ever went away hungry at a Coon gathering. How many Coon reunions were held at the Willamette Grange Hall is still a mystery. But since the family lived in the vicinity of the Willamette Grange Hall for at least 50 yrs, I expect quite a number of Coon Family reunions were held there.

Nancy, my cousin on the Gibbs side, and I finally went outside to breathe fresh air as the basement felt too warm and the noise level had increased. She checked on her Grandmother, Nanny Gibbs, then we went outside. Others were already playing games. Horse shoes were always set up as a tradition that carried on from reunion to reunion. I found out later that my great grandfather, George Washington Coon, had always liked to play horse shoes. Someone had set up a badminton set and a baseball game was going on in the backyard of the Grange.

By 1969 the reunion crowd at the Willamette Grange had dwindled and the announcements given at each reunion included more and more deceased family members and friends. Small groups continued to gather with more of the next generation taking on the responsibility. Dorris Long, daughter of Mildred Coon Hannon, and her sister, Eva Coon Smith and her family worked together. Eventually, the last reunions hosted by the Coon siblings were held in Eva's backyard with help from her family. Both Eva and Mildred lived in separate homes side by side in Salem. The fond memories of those large groups of relatives happily gathering together at the Grange remain always.



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Most of what I know about the Coons came from my mother's stories. Esther Roberts Green lived with her grandparents, G.W. and Rachael, from a young age and had always adored them. She gave me a window into my great grandparents' life as well as her own. Many of the family stories were preserved by Thomas L. and Valda Coon. Their daughter, Georgia, eventually published their notes in a Coon's Tale. They were a fun loving bunch and grew up giving back to their communities and country.

Brief overview of the lives of each sibling:

1. May Coon Roberts Thayer: b. Linn County, made handmade quilts to sell and give to her family and church, studied her bible in her later years, member of the Dorcas Society, raised eight children.
2. Tom Coon: b. Linn County, Bailiff of Lincoln County Circuit Court, Coached Little League baseball, member of Oasis Lodge #41 IOOF of Junction City, member of the Agate Beach Grange.

Memories of Tom by Paul Coon: "I do remember playing catch with Uncle Tom particularly. He of all the aunts and uncles, seemed to have the most time for kids. He had a way of really building up the ego of a scrawny little 11 year-old boy. He had me starting for the Yankees before the day ended. A great man in his rather certain and convincing way."

3. Clarence: b. Linn County, stock buyer in Corvallis, ran for sheriff of Jackson County, a patrolman in the 1930s at Klamath Falls, moved to Florence, raised goats and sold goat cheese, married with one child, buried in the Florence Masonic cemetery
4. Chester "Chet" Coon: b. Benton County, started working for PGE Electric Company in Portland at 14 years of age, distinguished himself as an inventor of the "Safety Live Line Tools" patented in 1924, managed and operated "Coon's Safety Live Line Tools" company 1926 - 1955, sold his inventions to Electric Companies all over the world, donated thousands of dollars to disabled youth and under privileged youth, 1934-1935 offered my father a job to learn how to use the tools "Safety Live Line Tools" along with others for demonstration purposes, Ardent Sportsman, WWI Balloon Company, provided funds for a radiation machine to treat cancer at Alta Bates Hospital, California.
5. Arthur Coon: b. Linn County, lived at Marshfield, Coos County and Lakeview, Oregon, employed by Safeway for many years, retired in Corvallis, married with one son and grandchildren.
6. Francis Coon: b. Benton County, WWI enlisted 1917 in Naval Air Corp, flew along the coast of Ireland, Member of veterans of Foreign Wars, member of Willamette and Marys River Granges in Benton County, Grange Master at Aloha, Marys River Grange in 1956, and Willamette Grange Hall in the 1940s. Chairman of Pamona Grange and other organizations such as Scoutmaster, Infantile Paralysis Chairman, Washington County, Oregon, Public Utilities, March of Dimes, won the bid, as the story goes, to purchase the Westwood School House for \$10 in the mid 1950s, remodeled it for a home which is located on the Alsea Highway near Philomath. Wife, one son and three grandchildren.
7. Leston: b. Benton County, WWI army, moved to the tri Cities 1940, Richland, Washington, Councilman, retired from General Electric Company in 1962, member WWI Vet organizations.
8. Eva Coon Smith: b. Linn County, Volunteered for Vets of WWI, senior citizens groups, and hospital patients, married with two children, lived in Richland, Washington, for many years then moved to Salem next door to her sister, Mildred, together they enjoyed organizing the Coon family reunions over the years. Poet.

9. Mildred Coon Hannon: b. Linn County, homemaker, gardener, lived in Brookings, South Dakota for awhile then moved back to Oregon 1941, moved to Salem, she and her sister, Eva, enjoyed organizing the Coon family reunions over the years. Married with four children.

10. Ared William "Bill" Coon: b. Linn County, owner and manager of Auto Park grocery 1925 Corvallis, hired my mother at 15 years of age to help at the lunch counter and taught her how to make change, owner and manager of the Hamburger Inn in Corvallis at 12th and Jefferson, managed Safeway stores in Portland and Oregon City, owned and managed Top Hat Restaurant in Salem at 1275 State Street for 10 years, Sportsman, member of Masonic Lodge, Eastern Star and Isaac Walton League.

April 22, 2021

MY FATHER'S HOMESTEAD

1.
Today I sat a dreaming dreams
Of childhood days gone by.
And one place that I dreamed of
Brought teardrops to my eye.
I saw a little cabin and
My heart began to quiver,
It was my father's cabin on
The homestead by the river.

2.
Out on Willow Island
The homestead cabin stood.
There modern things could not be had
We had to cook with wood.
At night we burned a coal oil lamp
By which to sew or read,
And now as I look back, it all
Seems quite unreal indeed.

3.
Oh yes, we had a telephone,
The kind you had to ring,
But half the time the line was out
It made you hate the thing.
We had a horse and buggy,
We didn't own a flivver,
But we had loads of fun on
The homestead by the river.

4.
In winter when high waters came
We had to use a boat
To reach the barn, to tend the stock
But it never got our goat,
Each feller had a stick to set
Then watched it all a quiver,
To see the change the water made
On the homestead by the river.

5.
In summer it was beautiful
To hear the echoes ring.
To watch the butterflies and bees
And hear the birdies sing.
Small wild things lived there by the score
We didn't trap them either
For they were lots of company
On the homestead by the river.

6.
Vacation time will soon be here
And if I have my way,
I know exactly where I'll go
To spend the holiday.
I'll pack the grips and outfit
And family in the flivver
And spend the whole two weeks of it
On the homestead by the river.

Note: written for Dad Coon in 1920

Author: Eva Coon Smith



Willamette Grange Hall 1930's photo by Oregon State University

This website has a good article about the beginnings of this Grange and what work is going on now to rehabilitate the building and help membership grow.

<https://philomathnews.com/willamette-community-and-grange-hall-coming-back-to-life/>

Join Us for the World's Largest Family History Celebration, 3-5 March 2022.



FIRST WEEK IN MARCH

THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL

List of open positions and major responsibilities

Membership:

Greet people and collect names at the monthly meeting. Keep track of new members.

Historian:

Insert newsletter, obituaries, pictures, special events into the society notebook.

Library Chair:

Accession and de-accession materials, attend board meetings, oversee projects, write a short article each month for the newsletter.



Anybody know what this 1950's hat was named? Answer sort of hidden on page 3!

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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
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