

The First 25 years

1971 - 1996

Virginia Hoeye

and

Mildred Hawkins

Written accounts of the first 25 years

BENTON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Twenty-five years later there is no record of the effort and planning that went on, probably during the summer of 1971. It seems that a growing interest in family history brought a number of people together, among them Mary Peffer, member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Erma Lee Brown, genealogist, and a member of the End of Trail Researchers. Meetings were held. Velma Parsons wrote that an early planning meeting of about a dozen women met at the home of Lotta Chapman and Celia Coon. Names mentioned by Velma were Harriet Moore, Hazel Beals, Bessie Murphy, Bernice Robison, Clara Jans, Edith Hughes, Edna Wiese, Jo Zadina, Mary Peffer, and the hostesses.

At the May 1982 meeting Velma reminisced about those early days. She said that subsequent planning meetings were held in the Elizabeth Ritchie Room of the Corvallis Library. This activity led to the first publicly announced meeting, to be held on 11 September 1971. Unfortunately only the newspaper announcement remains as a record of that meeting.

It is possible that a Nominating Committee was formed at that September meeting. It is sure that officers were elected at the October meeting. The first officers were:

President - Velma Parsons

Vice President - Celia Wilson Coon

Secretary/Treasurer - Josephine Zadina

Directors - Hazel D. Beals, Harriet Moore, and Bernice W. Robison

Also present at that second meeting were Mary Peffer, Norma Pennington, Lavohn M. Watts, and Edna Wiese.

The End of Trail Researchers, based in Salem at the time, had as its main purpose publishing Oregon Records. A secondary purpose was to travel to other Oregon cities to assist with forming new groups. Erma Lee Brown traveled, and became an early member. Thus it was that our Society came into being as the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society, with members from Albany, Alsea, Corvallis, Cresswell, Eugene,

Lebanon, Sweet Home, and Pullman, WA.

The first program, on 9 October, was presented by Edna Wiese, who told of her recent trip of discovery in Germany. On November 13, Betty Wilson outlined the personal qualities needed and steps to take in compiling a family record in "Beginning of a Growing Record." On 11 December, Billie Sneed Webb told the group of "The Seven Steps to Genealogical Research."

In addition to socializing and personal research, the group expected to "cooperate with the Benton County Historical Society in the preservation and publication of area history." (The Corvallis-Gazette Times, Tuesday, 19 October 1971.)

Charter Membership closed on 31 December 1971 with these members: Ruth H. Arnold, Hazel D. Beals, Eugene Mitch Beard, Gladys Bierman, Leona Brandenburg, Ednah L. Breckon, John Breckon, Marjorie Buriemek, Lotta Chapman, Celia W. Coon, Stanley P. Farwell, Aaron Glasgow, Elaine Heckart, Edith Hughes, Clara Jans, Alene Lewis, Peggy Mason, Harriet Moore, Bessie G. Murphy, Velma Parsons, Mary Peffer, Bernice Robison, James Russell, Donna F. Soule, Ysabel Thomas, Glenn Ware, Louise 'Billie' Webb, Gene Westfall, Harriette Westfall, Edna Wiese, Betty Wilson, Marjorie M. Wink, Josephine Zadina, all of Corvallis; Elizabeth Akin, Ruby E. Boyes, Merle Britten, Joel Fosdick, Margaret Fosdick, Mildred Blair Hawkins, Ruth Lines Motley, Rex Palmer, Louis St. Dennis, Jean Vanderpool, of Albany; Mrs. J. W. Holbrook, Alsea; Margery Akin Crawford, Cresswell; Lois Inman Baker, Maxine Simmons Bell, Addie Dyall, Mrs. Edward Winn, of Eugene; Harley Haskins, Helen Haskins, Veva Large, Edith R. Mill, John Miller, Norma P. Pennington, of Lebanon; Erma Lee Brown, of Salem; Carla Healy, of Sweet Home; and Frances Milne, Pullman, WA.

THE BENTON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - PART 2 -

When the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society was organized, the members chose to organize in such a way that the group would be as independent as possible. The members did not form a Constitution. They did not incorporate. Though there is a list of Charter Members, the ones who became members in the first three months, before 1 January 1972, there is no charter. Names of Charter Members were published in the January 1996 News Letter.

Those first members drew up a set of By-Laws to govern the activities of the new Society. One Article has been eliminated; the other nine remain.

The first set of By-Laws was put together during the first months of the organization. A copy is mounted in Historical Book 1, in March, 1972. By March 1973 the group had grown. Articles needed to be reworded. Changes were made. In all, the By-Laws have been amended five times: March 1973, September 1974, March 1984, March 1990 and December 1995. Some of the Articles read differently now; a few read much the same as the original.

In the beginning, the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society was the one such organization between Salem and Eugene, and members were from Alesia to Sweet Home, Eugene and Cresswell, and one from Pullman, WA. Later, Lebanon, Sweet Home, and Albany groups were formed, which eventually led to one of the latest changes, the change of name to **Benton County Genealogical Society**, which better reflects the nature of the present group.

The End of Trail Researchers sponsored the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society. By 1974 the new group no longer needed a sponsor, so Section A was deleted from Article II, but the Society maintained a paid subscription and received the quarterly publication, Oregon. The entire Article II was deleted in 1984.

This genealogical group was formed as "non-profit, non-political and non-sectarian", and remains so, with the words rearranged.

One early purpose of the group was to "assist each other in genealogical research through association, inspiration and material exchange and interactions." This Section of Article III has remained unchanged. A Newsletter from 1974 states that Mildred Hawkins, Elizabeth Akin and Edna Wiese prepared Beginner's Kits for newcomers and beginners to promote this objective. At one time a committee of six researchers (three were DAR specialists) helped the beginners start their charts.

By 1974, as members shared more and more information, the group added Addenda to Article III, Section A, to "protect property, privacy, and rights" of both the Society and individuals.

The provision pertaining to working with the End of Trail Researchers in publishing bulletins and materials remained until 1984. Cooperation with the Benton County Historical Society in preserving and publishing of local history remains in nearly the same form, but the provision to assist the Corvallis City Library in obtaining genealogical material now reads: "To cooperate with the Benton County Library in matters pertaining to genealogical research."

In 1971 the Corvallis Library had a limited collection in the Genealogy section. The Society assisted the Library in selecting genealogical books. The Society bought books, and placed them in the Library for all to use. For a time the 2nd Vice-President was responsible for choosing books from the Genealogy shelves for use in the Society's monthly workshops, putting them onto a library cart to bring to the Ritchie Room. At the close of the meeting s/he saw that all books were returned. Mary Buchanan, a librarian who was also a Society member performed this service part of the time.

Membership in the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society was open to anyone interested in genealogical research. That Section of Article V reads the same today. In 1972 members not paid up by July 1st were dropped. In 1984 the date was advanced to January 15th.

The Benton County Genealogical Society - Part 3 -

Annual membership dues were \$1.00 at first. They were raised to \$2.00 in 1973, and remained at that amount until 1984, when the specific cost of membership was removed from the By-Laws, the same time the cut-off date for being in the membership list was moved forward to January 15th.

According to lists published in January each year, membership has ranged from the first, Charter number of 58, to a low of 46 in 1986, to 130 in 1995. Attendance taken from the sign-in sheets at meetings, was 10 in October, 44 in November, and 16 in December. 1971. From January 1972 through December 1995, the number signing the attendance sheets varied from 6 in June 1972, to 49 in January 1992.

From the beginning the fiscal year has coincided with the calendar year.

Regular meetings were set on the second Saturday of each month, and so they continue. Special meetings were provided for. Several have been held.

Meeting times were set for 11:00 am for Workshop for members, 1:00 pm for Business Meeting, and 2:00 pm for Program. When a Beginner's Class was held it started at 10:00 am. Some members brought sandwiches. Instant soup, coffee and tea were provided. Meetings were held in the Elizabeth Ritchie Room in the basement of the Corvallis Public Library, a convenient place as the Society's books were on Library shelves.

The Mid-Valley Genealogical Society bought books. They owned none when they organized. By December 1972, the group purchased and donated four books, while the Library acquired an additional eight. A dozen more publications were donated to the collection that year. Acquisition of books increased so that in 1974 Susan Taylor's report showed 209 genealogical books on the shelves and 13 periodicals in the Library. In May 1986, 297 genealogical books and periodicals were listed in the Society's Library Catalog Card List. The 1990 book list numbered 411, and the September 1995 shelf list tallied 1322.

The first elected officers, who served through 1972, were President, Velma Parsons; Vice-President, Celia Wilson Coon; and Secretary/Treasurer, Josephine Zadina. The three Directors, with no indication as to how they were selected, were Hazel A. Beals, Harriet Moore, and Bernice W. Robison. Officers elected for 1973 were President, Erma Lee Brown; Vice-President, Marjorie Burianek; Secretary/Treasurer, Elizabeth Akin. No mention was made of Directors.

By the end of 1973 the group decided to add a Second Vice-President and to separate the Secretary/Treasurer's jobs. Officers for 1974 were President, Mildred Hawkins; 1st Vice-President, Susan Taylor; 2nd Vice-President, Edna Wiese; Secretary, Betty Moore; Treasurer, Dorothy Blust. One interesting item, told by Edna Wiese, is that the group was so intent on being free from any possible tax requirements that the early Treasurers used their own Social Security numbers as the Identification Number for the Society's bank account!

In 1974 the first list of Committee Chairs is noted: Historian, Celia Coon; Librarian, Francis Hallam; Publicity, E. Mitch Beard; Surname File, Elizabeth Akin; Phone, Ruby Boyes and Marjorie Burianek. In September 1974 the group amended the By-Laws to conform with the current practices. Within the last year we have eliminated the Phone Committee.

Minor adjustments have been made to the Article pertaining to Nominations and Elections. Installation of Officers, once done in January, was moved to December by 1984.

The article on Amendments to the By-Laws has had small changes. In 1984 an Article was added, designating the quorum needed to amend the By-Laws, but it was eliminated at the last revision.

Over the years, the Society has grown and changed. The By-Laws have been an adequate, working framework, without Constitution or Charter.

Virginia E. Hoeye, Historian
25 February 1996

THE BENTON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - PART 4 -

On page three in the first Mid-Valley Genealogical Society History Book we find a news release that tells of the meeting held 9 October 1971, when the group became official. It reads, in part:

"A group of people interested in Genealogy, who have been meeting with members of the 'End of the Trail Researchers', some writers and publishers who have been issuing a quarterly bulletin of early Oregon statistics, have formed an organization, probably to be named the 'Mid-valley Genealogical Society' in order to plan programs, and help others interested in researching their family history."

The article goes on to say that Erma Brown of Salem, a Certified Genealogist, had been sending publications for their study, that the Library showed interest by bringing a book display to the meeting, and that attendees brought personal material. The program, the selection of officers, the intent of the group to cooperate with the County Historical Society, and Charter membership information were reported. The article ends with:

"It was voted to continue to hold the meetings in the Elizabeth Ritchie room of the Public Library, on the second Saturday of each month, with the workshop starting at 11 a.m. and the program at 2 p.m."

The meetings were held at the Corvallis Library for nearly ten years, through May 1981. The June meeting was held at the Meadow Park Mobile Estates Recreation Room. Except for November, which was cancelled because of flooding, meetings were held from September 1981 through February 1982 but there is no record of the place of meeting for those months, as no newspaper publicity was saved.

It was about this time the Library was experiencing growing pains, and needed the Ritchie Room space for library use. The March, 1982, meeting was held in the First Christian Church. We had the use of two rooms at most meetings, and our books, and refreshment equipment, which had been brought from the Library, were stored in a large cabinet built by member Vernon Stryker.

The meetings were advertised to start with a Workshop, at 11:00 am, on the featured States and Countries of the month, the business meeting at 1:00 pm and the Program at 2:00. Many months a Beginner's Class would be announced for 10:00 am, led, according to the publicity by Elizabeth Akin, though others assisted in this service.

The Society continued meeting at the Christian Church through September 1991, when negotiations with the Benton County Historical Society for library space in one room of the Annex, the former Parsonage for the Philomath United Methodist Church, and the use of the building on second Saturdays for regular meetings was completed.

The change of meeting place from the Church in Corvallis to the Historical Society Annex did not seem to detract from attendance, as it remained about the same as formerly. But in early 1994 the group was made aware that the number of people at the business meetings exceeded the number of persons allowed in the building by safety regulations. By May 1994 the group obtained the use of a room in the Philomath United Methodist Church for Business Meeting and Program at 1:00 and 2:00 pm. It soon became apparent that to switch the morning and afternoon activities would be advantageous, so that change was put into effect in January 1995.

THE BENTON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - PART 5 -

Programs and Projects

Meeting days for the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society included a program centered around research for ancestors. There are so many titles; it is hard to choose.

The earliest programs were prepared and presented by members. In the first, titled "Trip and Research in Germany", Edna Wiese shared the thrill of finding relatives in northwest Germany, as she described their way of life. Other members built programs about other places, as in the Carolinas, and in Eastern Canada. These successes were an inspiration.

One program was held at 10:00 am at Kerr Library on the Oregon State University Campus. The roster of members present is found inside the cover of the Library Handbook. The Map Room on the first floor, with the nearby microfilm readers seems to have been the highlight. Other programs told of research in the Fort Wayne and the Indiana State Libraries; in the National Archives in Washington, D. C.; in Salt Lake City as well as in the Family History Centers in several churches of the Latter Day Saints.

"How to" programs with such interesting titles as "Beginning of a Growing Record", "Seven Steps to Genealogical Research", and "Preserving Family Memorabilia" guided members, as did information on preparation of materials and manuscripts for printing.

Vital Statistics, important to building a family record, can be found, we were told, in many records, from the obvious to the obscure, public and private. The Oregon State Archivist described research in public records as well as changes in the State Archives.

Other times we heard about research of Native American culture and dances, the Lewis and Clark Journey, The Oregon Trail, and Oregon Land Claims. We learned about early school records, one-room schools of Benton County, the histories of Linn and Benton Counties, and the connection between Benton and Lake Counties. We learned of

Handwriting Analysis, and how personality traits show in handwriting; of using photography in Genealogy. Further topics were how to record oral history, and how to restore and preserve old books and materials. One speaker told of errors she had made in research, while another spoke of changes of names when immigrants arrived from northern Europe.

Several programs were on cemeteries. One speaker suggested that individuals or groups might adopt an old cemetery to preserve the history of pioneer families. Several years later the Society decided to conduct censuses of cemeteries in Benton County for which none had been done, and to publish the results. That project was completed in 1990, with the printing of a total of five books. Military records, extracted from the first five volumes, were published in a separate book, and an all name index for the set was completed in early 1996.

In 1976 the Society applied for a grant of \$1000 from Oregon State University Folk Club Thrift Shop, with money received to be used in indexing the newspapers of Corvallis. No record exists in the Historical Books as to receipt and use of money, but the project was completed, with the printed books in our library.

Another project, completed in January 1991, was publishing the 1910 Census of Benton Co. in Soundex. According to the newsletter, four books were printed.

A fourth, current project, is that of extracting vital statistics from newspapers of Benton County. The microfilm, given by the Corvallis Gazette-Times, are all the available rolls from about 1865 to 1979. The work is being done by volunteers, who enter the data onto forms. An index with birth and death dates transcribed to the Benton County Historical Society's computer data base, will be available in the Historical Society Library.

THE BENTON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - PART 6 -

Workshops and Seminars

The Mid-Valley Genealogical Society sponsored several workshop, and the first was a big one! This workshop, held May 17 and 18, 1974, was advertised:

"Arlene Eakle and Nancy Poolman at LBCC

"An advanced workshop in three parts:
"Friday evening: Solving American Pedigrees
- Migrational Patterns.

"Saturday morning: How to Find Birth,
Marriage and Death Dates Prior to 1900.

"Saturday afternoon: Solving American Pedigrees-
Land, Probate, Court and Tax Records.

"From the Genealogical Institute,
Salt Lake City, Utah"

With little money in the treasury, the members arranged with Linn-Benton Community College for space for the workshop and personally provided transportation from Portland and in-home housing for the presenters. We can assume the housing included breakfast, and maybe other meals, too.

Subsequent events were far easier to arrange, as they were one-session meetings. On May 10, 1974, Ron Bremer was the speaker. In April 1981 the Society held a Research Session. On May 9, 1988 Leland Metzler from Heritage Quest spoke. On November 4, 1989, Ron Bremer spoke; on March 15, 1990, Leland Metzler of Heritage Quest returned. And on May 16, 1994, Ron Bremer again came, with the Benton Historical Society as cosponsor.

* * * * *

We close this series with a quotation from a speech by Mrs. Esther Ervine, possibly made at the September, 1971, organizational meeting, and preserved on page 5 of the first Historical book.

"WHY GENEALOGY?"

Some take up genealogy purely as a hobby with all the incident benefits of a hobby. Some take up the subject as a means to preserve precious records for their patriotic organizations. Still others find genealogy an interesting sideline to the study of history and many more look upon it as an integral part of the doctrine of their church. But the urge which drives some more than others is that of a solver of puzzles. The genealogist becomes a master detective with an almost impossible problem to solve. An immense jigsaw puzzle lies in front of him, each piece of which must be painstakingly located before fitted into place.

But even deeper and more vital comes the realization, after a study of his family tree, that not only are the chromosomes of these ancestors passed on from generation to generation but their every word and deed, their very emotions have had some effect on their descendants. The genealogist can show the importance of the individual man in his present life and his responsibility to the future. The genealogist can prove his own immortality. No less a man than Daniel Webster has said, "Those who do not consider themselves as a link connecting the past with the future, do not perform their duty to the world."

The genealogist must be both tolerant and democratic. Tolerant of those on his tree who have "slipped" for he can see how circumstances molded their fates. Democratic, because he becomes aware that in the last analysis all peoples came from the same source. The genealogist may point with pride to some one illustrious name on his family tree, but he feels a great deal prouder of the hundred unassuming, hard-working, God-fearing people who never got their name on the printed page. The genealogist desires to breath life into the history of his own family.

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OUR SILVER ANNIVERSARY

A Time to Remember

The year was 1971. We had the time and the means to wonder about our roots. Retired persons were making pilgrimages to places of origin and a movement was building--interest in local history, family history and the story of our lives.

I saw a notice in a newspaper about a genealogy group that was forming in Corvallis. All interested people were invited to attend. I was interested. I had found a wealth of family records and stories and now it was my responsibility to erect the Family Tree upon which these could be preserved. I needed help.

On a Saturday in October, 1971, I went to the Elizabeth Ritchey Room on the west end of the Corvallis Public Library. It was the beginning of what would become the Mid-Willamette Valley genealogy Society, and it would draw from a wide area across the valley. The End of the Trail Researchers, an established organization for the preservation of records and publication in Oregon were sponsors and provided guidance until the organization was established. I found informed researchers, and a desire to assist others like myself who had much to learn. I became a member, little knowing what adventure lay ahead.

In 1972, the first set of By-Laws were accepted by the Society. Representing the dedication and concerns of the founding group, it provided a structure to shape the organization.

The Genealogy Society should be a non-profit, non-political and non-sectarian organization. Its purpose should be to assist each other in genealogical research through association, inspiration and material exchange and interactions. It would strive to protect property, privacy and the rights of the society and individuals. It would be active in the preservation and publication of local history.

I would learn that because of the need that Velma Parsons had with her own family research, she had sought help from Mary Peffer. Together with Harriett Moore, former archivist of OSU and Celia Coon, they began to make plans and drew in other researchers and historians, including Harley and Helen Haskins of Lebanon. Several had experience with DAR records. A committee of six was appointed to help beginners with charts and methods. Workshops would become a continuing activity.

A mutual policy was developed with the Corvallis Public Library who would shelve a collection of reference books and materials. The Society began to purchase books for the collection, based upon the needs of the members and the demands of a well-rounded collection. Velma served as President throughout 1972. In 1973 Erma Lee Brown (Akers) of Salem, with experience with the End of the Trail Researchers, stepped into the presidency to contribute her expertise to the growing society.

Meanwhile, many of us were gaining knowledge and know-how in Genealogy. During the 1972-73 school year, about 14 of us studied with Joan Harris in a course call Genealogy and research at LBCC. I recall developing friendships ^{with} Velma Parsons, Edna Wiese, Ruth Lines Motley, Betty Moore, Elizabeth Akin, Jill Fosdick and Dorothy Blust at that time. Joan Harris came from Gladstone to teach the class, leading us through

in-depth methods of record-keeping and research technics. Her mentoring made it possible for Elizabeth Akin to continue teaching genealogy for LBCC.

Spe^{ci}al speakers at our monthly meetings brought us into contact with genealogy and historical concerns. David Duniway, then State Archivist, spoke to us on his struggles to save public records in many parts of the state of Oregon, and the importance of the State Archives.

I became president, January 1974. Susan Taylor was vice-president in charge of hospitality and programming, Betty Moore was secretary and Dorothy Blust, treasurer. During the year, Edna Wiese was appointed to the office of 2nd vice-president^y in charge of hospitality and bringing books in from the Library. Such people as Ralph Van Cleve were eager and ready to assist as needed. It was a year of putting the machinery of the society into action. We worked hard to produce a functioning organization that would achieve our purposes for the society and for individual members.

Since some had profited from seminars given by other societies, we decided to hold a seminar. In April of 1974, arrangements were made for a two-day seminar at the Forum at LBCC. **Arlene Eakles** and **NANCY Poolman** of the Genealogical Institute of Salt Lake City presented three sessions with hand-outs and purchaseable materials. These sessions broadened and extended our vision, giving us insights on the changing attitudes toward genealogy and its acceptance as part of the discipline of history. At a later date, Eakles returned for another session at which 69 attended from around the valley. With Johnni Cerny, Arlene published The Source; a guidebook to American Genealogy.

In 1975, Elizabeth Akin took over the president's chair. The program and the membership kept growing. As the Bicentennial of the

founding of the U.S. approached, we were caught up in the importance of our part in writing a new history of our country. The Society voted to place a display at the Horner Museum on the campus of OSU. One of the members built a case and I assisted Edna Wiese in arranging a large display which drew much favorable comment.

In 1975, I again took the chair, and in 1977, it passed on to Theodore Gump. For a number of years, Elizabeth Akin held workshops for beginners at each meeting. This provided time for sharing and learning for anyone. There were members working on cemetery records, marriage and death records. Far more was happening than just work on individual family trees. There was much concern for community and state problems for collecting and preserving records. Joan Mueller had joined us and she took over the project of indexing back issues of the Gazette Times. Several, including Mr. Striker, devoted many long hours to this task and due to Joan's perseverance, it was completed and published.

It was about this time that I was presenting workshops and seminars through LBCC of Book repair and preservation. There was much interest within the society as this provided fellowship as well as profitable projects in preserving heirlooms. And I must add, that over the years, Eugene Beard took care of publicity, attracting new members and reporting programs and activities of the society.

In the late seventies, the Library could no longer take control of the book collection nor allow us to have the use of the Ritchey Room, because of expanding demands within the library. Arrangements were made to meet in the basement of the First Christian Church. Mr. Striker built a large cabinet which was placed in space allotted us. Members cataloged books, maps, journals and leaflets and made these available to members.

The nineties brought more changes. The Benton County Historical Society was setting up a museum in the abandoned College ^{in Philomath,} The Genealogy Society had the privilege of placing their collection there where it could be used more freely, so the meetings have also been changed to be held in that area. Over the years, the By-Laws had been updated to fit changing times and membership, but basically, its purpose has remained the same. Other genealogy societies had been organized such as one in Sweet Home, one in Lebanon and the Linn Society in Albany. It was decided to change to name to The Benton County Genealogy Society.

Work has continued on record keeping, even though the membership has changed. The Society received The History Makers' Award in 1992 for indexing the 1910 Census records for Benton County. Cemetery Records of Benton County have been completed and published in five volumes by Becky Kiger and her committee with work still being done on some military records. A special Canadian Interest Group has met for many years and still continues.

Over these 25 years, records have become available on micro-film, micro-fiche and then computers. The L.D.S. Church has collected parish records in practically every country of the world, bringing this collection together in Salt Lake City. Electronic devices provide quick and easy access to records and information in a way never dreamed of in earlier times. The possibilities seem unlimited. Yet we still need to write and preserve our histories and our stories. We need to know who we are and develop our understanding of our communities. No machine is going to do the work of well-documented research nor provide the satisfaction of personal involvement. Benton County Genealogy Society has come a long way in 25 years and I hope the dedication and wisdom of the Founding Group will not be forgotten.

MID-VALLEY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY -- CHARTER MEMBERS:

9 June 1990

"WHY GENEALOGY? Some take up genealogy purely as a hobby, some take up the subject as a means to preserve precious records for their patriotic organizations. Still others find genealogy an interesting sideline to the study of history and many more look upon it as an integral part of the doctrine of their church. But the urge which drives some more than others is that of a solver of puzzles. The genealogist becomes a master detective with an almost impossible problem to solve. An immense jigsaw puzzle lies in front of him, each piece of which must be painstakingly located before fitted into place.

But even deeper and more vital comes the realization, after a study of his family tree, that not only are the chromosomes of these ancestors passed on from generation to generation but their every word and deed, their very emotions have had some effect on their descendants. The genealogist can show the importance of the individual person in their present life and their responsibility to the future. The genealogist can prove his own immortality. No less a man than Daniel Webster has said, 'Those who do not consider themselves as a link connecting the past with the future, do not perform their duty to the world.'

The genealogist must be both tolerant and democratic. Tolerant of those on the family tree who have 'slipped' for it is possible to see how circumstances molded their fates. Democratic because he or she becomes aware that in the final analysis all people come from the same source. The searcher may point with pride to some one illustrious name on the family tree but feels a great deal prouder of the hundred unassuming, hard-working, God-fearing people who never got their names on the printed page. The genealogist desires to breath life into the history of his or her own family." (From MVGS Vol.1 Scrapbook---Mrs. Esther Ervine)

We are here today to honor those of our Charter Members that remain in the Corvallis area. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to refer to the roots of our society. Our historian, Virginia Hoeye, has kindly brought the many scrapbooks that have been assembled over the years. In the first album, 1971-73, the earliest article mentioning the establishment of this society is dated Friday, 10 Sept. 1971, and comes from the Corvallis Gazette-Times.

"Corvallis area Genealogical Society will hold its monthly meeting, Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Elizabeth P. Ritchie Room of the Corvallis Public Library, with a business meeting at 2 p.m. Anyone interested in genealogy may attend."

Eighteen and one-half years ago, on Tuesday, 19 Oct. 1971, an announcement in the G-T stated:

"A group of people interested in genealogy have formed an organization, probably to be named the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society, to plan programs and help others interested in researching their family history. The organization, which would be open to anyone interested, hopes to cooperate with the Benton County Historical Society in the preservation and publication of area history. Charter membership would be held open until the end of the year. . . . The following temporary officers were elected: Mrs. Theran Parsons, president, Celia Wilson Coon, vice president; Mrs. Anton Zadina, secretary-treasurer; and Mrs. F. Wayne Beals, Harriet Moore and Mrs. W.E. Robison, directors." The program was given by Edna Wiese, who told of her recent trip to Germany and the problems of research in tracing family history in that country.

G-T, Thurs. 11 Nov. 1971---

"One of the projects of the group will be to assist in collecting old records and history of the community to be published by the 'End of the Trail Researchers' committee, so they can be made available to the public." The speaker for that meeting was Mrs. Leslie (Betty) Wilson, who's topic was recording a family history.

Through his column "Thoughts While Strolling..." written for the Benton County Herald, E.M. "Mitch" Beard provided publicity for the fledgling group. In the process he became one of the Charter Members. In the issue for 18 Nov., he mentioned the Society goals as presented by Mrs. R.M. Peffer: Personal research---building of family history, recording local history and indexing of old records.

In Vol.1 of the Society scrapbook, alongside of a photograph of Mrs. Peffer there is written: "Mary Peffer has worked for years to establish a genealogical group in Corvallis. The Mid-Valley Genealogical Society is her 'baby.'"

Elizabeth Akin, taught our beginners Workshop for a number of years, taught genealogical classes through LBCC, and served as our president.

Mildred Hawkins, served in many capacities, including Society President, conducted installations, presented programs, etc.

Edith Hughes, has provided an example of a good member through her interest and support over the years.

Harriet Moore, has generously shared her collection of materials. Her responsibilities as Archivist at OSU, placed her in a position to deal in depth with the history of Oregon, and we have all benefited from her amazing recall of events and facts.

In past years, The Outstanding Service Award has been presented to the following members:

- 1977 -- Mary Buchanan
Mrs. Celia W. Coon....Charter Member
Harriet Moore.....Charter Member
Mary Peffer.....Charter Member
1983 -- LeRoy V. Stryker
1983 -- Ralph W. Van Cleave

There were 59 names listed as Charter Members at the end of 1971. A number of individuals did not continue with this group, many who moved away were instrumental in establishing or participating in other genealogical groups, and, of course, several have passed away and are missed. However, as you have noticed there are still a faithful few who having started us on our way, have continued supporting and encouraging the group over the years.

We would like to express our appreciation to those Charter Members of the Mid-Valley Genealogical Society who have been able to be present here with us today. They have set us an outstanding example to follow. Would you please come forward as your name is called:

- Elizabeth Akin
Eugene M. Beard
Mildred B. Hawkins...(unable to attend)
Edith N. Hughes
Harriet L. Moore
Velma Parsons.....(unable to attend)
Edna E. Wiese.....(unable to attend)
Elizabeth Wilson.....(unable to attend)
Josephine Zadina.....(unable to attend)

Prepared by:
Tatiana K. Michael