



Benton County Genealogical Society

◆
MAY 2026



Lobster Valley Cemetery

Remembering

Gardeners are getting their plants in the ground. High school and college seniors are preparing to graduate and begin their next phase of life. Even the animals are busy, many with babies to watch over. This month brings a flurry of activities and observances, from May Day to Memorial Day.

For many, Memorial Day means “cemetery hopping.” Some cemeteries are difficult to reach, or may be completely closed off. If you are researching a cemetery in Benton County, remember that our library has several resources available.

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April Program Recap

“Sharpen Your Skills with The Family History Guide”

by Bob Taylor, assisted by Brent Bunker.



Bob Taylor demonstrated the “Family History Guide” available online for free at <https://thefhguide.com/>

This extensive program uses structured learning pathways as well as menu-driven resources, with the ultimate goal of “making a family history journey easier, more efficient, and more enjoyable.” He showed how easy it is to select topics of interest, whether it’s in the USA or other countries. While the learning projects are geared to work with FamilySearch, Ancestry, MyHeritage, or FindMyPast, many of the activities and resources are generic and can be applied to users of any platform. The site links to several other resources, including one in particular that Mr. Taylor highly recommended: Linkpendium <https://linkpendium.com/>

A 6-minute video of the Family History Guide was featured on the “Viewpoint with Dennis Quaid Project” and can be viewed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8YpumXjXCM>



**BENTON COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

75th Anniversary Party

On May 30th at the Philomath Museum, the 1950s will be in full swing with activities, vendors, music, food, and drink. It’s a party for the whole county, celebrating 75 years of history, culture, and art.

**Saturday, May 30, 2026
Noon to 6:00 pm**

See the BCHS website for more information:
<https://bentoncountymuseums.org/events/anniversary/>

Philomath Museum, 1101 Main Street, Philomath, Oregon

Family Memorabilia



Mary Catherine Lewis Allen, my great grandmother, first owned this lovely bread plate that was handed down through generations. Now it's my turn to keep it safe and pass it down to the next generation with stories of her life.

My great grandparents were married on my great grandmother's 15th birthday in 1856. She became the mother of 11 children including two sets of twins. Her husband fought in the Rogue River Indian War of 1855-1856 and later became a teamster traveling to Portland by horse and wagon for goods that were only available there. I imagine he bought this bread plate in Portland as a gift to his wife. ~ Linda Olsen

I was 2 ½ when my grandmother died in 1961 so I don't really remember her. Last summer, my cousins gave me her old trunk. It had been stored but nothing removed. The only identifying mark I could find was on the lock. Based on that, I think the trunk was made in the latter part of the 1800's. Given the age and what I know of its travels, it is in remarkably good shape. It still contains the inner shelves.

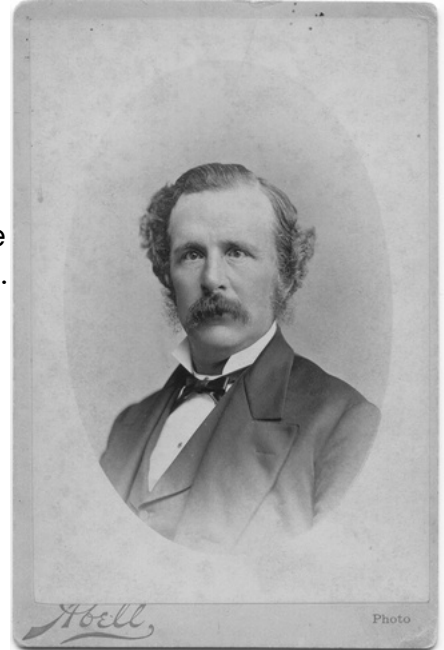


When I got it home and began to pull out and examine various pieces of my grandmother's life, the biggest surprise was waiting at the bottom. I found my own picture in a frame. ❤️
~ Laurie Corliss



Family Memorabilia, continued

The Rev Anthony Simpson (1831–1894) was my 2nd great grandfather. Born into a Quaker family in England, he immigrated to the United States in 1848. He eventually became a Presbyterian minister, serving in congregations in Pennsylvania, Oregon, Washington, Ontario (Canada), and Nevada. At one point in his career, he served as minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Olympia, WA, for about 18 months. When he left Olympia in 1867, the women of the church gave him a small photo album for carte de visite size photographs.



*Rev. Anthony Simpson
From the Ladies of the
First Presbyterian Church,
Olympia,
W. S.
Rev. A. Simpson*



Over the years, he filled that album with many family photos, including his father and siblings. The family photos of his brother's family were key in tracing the Simpson family back to their native town of Wellington, Somerset, England.

Some photos were identified with names on the back. Others were unlabeled, though the photo studio and place were often on the photos. This helped with potential identification by place and, with investigation, the time period that the photo studio was in operation.



Anthony's brother William Simpson (1825–1909) and his wife Mary Barlow Fidlin (1819–1899) who settled in Peoria, Illinois.

Years ago, before the Internet age, I visited Peoria to do research. My husband always kidded me about making a trip to Peoria but that is what we did in those days.

~ Susan Hayes

Note: See related story on next page.

Pennsylvania to Oregon, by Sea

Some of you may recall our March newsletter included a brief story on "The Journal Man," Fred Lockley. Our own Susan Hayes shared that her great grandmother, Emma Jane Simpson Woodcock, had been interviewed by Mr. Lockley back in 1923. The result of that interview was a two-day feature he wrote for the Oregon Daily Journal about her perilous sea journey to Oregon from New York via the Isthmus of Panama. Those articles are summarized below.

Emma Jane Simpson (1858–1942) was the second of four children born to the Rev. Anthony Simpson and Helen Crawford Simpson. The family had settled in Philadelphia before deciding to move west to Oregon where some of Helen's brothers were living.

In May of 1865, Emma was about 8 years old when the family traveled by sea toward Nicaragua on a steamship named the Golden Rule. Upon reaching the Caribbean Sea, the captain decided to celebrate his birthday with a "wealth of liquid refreshments." Next morning, due to the resulting hangover, the captain ignored warnings from the ship's mate about breakers ahead, and the vessel struck a submerged reef known as Roncodor Bank, about 300 miles north of Panama and 100 miles east of the island of Providencia.



The sailors used two small boats and a makeshift raft to ferry the more than 600 passengers and crew to a nearby barren island where they were stranded for 11 days. The



"Wreck of the S.S. Golden Rule, Caribbean Sea, May 30, 1865, artist's impression," House Divided: The Civil War Research Engine at Dickinson College, <https://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/44142>. (Artist's representation of a sketch by a passenger.)

crew salvaged as many supplies as they could from the Golden Rule before it broke up on the rocks. Unfortunately, they were unable to transfer the water casks to shore before that happened, so they dug holes in the coral rock where there were freshwater springs and lined them with canvas to use as catch basins. They lived on meager rations of coffee, hardtack, and bacon.

Incredibly, everyone survived the shipwreck. And during their time on the island, one passenger gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Roncodora.

The ship's officers set out in the small boats to find help. They returned with a couple small fishing boats but the passengers could not agree on an evacuation plan. By the time they came to agreement and began to set out, two U.S. warships came in sight. This was fortunate as the fishing boats were overloaded and probably would have been lost.

...Continued on next page

Pennsylvania to Oregon, by Sea (continued)

Emma's father paid one of the sailor's \$10 to dive into the wreckage of the Golden Rule to retrieve their trunks. The warships transported all the passengers to Aspinwall (now Colón), the Atlantic terminal of the Panama Railroad. From there, the Simpsons crossed the Isthmus through the jungle by train and proceeded by the steamer, America, up to San Francisco.

Emma's father was eager to reach San Francisco where a boat called the Brother Jonathan would soon embark for Portland. However, her mother insisted on staying in San Francisco to replace clothes ruined in the shipwreck. This delay saved their lives. The overloaded Brother Jonathan was wrecked on that very trip, claiming the lives of many friends the family had met while stranded on the Roncodor reef. Only 19 of the more than 200 passengers and crew aboard the Brother Jonathan survived.

The family eventually made their way to the Pacific Northwest, initially settling in Albany, Oregon, where Rev. Simpson preached in the Presbyterian church there and in Portland. They moved up to Olympia where he preached for two years before accepting a position back in Corvallis in 1867. A couple years later, they moved to a ranch five miles north of Corvallis near Mountain View Elementary School.

On May 8, 1879, Emma married Milton Sherman Woodcock, a local attorney. The couple built a home in Corvallis where they lived for 44 years and raised three sons: Arthur Roy, Clyde Harold, and Milton Edwin.

Milton Edwin Woodcock eloped with Mary Susan Tate Baird, marrying in Toledo, OR, on June 18, 1914. They had five children: Ralph Baird, Milton E, William Carter, and Emma Jane (plus another daughter who is still living). This Emma Jane went on to marry William Joseph Corcoran. They are the parents of Susan Corcoran Hayes.



If you have access to Newspapers.com, you can view the full two-day feature at the links below under the heading "Impressions and Observations of the Journal Man," by Fred Lockley.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1086031712/>

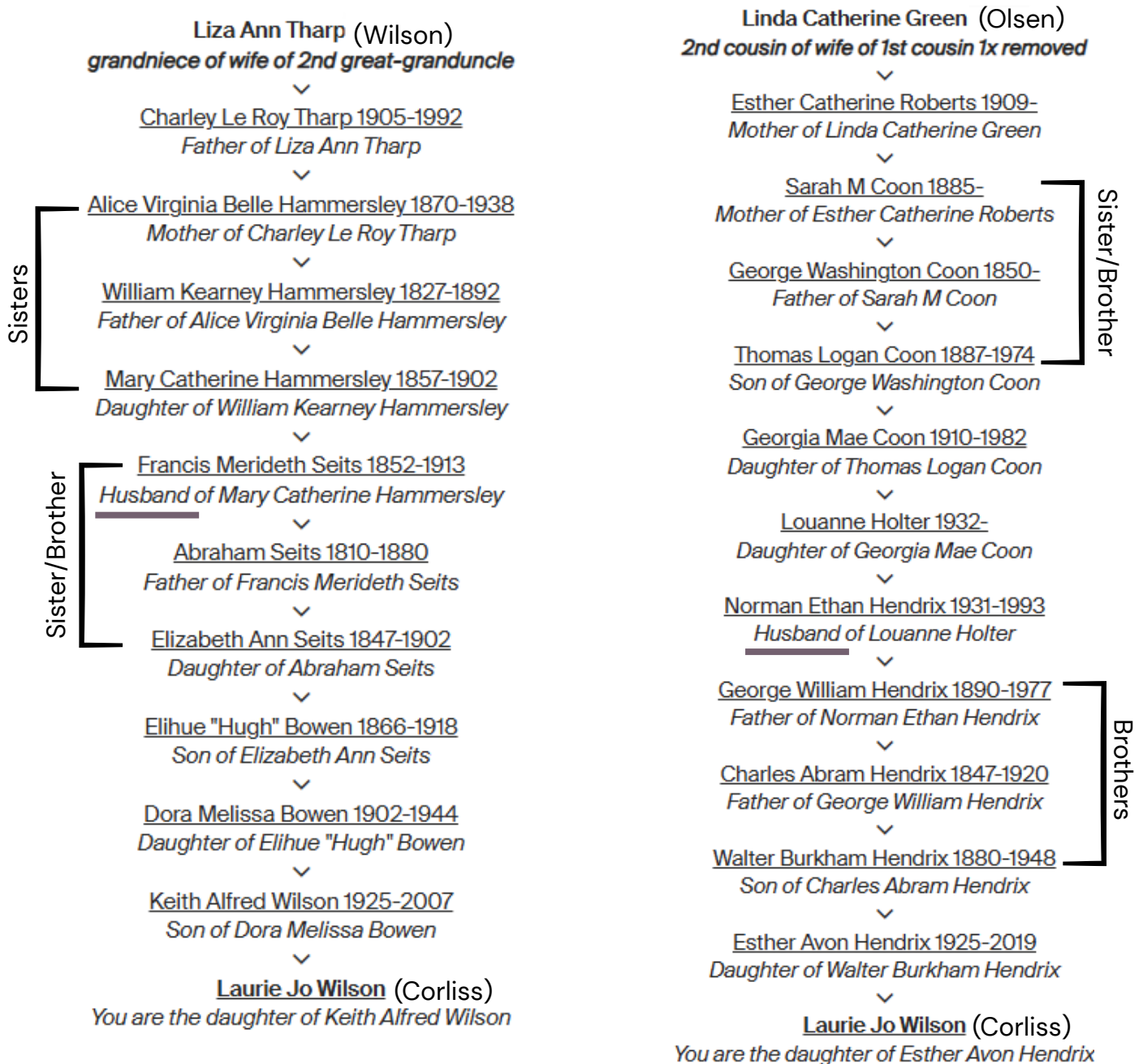
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1086032681/>

Shirtails & Outlaws

How do you define "shirttail" relatives? Distant cousins? "Chosen" family? I tend to favor the definition that describes a connection based on a marriage, where two people may have a relative in common but they are not actually related to each other. This is sometimes referred to as an "outlaw." My husband's sister is my sister-in-law, and I sometimes refer to her husband as my "brother-in-law-in-law." But "brother-out-law" might be a better fit.

I discovered at least two shirttail relatives among the BCGS members: Liza (Tharp) Wilson and Linda (Green) Olsen. I struggled to describe our "relationship" so I added them to my tree and let Ancestry figure it out. (Apparently, I'm not a tree "purist.")

Do you add "shirttail" or "outlaw" relatives to your family tree? ~LJC



Dum Tacet Clamat: Joseph Winfield Larkin

"Though silent, he speaks"

These words, in Latin, were inscribed on the tombstone of J. W. Larkin. My sister and I visited the Bellfountain cemetery recently and were intrigued by this marker. I had learned a bit about the Woodmen of the World fraternal organization while researching for a different story earlier this year, but this was the first "classic" Woodmen tombstone I had seen in person. So I took a picture. I decided to see what I could find out about this man who died too young. Through FamilySearch and old Weekly Gazette-Times editions, I was able to piece together a bit about Mr. Larkin's life. ~ LJC

Joseph ("Win") Larkin was born in the Monroe area, likely the community of Dusty (later renamed Bellfountain), to the Rev Abel Larkin and Rachael Kelsey Larkin in 1873. He drowned at the age of 27, leaving behind his wife, Emma Wooley Larkin, and three small children.

The final year of Larkin's life was particularly challenging, physically and financially. He was unable to work for about a year due to a severe injury to his arm. In early 1900, he suffered from a persistent case of the mumps that lasted for about five months.



Fortunately, Larkin was a member of the Woodmen of the World (WOW), Monroe Camp No. 493. His lodge brothers provided him with support during those difficult times, such as providing his family with a supply of firewood. They also paid his membership dues.

Larkin's life came to a tragic end in June 1900 during his first day back at work at the Ingram logging camp just north of Monroe. He led his team of two horses into the Willamette River, to draw logs across a gravel bar. The horses were harnessed side-by-side and he rode on one of them. After the log was released he turned the team around to go back for another log, but he was unfamiliar with the river and the horses entered deep water. As the horses struggled, Larkin was thrown into the river between them and, likely stunned by a blow to the head from a horse's leg, drowned in roughly twelve feet of water.

He was interred at the Bellfountain cemetery. Because his fellow Woodmen had kept his policy active during his disability, his widow received a \$1,000 death benefit, a sum described as a vital "benefaction" for the struggling family. In their formal resolutions, the Monroe Camp remembered him as a "faithful neighbor," a "loving husband," and a "kind father".

Knights of Pythias Cabin

I was cruising around on the USGS topographic maps site, focusing on historic maps that might show the location of the community of Peak on the north side of Marys Peak. It is interesting to see how some of the roads changed over time and how the contours of the land likely contributed to those changes. But what caught my eye was a label: Knights of Pythias Camp. My great-grandfather had been a member of the Knights of Pythias, but I knew very little about that fraternal organization.



(1957) <https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/>

I searched some old Corvallis Gazette-Times issues on Newspapers.com and learned that a cabin had been built on the 40-acre site in 1940. Subsequent searches revealed that the cabin saw a lot of use from the lodge members as well as several Boy Scout groups in the 1950's and '60's. It was sometimes a haven for lost hikers descending Marys Peak. There were also some records of vandalism. The last formal camp activity date I could find was in 1967. I don't think there is any remnant of it there now but, fortunately, the Benton County Historical Society had several photos to share. ~ LJC

First project was the outhouse.



Final cabin



BCHS 2003-038

BCHS 1986-031



Boy Scouts, circa 1968



BCHS 1986-031

Trails

In 1957, The Poetry Clinic (Roseburg, Oregon) published a small book of poetry collected from local “poets of the past and present.”

“A Century of Benton County Poetry, Centennial Edition” included a poem written by Myrtle Dale Stone, from Monroe, Oregon. There aren’t many published details about her life, but according to Ancestry.com and FamilySearch, she was born in 1898 and her parents were from Norway. She married Clyde Stone in 1928 and they had several children. Her husband died in 1937. Interestingly, on the 1950 census, she listed her occupation as Writer. She died in 1974.

Considering the many beautiful trails we have in Benton County, not to mention the numerous “genealogical trails” we have all followed, this poem seemed perfect.

TRAILS

Trails a-winding in and out,
Little trails to follow,
Some a-going to the top,
Some go down the hollow.

Some will cut a corner off,
Saving time and labor,
Some will cut across a yard
And take us to a neighbor.

Some little trails go round and round,
Some end up in a thicket --
Other trails to follow up
We have to cross a picket.

But whether up or down they go,
Around, across, or fake us,
You know I love to follow trails
To find out where they take us.



We need you!

The VP position is still open. Please consider ways you can be involved. Ask an officer if you have any questions about the appointed positions.

*** REMINDERS ***

The "Family Recipes from our Ancestors" cookbook is available to download from our website. We are asking a \$5 donation to the society for the cookbook.

Not yet a member?
See our website for how to join.



Thank you for supporting the Benton County Genealogical Society

Officers

Dana Sanchez, President

<vacant>, Vice President

Lois Courtney, Treasurer

Linda Olsen, Secretary

Appointed Positions

Membership: **Candy Koetz**

Programs: *** OPEN ***

Librarian: **Liza Wilson**

Audit: *** OPEN ***

Refreshments: **Pegge Gee**

Host: **Kathryn Moss**

Research: **Lois Courtney**

Book Sales: *** OPEN ***

Website: **George Davidson**

Facebook: **Payton James-Amberg**

Publicity: *** OPEN ***

Library Volunteers: **Lois Courtney**

Newsletter: **Laurie Corliss**

BCGSOR@GMAIL.COM

BCGS-OREGON.ORG

Benton County Genealogical Society
PO Box 35
Philomath, OR 97370

Meetings are held
on the second floor at the
Benton County Historical Museum
1101 Main St
Philomath, OR 97370

Benton County Genealogical Society presents



The BCHS-BCGS Collaboration



Sources in the BCHS
Research Library for
Local Genealogy
Research

Larry Landis, former director of Oregon State University's Special Collections and Archives Research Center, has done volunteer archives work at the Benton County Historical Society for the past five years. In that time he has learned about and used the vast array of resources in the BCHS Research Library, particularly those that he's used for genealogical related purposes. In his presentation, Landis will discuss those resources and how they complement Benton County Genealogical Society's Research Library.

Saturday May 9th 11:00 am – Noon FREE
On the second floor at the Philomath Museum, 1101 Main St.

A wheelchair ramp is located at the northeast corner of the building.
Please do not bring food or drinks into the museum.