



Benton County Genealogical Society

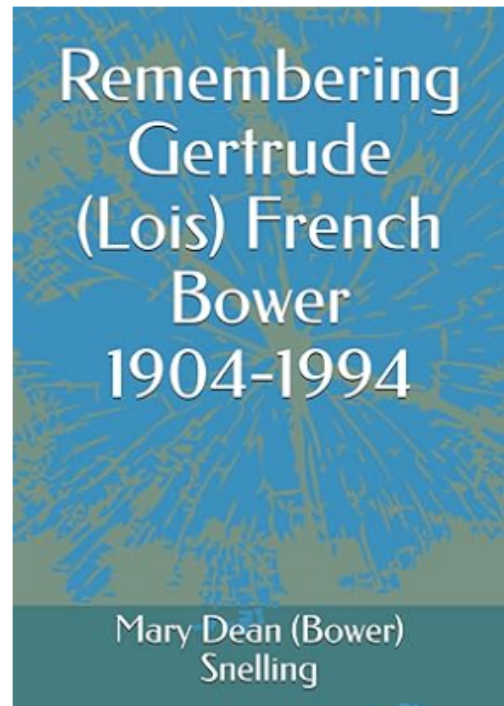
◆
JUNE 2026



Remembering Gertrude, Remembering Mary Dean

Most of you probably remember Mary Dean Snelling who had been a member of the BCGS for several years. Sadly, she passed away in January of 2024 following a yearlong battle with pancreatic cancer.

Genealogy had been one of her many passions. With the help of an online group called WriteNow, guided by Carol Darrow of Colorado, Mary Dean was, in her words, “racing against time” to tell her family stories. She managed to assemble the first chapter of a book about her mother, Gertrude. Mary Dean’s husband John was able to use her notes and writing assignments to continue her work and complete the book this year. He has graciously donated a copy of the book to our library where members will be able to check it out.



I had three concurrent reactions while reading her book. First, I was struck by the similarities I saw in Mary Dean’s family history as compared to my own. There are several stories and photos of treasured family memorabilia. Perhaps all families from rural backgrounds would see themselves in her mother’s life story, although Gertrude appears to have been an exceptional woman.

This observation also made me realize how much Mary Dean was like her mother. Both were quiet but adventurous, tenacious women. I used to enjoyed listening to her talk about her work with Corvallis’s sister city, Uzhhorod, Ukraine.

Finally, while none of us are ever truly finished with genealogical research, Mary Dean’s book is an example of a “final product” that so many of us hope to complete. ~ LJC

May Program Recap



Larry Landis, former director of Oregon State University's Special Collections and Archives Research Center, is the current president of the board of directors for the Benton County Historical Society (BCHS). He has been volunteering for the past 5 years in the BCHS archives.

Mr. Landis shared how the BCHS offers an extensive collection of primary and secondary materials designed to assist with local genealogical research. Key physical assets include an obituary file containing nearly 20,000 entries, over 1,000 family folders filled with personal histories, and a vast selection of school yearbooks and city directories. Researchers can also access census indexes and marriage records, as well as church and cemetery data to trace lineage within Benton County.

For those working remotely, the BCHS also maintains an online catalog with thousands of records. Mr. Landis showed how this is complemented by free online databases like Oregon Digital, Northwest Digital Heritage, and Historic Oregon Newspapers.

Access to the physical research library in Philomath is available by appointment. Contact Patty Larkin to schedule a visit.

541-929-6230
collections@bentoncountymuseums.org

BCHS Online Catalog
<https://bentoncountymuseum.catalogaccess.com/>

Oregon Digital
<https://oregondigital.org/>

Northwest Digital Heritage
<https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/nwdh/page/home>

Historic Oregon Newspapers
<https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/>

For those who were unable to attend, or want to refresh their memory, Mr. Landis's presentation is also available on our BCGS website:
<https://www.bcg-oregon.org/monthly-programs>

Davidson Cemetery

On a pleasant Sunday afternoon in May, my sisters and I had the privilege of helping George Davidson clean up his family cemetery located deep in the forest on the north side of Marys Peak. There are thirteen graves at this cemetery, with the first burial dated 1887 and the last burial in 1942. All had been residents of Peak, Oregon, although not all of them were George's ancestors.

This is the only cemetery I've ever visited that has "footstones" in addition to the name marker. Those blank boards have resulted in some people assuming they were unmarked headstones.

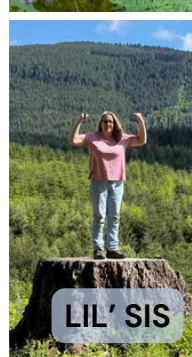
Since the area surrounding the cemetery was clear-cut (all trees removed) about five years ago, the grave markers were beginning to disappear beneath the fast-growing salal, ferns and berry vines. We cleared away as much debris as we could before our muscles began to complain.

We all had our aches and pains to remind us for a few days afterwards, but it was very rewarding work. I suspect we will be going back out there again in the near future to finish.

While this kind of work isn't for everyone, perhaps some BCGS members might be interested in doing this type of service project together in the future? ~ LJC



SOMETIME BEFORE THE CLEAR-CUT



LIL' SIS



OVERGROWN MARKER



THE BOSS HARD AT WORK



PROGRESS!

BCGSOR@GMAIL.COM

BCGS-OREGON.ORG

Benton County Genealogical Society
PO Box 35
Philomath, OR 97370

Have a wonderful summer
and we will see you all in
September!