



Benton County Genealogical Society

SEPTEMBER 2026

Back to School



Alsea 8th grade classroom, 1915

BCHS 2007-047.0004-1

It has been a busy summer and I've tried to get outside as much as possible. With fall weather pushing me back indoors, I might be able to finally finish scanning the Alsea High School yearbooks that my neighbor generously loaned me, spanning 1947 to 1970. (Scanned yearbooks are being shared on the Alsea Historical Society Facebook page.)

What a treasure to see so many pictures of friends and relatives. As a K-12 school, those old yearbooks also included photos of the elementary grades, providing an opportunity to see how all the students grew and changed over time.

Our BCGS library does not have many yearbooks, but we do have some that date back to 1911 for Oregon State and 1912 for Corvallis High School. Let us know if you have any older Benton County school yearbooks you would like to donate to our library.



In this edition

BCGS Member
Spotlight:
Linda Olsen

Fiechter-Johnson
House

Paper Dolls

L.L.L.L.

Contacts

October Program

Spotlight: Linda Olsen

Genealogy has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. My mother was raised by her grandparents who told pioneer stories about their lives. Having traveled across the plains by wagon train my great grandfather had stories to tell and my great grandparents visited with the many other early Oregon settlers who also told stories about traveling West.

[At right: George Washington Coon, Linda's great grandfather, wrote about how he walked barefooted most of the way to Oregon. He was about 13 yrs old when a bunch of boys from the wagon train went swimming and set fire to the grass where his shoes were.]

My mother repeated those stories and also told stories about her own life growing up as the youngest member of a large family of 10 children. Two of the youngest girls that looked after her were actually her aunts but they felt like sisters even into their elderly years.

One of Mom's uncles gathered information about his many brothers and sisters and later his daughter collected his notes



together to write a book. **A Coon's Tale** contains the location and dates of birth for each of the 10 children confirming what I had researched. Mom left me her audio tapes with her voice recording her earliest memories – a treasure beyond all others. Many of the stories my mother told me were included in her uncle's book. Some of the stories were funny and some more serious. One of the most amusing stories was about playing tricks on an uncle. One of the boys would put smelly Limburger cheese in the uncle's hat band and another time they put it in his pillow case when he stayed overnight. Of course, no one else could smell it! Another story a cousin told me was about how children in the Coon family were punished by their mother. Grandmother Coon would tell the child being punished to find a long sturdy switch. Most likely the first switch brought back would be very small. Then the child would be told to go find a much larger switch and so on until a suitable switch was found thus compounding the agony of punishment.

Grandmother Coon loved to dance. Many dances were held at the Willamette Grange Hall which is now being restored as the Willamette Community Grange Hall located at the corner of Hwy 99W and Greenberry Road. Mom would attend the dances with other young girls she knew or possibly ride with her grandparents. Neither of my parents had access to a car or a telephone. My parents wrote letters to each other and made arrangements to meet for dates. They eventually married in 1929 less than two weeks before the Stock Market crashed. When I was in high school, I asked my father how he and mom survived those bleak years of the early 1930's. He told me that when you are already poor you do not have anything to lose. They were happily married for 70 years.

Started for Oregon May 6/1863
Came by the way of Council Bluffs
Crossed the Missouri River
and came up on the North side
of plat came by the way of
of old fort half at this place
there was 60 wagons in the train
had fine weather and no
trouble with the indians no
sickness no deaths about
the worst thing that happened
to me was getting my shoes
burnt up alot of us boys went
in swimming and some of the boys
set the grass on fire a good big
shoes and no place to get any
more so I had to come across
the place barefooted



Willamette Community
Grange Hall 1922

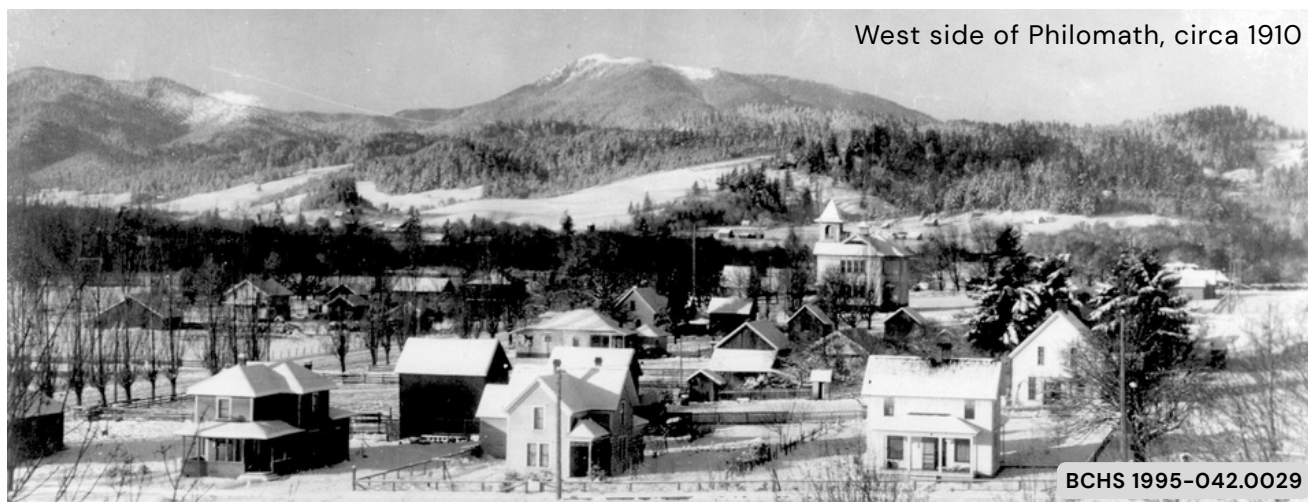
BCHS 1994-008.0815A-D1

...Continued on next page

Spotlight: Linda Olsen, continued

Perhaps the most surprising genealogy discovery was finding a book titled ***The Coon-Gohn Descendants from Chanceford Township, York County Pennsylvania***, which places my Gohn ancestors near Zweibruecken in the Palatinate, middle Rhine Valley, Pfalz, Germany. Ship records list several Gohn family members that sailed across the ocean on the ship "Thistle" in 1738. As the Gohn family expanded, most of them stayed close together in Pennsylvania and continued speaking German. Some descendants traveled south and changed their name to Coon and learned to speak fluent English. My ancestors are from the Coon group who relocated to the south then settled in the West.

No one in my father's family wrote stories about their lives; however, my grandmother Green did leave a WPA interview about her family. She wrote letters to her sisters and I was given the opportunity to copy the letters she wrote over most of a year. She wrote with pencil on tablet paper that is nearly unreadable today. Scanning the letters and printing them made a lovely booklet. After losing his two oldest brothers to WWI, my father and the remaining members of his large family worked extra hard farming. My father's oldest sister, my Aunt Mabel, pestered the rest of her family for genealogy information and eventually my grandfather Green told her he was born in Wisconsin and as a little boy traveled south with his family to Iowa where he started school. I found my grandfather with his family in the 1870 census in Franklin County Iowa. He was five years old. After most of their crops were destroyed by swarms of locusts the Green family traveled to the Nebraska region where they owned and sold property. Not being satisfied where they were living, they moved to the Midwest through US territory which had not yet been divided into states and eventually joined a wagon train to California, then to Oregon in time to be counted in the 1880 Oregon census. They spent the first months in Oregon on the coast, then found a homestead on the south slope of Marys Peak. My father was born on the Marys Peak homestead in 1908 as the 8th child out of nine in his family. A year later the whole family moved into Philomath so the children would have better schooling.



My grandfather became the proprietor of the butcher shop on Main Street in Philomath. The house they lived in on 18th Street in Philomath when Dad was very young still looks the same as it did in earlier photographs. I still drive by it once in awhile. My father's oldest sister, Mabel, married George Cummings, and she and her husband became postmasters in Philomath. One became a Democrat and the other one a Republican since postmasters at that time were required to be of the same political party as the current president of the United States. I checked that out and found it to be true. My father's younger sister became a school teacher. After a 6 week course at the Normal School in Monmouth, at 18 years of age, she started her teaching career in one room schools with multiple levels of students. Later she attended classes at the University of Oregon to Earn a Masters Degree in Education and taught in the Eugene schools for 45 years.

...Continued on next page

Spotlight: Linda Olsen, continued

Another surprise was finding a cousin and her sister who lived close by. Leslyn Gay Lewis had placed an article in the Corvallis newspaper wanting to know who had put the new tombstone on John Lewis' grave. She knew about my Grandmother Green's family. I took her to meet my Aunt Mabel as she was the one who kept track of the Green family more than anyone else. Gay and my aunt visited and I listened with amazement that Gay Lewis knew the past generations in my Grandmother Green's family better than I did. We soon figured out that her grandfather Lewis and my great grandmother Lewis were brother and sister. And the discoveries just keep happening.

If you are serious about your genealogy be sure to select a computer program designed just for genealogy. I still have many family notebooks and picture albums and will keep transferring information from the notebooks to the computer for a long, long time yet.

Contact all of your family members, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, to collect as many family stories as you can and record them for future generations. You will need to back up the many stories with sources especially birth, marriage, and death certificates; land deeds; censuses; war participation with pension information and any other first hand knowledge you can gather.

~ Linda Olsen



Ron & Linda (Green) Olsen
60th Wedding Anniversary



This past spring, Linda decided it was time to retire from her position as secretary of the Benton County Genealogical Society. She was an invaluable member of our board and served our society well for more than 20 years.

Happily, she will remain a contributing member of the BCGS and we look forward to working with her for many more years to come!

Thank You, Linda

Fiechter-Johnson House

This past July, I had the opportunity to tour the John Fiechter House (also known as the Fiechter-Johnson House) at the William L Finley Wildlife Refuge a few miles north of Bellfountain. The house is located along Finley Refuge Road in the northwest corner of the refuge. Tours are scheduled each summer and I highly encourage you to take advantage of those events. The volunteers who lead the tours are very knowledgeable of both the house and the families who built and lived there. ~ LJC



Following their marriage in March 1850, German immigrant John Fiechter and Cynthia Newton Fiechter settled on a 640-acre donation land claim, living initially in a log cabin and establishing a farm with outbuildings. In the first 9 years of their marriage, Cynthia gave birth to 7 children.

In 1853, John Fiechter began building a “fine lumber house,” using local lumber that may have come from Douglas fir trees on the property. Cynthia's father, Abiathar Newton, suggested a Classic Revival style layout with a central chimney, double hearths, and double front entrances.

The house's frame was constructed using mortise and tenon joints with hand-hewn sill logs, while the interior framing was cut with a sash saw and the interior wall boards were hand-planed. Downstairs featured a formal parlor, a kitchen, and a master bedroom, while the upstairs remained a single open room where their children slept.

Sadly, their daughter Rachael died in June 1861, and then John died in a hunting accident that October. Now a widow at 27, Cynthia was not allowed to fully manage the property in her own name. Her brother Norris became executor of the estate, and her father was appointed the children's guardian. Cynthia then married Archibald Johnson who had worked as a farm hand. Cynthia and Archibald had 6 or 7** more children.



As their family expanded, the house evolved to accommodate them. A new kitchen/dining room was added to the east (back) side of the house. This wing utilized more modern construction techniques, such as box frame construction and boards milled with a circular saw. The open second floor was partitioned into at least two rooms. Around 1863, Archibald finished the upstairs walls and replaced what may have been a simple ladder with winding stairs. Archibald died in 1889, leaving Cynthia once more a widow at the age of 55. Cynthia remained in the house another 17 years, with her oldest son operating the farm.

After Cynthia sold the property in 1906, the farm changed hands a couple times until it was purchased by a member of the Cabell family. The house became the residence of the farm manager. When the Cabells died, they passed the property to their son, Henry Failing Cabell and his wife Margaret. (The house has sometimes been referred to as “Failing Cottage.”)

**Records conflict over how many children Cynthia & Archibald had together. See chart on page 7.

Fiechter-Johnson House, continued

By 1933, the house fell into deep disrepair. Rather than tearing it down, Henry and Margaret undertook an ambitious restoration project. They added a prominent bay window to the south side room, replaced the flooring using salvaged materials from nearby farmhouses, and installed new front and back porches, a carriage house (see photo below), and a white picket fence. For the first time, indoor plumbing and modern heating were introduced with the addition of a hot-air furnace and a downstairs bathroom. To fit an upstairs bathroom, the original spiral staircase was replaced with a straight-run staircase.



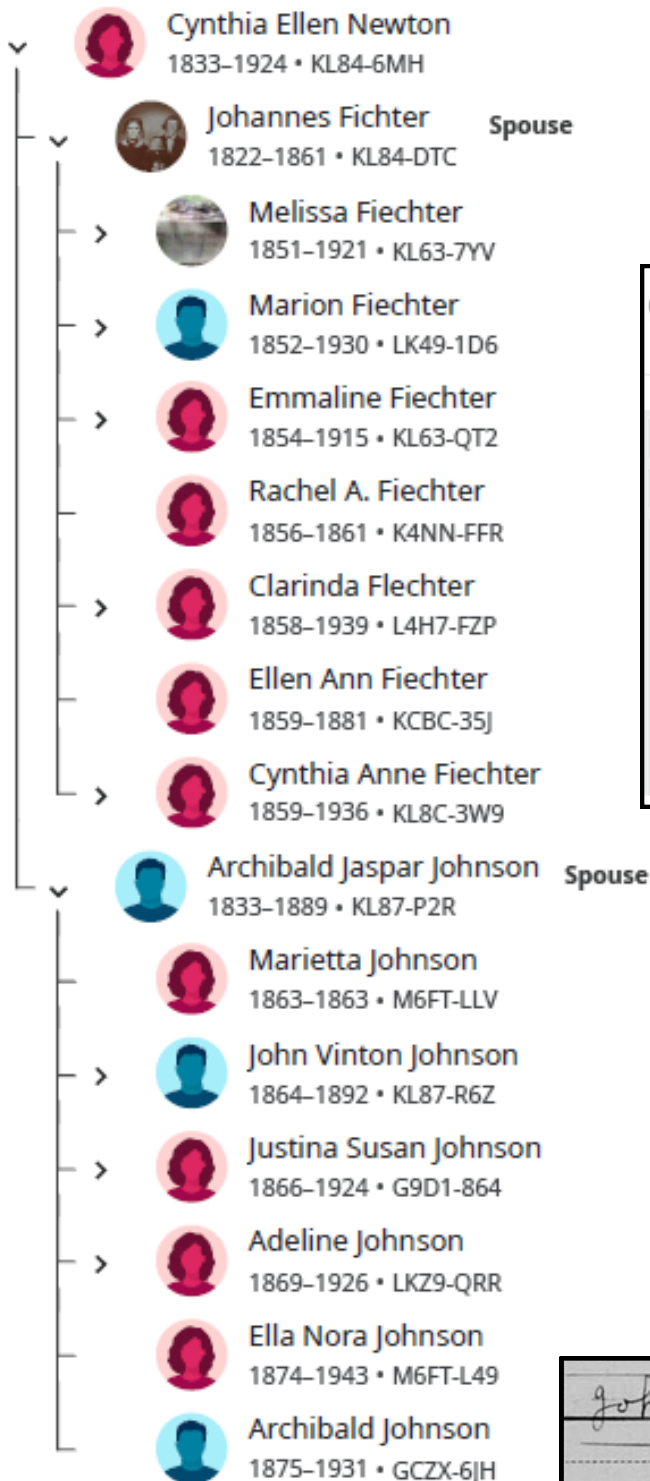
In 1964, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) purchased the property, and the Fiechter-Johnson house became the refuge's first headquarters. The back porch was enclosed to create additional office space, electric baseboard heating was installed, and a concrete sidewalk was laid.

Archaeological excavations by Oregon State University in 1981 paved the way for the home to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Under a cooperative agreement with the Benton County Historical Society, extensive structural preservation work began. This included rebuilding the fireplaces and chimney foundation in the 1980s. In 2000, workers replaced rotted sills, installed a new roof, repaired siding and studs, rebuilt the cellar wall with a concrete retaining wall, and poured a concrete footing for a new brick foundation. More recently, funding provided by the US Fish & Wildlife Cultural Resources office covered the cost of a full roof replacement and front porch repairs.

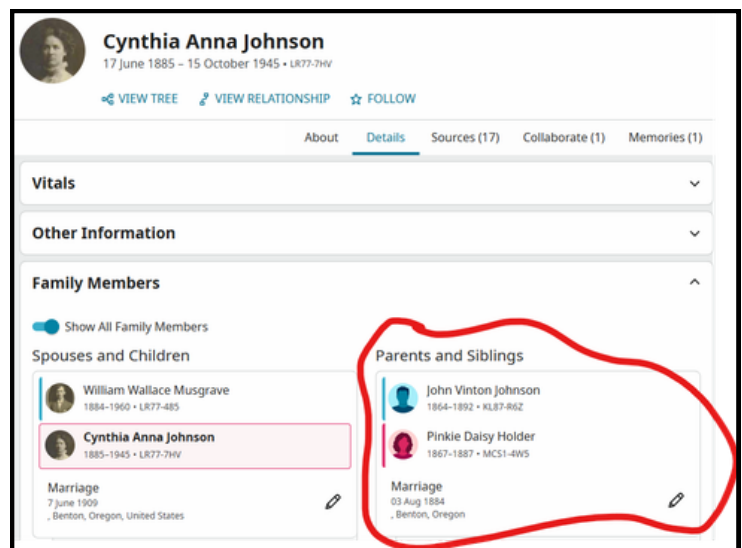


Fiechter-Johnson House, continued

Below is a descendency chart from FamilySearch showing the children of Cynthia Newton, as well as the separate entry for Cynthia Anna Johnson showing a different set of parents.



FamilySearch only shows 6 children born of Cynthia and Archibald Johnson, but the refuge literature names 7 children. Cynthia had a daughter "Cynthia Annie" by her first husband, and may have had another daughter "Cynthia Anna" by her second. They have different birth dates so they could be two different children, thus making the FamilySearch descendency record incomplete.



However, FamilySearch separately lists the second "Cynthia Anna" (also born in Benton County) with different parents. It is also important to note that this Cynthia's parents died when she was quite young.

After reviewing a record on the 1900 census for Benton County, I believe the second "Cynthia" was actually a niece of Archibald's, and likely went to live with her Aunt Cynthia Newton Johnson when her own parents died.

Cynthia Newton Johnson may not have given birth to the youngest Cynthia, but it appears she may have helped raise her from about age 7 and up.

4-51	Daughter	W F	Oct 1894	657
John Vinton Johnson	Daughter	W F	July 1870	24
Justina Susan Johnson	Daughter	W F	July 1870	24
Adeline Johnson	Daughter	W F	July 1870	24
Ella Nora Johnson	Daughter	W F	July 1870	24
Archibald Johnson	Daughter	W F	July 1870	24
Synthia	Niece	W F	Aug 1885	14

Paper Dolls

Despite several moves throughout her life, my mother somehow managed to save her paper dolls from when she was a little girl. I don't remember us talking about them much, except that she said she and her sister would cut clothing pictures out of old catalogs. I was surprised to find the dolls among her things after she died.



The cardboard dolls at the left are "Bobby" and "Joan." Designed by illustrator Queen Holden, they were first produced in 1928 by Whitman Publishing Co. Mom had carefully saved all their paper outfits, six for each doll.



The arms on each doll are depicted close to their bodies, but they are not moveable. The design of each outfit could simulate different positions for their arms, including holding objects.

"Joan" has a crease near her neck (don't we all), but they are otherwise in very good shape. Mom had kept them inside a large scrapbook (although they stuck out a little beyond the cover). They are one-sided images and mom had written her name on the back, probably to separate them from her sister's.

In the 1930's, Betty Campbell created "Round About" paper dolls. These were illustrated on both sides, with wrap-around clothes. They were often sold as a set of two dolls, such as "Diane & Daphne" or "Peggy & Polly." I think Mom's doll at right is either "Diane" or "Polly."



This doll is about 10 inches tall and has seven different outfits. The tabs are rounded to better slip into slots to hold the front to the back.

...Continued on next page

Paper Dolls, continued

Mom also had a Shirley Temple paper doll. It is about 12 inches tall and, like the "Round About" dolls, is printed on both sides.



Each of her eight outfits includes small lettered tabs and corresponding slots to show how and where to fasten the tabs around the doll. Her clothes were also more intricate, requiring a steady hand with the scissors.

Shirley Temple was a huge box-office draw in the mid-30's, offering a symbol of hope and optimism when the nation was coming through the Great Depression.



Apparently, Mom was still cutting out paper dolls in the 1980's. She saved a newspaper article from the Sunday Oregonian (Jan 23, 1983) that included images of "Debbie Dingle" and her friends, "Billy Bumps" and "Marietta," along with outfits. Mom must have acquired a second copy because she has the full page as well as cutouts from that same page. (I think she would have disagreed with the title though.)

I played with Betsy McCall paper dolls when I was little, and I remember anxiously waiting for Mom to finish reading the McCall's magazine so that I could cut out the paper clothes that were near the back pages. I remember being mad at myself when I accidentally cut through the folding tabs and then had to repair them with tape.

Unlike my mother's paper dolls, mine did not survive my childhood. And if the goal of the paper doll industry was to turn me into some kind of fashionista, it failed miserably, as anyone who has seen my wardrobe will attest. ~ LJC

Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen

While the setting here is outside of current-day Benton County, it was a part of the original Benton County configuration of 1847 and remained as such until February 1893 when Lincoln County was formed. In 1890, wealthy midwest loggers began acquiring large tracts of Oregon forest lands, often in unscrupulous ways.

Who were the L. L. L. L. and how did this organization help the WWI war effort? Further research in a booklet from our BCGS Library titled "A History of the Blodgett Tract, 1890-1946" answered some of my questions.

Situated on the central Oregon coast bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west and located between the Alsea and Yachats Rivers is the Blodgett Tract. This parcel was owned by John W. Blodgett, a lumberman from Michigan (not to be confused with William Blodgett, a Benton County pioneer of the early 1850s). This particular 10,000 acre parcel of timberland thickly populated with spruce trees became intensely important to the war effort during World War I.



Here's how it started: Before the United States declared war on Germany, the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) a labor union, called a strike. Poor working conditions resulted in high turnover of sawmill workers and loggers. Living in make-shift logging camps and working 10-hour days was quite rugged. The time was right for a strike. Their demands were 8-hour days and better working and living conditions.

When the United States declared war on Germany, April 6, 1917, the spruce trees on the Blodgett Tract suddenly attracted attention. The Sitka spruce lumber was tough, flexible, and lightweight, making it ideal for manufacturing airplanes. The government stepped in and organized an Airplane Production Board to oversee the production, and a subcommittee was formed to organize logging, sawmills, railroads, and durable roads for logging trucks. The infrastructure needed to be built as soon as possible to accommodate selectively cutting the spruce trees, milling the lumber specific to the requirements for manufacturing airplanes, and hauling the lumber by truck or railroad to an airplane manufacturing plant. Success was measured in board feet with an emphasis on increasing the number to 10 million board feet per month. Speed was of the upmost importance to help the war effort.

Soldiers helped fill the void of loggers and lumbermen left by the I.W.W. strike. Assigning soldiers to do civilian work had never been done before; however, the officials in charge of this huge project persevered and nothing could stand in their way. They had to have the manpower to supply the spruce lumber. Loggers and lumbermen on strike were unhappy and caused damage and possibly even sabotaged work in the logging camps slowing down the logging process.

...Continued on next page

Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, continued

"A patriotic organization known as the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen was prescribed as the antidote to sedition."

From: *History of the Blodgett Tract 1890-1946* by Stephanie Finucane, dated March 28, 1980, Waldport Ranger District Siuslaw National Forest, pg 8

And it worked. Members of this new organization created in 1917 were expected to take a loyalty pledge promising to contribute to the war effort by putting forth their best efforts to support the United States toward winning WWI. Members of the L. L. L. L. were given better working conditions and soon the loggers and lumbermen realized they were better off staying with the 4Ls and the strikes mostly stopped. The men felt they were also part of the war effort and worked even harder for a common purpose. The great demand on physical strength of many men working together under harsh weather conditions, and the nearly inaccessible terrain of the Oregon coast forest, slowed the building of railroads and numerous logging roads. World War I was nearly over by the time any airplanes were built from the spruce trees growing on the Blodgett Tract.

Curiosity about the 4Ls written on my uncle's service record motivated me to research the Loyal Legions of Loggers and Lumbermen. My uncle, Ralph Green, born and raised on a farm near Woods Creek west of Philomath, served in World War I as a member of the 133rd Spruce Squadron stationed at Fort Stevens near Astoria, Oregon. He was fatally injured in a logging accident on November 11, 1918. ~ Linda Olsen

Resources:

Finucane, S. (1980, March 28). *A history of the Blodgett Tract, 1890 to 1946*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Siuslaw National Forest, Waldport Ranger District.

Loyal Legion. (n.d.). About. <https://www.loyallegionbeerhall.com/about>

Mickelson, E. (1999). *The Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen*. Seattle General Strike Project, Civil Rights and Labor History Consortium, University of Washington.

<https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/strike/mickelson.shtml>



We need you!

Both the VP and Secretary positions are 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

<vacant>, Secretary

Appointed Positions

Membership: **Candy Koetz**

Programs: *** OPEN ***

Librarian: **Liza Wilson**

Audit: *** OPEN ***

Refreshments: **Pegge Gee**

Host: **Kathryn Moss**

Research: **Liza Wilson**

Book Sales: *** OPEN ***

Website: **George Davidson**

Facebook: **Payton James-Amberg**

Publicity: *** OPEN ***

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
Saturday of each month, Sept-June
10:30-Noon

Second floor of the
Benton County Historical Museum
1101 Main St
Philomath, OR 97370
(Elevator available)

Forgotten Oregon Stories

Bringing Oregon History to Life



Presented by Roen Hogg

Roen Hogg is an FAA Part 107 Certified drone pilot. He combines aerial photography with historical research to tell the stories of Oregon's people and places.



Forgotten Oregon Stories, created for YouTube, illustrate how historic diaries, photographs, early newspapers and vintage maps are used with modern technology and cinematic storytelling to explore the places where history really happened.

Saturday Oct 10th

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