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# Timber festival roots go back to 1901

BY EDWARD LOY  
MUSEUM MEMBER

Flying wood chips from woodsmen's axes, showers of sawdust from huge bucking saws, and cheering throngs of logging sports fans are a familiar part of the history of Albany.

The Mid-Willamette Timber Carnival of 1941, the brainchild of the chamber of commerce, evolved into the

long-running World Championship Timber Carnival. It was a big show that reflected the character of the community of that day and drew many thousands of people.

However, it was not Albany's first timber festival.

A much earlier, less ambitious event took place in 1901, on September 4 and 5. That's when Albany's Willamette Camp No. 5465 of

the Woodmen of America staged a celebration that featured a parade, a grand ball, and chopping, sawing, and log rolling contests.

The Woodmen of America was a national fraternal benefit society founded in Iowa in 1883 by Joseph Cullen Root. After hearing an inspiring sermon extolling the skills and labor of the men who cleared the land of

trees for homesteading, Root decided to incorporate logging themes into his organization. He encouraged the local chapters of the Woodmen, called "camps," to hold community-building events such as parades, baseball games, and, in wooded regions, forestry skills competitions.

Continued on Page 7

### Museum Directors:

John Buchner,  
Chairman  
Larry Bardell,  
Vice Chairman  
Michael Kok,  
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Tami Sneddon,  
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Shannon Leland-Willard,  
Bookkeeper

## Looking Back: Some lessons learned

BY JACK GILLESPIE  
MUSEUM MEMBER

Each time I walk or drive down First Avenue and come to Broadalbin Street, I feel something is missing.

Something IS missing — four stories of office buildings once atop the Wells Fargo Bank (then the First National Bank) on the southwest corner of First and Broadalbin.

In the late 1930s, when buddy Harold and I were eight or nine years old and "turned loose" downtown, we would dash to the southeast corner of the bank building where the elevator was located to "run a race."

The elevator operator was a young, friendly girl who seemed to be always reading a book, even when taking the lift up and down. We would give her a floor number and up she would take us without saying a word.

Upon reaching our floor, we would jump out and speed down the steel spiral staircase adjoining the elevator shaft, the elevator girl had already returned to the bottom floor and would be reading her book. It was a race we never won, but we kept trying.

During the school year, it was required that each grade school student be inoculated for diseases prevalent at the time. You didn't just get a shot as you do today. You went to a doctor's of-

fice in the bank building where he would poke a number of needle holes into your upper arm and shoot something into each hole to immunize you from a number of diseases for a length of time. A scar would remain for years.

As I got older, I made a number of trips to the multi-story bank building for various reasons.

I once went to a loan company there to see about borrowing some money. I was asked if I had a job and I said "no, not at the moment." The loan officer shook his head and walked away.

Another time I went to consult a lawyer on one of the upper floors of the building about suing a fellow who had taken my car and wrecked it. He asked about the wrecked car and I told him it was a 1935 Plymouth worth about \$95. The lawyer looked at me, shook his head and disappeared.

I heard that a girl I liked was working for a fourth floor dentist. I needed a bit of dental work so I made an appointment so I would have a chance to talk to her. I went to my appointment and was quickly put in a chair and my mouth braced open as the work was done.

### Lessons learned:

You can't borrow money unless you have some.  
You can't sue for \$95.  
You can't flirt with your mouth braced open.  
And, there is no way to outrun an elevator!

## History Circle members get insiders' look

Members of the "History Circle" were treated to an insiders' look at the past, present and future of the Museum's operations on May 19.

The newly-named support level members were guided through the Museum where they heard presentations on collection care, maintenance of the 1887 building, storage of artifacts and future development.

Ed Austin and Marie Naughton of Interpretive Exhibits, a Salem museum consulting and exhibit fabrication company, talked about plans for the updating and expansion of the first floor exhibit area. Interpretive Exhibits was hired by the Museum's board last fall to enhance the existing public viewing area. The project includes a detailed plan for the entire exhibit area and completion of the first phase by the end of the year.

Future ideas for the development of a portion of the second floor into a display gallery were also previewed. Board chairman John Buchner talked about the Museum being a future recipient of a major local art collection. The program was followed by hors d'oeuvres. More than 30 donors were in attendance.

This was the first event for "History Circle" members since its designation last year. To qualify for membership,



A 1942 war bond sale features song and dance by Albany first-grader Janet McDonald

A few years later, as a young bride, she was rock 'n roll singer Elvis Presley's first secretary in Memphis, TN. For the story, See Page 2

individuals or couples contribute a minimum of \$250 annually.

Mary Jacq Burck, chair of the development committee, organized the event with assistance from the Museum's staff and other volunteers.

Insiders also got a close look at re-

cently completed projects, including the repainting of the Museum building's exterior, painting and repair of second floor walls, the addition of several canopies over entrances and the installation of a second-floor heating and air conditioning system.

# Albany native signed The King's autograph

BY ADDIE MAGUIRE  
MUSEUM INTERN

In the fall of 1955, Janet (McDonald Young) Canton became a secretary. Any girl at the time surely would have been envious of Janet's employer, Elvis Presley. Perhaps she was lucky because she didn't know her luck at the time, and was not like many southern girls who would have swooned at The King's feet. Nevertheless, the native Albany girl made her spot in history simply by typing letters and organizing fan mail.

When she was a little girl living with her parents on Calapooia Street, Janet McDonald recalls that her house was the last on the block until housing was needed for veterans after World War II. She attended Albany High School, graduating in 1954, the last class before the school was rebuilt on Queen Avenue (now known as West Albany High School). She married her high school sweetheart, Ron Young, and moved to Memphis, TN, where he had joined the Marine Corps.

Growing up in Albany, Janet was a seasoned performer starting at the age of five. She performed for soldiers at the USO (United Service Organizations) building at First Avenue and Lyon Street, the Victory Cen-



Janet Canton  
and Addie Maguire

ter at First and Broadalbin Street, and at the nearby Army base, Camp Adair.

She would sing and dance with groups and sometimes perform solo. Janet said, "I remember the first time one of the soldiers asked me to dance. I said, 'I don't know how to dance.' And he answered, 'Well, just stand on my shoes, and I'll do the steps.' I replied, 'that'll ruin your shine!' 'It doesn't matter,' he said 'I can shine them up again,' And so that was the way the soldiers danced with us little kids."

Janet also was a part of a roller skating team in Albany. Two of her teammates,

the Hadley twins, who competed in the 1960 Winter Olympics in pairs ice figure skating, were killed in a 1961 plane crash on their way to Belgium to compete in the World Championships.

When Janet moved with her husband to Memphis, she was a new wife and needed a job. She went to the employment office and the clerk pulled out a file card that said, "Young singer needs secretary." Janet was interviewed by the rock 'n' roll singer's manager, Bob Neil. Needless to say, she was hired on the spot and was sent to work in the pink and black office of the up- and-coming singer Presley.

Her secretary duties were to open and read fan mail, write letters concerning Presley's tours and sign Elvis's pictures with his signature. "I had to autograph his pictures, and I learned to copy his signature." Janet recalls with a smile, "You couldn't read what the name was there, but I did pretty well with the copy." She did get to meet Elvis when he would come into the office occasionally. The first time they met, she described him as being "very nice, very sincere. He looked very tired. I think he had just arrived back from a tour the night

before."

Eventually, Mrs. Young learned that Elvis would sign a recording agreement with RCA Victor and a movie contract with Warner Brothers. This was the turning point in Elvis's career.

The signing day, as she remembered, was something special. "Elvis came to the office with his parents, who I met for the first time," Janet said. "Elvis was very close to his mother, he was so fond of her and spoke of her so lovingly. I just felt so fortunate for having met them... like I had witnessed something special."

Her job coming to a close, Janet was given the great compliment of continuing her work for Elvis in Nashville, TN. Of course, she stayed with her husband in Memphis but was flattered by the offer. Elvis had recently purchased his Graceland mansion and invited her to visit. Unfortunately, she was unable to be received at his home because the guards mistook her as one of the The King's many swooning fans.

Janet and her current husband Alan Canton reside in Albany, but she has fond memories of The King.

—Addie Maguire, a senior at Oregon State University, served as an intern at the Albany Regional Museum spring term 2011.

## Museum '11 budget reflects economy

Revenue for the Albany Regional Museum in 2011 is projected at \$108,000, according to the budget document presented by the finance committee and approved by the museum board of directors January 4.

Expenses total \$92,400. Both income and expenses have been reduced from the 2010 budget, reflecting less forecasted revenue and an expected decrease in endowment earnings.

The 2010 budget numbers were \$113,500 for revenue and

\$106,000 for expenses.

Carryover building improvements, begun in 2010, will add an additional \$70,000 to spending from reserves.

These improvements include the addition of heating and air conditioning to the second floor of the Museum building, awnings for the north and south sides of the building and remodeling of the former retail rental space for a meeting room and restrooms.

Other spending totaling \$60,000 for the first phase of an exhibit area update will also

come from reserve funds.

Treasurer Michael Kok says that the Museum has grown its reserves over the years to handle the building and exhibit projects with the assistance of several grants.

However, income for basic operations continues to depend on memberships, cash gifts, parking space rent and endowment earnings.

"These are tough economic times and the Museum must maintain strong membership and gift income to meet our expenses," Kok said.

## GIFT IDEAS

New books and videos available for purchase at the Museum include John Baker's DVD on Camp Adair and Mona Waibel's "Sweet Home Good Old Days III." The Museum's published illustrated history of the Albany World Championship Timber Carnival also is among offerings.

# Button collecting featured at annual tea

Collecting buttons was the subject of the annual Albany Regional Museum membership tea April 15.

Attendees numbered 58 with male members of the board of directors serving the refreshments.

This was the fifth tea sponsored by the Museum.

Ilse Christensen of Corvallis shared her expertise with buttons and traced the history of button collecting around the world.

In addition to the Museum staff of Tami Sneddon, Jennifer Jameson and Peggy Kowal, volunteers who helped with the event included Shannon Leland-Willard, Mary Arnett, Mary Jacq Burck, Evonne Rutherford, Nancy Lochner and intern Carri Body.



**One table setting**



**Bev Haven and Betty Thorn admire button jewelry.**



**Museum exhibit area was scene of 2011 membership tea.**



**Board member Joe Simon was among several men who served refreshments.**



**Button speaker Ilse Christensen.**

# Many mysteries follow the life of Mahlon Blain(e)

Illustrator was born in Albany in 1894

BY LINDA A. ELLSWORTH  
MUSEUM BOARD MEMBER

His illustrations have been described as bizarre, weird, creepy, erotic and fantastical. Norman Rockwell, he wasn't.

Mahlon C. Blaine was born June 16, 1894, to Wilson R. and Carrie Blain in Albany. The Wilson L. Blain family had come to Linn County in 1850, settling near Brownsville. After the death of their father in 1861, the family moved to Albany. Leighton E. Blain went to work clerking for S.E. Young. In 1865, he founded the Blain Clothing Co., which would be in business for more than 100 years.

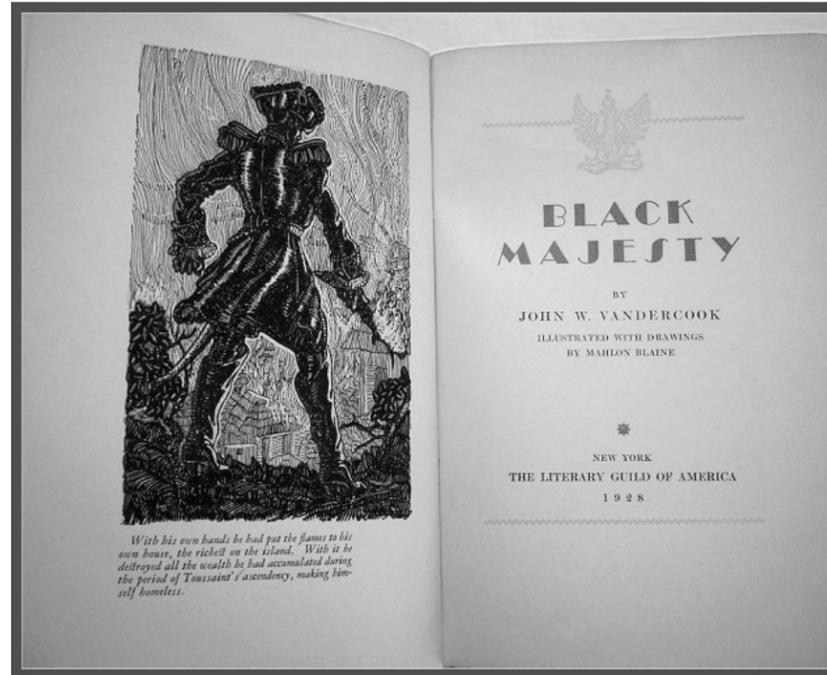
Wilson R. Blain taught in area schools, then went to work for his brother Leighton. In 1891, Wilson married Carrie Chamberlain. They are listed in the 1900 and 1905 census, but by 1910 they were divorced.

In the April 16, 1910, census, Mahlon Blain is listed with his father; four days later he is listed with Claude Jack, his stepfather in Tacoma, WA. This is just the beginning of the many mysteries of Mahlon.

Exactly why and when he added the 'e' to Blain is not known, but it first appears on his World War I draft registration. He is living with his mother in Dilly (Washington County), OR. He says he is blind in his left eye.

Sometime in 1915 or 1916 Wilson R. Blain moved to Dayton, OH, where he died on April 28, 1920. By then Mahlon is living in Portland with his mother, Carrie Jack. Both he and his stepfather gave their occupation as "artists." In 1921, Mahlon applied for a passport in Los Angeles to travel to Mexico City for an art exhibition.

In 1926, he moved to New York City and was successful in being hired to illustrate the book *Lime-*



house *Nights* by Thomas Burke. In 1929, he illustrated the book, *Black Majesty* by John Vandercook, which by 1932 had sold over 500,000 copies. Other books he illustrated include *The Tattooed Man* by Howard Pease, Ben Hur Lampman's *Here Comes Somebody*, and several Edgar Rice Burroughs novels reissued in 1962 with Mahlon's illustrations. For a more complete listing of the books he illustrated plus examples of his art, go to the web site: [www.erbzine.com/mag8/0880.html](http://www.erbzine.com/mag8/0880.html).

In 1930, records show that he lived in Manhattan, NY, with Thelma L. Blaine, age 24. He was 36 and married, presumably, to Thelma. His occupation was illustrator.

In an interview in the *Morning Oregonian*, Aug. 27, 1932, there is a picture of him and Thelma. In this



Self portrait of the artist



His passport photo

interview, he reminisced about working at *The Oregonian* in 1912 as a copy boy. He then was transferred to the art department where he claims he received his "first instruction in drawing." However, in the 1909-10 Albany City Directory, Mahlon C. Blaine is listed as a cartoonist.

What happened to Thelma is not known. In her picture, she looks tall and thin, like the women in many of his illustrations. Mahlon continued to provide illustrations for books and magazines for the rest of his life, becoming more and more a recluse. He died in 1969.

Two books have been written about him: *The Art of Mahlon Blaine* by Gershon Legman, Peregrine Press, c1982 and *The Outlandish Art of Mahlon Blaine*, ed. by Brian J. Hunt, GB Graphics, c2009.

**Our mission statement:** "To preserve, exhibit and encourage knowledge of the history and culture of Albany, Oregon, and its immediate surroundings through collection of artifacts, documents and photographs."

# Peacock House: A grand sight in its prime

BY ADAM ROBERTSON  
WEST ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL

Growing up in North Albany, passing by the Peacock House was a common occurrence for me. For several years, I was under the impression that it had earned its name by being home to a large group of colorful fowl. My mother eventually set the record straight, informing me that a family called the Peacocks once occupied the house. My friends and I were convinced that the house was haunted and spent several afternoons standing in front of it, daring each other to go inside, but never having the courage to actually go through with it.

Once the Peacock House was unceremoniously torn down to make way for Ray's Shopping Center, the myths and legends I had heard drifted to the back of my mind. However, every once in a while, a meandering memory of the house ignites a series of questions in my head: Who were the Peacocks? What did they do? What is the history behind the lost landmark?

William F. Peacock was born in Arbroath, Scotland, in 1845. He later immigrated to the United States and purchased 20 acres in North Albany with his wife, Mary E. Whetstone. The house was constructed in two phases, the first of which began in 1885. The back portion was built before the front of the house. William Peacock made his living as a farmer, and planted a wide variety of crops across his property.

Peacock grew grapes, walnuts, rhubarb, cauliflower and even had an orchard full of apple and pear trees. Some of the cherry trees he planted still remain at the site of the house today, as well as a single, ironically large, miniature hickory.

The back portion of the house contained rooms essential for living — kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms — and provided a simple shelter for the Peacock family when they weren't occupied with their farming duties. The front section of the house contained less practical rooms, including a living room, where the Peacocks spent much of their leisure time, and a parlor. The parlor is remem-



POTTS COLLECTION

The North Albany home of William F. Peacock, seen in 1908

## Curiosity leads to research project

Each year students of the Advance Placement U.S. History class at West Albany High School visit the Albany Regional Museum to do research on local history. Students then write a report on a subject approved by their teacher, Everett Hartman. The accompanying story on these pages by senior Adam Robertson is about the William F. Peacock House, which was a community landmark for many years before being razed for a commercial site.

bered by William Peacock's granddaughter, Irene Githens, for its beauty. There was an organ and a piano, and she loved simply being in the glamorous room. By all accounts, the Peacock House was a grand sight to behold in its prime: a long series of steps led to the front door, which had "Wm Peacock" inscribed about it in ornate glittering gold lettering.

Described as a hobbyist, William Peacock had interests in photography and taxidermy. While the claim was never verified, William insisted that when panes of glass that made up his greenhouse roof broke, he would repair the holes by patching them up with glass negatives from photographs he had taken. Additionally, he used some of the leftover glass from the construction of the greenhouse to design and build a small projector run by candlelight, which he referred to as his "magic lantern."

Peacock built a darkroom inside

the house and experimented with different methods of photography, including a few clever camera tricks he came up with himself. Githens recalls a picture of one of the Peacock sons standing on both the left and right sides of a chair. Also an amateur taxidermist, he kept a long glass display case full of all sorts of dead animals which he had killed and prepared, including birds, pheasants, beavers, squirrels, and even foxes.

Peacock was a perfectionist and kept all the plants in his yard and in his orchard in immaculate condition. The property was perfectly manicured; it was his pride and joy. Ironically, the very plants he worked so hard to maintain overran his property after his death.

Despite its stately appearance, the Peacock House was no stranger to tragedy. William's wife, Mary, died from labor complications shortly after delivering the couple's 13th child in 1901. William remarried later that same

year. Just a few years later, Peacock was digging a well on the property with two of his sons, William H. and Asa. Asa was digging inside the hole, while Peacock and William H. were on the sides, scraping dirt away. One side of the hole caved in, leaving Asa buried under seven feet of dirt. William H. immediately jumped in to save his brother only to have the other side collapse on him, leaving both men dead.

The father continued to live a quiet life after the death of his sons, farming and pursuing his hobbies until his own death in 1941 at the age of 96.

The Peacock House I grew up with was always in a sad state of utter disrepair. Windows were broken, doors were missing, and the structure itself was badly dilapidated. I didn't pay much attention when it was demolished to make way for the shopping center. However, I have found that the saying "you don't know what you have until it's gone" rings true: after researching the history behind the building and the family, I find it a bit tragic that it was simply done away with. I wish I could have seen it in all its grandeur, when it was considered one of the most beautiful homes in Albany.

**Sources:** Meza, Shannon. "This Old House." *Albany Democrat-Herald*, 2-29-04. Various handwritten notes at the Albany Regional Museum.

# AAUW program comes to Museum



**Museum administrator Tami Sneddon welcomes AAUW members.**

## 'Women's Work' theme of event

In recognition of women's history month, the local chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the Albany Regional Museum joined together to present a program on "Women's Work," March 12.

The program provided an historical, literary and socioeconomic perspective on women in the workplace. A cast of individuals from both organizations portrayed working women from the Albany community's past. The cast used Museum exhibits as backgrounds for their portrayals. More than 50 attended the public event.

Among the historical figures portrayed were Christine Dunbar Monteith, a member of the community's founding family; Abigail Scott Duniway, an Albany millinery shop owner who led the statewide effort for women's right to vote; Orah Harkness Buhl, an actress and musician who traveled the early 1900s Chautauqua circuits; Sallie Welch Chamberlain, wife of the Oregon governor from Albany; Naomi Althouse Young, wife of one of the community's leading early day merchants; Bessie Hale, proprietor of the Deluxe Shoe Shine Parlor; Virginia Koos portrayed herself as a former Linn County school teacher; Doris Price, bookkeeper for an 1940s department store; Ianthe Smith, who was a reporter and society editor for the local newspaper for nearly 50 years; Shirley Smith portrayed herself as a Timber Carnival competitor; and Evelyn Burleson Waldren, an Albany aviator in the 1930s and 1940s. The program also included a reader's theater of poetry and excerpts from various writings that followed the workplace theme. A presentation on pay equity issues concluded the program.



**Denise Hughes-Tafen as Bessie Hale, shoe shine parlor proprietor.**



**Kim Sass as newspaper society editor and columnist Ianthe Smith.**



**Shannon Leland-Willard as Doris Price, department store bookkeeper.**



**Virginia Koos as an Albany-area school teacher.**



**Peggy Kowal as Naomi Young, wife of store owner S.E. Young.**

# Small crowd took in timber festival

Continued from Page 1

Planning for the Albany Harvest Home Carnival began in early summer of 1901, and invitations went out to camps in Portland, Eugene, Salem, Brownsville, Crabtree, Lebanon, Monmouth, Alsea, and Falls City. Organizers hoped for crowds as large as 3,000-4,000 spectators. According to the *Albany Democrat's* account of the carnival, the local Woodmen eased the financial burden of the trip to Albany by securing "reduced fares on all the roads...and during the two days the toll, by special arrangement with the city council, will be taken off the bridge and all travel over it will be free."

Competitors came from throughout the Willamette Valley to vie for cash prizes. Woodsmen's bands from Salem and Albany played "splendid" music in the streets, and two vocalists from Portland entertained with "well-rendered solos," in the estimation of the *Democrat*. Orators delivered their speeches from a stage constructed on the east side of the courthouse, while the logging contests were conducted on a platform behind the Alco Club on Broadalbin Street. Dancers waltzed the night away during the grand ball at the Second Avenue armory. Other entertainment included foot and bicycle races, a tug of war, and a baseball game between the Albany Ramblers and the Portland Woodmen.

To mark the beginning of the celebration, the mayor of Albany, William H. Davis, gave a noteworthy welcoming address that prompted a reporter to declare him "one of the best outdoor

speakers in the state." The September 4 noon train from Portland delivered other dignitaries, including Gov. Theodore Geer, who delivered a brief, warmly-received speech.

While the chopping and sawing contests were similar to those of the later Timber Carnival, the log rolling involved no splashing, dunking, or swimming. Instead, teams of six men competed to see who would be the swiftest to roll a large log one hundred feet across the Alco Club platform. The team from Crabtree won with a time of 52 ½ seconds and claimed the first-place prize of \$20, a considerable sum in that day.

The five-mile bicycle race, which ran from the corner of First Avenue and Lyon Street to the Oak Creek Bridge on the Tangent Road and back, was fiercely contested and featured three stout Albany lads: Tom Alexander, Sam Dolan and Tom Shea. Alexander was a foreman for the *Albany Democrat*, Dolan made cigars for William Eagles's Ellsworth Street cigar company, and Shea was an employee of the Corvallis and Eastern Railroad.

The *Democrat* reported that Jim Riddle, a "professional road rider" from Monmouth and winner of several previous races won a \$15 Kodak camera for his first-place finish. Receiving a \$5 bicycle lamp for placing second was "professional bicyclist" and trick rider Bert Shaw of Salem.

Regrettably, while those people who came to the celebration reportedly had a wonderful time, attendance for the carnival was less than anticipated, possibly owing to the timing of the event. The *Albany Democrat* opined that the

carnival should have been scheduled for late September because too many people "are hop picking, others are harvesting, and people generally have just returned from their summer outing and hence have done all the going for the season they desire." However, a late September date would have conflicted with the Oregon State Fair of the era, and crowds for the Albany gala would surely have suffered accordingly.

Another, more fundamental, reason for the modest success of the Harvest Home Carnival is that logging and forest products were relatively unimportant here in 1901. Albany was a service hub for the surrounding agricultural community rather than a wood products center. The timber-themed show was the idea of the local Woodmen and did not necessarily mirror the interests of the broader local population.

There is no record of the Willamette Camp undertaking a reprise of the fete the following year. A community celebration of the timber industry would have to wait another four decades when Albany had become a timber town.

## Calendar of events

Museum activities for the summer and fall include:

- Wednesday, July 27, 7 p.m., historic cemetery tour, (sites yet to be determined.)
- Tuesday, August 9, 7 p.m., patron event, Flynn Building, second floor, First Avenue, Downtown Albany.
- Saturday, September 10, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Museum, Rhys Miller Classic featuring Ford Thunderbirds.
- Tuesday, October 4, 5 p.m., annual membership meeting, Museum, 136 Lyon St. S.
- More information on events: [www.armuseum.com](http://www.armuseum.com).

### Museum adds two names to memorial roll

The names of two longtime Albany residents were added to the Museum's memorial roll since the Winter 2011 newsletter.

They are Elizabeth Haddan and Margaret (Peggy) Boock.

### MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP FORM

To renew or begin your annual membership, indicate the type and fill in the form below.

- Friends of the Museum \$15  
 Business \$50  
 Patrons \$115  
 Business Patrons \$150  
 History Circle \$250  
 I want to learn more about the

Chautauqua Circle and Brenneman Society.

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

The Museum is a nonprofit  
501 C-3 corporation.

**Albany Regional Museum**  
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