

Albany Old Times

A bi-annual publication of Albany Regional Museum

May 1999

Albany Regional Museum

302 Ferry Street SW
(3rd St. Entrance)
Albany, Oregon 97321-2263
(541) 917-7587
e-mail: arm@teleport.com

Free admission - donation only

Open Monday thru Saturday
12 noon—4 pm

Tours available at other times
by calling (541) 917-7587



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Current Exhibits

Albany Airport
Aviation
Camp Adair
General Store
Photography
Railroad
Vaudeville
& more

President's Letter

It was just a year ago in a newsletter that we informed you of the City Library Board's request to vacate our Museum space in the basement of the downtown Carnegie Library. Unfortunately, we have not come up with a new location or building, although we are still optimistic that we will be successful. This is not a simple task due to problems that we outlined specifically in that newsletter. The basement of the Carnegie has not been used for library purposes for about 25 years (Before us, it was used for Kiddie Craft preschool.) We have been located there for the last 20 years, and one develops a "feel" for the building and its future long-term use. For many years, the City wished to close the whole building due to budget constraints in supporting two libraries with its duplicated services and expenses. During those years of threatened closure, I always felt that the Carnegie building should be saved, restored and maintained, although not as a "regular" library. My concept for this building (and it has nothing to do with whether the Museum stays or goes) is that it be used by the various historical groups of Albany as a meeting and gathering place, a repository of historical research materials, including those relating to Albany, and include materials and books on architecture and the restoration of homes and properties. It could also house records of deed, Sanborn fire maps, local histories, and perhaps even include quarters and space for the Linn County Genealogy Society, which now houses information and materials in the Main Library.

While both present libraries do a wonderful job, I see the major long-term problem not as a need for more space in the Carnegie Library, but a serious lack of space in the main library. We should all be working for an addition to the present main library or, better yet, a new and larger library for the city of Albany with its ever-expanding population.

On May 17, 1999, the Museum had tours for 65 third-grade students from two Albany elementary schools. If we had to close, we would deprive school children of visits to the local museum as part of their school learning experience. I hope this does not happen. I still think the Museum will find a building with adequate space and easier accessibility.

Contact the Albany Regional Museum if you have comments, suggestions or wish to help in any way: phone number, 917-5787; e-mail is arm@teleport.com. We appreciate your continuing support. The Museum is a non-profit organization recognized by state and federal statutes and all donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Gerald Brenneman, President

Did You Know...

...that visitors to the Museum during the first four months of the year numbered:

| | |
|------------|------------|
| 1996 - 287 | 1998 - 593 |
| 1997 - 316 | 1999 - 646 |



Captain John Conner Burkhart

Captain John Conner Burkhart of Albany was the builder and flyer of Oregon's first airplane. He is not remembered much around the state or in Albany now, but for many years at the turn of the 20th century he was remembered by farmers around Albany as the man who mowed down their fences and corn fields with his "crazy" flying contraption.

Burkhart left Oregon to attend Cornell University in N.Y. majoring in engineering and spending time studying flight and airplanes. He met the Wright Brothers and asked to work with them; but they refused, preferring to work by themselves. After graduating from Cornell in 1908, he completed his first airplane at Ithica, N.Y., and flew it for 3 miles in 5 minutes on Sept. 2, 1908. He used a wooden monorail as a runway to get it into the air. The landing was rough, but Burkhart was able to walk away from the crash, which in those early days of flying was a major criteria of success!

Returning to Oregon in the winter of 1909-1910, Burkhart, with his cousin Del Burkhart and friend William Crawford, designed and built Oregon's first heavier-than-air machine. They installed a Buick engine rated at 4 horsepower, which Crawford claimed was "exaggeration." John, Del and Willie went to Goltra Park in Albany and built a track about 150-feet long of wooden 2x4s surfaced with scrap iron for a runway. They also built a tower to hold a counterweight of an axle and railroad boxcar wheel which, when dropped from the tower, helped give their plane more momentum on takeoff. This way they got their plane up to 40-50 feet in the air and across the field. Since they could not turn the airplane, they mowed down fences and fields, although they did manage to avoid water towers and silos. They were given credit for the first flight in Oregon in April 1910.

Burkhart's last and most successful plane was built in 1912 in an old boathouse on the riverbank in Albany. It was equipped with a Boland 60 horsepower engine and attained a speed of 50 miles an hour. Within a week after finishing the plane, the three young men took it to the Albany Race Track and were soon flying it all over the Willamette Valley (after adding a steering mechanism and wheels to replace sled runners). They became quite an attraction at local fairs and other occasions from 1912 to 1914. Albany-ites decided at that point to be proud of their "crazy" flying son and began to write of his exploits in the local paper. A 1912 Albany paper recorded that "John Burkhart flew from the fairgrounds across the Northwest portion of the city, over the Chautauqua grounds (Bryant Park) and when directly over the Willamette River, shut off his motor and glided safely to a gravel bar."

Later in 1912, Burkhart gave 15-minute exhibition flights twice daily from the ball ground at Chautauqua Park, completing a circuit of several miles and landing successfully at his starting point, assuring the success of the 1912 Chautauqua gathering.

John gave up flying for marriage to Mabel Goss (the bride's family stipulated that Burkhart give up flying), and began a career as associate editor of *Aeronautics*, a leading publication devoted to mechanical flight. He also served as a commissioned Captain in the Army Air Corps at Washington, D.C. during WWI as a technical advisor. Later, while awaiting assignment as a photographer in the Observation Corps on Long Island, NY, he contracted tuberculosis. He returned to Portland, Oregon and opened a photographic studio, since photography was another major interest of his. In 1920, he had to move to California for health reasons. While living there, he photographed many artistic scenes of Santa Barbara for which he won much commendation. He became seriously ill and died on May 15, 1926 at the young age of 43.

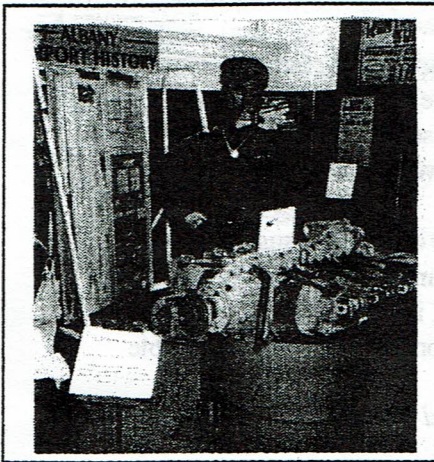
(The above material was part of a full-page story from the *Sunday Oregonian*, April 27, 1947.

Come see the Albany Aviation and Airport Exhibit at the Museum and learn more about John Burkhart as well as Charles Langmack, another local Oregon pioneer airman.

"Flying Machine at Albany Or. 17 June 1911."

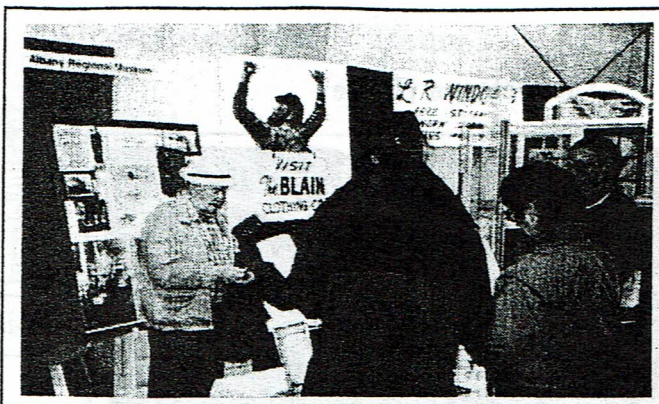


... is penciled on the back of this picture postcard. Research indicates that this is John Burkhart at Goltra Park or the Albany Race Track. (photo courtesy Jerry Brenneman collection)



WWI uniform & WWII Stinson L-5 airplane engine are part of the Airport & Aviation Exhibit at the Museum.

*** Albany Regional Museum is open Monday-Saturday, 12 noon - 4 p.m. ***



Museum volunteers Russ Sprague (l) & Eugene Mroczo (r) talk with ARM-booth-visiting couple (center) at the Linn County Home Show Feb. 5-7, 1999 about some artifacts and photos from the Blain Clothing Company. ARM Board members and volunteers talked personally to over 200 about the Museum and its purpose and goals.

Did You Know...

...that an Albany shoemaker H. Flindt, also known as "crazy Flindt" built the first steam aeroplane in the West in the 1890s?

The steam-powered plane, that he spent three years building, flapped its wings like a bird. A takeoff was tried from a flatroofed house near 5th & Montgomery streets. The plane went down—not up—nearly killing him!



Did You Know...

...when the Montieth brothers established claims on land which is now downtown Albany, they built a cabine to serve both claims?

One half of the cabin sat on the claim of Walter, and the other half on the claim of Thomas. While eating at their table, both brothers were able to do so on their own land. The cabin was replaced by a frame house in 1849 which now sits across from the post office and is the excellent Montieth House Museum.



Thanks

...to the following persons, organizations, businesses who donated or loaned items, gave money, help and/or time to the Museum since our last newsletter in October:

- Albany General Hospital*
- Washington Federal Savings & Loan*
- McKay Truck & R.V. Center*
- Marc Aitki*
- the Jack Rohrbough family*
- Bill & Doris Scharpf*
- Rod Tripp*
- Flinn's Living Theater*
- Veterans Commemoration Assn.*



Welcome

The following became family, individual or senior members of the Albany Regional Museum:

- Jack & Margie Gillespie*
- Chuck & Lise Grato*
- Maurice Hamington*
- Karl Humiston*
- Melvin & Shawlene Martin*
- Lee & Bett McCoy*
- Richard R. Milligan*
- Larry & Jo Roth*



V

Robert Potts has completed text & photo preparation for Volume 5 of the series "Remembering When: A Photo Collection of Historic Albany, Oregon." Due to the tenuous position of the its relocation, the Museum is unable to assist Potts in the Volume V production. If you can be of assistance to him, please call him at 928-9673.

(For a great price on Vols. II, III, IV, come to the Museum: \$12.50 each or \$35 for set of 3)

*** For further information/tours phone (541) 917-7587 or e-mail: arm@teleport.com ***

Your Albany Regional Museum needs YOU as a volunteer / donor (\$ or artifacts) / all of the above.

Yes!

I would like to volunteer: days/hours available _____

I would like to donate \$ _____ / artifacts _____

I would like to become a member: [] Business \$50 [] Family \$15 [] Individual \$5 [] Senior/Student \$3

I would like more information regarding _____

Name _____ Address _____

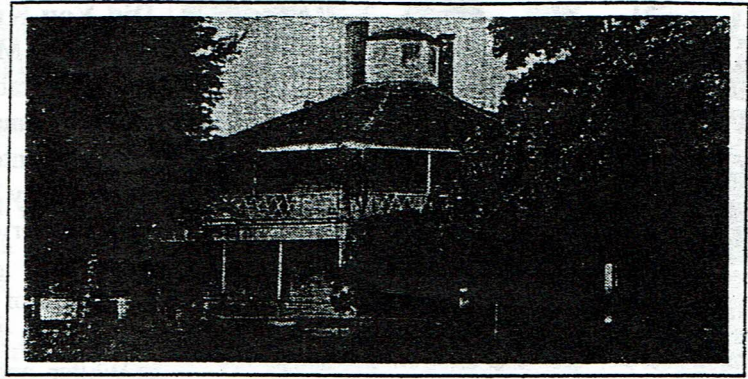
Phone _____ City, State, ZIP _____

The best day and time to reach me is M / T / W / T / F / S / S _____ a.m. _____ p.m.

Mail or bring in to Albany Regional Museum, 302 Ferry St. SW, Albany, OR 97321-2263. Thank you.

The Octagon House

One of Albany's most unique homes was the eight-sided house (referred to in the Albany *Evening Herald* newspaper as "the old block house"). Built in 1851 and completed in 1852 by Presbyterian Reverend Joseph P. Miller, the house was erected on West 5th and Walnut Street. It was later moved to Second and Washington streets. The octagon shape was designed to prevent a surprise attack from Indians since the approach of anyone could be seen from any side of the house. The Octagon House was destroyed by fire on July 4, 1922.



One story about Reverend Miller and the house involved local Indians who used to go into the house, sit on the floor and stare at the family. One day the Indians were watching the Millers eat a berry pie for desert and the Reverend Miller got a seed under his dentures. He spit out his teeth to remove the seed and then put them back into his mouth. The Indians were so shocked that they left the house immediately and never returned because, as they said, "too much medicine."

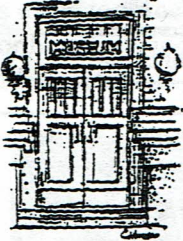
The Reverend Miller later drowned when he was a passenger on the the steamboat *Gazelle* which blew up on the Willamette River.

Did You Know...



- ...that in 1998 the Albany Regional Museum had visitors from 68 other Oregon towns & communities?
 - ...that people visited the Museum from 19 other states in the U.S.?
 - ...that we had 29 total visitors from such foreign countries as England, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico and Canada?
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