

Albany Old Times

Bessie Travers Cyrus

By Dan Murphy, Volunteer Coordinator



Photograph of Albany Garden Club's monument unveiling at the Linn County Courthouse by club's 1st president Marguerite Alderson Burkhart, commemorating member Bessie Cyrus who died in 1946, magnolia tree a gift from Hammerly Garden, Albany.

Museum's Burkhart Collection: 1982-001-0272

For many years while walking around the Linn County Courthouse grounds I would notice certain memorial plaques. One of those is a fine bronze plaque on the Southeast corner at the base of two Magnolia Grandiflora trees. The plaque is in memory of Bessie Cyrus and reads as follows:

Magnolia Grandiflora
Planted by
The Albany Garden Club
In Memory of
Bessie Cyrus
1948

I had never heard of Bessie Cyrus. No one I asked seemed to have heard of her either. The more I researched Ms. Cyrus the more I learned about how active she was in the community and the effect she had here. Yet no one I spoke to seemed to know anything about her beyond what I learned from old newspaper accounts. This surprised me because the tree that was planted in her honor is so grand and the plaque is so well made and substantial. Seventy-four years have passed since her death (1946) and I found it remarkable how quickly she had been forgotten.

Bessie Cyrus was born on 24 September 1892 in Adelaide, CA. She died 9 September 1946, age 53 at her home in Albany. She was buried at the Masonic Cemetery. She was married to Ward Cyrus. When she died she lived at 1008 Cottage Street.

Ms. Cyrus at the time of her death was production manager for the American Red Cross and had sent out a call for knitters to produce V-neck vest sweaters for soldiers out of a large shipment of olive drab yarn.

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Linn County Settlers, By Cathy Ingalls, Board Member

This is the latest installment of our monthly history articles by Cathy Ingalls. For more articles visit our website armuseum.com/new-blog-1

The late John Miles of Lebanon couldn't locate the grave of the mid-19th century minister that founded the long-gone town of Union Point so he made it his mission to find the graves of other pioneers who crossed the Oregon Trail, settling in Linn County on original donation land claims. It is estimated that about 1,200 families "proved up" on land claims in the county by the end of 1855.

Miles' goal was to record as many graves as possible before the settlers' names were lost to history.

A barber, he began his quest in the 1970s after reading Robert Duncan's "Covenanters By the Willamette." Members were Scottish Presbyterians.

One of the group's ministers was Wilson Blain who founded the Union Point Academy in southern Linn County. The school was the forerunner of Albany College, which later became Lewis & Clark College.

The task to gather information for documentation became so onerous that Miles teamed up with Albany historian and genealogist Dick Milligan to help with the research. It was Milligan who convinced Miles it would be more meaningful to later readers to flesh out the lives of settlers by including information about them found in biographies, obituaries and genealogies, which Miles did.

The result of their work is contained in 40 bound volumes published in 1984 titled "Linn County Oregon Pioneer Settlers. The books are available in the Albany Regional Museum's research library, which is open to the public.

Milligan writes in his forward to the books that most of the pioneers who came to Linn County became farmers and their names along with the contributions to their communities are largely forgotten.

Milligan completed the two men's work after Miles died halfway through the project. Miles died in 1996 and Milligan in 2011.

What follows are short biographies of some of the people who appear in the books:

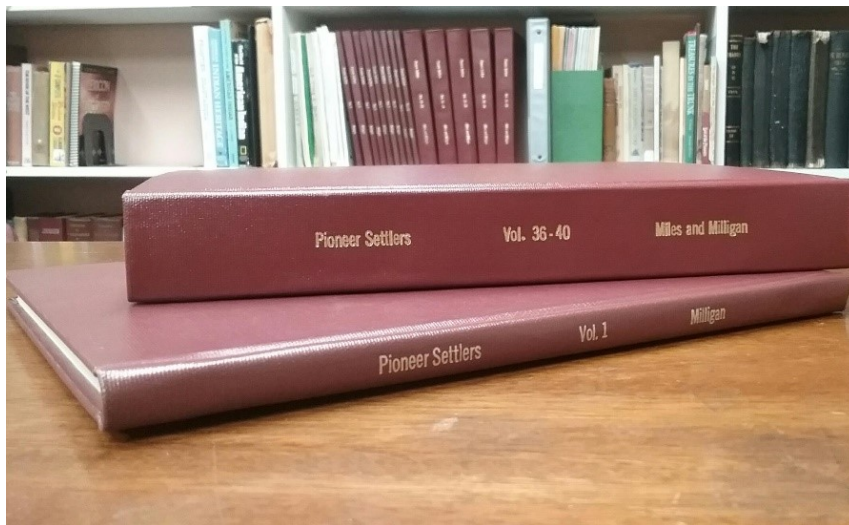
William Bilyeu was born in 1785 in Kentucky, arriving in Linn County in 1852 with an ox team and 52 family members.

He lived northeast of Scio, had 11 children, and was known for being the ancestor to the most family members in Oregon, reaching more than 100, at one time most were living at the forks of the Santiam River.

Bilyeu served as a private in the War of 1812 and took part in Andrew Jackson's campaign against the Creek Indians.

He died in 1879 and is buried at Bilyeu Den Cemetery in Scio.

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COVID-19 & the Albany Regional Museum

This space is typically used to highlight our upcoming events, exhibit openings, and programs. Due to the unprecedented outbreak of a novel coronavirus known as coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19, we are in the midst of canceling and rescheduling a sizable portion of our events. At this time it feels prudent to not publish a listing of events that are highly subject to change as this outbreak develops.

Our community at large is going through a difficult moment in time. Businesses and nonprofits of all sizes are struggling. This is literally history in the making and will have residual impact for years to come. I believe it is safe to say this disease and disruptions to our daily life will be an inflection point that will shape the next generations view of the world. Just as September 11 and the Great Recession were moments that shaped the Millennial generation, so too will COVID-19 shape Generation Z.

Recognizing these facts, we at the Albany Regional Museum need your help. First, we need your support; if you have a Museum membership please remember to renew. Consider upgrading it or even better give one to a friend, we are the keepers of history including moments like COVID-19. Second, document what is happening around you during this crisis; keep a journal, collect newspapers, and keep announcements from businesses. We will overcome this and when we do we will need to save the stories of how we responded to share with future generations. Thank you, be well and stay safe.



Photo Courtesy: Kay Burt



Albany Regional Museum

2019 Annual Report



Photo Courtesy: Kay Burt

Board of Directors:

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Amy Bozorth, Collections &
Exhibits Manager
Erica Broad, Member & Visitor
Services Coordinator
Kathwren Hayes, Member &
Visitor Services

Our Mission

To preserve, exhibit, and encourage knowledge of the history and culture of the Albany, Oregon area.

Our Vision

The Albany Regional Museum will serve as an indispensable cultural asset and historical leader in our community by engaging and educating the public and fostering an appreciation of the rich history and heritage of the Albany, Oregon area.

Board Report

The board worked hard in 2019 with a renewed focus on achieving our strategic plan. We reaffirmed our values and goals going forward and updated our vision which is included above.

In addition to the strategic plan, the board has been improving the Museum through work on the board committees, preparing new policies, and bringing on 2 new board members Fritz & Hannah Darling.

Board Members Darrel Tedisch, Kristen Schuttpelz, Jim Jansen, and Ruth Alderson were all nominated and voted in for an additional term. The board is energized and looking forward to 2020!

Volunteers

Congratulations to Ruth Alderson (far left) & Darrel Tedisch (far right) on going Above & Beyond in 2019. Congratulations to Maddie Getz (center) for earning our 2019 Volunteer of the Year award!

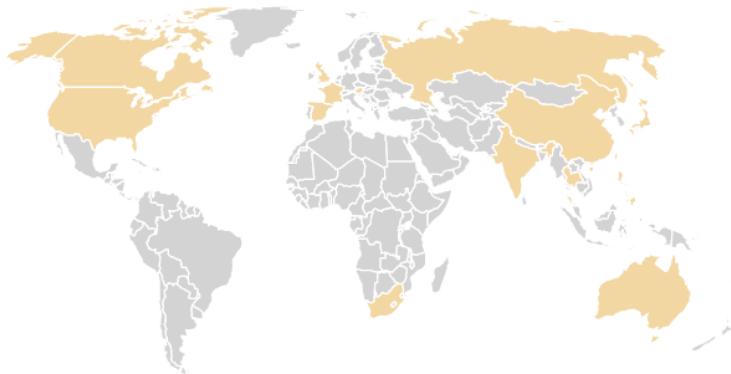


By the numbers:

- 48 Active Volunteers
- 5 Interns
- 2485.25 volunteer hours
 - Valued at \$63,199
 - Equals 1.25 full time staff

Volunteers are vital to the Museums operation. Volunteers work as greeters & docents, handle research requests, fold newsletters, setup events, scan photos, and much more. Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers!

Visitors



Visitors came from 31 states, and 15 countries!

By the numbers:

- 7116 total visitors
 - 3243 attended events
 - 2502 general visitors
 - 688 from tours
 - 683 from rentals

We had growth in attendance through rentals and events while tours have declined. Our tour groups were mainly local schools who brought 546 students through the Museum!

Programs



(Above) A packed house for History Bites. (Right) History through Headstones attendees eagerly listening to guide Darrel Tedisch.



Photo Courtesy: Kay Burt

Programs and events are the main driver of attendance, we work hard to bring you interesting history in fun ways.

New Events

- 1st Fridays at the Museum
- History Sips

Signature Events

- Monthly History Bites
- History through Headstones
- Railroad History Trolley Tour

Collections



By the Numbers

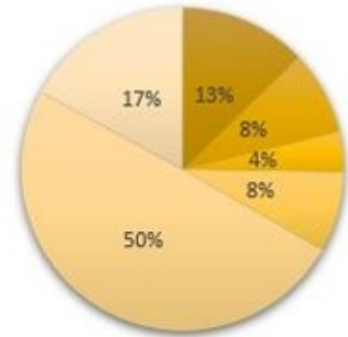
- 77 Accessions
- 775 new items
- 75% of all donation paperwork now in database

A grant from the Linn County Cultural Coalition allowed us to purchase new racks for our large furniture collection. Making them more accessible for preservation purposes.

Financials

We are fortunate to have an endowment to support our operations but we still need additional revenue streams to accomplish our mission. Membership is our 2nd largest revenue source at 17%. Thank you to all our members.

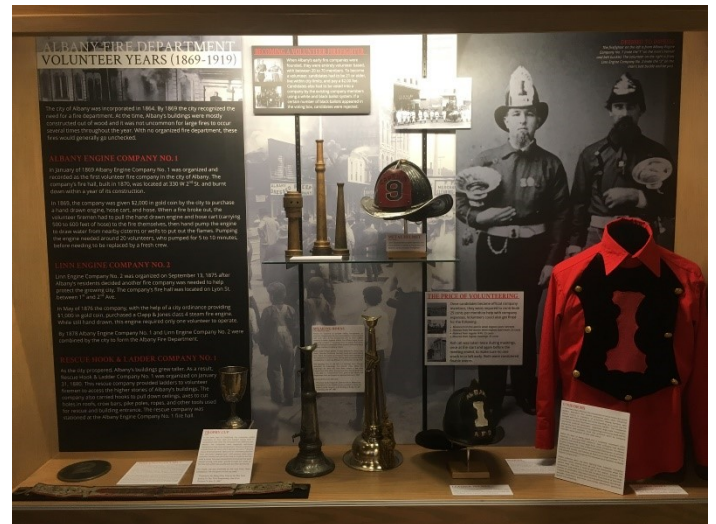
Revenue: \$127,995



- Fundraising
- Dedicated Donations
- Donations
- Operations
- Endowment
- Memberships

Exhibits

We completed three exhibits in 2019. "Where There's Smoke" celebrating 150 years of the Albany Fire Department & our American Legion Post 10 exhibition are on-site. The third exhibit was a temporary one at the Mennonite Village covering Albany and the Chautauqua. We also completed a 5-year exhibit plan that includes significant changes to the exhibit floor including an upgraded children's area, a reconstructed timber carnival can, and a model streetcar!



Cyrus (Continued from Page 1)

She married Ward Cyrus on 7 March 1914. At that time both of them were teachers in Linn County schools. She was a member of the local Methodist Church, Eastern Star, Pythian Sisters, Royal Neighbors of America and the Albany Garden Club. She was elected president of the Garden Club on 30 October 1930. She was well known for her flower garden and won many honors and ribbons for her flowers.

The Albany Democrat Herald published a tribute to Ms. Cyrus on 21 November 1946. The plaque in her memory was paid for by the Albany Garden Club according to a report of the club memorial committee as adopted in the form of a resolution by the organization as follows:

“The members of the Albany Garden Club wish to express our sorrow in the passing of Mrs. Bessie Cyrus, and our appreciation of her worthwhile influence in our midst. She gave of her large knowledge of gardening unstintedly (sic), and her lovely garden was an inspiration to the whole city. She worked untiringly for civic welfare, not only in this club, but others: her work for the Red Cross being especially outstanding. Her friendly spirit and unselfish service will long be remembered.

“Whereas, in her passing our club and the community at large has lost a devoted and useful member and citizen: therefore

“Be it resolved, that the Albany Garden club (sic) extend our deepest sympathy and send a copy of this report to the bereaved relatives.” – page 9.

Her husband, Ward, died at age 67 of a heart attack on 5 November 1952 in St. Petersburg, Florida. He lived at that time at 1008 Takena in Albany. He was a retired postal clerk. He was born in Scio on July 3, 1885 and lived there until 1914 when he moved to Albany. He had worked at the Post Office starting in 1913 and was made mail superintendent in 1945.

Perhaps one lesson to be learned here is how quickly we all fade into anonymity after our death. Still it seems to me there is value in maintaining a memory of someone like this. I have exhausted the newspaper files on Ms. Cyrus. If anyone out there knows about her or is related to her I would very much like to speak with you. You can contact me at the museum at volunteer@armuseum.com. Additional information will be added to her file here at the museum.

Albany—The Hub City

By Bill Maddy, Volunteer

This year marks the sesquicentennial of the first railroad to arrive in Albany, the Oregon and California Railroad. The railroad along with the riverboat, and stagecoach roads (today Interstate 5, Oregon Route 99E, U.S. Route 20 and Oregon Route 34) added another spoke to the wheel with Albany as the geographic and central location of the wheel for commercial and industrial transportation in the Willamette Valley. Thus, Albany was given the moniker of “Hub City”. The Hub City wheel became the logo for the Albany Commercial Club (today the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce). For many years several Albany businesses, even churches, have incorporated the Hub City theme in their name.

The Hub City historically, and now, is linked to markets by the Willamette River, railroad, highway service, and airport. Albany prospered as a political and commercial center in the Willamette Valley. Next to Portland, at one time Albany was the largest railway center in Oregon, it being the only town that had both North to South (Oregon & California, Southern Pacific, and Oregon Electric Railroads) and East to West railway reaching to the Pacific Coast (Corvallis & Eastern Railroad). By 1910 the Albany Commercial Club boasted that twenty-eight passenger trains departed daily from the Albany depots bound for Corvallis, Yaquina Bay, Stayton, Lebanon, Brownsville, Eugene, and Portland. This helped keep Albany’s reputation as a “Hub City”. Albany being the Hub City of the Willamette Valley grew and developed in the city we know today.

Since this year is the 150th anniversary of the first train to arrive in Albany, the Hub City, the Albany Regional Museum will present three Albany Hub City Railway Tours narrated by Albany historian and Museum Docent, Bill Maddy, on Saturday, May 9th at 10 am, 11:30 am, and 1:30 pm*. You will board the Albany Trolley (Streetcar) at the Museum, 136 Lyon Street S. The price is \$5 per person, seating is limited, and registration is required. If you are a Timber level member or higher ask about our Timber discount. To make a reservation contact the Albany Regional Museum, 541-967-7122.

The trolley history tour will include historic features that gave Albany the nickname “Hub City” and the trolley will travel along the route of the Albany Street Railway system (1889-1918) and the routes of some of the railroads that served Albany.

*The Trolley tour is subject to change due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Please check our website armuseum.com for updates.





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Settlers

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Moses Bland was born in 1819 in Indiana and died in 1873 in Lebanon from typhoid fever. It was said that Bland, who had four children, was “attached to his home, family, and was highly esteemed by all.” For a time, he was a trustee and director of the Santiam Academy in Lebanon.

Gamaliel Parrish was born in 1821 in Virginia and died in 1884 on a farm in Brownsville. It was reported that Parrish was feeling “strange” so he went to Lebanon, where a prescription was filled for him at a drug store. As instructed, he took a dose of medicine before supper and a dose afterward. He began frothing at the mouth, dying 20 minutes later. No autopsy was performed. He was considered to be a man of a stern demeanor and was wealthy but in later days his farm was foreclosed upon.

William Tyler Vaughan was born in 1808 in what was then Virginia and is now West Virginia. In 1845, he traveled by pack train to Oregon “having an unpleasant experience” at Meek’s Cutoff. No account of what happened to him is included in the books at the museum. The cutoff branched off of The Oregon Trail in northeast Oregon, rejoining the route at The Dalles. After living in Oregon for about a year, he returned to Missouri to bring his family back to the state with him. He apparently was unrecognizable because he hadn’t cut his hair or shaved his beard since leaving for Oregon. On his return trip, he brought his wife, nine children, cows, and 250 head of sheep, of which only 100 survived. In 1848, he traveled to California with pack animals and while near the American River “he helped hang some men at Hangtown.” He returned to Oregon with \$14,000 in gold. Vaughan made three more trips to California.

William Deakins was one of the county’s older pioneers as he was born in 1796 in Virginia. He was interested in joining the army knowing that his father fought in the Revolutionary War. Consequently, the youngster ran away to join up during the War of 1812. However, he was deemed too young to serve but he was allowed to stay, learning to play the bugle. He is buried in Providence Cemetery near Scio.

Richard Chisholm Finley was born in 1814 in Tennessee and died in 1882 in Crawfordsville. He was known as a Bible reader with a “great mind with more than ordinary energy and perseverance.” Finley built the first gristmill near Crawfordsville in the county, which was the only mill at that time between the Oregon Country and California. His motto was to “owe no man anything.” His funeral cortege was large, and people wept openly at his grave.