



Rainier Oregon Historical Museum

Established. 2015

Find us at “www.rainiermuseum.org”

Number 1

2020

Lost Graves of Rainier, Oregon

By Mike Clark



An 1889 Illustration showing the Dibblee house on a hill and the apple orchard where Merrill Dibblee and his uncle Merrill Blanchard were buried. The barn was built about 1870 on the site of Rainier's first attempt of having a school house.

Tread softly where you walk in Rainier for you might be passing over the remains of a fellow human being whose home, so long ago, is now our home. Within a mile radius of Rainier, there are five burial locations, lost to time, but later discovered by accident, found mentioned in an obscure historical document, or from the memory of an early pioneer. They are as follows:

Blanchard's Potter's Field Cemetery

In the fall of 1963, Hans Hovland was building a new house. Kenny Vance was hired to excavate for a basement. The house was on the right side of Fern Hill Road as you head out of town, about 450 feet beyond Riverview Drive. On the second day of excavating, work came to a halt when three coffins had been exposed with human remains. The county coroner was called in to examine the find. There were no historical records of burials there, but Ralph Morgan (whose dad had once owned the property) said there were at least seven graves at that spot, including five white men, and two Indians. It was a potter's field he said for persons without known relatives, friends or money. Virgie McCaskey said it was known as "Blanchard's Cemetery." She remembers that two men had been interred there, one a victim of a drowning and the other killed working for Dean Blanchard on a pile driver. It was decided that two of the dilapidated coffins that were protruding from a bank were to be covered back up. The third coffin, at the base of what was to be the basement, had deteriorated so much, just fragments of wood and bone, that the coroner deemed it not worthy for reburial. It was mixed in with the fill dirt. (a)

Katlagulaks Indian Burial Ground

The first known inhabitants of Rainier were of the Chinook tribe. Two groups of this tribe inhabited Rainier: The Katlamoiks, who occupied an area along the Columbia River between Fox and Nice Creeks, and the Katlagulaks, who lived near where the old Rainier Review building now stands (on East A Street at the foot of East 3rd Street). Another group was the Wiltkwilluks who had a village close to Rainier nearly opposite the mouth of the Cowlitz River. The Katlagulaks had a burial ground located near where Fred J. Tucker had his home, on the south side of Highway 30, east end of town (about a thousand feet east of East 5th Street). Tucker had owned Rainier Hardware. While Highway 30 was being constructed near the Tucker house, workers found Indian artifacts mixed in with dirt that had been excavated. A story was told of an Indian named Tom, the son of Chief Mimaloose. He spoke English rather fluently, and he was well liked by the town people. Tom met with a sad end when he hanged himself in 1865. His undoing was his affliction to alcohol. The reason offered was that he suffered from melancholia, caused when he could no longer protect his tribes burial grounds from the encroaching settlers. (b)

Kentucky Flats Cemetery

Virgie (Prichard) McCaskey, born in 1886, said that as a child she played hide and seek among the graves near Art Measor's house at the NE corner of the block of West 8th and West C Streets. This was in the east end of Kentucky Flats in Rainier, an area where friends and family from Kentucky had first settled. She picked wild flowers and decorated plots lacking care. The slope contained about 30 burials, mostly Indians and two small white children. It was bordered on one side by a dirt road that lead to the Rinearson Slough. A white picket fence enclosed the area. As years went by the fence rotted and fell, and tall ferns and grasses took over until it was forgotten. When a house was built about 1910, they unearthed many bone fragments and Indian trinkets. The trinkets were eagerly collected by the townspeople. (c)

Dibblee House Graves

In February, 1869, John and Sarah Dibblee arrived in Rainier with their daughter, Edith Elizabeth, and infant son, Merrill. They had been enticed to come by Sarah's brother Dean Blanchard. They bought the house that Jess Fowler had built in 1855 that still stands at the SE corner of the block at East B Street (Hwy 30) and East 4th Street. The house, at that time, faced north with an orchard of apples trees between it and the Columbia River. In 1873 their 5-year-old son Merrill had died. Two years later Sarah's 20-year-old brother, Merrill Blanchard, was stabbed in a local bar brawl while on a visit. He died two days later. Both were buried at the foot of an apple tree. The grave markers have long ago disappeared. (d)

Schoolmaster Strong's Grave

William "Riley" Strong was Rainier's first schoolmaster in the late 1850s. He first taught at Catlin (now Kelso) before coming to Rainier to teach. A schoolhouse was constructed of logs at Dibblee's corner, at the NW corner of the block at East B Street (Hwy 30) and East 3rd Street. But Strong died in 1858 before it was completed. Following Strong's death, Urban East Hicks came to Rainier to teach from 1858 until 1861. The site was later sold to John Dibblee in 1870 where he built his barn. The location of Strong's grave is believed to be at the junction of West 5th St. and Hwy 30 in Rainier, at the corner of what later became Ralph Morgan's service station. (e)

Note: Please be mindful that these graves are on private property.

References: (a) Rainier Review 10-17-1963, Kenny Vance 2020. (b) Rainier Review 03-04-1937, 02-08-1951 (c) Eleanor Abraham: Unmarked Graves Dot Northwest Trail of History, Tom McCaskey 1992. (d) Columbia Co. History Vol VI 1967, Dibblee House Burial Ground findagrave.com (e) Rainier Review 04-17-1925, 08-02-1951, History of the Columbia River Valley, Tom McCaskey

OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

(12-6-19 through 4-10-20)
We have 170 members now.

Dave and Renay Bernard
Kay Hansen
Gina Harrington
Jan Jackson
Bert Jepson
Lucinda Longo
Jenne Norris
Sara Northcutt
Robert L. Rauch, Sr.
Jennifer Rego and Keith Mages
Lisa Van Natta

LIFE MEMBERS

Lawrence (Buzz) and Alice Beck
Mike Avent
Harold & Elaine Davis

HONORARY MEMBERS

Carl Pellham
Columbia County Museum Association
Vernonia Pioneer Museum Association

Contact information:

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ROHM Vice President Duane Bernard: 503-556-9661
ROHM Historian Mike Clark: clarkmikew@aol.com

President's Report and Museum News

by President, Kay Heflin

As I began writing my president's report, our country and our community was going through a difficult time with the coronavirus Pandemic. As of April 9th, the U.S. coronavirus positive cases had exceeded 454,000 cases, and the death toll has climbed to 16,191. Our hearts go out to everyone that is being impacted by this pandemic. I pray that by the time you receive this newsletter, the coronavirus cases are on the downhill curve, and we are seeing the end to this terrible pandemic which has affected all our lives.

The first of April, our museum closed to the public when our Mayor, Jerry Cole, closed the Rainier City Hall due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our museum will resume its operations as soon as the City Hall is reopened and the coronavirus is under control. I hope that all of our members and your family and friends have remained healthy during this difficult and trying time.



A member of our museum, Margie Clark, receiving her lunch at the Rainier Senior Center, using safe distancing. Carla Bodenhamer is at the other end of the fishing pole. Karla said that they came up with this little spoof, thinking that it might bring a smile to some of our folks. Picture taken and shared by Rachel Kelley.

While you are staying home to stay safe from the coronavirus, I would like to suggest something you can do to pass the time. Bring out those boxes of old photos and photo albums and look for any pictures taken of buildings in Rainier, grade school class pictures, parades, & events. Call your grandparents or aunts and uncles to see if they have any old pictures. Our museum is also capable of converting negatives and slides to digital images, and the St. Helens museum can convert the old 8mm rolls of film into digital images for us. We are still looking for yearbooks from 1934, 1988, 2018 & 2019. You can email images to me at kay-lynn2@hotmail.com, or mail copies to ROHM at P.O. Box 762, Rainier, Oregon 97048 or bring them by the museum any Saturday from noon until 4:00 P.M., once our museum reopens.

Help! I am currently working on the Silva building history for our Rainier Historical video and walking tour. Our museum only has two pictures of the Silva Building. Our museum would be interested in any pictures or information of this building and any businesses that operated in this building.



The Silva building was located at the corner of W. 3rd St. on the south side of Hwy. 30, where the Chevron Mini Mart is today. The Silva Building was built in 1926 for Mathiside Nussbaumer and after two years was sold to William Silva, who operated the Silva Chevrolet and Garage from 1928-1945. Businesses in the Silva Building were; Irvin Red Wilson Chevrolet Dealership, 1946-1951; H. R. Barker Chevrolet garage and Dealership. Harold Foshaug moved from the Signal Station to the Silva Building in 1951, when H. R. Barker moved one block east to his new location. Harold's motor garage and Union Station operated at this location from 1951-1954. Jack Wolf was a mechanic who worked for Harold Foshaug. When Harold had to move for medical reasons, Jack took over the business. Jack opened the Wolf Motor Co. & Ford Garage in Feb. 1954. Jack Wolf operated there until he built a new shop east of Rainier at Lindberg in 1958. Earl Dove's Marine Iron Works opened in 1960 until 1969. The Silva building was torn down in 1969, and the new Shell Mini Mart was built. Merle Chase moved from the Signal Gas Station to be its manager. If you have any pictures of any of these businesses, we would love to have them for our museum's picture collection. [Thank you, to Larry Humphrey for providing this timeline history.]

A historical video and walking tour of Rainier is being created by Alan Hulsopple. Mike Clark and I have been sharing history facts and pictures and helping Alan with writing dialogs for the sites. It has been an on-going project for the last several months. Alan just uploaded more than 25 videos and will be adding videos of the Interstate Tavern, Rainier (Joe Joseph's) Garage, Rainier Review, Rainier Creamery, Smith's Tug & Barge Co., Soley's Pharmacy and the Silva Building. Here is the link to be able to watch the videos, or type Rainier Historic videos in your browser and click on this link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKuealLQe_GSwLGzCB-MetA/videos



The Poetsch & Sons stamp is now in the new concrete curb on A Street. Duane Bernard and Carl Nys started this project last summer when they made a stamp to make an impression of this historic piece of Rainier history and then they were there in March to see the stamping of the curb in front of the old Poestch building that was dated 1922. This building currently houses The Rainier Appliance Store, and many of you remember it as the location of Joe and Bernard Oliva's Hardware Store.



Thank You, ROHM Vice President Duane Bernard, and Director Carl Nys, for seeing this project through!

The Rainier Oregon Historical Museum is committed to its goal of preserving Rainier's history. I think this newsletter is a testament to the work that our board members are doing to preserve Rainier's history. I commend our board members: Vice President Duane Bernard; Treasurer, Martha Van Natta; Secretary Sherry Evans; Directors Rick Burnham, Teresa Bentley, Delyla Laughlin, and Carl Nys, for all their hard work to reach this goal. A special thank you, to Martha and Robert Van Natta, for donating the funds to pay for the professional printing of this newsletter. Thank you to all our volunteers who volunteer to work on Saturdays and to our members who continue to renew their memberships and those who make donations to our museum so it will continue to grow. Thank You! Your President, Kay Heflin



I am currently writing a Historical cemetery grant in collaboration with Brian Garrison and Judy Lepin, a board member of the Rainier Cemetery District. This grant, in combination with funds raised, will be used to hire a contractor to re-glue headstones, level and reset 37 monuments in the Rainier Knights of Pythias and Woodbine cemeteries. Repairs to these headstones have been long overdue. The Rainier Cemetery District has no funds or manpower to complete this work. The Rainier Historical Museum's goal is to preserve the history that is represented on the headstones that are in these two cemeteries. The Knights of Pythias Cemetery on Near City Road, has graves dating back to 1883. The Woodbine Cemetery, at Hudson, has graves dating back to 1879. If you would like to help with matching funds and help preserve these old headstones and improve your local cemeteries, please send what you can to Rainier OR Historical Museum (ROHM) P.O. Box 762, Rainier Oregon 97048. Include a note or write on your check that the donation is for Rainier Historical Cemeteries. Any donation would be greatly appreciated, President of ROHM, Kay Heflin.

Put these dates on your calendar

Subject to cancellation if Covid-19 restrictions are still in place.

Saturday, July 11 - Rainier Days Parade -Loyed Rea will be the Grand Marshall

July 10, 11 & 12 - The Rainier Oregon Historical Museum will have a booth at the Rainier Days in the Park celebration. Come and visit our booth. We always have a great raffle basket and historical pictures.

Sunday, July 26 - 11:00-3:00 PM All-class alumni picnic at Hudson Parcher Park.

Saturday November 7- noon-4:00 PM Veterans exhibit and event.

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