

# Lane County Historian



Doll House Replica of Peters-Leston-Wintermeier House, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Chase  
to Lane County Pioneer Museum

—Courtesy Mrs. Clarence Chase

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LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## LANE COUNTY HISTORIAN

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Eugene at the turn of the century

—Courtesy of Lucia Moore

# *The Christmases That Were*

By Lucia Moore

Christmas is in the air. We can feel it and smell it. For, changed as it seems, it is a Birth and not the hustle and tussle we make of it. People have changed, not Christmas. Our streets are bright, our shops elegant, our friends eager and hurried; but somewhere there are still shepherds in the quiet hills. And I think there are prayers.

We can go back to our own quiet hills and to the open, wide prairie land; to the Christmases we knew in our valley with their gentle silences, their soft, rainy mornings and foggy ones and, sometimes, fields, hills and small towns white and sleepy under the snow. Time was sane then, and slow to move. There were evenings shared around a log fire while we listened to talk of the first Christmases our grandparents and great grandparents knew in a pioneer land. Beside those hard earned holidays we wide-eyed children thought ours all polished, well filled and beautiful. And in the talk there was the sound of sleighbells from Illinois or Maine and of Christmas fireworks from North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee, with all the December remembering. We were a little envious of grandfather's vast world.

However, in our stores on the main streets we could discover a few sleds, red mittens and hoods, sometimes boots; and oh, wonders, red kid shoes and china dolls—even a rare bisque one. Merchants who refused to let it be known that Santa was about to take over from our parents went right on filling windows with blankets, churns and yardgoods, which, after all, made up the bulk of needed gifts. Business could wait with the children for Christmas morning and Santa's doings. Was there some sort of

100  
75

agreement between some shop owners and St. Nicholas to avoid loading the sleigh too soon and pushing it down Main Street? To be sure, the grocer's candy barrels were bulging in December; he most certainly would have oranges when he could find some. All the apples were shinier than usual and the shelves held ears of unshelled popcorn along with the good wire mesh poppers with handles as long as a broom's. But mostly, there were only more men sitting longer hours around hotter pot-bellied stoves; and more and busier women at home scheming and dreaming about Santa's work while tying the sawdust safely back in dolls' leaking arms and legs, or pushing peddles on Singer sewing machines, so new and helpful.

No one had Santa's address. No one made demands. And among children the suspense was terrific.

My first mind-picture of Christmas seems to be of wreaths in our windows and of fir garlands along the high lifting stairway bannister in the big house where I was born. Possibly it was about 1890; why when I was three, I wouldn't know now, but maybe the sharp memory is due to the smell of the fir boughs that, stripped of most of their beauty, burned frighteningly in the fireplace. Some may remember the pale green house that stood so early on "Eugene City's" Ninth Street (now Broadway) and Charnelton, where the Bon Marche now covers our whole quarter block. The house was never any color but soft green—I suspect because it glorified the many, many trees father and mother had planted there. Across Ninth and south of us was the tall, pinkish house of Horace Crain whose thousand

clocks ticking in his jewelry store on Willamette Street I still hear wonderingly. *Who wound them all?* Who but Mr. Crain? Catty-corner across the muddy intersection, the big home of my Uncle and Auntie Holt loomed among trees, its tall windows marvelously rounded at the top. West, across Charnelton, was the white house of Thomas Grundy Hendricks, one of the founders, and president, of the almost new First National Bank, just two blocks away. There were trees in the Hendricks yard, too, and beds of forgetmenots and maiden hair fern behind a white picket fence, a grape arbor, a big barn far out of view, and horses, with fringe-topped carriage that came and went, sometimes with a black driver holding the reins.

We all had barns—at least those of us who drove teams to carriages or wagons, or a single horse to phaeton or buggy. Also, there were many other contraptions on wheels that would cope with the mud and dust. Father had one or two horses always; our first carriage was long, with three leather seats, one backward riding one where my sister Nina and I rode and sometimes felt seasick. Our barn had room too for a cow, one just at first. Later the cow barn stood across our alley, and housed two, usually jerseys.

Our fence was black iron, not really handsome iron grille but overlapping four-foot-high arches where frost made beauty in the spiderwebs on a cold winter morning. The wide east gate almost always stood open for the goings and comings of the carriage or the high seated buggy. I especially remember the windows of those houses on Eugene's first "four corners." Ours were narrow, and as I said, high, and squared off at their tops with decorative lintels. The Hendricks windows were as plain

and as strict as a banker's business; the Crains, tall and shuttered from the outside. On the others the shutters were inside, and our house was shuttered only in its big east diningroom.

It seems strange to think that in those late 1880s there were but 2500 people in Eugene, "with some 224 students," says history, "attending the university." The rutted streets were lined by wooden sidewalks, many of them built high off the ground to escape flood waters that sometimes came. Most of the curbs were wide, grassed, and proud of their maples, locust trees, or elms and poplars—even now-and-then an apple or cherrytree.

I spoke especially of the windows. At Christmas time the parlor ones were never so black-dark as on other winter nights. There might be a lamp in one, or a candle to light the Christ Child, but never a sight there of a Christmas tree until Christmas Eve, for the tiny candles on its branches were gold-precious and eyed every minute as they burned down much too quickly in their tin holders, making it necessary for a papa to hustle, putting them out by means of a long-handled snuffer. As for lighted streets, there were none, really. Here and there a street lamp such as Charles Dickens knew and wrote about, made a small glow half way down the block after the lamplighter came at dusk with his ladder; but arc lights came later, strung high above street intersections to sputter and "arc" at their carbon will.

My first sharp memory of a real Christmas morning is of the good smell of breakfast in mother's kitchen and of father calling "Merry Christmas, children!" as he came from milking two cows and putting down feed for Black Hawk, our spirited black horse. I was three or four. My sisters and my older

brother were in school, and I knew they were doing the things Central School planned for Christmas and when we were eating buckwheat pancake breakfast in the dining-room I left my chair to show them I could write my name on the foggy window. Or it might have been frost. It was cold in spite of the Franklin stove.

Christmas morning was for stocking discoveries by the corner fireplace in the sittingroom, but I don't think I ever worried about Santa coming down the chimney. Actually, our mother never made a big deal of Santa. Because she was our mother there was magic everywhere—in our books and in the big family Bible, in forests, in our spring garden and in the every-April blossoming cherry trees in our east yard. The story of a Birth and a manger was a part of the magic she taught us. The most wondrous part. If she ever mentioned a real visiting Santa I must have discounted it a little, at least as soon as I learned that some of my best gifts came from father's drug store and the grocer's. Or from our own dark basement where the big polished apple in my striped stocking had been stored (unpolished). But pictures of the red-suited old boy persuaded quite another part of me that he would be along when he got good and ready, and that seemed an interminable time while mother showed us how to cut stars by means of strange foldings of gold or silver paper and how to sew, with darning needle and yarn, net boots for nuts and candy.

Beside all that, waiting for Christmas seems a time of standing at our front bay window waiting for the snow that hardly ever came in time. It was more apt to be a soft gray January or February veil, hiding Spencer Butte, then coming slowly, oh slowly, to our corner,

past Governor Whiteaker's big white house on Tenth, then shrouding my Auntie Holt's even bigger house, then the Crain's and Hendricks' and at last the big wet flakes settling on our lawn and trees. Rarely, it came from the north, blotting out the other high Butte, Skinner's, and blowing across in blizzard wind, to stay on long enough for the sleighride I craved. I never did have but one, and that, the night before I was born! There was only one sleigh around, it seemed, and that one must be obtained from the livery stable doing business between our block and the First National Bank. I might add that across from the big stable there was the Weinhard Brewery with its all day and all night chuc, chuc, chuc as it made (as far as I knew) the ice we would need in summer to pack the hand turning ice cream freezer.

The thing I found most mysterious in that block between Olive and Willamette was the Chinese "Laundry" where the porch roof sprouted green grass and pig-tailed Chinese grew lilies and kept lichi nuts for my Christmas while they washed and ironed many a shirt. On Christmas Eve there they came, to our door with the sweet smelling Chinese lilies and the magic lichi nuts. And big smiles, with a "Melly Clistmas!" Who cared that papa's shirts sometimes came home late?

Not Christmas morning, but Christmas Eve was tree lighting time, and when the wired up screen of white sheets came down from across the south end of the parlor who cared that there was no snow across the hills and town roofs and lawns? There was now on the Brussels carpet, obliterating its pink roses, and on the branches of the Douglas fir, or of the tall pine or cedar, whatever father had found that would reach the high ceiling. I

knew very well that he never depended on Santa to furnish our tree but had it hauled from the mountains, or from our own farm land across the millrace from Deady Hall. One time I remember having a naked, strangely shaped oak tree, beautiful and different beyond belief with its moss covered branches. No telling what we'd see! Once there were two firs side by side with Frank's big Newfoundland dog, Queen, hitched to his sled. I'm sure trees and sled and dog were a distraction from the idea of gifts that year, and it may have been the panic year of 1893. There was another one when a lesser fir stood in the corner of the sittingroom, and that had only an orange and an apple for me and for Nina, with a game of checkers to be shared. But that I recall as one of my most loved and excited times, for I delighted in the sittingroom with its bright corner fireplace. Another year, in that same room, my most cherished doll, an old one newly dressed in a red skating costume and long black hair—real hair—with muff and trimmings of white eiderdown, was my very greatest doll thrill.

I seem to have had doll troubles. By the time I was grabby about dolls Nina had ceased to want them, preferring a jockey cap and riding whip or high gum boots, but she still owned the one doll buggy in our house. When we walked the mile to Grandmother's far up by the University she (Nina) did the pushing most of the way, so I made do with pushing hers a little way, and began to plan instead on a big, fine doll. At orders to get lost and stay away from the kitchen I did no such thing, aware that the whole family was gathered there. I waited around and peeked through the keyhole. There she was, long and ruffled and blond

curled, with Maude, Frank, Nina, mother and father handing her to each other, and there, on a chair, was the very large box she would occupy under the tree. I sneaked away on a sweet cloud. But the doll, already named by me, I don't know now what, did not get to our tree. She just never came. And I never dared ask why. Not, at least, until I was grown and could forgive my own cheating. Mother explained then. Dolls were expensive and she was one of the worst, and was boxed and returned to the store. Mother was appalled that I had seen the doll. Of that I am still ashamed.

No matter what was under our tree, it was always bright with the popcorn we had strung, from the wire popper on a long handle; with the cut-out stars, and the paper chains we'd fought, that hardly ever stuck, home-made paste being what Nina and I made of it; and against the ceiling was, through all the years, the glittering twelve inch tall angel, almost old even when I knew her, with a slight candle scorch on one wing, but still the regal sign that God, after all, gave men and children His great gifts, and always would. And reminding us of The Manger born-ing.

Think of God's gifts as we might, the Church Christmas tree always interfered with ours, because it came Christmas Eve, too, making us hurry to get there in time to see Santa Claus coming backward down a ladder from the big round window above the Methodist choir loft. His suit was much like the red undersuit that usually hung outside Mr. Saunders' second hand store, only stuffed fuller and not flying about in the wind. I was something of a show-off, and sometimes had a piece to speak, but after while when the baby sister came along she took over from me,

against her will. One of the Eve's when she was three she disappeared from our tree and we looked everywhere, calling and worrying. Finally father said "The little rascal has gone on to the church!" Well, it was three dark blocks and we hurried there, dashing into the sanctuary in time to see little Gladys, her bonnet hanging behind her pale blue coated shoulders as she said, from the rostrum, "... an all through the house not a cweatuh was stuhhing, not even a mouse . . ." after which she reached for her share of the last bags of candy and tumbled down the low steps. Until she went to school she talked like a little sure-enough pickaniny.

Now I am made to think that it had been only a short time back to war-time Christmases, as time and history go. The Willamette Valley had been settled by north and south, by Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and by Illinois and New York and other northern states, largely with some time spent along the Missouri before further venturing. But with war, families were divided. West of Eugene, on the slow Long Tom river where mistletoe grew heavy in the oak trees, Southerners still flew their Confederate flag, there were still fireworks at Christmas. Some Christmas parties in Eugene and smaller towns ended in fist fights and worse; yet people managed to gather in the new County Courthouse on Eighth Street in Eugene to sing carols among the fir trees that history says lined the courtroom walls. War news reached here slowly, by way of steamer-carried letters from San Francisco. Many after-war letters arrived at my grandfather's pioneer home in the Coburg hills to be delivered from the six-foot box that was the Willamette Forks postoffice, and which told of the surrender of Lee and discuss Lin-

coln's delaration; all things embittering to the sincere people who believed that Oregon should have been a slave territory and state.

Father was thirteen at the War's beginning and sometimes spoke of the days he heard the frightening word. He was helping his father build a gate—a wide gate leading to barns and pasture—when a rider dashed up to shout to grandfather that Fort Sumter had been fired upon. But that was some weeks after April 12th in 1861. Grandfather, tall Scotsman that he was, stood there with hammer in his hand, staring at the rider who had sped along the East Side Territorial Road. After a minute of silence he said, "God help us!"

Father, who walked his barefoot miles to school in summer, had not been told much about north and south, or about slavery. "What will it mean, Pa?" he begged, and Mitchell Wilkins shook his head. He had come to Oregon Country when he was twenty-five, a young tobacco grower on Missouri river-bottom land, who had not owned slaves but had sometimes needed them; and now he could see how the raw, open west had needed them on its vast acreage. But he still felt, as he had felt in the south, that no matter how great the need slaves must some time become free men and women. He tried, finally, to answer young Marion. Between harder than ever hammer blows he said, "It has to mean freedom—if it ever can—for the negro!"

"But war, Pa!"

The hammering stopped. "That's just it. But war!" and they went up the slope and into the down-south type house to try to tell grandmother.

Then, think of a nine year old, muddy little town bringing people from the Long Tom and all the small settlements into a three year old County Courthouse to try to

tell them, while Christmas carols and fighting went on, that they must and could work together toward a free state. When Grandfather told us about it in front of our Christmas fire my toes curled and my heart beat faster. They still do!

We never went to grandfather's for winter holidays. The roads were far too deep with mud, even sometimes under flood waters between the Willamette river and the McKenzie. Grandfather's wagon and heavy team could travel winter roads that a light team and carriage would never attempt. And Grandfather sometimes came on horseback.

Strangely enough, I knew very little about Christmas in our friends' homes or in the homes of my schoolmates. At school we did all the things teachers could think up, and I recall particularly one surprise planned by my second grade teacher, Miss Jennie McClure. The room in the Central School was big and cold, except on the side where a bellied black stove roared and crackled, that winter afternoon just before we would rush out for our holiday vacation.

"We will now have our Christmas surprise," Miss McClure said, with her prim, slim faced smile. "I will ask you all to bow your heads down on your desks, shut your eyes and fold your arms on your desks to make your heads comfortable. Do not peek, any of you! And will Otto please come to help me?"

Otto duly rose and we folded our arms for pillows and put heads down in breathless suspense. There was quite a time of footsteps and whisperings. Quite a long time. Such a while that I couldn't endure it. And I peeked. I looked out from an elbow just in time to see a long wire break, letting most of the miniature Chinese lanterns

dump their loads of popcorn. Aghast, I couldn't shut my eyes. WHAT would poor Miss McClure do? She was wondering the same thing, but she whispered to Otto and he brought the broom and dust pan from its corner. More time, while poor, inventive Miss Jennie did the only possible thing. Red faced and frightened, she and Otto rescued the lovely white grains, put them back in the lanterns and mended the wire.

I had ducked my head good by the time she said, "Now you may look, children!" We looked, and maybe everyone but bad me was surprised. I can't help doubting it as I remember. And I hope dear Jennie McClure will forgive me for telling, rest her wonderful soul. I know the good Lord forgave her. A few dusty splinters were kinder than thirty disappointed youngsters. And the bright little lanterns were a fine sight, to be carried home cherished—and to make me ashamed. I only claim one small grace—I never told anyone, in school or out. Just like that doll time, I didn't dare, for my own sake.

There was another doll event, about the time I was in the second grade. I was big enough to climb up on a chair to search on the closet shelf for the big doll I kept expecting. Instead of a long box I found a round one like the hat boxes mother sometimes brought home, boxes fascinating with pretty feathered or flowered hats. I let myself down precariously, sat on the chair and opened the box. Good grief, there was a white muff, curly as a lamb and just the size for my hands. Who's else? A neck piece, soft, broad and beautiful circled around a pasteboard frame—whose furs were these but mine? I can smell the mothballs yet. In a hurry if ever I was, I put on the round cover and managed to clam-



ber up to replace my find. Another shining cloud on which to wait, and that time I was sure, with the smell of mothballs following me around until the furs were actually mine.

My four year old sister often made, and sometimes did carry out, her own big Christmas plans. Once it was to build, with her own hands and the help of a kitchen knife, the doll buggy I was always hoping for, and she accepted me as a spectator during the process. We collected cigar boxes, always to be had from the drug store, and a safe, dull case knife. Our three legged "parlor grand" Mathushek piano, ordered from Chicago with great hope that one daughter at least might learn to play it, stood in front of the big north window in the parlor, and we crawled in under it with our materials until we were far out of mother's sight. The small panes of yellow, purple, blue and red glass filtered their colored lights onto Nina's hands as she drew a circle around a plate on one of the cigar box lids, then began to cut. Nina never allowed anything to defeat her, and so she tried, the edge of the lid punched hard against her stomach, and tried. And tried. She did make a little progress, and then she suddenly quit and threw up. The pink roses on the carpet were in such a mess that I began to cry.

Mother came running from behind her closed bedroom door, where she was doing Santa Claus' work on her sewing machine. She was turning around and saying, "Children! Where are you?" When she pulled us from under the grape carved piano, Nina's fine plan exploded in her pale face, and I was forced to give up even the round, lovely top for my dream of a doll buggy.

Another of that sister's plans was out and out successful. It was

the next year, I think, that she decided what she would give father for Christmas. She and he were great pals. She went with him to the evening milking and did some hay pitching down into the animal stalls, too. She was allowed to sit by him on the high buggy seat when he raced Black Hawk around the new, sporty track in Merriau's Park (the reason for jockey cap and whip), so now it was Christmas and she would return his good deeds.

There was little holiday glamor along Willamette Street that year, but of all the windows between 9th street and 7th, Cal Young's butcher shop window was best, aglow with green and red tissue paper frills, mistletoe from the oak trees on his farm across the river, and a lovely, fancy-trimmed little pig clutching a red apple in its mouth. When Nina saw that window she hurried home to whisper to me that Christmas at our house was going to be a very big time, with a wonderful surprise. I was happy to find myself in on the surprise as we trundled the tin wagon left over from our brother's young days out of the dark basement, secretly across the lawn, out the carriage gate. No questions from the house, so we proceeded along 9th past the Chinese laundry, past the brewery and livery stable, past the bank, at which corner we turned northward. Red wagon squeaking from age, we pulled it along the wooden sidewalk past Mr. Friendly's Dry Goods Store and Schwarzschild's Book shop, past the high-domed and impressive Hovey corner and the Wilkins Drug Store, hurrying a little there for fear father might see us. It seemed a shame not to go in as usual and see how the rock candy jar looked, pink or white, but we resisted, curiosity driving me on my tired legs. Finally, nearing 7th, Nina slowed at Mr.

Young's window with its glorious, mouth-watering but naked pig. Seeing its beauty, all edged with smilax, I began to doubt our plan. (It was ours by now. Only I left the deal to Nina). She was really ready. She had on her best plaid coat and a straw hat tied under her chin. Her chin was up and her eyes were big as Mr. Young looked at us over his counter.

"Hello, little girls," he said. "What can I do for you with your red wagon?"

"Please, I want the pig," she told him, pointing. "The pig in the window."

"You don't say!" Mr. Young's cheeks were always pink but they were pinker now. "You want my pig! My Christmas pig? And what would you do with him, little Nina Wilkins?"

She was very earnest. "I would give him to papa for Christmas. And mama would roast it"—she said *it* this time "and papa will love it."

Mr. Young didn't laugh at her the way I was afraid he would. "It's an expensive pig," he said.

"How much?"

"Five dollars. You see, he was lots of work, and he—he really weighs quite a few pounds."

My full-of-ideas sister nodded. "That's all right. We can haul him in our wagon. Lucia rode some of the way here, but she can walk home."

I had not thought ahead to that, and four blocks seemed pretty far, but I wanted the pig too. "I could ride with him," I suggested, watching the pig being wrapped up in butcher's paper, but Nina said that would make too many pounds. She knew, all right, because she was always having to let me sit on the tricycle back seat father had caused to be built. Even when she raced

tricycles with Ruby Hendricks and Agnes Harris and the little Lauer girl, I clung there, my short arms just reaching around her.

Mr. Young was really smiling as he tied the last of the heavy string, lifted the package from the round cutting block and stored it in our wagon. Do you have five dollars? And I hope Marion likes your gift!"

You can charge it to papa," Nina said. With the secret well wrapped, and with me walking in my high buttoned shoes, we went out and along the east side of the street, past Mr. Goldsmith's pleasant smelling cigar shop, past Mr. Dunn's Dry Goods, past two saloons where there were clinking, Christmassy sounds coming out under the small shuttered doors, then past the hotel under the bare maple trees. This December day there were no chairs tipped against the hotel, with men sitting, and glad of that, we turned the corner, bound for home and a hiding place for the pig.

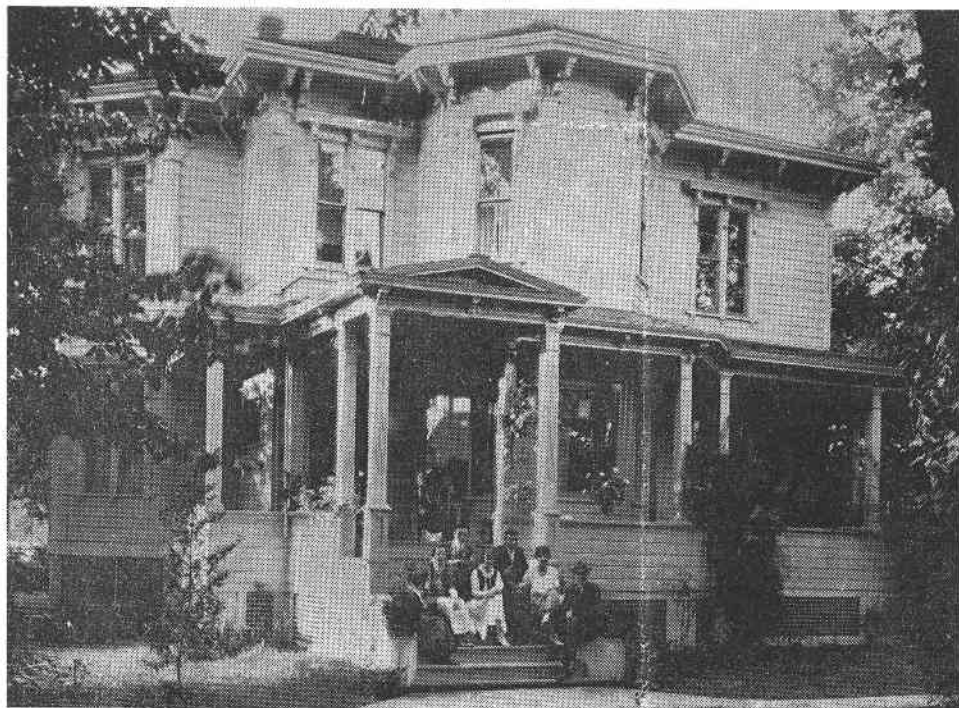
I suppose our Christmases were much like all the other valley ones. At any rate, these are mine. As I write words on paper the sounds I have been listening to were not sounds of my typewriter keys, but of church bells and greetings; of the clug of wagons and teams in the mud, and of the soft falling snow—how it was when rain fell against a barn roof, sweet and clean enough to drink when you caught it in a rain barrel. Of the frightening sound of a run-away team, or of the firebell in the tower of the City Hall, and the soft "Go 'long, yo' mule!" as friendly black Wylie tried to move the first street cars. Then of the wonderful clatter of horses feet on real pavement, the length of main street's few blocks.

And after a while, the first garlands of mountain fir and pine

along those blocks made new beauty, while Mr. Dunn and Mr. Friendly and others brought bigger sleds and dolls, more people carried home bigger packages than the ones father slipped through our dark back hall at dusk on Christmas Eve.

I think of these people, these places, these things we knew, and for all of them I have a fresh, new love and appreciation. Almost as if I had gone back again into the best of small towns and the loveliest of valleys.

Merry Christmas!



The Francis Marion Wilkins Home

—Courtesy of Lucia Moore



Childhood portraits of the Wilkins sisters

—Courtesy of Lucia Moore

## *From the President's Corner . . .*

The Lane County Historical Society has had a busy and sometimes exciting year in 1972.

Perhaps our greatest achievement was the moral backing which we were able to give to historic preservation. This appears to have been a year of awakening among many of our people; that our priceless and irreplaceable treasures are vanishing right in front of their eyes! Our active Historic Preservation Committee with Philip Dole as chairman, managed to help save the old and much loved Quackenbush Building, that has been a Eugene landmark since 1903. The venerable Smeed Hotel (first called the Baker) will remain standing, but will be converted into a business building with office space. Another unused building on 5th Street has become the Grainary, a popular eating place with "atmosphere." This was done through the efforts of architect Otto Poticha, who has been of the greatest assistance to our committee.

Viewing Eugene, one can understand better how "The Walls of Jericho Came Tumbling Down!" Every day another familiar landmark disappears.

Several splendid programs were offered through the year. One of the most exciting and rewarding was the "unveiling" of the exquisite Doll House, which Mrs. Clarence Chase, board member, has worked with an artist to create over a period of two years. A real treasure, it is an exact replica of the home of Mrs. Gail Wintermeier, located at 1611 Lincoln Street. Built in the early 1860's, this is an outstanding example of Gothic type architecture, which has been photographed and sighed over by many. With Lincoln Street being rezoned to multiple dwelling it is feared

this unusual structure will be demolished. Every single piece of the building was brought around "The Horn" by sailing vessel to Portland from France. Laboring oxen brought it to Eugene, where it was assembled. It has not always stood upon its present site, but survived a move without the displacement of a single shingle, due to its sturdy construction. Through the cooperation of the Eugene Hotel and its manager, Mr. Fairchild, we were able to hold a very special meeting when its miniature of perfection was shown for the first time and after a short program, was presented to the Lane County Historical Museum by Mrs. Chase. This was her gracious way of adding to our preservation and encouraging others to become interested. Our always willing cookie bakers and refreshment committee served more than 400. Several artists displayed their original work at the back of the crowded large dining room of the hotel.

Mrs. Chase, due to ill health, has been made an honorary board member—the second one ever given by our Society.

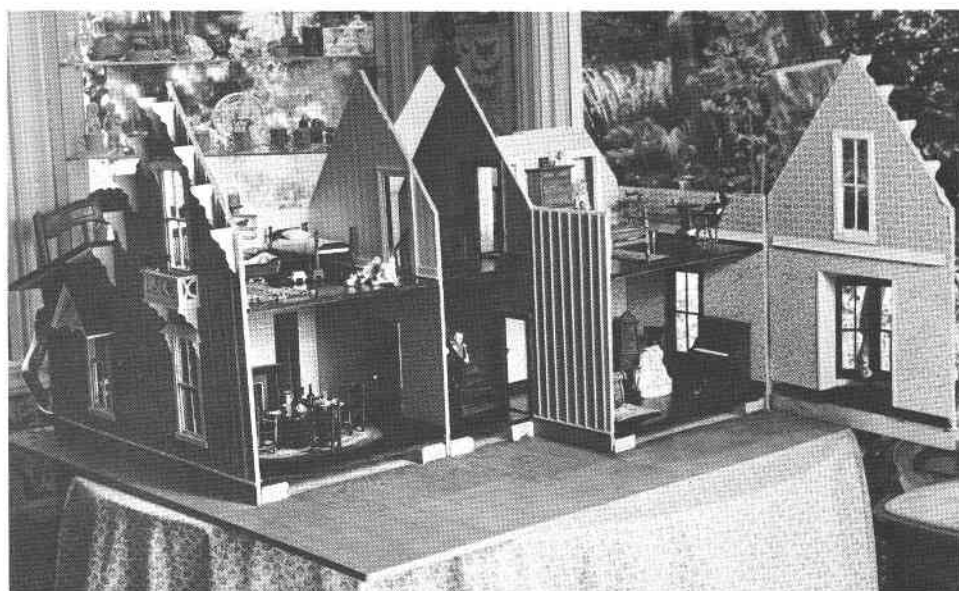
On the occasion of the Chase's 50th wedding anniversary, held at the Eugene Country Club, the exquisite model was again on display. It was greatly enjoyed and there was a constant flashing of lights as photographers crowded around to take it from every angle. As soon as adequate accommodations can be arranged at the Lane County Museum it will be a featured attraction.

One of our members has become a contributor to the Magazine Section of the Register Guard, with stories of early days on the Mohawk River. Mr. Claude Hammit has a delightful way with words



**Peters-Leston-Wintermeier House at 1611 Lincoln Street**

—Courtesy, Lane County Pioneer Museum



**Interior, Doll House Replica, Peters-Leston-Wintermeier House**

—Courtesy, Mrs. Clarence Chase

and uses them to weave stories of long ago that are vivid and highly entertaining. Another board member, Mrs. Leah Menefee, is collaborating on a story of the Lost Wagon Train of 1853 upon which she has done monumental research. Retired Professor Alfred Lomax, also a board member has completed a book on the early woolen mills of Oregon. This, too, should soon be off the press.

A substantial gift of money came to this Society from one of our members, with the stipulation that it be used to buy books for the Lane County Museum Library, and such other needs as we may have. Already, the book buying committee has spent more than \$600.00 on carefully chosen books of Oregon and Northwest History. Great care is being taken that all books added are authentic. We are urging anyone who may have such books to contact our Historian Editor, who is chairman of the committee on acquisition. Often, we learn, too late, that some estate has been broken up and the precious books destroyed.

Your society feels a responsibility to assist the Museum in every way possible and urges those of you, who have been "putting off" taking your treasures there for safe keeping and for future generations to enjoy and learn of the past; There is no time like the present! Hopefully, the Museum will be enlarged to accommodate a greater number of artifacts from by-gone generations.

Newsletters have announced our Public Interest meetings and have carried a wide variety of items; some in answer to questions that are often asked, others from stories learned from our "oldtimers" along with "recipes" gleaned from the American Family Recipe Book, published in 1847; Cold cures, how

to stop a headache, relief from dandruff and snake bites are all covered. Some of the remedies are a bit startling!

Our dependable program chairman, Ethan Newman, has come up with some exceptional programs that have proven to be both educational and entertaining. We collaborated with the Museum on two that drew amazing crowds. The first, Early Railroad, was put together by the newly formed Railroad Buffs group and featured a film in sound and color, which had been collected and sound tracked by Mr. Don Hunter, head of the Audio-Visual Department at the University of Oregon. Ringing of the bell, the huff, chuff of the engine and hoarse whistle that warned drivers of "skittish" teams that the great, iron monster was "comin' 'round the bend," brought back nostalgic memories. It was necessary to run three showings to accommodate the crowd.

Our most recent program, with the Museum, was on old time logging. This film was cleverly done by Ron Finne. Starting with ox team logging, then going chronologically through the horse logging days; spar tree climbing and rigging for "Hi-Ball" logging; River driving was a slow and laborious method that is now a forgotten art. It was a thrill to see men pitting their strength and skill against a mighty river as they rode a bounding log through Black Canyon, with only a peevey to help them balance and keep their precarious footing. Loggers of the old school handled the narration, using terminology that too, is almost forgotten. Donkey engine logging brought back memories as one listened to the shrill, pop-off valve as the engine, laboring under a full head of steam, as it wrestled a stubbornly resisting log to the landing. Two showings accommodated over 1,000 people.

Our cookie and coffee department had visions of "The loaves and fishes!" Somehow they managed, as always, to meet the unexpected demand.

Sandwiched in between was a delightful program presented at Harris Hall by Mr. Herb Yenne and Cy Wright, retired men who live in Corvallis. Their fascinating hobby is photographing the many facets of Oregon. Covered bridges, in color, referred to in the "Horse and Buggy Days" as Sparking Bridges, were a delight and when the audience asked for more they obliged by showing "These Old Houses." Artistically shown in color were some of the most unusual architecture and styles of building in dates of 1850 through 1900. Our famous Coffee Crew added the final touch and everyone expressed eagerness to have these two talented men back soon again. Mr. Yenne narrated as Mr. Wright showed the slides.

Many of our members attended the dedication of the Dr. Lee house in Junction City, which was recently purchased by the Junction City Historical Society. Starting with the vast collections of Clarence Pitney, long a member of the Lane County Board of directors, its success is already assured and the new organization has cause for pride and satisfaction. Now, we are wondering how Clarence manages to survive without being surrounded by everything from horse collars to old time pickle jars and Indian artifacts! His home must, indeed, be empty.

Starting what we hope will be an annual get-together was our meeting with the Douglas County Historical Society at the Jesse Applegate House near Yoncalla. Jesse had a strange quirk, in that he would never allow his picture to be taken. A relative with artistic

ability made a crayon drawing of this man who had added so much to Oregon's history. Framed, it hangs on the wall of his former home. Two of our members, with excellent camera equipment and light bars took pictures of the drawing. When the films were developed there was not a trace of Jesse. Those who live in the house, hint darkly that they have ghosts, because of strange noises—footsteps, when no one can be found and other annoying and often disturbing sounds. Perhaps it is just Jesse Applegate, making sure that no one gets his picture!

Our active Publications Committee is continuing to produce diaries, both of plains crossings and of early settlement days. These have gone to the major libraries of the United States, where we have standing orders, as well as to many individuals. They have been the financial life-blood of this organization. Our greatest difficulty is that we never "think" large enough! The issues are gone before the demand ceases. Several have had to be reprinted. Another is now being prepared. After our society was reorganized in the mid-1950's it was often necessary to "pass the hat" among the board members to pay our bills. A handsome permanent award was given to the society for the excellence of this committee work.

At our annual pot-luck picnic, held on the Lane County Fair Grounds on the Saturday in June nearest to the 20th (Cal Young's birthday) more than 100 usually turn out for wonderful food, a short program and a lively afternoon of renewing old and cherished friendships. Transportation is furnished for those who would otherwise be unable to attend. At this time Life memberships are given to all who have reached their 80th birthday.



Each one is escorted to the stage and asked to give their place of birth and the date, along with a "brief" history of their life. One requirement must be met; they must have been born in Lane County. For years one member has been coming from California. He is well into his 90's and we look forward to seeing Harlan Ellmaker each year.

One question we are very often asked is: "Where is Eugene Skinner buried?" His final resting place is in the Old Masonic Cemetery, on the fir covered butte near the end of University Street. Like many of our ancient burying grounds, it is sadly in need of perpetual care. It seems to afford some of our younger generation great satisfaction to overturn head stones and in other ways to desecrate this rather isolated spot.

Our Skinner cabin replica, which is located on the Willamette River side of Skinner's Butte, was completed and turned over to the Eugene Park Board with a sigh of relief. Now it is being enjoyed by a great number of people, who marvel at its tiny living space and complete lack of modern facilities. Certainly, our pioneer ancestors would marvel at our push-button life and the ease with which we travel around the country. Recently I was called upon by a desperate person who was searching for a driving horse and buggy to lead a parade! One of the reasons our Great Pioneer Pageant was discontinued was the fact that driving teams were no longer available and certainly, cattle had long since forgotten the strain of the heavy ox yoke.

Our Quarterly Historian is a gold mine of information and we solicit stories from our members. Some thought has been given to enlarging the volume to allow for more features. Printing costs are our

chief consideration. Each year one community has been chosen for a special edition. To date, Florence, Springfield, Junction City and Cottage Grove have been featured. We are fortunate that our able editor (Inez Fortt) is an avid historian and also a recognized free lance writer. After working for more than 12 years in the Oregon Room of the University Library she has much to offer our readers.

The home of one of our eighteen board members is offered each month and following desert a lively evening ensues. Many new ideas and plans are proposed. It is a pleasant task to sort out the possible ones and to keep enthusiasm high. To have the privilege of working with such a dedicated group has been a delight. My deep and sincere appreciation goes to each and every one who has been so generous with their time and interest. Now we are casting longing eyes at the Wintermeier House, hoping desperately that it may be saved. What could be more wonderful than having it at some future date to display some of the fine, old things that we are not able to accept, because of the lack of a proper place in which to show them. Miracles do happen and we can always "Wish upon a Star."

Every year brings its problems and small triumphs and we are looking confidently forward to 1973. We ask your continued support and always welcome suggestions that will help to make your society a mirror of the old and a bridge that will connect it solidly to our fast changing world; that our new generations may know more of the dramatic part our ancestors played to make the west the greatest spot on earth, in which to live and enjoy the privileges that are ours today.

*Hallie Huntington*



# The Smeed Hotel and the Quackenbush Store

By Inez Long Fortt

## THE SMEED HOTEL\*

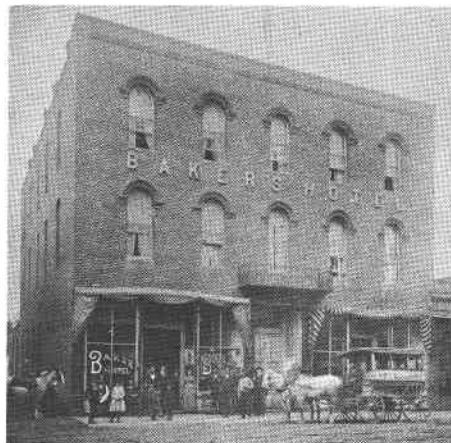
When the Smeed Hotel was closed in June, 1970, a crudely written placard, "Keep Out," on the front door was in sharp contrast to the elegant gold-lettered sign, "Smeed Hotel," in large letters spread over the main entrance to the hostelry and which was visible for blocks.

The Smeed Hotel, once a favorite stop for visiting dignitaries to Eugene and the center of the social whirl for the young belles and beaux in the late 1800's and early 1900's, was one of the historic buildings cited by the Lane County Historic Preservation Committee to be preserved when its doom was announced by the Urban Renewal Agency as part of the overall plan for the Eugene downtown mall.

The Smeed Hotel dates back to the middle 1880's. In 1884, a contract was made by Mr. Charles Baker with Mr. George H. Parks to build a three-story fireproof hotel just north of the post office on Willamette Street, at a cost of \$7,000—exclusive of the third story which temporarily would be uncompleted. When entirely finished and furnished, the hotel with the lot would cost around \$15,000.

A brick and mortar elevator was installed in the building. A carved registration desk of huge proportions was built on the left side of the large lobby. To the left of the large desk was an arched entrance which led to the spacious dining room. On the right side of the desk was a wide open stairway which led to the upper stories.

A brick fireplace was installed when the wooden kitchen originally planned for the structure was not allowed by the Eugene City Coun-



Baker's Hotel, later, Smeed Hotel

—Courtesy, Lane County Pioneer Museum

cil. According to the *Eugene City Guard* of April 11, 1885, the structure equalled any hotel from Salem, Oregon to Red Bluff, California.

On March 2, 1885, the completed building was sold to Mr. Stephen Smeed who rented it to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Baker. It was called Baker's Hotel until 1892 when it was renamed the Hotel Eugene. Not until 1907 was it called the Hotel Smeede. The "e" was added to give the name a touch of elegance.

In 1914, the Hotel Smeede became known as the Smeed Hotel. The structure was being painted when Mr. Smeed said, "Paint out the 'e.' The hotel is named Smeed after the family and so it shall be called." Since its purchase by Mr. Stephen Smeed in 1885, the hotel remained continuously in the Smeed family, until its closure in 1970.

In 1972, Mr. Otto Poticha, Eugene architect and associates secured the famed Smeed Hotel.

\*"The Saga of the Smeed: Renovators Bone Axe for Smeed Hotel . . ." by Inez Long Fortt, *Emerald Empire Reminder*, July 1, 1970.

## THE QUACKENBUSH STORE

"If you can't find it, go to Quackenbush's. They will have it."

The statement was true. Anything and everything from jewelry to silver and exquisite china, pots and pans to toys, farm tools and iron stoves to Basque figurines, Viennese glassware, German clocks, Oregon myrtlewood, Indian baskets, wheelbarrows, even buggies. Name it and somewhere in the delightful labyrinth of floors, laden counters, packed shelves and crowded passages, it would be found.

Singing overhead are the antique change carriers; an early period scales serves the customers. An informal open office in full view on the balcony views the store while messages are called back and forth between office and salespeople, adding to the general informality and friendliness of the pioneer establishment.

The store, a landmark in Eugene for almost seventy years, was founded in 1903 by J. W. Quackenbush and his son, Arthur. It was called J. W. Quackenbush & Son. Opened as a hardware store, it

soon spread out into all areas of merchandise.

When Arthur Quackenbush was married in 1922, his wife became a partner in the enterprise and the store grew rapidly as it developed and emphasized its unique characteristics. The couple operated the business together until January, 1970, when Arthur Quackenbush died, soon followed by the death of Mrs. Quackenbush in September, 1972.

"Trust, not hardsell a customer" was the slogan of the store and the policy built a large clientele in the community.

In 1971, the store was doomed for demolition by the Urban Renewal Agency. Persuaded by the Lane County Historic Preservation Committee and the Lane County Historical Society, Mrs. Quackenbush rehabilitated the threatened building. With her assistance, the structure with its many distinctive and unique features was "saved." It is presently being operated by a corps of old-time employees who are maintaining its former charm and friendliness.



Quackenbush Store

—Courtesy, Lane County Pioneer Museum



Arthur Quackenbush pulls antique change carrier  
Mrs. Quackenbush in china area; tables, bins overflowing with china  
—Courtesy, Eugene Register-Guard

**LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
740 West 13th Ave., Eugene, Oregon

Non-Profit  
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U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 96  
Eugene, Oregon



**A. V. Peters Home (Wintermeier House) at 10th and Pearl Street**

—Courtesy, Lane County Pioneer Museum