

# Silverton Country Historical Society

Museum and Office 428 South Water Street



The year 2012 marks the 100th anniversary of Oregon granting women the right to vote, so we have decided to dedicate this year's newsletters to some of the noted women throughout Silverton's history. This month we are featuring the inimitable Mildred Thayer.

## Mildred 'Millie' Wilson Thayer

Dec. 25, 1927 - Aug. 31, 2000

Teacher, Historian, Author, Volunteer

What is it that makes a historian? What is that drive to fill all the blanks, make all the connections, get it all written down? Like her predecessor before her, June Drake, Millie Thayer had what it takes to be called a historian-extraordinaire. In her short, 73 years, she produced some of the most useful documentation of Silverton's history. It's hard to imagine how she was able to accomplish so much, producing four books, plus one that remains unfinished, all the while caring for family, volunteering and teaching. It was a true labor of love; a love of history and a love of Silverton.

When I joined the historical society twelve years ago, there were certain names that kept popping up in the course of museum business which of course, is history. There were few more revered than Millie Thayer. I had noticed the books she had written and have referred to them countless times. Until I volunteered to write about her, there had not been an occasion to look at her own personal story, written in *"The Oregon Years."*

Having been born in a sod house in Nebraska, Millie arrived in Silverton in 1938 with her parents, Bill and Eva Wilson and two siblings, Elaine and Duane (she didn't learn that Bill was actually her stepfather until she was 20 years old). They had moved from the Midwest, probably to escape the harsh living conditions and lack of opportunities. The Wilsons took a job on the Luigi DeSantis place in the Silverton Hills because it offered housing...a one room berry cabin



with a mattress on the floor. Being innovative and industrious, gathering cast-offs from previous berry

pickers, they soon had two beds and a homey cabin. Mr. DeSantis appreciated the Wilson's hard work and they were hired to stay on after the berry season was over. They lived there for 9 months.

They eventually moved out to the Abiqua area, buying a place from Edgar Hobart. Millie went to Dunagan School and then Silverton High School. In 1945, Millie went to Oregon Normal School, now called WOSC in Monmouth. There was a shortage of teachers in 1947 so after two years of college she was asked to get an emergency license and start teaching at Evens/Evans Valley School where she had to teach her own brother and sister. (Dunagan had consolidated with Evans Valley).

After two years she returned to college and got her degree in teaching. She taught two years at Cascade Locks, eventually moving to Alaska where she met her future husband, Ed Thayer. Their only child was born in 1955, not long after they moved back to Silverton.

Millie was teaching at Mark Twain when she started her students on a history project of talking and recording a number of businessmen around town. One of the best oral histories done by Herman Goschie was at the behest of one of her students about the hop industry. Some of them were short, some of them had flaws; but they, at least, are something that we wouldn't have if she hadn't inspired her students with the importance of collecting history from people who had lived it.

She 'retired' in 1988, but like many people, she stayed so busy she wondered how she had had time to work. In the short 12 years from her retirement to her death, her life was a constant round of volunteering and teaching, compiling and writing. She taught 55 Alive classes, belonged to Oregon BPW and the Retired Teachers Association as well as serving as secretary for the Willamette Historical Auto Club.

*Mildred Thayer—Continued on Page 3*

## Homer Davenport Community Festival August 5, 6, 7, 2011



Homer Davenport became the focus of Silverton, Oregon's traditional Summer Festival in 1980. Every year since, the celebrations have kept Silverton's young and old alike in high spirits. This year as usual, the **2011 Homer Davenport Community Festival** will be held on **August 5, 6 and 7**, the first full weekend in August. Come join us as we celebrate the life and work of Homer C. Davenport, Silverton's favorite son and 19th century Hearst Political Cartoonist. For more information, visit the Homer Page at: <http://HomerDavenport.com/>

### Timothy Woodbridge Davenport July 30, 1826 - April 26, 1911 By Gus Frederick

On April 26, 1911, Silverton and the State of Oregon lost one of its more learned, compassionate and literary figures from pioneer times. Timothy Woodbridge Davenport, father of Homer, was a remarkable person in his own right. He was a medical doctor, a farmer, surveyor, Indian agent, store owner, State legislator and more. In his later years, he took to writing. Over a period of several years, he contributed over a half dozen papers to the then-new Oregon Historical Society, on topics ranging from historical recollections to his own take on various aspects of society. Looking behind the shining star that was his offspring Homer, we start to see the picture of a complex, caring and influential Oregonian.



As this is the Centennial of the passing of Timothy Woodbridge Davenport, we dedicate this year's Homer Davenport Community Festival to his memory.

#### T.W. Davenport's Timeline

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1826</b> T.W. Born in Columbia, New York, to Dr. Benjamin and Sarah Rollins Gott Davenport                     | <b>1870</b> Wife Flora Geer Davenport dies of small pox.  |
| <b>1845</b> Timothy Davenport attended school in the 1845-1846 school year in Woodstock, Champaign Co., Ohio.     | <b>1870</b> Re-elected Oregon State Representative.   |
| <b>1846-1847</b> Worked as a teacher, Wilson's Academy, Woodstock, Champaign County, Ohio.                        | <b>1872</b> Marriage of Timothy Davenport to widow Nancy Gilmour on October 1. Silverton, Marion County, Oregon. Five children, four daughters and one son, who dies of TB as a teenager. |
| <b>1848-1849</b> Worked at practicing medicine, Woodstock, Champaign County, Ohio.                                | <b>1873</b> Sells the Waldo Hills Farm and moves to Silverton to manage the Grange store there.   |
| <b>1851</b> Emigrated to Oregon in a 1851 wagon train with his parents and four siblings.                         | <b>1882</b> Elected Oregon State Senator.   |
| <b>1851</b> Worked as surveyor in the Silverton Country, off and on for many years.                               | <b>1895</b> Serves as Oregon State Land Agent.  |
| <b>1854</b> Marries Florinda Geer, daughter of Ralph C. Geer, on November 17. Four children, two died as infants. | <b>1903</b> First written piece published by the Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, (OHQ), " <i>An Object Lesson in Paternalism.</i> "  |
| <b>1862-1863</b> Serves as Indian Agent at the Umatilla Agency, (9 months).                                       | <b>1904</b> OHQ publishes an extract from the more lengthy " <i>Recollections of an Indian Agent,</i> " and " <i>The Lessons of History and Evolution.</i> "                              |
| <b>1864-1868</b> Served as Marion County Surveyor, Marion County, Oregon.   | <b>1907</b> OHQ publishes " <i>Recollections of an Indian Agent,</i> " in four parts.   |
| <b>1867</b> Son Homer Calvin is born.   | <b>1908</b> OHQ publishes " <i>The Slavery Question in Oregon,</i> " in two parts.  |
| <b>1868</b> Elected Oregon State Representative.  | <b>1911</b> TW Dies in Pasadena, California on April 26 at the age of 84.   |

## Dime Toss Booth at Strawberry Festival!! Sunday—June 19th

We are still collecting glassware for use in our Dime Toss booth. Please scour your home and local yard and garage sales to help us out. Then be sure to come find us at the Strawberry Festival on June 19 to share in the fun and help us raise a little much needed funds! You can drop off your donations at the museum on most Tuesday mornings or on Saturdays and Sundays when we're open. You can also drop off items at my home, 211 Welch St., Silverton, down the hill from the hospital. (Leave it on our porch if no one answers your knock.)



Thank you all in advance for your generosity and support—

*Kathy Hunter*

### April Member Program



A large group of SCHS members and guests enjoyed a delightful visit with Carolyn Kaufman Simmons who worked in the office at Silver Falls Timber Co. almost directly out of high school until the mill closed in 1945. Carolyn was able to put a personal touch on the large mill, recalling stories about working relationships behind the scenes.



After her talk we gathered to look at our large collection of photographs of Silver Falls Timber Company and the logging industry. Everyone agreed, it was a wonderful evening.

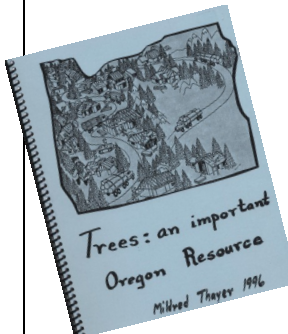


*Chris Schwab*

### Mildred Thayer (Continued)

It was probably around this time that she started workshops, teaching people to write their personal memories.

Two of her books were compiled and written in 1995: *“The Oregon Years”* and *“Silverton Country History.”* Following in 1996 was her book, *“Trees: An Important Oregon Resource;”* and *“Living in the Silverton Oregon Country”* was put together in 1997. After Millie’s death, her daughter, Victoria, brought a box full of Millie’s research material including stories for a new book which was going to be titled *“Silverton: Gateway to the Falls”*.



Thankful just barely touches the surface to describe our gratitude for all her work when searching for specific tidbits of Silverton’s history. Whether writing about the logging industry or gathering people’s memories, the Historical Society has benefited: we have her books, the slides she ordered from the Oregon Historical Society in Portland, and the tapes from her classes. Her books are for sale at the museum except for *“Gateway....”*. It’s in our archives, waiting for the next dedicated historian who might be willing to do a final proof-read.

*Carolyn Hutton*

## Three Silverton Homes Added to National Register of Historic Places

As the result of a submission by the City of Silverton to the Oregon State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation and their subsequent recommendation for acceptance, three local properties are Oregon's most recent additions to the National Register of Historic Places. The homes include the Murton and Lillian DeGuire Home located on Hill Street; June Drake's home on South Water and the Louis J. Adams house on West Main. The homes were selected following a survey of over 400 Silverton sites in order to identify three homes representing different architectural styles and socio-economic backgrounds. For more information, go to [www.oregonheritage.org](http://www.oregonheritage.org) and click on "National Register" at the left of the page. Congratulations to homeowners Jamie and Valerie Martinson, Ed and Karen McKenzie and Ron and Jane Jones!



DeGuire Home



June Drake Home



L.J. Adams Home

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### Silverton Iris Expert Featured *The Bulletin of the American Iris Society*

Dr. Kleinsorge—Oregon Pioneer in Irises  
Tracy Plotner, AIS Librarian

The January 2011 edition of the *Bulletin of the American Iris Society* included a story on Silverton's own Dr. Rudolph Kleinsorge. Not only was Dr. Kleinsorge a respected physician and surgeon and civic activist, he also found time to pursue an avid interest in the raising and development of irises.

In 1916, he began landscaping his new home with irises. By 1926 he had established an iris farm on his 100 square foot garden plot and began distributing a catalog. Over the years he received many awards from Iris organizations in recognition of the blooms he developed on his own, including the American Iris Society and the British Iris Society. He was also recognized with his own day of appreciation here in Silverton in May of 1969 for his lifelong involvement in the city.



Dr. R.E. Kleinsorge among his irises.

Dr. Kleinsorge died in 1978 at the age of 95, but his home still stands on East Main Street and his contributions to medicine, the town of Silverton and the world of irises live on.

We have a copy of the January issue of *The Bulletin of the American Iris Society* at the Museum along with many other items from the life of Dr. Kleinsorge.

*Chris Schwab*

## Volunteers still needed!!

It would be a terrible thing if we had to post a notice on the Museum door saying:

“CLOSED DUE TO LACK OF VOLUNTEERS”

**Please** help us keep that from happening—just three hours of your time once a month is all we need. We still have 3 slots open—two on the third Saturday and one on the fourth Sunday of the month. And we can always use volunteers who would be willing to help on an “as needed basis”. No experience required, just a willingness to meet people curious about Silverton’s past. You might even have quiet time for exploring the museum on your own or reading a good book. Think it over and call Chris at 503-873-4529. Thank you!!

Thank you to Robin Anderson for overseeing our display at the recent Genealogy Conference presented by Ancestry Detectives. And also thanks to Carolyn Hutton, Tom Worthen and Kathy Hunter for hosting our display throughout the day. The event was a great success.

### June Member Program Saturday, June 18th 2:00 p.m. Downtown Walking Tour



Come join us for a walking tour of the downtown area on the third Saturday in June. We will tour rain or shine, so if it looks like it could rain (in June??) just grab an umbrella to bring with you. Meet at the Museum. (It will be open for an hour before hand so come early and take a look at our progress.)

#### Coming Events—

- June—Downtown Walking tour, Saturday, June 18—2 p.m. Meet at the Museum
- July—Silverton, by Gus Frederick, Arcadia Publishing. More info later!
- August — Homer Davenport Community Festival, August 5,6,7
- Also coming soon—Grand Re-Opening of the Depot!

## New Look at the Museum!

Thanks to Board member and artist, Kay LaLone, the front windows of the Museum have been given a face lift! No longer are there blank white spaces staring out....Kay has painted a scene that looks

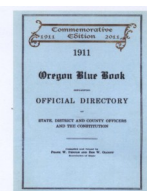


like beautiful drapes framing the window as you look inside. The photo does not do her artwork justice—come by and look for yourself. And keep checking the Museum for new signage and other

improvements to the exterior.

Two of your SCHS Board members have been appointed to the Silverton Historic Landmarks Commission. **Norman English** and **Chris Schwab** were approved at the March City Council meeting and can expect to begin their new duties in July of this year. The five-member Commission was established in 2006 to help preserve the City’s historic heritage. More information can be found at [www.silverton.or.us](http://www.silverton.or.us).

On Saturday, May 14, I attended the Preservation Month Fair at the State Capitol in Salem. Several organizations were there offering helpful information on preserving historic items from clothing to photos to buildings. Tours were offered of the Capitol building including a climb up the 121 steps to the golden Oregon Pioneer.



Celebrating 100 years of the Oregon Blue Book!  
Order yours on the State Archives website:  
<http://bluebook.state.or.us/misc/order/order.htm>



The booth hosted by the Oregon State Archives was selling copies of the 2011 Oregon Blue Book along with a commemorative edition of the 1911 Blue Book in celebration of 100 years of the Oregon Blue Book. I’ll have a copy for your perusal here at the Museum. You can order your own at — <http://bluebook.state.or.us/misc/order/order.htm>



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Post card written in  
1909 by Pearl  
Davenport

Your S.C.H.S. Board

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Chris Schwab	Secretary
Rufus LaLone	Treasurer
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Kathy Hunter	Membership
Molly Murphy	
Robin Anderson	
Marsha Worthen	

Thank you to our new and renewing members!

Lonna Boucher	Margo Drake Walker
Marcella Gentzkow	Karen Ek Lawrence
Bill Predeek	Edward "Jack" Geer
Amy McKinley	Patti Lindquist
Duane and Paulette Olson	GeerCrest Foundation

And thank you to these generous donors!!  
Harold and Ruth Ann Nielson

**If you received an overdue  
notice with your newsletter,  
we appreciate your prompt  
response.**

**Thank you!**