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Willamette Heritage Center at the Mill's journal highlights community celebrations

"Willamette Valley Voices: Connecting Generations" is Willamette Heritage Center at the Mill's biannual journal publication. Its goal is to provide a showcase for scholarly writing pertaining to history and heritage in Oregon's Willamette Valley, south of Portland.

Articles are written by scholars, students, heritage professionals and historians — professional and amateur. Calls for articles go out in February for the summer issue and in May for the winter edition. Each issue is themed to orient authors and readers to varied and important topics in valley history.

Our inaugural edition, summer 2012, looked at aspects of public spaces in the Mid-Valley.

Our winter 2013 issue, which came out at the end of February, contains articles about community celebrations. These celebrations give us an important sense of belonging, connections and identity. Communities are strengthened by these festivities. They help us answer questions about histories, communities, and self and group identities. Community celebrations are important for socialization, for newcomers to an area and for a community's children. Through participation, young and old alike learn about their heritage and culture.

Some articles in the new issue feature celebrations that were short-lived or are no longer commemorated. These events came into being to fulfill a purpose, but once that purpose no longer existed, the celebrations ceased to serve a function in their communities. They include: Salem's Cherry Festival, in the article by Kylie Pine; Oregon Normal School's May Day Fete, in the piece by Erin Passehl; the Oregon Trail Pageant of Eugene, in Julie Voelker-Morris' article; Mount Angel Flax Harvest Festival and the Federal Theatre Project, in Damond Morris's submission; and the Canoe Fete and Whitewater Parade, both in the Eugene area, in a feature by Jennifer Huang.

Some articles look at celebrations that are decades old, steeped in tradition and that connect generations of valley residents to a collective past: the Linn County Pioneer Picnic, in Ashley Sharatt's work; the Fern Ridge Thistle Regatta, in Huang's article; and the Lebanon Strawberry and Independence Hop and Heritage festivals highlighted, in Phil Decker's photo essay.

Meanwhile, others focus on celebrations that are relatively new: the Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival, in Rosalynn Rothstein's article; annual celebration of the Grand Ronde tribe's restoration, in David Lewis' piece; Aumsville Corn Festiva , in photographs by Decker; and Oregon Country Fair, in Shelley Deadmond's review of Suzi Prozanski's book "Fruit of the Sixties: The Founding of the Oregon Country Fair." These new celebrations are hoped to have long lives that grow and evolve as each generation adds to the events.

In addition, the journal has a new feature called "In Their Own Words." Through this, we are able to provide access to short snippets of oral histories housed in WHC's collections.

The theme for this summer's issue will be waterways. Examples of history and heritage topics related to waterways include: flooding events, environmental issues and reactions, water-powered industry, fisheries, dam construction, boats and boating, transportation, recreation, irrigation (human-made extensions or manipulations of water), water management and drought, or water-related attractions and tourism. For a copy of the Call for Article Abstracts for the summer issue, please contact me at either (503) 585-7012 or kenis@willametteheritage.org.

Finally, this year WHC offered two awards for the best graduate student contributions to "Willamette Valley Voices." Winners for 2012-13 were Toni Rush for her article "Dancing its Way into Your Heart: Cottonwoods Ballroom 1930-1960," which came out in our summer 2012 issue, and Damond Morris for "Mount Angel's Flax Harvest Festival and the WPA: Weaving Vaudeville into the Fabric of the Willamette Valley," in the winter 2013 edition.

Currently, the inaugural issue of the journal is available as a downloadable PDF at www.willametteheritage.org/LaRC/W_V_V_8_25_2012.pdf. You also can check the WHC's website after March 11 for a downloadable version of the winter 2013 edition. Both are available in hardcopy formate through the WHC gift shop.

Preserving the valley's heritage and sharing its stories is a part of a continuing process and dialogue of which WHC journal is the newest vehicle.

Keni Sturgeon is the curator at the Willamette Heritage Center at the Mill. Contact her at kenis@willametteheritage.org.

Additional Facts

Share your family photo

One of the new galleries in the Methodist Parsonage will share stories of eight Salem families over time. The center is asking Salem's residents to submit images of their "Salem Family" if you would like your family included in the display — whether your family came to Salem over the Oregon Trail or was already here when the explorers first came in the late 1700s. If your family immigrated to the city in the late 1800s or to escape the drought conditions of the Midwest during the Depression or if your family arrived more recently, we'd like to hear from you.

Please email a family photo, with family name and identities of those in the photo if known to kenis@willametteheritage.org or drop a hard copy of the photograph in the mail to be scanned and returned with the same information to Keni Sturgeon, curator, Willamette Heritage Center at the Mill, 1313 Mill Street, SE, Salem, OR 97301.
