



# THE BANDON LIGHT

A PUBLICATION OF THE BANDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## The Museum Welcomes New Executive Director — Gayle Propeck Nix



**Gayle Nix** became the new executive director of the Bandon Historical Society Museum in October. She replaced **Judy Knox**, who retired after holding the job for 20 years.

“I came in at a really good time,” said Nix. “Judy left the museum on a firm foundation,” noting that the museum has a strong volunteer base, is operating actively and is financially solvent.

Nix was born in Bandon and attended Bandon schools through high school. “I have lots of family in this area. My mom was a **Howard**,” said Nix. Her father, **Bob Propeck**

worked as a cheesemaker at the Bandon Cheese factory and worked as a weighmaster at Ocean Spray.

Nix lived away from Bandon for 21 years and then moved back. “Moving away and coming back gave me a whole different perspective on Bandon-by-the-Sea,” said Nix, who lived in several other parts of the country. “I appreciate Bandon as a great place to live. Had I stayed here forever, I might not have known that.”

Before taking the job at the museum, Nix was the office manager at a medical clinic. As executive director, Nix is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the museum. **Eileen Scott** continues to work part time as her assistant.

“The days go by so quickly,” Nix said of her job at the museum. “History has always been an interest to me. What better place for me to work.”

The membership and public will get a chance to meet and welcome Gayle at the Annual Meeting Saturday, December 10. The meeting begins at 1:00 PM and will be followed by a member's social. Please stop by, introduce yourself, and enjoy some refreshments.



The *Western World* ran this photograph of Mabel Howard, who had a grandchild in every class in the Bandon schools in 1957. Gayle Propeck Nix, the museum's new director, is on the far right in the front row.



# The Breuer Building

## By Dick Hancock



Mike Breuer at his work bench

I remember the long kitchen table on the second floor of the Breuer Building where all the relatives would gather on Sunday afternoons. The adults would gather at the table and the kids would "help" cousin "Feeney" by grinding coffee in the huge iron coffee mill or hoist wood for the kitchen stove up from the basement with the rope and pulley hanging from the back porch. Exploring the basement was an adventure too....searching out the eggs in the chickens' nests or speculating on what treasures were hidden in the big iron safe Uncle Mike kept there. Upstairs the adults would be discussing the latest gossip or venturing their opinions on politics and hoping they agreed with Uncle Mike's feelings on the subject. The visits were always lubricated by Uncle Mike's strong home brewed beer so the longer they lasted the louder they got! His opening of the porcelain stoppered bottles was ritual - he would hold the big, white enamel pitcher between his knees, point the bottle downward and flip the wire retainers. When the fumes and foam stopped flying, the pitcher would be full of strong, amber beer which he would portion out to his guests and himself. If we had been unusually

good, we would also get a small taste, accompanied by an "it's goot for dem" as he would glare at any parent who might dare to object.

Born in what is now Slovakia, Mike Breuer deserted from the Kaiser's army at the age of 21 and migrated to the US, settling first in Bridgeport, Connecticut. From there he headed west and homesteaded on Indian Creek, on the Middle fork of the Coquille River. He saved his money and brought all his brothers and sisters to the US, one by one. In 1894 he started a cobbler shop in Bandon, walking overland every week from the ranch. The present Breuer Building was started during that time and finally finished about the turn of the century. It housed what had become a general mercantile store as well as family living quarters on the second story, and a small attached part on the west side which was his cobbler shop where he made shoes and boots as well as repairing them. For over a half-century he worked at his bench there, amidst the smell of leather, boot polish and sometimes the tempting aroma of salmon smoking in the big wood stove. When one of the many relatives who commercial fished on the Coquille would bring him a salmon, he would build a small, smoky fire in the ash box and



Mike Breuer's cow and building (right)



1961 Breuer Building



1969 Breuer Building

(Breuer Building continued on page 6)

# The Wreck of the Randolph

By Dick Hancock



Schooner Randolph under construction at Herman Brothers shipyard in 1910.

The small, 60-foot long, gas powered *Randolph* was not a lucky boat by all accounts. Built at Randolph by the Herman Brothers in 1910, she had her share of problems while navigating the rough and rocky coast between Rogue River and Coos Bay. She carried freight of all kinds and an occasional passenger as she plied her way up and down the Coos and Curry coast, giving the Life Saving Service more than her share of business.

On May 1, 1914, she grounded at the mouth of the Rogue River. The Bandon Life Saving Station was called upon to refloat her. On August 5, 1914, while heading out over the Bandon Bar, she lost her propeller and drifted up on the rocks next to the south jetty. The lifesaving crew had to take her anchor and a heavy line up stream and winch her up on the anchor line. After six repetitions of this exercise, they were able to moor her at a dock, from where she was towed by the towboat Star to a place where she could be repaired.

But on April 24th, 1915, just three months after the Lifesaving Service was disbanded and absorbed into the Coast Guard, her luck ran out. While crossing the bar in heavy seas, her bow dropped into the trough between two large waves and she "pitch poled" over.

Three men who were standing on deck were swept away and drowned. A fourth, deckhand Chauncey Carpenter, was standing in the bow of the boat and managed to swim ashore to the south jetty and survived. There was no sign of Captain Charles Anderson and Engineer Henry Colvin.

The upside down hull drifted ashore on the south beach, where the Coastguardsmen were able to get a line on it and rig a breeches buoy. When they were finally able to board the hull, voices and knocking sounds were heard inside the hull. My grandfather, G.R. (Dick) Hancock and another coastguardsman Dolf Johnson chopped a hole through the thick wooden planks and found both the Captain and the Engineer cold and wet but otherwise unharmed.

When Engineer Colvin was hauled through the hole, he still had his pipe clenched between his teeth and only removed it to ask "does anybody have some dry tobacco and matches". After receiving them he thanked his rescuers profusely before being tied into the breeches buoy and hauled ashore to safety.

The little *Randolph* was damaged so extensively she was salvaged where she lay and never sailed again. A few months later, in a very similar accident, the steam schooner *Fifield* joined her in her watery grave on the south beach.



Randolph under construction (1910).



Coastguardsmen rig a line to the Randolph, April 24, 1915



Coastguardsmen chopping into the hull, April 24, 1915.

## Bandon High Class of '61 Celebrates at the Museum



Members of the Bandon High Class of '61 gathered for a reunion at the museum on Cranberry Saturday. Board member **Donna Mason**, a member of the class, headed up the gathering. The museum ran extended hours. Class members from neighboring years also dropped in to join the gathering. Volunteers added extra fifties touches to the display, which was already decked out for the Cranberry Festival. Class members swapped stories and reminisced over museum pictures. "We hope other groups consider the museum as a gathering place," said Museum Board Chair **Jim Proehl**.

## Bandon Museum at the Coos County Fairgrounds Museum



A crew from the Bandon Museum traveled to the Coos County Fairgrounds Museum in Myrtle Point this summer to install a Bandon exhibit in that museum.

The Fairgrounds Museum is designed to host exhibits from other museums and groups that share Coos County's history.

The Bandon exhibit covered about 140 square feet of wall space and a display cabinet about eight feet long. The exhibit concentrates on water related subjects (beach, harbor, and bog) to set Bandon off from the county's inland communities.

Museum volunteers constructed 18 thirty-by-twenty inch cloth covered foam board panels and six half-sheet panels. Photos were mounted on the larger panels and the small panels bore text.

The display case was filled with beach related objects. The work of preparing the panels was shared by a wide ranging group.

Volunteers **Doreen Colbert, Gayle Nix, Paula Colgrove, Kathy Cowan, Kathy Phillips, Nancy Murphy, Jim Proehl, and Donna Mason** helped with constructing panels, and finding, printing and mounting photographs.

Jen Ells' Community Arts class at Bandon High spent a session at the museum helping to prepare the exhibit. Student employee **Katie Brown** put the finishing touches on the text panels.



## Veterans' Celebration



Over one hundred people visited the Bandon Historical Society Museum during its Veterans' Celebration Saturday, November 12. The historic military vehicles parked outside the museum drew some to the event.

The event was organized for the second year by museum volunteer **Rick Hinojosa**. The museum has held veterans events for many years.

The featured speaker was Boatswain's Mate First Class **Ray**

**Clendenen** who serves out of Coos Bay. He spoke about the role of the Coast Guard in Bandon and answered questions about the mission of and service in the Coast Guard.

Several collectors exhibited parts of their military collections, including **Hinojosa, Joe Lash, Alex Tessman and Stephen Joyce**. The military vehicles on display were from the Oregon Central Coast Military Vehicle Group. The vehicles came from Myrtle Point, Coos Bay and Florence and were manned by **Jim Shipp, Joe Perkins, Cal Applebee, Traci, Jason and Clayton Kellam, Hunter Berrier, and Anthony Stump**.

Several local veterans brought their service photos to the museum to be scanned into the museum's photo collections. The museum continues to encourage veterans and the families of veterans to offer photos for scanning.

(Breuer Building continued from page 3)

smoke the fish.

The building gained its place as one of the oldest buildings in Bandon on the night of September 26, 1936, when the Bandon fire destroyed most of the rest of the bustling seaport. Sweeping down from Bear Creek to the east, it quickly reduced to rubble and ashes most of the town. Despite buildings on the east side and on Coast Guard hill to the south going up in flames, family and friends hoisted water to the roof and saved the building after an all-night battle. The spring in the basement and the river to the north provided the water and the family provided the manpower, saving the lifework of Uncle Mike. When my father, Wayne Hancock, came down the river from Prosper the next day in his gill-net boat, he said he wasn't surprised to see the building still standing, "No mere fire would dare defy Uncle Mike".

You can see the building now, restored to much of its original condition, immediately west of the old Coast Guard building. I wonder how many ghosts of the family visit the guests of the Bed and Breakfast on windy nights when the howl of the wind would be hard to tell from the rustle and whispers of the original occupants.



2016 Breuer Building

Currently Bandon Historic River House LLC

## Authors Visit Museum for Research



Bill Lansing

Two authors who have written extensively about local history visited the museum recently to gather photographs for upcoming books.

**Bill Lansing**, who has written and published books on logging, schools, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, visited to gather photographs for a book on

south coast rivers and fishing.

Lansing is the former president and CEO of Menasha Forest Products headquartered in North Bend.

**Andie Jensen's** titles include "Hangman's Call," a book about executions in Coos County, and his most recent book, "Gone But Not Forgotten," a book on the coal mining operations at Beaver Hill. Jensen is a retired California Police Sergeant who has written extensively about local law enforcement since moving to Coos Bay.

His book about Beaver Hill was his first title not about policing. Jensen's next venture will be about places that were once communities, such as Parkersburg, Prosper and Randolph, that are now mostly just spots on the map.

Though different in style, both authors produce heavily illustrated books. Bandon's museum has shared photographs with both in the past.



## AGENTS WANTED



**Julia Marlow**  
Uses and  
Recommends  
Madame  
Du Four's  
Face  
Powder.

**Everywhere  
To Sell  
Madame  
Du Four's  
Face  
Powder**  
which is prepared  
in four colors  
And Two Sizes.  
**25c & 50c**  
PER BOX.  
Send 2c stamp  
for sample, De-  
partment 13.

**The Du Four Co., Wash., D. C.**

### 100 Years Ago

The advertisements above, to the right and below are from *The Bandon Recorder* in 1916.

## We Have Moved

From the old stand on Second Street to the Laird & Lowe Building at First St. and Wall Streets opposite to Bank of Bandon Building, where we will be pleased to meet old patrons and new.

Hardware, Electric  
Fixtures and  
Plumbing.

**STARR-MAST**  
Hardware Company

## HOTEL GALLIER

Bandon

Oregon

RATES \$1.00 TO \$2.00 PER DAY  
SPECIAL RATES BY WEEK OR MONTH  
SAMPLE ROOM IN CONNECTION

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**November & December 2016** — Christmas Village display at the Museum.

**December 10, 2016** — **Museum Annual Meeting** at 1:00PM. A member social with refreshments will follow. Please join us!

**December 23, 2016** — Museum closes until February 6, 2017. Staff and volunteers will refresh the exhibits for the 2017 season.

**January 24, 2017** — Museum Board Meeting, 4PM at the Museum. All members and guests are welcome to attend.

**February 4, 2017** — **Special Event-Shipwreck Stories**. 1:00—4:00PM at the Museum, Free Admission; stories begin at 2:00PM

**February 6, 2017** — Museum reopens for the 2017 season.

**February 28, 2017** — Museum Board Meeting, 4PM at the Museum. All members and guests are welcome to attend.

*(Continued from page 2) Donations and New Members*

- 1929 three piece fishing pole— **Kathy Cowan**.
- Rexall Toothache wax and Kodak film—**Bev Tresidder**
- Coast Highway dedication & 1958 Bandon High School Commencement programs — **Mary Ellingsen**.
- Gift box of cheese “The Cheddar Affair” story of Bandon Cheese — **Darwin Van Leuven Family**
- Old sewing patterns & Halloween decorations used by teacher **Dena Pierce** in the 40’s and 50’s — **Careen Pierce**



**THE OREGON  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

*Here for Oregon. Here for Good.*

The Oregon Community Foundation recently awarded the Bandon Historical Society a grant of \$1,800 as part of the foundation’s Small Arts and Cultural Grants program.

The Bandon Museum titled its application “Sharing Bandon’s Story.” The museum earmarked the grant money for communication with its members, visitors and the general public. The funds will be used to produce newsletters, maintain the museum’s website, and pay for postage, phone and Internet.

“Many grant programs only fund new projects,” said Museum Board President **Jim Proehl**. “This program recognizes that small organizations often simply need operating money. We appreciate the Oregon Community Foundation for recognizing our needs.”

## President’s Corner...

**By Jim Proehl**

**Board President**



**The results of the election left me shocked, saddened and disappointed!**

Obviously, I am referring to the vote on the Coos County historical fund.

Ballot measure 6-153 asked Coos County’s voters to tax themselves at a rate of 10 cents per thousand, which would have raised up to \$500,000 per year to fund the eight history museums in the county.

The ballot measure was the work of an ad hoc committee, called together by Joe Slack, past president of the Coos History Museum, of volunteers representing each museum.

We introduced our idea to the Coos County commissioners and picked our way through the thorny ground of deciding how the funds would be allocated, should the measure pass.

After we met with them several times, the county commissioners agreed to refer the measure to the voters. Election victory seemed at our fingertips.

We formed a political action committee, raised a modest campaign war chest, and formed a subtle campaign strategy.

We only lost by 8,000 votes.

Maybe I’m not so shocked that voters chose not to raise their taxes. We didn’t win the election, but we did sow the seeds of cooperation among the county’s museums that may someday lead to a shared approach to fundraising.

We’d love to have the reliable source of funding the vote could have provided. But without it, Bandon’s museum still runs in the black, has a reserve in the bank, and operates more hours than any other small museum in the state. We’re fine.

There is no drama in the election for directors and officers of the Bandon Historical Society. The ballot is included with this newsletter; no one is running against anyone.

As in a lot of volunteer organizations, finding people willing to fill positions is the larger challenge. I’d like to personally thank everyone willing to sit on the board and serve as an officer.

It begs the question; why take a vote at all?

Voting when the election is uncontested keeps the decision-making mechanism in place. It’s part of the process for a member, non-profit organization.

If voting makes you think of a good board candidate, put that name on the ballot and tell that person you think he or she would be a good board member.

A slate of opposing candidates would suggest a philosophical division within the museum. We are not divided.

It’s nice to have an election to feel good about.

## JOIN THE BANDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

YES! Please accept my membership in the Bandon Historical Society

Already a member? Please consider a donation to help support your museum.

(please check one)

I'm a Member \_\_\_\_\_ and would like to make a tax deductible donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$15 Individual \_\_\_\_\_ NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

\$25 Family \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\$35 Business \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

\$250 Life \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to BHS and mail to:

**Bandon Historical Society, PO Box 737, Bandon OR 97411**

For more information on benefits of memberships go to

<http://www.bandonhistoricalmuseum.org/membership.html>

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