



# THE BANDON LIGHT

Sponsored by Chas Waldrop, Real Estate

A PUBLICATION OF THE BANDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## The Case of the Captain's Wife: A Women's History Month Mystery?

Captain Olsen's wife presents a mystery, perhaps one to be solved in March: Women's History Month. Volunteers have been working lately to update and refresh several family group photos, including the Olsen family. For many years, John Olsen was the captain of the *Elizabeth*, a steam schooner that made more than

600 trips between Bandon and San Francisco. What made writing the caption for the Olsen family difficult is that we know everyone's name except the Captain's wife. It's not an uncommon problem, not being able to find a married woman's first name.

A word search of newspapers in Bandon and Coos County, via the *Historic Oregon Newspapers* web site hosted by the University of Oregon, yielded lots of hits for "Olsen," including the story of Olsen re-

placing Jensen as Captain of the *Elizabeth* in 1907. (Captain Olsen retired and was replaced by Captain Olson, but we digress.)

The account of Captain Olsen's wedding seemed like a sure bet for

finding his wife's name, but no luck. To be fair, if he had married a local girl, we'd have been more likely to have learned her name, but he found his bride in San Francisco and the news of the wedding reached town before the couple.

Thereafter, she shows up in the paper as Mrs. J. Olsen. It's not that she was a recluse. We find her and her children's names in the newspapers frequently, most frequently on ships' passenger lists. They often traveled on the *Elizabeth*.

No doubt, Captain Olsen's wife's first name is on record somewhere. But where? How should we celebrate Women's History Month? One way would be to take up the challenge of filling in more of the stories of women in local history.

We may even learn their names.



Captain and Mrs. John Olsen and their children  
Mary, Willie, Ida and John (seated). Scan #30322

*This exhibit caption for the photo of the Olsen family accommodates the fact that we don't know Mrs. Olsen's first name.*

### Capt. Olsen a Benedict

Rumor has it that Capt. Olsen, the esteemed master of the steamer *Elizabeth* took unto himself a wife while in San Francisco the last trip. We were unable to learn the lady's name but understand she comes from the best stock of the city. As for the captain, we need make no comment, as he is known here as a big, good natured, daring sea goer, and is universally admired by everyone. His many friends in this city will extend the heartiest congratulations.

*The account of Captain Olsen's wedding in the April 1, 1909, Bandon Recorder does not include his new bride's name. The headline is likely a reference to Shakespeare's play Much Ado About Nothing, in which a character named Benedict rails against matrimony, until his marriage to Beatrice at the end of the play.*

### NOTES FROM ALONG THE BANDON WATERFRONT

The *Elizabeth* arrived last night with 210 tons of freight and the following passengers: Mrs. J. Olsen, Ida Olsen, Mary Olsen, Mrs. M. J. Laughlin, T. S. VanVleet, wife and two children, H. Hogan, W. J. Hendy, E. Walker, E. D. Dunham and wife, Miss H. Dunham, Willie Olsen, Will Barrow, James Hill, A. E. Tower. The *Elizabeth* will sail again at midnight Wednesday.

The *Speedwell* arrived yesterday with a small cargo of freight and the following passengers: B. O. Hasford, Mrs. M. Adderson and child, Geo. W. Moore and wife, Geo. W. Moore, Jr., John Moore, Miss Moore,

Bandon Recorder, June 9, 1914

# THE BANDON LIGHT

A publication of the  
**Bandon Historical Society  
Museum**

Executive Director.....Gayle Propeck Nix  
Native American Consultant... Reg Pullen

## Board of Directors

President.....Doreen Colbert  
Vice President..... Elaine Stohler  
Secretary.....Faye Albertson  
Treasurer.....Jim Proehl

## Board Members

Kathy Dornath	Donna Mason
Rick Hinojosa	Mary Schamehorn
Mary Stewart	Nancy Murphy
Reg Pullen	Brian Vick

## Nominating Committee

Doreen Colbert	Elaine Stohler
Donna Mason	Carolyn Russell

The Board meets the fourth Tuesday of each month,  
4:00 pm at the Museum. All members and guests  
are welcome to attend.

## Newsletter Layout Jim Proehl

---

Bandon Historical Society  
PO Box 737  
Bandon, OR 97411  
Phone/Fax 541-347-2164  
E-mail:

[bandonhistoricalmuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:bandonhistoricalmuseum@yahoo.com)  
Web: [www.bandonhistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.bandonhistoricalmuseum.org)  
a 501(c)(3) organization

If you are interested in Bandon's history and  
would like to help preserve our past for future gen-  
erations, call us—we need you.

The Museum is OPEN Monday through Satur-  
day 10-4 and 7 days a week June through Septem-  
ber.

Volunteers are waiting to help you and answer  
your questions about Bandon's history.

Enjoy Bandon's rich, wonderful history!

Located at: 270 Fillmore Avenue, Bandon, OR

**On the corner of  
Fillmore Ave. and Highway 101**

© 2021 Bandon Historical Society



## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

The only good thing I  
can say about 2020, is that  
it's over. Let's hope that  
2021 treats us better.

In spite of the pandemic  
related shutdowns, we had  
lots of positive things hap-  
pen at the museum.

We had new flooring installed in our entrance and  
gift shop and in our biggest room where we have our  
programs. This was made possible by a grant from  
Trust Management Services.

Freedom Graphics designed and installed new out-  
door signs thanks to a grant by the Mr. and Mrs. Mi-  
chael L. Keiser Fund.

We moved the cannon (with the help of six men)  
from the gift shop into the military area, which is a  
better place for it.

Jim Proehl and Tom Orsi created four, new, fami-  
ly friendly hike guides available in a brochure rack in  
the alcove by the front door. They have been very  
popular.

We were able to open our doors June 8–Nov 17,  
then closed again Nov 18– Dec 2, then open again  
briefly, Dec 18–Dec 23.

We had Free summer Sundays, but for a shorter  
season.

We displayed our Cranberry Festival dresses and  
had some Facebook posts to help celebrate the Cran-  
berry Festival. We had six newsletters during the  
year, our regular four and two special editions to  
commemorate the Bandon fire and Veterans Day. We  
also did Bandon fire history minutes on the radio for  
August and September.

We had a smaller version of our Veterans Day pro-  
gram. It was an outside event organized by Rick Hi-  
nojosa, a volunteer and board member.

### **We finished the year financially in the black.**

We applied for and received three COVID-19 re-  
lief grants that originated with the federal CARES act  
in addition to grants from several long-time grantors.

We would like to thank the sponsors who contrib-  
uted again this last year.

Most importantly, we received a generous re-  
sponse to our fund-raising letter and continual support  
from our members. **You kept us afloat.**

Come in and check out the changes we made dur-  
ing our longer than normal down time. It's looking  
really good!

Gayle Nix  
Executive Director

## How Do We Preserve a Pandemic?

When the museum builds an exhibit to document this era, what will we put on display: a roll of toilet paper?

For many of us, the strategy has been to do as little as possible, in the hope that nothing happens. Cancelled events, blank schedules, home haircuts: it's not a pretty picture. There probably isn't a picture at all.

And yet, even doing nothing is doing something.

A couple generations from now, when the children of today's children get an assignment to find out what happened in their grandparents' day, history will tell them there was a global pandemic in 2020, but what record will they find to tell them about their family and their community?

What will those grandparents have to share? Will they show them the photos on their phones, pull up their Instagram Posts, pull out their old Chrome-books and show the grandkids their remote learning lessons? Not likely.

It's not just a pandemic problem. It's life in the digital dark age of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.



What can we do to document our era? Cut and paste text from websites. Save it as a text document. Print a copy. Make prints of some of our photos. Label them clearly with names, place and date. Edit and back up videos. Store them on multiple platforms. Write some letters.

Collect some objects. When you don't need it anymore, put your mask (and a note about why you saved it) in a plastic bag.

The museum has a file ready to preserve the pandemic. Share your story.

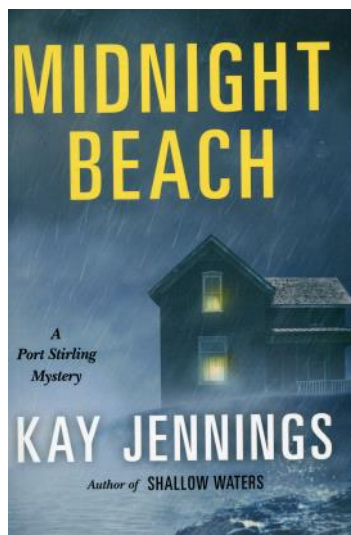
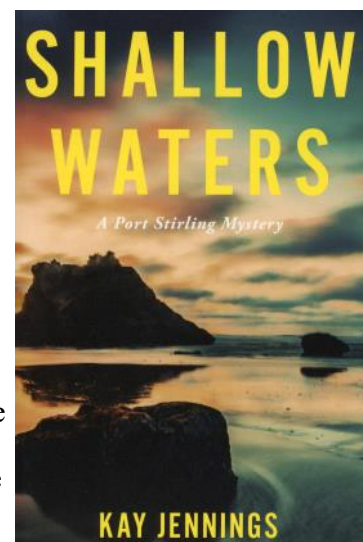
The year 2020 may be one a lot of us would like to forget, but future generations will thank us for saving a little bit of it.

## There's Something about Port Stirling . . .

Two recently published mystery novels by Kay Jennings have been making the rounds among museum volunteers and have been great sellers in the museum book shop. It may have something to do with the place where the stories are set: Port Stirling, a small town on the Southern Oregon Coast with rainy weather, rocky headlands, an iconic lighthouse and lots of places to go for beer and clam chowder.

In *Shallow Waters*, a new police chief has to hit the ground running as the details of a horrific murder come to light on his first day on the job. A complicated drug and kidnapping case is at the heart of *Midnight Beach*. The stories are set in contemporary times but the events that drive the plot are drawn from the local history.

"Native Oregonian Kay Jennings was born in southwest Oregon in a small town not unlike her fictional Port Stirling. She currently lives in Estacada, OR, with her husband, Steve, a technology entrepreneur. After a lengthy career in corporate Communications, she debuted her Port Stirling mysteries with *Shallow Waters*. *Midnight Beach* is the second novel in that series," reads the biography on her book jacket.



Kay Jennings, who grew up in Coquille, makes no mystery about the real identity of Port Stirling as a stand-in for Bandon. She gives credit at the end of *Midnight Beach* to "old friend Bill

Smith of Bandon for first alerting me to this great story in Oregon history" and has been checking details with the museum for her third Port Stirling mystery.

For local readers, the game of matching up the names of parks, restaurants, towns and rivers with actual places adds to the fun of following the plot and characters. We can't wait for the next Port Stirling mystery.

# A Neon Sign Glows Again: Sheds Light on Ma McDuffee

A neon sign, dark and tucked out of the way in a corner, drew the notice of volunteers who were refreshing a section devoted to motels, restaurants and entertainment.

Some “what if” thinking about how the sign could be better displayed led director Gayle to call *Leonard M. Deel, Signs and Repair*. Mr. Deel was able to put the glow back into the sign. He also gave it a new black backing to make it stand out better.

The sign once hung at the Bandon Wayside Motel. Built by Anna and Ernie Wehner, the motel was located on the east city limits. When Highway 101 was routed along the Coquille River, the Wayside Motel was the first business “in Bandon” that travelers from the north would have come to.

The sign was donated by Kristy Bowman who owned Wayside Motel for a time.

With the sign newly aglow (and needing an outlet to plug into) it made sense to relocate it to a more prominent position where it now greets visitors to the museum as it once greeted visitors to Bandon.



## Memories of the Wayside Place after the 1936 Fire.

By Helen Wehner Schrader

*(The process of restoring the neon sign from the Wayside Motel led volunteers to revisit this piece written in 2011 by Helen Wehner Schrader, whose parents owned the motel and the house and property adjacent to it.)*

This letter is about my family moving to Bandon in 1948 and the place we bought.

The place is located on what used to be Highway 101 and is now 42 South, just past the turn off and before



the Bandon Wayside Motel. The home was one of the places that the Bandon fire of 1936 did not burn down. When you see it now, you will notice the rock garden around front of the house.

Here is what happened after the Bandon Fire. The home was owned by **Ma McDuffee** (Laura A. McDuffee, 1887-1961). She had lived there a long time. After the fire, she made an offer to any of the survivors who did not have a place to live, that they could build a cabin on her property with whatever they could find to build it with. The agreement was that when they were ready to move on, the cabins were then hers and she ended up renting them out.

When my family moved to Bandon in 1948, there were 11 small cabins on the property. After the fire, **Ma McDuffee** walked to town and with a wheel barrow she collected the melted glass from the burned-out buildings. She would fill up her wheel barrow and walk back up the big hill. Then she proceeded to build a cement fence using both the melted glass and big and small shells along with other items that she collected at the fire scene. She also made a special memorial with the glass to honor the history of the fire. That is still there, in the front yard of the big house. She also built fishponds and arches, decorated seats, using much of the melted glass. Lots of different shapes are still in the front yard. She also had fountains that worked. Over the following years, lots of tourists would stop and admire the garden and fences.

My parents started to work on the cabins that were left on the property and found that most of them were

Continued on Page 5.

# The Letters “N.O.W.” on a Ribbon Lead to a W.O.W. Story

The initials “N. O. W.” on a ribbon found by Donna Mason as she sorted a box of documents raised questions that sent us to the collection of *Western World* newspapers.

The lead paragraph of a May 19, 1927, *Western World* front page story reported: “Mrs. Geo. Erdman and Mrs. E. Lewin, members of the local committee for Seaside Circle, Neighbors of Woodcraft, are busily engaged making preparation for the big district convention that is to be held in Bandon on Monday and Tuesday, June 6 and 7. Information received from the district officials indicate that the convention here will be a record-breaker for attendance.”

The commemorative ribbon, with a red, green and white color scheme, was for a Neighbors of Woodcraft district convention held in Bandon in June of 1927. The Neighbors of Woodcraft was the women’s branch of the Woodmen of the World.

The Bandon Orchestra played at intervals throughout the 1927 N. O. W. convention, which met in the Dreamland dance hall. Mayor Herbert Brown and Chamber of Commerce President CR Wade both addressed the delegates. Businesses in the community were encouraged to decorate in green, red and white, the colors of the organization.

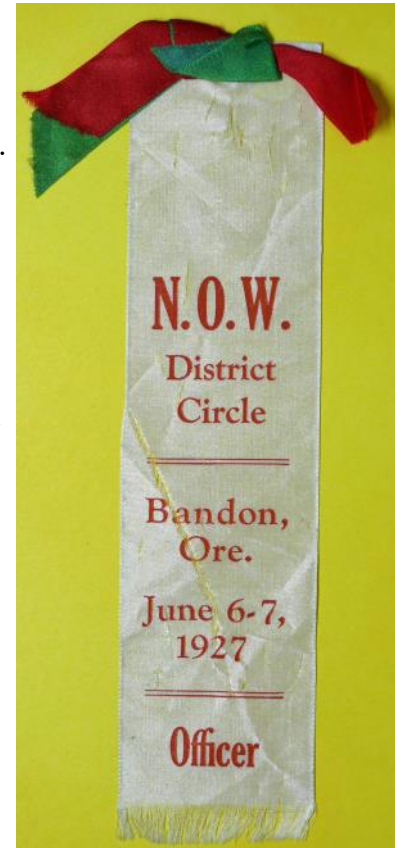
In addition to holding their business meetings, convention participants danced at the Silver Spray Gardens, swam at the Wecoma Baths, ate a salmon dinner prepared by both the Gallier Hotel and Hotel Westland, and were driven to the beach by members of The Beachmen, better known locally as the Sons of the Beaches.

Delegations came from Lane, Douglas, Josephine, Curry, Lake, Klamath, Jackson and Coos counties.

The Woodmen of the World (not to be confused with the IWW, or Wobblies, a controversial labor union) was one of the many fraternal organizations and lodges that formed in the era after the Civil War and flourished in the early 1900s. In addition to providing social activities, lodges offered their members’ families financial support in an era before Medicare and Social Security.

As a lodge, the Woodmen of the World did not have the staying power of the Elks, Masons or Odd Fellows, but still exists as an insurance company. Legacies of the Woodmen of the World are the tree-stump shaped headstones found in many cemeteries and WOW Hall buildings still standing in some communities, including Langlois.

The delegates passed a resolution near the end of the Bandon convention expressing their gratitude to the community for all the services it provided. It included the line, “The badges furnished us were neat and pretty.”



**Continued from Page 4.**

put together with whatever they could find. Cardboard walls, old pieces of wood and whatever else they could find. Each cabin had one faucet (cold water) no bathrooms, just little rooms that fit a double bed and they had a wood stove, which was used for both cooking and heating.

It would be nice if the gardens could be fixed once again and people could enjoy them.



*Ma McDuffee’s rock garden, made of concrete, shells, and glass from the 1936 fire, still stands along Highway 42S.*

## Photo Find

### A House on Lampa Mountain Road has a Rich History

Anyone who has driven Lampa Mountain Road, either to add some adventure to a trip to Myrtle Point or because their car's navigation system decided that was the most direct route to Interstate Five, has encountered a house on the left side of the road not far beyond the Highway 42 junction.



Board member Faye Albertson recently brought three earlier-era photos of the house to be scanned and reprinted so she could share them with the current owners. The images are a great addition to the museum's photo collection.

A note on the back of the photo said the house on Lampa Creek was built in 1905.

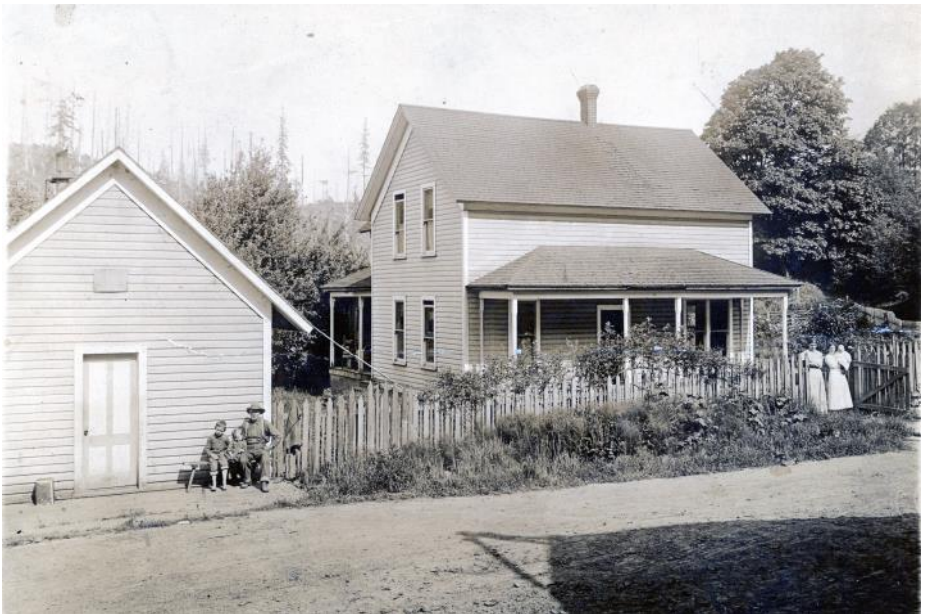
Local historian Doug Borgard added some further details: "The clean-shaven man in all three photographs is my great-grandfather, George Chester Welch Sr. (1851—1928). The larger woman in all three photographs is his wife, my great-grandmother, Bonnie Isabelle Welch, nee: Sell (1886—1967). The boy and

girl are their children, George Chester Welch Jr. (1906—1976) and my grandmother, my Aunt Faye's mother, Mildred Hope Welch (1911—1979). Mildred looks about three-years-old to me dating them (and the photo) to about 1914."

There is no identification for the woman holding the baby.

There was a vibrant community along Lampa Creek during the era the photos were taken. A number of family names that recur in local history trace back to Lampa Creek homesteads: Hanly, Sweet, Panter, Ellingsen, Borgard, Chlemens, McCue, and Randleman are just a few.

Since the day the photos of Faye's mother were taken, the road has clearly undergone some reconfiguration. Lampa Mountain Road travelers have seen years of remodeling to the house. The photos add another chapter to the story of a familiar building.



### Bring Us Your McKay's Receipts— And Visit Us More Often

McKay's Markets continue to support local organizations by giving a return on McKay's receipts collected by organizations. The McKay's Market Advantage Sales Receipt Program has been a source of museum funding for many years. The program used to accept receipts up to a year after the purchase date but has reduced that time limit to six months.

So, continue to bundle up those McKay's receipts, bring them to the museum and use them as an excuse to drop in and see us more often.

## Queen Elli Schulz Lends Her Radio Voice to Bandon “History Minutes”



Elli Schulz, 2019 museum summer employee, member of the Bandon High speech team, and **reigning Queen of the Cranberry Festival**, has added her voice to the “History Minutes” that air on local radio.

“I was tired of just hearing me,” said Jim Proehl, the museum’s other radio voice. “I thought some of these spots would sound a lot better in Elli’s voice and she agreed to go to the studio and record.”

The museum buys air time on KDBN--Real County 96.5 FM, but the spots sometimes air on other stations in the Bi-Coastal Media family such as The Tee--KTEE, Hot County KSHR and KRWO.

A grant from the First Interstate Bank Foundation will pay for a year’s worth of air time for the “History Minute” spots. Carolyn Reed, manager of the Bandon First Interstate Bank branch, was instrumental in helping the museum secure the grant.

“We get a lot of good feedback from the ‘History Minutes,’” said director Gayle Nix. “Hearing Elli’s voice on the air is a treat.”

### ***“Mother” Laub Cares for Children in Need***

**Here’s a little history from the museum in Bandon.**

When Effie Laub died suddenly in 1944, the community lost a local hero. She was 66 years, one month and 26 days of age, according to her obituary. Her husband, William, had died six years earlier. “Mother” Laub, as she was affectionately known, was a Godsend for children from desperate families. During the depression, her East Bandon home was a refuge for needy Coos County children. Besides her own five children, she made a home for 28 others who had been left adrift, whose future depended upon a mother taking an interest in them. At the time of the fire in 1936, when Bandon was destroyed, her home was haven for 11 otherwise homeless children. Effie was born in Kansas City, married William in Redding, California, and shared her home in Bandon for 35 years. In an era when the fabric of social services was thin, “Mother” Laub offered a lifeline to many children.

**And that’s a little history from Bandon’s museum.**

### ***Memorial Donations***

**A memorial donation has been made in memory of:**

James T. Reilly, Glenn Robertson, Judy Howard Manicke, Michael Stockford, Kay Vincent

**Memorial donors:**

Charlene Reilly, Judy Knox, Kathy Dornath, Deanna McDermott, Thomas Driessan, Sandi and Richard Dale, Brendan and Kelly Reilly, Eric and Betty Albertson, Careen Pierce, Tauna Rae Tiscornia, Kathy and Jim Cowan, Ann Remy, John and Molly Abbott, John Achtel

### ***Bea DeCosta Remembers the Wecoma Baths***

**Here’s a little history from the museum in Bandon.**

The Wecoma Baths, a heated, salt water pool, opened on Coquille Point in 1925. Bea DeCosta shared these memories. My husband, Joe DeCosta, was a lifeguard. People came from different parts of the state to take a plunge in the Wecoma Baths. I remember Joe telling me about college students coming to the baths and doing fancy dives and how he learned to dive like them. On the north side of the pool there was a big beautiful fireplace made of rocks. The swimmers could relax and enjoy the heat. They also had a balcony where people could watch the swimmers--admission free. On one occasion, a woman sitting in the balcony lost her diamond ring in eight feet of water. A lot of fellows tried diving in the pool to find the ring. Finally, Joe found the ring and returned it to the woman.

The Wecoma Baths burned in 1936 but the memories survive.

**And that’s a little history from Bandon’s museum.**



***Joe and Bea DeCosta***

## 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)

\$15 Individual \_\_\_\_\_ NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
\$25 Family \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\$35 Business \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
\$250 Life \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_  
I'm a Member \_\_\_\_\_ and would like to make a tax deductible donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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>

A P U B L I C A T I O N O F T H E B A N D O N H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Bandon, OR 97411  
Permit NO. 61



**Bandon Historical Society**

PO Box 737  
Bandon, OR 97411

Return Service Requested