



THE BANDON LIGHT

Sponsored by: The Joe and Frances Naumes

Family Foundation Inc.

A PUBLICATION OF THE BANDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Would Santa Visit Bandon for Christmas after the 1936 Fire?

Celebrating Christmas in Bandon in the wake of the 1936 fire was going to be a challenge. Most families were living in tents. There were no churches, theaters, meeting halls or restaurants. The grade school had burned down. The high school on Bandon Heights was the only substantial building to survive the fire.

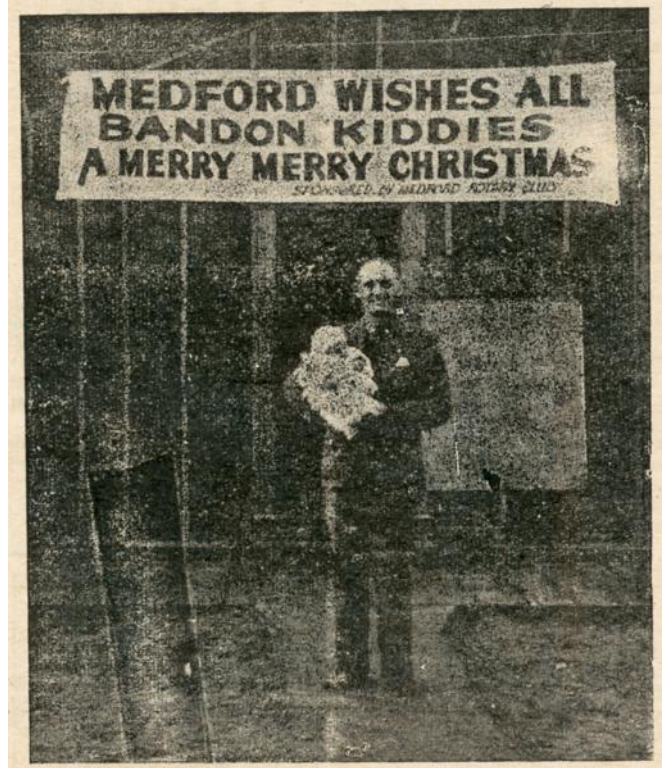
City fathers were lobbying in Salem and Washington D.C.

It would have been an especially bleak Christmas for Bandon's children were it not for the generosity of their Oregon neighbors.

Headlined "Bandon Discovers Santa Is No Myth," an article in *The Oregon Statesman* (Salem), December 25, 1936, tells the story well.

BANDON, ORE. DEC. 24- (Associated Press)-Fire-stricken Bandon laid down its tools of reconstruction tonight cheered by the knowledge Oregon had opened its heart to destitute families and

ROTARIAN HEAD HOLDS "SPARKY"



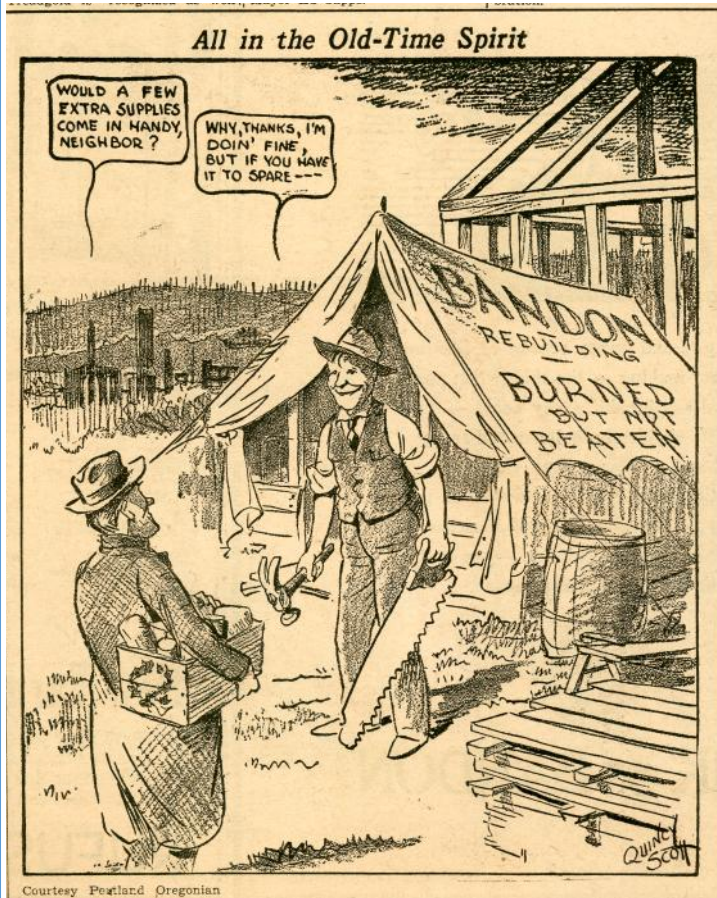
Thomas "Sparky" Adams, born during the '36 fire, in the arms of the Medford Rotary Club president.

hundreds of children, a yuletide long to be remembered.

Truck-load after truck-load of toys, books, all manner of gifts, and much needed merchandise arrived from all parts of the state.

Christmas baskets went to families all through the area ravaged by the conflagration on September 26 when at least 10 persons lost their lives in forest fires along the southern Oregon coast.

In Bandon, wiped out by the blaze, scores of children saw a free movie and received sacks of



Courtesy Portland Oregonian

The Bandon Western World republished this cartoon from the Portland Oregonian in December of 1936.

Continued on Page 6.

THE BANDON LIGHT

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

Executive Director.....Gayle Hankwitz
Native American Consultant... Reg Pullen

Board of Directors Board Officers

President.....Elaine Stohler
Vice President..... Mary Schamehorn
Secretary.....Faye Albertson
Treasurer.....Jim Proehl

Additional Board Members

Rick Hinojosa	Donna Mason
Nancy Murphy	Reg Pullen
Berta Dargen	Sheri Wright
Sharon Haga	

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
Web: 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 generations,
call us—we need you.

The Museum is OPEN
Monday through Saturday 10-4
and 7 days a week June through September.
**On the corner of
Fillmore Ave. and Highway 101**



© 2025 Bandon Historical Society

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



**Gayle Hankwitz
Executive Director**

WELLLLLL . . . our build-
ing project has finally taken
off! Construction crews are
digging up part of the parking
lot to make way for the founda-
tion of the Don and Joan

Lynam Events Center even as I write.

I just had my ninth anniversary of working here
the first of October. I can truly say this is the most
interesting job I've had. There is always more to
learn. The years have flown by and have been so fun!
I love working with the volunteers and interacting
with visitors. We get lot of compliments on our muse-
um and that's always nice to hear.

With the building project in progress, this coming
year may be the best year yet. Founded in June of
1976, the historical society is observing its fiftieth
anniversary in 2026. What if we can open the new
addition and celebrate 50 years on the same day!



Sadly, we have lost three board members since we
learned of the generous gift Don Lynam left in his
will: Mary Stewart, Kathy Dornath, and recently
Brian Vick. So sorry they are gone but I'm sure they
are with us in spirit.

We will close December 24, remain closed
through the holidays and the month of January, and
reopen February 2. We will have our annual meeting
Thursday, February 5, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. Please
try to come. It will be an interesting and fun open-
house style meeting.

I want to thank everyone for their donations in re-
sponse to our annual fund-raising letter. Donations
large and small, it all helps.

Historical Society Annual Meeting Set for February

The Bandon Historical Society will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, February 5, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm, at the museum. The open house provides community and museum members an opportunity to review the many programs and activities of 2025 and to preview the events of the upcoming year. The year's financial report will also be available.

But that's not all! There will be a fun scavenger hunt, a voting booth to select the 2026 board officers, door prizes, refreshments and, of course, a chance to enjoy each other's company.

Please join us for a fun and informative evening.

Charis McGaughy Nominated for Museum Board Position

At its October board meeting, the Historical Society Board of Directors nominated Charis McGaughy to fill a position on the board of directors. She is running unopposed, though members have the option of writing-in another choice. If elected, she will serve a three-year term.

Charis McGaughy moved to Bandon in 2021. Currently, she is the founder of Bandon Tours, a business that

offers food and history tours of Old Town Bandon. Prior to that, she worked for over 30 years in the public education arena, including most recently as the superintendent of Coos Bay School District. Throughout her career, she has



worked as a teacher, administrator, researcher and educational policy worker. She loves learning and working with students and enjoys volunteering with Jim Proehl and the rest of the volunteers supporting field trips to the museum. Dr. McGaughy earned a PhD in Educational Leadership, Policy and Organizations from Vanderbilt University, a master's degree in Public Affairs from the University of Texas, and a BA in Government from Pomona College.

Remembering Brian Vick

We are remembering Brian Vick, a member of our board of directors, who passed away in September. Brian liked to refer to the museum as "his baby," because he was mayor when the city helped the museum obtain the "Old City Hall," the current home of our museum. Brian will be remembered for serving the community in many roles, but we are especially grateful for the role he played in collecting, preserving and sharing Bandon's history.



Vote! Vote! Vote!

Every February, museum members have the opportunity to vote for the next year's board of directors. This year's slate includes four officers and four board member positions. Officers serve a one-year term. Board members are elected to a three-year term.

The recommended slate of officers for 2026 are: President, Elaine Stohler; Vice President, Mary Schamehorn, Secretary, Faye Albertson; Treasurer, Jim Proehl.

Board members recommended for re-election are: Mary Schamehorn, Berta Dargen, Rick Hinojosa. This year we have a board opening. Charis McGaughy has been nominated to fill the vacancy left by the passing of Brian Vick.

Be sure to attend the February 5 open-house style annual meeting and cast your vote!

Fits Just Right

The museum is grateful to Doug and Sharon Ward Moy for the donation of a curio cabinet to house historical artifacts.

"The guys" moved the cabinet in the middle of a rainstorm.

Donna Mason found the right place for it and had it in service within a few hours.

It looks like it was made just for our building.



Postcards Found in Texas Came from a Bandon Photographer

A package arrived at the museum in September with a return address in Muenster, Texas. A handwritten note was inside.

To Bandon Historical Museum—

Enclosed are 75 photo postcards taken by Reeves on and around 1916 of the Bandon, Oregon, area.

I found these in a box of postcards I purchased at an estate sale.

I believe they need to go home to Bandon. I hope they add to your museum collection to help illustrate what the area looked like over 100 years ago.

May the postcards be my gift to your museum.

Janie Hartman

Ms. Hartman knew the postcards were taken by Reeves because the phrase “by L. Reeves” appears in the lower righthand corner of many of the photos.

A search for Reeves via the *Historic Oregon Newspapers* website yielded this find in the March 9, 1916, *Western World* under “Tales of the Town.”

Louie Reeves, who takes right good kodak pictures and knows as much about cameras as he does about the barber business, which is a whole lot, has hung a number of fine post card views up in Glen’s (barber) shop window, showing the various states of the *Fifield* wreck, sea gulls, etc. Ye Scribus happened to be looking them over this week, as was also a rather prepossessing young lady and her escort, and the alert ear was stung with the following dialogue:

“Is that really waves splashing over the boat, dear? Oh, look at the birds, are they real gulls?” as she pointed to the photos.

“Oh no, of course not. It’s nothing but fish pasture and jay birds!”

The folksy column directly references the pictures sent from Texas. The joke about the pretty girl falls a little flat.

An item in an August *Western World*, 1917, announces Louis Reeve’s marriage to Miss Nita Tucker of Bandon but notes that he has moved on to barbering in Marshfield.

The postcards mailed from Texas are full of visual information about Bandon c 1916 and are a wonderful addition to our collection.

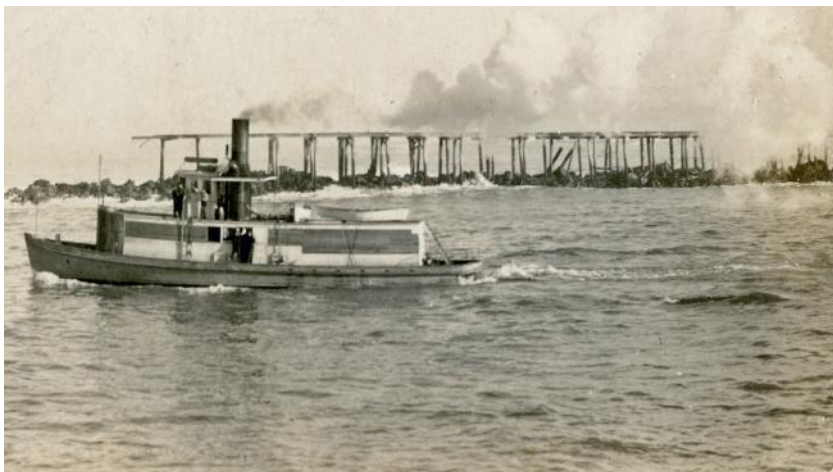
How the works of a Bandon photographer/barber landed at an estate sale in Muenster is still a history mystery.



Louis Reeves either used a self timer or handed his camera off to someone else but the note on the back of the photo confirms this as a photo of himself on Bandon’s beach.



The wreck of the Fifielid, which occurred on February 29, Leap Day, 1916, is the subject of 17 of the photographs by Louis Reeves.



“A small steamer headed out to sea” is the note on the back of this photo. The context, the common handwriting and the consistently bad spelling indicate Louis Reeves wrote all the notes.

Coast Guard Lifeboat Drill Captured by Barber/Photographer

Among the images captured by Louis Reeves, a barber aspiring to be a commercial photographer, is a series of 11 photographs of a Coast Guard life boat drill in the Coquille River harbor at Bandon c. 1916. The series captures the capsize and recover drill and the background details reveal information about Bandon's waterfront. We chose four images to share.



New Clues in an Old Case

A phone call recently came from a woman who had found “The Case of the Wandering Headstones” in a 2024 edition of our *Bandon Light* newsletter. She had something to add.

Her grandparents, who lived in Coos Bay near the old prison, had found the wandering headstones in the river in 2004.

Her grandmother, Jamie Russell, was struck by the coincidence that the name on one of the headstones was also Russell, though she knew of no family connection to Mary Russell, who died near Langlois in 1887. She and her husband kept the headstones and eventually put them in a storage unit. The grandparents have since passed away.



The storage unit and its contents, including the headstones, were auctioned off in 2023.

Someone dropped the two headstones off in Bandon's Averill Cemetery in 2023, though neither “*William Hirst, Died Oct. 27, 1862, Aged 34 years,*” nor “*Mary A. Russell, Born Aug. 8, 1877, Died Oct. 30, 1887,*” had been buried in Bandon.

The case is still open. We appreciate the new chapter.

The March 2024 edition of *The Bandon Light* containing “The Case of the Wandering Headstones” is available on the museum's website under the “Collections” tab in “Newsletter Archives.”

“Bandon Discovers Santa Is No Myth”

Continued from Page 1.

candy today, and a live Santa Claus appeared as a messenger of good will and gifts this afternoon.

Three entertainments will be held Christmas day.

The women's club committee said it was possible enough clothing and non-perishable staples would be left over to continue the Christmas message well into the winter.

Rebuilding of the city is well under way.

The Bandon *Western World*, provided further details.

“The Christmas party at the new Bandon Cheese & Produce Co. building Monday night, under the sponsorship of the American Legion in cooperation with all civic and religious organizations of Bandon, was a huge success, some 1200 people being entertained. The Journal Juniors of Portland and the U.S. Recruiting station of that city furnished the entertainment.”

The Portland “Christmas Program for Bandon” had charge of the local party. They had 1350 sacks of treats ready for the kiddies. They distributed 1100, the rest being given to other local Christmas parties.

The eight young entertainers from Portland gave a live show. Petty Officers Norton and O'Brien of the Portland naval recruiting station showed several reels of moving pictures.

“Then came the near-riot. Santa Claus, looking suspiciously like Quincy Corrie of Bullards, appeared on the stage to announce the distribution of gifts would start.”

Later, Ralph Vincent, photographer for the *Oregon Journal* (Portland), took a picture of Ida and Ada Heine, tap dancers, and Billy McIntyre, accordionist, who played for Llewellyn Williams, small sick boy in the Red Cross colony who was unable to attend the party.

The Medford Rotary Club, in cooperation with the Rotarians of other southern Oregon communities, played a major role in the pre-Christmas party. They brought the equipment to show movies, a substantial gift for every child, a dozen baseballs and bats for the high school athletic program and a promise that basketball uniforms were on the way.

The North Bend High School band played at the party.

The Cinderella Players of Port Orford, so named because the idea grew out of the wish to help those living in the ashes of Bandon, staged a program in several rooms of Bandon High School on the evening of Christmas Day.

The Bonneville Dam Chronicle, December 25, 1936

“Bonneville School News”

“The third and fourth grade girls made a baby quilt and sent it to the mayor of Bandon with the request that it be given to some needy child.”

Southern Oregon Miner (Ashland), December 25, 1937

“Ashland Sends Half Ton Gifts to Bandon”

More than a half ton of articles have been donated by the Ashland townspeople for a gift shipment that was sent to Bandon yesterday by the Medford Rotary Club.

All donations were of a practical nature and will be used by Bandon residents. Included in the shipment were beds, cooking utensils boxes of canned goods, fresh fruit and even a sewing machine.

Bandon Western World, December 31, 1936

Labor Council Sends Boxes for Christmas

The Coos Bay Labor Council and the Salvation Army cooperating sent 100 Christmas Boxes to Bandon for distribution to 100 families according to W. T. Allen, Local 2698 Sawmill and Timber Workers Union.



The Christmas party for Bandon's children was held at the newly built Bandon Cheese and Produce Company building. The “Cheese Factory” would not open for another month.

Museum Extends Hospitality to Eastern Oregon School Group

By Jim Proehl

When the museum was asked by Wheeler County High School in Fossil to host a museum visit in November, I was all in. My teaching career began in Harper, another Eastern Oregon district with about 30 students in the high school. I knew what kind of group was coming.

The 350 mile drive each way would fill two days of their four-day trip. They planned to spend a day in the Redwoods. We offered to fill their day in Bandon, which happened to fall on Veteran's Day.

Shortly after daybreak, the group visited the Haga's cranberry farm. Jeff gave a great tour. Board member Berta Dargen arranged for Shoreline for Ed-



Jeff Haga explained the difference between wet and dry picking at the J and S Cranberry Farm. Agriculture and natural resource management were priority subjects for this school trip.

ucation Awareness to lead a beach walk. Our crew of retired educators hosted the museum part of the visit, combined with lunch in the building prepared by Sharon Haga. Prospective board member Charis McGaugy helped lead an Old Town tour that linked up with Shawn Winchell at the Port of Bandon to see the aqua-culture tanks.

Ice cream at Face Rock Creamery wrapped up the day.

For the museum, it was a good exercise in collaboration. The day was seamless thanks to our wonderful team of volunteers.

Every group involved commented on the politeness of the kids from Fossil. I wasn't surprised. Politeness is a premium in those rural, Eastern Oregon, schools.



Harbormaster Shawn Winchell let the students from Fossil hold sea urchins. This was the first trip to the coast for several of the Fossil students.

McKays Receipts Bring Revenue

As another year draws to a close, the Bandon Museum Board and Members extend a grateful thanks to McKay's Market.

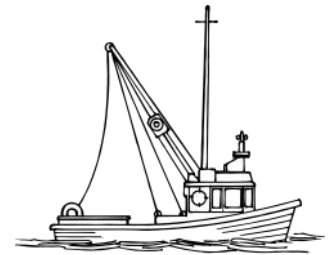
Through their Market Advantage Sales Receipt program, the museum has received \$1,086.25 in the past year.

Simply by shopping at McKay's and bringing the receipts (no older than six months) to the museum, we all help share the history of Bandon with the community.

Memorial Donations

Memorial donations have been made in the name of:

Sonny Querry
Marion Gant
Rhonda Haga
Brian Vick
Gina Swenson
Ann King
Kathy Dornath



Memorial donations have been made by:

Bo Shindler
Sandra Handsaker
Raydell and Meria Sperle
Samuel and Lorena Woods
Gloria Haga
Horty Joyce

New Members:

Life Members:

David and Holly Von Damm
Marlo and Pamela Young Lee
Richard Young

Individual and Family Members:

Charles and Rachel MacDonald
Hunter Finch



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)

\$20 Individual _____ NAME: _____
\$30 Family _____ ADDRESS: _____
\$250 Life _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
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