



# THE BANDON LIGHT

Sponsored by: **Waterfront Coffee Café &  
Farm & Sea**

A PUBLICATION OF THE BANDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## A New Chapter in the Story of “Who’s Buried at Bullards Beach”

By Jim Proehl

I often give an evening talk at Bullards Beach State Park titled “Who’s Buried at Bullards Beach.” After acknowledging that countless generations of Indians lived in and are buried within the state park, I narrow the talk to the people buried in the Bullards Family Cemetery. We explore the story of Red John and Black John Hamblock, the death of Mary Ellen Hamblock, and the marriage of Malinda Hamblock to Robert Bullard. Typically, we count up the headstones, count down the stories, and are left with a mystery.

**Who was Victor Thornton, the six-year-old who died in 1913, and has no relationship with the Bullard family?** His plot is marked with a headstone too modern for a 1913 burial.

When I saw a Corvette in the parking lot during our Classic Car Klatch on a Free Summer Sunday in August, I assumed its drivers were here for the car show. When desk volunteer Sheri Wright mentioned that a woman visiting the museum said she had once helped install a headstone at Bullards Beach State Park, it was an opportunity to investigate a mystery.

The only information I already had about Victor was found by one of our genealogical researchers, who found his name in a 1910 census as living with his family in a logging camp at Prosper and a death certificate that said he died of pneumonia and was buried in the Hamblock Cemetery. The only clue in our collection was a program from an event at the Prosper school that listed two other children named Thornton.

I found the woman who had talked to Sheri at the desk and met Debra Ward. Her great-grandmother was Victor’s mother. Her grandmother was Victor’s younger sister. In 1986, she helped her mother place a new headstone on Victor’s grave.

It was a coincidence that Debra and her husband, visiting from Vancouver, Washington, had parked their Corvette in our lot on car show Sunday.

Debra briefly shared Victor’s story and promised to fill in more by email. I found the program from the Prosper School program and she confirmed that Louise and William were Victor’s older sister and brother. We found a photo on an exhibit wall of students gathered outside the Prosper school in 1912, a photo she hadn’t seen before, and she identified Louise and William.

We’ve always speculated that Victor was buried in the Bullard Cemetery because the Bullards were people who would help out their neighbors. The history Debra Ward shared didn’t change that conclusion.

Victor was the third of six children of Pearl and Joseph Thornton. The Thorntons lived in the local area about ten years. Joseph logged and did mill work at Prosper. He does not come off well in the family’s memory. Pearl’s extended family, including her brother, Samuel Beeman, his family, and a Hunt family were also working in Prosper.



*The Thornton family at Prosper: Louise holding a doll, Anna, Pearl holding Eunice, William, Joseph, and Victor. Photo courtesy of Debra Ward.*

**Continued on Page 7.**

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

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

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Elaine Stohler           Berta Dargen

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

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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 Saturday 10-4  
and 7 days a week June through September.

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

Enjoy Bandon's rich, wonderful history!

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

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## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Gayle Hankwitz  
Executive Director

October first I realized I had my seven-year anniversary working at the museum. I just want to say how fast these years have gone by and how much I enjoy my job. It truly is an honor to be here.

We are making progress on the addition of an auditorium provided by the estate of Don Lynam. After several discussions, Coos/Curry Consulting produced a floor plan and drawing that our board agreed on which can be submitted to the city as part of the pre-application process.

Our Night at the Museum was a huge success. A big thanks to Jeff and Sharon Haga for providing the delicious hors d'oeuvres and Barry and Lori Osborne at Farm & Sea for providing the beverages. The "adult" history detective challenge was so much fun we will make it an ongoing part of this annual event. Thanks to Jim Proehl for creating it. He outdid himself.

Our Veterans Day program was well attended. "Thank you" to our veterans' coordinator Rick Hinojosa, our guest speaker Bob Thrush, and to the people who brought their military vehicles and collections to put on display.

When we lost Mary Capps, one of our museum founders, we lost a huge resource and a great lady. She will be missed.

We would like to thank everyone who donated to our annual fund-raising drive, to our building fund, and to those who made memorial donations. It looks like we will finish the year in the black.

Our annual meeting date is Tuesday, February 6, at 4:00 pm. All members are invited. At the meeting, we will be voting on the coming year's officers and for board members whose terms have expired. It seems sort of silly to hold an election when everyone is running unopposed, but we are a member non-profit and need to follow the rules. Attend if you can.

In 2024 is the fiftieth anniversary of the arson fire that burned down Bandon High School. The story of that fire will be the subject of a program at the museum Saturday, February 10, at 2:00 pm. Mary Schamehorn, an eyewitness who photographed the fire and covered it as a journalist, will narrate the program.

Our gift shop Christmas sale is on now—**20 percent off for members**—through December 22, after which point, we close for the holidays and for the month of January. We look forward to seeing everyone when we reopen February 5. Happy Holidays.

# Museum Mainstay Mary Capps Passes Away in September

Mary Elizabeth Boice Capps, born in Langlois, Curry County, Oregon on August 17, 1924, passed away September 3, 2023.

Mary was one of twelve children, six boys and six girls, born to Carrie Guerin Boice and Judge Allen H. Boice. She was Valedictorian of the 1942 Langlois High School graduating class. She continued her education at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. She graduated from Whitman in 1946 with degrees in English and History. Returning to Langlois,

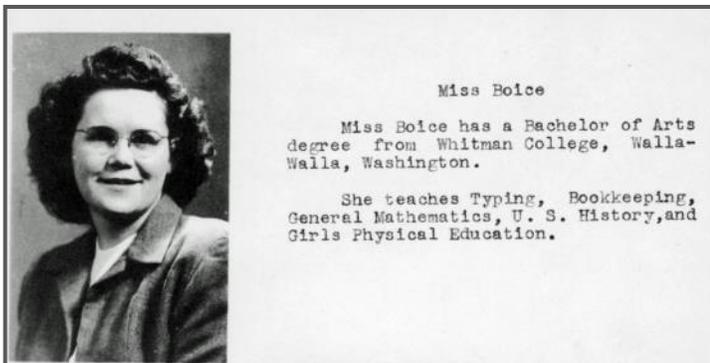


*Mary Capps talks with Bill Dodds at a Bandon Fire program in 2016*

she taught at the school she had attended a few years prior. Mary married Edgar Lowe Capps from Bandon in June 1948. They had three children whose names all incorporate elements of Mary's name: Emily Elizabeth Capps (Hall), Mary Maud Capps (Marceau) and Bruce Boice Capps. She was a substitute teacher until her children reached school age, then returned to teach full time. She became a reading specialist and was instrumental in developing a remedial reading program for the Bandon School District.

Edgar and Mary's knowledge of local history stemmed from their families' local roots. Edgar's maternal family arrived in Bandon in 1853 and Mary's family arrived near Eckley in Curry County shortly after. Mary always incorporated local history in her classroom curriculum.

Edgar and Mary were charter members of the Bandon Historical Society and mainstays of the museum's board and volunteer corps, especially at the time the museum moved into its current building. The cou-



*Entry from the 1947 Langlois High School Yearbook*

ple literally built the museum we have today. We still draw from the articles Mary wrote for the *Western World*. She could always be counted on to lead a tour or lead a hike.

The museum held a Mary Capps Appreciation Day on November 29, 2019, and considered her a curator emeritus until the time of her death.

## New Windows Provide Better Spaces for Fragile Artifacts

Clear Choice glass recently installed three acrylic, locking windows to enclose a section of display space at the top of the ramp from the entrance desk to the main floor of the museum.

The display space currently houses a collection of 1:18 scale metal car models donated by Dennis Fee from Port Orford. Dennis also donated the funds to install the new windows.

The locking windows give the museum another space to house valuable objects.

"We love the metal cars but we also notice that visitors love to pick them up and play with them," said Director Gayle. "Enclosing that space has been on our mind for some time, but Dennis' generous donation made that all work out."



## Braemar Trust Grant Replaces a Workhorse

In our grant request to Trust Management Services, we wrote: "The copy machine is the workhorse of the museum. We love our current Kyocera Copier, but it's showing its age and the technician who services it tells us it's time to put the old copier out to pasture and hitch up a new workhorse."

The museum received a check from the Braemar Charitable Trust for \$7,985.00 to purchase a new copy machine and pay for a year of copier maintenance service.

The Braemar Charitable Trust actively seeks grant applications for historic preservation projects which are evaluated and administered through Trust Management Services.

# Anniversary Approaches of the Fire that Destroyed Bandon High

The night of January 23, 1974, an arson fire destroyed Bandon High School. The museum will mark the fiftieth anniversary of that fire with a free program at the museum Saturday, February 10 at 2:00 pm. The event will also give the public a chance to celebrate the reopening of the museum for 2024.

Mary Schamehorn, Bandon's mayor and a museum board member, will narrate the program. Mary was a reporter for the *Western World* newspaper in 1974. She was among the first on the scene when the fire alarm sounded, took photos of the fire, and covered the story of the fire, the arson investigation, and the process of getting Bandon High's students back to school. Her photography will illustrate the program.

The Warehouse Coffee Café will also host a high school fire program, led by Mary Schamehorn, in the Bandon Fisheries Warehouse building on Tuesday, January 23. The seating area opens at 11:00 am and the presentation begins at 11:30. "This is another good chance to learn the story of the night Bandon High burned mixed with a good cup of coffee and maybe even lunch," said volunteer Jim Proehl.



*Band members, under the direction of Lou Wright, posed for a photo outside their "new" high school for this photo included in the 1950 yearbook.*

*Before the 1974 fire, Bandon High stood in a space now vacant outside of Harbor Lights Middle School. The junior high wing of the school and its gym survived the fire.*



*Firefighters initially concentrated their effort on putting out the fire in the music building as community members worked to save the instruments, unaware of the incendiary devices placed in the main school building.*

## History Minute: “The Davison Brothers Build a Car”

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

Car construction was more simple, circa 1930, when brothers Francis and Earle Davison decided to build a car out of spare parts.

As their project grew, so did their definition of



Front desk volunteer Kristy Bowman shared this story that became a “History Minute” on Local radio.

“spare.” It seems they appropriated parts from some garages and yards around town.

The boys named their car Stromboli. Maybe the car looked like an Italian Sandwich. Maybe the engine sounded like an Italian volcano. Maybe they just liked the word.

A photograph in our collection shows Francis driving Stromboli with his younger brother, Robert, in the passenger seat. The Davison boys were rolling.

The joyride was over when neighbors began to recognize parts of the brothers’ car.

The boys’ father, Noah Davison, a grocery store owner, made the boys disassemble Stromboli and take the pieces back to their owners.

**Dad was undoubtedly right. But the family enjoyed the story, and passed it along to Bandon’s Museum.**

Listen to Bandon History Minutes on 96.5 FM KBDN, and other Bicoastal Media radio stations.

## Photo Find: A Hero to Children in Need: “Mother Laub”

We’ve known the story of “Mother Laub” for some time. Elli Schulz recorded it as a History Minute. Susan Laub Lozano recently donated her photo.

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 fami-



lies. 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.



Effie Laub is at the center of this group photo.

### New Members:

Life Members:

Betty and Eric Albertson  
Stan and Miriam Schiffman

Individual and Family Members:

Emily Simon  
Harvey Bonnie and Cheri Hall  
Mary Giddens



# Annual Meeting and Board Elections to be Held February 6

The Bandon Historical Society will hold an annual member meeting and annual board member and board officers' election with a gathering at the museum Tuesday, February 6, at 4:00 pm. The meeting will give members a chance to hear a review of the past year, a preview of the coming year and an annual financial report. It will also be an opportunity for members to see what's new on the exhibit floor after the museum's January closed period.

A vote of members will be taken to affirm the slate of officers for the coming year and the election of four board members to a three-year term. Donna Mason, who has served as the board's president for the past year and a half, chose to not run again for the office of president but will remain on the board.

At the November board meeting, the board recommended a slate of officers for the coming year: President, Elaine Stohler; Vice-President, Mary Schamehorn; Secretary, Faye Albertson; and Treasurer, Jim Proehl.

Board members are elected to serve a three-year terms and board positions are staggered so that four positions are elected each year. The board recommended reelecting Reg Pullen, Faye Albertson and Jim Proehl to three-year board positions and electing Sheri Wright to fill the board position formerly held by Kathy Dornath.



*Sheri Wright*

Sheri Wright is the board's recommendation for its one open position. Sheri Wright was born and raised in a small town in northern California, attended UC Davis and worked in San Diego County for the majority of her career. She retired in 2017 after 30 years as a Human Resources administrator in both the private (Progressive Insurance and Callaway Golf Co.) and public (MiraCosta Community College) sectors. She met her husband in college where she earned both a BA in History and M.Ed. in Organizational Development. They have one son who graduated from Lewis and Clark College with a degree in Environmental Studies who now works in Portland.

Sheri and family have been regular visitors to the Oregon coast ever since attending a family reunion camping trip at Honeyman State Park in Florence in the early 2000's and visiting in-laws who retired in Coos Bay. Since moving to Bandon in 2018, she has enjoyed getting to know the area and all that it has to offer. Sheri has volunteered at the Bandon Historical Society Museum since 2019 and helped out with the Gift Shop. Besides reading, her other passions include quilting, knitting, travel and cheering for the SF Giants and 49ers.

## Receipts from McKay's Markets Help Us

McKay's Markets supports 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 McKay's Market Advantage Sales Receipt Program contributed \$1,227.72 to the museum in 2022.

Bundle up McKay's receipts obtained within the past six months, bring them to the museum, and use them as an excuse to drop in and see us more often.

## Memorial Donations

Memorial donations have been made in the name of:

**Julita Fong  
Kathy Dornath  
Mary Boice Capps  
Marilyn Noorda  
Robert Radkey**



Memorial donations have been made by:

<b>Ann Remy</b>	<b>Alyce and Jim Cawdrey</b>
<b>Jim Proehl</b>	<b>Sam and Lorena Woods</b>
<b>Barbara Knapp</b>	<b>Mary Ann Donaldson</b>
<b>Carol McKenzie</b>	<b>Steve Donaldson</b>
<b>Sue Rymal</b>	<b>Jim Donaldson</b>
<b>Bob Donaldson</b>	<b>Bonnie and Jerry Cox</b>
<b>Robert Mahaffy</b>	<b>Bob and Emily Hall</b>
<b>Pat Gripentog</b>	<b>Ann King and Rick Toth</b>
<b>Alice Hutchens</b>	<b>Jane and Jerry Cornish</b>
<b>Adam Hall</b>	
<b>Richard and Andrea Hofmann</b>	
<b>Franz (Bo) and Kathy Shindler</b>	

*“He (Joseph) does not come off well in the family’s memory.”*

Continued from Page 1.

The genealogy that Debra shared recorded Victor as dying of croup. Croup is usually associated with infants, but membranous croup, also known as diphtheria, was rampant in the Coquille Valley in the early part of the century.



The family story is that Joseph, who was given to drink, would not pay for a doctor when Victor became ill and would not pay for a burial when his son passed away. S.L. Beeman signed Victor’s death certificate. Pearl’s extended family helped her arrange to have Victor buried in the



*A studio portrait of Victor Thornton courtesy of Debra Ward.*



*Victor Thornton’s extended family, the Beeman, Hunt and Thornton clans, in Prosper about 1910. Photo courtesy of Debra Ward.*

Bullard cemetery.

Debra’s mother negotiated with Oregon State Parks and worked with the Evans family, Bullard descendants, to get permission to put the new marker on Victor’s grave.

The photos and genealogical records Debra shared add depth to our picture of life on the lower Coquille and open another mystery; there are references to other children, especially infants who died at birth, as being interred at Bullards.

My final “Who’s Buried at Bullards Beach” talk was in September, this time with less mystery but deeper meaning.

## Look for the Lights at Coos Bay’s Historic Railway Museum

May we recommend a visit to the Oregon Coast Historical Railway Museum in Coos Bay, even if it is just to drive by and check out their holiday decorations.

The museum is located on the northbound section of Highway 101 on First Street, not far from Farr’s Hardware. It’s a mostly open-air museum with some huge artifacts.

The museum is open year-round on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons. This time of year, their volunteers go all out with holiday decorations so, especially after dark, it’s a fun place to look at.

**The Spirit of Community**  
**CHRISTMAS**  
CONCERT

COME JOIN US AT THE HUGHES HOUSE for a free holiday concert and art inspired by our beautiful hometown!

Featuring the music of  
**JUST JENSENS**  
DECEMBER 17th  
2:00PM to 3:00PM  
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10:00 AM to 3:30 PM

Sponsored by the Cape Blanco Heritage Society and Oregon State Parks. More info at [capeblancoheritagesociety.com/events](http://capeblancoheritagesociety.com/events). Photography by Lynda Foster.

## 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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

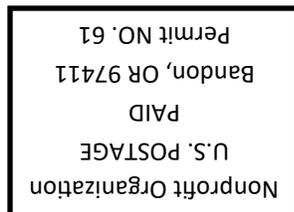
Please make check payable to BHS and mail to:

**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



**Bandon Historical Society**

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