



THE BANDON LIGHT

Sponsored by: The Descendants of

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A PUBLICATION OF THE BANDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mayor Drane is Missing: A True-Crime Mystery?

By Jim Proehl: Ripped from the Pages of the Bandon *Western World*

The mayor's wife thought something was fishy when the mayor didn't take his bath. The mayor liked a good bath.

The mayor's friends thought something was fishy when he did not attend the Young Democrats banquet at the Westland Hotel Monday night. The mayor liked a good banquet.

When the mayor was still missing Tuesday morning, everyone thought something was fishy. Bandon was in an uproar. Everyone liked the mayor.

Mayor Drane was missing, and so was his car. He drove a tan 1931 Chevrolet with red wire wheels, a spare wheel on each side, and a trunk at the rear. The car had new Goodyear tires on the rear wheels.

The November 7, 1935, *Western World* newspaper sported a banner headline: "**Mayor Drane Missing: Foul Play Feared.**"

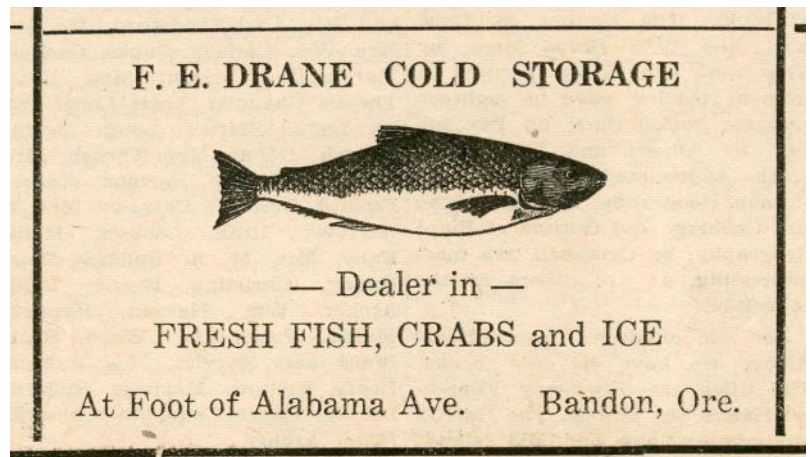
Frederick Elmore Drane was the popular mayor of Bandon, serving his third two-year term since he was first elected in 1930. He was a third-generation descendant of Coquille Valley pioneers, with family connections up and down the river.

The mayor didn't seem to like the Frederick part of his name. He preferred Elmore, or just went by F. E. In his younger days, Drane ran a tug boat company on the Coquille River. In 1924, F. E. and his wife, Maude, moved to Bandon. He sold his tug boats and bought waterfront property. Elmore and Maude had a house in Bandon about where First Street meets River Road. His mother, Emma, lived on a farm in Parkersburg.

Before the big fire in 1936, downtown Bandon was built on pilings. City Hall was at the river end of Cleveland Avenue, also known as Short Street. The mayor's cold storage business was on the wharf at the end of Baltimore Avenue. The mayor was known to drive on the docks from City Hall to his business.

The newspaper traced the mayor's Monday afternoon movements in meticulous detail: "Mr. Drane, who operates a cold storage plant where he buys and ships fresh fish, left his office at about 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon with the declared intention of getting ready to attend the Young Democrats banquet at the Westland Hotel at 7:00 p.m. He had told his wife of his plan and she had gone to the house, located a block from the plant, to prepare his bath water and to lay out his clothes. At the time he was dressed in overalls, having been working with fish in the plant all day.

"After leaving his office, he went to the city hall where he talked with City Recorder LeGore, Fire Chief Woomer and others in regard to the banquet. From there he returned to his office and was met there by Myron Shannon between



Mayor Drane drove a 1931 Chevrolet coupe that he bought from City Recorder William A. LeGore.

Continued on Page 4.

THE BANDON LIGHT

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

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

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Kathy Dornath	Rick Hinojosa
Mary Stewart	Nancy Murphy
Reg Pullen	Brian Vick
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 generations, 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

The museum reopened February 6 after our annual winter closure.

We held our annual membership meeting February 7. At the meeting, we elected four board members to three-year terms: Brian Vick, Mary Schamehorn, Rick Hinojosa and Berta Dargen. The membership reelected our board officers to another one-year term.

The biggest news of our past year and the biggest challenge of the year to come arrived with the news that Don Lynam, who passed away in September, left the bulk of his estate to the museum with the provision we use it to expand our space for programs. To get ourselves pointed in the right direction, we met with Sheri McGrath of Coos Curry Consulting at our February board meeting.

A great time to volunteer or join the museum would be during this exciting time of growth.

In mid-February, a young man brought us a scrapbook he found on a trash pile. He didn't have any connection to the person who put the book together, but he didn't think it belonged in the trash so brought it to us.

This is the kind of history puzzle I love. The book was filled with newspaper clippings, greeting cards and keepsakes. It was put together during World War Two. There was a program for a grade school graduation, but it didn't name the school. A lot of the clues, like a pennant with the initials AHS, pointed toward Arago, but the name that occurred most often, Geraldine Holycross, pointed toward Langlois.

So, we asked our Langlois expert, Bonnie Jensen Cox, and she supplied the missing links. The Holycross family lived in Arago until they moved to Langlois where Geraldine finished high school and married Lloyd Kreutzer. They were married 64 years.

Bonnie made contact with the family for us: "It is so thoughtful of you to offer the scrapbook to Geraldine's daughter, Vicki Kreutzer Elias. She definitely wants it and is quite excited about it. What a remarkable rescue by a good Samaritan! Bonnie."

We put the scrapbook in the mail. I wish every history mystery could have such a happy ending.



McKay's Receipts Produce Support for the Museum

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

McKay's Markets, which gives a return on McKay's receipts collected by organizations, has been a source of museum funding for decades. Museum Board Member Elaine Stohler processes the receipts for the museum.

The program used to accept receipts up to a year after the purchase date but has reduced that time limit to six months.

So, 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.



Allison Hundley won a McKay's shopping spree in 1980. Manager Jim Cornish presented her trophy.

Keiser Fund Grant Fuels Winter Work

The museum got a little brighter as the result of some grant funded work done during our winter closure.

The fluorescent light fixtures throughout the museum were converted to operate on LED light tubes,

which produce a more consistent and economical source of light.

Museum volunteer and retired electrician Tom Hultin oversaw the conversion. The cost of materials was covered as part of a

grant of \$3,500 from the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, Mr. and Mrs. Michael L. Keiser fund.

Donna Mason worked during the closed period with other volunteers to refresh the milk and cheese exhibit at the south end of the museum. Keiser grant funds bought display furniture.

The Keiser fund grant will be used to do some additional interior "facelift" projects as well as support general operating costs.

Historian Peter Stark to Appear in Gold Beach

Author and adventure historian Peter Stark will make a benefit presentation in Gold Beach at the Curry Public Library April 5, 2023, at 5:30PM. Admission to the event is free. More information is available from the Curry County Library.

Peter Stark's book *Astoria*, a New York Times best-seller in 2014, told the epic story of the first American colony on the West Coast, at the mouth of the Columbia River. His *Young Washington* (2018) was named a finalist for the George Washington Book Prize. He has recently completed a book about the struggle for the lands of the Midwest between the great Shawnee leader Tecumseh and the frontier governor (and later president) William Henry Harrison. Titled *Gallop Toward the Sun*, it will be published by Random House this August.

Peter offered to do this reading after getting rave reviews about Gold Beach/Curry General Hospital from his son-in-law who recently completed part of a residency requirement working with Dr. Jessica Carlson and the surgery team at Curry General Hospital.

On the day of the event, doors will open an hour or so prior to Peter's presentation for refreshments and a silent auction. During this pre-function, music will be provided by Agness pianist Michele Berlant.

Funds raised from books sold and the silent auction go to benefit the Curry Public Library and the Curry Health Foundation.

Inn at Face Rock Gives Local Grants

The museum was pleased to learn recently that we were one of 12 local organizations chosen to receive a \$500 grant from Best Western Inn at Face Rock.

On its web page, the Inn, in turn, thanked its customers for enabling it to give local grants.

The management of the Inn wrote:

"When you choose to be our guest, you're directly supporting our local community. The impact of your support can be seen in the school around the corner, the organizations downtown, the hospital up the road, and the many friendly faces you pass by each and every day in our community."

The complete list of local grant winners is available at <https://innatfacerock.com/community/>.



Construction of the Inn at Face Rock began in 1978.

“The only other feasible theory is that he met with foul play.”

Continued from Page 1.

6:00 and 6:15, the latter buying twine for a fish net.

“As Shannon left, Mr. Drane was seen going into the building, adjoining the cold storage, where he kept his car. At about 7:30 Frankie Wilson saw him, hatless, driving his car from the direction of his garage into First street. At the Baltimore intersection he was seen by Ed Rose who says Drane was driving east on First street and slowing down as he approached Chicago Avenue, in front of the Seaside Bakery. So far as anyone has been able to learn, that was the last time he was seen.”

The Coast Guard dragged the river and found nothing. Law enforcement was quickly on the case. County Sheriff “Bill Dad” Howell began a search Tuesday night. State Police put out a statewide BO-LO: “Be on the lookout.” State police experts investigated, found no scars on the docks, and speculated a car would have to be travelling over 40 miles per hour to clear the wharf without leaving a mark. The search turned away from the river.

The *Western World* examined all the factors that could drive a married man to suicide, and dismissed them one-by-one. The mayor was a happy, successful man.

On Wednesday, at the Chamber of Commerce meeting, a searching party was organized which, augmented by some 50 high school students, started out to comb the territory between Bear Creek and Two Mile on the theory that he might have gone on one of the by-roads and met with an accident.

The only other feasible theory, reported the *Western World*, is that he met with foul play. It is possible that he picked up someone on the highway, or had been held up and ordered to drive away.

The paper reported, “The first clue of any importance that may lead to a solution of the disappearance of Mayor Drane was picked up by City Recorder W. A. LeGore Wednesday afternoon when it was learned that a Nash sedan with a California license plate had been parked on Baltimore Avenue for a week. The car is locked, the tires are flat and the generator has been removed. It contains no gas.”

The fact that the suspicious car was registered in Hollywood, California, seemed especially unsettling. Art Smith informed the officers that a set of license plates may have been stolen from a local car Monday evening.

Could the mayor, and his car, have been commandeered by someone from Hollywood?

The searching party composed of some 75 people returned to town after dark Wednesday evening after having covered miles of territory but without success. No clues whatever were found.

The search turned back to the river Thursday afternoon when one of the spare wheels from the Drane car was found on the river bank by Ralph Faulkner who was in search of driftwood logs for firewood. He notified W. A. LeGore who took the wheel to the Capps Motor Company where the number of the tire was registered. Mr. LeGore formerly owned the Drane car and it was he that bought the tire that was on the tell-tale wheel. On the same day, a Coast Guard man found a gallon oil can along the



Elmore Drane aboard the tug Diesel in a photo dated September 1, 1927. Waterfront buildings and the wharf are in the background.

river beach, which also came from the Drane car.

The mayor was known to frequently drive through the narrow entrance to the wharf in front of

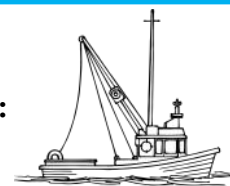
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New Members:

Individual and Family Members:

**Tracy and Ivan Hultin
James and Megan Kalina
Darlene Wilson Faulkner
Amy and Brian Robertson
Debbie and Scotty Freeman**

**Merrilie Jewell
Donna McMahon
Marion Baron**



“The absence of the mayor was on everyone’s lips.”

Continued from Page 4.

the city hall building. Consequently, the search of the river at that point was resumed with added vigor all Thursday afternoon, all that night, and all of Friday.

Alex McLeod and Clarence Baumgardner manned the tug *Diesel* in the search. They were assisted by volunteer citizens and the U.S. Coast Guard crew with Captain Goodman in command.



This photo of Mayor Drane hangs in Bandon’s City Council chambers.

Being unable to locate anything with pike poles, fish nets and drag hooks, Marion Zumwalt, deep sea diver of Port Orford, was brought to Bandon with his outfit.

All day Thursday and Friday the anxiety and suspense was noticeable everywhere in Bandon. The absence of the mayor was on

everyone’s lips and business was practically at a standstill with merchants joined with the rest in prosecuting the search. The waterfront was lined with hundreds of people. There was much conjecture over the possibility of foul play and various theories along that line were advanced, reported the *Western World*.

The mayor was still missing. One man didn’t think they were looking in the right place.

While dragging operations were under way a block west of the City Hall, Alex Erickson watched the water upstream of the search. He found that small oil blotches appeared at almost regular intervals some 30 or 40 feet downstream from the foot of Baltimore Avenue. Nothing like it appeared above that small area.

Search authorities didn’t like Erickson’s theory, so he convinced Captain L. Christensen to give it a try. The two secured a tow boat and went to the spot. The third prod with a pike pole struck the top of the car.

The mystery of the disappearance of Mayor F. E. Drane was solved Friday evening, shortly before

eight o’clock. His automobile, in which his body lay, was lifted from the bottom of the Coquille River.

The county coroner, Dr. Russell Keizer of North Bend, rendered an on-the-spot verdict of “accidental death,” considering it unnecessary to hold an inquest.

Funeral services for Mayor F. E. Drane were held in the flower-banked chapel at Schroeder Bros. mortuary in Bandon. Rev. D. Loree conducted the services which were heard by a crowd so large as to overflow the chapel.

Mayors and officers from cities and districts in Coos and Curry counties were among the prominent men who attended the funeral. Floral offerings were so extensive that the wreaths and sprays formed a solid bank of color in the chapel.

Pall bearers were chosen from the late mayor’s large list of close personal friends. They included Alex McLeod, William A. LeGore, James E. Walstrom, Ed Capps, Clarence Baumgardner and L. E. Osborne, all of Bandon.

Interment was in the Odd Fellows cemetery at Coquille. Crowds of mourners thronged the cemetery despite a cold rain which pelted down during almost the entire services.

City Councilman Ed Capps was chosen to serve out Mayor Drane’s term, and so he was the mayor when Bandon was destroyed by fire, less than a year later, in September of 1936, but that’s another story.

Final Resting Places

Elmore and Maude Drane are buried in the Odd Fellows Pioneer Cemetery on a hilltop in Coquille. They share a plot with John Frederick Hamblock, better known as “Red John,” to distinguish him from his brother, also named John, who was known locally as “Black John” and is buried in the cemetery at Bullards Beach State Park. The Frederick in F. E. Drane’s name likely came from his grandfather.



Coquille Tribal Community Fund Sponsors “History Minutes”

The Coquille Tribal Community Fund presented a check for \$2,400 to the museum during a reception at the Mill Casino February 2 to fund another year of “History Minutes” on local radio. A similar Coquille grant purchased radio air time in 2022.



The grant purchases air time for the “History Minutes” on radio station KBDN.

We consider the program a bargain; the contract is for 40 weekend spots a month on one station but we hear

the spots on all eight Bicoastal Media stations seven days a week.

The CTCF distributed over eight hundred thousand dollars in grants at the 2023 reception and has given more than eight million dollars in grants since the fund was established. The museum has received funding from the Coquille Tribe since 2012.



“History Minute:” The Wreck of the *Oliver Olson*

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

The *Oliver Olson* is the largest ship to ever cross Bandon’s bar. It’s still here.

Millions of board feet of lumber were shipped out of Bandon in the 1950s, mostly aboard ships of the Olson Steamship Line, a company based in San Francisco.

In November of 1953, the *Oliver Olson* was headed inbound to pick up a load of lumber from the Moore Mill and Lumber Company docks.

A strong cross current from the north pushed the 307-foot-long ship hard aground, on jagged, submerged rocks, just beyond the end of the south jetty.

The ship was declared a total loss, sold for salvage, emptied out and cut to the waterline.

Recognizing an opportunity, the Army Corps of Engineers filled the hull with rocks, providing a badly needed extension to the jetty.

So, the *Oliver Olson*, the largest ship to visit Bandon’s harbor, is still here, buried beneath the south jetty.

That’s a little history from Bandon’s Museum.



The bow of the Oliver Olson under the rocks of the south jetty.

Potato Club Charter Sheds Light on Life North of the River

A document donated to the museum in December by Tom Hultin made us all smile: the Boys and Girls Club Charter for the Potato Club of Bullard. The charter gave the Potato Club official status as a 4-H club. The illustrations and scrollwork around the perimeter of the certificate are especially rich in detail.

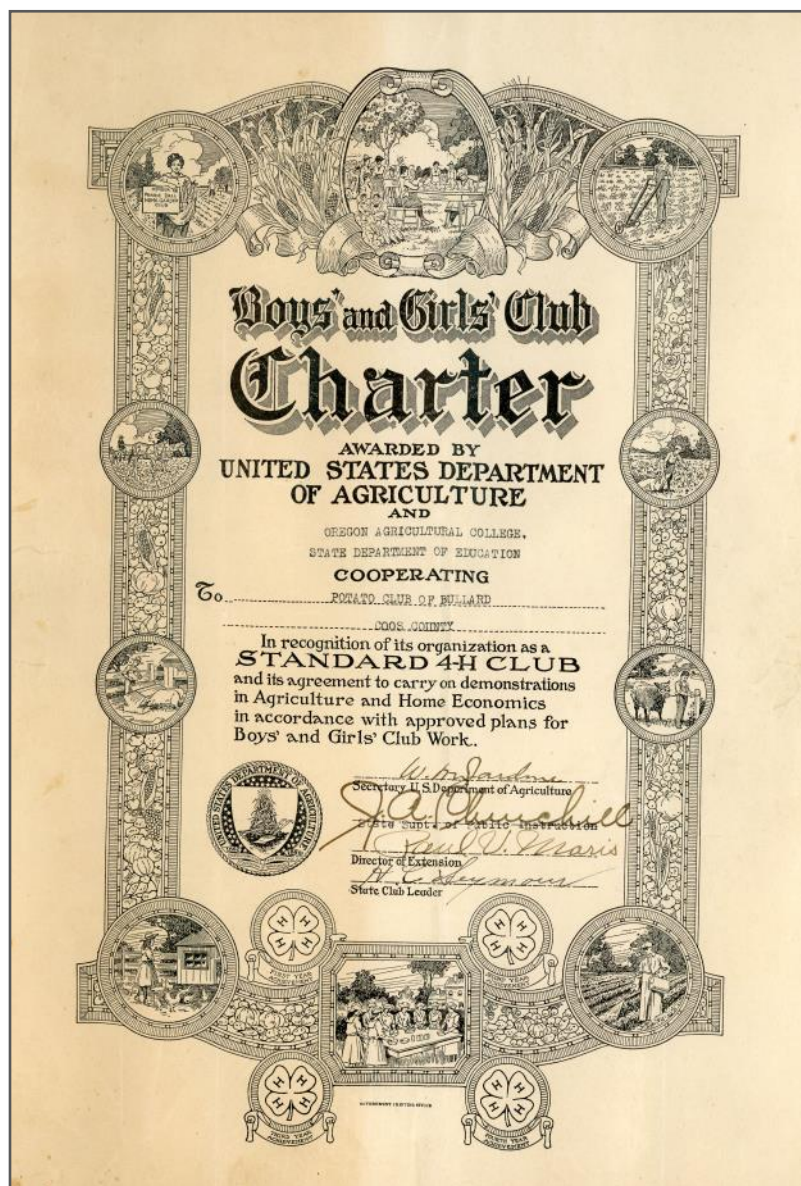
The document was undated, but it bore the signature of W. M. Jardine, Secretary of U. S. Department of Agriculture, who served from 1925 to 1929 and J. A. Churchill, whose term as State Superintendent of Public Schools ended in 1926. That considerably narrowed the possible range of dates.

We've got to conclude that someone beyond the local level typed the charter to explain why it reads "Bullard" rather than "Bullards." Bullard is a family name; the place name is Bullards. And it would have been more accurate to locate the club in Randolph. But in 1926, Bullards had a post office, Randolph didn't, and people who lived north of the river didn't consider themselves as living in Bandon.

The "Randolph School Notes" by Donald Hultin in the *Western World*, March 11, 1926, reported: "The boys have organized a potato club. The officers are: Donald Hultin, pres.; Donald McLeod, vice-pres.; George Thrush, secretary. The other members are Kenneth Hultin, Earl Shinn, Delos Shinn, and Kenneth Thrush. A. R. Hultin will act as club leader."

That the charter ended up in Tom Hultin's possession is not surprising, considering the number of Hultins in the club.

Though it's a Boys' and Girls' Club charter, it appears no girls chose to join. The same School Notes article reports the formation of a Sewing Club, organized and named "Sewall." Perhaps that charter is in someone's closet, waiting to be found.



Memorial Donations

A memorial donation has been made in the name of:

Sharon Pruett Bemetz
Mary Bowman Cullen
Robert G. Wilson
Don Lynam

Danny Schultz
Patricia Seidler
Carol Russell

A memorial donation has been made by:

Sharon and Doug Moy
Judy Schultz Knox
Geri Procetto
Kristi Bowman
Ann Remy



The Randolph School, scanned recently from an album donated by Cheryl Lemon Laffranchi.

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>

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