



# THE BANDON LIGHT

Sponsored by: Carolyn Russell

And Family

A PUBLICATION OF THE BANDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## The Case of the Wandering Headstones

By Jim Proehl

It was a year ago that I first spotted them, lying there, pale and alone, in the Averill Pioneer Cemetery.

I walk through that cemetery almost every day; it's just down the block from my house. On a rainy Friday in March, 2023, I spotted a couple of "new" marble headstones that hadn't been there on Thursday. When I say "new," I actually mean old. The dates of death were 1862 and 1887, a little early for a burial in Bandon.

But they were "new" to the Averill Cemetery, and they weren't marking graves. They were in a place suspiciously close to the road. The sort of place where a guy might stop, if he wanted to drop something heavy and drive away.

As I said, I spend a lot of time in this cemetery. You could say, I know where the bodies are buried. These two weren't buried here.

I let the headstones rest in the Averill Cemetery for a couple of weeks, just in case . . . But leaving them in the wrong cemetery made me uneasy. And the fact that they were small enough to pack off and carry convinced me to pack them off before someone else did. I carried them to the museum.

I needed help, research help, so I turned to Mary Russell, daughter of desk volunteer Carolyn Russell. I told her this was a case with her name all over it. The name on one of the headstones was "Mary A. Russell."

They obviously weren't the same person. The Mary on the headstone was a ten-year-old who died in 1887. The Mary I approached for research help is, let's just say, older than ten.



*In the Averill Cemetery — suspiciously close to the road*

She quickly got back to me and established there was no family connection between her Russell family and Mary A.'s family.

Mary's research led us, literally, in two different directions.

The Mary A. Russell headstone reads "Born Aug. 8, 1877, Died Oct. 30, 1887." It's topped with the figure of a lamb, a common motif for a child's headstone. The lamb is missing its head. Anyone who has spent much time in old cemeteries knows it's rare to find a headstone where the lamb is all there. *Why do they always cut the heads off the lambs? Why?*

In the 1880 U.S. Federal Census for Oregon, our researcher found a two-year old "Mary A. Russell" recorded as living in the Floras Creek Precinct of Curry County, born to James P. Russell and Nancy C. Russell. Mary isn't listed in either the 1900 or 1910 Floras Creek censuses (the 1890 census was lost to a fire). However, both later censuses note that the mother had given birth thirteen times, but only twelve children were alive. The census records strongly sug-



*The James and Nancy Russell home on Floras Creek from the Langlois Centennial book*

**Continued on Page 7.**

# THE BANDON LIGHT

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

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

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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

I enjoyed our winter break. We got lots of things accomplished—moved and cleaned up exhibits, redid the 1936 Fire display, got the carpets cleaned. The museum looks spiffy. But It is great to be open again and have visitors!

We are making progress toward using the estate of Don Lynam to build an addition to the museum. It will be used for meetings, lectures, presentations, audio/visual performances, special exhibits, and the like. A committee from the museum joined our consultant, Sheri McGrath of Coos Curry Consulting, for a meeting with city staff members to begin the building per-



mit process. The meeting was very favorable. Stay tuned for lots of exciting things happening here.

Thank you, Sheri, for all your hard work on our behalf.

Kay Jennings' new book, *Cold Rock Island*, will be available about June 1. It is the seventh in her crime novel series set in Port Sterling, which we all know is Bandon by another name. I can't wait to read it. I know it will be available first on Kindle, but I'm going to wait until it's available in print.

Call me old fashioned, but I like to read an actual book and support our museum's gift shop at the same time. If you want a print copy, we'll be the first to have it.

Welcome to our new board member, Sheri Wright. We are fortunate to have her.

Stop by the museum soon to check out our winter's work.

# Bill Lansing and Bonnie and Jerry Cox Publish New Books

Two of our favorite historians, Bill Lansing and Bonnie Jensen Cox, have recently released new books about local topics. Our museum shared photographs and information with both authors so we are eager to see the products.

Bill Lansing, who has written on topics ranging from Coos County schools to logging operations to area doctors, shares some statistics about cows to lead to the central question at the heart of his newest book.

“In 2021, there were 7,500 beef cattle in Coos County, Oregon, and about 3,700 dairy cows. One-hundred years ago, there were 11,000 dairy cows and less than 2,000 beef cattle in the county; and by 1940 the statistics continued to favor dairying with over 15,300 milk cows reported in Coos County and only 1,700 beef cattle.

“What changed? You’ll find out in *Curds and Whey: A History of the Creameries and Cheese Factories in Coos and Curry Counties, Oregon.*”



**Bill Lansing**

Lavishly illustrated, *Curds and Whey* presents the history of the creameries, cheese factories, and dairy farms in Coos and Curry counties, including the unique history of the early creameries and cheese factories in Southwestern Oregon, where they were located and what they produced along with individual stories about each.

The book documents pioneer dairy farmers who made the dairy industry a major part of the early economy of Southwestern Oregon and tells how the “mosquito fleet” of riverboats were key in supporting the dairy industry—getting milk to market, and to butter and cheese factories in the region.

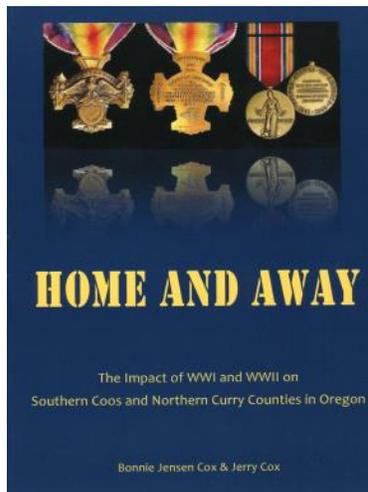
It’s all supported by unique photographs, charts, and interesting stories.

Checkout *Curds and Whey* along with other copies of Bill’s books on his website at [Billlansing.com](http://Billlansing.com) or contact him at [bill@billlansing.com](mailto:bill@billlansing.com).

Bonnie Jensen Cox, our authority on all things Langlois, collaborated with her husband Jerry to write *Home and Away: The Impact of WWI and WWII on Southern Coos and Northern Curry Counties in Oregon*. Bonnie’s earlier books include *School Evolution*, a history of Curry County Schools, and *The Story Behind the Treble Clef*, a Jensen family history centered around making music in our area.

Jerry, a former social studies teacher and school counselor, and Bonnie shared an interest in learning what it was like for folks in their local community during the two wars.

Utilizing local, state, and national newspapers, on-line resources, reference books and maps, plus the testimony of five women of the area who were in high school during WWII, the authors have put together a comprehensive local story of those war-torn times.



As a guide for their study, the Coxes used the legal border for the Port Orford-Langlois School District where they grew up and were later employed.

The authors have created a list of men and women who served during the two wars—filtering and including the names of all residents who lived within the boundary of

the study at some point in their lives. After four years of research, they have delivered a 500+ page work supported with photos, maps and news items. The publication is indexed and hard bound.

The emerging role of women in both wars is covered as well as the impact of global warfare on the local economies and family life. Perhaps most importantly, the authors have compiled the backstories and final denouement of all the young men who did not survive the conflicts.

*Home and Away* is available for checkout at both the Langlois and Port Orford public libraries and a reference copy is available in our museum.

Parties interested in purchasing the publication should contact [bonjercox@gmail.com](mailto:bonjercox@gmail.com) or phone/text 541-404-2490.

## Braemar Trust Keeps Us In the Saddle

This edition of *The Bandon Light* is the first to be printed on our new Kyocera copy machine. The new machine was purchased through a grant from the Braemar Charitable Trust through Trust Management Services. The grant also includes a year’s worth of copy machine service with South Coast Office Supply.

The copy machine is the museum’s workhorse! We thank Trust Management Services for helping us with another grant opportunity.

# March Madness: Tracing the Beginning of Basketball in Bandon

As preparation for a talk at the high school, I recently searched for the first account of a Bandon High basketball game. I was mildly surprised that the earliest coverage, in 1908, was of the girls' team.

The phrase "BANDON HIGHS" in the headline threw me until I understood the team didn't yet have a name. It's fun to see both the customs of the game and the language of basketball reporting in its earliest stage of development.

March, a month devoted to both basketball madness and women's history, seems like an appropriate time to reprint this story from the March 19, 1908, *Bandon Recorder*. Jim Proehl

## BANDON HIGHS DEFEAT NORTH BEND

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LOCAL STUDENTS RETURN EXCULTINGLY  
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Friendly Rivalry at Basket Ball Will be Repeated in City-by-the-Sea.  
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The girls' basket ball team of the high school met the North Bend high school team in a game at North

cheers and a tiger for Ernie Boak!

Mrs. Ostien accompanied the girls as chaperon, and they all have good words for the courteous treatment and entertainment given them at North Bend. On their arrival they were served with dinner at the home of Mr. Raab, superintendent of the North Bend schools. The game was fair, clean, free of wrangling, and the best of feeling prevailed throughout.

The line-up of the home team was as follows: Hazel Stephenson, center; Elsie Stephenson, Nora Gibson (captain), forwards; Rittie McNair, Erma Craine, guards; subs., Lena Langlois, Sylvia Rackleff.

North Bend line-up: Edith Allgers, Hattie Van Zile, Edith Raab, Ellen Anderson, Helen Mende,; subs., Belva Flanagan, Amelia Volz. Referee, Ernie Boak of Bandon.

Umpire, W. A. Davenport, North Bend.

Roy Corson and Elisha Wilson of the high school went along to cheer the girls to victory.

The vanquished team in this contest will come to Bandon in about two weeks to endeavor to recover their lost laurels, and the hospitality shown by them Friday will be fully reciprocated.



*The 1908 Bandon High girls' basketball players visited a photo studio to have their team picture taken.*

Bend last Friday night, and won a neat victory over their adversaries by a score of 12 to 8. The Bandon girls scored within the first two minutes of play, and the game was fast and exciting throughout, but at no time during its progress was Bandon in danger of defeat. Her team work was fine, and there were a number of splendid individual plays.

This was the girls' first game with an outside, team, and to win over the North Bend school, which is credited with having the strongest team among the schools of the county, gave good cause for much rejoicing. The girls have worked hard to put themselves in form to play a winning game. But in the victory were the earmarks of Ernie Boak, their efficient and untiring coach. The good playing of the team is largely due to his earnest and thorough training. The high school students give a hearty three



*The Bandon High 2024 girls' basketball team finished the season undefeated in league play, earning a trip the state tournament.*

# History Minute: Grandma Shoemaker Registers to Vote

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



*Mary Shoemaker's photograph appeared in the Sunday Oregonian, May 25, 1913.*

In 1919, the nineteenth amendment guaranteed women the right to vote. Oregon had already extended the vote to women in 1912.

Mary A. Shoemaker, known as "Grandma Shoemaker," 83 years of age, made the news when she registered to vote in 1913. In company with a correspondent from the Portland *Oregonian* newspaper, she walked from her home to Bandon's City Hall, a distance of half a mile, to sign her name on the voter registra-

tion books, becoming the oldest woman voter in this part of the country.

She was particularly inspired to vote by a measure to fund Bandon's library.

Mrs. Shoemaker came from Booneville, Missouri. Her husband was killed during the Civil War. Captain Shoemaker was close friends with General Grant.

Grandma Shoemaker died in 1918, too soon to vote in a national election. She is buried among the Civil War veterans in Bandon's Grand Army of the Republic cemetery.

*That's a little history from Bandon's Museum.*

*Bandon "History Minutes" play on station 96.5FM and other Bicoastal Media stations.*

## Elections and Bylaws on the Agenda at the Annual Meeting

The museum's annual member meeting was held February 6 at the museum. On the agenda were a financial report, board elections, a review of the last year and preview of the coming one, and a vote to make a change to the bylaws.

Elected to board positions were Elaine Stohler, president; Mary Schamehorn, vice president; Faye Albertson, secretary; and Jim Proehl, treasurer. Elected to three-year board terms were Reg Pullen, Faye Albertson, Jim Proehl and Sheri Wright. Wright is new to the board, filling the position previously held by Kathy Dornath. The other three were returning board members.

The operating fund was \$17,507.88 in the black at the end of 2023, compared to being approximately \$2,500 in the red the previous year. "We often look better at the end of an odd numbered year, because there is a substantial grant which we can apply for only in odd numbered years but has to be spent during the following fiscal year," said board treasurer Jim Proehl.

By vote of the membership, the bylaws were changed from specifying that the annual meeting

should be held in October, November or December to be held in January or February, which has been the practice the past several years.

### Free Summer Sundays on the Calendar Again

The museum is one of more than a dozen Bandon groups to receive a Community Grant from the Best Western Inn at Face Rock. Partnered with First Interstate Bank, the Inn helped the museum initiate the project of offering free admission on Sundays in the summer.

Free Summer Sundays run from Memorial Day through the Cranberry Festival weekend. Best Western Inn at Face Rock has been a continuing supporter of this popular program.

## Two Grant Providers Support Rebuilding the "Fire Wall"

Our volunteer crew has used some quiet winter hours to rebuild the exhibit that tells story of the 1936 Bandon Fire. The project is supported by grants from the Coos County Cultural Coalition and the Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation.

Donna Mason and Nancy Murphy led the process. The result is an exhibit that tells a more complete story in less space. In the space gained, the ladies added an exhibit showing the history of our museum building, which was a city hall built in the wake of the 1936 fire.

The Keiser family, owners of the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, have given the museum financial support for two decades.

The CCCC is an arm of the Oregon Cultural Trust. Local leaders in the arts community administer its Coos County grant program.

### *New Members:*

#### **Life Members:**

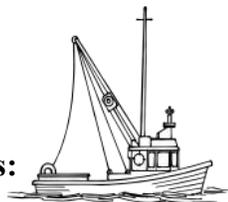
**Ron Moody**

#### **Individual and Family Members:**

**Rustin Bonner**

**Scott J. Szala      Carrie Ryan**

**Neal Barlow and Barbara Samuel**



# A Glass Bottle Found in Ferry Creek Tells Two Tales

Not long before we closed for our winter break in December, Aiden Johnson, nine-years-old, visited the museum with his grandfather, Gary Sands. Aiden brought something he found in Ferry Creek, just off the end of Ninth Street. He thought it might belong in a museum.

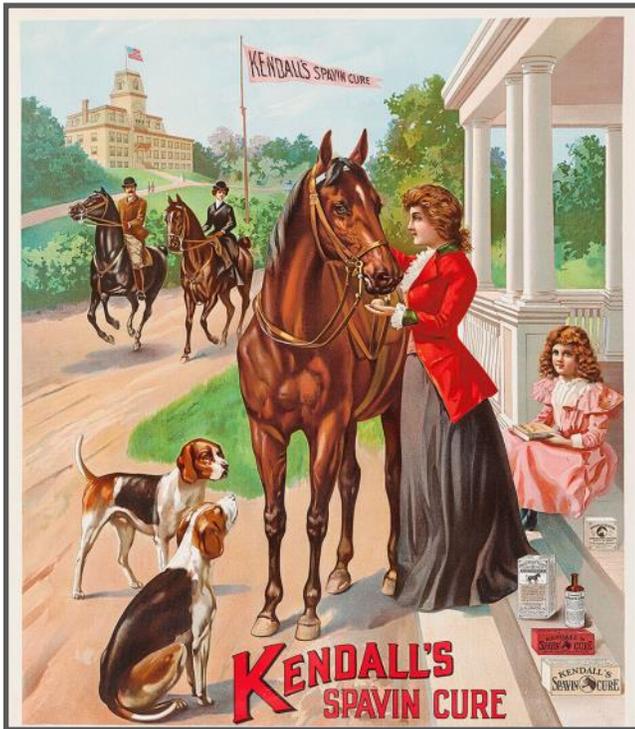


Donna Mason worked with Aiden to fill out an intake form for a donated object and showed him where it would likely be put on display.

Aiden's donation was a brown glass bottle, about six inches tall. The bottle no

longer has a label but lettering just below the neck reads "Kendall's Spavin Cure." Lettering around the bottom reads "Enosburgh Falls, VT."

It took just a few minutes looking on the internet to discover what once filled Aiden's glass bottle: alcohol and opium.



Spavin is a swelling condition on a horse's leg. According to the Vermont Historical Society, producing and promoting Dr. Kendall's opium-rich cure brought an incredible amount of wealth to the town of Enosburgh Falls.

The promotion made clear that the cure was not confined to horses. One advertisement read, "When you meet with an accident, get a sprained ankle, or

[become] otherwise injured, don't go to the expense of sending for a doctor, but apply Kendall's Spavin Cure, and you will experience instant relief." The advertising was a bit coy about whether, for humans, the cure was best applied externally or internally.

Dr. Kendall fell prey to his own product. "Around 1880 he was falling into addiction. He ended up being committed to a sanitarium in the Chicago area, and never came back," according to Tim Camisa, current owner of the Kendall building. Dr. Kendall's demise didn't end his business. His partners continued to sell and promote the product until the Pure Food and Drug Act put them out of business.

Considering how widely Kendall's Spavin Cure was marketed, it's understandable it found its way to Bandon. Whether the bottle's owner used it to doctor his horse or doctor himself is the part we don't know.

Visitors often ask how we acquire the artifacts that fill our museum. Donations such as Aiden's help answer that question.

## Always Looking for New Volunteers

There are lots opportunities to volunteer at the museum.

Front desk volunteers typically work one three-hour shift a week. We also need a corps of front desk substitutes. "It's a good way to meet people and learn about local history. Believe me there is always more to learn about our beautiful little town," says Director Gayle.

Volunteers often start with an "assignment" but work best once they find a niche that matches what they enjoy doing with a role that helps meet our mission of "Collecting, preserving and sharing local history." There's always more history.

"Volunteer jobs can be ongoing, but if you just want to help with one project, we won't hound you," says Gayle.

A good start for anyone interested in volunteering is to call Director Gayle and share your interests and contact information. Even better, stop by and talk.

## Memorial Donations

Memorial donations have been made in the name of:

Mary Capps  
Edith Winters

Alice M. Boak  
Charlotte Dow

Memorial donations have been made by:

Mike and Sharon Hennick  
Bryon and Patrick Auer  
Kirk and Elizabeth Day

Dennis Tiernam  
Janice Hawk  
Mary Ellingson

## “Why do they always cut the heads off the lambs? Why?”

Continued from Page 1.

gest that Mary was Nancy Russell’s child who died prior to 1900.

Mary learned the child was buried in the Denmark Cemetery, near Langlois. Bonnie Jensen Cox confirmed the Langlois area lore that ten-year-old Mary Russell died of diphtheria. But Mary A. *has* a headstone in the Demark Cemetery.

“Comparing photos taken at the Denmark Cemetery, it appears that the markers for Mary, her father, her mother, one of her sisters, and two of her brothers, were made from the same stone material and were engraved in the same style as the most recent headstone, which was placed in 1969. I’m guessing that Mary’s original headstone was replaced in the Denmark Cemetery when markers were made for other family members who died decades later,” reported Ms. Russell.

Did the Russells replace the markers because Mary’s was missing?

The other wandering headstone, engraved “*William Hirst, Died Oct. 27, 1862, Aged 34 years,*” points in



***Carl Wiren, six year old son of Captain and Mrs. Oscar Wiren, lighthouse keepers, is buried in Bandon’s Averill Cemetery. The lamb on his headstone is missing its head.***

the opposite direction and to a darker story. Ms. Russell found the following item in *The Oregon Statesman*, a newspaper in Oregon City, Nov 17, 1862.

“A man named William Hirst hung himself on Coos River, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of last month. When found he was dead. The deceased leaves a wife, five young children, a mother and two brothers, all residing on the Coquille River. Mr. Hirst was an industrious and thriving man; had resided in Coos County for the past four or five years. It is believed that he was partially insane, as he had made two attempts to take his own life before—one about two years ago, and the other quite recently. Yet no one was really alarmed, as most people did not believe he was in earnest about it. Pecuniary consideration could not have influenced him, as he leaves a handsome property.”

It took several years to settle his “handsome property.” Estate notices filed in the few newspapers published in the state at that time provide more of the story.

William’s short time in Coos County generated enough records for Mary to match an individual to the headstone. William was born in England, about 1828. By 1860 he lived with his wife, Mary Ann, and four children along the Coquille River. The census shows two brothers living nearby. In 1862, William and Mary Ann had a fifth child, a daughter named Alice.

Early Coos County marriage records show that Mary Ann Hirst moved to Empire City (on Coos Bay), where she wed James Martin Davis on February 24, 1864. The courts appointed William’s brother, Thomas, as guardian of William’s infant children. Thomas moved to Marshfield and opened a store.

William Hirst was buried in the Empire Cemetery.

“It’s been interesting to learn about William Hirst and Mary A Russell whose headstones mysteriously appeared together in Bandon. Each headstone was originally placed in a different cemetery, and there is no obvious connection between the individuals or their families,” concluded Mary.

My conclusion about the connection between the two people is that their headstones are small enough to pick up and carry. Could the same impulse that leads some people to chop the heads off the lambs lead others to think it would be an adventure to take a headstone home? I can imagine a time when joy-riding teenagers might have collected a few headstones from seemingly deserted cemeteries.

A survey of Coos County cemeteries in the 1960’s reported the Empire Cemetery had been “abandoned to nature.” Today the location is completely overgrown and not maintained as a cemetery.

The Denmark Cemetery is lovingly cared for today, but there were times when it may have seemed deserted. My association with the Averill Cemetery began with helping Eagle Scouts Trever Jackson and Dustin Baum do Eagle service projects to reverse years of damage. Lots of Bandon headstones are missing.

How did two headstones reappear in a Bandon cemetery, halfway between Empire and Denmark? In my mind’s eye, I see someone with a ’57 Chevy and a guilty conscience dumping them on a rainy Bandon night.

You can see Mary A. Russell’s headstone on display in our museum. Should the Russell family or Denmark Cemetery want it back, we’ll gladly give it up, but I think it may have found a home on our exhibit floor.

I have a couple of ideas as to where William Hirst’s headstone belongs, but for now it sits under my desk.

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

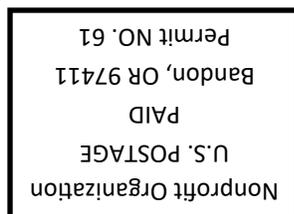
Please make check payable to BHS and mail to:

**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



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