St. Paul Mission Historical Society (SPMHS)
P.O. Box 158
St. Paul, Oregon 97137
Newsletter – Fall 2026

We hope you enjoy this Fall 2026 edition of the St. Paul Mission Historical Society (SPMHS) newsletter. We welcome your suggestions for future articles. Please feel free to contact any of the Board members with your comments and suggestions.

Mission of the Society:

Preservation of the history of early Oregon and the French Prairie region of the Willamette Valley. Preservation includes establishment of a historical trust for artifacts, written and spoken history of the St. Paul and French Prairie area, and publication of historical records of early Oregon.

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The Annual Meeting:

It will be held on Sunday, October 4, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. at the St. Paul Fire District office located in St. Paul. A light brunch will be provided at no charge. In order to provide an accurate head count, please RSVP to cmarielake@stpaultel.com or call Connie Lenzen at 503-810-4327and leave a message.

Board members will report on grants and activities this past year.

The annual meeting will feature treasures from the archives and time to tell St. Paul stories in order to celebrate the Society's 50th anniversary. The inaugural newsletter issue came out on August 9, 1976.

Board Elections:

The following board members are up for re-election: Claudine Smith Lake, Donald Koch, and K'Lyn Brentano. Shelly Bernhardt has joined the board but needs to be elected to a three-year term.

If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors (three-year positions), please contact President Claudine Smith Lake. Her email is cmarielake@stpaultel.com. The Board consists of at least eleven members and no more than nineteen. The term is three years. As a working board, each member

chooses an area of interest. The Board usually meets the third Thursday of each month (except October, November and December) at 11 am at one of the board member's home or by Zoom (if requested).

Nominations may be made at the meeting for additional board members. We welcome anyone who wants to join the board.

Board of Directors 2025-2026:

Claudine Smith Lake, President
Connie Lenzen, Secretary
Donald Koch, Comptroller
K'Lyn Brentano
Gerry Lenzen
Shelly Bernhardt, Vice-President
Benda Howard, Treasurer
Tim Bergquist, Newsletter Editor
Gretchen Brown

Board Accomplishments 2025-2026:

- Continued work on inside demo of Brentano House.
- Replaced the porch on the Murphy House.
- Prepared a flyer to advertise the Society and distribute around town.
- Held open house at Murphy House as part of 250th celebration.
- Established policy to accept photos to add to our website collection.

Board Goals 2026-2027:

- Continue renovations on both Brentano and Murphy houses.
- Get water and sewer hookups to the Society property.

Thanks to the following for their support this past year:

- St. Paul Fire Department for use of a meeting place.

Grants:

- Marion Cultural Development Corporation; $3,000 for Brentano House Restoration. To be spent during the 2026 calendar year.
- Oregon Historical Society; $1,000 Oregon 250 grant. Used for costs of cleaning and advertising (flyers promoting the event and direction yard signs) for the Murphy House Open House in May.
- Oregon Community Fund; $5,000 general operating support. Formal name supporting this grant: William G. Gilmore Fund of Oregon Community Foundation. This has been used during the year to help pay for our normal operating expenses.
- Preserving Oregon, State of Oregon Heritage Program; $6,000 for Dr. Brentano House to complete electrical work. This is a matching grant, which means SPMHS also pays $6,000 of the cost of the work. Having the Brentano House in the St. Paul Historic District, meets the standard as contributing to a National Register district.

Murphy House Tour:

Claudine Smith Lake conducts tours of the Murphy House by appointment. She prefers a two week notice for scheduling purposes. The house is located behind the fire hall in town.

Brentano House Restoration:

- Hired Chris Ritter to put in new window (was previously constructed) in kitchen. This original window had been closed in when the back porch was walled in.
- Chris Ritter also installed a new (old) farmhouse sink in the kitchen. The sink had previously been in use at Harold Brentano's house.
- The Brentano family took advantage of some wet, spring days to have a crew do demo work. Finished downstairs and worked upstairs to complete removing plaster, sheetrock, wall paper, old loose insulation, and ceiling tiles. Borrowed a neighbor's dump trailer and hauled everything to dispose of. This should complete the majority of the inside demo.
- Have completed the application with the City of St. Paul for sewer and water services.



Kitchen Window and Sink



Demo work

Joe and Rosella McKay Service Award:

The Society established this Award for outstanding service to the Society. The inaugural awards were made in 2024. The recipients to date are Catherine Zorn, Gertrude Jette, and Maureen Ernst. The 2026 awardees are **Bill Murphy and his late father Richard "Dick" Murphy**. They will have their name added to the plaque as well as receive a certificate acknowledging their contributions at the annual meeting. Detailed biographies and pictures will be provided in the Spring 2027 newsletter. That newsletter will also have a call for the 2027 nominations.

Murphy House Restoration:

- Porch replacement. The boards on the front porch were replaced with TREX decking boards. The dry rot on the railing and upper deck posts was repaired.
- The entire outside of the house was painted; including the front porch and upper porch deck, the window trim and window pane trim, and the side porch.
- Curtains and blinds were removed and new lace curtains were hung. Numerous days of cleaning, freshening up every room, and inside décor/arrangement done.
- The orange carpet on the stairs was torn out and the stairs now have a painted look.
- Outside window cleaning and detailed inside cleaning were hired.



Outside of house newly painted



Murphy table used for open house in May

Fred Meyers Community Rewards Program:

Apply for a Fred Meyer's Shopper's Card for free and link it to St. Paul Mission Historical Society. Fred Meyer donates annually to participating organizations based on your percentage of spending as it relates to the total spending associated with all participating Fred Meyer Community Rewards organizations.
Use this link: Fred Meyer Community Rewards Program to get started.
Sign in or create an account, then search for the St. Paul Mission Historical Society in the list of organizations.

America 250-Oregon:

The Society has participated in two 250th Anniversary events this year:

- The Society partnered with the Oregon Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) for an event on November 11, 2025 to celebrate William Cannon, Oregon's only known Revolutionary War veteran, who is buried on the old St. Paul Pioneer Cemetery. The event was held at the old St. Paul Cemetery beginning at 10:00 am.
- On May 23 and 24, 2026 an open house was held at the Matthew O'Connor Murphy House from 11 am to 3 pm. Parts of the house date from 1852, and visitors had the opportunity to view historically significant St. Paul/French Prairie artifacts, ranging from furniture, ceramics, textiles, photos, and more. Directors volunteered for shifts during the 2 days to greet visitors. Over 50 community members, family, and out of town visitors came to tour during the 2 days.

Information about Oregon's involvement in the United States 250th Anniversary (Semiquincentennial) celebration can be found at: https://www.ohs.org/about-us/america-250-oregon/index.cfm

SPMHS 50th Anniversary:

The Society was incorporated on June 1, 1976, by Joe McKay, St. Paul postmaster and chair of the St. Paul Bicentennial Commission. The inaugural newsletter issue came out on August 9, 1976.

The SPMHS owns and maintains two historic St. Paul homes, hosts thousands of St Paul and French Prairie images and articles on its website, and commemorates local notable figures like William Cannon, the only known Revolutionary War veteran to be buried in Oregon.



On Thursday, July 8, 1976, the newly incorporated St. Paul Mission Historical Society met at the Knights of Columbus Hall [aka Creamery Building]. A membership drive was on the agenda as well as a fund raising campaign to move the Emmett Kirk house to society property. Dan Brockman of Woodburn donated the house, and Daniel Smith donated the land. Photo from St Paul Mission Historical Society website. It shows the Emmett Kirk House, built in 1890.



In 1980 Mrs. Al Powers, an early SPMHS member, purchased land located directly north of the Saint Paul Fire Department on Mission Ave., NE. The Matthew Murphy house was moved to the property, and she had the house restored. The Dr. F. X. Theodore Brentano house was donated by the St. Paul Rodeo and moved to the property in 1994. To maintain their budget, the SPMHS sold the Kirk House in 2003.

The three original SPMHS houses.

In 1981, the SPMHS sponsored a proposal to create the St. Paul Historical District. In 1982 the St. Paul core area, containing 92 structures, was designated a National Historic District and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Saint Paul Mission Historical Society has developed a public database of historically significant manuscripts and photos from the SPMHS collections and the Harriet D. Munnick collection. Harriet D. Munnick was one of French Prairie's most prolific historians. Unfortunately, much of her work was never published and has not been available to the general public. Her research and documents were donated to the SPMHS.

More info about the Society's history can be found on Wikipedia (article written by Connie Lenzen) at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Paul_Mission_Historical_Society_-_Oregon.

Dues:

It is time for our annual dues drive. Your dues allow us to continue the work of preserving St. Paul history. Below is a membership application form. Please complete and return it with your annual dues to the address below or bring it to the annual meeting.

If you are a Life Member or Benefactor, please update your membership information so we can keep our files current. Many of our Life Members continue to donate to the Society, and we thank you for your support**. We especially appreciate your email address. We use that to send the monthly news updates and a digital version of the newsletter. This helps save money.**

Our sincere thanks to all of our members for supporting St. Paul history. If you would like to contribute to the digitization of historic artifacts and maintenance of our collections, your additional donation would be greatly appreciated. See you on October 4 at 10:30 a.m. at the St. Paul Fire Hall.

Name(s): _____

Address:_____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip:_____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

__ Individual: $20 __ Senior: $15

__ Family: $35 __ Supporting: $75

__ Corporate: $200 __ Benefactor or Individual Life: $500

Bring your dues to the Annual Meeting or Send it no later than November 1, 2026 to:
St. Paul Mission Historical Society, P.O. Box 158, St. Paul, OR 97137. Thank you!!

Website: www.spmhs.com.

The website has been updated extensively with lots of new information including stories and articles.

