

St. Paul Mission Historical Society (SPMHS)

P.O. Box 158

St. Paul, Oregon 97137

Newsletter – Spring 2025

We hope you enjoy this Spring 2025 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.

This newsletter focuses on the Joe and Rosella McKay Service Award (see the last four pages).

Mission of the Society:

Preservation of the history of early Oregon and the French Prairie region of the Willamette Valley. Preservation includes the 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.

Board of Directors 2024-2025:

Claudine Smith Lake, President
Connie Lenzen, Secretary
Donald Koch, Comptroller
Gretchen Brown
Tim Bergquist, PhD

Gerry Lenzen, Vice-President
Benda Howard, Treasurer
K'Lyn Brentano
Rev Scott Baier

Website: www.spmhs.com.

The website has been updated extensively with lots of new information including [stories](#) and [articles](#).

The St. Paul Mission Historical Society is developing a public database of historically significant manuscripts and photos from the SPMHS collections and the Harriet D. Munnick collection. Thanks to the Austin Family Foundation and the Schwemm Family Foundation, grant funds have allowed thousands of items to be digitized. Click on the [collections](#) tab to see what has been digitally preserved.

ST. PAUL MISSION HISTORICAL SOCIETY - ST. PAUL, OREGON

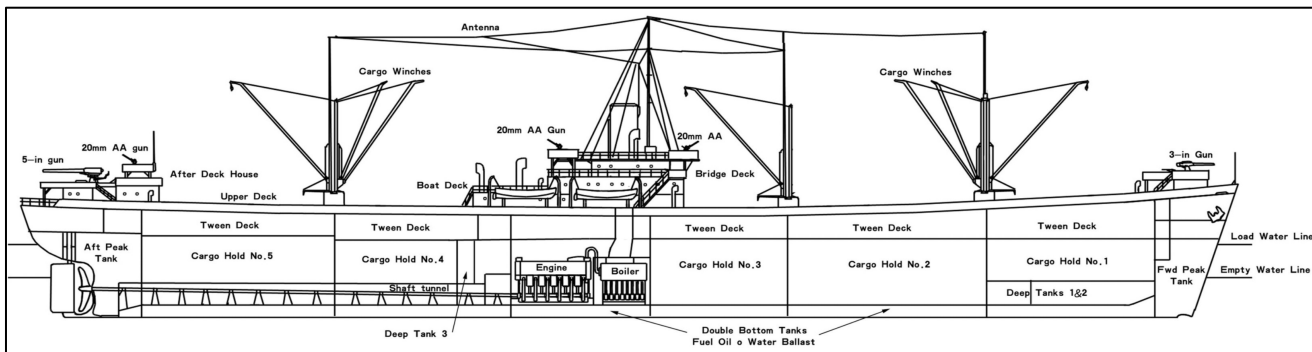
Preservation of the history of early Oregon and the French Prairie region of the Willamette Valley

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Treasures from the SPMHS Archives:

Joe McKay, the founder of the St. Paul Mission Historical Society, collected thousands of items that illustrate St. Paul's history. One of the most unique is the nameplate for the Liberty Ship, *S. S. Francis N. Blanchet*.

During World War II, 2,751 Liberty ships were built to transport goods to war zones. The 441-foot-long ships were crewed by around 40 Merchant Marines and one to two dozen Naval personnel. The five cargo holds held 10,800 deadweight tons in each hold. Planes, tanks, trucks, and trains could be lashed onto the deck.



The Liberty Ship *S.S. Francis N. Blanchet* was built by the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation of Portland, Oregon, one of Henry J. Kaiser's three WWII shipyards. It was launched on October 10, 1943, and completed on October 17th. The cost was \$1,586,618.00.

The whereabouts of the ships were kept secret during the war. After the war, some of the *S.S. Francis N. Blanchet*'s destinations were released. They included Australia, Papua, New Guinea, Sri Lanka, India, England, Boston, Nova Scotia, New York City, Scotland, Guantanamo, Dar es Salaam, and Capetown. In October 1945, at war's end, the *Blanchet* was adapted to return Australians from Manila to Brisbane, Australia. At that time, it was described as "a rickety craft with cracks in the welded hull." In January 1961, the U. S. Maritime Administration advertised the *Blanchet* for sale. Gilmore Steel of Portland, Oregon, purchased the *Blanchet* and five other Liberty ships for \$66,000 each. On October 10, 1961, Zidell Explorations, Inc., of Portland, Oregon, received the *Blanchet* at its Willamette River yard, and scrapped the ship.

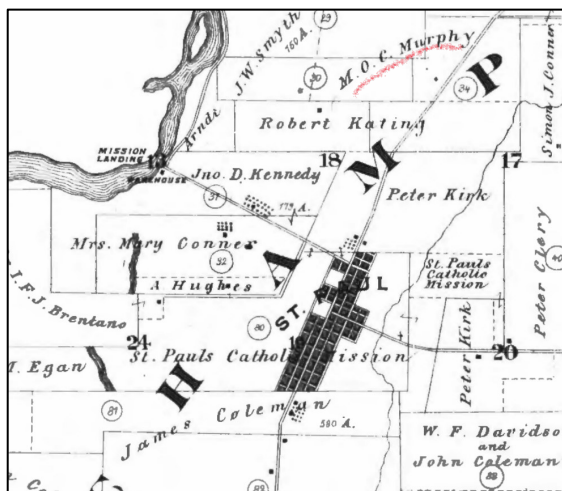
On June 18, 1962, a representative of the U.S. Maritime Commission presented two *S. S. Francis N. Blanchet* name plates to Archbishop Edward D. Howard. The name plates would have been placed in the Archdiocese Archive, and that is likely where Joe McKay, SPMHS founder, found the name plate that now resides at St. Paul.

Murphy Museum Appeal:

The Murphy Museum (aka Matthew O'Connell Murphy House) is located on the Saint Paul Mission Historical Society property in downtown St. Paul, Oregon. It houses historically significant St. Paul artifacts ranging from furniture, ceramics, textiles, photos, paintings, etc.

The original house was built around 1852 on the Willamette River. It consisted of three rooms on the first floor – kitchen, dining room, and sitting room. Two bedrooms were on the second floor. During the Flood of December 1861, Mrs. Murphy (Ellen Costello) and her newborn baby were placed on a mattress and removed through one of the bedroom windows. When the flood water receded, the house, barn, and animals were gone.

A part of the original house was found in a nearby tree. It was moved to higher ground one mile east of the river and became part of the rebuilt house. In 1871, the house was moved another mile east to St. Paul Road, and a five-room addition in front of the original structure was built. The current kitchen, dining room, and two small upstairs bedrooms are from the 1861 structure, including part of the 1852 house. This map from the 1878 Historical Atlas of Marion and Linn Counties, Oregon, shows the location of the M.O.C. Murphy donation claim.



In 1980, Mrs. Al Powers, an early SPMHS board member, purchased land located directly north of the Saint Paul Fire Department on Mission Ave., NE, in Saint Paul, Oregon. The house was moved to the property, and she had the house restored.

Over the years, several volunteers, including Dick Murphy (deceased) and Hunter Wylie, worked on upkeep. The most recent house expenditure was for furnace repair. It was discovered that the ducts had not been connected to the furnace in the crawl space, and this was fixed.

The house has several pressing repairs. The first need is the replacement of the front porch. It has wood rot, and someone could fall through the boards. Then, the exterior paint is peeling in numerous areas. It should be repainted to maintain the structure's integrity. Shown to the right is a photo of the porch steps from 2022.



Mrs. Powers provided a \$10,000 endowment that was invested. According to endowment instructions, ten percent of annual earnings from this investment must be kept for upkeep, maintenance, and growth.

Prices keep increasing, and the fund earnings are insufficient for the porch replacement and the house painting. We are coming to you for help in maintaining the museum. Anything you donate for this purpose will be greatly appreciated. We know there are many demands on you, and we appreciate what you do for the Society. The St

Paul Mission Historical Society has a 501(c)(3) classification to accept endowments, grants, and donations as charitable deductions. The IRS number is 93-0671244. Donations should be sent to the St. Paul Mission Historical Society, Box 158, St. Paul, Oregon 97137.

For more information about Matthew Murphy, see his autobiography on the SPMHS website, https://ppolinks.com/spmhs/2020-1-35_MATTHEW_MURPHY.pdf

Brentano House Restoration Update - Getting Down to Bare Walls:

These past few months, a group of Brentano family members have been tearing out the inside walls to get down to the stud/board walls. Several work parties have been held to demo the inside walls. This includes layers of plaster with paint, wallpaper, more paint, and more wallpaper. Also, tearing down the ceilings. The front room is done, and other rooms are started. Some of the work has been to scrape off wallpaper and the glue. It is very tedious, and that old glue is really stuck on!



Additional funding is needed to complete the inside renovation. A detailed budget for the inside work has been completed. We plan to continue with the work and continue to need donations. To donate, please mail a check to St. Paul Mission Historical Society, with the memo of "BRENTANO HOUSE". A separate checking account has been set up specifically for the Brentano House.

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 organization. Use the following link to get started. <https://www.fredmeyer.com/i/community/community-rewards>

Sign in or create an account, then search for the St. Paul Mission Historical Society in the list of organizations. Thank you.

Joe and Rosella McKay Service Award 2024 Recipients:

Catherine Zorn (February 8, 1911 – April 21, 1997)



Catherine Zorn graduated from Marylhurst College with a teaching degree. She taught at Arbor Grove School and West Woodburn School. She changed careers and worked full time as a city clerk in Salem while attending law school. She went to early morning classes at Willamette University and then took night classes at Northwestern College of Law in Portland (now Lewis and Clark College). In June 1948, she graduated as the only woman in her class.

Catherine passed the bar exam – again as the only woman. She worked for several law firms before being appointed Oregon Assistant Attorney General in 1951. In 1961, she argued several Oregon land use cases before the U. S. Supreme Court. In 1967, she went into private practice and retired in 1989. In 1979, she wrote the Casper Zorn House nomination for the National Register of Historic Places. Catherine Zorn helped establish St. Brigid's Home for Girls in Salem. She wrote the charter for the St. Paul Parochial School Fund. She was active in the Salem

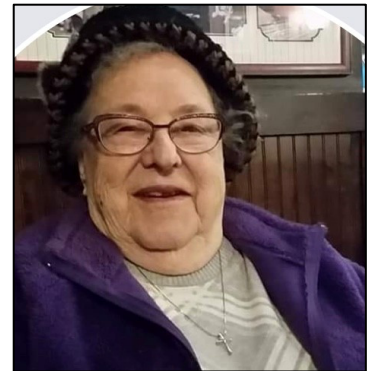
Soroptimist Club. Her special interests were agriculture problems, small businesses, taxation, education, historic preservation, and senior citizens.

Catherine was one of the original SPMHS board members and the first vice president. As a practicing attorney, she wrote the SPMHS by-laws. When points of law came up, she provided legal advice to the Society. She acted as the SPMHS parliamentarian. She assisted in fund-raising by opening her home, the Zorn House, for the annual SPMHS Tour of Homes. She is buried in the St. Paul Cemetery.

Gertrude Mae (Hall) Jette (June 28, 1925 - October 16, 2023)

Gertrude Jette spent her life cherishing the historical significance of the Willamette Valley. She served as treasurer for the St. Paul Historical Society for many years, finally retiring in 2015.

Born in Plainfield ,Iowa, she and her family moved to Oregon in 1938, settling in the Bald Mt. area of McMinnville. They served as lookouts for Japanese bomber planes in Yamhill and Tillamook counties. She attended Linfield College in McMinnville from 1945 until 1947, when she married Bob Jette. She returned to Linfield in 1984 and got her degree in Home Economics.



During her lifetime of dedication to Oregon history, she was a member of The Daughters of the American Revolution. She served on the Building and Grounds Committee for the Newell house, owned by the D.A.R. Living right next to Champoege, she was a member of the Champoege Historical Society, the St. Paul Mission Historical Society, and the Daughters of Union Vets of the Civil War.

History was her passion, and family was her love. She and Bob had 4 boys, Norm, David, George, and Dan, and 1 daughter, Lorene. She was known for her apple cake, peach cobbler, popcorn balls, and her famous egg noodles. She and Bob were known for their love of dancing and socializing in the community. She is buried in the St. Paul Cemetery.

Joe and Rosella McKay Service Award

In 2023, the St. Paul Mission Historical Society established the Joe and Rosella McKay Award for Service to the Society to honor individuals who have performed outstanding service to the Society. The award is limited to one living person per year, except when a pair of members has worked together. The number of deceased individuals shall be made at the Board's discretion.

The awardee[s] will have their name inscribed on a plaque in the Murphy House and will receive an Award certificate at the October annual meeting and brunch. Their biography will be printed in the Spring Newsletter. If they are not currently a member of the Society, they will receive an Honorary Membership.

Any dues paying or Life member of the Society may make a nomination, and the awardee will be selected from the nominations by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. Nominees must have a documented history of Service, Leadership, or Accomplishment to the Society over a long time period.

Procedure: Any Society member may nominate an individual for the award in writing. A nomination must be submitted to the Society President, and should include the following:

- individual's name and contact information,
- list of services, activities, positions, and accomplishments,
- narrative describing the nature of their work in terms of its importance to the Society, and a
- short biography.

All areas of service should be examined and may include, but not be limited to:

- service as a board member,
- chair of a major committee or project,
- research and writing,
- significant fund raising, or,
- other responsibilities.

The Board will review the nominee information and may also consider nominations carried forward from a previous year. The Board will select the individual who in their judgment is the most deserving. The Board may decline to select an awardee if the available nominations are found to be inadequate, or if no nominations are received.

Information submitted for nominees who were not selected for the award will be retained by the secretary for possible use in future years by the Board. Prior to publication of the award, an official biography will be prepared from the data submitted in the nomination. It will be presented to the awardee for verification.

Schedule for nomination process:

- Spring. Newsletter announcement about nominations, including criteria.
- June 1st: Nominations presented to Board.
- July Board meeting; Review the nominations.
- August Board meeting: Board acts to select a nominee. Plaque and certificate prepared.
- October: Award presentation at the Annual Meeting.
- Spring: Publication of official biography in the newsletter.

St. Paul Mission Historical Society (SPMHS)
Joe and Rosella McKay Service Award Nomination Form
Deadline June 1

1. Personal Information:

Nominee's Name(s) _____ Living____Deceased_____

Nominee's Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (work)_____ (home)_____

Email Address _____

Date and Place of Birth _____

Date and Place of Death (if deceased) _____

Please indicate the category in which the nominee is eligible:

_____General Membership _____Research and Writing _____Fund-raising

_____Board Member _____Committee _____Other

2. Contributions/Accomplishments: Tell us how the nominee has contributed to the SPMHS and to the Society's success.

3. List of Services, Activities, Positions, and Accomplishments.

4. Short biography (to include years and dates).

Joe and Rosella McKay Service Award Nomination Form

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- 5. Other Pertinent Information and Comments:** List items not specifically covered somewhere. Notable quotations, biographical information, nominee's interests, and any other information that gives further insight about the nominee.

Nominated by _____

Relationship to Nominee _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (work) _____ (home) _____

Email Address _____

Signature _____

Date Nomination Submitted _____

Persons nominated should be aware of the fact that any information listed may be made accessible to the public or media if that person is selected to receive the award.

Nomination Forms must be submitted by June 1. Awardees will be notified by August 31. The award will be presented at the October Annual Meeting.

Please return the completed form to:

SPMHS

P.O. Box 158

St. Paul, Oregon 97137



***Note:** If you are not a member of the SPMHS, you may submit your membership dues with your nomination for the award.

___ Individual: \$20

___ Senior: \$15

___ Family: \$35

___ Supporting: \$75

___ Corporate: \$200

___ Benefactor or Individual Life: \$500