

Monumental News

An occasional newsletter of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association

Fall 2009

Happy Birthday—Eugene Skinner

Over 200 people on a beautiful September afternoon celebrated the 200th birthday of our city's founder. The party took place in the Masonic Cemetery's Public Square, two and a half miles from the city in Skinner's time and a favorite Sunday picnic site for Eugene residents in the 19th century.

John Bredesen, EMCA president, welcomed birthday party guests and told them about some of Eugene's other illustrious citizens buried in the cemetery. He emphasized that "the history of the city is right here."

Eugene poets Nancy Moody, Willa Koretz, and Erik Muller read poetry and prose featuring the cemetery and

Eugene Skinner. See page 2 for excerpts from Nancy's poem about Skinner and Willa's description of her discovery of the cemetery's "wildness."

Lane County Historical Society director Bob Hart then introduced Eugene Skinner, aka William Sullivan, by reading from a "curious piece" in the September 14, 1909 Eugene Guard that described Skinner's appearance on the 100th anniversary of his birth. Bob wondered if he might make an appearance on his 200th birthday, and at that moment Eugene Skinner emerged from his grave with shovel in hand and brushing off dirt, greeted the assembled crowd, and delight-



Eugene Skinner birthday cake

ed them by reading and commenting on letters he wrote to his sister.

Kay Holbo, EMCA founder and vice-president, concluded the program by announcing two very special birthday gifts—color prints of paintings by George Warner, donated by his widow, Ruth Warner, and 13 new Hope Abbey clerestory windows, restored and installed by Eugene glass artist, John Rose, at a significantly reduced cost to the cemetery.

Guests sang "Happy Birthday" to Eugene Skinner and enjoyed birthday cake donated by Eugene bakeries and floral displays surrounding the Skinner plot donated by local florists.

The birthday party was the culminating event of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery's sesquicentennial year. Sesquicentennial Committee members were Barbara Cowan (chair), Alice Adams, Kay Holbo, Violet Johnson, Mary Ellen Rodgers, Lynette Saul, and Karen Seidel.



Bill Sullivan as Eugene Skinner

Eugene Skinner Live

In March 1860, Eugene Skinner wrote two long letters to his sister Phebe in western Canada. He described life in the Oregon country, in the growing Eugene City (previously named "Skinner's Mud Hole"), and within the Skinner family. Here are a few excerpts.

Arriving in the Willamette Valley:

We left California in April 1846 and started for Oregon packing and were 30 days between houses in an Indian Country. Took this claim of 640 acres (upon which Eugene City stands) in July, had a cabin built and 20 acres of wheat sowed, and on the first of May

continued on page 4

Masonic Remembrance

by Willa Koretz

I had more than a little trepidation moving to the “city” after spending most of my adult life in the country, where there are huge trees, expansive views of the night sky, the eerie silence of land left to become itself. But a pretty house on Elinor Street convinced me that I should give it a try—although it was a bit close to the Eugene Masonic Cemetery.

The cemetery is the place you remember from childhood, where things go bump in the night—things that should no longer have the power to go bump. Cemeteries are the places you are drawn to on Halloween—but dare not go. At first, I didn’t visit. Who walks a dog in a cemetery? Maybe Yupi would be afraid of the “ghosts” in there?

But my fears were unfounded: He sensed the aliveness of everything there, the sweet pea trying to take over the wild grasses, the trees having stood there longer than any of us have been on this earth. Watching him respond to this spooky, sacred place opened up my sense of awe: that nature could live in our crazy cement midst—and thrive.

I work at home, and when I have been at my desk too long, in the virtual world of glowing words on a screen, I feel nature beckon. I hear something as palpable as the faint sound of the wind in the enormous trees, or something nearly inaudible, but beckoning just the same. Out the door we go, to be reminded of the wild—and the wild nature in ourselves. Very few people know that what Thoreau said was “In **wildness** {not wilderness} is the preservation of the world.”

If all of us city dwellers could

hear this call—and respond to it—we’d walk in old cemeteries more. Standing under tall trees, we could tap into something larger, that part of the world we live in that “knows.” The way we ourselves used to know, by the direction of the wind or the slant of the sun. The way Eugene Skinner knew, as he made his way here and ultimately came to rest here. The way Prior and Eleanor Blair knew the wild, producing grain and fruit, before coming to rest here. The way Catherine Davis instinctively knew how to bind a wound and minister to the sick, before she came to rest here. The way Yupi knows as he stops to smell some given clue, slowing my hurried pace by his fascination with how nature speaks to the senses, if we only listen.

For all this, I am grateful. Grateful to Eugene Skinner for thinking, “Yes, this is just the place to stop.” Grateful to the early Masons for thinking, “This is a grand and enveloping place to bury our dead, where they will one day be protected by tall trees—and have a view of this burgeoning new city.” Grateful to Lord Nelson Roney for creating so much of that beautiful city. Grateful to all who have come to rest here.

(Willa is a poetry performance artist and founder of a poetry reading series.)



Eugene, Man and City

by Nancy Carol Moody

1847

He listens to the Natives, who have seen the valley from Ya-po-ah, know the water that will grow large and drown the valley grasses.

1848

Fish enough from the untamed river, grasslands alive with deer. Horses brought to harness for the man to cross the water. “Ten sleeps” in the buggy north to Oregon City for calico and wool, flour and salt. Mary and the baby in the cabin alone, the Country full of Indians.

1851

Forty people inhabiting this ground, Skinner, now postmaster, Skinner, now the ferryman, carves a swath of land from his claim, plats a grid of dirt for the town.

1861

Snow and rain, wrung all season from the clouds, the flat-banked river rising, floodplain submerged in water nearly as deep as a woman is tall.

1864

Windowblinds drawn, Mary all in black. A lone firebell tolls for the Masons’ first member. . . Eugene Skinner, dressed for time in his good clothes, his remains held still beneath the slab.

(Nancy is a Eugene poet with a forthcoming poetry collection, Photograph with Girls.)

**Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association —
541-684-0949**

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|-----------------|---------------------|
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www.eugenemasoniccemetery.org

After the Party's Over....

2009 has been a fine year for celebrations—our Eugene Skinner birthday party on September 13 drew a crowd of two hundred thirty visitors, six birthday cakes, much poetry and music plus one robustly restored Eugene Skinner in the form of William Sullivan, stepping out from the grave to provide wry observations of Eugene today and yesterday.

In May the EMCA hosted a free picnic for Amazon neighbors during the Memorial Day weekend. Over 125 folks attended and clearly enjoyed it, as they lingered and lingered.

A well-organized work party in May drew about 50 volunteers and returned our thoughts to the ongoing work of caring for the cemetery and Hope Abbey.

Contrary to the notion that cemeteries are somehow “recession-proof,” 2009 produced serious recession related shocks to our budget.

Over 50% of our income normally comes from the sale of burial space, and as of October 1, this figure had fallen more than 70% for 2009.

This means we have had to draw upon our rainy day funds and even these are now drying up.

It is urgent now that we expand our circle of friends and neighbors who actively support us. Please transform your appreciation for all the hard work and accomplishments that were celebrated with the parties of 2009 *by sending a financial contribution to the cemetery now.*



John Rose offers a 100% match for gifts to support ongoing restoration of glass windows in Hope Abbey.

Since 2003, John Rose, Eugene’s outstanding glass artist, has been purposefully restoring more than 80 glass windows in Hope Abbey Mausoleum. The increasingly soft golden light in the south wing of the mausoleum is the result of the extra thirteen windows that were completed in the spring of 2009.

Now John has issued a challenge to supporters to fund additional windows.

“EMCA needs new gifts to finish windows of several sizes. I will match with my labor the dollar amounts of generous donors who want to give a boost to this ongoing effort.”

“We are deeply grateful for John’s effort to inspire other friends of the cemetery to make their own gifts,” says John Bredesen, president of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association.

Hope Abbey is open the last Sunday of each month from 1-4. Visitors can view the John Rose windows already completed as well as the various size windows still left to fund. Come visit!



Send us your email address!

The Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association is interested in using email to communicate with our supporters about future events in the cemetery. If you are interested in learning more about work parties, volunteer opportunities, celebrations and events, send us your email address.

Name _____

Email _____

Yes! I want to help the Eugene Masonic Cemetery by becoming a member of the Eugene Cemetery Association. Membership is yearly.

- Friends up to \$49
- Supporters \$50-99
- Sponsors \$100-249
- Preservers \$250-499
- Monument Rebuilders \$500-2499
- Monumental Givers \$2500 or more

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

- I am a Mason.
- I want my contribution to go for the mausoleum.
- I want my contribution to go for general maintenance.
- My contribution is in memory of

Please mail contribution to
Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association,
P.O. Box 5934, Eugene, OR 97405

Your contribution is tax-deductible and warmly appreciated.

Eugene Skinner Celebration



Eugene Skinner, from page 1

1847 moved my wife and child Mary, then five months old, into our new home in the far-off West. . . For four months less three days Mary never saw the face of a white woman or child except our own, and five months before we had a neighbor. . . Once I was compelled to leave my wife and little one alone whilst I went in search of flour, the nearest mill being 60 miles away.

Praising God's Country: You are a stranger to this far-off West and those that inhabit it, and the beautiful scenes which surround us in Oregon, but could you but see our land of enchantment and we could be once more together in this country, we would try to live our childhood days over again.

Appreciating Oregon's Bounty: In the month of November last, we had a fall of some two inches of snow one night. The next morning it looked singular to see tomato, pumpkin, cucumber, and bean blossoms peering through the snow. It was all gone by ten o'clock, and the vines continued to blossom until about the middle of December. . . Since then we have but a few frosts, no snow, my peach

and almond trees are in full bloom. . . I have some 100 head of cows and stock cattle, and they have no feed this winter except what nature provides.

Bragging about his Children: As for our children, they know nothing of sickness. They are all very large for their ages. Mary is as tall as I am and will outweigh me. The next, Leonora, is more slender. Phebe is robust and is as much like the original in our younger days. St. John is said by all to be as smart as the smartest. Amelia soon will be five years old, and I think the smartest of them all.

Educating his Children: The four older ones are going to school. Mary, besides the usual English, is studying French. I intend to have her well thoroughly understand Mathematics. She, as well as St. John, is quite good in figures. Leonora is more dull; Phebe won't work—she spends her time in reading. . . Mary and Leonora are taking music lessons. Last Christmas one year ago, I received from San Francisco a first-rate piano. . . Mary plays many pieces very well, but I think that Leonora will excel. . . The girls as well as St. John have most excellent voices for singing and in some pieces of church music can carry all the parts.

Recent Contributions

The following individuals contributed gifts April 1–October 1, 2009. We thank you all.

Monument Rebuilder (\$500-2499)

Alice Adams
John Bredesen and Fran Ross
Kay Holbo
Larson Family Foundation
Jim Luckey
Adith G. Moursund
Carol Stroud

Preserver (\$250-499)

Harold Busby
Barbara Cowan and Richard Larson
Lindsay Pierce

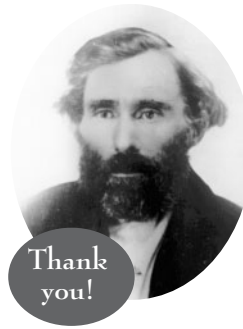
Sponsor (\$100-249)

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Hope Pressman
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Tomoko Sekiguchi

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Marie Ragland
Cheryl L. Roffe
Earlene Scallion
Rosalie Willett

Gifts in Honor and in Memory

We wish to thank all who contributed and regret any errors or omissions. April 1 – October 1, 2009 the Masonic Cemetery Association received gifts from the following:

Monument Rebuilder (\$500-2499)

Paul and Kay Holbo in honor of Scott and Paula Carpenter
Alice Adams Rose Window in memory of Murray Adams
Scott and Paula Chan Carpenter Rose Window
Carol Stroud Rose Window in memory of Jim Stroud
Kathleen Doty Rose Window in memory of Margaret Leonetti

Preserver (\$250-499)

Susan Whitney in memory of Dorothy Barclay Zimmerman
George Baker in memory of Elma Baker

Sponsor (\$100-249)

Dennis and Lynne Hellesvig in memory of Andy Halpern
Don and Sarah Klinghammer in memory of Dan Klinghammer
Paul and Roz Slovic in memory of Dan Slovic
Marilyn Schenck in memory of Don, Lois and Gavin "Rooster" Fox
Barbara Butler in memory of Harold Butler

Joseph Felsenstein in memory of Jacob Felsenstein
Michelle Koehn in memory of Katherine "Kitty" Koehn
Sheryl Engelbert-Scott in memory of Leslie Marsh
Rex and Julianne Underwood in memory of Lois, Don and Gavin Fox
Rene Speer in memory of Noel Wicks
Nancy McFadden in memory of Scott McFadden
Carol Williams in memory of the Luckey and Leasure family members

Supporter (\$50-99)

Chris and Laura Ramey in honor of Calvin, the Dog
Lorraine Abbott in honor of the Don Wiley Family
Scott Christianson in memory of Barrett, Hill, Sloan and Forrest families
Myrtle Ficouturo and Samuel McClay in memory of Dawn Ardath McClay
I.R. Carlisle in memory of Dick Carlisle
Gay Morgan in memory of Frieda Prichard

Vikki H. Chrostek in memory of Guy and Buddy Chrostek
Norman and Patricia Bishop in memory of James and Jimmy Bishop
Bert and Katherine Eaton in memory of John F. Girton
Shirley Scott in memory of Lyle Scott
Ginny and Roger Reich in memory of Robert and Opal Clark
Anne Eastland in memory of the Eastland Family
Geraldine T. Leiman in memory of the John Addison Family
Judy Wood Lyons in memory of William and Sallie Wood
Friend (up to \$49)

Kirsten Hughes in memory of Christine Monnet
Tom and Janet Heinonen in memory of Ethan and Lois Newman
Joan H. Agerter in memory of Howard F Herbranson
Bonnie Souza in memory of James E. Beard

MANY THANKS

We wish to express our thanks for the generous in-kind contributions made by the following people and businesses during the Masonic Cemetery's sesquicentennial year:

Albertsons
Angels' Tree Service
Barry's Espresso Bakery & Deli
Bell Hardware
Heather Bull

Cinnabon
Eugene City Bakery
Eugene Flower Home
Eugene True Value Hardware
Eugene Weekly

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Rainscapes Sprinkler & Landscaping

Rhythm & Blooms
John Rose
Sweet Life Patisserie
Sy's Pizza
Temple Beth Israel

The Register Guard
Track Town Pizza
Ruth Warner



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

What's Inside:

Eugene Skinner 1
Masonic Remembrance 2
Eugene, Man and City 2
Party's Over 3

*Newsletter by Karen Seidel
and Beneda Design*

Eugene Skinner Celebration



Consider your place in history. . .

Burial Space for Sale

The Eugene Masonic Cemetery offers a variety of options for memorials, cremains, and earthen burials. Your purchase would provide a beautiful and meaningful space for your family to visit for generations to come. *For more information, phone Mary Ellen Rodgers at 684-0949.*