

Aumsville Museum Opens . . . by Gloria Clark

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In 1843 John McHaley settled in what was destined to become Aumsville. Allen Jones Davie and Reuben Lewis arrived the next year. Henry Smith made it in 1846 with William Porter following him by two years. Henry Turner, after whom the nearby Marion County town was named, arrived in 1852 which makes him something of a latecomer in comparison, although the several mills that he built in and around Aumsville provided employment and attracted other settlers to the area.

"If there is anything extant regarding these families and the history of Aumsville, it is probably here in our Aumsville Historical Society Museum & History Center, already or most likely will be since we are gaining more and more items all the time," advises Theodore (Ted) Shepard, president of the Historical Society of which the museum is an integral component. The collection is anything but static.

"Some items are on permanent display while others are temporary and are changed periodically so returning visitors will find something different from their previous visit," says Shepard. "Both donations and loans are part of what is displayed."

The museum opened its doors on Aug. 14, 2009, with a Grand Opening two weeks later. "In this, our first full year of operation, we'll be open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays beginning in March through to late November and by special arrangement for groups or individuals." Call Shepard at 503-749-2744, vice-president Karlene Santibanez at 503-749-2585, or historian Lorene Mathews at 503-749-2716 to arrange

a day and time that is mutually convenient.

"We try to get the provenance of every item," says the man who lives on a Century Farm in town. "My wife's grandfather Roy Fuson bought it from Henry Turner on Dec. 1, 1908, three years before Aumsville was incorporated. Our town was named after Turner's son-in-law Amos Davis who was called Aumas.

Tied in with this information is an 1862 mail slot at the museum from the old post office when the area was known as Condit. The post office was three miles southeast of what was then called Hoggum and had its name changed to Aumsville in 1868," says Shepard. "Hoggum got its name because there were so many pigs around here then. The mail slot itself is almost secondary to the history connected with it, which only adds to the interest one takes in looking at it.

When Maude Porter Boone owned the wooden washing machine, could she have even imagined something so revolutionary as an automatic washer much less the widespread use of something called electricity. When the Peters family had the Donker Bentwood cradle in 1877, it would have been much easier to picture infants being rocked to sleep in it a century later. Perhaps having it considered an antique or at least a valuable bit of property would have been more of a stretch. It was, after all, a common household item in frequent use. As was the wooden washer, too.

Evoking memories of the daily life of Aumsville residents of a bygone time is the purpose of the museum's existence. The old red brick building at 599 Main St. opened

about 1912 as the Aumsville State Bank nearly 100 years prior to its reincarnation as a place for historic artifacts. The bank's vault is still intact and impressive.

The 960 sq. ft. of space houses information and photographs concerning pioneer families who settled in what would become the boundaries of the Cascade High School district. A collection of tools used by them includes some that are still familiar and others a bit more obscure. There are items like bean tickets and berry tickets from farmers as well as calendars from town businesses that are merely a memory.

"There's a genealogical library here, too. When I moved back to Aumsville in 1968, the population was 495. Now it's 3,535," says Shepard. "Not much more than a century and half ago, it started off in the low double digits. We're all volunteers in the museum and usually two of us are on hand to answer questions or guide visitors around if that's what they want. Not only will we talk about what's here, but we're always ready to learn more from you who come to see us."

Admission is free and mementos of your visit are available.