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VERNONIA'S

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Museum Launches Sale of Vernonia Book

Copies of the new book, *Vernonia*, will be available on February 1st. The book celebrates the history, early pioneers and culture of the Vernonia community and is being published by Arcadia Publishing. The book was authored by the Vernonia Pioneer Museum Association.

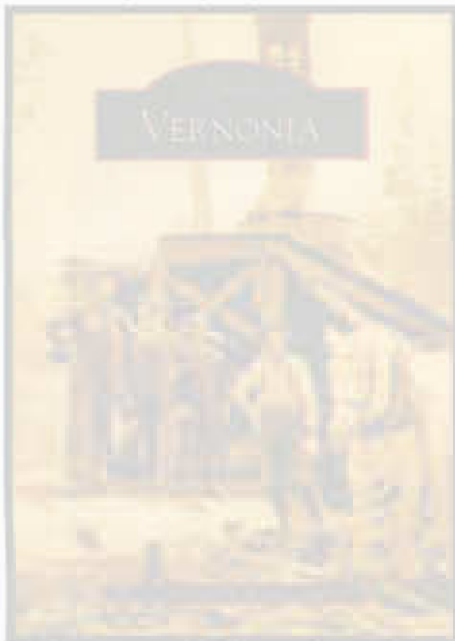
A "book launch"/signing party will be held at the Vernonia Library on Saturday, February 6, starting at 2:00 PM. Copies will cost \$21.99 and will be available at the museum and various other places around Vernonia. Copies purchased at the Museum will benefit the continued operation of this local historic landmark, and the museum will receive royalties on all books sold.

All work done on the book was by Museum volunteers. Barbara Larsen was the project leader and Tobie Finzel wrote the copy. Carol Davis and Ralph Keasey assisted in the research and content review. The volunteer museum board obtained the photographs from its own collection, current and former residents, and descendants of the early settlers. The Museum Board wishes to thank those who willingly shared their

memories and photos for use in the book. Housed in the former mill headquarters, the Vernonia Pioneer Museum Association preserves photographs, oral histories, and artifacts from Vernonia and surrounding Columbia County.

Arcadia Publishing is the leading local history publisher in the United States, with a catalog of more than 5,000 titles in print and hundreds of new titles released every year. Arcadia is best known for its popular *Images of America* series, which chronicles the history of communities from Bangor, Maine, to Manhattan Beach, California. With more than two hundred vintage black-and-white photographs, each title celebrates a town or region, bringing to life the people, places, and events that define the community.

If you would like to order a copy of the book by mail, send a check payable to VPMA for \$25 (for the book plus postage) to VPMA, P.O. Box 26, Vernonia, OR 97064. It is also available through Arcadia Publishing at www.arcadiapublishing.com or 888-313-2665.



The new book Vernonia will be available on February 6th.

Scappoose Builds a New School

New Petersen School Is An Example for Vernonia

By Scott Laird

The Scappoose School District is building a new elementary school, and Superintendent Paul Peterson is very happy with the results so far.

The new Otto Petersen Elementary School is starting to take shape this winter, with construction underway, and is scheduled to open for students in the fall of 2010. The new building will replace the aging Otto H.H. Petersen Elementary building that sits right on Highway 30 in Scappoose.

"The majority of the building standing today is from the construction in the 1950's," said Peterson, during a recent interview with *Vernonia's Voice*. "Renovations to bring it up to current code requirements would have been nearly as expensive as building new, and we'd still have a school too close to the highway... with all the noise, fumes, and traffic. The building was terribly energy inefficient, and its sprawling layout made supervision and safety very difficult to manage."



Scappoose Superintendent Paul Peterson checks in on construction of the new Petersen Elementary School.

As the Vernonia community hopefully follows in the footsteps of Scappoose, with construction of a new school building, there are many lessons that can be learned from Scappoose's process. Although the two projects were very different from the outset-- Vernonia's schools were flooded and needed to be replaced immediately; Scappoose deliberately decided and prioritized its project-- there are many insights Vernonia might gain

about how to be open, transparent and collaborative, about how to reach out to and include local workers and subcontractors, and about how to keep the project within budget.

The Petersen Elementary School in Scappoose is being built by P&C Construction of Gresham, whose Vice President and Project Manager, Steve Anderson, makes no secret that P&C may be interested in proposing on the Vernonia School project. "We've been to several School Board meetings and are getting a great feel for what's important to the community," says Anderson. In addition

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Wyden Visits Vernonia

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden paid a visit to Vernonia on January 13, 2010, meeting citizens during a formal Town Hall Meeting and answering questions from the audience.

About sixty citizens and fifty students were in attendance at the Vernonia High School gymnasium for a 1:00 PM mid-week meeting, the details of which were not formalized until about forty-eight hours prior to the Senator's arrival.

Wyden answered questions from the audience on topics such as the size of the national debt, the war in Afghanistan and national health care reform, to how Vernonia can better tell their flood story and get more national support for recovery efforts.

In answer to the question, "What would be success in Afghanistan?" Wyden stated that he is concerned that the region is more complicated and requires much more than a military solution. "Al Qaeda, obviously a great threat to America, is not going to be defeated with a country-specific strategy," said Wyden. "I go into

this next round of debate with respect to the military build-up in Afghanistan with considerable skepticism. Success would be trying to achieve some measure of stability and reducing the threat of Al Qaeda and the Taliban."

When asked why he thought no Republicans voted for the Health Care bills, Wyden responded, "I wanted a bi-partisan bill. I don't think in my time in Congress

I've seen an atmosphere that is quite as partisan as we see today. I consider it my top priority in Washington to try to find ways to bring Democrats and Republicans together. And I hope that all of you as citizens don't reward this kind of polarization from folks, especially on the far right and the far left."

When asked about federal assistance for Vernonia and for Vernonia schools, Wyden stated that he has tried to be a point man in making the case for Vernonia and trying to get the fed-

eral agencies here. "We've been working on the schools and the [FEMA] trailers and roads, and trying to marshal all our resources," said Wyden.

"And we need to do more of the same and we need to do it now. Because my experience is that attention moves on. The biggest challenge in terms of Vernonia and what I'll be trying to do, is trying to keep people's attention on the issue. And trying to make it clear that we're not back

yet, and that we still have a lot to do. I know you're focusing on the health clinic and the schools, and houses and all of the things that are necessary for community life. I think that we've been able to convince people in Washington D.C. that this is a special place. This is a place that could have packed it in a long time ago. What we need to do now is pour it on." Wyden later stated that there are a number of federal appropriations being pursued on behalf of Vernonia.



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to the Petersen School, P&C Construction is currently completing a \$30 million campus expansion at Clatsop Community College in Astoria and has been involved in a number of projects for the Beaverton School District.

Superintendent Peterson (no relation to Otto-- "Just a coincidence-- mine is with an 'O,' the school is with an 'E,'" says Paul) has been pleased with the progress of the project so far-- a combined \$33.3 million dollar facilities upgrade the school district embarked on about four years ago, just about the same time Peterson came on board as Superintendent. Included in the total project are some already completed classroom additions at the Warren and Watts Elementary schools. Once the new Petersen School is complete, a new auditorium will be built onto the high school, along with some classroom renovations at the high school and possibly some additional high school classrooms.

The new Petersen School will accommodate 550 students, which allows for growth in the district, will be energy efficient-- saving thousands of dollars monthly in utility bills-- and provide new technology options, will be safer for students and provide a healthy learning environment, and will be a community resource.

But as exciting as construction of a new building might be for a district superintendent, Peterson is as thrilled with the process that the community has used to come together to design the building and pass a school bond to fund the construction. "For me, this whole project has been more about the people than the building itself," says Peterson.

Peterson came to the district about four years ago from Klamath Falls and joined an already underway school facilities upgrade process that was looking at the current state of district facilities-- age of buildings, needed upgrades and repairs and other potential issues. Peterson embarked on a truly "public process" including community members, staff and students in creating a "Long Range Facilities Plan" to strategically plan for the future, in designing the new facilities and classrooms, and assisting

the bond campaign, which was run by community volunteers, and headed up by parent Karen Kessi. And the public continues to be involved in the project with an Oversight Committee of seven community members who continue to monitor the progress of the project, including schedule and budget; and a Communication Committee which has developed a plan to keep the community informed of the progress through a website, e-newsletters, direct mail, public meetings and



Architects, school staff and community members worked together to design the new Petersen School.

other public relations work.

Peterson was fascinated with the results of the collaborative process. "The magic of this was that, in the end, the plan we came up with was not one person's idea. It was the plan of the whole group. The collective group of people is really what drove this project," he says.



Many "Bumper Sticker Ideas" from the community were incorporated into the design of the project.

One of the things Peterson is most proud of is the way input on the design has been incorporated into the project. Through a series of open meetings, the district identified what came to be known as "Bumper Sticker Ideas"-- ideas like "honor Scappoose's" heritage," "make it an inviting and safe place," and "lots of gathering spaces for groups of students," became the overriding principles for the design. One key goal was a "100 Year Building"-- a building that would last a long time. And so the design has incorporated mostly steel and concrete in the initial construction.

The end result is a design that has been well thought-out and includes many of the ideas and goals that the community put forward through the process-- a building that is healthy, welcoming and safe, resource efficient, and designed for maximum use. "The architects did a tremendous job of listening to us," says Peterson.

With construction now underway, for Peterson the challenge has become how to include local contractors and keep as much money as possible in the community and stay on budget.

The District has worked closely with P&C Construction, who was chosen as Construction Manager/General Contractor (CMGC) through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

According to P&C's Anderson, public construction projects such as new K-12 schools must follow well-established rules set forth by the State of Oregon. "What most people don't understand is that there are statutes and regulations governing how public projects are bid for subcontractors," said Anderson. "Everything has to follow a public process and, according to state public contracting rules and regulations, the work has to go to the lowest, responsive subcontractor bidder. Nobody can be awarded a contract merely because they are considered local." In other words, with a fiscal responsibility to stay within budget, and maximize what can be built for a community with limited dollars, along with legal requirements to follow a certain process, a public project is limited in how it can hire local companies.

What the Scappoose District has done, according to Anderson is "...give local contractors every single opportunity to get work." According to Anderson, the District tried to make local workers aware of opportunities and keep them informed. They announced and held informational meetings for subcontractors where they collected information about what kind of work subs do and the size of their operation, explained the bidding process and kept a tracking list of who was interested in working. "We've tried to make them aware of every opportunity and keep them informed," said Anderson.

Local businesses who received contracts for the project included: Knife River, John L. Jersey, Scappoose Sand and Gravel, Custom Metal Fab, TFT Construction, and Witschen Tree Care. Even KLS Surveying from Vernonia worked on the project.

According to Brian Gray, General Manager of Knife River Corporation, the project has helped the local economy-- and not just his employees. "Our company supplied the concrete for all three projects, so far (Grant Watts, Warren, and the new Petersen Schools). This is definitely helping us to keep our local employees busy through a slow economy, which will be especially important to us this winter when not a lot of other construction is going on. This work is benefitting more than just our own drivers, too. The downstream effect is huge-- more significant than people probably realize. With a concrete order like this, the local rock guys stay busy. We have also used Les Schwab, Lawrence Oil, Tom Fischer Trucking, and other local businesses for materials and services. The list goes on. That ripple effect is definitely taking place."

The other challenge during construction is staying on budget. According to Anderson, P&C Construction worked hard before construction began to figure in all contingencies, estimate ahead of

time what the final costs would be, and include "value engineering,"-- a systematic process to identify alternative construction systems or methods which will result in reduced construction costs, reduced maintenance costs, increased quality, and/or reduced project duration. P&C incorporated this and has worked with DLR Group Architects and Cornerstone Managements-- two other partners in the construction project-- cutting costs during construction by using the most cost-



Local subcontractors have been hired and played a key role in construction of the new school.

effective materials that met the specifications, sequencing the work as efficiently as possible, and, according to Anderson, "...trying our best to take the cost risks out of the equation."

According to Superintendent Peterson, construction is going well on the new elementary school. "We have been pleased with P&C, and have also hired them for our [renovation] project at the high school," he said.

The new building will be energy efficient, using 30% less energy and will apply for a LEED Silver certification. It



Scappoose Superintendent, Paul Peterson sits near an image of the new school building that is now under construction in Scappoose.

also has a spot for the old bell from the original Petersen School, which will be moved to the new building. And the school sign will be made from trees that were removed from the site during construction. There's more of those "bumper sticker ideas" the community put forward.

The Scappoose School District appears to be on track to have a new school facility that the whole community can be proud of, not just the superintendent. And that's because so many community members have been involved throughout the process and have helped make it happen.

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