



## **HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION MINUTES**

**Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001**

City Hall Council Chambers  
313 Court Streets  
The Dalles, OR 97058  
Conducted in a handicap accessible room.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Eric Gleason called the meeting to order at 4:09 P.M.

### **ROLL CALL**

The following Commissioners were present: Eric Gleason, John Lambert, Bob McNary,  
Francine Havercroft, Pat May.

The following Commissioners were absent: None

Staff present: Bob Paul, Senior Planner  
Dawn Hert, Planner  
Denise Ball, Administrative Secretary

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

McNary moved that the minutes of April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2001, be approved. Havercroft seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Havercroft moved the agenda be approved. McNary seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**None**

### **PUBLIC HEARING (QUASI JUDICIAL)**

Chair Gleason read the rules for the hearing.

Commissioner Lambert said he was contacted by Mr. Backstrand regarding the delay in the hearing for his carriage house. Only the process for public hearings was discussed. Bob Paul, Senior Planner, asked if Lambert & Backstrand had discussed the project. Lambert said no. It was agreed by Paul and the Commission that Lambert was not biased and could vote.

Gleason opened Public Hearing HLC 58-01, **Construction of a Carriage House at 608 West 6<sup>th</sup> Street.**

Paul presented the staff report. Commissioners requested that the standard archaeology find clause be added as condition 4. Paul will make that an additional condition of approval.

Gleason opened the hearing to the public for comments. There were none. Public comment was closed.

Havercroft moved HLC 58-01 be approved with staff conditions and adding condition 4, archaeology find clause. McNary seconded. It was approved unanimously.

Gleason opened Public Hearing HLC 59-01, **Construction of a foundation wall and rebuild a rear porch at 503 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Place,** and stated the same rules and standards apply.

Paul presented the staff report and three photographs. Paul deleted “or matching existing carriage house” from condition 2 and deleted condition 4.

Gleason opened the hearing to the public for comments. There were none. Public comment was closed.

The commission discussed the project and felt that the archaeology find clause should be added as a condition of approval.

Paul agreed to add it.

The commission also felt it would be a good idea to recommend that the property owner, Jan Hillstrom, install a historic plaque.

Havercroft moved HLC 59-01 be approved with staff conditions one through three, delete four, and add the archaeology find clause. The applicant should also be encouraged to obtain a plaque. McNary seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The public hearings were closed.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

1. GIS Grant Status – Paul is getting electronic historic information. He requested volunteers to help enter this data into our GIS when it is up and running. Lambert felt he could donate some time to the project.
2. Annual Grant Cycle – Paul reported that a \$2000 Grant was the only one applied for this year.

Paul then brought out the “retirement” cake and presents for Pat May. This is her last meeting after seventeen years of service. May shared some of her family history: Her late husbands great,

great grandmother came to Oregon via the Oregon Trail. Pictures of May and the Commissioners were taken. A good time was had by all.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next scheduled meeting date of the Historic Landmark Commission will be June 27<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 P.M., in City Hall Council Chambers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Denise Ball, Administrative Secretary.

  
Eric Gleason, Chair  
Historic Landmark Commission

# MAYS BUILD LASTING LEGACY

*Carrying on work begun with her husband, Bill, Pat May tells the Mid-Columbia's story in pictures*

■ By DAN SPATZ  
*of the Chronicle*

If a picture is worth a thousand words, Pat May offers an encyclopedia beyond compare.

She and her late husband Bill spent years compiling Wasco County's unique photographic archive, the "picture boards" of the Old Wasco Pioneers Association. It's a resource often taken for granted here, since the collection has become the source material for a wide range of displays and publications around the area.

Yet the very existence of this collection is no accident, particularly given the fragile nature of the subject material. All too often, old family photos are tossed aside by younger generations without a second thought; they often end up moldering away in the nearest landfill.

Not so locally, thanks to a story that began with a young Army recruit's basic training during World War II.



PAT MAY talks about her life with husband, Bill, and the photo boards they accumulated

Bill May was born in Spokane but soon moved with his family to Wamic, where he grew up and where his great-grandfathers had settled, then to The Dalles in 1934, where he attended high school. He received his draft notice in 1942, and arrived for basic training at Camp Robinson, Ark.

At a local Methodist Church function, he met Little Rock native Pat Place, and joined her and her mother for Christmas dinner.

It was the beginning of a lifetime together.

"They could see the kind of quality he had, and they sent him right from basic training to officers' training school at Fort Benning, Ga.," explains Pat. "I went to see him there."

They were married one month later.

"That was an act of faith on my part," Pat says, joking that she married a corporal who would soon be wearing a second lieutenant's bars.

Pat had never met her new in-laws when she took a train west from hot, humid Little Rock to Oregon.

"This is what you do when you're young enough," she says.

That was in 1943.

"His mother was a card," Pat recalls of their first meeting.

When she visited Portland, people used to poke fun at her southern drawl — until she pointed out that Down South, nobody had ever heard of Portland, Ore. The only "Portland" worthy of note was in Maine.

The young couple would move many times during Bill's four years with the Army, from Corvallis to California, before Bill received his orders to Europe.

This was soon after Normandy — the Germans were in retreat, but "the war was far from over," Pat recalls.

Bill May and other soldiers worked to consolidate the Allied victory, conducting village-to-village operations and overseeing German prisoners who defused unexploded bombs.

Many of those prisoners were turned over to the Russians — still among the Allies in those brief years before the rise of the Iron Curtain —

bound unknowingly for oblivion in Stalin's gulags.

Pat's mother joined her in Oregon during the two years Bill would spend overseas, and they lived in an apartment; Pat had no other relatives in Arkansas, and she never returned to that state.

Bill May's four-year tour of duty ended after the war, and he came home in 1946.

and other tasks.

Pat saw to the family — their son, born in 1948, and daughter, born nearly a decade later, in January 1957.

"There was such a blizzard — it was 13 below zero the day we brought her home," she recalls.

Helen (May) Brookman now lives in Boise, Idaho; Danny Jack "DJ" May (named for his two grandfathers) is a mobile x-ray technician based in Portland.

One of Pat's first entries into local social activities — the beginning of a long story of service — would be as a Scout den mother (a job she was assured would take a day a week, though it turned out to be far more demanding).

When Mt. St. Helens erupted in 1980, Pat and Bill collected ashfall one of the blasts deposited on their front porch; Pat still has it in a bottle on a shelf, with a note carefully describing the date. They drove winding forest roads to visit the volcano itself, still smoldering.

But the enduring legacy for which both Bill and Pat May would be known came into their lives in 1983, when Bill's cousin asked them to take over a collection of 146 "picture boards" assembled by local historian William McNeal. Bill was an amateur photographer. Both he and Pat enjoyed history, and the project was appealing. They worked closely with another historian, the late Fritz Cramer.

"We could not have asked for a better person anywhere," Pat recalls of Cramer.

Their first task was to photograph the photos already mounted, but they soon started making their own boards. Old photographs came in by the dozens, by the hundreds, from family attics and trunks and drawers.

They came from the elderly, who didn't want to throw them out.

"Those dear old souls would give us their pictures — they didn't know what to do with them," says Pat.

And they came from young family members, often rescued from other young family members intent on throwing out the "old junk" from their late parents' or grandparents' home.

One woman brought in her dad's collection of



THE MAYS, Pat and Bill, began life together as a result of Army basic training at Camp Robinson, Ark.

"He was a fine gunsmith," Pat says, and his first job after the Army was with E.B. Young in The Dalles. But he would spend most of his career in the aluminum industry, working on the potlines of Harvey Aluminum and later, after the plant changed owners, Martin Marietta. He would later transfer to the "tool crib," conducting inventory

# May

Continued from Page A1

photos accumulated during his 55 years with the Union Pacific Railroad; once mounted, they comprised 15 separate picture boards. Photos of the Great Southern Railroad, which ran between The Dalles and Shaniko, appear on 13 boards.

To continue only with the railroad theme — one of myriad topics represented on the boards — there are also represented the Ruckle Railroad (which ran near Cascade Locks), the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, the Dalles-Celilo Railroad, Oregon Portage Railroad, and many others.

There are photos of depots and train wrecks and old communities long vanished from the map.

Hundreds of other boards are devoted to schools, riverboats, fish-

wheels, main streets, families, events, outings — a photographic record of everyday life in the Co-

“We knew why we were doing it — other people were bringing us these pictures and they wanted them saved, and we wanted them saved.”

—Pat May

lumbia River Gorge and surrounding countryside, saved from demise.

“We’ve had people in their 40s come and say to us, ‘We’re cleaning out our parents’ house, we’re hauling this to the dump — it’s my family, and I want you to save it for us.’ That was told to us time and time again — and we did, we saved all that,” Pat said.

With every delivery, Bill would retreat to his darkroom. He would photograph each print with a large, stationary camera, creating an archive of negatives.

Then, he and Pat would mount the originals on acid-free paper supplied by their son from his work as an x-ray technician. They worked on their dining room table.

“He had his glue gun, which set up real fast, and I’d be at the kitchen table, typing up captions on an electric typewriter,” Pat recalls.



They would then attach these mounted photos to the picture boards, heavy wooden sheets several feet square. Bill would lean each board by their fireplace until the glue dried, then cover it with a protective layer of plastic.

Pat cataloged everything, developing a three-volume file of carefully cross-indexed references.

There are dozens of subjects, and the index tells where to find each subject on the hundreds of picture boards Bill and Pat May constructed through the years.

Pat says it was satisfying work, even when somebody grumped — as some people will always grump — about their choice of photos for a particular board.

“It took a long time,” says Pat.

And the work didn’t end with the boards’ construction. Bill would spend days each week maintaining the boards, keeping them in good

repair.

Yet their great project together would all too soon come to an end.

Bill May died ten years ago, of cancer.

Near the bottom of the last picture board he made, Bill wrote a brief message, saying “goodbye” to Pat, in French. They had been married 47 years, and had two grandchildren, both still quite young.

Pat May carried on the work.

Although she couldn’t continue Bill’s photographic archive of the prints, Pat continued to assemble picture boards, compiling 23 boards on her own. Still working on the kitchen table, she weighted each newly-mounted picture board beneath a blanket with a heavy cross-section of iron rail.

Today, Pat maintains the meticulously typed record of negatives and picture boards, which are stored safely by Wasco County whenever they’re not on public display. The archive tells her the location of every subject on every board.

“We knew why we were doing it — other people were bringing us these pictures and they wanted them saved, and we wanted them saved,” Pat said.

“It was a feeling of deep-seated satisfaction.”

*EDITOR’S NOTE: Pat May was honored by the Wasco County Pioneers’ Association earlier this month with a lifetime service award, recognizing her contribution to the preservation of the area’s history.*