

# The OREGON OBSERVER

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Photos by Jeremy Jones

Oregon Area Historical Society members Ann Morris (left) and Melanie Woodworth sort through items Saturday that were found in Florice Paulson's estate. Paulson, who died in June, named the historical society as a beneficiary in her will.

## Taking apart a time capsule

### Museum finds unexpected treasures in Paulson estate

**BILL LIVICK**  
Unified Newspaper Group

Ann Morris wasn't sure what she'd found.

The Oregon Area Historical Society member was going through yet another box at the estate of the late Florice Paulson, this one full of hats, and pulled out a red wool cap she thought might have belonged to a child.

She passed it on to fellow volunteer Melanie Woodworth and asked if she had any idea.

"That looks like a Civil War kepi, but it's red," Woodworth responded, not exactly sure what to make of it. "I know somebody who will know."

Woodworth phoned her husband, Doug, an avid scholar of the Civil War, and he confirmed her hunch, with its markings revealing that it was a Confederate artillery officer's cap, something rare even for historical collections.

"Doug was very excited," she

#### What they found

Items of value or special historical interest:

- Civil War kepi (hat)
- Rare, first-print edition books
- Postcards from near and far
- Dishes
- Clothing
- Remington plates
- Road maps
- Marbles and other toys
- Furniture, including book cases from Oregon's first library

said. "It's quite extraordinary that something like this would survive."

The kepi is just one example of the time capsule that members of the Historical Society discovered at the home of Paulson, who died June 11 at the age of 95.

Paulson was an only child who never married or had children – and she collected everything.

In her will, she made the historical society a beneficiary of her estate, the third in line behind two distant cousins. One of the cousins claimed some furniture and a few odds and ends; the other "signed off" on everything.

"It was determined that all the remaining contents would be the property of the historical society because we need a significant amount of time to go through everything," Melanie Woodworth explained.

The coordinator of the Oregon History Museum and a board member of the historical society, Woodworth and several others – including her husband, Morris, Jerry Neath, Phil Meyer and Kermit Traska – spent hundreds of hours over the past two months sorting through the things

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Among items found in Paulson's estate was a commemorative plate from the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893.



Volunteers found a toy horse, along with a collection of old photos.



Paulson kept an assortment of vintage books and games.



Melanie and Doug Woodworth were most excited about finding this Civil War kepi.

#### Oregon School District

## Board approves handbook change

### Compromise reached on teacher discipline

**SCOTT DE LARUELLE**  
Unified Newspaper Group

After wrangling for months over "just cause" language removed from the Oregon School District employee handbook last year, school board members reached a compromise of sorts on new language that determines how the district disciplines or fires teachers.

Debate on the issue at Monday night's board meeting stretched for several hours, with language proposed by member Rae Vogeler defeated 4-3 before another version written by member Steve Zach was approved, 6-1.

The new wording will replace existing sections

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## Students get up-close look at local industry

**SCOTT DE LARUELLE**  
Unified Newspaper Group

For manufacturers, it's a great way to introduce young people to the fast-changing world of industry. For students, it's an opportunity to learn about a possible career path that is full of jobs.

It all came together for Oregon High School students at "Manufacturing Day," held Friday at Stoughton Trailers' headquarters. They toured

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Photo by Jeremy Jones

Clockwise from top: A few items remain to be taken out of the Paulson estate on Jefferson Street as of Saturday; at right; Volunteers sort through a box of belongings at the Paulson Estate; bottom right: a child's piano as displayed at the Oregon Historical Museum.



## Treasure: Paulson was a big help to the historical society long before she willed her estate

Continued from page 1

saved in the basement and attic of her home on Jefferson Street. They found historic artifacts, family treasures and sundry objects dating back to the time of Florice's grandparents and even great-grandparents.

"The house contains just massive amounts of stuff from three generations," Woodworth said. "It was a real time capsule."

### Kind of overwhelming

Melanie and Doug Woodworth are both history buffs and former archaeologists. They compared going through the estate to a dig.

The group discovered rare first-print edition books dating back to the turn of the last century, and enough postcards, photographs and kids' toys in pristine condition to stock a museum.

They filled three Dumpsters but retained so many boxes of miscellaneous items that the Woodworths estimate it will take a year or two before they and other historical society volunteers can manage to investigate it all.

Melanie called it "a tremendous opportunity" for

the historical society, but also "kind of overwhelming."

"Because she did save everything, we found all kinds of Oregon memorabilia," she said. "We found some really extraordinary vintage books, stamps, political buttons, marbles, lots of vintage toys, all kinds of interesting linens, pottery and dishes and more dishes."

Much of what the Woodworths and others saved will go to an online auction in late October, with sales benefiting the historical society. And much of it will eventually make its way to a museum display.

The historical society folks first entered Paulson's home on Aug. 19 and determined they would have everything removed by Tuesday of this week. By then, Melanie estimated, the group collectively would have spent at least 400 hours in the effort.

"The timing was such that there were enough of us around that are retired and have the time to do this," she explained. "It was a massive effort, and we had to play beat the clock, but we had enough flexibility that we could comfortably be out by Oct. 15."

Sifting through the estate

**'The house contains just massive amounts of stuff from three generations. It was a real time capsule.'**

Melanie Woodworth,  
Oregon History Museum coordinator

proved especially challenging because Paulson had been a heavy smoker throughout her entire adult life. Everything in the house was saturated with nicotine, dust and tobacco smoke.

The effect was so powerful that volunteers wore face masks and used air purifiers constantly. Some potential helpers had to decline once they entered the home.

"There was so much material that several people from our group worked just massive hours, and I ended up in the role of coordinating the project," Melanie said. "It was a matter of determining what do we take for the museum and what are we sending to auction? Then we had to determine what items go to donation and what goes in the Dumpster."

"She saved everything — just everything."

### Rare books

Paulson was a big help to the historical society long before she willed her estate. In the late 1980s, she used part of an inheritance to buy an old lumber company building on Lincoln Street and donate it for a history museum.

OAHS members had no idea how extensive her collection was.

In addition to the kepi, she preserved other rare treasures such as first-print edition books.

The Woodworths have many of them at home and are researching their significance.

"A lot of these first editions aren't available any more," Melanie said.

Her husband called them "beyond extraordinary."

"There's one that was printed in 1902 and details a snowshoe trek from Northern Alberta to Alaska," he

said. "It's got about 23 Remington plates in it. Stuff like that. These books are just like they came off the press. They hardly were used. You open them up and they still creak."

They found a first edition of Theodore Roosevelt's trip to Africa with his son, Kermit, in 1910. Doug said he couldn't find it on any of the online old book sites.

Another rare book was written by a woman, Mrs. Cora Hatch, who was "kind of a spiritualist and an ingénue back in the late 1850s," Melanie explained. "She writes this book and her entrepreneurial husband publishes it."

In researching, the Woodworths learned that Hatch's book had been banned in various locations around the country and even burned in some places.

"But there's a copy at Florice's house," Melanie said. "The only other copy we could find is at the UW archives. You just don't find them out there. But researching on the web, you find that there's a whole website devoted to this woman. She's a very important figure to the spiritualists."

Out of curiosity, Melanie

emailed the people running the website to learn the value of the book.

"I got a strong response; everybody wants this book," she said. "We will keep some of the books, but in some cases we could raise some money for the historical society so some will be sold, probably on eBay."

They also found a guide to Egypt that was published in 1902 — 15 years before Florice was born.

"It's got 23 pristine foldout maps in it," Doug said. "People cut those maps out and sell them."

The historical society already listed the book on eBay, for \$375.

"People are watching, but nobody's taking," he said.

The group uncovered less profound books as well, including schoolbooks from when Paulson's grandparents were children.

### Local connections

Much of what the historical society found has ties to Paulson's local kin — families with familiar names in the Oregon area: Paulson, Hanan, Tipple or Dank.

Turn to **Treasure**/Page 13



Photo by Jeremy Jones

Melanie Woodworth carries a box destined for the Oregon Historical Museum out of the Paulson estate on Saturday. A dumpster outside the home on Jefferson Street has also seen its fair share of trash as volunteers have spend near 400 hours emptying the house.



Photo by Jeremy Jones

Jerry Neath sorts through belongings in the garage at the Paulson estate.

## Industry: Visit an opportunity to bring more awareness about industry

Continued from page 1

the facility and talked to employees about job possibilities at various information stations, including: environmental health and safety, sales, information technology, human resources, engineering, manufacturing support and manufacturing engineering.

Students from the OHS machine tool and welding classes attended the morning-long session; they were among five high schools invited.

OHS School-to Career Coordinator Greg Granberg said he appreciated that Stoughton Trailers officials reached out to the school – the first time OHS has participated in Manufacturing Day.

“It’s been an awesome experience for students to see what they’re doing in the classroom, and how it relates to jobs that are happening here in our own community is wonderful,” he said. “It’s a unique opportunity.”

OHS senior Abert Everson, who is in both the machine tool and welding classes, was impressed by the size of the factory and its robotic welding capability.

He said he appreciated the chance to see how items are manufactured up close.

“You don’t have to necessarily work for a big company like this, but there are welding companies that are doing framing and stuff like that – things that you might want to do later, jobs like this,” he said. “It gives you more opportunities to see stuff you want to do later on.”

### ‘Desperate need’

The day is a positive for manufacturers as well, said Stoughton Trailers spokesman Keith Wise.

“It’s an opportunity for the industry to bring a little more awareness, a little more education into the industry, which is in desperate need of it,” he said. “Hopefully they can take a lot back to the classroom here, because there are a lot of unknowns about the manufacturing industry. This gives an opportunity to educate them more, and for those going on into manufacturing related fields, it gives them a better awareness of what is needed to compete in today’s manufacturing environment.”

Wise said the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates



Photo by Scott De Laruelle

Jason Hunn of Stoughton Trailers talks with OHS senior Abert Everson (camo sweatshirt) about career opportunities.

there are more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs now open, from engineering to the shop floor, but there are not enough skilled workers to fill them.

“We’re not preparing the next generation, and this is the purpose of Manufacturing Day,” he said. “This isn’t mom and dad’s manufacturing industry

– employees coming into the workforce have to be computer-savvy. It’s not just someone doing the same job every day for 35 years and then retiring. When we’re

competing against the Asian and European markets, our workforce has to be flexible, and have a wide degree of knowledge and capability.”

## Treasure: Paulson was a big help to the historical society long before she willed her estate

Continued from page 12

Her father was Arthur Paulson, who was born in Oregon in 1885. Her mother, Mona Hanan, was born in Rutland in 1889. Florice’s grandparents on her father’s side came from Denmark, Melanie said, but the Hanans “were here very early.”

Melanie said she thinks the old photographs she and others found could be “a tremendous resource” for anybody doing genealogy.

“We could match up people and they could get copies of these,” she said. “Or maybe they could help us identify some of them, too.”

The group also found hundreds of postcards from the early 1900s. They decided to give postcards of Stoughton or Evansville to historians those communities because they provide early images of their downtowns.

The Woodworths also invited the visual materials curator at the State Historical Society to visit the project.

“We pulled all the postcards from Madison, the UW or the State of Wisconsin,” Melanie said. “Then they went to the State Historical Society and they compared them to the images they already have, and as a result of what we provided, they now have 182 new images – which is very exciting.”

“It was the right thing to do, because if we sent those out to auction, for example, some collector would just have them in a box somewhere. We thought those belong to the state.”

Historical society member Jerry Neath pointed out that local items were the main reason for volunteers spending hundreds of hours going through the estate.

“(OAHs wanted to) find things that are pertinent to Oregon and its history,” he

said.

“It enhanced our understanding of Oregon.”

Like others involved in the effort, he was surprised at the amount of material that Paulson kept.

Maps from the 1920s caught his eye and got him thinking about “how mobile people were back then.”

“A lot of times they would settle in Milwaukee County for a few years but then would move on to the west to Oregon or farther,” he said. “They didn’t hesitate to move around.”

### Keeping the kepi

It’s one thing to find a trove of rare books, photos, dishes and furniture; it’s another to make some sense of it all. That requires the background to be aware of what’s worth looking into, and also how to do research.

Melanie said digging into the Paulson estate wouldn’t have been possible without volunteers from the historical society.

“We couldn’t have done this without such a dedicated group of volunteers to pitch in,” she said.

But the Woodworths also deserve much credit. Both retired from careers at the University of Wisconsin about seven years ago and have since focused on other passions. For Doug, it’s been growing produce, woodworking, genealogy and history. Melanie shares his passion for genealogy and history and has dedicated much of her time to the Oregon History Museum.

And both are experienced researchers. That skill became particularly helpful in learning about the Civil War kepi, which has buttons signifying artillery, and a red braid, meaning it’s an officer’s cap.

“I can’t impress upon you how rare those are,” Doug said. “They don’t find new

kepis anymore.”

The only ones that do exist are in collections, he added, and being a Confederate artillery officer’s kepi makes it extra rare.

“I’ve never seen one,” he said. “I’ve never held a real kepi, and I’m a Civil War buff. But I’ve never held anything this rare.”

In order to justify keeping the red cap for display in the Oregon museum, the Woodworths needed to find a local connection.

“If we can find a story, then we can keep it and won’t have to sell it,” Melanie figured.

“And so I was determined and I researched her family and found that there was one person in her family – her great-grandmother’s brother, Eugene Tipple – who served with the 42nd Wisconsin in Southern Illinois. He was on garrison duty, so it’s quite likely that he brought it back.”

The couple checked with a professional historian to see if Melanie’s theory checked out.

That was Doug’s distant cousin, Steven Woodworth, a history professor at Texas Christian University and a Civil War historian. He agreed that Melanie’s interpretation of the history makes sense, as did the curator at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

“They think this is the most likely explanation,” she said. “So that was the big find, I think. It’s so rare, and we can tie it to a local connection.”

### An adventure

There were dozens of other interesting discoveries in Paulson’s house: hundreds of marbles; furniture that’s more than 100 years old and looks as if it just came from the showroom; bookcases that were part of Oregon’s first library; turn-of-the-century clothing.

“You could do a whole

child’s room from the turn of the last century with the contents of what they found – the clothes and everything else,” Doug said. “It’s too bad there’s not more room in the museum, and they also need workspace.”

On Tuesday, Melanie said the museum was overflowing

with boxes.

She and others at the historical society are “so grateful” that Paulson included the organization in her will.

“I feared that when her day came, we would have to go to an auction and buy things if she hadn’t made a provision for us,” she said.

“As it turned out, we worked hard to get the stuff, but it’s been a real journey of adventure. We’d leave exhausted but then look forward to going back to see what we were going to find next.”

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