

**Story** by Carol Zolkoske, Treasurer, Santiam Heritage Foundation  
(and incidentally Secretary, St. Boniface Community Archives & Museum)

Hello everyone. Please let me introduce myself. I am the grand old lady who lives on First Avenue in Stayton. That's a photo of me taken on Memorial Day. I look pretty good, don't you think? My people at the Santiam Heritage Foundation say that I am going to look even better on July Fourth.



For those who don't know me, let me tell you about myself. My days started in 1903 when Martha and Charles Brown built me as a showcase home to display all the nice things you could buy from the Brown Lumber Mill. Boy, was I a looker! The Salem paper even called me the best looking house east of Salem. The Brown Family took good care of me for 25 years. There were two boys and one girl in the family. They were great fun because they all played musical instruments. Martha and her daughter Ruth played the piano. Charles played the violin and the cornet. The boys, Lee and Giles, played a number of instruments. They played music a lot and it was even more fun when they filled my double parlors with guests. Martha filled my dirt floor basement with canned goods of all sorts. Martha was born into a hard-working German speaking farm family who lived just east of Sublimity. She spent all summer canning the vegetables and fruit that grew in my large backyard.

Twenty-five years after moving in, Charles died unexpectedly. What was Martha to do? She loved me, my big back yard, and sleeping on the kitchen roof on hot summer nights. Charles had just started a new business. It was called the Bat Factory and was down by the Stayton Ditch. Wool and straw were mixed together to make a thin mattress. These were used as bedding. In small towns in the 1920's, women seldom worked outside the home. But Martha sold me and she and her sons took over the business. She ran the factory for many years and was very successful.

By 1928 things were looking up for me. I was to get a whole new lease on life. The Kendricks bought me and turned me into a hospital. It was a mixture of happy and sad times. So far, my people have located more than 100 babies that were born in my upstairs room on the southeast corner - and they're still looking. Many of the mothers were from isolated logging camps. Usually, they stayed with me for a week. Some of the patients were men who were hurt in logging or farm accidents. They were all well taken care of by Nurse Agnes Kirsch. Nurse Kirsch was also a midwife and she took care of people in the Santiam Canyon for over 50 years. She is still remembered fondly. In 1934, I underwent a complete makeover. This

made the hospital bigger and more efficient, but I did lose some of my charm. In 1939 the Hospital closed. A new chapter in my life was about to start.

The Nightingale family moved in. They were a large family. Many of the children were already grown and no longer lived with the family. But the younger ones loved playing in my many rooms and with all the hospital equipment that had been left behind. It was a sad time for the family, however. Their son was serving in WWII and when he returned they planned to buy one of the grocery stores on Third Ave. They dreamed of the day he would return, but sadly it was not to be. He died while serving in action. They bought me with the money they were saving for his return. Members of the family have come back on occasion and reminisce about those days.

Next came the Weddles, a well-known family in town, as they were the proprietors of the local mortuary. The rumor was they would make me into a funeral home. But instead the family moved in. For 37 years, three generations of the Weddle family lived here. There was another major change to my appearance when an outside staircase was built and apartments were put in upstairs. Members of the family were so fond of me that Wendy Weddle Stone is now president of the SHF. By the time I was sold to the last family in 1987, the Huntleys, time had taken its toll. The Huntleys tried to rescue me from decline, but alas, the task proved impossible. Everyone in town wondered, what would become of me.

In 2000 Stayton Cooperative Telephone bought me. People speculated as to what SCTC might do. They surprised everyone by selling me to the newly formed SHF in 2001. The last eleven years have been spent turning what some referred to as an eyesore, into a true "painted lady". My people have big plans for me. When I am fully restored I will once again be a welcoming place for weddings, receptions, reunions and activities of all sorts. There will again be music and laughter. There is still a lot to be done, but progress is steady. My people say that restoring me is expensive but that I am worth it.

I want to thank everyone for their donations large and small, and for becoming lifetime or yearly members of SHF. It's only \$10 for a yearly membership or \$100 for a lifetime. This money helps pay for the newsletters and postage. Thank you for supporting fundraising activities like the can and bottle drive that the Stayton Rotary sponsored this winter. There was lots of activity in my yard with people dropping off cans and bottles day and night into the big blue bin. More than \$2000 was collected. There are dozens of people to thank. All the folks, young and old who volunteered on work party days. My people enjoyed getting to know everyone, and sharing lunch with them. Thank you also to staytonevents.com for always getting the word out about SHF activities. They do a wonderful service letting people know about all the great things that are going on in the area.

Again this year my people are selling tickets for the garden tour on June 24. As in years past the cost is \$10 a ticket. Eight gardens will be opened. This year four will be in the countryside outside of Stayton. This is the big fundraiser of the year. Tickets can be purchased from Board members, at Jensen-Kreitzer Family Clothing in downtown Stayton, and on the day of the garden tour at the Bird and Hat Inn.

During Santiam Summerfest, on Saturday July 28, I will be open (free) so you can see all the exciting changes that have been made. Stop by to say hello and see what a make over can do for a 109 year old lady.