

SDOP Leadership Update: The SDOP Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Dina Saunders Miller, formerly President-Elect, is now serving as President, and Reggie Burke is now serving as Secretary. We welcome Dina and Reggie to their new roles and look forward to working together with our Board and members as SDOP continues its mission and moves forward into the year ahead. See Board Minutes on pg. 8

President's Letter



*From Dina Saunders,
SDOP President*

Dear Members,

It is a privilege to serve as the newly elected President of Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers. I

am grateful for the trust and confidence the elected Officers and Board members have placed in me, and I look forward to working together to preserve, celebrate, and share the rich heritage that we all share that brings us together as a community.

As I began this journey, I want to emphasize that no President succeeds alone. The strength of our organization comes from the dedication, experience, and teamwork of our Officers, Directors and our members. I am fortunate to serve alongside an outstanding group of individuals who have generously volunteered their time and talents.

Please review the list of your Board Members and Volunteers listed on page 2.

Each one of these Officers and Directors brings unique skills, and a shared commit-

ment. Their years of service to SDOP are immeasurable. Their willingness to serve reflects the spirit of volunteerism that has been the foundation of our organization for over one hundred years. I know they will work tirelessly to support you, our members and help ensure our heritage is preserved for future generations.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the opportunities before us. Together, we can continue to grow our membership, expand our scholarship program, preserve our history, and create meaningful experiences that connect generations. Every member has something valuable to contribute, and I encourage you to become involved by attending events, volunteering to chair a committee, sharing your ideas and your stories with our newsletter editor and inviting others to join our organization.

Our heritage is more than our history - it is our identity, our traditions, and the stories we pass on. By working together, we ensure those stories continue to inspire future generations.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment. I look forward to serving alongside our dedicated Officers, Directors and each of you in the months ahead.

Dina Saunders - President

Upcoming SDOP Meetings and Events

Board Meeting -

The Reed Opera House – Rm. 205
Saturday September 19th at 10:00 am
189 Liberty Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
(Reed Opera House history on pg. 11)

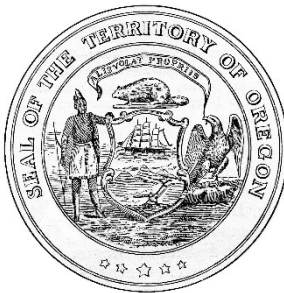
Events -

Are you interested in how Oregon is celebrating the 250th Anniversary of Independence? This article in the Oregon Capital Chronicle covers a host of projects and events sponsored by the America 250 Oregon Commission:

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2026/06/26/heres-how-oregon-is-celebrating-americas-250th-year-of-independence/>



Oregon Capital Rotunda



Oregon's motto, "She Flies With Her Own Wings"
(*Alis Volat Propriis* in Latin), reflects the state's historical spirit of independence and self-reliance.

Board Members & Volunteers

Officers

President: Dina Saunders Stevenson, WA
503-964-4598
dinam13@hotmail.com
Secretary: Reggie Burke Gresham, OR
Treasurer: Shauna Noon Portland, OR
(541) 206-4558
shauna@oregonsdop.org
Registrar: Debbie Pedersen Damascus, OR
debbie@oregonsdop.org

Immediate Past President

Chris Fronk Meinicke Portland, OR
chris.meinicke@outlook.com

Board Members

Zoe Godsey godsey75@msn.com
Sophie Curley curley.sophie@gmail.com
Kim Nurmi murmii@gmail.com
Dave Thompson Aloha, OR
dave_tek@yahoo.com
Janet Wilson Beaverton, OR
jlwilsonsdop1@gmail.com
Mel Fuller Lake Oswego, OR
mel.fuller@oregonsdop.org
Sherry Fuller Lebanon, OR
shercan2828@yahoo.com
Lindsey Hollinger
lindseyr.hollinger@gmail.com

Historian:

Chris Fronk Meinicke
chris.meinicke@outlook.com

News Coordinator: Dave Thompson

dave_tek@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Mark Goddard

mark@oregontrailgenealogy.com

Web Administrator: Lindsey Hollinger

lindseyr.hollinger@gmail.com

Facebook: Wesley Potter

alohadustoff@gmail.com

SDOP General Voice Mail: ... (541) 581-0378

SDOP News is published six times a year (Jul, Sep, Nov, Jan, Mar, and May) by Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers. Send inquires and submissions to Mark Goddard, Editor - mark@oregontrailgenealogy.com.

Submissions for the September 2026 issue should be sent by *Aug.. 25, 2026*. Photos and articles are welcome from all members!



The road that leads to us...

Donations to SDOP

SDOP thanks those who donate to support our programs and operations such as the SDOP newsletter and the scholarship fund. One goal of SDOP is rewarding the younger generation, especially those who have an interest in Oregon History. It would be nice if SDOP received additional donations for the scholarship fund and the Junior Awards Programs.

Thank you for financially supporting our efforts to promote an interest in Oregon history with diverse audiences.

Donations made through the website are processed through a secure provider by using your credit or debit card, and no PayPal account is needed. We appreciate each and every donation and will be diligent handling all.

Checks or Money Orders can be made out to **SDOP**.

The mailing address is:

SDOP
P.O. Box 6685
Portland, OR 97228-6685

Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers operates as a 501(c)(3) entity. Donations are tax-deductible.

SDOP EIN# is 23-745515

New Member Fees (Submit with application):

Junior [birth — 18]:	\$12.00
Adult [18-60] / Senior [60+]	\$30.00
Includes pioneer certificate and pin	
Friend of SDOP	\$30.00

Life Member/Friend Fees:

Birth - 60	\$300.00
60+	\$150.00
Includes pioneer certificate and pin	

Annual Dues (after first year):

Annual dues are due in June.

Junior [birth - 18]:	\$8.00
Adult Member/Friend [18 - 60]:	\$20.00
Senior Member/Friend [60+]:	\$15.00

Adjustments

Printed Newsletter fee:.....	+\$10.00
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New Members

#2105 Krisanna Gregory Clark-Endicott	Life
Wm Riley Robertson*	1852 KY
Julia Ann Potter	1853 MO
#2032 Joel Edmonds Waszak	Life
John D. Edmonds*	NY
#2072 Denise Bogue Skonieczki	Friend
#2099 Debra Jo Sohrt Flickinger	Senior
George Franklin Settlemier*	1849 MO
Adorum Adam Settlemier	1849 IL
Louisa D. Nanny	1849 KY

Introducing Our Board Members

Debbie Pedersen – SDOP Registrar

Born and raised in Portland, Oregon and a proud Oregonian. I have a twin sister and my older sister and brother. I graduated from Sunset HS in Beaverton, OR, followed by OSU. Soon after I married my husband, Mark. We have two daughters - Lauren and Rachel, and our son-in-law Rein and 2 grand kitties. We enjoy having them nearby. We have a wonderful extended family, many of whom live nearby.

My pioneer ancestors: the Christian Miller family traveled the OT in 1848 from Montgomery County, Indiana. I am related to John Alkire Powell, whose family arrived in 1851, as well as Franklin Propst who arrived in 1852. All settled in Linn County. Christian Miller was my GG Grandfather on my dad's side. Christian traveled the long trail with his brother Isaac Miller, who was captain of Company 2 that year. Christian and Isaac hired William Wright Anderson to drive a third wagon. Anderson kept a detailed diary of the crossing, mentioned several times in the book "Emigrants On The Overland Trail- The Wagon Trains of 1848", by Michael E. LaSalle.

I grew up hearing stories of the family life on the farm near Knox Butte in Linn County, where Christian settled his family on a donation land claim. My pioneer ancestors are buried at Santiam Central Cemetery close by where they lived.

Lindsey Hollinger – Web Editor

New to the board this year but a long-time volunteer for SDOP, Lindsey Hollinger lives in Oregon's mid-Willamette Valley. She has served as SDOP's Online Museum Curator and website editor for the past seven years. In her free time, she enjoys creating handmade greeting cards and water-

color painting, and she and her husband collaborate to make quilts that are donated to local charities. She loves organizing, building complex spreadsheets (even when a simple list would do), and never passes up the chance to learn a new skill.

Lindsey's fascination with Oregon history began in fourth grade while learning about the Oregon Trail. Her family soon shared that she had Oregon pioneer ancestors, including ancestors who reached Oregon by sea via the Isthmus of Panama and others who traveled the Oregon Trail. Among them was John Settle of the Lebanon area, a principal investor and supervisor for the Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain Wagon Road (now Highway 20). While scouting the route, he encountered a mountain lake that was later named in his honor, although the name was recorded with a misspelling: Suttle Lake. Stories like these sparked Lindsey's lifelong interest in preserving Oregon's pioneer history and ultimately led to her involvement with SDOP.

Sophie Richmond Curley – Artist-teacher-community involvement

Last year I did training with Mike Irving and Tom Marquette for the Grand Floral Rose Festival Parade committee. I learned the process in which the club follows to be a participant in the parade year after year. I enjoyed this involvement and it brings me closer to my ancestors and heritage. I am a fine artist by trade and taught for many years at Pennsylvania State University. I am also interested in the culinary arts and currently work for the Oregon Home Care Commission.

My family is David and William George Flett. They arrived in Oregon in 1841. The Flett's were ship builders and were needed for their skills. They all worked for the Hudson Bay Company as trappers. William Doughty is my great, great grandfather: his role was to divide up the Oregon Terri-

tory and he was one of three congressional leaders.

My interest in becoming a member of the board is to not only celebrate my ancestors who came to Oregon in 1841, but to also contribute to the growth and development of the SDOP. I am interested in the history of the Oregon Trail, which was the backbone of this territorial settlement. I would like to make a difference that helps our organization be recognized, respected and protected, for generations to come.



Grand Floral Rose Festival Parade



Oregon or bust! It was a tough journey, just like the pioneers in 1852, with the Rose Festival Grand Floral Parade changing and trying a new format this year. It was a combination of the Grand Floral Parade and the Starlight Parade. Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers kept up with the tradition by honoring two Miss Pioneers Oregon: Addison Stabenow and Shanti Del Rosario. The girls were chosen from their essay submission about the Oregon Trail. Shanti was proud to represent us at the parade, while unfortunately Addison was unable to attend. We were cheered on by anxious, happy fans that sat and waited for us under a beautiful sky and perfect temperatures. We improvised our wagon (the journey is always tough on the Oregon Trail) so Miss Pioneer Oregon rode in a pedicab, driven by her father. Her mother attended as well, and both were behind the banner that announced their presence. Westward Ho.....and Happy Trails.



**Miss Pioneer Oregon
Addison Stabenow**

In Memory**Merle Gene Miller 1930-2026**

SDOP's long-time member, Merle Gene Miller, passed on June 19, 2026, at the age of 95. He was devoted husband, father, veteran, master craftsman (Merle held the title of being one of the first three certified Master Watchmakers in Oregon. Later he opened his own clock and watch repair shop called, Merle's Time and Chime. Merle was very busy in his retirement years still repairing clocks and watches in his home in La Grande, Oregon.) He was also a community volunteer and a great historian.

Merle Miller was the heart and soul of the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers (SDOP), serving as President for 1999-2000 term. He also served as the registrar of SDOP for at least 15 years and as the editor of the SDOP Newsletter for the same amount of time. He was a mentor to many SDOP officers who came after him. His wife, Pat was his biggest supporter and became a "Friend of SDOP". Their children are current members of SDOP, and they also have two Miss Pioneer Oregon granddaughters: Jessica Jill Gruis was Miss Pioneer Oregon in 1998. Mary Elisabeth Miller was Miss Pioneer Oregon for the year 2000.

Merle's Pioneer roots go back to 1847 and then again in 1848 when Merle's GG Grandfather Isaac Miller and Issac's brother Christian Miller (who is Debbie's Pedersen's GG Grandfather) traveled to Oregon in 1848. The town

of Millersburg in Linn County, outside of Albany, Oregon, was named for Isaac Miller.

Even though Merle didn't travel to many SDOP's meetings or events in the last few years I am still going to miss him and hearing from him via FB and/or letters. I've visited Merle and Pat a couple of times at their home in La Grande, once to speak at Pat's DAR's chapter meeting. I cherish his friendship and especially his knowledge of Oregon's history.

(Contributed by Chris Meinicke)

Merle's Obituary:

Merle Gene Miller, devoted husband, father, veteran, master craftsman, community volunteer and historian peacefully passed away on June 19, 2026, at the age of 95.

Born December 3, 1930, in Burns, OR, to Ira A. (Jack) and Zeta M. Dunten-Miller, Merle grew up in Drewsey and graduated from Crane High School, where he met his high school sweetheart, Patricia L. Seely. They married on Nov. 11, 1951, and would celebrate their 75th wedding anniversary this year.

As an Oregon Technical Institute (now OIT) graduate in watch repair, Merle served in the U.S. Air Force in Austin, TX, repairing aircraft timing gear. He held the title of being one of the first three Certified Master Watchmakers in Oregon.

First settling in Burns, Oregon, he worked a brief time as a clerk at Hines Lumber Co., and Shooks Jewelry. He was a member of the local Burns Jaycees, which included planting trees that still stand proudly in Triangle Park today.

After moving to La Grande, he briefly worked at Birnie's Jewelry, then later opened his own clock and watch repair storefront, Merle's Time and Chime. He worked for 22 years for Oregon State Parks, including serving as a project coordinator with Oregon Youth Authority, River Bend Crew. Deeply invested in his community, Merle was Scoutmaster of Troop 555 for 20

years, earning the Silver Beaver Award, the highest honor a local Boy Scouts council can bestow.

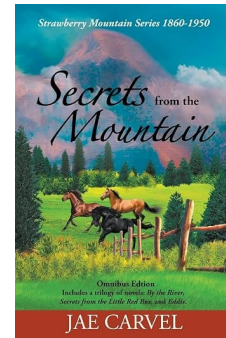
As an historian, he served as a board member for the Union County Museum and newsletter editor. He also volunteered as President of the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers and again served as newsletter editor, which was sent globally. He was given the pleasure of being the oldest Oregon member of The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Lewis and Clark Chapter. He enjoyed a life-long search for his family's genealogy and enjoyed helping others find theirs as well.

He is survived by his wife, Pat; children, Larry (Pam) Miller, Jana (Larry) Gruis, Jodi Miller, and Keri (Ken) Hagerman; sister, Lorene Munkers; and 15 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren, and 7 great-great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; brother, Charles; and 2 infant grandsons.

To honor Merle's lifelong love for history, please consider making a memorial contribution to either the Union County Museum at 331 S. Main St., Union, OR 97883 or to the Harney County Museum at PO Box 388, Burns, OR 97720.



FEATURED BOOK



Secrets From the Mountains

By Jae Carvil

Jae Carvel's novels are inspired by the many stories of her ancestors who came to Eastern Oregon as pioneers. She combines imagination with history to create the stories of the Strawberry Mountain Series. Jae believes people solve their problems in about the same way from generation to generation...always hoping to make their lives better with their efforts.

Sarah Ann leaves Illinois with the Manwaring wagon train in 1869. The Martin family saga begins. She arrives at the end of her trail in the upper John Day Valley of Oregon Territory. In the shadow of Strawberry Mountain, she raises nine children as a pioneer rancher's wife. Evelyn, her youngest daughter, ventures into adult life at the turn of the century. After adventures and relationships, she returns to the ranch to spend her life. Eddie, the youngest son, escapes the family and the ranch, taking his secrets with him. Surprises await the reader who gets to know and love the characters of this series of stories. Real people with true emotions forge their family ties and deal with their problems.

Available at <https://amzn.to/4vFjL1S>

**Sons & Daughters of Oregon Pioneers
Board Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2026
Champoeg State Park
Conference Room**

Following careful consideration of organizational and governance matters, the Board took action to make changes in SDOP leadership. The Board remains focused on strengthening communication, supporting effective governance, and preserving the continuity and future of the organization. We look forward to moving ahead together with a renewed focus on SDOP's mission, our members, and the important work of preserving Oregon pioneer history.

Attendance Record
Quorum established.

Directors present: Shauna Noon, Debbie Pedersen, Dina Saunders, Chris Meinicke, Reggie Burke, Mel Fuller, Janet Wilson, Dave Thompson, Sherry Fuller, Zoe Godsey, and Sophie Curley.
Absent Members: Kim Nurmi

Meeting called to Order: 10:54 am

President's Address & Leadership Update

- **Recap of Special Meeting:** Transitional President Mel Fuller provided a recap of the special board meeting held on June 30, 2026.
- **Governance Status:** During the June 30th meeting, a majority of the board elected Mel Fuller as transitional president to guide the organization through current governance and leadership difficulties.

Presidential and Officer Succession

- **Bylaws Enforced:** A member questioned whether a new president would be elected during the meeting. It was clarified that per the organization's bylaws, a new election is not required because a designated

President-Elect is already in line to step up automatically following the removal of the previous president.

- **New President: Dina Saunders** was officially introduced as the incoming President.
- **New Secretary:** The board appointed **Regina (Reggie) Burke** as the new Secretary.
- **Finance Chair: Shauna Noon** to remain as Treasurer.
- **Newsletter Team: Mark Goddard** was reinstated as Newsletter Editor.

Board Transitions & Roles

- **Past Leadership Council: Chris Meinicke** (referred to as a past president) will remain active within the "past president space" to provide mentorship and support to the incoming leadership.
- **New Board Member:** The board appointed **Lindsey Hollinger** to fill a vacancy.

New Business:

- All officers and the Board of Directors in attendance received a packet containing a Certificate of Oath of Office, Oregon Nonprofit Compliance Acknowledgment, Oath of Office, Bylaws, and the Policies and Procedures.
- Everyone was asked to sign and return the Acknowledgment of Receipt and Agreement to the Secretary.

Treasurer Report

The bank authorizations will be updated in accordance with the SDOP bylaws.

- The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 pm.

Featured Website



We were surprised to hear from an SDOP member that they had not heard of our Facebook group! To rectify that, we humbly present to you:

[Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/groups/SDOPEmail)

Public group - 565 members
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SDOPEmail>)

If you haven't done so already, we encourage you to visit the site and request membership. Once there, you can join in the conversations about our pioneering history and post your own queries or stories. We also regularly update SDOP's coming events like Board meetings, picnics, and other activities of SDOP.

By the Scholarship Committee

We would love to see our College Scholarship and Jr. awards program grow. If you would like to donate to these programs, visit the Donations and Dues link on our website.

You can help earn donations just by shopping with your Fred Meyer Rewards Card! Fred Meyer is donating \$2.5 million per year to nonprofits in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, based on where their customers tell them to give.



Here's how the program works:

- Sign up for the Community Rewards program by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to SDOP at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. You can search for SDOP by name or by our non-profit number 86878.
- Then, every time you shop and use your RewardsCard, you are helping SDOP earn a donation!
- You still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points, and Rebates, just as you do today.
- If you do not have a Rewards Card, they are available at the Customer Service desk of any Fred Meyer store.

Restoration of Pioneer Headstones

SDOP member Roger Porter has a passion for the restoration of pioneer headstones. Roger Porter grew up going to the Aumsville Cemetery with grandparents to mow, spray for dandelions, and clean the flower beds. His grandparents have passed away but he still keeps up what his grandparents taught me, to go to this Cemetery and others and take care of them.

Roger's pioneer roots extend to William M. Porter 1812-1899, who, along with his wife Sarah (Coffey) Porter 1820-1848 and extended family, traveled the Oregon Trail in 1848 (see <https://www.oregonpioneers.com/1848.htm>). Settling in the Willamette Valley, many of them are buried at the Aumsville Cemetery.

Roger became concerned about all the headstones that were broken. He dreamed of having them restored. So, one day he started to do something about it. He made a call to the Willamette Heritage Center and asked them if they knew who could fix old headstones. That led to working with the Oregon Parks & Recreation and their Historian, Elizabeth Potter, and he began to learn the process of headstone restoration.

This is a photo of his 3x great Aunt Catherine (Coffey) Porter's headstone, taken from her FindAGrave website:



And here, you can see how those cracks reduced the headstone to broken pieces:



Depending on the damage, the process of restoration is tedious, taking hours to repair the damage.

But that is the work that Roger lovingly performs.



Not quite finished yet, but what a remarkable difference... and a precious gift to Catherine's memory.

Roger has been working with several cemeteries, helping them with grants to get other headstones repaired as well. He also wants to educate others on proper headstone cleaning, having recently helped with a clinic at the Twin Oaks Cemetery in Turner for that very purpose.

If you have your own family headstones that need restoration or want to start a restoration project in cemeteries near you, feel free to reach out to Roger for his assistance.

Roger can be contacted at:

porter.roger.a@gmail.com

The History of Reed Opera House



The Reed Opera House was designed from the start for more than the single purpose its name suggests. In fact, it wasn't going to be an opera house at all.

New Hampshire-born Cyrus Adams Reed (1825-1910), who built the Opera House in 1869-70, had a contract with the state to erect a building to house the Oregon State Legislature, the State Supreme Court and the State Library.

When the newly elected officers of a changing administration refused to comply with the agreement, Reed had Architect G.W. Rhodes include seven shops on the ground floor; the Opera House proper enjoyed the center of the building, on the second and third floors, and the balance of the building became the Reed Opera House Hotel.

The decision to build a 1,500-seat theater was an adventurous one. The population of Salem in 1870 was reported to be 1,139, being served by 11 grocery stores, 15 dry goods stores, three bars and three drug stores. Liberty Street was unpaved and rutted, and fist fights and gambling were nightly events.

The pioneering Reed was not only an optimistic visionary, but a teacher, merchant, builder, industrialist, politician and artist who painted the opera house sets. Reed's Opera House became the center of Salem's early social life, housing touring plays and opera companies, concerts

by John Philip Sousa's band, vaudeville and minstrel shows, revival meetings, and exhibits by political cartoonist Thomas Nast, and other famous artists.

It was the favorite venue for Hallie Parrish Hinges, a singer who performed a concert at the Reed for President Benjamin Harrison on May 5, 1891, and was called "Oregon's Nightingale" by Theodore Roosevelt a few years later.

The Reed's stage was a pulpit for Susan B. Anthony and Abigail Scott Duniway at the height of the national drive for women's suffrage, which in 1871 Oregon was headed by Cyrus Reed.

Another U.S. President – Rutherford B. Hayes – drew crowds to the Reed on September 30, 1880, while seeking to become more than a one-term leader.

The first performance on the Reed stage was "Frances Carroll", a drama depicting theater life. The Oregon Statesman commented in its Sept. 28, 1870 edition that "after a long time without any amusement except the legislature our citizens must, by this time, be in good trim to attend a first-class theatrical performance."

The Reed would be Salem's premier theater for the next 30 years, finally closing with a minstrel show on April 26, 1900, shortly after the opening of the new Grand Theater a block away.

[Excerpt from Reed Opera House website. To read more history see [History - The Reed Opera House](#)]



SDOP News

Oregon Pioneers'
Newsletter

Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers

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Celebrating 125 Years of Heritage and Community

From 1907 to 2026, we honor the pioneers who built our legacy and the generations carrying it forward.

Our commemorative “**Celebrating 125 Years**” T-shirt feature the covered wagon emblem and the inspiring motto: ***Preserve the Past, Inspire the Future.***

These shirts are perfect for reunions, community events, or everyday wear. A proud way to show your connection to our shared history.

Order yours today at: <https://oregonsdop.org> at the Trading Post tab

Let's continue to **honor our heritage and build our future together.**