

Voices & Maps of Clatsop 2026

“A Digital Preservation Campaign”

An overview of our digital archive with links to selected collections.

In 2018, the devastating armory fire in Aberdeen destroyed an irreplaceable local historical museum, underscoring the urgency of preserving historical documents and photographs. Inspired by that loss, the Clatsop County Historical Society (CCHS) launched a digital scanning initiative to safeguard our shared heritage for future generations..

Thanks to a generous donation from the Huisiking Foundation in 2018, CCHS established a state-of-the-art digital scanning center featuring professional high-speed scanners and access to the Internet Archive—the world’s largest online library, with more than 56 million books and texts and 15 million videos.

From late 2018 through December 2025, more than \$289,000 in donations was raised to support the scanning center. In fall 2019, the center hired a digital archivist and, to date, has uploaded more than 42 major collections. As of March 2026, the initiative has digitized 4,357 items totaling 85,044 files and generated more than 562,579 online views from history enthusiasts worldwide

These donations have enabled CCHS to digitize its own substantial holdings while also helping local organizations preserve their archives at no cost. Beneficiaries include the Seaside Museum, Warrenton Heritage Museum, Astoria Golf and Country Club, Clatsop Plains Historical Records (including Gearhart and Surf Pines), Peace First Lutheran Church, the Westport Collection, LCPS, and many others.

Below are selected links that demonstrate the diversity of our digital archive:

The Clatsop County Historical Society maintains an Archive and Research Library in the Heritage Museum, offering researchers a unique resource documenting the evolution of Clatsop County history. [Link to the entire Clatsop County Historical Society digital collection.](#)

Clatsop County Video and Film

This collection features 21 publicly available videos produced by volunteers. These include numerous 8–10 minute pioneer interview vignettes, along with three presentations from CCHS Thursday Night Talks and Seaside History & Hops programs. [Click here to view.](#)

Clatsop County Video and Film Restricted.

This collection includes more than 46 full raw interviews with longtime pioneers. These videos are not publicly viewable because editing has not yet been completed. Each raw video was processed with captions, and the resulting text was embedded in metadata so researchers can search conversations by keyword and locate exact spoken timestamps. Researchers may request access through the CCHS curator. [Click Here to View](#)

Paul See/Josiah West Collection.

One goal of CCHS is to create anthology collections of pioneer families who settled in the region. This collection contains research and materials on local and family history compiled by longtime Clatsop County educator and writer Paul See, with emphasis on his grandfather Josiah West, an early settler of Clatsop Plains. [Click here to view](#)

Astoria Public Library Newspaper Index.

Newspaper index typed on cards through 1860s -1999. The newspapers include Astoria newspapers: Astoria Daily Budget, Morning Astorian, and Daily Astorian. [Click here to view](#).

Clatsop Community College Historic Preservation & Restoration Digital Archive.

The digital archive of Clatsop Community College's Historic Preservation & Restoration program houses out of print books and publications including historic house plans, building details, and catalogs. [Click here to view](#).

Westport, Oregon Collection.

A collection of materials relating to Westport, Oregon: its heritage and importance and showing how our scanning center supports our rural neighbors. [Click her to view](#)

Peace First Lutheran Church.

Records for Peace First Lutheran Church and its predecessor churches in Astoria, Oregon. [Click here to view](#).

City Directories.

Name and address guides to individuals and businesses throughout Clatsop County, including the communities of Astoria, Warrenton, Flavel, Hammond, Seaside, Cannon Beach, Knappa, Svenson, Jewell, and Westport. [Click here to view](#).

Yearbooks.

Annual publications from Clatsop County schools, including those of Astoria, Warrenton, Seaside, Knappa, and Jewell. [Click here to view](#).

Clatsop Plains Historical Records, Incl. Surf Pines and Gearhart.

The Clatsop Plains are a region of wetlands and sand dunes between the Northern Oregon Coast Range and the Pacific Ocean. [Click here to view](#).

Astoria Golf and Country Club.

Founded in 1923, the Astoria Golf and Country Club has a long and distinguished history in Clatsop County, reflected in this collection. [Click here to view](#).

Facts and Statistics about the CCHS Scanning Center

As of April 25, 2026 these are the statistics of our Internet Archive digital library:

- Went live with Internet Archive on June 12, 2019
- Hired Julie Burpie as our digital archivist in Fall 2019
- Then Covid hit.
 - The bad: The momentum to tie in multiple stakeholders was brought to a standstill.
 - The good: With limited access to the center by the public, Julie and Chelsea Vaughn, CCHS curator, had a lot of time to get a jump on the Digital Archive.

To Date:

- Total number of collections 42 (last one is a new collection for the Columbia River Maritime Museum)
- Total Views: **602,791**
- Total Items: **4,357**
- Our digital library has more than ½ a terabyte of storage in **85,044** files.
- 42 restricted pioneer raw video interviews of people in Clatsop County. Includes all captions in text and included in Meta Data for full text search (eliminates the challenge to find the right segment in videos).
 - Almost 26 hours of recordings of old pioneers such as Bob McEwan, Dick Fedig, Denny Holmes, Richie Schroder, Russ Earl, Mike Manion and many more.
- 21 Publicly available videos. These include several short 8-10 minute vignettes of some of our pioneer interviews.
 - Includes three presentations made at the CCHS Thursday Night Talks or the Seaside Museums History and Hops talks.

1. [Clatsop Community College Historic Preservation & Restoration Digital Archive](#)

Views: 105,316

2. [Astoriana Ephemera and souvenirs from Astoria's rich past.](#)

Views: 104,802

3. [City Directories](#)

Views: 66,858

4. [Yearbooks](#)

Views: 48,159

5. [Cumtux](#)

Views: 37,490

7. [Peace First Lutheran Church](#)

Views: 29,381

8. [Clatsop Plains Historical Records, Incl. Surf Pines and Gearhart](#)

Views: 27,283

9. [School Records](#)

Views: 21,620

10. [Photo Albums](#)

Views: 21,595

Top Regions (Last 30 Days)

Region	Country	Views
Unknown	United States of America	1,934
California	United States of America	1,376
Ontario	Canada	1,023
Oregon	United States of America	869
Massachusetts	United States of America	800
Ohio	United States of America	730
Utah	United States of America	617
An Giang	Viet Nam	496
Washington	United States of America	457
Florida	United States of America	432

Below is an article from the Spring 2025 Vol. 45 No. 2 Cumtux CCHS Historical Quarterly, that describes the Pioneer Interview program and how it was started.

Preserving the Past: One Conversation at a Time

By Tom Smith

A good friend—and fellow history buff—once told me the best way to capture history was simple: “Get a tape recorder, sit down with your grandparents, and let them talk.” It’s one of the best pieces of advice I’ve ever received.

In today’s world, you don’t need a fancy recorder or professional gear. Just a smartphone and a little curiosity. That’s how we began the Clatsop County Historical Society’s (CCHS) video history project—and how anyone, anywhere, can start preserving the voices and stories of the people they love.

A Return to the Plains

After retiring, *for the last time*, my wife and I moved back to Clatsop County and built our home near the south end of Neacoxie Lake. I’ve always loved history, but something about returning to this place sparked a deeper connection. It didn’t take long before I found myself engrossed in the layers of stories surrounding our community.

The timing was serendipitous. In 2019, Surf Pines, our local community, was preparing to celebrate its 70th anniversary. I volunteered to create a short video to mark the occasion. I had no video production experience and had never edited footage before. But I had a smartphone—and a strong desire to learn.

A Chance Encounter with History

What I lacked in technical skills, I made up for in enthusiasm. Fortunately, history has a way of guiding the willing. One evening in late 2018, while having dinner at McMenamins in Gearhart, I struck up a conversation with the gentleman next to us. By chance, it was Richie Schroeder, a third generation Clatsop Plains resident.



Fig. 1 Richie Schroeder interview 2019

Though I had known of his mother years ago, Richie and I had never connected. But once I mentioned the Surf Pines history project, his eyes lit up. He had *stories*. His grandparents had immigrated from Germany to Gearhart at the start of the 20th century, becoming successful hoteliers. They managed the second Gearhart Hotel and later opened the Ocean House. His grandmother, Meta, was also famous for her bathtub gin, produced during Prohibition for residents of what was then cheekily known as “Gin Ridge.”

His father, Dick Schroeder, pioneered a leasing model for canning machinery that led to the family buying the first home in Surf Pines. Richie himself was a savvy real estate developer, creating Pinehurst and other communities, and had grown up alongside Jimmy Lucas, son of Surf Pines’ original developer. In short, Richie was a walking time capsule.

So, I pulled out my iPhone, propped it up, and started recording.

Learning to Listen



Seaside History And Hops Presentation February 27, 2025
by Tom Smith

Publication date: 2025-02-14
 Topics: Denny Holmes, Tom Smith, James Beard, Bob McEwen, Dick Fellig, Gearhart, Gearhart Hotel
 Collection: clatsopcountyhibeardfilm; clatsopcountyhistoricalsociety; americana
 Language: English
 Item Size: 4.9G

Clatsop Plains Chronicles: Stories of Gearhart's Grand Hotels and James Beard for metadata

This presentation, part of the Seaside Museum and Historical Society's History & Hops series, explores the rich history of Gearhart, Oregon, through the memories and research of longtime resident Denny Holmes. Hosted by Tom Smith, the film delves into the legacy of four historic Gearhart hotels—each reflecting the town's transformation from an exclusive coastal retreat to a vibrant community. From the grandeur of the Gearhart Park Hotel to the Prohibition-era intrigue of the Ocean House, these iconic establishments played a pivotal role in shaping the town's character.

Additionally, the documentary highlights the profound connection between Gearhart and James Beard, the legendary chef who spent his formative years along the Oregon coast. Featuring rare archival footage, historical photographs, and firsthand accounts, Clatsop Plains Chronicles preserves the voices of the past while celebrating Gearhart's enduring legacy.

"00:00:10:29" end="00:00:12:29" Good evening, everyone.
 "00:00:12:29" end="00:00:14:29" My name is Tom Smith and I'm excited
 "00:00:14:29" end="00:00:17:29" to be here tonight for another history and hops presentation
 "00:00:18:29" end="00:00:24:29" where we gather to share a drink, swap stories and take a trip through the past.
 "00:00:25:29" end="00:00:28:29" Some of you might remember a presentation I gave here a
 "00:00:28:29" end="00:00:31:29" couple of years ago that night I had the privilege of
 "00:00:32:29" end="00:00:35:29" meeting Denny Holmes, a long time Gearhart
 "00:00:35:29" end="00:00:38:29" resident with a lifetime of experience in this town.
 "00:00:39:29" end="00:00:42:29" This past fall, Denny reached out to Steve Wright
 "00:00:42:29" end="00:00:46:29" president of the seaside Museum and Historical Society, and

Add to list Favorites Share Flag

0 Views

DOWNLOAD OPTIONS

H.264 IA 1.9a
 ITEM TILE 1.9a
 MPEG4 1.9a
 TORRENT 1.9a

SHOW ALL 4 Files 4 Original

IN COLLECTIONS

Clatsop County Video and Film
 Clatsop County Historical Society

That first interview with Richie wasn't just an introduction to video storytelling—it was the start of a journey. He became my mentor and friend, guiding me into the lesser-documented history of the Clatsop Plains. As Mac Burns, longtime executive director of CCHS, once told me, “We have a lot of history from other parts of the county—but very little from this area between Gearhart and Warrenton.”

That changed with one conversation.

Encouraged by the experience, I reached out to others:

- **Mike Manion**, a respected Gearhart realtor and son of Bill Manion, Surf Pines’ original salesperson
 - **A local Family Matriarch**, who married into another pioneer family, proudly declared her great-great-grandmother was *“the first Caucasian woman in Astoria not part of the oldest profession”*
 - **Milt Stewart**, a three-time Surf Pines homeowner
 - **Steve Dawson**, son of one of Surf Pines’ earliest residents
 - **Shirley See** and her daughter **Dana Westin**, whose family ties go back to Josiah West, one of the region’s founding settlers
- And the list kept growing.

A Tapestry of Voices

Over the next few years, the project expanded to include long-time Clatsop County residents like:

- **Bob McEwan**, the oldest living resident of Gearhart, whose family moved there in 1929
- **Dick Fettig**, whose family has lived on North Ocean since the early 1940s
- **Denny Holmes**, son of Oregon Governor Robert Holmes, and moved to Gearhart in 1938
- **Russ Earl**, grandson of Josiah West, who with Richie Schroeder shared two captivating hours of memories about growing up in Surf Pines in the 1950s and 60s

In 2023, for the Astoria Golf and Country Club’s centennial, we recorded stories from longtime members like Dan Van Dusen, Russ Tagg, Jeff Leinassar, Peter Roscoe, Todd Burns, and John Mattingly, the club’s manager for 40 years.

All told, we’ve captured over 60 hours of footage from 43 interviews. Each conversation is a thread in the vibrant tapestry of our local history.

From Raw Footage to Living Archive

Every interview is stored in a restricted collection within the CCHS digital archive. While not all of the footage has been edited, each recording includes searchable caption files. This “metadata” enables researchers to pinpoint the exact moment a topic or person is mentioned—right down to the second.

This tool proved invaluable during our February 2025 “History and Hops” presentation at the Seaside Museum. By searching the raw interview transcripts, we extracted relevant clips about Gearhart’s grand hotels and James Beard, straight from those who lived it.

You can view this presentation at:

archive.org/details/seaside-history-and-hops-presentation



Fig. 2. My professional recording equipment.

How You Can Help Preserve History

Liisa Penner, CCHS’s longtime archivist, encouraged us to share this story for a reason: We need your help. Many of those I interviewed, Mike Manion, Richie Schroeder, Bob McEwan, are no longer with us. Their stories would’ve been lost if not for a simple decision to hit “record.”

You don’t need fancy gear. A phone and a tripod will do. If you want better sound, Amazon sells wireless lapel microphones for under \$25. Most importantly, you need to care. Ask your grandparents, parents, or longtime friends about their lives. Let them talk. Listen well. Ask follow-up questions. Capture their voices.

You don't need to edit the videos yourself. Just record them, then contact CCHS. You can share your files by memory stick or online. The team will catalog your contributions and make them available for future researchers. If you give permission, your recordings may be used in future public mini-documentaries.

Join the Effort

If you're passionate about local history, like I am, we'd love for you to join our effort. Whether you're a tech-savvy storyteller or someone who simply enjoys a good story, your help is welcome.

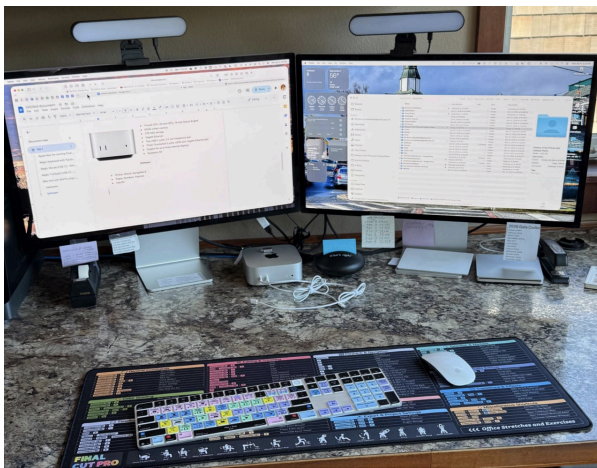
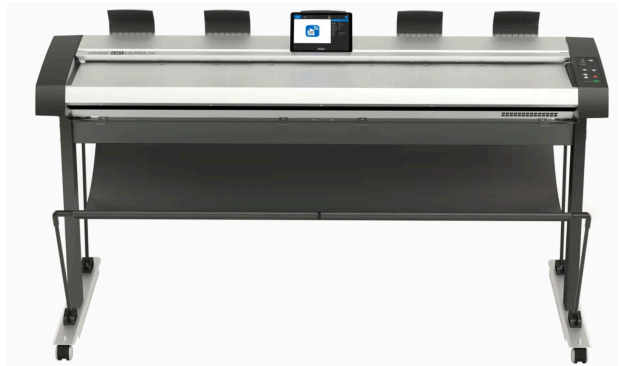
CCHS's digital archive has become one of its most-viewed resources, with over 461,944 views in the last four years. Together, we can ensure that the stories of today become the rich historical records of tomorrow.

So grab your phone, call up a relative, and press record. History is waiting.

Voices & Maps of Clatsop 2026

A Digital Preservation Campaign

Over the past seven years, the **Clatsop County Historical Society** has built one of the most advanced digital archives in the region, with over **4,300 documents and more than 590,000 views worldwide**. As of December 2025, the Scanning Center has also raised **over \$285,000** to support staff and operations. Building on this success, we are launching the next phase of expansion: adding **large-format scanning** for maps and blueprints, and a **video preservation center** to digitize VHS tapes and our several



hours of pioneer interviews—making these irreplaceable materials accessible to the public.

A generous donor has committed **\$28,000 in matching funds**, meaning every dollar contributed will be doubled. This campaign will allow CCHS to expand its role as a **regional hub for digital preservation**, serving partner organizations and engaging volunteers through hands-on training in scanning and video production. Our goal is to leverage this match to raise an additional **\$28,000+** through community support and grants.

Every Gift Counts. CCHS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and all donations are tax-deductible.

Give online at:

astoriamuseums.org/support-us/donate, by mail (PO Box 88, Astoria, OR 97103), or call 503-325-2203.

Please note “Scanning Center” so your gift is matched.

Together, we can preserve Clatsop County’s history and make it accessible for future generations.

