



# Old Aurora Colony

NEWSLETTER OF THE AURORA COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JUNE 2020

**D**eath is almost always cruel, but in this time of pandemics and social distancing there is a deeper sadness: Friends and family cannot gather in numbers to grieve, to share memories.

*Patrick Harris, who led the Old Aurora Colony Museum and Aurora Colony Historical Society for most of the past 37 years, passed away on April 18, 2020, three months after he suffered a stroke. Since we cannot yet come together to celebrate him, we dedicate this issue of the Aurora Colony Historical Society newsletter to memories of Patrick. We have collected here the types of stories and remembrances that people typically share at a celebration of life.*

*The museum has received dozens of remembrances of Patrick, from descendants, members, staff, volunteers, colleagues, and board members, past and present. Apologies if your submission was edited or omitted; there simply wasn't room for everything, but uncut memories will soon be online at [www.auroracolony.org](http://www.auroracolony.org) and will be preserved in our archives. Should you wish to contribute your own remembrance, please email [Luana@auroracolony.org](mailto:Luana@auroracolony.org).*

*Now, please join ACHS in celebrating the rich life of the remarkable Patrick Harris. ♦*

## IN MEMORIAM: PATRICK JOHN HARRIS



**P**atrick John Harris was born February 9, 1954, in Seattle, Washington, to Claude and Katherine Harris. He grew up in Portland but lived a great deal of his adult life as a leading citizen of Aurora. He passed away in Portland April 18, 2020, at the age of 66, following a January stroke.

Patrick was a historian, a writer, a poet, a philosopher, a photographer, and much more. He loved books, baseball, and the Blues. And Patrick loved Aurora.

Patrick interned at the museum in Aurora (when it was known as the Ox Barn Museum) in the late 1970s and early 1980s while studying at Portland State University. After obtaining undergraduate and Master's degrees in history at PSU, Patrick began his career at ACHS in 1983, replacing Mark Peterson, who left for Minnesota. Patrick left ACHS in 1996, becoming executive director of the Museum of the Oregon Territory in Oregon City in 1997. He returned to ACHS in 2006 and led the organization until his death.

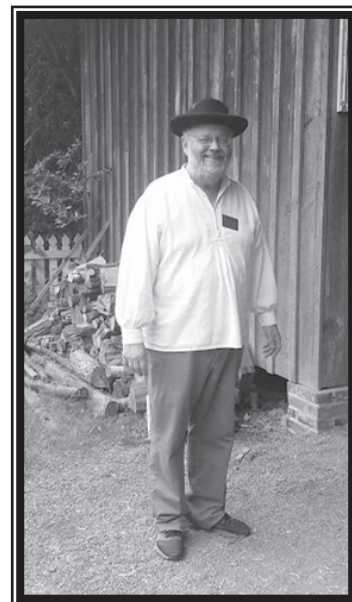
One of Patrick's formative experiences as a young adult was working for Farrell's, the well-known ice cream emporium. Patrick often talked about the Farrell motto, "Give 'em the pickle." That customer service philosophy matched Patrick's easygoing personality and informed the way he approached his work.

Patrick is survived by his brother Terry Harris (Diane), sister Kaye Harris Whitmer (Richard), cousins Judi Thompson and Diane Shalander, numerous nieces and nephews, and many, many, many friends.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the family held a small private burial. A celebration of life will be held at a later date when larger groups can gather.

The family asks that as a memorial, you consider a donation to the Old Aurora Colony Museum. The board of directors has established the Patrick John Harris Endowment Fund in Patrick's honor, with those funds being directed to further the work of the new Will Family Preservation & Research Center, which Patrick considered his crowning career achievement to date.

Patrick was buried at the Aurora Community Cemetery, near all the Colony members and descendants whose stories made up the fabric of his life and career. Fittingly, his gravestone will forever remind us of his very special role in the story of Aurora – **historian**.



## SOME ACHS HIGHLIGHTS DURING PATRICK'S TENURE

### **1982-1996:**

- Saving, moving and restoring the Octagon Building, an outbuilding of the Aurora Colony Hotel
- Restoration of the Colony's Stauffer-Will Farm, including an award-winning restoration of the barn
- Creation of the living history school programs for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at the Stauffer-Will Farm and Aurora Village
- Two concerts featuring Dr. John Keil Richards and Oregon Symphony musicians playing the Colony instruments
- Rebranding the Ox Barn Museum as the Old Aurora Colony Museum, and first efforts to establish an endowment
- 1993 Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial reenactment trip with Earl Leggett in the Moline wagon

### **2006-2020:**

- The Oregon Music Project, preserving and digitizing the handwritten band playbooks of the Colony Band (winner of an Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History)
- Expanding the museum collection
- Expanding the database for descendants of the original Colony families
- Developing extensive Aurora family history files and increasing knowledge of family roles in larger historical contexts
- Research on the relationship of the Colony to the larger French Prairie and Willamette Valley communities
- Establishing new annual events, such as Emma Day
- Completion of the new Will Family Preservation & Research Center, the culmination of Patrick's career



*Patrick lived to see the Will Family Preservation & Research Center built; this photo is from the December 15, 2019 open house.*

## ACHS BOARD REPORT

**By Ted Heid, Vice President**

**T**he ACHS board of directors is dealing with two severe blows: the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unexpected and abrupt end of Patrick Harris's long tenure at the helm of ACHS. All museum operations, planning, communication, and curatorial issues were managed or overseen by Patrick. The responsibility of filling Patrick's large shoes is ongoing, and is a process of discovery for the board and two remaining staff members, Christina Leder and Caroline Queer. Other staff have been laid off during the mandated closures.

The board saw it needed help and turned to prior board members, with their knowledge of what filling Patrick's shoes means. Therefore the board invited Annette James, Cheryl Burks, and Mike Byrnes to rejoin for at least a year and all accepted. Luana Hill left the board but volunteers her expertise on museum communications. Long-time board members Ken Hartley, Spud Sperb, and Carol Burger, and newer board members Diane Anderson, Bill Bennett, Ted Heid, and Ken Riley round out the board.

Just as the expanded board was moving to more directly manage museum operations and other issues, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, resulting in the loss of at least 50% of the museum revenue for 2020. This eliminated any short term financial ability to hire a new executive director. The board is now trying to determine if any of the usual fundraising events can occur, even if in a different format, and is also pursuing grants and COVID-19 funding possibilities; success is unknown at this time. We have implemented cost cutting to the minimum needed to keep utilities on and part time staff on limited hours.

The new Will Family Preservation & Research Center was approved for occupancy in January 2020 and all but about \$80,000 of the \$1.5 million cost of the building has been raised. Now funds are needed to move into the new building and this presents another financial challenge that can only be met through fundraising and grants. It is a busy and challenging time for board members; all are stepping up.

Your help would be appreciated in order to accomplish our common goal: ACHS must survive this double crisis. Please help as you are able.

## STAFF MEMORIES

**ALAN YODER** is a Colony descendant (Kocher, Will, Stauffer), who was program coordinator in the 1980s.

I worked with Patrick on many projects during his first tenure as director of ACHS. We scrambled through spring school tours, Sausage Dinners, Quilt Shows and the summer rush of tourists and visitors. Swept wet soggy walnut leaves off the steps in the fall and hurried through chilly Steinbach log cabin tours in the cold of winter. ... With humility and humor he was able to mend fences and build bridges with Colony descendants and community members.

**ALLISON DITTMAR** is former assistant curator and collections manager, 2010-2017.

I had just finished graduate school and after volunteering was hired as assistant curator and collections manager at ACHS. Patrick would continually claim himself to be my personal Mr. Fezziwig, the kind and generous business owner from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Whenever we would make a profound discovery or have a good story, he would tell me that I would have to share it at the party for the 100-year



anniversary of ACHS in 2063. He would then impersonate me as an old lady, hunched over, walking with an imaginary cane. He would retell whatever we were discussing with an elderly quiver in his

voice, "... and this is what Mr. Fezziwig and I got up to at the Old Aurora Colony Museum some 50 years ago." It would make me laugh every time. He was a most vibrant mentor and I will forever be indebted to him for all that he taught me.

**CHRISTINA LEDER** manages programs, events, the volunteer program, and the Farm program.

One hot August Colony Day, we were working in the museum courtyard and a woman with her dog caught my eye. I became annoyed that she brought the dog to a public venue, allowed him ON THE TABLE, and I was concerned for the public should the dog be a danger. Patrick, upon hearing my annoyance, whispered in my ear, reassuring me that it would be okay. So, I forgot about the dog and went about the long, hot day's event.

After the weekend, I climbed up the stairs on Monday, greeted Patrick "good morning," and went to my desk. There before me was an 8" x 11" picture taped to my computer monitor. I could hear sniggering from the office beside me. The photo was of the dog—the dog from the previous Saturday, sitting on the bench of a table in the museum courtyard. Patrick appeared from around the corner. His eyes were twinkling that all-knowing, superior humorous way they did. We both shared a good laugh at my expense.

I cherish the time my little son and I visited Patrick's foster home and we sang *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* and *You Are My Sunshine* with him. It is a precious memory for me. I will always remember him dressing up like Dr. Keil, camera in hand, riding on the seat of the Colony wagon through the town of Aurora, waving and smiling at the crowds.



**CAROLINE QUEER** has worked for two years as what Patrick called "our bad ass business manager."

My favorite memories of Patrick are when he would be researching someone for a descendant or an exhibit. He'd come out of his office and plop down in one of the green over-stuffed chairs and read aloud what he'd just found. "Now isn't that something?!?!?" he'd say with a smile! His mind was full of historical details – ask him anything about anyone Aurora Colony (and otherwise!) and he'd have facts right off the bat. He was a great boss and a pleasure to work around.

**JAN BECKER** has been both volunteer and staff member.

I came to Aurora as a regular volunteer eight years ago. I worked with school children at the Farm two days a week for six years, then was asked to be coordinator for the Village Program. Dear Patrick was always smiling support, ready to answer questions or help when I needed him at a station. At a moment's notice, I could hike upstairs in my pioneer garb, ask him to don his pioneer hat and shirt and come work at the schnitzelbank station. He wasn't too sure at first but later admitted he did enjoy the students. The students loved his witty quips and funny voices! He was such a presence in every aspect of ACHS. What a shame he cannot savor the completion of the P&R Building. All his hard work and positive attitude leave quite a legacy.



Patrick, Larry, Diane, Steve, Jan on break in the Village

## STAFF MEMORIES

**JANUS CHILDS** shares Patrick's love for research and history; she met Patrick during the time she was at End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center and Patrick was at MOOT in the mid 1990s. In Aurora, they focused museum exhibits on the Colony families and their connections.

**W**e did an exhibit on the Forstner and the Bier families and while that exhibit was on display, California had all those terrible wildfires. The family that had loaned us most of the artifacts for that exhibit had their home burn to the ground while the items were safely at the museum. They decided we needed to keep all of them. Wow, these family treasures would have been lost had they not been on exhibit! Patrick did so much to expand the collection.

Patrick and I often made trips to Hubbard, Butteville, Barlow and Aurora cemeteries looking for descendants... Four of us from the museum made a trip up to Willapa Museum in Washington to see what they had of the original descendants, and we visited Willie's grave.

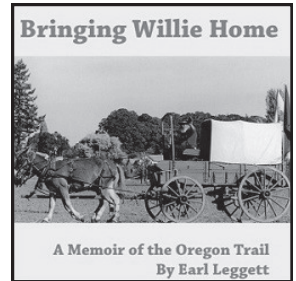
Each of these ventures Patrick had his camera in hand taking photos of anything that caught his eye. He took some amazing photos wherever he was... He had a knack of catching very interesting shots. He entered his photos in art shows and sold many of them.

**KATHLEEN MASON** managed communications and marketing for the museum from 2012 to 2017.

**T**he big joke between us was that he didn't just "see dead people," like in the movie—he dreamed about them, he talked to them (and believe me, they talked back!)—heck—he channeled them. These 19<sup>th</sup> century German-Swiss settlers

were sometimes more real to him than 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century folks... By reading, sorting, interpreting their lives in museum exhibits, through events like "Remembering Emma," he grew to admire them, flaws and all—understand them, care for them--and by extension, care for their descendants.

One of my fondest memories of Patrick is the relationship that he had with Earl Leggett. Some may remember that Earl was a guiding force to create/re-enact the Oregon Trail trek by the Aurora Colonists. Because Earl had kept an extensive diary of his re-enactment in 1993, he came to Patrick to help him get the diary published. With all of us on staff helping, Patrick got it published with the help of Earl's wonderful wife Dorothy, about six months after Earl passed away.



Earl always felt that Patrick was too modest about his historical and scholarly accomplishments. Earl commented to me more than once that "Patrick never stamped his own ground." I smile every time I think about ... that very folksy comment!



January 2020: Post-holiday staff & desk volunteer lunch. (clockwise from left) Pamela Weninger, Caroline Queer, Jan Becker, Christina Leder, Kathy Hardman, Suzanne Brown, Patrick, Cathy Harper, Karen Young

## PRESERVE THE COLONY'S PAST FOR THE FUTURE!

### DONATE TODAY TO HELP ACHS IN THIS TIME OF NEED

#### Patrick John Harris Memorial Endowment

Establishes restricted endowment support for ongoing operations of the new Will Family Preservation & Research Center, in honor of Aurora historian Patrick Harris, whose hard work helped take it from dream to reality.

#### The ACHS Emergency Operations Fund

To date the museum has lost more than \$70,000 in revenue due to cancellation of the school program and several special events during the COVID-19 pandemic. Emergency support is vital to offset these critical losses.

Donate at [www.auroracolony.org](http://www.auroracolony.org)

Or mail a check to PO Box 202, Aurora, OR 97002, designating fund(s) and amount(s)

## DESCENDANT MEMORIES



*David & Mary Lou Wagner at the January P&R open house*

**DAVID GERBEN WAGNER** is a Wagner descendant; Emma Wagner Giesy was his great aunt. He and his parents were ACHS founding members.

**W**HAT A LOSS! Patrick knew more about me and my family history than I did. Mary Lou and I were about the last to see Patrick on a Tuesday evening prior to the severe stroke he had that night or the following early

morning. We saw Patrick soon after at Meridian Park Hospital and later at a foster home. It appeared he was making much recovery but certainly would not return to do the marvelous wonderful work that he dedicated his life to do. WHAT A LOSS!

**LISA TREI & PEGGIE TREI** (daughter & mother) met Patrick circa 1984 when they first traveled to Aurora from California, making several trips over the years. Peggie (as well as the Beals) helped install the iron fence and repair the tombstones toppled by sheep & goats at the Keil Cemetery.



*Patrick at the Keil Family Cemetery with Peggie Trei*

**M**y mom and I (Lisa) always enjoyed visiting Aurora. During our visits over more than three decades, Patrick would point out gradual improvements to the museum and take us to the cemetery...Patrick was always engaged, helpful, kind, and generous with his time. He was very smart and fun to talk to. Mom learned a lot about the

families and our connections to them through him...We are related to the Niefts.

Favorite Aurora memories include attending the Strawberry Social about seven years ago and having my three daughters participate in the education program at the barn 11 years ago. I wrote to Patrick last fall and told him I was looking forward to visiting the Colony more frequently since my youngest daughter is a freshman at the University of Oregon. I'm so sorry he left us so quickly. Patrick, thank you for everything you did for the Aurora Colony. You will be missed.

**SHERRIL A. KEIL** met Patrick in Aurora in 1984.

**I** was with my sister. We introduced ourselves to Patrick at the Ox Barn Museum. We are the great, great, great granddaughters of Wilhelm and Louisa Keil. Our great, great grandfather, August Keil, returned from Aurora to Bethel,

Mo., and raised Frederick William Keil in Bethel. When we visited Aurora in 1984, Patrick gave us a personal tour of the museum. He also arranged for us to tour the Keil Cemetery. Over the years, Patrick became a good friend of our family.

**MARGE BARNHART** descends from Colony great-grandparents Charles Becke and Anna Giesy Becke. Heirlooms the family have donated to the museum include the large trunk (believed to have come around the Horn) that belonged to the Giesys, and the model wagon that was made from materials of the Beckes' original wagon.

**P**atrick was such a wonderful man ... I have known Patrick for many years through our family connection to the Aurora Colony — since he first began there — and he was so helpful and informative, always. He truly loved learning about the Aurora history and his contribution to sustaining that history was immeasurable. ..

Patrick ... was a gifted story-teller and a dedicated historian who truly loved learning about and sharing Aurora history. I was so grateful to him. He knew more about our family history than members of our family! Patrick would take time, whenever I brought friends to see the museum, to give us a personal tour and would simply, at times, hand me the keys so that I could take my friends on a tour, myself. Patrick... truly brought history alive. .. What a debt of gratitude is owed to Patrick for the rich history ... that he helped to bring to life.

**SUSAN STAUFFER RACETTE** is the daughter of Norman and Norma Stauffer of the Stauffer-Will Homestead.

**I** was so sorry to hear of Patrick's passing. He contacted the Stauffer family approximately three years ago when the museum was arranging an exhibit on the Stauffer descendants. He was kind enough to come to the family farm and help us decide upon the items we had that would be of interest for the exhibit. His knowledge of the Colony was extensive; he even taught us some history that we did not know about regarding our ancestors! His enthusiasm, patience, kindness and friendliness endeared him to us immediately...



*Patrick at the Stauffer-Will Farm with his twin, Dr. Keil*

**JOYCE BEALS** is the widow of Rodney Beals, a descendant of William Keil.

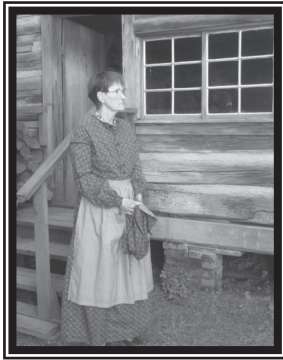
**H**e did a really good job and made something of the museum. He knew how to go about improving it and it became a worthwhile place to visit. And we got to be good friends." Daughter Brynn, also a Keil descendant, says, "We are so sorry to learn of Patrick's passing, and will miss him."



*Patrick with Joyce Beals*

## COLLEAGUE MEMORIES

**JANE KIRKPATRICK** is author of the trilogy based on the life of Emma Wagner Giesy and first met Patrick in 2005. Patrick was always amazed (and grateful) for the number of visitors the books continued to bring to the museum, from as far away as New Zealand, seeking to step on “the very floors Emma walked on.”



Jane dressed up for one of many “Emma Days.”

I first came in contact with Patrick when I began research for my trilogy about Emma Giesy and later the quilt book of Aurora’s fabric artists that I wrote (with much volunteer help!) and my husband Jerry photographed. Patrick was working for the Museum of the Oregon Territory ... then, but Jim Kopp advised me to visit him and oh, what a gift he was to this writer!

Eventually, to my delight, he came to the Aurora museum and was a

living library. I used to say he dreamed in family trees because he knew all the connections between families past and present. He opened doors to me (literally letting me wander upstairs at “Emma’s” house) and in the archives and he introduced me to people who made my stories authentic and hopefully captured the community spirit that is Aurora, a spirit that inspired people who discovered Aurora.

We started planning the Emma Days after the first book came out (*A Clearing in the Wild*) and Patrick and the Colony became a part of my life and Jerry’s too ever after. Our dog Bodacious Bo grew up sleeping in the back of our car parked in the shade across from the Presbyterian Church while I donned period clothes at Patrick’s request, performing in his plays, talking to people at the herb garden, signing books, eating strawberries at the festival. We made our ranch available as part of a fund-raising adventure for three years ..And we laughed together often.

Patrick’s heart was so huge. He loved Aurora and her stories so much. He was a wonderful writer too and his travel stories with nephews and nieces, I think, are precious even though I didn’t meet them —He made me want to meet them! They ... made me want to just spend time with this kind, creative, enthusiastic and generous man who embodied all the special qualities of the community he served.

My life is richer because of Patrick’s presence in it as are the lives of thousands who came to know of Aurora through those books. None of those connections could have happened without Patrick. He’ll always be my most treasured Aurora colonist... His vision and his passion will be the light we can follow to retain and support this important story in American history.



Patrick introducing one of Jane’s Emma Day talks

**EILEEN AIKEN ENGLISH, ED.D.** is a research volunteer at Old Economy Village in Pennsylvania and compiled the *Demographic Directory of the Harmony Society*.

The moment we were introduced I was struck by his bright outlook, and the love and respect he felt for members of the Aurora Colony, particularly for those who had traveled with Reverend Keil to Aurora. His contribution to the *Demographic Directory of the Harmony Society* was significant, and I’m grateful for memories of his cheery banter and the enthusiasm he never failed to invoke. As I continue researching the Harmonists who lived in Phillipsburg, I’ll be tempted to run to the phone to share newly discovered tidbits. I’ll miss the chats about “our people.” Then again, somehow I think he’ll know what’s on my mind.

**ELLEN THOMAS** first met Patrick in the early 1980s and was first an ACHS contractor, then member/board member.

I was never sure whether Patrick was Dr. Keil returned, or if Dr. Keil was actually Patrick before there was Patrick. At least that’s the way I thought of it. The physical resemblance was always striking to me and his passion for telling the story of the Colony was unstoppable, just as Keil’s was for founding and leading the Colony. That these two spirits were so intertwined, and so central to the Colony’s legacy, always fascinated me...

Patrick ... hired me to help with the museum’s exhibitions on three different occasions (to create an audio-visual “welcome video,” an exhibit in the main building about the famous Colony musicians and band, and another in the Octagon). [Later] he invited me to be on the Board ... in the 1990s. I adored working with him. He was kind, open and appreciative. When he left ACHS for a while, I was quite surprised. How could you “be” Dr. Keil somewhere else? Then he was back, of course, which made complete sense to me.

What an incredible achievement the building campaign is! We only dreamed of the possibility in the 1990s. A remarkable testament and tribute to his years and years of devotion and service.

**JUDITH REES** met Patrick through a study she conducted in 1984. It was used in the museum’s first walking tour brochure.

Philip Dole and I were working under the auspices of the state’s Historic Preservation Office with public historian Elisabeth Walton Potter, to conduct a resurvey of the buildings in the Aurora Colony National Register Historic District... Patrick ... helped me access records of the Colony buildings and the families associated with them.

I was immediately drawn to the charm of Aurora. It reminded me of spending the summer on my grandmother’s farm near Scio, and I connected with the story of German pioneer life... Patrick and I were both in the early years of our careers and enjoyed working on this challenging project. This started a period when I served on the ACHS board...

What a legacy he leaves. May someone else be entranced by the magic of Aurora and continue in his efforts.

**MARY BYWATER CROSS** is a noted quilt historian and author who first worked with Patrick in 1983. She created the Oregon Trail Quilt Project for the 1993 Sesquicentennial.

I worked with Patrick during his years at both the Aurora Old Colony Museum and the Museum of the Oregon Territory on quilt-related projects.



Patrick receiving his OCTA award in 2013

Patrick was a joy to work with, always willing to answer my questions and share his vast list of connections. He put me in contact with folk in Bethel, the wagon and crew representing Aurora crossing the Plains, and the Colony descendants who owned pioneer quilts. In return, I introduced him to Jane Kirkpatrick...

Our working relationship continued when he was director of the Museum of the Oregon Territory in Oregon City. He contracted with me to curate and mount three quilt exhibits, two as complements to touring Smithsonian exhibitions... Patrick was always open to new ideas as we worked to expand

## AURORA MEMORIES

**MARCIA & TIM CLARK** met Patrick 33 years ago when they were caretakers at Newell House Museum at Champoege.

We [volunteered] at ACHS as members and actors in many of their living history productions, perhaps the most notable of those being his ill-conceived idea of doing a walking tour of Aurora with actors at various stations



interacting with guests and relating pieces of the history of the Colony. He chose to stage this in late January of 1992 (?), a season we thought a little flaky — and told him

so, good-naturedly — but he was sure it was a great idea.

As you might guess, it began to snow the evening before the performance; not a dusting but one which lingered...and the next morning he found himself with snow still drifting down and a “disgruntled” actor picketing the Ox Barn with homemade signs that said “Harris Unfair to Actors” and “Harris: Not a Weather Prophet.” He laughed his fanny off, took pictures, and placed one of them above his desk at the museum... where it sat for many years.

the museum’s attendance and presence in the community.

After his return to Aurora, we continued to share our mutual interest in quilts and people of the Aurora Colony...In return, it was my honor to nominate and have him receive a Distinguished Service Award from the Oregon-California Trails Association Annual Conference in Oregon City in 2013.

**THOM M. ARMSTRONG** studied history at Portland State University with Patrick.

As graduate students, Patrick and I, along with a cluster of other enthusiastic graduate students, helped to revive the PSU chapter (Phi-Beta) of Phi Alpha Theta, the history honorary society, which had been inactive for a number of years... Through Patrick’s connections with the Aurora Colony Historical Society, the re-launch dinner took place at the Aurora Colony’s Ox Barn Museum. The setting among the museum’s artifacts was perfect, and the food outstanding...

In the years since then, Patrick and I stayed in touch and, at times, we got together when I was in town for holidays or summer vacations ... I have fond memories of my two sons making candles in the Ox Barn Museum, and of taking friends from out of town to visit Aurora... I had hoped to get together with him on one of my periodic visits ... His sense of humor and his charming smile I will recall fondly in the years to come.

**VIRGINIA (GINGER) SWIFT** met Patrick when he arrived in 1982. She served on the board, chaired the quilt show, helped start the Aurora Colony Handspinners’ Guild, gave tours, and ran the school program at Stauffer-Will Farm.

Patrick was so funny and we enjoyed talking about the history and descendants and what we should or should not talk about on tours. Some things just can’t be put into words.

I had never had Nanaimo bars until my first quilt show. Patrick showed me how to “squirrel” a few away for the “staff.” Hanging quilts with Patrick was a whole different experience.

I remember the trip we made to Vancouver, BC for the World’s Fair. We took artifacts across the border. MaryAnn [Moore] and I presented spinning demos. Coming home was a little exciting as we tried to get “across” with our artifacts. Lots of paperwork and a worried Patrick. Working with Patrick and Alan Yoder to make the Farm Program a reality was probably my favorite project. We shared so many laughs as the kinks were worked out.

When I think of Patrick the best picture that comes to my mind is him spinning on the Colony Great Wheel. He was really good at it and looked so professional as he demonstrated the device. He loved that museum and the stories that surfaced through

research and descendants sharing their stories. He would get so excited... I loved watching his devotion to the museum and its descendants.



## AURORA MEMORIES

**BRIAN ASHER** has served as both president and treasurer of ACHS, and was Patrick's neighbor and friend for 25 years.



*Brian & Nancy hosted many fundraising dinners in their home, and guests always hoped Patrick would be in attendance to regale them with conversation.*

In life you encounter many very interesting people, then along comes Patrick Harris! The more time you spent with him the more intriguing the conversation became.

His ability to remember historical facts, dates and family members from the Colony was just remarkable. With his character, wit and humor, Patrick's storytelling engaged his audiences.

Bringing Patrick back to work at the Old Aurora Colony Museum will always be a proud moment for the community...

What great times we had raising interest and promoting our museum, from the countless volunteer hours with the Aurora Village and Stauffer-Will Farm Programs, the annual fund raiser and the Quilt Show, just to name a few. I can recall one Christmas holiday program that Patrick wrote where each cast member, dressed in period costumes in front of a sold-out crowd, endured the freezing temperatures! This is just one of the frozen-in-time memories.

We have lost a great human being too early; however, the life work he has accomplished will help preserve the history of the Aurora Historical Colony and the community of Aurora for many generations to come.

**CHERYL BURKS** is on the board and has volunteered in most every event and program, often as chair.



I knew Patrick for 13 years. What a character! A genius, funny, a treasure trove of information about all things regarding the historic Aurora Colony and so dedicated to ACHS.

I loved how Patrick would burst into spontaneous song about any topic under the sun, often accompanied by dramatic gestures.

**TED HEID** has been an ACHS member since 2015 and joined the board in 2019. He is currently vice president.

The annual auction in 2017 included an evening and dinner with Patrick at the Frederick Keil House and I was outbid by Roberta Hutton. So at the next annual auction I succeeded with my bid for a dinner evening with Patrick at the Keil House along with six of our guests. It was a magical evening orchestrated by Michael and Stephanie Sutch, and

besides wonderful food and entertainment, included Patrick's Colony stories, Aurora history stories, and Patrick's willingness to answer numerous questions with good humor and warmth in a setting that felt like being in the 1870s.

... During the fall of 2019 I had several conversations with Patrick about his desire to pull together his writing and research on Colony history into a single document for publication. He described this as his capstone professional goal and one he wanted to make his priority beginning 2020.

We owe it to Patrick to do all we can with what he left us to realize his goal and make good use of the P&R building in memory of Patrick.

**LUANA HILL** is a former board member who was involved at the museum when Patrick was hired in 1983.

So many good memories of working on projects with Patrick over the years – Expo 86 with the quilters and spinners, concerts on the restored Colony instruments with Dr. John Keil Richards and Oregon Symphony members, creating the logo, the first endowment fund, saving the Octagon Building, and in these last few years, seeing his dream of a preservation & research center come to near-completion. I enjoyed reading his own musings as well; he was a gifted writer and poet. Most of all, just an enjoyable human being.



One of my favorite times spent with Patrick was in September 2016 when he played French Prairie tour guide for Bob and me, with the wonderful Annette James at the wheel. (We successfully bid on this at a *Party at the Farm*.) As we traveled from Charbonneau to St. Paul to Silverton on a circuitous route, with lunch along the way, Patrick rified happily about various aspects of early Oregon and French Prairie history. He made it so much fun – not just information but, as my husband says, “he brought joy to the hearts of those around him.” It’s a sobering reminder of what we have lost. But his work and his research remain – it’s up to us to keep it going!

**JOHN HERMAN's** mother and grandfather helped preserve many Aurora Colony structures and establish ACHS.

My grandfather, Burt Brown Barker, at the urging of Ruth Powers, and my mother, Barbara Sprouse, became involved and were quite supportive. I first met Patrick as his time at the museum was being established.

My mother bought a Colony house which she hoped the rent was to go to the operating budget. It provided income for a number of years...I served on the Board for a number of years and helped Patrick establish the first auction...

Patrick was the backbone of ACHS and surely will be missed!



**SHATRINE KRAKE** is a graphic designer who has worked on some museum and town projects.

When I think of Patrick, I am instantly reminded of his quirky hat nestled atop his head and a huge grin, dare I say smirk, lighting up his whole face.

I grew up in Aurora and had the privilege of visiting the Old Aurora Colony Museum in grade school. It left such an amazing impression on me, that when I was approached to help design marketing materials for the museum and Aurora I leapt at the chance! That is when I was first introduced to Patrick. I could have spent days listening to his tales of our town and looking through photos from the past. Fast forward through a decade of working on projects together all the while dreaming of different ways to help Aurora shine like the gem it is, bumping into each other all over the community and sometimes even at the beach! I still feel like I just scratched the surface on all the knowledge and wit Patrick had to share.

I am eternally grateful to this man that invited me back home to work at a place I loved and showed my children all the joys I experienced there as a child. Patrick, you are the brightest, boldest light and we miss you ever so much, but trust me my friend you have written the most beautiful historical tale for us to share with all.



**MERNIE MARTIN** was an ACHS member and volunteer who for years organized the quilt show coffee shop.

Patrick loved my Nanaimo bars that I made every year for the quilt show. I don't think very many made it out to the cabin. It was quite the joke that Patrick would hide them and share them as he saw fit, but I think he ate most of them!

It was always a fun time with ol' Pat!

**BRIAN (B.C.) KIELING** has known Patrick since he and his brother had an Aurora art gallery in the late '80s.

Over all the years I've known him, I'd have to say that, to me, his most noticeable and interesting trait was his sharp, amusing and concise wit. It's been several years since we used to occasionally cross paths at the local wine shop. The conversation was always entertaining and never a dull moment.

I remember once, over ten years ago, I stopped in the museum to chat with Patrick. When he saw me he said, "Look at this, Brian!" It was a 'dry sink' from back in the Colony days. I said, "wow! We've got one just like it out on the farm."

"Well, Brian," he said, "I (the museum) just bought it from your brother!" After a moment of consternation with my brother's unilateral action, I had to agree that the museum was a far better place for it than out in the barn.

...When Larry and Patrick would do their auction dinners, they would occasionally allow me the honor of being their sous chef!... Patrick was an Aurora mainstay. The town, and the museum, have lost a treasure, and so have his many friends and family.

**ROBERTA HUTTON** is a past board member and baker-in-chief for various ACHS fundraising and hospitality efforts.

I first met Patrick in my early days in Aurora. He was a regular at the Chez Mustache, my son's restaurant. Patrick convinced me I should bake bread with the 4<sup>th</sup> graders at the Stauffer-Will Farm, an activity I loved from the first days. I was five years into that activity when he approached me about a vacancy on the ACHS board. All during this time, he was working at Museum of the Oregon Territory, but I know his heart was, as always, with ACHS... Not long after my term began, I was elected secretary, a position that lasted the rest of my 12 years on the board. We circulated through three executive directors in less than five years. One, Alan Guggenheim, encouraged the board to bring Patrick back as curator, and later, he again became executive director.

Working with Patrick was always a delight, his sense of humor, and LOVE of cookies (actually anything baked) was an ongoing game. Any cookie left from an event went first into the freezer and then into Patrick. He was great at volunteering me to auction off desserts and dinners at the annual auction. He somehow always had an invite to those dinners, or convinced family members to "bid one up." Two, at the Keil House, were birthday celebrations with his family and a great joy for me.

My most poignant memory, however, was of Bill Miley's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Patrick called me on the Monday of Thanksgiving week and cajoled me about doing a dinner for 14 on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. WOW, my big family was going to be here until that morning! But I could never say "NO" to Patrick. He



Patrick and Roberta with Bill Miley at Bill's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.

had asked Brian Asher to host in his lovely home, and between us we were able to pull it off. The only downside was that special guest Bob Hurst had been hospitalized that morning. We knew Bill would be very disappointed, but forged ahead. Needless to say, it was enjoyed by all with Patrick serving as host!

**JILL STANFORD [WARREN]** was a former owner of the Frederick Keil House and collected Colony artifacts. She donated many Colony items to the museum. Be sure to look online for her much longer and very charming reminiscences.

Patrick Harris came into our lives and ... there was laughter, there was complete immersion in Aurora and its history by Patrick and he was immediately adored...

When we put on the Quilt Shows, it must be pointed out that we were real amateurs at this. Patrick's enthusiasm was boundless and I remember flinging those precious quilts over the cords with him with NO GLOVES ON, and the SHADES WERE UP. We had a luncheon every day for the ladies who quilted in the fireplace room and Patrick loved the food that was served by the volunteers, a different one each day. He happily sat down with those ladies at the long table in the kitchen and helped himself to whatever hot dish was being served and soon had them laughing and giggling.

## AURORA MEMORIES

**KIM HIGGINS** *volunteers with events & school programs .*

**B**ack in the winter of 2019, Patrick, several volunteers and I were preparing for the students' arrival at the Village. We opened up the coffin in the tie shed to dust away the cobwebs and tidy up the mannequin inside. Always a favorite with the children as they heard the story of Dr. Keil's son, Willie, and his untimely death, the coffin and its contents had not survived the winter. We were dismayed to find "Willie" lying in a puddle of orange goo... his hair was orange, his clothing and shoes were orange, and the metal lining the coffin was— you guessed it— orange. Something had to be done and Patrick gave me the go-ahead to remedy the situation.



With the help of another volunteer, I stripped off Willie's hair, shoes, and clothing.... I dove in and cleaned him up [at home], reattached his arms with copious

amounts of duck tape, and bought him some period appropriate clothing, and a Justin Bieber wig. I repainted his face, paying special attention to his piercing blue eyes. ...He scared several people as they walked past, including yours truly, but we coped. At last his accessories— suspenders and a splendid bow tie— arrived, and Willie was ready to go "home."

Patrick welcomed us with open arms. Because the coffin still needed work, Patrick found a place for him in the kitchen, where Willie greeted Patrick each day with those piercing blue eyes. Apparently, we were a fan club of two, because we would often enter the kitchen to find that Willie had been turned to the wall. Patrick would carefully turn him around and give him a pep talk. Now we are a fan club of one. Willie will miss Patrick and all of the love and respect he gave him. Willie and I are now counting on the rest of the staff and volunteers to hold him in the esteem he deserves. And the coffin still needs work...

**ROB & NANCY DOWNIE** *are members and musicians who for 15 years have volunteered at ACHS, performing music of the Oregon Trail era in period costume as Heartstrings.*

**P**atrick was very welcoming to us when we arrived in Oregon (from Michigan) and very supportive of our period music. He worked tirelessly on behalf of the Aurora Colony and the preservation of the museum and its artifacts. He left us too soon and his shoes will be difficult to fill.

**JANE RICHARDSON** *volunteered from 2008 to 2014.*

**I** first met Patrick in Oregon City at the time of the Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial. I was a tour guide at the time, and was, of course, interested in meeting him and learning all I could. He was so helpful and a great representative for us to greet visitors. Then when I became a volunteer in Aurora with the Farm Program, there he was again!

The thing that impressed me, and convinced me to sign on, was the atmosphere and the total high regard for the volunteers and the commitment to the leadership of the board. The staff's respect and support of the volunteer program was so evident. I had been on the Girl Scout Council Staff and recognized the "feeling of the right way to do business!" Count me in. Patrick at the helm, with a fabulous staff. Always fun ...

**MARILYN "MAIZIE" YOSEMITE**

**T**here are so many pleasant memories I have of Patrick. Here is just one we shared. For a celebration of the anniversary of the end of the Oregon Trail, Patrick and I and several museum members attended the Pioneer Ball at the state capitol. There was music and dancing and free wine!

Patrick dressed in his quintessential Dr. Keil ensemble. I sewed a pioneer outfit which included a dress, pinafore and hat. This became the usual costume I wore when I volunteered at the Stauffer-Will Farm and other museum functions. I will always cherish this costume. I will remember Patrick any time I have an occasion to dress up as a pioneer.

**MARY ANN MOORE** *is a past board member and a lifetime member of ACHS, and a life member of the Aurora Colony Handspinners' Guild.*

**G**inger (Clare) Swift and I spent time with Patrick working at the World's Fair in Canada (Expo 86). The Aurora Colony Historical Society had an exhibit there. Recently just before Patrick had his stroke he and I were planning a visit to the museum and the new Preservation & Research Center building by the Adult Girl Scout Troop I belong to. Many of our members had helped with the Stauffer-Will Farm program at its beginning. We were all saddened that he could not be with us the day of our tour... *We all need to see that the new building houses the artifacts!! We all need to help in any way we can by making a contribution to the Aurora Colony Historical Society in his memory.*



*Maryanne Moore  
& Christine  
Thomas-Flitcroft*

**CHRISTINE THOMAS-FLITCROFT** *is a long-time ACHS member and hand spinner who also rented shop space at the Giesy General Store Building for 17 years.*

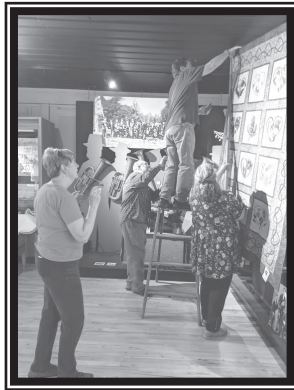
**P**atrick played a big part in working with and helping the Aurora Colony Handspinners' Guild put on the Antique Spinning Wheel Showcase. A small group of the Aurora Colony Handspinners' Guild members, which included Lori Cobb, Mary Ann Moore, and Ginger (Clare) Swift among others, brainstormed with Patrick back in 1982 to come up with an event that would help promote the museum and also promote the art and craft of hand spinning.

This year would have been our 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Showcase and we were planning on dedicating it to Patrick. He was always so helpful in getting ready for this event. He was always in attendance and had many great stories to tell. I think he particularly liked our soup kitchen where we had good food and plenty for all the volunteers to enjoy!

**SANDY NELSON** is a member of the Old Aurora Colony Quilters and has chaired the quilt show.

Every week as we quilted the raffle quilts and other fundraising quilts, Patrick would entertain us with stories of the Colony. With his gift for facial expressions and voice changes, not only were they educational, but also entertaining. He spoke as if he were telling stories of his relatives, which with all his study, they probably felt like it. He will be so missed in so many different ways.

Hanging quilts for the quilt show: “Patrick, move it a little to the right, no the other right, what part of right don’t you understand?” By the time all the quilts were hung, adjusted, switched around and tweaked we were all a bit rummy, but the laughter and productivity were still there, with Patrick always there and keeping us in line. Every show was a work of wonderful teamwork.



*L-R: Sandy Nelson, Patrick, Steve Freid, & Christina Leder hanging a quilt show*

**LARRY TOWNSEND** knew Patrick for 39 years as a board member, volunteer, and as friend and neighbor.



*One of Larry’s favorite pictures with Patrick. He says, “Patrick and Larry were a package deal for Tuesdays at the Village program.”*

*Larry wrote a wonderful but long and complex story about his first encounter with Patrick as a tour guide — and Patrick’s amazing memory — that can be found online.*

We went on multiple “road trips” over the nearly 40 years of our friendship. With Patrick’s encouragement, I volunteered for many events benefitting the museum, including starting the first auction fundraisers and even for a

position on the board for a few years. Patrick and I auctioned off gourmet dinners for 6-8 people at various venues. These were all great fun and along with our worker bees, Maizie Yosemite, Terri Roberts, Jan Egli, and my wife Karen, who was behind the scenes as “ringmaster.”



**CAROL BURGER** met Patrick around 2010, when she began quilting with the Old Aurora Colony Quilters and helping with the quilt show. She is board secretary.

Since Patrick died, I’ve been trying to come to this realization and it is so hard. I keep thinking I am going over to the museum and Patrick will

be there, smiling and happy and chuckling about some incident in history. I think I am still in shock.

Patrick was the woven fabric keeping our museum together. He, in his own quiet way, kept the wheels turning and our goals reached with his humor and underlying determination. Yes, he was a scholar, fund raiser, activities director and participant and so much more; he wore many hats on behalf of the museum. He was a star!

**KAREN TOWNSEND** has been a museum board member, and worked on Aurora Chamber/Visitor Association projects with Patrick: auctions, wagon train, and Emma Walk, to name a few.

A true artist must do his art, regardless of who sees it. As we all know, Patrick was an artist in not only photography but writing. Night after night, I would see him on his porch after a day at the museum, writing in long hand on a pad of paper. In complete absorption, getting his thoughts down. This was EVERY night when it wasn’t raining, winter cold or inhospitable so I expect on those nights he was inside, doing the same. I rarely waved as I drove by, I didn’t want to break the flow.



*Patrick’s own photo of his glasses, pen and journal on his Aurora house porch*

The 1993 Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial trip with Willie crossing the trail was a big deal for Aurora... Patrick, Earl & Dot Leggett, Diane Anderson, myself, and others of the Aurora Chamber wanted an Aurora wagon on this whole trail, from Missouri to Aurora... Aurora had the ONLY wagon from Oregon that made the whole trip! ... Patrick was the glue that held this together and made it fun.

**BILL WETTSTEIN** is a former board member.

Patrick Harris: Historian, intellectual, kind, considerate, a real gentleman and good friend.

There is no way to replace Patrick. He was one of a kind. It is the society’s great loss. Patrick carried the society and was up front and instrumental in making it to be what it is today. What a memory he had. Myself, having lived in Aurora since 1940, thought I knew a lot about the Aurora Colony until I would talk with Patrick. I knew people who were born in the Colony however I did not always know their relationships to others in the Colony until I would talk to Patrick. It was then that he would set me straight.



*Bill Wettstein at the P&R open house*

I believe everyone is aware that Patrick knew more about the Colony and its descendants than any of the descendants themselves. It was amazing how much he could tell some of these people things about their family that they did not know. So sad that you left us, with so many questions to ask and you being the one with all the answers. Sure wish we could have known you longer, Patrick. Sleep well friend.



# Old Aurora —Colony—

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[www.auroracolony.org](http://www.auroracolony.org)

### Find us:

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**Street address:** 15018 Second Street NE  
(Corner of Second & Liberty Streets)  
Aurora, Oregon 97002

**Phone:** 503.678.5754 **Fax:** 503.678.5756

The museum is currently closed, with staff on limited hours.

**With all summer events cancelled,  
we are working on a revised schedule:**

*We hope to hold a revised*

**Online Fundraising Auction August 29**  
*and are planning (with modifications) for the annual fall*  
**Quilt Show October 9-18**



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*The Aurora Colony Historical Society  
promotes interactive lifelong learning by  
inspiring curiosity about, and preservation of,  
the heritage of the Aurora Colony.*