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FEATURED

Caples House Museum The past is not far — 40 year anniversary

Amber Nobe Aug 24, 2010



The Caples House was built by Dr. Charles Caples in 1870 on the site of his father Joseph's original log cabin (built The house was donated to become a museum by Charles' daughter; the museum opened in August 1970.

Amber Nobe

MORE INFORMATION



In the grand scheme of things, the history of Columbia County's cities is fairly short. That said, there's quite a cont between the way the area's American settlers lived and ou current bustling lifestyle only a few generations later.



Caples House holds Valentine Tea

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[Caples House Museum](#)

The Caples House Museum in Columbia City doesn't just li us to those not-so-long-ago but often-forgotten times — it completely immerses us.

The museum celebrates its 40th anniversary this month. It great excuse (if you needed one) to visit the historic groun and quite literally take a step back in time.

Stroll among the prolific apple trees and imagine the sailbo breezing by on the Columbia are the steamboats of old. On you enter the two-story, white-washed home, your imagin won't have to work so hard.

From the iron stove oven (complete with 19th-century pan and waffle presses) to the original horsehair doctor's couc and wooden piano that had to be pulled through a window (the door frame was too narrow), the house is carefully restored to its 1870s beginnings.

The stairs are steep, narrow and creaky. The furnishings — most of which belonged to the Caples — are sparse but ornate. Plumbing that was installed in the 1930s has been removed.

Dr. Charles Caples practiced medicine in Columbia County the late 1800s. In 1870, he built this home on the former s his father Joseph's log cabin, which was constructed on a li claim in 1845.

(The wood for the cabin had already been milled and left b settlers who instead chose Fort Vancouver as their spot. Th was a good enough incentive for Joseph to be the first whi man living in the area that is now Columbia City.)

In 1959, Charles' daughter Dell Caples Houghton donated

property to the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAAR), a historical society that operates three other museums in the state.

The group spent 10 years restoring the home and grounds, discovering many original pieces in the attic and arranging them in the house as they had been during the doctor's time.

Then 100 years after it was built, the museum opened to the public with great fanfare — The Sentinel-Mist Chronicle reported nearly 1,000 visitors during the grand opening weekend in late August 1970.

Today, "the museum is functioning just about as it did when it opened," said Terry Maloney of St. Helens, who essentially directs the museum as a member of the DAR.

That means it's an authentic experience of a time when visitors came by river (there were no easy roads to St. Helens or Stumptown, aka Portland) and the Caples dreamed of Columbia City being the next big stop on the river after Astoria.

Make it a stop on your list of things to do before summer's over — there's much more to learn about the area's early history there.

The Caples House today

Tours

Museum tours are offered from 1-5 p.m. Fridays through Sundays in the months of March through October, or by appointment.

Be prepared for an authentic experience; three docents are

former teachers who know their stuff, and museum staff c
dress in period costumes.

Tours specialized for the little ones are available, with
scavenger hunts and other interactive features.

Events and activities

The museum hosts an afternoon tea every Friday, 2-4 p.m.
the Knapp Cultural Center for \$5.

A full spread of finger-food treats, an ornately decorated t
and conversation with local history buffs is a throw back to
old world tradition.

Besides tea, the museum hosts these events:

- Harvest Festival Oct. 16
- Craft Fair Nov. 6
- Christmas Ships viewing Dec. 11
- Valentine's Day tea in February
- Fleet Day viewing in May

The grounds are also open for general use — visitors can k
a picnic, use the museum's croquet set and buy a barrel of
apples for \$5.

Children's Attic

One of the few changes to the museum over the years is tl
transformation of the carriage house into the Children's At
where a vast collection of dolls, other period children's toy

and a train set delight younger visitors.

The doll collection includes one belonging to the Caples family, a full set of dolls dressed to represent all the First Ladies, and representatives from popular contemporary doll sets (original Barbies, Cabbage Patch Kids and American Girls).

"I want moms to be able to say, 'Oh, I had a doll like that' to their daughters," said Terry Maloney, museum director.

DAR

The local Daughters of the American Revolution chapter has about 35 members; more are always welcome. Contact Terry Maloney at (503) 366-4010.

Caples House Museum

1925 First St. in Columbia City

(503) 397-5390