When we reached Midland we were glad to be able to go inside the Community Center and eat our lunches away from the chill wind. Tables and chairs were ready for us as well as a big urn of hot coffee for those who had not brought a hot drink. We want to thank those people who had to forgo the tour to make us welcome and comfortable.

Verland Huff introduced the first speaker, Barney Hooper who told us his memories of Midland.

Barney's father, John D. Hooper, was the first to farm on Miller Island, which in about 1909, was mostly sagebrush and swamp land. Barney was born on Miller Island. His father owned 100 horses and mules and when the railroad was being built, Mr. Hooper helped to build it. He was well known around the area for being a very strong man, well able to do fetes of strength that would have downed an ordinary man.

Barney told us that Midland was the largest cattle exporting place in Oregon this side of Portland. There were no trains north of Midland and he saw thousands and thousands of cattle go by while he was sitting in school, which was about a quarter mile from Midland. The cattle were driven hundreds of miles to Midland.

Barney mentioned Alex Davidson who operated a cattle ranch 1/2
mile north of Midland before the railroad came to the Klamath Country. He took 100 steers to Dawson Creek in the Yukon. First he took them to Prineville and then on to Shaniko where the railroad from the north ended. He shipped the cattle to Seattle and then loaded them onto a boat going to Skagway, Alaska. He paid Indian guides to get them across the mountains and rivers and upon their arrival in Dawson, Alex sold them for $1 a pound.

Barney feels he has seen many, many changes in his life time and especially around the Midland area.

Verland next introduced Winston Patterson, born in Klamath Falls in 1914 to Irene and Clyde Patterson while the family was farming around Midland. He told us many things about his family and Midland during the time he was growing up. He and his wife, Louise, still live on their farm in the Worden-Keno area.

In 1906 the California Northeastern Railroad made a preliminary railroad line survey through the Lower Lake area into Klamath Falls. From their survey they located a point 414 miles from San Francisco and approximately 414 miles (railroad miles) from Seattle. They called this "Midway" station, Midland, Oregon, elevation 4,125 feet. Prior to 1906 this community was a part of the Spring Lake District.

A wet weather lake existed 1/2 mile southeast of the present town of Midland. A cold spring on the northeast shore of this lake flows into this lake, thereby the name "Spring Lake" came about, after which the Spring Lake Community was named. To my knowledge this spring varies very little, summer or winter, in flow. Its cold water was always refreshing to man and beast. The spring still existed in 1985 behind the Otis Osborn home.

In 1906 and 1907 the Railroad dike across Lower Klamath was being completed; this dike shut off the water from the Klamath River into the Lower Klamath allowing the swamp to dry up on some 22,000 acres covered with a mass of tules. As the water receded and the land became dry the tules were burned off as the swamp was prepared for cultivation.

By 1908 the Southern Pacific Railroad Co. had purchased the entire stock of the California Northeastern Railroad which had brought the rails into Butte Valley. Southern Pacific had laid
the ties and steel to Holland now known as Ady 4 1/2 miles south of present day Midland.

Midland was beginning to be a booming town. The railroad was laying ties and steel across Lower Lake using some 400 Chinese laborers. The ballast trains were following close behind. A large railroad construction camp existed 1/2 mile north of present day Midland. The depot was being built with its waiting-room, ticket office and freight storage room and with a large platform and ramp.

Stock corrals were under construction with loading chutes to load both cattle and sheep. The railroad section crew houses were being constructed along with a high 10,000 gallon water tank to furnish water for the steam locomotives, the section houses and stock corrals.

Ben Galloway's Green Store and post office was built earlier, and was the oldest building in Midland. A one room school was built about 1908 and another room and kitchen added some years later.

A two story hotel, eight rooms upstairs and saloon downstairs with kitchen and dining room facilities was being finished by Jack and Annie Davidson, who operated this facility until a Mrs. Power took over in 1913.

Bill Barks was building a large livery stable and barn along with some 20 acres of holding and sorting corrals with scales, which joined the railroad corrals.

Jim and George Jory built a beautiful home in the center of Midland, very elegant for those days. Close by they built a blacksmith and wagon repair shop.

A square front building, east of the hotel, was built but was never used. It was supposed to become a telephone and telegraph office.

A lumber yard near the depot furnished the lumber for all these buildings and corrals. This lumber yard existed for three years. The lumber was brought on barges, pushed by the steamer "Buffalo" up the west side of the newly constructed railroad dike and unloaded at the end of the resulting railroad slough.

The lumber came from a sawmill on the Flowers property southwest
of Teeters landing and from sawmills in Klamath Falls.

Construction of a large grain storage warehouse was started by Oak Boggs and Son and was built for Charlie and Ed Martin, owners of Martin Bros. Milling in Klamath Falls. This warehouse still stands in Midland west of the railroad tracks. For a time this warehouse was the social center of the community. Two celebrations were held in this warehouse, one in 1909 and another in 1916. This warehouse was the sacked grain shipping center for the Klamath Valley, including Merrill, Malin, Langell and Poe valleys.

Then in 1910 Ralph Vincent built another store just east of the hotel which was more modern than Galloway's Green Store. The post office was moved to the new Vincent Store. Anderson finally closed.

When the railroad reached Klamath Falls and beyond, thousands of cattle and sheep were brought into Midland from Eastern Oregon. The ZX at Paisley shipped thousands of cattle each year. Louie Gerber from Goodlow Mountain country shipped cattle several times a year. Other ranchers from Lakeview, Alturas, Klamath Marsh and Silver Lake were bringing cattle for shipment to the fattening yard near yards Bakersfield to the slaughter houses of Swift & Co. and Armour in South San Francisco. As many as four to five cattle buyers stayed at the hotel.

Additional holding corrals had to be built. When the ZX from
Paisley came in, the drive was strung from Midland to the Olene Gap, some 12 miles. The corrals wouldn't hold them so they bunched them in the Martin Bros. Warehouse area.

These cattle were wild range animals, they knew nothing of trains. One afternoon the corrals were full. Cattle were bunched in the town awaiting corral space. The local passenger train was due from Weed. Two cattle trains of 35 cars each were being loaded on the siding. The passenger train whistled as it came to the siding. The 7,000 head of cattle had never heard anything like that before and stampeded. The cattle in the corrals flattened the wood fences. The bunched cattle took off. The cattle ran from Midland beyond Miller Hill to near the present airport before they settled down. Over the next two days one of the biggest cattle round-ups occurred in that area. After that the trains slipped by without whistling.

The first (pioneers) in the Lower Klamath Lake area was perhaps, Zukorman Brothers from Stockton, California who used horses and horse tillage equipment to break down the tule roots into a culturable mulch on about 7,000 acres from the Klamath Straits (Ady) south to the California state line.

Mike Motschenbacher was attempting to bring some 2,500 to 3,000 acres under cultivation in the central-east side of the Lower Klamath. Mike lived in Klamath Falls, and his advise was quote: "You'd better get that grain planted before the snow disappears off of Haymaker Mountain or it will be too late." Haymaker is now called Hamaker Mountain and is the large mountain to the west.

Rye grain was the only crop that would partially grow in the tule roots and this crop was held back by the high alkali content in the soil. Barley and oats were complete failures.

Below Motschenbachers to the east, "Coyote" Hopkins farmed the dry hills and owned some 1,500 to 2,000 acres of Lower Klamath Lake.

A Japanese from the Stockton, California area, by the name of Yama Goochie brought in a 45 Holt tractor from Stockton to cultivate 800 acres of the Lane Ranch in Lower Lake, 2 1/2 miles south east of Midland. He raised rye also.

Clyde Patterson, my father, purchased the Carrack Ranch and the
Short Ranch, which extended into the northeast part of lower Klamath. We also raised rye. I might mention here that around 1902 to 1906 Short grew some of the first potatoes in the Klamath country. They were dry land potatoes.

The Carracks homesteaded on the shores of Lower Klamath on the northeastern shore. Mr. Carrack owned and operated a harness shop at Sixth and Main Streets in Klamath Falls where the First National Bank, renamed First Interstate Bank, now stands. Mr. Carrack was struck by lightening and killed while crossing Main Street.

Along present day U.S. 97 from Midland to Ady (Klamath Straits) is a 3,200 acre ranch now operated by "The Henzels". In the 1920's and 1930's we called this the "Chinaman Ranch".

Sing Kee, a prominent chinese businessman from China Town in San Francisco, purchased this property in about 1916, along with the Midland Hotel to house his chinese workmen. Sing Kee (as I understand from my folks) brought his friend and partner, Ching Lung, from China to oversee and run this farming operation. Sing Kee usually stayed in San Francisco and ran his business there. They brought in two large 75 Holt Crawler Tractors, tillage equipment, a huge 32 foot cut Harris Combine, all wood construction.

In 1919 my Mother took over the operation of the Midland Hotel, but the chinese stayed and boarded with us and my father helped them in their operations.
They raised a good crop of rye in 1920 or 1921 and about noon September 22nd the chinese crew went to lunch leaving their 75 Holt tractor and large Harris combine in the field not noticing that the combine had a red hot bearing. Upon their return the combine was a mass of flames. The tractor was burning as was the surrounding field of rye. By night most of Lower Klamath Lake area had burned, the Chinaman Ranch, the Lane Ranch (Yama Goochie) who lost his machine shed and 45 Holt Tractor, Mike Motschenbacher, the Hopkins property in Lower Lake, parts of Zukormans, across Klamath Straits, the Patterson property and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Land in the central part of the Lower Klamath Lake. From about 1910 to 1920 the tule roots had decayed into peat. This peat was from about 3 feet to 6 feet in depth. The fire set the peat soil on fire all over the Lower Klamath. The peat fires burned for two to three years to a depth of six feet. Spot fires were still burning six years later.

A strange phenomena occurred as the peat burned. The heat from the burning caused whirlwinds or devil winds as they are sometimes called. These swirling winds, up to 100 feet and larger in diameter picked up the burning peat and unburned peat which exploded into a raging inferno sometimes 2,000 feet or more in height. Just imagine fires 2,000 feet in height with a roar as loud as a jet airplane on take off, then combine 3 or more of these raging at one time, sometimes very near. People were frightened who did not realize where this huge, loud roar was coming from. I understand this roar was heard as far away as Crater Lake. Horses and cattle were wild with fright. Some people were sure we had-had it! This occurrence continued every summer for as long as the peat burned, or for two or three years.

During and after the fire in the peat came the dust storms or ash storms from the strong south winds we have. Sometimes a person could only see a few feet and could easily become lost. We could only wait out those storms which would deposit as much as 1 1/2 inches of ash on everything inside the houses. These storms lasted from 5 to 10 years and there is still evidence of them too. The ash was very irritating.

Today Lower Klamath grows barley, oats, potatoes etc. in large
quantities and is a prosperous part of our country.

Sing Kee died in San Francisco but Ching Lung became a resident of Merrill and today his family are very prosperous farmers and business people of our community.

When Winston had completed this much of the history of Midland, Jim Flowers, Verland Huff began to try to out-do each other with stories of Mr. John D. Hooper's strength and endurance. Several grandchildren were present and Barney Hooper of course, to verify these stories. We were all amazed at the strength of this man. Julian Ager added that his family lived about 4 miles from the Hoopers and he could vouch for Mr. Hooper's voice being as strong as the rest of him. Then Thelma Houck told us a few of her memories of this man. He loved to ride his horse and he also loved to read poetry to Thelma and the other children.

Verland told us; Mr. Hooper was a native of North Dakota. He married Anna Cook in Ashland, Oregon and they were married 56 years. He died 30 October 1945 at the age of 81 years and is buried in Linkville Cemetery in Klamath Falls.

Edna Belloni Flowers, bought the store and post office in 1924 and Jim remembers there were two saloons in Midland during the early years.
We again boarded the buses and drove on Highway 97 S. to Miller Island Road where we turned right, passed the Humane Society and turned onto Tingley Lane and eventually to Griffin Lane to a site on private land across the Klamath River from the former site of Merganser.

Devere Helfrich researched the Klamath County Records, United States Postal Records from the National Archives, History Of Central Oregon (1905) and got excerpts from the Ashland Tidings as well as a few reminiscences from old-timers who have long since passed away, to come up with the history of Merganser. The following is from Klamath Echoes #15 written in 1977.

The townsite of Merganser was on the west bank of Klamath River about two miles below Linkville, and the town came into existence in 1870. The cause of the founding of a town in such close proximity to the village of Linkville was that the proprietors of the older town site did not offer inducements to people to start in business in competition with the already established businesses and it was impossible to buy lots upon which to conduct a business which would in any way interfere with those already established.

Most of the men connected with the founding of Merganser arrived in Klamath County between 1869 and 1871 inclusive. The deeds
and patents to their land were recorded in Jackson and Lake Counties in which Klamath County was then situated and remained so until 1882.

The History of Central Oregon recorded that in 1870 a General Store was established by John P. Roberts and Albert Handy on a site later to become the town of Merganser on the west bank of the Klamath River about where the yards of the Kesterson Lumber Co. were in 1941.

On June 20, 1872 a post office was established in Jackson Co. with Albert Handy as postmaster. This post office, named "Klamath" was undoubtedly in the Handy and Roberts store which seems to have been located on or very near #1 Green, of the Reames Golf and Country Club. Since Handy and Roberts arrived in 1870 to start a general store supposedly on land then claimed by them, the southeast corner of the SW 1/4 of SW 1/4, Section 8, Township 39 South, Range 9 East, it is presumed that the post office would be located in this building. Theirs was the fourth post office in Klamath County because Linkville, Langell's Valley and Yainax preceeded it, having been established on November 1, 1871.

The State Board of Commissioners, by State Swamp Land Certificate #117 on March 13, 1873 sold to J.N.T. Miller a narrow strip of swamp land adjoining the Link or Klamath River's right hand bank between what used to be called in 1977, the Klamath View Auto Camp (and now in 1992 is called the Klamath View Trailer Court on Greensprings Drive) and the U.S. Highway 97 Bridge across Klamath River above Weyerhaeuser Lumber Company sawmill. This land was not connected with the townsite of Merganser, but a wagon road from the northwest end of the old Nus ferry and later Gleim bridge led north-westerly across it to Linkville and Whittle's Ferry (Keno) and on to Yreka and Ashland.

On April 9, 1873 the name of the post office "Klamath" was changed to "Lakeport" probably because an early General Land Office survey map showed the Lower Klamath Lake extended as far upstream as present Link River Bridge in Klamath Falls. The name Lakeport was again changed on May 19, 1875 to Merganser because there was a Lake City post office in Surprise Valley, Modoc County California which was on the same route which caused confusion with
the mail deliveries.

On April 2, 1874, the State of Oregon deeded 314.9 acres to Joseph Penning who had arrived in 1869. This land adjoined the J.N.T. Miller strip on the north and was later to contain most of what became the town site of Merganser.

Evidently as soon as Joseph Penning received title to his land, he sold a small portion to Albert Handy and John P. Roberts to complete title to land probably adjoining that upon which their store had been erected. This land lies immediately to the south of the southeast corner of Reames Golf & Country Club. Further it lies immediately to the north of the old Kesterson Lumber Mill, now owned by the Klamath Lumber Company. The description of the land in part read, "***known as Handy & Roberts, all that portion of blocks 1 and 3 in the town of Lakeport not already the property of said firm."

Following the close of the Modoc War the town took on new life and several new businesses joined the store, post office, blacksmith shop and the residence of Joseph Penning; a harness shop by Robert T. Baldwin, and a large hotel built by John Gleim. When the harness shop moved to Linkville the building was then occupied by the brewery of Paul Breitenstein. Paul and Anna Breitenstein with their son Richard "Dick" (born in California in 1878) arrived in the Klamath Country sometime in 1879.

The town was short-lived though. Roberts and Handy secured a site in Linkville and moved from Merganser; the blacksmith shop moved elsewhere and the brewery closed. After this Merganser passed away in all but the memories of those who had lived there prior to 1880. Dead but they say never officially vacated.

Probably the only one born in Merganser due to its short life, was Charles Innes Roberts born January 27, 1876 to Harriet Baldwin Roberts and John P. Roberts. Mrs., John P. Roberts was the daughter of Robert T. Baldwin, one of the businessmen of Merganser. Later Charles I. Roberts was a prominent businessman in Klamath Falls, owning a hardware store under such names as: Roberts and Hanks; Roberts and Harvey; Roberts and Peak and finally Roberts Hardware which was burned out in the Evans Apartment fire on February 1947.

The Breitenstein family continued to live in Linkville and
Klamath Falls. Richard married and had two sons, one a long time Pharmacist here and now his son is a Doctor of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology living here. Those four generations plus the grandchildren of Art and Ellen make five generations of Breitensteins who have lived here.

The bridge which spanned the Klamath River from Merganser to the other side was left to rot and fall away. The last of it was torn down when the first steamboat was placed in commission on the river.

It was on this other side of the Klamath River at the Merganser Crossing that our Tour took us. The Griffith family own the property through which we passed to the river and Gary Griffith and his sister, Margy Divine met us and explained the old buildings to us. One old building had been a stagecoach stop on the way to Merganser. At that time there was a porch all the way around the house and a place on the roof to watch for the approach of the stagecoaches. There were old out-buildings around which were stables and barns and on the hill with the stagecoach stop building were other houses for some of the employees.

Jim Flowers told us that his brother George and his wife had lived in one of the houses in 1939 when they were first married.
Verland introduced Mrs. Kit (Richard) Baldwin who gave us some history of Merganser. Her husband, Richard, had been very interested in Merganser and made quite a study of it but as Mrs. Baldwin told us, most of her information came from the history of Merganser as written in Klamath Echoes #15 by Devere Helfich and the History of Central Oregon.

Mrs. Baldwin first told us how Merganser got its name. "A Merganser is a very beautiful duck, especially the hooded Merganser which has a very large black and white crested head. It likes to nest near the water and because it eats fish it has a fishy taste. So, I don't think many hunters take it home for dinner. The story goes that two scotsmen named Ennis were hunting one day in the vicinity and shot a Merganser duck. The name of the town was being considered at the time and they suggested the name "Merganser" which was adopted. So strangely enough the town was named for a duck".

Mrs Baldwin told us one of her husband's greatest desires was to have a historical marker for Merganser because of its role in the history of Klamath County. His wish will come true with the help of the Klamath Chapter of the Daughters of the American Colonists.

After wandering around looking and taking pictures we again boarded the buses and returned to the Museum, the end of our tour.

Transcribed from tape, researched and written by Mae L. Smith
KLAMATH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OFFICERS FOR 1993.

President: Wayne Scott
Vice President: Billie Fitzhugh
Secretary: Janis Kafton
Treasurer: Paul Fitzhugh

In addition, the following representatives serve on
the Society’s Board of Directors:
Carolyn Dearborn and James Flowers.
with Carol Mattos, as past president.

Just a reminder to let you know your 1993 Dues are now
due. Dues are $5.00 per person.

Dues must be paid if you wish to continue to receive
The Trumpeter.

Send your payment to: Klamath Historical Society
1451 Main Street,
Klamath Falls, Oregon 97601.

The first meeting of the year will be held Thursday,
January 28th. at 2 P.M. in the Museum Meeting Room with
the entrance on Spring Street. See you there.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!