

Help us make it happen!



Jefferson County Museum Project

Jefferson County is a fast-growing, dynamic community with rich history, amazing stories and inspirational people. Yet it remains the only county in Oregon without a county museum.

Your Jefferson County Historical Society is changing that!

From its beginnings in the 1960s, the Jefferson County Historical Society has been dedicated to celebrating, preserving and showcasing history of the county. In the mid-'70s, a small museum started upstairs in the original county courthouse building on Sixth and D Street in Madras. The building was condemned in 2011, compelling our collection be put in storage. Since then, the Historical Society has endeavored to re-establish a museum. Multiple efforts over the years to partner with local organizations failed to come to fruition.

In May 2025, we made a major investment toward reaching that goal. With an assist from Jefferson County, we purchased the historic Fralic Methodist Church, an iconic structure built in 1908-09. While added to over the years, it retains its original classic look with its tall steepled and functioning bell tower.

Inside, the wide-open interior allows for creation of a first-rate grand room exhibit hall. Smaller rooms provide areas for focused exhibits, a children's area, gift shop and support services. The building has 6,400 square feet of potential, including a full basement. Our plans utilize the main floor for exhibition and downstairs for storage and research. Upgrades and maintenance over the years have kept the building in great shape.

There is a need, however, to undertake some changes before we can open as a public museum. Sitting on a half-acre lot, the museum has space for on-site storage of artifacts, allowing for regular renewal of exhibits.



Our Historical Society is determined to create an outstanding museum the community can take great pride in, benefiting our local economy and livability. We have a vast collection of county archives, historic photographs and artifacts waiting to tell the story of Jefferson County.

We have a dedicated board with individuals who bring many talents in our mission to open a museum, and we are eager to find supportive partners who, like all of us, value the importance of our local history.

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Restoration Projects planned before we open:

- **Exterior** - Enhance the existing siding with restoration of original wood siding, replacement of damaged elements, with a focus on returning the exterior to its historic look. The JCHS is seeking a Diamond in the Rough Oregon grant in Spring 2026 with the eventual goal of the 115-year-old building being placed on the National Historic Register.
- **HVAC system** - The facility has heating for both floors but no air conditioning. JCHS obtained a \$20,000 matching Oregon Heritage Grant in Fall 2025. The cost to update the HVAC system was bid at approximately \$45,000. Completion of the project is targeted for 2026.
- **Entrance and sidewalks** - The entrance will need to be made to ADA-standards, and that will entail concrete work and a new entry door. The sidewalk project will focus on the south and west sides of the building. The JCHS plans to create a courtyard/entrance area on the east side of the building to feature landscaping and engraved pavers to fundraise and honor contributors to the museum project.
- **Restrooms** - Existing restrooms need renovation to meet ADA-standards.
- **Flooring** - Installation of commercial grade wood or wood laminate flooring in the upper floor (public museum area) and stairwell to lower floor replacing older carpeting for safety and aesthetics.

**These projects will be done as funding is obtained.
We are actively seeking grants and donations,
and 2026 will be an important year for the project.**

How you can help us open the museum:

Make a tax-deductible donation. The Jefferson County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and your contribution is tax-deductible. It is also a member organization of the Oregon Cultural Trust, which can provide additional tax benefit to your donation. You can direct your contribution specifically to the Museum Project or to the Jefferson County Historical Society in general for future museum operations.

Join the historical society. Your membership will help fund improvements and contribute to our sustainability. Individual memberships are currently just \$25 per year, \$50 for family, \$150 for patron. Become a benefactor for \$500 or more. Mail membership check to JCHS, P.O. Box 647, Madras, OR 97741.

The Jefferson County Historical Society:

Dedicated to opening a museum and the maintenance and preservation of our collection • Holds community History Pubs • Produces the award-winning *Agate*, a local history publication • Hosts a popular monthly trivia night as a fundraiser • Maintains our website: Jeffcohistorical.org. • And much more!



One of our museum plans is to have a children's area, with tangible elements to bring history alive to modern kids. This photo is of a girl with a watermelon taken at her family's Culver-area homestead in the early 1900s.

Among the initial plans for the Jefferson County Museum:

- Open, well-lit modern concepts and design.
- Displays and presentations using the latest digital technology.
- Walking-tour timeline of Jefferson County history.
- Large format historical photography adorning walls.
- Regularly updated programs, displays and events.
- Displays honoring our community's Native American and Hispanic influences.
- Children's area.
- Gift shop.