



# Siuslaw Pioneer Museum

## *Desperation to Abundance*

This year we will present a series on two important families in Florence history, Kyle and Bergman. As research commenced, our volunteers began to better understand what it must have been like to feel so desperate that you HAD to leave your home (an environment of pollution, disease, and famine) and try to find a better way of life.

As you learn about these two families, it becomes clear that when they finally settled in the Siuslaw Valley their lives changed immeasurably and their environment was one of great abundance of fish, timber, minerals, and wildlife. Can you imagine moving to a new country where vast forests of timber covered the land, vast schools of fish filled the waterways, and there were vast areas of open landscape for settlement?

We're going to begin by setting the stage of what life was like, in the home countries of these two men, around the time that the Kyle and Bergman immigrants left their mother countries and came to the United States and the Pacific coast.

John Bergman was born in Hannover, Germany and William Millree Kyle was born in Glasgow, Scotland.

**What do you think motivated your ancestors to leave their homeland and settle in other locations?**

Merilee Mulvey- KRL Volunteer Editor  
Kyle Research Library at SPM



Source: Getty Images – artist rendition of Glasgow Scotland circa 1750-1800

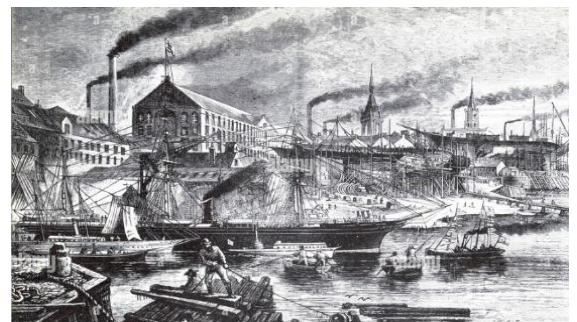
## **GLASGOW, SCOTLAND** **In the mid- 1700s**

Everything about the story of the Kyle family starts in Glasgow in the mid-1750's; the industrial age was beginning there with factories producing sugar as its main product. By 1755 Glasgow's population had reached 23 thousand; linen and cotton were now products produced by even more of the stone factories being built. With access to the river Clyde merchant trade routes were established, shipping sugar and cotton to the Americas by 1776.

The once small borough of Glasgow was growing fast. As the 1800's dawned they brought gas-lit streets at night and in early 1840's the railway system was starting to expand throughout Europe and "Railway Fever" was changing the landscape. As Glasgow connected with the iron rail system people poured in looking for work and every aspect of Glasgow began to expand.

Cont'd on page 2

Image source:  
Clyde Shipyards,  
Scotland about  
1860.  
[www.alamy.com](http://www.alamy.com)





**Glasgow**, Scotland/Cont'd from page 1

Manufacturing was at this time. Modern railways connected the import & export harbor. With linen, cotton, and sugar now staple exports, iron & steel foundries began establishing their manufacturing footprint.

The labor force was also appearing; coming from Ireland and fleeing the famine were large groups of Irish, filling ships to their capacity and arriving daily in Glasgow. There was also a migration of people coming down from the Scottish Highlands with the same intent; but a bitter welcome it would be.

Glasgow was having difficulties dealing with this wave of newcomers. Residents of the city were feeling overrun; existing living conditions in the lower part of town were primitive at best. The riverbanks were beginning to become lined with makeshift camps. Streets were saturated with overcrowding; typhus and famine fever were on the rise. Churches were full and resources were diminishing.

Infrastructure was basically non-existent, so not only did they face the physical challenge of establishing the basic needs to exist, but they were also subjected to the element of racial bias that local morality inflicted upon them. Several articles from the Glasgow Courier addressed them as “vagrants ripe with disease.”

In June of 1847 the Glasgow Courier stated, “they are to be seen everyday squatting in squalor, stretched in a step of suffering covered in rags and filth in the public Thorofare”. It was a fully functioning humanitarian crisis by today’s standards, seen then as just another day.

## Hannover, Germany In the mid- 1800s

Until 1803, Hanover, Lower Saxony, Germany was occupied by the French and Prussian troops as a constituent state of the Holy Roman Empire. It gained independence in 1814 and was raised to a kingdom which lasted until about 1866.

During the period 1848-49 (when John Bergman was born) hard times were sweeping over the continent as discontent with the German Confederation became full-blown revolution. Severe economic depression halted industrial expansion and caused urban unemployment. Serious crop failures led to a major famine. Those hungry lower classes suffered dramatically, to the point of open rebellion.

As the 1850s evolved through political, industrial, and social confusion, eventually unification began to coalesce and the industrial revolution helped the country’s economic expansion. This would have greatly impacted the shipping and fishing industries as immigrants moved to the United States and tapped into the country’s perceived unlimited supplies of timber, fish, and crop land.



## John McNab Kyle & Isabella Millree

**John McNab Kyle** and **Isabella Millree** were joined in marriage in Govan on 23 May 1852 at the old Govan church. Govan is a small township just a few blocks from the river Clyde in Glasgow. At the time of their marriage, records show John living at 30-Watt Rd just a few blocks east from Govan and a couple of blocks south of the river Clyde in Glasgow. The family later moved to 66 Nelson St; all these addresses are very close to what is now the Kingston Bridge.

Our research indicates that (at the time) the whole area surrounding the Kingston Bridge from the Clyde River back was full of stone tenement buildings (dense, tight units stacked up to house the families and immigrants that provided the labor to fuel industrial economy's engine). John worked as a cloth cutter/tailor and Isabella was a seamstress as their family grew. Their first child, Margaret, was born in 1853. Next, first son John was born in 1855, then a daughter Mary in April of 1856, followed by **William Millree** in May of 1858, with two sisters next, Isabella in 1860 and Agnes Jane in 1862. Families were large and childhood deaths were common.

At some point between 1858-60 the family briefly relocated some 35 miles to the northeast of Glasgow to a suburb known as Mar Place, 30 Bach Stair, Alloa near the river Forth. By the 1871 census, Isabella had recently died and the family had moved back to Watt Street.

During his adolescence, William Millree Kyle was exposed to the daily rituals of the old Glasgow docks. The comings and goings of many ships either bringing bulk supplies or loading with the manufactured goods of Glasgow processed for export. The docks couldn't expand fast enough to accommodate the amount of traffic accumulating at this popular port. Ships tied up at long running docks and warehouses that ran the length of the river on both sides all the way to the Kinning Park and Govan.

It was easy to find work doing odd jobs in those days. Labor was cheap and much sought after. If you could do the work and keep up with the pace you were hired. By 1868 William was 10; the docks were starting a huge expansion project to be known as the "Queens Dock" which would create a much-needed upgrade to this bustling port. The streets of Glasgow in those days were simple and direct. You had the river Clyde running down the center, dock & warehouses then

Cont'd page 4

## John Bergman, Capt. & Christina Boveng

**John Bergman** was born on 8 June 1847 in Hannover, Lower Saxony, Germany.

Family history information (from the series "The Centennial History of Oregon 1811-1912") indicates John became involved with the sea as a teenager around the age of 15 years. His father is said to have died at the early age of 29 years, which would have put quite a hardship on John's mother and his siblings. As noted in this newsletter page 2, the economic climate of Lower Saxony was not ideal during John's childhood years.

The biographical information about John states that after several years as a deep-water sailor, he emigrated to the USA circa 1869 (about age 22) and spent about a year in New York. Possibly traveling on the Schooner "Forest King", John sailed to the Oregon Coast, eventually making his way to the Columbia River area of Oregon state and became engaged in the fishing industry.

The schooner "Forest King" was depicted in the image below of a three-masted sailing vessel.



It is a watercolor painting of the "Forest King" of Fairhaven, Massachusetts; Oliver E. Briggs, Commander, leaving Marseilles March 29, 1866.

**Source:** <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Forest-King-of-Fairhaven--Oliver-E-Briggs/A21E60DAE47522A8>

Fairhaven, Massachusetts was a major shipbuilding town as far back as the early 1700s in America. It became a town of shipwrights, ship chandlers, ropemakers, coopers, and sailmakers.

Cont'd page 4

## John McNab Kyle

Cont'd from page 3

factories and tenant housing moving outward from the river. Walking distance was good, a horse and cart better if affordable. The streets of Glasgow in those days were extreme; you were exposed to the raw realities of life. If the vagrancy, poverty and stench of poor sanitation didn't kill you, the labor working conditions could as well. This was just part of existence and William Millree Kyle was seeing and learning the lessons of life firsthand.

Though there were schools and institutions of higher learning at that time, we were unable to discover if William had ever attended any schooling at all. In those days usually only upper middle class and the elite were allowed to scholar; even though an education act was passed it was not enforced. The same was true with the child labor laws. These were some of the early attempts and efforts at confronting and protecting children from the perils of everyday life.

The family must have been able to afford some help in the home because they had a servant during the 1861 census. If both parents were working then it made sense to have help at home with the children and meals. In April 1870 the rug was pulled out from under this fragile family. **Isabella Millree Kyle** succumbed to an illness at the age of 42. How does this father of six children ages 8 to 17 years cope with everyday life? Middle child, **William Millree Kyle** was just 12 years old at the time.

Within a year (1871), John McNab Kyle married a younger woman, **Elizabeth Salter**, the daughter of a local innkeeper John Salter. The family moved around 1872 to London, England. Possibly, John had obtained a better job as a tailor...

The family number fluctuated over the next few years. Elizabeth had two children, Robert in 1875 and Christina "Eliza" in 1883. Sadly, John lost the youngest two children from his first marriage; Agnes died in 1873 at the age of 11 years and her older sister, Isabella (named after her mother), died two years later, in 1875 at age 15.

By 1881, the family was firmly settled in St. Matthew, London, England. John was a "tailor's cutter" and Eliza was a "dressmaker." John died in 1887 and Elizabeth died 32 years later in 1919.

## John Bergman, Capt.

Cont'd from page 3

A Schooner was typically a two or three masted sailing vessel with fore and aft sails. Though originally based on a Dutch design of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the first genuine schooner was developed in the British North American colonies, possibly in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1713 by a shipbuilder named Andrew Robinson.

Schooners (fore-and-afters) were excellent for coastal sailing, handling better in coastal winds, with shallower drafts for shallow waters, and required a smaller crew in proportion to their size.

John signed on to the "Forest King" in **1870** as it set out for the Pacific coast by way of Cape Horn. Later that year he made his way to the Columbia River where he became involved in the fishing industry. After purchasing an interest in a cannery, for the next few years John built up that business of canning salmon and lived in Astoria, Oregon. He sold out his interest in that business and purchased a canning establishment at **Florence, Oregon**. That business was booming for four years and then he sold it and purchased the passenger steamer "Favorite."

The steamer "Favorite" may have looked like this...



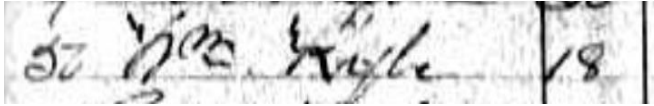
John purchased the steamer "Favorite" about **1887** and put it into service, with himself in command, for about three years, engaging largely in government work at Umpqua, Oregon. During that period, he was involved in the rescue of passengers from the ship "**Tacoma**" off the Oregon coast. (That story will be told in a future issue of the newsletter.)

Shortly after the rescue event, John sold his steamer and received the appointment of **Keeper & Master of the Life-Saving station at Jaquina Bay in Newport, north of Florence, Oregon.**

## William Millree Kyle

John's son, **William Millree Kyle**, was born on 22 May 1858 in Tradeston, Glasgow, Lanark, Scotland. His travels across the world to the North American continent are still being researched by our staff.

Preliminary research indicates he went to sea at age 14, possibly as a stowaway or cabin boy around 1871-72. Records from Ellis Island New York, 1877, show him arriving on the ship "Celtic", occupation laborer age 18 years.



The U.S. Census for 1880 shows him in Astoria, Oregon at age 22 occupied as a fisherman and living at house #9 in Upper Astoria, a large boarding house with many other boarders involved in the fishing industry.

We know he traveled on a vessel named "Parsee" around the Cape of Good Horn. A news article from the Eugene Register Guard 1943 mentioned that Mr. Kyle first came to [Florence](#) in 1884 on the steamer "Mischief".

*We will continue William Millree Kyle's story in the next issue of the newsletter. His daughter eventually would marry Captain John Bergman's son...*

## HOW DID THE TWO MEN MEET?

The **1880** U.S. Census for Upper Astoria, Oregon shows **John Bergman** living at a boarding house in that town.

Kyle William	W M 22	Boarder	1	Fisherman
McDonnell William	W M 21	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Jarvis James	W M 25	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Deiger William	W M 24	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Morton John	W M 40	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Morton Fred	W M 42	Boarder	1	Fisherman
McCallister St.	W M 60	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Jackson John	W M 38	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Bolling James	W M 22	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Columbus John	W M 47	Boarder	1	Fisherman
Bergman John	W M 31	Boarder	1	Chit Tender

We see that John was 31 years old and his occupation was "net tender." Most of the other boarders were in the fishing industry as well. On the same page of that exact census report, just 10 lines above John's entry... was the son of John McNab Kyle... **William Millree Kyle**, age 22 years and occupation "fisherman."

*We will continue John Bergman's story in the next issue of the newsletter, which will cover his career at the Yaquina Life Saving station and his son's marriage to the daughter of William Millree Kyle.*

### Marriage William Millree Kyle & Kajsa Stina "Christina" Boveng

**William Millree Kyle** was born in Scotland in 1858 and his wife Christina was born in Sweden in 1861.

The *Oregon, U.S. County Marriage Index 1851-1975* lists the couple's marriage date as **8 Feb 1882** in Clatsop County, Oregon

The couple had the following children:

William John "Mike" Kyle	1883 - 1963
David Magnus Kyle	1884 - 1950
Edwin Helmer Kyle	1886 - 1957
<b>Isabella Florence Kyle</b>	1889 - 1978
Otto Millree Kyle	1903 - 1903

### Marriage John Bergman (Captain) & Helena "Lena" Moy

**John Bergman** was born in Germany in 1847 and his wife Lena was born in Switzerland in 1860.

The *Oregon Biographical Card File, 1700s-1900s* lists the couple's marriage date as **29 Sept 1880** most likely in or near Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon. This was his first of three marriages and only children.

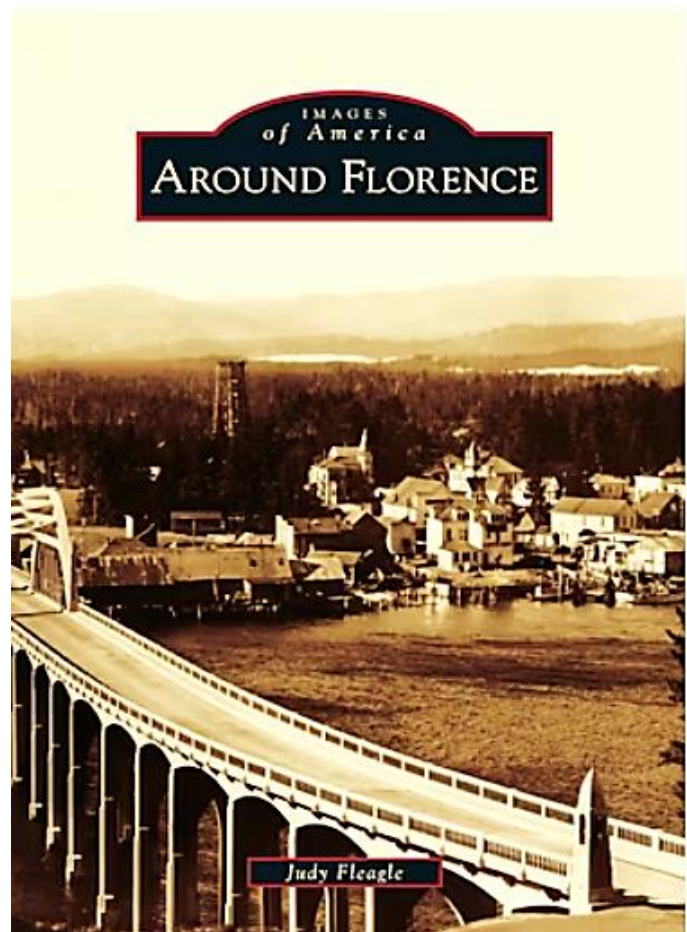
The couple had the following children:

<b>John William Bergman</b>	1884 - 1922
Carl Frederick Bergman	1885 - 1970
Henry Ludwig Bergman	1888 - 1961
Mary Augusta Bergman	1889 - 1937
Frederick Bergman	1891 - 1891



## ***Congratulations***

to Judy Fleagle on her 22 years as a docent for Siuslaw Pioneer Museum. Judy is a retired school teacher and popular local author of numerous books. We appreciate her wit, humor and ability to light up a room! Her book, *Around Florence* is available to purchase in our museum gift shop.





## **Preserving our Past: Museum Launches Wall Reconstruction Campaign**

The Siuslaw Pioneer Museum is launching a campaign to save its west wall. Time has taken its toll on our beloved museum and we are now facing a critical challenge: the west wall has suffered significant dry rot damage, threatening the structural integrity of the building and the priceless artifacts it houses. As custodians of the Siuslaw Valley's rich history, we've launched the West Wall Reconstruction Project to address this urgent issue. Our plan is straightforward, but ambitious.

To begin with, we are in the process of conducting a professional assessment to determine the full extent of the damage and a price estimate for repairs. Once that is complete, we will continue our fundraising campaign for this project until early summer 2025, at which point reconstruction will begin.

Fundraising has already begun and we have set a tentative fundraising goal of about \$70,000 from local donations. Because the final cost of this project is not yet known (as we await the assessment) and will certainly exceed our local fundraising goal, we are actively seeking support through other means such as grants, community donations, and partnerships.

It is a formidable undertaking, but essential. The museum is more than just a collection of artifacts; it's a vibrant hub where history comes to life. Our exhibits, such as Indigenous artifacts and displays like Jean's Sewing Shoppe, help connect visitors to the past in tangible ways. Programs like the Heritage Players' historical reenactments and free entry days for low-income families make history accessible to everyone.

Without a secure and stable building, these invaluable programs and resources are at risk. And left unaddressed, the dry rot issue will eventually lead to structural failure, jeopardizing the preservation of the priceless historical artifacts that embody the Siuslaw Valley's rich heritage.

By launching the West Wall Reconstruction Project, we are not just repairing a wall—we're preserving the stories, artifacts, and experiences that define our community. This project will ensure that the museum remains a cornerstone of cultural education and pride for years to come.

And we can't do this without you. Your generosity can make all the difference in reaching our goals and ensuring the museum remains a vibrant part of Florence's future. To donate or learn more about the museum, visit [www.siuslawpioneermuseum.com](http://www.siuslawpioneermuseum.com), call us at 541-997-7884, or send a check to Siuslaw Pioneer Museum Association, PO Box 2637, Florence, OR 97439. Together, we can safeguard our past for generations to come.



P.O. Box 2637  
Florence OR 97439  
Return Service Requested

MAILING LABEL

### Upcoming Events

January – March 2025

Jan 13 Board Meeting at museum  
Feb 10 Board Meeting at museum  
Mar 10 Board Meeting at museum

Keep abreast of happenings at the museum...

Visit us at:

e-mail

[library@siuslawpioneermuseum.com](mailto:library@siuslawpioneermuseum.com)



website

[www.SiuslawPioneerMuseum.com](http://www.SiuslawPioneerMuseum.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/Siuslaw-Pioneer-Museum>

Newsletter:

In transition... we'll keep you informed of our new newsletter email address soon.

### Thank You

Many thanks to these area businesses and organizations for their support throughout the years:

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Coast Radio KCST                                   | Ray Wells Inc            |
| Florence Dental Clinic                             | River House Inn          |
| Florence Motor Sports                              | Ron's Paint & Supply     |
| Goodman's Floor Coverings                          | Three Rivers Casino      |
| Heceta Self Storage                                | Tony's Garage            |
| Hoagland Properties                                | WG Peterson Woodwrk'g    |
| Kitchen Klutter Inc                                | Pro Lumber Inc           |
| Lofy Construction                                  | Port of Siuslaw          |
| Northwest Land Surveying Inc                       | Shipping Solutions       |
| Old Town Barbershop                                | Oregon Pacific Banking   |
| Western Lane Fire/EMS Authority                    |                          |
| Sea Lion Caves                                     | Davidson Industries      |
| Ada Grange #570                                    | Ladies of Elks, Florence |
| OSSDAR-Daughters of the American Revolution-Oregon |                          |