Sturgeon, who curated the exhibit. "It's a lot of fun, of course, but you don't realize until you start researching that the connections are just everywhere."

Peter Booth, Executive Director of the Center, adds, "Oregon brewing touches on agricultural workers as well as farm owners. It touches on industry. It touches significantly on women's history, too, because the people most responsible for getting women the right to vote got their political experience in the temperance movement."

"In fact, the leading argument against women's suffrage in Oregon was that if women voted, prohibition would follow. And it turned out that's just what happened!"

Exhibits show workers in fields of hops, which have grown in the Willamette Valley for more than one hundred years. It shows Henry Weinhard's factory in Portland as well as working men and forgotten breweries in towns large and small — some of which thrived and many of which failed.

The many containers in which beer has been stored through the years are on display: the impact of Prohibition in Oregon is explored. Intriguing "giveaways" by saloons and women's temperance anti-beer tracts and poems are included; items you'd never think of seeing. From the first brewmasters in the Fort Vancouver of 1826 to the emergence of 14 important regional microbreweries in recent decades, those who attend the exhibit will learn how the brewing of beer, which began more than 6,000 years ago by ancient peoples, has impacted the people of our state.

Salem enthusiasts will be particularly interested in the story of Salem Beer, Booth believes. Sam Adolph founded the first brewery in town at Church and Trade Streets in 1862. "Salem Beer reflected a lot of the industrial nature of Salem, as well as area agriculture. Workers were invited to local saloons for a free lunch on the understanding they would buy a pull of beer." History on Tap examines the cultural and economic role of Oregon generally, and the Mid-Valley specifically, as one of the nation's largest beer producers.

When the Willamette Heritage Center was reorganized in recent years, a new mission was established to explore different aspects of Willamette Valley heritage than had been shown before. Salem's early history and the prominence of the modern beer culture made History on Tap a natural topic.

"In lots of ways telling the history of brewing in the Pacific Northwest and Willamette Valley embodies what the [Willamette Heritage] Center has become," says Sturgeon. "[It's] a place that tells the history of the whole valley, puts it into both local and national contexts, and shares and presents everything in a fun way. And this exhibit even puts us into the story of when brewing started, more 6,000 years ago. The more you look, you see the connections are everywhere."

Both Booth and Sturgeon credit a host of local historians, historical societies and civic-minded citizens for contributing to the impressive displays of objects and photographs. The exhibit is sponsored in part by Gillgarnesh Brewery, McMennamins, Loustic, Pale Horse, Terri and Greg Olson, City of Salem Transient Occupancy Tax Grant, and Salem Weekly.

History on Tap is enhanced by a number of intriguing individual programs (see side bar). As well as provoking curiosity and providing entertainment, the exhibition serves as proof of the adage that more things are connected than we ever first imagine.