The Pursuit of Happiness
A History of South Portland

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History, like an ocean wave, surges through time and space with unseen origins and unknown consequences. While its workings are hidden, it is very much alive. For us, both history and language are born with the first story. It is the telling then that makes history for us. The historian remembers, recalls, awakens and revitalizes buried moments- into meaning, song and even breath itself. Thus we begin -- again --breathing in the past.

These things whose life
Is a constant leaving, they know when you praise them. Transient, they trust us, the most transient, to come To their rescue…

Rainer Maria Rilke
Duino Elegies, Ninth Elegy
The Pursuit of Happiness
A History of South Portland

The Gateway

Before Portland existed, South Portland was already the gateway into the fertile Willamette Valley. It was the pinch point for transportation. There the Tualatin Mountains press up against the Willamette River where it becomes too shallow for big boats. And beyond, the Willamette River flows northward through the heart of the valley, connecting the fabulous Willamette and Tualatin Valleys to the massive Columbia River and hence to the Pacific Ocean. Natives had used this waterway for generations and guided explorers in the 1700s. A major Indian trail from Mount Hood crossed the Willamette River near to present SW Gibbs Street from where it branched. One main branch headed north to The Clearing and another went south to Diamond Head near a little island on the north side of Lake Oswego. By crossing the upper portion of the lake, this route served as the main Indian trail that went to Willamette Falls and California. Another trail led into the Tualatin Valley and west. Thus it was that by the early 1800s, trappers and traders were traveling upriver on the Willamette in canoes and moving along the old Indian trails- looking for opportunities. This valley became known as an Eden, land of fulfillment, for those who transformed the challenges of America’s western expansion into their own manifest destiny and searching for the American Dream.

During in the salmon season, the Great Falls on the Willamette was second only to the Columbia River Cascades as a place for gatherings of all Indian nations of the Northwest. At the Great Falls, Doctor John McLoughlin built a town where all river traffic stopped. But Oregon City never grew into a major city because it wasn’t the true “head of navigation” where large ships can moor. Similarly, several other towns down river like Milwaukie, Willamette Falls and Gladstone failed their ambitious developers because none of them could develop a harbor for ocean vessels either. In fact, all large ships had to stop several miles downstream before they ran aground. The river was simply too shallow at Ross Island where sand and gravel bars reduced the river depth to as low as four feet in the summer. From there, products would have to be transported up and downriver by flat bottomed riverboats, wagons and later railroads.

For Portland was the true head of navigation: the farthest point on a river to which ocean-going ships could proceed at all seasons of the year. Thus, ocean vessels could travel over 100 miles upriver from the dreaded Columbia Bar at Astoria, but not beyond what became known later as South Portland.

Portland grew quickly, simply because of these geographic constraints at the south end of town where a sandbar blocked the river. And overlooking this troublesome Ross Island Bar, William Johnson built the first cabin in the area of a future Portland-- and settled at what is the oldest continually inhabited site in Oregon’s largest city. Johnson was a restless adventurer and trapper who had decided to become a riverboat pilot. He settled at an ideal location to engage and
pilot boats through the shallows upstream to the Falls. A mile downriver and a
year later, the town of Portland was platted at the deep harbor site near a bend in
the river-- at “The Clearing” just north of Ross Island. The future South Portland
was a choke point that dictated a Willamette Valley “head of navigation” that
came the city of Portland. Johnson had quietly settled into a significant
physical and cultural choke point or funnel for the west coast of America. On the
entire west coast, only San Francisco rivaled Portland for size and sophistication.

South Portland developed on a narrow ribbon of land along the western
bank of the Willamette River. For South Portland is squeezed between the river
and the West Hills; it’s only a few hundred yards wide and about three miles long.
The West Hills are the south end of the Tualatin Mountains, a fifty mile long ridge
that extends to St. Helens, almost halfway to the Pacific Ocean. Today’s South
Portland is closely connected to the city, the river and major transportation
routes. It offers a desirable environment for both commercial and residential
development. Unfortunately, this thin strip of land has also become a key- or
bottleneck- for the west coast’s major transportation corridor between Mexico
and Canada. Three dozen lanes of moving north/south traffic funnel through a
neighborhood only eight blocks wide. But it wasn’t always so, and in spite of the
immense traffic flow, the area remains a destination and home to many… with a
vibrant history known by few.

South Portland became notably the home of many “firsts” in Portland: the
site of the first homestead, the first state penitentiary, the first water supply, the
first dump, the first street car line, the first branch library and post office
substation, the first County Hospital, the first urban renewal project, the first
historic district, the first Greenway Trail and the first fully urban aerial tram.

Its unique topography creates a lovely environment offering some of
Portland’s most scenic river landscapes which form an immense natural
amphitheater to the river with islands and mountains beyond. Numerous creeks,
streams and ravines run down its slopes to the river on steeply dropping terrain.
Several streams, now underground, originally formed deep gulches cutting east
and west through the hillsides at Arthur, Woods and Pennoyer Streets. Marquam
Gulch, at the north end still remains the largest ravine. Formed by Caruthers
Creek, it was once the source of early Portland’s fresh water supply and the
location of a tall railroad trestle. Today, it is mostly filled in, the upper portion now
Duniway Park and the Marquam Trail head. Smaller ravines at Woods and
Pennoyer Streets also had trestles and were later filled. To the south, Stevens
Creek still flows from the Bertha summit in Hillsdale to the Willamette at Fulton.
Besides Duniway Park, several other public parks grace greater South Portland:
Lair Hill Park, Willamette Park, Fulton Park, Butterfly Park and Heritage Tree
Park. Several trails run east and west to connect to the Willamette Greenway
Trail.

Parallel to the river, two long, level shelves of land run, one along the river
flood plain and another along a higher fault line. These have always been well-
used transportation routes. Crossing the river, an ancient Indian trail from Mount
Hood branched into several other trails near the site of the lower OHSU aerial
tram tower. One of these trails went north to the Clearing and another south. The
third went west. All of them later became railroad beds and then Oregon State Highways: Macadam Avenue (OR 42) and Barbur Boulevard (OR 10 and US 99W), with Interstate I-5 between them.

The greater South Portland district could be more accurately described as several distinct smaller neighborhoods severely divided by regional traffic: 1) Lair Hill, 2) Corbett, 3) Terwilliger or Fulton, 4) the triangle north of Duniway Park, 5) a triangle north of Kelly Way, 6) South Waterfront, 7) the Failing School triangle, 8) John’s Landing, 9) the Slavin Road area, 10) Miles Court colony and moorages, 11) Fulton Park Hill. Each of these has a unique character and history. The South Portland National Historic District in the north end stands as a cohesive example of the vibrant, minority gateway communities that flourished from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It endures as an intact representation of a turn of the century working class neighborhood with many Queen Anne style workers’ cottages.

Since the first log cabin in 1842, South Portland has been developed and redeveloped. After growing from the mid 1800s into one of the most vibrant and inclusive communities in the city, the area began to decline in the late 1920s during the era of the automobile and the birth of zoning. When faced with total annihilation in the 1960 and 70s, the area near Lair Hill Park rallied, resisted and began to revive. In the tightly knit Lair Hill area, only two or three houses have been lost in the last quarter of a century and virtually every property there has been renovated.

The history of South Portland raises the question of whether a physical place can have a “soul.” For there are certain places in the world ranging from wilderness to urban that are described as having “soul” or what Robert Musil calls the “mystery of the whole” [The Man Without Qualities]. There have been times when South Portland has perhaps had “soul”, particularly as an immigrant community when the collective ethos was productive, ambitious and unique. It was almost a world unto itself. It was alive; many say it had soul of its own.

But South Portland’s collective immigrant soul dissolved in two or three generations as its immigrant impulse was swept away by automobiles and their individual pursuits of happiness. They were transformed into “Americans”, taken by the bipolar pull of the American Dream which can fling an individual into the sky of success and fame or drag them into a gray middle class life. They immigrants were ambitious and restless in their vibrant ghetto of South Portland. But perhaps the soul itself is, after all, restless. The “soul” of South Portland was extinguished by the end of World War II. It rediscovered some of its magic in the 1960s and 70s as it became known as a colony for impoverished artists and hippies. And by the millennium, South Portland was once again recognized as one of the special places in Portland.

Today, as Portland’s central city continues to expand south, the small triangle of land in South Portland is challenged by development and land use issues of great magnitude. The largest development in Portland’s history now rises in South Waterfront—on a flood plain land where once built liberty ships were built and earlier served as farmland for William Johnson. As change sweeps across the city, the many historic houses remaining in South Portland
reflect an earlier time of the vibrant energy in American immigrant life. For during that time, South Portland was the exciting melting pot and engine room of ambition for a growing city. It had been the home--and center of the world--for countless immigrant families. It had become the American Dream- realized- for many new Americans. It was a dream that now lies scattered among far-flung suburbs and endless highways… But there is always a new generation of dreamers—dancing to their own dreams. Many people, disenchanted with the broken promises of suburban life, are attracted to South Portland as they revitalize the city. And like the eternally reborn phoenix, a new South Portland again arises from the lost dreams of the old.

1867 Panorama of South Portland  from Robinson’s Hill by Carlton Watkins
The Landscape

Pre-History

South Portland was created by an astonishing series of astrological and geological events, dating back to the origins of our earth, 4.6 billion years ago. The early geologic history of Oregon involves plate movements and accretion of exotic terranes. Over 200 million years ago in the Jurassic Period of the Mesozoic Era or “the Age of Reptiles”, the North American continent began drifting away from Europe and Africa to create the Atlantic Ocean. The original supercontinent “Pangaea”, had a northern portion we call “Laurasia” and a southern component, “Gondwana”, which were separated by a major seaway, “Tethys”. This seaway gradually expanded to the east. Pangaea began to split apart in the Middle Jurassic period as the Atlantic Ocean formed between North America and Africa. From that moment on, “Oregon” was the leading edge of the North American plate; the site of many collisions with smaller continental plates that were swept up and added to North America as it glided into the immense pre-Pacific ocean. Up to three fourths of Oregon may be composed of rocks and sediments acquired from beyond the Pacific basin. In time, the Pacific Northwest developed a wet, tropical climate with flora and fauna that would be unrecognizable today.

Since the emergence of multicelled life, there have been at least five mass extinctions, most of them probably caused by asteroids striking the earth. The greatest “great dying” destroyed 95% of all species in the oceans and most of them on land. The Earth’s magnetic field reversed about 60 times during the Cretaceous period as the super continent, Gondwana, broke up. About 65 million years ago, an asteroid seven miles in diameter shifted from its normal orbit between Mars and Jupiter and plowed into the sea at 40,000 miles an hour. It hit near what is now the Yucatan Peninsula leaving a huge impact crater named Chicxulub. The entire earth baked for an hour at 500 degrees. Soot and iridium blackened the sky for months, blocking sunlight and lowering the earth’s temperature. All land animals over about 55 pounds became extinct along with many smaller organisms. The survivors evolved into today’s living world.

Further global climatic changes occurred 35 million years ago at the beginning of the Oligocene Epoch when several bolides struck the earth in Chesapeake Bay and Siberia. The impact of the former shattered bedrock to a depth of 50 miles, throwing dust into the stratosphere that dimmed the sky. Widespread forest fires further obscured the sun and accelerated global cooling. Tropical vegetation that covered almost all of the Americas retreated to the equator. The poles acquired permanent ice and the mid-latitudes like Oregon became temperate and seasonal.

But before the episodes of “great dying” occurred, about 60 million years ago at the beginning of the Tertiary Period or “the Age of Mammals”, the North American Plate moved over a volcanic hot spot creating a chain of north to south volcanic islands in the ocean offshore of the coast, where Idaho and Nevada now
lie. The North American Plate continued to slide over the Juan de Fuca Plate and, as it lifted, the islands became the Coast Range and east of them, the vast Puget Sound and Willamette lowland was formed. More volcanic activity covered the valleys with basalt up to a thousand feet thick. There are places in the West Hills where the lava is over 1000 feet thick. It took decades to cool into basaltic rock, some of it crystallizing into basalt columns.

As seismic faults opened the Portland Basin, more than 100 volcanic vents in the area known as the Boring Volcanic Field erupted. This activity occurred from three million to less than a million years ago. The landscape as seen from South Portland was shaped then including Rocky Butte, Mount Tabor and Mount Scott. Mount Sylvania was a shield volcano, as was the land under the Portland Zoo. “Willamette Falls pours over a Boring lava flow that filled the Willamette’s ancestral channel and forced the river’s channel south.” The Portland Basin may yet be expanding and if so there could be future eruption to the north and west of existing volcanoes. [Ellen Morris]

Twenty million years later, more eruptions inland of the Coast Range created the Cascade Range. With time, much of the basaltic rock was broken down into soil, leaving various rocky cones and buttes protruding through a verdant landscape. Further tectonic plate collisions pressed against these layers of sediment, creating enormous folds in the skin of the earth. One of the ridges we call the Tualatin Mountains which extend from St. Helens to Oswego, forcing the Columbia River to bend north and severely limiting the size of Portland on the west side.

The vegetation of Oregon at that time was somewhat familiar, but the animals were vastly different from those of the earlier Mesozoic Era or "Age of Reptiles" and different from those of today. For although there were no dinosaurs in the region, there were remarkable creatures including woolly mammoths, mastodons, teratorns (birds weighing up to 170 pounds with 12 foot wingspans), cave bears, saber-toothed cats, dire wolves, giant ground sloths, giant bison and horses. In modern times, the remains of real elephants eleven feet high at the shoulder have been unearthed at Newberg, McMinnville, Dayton, St. Paul, Silverton, Harrisburg, and Eugene and elsewhere. "Found in a variety of locations both east and west of the Cascades, Oregon's more ubiquitous Ice Age inhabitants included woolly mammoths… The nearly complete skeleton of a female mastodon was found in Tualatin. This is now mounted in life position in a quiet hallway in the Tualatin Public Library, near the site of the Pleistocene swamps and quicksand where she met her death 11,300 years ago." A large bird called the teratorn was also found as land was excavated for Woodburn High School. This bird had a wingspan of 12 feet and probably weighed about 170 pounds. [Bishop]

Some of the largest floods in the history of the world occurred in the Pacific Northwest at the end of the Pleistocene Epoch or the “Last Ice Age”. Between 19,000 and 15,500 years ago, sequential ice and debris dams developed in a deep canyon upstream of Lake Pend Oreille in the Clark Fork River of northern Idaho creating an enormous 3000 square mile Lake Missoula, and filling 500 cubic miles with water. The US Geological Survey has counted 89
and has documented 40, but there may have been hundreds of such floods. [Bishop] The lake repeatedly filled to the size of both Lake Ontario and Lake Erie until much of eastern Washington, Idaho and Montana were under water. Lake Missoula stretched for 200 miles and was somewhere between 900 to 2000 feet deep. It was one of the deepest lakes on the planet. The ice dams may have melted or because ice is lighter than water, simply lifted, but when they did, they broke, they created voracious floods which roared down the Columbia River at 65 miles per hour. Water, ice and debris poured out at about 17 million gallons per second-- over nine cubic miles per hour for 40 hours. The volume of a single flood would be as large as 400 cubic miles, more than the annual flow of all the rivers in the world. Water backed up into the Snake River. It passed 400 feet above the top of Crown Point and ripped off the north face of Rocky Butte. 90 percent of its solid material flowed into the Pacific Ocean for 1200 miles, smoothing the underwater Tufts Abyssal Plain.

Another singular, but noteworthy flood at that time is called the Bonneville Flood. The Great Salt Lake is but a small remnant of the vast prehistoric Lake Bonneville. This gigantic lake eroded a 300 foot deep gully at Red Rock Pass in Idaho and 1,220 cubic miles of water rushed into Hell’s Canyon of the Snake River, flowing at the rate of one million cubic yards a second, 40 miles per hour. In the Columbia Gorge, the water rose over 1,000 feet.

These floods in total transformed the Willamette Valley. They backed up into the five million acre Willamette Valley as far as Eugene, filling the valley with more than 300 feet of sediment, rich topsoil from eastern Washington, Idaho and Montana. It scraped out an older Willamette Falls, recreating it upriver at its present location in Oregon City. In the Portland Basin, the slowing water deposited a massive gravel bar that extended for five miles between the Columbia and the Willamette Rivers creating the Alameda Ridge. The flooding water gouged out Oswego Lake and created the Durham Quarry site, occupied now by Bridgeport Village. The Willamette Valley became a vast lake 100 miles long and 60 miles wide. In 300 feet of water, “only the upper 10 floors of the First Interstate Tower and the tops of Rocky Butte and Mount Tabor would have stood above the raging water.” [John Eliot Allen] The soil of Montana flowed with Washington Palouse clays to fill the valley floor with 15 feet of fertile mud.

All of the topsoil below the 400 foot elevation was washed away and a layer of clay was swept up onto the West Hills granite face where it remained, creating unstable slopes. Up to 150 feet of gravel, sand, silt and clay was left along with deep deposits of eastern Washington topsoil that formed the fertile Willamette Valley. Sediment and large boulders were carried up to 400 feet above sea level on ice chunks. An eight foot boulder was carried to what is now the Erratic Rock Natural Site near Sheridan. Interestingly, if the massive ice sheets that caused the floods had stopped 50 miles north of where they did, Missoula Lake would not have formed and none of the floods would have occurred. [Dana Tims]

Glaciers and floods repeatedly expanded south into Oregon during the Last Ice Age of the Pleistocene Epoch, or “the Age of Man” carrying rocks, gravel and shaping the land. The famous Willamette Stone, a large meteorite (siderolite)
crashed into an ice sheet in southern Canada or northern Idaho. It formed part of an ice dam near today’s Missoula. When the dam broke, the meteorite floated on its own ice raft, along with 50 cubic miles of sediment, downstream for hundreds of miles to a hillside between West Lynn and Lake Oswego. A Welsh minor dug it up in 1902. It was shown in the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, and after an ownership dispute, it was bought by a New York socialite. Since then, it has been on display at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. In 2005, a piece of the Willamette Meteorite was found in a closet of Collins Hall at Willamette University and was given to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. The meteorite is the largest to be found in the United States; the sixth largest in the world. It weighs over 15.5 tons. Its metallic content is such that, when struck, it rings like a bell. The Indians called it *Tomonos*, a sacred stone that had fallen from the moon with magic powers.

Ellen Bishop speculates that modern times may simply be a warm interglacial period before another ice age. She notes that earlier interglacial periods had higher levels than today of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses. During those times, sea level rose more than 60 feet, carbon dioxide decreased, which caused glaciers to again advance. In the following centuries, some of the 150 foot deep deposit of fine-grained loess or silt would dry into dust and be blown from the valley floor onto the hillsides.

The West Hills above South Portland retain a base of black basaltic rock covered with unstable clay soil. The South Portland neighborhood itself is built on the only flat ledge directly south of the city. And between South Portland and the Willamette River lies a flood plain originally etched by creeks from several large gullies that cut through the hills before turning north to empty into the river. These ravines were initially deep, and combined with the hills themselves, hampered settler movement south and west. Originally crossed with large wooden trestle bridges, they were gradually filled in with debris. The biggest ravine though was Marquam Gulch and was fed by Caruthers Creek. It was bridged by an enormous trestle for freight trains that was later rebuilt. Initially a source of fresh water, it soon became the town dump. As the gulch filled, houses, barns and other
structures were built progressively further into it. The story of Wolf’s Barber Shop falling into the ravine as he was shaving a customer illustrates the aggressive construction that occurred on these unstable slopes. A massive project in the 1920s effectively filled in the west portion, eventually becoming Duniway Park and Barbur Boulevard. The area to the east was also filled, but at a lower elevation. Then the Duniway Park track was raised substantially with landfill from freeway construction in the 1960s. Now Marquam Gulch is essentially terraced in three large levels above the flood plain. The deep manholes and periodic sink holes are reminders of these old ravines.

Originally, the entire area was deep forest. Fir, hemlock, cedar and other conifers grew to immense proportions. Deciduous trees included white oak, maple, dogwood, cottonwood, hawthorn, ash, madrona, alder, cascara and dogwood. The undergrowth included ferns, berries of all kinds, rhododendrons, kinnikinnik, camas, willow and rose.

**Earthquakes**

Today, volcanic and seismic activity continues to alter the land. This instability results from periodic subterranean movements occurring off of the Pacific coastline in the Cascadia Subduction Zone. There, a trench separates the Juan de Fuca and North American Plates. Unlike other active areas in the Pacific, these plates become locked together as the Juan de Fuca plate slides eastward below the North American Plate. The two plates continue to collide at a rate of about one inch a year, binding up for a period of four to seven centuries before releasing. While they are locked, the North American Plate bows upward. When they slip and release, the entire land mass west of the Cascades drops in a massive quake lasting up to five minutes. The release may be sudden and
unpredictable, creating intense earthquakes and tsunamis with catastrophic results. Many minor quakes tend to relieve this pressure.

In Oregon, there have been about twenty “felt” quakes of 3 or more in magnitude. And three of them were 5-6 in magnitude and caused millions of dollars in damage. Because the northern Willamette Valley seems to be an extensional basin, it will continue to have earthquakes. The Portland Hills Fault is one of five major seismic faults in the state. It is 40 miles long and lies on the east side of the Tualatin Mountains that stretch for 60 miles from St. Helens, Oregon and across west Portland. This fault runs under some of Portland’s tallest buildings and along Barbur Boulevard in South Portland. The area in and around South Portland itself is riddled with smaller faults. The Oatfield Fault cuts through the length of the West Hills. Across the river is the East Bank Fault which passes under the Rose Quarter, Lloyd Center and University of Portland. All of these faults could produce shallow crustal earthquakes of magnitude 5 to 7. Frequent small quakes on the Oatfield Fault reduces stress on Portland’s many faults. But only a deeper, major Cascadia subduction zone earthquake can produce powerful magnitude 8-9 quakes. This would strike the Oregon coast and effect all of the Portland area equally. In fact, the entire region of Southern Canada to Northern California and the Pacific to the Cascades will experience it. In the ten thousand years since the last ice age, there have been eighteen major M9+ earthquakes. Although the average period between major quakes is a little over 500 years, the timing is unpredictable. There seems to be a pattern of a long quiet period of about 700 to 1000 years followed by two or three earthquakes separated by only 300 to 400 years. The last Cascadia earthquake occurred in January of 1700, preceded by one about a thousand years earlier. This pattern forecasts the next major quake to occur sometime in this century.

The Portland Basin commonly experiences earthquakes, many too small to be felt. Since its first recorded earthquake at Fort Vancouver in 1841, the area has experienced over 1,000 tremors. Recollections include the following: A mild quake occurred on April 30, 1882. At midnight on September 22, 1883 there were ten tremors. At 8:30pm on February 3, 1892, a severe quake of magnitude 5 lasted for 30 seconds in Portland which made buildings sway and people run out to the streets. The quake lasted thirty seconds with no damage to buildings. The same year at 2:50 in the afternoon of April 17, there were two heavy shocks of about ten seconds duration each; there was no damage though many people ran out of buildings and into the streets. At 4:47 on the morning of February 25, 1895, there were three slight but distinct shocks, each of about three seconds duration with the vibration running from north to south. On April 2nd of the next year a single brief shock was felt about 2:30 in the morning. In 1914 two quakes were noticed, one at 6:30pm on Sunday, March 22 and lasting ten or twelve seconds. Another was a faint vibration at 2am on September 6. At seven in the evening of May 19, 1915, the east side felt a tremor of a second or two; it was said that dishes rattled and books were knocked over. There was a thirty-second quake felt from Salem to British Columbia at 7:30pm on Thursday, February 14, 1946. A Portland woman had a card table turned over, but the quake was so slight in its jar that she suspected her cat under the table had done the job. About
noon on Wednesday, April 13, 1949, the Pacific Northwest was rocked by the worst earthquake since white settlements were established. While the greatest damage seems to have been in Seattle, in Portland the ground rose and fell, chimneys broke off, walls cracked, and merchandise in stores fell from the shelves. When cracks appeared in the walls of a downtown department store, the area was roped off. The train from Seattle was an hour and a half late. An elevator operator in the Terminal Sales Building felt like "a bird in a cage with a gorilla shaking it." Another major quake of magnitude 5 hit on November 5, 1962 causing buildings to partially collapse and cars to be crushed by falling bricks. Tremors continue to occur from time to time without warning.

The River

The earliest movement of people through the region was done on rivers. Few Indians used horses in the dense forests, preferring canoes. At "The Clearing" (later, Portland), 120 miles upriver from the Pacific Ocean, the tide rises twice daily from 2 to 3 feet. Chinook canoes were fashioned from a single cedar log and could carry up to 30 people. Canoes and river craft carried explorers and trappers as well. Ironically many Indian canoes outlived their builders and owners as the "cold sick" killed 90 percent of the natives within ten years after 1830. Five and seven man river boats or “bateaus” (French: boat), were also used by traders and trappers in the 1830s because of their simplicity, economy and shallow draft. These were often outfitted with crude sails. These canoes and boats had to stop at the falls of Oregon City and portage over them in order to continue upriver.

Large sailing ships seldom ventured upriver of Portland because of their deep keels, the narrow river channels and fickle winds. In its natural state, the Willamette was a half mile wide at Ross Island and only nine feet deep. The river at Swan Island was equally wide, but 26 feet deep. At Morrison Street, it was 1400 feet wide and offered a steep riverbank on the west side for boats. Hence, Portland became the major port instead of Oregon City, Milwaukie or Willamette City. Shallow keel steamboats ruled the rivers from 1850 to the end of WW I when reliable roads and railways finally displaced them. Local river traffic was first moved on side wheelers- like Captain Ainsworth’s Lot Whitcomb built in the 1850s. But by 1860, stern wheelers replaced the side wheelers which tended to roll from side to side. The shipment of grain has been a primary port economy of Portland. In fact, the carpenter of the first store and warehouse in Portland (for Francis Pettygrove) was paid with money from a wheat shipment to Hawaii. Several Scot families settled in Portland to develop the “wheat fleet” which regularly shipped grain to the United Kingdom beginning in 1868. The locks in Oregon City opened in 1873, but by then, Portland was the river destination of choice. By 1877, the harbor of Portland was crowded with 45 sailing ships under the British flag, primarily to load grain for the long voyage around the Horn to England. By 1890, a grain ship left Portland for foreign ports on the average of once a week.

Ferries connected the two riverbanks of Portland until 1887 when the first Morrison Bridge was built. There was the Stark Street Ferry, a little ferry where
the Hawthorne Bridge was built in 1908 and the Sellwood Ferry. A steel cable stretched between the two shorelines along which the ferries moved, pulled by a donkey engine; the cable sank after the ferry passed, allowing other ships to move up or down river. The ferry at Sellwood was used until 1926 when the bridge was finally built. The Sellwood, Ross Island and Burnside bridges were completed at about the same time by the world famous engineer, Gustav Lindenthal from New York City. They were the largest construction projects on the west coast at that time. Eventually, Portland became one of the largest ports on the west coast with huge shipments of lumber and grain. Along the river, Jones Lumber had countless pilings for log rafts and a small dock. Across the river, Inman-Poulson Lumber Company had a large dock. And East Side Lumber had a strong presence on the river between Oaks Park and SE Tacoma Street.

But the price of growth along the river was high. Raw sewage and pollution continued to increase until the lower Willamette was so toxic that healthy fish immersed in it died within minutes. The Oregonian stated on September 22, 1937 that earlier that month: …State Treasurer Rufus Holman personally led an investigating team out on the river to test the water's oxygen count. At one spot, across the Willamette from the east end of the Ross Island Bridge where a gigantic open sewer released its contents, a score of salmon fingerlings and some mature trout lasted less than seven minutes after being dumped into a wire crate that had been lowered into the water. The group next went to mid-stream, near the battleship Oregon which was moored temporarily by the Public Market Building. Ten fighting trout were lowered into the submerged cage. Nine minutes later, they were all floating bellies up, either dead or dying. As one of Holman's party noted, "The fish would live longer in a frying pan or on dry land."

Efforts over the next half century have improved the river considerably. By the end of the Twentieth Century, enhancement of the water condition allowed the return of 30 species of native fish along with the introduction of 22 new species. Today, 70 percent of Oregon residents live within 20 miles of the Willamette River.

Floods

Floods called “the annual freshets” by old timers, have always been a concern in the Columbia and Willamette River valleys. There are two times annually when the rivers can rise to flood levels. The first freshet is usually in June or early summer and caused by melting snow. The second occurs late in the year, often December, when suddenly warm weather causes an early snow melt. During the heavy spring runoffs, rivers and streams continue to flow over banks despite the many dams and dikes built throughout the Willamette and Columbia drainage areas. Normally, the river averages a height of about five to six feet in Portland. The Native Americans spoke of rivers on the rampage and pioneers told of great destructive floods in all parts of the Oregon Territory. Substantial floods were recorded in the years of 1853, 1854, 1861, 1862, 1871, 1876, 1880 and 1884.
One of the earliest mentioned, the flood of 1844, settlers insisted was by far the "greatest of them all". And yet within twenty years, another large flood in 1861-2 became referred to as the “big one” of pioneer times. In December of that winter, after several days of intense rainfall, a sudden warm spell melted the mountain snow pack. Water rose to a height of four feet in the streets of Oregon City. On the other side of the falls, Linn City was wiped out. Up river, Champoeg, a town of over one hundred buildings and the site of the first provisional government of 1843, was also washed away, leaving the site "bare as a sand beach". The town has never been rebuilt. The flood finally crested at 57 feet above low water. The damage was extensive: lives were lost with livestock and property destroyed. During the flood, steamboat Captain George A. Pease, guiding his craft through the high water, picked up 40 people clinging to houses, rafts and trees. But winter wasn’t over yet. And December 22, the flood was followed by a sequence of three severe snowstorms. Firewood was scarce and cost up to $20 a cord. For 118 days, lasting well into March, the Willamette Valley and the coast enjoyed only 20 days that were without violent storms. Years later, Meteorologist Lester B. Larson, making a study of Northwest weather, concluded it was “the worst winter on record.”

There were damaging floods throughout the latter decades of the 19th century. A destructive freshet of January 1881 caused Harvey Scott, the great editor of The Oregonian, to offer some sound advice: "It must be apparent that such a flood is likely to occur any winter; and hence the proper thing to do is prepare for it ... As the scientists would put it, we must get into harmony with our environment. It will be no great trouble to do so."

In February 1890, another surge of wild water knocked out bridges at Salem and Albany, devastated lowlands, and swept thousands of saw logs down to the ocean. The flood of June 1894 was especially memorable for Portlanders as water backed up into the Willamette, rising to a record height of 33.6 feet. Water covered 250 to 300 blocks, flooding SW Third and Morrison as well as NW Tenth and Glisan. The Columbia River crested at 49.7 feet. Train service was discontinued. Bridges were left open and every boat was put to use. Businesses were operated from their second floors. And a floating bar carried on a flourishing trade. As dramatic as it was, little damage occurred in Portland, since the flooding was calm water that merely backed up from the Columbia River. [Ellis Lucia] Even after the construction of Bonneville Dam in 1934 and the Grand Coulee Dam, flooding remained a problem. The spring snow melt often raises river levels dramatically, especially with snow water in the Columbia; it caused extensive flooding before the dams, in June of 1923, and also after the dams with the destructive Vanport flood in 1948. On Christmas day in 1964, the river rose to 32.45 feet, with flooding throughout the region. During that flood, a ship broke loose from Zidell and floated down against a bridge as did several boathouses. And in February of 1996, the river rose to 28.6 feet causing little damage, but much anxiety.
There has been another significant consequence of floods. The annual flooding of the Columbia and Willamette rivers, overflowing areas ranging from several hundred feet to four or five miles wide, resulted in the breeding of mosquitoes along their shores. The *aedes*, or floodwater mosquito lays its eggs in flooded areas after the waters recede. And the eggs lay dormant until the next year’s flood, when they are hatched by water washing over them.

In the early 1930’s, a study by the United States Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine Station in Portland, recommended control of the mosquito pest. Brush was cut and burned and diesel oil was poured over the clearings. But because many districts were untreated, there was only partial abatement. This work was continued annually until 1938, when federal aid was withdrawn; men with spray cans on their backs no longer went out to spread diesel oil on the mosquito-breeding places. This was followed with complaints that the mosquitoes hatched in the annual floods had become so thick that they stopped berry pickers and other laborers working within flight range of the pests: drove out the tourists living in auto camps: and irritated cows so badly by bites that milk production was curtailed by about fifty per cent. The city and the county decided it was necessary to resume mosquito control.

On July 2, 1946, the old method of using diesel oil was discontinued because the use of the new DDT sprayed from an airplane was found to be more effective. In three and a half hours one plane could cover the same area it took ten men twenty-two days to do by the old hand method. The Bureau of Insect Control purchased an Army and a Navy trainer plane, which were replaced, one in 1950 and the other in 1951. Today the problem is almost nonexistent because of the elimination of mosquito breeding grounds through the infill of low swampy areas in the Portland floodplain. It has been said that the West Hills cottages were built in the twenties and thirties as a way to escape the malaria ridden swamps of Portland.
Extensive flood control in the twentieth century has also reduced the frequency and severity of flooding. Dams along the Columbia River reduce high water events there that back up into the Willamette River. And along the dozen tributaries of the Willamette itself, whose watershed is 12,000 square miles, there are now 11 major flood control and hydro-power dams.

On the other hand, periods of drought have also been a recurring concern. Late summer in the Willamette Valley is often very dry for weeks or even months at a time. For decades, field burning, which is no longer allowed, created significant pollution and heat inversions. Grain crops also produce highly allergic conditions throughout the valley. Droughts have occurred in the Willamette Valley every year from 1928 to 1941, from 1976 to 1981, and from 1987 to 1994.

Heavy rains not only contribute to flooding in the winter, but also destabilize hillsides. This rainfall creates a significant flow of water down the slopes of the West Hills resulting in landslides. The original deep ravines are an indication of eons of wet winters and fast moving streams. Several were first bridged by wooden trestles on Fourth for trains, and on First and Corbett for vehicles and foot traffic. As these deep gulches have been filled with debris, engineered drainage has been essential, generally in the form of sewers and storm drains. Aside from the disadvantage of mixing and discharging raw sewage into the river with storm water, sink holes tend to form under streets and infilling infrastructure. This has occurred in Marquam Gulch and most recently in Woods Gulch, running east from Marquam Hill, down Gibbs, Grover and Woods Streets to the river. In the fall of 2005, several large sink holes opened very quickly north of the Ross Island Bridge near Corbett Street. One began consuming repair equipment and became seventy feet deep and wide enough to swallow a large building. It was discovered that the sewer had collapsed. It was a thirty inch diameter brick sewer pipe in Woods Gulch which drains Marquam Hill that had been built in the natural streambed in 1893. But as the area developed during the next century, the brick sewer became buried in layers of fill. Immediately, 24 hour emergency repairs began and diversion pumps installed. The unexpected project will continue for possibly two years and involve millions of dollars. Plans call for two blocks of open excavation and sewer replacement, then boring and jacking under Front Avenue as well as under the Ross Island Bridge at Corbett. The largest efforts will involve micro tunneling 800 feet under I-5 to install a five foot diameter pipe without stopping traffic on the freeway. [Portland Bureau of Environmental Services] Portland has the highest sewer rates in the United States, in part because of the lack of maintenance. It provides an unsettling example of how history shapes the future.

Another historic repercussion of water and sewage control efforts lies in the West Side Big Pipe project. It is a twenty year program begun in 1991 to control combined storm water and sewer outflows. The project originally involved the construction of a 14 foot diameter pipe across the city to the Columbia Boulevard Wastewater Treatment Plant opened in 1952 near the Columbia Slough. “The estimated cost of the Combined Sewer Overflow Project has jumped from around $900 million when it began in 1997 to $1.4 billion today... Most of the rise comes from increasing the diameter of the pipe from 17 feet to
22 feet because of revised estimates on the amount of water it will need to collect and carry." The cost for the west side project has ballooned to $445.5 million for the west side alone. [Jim Redden]

**Ross Island**

Often referred to as one island, there are actually three: Ross Island, Hardtack Island and tiny Toe Island. And although the islands were all low and mosquito ridden, they had long attracted attention as an idyllic destination.

Sherry Ross was born in Indiana in 1824, becoming an Oregon pioneer in 1845. He settled on the 400 acre Ross Island near the north end of Toe Island on February 14, 1850, and died on January 4, 1867. This island was claimed by Sherry Ross in 1850, and after his death the widow Rebecca Ross was given the US patent of Land Claim. By 1908, all three of the islands were owned by John Kierman.

Ross Island was proposed as a city park site in 1912 and again in 1924. But two years later, in 1926, the Ross Island Sand and Gravel Company was formed, acquired a long term lease from the City and was permitted to construct a tramway with hoppers to service sand and gravel bunkers on Hardtack Island. The company has continued to dredge on the 290 acres for 75 years using questionable and often contested tactics. By 1950, Ross Island Sand and Gravel was the largest pre-mix concrete company in Oregon. It has literally dug and shipped off most of Ross Island itself and still blocks one of the most beautiful views in the city from the public with an ugly, but highly profitable, commercial enterprise on SE McLaughlin Blvd. Money was made by selling rights to dump contaminated material from dredging into the enormous artificial lagoon. Gravel mining ceased in 2001.

Today’s Ross Island is but a ravaged skeleton of its former presence. The main island is but a shell around an immense lagoon up to 75 feet deep. Hardtack Island has been joined to Ross Island itself by a thin land bridge to the southwest. East Island was the southern end of Hardtack Island. Toe Island disappears from time to time under flood water which also sweeps off the vegetation. Robert Pamplin, Jr., President and CEO of the R.B. Pamplin Corporation, a family-owned company with annual sales approaching $700 million. His family has owned Ross Island Sand and Gravel since it began. Pamplin has pledged to donate the island to Portland, but his company will retain about 25 acres on the island for a gravel washing plant for gravel trucked from Yakima reservation in Washington. A ten year remediation program will add 4.5 million cubic yards of fill to create 36 acres of wetland habitat. The company continues to make money by filling the artificial lagoon with material and soil from dredging operations. It has been discovered that dredging fill from Bonneville locks and the Port of Portland shipyards was contaminated with cancer-causing chemicals like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. There is a proposal to cover the contamination with at least three feet of clean fill. In addition, reclamation plans for the next ten years call for over four million cubic yards of fill. Perpetual monitoring will be needed for arsenic and zinc tainted soil near the company’s processing plant, a former settling pond contaminated with tributyl tin and a
lagoon shoreline with elevated pH levels. Long term concerns relate to floods and earthquakes. [Oregonian, Dec 22, 2005]

Still, boaters enjoy navigating around it- carefully around its shallow south end- and sometimes camp on the north end. The east side channel offers an intimate natural experience with wildlife: beaver, muskrat, herons and eagles. A popular public trail skirts along the shoreline and Oaks Bottom is a much visited wildlife refuge.

An early story about Ross Island refers to the famous Blue Ruin whisky of pioneer days. Some narratives say it was made on Ross Island. A powerful drink, some early settlers drank it “neat”, or “barefoot”, as the saying goes. Others reduced its ferocity by making it into a long toddy. Blue Ruin was probably made from a mash of wheat, shorts or “middlings” and molasses. The topers played bean poker for Blue Ruin. From time to time temperance enthusiasts swooped down on the stills and dumped the stuff in the river. Scott makes a racist tainted reference to it by saying: “It appears that the place was some times infested by Indians, who somehow got hold of ‘blue ruin,’ a vile sort of intoxicating liquor, and made night hideous with their carousals.”
The Early Settlers

Native Americans

Exactly when and how human beings arrived in the area is unknown. Perhaps they arrived from Asia, coming across a northern land bridge or perhaps they crossed the sea. By 9 or 10 thousand years ago the Pacific Northwest had many human communities as evidenced by hundreds of sandals found from that period. The discovery of the 8 thousand year old “Kennewick Man” has inspired much conjecture. There are startling assertions that skull and bone shapes appear more Caucasian than typical Native Americans of the area. The Kennewick Man may be from outside of the area or even a Paleo-Indian. The controversy continues as there is so little evidence of native cultures left.

Within about 2,000 years after humans arrived in North America, many of the largest Ice Age animals were extinct. Gone were the giant ground sloths, giant bison, woolly mammoths, mastodons, cave bear, saber-toothed cats, and other animals. Bishop asks: "Were humans to blame for the late Pleistocene extinction of Oregon's furry megafauna? There is evidence -- mostly found outside Oregon -- that points the finger at us [humans], from the remains of paleobarbeques to the presence of a human hair in the Woodburn bog from which various animal remains have been excavated." [Bishop] It is suspected that the pre-historic hunters may have driven large animals into the bog where they would get stuck and were easier to kill. The flora and fauna remain essentially the same today as it was then.

The Multnomah tribe, a subset of the Chinookan tribe, lived in the area for perhaps 8,000 years, although the earliest evidence of humans in the area is much more recent -- from about 1500 BCE. Petroglyphs carved long ago have been found carved into the basaltic rocks along the river gorges and at Willamette Falls. Stone sculptures have been found on Sauvie Island with artistry and craftsmanship similar to the Fraser River Culture.

Before European contact, there were about 45,000 natives living in northwestern Oregon. Some of them settled on, and near, Wappato (Sauvie) Island. Indians also lived in Scappose, Vancouver, Ridgefield, Blue Lake Park, St. Johns, near Willamette Falls and in the Lake Oswego area. At least fifteen large village sites have been discovered on Sauvie Island, most notably on the southeast side. There was an autumn fishing village near the mouth of the Clackamas River. For years, these Clackamas tribe villages held council meetings on a bluff overlooking Oswego Lake (near an island where Carl Jantzen built a palatial residence in the 1920s). It has been suggested that Native Indians also met on Council Crest and perhaps at Willamette Park.

These Chinookan tribes included Multnomah on the west side of the Willamette and Calapooia in the Tualitin Plains. They fished the rivers, foraged for natural vegetables and fruits, and hunted game for food and clothing. Seasonal changes mandated a rhythmic nomadic life where the natives would leave and return to the biggest villages permanently located at the fall fishing locations. Natives had a semi-nomadic culture, moving with the seasons and migrations, usually returning to their Autumn village. They had a strong spiritual
bias. Most native people had a unique spiritual power, perhaps as simple as splitting wood. Young men especially were sent in puberty rites to remote and scary locations where fasting and swimming played important roles. Often a spirit would visit them in a dream after the initiation. Five was a special number and shaman dances would often last for five days. Song creation was prized and “set” with a dance. When shamans could not cause a favorable influence for Native desires, they were often blamed for bad luck and assassinated.

The rivers were the main highways; they traveled throughout the area in canoes and on foot. Major trading places developed at salmon fishing falls, particularly Celilo Falls and Willamette Falls. Other meeting sites may have included Willamette Park where it was possible to wade across the river in late summer, and Diamond Head, a point of land on Iron Mountain in Oswego. There was a trail from Mount Hood that came west to the Willamette River at the downstream end of Ross Island. After crossing the river, the trail continued several hundred feet west where it divided into several branches, one going north to “The Clearing” and one going south to Willamette Falls and further south on the Molalla Trail to Klamath and California.

The cedar tree played a large role in their lives. It was used for clothing, housing and baskets. In the summer, little clothing was worn. But in winter both men and women wore conical rain hats of cedar bark. They used robes of beaver or bobcat fur tied at the neck; the men’s robes were longer, thigh length, and women’s robes hung to the waist. Women also wore skirts made from cedar.

Houses were built together into “long houses” constructed of cedar bark slabs or “planks” torn from large trees and lashed to a frame with the bark side facing in for walls and roofs. Mats were hung on the inside walls. One of the main functions of these houses was for curing fish and lamprey eels or “suckers”. The fish and eels were hung inside from the roof where smoke from the central fire would cure them. Consequently the interiors were dark, smoky and fishy smelling. A central area was excavated and surrounded with several planks called the “sitting plank”. Because these houses were left empty by the nomadic life of the natives, they gave the appearance of being abandoned in the summer.

The men built smaller canoes from a single cedar log and large ones with decorative prow and stern stitched on which could carry from twenty five to thirty men. Each man had a five foot paddle made of ash. Each canoe was embellished throughout the lifetime of its builder with carved, painted or burned images of animals and men. The long carved bow overhung the waterline for four or five feet. Lewis and Clark had a high regard for their canoes, calling them the among the finest in the world for service and beauty. These canoes often stopped along the river at The Clearing and across from Ross Island on hunting and fishing trips.

Women primarily tended the houses, prepared food, made baskets and mats. They picked berries and fruit, dug tubers and roots, and gathered bark and other useful plants. They skinned animals and prepared fish to be dried for the winter. The natives ate salmon and sturgeon from the rivers, roots, nuts, berries, and wappato. Wappato is a soft bulbous root tasting like potato which was harvested in shallow water by loosing the mud around it with the toes so that it
would float to the surface for gathering. The harvesters, all women, would place the wappato tubers into small canoes that they pulled by the bow alongside of them in water up to four feet deep. They also loved camas bulbs baked with hot stones, then ground into flour for baking. The best string was made from stinging nettles. Tobacco was mixed with kinnikinnik and inhaled deeply, especially by the men and boys. This was very intoxicating. Often the natives became stupefied, and were sometimes burnt badly when they fell into the fire.

Their culture fused an artistic impulse with many aspects of their lives, particularly their boats, dwellings and clothing. Musical expression took form through chanting and percussion produced by drums, rattles and simple whistles. Songs were composed, becoming the property of the one who created it; and only the owner of a song was allowed to sing it. But these songs could be given away as gifts during ceremonies and it was a great honor to be given a song. The Multnomah Indians enjoyed storytelling, potlatches and games. One popular game was like ping-pong with a small pumice ball hit between two teams with paddles. Large feasts were popular events and were prepared by the men. When a man died, he was placed in a canoe with all of his possessions; the canoe was then cradled in tree branches.

Several early accounts note that the natives were quite beautiful physically. But Europeans were equally dismayed by their foul smell, caused by rubbing fish oil on their bodies to stay warm in winter. The Chinooks were small in stature. Their eyes were large and black or light brown. They had wavy black hair and, unlike most native Americans, the men could grow beards. All of the river Indians flattened the foreheads of babies into a straight line from the crown of the head to the tip of the nose as a cosmetic enhancement. This was done by tightening two small boards on an infant's head during the baby's first three or four months of life. A demeaning recollection stated that Chinooks had notably bad eyesight caused by the constant and irritating smoke in their lodges and poor teeth which were ground down by constant use as tools and for food preparation. Often a high regard for the natives is mentioned in the diaries of explorers; the natives were respected and considered as friends to the white man.

Slavery among the Natives was common until the 1840s. Perhaps 40% of the population in a village near Fort George was slaves. The Chinookan were especially big slave traders. Many slaves were taken in raids as far south as Northern California and, after killing the men and elders, were brought to the Columbia River area. William R. Broughton was Captain George Vancouver's second in command. In 1792, Broughton spent three weeks on the Columbia River and sailing as far east as the Sandy River. He provides the first real description of the Oregon Country. It was, he wrote in his log, "the most beautiful landscape that can be imagined." He went on to describe the wooded islands and water meadows, the sand spits, bluffs and beaches, river banks thick with lavender and mint, and the groves of alder, maple, birch, willow, poplar, oak and long slopes of fir. He remarked on the flights of duck and geese, brown cranes, white swans, otter, beaver, deer and elk. And, above all, the mountains in their supreme and perfect white repose. Like other Americans before him, Broughton was impressed by the natives. John Boit of Robert Gray's crew had written: "The
men at Columbia’s River are strait limb’d, fine looking fellows and the women are very pretty.” Broughton himself found the natives surpassed other tribes in their “paints of different colors, feathers and other ornaments.” He found them to be always civil and often helpful. Because of one old chief, he named a stretch of river that passed the chief’s village “Friendly Beach” (near Vancouver).

Broughton was the first European to sight a large river (the Willamette) flowing from the south into the Columbia River about 100 miles from the Pacific Ocean. It is one of the few rivers in North America that flows northward. He named this river the River Manning. A dozen years later, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark arrived on Sauvie Island near the mouth of the Willamette on November 3, 1805. They had been sent west by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the Louisiana Purchase. They found an estimated 2,400 Chinook speaking natives living in almost 80 homes and lodges there, and 1,800 more on the shore nearby. The natives used an Indian word, “matnumax” [Zenk] or Mulkknomans, to identify villagers on the east side of the island. It has been suggested that the word is a corruption of “nemathlnomaq”, meaning “goes toward water” [Zenk] or perhaps “down river” (from Willamette Falls; the river above the falls was called “Walllamat”). Thirty two years later, Charles Wilkes used the name “Willamette” in a report. For several decades following, both names were used interchangeably until the older name disappeared from use.

An early account of white men traveling up the Willamette River to the Falls was recorded in 1811 by the Pacific Fur Company’s Astor Party. Apparently, the natives viewed these white men as curiosities rather than a threat. It was not until eighteen years later in 1829 that the next significant contact with white men occurred when Dr. John McLoughlin of the Hudson’s Bay Company arrived at the falls by boat. McLoughlin supervised the Hudson’s Bay Company operations at Fort Vancouver; his relationship with the Native American population was relatively peaceful.

The biggest threat to the native tribes was not cultural, but biological. It arrived in waves of European diseases: smallpox, malaria, diphtheria, typhus, typhoid, whooping cough, measles and influenza. Upon his return in 1806, Captain William Clark visited the Nichaqwli (at Blue Lake Park east of Sauvie Island) and noted that several plankhouses appeared abandoned. He asked where those people had gone. The father of his guide showed him a woman’s pockmarked face and Clark realized that she had survived smallpox, perhaps thirty years earlier.

The Indians suffered several severe attacks of the Cold Sick, called “Fever and Ague”, by the whites around 1830. An early incident of contagion was recorded in 1829 when a New England sea captain, John 0. Dominis, sailed to Oregon hoping to start an import business of salted salmon. The account says his ship ran aground at Deer Island in the Columbia. Apparently, Dr. McLoughlin sent Native American workmen down to help free the ship. They discovered that some of the crew was ill. When natives discovered the nature of Captain Dominis’ business, they cut the anchor line of his ship and it floated downstream. But the infection from his sick seamen spread along the river and the tribes in the valleys fell victim to “the Cold Sick”.

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Natives on Wappato Island were among the worst hit. This incident alone wiped out nine out of ten of the Columbia and Willamette River Indians. In 1830 George Roberts of the Hudson Bay Company visited Chief Cassino where he found dead and putrefying bodies lying where they had fallen. He also found a crying baby in the grasp of its own cold and stiff mother. He took the baby to Dr. John McLaughlin who then helped to save the Chief. Cassino became the chief of a ravaged nation. Of his own ten wives, four children and eighteen slaves, only three survived.

Thirty years after Lewis and Clark, dead Indians could be found on the ground unburied. Grass and brush had begun to overgrow village sites where utensils and tools lay scattered on the ground. By 1840, most of the natives were dead- as European families settled on their chosen land claims- land cultivated for thousands of years by natives who burned off underbrush to create large savannahs for hunting and leaving thickly forested areas for foraging.

What was the “cold sick”? Bob Boyd suggests it was primarily malaria. Almost everyone in the area got it including natives and trappers. The Indians believed that sweating was the cure which was the worst thing they could have done. Very few survived the “cure”.

In one generation, the original natives had been exterminated. Dr. John K. Townsend in 1833 wrote: “The spot where once stood the thickly populated village... is now only indicated by a heap of indistinguishable ruins. The depopulation has been truly fearful.” Simon Reeder in 1853 completed a seven month trek from Indiana to Sauvie Island with his wife and four year old child using oxen and a raft. They settled on an empty Indian village site, removing hundreds of bones and skulls by the wheelbarrow. Burial canoes were still cradled in nearby tree branches.

The growing tide of immigration after McLoughlin’s retirement in 1845 gave rise to increasing fear and resentment by the natives. Afraid that they were being deliberately poisoned, aggravated by a total disregard of their rights, they sparked a series of attacks and reprisals in southeast Oregon which enraged most of the white settlers. Peter Skene Ogden, an agent for Hudson's Bay Company, ransomed the survivors of the 1847 “Whitman Massacre” near Walla Walla from natives and brought them to Oregon City. In retribution, captured natives were tried and hung in the town. Oregon Governor George Abernathy said in December of 1847, “Our relations with the Indians become every year more embarrassing. They see the white man occupying their lands, rapidly filling up the country, and they put in a claim for pay. They have been told that a chief would come out from the United States and treat with them for their lands; they have been told this so often that they begin to doubt the truth of it.” That same day, news of the Whitman massacre reached him that the Cayuse Indians had slaughtered the Whitman family with twelve others and were holding 53 women and children captive. Thus began the first of the Indian wars, a bungle and waste from beginning to end. By the late 1840s, Multnomah Indians were seldom seen. A few years later the surviving remnant of lower Willamette Valley Indians were removed and sent to the Grand Ronde Reservation in the Coast Range west of Salem. In 1855, Joel Palmer sought to gain fair treatment for the natives. As
superintendent of Indian affairs, he initiated the reservation system in Oregon as a means of protecting the natives from the whites and to bring peace to the two races. In that same year, a treaty -- which was never ratified -- was rejected by the remaining Chinook Indians on the Columbia River who refused to leave their homeland. This outbreak known as the Yakima Indian War was waged for several years. Natives resisted reservation life with the Modoc, Nez Perce and Bannock wars in the 1870s. In 1887, the Dawes Act abolished the natives’ communal ownership of their reservation, giving them individual parcels instead, hoping that they would become independent farmers. This resulted in an enormous reduction of Indian-held land. Gordon Dodds wrote: “By the 1880s for the white majority, Oregon Indians were literally ‘out of sight and out of mind’, consigned to fringe regions, unworthy in their impotence even of hatred.” In the Grande Ronde Indian Reservation, native survivors included those from Clackamas and Oregon City, but no known Multnomah Indians.

Harvey G. Starkweather, the first superintendent of schools in Clackamas County described an Indian village near Portland (where Jennings Lodge was later built across from Cedar Island on the Willamette River).

“As I recollect this particular Indian camp, it was a vile smelling place. Each hut of one room served as shelter for a large family and in it living, cooking, sleeping and the curing of fish and meats were carried on in more or less indiscriminate manner.

In the center of the hut was a depression of about ten feet square and eighteen inches deep, and here a fire was built. Directly over the fire was a hole in the roof. There was no connecting flue or stovepipe but, when the smoke had accumulated to such an extent that it entirely filled the room, it could escape through this hole in the roof.

I distinctly remember on the occasion of one of my visits that the ceiling beams of the hut were covered with eels for the purpose of drying. The condition of the interior at this time can be better imagined than described.

I recollect many interesting features, as a tame beaver and a fawn which were evidence of the Indians' fondness for pets.

I remember the immense sturgeon and salmon which the Indians caught. A medium-sized salmon, say up to 15 or 20 pounds, would sell for 25 cents. A larger fish, up to perhaps 35 or 40 pounds, could be bought for 50 cents. The Indian delivering it a mile or more, carrying it upon his back.” [Goodall]

The interface between the First Nations people and European people is perhaps the most ironic and tragic moment in the quest for the American dream. Note that by the 1840s, settlers stumbled into a virtual paradise in the Willamette Valley. The large open savannahs dotted with groves of trees were perfect for them. What they happily discovered was the result of centuries of landscape cultivation by the native tribes. It was a stabilized natural environment, built and maintained by humans in harmony with their surroundings. In only ten years, up to 90 percent of the Indian population was decimated. Indian resistance was almost nonexistent in the valley. The native species of plant and animal life was changing suddenly and forever. The undergrowth was no longer controlled by native burn off. Himalayan blackberry, English ivy and the Norway rat were only a
few of the environmental changes that were introduced along with “the cold sick”. Property ownership and property lines diced up the land unnaturally and denied the First Nation tribes their inherent rights. Transportation routes interrupted the ancient flow of nature. The negative transformative power inherent to the “pursuit of happiness” had picked the apple, so to speak, and cut down the tree as well. A century and a half later, our ecology is heavily out of balance and American society remains highly unstable and dependant upon exterior resources. But above all, after unconsciously destroying a natural and balanced environment and its people, our society still chases after the American dream more aggressively than ever. And we killed our best teachers even before we could befriend them. As Terence O'Donnell says in *That Balance So Rare*: “the disease, killing, and heart-sickness that would go on for a century and end by almost obliterating the native peoples from the face of their lovely earth.”

Where is my home - my forest home?
The proud land of my sires?
Where stands the wigwam of my pride?
Where gleam the council fires?
Where are my fathers' hallowed graves?
My friends so light and free?
Gone, gone -forever from my view
Great Spirit! Can it be?

[A Clackamas Indian’s Query.
From Wise-Tong Pioneers of Clackamas, Oregon. Arthur D. Coleman]
Frontiersmen and Settlers

Explorers, frontiersmen and trappers moved through the region, often without leaving a trace of their presence. They traded with the Indians, bringing goods and stories to Fort Vancouver and settlements like Oregon City and Champoeg. William Clark returned to the Columbia River in 1806, a year after the celebrated Lewis and Clark expedition. He had heard of a large river that drained a valley to the south, but had missed the Willamette River entirely on the original 1805 expedition, perhaps because it was blocked by islands. But as he was returning to the Midwest during his second visit, he was told of the big river from the south by a Nichaqwli or Washougal native guide. Using a map made of charcoal on a tanned skin, they entered the Willamette River the next day, April 1, 1806. They paddle up the Willamette to Cathedral Park or Swan Island. He noted: “At this place I think the width of the river may be stated as 500 yards, and sufficiently deep for a Man-of-War or ship of any burthen.” Without realizing that William Broughton had already given the name of “the River Manning,” he chose to name the river “Multnomah.” He had also named Wappato (Sauvie) Island, “Multnomah Island.”

Shortly after Lewis and Clark returned, interest in the far west grew. The fur trapping industry was an attraction because it was so immensely profitable. In merely four years beginning in 1834, for instance, Hudson’s Bay Company accounts revealed that over 23.4 million animals had been caught and killed. Gaston projects this figure into the forty year fur trapping period to 230 million animals killed for one company alone. Competing with Canadian interests like the Northwest Company and Hudson’s Bay Company (which merged in 1821), John Jacob Astor decided to create a fur trading post on the Columbia River. In late 1811, Wilson Price Hunt led an exploratory trek inland for Astor. In early 1822, William Henry Ashley ran ads in several St. Louis newspapers to form a brigade with Major Andrew Henry on three keelboats of 150 men and 60 horses to hunt for beaver pelts. This was the beginning of “the brief and boisterous era of the mountain man.” (John Terry) Ashley’s initial expeditions fared poorly as he lost a keelboat on the Missouri in 1822 with $10,000 in trade goods, and the next year was spent fighting the Arikara Indians. After Henry’s retirement in 1824, Ashley abandoned his route on the Missouri River to travel overland. His path on the Platte River and South Pass soon became the “Oregon Trail.” In 1825 he initiated an annual Rendezvous for trappers to trade their furs for goods brought from St. Louis by him. His profits were tenfold over expenses. John K. Townsend, a naturalist who attended the rendezvous in 1834 described his experience: “These people with their obstreperous mirth; their whooping, and howling, and quarreling, added to the mounted Indians who are constantly dashing into and through our camp, yelling like fiends; the barking and braying of savage wolf-dogs, and the incessant crackling of rifles and carbines render our camp a perfect bedlam.” Ashley sold the fur company in 1827 as the “Cold Sick” was devastating the natives.

In the mid 1830s, there were about 600 fur trappers in the west plus the “brigades” dispatched by the Canadian Hudson’s Bay Company which began in 1670. There was an obvious difference between the American and Canadian
frontiersman. An American trapper was described by Frances Fuller Victor in The River of the West: “Oftener than any other way he was some wild youth who, after an escapade in the society of his native place, sought safety from reproach or punishment in the wilderness. Many were of a class disreputable every where, who gladly embraced a life not subject to social laws.” By 1840, Ashley’s route served to usher, not wild mountain men, but domesticated pioneer settlers.

The Oregon Territory remained relatively wild and unsettled- with only mountain men and fur trappers- until the arrival of the “Great Migration of ’43”. It was led by Marcus Whitman and accompanied by A.L. Lovejoy. These settlers numbered 1400 and alone more than doubled the population of Oregon. Thus beginning in 1843, the Oregon Trail brought Americans west to the lush Willamette Valley. The trek was daunting. Even a decade later, the difficult journey would often take four to seven months. As Lavinia Porter wrote in 1860: “I would make a brave effort to be cheerful and patient until the camp work was done. Then starting out ahead of the team and my men folks, when I thought I had gone beyond hearing distance, I would throw myself down on the unfriendly desert and give was like a child to sobs and tears, wishing myself back home with my friends and chiding myself for consenting to take this wild goose chase.” Emigrants depended heavily on Native Americans in many ways. Disease was the worst enemy, killing 10,000 travelers in two decades. Cholera was a common sickness with water holes and camps befouled. Thousands of rotting buffalo carcasses were left on the plains. Agnes Stewart wrote of one creek side campsite in 1853: “We could hardly walk for the cow dung and could hardly breathe for the smell of dead cattle.”

In the twenty years between 1840 and 1860, fifty three thousand immigrants made it to the Willamette Valley and other major valleys of western Oregon. A distinction was sometimes made between those who went to Oregon and others who favored California. It was said that California attracted the single adventurer while Oregon became home to sober and respectable individuals. Jesse Applegate wrote to his brother that “almost all the respectable portion of the California immigrants are going on the new road to Oregon—and nearly all the respectable immigrants that went last year to California came this year to Oregon.” An apocryphal story sums it up. At a branch in the Oregon Trail, the route south to California was marked by a cairn of gold quartz while the one north had a sign that simply said: “To Oregon”. Those who could read came to Oregon. A notable exception was found in the “Rocky Mountain Boys” who lived on the “Tuality Plains.” (Tuality, Twality, At-fal-a-ti, Quality, Faladin and Nefalatine were all alternate names for Tualatin.) The Rocky Mountain Boys were of course aging American trappers: rugged types with Indian mates and children.

The Clearing

As late as the 1830s, the area now known as Portland was a deeply forested hillside of large Douglas Firs and other native species skirting the Willamette River. Groves of large hemlock trees grew on the hills to the west. Along the riverbank, black cottonwoods grew in abundance. Many were seven feet thick and 200 feet tall. They were easily cut for firewood and temporary
shelters. Parallel to the river ran two or three trails, one near the river, along the top of the flood plain, and the other higher up on the hillside along a natural fault line. These trails were used by the Multnomah Indians and fur trappers. The river and the mild climate nurtured the abundant wilderness and fostered immense salmon runs. Canoes and boats traveled the thirty miles between Fort Vancouver and the falls at Oregon City. These were two of the earliest settlements in the west, and both belonged to the Hudson’s Bay Company. Although there had been many trading posts, after the War of 1812 and until 1830, many Columbia River trading posts merged with the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Vancouver which became the “grand market”. The large falls up the Willamette River led Dr. John McLaughlin to create the Oregon City townsite where sawmills could be powered by water. These falls later powered the first long-distance hydroelectric generating station, sending electricity north to Portland on wires strung along the river in the 1880s.

The future town site of Portland, as seen by Captain John Couch in 1842 was no more than a clearing on the riverbank of about an acre from which the brush had been cut away and burned. It had been made by Indians and trappers traveling between the two Hudson’s Bay Company posts at Fort Vancouver and Oregon City. Used as a landing for a mid-day rest, it was simply known as “The Clearing”. In mid-November of 1843, William Overton, a lanky drifter from Tennessee, was feeling ill at Fort Vancouver when, Asa Lawrence Lovejoy, a young lawyer from Massachusetts, offered to take him back to Oregon City in his canoe. Canoes like his were a common conveyance for the thirty mile trip. They were large, carrying two or three passengers and cargo. These canoes were handled by four Indians and paid with a woolen shirt or a blanket. [Snyder] As they neared The Clearing, Overton was feeling worse and suggested they go ashore. This gave Lovejoy a chance to see “the best claim... around here.” Lovejoy later recalled: "It took my eye. I had no idea of laying out a town there, but when I saw this, I said: Very well, sir, I will take it.” [Throckmorten] Overton decided to claim one square mile with Lovejoy, if Lovejoy would file and pay the $.25 fee to record the claim in Oregon City. They staked their claim by making tomahawk slashes on trees in The Clearing. Overton, who was chronically ill, built a shingle mill in a lean-to on the south side of the claim. But after being repeatedly washed out by floods and indebted to Lovejoy, he sold his half claim to Lovejoy’s business partner in Oregon City, Francis W. Pettygrove, and disappeared into the warmer Southwest.

This site was end of a long, relatively deep 100 mile river passage from the ocean into the Willamette Valley. It was as far as large ships could easily sail into the heart of Oregon. For only mile beyond, the Ross Island bar, composed of large glacial deposits of sand and gravel, became dangerous for riverboats at low water. And further upriver lay the Clackamas Rapids. Captain John Couch pointed out to them that the deepest water for ample anchorage and turning space was downriver from Oregon City. Three recent voyages had convinced Couch of The Clearing’s superiority as a port because of it wasn’t located too near the falls nor subject to shifting river depths. “...ships have and may proceed thus far during the June rise of the Columbia, back water from that river making
the Willamette navigable to Oregon City. But in ordinary low water, the bar [at Ross Island] has on it only about four feet of water. I have frequently observed Indians wading the river at that bar, and have crossed it on horseback myself at the same place. Captain John H. Couch” Thomas Stephens concurred. When the water was very low though, there were still two bars below Portland to impede navigation: Post Office Bar, about a mile upriver from the Willamette’s mouth and a bar at Swan Island.

Until that moment, neither Lovejoy nor Pettygrove had seriously considered developing the site. But the prospect of a deep-water port made The Clearing an attractive site for a town. At the toss of a coin in 1844, Pettygrove’s choice of “Portland” was chosen as the name of the town over that of another port, Boston. A year later, Couch filed claim to 640 acres north of the Lovejoy-Pettygrove claim. Soon, the latter two began to clear land at the foot of Washington Street. Pettygrove hired a carpenter, John Waymire, to build a double cabin for a store and warehouse. Waymire almost left because of the mosquitoes and fleas. The two then hired an itinerant surveyor, Thomas A. Brown, to survey and plat the site and survey 11 ½ miles of roadway to connect with the promising farmland in the Tualatin Plains. The town was plotted into 16 blocks, 200 feet square, each with eight lots measuring 50 by 100 feet. North and south streets were 80 feet wide and cross streets were 60 feet wide; there were no alleys. The smaller “dollhouse” blocks, so called because they were much smaller than most city blocks in the United States, maximized the number of corner lots that could be sold. There were three north/south streets: Front, First and Second; and nine east/west streets: Washington to Jefferson. Streets were named by a widely used prototype that originated in Philadelphia. Front Street itself was so named because it “fronted” on the riverfront. In South Portland though a turn in the river exposed some distance between Front Street and the river posing a problem with street addresses which started at the river with 100. This was resolved by mirroring the numbers to the west, but adding a zero before them. Thus 0223 SW Whitaker is officially six blocks from 223 SW Whitaker.

Late in 1845, Lovejoy sold his half interest to young Benjamin Stark. Pettygrove built a slaughterhouse on the south riverbank near present day
Lincoln Street and sold hides to Daniel Lownsdale, a southerner who claimed the land west of them that same year and had built the first tannery on the west coast. Asa Lovejoy was relatively inactive as Pettygrove’s co-owner of the townsite, remaining mainly in Oregon City during Portland’s infancy. He sold his half interest within two years of the original claim on The Clearing to Benjamin Stark, a cargomaster. At that time, few even knew of Portland. Pettygrove continued to live in Portland and began using his warehouse as a retail store, the city’s first business operation. He opened a wagon route along the east side of the Willamette to Oregon City. But the following spring of 1846, he too began to sell several blocks and lots for development. And within six months after the discovery of gold in California, he had sold everything, including his half-share to Lownsdale, and moved to San Francisco. Within another six months, Lownsdale had sold his half interest to Stephen Coffin. During this time, intense debate questioned the provisional nature of the government. Was the area to become British, American or an independent republic of its own? In 1846, the British wanted everything north of the Columbia and the Americans wanted everything south of Alaska (Russian land). The American cry of “Fifty-four forty or fight” was resolved with the present boundary between Canada and the U.S.

Although other sites along the river were claimed as future port town sites, like Fort Vancouver, Fort William, Linton, Milwaukie, and even Oregon City, only Portland quickly grew into a major port and city. By 1884 it was still the only fresh water harbor on the Pacific coast that could accommodate ocean-going vessels where ships could be put into dry docks where barnacles would die and be easily scraped off of wooden hulls.

The town grew quickly from “60 souls” in 1846 to “about 100” one year later. By 1848, there were “800 souls”, a sawmill built by Pettygrove, Lownsdale’s tannery, Terwilliger’s blacksmith shop, a wharf and a road to the Tualatina Plains. Portland incorporated in 1851 and within seven years had a population of two thousand and a hundred stores. There was a “library”, a music shop, elm lined
streets of classic revival cottages with tiny pillared porches. There was even a brick building with arches. And roughly three years after the Indian Wars had ended—on March 15 of 1859, the Brother Jonathan sailed into Portland with news that Oregon, a month earlier, had become the 33rd state in the Union. By 1900, there were 90,000 residents in Portland and ten years later, 200,000 (almost one third of Oregon’s total population).

William Johnson

William Johnson, celebrated as the first European settler in Portland, was born in England in 1784 and died near Champoeg on November 12, 1848. [Hussey] He served in the British Navy as a young man, but deserted a ship in Boston to become a seaman in the US Navy. He was a veteran of the War of 1812. He became an employee of the North West Company in 1817, transferring to Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821 upon the company’s merger when he was employed by the Columbia Department. Between 1828 and 1834 he seems to have spent much of his time as a cow herder, trapping on occasion, notably with the Umpqua parties between 1828 and 1830. The Hudson’s Bay Company first notes him as a Willamette Valley settler in 1837. After 1842, his name disappears from their accounts. Hussey suggests that Johnson may have been attracted to Champoeg as early as 1828 “while camping there with the Southern Brigade, that he may have selected a farm about 1834 and placed a tenant or an Indian slave on it, and that he moved there himself about 1836.” [Hussey]

Another source says that William Johnson came to Oregon on Captain Couch’s brig, Maryland, as a sailor. [History of Portland, Oregon, compiled by Workers of the Writers’ Program] However, John Couch sailed to Oregon in 1840, three years after Johnson signed a petition in 1837 at Champoeg. Captain Couch visit offers insights into the times for he was a skillful pilot who managed without charts to bring his vessel, the Maryland, up the river to “The Falls” (Oregon City) in June of 1840. And because the June flooding of the Columbia River backed water up the Willamette, he was able to bring his ship, literally, right up to the falls. Couch was sent by Cushing & Co. of Newburyport, Massachusetts in an attempt to breach the monopoly of the Hudson’s Bay Company by trading for salmon. But he could not persuade the Indians to fish for anyone other than “The Company.” [Snyder]

In January 1837, a US Navy purser, William A. Slacum visited Champoeg. He made a note of William Johnson who possessed a farm, said to be near the mouth of Champoeg Creek, since 1834. Johnson had 45 fenced acres, 25 of them cultivated, with two “good” houses, 14 hogs and two horses. Johnson had harvested 300 bushels of wheat in the previous season. [Hussey] Thomas Jefferson Farnham visited his “good shantee” in1839. “It was a hewn log structure about twenty feet square, with a mud chimney, hearth and fireplace. The furniture consisted of one chair, a number of wooden benches, a rude bedstead covered with flag mats, and several sheet-iron kettles, earthen plates, knives and foeks, tin pint cups, an Indian wife, and a brace of brown boys.” After breakfast the next morning, Johnson insisted on a tour of the farm, impressing Farnham with the “fenced fields, many acres of wheat and oat-stubble, potato-
fields, and garden-vegetables of all descriptions, and a barn well stored with the
gathered harvest.” [Hussey]

Two years later Lieutenant Charles Wilkes visited, finding the house “not
very pleasant in appearance.” He noted that there was “little cleanliness” about
the place and that most of the domestic duties were performed by two young
male Indian slaves; the place having “little the appearance of belonging to a
white man.” He wrote that Johnson’s native wife was a “rather pretty” girl and
agreed with him that she was “worth half a dozen civilized wives.” And Wilkes
was pleased that Johnson had hired “old Mr. Moore” from Illinois to spend
several months there as a teacher for his children. When Wilkes visited, wheat
and potatoes were flourishing, but the kitchen garden only “tolerable”. Johnson
had “some little stock” and found the “voracious” panthers and other predators
troublesome. [Hussey]

It is known that as a resident of Champoeg in 1837, Johnson signed a
petition for an American territorial government which was then presented to the
United States Senate. In 1841 he was a member of the committee of territorial
organization at Champoeg and at a meeting of the settlers, was named high
sheriff for the French Prairie colony.

In 1842, William Johnson brought his Indian wife and two children down
stream along with two Indian slaves. [Corning] He built a log cabin just west of
the Ross Island bar, about a mile south of “The Clearing” at the branching of
several Indian trails. Their household became the first and only settlement
between Willamette Falls and Fort Vancouver. He built his cabin, the first on the
west side of the river, on a knoll above the river trail. There he “snuggled his
domicile in an opening in the timber where a stream made the spot inimical to the
fir trees.” [Scot] His cabin was on the north side of a little stream which emptied
just below his cabin into a small lake which formed on the flood plain, running
north to a creek (Caruthers Creek) at Marquam Gulch. The low water lake
draining from both ends into the river. Across the river to the east was more low
swamp land that extended north for some distance. One went east, crossing the
river and continuing to Mount Hood. Another went north to the Clearing. One
went south to Diamond Head at Oswego Lake, then south to the Falls. A short
walk for a few hundred feet on the trail south of his house led to a trailhead going
west and up into the hills from the north end of Ross Island. These were the early
beginnings of highways: I-5, OR26 and OR43. From this cabin on the banks of
the Willamette, he cultivated the rich flood plain below, raised stock and worked
as a pilot on the river. There were several reasons why he may have chosen this
location to settle. First, it was at an important branching of several Indian trails.
Secondly, the land below was a flood plain, clear of timber and easy to cultivate.
And thirdly, the question of “The Head of Navigation” remained unsettled; How
far could ocean-going vessels travel upstream without the risk of running
aground at any time of the year? Johnson realized that Ross Island was that
point. For whatever reason, Johnson abandoned or sold his farm in Champoeg
and by mid August 1843, was settled halfway between Fort Vancouver and
Willamette Falls, tilling the flood plain and tending his flocks. Apparently he also
acquired "a certain local fame" for "clandestinely distilling a concoction known as "blue ruin."

A year after settling near Ross Island, the year that Pettygrove and Lovejoy "claimed" The Clearing, William Johnson went upriver to Champoeg. There he stood up to be counted along with Joe Meek, the flamboyant "minister plenipotentiary from the Republic of Oregon" and 50 others in favor of creating Oregon's first provisional government. Seven years later, in 1850, he abandoned the Portland site just before the Donation Land Act was passed and moved with his wife and children to French Prairie. He died that the same year near Champoeg. As Joseph Gaston colorfully relates in 1911: "Mrs. Charlotte Moffett Cartwright remembers well the cabin of Johnson and his half blood Indian wife, which was located near the trail which led from the Terwilliger home to the 'town.' Johnson dropped out of sight soon after Caruthers came into the country, and nobody ever knew what became of him."

He was originally an English sailor who later served with the United States on the old frigate Constitution, participating in the naval battle between that ship and the British cruiser Guerriere off the coast of Massachusetts on the 19th day of August, 1812. When the war broke out between the United States and Great Britain, it was supposed that as this country had no navy, the English would sweep American merchantmen from the seas. This they tried to do; and the few small frigates of the Americans could offer but little opposition. The American ship made famous by the battle here commemorated, had but then recently returned from European waters, where she barely escaped capture by the speed of her sailing. The British captain had been anxious to encounter a "Yankee man-of-war," having no doubt of an easy victory, and the "Yankee" Captain Hull of the Constitution was ready to accommodate him. They were wooden ships and they sailed right into each other, firing their little cannon as rapidly as they could be loaded, until with grappling irons, one ship laid hold of the other and her brave men leaped over all obstructions to end the fight at arms length in a life and death struggle on the decks of the-boarded ship. In that bloody battle William Johnson joined a boarding party, charging the bulwarks of the Briton and received an ugly scalp wound from a British cutlass. Henceforth, he delighted to tell of this terrible sea fight, speaking of the "Old Ironsides" as one might speak of a dearest friend. And being the only Oregonian known to have taken part in a naval battle in defense of the American flag, he is entitled to have his name reverently preserved in this history. This was the real battle in which William Johnson, who had his little log cabin on the present site of this city out near John Montag's stove foundry, sixty-seven years ago, immortalized himself in. He was defending his adopted country against the injustice of the land that gave him birth, and he shed his blood that the stars and stripes should not be hauled down in defeat. He was the first settler on the site of Portland, Oregon. He was a member of the first committee appointed to organize a provisional government, and he was one of the fifty-two who stood up at Champoeg sixty-seven years ago to be counted for the stars and stripes. And it is justly due to his memory that his name and his great services be here duly recorded, that they may be honored for all time. [Gaston, p. 204-5.]
Johnson may or may not have fought the famous battle between Old Ironsides and the Guerriere. There were two William Johnsons on the ship’s roster. Moreover, the details of his yarns don’t correspond with known facts. Curiously, he never renounced his British citizenship either. But in his Champoeg cabin, he had proudly hung a print of the capture of the Guerriere. [Hussey]

A personal acquaintance, Colonel Nesmith, thus spoke of him: “He was, in 1843, the only settler on the river below the Falls; a British sailor. He was a fine specimen of the British tar and had at an early day abandoned his allegiance to the British Lion, and taken service on the old frigate Constitution. I have frequently listened to his narrative of the action between the old Ironsides and the Guerriere on which occasion he served with the boarding party. He used to exhibit an ugly scar on his head made in that memorable action, by a British cutlass, and attributed his escape from death to the fact that he had a couple of pieces of hoop iron crossed in his cap, which arrested the cutlass and saved his life.” [Scott, p. 95.]

Although William Johnson was the first settler on the west side, an acquaintance of his settled for a short time on the east side fifteen years earlier. Etienne Lucier, born in 1793, like Johnson, also became a trapper for the Hudson’s Bay Company. A French Canadian, he had come overland to Astoria with Wilson Price Hunt’s expedition in 1812. He later headed John McLoughlin’s successful efforts to blast out a millrace at the Falls of the Willamette. He trapped in the Willamette regions until 1828 when he settled on the east side of the river in the vicinity of SE Grand and Morrison. There he built a cabin in the woods and forged a trail down to the Willamette. But in less than a year, he had abandoned
it and moved up river to French Prairie. There he raised the first wheat grown in Oregon, gaining the reputation as “the first Oregon farmer.” He farmed until his death in 1853. He was buried in an unmarked grave at St. Paul Cemetery. Both he and William Johnson were active in early wolf control meetings and both of them voted in the civil organization of the country at Champoeg in May of 1843 where Lucier was said to have cast a deciding vote. Like Johnson, he married an Indian woman with whom he had one daughter.

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1840, construction began on a 54 foot ship named the “Star of Oregon” on the east side of Swan Island and finished a year later at Willamette Falls. When Johnson abandoned his cabin ten years later and returned to French Prairie, there were at least 14 steamboats making scheduled runs on the Willamette and over 30 towns registered in the valley itself. Most of the towns existing today were founded in between 1840 and 1850 by people like Lucier and Johnson. But Johnson was the first to recognize and settle at the Willamette River’s true head of navigation, a funnel for North American commerce and future site of the largest inland port on the west coast of all of the Americas.

**Donation Land Claim Act**

The large territory of Oregon was claimed by both England and the United States. England claimed the land north of the Columbia River and Americans rallied at the words: “Fifty-four forty or fight”, a latitude far north of the 49th parallel finally settled upon as the international boundary. The settlement was due principally to the 12,000 American pioneers who trekked overland in the 1840s on the Oregon Trail. For at that time, physical possession carried greater weight than exploration and discovery. A territorial government was established two years after the sovereignty issue was resolved.

Because both the United States and England claimed it, title to the Oregon Country was itself unsettled, as were most Oregon land and townsite claims and transactions. The legality of these claims and town-lot titles was hazy until the mid 1850s and many titles remained in question until the 1870s. The settlers themselves created their own provisional land claim laws before the US could declare Oregon a territory and Congress enacted the Donation Land Law. They realized that provisional legislation and titles might be rejected in the future. But they believed that congress would confirm first claims to 640-acre tracts. And town lot holders who had bought or traded land from the original claim holders certainly expected that their titles would be honored. So Oregon settlers filed and jumped claims, made promises and agreements, registered and re-registered deeds while hopefully awaiting the future.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the US government was encouraging land ownership. It created a national grid system. The mid west was platted into square township units measuring six miles on each side. These were divided into thirty-six square mile sections of 640 acres each. A quarter section of 160 acres became the standard because it was considered the ideal size for a family farm. In 1841, Thomas Hart Benton, Senator from Missouri, pushed his Pre-emption Land Bill through the US Senate, It stated that any US citizen was given the right
to settle on 160 acres of surveyed land and could later buy the land from the government at a minimum fixed price. A controversy soon followed concerning the initial values set for the price of land. In support of Benton a year later, another Senator from Missouri, Lewis F. Linn, introduced a resolution asked for the termination of the agreement with Britain to share Oregon. It also called for granting 640 acres to any white male who occupied and cultivated the land for five years. These resolutions failed, but they played an important role eight years later.

Late in the year of 1850, Congress passed the Donation Land Claim Act granting free land to qualifying early settlers of the Oregon Territory. A single man could claim a half-section or 320 acres. It required that the claimants live on and cultivate the land for four consecutive years. This act was to encourage pioneers to endure hardships and settle in the west. Registry required land titles to show clearly marked property lines. Any American settler over 18 years of age was given free land if they registered their claim before December 1, 1855. His wife could hold an additional half-section in her own right. This was 62 years before women’s suffrage gave women the right to vote in Oregon. At that time, men outnumbered women nine to one. The result was that girls as young as 11 to 13 years old were wedded to ambitious men. The marriages were often in name only with the bride growing up with her parents for a time or the husband living alone while he worked the land.

Early property owners. (G)

Stephen Coffin
At the age of forty, Stephen Coffin migrated with his wife and children from Maine to Oregon City in 1847. But with hard work and good fortune he quickly became a wealthy man. Two years later Coffin moved to Portland where he purchased a half-interest in the town site, north of today’s Lincoln Street. Both Snyder and MacColl report that Coffin, like other early Portland entrepreneurs and speculators, was a quick one to discover and pursue opportunity, even if it wasn’t always to his advantage and early real estate dealings often involved self promotion and questionable shenanigans. With suspicious tactics, Coffin along with Daniel Lownsdale and William Chapman, pried the land from Ben Stark, all of them early Portland entrepreneurs. The three partners began quarrelling. “Faithless promises” led to charges that Chapman and Coffin had “filched out of the pockets…” which led to “squirming and shuffling” and law suits until Coffin testified at a court hearing that “we became enemies.” Yet as all of this was going on, they were still selling parcels of the unresolved land to one another and to other eager purchasers. This included Coffin’s and Lownsdale’s $300 sale of land in 1849 for Portland’s first school at First and Oak, also the first joint private-public educational institution on the west coast. [MacColl]

Late in 1850 Stephen Coffin went into an ill-fated partnership with the early southeast Portland property owner, Gideon Tibbetts. They launched a canoe ferry that was challenged by James Stephens. Stephens was angry and warned others not to buy land from Coffin, and Tibbetts lost a substantial sum of money in the endeavor. In 1852, Coffin himself was tricked by William King, a man once described by Malcolm Clark as “distinguished by an illuminated nose and a conniving nature.” King had arranged for the State penitentiary to be built in Portland. The state somehow leased two blocks from King, one of them owned by Coffin (Portland Block 106), along with King’s own neighboring block (Block 107) for the prison site. The penitentiary was built on the two blocks, but Coffin was furious. Even ten years later, he steadfastly refused to sell his block to the state. Finally, the state moved the penitentiary to Salem thirty years after King’s initial lease. [MacColl]

Stephen Coffin played an important role in the city’s growth as a strong promoter of “Stump Town,” a nickname for Portland which had grown so quickly from forested land that the many remaining stumps were painted white to avoid accidents at night. Coffin, who liked to be called “General” because of his Civil War service in the militia, was a man of many interests: an active promoter, merchant and politician. He helped found Oregon’s Republican Party in 1856. A year later he was on the city council. He was the only ex-proprietor to sell all of his land holdings and become successful as a merchant. Several of his ventures cost him a small fortune without costing him his comforts. He helped to build the first steam powered sawmill at the foot of Jefferson Street. It was called “the old sawmill” and had the first industrial whistle. Eugene Snyder describes that: “In 1850, when the mill started up, there was an Indian settlement just to the south of the mill, in a flat area which today, given over to industry, has become a treeless tangle of tanks, towers and metallic shapes where no Indian would feel at home.
When the Indians heard that the white man's new big tool was about to start working, they hesitatingly gathered round. Suddenly, the steam whistle shrieked; the Indians ran into the tall timber, then only a few steps away. There they remained for some time while the mill, hissing with jets of steam, slowly turned a log into rough planks." A saw mill remained in operation at that location for a hundred years. In 1862 he built the first saw mill in eastern Oregon's pine belt at Oro Dell near La Grande.

In the early 1860s, Coffin helped to form a couple of transportation companies to serve Willamette Valley merchants and farmers, the People’s Line and its successor the People’s Transportation Company. He also became a prime mover in building the Tualatin Plank Road up Tanner Creek, becoming one of the first roads over the West Hills, and later known as Canyon Road or Highway 26. At the 1855 outbreak of the Yakima Indian War which began near Walla Walla and was fought on both sides of the mid-Columbia River, Coffin provided a steamboat at his own expense which he filled with provisions and blankets for transporting troops up the Columbia River. By 1858, the Indians had lost 90 percent of their traditional lands and lived poorly, confined on a reservation. In 1863 he was appointed Brigadier-General of the militia by Oregon’s Governor Addison Gibbs. Through contracts he built twenty wooden bridges; he donated a levee to Portland, he purchased Portland’s first church and school bell. In 1871 he and his second wife donated seven park blocks and several acres for a public levee at the foot of Jefferson Street. Stephen Coffin spent his last years quietly on a farm in Dayton, Oregon, dying in near-obscurity in 1882.

James Terwilliger

James Terwilliger's family was originally Dutch and was among the first settlers of New York. His grandmother owned a large tract of land on the site where New York City now stands. Terwilliger was a New York native who left to became a blacksmith in Knox County, Ohio. In 1841, he "joined a movement that was then attracting a great deal of attention and turning his face westward,
removed to Hancock county, Illinois, on the Mississippi river, which had attracted the favorable notice of the Mormon leader, Joseph Smith. Here many of the Latter Day Saints were gathering and at Nauvoo they erected a temple and aroused great antagonism on the part of many of their neighbors.” [Book at Sam Adam’s office] He “built a blacksmith shop, at a crossroads, where he also took up land for a farm.” He decided to leave with Mormons for “the new northwest”. [Ibid] In 1845, “Mr. Terwilliger started for his new home with a team of four oxen drawing an emigrant wagon in which were his wife and four children, and a few of the most urgent necessities of pioneer life, among them his ax, gun and ammunition. His wife, Sophronia Hurd Terwilliger, died during the six month trip and James arrived in Portland with his four children on October 3rd.

He erected Portland’s first house, a log cabin, for his family at First and Morrison. He also built the first blacksmith shop, becoming Portland’s first blacksmith. He was a 36 year old widower. In 1847, Terwilliger married Palinda (or Philenda) Green and had two more children. In 1850, Terwilliger secured 640 acres of land south of the small town site of Portland. The land grew in value and portions were sold for residential use. Terwilliger was active in public affairs and became a colonel of the state militia. He died in 1890 at the age of 84. “The tract of land now known as Terwilliger Park was originally donated to the city as a cemetery but was later dedicated to its present use and is a permanent monument to a man who was one of the first to discern the possibilities of the site as the location of a growing city.” [Ibid]

Another account of Terwilliger claims that he was restless and enterprising, that he built a log house on the east side of the Willamette River and went into the timber business with his neighbor, James B. Stephens, who soon lost $16,000 in the partnership. Stephens had also built a log house on the river at the foot of Stephens Street. Terwilliger was remarried in 1847 to Philenda Green with whom he had two more children. He also bought four lots from Francis Pettygrove’s site in Portland, built a blacksmith shop and a second log house near SW First and Yamhill Street, where he lived before he joined the 1848 California Gold Rush.

The Gold Rush was a big event and effected every community on the west coast. Approximately two-thirds of all able bodied men in Oregon departed for California, leaving farms and families. The Oregon Spectator asked Oregonians to stay on their farms- until the newspaper’s printer also left. It’s said that news of the California gold rush arrived in Portland in August of 1848 when Captain Newell sailed up the Willamette buying all the shovels he could. No one understood why until with a ship full of spades, wheat and other provisions, he informed locals that gold had been discovered in California.

It was said that Terwilliger traded away his rights to his place on the east side for a horse, and that he then bought a piece of land on the trail and south of William Johnson’s place in exchange for the same horse. In fact, James Terwilliger returned a year later with a modest amount of gold dust. He and his family then settled on a 640 acre wooded claim south of the city and west of Ross Island. He built a cabin where two streams came together, just north of Toe Island. In 1850 he filed his claim under the Donation Act. He farmed his land, ran
a small tannery and regularly visited his property in town until his death in 1892. It's said that in 1860, Terwilliger sold three acres of his land for $500 and a bottle of whiskey to the builders of the Jones Lumber Company Steam Sawmill. Once he harvested and squared lumber from James Stephens land with Stephen Coffin and shipped it to California. Both Coffin and Terwilliger lost their investment when the market in California collapsed.

**John Slavin**

West of the Terwilliger land parcel was a claim belonging to John A. Slavin who built a skid road to haul logs down to the Willamette River. Slavin's Road became well established. He improved the roadway to move cattle, horses and produce from Slavin's farm to the markets of Portland through the hills to Portland. This later became a county road to haul rock for road building from a quarry on Slavin's property. He also owned a blacksmith shop for the convenience of local farmers. Slavin Road crossed the West Hills into the Tualatin Valley. He lived at the crest, near today's Hillsdale Branch Library.

Born in 1826 in Boone County, Missouri, Slavin left for Oregon at the age of 24. Having sold, or traded, his horses and equipment along the way, he arrived in Portland tired and broke in 1850. He quickly found work shaping logs and building houses in “Stumptown”, a growing town with 600 men, women and children. He almost died with a sickness “from exposure to the rain.” When he regained his health, he paid off his debts and took a land claim of 160 acres. The area became known as “Slavin’s Hill”. The homestead doubled in size through his marriage to 16 year old Emma Ross. Such marriages were common because of the Donation Land Claim Act where girls of 12 or older were wed to grown men. Often the newly married girls would continue to live with their parents until they were a little older. In 1853, Slavin wrote: “I have a small stock of cattle and hogs, a small barn with a small frame house, 16 feet square with a pretty wife seventeen years and six months old.” They had six children together, of which only three survived.

As Oregon’s population continued to grow exponentially, from 13,000 in 1850 to 52,000 by 1860, Slavin expanded his fortunes throughout the Northwest. His Hillsdale property was worth about $1,000 to $1,500 an acre in 1893. But it was said that he also owned property in 23 counties of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, including two large horse ranches in Eastern Oregon and commercial property in Spokane. Slavin served two terms as a Multnomah County Commissioner, he donated land for schools and other purposes. He died in 1908 and his wife died five years later. He had written long before: "I am satisfied to live and die here. I came to a new country to make a start with the country so as to grow with it. And if I grow in point of prosperity as fast the country improves, I will be satisfied." [Paul Pintarch]

**The Caruthers**

The establishment of the Caruthers Addition to the south of Portland involves one of the most complicated legal battles over land titles in Portland's early history. Elizabeth Caruthers was born in North Carolina in 1792. She married Joseph Thomas in Tennessee in 1816 but chose to be called Mrs.
Elizabeth Caruthers when her husband died in 1823. Her son Finice (pronounced “fye'-niss”) was then but 5 years old. “Whether it was by some such prescience that she named the last of her race Finice (finis) does not appear.” [Scott] In 1847 Elizabeth and Finice found her way overland from Tennessee to Portland. For some reason, both she and her son generally used Elizabeth’s maiden name, Caruthers. Little is known about their lives back east, nor about Elizabeth's brief marriage to Joe Thomas. “There was some sort of mystery about their former life, and Finice lived much alone, never marrying.” [Scott] E. Kimbark MacColl in Merchants, Money and Power calls them “Portland’s Quiet Neighbors” for they were simply not ambitious as “they participated little or not at all in the kinds of frenetic land dealings engineered by Portland’s proprietors.” In 1850, three years after arriving in Portland, they settled on the rise overlooking the Willamette River just south of the small, but growing town of Portland, on William Johnson’s home site abandoned only two years earlier. Elizabeth filed a Donation Land claim for one square mile of land at the south end of the original Portland township on a shoulder of land just below Mount Robinson and Judge Marquam’s homestead.

As H.W. Scott wrote 40 years later in 1890: “The two, upon arriving here, bought the land belonging to William Johnson, who lived south of town. On the side hill amid the fir trees, they built a cabin, putting one part of the structure on the claim that the mother decided to take, while the other extended upon the land of Finice. In this retreat, far from the world, and separate from their former life, whatever it was, they lived quietly and happily. The old lady was peculiar, and pleasant stories of her sayings and doings went around the neighborhood. In one of these it is related how a caller found her in a sad and pensive frame of mind, from which his best sallies of wit could not arouse her. At length she revealed the cause of her melancholy. ‘There will be war,’ she said.

"Ah indeed; why do you think so?"

"My old hen" she replied "laid an egg with letters on it; and there it was as plain as fire 'W-O-R', War." [Scott].

Elizabeth, for some reason as a widow, chose to use her married name, Mrs. Thomas, when she tried to claim two 320-acre parcels, causing the General Land Office to question her claim. Because the law required the owner to live on and improve the property, her son took half of the claim and they built a house straddling the property line. Each lived in the half of the structure that was on their respective land grant. Finice took the north half of the 640 acres (SW Lincoln to Gibbs Street), and Elizabeth took the other half south to James Terwilliger's claim (which ended in the south near SW Bancroft Street). They cleared and farmed the more fertile land in the flood plain below. The Caruthers became two of the city's original 212 landowners. Caruthers Street and the nearby creek in Marquam Gulch both get their names from Finice Caruthers.

“[Finice] Caruthers was a quiet upright man, much interested in education, and gave liberally for the erection of the first schoolhouse, and performed all his public duties cheerfully. He laid off some twenty blocks on the north side of his claim, calling it Caruthers' Addition to Portland.” [Scott] He was an active land speculator, with claims in Multnomah and nearby counties assessed at over $24,000, which, at the time, made Finice one of the wealthiest men in Portland.
His riches were only good on paper, though, because most of his land holdings were mortgaged and he had little cash. He was somewhat of a loner and never married. Finice made one foray into public life as the Democratic candidate for county coroner in 1853 and lost.

The charter for Portland of 1851 had no provision for the public supply of water. Until 1857 Portland’s water was drawn from wells that were becoming increasingly contaminated. That year, Finice Caruthers joined with his neighbor to the south, Stephen Coffin, to create The Pioneer Water Works, Portland’s first fresh water supply. It was a primitive network of fir log pipes laid from Marquam Gulch down to Portland central district. Fir logs were bored with a hole 2 ½ inches in diameter and connected by metal sleeves to bring water from Caruthers Creek, just west of Seventh Street. Finice provided the water and most of the labor for Coffin’s plan. When Coffin’s money ran out in 1859, they sold the business to Robert Pentland who installed a steam plant at the foot of Mill Street to use additional water from the Willamette River. And three years later, Pentland was forced by financial needs to sell to Henry (or John) Green and H.C. Leonard who had already established Portland’s first utility, the Portland Gas Light Company. Later they laid 5,000 feet of California redwood logs and a line from Balch Creek in Northwest Portland.

Soon thereafter, Marquam Gulch became the town’s first dump. Much later, in 1884, the Palatine Hill Pumping Station was built four miles upriver from Portland. It was an imposing two story, brick structure that delivered ten gallons a day of foul tasting river water. It was quickly replaced a publicly owned water system with Bull Run water a year later. There was a concrete water reservoir with pump house at SW Broadway and Lincoln Streets, then abandoned in 1895.

Elizabeth, Finice’s mother, died in 1857. Before his own death three years later, Finice laid out about 20 acres as a southern extension of the city called the Caruthers Addition. And responding to the need for home sites, he subdivided his part of the land which lay between the hills and the flood plain.

When Finice died in 1860, he left a parcel of valuable property. Elizabeth’s half of the claim alone was valued at $12,000. In addition to the original claims, he had bought more land in the area, and his death engendered an odd string of legal battles. With no will or apparent heirs, the $30,000 estate was placed in the hands of a court-appointed administrator, who laid out a second addition and sold the property. Some questioned Elizabeth’s claim on the grounds that she never really lived there or improved it. Some claimed Finice was not really
Elizabeth's son and urged the whole package be taken-over by the state and sold at auction. Others accepted Finice as Elizabeth's son but doubted his legitimacy as such. It was possible that he was Elizabeth's bastard child. If that was the case then there were no legal heirs. The state itself tried to claim the title because of the faulty original claim. Finally, Stephen Coffin, the prominent promoter and businessman who owned the land north of the Caruthers' claim was named administrator of Finice's estate.

It turned out that the Caruthers owed some surprisingly large fees and charges, which detracted from the overall value of their estate. In December 1861, a majority of Finice's claim was auctioned off to the public. Somehow most of the proceeds simply vanished into various assessments and legal fees; no one seems to come out ahead except the law and land barons. But in 1868, the state lost its claim to the land, about 265 to 290 acres, which was again sold under suspicious circumstances.

Because of confusion and greed, the unresolved case involved almost endless possibilities and by its notoriety invited sporadic heirs to appear and contest ownership. In 1869, a known womanizer named John Mitchell Hipple and his friends found a man in St. Louis who answered to the name of "Joe Thomas". They bribed him and brought him to Portland. So it was that in the midst of the wrangling someone calling himself Joseph ("Wrestling Joe") Thomas showed up claiming to be Elizabeth's long-lost and/or dead husband. He sued for title to the property and won, only to renounce his victory and imply he'd been used to perpetrate a fraud. Even as he was trying to establish his claim, another man, Dolph Hannah, set up a counter claim. Records of the entire affair were "tantalizingly vague." After "Wrestling Joe" successfully won his claim to the property, Mitchell Hipple and his friends paid him an $8,000 more for his property rights. And in 1870 they formed the South Portland Real Estate Association from the old Caruthers Company. Through corruption, graft and greed, they quickly made themselves, others, and even the mayor, rich. When "Wrestling" Joe Thomas was exposed as John C. Nixon in 1873, nobody even contested the corrupt financial and political transactions. Then, as H.W. Scott describes it in 1890: Upon the appearance of Villard, and the formation of the Oregon and Transcontinental Railway Company the stocks of this Caruthers Company was bought for the 0 R & N. R. R. and it was at first proposed to make the terminal works of this road on the west side of the river, near the present site of the Powers' Manufactory. Maps of the city made at that time show the 0. R. & N. road crossing the Willamette at Ross Island, and there was at first considerable preliminary work done at this place. The depot and terminal works were finally located, however, on the east side of the river below the city, but the railroad is understood to still own what remains unsold of the original Caruther's claim, illustrating once more how loose property gravitates toward railways. [Scott, P. 136-8.]

In the 1870s, the Caruthers Addition held a unique position of being the only undeveloped plateau between the Tualatin Mountains and the river. Other neighborhoods like King's Hill and Portland Heights to the west developed later because, unlike the Caruthers Addition, they had to be physically carved out of
the hills. In the more level Caruthers Addition, development occurred at a faster pace. Streets were laid out in Portland’s familiar 200 by 200 foot grid pattern like downtown, then named for prominent businessmen and politicians. Seventeen city blocks were sold at prices ranging from $280 to $700. A portion of the property was purchased by Jewish residents, heralding the future influx of Jewish immigrants to the South Portland area. Meanwhile, Portland’s population had exploded from 800 in 1860 to 17,500 by 1880 in one generation. It continued to roughly double every five years through the turn of the century. As Portland continued to grow, the Caruthers Addition became one of the city’s first suburbs.

**Philip Marquam**

Philip Augustus Marquam was born in Baltimore on February 28, 1828. He graduated from Bloomington Law School in 1847, Indiana before coming overland to California in 1849 and to Portland on August 13, 1851. Marquam married Mary Emma Kern in 1853 at Cedar Mill when he was 30 and she was only 17 years old. They had four sons and seven daughters. He became a successful attorney in Portland and was elected a Multnomah County Judge in 1862, a position he held until 1870. In 1882 he became a state legislator. Marquam was able to persuade the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company (OR&N) to establish their headquarters in Portland. Besides his law practice, Marquam was an active land speculator, earning the title of "the greatest landowner in Multnomah County." At one time, he owned the Fulton district and 298 acres on what is now known as Marquam Hill.

Marquam bought the old John Donner donation land claim in 1857. It was high in the hills above South Portland and became known as Marquam Hill. In 1875, The Marquams deeded their portion of water rights with five acres to the Portland Water Company “forever”. After owning Marquam Hill for twenty three years, he finally in 1880 platted it into the Portland City Homestead. Subsequently, the OR&N bought a large portion of his land there, planning to build a train depot on Marquam Hill. The purchase was based solely on Marquam’s plot plan in which he delineated 200 foot square blocks, the same as downtown Portland. The railroad’s assumption that the land was flat, was wrong. When the they realized that it was no place for trains, they gifted some of the land to the University of Oregon Medical School that was housed in NW Portland at the time. In the late 1880s, he built the Marquam Grand Opera House on Seventh Street (later renamed the Orpheum Theatre on SW Broadway) and the Marquam Office Building, called “the first modern office building in Portland” in 1895. Marquam was also active in getting the Morrison Street Bridge built, as well as constructing the Marquam Office Building and the Marquam Grand Opera. He also made many contributions to the educational and sporting history of the city. Marquam is credited with being the father of good roads in the state, for “nearly all the public highways outside of the city were laid out during his administration.” [Corning]

Marquam Hill, Marquam Gulch and the Marquam Bridge were all named after him.
Peter Taylor

Peter Taylor was born in Perth, Scotland, in 1823. He was apprenticed to a cabinet maker at an early age, but when his master's business failed he was thrown out on his own resources. He traveled to London, worked at his trade from 1845 to 1847, and there became interested in accounts of better opportunity in the United States. In 1847, he immigrated to New York, and was married there to Sara Heppell, another recent immigrant from England. The couple moved to Ohio, and then to Iowa, where he worked as a house carpenter. In May 1852, he temporarily left his wife and three children and joined a team of 15 wagons that were headed overland for Oregon. Many members of this small band died of cholera, and Peter Taylor's own wagon broke down 100 miles east of Ft. Boise. He continued alone and on foot finally. When he contracted "mountain fever" and passed into a stupor in the Blue Mountains of Oregon, he lay down to die. A party of Indians chanced upon him, loaded him across a pony, and carried him back to their settlement on the Umatilla River. There he was able to regain his health, when he recovered, being without money, he gave them his checkered shirt and recalled that they seemed well satisfied. The Indians showed him the trail to The Dalles, and from there he came by boat to Portland in October of 1852.

The population of Portland in 1852 was about 450 persons. At first, Taylor did whatever work he could find. One of his first jobs was putting together the machinery for the first horse-power that was used in the river ferryboats. His employer at that time was A. B. Hallock, the city's first architect. They formed an association lasting many years. In 1853, Portland elected its first mayor and Taylor found a permanent position as a pattern-maker for the first iron foundry in the city, the Portland Foundry, established that same year. He worked there for 9 years. Also in 1853, he helped organize one of the first volunteer fire companies in the city, the Hook and Ladder Company, and was the second citizen to be put on the list of volunteers. In 1862, Peter Taylor, ever the ambitious pioneer, left Portland in the company of 43 men for the John Day gold mines. They encountered snow at The Dalles, and in the mountains 200 miles beyond, became separated during a severe winter storm. Less than one half of the original party survived and to make their way back to Portland.

He was taken on after his return by the second iron works then starting up in the city, The Oregon Iron Works, and put in charge of the pattern-making department. In 1865, Peter Taylor started the highly successful Willamette Iron Works with A. B. Hallock, John Nation, John Thomas. It was Portland's third foundry and a major corporation, producing much of Portland's cast-iron building fronts between 1865 and 1889. Early Portland's collection of cast-iron fronted architecture was surpassed only by San Francisco on the west coast, and today is one of the principal remaining collections in the nation.

Mr. Taylor was initially in charge of pattern-making, but in the years to follow would serve as Vice President and President of the corporation. During the time of his active involvement with the firm, the Willamette Iron Works produced the iron work for a great number of Portland's buildings, including the Ladd and Tilton Bank (1868) the Odd Fellows Temple (1869), the Cosmopolitan Block (1878) and the Merchants Hotel (1880). The last building mentioned and
the reconstructed Ladd and Bush Bank in Salem, are standing landmarks to the firm's work. In 1882 the Willamette Iron Works reported having 80 employees and an annual work valued at $200,000, which was second in volume only to the timber industry among manufacturers operating in the city. The company eventually passed into the hands of H. W. Corbett and was re-incorporated as the Willamette Iron and Steel Works, as it is known today.

Peter Taylor retired from active business in 1881 and traveled with his wife back to their old homes in Scotland and England. After his return to Portland, he gave the family home near SW First and Caruthers Street to his son Douglas, and had constructed for himself, at a cost of $5,000, a new home on the corner of SW First Avenue and Meade Street. Mr. Taylor sold the Italianate style residence to the Haehlen brothers in 1887 and went to live with the families of his children. He died on November 11, 1909, at the age of 86 years.

John Corkish

John Corkish was an Irish immigrant from the Isle of Man. At the age of 17, he arrived in America with his shipmaster uncle. Corkish lived in Ohio and Wyoming before moving to Portland in 1884. He arrived in the city as an agent for the Continental Oil Company but went on to greener pastures, forming and supervising two large corporations: The Puget Sound Pipe Company in Olympia Washington and the Goldendale Milling Company in Goldendale, Washington. Corkish remained in Portland until his death in 1916.

The Haehlen Brothers

The experience of the Haehlen brothers, John and Gotlieb, coming to Portland in 1885 from Lenk, Switzerland, was especially typical of the times. They arrived with "ten dollars and a smashed trunk... full of hope and courage." In a short time they established a successful restaurant business, and found a home in South Portland. The Haehlens, who had arrived in Portland two years earlier from Lenk, Switzerland, had prospered after opening the Knickerbocker Coffee and Oyster House on Washington Street. They had the second home built on the adjacent vacant lot for a cost of $3,000 and collected rental income from the property until the brothers both married in 1890. John Haehlen then lived with his family in the Taylor House, and Gotlieb Haehlen, with his family, occupied the more recently built home to the south. The Knickerbocker eventually closed, but Gotlieb purchased the Pine Street Coffee House in 1897 and ran this popular no-frills restaurant on Pine Street between First and Second Avenue, in the heart of the old commercial district, for over 40 years. Gotlieb's employees were all relatives that had mostly been born in Switzerland. The tiny place, where "the floors run at a 10 or 12 percent grade in one or two places, was famous for its German pancakes and good "eats." On March 23rd, 1913, the Oregon Sunday Journal described it as "Portland's millionaire club," and referred to the little restaurant on Pine Street as "the businessmen's Mecca for years." Like many of the immigrants who had come to Portland during this period, and who had made their home in South Portland, they had by then become established members of the community.
William Lair Hill

William Lair Hill, an attorney who is called the father of Portland's park system, was born in Tennessee, August 20, 1838, the son of Reuben Coleman and Margaret Graham Lair Hill. The family migrated to Oregon in 1853 to Benton County. His father was a physician and a Baptist clergyman. William, who preferred to use his middle name, attended the Jefferson Institute in Jefferson, and graduated from McMinnville (Linfield) College. He was admitted to the bar in 1861. During the Civil War, he performed military service in Eastern Oregon. He became Grant County judge from 1864 to 1866 and married Julia Hall Chandler in 1865.

Hill came to Portland in 1864. He was an excellent lawyer and practiced law in a number of different locations. He edited the Daily Times and, for a short time, was drafted as editor of the Daily Union by Republicans and printers that were unhappy with a competing daily newspaper, the Oregonian, published by the tight-fisted Henry Pittock. William Lair Hill purchased a three and one half acre property on the south side of Marquam Gulch in 1868, selling it twelve years later to Charles Smith. Lair Hill became editor of the Oregonian in October of 1872, serving until 1877 when Harvey Scott resumed as editor. His colleagues were Matthew Deady, George Williams and Asahel Bush. He lived and practiced law in The Dalles for a time. He was best remembered for the codification of the Oregon laws, Annotated Statutes of Oregon, during the years of 1882 to 1887. He moved briefly to Oakland, California in 1889 and, in the same year to Seattle where he compiled and codified the laws of Washington. In 1892 he was one of the directors of the new Columbia River Railway & Navigation Co. He resettled in Oakland in the early 1900s and practiced law, remaining there until his death, February 24, 1924. He had four children. The Lair Hill neighborhood was given its name in the mid-1920s when William Lair Hill died.

Upon his death, Franklin Pierce Mays spoke of his friend, Lair: "He knew more law than any man I have ever had anything to do with, and he knew more of everything else than he did of law- he could name you every flower and plant that he saw in an afternoon's walk, and when he was more than 80 years old he learned to drive an automobile, and to do it well. For relaxation it was his habit to read scientific works in the original German. … He seemed to know something on every conceivable subject and to know it thoroughly."

In 1880, Lair Hill sold the three and one-half acre site to Charles E. Smith, an industrialist who owned an iron foundry on the banks of the Willamette River. Smith's company made much of the cast iron ornamentation which decorated the facades of Portland's commercial buildings. His family built two houses on this land- the first, a relatively modest farmhouse, and the second, an elegant mansion. The latter was designed by Justus Krumbein, a relative who had come to Oregon in 1871 from Homburg, Germany. Krumbein was an influential architect in Oregon who designed the original State Capital building in Salem, the old St.Vincent's Hospital and several large commercial blocks in Portland. The grounds surrounding the mansion were laid out and planted and the entire site enclosed with a cast iron fence. Several of the trees there were possibly planted
by Mrs. Smith, a plant lover. The Smith family certainly lived quite apart from their neighbors in the more modest cottages just across Second Avenue. Mr. Smith resided in the mansion until 1909 when he donated the house and grounds to the Country Hospital, in lieu of attempts by others to purchase the land. Mr. Smith wished the private pleasure grounds he had created to remain intact. The Smith mansion was torn down and the first county hospital was built. It became the nurse’s quarters and then the Children’s Museum. Later, a Carnegie Library was built on the northeast corner of the property.

The Riverfront of South Portland
Along the riverbank of South Portland, saw mills provided lumber for a growing city. The river was a natural and perfect vehicle for floating logs to the many mills that lined the Willamette in Portland. The lumber was used for every imaginable purpose and exported profitably. At the foot of Harrison Street, J. Moser and Sons opened a mill that they sold two years later in 1885 which became a box company, making fruit and cigar boxes and barrel staves. They produced lumber for the original Morrison Bridge, built in 1887. Samuel Cobb came west in 1882 and soon partnered with Sam Wren in a box factory at the foot of Montgomery Street. Further south, saw mills in the Fulton area like the Jones Lumber Company Steam Sawmill employed hundreds of Portlanders. It was built on three acres of land purchased in 1860 from James Terwilliger for $500 and a bottle of whiskey. (At least, that's the story.) Other large sawmills were built on the east side across the river. In Fulton, the Multnomah Lumber and Box Company was at Bancroft Street, the Oregon Chair Company, Oregon Furniture and Manufacturing Company were both between Richardson and Boundary Streets, and the John Halsey Jones Company occupied five blocks near Flower Street. Leech's Foundry and the Webber Brothers' Tannery were both located beside the river in Fulton with the owner’s families living nearby. There was also a soap factory and a candy factory near the river.
Immigrants

Those who came to Portland in the first two decades after its inception were mostly from New England. It was the same in South Portland. During that time, job openings created by rapid growth in timber, agriculture, and railroad industries, attracted many immigrants to Oregon. As they came, Portland developed one of the most heterogeneous populations in the far west. Immigrants from England, Ireland, Canada, German, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Italy and China mingled daily. In 1860, over 25 percent of Portland residents were foreign born. And by 1890, Portland was second only to San Francisco with the most foreigners in the West. Portland’s population was almost 27,000 and one sixth or 4,646 could not speak English. For the two decades following 1880, almost 40 percent of all Portlanders were foreign born; add those who had at least one foreign born parent and the figure rose to 59 percent. Despite the mingling on the streets, there were few mixed marriages; it was under 10 percent. [Merriam] The Scandinavian and Irish immigrants who settled in Portland tended to congregate in the northeast section of town, the Chinese created one of the largest Chinatowns on the west coast. Italians and Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia gravitated to South Portland.

The area north of the Caruthers property (Lincoln Street) was populated first by German Jews and Irish Catholic immigrants. Those who purchased some of Stephen Coffin’s and Finice Caruther’s land holdings created an inviting atmosphere for waves of new immigrants. In time the first immigrants became more affluent, leaving their menial jobs-- and South Portland as well. Yet as these first immigrants left, South Portland’s minority reputation grew, attracting new waves of immigrants. This was partly because the first wave of recently established German Jews from Bavaria had become South Portland landlords, which attracted newer immigrants unfamiliar with American ways. More immigrants were then drawn to the same area because of the large number of Eastern European Jews and Italians already located there. There was a tendency for families from the same area of the old country to settle together. South Portland was also attractive because of its proximity to downtown Portland. It was near to day jobs on the waterfront, to factory work along the river, to businesses in town and to the nicer residential areas in the park blocks. The railroad yards and gardens were nearby. And best of all, rents were low.

Life in South Portland

The area known as South Portland was roughly located between SW Harrison and Curry Streets, and from the river to Fifth Avenue. The commercial hub of South Portland though was much smaller; it centered on SW First between Arthur and Sherman, and continued for eight blocks on First between Grant and Porter Streets. Near the Hawthorne Bridge at the extreme northern edge of the area was the South Portland (or Jefferson Street) Train Station and not far from it at Yamhill Street was the Farmer’s Market which offered fresh vegetables and other agricultural products. At its height, this market was served
annually by about 75,000 different growers and producers. [Klooster] The area known as “Little Russia” consisted of several blocks toward the northern end located roughly between Lincoln and Caruthers, and Hood to Second. The Italians lived in “Little Italy” to the west and south of the Russians. Jewish immigrants settled among, but mostly south, of the Russians and east of the Italians. The area was sometimes called “Jewtown”. These various cultures mixed easily while still retaining their own identity.

Boarding houses and rooming houses proliferated. This established a domestic core, not of family owned real estate, but small rentals instead. Thus many of the immigrants in South Portland lived together in small apartments and rented rooms, often in large or combined families. It was common for these families to move to new quarters within the neighborhood every few years.

The hub and business center of the neighborhood was located along First Avenue and Front Street, and between Arthur and Sherman. There one could find kosher markets, drugstores, delicatessens and bakeries: Mister Cottell's drugstore, Mister Harper's deli, Mosler's bakery, Korsun's market. The integration of South Portland life was illustrated by Colistro & Halprin's Grocery and Delicatessen for Colistro was southern Italian and Halprin, a Russian Jew. One could shop at Himmelfarb's Grocery and pick up a treat at the Star Bakery. The shops were all within easy walking distance of most South Portland homes and this reinforced the pedestrian activity that the Lair Hill and Corbett area cultivated. In fact, South Portland's community vibrancy relied on the advantages of a pedestrian culture. The informal street activity that intensified during the weekends was especially enjoyed. Every Saturday evening after the Sabbath had been observed, Jewish residents would stroll up and down the streets chatting with friends and relatives. Italians would do the same after Sunday services. They all knew each other and would walk to nearby homes and visit. Some shops would open for a few hours to capitalize on the steady foot traffic. The streets were alive and teeming with activity as Jews and Italians meandered through the community eating their sunflower seeds, buying ice cream, or stopping at the Gem Theatre to view the weekly serial. The busiest area was along First Avenue. Neighbors would visit one another and refreshments would always be served. Meanwhile the stores were opened a few hours for shoppers and strollers. This amiable community life remained extremely active for two generations from 1880 until the Depression.

Religious organizations played a key role in developing these immigrant communities. Since many of South Portland's immigrants were devoutly religious, they constructed a variety of churches and synagogues from the late 1860s into the 1920s. Because Portland’s Jews were of different nationalities, their synagogues tended to be delineated by national background but were sometimes constructed for purely geographic or political reasons. At one point, there were six synagogues within walking distance of South Portland. The Italians, who came mainly from Southern Italian provinces, had their own Italian Catholic church and two Catholic schools. All of these institutions provided immigrants with places of worship as well as informal community centers and meeting places. But they were also places for family fun and social gatherings for friends
and newcomers, both before and after services. The Neighborhood House and the Manley Center attracted the entire community to less directly religious activities.

Often within a few years, families that originally arrived penniless had established themselves. Day jobs and specialized skills grew into family enterprises. Junk peddlers started salvage businesses-- for the close proximity to the Portland’s commercial core made the junk business attractive and convenient. Most of them relied initially on horse and cart to haul their wares. Fruit vendors bought from local gardens and established wholesale food markets. Butchers, bakers and other small businesses began to thrive with the family often sharing in the work and living upstairs or nearby. Thus for several decades before World War I, South Portland developed its own village atmosphere of homes and shops with various working class ethnic backgrounds.

South Portland became recognized as the settlement community for Italian Catholic and Eastern European Jewish emigrates. Many of them arrived at the South Portland (Jefferson Street) Train Station near the river and simply walked a few blocks south into their new lives. They would find themselves in an exciting place where within a few city blocks over a dozen languages were spoken. The residents there were self sufficient. They had their own newspapers, one of which had a masthead that said: “South Portland Times—A Clean Newspaper that Goes Home.” The community even chose a local leader informally as their own "mayor". Fruit vendors, ethnic foods and junk peddlers created an exciting mixture of cultures which Portland has never since duplicated. These patterns lasted for 50 years as the area thrived, reaching a sustained peak between 1905 and 1927. Within a five block radius of the Lair Hill neighborhood, there were seven markets, three bakeries, two fish stores, at least
two kosher meat and poultry shops, a dry goods store, a hardware store and two drug stores.

For minorities in South Portland generally, involvement in city politics was kept to a minimum. The women never participated in politics or city affairs. They remained at home, cared for their families, and attempted to retain some of their traditions. Granted, the men were concerned about national politics, voting and obtaining their citizenship papers, but, aside from those aims, their attention was focused primarily upon the inner community of South Portland. An exception was Judge Gus Solomon, known simply as “The Judge,” who served as federal district court judge for longer than any other in Oregon history. The Federal Courthouse is named after him. Before becoming a judge he fought as an attorney for the “little guy”. For example, in 1937, with the ACLU, he helped win a landmark First Amendment case defending a Communist organizer against the state of Oregon. His wife Libby was devoted to social work.

By 1900 the entire city was enjoying their successful international port which exported lumber, wheat, and other commodities harvested in Oregon and Washington. The wave of immigrants that settled in South Portland continued to develop it as a multi-cultural cluster of interlocked neighborhoods. Predominating were the Jews and Italians; but French, Turkish, Sicilian, Asian, and African-American groups settled in South Portland in a pattern that continued through the Depression and into World War II.

As a gateway community, South Portland continued to evolve as it tried to fulfill the social needs of its immigrant residents. Many foreigners who moved to America arrived penniless, illiterate, and unable to speak English. Naturally they would first look to relatives and friends. In some cases, those with no friends or family depended upon others who had already settled, people who might even be strangers except that they shared common cultural and linguistic ties. Many social organizations were formed, dedicated to smooth the transitions that immigrants faced upon arriving in Portland and assimilate them into American life. Great affection and support grew for many of these organizations that were crucial to first generation immigrants.

But second generation immigrants became quickly assimilated and did not feel the need for ethnic cohesion; after all, they were Americans. They began to pursue their own lives and careers, often out of the confines of the South Portland ghetto. Thus, by the 1930s there was a strong migration out of South Portland. The construction of the Ross Island Bridge in 1926 also cut deeply into the tight community. And finally the ravages of the Great Depression further broke the social and economic integrity of South Portland. Up to one-third of the population moved nearby to the Shattuck School area and 20 percent moved to the Eastside, primarily to the Irvington and Ladd’s Addition neighborhoods, with smaller numbers settling in Laurelhurst, Alameda and other parts of the city. Some of the most well-established businesses relocated to the east side along SE Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues, near Ladd’s Addition where many Italians cultivated vegetable gardens.

The older German Jewish residents were the first to leave, moving to the northwest quadrant of Portland around Marshall and Northrup Streets and later to
the Irvington neighborhood in northeast Portland. Russian and Polish Jews replaced the departing German Jews in the Lair Hill and Corbett neighborhoods. But many other ethnic groups joined this second inflow of immigrants so that French, Turkish, and African-Americans were also settled in the Lair Hill neighborhood. Newspapers of the era enjoyed lining up rows of neighborhood children to illustrate the diverse nationalities of the area's newcomers. "The South Portland area was alternately known as "Little Italy" or "Little Jerusalem."

The second wave of immigrants also aspired to leave "the ghetto" for better neighborhoods. And despite the hardships of the Depression, many South Portland Jews continued the patterns of the late 1920s before the stock market crash and economic decline. They continued to move to new and nicer areas of the city. Because the economy remained unstable, they invested their savings and available funds into home ownership. When young couples married or when families managed to increase their income and status, most sought to move to the Eastside. As a result, even during the Depression, many more young Jews owned homes than had their immigrant parents. It was not always easy to leave the neighborhood of their youth where the shuls and the kosher stores remained, where often their parents remained as well. But the second generation had a strong desire to improve their lot. They had grown up in America and shared its dream of building a new and better life. And yet the Eastern European families still retained their vital sense of being Jews despite moving away from South Portland. Diane Nemer, who moved from South Portland to Irvington when she was married, described "the feeling of moving up from one area to the next... always a step in the right direction... Each one of us married and moved away from South Portland to where we felt the homes were better, to a better district. It was sort of something you were striving for." [Ibid, p. 189-90] By 1960, there were few of the immigrant families left in South Portland. It seemed that all that was left was old people, a closely knit community of gypsies who still spoke Romanish and had a "king", and the down and out. The area was depressed and run down: the ideal location for Portland's first urban renewal.

Racism, prejudice and discrimination also played a large role in South Portland's history. From the beginning, racial, religious and economic differences were the source of cruelties on every scale. Much of the social and economic difficulties faced by immigrants and their families grew out of the dark side of America: a melting pot for some, the frying pan for others. The strength of America was based on the creative cooperation of many different cultures. It was the acceptance and appreciation of one another that drove development. Beginning with the First World War, immigrants encountered disabling prejudice. Americans became anti-Italian, anti-Jew, Anti-Chinese, anti-Catholic: anti-alien. A nation built by immigrants began to cry: "America for Americans." The melting pot was melting down.

The anti-Asian pulse in America is particularly illustrative. As Jim Francesconi said in 2000, "There was a time not so long ago when Portland and Oregon enacted laws to deny native Americans, African Americans, Chinese, Japanese and women essential rights, including citizenship voting rights and property ownership." [The Asian Reporter, page 9, Mar.14-20, 2000.] Chinese
immigrants had built much of downtown Portland’s buildings, streets, dug canals and lay sewers as well as the railroad tracks from the ports to the rest of the nation that served the commercial heart of Portland. But as early as 1856, a law prohibited marriage between whites and anyone with a quarter or more of Chinese, Hawaiian, Negro or Indian blood. Until 1919, it was prohibited to sell property in any and all white neighborhoods to Asian Americans or African Americans by the Portland Realty Board. On January 9, 1942, the City Council decreed that no business licenses were to be issued to Japanese Americans. A curfew was also imposed on all persons of Japanese ancestry from 8pm to 6am. A month later, Roosevelt signed an Executive Order making all Japanese residents into virtual prisoners of war. Not until 1943 were Chinese allowed to become naturalized citizens the same being true for Japanese and Koreans until 1952. Little is left of Portland’s Chinatown which grew from 27 Chinese in 1860 to nearly 10,000 (one tenth of all Chinese then in America) 22 years later when immigration of Asians was stopped by the National Exclusion Act.

Public Markets

Residents of South Portland would often buy their fresh produce at the Farmer’s Market nearby. Public markets in Portland have had an often transitory relationship to Portland. In “A Market for the City: The History of Portland's Public Markets,” George Eigo offers an intriguing assessment on markets and urban integrity. The following section is indebted to him. He describes Portland as always having had informal farmer’s markets. The first formal public market was created by the ambitious and successful Alexander Ankeny in 1868 with the “New Market and Theater” at First and A (Ankeny) Street. It was instantly lauded as Portland’s finest addition, reminiscent of a Renaissance palace. It was a multi-purpose building that mixed retail commerce below with business offices and entertainment above. It included an oyster salon, a German social and athletic club, a bank, the telegraph and a drug store. It offered music reviews, drama and even John L. Sullivan in a prize fighting demonstration. With quality and integration, Ankeny created a high standard for markets in Portland. Yet as residents moved away to the NW and SW, the market suffered and ceased operations by 1885.

For the next three decades, farmer markets came and went-- including in 1883 an “Italian Row” at SE Oak between First and Second, as well as an “Italian Gardeners’ Garden” which was “near Car Shops”. In the early 1900s, the Italian Ranchers and Gardeners Association operated near the Central Market for many Italians who supplemented their incomes with small gardens in the city. Their first market was on the west side of the river just below the present Civic Auditorium at SW Third and Market. It was a wooden structure built on pilings driven into the bank of the river. But the building was weakened by recurring high water and plans for a new one on the east side were underway in 1906. The new location was closer to gardens and occupied a complete block at SE Third between Main and Madison. Two years later, the fruit and vegetable vendors organized an association with the retailers: *Unione Dei Rivenditori Di Frutta Ed Erbaggi*, the Union of Fruit and Vegetable Sellers. Portland’s first truly public municipal
markets opened in the spring of 1914 with the Albina Public Market in Northeast Portland at Knott Street and Williams and, a month later, the Carroll Public Market on SW Yamhill. The market on Yamhill, named for John Carroll, editor of the Evening Telegram and initiator of the idea for the market, was an immediate success. After the opening day parade, 35,000 shoppers had purchased most of the produce by mid-afternoon. Within two months the city took over operations and provided sheds, umbrellas and a market master. Traffic filled the streets to the point of chaos. The market grew to encompass six blocks with 212 stalls and over 400 venders daily. It was the embodiment of old world charm and became a model for municipalities across America and Canada. And yet, there were constant problems including claims that management controls and pricing were opposed to free trade and the spirit of a free people. Some complained that it was “un-American” because of the immigrant farmers that substantially sold there. Carroll Public Market’s major drawback, however, proved to be neither its economic policies nor its market regulations but its own success. The Yamhill Street location simply could not handle the daily traffic. Its narrow streets and extended vendor sheds impeded pedestrian and automotive traffic alike. Congestion in and around the area was notorious. So were the public health problems that resulted. More than four hundred food vendors were regularly crammed into six city blocks for up to eighteen hours a day. So much food and such market density proved more than sanitation regulations and strict enforcement could handle.

A 1927 city council study proclaimed the present Yamhill Street configuration no longer tenable, and gave the city five years to find the Carroll Market a new home, recommending relocation along the waterfront. After great controversy and resistance, the farmer’s market was replaced by the largest-ever public market in the country: the Portland Public Market Building. Built in only five months between SW Front and Harbor, this massive structure was originally planned to occupy five blocks, but was reduced to three blocks because of financial complications in the depression. Even so, it offered three acres of free parking for cars. On December 14th, 1933, “Portland’s Marvelous New Million Dollar Public Market” opened to a three-day “public reception” that boasted “wonderful sales” and “plenty of music and fun.”

Meanwhile, the Yamhill Public Market Producers’ Association christened its rival operation, the Farmer’s Cooperative Market in the warehouses along Yamhill, even as the old sheds were being torn down and carted away. Open resistance to the new Portland Public Market did not seem to have an adverse effect on business at first. Vendors, shoppers and assorted visitors crowded the new building daily through early 1934, as much to witness the technological splendor of the million-dollar market as to shop for summer squash and ham hocks. Part of the allure began with and remained the spectacle of the shopping experience. What the Carroll Market represented to tradition, the Portland Public Market represented to modernity. “Conceived by men who had vision blended with modern efficiency and economy,” the market appealed at the same time to the old and the new. In the minds of the shoppers, the “color, romance and bustle
akin to the bazaars of Old Bagdad” was transformed by New World “modern construction and utility” into a romance of efficient technology.

The new Portland Public Market was seen and marketed as “a veritable palace of wonders in which (one could) shop and gaze at fascinating wares” for days on end. Hyperbole aside, the Portland Market had much to boast about. At the time it was the world’s largest public and farmer’s market. The building ran 620 feet along Front Street between the Hawthorne and Morrison bridges and eleven stories high, with 220,000 square feet of floor space. This translated into space for approximately 200 merchants. Each vendor stall was equipped with a sprinkling system, overhead light fixtures and a springless scale for maximum accuracy. For maximum sanitation, the market provided the vendors with two dry storage and one large refrigeration room, all guaranteed vermin proof.

For the consumer the Portland Public Market offered variety, cleanliness and convenience. From 8 AM until 7 PM (except Saturday when the market stayed open until 9PM), shoppers were encouraged to push market-provided Handy Anne shopping carts through main floor and mezzanine and browse concessions and stalls for groceries, produce, meats, fish, fowl, flowers, tea, tobacco, candy, preserves, prepared foods, dairy, and baked goods, with “nationally advertised goods preferentially treated.” While the main floor catered solely to the shopper’s food needs, the mezzanine was reserved exclusively for specialty and personal service shops including household goods, barbers, beauticians, optometrists, dentists, typists, dry cleaners and a gas station. When shoppers were finished the market’s passenger elevator awaited to take them either to the roof where their cars, groceries and attendant awaited them, or, if they did not feel like going home just yet, they could visit the market’s 500-seat auditorium to watch domestic demonstrations of all sorts given from a modern kitchen set up on stage.

By 1937 Portland Public Market advertised its yearly sales volume at between five and six million dollars with some fifty to sixty thousand customers a week and the occupancy rate at just over ninety percent. Yet it never caught on as a local marketplace and struggled in the late 1930s to keep steady customers and vendor occupants. Unfortunately the market died within a decade. Litigation, liens and an antagonistic city council that refused to take over ownership sealed the fate of a once vibrant downtown market in Portland. By 1942 the market was closed; no one seemed to mourn the loss. The Navy leased the building in World War II and the Oregon Journal owned it from 1946 to 1968. A year later it was demolished along with Harbor Drive in order to create Tom McCall Park. A park had been originally recommended in the visionary Bartholomew Plan, a master scheme for riverfront improvement in 1932, only one year before the market was built.

Several factors contributed to the Portland Public Market’s steady demise. To begin with, the debate surrounding its origins opened an unnecessarily public and combative wound that was never fully healed. Those who had fought against the Portland Public Market in 1933 were still against it in 1942. And while it was somewhat attractive as a novelty, the modern market building was never recognized as a base for sustained local business. In moving to the waterfront,
the Portland Market did not simply modernize the Carroll Market and take it inside, but altered what had been a successful, if problematic, formula for direct producer marketing. It ignored the market’s populist politics – something that continually drove the Carroll Market – in favor of a modern super market economics of scale. There was a loyalty among the Carroll Market vendors and consumers. Ironically, one merchant who refused to move to the new market building was a merchant named Frederick Grubmeyer who had started a store there called “Fred Meyer’s”. He later divided his store into several separate specialty spaces. This departmental philosophy evolved into a rapidly growing company that developed into immense suburban stores throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Ultimately, the planned waterfront development surrounding the new Portland Market never took place, at least not in the way that market’s organizers had anticipated. The market was expected to be the cornerstone, but not the sole piece of the new commercial district. By including a parking lot on the roof of the building, the Portland Market proved attractive to automobile traffic but had problems attracting pedestrian and suburban commuter customers. Expected redevelopment of the area was to include a rail connection for suburban shoppers. A victim of bad-timing, the Portland Public Market was attempting to lure consumers into the downtown area at a time when social and economic forces were literally driving urban residents out of the city in automobiles.

The closing of the Portland Public Market was certainly not the end of public markets in Portland. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s local producer and farmer markets maintained their own, but in the wake of the post-war suburban sprawl and the decentralized shopping patterns it signaled the end of a colorful chapter for the urban shopper. South Portland suffered greatly for it. Not only was it being destroyed by traffic planners and zoning changes, but the economic matrix was also being destroyed by poor planning. The neighborhood dynamics were reduced to a dependency on the tiny local grocery stores that were never meant to compete with the farmer’s markets fresh produce lost their customer base to the suburbs and became minimal “convenience stores” with canned food, beer, wine and cigarettes.

The Jewish Presence

[Much of this chapter is indebted to the inspired work of Steven Lowenstein, author of The Jews of Oregon: 1850-1950. Jewish Historical Society of Oregon, Portland, Oregon, 1987.]

A German Jewish middle class developed in the early nineteenth century from which emerged nearly all of Oregon’s Jewish merchants. They were motivated by a code of hard work, a desire for respectability, moderation and an intense devotion to their families. After centuries of prejudice, repression and official restrictions on Jewish economic activity, they felt the desire for a better life keenly. The first Jews to establish themselves in Portland in the 1850s traveled from Bavaria, Germany. There were not many, for by 1865, there were only one
hundred Jews recorded within Oregon. But as early as 1862, the few Jews residing in the city were already crowding into the South Portland area.

Young Jews who left Germany for a new life in America often found a rich network of relatives and friends who had already emigrated. Others in turn soon followed. They all shared similar values, a sense of community and common blood. Their mutual origins and aspirations developed into the loyalty, trust and personal confidence so necessary for commercial success in America. In contrast to the prejudice and fear of Jews they had encountered in Europe, Jewish immigrants brought traditional crafts and entrepreneurial skills to the New World where they were often accepted and rewarded. For those who accepted the risk of the western frontier, the possibilities for prosperity were truly exhilarating.

These few, daring Jewish immigrants came west with determination, energy and skills, blending easily into a mixture of religious and ethnic groups that made up the frontier. Most of them were young, unmarried men who came to Oregon with brothers or cousins after having apprenticed with relatives in the eastern US or in California. They were itinerant, seeking opportunity within the broad network of Jewish businesses owned by relatives and friends.

The prevailing pattern was similar throughout the United States; the peddler on the newest frontier accumulated enough money to establish a retail store which then either expanded, specialized and developed into a wholesale supplier for other retail outlets, which in a few instances emerged as a financial empire. Not many Jewish merchants were as successful as the owners of Fleischner, Mayer & Co. (at one time reputed to be the largest wholesale dry goods house west of the Mississippi), or the Meier & Frank department store, nor could match the personal accumulations of wealth by Bernard Goldsmith or Sigmund Heilner. But many of these Jewish immigrants became successful retailers and shopkeepers, and solid members of the middle class.

Before the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the journey to the West Coast was long and arduous, and there is little documentation of Jews who traveled overland prior to that date. The 1860 national census listed 146 merchants in Portland, of which approximately one-third were Jews and nearly all were owners of their own business. Interestingly, at that time there were no Jewish professionals, and even twenty years later, there were only five. For the German Jewish immigrants were largely traders with minimal education. And nearly all Jewish women were listed in the census as "keeping house" or "living at home." Family ties were very important in the Jewish commercial world. When employees were needed for company expansion, relatives were recruited. Members of major commercial families would often intermarry. Families would provide shelter and employment for their relatives, offering them immediate access to successful business and social circles. Often, after a period of years, relatives would spin off new enterprises.

But beginning in the 1870s, immigration patterns changed drastically. The most dramatic moment came on March 1, 1881 when the czar of Russia, Alexander II, was felled by an assassin's bullet. This precipitated profound changes for the Jews of Eastern Europe resulting in massive waves of
emigration to the United States and Oregon. Between 1877 and 1918, almost 9,000 Jews moved to Oregon because of oppression in Eastern Europe. For centuries, the Jews had lived in the Eastern Europe of Russia, Rumania and Austro-Hungary, subject to the tyranny of czars and the vindictive violence of Christian peasants mistreated by their rulers. Jews occupied the roles of trader and artisan to which they had been relegated since the Middle Ages. They were restricted in Russia, which included much of modern Poland, to a relatively small area called the "Pale of Jewish Settlement". This area was comprised of approximately 380,000 square miles between the Baltic and Black Seas. In the villages (or shtetes) and towns of the Pale, they lived as best they could in wooden houses with mud floors, large families often crowded into a room or two. Here an archetypal character was the luftmensch, the person who managed to "live off air," to scrape together a living however possible. In this difficult environment the Jews created a rich culture centered on the family and where every aspect of life was infused with religion. Official responses to these Jews prior to 1881 alternated between repression and tolerance, between forced attempts at Russification and ghettoized segregation.

But in 1881, Alexander III ascended to the throne. He was advised by the fanatic and powerful Konstantin Pobedonostsev, and official Russian policy became virulently anti-Semitic. Its goal was to convince the peasants that their problems were caused by Jews. And during the next three or four years under this new regime, devastating pogroms took place in hundreds of towns. In the 1880s and 1890s, over two million Jews from Eastern Europe moved to America. A mass exodus was caused by the twofold desire to both evade conscription into the Czar's anti-Semitic army and to escape the imminent threat of the pogrom.
Then a series of terrible massacres occurred between 1903 and 1906 in Kishinev, Odessa, Bialystok and elsewhere. In an account of one of these massacres, Celia Blumenthal who was eighty-five years old and living at the Robison Jewish Home in April, 1986, described for the Portland Jewish Review her horrifying memory of the terrible pogrom in Kishinev on Easter Sunday, 1903:

“I was just a little tot then. They murdered a man right in front of my eyes. He was an old man just walking up the street, a Hasidic man with a long beard and pe’ot [sidelocks], and a velvet hat. Along came a soldier on his horse; he got off and, just about three feet away from me, took out this big saber and sliced the man’s throat. He just fell at my feet, and I ran inside and hid behind a table. I was screaming and crying and my mother couldn’t control me. That was a picture that I’ve never forgotten.” [Steven Lowenstein]

Between 1881 and 1910, one and a half million Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe. And many more fled; over a million more came to the US from Russia (including Congress Poland), 280,000 from Austro-Hungary and 67,000 from Rumania. Upwards of a million more would come by 1924 when immigration to America was severely restricted. Although non-Jews were also part of the swollen tides of immigration, they could not compare in quantity with the flood of Jewish immigrants. For while the general population of the United States increased by 112 percent between 1881 and 1920, the Jewish population in that same time increased 1,300 percent. Before 1881, only a few of the early Jewish settlers had come from Posen in German Poland and other Eastern origins. But by 1928, 3 million of the 4.2 million Jews living in the United States had come from Eastern Europe. In Oregon, the story was the same: the 868 Jews counted in 1877 had swelled to 9,767 in 1918, an increase of over 1,000 percent, caused almost entirely by the immigrant waves from Eastern Europe. Most Eastern European immigrants destined for Oregon stopped on the Lower East Side before traveling by train across the country to Portland. Others, however, came more directly because relatives or families from their villages. For instance the family members of the Directors, Schnitzers and Rosenfelds, who had all arrived from the town of Chartoriysk and surrounding shtetis near the ever-changing border between Poland and Russia, had already settled in Portland.

Another group of families immigrated to the Northwest which included the Menashes, Policars, Hassons, Babanis, Benvenistes, Russos and others. A large Sephardic community settled in Seattle while a smaller contingent came to Portland. Although they were originally descended from the Sephardic Jews of Spain, their families had come from Marmora in Turkey, and the Isle of Rhodes, where they had settled after escaping the Spanish Inquisition centuries earlier. And also, toward the end of the nineteenth century, many Jews were prompted to seek new lives in the West because of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and military conscription resulting from Turkish wars. When these waves of non-Germanic Jewish immigrants initially came to Portland though, they caused shock and consternation among the established German Jews. Similar responses occurred in New York and throughout the country. The new immigrants were clannish and as they crowded into urban areas like South Portland, those districts developed the feeling of ghettos in Europe.
The staid German Jews had become thoroughly American; they conducted business like good Americans with a sincere handshake and were true to their word. Good manners and taste were paramount: reflected in the culture of Brahms and Beethoven. They didn’t approve of the crude old-country manners of the new wave of Jews from Poland and Russia who did not even want to assimilate into American life. The older, settled Jewish families found the new East European immigrants noisy, assertive, feisty and argumentative. It was reflected in the garish tone of Yiddish theater: filled with melodramatic passion, agony and wild laughter. The German Jews of Portland couldn’t even understand the languages spoken by the new immigrants. The East European Jews were also an embarrassment to the established Germans Jews who were afraid that gentiles might lump them all together as “Jews”. There were the upsetting and dangerous political ideas that the new immigrants had brought, ideas of socialism, anarchism and Zionism. This ushered the fear that gentiles might withdraw their friendship and support of the Jews. For the German pioneers had learned how to be “politically correct” in America and believed that Eastern Europeans must adapt to American democratic ways quickly in order to find success. Finally they feared that the new immigrant pro-Israeli Zionism would reflect a split loyalty and throw doubt on Jewish patriotism for America. [Ibid, p 72-9] Temple Beth Israel even attempted to keep its membership lists “pure from Eastern-European infiltration”. [Rabbi Julius J. Nordel]

A strong nostalgia lingers for many of those who lived in old South Portland. There, Eastern European Jews found a way to recapture the closeness, vitality and Jewishness of the village life left behind in Europe and yet succeed in the new, strange world of America. The retention of Jewish religious practice and ritual with a sense of tradition and roots and perhaps above all, family unity, was the essential base from which to grow. South Portland's Jews would not give up these essential aspects of their Jewish identity and, in that sense, resisted “Americanization. Eastern European Jews brought with them the tendency to save carefully and share, aspects they felt necessary to forge a better life. For centuries they had disciplined themselves in self-denial, so it came naturally to parents to sacrifice in order that their children might have better lives than they did. The family was typically a strong, stable unit, and each member was expected to contribute to its well-being. As a result, the South Portland community was nearly self-sufficient. Aside from jobs outside of the district, nearly everything essential to life was available inside of its borders. Residents found within a few blocks synagogues, the mikvah, public and Hebrew schools, an intensely active Neighborhood House, and many small shops that formed the core of old South Portland.

From 1890 to 1920, a crucial element of South Portland life involved informal street activity. The visiting that ensued was perhaps the most important form of entertainment for the Jews. Every Saturday evening after the Sabbath had been observed, the residents would stroll up and down the streets chatting with their friends and relatives as they went. Neighbors would visit with each other and refreshments would always be served. Meanwhile, the stores were opened for a few hours while the strollers passed by. The streets were alive and
teeming with activity as the Jews meandered through the community eating their sunflower seeds, buying ice cream, or stopping at the Gem Theater to view the weekly serial. [MacCall, The Growth of a City.]

Steven Lowenstein recreates the atmosphere of life in South Portland with vivid affection.

An important part of Jewish life centered in and around the neighborhood shops along First Avenue. There was an air of excitement as shoppers socialized or exchanged the latest news with shopkeepers or friends. The shops were always crowded on Thursdays and Fridays because Sabbath meals had to be prepared and everything made ready for the Sabbath when all work including cooking was not allowed. At sundown on Saturday when the Sabbath was over, most of the neighborhood could be found strolling along First Avenue, just enjoying themselves or shopping for the next week.

Try to imagine the sounds, the smells and the motion along First Avenue for the several blocks between Grant and Meade streets. Perhaps most former South Portland residents would best remember Mrs. Levine’s Fish Market (she was sometimes called Mrs. Levin)Her shop was initially located near First and Sheridan, and later a block north at First and Caruthers. Listen! Can you hear Mrs. Levine?

“I opened a fish market. See, so the ladies they went to bed early, they knock at my door, five o’clock in the morning. They wake me up to open the store and I have to do that. Then in the night I had to deliver my orders. My daughter Esther was a young girl and my boy also helped. This was my life…. So I had this fish market and two big tanks…. I got a little net and I took out a carp and these ladies told me ‘she said the head is too big.’ I took another one, she said ‘the stomach is too big’” so I went, and I was the fish lady. …I had to at-tend one year eight hundred pounds carp, to sell myself and cut salmon, halibut, black cod, white fish.”

And s a boy, Jack Hecht recalled:

“A joy in my life was always going to Mrs. Levine’s Fish Market, where the fish were alive in a great big, huge tank, and standing looking down into this tank and seeing all these hundreds of fish swimming around, and they would catch one with a net, lay it on a piece of paper, and rap it on the head with a hammer and that’s the fish you took home.”

Mrs. Levine and her family lived in the back of the market. Her husband, Ephraim, was one of several shochets in the community who slaughtered cattle and chickens in the prescribed kosher manner. He worked across the street from the fish market next to the small shul [Yiddish: school or synagogue], Linath Hazedek, where he butchered chickens for five cents apiece. Besse Harris remembered:

“If we were fortunate enough, or rather unfortunate enough, to have to carry the chicken down to Mr. Levine to get it killed, that was another thing. I was really very frightened about carrying a live chicken, so mama very kindly would put it into a gunny sack for me and I would have to hold it out at least twelve inches from my body for fear that he might peck on
me if it were any closer. Well, coming back was a much easier process as the chicken was dead already and there was never any fear of any problem. Mr. Levine was very nice. He always took our chickens and he blessed them and drew the jugular vein, but we had to bring them home to get them flicked. The flicking is pulling the feathers out. Well, we had a gas plate in the basement and mother would take a hold of the chicken with its legs in one hand and the neck in the other and keep turning it and singeing it at the same time. It made it much easier to flick the chickens after they were singed and that's how we did our Friday chicken routine."

Live chickens as well as fresh fruit, vegetables and other produce were often purchased not in a store, but from a peddler’s cart. The peddler would go from home to home or simply park mid-street, where he would hawk his wares to anyone within hearing.

The important intersection at First and Caruthers had Louis Leveton's drugstore on one corner for many years. And when he died, Korsun's grocery moved into the same space. Across the street was the grocery run by Mrs. Maccoby whose husband, Moses, taught at the Hebrew school. Next to it was the well-known Solomon Apartments, built by Jacob Solomon whose son Gus became a federal district court judge and held that position longer than any other judge in Oregon history. Gus was the youngest of five children. He was born on First Avenue between Lincoln and College streets in 1906. His Rumanian father came to Portland where he met and married Gus' Ukrainian mother shortly after her arrival in 1895. Gus' father, Jacob Solomon, had several stores that sold men's clothes, and he later built the well-known Caruthers or "Solomon" Apartments at First and Caruthers. Next door was Dave Schneiderman's pool hall, often crowded with older boys and the neighborhood characters including, Mr. Nichols, the foot patrolman there. Mr. Mosler's bakery was also located on First near Caruthers and he produced what many would swear were the best bagels they ever tasted. Two other fine bakeries competed for South Portland's business: the Star, which was run by William Rosumny and Hyman Rotenberg; it was across the street from Ruvensky's Soda Works on Second between Arthur and Sheridan. The other bakery was Gordon's Bakery. There was a short-lived merger of the bakeries in the late 1920s described by Louis Rotenberg, Hyman's son:

"They realized that three bakeries couldn't make it, so by all going together they felt, with less overhead, they could make it. Their temperaments clashed quickly. We had three guys who felt that they could run the whole thing and they just could not get along. I think the strongest of them was Mosler. I am sure the merger didn't last a year. Then it got back to three bakeries and very quickly Gordon disappeared from the picture. Then it was just two and there were always these two here until World War II. About that time my dad went out of the bakery business and then Mosler had it all to himself."
There were other colorful shops along First Avenue. Calistro and Halperin's Italian-Kosher delicatessen between Caruthers and Sheridan catered to both the Italian and Jewish trade since its owners came from each ethnic group. Halperin was from Calabria in Southern Italy, arriving in America in 1926. Eight years later he brought his wife and two children over. The store was like a neighborhood center, helping families through the Depression. It was one of the first post Prohibition stores in Portland to stock wine. His daughter, Lorita Pauls, learned English upon her arrival in Portland at the age of 27. Soon after graduating from Commerce High School, her parents arranged for her marriage which failed, devastating both her and her old world parents. [Joan Harvey]

Nearby was Charlie Cottel's drugstore, a popular, non-Jewish store at First and Sherman, where one could get a shake or sundae at the soda fountain-- or have an eye exam or a bottle of pills made up. Dr. Labby's dentist office and Dr. Wolfs medical offices were upstairs. Simon Director, Isaac Friedman and Joseph Nudelman had kosher meat markets within a few blocks of each other along First Avenue. A little north at First and Grant, stood Robison's dry goods store which was really a mini-department store widely used by South Portlanders. It was Mrs. Robison's sons, Charles and Edward, who later donated significant funding to help establish the Robison Home, the Jewish community's modern care facility for the elderly. There was the Seaman’s Union, a brass foundry, Phelan's Grocery and Siegel's Grocery, both run by two brothers. There was the Neff White Rose Grocery and a taxidermy shop.

There were also movie theaters along First. The most popular were the Gem Theater at Sheridan, and Berg's Theater at Grant. Admission was five cents a movie, and families flocked to the silent films, particularly on Saturday nights. Norman Kobin describes Berg's Theater:

“They had a theater on First and Grant... and lived in the Solomon Apartment building. One of their girls who was friendly with my sister, Lillian, was Minnie Berg, who everybody knows became the very well-known opera singer, Mono Pallay. You know it was the days of the silent movies. They had a bath-room, as I recall, up on the stage, so that whenever somebody had to go to the bath-room they would have to walk on the stage and sometimes it would obscure the pictures. In addition to that, they had an old matron ... who would be playing the piano all through the show. The First Avenue Theater was really something.” [Steven Lowenstein]

Some of the best preserved lore concerning any of South Portland's establishments involves Mr. Wolf's barber shop. Originally located across the street from Cottel's Drugs at First and Sherman. Wolf later moved his shop to the edge of Marquam Gulch, an area of the neighborhood itself steeped in legend. Moses "Scotty" Cohen recalled:

“I'll never forget one day. There was a barber named Wolf and there was a wooden bridge which wasn't kept up very well which went across the Gulch. The barber shop was right next to the bridge. One day
this dam wooden bridge sank down into the Gulch and Wolfs Barber Shop slid down with it. He had a customer in the chair and both of them went down, but neither one of them got hurt. I went down and saw it and there was quite a hole down there. It was sure funny.

Wolf, he'd take his time, he'd give these fellows haircuts and shaves, and he'd work all hours of the night. He'd go to work at eight in the morning and wouldn't be through until eleven or twelve at night. He always made appointments with people—many worked, you know, they couldn't get a haircut in the daytime—he'd wait for them until they got off work at night. He was a good barber. He always had a cigar in his mouth, even when he was shaving or giving a person a haircut— he always had a cigar in his mouth, but he never smoked it; he just chewed it.”

In the early days of Jewish South Portland, the horses and wagons of the peddlers were housed in the Gulch, and each morning they could be seen streaming up to begin the day's rounds. Before the Gulch was filled, boys played baseball and other games in it, and stories are told of a hermit called Kasaboo who lived in a shack of cans and pieces of lumber at its bottom, of Umbrella Jimmy and of Miss McGee, a woman who came out of the Gulch to preach along the streets each day. The Gulch was later used as a city dump for many years, and finally in the 1930s, it was filled by Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers in order to create Duniway Park. [Ibid, p 96-100] And yet on a dirt lane next to the gulch just north of Lair Hill Park was a barn built by Gussie Kirshner Rhinehart's father. It stood there for several more decades becoming the last barn within the city limits of Portland.

The separate community life of old South Portland was largely self-contained. With only minimal English and family customs shared by neighbors, people felt more comfortable there. The cable car ran from downtown along First Avenue into South Portland and, for many years before the First World War, its conductor on the South Portland run was a friendly Norwegian named Olaf Krogstad. But few rode the cable car regularly except those who worked outside the neighborhood. Participation in city politics was also minimal for South Portland had its own newspapers, and sometimes even referred to its informal leaders as "mayor."

But ultimately, even Eastern European immigrants wanted to become "good Americans". So they took classes at Neighborhood House and Failing School which enabled them to pass the tests for their precious citizenship papers. They then began to vote in elections, and they voted regularly, considering it a treasured right often denied them in Europe. Many also followed national and international issues particularly those related to the Zionist dream of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Jewish immigrants of South Portland were proud of their new home in America and their wonderful new life of freedom and hope. Frieda Gass Cohen speaks for many when she said in 1975:
“When we grew up in South Portland, that area housed practically every Orthodox Jewish person in the city. There were very few who lived anywhere else. It was really a teeming place for Jews and what an exciting place! They brought up their children there; they educated them; they sent them to Hebrew school.... The children grew up in the neighborhood and more or less stayed in the neighborhood all the time they were growing up. All of my lifelong associations from then until now were made right there. Those people that were my friends at that time, remain my friends now.

“What I liked most about my neighborhood was the fact that it was an ethnically Jewish group.... You were at home in ten houses on the block. You could knock on any door or you would not even have to knock; you could just open the door and walk into so many homes. Everyone in the neighborhood looked out for you. You could send your child out to play and it couldn't get hurt or mistreated because someone else's mother was always looking out to see that nobody hurt it. Everybody knew who you were. We were close to our neighbors. Yes, our house was literally very close to that of our neighbors.”

“During the Depression, from 1929 on, things were rough for most everyone in our area [South Portland]. We didn't feel any different; we never considered ourselves poor; we just didn't have any money. My parents were very frugal, and again we never ate out but we didn't lack for anything. Things were difficult as far as money was concerned, but my friends did not have money to spend either ...so we did not particularly feel the lack of money.” [Ibid, p 188]

**Neighborhood House**

The Neighborhood House (technically "The Neighborhood Guild House of the Council of Jewish Women") was a community service agency run by the wealthier, first generation German Jews. It was but one of 800 organizations within the small Jewish community of Portland between 1893 and 1950. Originally, it was located in the Castle Building on Southwest Third and Harrison Streets in 1896. Then it was located at First and Hall, across the street from Shaarie Torah synagogue, where it remained from 1899 until 1910. As immigration to South Portland increased, the number of people using Neighborhood House grew dramatically. English classes mushroomed from eleven pupils and a single teacher in 1906, to three hundred pupils and fourteen teachers by 1909. Approximately half of the students were not Jewish. Even with the large new facility, Neighborhood House could not accommodate the numerous requests for meeting space, and within five years of its construction, the building had already been outgrown.

The current Neighborhood House was financed by a subscription drive headed by Ben Selling and Rabbi Jonah Wise of Beth Israel, with the cooperation of the Council of Jewish Women. Two lots were purchased from Joseph Simon and his law partner, C. A. Dolph, at Second and Wood for $3,750. A loan was secured to supplement subscriptions. The building was designed by
Albert E. Doyle and built in 1904. It heralded Doyle’s return to the neighborhood 15 years after he helped design the Fourth Presbyterian Church at First and Gibbs Streets as a young man. The new building was finally occupied six years later in 1910 as the new home for the “Neighborhood House”. The Portland Hebrew School was there and the settlement house, run by Ida Lowenberg who was from one of the city’s older German-Jewish families, offered social and educational opportunities for immigrants.

The Neighborhood House was the first settlement house west of the Mississippi River. It was hoped that assistance for new Jewish immigrants would lead to their "Americanization" and make them more acceptable to the already assimilated German Jewish community. Thus it became a social center for the newly arriving Jews, offering free clothing, medical care and classes in English, cooking, health and baby clinics in addition to recreational opportunities. Begun in an effort to promote study of the scripture among Jewish women, the Neighborhood House evolved from religious to philanthropic aims. And by the turn of the century, with local experience and knowledge of the growing national settlement house movement, the Council began to move away from older concepts of charity toward settlement ideals. These included relieving poverty through education and social services provided by professionally trained teachers and social workers, and through political and economic reform. Although it started as a vocational school for Jews, it later opened its doors to all immigrants, offering desperately needed English language courses. The Neighborhood House sought to provide basic instruction, skills, and religious education to introduce American ways primarily to children.

It served all ethnic populations, and provided a host of functions—cooking and sewing schools for girls, manual arts for boys, sports and recreation, social events, English-language and American citizenship classes, a kindergarten, dispensary, and a well-baby clinic. An out-patient dispensary which had opened in 1914 was closed and replaced by the well baby...
clinic. At the same time, nutrition, pre-natal and adult clinics were established. Summer day-camps were begun in 1936.

War efforts were organized in the building during both World Wars; in 1943, 3,500 Camp Adair soldiers were camped across the street in Lair Hill and Duniway Parks. Also during that war, the Neighborhood House was actively engaging women seamstresses in war programs for the Red Cross, Bundles for Britain and Russian War Relief. A USO Center was opened along with a 20 bed dormitory for servicemen. Classes included a Surgical Dressing Unit. After the war, classes were expanded for children and teens. In the 1960s, a program was initiated for the mentally retarded and remedial reading classes were held for neighborhood children.

In 1912, Ida Loewenberg was hired as “headworker”, a post she held for the next thirty-three years. Her dedication to her work and her dynamic, energetic personality influenced every aspect of Neighborhood House life. Almost all those who grew up in South Portland remember her with respect and fondness. The years following the hiring of Ida Loewenberg were ones of steady expansion. Athletic clubs multiplied for both boys and girls; social, music and literary clubs were launched; an orchestra and theater group was established; a free clinic and dispensary were opened (later replaced by the Well Baby Clinic run by the Visiting Nurses Association); and a high-quality newspaper with Ida Loewenberg as editor-in-chief was begun. An early, regular contributor to the newspaper, the Neighborhood, was Marcus Rothkowitz, who was raised in South Portland and later became known as one of America’s greatest painters, Mark Rothko.

One of the most important and still influential activities launched at Neighborhood House in these years was the South Parkway Club, founded by ex-newsboys in 1916. It was called "South Parkway" because the boys came from "South" Portland near Lair Hill "Park." The South Parkway Club, which was begun by young men aged sixteen to twenty-one, was unusual in the range of activities it undertook and the loyalty of its members over the years. In 1923, their wives formed the South Parkway Sisterhood because, as Sadie Horenstein put it, "We refused to stay home alone every Tuesday night." The Sisterhood held parties and other social events, They raised funds for charity which in later years were primarily for the Robison Jewish Home.

Mel Blanc grew up in South Portland, beginning his career in entertainment as part of an early South Parkway Club minstrel show. He later went to Hollywood and became famous as the voice behind Bugs Bunny and Porky Pig. He was also with the Jack Benny Show. Edith Schnitzer Goodman remembers Mel living across the street from her and even as a kid making all kinds of "funny sounds that later became his way of life." Nate Cohen, known as "Uncle Nate," was another entertainer from South Portland. He produced and was master of ceremonies of "Stars of Tomorrow" which was heard every Saturday morning on KEX, and later on KPTV, until Cohen's death in 1964. The show began in 1926 and was
broadcast from the window of its sponsor, the Star Furniture Company. It helped launch a number of talented youngsters, including Jane Powell, who was born Suzanne Burce, and Johnny Ray. Nate Cohen’s wife told the Oregonian in 1972 that Nate’s mother had always told him: "'Only bums go into show business.' So he went at it a different way; he spent his life giving children a chance to perform."

The South Parkway Club and its Sisterhood, and even the daughters of South Parkway members who formed the South Parkway Junior Sisterhood in 1933, met together for many years and retained the close friendships they had formed in their early immigrant days. The club finally disbanded in 1983, when eighty-four-year-old Nate Schwartz was the only remaining charter member and eighty-nine-year-old Boris Geller was the oldest living member. It had simply become too difficult for many of the club members to continue the activities they had maintained for sixty-seven years. During the 1920s, as the public schools took on more and more of the early educational functions of Neighborhood House, the focus began to shift from immigrant settlement house to community center. [Ibid, p 140-3]

Other Jewish groups were formed solely for the purpose of social interaction, including B’nai B’rith for men and the Hassadh for women. B’nai B’rith had its own building on SW 13th near Market Street. There was a feeling in South Portland that the kids who attended B’nai B’rith were "ritzier." To Harry Mesher: "the B’nai B’rith, which was known as the Jewish Community Center, was for the rich kids. The poor kids, they went to the Neighborhood House." Seen from South Portland, the new middle class that used the B’nai B’rith Building seemed a world apart, but as years passed and South Portlanders grew increasingly prosperous, the two communities came closer together. [Ibid, p 159]

War efforts were organized in the building during both World Wars; in 1943, 3,500 Camp Adair soldiers were camped across the street in Lair Hill and Duniway Parks, and the Neighborhood House served as a USO Center and dormitory with 20 beds, and also a Red Cross Center teaching nutrition, first aid and surgical dressing. In the late 1920s the Neighborhood House added the North Wing which included a swimming pool, handball courts, stage, boxing, wrestling and weightlifting rooms. The building is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. George McMath, a Portland architect and grandson of A. E. Doyle, supervised the 1982 renovation. For years, the building housed the YMCA day care center. But seismic concerns and other improvements needed by the building increased until the League of Jewish Women sold it to the Cedarleaf Waldorf School.

**The Zidell Family**

Two especially enterprising emigrants from Russia that began family dynasties as junk peddlers were Sam Schnitzer and Sam Zidell. Sam Zidellovski (or Zidellinski) emigrated from Kiev in his teens to escape Russian pogroms, and
arrived in America in 1911. He was a man who willing to take risks, soon starting a business based on his first love: barter. He bought and sold old machinery, pipes, wire, hides, wools, and rags to farmers, loggers, anyone looking for a good deal. He frequented auctions and liquidation sales and collected metal from old sawmills and machine shops. Moving from Roseburg to Portland in 1916, he partnered in selling second-hand machinery and parts, and bought out his partner, Steinberg, in 1942. At the beginning of WW II, he had more than three acres below the Ross Island Bridge covered with piles of scrap seventy feet high of iron, brass, copper, and other metals, including 150 different grades of metals, all in separate stacks and ready for local shipyards to use. In 1946, his son, Emery initiated ship dismantling with the purchase of six aircraft carriers bought for $78,260. Two years later, Emery began the Valve Division, and in 1955 started Tube Forgings of America. By 1960, Zidell Explorations was the nation’s largest ship dismantler, with hundreds of men working in shifts around the clock. More than 336 vessels including WW II’s largest aircraft carrier Ticonderoga, had been dismantled by 1976. In 1978, dismantling operations ceased due to lack of ships and increased interest by the company in ship repair. Zidell’s operations were plagued by repeated fires including a disastrous $4 million fire in 1956, and several others in 1961, 1965 and 1982, as well as flood damage in 1964. Emery’s son, Jay, worked his way up, beginning in 1963, and now heads the firm. Since the late 1960s, building and leasing barges has been the main business along with industrial tube forging. As of 2004, more than 300 barges have been launched by Zidell.

**Sam Schnitzer**

Perhaps the most successful of the Russian Jewish immigrants to Portland was Sam Schnitzer. He was the founder of a large Portland family. Four of Sam and Rose Schnitzer's sons—Manuel, Morris, Gilbert and Leonard—have been partners in the family's shipping, steel, cold storage and real estate interests on the West Coast and Guam. Another son, Harold, left the family company in 1950 to form Harsh Investment Corporation which has real estate holdings throughout the country. In 1986, the Schnitzers were one of only two Oregon families to make the Forbes magazine list of the four hundred richest citizens and families in the United States.

The Oregon Journal on January 17, 1995 published Sam Schnitzer’s story; “I was born in Russia on July 12, 1880. My father and my three brothers all live in Portland. I came to the United States when I was 24 years old. I was drafted into the Russian army in 1903, when I was 23 years old. Right then Russia was preparing to fight Japan, but I didn’t feel that I wanted to kill any Japanese or have any Japanese people kill me, so I watched my chance and without consulting the captain of my company I resigned one night and escaped into Austria. I had no money. I tried very hard to get a job at a dollar a week but nobody seemed to need my services. So I wrote to my uncle who had gone to the United States to send me $110 to pay for my ticket to New York City. He sent me the money, but the letter was addressed wrong and it was returned to the
dead letter office and finally sent back to him. He wrote me again, 
enclosing the money, but this was four months after I had deserted from 
the Russian army, and most of that time I went on very short rations.

"When I got to New York I got a job at $4 a week. Four other young 
men and myself rented a room at $7.50 a month. That meant it cost me 
$1.50 a month for a place to sleep. No, we didn’t have beds; we slept on 
the floor. I allowed myself 5 cents for breakfast and 10 cents for dinner. 
Out of my salary of $208 for the year I managed to save $85. I bought a 
second-class ticket to Portland, arriving here in 1905.

"I found there were lots of junkmen in Portland, so I went to work 
for Sam Nudelman, working in his tobacco store at $6 a week, working 16 
hours a day. When I had saved $45 I went down to Astoria and started in 
business for myself. I had no money to buy a horse or wagon, so I started 
in the junk business, and I was my own horse and wagon. I bought old 
sacks, brass and copper, old iron and bottles, and carried them on my 
back till I got as much as I could carry. Then I would take them to a yard 
where I stored them. If I bought an old kitchen range or some heavy 
article I would wait till I had bought enough to make a load, and then 
would hire an express wagon to go around with me and collect them and 
haul them to the dock. I shipped them to Portland.

"After three years I came to Portland and started in the junk 
business here. One day I went to the basement of the Portland Hotel to 
bid on some junk. There I met another junkman, named Henry Wolf. We 
talked the matter over and decided to go into business. We took in a third 
man, each of us agreeing to put up $1000. When it came time to put up 
the money, Henry said he had a large horse and a wagon, which he would 
put in at $250. He had some old junk in his basement which he would put 
in at $300. I had a lot of pipes that I had bought from the Union Oil 
company after its big fire. I put these in at $500. When it came to putting 
up the cash, Henry and my partner and I found that all of us had figured 
on the others putting up the cash, as we were all short of cash. After a few 
months Henry Wolf and I bought out our partner, and Wolf and I went in 
together, agreeing to put the cash into the partnership when we had made 
it out of the business.

"We decided to call our firm the Alaska Junk Company. We started 
in a little building with 25-foot frontage at 227 Front Street. The man we 
had bought out prospered, and eight years later came to us and wanted to 
buy back his third interest, but Henry and I decided not to take any 
partners. I was married in the fall of 1906 to Rosa Finkelstein. Like myself, 
my wife was born in Russia. We have seven children — five boys and two 
girls... ""
Mark Rothko in Portland

This account of Mark Rothko is especially indebted to James Breslin and interviews in the Archives of American Art.

Nostalgia for old South Portland abounds. For some though, family life in the tight South Portland community was stifling and repressive. The adolescence of Mark Rothko, one of America’s most famous painters, offers insight to the complex dynamics of immigrant life in South Portland.

Marcus Rothkowitz (he changed his name to Mark Rothko around 1940) was born in the Pale of Russia in the town of Dvinsk (Daugapils) on September 25, 1903 to a Lithuanian father, Jacob Rothkowitz and his wife, Kate Goldin. The family included his sister, Sonia, fourteen years older, and two brothers, Moise and Albert. They were eleven and eight years older respectively and both later changed their last name to Roth. All of them were well educated and politically aware like their parents. They had a large library of Russian books and spoke Russian instead of Yiddish at home. The father was a dentist who owned a pharmacy. He was also an outspoken Zionist; he was involved in the community and helped others readily. Kate, the mother, raised the family and discreetly made extra money by washing laundry at night. Marcus was a high strung and noticeably sensitive delicate child. Breslin calls him sickly, perhaps from a deficiency of calcium. And that when he was found eating plaster off of walls, he was sent to a nearby village where he recovered by drinking milk.

Marcus’ father emigrated to America in 1907, broke and politically suspect. His brother Sam had emigrated to Portland seventeen years earlier as a young man, becoming a successful businessman through connections in America. Before coming west, Sam Rothkowitz changed his name to Weinstein when he partnered with Nate Weinstein to form the New York Outfitting Company. Nate was the oldest son in a family of twelve and because of familial disagreements in the New York business, three of Nate’s brothers left New York and came to Portland where they started Weinstein Brothers, a clothing business with branches in Seattle and Tacoma.

Rothko’s two older brothers left Dvinsk in 1912 in a railroad car without passports, and then “traveled through Poland in a covered wagon” bribing soldiers along the way. They then waited several days in a baggage room before they could get on board a ship. On January 1st, 1913, Moise and Albert left Bremen and after two weeks in steerage they arrived on Ellis Island where relatives met them.

The summer of 1913, Marcus, with his mother and sister, paid one kopek each to cross the Dvina by ferry, then traveled by train to Libau (Liepaja) on the Baltic Sea from where they sailed second class to Brooklyn. During a ten day visit with family in New Haven, all three wore badges that said they couldn’t speak English. Then they made the two-week journey to Portland. Rothko remembered it as an “exhausting, unforgettable journey,” wondering “whether they were ever going to get to the end of it.” In Portland, both Rothko and his sister felt painfully self-conscious and embarrassed by his poor Russian-Jewish origins, but above all, they resented being forced by their family to leave their homeland. Even after settling in South Portland, Rothko disapproved. Even so,
his sister Sonia confessed that: "We all thought we were coming to Heaven". [Breslin]

Marcus, his mother and sister arrived in August of 1913 to a wood two-story house facing west at 834 Front Street that the Weinstein family had arranged for them. [Portland City Directory, 1914] Portland street numbers changed in the early 1930s. The house at 834 Front was at the intersection of Front and Curry in what is now the 3400 block on Front. This house was torn down when Front Street was widened in 1941. Rothko’s brothers had been learning English at the Neighborhood House. Moise said: "We had a big party the night they came." [Archives of American Art interviews] Within months though, their fifty-five year old father became seriously ill and died that spring of colon cancer. Moise said: "We took care of him to the very last day, all of us; we were all around his bed when he died. We watched him die." [Archives of American Art interviews] A funeral service was held at the Front Street house, after which he was buried in the cemetery of the Ahavai Shalom synagogue through a special “burial privilege” arranged by the Weinsteins. Rothko’s mother was also buried in the Ahavai Shalom Cemetery.

New to America, the young Rothko was not happy for the family found little respect, and even less money, than in Dvinsk. He couldn’t speak English and felt dependant upon his Weinstein uncles. Rothko’s father and both of his brothers had worked for the Weinsteins occasionally, but when Sonia was offered a job in the alteration room, she was so insulted that she “came home and never went back to work.” She later said that in Russia “if you had my kind of education, you were above the laborer; you wouldn't even talk to them.” Rothko resented the Weinstein family. "They were rich and he was poor. He thought they treated him like a poor relation." He began "vilifying his relatives because he had to work selling newspapers and piling pants." [Archives of American Art interviews] Rothko’s mother made money by taking in boarders. Sonia worked as a dental assistant. Moise opened a pharmacy where Albert worked before opening his own pharmacy.

After only three weeks in America, Marcus enrolled at the Josiah Failing School, a few blocks north of their house on Front Avenue. Like other immigrant children who knew no English, he was placed in the first grade and moved up as his English improved. After the his first day of school, Marcus, a ten-year-old in first grade, came home bloodied and harassed because he couldn't speak the language. "We were all so green," Sonia said. "We didn't know anything." [Archives of American Art interviews]

Markus sold newspapers on street corners in downtown Portland with his cousin, Max Gordon, who recalled that he and Rothko would sell papers on opposite corners beginning at ten o’clock in the night when the morning papers hit the streets. Rothko hated selling papers. The weather was cold and wet. There were fights for the best locations, and distributors refused to buy back unsold newspapers from the paperboys. Another paper boy remembered: "I was ten years old when I started selling papers. It wasn't very safe to go downtown and sell papers before you could handle yourself on the street. The boys were very jealous of the corners on which they sold and interlopers were made
unwelcome. Competition was very heavy; it sometimes resulted in fights, black
eyes and bloody noses. Each one had to bring money back to his family."
Rothko’s sister, Sonia, recalled that "Mark was a little chubby boy and he used to
come home beaten up every time." [Archives of American Art interviews]  

Most of the immigrant families in South Portland lived as boarders in
apartments, boarding rooms or rental houses. It was common to move every few
years. Just before Rothko began his second school year in the fall of 1914, the
Rothkowitzes moved from Front Street to a similar two-story wood frame house
at 232 Lincoln Avenue. A year later they moved around the corner to a flat at 538
Second Street where they stayed until after Rothko graduated from Lincoln High
School. (Today all three of the Rothkowitz houses have vanished along with
much of South Portland. Their first house was destroyed when Front Avenue was
widened, and the latter two were razed in order to build the twenty-five-story
Madison Tower luxury apartments in the South Auditorium Urban Renewal
Project.)

In their second house on SW Lincoln, the Rothkowitzes lived in a slightly
more crowded and commercial neighborhood; but they were merely one block
from the boundary that separated the Failing and Shattuck School Districts. So
instead of attending Failing School in the poor immigrant area, Rothko enrolled at
Shattuck, a better school in a more affluent neighborhood to the west. The year
after entering the first grade at Failing as a ten year old, he entered third grade at
Shattuck School and by spring he was in the fifth grade. Rothko completed grade
school in just three years and high school in three and a half. Rothko also loved
music. He taught himself to play mandolin, which his brothers also played, and
learned to play piano by ear.

In high school, Rothko was smart, articulate and contentious. He enrolled
in the "College Preparatory Course" and chose electives in French and Dramatic
Arts. His high school classmate, Aaron Director, described him as assertive and
that he liked to talk a lot. Max Naimark, another friend, said: "While in high
school Marcus was a good student. He was well versed with the English
language, an excellent speaker and loved to debate. He was quite outspoken
and didn't hesitate to voice his opinions which were quite on the liberal tone and
at the time not too acceptable by many." [Breslin]

Of the roughly 900 students at Lincoln High School, Breslin estimates that
about one in ten were Jewish. And though Lincoln was a more liberal school than
most, differences in ethnicity and social class bred tension. The school's social
clubs and athletic teams tended to be controlled by affluent West Hills families
and Jews were sometimes excluded. At the beginning of his senior year, Rothko
revived the letters-to-the-editor section of the Lincoln Cardinal magazine called
the "Contributors' Club." He hoped it would create "an open forum for the
expression of ideas and opinions of everyone in the school." But not long after
Rothko’s class graduated, the Contributors’ Club again disappeared. Because
the Tologeion Debating Society at the high school excluded them, Rothko’s friend
Max MacCoby complained in a letter to The Cardinal accusing the school of
"race prejudice" in the selection of club members: "Anyone who has a name
ending in 'off or 'ski' is taboo and branded a Bolshevik." Consequently, Rothko
and his South Portland friends including Naimark, Aaron Director, Gus Solomon, and Gilbert Sussman started their own debating team at the Neighborhood House. [Breslin] Curiously, although Rothko lived only a few blocks from the Neighborhood House, he generally wasn’t interested in their programs.

In the June 1921 issue of The Cardinal, which also served as the yearbook for his graduating class, Rothko’s classmates predicted that he would become a "Pawn Broker." [The Cardinal, June 1921] Eight years after his arrival in Portland, he graduated from Lincoln High School and received a scholarship to Yale University. Looking back, Rothko pronounced the program at Lincoln "ridiculously easy."

Rothko had entered high school during World War I, a difficult time for émigrés in America. Portland had become ultra-patriotic, "achieving a per capita record of war bond sales unequalled in the United States." Even the international, "Spanish flu" epidemic of 1918 was widely blamed as a "Red plot." Immigrants were demonized as Huns, Reds and slackers. A series of raids across the US led to 249 suspected radicals who were then simply deported to Russia. In Portland, when a young Socialist told soldiers boarding a train that they would be fighting to protect the Rockefeller fortunes, he was arrested, found guilty under the Espionage Act and sentenced to 18 months. Another local radical, Dr. Marie Equi, was imprisoned in San Quentin for calling the war, "The Big Barbecue." George Baker, a belligerent reactionary who became mayor in 1917, sought to unify and purify the city through militant means. One of his goals was “the extermination of the IWW (International Workers of the World) members congregated in this city” and he later raided the IWW Hall at 109 SW Second, only four blocks from Rothko’s home. A man in 1919 was jailed for simply carrying an IWW banner. [MacCall, Growth of a City]

Like his father, Rothko was intellectual and a political dissident. Rothko later mentioned that his family, "followed and applauded the Russian Revolution. I grew up as an anarchist. While I was still in grade school, I listened to Emma Goldman and to the IWW orators who were plentiful on the West Coast in those days." [Breslin] Goldman was a Russian Jewish émigré and spoke in Portland on her annual tours. On August 7, 1915, she provoked a local scandal when she lectured Portlanders on "Anarchism," "Free Love," "Nietzsche," and "Birth Control". The police stopped her last speech and arrested her. She was tried, found guilty and fined $100. [Oregonian, August 5, 1915].

In Portland, Rothko did not focus on art., although relatives recall that in high school and college he liked to draw, especially when he was supposed to be doing something else. Rothko worked in the shipping department of the Weinstein’s New York Outfitting Company while in high school and during the summer after his second year at Yale. "At times," Ed Weinstein said, "Mark would occupy himself by drawing and sketching on the store wrapping paper." One day, his Uncle Nate discovered Rothko drawing; he "shook his head, 'Marcus, why are you wasting your time? You will never be able to earn a living that way.'" [Breslin]

Later in life as a famous artist, Rothko claimed that he was "not exposed to paintings at all as a boy, or even in college." He told an art critic that "he
learned painting from his contemporaries in their studios." He claimed to be self-taught. He did not take any children's classes at the Portland Art Museum; he didn’t study art at Lincoln High School, nor at Yale. Interestingly, when Rothko was in grade school, the Portland School District initiated an innovative art program with museum visits, slide talks, and reproductions of artwork displayed in the schools. In an essay published by The Cardinal in his junior year, Rothko describes the tedium of school with an imaginative eye: "I set off to school on Monday morning with the sad thoughts of a week’s hard work in my mind. And [as I] approach the school, the vision of a long, long road arises before me. The road is rough and bumpy. Milestones, marked Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, are lined along the road. The last one is far, far away, beyond that point where the horizon meets the earth." [The Cardinal, June 1921] And yet even today, one can walk to the Failing School from the first Rothkowitz house at Front and Curry, and still see the stunning landscapes of the river, mountains and dynamic skies that must have engaged Rothko.

In the fall after graduating from Lincoln High School in 1921, Rothko traveled to New Haven, Connecticut to enroll at Yale University. But before finishing school there, he left, and feeling no desire to return to Portland, he settled in New York City. There he enrolled in the Art Students League in 1925. Much later, Rothko claimed that if he had "remained in Portland, he would have been a bum." Sonia said that "he hated Portland, calling it dull and provincial." She said that he felt "he didn't belong. He wanted bigger horizons... He said when he gets out of high school, he is going to someplace else." [Breslin]

It was only after Rothko left South Portland and his family that he discovered the world of art. Rothko’s decision to become an artist certainly defied his mother’s desire for him to become an attorney. And painting also defied the traditional Jewish taboo against iconic images. But Rothko, like other Jewish-American painters of his time including Adolph Gottlieb and Barnett Newman, was not a religious painter. Contrast these artists with Jewish artists like Marc Chagall and Chaim Soutine living in the Pale of Russia where an interest in art confronted severe political harassment and religious taboos. The young Soutine for example asked a rabbi to sit for a portrait and was beaten by the rabbi’s son. [Silver and Golan]

Although Rothko seemed to have left Portland forever, his ties there were not completely broken. In 1927, Rothko met Louis Kaufman, a young violinist whose family had known Rothko's family in South Portland. Kaufman had bought a painting from Milton Avery for $25 and introduced Rothko to Avery who became a close friend. Five years later while camping at Lake George, he met Edith Sachar and later in that year, 1932, they were married in New York by his old Lincoln High School friend, Rabbi Max McCoby.

Financially poor, Rothko and his wife nonetheless enjoyed a bohemian lifestyle. And in the summer of 1933, they took the first of a series of low-budget Depression vacations, hitch-hiking across the country and camping along the way. They made it to Dufur, a small town in north-central Oregon where they stopped to visit Rothko's brother Albert. Albert had moved there from South Portland and, like his father, opened a drugstore. In time he had become the
mayor, fire chief, and head of the Masons. Albert and his family drove the Rothkos into Portland. There, Mark and Edith camped in a tent in Washington Park. They "made breakfast on a sterno stove" and ate some of their dinners with Rothko's mother. One of Rothko's nephews was "very, very impressed" with his uncle's boldness: "That was a scary thing to do in those days: to hitchhike out of New York and he didn't have a dime." [Archives of American Art interviews]

According to one family story, the police eventually rousted the young couple for public nudity, and Rothko was able to talk the officers out of making an arrest. While camping in the Portland hills, Rothko produced a number of watercolor landscapes of Portland. A Rothko nephew remembered seeing a closet of Sonia's filled with "hundreds" of his uncle's watercolors. It's ironic that when Rothko evolved into his mature painting style, he told Stanley Kunitz "he didn't want to be associated with nature. In fact," Kunitz continues, "one of his statements that shocked me most was saying that he really hated nature, that he felt uncomfortable in the natural world." [Archives of American Art interviews]

That summer, Rothko, who liked to revile Portland as provincial, had his first one-man show at the Portland Art Museum. He exhibited his own drawings, watercolors and temperas as well as a selection of his students at the Center Academy in Brooklyn. An Oregonian review on July 30, 1933 was favorable and noted a strong Cezanne influence.

His visit was not all bohemian adventure and artistic triumph. His family was more critical. Rothko's brothers and sister had all married within the Portland ghetto and Rothko's wife, Edith, did not fit in; she was difficult and had a hard time there. Rothko's mother said she was lazy. Her sister-in-law, Bella, said that Edith wore flour sacks for underwear. At one point Edith simply stayed by herself in the bedroom, an unhappy victim of the tight family relationships in South Portland.

Although Rothko still felt close to his sister, he was no longer part of the family. He lived across the continent, seldom wrote and was an artist. When the family was together there remained a "strong family tie and they picked up as if the conversation had had a brief pause." But resentments continually arose. Moise's wife criticized Rothko for not writing to his mother, who "used to send him stuff and never know whether he got it or not." And Rothko failed to send money to his mother who was now dependent upon her children for support and eventually forced to live with Sonia. On the other hand, Rothko expected help from them, especially from his oldest brother, Moise. But the Depression had been hard on the family. One of the Weinstein brothers unrelentingly hounded Moise to repay a loan. Albert's pharmacy in Dufur had closed. But worst of all, Rothko felt, correctly, that his family did not understand his art. "...we didn't know what it was all about anyhow. ... At that time it looked to us like we didn't know what it was. Of course, it wasn't that the world accepted him so well." [Archives of American Art interviews]

By 1933, it was all over for everyone in the Rothkowitz family had moved out of the South Portland neighborhood. But as Moise's son Julian put it, "we were a very close knit family. It was a rare weekend that we weren't either at Sonia's, or Sonia at our house, and when Albert lived in Portland, all the children
played together. Grandma was always with us." [Archives of American Art interviews]

The Italian Presence

Before 1870, a unified nation known as Italy didn’t exist. Instead the region was divided into foreign dominated kingdoms, papal and independent states. And so it was that many immigrants didn’t think of themselves as “Italians,” but rather as Sicilians, Venetians or Tuscans. Although the earliest Italian immigrants in Portland were from northern Italy, the majority was ultimately from the Mezzogiorno, particularly the southern province of Calabria. Beginning in 1860, a series of political, economic and natural disasters swept the entire boot of Italy-Calabria, Sicily, Basilicata and Apulia. First, after hundreds of years of control by Spaniards, Austrians and the French, their expectations of a new life were fueled and dashed by revolution. For in 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Italian nationalist, freed the south of Italy from the rule of the French Bourbon kings. The unification that followed under the House of Savoy ended foreign domination. Peasants celebrated the promise of relief from a feudal system perpetuated by the wealthy class. Rome was restored as the capital of Italy. But peace was short lived.

Economic conditions of the poor did not improve as expected. Rather, political power was assumed by the middle class based primarily in the north. Share-cropping replaced feudalism, giving absentee landlords the majority of crop yields; peasants received but a small percentage. Within only a few weeks, peasants (financed by the deposed Bourbon king Francesco II in alliance with the Vatican) began a series of fierce rebellions which took five years to crush. Soon, there followed further revolts in Sicily. Economic hardships, unfair laws and a vexing tax system that favored the north, all weighed heavily upon southern Italians. In Southern Italy the land suffered from erosion caused by deforestation and obsolete farming methods.

At about the same time, natural disasters further destabilized the southern provinces of Sicily, Calabria, Apulia and Basilicata. Homes and farms were destroyed by an unprecedented catastrophic earthquake on December 28, 1908 with tidal waves, landslides, fires and floods. Several epidemics of malaria decimated the population. During the next decade, the 1870s, import laws were tightened by the French to protect their own wine industry, causing a loss in exports for Italian vineyards north and south. America and Russia flooded the Italian grain market, particularly hurting the southern economy. Finally, as California and Florida developed their own commercial tropical fruit orchards and markets, Italy was no longer the source for American oranges, lemons and other citrus fruits. With the agricultural economy destroyed and no industrial infrastructure, there was no work and the traditionally difficult Italian peasant life in the south became impossible. Emigration out of Italy seemed the only answer for many. While Italians in the north first departed to America, conditions in the south were harsher leading in the 1880s to massive emigration to the US. By 1930 four and one half million Italians (80 percent from the south) had entered the United States where they found a need for inexpensive, unskilled labor. Jobs were available in railroad construction, road building and factory work. As
Charles Gould describes it, “American industrialists recognized Italy as a great labor pool. They sent agents there with prepaid tickets to induce workers to come to the United States. Foreign and Italian shipping companies set up their own 'go now, pay later' plans. Between 1895 and 1914 almost all an Italian needed to get to America was the will to go.” It wasn’t unusual to depopulate entire towns and villages as they moved to the US where they resettled together. Over 200 different family names extant in Portland before 1916 have been associated with their particular region in Italy. From a list of 211 the following figures came to light: from Calabria, 62; Abruzzi, 35; Liguria, 29; Sicily, 27; Apulia, 11; Piedmont, 9; Tuscany, 7; and the rest distributed among the remaining regions. [Gould]

With the onset of World War I in 1914, a royal decree stopped all emigration for men of military age in Italy. At the same time, the US Congress overrode a presidential veto by passing a law that prohibited illiterate immigrants. That year was the last large movement of Italians to the US. Further US restrictions were placed after 1920.

While most Italians settled in New York, Illinois and Louisiana, many southern Italians, especially Calabrian, found their way to Portland and other cities to form “Little Italies”. And while differences existed among the immigrants, religion was a common thread for over 95 percent of them were Catholic. Their rural backgrounds and lack of formal education gave American Italians a unique perspective on life. There was a strong interest in a non-commercialized way of life. It is said that some people live to work, but the southern Italians worked to live. James Oppenheim in 1912 saw Italian women picketing in Lawrence, Massachusetts and wrote a song based on signs they were carrying that said: “We want bread and roses too.” These close-knit communities offered shelter, job connections and friendship. Thus paesani preserved their language and
culture through *le vie vecchie*, the old ways of life that would eventually slow their absorption into the American mainstream.

Italian immigrants originally expected to return home to Italy with enough money to buy a farm or start a business. American nativists saw them as "birds of passage" and an economic drain. But because of the need for unskilled labor in the US, the government did not tighten immigration quotas. Thousands were employed in work gangs across the country. They worked for low wages doing the most menial kinds of labor. If they were lucky, they were offered a job upon arrival, often by established countrymen. One could also buy a job for $3 at private employment offices in Portland. Vito Vitti's Garibaldi Grocery not only offered foods imported from Italy, but also was a free labor agency. Vitti would place Italians in jobs with railroads, lumber camps, and construction companies as far away as Idaho from 1910 on into the 20s. An Italian at a house across the trestle from the dump would put a shovel in the hands of immigrants and even give them a place to stay until they could settle in. Two hundred Italian laborers were hired to hand dig the basement for the Olds, Worthman and King department store building that still stands at SW Tenth and Morrison. Italians also worked in mills, and on road crews. They did remarkable stone work for the beautiful Columbia River Highway. In Portland they laid rails for both steam and electric cars, laid pipe for sewers and gas, constructed buildings and built streets. Some did return to their homeland, but many more stayed and raised enough money to bring other family members from Italy.

Although few Italians could read or write in their own language, in 1889 *La Tribuna Italiana* began printing a dual language newspaper in Seattle for distribution throughout the Northwest. In 1910 another dual language paper was printed by Dr. DeRosa of Portland called *La Stella*. And in 1917 Dr. Carlo Visetti,
the Italian consular agent in Portland began publishing the Italian language
*L'Asino* (The donkey), a paper that was sympathetic to the Italian government. Antagonism was strong between the Tribune’s Portland editor and DeRosa and led to a memorable fight outside of an Italian restaurant at First and Stark in 1915. “Each had a badly discolored eye and a bruised face... when friends separated the pair.” [Oregonian, May 20, 1915.] There was also a weekly illustrated magazine, *L’Italico*, a literary and agricultural publication edited by Raphael E. Romano. Two other papers provided some Italian news. The Oregonian and The Catholic Sentinel. The weekly Sentinel began in 1870 and is still published, but it originally covered mostly Irish and German news, later providing good Italian coverage. Immigration agencies advertised in newspapers like *La Tribuna Italiana* before World War I. They claimed that there was a limited quantity of first-class gardens and work available in the vicinity of Portland. Loyalty to the homeland remained high; for instance, around 1911 *La Tribuna Italiana* ran an advertisement calling for the Italian community to donate money toward the purchase of an airplane for the Italian Army.

Although there were at least six Italian born priests in Oregon between 1844 and 1847, few Italians immigrated to the US before 1880. Then, because of adversity, they came in increasing numbers, especially between 1902 and 1914. In 1860, Oregon had only 31 foreign born Italians which grew to 1,014 in 1890, most of them residing in Portland. By 1900, they numbered 5,538. Mostly uneducated, they became farmers, laborers, peddlers, tailors and cobblers. The earliest Italians though did not remain, but returned to their homes in Italy. Gould states that “a check of the *Portland Registrars* of the 1860s and 1870s will show that a dozen or so Italians came to Portland and set up businesses—groceries, a fish market and a fruit store—but they stayed only one or two years and left, never to return.” For instance Mary DeMartini told the tale of Antonio deMartini, an intrepid Genoese who wandered north from the gold fields of California to Oregon in the late 1840s. Foraging along the way, he lived partly on duck eggs. He returned to Italy, but his tales of adventure inspired his son, Raffaele, to come and settle in Portland in 1901. [In an interview with Charles F. Gould in May of 1971.] Possibly the first southern Italian was a fourteen year old Sicilian named Frank Amato who was a railroad laborer.

In 1902, of the 22 bootblacks then in Portland, nineteen were Italian. It was the second largest occupation of Italians. But the majority were day laborers, railroad workers, gardeners and dressmakers. They peddled vegetables, cooked, worked in saloons, collected garbage and scavenged. They were servants, made umbrellas and sold peanuts. The southern Italian immigrant farmers soon seemed to dominate the local fruit and vegetable markets in Portland. But compared to day labor, farming required capital outlay and seasonal patience. Others became stone masons, barbers and tailors. Robero Corruccini became the conductor of the Portland Opera Association from 1916 to 1923.
Most of the first Italians arriving in Portland found their way to boarding houses along Second and Third Streets, and notably, the boarding house of a Genoese, Abramo Cereghino, at 326 SW Front Street. It was a low building with only a lone pine tree by the porch to identify it. That tree was the first thing many Italians looked for when they arrived in Portland. Another destination was the Italian Hotel on the corner of Fifth and Pine Streets which was owned by Angiolo Aletro from 1883 to 1885. At 86 First Street was Campi’s Hotel, providing lodging, a saloon and an Italian restaurant. Dotta and Mari were the proprietors. According to the Portland Register of 1884, the bill of fare included “Macaroni, Ravioli, Tagliarini, Lasagne, Spaghetti, and Risotto served in Italian Style.” An immigrant might also find a place to stay in many of the Italian homes throughout South Portland.

Another illuminating account concerns S.N. Arrigoni, a seaman. He came with his Irish wife to Portland in 1856. They opened a restaurant and later owned and operated the Pioneer Hotel on the corner of Front and Washington. It claimed to be Portland’s oldest, largest and finest establishment with accommodations for 300 guests and boasted of such prominent guests as Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. He renamed it “Arrogoni’s Hotel. And as the hotel became known up and down the coast as the most desirable place to stay in Portland, the Arrigoni’s rose into the upper circles of Portland society. Andrew Rolle said "...(Arrigoni) became one of the organizers of Portland's [socially prestigious and influential] Arlington Club and of its first Masonic Lodge; in his home were to be found the first sewing machine and piano in the state. Arrigoni’s hotel boasted the first telegraph office and express service in Oregon, and he gave Portland its first street light, a small oil lamp which stood outside his Pioneer Hotel." In 1869 Arrigoni sold his Portland holdings and moved his family to Astoria where he became one of its most prominent citizens.
Charles Gould describes two typical Italian immigrants—one from the south and the other from the north. The accounts of these two immigrants are not exceptional among Italians in Portland.

Frank Amato, age 14, left his family in a small town near Palermo, Sicily, and arrived in Toronto, Canada, in 1887. It was winter and he had never experienced such cold weather. He had heard of a construction job building a railroad line between Seattle and Portland and seized the opportunity when told the climate was considerably more agreeable. He worked but a few months for the railroad and saved enough money to move to Portland and enter the produce business. He saved more money, returned to Sicily, married, and then brought his bride to Oregon along with his three brothers and three sisters. Amato eventually became a prosperous produce merchant.

Sam Simonatti was born in Tuscany. He was a carpenter by trade, but could not, at first, follow his profession when he arrived in America because he did not know English and "because things were done so much differently in America. In Italy everything was done by hand—here, machine." He crossed the continent by rail and settled in Tacoma in 1914. Simonatti soon got work with the railroad, and later worked with lumber companies and on road construction. Following the latter job he went into partnership with two fellow laborers. They chose Portland as a base for their new building company because it seemed to offer steady employment. He also went to trade school. Simonatti, now retired, whose self-employment started in 1918, owned and operated his own building company.

The 1870 U.S. Census lists only four Italian-born residents in the area of what would later be known as Portland's "Little Italy". Antonio Ferrara, his wife Rosa, and his brother John were grocers. Joseph Barbara was listed as a steam steward. By 1880 the vanguard of what would be Portland's Italian community had arrived. The Census for that year lists sixteen single Italian males in South Portland. These men, mostly day laborers, lodged in inexpensive boarding houses along Second and Third Avenues. South Portland In the late 1880's was a clearing house for Portland's immigrant population. The Italians who settled there were preceded by earlier German and Irish immigrants. As the Germans and the Irish became more affluent, they left not only the area of South Portland to the later immigrants, but also the most menial jobs.

In the late 1880s, the American Catholic Church was predominately Irish. The language and style of Italian Catholic worship was an embarrassment. Italian religious needs were generally served in broken Italian by an Irish-American priest in church basements. With the construction completed of the German Catholic church of Saint Joseph’s, the Church of Saint Michael the Archangel on SW Montgomery Street was given to the Italian Catholics which they used for six years. By 1901, there was money and volunteer labor to build a new Saint Michael’s Church which still stands and along with Saint Mary’s Academy, became the focal point of the Italian community.
Italians tended to lead very active social lives with children and elders included in their gatherings. It often seemed that children outnumbered adults at dances, weddings, picnics and games. During interviews with Charles Gould in May of 1971, Mary DeMartini and Sam Simonatti recalled:

Every Sunday afternoon "bocce bal" games were played in an orchard near 52nd and Division where winners got to buy ice cream for the children. The Italian gardeners were avid "bocce bal" players and Sunday tournaments were held at Montavilla, Parkrose, and other places. There was the popular Saturday night dance in which gentlemen would politely remind each other when dancing with one another’s wife or girl friend, to "balla senza maliza" or dance without malice.

Picnics up the Columbia River by train or down the river by boat were major annual social events. These trips were sponsored by one or more of the many Italian lodges and the Gardeners Association. They were all-day excursions. More than 500 people floated up and down the river on the hired passenger ship Swan. Two bands accompanied dancers on the upper deck and the lower deck. Picnics were held ashore at Sauvie Island or Cascade Locks.

The most notable aspect of the social and cultural life of the Italians in South Portland was its inward orientation. One could visit the Italian Hall at Fourth and Hall for companionship and recreation. Louis Deluchi at the Italian Information Center, 324 Front Street, could give information or offer advise about business matters. And for medical attention or consular service, one could go to see Dr. Charles Candiani at the Italian Consular Agency, begun in 1908. The Italian immigrants tended to organize and participate in a number of clubs and societies, either as part of their church’s religious activities or as an extension of their heritage. The number of clubs, societies, and associations that sprang up around the turn of the century is very large. Some of the most important of these groups were the Antico Ordine dei Druidi, the Forrestieri d"America, and the Circolo Feminile "Regina Margherita". Three major benevolent societies were established between 1880 and 1910, all of them lasting half a century or better: Columbia Lodge from 1889 to1965; Societa M.S. Bersaglieri (Bersaglieri Columbia Society) from 1906 to1963; and Societa di M.S. Mazzini (Mazzini
Society) from 1908 to 1957. These three organizations were originally founded to assist Italians in financial straits, but they were also very active social clubs. With the variety of groups located in the area, there was something for everyone. Possibly the most well known of the Italian-American groups in Portland was the Columbus Day Association. This committee, composed of the most influential members of the Italian population, was responsible for organizing the annual Columbus Day celebration. Begun prior to the turn of the century, this important social event continued into the 1960's. The highlight of the festival was the selection of Queen Isabella, King Ferdinand, and Christopher Columbus. Ballots could be purchased for ten cents at many locations throughout "Little Italy". The winners would then lead the festivities of the day. The program for the 1911 festival shows the scope of the celebration: at 10am was the Coronation of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella at City Hall, attended by the civil and military authorities of the City of Portland. At 2:30pm, the Grand Military and Civil Parade was held, including the U.S. Army and Navy. At 5pm, the Official Banquet was given by the Executive Committee for all the dignitaries of the city. At 8pm, the Gala Grand Ball was held at the Armory Building. And finally at 9pm was the distribution of prizes and the Gold Cup. In 1916 the Italian-American Republican Club was formed with 500 members. Its purpose was to encourage naturalization of many Italians eligible for citizenship and secondly to support the Republican Party. The last major organization, United Italian Societies, began in 1919. It created a federation of a dozen lodges and societies who pooled their resources into a strong political bloc.

Economic conditions for many Italians improved drastically in the years between 1900 and 1920. Many new businesses opened in the community including grocery stores, restaurants, bookstores, saloons, and movie theatres. This led to an informal street activity, known as the "passeggiata" that is so common in Italy even today. Families would stroll up and down the main streets on weekends chatting with their friends, eating ice cream and window shopping. There were two movie theatres offering predominantly Italian films, the Columbia and the Gem. The Columbia Theatre ran Italian films three times a day and offered special live shows on Sundays. Another major social event of the year was the Italian Reunion picnic. The Catholic Sentinel on August 15, 1901 described the picnic that summer as follows:

The Italian Reunion which was held in the Jefferson Street gardens on Sunday was very largely attended... the spacious hall and the stage were appropriately decorated for the occasion with streamers, flags, and bunting. Near the stage, the national flag of Italy, gorgeously embroidered and trimmed with gold, waved alongside the Star Spangled Banner. The Flag, was purchased at Milan, Italy and cost nearly $1000. Refreshments of all kinds were served on the gardens by Italian Ladies. Probably one of the best orchestras on the Pacific Coast, under the leadership of Prof. DiCaprio, dispensed music on this occasion and there were many in the gathering whose spirit, at least, gave willing attention to the national anthems so artistically rendered and obeying the impassioned strains, went back on the
wings of imagination to scenes and associations in the native land, where their lives first began—to their dear Italy.

In Portland, there were several locations of Italian colonies: the first group of northern Italians settled to the north and east of the city dump in Marquam Gulch south of Sheridan and west of Fourth. As that group moved out, immigrants from the south of Italy moved in, extending the Italian district to Clay Street and the west end of the Ross Island Bridge. Tony Casciado remembered that the dump was known as “the gulch”, although the Italians called it “the creek” (rhymes with “stick”). It was 150 feet deep with an enormous train trestle that towered over the houses below it. Tony was born in a house directly west of the trestle on SW 5th, land now occupied by Duniway Park.

On the other side of the trestle on the SE corner of SW 4th and Sheridan lived his dad’s uncle who was a contractor. “He had a work gang who dug out basements all over town. New immigrants would come to his house and ask for a job. He would hand them a shovel and put them to work. He boarded them there too until they could find a place. He dug the basement of Olds, Worthman and King with a gang of 200 men. It was all done by pick and shovel.”

A sizable second colony of southern Italians, mostly from Calabria, Abruzzi, Sicily and Apulia, developed across the river in and around Ladd’s Addition where large and small gardens could be cultivated. There, jerry-built rentals were erected there and were occupied mostly by Italians. This colony became, and remains, the largest in the Portland area. The shacks were later demolished and replaced by the many substantial homes in and around the Ladd’s Addition Historic District. It’s interesting to note that Portland’s first two Historic Districts, Lair Hill and Ladd’s Addition, were originally Italian settlements. Other southern Italians settled in the Parkrose and Milwaukie farming districts. The Genoese who moved out to Parkrose and Milwaukie worked diligently on their 10 and 15-acre truck farms. Many other Italians supplemented their incomes with small gardens in the city. Ladd’s Addition was a giant farm made up of private
individual gardens, the produce of which was for both home consumption and sale. "In addition to men who leased or owned farms . . . less prosperous arrivals rode streetcars to the end of the line and worked as much as twelve hours a day in the fields. . . . And young boys . . . worked mornings and after school cleaning out market spaces for producers who paid 15 cents a day for a five foot stall to the market master." The produce stalls were arranged on the south side of S.W. Yam-hill, between Third and Fifth streets." [Oregon Journal, section 2, page 1, April 29, 1970]

The west side locations were not exclusively Italian, for Eastern European Jews were arriving in Portland at about the same time. The two groups co-inhabited the same neighborhood. First Street was predominately Jewish, while Third, Fourth, Sixth and lower Fifth Street were Italian. Along Hood, Water and Macadam Streets. But on Front Street Italians and Jews were equal in number. Italians were located east of the Jews on Grant and Caruthers Streets and on Sheridan Street. While differing in their religions, both Italian and Jewish immigrants had many similarities that made their relationships compatible. The two groups came from the European peasantry and were recent immigrants to the United States; both shared strong family values; both spoke a foreign language, and both were an abused and downtrodden minority. Their common adversities led to a bonding and fostered a harmonious relationship. Gauda Jermouske Hahn, a Jewish lady who lived at S.W. Second and Arthur, noted in an interview in 1980: "... in our immediate neighborhood there was an Italian family and they were very good friends. Somehow I guess we all had our differences, but there was a feeling of extended family closeness."
John Granato remembers his boyhood in the 1930's, when his Jewish friends would bring him to their services, and he would bring them to his own at St. Michael's. John lived at S.W. First and Hall, across from Congregation Shaarie Torah, a synagogue. Jewish tradition prohibited doing work on the Sabbath. But it was still necessary to heat the synagogue and perform other simple tasks. Rabbi Fain for several years employed John as the shabbas goy, a gentile hired to do these small jobs. This was fine with St. Michael's pastor, Rev. Michael Balestra, S.J., but after the closure of St. Michael's school in 1934, when John transferred to St. Lawrence school, the pastor, Rev. John R. Laidlaw, coming from a tradition different from that of Father Balestra, strongly suggested that John discontinue his duties at the synagogue. He continued anyway, but didn't tell Father Laidlaw. (Fred Granata, The Biography of a Parish)

The Italian presence in America began to show in the 1880s as a tide of Italian immigrants began emigrating to the United States. Many of them left their country due to the turbulent environment with socio-political upheavals and natural disasters including earthquakes and drought. While the largest number of Italian immigrants chose to live on the East Coast, some traveled to the west. The first wave of Italians to arrive in Portland in the 1880s were interspersed among the Jewish population, but generally settled at the edge of the city dump, at the present site of Duniway Park. They continued to move east towards the river; but the heaviest concentrations of Italians were located along the western edge of South Portland and north of Marquam Gulch. For both Italian and Jew, the area was amenable to virtually all their needs, allowing their cultural traditions to flourish. South Portland was somewhat of a world unto itself where life remained focused upon family, neighbors and community and was less involved in city-wide issues. Everything anyone wanted could be found right in the neighborhood.

Another important focal point for Italians was the Helen Kelly Manley Community Center, also known as the Portland Settlement Center, but often simply called The Manley House. It may have actually been a Methodist Mission with a "mission" for apparently the Jewish community reacted strongly when attempts were made to convert Jewish children in the kindergarten there. The building still stands at SW Front at Hooker. Built in 1912, it operated primarily as a focal point for Italian activities until 1928. It was known as the "poor man's Neighborhood House," in part because the latter charged a membership fee while the Manley House was free. The Manley Community Center was only two blocks east of the library and across the street from the "new" Failing School.

The early Italian community remained strongly Catholic and constructed a church in 1894 when they inherited a site at SW Fourth Avenue and Mill Street formerly occupied by the congregation of St. Joseph's, the German National Church. A new church, The Church of St. Michael the Archangel, was completed in 1901 with $14,000 in funds raised through private donations. The labor to build it was volunteered by the Italian community. Nearby, St. Mary's School for Girls was built, a large Victorian stone edifice with a turret on the top; the school has since been demolished and rebuilt across Fifth Avenue from the original building. At the time, St. Michael's was one of three religious sites established for the city's
Italian, Polish, and German-speaking residents. Of those three churches, only St. Michael’s remains, a solitary reminder of the vital Italian community that surrounded it.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a number of the buildings were already beginning to exhibit signs of age, so the cost of housing was low. And as the second wave of Italian immigrants came to Portland in the early 1900s, they moved into the same South Portland neighborhood. Indeed, they often moved into the same houses as the first colony of Italians began to relocate their families to homes in the southeast section of the city, along Clinton Street and into Ladd’s Addition where many of the early residents were Italian truck farmers who sold their produce at both the Farmer’s Market on SW Fourth and, from 1900 to 1949, at the Market Building at 1305-1337 SE Union Avenue.

Dario Raschio recalled in 2005 when he was 91 years old: “We were all immigrants, I guess you could call it a kind of a ghetto; we all felt together.” He was born in South Portland on Water Street near Mill. Box cars were unloaded across Water. Rudy Boyd of Boyd’s Coffee built across from their house. Their second house was around the corner; his family moved several times, but always within South Portland: “We always rented; we never owned. Even when I was five, I couldn’t speak English. You know in South Portland we had our own accent. All of the kids had nicknames: one boy was called ‘Buttonhead’. He wasn’t all there. The girls would chase him and he just loved it. Another boy was called ‘Monk’ for monkey. My friends called me by my nickname: Dadio. I was ashamed of Dadio so I went by my middle name, Michael. My wife is Mary; I call her ‘Maria mia’.

“I went to school at St. Michael’s a whole eight years; 1929 I graduated. All our family baptisms and weddings were in St. Michael’s. St. Mary’s was across the street. They had two blocks. Across from them [on Fifth] was their laundry. They sold the school and rebuilt on the laundry site. The Blanchet [pron: “blan-chay”] Institute was for boys. St. Lawrence also had a school. We went to church every morning at 8am and had mass, then we went to school. I told my zoology teacher I wanted to go into education. ‘You’re going to have trouble’, he told me. And he was right; I couldn’t get a job anywhere because I was foreign or Catholic. Across the street from the St. Michael’s was a fire station [on Fourth Avenue]. As kids, we used to get kind of chummy with the firemen. And across from St. Michael’s on Fifth was a huge mansion with stables. At funerals, Italians who weren’t religious would stand around the fire hydrant on the corner, but wouldn’t come into the church.

“We spent quite a bit of time walking downtown; we called it ‘downtown’. The groceries in the neighborhood were real small, so if we wanted good groceries, we’d walk down to the farmer’s markets. Calisiano had a grocery store at Third between Jefferson and Madison; and there was Garberino’s Grocery on First between Madison and Jefferson. On the corner of Front and Hall was a Chinese laundry. They would iron clothes on the street corner with old heavy flat irons dress in traditional Chinese outfits. Across the street on the corner was a house of prostitution. Women would sit in the window and men would knock on the door. On my way to school, these women would have me go get cigarettes
and they would give me fifty cents. There was another prostitution house, a blacksmith’s shop, taxidermist, a grocery, an apartment house with another house of prostitution. I guess I was living in a red light district as a kid but never thought about it. The Lincoln Powerhouse [on the river under the Marquam Bridge] burnt sawdust for electricity; once it caught fire and we could feel the heat at our house.

“We used to play in the Sands [in the South Waterfront area]. It was all fill from dredging. We used to run across logs in the river. One boy fell through down in Fulton and the logs closed up and he drowned. There was a store on the old Fulton Street car line [at the SW corner of First and Caruthers] where I used to buy sunflower seeds; they had everything in barrels. We built wagons from junk and rode them down Harrison and Front on the cobblestones. And we’d go swim at the Neighborhood House; one day [a week] was swimming without suits for men, another for women- for sanitary reasons. My best friend was Roy [Matters]. His parents owned a cooperage at Water and Columbia. Upstairs was a rooming house. They lived up there. It was just south of the Oregon Electric Train Station [a triangular building west of the moored battleship, USS Oregon].”

On the Market Street side of the Auditorium was a lumber yard. Up by the main library was the Italian Federal Hall; the Society was on the second floor. “There were several Italian societies, two or three. I worked on WPA where we’d work two weeks out of a month. The WPA built parts of Barbur. Oh, I got more stories than Carter’s got pills.”

Tony Casciado recalled that “the street car ran from the ballpark [at NW 24th and Vaughn] over to Burnside, down to Third to Clay, down to First and from there out to the cemetery [Riverview Cemetery]. We used to play there.”

Through the years, many of the original Italian groups have disbanded, and some have been replaced by others. Columbus Day is still celebrated, and the Paesano Picnic is still a major event. Because of urban renewal the Italian-American businesses in South Portland have either been relocated or closed down. Families have dispersed to all areas of the city and into the entire range of economic and social classes. For many their only tie with their Italian heritage lies in the memory of South Portland. "Little Italy" offered them a transition from the ways of the old country to life in the new. The destruction of the neighborhood meant, for many, the loss of Portland's most fascinating, entertaining and diverse areas. Today very little remains of Portland’s Little Italy: Saint Michael’s Church, a few residences and a restaurant whose name tells it all: Caro Amico, my dear friend.

**Saint Michael's Church**

The histories of several local Catholic institutions are all connected with that of St. Michael the Archangel Parish: St. Michael's College, Blanchet Institute, Christian Brothers Business College, Aquinas Commercial College and High School, St. Michael's chapel, St. Mary's Academy, St. Lawrence Parish, St. Joseph's chapel and St. Joseph's German Catholic Church (German Catholics in Portland originally met in St. Michael’s Church until they built their own church at NW 15th and Couch).
The following information is from Fred Granata’s book: The Biography of a Parrish: Saint Michael, the Archangel Catholic Church:

The first Catholic Church building in Portland celebrated Mass on midnight of Christmas eve in 1851. It was originally built in the vicinity of NW Fifth and Couch on land purchased from Captain Couch. (Prior to that time Mass was offered in a private home.) Archbishop Francis N. Blanchet dedicated the church February 22, 1852. The pioneer congregation soon began to realize that the site was too remote from the people. The road to it was a mere trail through the woods often blocked by fallen trees. A meeting was called, and four lots were secured from Benjamin Stark at SW Third and Stark, where the building was moved in 1854. Within eighteen years the little chapel building was moved once more to the present site on SW Fourth at the south side of the existing parking lot until demolished in 1902.

In 1871 at SW Fifth and Mill (the present parish site), on land which Archbishop Francis N. Blanchet had purchased in 1867 from the Holy Names Sisters at a cost of $2,000, the Archdiocese established St. Michael's College for Boys. (In those early days a "college" was simply a school.) The building was completed in three months, and on August 28, 1871 more than sixty pupils presented themselves to what was the first Oregon school under the direction of the diocesan clergy. Rates of tuition for an eleven week term were $5.00 for the primary department, $7.00 for the intermediate department and $9.00 for the higher department. The early students included boys who were transferred from St. Mary's Academy which had begun in 1859 as a school for both boys and girls. Some of the boys were orphans who resided in an institution called St. Joseph's Orphanage which the Sisters maintained in a building at the southwest corner of their block (east of the school's present location).

A passage from the diary of the Holy Names Sisters notes: August 21, 1871: Opening of St. Michael's College... Owing to the advantages offered by this college we have decided to dismiss our remaining orphan boys and to make our orphanage an asylum for orphan girls and also to establish there a day school for children whose parents have not the means to place them in the select day school at the academy. May our Divine Lord bless the prosperity of these two institutions.

By 1885 St. Michael's College had an enrollment of 125 pupils, and in addition to Father O'Dea, its principal, and Rev. Bertram Orth, its director, had two lay teachers, Charles J. O'Reilly and P. Camey. In Catholic History of Oregon (1916) by Edwin V. O'Hara we learn that St. Michael's college had a brass band, a telegraph apparatus, a physical laboratory and a printing office. It also published a newspaper. The Archangel, with a circulation of about 500. At the request of Archbishop William Gross the Franciscan Order was to have taken charge of the college, but when they failed to show up on time, he invited the Christian Brothers, who assumed direction in January 1886 at the original location, S.W. Fifth and Mill.

Brothers came from San Francisco and found a dilapidated old school with living quarters that were even worse. Their superior, Brother Adalrick, died from overwork and illness in two months.

In 1895 St. Michael's college was closed. The Brothers moved to quarters above the pro-cathedral, then located at N.W. Seventeenth and Davis, where they operated St. Mary's Parochial School for Boys. Several years later Archbishop Christie erected another school building on the site of the old St. Michael's, and in September 1901 the Brothers moved back, this time opening Blanchet Institute which continued until 1908. The Brothers then started a business college at a site on Portland's east side. In 1909 the St. Michael's parish school with a staff of two sisters began operations in the building at S.W. Fifth and Mill. Christian Brothers Business College, located at N.E. Grand Avenue and Clackamas Street, continued through 1922. In 1923, then under the Dominican Fathers, it became Aquinas Commercial College and High School. It no longer exists.

In 1863 the S.W. Mill location was still considered to be rural. The only Catholic parish in town was the Cathedral at S.W. Third and Stark, and people in the neighborhood of St. Mary's Academy, finding it more conveniently located, would go to Mass in St. Mary's chapel which was connected with the academy. This continued for twenty years until April 1, 1883 when St. Michael's College chapel, the little church which had been moved to the south side of the lot, was fitted and ready. The diary of the Holy Name sisters contains this entry on April 1, 1883: “From henceforth our chapel will be private. This morning the community Mass was at eight o'clock, no seculars (lay people) present. Some of them find it hard to quit the quiet sanctuary where they had heard Mass and assisted at Benediction Sunday after Sunday for twenty years. St. Michael's College Chapel has been fixed up and our chaplain has been charged by the Archbishop to say an early Mass for the accommodation of the Catholics of South Portland every Sunday.”

In 1883, the City of Portland west of the Willamette River had but one Catholic parish. This was the Cathedral, then a Gothic structure, located at SW Third and Stark. (All that remains of the Cathedral today is the rectory, now called the Bishop’s House at 223 SW Stark Street.) On June 19,1883 the Archbishop announced that henceforth the west side would have two parishes. The area north of Columbia Street would be the territory of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and the area south of Columbia Street would be the territory of a yet unnamed and un-built parish to be located at SW Third and Sherman. This new building was to become St. Lawrence parish. The chapel of St. Michael's College was designated as the temporary parish church until the intended new church, St. Lawrence, was completed. On August 18, 1960, because St. Lawrence parish was scheduled to be demolished by the urban renewal project, the Italian National church, St. Michael the Archangel parish, was designated by rescript from the Vatican to "assume the pastoral care of the faithful living within the parish limits of St. Lawrence" in southwest Portland. Thus, St. Michael's is both the predecessor and the successor of St. Lawrence parish.
With the completion of St. Lawrence church in 1883, hard times set in for the little chapel. The faithful in the neighborhood now had their own church and parish. On the other hand, St. Michael's chapel received only scant support and fell into disrepair. In 1886 after thieves had robbed it, the little chapel with its grand history became a utility building. The Archdiocese used it as a temporary location for other parishes while their own buildings were under construction. The Christian Brothers used it for storage and as an exhibition hall.

Between 1883 and 1890 there is no record of any pastor or rector for St. Michael's chapel, and its only use seems to have been that of serving as a temporary location for another parish while its own building was being constructed somewhere else. The first reference to St. Michael's as a church for Italians was on September 15, 1892 when the Catholic Sentinel reported that Rev. Eugene Bolla had charge of the chapel on the Christian Brothers lot where he celebrated Mass on Sundays for the Italians. A native of Italy, Father Bolla's sermons were said to be gems of religious eloquence. The tenure of Father Bolla as rector of the chapel, now used for services to Italians, along with the increasing influx of non-English speaking Italian immigrants into the St. Michael's neighborhood, suggests that the Archbishop and the Italians spontaneously recognized the need for an Italian church. The Italians must have been uncomfortable at the nearby St. Lawrence parish in charge of Americani who did not speak their language and who did not share or understand their customs and practices. In 1894 the little chapel was turned over to the Italian community living in the area called "Little Italy," 23 years after worship began in that location.
A new church was built in 1901 for $20,000. “The style of the new structure will be Romanesque, with steep roof, tall spire and stained windows…” The new church will seat 400.” The windows were designed and built by David L. Povey’s, Povey Brothers Glass Company, founded in 1888. Donors included laborers, an umbrella maker, vegetable peddlers, bootblacks, a tailor, farmers, widows, a saloon keeper and a shoemaker.

Italian national parishes generally were the poorest. In Italy the government supported the Church, and Italians were not accustomed to donating to support their parishes. Furthermore, the pastor was usually an Italian who was not practiced in asking his parishioners for donations. Despite this, the entire estimated cost of the construction of St. Michael's was raised in less than eight months, July through November 1901. This is truly remarkable when one considers that most of the Italian immigrant wage earners were uneducated, unskilled laborers who made an average of 25 - 30 dollars per month.

It was Father Cestelli who built the present St. Michael's church, and he is said to have done some of the physical labor himself. Father Cestelli's house, which he built on North Willamette Boulevard and Ainsworth Street with the consent of the Archbishop, resembles an Italian villa and is the first reinforced concrete building in Portland.

Father Cestelli was born in Sanspolcro near Fiesole in Tuscany on September 26, 1840. He was ordained May 30, 1863 and shortly became a professor of moral philosophy at the Greek college of Grottaferrata in Rome. In 1883, he came to the United States. In the 1890s, he visited Portland and resolved to stay here to minister to the Italian people. The Archbishop appointed him as pastor of St. Michael's on May 2, 1901.

Father Cestelli suffered two tragedies: The first was a fire in 1905 that destroyed St. Michael's rectory and everything in it including his valuable library. He was enveloped in flames, badly burned and spent several months in the hospital. He never did fully recover and resigned from active parish work to become chaplain at St. Vincent Hospital. According to The Sentinel's account in its January 4, 1906 edition:

Fr. Cestelli, pastor of St. Michael's Church, narrowly escaped from a fatal burning last Thursday morning. The parochial apartments had in some unknown way caught afire, and in escaping from the building Fr. Cestelli was seriously burned about the face and arms.

At the time of the rescue Fr. Cestelli was standing on the roof of the porch, his clothing in flames. He was unmindful of his own danger in his efforts to awaken the members of the fire department, whose headquarters were just across the street, that they might save the brick and stone edifice from destruction. It was while the priest stood upon the roof of the porch, a human torch, calling to the firemen, that Driver Taggart was attracted by his cries. Rushing across the street, the fireman called to the priest that he would save him from his perilous position, cautioning him not to attempt to jump to the ground. Quickly climbing a supporting post to the roof of the porch, Taggart reached the priest and carried him safely to the ground.
A second tragedy took his life. In 1916 he was killed while driving a jitney that was crushed between two street cars. Father Cronin of Cathedral parish was a passenger on one of the streetcars and did not immediately recognize Father Cestelli. Later hearing that one of the injured was a priest, he rushed to Good Samaritan Hospital and administered to him the Last Sacraments moments before he expired.

In 1910, a Jesuit from Gonzaga College in Spokane named Father Michael Balestra succeeded Father Castelli. During his long tenure at St. Michael's, he became a living legend. Andrew Bolle says that "...he made St. Michael's parish...a center for the Italian-Americans. Balestra lived frugally, begged clothing and food for the poor, and helped educate wayward waifs. For more than fifty years he ministered to Portland's Italians, generating widespread loyalty."

The original altar was donated by John C. Cordano and made by Martin Karmel, a woodcarver. Mr. Cordano's story, as reported in 1910 in Portland, Oregon, Its History and Builders, by Joseph Gaston, is summarized below in this history because it gives a glimpse of the life of an immigrant in the early part of this century and of how he prospered through his own industry and thrift.

At age 13, an orphan, Cordano made his way alone to Portland from Genoa, arriving in 1882. As it was imperative that he have an immediate income, he began blacking boots. Gradually he built up a good business, and when he had acquired sufficient resources, established a fish and poultry business. Subsequently he was appointed a deputy sheriff and in 1905 was chief criminal deputy during the Lewis and dark Exposition. He is said to have apprehended many of the most desperate criminals known on the Pacific Coast including Castro, the murderer, and the notorious desperadoes, Men-ill and Tracy, James F. Muse, Nick Haworth and Eugene Roberts of San Francisco. In 1898 Mr. Cordano became connected with the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company (now Union Pacific Railroad Company) and Southern Pacific Railroad Company in the tax and right-of-way department. On his own behalf he made wise investments in real estate and was reputedly worth about $100,000. In 1891 Mr. Cordano married Jennie Raffetto of San Francisco. He was for fourteen years president of the Italian Society "which is composed of the best Italian citizens of Portland". He also was a member of the Elks, the Druids, the Red Men and the Mazzini Society. In politics, he was described as an earnest Republican.

As far back as the decade of 1910, seemingly unrelated forces, which would have a profound effect on the future of the parish, were starting to emerge. The first of these was the opening of several bridges across the Willamette which allowed access to cheap land. Some Italians, who found the housing and location of Southwest Portland unattractive, resettled on the east side. Many of them severed their ties with St. Michael's and joined other Catholic parishes. Ethnic cohesiveness, however, was maintained through membership in clubs and lodges which were consolidated in the 1920's in the Italian Federation Hall at S.W. Fourth and Madison.
The opening of the Ross Island Bridge in 1926 probably was the first episode in a period when the homes of many parishioners would be removed to make way for the automobile. When first completed, the Ross Island Bridge did not appear threatening, but by 1931 the county, in the process of constructing new western approaches, removed the residences of some parishioners. This was repeated on a larger scale in 1941 when land was acquired for the newly rebuilt western approaches which would use about 17 acres. In 1940 the City Council proposed a bond issue to finance its Front Avenue plan. The Oregonian and Oregon Journal both gave it editorial support saying that the project would provide much needed employment, revive assessed values, beautify the river front and move traffic. Completed in 1948, the Front Avenue project took still more parishioners' houses for the building of Harbor Drive. (Harbor Drive was removed in the late 70's).

The most substantial shock to the demographics of St. Michael's parish was urban renewal, not just one, but two projects. Proposed in 1958 and approved by the voters, urban renewal resulted in the demolition of many blocks of houses and other buildings in a large area just across Fourth Avenue from the church. What had been a neighborhood of modest homes, small businesses, churches and synagogues was totally removed and supplanted by upscale high rise apartments, condominiums and office buildings. More parishioners left the neighborhood. In an interview in March 1973 Father Orso-Manzonetta, discussing the slowness of the drive for funds to restore the church lamented, "In the old days this area was known as Little Italy. There was a close alliance between all people. Then urban renewal came and moved everybody out. We are not getting the funds we need because all the old time Italians are gone. That monstrous planning commission could have done a better job - they just drove all of the old Italians out of here." The destruction of homes through governmental action continued into the mid- 1960's with the building of 1-405 Freeway and into the early 70's with the expansion of Portland State University through another urban renewal project. Indeed, in May of this year (1994) Portland State has announced its intentions again to enlarge its boundaries.

With all of this the character of the parish changed. In 1960 the Archbishop merged St. Lawrence parish, which had been torn down by urban renewal, into St. Michael's. While still nominally an Italian national parish, St. Michael's became a territorial parish as well, serving a dual role. The composition of its congregation soon changed. Italians became a minority of the parishioners, and a small minority at that. In 1980 Father Aldo estimated that Italian parishioners comprised only 20, a figure that prevails today. Members of the parish now live in all parts of the Portland area. Parishioners represent 38 ZIP codes and include students from Portland State, residents of apartments and condominiums in the neighborhood, street people, professional and business persons as well as suburban residents. "Temporary parishioners" consist of downtown workers who attend noonday Mass during the week and guests from all over the country who are staying in downtown hotels. In 1992 the Sentinel described St. Michael's parish as "... a cosmopolitan one, perhaps the most cosmopolitan in the city, a busy, diverse world reflecting the city around it."
Dario Raschio recalled in 2005: “I went to school at St. Michael’s a whole eight years; 1929 was when I graduated. All our family baptisms and weddings were in St. Michael’s. St. Mary’s was across the street. The Blanchet Institute was for boys. St. Lawrence also had a school. We went to church every morning at 8am and had mass, then we went to school. Across the street from the St. Michael’s was a fire station [on Fourth Avenue]. As kids, we used to get kind of chummy with the firemen. And across from St. Michael’s on Fifth was a huge mansion with stables. At funerals, Italians who weren’t religious would stand around the fire hydrant on the corner, but wouldn’t come into the church.”

The Josiah Failing School

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Josiah Failing School was primarily known as an immigrant school, as it was centered in South Portland where as many as a dozen languages were spoken. Up to half of the children at Failing School were Jewish during the first years of the century, and approximately 20 percent were Italian. Other ethnic groups came from Asia and Europe.

The school faced the immediate problem of serving students of approximately twenty-three nationalities. Up to half of the children at Failing School were Jewish during the first years of the century, and approximately 20 percent were Italian. Other ethnic groups came from Asia and Europe. Most of them could speak little or no English. To resolve this problem, Failing School maintained a large, un-graded classroom where students of different ages, who had received some education in Russia, Italy or elsewhere but did not speak sufficient English could be taught. When a student was sufficient in English, they were placed in the grade most appropriate. Sometimes they went directly into high school from the un-graded class. This program was started almost ten years before instruction in the English language was mandatory in any Portland Public School.

Upon graduation from the school, most of the students went on to Lincoln High School, where many made their first real contact with the "outside" world. A sense of brotherhood pervaded the Failing School. There were World Citizenship Programs where children of all nationalities would present programs with songs, dances, and skits from their native lands. Owen Joseph Card said: "In the main, this district is composed of families in the low income group. There is a general distribution of nationalities representing the Irish, Germans, Italians, Filipinos, Chinese, Syrians and Negroes. In religion. Catholic, Protestants, and Jews are represented. The Failing School District has been called by some educators and social workers ‘the little United Nations of Portland.’"

Two early principals of the school universally celebrated were Washington Irving Pratt and Fanny Porter. To encourage frugality, the school maintained a bank for the students. Cards would be punched to indicate the amount deposited, and Miss Porter would have a student take the collected funds down to the "real" bank where an account was kept. A night school was also established for adults which provided an eighth grade certificate and helped prepare the immigrants for citizenship exams. Miss Fannie Porter is well remembered as a loving, but strict,
influence on many young lives. There are countless stories by former students about Miss Fannie Porter and her effect on their lives. It’s said that at her funeral over 8,000 people showed up to pay their respects.

In 1915, an article appeared on the front page of the Portland News. “My mother had Levin’s Fish Market,” Moe Levin explained. “Once I was supposed to deliver a live carp to somebody before school.” The ten pound carp was to be delivered to Mrs. Buchwach. Her son also went to Failing so Moe decided to deliver it to him at school. “I knew I would be late, so I brought the carp to school and hid it in the cloakroom. When somebody discovered it, I held it up by the eyes. Fanny Porter knocked over a library table trying to get to me.” Moe explained to her that the problem was caused by her own “no tardy” rule. Moe also recalled that even “fighters like Billie Ryan, Scottie Cohen and Bennie Peltz were all afraid of her.”

The unity and understanding fostered there remained alive for those who attended Failing School and was celebrated annually at the Failing School Picnic, held on March 17th each year, which drew a large crowd of alumni. Many who grew up in old South Portland speak reverently of Miss Fannie Porter, the principal of Failing School, and their teachers, including Miss Porter’s sister, Kate. According to Besse Harris: We were very attached to our teachers at Failing School. Miss Porter, our principal, was just like a second mother to all of us. Life was very close and very sincere, and teachers and students were very devoted to each other.

"Miss Porter was a large woman," recalls Maurice Sussman, "in some ways she reminded you of Mrs. Roosevelt." Sussman went on to extol Miss Porter and her sister, Kate, for their dedication to educating their students. To reach the school, they had to come from Oregon City on the inter-urban streetcar and then transfer to the South Portland streetcar; in bad weather they would take a taxi the entire distance at great expense. Sussman recalls Miss Porter standing in the rain under her umbrella, never missing a game when Failing played Shattuck or Holman or Ladd, no matter what the sport. She was strict with students and demanded their best, but they loved her because they sensed that she cared deeply about them.

Jacob Weinstein, later to become a nationally recognized rabbi in Chicago, paid this tribute to Fannie Porter in 1920:

Those of us of foreign birth who came under the guidance of Miss Porter must feel particularly grateful to her. She did not make the mistake of many American teachers who conceive Americanism as a completely formulated doctrine which is to be hammered into the minds of their students to the exclusion of all else. Miss Porter early recognized that the best Americanism is the most harmonious combination of the foreign elements of which it is composed. She knew that every foreign-born child possessed some trait that it would be to the best advantage of this country to maintain and develop.

Graduation was an important event. Maurice Sussman recalls that all of the parents would be invited to the ceremony:
The class sat down and the parents were behind ... all immigrant parents; to them graduation from school meant so much. What Miss Porter did was have every child called and as they walked up, she would say something about that child, something good, what they did, what they could do, what she expected of them and she never lacked for words. She was just marvelous and it made the parents feel good. I've never seen it done; they never did it in high school, nor in college, but she did it for every child and I think it meant so much, and these things I remember to this day.

A significant number of Jewish children also attended Shattuck School in the block bounded by Broadway and Park avenues and College and Jackson streets, a bit to the north and west of the immigrant district. When families became established and were doing better economically, they often moved six or eight blocks northwest in search of better housing and a sense of upward mobility. Some Jews of German background had long lived in the Park Blocks area, and the B'nai B'rith Building was nearby. By 1920, 35 percent of Shattuck School children were Jewish.

Upon graduation from elementary school, most of the South Portland immigrant students went to Lincoln High School, where many made their first real contact with the "outside" world. Jack Hecht recalls:

At Lincoln High School, I personally discovered that there was a whole other world. In those days, Lincoln High School was like a melting pot of Portland. You had the kids from South Portland, you had some very wealthy children from the Heights families, from Lake Oswego, from Dunthorpe. ...I was invited to their homes. I saw how, so to speak, the other half lived.... You were accepted as an equal because you were all the same age.... Many of the friends I had in grammar school were still my friends in high school, but a lot of Jewish kids from upper South Portland, the Park Street crowd that went to Shattuck... became friends of mine ...

[Lowenstein, p. 115-7]

The South Portland Library

In 1913, a small library book deposit was established in SW Portland at an unknown site, probably in the corner of a post office, church or store. These early book deposits typically received two boxes of books each year. Shortly thereafter, SW Portland’s first branch, the South Portland Branch Library, opened its doors to the public on December 13, 1913. It stood on the corner of First Avenue and Hooker Street on land leased from the School Board, the former site of the original Failing School. The contractor was O. Tillison who built it for a bid of $968, not including heating and plumbing. No architect is mentioned in the archives, so the contractor may have furnished the plans. To accommodate the needs of the immigrants, the library in addition to the usual collection of books in English, books and periodicals in German, Italian and the Yiddish languages were also housed in the library. Because of immigrant interest, it was a very busy place and the only branch library open on Sundays. According to the annual report of 1915: "To attract the foreigners to the libraries is quite as important as the work with the children and the schools, for to many of these new Americans..."
the Library takes the place of school, and often the shy and bewildered man or woman will venture into the small library when he would be overawed by a larger and finer building. The greater part of the foreign population of the city lives in South Portland, though there are many foreign readers at Brooklyn and Lents and scattering numbers in other localities. In addition to the demand for books in the various European tongues there are frequent calls for books written in simple English yet mature enough to hold the interest of a grown person, and such books are not easy to find. A list of books of this description based upon the criticism and comments of the foreign readers is in process of compilation at the South Portland Branch."

By 1918, due to the extensive use of the library by the people in the "new citizen district", the need for a new building arose. To meet that need a small but beautiful Carnegie library was constructed a block away on the former Lair Hill property. The books were moved in 1921 to the new location with local children forming a line to pass books, shelf by shelf, from the old building to their new library up the street.

South Portland Carnegie Library facade
Transportation

It’s tempting to say that because of transportation improvements alone, western civilization discovered that the world was round- and began to explore it. Certainly, America itself was discovered, explored, conquered and developed through increasingly powerful mobility. Wind, water, fire and steam all played a part in mobilizing the wheels of the industrial revolution. In the nineteenth century, transportation systems became an obsession of the industrialized world. And it wasn’t long until transportation improvements grew into clever monopolies and commercial empires. Countless inventions and road improvements developed as the age of iron gave way to the age of oil. Many of the “improvements”, in fact, weren’t.

In the beginning, Portland was planned with small blocks of 200 feet square and sixty foot wide streets. “Though in some ways Portland's appearance was pleasing, it had one feature which incited criticism and ridicule: stumps in its streets. A visitor in 1847 noted that 'The trees are cut down where the streets have been surveyed, but the stumps are left.' He also observed that the forest came right down to Second Street, though there were ‘two or three small cabins under the big trees on Third Street.‘” [Snyder] It wasn’t long, of course, before the trees were cut as building expanded westward. But stumps remained in many of the streets for several years. The stumps were painted white to help prevent accidents at night. Proprietors of rival town sites claimed Portland had more stumps than people and gave it the derisive nickname ‘Little Stumptown.’

The first road out of Portland was a primitive wagon road to Oregon City. And there was a twisting pathway delineated by Thomas Brown, up a creek (now Burnside street) to the Tualatin Valley in 1846. As Eugene Snyder says: "It was simply a pair of ruts winding through the forest. The route went westward from the head of Washington Street, crossed Tanner Creek near Lownsdale's tannery, ascended the hill through present Washington Park, and then followed the ravine in which Bumside and Barnes Roads now run. It was 12 tortuous miles by this route from Portland's waterfront to the Tualatin Valley. However, difficult though this road was, it was adequate to draw to Portland some of the farmers' trade that had previously gone to Oregon City. A description of what travel was like on the "Pettygrove Road" is contained in a diary of Mrs. Elisabeth Geer, a pioneer settler in "Yam Hill" County, who traveled over it in February 1848. She and her family came to Oregon in a wagon pulled by oxen, but they all had to walk and help the oxen from Portland to the Tualatin Plains because the wagon was in mud up to its wheel hubs. There was no surfacing on the oozy forest bed, and they trudged only nine miles that first day, having started at sunrise." Three years later, Daniel Lownsdale opened an alternate route past his tannery, up Tanner Creek. It became the Plank Road where wagon axles sank up to their hubs in mud and entire sections of plank were constantly washed out of gulleys.

In South Portland, much of the traffic movement still traces the few pre-existing Indian trails. William Johnson built his cabin at the intersection of several important Indian trails. One went east to Mount Hood, another north to “The
Clearing”; one went west over the hills and one went south to California. Thousands of commuters on Highway 26, Barbur and Macadam still trace those prehistoric pathways. It has always been difficult to develop roads, sidewalks, train and streetcar routes because the South Portland topology is pinched by the river and the mountains and was diced up by deep ravines. The greatest challenge though lay in crossing over the fifty mile long Tualatin Mountains, also called the Scappoose Hills. It took six years for the six mile “Great Plank Road” to be completed from Jefferson Street over the Sylvan Pass to the Tualatin Valley. Patton Road was also carved over the hills, some saying it was easier to move wagons and livestock there than through the deep mud of the Plank Road. John Slavin built his own road to the Hillsdale area. Taylor’s Ferry also crossed over the hills to the Tualatin Valley from the little town of Fulton. Large trestles were built over major ravines at First and Fourth Streets. With time, wagons gave way to trains and trains were replaced with automobiles. These developments parallel the growth of America. Soon after World War II, trains were becoming obsolete and all of America was on the road in privately owned cars. Today more than 200 million cars in America guzzle 11 percent of the world’s daily oil output. In the 125 years that South Portland developed, from roughly 1880 to now, the world has consumed 125 trillion gallons of oil. An equal amount will be consumed by 2040 [from a speech by David J. O’Reilly, chief executive of Chevron, February 2005]

Interestingly in the 1890s, the bicycle, a recent invention, became very popular not only as an entertaining diversion, but as a popular method of travel to and from work. Thus with the invention of chain drives and pneumatic tires, the comical hobby horse, a bike without pedals, became obsolete. As bicyclers sped down the roads, they became known as “scorchers”. Soon, hundreds of bicycles swarmed over the streets of Portland. A proposal at the time called for bicycle paths between the street and sidewalk. And the first bicycle path in Portland opened in 1896, following the Macadam Road to the roadside inn called the “White House”, in the same year that the United Wheelmen's Association was organized. Within three years, the number of bicycles sold in Portland had more than doubled to 5000. Ken Harding remembered that twenty years later, as a kid, he rode his bike everywhere. “You could ride your bike to McCormick Pier and just lay it down and walk up on the deck of a ship and watch them hoist things up.”

**Portland and Willamette Valley Railroad**

The right-of-way for the Jefferson Street Branch was originally assembled by William Reid in 1885-1887, as the Portland and Willamette Valley Railroad. The line, which was even then controlled by the Southern Pacific Railroad, began operations in July of 1887. Its northern terminus was the Jefferson Street Depot, a site wrested from public ownership after two state legislative battles and as many Oregon Supreme Court decisions. The railroad's first board of directors included local businessmen William S. Ladd, Simeon Reed, C.H. Lewis, and Aaron Meier.
Opening the railroad had a major impact on the development of Southwest Portland. Initially fourteen trains a day operated between Portland and Lake Oswego, and the railroad became the main transportation link for developing residential communities along the route. Its passenger service remained profitable through 1914, when the line was electrified. In 1920, passenger service hit its peak with Southern Pacific running sixty-four "Red Electrics" to and from Portland each day. Operations were cut back in 1924, and by the end of the decade passenger service was halted altogether.

Freight service continued in the Macadam Corridor until 1983. In August of 1984, the Interstate Commerce Commission granted Southern Pacific permission to abandon the branch. In November of that same year, the Portland Friends of the Greenway, a non-profit corporation, was asked to assist seven governmental entities acquire the line. Those entities included the cities of Portland and Lake Oswego, Multnomah and Clackamas counties, Metro, Tri-Met and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The Corridor contains between 30 and 35 acres of land and easements. Its northern terminus is now under the Marquam Bridge at Moody Street. It extends south, along the Willamette River, 6.05 miles to where it joins Southern Pacific's Tillamook Branch just north of Lake Oswego. Between the two points, it passes through the South Portland Industrial District, Johns Landing, four city parks, a 1,400 foot tunnel and the residential areas of Dunthorpe and Elk Rock.

[Ernie Munch]

**Fourth Avenue Train**

The early railway lines through South Portland became important transportation routes to the south and west of the city. Shorter routes over the hills existed for wagons at the plank road of 1850 (Canyon Road), Patton Road, Slavin Road and Taylor's Ferry. But a westbound train line would need to be built, going south to Stephen’s Creek, with fill dirt or trestles to cross several
ravines, including the especially large Marquam Gulch, before heading west to cross the summit into the Tualatin Valley near the headwaters of Fanno Creek. Only then could a train enter and cross the Tualatin Valley, passing through Beaverton and Hillsboro to Forest Grove with another spur going to Newberg and McMinnville.

Thus, in the spring of 1868, a franchise was granted by the legislature to Joseph Gaston and the Oregon Central Railroad began construction on a rail line to connect the downtown wharves to the rich wheat fields west of the city in the Tualatin Valley. It was begun only one day before construction began on an ambitious East Side railroad. On the morning of Wednesday, April 15, the board of directors of the West Side Company gathered at the head of Fourth Street in Caruthers’ Addition, with a large crowd of citizens. And on the very next day, ground was broken on the east side in an open field about three fourths of a mile from the Stark Street ferry landing and about five hundred yards from the east bank of the river. Flags were flying and a procession marched to the spot with the mayor and councilmen present.

One hundred men were working on the west side, but the work was impeded by rain and the necessity of blasting out rock, filling in gullies, and building bridges. It was more practical to bridge some of the gullies like the massive Marquam Gulch since there was not enough fill dirt immediately available. By June 22 about ten miles of railroad had been completed. Suddenly, in the fall, work was suspended, and though hopes were entertained that it might be revived in the spring, nothing was done. The company became discouraged and sold out to Ben Holladay on July 2, 1870. Construction resumed. The road was completed to Cornelius in December of 1871 and a regular train service was inaugurated between Portland and Hillsboro. Construction on the road continued until it reached St. Joseph, near McMinnville, in November of 1872. [Percy Maddux, City on the Willamette, pages 60-1]

Meanwhile, the first rail link to San Francisco, which had been proposed by Ben Holladay in 1868, was serving the Valley by 1872 when it reached Roseburg, finally arrived in San Francisco in 1887. The first transcontinental rail line arrived in Portland in 1883. In the following years, local lines were constructed to the coast, across the interior, and throughout the Valley. By the turn of the century, the state was fully integrated by railroad.

Portland’s Union Station, built in 1893, became the vital hub of a mature railroad system for more than 60 years. At its height, 74 trains arrived and departed daily. In 1944, it was used by more than 4.8 million passengers. The last of the grand passenger trains was replaced by the airline inspired Amtrak in 1971.

The Fourth Avenue Train, established South Portland’s reputation as a transportation corridor. Because this line was without competition, it was very lucrative and a higher rate was charged to ship to California than anywhere else in Oregon. For years, the city had tried to persuade Southern Pacific to remove their tracks from Fourth Avenue. The line was originally designed for general traffic, but was being used only for freight. There was strong public pressure to remove the enormous, noisy steam driven freight trains. Even after much political
back biting, Southern Pacific refused. The city claimed that the perpetual franchise was granted not to Southern Pacific, but to the Oregon Central Railroad. Finally in 1906, five years after a lawsuit by the city and city council intervention, Southern Pacific removed the steam locomotives and electrified Fourth Avenue for its Red Electric Line.

**Red Electric Interurban Railway**

While eastside trolleys developed from horse drawn to steam to electricity, the trolleys on the west side went directly from horse drawn to electricity. For nearly 25 years after 1890, electrically powered mass transit grew until by 1915 regional Portland had the third most extensive electric railway system in the United States. It was the golden era for interurban electric railways, providing transportation for commuting to new suburbs and leisurely trips through the Willamette and Tualatin Valleys. The “interurbans” played an important role in Portland’s explosive growth during this time, but most intensely after the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition.

The Red Electric was one of the last interurban electric railways. Because it traveled on the same tracks as freight trains, it had to be compatible with the standard gauge tracks and performance requirements of the existing freight trains with their enormous steam locomotives. Rolling stock of the electric line included various types of cars: coaches seating sixty; combination baggage and passenger cars; baggage, express and mail cars; and elegant “observation” cars. The only serious accident in 15 years of operation in the valley was at Bertha on Sunday, May 9, 1920, when a head-on collision occurred. Nine persons were killed and a large number injured.

Gradually the interurban electric lines were abandoned, beginning in 1929, and only two years after the Southern Pacific Company started a substantial bus line, the Oregon Motor Stages. In the 1930's, the large trestle over Marquam...
Gulch was filled in, homes were removed and the upper portion filled and leveled by dozens of WPA workers to create the two levels of today’s Duniway Park. In 1976 several old homes on the south side were demolished and the Metro YMCA was built on the edge of the track in the park.

**First Trolley in the West**

In April of 1871, Portland’s population was 9,800. Most of the development was along the waterfront where the streets were still primarily dirt, or more often mud, and sidewalks were wood. The city council received a proposal from Levi Estes, a partner with D. S. Stimpson in the ownership of the Willamette Sawmills, to build and run street cars with horse power or mule power along the streets on First, Fifth, Burnside, Davis and Washington. On September 12, 1871, his Portland Street Railway Company was granted a twenty-five-year franchise with "the right and privilege to lay down and maintain an iron railroad track or tracks," and provided that Estes or his assigns should "plank, pave or macadamize as the municipal authorities shall direct, that portion of the street or streets along which their railway shall be laid, the whole length of the said railways, between the rails and for a width extending three feet on each side of the track, and keep the same constantly in repair." In laying down or repairing the tracks, no street was to be obstructed for more than a block at a time. The cars were to be "of the most approved construction for the comfort and convenience of passengers, to be drawn by horses or mules and not otherwise," with a rate of speed of not more than eight miles an hour. Should the speed of eight miles an hour be exceeded, the company would be liable to a fine of $25. "The rails to be used for the said railway," stated the ordinance, "shall be of good iron and of the most approved pattern now in use for street railroads; the cars shall run at all convenient hours of the day and night, for the accommodation of the public." Obstructing the railroad was made a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of $25 or twenty days in jail or both. Insulting and abusing passengers was made another misdemeanor.

Ben Holladay provided some old rails which had been used by the Oregon & California Railroad. The ties were from Estes' sawmill. And in September the Portland Street Railway was incorporated. The next year the project was completed at a cost of $10,000. At first there was only one car, which had been used in San Francisco and discarded. Passengers began getting on at the end of First Street, dropping their fares in the box, and riding the length of the street. A mule drew the car, which would not hold more than twelve passengers, and made the round trip in an hour. Should the car be going empty one way and encounter a prospective passenger wanting to go in the other direction, the driver would just as soon turn around and go the way the desired fare wanted; but, of course, the car on the track could not be turned around, so the mule had to be unhitched at one end and hitched up at the other end. This went on for a number of years and then Estes was able to procure more cars. Ultimately he had eleven cars and thirty-five horses. ... [Percy Maddux, p.95-7.]

In 1883, two new horse car companies were formed to serve a city of 22,000. The Transcontinental Street Railway Company began at the end of that
year, expanding over the next few years to 30 cars with 110 horses and operating over 14 miles of track.

Horsecars were extremely successful. Developed in 1858, they were inexpensive and track was easy to lay, they moved smoothly on rails, they averaged six miles an hour and stopped frequently. Resulting development along them was a precursor of the highway strip with notable differences: vehicular traffic remained light and accessible, communities stayed coherent and sociable. They did hog the center of the road and left “horse biscuits.”

The construction of Portland’s first horsecar railway encouraged the commercial growth and rapid development of South Portland. When completed, the horse drawn car line ran from NW Glisan Street in Portland’s elegant northwest residential district, through the city’s commercial core, and along First Avenue ending at SW Gibbs Street. (Another account says the streetcar ran along First Avenue from Fulton to Grant, then went up Grant Street to Third Avenue, turned on Third and proceeded back to the center of town.)

In the 1880s, Frank Julian-Sprague—who had worked for Thomas Edison— invented the overhead line for an “electric streetcar”. His device was called a “troller” because of its similarity to fishing, hence “trolley”. By the turn of the century, 90 percent of American streetcars were using his patents. On January 26, 1889, the Metropolitan Railway Company was incorporated by Henry Pittock and others. The first electric line, begun in October of 1888 ran west to the top of the hill at SW Harrison Street, and was extended south in 1889 to Hamilton Street and then to Fulton Park opening to traffic on New Year’s Day in 1890. Almost twenty years after the first horse drawn trolley, electricity finally replaced animal power completely. Today there are few signs of the tram. Steel rails and cobblestones are sometimes dug up by street repair crews. A few of the old Corbett commercial buildings still remain at the end of the old streetcar line near Hamilton Street. And Corbett Avenue still splits into two streets south of Virginia, the western one for the tram.
The tram provided residents of the area with a convenient means of transportation to and from the city. But it also signaled the demise of the horse and cart junk peddlers from South Portland. Along the tram route, a wide variety of indigenous shops and institutions flourished. Dry goods, fish and drug stores, kosher meat markets, churches, synagogues and schools were all located along the street car line, forming the social and economic core of the new community.

Before 1889, Portland had very poor transportation into the suburbs, even those within the city limits. Many people preferred walking because they were disgusted with the slow horse drawn streetcars. With the coming of electric lines, operating at costs of a third to a half less than that of horse car lines, more people used the street railway; and with better service, suburban real estate began to increase in value. The objection that poles and wires of electric trolley cars would be unsightly was countered by The Oregonian response that a tired horse pulling a car uphill was a good deal more unsightly. And the new electric cars could go as fast as twenty-five miles an hour.

Streetcars were a vital part of Portland's economic and social life until the mid twentieth century when the automobile took over the roads completely. It is unfortunate that, unlike highways, streetcar companies received little government support. Ken Harding recalls that it cost four cents to ride as a kid. “At that time, little kids could go on the “trackless trolley” without any concerns. After a ballgame in NW Portland, there would be ten streetcars waiting outside. Even churches could “charter” a streetcar for special events.”

Fifty years after their disappearance, streetcars and rail (“light rail”) has returned to Portland. Beginning in 2004, the first of the new streetcars again followed a route running from northwest to southwest Portland. Ironically, as these new lines appear, old iron tracks, wooden ties and cobblestones are found and dug up. All ten of the new streetcars have been manufactured by Inekon in the Czech Republic and imported to Portland. In 2005, US Congress approved $4 million for the Oregon Iron Works to build a local prototype licensed by Inekon...
which could make the Oregon Iron Works the only US manufacturer of streetcars.

Age of the Automobile

In Portland, it all began when a strange sight appeared on the streets in 1898; it was a “Locomobile” which Henry Wemme, an immigrant from Germany, had shipped across the country by rail from Newton, Massachusetts. This first automobile frightened so many horses that there were numerous runaways. Roadways then were rough, so much so that it required an entire day for motorists to caravan from Portland to Gresham and back. Seven years later in 1905, there were 218 automobiles in Oregon, forty of which were in Portland. By 1908, there were 30 car dealerships. In 1920 there were over 103,000 cars in Oregon, one for every eight people. The Model T coupe cost $290 in 1927, $55 less than in 1916. And by 1929, there were more cars and trucks registered in Multnomah County alone than in the entire state at the beginning of the decade.

Until 1935, all automobile traffic south of Marquam Gulch moved along on Corbett or Macadam. But in that year, it was finally decided that the rail line for the Red Electric on the western edge of the community would be abandoned and replaced by a major thoroughfare. As a result, the right of way for the old Fourth Avenue train bed was paved, becoming Barbur Boulevard or US Highway 99 West. The west approach to the Ross Island Bridge was also modified at that time to accommodate higher levels of automobile traffic.

“In the early years of motoring, hardly anyone understood the automobile’s potential for devastation—not just of the landscape, or the air, but of culture in general. … A civilization completely dependent on cars, as ours is now, was not inevitable. The automobile and the electric streetcar were invented and made commercially viable at roughly the same time: the period from 1890 to 1915. … A basic formula of traffic engineering states that one lane of limited-access highway can accommodate 2500 cars per hour, while one lane of light rail can accommodate 40,000 passengers per hour. … But perhaps the greatest cost to the public was the degradation of urban life caused by enticing the middle class
to make their homes outside of town.” [James Howard Kunstler] Auto, tire and petroleum companies all conspired to develop a greater automotive dependence, especially General Motors. In 1925, GM acquired the Yellow Coach Company, beginning a systematic campaign to remove streetcar lines throughout the US. In 1932, GM formed the United Cities Mobile Transit Corporation to convert streetcar lines to buses. It was dissolved in 1935 after the American Transit Association censured it for trying to dismantle Portland’s, electric trolley lines. “General Motors’ ultimate goal was to replace public transportation with private transportation, meaning the car, and in this they triumphed.” [Kunstler] In the 1950s, the Rose City Traction Company which was Portland’s largest privately owned bus line, became insolvent.

The initial alteration to South Portland’s physical character by the auto forced considerable social changes. Streetcars were slow and predictable, because of cars, the streets became dangerous; children could not play as they had in the past. Noise pollution was an additional concern. But the most serious problem facing South Portland was commercial. Because residents could travel more easily to other areas of the city by car, they began spending their time and money outside of the South Portland neighborhood. This development damaged the highly social pedestrian culture which defined South Portland as a true community.

In the years following World War I, immigrant families that had originally arrived penniless, found themselves financially solvent. Fruit vendors now owned wholesale markets, and junk peddlers developed the salvage business. Immigrants also recognized that their new English speaking skills eased their transition into American middle and upper-class society. Consequently, residents began to move out of South Portland, the Lair Hill and Corbett neighborhoods to classier subdivisions found in the Irvington or Laurelhurst neighborhoods of northeast Portland. Soon, the only members of the original South Portland community that remained were older Jews and Italians or shopkeepers who could not afford to change their location.

In South Portland, confusing or conflicting plans have been common. There have been two park-like proposals of similar vision. The first was by John Olmstead, one of the two sons of Frederick Law Olmstead, all of them influential American landscape designers, who realized Portland’s potential as a scenic city, proposing among other things a parkway above the city which became Terwilliger Boulevard. The second vision was called the Bennett Plan which outlined a vast system of parks including the shores of the river and Ross Island itself.

In 1943, the New York City Park Commissioner, Robert Moses, “America’s #1 public works pioneer”, was hired by William Bowes, an ambitious Portland city commissioner for $100,000. Moses visited Portland for a week and his staff of 12 stayed for two months. They created a comprehensive “Portland Improvement Plan” that would cost $60 million for breathtaking changes. He proposed a new civic center, neighborhood schools and of course a modern highway system similar to his vast projects in New York City and across the nation where his highways obliterated the existing communities. (It is interesting to note that
Robert Moses didn’t drive, and that in the period from 1945 to 1960, agencies controlled by Moses spent $4.5 billion, none of it on mass transit.) Moses essentially reorganized existing plans by the Oregon Department of Transportation for freeways into a larger central city plan. Voters rejected his plans for demolishing 20 blocks downtown as well as the Union Station, but accepted a new sewer system and developing Front Avenue into the West Coast highway corridor. His proposal served as a mandate to rip out a commercial and residential swath for the Interstate Highway, 99-W, along the river and up through South Portland along Front Avenue and Harbor Drive. This created the new Harbor Drive and Front Avenue, a controlled access highway system 4 to 6 lanes wide that destroyed the integrated and efficient grid system of the city. It made Front Avenue into a “short cut” for outer Southwest Portland, cutting across the neighborhood from Barbur Blvd to the Steel Bridge. It offered a Los Angeles style interchange at the west end of the Ross Island Bridge which further cut up the area. “...Moses liked to ignore the more unpleasant newly discovered facts. Among the most crucial of these was the principle of traffic generation, the mathematical rule that any highway built to alleviate congestion on an earlier existing road, would only succeed in generating a larger aggregate amount of traffic for all roads. This rule was proven time and again with every one of Robert Mose’s bridges and highways.” [Kunstler] The river itself and portions of South Portland became isolated and dysfunctional. Ironically, many of the arterials, tunnels and freeways proposed by Moses were constructed, but they were under-built and inadequate from the start.

The overall result was that houses, businesses, warehouses and iron front buildings were destroyed- and the streetcar line removed. The area’s social and functional core was irreparably damaged, the river became divorced from civic life- and old South Portland was split in half by nonstop traffic, no longer a contiguous neighborhood. The separate identities of the five communities that had previously gathered under the umbrella of South Portland now emerged as distinct neighborhoods that were eventually differentiated in the public mind.

In 1949, the Front and Harbor Drive extension was constructed and the west end of the Ross Island Bridge was again modified to accommodate the constant increase of automobiles. At the west end of the bridge, a simple intersection tee with a traffic circle marked by a kiosk in the center of Corbett Avenue was replaced by a freeway cloverleaf that consumed three entire blocks and further isolated portions of the neighborhood with non-stop traffic.

In 1956, under the guise of national security, Congress approved the massive Interstate Highway Act which called for 41,000 miles of new expressways. The federal government would pay for 90 percent and the states for 10 percent. It was the largest public works project in the history of the world. Toward the end of that decade, the Baldock Freeway (I-5) was constructed through the neighborhood over Multnomah and Willamette Streets. This development removed thirty blocks of housing and parkland between Woods and Lowell Streets. It decimated the population of the area by one third and severed all access to the river. In spite of that, South Portland continued to have an integrated relationship with downtown through the street grid that was
uninterrupted from northwest Portland to Hamilton Street in the south. But finally, in the early 1960s, a large trench was excavated around the west side of the city for the creation of I-405, a major ring freeway that physically isolated South Portland from downtown. The Interstate Highway Act was a success. “The cities, of course, went completely to hell. The superhighways not only drained them of their few remaining taxpaying residents, but in many cases the new beltways became physical barriers…” [Kunstler]

By 1976, it was recognized that I-5 had in fact replaced 99-W as the Interstate highway. Portions of 99-W were dismantled, including Harbor Drive which was finally removed to build a park along the river. The transit mall downtown was completed. In 1978, the South Portland Circulation Study was initiated to study and resolve this shift in traffic and land use. Inspired by the Mount Hood Freeway Project, which drew attention to the west side of the river, it was the next logical step south after the dismantling of Front/Harbor Drive. Thoughtfully conceived, it proposed viable solutions for many of the traffic problems in South Portland. But before the project could move forward, a group of about 250 people notably including Lloyd Keefe, an ex-planning director for the city met in a school cafeteria and killed the project “until the Terwilliger exchange at I-5 could be built.” But lack of funding tabled the study for almost twenty years, until 1996 when funds were allocated to re-open it. In 2003, an aerial tram was proposed by OHSU to solve transportation problems for their own expansion plans. It will glide over the traffic confusion in South Portland to the South Waterfront development of high rise buildings that are trapped between the river and I-5. “Plus sa change, plus c’est la meme chose.” The area still suffers from massive and unresolved traffic problems, particularly at the Ross Island Bridgehead, along Highway 26 and Macadam Avenue. Ironically, where William Johnson’s log cabin once stood on a dirt trail, now tens of thousands of cars and trucks pass over the site of his simple cabin. And today, a neighborhood only eight blocks wide is diced up with up to three dozen lanes of moving traffic and another dozen lanes for parking.

In the beginning throughout America, most highways generally followed the routes of old trails and cities were gridded into 400 foot square blocks with alleys. Portland on the other hand was gridded into short, 200 foot blocks without alleys. All streets ran parallel or at right angles to the riverfront at “The Clearing”. The streets were dirt and virtually impassable in wet weather. Sometimes logs, called a “corduroy road”, or planks, a plank road, would fill over deep mud holes or were used to improve sidewalks. Stumps along Front Street were whitewashed so that people would not run into them in the dark. In 1865, wood and asphalt “Nicholson pavement” that Mark Twain compared to cheese was laid on Front and First Streets. Cobblestones or “Belgian building blocks” were used for paving as early as 1872. They were often placed between trolley car tracks to give traction for the horse drawn cars. These cobblestones have been used for ship ballast for much of the late 19th and early 20th centuries by empty grain ships arriving from Europe. As the ships were filled with wheat and other grains, the ballast stones were left in port. Ships later pumped sea water in and out of bilge compartments for ballast. By 1890, Belgian basalt blocks, quarried near St.
Helens, were being laid on some of the streets. It was because of the streetcars that a viable and even enviable system of mass-transportation developed. The system was so successful in fact that in the 1920s, a quarter of a million Portlanders were riding streetcars daily. And by 1940, there were over 40 trains a day passing through Portland’s Union Station with regular service to the coast and towns throughout the state.

But the most important invention to reshape America’s neighborhoods—especially including South Portland—was the automobile. Gasoline powered vehicles completely changed the concept of city, and South Portland was not alone as it began to experience a systematic physical transformation brought on by the auto’s rising popularity. Social life was drastically altered. The people of South Portland no longer needed to walk to a friend's home, nor stroll to the corner store, or take a streetcar downtown. Little by little families abandoned the dense urban neighborhood for spacious and modern suburbs. The urban core began to deteriorate badly.

In terms of regional transportation though, siting Portland in the beginning at “The Clearing” on the Willamette River's west side was an unsolvable problem. It placed the core of the city inside of a geographic triangle of hills and river that hems West Portland in on all sides. Access to the east and north of town required ferries or bridges. And access to the south and west of town required passes or tunnels through the Tualatin Mountains. The east side of the river, with its glacier smoothed terrain, was blocked on the north and west sides by rivers. Thus Portland became, informally, two towns with confusing twisted roads on the west side and predictable straight streets on the east side. Today, there are still only a few roads out of the west side; in rush hour, lines of cars snake along the old road beds: Canyon Road, Barbur and Macadam. On the east side, there is a five mile line to cross the Columbia River.

In the fifties and sixties, Portland city planners began to vigorously endorse the concept of freeway systems, further reducing the housing stock and livability of South Portland. The Banfield Freeway on the east side was the first, built in 1955. The George P. Baldock Memorial Freeway was built in Southwest Portland in 1962. For it, dozens of acres of housing, business and open land was cleared. Much of the Terwilliger Playground and all of Old Ironsides Park were lost. South Portland was for a third time divided by non-stop traffic and access to the river was curtailed. The north Portland Minnesota Freeway, I-84, was completed in 1965, I-205 in 1983, and the Sunset Highway, OR 26, after decades of work is never finished. Ironically all work on the Sunset Highway is to the west and east of South Portland; ODOT and PDOT will not commit themselves to resolving the tangle of lanes, streets and ramps that ensnarl traffic in the city core.

Throughout the twentieth century, the automobile became and remained the main symbol of progress and prosperity for individuals, families and the nation as a whole. By the end of that century though, the infrastructure of the city, including sophisticated and efficient mass transportation- and many architectural assets- became liabilities and were eliminated. "Portland planners were hostages to the automobile between 1920 and 1940," Carl Abbott said, “and the working
definition of their job changed from urban design to traffic engineering." [From Frozen Music, p 182] Louis Mumford wrote in 1961 in The City in History:

"Currently the most popular and effective means of destroying a city, is the introduction of multiple-lane expressways, especially elevated ones, into the central core. . . . Thus the bombs that devastated the City of London in the Blitz did no more damage than the unrestricted planning of expressways and parking lots are now doing every day, abetted by a national highways program planned on the same assumptions of mono-transportation from 'door to door'."

After visiting Portland, Pulitzer Prize-winning architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable wrote in the Oregonian, July 12, 1970: "The automobile is the destroyer everywhere. In Portland, the cohesive and intimately scaled core city is being decimated for parking lots and parking garages." By 1972, more than half of downtown Portland was surrendered to the automobile. As more roadways were built, the area was sliced into long thin north and south ribbons. It became increasingly difficult for traffic to cross east and west. This problem remains unaddressed by traffic planners reluctant to take on the challenge. Although many millions of dollars have been spent for several decades on Highway 26 to the east and west, nothing has been done where it drives through the heart of South Portland scattering onto two lane local streets with confusing logic. Traffic backs up for blocks. In the late 1800s, the expansion of the downtown street grid created a dynamic traffic pattern for South Portland to develop and grow. In the mid 1900s, the logic of the grid was broken by super block developments, freeways and ramps. This approach to traffic planning created a new kind of city; a city whose cultural and economic infrastructure was sufficiently destroyed so that one could simply drive through it, rather than to it. "The deficiencies of the American urban freeway are immediately apparent. It is designed solely from the vantage of the traffic engineer. It is monofunctional... No other activity can go on at its margins... When it defines urban spaces, it does so only in a crude and disruptive way, creating 'Chinese walls' of noise, danger, and gloom that cut off neighborhoods from each other." [Kunstler] And the individual freedom suggested by the first automobile became an ironic prison for thousands of commuters during rush hour, for according to Kunstler, anyone who commutes for a half hour in each direction spends three and a half weeks sitting in their car.

So it is that today commuters pass through the old South Portland neighborhood like countless ghosts from another world. The area has become a place where one can get lost in the circular or dead-ended pockets of frayed and feeble neighborhood fragments. It has become impossible to travel east or west more than two or three blocks without major highway blockages. And even the highways tangle together as they wrestle and compete for their access to bridges and connections. This hopeless tangle of traffic has become a planning nightmare. And with the beginning of the 21st century, rather than confronting the chaos, an expensive aerial tram has been proposed to "fly" over the confusion for a dozen blocks. Without touching the neighborhood physically, it is claimed that it does not impact it. And yet, by not serving the inhabitants, it simply adds one
more layer to a transportation tangle that seems to defeat itself, taking traffic congestion to the skies.

And yet after being diced up by millions of cars, a shift back to an attractive and livable South Portland has begun. Portions of major highways like 99W have been dismantled and replaced with parkland. The streetcar has even returned, its shiny tracks following a path from NW Portland to South Portland, much as the first horse drawn one did. Bicycles are again popular. And the OHSU aerial tram floats quietly over the city.
Macadam Road and South Along the River

Macadam Avenue is perhaps the oldest road in Multnomah County and became the first road west of the Mississippi River to be paved with "macadam". It was named for John Loudon. MacAdam, a Scottish engineer of the late eighteenth century. MacAdam devised a way to drain water from the sub-soil by laying down larger stones first and then filling with progressively smaller stones to a smooth finish.

Before the roadway along the flood plain of the Willamette River was built, it had been an Indian trail used by both natives and trappers, tracing the natural topography along the river's edge. The south end, where Willamette Park is now, had been an Indian meeting ground for centuries, perhaps in part because it was easy to wade across the river there in late summer. William Johnson built Portland’s first cabin toward the north end along the path near the current intersection of SW Macadam and Curry Street where several Indian trails branched, one crossing the river and leading to Mt. Hood.
During the region's early expansion, most commerce was carried via the Willamette River. Problems in navigation, however, necessitated the improvement of the foot trail into a wagon tract. The first major improvements were made during the years 1845-46, and 1848-49, a period when the town of Milwaukie rivaled Portland for regional trade. The north-south trail was soon improved to serve as a wagon track for early land claim settlers like James Terwilliger and William Torrance. Terwilliger was directly south of Caruthers on the river. At the far south, beyond the city limits of Portland lay the site of William and Mary Jane Torrance's 1850 donation land claim which encompassed what later became known as Riverwood, Riverdale, Palatine Hill and part of Dunthorpe. Torrance had built the Taylor's Ferry road from the Tualatin River to the Macadam Road with Lot Whitcomb, founder of Milwaukie. Taylor's Ferry Road then connected the east side of the Willamette by ferry at Sellwood with the Tualatin Plains and Military Road. In 1852, the road was surveyed and made part of the territorial system. In the same year, John A. Taylor who had come from New York in that same year at the age of 27, began a ferry across the Tualatin River [near to where 99W crosses the river]. This improvement was linked to the wagon road by Taylor's Ferry Road which was at that time "but a mirky tract". At the intersection of these two roads, Captain Cushing opened the Red House Tavern. Other structures found along the wagon tract at that time included the Stephens, Terwilliger, Fitz-Henry and Caruthers' residences, and the first State penitentiary at the north end. Initially the road was built either as a corduroy (log) or a plank road.

In 1862, a charter was granted to the Portland and Milwaukie Macadamized Road Company to establish a toll gate. The road was graded, straightened and hard-surfaced, or macadamized, at a cost of about $70,000. The first toll gate was installed below the State's prison where Macadam and Front Street joined. A second toll gate was erected near the southern end of Macadam, at the foot of Palatine Hi11, where Macadam curved left towards the Willamette River. In 1866, Macadam Road was declared the best in the State. Another account claims that the macadam paving began in 1853 for a toll road and was completed in 1858.

Profits from the toll gate were minimal and the undertaking proved to be a non-paying investment. Some of the reasons for its failure were that the town of Milwaukie went into a decline, river transportation improved, and a road had been established from East Portland towards Milwaukie along the east bank of the river.

Additionally, a petition was submitted to the Multnomah County Court requesting a public road running parallel to Macadam. Under these circumstances, the Portland and Milwaukie Road Company decided to sell out to the County. In 1879, after extensive negotiations, the promoters finally received $5,000 for their interests.

In 1887, the Portland and Willamette Valley Railroad, under the control of the Southern Pacific, opened its line along the west bank of the Willamette River, paralleling Macadam Avenue. Author Rudyard Kipling recorded this
impression of Macadam Avenue in 1892 when he traveled south from Portland in order to go Salmon fishing at the Clackamas River.

"Half a mile from this City of fifty thousand souls [Portland], we struck (and this must be taken literally) a plank-road that would have been a disgrace to an Irish Village.

"Then six miles of Macadamized road showed us that the team could move. A railway ran between us and the banks of the Willamette, and another above us through the mountains. All the land was dotted with small townships and the roads were full of farmers in their town wagons, with bunches of tow-haired, boggle-eyed urchins sitting in the hay behind."

[Rudyard Kipling. American Notes 1899-1900, Travels in 1889-1893]

The road originally led to the west terminus of the Sellwood ferry where one could cross the river and proceed to Milwaukie; one could instead linger at Rosie’s, a blue collar roadhouse, or travel further south on the west side to the infamous roadhouse at Military Road called the White House. By the mid-1870’s, Macadam’s name gradually changed to the White House Road. It was said the paved roadway offered dangerous temptations to the sporting set by providing an unofficial race track for clients of the roadhouses which lay just outside of the city. A three-seated stage, with storage for hand baggage only, made a daily trip on “McAdam Road” between Portland and Oswego in the late 1860s. Oswego was the site, in 1867, of the first iron foundry west of the Rocky Mountains where over an acre of old growth Douglas fir trees were cut daily to feed the fires of the smelter at Sucker Creek.

In 1901, the decision was made to widen Macadam Avenue to an 80 foot right-of-way from Sheridan Street to White House. Evidently, this was a project undertaken jointly by Multnomah County and the Riverside Driving Association, since it is recorded that the Association compensated property owners for some relocation damages. On June 27, 1904, the White House caught fire. The structure burned to the ground and was never rebuilt. Interest in Macadam declined thereafter and the roadway fell into disrepair.

By the middle of the 1980s, there were eleven train stations between Portland and Oswego. The Portland and Willamette Valley Railway made fourteen trips each day along that route. Five of the stops served the little settlements of Riverwood, Riverdale, Rivera and Elk Rock.

The second generation of Portland wealth built the Dunthorpe area. Several hundred acres of land to the south and west sides of Riverview Cemetery had been bought as iron ore speculation by William S. Ladd and Simeon Reed. Ladd’s son, William S., platted 125 acres in 1916 to become upper Dunthorpe. His company, the Ladd Estate Company controlled the lower area of Dunthorpe as well. In 1909, the Riverwood and Abernathy Heights were platted by Henry Ladd Corbett. A stately French chateau was built by Hamilton Corbett. Not far away, Peter Kerr, a grain merchant, spent two years to build a Scottish baronial mansion (now known as the Bishop’s Close) with its Olmstead designed garden. Soon his neighbors included his brother, Thomas Kerr, and C. Hunt Lewis and Faber Lewis, sons of the grocery magnate Cicero Lewis. William M. Ladd finally completed his own 16 acre estate in Dunthorpe. He also imposed
restrictions to secure an exclusive surrounding district with covenants that prohibited swine and goats, persons of African or Mongolian descent; there was to be no selling of liquor, no advertising signs and no house less than $3,000. But the finest estate of them all was Fir Acres. It was developed for Lloyd Frank, a partner in the Meier and Frank Department Store. This 64 acre estate was terraced around an Elizabethan tudor centerpiece called Palatine Manor and completed in 1924. It cost $1.3 million at the time. Many of the houses in the Dunthorpe area had been designed by Portland’s most prominent architects including A.E. Doyle, Wade Pipes, Ellis Lawrence and Herman Brookman. And although there has been much infill, the mystique of wealth still adheres to the area.

Macadam Avenue was improved in progressive segments from 1910 to 1929. Improvements (noted from north to south) began from Grover to Lowell in 1910, Lowell to Hamilton in 1914, Hamilton to Dakota in 1911, curbs were added from Dakota to Taylor’s Ferry Road in 1914 and Pavement in 1927. Macadam from Taylors Ferry Road to the Sellwood Bridge was improved in 1929, and from the Sellwood Bridge south in 1929.

During this period, the Sellwood Bridge was erected (1925) and the land adjacent to the street began to develop with industrial and commercial uses. The State Highway Division, in 1937, agreed to take over the maintenance of the road as a State highway. In 1955, the west approach to the Sellwood Bridge was improved with ramps.

On September 27, 1964, the Oregon State Highway Division held a hearing on a proposal to reconstruct Macadam Avenue as a four lane road with a 4 foot divider. The intersection with Taylors Ferry Road was stressed as a trouble spot which should be redesigned. In 1965, the OSHD began acquisition and clearance of land in this area and undertook the preliminary design of a grade-separated interchange. However, because of a lack of funds, no construction was undertaken. In September of 1973, a Macadam Corridor Task Force on Transportation was appointed by the mayor to evaluate the transportation needs and related problems along Macadam Avenue, and to make specific recommendations.

On February 2, 1977, the federal government approved a City request for $40,000 in preliminary engineering funds for three signals along Macadam Avenue at Nebraska, Boundary, and Virginia.

In June of the same year, the federal government approved a Multnomah County request for $32,000 for the preliminary engineering of safety improvements to the west end of the Sellwood Bridge.

At about the same time, Portland City Council adopted the Arterial Streets Classification Policy which designated Macadam Avenue a Major City Traffic Street, a Regional and Major City Transit Street, and a Boulevard. The Policy also designated the existing Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way as a Regional Transit way and located a bicycle and pedestrian pathway adjacent to the Willamette River.. In 1977, $2.5 million was allocated for the Macadam Avenue project and modifications to the west approach to the Ross Island Bridge.
The railroad tracks along the west side of the river remain in place and are used for an antique excursion trolley during the summer. Old streetcars travel for seven miles to the town of Lake Oswego with spectacular views of the river and through a tunnel under the Bishop’s Close. An effort to extend public transportation along this route has been met with intense opposition from residents. This resistance is a far cry from the insightful interests of the original investors who realized the advantages of public rail transit into the city. For almost a century, automobiles have eclipsed other modes of transportation. But the petroleum age sputters toward its end and both old and new ideas rise from the dust.

Road Houses: White House and Red House

At Riverwood, where Macadam Road ended was the imposing and opulent “White House”. It was built for $17,000 in 1886 to overlook the river from high above (where SW Military Road and Riverwood Road now meet, almost directly across the river from Milwaukee). Originally called “White House Bob’s” for its first flamboyant proprietor who made it popular by advertising that “the lid was off—any sort of game might be had, and no policemen were around to cramp anyone’s style.” The building was painted a dazzling white. In 1885, the Multnomah Driving Association was organized for the purpose of repairing and sprinkling the road. Macadam Avenue became popular as a course for sport and pleasure driving. The White House also continued to grow in popularity. H. D. Leonard, Portland pioneer financier, gas and utility developer and partner of John Green, who was one of the incorporators of the Macadam Road Company, became interested in the roadhouse. He bought out White House Bob in 1886, moved the roadhouse across the road, and improved and added to it. When the renovations were completed, he had one of the finest hosteties on the Pacific Coast. He called it the Riverside Hotel but its popular name continued to be the White House. In the late 1882's and 90's, the White House and its night life reached the height of its popularity.

The location was outside of the moral confines of the city and was known as the glamorous roadhouse of Portland’s Gay Nineties “where the sporting blood of early Portland came for amusement and where the daughters of neighboring landowners were not allowed to enter by their fathers’ stern commands”. It offered a great, high building with a long flight of steps for those
who came to it by riverboat. It also had an imposing drive on the west side for those who arrived by carriage on Macadam Road. In fact, the stretch of Macadam leading south from Fulton Park and the Riverview Cemetery was known as the "White House Road". The White House was famous for gambling facilities, trap shooting, superior food, liquor and other pursuits. But its attraction was primarily for horse racing for it had an impressive half mile race track ringed with poplar trees. The dashing gentlemen of Portland who owned fast horses would drive them out to the race track on the road. And after a day of racing or trapshooting, they would return to the city with caution thrown to the wind, and tear along the White House Road to Fulton to finish their wagers. A wooden marker at each mile post gave the horsemen a measure as they raced home. The fate of this landmark was chronicled in the Oregonian of June 27, 1904.

The White House was transformed into a heap of charred ruins yesterday. The fire had little or no opposition and was blamed on a defective flue. Many years ago, as many as 25, fashionable Portland was wont to repair there in midday for the races that were held in the old race track adjacent to the hotel. It has since held its attraction to visitors for its location on the banks of the river amid natural surroundings.

The evening visitors had not commenced to arrive when fire broke out a few minutes before 9 o'clock. Two young men, who were washing the dust of travel from their parched throats, first saw it and notified the manager of the house, John Barry. The force, composed of a brace of Chinese cooks, one barkeeper, one porter and two roustabouts, manned fire extinguishers and tried nobly til driven down by the heat.

Their attention was then turned to saving the fixtures and stock of liquor, cigarettes and viands of the larder. They had plenty of assistance. A motly throng of railroad laborers ran from their camp, carried out cases of beer, champagne and other beverages. In about 20 minutes the whole railroad camp was drunk. No alarm was given. Dozen of spectators went out in launches, autos and traps.

A new building called "The Riverside" was built on the site of the White House, but it also burned down.

That same year, county commissioners said they would not help care for the road. The Oregonian of April 16, 1904 stated that the Riverside Driving Association had carried on this work for 25 years, "men who have fought tooth and nail in an effort to give the City of Portland a driveway have lost heart and will do nothing until the road is put in repair; the only driveway in or near the city will be impossible on account of dust." Citizens stated that they felt the county commissioners should widen the road and consider buying horses (that were to be discarded by the fire department) to be used to haul a sprinkler, and that they would make an effort to have the chain gang level up the White House Road. The Riverside Driving Association dwelt on the fact that the dust kicked up "is ever in the eyes and teeth of those who follow." [Mary Goodall] Just south of the infamous White House site is the staid mansion and gardens of the Peter Kerr estate which were designed by John Olmstead.
Another roadhouse at the south end of Fulton, was the heavily patronized “Red House,” in a rambling and less elegant frame building. It had a beer garden, dance pavilion and playground for picnicking. All told, the south end of Portland was well equipped for gambling and “high life.” A counterpoint to the fast life offered on Macadam Avenue was the many funeral processions bound for Riverview Cemetery, just south of Fulton.

In 1887, the Portland and Willamette Valley Railroad’s west line opened parallel to Macadam Avenue. A year later, the formation of the Fulton Park Real Estate Development Company promoted the hill above Fulton as a suburb.

Within a few years, between 1889 and 1891, ten street car companies were formed in Portland which, at the time, formed the largest city railway in the west. One, the Metropolitan Railway Company, ran a line from NW Second and Glisan, along Corbett Street and Taylor’s Ferry to Riverview Cemetery. Ten years after the financial panic of 1893, the first electric line began operation on the east side, running from Portland to Oregon City. The Sellwood Ferry was inaugurated in 1905, the same year as the immensely successful Lewis and Clark Exposition. The entire city was thriving and suburbs were growing so fast that concern was voiced that there were no more names for the new streets. The big lumber mills on both sides of the river employed hundreds. By World War I, Macadam Avenue was run down. And finally, after twenty years of use, the ferry was replaced by the long awaited Sellwood Bridge in 1925.

**Bridges**

Congruent with road improvements, the voters of 1923 approved local bond measures for the construction of two fixed span bridges: $1.6 million for the Ross Island Bridge and $350,000 for the Sellwood Bridge. At the same time, the Burnside Bridge was to be replaced. These projects were rife with corruption, collusion and scandal that lined pockets and rocked the city government. In 1924, the entire board of city commissioners was recalled. A new board was more scrupulous, but remained sympathetic to compelling business connections. The Sellwood Bridge was completed in December of 1925 at a cost of $541,637. The Ross Island Bridge opened a year later on December 21, 1926, having cost $1,927,468.

The position of supervising the construction work on the bridges was given to Dr. Gustav Lindenthal, a famous civil engineer from New York. Bids for the construction of the Sellwood Bridge, which was to supplant the Sellwood ferry, were opened in January of 1925. Specifications called for a bridge of steel with concrete piers, 1,917 feet long, not counting the approaches which add about 600 feet. The span would be seventy-five feet above low water, but no draw would be necessary since the bridge was located above deep water navigation. There would be a five-foot sidewalk along one side of the bridge. The Gilpin Construction Company was the winning low bidder. The Sellwood Bridge used materials from the original Burnside Bridge and was constructed on fill material in an area that is geologically unstable. It was built with a continuous truss which requires fewer parts and is cheaper to build than other types of bridges. The resulting narrow bridge with only two lanes and one sidewalk was obsolete by the
time it was finished in December of 1925. It was Portland’s first fixed span bridge as well as the first bridge on the river without trolley tracks. For decades, the west end has continued to sink. A section of the bridge had to be removed and re-built in 1960 after the hillside itself slid several feet toward the bridge. The west end interchange was completely rebuilt in 1980. Since then, ground movement has caused the west end approach girders to crack. In 2004, cracks have been restrained with steel clamps. The weight limit for truck loads has been reduced from 32 tons to 10 tons. The Sellwood Bridge is the only four-span continuous truss highway bridge in Oregon and possibly in the nation.

Work started on the Ross Island Bridge in late spring of that same year, on May 29, 1925. This bridge was twice as long as the Burnside Bridge, doubling its length to 4,000 feet when about 2,000 feet of approaches were added, and have a clearance of 125 feet above low water. High enough that no opening mechanism was needed, the bridge was less expensive and more elegant than many. The Ross Island Bridge directly connected South Portland to the east side and became State Highway 26. Traffic on the west end circled a kiosk placed in the middle of Corbett Avenue merging into the neighborhood’s street system with minimal impact; thus the resulting traffic increase was easily managed by the regular street pattern.
Transformation

Slums, Zoning and Hippies

Home ownership has long been implicit as a favorable and stabilizing policy in America. Before the Depression in the twenties, President Herbert Hoover said that a family that owned a home had “a more wholesome, healthful and happy atmosphere in which to bring up children.” Later, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said boldly that “a nation of homeowners is unconquerable.” The implication of course was that any aspiring and respectable family would want to own a home. Roosevelt also said in 1937 that he saw “one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-fed, ill-clothed” and challenged the nation to do better. Most of the immigrant families in South Portland rented and always dreamed of owning their own house. But there were few homes available for purchase in the city’s old “ghetto” and visions of the suburbs were very appealing. Ironically, the farms of America were being abandoned by families drawn to the cities. The population of farmers in the US in 1940 was 23 percent; by 1980 it had dwindled to 3 percent. [Kunstler]

An exodus prompted by invasive traffic and inappropriate zoning accelerated after World War II, devastating the integrity of South Portland’s residential population. Immigrants gradually moved out of South Portland to more attractive and modern suburbs. Portland’s post-war housing boom lasted through 1948, when the military-industrial economy began to slow. As they left, the area became depressed, and as it became depressed, more people left. Traffic projects accelerated, favoring mobility rather than community livability. Highways balkanized the area into isolated blocks and eroded any desire to settle there for those who wished to live in a stable neighborhood. Because of this deterioration, mostly poor white and some black families lived in South Portland. The neat yards and vegetable gardens that characterized the Corbett/ Lair Hill neighborhood became overgrown: a place of slum landlords, dilapidated buildings and neglected property infested with homeless camps. Lair Hill and Corbett began to look like a twentieth century ghetto.

Map of South Portland Slums. Drawn by Elizabeth Rocchia (ER)
By 1950, South Portland was known as a slum. The immigrant community had been largely replaced by old people and an unassimilated community of Romanish speaking gypsies. The passion was strong for those in power to clean it up, to eradicate “the blight.” It was so strong that by the end of the Twentieth century at least a hundred city blocks had been completely destroyed and rebuilt in and around old South Portland. The area had been “cleansed,” as if a virus had infected the physical past, as if war had been waged, a deathless Dresden. Today only a handful of buildings survive north of Arthur Street: St. Michael’s Church, a few apartments, Mrs. Neushin’s humble house. It has all been replaced with modern high rises without any sense of street life. Portland State University planning policies have drained the vitality from the surrounding old neighborhood, modifying apartments into dormitories deprived of an older community context and without a vibrant university district. East and along the river, a more enlightened project at Riverplace tries to replicate a village context, but in a self conscious and ineffective way. It’s true that over time the city has in many ways grown richer. But at the same time, the city has squandered much of its inheritance--physical and intellectual gifts from energetic and inspired city fathers—an easily forgotten yet irreplaceable presence.

Concurrent with the immigrant Diaspora from South Portland and the growth of modern highways through it, was the application of urban zoning as a developmental planning tool. From it’s beginning, South Portland developed into a mixed use area of homes, cottage industry, small stores and shops with liveries interspersed among homes and apartment buildings. Until the end of World War I, private property was generally protected at which time a planning commission was established. But in 1924, the entire area including Lair Hill, Corbett and Terwilliger was zoned for “commercial and light industrial use”. The resulting industrial bias undermined the area’s residential integrity. The riverfront itself claimed a laissez faire dynamic with no zoning constraints, and in fact with no effective zoning at all until 1959. And so it was that for decades, Portland’s zoning code favored industry and commerce over homes and small businesses. How did this occur? E. Kimbark MacColl explains in The Growth of a City:

Beginning in June 1919, the planning commission spent over four months holding neighborhood zoning meetings throughout Portland. A number of citizen suggestions were incorporated into the final ordinance that was presented to the council in March of 1920. One authorized the planning commission to establish 29 advisory neighborhood associations comprising property owners who would be consulted prior to any planning commission decision affecting a neighborhood's existing zoning classification. It was this provision, more than any of the others, that provoked such heated opposition from the Portland Realty Board and the Citizens Anti-Zoning League. Although neither group ever mentioned the matter publicly, the planning commission's zoning commission informed the city council of the fact on March 17th: "We found most of the [Realty Board] committee... very loath to have the people of any neighborhood be allowed to say whether they wanted to keep stores and apartment houses as well as industries out of their home blocks. ...This right of
neighborhoods to be consulted... is well recognized. ...These regulations resulted from the gravest abuses of unwarranted scattering of such buildings through residence districts."

The Citizens Anti-Zoning League was formed as a front organization for the realty interests. The majority of the Realty Board members opposed the zoning code. But because the opposition did not want to be identified directly with realty interests, and because a few prominent Realty Board leaders like E. B. MacNaughton and Frederick H. Strong favored the code, the anti-zoning group took the initiative in the name of "the small property owners" who, they declared, were being victimized by the code. The facts revealed otherwise. Many of the opponents represented large property owners. In 1920, city planning was a suspect profession, "a long-haired attempt to invade private enterprise." As a result, one of the most highly qualified city planning consultants in the country was discredited by commercial real estate interests that attacked one of the basic principles of the zoning code: The establishment of restricted centers for commercial and industrial purposes. Such a principle was "socialistic and un-American," he charged. Every property owner should be allowed to use his own judgment without the necessity of consulting city government. "No zoning code should reduce the potential value of any property in the city."

The defeated ordinance had provided for eight classes of property use: Two involving residential dwellings, four regulating the location of businesses and public facilities, and two establishing specific districts for factories, warehouses and "noxious industries." An additional provision had established districts with defined height limitations. Had the voters approved the original plan, Portland would have joined New York and St. Louis as the only American cities to have adopted comprehensive zoning codes by 1920.

It was to take four more years before Portland voters would approve a zoning code — a diluted and simplified version of the 1919 plan. In the interim, uncontrolled development proceeded at an increasing pace. Commercial and industrial enterprises invaded residential districts in Rose City Park and Northwest Portland. Sullivan's Gulch became an established industrial zone and Sandy Boulevard exploded with strip development. The area north of Hoyt Street in Northwest Portland lost much of its residential identity to expanding commercial enterprises. All of these developments, together with others in Southeast Portland, proved to be irreversible even after the 1924 code was finally approved. The 1924 zoning code remained in effect for 35 years and was decidedly unfavorable for many neighborhoods.

The code provided for four zones. Zone 1 was restricted to single family residences. It covered 18 percent of the city's area and included all of the wealthier residential districts. Zone 2, covering 41 percent of the city, provided for a heterogeneous mix of lower valued residential properties, multi-family structures and incidental commercial uses. Zone 3,
allotted 26 percent of the city, was designated for commercial and light industrial use. Zone 4, the remaining 10 percent, was unrestricted. When outlining the four zones, the joint committee followed one basic rule: "All streets, upon which main or through streetcar lines were located, were zoned business" or zone 3.

The new ordinance ignored all area, height and density controls, factors which in subsequent years became recognized as essential ingredients of effective zoning legislation. The major consequence of zoning 41 percent of the city's area for possible apartment and commercial use was the gradual blighting of older single family homes. The areas that were to suffer the worst consequences, however, were those adjacent to the Willamette River frontage. Both banks from Sellwood in the south, past the downtown district, and past St. Johns to the northern city limits were zoned either manufacturing or unrestricted. All of South Portland's Lair Hill Park, Corbett and Terwilliger districts to the base of the hills were placed in zone 3. Ross Island and the other islands were zoned unrestricted.

The fraudulent nature of the Realty Board's strongest public attack on the 1919 code — as a detriment to the small property owner — was clearly documented by veteran Commissioner William A. Bowes in 1945. "It was the people of modest means who suffered the most" from the overly permissive 1924 code. "This condition reflected itself in the lowering of property values in many areas and in handicaps in obtaining loans for construction of homes." Bowes cited the effect of overzoning for commercial use along Union Avenue, Sandy Boulevard and SE 82nd Avenue. Many of the commercial establishments that were erected were flimsy and underfinanced. In later years, they would be abandoned or simply allowed to deteriorate while in use, resulting "in the depreciation of adjacent residential property values."

Five years after the 1924 zoning code, the Great Depression hit and the American economy was devastated. Every business, household and individual was effected. The Depression lasted from late October in 1929 to the end of the military buildup at the outbreak of World War II. And although the Depression caused suffering for nearly everyone, it was also remembered as a time of sharing and kindness. Per capita income plunged from $668 in 1929 to $358 in 1933. Hourly wages were low. For example, in 1935 electrical work was paid 75 cents per hour, while loggers earned only 15 cents. Still, many loggers found work, at least until the Tillamook Burn. Workers did not enjoy many benefits; there were no employer health plans, no unemployment compensation. Twelve hour work days without overtime were not objectionable. President Roosevelt initiated programs to stimulate the economy like Work Projects Administration projects that employed many. For instance immigrant Italian stone masons helped construct the stunningly beautiful Columbia Gorge Highway and Timberline Lodge.

Home building had fallen by 95 percent and repairs to existing homes were almost nonexistent. By 1933, half of the home mortgages were technically
in default. To restart housing, Roosevelt created the Federal Housing Administration. It overwhelmingly favored single-family detached homes in the suburbs. And the monthly mortgage payment was usually less than rent for a city apartment. "The American Dream of a cottage... was less a dream than a cruel parody. The place where the dream house stood—a subdivision of many other identical dream houses—was neither the country nor the city. It was noplace. If anything, it combined the worst social elements of the city and country and none of the best elements. As in the real country, everything was spread out and hard to get to without a car. There were no cultural institutions. And yet, like the city, the suburb afforded no escape from other people into nature..." [Kunstler]

In South Portland, more and more people began to move away and it, like many American neighborhoods, fell sway to the pressures of change. As Jews left South Portland, so did Italians. The idea of prosperity coupled with a desire for "The American Way" spurred these families to purchase residences in the "nicer" sections of Portland. The wealthiest of the early immigrant German Jews moved to Portland Heights and Dunthorpe; and later Russian and Polish Jews who rose economically moved to Irvington, Laurelhurst and Westover Terrace. Italians moved to the area in and around Ladd's Addition.

By the mid twentieth century, Lair Hill and Corbett had deteriorated markedly. Many houses had been lost with Robert Moses' expansion of Front Avenue and Ross Island Bridge ramps. And the construction of the interstate freeway over Marquam Bridge further isolated the Lair Hill and Corbett neighborhoods from the waterfront and downtown Portland. South Portland suffered intensely as it lost its integrated character and physical connections.

Slum landlords and low rents began to attract new tenants with novel lifestyles. In the late 1950s, the Café Espresso at Second and Clay became a hub for beatniks, many of whom later morphed into hippies. Nearby, in front of the civic auditorium, was Bud Clark's tavern, the Spatenhaus. Several decades later, Bud Clark became one of Portland’s most colorful mayors. By the mid sixties, the area was attracting college and high school students as well as drop-outs, fostering the hippie movement in Portland. Some of their creative impulses were spent embellishing the run-down buildings in novel ways. The area took on a new and eccentric character.

Emery Ingham created and operated the Psychedelic Supermarket, located at 2735 SW First Avenue. A natural food store called “Nature’s”, opened in the same block at the corner of First and Meade Streets. It later grew into a large grocery chain through the direction of Stan Amy. Lair Hill Park became the center for the “Haight-Ashbury” district of Portland with music, drugs, long hair and free love available to those who wished to “experiment” with a change in consciousness. Teeny-boppers, angels, dealers, honkies, spades and pigs all made their way to the park. But for a moment, idealism and hedonism overpowered politics. During the summers of 1966 and 1967, there were several “Be-ins” in Lair Hill Park. They included acoustic and electric music, some in performance, but more often improvised into jam sessions. Groups that played included the Great Pumpkin, the PH Factor Jug Band, the Tweedy Brothers and
the US Cadenza. Signe Anderson, lead singer for the Jefferson Airplane left the San Francisco rock band for Portland, to live near SW Water and Meade Street.

A progressive-hippie group called Provos became involved at the open air concerts in the park where people of all ages, economic, social and psychological conditions sat in the grass or picnic tables listening to the music and chatting. Kids of all ages played on swings and a small merry-go-round. Small groups openly shared wine, food and marijuana. Some people got high -- and some got burnt. Concurrent with rock concerts in Lair Hill Park, there was acid, grass and free love on the street and be-ins at the Lovejoy Fountain.

James Kunstler in The Geography of Nowhere says: “The Aquarian uproar of the late sixties was largely a reaction to this crisis of cultural values and the sense of doom it induced. A generation came of age and realized with a rude shock that there was something very wrong with the creeping-crud economy they had grown up with… with its tawdry material rewards, its lamebrained notion of the Good Life…” The sixties was a wild and unstable time for everyone involved. It wasn’t long before naivety evolved into wariness. A more serious world spoiled the bacchanal. It took issues as grim as the Vietnam War and as simple as maturity to essentially end the “Summer of Love, 1968.”

There had always been rental housing in the area and as many properties become dilapidated, by the early sixties, mostly low income seniors, some of them black and with families, were living in the area. At least one black family spanning five generations had lived there in the same home since 1915. Chinese and Japanese families also lived in the area. A number of Italians and Russian or Polish Jews still lived there. But by 1976, the area was also a host to slum landlords and high rise speculators. The Corbett area at that time was more than 60% owned by absentee landlords. One of them, Victor Bringle of Carter, Bringle and Associates, owned 55 properties in the area. The A-0 zoning would have permitted profitable high rise, high density apartment with conditional use office construction. A neighborhood plan discussion of three years culminated in Council approval of rezoning twenty blocks to A-1 that maintained the three story height limit of the buildings. Bringle opposed this saying: “As a professional engineer, it is my opinion that they’ve outlived their useful lives.” [Patty Mantia]

Students and low-income artists had been drawn to these run-down buildings which they could fix-up and live in inexpensively in a community of others like themselves. In 1965, houses rented for $45 to $75 per month. But this all ended in the late 1970s after the area was down zoned and speculators sold off their holdings to residents and renovators. Many of these houses sold for $15,000. And some of the residents bought their house. This moment in history is colorfully recorded in Penny Allen’s film: “Property” which documents the efforts of a hippie enclave on SW Corbett Avenue to purchase their crash pads from the slum landlords. Vincent Canby commented wryly in a review: “I suspect, however, that the group’s success in putting its hands on the necessary money and in establishing bank credit says less about the conscience of American capitalists than about the value of having solid, prosperous, middle-class parents if one wants to drop into the 70’s after having dropped out of the 60’s.”
By the last quarter of the Twentieth century, South Portland was one of the lowest owner occupied areas in the city. It was a shambles. All 14 acres of Terwilliger Playground (Corbett to Macadam and north of Bancroft) were lost. The 5 ½ acre Old Ironside Park (west of Macadam and north of Whitaker) disappeared. And yet the destruction continued. Urban Renewal, the construction of I-5, the Marquam Bridge and I-405 fed thousands of vehicles into a highway trough that was once a thriving neighborhood. Portland State University destroyed six to ten blocks of South Portland as it expanded from a trade school for World War II veterans called Vanport College into a major state university. In all, South Portland including Terwilliger and Fulton areas lost over 98 acres to traffic alone.

**Urban Renewal**

In the Depression, it became apparent that many cities in America were aging and falling apart. Portland’s core was also losing its attractiveness. In 1937 the nation’s first public housing program, the Low Rent Public Housing Program, was advocated for “the elimination of substandard and other inadequate housing through the clearance of slums and blighted areas, and the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and suitable living for every American family.” [Franklin Roosevelt, Second Inaugural Address, 1937] The Housing Act of 1949 re-emphasized a national commitment to adequate housing and offered federal funds to municipalities for urban development. A year later, Pittsburgh became the first major city to undertake a modern urban renewal program. During much of the fifties, Portland was in a recession with construction down 40 percent. Hence, federal assistance was an attractive prospect to politicians. In 1951, Oregon became involved in the urban renewal process. Five years later, state and federal governments were given complete control over new highways which were often routed through urban neighborhoods.

At this same time, Americans were gravitating toward the suburbs. A novel attraction became the shopping center. The first one in Portland opened modestly in Hillsdale in 1955. In no time, the mall concept developed an attractive almost romantic quality as stores became showcases and dining a theater to conspicuous consumption. The Hillsdale Center was followed by Eastport Plaza on SE 82nd and the enormous Lloyd Center which opened in 1960. Parking lots surrounded all of them, the latter two accommodating hundreds of cars. The urban core suffered as Meier and Frank opened a major store in Lloyd Center as did Sears and J.K. Gills.

Terry Schrunk was elected mayor in 1956 and campaigned for urban renewal. A year later the Oregonian Legislature approves an urban renewal law. In 1958 Portland voters narrowly approved the creation of the Portland Development Commission (PDC), headed by Ira Keller as chairman and John Kenward as director. Since then, Portland has received funding for 17 major redevelopment projects influenced by three major philosophies. The era of grand projects, often with a sense of urgency, from 1958 to the late sixties. An era through the eighties of preservation efforts and revitalization. And the present era
of public/private partnerships, citizen involvement and post-modern urban planning theory.

After a failed effort to create a two block pilot project on NW Vaughn, South Portland became seen as an ideal location to test the Urban Renewal solution for blight. After years of neglect by both landowners and the city itself, it was run down, run over by modern highways and had run out of the vital immigrant energy that built it. Most of the area was used as essentially low income housing. It had been considered for clearance and redevelopment since 1950. John Kenward called it an old “stopover” neighborhood: “blighted” and “economically isolated.” At the same time, the state highway department ratified a plan for a “foothills freeway” in the same area. Compared to the city as a whole, South Portland had three times the juvenile delinquency, almost as much adult crime and four times the number of welfare cases. [Wollner]

According to a report in 1960 by the Housing and Home Finance Agency of the Urban Renewal Administration, of a population of 969 persons, almost half (441) were over 60 years of age, including 254 persons over 70 years old. 369 were renters and 264 lived in “dilapidated housing with extensive rot, substantial sagging of floors, walls or roof, extensive damage, or never has provided adequate protection against the elements.” 250 had a total annual income of under $1499. 341 were single and 326 lived alone. 389 relied on old age and survivors insurance, welfare payments and pensions. The area was listed as a

Little Russia, First Avenue looking south on Clay Street, c1958.
slum on maps and identified as “infested with gypsies” who were remnants of the Romanish speaking Eastern European immigrants living near the Auditorium in South Portland who refused to assimilate.

Urged by various civic groups and organizations, Portland was ready to renew itself. The City Club for instance, issued a report in 1958 stating that “if Portland is to keep step with the growth of the Pacific area, it must plan not only for industrial development, ... but must also protect against deterioration and stagnation.” Targeted as a potential renewal zone as early as 1952, 109.3 acres between SW Market Street, Harbor Drive, Arthur Street and Fourth Avenue of South Portland were designated the “South Auditorium Project” in 1960. It received 97 percent of its funding from the private sector. And although it was a district that cost the city more in public services than it received in tax revenue, by 1974 the area had added $394 million of assessed property value to the tax rolls. Many residents in the area did not understand the concept of urban renewal. But others did. Organized as the Property Owners Committee, they testified against the plans. They were concerned that eminent domain was unconstitutional and that a fair price was not being paid by PDC. Private and class suits, initiative and referendum efforts were attempted, but failed. Some shop owners hung large signs in their windows accusing the government of destroying the right of private property, of Nazism and Communism. One sign vowed that the owner would not move. Within a year though, the South Portland development became PDC’s initial flagship project.

In 1962 the Bureau of Buildings published a promotional piece called “Meet Creepy Blight”. In it, an ogreish cartoon character proclaimed: “I destroy houses, neighborhoods and cities. I’m not really happy unless I’m tearing down a house or two… They don’t call me “Creepy” for nothing, you know!” [Wollner]

By 1963 all of the land had been cleared. Former residents did not always fare well. Of the 30 percent for which records were kept, all encountered a substantial rent increase. And of the 470 families who moved out of the urban renewal area, 45 percent were relocated into manufacturing zones and 16 percent into commercial areas. 63 percent were relocated into deteriorated or blighted areas. Fifty householders were relocated to locations that, within ten years, became right-of-ways for freeways, forcing a second move.

Originally, Keller believed that public housing should be built on the edges of the district. The city at that time was seeking a location for a sports arena, and several different areas in town were surveyed. The area south of the Civic Auditorium was settled upon and a grant was awarded to survey and study the concept. An assessment determined that the area contained “blight”. The Housing Act of 1954 provided for clearing the area. It was the first use of an “urban renewal” agenda in Portland and long before preservation became a tool for planning. At the time, “Urban Renewal” meant clearing the area of all structures, businesses and residences.
The Housing Act also recommended clearing other “decayed” parts of Portland including several blocks east of Barbur Blvd. near Hamilton and, in NW Portland, the Vaughn Street Project.

Then Joe Dobbins, a used car dealer, initiated a ballot to restrict the location for an arena to the east side. The site of the present Memorial Coliseum was chosen and built upon in 1962. Meanwhile, momentum was underway to clear South Portland at the same time that the east side site was being cleared, the latter angering the black community whose vibrant core on Williams Avenue was later bulldozed as well.

After South Portland was cleared, a new plan for the South Auditorium area advocated industrial development, a large parking lot and the I-405 freeway to be built at SW Market Street. And so it was that Ira Keller who had come to Portland in 1954 to stimulate development became the chairman of a sub-committee on urban renewal. In the summer of 1958, this committee became a new organization called the “Portland Development Commission” (PDC). It was a new agency, created from the “Housing Authority” of World War I and was
headed by Ira Keller with John Kenward as director of its political and administrative forces for systematic planning. An innovative means of financing new developments through bonds called “Sacramento Financing” was renamed as “Tax Incremental Financing”, providing a $2 million levy (perhaps still unspent).

PDC didn’t like the original plan for the area and hired Skidmore, Owens and Merrill for a new plan in 1961. They proposed super blocks in South Portland which would free up 37 of the 83.5 acres otherwise occupied by streets. A PDC brochure from that time titled “Investment Opportunities in Downtown Portland, Oregon states: “The South Auditorium Redevelopment Project has been planned to make the best use of the land in relation to people and functions. Malls and parks keep the entire plan open and attractive. … The entire plan has been designed for maximum and coverage and has been carefully integrated into the total Portland community.” This vision conformed with an ODOT plan for I-405 to be located at its present location rather than the Market and Clay Streets alignment proposed by the planning director.

The project involved purchasing, condemning and bulldozing 83.5 acres or 54 blocks. A project fact sheet describes the project.

REASONS FOR URBAN RENEWAL- Buildings 60 - 80 years old ... over 60 sub-standard ... low assessed valuations . . . high cost of safety and welfare services . . . 57 of 83.5 acres in streets . . . incompatible mixture of commercial, residential and industrial lots

THE URBAN RENEWAL PROCESS- 303 parcels acquired ... 1,575 residents and 232 businesses relocated ... demolition of 382 buildings completed

Project approved by voters of Portland in May, 1958 • • • Portland Development Commission established July 10, 1958 • • • Final Redevelopment Plan endorsed by Portland City Planning Commission on October 9, 1961, approved by Portland City Council on October 18, 1961 and by the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency on December 20, 1961

Site improvements: All utilities to be underground ... major perimeter and interior streets to be widened ... parks and pedestrian malls to be installed

Estimated project cost of $11.5 million to be reduced by amount received from sale of land. Net project cost of between $3.5 million and $4.5 million to be paid 2/3 by Federal government and remaining 1/3 by the City of Portland

SALE OF LAND- Parcel sizes ranging from large superb locks of several acres down to smaller parcels of less than an acre . . . minimum prices to be published when land offered for sale by open competitive bidding on or after February 1, 1962
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT- Apartment housing ultimately for 5,000 to 4,000 persons . . . office and commercial enterprises to provide employment for several thousand workers . . • possible value of new construction up to $60 million to $70 million ... tax return from project area to be around ten times that received from the area before redevelopment

The clearing included homes, businesses, low and mid-rise apartment buildings and religious buildings including five synagogues and a catholic church. Relocation negotiations included moving a brick synagogue which collapsed on the trucks during the move. It turned out that the building was insured and offered favorable financial compensation to the synagogue which was rebuilt on SW Barbur at Gibbs.

While the vibrant Italian and Jewish community of South Portland had largely moved away by the Second World War, some Italians, Chinese, blacks and a number of elderly, more Orthodox Jews stayed. A strong sentimental attachment to the neighborhood remained for many, especially those whose parents or grandparents still lived there and who themselves had grown up in its shtetl environment. For the neighborhood sheltered many of the city's ethnic groups, craftsmen and little delicatessens in rundown hotels, apartments, commercial blocks and junkyards. To its inhabitants, South Portland was still a tightly-knit, if shabby, island of ethnicity. To Kenward it was a "blighted and economically isolated neighborhood" deserving no better fate than eradication. Some felt that urban renewal improved a deteriorating area. Others, such as Flora Steinberg Rubenstein, spoke for many: “It was a lovely neighborhood. We had everything we needed. There were kosher butcher shops. There were bakeries. There were grocery stores. There was everything here and people were friendly....”

Gidion Bosker and Lena Lencek discuss the logic of demolition in their book, Frozen Music: A History of Portland Architecture. They say that in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Portland's professional planners had not yet warmed to the idea of reweaving the urban fabric from the existing fraying strands. "They took for
granted," Carl Abbott explained, "that neighborhood decline is an inevitable process, the end product of a long slow process of erosion." Like other planners throughout the country, they assumed that this was an irreversible erosion in which inner, residential neighborhoods "naturally give way to institutional and fringe commercial uses as the city grows and demands space for its central functions." By deciding to "clear" the South Auditorium Project area, planners produced a clean slate on which a new architectural and urban vision of the city would be inscribed.

The South Auditorium Urban Renewal Project flattened 54 blocks of South Portland to the ground. South Portland had been quickly and effectively demolished. At least 349 parcels were secured, 1,573 residents including 336 families and 289 business were relocated and 445 building were demolished. Everything that had been there was gone. As the bulldozers left, the area looked like Dresden after the war. The relocation has been compared to the upheaval of Vanport City after the flood in 1948. In South Portland, the “melting pot of America” became more like an incendiary bomb. “Urban Renewal” meant complete eradication of an immigrant community; the infrastructure was not rebuilt; it was utterly replaced. Kunstler says: “The result of Modernism, especially in America, is a crisis of the human habitat: cities ruined by corporate gigantism and abstract renewal schemes, public buildings and public spaces unworthy of human affection… In their effort to promote a liberated and classless society, the Modernists and their successors tried to stamp out history and tradition, and the meanings associated with them... They failed to create a social utopia... Yesterday’s tomorrow turns out to be no future at all.” [The Geography of Nowhere]
The heart of the community no longer existed. It was replaced with super blocks and freeway connections. Only a few fragments of South Portland were left including St. Michael’s Church and the Civic Auditorium (with a modern façade in 1970 covering its older South Portland heart). A block away from the auditorium, the imposing Victorian stone building of St. Mary’s School for Girls was torn down and for decades this block has remained a surface parking lot surrounded by the massive stone foundation wall of the old school.

There are two versions explaining why the demolition stopped at Arthur Street. One is that a group of South Portland residents calling themselves “The Hell Park Association” joined together to fight urban renewal. Intense resistance stopped the demolition at SW Arthur Street in 1968. Later, they met on October 28, 1970 at the Neighborhood House to plan for future protection from wanton development. Another states that in 1971, the City Council voted 4 to 1 to proceed with the South Portland Urban Renewal clearance project. The plans were abandoned when President Richard Nixon cut off urban renewal clearance funds.

By the mid-1960s, the South Auditorium Renewal Project was considered by planners a practical success and perhaps the most innovative urban development scheme in America. Keller, who stood out with his inevidible bow tie and red Cadillac, felt it was his proudest achievement and as he said, “the greatest downtown project in the country.” [Wollner] Once completed, it yielded to the city a tenfold tax return on their investment. It was so successful that In 1965, the Portland City Council approved a 13-block extension (Phase II) of the urban renewal area at the north end of the original project. The California planners of Livingstone and Blainey proposed saving and rehabbing some of the old buildings, but Keller insisted that the buildings go. Ironically, Portland was selected in 1966 as one of 63 cities nationwide for the Model Cities Program which provided federal assistance to improve neighborhoods. Two years earlier, the Auditorium itself was remodeled to look like the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

Across the street from the auditorium were buildings owned by Benjamin Franklin Savings and Loan- where Bud Clark’s Spatenhaus was located. A colonial style building favored by Benjamin Franklin was planned when, at a meeting, Judy Galantha casually suggested a park. A city block was exchanged with the owners and the Forecourt Fountain was built instead. It was a brilliant sequel to the Lovejoy Fountain several blocks to the south. Together, with a convincing and yet subtle irony, they replicated in topographic form the wild Cascadian rocks, rills and streams of the pre-European Northwest.

They were but a part of a larger vision by Lawrence Halprin who had been engaged to develop a landscape plan for the South Auditorium project. The Lovejoy Fountain became an immediate success: attractive, inspiring. It lived up to its name. Many people of all ages were drawn to the site; it seemed the embodiment of love and joy. So much so that a large squad of police swept through, primarily to clear out the hippies that reveled in the cascading waters.

Halprin suggested that at its core, the South Auditorium area offer a linked series of public spaces. The Halprin-designed parks are essentially three linked
garden rooms forming a connecting realm of public space between the buildings there and the central city to the north. From the south to the north, in a flowing sequence of fountains, paths, and plazas, the experience of the Halprin parks in Portland begins at the "Source Fountain", which leads to the Lovejoy Fountain, with forms derived from the high desert, on to Pettergrove Park, with forms derived from meandering valley streams and meadows, and finally to the Forecourt Fountain, which recalls the mountains with its dramatic falls and alpine plantings. They embody Halprin's philosophy that sculptural and landscape forms recognize nature and natural processes as a "driving force" but that the design does not "imitate nature."

In the 1981 Process Architecture: The Sketchbooks of Lawrence Halprin, he writes, "In Portland 1 attempted to do 2 things: The first of these was to develop a long eight block sequence of open spaces, promenades, nodes of plazas & parks with a mix of public space & private space interwoven. Along this progression are a diversity of uses - housing, apartments, shops, restaurants, offices, auditorium. The space is choreographed for movement with nodes for quiet & contemplation, action & inaction, hard & soft, YIN & Yang.

The second basic approach was to bring into the heart of downtown activities which related in a very real way to the environment of the Portland area-the Columbia river, the Cascade mountains, me streams, rivers & mountain meadows. These symbolic elements are very much a part of Portlanders’ psyche- they glory in their natural environment and escape to it as often as possible. But it seemed important to acknowledge the urban character of these places as well as their origins- so the designs deal with the origins of form: the process by which natural form is created. The fountains & plazas are formed to link up with nature’s process not copy her.

Finally these places were for the first time designed to be used to be participatory. Not just to took at -- they say come in not stay off." Ian McHarg described the project this way: "Halprin designed this fabulous creation in Portland where there was such a vitality of water, such a vitality of different spaces-that it became a sinecure for the whole city. I mean, people went to great lengths to go there, they got married in the bloody place: they had celebrations in the place. And so it was always animated with people. He was the first person, worldwide, to provide a plaza worth going to."

Lawrence Halprin's proposal for the Forecourt Fountain was unanimously approved in 1968. The fountain itself was designed by Angela Danadjieva of Halprin's office. Construction began in 1969 and was completed the following year. Upon its dedication on June 23, 1970 it became an instant city landmark and an internationally acclaimed open space. Ada Louise Huxtable, architectural critic for the New York Times, called the fountain "perhaps the greatest open space since the Renaissance." In 1978 the Forecourt Fountain was renamed the Ira C. Keller fountain, in memory of the civic leader and first chairman of the Portland Development Commission (1958 to 1972). Ira Keller was largely responsible for the creation of the South Auditorium Urban Renewal Area and planning for the fountain.
In 1964, Portland State College began development on its 46-acre site. A master plan was required to demonstrate the logic of expanding the University west of the Park Blocks. The Portland State University (PSU) Urban Renewal area was designated in 1966 with plans for and expanded campus and conversion of the park blocks into a pedestrian mall. In the following years, up to a dozen blocks have been razed by Portland State for facility development, not including the addition of three blocks of campus greenspace closed to traffic in the park blocks. In 2004, they bought property near the Ross Island Bridge and proposed to include over 100 acres south of I-405 including the South Portland National Historic District as part of their plan district.

Outside of the South Auditorium Project, private development pressure also assaulted the neighborhood. One slum landlord, Carter, Bringle and Associates, owned 55 buildings south of Arthur Street and was planning to demolish and replace them with low income high rise apartments-- until zoning in the area suddenly changed. Another landlord, Wade Erwin, chose to demolish two houses in a single block in 1977. He was a lawyer and landlord whose office was around the corner in the old Front Avenue Fire Station. One house was the Mayor Riley home at 3322 SW First. The other was around the corner at 15 SW Whitaker and was one of two matching Victorian houses: it was occupied by the third generation of a family. A legal battle was waged by neighbors who then formed a picket line around his office. Finally the Mayor Riley house was moved to a site of the demolished Psychedelic Super Market and Merchants of Warm at First and Meade. The second house near the site of the original Mayor Riley home site was demolished and remains a vacant lot 25 years later.

An ironic counterpoint to the presumptuous agendas of planners in South Portland occurred in Jane Jacobs book, “The Death and Life of Great American Cities”, which was written in 1961. Jacobs, an eminently sensible outsider to urban planners, noticed the deserted streets of a new project in Philadelphia contrasted dramatically with crowded older streets nearby. This perception of urban emptiness is still seen throughout America where modern developments have “organized” the streetscape. The dominant urban planners of that time insisted on bulldozing slums and replacing them with high rises and open space. Jacobs advocated for diversity, density and dynamism. To achieve this, she recommended four basic considerations: 1) A street or district must serve several primary functions. 2) Blocks must be short. 3) Buildings must vary in age, condition and use. 4) Population must be dense. She also discovered that the aesthetically obsessed urban designer in Philadelphia ignored this need for urban vibrancy. “He wasn’t concerned about its attractiveness to people. His notion was totally aesthetic, divorced from everything else.” Jacobs instead called for a joyous urban jumble that crowded people and activities together. “There is a quality even meaner than outright ugliness or disorder, and this meaner quality is the dishonest mask of pretended order, achieved by ignoring or suppressing the real order that is struggling to exist and to be served.” [Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities] A half a century later, Portlanders are drawn to the vibrant street life on NW 23rd and 13th Avenues, SE Hawthorne Boulevard and NE Alberta Street, all models of urban livability. One
might ask why planners for PDC, PSU, OHSU and South Waterfront continue to dance with developers who build glass walls and stone veneers that reflect empty streets. There are complex issues in Portland’s development that remain hidden in South Portland.

In reflection, Flora Steinberg Rubenstein said: “So what did urban renewal do for the average person who only wanted to exist? Nothing. We now have high-rise buildings. Some people consider that a gorgeous sight, but to me it’s an atrocity because no building, no matter how gorgeous or how high it stands, can take the place of people. There are no stores around here. There is absolutely nothing. ... South Portland community life is ... done away with; it's dead.” [Lowenstein, p 216]

**Shipyards**

Commercial shipbuilding began in South Portland in the 1880s when the Portland Ship Yard built river boats. There were several early shipyards near South Portland. Supple-Ballin Ship Building was across the river from where “The Clearing” had been. And the Wolff-Zwicker Shipyard, active during the Spanish-American War era, was north of the huge Inman-Poulson Lumber Company dock and across the river from Caruthers Creek where the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) is now. In World War I, three shipyards were operating “off the spit”, a river bar west of the north end of Ross Island where Caruthers Creek emerged from Marquam Gulch. (This spot later became the site of Zidell Ship Dismantling and the Ross Island Bridge). One, Coast Ship Building Company, built wooden boats. It was incorporated as Heath Shipbuilding in 1916 at the foot of Lincoln Street. Robert Waldt said that “Coast used green timber and in a few years most of their boats sunk or were scrapped. They say some of the ships even sprouted green leaves.” The other two, Columbia River Shipbuilding Company and Willamette Iron and Steel (later called Northwest Steel) built steel ships. Willamette Iron and Steel, begun in 1917, built mostly for foreign owners. After World War I, the shipyards were torn out, and shortly after that the Barde (“bar-day”) Steel Company became the first ship scrap yard in the area. Barde was replaced by Commercial Iron Works, a non-Kaiser shipyard, which played a large role in World War II shipbuilding.

“I ask that every skilled man and woman in America who can work in a shipyard volunteer immediately.” [Admiral Chester Nimitz, 1943] In 1939, just before World War II, there were only 232 shipyard workers in Portland. Because of Admiral Nimitz’s urgent request, shipyard employment rose to over 150,000 by 1943. Five shipyards were operating three shifts, 24 hours a day, building two ships per week for a total of 1,737 vessels in the war effort. It was compared to building two hotels a week with hospitals, barber shops, jails and movie theaters. An entrepreneur, Henry Kaiser, with no experience in shipbuilding in 1940, built seven shipyards on the Pacific coast by the end of the war, and had interests in seven more. Three of them were owned by Henry Kaiser; the Vancouver Shipyard was the largest with twelve ways and built Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) and “baby flat tops (small aircraft carriers); the Oregon Shipyard in North Portland built Liberty ships for convoys, and then Victory ships which were faster;
the Swan Island Shipyard made tankers and fleet oilers for the Navy. There were also two non-Kaiser yards: Willamette Iron and Steel Works in Albina and Commercial Ironworks and Conversion in South Portland below the west end of the Ross Island Bridge.

Beginning in 1941, workers were recruited from around the country and within months, Portland’s population swelled by one third with the addition of about 160,000 migrants. Many worked double shifts, sometimes in two shipyards, building supply ships for the war in record time. Public housing was built for 50,000 people in Vancouver and in Vanport, a town created by the war effort. By the end of the war, thousands had settled in Oregon and Washington to stay. Most significant, was the influx of Negro workers. For although Oregon had been very severe in discouraging any African-American presence before the war, many came to work in the shipyards and stayed. Before 1940, only about 2,000 blacks lived in Oregon. By the end of the war, there were ten times as many.

Shipyard workers created their own mythology with heroes like Rosie, the Riveter; Wendy, the Welder and Stubby Biddlebottom. An underground economy and culture developed as workers Paintings, drawings and photographs celebrated the shipyard energy and workers enjoyed work breaks, meals and off-time events together. They often created jewelry and knives from left over materials. The collective energy was intoxicating and exhausting. Shipyard friendships, rivalries, romances and marriages sustained the high intensity of the workers. High expectations were set by the war department- and then exceeded by the workers high spirits. The noise level was so high that it could be heard as far away as five miles. Many workers developed severe hearing losses as a result of loud hammering and pneumatic chippers in closed spaces. There was tons of asbestos used throughout the ships by insulators who left waste inches deep on the floors to be cleaned up.

Women made significant contributions to the war effort, even as they raised families at home. At least 27 percent of the workers were women. Previous to the war, 41 percent of the women employed had been housewives. In the Vancouver shipyard alone, 20,000 women were at work by 1944. They signed up enthusiastically for strong patriotic reasons- and also because of the high wages of $.88 to $1.58 per hour. At the time, office work paid $70 per month whereas shipyard wages were $230 per month. Many women were recruited for work as welders and in other jobs. Women were especially good for work in small areas and of one of the dirtiest jobs, tank cleaning, 65 percent were women.

Although there were incidents of abuse, the spirits of the women workers was very high and dedicated. There were frequent beauty and popularity contests, including a fashion show of work clothes. A full day at the shipyard combined with the challenge of childcare and housework often until midnight had the effect of cumulative fatigue. Some women worked double shift. Although celebrated in heroic images like “Rosie, the riveter”, women were discouraged from paid work at the end of the war because of a job shortage. Women reluctantly took low paying jobs or dropped out of the work force entirely becoming full time homemakers. But many women had realized their potential in the shipyards in remarkable ways.
The two non-Kaiser shipyards were the Willamette Iron and Steel Works in Albina and Commercial Ironworks and Conversion on the Willamette River below the west end of the Ross Island Bridge. The latter location had been a shipyard for decades. Ships were built there in World War I, but there was little shipbuilding activity in the Depression. During the Second World War it built mostly small aircraft carriers called “baby flat tops” or “jeep carriers” in a lend lease agreement with Russia and England. It was also involved in converting tankers to troop carriers. Although some of the workers lived nearby, many would take streetcars down to Stark Street where they got on busses that would take them to the shipyards.

It all ended in 1945 with the war’s end. Ken Harding remembered that “on VJ Day, one guy left a crane just whirling around and climbed down. Everyone left the shipyards and went downtown to celebrate.” Women went back home. Men found employment. And gradually the shipyards were close or converted to ship repair and dismantling.

After decades of industrial use including ship dismantling and barge construction, Portland was recognized as a “Brownfield Showcase” by the Federal Government (meaning that contaminated soil in Portland merits Federal attention) and the North Macadam area was designated as an Urban Renewal District. There, in 2003, a groundbreaking ceremony initiated the largest economic development in Portland’s history: South Waterfront, a project anchored by the first fully urban aerial tram in the United States.

**Arts and Crafts**

The arts have played a large role in the history of South Portland. There have been two major arts institutions in the area: the Civic Auditorium, Contemporary Crafts. And other centers of culture are nearby at PSU, the Art Museum and the Performing Arts Center. Artists, writers and musicians have long been attracted to the social and architectural ambience of South Portland. Anna B. Crocker, Mark Rothko, LeRoy Setzol, Henk Pander, Liza Jones, Tom Prochaska, Christine Bourdette, Kim Osgood, Eric and Garth Edwards, Penny Allen, have all lived and worked in South Portland. Many more Portland artists have had studios there, notably Tom Hardy and Al Goldsby. The influential Inkling Studio at 3508 SW Corbett Avenue, a cooperative space owned by Liza Jones has been shared by dozens of printmakers. It is housed in the old Martin’s Grocery Store.

The Contemporary Crafts Gallery on Corbett Avenue has long been an arts destination in South Portland. It is noteworthy that perhaps the first gallery to exhibit and sell modern art exclusively was the New Gallery of Contemporary Art. It was a cooperative gallery located in a Victorian house that was a half block north of Duniway Park on SW Fifth Avenue. Norma and Ron Peterson ran it from 1958 to 1962 with an exclusive stable of artists including Lee Kelly, Byron Gardner, Dwane Zoladek and others. It was also the only art gallery in Portland after Louis Bunce’s Kharouba Gallery closed and before Arlene Schnitzer’s Fountain Gallery opened in 1961..
South Portland National Historic District

The South Portland National Historic District is snuggled awkwardly between John Olmstead’s Terwilliger Parkway and Robert Mose’s Front Avenue. This placement reflects the physical, social and emotional dynamics that have created and destroyed South Portland and much of America as well. By 1963, the thriving district of the city known as South Portland had been effectively demolished. By then the area south of the Urban Renewal project and extending to the Sellwood Bridge had lost about 14 acres of housing and parks to transportation developments. And yet just south of the urban renewal project the small and impoverished neighborhoods of Lair Hill and Corbett remained intact. Expected development in the area didn’t happen. Slum landlords held most of the property. One property owner, the company of Carter, Bringle and Associates owned over 55 rental houses. From 1960 to now, few houses have been demolished. A renewed appreciation of the Corbett and Lair Hill area began to grow. The area was down zoned and opportunistic slum landlords gave up their dreams of high-rise, low-income housing. In 1975 the Corbett/Terwilliger/Lair Hill Planning Committee prepared a plan for their neighborhood which had as a primary goal the retention and preservation of the remaining housing, and the plan was approved by the Planning Commission in Fall, 1975. And in 1977 the city created the Lair Hill Historic Conservation District, It was the first formally recognized and protected historic district in Portland. Historic designation sent the message to speculators and residents alike that preservation was an officially supported goal. More important for actual residents of the neighborhood, the designation "dedicated the area to the purpose of a sense of community." Above all, residents wished to recreate the atmosphere of neighborliness that used to characterize the Lair Hill community. It was a dramatic turn of events. Even the hippies bought their rented homes- as portrayed in Penny Allen’s film, “Property”). Houses began to be restored and gentrified. Harbor Drive was closed in 1974 and replaced by Tom MacCall Waterfront Park with a renewed relationship to the river. Macadam Avenue was widened into a boulevard in 1978, and landscaped. Willamette Park was raised ten to fifteen feet with fill from I-405. And John Gray’s ambitious transformation of the B.P John Furniture Factory into John’s Landing brought new life to the area. The city established the first phase of the Greenway Trail.

Most importantly Corbett area residents, observing the positive effects of historic preservation planning in Lair Hill after its designation as a conservation district, wished to reap similar benefits. They proposed that the boundaries for a National Register Historic District be extended to include a fine collection of Queen Anne style workers’ cottages in the Corbett neighborhood. As Corbett and Lair Hill share the same history, their proposal was accepted.

Thus, in 1998 the Lair Hill Historic Conservation District was expanded to become the South Portland National Historic District. It is now celebrated for its cohesive network of working class Victorian houses as one of the oldest settlements in Portland with over one third of the resources in the neighborhood still intact. The real estate market has responded to the attractiveness of the historic architecture by calling the area “Lair Hill”, ironic in that it wasn’t named
after a hill. Finally, in September of 2006, the “Corbett, Terwilliger, Lair Hill Neighborhood Association” (CTLH) voted to change their name to the more inclusive “South Portland Neighborhood Association”.

The period of historical significance for the South Portland National Historic District begins in 1876, and ends in 1926 with the completion of the Ross Island Bridge when the neighborhood began its decline. The modest architecture of the South Portland neighborhood is indicative of the neighborhood's development as a working class immigrant community in the latter decades of the 19th century. The architectural significance of the neighborhood lies in its intact grouping of modest 19th century buildings. The architectural styles of the primary development period are mainly represented by the Queen Anne and Rural Vernacular styles. However, there are also some structures which were built in the Italianate style. These styles were widespread throughout the western United States in the latter part of the 19th century. The Queen Anne and Italianate styles evolved during the Victorian era due to the availability of popular pattern books which created a demand for certain styles. Architects did not play a significant role in the development of the South Portland district since the area was a predominantly working class immigrant neighborhood. The architecture is typical of late 19th century housing in the United States. South Portland represents the oldest intact residential development in the city of Portland.

During the 19th century, advancements in construction technology changed the way houses were built utterly. Balloon frame construction with machine-cut nails and lighter, standardized lumber became the common residential building type. In addition, industrialization allowed for the mass production of building components. This "modem" way of constructing residences was less expensive and allowed even people of modest means to decorate their
homes with spindles and other forms of decorative woodwork. Thus, residents of the South Portland neighborhood who were primarily working class immigrants were able to individualize their homes by choosing the arrangement of decorative elements. Today, that individuality is still evident in the relatively intact collection of Victorian workers’ cottages that distinctively characterize the South Portland Historic District.

The secondary development period includes buildings built in the Bungalow style and the various Early 20th Century American Movement styles. Structures in the Bungalow / Craftsman style are also present in the South Portland Historic District. The popularity of the Bungalow / Craftsman style coincides with the secondary period of development, rising in prominence as an architectural style after about 1905. Bungalows were well regarded as a style due to their efficiency and less expensive building costs when compared to the ornate, irregularly-shaped Queen Anne and Revival style houses of the 1890s. They tended to be small, sometimes containing only two bedrooms and an unfinished second story. They often featured a large number of windows and had a big front porch like their Queen Anne brethren. As a style, Bungalow / Craftsman embodied the ideals of the Progressive movement with its emphasis on a simple lifestyle complemented by an attention to the attributes of nature. For the working class residents of the South Portland area, the cheaper construction costs of residences built in the Bungalow / Craftsman style must have been the overriding appeal. In conclusion, the Bungalow / Craftsman style as evidenced in the South Portland Historic District illustrates the economic concerns of the area’s working class residents and alludes to a shifting cultural mindset about the ideal lifestyle.

In spite of the local and national historic recognition given to South Portland, the appreciation of its cultural and economic significance remains low. For although the city planners lean toward the council of a design commission and seeks historic reviews, there is great pressure from developers for non-compatible projects. A new building on SW Meade, west of Second Avenue, illustrates the ignorance of policy makers in Portland concerning historic resources. This attitude remains consistent with eighty years of generally destructive policies for South Portland neighborhoods. And sadly, most of these policies have not offered the city better results than a real appreciation and restoration of historic resources would have done. Until this changes, it’s difficult to foresee how Portland might take best advantage of this unique resource known as the South Portland National Historic District.

South Waterfront

As the twenty-first century begins, the waterfront of South Portland is developing into a significant district of high rise buildings along the Greenway Trail. Inspired by the modern skyline of Vancouver, B.C., contaminated and essentially vacant industrial sites are becoming spectacular urban homes for
several thousand new residents, bringing the South Waterfront area back to life. There are many benefits to be gained by the Portland Development Commission’s (PDC) largest endeavor in revitalizing the city including insights into urban planning and vision. In the half century since the initial South Auditorium urban renewal project projects, PDC and the City involve the public more fully. But South Waterfront was created with 20th Century ideas that still favor big business over the vastly smaller entrepreneur opportunities by which immigrants first built South Portland in the 19th Century. Modernist ideas are developing a new area devoid of the eclectic character found in older urban concepts. Urban planners remain weak in realizing effective and truly comprehensive master plans. Infrastructure alone simply does not create the greater connected whole that ideal cities possess. As a consequence, South Waterfront will essentially stand alone. It will not integrate into, nor knit the torn fabric of Portland together. And unlike the Pearl District, it will create an island of high rise structures without transitions into the older evolved elements of the city. South Waterfront is especially isolated by a noisy I-5 freeway on one side and a beatific river on the other with few entry points. Without effort, the situation might resemble a gated community. Because of these natural and manmade constraints, only the inhabitants of South Waterfront will be able to affect the situation. Perhaps the spirit of South Portland will prevail and the area will become a true neighborhood that connects with others.

Before design and construction began, PDC claimed that development would not occur without an “anchor project”. Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) offered to build a facility that might even spur a biotech industry in South Waterfront, thus ending four decades of vacant brown fields in the heart of Portland. But OHSU claimed it would not do so without a connecting aerial tram between their new Peter Koehler Pavilion and the hill campus to a new biotech facility by the river which would jump start a small biotech industry there. No alternate plans or routes were acceptable. There were rumors of OHSU abandoning Portland to build a campus in Washington County. The City capitulated. OHSU was the largest employer in Portland. Besides, South Waterfront was a high profile project that defined Portland as a renaissance city. Neighbors to the west were critical of the imposing heights of the proposed residential towers, infrastructure costs and questions of access into South Waterfront- but most of all by the intrusive nature of the aerial tram. For them, the tram violated the spirit, if not the letter, of scenic and historic criteria, it appeared to be an unnecessary commitment for the City, and most of all unnecessarily compromised the livability of South Portland. Because the tram essentially served OHSU, there were questions as to whether it fit mass transportation objectives for the City. To work around these issues, the tram was declared a “utility”. The work proceeded in the face of local opposition. The City even made an unusual, one time, offer to buy the homes of unhappy homeowners for resale.

The aerial tram project quickly became immensely complex and expensive. It was the first aerial tram in the U.S. after the Roosevelt Tram on Staten Island n New York. And it was to become an iconic landmark through a high profile international design competition. Reputations became attached to
the tram’s success. The estimated cost rose from $15 million to $57 million. Still, it was a fraction of the $2 billion cost of the entire South Waterfront project. Tram construction fell behind schedule. And curiously, OHSU decided to build a new hospital building at the upper anchor point of the tram. This necessitated very complex engineering; the upper tower could no longer attach into the hill behind it. Rather, it had to brace itself into the soil and rock below and not move more than an inch at the top, nine stories above. It couldn’t transmit any vibration to surgical operations in the new building to which it connected. At the same time, this upper tower had to resist a million pounds of cable and an additional million pounds of tension --without a backstay. These were unprecedented problems for the experienced Swiss tram builders, Doppelmayr CTEC.

During construction, several issues angered citizens and almost stopped the tram project. The cost skyrocketed, mainly because of a rise in the cost of steel. Design changes compromised the intended iconic impact. And raising the tram cables with numerous street utilities below became complex and expensive. In a frantic, around the clock work schedule, the tram was completed at the end of 2006 and offers awe-inspiring rides.

The tram climbs to the medical school on six cables about 3,300 feet long. At 22 miles per hour, the trip takes only three to four minutes. It is up to 95% energy efficient. The City of Portland is the tram’s owner and regulatory authority. Doppelmayr maintains and operates the tram under contract with OHSU. There are twelve employees who maintain and operate the tram and annual costs of over one and a half million dollars. In two modern silver capsules, the aerial tram can silently float up to eighty people back and forth over the rooftops and grid locked streets. Like the Portlandia sculpture, the tram reflects a bold and imaginative approach to urban development by creating a new icon for the city and notable place marker for South Portland.

Meanwhile, South Waterfront developments have moved even faster than the OHSU anchor building and its tram. Even before the OHSU celebrated the opening of its building and the tram, three residential towers had virtually pre-sold all of the condominiums before completion. And groundbreaking had already begun on several more residential buildings. The biotech revolution for Portland quietly disappeared. Instead OHSU built what they call the Center for Health and Healing. At the celebration of the new building, Peter Koehler, ex-president of OHSU noted that he and Homer Williams, a residential developer, had been discussing a collaboration in South Waterfront for years. South Waterfront has become in effect, an isolated, developer driven modernist infill project. Similarly, OHSU remains a seemingly self interested bastion without close physical and cultural ties to its hosts, the city and South Portland. The aerial tram is a success in that it provides OHSU with a fast, iconic connector to their hill complex. It is also an international attraction with no tourist amenities. The shiny cars float over South Portland- above the snarled traffic- to connect the hill campus with a new campus gateway far below. Once the cradle and grave of ships, South Waterfront is quickly becoming, like the South Auditorium project, Portland’s largest redevelopment success story.
The Future

The history of South Portland sweeps across generations-- seemingly as quick as an eye. From the drift of continents, to a delicate web work of Native trails, to aggressive bulldozers, and finally to the first fully urban aerial tram which floats over an ancient seismic fault, a historic district, the Pan American highway, and down through modern glass towers to a forgotten flood plain. It’s the history of a community that refused to disappear. It’s also a history that reaches into the future-- for its history is still unwinding. With intense pressure from developers, the expansion of the central city, and the growth of two major universities, South Portland’s history is not finished. And still, neighbors live there pleasantly in homes of a bygone age, enjoying the ambience and amiable atmosphere of an old fashioned streetscape from their front porches, sharing potluck dinners, all within easy access to a great city.

Much of the charm of the South Portland National Historic District is more often because of the charm of the streetscape than the charm of the Victorian worker houses. Granted the various styles are pleasant. But their relationship to the street is also an important element. Houses are pedestrian friendly, close to each other and to the street, they have front porches that connect a private inside world with the public street world, there are few “snout house” garages or large yards to separate homes from the street. “The texture of life is mixed, complex, and dense, as a city ought to be, the way all cities used to be before the automobile and curse of Modernist planning.” Kuntsler continues: “It is a living organism based on a web of interdependencies…It expresses itself physically as connectedness… ‘Most important,’ Wendell Berry writes, ‘it must be generally loved and competently cared for by its people, who, individually, identify their own interest with the interest of their neighbors…”

Many homes and businesses have been revitalized by owners who harbor a passion for South Portland. Interiors and exteriors seem to evolve into contemporary environments with dominant or key historic elements retained. This urban neighborhood has also attracted considerable infill projects for small vacant lots. On Whitaker Street near First Avenue for example, a substantial investment was made by an architect/ engineer couple, Bryan and Chris Higgins, who like others, chose to settle in South Portland after renting. They designed and built a remarkable, inherently energy and material efficient “green” house of just over 1000 square feet on a tiny 25 by 50 foot lot of 600 square feet. Their home was later chosen for the “Portland Catalog of Narrow House Designs” as a winning entry in the Portland “Living Smart” home plan competition. It has been featured in the news and in architectural magazines. It fits in well with the Victorian house six feet away. The couple is raising a family there- as are a surprising number of new and young South Portland families.

Clem Ogilby preserves and relocates historic buildings. He realized a creative solution for an infill development that needed to remove several houses in South Portland. One house was moved to another lot next to a local landmark house. Another, a historic mission building was cut in half and moved over the Ross Island Bridge to become a piano recital hall. A third house from 1886 was
also cut in half, moved down to Willamette Park, hoisted by crane onto a floating wood and foam foundation and towed to Multnomah Yacht Moorage. A second story was added, as was a second life to the building as a floating “green” home.

Although significant traffic still isolates areas of South Portland, there are plans to restore lost connections. A pedestrian bridge over I-5 will, for the first time in over fifty years, offer a dignified connection between South Waterfront and the older South Portland neighborhood. And finally, completion of the South Portland Circulation Study will reconnect the traffic-isolated neighborhoods of Lair Hill, Corbett Street and the Failing School area.

In sum, there are five reasons why such vibrant immigrant communities like South Portland did not survive after the Depression. All five reasons led to an internal American Diaspora. 1) Assimilation. As immigrants became more American, the need for a protective ghetto declined and many moved away. This was especially true for the second and third generations of immigrant families. 2) Private transportation. The auto industry accelerated as gasoline engines improved. Highway construction transformed the urban and rural landscape. The integrated economic and social patterns were scattered. 3) Home ownership. Both Hoover and Roosevelt placed an emphasis on home ownership. South Portland was primarily tenant based and home ownership encouraged an exodus to the suburbs. 4) Urban policy. Shifts in land value were reflected in zoning policies that destabilized mixed use neighborhood integrity. In South Portland, the urban renewal program also destroyed the neighborhood physically and resettled its citizens in other parts of the city. 5) De-emulsification. As the economic conditions in immigrant communities changed, many rose in affluence and moved away to “better” neighborhoods. Those in poverty remained, attracting a poor and transient population, and sinking further into ever more decayed tenement conditions. These five elements eroded and destroyed immigrant communities throughout the United States. Thus the process inherent in the American “melting pot” transformed physical communities as well as individual lives. Many immigrant families discovered that “you can’t go home again.” And many didn’t want to... although there was a palpable sense of loss. Repeating Flora Rubenstein: “It was a lovely neighborhood. We had everything we needed. There were kosher butcher shops. There were bakeries. There were grocery stores. There was everything here and people were friendly....”

Aside from the nostalgia, the rich history and the friendly neighbors, what will be the legacy of South Portland? Hopefully, it will be more than simply the calcified bones of an earlier time. In truth, there’s not a lot left of South Portland. Perhaps some of the spirit and innovative energy invested into South Portland can be distilled into a wisdom that is passed on to the future. The restless, phoenix-like nature of America, often self serving, can learn much from the history of communities like South Portland. And perhaps the richest gift from such histories will be nothing more than insight. The insight that we are not alone, that together we can make ourselves wealthier, that quality of life is interdependent, that planning involves a shared future. To realize this, developers and planners need to search for deeper rewards hidden in “the
bottom line”. Most importantly, they must work from an off-site inventory that includes all of the features beyond their ownership and control that can shape their project favorably. Views, the project’s footprint, it’s shadow, building incentives, the streetscape, social and economic vitality, integration with the existing environment. These are interconnecting tools that can magnify the success of their project. In addition, urban planners including neighborhood associations, can proactively seek and involve appropriate developers for specific sites with integrated development in mind. Can history make the future better? Only time will tell.

More than just working together, we ultimately must share the product of our work, for it becomes our world. We must plan and build to that end. In 1831, as Alexis de Tocqueville studied America, he wrote: “individualism at first, only saps the virtues of public life; but in the long run it attacks and destroys all others and is at length absorbed in selfishness.” James Kunstler notes that “we’ll have to give up our fetish for extreme individualism and rediscover public life… rediscover public manners and some notion of the common good… If we can do these things, we may be able to recreate a nation of places worth caring about, places of enduring quality and memorable character… life is short, fraught with uncertainty, and sometimes tragic. We know not where we come from, still less where we are going, and to keep from going crazy while we are here, we want to feel that we truly belong to a specific part of the world.”

In the far distant future, the most significant changes to South Portland -- and our larger home, the planet -- will again be geologic and climactic. Plate tectonics will continue to shuffle the continents around like boats floating in a tub. Seismic movement will possibly carry Southern California north to Alaska in 250 million years as the Pacific Plate slides past the North American Plate along the San Andreas Fault. And climatic shifts will alter the flora and fauna into new environments. Most of our human history is but a splinter of time. What we love of our world today, we must love well, for today will not repeat itself. Even the future itself will become history and history will in time become lost. But the big question is: are we happy in the world as we make it? Therein lies the pursuit.

The history of South Portland remains an unveiling legacy with shifting meanings, much of it unknown. For beneath it all is a restlessness, perhaps it’s the universal element of restlessness: be it seismic tremors, waves of immigrants, tides of commuters, or planners wooing ambitious developers. Or perhaps it’s the paradox of happiness itself—for the harder one chases after it, the harder it is to capture. Countless Americans have shared this bit of land at the south end of Portland, always dreaming, and always in the end, moving on. Perhaps the future of South Portland will be as exciting as its past; perhaps the chase for the American Dream, “the pursuit of happiness”, will ultimately reward its seekers; perhaps it will end where it began-- in places like South Portland.
Cities each have a kind of light,  
A color even,  
Or set of undertones  
Determined by the river or hills  
As well as by the stone  
Of their countless buildings.

I cannot yet recall what city this is  
I’m in.

It must be close to dawn.

From "On Waking in a Room  
And Not Knowing Where One Is"  
by August Klienzahler
South Portland Neighbors

Town of Fulton

By the mid 1850s, a boat landing was established on the Willamette River where a wagon route from the Tualatin Valley farms ended. This became known as Taylor’s Ferry, named for John A. Taylor who came to Oregon by ox-team in 1852 from New York. A ferry crossed the river from the dirt road to the other side where a settlement known as Sellwood developed. Taylor operated a ferry on the Tualatin River which was replaced by a toll bridge. The road ran up the hill from the Willamette River and along Stephen’s Creek on a path now followed by Bertha Boulevard and Capital Highway, finally ending at the Tualatin River ferry.

Along the riverbank, not far from the Fulton boat landing, lay a long, level stretch of land, now Willamette Park. It was here that the Indians camped during the salmon runs while en route from Wappato (or Sauvie) Island on the Columbia River to the Willamette Falls at Oregon City. It became a lively spot several times each year for the Indians. Their numbers grew until residents of Fulton protested the perceived nuisance of thefts, trespassing and disorder. And by World War I, authorities had established a curfew for natives and forbade campsites there. This level ground along the river was later used by National Guard units as a drill field, and even later in the early 1900s, the same spot was a meeting place for an organization called the Sellwood Cadets. Their activities included instruction on the manual of arms, marching and other outdoor projects somewhat similar to Boy Scout programs of later years. Fulton and its ferry were quite active for, across the river on the east side, quite a few workers were employed at the huge East Side Mill and Lumber Company, as well as a woolen
mill, a tannery and numerous other enterprises including the Oaks Amusement Park.

In 1887, nineteen years after the Fourth Avenue trains began running, tracks were laid along the west side of the Willamette River and the Portland & Willamette Valley Railroad, under the control of Henry Villard and the Southern Pacific Railroad, opened its west bank line along the river and the Macadam Road. This train line along the river encouraged further industrialization upon the once fertile flood plain.

The town of Fulton itself was developed by Robert R. Thompson, a very successful ship owner and merchant, who bought 35 acres and built a hotel, post office and other structures near Taylor’s Ferry.

There are two versions for the origin of Fulton’s town name. In one the town was named after a landowner, Thomas Fulton Stevens, who claimed a 634 acre parcel in 1850. (A different account of Steven’s land ownership claims that Daniel Lunt, one of the mates of the vessel Chenamus, took up a land claim south of James Terwilliger, and later sold it to Thomas Stevens.) The second version of Fulton’s name origin states that by 1883 the area had grown substantially and needed a post office. It was a Republican administration year, and one of the local faithful party members received an appointment as postmaster. Thus Robert Riegleman, the first postmaster, had the privilege of naming it. Generally, a nominee would choose his own name, but Riegleman thought the length and spelling of his name would cause confusion, choosing instead the name of a United States senator from Oregon, whom he admired, Charles W. Fulton.

Robert Riegleman was also the first to operate a stage line from Fulton to Portland. He and his wife ran a general store until it was destroyed by fire; it’s said that they kept a busy inn and the family was very involved in civic affairs.

There were a couple of well known roadhouses in the area: the most notorious being the notorious “White House”. But in the town of Fulton itself was the “Red House”, a less elegant, rambling frame building, well equipped for gambling and the high life. It was at the south end of Fulton and was heavily patronized. There was also “Rosie's Park”, located on the block south of Nevada, between Macadam and Virginia Street. It is believed to have been Kleinsorge’s Place before Rosie bought it around 1892. (A 1911 photograph of Virginia Street shows a sign for “Wilhelm's Beer Garden", indicating a later change of name.) Rosie's Park included a roadhouse, beer garden, dance pavilion, playground and picnic area. It became a popular spot for the mill workers, streetcar men, and other workers as well as their families in the 1890’s. But on Macadam Road, the higher class carriage trade went to the White House, high above the river and across from Milwaukie. It was famous for its gambling facilities, horse racing, trap shooting, superior food and liquor. But the workers and trade people went to Rosie’s. Funeral processions to Riverview Cemetery provided a counterpoint to the bustle of daily traffic through Fulton.

Both sides of the river in the late 1800s were largely settled, and shared many similarities. Factories, houseboats and worker’s cottages proliferated. The
area was a natural extension of South Portland with the advantages of the paved Macadam Road, river transportation and a steam train.

One of the first industries in the area was the Jones Lumber Company Steam Sawmill built on three acres of land between Macadam and the river. There are two stories about its origins. One says that the site was purchased in 1860 from James Terwilliger for $500 and a bottle of whiskey. Another that Justus Jones and his son John Halsey Jones sold a mill at Cedar Mill Falls near the present Cedar Mills community in 1869. The Cedar Mill began in 1853 cut lumber using the falls to power an overshot wheel to drive a muley or sash saw. [John Terry. Oregonian, October 22, 2006] The Jones Lumber Company soon became the principal industry in the neighborhood, employing many of the people who lived in nearby homes, including some of James Terwilliger's descendents. It continued functioning until after World War II.

Other smaller businesses developed in the Fulton area. Leech's Foundry and the Webber Brothers' Tannery were both located beside the river in Fulton with the owner's families living nearby. (The 1911 Joseph Webber Residence with its small carriage house remains today at 7006 SW Virginia.) There was a soap factory, and later furniture manufacturing. The Tamler family had a dairy on Nevada Street (where their house still stands). On Nevada Street, tight against the hillside, was Keller's meat market and shop. Although the Keller home and shop are gone, the stone walls of the spring house where the meat was kept remains, hidden in the vines and brush at the base of the hill. The Keller's had come to Fulton in 1880. Their first butcher shop in South Portland was at 3rd Avenue and Lincoln Street, but the cattle were pastured on the Terwilliger hillside until slaughtered and the meat brought to the shop.

The inauguration of the Sellwood Ferry in 1906, was a boon for both Fulton and Sellwood. At that time, big lumber mills, almost facing each other across the river, were employing hundreds of workers. Other industries along the river on the west side included the Multnomah Lumber and Box Company (at Bancroft Street), Oregon Chair Company, Oregon Furniture and Manufacturing Company (both between Richardson and Boundary Streets), and the John Halsey Jones Company (occupying five blocks near Flower Street). Many people lived on both sides of Macadam. Along the river at Miles Place there were two blocks of residential lots and further north, also on the river, there were a nine continuous blocks of residential lots (Carolina Street to Nevada Street). There were also many houseboats on both banks of the river, some of which were used for prostitution. Across the river in Sellwood, red brick electric car barns served as the terminal point for all the Southeast city lines. This created a great demand nearby for homes of the families of streetcar employees.

By the time of the big Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905, the financial Panic of 1893 was hardly remembered and the suburbs of Portland were booming. Portland was enjoying a prosperous era with thousands of visitors to the exposition seeing the northwest for the first time. In 1926, after 20 years of service, the Sellwood Ferry was retired and the long-awaited Sellwood Bridge became the new link across the river. For, in that year, voters passed a bond to build three bridges: Burnside, Ross Island and Sellwood. The $541,637 budgeted
for the Sellwood Bridge was less than one fifth of the total budget. The shortfall was discovered in the midst of a contracting scandal that led to the dismissal of three county commissioners. When completed, the bridge was only 28 feet wide with two lanes and a mere four foot sidewalk on the north side. Today, its structural integrity has weakened markedly. The west end has been slowly sinking for many years as over 30,000 vehicles cross it per day.

Nearby on both sides of the river in the late Nineteenth Century, inexpensive houseboats were built from lumber that was full of knots and rejected by the nearby sawmills. A flood in 1894 washed some of the houseboats up onto the west riverbank where they remained when the floodwaters receded. This became known as the Miles Place colony, home to some fiercely independent folks who enjoy each other and a life focused on the river and changing seasons. Most of the homes are raised up so the rising river can flow beneath when it floods. Since the flood of 1996, more upscale homes are beginning to replace the smaller, old, colorful riverside cottages. This covey of cute little houses on SW Miles Place remain today as the only small scale residential neighborhood directly on the river in the entire city of Portland.

Fulton Park

In the west hills of Portland, there were several places high above the river where speculative landowners superimposed a flat land street grid on the steep hillsides and ridges of the Tualatin Mountains. Unrealistic maps were thus created of imaginary prospects with impossibly regular street grid plans, sidewalks and building sites for the unwary developer. One such overlay on Marquam Hill made a mockery of the purchase of property there, sight unseen, by a railroad company, for their intention was to build a train depot. Another overlay occurred in 1888 when the Pacific Land and Investment Company created Fulton Park: “the largest, best located and most desirable tract ever placed upon the Portland market.” It offered a regular car line service, and a singular lack of bother from vehicular intrusion.
subdivision of Portland. A home overlooking Fulton became very desirable. Many prominent families had their homes on the hillside above Fulton, including Judge Bean, Austin (their house is at Fulton Park and LaView), Newell, Emsen and Prudhomme. These were all original homeowners who built on the hill above the town of Fulton.

This area rising steeply above Virginia Avenue contain an ensemble of turn-of-century homes on winding streets interconnected with steep walks and stairs which are architecturally and historically interesting, retaining the qualities of life from the period in which the homes were built.

The Hillsdale and Multnomah areas beyond Fulton Park had become dairy land sometime before 1900. There, Swiss and German immigrants had cleared forests for dairies and vegetable farms. The Fulton Park Dairy (sited at today's Wilson High and Reike Schools) was owned by the Raz family. Silver Hill Dairy was located at today's Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Gabriel Park was the site of the Pine Creek Dairy and Multnomah Dairy Farm. Florian Cadonau began Alpenrose Dairy in 1891 on Hoffman Road (now called Vermont Street at 35th Avenue). Other dairies were called: Edelweiss, Zweifel, Luescher, Steudler and Gertsch Brothers. [Kirk]

**Terwilliger Parkway**

Portland began to pay attention to parks at the beginning of the twentieth century when there was a recognized shortage of public parks. The park board commissioned the Olmstead Brothers Landscape Architects of Brookline, Massachusetts to make a report for a park system that could be realized with a million dollars. The plan submitted in 1903 called for a system of parkways and boulevards, connecting playgrounds, parks and city squares. It included a park boulevard circuit running along the west side of town from Macleay Park to the Sellwood ferry, then on the east side from Sellwood to Mount Tabor and on to Switzer Lake near the Columbia River, and from there across to Macleay Park by way of Swan Island. The only part of this ambitious plan that was developed was the Hillside Parkway (or Terwilliger Boulevard).

In 1908, when E.T. Mische was appointed superintendent of parks, a million dollars was voted for the project. The first part of the system laid out was Terwilliger Boulevard, a three-mile strip which cost $250,000. The rest of the million dollars was used to develop existing parks. A two-million-dollar bond issue was voted down in 1913, and with a change in park board organization under the new city charter, interest in the Olmstead plan died out and nothing more was done. Mische, ardent endorser of the plan, eventually resigned.

**The Medical School**

The medical school was established in Salem in 1865. It moved to grocery store in NW Portland in 1878 and merged with the University of Oregon in 1913. In 1893, the school had the only microscope in the Pacific Northwest. In 1917, Dr. Kenneth A.J Mackenzie persuaded the Oregon Willamette Railway and Navigation Company to donate 20 acres of land which they had bought, sight unseen, from an attractively grided land-division map. The railroad assumed
that the land was flat because of the map’s non-existent street grid that looked as flat as downtown Portland. The railway had planned to build a terminal at that site which turned out to be atop one of the steepest ravines of the west hills, Marquam Gulch: an impossible site for trains. The gift was called “Mackenzie’s Folly”. But in 1919, Mackenzie Hall was built on Marquam Hill to serve the medical school which moved from a three-story building near Good Samaritan Hospital. The campus was enlarged with the addition of 28 acre Sam Jackson Park and an adjoining tract of 88 acres. This was a Christmas gift to the state and the people of Oregon from Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Jackson (of the Oregon Journal) and their son Philip in December, 1924, just before Mr. Jackson’s death. The condition was stipulated that it should always be known as “Sam Jackson Park” and that the University of Oregon Medical School, should be there on the part of it known as Marquam Hill and that other schools and hospitals might be there: The Multnomah County Hospital was built in 1920, Doernbecher Hospital for Children and the United States Veterans’ Administration Hospital were built in 1926, the outpatient Clinic in 1931 and a handsome library was constructed.

In 1974, the school separated from the University of Oregon and in 1981, the school was renamed “University of Oregon Health Sciences Center” (OHSU). Called the “Acropolis on Marquam Hill” by E. Kimbark McCall, the site is commonly known as “Pill Hill.” The sprawling campus continues to grow in size and reputation with an annual budget approaching $1 billion, hundreds of faculty members, over 10,000 employees, clinics across the city and several dozen buildings on Marquam Hill that include a dental school and the Casey Eye Institute. OHSU is building a novel aerial tramway to connect with facilities near the Ross Island Bridge with a budget that has more than tripled to $55 million and the city refuses to increase their budgeted contribution for it. The controversial tram reflects a conflict of interest for city planners who allowed
corporate interests to dictate public transportation policy, land use and air rights. History has a way of repeating itself in countless variations. A similar conflict of public versus private land use occurred in 1928 when the largest electric sign in North America—perhaps in the world—was built on Healy Heights at the end of SW Council Crest Drive, just north of the present KGON radio tower on the hill above the medical school. The sign crossed several lots. The Richfield Oil Company was granted permission to erect fifty foot high neon letters that spelled their company name. The sign was 750 feet long and could be read from 50 miles away. Three years later, Richfield was bankrupt.

**Schools**

South Portland was home to many families with children. So much so that at least seven schools once served the area: Lincoln High School, Shattuck School, Ladd School, St. Mary’s Academy, St. Michael’s School for Boys, Josiah Failing School, Holman School, Terwilliger School and Fulton Park School: all of them served the area, several of them were built, destroyed and rebuilt. Today there are no public primary schools operating in South Portland. But there are several colleges and specialized schools. The Cedarleaf Waldorf School owns the old Neighborhood House. The Portland French School occupies the old Terwilliger School. The National College of Naturopathic Medicine owns the Failing School building. The International School has a campus on SW Sherman near Riverplace. The Oregon Health Sciences University campus covers much of Marquam Hill. Portland State University occupies several blocks of old South Portland including a former Lincoln High School building. Lewis and Clark College has developed the old Frank estate into a lovely campus to the south.

Perhaps the oldest school in the area was St. Mary’s Academy which began in 1859 as a school for both boys and girls. It also housed orphans in a building on the SW corner of the block called St. Joseph’s Orphanage. The building was originally across Fourth Avenue from the present school, a tall imposing stone structure with a cupola on the top. It was demolished in the 1960s and remains a parking lot surrounded by the stone retaining wall with “St. Mary’s Academy” emblazoned over the remaining Fourth Avenue stairway into the old school. The present school for girls is across Fifth Avenue from the original school grounds and remains one of the few active schools in South Portland today, a school highly respected for its academic integrity.

St. Michael’s College for Boys was across Mill Street from St. Mary’s. It began as St. Mary’s became a school for girls only in 1871. The term “college” simply meant “school” at the time. There were sixty pupils. Tuition was $5 to $9 per term. By 1885, 125 boys were enrolled. St. Michael’s had a brass band, a telegraph apparatus, a physical laboratory, a printing office and its own newspaper. But by 1886, it was a dilapidated old school at which the superior, Brother Adalrick, died from overwork and illness in two months. In 1895, the school was closed and moved to NW 17th and Davis.

The Harrison School was located between 5th and 6th. And there was a “Colored School” at the NE corner of 4th and Columbia between 1867 and 1871,
“after which colored children were admitted to all schools on the same terms as other children.” [Gaston]

The largest elementary school in the city in 1914 was the Ladd School which had 1176 pupils. Designed by F.A. Naramore, it had been formerly called the Park School. The building itself occupied much of the block. It was a large wooden structure of two stories, an attic and a raised basement. It had double hung windows and a large roof punctuated by thirteen dormers and three chimneys. Two front entrances were capped with balconies, the south balcony supporting a flagpole. The Portland Art Museum now occupies the site.

Shattuck School was designed by F.A. Naramore. It was built in 1914 at the south end of the park blocks. The front of the brick building featured a small open courtyard with seats, stairs and a flagpole facing the park blocks. It is a dignified and graceful building with well grouped windows and ornate touches around the entrance and the nicely delineated flat roof. It is now a part of the PSU campus, having been used by Portland Community College for many years. It was considered “higher class” than its immigrant filled neighbor, the Failing School. The second school of the then new Portland School District was opened to students in 1866. It was called the Harrison Street School. It was a stern and tall two story, two room building with a heavy cornice all around and a domed gazebo on the top. By 1877, eight more classrooms had been added. The building was destroyed by fire two years later. A new school was built. It also burned in 1887, perhaps by an arson. It was again rebuilt. Later eleven classrooms were added. The dignified building had three portico entrances supported by classical columns and balustraded pediments. A majestic square turret rose above. In 1904, the name was changed to Shattuck in honor of school board member Judge Erasmus D. Shattuck. In 1915 the school became The High School of Commerce and was finally demolished in 1929.

The Failing Grammar School at SW Front Avenue and Porter Street, was named after Josiah Failing, a successful merchant, who has been called “the father of the public schools of Portland.” Failing believed that the public should do all it could to make good and useful citizens, but an education beyond that level was not a public responsibility. In 1851, he came to Portland and immediately spearheaded efforts to form a school district. By the end of that same year, Portland had its first free, public school. Two years later, he was the mayor of Portland. He was the Oregon delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1864 when Abraham Lincoln was nominated, and in 1868 after Lincoln’s death. Failing also led the drive to establish a tax supported public high school in the early 1860s, admonishing all who would listen to him that he would rather pay $10 in school taxes than $1 to support jails. His son, Henry, arrived in Portland in 1853 when the population was under 1500. Henry later became the president of First National Bank and the Failing family remains strongly involved in the cultural life of the city.

The Failing School was the main immigrant school of Portland. In fact, ninety percent of the students at Failing were immigrants: Italian, Jewish, Anglo, Chinese, Japanese, Black and others. Many couldn’t even speak English when they began at the school. The existing concrete and brick veneer building was
built in 1912 across Front Avenue from the original wooden 1882 Victorian building. By 1914, fully one fourth of the students were of Russian extraction. The original wood structure was demolished in 1922. The principal of the school for many years was Fannie Porter, a large woman who loved her students and disciplined them severely with that love. She “would kill you if you came in tardy,” remembered Morris Levin. “When Fanny Porter died, she had the biggest funeral in Oregon,” for more than 8,000 people went to her funeral in Oregon City.

The first school, a Victorian wooden structure, shared the block with the city’s first branch post office. The present structure east of Front was built in the 1920s and was designed by the architectural team of Whitehouse and Fouilhous. Enrollment diminished as immigrant families Americanized and moved to other parts of the city. By the mid twentieth century, many of the South Portland schools were closed or closing, including the Failing School. In the early 1960s, Portland Community College (PCC) bought the property from the Portland School District for $425,000. It had been a satellite school of PCC for many years. Two decades later, it was bought by the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, North America’s oldest naturopathic four year medical college, and is used as their main campus.

Lincoln High School has a long history in several locations around Portland. Originally called the Portland High School, it was the first public high school in the Pacific Northwest. The establishment of the new high school was only a decade after the first public high school in the nation had begun in Boston. Portland High School began in the second story of the North School at NW 11th and Davis. In 1874, the high school moved to the Central School, located at today’s Pioneer Square. In 1879, the high school moved to the Park School which later became the Ladd School which was in turn replaced by the Belluchi designed Art Museum. Finally in 1885, the first structure built in Portland expressly to house a high school was erected at SW 14th and Morrison. And at this time, the name was changed to Lincoln High School. The building was an absolutely magnificent Victorian Gothic building, highly ornamented with tall gothic windows and dormers projecting from a mansard roof, wrought iron “widows walks” and an oversized nonfunctional clock in a tower above the main entrance. In 1912, having outgrown its building, Lincoln moved to its new home in the Park Blocks, now known as PSU’s Lincoln Hall. It still stands on a full block at SW Broadway and Clay. The architecture firm of Whitehouse and Fouilhous designed it. The resulting school reflected an advanced concept of education that included a large room for penmanship, three separate rooms for typewriters and another for shorthand. There was a cooking laboratory with separate room for cooking lectures and yet another “dining room.” There were separate labs for chemistry, zoology, botany, industrial arts, mechanical drawing, freehand, design, physiography. All of these were on the third floor. The second floor housed classrooms and two sewing rooms. On the first floor was a large auditorium that rose for two stories, classrooms and two locker rooms. In the basement was a gymnasium, two locker rooms, four lunch rooms, two for boys and two for girls, a caretakers quarters, a physics lab. The present Lincoln High
School was built in 1952 on the site of the former Jacob Kamm Estate at SW 14th and Salmon.

By far, the largest school in the area is now Portland State University. It began in 1946 as an interim measure to provide lower level classes to an overload of returning World War II veterans who could then transfer to other Oregon schools. Initially called the Vanport Extension Center, it was Oregon’s first public junior college and was intended to exist for only a few years. It was so successful that by its second year it was called Vanport College. In that year on Sunday, May 30, 1948, the college was lost along with the entire 647 acre wartime community of pre-fabs in a spring snow melt-off that flooded over a dike along the Columbia River. Three evenings after the flood, 1000 students gathered at Grant High School to learn that the college would continue “somewhere, somehow”. A Kaiser shipyard building was used until in 1952 it was re-located in the old Lincoln High School building in the South Park blocks. In 1955 the student body re-named it “Portland State College” and it was given full four year accreditation. By 1969, with enrollment over 11,000, the school included doctoral programs and became “Portland State University”. By 1984, the University occupied 28 square blocks. Although some larger apartment buildings had been saved, many old buildings had been demolished and replaced by modern structures. In the 1970s, after the Vietnam crisis, the campus absorbed the South Park blocks and closed almost a dozen streets to vehicles as the school struggled to create a more traditional campus.

The Holman School was also known as South Portland School. It was built in 1894 in the block south of Bancroft and east of Corbett on a beautiful site overlooking the river, and with one of the grandest views of Portland. On Corbett was a small business district where the streetcar stopped. The block north was Terwilliger Playground which extended down to Macadam Road. The playground was created out of a former cemetery. The school was a wood framed building designed by T.J. Jones. It faced west with a flagpole atop a large rooftop dormer. A group of three windows were centered in the dormer with a Dutch style pediment. A rather conservative entrance to the left opened at the top of a short flight of stairs. The basement was raised enough to be surrounded by windows. Large dormers dominated the third floor. Windows were overhung with nine and sixteen lights in the upper panes. The chimney had a “chinese hat” for a top. Soon after it was built, Jones designed an addition in character with the original plans. Later the building was used for various purposes including a cabinet shop. The site is currently used as a parking lot for a large apartment building.

The first neighborhood school was built in 1869 at the northwest corner of SW Pendleton and Macadam. The school was called “Fulton” for the town and its windows were frosted over in an attempt to keep young minds from wandering. In 1907, the building ceased being used as a school and became a basket factory. Another school was designed and built in 1907 adjacent to the former Fulton School and named Terwilliger School. It was a wooden two story structure with one classroom on the first floor with two more above. It had classical elements and Dutch styled dormers. The basement or bottom floor was sunk only
about two feet and was generously provided with windows. A front stairway led to a classically styled porch with a balustrade above, along the flat roof of the porch.

In 1912 another site was purchased from the estate of Hannah Mason and the South Portland Company for $13,000. In 1916, a new building was designed and built by F.A. Naramore, with the first class graduating in January of 1917. In 1928-29, the school was enlarged with two classrooms added to each wing and the enclosing of the play court. It still stands little changed but for the addition of “portables” in the back field. It is a broad faced stately brick structure with two arms extending to the back and situated on an enormous playground. Naramore designed a graceful yet dignified school with large multi-light windows and a central turret. By 1938, the Parent Teacher Association had started a hot lunch program which was finally, after much persuasion, taken over by the school district. In 1943 a kindergarten class was added. In 1947 the office area was redesigned. Beginning in the late 1940s, small improvements have altered the building slightly, changes include floor and ceiling tiles, carpeting, bathrooms. A portion of the playground was blacktopped in 1959.

As South Portland lost its families to suburbs, the Terwilliger School absorbed children from two other large schools that were closed. When Holman School at SW Bancroft and Corbett was closed, those children then attended Terwilliger. When the Failing School closed a generation later in 1958, the children were transferred to Terwilliger as well. Eleven years later, Terwilliger School itself held its last graduation in June of 1969. In September of that same year, seventh and eighth grade students were bussed to Robert Gray School near Hillsdale. In 1971, the kindergarten class was closed and also bussed with the older students to Robert Gray School. Finally in 1979-80, the Local School Advisory Committee recommended the school be closed because of declining enrollment and the reorganization of schools that fed into the Wilson High School Cluster.

In 1970, the office for the superintendent of schools was built. In 1990, classrooms were remodeled into offices for Portland Public Schools administration staff. The building also housed the Vermont Hill Child Care Center. The school is now the Portland French School.

And high above Terwilliger School at the southern end of the streetcar line was Fulton School. The first Fulton School building designed by the architect, R.H. Miller, was a simple one story wood frame structure with a hip roof and containing three classrooms. There were no bathrooms in the building. The entrance featured a small “covered piazza” with a simple railing at the top of eight stairs. Supported by four posts was a shingled gable. Through the single front door with windows on either side was a small hall with three doors, one into each of the classrooms, and a stairway down into a wood cellar below the center of the building. In each of the three classrooms there was a wood stove. Each room had four double hung windows with half lights on the top, all facing the back of the school. At one end of each room was a long, thin wardrobe with doors at either end, a set of two or three windows on the front side and tucked inside the wardrobes was a smaller door into a tiny “fuel room”.

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This simple school house was replaced at the beginning of World War I. The new and more elegant building was designed by F.A. Naramore in 1914. The style is reflective of the California mission style. It featured four classrooms, two generous, modern bath rooms, and two parallel entrances separated by the office. It was heated by a large boiler room. These led into a large assembly hall with a stage at one end and two classrooms on either side. Modifications were made in 1936 for auditorium seating and the playground was improved in 1953. It has been used for many years by the parks bureau as a community center.

Parks

At the turn of the century, it became obvious that Portland had less land devoted to parks than any city on the west coast. The first park report was issued in 1902 when there were 136 acres of park land in ten different properties. In 1903, Portland’s mayor, George H. Williams, realized the need for change. The Olmsted Brothers submitted an ambitious plan. Although little was realized of this plan, its influence was enduring. Terwilliger Parkway, Forest Park and other sites were developed or improved including Mount Tabor and Rocky Butte. As the city grew in population and more park property was acquired, a program of recreation as well as park maintenance was developed. In 1911, the Greater Portland Plan Association retained Chicago planner Edward Bennett. His Paris and Budapest inspired plan was submitted in October of 1912. It proposed broad, tree-lined boulevards that radiated from traffic circles anchored by obelisks and a central mall lined with classical style buildings. The waterway was to be reclaimed as a public parkway. Although approved two to one in public polls, it was discarded as out of proportion for the city.

Parks in South Portland have included Duniway Park, Lair Hill Park, Old Ironsides Park, Terwilliger Playground, Willamette Park, Fulton Park, Heritage Tree Park, Butterfly Park and the Greenway Trail.
Two major parks have been somehow lost to private development. Terwilliger Playground was a large park just north of Bancroft. It was one or two blocks wide and ran down the steep hillside from Corbett to Macadam. Holman School was on the southwest corner at Corbett. "The tract of land now known as Terwilliger Park was originally donated to the city as a cemetery but was later dedicated to its present use and is a permanent monument to a man (James Terwilliger) who was one of the first to discern the possibilities of the site as the location of a growing city." [Book in Sam Adam's office] The eastern portion of the site was lost to traffic with the building of the Banfield freeway (I-5). Somehow the west end of the park was given or sold to the Red Cross where they built a large building with several parking lots which they then sold to a private business, W'East. The land was then private property instead of in the public domain. The building was destroyed to create the "Corbett Crescent," a residential townhouse and apartment project in 2006-7.

A second park was lost in a federal transportation development, becoming I-5. This was Old Ironsides Park. It occupied the block upon which William Johnson built his cabin in 1842. There were plans before World War II to build a copy of the original cabin there. It was between Gibbs and Whitaker Streets and Macadam and Hood Streets. Traffic on I-5 now flows through the location. A bronze monument to Johnson stands nearby.

Two small parks have been created in South Portland by local residents. Heritage Tree Park originally served as a side yard for a run-down, but unique Victorian house with an unusual corner bay and Povey windows. The first developer of modern row houses in the city, Phil Morford, was planning to build there, where a large White Oak tree stood. To circumvent opposition to his plans, he arranged to have the tree girdled, thus killing it before his purchase of the land. He had used this tactic in the area before. A neighbor stopped the tree cutter who said "the tree was an object of contention in the sale of the property." But soon one of Morford's managers arrived with a chain saw, determined to finish the job. A neighbor broke the chain saw with a shovel as others screamed for help. Within minutes the tree was festooned with chains, flowers and fencing to protect it. Neighbors camped out under the tree for several weeks as intense negotiations sought to resolve the issue. Local and national media pursued the story. An emergency session at city council supported the citizens, but could not compel the developer to relent. Finally, Morford agreed that he would not destroy the tree. He bought the property and built without damaging the tree further. The incidents inspired the birth of Friends of Trees and the Heritage Tree Program. Years later, citizens raised money to buy it from his attorney and donate it to the city for Heritage Tree Park. Thus one tree brought thousands of new trees to Portland and fostered the recognition of many notable heritage trees.

The Butterfly Park was the inspiration of one woman, Jeanne Galick, who was able to transform an old parking lot at the south end of Miles Place into a landscape of natural plants and rocks. Galick was able to move individuals and bureaucrats in a sustained effort that made winners all around.
Cemeteries

The burying grounds of Portland were originally relegated to the outskirts of town. The first in 1854, was “Mt. Crawford”, later called “Lone Fir Cemetery”, is on the east side of the river at SE Stark Street and 26th Avenue. It was originally accessed by boat or barge from the city center on the west side. Many prominent citizens from the west side were ferried across the river to their $10 graves. The location was considered far from town. A funeral procession might take half of a day. First, the mule-powered Stark Street ferry was slow. And then, from the river, a procession slogged up the muddy road. Still, more than 25,000 people were buried there, including names like Curry, Dekum, Hawthorne, Lane, Lovejoy and Macleay. Other important figures were later exhumed and moved back across the river to the more prestigious Riverview Cemetery. Hundreds of Chinese that were buried there were also exhumed and sent to China for reburial. The passage of time, neglect and poor record keeping in the early years have led to an estimated 10,000 unknown graves.

In 1881, a dozen families including the Corbetts, Ladds and Failings founded the Riverview Cemetery Association. They raised $130,000 to start the cemetery. Thirty percent of receipts were entered into an endowment which was worth over $2 million in 1985 and still exists. By 1900, the remains of over 60 pioneers had been exhumed from Lone Fir and re-buried at Riverview. They included founders of the city with names like Failing, Northrup, Hoyt, Terwilliger, Skidmore, Flanders, Goodnough and Dolph. In 1985, 350 acres of 700 were meticulously landscaped with 50,000 graves and room for as many more. On the north side of Taylor’s Ferry Road, the Portland Mausoleum was established in 1916 as a separate entity with a mausoleum, crematorium and mortuary. It had originally been simply an adjunct to the cemetery called Riverview Abbey. In 1930 a concrete contractor, W.R Griffith and Sons, was hired to increase the crypt capacity. The company took ownership and the mausoleum has grown until in 1985 there were 26,000 entombed there with 16 more acres available for growth. [Karl Kloster]

Several cemeteries have sprung up on the west side, all to the south or west. On September 22, 1854, Finice Caruthers and James Tewilliger each made a gift of five acres to the city council for use as a cemetery. The Council authorized funds to build a fence and mark off burial lots for sale to the public. Between SW Corbett Avenue and Macadam, this became the Muire-Spofford Cemetery. By 1902 though, it had become the Terwilliger Playground. A half century later, it was given to the Red Cross for a building. Then, somehow it transitioned into private property.

There are map indications of a Jewish Cemetery by 1871 between SW Porter and Woods, just east of Corbett Avenue. This cemetery has also disappeared and is part of the west end interchange for the Ross Island Bridge.

Riverview Cemetery became a distinguished resting place, and served as a very different destination than the White House for traffic on Macadam. It began in 1880 or 1882 when a group of Portland families organized the non-profit River View Cemetery Association - mutually owned by those who choose this as the eternal resting place for their loved ones. River View became the primary
cemetery for the growing riverfront town of Portland. Those buried there include leaders in the community, including Henry Corbett, William Ladd, Josiah Failing, Simon Benson, James Terwilliger, Henry Pittcock, Henry Weinhard, Abigail Scott Duniway, Phillip Marquam, John Reed’s mother, Margaret, Wyatt Earp’s brother, Virgil and others.

Within the confines of Riverview Cemetery are several other old cemeteries. The oldest, Greenwood Hills Cemetery, is even older than Lone Fir Cemetery beginning in 1851. Also there are The Grand Army of the Republic Cemetery from the 1860s, the International Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery and Masonic Cemetery. Nearby is the Beth Isreal Cemetery where Joseph Simon, Richard and Maurine Neuberger, and Julius Meier are buried. The Ahavai Shalom Memorial Cemetery, begun in 1869, is also near.

ARCHITECTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

Saint Michael’s Catholic Church

One of the few remaining buildings of old South Portland, Saint Michael’s Church is a Romanesque style structure built in 1901. It has beautiful Povey stained glass windows throughout the sanctuary. The exterior is original. The interior has been altered, although restoration plans are underway. St. Michael the Archangel parish was built and shaped largely by Italian peasants who immigrated to Portland. They were mostly uneducated, illiterate, unskilled and poor, but bringing with them a great culture. This church served as the nucleus of “Little Italy” in South Portland.

Neighborhood House, 3030 SW Second Avenue

The Neighborhood House was built through the cooperation of Rabbi Stephen Wise and the Council of Jewish Women to provide a center for social and civic activities. It was designed by A.E. Doyle and built in 1904. It heralded Albert Doyle’s return to the neighborhood 15 years after he helped design the Fourth Presbyterian Church at First and Gibbs Streets as a young man. The building was finally occupied six years later in 1910 as the new home for the "Neighborhood House". The north wing with a pool, gym and handball courts was added in 1926. The recessed arched window surrounds are vaguely Georgian. The terra-cotta anthemion antefixae, that project up from the eave, are Classical Revival. The building as a whole cannot be identified as "a style," but borrows from the historic vocabulary, so it is termed Period Architecture.

The National Council of Jewish Women listed the building on the National Register of Historic Places, and raised $100,000, partly through a grant from the State Office of Preservation. George McMath, a Portland architect whose
grandfather, A. E. Doyle, originally designed the building, supervised the renovation which was completed in 1982. For years, it housed the YMCA day care center and is now a Waldorf School.

**Manley Community Center, 2828 SW Front Avenue**

The Portland Settlement Center, also known as the Helen-Kelly-Manley Community Center was built in 1912 and operated as the focus of mainly Italian activities until 1928. It may have been simultaneously a Methodist Mission. The red stone structure was in the Flemish style with squared gable ends and nicely articulated door and window openings.

**Josiah Failing School, 049 SW Porter Street**

The first building structure called the Josiah Failing School was built in 1882, one block west of the present school. It was a dramatic Victorian wooden building. On same block as the original Failing School site was the first branch library which was later moved to SW Meade Street between First and Second where it still stands. Portland Community College used the newer school building for their Ross Island Campus in the 1970s and ‘80s. It was bought by the National College of Naturopathic Medicine and serves as their main campus.

**Lair Hill Park (between Woods and Hooker, Barbur and Second Avenue)**

This three acre section of land has its own history, apart from the neighborhood which surrounds it. It was purchased in 1868, the year after Finice Caruthers staked his claim, by William Lair Hill. Hill then sold the three and one half acres to Charles E. Smith in 1880. Smith was a successful businessman who owned an iron foundry on the riverbank. Much of Portland’s cast-iron...
ornamentation was cast in his foundry. His family built two houses on the Lair Hill property next to the Fourth Avenue train line. He first built a modest farmhouse and later an elegant mansion designed by a relative from Germany, the noted architect, Justus Krumbein. Smith’s wife, Hedwig Hansen Smith, bore nine children, and family tradition has it that she would travel back to Germany to show off each new baby, and upon her return, carry back the seeds of her favorite trees and shrubs in her baby’s diapers.

The entire property was landscaped and enclosed with a cast iron fence. Nothing in the area could compare with his estate. The Smith family sold all of it to the county in 1909. The county used the parlors and bedrooms of the house for the first county hospital. A brick building was built at the south end of the property in 1918 as a nurse dormitory which later became the Children’s Museum. A Carnegie Library, designed by Folger Johnson, was built in 1921. In 1923 the county hospital moved up onto Marquam Hill and the mansion was quickly demolished. The county sold the grounds to the city in 1927 for $1 and it has been Lair Hill Park since. There is a large Cor-ten steel sculpture at the upper west end of the park. Cor-ten steel is a steel alloy that oxidizes over time, giving it an orange-brown color and rough texture. These metal boulders, handiwork of sculptor Bruce West, bring to mind an earlier real rock grotto which once stood in the park and provided a shady place where older men gathered on hot summer days to play chess. The surrounding Lair Hill neighborhood was given its name in the mid-1920s upon the death of William Lair Hill.

**Multnomah County Hospital, Lair Hill Park, 3037 SW Second Avenue**

A brick building, in the style Modified Georgian Revival, was originally constructed in 1918 as a dormitory for nurses working at the county hospital which was next to it in what is now park land. The building along with the land was sold to the city as part of Lair Hill Park in 1927. In 1942, the State Architect's Office extensively remodeled it to serve as the Youth Administration of the Federal Security Agency. In 1949, the Parks Bureau created a Junior Museum in the building, later renamed the Children’s Museum.

Note the prominent brick quoining, gently arched windows with stone keystones, and the prominent dentils at the eave.

**Carnegie Branch Library, Lair Hill Park, 2909 SW Second Avenue**

The first library was located on the corner of First Avenue and Hooker Street, the former site of the old Failing School. It was built in 1913 for the sum of $968, but was quickly outgrown. By 1918, due to the extensive use of the Library by the people in the area, the need for a new building arose. This building was built in order to meet that need. In 1921, the Carnegie Library Endowment provided funds for the construction of a new branch library at Second Avenue and Hooker Street. The formal opening took place in October, 1921. The building served as a library until the early 1950s. A graceful structure in the Italian Renaissance Revival style is one of seven Carnegie-funded branch libraries in Portland. It was designed by Folger Johnson of Johnson & Wallwork who designed four of the seven Portland Carnegie branches. On October 1, 1921, the
children of the neighborhood each carried armfuls of books up Hooker Street. Their procession was headed by the American flag, a copy of the United States Constitution and a picture of George Washington. Zerlina Loewenberg was its revered librarian for most of its existence. Like her sister, Ida, who was the headworker at nearby Neighborhood House, Zerlina never married, dedicating her considerable energy and love instead to the library and the community it served. [Lowenstein, p 121] The building housed a collection of books in Yiddish, German, Polish and Italian, as well as English, before being converted to an art center by the Park Bureau in the early 1954. The prominent arched windows, the proportions, and the use of the curved entrance flanked by columns are all typical of Italian Renaissance style. On the interior, a broken pediment appears below the circular window and Corinthian columns flank the wings, again Italian Renaissance in style. The simple, open interior space was lovingly restored by Parks Bureau personnel after an arsonist's fire in 1977.

The splendid tree outside the door of the Art center is a copper beech, native to Europe. The beech tree was probably planted by Charles E. Smith's wife, who came from Germany to marry the industrialist in 1873.

Zidell Family Houses, 2723 and 2731 SW Second Avenue
2721 was built in 1908 for Edward Hans. 2731 was built in 1880 for Mrs. Jane Hart. Both houses were once occupied by the Zidell family, founders of Zidell Marine Corporation.

Corkish Apartments. 2734-2740 SW Second Avenue
Built by John Corkish, an Irish immigrant from the Isle of Man. Corkish remained in Portland until his death in 1916. The ornate John Corkish Apartments were constructed as family residences for the working class immigrants who populated South Portland. A well known opera singer in Portland lived there named Mona Paulee who began singing publicly as Minna Berg at Kelley's Restaurant, a beer parlor. This Victorian-style block of flats (four-plex) was built around 1890. The building demonstrates an interest in giving apartment buildings a residential appearance. It is one of three remaining Queen Anne style apartments in the historic district. The John Corkish Apartments became a National Register property in 1980, because it was believed to be a primary site embodying distinctive architectural qualities essential to the future of the South Portland Conservation District. It is considered to be contributing within the district because of its historic and architectural significance. This structure is one of several original apartment houses still standing in the neighborhood; the others are at 2717 SW Second, 3101-3105 SW First, 3207 SW First, 036-038 SW Porter, 5 SW Whitaker and 16 SW Porter.

Kesser Israel Synagogue. 136 SW Meade Street
The building on the southwest corner of Second and Meade was erected by the Immanuel Baptist State Church in 1888. It occupied the building from 1900 to 1912 when the building was purchased by H. Horenstein, Morris Goldstein, and T. H. Goldstein. The founders were East European Jews. It became the
Meade Street *Shul* or synagogue, and formally called the Kesser Israel Synagogue. Today it is the only orthodox synagogue in Oregon. Inside it resembles pre-holocaust Synagogues of eastern Europe.

The crenellations at the top of the tower are Romanesque. the vestigial buttresses at the side, Gothic in origin. The Synagogue uses the original balcony level, now floored in, for its sanctuary, and the original early 20th century light fixtures remain in place. The windows contain no figural art because The Commandments speak against "graven images", and hence no statues or portraits appear in synagogues.

**South Portland Branch Library. 116 SW Meade Street**

In 1913, a small library book deposit was established in SW Portland at an unknown site, probably in the corner of a post office, church or store. Shortly thereafter, SW Portland’s first branch, the South Portland Branch Library, opened its doors to the public on December 13, 1913. It stood on the corner of First Avenue and Hooker Street on land leased from the School Board, the former site of the original Failing School. The contractor was O. Tillison who built it for a bid of $968, not including heating and plumbing. No architect is mentioned in the archives, so the contractor may have furnished the plans. By 1918, due to the extensive use of the library by the people in the "new citizen district". the need for a new building arose. To meet that need a new library was constructed a block away on the corner of S.W. 2nd and Hooker streets. The books were moved in 1921 to the new location with local children forming a line to pass books, shelf by shelf, from the old building, up the street to their new library. The original building remains on Meade Street and has served as a residence ever since the library moved.

**Anna B. Crocker House, 119 SW Meade Street**

Anna Crocker lived in this house. She was a bright and talented portrait artist and respected supporter of the arts. After graduating from the Art Students League in New York, William Ladd appointed her as both museum curator and art school principal. She remained curator and, in effect, director for 27 years. This house may also be distinguished as the original site for Nature’s Grocery.

**Mayor Riley House, 2737 SW First Avenue**

This Victorian building was originally located five blocks to the south and was probably built in the 1880's. Note that the decoration is largely confined to the facade. It was owned from 1906 until 1940 by the family of Earl Riley, mayor of Portland during the World War II years, and was his boyhood home. Mayor Riley was voted in 1948 as “America’s Most Typical Mayor” by the Office of War Information. Riley's father was a fireman at Engine Company No. 5, just around the block from his home. In 1907, six of the seven firemen working at PFD NO. 5 lived within three blocks of the Engine House. As late as the 1940’s, Mayor Riley's widowed mother still considered the firemen as part of her family and used to walk around the block to visit them daily. Her gait as she walked back from the firehouse was occasionally a bit unsteady, neighbors recall, and the
mayor seems to have arranged for some friendly officers from his Police bureau to check on her regularly. Mayor Riley died in August of 1965. By the 1970's, the Riley house was badly run down, and the owner decided to demolish it. Because of the protection offered under the Historic Conservation District Zoning, the neighborhood and the Landmarks Commission were able to delay demolition until arrangements could be made for the house to be moved from 3322 SW First Avenue. It was relocated on a bright spring day in 1979, causing the temporary removal of innumerable utility wires and general neighborhood rejoicing. Its renovation won its owners an award and includes a solar water heating system, visible in part on the south-facing roof.

**Marquam House, 2740 SW First Avenue**
This simple worker Victorian cottage was constructed by its first owner, Philip Augustus Marquam, a prominent pioneer in Portland history.

**Peter Taylor House, 2806 SW First Avenue**
One of the two oldest structures in the neighborhood, this modest house was built in 1882 for Peter Taylor, the original occupant of the Italianate style residence. Taylor, was an early Portland pioneer who first arrived in the city in 1852. His Spartan taste is reflected in the conservative elegance of the house. He played an important role in the development of the iron industry in the city of Portland.

In 1881 he gave the family home near SW First and Caruthers Street to his son and constructed a new Italianate style home on the corner of SW First Avenue and Meade Street for $5000. He sold it to the Haehlen brothers in 1887 and went to live with the families of his children. He died on November 11, 1909, at the age of 86 years. The earlier family homes were destroyed by the South Portland Urban Renewal Project in the 1960s, or, like the first home that Peter Taylor built himself in 1853 on the corner of SW Fifth and Salmon, were torn down to make way for the growth of the city center.

**John and Gotlieb Haehlen House, 2818 SW First Avenue**
Peter Taylor sold his Italianate style residence to the Haehlen brothers in 1887. The Haehlen's eventually sold both houses. By 1910 John had died and Gotlieb had moved his family elsewhere in the city.

The architectural detailing of the Haehlen House is the most distinctive to be found among the Victorian buildings within this district, and is quite unique in the city.

**Lair Hill Delicatessen, 2823 SW First Avenue**
This small grocery is the only remaining business of the dozens that once lined First Avenue when the trolley ran along this street and South Portland was thriving. The arrangement of a shop on the street level and living quarters above was typical in this area. Around World War I, it was owned by an aunt of Leo Greenstein's and called “Tanta Raizel” and her husband who lived there with their five daughters. One would not pick things out for themselves; rather, one
would ask the grocer for them, who would then get them and often even deliver them. It survived as a small mom and pop grocery known for many years as “Slim’s” and run by Slim and Esther. The store had been owned by Esther Weinstein’s parents. Esther married Albert Schulhaus who was a holocaust survivor. He was very tall, well over six feet, and thin as a rail. His nickname was “Slim”. It’s said that the store was in Esther’s family for four generations: over 70 years.

McInnis Contractors, 3025 SW First Avenue

Built in 1916, this one-story brick structure was once a car garage and a brass factory.

Buckman Apartments, 3101 SW First Avenue

This is another immigrant apartment house or "block of flats" which was built around 1890. It is a good example of high Victorian, festooned with detail. It was owned by the Buckman family from the time it was built until the 1930's. This building was one of the first in the neighborhood to be renovated.

Row houses, 3122, 3124, 3132, 3138 SW Second Avenue

These four matching houses, built in 1906, are excellent examples of the classic box style. The Fox family lived in one of these houses. They owned one of several barns that stabled horses and wagons for the junk peddlers in old South Portland. There was a blacksmith in the Fox barn that children would enjoy watching as he shoed horses. The Fox barn was in the block just south of these houses. Another barn owned by Gussie Reinhardt’s father was on Meade Street, a block east of the YMCA. A third barn was owned by Norman Berlant’s grandmother. He lived on SW Front at Curry Street. His father had a kosher butcher shop at SW First and Sheridan which had a non-kosher butcher shop on one side and Rottenber’s kosher bakery on the other; across the street was the Southern Hotel.

Comparisons may be made between these row houses and four slightly older Victorian row houses just south of Whitaker on SW Water Street. Other comparisons may be made with a row house development from 2000 on SW Gibbs, west of Front, and a row house project from the 1980s on SW Whitaker Street, west of Kelly.

Row houses, 3400 block of SW Water Street

Another set of four matching row houses from the 1890s. A good example of the row house concept before automobiles includes sophisticated shingle-work and other architectural details. The stained glass transom above the front door of the southern-most house was made by the Povey Brothers. It identifies the house with the original stained glass numbers.

In 1888, David and John Povey, the sons of generations of stained glass craftsmen, came to Portland, becoming the first to both design and manufacture stained glass in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Utah. Joined by other family members, the Povey Brothers Glass Company created windows utilizing...
both European and American glass for homes, businesses, and churches throughout the Northwest and British Columbia.

**Fourth Presbyterian Church, 3314 SW First Avenue**

The main part of this building was built in 1890 and is Carpenter Gothic. Note the board-and-batten siding and the arched windows with hood molds. The addition to the north is much later and very sensitively done. The building was designed by H. J. Hefty, a Catholic living in the neighborhood, for the Fourth Presbyterian Church, a congregation that had been meeting since 1887 in a planing mill office [across Gibbs Street from the church] with the Reverend Thomas Boyd as its initial pastor. Although it’s been said that Hefty's plans were carried out by Albert Doyle, more likely Doyle helped to design the north wing in 1910. The façade is an expression of Romanesque style in wood. There is a possible connection with the Methodist-Episcopal Church on Powell Street in San Francisco. The San Francisco Church is possibly by architect Louis R. Townsend in the "Perpendicular Style" (said to have replaced the preceding pre-fabricated church shipped to San Francisco from Portland about 1850). There is a striking, though possibly only coincidental, similarity in the elevations of Portland’s Fourth Presbyterian and San Francisco’s Methodist-Episcopal. It is possible that the San Francisco architect produced the design for the Portland church or that it was adapted from his design. The Fourth Presbyterian Church remained in the building until July 1957, when the building was purchased by the Union Gospel Mission. The building was used by the Christian Fellowship Church, then the Prince of Peace congregation, and now Great NW Books.

**Residence at 3205 SW Second Avenue**

This house is an example of High Victorian. The addition of the stair to the second floor is well done. This is another house that faced demolition in the neighborhood. It was moved to this site from the north end of the block and, through extensive renovation, achieved the fine appearance it bears today.

**Foulkes Family Houses, 14, 16 SW Whitaker and 3417 SW Front**

14 SW Whitaker Street was the boyhood home of Edward T. Foulkes, architect of the Henry Pittock Mansion— and designer of the Dr. A. S. Nichols House, both listed on the National Register of Historic Places. His parents, Robert and Laura Foulkes, emigrated from Wales in 1873 to Monmouth, Oregon. Edward was born there a year later. In 1884, the family relocated to Portland and settled in the South Portland area in 1892. His mother was a member of the First Baptist Church, and his father was a compositor on The Oregonian for 35 years. Robert Foulkes was "popularly known as the dean of the Welsh colony. They had six children. Edward Foulkes attended Portland High School and went on to Stanford University, eventually graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Science in Architecture in 1895. Though he worked with some architectural firms in the northeast, Foulkes moved back to the west coast to start an individual practice in 1906. He had offices in San Francisco and Fresno, California. In 1909, Henry L. Pittock, publisher of The Oregonian and
his father's employer, commissioned Foulkes to design his French Chateau style mansion. His work produced one of the most noteworthy mansions in the city of Portland. Although this building can be associated with Edward Foulkes, a notable architect, his period of productivity did not occur while he lived at this residence. This building remains a good example of a Stick / Eastlake style residence.

**Fire Station, Engine Company No. 5, 3300s SW Front Avenue**

Mayor Earl Riley's father was a fireman at Engine Company No. 5, just around the block from his home on First next to the church. In 1907, six of the seven firemen working at PFD NO. 5 lived within three blocks of the Engine House. As late as the 1940's, Mayor Riley's widowed mother still considered the firemen as part of her family and used to walk around the block to visit them daily. Her gait as she walked back from the firehouse was occasionally a bit unsteady, neighbors recall, and the mayor seems to have arranged for some friendly officers from his Police bureau to check on her regularly. The fire house has been converted into offices and the large door for the engines has been filled in with matching brick. From the side, one can see the high section within which hoses were hung. It was located a half of a block south from a lumber mill.

**Rooming House, 3204 SW Corbett Ave.**

This is one of the oldest structures in the area, built in 1876. It became a boarding house where over time several Hebrew School teachers lived as well as a dance teacher.

**Ross Island Grocery, 3338 SW Corbett Ave.**

One of several "mom and pop" groceries in the area. It now offers fine deli and café dining in a casual atmosphere. Like the Lair Hill Deli, this store survived the 1950s and 60s as a convenience store with cheap wine, cigarettes and canned goods. It has served as a movie set as have the houses in the block to the south where "Property" was filmed by Penny Allen.

**Milton Smith Residence, 3432-3434 SW Kelly Avenue (0305 SW Curry)**

The Milton Wirt Smith House was designed by the pre-eminent architectural firm of Whidden and Lewis, who also designed such notable buildings as the Portland Hotel (1888-90) and Portland City Hall (1895). The Smith House, one of the firm's earlier residential designs, was built in 1891-92. In addition, it is considered the earliest example of Colonial Revival architecture in the city. The use of residential electricity in this structure at the time of its construction also sets it apart as perhaps the first residence in the city to be wired for electricity. The first owner and longtime resident of the house, Milton Wirt Smith, was a prominent attorney in Portland from 1881 to 1950. He was born in Aurora, Oregon on July 15, 1855, the son of an Aurora gristmill and sawmill owner. He received his M.A. in law from Pacific University in 1881 and later became a trustee of the school. Upon moving to Portland, Smith became active in community affairs, serving as officer of the Portland Library Association,
the Free Kindergarten Association and was several times President of the Multnomah Law Library. He and his wife, Alice, whom he married in 1881, resided at 0305 SW Curry Avenue from 1890-1925. The building, which was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981, is considered to be contributing within the district because of its historic integrity and association with the architectural firm of Whidden and Lewis.

**Henry Weinhardt house, 3400s SW Kelly Avenue**

Henry Weinhardt lived here for a time with his family. He also lived in a house on SW Second Avenue. His brewery has become one of the largest in the nation. But just before World War I, Oregon governor Oswald West favored prohibition, saying “Weinhardt's brewery won't rule the state of Oregon. There isn't a brick in the brewery that doesn't represent a broken heart.” His first brew house was just outside of Fort Vancouver in 1856. He moved to Portland in 1862 and died in 1904.

**Martin Grocery, 3508 SW Corbett Avenue**

This streetcar commercial structure was built in 1913 as a grocery store named Martin Grocery. In the 1950s the proprietress began renting the southern half to architectural draftsmen, and continued living in the north half. In 1982, Liza Jones bought the building and created an intaglio print shop called "Inkling Studio".

**Jewish Shelter Home, 4133 SW Corbett Avenue**

Built in 1902, the home was originally built as the residence of Elmer Cromwell, an Oregon Legislator who was appointed Federal Marshall by President Taft in 1910. The Jewish Shelter Home was established in 1919 by Jeanette Meier when she was 78 years old, to provide a home and Jewish environment for children who were orphans or whose parents were unable to care for them. Her son was Julius Meier who often held Board meetings for the home in his office at the Meier and Frank department store. The home had a capacity of fourteen, ten in the main house and four in a detached isolation hospital. The home was conceived as a temporary shelter, though some stayed for several years. Typically, children were admitted to the Shelter Home because parents were separated, had recently died, or they were too ill or poor to continue to take care of them and no relatives were available locally. But cases varied widely. The Shelter Home was essential because there was little public assistance, and help would come, if at all, from relatives or the Jewish community. Jewish merchants and neighbors contributed supplies to the home and would sometimes take children out to movies or neighborhood events. Hanukkah parties, Passover seders and open houses were often held at the Shelter Home to give the children as much of a sense of warmth and caring from the community as possible. The children were usually enrolled in Hebrew School at the Neighborhood House as well as at the Failing School. [Lowenstein, p 148] After 1947, it became a private residence.
Holt, Saylor, Liberto House, 3625 SW Condor Street

The Holt-Saylor-Liberto House is designed with a mixture of Queen Anne and Classic Revival features. The house was originally built in 1888 for William Sylvester Holt, a Presbyterian missionary in charge of all missionary activity sponsored by the church in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, and Alaska. One year after completion, Holt sold the house to William H. Saylor, a Portland physician who helped found the University of Oregon Medical School. Antonio Liberto, a successful concrete contractor, purchased the property in 1911. Liberto helped form a community of families in the area to promote the traditions of their Italian culture, and transformed the hillside property with the addition of vineyards, bread ovens, wine vats, and terraced gardens. The house was listed on the National Historic Register in 1978.

Colony of Victorian Houses, Corbett and Sheridan Street

Several very fine examples of high Victorian design houses are found on both sides of SW Corbett between Sheridan and Baker Streets. They were built on a high overlook on the south side of Marquam Gulch. Baker Street is a short winding street of river stones. It is one of the last unpaved streets in the area. At the SW corner of Corbett and Sheridan, a set of dentures are embedded in the old concrete sidewalk.

Greyhound Bus Station, 2521 SW Water Avenue

Built with an Art-Deco façade, the Greyhound Bus Depot occupies an entire block west of Corbett Avenue. This was the main bus terminal for Greyhound before it moved one block south of the Pioneer Courthouse in downtown.
Lost Landmarks

Schools
Ladd School.
Holman School.
Josiah Failing Grammar School, first building.
Terwilliger School, first building. The first neighborhood school was built in 1869 at the northwest corner of SW Pendleton and Macadam. The school was called “Fulton” and its windows were frosted over in an attempt to keep young minds from wandering. In 1907, the building ceased being used as a school and became a basket factory. A new school was erected nearby in 1916.
Fulton Park School, first building.

Synagogues
Linath Hazzedek, at SW First and Caruthers Streets.
Shaarie Torah, at SW First and Hall Streets.
Ahavath Achim synagogue, destroyed in moving, July 1962.

Churches
Saint Lawrence Catholic Church. SW Third and Sherman Streets.
St. Lawrence was built in 1883. It was to replace the first St. Michaels Church at SW Third and Stark where the Bishop’s House remains. A later St. Michaels was built at Fourth and Mill Streets where it still stands. St. Lawrence was destroyed in the Urban Renewal project. Thus St. Michaels is both predecessor and successor to St. Lawrence.

Cemeteries
There are at least two cemeteries that are identified on early maps of the area. A large one on SW Corbett, north of Bancroft, later became a public park, Terwilliger Playground. And later became the location for a large Red Cross building, which was then sold as private land to Wy’East, and then made into housing by a developer.
Another cemetery, a Jewish one, is noted at the end of the Ross Island Bridge at, roughly, SW Corbett and Woods Streets. In the fall of 2005 this location became an enormous sink hole.

Reservoir, Marquam Gulch, SW Broadway and Grant Streets.
A concrete reservoir and pump house existed at the end of Seventh or Broadway in Marquam Gulch in the 1880s.
Oregon State Penitentiary, Block 106-107. SW Front at Hall Streets

The first state penitentiary was built in 1852 near the river. It remained there for twenty years before the institution was moved to Salem where it continued to grow in size, holding at the end of the Twentieth Century, more prisoners than ever. The first state prison in Portland was built partially on Block 106, land owned by Stephen Coffin who was not aware of its construction on his land. The government had been misled by William King, a man once described as “distinguished by an illuminated nose and a conniving nature.” [Malcolm Clark]

King had personally pressed for the State penitentiary to be built in Portland. He leased block 106 along with his own block 107 for the prison site. The penitentiary was built and Coffin was furious. He refused to sell his block to the state in 1862 and awaited its removal to Salem twenty years later. [MacColl]

Another source states that two earlier wooden structures proved inefficient and that a brick structure was built in 1857. After the penitentiary was relocated to Salem in 1866, H.C. Leonard and Henry D. Green, who operated the Portland water works, bought the dressed stones from the prisoners’ cells to use in one of their reservoirs. In 1867, the State sold the building to the Oregon Iron Works and a few years later, it became the Smith and Watson Iron Works. [Don Nelson]

Espey Boarding House, 2601-2605 S.W. Water Avenue [Demolished]

A relatively rare example of the once common practice of incorporating both commercial and boarding areas into a single structure, the Espey Boarding House takes its name from a carriage works established here in 1890 by William Espey. The two-story building, built in about 1886, was of brick masonry construction and was modestly decorated with ornamentation characteristic to the late 19th Century. The most distinctive feature of the boarding house was the use of "Gibbs surround," a Mannerist era (1520-1600) window framing treatment, consisting of a triple keystone and a surrounding border of protruding stone blocks, which was revived by the "Creative Eclectism" of the 1880's. The large Greyhound Bus Depot was built north of it in the 1920s. It was listed with the National Register of Historic Properties on September 19, 1979 and destroyed within ten years. It has been a vacant lot for almost a quarter of a century. At the foot of Lincoln Street was the sawmill for the Portland Lumber Company which burned in 1929.

Lincoln Power Plant, east end of SW Lincoln Street [Demolished]

North of the shipyards was the Northwestern Electric Company steam plant, a huge concrete structure originally with 180 foot smoke stacks. It was built in 1917-18 by Northwestern Electric Company (merged with Pacific Power and Light in 1947) to produce steam and electricity for downtown Portland. It was sited next to the river to cool its three giant turbine generators with river water. An adjacent sawmill (the Portland Lumber Company which burned down in 1929) provided cheap hog fuel (wood chips) to fire the furnaces. After 1929, fuel for the plant was brought up the river in barges to a dock. In 1967 the plant was
converted to natural gas and its tall stacks and mountain of sawdust disappeared. The steam plant had six sawdust burning steam boilers and a

7,500 kilowatt generator. It piped steam to nearly 700 downtown businesses through 15 miles of underground pipelines and myriad valves. It also provided one third of the city’s electrical power. At one time, a crew of 70 operated the plant. It provided several days of backup power to the city following the Columbus Day storm of 1962, but was finally shutdown completely in 1986.

**U.S. Brewery Building**

This was the first brewery in Portland and was started by a German immigrant.

**Mark Rothko Homes**

The Rothko family lived at 834 Front Street according to the Portland City Directory of 1914. But Portland street numbers changed in the early 1930s. The house at 834 Front was at the intersection of Front and Curry in what is now the 3400 block on Front. This house was torn down when Front Street was widened in 1941. Rothko’s family moved before he began his second school year in the fall of 1914, to a similar two-story wood frame house at 232 Lincoln Avenue. A year later they moved again, this time around the corner to a flat at 538 Second Street, where they lived until after Rothko's graduation from Lincoln High School. Today, along with most of South Portland, all three of the Rothkowitz houses have vanished, the first was lost to the Front Avenue expansion, and the latter two were razed in order to build the twenty-five-story Madison Tower luxury apartments in the South Auditorium Urban Renewal Project.

**St. Mathew’s Episcopal Mission, SW Corbett at Bancroft [Moved to SE]**

Built in 1912 to replace an 1874 Episcopal mission at First and Caruthers which burned in January of 1879. It was built as a parish hall until a church could be built. The Caruthers Mission had been established by Rev. John Rosenberg with the help of the parish’s perpetual deacon of the nineteenth century, James L. Daly who was from Ireland. The simple but elegant treatment of this one room building includes multi-light Tudor arched windows, exposed truss rafters and purloins, ogee arches at the two entry doors and jigsaw motifs. The architects were (Max) Mayer and (Folger) Johnson. The building also served for three other
churches and as a private residence. It was on the corner of the large Terwilliger Playground which extended down to Macadam Avenue. Across Bancroft Street was the Holman Grade School. In 2005, the roof was detached and the entire building was moved across the river in two pieces. Another mission existed on Porter Street between First and Second, was demolished in the 1990s, and is now a parking lot.

**Bockman Scrap Metal**

The large warehouse on Second Avenue, built in 1979, is headquarters for a second generation scrap and junk business. This kind of business was common among recent immigrants and is a real tradition in the neighborhood. The unusual appearance of the warehouse is the result of attempts to make a prefabricated industrial building of the 1970's compatible with the architecture of the surrounding neighborhood. There was a barn owned by the Fox family in this block.

**Smith Mansion, Lair Hill Park**

In 1880, Lair Hill sold the three and one-half acre site to Charles E. Smith, an industrialist who owned an iron foundry on the banks of the Willamette River. Smith's company made much of the cast iron ornamentation which decorated the facades of Portland's commercial buildings. His family built two houses on this land- the first, a relatively modest farmhouse, and the second, an elegant mansion. The latter was designed by Justus Krumbein, a relative who had come to Oregon in 1871 from Homburg, Germany. Krumbein was an influential architect in Oregon who designed the original State Capital building in Salem, the old St. Vincent's Hospital and several large commercial blocks in Portland. Krumbein had designed several well-received buildings in Portland, one of which was next to the Benson house, and most of which are lost. The grounds surrounding the mansion were laid out and planted and the entire site enclosed with a cast iron fence. The Smith family certainly lived quite apart from their neighbors in the more modest cottages just across Second Avenue. Smith resided in the mansion until 1909 when he donated the house and grounds to the Country Hospital, in lieu of attempts by others to purchase the land. Smith wished the private pleasure grounds he had created to remain intact. The First County Hospital made use of the facilities from 1909-1923 in the parlors and bedrooms of the elegant house, and moved to new facilities on Marquam Hill in 1923. A wrecking permit was issued for the old Smith mansion in October, 1923 and by December demolition was nearly completed. When Hill passed away in 1924, the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers lobbied to name the area surrounding the former residence after William Lair Hill. In 1927, the county sold the grounds to the city for $1.00 and it has served as a public park since then.

To the west of Lair Hill Park and on the edge of Marquam Gulch was the oldest barn within the city limits until about 1970 when it was torn down. The Kirschner family barn stood near the corner of Third and Meade. The junk peddlers in the area used it to house their horses and carts. There was another one at SW Second and Grover.
The Children’s Home, SW Corbett between Lane and Gaines. Demolished.  
Several blocks north of the Jewish Shelter Home, was the Children’s Home moved from Couch’s Addition in 1872 to Corbett Street and remained there for 37 years until 1909. “It was created by the Ladies’ Relief Society, a Unitarian organized by Unitarians in 1867 to coordinate numerous city-wide women’s charitable causes. Four years later, they created a Children’s Home for orphans and children abandoned by mothers unable to provide them proper care. It also sheltered temporarily destitute pregnant women. They recruited a board consisting of Ladd, Ainsworth, Failing and Eliot as trustees. The Home,” as it was called, was a grand and stately structure with a central square turret above a large front porch. The property was surrounded by a well fitted stone wall. It enjoyed the highest social standing among Portland’s volunteer institutions. It was the predecessor of the Perry Center.

William Johnson Cabin. SW Macadam and Hood, Whitaker and Gibbs
The original site of the first cabin in the Portland area was on Block 137 in the Caruthers Addition between Macadam Avenue and Hood, and between Whitaker and Curry Streets. The William Johnson Site was marked in 1925 by the Oregon State Society of the Daughters of 1812 with a bronze plaque on a stone monument. In the 1930s, the Society arranged for the City to dedicate the site as “Old Ironsides Park” where a reconstruction of Johnson’s cabin was intended. With the construction of I-5, the monument was moved east to Macadam Avenue.

Fulton
There is no sense of the once active town of Fulton, a working class suburb south of Portland. Its center was at the bottom of Taylor’s Ferry Road. It was comprised of several commercial buildings including it’s own post office. The only remaining commercial building left is the old Fulton Post Office building built in 1868 which still occupies the northwest corner of Macadam and Nevada at 7035 SW Macadam. It is much changed from the original one-story building but still is characteristic of the wood frame commercial buildings of the late 1880’s. It was occupied for many years by Al Speak’s General Store. It is the only large building left of the old town’s business center. Nearly all the industrial and commercial landmarks of old Fulton have vanished including the Jones Lumber Mill warehouse. A small community of homes remains, south of Fulton on Miles Street. On the east side of the river, there are some red paving stones showing through the asphalt where the Sellwood ferry landed. And one may still see the retaining wall of the infamous “White House” at Military Road and Riverwood.

Trinity Presbyterian Church at 6437 SW Virginia was built in about 1910 in the "Akron Style" [Pastor H.B. Eschen]. When the congregation was organized in 1889 it built its first church at 0308 SW Dakota. This building was converted to a residence in 1890. The Dakota Street building bears little resemblance to a church today, except for the steep, high roof and a small window high up on the gable end.
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This history of South Portland is assembled from many sources. Stories and research about the area has been scattered and incoherent. This is the first time that these voices, many of them nameless, have been brought together. I wish to honor each of them. I hope that their voices will not be lost. I am deeply indebted to each of them. I am especially grateful to E. Kimbark McCall, Steven Lowenstein and Charles F. Gould for their work. To all of these sources, I extend my profound gratitude. Without them, the history of South Portland would not exist.

Forse altro cantera con miglior plectio. [Cervantes]

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