

Two Trees and a Railroad Time Almost Forgot



PHOTO COURTESY OF YAKONA NATURE PRESERVE

Above: Yaquina City was the terminus of the Corvallis and Yaquina Bay Railroad.

What do Oregon’s 77th and 82nd Heritage Trees have in common? Historically, a railroad.

Railroad promoter Thomas Egenton Hogg organized the Corvallis and Yaquina Bay Railroad in 1872 (later Oregon Pacific Railroad) with the vision to build a new transcontinental line eastward from the Oregon Coast and provide Corvallis with a railroad connection.

Today, it’s hard to imagine Yaquina Bay competing with cities like Portland for San Francisco’s shipping commerce, but that was Hogg’s vision. After being rejected by the state Congress for a budgetary

allocation to develop the shipping and rail industries in the area, he turned to private investors. His quest for funding took him across the country and the “pond,” during which time he acquired enough money to build a railroad from the spur in Corvallis all the way to the coast. Ultimately, this segment of the railroad was the only piece that was realized.

One of the stops from Corvallis to the coast was Eddyville. Originally known as Little Elk, Eddyville was founded by Israel Fisk Eddy. Eddy settled in the area in 1870 and built a sawmill and gristmill with a small dam on the Yaquina River to supply the power. Why put a gristmill in the middle of tall timber? Eddy likely believed Hogg’s vision that Yaquina Bay would become a major port for shipping grain from Eastern Oregon to a wide market. Local lore tells us Eddy agreed to a depot on his land, but only if it was named Eddyville.

Today, Eddyville is an unincorporated community in Lincoln County. It is here that you can find Oregon’s 77th heritage tree, the Eddyville Redwood. It is 130 feet tall with a 40 foot crown spread and can be accessed on the straight stretch of the north edge of Crystal Creek Road just west of the Eddyville post office. It is believed the Eddyville Redwood was planted by Eddy in 1888 after a horseback trip to California where he returned with several redwood trees.

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Above: The Eddyville Redwood, Oregon’s 77th Heritage Tree

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THE WORK BEHIND THE WORDS

The core focus of the Oregon Historical Marker Program is maintaining the state’s inventory of historical markers. Because the program began in the 1940s and the markers are constructed of wood, the maintenance cycle is constant.

It turns out there’s a benefit to each marker’s limited lifespan. When a marker begins deteriorating due to age and weather, it gives the Oregon Historical Marker Committee a chance to revisit and revise the interpretive text. The committee reevaluates not only the story being told, but who’s vantage point it’s being told from and who else can be brought to the table to help tell the story. The committee asks new questions and finds emerging research.



This past year, the program installed the third iteration of the Willamette Post historical marker, located on OR 219 south of Newberg. The original marker was an early creation in the program’s history and had last been replaced in 2004.

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A Sitka Spruce continued from page 1

Continuing west to Newport, we find Oregon’s 82nd heritage tree on the site of what was once the bustling community of West Yaquina. In 1882, Yaquina City was founded as the terminus for Hogg’s railroad. In 1884, West Yaquina was incorporated on the peninsula directly across the bay from Yaquina City, promising future home sites for wealthy investors in Hogg’s railroad - a Martha’s Vineyard of the west. New homes and a school were built. A ferry service ran between Yaquina City, West Yaquina, and Newport. In 1888, 144 ships were entering and leaving Yaquina Bay annually making the trip to San Francisco. In the early 1890s the area was the largest population center in Lincoln County.

The prosperity didn’t last. By the mid-1890s the boom days were over. After two of Hogg’s major ships sank, he was bankrupted and the ownership of his

railroad passed to Southern Pacific Company. By World War II the terminus of the rail line moved to Toledo and the tracks to Yaquina City were removed. Roughly 20 years later, the population dropped to 0.

Today Yaquina City is known locally as Sawyer’s Landing, and the site that was West Yaquina is now part of the Yakona Nature Preserve. It is here you will find Oregon’s 82nd heritage tree, a 158 ft tall, 200 year-old Sitka Spruce, standing over what was once Water Street. Few remnants of the ghost town remain, but two 30 ft wells serve as archaeological evidence of what was once here.

The West Yaquina Sitka Spruce can be accessed by a 3-mile hike from the entry point at SE 40th / Harborton Road in Newport, Oregon or by contacting the Yakona Nature Preserve to arrange a free tour.



Above: The West Yaquina Sitka Spruce, Oregon’s 82nd Heritage Tree

Philomath Community Commemorates Untold History



Left to right: Eric Niemann, former mayor; Roger Blaine, nominator; Jessica Andrade, city councilor; Marilyn Keller, vocalist; Alex Johnson II, Albany mayor; Bob Garcia, Travel Information Council chair; Chas Jones, Philomath mayor; Zachary Stocks, Oregon Black Pioneers executive director, and Jason Dorsette, Linn Benton NAACP president at the Shipley Family Homestead dedication.

A meaningful part of our heritage programs is the public dedication when a project comes to completion. Committee members and project partners unveil the final product and reflect on the meaning behind the work.

Last summer, 150 members of the Philomath community gathered to dedicate the state’s newest historical marker about Reuben & Mary Jane Shipley.

The marker tells the story of Mt. Union Cemetery, located adjacent to the City of Philomath, that is situated on land once belonging to the Shipley family. Reuben was born into slavery in Kentucky and was brought to Oregon by his owner Robert Shipley in 1853. In return for driving the family wagon across the continent, Robert granted Reuben his freedom. Reuben worked for Eldridge Hartless and purchased 101 acres of Christian Bales’ homestead.

In 1857, Reuben Shipley married sixteen-year-old Mary Jane Holmes. The couple raised six children and were active members of Plymouth, an agricultural community near present-day Philomath. In

1861, Reuben deeded two acres to create Mt. Union Cemetery on condition that Blacks be allowed to be buried there as well as Whites. Reuben was buried there in 1872 under his eldest son Edward’s chosen surname of “Ficklin.” Mary Jane lived until 1926 and is buried beside Reuben, along with four of their children.

The Shipley story recognizes Oregon’s complex history with Black residents and the resilience of early Black settlers. At the August dedication, speakers illustrated that the Philomath community embraced telling the Shipley family story as a way to think critically about who they are today.

“It is our hope that telling these stories will give a more complete picture of our community’s past and offer a guide for our future.”

Jessica Andrade, city councilor and chair of the city’s Inclusivity Committee thanked everyone involved with the project. “We hope this is just a first step in our city’s

effort to honor our diverse, vibrant and sometimes difficult past,” Andrade said. “Many community members have shaped this area for centuries and their stories are far too often left untold. It is our hope that telling these stories will give a more complete picture of our community’s past and offer a guide for our future.”

Alex Johnson, Albany mayor and president of the Oregon League of Black Cities shared his life experiences.

Zachary Stocks, executive director of Oregon Black Pioneers described the significance of the Shipley Family marker: “At Oregon Black Pioneers, we are proud to honor the Black Oregonians who made a life for themselves and their families during the years of legalized Black exclusion. The story of Reuben and Mary Jane Shipley represents the courage and perseverance of all 19th century Black pioneers, particularly in their achievements after their freedom was realized.”

Additional speakers included Mayor Chas Jones, Linn Benton County NAACP President Jason Dorsette, Travel Information Council Chair Bob Garcia, and Roger Blaine, member of the nominating group. The program concluded with the vocal talents of Marilyn Keller who sang “Lift Every Voice and Sing” and “Amazing Grace.”



The Shipley Family Homestead marker is located at the intersections of the Newton and James Streets in Philomath. The marker was initiated by the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Corvallis, and the project team included representatives from Mt Union Cemetery, the Corvallis chapter of the NAACP, Oregon Black Pioneers, Oregon State University, and the Oregon Historical Marker Committee.

Some Early Efforts at Documenting Heritage Trees

By Dave Hedberg, Environmental Historian, Oregon Heritage Tree Committee Vice-chair

Have you ever gazed at an old tree that connected you to people long ago?

All of Oregon’s Heritage Trees are deeply connected to people of the past. Whether it’s the specific person who planted and cared for them, or the countless individuals who visit them for inspiration, we are all preserving heritage trees when we honor them with a visit.

I recently came across a series of photographs at the National Archives by George E. Griffith, a photographer and public relations official with the U.S. Forest Service. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s Griffith took part in a national effort to identify and document Historic Trees in the National Forests. This work was

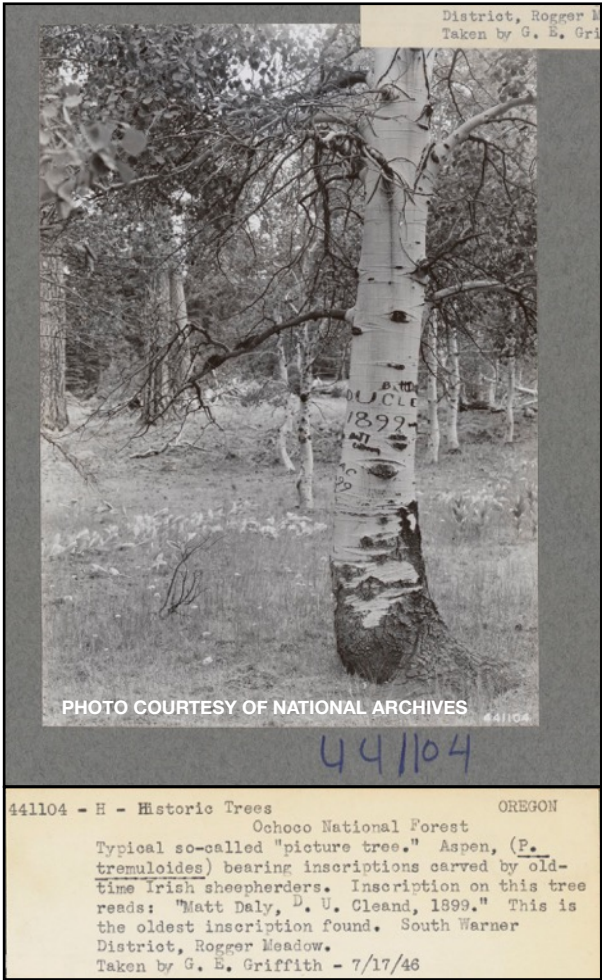
important both to record historically significant trees and to help direct visitors to opportunities for tourism and recreation. Griffith’s photographs were taken long before the Oregon Heritage Tree Program was established in 1995, but his photos directly relate to several trees in the program. We are not the first people to be inspired by historic trees!

Griffith visited a large Ponderosa pine in August of 1946 and captured the enormity of the tree's trunk circumference as three tourists posed at its base. At the time, Griffith claimed the tree was the biggest pine in the National Forest. Today we know it is officially the largest Ponderosa Pine by circumference in the world, measuring 162 feet tall and 28.9 feet in circumference! “The Big Tree,” an official Oregon Heritage Tree, is located in La Pine State Park. At over 500 years old, its tree rings tell the story of countless fires practiced by Indigenous land stewards centuries before Oregon became a state. More recently, its rings tell the story of a changing climate.

In August of 1946, Griffith visited and photographed another storied Oregon tree: an Aspen arborglyph located in southeast Oregon. Shepherders commonly carved messages to each other in the soft bark of aspen trees as they led their herds across the Great Basin of Oregon, Nevada, and Idaho. Always traveling with their livestock, herders often lived solitary lives and the messages and pictures they left in the tree bark were ways to communicate and connect with each other. While most of the sheep herders were of Basque heritage, Griffith’s photo of a tree inscribed 'Matt Daly, D. U. Cleand 1899,' suggests these particular herders were Irish.

Because Aspen trees do not typically live more than 200 years, it is rare to find an arborglyph from the 1800s today. Griffith

noted the 1899 arborglyph was the oldest he could find. Though it is unclear if that particular tree is still alive, the Oregon Heritage Tree Program recognizes a



fantastic grove of Aspen arborglyphs near Fish Lake in the Steens Mountains. This grove of arborglyphs dates to the mid-twentieth century when Basque shepherders worked the area.

Through the power of capturing a moment, Griffith’s photographs help us see what our heritage trees looked like over half a century ago. These historic images serve as reminders that our enjoyment of trees connects us with our history, and on a deeper level, it should remind us of our responsibility to ensure future generations have similar opportunities.



Heritage Tree Award Winner

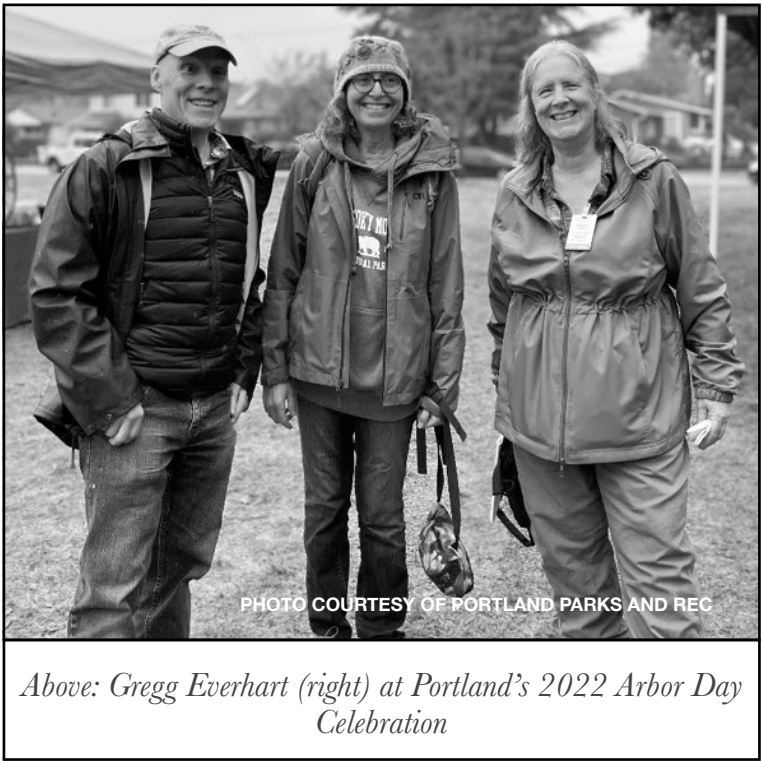
The Heritage Tree Hero of the Year Award recognizes individuals and groups who are engaging communities through education about the importance of trees and raising awareness about Oregon’s history told through trees and forests.

Congratulations to **Gregg Everhart** of Portland for receiving a 2023 Heritage Tree Hero of the Year Award!

Gregg is a long-time member and former chair of Portland’s Heritage Tree Committee and previously served on Portland’s Urban Forestry Commission. Gregg is known as an excellent communicator and gifted storyteller who is able to weave history into horticultural observation and share the “wow factor” of a tree’s value with her audience. In her years with the Portland Heritage Tree Committee, Gregg has personally reviewed hundreds of nominations and

has helped bring nearly 70 new designations into the program. She also stands out for conducting focused outreach to educate the community on why expanding and preserving the urban forest in historically vulnerable, low-income areas is vital to public health. The result of her work preserves not only a piece of Portland history, but also the space for large trees to grow within Portland’s ever changing landscape.

Thank you for promoting the appreciation of trees and educating the public about the value of heritage trees!



The Work Behind the Words continued



Above: Original Willamette Post Marker circa the 1940s.

The newest 2022 version was reviewed by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and includes information about the Kalapuyan village of Champoeg as well as the full name and ancestry of the woman who made the fort her home in the 1830s.

Once the text was complete, the wood for the marker was prepared by the Salemtowne volunteers. After routing the text at the ODOT sign shop, the volunteers applied numerous coats of paint and stain to protect the letters and sign from the weather. This is labor-intensive work they have mastered. They then assembled the sign, and the TIC Sign Crew transported and installed the marker outside of Newberg.

Thank you to all the Historical Marker Committee members and the Salemtowne Volunteers for your excellent work!

2022 Heritage Programs Yearbook



(1) Beaver Hill Mine historical marker dedication in Coquille. (2) Heritage Tree Committee members at PSU Copper Beech dedication. (3) Architect George Crandall (center) with Dave Hedberg and Ed Washington of the Heritage Tree Committee. (4) Historical Marker Committee members visit Klamath Tribal Headquarters in Chiloquin, (5) Al Tocchini of the Heritage Tree Committee measures a prospective tree. (6) TIC Chair Bob Garcia, TIC Councilor Ed Washington & Executive Director Elizabeth Boxall at Beaver Hill Mine dedication. (7) Heritage Tree Chair Craig Leech conducts maintenance at the Grove of the States.

Heritage Committees

Heritage Tree Members:

- Nancy Appling
- Scott Brown
- David-Paul Hedberg
- Jennifer Karps
- Craig Leech (Chair)
- Charlotte Lehan
- Molly McKnight
- Arne Nyberg
- Kristin Ramstad
- Richard Riggs
- Al Tocchini
- Ed Washington
- Samantha Wolf

Historical Marker Members:

- Gwenn Baldwin
- Barbara Bonnem
- Kelly Cannon-Miller
- Eliza Canty-Jones
- Nancy DeSouza
- Robert Garcia
- Sarah Jalving
- Robert Olguin
- David Porter (Chair)
- Ed Washington

Salemtowne Volunteers:

- Alan Avery
- Jack Carroll (Foreman)
- Kenn Carter
- James Childers
- Donald Conrad, Jr.
- Richard DuBois
- Stan Gregory
- John Mangini
- Herman Mitzel
- Howard Palmer
- Leonard Shultz
- Owen Stockard

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The Oregon Historical Marker and Oregon Heritage Tree Programs are administered by the Travel Information Council.

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