TIMEIMAGE

Neighborhood History Project
Bureau of Parks and Recreation

Autumn 1978

Cover photo: Captain John Kern residence was located on S.E. Powell.
Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society.

TIMEIMAGE: Reflections of Portland

THE NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY PROJECT
BUREAU OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PORTLAND, OREGON

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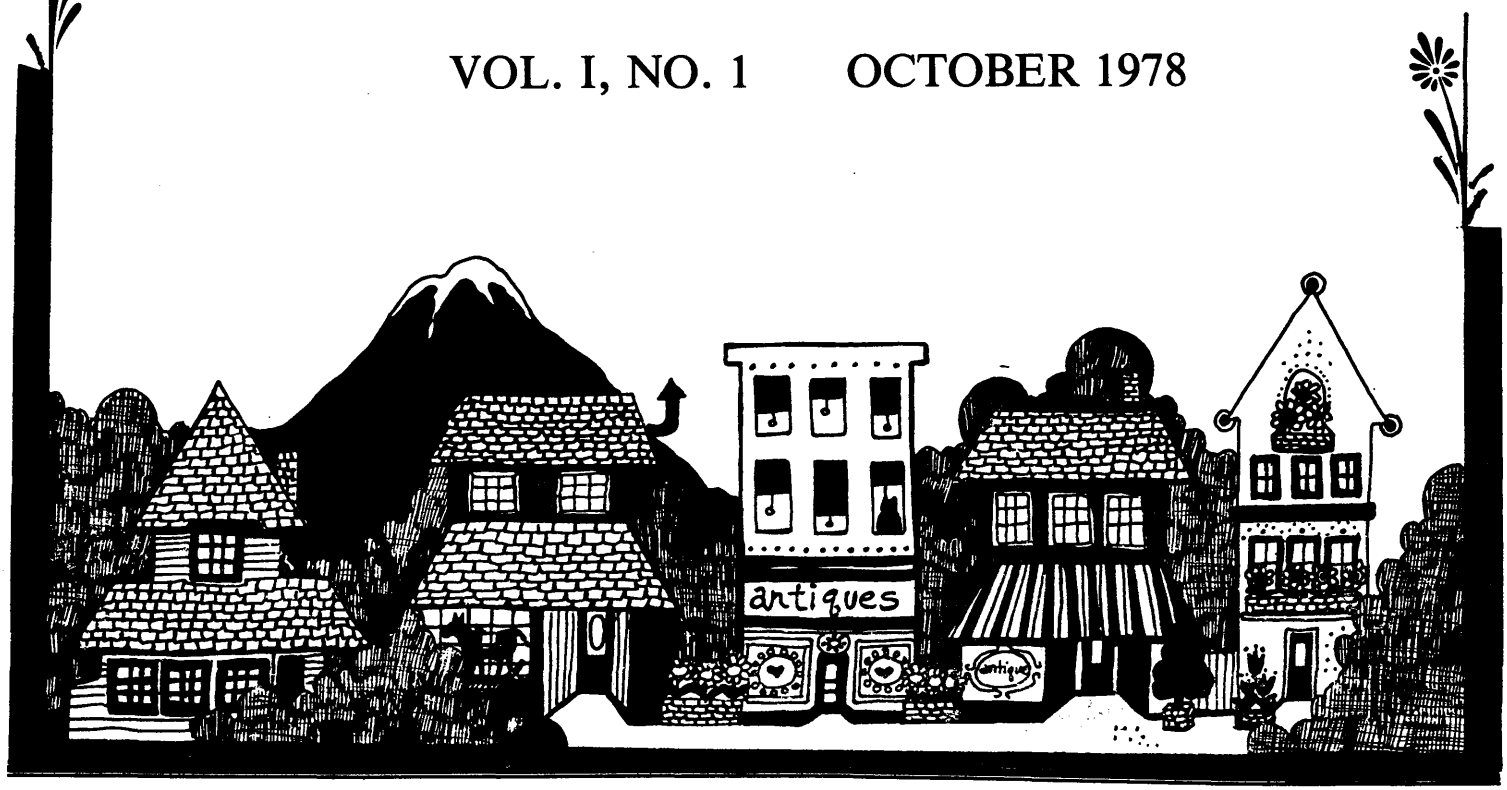
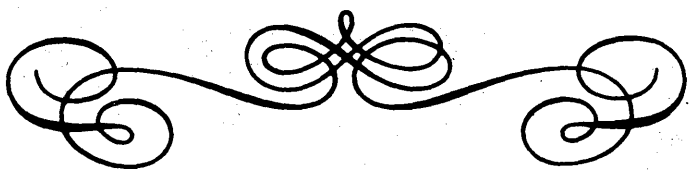


TABLE OF CONTENTS



Neighborhood History
Project
2200 N.E. 24th
Portland, Ore. 97212
Oct. 3, 1978

ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY PROJECT:

The purpose of the Park Bureau's Neighborhood History Project is to gather and distribute information concerning the history of Portland's neighborhoods. It is our belief that through a better appreciation of neighborhood history a sense of community can be preserved among established residents and fostered among the young and the newly arrived. A sense of neighborliness, in part, depends upon an appreciation for the distinctive features of one's neighborhood; features that tend to create bonds between neighbors as well.

Portland has within its boundaries over sixty communities with a distinct identity, each one unique and special. Five districts were once separate, incorporated cities. It is the Neighborhood History Project's goal to gather the bits and pieces that reveal the special character and history of these communities and, with the help of volunteers and residents, make this heritage known.

The result of our efforts to date has been a collection of oral history tapes, vintage photographs, five slide presentations, miscellaneous documents and a deepened appreciation for neighborhoods among many Portlanders. These materials housed in neighborhood centers and the Neighborhood History Project office, have been collected by volunteers, community groups and schoolchildren, and are available to the public. Training sessions on oral history interviewing and research techniques are available as well.

With the introduction of this yearly magazine, TimeImage, to Portland, neighborhood historians and concerned residents will have a forum to share their discoveries and introduce issues affecting their neighborhoods. This first issue of TimeImage highlights a few significant people, places and things that comprise historically significant communities in Portland. We hope you will enjoy this issue and look for those following.

Lana Danaher
Project Director

Portland Parks and Recreation

THE STORY OF AMOS NAHUM KING

by Dean S. Smith

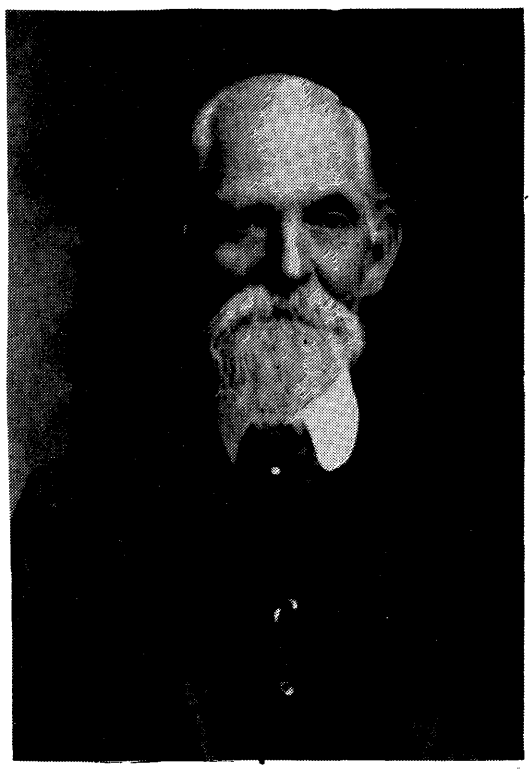
At the height of the gold fever in the spring of 1849, when Portland was but a struggling town, two men anxiously disposed of their holdings and hurried off to the California Mother Lode in pursuit of quick riches. Thus it was the lure of gold that enabled an assidous, but little-known, businessman named Amos Nahum King to make a purchase that would assure him a lasting place in Portland history.

As was the case with many men of his time, King's acquisition of 513 acres of wooded West Portland hillside was more fortuitous than provident. The plot was rugged and removed from the tiny town along the river, though less than two miles separated the two. Only a rudimentary tannery and a cabin or two occupied the sprawling claim. In time, it was to make the hard-working King one of Oregon's first wealthy men.

Although he operated the tannery--one of the few in the West and the only one at that time in the Pacific Northwest--for more than a dozen years, King's real wealth resulted from the land he had taken over from the gold-hungry partners Apperson[1] and Balance. By the 1890's, his claim became the first fashionable residential district in the West Hills. Today, the historic Kings' Hill neighborhood, as well as the Kings' Heights area above Northwest Portland, are legacies to King and his descendants.

At eighteen, young Amos moved with his family to Missouri where he cultivated a skill, that of a ferryman. Combined with an early knowledge of tanning, the experience he gained on the Missouri River would contribute to his arrival in Portland and the nest egg he used to obtain his land. After three years of moving man, beast, and cargo on the Missouri, a spring freshet swept away his ferry and docks on both sides of the river, thus ending King's three-year-old enterprise.

In the same year, King and his family made a decision to go West and set off on an adventurous trip to Oregon. The long journey with his parents, five sisters and three brothers proved fateful as the train of about 100 wagons made a perilous journey across deserts, the rugged Rockies and many wild and swollen streams. Along the way, King's brother died of mountain fever as did his brother's wife a few days later. They were buried along the Old Oregon Trail.



Portrait of Amos King. Photo courtesy of King's Hill History Project

[1]Some accounts have the name Aberson, Ebson or Aperson. It is unclear which is correct.

One particulary harrowing aspect was described as a "desperate trip" through Meek's cutoff, a shortcut from the Snake River to The Dalles. Like other parties attempting the crossing, the King party wandered around in the Eastern Oregon deserts for weeks before they finally located their destination. At The Dalles, the party built a number of pine rafts upon which they floated until forced to make portage at the cascades, where now the town of Cascade Locks is located. Transferring to small boats, the group pressed on to Linnton.

Along with a family named Fuller, the Kings ignored Portland and travelled south to Forest Grove for the winter of 1845-46. During the following year the family settled in an area on the Luckimute River near Corvallis. The valley where they settled is now known as King's Valley. In a feature article for the 50th anniversary edition of The Oregonian, a year before his death, King wrote:

"Up in King's valley I early began to hear stories about the profits and dangers of boating on the rivers from Oregon City to Vancouver. Every once in awhile somebody was drowned in the Clackamas rapids, or a boat was capsized and her cargo lost. I had had some experience in that sort of work on the Missouri and I concluded that I would try it.

So I came down the river, got a boat, and went out to have a look at the Clackamas rapids. I was two or three miles below Oregon City and I met a boat with a man in it. 'Say,' I said, 'How far is it to Clackamas rapids?' 'Why, you've passed them,' said he. So I had and I didn't know it."

Thereupon, King invested in a flat-bottomed ferryboat and began a short,

Amos King and family members. Photo courtesy of King's Hill History Project

but successful, endeavor to compete with other boats which carried goods up and down the rapids and occasionally, above the falls at Oregon City. King wrote:

"There were three boats then plying from Vancouver to Oregon City; no steamboats, mind. The first trip I made nothing and the second netted me two dollars. Then one new boat drew off, and then another, until I had the business pretty much to myself. You see, I never tipped a boat over or wet anybody's goods.

Then I got another boat above the falls, and so I had through service from Vancouver to Yamhill. This was before the days of the Oregon City locks and we had to pack goods around the falls on our back. It took about two weeks to make the through trip, though, if everything went well, we made it quicker. I was so prosperous that I had a crew of two in my bateau. Usually we didn't stop long at Portland. There wasn't much in Portland in those days."

There wasn't much there in 1849, either when Amos, at 27, decided to try his luck. Nevertheless, the town was beginning to show some signs of prosperity. King attempted to buy some blankets at Crosby's store at First and Washington Streets, but he had to wait for three days to get waited on, business was so brisk. King wrote:

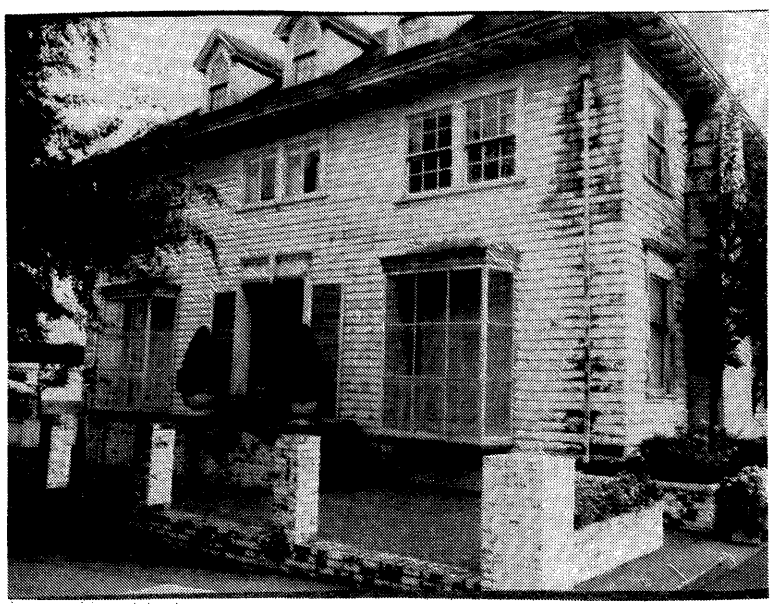
> "I bought the tannery from the two partners who wanted to go to California. That was in 1849 and the gold excitement was at its height. I bought the whole outfit just as it stood; hides, leather in hand, tools--everything. Off went Ebson and Balance. In a year or two Balance came back broke and went to work for me until he got enough money to go to Jacksonville to work in the mines."

King found himself with a monopoly. His tannery, built in 1845 by another noted Portland pioneer, Daniel H. Lownsdale, was the only one operating in the Northwest. Anyone wishing to be other than barefoot for winter had to obtain leather from him. Cattle were so scarce at the time that most of King's hides were deer. "Everybody wore buckskin--buckskin coat, buckskin jacket and buckskin breeches, all home-made," he said.

Using a broadaxe, King built new vats large enough to handle a fully-stretched cowhide. To produce tanning compound, he ground hemlock bark in a machine powered by horses and mixed it with water from Tanner Creek, named in honor of the tannery. The hemlock process required hides to stay immersed for up to a year, and thus, King had to have many vats. They covered about an acre of land where the Civic Stadium, and the Multnomah Athletic field before that, now stands. The vats were never removed, and no doubt continue to rest in good condition somewhere below the ground.

In 1846, King married Melinda Fuller, a vigorous pioneer woman whose family had accompanied the Kings for the westward journey. Mrs. King reached a weight of 336 pounds in her adulthood, but her strength and hard work were legendary. She was said to be able to lift a 50-pound sack of flour and hold it out at arms's length.

> "She was one of the strongest women I ever saw," said her admiring son, Nahum. "If anybody got gay with her she could slam them into the middle of next week. She was awfully good-hearted and jolly, but she believed in having her children do what she told them to, and after we had felt the weight of her hand a time or two, we generally minded."



Edward King residence, S.W. King & Yamhill. courtesy of King's Hill History Project.

Amos and Melinda settled into the family home near the tannery at a location approximately where the Miller and Tracey Funeral Home now stands. Amos was proud of having lived in the same home for nearly 50 years. For the first six years, home was a nearby cabin where the first three children were born. The couple had six children in all, two of whom died at early ages.

Amos King's first civic gesture was to sell 40.78 acres of land to the City of Portland for $32,624. The land became the nucleus for Washington Park, which later was expanded to the south and west. Even in those days, the $800 per acre was considered a bargain. The year was 1871.

By that time the family was selling off portions of the original land claim, which had stretched form what is now N.W. Lovejoy to S.W. Jefferson Streets. The eastern boundary was roughly along S.W.18th Avenue and the western extremities extended well into the area of Washington Park. Both of the King sons, Nahum and Edward, built homes on the family claim. Other offspring also lived in handsome homes on Kings' Hill, but only one of the homes remain--the Edward King residence at S.W.King Avenue and Yamhill Street. Today, its exterior is in some disrepair and has been slightly modified.

Following the death of Melinda in 1887, the various King heirs formed the King Real Estate Association, succeeded in 1901, when Amos died, by the King Estate. As land values continued to rise, the family and subsequent real estate companies sold off holdings. At first the plots were quite large, but they became smaller and smaller. Well-known Portland merchants, such as Lipman and Wolfe, built homes in the late 1800's. A prominent early physician, Dr. C.W. Cornelius, lived in a house that still stands at 2182 S.W. Yamhill Street and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In all, ten landmarks remain in the neighborhood, including the Wilcox Mansion, Hexter House, L.A. Lewis House, McCamant House, MacKenzie House, Barde Home and the Honeyman House. Two other designated landmarks are the Town Club and Zion Lutheran Church. A large number of other buildings in the neighborhood are considered designable as historic landmarks.

When Amos N. King died on November 11, 1901, he left behind much more than his imprint on Kings' Hill. He had many mourners, including some of Portland's most prominent businessmen. Many of those same people had profited from King's counsel. Benton Killin, a lifelong friend, once said of him: "When Amos King gave his advice about anything, you can be sure that it is the advice to be followed. I know of no man in Portland who has sounder or clearer judgement."

King had lived to the age of 79 and had spent 52 of those years in Portland. Just before his death he could have boasted at being the only remaining Portlander whose name appeared in the first edition of The Oregonian in 1850. He had helped create one of the city's loveliest parks and had turned over property for the old Exposition Hall, a huge facility at West Burnside and Southwest 18th Avenue that was a landmark and source of civic pride at the time.

During the latter part of his life, he had looked after his extensive property interests, never losing sight of the value of well-kept neighborhoods. An account after his death said that he was often seen by Kings' Hill residents "with spade in hand, correcting the faults in a street improvement due to the carelessness of city workmen." Almost to the day of his death he would make certain that the winter downpours would not overflow choked sewers and damage property.

Amos Nahum King was, in every sense, one of Portland's most prominent pioneers.

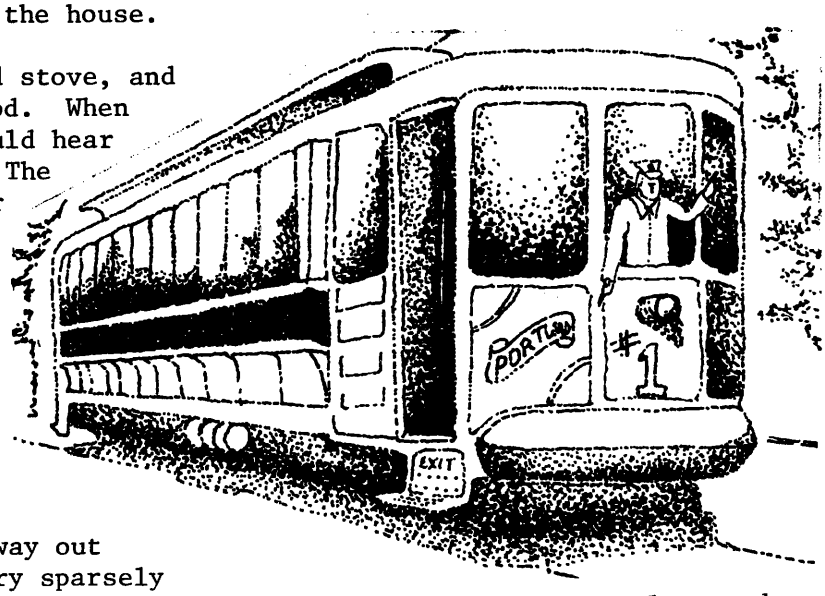
Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society.

Early Days in the Buckman Neighborhood

by Thomas McPherson

AUTHOR'S NOTE: It was just one year ago that I happened to receive a telephone call from my father's cousin, Ione Lewis Mark. The call was intended as a birthday greeting to my father who was out of town, and I was house-sitting. At that time my father's family seemed an impossibly complex maze of relations. All I really knew about Ione was that her grandparents were my great-grandparents who had been covered-wagon pioneers to the Oregon Territory way back when. That fortunate phone call introduced me to my ancestry, a discovery which has enriched my life. Ione is one of those rare individuals gifted with a keen memory, deep compassion, and a natural sense of poetry expressed in her everyday speech. The following are her words, rearranged only a little. These are the experiences of an almost forgotten time before two world wars, a time of simple virtues and congenial intimacy when little girls in blue sunbonnets breathed only fresh air and downtown Portland made room for circus elephants on parade.....

I was born in 1890, November 13. I guess I was 87 my last birthday. We lived in the old home at 604 East Ankeny Street (now 1516 S.E. Ankeny). The house was just a five-room cottage when I was born. The three front rooms were connected by double doors of Southern Oregon pine. My father had that lumber sent all the way from Southern Oregon when he built the house.



The house was heated by a wood stove, and every fall Dad would order cord-wood. When the wood-saw men would come you could hear the saws going all over the city. The sound marked the season. My father watched carefully to see that they didn't cheat him by leaving little holes in the wood pile. He was a scrupulous man, Treasurer of Multnomah County for 40 years, elected by Democrats and Republicans alike. He was called "Honest John". Never lost a penny for the county!

From our house we could look way out over the Buckman area. It was very sparsely populated. The Buckman's had a house way out on Buckman field between our place and where the Lloyd Center is now. Dr. Humphrey had a house right across from us, and the house next door was there, but most of the houses were built later. There wasn't any Laurelhurst in those days, and past 40th Avenue you were practically breathing mountain air!

Everyone had wooden sidewalks, if they had sidewalks at all, and there were lots of horses around. The vegetable man came in a horse-drawn cart. Later, the streetcars were put in on Ankeny Street and it sounded like the streetcar was going to run right into our upper·bedroom. Dad was on the first streetcar that ever went down Ankeny Street. He and another man whooped and hollered and waved their hats.

The streetcar fare was just five cents, and so was a loaf of bread. My mother baked her own, but if she ran out she would send us down to Keeley's, a little papa-mama store on 12th and Ash. We kids would start picking at that loaf, and there would be a big hole in it by the time we would get home.

Portland was a colorful town in those days. The circus had its tents on the Buckman fields, and the Barnum and Bailey parade of elephants went right through the downtown district. There were gypsies who camped in nearby fields.

We were sort of a clan, the McPhersons. There was my mother's brother, Uncle Lee, who lived at 673 East Ash Street; there was Aunt Pearl, who lived on S.E. Ankeny and 21st; there was Aunt Kate, who lived on N.W. Lovejoy; Anna Moore, who lived around S.E. 9th and Pine; Uncle Edward, and many others. Oh and we had fun together! We had costume parties and birthday parties and we never had alcohol at any of our homes. Our social life revolved around the church, the school and the home. If we ever had to walk past any of the saloons downtown, Mama would pick up her skirts and grab us kids and hustle past.

My father didn't smoke or anything of the kind, but he liked to chew gum. One time Uncle Lee made up a limerick about him which ended each verse with the line, "But he wouldn't get to heaven 'cause he did chew gum". When I heard it, I beat it right to my father and told him, so he made up a poem to spring on Uncle Lee.

My father and Uncle Lee were great talkers and they used to argue politics in quite strident terms. They didn't agree half the time, and that was the fun of it. I can hear Dad say, "I tell you, Lee..." and then Uncle Lee would say, "I don't know, John...". One day Uncle Lee dropped by after work. My father wasn't home yet, so he climbed the old cherry tree in the back yard and just ate and ate. Pretty soon Dad came home and Uncle Lee said, "John, I sure had a good feed on those cherries". Dad said, "Lee, those cherries are wormy"! He just turned green. The irony of it was that the tree was called a "Black Republican".

I taught school for five years and with money I had saved I bought an oak porch swing. It cost about $9 and that was a whole lot of money. It was on that porch swing, on the front porch on Ankeny Street, that Dallas proposed to me. I had met him at a Sunday School class at the Centennary Church. I had a very pretty red umbrella, and he said he followed my red umbrella home. When we were married in 1919 there were aproximately 200 cars in the city of Portland but I asked for and got a white taxicab for going away.

I have lived through the most wonderful age! We started with coal oil lamps, then we got gas lamps with open flames we lit with a match. Then there was the gas stove, then electricity, and oil heat. We have seen the arrival of the radio, television, and the airplane. Dallas came home one night and his eyes were just like stars. He had been up in an airplane that had circled the city!

THE DECLINE OF NEIGHBORHOOD MARKETS IN NORTHEAST PORTLAND

by Eileen Berdon

Revised by Lana Danaher

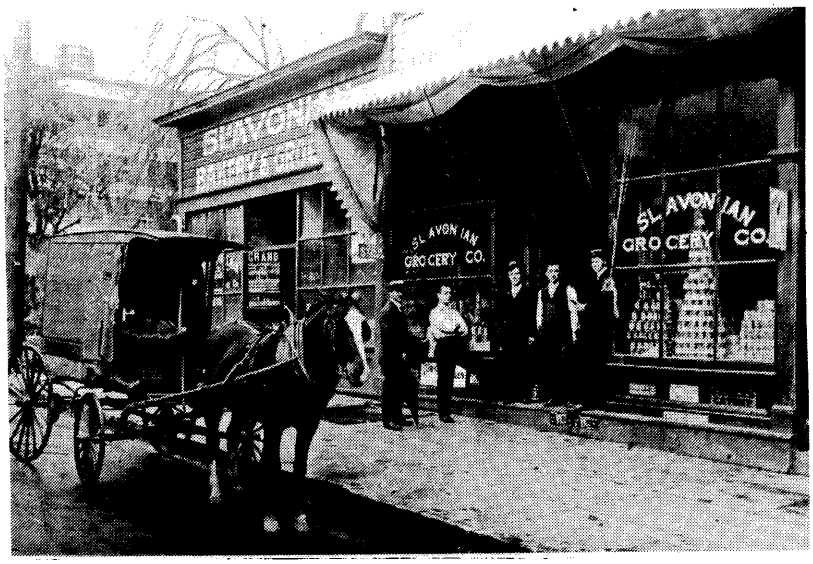
EDITOR'S NOTE: The neighborhood store, so valued in the past for its personalized services and as a social gathering spot for friends and neighbors, has gradually faded from view. Yet, small scale businesses are still an indicator of a neighborhood's vitality and stability. This article examines the role of the neighborhood store and how it came to be replaced with the supermarket.

This article examines the evolution and decline of the once popular "Mom and Pop" stores in Northeast Portland. The area studied comprised eight square miles, bounded by Killingsworth to the north, East Burnside to the south, 82nd to the east, and Union Avenue to the west. An examination of these independently owned and operated stores, since replaced by large corporations, will be an aid in tracing the changes having occurred since 1900 in this area of Portland.

In 1900 there were ten grocers in the area. They were located only on Union and Grand Avenues, reflecting the gradual eastward expansion from Albina. The building boom had started by 1910 when forty-six grocers had shops on the busiest streets in the area. The majority of food markets were located in clusters with other retail establishments. Union Avenue, Alberta Street and Glisan Street in the Montavilla neighborhood were dotted with butcher shops, bakeries, cafes, hardware stores, shoemakers, and confectioners. Until the twenties, specialization was the

Union Avenue business district, circa 1920's. Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society.

rule. Busier corners often had two grocers next to each other with a third across the street. Perhaps one sold better vegetables, another cheaper flour, and still another served the German immigrant population. In those days it was not unusual to shop at three or more stores for the family's food. Since refrigeration was not then widely available, shopping trips had to be made frequently, often each day.



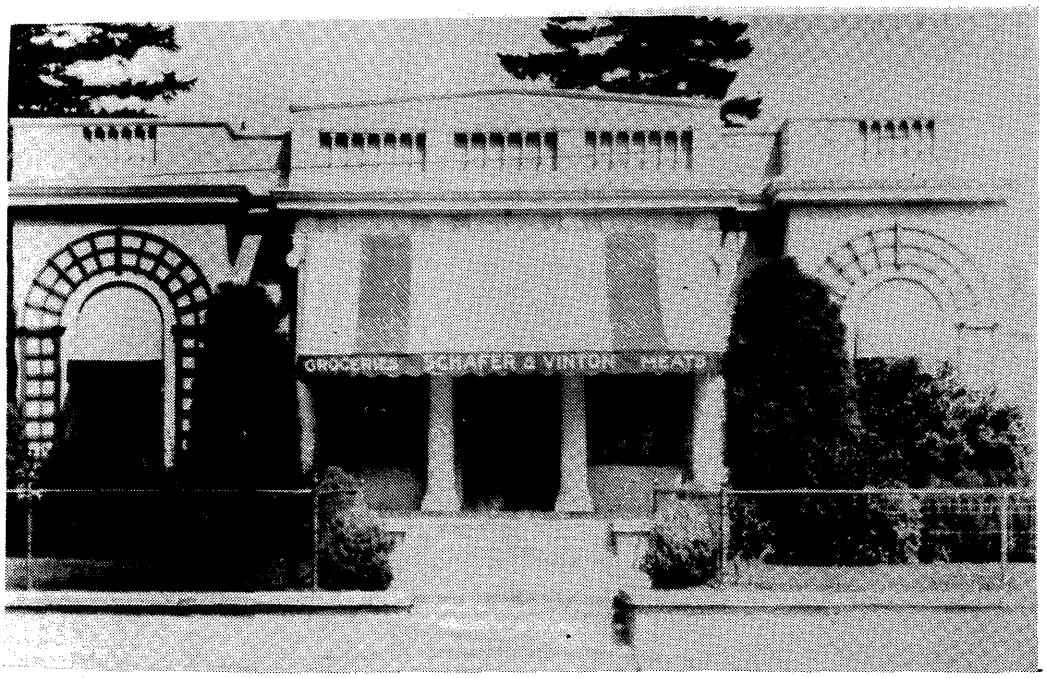
Slavonian grocery, c.1910. Groceries serving immigrant population were once common. Photo courtesy of James Spassov.

Most of this area was developed with the automobile in mind with wide, paved streets and garages. Although sharing the nation's growing infatuation with the automobile, people were not yet dependent on cars for shopping. The location of small stores was still an indication of pedestrian traffic flow, especially since women shoppers tended to walk the few blocks to the store. As homes were built further from retail districts and main traffic arteries, home delivery of groceries became an even more important service to these pedestrian shoppers.

By 1920 there were 95 grocery stores in the study area, more than double the 1910 figure. Union Avenue's commercial growth continued and Sandy Boulevard became dotted with retail establishments of all types, extending out as far as 82nd Avenue. The districts, with little or no commercial development, Irvington, Alameda, and Laurelhurst, relied heavily on home delivery of services generally offered to the neighborhood households in those days.

Since owners lived close to their stores, their names reflected the ethnic composition of the community. The surnames of the owners reveal the Scottish, German, English, and other European backgrounds then common to the area. In the late 1920's Eastern European names began to appear more frequently because of the increased settlement into the area of Russian and Jewish immigrants.

During the twenties a curious change occurred in the grocery business. Whether as an expression of mercantilist idealism or as a response to increased entry into a seemingly saturated market, stores began to drop the names of the owners and adopt such modernized names as Square Deal, Right Way, Fair Way, and the somewhat sinister pun, Better Buy. Often these were new entrants into the community such as Safeway, which emerged along with the lightheartedly christened Piggly-Wiggly as a dominant chain store company. By the mid-twenties there were grocery stores within walking distance of every sector of the study area excepting Alameda and the undeveloped residential area further east. The Depression caused the bankruptcy of many small businesses, grocery stores included. However, these were good years for the Safeway organization which was able to buy out faltering grocery stores. By 1940 there were over seventy Safeway stores citywide.



Schafer & Vinton's at N.E. 15th & Brazee, was designed to look like a residence. It has since been remodelled as a Thriftway store.

During the Depression the independent store continued to provide such essential services as home delivery and the extension of credit. Some were even able to maintain immaculate appearance despite hard times. The July 15, 1931 Oregonian, in a characteristically cheerful story describes "Schafer and Vinton's modern grocery store" and remarked how it had been designed to resemble a residence. It was located in the Irvington district which also boasted a "bungalow type of fire station" on N.E. 24th. The number of independent grocery stores peaked in 1942 at 176. There was one such store an average of every five blocks in any direction throughout the study area.

Through the fifties the "supermarket" increased in numbers and the effects of these stores became visible in the area. Independent grocers were squeezed out of business at a brisk pace through the fifties, so that by 1960 there were half the grocers there were in 1950. Similarly other retail establishments also faded away during this period--candy stores, bakeries, drug stores, and so on.

The disappearance of these stores in this period was a result of the entry into the community of the larger supermarket. A good example of this was the Glisan Street area, east of Laurelhurst, that lost most of its diverse retail establishments to the more competitive and larger retailers located within driving distance. The Hollywood district appears to be a fairly cohesive retail area, but until the fifties, it stretched five or six blocks furthur in two directions. By 1960, six separate chain supermarket corporations controlled sixteen stores in the study area. Except for several particularly well-located independents, the supermarket became dominant. By 1960 there were 2.2 persons for every car and supermarkets were being built fronted and sometimes surrounded by extensive parking areas. The emergence of the automobile can be seen as strongly correlating to the decline of the neighborhood commercial systems

Fred Meyer's first suburban store, located in the Hollywood District. It was first to offer off-street parking. Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society.

that included the neighborhood grocery.

The number of independent grocery stores continued to decline in the seventies. In 1975 there were 23 independent grocery stores and thirty chain stores representing twelve chains. The "convenience" stores such as Seven-Eleven and Plaid Pantry have also multiplied. Most of the independents, like the convenience stores, do their briskest business in beer and wine, cigarettes, and after-school snacks. In most other areas of grocery trade the supermarket is dominant.

Convenience has often been cited as a reason for the success of the supermarket. As advertisements have said since the forties, the supermarket offers so much for sale under one roof that it saves the shopper time. No longer was it necessary to shop at several stores for the family's food; butcher shops, bakeries, the fruit-seller, were no longer needed--instead there was the supermarket. But convenience is a subjective idea. In advertisements a ten minute drive became more convenient than a three minute walk. Once the older, smaller stores began closing, the consumer began to discover a different meaning for the word convenience; the option of NOT driving to the store and standing in line for a loaf of bread or a bag of fruit was gone. The virtues of caring, cleanliness, and dependability are often used in advertising grocery stores. This image-making, present in advertising since the forties, seemed an attempt to make-up for the fact that strangers instead of neighbors were running the local markets.

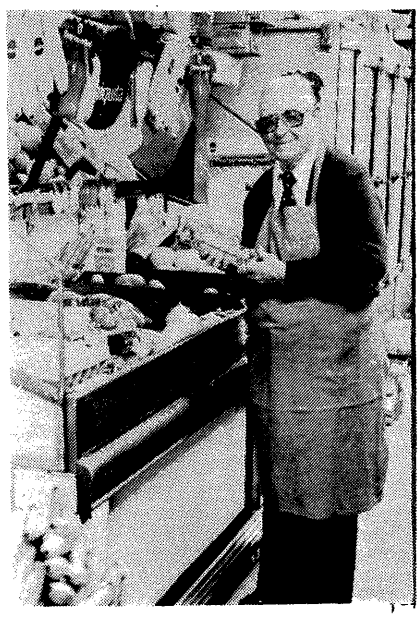
Economy of scale is another reason often cited for the increasing reliance of shoppers on supermarkets. But when it became necessary to drive instead of walk to the store, an otherwise unaccounted for price was paid. The price paid included the costs of improved roads, gasoline, a second car, noise and pollution, and much more. There is no question that vegetables

are often cheaper at the supermarket that buys in quantity, but the hidden costs of arriving at them has been higher than assumed.

It has also been argued that the average supermarket offers a much larger selection of both food and non-food items than the smaller corner store. The smaller, independent store seems insignificant in its dearth of offerings in comparison. However, the forefunner of the supermarket was not only the small neighborhood store but a whole functioning system that contained grocery store, butcher shop, drug store, shoe repair, and other retail establishments that served the needs of the community. This system provided a diverse choice of consumables and the stability of a self-sustaining, orderly and integrated system.

If a backward glance at the independent grocery stores in Northeast Portland shows us anything it is that residential areas like this one may be more fragile than assumed. The decline of the small grocery accompanied the disappearance of numerous diverse shops that began the transformation of this area into a bedroom community.

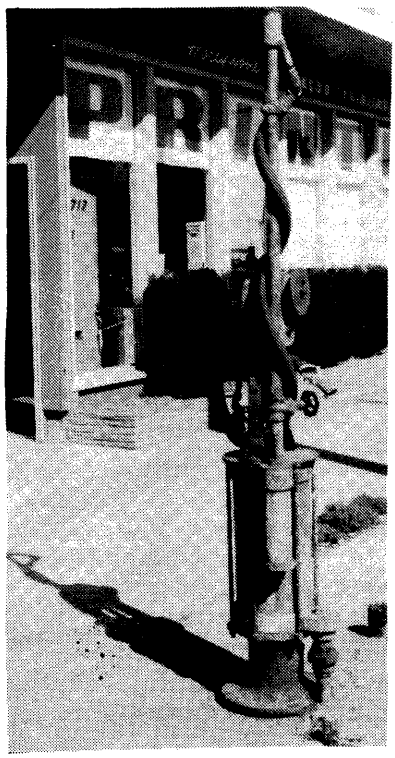
The automobile has increased the mobility of this area's residents, but at the expense of neighborhood self-sufficiency. The loss of the neighborhood grocery has had wide significance in the community, especially affecting its liveability. The story of the decline of the neighborhood "Mom and Pop" stores is one of significance in the history of this and other neighborhoods.

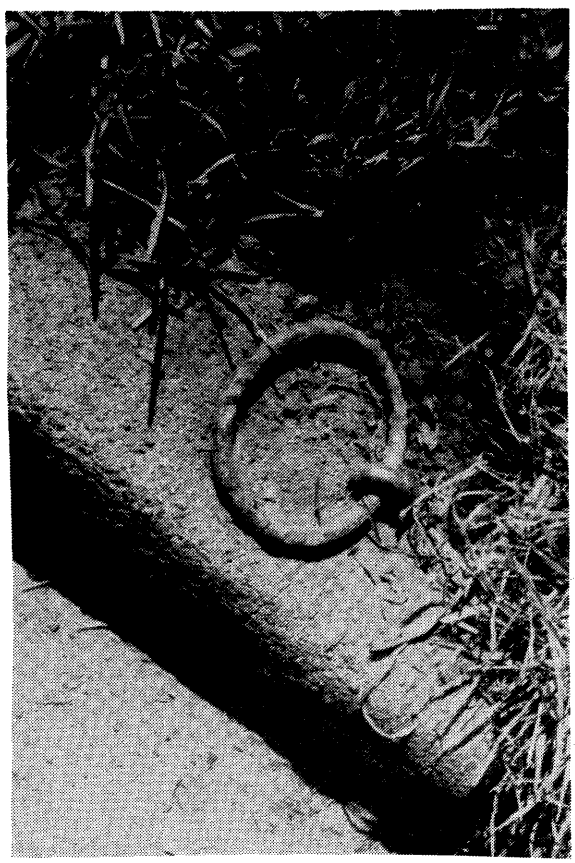


George Denfeld, a friendly neighborhood grocer. Photo by Susan Doran, NHP.

ANOTHER KIND OF LANDMARK

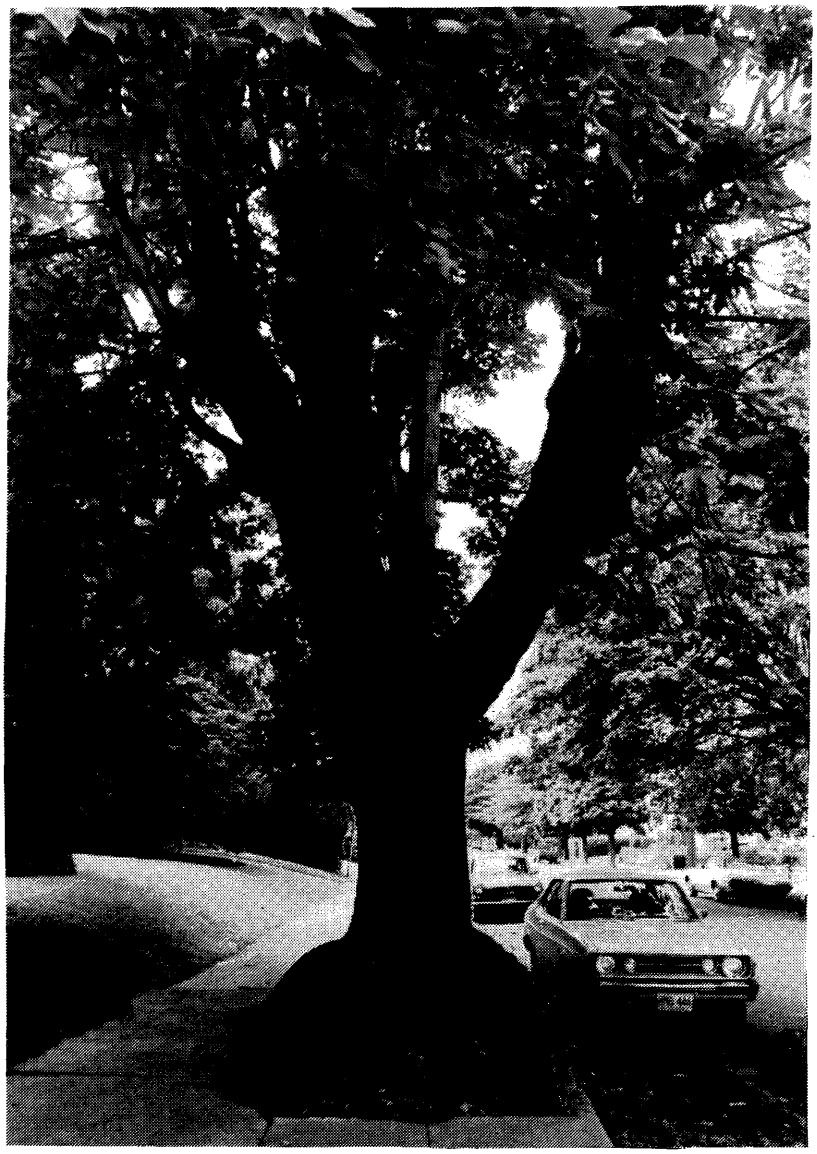
When taking a neighborhood walk a careful observer can discover historic landmarks quite different from those found in the National Register. Like the many fine structures officially recognized for their historic significance, neighborhood landmarks can provide a glimpse of another time and way of life.





(Above) Along S.E. Division and 45th Streets stands a gas pump dating back to the early 1900's. Surrounded by newer office buildings and remodelled homes, this old-style pump recalls the time when new forms of transportation were introduced.

(Left) Tether rings can be found on the curbstones in many inner-city neighborhoods. Though no longer of practical value, they have been carefully salvaged as streets have been widened and replaced.



Photos by Susan Doran

In the mid-1890's the son of Oaks Plummer planted Maple trees along the new roads of Irvington. We can only speculate as to why a young boy would plant trees for a future generation as he did. However, the result of his generosity are the several large trees found in the Irvington area. The large burls at their base identify these "Plummer" trees. Only a few remain yet they stand as evidence of another kind of landmark.

When next you walk through your neighborhood take a close look. Look for forgotten tethering posts, streetcar rails, or signatures of proud masons left in the sidewalks when paved sidewalks were first built. You might be surprised at the artifacts plainly in view.

Mt. Tabor—From Forest to Families

by Grant Nelson

Today, Mt. Tabor is a neighborhood of single family homes clustered around the slopes of Mt. Tabor, a six-hundred foot hill containing the remnants of an extinct volcano. At one time, the Mt. Tabor area included all of the area east of 20th Avenue as far as Russellville (S.E. 102nd & Stark) and between Sullivan's Gulch (Banfield Freeway) and Section Line Road (S.E. Division Street) on the south. When the residents of the area organized themselves into a neighborhood association in 1974, their conception of what constituted Mt. Tabor had shrunk from the nineteenth century conception of the neighborhood. The boundaries of the neighborhood set in 1974 ran from Division Street on the south to East Burnside on the north, and from S.E. 50th Avenue on the west to S.E. 76th Avenue on the east. It is my intention to examine the early stages of development of the area known as Mt. Tabor with an emphasis on the process by which it changed from a wooded, game-filled wilderness to a rural community of farmers and orchardists and eventually to a residential neighborhood. Perhaps the greatest influence on the development of Mt. Tabor has been the proximity of the area to the City of Portland. Mt. Tabor developed rapidly once it was linked with that burgeoning west-side metropolis.

Portland had begun to be settled by 1842 when William Johnson of Captain Couch's brig Maryland staked his claim on the west side of the Willamette River and built a small cabin. Johnson, realizing the benefits of having neighbors, moved to French Prairie near Salem. Next, a man named Overton set up a shingle mill. Within a year, he sold out to Pettygrove and Lovejoy. In 1844, they started Portland by laying out a town site on the west side of the river. Meanwhile, on the other side of the river, the only habitation was the cabin of a man known as Peria or Poria, probably a Hudson's Bay Company voyageur. In 1845, James B. Stephens purchased Peria's cabin from Dr. John McLoughlin for $200. He proceeded to lay out the townsite that became known as East Portland. A crude ferry service connected the two germinal towns almost immediately. It provided for light freight and passengers only since a canoe was all that was then available.

Sometime during 1846, an event occured which was to have a profound effect on the settlement of the eastside. Up until that year, much of the land east of the river was heavily wooded. However, 1846 was the year of the so-called "big burn", a forest fire that began on the slopes of Mt. Scott, south and east of Mt. Tabor. It burned off most of the timber as far north as the wetlands near the Columbia River to the north. The trees were soon replaced with coarse grasses. The area was so throughly cleared that the setting up of farms was a simple matter not requiring the time consuming and backbreaking job of clearing.

The Reverend Clinton Kelly was one of the next to settle on the east side of the river though his claim was somewhat southwest of Mt. Tabor, both he and his sons figured in the later history of the area. After purchasing claim rights from an unknown early settler for $50, paid out of his first year's turnip crop, he settled on his claim, began farming and continued his circuit riding and preaching on the side. Kelly settled in 1848 when game was still plentiful on the east side. One of Kelly's sons is reported to have killed a bear near what is today S.E.

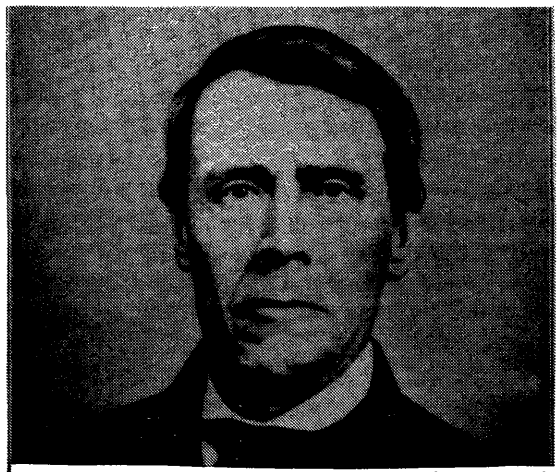
Division and 12th Streets. Kelly's son, Hampton, whose claim was east of his father's, built a house of sawed logs measuring 2'x 9'. Hampton's cabin was probably typical of many of the early dwellings on the east side in terms of both style and materials.

Reverend Kelly's circuit riding duties took him throughout the lower Willamete Valley. His circuit included Portland, Milwaukie, Mt. Tabor, Oregon City, Columbia Slough, Lents, St. Johns, Sandy, Fairview, and Foster. In addition to his Methodist-Episcopal sermons Kelly must have extolled the virtues and advantages of farming across the river from Portland.

Kelly, on one of his circuit rides to Oregon City, might have come into contact with a fellow Methodist who had come to Oregon with his family from Missouri in 1847, Dr. Perry Prettyman. After nearly two years in Oregon City, Prettyman and his family moved to Mt. Tabor and staked out their claim. The Perry Prettyman claim ran from Base Line Road (Stark Street) on the north to Section Line Road (Division Street) on the south, and from 39th Avenue on the west to 60th Avenue on the east.

Dr. Prettyman was 54 years old when he arrived at Mt. Tabor. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had come to Oregon from Newcastle County, Delaware, by way of Missouri. He was a naturopath rather than an M.D. Dr. Prettyman studied medicine at the botanic medical school in Baltimore during the late 1820's and had moved to Missouri in 1839. We have Dr. Prettyman to thank for that nemesis of the green lawn, the dandelion, for it was he who introduced the plant to the Northwest. He brought dandelions here from Missouri for medicinal purposes. Dr. Prettyman practiced his brand of medicine from the back of a horse up until his death in 1872.

Other early arrivals in the Mt. Tabor area included David Prettyman who, at nineteen, settled on lands east of his father's claim in 1851 and Samuel Nelson, a physician, who arrived in 1852 and settled to the east of Dr. Prettyman and north of D.D. Prettyman. Newton D. Gilham, who had brought a wagon train to Oregon in 1852, settled on the north slope of Mt. Tabor the following year.



Reverend Clinton Kelly, early settler of Southeast Portland. Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society.

Most of the early settlers in the Mt. Tabor area were Methodists. In 1853, they founded the Mt. Tabor Methodist-Episcopal Church. About this time, Mt. Tabor received its name as well. A likely scenario is that the Methodist families in the area (there were about ten at that time) organized a church and needed to signify its location in the name. Whether in 1853 or a few years earlier, it was the Reverend Clinton Kelly's son,

Plympton, who proposed the name Mt. Tabor. As the story goes, most of the area residents at the naming meeting favored the name Mount Zion, but Plympton, who arrived late, had been reading Joel T. Headley's book, Napoleon and His Marshall, "...and was most impressed among other things, by the battle fought by the French against the Moslems on the Plain of Esdraelon not far from the base of Mount Tabor in Palestine"[2]. His enthusiasm for the name, coupled with the fact that Mt. Tabor has traditionally been held to be the site of Christ's transfiguration, must have impressed the devout Methodist residents of the area sufficiently to convince them that Mt. Tabor was a better name than Mt. Zion. The hill has been known ever since that time as Mt. Tabor.

The Mt. Tabor Methodist-Episcopal Church was built on a spot near the corners of four land claims on land donated for the purpose by N.D. Gilham. The Mt. Tabor Methodist-Episcopal congregation that formed in 1853 is still active today, more than 120 years later.

Other land claimants arrived during the early 1850's including Elijah B. Davidson, Benjamin F. Starr, Joshua Witten, Hilary Casson, and George and Robert Gray. By 1855 all of the lands in the vicinity of Mt. Tabor had been claimed by these early settlers.

The farmers and orchardists of suburban Mt. Tabor in the early 1850's did not commute to downtown Portland. The horseback or wagon ride to one of the crude ferries to Portland was not a journey lightly undertaken and must have involved hours rather than the few minutes required today.

There was a gold rush on in California at this time and there was an insatiable demand for fruit and huge profits to be made supplying it. The first orchardist in the Willamette Valley was Seth Lewelling. In 1852 he was growing fruit near the present town of Milwaukie, Oregon. The farmers near Mt. Tabor were not far behind. Portland had been linked with Astoria and California by steamer since 1850 and the docks on the Willamette were accessible via the Stark Street Ferry. J.B. Stephens began operating the ferry sometime around 1853. This ferry was not a canoe but a skiff for passengers with a flatboat for teams and wagons. The Tualatin Plains farmers, having been joined to Portland by road in 1849, and the east side farmers, supplied fruit and other produce for the California market. According to Joseph Gaston, apples, prior to 1854, were bringing as high a $2 per pound, which is high even at today's inflated prices. Maddux, in his book City on the Willamette, relates a story of an early Portlander who absentmindedly ate three peaches while gossiping in a grocery store and upon inquiring as to how much he owed for the peaches was told that they were $5 each. In 1854, 500 bushels of apples were shipped south and returned a profit of between $1.50 and $2 per pound. In 1855, probably spurred on by earlier successes, 6,000 bushels were shipped returning $20-$30 per bushel. By 1856, exports of apples alone totalled 20,000 boxes which were selling for nearly $2 per pound. The picture is fairly clear, Mt. Tabor, which accounted for much of the fruit shipped out of Portland, was a gigantic fruit orchard during the 1850's. In California gold had to be sluiced from rivers and dug out of mines; in Mt. Tabor it grew on trees!

Mt. Tabor had its own school as early as 1852. Urban East Hicks is reported to have taught school there during 1852. Hicks must have been a fairly knowledgeable man for he informed his students that Mt. Tabor had once been a volcano. This assertion was not confirmed for nearly 50 years. However during excavation for gravel with which to pave roads, the remains of a vol-

canic vent were indeed unearthed. Hicks left the area shortly after he had come in order to fight in the Indian Wars in Washington. Later, (1863-64), Plympton Kelly's wife, the former Elizabeth Clark, also taught at Mt. Tabor,"...in a log cabin on Mt. Tabor with but 16 pupils...".

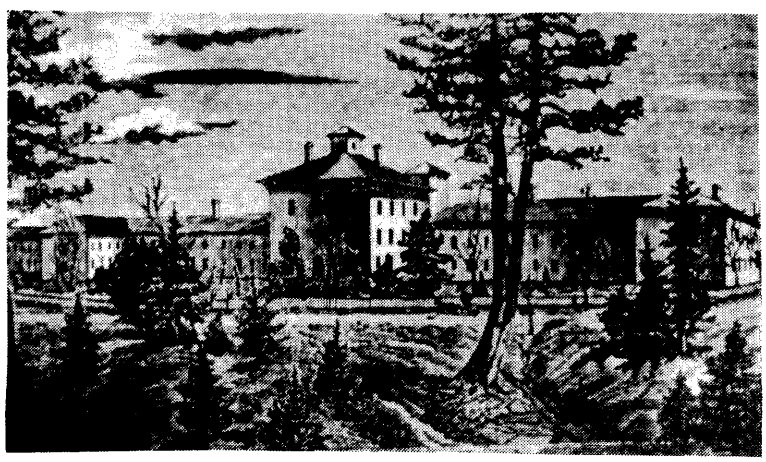
From 1853 to 1860, the number of families in the vicinity of Mt. Tabor more than doubled. Some of the donation land claimants had begun selling off small parcels which provided for a modest population increase. This also provided them with some of the labor needed to tend their large orchards. Of the nineteen heads of households, eleven were engaged in farming, one in backsmithing,one in medicine, one in carpentry, one in mechanics, two were laborers, and one was a clerk. There was a labor force of fourteen farmhands spread out among eight farms and there was a young Methodist-Episcopal clergyman named John T. Wolfe living in the home of Samuel Nelson, one of the local physicians. White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants predominated in the community and the only foreign household head was from England. There were 40 children living in the neighborhood, an average of only 2.5 children per household with children.

Perry Prettyman's farm was the most valuable property in the Mt. Tabor area in 1860. In that year, it was valued at $3,800 and required the services of three farm laborers. Prettyman was well aware of the prospective worth of his property, and told his sons: "I shall live to see this land worth $100 an acre; you will live to see it worth more"[3]. Before his death in 1872, it was worth over $300 an acre. The original settlers in the area were not quick to sell off parts of their claims but by 1870 there were an estimated 36 households in the area, almost twice as many as in 1860.

At the time of the 1870 census, farms still accounted for most of the activity in the Mt. Tabor area. Farming occupied 28 of 36 household heads; two were engaged in gardening, two were machinists, one a physician, one a laborer, one a County Assessor, and one a hotel keeper. The non-family labor force consisted of 14 laborers spread among six farms and the hotel. Two of the laborers were Chinese.

Although the majority of the farmers in the area were born in the United States, some who had immigrated to this country began to settle in Mt. Tabor. Six heads of households were English, four were Irish, one was from South Wales, one from Prussia and one from Sweden.

New residents like Richard Price, who came to Mt. Tabor in 1869, did much to shape the rural fruit-growing community into today's residential neighborhood. Price purchased 45 acres on the west side of Prettyman's donation land claim in 1869. Price had been in charge of the farm which supplied produce for the State Insane Asylum which was located in East Portland. Hawthorne Boulevard was then known as Asylum Road and extended only as far as today's 39th Avenue, then a county road along the west edge of Prettyman's claim. Price immediately extended Asylum Road (Hawthorne) to the east and sold off



State Insane Asylum, East Portland, was located near S.E. 12th & Hawthorne.

all but 6½ acres to others. Price continued to farm on his acreage and grew hay and potatoes. He and other subdividing farmers began the process of piecemeal development that characterized much of what was to ultimately become rural Mt. Tabor.

The 1870's must have been a period of steady growth in the Mt. Tabor area. By 1880 the number of households had again more than doubled. In 1880, 408 persons lived in 83 separate households. Farmers still represented a majority of household heads, but those engaged in other occupations now made up nearly 40% of those listed. Included in occupations given were physician, stonecutter, carpenter, real estate agent (one of the Prettymans), joiner, shoemaker, merchant, dairyman, dealer in boots and shoes, gardener, wheelwright, boarding house operator, teacher, and retired brewer. The population was beginning to diversify and many of the newcomers were engaged in building the homes for future residents. Many more immigrant families had come during the 1870's. Household heads listing their birthplaces in foreign countries now accounted for more than 40% of the family heads. These immigrant families came, almost exclusively from northern European countries with one notable exception, the Chinese.

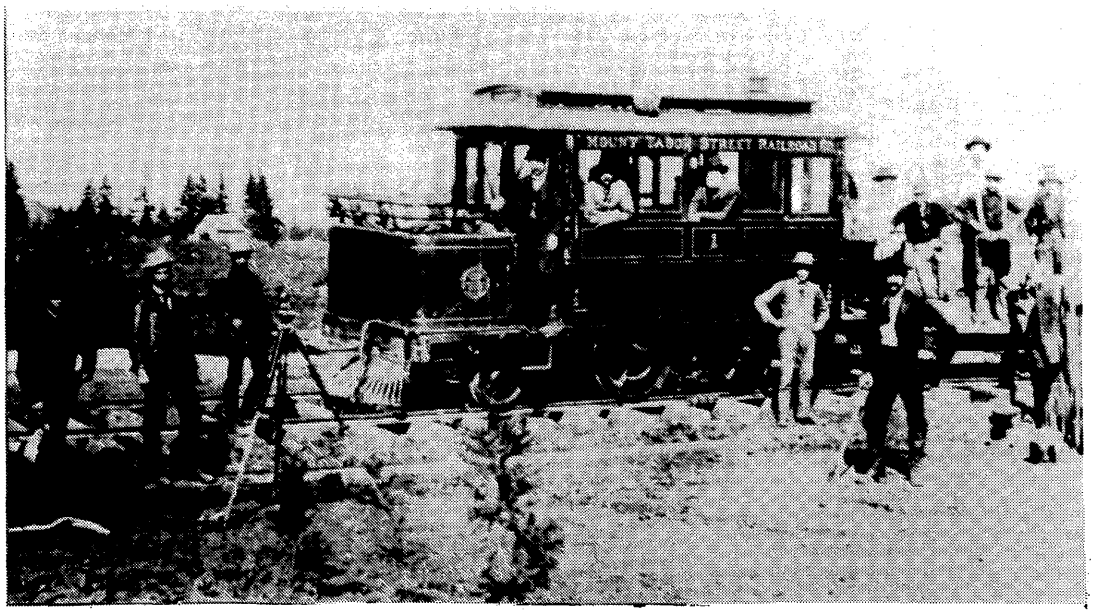
At the time of the 1870 census there had been but two Chinese laborers residing at Mt. Tabor, but in 1880 there were fifteen. The Chinese on Mt. Tabor were not well assimilated into the community; some of them lived singly at the farms in the area and are listed as cooks and farmhands, but there were also two households of young Chinese men who listed themselves as farmhands and woodcutters. Anti-Chinese feeling in the community increased as their numbers grew. These racist feelings were fanned by the polemics of politicians such as Sylvester Pennoyer who ran for, and in 1886, won, the governorship of the state on an Anti-Chinese platform. Many in the Mt. Tabor area must have shared the Governor's racism, for in 1886 a group of Chinese cutting wood on Mt. Tabor were attacked and forced to board a ferry for the west side.

Most of the roads of the 1870's and 1880's ran along the edges of major land claims. These thoroughfares correspond to today's 39th Avenue, 60th Avenue, 82nd Avenue, Stark Street and Division Street.

The major junction of these roads was at what is today S.E. 60th and Stark (then Mt. Tabor Avenue and Base Line Road). This was the point at which the land claims of Perry Prettyman, Elijah Davidson, Newton Gilham, and Samuel Nelson met. It has already been mentioned that the Mt. Tabor Methodist-Episcopal Church was located near this intersection, but during the '70's and '80's a store, a school, a post office, a fire station, and in 1883, another church were all clustered at this important intersection.

Most changes transforming Mt. Tabor into a residential community occurred during the 1880's when Mt. Tabor was linked to the City of Portland. There had been talk of a Willamette bridge since the late 1850's, but most, like farmer William Beck, thought that the Stark Street Ferry was good enough. Beck commented in 1858 that he kind of liked the ferry because it gave him a chance to rest the horses on the way to town.

Ironically, Beck played an active role in the effort to bridge the Willamette, and in 1875 worked with some other east side residents in presenting a construction petition to the county. There was little opposition to the idea, but the County Court held that since the City owned no property on the west side on which to land the bridge, it would have to deny the petition. Beck and other bridge backers shifted



Steam powered "dummy" designed to avoid frightening horses. Photo courtesy of The Oregon Historical Society.

from their original idea of a free public bridge to a private toll bridge. In 1880 work commenced on a bridge by the Garrill Brothers of San Francisco with backing from Beck, Dr. J.C. Hawthorne and C.M. Wiberg. This attempt was opposed by some west siders, riverboat owners, and town lot interests. At the urging of these interests, Judge Deady issued an injunction against the bridge on the basis that it would constitute an obstruction to navigation. Finally, the injunction was dissolved and building began. The Morrison Street Bridge opened in April of 1887 and it was Mt. Taborite William Beck who led the procession across. The bridge was a toll bridge until it was purchased by the City in 1895 for its original cost of $150,000.

Beck and the other bridge backers didn't stop their development schemes with the opening of a bridge, but went right on to form a company known as the Willamette Bridge Railway Company. Their idea was to build a steam railway to serve the hinterlands on the east side of the river. On September 21, 1887, only a few months after the bridge opening, ground was broken for the railway. The first trip was made on July 9, 1888, to Sunnyside, a newly subdivided area to the west of Mt. Tabor. The following year, service was extended to Mt. Tabor the first trip taking place in June of 1889. Two weeks later, the Mt. Tabor Railway Company opened a steam powered line out Hawthorne Blvd. to 54th Avenue. The steam powered units which pulled the passenger cars along at a brisk 20 mph clip were known as "dummies". Their designers subtly tried to disguise them as regular, horse-drawn streetcars, so that they would not frighten horses. These units continued to be used until the lines were electrified around the turn of the century.

The business of subdividing now began in earnest. Much of the area

was accessible to persons willing to walk the few blocks to one of the two steam railway lines. Many of the subdivision names are linked with Mt. Tabor must have been names that are associated in the minds of many with the pastoral orchards of the area. Developers capitalized on this association and the name of the area was preserved in Mt. Tabor Villa (later shortened to Montavilla), North Mt. Tabor, East Tabor Villa, Tabor Heights, Tabordale, Taborside, Mt. Tabor Place and Mt. Tabor Park. Other subdivisions played on the rural theme with names like Orchard Homes, while some followed the pattern of many of today's housing tracts with names that just sound like they belong to a pleasing place to live as in Edendale, Melrose, Belwood, Crystal Springs, Edgewood, Auburn Park, and Belmont Park. The names of the farmers and orchardists were also perpetuated in names like Rumsey's Addition, Kinzel Park, Brainard's Addition, Christensen's Addition and W.D. Prettyman's Subdivision. Some of the names like Second Electric Addition and Tabasco Addition defy classification. Some idea of the rate of growth in the area during the late 1880's when transportation facilities began serving the neighborhood, can be gained by comparing the R.L. Polk Directories for the years immediately preceding and following the opening of the steam rail lines to Mt. Tabor in 1889. Mt. Tabor is listed separately in these directories. In 1888 there were 142 residences in the area and by 1890, the number of residences had risen to 201, an increase of about 41% in only two years.

Another bridge to the west side, the Madison Street Bridge, opened in 1891, the year East Portland and Portland consolidated. Yet another bridge, the Burnside, opened in 1894. The three bridges connected the heart of downtown Portland with the Mt. Tabor area and provided early settlers and their descendants with tidy fortunes. Today these bridges provide the neighborhood with traffic that flows through it on the way to other former farm and orchard areas further to the east.

Today, many remnants of old Mt. Tabor exist. Homes dating back to the late nineteenth century, isolated fruit trees in the yards of some residences, and the memories of many long-time residents, remind us of early Mt. Tabor. In 1977, a neighborhood history group

Mt. Tabor business district, c. 1890, near 60th and Stark Street. Photo courtesy of The Oregon Historical Society.

An example of an early home in Mt. Tabor. Photo by Susan Doran, Neighborhood History Project.

was formed to pull together those memories and hopefully these pages will provide part of the introduction to that on-going work.

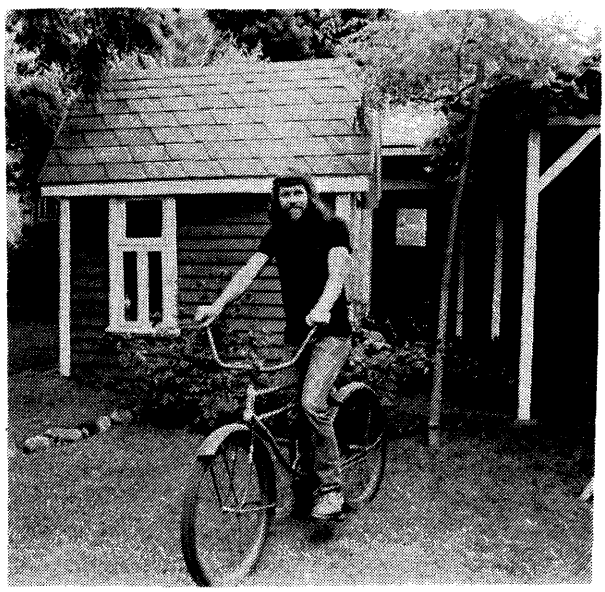
Notes:*

1. Joseph Gaston, Portland, Its History and Builders, Portland, 1911, vol.II, p.223.
2. Lewis A. McArthur, "Oregon Geographic Names", Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. XXVII, p.359.
3. Portrait and Biographical Record, Portland and Vicinity, Portland, 1903. (See entry on Plympton Kelly).
4. H.K. Hines, An Illustrated History of the State of Oregon, Chicago, 1893, vol.ii, p.966.

* A complete footnoted version of this paper is available at the Neighborhood History Project office.

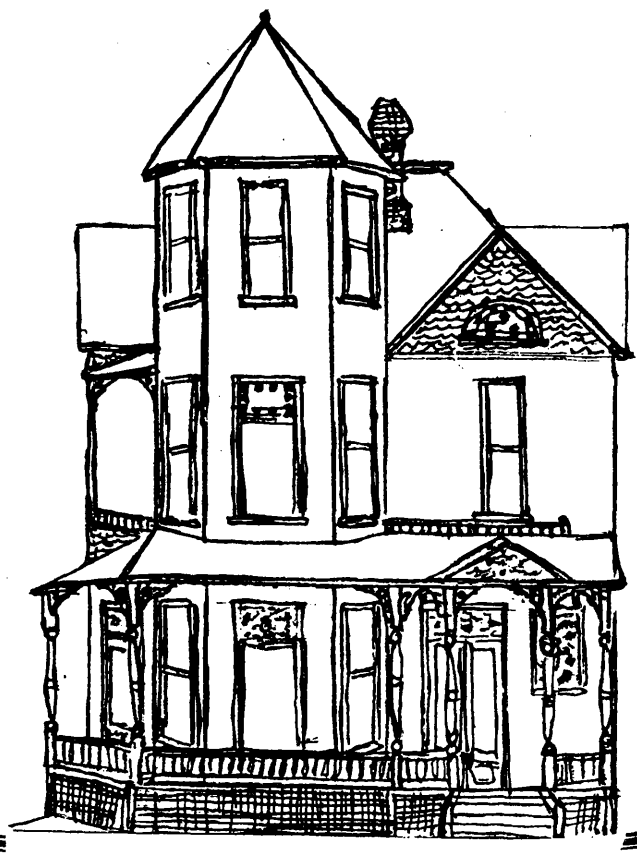
A RECORD OF OUR PAST

by Susan Doran



Long before the current trend toward preserving and restoring old houses, a young resident of Irvington began a life-long involvement with neighborhood history and historic architecture. Beginning at age eleven in 1949, Robert Brown collected information on the many fine examples of pre-1900 houses in his Northeast neighborhood.

As an Oregonian delivery boy, Bob Brown became concerned with the destruction and drastic remodelling of Victorian style houses. Feeling strongly that these past architectural styles should be recorded, young Bob began to draw most of the Northeast houses built prior to 1900. At first these drawings were crude, but soon they became extremely detailed. From research and conversations with older neighbors, Bob began to piece together the way the Northeast area had changed and who had lived there. From interviews with people like Albina Page (namesake of the Albina district) and Mrs. Povey (wife of one of the famed Povey Brothers), Bob acquired a specialized knowledge of his neighborhood.



As he developed his knowledge of the area's history, Bob also defined a methodology for locating information on neighborhood architecture that has since become of use to many local historians and preservationists. He is currently writing a book on Portland's residential styles of architecture. The book will contain information on dating houses and a unique research method of value to this new field.

Neighborhood history, historic preservation and restoration, inner-city revitalization, and oral history have all become topic of increasing interest in the last decade. Neighborhood organizations devoted to the

preservation of historic sites and community heritage are flourishing in many cities and towns across the country. The post-war trend from city to suburbia has reversed itself--the most coveted homes are precisely the ones that were abandoned in the '40's and '50's. There is an awareness of the value of preservation that wasn't significantly present when Bob Brown was eleven years old and witnessed Victorian homes being torn down. This concern for a connection with our history has finally received the recognition a young newspaper boy gave it nearly thirty years ago.

"It impressed me in '49, this guy was ripping his front porch out; taking out his original doors, changing everything. I saw all that intricate gingerbread falling off. It was just thrown out--sawed up and put in the fireplace and I thought, well, there ought to be a record of that house; so I started drawing. I drew all the way down the block, to the corner and kept right on drawing." ---Robert Brown

Compiled and edited by Lana Danaher, Project Director

Design and lay-out by Kathay Duff and Steven Danaher

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