

Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

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The Old Train Station by Don Skinner

The Old Train Station, affectionately known as the OTS, is the base of operations for Friends of Historic Forest Grove — a volunteer organization dedicated to educating the public about Forest Grove's historic heritage. Known as the Southern Pacific Railroad Station when it was built in 1913, this historic brick station was originally used for passenger service.

In their quest for expansion, Southern Pacific Railroad began commuter service to outlying cities within the Willamette Valley by creating interurban rail lines known as *Red Electrics* because of their bright red color. These electric commuter trains were usually two or three cars long and were also used for mail and light freight. The first trial run from Beaverton to Gaston occurred on January 5, 1914, and regular service began running through the Forest Grove station two weeks later. The OTS continued to serve passengers until July 28, 1929, when paved roads and increased use of buses and personal automobiles brought an end to the era of electrified rail systems.



Originally Known as the Southern Pacific Railroad Station, Circa 1920

Following termination of passenger service, Southern Pacific used the station for freight. In 1943, the station was purchased from Southern Pacific by seed company owners, E.V. and C.G. Burlingham, and was converted to company offices and work spaces.

In 1948, the seed company enclosed the covered platform to expand the size of the building. In 1951, the deed to the property was transferred to E.F. Burlingham & Sons, and an extension on the west end of the building was completed in 1987. In September of 2000, Woodfold Manufacturing, Inc.

purchased the building for office and meeting space. In 2008, Woodfold invited the Friends of Historic Forest Grove to occupy the building rent free.

The OTS, which is built of brick and has a somewhat ornate roofline, is quite unique because most train stations constructed in the Pacific Northwest during the early 1900s were made of wood and had simpler rooflines. Sometime in the past, the station's original overhang

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roof design was redesigned and replaced. The overhang of the eaves was shortened and the knee braces removed. These changes, along with enclosing the open platform, greatly reduced the features that were characteristic of typical railroad stations of the time, but did make the building look more “modern.” However, today the OTS still retains most of its original brick exterior and cement foundation.

Who Are Friends of Historic Forest Grove?

In 1987, a small group of about a dozen determined volunteers formed the 501(c)(3) public charity, Friends of Historic Forest Grove, to help educate the public about Forest Grove’s important role in the history of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. They wanted to inform historic building owners and the public about how to preserve and restore Forest Grove’s historic structures. They also wanted to build public awareness and appreciation for Forest Grove’s rich historic heritage. They set up tours of local historic properties, and raised funds to purchase brass plaques identifying buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Today, Friends of Historic Forest Grove continues to operate totally on volunteer effort. Members work to document the history of the area by collecting photographs, documents, as well as oral and written accounts — all of which they make available to the public for research purposes. These historic resources are also used in preparing educational programs for classroom, civic, and public presentations. Recently, the Friends began an effort to collect historic artifacts, donated or loaned, and have begun displaying those artifacts representing the past in the OTS for public viewing.

Since they were invited to occupy the OTS, the Friends have transformed the station’s interior into a working historic center including:

- Display Room containing historic photos and artifacts
- Library and Research Center
- Reproduction of a 1920s-era Southern Pacific Ticket Office
- Workroom for processing incoming items and for document and photo storage
- Meeting room, seating 30+ people, available for use by other organizations
- Friends of Historic Forest Grove business office
- Tualatin Valley Model Railroad Club’s clubhouse

The back yard behind the OTS provides further educational opportunities. This is where you will find the Community School’s garden, a place where local children learn about gardening and have fun growing flowers and vegetables. Forest Grove High School students have also been involved in some of the garden projects found there.



Community Enhancement Program (CEP) Grant Funding

In the Spring of 2012, Friends of Historic Forest Grove applied for a Forest Grove Community Enhancement Program (CEP) grant to help preserve and enhance the appearance of the outside of the OTS. Although the Friends requested thousands of dollars, they were grateful to receive \$2,346, which they have carefully stretched — with the aid of volunteer labor — to rapidly complete an impressive array of projects including:

- Repair of brickwork and foundation cracks
- Painting the front entry and foundation
- Installing new porch lighting and motion detectors
- Installing new signage and hand railing
- Re-glazing windows
- Landscaping, picket fencing, and more

Vision for the Future

Currently, the OTS is only open on Wednesday mornings or by appointment. The Friends would like to remain open several days a week and on Saturdays so that visitors could enjoy what the OTS has to offer. They plan to be open during downtown events, such as First Wednesday and Farmer's Market, in hopes that the station's close proximity to the downtown area will bring greater public interest.

The Friends are always actively seeking more documents, photographs, and artifacts that represent Forest Grove and the surrounding area. Greater access to such resources would help them preserve more of Forest Grove's past and allow them to rotate historic resources in the OTS Display Room. This would help increase public interest and enrich resource collections for public research purposes. The Friends also hope to soon begin inviting schools and groups to tour the Display Room and Research Center.

Perhaps, one day, the Friends will be able to purchase the OTS. Though it would be a very large undertaking, removing the enclosure on the east end of the building and replacing the station's original roof overhang would help make the station look like it did back in its heyday.

Best Kept Secret in Forest Grove

For many years, the Friends of Historic Forest Grove have seen themselves as one of the town's best kept secrets. But as volunteers continue to restore the OTS, collect and display more historic resources, and share them with the public, more people in the community are becoming aware of the organization's positive impact. The Friends hope that word will continue to spread, and that this will bring many more visitors to the OTS. Friends of Historic Forest Grove volunteers have much historical information and many resources to share with visitors about the town's history, and they enjoy hearing old stories shared by visitors about the town.

The OTS is open to the public on Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. until noon or by appointment. The station is also open during open houses scheduled during the annual Spring Garden Tour (always the 1st Sunday in June) and the annual Tour of Historic Homes (always the 4th Sunday in September).

HLB Holds Annual Preservation Fair

The Historic Landmarks Board held its third annual Preservation Fair at Central School on Saturday, April 27. Fourteen exhibitors participated in this year's fair, displaying their products and services and sharing ideas. Four presenters took to the stage and offered advice about marketing a historic property, earthquake proofing a historic home, the benefits of indoor storm windows, and historic home painting considerations. Free to the public, this year's fair offered these exhibitors:

- Grayson Realty's Katya Duncan
- Made in Oregon Twice flooring and furnishings handcrafted from recycled barn wood
- Building/remodeling contractors, Weston Homes
- The Golden Rule, sustainable construction
- Certified arborist, David Hunter
- Indow Windows "keeping the warm inside" with indoor storms
- Sojourn Forest Grove's historic tours of FG
- Friends of Historic Forest Grove
- Librarian Ismoon Hunter-Morton, organizer of the Eric Stewart Collection at the FG Library
- Earthquake Tech's home protection services
- Painting experts, Bryan Corke Painting & Construction and Holland Painting
- Community Action's Energy Conservation Team
- Historic Landmarks Board providing information about the Renovation Grant Program

Community Enhancement Grant Funds

If your house is on our local historic register, or a contributing building in one of the three historic districts, your house may be eligible for restoration / rehabilitation grant funding. The Historic Landmarks Board may have funds to help you with your projects. If you are planning any exterior restoration work, have structural work to do such as foundation or porch repairs, even exterior painting or re-roofing, we'd love to help. We fund projects up to 50% of the cost of the job per grant, up to \$1,000 (less for painting and roofing). We can also help you find historically appropriate solutions to challenges you may have. Contact James Reitz at 503-992-3233 or jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov.

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Historic Landmarks Board

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