

Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

Houses on the Move

By George Cushing

With the recent move of two prominent buildings in Forest Grove, homes on the move are on the minds of many. Last year the journey of Old College Hall on the Pacific University campus was quite an event. More recently historic Walker Hall, built in 1859 and home of the first Pacific University President, was moved to the west side of town. In Forest Grove's history, houses and buildings have been on the move almost as long as there has been a town.

When people built newer and larger homes the old homes were often moved, sometimes across the street and many times to the other side of town. Some buildings have moved more than once. Pacific University's College Hall has been moved three times. Its current location is now very close to where it started its journeys around the campus.

We can certainly be thankful of the foresight of many of Forest Grove's early inhabitants, as some of our most interesting historical homes have been moved rather than demolished. One such is the old Stagecoach Stop at 2117 "A" Street (the Stephen and Parthenia Blank House). Built in 1859, this home was moved in the mid-1890s to make way for a new home. Another at 1724 Ash Street is interesting because it is an ornate Queen

Anne with a Craftsman porch. The original delicate Queen Anne porch was a victim of the move.

Although many of the moved homes are rather modest, others are somewhat larger and more imposing such as the Cornelius House, currently resting on 19th Avenue. Most homes that have been moved, especially in the recent past, have been extensively renovated after their move. For example, the home on the southeast corner of 19th Avenue and Douglas Street that was moved a few years ago was extensively remodeled and is now a handsome addition to Forest Grove's stock of historic homes.

The city has seen several periods of house moving both before and after the year 1900. House moving technology has changed tremendously over the years. In the earlier years, houses were simply jacked up with railroad jacks, placed on thick timbers and laboriously dragged to a new location. Today's modern methods gently lift a home onto special wheeled dollies that enable quick and efficient moves without cracking even fragile plaster walls. Houses continually move with ever larger and more delicate homes and buildings gently journeying through time and space.

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A.T. Smith House: The Story of an Obsession

By Mary Jo Morelli

I have considered myself "passionate" about historic preservation for quite a long time. I made time in my life while raising three sons and helping run a family business to participate on the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board and to help organize the Friends of Historic Forest Grove. Both of these things I did "for me" and in retrospect I see how odd this is!

Now that I feel compelled to consider myself obsessed (*Oregonian* article of Wednesday, March 16, 2005 by Jerry Boone) with saving the Alvin T. Smith House, I feel it is necessary to review the roots of my passion and obsession as related to historic preservation.

As my family's past represented my roots, I felt that I should provide my children with knowledge of the history of Forest Grove and why it would forever be an integral part of their own roots. We own three acres on Fern Hill and I read "The Gray Nineties" by Lester Mooberry. This was my first introduction to Alvin T. Smith.

As a member of the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board I became aware of the Smith property. Under the mentoring of Gladys Haynes and Eric Stewart I found a new focus in the history of Forest Grove.

There was no single event that got this passion started. It was a series of events that have resulted in an obsession:

The Zurcher estate sale, when the family cleaned out the house and I bought boxes of old wall paper remnants!

My garage sale find of Smith house field survey sheets from the first Washington County Cultural Resource Survey!

My shock at reading in the newspaper that the house had been annexed into Forest Grove as industrial property!

Being so naive as Chair of the FG-HLB to believe that the historic significance of the house would be recognized and the house preserved as industrial development was being planned!

The betrayal when I learned that a proposed garbage transfer station was strategically designed to occupy the site of the house! (We stopped that plan!)

All these things and more have served to turn a passion into an obsession. I could not watch the same thing happen to this property that had happened to my own family property in Gresham. Besides, Smith left a greater record of the history of Oregon than my own family.

Smith was a busy and industrious man who after settling a wild land, plowing that land, raising crops and animals, and building houses and barns, found time to take in orphans and boarders, be a Territorial Magistrate and the first Postmaster.

He built bridges and roads in his early days on the Tualatin Plains and saw the railroad arrive when in October 1876 he allowed the Oregon Central Railroad Company to cross a strip of his land in exchange for lifetime annual passes for him and his wife. He began selling off north portions of his land along that railroad right-of-way in future years.

Smith was an astute and successful business man. This can be further verified by the detailed records he kept which are at Oregon Historical Society. Preservation of the remarkably well constructed home he built in 1854 is small tribute to pay to this man who in his austere and cryptic way left a unique view of a 19th century life on the western frontier.

Answers to Historic Landmarks Crossword

By Claude Romig

Across

- 3. flight
- 6. veranda
- 11. column
- 13. Rasmussenprice
- 16. large
- 18. fanlight
- 21. arch
- 22. roof
- 25. chimney
- 26. transom
- 28. keystone
- 29. money
- 30. basement
- 34. balustrade
- 35. knobandtube
- 36. newspaper
- 38. attic

Down

- 1. vernacular
- 2. cornice
- 3. fir
- 4. gable
- 5. porch
- 7. dormer
- 8. Hipped
- 9. flue
- 10. Hines
- 12. Molding
- 14. Smith
- 15. architrave
- 17. balcony
- 19. mills
- 20. Victorian
- 23. Fascia
- 24. garage
- 27. Hoar
- 31. entablature
- 32. queenanne
- 33. corbel
- 37. Eave
- 39. casement
- 40. lintel
- 41. siding

Become a Board Member

You've read the newsletter. You've seen the renovation projects. You've admired the new street signs in the Clark District. And you've wondered: how can I be a part of that? The answer is simple: join the Board! We've lots of projects coming up, including additional survey work south of the Clark District, and development of a website. Want to learn more? Come to a meeting! We meet the fourth Tuesday of the month @ 7:00 p.m. in the Community Auditorium conference room. But if you can't wait to join up, please contact James Reitz @ 503/992-3233 for an application. We look forward to hearing from you!

The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board Grant Program

Is your house on our local *Register*? If it is, did you know that your house is eligible for restoration / rehabilitation grant funding? The Historic Landmarks Board has funds to help you with your projects. If you are planning any exterior restoration work such as restoring architectural features or if you have structural work to do such as foundation repair, we'd love to help. We fund projects up to 50% of the cost of the job per grant. Come see us! We can also help you find historically appropriate solutions to any problems you may have.

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