

# Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

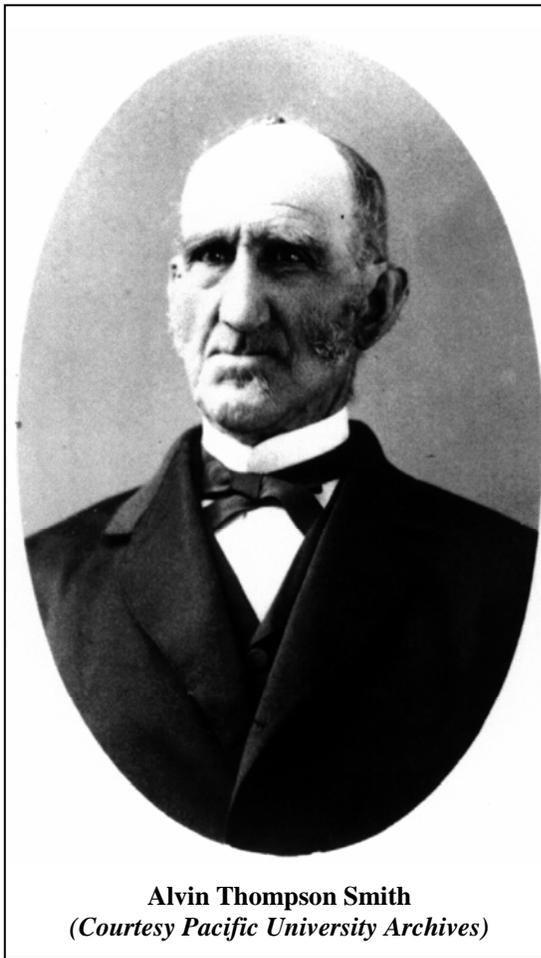
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## *A.T. Smith - There to Here*

*By Jon Stagnitti*

Alvin Thompson Smith, known in his day as 'Godalmighty Smith', arrived at West Tuality Plains in late September 1841. What and where are West Tuality Plains you might ask? Maybe a better question is...where did Smith, Forest Grove's first and perhaps most influential pioneer, come from and how did he land here?

A.T. Smith's great-great-great-grandfather Capt. Thomas Smith, born in 1634 most likely in England, arrived in East Haven, Connecticut in 1652. His mother's ancestors, the Thompsons, landed in New Haven, Connecticut from Kent County, England some time later. Nearly two centuries passed when, on November 17, 1802, Alvin Thompson Smith was born in Branford, New Haven. Of Smith's 10 brothers and sisters, the first-born died before the age of two, two others were lost at sea and the others spread out from New Haven to Kansas and Illinois.



**Alvin Thompson Smith**  
*(Courtesy Pacific University Archives)*

A.T. learned the carpenter's trade while in Branford then, at the age of 25, moved to Fairfield, Illinois to farm with his brother Caleb. In addition to working on the farm, he did carpentry work in nearby Quincy. On September 23, 1838, he became a member of the Quincy First Congregational Church, which little did he know, was to start him on a path to Forest Grove. It was here that he met Harvey Clark, a graduate from Oberlin Collegiate Institute and interim minister at the church. Oberlin, and its impact on the future missionaries to the west, is worth mentioning.

With the addition of the charismatic but controversial revivalist Charles Finney to its faculty, Oberlin was experimenting with a new kind of liberalism in theological education. The more traditional

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Puritans likely took exception to some of the school's ideologies, but others, the likes of John Smith Griffin, Harvey Clark and A.T. Smith were moved. For instance, women and blacks were encouraged to attend, free speech was promoted, and foods such as meat, butter and tea were forbidden. Overall, the atmosphere was very anti-slavery and anti-Catholic. It was here the notion that the "souls of Indians in the West needed saving" was born.

It was this notion of saving souls that compelled Smith, along with other members of the congregation including Adelaide and Philo Littlejohn, the Griffins and Clark, to become missionaries and head for the Old Oregon Territory. They centered their undertaking on the Waiilatpu Mission of Marcus Whitman. But, before embarking on this journey, Smith 'needed' to find a wife. After all, it was strongly encouraged that any man leaving on a mission be accompanied by an 'assistant missionary', a term used by the American Board Mission Heritage Committee to describe a missionary's wife. According to Smith's diary, he had an interview with Abigail Raymond on March 9, 1840 about joining him. He got a license to marry on March 14 and wed the evening of March 19.

On March 23, 1840, A.T. Smith, Harvey

Clark and Philo Littlejohn set forth from Quincy, Illinois with their wives, a 'newly engaged plow' and some sick horses; their destination... the Willamette Valley. Smith's diary for that day read, "took leave of friends and started from Quincy about 2 o'clock and traveled 11 miles. Brother Clark's horses acted bad and one of my own was sick." To add some perspective, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, the first pioneers to come to Oregon in a covered wagon, did so less than four years prior to A.T. Smith. The Oregon Trail was as yet unheard of and the first big wave of westward migration was still some three years away.

For the challenges that lay ahead for Forest Grove's first pioneer, stay tuned...

*Special thanks to George Williams for providing much of the information for this article.*

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## ***Dustin Kollar – HLB's Newest Member***

***By Dustin Kollar***

I was born in Dunoon, a small seaside town on the west coast of Scotland, where I lived until the age of two. After that I called Brentwood, NY (a large city in central Long Island) home for 21 years. Our home was a converted farmhouse, and if anyone is familiar with Long Island, you know that if it was a farm, its gotta be old!! Over 150 years to be exact, and my father, my brothers and I helped restore the house to the splendor it is today.

Over a period of ten years I made my way to the west coast, starting with chiropractic school in St. Louis, Missouri and opening my first clinic in Omaha, Nebraska. With the exception of our new home that we bought this past April, I have lived and owned only older homes, and spent

many a day restoring them. Our last was a 1½ story home in Omaha, that was a joy but yet a tiresome project. A project that was too big, it sent me over the edge compelling me to buy that brand new home here in Forest Grove.

My wife Julia, my son Cody, and my daughter Jordan have lived here now for nine months, and love everything about our new community and town. I've never felt that small town feeling before, and oddly enough for this city boy, it feels really good. So good, that I felt I had to get involved. So here I am, another New Yorker trying to fit in and make a difference in his newly adopted home. I look forward to doing my part in preserving our wonderful town, and meeting many of you along the way.



## **Local Updates**

Friends of Historic Forest Grove Calendar sales have gone well and they're clearing out the remaining stock at a bargain price of \$10. Calendars can be purchased at Your Travel Place in Forest Grove and at FHFG website [www.historicforestgrove.org](http://www.historicforestgrove.org).

# ***The Atfalati Kalapuya (Part II)***

*(Continued from last newsletter) By Monty Smith*

## **Food, housing and clothing**

The wapato root, otherwise known as Indian potato or arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*) is a small tuber found in the mud along the shores of lakes and rivers and had a slightly nutty flavor. These were important for the Atfalati because Wapato Lake was one of the few places they could be found and were an important item for trade. The entire tribe would participate in the annual harvest at Wapato Lake. By the 1850s, however, lowland roots such as camas and wapato were becoming scarce due to the settlers' swine and drainage of lowlands. Other dietary items included all kinds of large and small game, birds and fish, but the Atfalati were more dependent on plant resources than neighboring tribes.

The tribe lived in permanent villages in the winter months and traveled to the food sources in the summer. Their houses were large rectangular structures that contained several families of related males. The dwellings were framed with poles and covered in planks, bark or sometimes grass.

In the summer women wore an apron or short skirt made of rush, grass or shredded cedar bark, and men would either go naked or wear a loincloth, leggings and cloak. Boys and girls went naked. In the winter everyone wore elk-hide, and women also wore buckskin gowns. By the 1830s they had begun adopting European dress. Dentalia shells were worn in the nose for ornamentation, and both men and women wore beads suspended from their ears.

## **History and language**

The Kalapuya first emigrated from the Columbia River Plateau between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago. They were estimated to have grown to a population of 10,000 about 250 years ago, but were hit hard by a smallpox epidemic in the 1780s (brought by Europeans). In 1806 natives told William Clark there were more than two thousand members of the Kalapuyan tribe living in 40 villages. In 1829 a ship sailing up the Columbia brought fever (probably malaria) and reduced the population by another 75% or more. By 1845 the Kalapuyan population was estimated to be 300, and in the mid-1850s they were removed to the Grande Ronde and Siletz reservations in Yamhill and Lincoln counties, respectively. By 1910 the number had reduced to 220, and it sits at about 300 today. In 1851 when a treaty was being negotiated, 65 Atfalati were recorded which was reduced to 44 by the 1910 census. There are none left today.

The Kalapuyans had three distinct dialects that had evolved to become mutually unintelligible, even to bands only fifty miles away. In later years when conversing they usually spoke either English or Chinook. By 1915 there were only seven people who could speak the Kalapuyan language, and but one left who knew the Atfalati dialect.

All that's left of the Atfalati today are some petroglyphs in the Cherry Grove area.

References:

**Winter 2004**

*The Atfalati Kalapuya: Glimpses of a Vanished Culture. Graduate study research paper written by Brad Klaus.*

*Various websites brought up via a Google search of "Atfalati Kalapuya"*

***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 a 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.

***Upcoming Events***

- February 19 (Thursday) 7 pm  
Restoration Workshop (FHFG)  
“Landscaping Your Historic Property”  
location TBA.
- March 20 (Saturday) (FHFG)  
Trinkets and Treasures antique appraisal  
show.

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Preserving Forest Grove is a quarterly newsletter published by the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board to help fulfill its duty of public education regarding the preservation of cultural resources. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please call James Reitz at 503-992-3233, or [JReitz@ci.forest-grove.or.us](mailto:JReitz@ci.forest-grove.or.us).

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***In this issue***

- A.T. Smith Bio (Part 1)*
- Meet Dustin Kollar*
- The Atfalati Kalapuya (Part 2)*