

# Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

## *The Atfalati Kalapuya*

(Part 1) By Monty Smith

The *what?* The Kalapuya were the Native Americans that lived in the Willamette Valley, and the Atfalati were the local branch of the Kalapuya tribe. Atfalati is an anglicized version of their name, as in their local dialect it would have been pronounced more like “TFA-lat-ya”. Local settlers called them the Fallatah, or Tuality (from which we get the name of Tualatin) or more simply, the Wapato Lake Indians. There were 24 known villages and bands centered around Wapato Lake but the band ranged between the Willamette River and Coast Range and up to Tualatin Mountain to the north. The villages of Chapungathpi and Chachamewa were situated where Forest Grove now sits.

### **Culture**

Compared to other Native American tribes in the northwest, the Atfalati had fewer class differences and greater social mobility, although it was still a tiered society. Wealth determined ones station in the power structure, and cradleboards were used on babies to flatten their heads as a mark of high social standing. Slaves were on the bottom tier and were often captured from other tribes (orphans were also made into slaves). One could also become a slave through gambling debts or as punishment for a crime. However, slaves were often accepted as tribal members, could marry, and could even marry non-slaves if horses were paid to the slave owner.

The Atfalati had no chief until one was required in 1855 for negotiating treaties, but each village had a headman, usually the richest man in village. The headman would resolve disputes but was also expected to give villagers the benefits of

his wealth and power when needed. Marriages were arranged and were confirmed with an exchange of gifts between families. Most frequent payment for marriage was slaves, beads, money and horses, and the groom’s family would provide gifts of one-fourth or one-third as much value. A male could marry into a wealthy family by paying the bride price, and likewise it was considered fortunate to have daughters so one could marry into a wealthy family.

Games were popular, and among the most popular were gambling and a hockey-like game called Shinny Ball. Gambling with sticks, hands or beaver teeth dice were played for high stakes – one could lose all their possessions and even become a slave due to a gambling debt. Shinny ball was popular between villages. Teams of 10-25 men from each village would use a 3-foot shinny stick to hit a wooden or whalebone ball between two goal posts. The hand must not touch the ball, and there were no rules against striking other players and the game often became quite bloody.

Atfalati legend tells of a monster that lived in Wapato Lake called Amhuluk. This was similar to a great horned dragon or sea serpent, and was supposed to have tried to catch and drown all things. Amhuluk is thought to have been either a symbol of a thief, or else a made-up monster meant to scare children from the water. As for religious beliefs, the Atfalati believed all souls go to a place across the ocean, with good souls and bad souls going to different places.

(To be concluded in next month’s newsletter)

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## ***Oregon Historic Preservation Plan***

*By Scott Rogers*

One of the growing issues within Oregon is the continuing effort to preserve our historic and cultural resources. As a concerned citizen, how can you voice your suggestions or comments?

The State Historic Preservation Office, or SHPO, is in the process of updating the "Oregon Historic Preservation Plan"; this document serves as the guide for preservation planning for Oregon's citizens, organizations, and government agencies, and to better capture the input of concerned residents. SHPO organized and hosted 25 community meetings throughout the state.

I attended the November 13th SHPO meeting in Hillsboro; and while the meeting was intended to address issues throughout the western Washington county area, the overwhelming majority of attendees were from the Hillsboro and Forest Grove area. The meeting started as an open forum, providing individuals with an opportunity to openly voice issues and concerns with Dr. Steven Poyser, Statewide Preservation Planner for SHPO. Dr. Poyser then discussed how these issues and concerns could be incorporated into the upcoming revision of the Preservation Plan.

I came away from the meeting with two conclusions: one, the historic and cultural resources in Oregon are in desperate need of assistance. Never has there been more pressure on land development, especially within the Urban Growth Boundary, than there is today. Two, the citizens and government of Forest Grove need to be applauded as an amazing example of a community banding together to preserve the historic properties that exist in our own backyard. Forest Grove was commended not only for the Historic Landmarks Board and its policy of issuing renovation grants to qualified applicants, but an overwhelming majority of the attendees at the Hillsboro meeting were there to discuss the A.T. Smith House and their efforts to transform this remarkable piece of history into a museum and agricultural interpretive center.

I urge you to get involved, either locally through the Friends of Historic Forest Grove or the Historic Landmarks Board, or at the state level.

If you'd like more information, please check out the SHPO website at:

<http://shpo.prd.state.or.us/shpo/index.php>

Or, if you are interested in the Friends of Historic Forest Grove or the A.T. Smith House, check out their website at:

<http://www.historicforestgrove.org/index.html>

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## ***A Home Reflects its Changing Occupants***

*By George Cushing*

How often have you looked at your old house and wondered "how many times it has been remodeled"? When we look at a house we quickly imagine ways it could be changed. On some we want to add or modernize while on others we only see the remodels already done (and sometimes think of how wonderful it must have looked before).

Older homes can be museum pieces preserving our past, but more often we enjoy the well preserved but updated homes. Houses should be looked at as a living thing mirroring the people who temporarily choose to abide there. A house will change to more closely match the needs of its occupants through additions or remodeling.

Let's take an example of a cabin in the mountains and how it's changed over the years. Today it's a modern home, but the original site may have held a 1920s 10x50 lumberjack's bunkhouse sitting on log skids. Many years later a 2<sup>nd</sup> bunkhouse was adjoined. At some point a lean-to with indoor plumbing was added as a bathroom, and later still another lean-to as a laundry and pump room. Subsequently another room is added to the side of the house, further adding to the house's interesting shape, and making one wonder about the inspiration for the now quite odd architecture. Finally a new deck on the back and a large porch on the front complete the add-ons. The final product has become an historical reflection of its owners and their needs over the years.

Today, as we look at what's become of this historical cabin most would agree that the original bunkhouse would be less accommodating than it's modernized descendent. Very few would prefer the original outdoor privy or even the first indoor plumbing. The updating from wood heating and

cooking to electricity certainly changes the historical nature of the home, but the historical loss is overridden by the increased livability.

So as we remodel our homes remember that everything we do effects the building's historical nature but that homes need to be tastefully updated in order to both bring history into the present as well as provide an attractive, comfortable home.

### ***Local Updates***

- Roof repairs to prevent further water damage have been completed on the AT Smith House. The Historic Landmarks Board provided a grant to help fund the repairs.
- The Eric Stewart History Room was officially dedicated in October and work will soon begin on cataloging the Stewart collection of historical material. Look for a notice early next year!
- Pacific University's Old College Hall was re-opened on December 3 (it was moved to its present location on July 27).

### ***Upcoming Events***

- Feb. 19 (Thu.) 7 pm  
Restoration Workshop  
"Landscaping Your Historic Property",  
location TBA
- Mar. 20 (Sat.)  
Trinkets and Treasures antique appraisal  
show.  
Forest Grove

## ***Meet the Newest Board Member - Jon Stagnitti***

Born in Central NY, my journey to Forest Grove was a circuitous one. My interests are varied and, to a large extent, my experiences have kept pace. Manhattan, Colorado, Wyoming, Portland, Malaysia and Ireland were all called home along the way. The decision to move to Forest Grove three years ago was an easy one; it is a close enough for my wife Melanie to commute to her workplace in Hillsboro, and the one place in the Portland Metro area that felt like 'home' to us. It's the kind of home I knew in my youth and the kind where we could be happy raising our children, Lucio and Sofia. Plus, there are great gardening possibilities and close proximity to some good fishing.

Home for the first half of my life was Canastota, New York. A town of about 5,000 people, Canastota has the kind of small-town vibrancy one finds when residents invest of themselves and work to nourish the sense of community - a feeling I find in Forest Grove as well. In addition to an abundance of old homes, you will also find a local museum, a wonderful turn-of-the-century, Craftsman-style public library and families with roots in the community. Getting involved in a smaller town is not always easy. Neighbors and even family members can find themselves on opposite sides of important issues such as zoning or education. But, in the end, the community itself generally emerges victorious. I grew up in a house built in the mid-1800s in a neighborhood full of old houses; some grand, others modest like ours.

The choice to join the Historic Landmarks Board seemed obvious – here is a group that not only cares about the older homes of Forest Grove but also does what it can to help preserve them. I look forward to the opportunity to do my part.

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### ***History Buff Calendars now at Saturday Market***

The Friends of Historic Forest Grove now have a booth at Saturday Market in downtown Portland to help sell the 'History Buffs' calendar. The booth is on the west side of the MAX tracks, next to the Saturday Market Office. The calendar was produced using local talent and was photographed on location at the AT Smith House. Proceeds are going toward the purchase of the historic house.

### **Historic Landmark Board Openings**

Interested in joining the Historic Landmarks Board? As a board member you'll help preserve the city's history while becoming much more familiar with and it, plus helping with the Preservation Grant Program as well as the quarterly newsletter.

Contact city liaison James Reitz at 503-992-3233 or city recorder Anna Ruggles at 503-992-3235.

#### ***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.

#### ***The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board***

- Monty Smith (chair).....503-357-7804  
.....[montys@orel.ws](mailto:montys@orel.ws)
- Scott Rogers (Vice Chair).....503-357-8265  
.....[SRogers@extensis.com](mailto:SRogers@extensis.com)
- Elizabeth Muncher (Secretary).....503-357-6168  
.....[Elizabeth.A.Muncher@tek.com](mailto:Elizabeth.A.Muncher@tek.com)
- George Cushing.....503-357-3389  
.....[george.cushing@worldtravel.com](mailto:george.cushing@worldtravel.com)
- Jon Stagnitti.....503-357-6369  
.....[semangati@yahoo.com](mailto:semangati@yahoo.com)

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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***Historic Landmarks Board  
City of Forest Grove  
PO Box 326  
Forest Grove, OR 97116***

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