November Program:

Wild Beauty illuminates the rich photographic heritage of one of the most magnificent landforms of the American West with 134 images by three dozen photographers, including Carleton Watkins, Benjamin Gifford, Fred Kiser, Lily White, Sarah Ladd, Alfred Monner, and Ray Atkeson. These rare photographs, most of them previously unpublished, have been meticulously restored and then carefully reproduced in four-color process to capture the nuanced tones and subtle coloring of albumen silver prints, gelatin silver prints, platinum prints, hand-colored photographs, and early Kodachromes.

The Columbia Gorge exerts a powerful influence on the lives and imaginations of those who live in the region, and those who visit. As the only near-sea-level passage through the Cascade Range, it was a corridor of trade and a center of culture for Native Americans for thousands of years. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lewis and Clark traced their westward path of exploration through the Gorge, and half a century later the early emigrant wagon trains followed the same course to the Pacific Northwest.

On expeditions to the Gorge in 1867 and again in the early 1880s, Carleton Watkins produced what are widely considered to be some of the greatest landscape photographs ever made. The place Watkins saw transformed, incrementally at first by the construction of locks and canals, and then fundamentally by hydroelectric dams.

Much of the extraordinary work created during this period by Watkins and his successors has never been available to public view. The original prints or negatives are fragile; they exist today primarily because they have been preserved in archival collections. Now, in Wild Beauty, the authors present some of the finest surviving photographs of the Columbia River Gorge framed by insightful text, offering us a portrait of one of the West’s primal landscapes through nearly a century of dramatic change.

The story of the American West is written across the surface of the Columbia River. Wild Beauty captures not only the shores, but the complex and conflicting histories that have played out in the Columbia River Gorge over the past two centuries. Most important, these photographs reveal what has been hidden beneath the waters, unfolding the distinctive geology of the Gorge and bringing back to life a Columbia we can now only imagine. Wild Beauty is a gift to the Columbia and to all who love this majestic and elegant river.”

— Toby Juravics, Curator of Photography, Smithsonian American Art Museum
Busy times at THIS! A HUGE thank you to Multnomah County Work Crew, Waste Management, Metro and the City of Troutdale! The row of "shrubs" between the Depot and Troutdale House have been greatly reduced in size and the dirt on the east side of the Depot has been cut back by a couple of feet. It looks so much better! The picture of the Blaser house brings back memories. Sorry MOM, it must be told! Mayor Blaser had a crab apple tree on his property that hung way over his fence on the Jackson Park Road side. In the late summer when the apples were ripe, there would be so many apples on the tree that the limbs would hang down and almost touch the ground. We could hide under there and not be seen.

At Mom’s request, we would go down and ‘borrow’ enough crab apples for many batches of jelly. Yum! ... Mayor Blaser never used any of the apples, but he would sure yell when he heard us out there ... but sadly, the tree is now gone with all the construction on the corner of the highway and Jackson Park. I also know for a fact that if any of the apples got thrown at cars, MY BROTHERS DID IT! I fondly remember Helen Otto and having grown up with all the Otto kids. She will be greatly missed by the Troutdale Community and all who knew her.

Another fond memory is buying gas at Mike’s! Mike & Pauline Morrow were almost always at the gas station. You could charge your gas, soda and cigarettes and go back and pay them on payday...so sad those days are long gone.

Have a Happy Holidays! Terry

Does anyone remember the Tap Pot Inn?

Helen Otto

Helen Dombeckowski Otto, wife and legislative assistant to the late East County senator and former Troutdale mayor Glenn Otto, died Oct. 13, at the age of 90.

A veteran of the Army Nurse Corps in World War II and a founder of the Troutdale Historical Society, Otto and her husband, the late Glenn Otto, both Democrats, served in Salem for 20 years before his retirement in 1993. Glenn began his political career as mayor of Troutdale and then was elected to the house and later the senate.

Three of her brothers, and Helen, who joined the Army Nurse Corps, served in World War II. Helen nursed in military hospitals in Italy, caring for her brother who was injured in the push for Monte Cassino. She was still in Italy when a letter sent to her eldest brother was returned marked “Killed in Action.” He is buried near Saint-Lo in France.

Her wartime connections created friendships with westerners who urged her to come to Oregon.

“I was the only one of my family who went so far,” she said. She met Glenn Otto, a young Navy veteran, on her first day at Vanport College.

One of the early dates was to take in the smelt run on the Sandy River at Troutdale. The two were married in January 1949. They had two children when they moved into a restaurant on the edge of the Sandy River at the west end of the Troutdale bridge. The combination restaurant/home was in the thick of every smelt run for years. The Otto front yard the site of a hamburger stand, a net concession and smelt-by-the-pound sales.

Troutdale was well under 600 in population. Glenn Otto, riled by an issue over water meters, became involved in local politics and was elected mayor in 1966. Helen and her husband suggested creating a historical society in the rapidly changing city. “The result was the founding in 1968 of the Troutdale Historical Society. Helen Otto remained on the board for most of the early years of the organization.”

From Sharon Nesbit

Mike Morrow

Mike Morrow, who died Oct. 4 at the age of 80 in his home at Summerplace, was the Fairview gas station guy who always washed your windshield and checked your oil.

Morrow, and his wife Pauline, who survives him, operated the Fairview Shell and adjacent grocery store at the corner of Sandy Boulevard and Fairview Avenue for 33 years, beginning in 1954. Both volunteered for the Troutdale Historical Society in their retirement years.

The Fairview gas station was built more than 85 years ago on Sandy Boulevard, then the route to the Columbia River Highway through the Columbia River Gorge. Their station, along with other historic gas stations strung along the highway, were stops for refreshment, repairs and fuel for early-day motorists. The Morrows were friends of other longtime gas station owners, Ike and June Handy in Troutdale and Bob and Nev Scott in Springdale.

In the early days, attendants wore uniforms, the station offered charge accounts, a mechanic on duty and a place to cash a paycheck.

“On payday the workers from Reynolds Metals (in Troutdale) would be lined up out the door to cash their pay checks and they’d pay off their bills at the same time,” Pauline Morrow said.

From Sharon Nesbit

Troutdale/Fairview Reunion

It was a meager turnout Oct. 11 for our Fairview/Troutdale school reunion, about 15 people, but a few connections were made and memories recalled.

Society president Scott Cunningham reminded us that no matter where you live after you grow up, your roots are where you went to school. Herb and Clover Nasmyth were there and he recalled that he had an insistent Troutdale teacher who wanted curves on the top of his letter 'm,' a feat that Herb says he still has not conquered.

Gary Holman recalled being in the first class from Troutdale to go to middle school, and how upset both parents and students were at cutting two years off the experience at Troutdale grade school.

Doris Cereghino Caramella remember standing on top of the Ocean Wave, a lethal kind of merry-go-round since banned from school grounds, and the fall that cut her chin and left a lifelong scar.

Carole Klinger came with her Fairview beanie and a store of Fairview Grade School pictures as did Alvin Leroy Roberts who attended Fairview in the 1930s. Roberts connected with classmate Jo Stone Callister, so the two enjoyed going over photos. Roberts has been working abroad most of his life and is back in the community and enjoying classmate's.(Herb Nasmyth remembered that Roberts' father owned a buzz saw and cut most of the stove wood in the area.)

Roberts can be contacted at his daughter's home in Gresham, 503-465-0633.

Both Cunningham and Verne Rathman spoke of teacher Helen Fehrenbacher, who turned 103 in October, remembering what a great contribution she made to their education.

From Sharon Nesbit
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In the event of icy or snowy weather and hazardous driving conditions, our meetings will be automatically cancelled. We will do our best to post such a message on the THS answering machine, 503-661-2164. If you have a cold or the flu, PLEASE STAY HOME!