



# ByGone Times

Quarterly Newsletter of the Troutdale Historical Society

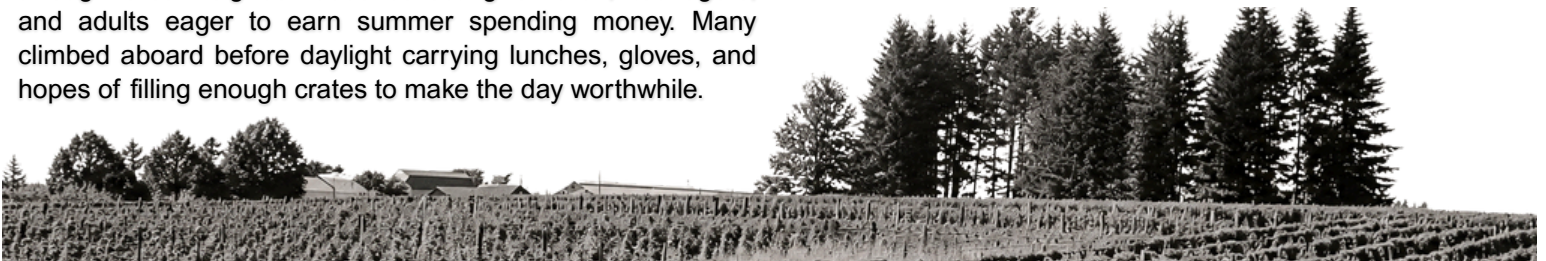
Office: (503) 661-2164 Email: [TroutdaleHistory@gmail.com](mailto:TroutdaleHistory@gmail.com)

## Sweet Summers: When Berry Fields Covered Troutdale



Before subdivisions, outlet stores, and four-lane highways transformed Troutdale, summer arrived with the scent of ripe strawberries drifting across the fields. Long rows of berries stretched across the countryside, their bright red fruit waiting to be picked beneath the warm June sun. For much of the twentieth century, berry farming wasn't simply part of Troutdale's economy, it was part of its identity. Eastern Multnomah County became one of Oregon's premier berry-growing regions because nature seemed to have designed it for the job. Rich alluvial soils, mild temperatures, abundant rainfall, and irrigation from nearby streams produced exceptional crops of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and later blueberries. By the 1920s, berries had become one of the area's most valuable agricultural commodities. Japanese-American farming families played an especially important role, producing an estimated ninety percent of the strawberries grown around Troutdale. Their careful cultivation techniques, developed through generations of farming experience, helped make eastern Multnomah County one of Oregon's most productive berry-growing districts. When harvest season arrived, the fields came alive before sunrise. Old school buses, known simply as "berry buses," traveled through area neighborhoods collecting children, teenagers, and adults eager to earn summer spending money. Many climbed aboard before daylight carrying lunches, gloves, and hopes of filling enough crates to make the day worthwhile.

The buses wound their way east toward Troutdale, Fairview, Gresham, and beyond, delivering thousands of seasonal workers to the fields every summer. Berry picking was honest work, and it wasn't easy. Strawberry pickers spent hours bent low to the ground, carefully searching beneath leaves for perfectly ripe fruit. Raspberry and blackberry fields demanded equal determination, often leaving hands scratched by thorns and stained deep purple by day's end. During the 1950s, strawberry pickers often earned about 50 cents for every crate they filled, with a small bonus for staying until the day's work was finished. Fast pickers could earn enough money to buy a bicycle, new school clothes, or save for the coming school year. Yet few people remember only the hard work. They remember sneaking an occasional berry into their mouths. They remember laughing with friends between rows. They remember the satisfaction of seeing stacks of full crates waiting to be loaded onto trucks headed for markets, canneries, and freezers across the Pacific Northwest. For many families, berry season became a yearly tradition that taught responsibility, perseverance, and the value of an honest day's work. **continued on page 5**



# Volunteer Spotlight

## A Heart for History: Helen Wand

Some people preserve history by collecting artifacts, Helen Wand preserves it by bringing the past to life. The daughter of Alice and Ignatius Wand, founding members of the Troutdale Historical Society, Helen grew up surrounded by stories of the Columbia River Gorge and the pioneers who shaped our community. That lifelong passion led her to become an award winning author, historian, educator, and one of our Society's most dedicated volunteers. After a successful career as a medical technologist, she founded the Clinical Laboratory Assistant/Phlebotomy Program at Clackamas Community College before retiring to devote more time to history. Helen is the author of the acclaimed historical novels *Where Eagles Nest* and *Echoes of Forgotten Places*, both inspired by the people and places of east Multnomah County. At the Troutdale Historical Society, she served a term as our board President and for more than ten years served as chair of our Programs Committee and continues to generously share her knowledge, research, and enthusiasm with our volunteers and visitors. Through her writing, volunteer service, and lifelong dedication to preserving our local heritage, Helen has helped ensure that the stories of our community will continue to inspire future generations. Thank you, Helen, for your remarkable commitment to preserving the history we all cherish.



## Yarn at the Barn

~Barn Exhibit Hall Museum~  
732 E. Historic Columbia River Highway  
Troutdale, OR 97060

Program starts at 10:00 am until Noon/FREE

Presented by Jamie LaCour

Get creative with us! Our free fiber arts program returns on the first Wednesday of every month from 10:00 am to noon at the Barn Exhibit Hall. Come build new skills, exchange techniques, and enjoy the joy of crafting together. Open to ages 14 and up, with beginner supplies provided. Best of all, it's completely free, join us and start creating!

July 1<sup>st</sup> - Aug 5<sup>th</sup> - Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>

Learn Something New!

## OVERLAY MOSAIC CROCHET WORKSHOP

Make the Troutdale Cowl

  
**SATURDAY**  
 AUGUST 22, 2026

  
 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

  
 LIMITED TO  
 6 STUDENTS



# \$35

PER PERSON

Register Now!

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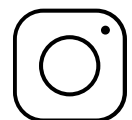
FaceBook.com/TroutdaleHistory.org



www.TroutdaleHistory.org



@TroutdaleHistory



Instagram.com/BarnMuseum



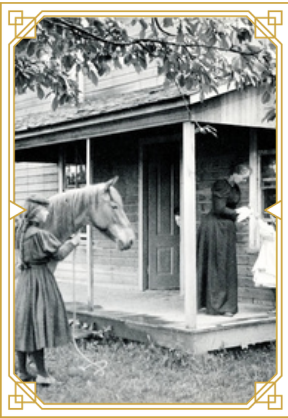
Summerfest is back, and what a wonderful homecoming it was! After several years away, it was truly heartwarming to see one of Troutdale's favorite traditions return, bringing our community together once again with music, laughter, history, and smiling faces around every corner. From the opening parade led by the Salvation Army Gresham Drum Corps, to the ribbon cutting at the beautiful new Sharon Nesbit Heritage Park, to children waving colorful streamers as they marched from the Depot Rail Museum to the park, the entire day was filled with excitement and community pride. Families explored downtown, met friendly llamas, discovered hidden Worry Worms, enjoyed the Yarn Bomb displays, and visited the museums in numbers we have not seen in years. Here at the Troutdale Historical Society, more than 250 people walked through the doors of our museums, 68 explorers completed the Troutdale Treasure Trail, we welcomed six new member households into the Historical Society family, and we met six potential new volunteers who expressed an interest in helping preserve Troutdale's history. Perhaps even more exciting was the number of visitors who discovered our museums for the very first time. Watching children race through the exhibits, hearing longtime residents share memories, and seeing new families experience Troutdale's rich history reminded us exactly why we do what we do. Community events like this are never the work of one organization, they are built by dozens of caring people who give their time, talents, and generosity to create something special for everyone else. We extend our deepest gratitude to Joy Beldin, Margaret Rice, Jeff Neiger, Joyce Belcher, Jamie LaCour, Marlee Boxler, Dave Ripma, Sharon Nesbit, Kimberly Carl, Lauren Shaw, the City of Troutdale, Troutdale Barber Chicks, Ristorante di Pompello, Goin Gaming, Historic Troutdale Barbershop, Troutdale Burrito Shop, and Sasquatch Adventures for the countless hours they

invested planning, organizing, promoting, donating, setting up, cleaning up, volunteering, and making sure every visitor felt welcome. We also want to recognize the amazing volunteers and donors who helped create our colorful Yarn Bomb displays and contributed prizes, supplies, and support, including Halina Wall, Kelly Turner, Dana Bernhardt, Gloria Douglass, Diane Smith-Wright, BobbieLou Chapman, Vicki Ogden, Kimberly King, Collyn Baldwin, Christine Fahlman, Dottie Porter, Liz Holmes, Sherry Backus of S.A.C.K. (Supporting A Community with Kindness), Brandi Deal, and Carla Bicket. Every ribbon tied, every decoration hung, every donated item, every volunteer hour, and every encouraging smile helped make this event unforgettable. A special thank you also goes to everyone who attended. Whether you marched in the parade, visited the museums, completed the Treasure Trail, stopped to pet the llamas, welcomed Queen Sharon with a smile, listened to the speeches celebrating our community, or simply spent the afternoon enjoying historic downtown, you helped make Summerfest feel like home again. The energy throughout the day reminded us just how fortunate we are to live in a community that values its history, supports its local businesses, and comes together to celebrate what makes Troutdale unique. After the challenges of the past several years, seeing Summerfest return stronger than ever gave all of us hope for the future. The laughter of children, the conversations between old friends, the excitement of first time museum visitors, and the overwhelming support shown by our volunteers and community partners made this a day we will remember for many years to come. From all of us at the Troutdale Historical Society, thank you for helping make the return of Summerfest such an overwhelming success. We are looking forward to next year for an even bigger celebration.

# JUST THE OTHER DAY

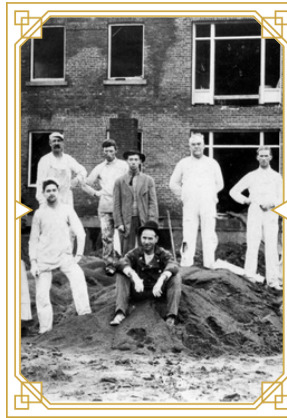
## 1880 - A Town Ready to Grow

The Troutdale Post Office was officially established. With rail service already nearby and fertile bottomland surrounding the community, local farmers soon began shipping fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and other farm goods to Portland markets.



## 1911 - Farming with a Purpose

The new Multnomah County Poor Farm opened in Troutdale on 345 acres. Residents raised livestock and cultivated vegetables, berries, and field crops to help feed the institution, making farming an essential part of daily life.



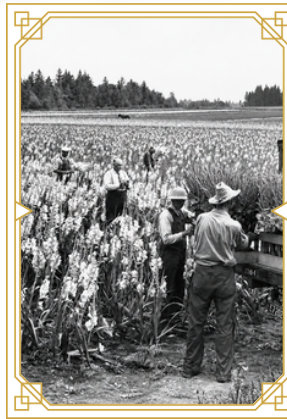
## 1924 - Fields Fit for a Mayor

Laura Harlow was elected mayor of Troutdale. During the same era, local farms were earning statewide recognition for their agricultural products as Troutdale's fertile sandy soils supported thriving truck farms and produce growers.



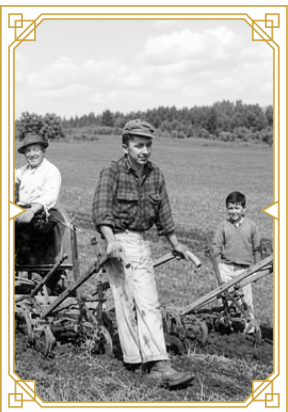
## 1928 - Flowers Bound for Fame

Troutdale railroad agent A.D. Kendall shipped his prize-winning gladiolus blooms by refrigerated railcar to the American Gladiolus Society's national competition in Toledo, Ohio, bringing national attention to Troutdale's growing flower industry.



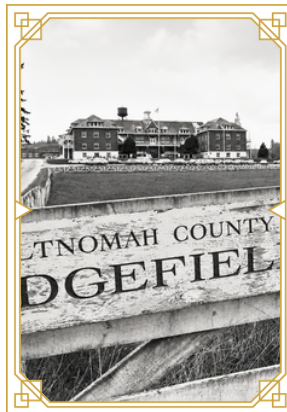
## 1943 - A Family Plants Its Roots

The Fujii family had farmed the Troutdale area since the early 1900s before founding Fujii Farms in 1943. 80 years later, and the family is still growing strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries, making it one of Troutdale's longest-running berry farms.



## 1964 - The End of an Era

By 1964, farming operations at the Multnomah County Home and Farm (today's Edgefield) officially came to an end. For more than 50 years, residents had grown vegetables, berries, and other crops on the property, making agriculture a daily part of life before the land transitioned to new uses.



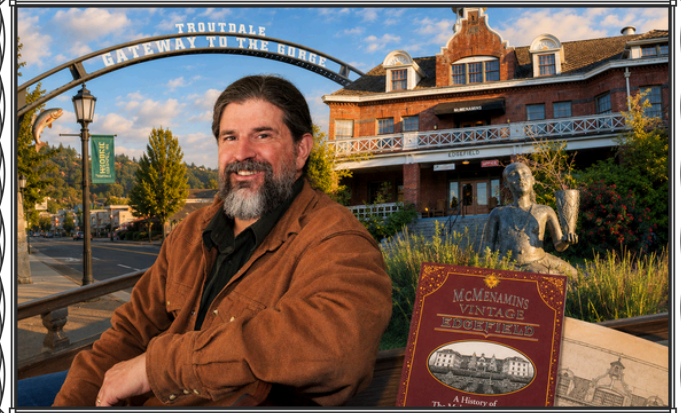
## Sweet Summers: When Berry Fields Covered Troutdale continued from page 1

Among Troutdale's most familiar farming families is the Fujii family, whose roots in the community stretch back to the early 1900s. For generations they have grown strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries, becoming one of the area's best-known agricultural operations. During harvest, the Fujii fields reflected a system common across Troutdale. Pickers were paid by the crate, but rather than receiving cash each time a full crate reached the scale, they were given a punched ticket showing the weight. At the end of the day, those tickets were redeemed for cash. Jim Fujii recalled that his family's farm handled payment this way, a simple but efficient system that kept the harvest moving. The Fujiis were far from alone. Historical records also document farms such as the Cereghino Farm, the Baker Farm, and the Strebin Farm, reminders that berry production once covered much of the Troutdale countryside. Together with dozens of other family farms, they supplied fresh fruit that found its way onto dinner tables throughout Oregon and beyond. For many local children, berry season was simply part of growing up. Schools dismissed for summer just as the harvest began, reflecting what educators often called an agricultural calendar. Helping in the fields was not viewed as an optional summer job so much as a family responsibility, and children worked alongside parents, grandparents, neighbors, and friends. The experience taught responsibility, perseverance, and the value of earning a paycheck through hard work, something that has largely disappeared as modern labor laws and agricultural regulations have changed the way farms operate.

Over the decades, however, the landscape slowly changed. As Portland expanded eastward, many berry fields gave way to neighborhoods, shopping centers, schools, and roads. Acres that once echoed with the voices of berry pickers gradually disappeared beneath pavement and rooftops. The seasonal rhythm that had defined summers for generations became increasingly rare. Still, Troutdale's agricultural roots have never entirely faded. Local farms continue to produce berries each summer, and farm stands still draw customers searching for fresh-picked fruit. Countless residents can still recall berry buses, stained fingertips, aching backs, and the excitement of redeeming a pocketful of punched tickets for that first hard-earned paycheck. The story of Troutdale's berry fields is about far more than agriculture. It is the story of immigrant families who transformed fertile ground into thriving farms, of children learning the value of hard work, and of neighbors working side by side beneath the summer sun, harvest after harvest, year after year. As we celebrate Troutdale's past, it is worth remembering that many of our community's greatest stories were not written inside grand buildings or along busy streets. They were written one berry at a time, in fields that fed families, strengthened communities, and helped shape the Troutdale we know today. While many of those fields have disappeared, their legacy remains as sweet as a sun-warmed Hood strawberry picked fresh from the vine.



History's Greatest Storyteller:  
 Congratulations to Tim Hills,  
 2026 Oregon Heritage  
 Excellence Award Recipient!



If you've ever wandered the halls of McMenamins Edgefield, admired one of its murals, or found yourself stopping to read "just one more" story on the wall, you've already experienced the work of Tim Hills. This spring, Tim received the 2026 Oregon Heritage Excellence Award, one of Oregon's highest honors for those dedicated to preserving our state's history. The Oregon Heritage Commission recognized Tim for his lifelong commitment to uncovering history and his extraordinary gift for storytelling, noting that his research and partnerships with communities have influenced the preservation and interpretation of historic buildings throughout the Pacific Northwest. For those of us who know Tim, this honor simply confirms what we've known for years. As McMenamins' lead historian for more than three decades, Tim has helped transform historic schools, theaters, hotels, and landmarks into places where visitors don't just see history, they experience it. Before a mural is painted or a building begins its next chapter, Tim uncovers the stories hidden within old photographs, newspapers, blueprints, oral histories, and conversations with longtime community members. Those discoveries become the inspiration behind McMenamins' distinctive "historical surrealism," where every piece of artwork tells the true story of a place. Here in Troutdale, Tim has also been a valued friend and longtime supporter of the Troutdale Historical Society. We are especially grateful for his collaboration with our own "Queen of Troutdale," Sharon Nesbit, on McMenamins Vintage Edgefield, preserving the remarkable history of the former Multnomah County Poor Farm and the beloved destination it has become today. Tim reminds us that preserving history is really about preserving people, their stories, their struggles, and their triumphs. His passion has inspired countless others to appreciate the places and memories that define our communities. Congratulations, Tim, on this well deserved recognition. Thank you for more than 30 years of preserving Oregon's history, supporting organizations like ours, and proving that the best stories are often hiding in plain sight. From all of us at the Troutdale Historical Society, thank you for helping keep our shared history alive.



Guess This Item from the Collection! Take a close look... any guesses?  
 This hand-cranked wooden device features a large grooved roller with two smaller rollers tucked beneath it. Once found in many homes, it made one of the most time-consuming household chores much easier. What do you think it was used for? Make your guess and see if you're right in the next issue!

**Last Issue's Answer:**

The mystery artifact was a Wizard Cigarette Holder, patented on February 5, 1889. This small spring-loaded metal clip held a cigarette securely, allowing smokers to keep their fingers clean and avoid burns while enjoying a smoke. A clever Victorian-era accessory, it reflects the ingenuity found in many everyday items from the late 1800s.



### What's New Along the Historic Columbia River Highway

More than 110 years after its first automobiles rolled through the Columbia River Gorge, the Historic Columbia River Highway continues to evolve. While preserving this National Historic Landmark is no small task, 2026 has brought several exciting milestones for one of Oregon's greatest engineering achievements. The biggest news is the reopening of the East Multnomah Falls Viaduct after an extensive restoration project. For the past several months, crews carefully repaired and strengthened the century-old structure while preserving its original appearance. The project marks another major step in ensuring future generations can experience Samuel Lancaster's vision just as travelers did over a century ago. Travelers should also know that work continues elsewhere along the highway. Rock wall repairs near Larch Mountain Road are underway this summer following landslide damage earlier this year. These repairs help preserve one of the highway's signature features, its beautifully crafted stone guardrails that have become as iconic as the waterfalls themselves. If you're planning a trip to Multnomah Falls this summer, remember that timed-use permits remain in effect for the I-84 parking lot between May 22 and September 7 from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The permit system helps reduce congestion and improve the visitor experience during the busiest months of the year. Cyclists and hikers continue to enjoy one of the highway's newest attractions, the reconstructed Mitchell Point Tunnel. Opened to pedestrians and bicyclists, the tunnel recreates one of the highway's most celebrated engineering marvels and once again offers breathtaking window views overlooking the Columbia River, just as visitors experienced in 1915. Here in Troutdale, our community remains the western gateway to this remarkable roadway. Every visitor who begins their journey in downtown Troutdale is following in the tire tracks of more than a century of travelers who set out to discover waterfalls, breathtaking vistas, and one of the finest scenic highways ever built. As restoration work continues, the Historic Columbia River Highway remains exactly what its designers intended, not simply a road to get somewhere, but a destination in itself.

#### Harlow House

Thurs - Sun / Noon - 3pm

#### Barn Exhibit Hall

Thurs - Sun / Noon - 3pm

#### Rail Depot

Mon - Sun / 9am - 3pm

# A Message from the President of THS



Jeff Neiger

Thank you to all members who welcomed me into office as President of THS. As I succeed past President Dave Ripma, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for his leadership and mentorship. Summerfest was well attended, starting with a parade from Mayor's Square to the Sharon Nesbit Heritage Park where Mayor Dave and Sharon spoke and helped usher in the grand opening. The Troutdale Treasure Trail (scavenger hunt) was hugely popular as was face painting, lawn games, and of course two white llamas leading the procession! The success and simplicity of our parade has inspired talk of a repeat performance reestablishing Troutdale's annual Summerfest. Thank you to all our wonderful helpers for planning and executing these events. As we celebrate the history of Troutdale and educate the public, the result has been a new influx of citizen volunteers. Thank you for keeping our history alive!

THS President,  
Jeff Neiger

## THS BOARD

### Executive Board:

President: Jeff Neiger  
Vice President: Dave Ripma  
Treasurer: Jamie LaCour  
Secretary: Ann Chatterton

### Board Members:

Marlee Boxler -  
Joyce Belcher - Norm Thomas

### Editorial Team

Joy Beldin ~ Len Otto

### Executive Director

Chris L. Garza

## FRIENDS OF HISTORY REMEMBERED

Kenneth (Ken) Louis Otto, February 2, 1951 – May 11, 2026



Former THS member Ken Otto grew up on the banks of the Sandy River in Troutdale, going on to live his entire life in Oregon. He graduated Troutdale Grade School in 1965, and Reynolds High School in 1969. At Reynolds, he was a letterman in football and was the class president his senior year. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at Lewis and Clark College and a Master of Public Administration from Syracuse University. After earning his master's degree, Ken held several administrative positions in Oregon state government. He later worked 20 years at MODA Health, retiring in 2019. Ken stepped out of his comfort zone in retirement, taking singing and acting classes. He was proud to have sung in the choir at St. Andrew Catholic Church, and to have been in two episodes of Portlandia. Ken is survived by siblings Len (Gloria), Mary (Mike), brother Neal (Shannon), nephew Nate, and niece Brynne (Bob). He was predeceased by his parents Glenn and Helen Otto and sister Joann Otto. Contributions in Ken's name would be welcomed by St. Andrew Catholic Church ([standrewchurch.com](http://standrewchurch.com)) and/or The Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon ([emoregon.org](http://emoregon.org)).

## NEW MEMBERS SINCE MARCH

Alena Savage - Debbie Burton - Desiree Smith - Gregory Menta - Heidi & David Levan - Jennifer O'Donnell - Lana Luke  
Melissa Preston - Sabrina Austin - Steve Hamilton - Steve & Cindy Snow - Susan Krebs

# A Big Thank You to all of Our Sponsors



Edgefield



Troutdale Masonic Hall  
202 SE Dora Ave



Corner of Orient Dr. & Short Rd.  
29690 S.E. Orient Dr. • Gresham, OR 97080

Wholesale (503) 663-0725  
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The Troutdale Historical Society is grateful for the businesses and organizations that choose to support local history through their sponsorship of the Troutdale Historical Society. Their generosity helps fund day-to-day operations, educational programs, exhibits, museum preservation, and the countless behind-the-scenes efforts that allow us to collect, preserve, and share the stories of our community. Every issue of ByGone Times, every program, and every visitor experience is strengthened by their support. We simply could not continue our mission without these valued partners. Please join us in thanking them and, whenever possible, supporting the businesses that help keep Troutdale's history alive for future generations.

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Troutdale, OR, 97060

Phone: 503-661-2164  
Email: Troutdalehistory@gmail.com  
Website: www.TroutdaleHistory.org

The Troutdale Historical Society is organized and shall be operated exclusively to gather, preserve and make available museum, record, and other material relating to the history of the community of Troutdale, the northern portion of the Sandy River, and nearby areas to stimulate an interest in, and knowledge of the locality's past.

# TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WWW.TROUTDALEHISTORY.ORG

JOIN US AND ENJOY FREE ACCESS TO ALL OUR MUSEUMS, 10% OFF AT THE BARN STORE GIFT SHOP, QUARTERLY NEWSLETTERS DELIVERED RIGHT TO YOUR INBOX OR MAILBOX, AND \$10 OFF YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH THE OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

- \$20 Individual Membership
- \$30 Family Membership
- \$100 Lovers Oak Membership
- \$250 Business Sponsor Membership
- \$500 Corporate Sponsor Membership
- \$1000 Captain's Circle Membership - Lifetime

### ALREADY A MEMBER? GIVE A GIFT MEMBERSHIP!

\*Must be an active member to purchase a Gift Membership for another person.  
 \$15 Gift Membership \_\_\_\_\_

(Current Member's Name)

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- General Operating Fund \_\_\_\_\_
- Endowment Fund in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

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(Visa, Master Card, Discovery ONLY)

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV # \_\_\_\_\_ /\_\_\_\_\_/2026

## Thank you for your support!