

The

ARCHIVE

QUARTERLY OF THE GRESHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2024



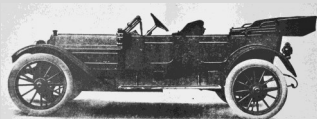
410 N Main Ave ♦ PO Box 65 ♦ Gresham, OR 97030 ♦ (503) 661-0347 ♦ info@greshamhistorical.org

AN AERIAL PORTRAIT OF GRESHAM

See pg. 4



Aerial photo of Olympic Manufacturing Company, 1974.
GHS coll. 2004.012



Gresham: "Detroit of the West"? See story pages 6-7.

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AT THE MUSEUM

UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 30** Building Stories history talk, 5pm (see pg. 5 for details)
- April 13** Landscaping work day #1, 9-3 (all welcome!)
- April 27** Landscaping work day #2, 9-3 (all welcome)
Mt. Hood Jazz Festival history talk, 5pm (see pg. 5)
- May 10 -11** GHS Flower Fest
-Plant Sale, May 10-11 all day in GHS parking lot
-Flower crown workshops evening of May 10 and morning of May 11 (times TBA)
- May 18** Cemetery Tour, 12pm (see pg. 5 for details)
- June 9** Cemetery Tour, 12pm (see pg. 5)
- June 21** 2nd Annual Speakeasy Gala (details TBA)
- June 29** Voices of Gresham Podcast Launch (see below)
- July 6** Cemetery Tour, 12pm (see pg. 5)
- July 20** Festival of Arts in Gresham, 9am to 5pm, Downtown Gresham
-Tie dye workshop, all day during Festival of Arts



NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Voices of Gresham Podcast Is In Production!

The Oregon Heritage Commission has awarded the Gresham Historical Society (GHS) an \$18,000 grant to launch a unique podcast that tells the Gresham experience from the perspective of those who have lived it.

The initial episode will be released at a launch party on June 29.

the City of Gresham Community Enhancement Grant since 2022. Over the past year and a half, she has developed a robust oral history interview program, which will form the basis for this podcast. *Voices of Gresham* will also integrate oral histories recorded on cassette tapes by GHS volunteers in the 1980s and 1990s, plus a handful of interviews filmed between 2013 and 2015. The initial episode of a planned first season of 10 episodes will be released at a free launch party on June 29, 2024.

Episodes will be organized around themes in Gresham's history and will place these stories in the context of regional

and national events, such as the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II – the subject of a planned five-episode arc in the first season. Other possible themes include displacement and migration, agriculture, urbanization, environment, and commerce. Each episode will incorporate research done by GHS staff and volunteers, along with narration by Vallance and various guests. The primary focus, however, will be on the recollections of Gresham residents.

Voices of Gresham is intended to nourish a sense of our shared past by removing barriers to access. People who are unable to visit a museum exhibit for any of a variety of reasons will get to engage with local heritage through the podcast. *Voices of Gresham* will be available for free on Apple Podcasts and other leading platforms and will receive a dedicated page on the GHS website, greshamhistorical.org.

The primary focus will be on the recollections of Gresham residents.

AT THE MUSEUM

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS (CONT'D)

Gresham History is Going Digital!

With help from the State Library of Oregon and the Schwemm Family Foundation, we've recently begun uploading historic documents, photos, and objects to an online archive that you can browse at this address: <https://www.northwestdigitalheritage.org/s/s/gresham/item>



You can currently view over 250 items – with many more on the way. We are proud to join the many regional museums, libraries, and archives that share their collections via the Northwest Digital Heritage portal. We hope this will be a valuable resource to our community and to historians everywhere.

Historic Ledger Returns to New York

In exploring a box of unprocessed donations from the 1990s and 2000s, we recently discovered a mildew-stained post office ledger from 1888. We love post office documents, as they're often a terrific source of information on early Gresham-area residents. This ledger, however, originated further afield – in Sacandaga Park, New York. Not familiar with the place? Neither were we. We got in touch with the Northville Northampton Historical Society (NNHS), the closest museum we could find, and learned

that Sacandaga Park was a resort town and amusement park that simply could not catch a break. First, it burned to the ground in 1898. In 1930, the rebuilt town was demolished and then permanently flooded by the construction of Sacandaga Reservoir. So if you go looking for the town of Sacandaga Park, you'll need a snorkel.

We transferred the register to NNHS, where they're making better use of it than we could. But the mystery remains: how did the register survive the destruction of the town... twice? And how did it end up in our archives? We're still scratching our heads.



NNHS staff examine the Sacandaga Park post office ledger.



IN MEMORIAM: ALEX MORGAN

We are saddened to share the news that volunteer Alex Morgan recently passed away at age 25.

Alex joined us in December 2022 and specialized in digitizing and cataloging historic photos. This was an important and often tricky task at which Alex excelled, adding immeasurable value to our organization. Alex always showed up with a smile.

At any nonprofit organization, volunteers will come and go. In the case of young volunteers, we hope that when they leave, it's for a career in museums or archives. This is how I imagined we'd eventually lose Alex. A recent graduate of the Master of Information and Library Science program at University of Washington, Alex was a born archivist.

Our thoughts are with Alex's family. -SA

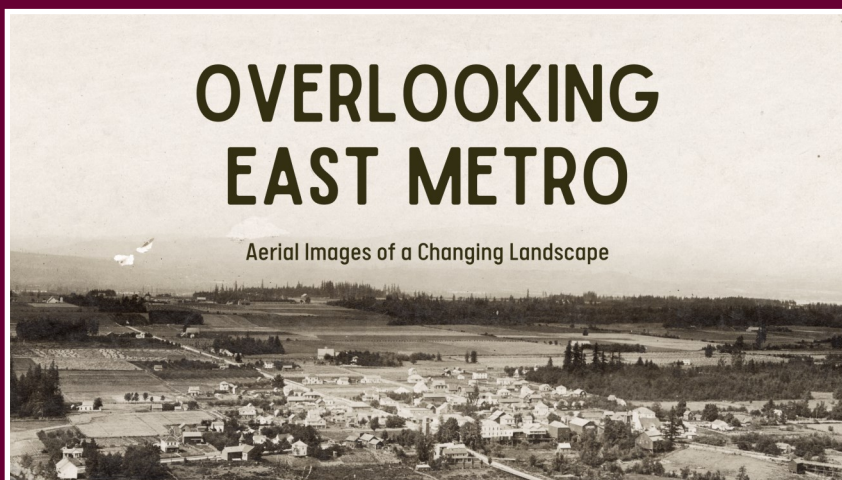
AT THE MUSEUM



This special exhibit features locally-connected artists who share their unique take on a variety of traditional methods. Check out the diverse talent that makes up Gresham's artistic landscape.

This exhibit is funded by a City of Gresham Cultural Events Grant. Most of the art on display in this exhibit has been purchased from the artists and will remain in our permanent collection so that it can inspire future generations.

Making and Mending is a celebration of the once-great art of textileworking. Encompassing a variety of hand-sewing techniques, this exhibit explores the meaning that sewing once held by featuring garments in GHS's collection of historic textiles. Thanks to the efforts of volunteer curator Rose Caughie, we are coming into a greater understanding of the stories and knowledge contained within this remarkable collection.



This year's photo essay, *Overlooking East Metro*, offers perspective on the physical changes the Gresham area has undergone starting with the earliest known aerial images taken in around 1905. Test your knowledge of local geography and compare today's Gresham with photos from the past.

GALLERY RENTALS AVAILABLE!

Did you know that you can rent the museum gallery for special events? A beautiful historic setting, our space is perfect for gatherings of up to 100 people. We'll even set up the tables and chairs! Call us at (503) 661-0347 or email info@greshamhistorical.org for more information.

AT THE MUSEUM

JOIN US FOR OUR 2024 PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

GHS kicked off a new monthly event in February, with a presentation on Black history in East Multnomah County by Kathleen Williamson. The lecture was the first in a regular series designed to feature topics related to local history and significant collections at GHS. Presenters are museum volunteers, who showcase the work they do behind the scenes to preserve our heritage and share it with future generations.

When: 5-6pm on the last Saturday of every month

Where: Gresham Historical Society main gallery, 410 N Main Ave, Gresham, OR 97030

Cost: \$5 per person (FREE for members!)

Lecture Schedule through August

March 30: Building Stories: What Our Historic Places can Tell Us About Our Shared Past, by Sarale Hickson

April 27: The Mt. Hood Festival of Jazz in Film, presented by Brendan Bender

May 25: Collections Spotlight: Historic Textiles, presented by Rose Caughie


June 29: Voices of Gresham Podcast Launch, presented by Stephanie Vallance (see pg. 2)

July 27: Zim's Twelve-Mile Store, presented by Anne Endicott

August 31: TBD.

Topics and presenters subject to change. Follow us on Facebook or Instagram for updates.


On **March 30 at 5pm**, volunteer Sarale Hickson will discuss how we can use Gresham's historic places to understand our collective history. This process can be used to tell a broader story that better reflects our diverse community's experiences.



BUILDING STORIES
WHAT OUR HISTORIC PLACES
CAN TELL US ABOUT OUR
SHARED PAST

Presented by Sarale Hickson

MUSEUM LECTURE SERIES
 Last Saturdays @ 5




*Returning
Soon*

OLD GRESHAM
Cemetery
Tours

Our popular cemetery tours are returning! This event is free to everyone. Bring your friends and come learn about the colorful, poignant, and surprising stories contained in Gresham's historic cemeteries. Tours meet at 12pm in the east lot of West Gresham Elementary. See pg. 2 for upcoming dates.

THE BEAVER SIX CAR—FACT OR FICTION?

By Anne Endicott

In the early 1900s, Portland businessman P. A. Combs decided to put Gresham on the map as a major player in the automobile manufacturing business. He built a factory, a prototype vehicle and developed a prospectus to attract investors.

But a shroud of mystery followed Combs and his company. The dream to make Gresham the “Detroit of the West” ended with a lengthy litigation, the loss of investors’ money and the biggest question of all – were any cars ever produced in Gresham?



Interpretive sign at Gresham Station shopping center, the site of the former Beaver State factory.

Combs was a pioneer with the notion of buying locally made products. The former vice president of an auto supply firm concluded that his fellow Oregonians would purchase automobiles manufactured here if someone made and marketed them.

Combs designed and built the Beaver Six Car in 1912, which he promptly took to driving around Portland and Gresham as advertising for his venture. He collected a handful of Portland executives and founded the Beaver State Motor Company, with 300,000 stock shares valued at \$1 per share.

Timing is everything in business, so a couple things helped pave the way for Combs’ vision of challenging Detroit’s domination in the car manufacturing market. First, the good roads movement had picked up speed since Americans found motoring through the countryside far more pleasurable than riding a bicycle.

Plans for the Columbia River Scenic Highway were on the drawing board and for the first time, a national paved highway system appeared possible.

Secondly, Combs had a convincing sales pitch. Auto manufacturers had factories in several eastern and mid-western states, he said, and a factory in Oregon would save shipping costs for buyers. Enthusiasm in the project was high, making investors plentiful.

The company purchased land on the corner of what is now, Northwest Eastman Parkway and Division Street. Beaver Motor Company’s factory, completed in March 1914, was 204 feet long, constructed of reinforced concrete, and contained a brick curtain that cost nearly \$7,500.

Combs was so sure of his enterprise that in May of 1914, he announced that seven Beaver Six vehicles would be ready for use in the Rose Festival parade in June. Parts for 500 cars had been ordered, Combs said, and assembly of the first Beaver Six vehicles was only days away.

But potholes in the road to production began to develop. War shortages created difficulties in acquiring the patented Daimler-Lanchester worm drive gears from England and concerns were raised over the newly built factory’s ability to fill the flood of customer orders already on the books. Beaver Motor reacted by abandoning plans for a full-size touring car and launched a program to develop a smaller vehicle to meet public demand.

Undaunted by the setback, the company moved their executive offices to Gresham in 1915. Six employees began casting four and six-cylinder engines in a foundry, that was once a woodshed for one of Gresham’s pioneers, Dr. John Powell.

In the fall of 1915, The Outlook reported that workers had turned to more profitable work, (building drag saws), waiting for the tide to turn in automotive production. By April 1918, however, the only thing coming out of Beaver Motor’s Gresham factory were saws.

Combs’ visions of Henry Ford-esque fame suddenly come to a grinding halt.

Toledo-based Willys-Overland, Inc., cried “infringement,” claiming Beaver Motor’s engine design

HISTORY FEATURE

(continued from previous page)

was a hair too close to one patented by the Overland company and filed suit. Investors saw their nest eggs disappear and the public wondered whether any Beaver Sixes had ever been built in the first place.

Which is the question still being debated more than a century later. While conflicting accounts say between two and four vehicles did see the light of day, the bottom line is no one alive today has ever seen one.

Combs' failed auto factory eventually changed its casting equipment and went on to produce rail car wheels, sewer pipe, drag saws, cement mixers and gasoline engines. The Olympic Manufacturing Company used the building to manufacture veneer until the late 1990s, when it was razed to make way for development of the Civic Neighborhood and Gresham Station.

But in the end, the Beaver Six may have been aptly named. In today's market, if one were found, it could be valued at more than six figures.



Beaver State Motor Company manufacturing plant in Gresham, circa 1920. GHS photo 2014.008.0025

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This month's reappearance of the sun and emergence of early spring blooms has us finally beginning work on a project to relandscape the south side of the museum. This site is haunted by the ghost of a filbert-shell path that used to wind through it: grass won't grow on the site of the former trail, creating an unsightly brown streak. (The rest of the grass dies shortly after summer begins, as we don't have sprinklers in the budget.) In addition, current vegetation is too close to our building, putting the foundation at risk from roots.

Our plan is to replace the grass and shrubbery on the south and east sides with new plants with low water needs, high visual appeal, and allure for pollinators. On the south side facing 4th Street, this will include lavender and rosemary, as well as native shrubs such as Oregon grape and snowberry. On the west side, facing our parking lot, we're planting blueberries, strawberries, raised herb beds, and a wildflower garden.

The hope is that the new landscaping will keep our grounds green and inviting year-round.

This project is funded by the City of Gresham Community Enhancement Grant and by in-kind support from Burns Feed Store, One Green World, and Al's Garden Center. Additional thanks to Thea and Angel Hayes for helping us develop our landscaping plan.

If you're interested in helping out, **we'd love for you to join us on April 13 and 27**, our two big planting days. Call us at (503) 661-0347 or email info@greshamhistorical.org for more information.

Silvie Andrews



RECIPES FROM GRESHAM'S PAST: PART 2

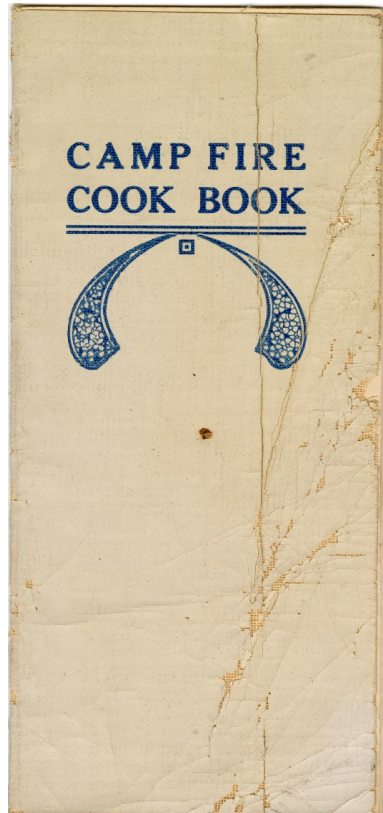
By Elizabeth Cour

This article is the second part of a seasonal series dedicated to sharing recipes and history from a 1923 Campfire Girls cookbook. The "Camp Fire Cook Book" was donated by a former president of the GHS, Betty Chisum, and the recipes were compiled by Gresham Campfire Girls Kathleen Bailey, Willene Botkin, Hazel Cooley, Helen Hisey, Florence Honey, Joyce Kidder, Lillie Nelson, Melba Rossman, and Dorothy Taylor. Their cookbook cost 50 cents at the time. The table of contents includes sections for bread, cakes, cheese dishes, confectionery, cookies, fish, meats, pastry, pickles puddings, salads, soups, and vegetables as well as a table of weights and measures.

The Campfire Girls organization was founded in 1910 by Luther and Charlotte Gulick, just a few years before the Girl Scouts began in 1912. Now known as "Camp Fire", Campfire Girls was America's first multiracial, multicultural, and nonsectarian organization for girls. This organization was established 10 years before the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted women the right to vote.

At the time of its creation, one of the goals of the Campfire Girls was to normalize young women learning skills outside of traditional gender specific roles. Campfire Girls has even been credited with helping popularize bloomers and pants as part of women's fashion. Some Campfire Girls alumni include Gladys Knight, Shirley Temple, Madonna, Marian Anderson, and Rita Moreno. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was also a chairwoman of the Campfire Girls' National Advisory Council in the late 1930s.

Camp Fire Cook Book compiled by the Gresham Camp Fire Girls in 1923.



Recipes

Here are some hearty recipes to try and share while the weather is still cool.

*Note: Most of the baking recipes in this cookbook do not include baking times or temperatures. We suggest you consult similar recipes and use your best judgement.

Baked Cheese and Rice

1 cup boiled rice.
1 tablespoon flour.
1 tablespoon butter.
1 cup milk.
1 beaten egg.
2 tablespoons grated cheese.
Salt and pepper to taste.

Make cream sauce of the butter, flour, milk, and salt. Mix boiled rice with cream sauce, add grated cheese and beaten egg. Bake a light brown. Delicious.

Vegetable Soup

Add to the broth of 3 pounds of boiled beef, 1 bay-leaf, ½ cup rice, 1 onion, 2 large carrots, ½ cup macaroni and salt and pepper to taste. Cook 1 hour. Then add two large potatoes and cook ½ hour.

Pimento Potatoes

6 medium sized potatoes.
½ can pimentos.
½ cup grated cream cheese.
Salt and pepper to taste.
1 ½ cups cream sauce.
3 tablespoons butter.

Boil, cool, and slice potatoes, add pimentos, cheese, salt and pepper. Turn into a buttered baking-dish, pour over the sauce, sprinkle bread crumbs on top and dot with butter. Bake for 20 minutes.

Serve

Oatmeal Cookies

2 cups flour.
1 cup sugar.
2 cups rolled oats.
1 cup chopped raisins.
½ cup chopped nuts.
¾ cup butter.
2 eggs.
1 small teaspoon soda.
A little cinnamon.

Drop by teaspoon in a buttered pan and bake in moderately slow oven.

Sources

New England Historical Society
Camp Fire Girls Website

FROM THE ARCHIVES

GIANT STEPS: DIGITIZING THE MT. HOOD JAZZ FESTIVAL TAPES

By *Brendan Bender*

I recently stumbled across an article about the passing of pianist and singer Les McCann and recognized his name from my work with the Mt. Hood Jazz Festival videotape collection here at GHS. McCann, renowned for his impassioned live performances, was a repeat performer in the festival's nascent years. Beginning in 1982, the festival brought together local talent, such as Tom Grant; up-and-coming artists, such as Wynton Marsalis and Kenny G; foreign acts including Eiji Kitamura; jazz icons Tony Bennett, Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, Dave



Brubeck, Tito Puente, and Sonny Rollins; blues legends such as BB King and John Lee Hooker; and R&B stars including the Pointer Sisters and Anita Baker onto one stage at Mt. Hood Community College.

Multnomah Community Television shot and aired Jazz Fest performances during the festival's heyday in the 80s and 90s. GHS then acquired this tape collection from MHCC back in 2008. After bouncing around a few different storage locations (the basement of Jazzy Bagels having been the most recent), the tapes were rehoused here at the museum in 2023 so that the cataloging process could begin.

Opening each box was super exciting. There was no telling exactly what each tape might contain. Pressing "play", however, was no small feat. While roughly 20% of the collection were VHS or S-VHS tapes (and therefore compatible with any consumer grade VCR), nearly 80% were U-Matic or Betacam: two professional grade formats used for television production during the late 20th century. In layman's terms: these were the sort of tapes you need obscure and expensive equipment to play. So, it was nothing short of serendipitous that Jim McClellan, a Gresham local

who spent decades working for Trinity Broadcasting Network, walked in one Saturday afternoon. As luck would have it, Jim had exactly the right gadgets sitting in his basement.

Jim is also an expert problem-solver. Years of moisture exposure meant that many of the tape reels were damaged and covered in mold, rendering them unplayable. Fortunately, he found a solution: an ingenious baking process where the tapes sit in an electric oven for 12 hours at 130 degrees. This process dries them out and sheds any accumulated build-up of mold or other gunk. Baking these tapes has had incredible results. I can't speak enough about how beneficial Jim has been to this project. Thanks to his help we've made huge strides with this collection.

As of this writing, we're still in the process of converting the last of the tapes from analog to digital, so not all the footage has been seen yet. But what we have seen so far is fantastic. There are full performances from the 1983-1988 and 1991-1992 incarnations of the festival. Some of the tapes contain the hour-long Jazz Fest "episodes" aired by MCTV; others have raw performance footage and interviews previously unseen by the public.

Les McCann may no longer be with us, but he and so many other departed artists will live on through the music. The contents of this Jazz Fest collection serve as an invaluable document of a bygone era - of the performers, the festival, and Gresham itself.

I can't wait to share it with you.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Brendan and Jim have been working on the Jazz Festival tapes for almost a year. Because of their efforts, the tapes have gone from one of the scariest collections at the museum (Mold! Obscure and outdated media! Priceless recordings being lost to the ravages of time!) to one of our greatest assets. We are working with current Jazz Festival leadership to make these recordings more broadly available. In the meantime, we hope you'll join us at the museum for Brendan's history talk on **April 27 at 5pm** to learn more about this amazing collection...and possibly watch a screening. -SA

MEMBERSHIP

Not a member already? You can join on our website, at greshamhistorical.org.

Or, fill out the form below, bring it to the museum, or mail it to us at PO Box 65, Gresham, OR 97030. Make checks payable to the Gresham Historical Society.

Membership at the Gresham Historical Society supports the continued preservation and sharing of our local history. Now, more than ever, we rely on member support to continue our mission.

MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT/RENEWAL FORM

Member or Family Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

CHOOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Each membership level includes 10% off museum store purchases, a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, and invitations to members-only events throughout the year.

- Individual** \$20 membership for one adult
- Family** \$30 benefits for two adults and all family members under 18
- Business** \$100 two membership cards for any employee
- Business Plus** \$200 two membership cards for any employee and your business logo in the Quarterly of the Gresham Historical Society

I wish to make an additional donation in the amount of \$ _____

How do you prefer to receive your newsletter? Email Print

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Payment method (circle one): Cash Check (payable to Gresham Historical Society)

Please charge my credit/debit card \$ _____

Card number _____ Expiration date _____ CVV _____

Signature _____

YOUR MEMBERSHIP...GRESHAM'S LEGACY

We're excited to announce our 2024 Membership Drive - a time to connect with new members and show our love for those who have supported us through the years.

Our members get exclusive access to members-only events, discounts on museum store purchases, free admission to the 2024 lecture series, and a subscription to our quarterly newsletter.

From now through April 30, **your membership will also get you an entry in a raffle.** The prize – a basket of gift certificates to local stores and restaurants, museum store merchandise, and tickets to upcoming events – a total value of over \$250!

Every current and new member will get one entry. You can earn extra entries by referring new members or buying gift memberships for the history lovers in your life.

What does your membership support? Every donation and membership payment we receive directly supports our mission to preserve and share our community's past to enrich its present and future. That includes free exhibits, public lectures, archival research and preservation, and much more.

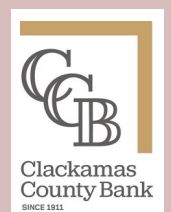
MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to all who have donated, joined or renewed since August:

Laurie Monnes Anderson
 Mike & Claudia Andrews
 April Avery
 Richard Barker-Maxwell
 David & Kendra Baumann
 Charlotte Becker
 Don & Pre Bee
 Joy Beldin
 Linda Bergmann
 Jen Bodendorfer
 Susan Bookout
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 Richard & Georgene Witmer
 Travis Wright
 Ann Zink & Steve Christiansen

OUR GRATITUDE TO THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS PLUS MEMBERS FOR THEIR VITAL SUPPORT!





Cars assembled at the Multnomah County Fair racetrack, circa 1915-1925 GHS 2001.002.0007

The Gresham Historical Society is a private, nonprofit organization that manages the Gresham Historical Museum and special collections library and archive, located in the 1913 former Gresham Library building in Historic Downtown Gresham.

Founded in 1976 and funded through donations from the community, the Gresham Historical Society was run exclusively by volunteers for the majority of its history.

In 2010, Multnomah County voters passed a property tax levy to support local history. These levy funds pay the salary of a full-time museum director, which helps keep us free and open to the public.

Our mission is to preserve and share our community's past to enrich its present and future.

HOURS

Wednesday-Saturday	10am-4pm
Sunday	12pm-4pm
Monday-Tuesday	Closed

CONTACT

Web: greshamhistorical.org/contact
Email: info@greshamhistorical.org
Phone: (503) 661-0347

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