

*The*

# ARCHIVE

QUARTERLY OF THE GRESHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2025



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

Fresh snowfall on a Steiner cabin on Blossom Trail in Government Camp, c. 1940s. From 1925 to 1952, Henry Steiner built around 100 cabins in and around the Mt. Hood area using native materials. His style defines Oregon Rustic architecture. 35mm color slide from the Hougen Family Collection. GHS Photo 2006.030.0015



See pg. 6-7



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

At the Museum **pg. 2-5** ♦ Research Files **pg. 5**  
History Feature **pg. 6-7** ♦ Meet the Team **pg. 8**  
Photo Essay **pg. 9**  
Membership **pg. 10-11** ♦ End Matter **pg. 12**

# AT THE MUSEUM

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Nov. 3-28**

**Museum Closed for Decorating**

**Nov. 29-Dec. 20**

**Christmas at the Museum & Gingerbread House Competition**

The annual fundraiser returns with community events, live music, photos with Santa, and of course, gingerbread houses! Details on pg. 3.

**Dec. 21-Jan. 23**

**Museum Closed for Exhibit Preparation**

**Dec. 28, 12:30pm**

**Annual Member Meeting and Year-End Party**

Join us for brunch and learn what's planned at the museum in 2026. Last chance to see the beautiful holiday decorations before they go back in storage for another year! Open to members.

**Jan. 24, 10-4**

**Exhibit Opening**

See two new featured exhibits, browse recent acquisitions, and enjoy light refreshments.

**Jan. 31, 5-6pm**

**History Talk (topic TBD)**

**Feb. 28, 5-6pm**

**History Talk: Oregon's Black History, 450 Years in 45 Minutes**

Presented by Mariah Rocker with the Oregon Black Pioneers. Learn about the key individuals and events that characterize Oregon's unique and centuries-old Black History. See pg. 4 for details.

**Jun. 13-21**

**Gresham History Week**

Community-wide festival commemorating the 250th anniversary of American independence, and the 50th anniversary of your historical society! More information below.



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### The Gresham Historical Society Celebrates 50 Years

2026 marks the 50th anniversary of local history preservation in Gresham. The Gresham Historical Society (GHS) is planning a year of programs and events to coincide with this anniversary.

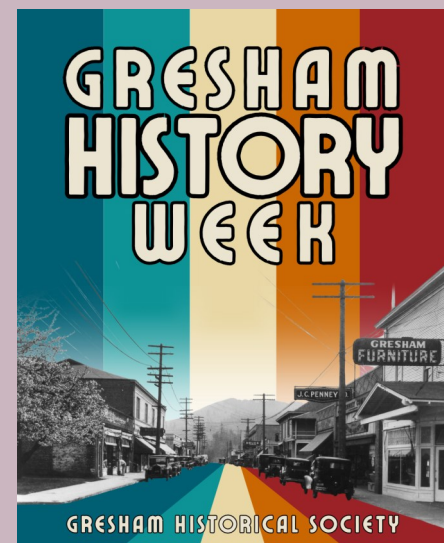
Those skilled at math might have deduced that 50 years before 2026 was 1976, the year of the U.S. Bicentennial. GHS's formation was a direct result of Bicentennial activities in Gresham. Rather than holding a World's Fair-type exposition to commemorate 200 years of independence, the federal government decided to place a focus on local history, setting aside funds for communities to host events that reflected local values and history. One term of these grants was that the program needed to include an enduring element, and for many communities, that included founding a museum.

Next year, GHS is planning a full week of programming from June 13 to 21 to add a local flavor to the US Semiquincentennial (250) anniversary. History Week will include a city-wide scavenger hunt, live music, street fairs, interactive living history performances, arts demonstrations,

history talks, a trivia night/historic costume competition, tours (guided and self-guided), exhibits, and much more. Stay tuned for a full schedule of events as History Week approaches, and let us know if you'd like to get involved!

In the past 50 years, a lot has changed within GHS and in the history field as a whole. These changes will be the focus of next year's main exhibit, *History and Memory*. The exhibit will

focus on how these two concepts can overlap and diverge, using GHS's own collection and archives to illustrate how history gets made. It will also explore our changing role in the community. *History and Memory* will open on January 24, 2026.





# AT THE MUSEUM



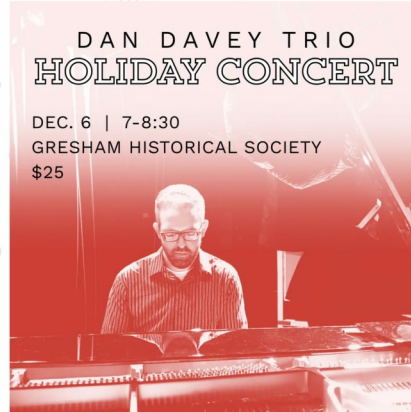
## HOLIDAY EVENTS



Sponsored By  
**WAA** WarrenAllen LLP  
 ATTORNEYS AT LAW



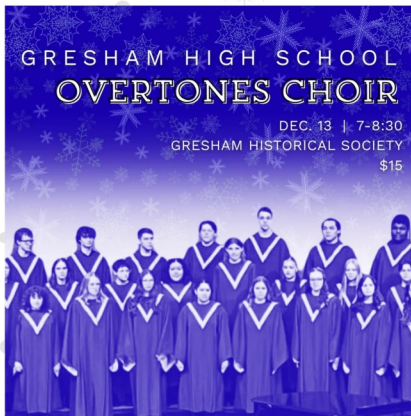
**Nov 29 @ 5-6 pm**



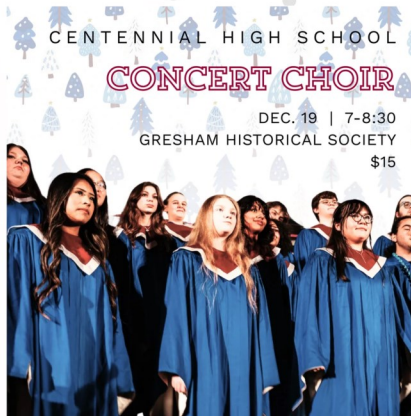
**Dec 6 @ 7-8:30 pm**



**Dec 12 @ 7-8:30 pm**



**Dec 13 @ 7-8:30 pm**



**Dec 19 @ 7-8:30 pm**



**Nov 29, Dec 6,  
 Dec 13, Dec 20  
 @ 10 am-4 pm**

## VOTE IN THE GINGERBREAD CONTEST

**Open Thurs-Sat 10-4, Sun 12-4**



Scan QR code  
 to learn more &  
 get tickets!



**Dates:**  
 November 29 -  
 December 20

**[greshamhistorical.org/  
 christmas-at-the-museum](http://greshamhistorical.org/christmas-at-the-museum)**



# AT THE MUSEUM

## ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING + YEAR-END PARTY

### HELP US CELEBRATE ANOTHER HISTORIC YEAR AT THE MUSEUM!

- ✦ Hear updates from the director and officers
- ✦ Enjoy seasonal refreshments
- ✦ Learn what's in store for 2026

OPEN TO MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

DECEMBER 28

12:30-3PM

410 N MAIN AVE

RSVP

[info@greshamhistorical.org](mailto:info@greshamhistorical.org)  
(503) 661-0347

History Talk | Feb. 28, 5pm | 410 N Main Ave | \$5 (free to members)

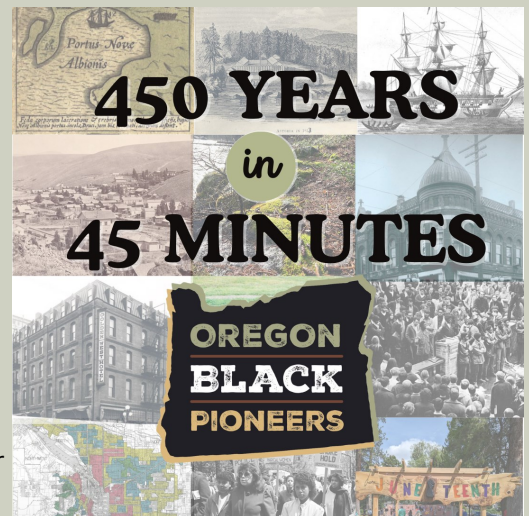
### **Oregon's Black History: 450 Years in 45 Minutes**

*Mariah Rocker, Oregon Black Pioneers*

People of African descent have lived and worked in Oregon since before the founding of the earliest English-speaking settlements in the Americas. Despite this, the popular narrative of our state's history excludes the experiences of African Americans before the mid-20th

century. This erasure is the result of historic legal and social marginalization that contributes to the ignorance of Oregon's Black heritage, as well as influences contemporary disparities in housing access, community investment, and policing. For this presentation, Oregon Black Pioneers will attempt to correct the record by highlighting key individuals and events that characterize Oregon's unique and centuries-old Black history.

Oregon Black Pioneers is Oregon's only historical society dedicated to preserving and presenting the experiences of African Americans statewide. For more than 30 years, they have illuminated the seldom-told stories of people of African descent in Oregon through engaging exhibits, public programs, publications, and historical research.





# OUTLOOKing

Volunteer **Mike Andrews** spends hours each week sifting through bound volumes of the Gresham Outlook, which we recently received from the Outlook's closed print shop. While looking for damaged or missing pages, he also finds forgotten and unusual stories from Gresham's past. He shares them in this recurring section.

## Gresham and the Gas Crisis of 1974

Remember the good old days back in 2021 when COVID was getting popular and stores were rationing toilet paper? There really wasn't a supply line problem, but folks were afraid of a shortage, which resulted in TP panic buying.

In early 1974, during the not-so-great Energy Crisis, a similar situation developed: because of an Arab oil embargo, oil companies began to reduce the allotments of gasoline to stations around the country. Even though the reductions generally weren't that significant, just the thought of less gas availability led to panic-buying and hoarding. Long gas lines at stations became common in Gresham as drivers, fearful of running out of gas, would top off their gas tanks even if they didn't really need to. Others would bring several gas cans, or even 55-gallon drums to fill. As a result, some stations actually did run out of gas, which fed the panic even more.

Some Gresham gas station managers blamed "scare announcements" by the media for the problem. In the January 3, 1974 *Outlook*, Clem Wacker, manager of the Phillips 66 station on Main St. and Division, said "I don't think there's ever been a time when there were more cars on the road with their tanks so full. If everyone would buy like they bought gas before there'd be less of a problem, or maybe no problem." And Mike Moody, an attendant at a Shell station on 242nd and Stark, stated that "People hoarding gas are creating a problem that shouldn't even exist."

To combat the overbuying, some stations began to limit the amount of gas that could be purchased and/or they reduced their hours of operation. The State of Oregon initiated an odd/even license plate system such that, if the last digit of your license plate was an odd number, you could only buy gas on odd dates. The federal government even considered gas rationing cards, similar to those issued during World War II.

People started biking, walking, carpooling, and taking busses (there was no MAX, yet). The scare didn't last long, and by summer, it was just a bad memory, the drivers back to their old gas-wasting ways.



Gas lines in Gresham seemed to stretch for miles.  
Gresham Outlook, January 3, 1974.



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This holiday season, I'm thinking about the idea of community and how this relates to the museum. It's always been central to our programming, and it's even a part of our vision: "The Gresham Historical Society will be a center for the community where all may gather to learn and find inspiration in the history and culture of the Gresham area." We're always looking for ways to serve and represent as many people in our community as possible, and our programming in 2026 will reflect that goal. I am honored to be a part of this community and look forward to supporting its continued growth.

-Silvie Andrews





# HISTORY FEATURE

## DOWNTOWN GRESHAM: NINE DECADES IN NINE BUILDINGS

By Silvie Andrews

This history feature is adapted from the September history talk, "Downtown Gresham: A History in 10 Buildings." Watch the lecture on YouTube for more info (scan the QR code or visit [youtube.com/@greshamhistorical](https://youtube.com/@greshamhistorical))—or join us next spring when walking tours resume!



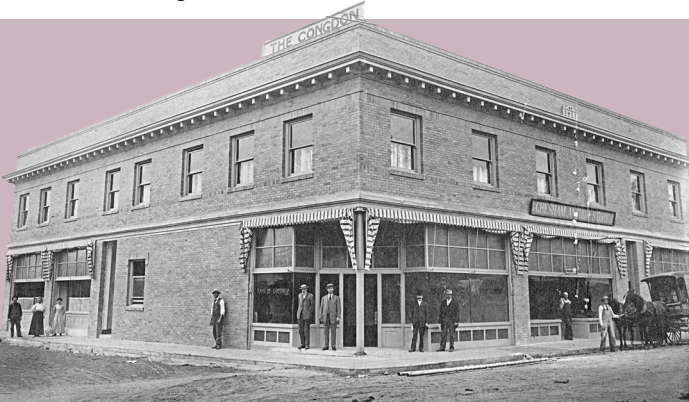
### GRESHAM BAKERY, c. 1905

This building is one of the last relics of early Gresham, before a series of fires wiped out most of the wooden buildings on Main Avenue. Subsequent construction utilized "fireproof" materials, mainly brick. The style is vernacular (meaning not designed by a professional architect) with Queen Anne influences such as fish scale siding. Originally, the bakery owners lived above the shop, as was common at the time. Belgian-born Theodore Van Doninck bought the bakery in 1915 at a time when it was rare for immigrants to own businesses in Gresham. It remained a bakery until becoming a children's bookstore in the 1990s.



### CONGDON HOTEL, 1911

In the early 1900s, Gresham became more commercially viable with the addition of a passenger train to Portland in 1902 and incorporation as a town in 1905. William H. Congdon was part of a cadre of businessmen who moved to Gresham during this era. The Congdon Hotel is the earliest surviving "fireproof" building in Downtown Gresham. Originally, it served traveling salesmen, but Congdon began marketing to tourists on their way to Mt. Hood and the Gorge with some success. The hotel offered laundry and dining service; guests could also pay extra for a private bathroom.



### REXALL DRUGSTORE, 1929

Gresham's longest-enduring drugstore opened in 1903 in the John Metzger building, a two-story wooden structure at the corner of Main and Powell. Owner Arthur Dowsett replaced the rickety building with a new, modern brick edifice in 1929. The Rexall is perhaps best remembered for its soda fountain, which Arthur originally installed in 1910 to draw travelers arriving by streetcar from Portland. It also made the drugstore a popular hangout for locals. The Dowsett family operated the business until 1997, when competition from large pharmacy chains drove it to close.



### JACOBSON FUNERAL HOME, 1934

One gets the sense that the social scene in Gresham was somewhat lacking during the Great Depression. When the Jacobson Company opened a mortuary on Third and Main in 1934, over 800 people attended the dedication—all of them living. The event included live music and a speech by a representative from the mayor's office.

The style of the building was originally Mission Revival, visible in the terra cotta tiles above the door and window as well as the prominent arches. After many years of renovations, the façade has become Art Deco. The building now holds iCandy and the Local Cow.





# HISTORY FEATURE

## Mt. Hood Theater, 1948

Built in 1948, the Mt. Hood Theater was part of two trends that would come to define postwar Gresham. The first was the rise of family-oriented recreation opportunities responding to the Baby Boom, which also included bowling alleys and skating rinks (such as the neighboring Fun Centre). The second was the expansion of the Downtown Gresham business district east on Powell Boulevard, into an area that had previously been dominated by farmland.

## W.R. Hicks, 1958

When Elery and Eunice Ward built their store on Roberts Avenue in 1934, it was the first commercial structure on the street, and people told them they'd get no business. By the time W.R. Hicks moved his department store to the corner of Roberts and Second in 1958, the landscape had changed, and Roberts was just as busy as Main. Both streets were one-way, drawing traffic to Hicks and the other businesses that popped up on the same strip. The new Hicks was a major shopping destination until it closed in 1989, unable to compete with large department store chains.



## GRESHAM STATE BANK, 1962

With its natural stone walls, folded plate roof, and bay windows, the Gresham State Bank is among the most distinctive midcentury modern buildings in Gresham. This style of architecture was associated with luxury and modernity, and the building's appearance reflected Gresham's changing identity and aspirations. Governor Mark Hatfield presided over the ribbon-cutting, arriving by helicopter in the lot behind the bank. Over 1000 people attended the reception. (Gresham's population was below 5000 at the time.)



## DEE'S STUDIO/KINNEAR BUILDING, 1972

Take a closer look at this building on Third and Main next time you drive past and you'll notice that no two windows are the same size or shape. It's completely one-of-a-kind, custom designed for Dee and Lee Kinnear by Ray "Buzz" Gorder, a Portland exhibit designer, architect, and entrepreneur. The open floor plan included space for Dee's photography studio, Lee's dress shop, a florist, and a hairdresser—a one-stop shop for special occasions. During this period, Main Avenue grocery and hardware stores were giving way to gift shops and restaurants.



## GRESHAM REGIONAL LIBRARY, 1989

SERA Architects went with a bold Postmodern design for the new Gresham Regional Library. The old Gresham Library, at 3000 square feet, was beloved but far too small to keep up with the rapidly growing population. The new library was over six times the size and featured a large children's section to meet Gresham's high demand for kids' books. Residents lined up to pass books from the old library to the new in a "Book Brigade" to help the new library open on time. At the January 1990 opening, Senator Mark Hatfield spoke on the crucial importance of libraries to free speech and democracy.



# LET'S GET ACQUAINTED

We love our volunteers! Our staff of about 50 volunteers helps out with everything from photographs to textiles and oral histories. They greet visitors to the museum, lead historical tours and lectures, and provide the heavy lift with property maintenance and repair.

A 12-member board of directors oversees the financial side of GHS and the museum, conducting fundraisers to support upkeep on GHS buildings and day-to-day expenses. The board also works closely with Executive Director Silvie Andrews to aid with grant funding, collections acquisitions, and marketing.

The generous donation of our volunteers' time ensures Gresham's history will continue to unfold and be available to future generations.

So let's get acquainted!

## SALLY WIGGINS, FRONT DESK GREETER

A thrift store find lead Sally to the doors of the Gresham History Museum two years ago.

Her purchase, a copy of *Gresham: Stories of Our Past, Campground to City*, inspired her to visit the museum, which she said she always found was an "intriguing building."



"I never seemed to be down there on a day it was open until October 2023, when I visited with a friend," Sally said. "We were chatting with the docent, and I told her I wanted to do what she does!"

After an introduction to Executive Director Silvie Andrews, Sally soon found herself sitting at the front desk greeting visitors as she continues to do every Sunday afternoon.

Sally enjoys meeting a "huge range of interesting and different people" through her interactions with both visitors to the museum and other volunteers. It's a never-ending education in Gresham's history, she said, and something she's happy to share with others.

"I think we all need to learn about those who came before us and why they chose to live in what we call our community," Sally said. "We should appreciate how each passing generation contributed exponentially to the way we live today and that it's not all about our 'here and now.'"

## VICKI MOEN, GHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

When you've lived in a community for more than four decades, you recognize that growth and change are inevitable. But according to GHS board member Vicki Moen, choosing to protect the past is what ties a community to its roots and its future.

"When Gresham High School was being renovated, they were very intentional in what they preserved," Vicki said. "The ginkgo trees out front, the architecture – those were part of that history. I love the preservation and restoration of our architecture and history."

Vicki's own connection to Gresham runs deep, as a member of one of the community's most celebrated families and owners of the oldest local family-run business, Moen Machinery. Before joining the GHS board last year, Vicki served on the Gresham-Barlow Education Foundation board for 16 years, six as executive director. She currently sits on the steering committee for 100 Women of East County, a philanthropic group of local women who help support nonprofit agencies and organizations.

It takes a village, Vicki said, to foster community engagement and growth, but protecting our past is the foundation for where we're going.

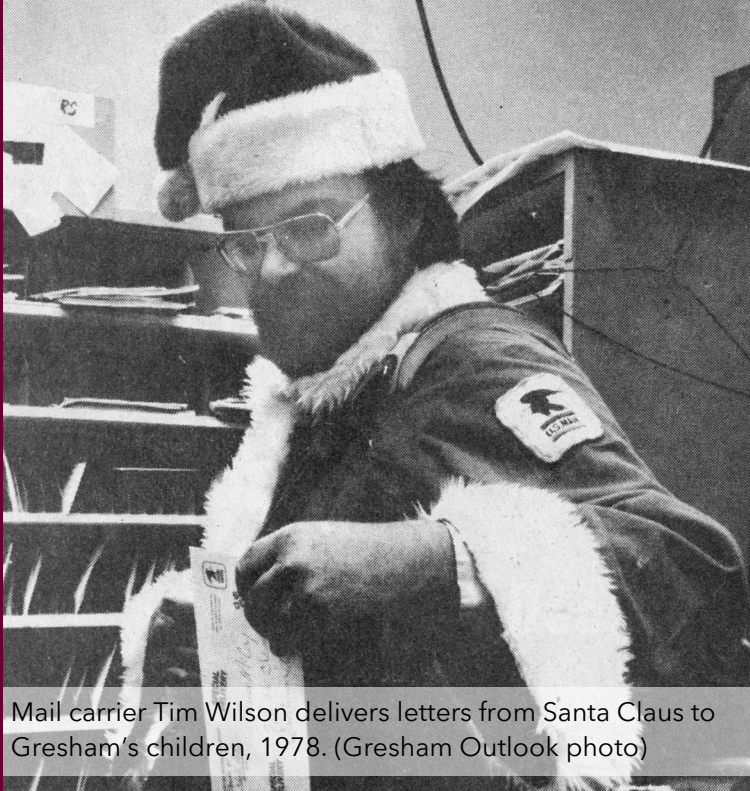
"Preserving the history of our hometown strengthens our ties to the community and allows us to celebrate our shared experience," Vicki said. "We have an obligation to preserve the history of the place we live."





# PHOTO ESSAY

## WINTER HOLIDAYS IN GRESHAM



Mail carrier Tim Wilson delivers letters from Santa Claus to Gresham's children, 1978. (Gresham Outlook photo)



In 1991, carolers in Downtown Gresham continue the long tradition of voices raised together in the cold air.



The annual drive-in Christmas light display at the Thames Nursery on Regner Road was a beloved tradition for many years, as seen in 1998. (Gresham Outlook photo)



Sisters Mabel and Evelyn Metzger pose beside their Christmas tree in the 1960s.



In 2007, Santa Claus helped SnowCap Community Charities host a Christmas Dinner at Rockwood United Methodist Church. (Photo: Tim Curran for Mid-County Memo)

The Chanukah Festival joined Gresham's catalog of annual winter events in 2020. (Photo courtesy of Gresham Chabad Jewish Center)





# MEMBERSHIP

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.

Not a member already? You can join on our website, at [greshamhistorical.org/membership](http://greshamhistorical.org/membership).

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

## 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** \$25 membership for one adult
- ☐ **Dual** \$35 membership for two adults
- ☐ **Family** \$50 benefits for two adults and all family members under 18
- ☐ **Business** \$150 two membership cards for any employee
- ☐ **Business Plus** \$500 two membership cards for any employee and your business logo in the Quarterly of the Gresham Historical Society
- ☐ **Patron** \$1,000

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 \_\_\_\_\_



Gathering of "Old-timers of Gresham and vicinity", circa 1920s-1930s. #2022.001.0121



# MEMBERSHIP

## THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE JOINED, RENEWED, OR DONATED SINCE SEPTEMBER:

Autzen Foundation  
 April Avery  
 Melissa & Logan Beveny  
 Jonathan Caruso  
 Zakia Curley  
 Michael Fitz  
 Mitch Frister  
 Valerie Greenaway  
 Karlyn Greenway  
 Gresham Sanitary Service

Philip Guernsey  
 Joy A. Guidry  
 Kristin Klotter  
 Jim Mockford  
 Moen Machinery Co.  
 Janine Morgan  
 Mt. Hood Community College  
 Conny Negelsbach  
 Dennis Osborne  
 Sue Piazza & Michael Patrick

Jodie Rhinevault & Tim Van Veen  
 Riegelmann's Appliance  
 Riverview Community Bank  
 Jimmy Talim  
 Tokola Properties

### In-Kind Donations

Minuteman Press Gresham—  
 printing

## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS PLUS MEMBERS:



ADVERTISE WITH US—YOUR BUSINESS PLUS MEMBERSHIP WILL SHOW LOCAL HISTORY LOVERS THAT YOU CARE!



Snowy Mt. Hood from Glen Davidson's hunting cabin near Zigzag, 1948.  
*Glen Davidson, Kodak Safety Film negative. GHS Photo 2014.008.0057*

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](http://greshamhistorical.org/contact)

**Email:** [info@greshamhistorical.org](mailto:info@greshamhistorical.org)

**Phone:** (503) 661-0347

## Board and Staff

**President** Sue Piazza ✦ **Vice President** Lon Shiiki ✦ **Treasurer** Leslie Radke ✦ **Secretary** Cassie Rafalski

**Board of Directors** Debby Brown ✦ Anne Endicott ✦ Karen Johnston ✦ Fred Gilbert

Carson Loveridge ✦ Vicki Moen ✦ Jon Sandstrom ✦ Bess Wills ✦ Cathy Keathley ✦ **Emeritus** Carla Piluso

**Museum Director** Silvie Andrews