

The

ARCHIVE

QUARTERLY OF THE GRESHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2026



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

Main Avenue looking south from 3rd Street, Downtown Gresham, 1926.
Wesley Andrews photo, GHS 1145.



See pg. 6-7

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GRESHAM HISTORY WEEK



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS—JUNE 12-20, 2026

What is History Week? It's a festival commemorating the Gresham Historical Society's 50th anniversary and the US 250. It's also a chance to have fun while learning about the place we call home. All events are free unless noted otherwise. **Registration may be required—visit greshamhistorical.org/history-week for more info.**

All Week

City-Wide Scavenger Hunt

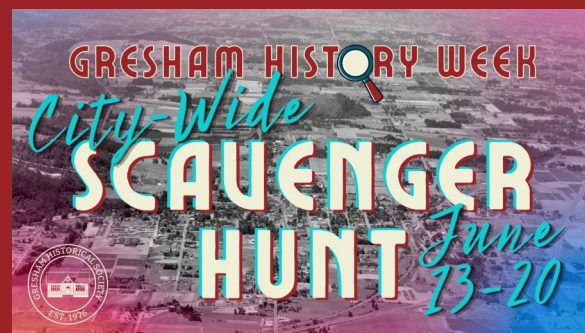
Find historic sites and complete tasks to win prizes! This is an all-ages event that can be done in groups or individually. Register online (QR code on pg. 3)

Pop-Up Exhibits

Located around Gresham—five exhibits featuring Black history, migration stories, Indigenous history, and more.

Crafting History—Gresham Historical Society

On weekday mornings at 10:30, join us for kid-friendly craft activities at the museum.



June 12, 5pm Opening Reception—Gresham Historical Society

Open to members and volunteers, past and present; honoring those who founded GHS in 1976!

June 13, 10am Scavenger Hunt Kickoff—Gresham Historical Society

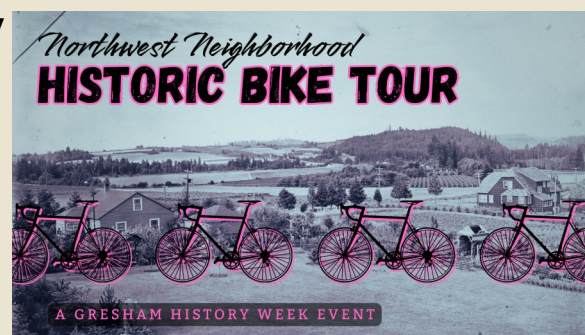
Get the edge on the competition, and pick up your limited-edition History Week t-shirt!

June 13, 11am Downtown Gresham Walking Tour

Learn about the history all around us on this walking tour of historic buildings.

June 13, 2pm Northwest Gresham Bike Tour—Bella Vista Park

Explore a historic neighborhood on this 1.5-hr bike tour.



June 14, 11-4 Arts & Culture Fair—Gresham Historical Society

See traditional art forms in action, and learn how to get involved with history and culture organizations at this day-long street fair. Live performances at Spinellas outdoor stage next door, 12-2:30pm.

June 14, 6pm History Talk: "Old Glory Unfolded"

Chris Garza reveals the history of the American Flag—just in time for flag day!



Presented by Gresham Historical Society @ 410 N Main Avenue, Gresham

HISTORY WEEK EVENTS

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June 15, 3pm **Public Art Walking Tour–Gresham Historical Society**

Judy Han leads a tour of Downtown Gresham statues and murals.

June 15, 6pm **Historic Bike Ride: Power and Transportation–Main City Park**

Learn about Rails-to-Trails and the history of electric power in Gresham on this 6-mile loop.



Jun. 16, 10:30am **Crafting History: Weave a Mat with Native Plants**

A children's craft activity with Stephanie Ironheart of Portland All Nations Canoe Family.

Jun. 17, 10:30am **Crafting History: Bookbinding–Gresham Historical Society**

A craft activity for ages 12 and up. Learn how to make and bind your own notebook!

June 17, 6pm **Civic Night–East County Library**

Talk to local elected officials in this youth town hall.

June 18, 4-8pm **County Fair Night–Gresham Historical Society**

Enjoy this throwback to the Multnomah County Fair with themed activities including a pie baking contest, craft fair, and a history talk.

June 18, 5-6pm **History Talk: Memories of the Multnomah County Fair–Gresham Historical Society**

Anne Endicott and Len Otto reveal the early history of a Gresham institution.



HISTORIC COUNTY FAIR NIGHT

on Third Thursday, 4 to 7:30 pm
JUNE 18, 2026

- PIE CONTEST
- GARDEN DISPLAY
- OUTDOOR MARKET
- HISTORY TALK

June 19, 12-5pm **Juneteenth Festival by Play Grow Learn–Vance Park**

Head over to Rockwood for this family-friendly event celebrating Black history.

June 20, 10-4 **Living History Day–Downtown Gresham**

Find figures from Gresham's history and learn their stories for the chance to win a prize.

June 20, 12-1 **Cemetery Tour–Gresham Pioneer Cemetery**

Learn about historic cemeteries in Gresham.

June 20, 6-8pm **Trivia Night & Historic Costume Contest–Rockwood Market Hall**

Team up and test your history knowledge!



History Week is
presented by



Supported by a grant from
the Oregon Cultural Trust
via the Multnomah County
Cultural Coalition



Learn more and
register for events:



[greshamhistorical.org/
history-week](http://greshamhistorical.org/history-week)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jun. 12-20** **Gresham History Week**
A festival of events and programs for all ages. See previous pages for the current schedule.
- Jul. 11, 11am** **Walking Tour of Downtown Gresham—Gresham Historical Society**
Learn about the history all around us on this free, 1.5-hour tour of significant buildings.
- Jul. 18, 12pm** **Cemetery Tour—Gresham Pioneer Cemetery**
Join us for a 1-hour walking tour of three historic burial grounds. Meet at West Gresham Elementary.
- Jul. 18, 9am-5pm** **DIY Tie Dye Fundraiser—Gresham Historical Society**
Create your own wearable art at this messy fundraiser! \$20 per t-shirt (bring your own for a discount)
- Jul. 25, 5-6pm** **History Talk: "The Ladies" of Mt. Vernon**
Teresa Osborne will present an accounting of the women behind the first historic preservation movement in American History.
- Aug. 1, 11am** **Walking Tour of Downtown Gresham—Gresham Historical Society**
Miss the tour in July? Join us for this one!
- Aug. 15, 5:30pm** **Picnic for the Past (Dinner Fundraiser)**
Enjoy live music, delicious food, history trivia, and a silent auction at a beautiful home in East Gresham. Tickets are \$100 per person; sponsorships available. See pg. 5.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you, Multnomah County Voters!

In the May primary election, voters turned up in record numbers and overwhelmingly voted to approve Measure 26-261, renewing the Oregon Historical Society levy and ensuring another five years of funding for OHS and four East Multnomah County museums. This levy enables us to provide free admission to the museum five days per week for most of the year, along with a large and growing portfolio of educational programs.

We thank the Multnomah County voters for again placing their confidence in us. We will continue our mandate to meet the needs of our community with high-quality, diverse programming.

Oregon Museum Grant Awarded for Agriculture Exhibit

GHS is excited to announce a \$6,969 grant to support our 2027 exhibit, *Dairies, Berries, and Nuts*. This exhibit will feature the long and ongoing story of agriculture in Gresham. Topics will include the Gresham Berry Growers, the Bracero program and migrant labor, the Multnomah County Fair, and Indigenous land stewardship practices that continue in the present day.

The Oregon Museum Grant is awarded annually by the Oregon Heritage Commission, a division of Oregon Parks and Recreation. GHS previously received the Oregon Museum Grant in 2024 for assessment and rehousing of historic textiles that were damaged in a 2021 arson fire.

Grant funds will primarily support wages for three temporary curators, Melissa Bevency, Rose Caughie, and Hannah Jensvold, who also worked on the current exhibit, *History and Memory*.

Voices of Gresham Launches in September

Thanks to a sponsorship from the City of Gresham, the *Voices of Gresham* podcast is set to premiere its second season at the end of September. The launch party will coincide with the September history talk, which is scheduled for 9/25 at 5pm.

Where the first season focused on Japanese American history in Gresham, the second season will include a five-episode arc titled "Coming to Gresham," exploring the many migrations that have brought people here over the past 175 years. Other episodes will feature Gresham's public libraries and the history of live music in the Gresham area.

The first season of the podcast received widespread praise for its powerful storytelling and unique format, which features oral history as the basis of each episode. All 10 episodes are available to stream at greshamhistorical.org/voices-of-gresham.



OUTLOOKing

Volunteer **Mike Andrews** spends hours each week sifting through bound volumes of the Gresham Outlook, which we received from the Outlook's closed print shop in 2024. While looking for damaged or missing pages, he also finds forgotten and unusual stories from Gresham's past. He shares a few of them in this recurring section.

Oh, What a Night!

If you attended the Fourth of July fireworks show at Gresham High School in 1977, you probably will never forget it. On that night, a spark from one of the fireworks landed in a stockpile of about 160 unlit rockets, essentially igniting them all at once. The ensuing explosions and flying rockets sent thousands of spectators diving for cover and sent three to the hospital.

According to the July 7, 1977 *Gresham Outlook*, Gresham fire marshal Bob Eisele said the lighting crew had taken adequate safety measures beforehand, including covering the rockets under a heavy tarp, which helped to confine them when they blew. Gresham Police Lt. Jim Gruetzke estimated that 25,000 spectators were crowded into the area around Gresham High School. To make the situation even more chaotic, there was an unrelated vehicle fire on Burnside and an injury accident on Division.

Gresham Police chief Kent Reeser said the fireworks mishap could have been much worse. "It's miraculous that somebody wasn't badly injured or killed. When asked if he would have any recommendations for future displays, Lt. Gruetzke said, "...move the show to Molalla..."



Fireworks explosion at the Gresham High School football stadium. *Gresham Outlook*, 7/7/1976



July 18, 2026 + 9am-3pm + \$20 + At the Museum

Our annual **DIY Tie Dye** fundraiser is coming up! Get a little color in your life while supporting community history. All materials are provided, but you can bring your own (all cotton) shirt for a discount.

Other things to note:

Tie dying can get messy! Consider wearing old clothes to this event.

The process takes about 20 minutes. Your creation should remain bagged for 24-48 hours before you rinse the dye out.

Aug. 15, 2026 + 5:30-8:30pm + \$100/person

Celebrating 50 years of the Gresham Historical Society! Picnic for the Past will feature live music, a history talk, and a delicious meal cooked from scratch.

Follow the QR code to purchase tickets, or find the event through our website at greshamhistorical.org/events.

The location is a home in east Gresham. **Address available with ticket purchase.**



LIBRARIES, OLD AND NEW

By Melissa Beveney

*"The people who came were enormously proud of the new library. It showed in the way they walked down the long aisles, running their hands along the spines of new books... It was a wonderful way to launch the new library, bringing people together to celebrate one of the most valuable assets a community can have. I thought I'd be nostalgic for the old Carnegie Library. I had always enjoyed going there because it was such a friendly place... But when you walk through the new library, the books almost cry out to be picked up... The old library had quaint charm, but even people who loved it had to admit it got a trifle crowded at times."- Kathleen Glanville, *The Oregonian*, "Gresham Turns a New Leaf with Dedication of its Regional Library," January 11, 1990.*

This sentiment from 36 years ago could have easily been applied to the events of last month. Once again, Gresham welcomed a new, even larger library. The change inspired a mix of emotions. Many grew up going to the library on Miller Avenue or took their children or grandchildren there. And the now-closed branch will always hold some modicum of nostalgia. However, change is inevitable in Gresham, the once tiny town that has grown to a midsize metropolis in a few short decades. And it only makes sense that Gresham's libraries keep growing with the community that visits them.

Yet, it's hard to imagine that a 95,000 square foot branch started as just a tiny nook. Its first "librarian" was Iona McColl, an adopted child of Oregon Trail settlers and a widowed mother with four children. When she became the town's first woman postmaster, Gresham lacked a library branch of its own. Accessing books meant traveling to Portland, which in those days was far less convenient. Iona came up with an idea. In 1903, she registered the post office as a deposit station of the Portland Library and rented out a room upstairs. There, she installed fifty volumes and set up a wooden table and chairs. A stove kept the room warm. And in November of 1903, Gresham's first reading room opened to the public.

How do you divide the word acknowledge? Where is Williams College, and what is its football record? Where is South Yemen? Hundreds of such questions are answered every day by Library personnel. The Library is more than books and magazines--it's a source of information.



Image from a 1972 pamphlet titled "Look to Your Library."
Multnomah County Library

In the years that followed, the branch's operations were precarious. There weren't always volunteers to serve as "custodians," and a permanent location hadn't yet been determined. In 1905, the library was forced to close before reopening again with help from the community and the Library Foundation. New funding provided payment for the custodians (a whopping \$1 per week), guaranteeing a bit of stability. However, the reading room still lacked a long-term location and was forced to move a couple more times.

This all changed when future mayor Charles Cleveland heard of Andrew Carnegie's library fund. With the help of Portland librarian Mary Frances Isom, Gresham successfully applied for the grant. Architect Folger Johnson oversaw the building's design, and in March 1913, hundreds gathered for the grand opening. Five years later, Red Cross volunteers provided medical training for "Spanish Flu" there. And when the Great Depression hit Gresham hard, the library offered hope and creativity with WPA-funded art classes. For several more decades, the Tudor building was home to countless story times, community gatherings, and summer reading stints after trips to the local pool. In the middle of its tenure,



Elizabeth Ashwell at the opening of Rockwood Library in 1963. Multnomah County Library Photo

another location opened nearby in Rockwood. That 1963 opening was also met with positive sentiments. Many even commented, "This is the nicest thing that has happened to Rockwood."

When the Rockwood and Gresham branches began to get crowded, however, the Gresham Regional Library came along. Its christening was legendary, filled with old-fashioned fun and pageantry. The community lined up from Main to Miller and participated in a "book brigade" to finish moving the books from the old library to the new one. Six years later, in 1996, author Beverly Cleary made an appearance to dedicate two busts of her popular children's book character Ramona Quimby. And as Gresham moved into the new millennium, the library adapted with the evolving technology. Computers sat on desks where books had once rested, and online chat began to outpace reference by telephone. But the community focus never changed, with helpful staff and engaging programs throughout the life of the library.

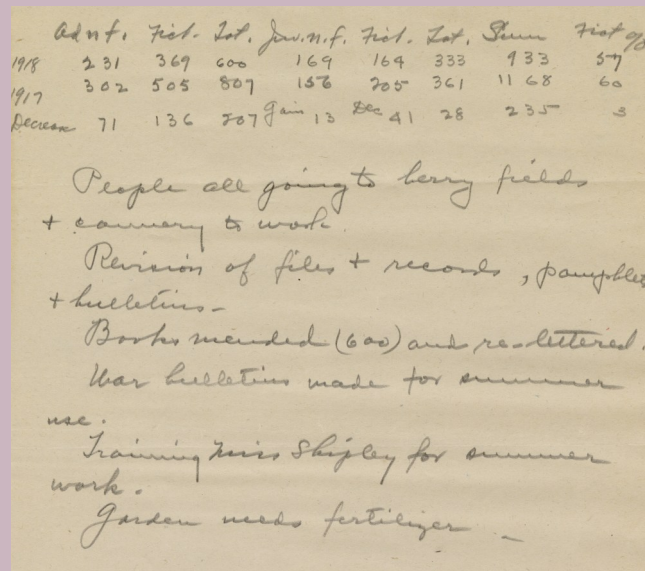
The opening of the East County Library marks a new era of Gresham libraries. With loss of the older branch comes a chance to create something new. There are still friendly library assistants, story times, and spaces for community togetherness. As you sip your coffee on the rooftop patio or peruse the library's 200,000 books and items, think back to that little nook that started it all. Oh, what a journey it's been!

Sources

The Oregonian

Multnomah County Library website & digital collections

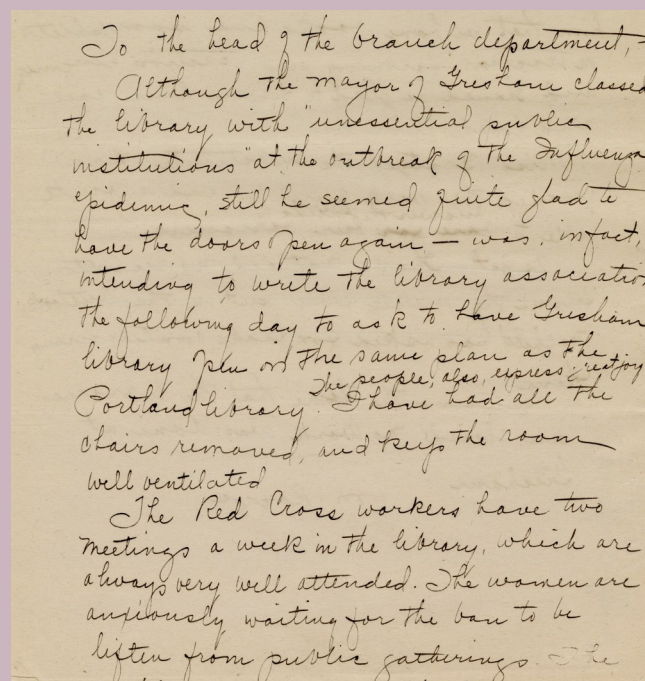
COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT: 1915-1919 LIBRARY REGISTER



This incredible resource documents life in Gresham through the everyday data of library usage and circulation. In the above report from June 1918, the librarian notes decreased circulation as working-age people took temporary jobs in the berry fields and cannery. Library staff also assembled and distributed war bulletins for World War I. The below report, from October 1918, provides a narrative of the library's closure due to the Spanish Flu epidemic and subsequent reopening.



Opening of East County Library on May 16, 2026. Photo by Logan Beveny



LET'S GET ACQUAINTED

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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.

An 11-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!

CHARLOTTE BECKER, COLLECTIONS & RESEARCH VOLUNTEER

It took nearly four years, but collections volunteer Charlotte Becker finally saw the light.

"I spent most of my time photographing historical objects in the dark basement of the museum," she said. "But most recently, I have been freed from the basement to research and write short articles for a new Gresham Guidebook, featuring people, places and events from the city's past and present."



Charlotte is among several collections volunteers who unwrap objects stored in boxes in the bowels of the museum, cataloging and photographing each item before rewrapping it and placing it back in its box. She then uploads the photos into the GHS database, leaving behind a searchable record of historical objects.

A former licensed social worker with the Portland VA Medical Center, Charlotte retired in 2015 and "needed something worthwhile to fill my time," she said. "I like doing things that help me stay active, mentally and physically. I have always volunteered somewhere in some capacity and I love history. (This) seemed like a good fit."

History needs to be preserved, Charlotte said, because once that vital connection to the past is lost, it can never be recovered.

"We learn from the people who came before us, through their successes and regrets," she explained. "[GHS provides] a free and accessible link to our history."

CATHY KEATHLEY, BOARD MEMBER

Another lifelong Gresham resident, Cathy is one of the newest members of the GHS board. A love of local history and the desire to maintain it, she says, is one reason why she chose to join the board in January this year.

"I've actually been bringing my kids here for 35 years, for Santa photos," she said, laughing.

Cathy is no stranger to the financial needs of nonprofits, having spent many years in fundraising capacities with local schools and organizations. She sits on the board for the Gresham-Barlow School District, and after a hiatus, was re-elected to Gresham City Council in 2025. She was elected council president earlier this year.

Drawing from her years of civic involvement and passion for her hometown, Cathy finds a clear connection between the community's past and where we go from here.

"We have to keep our history alive, especially for the next generations," she says. "I think our history frames our decision making for the future."



PHOTO ESSAY

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE GRESHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By Anne Endicott

In 1976, as part of the 200th birthday of the United States, the US Bicentennial Commission offered grant money to communities around the country who organized their own bicentennial celebrations. The only catch was that each event had to include something that would last when Bicentennial festivities ended: a monument, restoration project, or . . . a museum.

Thus, the fledgling Gresham History Society (GHS) and soon-to-be history museum were born.

Pictured: Bertha Fanning, Echo Akin, Mildred Hodges, Esther Warner, Esther Allan, and Nancy Whistler at a Bicentennial event. Several of these women became GHS volunteers.



GHS' first home was thanks to the congregation of Bethel Baptist Church, who donated their former place of worship after replacing it with a new and larger structure in 1979. Through bake sales and financial donations, GHS volunteers were able to move the old church to a new home in Main City Park. Restoration of the building, however, became a seemingly endless project that emptied the group's bank account several times. Still, volunteers organized fundraising events and temporary displays at the church to promote community interest in history and a permanent museum.

Pictured: Bethel Baptist Church in Main City Park during renovations.

NOTABLES IN EARLY GHS LEADERSHIP

Sally Arnold and Jim Chase were integral in the founding of GHS in 1976. Jim was the first president of the organization, and Sally served as secretary of the board for many years.

Karl Hays, an early president, helped oversee renovations and restoration of the Bethel Baptist Church.

Pat Stone, a retired physical education teacher and school administrator, became the volunteer director of GHS in the late 1980s. A dedicated jack-of-all-trades, Pat logged hundreds of hours each year retiling the bathroom, talking to visitors, editing the monthly newsletter, and taking Santa photos. Part of Pat's legacy is the massive artifact collection she built.

Pictured: Sally Arnold and Jim Chase at a Historical Society event, either during the US Bicentennial or shortly after.



MEMBERSHIP

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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.

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 _____



Members of Stapleton, Eastman, Elkington, and Dowsett families camping at Salmon River, 1915. GHS #249

MEMBERSHIP

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

Laurie Monnes Anderson
Bill & Kellie Arabak
Jen & Matt Bodendorfer
Marilou Bohmann
Mick Bourgo
Joe Breniser
Debby Brown
Jeremy Buck

Rob Burke
Eric & Jenny Byrne
Kathleen Cannon
Taylor Coen
James & Nancy Cotter
Davis Family
Stefanie Donner
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Kathy Edwards
Anne & John Endicott
Margaret Erikson
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Helen Wand
Bess Wills & Bob Avila
AJ & Preston Wills
Shirley Wright

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Clackamas County Bank
Historic Downtown Gresham Association

Christmas at the Museum Sponsorship

USI Insurance Services

Podcast Sponsorship

City of Gresham

In-Kind Donations

Minuteman Press Gresham—printing
A Plus Tree, LLC—mailing

Grants

City of Gresham
Multnomah County Cultural Coalition



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS PLUS MEMBERS:





8th grade graduates of Gresham School, 1902. GHS 1162

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

1976 - GRESHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 2026



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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