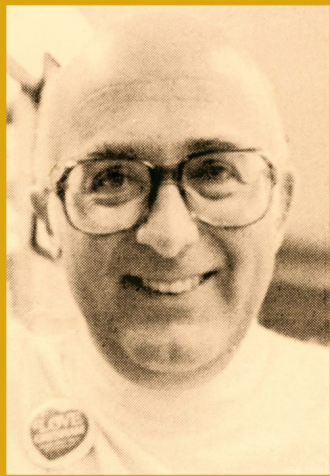




Gresham Historical *Quarterly*

Winter 2021

Remembering Gresham's Rexall Drug Store



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Left: Dick Dowsett served on the Board of the Gresham Historical Society and supported the museum over the years. He will be missed.

Below: A winter view of Gresham's Rexall Drug Store.





About Gresham Historical Society & Museum



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The Gresham Historical Society is a private, non-profit organization that manages the Gresham History Museum, special collections library, and archive, located in the historic Carnegie 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 and again in 2016, Multnomah County voters passed a property tax levy to support local history. Those levy funds pay for exhibitions and for us to have a full-time staff member which helps keep us free and open to the public.

Hours of Operation

Tuesday 10 am – 4 pm

Wednesday 10 am – 4 pm

Thursday 10 am – 4 pm

Friday 10 am – 4 pm

Saturday 10 am – 4 pm



410 N Main Avenue

Gresham, OR 97030-7212

503-661-0347

www.greshamhistorical.org

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Letter from the Director

Greetings to our valued Members and Supporters!

It is with much sadness that we report the passing of our friend and supporter Dick Dowsett. Another chapter in Gresham's history has ended. We have witnessed the end of an era with the rise and fall of the local drugstore. This month's feature articles highlight the history of Dick Dowsett and the Dowsett family in Gresham.

The past year was full of challenges for all of us in 2020. Thank you to all of our members and friends who came together at the end of the year to lift us out of the red. Your Gresham History Museum ended the year in the black. We expect more challenges in the coming year and when restrictions are lifted on gatherings, we are planning an orientation for volunteers, a Spring cleaning, our annual meeting, history talks and other events.

With positive signs in the fight against the pandemic we plan to open the museum on March 9, 2021. The Gresham Historical Society will be taking all necessary steps to comply with social-distancing guidelines and we will require everyone to wear a mask.

Since we are opening back up to the public, we will need additional visitors in the operation of the museum. We need people to meet and greet the public each day we are open. We also need volunteers to help with research projects and clerical help. Let me know when you can help.

We are working on some new exhibits at the museum in 2021 including an ambitious project entitled: the Diversity of Gresham.

With the beginning of the new year, now is the time to renew your museum membership. Also, you'll want to designate the Gresham Historical Society when you shop at Fred Meyer/Kroger or AmazonSmiles. Your support helps to keep the lights on, the furnace going, and keep up with the maintenance of our beloved building. We greatly appreciate your support.

Best regards,

Mark Moore, Museum Director

President's Message

To our Members and Friends,

Good news, the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions are loosening up and we will be reopening the museum March 9, 2021. We are all looking forward to seeing everyone, members, volunteers and our guests.

While closed, the many committees, made up of Board members and volunteers, wearing masks and social distancing, have continued to work on their many projects helping to make our museum the place to visit.

Mark, our Museum Director, is currently working on a new exhibit honoring Gresham's diversity and all the contributions of time, skills, teamwork and community that built Gresham. He has also prepared a welcome presentation and information on Gresham's new mayor, Travis Stovall.

The Membership/Events committee has a year's program laid out for 2021, so be prepared to participate and bring all your family, friends and neighbors to our upcoming fun exhibits and events. Events and exhibits will be announced in the newsletter and posted on our website:

www.greshamhistorical.org.

We are ready!! So looking forward to seeing everyone back at the Gresham Historic Museum once again.

Carol Nielsen

President



Become a Member

Not a member yet? Becoming a member is easy! Just fill out the Membership Enrollment Form, bring it by, or mail it in to the museum.

Membership at the Gresham Historical Society supports the continued preservation and sharing of our local history.

Membership includes

- Subscription to the *Gresham Historical Quarterly Newsletter*
- Membership Card
- First notice on all public programming and events

Choose your membership

Individual— \$20

Membership benefits for one adult.

Family —\$20

Membership benefits for two adults and all family members under 18.

Business Sponsorship —\$50

Two membership benefits to be used by any employee and your business' logo to appear in the *Gresham Historical Quarterly Newsletter*.



Membership Enrollment Form

Member name (*Business name for Business Membership*)

Member 2 name (*if Family Membership*)

Street address

City, State, Zip

Home/Cell Phone Work /Cell Phone

Email address

Membership Level

- ☐ Individual \$20 ☐ Business \$50
☐ Family \$20

\$_____ Membership amount *include discounts

\$_____ Additional contribution

\$_____ Total amount

Payment information

Please enclose a check payable to the Gresham Historical Society, and mail it to the address below or bring it by the museum along with this form. To pay by credit or debit card, please call or come in to the museum.

Gresham Historical Society
410 N Main Avenue
Gresham, OR 97030-7212

Remembering Gresham's Rexall Drug Store



Arthur Dowsett (left) at Gresham Rexall Drug Store circa 1915.

Seeing the need for a drug store for residents of Gresham and East County, Dick Dowsett's grandfather opened the first drugstore in Gresham in 1903. The Gresham Drug Store remained in business for 93 years and three generations until Dick Dowsett's retirement in 1996.

In the early years before Gresham was incorporated as a city, an illness could be fatal. There was one doctor in the area and he ordered medicines from the Wyeth Company of Philadelphia. Before Arthur Dowsett opened the drugstore, the closest pharmacy was over ten miles away in Portland. There was one dirt road between Gresham and Portland and it was a long, rugged road that took the better part of a day for travel to and from Portland. In the rainy season, this road would quickly turn to mud, making the trip tedious and sometimes impossible. There weren't many automobiles yet, so travel was by horse or wagon. Many people died while waiting for the medicines to arrive.

In the years after the Gresham Post Office opened in 1884, pioneers traveled to Oregon from eastern states and foreign countries. Each individual brought his own skills—baker, blacksmith, carpenter, cobbler, grocer, or tinker, etc. to contribute to the growing community.

Remembering Gresham's Rexall Drug Store (cont.)



Arthur Dowsett at Gresham Drug Store, circa 1920.

The man who would become Gresham's first druggist, Arthur Dowsett, was born in Galion, Ohio on July 14, 1876. His parents had moved there from England about ten years prior to his birth. Arthur was the third youngest of the eight Dowsett children. When Arthur was 12 years old, the family moved to Stevens Point, Wisconsin in the fall of 1888. He did not attend a pharmacy school, but learned the trade from a local pharmacist in Stevens Point.

Leaving Wisconsin at the age of 26, Arthur decided to travel west to investigate the value of some old mining stock somewhere in the Pacific Northwest. When he arrived, Arthur discovered that the mining stock was worthless, but he decided to stay in the West. Arthur traveled around the state of Washington on his round-about trip to Oregon, living in Portland before his final destination in Gresham.

He loved the outdoors and he bought a bicycle. He is said to have ridden all the roads and trails out of Portland into the nearby countryside. On one of these adventures, he stumbled upon, or rode into the area called Gresham. He fell in love with the quaint, small, and friendly town so

he repeatedly visited Gresham. Before long, he made many friends in Gresham, including Dr. Joseph Short and his family who lived in a house on Roberts and Second Street.

Arthur moved to Gresham in late 1902, living with the Short family for about a year. He saw the obvious need for a drugstore in Gresham to provide a supply of medicines to the community and secured a good location on Powell and Main Street in the new John Metzger Building.

The first year, he ran something of a notions store, selling needles, thread, and other small articles. He also sold "over-the-counter" medicines. But in 1904, Arthur Dowsett bought into the Rexall franchise and started a full-fledged drugstore. A year later, Arthur married a young lady from Troutdale named Pearl Stafford. She had a fondness for children and became a teacher at Gresham Grade School.

In 1906, Arthur and Pearl had a son named Stafford. He would go to Gresham Grade School and Gresham Union High School. At high school, Stafford was the yearbook editor, and he was active in the Lettermen's Club, Latin Club, Finance Committee, tennis, basketball, and the school orchestra. After graduating in 1925, Stafford enrolled in Oregon State College where he graduated in pharmacy. Afterwards, he became a pharmacist at the Gresham Rexall Drug Store in 1928.

As the drugstore continued to expand its services and increase its stock, more and more responsibility fell on Arthur's shoulders. This led Arthur to seek a partner in the drugstore. Arthur partnered with an uncle, Joseph Patneau, a pharmacist from Glasgow, Montana who bought into the Gresham Rexall Drug Store in 1909.

Arthur became a member of the Grade School Board of Education and he served as assistant postmaster while the Gresham Post Office was

located in the drugstore. Arthur was active with the Masonic Lodge, the Grange, the Kiwanis Club and numerous other community associations. He spent time on the city council and the Chamber of Commerce.

The success of the drugstore was not instantaneous. The partners worked well together and the drugstore would become one of the longest-operating businesses in Gresham. Joseph remained a successful, hard-working partner until his death in 1929 when Stafford purchased his stock and became a partner. In 1934, Stafford and his wife Frances had a son that they named Richard.

Arthur retired from the drugstore in 1939. Stafford took the reigns at that time along with his brother-in-law, Eugene Welling.

When the depression and World War II caused a slowdown in the business, Stafford kept long hours and he would work thirteen of every fourteen days. Like his father, Stafford became involved in the community. He was a volunteer firefighter and he was active in the Chamber of Commerce as well as the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Stafford was a Gresham City Councilman for five years beginning in 1958. He then served for three years as Mayor. In 1962, Stafford retired from the drugstore and sold his stock to his son Dick who partnered with Bob Madsen, a pharmacist who had worked there for many years.

When Dick retired in 1996, their 6,000 prescriptions were transferred overnight to the Safeway on Division Street and Dick went there to help with the transition. The fountain, deli and the Hallmark shop operated for a short time. Afterwards, the building was renovated and Jazzy Bagels has been there for over 20 years.

Source: The Dowsetts: Three Generations by Ray Bolkan.

Remembering Dick Dowsett

April 12, 1934 to January 5, 2021

Richard L. Dowsett passed away peacefully on January 5, 2021 after a long battle with chronic kidney failure at the age of 86. Dick is survived by his three children Michael, Elizabeth and Mark, seven grandchildren and three great grand-children. He is preceded in death by his wife Nancy, parents Staff and Frances Dowsett, and sister Gayle Hibbard. Dick's wife Nancy passed away at the age of 55 due to diabetic complications.

Richard (Dick), or "Mr. Gresham," as he was affectionately known, grew up in Gresham attending West Gresham Grade, Gresham Union High and he graduated from Oregon State University with a pharmacy degree in 1956, including two terms as president of Kappa Sigma fraternity.

He then served three years as a commissioned officer in the US Army running the hospital pharmacy at the Fort Ord base in northern California. Dick then returned to Gresham to join his father Stafford running the local Gresham Rexall Drug store and eventually two additional locations throughout his more than 40-year career.

Dick was also a member of the downtown Kiwanis Club, as well as the Historic Downtown Business Association and served as an Elk. He was a sponsor for a variety of annual events including the Mt. Hood Jazz Festival downtown warm-up, the Teddy Bear Parade, and Gresham Little League.



Skating partners Liz Bartholomew Jones and Dick Dowsett at the Gresham Fun Centre.

Richard Dowsett was a long-time supporting member of the Gresham Historical Society as well as a Board member. Dick donated a bench that sits in front of the Gresham History Museum, so people can sit and marvel at the beauty of this city called Gresham.

Dick's grandfather Arthur Dowsett began the Drug store business at Powell and Main in 1903 when the downtown streets were still dirt. That same building was renovated in Dick's retirement and has housed the Jazzy Bagel business for over 20 years.

The Dowsett family served the Gresham area for three generations with Stafford serving two terms as city mayor and both father and son volunteering for the Gresham Fire Department. The annual Fireman's Picnic was held at the Dowsett Lane homestead for many years promoting a strong community.

Dick enjoyed family outings, skiing Mt. Hood, boating on the Columbia River, and working on older cars as a hobby mechanic.

At the age of 62, Dick retired from the Gresham Rexall Drug Store on Dec. 26, 1996. Dick was the last Dowsett pharmacist in Gresham—a family dynasty that lasted for 93 years and three generations.

A public memorial service will be scheduled and announced in the near future at Gresham Memorial Chapel. He will be greatly missed.

Donations to the Gresham Historical Society are being accepted in memory of Richard L. Dowsett.

Welcome to our newest member!



Mayor Travis Stovall

Gresham resident Travis Stovall was sworn in as Gresham's 28th Mayor on January 5, 2021. He is the CEO and co-founder of eRep.com, a firm focused on helping individuals find work they love and companies build highly efficient teams of workers.

Stovall has been a healthcare administrator and he served the Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce as President of the Board of Directors. In addition, he is a board member of several prominent local and regional organizations, including Tri-Met, the regional transit agency

In his free time Stovall is a private pilot, plays tennis, cycles, and enjoys spending time on Orcas Island in the Puget Sound.

How to Support the Museum

Gifts and contributions to the Gresham Historical Society support the continued preservation and sharing of our local history.

Monetary Contributions

Your unrestricted gift supports the daily operations of the Gresham Historical Society and the maintenance and preservation of the Historic 1913 Gresham Carnegie Library.

Planned Giving

Your unrestricted recurring gifts provide the predictable, ongoing support that allows the Gresham Historical Society to perform necessary financial planning.

Gifts in Memory or Tribute

Each year, the Gresham Historical Society receives gifts in memorial and tribute. Honor the life and achievements of those in your life through legacy giving.

Appreciated securities or stock

Charitable gifts of stock are a wonderful way to provide ongoing support for the Gresham Historical Society. Check with your tax adviser for details.

Support Us with Your Purchases



www.greshamhistorical.org

Monetary Contribution Form

Name

Street address

City, State, Zip

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☐ Check payable to Gresham Historical

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Thank you, Donors!

We would like to give a special thank you to those who donated to the Gresham Historical Society. Your financial support helps us fulfill our mission of collecting, preserving, and sharing our local history. Because the Gresham Historical Society does not receive federal or state aid, we could not do our work without the support of donors like you. Thank you for helping make history happen, and keeping our museum—your museum—free and open to the public.

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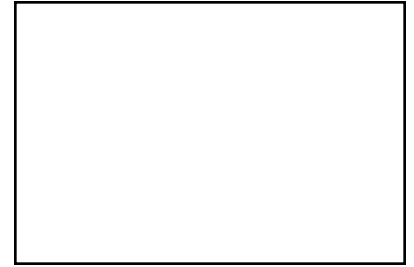
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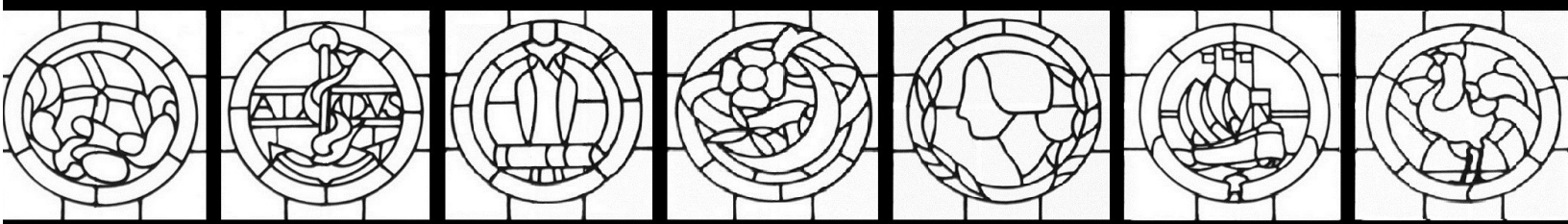


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