



Gresham Historical *Quarterly* Spring 2021

New Statue Unveiled at the Museum



Kirk French



Sunday at the Carnegie



Martha Ruegg

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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 Kirk French, former Gresham City Councilor, Gresham Historical Society volunteer, and Board member. It was a pleasure to have known and worked with him.

Earlier this Spring, we debuted our History Talk Series when Portland historian, author, and former newspaper reporter Fred Leeson spoke about Fred Meyer — My-Te-Fine Merchant. We had about 40 guests and members in attendance.

Over 40 members, volunteers, and guests attended our Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Day. The work that we do would not happen without the help and support of our volunteers. If you are a volunteer, you know the satisfaction that you receive from sharing Gresham history with others. We value the sacrifices that you make to be part of the Gresham History Museum family.

If you are a member and you are not a volunteer, we hope that you will consider sharing your time and talents with us. Volunteer hours add up—grants, both federal and private, can be dependent on volunteer hours. Volunteering is a valuable alternative to making a monetary contribution.

If you are not a member, we need more of you to help support the work we do—documenting and preserving photos, stories, and artifacts from the Gresham area. Renewing your membership is easy. Go to our website and pay securely online or mail your check today. We can also take your credit card payment over the phone

Another way to support our work is to designate the Gresham Historical Society when you shop at Fred Meyer/Kroger or AmazonSmiles.

I am honored to be your Museum Director. It is a treat for me to get to know each and every one of you and to share our memories from years past. You'll find Gresham's finest citizens at our Museum.

Best regards,

Mark Moore, Museum Director

President's Message

To our Members and Friends,

I am so glad to share all that we have accomplished since we shared our last newsletter with all of you.

This spring we showcased a new exhibit about diversity in our city of Gresham from our very start as a city in 1905 to today.

We have finally fenced in our parking lot with an electronic gate that opens for our volunteers and employees, as well as guests of our museum. This has been so needed for as long as I have been first a volunteer and now a board member of the museum. There were many times when others were parking all day every day in our parking lot so that there were no spaces available for our volunteers or guests to park. It became a huge issue, so we finally figured out a way to finance it to make it a reality. It is so wonderful to have parking space for our volunteers and our guests when we have events at the museum.

On Sunday, May 23rd, we held our Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Day. We had a wonderful attendance and were able to honor our volunteers as well as our Board of Directors who make it possible for us to keep our doors open to the public five days a week.

To start our annual meeting, we first had a dedication of a wonderful bronze statue honoring a pioneer couple coming to the museum. It is called "Sunday at the Carnegie." This bronze was given to the museum by Gresham Outdoor Public Art or better known as GOPA. We are so grateful to them for such a stunning bronze. You really need to come to see it and our museum.

I could go on and on about what is happening at the museum, but I am limited on space. We are a very active group of Gresham citizens that have the museum in our hearts to preserve the history of Gresham.

We truly would like for you to join us by volunteering or joining the museum to preserve our history and to be involved where only good things are happening.

Have a wonderful summer.

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 — \$30

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

Business — \$100

Two membership benefits.

Business Plus — \$200

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 \$100

☐ Family \$30

☐ Business+ \$200

\$_____ Membership amount

\$_____ Additional contribution

\$_____ Total amount

Payment information

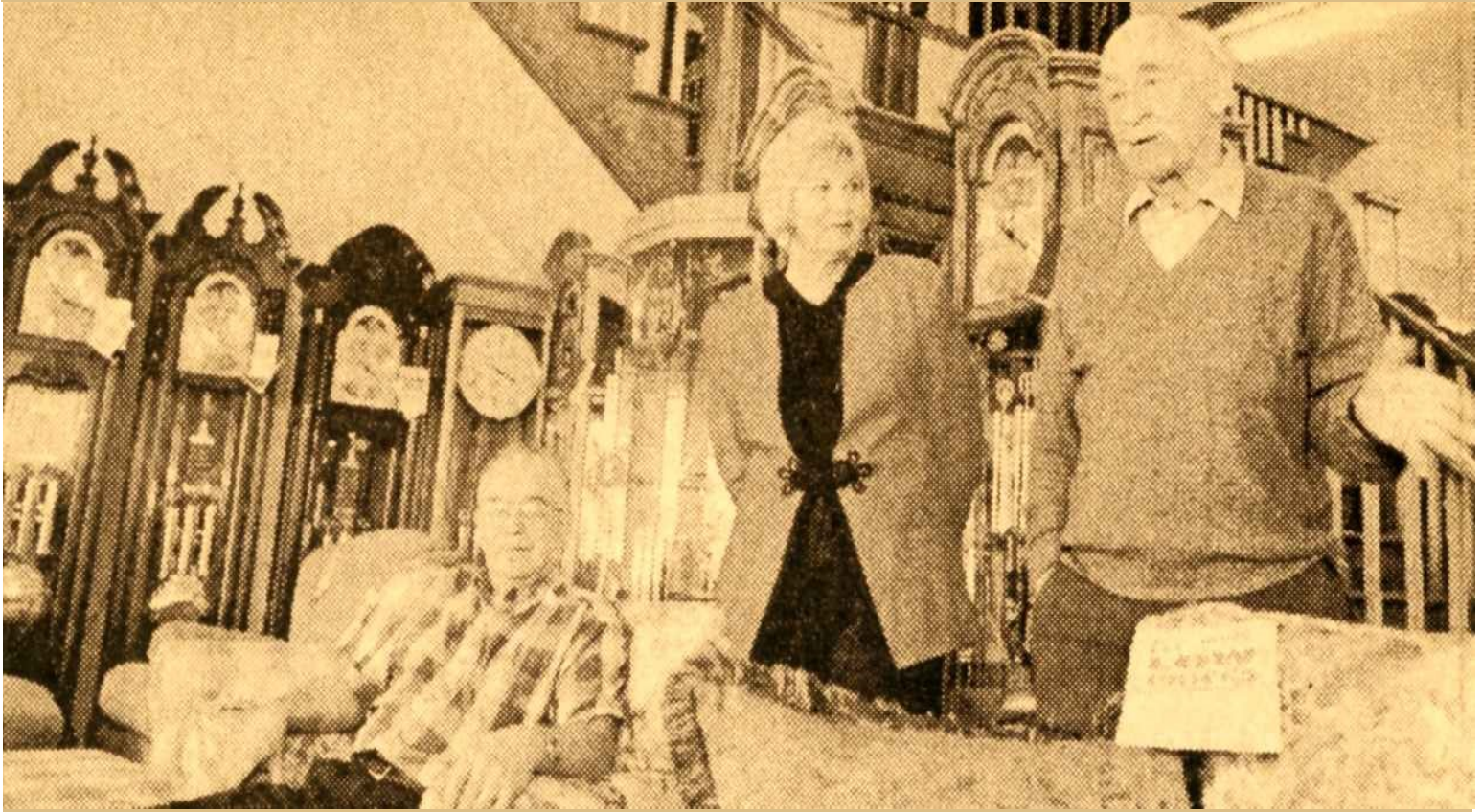
Please enclose a check payable to the Gresham Historical Society, and mail it to the address below or bring it to the museum along with this form. To pay by credit or debit card, please call 503-661-0347 or come in to the museum.

Gresham Historical Society

410 N Main Avenue

Gresham, OR 97030-7212

Highlighting Gresham's Amiton Furniture



Bill Amiton (right) with co-owners Bob Matulef and Annie Amiton at Amiton Furniture in 1998. Photo by Sharon Nesbitt, Gresham Outlook.

One of the oldest businesses in Gresham, started by Bill Amiton, will be celebrating 80 years in July 2021. Bill was born on September 7, 1916 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada to Abraham and Anna Amiton. The family left the Canadian Prairie and moved to Portland where Bill grew up. He graduated from Lincoln High School in 1934. Bill married Florence Jacobs in 1939. In July of 1941 when he was 24 years old and scouting for a place to start a business in the Portland area, he chose Gresham. "I'd looked for a place to do business in Beaverton, Tigard, and Vancouver, but there was way more activity here. Gresham looked more prosperous and there were a lot of people moving into the area," he said.

Equipped with little more than a Pontiac and a trailer, Bill Amiton opened Amiton Furniture, a small used furniture business in a building about the size of a double garage on the south side of Powell Boulevard in what is now Main City Park. His rent was \$25 a month. The activity and prosperity that Amiton had witnessed was the result of the crowds that were drawn to the Multnomah County Fair, then a late summer event on Main Avenue.

"In the early days, the furniture business was mingled with the funeral business, because you could make a few coffins between customers," Amiton recalled. Gradually, people began to take pride in their homes in the same way they might drive a nice car and began decorating their homes with new furniture. (continued on page 6)

Highlighting Gresham's Amiton Furniture (cont.)

"Back in the beginning, we didn't dress too nicely because we sold stoves and got kind of dirty, he said. When we began selling more furniture, we dressed a little better." Bill Amiton remembers the time a guy came into the store, saw him in a suit and asked if he was going to a funeral.

The year 1958 brought changes. Bill took the opportunity to move from Powell to the building once known as the Regner Opera House on Main Street. Bill and Florence lived above the store. The building, which still houses Amiton Furniture, held W.R. Hicks & Company, then Gresham's largest department store. When Hicks built a new building on the next corner, Amiton moved into the former Hick's store.

Bill Amiton continued working until May 4, 2008. He passed away four days later, on May 7, 2008. Amiton Furniture continues to sell furniture nearly 80 years since Bill came to Gresham in 1941. You could always find Bill at the store except for when he was drafted during World War II. He served as a sergeant in the Army. His father Abraham ran the store during that time.

Museum Schedule of Events 2021

June 17	5:30 pm	Dedication of the Little Lending Library
June 26	11:00 am	Rock Around the Clocks — DJ Dick Karman
June 27	2:00 pm	History of the Meier & Frank Clocks
July 25	2:00 pm	The Evolution of Radio with Dick Karman
August 22	2:00 pm	Bigfoot and Brew with Joe Beelart
September 26	2:00 pm	The Japanese Internment — Gwenda McCall
October 31	1:00 pm	Halloween Monster Mash at the Museum

Weekends — November 27 thru December 19:

Christmas at the Carnegie



Funded by donations to Gresham Outdoor Public Art, artist Heather Greene was commissioned to create a bronze titled “Sunday at the Carnegie.”

Coming soon!
To the Gresham History Museum
– our own Little Free Library!

Have new or gently used books to donate?
 You can drop them off at Sunny Han’s Wok & Grill
 Located at 305 N. Main – hours: 11am – 7pm
 Books for all ages are welcome!

Tax receipts available for all donations. Organized by the Gresham Outdoor Public Art Committee, a 501(C)(3) organization.

Books may also be dropped off at the Museum during business hours

Remembering Martha Ruegg



Martha and Chuck Ruegg at their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

May 8, 1930 to April 24, 2021

Martha Jean Ruegg, age 90, former Gresham Historical Society volunteer, passed away at Avamere in Sandy on April 24, 2021. Martha was born May 8, 1930 to Jacob Luscher Jr. and Elizabeth Jane (McKeown). Martha's family were residents of the Gresham area, enabling her to attend Lynch Grade School and Gresham High School.

Martha married Charles "Chuck" Leroy Ruegg on July 9, 1948. They were married 58 years. Together they raised four children while living in the Wildcat Creek area of "the Mountain."

Martha spent these years volunteering at Welches Grade School as PTA treasurer, lead Girl Scouts and 4-H organizations, served on the Clackamas County Board local voter precinct, and on the staff of "The Hoodland News" Newspaper.

She also had active hobbies including being part of a Bowling League, enamelware, tin etching, and sewing.

Martha began working two days a week for Dr. H. R. Rasmussen in Gresham. Eventually she worked full-time up to his retirement in 1971. Subsequently, she worked for many private practice doctors and ultimately worked in group practices until she retired at age 78.

In 1968, Chuck and Martha Ruegg moved to Compton Road in Boring. Martha studied at Mt. Hood Community College and her hobbies at this time were calligraphy, crocheting, and knitting. Both Martha and Chuck became part of reunion planning for Gresham High School.

From 2009 to 2015, Martha was a Gresham Historical Society volunteer. She made many friends and enjoyed her time working with other volunteers and staff. During her time there she gathered documents of Ruegg/Sleret and Luscher/McKeown family histories to share with her children, providing invaluable family genealogy information. She was our resident calligrapher and we still enjoy her work today.

Martha lived in her Compton Road home for 51 years. In March of 2019 she moved to the Avamere Assisted Living facility in Sandy, Oregon.

Remembering Kirk French



Kirk French

July 17, 1949 to April 9, 2021

Former Gresham Historical Society Board Member, Gresham City Councilor, and longtime community volunteer Loren Kirk French died April 9, 2021 after a serious illness in a local hospital.

Kirk was born July 17, 1949 in Portland. He grew up in Northeast Portland and graduated from Lincoln High School. He went to work for Burns Brothers Inc. Truck Stops in East Multnomah County, where he rose through the ranks and eventually served as the district manager for Travel Centers of America before his retirement.

Kirk moved to Gresham in 2007 and he was first elected to the City Council in 2014, after previously filling a vacancy. As a Councilor, Kirk was known for his hands-on approach to leadership and presence at community events. By some counts, he attended more than 800 public events after he was sworn into his first full term on council in January 2015. He was elected Council President and served the city in that capacity until losing the position in a close election in 2018.

During his final year on council, Kirk French oversaw the launching of Gresham's Neighbors Helping Neighbors, a program aimed at dealing with low-level code violations. In the first gathering, which had volunteers help at a home in the North Central Neighborhood, Council President French was there doing his part. He cut back out-of-control foliage, removed trash and leaves, and cleared the sidewalks for the resident who was unable to deal with the issues on their own.

Kirk was a very valuable, working board member and he will be greatly missed. He was active with the Facilities Maintenance Committee and the Budget and Finance Committee.

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
with



Us
Your

Monetary Contribution Form

Name

Street address

City, State, Zip

Home/Cell Phone

Work /Cell Phone

Email address

If memorial gift, Name of honored person(s)

Payment Information

☐ Check payable to Gresham Historical

**Would you like to enroll in
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☐ Yes, please charge my credit/debit card for a
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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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Patrons	\$1000-1999
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Benefactor	\$5000-9999
1913 Carnegie Fellow*	\$10,000+

*Lifetime

(Monetary or in-kind value)

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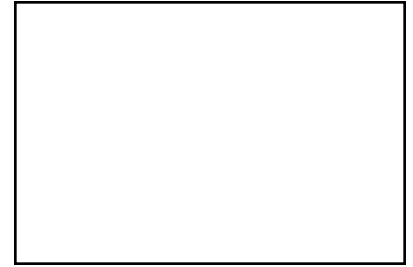


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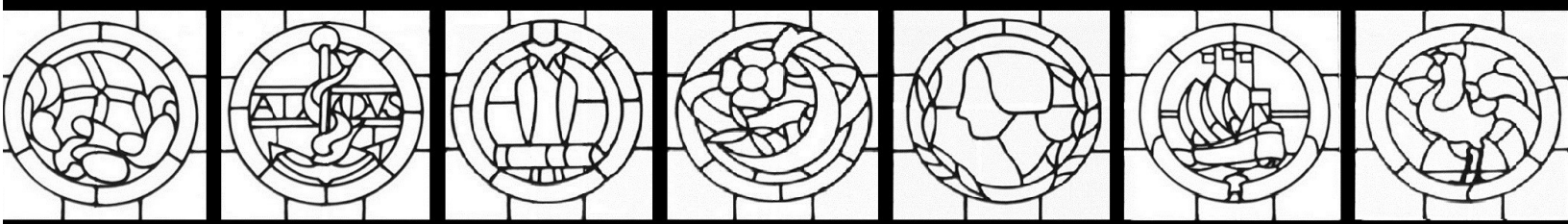


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Gresham, OR 97030-7212



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Gresham Historical Society & Museum

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