

OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENTS



THE OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1846



OREGON MY OREGON

“

“OREGON MY OREGON” was conceived as a large classroom for learners of all ages. The exhibit scratches the surface of the history of the Oregon Country [and is] the latest magnet set to draw those who want to learn and know more.

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— Dr. Stephen Dow Beckham, Exhibit Curator



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INTRODUCTION

regon My Oregon” breathes life into Oregon history by focusing on the people who make up that history. The exhibit places the Oregon story in a larger context, helping you to understand how Oregon history is related to regional, national, and even international events. The displays feature stories about struggling farmers as well as wealthy business owners, miners along with industrialists, immigrants as well as Native Americans. As you walk through the exhibit you will move from days of the first inhabitants to present-day Oregon, exploring the everyday lives of the people who have called and who continue to call Oregon their home.



THE LAND OF MANY FACES

“The Land of Many Faces,” focuses on the diverse landscapes and peoples of Oregon. The shoes and hats displayed to the right as you enter the exhibit represent some of Oregon’s various



occupations and cultural communities. For example, look at the rust-colored hard hat with a bright yellow stripe. Pat Koehler, a nineteen-year-old electrician who worked in the Kaiser Vancouver Shipyards during

World War II, wore this hat in 1945. The black hat with the blue and red top was worn by Moy Back Hin, who in 1906 was appointed the first Chinese consul in the Pacific Northwest. You will also notice three different Native American basket hats. Native American women wore these hats for personal adornment and for protection against wind and rain.

Around the corner to your left you will find a large map of Oregon, highlighting the state’s regions, including the coast, western valleys, the Columbia Plateau, Northeastern Oregon and the High Desert of South-central and Southeastern Oregon.

THE FIRST OREGONIANS

“The First Oregonians” display features the history of Oregon’s native peoples. In the cedar *Plank House* you can read oral traditions about how the world was made, what to do when the new moon appears, the meaning of the cry of the owl, and reverence for the earth.

Notice how the differences in food resources, topography, and climate influenced Native American lifeways. The Northwest Coast



cedar *Plank House* demonstrates how Indians lived in semi-permanent dwellings, and utilized local resources to make shirts, fish hooks, baskets, and canoe paddles. You will also discover that Native Americans often traveled long distances in the Great Basin region to procure food resources. Sumac was used by Indians in this area to make baskets for carrying roots and water. Walk around the Great Basin *Rock Shelter* and examine a 9,000-year-old pair of sagebrush sandals.

At the Columbia Plateau *Salmon Drying Racks* you will find digging sticks and tightly woven bags used to harvest and collect roots. Examine the Chinook cedar canoe that is fully loaded with a variety of trade goods. Indians traded obsidian, horses, and dried salmon from east of the Cascade Mountains. Dried smelt, cedar canoes and paddles, and Dentalium shells were traded from the coast to the Plateau and the High Desert.

LURE OF THE WEST

EXPLORATION AND TRADE

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“**T**he first of the two “**Lure of the West**” sections spans the 1500s through the 1840s and recounts the stories of European and American sea captains who sailed the North Pacific shores in the late eighteenth century, hoping to find the Northwest Passage, expand their country’s territory claims and to develop commercial trade routes with Asia. Captain Robert Gray of Boston explored the Pacific Coast and traded with Indians for sea otter pelts to sell for profit in China. You can see Gray’s 18th century sea chest, dinnerware, and a wood fragment from his ship the *Columbia Rediviva* which was the first euro-American ship to cross the Columbia River bar in 1792. David Douglas, whose re-created campsite you can see on your left, searched out and catalogued plant specimens for the Royal Horticultural Society of London.

As you walk through the recreated Hudson's Bay Company trade ship, you will see trade goods such as beads, copper kettles, beaver traps, and silver trinket bells. These artifacts illustrate the role of Native Americans in the early development of a market economy in the Pacific Northwest.

HBC trading ships brought trade goods to Fort Vancouver and exported furs to China and England. The British Hudson's Bay Company operated fur-trading posts throughout Canada and the Oregon Country. They established Fort Vancouver on the north bank of the Columbia River in 1825.

Trade relations brought Indians into contact with Euro-Americans, but also, tragically, with Euro-American diseases. Once estimated at 50,000 to 100,000 in Oregon, Indian populations were reduced to mere thousands by the latter half of the nineteenth century.

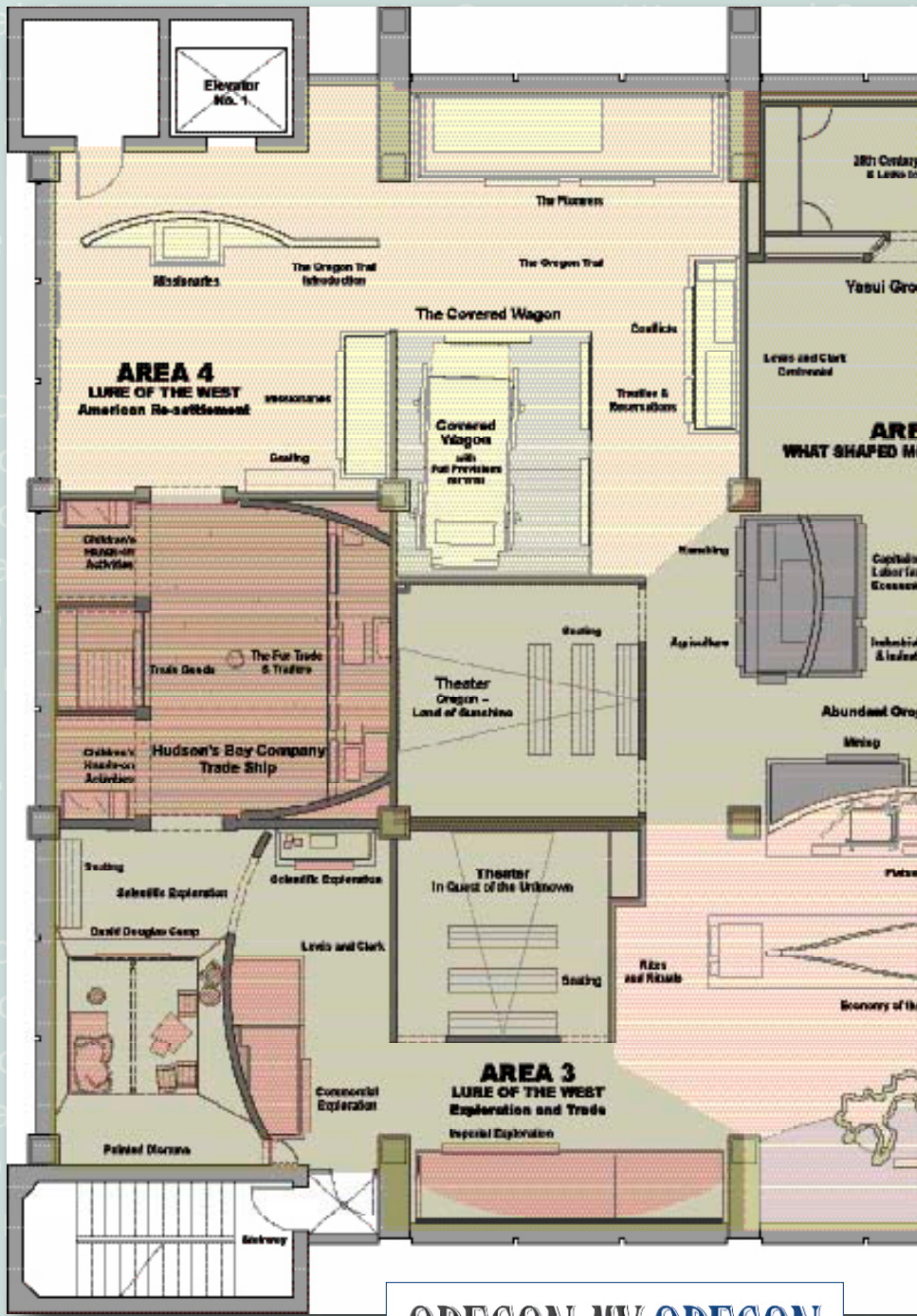
LURE OF THE WEST

AMERICAN RE-SETTLEMENT

The second “**Lure of the West**” area focuses on the period from the 1840s through the 1870s. Missionaries, who came to Oregon to convert native peoples as well as fur traders to Christianity proved more successful in assisting Euro-American settlers. As you walk through this portion of the exhibit, you may ask about the missionaries’ personal sense of purpose, the places they came from, and the struggles they faced in their new homes.

To your right you can listen to excerpts from the diaries of Oregon Trail travelers in search of economic opportunity and a better life. The artifacts in the covered wagon provide a sense of the everyday life, routine, and hardships these settlers faced on the overland journey.

Euro-American re-settlement of Oregon dramatically changed Indian lifeways. In the 1850s the federal government participated in treaty negotiations with Native American tribes and relocated many to reservations—a process that resulted in the cession of millions of acres of Native lands to the newcomers. Examine the “Indian Supplies” list designated for the Rogue River and Cow Creek Indians to see the compensation they received in exchange for their lands.

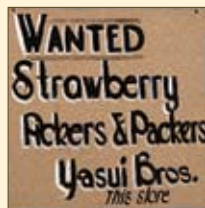


OREGON MY OREGON

EXHIBIT FLOOR PLAN



oregon



WHAT SHAPED MODERN OREGON (1860S-PRESENT)

“What Shaped Modern Oregon (1860s-Present)” identifies immigration, industrial growth, and transportation development as the major forces that shaped modern Oregon. In the *Oregon-Land of Sunshine* Theater and adjacent displays, you will see how ranching and wheat growing induced homesteaders to settle east of the Cascade Mountains, while farming and forestry dominated the western valleys. You can also learn about the miners, who rushed to gold strikes in eastern and southern Oregon and the transportation industry, which linked far-flung regions of Oregon and connected the state to national and global markets.

This section of the exhibit also explores diverse peoples who have come to Oregon looking for job opportunities. This display will help you understand what role Chinese, Japanese, Europeans and African-Americans played in the development of the mining industry, railroads, canneries, orchards, fisheries, and timber industry.

Feel free to explore the *Yasui Grocery Store* owned and operated for more than thirty years by Masuo Yasui and his brother Renichi. In December 1941 the U.S. Treasury Department shut down the Yasui Brothers Store. The brothers were forced to sell their merchandise below cost and close the store permanently after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which ordered the army to transport all West Coast Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans



to internment camps in the interior. In the *Yasui Store* you can also examine the war efforts in Oregon, including a boost in spruce production to build airplanes, and life in army training camps.

OREGON CULTURE

The final section of the exhibit, “**Oregonian Culture,**” adds yet another chapter to the Oregon story and draws attention to the significant controversies in “abundant Oregon.”

These controversies have led to important dialogues that take as their focus the sustainability of the state’s natural resources and the health and stability of Oregon Communities.

Take a seat at the *Newberry Lunch Counter* and explore some of Oregon’s most pressing contemporary issues. Sit back and imagine how current policies and controversies are tied to the past and how these issues affect the way we live today.

To the right of the *Newberry Lunch Counter* you can learn about Oregon’s historic and innovative legislation, such as the “bottle bill,” land-use planning, and public beach access.





Oregon is a **“Land of Many Faces.”** The voices, artifacts, and stories in **“Oregon My Oregon”** interpret how everyday people have made Oregon what it is today. As you leave the exhibit, consider the major themes in Oregon history and how this history has laid the groundwork for your ongoing contribution to the Oregon story.

OREGON MY OREGON

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