Oregon Historical Society Museum to Open Wednesday, October 14, Following Building Vandalism

Portland, OR — October 13, 2020 — Following vandalism to the Oregon Historical Society’s (OHS) downtown facility on the evening of Sunday, October 11, the museum is set to open for regular museum hours on Wednesday, October 14. Current museum hours are Wednesdays – Saturdays from 10am – 5pm and Sundays from 12pm – 5pm. While the building is currently boarded up due to the extensive damage done to the windows on the building’s front entrance and exterior, visitors will be able to safely enter the building through the 1200 SW Park Avenue entrance.

OHS released a statement yesterday in response to the vandalism, thanking the community for the outpouring of support and sending gratitude that no staff or visitors were harmed. While the building repairs will be extensive, the statement noted that the greatest concern was surrounding the Afro-American Heritage Bicentennial Commemorative Quilt, which was taken from its display on Sunday evening and thankfully recovered early Monday morning by local police. Each square of the quilt, crafted in the mid-1970s, honors a Black individual or moment in history. The quilt was sewn by 15 Black women from Portland, who donated it to OHS and entrusted it to the Society’s care. It was on temporary display for the month of October in the OHS pavilion so that it would be freely accessible to view by all as part of a collaboration with Portland Textile Month.

Unfortunately, OHS has had to remove the quilt from public display to allow OHS collections staff to assess care needs. While the quilt was recovered intact, as it was wet there has been color bleed of the fabric due to moisture, which will require the attention of conservation specialists. While the quilt will not be able to return to public display for the remainder of Portland Textile Month, we invite community members to learn more about this important piece of local African American history through this recent blog post and by joining community members for a virtual panel discussion on the quilt’s significance on Thursday, October 15 at 12pm.
The OHS statement further reflects:

We understand the significance and importance of the messages fueling the protests that have been taking place in our city and across the nation these past few months, as evidenced by much of our work during recent years. In 2019, we opened our new cornerstone exhibition, Experience Oregon, in collaboration with many community partners, including the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, and the result demonstrates our commitment to telling honest Oregon history — the good, the bad, and the ugly. We dedicated the Winter 2019 issue of our journal, the Oregon Historical Quarterly, to the subject of “White Supremacy & Resistance,” and in the Summer 2020 issue, we published articles specifically related to OHS’ history as related to Indigenous leaders and belongings.

As we clean up broken glass, scrub paint, and make plans to ensure safety in our building, we also, as always, welcome critique of our work. We would be grateful to have constructive feedback from all those who are willing and able to aid OHS in fulfilling our vision of an Oregon story that is meaningful to all Oregonians.

The Oregon Historical Society is eager to safely welcome back visitors to its galleries this Wednesday, and again wants to thank the community for the outpouring of support it has received these past 48 hours in the form of calls, emails, new and renewed memberships, and donations.

About the Oregon Historical Society

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state’s collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website (www.ohs.org), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon’s history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon’s cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.