



W.E.O. Merrill bicycle shop, downtown Portland. Image: Norm Gholston.

**HISTORIC
BICYCLE TOUR
~ of ~
NORTHWEST
PORTLAND**

About Northwest Portland

Northwest Portland is home to four Historic Districts: Alphabet, Skidmore/Old Town, New Chinatown/Japantown, and 13th Avenue. Between individually designated historic properties and the contributing resources within the districts, there are over 500 National Register of Historic Places-listed properties in Northwest Portland that are today protected by the City of Portland's historic preservation ordinance.

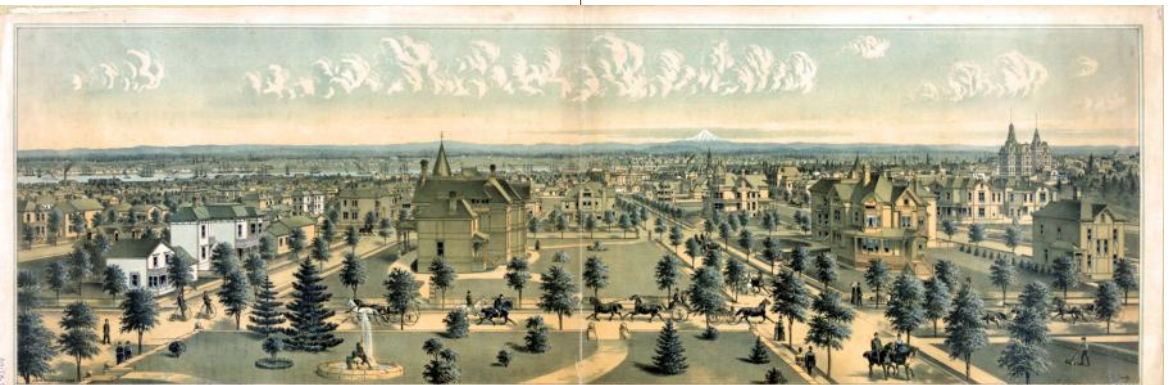
Largely developed beginning in the 1860s, every part of Northwest Portland has changed drastically since Portland's Settlement Era. During the 1880s and 1890s, NW 19th Street was the epicenter of Portland's fashionable residences, featuring stately architect-designed mansions on full blocks. As Portland's population exploded in the early years of the 1900s, many of the mansions made way for upscale apartment houses, and myriad architectural styles infiltrated the core of Northwest Portland. In 1905 an internationally-known fair was held

adjacent to the Slabtown enclave, bringing hordes of people to Portland from all parts of the globe. Closer to the river, commercial buildings have risen and fallen, giving way to parking lots that may one day see salvaged cast-iron installed once again. And, a district once home to single family houses – and later converted to warehouses – has been reborn as the Pearl.

This bike/walk tour travels through each historic district, while highlighting some of the individual buildings and undesignated places that make Northwest Portland unique from anywhere else.



NW 23rd and Thurman circa 1910. Image: Norm Gholston.



Northwest Portland looking east from 19th in 1888. Image: Library of Congress

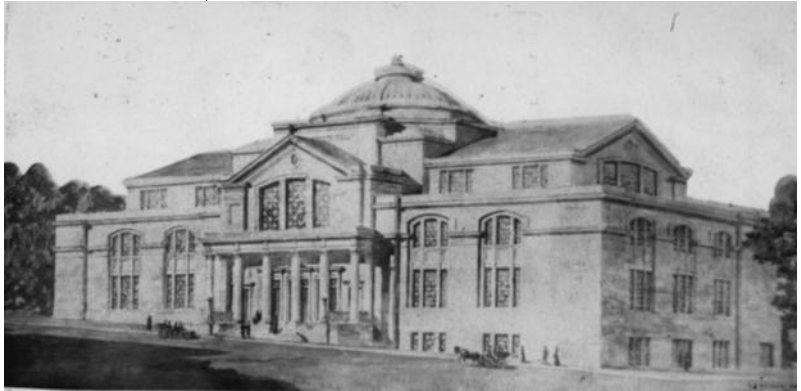
First Church of Christ, Scientist 1819 NW Everett St.

1

This 1909 Beaux-Arts-style building was built for members of Portland's Christian Science Church during a period of growth and change in NW Portland. The design of the church is attributed to Chicago architect Solon Spencer Beman, who was the inspiration behind countless Christian Science churches around the nation. During the early years of the church, legend has it that the 1200-seat auditorium would occasionally swell to capacity, leaving members to find seating in the aisles. As the city expanded outward, a dozen additional Christian Science churches were built to relieve demand at this flagship location.

In 1976, the membership of the church had dropped to a mere 100 members. At that time the building was sold to a nonprofit for \$300,000 to be used as a community service center. After being used by such organizations as Loaves and Fishes and Neighbors West-Northwest, the Northwest Children's Theater and School became the primary tenant in the building.

In 2004, an estimate to rehabilitate the structure was tagged at over two million dollars. No entity has yet been able to raise even the fraction of the funds needed to seismically upgrade and stabilize this beloved historic icon. Today, the building is known as the Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center.



Top: Architect's rendering First Church of Christ, Scientist. Image: Norm Gholston.

Below: Interior. Image: NW Cultural Center.



The Knapp House stood at NW 18th @ Glisan (demolished)

2

Fire Station No. 17 824 NW 24th Avenue



Fire Station 17 in the 1920s. Image: Norm Gholston.

Fire Station 17 was opened for use in 1912; a time when horse-drawn steam pumper engines and ladder trucks ruled the Portland Fire Bureau.

The building was designed by Lee Gray Holden and cost \$12,000 to construct. Holden was a Portland Fire Battalion Chief who, without formal training in architecture or engineering, designed 24 Portland fire stations and fireboats during the first quarter of the 20th century.

For the first four years of its life, Fire Station 17 relied on three horses to pull the equipment around Northwest Portland. After

being motorized in about 1916, the station operated around the clock until being closed in 1968 or 1969. During the 1970s, the Fire Bureau's "Toy and Joy" makers used the building during the Christmas Season for preparation of toys for children.

The station was sold in 1984 and converted into a live-work space. In the rear of the building, a two-story hose drier still stands tall

and intact. The building remains in residential use today.



Horses of Fire Station 17 in 1914. Image: Nat'l Register Nomination.

Fairmount Hotel

1920 NW 26th Ave

3

The Fairmount Hotel is a rare reminder of Portland's 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, a fair that for one year covered 400 acres of land just northwest of the Fairmount.

Although the buildings constructed for the Exposition were grand in scale and style, most were intentionally built to be temporary. Other than the grand Forestry Building (burned in 1964) and a few smaller buildings that were moved immediately after the fair, very little remained of the Exposition after 1911. The land was cleared and became a barren mud flat until war housing, and then warehouses, were built on the site.

The Fairmount was one of several speculative hotels that were built in preparation of the fair. Located directly across NW 26th Avenue from the entrance to the Exposition, the hotel had 150 rooms with rates starting at one dollar a day. During the Fair, the building had gas and electricity, electric call bells, telephones, and modern bathrooms.

After the Exposition, the building was converted to apartments and over time deteriorated in appearance in reputation. During the '70s and '80s, the building was



Lewis & Clark Exposition circa 1905. Image: UO Libraries.

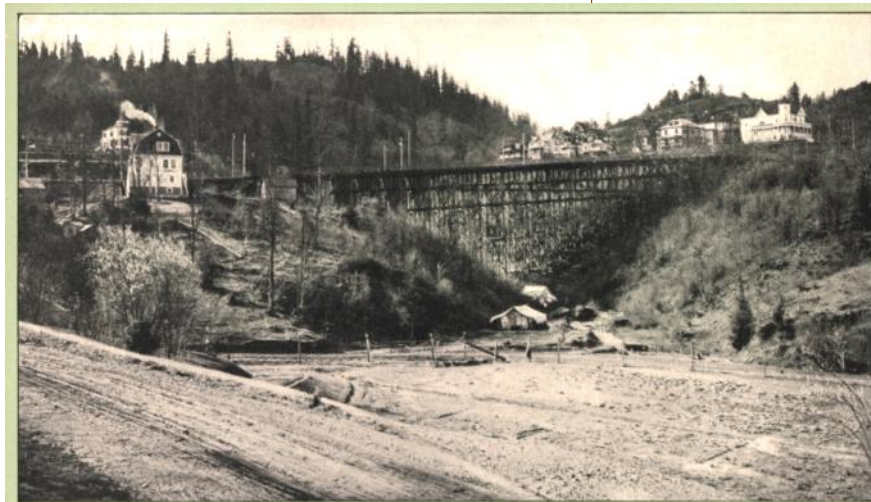
referred to as a "firetrap," "flophouse," "decrepit apartments," and "imminently dangerous."

In 2001, the Fairmount Hotel was rehabilitated for 80 affordable apartment units.



Forestry Center circa 1960. Image: UO Libraries.

4 **Balch Creek Canyon** **3022 NW Thurman Street**



Previous Balch Creek Bridge circa 1904. Image: Norm Gholston.

Balch Creek was named after Danford Balch, who received the original 640 acre Donation Land Claim for land on the hills and flats in this vicinity. Although the 640 acres were eventually subdivided and developed during the late 1800s, a number of deciduous and conifer trees from the original farmstead remain in the area.

In 1864, the City of Portland purchased a series of dams and pipes that had been erected on Balch Creek to supply water to the residents of the growing city. Although replaced by the Bull Run Reservoir system later in the 1800s, remnants of the concrete and wood intake dam are still visible today. The current bridge over the canyon was erected in 1905 in preparation for the Lewis and Clark Exposition and the residential development that was quickly encroaching on the area during the early 1900s.

Scandal! In 1859, Danford Balch's 16-year-old daughter eloped with one of the farm's hired hands, Mortimer Stump. When the enraged Balch learned that the couple was returning to Portland, he greeted Stump at the dock with shotgun in hand. Balch killed Stump, was arrested and jailed. Balch escaped from

jail, was recaptured, convicted of murder, and executed publicly in Portland's first *legal* hanging.



Wigwam, Macleay Park 1905. Image: Norm Gholston.

SLABTOWN

5

Thanks to the efforts of local historians Mike Ryerson and Tim Hills, the name Slabtown has been resurrected from the brink of extinction. This former community was established by Irish, Croat, Slovenian, and Slovak immigrants at the turn of the 20th Century and roughly bound by NW 17th, Lovejoy, 26th, and Nicolai Streets.

Slabtown was a working class neighborhood sustained economically by lumber mills, spiritually by St. Patrick's Church, and socially by the Vaughn Street Ballpark (extant at NW 24th and Vaughn from 1901 to 1956).

While local mills were selling quality lumber across the country for construction and furniture, the cheaper wood by-products were often sold locally for burning. These bark covered exterior cuts were called slabs. In the summer homeowners would buy this cheap green wood and let it dry for use in the winter. The abundance of these piles in front of the homes near the mills earned the neighborhood the name "Slabtown."



House on NW 15th with pile of slabwood in front circa 1900. Image: Norm Gholston.



Portland lumber mill workers. Undated. Image: Norm Gholston.

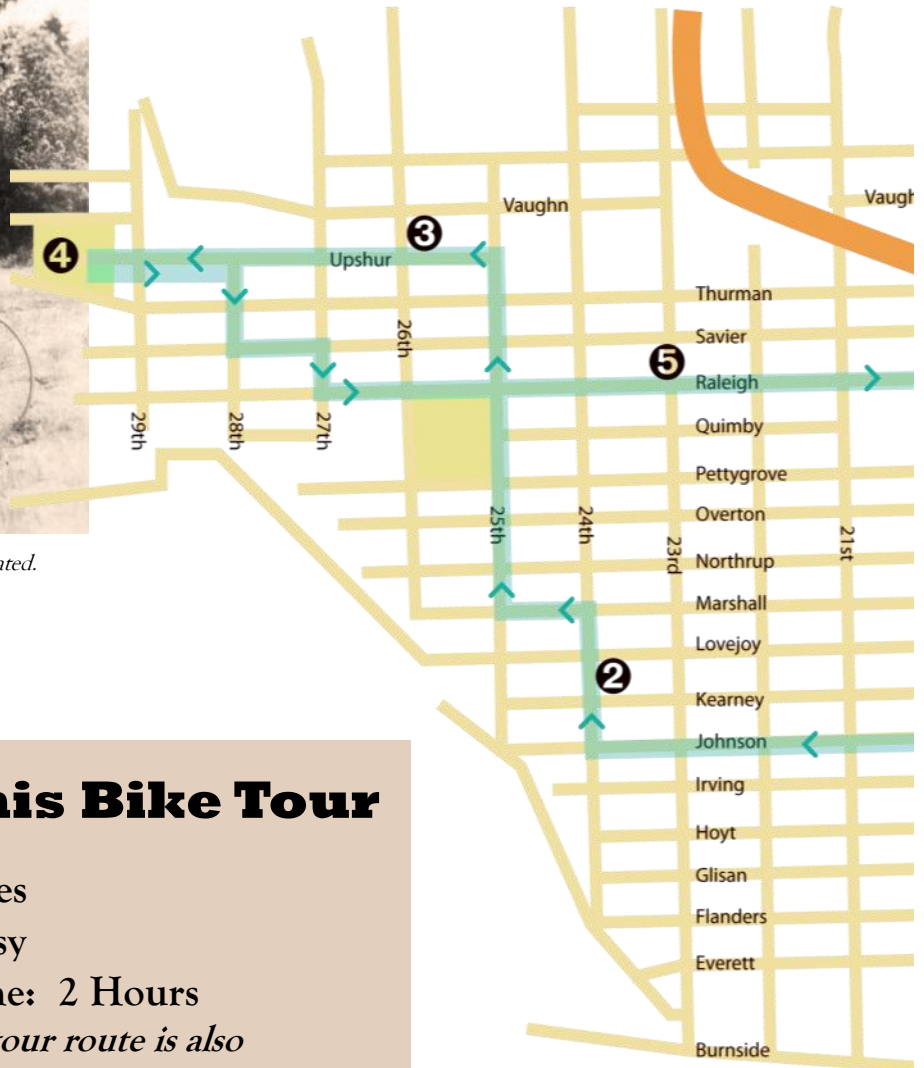


Vaughn Street Ballpark in the 1940s. Image: Norm Gholston.

Your Route Through



“Portland gals on a tricycle” Undated.
Image: Norm Gholston.



About This Bike Tour

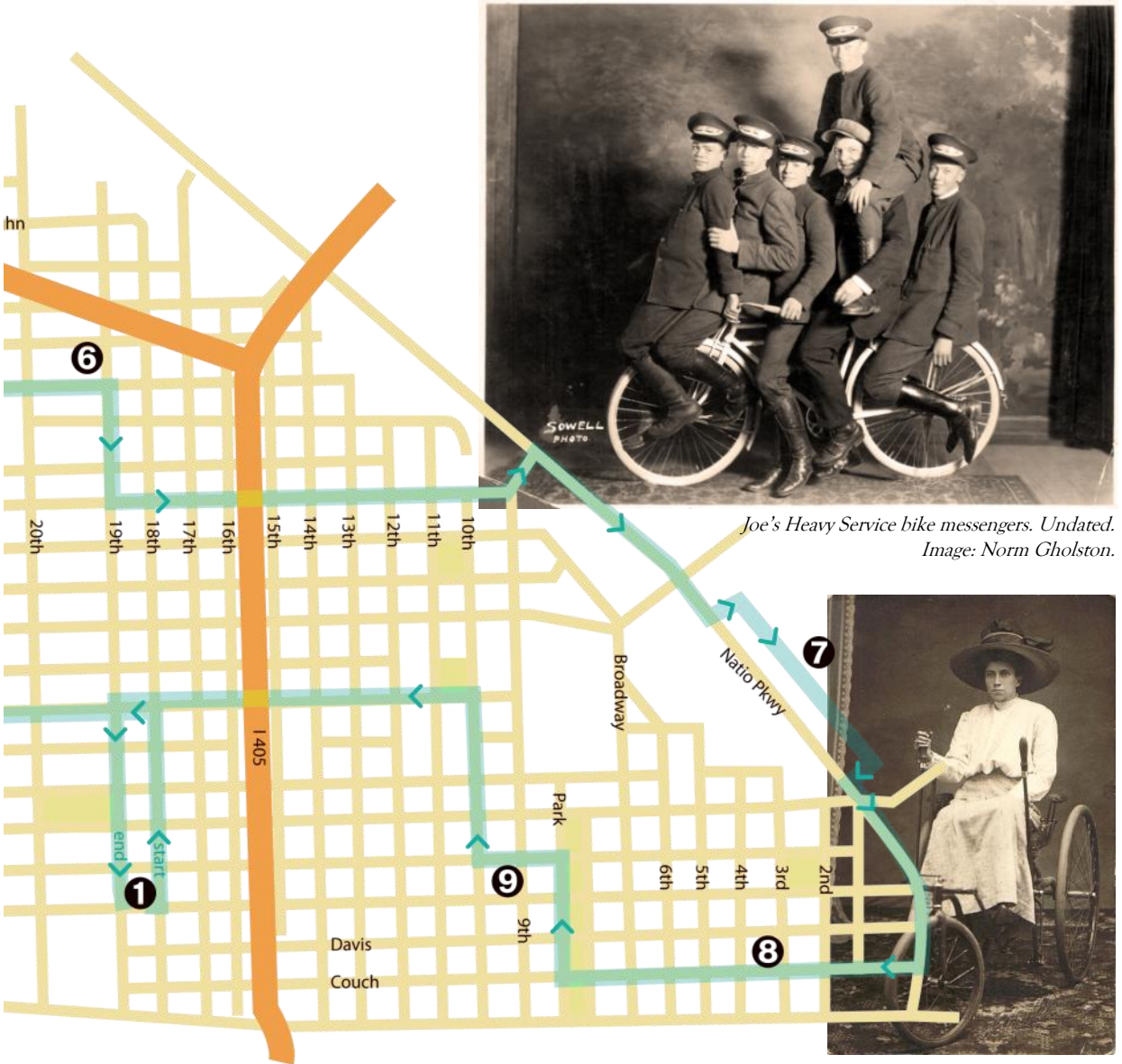
Length: 6 miles

Difficulty: Easy

Estimated Time: 2 Hours

Please note the tour route is also completely accessible for pedestrians.

Historic NW Portland



Joe's Heavy Service bike messengers. Undated.
Image: Norm Gholston.

Portland woman on Tricycle circa 1910
Image: Norm Gholston.

6

St. Patrick's Church 1635 NW 19th Ave



St. Patrick's was designed by German-born architect Otto Kleeman in 1889, whose original design called for a brick building. But when contractor James Barrett was awarded the project, he instead sourced basalt from Clackamas County as the exterior material.

The church was dedicated on March 17, 1891, and became the spiritual heart of the Slabtown community, particularly for two ethnic groups: the Irish and the Croatians. The pews and altar are crafted of hand carved oak and the interior was not finished until 1914. The Rectory was built in 1888.

In 1951, the Portland Development Commission (PDC) attempted to create the city's first Urban Renewal Area in the vicinity. The neighborhood fought this vision and the PDC subsequently refocused its efforts on clearing South Portland. There, Otto Kleeman's

similarly impressive St. Mary's Academy was demolished, leaving St. Patrick's as the architect's most notable work in the city. Today, St. Patrick's is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its dramatic architecture.

Note: Both St. Patrick's and the First Church Of Christ Scientist exemplify elements of the Beaux-Arts architectural style that emerged out of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris during the late 1800s. Paul Cret, designer of the memorial to David Campbell in Fireman's Park on West Burnside, was one of the great American architects to use this style.



Original stairs St. Patrick's Church 1920. Image: St. Patrick's Church.

The Working Waterfront

600 NW Naito Parkway

7

Now home to the McCormick Pier Condominiums, the west bank of the Willamette River in the vicinity of Union Station was once a bustling center of water and rail transportation.

With the completion of the first steel bridge in 1888, docks flanked the shore and rail lines covered the land along what is today Naito Parkway (formerly Front Avenue). The 1888 bridge was located in the vicinity of present-day McCormick Pier Grocery & Deli and served as the rail connection between east and west until the current bridge opened in 1912.



Albers Mill along Portland's working waterfront circa 1910. Image: Norm Gholston.

the story of the large-scale grain milling and processing that happened on the waterfront in the early decades 1900s.



Union Station was completed in 1896 by the architecture firm Van Brunt & Howe.

The c. 1909 Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company Freight Office and Warehouse is one of the last remnants of the working waterfront still standing on the west bank of the river. The nearby Centennial and Albers Mill buildings tell



Flood of 1894 looking south on 1st from Everett. Image: Norm Gholston.

8

Simon Façade 107 NW 3rd Avenue



The Simon Building was built in 1892 by the architecture firm Pickles and Sutton in the Richardson Romanesque style. The building was severely burned by fire sometime before 1980, at which time the façade was stabilized and given an AIA award for preservation. The neighboring Sinnott House of 1883 has been vacant since the 1950s and awaits a preservation strategy.

The block is located within two overlapping historic districts, the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District and the Skidmore/Old Town National Historic Landmark District. While both districts are significant for cultural history and architecture, today the Skidmore/Old Town district embodies a unique opportunity for Portland's creative designers.

During the 1930s through 1960s, dozens of

cast-iron fronted buildings similar to the Sinnott House were leveled to make way for parking lots along the waterfront. At the time, preservationists salvaged hundreds of feet of cast-iron storefronts in hopes of reinstalling it at a later date. The cast-iron remains in storage today and 29% of the district remains covered by surface parking lots.

In May, 2012, the Historic Preservation League of Oregon listed the Skidmore/Old Town district as one of Oregon's Most

Endangered Places citing lack of investment, instances of demolition-by-neglect, the high cost of seismic upgrades, and a lack of design guidelines to protect its integrity.



NW Naito (formerly Front St.) approaching Couch circa 1885

Ballou & Wright Bldg # 9

327 NW 10th Avenue

This five-story reinforced concrete warehouse building was designed in 1921 by architecture firm Sutton and Whitney for use by the Ballou & Wright Company, one of Portland's leading wholesalers of bicycles, motorcycles, and automobile parts during the first half of the 20th Century. The company was founded in Montana in the 1890s, but relocated to Portland in 1901 with the opening of a small store on SW 1st.

With the heyday of bicycling occurring between 1895 and 1905, Ballou & Wright in large part created and developed the market for recreational wheeled vehicles in Portland. With the introduction of the automobile, the firm expanded to the point of needing a flagship warehouse. With twelve branches across the Northwest, the opening of the warehouse allowed Ballou & Wright to become a regional player until its closure in 1960.

Of additional interest at this stop is the National Register-listed **Otis Elevator Company** building at 230 NW 10th Avenue. The building was built in 1920 as a specially-designed operations headquarters for the national elevator firm. Ironically, the building is only one story tall.

It's also worth noting the salvaged **Lovejoy Columns** across 10th from the Ballou & Wright warehouse, a remnant of the viaduct that elevated Lovejoy Street from the Broadway Bridge to NW 12th from 1926 to 1999. From 1945 to 1952, railroad watchman Athanasios (Tom) Stefopoulos painted elaborate art on the viaduct columns.



*Tom Stefopoulos and the Lovejoy Columns, about 1950.
Photo by Joan Peacock. Image: Historic Photo Archive.*

About the HPLO

What makes Oregon, OREGON? It's not just our great outdoors; it's also our historic homes and neighborhoods, bridges and barns, churches and storefronts. The members of the Historic Preservation League of Oregon believe these cultural and economic assets should be passed forward to future generations. In fact, we think its essential for us to have livable, sustainable communities.

A non-profit founded in 1977, HPLO activities include advocacy, education, and the management of over 40 historic conservation easements on properties across the state. We work to save and repurpose an annual list of **Oregon's Most Endangered Places** and we convene an annual **Preservation Roundtable** to tackle issues effecting historic neighborhoods. Our goals include:

- Preserve and pass forward historic sites, properties and districts.
- Ensure sufficient economic incentives for historic preservation.
- Promote appropriate land use policies, development guidelines and preservation standards.
- Support the value of preservation to Oregon's cultural, environmental, and economic well being.

We invite you to check us out on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, visit our website, sign up for our e-newsletter, and consider joining as a member to support this important work.




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Many Thanks!

This publication was made possible by the Office of Neighborhood Involvement through the Neighbors West-Northwest Neighborhood Small Grants Program. The NWNW coalition provides support to twelve vibrant Neighborhood Associations in northwest and inner southwest Portland, including the Northwest Neighborhood Association. To get involved, visit www.nwnw.org or call (503)-823-4288.

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