Just Yesterday
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1976

With support of the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Oregon
The story of West Linn begins with Robert Moore, who came to Oregon in 1840 from Illinois at the age of 59. He negotiated the purchase of a 1,000 acre site, lying along the west bank of the Willamette River at the falls, from Chief Wanaxha of the Cloughwe-Wallah, or Wallamut Indians. Upon the death of his wife in 1850, Moore was compelled to relinquish all but 320 acres of this land. His cabin, named "Robin's Nest" stood on the east slope of the hill overlooking the falls.

Moore's donation land claim extended westward from the water 1,340 feet, and from one-fourth of a mile below the falls to one and three-fourths miles above the falls. From the northeast corner of this property the owner carved a townsite in 1843. Originally there were twenty-five blocks.

By early 1845, Moore's embryonic town had two spacious log houses and a large number of tents occupied by settlers who had arrived the autumn before. In 1846, about fifteen rough dwellings were occupied principally by mechanics, men employed in the flour and lumber mills built by Moore, and on the ferry he operated across the river just below the falls.

Moore, by an act of the Provisional Legislature on December 22, 1845, changed the name of this town from "Robin's Nest" to "Linn City" in honor of his friend, Dr. Lewis F. Linn of Missouri. Moore reasoned that if the falls region prospered at all, Linn City could and would prosper with it. He encouraged A. H. Frier to locate at Linn City to operate the Linn City Hotel, formerly the Washington Hotel, which had been operated by Stephen H.L. Meek.

In 1848, Moore served as road supervisor of the Multnomah and Linn City District, an area which extended from his townsite to the Butte (Mount Sylvania) on the road to Tuality Plains, and below on the Willamette River to Sucker Creek (Oswego Creek) and south to the Tuality-Yamhill line, at Tuality River.

Business establishments included a store owned by David Burnside and the store of W.P. Day and Robinson. Dr. Henry Saffarrans practiced medicine through 1850, and Justin Chenoweth, a surveyor, also resided in Linn City.

It was not long before able-bodied men began to leave Linn City for the California goldfields. By the winter of 1849-50, many returned, some demoralized by their suddenly acquired wealth. They lived recklessly and spent wildly. Everywhere gambling was rampant.

On January 1, 1850, a post office was established in Linn City. Now 69 years old, Robert Moore was still an active leader giving all his attention to the
development of his town. To encourage its growth, as well as that of the entire falls area, Moore, on April 18, 1850, purchased a newspaper, the SPECTATOR, continuing publication at Oregon City. Moore’s first editor was the Reverend Wilson Blain, who in a December, 1850, issue wrote:

On the opposite side of the river is a town of considerable importance, called Linn City. Although not so large as Oregon City, it has the facilities and elements with proper development to become a rival.

In 1852 and 1853, Robert Moore built the Linn City Works. A grist mill, a sawmill, a warehouse, wharves, and a breakwater were constructed below the falls. The breakwater created a basin where river boats could tie in for loading and unloading at the mill and warehouse. Freight then had to be carried around the falls, where at their head a similar basin was constructed with a projecting breakwater with wharves extending to the works and mills owned by Moore's son. At a cost of $100,000 the combined enterprise was named the Willamette Falls Canal, Milling and Transportation Company.

With Linn City little more than a place of mills and a transfer point for river traffic, on September 2, 1857, Robert Moore died, his dream still unfulfilled.

After the death of Robert Moore, Linn City lagged in importance. On September 13, 1858, the sheriff of Clackamas County sold forty-nine lots in Linn City for taxes, purchasers paying from $75 to $512 per lot.

According to the 1860 census, the population of the Linn City district was only 225 persons.

On the night of April 23, 1861, fire broke out in the lower warehouse and soon spread to the grist mill. A strong south wind was blowing and equipment was poor and inadequate. The conflagration was soon out of hand and spreading from the grist mill to the sawmill. With the entire Linn City Works afire and the wharf planks burning, the steamer JAMES CLINTON, docked in the upper Linn City basin, caught fire. In a few hours, it burned to the water’s edge and sank, a loss of $6,000.

The grist mill was a total loss. Abernathy, Clark and Company, who since Robert Moore’s death had operated the Works under the name of the Oregon Milling and Transportation Company, suffered the greatest loss in property damage, nearly $100,000.

A few of the town’s business leaders refused to be discouraged. If the warehouse and freight handling facilities were restored, Linn City could regain its lost trade. Men began reconstructing the warehouses.

The fall of 1861 opened with but little precipitation. Late in October the customary rains began. During November, however, rain fell almost continuously over northwestern Oregon. The Willamette rose at a rapid rate and was soon lapping over its banks.

As darkness settled Monday, December 2, water was rising over the lower Linn City streets. In the early dawn of Tuesday morning the river was still rising, now more thickly strewn with debris. The mills, warehouse, and all of the stores and houses on the rocky flat of Linn City were deep in the mounting flood. All day stranded people were removed through windows of their houses by boats.

During that afternoon, a large part of the breakwater protecting the Works gave way before the immense pressure of water. Gradually the flood's force became too great to resist. Walls of houses and stores were crushed and were picked up bodily and borne away. With the breakwater gone, the grist mill and the sawmill collapsed and their wreckage was sucked into the current.

Finally, Wednesday morning, the extent of the destruction was fully apparent. At Linn City, only two dwellings and the warehouse at the Works remained standing. The breakwater, above and below the falls, had been carried away at a loss of $50,000. In the mill, quantities of wheat and flour had been gulped down by the waters. All of the houses of the mechanics were gone. Only the lower and upper mills remained standing. The falls seemed no more than turbulent rapids.

During the Christmas week there was a light fall of snow over the mid-Willamette country. The white flakes fell upon the flat where Linn City had so recently stood. Even the thin surface of earth which before had covered the harsh rocks had been licked away. Linn City had vanished.

Until 1868, little was heard of the former townsite. In that year the Willamette Transportation Locks Company began excavation for a locks. When finished in 1873, it cut through the rocks at the river’s western margin and provided a passageway for boats around the falls. In the late 1880’s, the industrial development now lying close to the water’s edge on the west bank was begun. The Crown-Zellerbach Pulp and Paper Company mills and an electric plant today stand partly on the site of the lost town.
MULTNOMAH CITY

On October 9, 1842, Hugh Burns, a native of Ireland, platted a town below Linn City on his 640-acre claim and named it after the lower river, called by the Indians "Multnomah." As described, boundary lines began "at a small white oak on the water's edge," the adopted corner between Robert Moore's property and that of the claimant.

A boat landing was Multnomah City's first development. Joe Meek, the frontiersman and collector of revenue for territorial Oregon in 1844 paid taxes on "a property in the city of Multnomah."

In 1845, Burns and Moore each proposed to locate the seat of the Provisional Government on his respective townsite. Robert Newell at Champoeg also petitioned that his town be made capital. The vote to consider a choice among the three was in favor of the Multnomah City site. By petition, 60 men from Champoeg and the middle valley caused a deferment of choice. This session of the Provisional Legislature was held at Oregon City and consequently there the seat of government remained.

After 1853, the name of Multnomah City dims upon the records. West shore traffic tied up at Linn City's more accommodating wharves, and Multnomah City became merely the northern environs of that growing port. The high water of 1853 inundated the lower levels about the falls on both sides of the Willamette. There was small incentive to rebuild.

DONATION LAND CLAIMS

Donation Land Claims helped settle the West because the pioneers got their land free from the government. A man could have 320 acres. A man and wife could have 640 acres or a section. A person could do whatever he wanted with the land, but usually they would either farm the land or plat it for a city.

Two men who took advantage of Donation Land Claims were George and Gabriel Walling, cousins from Iowa. George, a nursery man, and Gabriel, a lawyer, both later contributed to the development of Clackamas County.

In 1847, George Walling left Iowa, leaving his home and nursery business behind, bound for Oregon City and the Willamette Valley.

George Walling is remembered with respect as a nursery man who did much in propagating plants and trees that were needed in starting the agricultural life in Oregon. The Major Francis Cherry and the Champion Prune were two that he originated.

Besides his love for horticulture, Walling was devoted to education. His interest started when his son Albert was enrolled at Concord School across the Willamette River. Walling did not relish the idea of his son rowing across the mean waters of the Willamette River, but he considered it a part of a good education. Walling's devotion in the field of education resulted in 15 years as School Superintendent for Clackamas County.

It was the day before Christmas, 1849, when Gabriel Walling brought his family to his Donation Land Claim on the west bank of the Willamette. It had river frontage of one-half mile.

Gabriel brought a high knowledge of government with him across the plains in 1849, along with dreams of clearing a large plantation and big scale farming. He is remembered as one of the organizers of the State. Gabriel Walling later served as a member of the Territorial Legislature and later as a judge of Clackamas County.
CONTEST TO NAME WEST LINN

In May of 1913, the areas of West Oregon City, Bolton, Sunset, and Willamette Heights were incorporated. Their needs were supplied from the well-established Oregon City.

During the first week in May, members of the West Side Improvement Club met in the parlours of the Oregon City Commercial Club and voted 50 to 7 in favor of incorporating the four districts. Most of the residents had felt for some time that this was the best way of getting needed utilities and improvements without annexing to the town across the river. At the same time, they discussed tentative boundaries which included the mills and power plants.

Mr. B. T. McBain, representative of the Crown Columbia Paper Company, offered five dollars for the best name for the proposed new town. In 1913, five dollars was five dollars, and when the contest ended, the following suggestions were put before the judges: Belvidere, Birmingham, Dale, Fallsview, Firland, Fir City, Harriman, Hoodview, Hillmount, Mill Falls, Millbrook, Lee McBain City, McBainville, Moonlight, Millsboro, Millsburg, Oregon View, Oakwood, Parkfalls, Richmond, Rosedale, Rosemere, Rose City, Rosecliff, Sunset City, Sunnyside, Strahorn, Twilight, Westlynn, Willamette Links, Wiloreton, and Woodrow. The three judges, J.V. Campbell, Judge G.B. Dimick, and the Reverend C.W. Robinson, voted all the names down, then reconsidered and settled on Millsburg.

Apparently no one was pleased with the name except its author, J. Nichols, for after a week of argument, it was announced in the Oregon City MORNING ENTERPRISE Saturday, June 28, 1913:

Millsburg, the prospective city on the west side of the Willamette River, changed its name on Friday evening to West Linn, thereby doing away with a title that was neither euphonious nor distinctive, and adopting in its new name a memory of the old pioneer town of Linn City which once stood upon its site.

...The incorporation papers will be presented to the county court for approval at the next term, which will be on July 2; and soon after that date the city of West Linn hopes to come into being and get itself upon the map.

The city of West Linn was incorporated August 15, 1913. The charter was filed in the office of the Recorder of the City of West Linn on October 29, 1913.

Mayor: John Lewthwaite
Recorder: L.L. Porter
Treasurer: M.E. Clancey
Marshal: P.J. Winkel

Aldermen: N.T. Humphreys
N.C. Michels
L.L. Pickens
S.B. Shadle
Charles Shields
O. Tonkin

West Linn City Hall - Railroad Depot, 1895
Willamette Falls Locks are located on the Willamette River’s left or west bank at West Linn. The Locks’ downstream entrance is 26.1 miles above the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers, whose junction is about 101.5 miles from the Pacific Ocean.

The Willamette River at Oregon City spills over a rocky basaltic horseshoe-shaped reef. The water in passing over the Falls normally drops about 41 feet.

The Locks at Willamette Falls were constructed during the years 1870 through 1872 by Willamette Falls Canal and Lock Company to provide a means of moving river traffic by the Falls. The State in 1870 aided the company by raising $200,000 in gold bonds under an act to “appropriate funds for construction of steamboat canal at the Willamette Falls.” The Locks were completed and opened on New Year’s Day, 1873.

They have been operated and maintained continuously since that date by a number of owners. The United States Government purchased the Locks from the Portland Railway, Light and Power Company on April 26, 1915, for $375,000.

The Lock system includes four locks, a canal basin and a guard lock. Approach guides extend 150 feet downstream from the lower gate and over 300 feet upstream from the upper gate to assist or guide vessels into the Locks.

The water surface of the canal basin is maintained at a constant level by means of the guard lock. Its use is limited to periods when the river level is high. Control of this water is necessary to avoid flood damage to lower levels.

The lower two lock lifts are entirely excavated into the natural rock, with wood planking on the walls. The upper two lifts and guard lock have walls of wood and masonry extending from the excavated rock to the operating levels.

All four locks are similar and comprise the downstream portion of the lock system. Each lock, including the guard lock, is 40 feet wide and 210 feet long.

The lower five gates are operated from two control stations. Gates adjacent to the control stations are under direct visual observation. The upper and lower gates are operated by remote control, with the aid of closed circuit television to monitor the operation.

Average annual tonnage through Willamette Falls Locks is well over a million tons, with rafted logs and paper and paper products making up most of the commercial traffic. Some 31 different commodities pass through the Locks each year.
The Willamette meteorite was found on the Oregon Iron and Steel Company's property in Willamette by Ellis Hughes in 1902.

The meteorite is the largest iron meteorite ever found in this country and the sixth largest in the world. It weighs 15½ tons and is 10 feet in length, 6½ feet in height, and 4 feet 3 inches in width. The meteorite is somewhat bell-shaped and landed with its flat side up.

When Hughes found the meteorite, he cleared a road which took months to complete. In 1903, he was ready to start moving it. After three months and much hard work, the meteorite was resting in Hughes' yard. He built a shed around the meteorite and charged people 25¢ to see it.

The Oregon Iron and Steel Company found out about the meteorite and their attorney was among the interested viewers. He soon noted a newly hewn road leading to the property of his employer. On April 28, 1904, Oregon Iron and Steel Company sued Hughes for the meteorite and won.

Hughes appealed the decision to the Oregon State Supreme Court. This trial lasted through the summer months of 1905. On July 17, 1905, Chief Justice Wolverton ruled:

Meteorites, though not imbedded in the earth, are real estate and consequently belong to the owner of the land on which they are found...Seeing there is no error in the record, the judgment of the Circuit Court will be affirmed.

After the Supreme Court verdict, the Iron and Steel Company moved the meteorite to the Willamette River at the mouth of the Tualatin River. There the meteorite was put on a barge and moved to Portland. It was placed in the Mines and Minerals Building of the Lewis & Clark World's Fair. Mrs. William E. Dodge II of New York negotiated with the Iron and Steel Company for its purchase. A newspaper account reported the selling price at $26,000. Mrs. Dodge then presented the meteorite to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The museum still owns it today. The curator-in-chief of the Museum felt Oregon should have a fragment of the Willamette meteorite and sent it for display at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

In 1936, the meteorite was moved to Hayden Planetarium. The Planetarium was built around the meteorite exhibits. No doors were made big enough to get the Willamette meteorite out.
Transportation
Alphonse Boone, grandson of Daniel, also had a ferry. It was located at the south end of Boones Ferry Road and crossed the Willamette River at Wilsonville. This ferry was kept running until the Boone Bridge (a part of the Baldock freeway) was built in 1954.

A ferry owned by Captain Florian Harlow was running in another area. It crossed the Willamette River at Milwaukie.

The rates for the ferry were as follows:

- A single passenger: $12.25
- 1 man and horse or mule: $2.50
- Every single horse, or cow, or mule, or ass, colts and calves included: $1.00
- Each wagon drawn by 2 horses or oxen and its load: $5.00
- Each wagon drawn by 4 horses or oxen and its load: $7.50
- Each wagon drawn by 6 horses or oxen and its load: $8.75
- Every additional pair of horses or oxen to wagon: $1.25
- 1 horse or mule or wagon: $3.75
- Every sheep, goat, or hog, kids or pigs included: $3.00
- Each 100 lbs. goods, wares, merchandise, or produce: $3.00

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EARLY TRANSPORTATION

The ability to transfer their goods to market was important to many early settlers. Riverboats, steamboats, ferries, stagecoaches, railways, and bridges connected early Linn City with other communities.

The Willamette River was too shallow for most boat traffic around the falls. Between 1850 and 1853, thirty thousand dollars were spent on dredging. It was still difficult for riverboats to pass, and the goods were often portaged around the dangerous area.

Riverboats were used for passengers long after steamboats came.

After the flood in 1861, steam-powered shipping on the Willamette increased. They were even able to travel upstream.

When boatbuilding started along the Willamette, it was the biggest enterprise in years. Most of the builders in Oregon had something to do with riverboating.

The first recorded ferry started running in 1844. It was owned by Hugh Burns and ran between his settlement of Multnomah City (the present Holly Gardens of West Linn) and Green Point in Oregon City.

About the same time, Robert Moore, founder of West Linn, and Dr. John McLoughlin of Oregon City started a joint ferry. It ran between Linn City and a ramp at Third Street in Oregon City.
The MODOC, unloading lumber and provisions at Wilsonville Landing, just above the site of I-5 bridge but below the present road and old ferry landing.

This location was later used as a gravel bunker site. Clackamas County hired or contracted a steam dredge and barge to dig gravel and barge it to the bank. The farmers equipped their heavy wagons with 2" x 4" bottoms and plank sides to haul the gravel for roads in the area. When they got to their destination, they would remove the end gates and lift each 2" x 4" floor board so the load would sift through. This technique saved the manpower required to shovel the load. Gravel was usually hauled in the fall before the winter rains.
ROSEMONT ROAD

Rosemont Road has a great deal of historical significance and has played a vital role in the development of West Linn. The early settlers faced the problem of transportation. They needed a road to connect them with the nearest settlement. Early Rosemont provided transportation between Linn City and Tuality Plains. The river connected them to other communities by ferry.

Rosemont started out as an old Indian trail. It was gradually widened by the feet of oxen and the turning of wagon wheels. At the time, Rosemont was the only road leading west from the river. Most likely, it was the road often used by early settlers, explorers, and trappers. Among these were Joe Meek, the territories poll-taxer; Stephen Meek, who regularly drove an eight ox-team into the Tuality Plains for grain; and Oregon’s most famous Indian agent, Joe Palmer.

The only proof that Rosemont Road is in its original location is that the mill stones from the old weighing station were discovered. These stones are buried beneath the driveway at 3300 Rosemont Road.

EARLY SCHOOL BUSES

The first school buses in the Willamette area were owned and operated by Ewald Leisman and another driver early in 1920 for West Linn High School. They were known as the big bus and the little bus, and they carried pupils from Willamette, Frog Pond, Stafford, and Wankers Corner to school and back.

One morning in October, 1925, Leisman was killed when he became caught in the machinery of a rock crusher he owned and operated on the hill above the Crown Zellerbach mill. In the emergency, his brother-in-law, Lloyd A. Mathers, took over the big bus and Mrs. Mathers (Lorraine) immediately applied for a chauffeur’s license so she could drive the little bus until some other arrangement could be made. She made history by being the first woman in Oregon to be granted the license and the first woman to drive a school bus.

In 1927, Edward Gross began the busing of students to and from school in the Willamette area.
OREGON CITY–WEST LINN BRIDGE

Construction on the Oregon City - West Linn bridge, proclaimed "The Most Beautiful Bridge in America," began July 29, 1921. The former 470-foot span, built in 1888, had carried foot and vehicle traffic for almost 34 years, less time out for redecking.

Constructed by A. B. Guthrie and Company, Inc. of Portland, the bridge was completed in December of 1922, at a cost of $275,000.

Carl P. Richards, Assistant Bridge Engineer, said of the arch that was at the time "the major link in the Pacific Highway from Mexico to Canada:"

Considerable effort has been expended on the aesthetic treatment of the bridge and its beauty has been developed by careful treatment of its proportion and lines, rather than by addition of detailed ornamentation... In design, unlike any other bridge yet built; constructed...to last for many generations... this bridge fits well the beauty of the natural setting in which it lies.

Thursday, December 28, 1922, was the grand opening and dedication. Planned by Mayors James A. Shannon of Oregon City and Harry E. Greaves of West Linn, County Judge Harvey E. Cross, the state engineer and civic officials, it included a queen, Miss Harriet Phipps of Oregon City and her maids Miss Ruby Long of Oregon City and the Misses Gertrude Wellson and Vena Barnes of West Linn. Judge J.U. Campbell was Grand Marshall of the parade, and after the ribbon was cut, Franklin T. Griffith acted as toastmaster for the banquet in the West Linn Inn.

The highlight of the celebration was the "Wedding of Two Cities" when Ella Elner Parker from West Linn and Louis E. Hartke from Oregon City were married at the center of the span. Traffic then began to roll, and it has never ceased.
An Interview

When I came here in 1910, we used to get our Christmas trees in the Wilderness Park area. The big trees were logged off. They were between four and six feet in diameter. The wood was hauled down across the Willamette and used for fuel at the mill. Also, I used to see maybe 100 cords of wood piled alongside the locks for the freight boats that came up the river. There were no roads then. The boats came from Portland and went on up-river to Eugene. These stern-wheelers were shallow draft boats. Even so, they had problems getting past the New Era bar. Sometimes in the early twenties they dredged it out and put the main channel on the other side. The history of these stern-wheelers can be seen at Champoeg Park.

I could count the houses on Sunset Hill with both hands. They all had a fence around them because the stock ran loose.

Eli Parker had a slaughter house in a little ravine near Sunset School. His place is torn down now. He had a shed where he kept the meat. The meat was on a counter under cheesecloth. When he went out of business, Oregon City meat companies came up here with a horse and a two-wheel cart to deliver meat from house to house. A Chinese farmer also delivered wonderful vegetables from Green Point, behind the present Oregon City Shopping Center.

The 7th and 8th grade students from Bolton came up to Sunset School. A big flight of stairs came up the hill by the present reservoir and then a sidewalk, two boards wide, continued through the trees and along the fence to the school. It was not where the present road is. When they built the reservoir, they cut a road through.

When we were kids, we had good sledding because of the lack of traffic. In fact, we used to sled down the hill and clear across the suspension bridge into Oregon City. We had no parks to play in, just open fields. We had plenty to do. After school it was our job to bring in the wood for the evening and kindling for the morning. Also, we brought in wood for the heating stove. We had three or four lamps to take care of: we had to trim the wicks, clean the glass, put coal oil in it, and go to the store and buy a gallon of oil if we were out.

Also, we would help the buzz-sawer who cut up the wood in stove-wood lengths. For about two bits a cord we would throw the wood into the yards. Then, he would pile it up.
THE OLD SUNSET SCHOOL

The old Sunset School was in the same location as the present school. It was a two-story building for grades one through eight. There were two grades in each room.

The rooms had pot-bellied stoves for heating. It was the responsibility of the 7th and 8th grade boys to feed the stoves. There were usually 10 to 12 cords of wood piled off to the side of the school every year for this purpose.

When I attended school in 1910, there was no electricity or running water. Some of the lower grade teachers boarded with the Buse family. The Principal’s house was built alongside the school to prevent unlawful entry. This house was moved when the school was expanded and is still in existence.

A gym was built from lumber of torn-down buildings in Oregon City. Half of the gym was used for a training room and the other half for a gym and assembly room. Commencements and other programs were held in the afternoon’s natural light.

The school was wired and plumbing installed around 1912.

SUNSET FIRE HALL

Before 1912, the fire department had two little carts with a 2½” hose and a 1” nozzle. They were kept in stations that looked like garages. The only alarm was someone running down the street yelling “Fire!” When there was a fire, we had about 80% water damage and 20% fire damage.

With the installation of the water pipeline in 1912, a fire department was organized in the Sunset area. The first trucks were homemade from Model A chassis with a water tank, hose, and other necessary equipment on them. Later we went to a commercial truck and finally West Linn City bought three or four big trucks.

The Sunset Fire Hall was a Works Progress Administration project in 1938. Twenty years later, they added on to the building to house the larger trucks.

SCHOOL BOARD

Going back in history: we didn’t have enough students in this district for a first class district and we were controlled by the State. Oswego was in the same predicament so we consolidated with them. That went on for a few years, then one of the Oswego members of the school board got the idea he could take enough money from the consolidated school district to build their own school. They wanted to take half the value. Well, what we did offer them was the money they put into the district, less the amount we charged them for tuition. Anyway, we separated and that put us into a bind. We then took in the Stafford School and the Wilsonville School to keep our enrollment up.

I joined the school board in 1938, after they had dissolved with Lake Oswego. The Superintendent resigned because of monetary disagreements. We hired a man from Rainier. He had a jealous wife and she shot him. I was chairman of the board in 1944 when we put out bids for another Superintendent. By a unanimous vote of the board, it was decided we would contact a former teacher in West Linn who had furthered his education in administration, Chet Tunnell. He accepted our offer and served 30 years in our district.

CITY COUNCIL

Skyline Drive is the third street that was put in going up the hill. The first two were moved because of the expansion of the high school. There was a lake where the parking lot is for the high school and I used to shoot ducks in there. West A Street from the high school to Highway 43 was just a trail.

When I was on the City Council, we realized the land value was there and we wanted to get some “match money” to put a street through. We raised the appraised value of the land, applied for a Bancroft “match,” and put the street through. Then the land value was there.
WANKER’S CORNER

Christian B. von Wanker was born in 1824 in Berlin, Germany, and married Barbara Ann Geist, also born in Germany in 1829. Two of their sons moved to Oregon, Fredrick William and John Abraham.

Fredrick and his wife, Liza, bought a farm that bordered on the Tualatin River and the canal that feeds the Oswego Lake. All of their children were born there.

John Abraham and Dora, his wife, bought a home on Stafford Road. This home is still livable and is located one-quarter mile south of Wanker’s Corner near the new I-205 freeway. Their children all attended Stafford School which was located a mile and a half away. Mr. Wanker was employed cutting cordwood. The wood was floated down a canal that had been dug by Chinese laborers and ended at a foundry. The wood was burned to make coke first, then the coke was burned to make pig iron. He also worked as a deckhand on a steamboat that navigated the Tualatin River and brought more cordwood to another foundry located near a dam on the Tualatin River. The Wankers purchased their first 20-acre farm in 1895 from the Athey Domain which was located at the intersection now known as Wanker’s Corner.

Wanker’s well did not provide sufficient water for the family needs so an additional 20 acres bordering on the Tualatin River and Stafford Road were purchased. During harvest time all the neighbors would come to help each other with the grain and the baling of hay. The harvest hands would be served breakfast at about 6:30 A.M., along with lunch and dinner if the work lasted that long. The land was cleared by some laborers called Montenegroes, who used horses to pull the stumps and logs and gathered them in huge piles to be burned, the fires lighting up the sky at night.

Wanker would leave early in the morning to haul his produce to Portland and return home at 10:00 the same night, an exhausting trip for his team of horses as they had to pull the load on a corduroy road down deep canyons and over steep hills.

Wanker’s Corner was established when Walter Wanker, son of John and Dora, built a grocery store at that intersection in 1931.
WILLAMETTE TOWN HISTORY

In 1847, James Marshall Moore arrived in Oregon. He was the son of Major Robert Moore, who founded Linn City which later became West Linn. James Moore staked his claim just above his father's and settled at the mouth of the Tuality (Tualatin) River. Two years later, he constructed a lumber mill and a grist mill. The town of Willamette was established by Willamette Falls Electric, forerunner of PGE, who purchased land from the Baker land claim, with the understanding that 12th Street, where Willamette School is located, would run down to the river to give people easy access to the docks. If a person wished to buy land, he could buy one lot, build a $500 house on it, and get another lot free.

Mayor C.B. Willson presided at a council meeting on December 23, 1913, when "A Bill for an Act to Incorporate the Town of Willamette in Clackamas County and Provide a Charter Therefor" was submitted and passed. City recorder was H. Leisman. By 1916, Willamette's need for clean water led to annexation to West Linn.

The first electric line was built in 1891 to haul cord wood, transporting an average of 100 cords a day as fuel for the paper mills. The line was built by Charles A. Miller who was the first motorman on the line and also assisted in setting the poles and building the electrical equipment with others from the PGE company. After the streetcars were taken off as transportation, Tony Rinkes ran buses between Willamette and Oregon City. Lack of patronage caused the discontinuation of public transportation.

The Bernert family started running the first power tugboat in 1907. Several of their boats were sold later to Mr. Bigelow who started the Ramona Tug Company. Built in 1930, the MARY LEE was the first diesel tugboat and it ran until 1933, and since then all tugs have been run by diesel.

During the same era as the horse and buggy, the sternwheelers plowed up and down the Willamette River stopping at landings along the way. One of the many landings where some of the 39 boats on the Willamette brought their cargo of food stuffs, mail, and passengers was the "Willamette Landing."

Logging and wood-cutting were once big operations in Willamette. Everybody cut wood. The first store, Grave's General Store, Seventh Avenue at 14th Street, was started to accommodate those wood cutters. The wood was hauled to the Pulp and Paper Company on the streetcar and loaded on flat cars. Each car had six or eight racks, each rack holding two cords of wood and these were pulled down to the mill by cable. When the streetcar wasn't running, the wood was hauled to the mill on railroad cars, the tracks following the same path that the highway does now.

In 1914, the Leismans began operating a general store. Home delivery of groceries was made with Leisman's team of horses.

In the 1920's and 1930's, baseball games were attended by many people from the vicinity, sometimes drawing crowds of 1,500 to 2,000 persons. The baseball field was located at the end of Dollar Street and cows ran wild around the baseball diamond because the people were not required to keep the stock corralled. Games were later played in the present Willamette Park. The Lion's Club rebuilt the field in 1954.
The Robinwood Water District was incorporated in 1946. It combined several small water systems whereby owners of wells sold water to neighbors. The district started with about 20 customers. Wells were gradually replaced by district water connections. In later years the people voted to add fire protection to the water district services.

First major areas were the plats of Maple Grove, Cummings Hill, and Robinwood. Originally, the district included the area along and below the highway from the Marylhurst Campus to Jolie Point Road.

The first secretary of the water district was Duane Lafferty, who is now the Lake Oswego councilman. His wife assisted him in the bookkeeping. In 1956 Lafferty moved to Roseburg. It was then Ruth Fetz took over. At first she did the work in her home, then on Kenthorpe Way after the office was built. She worked there until the district was annexed by the City of West Linn.

There were several phases of development. The Robinwood Water District was connected to the South Fork Water District. The new soft water replaced the old well water previously used. Voters approved the sale of $100,000 worth of bonds.

The next phase of the project involved the erection of a 100,000-gallon used watertower from Richmond, Washington. The tower is in Kenneth Cumming's Marylhurst Heights and was completed in late December of 1959.

The water district decided to pay the Bolton Fire Department to provide services, but in late 1959 the Bolton Department said the water district was too big for them. So January 27, 1960, the Robinwood Volunteer Fire Department was organized with their equipment consisting of Joe Hamel’s Model “A” and a two-way radio.

In April of 1964 the water district people approved $42,000 in bonds to be sold. The money was to be used to buy a fire truck and build a one-story combination firehall and meeting room. The meeting room was cut out but they did build a firehall on Cedaroak Drive and they did get the firetruck.

The City of Lake Oswego prior to 1967 received water from the Bull Run water system. As the city grew, a new source became necessary. The council decided that the best possibility was water from the Clackamas River, through Gladstone under the Willamette, treated in Robinwood, and on to Lake Oswego. Residents objected to the treatment site, but the City of Lake Oswego had no other major difficulties in their project.

The possibility of the water district annexation to either Lake Oswego or West Linn grew through 1967. Finally in September of 1967 the Robinwood Water District was annexed to the City of West Linn. Not many people objected to this annexation as it helped everybody. It increased West Linn’s population to 7,000. West Linn assumed Robinwood’s bonded indebtedness of 8.6 mills but with more population, the city received $40,000 from the State of Oregon. The fire department didn’t change much since they just joined the West Linn Volunteer Fire Department.

The police protection almost doubled. The area had much lower water rates, but they got a city tax which compensated for the old high water rates.

One big change was from the Lake Oswego post office to the West Linn office.

A main event in Robinwood history was the flood of Christmas, 1964. The Willamette river crested December 25 at 19.9 feet on the Oregon City gauge and 48.1 feet on the Portland gauge. The Portland gauge read 21.1 feet over flood stage, the highest since 1879.

The flood victims either stayed with relatives or friends or at the Robinwood water district office where the Christmas mail was waiting.

Grateful residents of Robinwood said the Robinwood Volunteer Firemen did an outstanding job of evacuating about a dozen families from flood-threatened homes. The firemen’s wives served coffee and sandwiches “to keep them going,” according to Chief Bill Bryant.

After the flood waters had receded, doctors of the Robinwood area felt it would be wise to offer typhoid shots. The doctors and nurses of the area organized and administered the shots at the water building. This was the first place in the metropolitan area to offer shots. Consequently, people from other communities also lined up in the streets for inoculations.

Magone’s Park on the west bank of the Willamette River below Bolton, was popular for over forty years as an all-round recreation spot. Located on the Daniel Dean Thompkins DLC (Donation Land Claim) just north of the Hugh Burns DLC, it drew much of its patronage from Portland. Dan Magone, a grandson of the Thompkins, built the park around the old family home which had been started in 1850, and in 1860 a story and a half section with windows that came around the Horn were added. It was high enough above the river bank to escape the 1861 flood.

The facilities consisted of a dance barge called the BLUEBIRD which was anchored by the river bank, a number of rental cottages clustered around the old house, and a bathing pool in the edge of the river. There were rowboats for moonlight cruises on the river and in season for fishermen, a dance platform on land, tables and benches and popular concessions where family members sold pop and wienies.

The park lost patronage after steamboats stopped running on the river. Access by land was difficult because the road down from Bolton was steep and unimproved. In the late 1920’s the cabins were deserted and an old lady collected quarters for the use of a table.

Another early park was located on a 15-acre, wooded plot at the foot of Pete’s Mountain across the Tualatin River from Willamette. Gustav Schnoerr opened this park in 1910. This park contained an open-air dance hall with a grand piano and a Rathskeller underneath the dance hall where pop and ice cream were sold.

Mary S. Young State Park, located inside the limits of West Linn, comprises 131.28 acres and lies between the Pacific Highway and the Willamette River, which gives it a waterfront.

Mary S. and Thomas E. Young, who deeded the land to the State, gave it in five separate but adjoining parcels through the years of December, 1963, to December, 1966. After the Youngs purchased the land, they had it enclosed with a high cyclone fence with the entrance gate kept locked as a protection against trespassers.

These astute donors, knowing human nature and the forgetfulness of future generations, placed stipulations on the use of the land, restricting it to a park for posterity. The conditions under which the conveyance was made state:

1. Such property shall be kept and maintained as nearly as possible in its natural condition...the removal of the trees will be limited to those that are diseased or considered “falldowns” and those necessary to develop the property for park purposes...any restroom or similar facilities...place them in locations that are as inconspicuous as possible...

2. The State shall collect no revenue from the public for use of the park except for recreational services which cost more than regular park maintenance...

The park was completed in 1971 by Fred Schubert, a local resident. The wilderness park was dedicated in 1972 and is enjoyed by many nature lovers, joggers, photographers, swimmers, and many others.
Burnside Park

On July 8, 1935, the City of West Linn acquired an unimproved 10-acre parcel of land from Maria S. Caufield. The area was bequeathed to the City in memory of E.G. Caufield's beloved uncle, David Burnside, early pioneer of Linn City. The natural park lies between lower Buck Street and the Willamette River. In the summer of 1976, the City created a trail through the area with the entrance on Failing Street.

Hammerle Park

Hammerle Park was purchased from Moody Investment Company. This 5.81-acre park adjoins Bolton Grade School on Portland Avenue. The park contains the following facilities: restrooms, wading pool, merry-go-round, monkey bars, swings, slides, chinning bar, sand box, ping pong table stand, teeter-totters, drinking fountains, fireplaces, baseball diamonds, covered picnic area, and tennis court.

West Bridge Park

This is an 8.9-acre park of which 2.4 acres were acquired from the estate of Edward H. McLean, in 1969, and the balance of 6.5 acres from the State Highway Department when the I-205 bridge was completed. The outstanding location, river frontage, ease of access, and a fine old 15-room house and grounds characterize this park.

Willamette Park

This 9.15-acre developed neighborhood park is located at the confluence of the Tualatin with the Willamette River. The park contains the following facilities: restrooms, wading pool, merry-go-round, monkey bars, swings, slides, chinning bar, ping pong table stand, teeter-totters, drinking fountains, fireplaces, baseball diamonds, horseshoe pits, covered kitchen area, and boat ramp.

Sunset Park

This 2.44-acre neighborhood park was acquired from Crown Zellerbach. It is located adjacent to the Sunset Fire Hall and Sunset Grade School. It contains the following facilities: restrooms, wading pool, merry-go-round, monkey bars, swings, slides, chinning bar, sand box, ping pong table stand, drinking fountains, fireplace, and tennis court.

Goat Island

Goat Island is a 23.28-acre brush-covered island that lies parallel to River Street in the Holly Garden area. During the low water time of year, a sandy beach is found along the northerly boundary of the island. During high water, most of the island is submerged.
The primitive and the civilized are just steps apart at the Camassia Natural Area in West Linn. The 22½-acre tract not only bears geological records of the catastrophic Missoula Flood which occurred several thousand years ago, but the area is a showplace of wildflowers that were once abundant all over the Willamette Valley.

Leading the spring parade of blooms is the beautiful blue camas lily for which the area was named. West Linn High School grounds adjoin to the north and Interstate Highway 205 runs below steep cliffs to the east. This bit of wilderness is easy to reach.

Within the boundaries, there are scabbed lands, channels, depressions, ponds and several large icerafted boulders, together with many smaller erratics, to bear witness to the flood era. Dating even further back, basalt in the area is estimated at 10 million years or more in age. The geologic features form natural rock gardens where sedum, ferns, and mosses thrive. The ponds with marsh and water plants are home to frogs and salamanders. Protected meadows and woodland sections invite many kinds of birds to feed and nest.

During several weeks in the spring, usually late April and early May, depending on weather, the floral display is the showiest.

To prevent loss and damage to the unique geological and biological aspects, the Oregon chapter of the Nature Conservancy purchased the West Linn acreage and established the Camassia Area. The conservancy is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving land in the natural state.
The Inn, built in 1918, is owned by the Crown Zellerbach Corporation, the world's second largest paper manufacturer. The building's original purpose was to provide homes for the mill's employees and other working people in the still sparsely settled town, founded only five years previously, and built high on the hillside out of reach of the flood waters which destroyed the earlier community of Linn City.

As the town grew, the Inn's residents gradually established their own homes, and the unique hostelry was opened to the general public. For many years it was leased and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Austin Seavy, but the Crown insignia is stressed throughout.

Although the dining room has been remodeled, the essential character of the Inn, with the charm of an older era, has been retained.

There is probably not a stopping place in the Pacific Northwest surrounded by so much of the country's history, and crowded into so small a space, as the West Linn Inn, center of the (old) town of West Linn. From the long veranda overlooking the Willamette River visitors can retrace a time span of more than 150 years. In the pools below the Willamette Falls - the "Hyas Tyee Tumwater" of the native tribes - the Indians for centuries speared their fish and cast their nets undisturbed. From the high, rocky ledge on the opposite shore they watched the strange activities of the early settlers. Out of sight on this same cliff, within walking distance, is the restored home of "the father of the Oregon Country," Dr. John McLoughlin, and directly below, powered by the falls, the complex of a great modern industry.
WILLAMETTE RIVER (West Linn) BRIDGE on I-205 received Award of Merit for long span in 1971 from the Consulting Engineers Council of Oregon. The structure has been described as a masterpiece of engineering. Its total length is 2727 feet, 1030 feet of which cross the main channel of the river.
The year, 1914. The scene, a Baptist minister journeys on a Westward trek from Missouri to Oregon, accompanied by his wife and two-year old son, Chester Tunnell.

Chester Tunnell. A name known and respected throughout the West Linn School District for thirty years, due to his distinguished service as Superintendent of Schools.

Yet, who is the real Chester Tunnell behind the composed face that appeared before the public for nearly three decades? How did he develop a desire to devote the majority of his lifetime to education?

Born into a sound family, Chester spent most of his childhood in Portland, Oregon. From the moment Chester could "stand on his own two feet" he never let an opportunity to get ahead pass him by.

"I sold newspapers on a Portland street corner from fourth grade to high school. This was before the days of television or radio and I'd sell the Journal for 2 cents a piece, or 3 for a nickel. Whenever anything exciting would happen, like a boxing match between Dempsey and Lewis, the companies would publish extra papers which we'd sell for 5 cents each. I remember yelling 'Extra! Extra! Read all about it!!' and watching the men rush out to their porches to find out who won the fight."

Attending a Portland high school, Chester was heavily involved in athletics in any size, shape, or form, and dreamed of becoming a football coach and a teacher.

While at Linfield College to receive a teaching degree, Chester married Evelyn. "We lived in the armory to save money and I worked both on campus and in the harvest fields. I made 25 cents an hour for an eight-hour day and was actually pleased to get that."

Mr. Tunnell began his career as a teacher in the remote southern Oregon town of Jacksonville. "I was really excited when I walked into my own classroom on my first day of teaching as my students were only four years younger than I."

Between 1937 and 1943, he taught at West Linn and later transferred to Adams, Oregon and then to Dallas, Oregon. While he was teaching, Mr. Tunnell realized that he was not going to be satisfied with his career until he tried administration. He was offered the position of Superintendent of West Linn Public Schools in 1946, a position he held until 1976.

"After building our house, we had to scrimp and save to buy our first car, a 1937 Ford. That car cost $800, which was like $2,500 to us!

"We drove to West Linn’s main grocery store which was located in the present police station. The old City Hall, police station, and post office were situated above the store.

"When I took over as Superintendent, West Linn High School had a student body constituted by students from West Linn, Gladstone, Lake Oswego, and Lake Grove due to the absence of high schools in the surrounding areas. The students were accepted on a tuition basis which the separate districts paid. If the students didn’t want to attend West Linn High School, their alternative was Lincoln High School in Portland.

"Even though West Linn High School’s student body came from four separate areas, they were a closely-knit student body. They all pitched in to defend their high school in the West Linn-Oregon City rivalry, which, incidentally, is the longest consecutive high school rivalry in Oregon!"

Mr. Tunnell witnessed the city of West Linn "move a mountain" when the high school expanded in 1946 to relieve the "growing pains." "The original road connecting West Linn High School to Skyline Road cut right through the principal's current office."

Mr. Tunnell’s superior management and administration of all the schools in West Linn from grades one through twelve, and excellent job of "watchdogging" the policies and procedures of the school board did not go unnoticed. In 1963, Mr. Tunnell was chosen as one of ninety school administrators representing the United States to go on an all-expense paid, six-week trip to Sweden to study their educational system.
BOLTON SCHOOL

In 1892, the parents of the Bolton area tired of their children having to walk over the hill to Sunset School and petitioned the school board for their own school. A store was purchased from Mr. Cramers for $25.00, which became the first Bolton School and housed only the primary grades. The other elementary age children continued to attend Sunset School.

The first Bolton School building was built in 1922, across the street from the store and served the first eight grades.

The main building had four classrooms, a manual training shop, sewing room, restroom, office, kitchen, dining room, and auditorium. A separate gymnasium was to the rear of the main building. Both the gym and main building were sold to a church on August 14, 1950.

The present Bolton Elementary School was constructed in 1950.

CEDAROAK PARK SCHOOL

Prior to the construction of Cedaroak Park School in 1958, children attended school at Bolton.
STAFFORD SCHOOL

There was a one-room log cabin school in Stafford in 1891. It was not known when it was built. It was located about 30 yards to the southwest of the present “Old Stafford School,” which now serves as the district administration building. This first Stafford School was moved in 1896 across the road to serve as the residence of the school teacher for several years. After that, the building was a play shed for the children until the roof collapsed and the building was torn down.

In 1896, a new two-room Stafford School, complete with bell and tower, was constructed at the same site as the first school house.

About 1930, the present “Old Stafford School” was built. The main portion of the 1896 school was moved and became the gymnasium of the 1930 building.

The present Stafford Elementary School was built in 1967.

SUNSET SCHOOL

The first Sunset School was constructed sometime around 1890. It was the first school in Oregon to provide transportation for children. The conveyance was a horse and wagon which carried children to the schoolhouse from the Rosemont area. This building was torn down in 1916.

The next Sunset School was constructed in 1917. This building burned down in 1940.

In 1930, a gymnasium was built 20 feet to the west of the 1917 school house. The gym survived the fire of 1940, and remains in use today as the gym of Sunset School.

The present Sunset Elementary School was built in 1941.
WILSONVILLE SCHOOL

The city center of Wilsonville first developed by the Boones Ferry Landing and by 1908 consisted of a post office, two stores, a blacksmith shop, and a tavern. The city center later developed at the "four corners" due to a new railroad.

The school was located about where the present music room is of today's Wilsonville Grade School. No record could be found regarding the school building nor where children attended school prior to its construction. Another school was built about 1912 near the present school site.

In the greater Wilsonville area were other small schools: Kruse School located by Frog Pond; Catlin's School in the Hood View area.

Presumably, the 1912 Wilsonville School lasted until the present one was built in 1950.
WILLAMETTE SCHOOL

District No. 105 (Willamette) was formed on April 15, 1896. We know, however, that children attended school prior to that date. The upper story of Bardorf's store was used as a school house beginning in 1894.

The first Willamette School was built in 1896 and housed grades one through ten. The 11th and 12th grade pupils who attended school went to Oregon City to complete high school.

In 1912, the school was more than doubled in size by building an exact duplicate behind the 1896 building with a connecting hallway and steps. A gymnasium was also built in 1912.

The hot lunch program was started in 1914 with mothers bringing the lunches to school.

The 1896/1912 Willamette School was torn down in the summer of 1936 to build a new school as a Federal Grant Project. This building burned down on January 5, 1949.

The Willamette Fire Hall, Sunset Fire Hall, Sunset School, the Willamette Church, and Bolton School were used to house the school children until a new Willamette School was built the following year.

The present Willamette Grade School was constructed in 1950.

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

The "Old Stafford School" building, which serves today as the district Administration Building, was last used as a school during the 1967-68 school year. The Board Room is that part of the 1896 school house which was moved to become part of the 1930 building. The old school bell is still in the tower.
In 1919, the first high school was built on the present site of Willamette Grade School. This temporary building was one story, housing 55 students and 3 teachers. The first graduating exercise was held in June, 1920, with five girls graduating.

A "new" high school was constructed in 1920 on the present site of West Linn High School. This building was formally dedicated in 1924 and is still part of the present high school. The building accommodated 222 students during the 1923-24 school year.

Another building was constructed in 1923. This building included a gymnasium, dressing rooms, manual training shop, mechanical drawing room, drafting office, a "furniture finishing" room, and a "swimming tank."

The third major construction was the addition of an auditorium in 1927 directly behind and joined to the 1923 building.

The next addition to the high school was in 1936. A building was constructed between and joining the two existing buildings.

An "Agriculture Building" was added behind the auditorium in 1938.

In 1955, the sixth major addition occurred at the high school along with major alterations in the 1936 addition. The new additions included the present turnaround, covered porches, offices, new gym, and seven classrooms.

More classrooms were added in 1961 and 1962 when the upper football and track field were built. Then six more classrooms were added in 1963.

The tenth and last major construction of the high school occurred in 1966. This addition was the metal and wood shop building, the C wing, library, AV room, teachers' library, home economics room, and the visitors’ team room. The cafeteria was enlarged during this construction phase and remains the same today.

A bond was voted to build the 1955 and 1966 additions. The other additions were all "pay as you go" through the yearly budgets.
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