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TO: Salem Historic Landmarks Commission

THROUGH: Lisa Anderson-Ogilvie, AICP Deputy Community Development Director and Planning Administrator

FROM: Kimberli Fitzgerald, AICP, Historic Preservation Officer

DATE: May 18, 2023

SUBJECT: Salem Centennial Sign Update and Replacement Options

ISSUE:

Salem Centennial Sign update and replacement.

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND:

The City of Salem Historic Landmarks Commission has identified in their 2023 Workplan updating the Salem Centennial Sign (aka “Salem Began Here”) located just south of 960 Broadway Street SE (**Attachment A**).

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

- Original Construction:** The Salem Centennial sign was designed and constructed in 1959 as a joint project between the Marion County Historical Society, Salem Chamber of Commerce and the Marion County Centennial Commission, as part of Oregon’s Centennial celebration in 1959 (**Attachment B**).
- Maintenance.** This sign has been maintained by the City of Salem since 1960 and was recently restored in 2006 by the City and Salemtowne volunteers (**Attachment C**).
- Schepke Request. 1-19-2023.** On January 19, 2023, Jim Schepke reached out to Councilor Stapleton expressing his concern about this marker and recommending that it be replaced and including proposed new language drafted by David Lewis (**Attachment D**).
- Oregon Travel Information Council.** The Oregon Travel Information Council (OTIC) is the official administrator of the Oregon Historical Marker program: <https://oregontic.com/oregon-historical-markers/>. Even though Salem’s Centennial Sign has a design similar to Oregon’s historic Beaver Boards, it is not currently part

of their historic marker inventory. OTIC has a process in place for sponsoring a new site specific marker, or a regional marker.

HLC ALTERNATIVES

Option 1: ***Replace the Marker – replicating existing design and material- but with new language.*** Should the HLC select this option, staff recommends establishing a Project Advisory Committee comprised of stakeholders including local historians, Tribal representatives, an HLC Liaison, and a City Council Liaison. This advisory committee will be responsible for overseeing the development of narrative text for the updated marker.

Option 2: ***Sponsor a new (site specific) Marker through the Oregon Travel Information Council.*** Should the HLC select this option, staff recommends establishing a Project Advisory Committee comprised of stakeholders including local historians, Tribal representatives, an HLC Liaison, and a City Council Liaison. The responsibilities of this advisory committee would be to coordinate with the OTIC, who have an existing Historical Marker Committee comprised of stakeholders including experts in Oregon history. Both OTIC staff and this Committee oversee the development of narrative text and graphics for the marker with input from the local jurisdiction(s) and interested Tribes.

Option 3: ***Sponsor a new (regional) Marker through the Oregon Travel Information Council.*** Should the HLC select this option, the OTIC has an existing Historical Marker Committee comprised of stakeholders including experts in Oregon history. Both OTIC staff and this Committee oversee the development of narrative text and graphics for the marker with input from the local jurisdiction(s), which in this case would include Marion and Polk counties.

Option 4: No Action; Leave the marker as it is.

TRIBAL RECOMMENDATION

The Salem Centennial Sign update and replacement options were presented for discussion at the Tribal Roundtable meeting on Monday May 8, 2023. The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde recommended the HLC proceed with either Option 1 or Option 2. The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz recommended the HLC proceed with Option 2 (**Attachment E**).

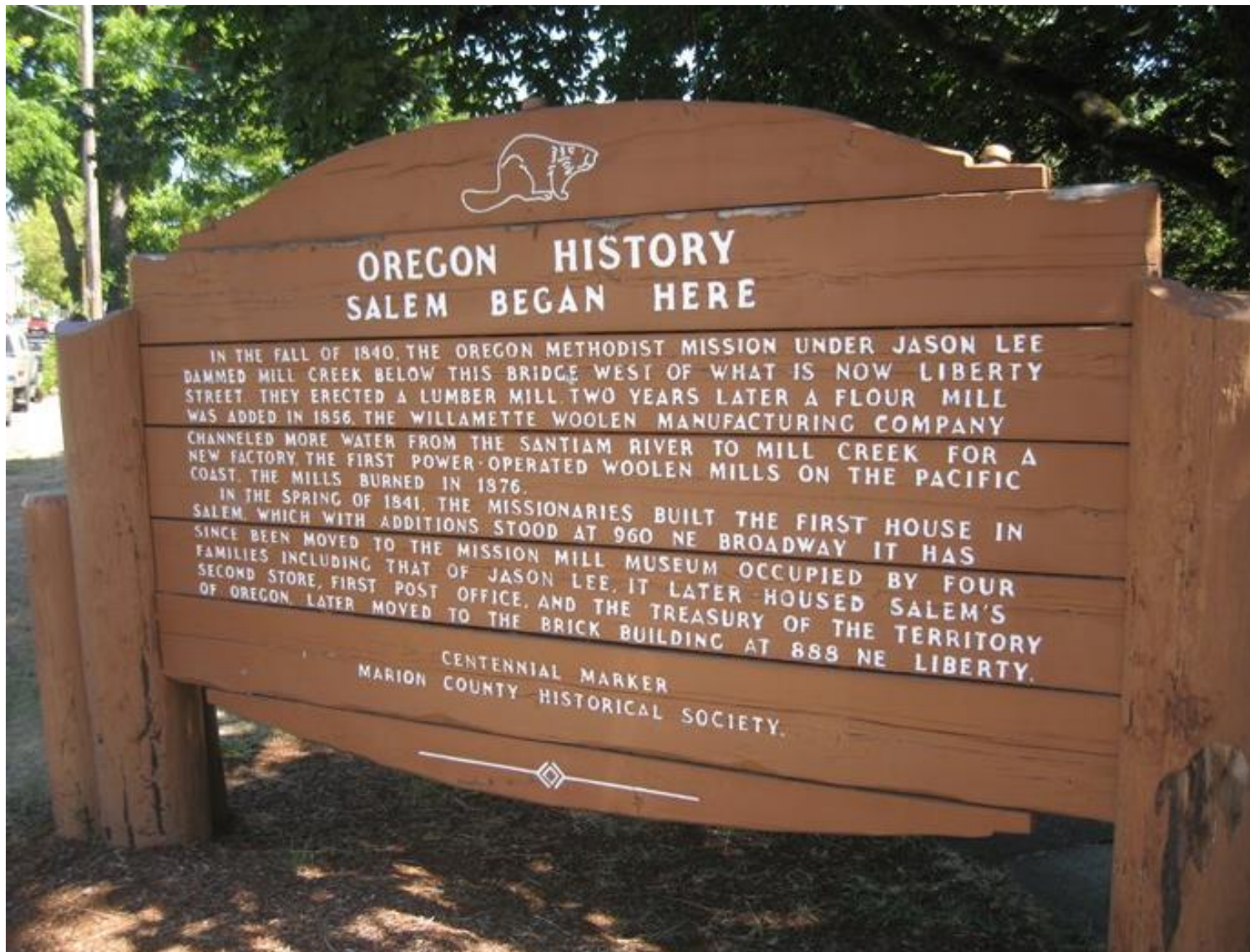
Attachment A. Salem Centennial Sign (aka “Salem Began Here)

Attachment B. Research Report: Historic Timeline of Salem Centennial Sign

Attachment C. Statesman Journal “Salem Volunteers Leave a Mark” – 3-13-2006

Attachment D. Schepcke email correspondence (1-19-23)

Attachment E. Tribal Roundtable Minutes (May 8, 2023)





Location: Identified as "Jason Lee Historical Marker"

SUMMARY TIMELINE

September 1960 – Sign
Installed by City of Salem work
crews

March 2006 – Restoration
work completed by volunteers,
spearheaded by Wayne Sharp
under direction of the Salem
Parks Department.

Research Report

Marion County Centennial Commission's Beaver Board
Historical Marker



Figure 1: Beaver Board sign as of June 2019 located on the east side of High Street just south of intersection with Liberty. PHOTO SOURCE: Googlemaps

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Who owns and is responsible for maintaining the Beaver Board Sign?

Conclusions:

We could find no official paperwork showing “ownership/title” to the sign. Other publications indicate the sign was designed under the auspices of the Marion County Historical Society (now Willamette Heritage Center) and the Marion County Centennial Commission (a local non profit corporation set up to chair county level activities for the 1959 State Centennial Celebration, with connections to the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce). The City of Salem Parks department installed and has maintained the sign since 1960. Other Beaver Board Style historical markers were created and maintained by the State Highway Department originally, management now part of the Oregon Travel & Information Council.



Connecting Generations by preserving and interpreting the history of the Mid-Willamette Valley

Report prepared by Kylie Pine. 7/5/2022

SUMMARY OF WORK

- Ran searches through Newspapers.com
- Looked through extant meeting minutes of the Marion County Historical Society (MCHS003.001). There are no meeting minutes in 1960-1961 timeperiod.
- Looked for MCHS newsletters (no newsletters before 1964)
- Looked at MCHS publication Marion County History. There is mention in the 1961 edition, only transcription of the sign
- Searched through PastPerfect for mentions of the Marion County Centennial Commission/Committee, etc.
- The WHC has incomplete records for the Marion County Centennial Association, a non profit created to oversee activities in Marion County related to the 1959 Oregon State Centennial – see X2018.008.0121 collected by Hugh Morrow. No direct mention of signs.

There were three Salem-based historical markers designed by member of the Marion County Historical Society (Committee for Preservation of Historic Site spearheaded by Lewis Judson) and Marion County Centennial Commission in 1960. Two bronze plaques and one wooden sign.

Chronological List of Resources

“History Society to Hear Talk on Name of County.” *Capital Journal* 9 Nov 1956 pg 5

“...The Society plans to place markers during the year on a number of historical sites that have been little publicized.”

N.B. *No mention of Jason Lee House site (Oregon Institute, South Salem Mills listed by name.*

“SP Agrees to Annexation Plan.” *Oregon Statesman* 26 Jan 1960 pg 2

City Council Minutes list in other business:

“The council...approved the erection of two historical markers.”

“Letters from Marion County Historical Society reported that two markers were ready to be placed on North High Street in the area where North High and Liberty street meet to form Broadway Street. AREA OF MISSION The Bronze Markers, part **of last year’s Centennial program**, will note that it was in this area where Jason Lee Mission was located. The exact site will be marked as the place where City of Salem had its beginning in 1840.”

→ **References the 1859 Oregon State Centennial Program**

“Chamber Outlines Projects for ‘60” *Capital Journal* 27 Jan 1960 pg 8

Listed among accomplishments...” assistance given by the [Salem] Chamber [of Commerce] in organization of the **Marion County Centennial Assn.**

“Plaque Has Brief History of Salem” *Oregon Statesman* 30 Mar 1960 pg 5

N.B. Showcases bronze plaques put up by Marion County Historical Society at Salem City Hall and 960 Broadway (NOT THE SAME AS BEAVER BOARD) and mentions future installation of Beaver Board to commemorate SAWMILL site.

Second Marker Due:

Judson noted that another historical marker, a large wooden wone, soon will be erected south of the juncture of High, Liberty and Broadway streets. It will detail history of various mission building in early Salem.

A bronze marker will go into the walk at 960 Broadway St NE to note where the mission sawmill, the structure that was the start of Salem, was built in 1840 he said.

“Historical Marker Given” *Capital Journal* 30 Mar 1960 pg 7

A man whose grandparents played a prominent part in founding the area which eventually became known as Salem has turned over a marker to City Hall.

Lewis Judson, 1000 Judson St. SE, chairman for Marion County Historical Society and one of the principals involved in creating sentiment for historical markers, carried the bronze plaque to City Hall Tuesday where it will be placed on an outside wall of the building...”

“The present day Judson announced that tow other markers soon will be erected. One will consist of a large wooden marker on which will be detailed history of various mission buildings n this vicinity. It will be placed south of the juncture of High, Liberty, and Broadway. The other, a bronze one, will be placed in a walk at 960 Broadway, where the sawmill built in 1840 was located.

The City Hall marker was donated by Oregon Centennial Commission.

“Looking it Over” *Capital Journal* 2 APR 1960 pg 5

Image showing bronze plaque at City Hall.

“The marker was presented to the city by the Marion County Historical Society as part of its observance of Oregon’s Centennial year in 1959.”

“Sign Records Early Salem History” *Oregon Statesman* 12 Sept 1960 pg 1

N.B. Includes image of the Salem Began Here Beaver Board.

Caption: “Historic Marker Put in place Wednesday by city park crew chronicles early Salem history, is placed on Mill Creek breidge on High St. NE. Just below bridge was spot where Mill Creek was dammed when Jason Lee constructed sawmill here in 1840 (Statesman Photo).

Caption (*Jason Lee House image*). Salem’s first house, built in 1841 , and occupied by the Jason Lee family and three other families, stands about a block north of historic marker erected on High St. NE this week. House is now used for apartments (Statesman Photo).

Sign Marks Jason Lee Sawmill Site.

Salem parks department crews this week put finishing touches to a sturdy monument to one of the city’s founding fathers, Jason Lee.

The marker in the form of a sign, is on Mill Creek bridge on the High St. NE just south of the Broadway intersection.

It is a project of Marion County Historical Society and Marion County Centennial Commission.

Notation on the marker includes the fact that Mill Creek was dammed in 1840, just below the bridge when Jason Lee and other pioneers constructed a sawmill west of present Liberty St. A flour mill was later added on this site.

In 1856, the marker notes, Willamette woolen Mfg. Co. channeled more water from Santiam River to Mill Creek, beginning the first power-operated....

“Traffic Group Okehs Change at Intersection.” Oregon Statesman 23 Nov 1960 pg 3

“Ban of Parking

--Approval of a Salem park department request that parking be prohibited immediately adjacent to the Jason Lee house historical marker on the east side of High Street north of Mill Street.”

Marion County History Publication, 1961

Marion County Centennial Markers

Plaque on Salem City Hall

SALEM
FOUNDED IN 1840
BY METHODIST MISSIONARIES,
BECAME TERRITORIAL CAPITAL IN 1852,
AN INCORPORATED CITY IN 1857,
PERMANENT CAPITAL OF OREGON IN 1864,
W. D. PUGH DESIGNED THIS CITY HALL,
UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN 1893

Round bronze marker in sidewalk at 889 Liberty Street, N. E.

SITE OF
THE
JASON LEE MISSION
SAW MILL
THE BEGINNING OF
SALEM
1840

*Wording on large wooden marker on
High Street Northeast at the Mill Creek crossing in Salem*

OREGON HISTORY
SALEM BEGAN HERE
IN THE FALL OF 1840, THE OREGON METHODIST MISSION UNDER JASON LEE DAMMED MILL CREEK BELOW THIS BRIDGE. WEST OF WHAT IS NOW LIBERTY STREET THEY ERECTED A LUMBER MILL. TWO YEARS LATER A FLOUR MILL WAS ADDED. IN 1856, THE WILLAMETTE WOOLEN MANUFACTURING COMPANY CHANNLED MORE WATER FROM THE SANTIAM RIVER TO MILL CREEK FOR A NEW FACTORY, THE FIRST POWER OPERATED WOOLEN MILL ON THE PACIFIC COAST. THE MILLS BURNED IN 1876.

IN THE SPRING OF 1841, THE MISSIONARIES BUILT THE FIRST HOUSE IN SALEM, WHICH WITH ADDITIONS STANDS AT 960 N.E. BROADWAY. OCCUPIED BY FOUR FAMILIES INCLUDING THAT OF JASON LEE, IT LATER HOUSED SALEM'S SECOND STORE, FIRST POST OFFICE AND THE TREASURY OF THE TERRITORY OF OREGON, LATER MOVED TO THE BRICK BUILDING AT 888 N.E. LIBERTY.

TURNER
PLATTED MARCH 8, 1871 BY H. L. TURNER
WITH THE BUILDING OF THE RAILROAD
TO CALIFORNIA. SITE OF THE TURNER FLOUR-
ING MILLS. FIRST RURAL FREE DELIVERY
IN OREGON MADE FROM THE TURNER
POST OFFICE, OCTOBER 16, 1897, UNDER
GEORGE F. ROBERTSON, POSTMASTER.

*Committee for Preservation of Historic Sites, Marion County Historical Society,
Lewis Judson, Chairman*

Figure 2: Writup in MARION COUNTY HISTORY a publication of the Marion County Historical Society, 1961 edition

Prange, Conrad. "Quick, Free Course in Oregon History Found on Roadside Markers." *Oregon Statesman* 27 Aug 1961 Section I page 6.

"...The signs are large, stained heavy boards, suspended between log posts, and are the work of the Oregon Highway Department." They are made at the highway's shops. Letters are routed out and coated with aluminum paint for clear visibility."

"...Widdows is a representative on the Oregon Historical Society and the society assists in preparing the texts of the marker's messages."

"Lists and locations of the markers are available at the State Travel Bureau in the Highway Building in Salem."

N.B. Includes photo of "Beaver Board Design"

Lynn, Capi. "Salem Volunteers Leave a Mark." *Statesman Journal* 13 Mar 2006 pg 1

"You can drive by and not see it because it's gotten so faded," said Toni Payseno of the Salem parks operations division.

The city enlisted the help of a group of Salem town residents to restore the weatherworn landmark commonly referred to as the Jason Lee Sign.

'We wanted to make sure we maintained the historic piece' Payseno said. 'We're deferring to the experts on this.'

Wayne Sharp and his crew of volunteers have been restoring Oregon Historical Markers for a decade. They do some of their handiwork in a shop at their West Salem retirement community and some on site...

It was placed in 1960 as a joint project of the Marion County Historical Society and the Marion County Centennial Commission and is the only historical sign maintained by the city of Salem.

Salem volunteers leave a mark

Retirees restore local and statewide historical markers

By CAPI LYNN
Statesman Journal

On foot, you can't miss it. In a car, all you might notice is a brown blur.

The jumbo wooden sign near the Mill Creek bridge on Broadway NE marks the site where Jason Lee and his Methodist Mission built the first house in Salem.

"You can drive by and not see it because it's gotten so faded," said Toni Payseno of the Salem parks operations division.

The city enlisted the help of a group of Salemtowne residents to restore the weather-worn landmark commonly referred to as the Jason Lee sign.

"We wanted to make sure we maintained the historic piece," Payseno said. "We're deferring to the experts on this."

Wayne Sharp and his crew of volunteers have been restoring Oregon Historical Markers for a decade. They do some of their handiwork in a shop at their West Salem retirement community and some on site.

"Our wives enjoy it because it gets us out," Sharp said with a chuckle.

Most of the restoration of the Jason Lee sign will be done on site because it is too cumbersome to move. The sign is about 8 feet tall and 10 feet wide and tells the story of how "Salem began here."

It needs to be repaired and repainted. There's dry rot in the posts, some of the 1½-inch tall routed text has chipped away, and there's graffiti on the back.

It looks pretty shabby, but Sharp said he has seen worse.

The volunteers already have removed the top and bottom boards, which were so rotted that they had to be replaced.

Mel Christy routed the



LORI CAIN | Statesman Journal

Salemtowne retirement community residents Wayne Sharp (top) and Mel Christy chip away old paint from the Jason Lee sign on Broadway NE.

A place in history

WHAT: The Jason Lee sign, installed in 1960.

WHERE: Near the bridge over Mill Creek on the east side of Broadway NE across from Boon's Treasury.

WHEN: The sign is in the process of being restored by a group of volunteers from the retirement community Salemtowne.

Online

DETAILS: To read the text of the sign, see this story at StatesmanJournal.com



Rotting wood is one of many challenges volunteers from Salemtowne face in restoring the Jason Lee sign.

first," Erv Bull said.

The most time-consuming task will be chiseling out the white paint that has been cracking in each of the more than 700 letters and numbers.

Sharp estimated that it takes more than 100 volunteer hours to restore an average marker and figured it will take about

See Markers, 2A

Markers

Continued from 1A

that to return the Jason Lee sign to its original luster.

It was placed in 1960 as a joint project of the Marion County Historical Society and Marion County Centennial Commission and is the only historical sign maintained by the city of Salem.

Sharp has a three-ring binder full of before and after photos of the Oregon Historical Markers restored by the group, which has traveled as far east as Enterprise and as far south as Klamath Falls.

A map on a bulletin board in the Salemtowne shop shows the locations of the 99 markers that were erected to commemorate people, events, places or geological features of statewide or national significance.

More than one-third are highlighted yellow — including the James Nesmith marker at the entrance of the Polk County Fairgrounds in Rickreall — and represent the portion restored by these volunteers.

"We've learned a lot by experience," Christy said. "It gets easier with every one."

They apply a white primer on each sign and then dab white paint in the routed letters. Then comes four coats of a specially mixed paint they call "historical marker brown."

The goal is to complete the work on the Jason Lee sign by mid-June, when a centennial celebration of his burial in Salem is planned. Lee died in Canada in 1906, but his remains were brought back to Oregon and interred in Lee Mission Cemetery with his two wives and his two children.

Because of the volunteers and their expertise, restoration of the sign will cost the city less than \$300 for materials only.

"This is such a gift," Payeno said. "I think it's going to stand out so nice so people can see it."

clynn@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6710

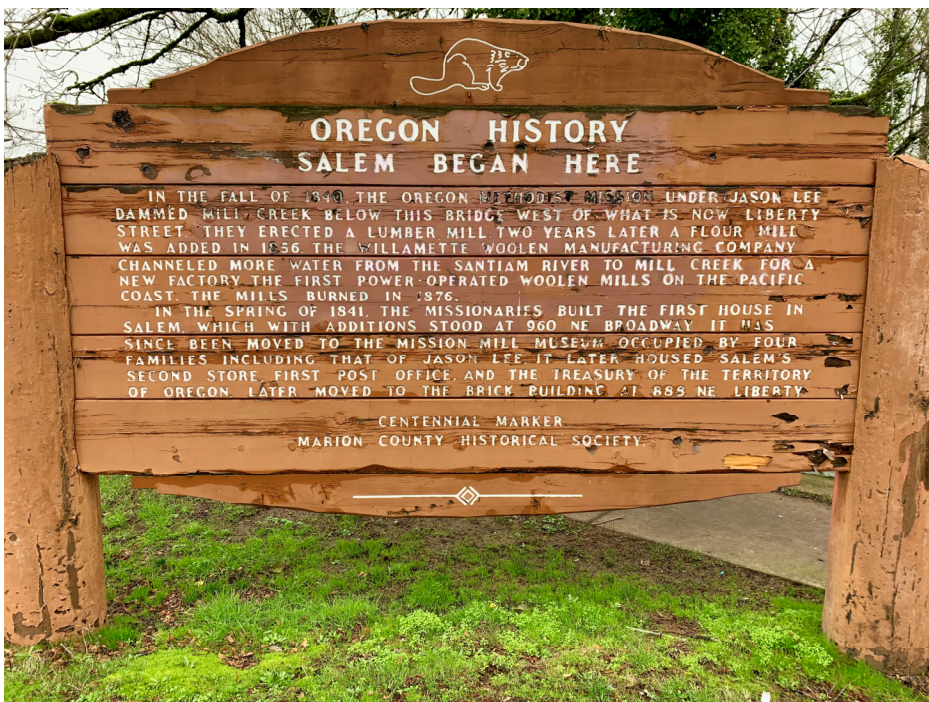
Kimberli Fitzgerald

Subject: "Salem Began Here"

From: Jim Scheppke <jscheppke@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, January 19, 2023 9:35 PM
To: Virginia Stapleton <VStapleton@cityofsalem.net>
Subject: "Salem Began Here"

Dear Councilor Stapleton:

For a long time I have been concerned about the historical marker in Ward 1:



As best I can tell the marker was erected in 1959 when Oregon celebrated its Centennial, so it is about 64 years old. There are a number of things that are objectionable about it:

- 1) The title is offensive to the Indigenous people who lived here for millennia before Jason Lee got here. Salem did not begin with settler colonization.
- 2) The rest of the text is a pretty boring recitation of various mills and other buildings and does not present an engaging story of early day Salem, including the Kalapuya village that was on the riverfront.
- 3) The rundown condition of the marker is really an embarrassment and would suggest to a visitor to Salem that we don't really care about our history here.

For these reasons I think the marker needs to be replaced as soon as possible.

That brings up the question of who owns it. It has the appearance of a "Beaver Board" of which there are many around the state that belong to the Oregon Travel Information Council. However, when you go to their website there is a map with all of the Beaver Boards under their control. This one does not appear on the map. So I would conclude from this that this marker belongs to the City of Salem.



It might also have some connection to the Willamette Heritage Center since their former name appears at the bottom of the marker.

I have brought this problem to the attention of both Kimberli Fitzgerald at the City and Michelle Cordova at the Willamette Heritage Center and they seem to agree that the marker needs to be replaced, but they have done nothing about it. Kimberli has told me it is on her back burner. So many months have passed, and in my frustration I am bringing the problem to you because the marker is in Ward 1.

The good news is that Dr. David Lewis, the former tribal historian of the Grand Ronde tribe and presently a history professor at OSU has volunteered to draft the text for a new marker at no cost. David is the author of the "Salem" article in the Oregon Encyclopedia and is well qualified to do this. I understand there are also volunteer woodworkers at Salemtowne who work on Beaver Boards who might be recruited to create a new marker (I would like to see it echo this one). I would be willing to raise funds for the cost of materials and make a generous contribution myself.

Maybe if you asked Kimberli about this we could get it going? Thanks for listening!!

Jim

Jim Schepke
jschepke@comcast.net
503-269-1559

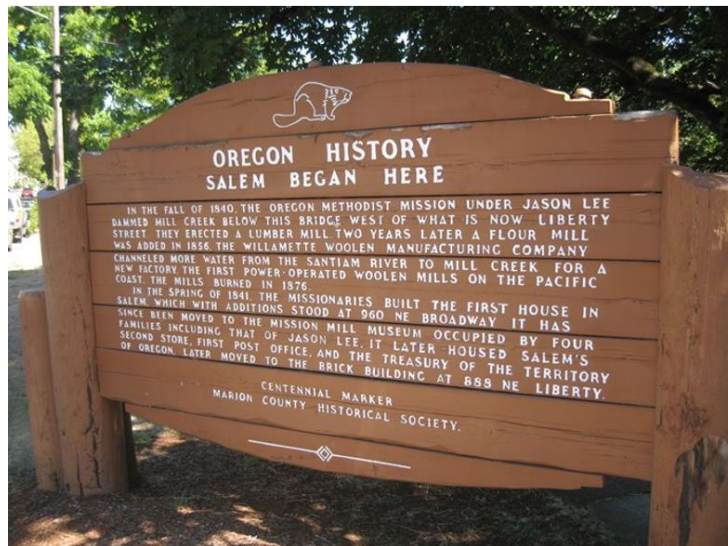
Historic and Cultural Resource Compliance Coordination
 Monthly Meeting
 Minutes May 8, 2023

<p>MINUTES Monday May 8, 2023 Digital Zoom Meeting 8:30-10:00 am</p>	<p>STAFF Kimberli Fitzgerald, City Archaeologist kfitzgerald@cityofsalem.net 503-540-2397 Zachery Cardoso, Staff Assistant zcardoso@cityofsalem.net</p>
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Chris Bailey, Cultural Protection Specialist, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde
 Peter Hatch, Historian and Cultural Protection Specialist, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians
 Jessica Curteman, Archaeologist. HLC Liaison
 Kimberli Fitzgerald, HP Officer/City Archaeologist, City of Salem

i. New Project: Salem Centennial Sign Update. (8:30) Jennifer Kellar, Milan Davis

The meeting began at 8:30 a.m. with introductions. Kimberli provided an overview of the history of Salem's Centennial sign, located at the bridge over the creek – just south of 960 Broadway Street NE.



This sign was designed and constructed in 1959 as a joint project between the Marion County Historical Society, Salem Chamber of Commerce and the Marion County Centennial Commission, as part of Oregon's Centennial celebration in 1959. This sign has been maintained by the City of Salem since 1960 and was recently restored in 2006 by the City and Salemtowne volunteers.

On January 19, 2023, Jim Schepke reached out to Councilor Stapleton expressing his concern about this marker and recommending that it be replaced and including proposed new language drafted by David Lewis. The Salem Historic Landmarks Commission identified updating the sign as part of their 2023 Workplan, presented to City Council on February 27, 2023. Both Jennifer Kellar and Milan Davis stated that the City of Salem Parks Division appreciated hearing the Tribes input, and are looking forward to assisting with the replacement of the sign as directed in the upcoming year.

Kimberli clarified that the Salem HLC will be taking action on this project at their May meeting and will be considering the following four alternatives- and would like the Tribes feedback on which process would be preferred:

Option 1: Replace the Marker – replicating existing design and material- but with new language;

Option 2: Sponsor a new (site specific) Marker through the Oregon Travel Information Council, Oregon’s official administrator of the Oregon Historical Marker program.

Option 3: Sponsor a new (regional) Marker through the Oregon Travel Information Council.

Option 4: No Action; Leave the marker as it is.

About Historical Markers



The Travel Information Council is the state’s official administrator of the Oregon Historical Marker Program. Oregon’s historical markers tout a history all their own—many of the famous Port Orford cedar “Beaver Boards” were built by the Oregon Department of Transportation in the 1940s, 50s and 60s.

TIC adopted the program in 1991 and works with a team of dedicated volunteers in preserving the signs for future generations. The program is steered by the Oregon Historical Marker Committee, which is staffed by volunteer professionals involved in Oregon forestry, geology, and historical and cultural research.

In addition to members of the marker committee, the program relies on another important group of volunteers—volunteer master craftsmen based within a West Salem retirement community. The “Salem town Historical Marker Volunteers” could easily be called a linchpin of the program. The group of approximately 10 men ensure that over 110 Historical Markers remain in good condition. Given the age of many of the markers, this is a supreme task.

Tribal Response

Chris Bailey expressed initial concern about the Option #1, given that there wasn’t adequate time to review the language proposed by Jim Schepke and David Lewis. Kimberli clarified, that the language would not be considered until much later in the process, and at this stage the HLC would just be considering which process Option to proceed with. After that clarification, Chris stated that the Grand Ronde would be comfortable with either Option 1 or Option 2.

Peter Hatch stated that Option #4 was not an acceptable option, given that the sign as it exists does not accurately reflect the existence of the Chemeketa Village that was at this location prior to the Methodist Missionaries coming to Oregon in 1834. Peter stated that while a Regional OTIC sign would definitely be of interest – in order to provide visitors a larger understanding of the pre-history and history of the Willamette Valley, it would not be appropriate in this location, as not many visitors naturally go to this area in Salem—instead it would be more appropriate to install this sign on the Capitol grounds or the Willamette Heritage Center, which gets many more visitors. Peter recommended Option 2 as the preference for the Siletz- for the development of a new site specific marker, since the OTIC has a well established standard process with clear criteria and standards relating to cultural humility and accuracy.

Kimberli stated that these recommendations would be passed along to the HLC for their consideration at their May 18, 2023 meeting, and then asked whether Chris or Peter would be interested in serving on an advisory committee for this project should the HLC establish one. Both Peter and Chris indicated that they would be interested, however they would need a better sense of the time commitment and method of meeting (Zoom is easier). Kimberli stated she would provide an update at the next regularly scheduled Roundtable meeting.