

SUMMER
2010

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Bethel Institute, circa 1856. This college is among several others located in the Willamette Valley that no longer exists.

College Tales from Long Ago

by George P. Edmonston Jr.

In this second of our four-part series celebrating the lesser-known stories of Oregon's Willamette Valley history, let us turn our attention to the regional colleges of the 19th century. Some are still with us, some are not, but all are worth remembering.

We begin in the most unlikely of locations, the North Atlantic during World War II, 100 miles off the coast of Greenland in an area known as "Torpedo Alley." The date was February 3, 1943. The place: aboard troop ship *USAT Dorchester*, on its way to Europe with 904 U.S. Army service personnel, merchant seamen and civilian workers.

At approximately an hour past midnight, the *Dorchester* fell into the sights of German submarine U-223, which fired a spread of three torpedoes at the unsuspecting vessel. Two missed but one hit starboard in a blow that seriously crippled the ship.

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On the road to a preservation trades conference: a personal journey

by Pam Chestnut, Certified building preservationist and adjunct instructor,
Clatsop Community College/Historic Preservation & Restoration program

An Elisabeth Walton Potter Historic Preservation Advocacy and Education Award, administered by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, made possible my attendance of the Preservation Trades Network (PTN) annual conference/International Preservation Trades Workshop (IPTW) in concert with the bi-annual International Trades Education Symposium (ITES), held August 24-30, 2009, in Leadville, Colorado. My journey started a few days before the conference visiting dear friends in Wyoming in the town of Wheatland, which is very near the Oregon Trail. I'd always wanted to see old wagon ruts preserved in sandstone, and the nearby Register Cliffs where pioneers signed their names on sandstone cliffs (1849 was the earliest I found). We also went to Fort Laramie, a monumental historical site with beautifully restored buildings, excavations and ongoing preservation projects. This became my introduction to a wonderful preservation journey.

PTN is an important international building preservation organization actively dedicated to teaching, sharing and promoting traditional trades. When I saw the Potter Award announcement in our local newspaper, the *Daily Astorian*, and applied for the scholarship—which provides recipients financial assistance to attend a historic preservation-related conference, workshop or training—my sole intent was to add to my preservation skill-set and to share what I learned with in my preservation community in Astoria. I had not imagined the magnitude and influence that would actually come of the experience.

My next stop was Boulder, Colorado to see my nature-loving nephew. Historic downtown Boulder is filled with restored and rehabilitated buildings. A little bit of heaven runs through town in the form of Boulder Creek, preserved largely in its natural state and perfect for a dip on a hot August afternoon. Then on to Littleton where I joined a house-hunting adventure with another great friend, and helped her analyze and choose an early 1900's farmhouse to purchase. My impression of the Denver area was that residents seem to value their vintage commercial buildings and homes; the distinct historic districts reminded me of Oakland/Berkeley, California, and Portland.

Driving westward into the Rockies, I discovered the breathtaking Red Rocks natural amphitheater, which consists mainly of two diagonally converging ship-size boulders that create the renowned acoustics. Further into the mountains in Evergreen I toured the Hiwan Homestead Museum, a beautifully preserved late 1800's ranch buildings that started as a one-room cabin formed from an old hay barn. Scottish master builder Jock Spence bears mentioning here as he gradually transformed the barn into a splendid 12-room log house. Spence also crafted several other buildings on the property including his workshop. His finish work was simple and exquisite, and now I'm inspired to re-create versions of his crown-molding corner blocks and drapery rod brackets in my old home.

Full of enthusiasm and inspiration, I set out for my final destination: Leadville, a legendary frontier boom-and-bust mining town, a place of extraordinary natural beauty, history and hospitality, two miles high amid 14,000 foot peaks that has 70 square blocks of Victorian-era architecture. In 1859, news of gold discovery near Denver brought a reported 100,000 men.

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COLLEGE TALES FROM LONG AGO . . . continued from page 1

Now sinking into the icy waters of the Atlantic, the *Dorchester* became the scene of mass pandemonium. Amidst the screaming and crying came the comforting voices of four Army chaplains, directing the disoriented to safety and tending to the dying. Witnesses remembered seeing the four give their lifejackets to those without. One report said that as the ship made its final plunge, the chaplains were holding hands and praying as one.

One of these was Clark Vandersall Poling, a minister of the Reformed Church in America with roots deep in the Willamette Valley. His father was Daniel Adams Poling of Portland, Oregon.

Clark Poling's fame was in his dying. Daniel Poling's fame was in living.

Joined by Methodist Rev. George L. Fox, Rabbi Alexander Goode, and Roman Catholic Priest John Washington, Clark belongs with the others in a quartet known simply as The Four Chaplains. Since their deaths, they have been honored repeatedly. In 1948, the Post Office gave them their own stamp; Ft. Lewis, Washington, has the Four Chaplains Memorial Chapel and Family Life Center; there is the Field of the Four Chaplains at Ft. Benning, Georgia; the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. has the Heroes Chapel Window, a stained glass depiction of the four; the chapel at the Pittsburg International Airport was dedicated to the Four Chaplains in 1994. The list goes on and on and is most impressive.

Daniel was the first graduate of Dallas College in Dallas, Oregon. The school was the result of a union in 1900 of the Lafayette Seminary and La Creole Academy. All three represent what are often referred to as the "dead colleges of Oregon," a label first used by H. Earl Pemberton in an article by the same name in the journal *Commonwealth Review* in 1931. Others include Columbia College in Eugene (1856-60), the alma mater of legendary poet Joaquin Miller; Montville Institute near Washington Butte in Linn County (1857-1859); Albany College in the town of the same name (1867-1940); Philomath College in Philomath (1867-1929); The College of Philomath, also in Philomath (1889-1913); Bethel College in Polk County (1855-1864); Mineral Springs College at Sodaville (1892-1910); and Sublimity College (1857 to unknown) in Sublimity, Oregon, a short distance from Stayton, which we will come back to later in this feature. It is also important to note that Albany College and Philomath College are the predecessors to Portland's Lewis and Clark College.

A chaplain during World War I, Dan lived to be 83 years old and ran for governor of the state of Ohio in 1912 as a candidate of the Prohibition Party. For many years he was president of the largest Protestant youth organization in the world, the International Christian Endeavor Society in Philadelphia, and was editor for almost 40 years of the *Christian Herald* magazine, one of the most influential U.S. church magazines of all time.

Known as the "Gentle Fundamentalist," Dan was a special Christian emissary to presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower and was the first clergyman to receive the nation's highest civilian award, "The Medal for Merit." He was also a close acquaintance of President John F. Kennedy. As president of the philanthropic Penny Foundation, he was personal friends to retail clothing giant, JC Penny. When son Clark told him he was going to serve his country as a chaplain, father Dan said, "As a chaplain you'll have the best chance in the world to be killed. You just can't carry a gun to kill anyone yourself."



Clark Vandersall Poling was a Reformed Church of America minister and one of the "Four Chaplains," who died in World War II when the ship on which he was serving was torpedoed by a German sub. His son, Daniel, was the first graduate of Dallas College.

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La Grande Main Street: Transforming downtown one step at a time

by Sheri Stuart, Oregon Main Street, and Jason McNeil, La Grande Main Street

Downtown La Grande boasts many fine examples of turn-of-the-century buildings and a good mix of retail opportunities and restaurants, and exudes small town charm and warmth. Wanting to build on this base, the City of La Grande applied for and was accepted at the “Transforming Downtown” level of the Oregon Main Street program on September 26, 2008.

At this level, communities are working towards implementing a comprehensive revitalization effort using the tried-and-true Main Street Approach® developed by the National Trust Main Street Center. This is a comprehensive means to rebuild a healthy downtown by addressing the economic challenges facing downtown, beautifying and restoring the historic heart of the community and promoting the downtown with fun events and quality marketing.

The Main Street effort in La Grande is staffed and funded by the city’s Community and Economic Development Department with support from the La Grande Main Street Board of Directors, formerly the La Grande Downtown Development Association (LGDDA). In order for the program to reach the next level, “Performing Main Street,” it will, at the appropriate time, need to be transferred to the not-for-profit La Grande Main Street Board to provide staff support and program funding.



The La Grande Main Street Program has a good deal to celebrate in its first full year of operation. Many visible changes have taken place with more on the way under the direction of the Design Committee. A façade improvement program was launched in cooperation with the local landmarks commission to ensure historical appropriateness. Three businesses have completed façade improvements and several others are in various stages of approval.

In addition, several streetscape improvements have been implemented to create a more pedestrian-friendly and inviting downtown. These include new “Welcome to Historic Downtown La Grande” pole banners and historic district street signs, bike racks and the installation of 37 hanging flower baskets planted by the La Grande Middle School students.

Future improvements will be part of an overall plan including new street trees and additional street furniture (for example, light poles, benches, trash cans). Another key project is creating a resource center for historic

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COLLEGE TALES FROM LONG AGO . . . continued from page 3

The first president of Dallas College was Dan's father, Charles Culp Poling, one of Oregon's best-known late 19th century missionaries. In 1892, he founded the Evangelical Church of Lafayette that today serves as a museum for the Yamhill County Historical Society. The building was the central place of worship for students attending the Lafayette Seminary, which took root in the old Yamhill County courthouse building in Lafayette after the county seat was shifted to McMinnville in 1887 by a vote of the people. Known today as the Poling Memorial Church, it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

Charles Culp was married to Savilla Kring Poling, a powerful singer who, according to family tradition, sang the hymn, "I'm a Child of the King," to President James A. Garfield while he lay dying from an assassin's bullet. Charles' brother, Dan Vandersall Poling, was the director of an early student activity center at Oregon State University known as the Y-hut, located where the university's Memorial Union building is today. In turn, Dan V. was the father of Dan Williams Poling, long-time dean of men at OSU and the namesake behind a prestigious annual award given by the university's alumni association.

The United Brethren Church in Oregon settled Sublimity in the 1850s. By 1857 they had started Sublimity College. Its chief claim to fame is that Milton Wright, father of the Wright Brothers, Orville and Wilbur, was its first teacher and president. Wright had been sent west by his church on a mission and served the college for two years. In 1859, he returned east and went to Indiana where he was soon named a bishop in his church.

From Oregon State University, two lost stories are worth our attention.

First, it is often assumed that OSU was and is Oregon's only "land grant" school. Not true. The land grant concept—fundamentally, a gift of land is sold and the proceeds are used to fund a school—was also in evidence at Bethel Institute in Polk County and at Monmouth University in Monmouth, among others. In 1855, pioneers Amos Harvey and Glenn Burnett combined to give 240 acres, which was then sold as residence lots. By the summer of 1856, enough money had been raised to erect a large two-story building. Its location was approximately five miles north of Rickreall. Traveling on Highway 99W, turn right at the Bethel Road and then drive half a mile to where the road curves at Oak Grove Road. Nothing but farmland now marks the spot of what was once a small but thriving college campus. Monmouth University was founded in 1856 from the sale of land given the school by pioneers Thomas Lucas, John Smith and others. In 1865-66, Bethel combined with Monmouth, also owned by the Disciples of Christ, to form Christian College, a forerunner of Oregon Normal School, which later became Western Oregon University.

Second, prior to several false starts and several attempts by the Baptists and then the townspeople in general to fund a pioneer academy in Corvallis, the school didn't land on solid financial footing until after it was sold at auction to the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1860. According to university records in the OSU Archives, the first chief administrator listed as "school president" was the Rev. William A. Finely, who served from 1865-1872, at which time the institution was known



Located on a section of the college farm, the new Administration Building (now known as Benton Hall) for Corvallis College was built in 1889. Today, it is part of the Oregon State University Historic District recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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ON THE ROAD TO A PRESERVATION TRADES CONFERENCE: A PERSONAL JOURNEY . . . continued from page 2

In the spring of 1860 gold was found near what would soon be Leadville, and by that summer more than 10,000 men had come to make their fortunes.

Leadville was an ideal location for the PTN conference; *Finding Common Ground* was the conference theme. To quote the PTN workshop and lecture booklet, “Our partners, the Colorado Mountain College Historic Preservation Program, the University of Colorado-Denver College of Architecture and Planning and the Colorado Historical Society State Historical Fund are at the forefront (of) the connection between historic preservation, sustainable development, and maintaining livable communities, as well as creating opportunities for respected and valued employment for people that work with their hands, minds and hearts.”

A distinguished group of international educators and trades people presented and demonstrated their particular focus and skills. A virtual preservation feast was served in venues including the 1899 Leadville High School, now the National Mining Museum; historic Hayden Ranch, field school for Colorado Mountain College Leadville campus; old Evergreen Cemetery; and the 1879 Tabor Opera House. It was well-attended, friendly, educational and powerful, with lectures for theory and workshops for hands-on practice. Lecturers, including professionals from as far as France, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia presented well-researched topics.

What I learned at the PTN was invaluable. Leadville provided a splendid setting for the gathering—a dynamic and creative confluence of caring conservationists. I was indeed successful in adding to my building preservation skills. Furthermore, I now feel like an integral part of the movement and have a much more in-depth understanding of the hows and whys of preservation technique. Great opportunities to share and connect have become apparent, as from the ether, all because of one little article about Oregon SHPO’s Elisabeth Potter Award in the *Daily Astorian*, and the germ of a notion: “Maybe I just could...”

Nine Oregonians receive 2010 Elisabeth Potter Awards

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has announced recipients of the 2010 Elisabeth Potter Historic Preservation Advocacy and Education Awards. Potter Awards are given each year by the SHPO and are distributed among recipients for the express purpose of helping them cover travel expenses to a historic preservation-related conference or workshop chosen by the award winner and approved by the SHPO.

This year’s Potter Award recipients are:

- Kimberly Moreland, Tigard
National Preservation Conference, Austin, TX
- Kelly Haverkate, Dayton
National Main Street Conference, Des Moines, IA
- Heidi Beirle, Eugene
Preserving the Historic Road Conference, Washington, DC

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Summertime and historic property seasonal maintenance

by Joy Sears, SHPO Renovation Specialist

Summer is officially here according to the calendar. But our rainy and cool spring weather seems not too interested in leaving town. We are all looking forward to enjoying the longer, warmer days to get outside and enjoy Oregon under blue skies. And while it is tempting to run out hiking, boating and camping, now is the time to also start looking at your house in order to get any repairs done and do that maintenance that you put off for “better weather.”

Hopefully by now, you have any roofing, masonry work or painting scheduled with a contractor or planned to do yourself soon in the coming months.

Here are a few more things to consider doing in the “off” season:

- have your furnace inspected and repaired if necessary
- remove detachable exterior storm windows as needed
- repair or have repaired exterior storms as needed
- have the chimney or woodstove pipe checked and cleaned
- install or reinstall exterior blinds or other shading devices
- repair, install or have installed gutters and downspouts

If you already have exterior storm windows up or in place, it's time to look at having any window repair completed. Looking out a clear storm window is friendlier than a drab piece of plywood if sash removal is necessary for repairs to be done. Hang screens or install screens as necessary. For combination storm/screen windows and doors, remove and store energy panels until fall. Since warmer weather is open door time, make sure exterior doors all function properly. Consider installing screen doors to keep the bugs out and the cool breezes flowing.

Look into planting trees on west or south elevations to provide shade in the future. Consult with a nursery or landscaping contractor to determine a suitable species to be planted adequately spaced from the house for growth. If planting is not acceptable or feasible, look into adjustable awnings or blinds for the exterior of windows and doors to cut down on heat gain.

Do a thorough examination of the exterior of the house to see if insects or any wildlife have taken up residence in your eaves, foundation, attics or crawl spaces. Spray for insects when there is no wind to avoid losing its effectiveness. Call an exterminator when in doubt about course of action, but don't forget about the safety of your pets. Do whatever is necessary to keep unwanted critters out of your house by using metal flashing, metal mesh or chicken wire, steel wool and wood blocks.

Once you have these items addressed or planned for the coming months, you can enjoy your time to frolic in the great weather if it ever gets here.



NINE OREGONIANS RECEIVE 2010 ELIZABETH POTTER AWARDS . . . continued from page 6

- Li Alligood, Milwaukee
National Preservation Conference, Austin, TX
- Debra Levings, Roseburg
National Preservation Institute, San Francisco, CA
- Oscar Hult, Albany
National Main Street Conference, Des Moines, IA
- Nicole Nathan
Asian Pacific Islander American Historic Preservation Forum, San Francisco, CA
- Tara Ikenouye, Eugene
Society of Architectural Historians Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA
- Peggy Moretti, Portland
National Preservation Conference, Austin, TX

The awards are named in honor of Elisabeth Walton Potter, who as historian for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department in 1966 was the first staff member of the federally-mandated statewide program in historic preservation. Mrs. Potter retired in 1998 as long-time program coordinator responsible for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.

LA GRANDE MAIN STREET: TRANSFORMING DOWNTOWN ONE STEP AT A TIME . . . continued from page 4



preservation to assist property owners and businesses who wish to rehabilitate their historic downtown buildings. This information will be available both at City Hall and on-line to make it easily accessible.

The Promotion Committee has taken charge of many downtown events formerly managed by LGDDA and is working at creating new events. In conjunction with the Design Committee, the committee developed a “Spring Fling” event to coincide with hanging the flower baskets, unveiling the banners, and final installation of bike racks. Other exciting events are in the works including incorporating a “pioneer theme” into Crazy Days activities. The committee has also developed a logo to brand downtown, is planning outreach activities for Eastern Oregon University (EOU) students, and promoting participation in the “3/50” project, which encourages people to shop locally.

Some projects are more “behind the scenes” and less visible to the public although equally as active. The Economic Restructuring Committee has been in the data-gathering phase over the past year. This includes a downtown business survey and inventory, EOU student survey, downtown resident survey and a traffic/pedestrian count conducted by EOU students. This information will help determine who lives, conducts business, and shops downtown as well as identify their needs. Strategies to improve downtown to meet these needs, support existing new businesses and attract new ones can be developed based on the survey results.

Another bright spot for downtown is the opening of BELLA, a kitchen, wine, and chocolate store that has been a fixture in the nearby town of Baker City for 13 years. The main store in Baker City will remain open, but store owner Beverly Calder has been actively looking for the right space in La Grande for several years. According to Calder, “the opportunity to occupy a historic building that has been such an important part of the community for over a century was simply an offer I couldn’t refuse.” Calder credits the La Grande Main Street program with helping to sway her decision to open a second store.

The Liberty Theater restoration project is a key activity for the community. A group of concerned local citizens has begun an effort to restore the old Liberty Theater building to its former glory with the backing of the La Grande Main Street Program. The project has a long way to go, but the goal is to have the building restored to be used to show live theater, musical performances and specialty films and to become the home of the Eastern Oregon Film Festival. This sort of an attraction will be a draw to the downtown and contribute to making the district the cultural center of the Grande Ronde Valley.

As La Grande Main Street moves forward in its second full year of operation, the focus is to build on previous successes as well as building more momentum, increasing organizational capacity, and growing support for the program.

Finding solutions for the preservation of historic cemeteries

by Judy Juntunen, Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries

Oregon's historic cemeteries face similar problems to cemeteries throughout the United States. Often these are small cemeteries in both rural and urban areas that have been neglected, vandalized and sometimes abandoned. Even those that have a group of caretakers, trying to do everything they can to preserve their cemeteries, work with budgets that are small or non-existent. Yet these very cemeteries are important cultural, architectural and archaeological resources, and ways need to be found to provide help.

This topic was on the minds of commissioners Robert Keeler and I from the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries when we attended the 2009 Association of Gravestone Studies Conference. One presentation was particularly thought provoking, *Thinking Outside the Fence: Re-Defining the Historic Cemetery*.



John Bry, who has over 20 years of experience in historic preservation and community revitalization and is the trustee of two cemetery properties, proposed the five “M’s” for Cemetery Management and Revitalization: master planning, money, marketing, management and maintenance. He pointed out that several factors have led to the current state of many historic cemeteries. Funding was a primary problem, but some other issues center around our mobile society, the generation divide, and the difficulty of establishing an organization.

The discussion that followed Bry’s presentation centered on the five “M’s” and how cemetery groups might implement them and strengthen their efforts. Bry hopes that there will be a national discussion on a comprehensive approach to historic cemeteries. This might happen through a partnership of organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Association of Gravestone Studies. Ultimately he would like to see a National Historic Cemetery Center that would be not only be a partner and ally for the causes of historic cemeteries, but also a national clearinghouse that would include a database, technical assistance, referrals, and educational information.

Oregon’s historic cemetery commissioners came away from the discussion with a realization that Oregon already is a leader in the nation—the only state that has a citizen’s commission focused on the preservation and protection of historic cemeteries. And, it is one of the few states that offer grants to help cemetery associations with projects that are not possible to fund with most cemetery budgets.

For more information on the [Oregon Historic Cemetery program](#), contact coordinator [Kuri Gill](#), 503-986-0685.

COLLEGE TALES FROM LONG AGO . . . continued from page 5

as Corvallis College. There followed a 25-year period in which the school was managed by two Civil War veterans, one from the south, B.L. Arnold (1872-1892), and the other from the north, John McKnight Bloss (1892-1896). It was during Arnold's long tenure that attorney Wallace Nash and wife Louisa came to Corvallis from England. The year was 1879.

Nash, who counted among his legal clients the historic figures Charles Darwin and Henry Bessemer, quickly became interested in agriculture in the Willamette Valley. Among his many activities, he helped direct the annual Farmer's Institutes across the state, which brought the college's latest research on grain, stock and fruit growing to the people who needed it. This activity would grow into the OSU Extension Service.

As secretary for the college's Board of Regents, Nash was charged with restructuring the school's faculty. Assisted by Louisa, the two wrote every agricultural college in the country for information on faculty organization and pay, then used the data to launch a nationwide search for qualified instructors. This was the first attempt in school history to reach out beyond the borders of the state to recruit faculty. Louisa hit pay dirt by attracting Dr. Margaret Snell to Corvallis, the pioneer woman educator and medical doctor who became the first professor of household economy and hygiene (later home economics) in the Far West.

Wallace and Louisa were also prime movers in the planning and building of OSU's oldest building, Benton Hall. All six of their children, a daughter and five sons, graduated from Oregon State, and two of the boys—Desborough and Percival—were starters on OSU's first football team in 1893.

As for Bloss, students of the Civil War will delight in knowing that this is the same Sgt. John McKnight Bloss of the 27th Indiana Infantry Regiment given at least partial credit for the discovery of "Lee's Lost Order" at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862. He and son Will launched the sport of football at OSU in 1893 and Will was the school's first-ever quarterback and head coach.

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George Edmonston Jr. is the retired editor of the Oregon Stater, the alumni magazine of Oregon State University. He currently serves as history and traditions editor for the magazine. He co-authored the book, Tales from Oregon State Sports, in 2003, and has published hundreds of articles sharing Oregon's fascinating history in area newspapers, magazines and on websites.

Meeting the challenges ahead for Oregon heritage

by Kyle Jansson, Oregon Heritage Commission Coordinator

People with interest in Oregon heritage will be able to voice their opinions on potential solutions to major Oregon heritage challenges during August.

The survey to gather those opinions will be posted by the Oregon Heritage Commission, which is conducting a statewide assessment of heritage conditions and issues. A survey last spring and three regional Oregon Heritage Roundups identified a myriad of issues and potential solutions.

Major challenges that have been preliminarily identified are the lack of stable private and government funding; changing population demographics and generational expectations, including developing new leadership; the inability to measure and articulate the economic value of Oregon heritage; and the minimal amounts of meaningful coordination and collaboration among heritage organizations and their communities.

Other challenges under preliminary consideration for major issues are changing educational requirements; the uneven development of technology, the shortage of people in heritage organizations and businesses with the skills and knowledge to address issues of preservation, fund raising, leadership and technology; and the limited use of 21st century marketing, public relations and advocacy strategies.

The Heritage Commission will consider the survey responses at its September meeting as it prepares recommendations for the plan. A link to the survey will be posted at www.oregonheritage.org