

SALEM LANDMARK

Newsletter of the Salem Historic Landmarks Commission



FIRE AT THE CAPITOL -- Ian Tolleson, Legislative



When a Willamette University student called the Salem Fire Department in the early morning hours of August 30, 2008 to report smoke billowing from the Oregon State Capitol, the student knew the importance of helping protect this historic landmark. What the student might not have known was this was the third time such a call had been made. Amazingly, the Oregon State Capitol has burned down twice; once in 1855 and again in 1935. Needless to say, when Legislators and Capitol staffers hear “Capitol” and “fire” in the same sentence, they get nervous.

The big difference between the 1855 and 1935 fires compared to the recent one in 2008 is that the building was not entirely destroyed. However, that did not mean that nerves did not run high on that early August morning. The good news was that the building was still standing. The bad news was that the fire destroyed the Governor’s ceremonial office. In addition to the smoke and fire damage in the Governor’s ceremonial office and surrounding suite, there was severe water damage on all five floors. The water used to extinguish the fire was sprayed onto the second, third, and fourth floors and ran down into the first and basement floors underneath. When Capitol staff first entered the building, they were greeted with 4 to 5 inches of standing water in the first floor Galleria and hearing rooms. Upon further inspection, staff noticed that much of the water was draining to the Senate wing and flooding the lobby area and library of Legislative Counsel.

The source of the fire was construction materials being used on a terrace project outside the Governor’s ceremonial office. Though the exact cause of the fire remains undetermined, fire investigators ruled out arson and believe improperly discarded cigarettes are to blame. Due to the quick response of the Salem Fire Department, the rest of the Capitol was spared more extensive damage. The building was closed for only two days. Because of the hard work of the fire recovery staff, from the Capitol staff, onsite contractors, and outside restoration crews, the building was up and running quickly with minimal interruption.

Although most of the damage was repaired before the start of the 75th Legislative session on January 12, 2009, significant repairs are still underway in the Governor’s suite. Because of the damage to his offices, the Governor was relocated to the State Library. The first objective for the Fire Recovery Team was to get the building functional for the then-upcoming legislative session. It was determined that everything would be restored in that first phase with the exception of the Governor’s suite. Major repairs would be delayed in the Governor’s suite until after the legislative session adjourned so that construction activities would not interfere with the biennial session.

The Governor’s suite repairs are now underway. The primary objective of the work is to restore the suite to its pre-fire condition. In addition, smoke detection and fire sprinklers are being added. There will still be small signs of the fire, if you know where to look. For example, the large map of Oregon painting that hangs over the fireplace in the ceremonial office will show signs of the fire even after restoration. Minor burns were intentionally left on the map to reflect the historical evidence of the August 2008 event. Since the map has historical value, the decision was made to only lightly restore the map with water color so not to alter the map further. This process will give future owners the ability to remove the restoration work so that the map could be “un-restored” to reflect its full history, including the fire, if so desired. *(Continued on Page 2)*

Capitol Fire (continued from Page 1)

The fire that sparked the morning of August 30, 2008, was an unfortunate event in the history of Oregon's Capitol. As bad as the fire was, it could have been a lot worse if it were not for the Willamette University student that called in the fire, the quick response of the Salem Fire Department, and the Capitol Fire Recovery Team. The fire created challenges for Legislators and Capitol staff alike, but everyone worked together to prepare the Capitol for the 75th Legislative Assembly. Recent work has turned to the more damaged area of the building, the Governor's suite and ceremonial office. In a relatively short amount of time, that area, too, will be restored to its former glory for all Oregonians to visit and enjoy.



Book Review: *Save America's Windows* by John Leeke -- Joy Sears, Commissioner

If you were to believe everything you see in advertising, whether it be TV, radio or newspaper, then why wouldn't everyone replace their old, drafty, inefficient wood windows with new energy efficient vinyl or other replacement windows? Since there is obviously a dearth of craftspeople who know how to repair historic and old wood windows, wouldn't you want to buy new, no-maintenance windows for your house? All the advertisements and salespeople are trying to get you to buy their products. Whether this is good for you or your house; they don't seem to care.

Some people have expressed concerns that the National Park Service's Preservation Brief No.9: "The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows" is not user-friendly for the average homeowner. To counteract that, John Leeke, American preservationeer, has published his latest "Practical Restoration Report" from his company, Historic HomeWorks, entitled Save America's Windows. The report is practical enough to allow most anyone, homeowner or contractor, to stabilize and repair almost any wood window. Below is an excerpt from the opening page:

"Thousands of wood windows are ripped out of this country's older and historic buildings each year and hauled to the dump. This astonishing loss is due in large part to the fact that few people know how to care for existing wood windows. The report provides an economical and practical alternative to trashing your fine old windows and buying replacements made of plastic."

This report covers all the aspects of window repair, from project planning and understanding the basics, to sill and sash repairs. All repairs are covered step-by-step, including lists of tools and materials needed, with illustrations to guide anyone through the work necessary. He ends the report with excellent reprints from early trade manuals, as well as listing suppliers of various items used in the restoration projects. Most importantly, Mr. Leeke maintains an ever-growing list of window repair specialists found throughout the country. Over the years, John has conducted practical workshops across the country either in person or via the Internet. Workshop subjects have included maintenance of historic buildings, wood window repair, and steam paint removal.



To order this Practical Restoration Report, or any of the others he has published, visit Historic HomeWorks at <http://www.historichomeworks.com/hhw/reports/reports.htm>

Another worthwhile book is Working Windows by Terry Meaney. This is a valuable reference tool for most do-it-yourselfers or those looking to become one.

Some other great websites on window repair:

<http://kshs.org/resource/windowrepair.htm>

<http://www.oldhouseweb.com/how-to-advice/windows/historic-wood-windows>

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/TPS/briefs/brief09.htm>

<http://www.windowrepair.com>

http://www.oldhousejournal.com/how_to_restore_sash_windows/magazine/1600

Salem's Historic Buildings --Gene Bolante, Commissioner, Architect

The Historic Landmarks Commission continues to work in the interests of historical structures. Salem has many historical buildings worthy of saving for future generations. Many of these are single family homes, but several commercial properties also add to our historical resources. As an architect on the commission I am interested in how the use of a building changes over time and how the original fabric of the building has survived. What was attractive, functional and effective 80 years ago has changed as time has passed. In many situations fire and life safety has been improved along with modifications for the everyday comforts of life. Although it can seem daunting there are positive changes that can improve a historical structure. Some include roof replacement and seismic upgrades. The most common improvement upgrades are those made to bring the historical structure up to current trends. While improving the livability of your historical structure it also brings pride of ownership which extends the life of the structure. The intent of the commission is to maintain the historical context of a structure for future generations to enjoy. The City provides many options to assist building owners with maintaining their piece of history.

Salem's History, Archaeology, and You --Kurt Roedel, Commissioner, Archeologist

You may not know that the Historic Landmarks Commission is tasked with addressing archaeological resources that may be impacted by proposed projects. So what is archaeology? If you guessed dinosaurs, you just laid an egg. Archaeology is the scientific study of past cultures from the material they left behind. Salem has a rich archaeological history, from the arrival of the first people about 14,000 years ago, up until 1934. That's right. According to Oregon State Law, an archaeology site can be as little as 75 years old. Archaeology truly is everywhere. More than 30,000 archaeological sites have been identified in Oregon, and each site is a time capsule that can provide valuable insights. Not only do we learn about our past, but archaeology transforms the artifacts into a story that serves as a powerful teaching tool for today and the future. Now, if only we could be as attractive as Indiana Jones and Lara Croft...

If you think you have encountered an archaeological site, please contact Dennis Griffin, 503-986-0674, or for more information, visit the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office's website, <http://egov.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/ARCH/index.shtml>,

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- ARCHAEOLOGY:** The scientific study of past human cultures by analyzing the material remains they left behind
- ARTIFACT:** Any object made, modified, or used by people
- CULTURE:** A set of learned beliefs, values and behaviors shared by a group
- EXCAVATION:** Systematic digging and recording of an archaeological site
- MIDDEN:** Area used for trash disposal
- OBSIDIAN:** Type of volcanic glass often used to make tools
- POTHUNTER:** Person who digs or picks up archaeological materials without permission in order to recover goods
- ROCKART:** General term for pecked, incised, or painted figures on rock
- SITE:** Place where human activity occurred and material remains were deposited
- SURVEY:** Systematic examination of the ground surface in search of archaeological sites

Greetings from the Chairman of the Salem Historic Landmarks Commission

With all the advertisements lately on the radio, internet and print materials, you would believe that all existing windows are sucking your money out of your house. They promise to replace them so you can save tons of money on your utility bills. Even better, you can get a federal energy tax credit to offset some of the money you will spend on these “upgrades!” While the public may be led off in these wasteful directions, you can do many simple and relatively inexpensive upgrades to your older and historic home that will increase its energy efficiency while maintaining the historic character. In response to this issue, I have been conducting workshops entitled “Historic Homes and Energy Efficiency” in various communities over the last six months. If your community would be interested in hosting this workshop, just contact me.

Two great new websites with many answers for historic property owners have recently become available:

National Trust For Historic Preservation:

<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/weatherization/html>

National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/weather/index.html>

I am always available to answer technical questions about historic and old buildings, so feel free to contact me at Joy.Sears@state.or.us or 503-986-0688 (SHPO).

Take care,

Joy

We're on the Web!

www.cityofsalem.net/Departments/Community

[Development/Planning/Historic/Pages](http://www.cityofsalem.net/Departments/Community/Development/Planning/Historic/Pages)

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