



Bush's Pasture Park History

Salem residents are fortunate to have Bush's Pasture Park, a large urban park, just south of the central business district. The park is enhanced by the natural groves of old oak trees, spacious, green pastoral setting, an orchard with fruit and flowering trees, over 2,000 roses in its rose garden, and over a mile of paved paths for bicyclists, joggers or strollers.

Pringle Creek meanders through the eastern portion and a section is retained in its natural state with various species of trees, shrubs, ferns and a wildflower garden area. The addition of Deepwood with its adjoining wooded area reinforces the fragile natural area.

Mr. Asahel Bush, an influential pioneer, built his home in 1877, at a cost of \$5,000. It was occupied by Mr. Bush or members of his family for 76 years, until 1953. A year later the Salem Art Association entered into an agreement with the City for the operation of Bush House.

During the next several years, the Art Association worked toward the restoration of the house and began using the first floor as a museum. The second floor became an art gallery. Receptions for artists, lectures and cultural activities were carried on in the house.

Mr. Bush donated the 57-acre eastern portion of his estate to the City in 1917. Bush's intent for the area was that it be used for park and playground purposes. A bond issue to purchase the upper 43 acres, with the historic house and barn, was defeated by Salem citizens in 1945. The following year, voter approval to purchase the site was given only after Willamette University agreed to purchase a 9-acre athletic field in the center of the park.

In 1947, thirty years after the Bush donation, a Master Development Plan for the park was prepared by a Portland firm and development was begun in the early 50's Phillips Field, picnicking facilities along Pringle Creek, and the construction of the Soap Box Derby track by commercial interests were among the first projects accomplished.

Later, the upper lawn area was seeded, cooking units were constructed in the lower area, a driveway into Bush House from High Street and a parking area were paved, and play equipment was installed throughout the park with budgeted and donated funds. Development accelerated with the approval of a park improvement bond issue in 1957.

Four tennis courts, an automatic irrigation system in the upper area, a graveled parking lot and comfort station near Phillips Field were completed. In the mid-50's, the Salem Municipal Rose Garden was dedicated. Roses for the garden were donated by the Wholesale Nursery firms of Armstrong and Howard Rose Co., with the majority coming from Peterson and Dering of Scappoose, Oregon. Mrs. A.R. Tartar donated her collection of "Old Fashioned Rose" to add to the rose garden area.

The orchard area near Mission and High Streets is historically significant. The apple trees were planted by Father Leslie a century ago on the original Donation Land Claim. In about 1927, Miss Sally Bush began interplanting the orchard area with Oriental Cherries, Plums and Ornamental Crabs. Prominent Landscape Architects, Miss Elizabeth Lord and Miss Edith Schryver assisted Miss Sally in the landscaping of the area.

Development was again accelerated in 1966-68 with the availability of Urban Beautification funds. An irrigation system in the ball field area and around Bush Barn and the paving of pedestrian and bike paths through the park were accomplished. Highlights of development in the 70's with Revenue Sharing funds include the resurfacing and lighting of the tennis courts, paving of the upper Leffelle parking lot, and automation of the sprinkling system in the rose garden and orchard area.

Park maintenance facilities for the Park Department were located at Bush Barn when it was destroyed by fire in 1963. The City agreed the maintenance facilities for Parks should be moved from Bush Park and permission was given to the Art Association to reconstruct the Barn for use as an Art Center. Donated funds, along with the insurance money received by the City, were used for construction of the Art Barn.

Activities at the Art Barn center around workshops for all age groups, art exhibits and support for artists. In the first year of operation, there were only four workshops offered and only a few paintings were sold in the Collector's Corner. Today, approximately 30 classes are available for teens and adults. In addition, the Barn in 1976 provides space for a pot shop, kiln, weaving loft, offices and class room space. Approval for the addition was given with the understanding that long-range projection would see the Salem Art Association located in a major cultural center removed from Bush's Pasture Park.

With the removal of the art gallery and workshops from Bush House in 1965, the Art Association continued with the restoration and preservation of the house as a museum. Many of the original furnishings owned by the Bush family were purchased by the Art Association as part of the museum display. Not only is the museum an important tourist attraction with visitors from all parts of the country touring the facility, it is also an important educational experience for school children and citizens of the entire community. The house is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1976, refurbishing of the outside of the house was accomplished financed by a Community Development Block Grant. Donations of materials and labor were freely given. An example was the painting of Bush House and Barn with assistance from the Lifer's Club from the State Penitentiary.

The Salem Art Association has contributed greatly to Salem's cultural, educational and recreational life. The highly successful Bicentennial Art Fair sponsored by the Association in the summer of 1976, is another affirmation of their efforts. The cultural services provided by this active group represents a considerable savings in tax dollars to the citizens of Salem.

Softball play has existed in the lower section of Bush Park since the early 50's and is enjoyed by both players and spectators. As interest and enthusiasm increased, more diamonds were developed, reaching a maximum of a four-field complex in 1971. Due to community concern and inadequate parking, the complex was phased out in the mid-70's

leaving one lighted ball field, Phillips Field.

Throughout the history of Bush Park, requests have been received by various groups to encroach upon the park. These requests include the establishment of a zoo along Pringle Creek, a Boy Scout building, Garden Club Center building, an elementary school adjacent to the park so that playground facilities could be utilized, and the widening of Mission Street. The Salem Park and Recreation Advisory Board has consistently recommended against such encroachments.

The Board also endorsed the 1975 Community Goals Park Committee recommendation, "that Willamette University, in its long-range plan, consider relocation of its present athletic facilities, and that the soap box derby track facility be closely observed and consideration given to its removal."

With all of these many changes, Bush Park continues to grow as the pride and focal point of the Salem community. Salem would not be Salem without Bush's Pasture Park!

**The Crooked House, located across from the Art Barn at Bush's Pasture Park, was rebuilt in the summer of 2005. The Crooked House play house stood in the corner of Bush's Pasture Park for many, many years. Parks Operations staff found evidence of rot in the structure and determined the entire skin of the house needed replacement. Parks Operations partnered with the Bush Park Crooked House Playground Committee and employed Inside Oregon Enterprises, the self-funded work provider and training arm of the Oregon Department of Corrections, to rebuild the Crooked House.

To make sure that an accurate reconstruction occurred, Parks staff dismantled and relocated the existing Crooked House to the Inside Oregon Enterprises facility to use as a model. Once the construction was completed, it was reassembled at the park and once again available for youngsters to enjoy.

In 2006, an effort began to add safety lighting between the crooked house and Leffelle Street. An additional effort began to upgrade the lower Leffelle parking lot later that same year.