

FOR COUNCIL MEETING OF:

April 9, 2007

4.3 (i)

AGENDA ITEM NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

**TO:** MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
*Robert G. Wells*  
**THRU:** ROBERT G. WELLS, CITY MANAGER  
*Debra Figueroa*  
**FROM:** DEBRA FIGUEROA, MANAGEMENT ANALYST II  
**SUBJECT:** SALEM'S SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

**Issue:**

What is the proper year for the City of Salem to celebrate its sesquicentennial?

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the City Council selects October 22, 2010 as the official 150-Year birthday for the City of Salem.

**Background:**

On January 22, 2007, Council requested that Salem celebrate the sesquicentennial anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Salem during 2007. Staff researched the history of Salem's incorporation and October 22, 1860 emerged as the actual incorporation date.

**History:**

Salem submitted its first bill to incorporate to the Oregon Territorial State Government in December, 1856. The territorial House of Representatives passed Salem's Charter on January 10<sup>th</sup> and the territorial Council (forerunner of the Senate) passed an amended bill three days later. However, the House failed to pass the amended bill, since it was placed with bills passed, instead of with bills that needed to be enacted. When the incorporation was challenged by an anti-city journalist, Asahel Bush, the city charter was declared invalid on December 8, 1857 by District Judge George H. Williams and the Salem government was disbanded.

Not daunted, pro-city advocates initiated another incorporation act that was passed by both the House and Council in January, 1858. City elections were held and Salem elected a new City Council. However, Bush once again challenged the legality of the City. He claimed that the election was held before the law which contained the charter

had been printed. The City Council asked the courts to rule on the validity of the charter, and once again in April, 1858, the Salem Charter was declared invalid.

Oregon achieved statehood in 1859 and Salem made another attempt to become a city. On October 22, 1860, the City Charter was passed by the Oregon Legislature and the City of Salem became an official city. Sources used for the history of Salem's incorporation were, *Salem Online History and the Capitol Journal (Thursday, November 24, 1960)*.

### **Facts and Findings:**

The City has previously celebrated a sesquicentennial recognizing a Methodist Mission founded by Jason Lee in 1840 on the northern outskirts of modern downtown Salem. This sesquicentennial event took place between October 1990 and June 1991.

Should Council choose 2010 as the date to celebrate Salem's sesquicentennial, staff will become more involved in the State of Oregon's 150-Year birthday, which will occur in the year 2009. Through involvement in the early stages of the State's planning process, staff will gain a greater understanding of the planning and fundraising that should occur before Salem celebrates its own sesquicentennial in 2010.