150 Oregon Books for the Oregon Sesquicentennial

Is there a better way to celebrate Oregon’s 150th birthday than curling up with a good Oregon book? Here are 150 books, carefully selected for your reading enjoyment by librarians at the Oregon State Library in Salem. The list includes books for young readers as well as for older readers. It includes fiction, non-fiction, history and poetry. Some of these books are in-print and available at bookstores and some are long out-of-print classics. Your local library should have many of them, or library staff can get them for you. Print out this list, and start reading!

Books for Young Readers


Bess's Log Cabin Quilt (1995) D. Anne Love. With her father away and her mother ill with fever, ten-year-old Bess works hard on a log cabin quilt to save the family farm.


Bobbi: A Great Collie (1926) Charles Alexander. The true story of Bobbie, who was separated from his owners in Indiana and made his way home unaided to Silverton, Oregon.


Bound for Oregon (1994) Jean Van Leeuwen. The Todd family sets out from their Arkansas home on a two thousand mile trek to Oregon in 1852.


Dear Levi: Letters from the Oregon Trail (1994) Beth Peck. Twelve-year-old Austin Ives heads to Oregon in 1851 and describes his trek in letters to his younger brother.

The Devil in Ol’ Rosie (2001) Louise Moeri. Sent into the wilderness of Eastern Oregon in 1907 to round up the family’s escaped horses, twelve-year-old Wart struggles against great dangers before gaining his father’s respect.

The Double Life of Zoe Flynn (2007) Janet Lee Carey. When Zoe’s family has to live in their van for months after moving from California to Oregon so her father can find work, Zoe tries to keep her sixth-grade classmates from discovering that she is homeless.

Eli’s Songs (1991) Monte Killingsworth. When his musician father hits the road, twelve-year-old Eli is sent to live with his aunt and uncle in the Oregon woods.

Facing West: A Story of the Oregon Trail (1994) Kathleen Kudlinski. As his family sets out from Missouri to Oregon in 1845, young Ben, who suffers from asthma, is fearful of the dangers that lie ahead.

The Ghost Stallion (1999) Laura Williams. In 1959, thirteen-year-old Mary Elizabeth rides with her father to kill the wild stallion that is luring away horses from their Oregon ranch and ruining their livelihood, but she secretly wants to save him.

A Heart for Any Fate: Westward to Oregon 1845 (2006) Linda Crew. A spirited young woman joins her family in an overland journey to Oregon that will test each one of them to the limits of their faith and endurance.


I’m Sorry, Almira Ann (1999) Jane Kurtz. Eight-year-old Sarah’s high spirits help make her family’s long journey from Missouri to Oregon more bearable, though they cause both her and her best friend Almira Ann some problems.

Joyride (1999) Gretchen Olson. Seventeen-year-old Jeff is required to spend his summer working on an Oregon strawberry farm where new friendships with field hands and migrant workers, as well as the farmer's daughter, change his outlook.

Long Ago in Oregon (1987) Claude Lewis. These 17 autobiographical poems describe the family life and activities of a young girl in a small town in Oregon during 1917 and 1918.

New Found Land: Lewis and Clark’s Voyage of Discovery (2004) Allen Wolf. The letters and thoughts of Thomas Jefferson, members of the Corps of Discovery, their guide Sacagawea, and Captain Lewis's Newfoundland dog, are used to tell the story of the historic expedition to the Pacific Ocean.


Operation Clean Sweep (2004) Darleen Bailey Beard. In 1916, just four years after getting the right to vote, the women of Umatilla, Oregon band together to throw the mayor and other city officials out of office, replacing them with women.

Oregon, Sweet Oregon: The Petticoat Party Book, # 3 (1998) Kathleen Karr. As her family settles into their new lives in the Oregon territory, thirteen-year-old Phoebe Brown yearns for more of the freedoms she had experienced on the difficult cross-country journey.


Precious Gold, Precious Jade (2000) Sharon E. Heisel. Two Southern Oregon sisters befriend a Chinese family despite the racism and fear that overwhelm the residents of their small mining town.

Ramona the Pest (1968) Beverly Cleary. Ramona meets lots of interesting people in kindergarten class, like Davy whom she keeps trying to kiss and Susan whose springy curls seem to ask to be pulled.
A Really Weird Summer (1977) Eloise Jarvis McGraw. While staying with relatives who live in an old inn, twelve-year-old Nels finds a secret passageway to a part of the building that no longer exists and meets a strange boy whose family is trapped in a leftover pocket of time.

Tulip Sees America (2002) Cynthia Rylant. A young man and his dog drive west from Ohio and once they reach Oregon, decide to stay.


Wagons West! (1996) Roy Gerard. Buckskin Dan leads a young girl and her family and neighbors over rough terrain and through deep rivers until they reach Oregon.

Seaman: The Dog Who Explored the West With Lewis and Clark (1999) Gail Karwoski. The Newfoundland dog belonging to Meriwether Lewis proves his value as a hunter, navigator, and protector while accompanying the Corps of Discovery.

Year of the Black Pony (1976) Walt Morey. A boy growing up in the Oregon country in the early 1900's experiences the death of his father, the remarriage of his mother, and the ultimate attainment of a dream.

The Shy Stegosaurus of Cricket Creek (1955) Evelyn Sibley Lampman. The story of twins who discover a stegosaurus living on their Oregon ranch.

The Summer of Riley (2001) Eve Bunting. Shortly after he gets “the perfect dog,” Riley, an Oregon boy must fight for the dog's life after Riley is taken away for injuring an elderly neighbor's horse.

Tree Tall and the Horse Race (1986) Shirlee Evans. Tree Tall, an Indian boy living on an Oregon reservation in the mid-nineteenth century, wins a horse of his own in a race but finds his victory marred by misunderstanding and prejudice.
**Books for Older Readers**

*About This Life: Journeys on the Threshold of Memory* (1998) Barry Lopez. One of Oregon’s most accomplished writers reflects on the mysterious connections among landscape, memory and imagination.


*And the Shadows Took Him* (2005) Daniel Chacón. The Molinas move from their Central California barrio to Medford, Oregon where they are one of only three Latino families.

*An Arrow in the Earth: General Joe Palmer and the Indians of Oregon* (1991) Terence O’Donnell. A book that addresses relations between Indians and new settlers from the 1830s to the 1870s and discusses the social, political, cultural and religious development of Oregon during those formative years.


The Brink (2000) Peter Sears. Sears’ second collection of poems was the winner of the 2000 Western States Book Award for poetry.


The Clan of the Cave Bear (1980) Jean Auel. The first in a series of acclaimed novels set in prehistorical times by one of Oregon’s most successful writers.


Coyote Was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country (1977) Jarold Ramsey. The vivid imagination, robust humor, and profound sense of place of the Indians of Oregon are revealed in this anthology, which gathers together hitherto scattered and often inaccessible legends originally transcribed and translated by scholars.

A Day With the Cow Column in 1843 (1952 reprint) Jesse Applegate. A classic personal reminiscence of the first organized wagon train to follow the Oregon Trail.

Deer Drink the Moon (2007) Liz Nakazawa, ed. In this collection, thirty-three of Oregon’s most esteemed poets write about the state they call home.

Delights and Prejudices (1964) James Beard. A memoir with recipes by the great American gastronome with vivid recollections of Portland and Gearhart.


Down In My Heart: Peace Witness in War Time (2006 reprint) William Stafford. Memoir of the years Oregon’s greatest poet was interned in camps for conscientious objectors after refusing to be inducted into the U.S. Army during WWII.


Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall & the Oregon Story (1994) Brent Walth. The definitive biography of Oregon’s greatest governor is a fascinating story of McCall’s successes and shortcomings.


The First Oregonians (2007) Laura Berg. This book provides a comprehensive view of Oregon’s native peoples from the past to the present.

From Here We Speak: An Anthology of Oregon Poetry (1993) Ingrid Wendt. This historical anthology opens with Native American texts and ends with a broad sampling of Oregon’s finest contemporary poets.

From the West to the West: Across the Plains to Oregon (1905) Abigail Scott Duniway. This classic novel is based on the author’s own arduous 2,500-mile overland journey in a train of covered wagons to Pacific Northwest in 1852.


Heart of the Beast (2001) Joyce Weatherford. Twenty-eight-year-old Iris Steele inherits the family ranch in Northeastern Oregon, land the Nez Perce tribe claims is rightfully theirs.
The Hearts of Horses (2008)
Molly Gloss. The latest novel, set in rural Northeastern Oregon, by one of Oregon’s best novelists.

Hiking Oregon’s History
(1999) William L. Sullivan. For armchair traveler and hikers alike, this guidebook tells the stories behind 56 of Oregon’s most scenic historic sites.

Hole in the Sky: a Memoir
(1992) William Kittredge. Kittredge's vivid memoir, set largely in the cattle country of South-Central Oregon, is a Westerner’s settling of accounts with the land he grew up in.

Honey in the Horn (1935)
H.L. Davis. This Pulitzer Prize winning classic Oregon novel is a tale of the settling of Oregon in the first decade of the 20th century.


Horses and the Human Soul

Ellen Morris Bishop. A beautifully photographed, expertly written account of Oregon’s fascinating geological story.


Journeyman’s Wages

The Jump-off Creek (1989)
Molly Gloss. The unforgettable story of a widow who confronts and conquers the demands of homesteading alone in the 1890s.

The Lathe of Heaven

Legends From Camp
Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims (1883) A fascinating memoir and the first English-language book written by a Native American to be published in the U.S.


Living Among Headstones: Life in a Country Cemetery (2005) A memoir of Applegate’s experience as sexton of the Yoncalla cemetery and a meditation on how we long for our loved ones to have a continued place in our lives.

The Man With the Hoe and Other Poems (1919) Edwin Markham. The best collection of poems by Oregon’s first Poet Laureate.


McLoughlin and Old Oregon: A Chronicle (1900) Eva Emery Dye. A classic historical account of early day Oregon — the fur trade, the Whitman Massacre, and the Hudson’s Bay Company.


Nehalem Tillamook Tales (1990) Clara Pearson and Elizabeth Derr Jacobs. The energy, wit, and freshness of these sixty tales, as told by an accomplished Tillamook storyteller, make this volume one of the most accessible and readable collections of traditional Indian literature.


Oregon At Work: 1859–2009 (2009) Art Ayre and Tom Fuller. Using personal stories, historical data, and photos, the book describes what it was like to work and live in three very different periods of the state’s history.


Oregon Detour (1990 reprint) Nard Jones. Jones’ classic 1930 novel created a stir when it was published because of its thinly veiled, unflattering portrayal of the Eastern Oregon community where Jones grew up.


Oregon Indians (2006) Stephen Dow Beckham, ed. A rich documentary history that strives to let Oregon Indians tell their own story.


Oregon: This Storied Land (2005) William G. Robbins. A very readable one volume history of Oregon by one of our most accomplished historians.


Oregon’s Promise (2003) David Peterson Del Mar. A “People’s History of Oregon” concerned with events that most profoundly affected the everyday lives of ordinary Oregonians.


Ranald MacDonald:  The Narrative of His Life (1990 reprint) Ranald MacDonald.  Memoir of the Astoria native who became the first Westerner to visit Japan in 1948.


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Ranch Under the Rimrock (1968) Dorothy Lawson McCall.  A colorful, vividly-told memoir of life in the rugged High Desert country of Oregon by the mother of Governor Tom McCall.


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Return to the River: A Story of the Chinook Run (1997 reprint) Roderick L. Haig-Brown.  This classic 1941 book tells the dramatic life history of one salmon from her hatching through her spawning from the point of view of the fish.

Salmon Nation: People, Fish, and Our Common Home (2003) Elizabeth Woody.  With words, maps, and images, Salmon Nation invites its readers home to a place where people and fish can thrive together.

Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems (2003 reprint) Gary Snyder.  The first collection of poems by one of the most highly regarded poets of our time who spent much of his early life in Portland.

1. **Selected Poems: 1970-2005**  
   (2008) Floyd Skloot. Winner of the 2009 Pacific NW Booksellers Association William Stafford Memorial Poetry Award, a fine collection by one of Oregon’s most accomplished writers.

2. **Skookum: An Oregon Pioneer Family’s History and Lore**  
   (2005 reprint) Shannon Applegate. Award-winning chronicle of the Applegate family as they make their home in the Umpqua Valley.

3. **Sometimes a Great Notion**  
   (2006 reprint) Ken Kesey. This wild-spirited tale by one of Oregon’s greatest writers tells of a bitter strike that rages through a small lumber town along the Oregon coast.

4. **Starting Over: Community Building on the Eastern Oregon Frontier**  

5. **Stepping Westward: The Long Search for Home in the Pacific Northwest**  

6. **The Stories We Tell: An Anthology of Oregon Folk Literature**  
   (1994) Suzi Jones and Jerold Ramsey, ed. Traditional stories, songs, tales, and sayings reveal the richness of Oregon's oral traditions.


8. **Stubborn Twig: Three Generations in the Life of a Japanese American Family**  

9. **A Sweetness to the Soul**  

10. **Talking on Paper: An Anthology of Oregon Letters and Diaries**  


12. **Trask, a Novel**  
    (2004 reprint) Don Berry. A classic work of Oregon fiction about a mountain man’s quest for new opportunities and new land to settle.


**Tule Lake** (1979) Edward Miyakawa. The first Japanese American novel to portray the struggle for justice and freedom from within the confines of America’s internment camps during WWII.


**When the River Ran Wild: Indian Traditions on the Mid-Columbia and the Warm Springs Reservation** (2005) George Aguilar, Sr. Part memoir, part tribal history of the Kiksht-speaking Eastern Chinookans, who lived and worked at the great fishing grounds of the Columbia River.

**Varieties of Hope: and Anthology of Oregon Prose** (1993) Gordon B. Dodds, ed. This anthology of speeches, essays, and works of biography, history, and journalism, profiles the Oregon experience.

**Wild Beauty** (2008) Terry Toedtemeier and John Laursen. The history of photography in the Columbia River Gorge with more than 130 images, most published for the first time.

**Visible Bones: Journeys Across Time in the Columbia River Country** (2003) Jack Nisbet. Historian and naturalist Jack Nisbet looks to the relics of a region to connect the present to the distant past.

**Wildmen, Wobblies & Whistle Punks: Stewart Holbrook's Lowbrow Northwest** (2004) Brian Booth, ed. Irreverent accounts of the region’s history, from forgotten scandals and murders to stories of forest fires and floods by one of Oregon’s most colorful writers.


**Willamette Landings: Ghost Towns of the River** (2004 reprint) Howard McKinley Corning. New edition of the classic portrait of the Willamette River at a time when it was the bustling center of commerce and settlement.
Will You Please Be Quiet, Please? (1992 reprint) Raymond Carver. The first collection of short stories by Oregon-born Carver, now considered one of the 20th century masters of the short story.


