

SHORT-TERM STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

Despite the sobering challenges the heritage community faces, there are practical ways to advance heritage's cause, even before some of this report's big-picture recommendations are implemented. "Doing something" is therapeutic in itself, and some of the pragmatic suggestions below could actually generate some very positive results.

- Focus your organization on key purposes. Shed unsuccessful ones.
- Partner with other organizations, including arts, cultural, educational, tourism, humanities and economic development groups. Find ways to jointly solve challenges and promote heritage.
- Deliver history in a more compelling way that resonates with more people.
- Take better advantage of grants and other support programs that already exist.
- Develop short- and long-term goals to focus energy and follow through to generate a sense of accomplishment and motivation.
- Create a strong cadre of volunteers committed and trained for your organization's key purposes and needs.
- Gather the latest demographic information about your audience, city and county. Determine if your organization reflects that community and how you can meet your community's needs.
- Create a communications plan that effectively uses the print, electronic and digital media in your community.
- Enjoy what you do and celebrate your successes, large or small.



Cottage Grove



Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area

OREGON HERITAGE WALKING THE TALK

Some outstanding heritage efforts.

- Astoria Bicentennial
- Cottage Grove
- Crook County Historical Society
- Lane County Historical Society and Museum
- Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center
- Oregon Digital Newspaper Project
- Oregon Main Street Program
- Portland Archives Crawl
- Southern Oregon Historical Cemeteries Lunch Bunch
- Washington County Museum and Historical Society

For more information about them read the full report at www.oregonheritage.org. Printed copies can be requested from heritage.info@state.or.us or 503-986-0673.

"Oregon's heritage is important to our culture, our economy and our education. Heritage benefits all Oregonians - Let's all join to support it."

- George Kramer, Chair
Oregon Heritage Commission

OREGON HERITAGE VITALITY

THE CHALLENGE OF THE PAST FOR OREGONIANS TODAY AND TOMORROW



OREGON HERITAGE COMMISSION

JANUARY 2011

SUMMARY EDITION



OREGON HERITAGE COMMISSION
OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Note: Photographs are from grant projects funded by the Heritage Programs of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, from nominations to the Oregon Heritage Excellence Awards, or taken by OPRD staff. Thanks to all who provided photographs, information and expertise to this report.

OREGON'S CULTURAL HERITAGE: IT'S EVERYWHERE

Oregon's heritage is more than history, more than artifacts, more than documents in a museum. It is brick on an old downtown building, hand-hewn beams in a homestead barn, smoke rising from a powwow campfire, and sounds from a traditional community celebration. Heritage is stories about people and places, and traditions handed down by elders.



Warm Springs



Pacific Railroad Preservation Assoc.

Heritage links us to the past, and it influences how we think about the future. It inspires us as Oregonians, and it represents us in the imaginations of our visitors. Oregon's heritage is rich, dramatic and sometimes tragic.

Oregon's heritage is a blessing and a responsibility of the present that will inspire great deeds in the future.

SETTING THE STAGE: REPORT BACKGROUND

Oregon's heritage organizations expected the state's sesquicentennial year of 2009 to unleash an exuberant statewide celebration of Oregon heritage. However, the opposite happened. The year became a continuation of increasingly tough years that began for most state and local heritage organizations nearly 20 years ago.

The Oregon Heritage Commission began then to gather information about the status of heritage and to seek potential solutions to its challenges. This precedent-setting report looks at all of the heritage sectors, emphasizing collections, museums, historic preservation, historic cemeteries, historical societies, local heritage efforts, and archives.



White Stag Block, Portland

This report:

- Identifies eight major issues challenging Oregon's heritage and cites examples to address them.
- Makes four recommendations for solving them.
- Lists nine ways individuals and organizations can immediately address the issues.

The complete report is available at www.oregonheritage.org. Printed copies can be requested from heritage.info@state.or.us or 503-986-0673.

OREGON HERITAGE

BY THE NUMBERS

Nearly 200
history-related museums.

More than 30
distinct languages spoken 200
years ago.

1,943
individual properties on the
National Register of Historic
Places - at least one in every
county.

780
designated historic cemeteries.

\$9.78 million
in private re-investment
stimulated by seven Oregon
Main Street communities (2010).

78 %
of U.S. leisure travelers
participate in cultural and/or
heritage activities during travel.

2.5 million
photographic images in the
Oregon Historical Society
collection.

30,885
archaeological sites recorded.

THE EIGHT ISSUES

Oregon's cultural heritage is a significant factor, often unmeasured, in the economic, educational and cultural vitality of Oregon's communities. It typically is a public-private partnership in communities, with no single entity responsible for its conservation and development.



*Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center,
Portland*



Old Scotch Cemetery, Hillsboro

1. UNSTABLE AND INADEQUATE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE FUNDING.
2. LITTLE MEANINGFUL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.
3. THE INABILITY TO MEASURE AND ARTICULATE THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF OREGON HERITAGE.
4. CHANGING EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS HAVE REDUCED THE TIME AND RESPECT GIVEN HISTORY INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION.
5. SHORTAGE OF PEOPLE WITH THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF PRESERVATION, FUND RAISING, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY.
6. CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND EXPECTATIONS, INCLUDING DEVELOPING NEW LEADERSHIP.
7. LIMITED USE OF 21ST CENTURY COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY STRATEGIES.
8. UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY.

THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Oregon's heritage is at risk from both external and internal challenges. Some are statewide and nationwide in nature, while others are found within communities and organizations. No single solution, such as money, will solve everything. The Oregon Heritage Commission recommends that individuals, businesses and organizations re-vitalize Oregon heritage resources by pursuing four goals:

1. REQUEST THAT THE 2011 LEGISLATURE APPOINT AN INTERIM TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE STATE AND COUNTY FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR OREGON HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS, AND TO DEVELOP SOLUTIONS THAT PROVIDE ADEQUATE AND STABLE RESOURCES.
2. DETERMINE THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VALUE OF HERITAGE TO OREGON, INCLUDING ITS DIRECT AND SECONDARY EFFECTS.
3. STRATEGICALLY COMMUNICATE CONSISTENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF HERITAGE TO THE ECONOMY AND DAILY LIVES OF OREGONIANS.
4. INCREASE THE ABILITY OF HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES TO EXPAND THEIR LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT, PRESERVATION, COMMUNITY-BUILDING, COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS, AND TECHNOLOGY.