

PART VII: SOUTHEAST PORTLAND

Southeast Portland had its beginnings in two separate town-sites which grew and, with the addition of linking subdivisions, became the largest subdivision of the city. East Portland founded by James B. Stevens in 1850 and Sellwood founded in 1882 were the principal incorporated cities of southeast Portland. That East Portland did not become the central commercial and entertainment district for Portland was, I believe, due to two factors. First, the geography of the east bank made it necessary to construct expensive trestles and wharves over the estuaries of the east shore in order to have access to marine transportation. The second and possibly decisive factor was the bridging of the Willamette and construction of the main railroad depot on the west bank.

Bridging the Willamette would have come eventually; but bringing the trains across was a matter of politics and financing and made little practical sense. All the original trans-continental railroads arrived first on the east bank where the main terminal would have been easier to build. As it was, the O.R.&N. and O.&C., now Union Pacific and Southern Pacific, built their railroad yards on the east bank, becoming major industries for Albina and Brooklyn neighborhoods which have many qualities of railroad towns.

Another factor in the development of Portland vs East Portland was that agricultural products were the area's principal trading commodity and that the best and first agricultural lands cultivated in the Portland area were southwest and west of the Willamette rivertowns. Lands east of the Willamette were frequently described in early accounts as being densely forested with trees and thick underbrush, while parts of the Tualatin Plains and the Champoeg area were open fields which needed little clearing to initially place under agriculture. Until 1880, southeast Portland development was limited to the few riverside town-sites and additions, Stevens' East Portland, Brooklyn, Gideon Tibbets' Addition, and Sellwood. In the following ten years, East Portland grew by the platting and development of a chain of residential neighborhoods out to Mount Tabor Villa; along the ridges of SE Taggart and Woodward Streets, called East Portland Heights, Woodstock, and along the car line to Sellwood, these were the southeast streetcar suburbs.

EAST PORTLAND

The association of East Portland with the homestead of free-man Etienne Lucier was described in relation to the history of Northeast Portland and Irvington. Another freeman named Porier (Sp. uncertain) is said to have had a claim on the east side of

the river and to have built a cabin there (33). Porier died in 1845 and Dr. John McLoughlin, as administrator of the man's will, sold the property to James B. Stephens. Stephens' D.L.C. was recorded in the survey of 1850. Other claims in southeast Portland bear the names of pioneers still remembered, such as Gideon Tibbetts, Edward Long, Alfred and H. Lewelling, Jacob Wills, Seldon Murray, and Clinton and Plympton Kelley.

James B. Stephens arrived at Oregon City in 1844 with his wife Elizabeth. He immediately set about his trade as a cooper, making barrels for packing salmon and other commodities for shipment to the Sandwich Islands and Eastern United States ports. Stephens learned of the availability of the lands of the deceased former Hudson Bay Company employee and bought the rights for \$200. from Dr. McLoughlin. Stephens was also reported to have known of the availability of William Overton's claim on the west side, but chose the east side lands with their access to unlimited developable areas and rich farmlands and their lower price, instead of the deeper water but west hills-restricted Overton claim (34).

Stephens built a log house on the east bank near the foot of present Stephens Street. He continued buying east bank lands until he owned 1,920 acres extending from approximately Stark Street to Division Street and east to 20th Avenue. Stephens replaced his earlier cabin with a new and imposing two-story house in the early 1860's. The Stephens' house appears in many early photographs high on the riverbank central on the east side across from Portland, including the 1860's photograph in the O.H.S. collection and in a panoramic photograph of Portland in 1876 which was taken from the top of Central School. Stephens' home was moved from its riverbank site to its present location at 1825 SE 12th Avenue, at Stephens Street, in 1902 by Stephens' heirs. The house now is extensively altered and adapted for apartments but is sound and could be restored as possibly the most historic home remaining in Portland.

Stephens was engaged in many enterprises in Oregon and in California, sometimes profitably but more often losing money. Perhaps his only continuing and successful enterprise was the ferry from W. Stark Street to E. O Street, operated at first by mule power.

In 1850, Stephens laid out his first townsite which extended from E. Glisan Street to Hawthorne Boulevard, and from the river to First Street. It roughly corresponded to the land between the estuaries of Sullivan's Gulch and Assylvan Gulch near the foot of Hawthorne and Stark Street. Stephens filed the plat of East Portland in 1861. His new town appears to have grown slowly, awaiting the activities of railroad building in the 1870's to begin its major development. East Portland incorporated in October, 1870, and ten years later, the Steel Bridge was opened to rail traffic only. In 1879 the town was described as having

largely factories and docks, with scattered boarding houses and small shops.

Judge Mathew Deady wrote to the *San Francisco Bulletin* in 1866 describing his impressions of early Portland and East Portland: "...across the Willamette and upon its east bank, I could count the houses and orchards in the suburban village of East Portland. This place is yet half town and half country, but it is destined at no distant day to furnish an abundance of cheap and comfortable homes...."

In the 1880's, the west side Portland lowlands had become crowded with homes, making the open space of the east side more desirable for building. The opening of the Morrison Bridge in 1887 and of the general traffic deck on the Steel Bridge in 1888 cleared the way for free access to the east bank lands for development. The simultaneous development of steam car lines to Sunnyside in 1886 and three years later in 1889 to Mount Tabor hastened the rapid settlement of the outlying eastside; and Judge Deady's prophesy became fulfilled.

East Portland became the site of many industries which located along the railroad tracks and riverbank. Chief among these were lumber and flour mills, shipping facilities, metal smelting plants, and foundries. The streets of East Portland were trestles raised on wood piling to span the low marsh lands. An 1872 photograph of the area near East Stark or Pine Streets, looking southwest, shows a sparsely settled ridge of land where now would be SE Grand Avenue and Morrison Street, wooden trestles, and simple wooden homes and false front stores. The slough which met the river near the foot of Stark Street was called Asylum Slough and began near SE 12th Avenue and Hawthorne Boulevard. By 1896, the streets of East Portland were a grid of trestles as shown in a photograph of the industrial area near East Third Avenue and Belmont Street. The same photograph shows a new white building for the Buffalo Pitts Thresher Company and a long building for Russell and Company, farm implement dealers. The two-story 100X200-ft. Buffalo Pitts Building, remodeled, may be the same building now standing between the ramps of the Morrison bridge on East Second Avenue, recently a warehouse for Goodwill Industries, which bears on its south elevation signs for Studebaker Wagons, and the Oliver Company on the west elevation. The warehouse now has a full story beneath the present street elevation, corresponding to the piling level below the original trestle streets. Assessor's records give a 1905 date for this building which appears so similar to the 1896 photograph.

At the time of incorporation, East Portland comprised an area, rectangular in shape, from Holgate to Halsey Streets and east to 24th Avenue, including neighborhoods called Stephens' Addition, Brooklyn, Ladd's Addition, and Holladay Park. In February, 1891, Sunnyside was annexed.

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Portland and East Portland were consolidated in June, 1891. The central commercial district of East Portland was along Union and Grand (then Marghetta) Avenues. Today, there is a nucleus of old East Portland buildings remaining the five-block strip along Grand between Morrison and Pine Streets. Included in this core are: the three-story Barber Block of 1891, a late Victorian fantasy in brick, stone, wood, and metal; the Logus Building of 1894 is a handsome design similar to the Dekum Building in Portland and Queen Esther Apartments in Albina--brick, carved stone, and wood. Other comparable buildings complete the district, some appearing to be from the 1880's. A scattering of other notable buildings are in the vicinity of Grand and Morrison--the reinforced concrete feed mill at Third and Pine Street; Euphoria Tavern, 315 SE Third Avenue; brick and cast-iron building at Oak Street and Union Avenue; Orient Lodge, 706-10 SE 6th Avenue; Water Building, 622-26 SE Alder Street; Knights of Columbus, 523 SE Ankeny Street; the wooden industrial buildings of Phoenix Iron Works at SE Third Avenue and Clay Street.

East Portland has three Portland Historic Landmarks, the Judge W.D. Penton Residence, 626 SE 16th Avenue, 1892; Third Church of Christ Scientist, 1722 SE Madison, 1926; and on the very south end, the Robert D. Inman Residence, 3040 SE Grand Avenue, 1890. The central buildings in the 400-700 blocks on Grand Avenue should be considered for Historic Landmark recognition, some individually for their own sake and the others as a group because they offer the potential for a commercial historic district and renewal for this area. East Portland offers one of the richest ensembles of late Victorian residences in the city. The area now called Buckman has many blocks and sections of streets virtually complete with 1880's, '90's, and 1900's homes of excellent variety and completeness. The Queen Anne residence at SE 12th Avenue and Yamhill Street is an outstanding example in excellent condition. The inner blocks from 12th to 20th Avenues along SE Pine and Oak Streets have good examples of simpler Queen Anne and Stick Style homes.

The blocks between Morrison and Salmon Streets have many fine residences, especially in sections of Taylor and Salmon Streets, which were the ridge streets. The city will be a poorer place if the same concern and remedial action is not given for these blocks as is being given to the comparable blocks of Lair Hill-Corbett and Northwest neighborhoods.

The land forms of East Portland have been altered to a relatively greater extent than those of West Portland. An 1881 lithograph print of Portland from up on Carter's Addition has the estuaries of the east side clearly delineated. The Talbot Map of Portland of 1868 also has the bottom land areas shown. Stephen's Addition occupies a ridge between Sullivan's Gulch on the north and a creek extending out east generally along Division Street. In the middle of the east side of Stephens' town, near the present center of 10th Avenue and Salmon Street was the Lunatic Asylum.

The asylum grounds became Hawthorne Park in the 1890's. A 1930's Rotogravure photo shows this natural wooded park and the original spring which fed the stream that meandered through East Portland until about 1900. Today all of these land irregularities are filled, with exception of Sullivan's Gulch. The riverfront areas are filled approximately one-story deep.

SUNNYSIDE

The Portland, Sunnyside, and Mt. Tabor Motorline began operation in 1886 or 1887 and ran as far as the remote subdivision of Sunnyside. The car line connected with westside horse-car lines across the new Morrison Bridge in 1888. In 1889, the steam engine powered car lines of the P.S.&Mt.T. Motorline reached out to Mt. Tabor. My mother's family often described the all-day outings planned to take the steam car line out for picnics on the poison oak covered slopes, and the consequences of the outings. It is difficult for us today to appreciate the concept of distance in traveling in the 1890's; we can travel in 30 minutes the distance which then required an all day outing. The end of the car line in new Sunnyside was about at the present intersection of SE 34th Avenue and Belmont Street where the end-of-the-car line atmosphere is preserved in the nucleus of commercial buildings which remain in the area.

Sunnyside was platted in the late 1880's on what had been the Seldon Murray Donation Land Claim. It is physically an extension of East Portland, and architecturally continues the pattern of residential development along the ridges and later in the lower areas. There is a surviving rich assortment of late Victorian residences along the Taylor-Salmon Streets routes, with clusters on Belmont Street. There are several early 20th Century apartment buildings on Belmont and Yamhill Streets. A small group of larger residences are near the jog in the car line route at 28th Avenue and Morrison Street. Many older houses have the original carriage houses in their near yards. Sunnyside could well have a small historic district in the area of the Sunnyside Improvement Area, combining the end-of-car line commercial center with one or more adjacent residential blocks.

NOTEWORTHY BUILDINGS IN SUNNYSIDE AND THE LINKING STREETS WITH EAST PORTLAND ARE:

- The old stone churches, beginning with Hinson Memorial Baptist on 20th Avenue and Salmon Street.*
- Sunnyside Congregational Church at 32nd Avenue and Taylor Street.*
- Sunnyside Methodist at 35th and Yamhill.*
- The Mennonite Church at 35th Avenue and Main Street.*
- *The churches are all from c.1910 and exhibit a uniformity of architectural expression for churches of this period.





