

Tigard

By Sean Garvey

Tigard (pronounced TY-gerd) is located in Washington County's Tualatin Valley, a region that for thousands of years was the territory of the Atfalati, a northern band of the Kalapuya. Chachimahiyuk, the closest Atfalati village to present-day Tigard, was on the banks of the Tualatin River. Today, descendants of the Atfalati are members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. In 1843, white emigrants formed the Provisional Government, which created the Twality District (present-day Washington County) as one of Oregon's four original counties. The town of Tigard was named for Wilson McClendon Tigard, who settled in the area in 1852 and helped organize the area's first school. For years, it was the oldest unincorporated community in Oregon.

After Oregon became a territory in 1848, the Donation Land Claim Act in 1850 granted the first claims in the Tigard area to George and Martha Richardson, John L. and Martha Hicklin, William Graham and his wife, and James Hicklin and his wife. The Butte election precinct was formed in 1855, and the name came to identify the region. The Washington County Court later divided the Butte precinct into east and west precincts in 1876, and Butte became known as East Butte.

Butte's and, later, East Butte's early institutions developed slowly following Oregon statehood in 1859. A larger schoolhouse was built in 1869, and farmers formed the Butte Grange in 1874. An evangelical congregation was organized in 1877, and St. Mary Magdalene Mission church held its first Mass in 1878.

In the 1880s, Charles Tigard, Wilson Tigard's son, opened Tigardville, a general store along Taylor's Ferry Road on his parents' land claim. He opened a post office in the store in December 1887 and was appointed postmaster, and Tigardville slowly began to displace the use of East Butte as the town's name. Charles Tigard served two terms in the Oregon legislature and was president of the First Bank of Tigard, the area's first home-grown financial institution. He died in 1942.

When the Oregon Electric Railway was completed near Tigardville in 1907, the town was "minutes away" from Portland. A depot was built on Taylor's Ferry Road, a mile north of the Tigardville General Store. To avoid confusion with the railway's Wilsonville stop, the Oregon Electric changed the name of the North Tigardville station to Tigard. Within a few years, a commercial district emerged, with a hotel, general store, meat market, grocer, saloon, cigar and tobacco shop, blacksmith, livery stable, and barbershop.

The arrival of the railway coincided with the first residential developments in Tigard. Portland developer Edward Quackenbush's Investment Company subdivided and platted large tracts of land around the town, promoting the area with booklets like *Small Farms Pay* and *Tualatin Valley Farm Lands*. Taylor's Ferry Road became part of Oregon's first highway system in 1917 and was renamed the West Side Pacific Highway. A few years later, the Federal Highway Act of 1921 co-designated the West Side Pacific Highway as U.S. Highway 99W. Passenger service on the Oregon Electric Railway ceased in May 1933, and in 1940 the Oregon Highway Commission constructed a viaduct in Tigard to divert 99W traffic around the business district.

Tigard saw continued growth after World War II, and by 1952 the town faced a sewage disposal situation. The Tigard Businessman's Club promoted incorporation, and the Citizens Committee for Incorporation claimed that the best way to handle the sanitation issue was to create a municipality and tax residents. Tigard voters formed a local sanitation district in 1955 and approved a bond the next year to construct a modern sewer system and disposal plant. When the nearby town of Metzger experienced a similar crisis in 1957, Tigard Chamber of Commerce leaders supported incorporation that included Metzger in the plan. The voters rejected incorporation twice in 1958.

The Chamber of Commerce revived the idea of incorporation in 1961 when industrial committee chairman Elton Phillips reported that Tigard's taxing districts discouraged new industry. That September, voters approved incorporation by nineteen votes. The new city's boundaries stretched 1.41 miles and had a population of 1,749 people. Elton Phillips was elected mayor and took office in November 1961.

Tigard's population more than doubled by the 1970s, and property annexations expanded its geographic size. Commuter train service returned to Tigard in 2009 when Westside Express Service (WES) established service between Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin, and Wilsonville. River Terrace, a 500-acre area on the city's westernmost edge added to the region's Urban Growth Boundary in 2002. By 2017, Tigard had more than 50,000 residents.

Reminders of Tigard's early history are still visible throughout the city. The Tigard Historical Association saved the John Tigard House from demolition and restored it in 1979. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Tigard community's premier annual event is the Tigard Festival of Balloons, held every June at Cook Park.

Sources

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