This year’s Historic Home Tour was a great event. We appreciate all of the outstanding efforts of the Home Tour Committee. The Heritage Board is also very grateful for all the sponsors and volunteers who made the event possible. Thank you also for the record number of tour goers! Next up, please join us for the 13th Annual Oswego Heritage Council’s Collector Car and Classic Boat Show on August 19, 2012, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Enjoy collector cars and on-land classic boats at George Rogers Park, classic boats on the Lake at the Lake Oswego Corporation Docks and classic boats, including PT658, at the Foothills Park Docks. A free shuttle, provided by First Student, Inc., will run continuously throughout the Show to all three venues. Admission to all three venues is also free to both car and boat owners and spectators.

Pancakes and hamburgers will be provided by the Lake Oswego Lions Club at George Rogers Park and food and beverages will be available for purchase at The Stickmen Skewery and Brewery (former Oswego Lake House) at the Lake Oswego Corporation Docks.

Spectators will be able to get a closeup view of spectacular cars and boats and will be able to board and tour PT 658, the only usable PT Boat in the world and a member of the Columbia Willamette Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, a sponsor of the Show.

Other Pre-Show events will be held with the arrival of PT 658 at the Foothills docks on the Willamette on Saturday at 10:00 am. The crew, three who are WWII Veterans, will again be welcomed to the city by Mayor Hoffman and many other admirers. At 3:00 pm, our third annual water ski spectacular will be part of the Pre-Show events. The water ski spectacular will start with six skiers, all on classic wood skis, carrying flags that spell out OSWEGO. Each skier, in vintage-look polka dot swim suits, will circle Lakewood Bay. Other events will include Bob Barnum, an Oswego Heritage Council and Columbia Willamette ACBS Board Member, slalom skiing and Lita Schiel Grigg recreating her experiences as a Oswego Lake water skier.
There were fir trees all around our two houses, and so we were happily “right among the Christmas trees!” We had passed the tall, white church with the still taller belfry tower only about three blocks back along our way. Mt. Hood loomed up over some fields directly in front of our place, with the river in the near background. Never before had we seen such a magnificent mountain peak. I, for one, never have tired of looking at that commanding sight, to this day.

Details of our settling escape me. We all had work to do. Lester and I helped Papa to spade up the garden area, and we managed to get some planting done, in spite of this advancing summer weather. There was wood to split for the cook stove, and we boys were given specific directions in how to do this safely. Laying the fire and keeping it going was no problem, since we had done this for years. Chores interfered with our exploring the town, which we three boys managed to accomplish within a few days after our arrival, gradually extending our territory as opportunity offered. Neighbor boys gave us good directions to “Old Town” over beyond the duck pond, where the Post Office was, and the tall, ungainly school house stood on the same bouldery ridge. The Lake was not far on beyond that, with the dam and the waterfalls below it, and the wooden covered bridge which crossed Oswego Creek right next to the timbered dam. “South Town” struggled up the hill beyond the creek, some of the houses standing close to the south shore of the Lake. Signs at each end of the bridge warned drivers (of wagons, of course) to “Walk your horses. $25.00 fine.”

Snags standing in the water made the lake somewhat less than attractive to some people, and these called it Sucker Lake. It was a “made lake” in part, dammed many years before as part of the plan for mining iron and smelting it at the Oregon Iron and Steel Smelter with charcoal from the vast woods that covered the surrounding country for miles around.

Among the first people we met were Mr. and Mrs. Albert Thompson and her old father, “Grandpa Eaton,” who had been an early settler there. They were all pillars of the church and were most kind and tolerant of us preacher’s kids. Mr. Eaton always wore a long, white beard, but was active and alert, and told us much of the early days of Oswego. He had towed logs the length of the lake and hauled cordwood in his old, flat-bottomed scow many years before, and knew all about the iron mines up on Iron Mountain and the narrow gauge track on which the ore was hauled from the mines down to the smelter when the mines were in operation. The old “dinky track,” as we called it, was still traceable up the hill from the smelter down by the river to the abandoned mouths of three mine shafts which had been drifted at an angle into the hill just below the summit. In fact, there was a usable trail that followed the grown-over ties of the right-or-way, though the rails had been removed many years before, and there were rose bushes, hazel brush and second-growth fir which made the path a bit winding. After several scouting trips along this trail, we boys persuaded Mama to try it with us, which she did later that first summer. She already knew most of the trees and plants, as she was a more than amateur botanist, so we had first-hand information from her when she could take walks with us. On that hot afternoon we finally made it to the mine entrances and found cool relief in the tunnel openings where ferns grew, and there were still puddles along the mine floors with polliwogs in them. She warned us not to go far into the old shafts, as the timber supports were rotten and there had been many cave-ins.

On the first Fourth-of-July of our stay at Oswego, “Grandpa Eaton” and the Thompsons arranged for us to go on a picnic trip to the head of the Lake in his old scow. We boys had already found the old, flat-bottom boat tied to a snag in a cove not far from the swimming hole which all the boys of town used, and where the Martin family had a boat house. We bailed out the water in the scow, fixed a mast for a square sail near the bow of the boat, and carried a pair of oars down on the day before, hiding them among the brush overnight. Next day all of us Joneses and our hosts headed down the woodsy trail to the Lake, well laden with baskets of lunch and all that goes for a picnic, plus some firecrackers, of course. Somehow we all managed to get seats in the scow, which was about five feet wide and 20 feet long. There was not enough wind to help much, so the men took turns rowing all the way to the upper end of the Lake. We boys tried to help by using paddles made of boards with whittled handles. At last we beached the boat at a beautiful, grassy place across from the opening of the canal which brought water in from the Tualatin River.

That picnic was all that a small boy’s heart could desire, and after the big feast we boys were allowed to fire off our firecrackers and wade in the shallows of the lake, to our great delight. Time to pack up and re-embark came all too soon, but a breeze had sprung up from the west, so that Mr. Eaton could set the sheet that we had for a sail and so spared us men folks the task of rowing all the nearly four miles back. To our surprise, not much bailing was needed.

The Bloomers were fine neighbors, and we used to spend long evenings sitting on their front steps or ours, watching the evening glow over Mt. Hood and talking of their early experiences in coming to Oregon by covered wagon, conditions of work of the older Bloomer boys in the logging woods and mills, or of kidnapping of men for crews of the many sailing ships which still thronged Portland Harbor. “Shanghaing” was still common along all the west coast ports, ours included. They knew of actual cases, men they knew who had been on long voyages against their wills, after being drugged and hauled aboard a schooner or tramp ship only to find themselves well out to sea, involuntary members of the crew, bound for far places. Some found their way back after months of sailing. Some never returned.

The old folks returned to their experiences on the old Oregon Trail most often, though they traveled it well after the end of the Civil War, and there had been towns here and there, and fewer Indians to threaten their stock. But their long weeks on the dusty road seemed closer to us kids as they told of the dust, scarce water holes, alkali and sick cattle. We can always say that we knew some of the real pioneers. And they were always loyal to their new home in the Oregon Country, even though some called them “Mossbacks.” They were of Catholic faith, and the youngest daughter was still taking training at St. Mary’s Academy in Portland, preparing to enter a teaching sisterhood – Sister Cecelia, then a charming young lady.

We three older boys soon found work to do that would earn us some extra money, first picking strawberries up on a hill south of the Lake, later cherry-picking at Morgan’s farm (to be continued)
Circa 1899 Howard and Arthur Jones

Junior Girl Scouts Earn Bronze Award for Oswego Heritage House Rose Garden Project

On Tuesday, May 29th, at the Lakewood Theatre for the Arts in Lake Oswego, Grace and Aileen Converse of Girl Scout troop 40025 were presented their Bronze award for their participation and completion of the rose garden project.

Upon receiving the award, Aileen said, “Finally! I can go onto working towards the Silver award for this upcoming year when I bridge to Cadettes. I’m excited about working for my community so that I can make a difference.”

The girls decided to serve their community by creating a map and brochure that illustrates each variety of rose and its history in the garden at the Oswego Heritage House.

Grace and Aileen chose this project over many other opportunities they could have selected due to the Oswego Heritage House’s involvement in the community. They learned while visiting the museum in August last summer that the Heritage House had a need for a new visitor’s map of the rose garden to help guests learn more about the beautiful roses that are planted there. Grace commented, “The Lake Oswego Heritage House is probably the most interesting local organization and the most overlooked by our community. I wanted to raise awareness of it because it is a resource that not many people consider.”

After overcoming many challenges, such as identifying each rose, where they were planted, and learning more about the rose’s history, the girls began compiling a comprehensive brochure and self-guided tour of the garden.

When asked what the most difficult part of the project was for her, Aileen responded, “Learning more about each rose’s history because most encyclopedias didn’t say much.” Grace added, “Slogging through in the wintertime to try to identify each rose and where it was planted.”

The girls are planning to serve in the rose garden this next year by fundraising for plant markers so that all the bushes will be identifiable regardless of whether they are in bloom. They are looking forward to earning their Silver and Gold awards by serving more at the Oswego Heritage House. Look for further updates as the girls work towards earning their Silver and Gold awards with the Oswego Heritage House and the beautiful rose garden!

We would like to thank Lake Oswego Chamber for their help and grant money for new lighting. We would also like to thank Globe Lighting of Lake Oswego for their generous support. Without the help and support of these two groups we would not have been able to replace the lighting at the Heritage House.
This year’s Historic Home Tour has been the result of the dedicated efforts of many individuals. In addition to our generous Sponsors named below, we would like to extend a special note of thanks to our more than 70 home docent volunteers. Thank you sponsors, volunteers, home owners, and our wonderful Home Tour Committee.

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