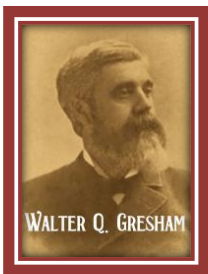




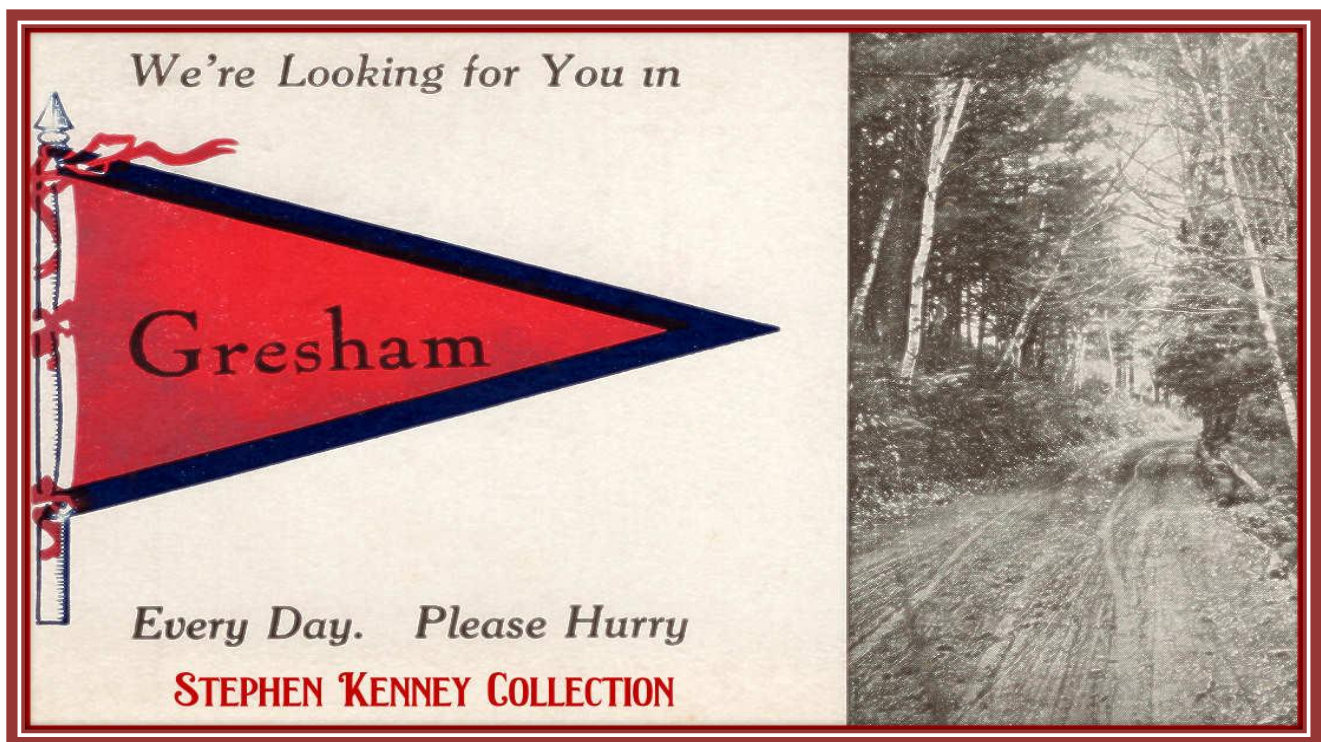
WEBFOOTER EXTRA

APRIL 2025



GRESHAM GROWS INTO A THRIVING METROPOLIS

BY MARK MOORE



Lithographed Gresham pennant postcard postmarked on March 6, 1914 in Gresham, Oregon.

Prior to the arrival of white European settlers, the Gresham area was heavily forested. Boring lava domes surrounded the area, and swamps dotted the land. Three Chinook tribes, the Multnomah, the Wasco, and the Clackamas, lived in neighboring areas along the Columbia River. These three tribes used the area to forage for food, hunt, or simply pass through while traveling to trade. During fishing season, the Clackamas tribe of the Chinookan peoples built their plank-house villages next to the various creeks and rivers within Gresham, including Johnson Creek.

European immigrants settled in the area beginning in the 1850s and Asian immigrants began to settle in the area in the 1880s. The first school in the area, Powell Valley School, was established in 1857. In the 1870s, a religious camp meeting ground was established in the area and this became a popular stop-off point for people traveling to Portland. The first sawmill was built in the Gresham area in 1880 and the first church, Bethel Baptist Church, was established in 1884, the same year the first post office was opened in the newly-christened town of Gresham where there were 52 families living within a three-mile radius.

Due to its proximity to Portland and being near the Bull Run water supply, which was tapped in 1893, Gresham saw early growth. Telephone lines from Portland to Bull Run were built through town a year later. Then in 1895, the area's first road, Baseline Road (now Stark Street), opened.

In 1901, the Oregon Water Power and Railway Company began building a railroad east of Portland to Gresham, Boring and Estacada to a dam and powerhouse that were to be built at Cazadero. The new Springwater rail line became a major source of transportation in the Portland area. The new railroad was used to haul logs to the sawmills, and to return with the produce and milk products from farms in the area as well as cut lumber for builders.

The railroad began using steam engines that pulled passenger and freight cars. By 1905, the rail line was electrified and streetcars began transporting passengers and freight. The streetcar significantly reduced travel time between Portland and the communities to its east. Horse and buggy travel from Gresham to Portland took an average of five hours while a trip via the interurban system took about forty-five minutes. On weekends, families packed picnic baskets and took the streetcar to parks at the end of the line as an excursion.

Then, in 1902, the first public telephone was extended from Portland to Lewis Shattuck's Store in Gresham where the switchboard was installed.

Also in 1902, ten students enrolled in the first Gresham High School classes.



Real photo postcard of the High School at Gresham. Postmarked June 8, 1908 in Gresham.

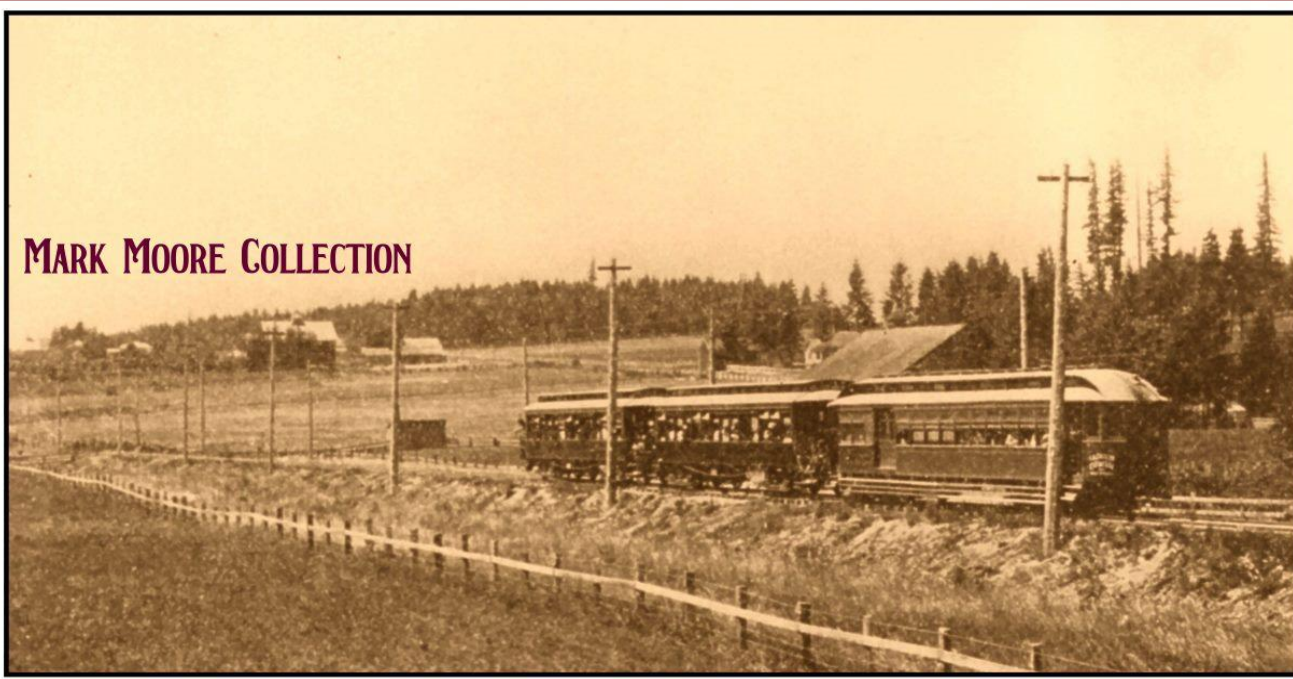


Photo of an electric interurban train stopped at Gresham's Main City Park Depot on the Oregon Water Power and Railway Company rail line heading back to Portland from Estacada, circa 1904.

The citizens of Gresham elected Lewis Shattuck as the first mayor in 1904. Articles of incorporation for the city of Gresham were submitted to the state of Oregon and they were approved early in 1905.

In 1906, the need for lights and electricity led to the organization of the Mt. Hood Railway and Power Company to build a rail line east of Portland to get supplies and building materials to Bull Run where a power generating plant was built. Construction began in 1908 and in 1911 they opened a 22-mile steam railroad line from 90th and Glisan in Portland to Burnside with service to 30 stations including Gresham. This line connected with the Union Pacific and the Montavilla streetcar line at 90th. The line was extended east to Bull Run near the confluence of the Bull Run and Sandy rivers.

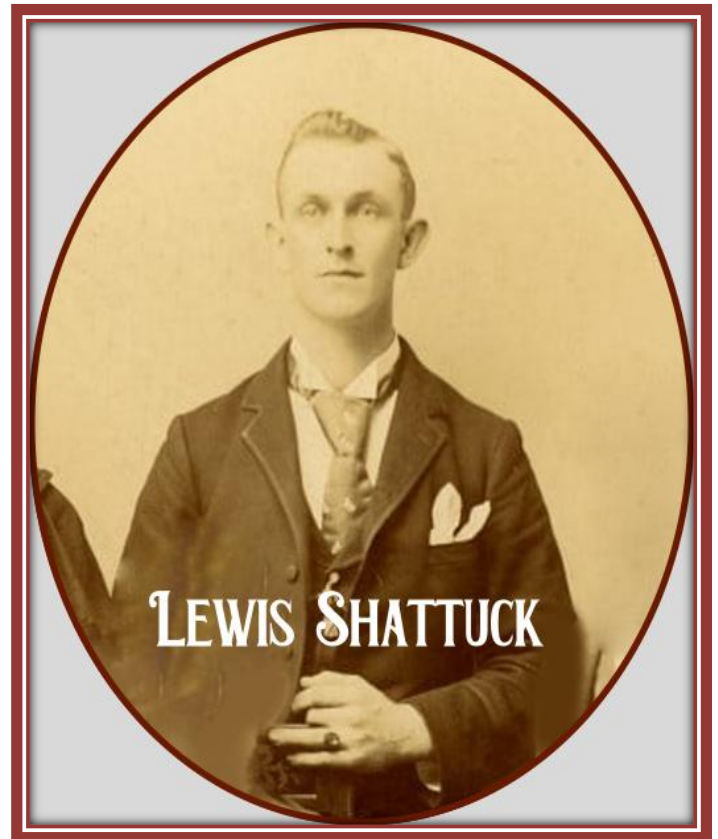


Photo of two excursion trains on the newly-opened Mt. Hood Railway and Power Company line east of Gresham, circa 1911.



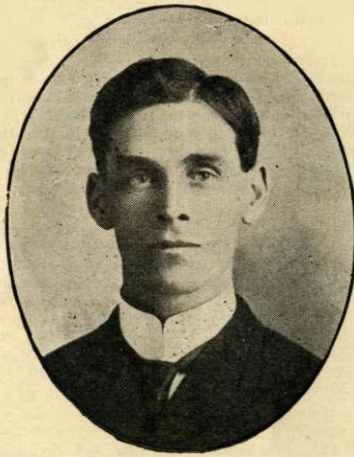
Photo of a Portland-bound interurban on the newly-electrified Mt. Hood Railway and Power Company at the Gresham Depot, circa 1915.

In 1910, Gresham residents abandoned a local well-water system and Gresham contracted with the city of Portland to supply water from Bull Run. That same year, a volunteer fire department was formed.

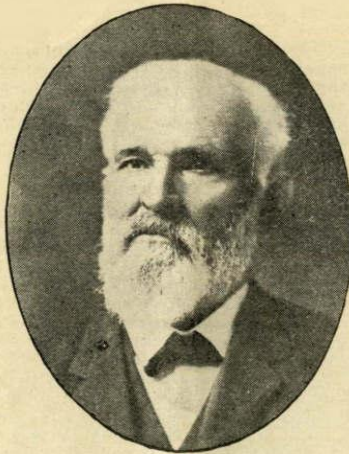
The Portland Railway Light and Power Company acquired the Mt. Hood Railway and Power Company's assets and operating equipment in 1912. They strung overhead electric wires above the rails in 1913, and began operating electric streetcars on the renamed Mt. Hood Division.

In the mid-1890s, several members of the Gresham Grange met to discuss the hosting of a Grange Fair. However, the idea of a county Grange Fair wasn't approved until a meeting at the Gresham Grange on July 13, 1906. A motion was made and passed asking that each Grange in Multnomah County cooperate in presenting the county fair.

In 1907, tents were set up for the first fair in an area known as "the flats," now a part of Main City Park. There was one large tent housing the main exhibits, and other smaller tents were lined up along Johnson Creek to hold carnival attractions. An independent group of stockholders sponsored the First Annual Multnomah County Grange Fair and Carnival on October 16-19, 1907.



TIMOTHY BROWNHILL
Editor of the Beaver State Herald,
promoter of the forthcoming fair
and carnival.



MR. and MRS. J. W. SHATTUCK.
Members of Gresham Grange and the first to assist in perfecting the plans
of the Fair and Carnival.



MARK MOORE COLLECTION

Photos of the principal organizers of the First Annual Multnomah County Grange Fair and Carnival on October 16-19, 1907. From left: Timothy Brownhill, Editor of the Beaver State Herald newspaper and promoter of the First Grange Fair and Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Shattuck, members of the Grange and the first in perfecting the plans for the Fair and Carnival. From a promotional booklet for the Fair.



Real photo postcard of the second Grange Fair at Gresham, Oregon in 1908 when it was relocated to a lot west of Main Avenue, a location where it remained for 61 years. The Exhibit Building is seen on the left and the Grange Fair Headquarters were housed in the tent in the center. The Exhibit Building was 60 ft. wide by 150 feet deep. Postmarked Oct. 19, 1908 in Gresham.



Lithographed advertising postcard for the Fifth Annual Grange Fair at Gresham on September 21-24, 1911. Postally unused. Mark Moore collection.

Due in part to Gresham's close proximity to rail lines, the fair grew throughout the years, permanent buildings were established on the site to house exhibits and others were used for the judging and showing of livestock. Sometime around 1910, the east side of the fairgrounds were given over to a racetrack to host competitions for horse racing, harness racing, Model T Ford races, and pig races. The south side held racehorse stables and livestock barns. The central portion was dedicated to display galleries and the racetrack grandstand. The northern portion of the fair was assigned to the midway and eateries.

Fairgoers experienced the smells of the barnyard that gave way to the aromas of fried onions, French fries, corn dogs, and cotton candy. You could feel the warm evening breezes with the whirlwind of carnival rides and the barkers, with their Kewpie doll attractions, made the fantasy complete. At the end of the night, fairgoers would go home with goldfish, stuffed animals, and other prizes in hand.

In 1912, a County Fair Association was formed to manage the Fair. The Fair continued as a private enterprise until the 1930s. From the mid-1930s until 1949, the Multnomah County Fair was operated by the County through the Multnomah County Fair Association, a private non-profit corporation administered by a board of local county residents.

In 1944, the Gresham fairgrounds and racetrack were chosen as the setting for the Hollywood film, *Thunderhead, Son of Flicka*, sequel to *My Friend Flicka*, starring Roddy McDowell as a teenager. Camera crews filmed racetrack scenes at the fairgrounds where extras from Gresham were hired to fill the grandstands. Gresham High School Band Director Harold Weber was hired to start the races with a trumpet salute.



MULTNOMAH COUNTY FAIR EXHIBITION BUILDINGS AUGUST 1946

MARK MOORE COLLECTION

Photo of the Multnomah County Fair Exhibition Buildings in August of 1946.



MULTNOMAH COUNTY FAIR AMUSEMENT RIDES AUGUST 1946

MARK MOORE COLLECTION

Photo of the Multnomah County Fair Amusement Rides in August of 1946.



MULTNOMAH COUNTY FAIR MIDWAY IN AUGUST 1946

MARK MOORE COLLECTION

Photo of the Multnomah County Fair Midway and Eateries in August of 1946.

Attendance at the Fair increased from 90,000 in 1950 to over 170,000 in 1955. Discussions began about that time to move the Fair to another site with room for growth. In the mid-1950s, the site of the Multnomah County Fair consisted of fifty acres near the center of Gresham, which had a population of just over 3,000 people, and it was located twelve miles east of Downtown Portland.

Gresham had grown to surround the fairgrounds, and much of the Fair site occupied land that could have been highly developed for business and residential purposes had the Fair not occupied the land in Gresham's core area. The last Fair in Gresham was held July 24 through August 2, 1969. The Multnomah County Fair moved to a new location in North Portland in 1970. The annual fair continues as a two-day event at Portland's Oaks Park.



Special ticket to the 1958 Multnomah County Fair.



Real photo postcard of Latourell & Son, Ford Agents in Gresham, Oregon. Postally unused, circa 1914. Advertising for Charlie Latourell and his son's Associated Gasoline Filling Station on Powell Valley Road in Gresham began appearing in local newspapers in 1914. Later that year, ads announced that they were the local Maxwell dealer and ads for Latourell and Son, Ford Agent, began appearing in 1915.

In 1914, Beaver State Motor Company erected the first automobile plant in Oregon at Section Line Road (now Division St. and Eastman Ave.) in Gresham where a new depot was built along the Mt. Hood Railway. They also made Beaver Drag Saws and Beaver Cement Mixers. Patent disputes with another automobile manufacturer led to the bankruptcy of the Beaver State Motor Company in the early 1920s.



Photo of the first model car produced by the Beaver State Motor Company, the Beaver Six, which appeared on the streets of Portland in October 1912. It was said to have a wooden frame and it was green with red wheels. It was also said that two other prototypes of Beaver cars as well as a truck were produced.

Also in 1914, Gresham Fruit Growers, later incorporated as Gresham Berry Growers, Inc. in 1919, began processing and shipping fruit and berries across the street from a new two-story depot, the largest on the Mt. Hood line, about one quarter-mile east of the auto factory.



Real photo postcard of First State Bank at Powell and Main, circa 1910. On the right is Aylsworth Clothiers. The corner of Gresham Drug is across Main Avenue on the far right. Postally unused.



Real photo postcard of a Gresham Baseball team in 1915. Postally unused.



Real photo postcard of the Liberty Bell at Gresham's Main City Park Depot on July 15, 1915. The train arrived in San Francisco the next day for the Pacific International Exposition. Postally unused. After leaving Seattle and Tacoma the day before, the Liberty Bell arrived in Portland where a parade was held in its honor. Later in the day, the Liberty Bell made its way to Gresham.

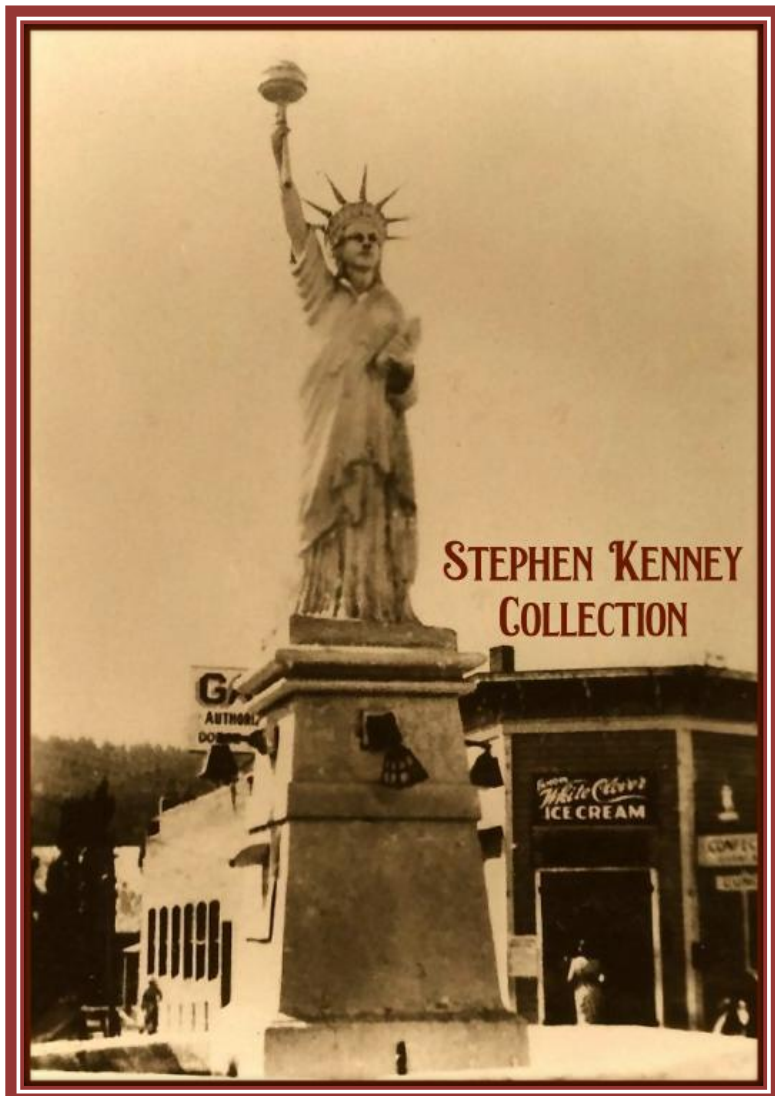


Photo of Lady Liberty, standing 8-1/2 feet tall, proudly draped in flags and bunting, greeted visitors to Gresham for a parade and guarded over the horse trough in mid-intersection of Gresham's busiest corner at Powell and Main, circa 1918.

Gresham's Lady Liberty had stood only six years after being purchased in 1918 for \$120 from a wandering Statue of Liberty salesman. Dedicated in May 1918, she was later placed on her pedestal on the horse trough, holding her electrical torch high. Later, in November that year, Lady Liberty was front and center as Gresham celebrated the armistice that ended World War I.

By 1924, as the paving crews made plans to pave Powell Valley Road, Lady Liberty had very few friends at that time. One of them was Gresham Outlook editor H.L. St. Clair, who wrote an editorial chiding city fathers about removing the landmark and suggested that the statue should be erected in some other place "where she can exert her patriotic influence and not be made a laughingstock by the traveling public." At the very least St. Clair continued, "A petition should be circulated."

In a council meeting to decide the fate of Lady Liberty, councilors were feeling somewhat contentious and it did not go well for the statue. Council members were upset with voters who had failed to pay for the building of sidewalks and they were upset over the voters' failure to approve a bond measure to buy land for a new city park.



Lady Liberty, they said, would be stored in a city warehouse, and no obstruction whatever would stand in the way of progress at Powell and Main.

Rumors abound, but no one knows what happened to Gresham's Goddess of Liberty after she was stashed away.

An official search in 1984 turned up nothing in the dark corners of the old public works building in Main City Park.

By 1920, Gresham was home to factories for boxes, starch, cheese, fireworks and airplane veneers.

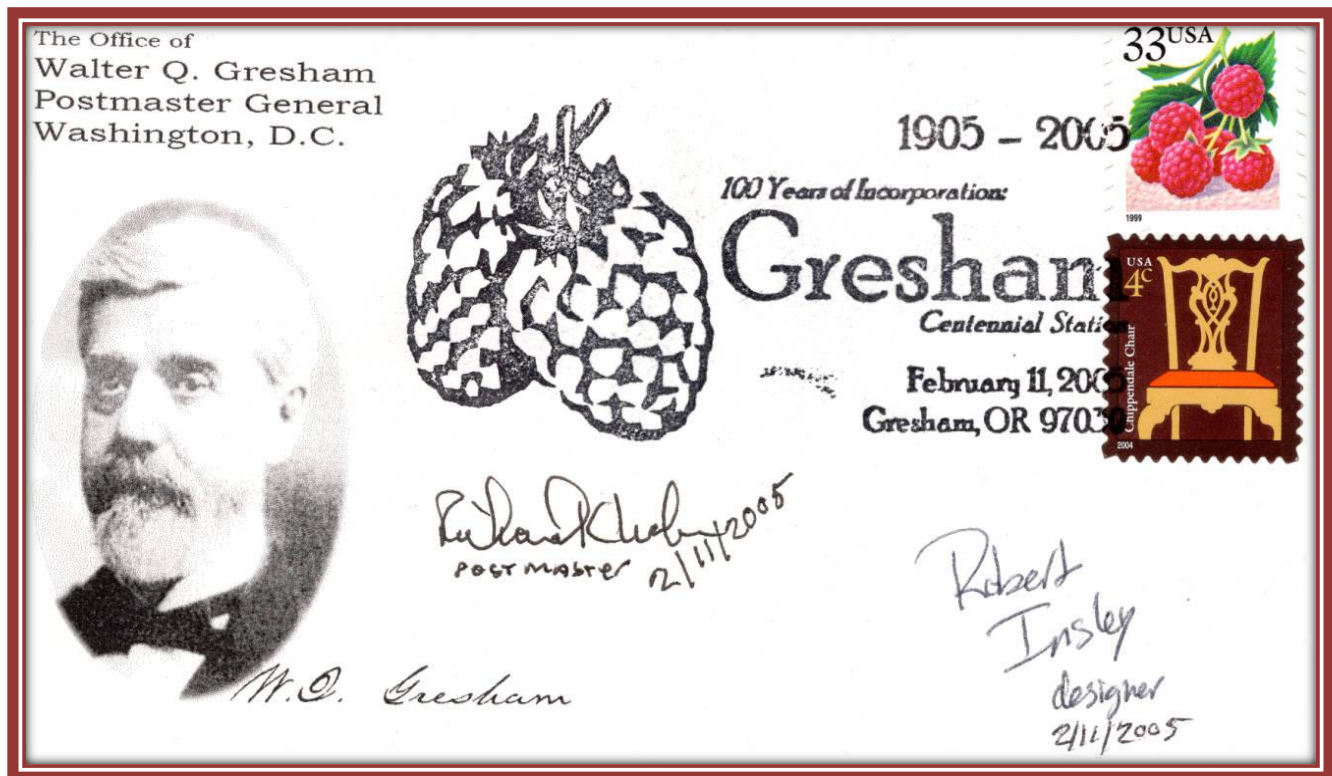
In 1921, the Oregon Legislature approved changing Gresham's designation from a town to a city.

In 1937, Gresham hired three policemen who wore badges on overalls for lack of uniforms.

Photo of Gresham's Goddess of Liberty at Powell and Main.

When it opened on September 19, 1966, the first students at Mt. Hood Community College took their classes for several years in a few trailers scattered around the old Multnomah County Fairgrounds in downtown Gresham. There were no athletic facilities, so students took gym class by going to the local roller rink or bowling alley. Today the college sits on a 212-acre campus east of Gresham where 30,000 students are currently enrolled.

In 1986, the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) light rail system rolled into Gresham, using the old Mt. Hood Railway right-of-way. Farming all but disappeared and agricultural land became scarce as several large corporations built electronics manufacturing plants and developers built multi-family housing units which catapulted Gresham to Oregon's fourth-largest city in 1995.



On February 11, 2005, Gresham celebrated 100 Years of Incorporation with a pictorial cancellation at Gresham Centennial Station, which is shown on a custom-designed cover.

The special berry design for the postmark was created by Webfooter Robert Insley who has drawn a number of logos depicting Webster Webfoot for signs and publications.

Editor's Comment: What if city leaders had the foresight to save Lady Liberty and keep the Fair in Gresham at what could have become Liberty Plaza at the end of the MAX light rail line.

Sources:

The Beaver State Herald Newspaper
The Gresham Outlook Newspaper
The Oregonian Newspaper



Lithographed postcard "Having a Jolly Time at Gresham, Oregon," postmarked September 23, 1912, copyrighted 1910 P. Bluh. Stephen Kenney collection.



WEBFOOTERS POST CARD CLUB

PO Box 17240
Portland OR 97217-0240



For the latest news, visit our website:



www.thewebfooters.com

email: webfootersinfo@gmail.com

