



History

A Brief History of the Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood (HAND)

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Comprised of several smaller neighborhoods, Hosford-Abernethy received its official name – the Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood Development Association (HAND) – in the 1970s. Portlanders during this time sought a system of organized neighborhood associations in order to better communicate with local government, business leaders and each other. The history of what became HAND can be traced back to some of the area's earliest settlers, even prior to when the neighborhood was part of the separate, incorporated city of East Portland.

Located in southeast Portland, the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood borders the Willamette River on the west, Southeast 29th Avenue on the east, Powell Boulevard on the south and Hawthorne Boulevard on the north. The neighborhood is a diverse combination of business, industry, and residential areas. The name Hosford-Abernethy is derived from two schools located at opposite ends of the neighborhood. Hosford Middle School, on Southeast 28th Place is named after Methodist minister Chauncey O.

Hosford a onetime resident of Portland who owned land on Mt. Tabor. Abernethy Elementary School is located on Southeast Orange Avenue, near Division Street. George Abernethy was, like Hosford, a Methodist missionary and was also Oregon's first provincial governor. Neither of these two men held a direct interest in the neighborhood which today bears their names, but both remain important in the history of both Oregon and Portland. When considering individuals who



Buildings at SE 25th & Clinton during the 1970s.

did impact the neighborhood directly, the names Tibbetts, Stephens, and Ladd deserve further exploration.



Home at SE 21st & Taggart sometime during the 1930s.

Gideon Tibbetts along with his wife Mary arrived in Portland in late 1849. Upon arriving in Portland, Tibbetts claimed a tract of land on the east side of the Willamette River that had essentially been abandoned by its former occupants. Gideon Tibbetts Donation Land Claim, stretched from the river east to what is now approximately Southeast 26th Avenue bordered on the north by Section Line Road (now Division Street) and on the south by Holgate Boulevard.

Tibbetts was the first developer of land in what became the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood. He cleared the land of trees and brush and began growing wheat and milling flour. His Brooklyn Mills Flour mill was once located near the intersection of 11th Avenue and Clinton. Around 1868, Tibbetts agreed to let a new railroad line crisscross his land creating a neighborhood divide that exists to this day. As the railroad became better established, the city's population began to grow. Seeing the opportunity, Tibbetts converted much of his land into a real estate development. Originally named "Brook Land" the development was renamed Tibbett's Addition when the area was annexed by the City of Portland in 1891. Today, the only physical traces of Tibbetts that exist are the two streets named in his honor: Tibbetts and Gideon streets.

While Tibbetts was developing his land, to his north another land claim, belonging to James B. Stephens, was undergoing similar change. Stephens had come to Oregon in 1845, purchasing his land claim for a mere \$200. Stephens was the owner of Portland's first Willamette River ferry which he operated from his home on the east bank of the river. He is also responsible for the original plat of the town of East Portland, filed in 1861, and the plat of Stephens' Addition, filed in 1869. Stephens' Addition is today part of the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood stretching from Hawthorne Boulevard south to



Building at SE 26th & Clinton during the 1970s.

Division Street, the Willamette River east to Southeast 12th Avenue. Stephens' house, built c. 1864, was moved from the banks of the Willamette in 1902, and although converted to apartments, still stands on 12th Avenue just north of Stephens Street.

Part of Stephens' land was to the east of 12th Avenue and although cleared of trees, was mainly farmland until he was forced to give up the land in a foreclosure proceeding. The land was purchased by Portland pioneer William S. Ladd, and it was eventually developed into Ladd's Addition, probably today the most widely recognized portion of the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood.

William S. Ladd arrived in Portland in 1851, starting out as a liquor and wine merchant. In 1854, he became mayor of the still tiny town of Portland, at the same time shedding his liquor business and embarking on new ventures in real estate, banking, and transportation. By the time Ladd purchased Stephens' land east of 12th Avenue in 1891, he was well established as one of Portland's leading businessmen. After acquiring Stephens' land, Ladd began planning a new residential subdivision for the 128 acre farm. Rather than a more traditional grid pattern, Ladd designed his new subdivision using geometric patterns similar to those he had noticed while on a trip to Washington D.C. Ladd's plan included numerous "modern" amenities for his subdivision, namely gas and electric lighting, paved streets and sidewalks, and a sewer system. Ladd's Addition is today the oldest planned community in Portland and in 2009 was named one of America's Greatest Places by the American Planning Association.

Unfortunately, Ladd died before construction could begin in his new development and due to other economic problems in Portland during the 1890s, the first home wasn't completed in Ladd's Addition until 1903. As the three "Additions" of Ladd, Stephens, and Tibbetts entered the twentieth century, transportation developments and an influx of immigrants lead to further changes in the physical and social landscape of the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood.



Streetcar rails along SE Clinton, taken sometime during the 1920s.

The 1869 arrival of the railroad through East Portland, led to further development along the eastside waterfront. A number of mills and foundries were constructed and the result was an increased demand for housing. This was the beginning of what is now known as the Central

Eastside Industrial District, an area stretching from the river to 12th Avenue that today is filled with commercial and industrial uses, but once was also dotted with plentiful housing, churches, and even schools. Many of the streets between Grand Avenue and 11th still contain the remnants of residential neighborhoods. At one time, Stephens Elementary

School stood on the block bounded by Harrison and Stephens streets, from 7th to 8th Avenue. The block is today a Portland General Electric substation.

By the late 19th century, there was a well established Italian immigrant community in South Portland (the neighborhood south of downtown). These immigrants and others had initially come to Portland to work on the railroads. With the availability of land for residential and farming uses, Italian Americans began moving to the east side, building houses in and around Ladd's Addition. The area grew rapidly in the early part of the 20th century, with new houses often built on extra-large lots. Produce was grown not only for personal consumption, but also for selling at local markets. By the time the United States entered World War I, Italian immigration to the area had peaked, but they now held an undeniable presence in HAND in the form of several businesses and churches like St. Philip Neri, whose original church building at SE 16th and Hickory dates to 1913.

Transportation has long had an impact on the landscape of HAND, beginning with Tibbetts allowing the Oregon Central Railroad to bisect his land claim. By the early 20th century, not only was the rail line well used, a number of streetcar lines also crisscrossed the neighborhood. Clinton Street and Hawthorne, were important parts of the streetcar (and later trolley bus) system, as were lines that ran on 11th and 12th avenues. The automobile also had a tremendous influence on the neighborhood. In 1914, the Ford Motor Company opened a plant at the intersection of Division and 11th, where they assembled Model T's using Ford's innovative assembly line techniques. Designed by notable Portland architect A.E. Doyle, the Ford plant remained in operation until around 1940 – it later housed a publishing company, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, and Multnomah County offices, before being sold to a private developer in 2003. In 1926, the Ross Island Bridge was opened, leading to more automobile traffic on Powell Boulevard and permanently dividing Tibbetts Addition. As a result, residents on the south side of Powell developed their own neighborhood identity – Brooklyn. The expansion of Highway 99 in the 1930s, created another divide in HAND, disconnecting the residential portion of the neighborhood from the river and much of the eastside industrial area.

HAND continued to grow as housing filled the empty lots once used for raising produce. By 1940, most areas of the neighborhood were developed. But in the years after World War II, many residents began moving to the suburbs, leaving inner Portland neighborhoods like HAND to deteriorate. Much of the housing in the neighborhood switched from owner occupied to rentals and remained this way or decades. Absentee ownership however, was but one of the significant problems facing the neighborhood in the mid-20th century. The biggest threat to the area was the expansion of Portland's freeway network.

In 1955, the Oregon State Highway Department unveiled plans for 14 new freeways, 14 so-called "expressways," and numerous other road expansion projects in the Portland area. Two of these projects would have significantly impacted HAND – the 20th Avenue

Expressway (which never got beyond the discussion phase) and the the Mt. Hood Freeway – arguably the most controversial road project in Pacific Northwest history. The 1955 report marked the first time the Mt. Hood Freeway was proposed publically. The portion of the freeway that would have impacted HAND directly, would have run parallel to Division Street with a centerline along Ivon Street. At the river, it would have connected to the Marquam Bridge (1966), which was constructed with ramp stubs designed to one day connect to the proposed Mt. Hood Freeway.

For 20 years area residents fought to preserve their neighborhood from the Mt. Hood Freeway, and with the help of local politicians and activists, they were ultimately successful. But even though the freeway was halted, there were still significant impacts on the neighborhood. Several homes that were in the path of the proposed freeway were moved or demolished. Today if you explore the streets between Clinton and Division in HAND, you will find housing constructed in the 1980s and later on land once targeted for the freeway. You'll also find a few neighborhood amenities, such as Piccolo Park, where the Piccolo family once lived, and the Clinton Community Garden. These properties were once acquired by the highway department for freeway construction.

By the time the Mt. Hood Freeway was halted in 1976, residents of the HAND, Richmond, and other nearby areas were already beginning to see renewed interest in their neighborhoods. Diminished housing prices (due to potential nearby freeway construction) made it easier for younger families to move into the neighborhood. Revitalization efforts were supported by the Office of Neighborhood Associations – formed in 1974 – giving residents more of a voice at City Hall. Many HAND residents felt empowered to prevent the further decay and destruction of their neighborhood. Ladd's Addition became one of the City's first residential historic districts. Designated as a National Historic Conservation District in 1977, Ladd's Addition was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

Over the past 150 years, the lands once owned by the likes of Tibbetts, Stephens, and Ladd, have developed from farm and fields into an eclectic mix of residential, commercial, and industrial activity. Throughout the neighborhood, property owners have renovated their homes and commercial buildings, often in a manner that restores their original character. There are still signs of the Italian influences in the neighborhood especially at St. Philip Neri Catholic Church, which had a new sanctuary built in 1950, designed by architect Pietro Belluschi. This church is not only a place of worship but often serves as a meeting place for HAND residents to voice concerns or perhaps attend a homemade pasta lunch or dinner.

Transportation continues to play a significant role in the neighborhood. A new MAX light rail line will soon be added parallel to the existing rail line. Although streetcars were eliminated by the 1950s, a new line will soon connect to OMSI and a new transit/pedestrian/bicycle bridge will soon be constructed over the Willamette at HAND's

westernmost edge. Clinton Street has also become one of Portland's first "Bike Boulevards."

While the Hosford-Abernethy name may seem somewhat unattached to the direct history of the neighborhood, after nearly 40 years it provides an identity for residents to connect with one another, and helps to unite the various parts of an otherwise physically divided neighborhood.

Suggestions for Further Reading:

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Pages

About

Avalon Sanctuary Pocket Park

Board

Contact

Crime Prevention

Current Issues

Development

Division Design Initiative

Eastbank Esplanade Event/Programming Guidelines

[Emergency Preparedness](#)

[Friends of Piccolo Park](#)

[Gideon Overcrossing](#)

[HAND Draft Bylaws](#)

[HAND FAQ](#)

[Hand Groups](#)

[History](#)

[Images of HAND](#)

[Then & Now Photos](#)

[Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood District Home](#)

[Ladd's Addition Historic Guidelines](#)

[Land Use](#)

[Neighborhood Action Plan](#)

[Letter about Vacating SE 2nd for OMSI](#)

[Links](#)

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