



FRIENDS OF  
Hendricks Park

NEWS FROM THE

# Park Bench

EUGENE'S FIRST PARK

WINTER 2006

**1906**  
HENDRICKS  
P A R K  
**2006**

This is the first of the centennial issues of the *Park Bench*. Each will highlight part of the park's history. This issue will view the park's early years. Our yearlong celebration will recognize Hendricks Park and instill a commitment for the next 100 years.

**H**endricks Park, now considered a cultural treasure, began quietly when the former Fairmount City, planned as a suburb of Eugene, was developed. George Miller, an early city promoter, part-time inventor, lawyer and supporter of the Fairmount district, began selling lots in Fairmount City in 1890, and had specified an area for a park. That parkland was called Fairmount Park on Miller's promotional map and is now principally Hendricks Park. The entire Fairmount City was annexed into Eugene in 1902.

When Eugene's population exceeded 3,000 in 1900, local businessmen and the city government focused on improvements and expansion, requesting updated street lighting, a new water system and a modern library. In 1906, Mayor Wilkins recommended to the city council the building up of our city, and directed that a site be selected for a city park. Wilkins had also discussed the idea of a city park with his friend and neighbor, Thomas G. Hendricks, after the two families had enjoyed a picnic gathering on the east ridgeline near the once Fairmount Park and noted the panoramic view.



View to the northwest (circa 1904). Grassland and young oak trees in foreground. Junction of Summit Avenue and Fairmount Blvd. at right. Note oak woodland on hillside. Courtesy of Lane Co. Historical Museum. Courtesy of Lane Co. Historical Museum.

***Park land dedicated.*** In November 1906, Martha and Thomas Hendricks deeded 47 acres in the Fairmount Hills to the city. The city purchased another 31 acres to complete Eugene's first city park. The dedication stated, "...such (a) park should be procured at the present time when the same is available in the natural state, to be reserved for future generations of the city of Eugene as a Public Park open to all of the inhabitants thereof and of the surrounding country."

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**Early park improvements.** The mayor gave immediate attention to the park. He directed city staff to replace all missing posts in the hitching rack surrounding the park, to construct an entrance with the inscription Hendricks Park and to grade Summit Avenue for the purpose of getting a roadway into the park.

**Landscape changed over time.** The park's landscape has changed over time. Prior to European settlement, the southern Willamette Valley, including Hendricks Park, was mainly open oak woodland. This was due in large part to the Native American practice of regularly burning the prairie and savannas. With the cessation of burning, the parkland developed into a Douglas-fir forest with a few small stands of Oregon white oak remaining from earlier times. Today the fir forest is transitioning into an old growth forest, and the remaining oaks are being protected and enhanced.

**Promoted as scenic attraction.** There were only four automobiles in Eugene when the parkland was set aside, but cars quickly became more popular. Articles in the newspaper about auto clubs appealed to readers. The mayor recognized Hendricks Park as a scenic attraction in 1907. By 1911, winding roads cut through the park for pleasure drives and to provide access to new picnic areas.

**WPA structure.** In 1938, the Works Progress Administration built the shelter in the park. The local newspaper referred to it as Hendricks Lodge. At the opening ceremony, Wilkins was honored as a pioneer park builder. The structure is now known as the "F.M. Wilkins picnic shelter." The original shelter was destroyed in a 1999 windstorm, when two Douglas-firs crushed the building. Only the chimney from the 1938 structure remains.

**At one time a zoo.** The park was home to a small zoo that started sometime around 1912, and remained for the next 50 years. This zoo consisted mostly of pens for Sitka deer in an area now in the Rhododendron Garden. Elk and sheep were also housed. The zoo was disbanded in 1972.

Stay tuned for more park history in the next issue of the Park Bench. 



A 1908 photograph shows a recent road cut in Hendricks Park. Some roads have become part of the trail system. Courtesy of Lane Co. Historical Museum.



## Volunteer Spotlight

Jenni Anderson moved to Eugene in the fall of 2004, and is doing postdoc work in evolutionary biology at the University of Oregon. She started volunteering a month after she arrived here, and has consistently attended the monthly Saturday work parties that remove invasive species from the Hendricks Park forest. Being new to Eugene, she wanted to become closer to and learn more about the community, and felt that volunteering was one way to do that. She loves the outdoors and the idea of improving well-established natural habitats. We who work with her on those Saturdays wonder if the main attraction is the invasive ivy or her favorite chocolate croissants from Eugene City Bakery. Thanks to Jenni—she is a joy to work with.

A 1915 overview of Eugene from Hendricks Park. Courtesy of Lane Co. Historical Museum.




View from Hendricks Park looking northwest, towards Skinner's Butte. University of Oregon campus in center. Courtesy of Lane Co. Historical Museum circa 1908.

Front page picture in August 7, 1938 Register-Guard newspaper when the WPA building was dedicated to Wilkins. The Willamette River could be seen to the east from the shelter before trees and homes obstructed the vista.



# Lecture on “The Story of Douglas-Fir”

BY WHITEY LUECK

Nowhere else in the world does a single species of tree so dominate a forested region as Douglas-fir does here in the maritime Pacific Northwest. Moreover, pollen studies show that until only about 12,000 years ago, Douglas-fir was virtually unknown in the region. What happened? And how did the forest in Hendricks Park arise, since for many of thousands of years before 1850—there had been mostly treeless grassland? The answers to these questions, as well as many other interesting tidbits about Oregon’s state tree, will be provided by Whitey Lueck in his upcoming talk **on February 8th, Wednesday evening 7-8 pm in the Eugene Downtown Public Library. The event is free and open to the public.** 

Whitey Lueck is a horticulturist, naturalist and landscape designer. He teaches a popular class called “Trees Across Oregon” for the University of Oregon’s Department of Landscaping Architecture. For 20 years, he has taught field classes in ecology throughout western North America—from the Canadian Rockies to Baja California—first through Lane Community College and now through his own private business. Whitey was also a co-founder of Eugene Tree Foundation in 1997, and currently edits ETF’s quarterly newsletter.



When this 1908 photograph was taken, stands of Douglas-fir were well-established. Courtesy of Lane Co. Historical Museum.

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## Centennial Events Calendar

*\*All tours will begin at 1 pm and meet at the Picnic Shelter unless stated differently*

### FEBRUARY

**Sunday, 12th** Winter Garden Tour led by Rachel Foster

### MARCH

**Sunday, 19th** Magnolia Tour with Roger Gossler. This special tour will continue on to Ruff Park in Springfield at 3 pm

### APRIL

**Sunday, 9th** Rhododendron Garden tour led by Michael Robert

**Sunday, 23rd** Tree Walk with Whitey Lueck

**Saturday, 29th** Bird walk with Dan Gleason - meet @ 7 am

### MAY

**Wednesday, 3rd** Wildflower tour with Ginny Alfriend – meet @ 6 pm

**Wednesday, 10th** Bird walk with Dan Gleason – meet @ 7 am

**Saturday, 21st** Native Plant tour with garden staff

### JUNE

**Sunday, June 18th** Medicinal Plant tour with Tobias Policha

### OCTOBER

**Sunday, 22nd** Fall color walk with Whitey Lueck

### NOVEMBER

**Saturday, 4th** Mushroom tour

# Winter in the Rhododendron Garden

**H**endricks Park Forest and the Native Plant Garden are subdued places in winter. Only toothwort, Oregon grape and osoberry bloom between January and March. Things are different in the Rhododendron Garden. Those in the know find this a great time to visit, and may even have the garden to themselves.

Lenten rose (hellebore) and witch-hazel are the stars in January, along with the little snowdrops that cluster at the bases of oak trees on the main lawn. The sharp, citrusy scent of witch-hazel flowers, blooming on bare branches, permeates the garden on mild sunny afternoons, reminding us that many winter-blooming shrubs rely on fragrance to draw their pollinators. Winter-blooming viburnums produce heavily scented flowers sporadically, between cold snaps.

Cornel (*Cornus mas*) soon follows, with tiny, deep-yellow flowers that make up for their small size with abundance. February sees signs of life from native flowering currant and the butter-yellow winter-hazels. Look for the lovely white form of flowering currant, which blooms before the pink form. Perhaps the most unusual looking shrub in the garden is *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, already in fat bud near the east end of the lawn. Hit it on the right day, and you will find that it too is fragrant.

Winter is a good time to appreciate the rhododendrons for all their variations in form and foliage. A few are already in bloom: look for *Rhododendron mucronulatum*, which blooms magenta on bare stems, yellow-flowered *R. lutescens* and the lovely moupinense with big white flowers.

***Treat yourself to A Winter Garden Tour with Rachel Foster. The engaging, knowledgeable gardener and author will lead a tour in the Rhododendron Garden on Sunday, February 12 at 1 pm. Meet at the shelter. Free.***

## NEWS BRIEFS



- Cathy Meis has been hired as the **new native plant gardener**. She said the chickadees and juncos are keeping her company this winter.
- Two Tuesday morning volunteers, Alexis Simpson and Selena Gerdes, have recently been admitted into Lane County Extension's **Master Gardening Program**.
- Evelyn Hess, Rachel Foster and Ginny Alfriend have just completed a design for the **new Native Plant Display**. The area is located directly in front of the picnic shelter. Volunteers will be doing the planting in late February.
- The next **Forest Work Parties** will be held on January 28th and February 18th. Meeting time is 9:30 am at shelter, rain or shine.

## Aunt Rhodie tells all...

*Dear Aunt Rhodie:*

*There is an old water pump across from the parking lot and near the "rock restroom." How long has it been there, and does it still work?*

*Thank you, Joan*

*Dear Joan:*

*The only reference we can find regarding the pump is in a history of 10 parks in Eugene written by Ruth Cordell. It reads: ...after acquiring the park land, (1906) the city made improvements putting in tables, two wells, swings and roads. The park staff thinks the old water pump marks one of the two original wells. Several years ago, park staff looked into repairing the pump but found it too dilapidated, and the well itself was not deep enough for safe use.*

*If anyone knows more history about this artifact, please let us know. *

*Sincerely, Aunt Rhodie*

Send questions to:

Aunt Rhodie, Friends of Hendricks Park  
P.O. Box 3784, Eugene, OR 97403  
or call 607-4066 and leave a message.



Friends of Hendricks Park  
P.O. Box 3784  
Eugene, OR 97403-0784

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Hendricks Park**

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**UPCOMING LECTURE** On February 8th, Wednesday evening, 7 pm at the Eugene Downtown Public Library, Whitey Lueck will give a lecture, The Story of Douglas-fir. Lecture is free and open to the public.

*This commemorative area is located at the northwest end of the Rhododendron Garden. The memorial was established to honor GLADYS WILKINS MCCREADY (1895-1990). Gladys was the youngest of F. M. Wilkins' three daughters. With her two other sisters, she wrote the local history classic, The Story of Eugene. All the sisters were writers, travelers and, in their own words, remarkable.*

