

Press Release

June 5, 2012

THE OREGON ENCYCLOPEDIA



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A partnership of Portland State University, the Oregon Historical Society, and The Oregon Council of Teachers of English

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The OE History Night at the Edgefield in May

The Oregon Encyclopedia (The OE) continues its monthly series of History Nights at McMenamins pubs with programs at the Edgefield Power Station Theater. At each History Night, The OE will look back at the people and events that have shaped our communities. Visit www.oregonencyclopedia.org for History Night locations and more details.

“I’ll Be Dammed! So That’s What They Did in That Building: The Story and History of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Troutdale Materials Laboratory”

Presented by Len Otto and Sharon Nesbit

Tuesday, June 26, 2012

6:30 p.m., doors open at 5:00 pm

McMenamins Edgefield Power Station Theater, 2126 SW Halsey St., Troutdale

Every day we walk by buildings and structures that are backdrops to the landscapes in our lives, but we know little about their history or impact on our community. For Len Otto, growing up in Troutdale a mile from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Materials Lab had its disadvantages. He remembers lugging 30 pound concrete cylinders from the facility to his father’s pickup truck. The cylinders were discarded materials from the USACE’s Troutdale Materials Laboratory. Little did Otto know that inside this nondescript building a variety of human activities took place that had a significant impact on the community and the Columbia Gorge region.

Built in the early 1940s, the Troutdale aluminum plant used the building to store aluminum destined for WWII aircraft. After the war the War Assets Administration stored and sold surplus war goods. In 1949 the USACE purchased the building and tested virtually every batch of concrete used in dam building on the Columbia River. It also became a laboratory to test a variety of materials. Learn about these activities and more with Len Otto and Sharon Nesbit. Retired from a career as an elementary educator, Len Otto presently pursues his lifelong passion for history by recording and publishing people’s life stories. Sharon Nesbit is a local historian and founder of the Troutdale Historical Society. She is a columnist and reporter for the *Gresham Outlook*.

The OE is an online resource for information on the state’s significant people, places, events, institutions, and biota. Over 1000 entries and essays have been published online and new entries are added every day. For more information visit www.oregonencyclopedia.org.

The OE is a partnership between Portland State University, the Oregon Council of Teachers of English, and the Oregon Historical Society. The OE has received support from a collaborative of the state’s five cultural partners—the Oregon Arts Council, Oregon Council for the Humanities, Oregon Heritage Commission, Oregon Historical Society, and the State Historic Preservation Office—with funding from the Oregon Cultural Trust. The Oregon Council of Teachers of English, the Oregon Heritage Commission, the Oregon University System, Willamette University, and private donors have provided additional support.