

FEATURE SECTION

Sec. 4 PORTLAND, OREGON, TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 1957 *****

Mount Tabor Had Gold Rush

Beautiful District, Park Can Boast Colorful Past

This is the first of two articles on Portland's scenic Mount Tabor district and its colorful history.

By Art Chenoweth

Mount Tabor probably is the only Portland community that was attracting attention thousands, perhaps even millions, of years ago.

Back in that dim past, the double-domed prominence from which the district gets its name was a sputtering volcano. Geologists at different times have offered differing versions about when Mount Tabor burped out its final **gob of effluvium**.

SOME OPINIONS say as recently as 2000 years ago, others put it at 1,000,000 years or more.

The years since then have been pretty lively ones, too. Mount Tabor has had a truly romantic past.

There was a gold rush and a uranium rush. There was natural disaster and violence. Pioneers opened a new era of progress there.

And our most irritating lawn weed got its start on those verdant slopes.

AT ONE time, perhaps 1,000,000 years ago, a great inland lake covered this region. Mount Tabor was an island, along with Council crest Kelly butte and Rocky butte.

Up to a little more than a century ago it might as well have remained an island. Covered and surrounded by a vast forest, the area was largely unpenetrated.

A natural disaster of 1846 helped to open the region to the settler. In that year a great forest fire erupted a little east of Lents at the foot of Mount Scott. Flames ate a wide swath northward, stopping only at the Columbia river edge.

EARLY SETTLERS called the ravaged section "the big burn." Acres of coarse grass and brush grew up on the burned-over land. Trails and farmhouses began to appear.

An early resident was Dr. Perry Prettyman. Coming to Oregon in 1847, he settled on a donation land claim on the west slope of this mountain which, as yet, had no name.

Another, more famous, pioneer came to that area in the same period—Clinton Kelly. But if Dr. Prettyman's name has not become so famous as Kelly's, still his coming had fateful consequences.

HE WAS a leader in the growing community and he helped organize the first Multnomah county agricultural society.

But he also did what turned out to be an awful thing—and all with the noblest of intentions. For medical purposes, so the old accounts say, Dr. Prettyman introduced a plant new to Oregon and nurtured it.

It was the dandelion. Today the fruits of his labors plague hundreds of thousands of home owners.

By 1853, the pretty mountain community counted perhaps 10 pioneer families.

Mostly Methodist, they organized a Sunday school and school at the home of David Prettyman.

FEELING THE need of a permanent edifice, they bent their labors to building a log school house. Some accounts place this building high up on Mount Tabor, others locate it east of the mountain.

The house was complete in the spring of 1854 and the settlers, gathering to dedicate it, sought a name for their stately mountain.

Clinton Kelly proposed Mount Zion and it was adopted unanimously. But the name was changed within the hour.

Plympton Kelly, son of Clinton, had been absent from the meeting for a few minutes. (Old accounts do not state why.) He returned to find the mountain already named and immediately objected.

MOUNT ZION is too common a name, he argued. He suggested Mount Tabor.

Plympton had been reading a book about Napoleon's campaigns. He had relived, with the French regiments, the stirring events of the French battle against the Moslems on the plain of Edraclon near the base of Mount Tabor in Palestine.

After Plympton explained his nomination, the group reversed itself, voting unanimously for Mount Tabor.

Passing years brought more settlers and a growing community organization. Mount Tabor had its own post office for many years, its own justice of the peace and its own legal status as a judicial sub-district.

VIOLENCE touched the mountain in 1886, a period when local sentiment ran strongly against imported "coolie labor." On the night of March 5, 50 masked men rode up the summit, grimly brandishing pistols.

On top they accosted more than 100 Chinese who had been chopping wood. The masked riders herded the terrified Chinese like cattle all the way down to the Willamette river.

There the Orientals were forced aboard the Albina ferry, dispatched to the West side and ordered never to return.

The year 1889 saw the opening of the first rail connection between Mount Tabor and the metropolitan area. An enterprise of the Willamette Bridge

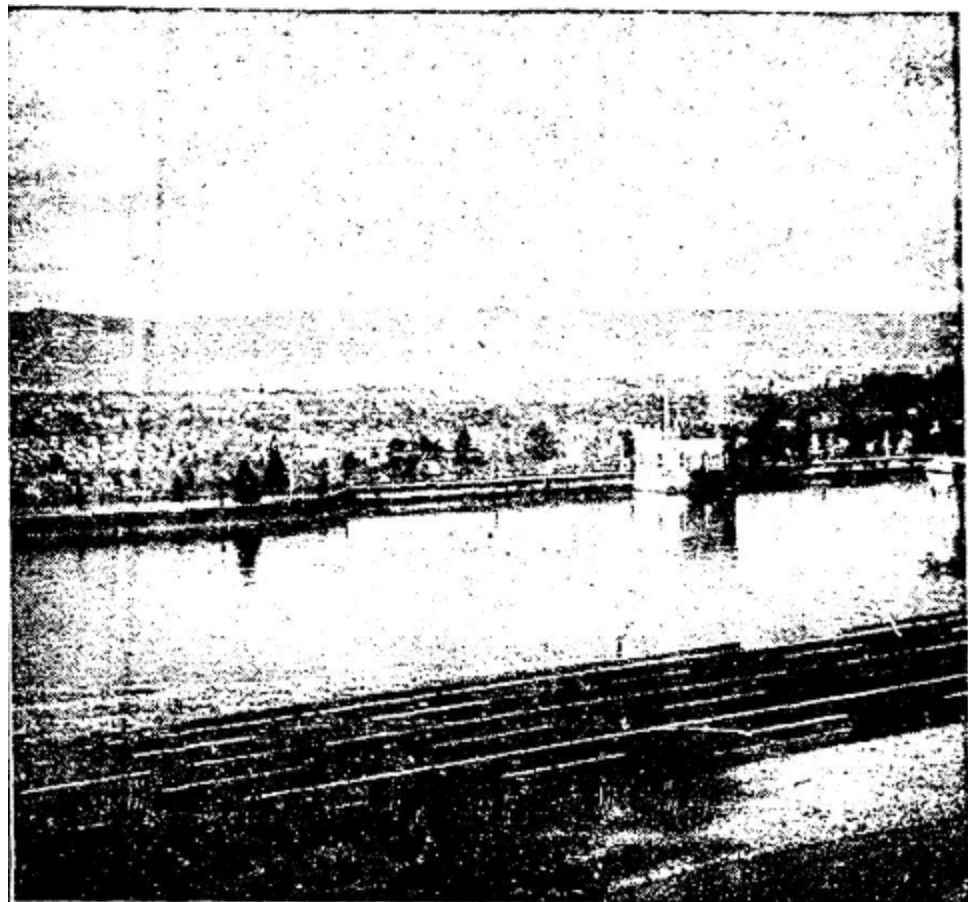
company, the line operated puffing steam motor trains and provided 24 trips a day.

With the beginnings in

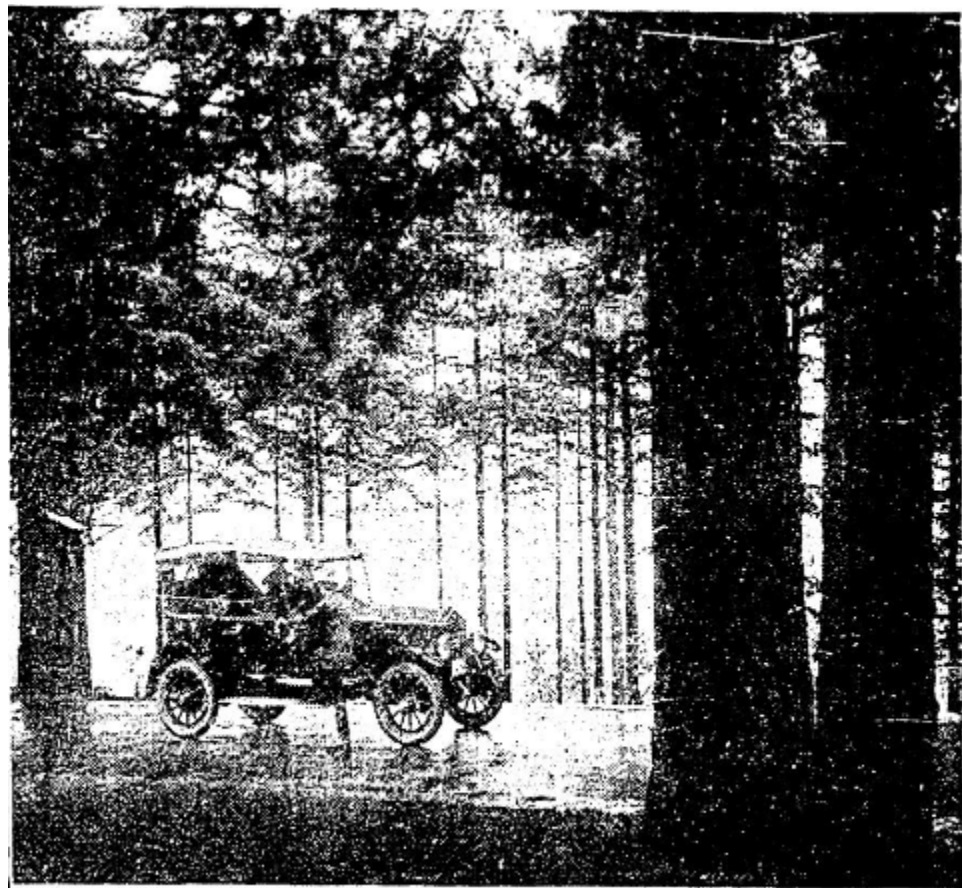
mass transportation, home-minded Portlanders began eyeing residential possibilities in the picturesque neighborhood

and many new houses began springing up.

(Tomorrow: Mount Tabor's 'gold rush'.)



RESERVOIRS, serving city's East side, lend tranquil air to wooded Mount Tabor park, overlooking Mount Tabor residential section. Area has long romantic history.



STATELY TREES, lofty view, have made Mount Tabor favorite excursion for many years. This scene of late 1920s would be impossible today. Auto traffic is much heavier.

FEATURE SECTION

Sec. 4 PORTLAND, OREGON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 1957 *****

Tabor's Crater Found in '13

City Acquired Mountain Park Site Back in 1909

(Final Article)

By Art Chennoweth

Journal Staff Writer

Mount Tabor had its brief "gold rush" early in the 20th century and only recently an equally-absurd "uranium rush."

The gold rush was a bit of foolishness that came indirectly from the unemployment problem of the time.

In 1909 the city acquired 200 acres on the mountain for a park site. It was decided to put idle labor to work developing the park and the city council appropriated \$10,000 for the project.

THE UNEMPLOYED idle continued their idling habits even after going to work and only part of the project was finished before funds were overdrawn.

However, workers did succeed in clearing 8000 feet of driveway 32 feet wide from the summit to the SE Salmon street entrance. Grading was finished on part of this.

In 1913 the grading work uncovered evidence of a crater and for the first time Portland knew it had an extinct volcano.

Somehow word got around that these volcanic deposits contained gold. The gold rush was on. More than 1000 persons carried away quantities of the stuff before the myth died.

THE CRATER was drilled 100 feet down for study and in 1952 it was marked by a plaque proclaiming that Portland is the only major U.S. city with a volcano in its limits.

Mount Tabor had no gold, but it had other advantages worth more to a burgeoning metropolis. Natural slopes proved a desirable site for reservoirs serving the city's East side.

From time to time some ambitious ideas were cooked up to "enhance" the mountain's scenic attraction. In 1933 there was a proposal to build a 300-foot observation tower at the summit. Estimated cost: \$500,000.

To be constructed of concrete, stone, marble and tile, the tower would provide a viewpoint 1200 feet above sea level. Restaurants and shops would be housed at various levels.

ANOTHER PLAN was to dig a tunnel into the center of the crater as a tourist attraction. Finally, there was a plan to link tunnel and tower with an elevator carrying visitors from deep within the earth to a point high above it.

These plans actually got to the city council level with serious consideration of asking government funds for construction.

Ultimately, Mount Tabor was left largely in its naturally beautified state, with no steel-girded elevators or monstrous cement towers. The volcanic cone was excavated enough to show the strata and an open-air amphitheatre constructed.

Acquisition of the park area by the city resulted in the removal of one of the fine old landmarks atop the mountain. It was the John Smith mansion, built in the last 19th century by a railroad contractor who was wiped out in the financial panic of the early 1890's.

NOTED FOR its numerous fireplaces and ornate woodwork, both inside and out, the house was considered by the city as a permanent park building at one time. Later the plan was abandoned and the house torn down.

Because of the reservoirs, the park had to be closed for some months in early World War II. Sabotage was feared but never developed. Guards were posted for a time and there were wire barriers around the tanks.

Business development of this community has been governed to some extent by the terrain. A few businesses have clustered on the saddle between the two summits for many years.

The western slope, with its more gradual incline, has proved the logical business site. A few shops and stores adjoin Portland Sanitarium hospital on SE 60th avenue and Belmont street.

ABOUT 2½ years ago 22 businessmen on SE Hawthorne between 47th and 60th announced they were banded together in a Mount Tabor Merchants association. Since then, they have made overtures to extend their jurisdiction to 39th.

The development of split-level houses has made sloping Mount Tabor newly desirable as a residential area. The west slope has a generally

modern residential face and many new homes have crowded right up to the edge of the park preserve.

A very recent development has bloomed in a narrow canyon at the head of SE Morrison street. For years the canyon was desolate, with only an old deserted mansion near its mouth.

This colorful old place, with iron dogs at the front door, winding staircases and a multitude of halls and rooms, was a favorite "spook party" tour for teen-agers.

NOW THE street has been improved to the canyon head-wall and a group of ultra-modern houses has gone up, affording tenants a degree of privacy seldom found in the city limits.

A revered Mount Tabor personality for many years was the late Chaplain John W. Beard, pastor of Mount Tabor Presbyterian church from 1923 to 1948.

After distinguished World War I combat record, the chaplain remained active in the military. Pacifists in the '30s reviled him for his outspoken insistence that a strong military is the best guardian of peace.

He returned to service with the national guard in World War II, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

HIS HOBBY was retracing historic pioneer routes, usually on horseback or by canoe. Most notable adventure was a four-month, 2500-mile horseback trip at the age of 65. In 1848, with his wife, he rode the old Oregon trail to its beginning at Independence, Mo.

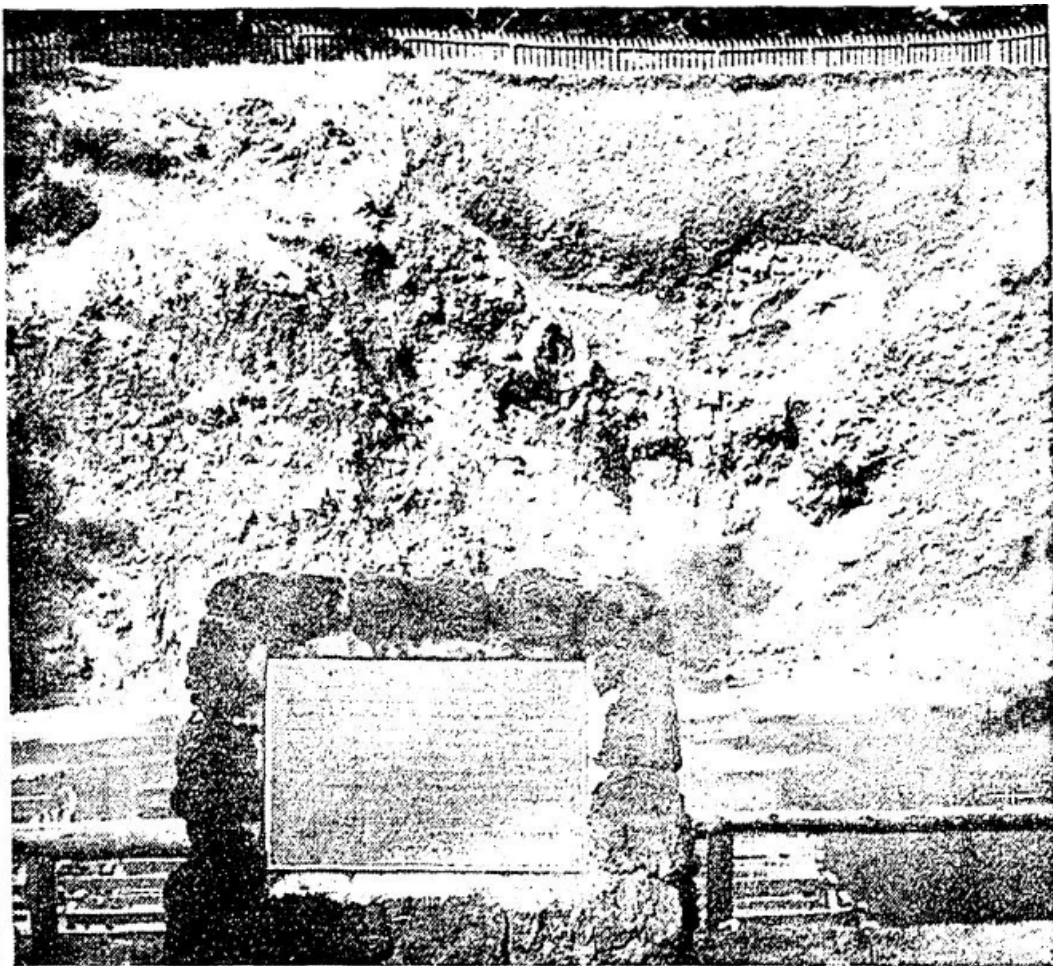
Portland, like much of the West, went crazy over uranium in the mid-50's. Everybody, it seemed, was buying Geiger counters and one chap claimed to have discovered uranium in downtown Portland.

Mount Tabor's volcanic ash drew these prospectors, as it had drawn the gold hunters 40 years before. But again the search bore no results.

Today Mount Tabor is one of Portland's oldest communities, yet one of its youngest. New home continue to spring up and only a few spots show signs of serious blight. It is Portland at its typical best.



NEW HOMES, springing up rapidly and in profusion on Mount Tabor, give area ultra-modern look despite long-time history. These are on SE Morrison street east of 60th.



CRATER of extinct volcano on Mount Tabor is marked by plaque. Cone has been excavated to show strata. Picnic area, outdoor theatre have been installed nearby.