

MOUNT-TABOR

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Special Supplement Timeline of Mt Tabor Park

A timeline of some significant events in the life and times of Mt. Tabor Park

By Cascade Anderson Geller, Diane Redd, & Shannon Loch

- 1888 Buell and Helen Lamberson dedicated a tract of land to the city as designated "park." This land appears to correspond to the site of Reservoir 1. There were about 142 residences in the rural area known as Mt. Tabor.
- 1889 Rail service came to Mt. Tabor and residences increase to 200. Portland's population exceeded 18,000 residents.
- 1892 President Benjamin Harrison signed federal protection for the 200-square-mile Bull Run Reserve situated west of Mt. Hood 50 miles east of the city, the identified site of Portland's municipal water source. This heralded the end of private companies tapping numerous sources, such as a spring at what is now SE 58th Ave. at Hawthorne Blvd. and the Willamette River. Many urban parks, like Mt. Tabor, were developed around reservoir complexes as the City Beautiful movement promoted access to water views.
- 1894 The Burnside Bridge was opened. Reservoirs 1 and 2 at Mt. Tabor, and Reservoirs 3 and 4, in City Park (Washington Park) were built in accordance to City Beautiful engineering and design concepts that encouraged "beautility." Using gravity flow to bring water from the Bull Run, the innovative system used two techniques of concrete construction, newly patented—reinforcing and bush hammering, which gave the appearance of cut stone. The wrought iron fences were designed by Whidden and Lewis, who also designed City Hall, which was completed the next year.
- 1899 Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. wrote *The Relation of Reservoirs to Parks*.
- 1903 John C. Olmsted (1852–1920), in his 1903 report to the Park Board, recommended that the city acquire "considerable land on this prominent and beautiful hill" known as Mt. Tabor. He also recommended that the city hire Emanuel Tillman Mische (c.1879–1934), a long-time designer with the Olmsted firm, as park superintendent. The most esteemed name in landscape design, the Olmsted firms helped to create the field of landscape architecture in the U.S.A. and designed many famous public and private landscapes including the Capitol grounds, Central Park, Arnold Arboretum, Yosemite, Stanford University, and many others.
- 1905 With the Lewis and Clark World Exposition, Portland's population burgeoned and the Mt. Tabor area was annexed to the City of Portland.
- 1906 E. T. Mische is hired as park superintendent. His pedigree included training at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Mt. Tabor was a number one priority as the city's biggest park. Citizen "push clubs" pressured City Council for park development on the east side. Mische developed a propagation nursery and fruitectium on the south side of Mt. Tabor.
- 1907 A second Olmsted report to the Park Board encouraged the city to procure lands for parks, something that had yet to occur even after the 1903 report.
- 1908 The Oregonian's ran a big article headlined "Want Park at Mt. Tabor: East siders think ground should be bought now. Committee to appear before park commission today, setting forth wishes of United Push Clubs." Citizen push clubs had a design in hand that included no less than 169 acres. Oregonian owner Henry Pittock (1835–1919) owned sizeable acreage on the butte, exactly where the new reservoirs were to be sited. He was paid some of the highest amounts for their properties when acquisitions began.



1909: Reservoir 2



Emanuel Tillman Mische



1909: brush clearing, Reservoir 5