Acknowledgements

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In order to sustain the availability of this and future walking tour maps, which are offered for re free but there is a suggested donation of 75 cents to the Heritage Museum Society , P.O. Box 7, Independence, Oregon, 97351. For more information call the Heritage Museum at 503-838-4989.

Independence Historic District Walking Tour

Welcome to a Walking Tour of the Independence Downtown Historic District

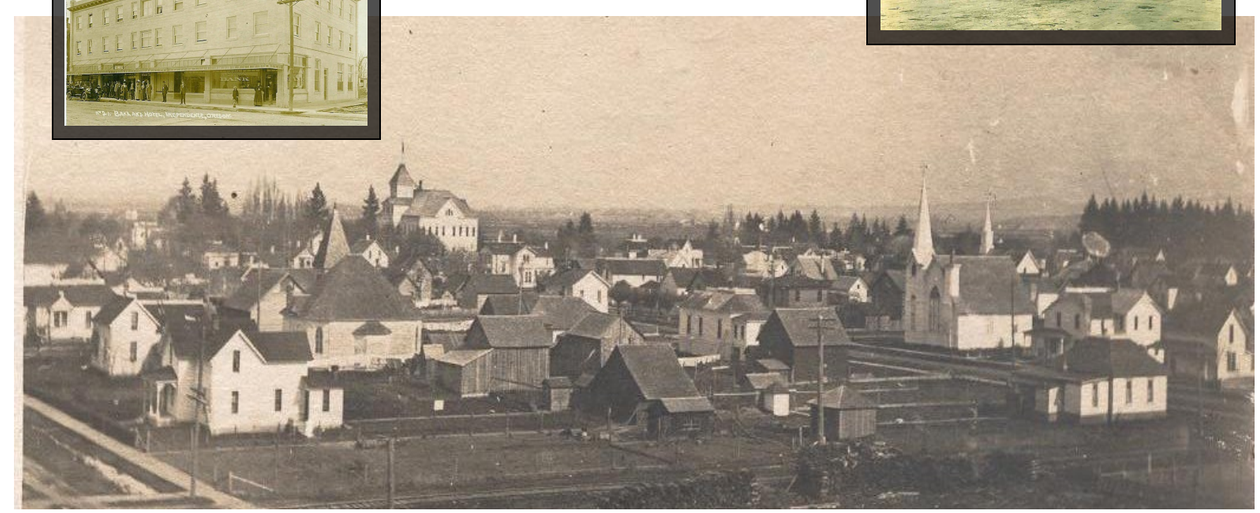
Elvin A Thorpe arrived from Council Bluffs, Iowa in the spring of 1845 and petitioned the U.S. Government to lay out a small township on the North side of Ash Creek. He received the patent in February of 1866. The township was named after Independence, Mo. by Mrs. Thomas Burbank who had lived there before her journey along the Oregon Trail. The town prospered until the winter of 1861-62 when flooding completely destroyed "Thorpe's Town of Independence". Henry Hill had arrived in 1847, staking his claim along the west bank of the Willamette River just south of Ash Creek. The town's folk were wary of rebuilding in Thorpe's town and beseeched Hill to platt a town. He platted 40 acres connecting to Thorpe's main through fare and gave away two lots to people to build a home. Hill's town was filed June of 1878 and incorporated in 1885.

The majority of the buildings downtown were built between 1880 and 1890 as the population grew from 700 to 1200. Three railroads were established in the 1880's; the O & C to Corvallis, Western Railroad completed a line down 2nd Street and the "Peanut Roaster" ran between Monmouth and Independence in 1890. There was a ferry system across the Willamette, which is still visible at the river bank on the end of "C" Street, electric street lights were working in 1890, the water works was completed in 1891, and the telephone and telegram office opened in 1892. From 1902 to 1905 the population grew to 1800, the first automobile was owned by Dr. Otis Butler in 1907 and six streets were paved in 1912.

During the 1920's a hospital, still located at Log Cabin and Grand streets, Independence Elementary school, and the library were all built. This renewed prosperity was primarily due to the Hop industry, the major crop from the mid 1890's through the 1940's. Independence was known as the "Hop Capital of the World". In 1913 a total of 4,275,000 pounds of hops were harvested at $.22 a pound. In the 1940's it is estimated that 25,000 people came to Independence to work the harvest.

Today large manufacturers and small business owners keep Independence much as it was 100 years ago. With the renaissance movement of the current city government, Independence continues to be a lively place to live, work and play. There are over 250 historic homes and businesses within Independence National Historic District.

Your tour begins at the plaza at Riverview Park, is less than a mile in length and holds more treasures than can be featured here.



For additional information, please contact: Independence Heritage Museum
112 S Third St. P.O. Box 7 Independence, OR 97351 503-838-4989 Website: www.orheritage.org

Independence Historic District Walking Tour

Explore the End of the Oregon Trail

1

Sperling Building
114 S. Main

Built by Albert Sperling in 1913 and named the Lerona Hotel after his daughters Leona and Rowena. The hotel was prominent, holding a bank, dining room, lobby, bakery and sample room on the first floor. In 1925 it became the Beaver Hotel with Moss Walker as Manager.

2

Main Street Antiques
144 S. Main

Built in 1880 by Belt and Whitaker as a furniture business until 1900 allowing the IOOF to use the upper floor for a number of years. A Chinese restaurant operated here in the early 1900's. The façade was restored by owner Dan Weaver in 2003. He has operated an antique shop in the building since 1976.

3

Ash Creek Animal Clinic
194 S. Main

Built around 1884, this Italianate building held a general store with the Masonic Hall on the 2nd floor. By 1902, the IOOF moved upstairs. The lower floor housed a dry goods store owned by Kenneth Williams until 1940.

4

Cooper Block
206 S. Main

Built in 1895 by prominent banker-turned hop grower J.S. Cooper in the Queen Anne style using local brick. In 1905, as a republican, he represented Polk and Lincoln counties in the legislature. Citizens would watch from the spire and ring a bell announcing the arrival of the Independence Ferry.

5

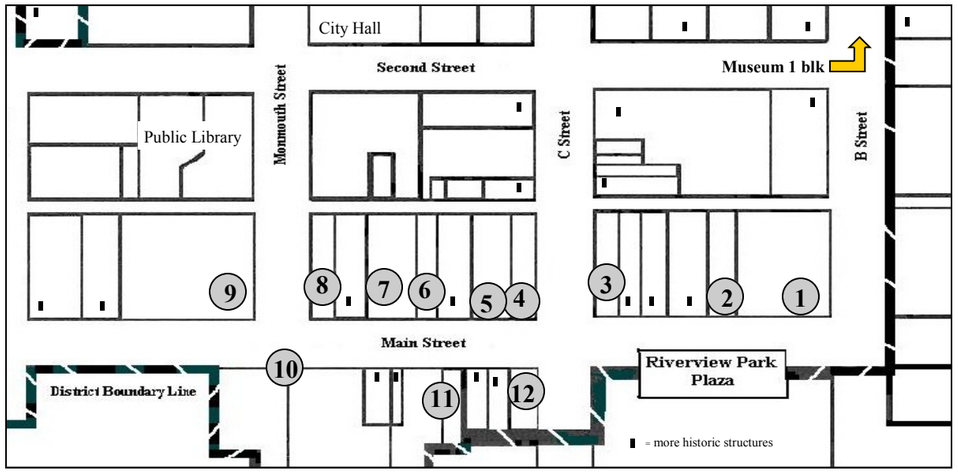
Little Mall on Main (Craven's)
226 S. Main

Built in 1888, as a single story, second floor was added 1913. Craven's operated a stationary store in 1888. In 1902, it was divided, with one half a millinery and shoe store. By 1913, former mayor, Wm Craven opened a soda fountain operating into the 1930's. It was used as a bowling alley in the 1940's.

6

250 Main St. Antiques
250 S. Main

This building was constructed in 1925 to house Farmer's State Bank, which went out of business in the Great Depression. It was subsequently occupied by Calbreath's grocery store until 1962. It was converted into a jewelry store and is now an antique shop.



This is Main Street looking south at the intersection of B Street, taken about 1920. To see more great historic photo's, come to the Heritage Museum at Third & B.

7

The Opera House
268 S. Main

Built in 1888, by L. W. Robertson for $10,000, this Italianate style building was the center of many cultural events. In the 1890's the upper floor held 500 wooden seats used by schools and the public for plays, operas, boxing and wrestling matches. The first floor held various businesses including a hardware store and appliance store. It is currently being restored.

8

Taylor's Fountain
296 S. Main

Built in 1884, housing a hardware store by 1888., and a grocery in 1913. Sylvester Drug occupied the building in the 1930's. Ed and Leila Taylor purchased it in 1944. It was a gathering place for citizens, retaining the soda fountain until 2006 and housing one of the largest coca-cola collections in the country.

9

Sterling Savings Bank
302 S. Main

Built in 1892 at a cost of $12,000 to house the Independence National Bank. H. Hirschberg was President of the bank until his death in 1925. He died one of the wealthiest men in Polk County. In the early 1900's the upper floor was rented to Dr. Otis Butler, the local physician.

10

Masonic Building
301-319 S. Main

Built (from right to left) in 1892, 1898, and 1914. The far right portion was built to host the Lyon's Lodge No.29, a Masons group that formed in 1859. In 1902, the first floor was home to an agricultural implements store and later a hardware store until 2004, around 1913 a theater is indicated on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, now the Elks.

11

Andy's Café
227 & 235 S. Main

These two buildings, the left was built in 1916, and was occupied by a number of restaurants including Nedrey's and Hazel's café. Clyde Wunder & Charles Wilson remodelded the building in the 1940's. Andy's Annex, on the right, was built in 1900, occupied by Holecheck Meat market from 1935 to 1950 and Nedrey's operated in this space, too.

12

2EZ
211 S. Main

Built in 1885 by J.S. Cooper as the First National Bank, the first bank in Independence . It purportedly held the best vault and safe in the valley. Cooper, a prominent member of the community, was active in banking, the hop industry, and politics. The building was later a tavern, Post Office (1901-1913) and a meat market and grocery store.