

Monmouth-Independence

Historical Research Resources

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People who are interested in the history of our community will find many sources for it that are publicly available. In an effort to build a multi-racial, multi-cultural history that enables learning and conversation, the Monmouth-Independence History Project has created this list of resources to help you do your own historical research and to understand different perspectives of it. This listing will be updated from time-to-time. Your suggestions are welcome and can be made by sending an email to mihistoryproject@gmail.com.

Archives

The [Hamersly Library Archives](#) at Western Oregon University has college publications, Faculty Senate minutes, catalogs, self-studies, yearbooks and affirmative action reports. It is digitizing some of these collections. Its online materials can be found at [Omeka @ WOU](#) and [Digital Commons @ WOU](#) and its physical collection is available [by appointment](#).

Independence Heritage Museum: Currently closed. The bibliography to its "Hops Are Our Heritage" exhibit is linked from the [Exhibit Web Page](#).

[Polk County Historical Society](#) in Rickreall has an archive open for limited hours. Call 503-623-6251 in advance for hours and contents.

[Oregon Historical Society](#). Library and archives in Portland are closed, but extensive materials are accessible through its [online catalogs](#).

The [Oregon Multicultural Archives](#) assists in preserving the histories and sharing the stories that document Oregon's African American, Asian American, Latino/a, and Native American communities. The collections reflect how these communities have contributed to the identity of the state.

Northwest LGBTQ History by the [Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest](#). This nonprofit archive collects, preserves, documents, and shares as much as able. It helps individuals and groups preserve their own historical data and finds a home for historically significant materials when they become available. It also partners with organizations looking at all LGBTQ-identified minorities in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

Books, Articles and Websites

Early History of Independence, Oregon by Sidney W. Newton, (Self-published, 1971) Several dozen short articles about Independence prior to the 1950s. Mostly recollections by the author with some photographs and maps.

Monmouth, Oregon: the Saga of a Small American Town by Scott McArthur (Self-published, 2004) Twenty-eight essays about various topics of Monmouth history, especially late 18th and early 19th centuries.

[Oregon Encyclopedia](#) The purpose of the Oregon Encyclopedia of History and Culture is to provide definitive, authoritative information about all aspects of the State of Oregon, including significant individuals, places, cultures, institutions, events, and peoples. Articles and essays include Monmouth, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the hops industry, braceros, Western Oregon University and many other topics.

Our History of Education: The Central School District, Past and Present, by the Central High School Band (Dallas: Itemizer-Observer, 1973). A heavily-illustrated book with about two dozen short articles describing the change in education in southern Polk County from the rural schools to the creation and early years of the Central School District.

Perseverance: A History of African-Americans in Marion and Polk Counties by Sheridan McCarthy and Stanton Nelson. Identifies many of the Blacks who came to the Willamette Valley and tells how they engaged with the communities. Published by the [Oregon Black Pioneers](#).

[“Hidden Citizens: Blacks in Salem Through the Years,”](#) by Virginia Green. Although victims of racial prejudice and racially restrictive laws, African Americans in Salem have developed their own lives and created their own opportunities in the community. Originally published in 2001 in *Historic Marion*, a publication of the Marion County Historical Society (now part of the Willamette Heritage Center).

Of Forests and Fields: Mexican Labor in the Pacific Northwest by Mario Jimenez Sifuentez. He shows how ethnic Mexican workers responded to white communities that only welcomed them when they were economically useful, then quickly shunned them. He renders the feelings of isolation and desperation that led to the formation of ethnic Mexican labor organizations like the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste (PCUN) farm workers union, which fought back against discrimination and exploitation.

City records:

The cities of Independence and Monmouth retain some public records, as do their libraries. about building permits, ordinances, planning studies, council minutes, and photos.

Newspapers

Nearly all Monmouth and Independence newspapers are available by microfilm; most of the pre-1923 newspapers have also been digitized and are available online through the University of Oregon's [Historic Oregon Newspapers Archive](#)

Independence newspapers:

The Independence west side. (1890-1901)

The Polk County post (1918-1921)

The Willamette news (1891)

Independence enterprise (1894-1904)

Independence enterprise (1908-1922)

Independence monitor (1912-1918)

West side enterprise (1904-1908)

Monmouth newspapers:

The Christian messenger (1870-1877)

The Monmouth Herald (1908-1927. Some issues contain the high school news.)

Christian herald (1882-1887)

Pacific Christian messenger (1877-1891)

Polk County observer (1888-1917)

Copies of these and other newspapers are available on microfilm, such as at the UO, WOU and Oregon Historical Society libraries. WOU also has some issues of its student newspapers online.

Oral Histories

Western Oregon University

Since 2015 students in several history courses have conducted [oral history interviews](#) with faculty and staff.

Century of Action

WOU students have [interviewed local leaders](#) for this organization that celebrates 100-plus years of Oregon women's right to vote and advances the understanding of women's citizenship in Oregon's history.

Oregon State University

The Oregon State University [Special Collections and Archives Research Center](#) (SCARC) is home to one of the more active oral history programs administered by any archive on the West Coast. Since 2010, SCARC has conducted or collected well over 900 interviews, documenting life and events across the Pacific Northwest. All of SCARC's recent interviews have been cataloged alongside several decades' worth of legacy oral history collections that are maintained and preserved by the department. SCARC is currently the repository for more than 2,200 oral interviews, the earliest of which was conducted in 1949.

Oregon Historical Society

OHS began conducting and collecting oral histories in 1976. In addition, [the collection](#) includes sound recordings, radio broadcasts, speeches, and music. The collection contains over 13,000 items, including phonodiscs and tapes, transcripts, summaries, outlines, and indices. Principal topics are agriculture, architecture, business and industry, education, environmental affairs, ethnic culture, family history, geography, government, the Great Depression, local history, medicine, military, organizations, science and technology, sports, transportation, urban planning, and World War II.

Oral Presentations

["Hannah and Eliza Gorman"](#). This 5-minute presentation about the two enslaved women who are likely the first Blacks to live in our community was prepared by the director of the Oregon Black Pioneers. It emphasizes their later lives in Benton County. 2020.

Population Information

Ancestry.com has the census lists for Monmouth and Independence until 1940. If you have a library card from either city library, you can access Ancestry free through the CCRLS online resources.

The Portland State University Population Research Center has [multi-page summaries](#) of the 2000 and 2010 census for Monmouth and Independence.

State Records:

Anything that required planning or permits involving state government may be available either through the agency that created the document or the [State Archives](#).

The State Historic Preservation Office has information about [buildings considered for designation as historic](#).

Video Presentations

[“Beyond Chinatown: Uncovering Oregon’s Rural Chinese History”](#) by Chelsea Rose. With a focus on rural communities, remote mining camps, and railroad construction, this collaborative project has provided important insight into the Chinese experience and role in the settlement and development of Oregon.

[“Grounded in This Place: A Deep History of Latino Activism in Oregon”](#) by Lynn Stephen and Mario Sifuentes. The history of Latinos in Oregon begins in the early 19th century, when the current southern state line was actually the northern border of Mexico, and continues through today, as new immigrants arrive and Latino Oregonians of many generations continue to shape the state.

[“The Oregon Story: Agricultural Workers”](#) is an hour-long documentary produced by Oregon Public Broadcasting looking at the challenges and lives of agricultural workers, especially those who are Mexican-American. It notes how some first came to help farmers during World War II, and that many have put down deep roots in Oregon, including Independence. It looks at issues of housing, pay, education, health care, and policy, with an emphasis on those living in Independence. Produced in 2001 with a grant from the US Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Initiative.

[“Racism in Oregon: A Brief History”](#) by Oregon Historical Society director Kerry Tymchuk and OHS community programs director Eliza Canty-Jones. In this hour-long presentation these two historians describe major themes and events in more than 150 years of Oregon history.

[“Rethinking Oregon Settlement”](#) by Katy Barber and Melinda Marie Jetté. This presentation strips the Oregon narrative of exceptionalism to consider how it fits into a global discussion of the movements of permanent settlers and laboring classes and the factors —improvements in transportation, rise of mass literacy, wars against and removals of Indigenous people, among others —that made possible their migration. Also, the story of the settlement of the Willamette

Valley, the destination of choice for many Oregon Trail pioneers, is particularly compelling, as it was one of the earliest sites of intercultural contact among the Indigenous groups, fur traders, and Euro-American settlers.

[“Social Movements, Citizenship, and Civil Liberties”](#) by WOU professor Kim Jensen. One hundred years ago women in Oregon faced many challenges and debated gendered questions that have powerful echoes in our own day. Oregon women shaped powerful reform movements and forged new civic roles including the achievement of the vote, office holding, and jury service for women, public health and civic betterment movements, and labor reforms battling corporate interests, regulating workplaces, and making education more accessible to women.

[“The Surprising Adventures of George Gibbs on the Oregon Frontier”](#) by longtime Northwest historian Stephen Dow Beckham and a panel of scholars who look at the life of Gibbs, who arrived overland in Oregon in 1849. He remained for 11 years to work in Oregon, Washington, and California as the pioneer ethnographer, linguist, and collector of material culture for the Smithsonian. He also recorded the negotiations of tribes and the federal negotiation that resulted in a Willamette River Valley treaty. The panel was sponsored by the Oregon Historical Society and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

[“Tribal Lands Management”](#) is a 72-minute presentation by Lindsay McClary, habitat restoration specialist, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, to the Luckiamute Watershed Council. For thousands of years, members of what today is the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde have been land managers in the Willamette Valley. The native plants and animals are intrinsic resources to the Tribes as they form the foundation to historic traditions and values. Although the Tribes were removed from much of their ancestral homelands, people never lost their connections to place. Today, the Tribe continues land management practices both on and off Tribal lands throughout the Willamette Valley. A look into past, present, and future landscape management describes how traditional practices are not relics of the past, but are reflections of today’s cultural values.

[“Why Aren’t There More Black People in Oregon”](#) is an hour-long presentation by PSU professor Walida Imarisha to the 2020 League of Oregon Cities conference. Reviewing the history of Blacks in Oregon, she emphasizes how white supremacy in institutions, including government, has shaped Black lives in Oregon since the 1840s.