

Monmouth-Independence History Timeline -

Prepared by the Monmouth-Independence History Project. Update of April 25, 2021

Date(s)	Region	Event(s)
1770-1840s	Oregon	Epidemics of diseases brought here by Europeans kill up to 90 percent of Native Americans in Oregon. This destroys some of the cultural and natural connections that Kalapuyan-speaking people who have been in the Monmouth-Independence area since time immemorial have with the area.
1845	Independence	A wagon train led by John Thorpe (sometimes spelled Thorp) of Missouri arrives here and includes a Black woman and her daughter. Thorpe's son Elvin is considered one of the founders of Independence and they settled "between Independence and Corvallis." The two enslaved women, eventually known as Hannah and Eliza Gorman , are probably the first Blacks to live in our community.
1846	Independence	Bill Tetherow's saloon is the first Independence business. It also later served as a church and a school.
1848	National	Congress passes the Act to Establish the Territorial Government of Oregon, which protected the rights of "Indians in said Territory, so long as such rights shall remain unextinguished by treaty"; appointed the governor to serve as superintendent of Indian Affairs; and appropriated \$10,000 for these purposes. [Oregon Encyclopedia - Willamette Valley Treaty Commission]
1850	Oregon	The Oregon Donation Land Law is approved by Congress. The legislation set in motion procedures for the disposal of public lands and established the grid-square pattern of land ownership. It enabled a citizen or "half-breed Indian" to gain title to 160 acres (320 acres for married couples) after residing on land and making improvements to it for four years. The law specifically excludes African Americans and Hawaiians. [Oregon Encyclopedia - Oregon Donation Land Act]
1855	Oregon	After an 1851 treaty had been rejected by Congress, the Willamette Valley Treaty is signed by some members of the Kalapuyan-speaking tribes and others. The Kalapuyans, who had been decimated by disease and whose population had declined to about 400 people, ceded nearly the entirety of the Willamette Valley to the United States government. In return, they were promised a permanent reservation; annuities; supplies; educational, vocational, and health services; and protection from violence by American settlers. The US Senate ratified the treaty. [Oregon Encyclopedia -- Willamette Valley Treaty Commission ; CTGR website]
1856	Monmouth	Monmouth University (today's Western Oregon University) opens.

1857	Oregon	Grand Ronde Reservation established by executive order. It becomes the forced home to Kalapuyan speakers. [Oregon Encyclopedia – Kalapuya Treaty of 1855]
1857	Oregon	Oregon voters approve a draft state constitution. Polk County voters approve 584-53 a section to prohibit Blacks in the state. (Oregon State Archives)
1859	Regional or National	Oregon admitted as a state by Congress with a clause in the constitution that stated "No Negro, Chinaman, or Mulatto shall have the right of suffrage" That clause was rendered moot by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, although it was not repealed by voters until 1926. Other racist language in the state constitution was removed in 2002.
1866	Independence	The first Independence town plat is approved by President Andrew Johnson. The first street to run north and south was named Indian Grave Street because it was placed next to Indian burial grounds. The six-block long street's name was later renamed Main Street. The first street to run east and west was named Jew Street. [Sidney Newton, Early History of Independence Oregon , pg. 2]
1880	Regional or National	The combined population of Independence and Monmouth is 958.
1882	Regional or National	The Chinese Exclusion Act is the first significant law restricting immigration into the United States. It suspended the immigration of Chinese people for 10 years and declared Chinese immigrants ineligible for naturalization.
1880s	Regional or National	Riots in western US cities force thousands of Chinese laborers to flee their homes. Dozens were executed.
1887	Monmouth	Monmouth's only two Chinese people, Ton Tin San and Lee Gee, operate a laundry until they are brutally murdered and their remains are found in a nearby well. Although detective Sam Simmons believes the murders are a gang activity, no one was ever arrested for the killings. [Scott McArthur, Monmouth, Oregon: The Saga of a Small American Town , 65-67]
1887	Oregon	Dawes Severalty Act approved by Congress results in loss over the next few years of most Grand Ronde reservation lands. [Oregon Encyclopedia – Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde]
1892	Regional or National	Geary Act reinforced and extended the Chinese Exclusion Act's ban on Chinese immigration for an additional ten years. It also required Chinese residents in the U.S. to carry special documentation—certificates of residence—from the Internal Revenue Service. Immigrants who were caught not carrying the certificates were sentenced to hard labor and deportation, and bail was only an option if the accused were vouched for by a "credible white witness."
1899	Monmouth	Monmouth City Council adopts Ordinance 109, which prohibits certain types of nuisances. It declares that one type of nuisance is "Any laundry or wash house which is

		managed or operated by Chinese labor in whole or in part.” [McArthur, <u>Monmouth, Oregon</u> , 67]
1910	Independence	Independence High School opens with two male and two female teachers. The men each received \$1,125 for their services and the women received \$630 and \$585. [CHS Band, <u>Our History of Education</u> , pg. 21]
1911	Monmouth	When a new Monmouth school building for all grades was opened, it had only three instructors: Meldora Jackson, Almilda Dought and Nellie F. McNeil. The following year, it was solely used as a high school. McNeil received a salary of \$75 per month as the high school’s first principal. [CHS Band, <u>Our History of Education</u> , pg. 24]
1912	Oregon	A constitutional amendment giving Oregon women the right to vote is approved by 52 percent of male voters.
1914	Oregon	A common teaching technique during the 1910s at Oregon Normal School is dressing students as black-faced minstrels and mimicking Black people, a method considered racist. This technique was then used by ONS graduates at schools around the state. [<i>Monmouth Herald</i> , numerous issues 1914]
1916	Monmouth	Polk County residents vote against a measure entitled “ Negro and Mulatto Suffrage ” to change the Oregon Constitution so that Black people would be able to vote. The vote was 2145 yes; 2650 no. While the US Constitution’s 14th Amendment says that this prohibition is unconstitutional, not until 1926 did Oregon voters decide to eliminate the discriminatory section from the Constitution.
1922	Regional or National	A former nun appearing under the auspices of the Ku Klux Klan addresses a packed Baptist church in Independence to speak on behalf of an amendment to the Oregon constitution that would have required all children to attend public schools (Private schools, such as Catholic institutions targeted in this campaign, would not have been permitted.) The proposed amendment was defeated by voters in the November election. [<i>Independence Enterprise</i> , Oct. 6, 1922]
1923	Regional or National	Oregon passes a law prohibiting Japanese people from owning and leasing land. [Willingham, <u>Grit and Ink</u>]
1924	Regional or National	Immigration Act restricts Middle Eastern, Hindu and East Indian, and Japanese people from immigrating.
1924	Regional or National	Although the 15th amendment to the US Constitution in 1870 had given full rights (including voting) to all males born in the U.S., Native Americans are only given the right to vote and full U.S. citizenship for the first time by the Snyder Act of 1924.
1940	Monmouth	Monmouth establishes what is today Monmouth Power and Light, one of the few city-owned utilities in the state. [McArthur, <u>Monmouth, Oregon</u> , ppg. 151-152]
1942	Independence & Monmouth	Monmouth and Independence grow with families who had been removed from land taken for the construction of the

		Camp Adair training base and with some of the tens of thousands of soldiers who trained there. [McArthur, Monmouth, Oregon , ppg. 214-217] [Oregon Secretary of State – Life on the Home Front exhibit]
1942	Regional or National	The US government begins the Bracero program to bring farmworkers from Mexico to fill the shortage of skilled agricultural workers created by World War II. More than 15,000 Mexicans come to Oregon as part of the program. Many stay after the war, when many returning soldiers choose not to return to the farm fields. [Oregon Encyclopedia – Bracero Program]
1943	Regional or National	Because of the Chinese government's support for the US during World War II, Chinese immigrants and their American-born families become eligible for US citizenship
1949	Independence & Monmouth	Independence, Monmouth and surrounding communities form the Central School District to deal with overcrowding. [CHS Band, Our History of Education , 26]
1950	Independence & Monmouth	After growing by 67 percent since 1940, the combined population of Independence and Monmouth is 3,906.
1950	Independence	The Independence Bridge is completed, ending 93 years of ferry service. Planning for the bridge began in 1935. [Newton, Early History of Independence , 62]
1952	Regional or National	Japanese immigrants are permitted to become US citizens for the first time.
1954	Oregon	Siletz and Grand Ronde Tribe's federal recognition ended when Congress passed the Western Oregon Termination Act. [Oregon Encyclopedia – Termination]
1956	Monmouth	Helen Redbird-Smith, a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, begins a 32-year-long teaching career in social science at the Oregon College of Education (now WOU).
1964	Regional or National	Congress approves the Civil Rights Act. It outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, and later sexual orientation and gender identity. It prohibits unequal application of voter registration requirements, racial segregation in schools and public accommodations, and employment discrimination.
1970	Independence and Monmouth	Monmouth's and Independence's combined population is counted at 7,831, which is an 88 percent increase over 1960's total.
1971	Monmouth	Former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali speaks at OCE. [Pamplin Media] Also speaking on campus, actor-comedian Godfrey Cambridge related his experiences in the film industry.
1971	Monmouth	Richard Peterson is student body president and the recipient of the Delmar Dewey Award, OCE's highest honor for a graduating senior. Lono Waiwaiole is editor of the student newspaper. Both are people of color. [Grove yearbook]
1973	Independence & Monmouth	Central High School band members sell copies of "Our History of Education: The Central School District, Past and

		Present” to raise funds for a friendship concert tour to northern Mexico. [CHS Band, Our History of Education , 44]
1977	Monmouth	Gerald Leinwand becomes president of Western Oregon State College. He is Jewish. The first community dinner for him features ham, which many practitioners of the Jewish religion consider inappropriate to eat. [Personal comment]
1977	Independence	Mexican-Americans voice concerns at a meeting in Independence about several instances where law enforcement officers are stopping them without cause and asking for ID. Attorney Rocky Barilla files a lawsuit to protect city resources and stop racial profiling, including that of U.S. citizens. The incident is one that led the 1987 Oregon Legislature to nearly unanimously approve a law that allows police and sheriffs to verify the immigration status of someone only when they are arrested for something criminal. [OPB - Spanish] [OPB - English]
1978	Monmouth	Gail Gengler becomes Monmouth’s first woman mayor when she is selected by fellow city councilors to complete the unexpired portion of the previous mayor’s term.
1983	Oregon	Grand Ronde Reservation restored by act of Congress. This meant treaty obligations were again recognized, allowing for much-needed health and human services benefits for tribal members and for government-to-government negotiations on a variety of issues. [CTGR website]
1989	Oregon	Polk Community Development Corp. established to develop low-income housing. [Polk CDC website]
1989	Oregon	The Ella Curran Community Food Bank incorporates as a nonprofit.
1990	Independence & Monmouth	The combined population of Independence and Monmouth reaches 10,713. It’s the first time the census count exceeds 10,000.
1995c	Monmouth	The first Indian pow-wow takes place at Western Oregon State College (now WOU).
1995	Monmouth	WOSC selects Dr. Betty Youngblood as its first woman president. The previous 18 presidents have been men, as have been her four successors.
1997	Monmouth	Western Oregon State College is re-named Western Oregon University.
2000	Independence & Monmouth	A total of 13,736 people are counted by the census in Independence and Monmouth. 80 percent say they are white only. Nineteen percent say they are of Hispanic or Latino descent. Fourteen percent say they are of some other race alone. [Wikipedia]
2000	Oregon	The interior of a home belonging to a biracial couple is spray painted with racial slurs while the family is attending an event at their children’s school. [Personal note]
2001	Oregon	Oregon Public Broadcasting produces a program “ The Oregon Story: Agricultural Workers ” that features Mexican and Mexican-American farmworkers, especially those in

		Independence. The program highlights housing, work, culture, and education.
2002	Oregon	Teresa Alonso Leon , who was born in Mexico, graduates from WOU. In 2016, she became the first immigrant Latina elected to the Oregon Legislature.
2002	Monmouth	Monmouth voters decide to end the prohibition against the sale of beer and wine in the city, ending its claim as the last city in the western US to be dry.
2004	Independence & Monmouth	Monmouth-Independence Networks (MINET) begins operations. It is a cooperative effort by the two cities to bring broadband internet service to the community after efforts to attract private internet communication firms failed.
2004?	Oregon	The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Western Oregon University sign an agreement that enables students to satisfy graduation requirements for language proficiency with Chinuk Wawa, a pidgin language that includes words from tribal and non-tribal languages.
2010	Independence & Monmouth	A total of 18,124 residents are counted in Independence and Monmouth. That is a 32 percent increase since 2000. The percentage of people who say they are white only declines to 78 percent. The percentage of people who are Hispanic or Latino grew by 67 percent in the previous decade and now comprises 24 percent of the population. Other groups whose growth exceeded the overall growth rate were Asian (115 percent), American Indian and Alaska native (74 percent), those who declared two or more races (51 percent), Black or African American (46 percent), and other (36 percent). [Wikipedia]
2013	Monmouth	WOU is the preferred Oregon university for Oregon's Hispanic students, and is favored second for African American and Native American resident students. Nearly 11 percent of the students are Hispanic.
2013	Monmouth	First woman hired as WOU athletic director (Barbara Dearing)
2013	Monmouth	The first annual Lavender Graduation honors graduating members of WOU's LGBTQ+ community, celebrates their accomplishments and acknowledges struggles that some community members have faced.
2016	Oregon	The first annual Black Graduation at WOU recognizes Black and African-American graduates. This ceremony allows the students to share their success with friends and family while celebrating the work they did to earn a degree.
2017	Oregon	First Black person hired as WOU athletic director (Curtis Campbell).
2017	Independence & Monmouth	Black people and other people of color say it is difficult to find a barber or hair stylist in the community who is willing and able to provide them professional service.
2018	Independence & Monmouth	After swastikas are painted on a public street in Monmouth, the mayors of Monmouth and Independence, the Central School District and WOU issue a statement that says,

		among other things, that “Acts of anti-Semitism, religious bigotry, racism and unlawful discrimination have no place here. To be clear, we denounce any form of hate in our communities, nation and the world and we invite you to do the same.”
2019	Monmouth	The first woman elected as mayor of Monmouth begins serving her term (Cecelia Koontz).
2019	Oregon	First Black cross country, mens basketball and track head coaches are hired (Wes Pifer and Octavious Gillespie-Bennett)
2020	Oregon	Grand Ronde Tribes have about 5,400 enrolled members [CTGR website]
2020	National	The COVID-19 pandemic arrives in Independence and Monmouth. After 14 months, more than 3,500 cases had been diagnosed and 52 deaths attributed to it in Polk County .
2020	Oregon	Black students at WOU feel intimidated when a pickup truck with a large Confederate flag flying on it drives through campus on several occasions, with occupants tossing things at students of color. A car owned by a Black WOU student has the “N word” spray-painted on it. [WOU BSU]
2020	Oregon	Black Lives Matter protests and counter protests take place.
2020	Monmouth	A Monmouth woman is arrested for a racial bias crime .
2020	Monmouth	City of Monmouth recognizes MLK Day for the first time. All City offices were closed on MLK Day.
2021	Monmouth	Three women serve as Monmouth city councilors along with the mayor, marking the first time that women have been a majority of the city council. The city also has its first woman city manager.

If you have suggestions of items to add to this timeline, send them to mihistoryproject@gmail.com