Oregon Historical Society to Close Temporarily in Response to COVID-19

Portland, OR – March 13, 2020 – Following the most recent announcement from state and local officials surrounding large public gatherings, the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) has decided to close to the public temporarily beginning on Saturday, March 14, with an anticipated reopening of Monday, March 30. OHS has cancelled or postponed all public programs through April 12, 2020 as well as cancelled school tours and suspended its traveling trunk program through April 17. Library services, including research inquiries and photo and film reproductions, will also be paused during this period.

“Oregonians have long looked to the Oregon Historical Society for accurate history. It is our hope that when historians write about this unique and challenging time, they will write that lives were saved and normalcy restored because the recommendations of public health officials were taken seriously,” said Oregon Historical Society Executive Director Kerry Tymchuk. “To do our part to ensure that history, and in keeping with the fact that the health and well-being of our visitors, staff, and volunteers is our number one priority, we believe that this temporary closure is the right thing during these uncertain times.”

OHS management has also made plans to alleviate the burden on its staff during this period of stress. Leadership has encouraged all staff to prioritize their own health and safety, and as such has granted all staff up to five paid personal days, to be used during this public closure period, in order to allow staff to care for themselves and their loved ones.

Lessons from the past will continue to inform our community in coming weeks. While many in our community practice social distancing at home, OHS encourages visits to ohs.org/washyourhands for reliable health information and links to OHS’s digital resources, which include the digital history projects like the Oregon Encyclopedia, the Dear Oregon blog, OHS Digital Collections, and free articles from our scholarly journal, the Oregon Historical Quarterly.
When the museum reopens, OHS is excited to debut a new exhibition, *Nevertheless, They Persisted: Women’s Voting Rights and the 19th Amendment*. One suffragist profiled in the exhibit who our community can learn from during this crisis is Esther Pohl Lovejoy; as a public health official, she helped prevent an outbreak of bubonic plague in Portland, in part by resisting xenophobic arguments that blamed Chinese Portlanders for the disease.

“Like the Oregon suffragists that made history in 1912 when they won Oregon women citizens the right to vote – after five previous failed attempts – we too will persist through this public health crisis and come out stronger,” said Tymchuk.

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**About the Oregon Historical Society**

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state’s collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website ([www.ohs.org](http://www.ohs.org)), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon’s history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon’s cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.