

The history behind

Oregon's Capital

Trappers and farmers established some of the earliest permanent settlements in the Willamette Valley region, nestled between the Cascade and Coast mountain ranges. The trappers arrived in the early 1800s and some remained and turned to farming. Methodist missionaries, who came to minister to the Native Americans in 1834, encouraged further settlement and were the founders of Salem. Missionary Leader Jason Lee and his group built

a mill on the Mill Creek. In 1842, they founded the first institution of learning west of the Rockies – the Oregon Institute, now known as Willamette

University. Salem was originally referred to as “Chemeketa,” a Kalapooya Indian name meaning “place of rest.” The missionaries, however, preferred the name “Salem,” an anglicized form of the Hebrew word “Shalom,” meaning “peace.”

In 1843, an overland migration arrived over the Oregon Trail to settle in the Willamette Valley. The influx of settlers traveling the Oregon Trail increased and agitation for U.S. control of Oregon resulted in the 1846 settlement between the U.S. and Great Britain. This action established the 49th parallel as the dividing line between British territory and the United States.

The Territory of Oregon, with its capital at Oregon City, was recognized in 1849. When Oregon gained statehood in 1859, Salem was sanctioned as the official capital.



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Photos below, l to r: Historic Elsinore Theatre; Zena Church; Mission Mill Museum and Historic Deepwood Estate.



A Pioneer

Spirit

The Salem area's pioneering spirit has created an intriguing capital city and extremely diverse region within Marion and Polk counties. What helps make the region so special are the historic attractions that paint the picture of Oregon's earliest settlers who made the arduous trek across the Oregon Trail in search of "Eden". They found exactly what they were looking for in Oregon's lush and fertile Willamette Valley and the Salem region.



Today Oregon's history is lovingly preserved in charming sites throughout the region such as:

- Mission Mill Museum which preserves three 1840's Mission houses and a 19th century woolen mill; the Museum interprets Western Oregon's settlement and industry.
- Bush House Museum built in 1878 by Asahel Bush II, this Italianate-style Victorian mansion and Conservatory in Bush's Pasture Park features changing exhibits, original fine art and furnishings.
- Historic Deepwood Estate an 1894 Queen Anne Victorian, located on 4.5 acres of historic gardens and nature trails, featuring exquisite stained glass and golden oak woodwork. The nature trails were designed by Lord and Schryver, the Northwest's first women landscape architecture firm.
- Oregon State Capitol holds the key to Oregon's history. Built in 1938, Oregon's third Capitol (first two burned), features Greek marble throughout the building and beautiful murals that depict the history of Oregon. Atop the dome sits the "Gold Pioneer".
- Champoege State Heritage Area is considered the "Birthplace of Oregon Government". Champoege is the site of the vote, on May 2, 1843, to form Oregon's Provisional Government—the first government in the Pacific Northwest
- Mt. Angel Abbey, set high above Mt. Angel on a 300 foot bluff is a century old Benedictine monastic community built in 1883 by Swiss Benedictine monks

Bush House Museum

- Two ferries continue to motor across the Willamette River daily transporting cars, farm equipment and pedestrians and cyclists.
- The Gallon House is Oregon's oldest covered bridge. It was named for the days when liquor was sold by the gallon or quart in a nearby house and tucked under the bridge for distribution.

Photos below, l to r: Historic Ladd & Bush Bank; Gallon House Bridge; Oregon State Capitol and Mt. Angel Abbey.

