

## Happy Centennial Year!

January 4, 2007

Posted by: Marilyn Clint

For those of us at the Rose Festival, staff, board and volunteers, we've been living in 2007 for months and months. For the past year or so I've described myself as a 'time traveler,' living in the past (with all the historical research and reflection), present (working on the 2006 festival and its production) and future (planning for the Centennial)!

And the future is now, with 2007 finally officially here!

At the Rose Festival office, we welcomed each other on Tuesday morning with "Happy Centennial Year," not "Happy New Year."

On New Year's Day, the Oregonian (one of our signature Centennial partners) launched the first of a series of historical photos they'll be running in the Metro Section over the next six months. The photo shows a decorated, horse-drawn float in front of the old Forestry Building, the geographic icon – "The World's Largest Log Cabin" -- built in 1906 as part of the Lewis & Clark Exposition. (I'll never forget that night in 1964 when flames lit the sky and the beloved building burned. What a feeling of loss we all had!)

When I came in on Monday to set up my office for the new year, I found an email from Gretchen Chilton Mills saying her grandmother, Beatrice Lilly, was one of the women riding on the float in that picture and that she would ask Beatrice's daughter to provide some of her mother's recollections of the event.

This is exactly what we had hoped for!

Board member Nancy Hopkins has been our official researcher for years now, visiting the Oregon Historical Society and the Multnomah County Library dozens of times over hundreds of hours to find tidbits of treasure about both Rose Festival and Portland history. In August of 2005, Nancy provided a blow-by-blow account of an accident in the 1907 parade that involved a float whose frightened horses would have veered into the crowd if not for the heroic effort of four policemen, illustrating how little things have changed in a century. The parade committee concentrates on making the event safe for both participants and spectators, and we still rely on the professional skills of the police to step in if needed.

Nancy has collected dozens of images from the Oregon Historical Society that we've been using in our marketing and advertising for the past year. In early December, just days back from vacation, Nancy drove several of us to a meeting at the Pittock Mansion, and on the way back to the office I said, "Nancy, I need you to find the original speech Mayor Lane gave to start the festival." I had many different anecdotal accounts of Lane's speech, and I knew it was made in October of 1905 at the latter stages of the Lewis & Clark Exposition, so at least I had some idea of where she could start.

Thursday afternoon of that very week, Nancy called from the library to announce she had found the information!

On October 14, 1905, during the farewell banquet of the Board of Governors of the Exposition, Mayor Harry Lane unveiled a plan to use the proceeds of the fair – actual stock dividends – to purchase the land around the forestry building for a park and to fund a "permanent rose carnival" to be held each summer. And he offered up his stock dividend of \$30, plus an additional \$100, to get the funding started.

"It's nothing more than a wild dream," said Mayor Lane, "but I believe if the people would take hold of this proposition it would be one of the greatest things . . . It would be the greatest permanent advertising for this city that was ever attempted and would make Portland's fame as a rose city world-wide."

Lane went on to say, "Los Angeles is continually telling of its attractions and Seattle is howling about its great beauty and natural advantages, but Portland surpasses them all when a comparison is made, and the city could be made doubly attractive. Let the civic improvement spirit take hold of the people; let them plant roses, which grow here in summer with but little care; let them park the streets and plant hedges of fir trees. We will then have a beautiful green and red city—green with fir and red with roses. Let the people paint their houses and continue public improvements; let the great railroads make this a center and a great seaport and we will soon have the most wonderful and most famous city in the United States."

It's great that he had such high aspirations for our city and our festival!

Tomorrow Nancy is going to the city archives to look at several "exciting" documents. It's so much fun to be surrounded by energetic people who are enthusiastic about the projects associated with our Centennial!