A Century of Connections

Connections among and between people, places, and events shape the development of a community. The sites on this trail provide insight into the connections embedded in the history of Canby as it evolved from a mid-nineteenth century pioneer farming community into a mid-twentieth century town on the urban-rural fringe.

That evolution was marked by milestone events that reset the course of the community’s development. The arrival of the railroad and the platting of the original 24-block town site in 1870 laid the foundation for the emergence of a commercial and transportation hub for the surrounding farms.

The resultant business opportunities, coupled with the incorporation of the city on 1893, permitted local entrepreneurs to establish retail, service, and financial businesses in the town center. In the 1920s, New Deal programs, the federal response to the Great Depression, provided Canby’s civic leaders with opportunities to expand and upgrade the townscape. Post-World War II growth spurred an expansion of the commercial corridor and a redefinition of Canby as a mid-twentieth century town on the urban-rural fringe.

The story of James R. “Ray” Vinyard, a civic and business leader, illustrates the ways in which people, places, and events were intertwined in Canby’s development. Over four decades, with direct connections to five sites on this trail, Vinyard played an important role in redefining Canby.

In 1891, at the age of four, Vinyard moved to Canby with his family from Marion County. Living on a farm overlooking the Molalla River, Vinyard attended the one-room Riverside School. In 1900, he began clerking at Louis H. Wang’s General Store, established by Louis H. Wang in 1901. He became a partner in the enterprise in 1917 and took full ownership in 1920, reviving the popular retail outlet until his death in 1948.

In addition to running his business, Vinyard took an active role in the social and cultural life of the community. His many memberships included the Masonic Lodge and the Oddfellows (site 3 and 6). Committed to the commercial prosperity of the community, Vinyard joined the Canby Chamber of Commerce and his family attended the United Methodist Church.

In 1973, Vinyard became a part of Canby’s governing body when the city council appointed him mayor after the death of Mayor H.A. Dedman. During his tenure, Canby acquired a Public Works Administration grant for improvement of the Holly Street City Hall (site 9) and initiated the early development of Will Park (site 1).

A Man with Connections

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A Connected Woman

Women also shaped the development of Canby. After their marriage in 1937, Elsa and Glenn Cutsforth managed the daily operations of the family’s meat market and, a decade later, expanded the enterprise into a grocery store. Over the next two decades, in the business prospered, they increased the size of the store, moving it to a larger building in 1955. Elsa’s business success was recognized with multiple awards, including Oregon Business Leader of the Year in 1970 and Oregon Retailer of the Year in 1974–75.

Active in the community, Elsa’s memberships included Order of the Eastern Star, Willamette Valley Economy Club, Canby Chamber of Commerce, Canby Historical Society, and the Canby Business and Professional Women’s Club. She also served on the City Planning Commission from 1957 to 1978. In 1976, she was named Canby Junior Chamber’s Citizen of the Year and the following year she received a “good guy” award from Canby High School Students.

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EXPLORING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
The Downtown Canby Heritage Trail
A SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR
William Knight Building

In 1890, insurance and real estate agent Charles Knight purchased the property for $1,000, completed construction around 1892, and converted it into the Knight Building. Over 2 decades, he expanded the building to larger quarters in 1912. Initially, it was a combination building that served as a grocery store on the ground floor and an office space on the upper floor. As befits Canby’s first financial institution, this building sits on what was the most prominent intersection in Canby at the turn of the 20th century. In 1906, the bank opened in the new building. It featured a curved cornice, an east-facing window, and an entrance over the sidewalk. After the turn of the century, as Canby’s commercial district evolved, the building became known as the Knight Building.

Cutsforth’s Store

In 1928, Frank T. Cutsforth opened a meat market in Canby. Cutsforth, who was a resident of Canby since 1908, opened his store on the ground floor of the Knight Building. He named the store Cutsforth’s Market. In 1936, the property owner, Canby Bank, decided to sell the building to Frank T. Cutsforth. He then changed the name of the store to Cutsforth’s Market. In 1940, he added a grocery store to the building. Cutsforth’s Market became a popular gathering place for Canby residents. It became known as Cutsforth’s Market and the store featured a variety of goods, including fresh produce, meat, and dairy products.

Front Street Library

The library was founded in 1927 by a group of women who were concerned about the lack of access to books in Canby. The first library was located in the old Oddfellows Building and was open to the public during the summer months. In 1937, the library was moved to the newly constructed Masonic Lodge building. The new library was opened to the public on July 4, 1937. It was a small building, but it provided a space forCanby residents to read and learn. In 1953, the library moved to a larger building on Front Street. It became known as the Canby Public Library. The library continued to grow and expand over the years, providing a valuable resource for Canby residents and visitors alike.