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Centralia Celebrates Oregon Trail Marker Rededication Friday

By Ralph Mancini / rmancini@chronline.com Sept. 27, 2019



Lee Thomasson leads the Washington State Society of Daughters of the American Revolution color guard before posting the colors Friday morning at The Borst Park Home in Centralia.
Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com

On Friday, Centralia's Fort Borst Park Oregon Trail marker became the last of 12 such refurbished monuments to be unveiled in Southwest Washington, from Tumwater to Vancouver during a public commemoration outside the historic Borst Home museum.

Event coordinator Shirley Stirling recounted how the markers were originally installed in 1916 and 1917 to recognize and remind locals of the 2,200-mile trail traveled by emigrants who made their way from several starting points of Missouri and through five other states, including Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and Oregon.

But contrary to popular belief, the trail didn't end for everyone in Oregon.

Historian Chuck Hornbuckle, of the Oregon California Trails Association, told attendees that a group of pioneers were forced to head north of what would later become the state of Oregon in 1845, when a mixed-race family, known as the Bush-Simmons Party, were told to head to Washington due to clause in Oregon's original constitution prohibiting non-white residents.

Hornbuckle continued by referencing an extension of the Oregon Trail, known as the Cowlitz Trail, which

terminated at Capital Park — now recognized as Sylvester Park — in Olympia.

“So, for us, we have that little bit of ammunition when the ones from Oregon say that the trail ended there,” said Hornbuckle.

The outdoor ceremony featured an opening invocation, the presentation of colors, the Pledge of Allegiance and a historical account of Military Road by Capt. Liz Dykstra the U.S. Navy’s Medical Service Corps.

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Regent Lanabeth Horgen officially presented the refurbished Borst Park monument to Centralia Mayor Lee Coumbs.

The dedication was especially significant for Horgen, a native of Independence, Missouri — the city where the Oregon Trail first began being used by migrant travelers in 1836.

Both Coumbs and Stirling spoke in reverential terms about an Oregon Trail traveler who also founded the City of Centralia — George Washington.

Stirling noted how Washington, an African-American, and his wife, Mary Jane, nursed Native Americans back to health and lent resources to people who were down on their luck, among other philanthropic efforts they performed during their lifetimes.

Following the event, Stirling offered her thoughts on how the latest rededication can help make youngsters aware of the travails their forefathers endured in their struggles to create a better lives for their families.

“We want to have our youth and everyone look at history, look at the past and appreciate what has gone on before — good and bad,” she said. “I think this helps us in our journey to be more human.”



Centralia Mayor Lee Coumbs, far left, shakes hands with Regent Lanabeth Horgen during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home.
Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



Captain Liz Dykstra of the U.S. Navy, current Sacajawea Chapter member, left, speaks during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home.
Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



Regent Lanabeth Horgen, far right, speaks during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home.
Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



Centralia Mayor Lee Coumbs, left, laughs and hugs Shirley Stirling during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home.

Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



Lee Thomasson adjusts the American Flag before leading the Washington State Society of Daughters of the American Revolution color guard before posting the colors Friday morning at The Borst Park Home in Centralia.

Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



Shirley Stirling talks bout the Oregon Trail during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home.

Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



Oregon Trail Restoration Project Manager Chuck Hornbuckle speaks during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home.

Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



The inside of the Borst Home is now on display as a museum Friday morning in Centralia.
Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



Bonnie Canaday displays the 'Our George Washington' coloring book during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home.
Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



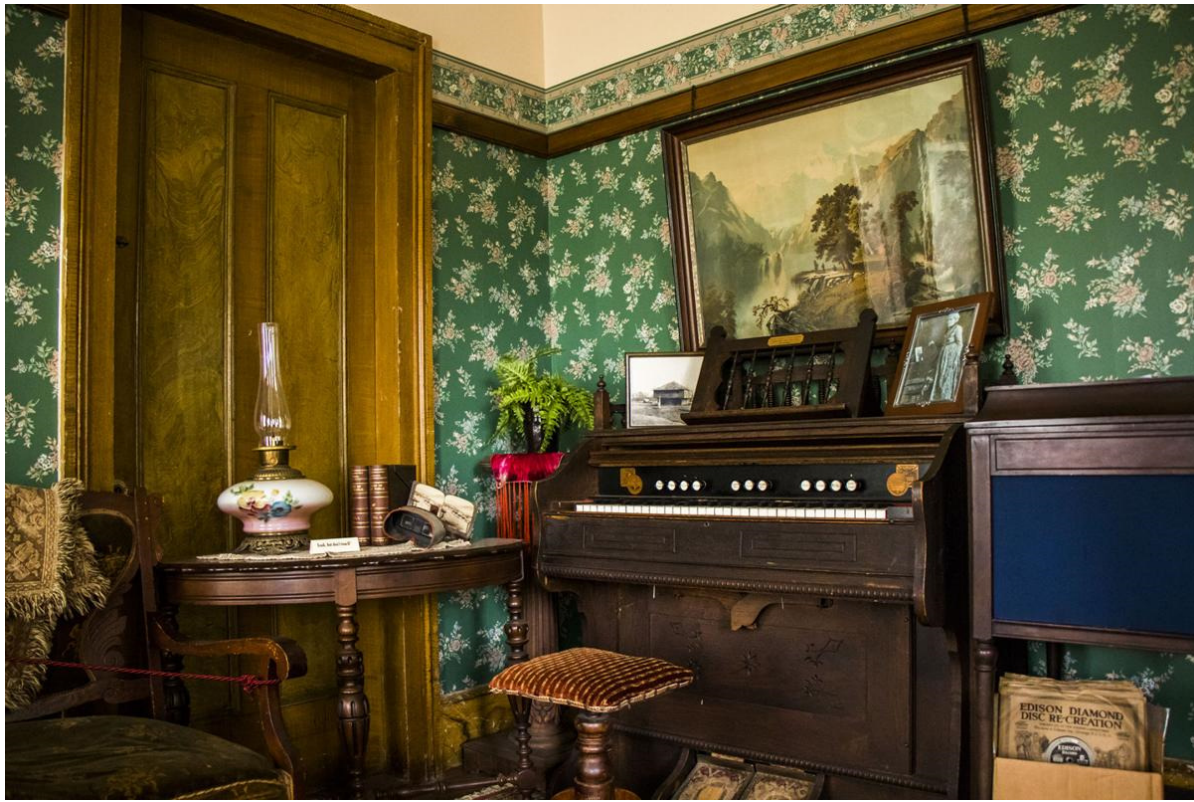
The Oregon Trail monument is uncovered during a rededication ceremony Friday morning at The Borst Park Home in Centralia.

Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com



The inside of the Borst Home is now on display as a museum Friday morning in Centralia.

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