

Century-Old Toledo Oregon Trail Marker Restored, Rededicated

Celebration: Toledo Marker Is One of 11 Between Tumwater and Vancouver

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Toledo Oregon Trail Marker Dedication

Toledo Mayor Steve Dobosh, left, Johanna Jones of Vision Toledo and Shirley Stirling, of the Daughters of the American Revolution, unveiled the restored and rededicated Toledo Oregon Trail Marker Tuesday afternoon in Toledo. Toledo was a stop on the Cowlitz Trail, an offshoot of the Oregon Trail.



"Everyone here has a passion for history," Herman said. When they decided to restore the Toledo trail marker, the Daughters of the American Revolution contacted Marion (Mick) Hersey, known for his work restoring monuments and markers. Hersey taught the DAR members how to restore the plaque, which was re-dyed and covered in a polyurethane coating and a coat of wax and oil to protect it from the elements. "All 11 markers as of last Friday ... have been restored," Hersey said, giving volunteer Chuck Hornbuckle credit for his help. "The big thing is to honor and remember." Before its restoration, the marker was tarnished and difficult to read from years of wear, DAR members said. Doug Nelson, president of the Washington State Sons of the American Revolution, shared stories of how his family crossed the Oregon Trail in 1882. Settlers were lucky to travel 18 to 20 miles a day, he said. They traveled in large groups to avoid confrontations with Native American tribes and ran into cattle rustlers and other dangers. Lanabeth Horgen, first vice regent of the Washington

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Not all travelers on the Oregon Trail ended their journey in present-day Oregon.

Toward the end of the 1800s, many families got to Oregon to find it had already been heavily settled, said Rich Herman, president of the Northwest Oregon California Trail Association. Instead, they turned north. Some took the Cowlitz Trail and ended up traveling through Toledo.

"The new end of the Oregon Trail became wherever you ended up," Herman said.

One-hundred years after the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution placed a marker commemorating the town's place on the Oregon Trail, members of the groups on Tuesday rededicated and revealed the restored trail marker.

"It took a lot of scrubbing, but we did it," said Toledo Mayor Steve Dobosh, who helped with the marker's restoration.

The Toledo marker is one of 11 between Tumwater and Vancouver, all placed by the DAR and SAR.

The groups organized a rededication ceremony Tuesday, including local officials, members of the groups, historians, volunteers and Oregon Trail enthusiasts. Many came dressed in period clothing.

State DAR, also recounted her family's history with the Oregon Trail.

"I was born and raised in Independence, Missouri," she said, adding it was the jumping-off point for many westward travelers. "My family stayed there and that's where we probably saw some of your families off."

The event also included displays of the tools and equipment used to clean the marker, information about Ezra Meeker and the Oregon Trail, and a covered wagon.

Fourth-grade students from Toledo Elementary School participated in the event, placing rocks with their names on them near the marker.

Historian Dennis Larson discussed the history of the Toledo Monument, starting with a 1905 visit from Ezra Meeker, a man dedicated to mapping and preserving Oregon Trail history, to the placement of the marker by the DAR and SAR in 1916.

Several speakers thanked Toledo for the city's part in the project, and commented on the marker's purpose of recognizing history.

The marker is a "reminder of the sacrifice made by the pioneers who helped settle the Washington Territory," Herman said.