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Photo by James Marks

Shelby Coble, a third grader at Patterson Elementary School, hammers in a pin to support a plaque at the location of the historic, now-demolished "Animal House."

Children visit Animal House site

By Betsy Clayton
Emerald Associate Editor

Second grader Virginia Salatar learned a little bit more about Eugene's history Tuesday when she and 13 other students from Patterson Grade School helped recognize one of Eugene's founders.

With volunteer Brad Perkins leading the way, the class of second and third graders installed a plaque on a salt rock at 755 E. 11th Ave. to recognize the site of A.W. Patterson's home, which before its demolition was more commonly referred to as "Animal House."

"I like to learn about Eugene. It's fun and it's interesting," Salatar said after she helped hammer a spike into the salt rock. "I'm going to come back and visit this."

One second grader insisted he would come back and visit the plaque when he is 85, while another student announced the history of Eugene is OK, but she probably won't remember it when she is old.

Perkins, owner of Preservation Development Company in Eugene, said he called Patterson school to arrange the field trip because he wanted to teach the children about the history of their school's founder, Ida Patterson, who was one of A.W. Patterson's eight children.

Perkins walked the children from Hilyard Street and Franklin Boulevard to the Masonic Cemetery, 24th Avenue and Onyx Street, with frequent stops on corners to tell them what buildings used to be there.

Xeroxed photographs from

the late 1800s helped students contrast what Eugene's founders built and what exists today. Perkins also described when commercial development began in Eugene and how that caused many residents to move their homes or tear them down after the 1920s.

On the corner of 11th Avenue and Hilyard Street Perkins pointed out the contrast between a 1920s-style home at 708 11th Ave. and Oregon Medical Laboratories, which now stands next to it.

In addition to buildings, Perkins emphasized lifestyles of the people who once lived in them. Most students said they watch television for night-time entertainment. Perkins asked them what they thought Patterson and his family did in the evenings.

Talk, drink coffee and tell stories were common answers, but one third grader said, "They probably went skinny dipping in the Millrace."

Actually, they played musical instruments and sang songs, Perkins said. The Patterson home was one of the first in Eugene to build a room just for musical purposes.

The house many University students know as "Animal House" was Patterson's second home on the site. After coming from Pittsburgh, Pa., to Eugene on horseback in 1852, Patterson established himself as the town's physician. However, he discovered there weren't enough people in the town to support his profession, so he became a surveyor.

When he re-established his medical practice in the 1880s, he built his original home on

the 755 E. 11th Ave. site. In 1890 he relocated the house across the Millrace so he could build a second home.

The first home no longer stands, and the second home gained popularity when it was used for the film *Animal House* in 1978. However, it was also torn down in spring 1986.

Many students said they couldn't remember all the history they were taught during the tour. Third grader Jamie O'Brien was sure of this. He liked learning all about it, "but I doubt if I'll remember it," he said.

Alice Brooks, the community/school coordinator for District 4-J, said the children actually retain a lot more knowledge than expected. "They listen but they see a lot more. When they get back to school you'd be surprised at what they can tell the other kids," she said.

The children also saw the original site of Patterson Grade School on the corner of 13th Avenue and Alder Street where Sacred Heart General Hospital now has a parking lot. The school was built in 1903 and torn down in 1930. Students agreed the Victorian-style school in Perkins' photos did not look like their school today, which is located at 1510 W. 15th Ave.

The children ended their walk at the Masonic Cemetery where the Patterson family is buried.

This was the Patterson students' first historic trip to the campus area, Brooks said, but they have had several field trips downtown to learn about the history there.

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