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Perspectives

History

for

EVERYONE



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

They say history is written by the victors — and it's pretty well agreed upon that the victors have been white, upper-class and male — but hopefully that view will soon change in Eugene. This city's process of deciding what makes a building historically significant is undergoing change to recognize the contributions of minorities and different classes to the area's history.

Under consideration by the Eugene Historic Review Board is the very process and criteria that determine which properties are designated as historic. Included is the modification that would attempt to recognize sites with "blue collar" and minority history in addition to the older tradition of simply listing the largest and most grand properties. Such an example is the Mims House at 330 High St., the first Eugene house owned by African-Americans after laws prohibiting home ownership by such groups were repealed.

At the very heart of this effort is the recognition that it's time to start recognizing the whole of our history and not just what traditional history books may teach us is important. By examining our entire

history perhaps we can realize the trials and successes of those who may have had a much harder time realizing the American dream.

That effort is an important one. For one reason, the process makes aware those who wouldn't otherwise know of the plight of minority groups in city history. Another reason is that some formal validation is granted for the contributions of historically under-represented groups.

Still, some are concerned that the recognition will be for the wrong reasons. University student Shawna Adams-Jacobs believes that recognizing home ownership by a woman simply because of her gender would reinforce the traditional stereotype of male ownership. Therefore, she and others argue that the historical merit would be based on "being a woman in the man-sphere."

While that is a valid concern, the overall push to

recognize minority contributions to local history must move on to give us the most complete and accurate view of history so that we may avoid our past mistakes and build on our past successes. And though historical merit should still be thoroughly examined in every individual case, there is no reason not to give a full effort into digging up the history of groups who wouldn't normally have made it into the static category of "biggest and best."

There is certainly room in Eugene's history to recognize minority history. The area has been — and currently is — largely Caucasian. When any group is in such an overwhelming majority, the tendency can be to overlook the contributions and struggles of other groups. Hopefully, now the effort to examine the legacies of those ignored groups will give us all a better picture of where we've been and where we're going.

This editorial represents the view of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

THE WEEK IN THUMBS



To health care for the poor

Come October, the extremely poor can receive better health care at the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic, which will offer more security and dependability to those in need.

To requiring renter responsibility

Though many students are against the Eugene Police Commission's proposal that would fine renters for repeated police calls to their residence within a 90 day period, it would hopefully keep area gatherings peaceful, quiet and safe for police.



To the possible demise of the Tandem Taxi

The service might temporarily stop when University bike coordinator David Niles resigns his position in mid-June. The Office of Public Safety will evaluate the service that transports injured or disabled students during the day.

To unduly harsh punishment

The Powers High School senior from Coos County Circuit Court judge in her attempt to restore her valedictorian title after the school district stripped her of the right after she was caught showering with five boys.