

# Archivist collects hop and brewing history

By GAIL OBERST  
For the Capital Press

Tiah Edmunson-Morton's great-great-grandfather, Henry Lawrence "H.L." Edmunson, grew hops in the late 1800s on a small farm in the Goshen area south of Eugene. Although the family sold the land in the 1940s, the plant is still a large part of Tiah's life.

"I like to think I have a bit of hop DNA, since I did end up starting the first hops/brewing archive in the nation," she said of her work at the Oregon Hops and Brewing Archives, housed at Oregon State University's Valley Library.

The archives are a logical extension of OSU's role in hop



Gail Oberst/For the Capital Press  
Tiah Edmunson-Morton, Oregon State University's hop and brewing archivist, listens to hop stories recorded for a recent historic display at the university's library.

history in the Northwest. The land-grant college in the 1890s began studying remedies to

control the "hop louse," moving to studies of processing machinery and, after Prohi-

bition, to the development of the plant itself, creating varieties resistant to mold, lice and mildew. Modern research is producing new varieties that center on flavors and smells to be used in craft beers.

In 2013, inspired by the regional focus on beer, Tiah began gathering stories and materials connected to Oregon's long history in hop cultivation, as well as home and commercial brewing history. The archive expanded in 2016 to include cider, mead and barley.

The majority of commercial hops grown in the U.S. today are grown in Oregon and Washington. An interesting history of hops' commercial migration from the East Coast

to the West is at Tiah's blog, <http://thebrewstorian.tumblr.com>.

Collecting and archiving the remnants of farming history in boxes and files is "not very sexy," Tiah said. "But it's important that I save it so people can use it."

The archives are lodged at OSU, but Tiah often shares portions of the archives with the public by talking to community groups, creating displays and using social media.

Because she spends her days collecting it, Tiah is a veritable storehouse of hop history, excitedly chatting about everything from the crop's first shipping records in the 1820s found at Fort Vancouver, to

more recent acquisitions donated by multi-generational hop-growing families.

Oregon's hop history is extensive, she said, and has included commercial producers that numbered nearly 1,000 in the 1880s. They were hand-picked until the 1930s. Hop harvests filled the small towns with hand-pickers each summer and fall.

"It impacted everything," she said, referring to Independence, a small town outside Salem that claims on its website that its population increased more than 10-fold during picking season, attracting pickers throughout the region, and migrant workers from across the nation.

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