

Oregon Historical Society exhibit features first black-owned bakery

A retiree of Bakers Local 114

The Oregon Historical Society opened a new exhibit May 23 featuring the first black-owned bakery in the state. The exhibit tells the story of Hurtis Hadley, a retired member of Bakers Local 114, and his wife, Dorothy, who opened Milwaukie Pastry Kitchen in 1977.

Hurtis Hadley joined Bakers Local 114 in 1965 and served for many years on the local's Executive Board, and as a trustee. He retired in 1997.

Raised in Oregon and a graduate of Portland's Jefferson High School, Hadley, 71, said he found his passion for baking as a teenager working as a busboy and waiter at Meier and Frank. The pantry chef was short-handed one day and needed an assistant. Hadley accepted the job.

A year later he was hired as a baker's helper at the Bohemian Restaurant and Bakery in downtown Portland. While there, Hadley said in his biography, he faced prejudice as the owner enrolled all the minority bakers in the Cooks Union, rather than the proper

Bakers Union with the white workers.

"This realization came when I reached retirement age and found out that I had to make up five years because



of being enrolled in the wrong union," he wrote.

After five years at Bohemian, and with little opportunity for advancement, Hadley heard that Albertsons was hiring apprentice bakers. He applied and was the first African American to be accepted into Oregon's three-year baker apprenticeship program. Because of his experience at Bohemian, he completed the program in two years, making him the first African American in the state of Oregon to be state certified as a journeyman baker.

As part of the apprenticeship program Hadley attended Portland Community College, where he earned an associates degree in Baking Technology.

He worked at several Albertsons in-store bakeries before accepting a job in the company's merchandising department. He had his eye on becoming a district manager, but was told at the time, "Oregon isn't ready for a person of color in that position," he said.

Hadley spent 10 years with Albertsons before returning to work at smaller independent bakeries. In 1977, he and his

wife decided to open their own business. Milwaukie Pastry Kitchen was a full line bakery that offered specialty breads, assorted pastries, and creative birthday and wedding cakes. Hurtis did the baking and Dorothy, a former licensed cosmetologist, managed the front of the store and coordinated the catering service. The shop's slogan was "Put a little Soul in your Roll." The bakery became a casualty of the Reagan Recession, and in 1985 it was forced to close.

Hadley returned to Albertsons, where he became the first African American in Oregon to be hired as a bakery manager for the company. The grocer later promoted him to bakery store trainer, where he headed up the Oregon division.

After learning that he didn't qualify for a pension, Hadley said Local 114 found him work, first at Franz Bakery in Portland, and later at Oroweat in Beaverton. He retired from Oroweat in 1997.

At a reception May 23 at the Oregon Historical Society, Brian Carter, director of Museum Services and Educa-



Hurtis (right) and Dorothy (center) Hadley are joined by Terry Lansing, financial secretary-treasurer of Bakers Local 114, at a reception at the Oregon Historical Society featuring the Hadleys and Milwaukie Pastry Kitchen — the first black-owned bakery in Oregon. Hurtis is a Local 114 pensioner, having retired in 1997. Also attending the reception was Laurel Koch, longtime financial secretary-treasurer of the Bakers Union, who retired in 2004. The baking utensils on display are original to the bakery, which opened in 1977, Hurtis Hadley said.

tion, said he heard the story of Milwaukie Pastry Kitchen from Dorothy Hadley. Carter was new to the job, having been hired away from the Northwest African American History Museum in Seattle, when Dorothy approached him in March 2013.

Dorothy Hadley told the Labor Press that she had heard there was a new director at the Historical Society, and that he wanted to trace the histories of more black Oregonians.

Hurtis Hadley said his wife spent close to a year researching the history. "She talked to the right people. One thing led to another ... and we're a part of history now."

"I listened to their story, and learned

a lot from our conversation," Carter said. "Out of that discussion came this exhibit."

The exhibit will run for the next six to eight months in the Madison Room, which is used for meetings and small receptions, with an adjacent terrace and view of the South Park Blocks.

Admission is free for residents of Multnomah County, and for active and retired military personnel and their families through Sept. 1. Saturday, June 21, is Community Day and admission is free for everyone. Otherwise, general admission is \$11 for adults; \$9 for senior citizens and students over 18; \$5 for youth 6 to 18; children under 5 are admitted free.



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