

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Historic Buildings at Risk

African American landmarks lack protections

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

For the community at large, the fire that destroyed the Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church in northeast Portland on Feb. 5 was a great tragedy. For the people at the Bosco-Milligan Foundation's Architectural Heritage Center, it was another landmark that's disappeared from Portland's African American history.

In 1998, the foundation published its Cornerstone study of Portland structures with links to the city's African American population. The researchers found 1,300 structures through the recollections of older community members. They also used old mainstream and African American newspapers to find out "who did what, and where they were living when they did it," said Cathy Galbraith, executive director of the group.

Most of the resources are concentrated in inner north and northeast Portland, where African Americans were compelled to live by legal and other restrictions for many years, but they are also scattered across other parts of town.

"At least on the east side, it's hard to find a street that wasn't touched by African American history," Galbraith says.

Unfortunately, a great many significant structures have been destroyed, and continue to be lost.

"I can think of at least 20 buildings that were destroyed

since we did the inventory," Galbraith says.

Of the latest loss - Morning Star - she says, "What makes that so tragic is that it was a building you thought you didn't have to worry about. It was in the hands of a strong congregation who had been wonderful stewards to it." Built in 1919, the structure at Rodney Avenue and Ivy Street was sold by Trinity Lutheran Church to Morning Star

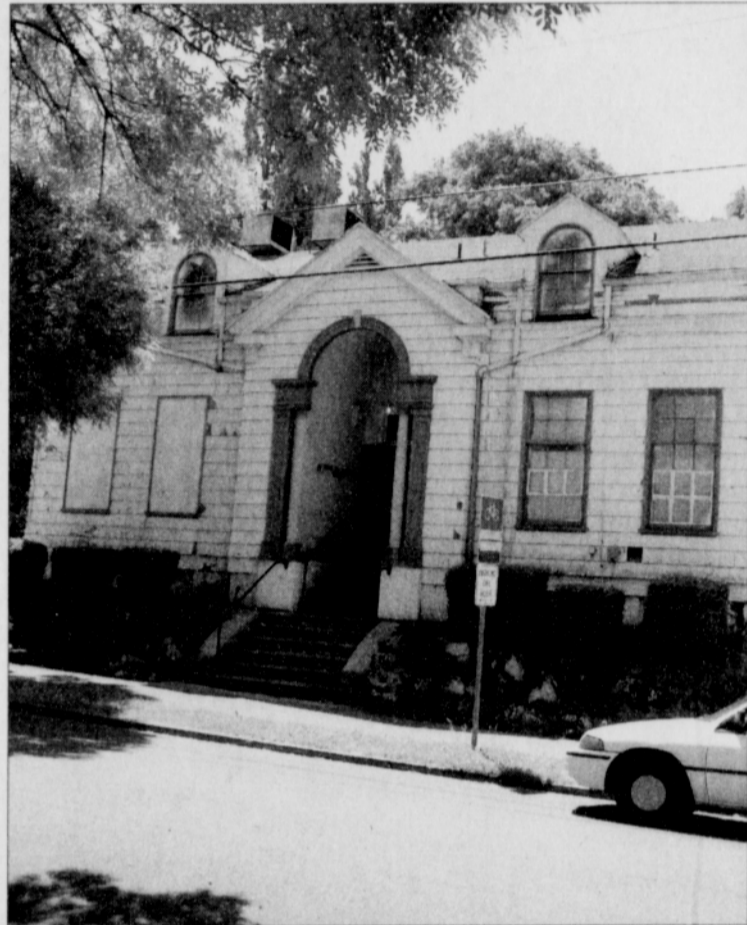
in 1959.

Two other buildings that are very much at risk are nearby at the old Mount Olivet Baptist Church building on Northeast First Avenue and Schuyler, and the Elks Lodge on Northeast Tillamook Street at Williams Avenue.

These are "two of the most important historic buildings in the whole Pacific Northwest," Galbraith says, but sitting on land



Historic Mount Olivet Baptist Church on Northeast First Avenue and Schuyler Street had its beginnings as an African American congregation.



The Elks Lodge continues as an African American community gathering place on North Tillamook Street and Williams Avenue.

PHOTOS BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

zoned for higher use, they are very vulnerable to "redevelopment."

Another at-risk structure is the old Dude Ranch Club at North Broadway and Wheeler Avenue. The building, now part of Multi-Craft Plastics Co. is on prime development land because its sits directly across from the Rose Garden and Memorial Coliseum.

"Anything between Broadway and Hancock is at risk," Galbraith says.

Galbraith has been doing outreach to community groups about this issue. The foundation has held workshops in the Boise and Humboldt neighborhoods, and may do one in Eliot in the future. They urge property owners and would-be owners to research the buildings they own or are buying, and look at the intrinsic worth

of the structure. Galbraith emphasizes that all historic inventories so far, including Bosco-Milligan's, have been less than complete. A building that's not on the list doesn't mean it's not historic," she says. Neither is the fact that it isn't strikingly beautiful or of impressive size.

"History doesn't always look like what we think it should look like," she says, explaining how for example, a historic building doesn't require a gingerbread or Queen Anne style. "Not everything in transit corridors needs to be high-rises. The buildings that are there can be viewed as an asset."

Another factor is a plan to expand the Portland Streetcar, which is seen as being as much an incentive to development as a mode of transportation, through the inner east side on a route that includes North and Northeast Broadway.



The old Dude Ranch Club was a popular entertainment venue for African American and other patrons. Located on North Broadway and Wheeler Avenue, the building is now part of Multi-Craft Plastics.

Concerts to Help Rebuild Church

The community is pulling together two more times in an effort to raise funds for Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church.

The northeast Portland church went ablaze on Feb. 5. Two benefit concerts to help the congregation rebuild are scheduled in the next few days.

"Saving the Star That Shines So Bright" will take place on Saturday March 3 at 6 p.m. This event is sponsored by PO Soul Entertainment and will be hosted at Calvary Christian Center, located at 126 N.E. Alberta St. Many of Portland's best-

known Gospel acts plan to participate. \$10 donations are requested, with all proceeds going to Morning Star.

On Saturday, March 17, long time Portland musical fixture Linda Hornbuckle, the bluegrass band No Time To Lose, the Misty Mamas and others will perform at 7 p.m. at the Englewood Christian Church, 3531 N.E. Killingsworth St. All donations collected from the concert will be deposited into the Morning Star Catastrophe Relief Fund with Wells Fargo Bank.

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