

Making Amends

continued ▲ from front

It was also the resting place of other people once considered less desirable by a majority population aligned against them. A portion of the 30-acre cemetery was used for the graves of local Chinese, who were widely reviled during the late 1800s, as well as patients from a nearby mental institution.

Referred to as "Block 14," it has been a long-forgotten part of the resting place. In 1947, the graves were dug up so that a building could be erected on the site adjacent to Southeast Morrison Street.

Multnomah County had come into ownership of the site and planned to sell it to a developer in 2002, but activists concerned with preserving its heritage rallied, forming Friends of Lone Fir Cemetery. Two years later, tests revealed that the remains of some Chinese were still present at the site, giving their cause added weight.

Working with Metro, which took over the property after it was demolished in 2005, activists are hoping to raise \$2 million for a proper tribute to the people who were discriminated against in Portland's early days.

"We're trying to memorialize this area so we can recognize their contribution," said Richard Louie, the president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, which is one of the groups working on the project. Louie pointed out that the Chinese worked menial jobs, sending their paltry wages back to their families and enduring scorn and discrimination heaped on them by white settlers.

Louie said that the Chinese did a lot of the "heavy lifting" - working on railroads, in mines, and other tough jobs of the 1800s - to make Oregon what it is today.

"This is a pioneer cemetery," said Marcus Lee, a member of the CCBA, "and these were the Chinese pioneers."

Metro recently convened a group of local experts to discuss what needs to be done to build the memorial, which is estimated to cost \$2 million.

Jane Hansen, a landscape architect with Lango Hansen Landscape Architects, said that she got involved in designing the site after reading coverage of it.

She said that the memorial will include an open meadow in the center, have structures to support vegetation around the edges, and its architectural theme will pay tribute to Chinese immigrants and the patients at the asylum.

Scrapping up the \$2 million for the project won't be easy, and

organizers don't anticipate the project will be completely done until 2013 or 2014.

However, commitment to it remains strong.

"It's important to remember your past," said Louie. "If you don't have some sort of memory of their contribution, it will be lost."

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