

The Bee

VOL. I Sellwood, Oregon. Subscription Price \$1. pr year. Oct. 6, 1906 No. 1.

1906-1931: Boom and Bust

In October, 2006, *The Bee* will begin its 101st year of publication. What an achievement (and on one occasion, what a miracle) for a neighborhood newspaper to survive into the electronic 21st century! In the Portland area, only the St. Johns Review is older (by two years). Each month, *The Bee* continues to report on matters important to citizens in the southeast corner of Multnomah County and the City of Portland.

The following special section attempts to summarize some of the changes that have occurred in the area served by *The Bee* in the past one hundred years, as well as issues that seem to repeat themselves. Reporting on local individuals and institutions makes this paper unique; your reading it, and supporting its advertisers, has kept this newspaper in print!

"No legitimate opportunity to boost for our suburb will be neglected. We are willing to work early and late...to thoroughly exploit Sellwood's growth from a business and commercial standpoint and her acknowledged superiority as the finest residence district to be found in the Rose City. In return we ask generous support from the business men and citizens... in the way of big ads, job printing and subscriptions. Without your support the paper can not prosper; can not do justice to this community. We shall do our utmost to merit your hearty support."

— Charles T. Price,
Editor, *Sellwood Bee*,
August 10, 1907

BY EILEEN G. FITZSIMONS
for *The Bee*

At the end of September, 1906, when the first issue of the weekly *Sellwood Bee* slid off the press, its content focused on news from the area between the Willamette River and Willsburg, Nehalem, and Ochoco Streets. It also extended some coverage to the City of Milwaukie, and residents of the City View Tract (Malden to Nehalem, 7th to 13th Avenues). Like other Portland businessmen, *Bee* owner and editor Charles Ballard was a booster for his community. A year earlier the Lewis & Clark Exposition had closed after a successful three-month run in the far northwest corner of the city. That event had exposed both outsiders and residents to the potential of civic and commercial "progress." While the Fair was temporary, its ancillary benefits to Sellwood were more permanent, with construction of Oaks Amusement Park and the adjacent interurban train line.

Prior to its naming by the Sellwood Real Estate Company in 1882, the area had grown, steadily though slowly, since its early settlement in the late 1840's. Forty years passed, and the community of Sellwood had both enough problems and enough self-confidence to form a city council and incorporate as an independent city (1887). After six years of effort, the citizen government was unable to provide adequate services such as a reliable water supply and paved streets, nor to persuade residents to pay for these necessities.

Consequently, in 1893 Sellwood was annexed to the City of Portland. Later that year the arrival of the streetcar (down Milwaukie Ave., west on Bybee, then south to the end of 13th Ave.) helped boost population to an estimated 5,000-6,000 residents by 1906. The heart of Sellwood was still 13th and Umatilla Streets, but the streetcar shifted the main thoroughfare from Umatilla to 13th Avenue.

The Bee was at the center of Sellwood, owners Charles Ballard and C.T. Price having placed their printing press and hand-set type cases in the back of a grocery store on Umatilla Street. Within a few blocks, residents could find their volunteer fire station, the IOOF Hall, churches, the post

office, and every business and service needed to sustain them—from the brewery to the bakery, hospital to the barber shop. The partners must have decided that Sellwood was large enough to support a newspaper through subscriptions (\$1.00/52 issues), advertising sales, and extra printing jobs.

They soon discovered that although Sellwood did have an adequate population base and had been part of the larger city for 13 years, residents retained their small-town perspectives. Business owners saw no need to buy ad space in the newspaper when there was no nearby competition. If one merchant purchased an ad, a second might cancel, believing he was entitled to exclusive ad space.

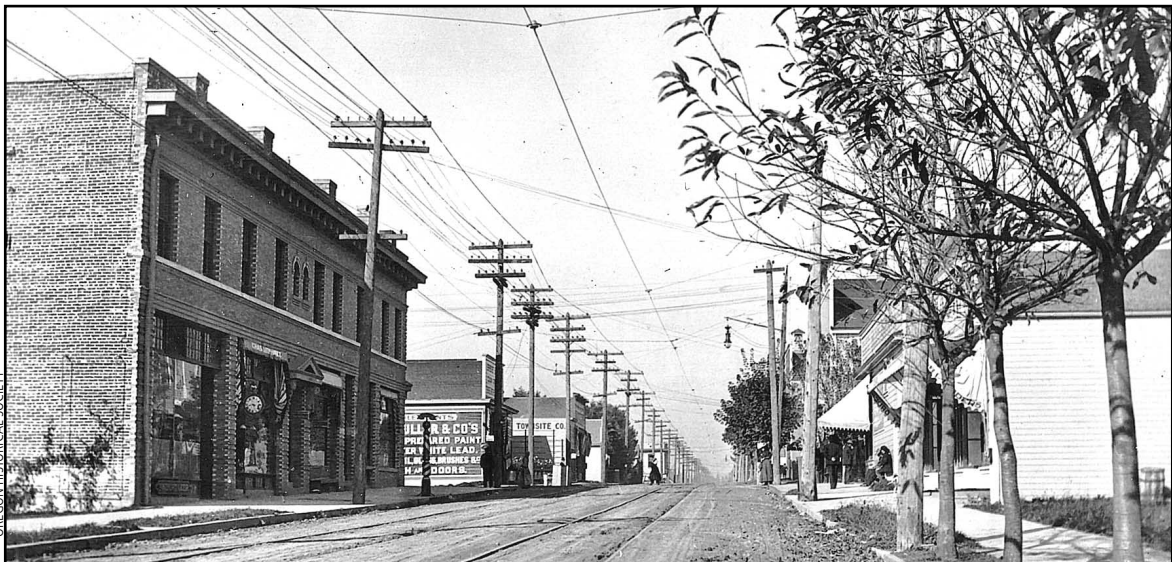
Another matter was not confined to Sellwood: Labor union organization. The editor wrote that they "had been notified that they would get more work with a union label on the paper." Within four months of launching their paper, its owners retreated to Milwaukie and renamed the paper the *Milwaukie* [sic] *Bee*. According to the editor, a lot of "petty boycotting had been going on," and the owners decided to reduce expenses and move to their "main office" in Milwaukie. Eight months later the *Bee* returned to Sellwood to a prominent location on 13th Avenue where it remained until the 1990s.

In less than a year, by 1907, Ballard sold the *Bee* to Charles M. Thompson who—with Price—stabilized and



A typical Lauman Co. home, S.E. 22nd & Yukon, under construction, October, 1927. Using his wife's inheritance, Charlie built the house, intending it as a retirement home. They mortgaged it to cover other debts when the housing market collapsed, and subsequently lost it.

published it for thirteen years. They developed a formula of "big" stories on the front page and dozens of smaller ones on the inside. These latter items were submitted by readers themselves, and provided detailed personal information about marriages, births, deaths, vacations, out-of-town visitors, hospitalizations, real estate transactions, social events, and announcements of people moving into or out of the community. The four- to six-page tabloid-sized paper closed with events and schedules of the local churches. The gossip "jots" boosted subscriptions and advertising gradually increased as the editor urged residents to help build up Sellwood by shopping locally.



Looking north on 13th from approximately Harney; pre-1920. Streetcar tracks in unpaved street; pendant street light. On left: Bank building, Sellwood Townsite Co.; on right: Belltower of fire station, wooden storefront at SE corner of 13th & Umatilla.

Constant encouragement from the paper and leadership from within the community resulted in several major improvements. By 1910 Sellwood had the first neighborhood YMCA, branch library, and public swimming pool in the city. It also had a substantial new brick building, and its first bank at the corner of 13th & Umatilla—as well as a bungalow-style businessman's club house. However, beginning in 1911, the local economy began to cool, and so did the pace of improvements. At the same time a new "menace" was growing that would threaten Sellwood's progressive self-image for several decades.

Until 1909, as the Sellwood streetcar left the small community of Brooklyn at Milwaukie Ave. and the Powell Valley Road and crossed Holgate Street, it passed a few scattered farmhouses and the tiny, hopeful Midway subdivision, with its one-room school, fire station (now the Yukon Tavern), and grocery store. Before May of 1909, most of the land between Holgate and Bybee Streets, and between Milwaukie Avenue and E. 39th Ave., was the Crystal Springs Stock Farm—the "hobby farm" of banker and developer William S. Ladd.

"...the future of the business interests of our prosperous suburb [are] at stake. What is the rational step for the allied commercial and private interests to take to prevent the establishment of a new business section... which would endanger the commercial supremacy of Sellwood and her business men?" He went on to argue, "Unless the businessman prospers the property interests are going to depreciate to a considerable extent."

He closed, "Let us then be up and doing. Let us have hard-surface streets, new brick blocks, and kindred marks of progress to show the world that we are still in the ring and do not proposed to be counted out."

But as Sellwood had "boomed" when its streetcar service arrived in 1893, the editor realized that the two new subdivisions would also grow, as transportation improved. By 1911 a new carline extension branched at the Milwaukie/Bybee intersection, extending service to Westmoreland and Eastmoreland. It passed over the Southern Pacific railroad tracks on a viaduct paid for by the Ladd Estate Co, destined for the Woodstock area. The Moreland subdivisions included "high class" features from the beginning, as the fashionable bungalows and four-squares came with concrete curbs and sidewalks. The developers also had support downtown, for in the same year Milwaukie Avenue from Holgate to Nehalem was hard-surfaced. By contrast, the tracks on 13th Avenue through Sellwood lay in a bed of mud and dust until 1921.

Soon another blow was administered. In July, 1911, *The Bee* revealed that a commercial building would be constructed in Westmoreland at the southwest corner of the Milwaukie/Bybee intersection. It would house both grocery and drug stores, a barber shop and meat market. The impact was more painful because the property owner was a doctor from Sellwood, Dr. E.A. Reed, whose medical offices were in the Bank of Sellwood. For the economic well-being of *The Bee* (or perhaps fearing establishment of a competitive newspaper), Price and Thompson capitulated and began including news from the two new subdivisions in their paper. It was not long before *The Bee* carried ads for Westmoreland shops and news from Llewellyn School. In response, the competitive energies of Sellwood businessmen surged, as did advertising revenues for the paper.

Through the First World War and into the early 1920s, residents of Sellwood and Westmoreland shared Sellwood churches, the library, Community Center, and public park, as well as stores in the older community. However, Westmoreland's commercial area continued to expand, by then including a bakery, clothing stores, a florist, and eventually a

movie theater and funeral parlor.

In 1920 *The Bee* was purchased by John P. Locke, who also published the "Nob Hill News". Although he owned the paper for 25 years, he remained in the background, and C.P. Thompson continued as editor. The masthead did change, to include subscribers in the Brooklyn, Ardenwald, Wichita, and Woodstock neighborhoods.

By the time of the long-anticipated opening of the Sellwood bridge in late 1925, all of the lots in Westmoreland had been sold. Two years earlier the shortage had been anticipated, and developers pushed the subdivision north to Reedway Street and east to 23rd Avenue. The story of one of the companies that built in Westmoreland in the 1920s reflects the end of the economic boom of the 1920s as well as the beginning of the Great Depression. The following account was written by Lauman family descendent Pat Hanrahan, who graduated from St. Agatha's School and is now a chemistry instructor at Clackamas Community College. It has been edited due to space constraints.

"The Lauman Construction Company consisted of Charlie Lauman and his sons, Walter and Laurence. On their way to Oregon they built in Lethbridge, Alberta; Glenwood, Minnesota; and Esmond, North Dakota—arriving in Portland in 1923. Their first work was on Cypress Street in Ladd's Addition, but they moved on to Westmoreland. Soon they were very busy; by 1928 they held deeds to 30 lots in the area. They also continued to build elsewhere in the city, including Ladds Addition and Rose City Park.

"Obviously with this much work, the three men did not complete all phases of construction themselves. They were primary contractors, and while they had many employees, they did a lot of the rough and finish carpentry themselves. They also developed a simple house plan that they could build and sell quickly, and this Lauman home appears throughout Westmoreland (see photo).

By late 1928 house sales were slowing. Charlie Lauman's daughter Florence and her husband William Hanrahan and children occupied one of the unsold houses on Yukon Street. Following the stock market crash in October of 1929, the Lauman Company was lucky to build a single home in a year. By 1934 they were out of business."

Much of this information came from Charlie's grandson Lloyd Hanrahan, who was a young boy in the 1920s. He spent a lot of time around the Lauman construction sites, where his patient grandfather and uncles showed him how to build a house. Today Lloyd lives in Westmoreland just one street away from a Lauman home.