

The following two pages are a copy of a feature article in the Salem, Oregon *Statesman Journal*:  
Heritage Oregon – ***Sublimity's name reflects past, present***, by Virginia and Thomas Green Jr.

Virginia also hosted a one hour PBS radio interview on KMUZ, Turner, Oregon on May 7, 2013. Participants were Sam Brentano, Marion County Commissioner, Henry Strobel and Carol Zolkoske of the St. Boniface Community Archives & Museum, and Carrie Adams Corcoran of Sublimity.

The color photograph of Sublimity was made and provided by Henry Strobel © 2003

(Next page please; zoom in if needed to read.)



# Heritage Oregon

## ONLINE

Go to [StatesmanJournal.com/Heritage](http://StatesmanJournal.com/Heritage) for more on area history.

## *Sublimity's name reflects past, present*

Early Sublimity-area settler James Denny wanted to call the town by that name because of its fine vistas and sublime scenery.

The same is true today: On our visits, we were impressed by the peaceful quality of the town and the beauty of the farming community.

Here's what the city of Sublimity has to say about the town's history on its website, [www.cityofsublimity.org/about-us/history](http://www.cityofsublimity.org/about-us/history):

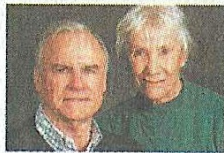
"The Sublimity area before 1840 was a vast forest, interspersed by Indian trails and sparkling mountain streams. A large Indian burn in the early 1800s cleared the land where the present town now exists. Sublimity had its beginning as an outgrowth of an Indian village or trading post before 1846.

"As early as 1852, the area served as a convenient gathering place for wagon train pioneers and had a primitive store as a hub for the surrounding area. In September 1852, a post office was established and the town got its official name. ... The post office has been in continuous service since 1852, making it one of Oregon's oldest post offices.

"In 1856, Sublimity School District No. 7 was organized. The first building was a log cabin with a dirt floor. The following year, Sublimity Col-



The vistas that helped Sublimity earn its name are shown in this official town photograph. SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL



**Virginia and Thomas Green**

MARION COUNTY 20

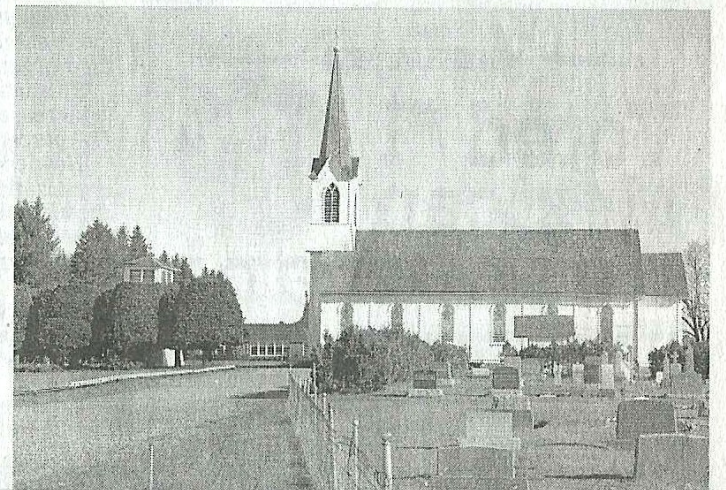
Electric lights were brought to town in 1914."

In addition to this history, railway immigrants from the Midwest founded St. Boniface Catholic Church in 1879. Built in the Carpenter Gothic style

Sublimity and Stayton men was held on the question of whether "the dish rag is more important than the broom." Judges decided 2 to 1 in favor of the dishrag.

Today, the city of Sublimity is a rural, residential community of less than one square mile in the western foothills of the Oregon Cascades. It's about 15 miles southeast of Salem on Highway 22 and situated north of Santiam Highway (directly to the north of Stayton).

Sublimity's agricultural industry includes grass seed, green beans, corn, broccoli, carrots, strawberries and oth-





was established and operated by the Church of United Brethren. By modern standards, it was more like a grade school but gave early Sublimity the distinction of being a college town. The first teacher and president of the college was Milton Wright, father of Wilbur and Orville Wright.

"Early Sublimity was a larger town than it is today. In 1857, it had a Chinese Laundry, five stores, a gunmaker's shop, a public school, a college, Methodist Church, United Brethren Church, a hotel, post office, public well and a made-to-order furniture shop.

"When the Civil War broke out, Sublimity was a town of 1,500, but people returned to their native states to fight, and the town became deserted. Population declined and depression set in. The 1860s brought resettlement by German immigrant farmers. By 1874, nearly all the abandoned farms around Sublimity were possessed by new people, and the town grew rapidly.

"In 1878, the town was divided into 20 city blocks ... buildings included a hotel and rooming house, a store, Catholic Church, saloon, blacksmith and (store).

"Sublimity was incorporated and granted its own charter in 1903. John Kintz was elected the town's first mayor in that year. In 1912, the city saw the first firefighting equipment.

six-bayed wooden structure with lancet stained-glass windows and a steep sloping roof. The cross-adorned steeple above its front entrance reaches to a height of 110 feet above the ground. Its historic cemetery adjoins the church building on one side. It stands on the former Sublimity College site.

In Capital Journal news of the 1920s, we see the following items (source "Ben Maxwell's Salem, Oregon," edited by Scott McArthur, 2006):

» 1923: Paving between Stayton and Sublimity, to start early in July, would be over a log road 10 feet high laid down by Downing in the early 1870s. Between these points in 1871, F.T. Wrightman recalled, there was a great morass. Through this swamp, Downing laid poles 10 feet high and covered his road laid on piles with earth. By 1923, the pole road-bed had sunk out of sight. It was the foundation of that part of the road between Stayton and Sublimity that was soon to be paved.

» 1926: A sedan owned by John Boedigheimer was still standing in the street at Sublimity. Boedigheimer left his car briefly, and when he returned, he discovered a swarm of bees had taken over. The swarm established itself under the back seat, where they were impossible to dislodge.

» 1927: A debate between

can be seen on the roads during the summer and fall months. Marion Estates, a senior living facility, is the largest employer in Sublimity, and there are 46 licensed businesses.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the population doubled, reaching the present number of 2,681. The city has a mayor and four city council members. There is a finance director who also serves at the city recorder, a Public Works Department of two members, a city attorney and auditor. There is a Sewer Committee and Planning Commission. Police services fall under the Marion County Sheriff's Office. The city is served by the Sublimity Fire District, a volunteer department with two fire stations: a new station built in 1989 on Northwest Parker Street and another station outside of town on Drift Creek Road Southeast. Sublimity contracts with the city of Stayton for sewer treatment and disposal.

Currently, the city has two parks. One is adjacent to City Hall and has a tennis court, baseball diamond, picnic shelter and playground equipment. The other park on East Main Street has a picnic shelter, jogging trail, barbecues and playground equipment. This park is in a wooded setting and is about six acres in size.

Visitors are treated to a

## St. Boniface Catholic Church dominates the background of this 1959 picture. SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

variety of attractions. In July, the Santiam Canyon Stampede puts on a rodeo event. The first weekend after Labor Day in September is the occasion of the Sublimity Harvest Festival featuring monster trucks and truck, tractor ATV and horse pulls. Area school groups and other local organizations are recipients of grant monies from this event.

Sublimity also remembers its residents' military service with a war memorial across from St. Boniface.

The St. Boniface Community Archives and Museum, founded in 2006, is located in an old convent building across from the church, the second oldest church building in continuous use in Oregon. The facility is open, without fee, from 9 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays; call (503) 769-5381 for information. The museum's website lists number of records, publications, photographs, family histories and artifacts outlining the city's history and traditions. The building itself, especially the second floor where nuns once lived, transmits the spirit of their lives as teachers and spiritual leaders. Rarely does one find such a dedicated volunteer effort to preserve a community's history as one

finds in Sublimity. Of special interest is "An Illustrated History of Sublimity from the 1850s on" by Henry Strobel (2003).

Nearby are Silver Falls State Park, Silver Creek Youth Camp and Silver Falls State Park Concession Building Area. The latter two are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

We are indebted to Carol Ditter for her hospitality and generous help in compiling this Sublimity information.

Tom and I have enjoyed lunches at the Wooden Nickel, a comfortable pub, and at Canyon's Edge. Other choices include Denim Country, Rob's Panezanellie's and Sloper Restaurant in Marian Estates.

When you visit Sublimity, check out the kiosk by City Hall at 245 NW Johnson St. for upcoming event information as well as city maps and the CARTS bus route schedules. Local newsletters and shopping guides are also sometimes available.

*Marion County 20 is produced by Virginia Green and Thomas Green Jr. For links to more information and additional photographs, go to [marioncounty20.blogspot.com](http://marioncounty20.blogspot.com). Contact Virginia Green at [vagreen9@comcast.net](mailto:vagreen9@comcast.net).*