



Walking to Forest Grove: The life and times of the prettiest town in Oregon

Ken Bilderback

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Forest Grove always has been off the beaten path, so much so that many of the earliest settlers had to walk to town. Even an American President had to hoof it for a visit. Forest Grove always has been a little offbeat as well. It took 50 years of legal battles to build a working sewer, and 100 years to legalize liquor, with the booze battles spilling out of the courtroom and erupting in an arson war. Although noted for its “salubrious climate,” Forest Grove surprisingly has found itself at the eye of international storms, from ethnic strife in the two World Wars to a real-life murder on the Orient Express. Yes, Forest Grove is off the beaten path. It doesn’t have a strategic position on a harbor or a river. It was snubbed by those who built the railroads and highways. Yet while Forest Grove never has had the things that built most American cities, it had something even greater. Forest Grove was built on an odd mixture of the indomitable strength of rugged “Mountain Men” who forged the Oregon Territory and the inspiring compassion of a band of missionaries and Tabitha Brown, the 66-year-old “Mother of Oregon,” who laid the groundwork for one of the very first universities in the American West. Researched and written by authors with more than a dozen national and international awards, Walking to Forest Grove tells the story of a city like no other, but also details both the baby steps and great strides that put any American city on a path to greatness.

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