

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

National Register of Historic Places
Date listed 1-28-09
NRIS No. 08001393
Oregon SHPO

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Paul Bunyan Statue

Other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Southwest corner of N. Denver Avenue and N. Interstate Avenue

☐ not for publication

city of town Portland

☐ vicinity

State Oregon

code OR

county Multnomah

code 051

zip code 97217

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature of certifying official/Deputy SHPO

12.17.08
Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet

 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Paul Bunyan Statue
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☒ public - Local
☐ public - State
☐ public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☐ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☒ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-Contributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
0	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument /

marker

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument /

marker

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: _____

walls: _____

roof: _____

other: METAL; CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☒ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1959

Significant Dates

1959

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

None

Cultural Affiliation

None

Architect/Builder

Kenton Machine Works, manufacturer

Victor R. Nelson, designer

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☒ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Paul Bunyan Statue
Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 10 524551 5047639
Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing

2 Zone Easting Northing

4 Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Oregon SHPO staff, with assistance from Maiya Martin and Bette Davis Nelson
organization Oregon State Historic Preservation Office date 19 March 2008
street & number 725 Summer St NE, Suite C telephone (503) 986-0678
city or town Salem state OR zip code 97301

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Kenton Neighborhood Association c/o North Portland Neighborhood Services, c/o Ms. Brenda Ray Scott
street & number 2209 Schofield Street. telephone None
city or town Portland state OR zip code 97217

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Located in North Portland's Kenton neighborhood, a landmark 31-foot tall statue of the mythical logger Paul Bunyan marks the intersection of N. Denver and N. Interstate Avenues. The statue is a non-contributing resource within the district because the date of its construction is not within the period of significance. The steel and concrete plaster structure is significant state-wide under Criterion C as an important example of roadside architecture in Oregon, and meets the requirements of Criterion Consideration B for a moved property. The nominated parcel includes the statue and its circular base, which comprise one contributing property.

SETTING

Facing north, the 31-foot-tall Paul Bunyan Statue stands at the north end of the National Register-listed Kenton Historic District at the north tip of a block shaped like a right triangle, with N. Interstate Avenue as the northeast-facing hypotenuse, N. McClellan Street as the south leg, and N. Denver Avenue as the west leg. The statue's immediate setting reads as a cone-shaped plaza, distinguished from the typical commercial character of the rest of the block by a curved, low, stone perimeter wall at its southern boundary and an expanse of concrete pavers laid in regular rows underfoot. Three concrete benches are set into the wall, and three circular concrete planters are placed around the perimeter of the statue. Immediately to the south, a two-and-one-half story, moderne-style commercial building, separated from the plaza by the stone wall and a planting strip, has provided the same backdrop for Paul Bunyan since he was constructed in 1959.

The neighborhood is very urban, with the recently realigned intersection of Interstate and Denver Avenues cluttered with modern cobra-head street lights, curb bump-outs, and the canopies, tracks, and railings of a nearby light-rail line station. Most buildings in the immediate vicinity are no more than two stories; most are one story, including Converting Machines Inc., CMI, formerly Kenton Machine Works, directly across Denver Avenue from Paul Bunyan, within which the statue was designed and the frame originally constructed.

THE STATUE

The Paul Bunyan Statue stands in the center of the plaza on a round, slightly elevated, poured-concrete base. The base wall varies in height from seven to eighteen inches to accommodate slight changes in the plaza floor's elevation, and is capped at the edge with flat concrete pavers. The center of the base is a hilly ground of mortared rough-cut basalt-stone blocks laid in a semi-regular circular pattern, creating the appearance of a naturalistic, soft earth setting under Paul Bunyan's huge feet. Three plaques are placed into the base on the east, north, and west sides of the statue, each set at a comfortable viewing angle on an inclined platform made of the same mortared stone as the base. The single bronze plaque on the north side and two Plexiglas panels commemorate the statue's original construction, subsequent restorations in 1985 and 1999, and the statue's history. All were installed since 1985.

As mentioned above, the statue itself is supported by a massive steel framework that was constructed off-site, in the machine shop across Denver Avenue. The frame, with axe head and boot frames attached, was

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originally erected fifty-nine feet north of its current location by a crane truck. Paul Bunyan's body was formed of cement plaster, applied on site.

Bunyan stands broad-shouldered, with his feet slightly apart, his arms against his body until the elbows, where his bulky forearms drop to form a casual hand-over-hand clasp over an axe head at his midsection. Much of his disproportionately tall head is covered with a smooth, black-painted, mullet hair style that blends seamlessly with a full beard and wide mustache. Bobbed in the back, Bunyan's hair is roughly chin-length, and topped with a solid blue lumberjack cap with a red ball on top. The sideburns, mustache, and bushy black eyebrows obscure much of his face, but the flesh-colored paint, conspicuous ski-jump nose, and expressive sculpted blue eyes provide excellent contrast to the black hair. His exaggerated cheeks are high and round, and his large, modest smile, flesh-colored lips, and white teeth are striking. Enormous, flesh-colored ears break through the black hair at each side of his head.

Bunyan wears a red-and-white checked, collared shirt over a barrel chest; the sleeves are rolled up to just above the elbow, the checker pattern is outlined in black. Four white sculpted buttons with four holes each decorate the front of his shirt. His light blue, boot-cut pants just skim the top of his boots. The plaster is scored to indicate pockets on the back of each hip. A painted-on, red handkerchief drops out of his west back pocket. Belt loops hold a black belt scored and painted around his waist, visible only in the back. In front, the suggestion of a black belt buckle peeks over his hands, which are clasped over a double-bit axe head. With the head leaning against Bunyan, the axe's steel haft angles out, with its knob end squarely anchored in the "dirt," a few feet ahead of Bunyan's boots. The axe has a black head, with its bits, or blades, marked with a white strip. The haft is painted beige.

Paul Bunyan's boots are six feet long and painted black. Suggestions of the soles, heel plates, top stitching, and crisscross shoe laces are sculpted into the plaster. The laces are painted as well, white laces against black boots.

SUMMARY

The statue is extraordinarily sturdy and the plaster is in excellent condition. The plaster application is high quality and full of detail, such as the slight sag in the rolled-up sleeves, the delicate outline of pockets on the back of the jeans, and the panel outlines on his boots, suggesting not just any black boot, but steel-toed logger's boots. The shirt, pants, and arms all are highly textured, adding dimension and liveliness to the statue's appearance. Details on his boot laces and buttons are not simply painted on; rather they were sculpted first to create depth. His expression is appealing and friendly, belying his intimidating size. His ears, nose, and cheeks are exaggerated, and his forearms and barrel chest are disproportionately bulky, but there is a deliberateness about all of it that is obvious and whimsical.

Marking the intersection of N. Interstate and N. Denver Avenues for fifty years, Kenton's Paul Bunyan Statue has excellent historic integrity and remains highly able to convey its historical associations. Although its immediate setting has changed some over time, the essential character of the neighborhood and street pattern has remained the same, and all the buildings surrounding the statue are still extant, including the shop within which the statue was designed and built.

Paul Bunyan Statue
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR
County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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ALTERATIONS

All aspects of the Kenton Paul Bunyan Statue are original. Periodic repainting of the statue occurred throughout the last 50 years, and local civic groups completed restorations in 1985 and 1999. Sometime during this period Paul's shirt was changed from its original red-and-white checks to a solid red color. The original pattern has since been restored. The regional transportation district, TriMet, relocated the statue fifty-nine feet south in 2002 to make way for the Interstate MAX light rail line and station. The statue was reinstalled on a new base facing the same direction, directly across the street from its original site, and still adjacent to the machine shop within which it was designed and constructed. The plaza was constructed at that time. Across Denver Avenue to the west, directly in front of the machine shop, are four blue cloven-hoof shaped bollards, a nod to Paul Bunyan's fictional companion, Babe the Blue Ox, that were also installed at the same time as the relocation.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION

Constructed in 1959, the Paul Bunyan statue in Portland's Kenton neighborhood owes its existence to Oregon's centennial celebrations. Centennial-themed festivals, ceremonies, parades, balls, exhibits, rodeos, and jamborees filled the event schedules of even the smallest towns in Oregon throughout the centennial year, which began on February 14th, 1959. The anchor event for the state's birthday was the Oregon Centennial Exposition and International Trade Fair, held in north Portland for 100 days between June 10th and September 17th. North Portland's Kenton neighborhood, celebrating its proximity to the event site, the neighborhood's industrial heritage, and Oregon's timber industry, erected a 31-foot-tall statue of the famed, over-sized lumberjack to welcome Exposition visitors. The Paul Bunyan Statue is eligible for listing in the National Register for state-wide significance under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a highly evocative and well-crafted example of roadside architecture in Oregon. Paul Bunyan was among many favorite characters of exaggerated size that cropped up along America's roads between the 1930s and the 1960s, before freeways and zoning codes limited the popularity of such constructions. The largest of the few purpose-built Paul Bunyans in the state, Kenton's Paul Bunyan stands alone as an urban marker and a community legacy. Regional transportation authority, TriMet, moved the statue 59 feet in 2002; for this reason the property is also being nominated under Criterion Consideration B for moved properties. It is eligible at the statewide level of significance.

ROADSIDE ARCHITECTURE

The construction of Interstate 5 through Kenton in the early 1960s marked the end of Kenton's unique position as a gateway neighborhood for motoring travelers. It was also the beginning of the end of the era of roadside attractions, whose history is inextricably linked to that of the automobile. Roadside Architecture is not a style; neither does it describe a specific type of building or structure. The term refers to those buildings, structures, and objects built or transformed to draw the attention of passing motorists and encourage them to patronize a particular business. While some resources may conform to a recognized architectural style, more often the unique nature of these highway attractions and the eclectic application of style and materials defy easy classification. What is common to all of these resources is their orientation toward, and easy access to and from, the highways and the use of signage and design to catch the attention of travelers. Most buildings were only one story in height and often spread horizontally to accommodate the maximum number of parking spaces. In addition to buildings, roadside architecture also includes structures and objects constructed as tourist attractions. Sometimes destinations themselves, but also used to draw patrons to existing businesses, this group of resources includes colossal dinosaurs, eclectic zoos, and theme parks among many other diversions. These resources developed in the early-twentieth century in response to an economic opportunity provided by relatively inexpensive commercial land along the nation's highways and the large number of potential customers the roads carried. As competition increased, individual business owners sought to differentiate their enterprise from similar services with eye-catching signs, building design, and unique attractions. As remnants of the nation's transition to an auto-centric society, these resources stand as important reminders of the sweeping cultural and economic changes of the early- and mid-twentieth century.

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When introduced in the late-nineteenth century the automobile was no more than a "tinker's toy."¹ Like the rest of the nation, automobile ownership and the construction of roads skyrocketed in Oregon during the 1910s and 1920s. By 1917 there was one car or truck for every thirteen residents in Multnomah County. Eight years later the number had risen to one for every five, and by 1929 one in every 3.7 individuals owned an automobile. Automobile ownership continued to increase through the Depression as well. The growing number of cars and trucks required the rapid expansion of the state's road system. In 1914 the state had 25 miles of paved road and 232 miles of planked road out of a total of 37,000 miles. To upgrade the roads, the national and state governments levied new taxes and began a construction campaign. In 1916 the federal Congress passed its first road-funding measure, and in 1919 Oregon passed its first gas tax to pay for road construction. In 1921 the state tax was doubled, and then raised again in 1923. By 1940 the state boasted 2,000 miles of paved road and a burgeoning number of auto-related businesses, such as gas stations and other roadside services.²

The increase in automobile use and miles of road nationally and in Oregon quickly transformed both cities and the countryside in the early-twentieth century as services and attractions sprang up along the highways. Early "auto Gypsies" slept along the side of the road and often depended on local town eateries and service stations for food and gas.³ Shrewd local entrepreneurs quickly realized that the relatively cheap real estate along the nation's growing highway system offered a unique opportunity to sell goods and services to a rapidly increasing number of travelers. The first roadside enterprises focused on offering essential services including gas, food, and lodging.⁴ Initially unsure of the economic potential of their endeavors, business owners did not build new buildings. Instead many adapted existing structures such as houses, barns, and outbuildings, or built simple shelters and shacks to house their businesses. Other early entrepreneurs simply sold their products along the road from their vehicles or a tent. As auto travel exploded so did the number of businesses, creating a competitive commercial environment. In order to attract the attention of motorists speeding by their storefront and to differentiate themselves from similar businesses, entrepreneurs created large and often brightly painted and lit signs or covered their buildings in metal "snipe" signs advertising national brands.⁵

The backlash to these garish ad-hoc roadside businesses began immediately. Campaigns to eradicate roadside blight in the early-twentieth century were carried out by middle- and upper-class reformers who drew on the aesthetics and ideals of the City Beautiful Movement. Between the 1920s and 1950s, educator and Vassar College graduate Elizabeth Boyd Lawton led the roadside reform movement, helping redirect the energies of the City Beautiful Movement from the city to the country. Lawton founded the National Committee for the Restriction of Outdoor Advertising in 1923. With help from several City Beautiful leaders, Lawton built her organization into a national institution. The group's focus expanded later as it began to target not only

¹ John M. Tess, National Register nomination for the "G.G. Gerber Building" (Salem, Oregon: State Historic Preservation Office, 2008), Section 8, Page 1.

² David Peterson del Mar, *Oregon's Promise: An Interpretive History* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 161-162.

³ Dedek Perer Brighan, "Journey's on the Mother Road: Interpreting the Cultural Significance of United States Route 66" PhD diss. (Middle Tennessee State University, 2002), 93.

⁴ John Margolies, *Fun along the Road: American Tourist Attractions* (Boston, New York, Toronto, and London: Bulfinch Press, Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 6.

⁵ Daniel M. Bluestone, "Roadside Blight and the Reform of Commercial Culture" in *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, edited by Jan Jennings, 170-184 (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 176.

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billboards, but also the expanding commercial enterprises that the group felt negatively impacted the aesthetic charms of the countryside. The group's new name reflected its widening efforts: National Council for the Protection of Roadside Beauty. While reformers were not necessarily against commercial endeavors, these individuals felt that roadside commercial development threatened their ability to escape the nation's urban centers and to visit "landscapes associated with a simpler and morally edifying preindustrial past." Recognizing the needs of motorists and wishing to still travel along the highways themselves, reformers instead focused on encouraging what they felt was appropriate development. In 1927 Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the Adolf Gobel Company (a New York manufacturer of hot dogs and other meat products), the American Civic Association, and the Art Center of New York sponsored a series of national design contests for roadside stands and gas stations. The sponsors awarded prizes for both existing enterprises and designs for new buildings. Judges favored picturesque establishments deemed neat and orderly and free of garish signs. The first prize winner of the design contest was Henry Ives Cobb, Jr., who designed a "pitched-gable, wood-cottage refreshment stand with a cozy bay window, a large veranda, and two simple hanging signs."⁶ Second place was awarded to Malcolm Cameron who made use of "Spanish mission architecture" in his plan.⁷ The nostalgic designs favored by the reformers would later be incorporated into motels and other establishments hoping to capitalize on tourists' romantic notions of travel.

To the consternation of many reformers, roadside entrepreneurs continued to house their businesses in inexpensive buildings. By the 1920s the economic viability of roadside commerce was obvious and some began to invest in purpose-built buildings. Early suppliers of inexpensive and adaptable roadside shelters were George and Arthur Trachete who turned their tinsmith and furnace repair shop into a supplier of prefabricated buildings. Early in their business the brothers supplied modern, efficient, and easily-to-assemble garages. Expanding their enterprise, the brothers began offering buildings in three types A, B, and C, referring to the length and width of the structural support. Small business owners turned the economical buildings into drive-ins, shoe-repair shops, auto garages, grocery stores, barber shops, and more. By the 1930s and 1940s customers could choose from a number of trim pieces that expressed a variety of styles, or order a custom building. Highly successful, Trachte Company was only one of many manufacturers offering pre-fabricated convenience for the growing number of roadside businesses.⁸

Just as popular as inexpensive prefabricated buildings were one-of-a-kind creations and stylized corporate buildings designed to emphasize services or products sold or encourage customer loyalty. The rise of these more extravagant and intentional creations marked the maturation of roadside architecture into a recognizable, yet eclectic type of construction. Such designs allowed travelers to quickly identify a business from the fast-moving highway. Beginning in the 1920s some businesses constructed stores that were as much a spectacle as a functional building. In 1926, the owner of a California lemonade stand housed his business in a huge lemon to advertise to passing motorists. In the 1930s Shell Gasoline began constructing stations in the shape of giant shells to differentiate the chain from other similar businesses.⁹ Drawing on the aesthetic of the National

⁶ Bluestone, 172.

⁷ Ibid, 170-176.

⁸ Carol Ahlgren and Frank Edgerton Martin, "A Story of Prefabrication: How the Trachte Company Grew Up with the Roadside" in *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, edited by Jan Jennings, 107-114 (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 107-112.

⁹ Dedek Perer Brighan, 93.

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Council for the Protection of Roadside Beauty, Standard Oil of California undertook a campaign to beautify its stations by developing a uniform design in the late 1920s. The company created a model station consisting of a gable-roofed station house with large glass windows, overhanging canopy, and well-landscaped grounds.¹⁰ The trend of branding a particular company through the appearance of retail locations continued well after the postwar period. The Trachete brothers developed a design for Kentucky Fried Chicken that was used by the chain between 1968 and 1975.¹¹

Other business owners sought to attract customers by capitalizing on traveler's preconceptions of their region, often reinterpreting some aspect of local history, regional identity, or folklore for passing tourists. For instance, in the U.S., Southwest "tourist cabins" featured stucco and false beams to suggest the architecture of Pueblos or Spanish Missions. In the south, these same buildings used a tropical or old-south theme. The use of regional icons was particularly important in the Midwest and West where popular legends such as Paul Bunyan or Native American culture were crafted into colossal commercial images to draw paying customers attracted to the storybook legends hawked by local businesses.¹² Through the postwar period, roadside castles, themed diners and towns, and other "must-see" attractions proliferated. Because of the general lack of local building codes and zoning ordinances in the early-twentieth century, owners were rarely limited by anything but their imagination.¹³ In Oregon, the state's timber industry loomed large as both a source of economic vitality and regional identity, and later would serve as an inspiration for ad-hoc roadside creations in the postwar period.

In addition to the establishments that sold gas, food, and lodging, roadside attractions such as zoos, museums, curiosity shops, amusement parks, and other ventures popped up along the highways. These ventures were sometimes destinations themselves or attractions intended to bring customers to another business, such as a gas station. John Margolies, author of *Fun Along the Road: American Tourist Attractions* notes that "because roadside attractions were hardly a necessity, the people who built them had to scream all the louder to attract customers."¹⁴ Many of these businesses used billboards to lure customers, perhaps most notably Wall Drug, which placed signs hundreds of miles from the store. Others relied on extravagant or outrageous architecture such as huge sculptures of animals, dinosaurs, food items, or historic and mythical characters. Most were creations made by the local community or a sole proprietor, and the degree of craftsmanship varied greatly from attraction to attraction. In general these creations were huge, intended to first catch the attention of passing motorists and then to impress tourists by their size. Almost all were colorfully painted.¹⁵ These wayside oddities proved so popular that in the 1960s and 1970s International Fiberglass, a California company, specialized in creating towering roadside statues depicting loggers, cowboys, Native Americans, "country bumpkins," and muffler salesmen. The company created the statues for a wide variety of businesses around the nation, and designers based them all on the company's first project: a Paul Bunyan. The standard model was about 20 feet tall. The company shaped the statues' arms to hold a number of objects, from mufflers to

¹⁰ Bluestone, 178-179.

¹¹ Ahlgren and Martin, 112.

¹² Dedek Perer Brighan, 93, 100-102, 104-105, 109, 112-113, 120; Karl Raitz, "American Roads, Roadside America" *Geographical Review* 88, no. 3 (July 1998), 379-381.

¹³ Margolies, 6-7; General statements about roadside attractions based on review of resources on the topic listed in the bibliography.

¹⁴ Ibid, 7.

¹⁵ Ibid, 6-9.

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picks and axes.¹⁶ Other businesses such as Creative Displays in Sparta, Wisconsin, manufactured fiberglass cows and steers during the same time. In 1973 International Fiberglass stopped producing the statues to focus on other aspects of the company's business.¹⁷

Roadside architecture in all its various forms flourished through the early 1970s. At that time, a growing emphasis on comprehensive planning and controlling the negative effects of urban sprawl began to limit how entrepreneurs could advertise their businesses. Advocates of these new measures echoed many of the same sentiments expressed by the National Council for the Protection of Roadside Beauty. Changing aesthetics also contributed to the construction of less garish buildings and more subdued signage and refined design seen in malls, shopping centers, and office courts.¹⁸

ROADSIDE ARCHITECTURE IN OREGON

In Oregon many businesses, and sometimes inspired individuals, created roadside attractions for commerce and amusement. While many of these resources no longer exist or are altered due to the changing nature of the State's cities and downtowns, many still survive. An exhaustive inventory of these resources does not exist and none are currently listed in the National Register; however, Harriet Baskas' book *Oregon Curiosities: Quirky Characters, Roadside Oddities & Other Offbeat Stuff* describes many of the attractions travelers still can find around the state. In Portland a circa-1950 jug-shaped building sits at 7417 Northeast Sandy Boulevard. Although the builder is unknown, the shape no doubt was a ploy to attract passers-by. In Port Orford, Ernie Nelson opened the roadside attraction Jurassic Park in 1953 to feature his two home-made dinosaur creations. By the time Nelson died in 1999 he had created twenty-three sculptures, some over 40 feet tall, and charged admission to the garden. As was true in the rest of the nation, Oregon businesses used the roadside to attract customers. A giant candle stands along Highway 30 in Sacapoose as an advertisement and publicity stunt for a local-candle making company. Originally constructed in 1971, the candle was made of 45,000 pounds of Wax poured into a silo, and was for a time listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the "World's Largest Candle." The candle now has a neon "flame."¹⁹ In Portland, several examples of exaggerated and eye-catching architecture dot the city. In the Hollywood district, the Stiegerwald Dairy was adorned with a giant milk bottle and the Pagoda Restaurant featured an oversize polychrome pagoda.²⁰

Residents also created these larger-than-life creations to mark events, or honor local fraternal groups and traditions. Damascus celebrated the 1959 Oregon Centennial with a fair and the creation of the giant "Centennial Peace Candle," which was 21 feet tall, weighed 4 tons, and measured 3 feet across. The form for the candle was locally made out of chicken wire and welded-together pieces of cut-up oil drums. Local children

¹⁶ Ibid, 26; For more information about Muffler Men see: Timothy Corriagan Correll and Patrick Arthur Polk, *Muffler Men* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

¹⁷ *RoadsideAmerica.com*, "Origin of the Species" <<http://www.radsiceamerica.com/muffler/origin.html>> (accessed 5 August 2008).

¹⁸ Bluestone, 182.

¹⁹ Harriet Baskas, *Oregon Curiosities: Quirky Characters, Roadside Oddities & Other Offbeat Stuff* (Guilford: CN: The Globe Pequot Press, 2007), 106-107, 128-129.

²⁰ Liza Mickle, William Cunningham, Robin Green, et al. "Historic and Architectural Properties in Hollywood's Commercial District in Portland" MPS (Portland: City of Portland Bureau of Planning, 1999).

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collected 20 tons of colored candle wax to fill it. Lit on June 14, 1959, the candle burned at the fair for one hundred days. In 1962 the City placed a steel replica of the candle in Damascus' downtown park. In 1973 the Barber-Shop Harmony Society held its international convention and championships in Portland, an event marked by the construction of World's Largest Barber Pole – measuring 70 feet and topped with a 2-foot-tall Styrofoam Ball. The giant barber pole is now in Forest Grove Oregon, where the Northwest Barbershop Ballad Contest is held annually.²¹

THE LEGEND OF PAUL BUNYAN

Given the reliance of the northwest economy on timber production, it is not surprising that the region adopted the legend of Paul Bunyan. The image of Paul Bunyan and the Big Blue Ox would find its way into local legends, books, art, and roadside attractions. The stories are filled with amazing feats of strength, ingenious solutions, and backwoods humor. Through their adventures Paul and Babe create the Great Lakes and many other natural features, cut entire swaths of lumber in mere days, and invent the tools and practices of the logging industry.²² Often inventive story tellers created these tales or changed yarns to fit their experience or the audience's expectations. The legend finds its origin in the Great Lakes region in the mid- late-nineteenth century among working loggers. Some attribute the character to a French Canadian logger, others insist that the stories have an American origin, and some scholars suppose that the story is based on several people or is entirely invented.²³ Whether the legend is based on an actual person, is a composite of many historic characters, or is entirely fiction is still debated; however, it is clear that Paul Bunyan stories were never widespread until they appeared in print. In 1951 Folklorist Rodney C. Loehr with the Forest Products History Foundation noted in *The Journal of American Folklore* that in many of the interviews he conducted that "many old lumber-jacks aver that they never heard Bunyan tales in the old time camps," while others "say that they did hear stories in the logging camps."²⁴ Loehr concludes that "it seems likely that Paul Bunyan was a true folk creation and that his exploits were related in some camps before he appeared in print."²⁵ The author attributes the uneven distribution of Bunyan tales to geographic isolation of lumber camps across the nation, high turnover among lumberjacks, and other competing stories.²⁶

Among those lumberjacks who did know of Paul Bunyan, the stories offered entertainment as well as a way to cope with the harsh and often deadly working conditions in the logging camps through self-deprecating humor.²⁷ Folklorist Dan G. Hoffman noted in *Western Folklore* that while lumberjack ballads focused on real-life tragedy, the Bunyan stories asked the listener to suspend disbelief and marvel at Paul's "superhuman size and strength [and] his clever solutions [that] are not literally for the common run of men."²⁸ For instance, the

²¹ Baskas, 112, 202.

²² Observation based on survey of various books including Paul Bunyan stories.

²³ James Stevens, *Paul Bunyan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), 1-8.

²⁴ Rodney C. Loehr, "Some More Light on Paul Bunyan" *The Journal of American Folklore* 64, no. 254 (October-December 1951), 405-407.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Dan G. Hoffman, "Tales of Paul Bunyan: Themes, Structure, Style, Sources" *Western Folklore* 9, no 4 (October 1950), 305-306.

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Ballad "The Jam at Gerry's Rocks" describes the death of six young men while clearing a log jam in a river. In contrast, when Paul Bunyan is confronted with a monumental jam "two hundred feet high" he easily solves the problem. Paul places his giant ox in the river, and then standing on the bank shoots his ox with a 303 Savage Rifle. According to the story, "The ox thought it was flies" and began switching its tail in a circular motion which drew the water up the river pulling the log jam with it. When Paul took the ox out of the river, the water and logs flowed back downstream, clearing the jam."²⁹ As Hoffman notes, the story makes light of a real-life deadly situation, allowing "the conquest of fear of death."³⁰ Paul also was more adept at dealing with the every-day inconveniences of logging life such as monstrous mosquitoes, difficult weather, and rough terrain. In every story, the natural nemesis is made huge, a fit conquest for the giant of the North Woods who easily overcomes the adversity.³¹

Bunyan tales did not become widespread in American popular culture until the early-twentieth century when a number of widely-published authors and advertising executives re-envisioned the stories for a widening audience.³² In 1910 marketer W.B. Laughead used the Paul Bunyan tales he heard working in the logging camps of Minnesota to create an advertising campaign for the Red River Logging Company. Other authors published stories previously, but the Red River Company advertising campaign made the tales popular. The company used the Bunyan legends to build support for its expansion west in search of lumber to sell to its growing market in the northeast. In an interview with Laughead, folklorist W. H. Hutchinson notes that although Laughead did not create the Paul Bunyan stories, he did invent many of the characters and stories now part of Paul Bunyan lore. Laughead's first booklet, *Introducing Mr. Paul Bunyan of Westwood California*, included some of the earliest drawings of Paul and the Blue Ox, which he named Babe, as well as a number of characters he created including Johnny Inkslinger, Chris Crosshaul, Shot Gunderson, Sourdough Sam, Brimstone Bill, and Big Ole.³³ Laughead's stories were "larded with chunks of advertising for Red River and garnished with photographs of the California timberlands," and featured California landmarks such as Mt. Lassen, which Laughead called "Paul Bunyan's Bean Pot." Although not initially successful because Paul Bunyan stories were not widely known, the Red River Company's persistence through 1944 made Paul Bunyan a popular folklore character nationally, and many other authors and novice story tellers elaborated on these tales or created their own.³⁴ Other's involved in the popularization of Bunyan tales included Esther Shephard, Glen Rounds, and Harold Felton, among others, who each published collections of stories based on the renditions of other authors or oral histories in 1924, 1936, 1947, respectively.³⁵

Hoffman notes that as stories became more popular, they lost much of their authenticity. In the popularized stories authors replaced the jargon of lumberjacks with language meant for the general public. Paul Bunyan's character changed too as he became "a miner, a railroader, and oil driller, a rancher, a farmer a construction boss, or an entrepreneur in other industries" to increase his appeal to other parts of the nation.³⁶ Writers also

²⁹ Hoffman, 304-309.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, 65.

³³ W.H. Hutchinson, "The Caesarean Delivery of Paul Bunyan" *Western Folklore* 22, no 1 (Jan 1963), 2, 5.

³⁴ Ibid, 6-7.

³⁵ Ibid, 63-126.

³⁶ Hoffman, 303.

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altered or removed the central pieces of Bunyan stories, logging humor references to camp life, to appeal to urban audiences. According to Hoffman, the result "is a superficiality of humor, a reliance upon formulas of mere exaggeration, and a tendency to caricature Bunyan and the supporting figures in the tales."³⁷ Folklorist Richard M. Dorson notes that by the late 1930s and early 1940s marketers used the figure of Paul Bunyan to promote a variety of products and local festivals, and the character's name became an adjective for "any sort of mammoth event."³⁸ By 1941 Paul Bunyan and his companions were the subjects of seventeen full-length books, several plays, music, ballets, murals, wood-cuts, paintings, and statues. Newspapers and other periodicals across the nation regularly featured the giant logger as well.³⁹

PAUL BUNYAN IN OREGON

No doubt Oregon's historic association with the lumber industry helped popularize Paul Bunyan legends. Writing in 1989, historian Carlos Schwantes remarks in his book *The Pacific Northwest* that "no economic activity today is more closely associated with the Pacific Northwest than logging and sawmilling...."⁴⁰ The Hudson's Bay Company erected the region's first mill in 1827. The operation shipped lumber as far as the Hawaiian Islands. As early as 1850 a steam driven mill operated in Portland. By the following year Oregon City boasted five water-driven mills. In the nineteenth century Northwest mills sent timber to markets along the west coast, especially to San Francisco where the California Gold Rush created a demand for building materials. In the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Washington State with its large inland waterways dominated the industry because logging could only occur where timber could be easily transported by water.⁴¹ Historian Carl Abbott notes that logging in Oregon went "big time in the Coast Range and the shoulders of Mount Hood [in] the early-twentieth century" as the expansion of railroads in Oregon undercut the Puget Sound's shipping advantage.⁴² Cutting accelerated in the Northwest as companies from the East Coast and the Great Lakes moved to the region after exhausting their own local supplies of lumber. In Oregon, large-scale cutting occurred in Washington and Columbia counties, following railroads into the Coast Range and to Tillamook Bay. Loggers and logging railroads also operated on the lower slopes of the Cascades on the Clackamas and Columbia rivers.⁴³ Oregon's timber industry grew steadily through the twentieth century, overtaking Washington in 1938. The transition was symbolically recognized by the relocation of the West Coast Lumberman's Association from Seattle to Portland in 1945, marking an era of "unparalleled affluence" in Oregon's lumber industry.⁴⁴ In the 1940s and immediate postwar, period advances in logging technology made harvests and milling more efficient, and the development of new forest products, such as plywood, expanded

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Richard M. Dorson, ed. *Folklore and Fakelore: Essays toward a Discipline of Folk Studies* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 292.

³⁹ Gladys J. Haney, "Paul Bunyan Twenty-Five Years After" *The Journal of American Folklore* 55, no 217 (July – September 1942), 155.

⁴⁰ Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 175.

⁴¹ Ibid, 175-178, 180; Peterson del Mar, 100, 160.

⁴² Carl Abbott, *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 42; Peterson del Mar, 100.

⁴³ Abbott, 115.

⁴⁴ Gordon B. Dodds, *Oregon: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), 210.

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the markets for Oregon's timber industry. From the 1940s through the 1960s Oregon remained the nation's top timber producer, cutting a relatively steady nine million board feet annually.⁴⁵

Bunyan legends migrated to Oregon from the Great Lakes region in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, about the same time as the logging industry moved to the Pacific Northwest. It is not completely clear if the stories arrived with the logging companies, or if wide distribution of Paul Bunyan stories by the Red River Logging Company spread the legend of Paul Bunyan. Evidence suggests that both forces contributed to the spread of Bunyan stories. What is clear is that the legends were immediately popular. Abbott notes that in Oregon "the culture of the woods ran on rugged individualism," and the Paul Bunyan character appealed to this sensibility. Despite harsh working conditions in the industry, Oregon loggers and mill workers were more likely to identify with the image of self-sufficient mountain men like Paul Bunyan than to join "One Big Union." In contrast, Washington State was a center of activity for the Industrial Workers of the World, which sponsored a timber workers strike in 1917, "free speech campaigns" in Spokane and Seattle, and precipitated violent confrontations in the Everett and Centralia massacres. Unlike Washington, Abbott notes that "Portland was the headquarters of the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, a cross between a company union and a patriotic society organized in 1917 to combat the I.W.W. The result is the persistence of a strongly individualistic 'pioneer' culture."⁴⁶

Oregonians quickly adopted the Paul Bunyan legend. In 1916 Oregonian Ida Virginia Turney wrote the first Bunyan narrative specifically aimed at children.⁴⁷ In 1928 Turney, an English instructor at the University of Oregon, wrote *Paul Bunyan Comes West*, a collection of children's stories, and in 1941 the now former instructor wrote *Paul Bunyan: The Work Giant*, published in Portland by local company Binfords & Mort, which quickly sold all 3,300 copies of the first printing.⁴⁸ The short and colorfully illustrated stories credited Bunyan as the inventor of the stump puller and breaking plow, among other tools, and portrayed him as a logger, lumber camp boss, builder, farmer, and mill manager as they follow Paul's successful effort to tame a wild wilderness into farms and towns.⁴⁹ Although the material for Turney's books were collected from Oregon, the change in Bunyan's professions, the inclusion of women in the narrative, and simplification of the text illustrate the growing gap between the Bunyan stories told in Lumber Camps and those marketed to a general audience. During the same time Turney was writing her stories, the Works Project Administration immortalized Bunyan in a three-panel glass mosaic in the Tap Room at Timberline Lodge.⁵⁰ The mosaic is still an integral part of the space.

Another prolific Oregon writer, James Stevens, perhaps did more to promote the legend of Paul Bunyan nationally than any other author. Born in Iowa in 1891, Stevens traveled alone to Idaho at the age of 10 and by

⁴⁵ Peterson del Mar, 221-223.

⁴⁶ Abbott, 118-119.

⁴⁷ Haney, 155.

⁴⁸ Dorson, 308.

⁴⁹ Ida Virginia Turney, *Paul Bunyan: The Work Giant* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1941).

⁵⁰ "Paul in the Tap Room," Oregon Works Projects Administration Folk Files, Paul Bunyan, folder 11 (Salem, OR: Oregon State Library, 1942).

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13 was working in the region's logging industry.⁵¹ Drawing on these experiences and the work of others, Steven's published his first Paul Bunyan story in H.L. Mencken's *American Mercury* Magazine in 1924. The next year he published the nationally acclaimed *Paul Bunyan*. In 1931 Steven's published a second book, *The Saginaw Paul Bunyan*. These volumes took literary liberties with the original Paul Bunyan tales, with the author beginning with a Bunyan folktale and then elaborating on it. Dorson notes that Stevens did not see himself as an academic folklorist, but instead as a "literary artist drawing imaginative inspiration from the well of folklore."⁵² Stevens admitted that in his experiences that lumbermen spent little time telling stories, and he did not hide his ambition to emulate great authors such as Hawthorne and Irving in creating literary fiction from folk tales. Nevertheless, Steven's popular books shaped the American's perception of Paul Bunyan, including the origins of the legend. Steven's claimed that the Bunyan legends were based on a French-Canadian soldier in the Papineau Rebellion of 1837 – a claim contested by many.⁵³ Still, Hoffman observes that "the Paul Bunyan most people know more closely resembles the concept of the character in Stevens' books than it does the Bunyan of any other popularizer."⁵⁴

For their work Turney, Stevens, and the WPA artists drew on an already well-developed local folklore, much of it adapted from earlier Bunyan legends. In 1942 the Oregon Writer's Project of the Works Project Administration placed the "Oregon Folklore Studies" collection in the Oregon State Library in Salem. The files contain a wide variety of folk literature, including logger's songs. Some of the material was previously published in books. In his reviews of the files, folklorist Wayland D. Hand noted that "the tall tale is a genre of folk literature that flourished on the frontier and nowhere does it seem to have enjoyed a more rank growth than in Oregon."⁵⁵ A full folder of the collection is dedicated to Paul Bunyan. Like stories from the Great Lakes region, Paul is portrayed as industrious, creative, and above all bigger-than-life as he confronts the dangers and annoyances of the woods. The Oregon stories have a regional flavor and feature local landmarks, animals, and natural phenomenon. The stories attribute to Bunyan the creation of the Washington's Puget Sound and Gray's Harbor, and in Oregon Bunyan is said to have created the Columbia River, Mt. Hood, and Crater Lake, as well as invented of many technologies important to frontier life. Oregon's notorious grey weather is parodied in "Paul and the Oregon Mist."⁵⁶ The collection also documents the many Paul Bunyan-related stories published in regional newspapers. Paul Bunyan stories and his likeness remained popular in Oregon and the nation through the 1950s.

THE KENTON NEIGHBORHOOD

The Kenton neighborhood developed as a creation of the national meatpacking company Swift & Company, eventually becoming Portland's premier manufacturing district and home to many working-class employees

⁵¹ Walt Curtis, "James Stevens," Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission, 1995 <<http://www.ochcom.org/stevens/>> (Accessed 12 December 2008).

⁵² Dorson, 5-6.

⁵³ Ibid, 6; Hoffman, 96.

⁵⁴ Hoffman, 94.

⁵⁵ Wayland D. Hand, "Work Projects Administration Folklore Files," review of Oregon Folklore Studies at Oregon State Library, *California Folklore Quarterly* 4, no 4. (October 1945), 426.

⁵⁶ Oregon Works Projects Administration, "Oregon Works Projects Administration Folklore Files," "Paul Bunyan," folder 11 (Salem, OR: Oregon State Library, 1942).

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and the businesses that served them. While the neighborhood's main business was meat packing, the area developed during the same period that Oregon's lumber industry began to expand. As a result, many lumber mills and producers of finished-wood products also located in the area. The neighborhood's relative isolation from nearby Portland's network of roads and rails created the atmosphere of a small town, and further strengthened its working-class identity.

Located in the lowlands of north Portland on the south side of Columbia Slough on the east bank of the Willamette River, the relatively flat location of the Kenton area with access to two navigable rivers was ideally situated for early-twentieth century manufacturing. Development occurred in 1907 after the North Bank Railroad Bridge across Columbia Slough was completed, linking the area to Portland.⁵⁷ In 1908, under the leadership of President Cornelius Chapman Colt and several business associates, Swift & Company formed the Kenwood Land Company to take advantage of the investment opportunity offered by the new bridge. That year the partnership purchased 3,400 acres in what would become the Kenton Neighborhood. In 1909 the Union Stock Yards opened, an action that spurred Swift & Company to begin development of their plant the same year.⁵⁸ For Swift & Company, Kenton was an ideal location to do business. The city was close to the cattle ranges in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, product could be shipped easily by rail or water, and the area lacked competitors. Swift & Company operated locally as the Union Meat Company.⁵⁹

As Swift & Company grew, the business developed its land holdings through a number of subsidiaries. However, the company did not want to administer a company town, and instead sold lots to private buyers. Over time, the influence of the company lessened and Kenton developed into an independent suburb of Portland that felt and functioned like a small town. The relative isolation of the community and weak transportation links between Kenton and Portland reinforced the trend. The opening of the Swift & Company plant in 1909 created demand for residential, commercial, and industrial lots as Colt planned. Initially Swift subsidiary Kenton Traction Company connected the plant to the company's newly platted six residential blocks with a streetcar line. Swift & Company platted another twenty-five residential blocks later that year in November. In 1910 another Swift & Company subsidiary, Peninsula Industrial Company subdivided the area between Columbia Slough and east of the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle Railroad bridge into 500 foot by 800 foot lots for a planned "manufacturing district." The ideal location attracted many industries. The first of these were meat-packing firms attracted by the proximity of the stock yards and Swift & Company. A number of companies producing milled lumber and finished wood products, such as Monarch Lumber and Nicolai Door Company, also located to the area. Mirroring the growth of Portland during this time, the number of plants

⁵⁷ Cielo Lutino, Liza Mickle, Robin Green, and Emily Huges, National Register nomination for the "Kenton Commercial Historic District" (Salem, OR: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 2000) Section 7, page 5. Hereafter referred to as "Kenton Commercial District."

⁵⁸ Ibid; Cielo Lutino, Robin Green, Emily Huges and Liza Mickle, Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historic and Architectural Properties in the Early Kenton Neighborhood of Portland, OR. (Salem, OR: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 2001), Section E, page 1. Hereafter referred to as "Kenton MPS." Under the guidance of its namesake founder Gustavus F. Swift, Swift & Company was one of several companies that pioneered the use of refrigerated rail cars, enabling the shipping of dressed beef. The innovation allowed cattle to be slaughtered and dressed closer to the region where they were raised and then be shipped to far off markets. The system reduced cost by concentrating operations and eliminating the long-distance cattle drives, it also encouraged the location of packing plants closer to cattle ranches rather than in Chicago or other cities close to east-coast markets

⁵⁹ Kenton MPS, Section E, pages 1-4.

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increased dramatically. In 1917 seventeen firms operated in the area, by 1924 the number had doubled. Commercial and residential growth was strong during the same period. By 1911 the commercial district along Denver Avenue had six two- and three-story cast-stone buildings including the National Register-listed Kenton Hotel. Growth continued through the 1920s as residents, businesses, and factories moved to the area. In 1910 the census recorded 150 residents. Ten years later that number had increased to 1,100. In that same period 185 buildings were constructed. By that time a bakery, drugstore, two dentists, three doctors, five churches, and two schools served the community. The largest employer was Swift & Company which employed 800 mostly local workers in 1919. Between 1922 and 1928, 315 more buildings were constructed and Swift & Company payroll rose to 1,800 employees. Growth slowed significantly in Kenton during the 1930s along with the rest of the metro area and the nation.⁶⁰

KENTON'S PAUL BUNYAN COMES TO LIFE

During WWII the construction of Kaiser shipyard and the community of Vanport – the nation's largest war-time housing project – created an economic boom for Kenton. The nearby location of Vanport boosted local commerce in Kenton, but in 1948 the community was washed away by severe flooding. Business was again buoyed when Interstate Avenue (Highway 99w) replaced Union Avenue, (now Martin Luther King Boulevard) as the city's main north-to-south route. The route paralleled Denver, and provided a steady stream of customers. Despite this good fortune, the gradual reduction of Swift & Company's workforce in the postwar period in response to changing industry trends took an economic toll. By 1947 the company employed only 900 workers, half of its work force during the 1920s. The lost jobs took a toll on local business as well, and many struggled to keep their doors open. By the mid 1950s the Kenton neighborhood had suffered a slow gradual decline since its height in the 1920s.⁶¹

In 1959, community business leaders hoped to reverse their fortunes and capitalize on the Oregon Centennial Celebration and the opening of the Centennial Exposition and International Trade Fair. The Centennial Exposition, or Expo, was the anchor event in a series of celebrations that took place across the state in honor of Oregon's 100th birthday. Located less than a mile-and-a-half north of Kenton, at the time the site of the Pacific-International Livestock Exposition and former site of the Union Stock Yards, organizers anticipated that the Expo would bring between 4 and 8 million people to Portland during the summer of 1959. *The Oregonian* identified Interstate (then Hwy 99), Union (then 99E), and Vancouver avenues as designated traffic routes for the Expo. Of the three, Interstate Avenue was the only route across the Columbia River to Washington State, a straight shot through Kenton for visitors traveling in either direction.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid, Section E, pages 5-9; Kenton Commercial District, Section 8, pages 34-40; Abbott, 42.

⁶¹ Kenton MPS, Section E, page 11; Kenton Commercial District, Section 8, page 40; Abbott, 49.

⁶² The present-day boundaries of the Centennial Expo are, roughly, Marine Drive to the north, I-5 on the east, N. Force Avenue on the west, and N. Broadacre Road on the south. The Expo occupied a corner of the Vanport site, which today supports the Portland Metropolitan Exposition Center, the Heron Lakes Golf Course and the Portland International Raceway; "Oregon's 100th Birthday Party," *The Oregonian*, Feb. 11, 1959, special section; "Traffic Routes to Centennial Designated," *The Oregonian*, 7 June 1959, p.18; One year later, construction started on the Minnesota Freeway segment of I-5 that would supplant Hwy 99 as the primary north-south expressway between Washington and Oregon (George Kramer, "The Interstate Highway System in Oregon: A Historic Overview" (Eugene, OR: Heritage Research Associates, Inc., May 2004), 35.

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Recognizing the potential benefits of the Expo's proximity, the Kenton Businessmen's Club formed a centennial committee to explore how best to get involved. By February 1st, 1959, they had a plan. Together with gateway welcome banners and bunting hung across Kenton's main streets, there would be a 30-foot statue of Paul Bunyan erected in the triangle intersection of N. Denver and N. Interstate avenues. Committee members anticipated the plan would cost \$2,500; Gay Taylor led the fundraising drive, assisted by Marion Hassferder, Al Bertro and Vic Nelson.⁶³

While the decision to "have some show of effort" was a made by committee, the idea for a Paul Bunyan statue was the brainchild of Victor A. Nelson and his 29-year-old son, Victor R. (both men went by "Vic"). The Nelsons owned and operated Kenton Machine Works, designing, building, and repairing specialty equipment for the plywood and printing industries.⁶⁴ Summing up why the Kenton Businessmen's Club chose Paul Bunyan to represent Oregon and the neighborhood, Victor R. remarked years later, in 2001, that "at that time, Oregon was the leading timber state and the Kenton Business Association wanted people traveling the route to see something that represented the lumber industry."⁶⁵ Victor A. was a Swedish immigrant who purchased the neighborhood machine shop in the 1920s, servicing the shingle and saw mills and other industries prospering along Columbia Boulevard before World War II. His son, who studied engineering at Oregon State University and served in the Army during the Korean War, went to work for Kenton Machine Works after the war ended in 1953. By 1959 the younger Vic was engaged in timber harvesting on some of his own property in Clackamas County, and both men had deep ties to Oregon's wood products industry. Bette Davis Nelson, wife of the late, younger Vic Nelson, recalls that both father and son thought Paul Bunyan would do a good job conveying the personality of the Kenton neighborhood as well as celebrating the history of one of Oregon's richest industries. The Nelsons considered him widely recognizable as a representative of the logging trade, and hoped he would also symbolize the evolving character of Oregon's wood products industry, including its more modern aspects such as plywood, Christmas trees, and forest management.⁶⁶

The statue's conception was a family affair. At the request of her husband, Bette Nelson browsed children's books for Bunyan images to be used in the statue's design.⁶⁷ Victor A. designed Paul Bunyan, assisted by his son, and oversaw the volunteer iron workers and welders as they built the beefy iron frame inside the Kenton Machine Works shop. Victor R. recalled in a February 2000 interview, that when the frame was done, "we hauled it out and stuck it up," facing north on a state-owned site across Denver Avenue from the machine shop. The statue was plastered on site by the plasterer's union apprentices, and painted in the traditional lumberjack garb: blue jeans and a red-and-white checked shirt, with black boots on his six-foot-long feet.⁶⁸

Paul Bunyan was dedicated in a ceremony on the afternoon of Saturday, June 6, 1959. The statue welcomed visitors to the Kenton neighborhood for the 100 days of the Centennial Exposition courtesy of a six-month state

⁶³ *The Oregonian*, "Paul Bunyan Statue Planned" (Portland: 1 February 1959).

⁶⁴ Victor R. Nelson, interview by Donna Sinclair, Oral History Archive at Center for Columbia River History <www.ccrh.org/comm/slough/oral/vicnlsn.htm> 7 February 2000 (accessed August 2008); Bette Davis Nelson, telephone conversation with Chrissy Curran, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, (21 August 2008).

⁶⁵ *Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area*, "Corridor Profile: Vic Nelson," (Portland: April 2001).

⁶⁶ Victor R. Nelson, 7 February 2000; Bette Davis Nelson, 21 August 2008.

⁶⁷ Jennifer Anderson, "Stumptown Stumper," *Portland Tribune* (Portland, nd).

⁶⁸ Victor R. Nelson, 7 February 2000.

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permit. The Kenton Businessmen's Club fully expected to dismantle the statue at the end of the six months, but the state approached them about keeping it up a little longer and using it as a tourist's information booth. With that reprieve, Paul Bunyan continued to stand as a neighborhood landmark providing tourist information until the construction of Interstate 5 in the early 1960s compelled the state to abandon the information booth in Kenton and move it to Jantzen Beach, a couple miles north. Paul Bunyan, according to Vic Nelson, "just sort of stayed there."⁶⁹

COMPARING KENTON'S PAUL BUNYAN

As a major north-west arterial along the West Coast, US 99 was an ideal location for roadside businesses and attractions. The route, originally known as the Pacific Highway, linked coastal California, Oregon, and Washington, and quickly became one of the most important roads in the West.⁷⁰ Many attractions popped up along the highway. In Milwaukie a WWII B-17G Flying Fortress Bomber sits perched atop an old gas station.⁷¹ Also along the route is the Grants Pass' Cave Man, and numerous other unusual neon signs and roadside services.⁷² In 1959, the Kenton Businessmen's Club took advantage of the neighborhood's location along the route, the excitement surrounding the state centennial, and the nearby Centennial Exposition to erect a roadside attraction that they believed was a fitting tribute to the State's economic and cultural heritage. The neighborhood's strong working-class background and tradition of lumber-related business in the vicinity made the giant blue-collar hero a natural choice. Bunyan legends did not originate in Oregon; however, the tales did resonate with Oregonians as shown in the prevalence of Buynan stories among loggers, the successful books published by Virginia Ida Turney and James Stevens, and the many other popular depictions of the mythical figure throughout the state.

Initially set to stand for only six months and primarily intended to commemorate Oregon's hundredth birthday, Kenton's business community did expect that the statue would bring other benefits. The neighborhood hoped that the statue would create publicity for the area and that its prominent location on US 99 would attract potential customers to the business district along Denver Avenue. Motorists were invited to stop and pick up tourist literature and could purchase a postcard of the statue at a kiosk located on site. Remembering the motives behind the statue's creation, Vic R. Nelson recalled that in addition to wanting to honor Oregon's birthday and the timber industry, "they thought that it would help business."⁷³ Kenton's Paul Bunyan statue reflects the practices of drawing on local legends and traveler's expectations to create a roadside attraction to entertain and draw visitors. The fact that the statue remained after the fair speaks to the local popularity of Paul Bunyan and the aesthetic appeal of the well-constructed whimsical statue.

Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox are nationally-known figures, and have been depicted along highways throughout the nation. In addition to the numerous "muffler-man" Paul Bunyans, Bunyan statues are found in twenty states from New York to California according to *RoadsideAmerica.com*, an online community devoted to

⁶⁹ "Paul Bunyan Towers, *The Oregonian*, 6 June 1959; Nelson interview.

⁷⁰ Jill Livingston, *That Ribbon of Highway III: Highway 99 Through the Pacific Northwest* (Klamath River, CA: Living Gold Press, 2003), 15.

⁷¹ Baskas, 120-121; Livingston 28, 46-51.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Joe Fitzgibbon, "Paul Bunyan Stands Tall Over a Hopeful Kenton" (Portland: *The Oregonian*, nd).

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cataloging the nation's quirky roadside attractions. The Kenton statue is one of the larger Bunyan representations.⁷⁴ Among these statues only one is known to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox in Bemidji, Minnesota were constructed between 1937 and 1938, and listed in the Register in 1988 for their association with local tourism. Considerably smaller than Kenton's statue, the Bemidji Paul Bunyan is only 18 feet tall and 5 feet wide wearing traditional logger clothing including boots, jeans, a red-plaid shirt, and a grey cap. Babe is 10 feet tall and 20 feet long, and painted blue with a gold muzzle.⁷⁵ Listed in 1990 under Criterion A and C for association with entertainment/recreation and art, Dinosaur Park in Pennington, South Dakota, is another National Register-listed example of a roadside attraction. Constructed in 1935, the park included five concrete and steel dinosaurs and related landscape features. Unlike Kenton's Paul Bunyan Statue, Dinosaur Park is unrelated to larger state-wide themes and trends.⁷⁶

Oregon's roadside architecture is varied, but roadside representations of Paul Bunyan and loggers are popular topics. No other industry or living or mythical character is portrayed more often statewide. In Medford, Oregon, two 37-foot tin loggers greeted travelers until 1994 when they were moved to the Jackson County Fairgrounds. Another logger stands in front of BJ's Tools on the outskirts of Grants Pass.⁷⁷ The statue is a "muffler man."⁷⁸ A diminutive statue of Ralph Bunyan, "Paul's little brother," stands in the town of Butte Falls. A more recent Bunyan incarnation is outside Grants Pass at the Cedarwood Saloon where the owner transformed a muffler man originally designed as a miner into the legendary logger in 1991.⁷⁹ Bunyan's likeness is also portrayed on the walls of the Tap Room at Timberline Lodge, a National Register-listed resource. Compared to other similar resources in the state, Kenton's Paul Bunyan Statue is the only purpose-built Bunyan statue created as an original work during the historic period that retains a high level of integrity. The statue also is differentiated from other roadside creations by its quality steel and concrete construction and the attention paid to its sculpting. The cement plaster is applied in a way that creates depth, including laces, eyes, and panels on the boots; pocket and belt loops on his jeans; a realistic shape to his rolled-up shirt sleeves; and an appealing and friendly expression. The statue's exaggerated facial features and barrel chest are intentional, and lend the statue a whimsical appeal. Eye-catching and drawing on Oregon and Kenton's identity to both celebrate and sell, Kenton's Paul Bunyan is an outstanding example of a roadside attraction.

CONCLUSION

The only statue of its type in Oregon, Kenton's Paul Bunyan is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a resource of state-wide significance under Criterion C as an example of roadside architecture.

⁷⁴ *RoadsideAmerica.com*, "A Catalog of Bunyan's" <<http://www.radsiceamerica.com/muffler/origin.html>> (accessed 5 August 2008). Figures for heights are estimated. No complete national survey of Paul Bunyan statues exists.

⁷⁵ Jeffery A. Hess, National Register nomination for the "Bunyan, Paul, and Babe the Blue Ox" (Saint Paul, Minnesota: State Historic Preservation Office, 2008), Section 7, Page 1.

⁷⁶ South Dakota Historic Preservation Office, National Register nomination for "Dinosaur Park" (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 1990), Section 7, Page 1, Section 8, page 1.

⁷⁷ Livingston, 24-25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 26; For more information about Muffler Men see: Timothy Corriagan Correll and Patrick Arthur Polk, *Muffler Men* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

⁷⁹ Baskas, 188-189, 200-201.

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Although moved in 2002, the statue remains along the same busy public right-of-way only fifty-nine feet from its original location along US 99 and continues to face the same direction. This short move maintains the integrity of an urban roadside feeling and association so important to roadside architecture, and therefore meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration B. Created to honor Oregon's 100th birthday and the state's principal industry, the statue represents Kenton's working-class roots and the close cultural association between residents of the state and the timber industry. The statue also reflects the growth of roadside commerce between the 1930s and 1960s in response to increasing automobile ownership and American's changing travel habits.

Since its construction, the statue is an integral part of the Kenton community. The statue is regularly featured in articles about the neighborhood and on the neighborhood association's website. A local café, Paul Bunyan's Espresso and Deli" takes its name from the neighborhood giant, and in 2002 Babe's footprints were installed in front of the former Kenton Machine Works building, now Converting Machines Incorporated (CMI). Local civic groups completed restorations in 1989 and 1999, and residents make sure that the statue has a fresh coat of paint – thanks to a fund that Vic R. Nelson set aside for the statue's maintenance in his will. Vic R. Nelson passed away in 2004. In an article in the *Oregonian*, Vic Nelson considered the statue's longevity and local importance saying, "so he was up there for six months, but now he's been up there forty years. And as substantial as he is, because I know how he's built, he could be there another hundred years."⁸⁰ As Nelson predicted, the statue continues in its original function as it welcomes visitors to Kenton's commercial district, just as it was designed to do for the 1959 Centennial Exposition.

⁸⁰ Fitzgibbon, nd.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Paul Bunyan Statue is located in north Portland's Kenton neighborhood within the boundaries of the National Register-listed Kenton Commercial Historic District at the intersection of N. Denver and N. Interstate Avenues. The statue is a non-contributing resource within the district because the date of its construction is not within the district's period of significance. The boundary of the nominated property includes the width, depth, and height of the Paul Bunyan Statue itself and the area occupied by the circular base on which it stands.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the entirety of the subject of this nomination including the base it is attached to.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Address: Paul Bunyan Statue
Southwest corner of N Denver Avenue and N Interstate Avenue
Portland, OR 97217

Photographer: Ian Patrick Johnson, Historian, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

Date: 25 August 2008

Ink and Paper: Fuji Crystal Archive paper and printing

Location of Negatives: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, Salem OR

- 1 of 5: North side of the statue, looking south, overview of streetscape
- 2 of 5: North side of the statue, looking south
- 3 of 5: South and east sides of the statue, looking northwest
- 4 of 5: North and west sides of the statue, looking southeast
- 5 of 5: North and east sides of statue, looking southwest, detail view of upper body and face

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DOCUMENTS

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- Figure 2: Tax lot map
- Figure 3: Kenton Commercial Historic District map
- Figure 4: Site overview, aerial photograph, overhead view
- Figure 5: Site overview, aerial photograph, "Bird's-Eye" view
- Figure 6: Site map
- Figure 7: Historic newspaper clipping showing Paul Bunyan Statue construction, c. 1950
- Figure 8: Newspaper clipping, *Oregonian*, Sunrise Edition, 6 June 1959, showing completed Paul Bunyan Statue
- Figure 9: 1959 postcard showing statue during the Oregon Centennial Celebration from June 6th to September 17th 1959
- Figure 10: Kenton's Paul Bunyan Statue moving to new site, 2002
- Figure 11: Obituary for Victor R. Nelson, *Oregonian*, 27 February 2004

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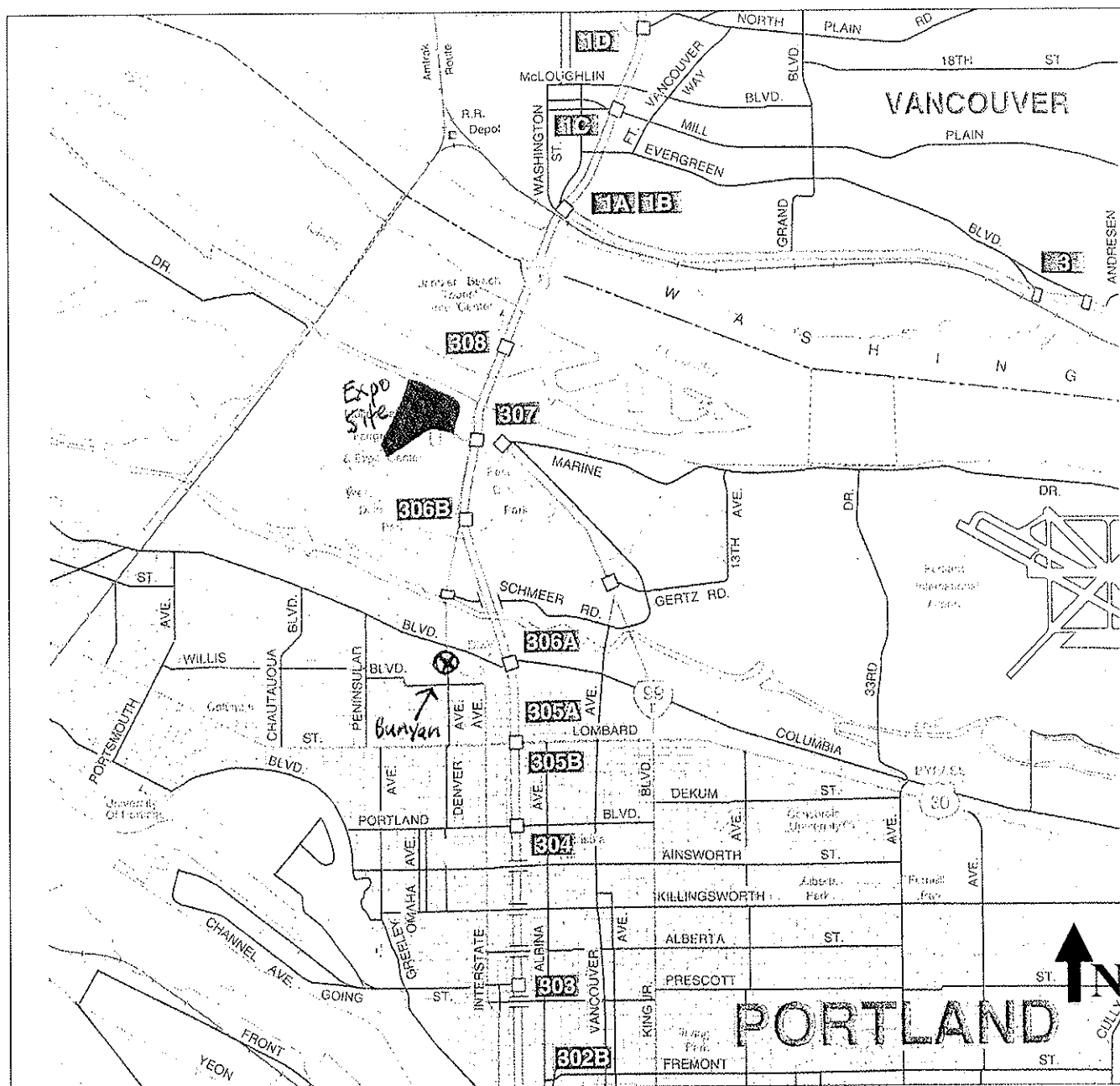


Figure 1: Map showing relationship between Paul Bunyan Statue and the Oregon Centennial Exposition and International Trade Fair

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Figure 2: Tax lot map, subject property outlined in black and marked with arrow

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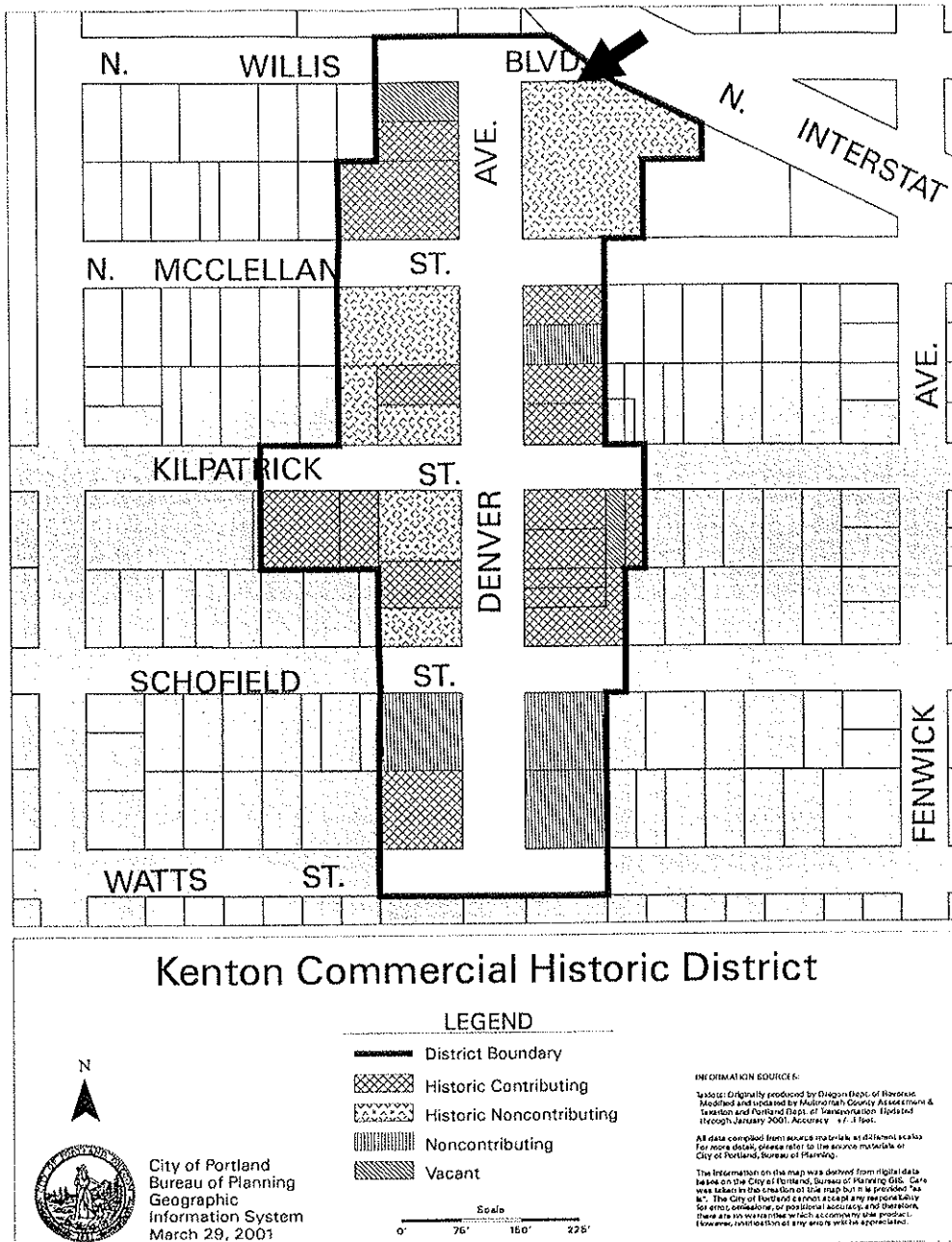


Figure 3: Kenton Commercial Historic District, Listed in National Register of Historic Places.
Map does not reflect current road alignment. Approximate location of subject property marked with arrow

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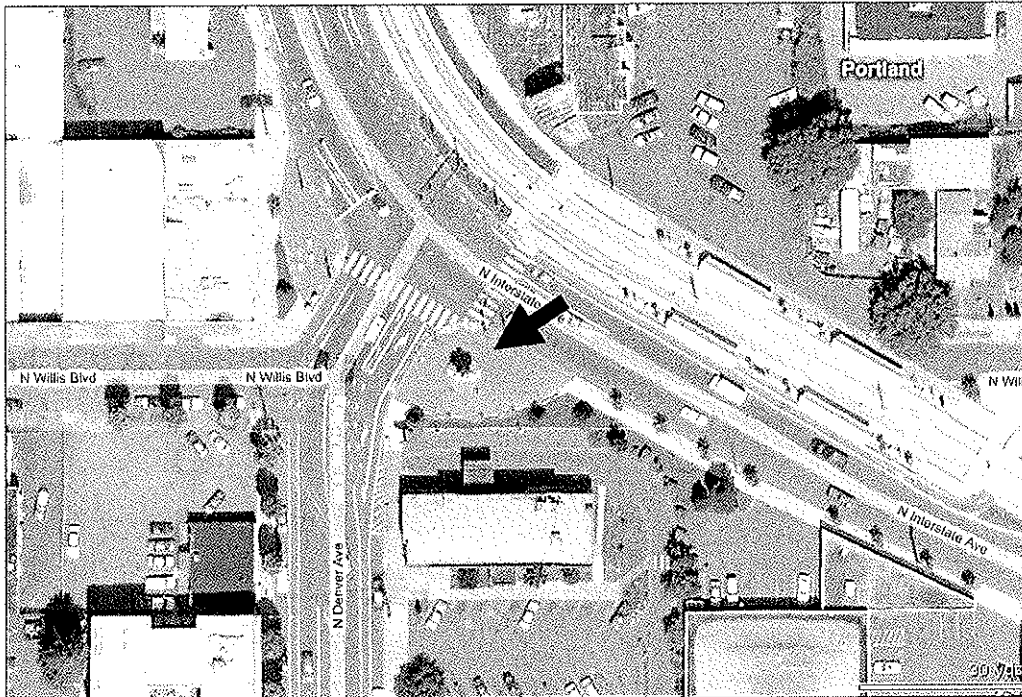


Figure 4: Aerial photo, location of Paul Bunyan Statue marked with arrow

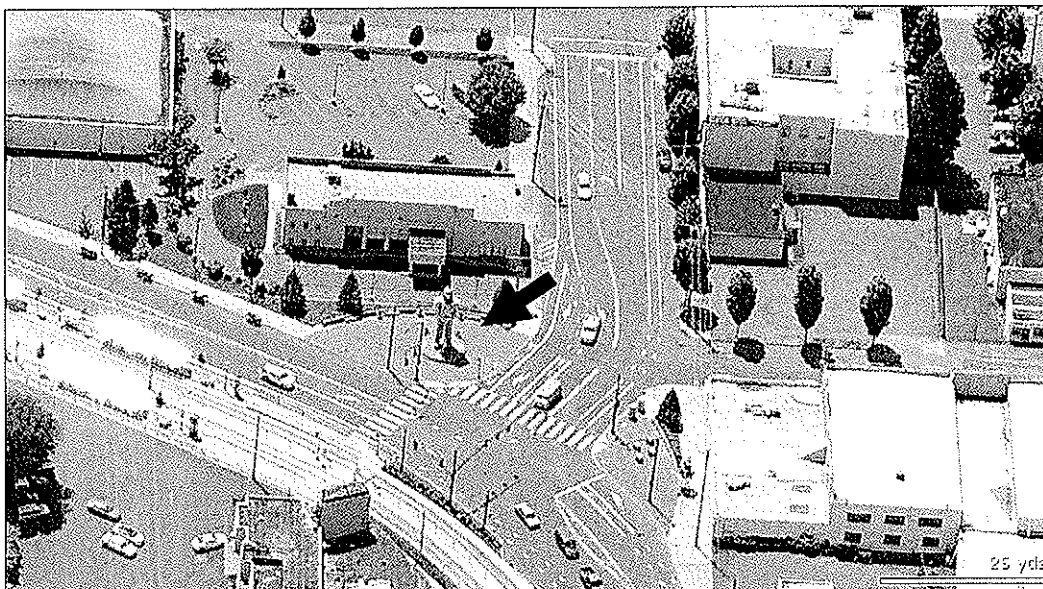


Figure 5: Aerial photo looking south, location of Paul Bunyan Statue marked with arrow

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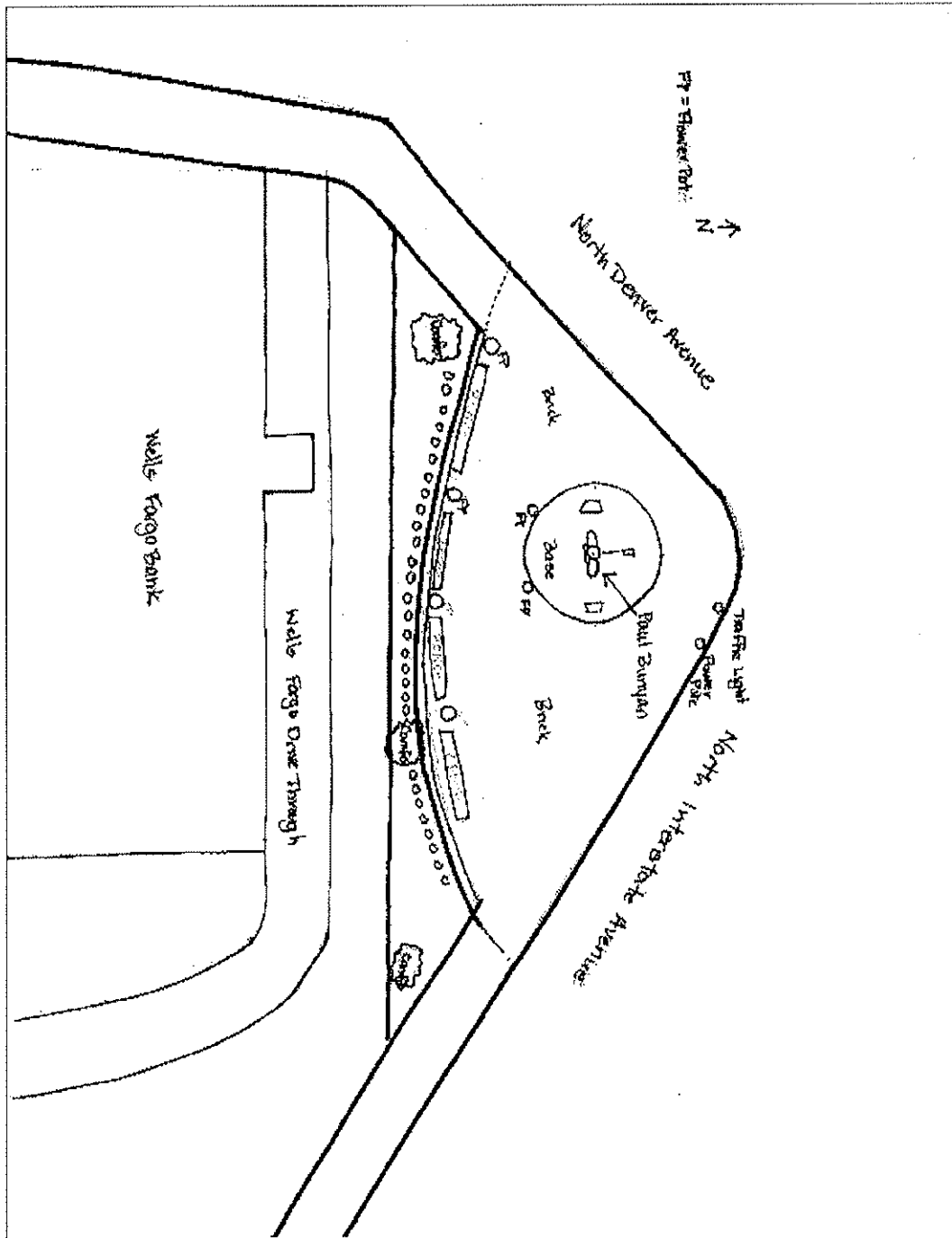


Figure 6: Site plan, prepared by Maiya Martin, August 2008

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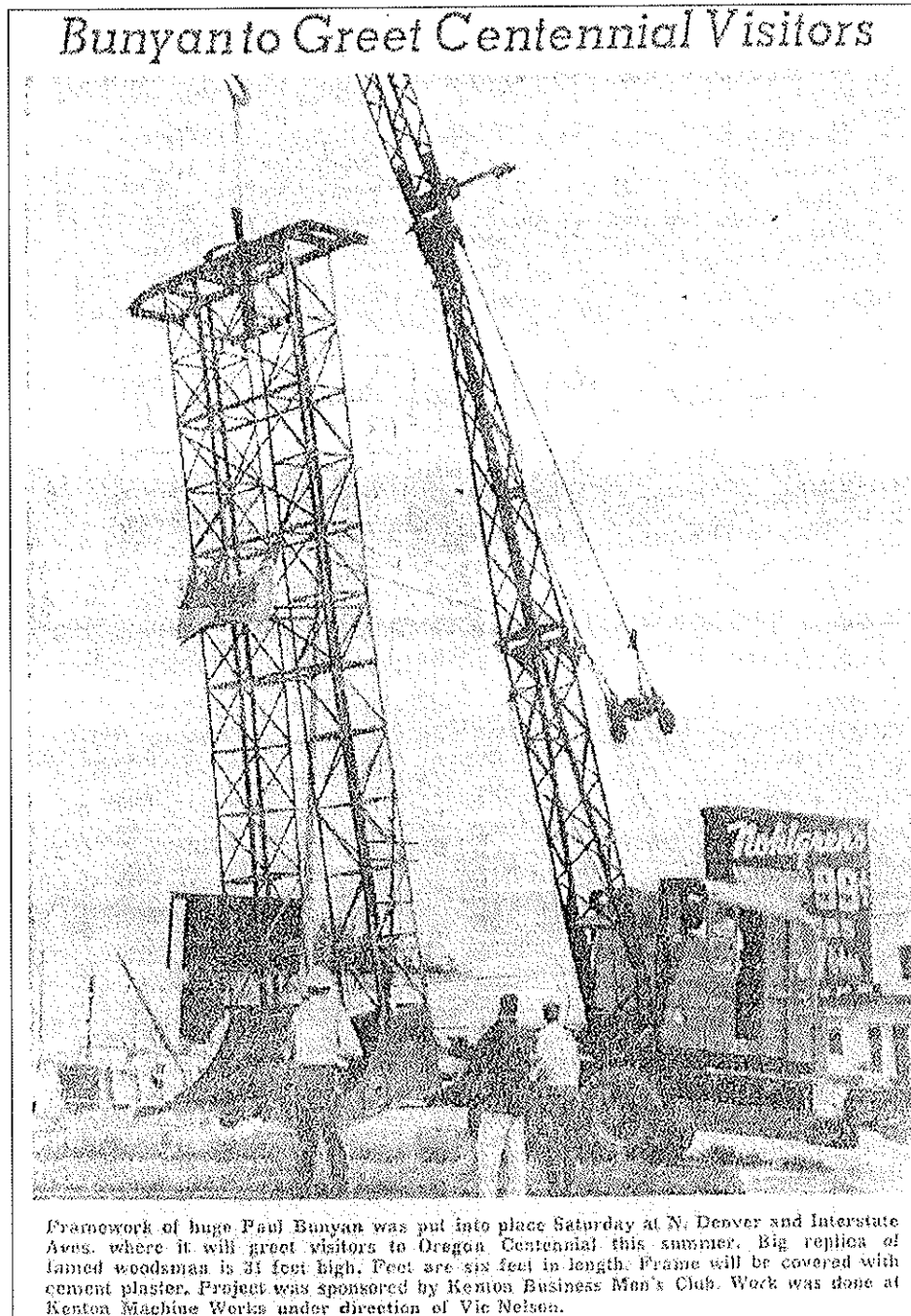


Figure 7: Historic newspaper clipping showing Paul Bunyan Statue construction, c. 1950

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Figure 8: Newspaper Clipping, *Oregonian*, Sunrise Edition, 6 June 1959

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Figure 9: Postcard from machine placed at the foot of the Paul Bunyan Statue. The vending machine is to the left of the pictured bench. The vending Machine remained in place during the Oregon Centennial Celebration from June 6th to September 17th 1959.

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Figure 10: Kenton's Paul Bunyan Statue moving to new site, 2002

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LIFE STORIES

His legacy towers over North Portland

Engineer and inventor Vic Nelson helped construct the Paul Bunyan statue for Oregon's centennial

BY AMY MARTINEZ STARKE
THE OREGONIAN

Vic Nelson proudly remembered all the excitement at the dedication of the big booted, 31-foot, 6-ton Paul Bunyan statue celebrating Oregon's centennial in June 1959. Vic helped design and build the statue with the red-and-white checked shirt while working with his father at Kenton Machine Works.

Paul, made of concrete, steel and plaster, was supposed to stand there only six months. But almost 45 years later, Paul Bunyan is still just a stone's throw from Vic's office window.

Vic, an engineer and inventor, got the ingenuity gene from his father, a Swedish immigrant. Vic eventually owned the small company, which designed specialty equipment for the plywood and printing industries. Vic looked for problems that needed to be solved and built machinery that would do the job.

Nothing made Vic happier than hopping in one of his Jaguars, top

down, and driving to the office, drawing whatever invention he had just scribbled up.

Vic, a cheerful, open book who liked everything but negativity, was just like his dad. He didn't consider his job work. "It's only work when you don't like what you're doing," he said. "You gotta like what you're doing to be successful."

Shortly before he died of cancer Feb. 19, 2004, at 73, Vic was scribbling ideas down in his little office in the back room.

His dad started the business in the 1930s, at the corner of North Willis and Denver. Vic worked at his dad's shop while going in Benson High School. He and his buddies bought hot rods and drag-raced on North Marine Drive in the days when a big time was watching their cars and hanging out at Wad-dies and Tik-Tok, drinking two or three Coca Colas. Soon Jaguars became Vic's car of choice.

Vic studied engineering at Oregon State University before he was drafted into the Army and spent the Korean War stateside. Eventually he went to work for his dad.

He met Bette Davis at a wedding they counted for years and eventually married in 1956. He bought a new 1966 yellow XKT Jaguar on their European honeymoon. He and Bette moved to Lake Oswego, and when the three

children started to arrive, he bought a "family" Jaguar, a four-door silver XJ6 he had just restored. And he recently fell in love with, and bought, a 1963 red XK120 coupe.



VICTOR R. NELSON

Born: April 12, 1930, in Portland
Died: Feb. 19, 2004, in Lake Oswego

Survivors: Wife Bette; daughters, Lynda McDermott and Karen Nelson; son, Victor A.; sister, Eleanor Taylor

Service: 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 27, 2004, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lake Oswego

Remembrances: Paul Bunyan Preservation Trust Fund at Wells Fargo Bank (any branch)

He had four Jaguars in all and kept them all. They were to drive, not just to look at. When admirers pulled up to see, he talked their ears off.

Vic knew only a few Swedish sayings but was a member of Loyal Legion of Lutesisk Lovers. Twice a year he ate pickled herring, lefse, cardamom bread, Swedish meatballs and krunkake at smorgas-bords, and he attended Swedish services on Christmas morning.

Vic was a longtime member of Promise Keepers and enjoyed the fellowship. "I used to always think I was in control," he said. "But when I looked at my life, a higher being was in control."

Vic saw boom, bust and boom again in his Kenton neighborhood, now that the Interstate MAX light-rail line is on its way through. The Paul Bunyan statue was relocated 59 feet to make room for a MAX stop but has remained the one constant watching over all.

Vic always made sure the grounds were kept up and the weeds pulled under Paul. Paul got a fresh coat of paint earlier this month, and Vic made sure that a trust hand for paint and repairs would keep him standing tall.

Amy Martinez Starke, 508-221-8534;
amystarke@news.oregonian.com

Figure 11: Obituary for Victor R. Nelson, Oregonian, 27 February 2004