

Tigard

Tigard (pronounced TY-gerd) is located in Washington County in the lower Willamette Valley, a region that for thousands of years was the territory of the Atfalati Kalapuya, a band that nineteenth-century settlers called the Tualatin. The Tualatin resided in permanent villages during the winter and spent the remainder of the year roaming the valley to hunt and gather. In the early 1830s, a deadly malaria epidemic struck the band, decimating it and killing as much as 97 percent of the population.

The city is named after Wilson M. Tigard, a pioneer from Arkansas who settled in the area in 1852. The city's history is defined by the growth and development that slowly transformed it from a rural farming community into a modern American suburb.

Wilson Tigard was not the first pioneer to settle in the area, but within a year of arriving he had helped establish the first school in the new community. He bought his claim from another settler in 1852; it was one of a collection of isolated farms that made up the area originally known as Butte and East Butte. By the early 1850s, William Graham, John Hickin, and George and Soloman Richardson had established Donation Land claims in Butte. A new East Butte school was built in 1869, and the Butte Grange organized in 1874.

Still, the community remained without much of a focal point until Charles Tigard, Wilson's son, opened a general store and meeting hall in 1880. The store was located along the Portland-Salem Road, a route that passed along the eastern border of his father's claim. Seven years later, Charles Tigard's store began operating the area's first post office, which was named Tigardville in honor of his parents.

The opening of the Oregon Electric Railway's Tigard station in 1908 connected the town with Portland, Salem, and Eugene. For the first time, Tigard was "minutes away" from Portland. To avoid any potential confusion with the railway's Wilsonville stop, the Oregon Electric named the local stop Tigard. When the rail station was built in a section of town called North Tigardville, about a mile from Charles Tigard's store and other businesses, commercial development shifted to the area around the new station.

The Oregon Electric Railway also helped Tigard become a residential destination for people working in Portland. In 1909, a real-estate developer platted the Burnham Tract, a subdivision with nine lots. In 1927, a larger subdivision called Morin's Addition was platted with thirty-five lots. Tigard continued to be primarily a farming community, but it was slowly transformed by growth after World War II. New highways were constructed through Tigard as automobiles replaced trains and trolleys. The completion of Oregon Highway 99W and [Interstate 5](#) during the 1950s and 1960s brought more people to the area.

As existing residential services became strained, the Tigard Area Chamber of Commerce began advocating for self-rule, and an incorporation measure was placed on the ballot in June 1958. The measure failed by two votes. A second election for incorporation narrowly failed four months later. Only after the perceived threat of annexation by the City of Portland three years later did voters barely approve incorporation. The City of Tigard was created on September 11, 1961, more than a hundred years after pioneers first settled the area.

Within ten years of incorporation, the City of Tigard's population and geographic size more than doubled. In 2009, the city's population exceeded 47,000, and there were over 3,400 businesses. Despite this remarkable growth, reminders of Tigard's past are still visible throughout the city. One of Tigard's many historic homes is the John Tigard House, a Carpenter Gothic Victorian house built in 1880 by Wilson Tigard's eldest son. The Tigard Historical Association saved the house from demolition and restored it in the late 1970s; it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Annual family-oriented events include the Festival of Balloons in June and the Family Festival in September.

Written by [Sean Garvey](#)

Further Reading:

Payne, Mary. *Tigardville Tigard: A History of Tigard* (2nd ed.). Lake Oswego, Ore.: Lake Grove Printing Co., 1982.

Zenk, Henry B. "Kalapuyans." In Wayne Suttles, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7: Northwest*

Coast. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 547-553.

Copyright © 2008-2012 Portland State University