

Press Release

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THE OREGON ENCYCLOPEDIA



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A partnership of Portland State University, the Oregon Historical Society, and The Oregon Council of Teachers of English

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The OE History Night at Edgefield in February

The Oregon Encyclopedia (The OE) continues its monthly series of History Nights at McMenamins pubs. At each History Night, The OE will look back at the people and events that have shaped our communities. Visit www.oregonencyclopedia.org for History Night locations and more details.

“A Woman Alone: Mona Bell, Sam Hill, and the Mansion on Bonneville Rock”

Presented by John Harrison

Tuesday, February 28, 2012

6:30 p.m.

McMenamins Edgefield, 2126 SW Halsey St., Troutdale, Ore.

Free and open to the public

For 15 months beginning in early 1934, Mona Bell, a mistress of the flamboyant, visionary entrepreneur Sam Hill, fought the Army over its condemnation of her hilltop mansion in the Columbia River Gorge 40 miles east of Portland to make way for Bonneville Dam. Hill, whose lasting works include Maryhill Museum and the Old Columbia River Highway, built the house in 1928 for Mona; that same year, their child, a boy, was born in Portland. Newly evicted but also newly wealthy, Mona set off on a peripatetic life as a penny-pinching recluse at a cabin on a remote lake in northern Minnesota, a world traveler who flaunted her wealth, and a difficult mother to the son she named Sam.

John Harrison, who wrote a biography of Mona, will discuss her life, her unusual relationship with Sam Hill and his cousin, Edgar, and the federal court proceedings that included then-Governor Julius Meyer, a friend of Sam, as a witness on her behalf. Harrison is a former newspaper reporter and, since 1990, Information Officer at the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, an energy-planning agency based in Portland. He is the author of an almanac-style history of the Columbia River that is posted on the Council’s website, www.nwcouncil.org/history. He also authored or co-authored several entries in the Oregon Encyclopedia. He has a bachelor’s degree in communications from Washington State University and a master’s degree in journalism from the University of Oregon.

The OE is an online resource for information on the state’s significant people, places, events, institutions, and biota. Over 1000 entries and essays have been published online and new entries are added every day. For more information visit www.oregonencyclopedia.org.

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