

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Hawthorne Boulevard from SE 20th to SE 55th Avenues

Prepared for the Hawthorne Boulevard
Transportation Improvements Project,
Section 106 Documentation



**City of Portland, Oregon
Bureau of Planning
Portland, Oregon
February 2003**

*Cover: 1926 Sewickley's Addition –
Hawthorne at SE 50th Avenue, looking NW
Oregon Historical Society photo # 1678, 52685*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The City's Office of Transportation initiated the Hawthorne Boulevard Project following City Council's adoption of the Hawthorne Boulevard Transportation Plan in July 1997. The improvements, which will be constructed starting in 2004, will make safer pedestrian crossings, enhance the boulevard's pedestrian environment, support access to businesses on the street, improve transit access and amenities, provide bicycle parking for cyclists visiting the boulevard, and maintain automobile and truck access. (Questions about the transportation project may be addressed to: Jean Senechal, Portland Office of Transportation, 1120 SW 5th Avenue, Suite 800, Portland, OR 97204; (503) 823-7211.)

This document, *Historic Context, Hawthorne Boulevard from SE 20th to SE 55th Avenues*, supports materials prepared to evaluate historic resources in an area that may be affected by the Hawthorne transportation project. The Bureau of Planning (BOP) prepared the document under an interagency agreement with the Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT), which has undertaken the project in the Hawthorne Boulevard area of southeast Portland. This *Historic Context* is one of the documentation materials submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in fulfillment of federal Section 106 requirements for the PDOT project.

Other Bureau of Planning prepared documents that are part of the Section 106 evaluation include Section 106 Documentation forms for properties in the project area, prepared in February 2003; and Finding of Effect forms, to be prepared in March 2003. All required documents have been or will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office in accordance with requirements of the Section 106 process. Questions about the Section 106 process and documents may be addressed to: Christine Curran, 1115 Commercial Street NE, Salem, OR 97301 (503) 378-4168. Questions about the *Historic Context* may be addressed to: Liza Mickle, Bureau of Planning, 1900 SW Fourth Avenue, Portland, OR 97201; (503) 823-7666.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

EARLY SETTLEMENT

Hawthorne Boulevard’s historic significance begins with its earliest recorded ownership. Originally held by John McLoughlin of the Hudson Bay Trading Co., the land was subsequently sold to James B. Stephens, who in 1850 designated Hawthorne (then titled U Street) the southernmost boundary of the new city of East Portland. The same year, Stephens established the Stark Street ferry to transport agricultural commodities from fertile eastern areas to the fledgling town of Portland and beyond. Used by farmers as a commercial transit route, U Street was only a small dirt road, extending as far as present day 39th Avenue. During the California and Southern Oregon gold rush of 1849, Stephens’ s agricultural shipping monopoly made him a handsome profit.

Outer east side Hawthorne Boulevard was slower to develop than the area closer to the Willamette River. One major event, the 1846 forest fire popularly known as the “Big Burn,” had a critical impact on this area’s development. The fire, starting at the base of Mt. Scott and spreading almost to the Columbia River, cleared much of the thick forest at a time when settlers had just begun to stake claims.¹ The result was an inviting flat, grassy area that was perfectly suited for pioneering farmers. [Some evidence suggests that the Kalapuya Indians of the Willamette Valley regularly burned the valley’s vegetation, producing an already existent pastoral environment.²]

From the late 1840s until 1855, early settlers like Clinton Kelly and Dr. Perry Prettyman staked claims just west of Mt. Tabor. Early farmers most likely did not commute to downtown Portland, but did much of their business through Stephens’ Stark Street ferry. The Mt. Tabor orchards made many of these early farmers prosperous. In 1856, exports of apples alone totaled 20,000 boxes, which sold for nearly \$2 per pound.³ In 1851, much of the land that now lies between SE 30th and SE 38th fell under the land claim of farmer Sheldon Murray. After farming sections of his claim for six years, he began to sell off portions for about \$10 an acre. The larger of these portions, the 160 acres that later became part of the Sunnyside neighborhood, went to James and Jane Abraham.⁴

In 1858, another important figure, Dr. J. C. Hawthorne, arrived in Portland to care for many of the county’s indigent patients. Impressed by Dr. Hawthorne’s devotion and eager to see his town of East Portland grow, Stephens donated seven acres of prime property to the Oregon Hospital for the Insane in 1862. The hospital was constructed on a tract bounded by present-day Hawthorne Boulevard, SE Taylor Street, SE 9th and SE 12th avenues. At this time, U Street became known as

¹ Grant Nelson, “Mt. Tabor – From Forest to Families,” *TimeImage* (October 1978), p. 18.

² Ken Ames, “Imagining Mt. Tabor 300 Years Ago,” *Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association Newsletter* (Fall 2001), p. 1.

³ Nelson, “Mt. Tabor,” p. 20.

⁴ *ibid.*

Asylum Avenue. Run by Dr. Hawthorne and Dr. A. M. Loryea,⁵ the hospital became a major employer for the small city; 18-20 percent of the population of East Portland worked there by 1873.⁶

THE RAILROAD ERA

With the introduction of the railroad in the 1870s, East Portland continued to grow in importance as a shipping and agricultural center. The city witnessed the construction of the Oregon and California's Willamette Valley Line terminal in 1868, and two years later a second railroad company, the Oregon Central Railway Co., also constructed an east-side terminus. With important new railyards, the city grew substantially, and town limits were extended to present-day SE 24th Avenue. Further east, between 26th and 32nd avenues were the old Chinese Gardens, with rows of carefully tended vegetables. One man who grew up in the area in the late 1890s recalled the elaborate Chinese funerals; the mourners would rent every horse and cart in town for their long processions down the main streets of Sunnyside.⁷

The nature of the east side community began to change in 1875 when farmer William Beck suggested that a bridge should be built to link the towns of Portland and East Portland. With the support of J.C. Hawthorne (and in the face of opposition by ferry owners), construction on the Morrison Street Bridge commenced in 1880. Although much of the country was facing an economic downturn in the mid- to late-1880s, Portland businessmen were making substantial profits through investment in new financial enterprises. The growing town needed bridges, roads, and water supplies. Such public projects were privately funded by Portland's elite, who helped turn the economic climate from a depression to a boom by 1887.⁸

The Portland Street Railway Company had successfully operated in downtown Portland since 1872.⁹ In May 1882, Henry W. Prettyman, W.M. Watson, and John Campbell (east side landowner and son of Dr. Perry Prettyman,¹⁰ Railroad Superintendent, and Chief Clerk at the US Engineer Office, respectively¹¹) filed articles of incorporation for the East Portland Railway Company. While the East Portland Railway Company did not propose a Hawthorne track,¹² the anticipation of streetcar lines along SE Belmont and SE Morrison streets, in addition to the Morrison Bridge construction, led to a frenzy of land speculation in the Hawthorne area and had a notable effect on the Mt. Tabor farmlands. As farmers anticipated better access to Portland and greater development, the complexion of the

⁵ Rod Paulson, "Sunnyside – Hawthorne Avenue was Called Asylum Road," *Portland Neighborhood Stories*, V.2. (OHS)

⁶ Karen Zisman, ed. *Portland Oregon's Eastside Historic and Architectural Resources, 1850-1938*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1989, Section E, pp. 7-8.

⁷ Violet Anthony, "Sunnyside," ca. 1951. Sunnyside vertical file. (OHS)

⁸ Gordon DeMarco, *A Short History of Portland* (San Francisco: Lexicos, 1990), pp. 66-67.

⁹ *Oregon Journal*, 10 September 1951, "Many streetcar lines have served Portland," p 12M.

¹⁰ Joseph Gaston, *The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912, V. II* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1912), p. 1017; *Oregonian*, 16 May 1882, "Street Railway for East Portland," p. 3.

¹¹ Portland Directory, Mt. Tabor and East Portland Sections, 1888. OHS shelves.

¹² *Oregonian*, 16 May 1882, "Street Railway for East Portland," p 3.

community transformed from agricultural to suburban. Mount Tabor farmland was purchased for investments and home building; as a consequence, the land was split into relatively small tracts. This made it difficult for any one person to assemble enough land to permit large development. With the exception of the Sunnyside, which was sizeable, many small subdivisions grew up around the base of Mt. Tabor.¹³

THE STREETCAR ERA

By the 1880s, as the east side of the Willamette River surpassed the west side in industry and new growth, land developers were looking east of the river for regional residential growth. The Hospital for the Insane closed in 1883 and the area was converted into an attractive tree-lined park. With the closing of the hospital, the name Asylum Avenue was deemed distasteful by East Portland residents. In April 1888, an ordinance was passed “that the street known as Asylum Street be changed to Hawthorne Avenue.”¹⁴

During the 1880s there was also a tremendous surge in transit-related development. In 1886, the Madison Street Bridge Company was incorporated, followed by the Sunnyside Land and Improvement Company in 1887. The East Portland building boom officially began with the completion of the Morrison Bridge in 1887. By 1888, the Willamette Bridge Company had built a streetcar line running directly to the housing development of Sunnyside, which claimed Hawthorne for its southern boundary. Prior to 1889, Portland had unsatisfactory transportation to developing suburbs and many east side residents found that it was faster to walk downtown than to take horse-drawn cars. Because streetcars brought about street and transit improvements, patronage on the cars was high. The electric and steam cars could be operated at up to half the cost of horse cars and the service was faster, causing commercial and residential real estate along streetcar lines to blossom.¹⁵

In 1888, the Mt. Tabor Street Railway Co. ran a steam-powered streetcar down Hawthorne Boulevard between present-day SE 5th and SE 54th avenues.¹⁶ Until then, the street had been a country road, with a number of adjacent orchards and berry fields. The new route proved popular and was eventually extended south along SE 50th Avenue to the Lents neighborhood. The track divergence at 50th is the cause of today’s irregular intersection at 50th and Hawthorne.¹⁷ The Madison Street Bridge (the predecessor of today’s Hawthorne Bridge) was completed in January 1891 and allowed for a direct streetcar commute westward from Mt. Tabor to downtown Portland.

With regular streetcar service to downtown, the Hawthorne Boulevard area continued to transform from a rural agricultural community to an expanding streetcar suburb. Subdivisions with homes formed to the north and south of the

¹³ Paulson, “Mount Tabor – Development Followed the Streetcar,” *Portland Neighborhood Stories*, V. 2. (OHS)

¹⁴ *Oregonian*, 10 September 1951, “Hawthorne Once Called Asylum Street,” p. M3.

¹⁵ Percy Maddux, *City on the Willamette: The Story of Portland, Oregon* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1952) pp. 98-100.

¹⁶ Zisman, *Portland Oregon’s Eastside Historic and Architectural Resources, 1850-1938*, Section E, p. 12.

¹⁷ *East Portland Community Plan Project Summary Report*, 25 August 1997, p. 45.

streetcar line, within walking distance of the boulevard. Retail strips and clusters of local businesses filled in along the boulevard, becoming a linear district that accommodated local residents as well as commuting patrons traveling between downtown and the Mt. Tabor and Lents neighborhoods.¹⁸

The predominant architectural style of the district in the following three decades was Streetcar Era Commercial. Most of these buildings were mixed use, two to three stories high, with housing units above retail uses. They were usually built up to the front property line and were constructed with wood, brick or stucco, with some brick and woodwork detailing.¹⁹ The buildings helped define the edge of the street, enhanced by storefront windows and doors at the sidewalk level that promoted pedestrian traffic.

Expansion during the Streetcar Era followed the streetcar line, and Portland grew to the east. On Hawthorne Boulevard, nodes or clusters of commercial activity grew up between SE 34 and 39th avenues and between SE 46th and 50th avenues. Development of the latter was spurred by that area's proximity to the transit node at 50th (where the Lents and Hawthorne streetcar lines met). The cluster of commercial development that grew up between SE 34th to 39th avenues, still an active "center" of Hawthorne Boulevard, was partly due to its location at the southernmost boundary of the Sunnyside neighborhood.²⁰

Streetcar line builders and real estate companies often worked together as developers. The Sunnyside area near Hawthorne Boulevard, platted beginning in 1888, offers an example of this kind of collaboration. The lots were sold without houses to individual builders who typically purchased groups of three or four lots and built on speculation. This relationship proved extremely successful, and several additional areas were platted along Hawthorne in 1888 and 1889 in time for the new Hawthorne streetcar line to open.²¹ The new developments, characterized by affordable houses on smaller lots, were framed by streetcar lines to the north at SE Belmont Street and to the south at SE Hawthorne Boulevard. Along the streetcar routes small specialty stores and services such as grocers, butchers, hardware stores, and beauty parlors opened to serve neighborhood shoppers, although purchases of major items were still made in the central city. This separation of shopping activities was an important feature of streetcar-oriented development and architecture.²²

The important role of Portland's elite in Hawthorne's development is evident in the musings of the *Oregonian* advocating for east side growth. Henry L. Pittock, owner and publisher of the *Oregonian*, was also a primary backer of the Sunnyside Land & Investment Co.,²³ and the *Oregonian's* editor Harvey Scott also held land on the east side.²⁴

¹⁸ *East Portland Community Plan Project Summary Report*, p. 45.

¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 75.

²⁰ The earliest Sanborn map for the area dates to 1923. It shows storefront development clusters at SE 20th, SE 34th, 35th, 37th, and 47th-49th avenues.

²¹ *Oregon Journal*, "Many Streetcar Lines," p. 12M.

²² Steven Dotterer, "Cities and Towns" in *Space, Style and Structure, Buildings in Northwest America, V.1*, edited by Thomas Vaughn and Virginia Guest Ferriday (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974) pp. 186-187.

²³ *Potential Historic Conservation Districts*, Sunnyside, p. 176.

²⁴ Paulson, "Mt. Tabor," p. 1.

The influence of the streetcar lines on the east side is very perceptible. There has been a steady appreciation of all kinds of property. They have stimulated the building of cottages for rent. The demand for cottages on the east side does not flag even now. But it may be stated that outside of those mentioned very little effort is being made to supply the demand. It is estimated that there are 2,000 acres of vacant land inside of the city. In fact, East Portland spreads over almost as much ground as Portland.²⁵

The new streetcar line coincided with the annexation of East Portland into the city of Portland in 1891. This resulted in a number of infrastructure changes: the streets on the east side of the Willamette were renamed to allow for continuity and a new and improved water main and sewage system was installed. The Asylum-creek sewage district was the largest in the city in 1895.²⁶ These key developments further facilitated population growth in the Hawthorne area. Overcrowding in West Portland caused a greater demand for affordable housing on the east side, and, as stated in the *Oregonian*, developers were hardly keeping up with this demand.

Other plattings in 1888 were Glencoe Park, Second Electric Addition, and the Crystal Springs Park Tract. A year later, the tracts of Dolan's Addition, Cherrydale, Brookdale, Bowne Addition, Hawthorne Addition, and Hawthorne Place were platted along Hawthorne Boulevard. By 1892, 19 of the 35 plats along Hawthorne were registered. Although platting continued at a brisk pace, the area still retained a relatively rural feel and actual building construction lagged. One local woman recalled that Sunnyside "was sparse back then." The upper area consisted mainly of cow pastures, and the horses that pulled the wagons for a local dairy were kept in stables where Sunnyside Elementary School sits today. "There were plank sidewalks and a place where horses could get a drink," the woman recalled. "I remember the streetcars and the saloon."²⁷

Employment opportunities accompanied platting. For example, a shoe factory was built in 1889 at SE 36th and Main, promising to employ workers from the surrounding neighborhood [the building was destroyed by fire after only a few months in operation]. The development company of J. Fred Clark & Son used this as a selling point in their Sunnyside advertisement: "1500 inhabitants to be added within six months, by reason of the shoe factory located there. Now is the time to buy, as every building put up in the tract increases values. If you want a home or desire to make money, call and see."²⁸ To appeal to homebuyers, real estate agents hoped to portray Hawthorne as a bustling boulevard with a more urban feel.²⁹ This kind of advertisement was highly effective for increasing the value of undeveloped land along Hawthorne. However, land and real estate speculation seemed to take precedence over actual commercial and home site construction and full-scale development did not occur until after 1905.

The 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition provided a jolt to Portland's economy, the benefits of which were largely realized in an ensuing east side housing boom. From 1905 to 1912 the population center for Portland was permanently shifted to the

²⁵ *Oregonian*, 29 August 1888, "Growth of the East Side," p. 3.

²⁶ *Oregonian*, 1 January 1895, "The Sewerage System," p. 31.

²⁷ Suzanne Richards, *Oregonian*, 1988, "Bertha Green Black." Sunnyside vertical file. (OHS)

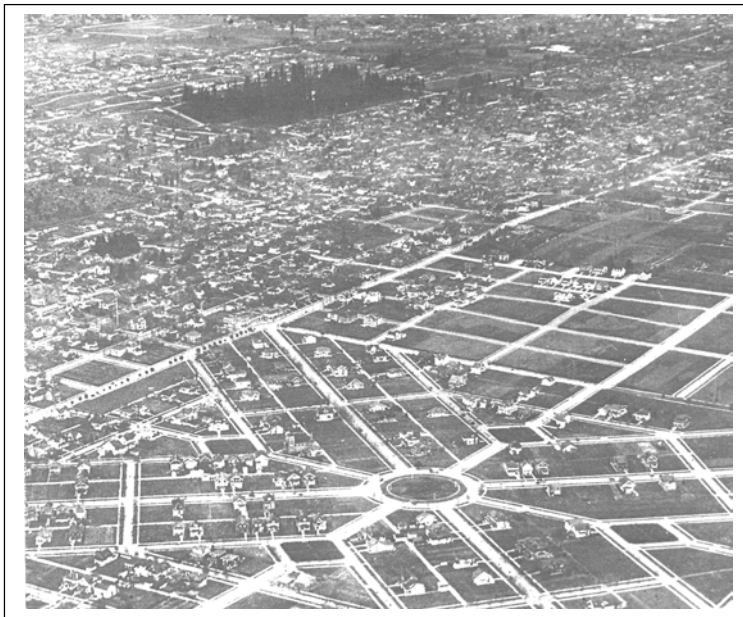
²⁸ *Oregonian*, 5 July 1889, Advertisement Section.

²⁹ *Oregonian*, 10 June 1889, Advertisement Section.

east side.³⁰ Smaller, more affordable homes were constructed in-between larger mansions and sold for about \$1,750 in 1909 [\$40,000 in 2002 dollars].³¹ Most of these homes were purchased outright: 65 percent of the families that moved into the new southeast neighborhoods owned their homes, as compared to 30 percent of west side families.³²

Much of the growth of east side Portland can be attributed to the proliferation of the streetcar. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the population of soared from 32,000 to 120,000, and by 1920 it would reach 185,000. The streetcar system not only provided transportation, but also attracted a variety of investments in commercial and residential development alongside the routes.³³

Additional street improvements served the growing population. By 1907, the length of Hawthorne to SE 39th had been completely macadamized,³⁴ a process that created a compacted roadway using stone surfaced with an oil-based binder. In 1910, as part of the Good Roads Movement, SE 39th Avenue was also improved between Stark and Hawthorne.³⁵ The improved roadways helped business along the already busy Hawthorne thoroughfare. Improved roadways, however, also eventually led to the demise of the streetcar as personal automobiles grew increasingly affordable and popular.



Aerial view looking northeast at Ladd's Addition, shown in the lower area, and at SE Hawthorne Boulevard, shown as a diagonal, from lower left to upper right. The view of Hawthorne begins at approximately 16th Avenue and ends at approximately 30th Avenue. The photo is dated "pre-1919."

Oregon Historical Society photo #1678 OrHi 39917

³⁰ Carl Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City* (University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. 50, 55.

³¹ Richards, "Bertha Green Black."

³² Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City*, p. 55.

³³ *East Portland Community Plan Project Summary Report*, p. 53.

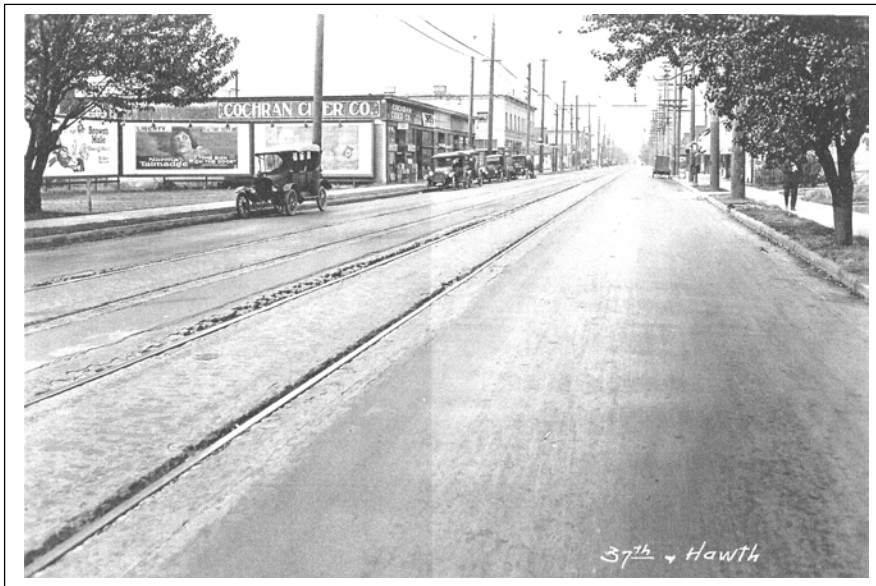
³⁴ Zisman, Karen, ed. *Portland Oregon's Eastside Historic and Architectural Resources, 1850-1938*, Section E, p. 15.

³⁵ *Portland Daily Abstract*, 24 December 1909, p. 1.

THE MOTOR AGE

The early 1900s building boom lasted for less than a decade. Although Portland ranked thirteenth in the country for new construction in 1912, the real-estate market collapsed in 1913-14 due to mounting tensions in Europe and the outbreak of World War I.³⁶ Many residential properties built along Hawthorne during the Streetcar Era were converted to retail or mixed-use.

With the foundation of the AutoBus Co. in 1915 and a steady increase in personal automobiles, streetcar ridership declined. In that year, Portland had the third most extensive electric railway system in the country but it was no competition for the convenience of the automobile.³⁷ Streetcar tracks aged and maintenance costs grew. With a rising minimum wage and higher maintenance costs, streetcar companies were forced to raise the fare from five to six cents. This defied City law that firmly established railway fare at a nickel. After a legal battle the fare remained at six cents, but the railways companies had already suffered financially.³⁸ A less expensive transit choice was to replace some railway lines with diesel buses.³⁹ An inevitable result was a doubling of vehicular traffic on city bridges between 1913 and 1916, with commuter automobiles and private motor cars running adjacent to old tracks.⁴⁰ In 1918, city planners deemed Hawthorne one of the city's busiest thoroughfares for vehicular traffic.⁴¹



View looking west on SE Hawthorne Boulevard from SE 38th Avenue, mid-1920s. The property at upper left was demolished to make way for the Bagdad Theater, constructed in 1927.

Oregon Historical Society photo #1678 COP 01846

Private auto ownership exploded after World War I. While Multnomah County registered fewer than 10,000 cars in 1916, by 1920 it had grown to 36,000, and over 90,000 by 1929 (approximately one car for every four residents). This also had an impact on the use of the city's streets. During the heyday of public

³⁶ MacColl, *Merchants, Money and Power*, p. 443.

³⁷ MacColl, *Growth of A City*, p. 103.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 123.

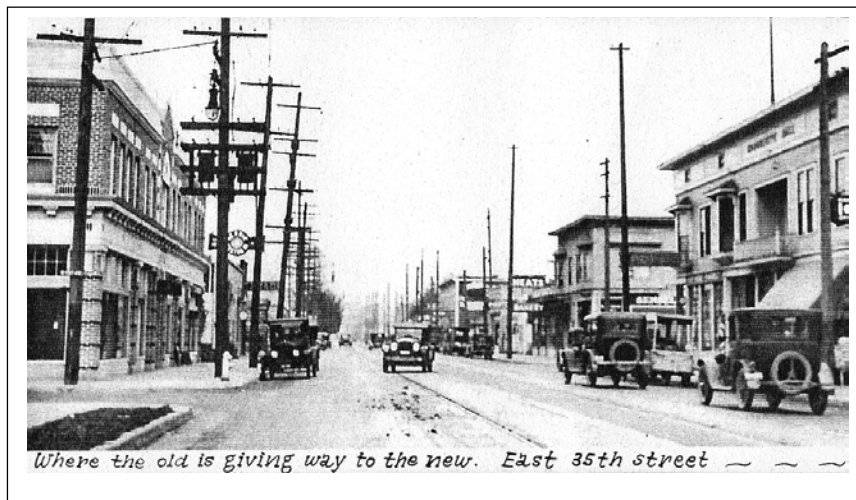
³⁹ *East Portland Community Plan Project Summary Report*, p. 144.

⁴⁰ MacColl, *Growth of a City*, p. 120.

⁴¹ <http://www.trans.ci.portland.or.us/about/History/1918TRAFFICFLOW.html>

transportation and few private vehicles, people could walk with relative freedom on the streets as well as on the sidewalks. As automobiles grew more numerous, traffic flow became a City priority.⁴²

The tremendous growth of auto traffic during the decades of the 1920s and 1930s had a great impact on present-day Hawthorne Boulevard for it was during this time that much of the residential building, street improvements, and zoning changes occurred.



“Electric wires and automobiles already clutter Portland’s Hawthorne Ave. at 35th, tracks lead to Mt. Tabor.” View looking east, 1926.

Oregon Historical Society photo #000692

To meet increased transportation demands, the City widened Hawthorne Boulevard and many connecting streets. In 1931, to accommodate heavy vehicular use, the roadway width was extended from 46 feet to 52 feet from SE Water Street to SE 52nd Avenue.⁴³ The curb lines were changed as part of this project. Although this project was originally slated to extend to 55th Avenue, residents from 52nd to 55th successfully petitioned for that portion of Hawthorne not to be widened. In 1936, a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project removed the streetcar rail on Hawthorne Boulevard between SE 12th and SE 54th in the hopes of creating a solid, even finish on the boulevard to benefit cars. It marked the end of the Streetcar Era along Hawthorne Boulevard.

New road construction allowed auto-oriented stores to proliferate along Hawthorne Boulevard. Service stations and garages nearly tripled between the years of 1930 and 1940, from six to sixteen. This increased number of service stations represented the greatest use-change and number of newly constructed businesses along the boulevard.

The Motor Age marked the zenith of small business on Hawthorne. Retail stores that had once spread out along streetcar lines now clustered for driving and parking convenience.⁴⁴ In 1934 there were 38 grocers and bakers, more than any number before or since (based on data up to 1952). Both Safeway and Fred Meyer had stores located along Hawthorne in the 1930s, but the stores were no larger than the average neighborhood grocery store. Fred Meyer’s first store was housed on the corner of 36th and Hawthorne.

⁴² Dotterer, p. 454.

⁴³ See Ordinance No. 58315 passed March 26, 1930, for change from Ordinance No.21172.

⁴⁴ Abbott, pp. 93-94.

The popularity of the automobile forced commercial establishments that had previously served local clientele to compete in a more regional market. Social changes brought on by the automobile, coupled with the 1930s stagnant economy, led to fierce competition amongst small business. Fred Meyer closed his first grocery store at 36th and Hawthorne, relying upon business from a large-scale bakery at 12th and Hawthorne throughout the 1940s.⁴⁵

The automobile and attendant social changes clearly had an impact on pedestrian traffic. Until the 1930s, Hawthorne had wider sidewalks. The original sidewalks were 12 feet wide and in many places had a three-foot wide planting strip next to the curb. However, as the automobile became an increasing presence on Portland's roads, it became evident that more space was needed on the roadway for travel lanes and on-street parking to support businesses. Streetcars were still operating at this time, and drivers had to navigate around them as they drove along the boulevard.⁴⁶ Also changed by increased automobile usage was the character of surrounding residential neighborhoods. In the Sunnyside area, many homes were razed to make way for parking lots, especially on and near SE Belmont Street. Much of this demolition was encouraged by City zoning.⁴⁷



Looking west on Hawthorne Boulevard from SE 39th Avenue, with the Sunnyside Masonic Temple at left and a typical sidewalk and planting strip at right, circa 1920s.

Oregon Historical Society photo #1678, OrHi 74885

Portland's first zoning code in 1920 had a significant effect on Hawthorne neighborhoods. Whereas houses in Ladd's Addition and Mt. Tabor were considered "medium-grade," properties in the older areas of Sunnyside and Buckman were known as "working class."⁴⁸ In addition, the 1924 city building code placed much of Hawthorne in multifamily (Zone 2) and business-manufacturing (Zone 3) categories. Although it was City policy to place streetcar routes within Zone 3, the application of single-family or multifamily zoning had additional political and economic undertones. Well-organized and affluent neighborhoods, like Mt. Tabor, received single-family status, while working class neighborhoods like Sunnyside, with its preponderance of rental housing, were given over to multifamily use.

⁴⁵ *Oregon Journal*, 10 September 1951, "Hawthorne Boulevard, Meyer Not Strangers," p. M12.

⁴⁶ Portland Office of Transportation, *Hawthorne Boulevard Project Summary of Recommendations For Design and Construction*, May 30, 2002, p. 3.

⁴⁷ *East Portland Community Plan Project Summary Report*, p. 296.

⁴⁸ MacColl, *Growth of a City*, p. 45.

Sunnyside further developed as a staunchly working class area with solid ties to the Sunnyside School and local churches.⁴⁹ Zoning sanctioned existing socio-economic divisions, and the code reinforced a distinction between newer, more affluent and spacious neighborhoods and older, lower-class neighborhoods with smaller houses and apartments.⁵⁰ It was within this context that Portland's next great building boom occurred.

Throughout the 1920s there was considerable development in the Hawthorne commercial area, mirroring development patterns elsewhere in the city. Approximately one-fifth of the properties in the study area was constructed at that time. Although the Streetcar Era Commercial style of architecture continued to prove popular into the 1920s, industrial and utilitarian styles also began to appear.

The typical commercial development of the Motor Age was a building constructed of steel, concrete, and glass. It was either built up to the front property line or set back from the street with an attached empty lot to accommodate automobile parking.⁵¹ An example is the property at 3315 SE Hawthorne, a concrete structure with little ornamentation. Constructed in 1918, it served as an auto-repair shop throughout the 1930s.

The Craftsman and Bungalow styles continued to be popular residential building types. But construction practices soon began to change as concrete replaced brick and wood, especially in multidwelling residences. Historic period styles such as Mediterranean, California Mission, Colonial, and English Cottage gained popularity. The Bagdad Theater at SE 37th and Hawthorne, a designated landmark, was constructed in 1927 in the Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style. Several apartment and multidwelling residences, including the Santa Barbara Apartments at 2052 SE Hawthorne, are examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, while the English Cottage style can be seen in the multidwelling residence at 2904-2918 SE Hawthorne.

With the onset of the Great Depression, relatively few new buildings were constructed along Hawthorne. Money was scarce and residential speculation ceased to be profitable until the beginning of World War II.

WORLD WAR II AND THE POSTWAR ERA

The economic depression left Portland with stagnant, even declining, growth throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Fred Meyer opened his first store in Southeast Portland in 1936 on the corner of SE 36th and Hawthorne and recalled that there "was not much business then."⁵² One major change in Hawthorne's commercial atmosphere was the growth of local bars and taverns. While City directories show no bars or taverns were in business in 1934 (prohibition ended in 1933), six bars and taverns are listed in 1940, and by 1953, the number had increased to thirteen. In many cases, older restaurants were converted into taverns in the 1940s. This type of commerce, especially abundant between SE 34th and SE

⁴⁹ *East Portland Community Plan Project Summary Report*, p. 296.

⁵⁰ Abbott, pp. 88-90.

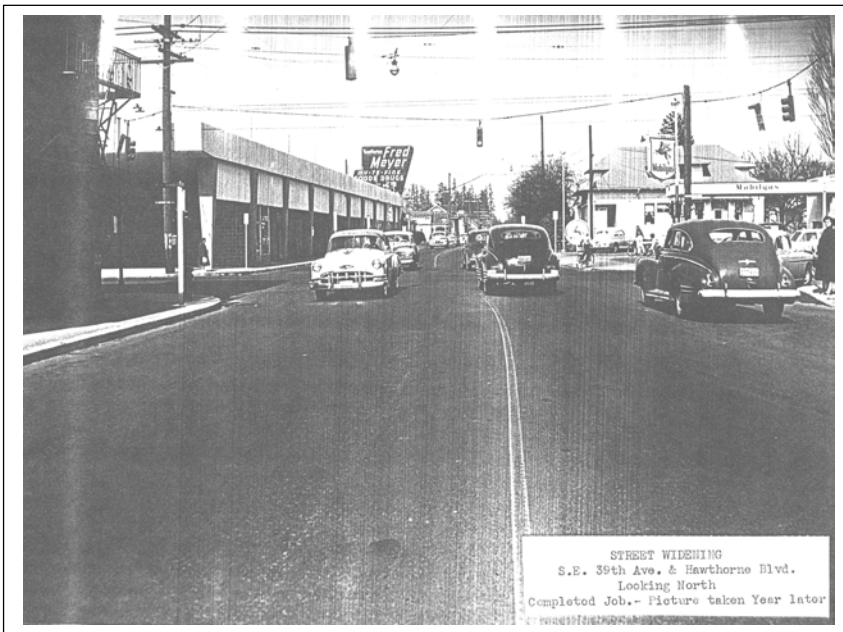
⁵¹ *East Portland Community Plan Project Summary Report*, p. 75.

⁵² *Oregon Journal*, "Hawthorne Boulevard, Meyer Not Strangers," p. M12.

37th, catered to the increasing working-class residents during and immediately after WWII.

Portland received a large economic and population influx in 1941 with the entry of the United States in WWII. Portland shipyards won war contracts, and the city's population grew considerably during the war years. The 1948 Vanport flood in north Portland left 17,000 people homeless and placed further pressure on working class residential neighborhoods like Sunnyside. Bus and mass transit use increased sharply with the influx of working families. Since the streetcar lines were decidedly outdated (the Mt. Tabor streetcar line, the last of the lines, ceased operation that year), the city compensated for the greater number of commuters by purchasing new buses.

In 1950, SE 39th Avenue was widened between Hawthorne and Belmont, leading to increased commuter vehicle traffic on both Hawthorne and SE 39th. The thoroughfare changed to become more exclusively commercial, and several private residences were either converted to commercial use or demolished. (According to City building records, approximately 12 buildings were demolished on Hawthorne Boulevard in the 1950s.) Hawthorne Boulevard's appearance also changed a great deal during this time. Streetlights replaced the stop sign at SE 39th and other busy intersections, and traffic flow grew heavier.⁵³



Looking north on SE 39th Avenue at the intersection of Hawthorne Blvd., with the new Fred Meyer store at left, 1951. The Street widening project was completed at this time.

City of Portland Maintenance and Construction Projects, Job No.16556 file.

The current face of Hawthorne was further defined by changes mentioned above and evidenced by the opening of the modern, multifaceted Fred Meyer superstore in 1951. The Hawthorne Boosters, whose 175 members were drawn from the Hawthorne Merchants Association, anticipated that the new store would promote increased development in the Hawthorne Boulevard area.⁵⁴ Ideally located at the intersection of Hawthorne and SE 39th, Fred Meyer drove many smaller businesses

⁵³ Joanna Ames, "The Old Days of Hawthorne: Twyman's Grocery," *Mt Tabor Neighborhood Association Newsletter*.

⁵⁴ *Oregon Journal*, "Hawthorne Club Does Real Job For Community," p. 3M.

out of the market. One such store was Twyman’s Full Service Grocery, located at SE 43rd and Hawthorne. James Bennett, who purchased the store from Jesse Twyman in 1942 recalled: “There was no other real competition until about the early 1950s, when Fred Meyer came in. My dad had to sell the store in about 1952 because he was losing business to the bigger store.”⁵⁵ Hawthorne Boulevard witnessed a drop in the number of grocers and butchers from more than 30 in 1940 to less than 20 by 1953. Many of the old grocery stores have since been replaced with an eclectic mix of small boutiques and specialty stores. The number of restaurants and other eateries, however, steadily increased to a dozen or more by 1953. Most were located in the lower Hawthorne area between SE 34th and SE 38th Avenues.⁵⁶

Portland’s wartime and post-WWII housing market was tight, and affordable housing was particularly scarce. Multifamily dwellings became more common, as did smaller single-dwelling homes. Sunnyside, the solid working class neighborhood that had flourished at the turn of the century, had begun to noticeably deteriorate. Smaller bungalows and cottages were built to house the influx of families.

Over the past 50 years, many residential properties in the Hawthorne Boulevard area were demolished to make way for new developments, including the large-scale Safeway and Fred Meyer stores in the lower Hawthorne area. Some properties were expanded and/or redeveloped, such as the Fraternal Order of Eagles lodge at SE 50th Avenue in the upper Hawthorne area, which had been previously used as a grocery store. These are highly visible examples of developments that changed the streetscape’s historic appearance. According to City building records, the greatest number of demolished resources in the study area were specialty stores, followed by residences and service stations.⁵⁷

Despite demolition, new construction, and other physical changes, the historic fabric representing Hawthorne Boulevard’s commercial development remains largely intact, particularly in two areas. The area between SE 34th and SE 39th Avenues (known as “lower Hawthorne”), a node of commercial activity since the Streetcar Era, continues to be a magnet for shoppers and pedestrians, with its mix of specialty shops, theaters, taverns, and restaurants. The area between SE 43rd and 50th Avenues (known as “upper Hawthorne”), somewhat less densely developed, also continues to thrive, offering many of the same attractions and neighborhood services. Both areas retain a concentration of resources that exemplify commercial and architectural development patterns in southeast Portland from the first decade of the 1900s through the early 1950s.

Hawthorne Boulevard’s Architectural Legacy

More than 200 buildings were constructed in the study area and almost one-third of those were constructed by 1913, representing the first great wave of development in both the immediate area and citywide. During the 1920s, the city’s second great development period, approximately one-fifth of the study area’s

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Portland City directories (various), 1924-1954.

⁵⁷ Bureau of Development Services, building permit records.

resources were constructed. Between 1940 and the present, another third of the construction activity occurred, half of this by 1953. The available construction dates indicate that two-thirds of the properties were constructed prior to 1953 and are at least 50 years old.

The Craftsman style is the most predominant residential style represented in the study area, appearing in approximately 1905. Characteristic elements of the Craftsman style include a rectangular plan, wood frame construction, a one and a half to two story, box-like volume, and a low-pitched hip or gable roof with wide overhanging eaves. Rooflines often include dormers, exposed rafters and decorative brackets. Porches were almost always present. Sometimes, rustic materials such as clinker brick and cast stone were incorporated. Variations of the style incorporate classical elements such as cornerboards, columns, and modillions. Examples in the study area include multidwelling residences, particularly duplexes and fourplexes. Duplexes were often designed to look like single-dwelling residences, the only distinction being paired entrances. In terms of plan, multidwelling residences along Hawthorne Boulevard include block, split-block, and courtyard-style apartments. The Bungalow style, generally one and one-half stories high, is a variation of the Craftsman style. Characterized by horizontality and Craftsman-inspired woodwork details, it sometimes incorporated elements of the Shingle style.

Examples of the Colonial Revival style represented in the study area are not “pure” examples of the style, but many do include characteristic elements such as applied Classical details and formal façade organization. Other characteristic elements include a square or rectangular plan of wood frame construction, horizontal siding, low-pitched hipped, gable or gambrel roofs, an entrance portico, and glazing such as oval windows, lattice glass, transoms and sidelights framing the entry door. The Dutch Colonial is a variation of this style.

The Queen Anne style is confined almost exclusively to buildings constructed as single-dwelling residences. The style is generally characterized by two and a half stories, wood frame construction; front-facing gable roofs; asymmetrical arrangement; decorative woodwork and shingles; a vertical emphasis; and polygonal bays and verandas, to name a few of the defining accents. Queen Anne/Shingle, Queen Anne/Vernacular, and Queen Anne/Cottage variants of the style were common in the residential areas surrounding Hawthorne Boulevard. The Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style is one of the Historic Period styles in the study area. The commercial buildings are brick or concrete construction, rectangular in plan, with a low-pitched tile roof and wood frame construction with a stucco surface or brick facing. Similar stylistic details such as curvilinear parapets were applied to both commercial and residential buildings.

The English Cottage style is a historic period style that followed traditional cottage designs for inspiration. It includes typical elements such as an asymmetrical plan, usually one and a half or two stories; brick construction, sometimes with stucco, or wood frame construction with shingle siding. Often there are picturesque storybook details such as rolled or curved rooflines, imitation half-timbering, and round-arched openings.

Small multi-dwelling residences are an important part of the fabric of the inner southeast residential neighborhoods. They were constructed during the area’s most

significant period of growth when the demand for housing skyrocketed. Small multi-dwelling residences along Hawthorne Boulevard were constructed in several styles, reflecting development trends throughout the historic period.

There are numerous Streetcar Era commercial buildings in the study area. Generally one to four stories high, many are of masonry buildings with a rectangular plan. Characteristic elements include large storefront windows, articulated bays, entrances at the sidewalk level, and flat roofs with cornices or ornamented parapets. Beginning shortly after the turn of the 20th century, buildings were being constructed of brick. As technology improved, brick veneer was applied over a wood, and later metal frame. Later, commercial buildings constructed during the Motor Age feature steel, glass, and concrete construction and little ornamentation. The commercial buildings in the study area are generally constructed up to the front property line, against the sidewalks. Many buildings have ground floor storefronts with offices or apartment units above. Stylistically, the commercial buildings represent the Streetcar Era Commercial style, the Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style, and the Modern Commercial style.

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