

Goose Hollow

by Michael Burnham

Sometimes a civil war inspires a place, and place inspires a civil debate.

Such is the story of Portland's eclectic Goose Hollow neighborhood and the tavern that bears its name.

One hundred and thirty-seven years ago, a dispute erupted among the hardscrabble immigrants who farmed, labored and raised geese amid Tanner Creek's flood plain, at the base of the West Hills. See, the geese formed gaggles, as they're known to do, making it hard to discern whose goose was whose. What's worse, the roaming bands of birds gobbled up gardens and gabbled incessantly at night. Portland Police Chief James Lappeus heard enough.

A lawman dispatched to the lowlands to drive away the birds was beaten back by a half-dozen women, who wielded sticks and stones and claimed an ownership interest in the fractious fowl. The skirmish was sensational enough to warrant a front-page headline, "A War About Geese," in the August 17, 1875 edition of *The Daily Oregonian* newspaper.

A judge ultimately made the "Solomonic decision" to round up the geese and divide them equally amongst the women, according to a Portland's Goose Hollow, a 2011 book by local historian Tracy Prince. The war of "Goose Hollow" was over, but the neighborhood name would stick for several generations as Portland grew upward and outward.

As the calendar flipped to the 20th century, folks built stately homes amid the hollow's surrounding upland areas, King's Hill, Vista Ridge and Gander Ridge. The Chinese vegetable gardens and tannery

along Tanner Creek eventually made way for the Multnomah Athletic Club, Multnomah Stadium and other structures. Even the creek would disappear in a culvert 50 feet below.

By mid-century, the hollow was mostly gone and the moniker "Goose Hollow" was remembered by few.

"With all of the change, it lost its neighborhood identification," recalled former Portland Mayor Bud Clark, whose family rented an apartment at the corner of SW 14th Avenue and Clay Street in the late 1930s.

The age of the automobile transformed the enclave even more. By 1950, the Radio Cab Company moved into Goose Hollow and service stopped on Portland's last three streetcar lines — the Council Crest, Willamette Heights and 23rd Avenue lines. By the late 1960s, several blocks of buildings — including the iconic Carlton Hotel — had been demolished to make way for Interstate 405, a freeway envisioned by the polemical planner Robert Moses two decades earlier.

"Freeways really destroy a neighborhood; they really do," lamented Clark, whose Spatenhaus tavern was the victim of south downtown urban renewal efforts in the 1960s.

Unlike the South Portland Italian and Jewish neighborhoods displaced by urban renewal, Goose Hollow's "mutilation" isn't often discussed, Prince wrote in her book. "Many Goose Hollow residents would like to see those scars healed with a park, pedestrian path, or other strategies to bridge the freeway chasm," she noted.

Interstate 405 remains, but Goose Hollow's future may depend less on the automobile than it did. During the past decade, mid-rise condo and apartment buildings have taken shape around Tri-Met's Goose Hollow and Kings Hill MAX stations. The Multnomah Athletic Club and adjacent ballpark (now, Jeld-Wen Field) draw steady foot traffic to 18th Avenue.

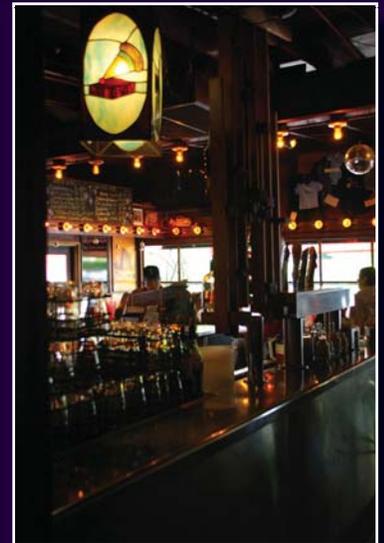
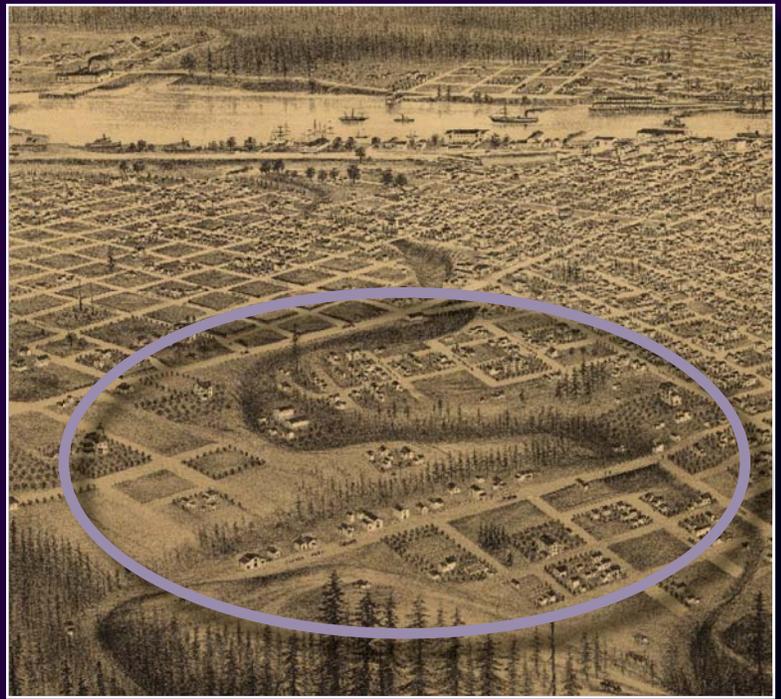
Several of the wood and brick homes tucked along the side streets feature a blue flag with a white goose — a symbol Prince created to give the ever-changing neighborhood a common identity.

“We still have a lot of surface lots and underutilized land,” noted Prince, a scholar-in-residence at Portland State University's Portland Center for Public Humanities. “We are of the few neighborhoods in Portland that wants more density.”

Perhaps no other establishment represents this eclectic neighborhood better than the Goose Hollow Inn, a wood-paneled pub at the corner of 19th Avenue and Jefferson Street. Clark, who would serve as Portland's mayor from 1985-1992, opened the pub in 1967 to rekindle the neighborhood's name and replace Spatenhaus.

The hippies have been replaced by hipsters as the beers on tap have grown at “The Goose.” Old-timers still swap stories, and cartoons on the wall lampoon Portland politics. This is a place designed to inspire a healthy, civil debate over an ice-cold pint of beer. The pub's matchboxes say so, after all.

“Enjoy the Goose Hollow Inn, named to rejuvenate history ... We are dedicated to quality draft, fine food, pleasant music and stimulating company. We are also dedicated to extremes of opinion, hoping that a livable marriage will result. If physical violence is your nature, either develop your verbal abilities or leave.” **M**



Looking east from the hills above Goose Hollow in 1881 (Library of Congress), a similar view in 2012 (Google Earth), a typical late 19th century dwelling, and the Goose Hollow Inn.