

1964 Christmas Flood

Glenn Otto Community Park was originally owned by the town's founding family, Capt. John Harlow and his heirs. In 1906, Lou and Laura Harlow, who would later live in the Harlow House (the home, a few blocks north, is now a Troutdale Historical Society Museum) sold the six-acre site to the Willamette Valley Advent Christian Conference for \$400.



For 55 years, beginning in 1909, the shady grounds next to the Sandy River were used for religious camp meetings with families coming to Troutdale to live for a week or two at a time, dining in a huge cookhouse, tending their needs in wash houses and spending days in worship, prayer and Bible study. Large gatherings were held in the building that is now called Sam K. Cox Hall. The climax of those camp-outs was a baptismal service. Half of the camp choir would ascend Broughton Bluff on the east bank of the Sandy River and the other half of the choir assembled on the west shore. As people were baptized in the river, the choirs sang back and forth to each other, their notes echoing off the bluff and in the canyon walls.

Use of the grounds for camp meeting purposes dwindled by the late 1960s. The events stopped in 1964 when a Christmas flood swept down the Sandy, snatching the huge cookhouse and grinding it up under the Troutdale Bridge. The river tore a gap in what is now the parking lot, linking up with Beaver Creek and washing out the highway. Access was cut off and, eventually, church officials decided to sell the site.

In the photo below, a view to the east is the East Columbia River Highway Bridge in the far background. In the foreground is the highway that was washed out by the high water flowing in Beaver Creek in December 1964.



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