

Dancing in Early Troutdale

Dancing was among the most popular of pastimes in early Troutdale. In addition to dances in local halls, including Troutdale City Hall, community members traveled to surrounding towns. In the late 1890s one of the most popular dance sites was Latourell, where Frenchy Latourell, well-known fiddler, and his family played and sang.



Troutdale residents rode the train up the Columbia Gorge to Latourell, danced until a midnight supper, then danced until breakfast was served. In the morning they caught a return train to Troutdale. They also rowed across the Columbia to dances in Camas and Washougal, or shared rides to Fairview and Gresham for dancing parties.

All ages attended early dances. Families tucked children in makeshift beds on the benches around the hall. Good order was maintained by a dance manager. Until the day he died, Dick Knarr, founder of Troutdale Sand and Gravel and former dance manager, showed off a thumb broken in a ruckus with a professional boxer he "bounced" from a dance.