

Cook Park History

This is an excerpt from an article written for the Tigard Historical Assn. newsletter. You can learn more about the city's history at <http://www.tigardhistorical.org/tha-newsletters>

John E. Cook entered public life as a member of Tigard's Park Advisory Committee which was composed of six people (five private citizen members and one member of the City Council), which he served on for 10 years. This committee was charged with finding an open space for a public park. They soon became interested in some acreage along the Tualatin River. John Cook spoke with the legal caretaker for this property (as the legal owner resided in Boston, Massachusetts). He discovered the 36 acres that the committee was interested in had already been deeded to Washington County.

However Julia Tigard (Mrs. Curtis Tigard) served on the Washington County Park Committee and knew that Washington County did not have sufficient funds for the development of the 36-acre property as a park so she assisted John in convincing the County Court that Tigard had the funds to develop a public park and that the 36-acre property should be deeded to Tigard. This was accomplished in the summer of 1962. This park property was mainly wooded, but had some open space for future recreation.

Then in October 1962 the major Columbus Day storm hit Tigard and uprooted trees on this 36-acre deeded property destined to be made into a public park. After trees and brush were torn up by the storm, John's Park Advisory Committee issued a plea to the public for assistance in the cleanup work and the Marine Reserves, Chamber of Commerce, Jaycees, and the Lions Club members all turned out to offer their aid.

The downed trees were removed and an old well was found which became operational to aid in the new park's development in the years before city water reached the area for the park. A formal ribbon cutting ceremony was held in ca. 1964 which opened Tigard Park. John E. Cook remained active with fundraising to add new facilities and amenities to the new park through BBQ chicken roasts and sales, selling over a thousand pounds of BBQ chicken a year to a responsive community who wished the new park to succeed.

When Julia Tigard resigned from the Washington County Park Board, John became a member continuing his work to beautify the Tigard region. The Tigard Park Advisory Committee continued its advocacy for green space and competed for environmental improvement dollars. His efforts were supported by Howard Terpenning, executive officer of the Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District.

Public access to the new Tigard Park was obtained through an agreement between John C. Bilyeu (who owned the home that is now the Quello House), Tigard School District, and the City of Tigard. Fred Anderson was the attorney for all three parties involved in the public access discussion and he arranged for the high school and Bilyeu to each give a fraction of their property for a public road down to the Tualatin River from Durham Road.

So successful were the efforts of John E. Cook in securing the original 36-acre deed to the property for the park, in fundraising for its development, and in securing public access that the Tigard City Council re-named the new park Cook Park in his honor. In the early 1970s a Councilman had come into Cook's Pharmacy and told John of the park's new name.

The City of Tigard has continued to purchase properties adjacent to the original 36 acres with the most recent acquisitions being the land for the soccer field and the land for the Tupling Butterfly Garden.