

It is easier, the local saying goes, to cascade down the Willamette Falls in an old whiskey barrel than it is to pass through the eye of a needle. While that may seem true, Scott Young's wall-covering mural bucks that notion and takes a page—several pages actually—from the allegorical novel *Golf in the Kingdom*. Young's dominating and colorful mural is his interpretation of that book and recreates the metaphysical meeting around the fire, a critical scene from the book. Visionary golf-sage Seamus McDuff looks on as author Michael Murphy is pulled from the meeting and “through the eye of the needle” by Shivas Irons, golf pro, philosopher and central figure in the novel.

The mural's inspiration is twofold. Just a drive, pitch and putt from the Oregon Golf Club, the West Linn pub attracts many golfers who enjoy a pint and some hearty food after a round, so the mural's subject matter seemed appropriate. More significant is that much of the enlightened philosophy mused in the book has long been one of the ideological driving forces behind McMenamins itself (read pages 60–61 aloud for specifics)! Around these parts, much has been made of the worldly lessons and significant teachings imparted in the book, not to mention its message. Just as the book hints at time and form being elastic, the aging and elusive Seamus McDuff has popped up in many forms on McMenamins coasters, T-shirts, posters and as the icon for the 3-par



Pub Course out at McMenamins Edgefield.

While the pub's proximity to the Oregon City Golf Course has done a lot to dictate the artwork, its proximity to the thunderous Willamette Falls has dictated this spot's history. The pub sits in the historic Willamette area of West Linn, just up the riverbank from the convergence of the Willamette and Tualatin rivers, and a bit upriver from the falls. And long before the roar of I-205 drowned out the roar of the falls, this area was a quiet, if not remote part of Marshall K. Perrin's Donation Land Claim.

Perrin came to Oregon in 1844 as part of the first wagon train to head west from Independence, Missouri. He quickly settled in Clackamas County, within earshot of the raging falls and the then half-day's travel to the already established Oregon City. Of course, a portion of his 260 acres on the bank of the Willamette probably encompassed seasonal Indian fishing camps. Oswego Lake and the Willamette Falls were traditional gathering grounds for thousands of years, and tribes from all over the region met here annually to share in the bounty of fish and trade for other goods and necessities.

Perrin retained his DLC for some 31 years, selling it in 1875. By then he had moved to the Hoquarton area of Tillamook County where he lived out the remainder of his days as a county judge. Perrin's DLC passed through several owners until 1885, when it fell to Benjamin Baker.

At the time Baker acquired Perrin's out-of-the-way land, a small movement was growing to develop the riverfront area. Several promoters saw potential for the site, and the Willamette Electric Company, which had formed with the intent of producing power at the falls to sell to Portland, thought the area could provide adequate worker housing. In 1891, after purchasing land from Baker, Willamette Electric platted the town of Willamette with water, power, dirt streets and an electric railway for passengers and freight that ran from the nearby Tualatin River to the many mills that lined the river near the falls.

Much wood was needed as fuel for the mills; consequently, logging and woodcutting was one of the area's earliest industries. By the turn of the century, the railway hauled as much as 100 cords of wood a day to the mills. Willamette also had one of the more accessible boat landings above the falls, and large sternwheelers plied their way up and down the



You are here: The arrow points to the pub site in this 1947 aerial of Willamette. North of 8th Avenue is rural. OrHi# 105662.

Willamette area of West Linn, looking south, about 1900. The original school is at center, with the streetcar running along 7th Ave. The pub site is through the trees along the right margin. Courtesy OHS# 28008



river, making frequent stops down at the Willamette Landing.

In 1913, the city of West Linn incorporated the areas of Bolton, Sunset and Linn City, but intentionally excluded the Willamette area. From the beginning, Willamette was populated with blue-collar workers from the mills, the electric company and other local industries, whereas the other areas were known for their more affluent residents. The executives, foremen, merchants and professionals who lived in those areas initially wanted little to do with the laboring class who lived in this area. Three years later, after a deadly typhoid epidemic, the city of Willamette was annexed into West Linn so that workers would have access to potable water.

The early class differences seemed to persist for years: A bloody strike in 1917 that halted the mills was declared the “Willamette strike against Sunset,” that is, the workers striking against the bosses. Indeed, even the 1930 census records report that most of the Willamette area’s residents were agricultural workers or laborers at the paper mills, electric plant, cement factory or other blue-collar pursuits.

8th Avenue seems to have formed the northern boundary of the Willamette area, and the pub site was probably immune to any class conflict, real or perceived. Much of the land from here north was agricultural or grazing land and this spot seems to have been part of a small farm operation as early as the 1920s. The old farmhouse fronted 8th Ave., about a block east of here.

About 1948 or ‘49, this corner lot was finally developed. Three houses were built between 10th St. and the farmhouse, all facing 8th Ave. The houses—all three rentals—remained part of the neighborhood until the highway was cut through 20 years later.

I-205 opened for traffic in January 1970 and changed this spot forever. Once a secluded destination, Willamette suddenly began to push its boundaries. Roughly five years after the interstate’s completion, the houses that stood along the block were razed and replaced by a modern shopping complex. From 1980 to 1988 this little building on the corner offered up Chinese cuisine under the banner of the Cantonese Restaurant.

In 1992 this place became West Linn’s first brewpub and McMenamins’ first “small house” brewery with a glycol system, allowing brewers to thoroughly regulate temperatures and control fermentation. But not everything here can be regulated and controlled as illustrated by Mike and Keith’s late-night golf (mis)adventure to the Oregon Golf Club on opening night.

Beer of a delicious variety has flown here since day one and the brewery past their 1,000th batch of beer back in 1995, a triple-hopped brew known as Meteor Pale Ale. The house specialty with a cultish following, Sunflower IPA, was named for the pub’s beer garden lined with sunflowers. Created here in the mid-1990s by brewer Rob Vallance, its popularity spread like wildfire. Folks from as far away as Eugene, it was said, made the pilgrimage here to drink the stuff. Today, Sunflower is the only IPA that McMenamins bottles.

Another notable misadventure that happened at this place occurred in 1999 when a customer finished his burger and four beers and then decided to heist the cash register. Confidently, he looked around the room, tucked the unwieldy machine under his arm and ran out the door, with an employee and a regular in pursuit! When police apprehended him nearby, he claimed that a “hitchhiking hippie carrying a rifle” ordered him to commit the crime. Go figure.

“Can you find the skull in the clouds?” That has been a pet question here for nearly 15 years. Now, with its recent remodel, McMenamins West Linn seems to have its course set, so to speak, for another great 15 years in this community where, as *Golf in the Kingdom* suggests, time, physical states and ideas are elastic, and everything is possible.