

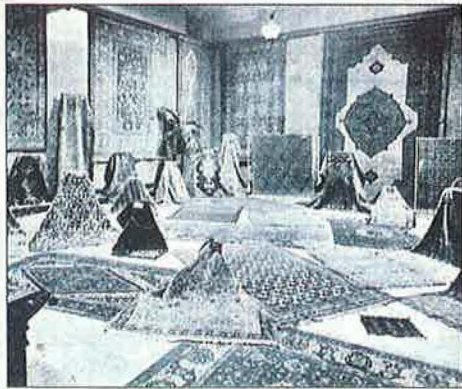


Young George Atiyeh stands in front of the Oriental rug store that his brother opened in downtown Portland in 1900.

OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



ABOVE: The Persian Tabriz carpet is centered with a blue Herati medallion within a patterned medallion on a cream field.



OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The historic Tabriz carpet (seen hanging at right in a vintage photograph) differed from the colorful, patterned rugs in the Atiyeh showroom at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exhibition in Portland.

Uncommon THREADS

By Helen L. Mershon ♦ Photos by Serge A. McCabe
THE OREGONIAN

It's a woven masterpiece of lustrous wool, hanging from a museum wall. The 19th-century Persian Tabriz carpet no longer covers the floor of a grand entry hall of a Southwest Portland home, owned by a prominent city leader and financier. But it remains a telling piece of city history.

Owned by the family of Ralph W. and Edith Hoyt for most of the 20th century, the rug was donated to the Oregon Historical Society recently by the descendants of George E. Atiyeh, the rug merchant who sold it to the Hoyts.

It had caught the Hoyts' attention in the prize-winning exhibit by A. Atiyeh & Bro. at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition in

A rare Persian carpet links two historic Portland families



The decorative pendants on the Tabriz are free-floating in a cream field, rather than attached to the center medallion as in most carpets.

Portland. The couple bought the rug (and apparently some others) from Atiyeh, a rug importer who had come to Portland to work with older brother Aziz. For the next 70 years, the rug would link the Hoyt and Atiyeh families, who became friends.

Former Oregon Gov. Victor Atiyeh, George's youngest son, remembers seeing the Tabriz for the first time in 1943, when he and his father visited Edith Hoyt, by then a widow. Hardly an average hall rug, the Tabriz, which measures 9 feet, 7 inches by 15 feet, 3 inches, was the focal point of the Hoyts' large entry.

The young Atiyeh fell in love with the rug. George told his son that he had offered to buy back the rug from the Hoyts if they ever tired of it. His son doubted whether that would ever happen.

Years passed. After George died in 1944, sons Victor, Edward and Richard ran Atiyeh Bros., raised their families and did civic work.

At Edith Hoyt's death in 1957, the rugs remained with a daughter, Kathryn Hoyt, in Portland. About 1980, Kathryn Hoyt telephoned Victor Atiyeh and said she wanted to sell the Oriental rugs. The brothers brought the Tabriz back to their family.

Earlier this year, the three brothers — the third generation took over the operation in the 1980s — marked the 100th anniversary of the family business in Portland by presenting the Tabriz to the permanent collection of the Oregon Historical Society.

The well-preserved rug was woven in the Persian workshop of Haji Jalili, which made some of the finest Tabriz rugs. It has a linen warp (as opposed to cotton) with fine knotting, creating its velvety texture. From its beginnings the carpet was considered rare and unusual.

But its significance to the Atiyeh family is its place in Portland's early history and their connection to it.

In a way, the story of the men who sold and bought the Tabriz rug mirrors the American dream.

George Atiyeh was born in

WOVEN THROUGH GENERATIONS

What: The Tabriz rug is centerpiece of an exhibit of Atiyeh history and memorabilia.

On display: Through March 2001

Where: Oregon History Center, 1200 S.W. Park Ave.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday (Thursday until 8 p.m.), noon to 5 p.m. Sunday

Cost: \$6 adults, \$3 students with ID, \$1.50 ages 6 to 12



A gift from the Atiyeh family to the Oregon Historical Society, the 19th-century Tabriz will be on display through March 2001. Scholars describe the carpet design as "Book Cover," a classic Persian design.

1883 in a tiny Syrian village north of Damascus. His family sent him to the American high school in Sidon and American University in Beirut.

Shifting economic and political winds in the Middle East prompted teen-age brothers George and Aziz to seek their fortunes in the United States. Their family bankrolled their first inventory of Oriental rugs.

Ralph Hoyt was born in Portland in 1864 and started to work as a bank messenger as a teen-ager. He eventually became a bank officer, and by the time he bought the Tabriz, he had his own investment business.

He also was a church organizer, was elected president of the Portland Rose Festival Association in 1912 and served four terms on the Multnomah County Commission. When poor health forced his retirement in 1928, the commission named what would become Hoyt Arboretum in his honor. ♦

You can reach Helen L. Mershon at 503-221-8527 or by e-mail at helenmershon@news.oregonian.com.

AREA RUGS

Atiyeh family celebrates 100 years of service, quality

BY GALE CORTELYOU

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — When Aziz and George Atiyeh emigrated from Syria to South Bethlehem, Pa., in 1900 to start their oriental rug business, it's not likely they could have foreseen how much their business would change — and grow into Atiyeh International. This year marks the centennial of the Atiyeh family's entrance into the U.S. area rug industry. The base of operations is now in Portland, Ore., where the third generation of Atiyehs continues to make a success of the business.

For the first two decades, the company then known as A. Atiyeh & Bros. operated strictly on the retail level, first in Pennsylvania, then in Portland. In 1905 the Atiyehs displayed oriental rugs at the Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland and won the first of 14 grand prizes and gold medals they have received over the years from various West Coast shows and expositions.

In the 1940s, high-end carpet was added to the product line, and today the store, owned and run by David Atiyeh and brother-in-law Tom Marantette, carries only the best carpet, including Karastan.

After two decades of running

their retail store, the founding Atiyeh brothers felt the art of oriental rug weaving was deteriorating, so Aziz moved from Portland to New York City in 1922 to set up an importing business. He then went on to Persia (now Iran) to establish the company's own looms in a village called Kerman, the operation of which was overseen by Georges Sirmadjieff, a Bulgarian national who had an eye for color and quality that he used to design Kerman Deluxe rugs for the Atiyeh looms.

The rug-making operation in Persia stopped during World War II when the British took Sirmadjieff

turned to Kerman to put the weaving center back together and began sending rugs to the New York showroom. It was at this point that Aziz developed the concept of programmed rugs, or making the same designs in different sizes, because he knew there was a limited market for one-of-a-kind rugs.

Aziz's sons, Fred and Philip, managed the successful importing business with their father until he retired. After his death in 1963, the sons continued the trade until 1983 when the Shah was removed as ruler of Iran. The new Muslim government was opposed to Americans doing business in that country, and the Atiyehs were denied access to their looms and warehouses. As a result, they decided to close up shop and retire.

Ten years later, their nephew and his wife, Tom and Leslie Atiyeh, revived the import business and have brought it to new heights as Atiyeh International. The couple moved the manufacturing base to Hebei, China, and re-established production of more than 100 of the original Kerman Deluxe designs that have the Atiyeh logo woven into them.



Tom and Leslie Atiyeh, of Atiyeh International, display their historic Open Field Kerman rug.

eff to a prisoner-of-war camp in India because he was Bulgarian. After his post-war release he and Fred Atiyeh, Aziz's eldest son, re-



Left: Co-founder George Atiyeh stands in front of the first Atiyeh store in downtown Portland, Ore., around 1905. Above: The newest store, a few blocks from the original storefront, has grown to include a rug-cleaning business.



Historic celebration

To mark the family's centennial, the Atiyehs have created some special projects — both for their customers and their community. At the Atlanta rug market in January, Tom Atiyeh announced the reintroduction of the classic Kerman design. He also launched a nationwide search for the oldest existing Atiyeh rug, the results of which will be announced at the July market in Atlanta.

The company started the first importer's Web site (www.atiyeh.com) and is offering \$100 cyber coupons, good for the purchase of any Atiyeh rug. According to Mike Joseph, owner of Joseph's Oriental Rug Imports in Indianapolis, these coupons are tied in with the Atiyeh Where's Waldo? rug, a whimsical licensed design. "Our Web site is hot linked to theirs — where the rug is shown — and my customers receive a \$100 coupon if they can pick out Waldo in the design," he

said. "It draws a lot of attention to both our Web sites."

Last month the Atiyehs brought their story to the public in the form of a special display, Women Through Generations, at the Oregon History Center, which features the history of the Atiyehs' rug business. The highlight of the yearlong exhibit is a 19th-century Haji Tahlil Tabriz oriental rug — valued at \$120,000 — which the Atiyehs have donated to the Oregon Historical Society.

A tradition of hands-on service

One of Atiyeh International's trademarks is its closeness to its retail customers. "We deal only in middle-to-high-end retail, and Atiyeh is one of our top suppliers," Joseph said. "My dad did business with them back in the '60s, and I have done business with them since the import business started up again in the '80s. They service our account extremely well and know what they're doing."

At Bradford's, a high-end furniture store in Nashville, Tenn., oriental rug department manager Bill Doyle said they go back over a decade, "and their customer service is great. They're constantly updating their products and procedures and are extremely focused on education. And their Web site has been extremely helpful. Many of my locals are now shopping on the Web, so Atiyeh has been speeding up the shopping process. I'm especially impressed with their product knowledge."

At Einstein Moomjy, the Paramus, N.J.-based, high-end rug retailer, Faiz Kass-Elias, rug buyer and handknotted oriental rug manager, said he has been doing business with Atiyeh for nearly 20 years, and things just keep getting better. "They have a unique presence in the market. They have a niche and do a wonderful job with it, providing beautiful designs and unusual sizes. And they follow up on every rug they sell us. They are constantly communicating with us and are involved in every aspect of the business, from production to inspection to shipping."

According to Tom Atiyeh, "We're not huge; not trying to be all things to all people. We've picked our niche and are sticking to it. We're also picky about our customers. And we make a couple trips a year to visit them. We see them at trade shows and talk to them on the phone, but when you see customers in their place of business, more is accomplished. That's why we don't have sales reps; it's just Leslie and I."

Fair in 1905 put Portland's best foot forward

By **JOHN TERRY**
THE OREGONIAN

It was more of a fair to remember than to endure.

The Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair, Portland's one and only world's fair, June 1 to Oct. 15, 1905, in the Guilds Lake area of Northwest Portland, was nothing if not a study in transitory opulence.

The only exhibit hall built to survive was the Forestry Building, the "World's Largest Log Cabin" constructed of huge Douglas fir logs carefully selected and fitted together with an eye to eternity. By contract with the state of Oregon, it was turned over to the city and remained as a monument to the state's timber industry.

The other gleaming white palaces "were mostly plaster skins over wooden frames," says Carl Abbott in "The Great Extravaganza" (Oregon Historical Society, 1996). Their cost: 79 cents a square foot.

The whole purpose, says E. Kimbark MacColl in "Merchants, Money and Power, the Portland Establishment 1843-1913," "was to present an idealized self-portrait of Portland. By advertising the city's most glorious features throughout America, the economic payoff would be stupendous."

Stupendous it was, over both short and long haul.

As noted last week, the fair not only turned a profit, its patrons poured \$8 million into Portland's economy in a year when the combined annual payrolls of the city's factories and workshops was \$7 million, according to Abbott.

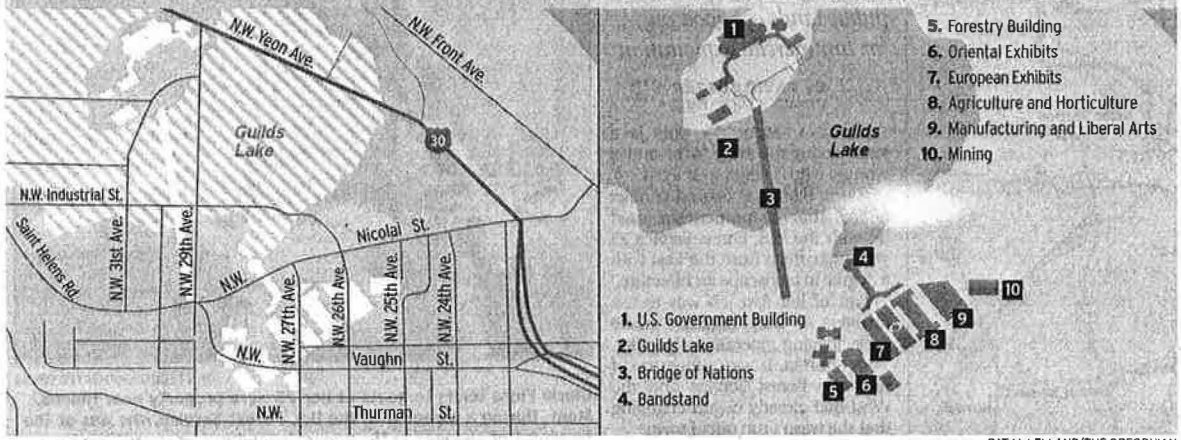
Beyond that, a million visitors from outside the area liked what they saw. The fair propelled Portland into a giddy decade rate of growth unequalled any time since.

Bank clearings increased by 150 percent; building permits by 458 percent. The population on the cramped West Side shot from 58,000 to 96,000; on the east from 32,000 to 178,000. The Morrison, Hawthorne and Steel bridges were replaced and the Broadway Bridge built to accommodate cross-town hustle.

"In 1910, at the height of the boom," Abbott says, "Building Inspector H.E. Plummer reported 132 new houses west of the river and 3,000 east ... Community leaders took it for granted that the

1905 LEWIS AND CLARK EXPOSITION SITE

On the right are the major exposition sites. On the left is the exposition site as reflected against today's Northwest Portland streets.



PAT McLELLAND/THE OREGONIAN

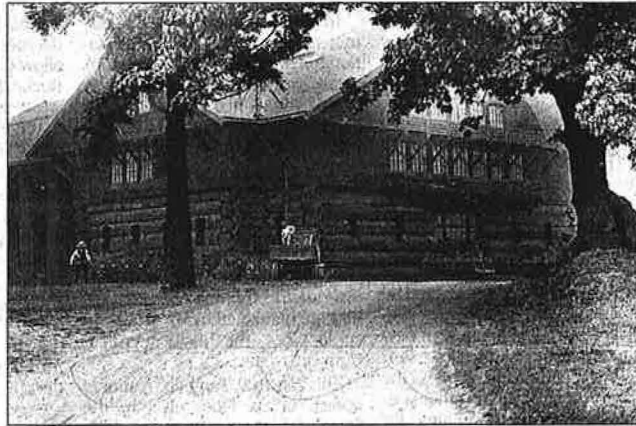


JOHN TERRY

Oregon's Trails

The Forestry Building, the "World's Largest Log Cabin," was erected for the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition and remained a popular tourist attraction until it was leveled by fire in August 1964.

THE OREGONIAN



Fair had been the key to their seven years of extraordinary economic growth ...

By then the fair was fading into history.

Some had hoped its grounds would be preserved. But it was too big for a neighborhood park, too far out for popular support. The 400-acre site was turned over to the Portland Development Co., ironically owned by investors from Seattle and the East. By March 1, 1906, the major buildings were razed, the process of filling Guilds Lake and converting the lowlands to industry well begun.

Today's view east and north from the site of the Oriental Exhibits hall, roughly where the Montgomery Park building stands, is one of unblemished commerce — businesses pouring cash into the

arteries of Portland, precisely as exhibition conceivers intended.

Some major artifacts were left; a few still survive:

♦ The Forestry Building, the "Parthenon of the Forest," lasted until 6 p.m. Aug. 17, 1964, when an errant spark transformed it into a monumental inferno. Firefighters could only protect surrounding property as flames thundered through its massive timbers. The World Forestry Center in Washington Park represents its heritage.

♦ The domed National Cash Register Building was moved to North Ivanhoe Street and Richmond Avenue in St. Johns to serve as Presbyterian and Lutheran churches, an American Legion hall, and now the St. Johns Pub

run by the historically ubiquitous McMenamens.

♦ The Illinois Building, a replica of Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, ended up at Southwest 18th Avenue and Jefferson Street, part of a failed historic colony. It fell into disrepair and was razed.

♦ The Massachusetts building was moved piecemeal to the Mount Tabor area, where it housed Portland Railway Light & Power Co. panjandrum Benage Stockwell ("B.S.") Josselyn in splendor, and was then a sanitarium. It was leveled in 1942 by fire or the wrecker's ball; accounts vary.

♦ The Administration Building became a residence on its original site, then was moved to West

Linn, where it's still a private home.

♦ The Masonic Building was moved to another Northwest Portland site and is a private home.

♦ Sculptor Alice Cooper Hubbard's statue of Sacagewea, the Native American heroine of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, was relocated to Washington Park, where it stands today.

♦ The bandstand was floated upriver to Oaks Park, where it endured several floods. Some of its graceful arches are in storage there and await rejuvenation.

♦ The natural stone Bank Building was moved to Aurora, where it served as the Aurora State Bank into the 1920s and is still standing.

A house in North Portland's Overlook district is widely reputed to be a state building later barged across the Willamette. It is noteworthy, but not via the fair. "Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon 1850-1950" by William J. Hawkins III and William F. Willingham (Timber Press, 1999) attributes its Colonial Revival design to George F. Durham and dates its construction to 1910.

Questions, comments or suggestions about a bit of Oregon history you'd like us to explore? Call Inside Line, 503-225-5555, and enter 4815. Or send e-mail to johnnterry@news.oregonian.com.

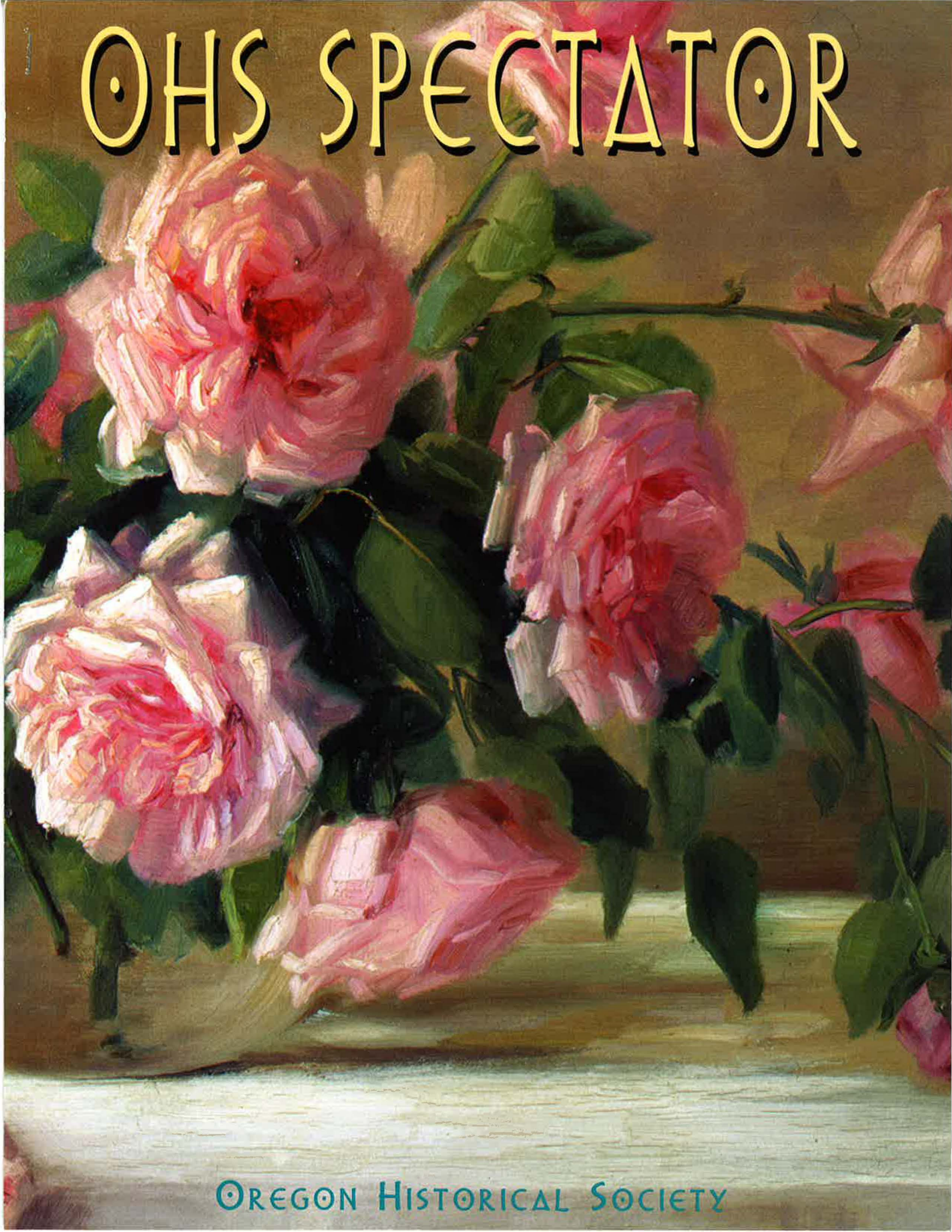
BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Arda Berryhill, co-owner of **Berryhill Nursery** in Sherwood, is one of two inductees into the Oregon Nurserymen's Hall of Fame Class of 2000. Berryhill, widely considered to be one of the Oregon nursery industry's modern-day women pioneers, has owned the 15-acre container nursery on Southwest Scholls Sherwood Road with her husband Roger since 1962. She is a long-standing member of the Oregon Association of Nurserymen, having served on many committees and contributed countless hours of volunteer time to a variety of causes. This year's induction ceremony is scheduled for June 17 at The Oregon Garden in Silverton.

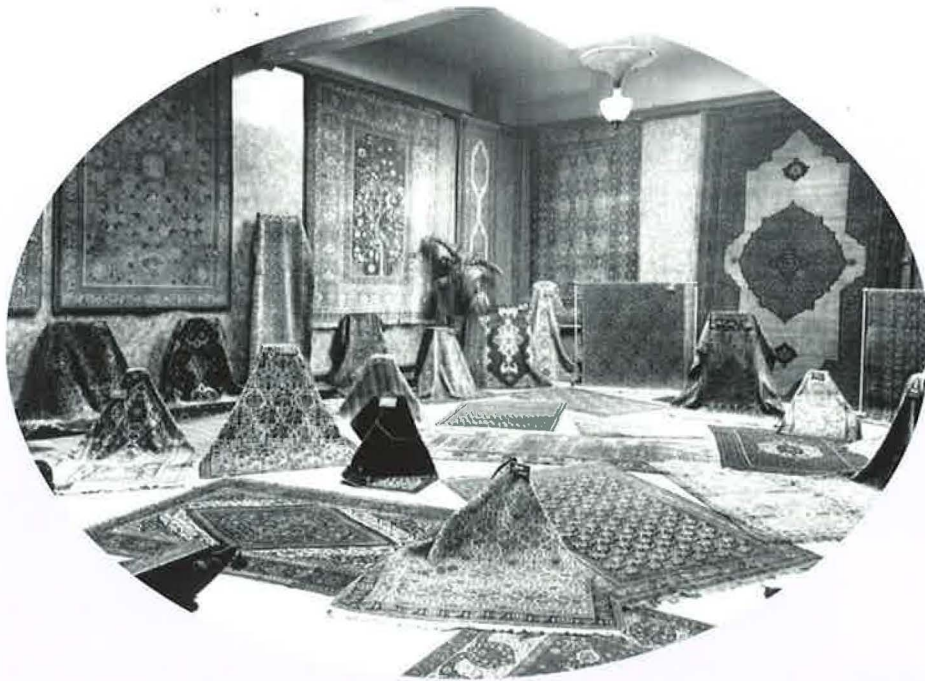
■
Former Oregon Gov. Victor Atiyeh, along with his brothers **Richard, David and Edward Atiyeh**, donated a 19th century **Haji Jalili Tabriz Oriental rug** to the **Oregon Historical Society** at an opening celebration held April 4 for "Woven through Generations," a yearlong exhibit at the Oregon History Center commemorating the Atiyeh family's 100 years in the rug business. The Atiyehs donated the Tabriz, valued at \$120,000, to the society in honor of the centennial anniversary. The Tabriz is on display as part of the History Center's exhibit through April 1, 2001. **Atiyeh Bros.** has a retail store near Washington Square, at 9225 S.W. Hall Blvd., in addition to their downtown Portland location. Free passes to "Woven through Generations," are available at all Atiyeh Bros. stores.

MAY 02 2000
Governor Atiyeh

OH S S P E C T A T O R



OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



HAJI JALILI TABRIZ RUG

This year, in celebration of its 100th year of business in Portland, Atiyeh Bros. Inc. bestowed a beautiful gift upon the Oregon Historical Society: a rare Tabriz rug imported from northwest Persia in the late 19th century. The rug was created in the workshops of Haji Jalili, located 40 miles northwest of Tabriz (in what is today Azerbaijan) and known for the high quality of their carpets, which they produced in small numbers. The ornate, 9.7 by 15.3 foot rug is currently displayed in *Woven Through Generations*, an exhibit devoted to the immigrant Atiyeh family's century-long commitment to Oregon as well as the distinction their company has achieved in importing, manufacturing, and cleaning Oriental rugs.

In 1905, just five years after Aziz Atiyeh and his brother George opened their first storefront in downtown Portland, they exhibited this rug at the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition and Oriental Fair. The Atiyehs' lush display won a Grand Prize.

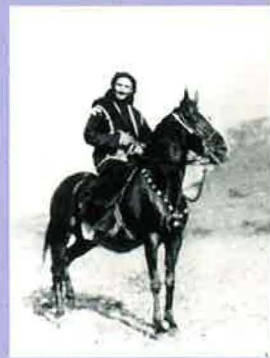


TOP: THE PRIZE-WINNING ATIYEH & BRO. RUG DISPLAY AT THE 1905 LEWIS & CLARK CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION IN PORTLAND. THE TABRIZ HANGS ON THE WALL AT RIGHT.

ABOVE: A DETAIL FROM THE RUG'S BORDER. THE INTRICATE DETAIL OF THE DESIGN DEMANDED HIGHLY SKILLED WEAVERS AND A HIGH KNOT-COUNT PER SQUARE INCH.



TABRIZ RUG ON EXHIBIT IN *WOVEN THROUGH GENERATIONS*.



AZIZ ATIYEH IN SYRIA, 1890S, ON AN ARABIAN HORSE FROM THE FAMILY'S HERD.

GEORGE ATIYEH IN FRONT OF A. ATIYEH AND BRO. ORIENTAL RUGS, 411 SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON STREET, PORTLAND, CA. 1902.

CARPET-LADEN CAMELS IN KERMAN, PERSIA, 1929. THE ATIYEH BROTHERS MADE A NICHE FOR THEMSELVES MANUFACTURING AND SELLING ORIENTAL RUGS IN THE KERMAN STYLE.

MOORE'S AUTOMATIC RUG WASHER, THE FIRST SUCH MACHINE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, CA. 1954. BEFORE ITS ADVENT, CARPETS WERE WASHED WITH A GELATIN IVORY SOAP PASTE, SCRUBBED, RINSED, SQUEEGEED, AND AIR-DRIED ON POLES. FRINGES WERE THEN BLEACHED, THE RUGS SIZED AND COMBED, AND THE FRINGES TRIMMED. FINALLY THE RUGS WERE VACUUMED AND ROLLED FOR DELIVERY.

WOVEN THROUGH GENERATIONS

Woven Through Generations tells the story of a remarkable family of Oregonians and traces the development of their century-old business, Atiyeh Bros. Inc. In Oregon the name is synonymous with rugs and carpets, and the exhibit, which includes several gems from the Atiyehs' personal collections, is an exotic primer on fine Oriental rugs as well as an introduction to the industry, past and present.

Aziz Atiyeh emigrated to the United States from Amar El-Husn, northeast of Damascus in present-day Syria, in 1897 at the age of 17. To finance his trip and provide him with enough capital to start a business, his family in Syria sold a substantial herd of their Arabian horses.

Initially Aziz worked in Pennsylvania as a supplier, buying Oriental rugs and linens from New York importers and reselling them to itinerant pack peddlers, many of whom were fellow immigrants from Syria who had left the decaying Ottoman Empire in search of trade opportunities. By 1900, facing increasing competition from other eastern rug suppliers, Aziz decided to move to the West. San Francisco's population (342,782) far outstripped that of Los Angeles (102,479), Portland (90,426), or Seattle (80,871), but Aziz went to Portland because it was said to be home to many former Northeasterners with "a taste for fine rugs."

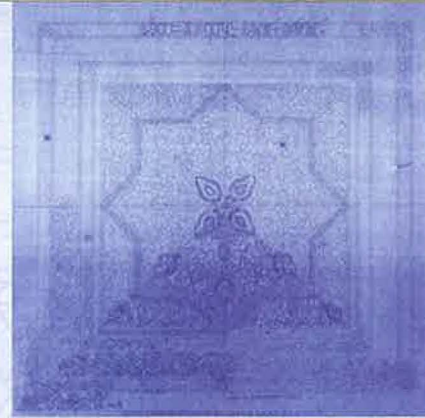
A. Atiyeh opened its doors to business in downtown Portland in 1900, and Aziz soon found the market he had anticipated. Two years later, he sent to Amar El-Husn for his younger brother George, and the business became A. Atiyeh & Bro.

Several generations of Atiyehs have continued to run and develop the business the two young brothers began. In its 100th year, the still-thriving operation has grown to include not only the original retail and rug-cleaning operation in Portland, but also Atiyeh International Ltd., which produces Oriental rugs and distributes them to the Portland stores and to some 80 other retailers in North America. Today Atiyeh International produces its rugs in China. Many continue to be patterned on design "cartoons" created in Kerman, Persia (now a city and province in southeastern Iran), in the 1920s.

Through the years, the Atiyeh family have maintained strong ties with their native Syria, even as they built a successful business and an outstanding record of public service in their adopted homeland. *Woven Through Generations*, a salute to the art of rug-making and to the distinguished Atiyeh family, remains at the Oregon History Center until April 1, 2001.



ABOVE: CENTENNIAL KERMAN SQUARE (WOOL AND SILK), WITH ITS PATTERN "CARTOON" (ABOVE RIGHT) BASED ON A 1920S DESIGN BY BULGARIAN ARTIST GEORGES SIRMADJIEFF. THE DESIGN MIRRORS AN EIGHT-POINTED STAR MOTIF FROM THE ALHAMBRA, A 9TH-CENTURY CASTLE IN GRANADA, SPAIN, CAPTURED IN THE 13TH CENTURY FROM THE MOORS.



RIGHT: RUG WEAVERS IN FUJIAN PROVINCE, CHINA, CREATING A LIMITED-EDITION COMMEMORATIVE ANNIVERSARY RUG, THE CENTENNIAL KERMAN, IN 1999. THE FACTORY IN CHINA EMPLOYS 10,000 WORKERS WHO PRODUCE 800 RUGS PER YEAR FOR THE ATIYEH COMPANY.



Lately, trucks are used to transport shipments to seaports. . . . Previous to that, we were sending goods by camels to Dozbad, and it required thirty-five days, but by trucks the first shipments arrived in twelve days.

AZIZ ATIYEH

Letter from Kerman, Persia, 1929



ABOVE: TOM ATIYEH OF ATIYEH INTERNATIONAL LTD. WITH THE FINISHED CENTENNIAL RUG, CHINA, 1999.

LEFT: THE ATIYEH CENTENNIAL KERMAN.

