

ENCHANTED FOREST  
8462 Enchanted Way SE  
Turner  
Marion  
Oregon

HALS OR-4  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### ENCHANTED FOREST

HALS NO. OR-4

- Location: 8462 Enchanted Way SE, Turner, Marion County, Oregon  
Lat: 44.83197 Long: -123.00888 (Park Entrance, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)
- Significance: The Enchanted Forest is likely to be the first storybook theme park in Oregon, and has been continually owned and operated by the Tofte family since its earliest beginnings in 1964. The park opened to the public in 1971.
- Description: The Enchanted Forest is a place for family entertainment that makes the most of the lush vegetation of the site, a second-growth native forest. Oregon's dry and sunny summer weather makes the dappled shade of the forest an inviting place and an ideal backdrop to bring fairy tales alive and create a diverse, fantasy theme park.

Although the parking lot is visible from Interstate 5 south of Salem, Oregon, one enters a different world after passing through the entry building. The park is situated under a virtually continuous forest canopy, composed of maturing native trees and plants such as Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) and Pacific rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*). The restoration and preservation of this forest as wildlife habitat and shady retreat is an important part of the park's mission. The trees are carefully thinned to allow some light to reach through to the attractions. The concrete and brick paths follow the steep grade of the hill and are built around the natural aspects of the site. No detail is left undone. Handrails are sculpted of concrete and finished to look like tree limbs. Trash cans and drinking fountains emerge from whimsically-crafted, concrete tree stumps.

A storybook castle, one of the earliest attractions built at the forest, is the first stop on a visitor's tour. A bridge leads one over a water-filled moat, complete with a concrete alligator. Small-scale dioramas within the castle feature fairy tale scenes, such as Old King Cole sitting on his throne. The path continues, taking visitors deeper into the forest where they encounter a delicious-looking gingerbread house, scaled to the size of a young child. Within the house visitors see Hansel and Gretel and an unpleasant-looking witch. As the path continues, visitors encounter a number of other familiar characters and settings such as Jack and Jill, Little Miss Muffett, the Crooked Man and his house, the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, the rabbit hole and the Mad Hatter's Tea Party from Alice in Wonderland, and the dwarves' mine from Snow White. Wherever possible, each attraction is sized for children, and designed to get inside, climb through, or slide down.

The path then brings visitors to newer parts of the park, in roughly the order they were built. A western town named Tofteville Mining Town (1972), the Haunted House (1973) and the Indian Caves (1982) are popular with older children. Next up is the Ice Mountain Bobsled Ride roller coaster (1984). The path then turns into a street through the Old Europe Village (1988, 1993) and winds its way to the Jolly Roger Inn where visitors can stop for refreshments and watch the Fantasy Fountains, a display of water jets and colored lights choreographed to music. Back up the hill, the Summer Theater (1985) brings plays and musicals to the outdoors. Other newer attractions are modeled on the thrill-inducing rides found at modern theme parks. The Log Ride opened in 1997 and the Challenge of Mondor opened in 2006.

The park is a popular attraction for locals and tourists alike, greeting thousands of visitors each year. Generations of families have visited the Enchanted Forest, experiencing the vision and dedication of one family's imagination on an Oregon hillside.

History: In 1962, after visiting several roadside attractions while visiting family in Minnesota with his wife and small children, Roger Tofte had the idea to build the Enchanted Forest. Other influences that led to the creation of the Enchanted Forest were the post-World War II automobile culture, the construction of the Interstate Highway System, and the opening of Disneyland in 1957.

Tofte had a modest income to build the Enchanted Forest. He worked as a draftsman for the State of Oregon's Highway Department and his wife, Mavis, was a caseworker for the Marion County (Oregon) Welfare Department. Tofte scraped together the money to buy the land by fixing watches for co-workers in his spare time and doing freelance work as a commercial artist.

Tofte carefully chose the site in close proximity to an interchange along Interstate 5 and in full view of the freeway. The site was steep and forested, unattractive to most developers, and was therefore, affordable. He purchased the 20-acre site in 1964 for \$4,000.

Tofte describes his vision for the park as a creative outlet. He didn't do a lot of research on the stories and places. Instead he would "dream up little sketches to begin with and went from there." Tofte spent weekends working on the site. Roger's brother-in-law, Dale Bjorke, lent his carpentry skills. Sack concrete was hauled to the site in a Volkswagen. After seven years of construction, the Enchanted Forest with its Storybook Trail opened to the public on August 15, 1971. Seventy-five people paid admission on the first day - \$1.00 for adults and \$.50 for children - and by the end of the year, 15,000 children and adults had experienced the Enchanted Forest. The park's popularity grew quickly and by the end of 1973 - just two years after opening - the park brought in enough

revenue to allow Tofte to retire from the state highway department.

Tofte's four children all helped with the creation of the exhibits as they grew up, gaining skills in design, construction, robotics, drama and music. Three of the Tofte's grown children – Susan, Ken and Mary – are currently employed at the park and the fourth, Lori, an architect, is consulted when new designs are drawn up. Mavis Tofte ran the business end of the park until 1991 when she retired. In recent years, she has written and published books on the history of the Enchanted Forest.

Tofte's presence at the site is visible and he continues to work there every day. Now eighty years old, Tofte looks back on his creation and says, "I don't think we could have done it today. Too much red tape. We couldn't have afforded it." The original construction was built without permits. Today, a comprehensive plan for the site is on file with Marion County, Oregon, easing the process for securing building permits as new attractions and facilities have been added.

Sources: Interview with Roger Tofte, owner, creator and founder of the Enchanted Forest, June 4, 2010 at the Enchanted Forest, Cathleen Corlett and Jean Senechal Biggs.

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<http://www.enchantedforest.com/history/history.html>

"A quiet dreamer turns 'Idiot Hill' into a Land of Enchantment," by Bob Keefer, *The Register-Guard*, Eugene, Oregon, March 22, 1992.

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One family crosses the moat to enter the Castle at the Enchanted Forest. The tree canopy surrounding the Castle frames the view for visitors as they approach.  
(Cathleen Corlett, July 25, 2010.)



The Mad Hatter's Tea Party display on the Storybook Trail at the Enchanted Forest. (Cathleen Corlett, June 4, 2010.)



The English Village at the Enchanted Forest. (Cathleen Corlett, June 4, 2010.)



The Enchanted Forest Comedy Theatre. (Cathleen Corlett, June 4, 2010.)



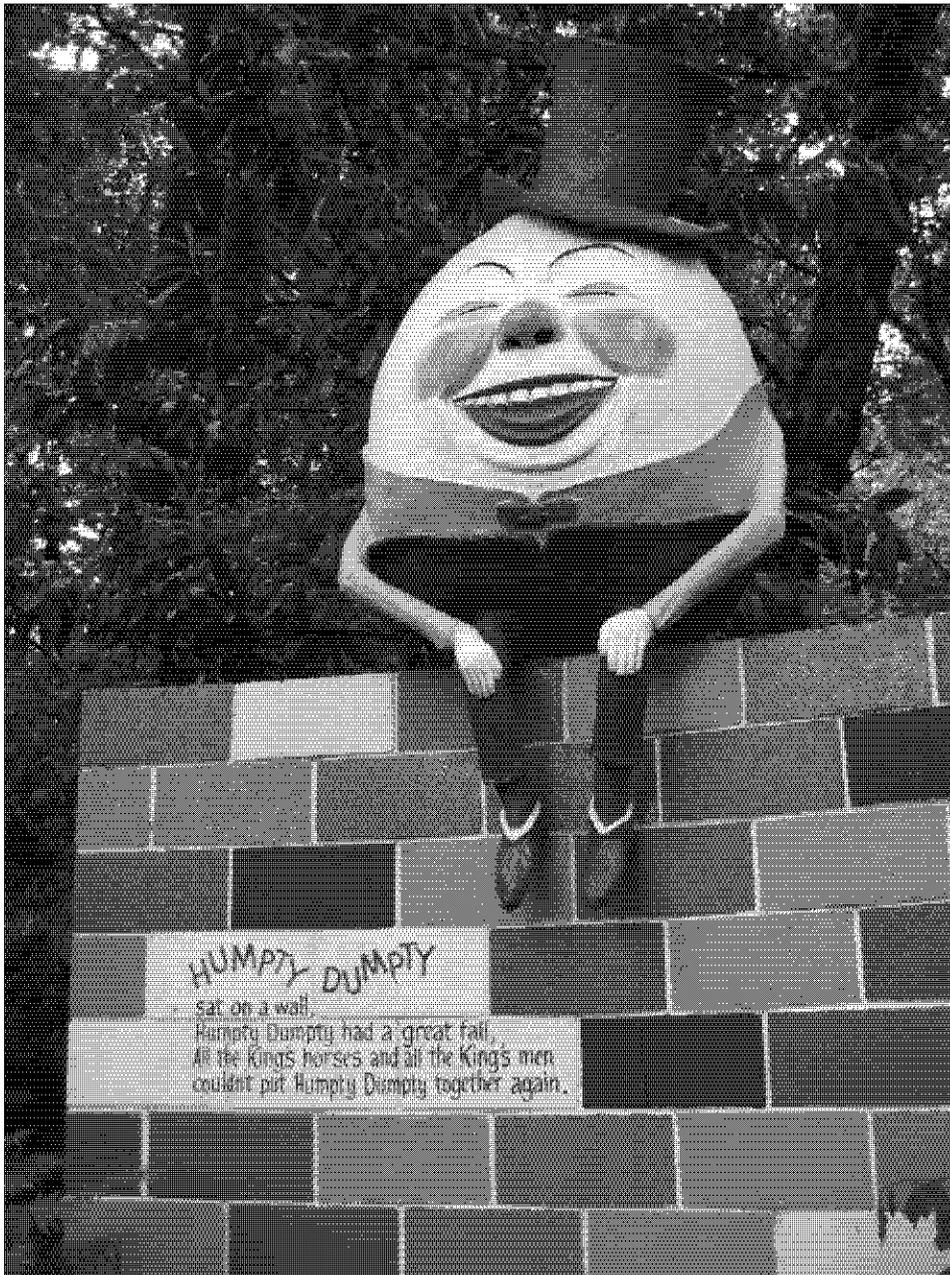
A forest path at the Enchanted Forest. (Cathleen Corlett, June 4, 2010.)



The Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe's Slide on the Storybook Trail at the Enchanted Forest. (Cathleen Corlett, June 4, 2010.)



The Witch Slide at the Enchanted Forest. (Cathleen Corlett, June 4, 2010.)



The Humpty Dumpty display on the Storybook Trail at the Enchanted Forest. (Cathleen Corlett, June 4, 2010.)