



Ruth McBride Powers Memorial Award 2015 Preservation Month



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Ruth McBride Powers (1903-1995)

Ruth McBride was born in Michigan in 1903, graduating from Stanford University in California. According to a 1980 OHS oral history interview, she became interested in history when “as a young bride” she moved to the Coos County lumber town, Powers, Oregon, named after her husband’s family. She began studying the history of her adopted state, especially its architecture and pioneer furniture. Her knowledge increased and she was appointed to the Oregon Landmarks Committee (now the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation) and was a board member of the Oregon Historical Society for many years. She became involved in saving the Ox Barn in Aurora. Her initial preservation project, in 1956, was reconstruction of the badly-burned 1852 Robert Newell house at Champoege, subsequently given to the Daughters of the American Revolution to operate as an educational site. Alfred Powers, her husband died in 1961 in Portland.

She continued her efforts, using her financial resources to save many of Oregon’s oldest buildings; sometimes they were purchased outright, at other times she providing major underwriting. In addition to the Ainsworth House, Rose and Locust Farms also known as the (Morton Mathew McCarver House), she is credited with saving the Philip Foster house and barn, Horace Dibble house, David Wagner log house, Murray Wade house, Lake Oswego IOOF hall, Pleasant Grove-Condit Church, John Boon house, and Francis Ermatinger house. In 1975 she received national recognition for her work from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In the final 25 years of her life Mrs. Powers divided her time between The McCarver House and the Rose Farm. She often opened the latter for fund-raising tours and it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

The McCarver House (Locust Farm) 1852, the 1847 William and Louisa Holmes House (“Rose Farm”), and the Captain John Ainsworth House built in 1852. Are the three remaining settlement-era houses built in the Mt. Pleasant area of Clackamas County. The survival of all three is due to the preservation efforts of a single benefactor, Mrs. Ruth McBride Powers.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has-Margaret Mead