

Palmerton Park **By Dennis Powers**

Orin Palmerton was a veteran of the Spanish-American War, who came to the City of Rogue River in the 1920s and purchased five acres of land from the Skevington family. Located off West Evans Creek Road and a five-minute drive from the city's downtown, Evans Creek runs through the property before emptying into the Rogue River, west of the Depot Street Bridge.

Palmerton conducted a plant and tree nursery at the property for years; during this time he also planted many domestic and exotic trees that were from around the world. Orin sold the pristine acreage to Jackson County in 1960, and the City of Rogue River in 1994 acquired it from the County. It is part of the city's park system, which maintains the park and continues to expand the diversity of the represented trees.

Palmerton Park is an arboretum--defined as a place for the study and exhibit of trees--with 96 distinct tree specimens found around the world, including pines from Japan, cedars from the Mediterranean, and large coastal redwoods native to the Pacific Northwest. Numerous trees in Ashland's Lithia Park are also here: from different maples, monkey puzzle, and sassafras to the ginkgo, tulip tree, and mimosa. Exhibiting also azaleas, rhododendrons, and other plants and shrubs, the park has paved walkways throughout, a duck pond, playground, and picnic area.

Linking the arboretum to the Anna Classick Bicentennial Park, the bridge over Evans Creek washed away in the New Year's Day flood of 1997. In its place, an impressive suspension foot-bridge (like a miniature Golden Gate Bridge in one sense) was constructed in its place.

Born in 1924 on the property before Orin Palmerton's purchase, Dick Skevington not only designed the original crossing over Evans Creek in the late 1980s, he nailed in the last plank into the replacement bridge in 2001. Skevington had built bridges for the National Parks Service for 28 years, before returning to Rogue River at retirement and being elected to the city council and then as its mayor.

Palmerton Park and Arboretum is one of those jewels that ties us into the past with a presence today--and is a beautiful setting.

Sources: "Phil Fehrenbacher, "Arboretum guide revised," Oregon Department of Forestry, at [Oregon Arboretums](#); John Darling, "Shhh! One of the county's best-kept secrets," *Mail Tribune*, November 20, 2005, at [Palmerton Park and Arboretum](#); "Palmerton Park: A Tour through Nature's Pathways," Rogue River's Arboretum: Park Brochure; Sanne Specht, "Rogue River Mayor Dick Skevington dies at 84," *Mail Tribune*, September 20, 2008, at [Born on Property](#); see "YouTube: Palmerton Park at Rogue River, Oregon" at [Video of Park](#).