



## Portland landmark Pittock Mansion turns 100 with free admission and special tours

pittock.JPG

Pittock Mansion turns 100 this year. To celebrate, admission is free for the first 10 days of February.

*(The Oregonian/file photo)*

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In the summer of 1914, Oregonian publisher and industrialist **Henry Pittock**, his wife, Georgiana, and nine members of their family moved into a newly built mansion high in the West Hills.

The Pittock Mansion, now owned by the public, turns 100 this year. The centennial celebration kicks off with an exhibit exploring the five-year construction process of this Portland landmark. For the first 10 days of February, **admission will be free** for everyone.

"We as taxpayers are all the owners of this house," said Marta Bones, executive director of the Pittock Mansion Society. "Everyone should have the opportunity to come and see it."

The French Renaissance-style chateau sits on 46 acres high atop what was once called Imperial Heights. It offers panoramic views of the city of Portland, which sits 1,000 feet below, as well as 200 miles of skyline, mountains, rivers and forests.

At 16,000 square feet – and 46 rooms -- it was an ambitious house for an ambitious man.

**Henry Lewis Pittock**, arrived in Portland as a penniless 19-year-old in 1853. After six years, he became the sole owner of The Oregonian newspaper. He founded the paper industry in the Northwest and owned interests in mining, railroads, sheep farming and banks. He was 73 when construction began on his dream house.

His wife Georgiana, the story goes, was less inclined to move.

Georgiana was instrumental in the founding of the Rose Society and worked for the interests of women and children – she helped found the Martha Washington Hotel, the city's first boarding house for women – and was reluctant to leave her cozy city home and rose garden.

The couple lived in the mansion for just four years. Georgiana died in 1918, Henry in 1919. Their grandson, Peter Gantenbein, moved out of the house and put it on the market in 1958, but there were no buyers. The house sat empty for years, and then the Columbus Day storm of 1962 wreaked extensive damage upon the property.

**Celebrate  
the centenni**

Admission to Pittock mansion is free for everyone from Feb. 1 through Feb. 10, and visitors can explore special exhibits into the mansion's construction and history. After Feb. 10 admission is free for members, \$9.50 for adults, \$8.50 for seniors, \$6.50 for kids 6 to 18 and free for anyone 5 and under. The mansion is at

When developers with plans to raze the house and subdivide the land made their interest known, concerned citizens began a campaign to persuade the city to buy and preserve the house and surrounding green space.

3229  
NW  
Pittock  
Drive.

In 1964, the City of Portland paid \$225,000 for the house and land. After extensive renovations, the house opened to the public as a museum in 1965.

Today, the Pittock Mansion Society and Portland Parks & Recreation collaborate to maintain the site.

A tour of the house yields all kinds of unexpected delights: there's a round Turkish smoking room with a domed roof painted in jewel-like blues and greens. A grand marble staircase with elaborate banisters, reminiscent of those in European palaces, winds up three floors through the center of the house. It's a sharp contrast to the narrow servants' stairs that run between the laundry on the lower level to the kitchen and butlers' pantry on the main level, then up to the servants' quarters on the third floor.

The kitchen floor -- a meticulous copy of the original -- consists of 8,000 puzzle pieces of interlocking rubber tile in an intricate design.

Henry Pittock's shower.

Courtesy of the  
Pittock Mansion  
Society

Henry Pittock's turreted bathroom provides magnificent views of Mt. Hood and Mt. St. Helens. The shower is a daunting hydraulic masterpiece; the Oregon Encyclopedia describes it as, "a human carwash with horizontal

needle sprays to reach all parts of the body, including a 'liver spray' and a 'toe tester'."

The house boasts other features that would have been considered modern conveniences in 1914, including intercoms connecting the rooms, a central vacuum system to make cleaning easier and the first residential elevator in Oregon.

Angie Allee, marketing communications manager at the Pittock Mansion Society, said that Georgiana had suffered a stroke by the time she moved into the house. She needed the Otis elevator to travel between floors.

Walls are decorated with portraits and photographs of the Pittocks. Several feature Henry, who stood a diminutive 5 foot 2, riding a bicycle or climbing a mountain. Allee said Pittock was a keen cyclist and founder of the Oregon Road Club for bicyclists. Into his 70s, he would ride his bike from Portland to visit a daughter in Camas.

He was a member of the first party to make a documented ascent of Mt. Hood in 1857 and co-founded the Mazamas, a mountaineering education organization that continues today.

On another wall hangs the front page of the weekly Oregonian edited by T.J. Dryer. Allee said that

when the young Pittock arrived in Portland he went to work for Dryer as a “printer’s devil” – fetching type and mixing tubs of ink. He slept under Dryer’s desk. Eventually, Pittock worked his way up and a few years later when Dryer left to work on Abraham Lincoln’s presidential campaign he “owed Henry so much in back wages, he gave him the paper,” Allee said.

By 1861, Pittock had launched the six-day-a week Morning Oregonian.

Henry Pittock.

Courtesy of the  
Pittock Mansion  
Society

“I fell in love with Henry, his determination,” said Patti Laumand, a volunteer involved with the mansion since the effort to save it from developers. “Imagine building a house like that at the age of 73.”

She was living in Raleigh Hills in the early 1960s when a neighbor called and urged her to help save the Pittock Mansion.

Laumand’s reply? “What’s the Pittock Mansion?”

Soon after, she and a group of women toured the storm-damaged property.

“We went in through the carriage entrance and I thought, ‘This is so beautiful,’” she said. “And then in the hallway, that smell of must and mildew was so terrible.” Despite being busy with her husband and two children, she dove into the effort to save the house.

City officials told the women they needed to raise \$100,000 toward the price of the house.

“We held bake sales, we baby sat children, we held coffees and teas and lunches,” Laumand said.

The women testified to the City Council and sought donations far and wide. They fell short of their fundraising goal, but the city bought the property anyway.

Laumand has served on the mansion board and has been volunteered at the mansion for the 50 years since. In the early days, her kids would do their homework in the mansion’s kitchen while she led tours. These days she volunteers at the gate lodge, once home to the Pittock’s steward.

Jeanne Allen, 92, is another longtime volunteer. She remembers once climbing into the attic and seeing the signatures of the workmen on the rafters. A former board president, she was also deeply involved in finding furniture for the mansion.

“It was almost impossible to find an appropriate stove for the kitchen,” she said, until a music professor in Laramie, Wyo., with a sideline interest in antique stove repair found a likely candidate in the Midwest.

He spent a year restoring the stove, which had “hay and grass growing in it.” Then he and one of his students delivered it to Portland in a pickup truck.

The music room at the Pittock Mansion offers a glimpse into the opulence on display in the century old home.

Courtesy of the Pittock Mansion Society

Allen still gives tours twice a month and will be at the mansion for the kick-off of the Centennial Celebration on Feb. 1. She said she treasures what she has learned over the years about the house, the family who lived in it and relations between the classes in 1914. She loves passing this knowledge on to visitors.

“It’s not just a house, its not just a Portland institution,” she said. “It’s a home, a very caring home.”

-- Rebecca Koffman

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