

## **What's in a Name? What Makes Irvington "Irvington"?**

By Jim Heuer, Irvington Historic Preservation Committee

If you've ever looked closely at the title to your property here in Irvington, you may be puzzled about the "official" description and where it comes from. Typically, it will indicate a plat name plus a lot number and a block number. For many of us, the plat name is "Irvington", a sizeable tract developed by or under the influence of Elizabeth Irving, whose husband, William Irving acquired the land in the 1850s as a Donation Land Claim. That certainly explains how your house is in "Irvington", but what if your title says "Edgemont" or "Gleneyrie"? There are actually about 13 plats included in the present Irvington Historic District. Are they really part of "Irvington"?

To help answer this question the ICA's Historic Preservation Committee has dug into the history beyond what was uncovered during the original historic district nomination. In some cases, the connection between the plats and the original Irvington is obvious: in the case of John Irving's First Addition, John Irving was Elizabeth Irving's son, and the plat was filed at about the same time as Elizabeth sold 288 acres of her land to developers to create the Irvington tract. In others, the connections have been more difficult to tease out.

Take Edgemont for example. Edgemont was platted as early as 1890, but few lots were sold. Many lots were held by investors awaiting the growth of the city being spurred by the expanding streetcar network. The connection with Mrs. Irving and the Irvington development turns up in large land holdings in Edgemont by one Oscar Heintz, president of Pacific Iron Works. Mr. Heintz was related by marriage to Elizabeth Irving's daughter, and lived with her daughter's family over a period of many years.

One of the largest tracts outside of the original Irvington plat was Gleneyrie. It was platted in 1911 along with the much smaller Stanton Street subdivision by members of the Taggart (sometimes spelled Taggart in the documents) family. But once development started in 1913, the promoter and owner of a great many of the lots was the Tate Investment Company. In their marketing campaign, they set out deliberately to link their new tract to its successful neighbor to the west, Irvington, as made clear in their fanciful advertisements claiming Gleneyrie to be the "natural outgrowth of Irvington" like this example from *The Oregonian* on April 9, 1913:

# To Gleneyrie

## 15 Minutes from Broadway

Portland's New Theatre & Shopping Thoroughfare



GLENEYRIE



**WITHIN** a few days the new Broadway bridge will be open—another connecting link between Portland's great residence and business districts.

Within 60 to 80 days tracks will be laid on Broadway (formerly Seventh) and cars running direct from GLENEYRIE, over the Broadway bridge, setting you down within 15 minutes in the heart of Portland's new theater, hotel and shopping district. It will give home-owners in GLENEYRIE the most direct—most pleasant car service of any residence district in Portland. You'll have nothing to apologize for on the way out to GLENEYRIE.

GLENEYRIE is the natural outgrowth of Irvington. Within a stone's throw of GLENEYRIE are magnificent homes, costing from ten to fifty thousand dollars.

GLENEYRIE has the highest class of improvements. Yet prices are from 25 to 50 per cent less than adjoining unimproved property in Irvington.

A limited number of sites in GLENEYRIE at \$1300.

Phone today and let us take you out to GLENEYRIE in our machine. It will place you under no obligation. Or take the Broadway car at Second and Washington. GLENEYRIE begins at Twenty-fourth and Knott streets.

**TATE INVESTMENT CO.**

1002-1003 Wilcox Building Phone Marshall 284

East Side Office Fifteenth and East Broadway. Phone East 4506

Tract Office Twenty-fourth and Knott Streets. Phone East 820





Odd, you might think, that a developer would so shamelessly link its own tract with that of a successful neighbor. Perhaps, but in this case the Tate Investment Company was simultaneously marketing an equally large tract named Dixon Place, just north of Irvington. Dixon Place, like a number of similar tracts, was controlled by more of Elizabeth Irving's relatives, the Shavers – Sarah Dixon Shaver, whose maiden name was "Dixon", not only owned the land but gave her name to it. Clearly, this Gleneyrie linkage to Irvington via the Tate Investment Company was not an accident.

Did these initial connections stick? Did the folks who lived in these satellite tracts consider themselves to be living in Irvington? It turns out that the answer is overwhelmingly "yes". Using the full-text search capabilities in the Historical Oregonian Archive, we checked out all the real estate ads for homes in the area composed of Edgemont and Gleneyrie and a few other plats to the immediate east of the original Irvington plat – covering a period from 1900 to 1948.

We found a total of 344 advertisements during that period that mentioned specific addresses, of which about 2/3rds mentioned the area where the house was located. Of those, 94% indicated “Irvington”. So, for years after the original marketing efforts linking Edgemont, Gleneyrie, and other tracts to Irvington, these areas retained their Irvington name and connection to Mrs. Irving’s bold project to build a “high class” neighborhood on Portland’s East Side.

So, to lay your mind at rest, if your title doesn’t say “Irvington”, that doesn’t mean that the area you’re in wasn’t considered “Irvington” in historic times – not all the historic connections are visible in that official title!