

CORNELIUS PASS ROADHOUSE

The wildlife here was once as common as the rain. Fox, deer, elk, and weasels all used to wander around the cultivated fields and apple orchards. Pheasants were easily spotted in the daylight just as owls weren't hard to find at night. Then, there were the turtles, which could always be found across Cornelius Pass Road and down the hill, sunning themselves on the rocks in the middle of Rock Creek (whenever there was sun). This was back when Sunset Highway was new and in a half-hour spent waiting for the school bus, you could count on one hand the number of cars that came along the Highway and the Pass Road.

These are Frank Imbrie's memories of growing up on the farmstead now known as Cornelius Pass Roadhouse (CPR). These days, the grounds containing the house and barns essentially form a six-acre, rural oasis surrounded by an increasing concentration of freeways, hi tech office buildings, and convenience stores. And while the pastoral world of Frank's youth has largely disappeared, little has actually changed at his old home.



Photo Courtesy Frank Imbrie

Donald, Robert, and Frank Imbrie sit "kinda tall" in the saddle, c. 1942.

CPR's huge, English chestnut and black walnut trees have been shading the stately country house for more than 130 years, and for much of that time, Frank's family was in residence there. The Imbrie family arrived in the mid-1840s as part of Oregon's first flood of white settlers. The Imbries came to Oregon from the Midwest, but they were not far removed from the Old World. The family's patriarch, James Imbrie, Jr., was born and raised in the Kingdom of Fife, a magical place on the southeast coast of Scotland, where passions for religion and golf run deep.

Among the Imbries of Fife were generations of farm-

1843: 18-year-old Kentucky native Edward Henry Lenox travels with the first major emigrant party over the Oregon Trail. He stakes a claim to a 634-acre tract that includes the present CPR site. Lenox settles the claim in 1849.

1850-59: Robert Imbrie acquires the Lenox property and builds the granary that still stands today.

1863-66: With the size of his family growing, Robert Imbrie has the three-story, gabled country home built to replace the original farmhouse.

1897: Robert Imbrie dies.

1902-13: During this period, the octagonal barn is built near the granary.

1933: Imbries begin selling barley to Blitz-Weinhard.

ers. In fact, the plow literally crowns their family crest. The Imbries of Oregon continued this agrarian tradition. By the 1850s, two of James' sons, James and Robert, each had developed farms in Washington County. James' acreage was in North Plains, while brother Robert took over and expanded the old Lenox place (in the middle of which CPR now stands), eventually building up its landholdings to 1,500 acres. Robert constructed the granary in the mid-1850s, and a decade later replaced the property's original farm house with the three-story, Italian Villa-style home that still welcomes visitors today. With a family that included 12 children and his mother, Robert needed the extra space.

Subsequent generations all lived in the spacious home without making significant changes, excepting the introduction of electricity and running water in the '30s. The farm on the other hand, took rather dramatic swings as it passed from father to son. In Robert's day, horses were the focal point of the family farm. Morgans were raised as draft animals and sold to area farmers. When Robert's son, Frank, inherited the farm, he developed it into a sizable dairy. It was Frank who had the wonderful octagonal barn built soon after the turn of the century. Its unusual design was ideal for the farm's milking and feeding operations. James Hay Imbrie, Frank's son, then shifted the farm into grain and hay production. For the middle decades of this century, the Imbries' barley was a key ingredient in Blitz-Weinhard beer.

In the 1960s, James laid down his plow, and the Imbries' century of farming of this land came to an end. At decade's end, James' third son, Frank, moved into the house built for his great grandfather. Frank's children became the sixth and final generation of Imbries to live beneath the shade of the elder chestnut and walnut trees.

Then, in 1977, Frank's younger brother, Gary, converted the family home into the Imbrie Farmstead Restaurant. Nine years later, McMenamins jumped at an opportunity to get involved with the venerable property and transformed it into one of the state's pioneer brew pubs.

When development threatened the buildings in the late '80s, the community rallied to save them, and soon afterwards, McMenamins was able to purchase the property and secure its preservation.

Since then, it's just been a whole lot of fun. And when the old barns were restored in 1998, a new and resounding agrarian spirit seemed to blow in--all the way from the Kingdom.

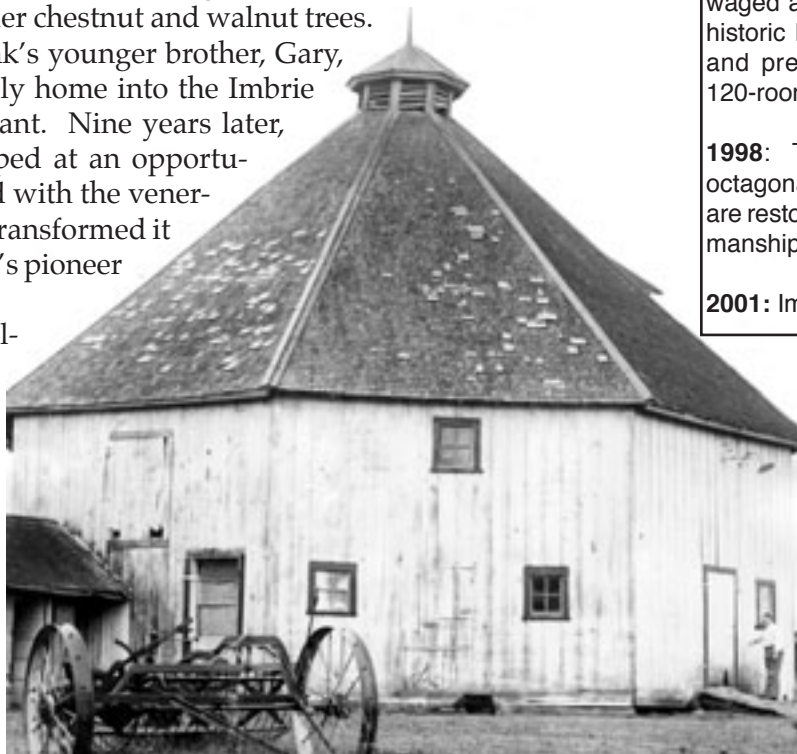


Photo Courtesy Frank Imbrie

CPR's unusual, turn-of-the-century octagonal barn, as it looked in the 1940s.

1945: Frank Imbrie dies.

1948: Sunset Highway is completed.

1962: James Hay Imbrie shuts down the family's centennial farm.

1968: James Hay Imbrie dies.

1969: James Hay's son, Frank, moves his family onto the old homestead. His children are the sixth and final generation of Imbries to live there.

1977: Frank's family moves to the back part of the property and his brother Gary opens the Imbrie Farmstead Restaurant in the old house.

1986: McMenamins leases the property and transforms the 120-year-old house into a brew pub called Cornelius Pass Roadhouse.

1988: A grass-roots battle is waged and won to preserve the historic Imbrie house and barns and prevent construction of a 120-room hotel on the site.

1998: The great, old granary, octagonal barn and milk house are restored using pioneer craftsmanship.

2001: Imbrie Hall opens.