

TOUR HELVETIA CENTRAL



Presented by Helvetia Community Association
www.HelvetiaCommunity.org

A 501(c)(3) cultural, educational, non-profit organization

INTRODUCTION TO HELVETIA

In addition to their picturesque beauty, the hills of Helvetia and the Tualatin Mountains perform essential environmental functions. They shed rain to local stream headwaters and the aquifer below, which feeds the valley floor farmland as well as wildlife habitat. This hydrology supports vast dryland farming and smaller irrigated farming, and contributes to the highest classification soils remaining in Washington County, right here in Helvetia. As headwaters feed larger streams and rivers, Helvetia is also one of the important sources of clean water for fish habitat in our Tualatin Valley.

Helvetia's cultural heritage embraces the pre-settlement Tualatin (Tuality or Atfalati) tribe, that occupied and cared for the land prior to settlement by people of mostly European descent. Treaties have included the Tualatins as part of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. When German-Swiss farmers immigrated to the Helvetia area over 150 years ago, they saw a striking resemblance to their native Switzerland in the fertile soils and rolling hills of the Tualatin Mountains. They named the area "Helvetia", Latin for "Switzerland" -- a name that is still found on Swiss postage stamps and coins.

The farmhouses, churches and barns they constructed in the 19th century can still be seen throughout Helvetia, meticulously maintained and in continual use for more than 100 years.

- **Finding Helvetia**
 - The Helvetia area lies on the north side of the Sunset Highway (US-26) between Cornelius Pass and Jackson School Roads
 - Take Exit 61, Brookwood Parkway/Helvetia Road, about 10 miles west of Portland, Oregon
 - Head north to begin your Central Helvetia Tour at West Union Elementary School

Along West Union Road and Jackson Quarry Road...

● **West Union Elementary School**
23870 NW West Union Rd
Hillsboro, Oregon 97124

West Union School has been an integral part of the community for the past 150 years. Established in 1851, it is the oldest continuously operating public school in Oregon. It is in its third building and its second site. In 1948, the West Union Community Club began hosting a ham dinner annually each Veterans Day. Children in each grade contribute in some way to the success of the dinner, from decorating tables, to serving guests, to clearing tables - even providing entertainment.



● **Schoch's Dairy and Creamery**
503.647.2638
www.schochdairy.com



One of Helvetia's two working dairies, the Schoch Dairy sells organic milk produced by the cows on their 74-acre farm on West Union Road. Dave and Casey Schoch and their sons are a third-generation dairy family. Their on-farm creamery pasteurizes and bottles milk for local customers.

● **Batchelder Century Farm**

Helvetia's oldest family farm, the 200-acre Batchelder farm, recently celebrated its 150th year. The Batchelder Farm is recognized by the State of Oregon's Century Farm program for families who have owned, lived on and farmed or managed the farming of the same parcel of land for at least 150 uninterrupted years. Established in 1858, the Batchelder farm is older than the state of Oregon.



Spencer and Pam Gates are 5th generation farmers of the 309-acre Connell Century Farm, established in 1886. Spencer Gates is the great-great grandson of Joseph Meek, the famous mountain man of Oregon's early years. Spencer proposed to Pam Gates by discing a field with the words, "Pam Marry Me" and hiring a plane to fly her over the field. Fortunately, she said "YES"! Local filmmaker Melissa Rue has produced a documentary about life on the Connell Farm.

● **Connell Century Farm**

www.cultureunplugged.com/storyteller/Melissa_Gregory_Rue#/myFilms

Washington County Vineyard and Valley Scenic Tour...

As you head north on Jackson Quarry Rd, passing the Connell Farm, you will be on the Helvetia portion of the Washington County Vineyard and Valley Scenic Tour, which continues north along Jackson Quarry Road, east and south along Helvetia Road and back to the Helvetia Interchange at Exit 61 of US-26.

Along Jackson Quarry Road...

Jackson Quarry Road is named for John B. Jackson, who built the first grist mill and sawmill in the 1850's on his 640-acre homestead near a creek (also named Jackson Creek) in the area north of present-day Highway 26.

On their transitional organic farm at the historic Connell Crossing, brothers Aaron and Jesse Nichols harness the power of their Belgian horses, Gale and Esther, to work the ground. Matsu, the Great Pyrenees, guards the turkey flock and keeps deer out of the vegetable rows! Their produce is grown for year-round restaurant clients, three-season CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) subscribers, and for farmers' markets.

● **Stoneboat Farm**
www.stoneboatpdx.com

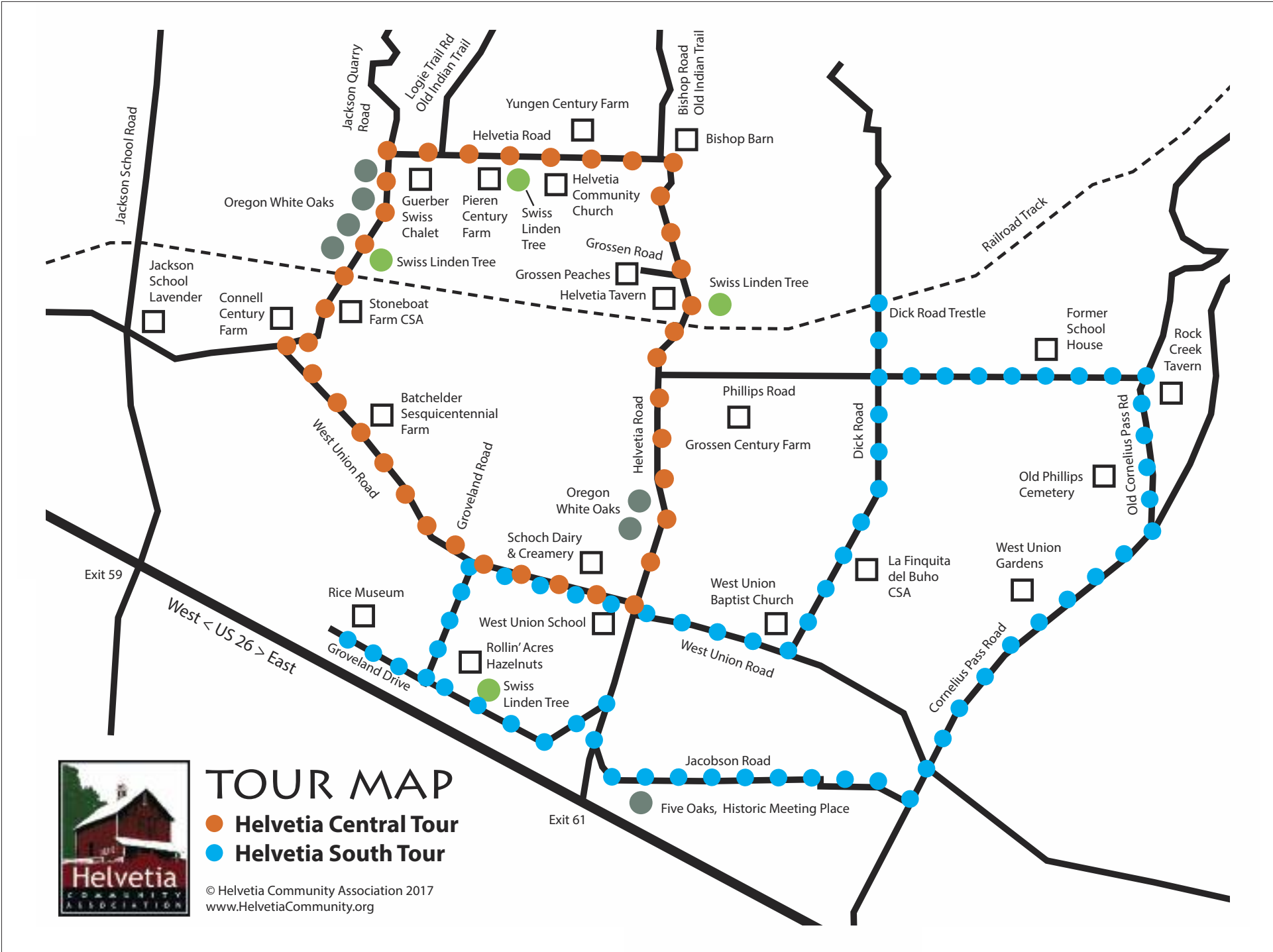
Throughout Helvetia, you can see majestic Swiss Linden trees wherever there was a German-Swiss family homestead. Local lore has it that twelve Linden saplings were brought from Switzerland in 1892. Local midwife Marie Nussbaumer used the leaves for medicinal purposes and Linden tea is still made from them by Swiss descendants. You can see a Swiss Linden tree behind the home to the northwest of the railroad crossing. Later in the tour, you can see another Linden Tree across from Helvetia Tavern, as well as others at, and near, the Pieren Farm, which is also represented on the cover of this booklet.

● **Swiss Linden Trees**

Note the Oregon white oak trees that line the road. Less than one percent of the historic Willamette Valley native oak habitat still exists so we are especially fortunate that over 3,000 of these important species remain in the Helvetia area, some as old as 500 years. The Tualatin tribe used the Oregon white oaks as shelter and as a food source, creating a mush of their acorns. They patiently nurtured the Oregon white oak trees because it can take as long as 75 years to get the first acorn harvest.



● **Oregon White Oak Trees**



TOUR MAP

- Helvetia Central Tour
- Helvetia South Tour

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Along Jackson Quarry Road...

● Guerber Swiss Chalet

The Guerber family settled in Helvetia in the late 1800's. Continuing in the Swiss tradition, they made cheese in large wheels, shipping them to Portland by train. Don Guerber built his Swiss Chalet from original plans brought from Switzerland in 1982. The Chalet was the site of an episode of the television series, Grimm, in 2011.

Along Helvetia Road...

Note: Logie Trail Road and Bishop Road are both old trails used by the indigenous Tualatins to get north to Sauvie Island and the Columbia River for harvesting and trading during their seasonal rounds.

● Pieren Century Farm

Johannes and Elise Pieren of Bern, Switzerland, arrived in the U.S. in 1890 with their five children. They settled in Helvetia, bought 50 acres and developed a very successful farm. Johannes never did speak English, since church services were in German and many of his neighbors were Swiss or German. Built in 1905 by Fred Bischoff, the Pieren barn continues as a working barn over 110 years later. An image of the iconic Pieren barn serves as a logo for the community's non-profit Helvetia Community Association.



● Helvetia Community Church

503-647-2775
www.helvetia-church.org

The heart of Helvetia is the picturesque Helvetia Community Church. Founded in 1881 by Swiss and German settlers, the building was constructed in 1899. Services were held in German until 1942. Every July the Swiss community celebrates Swiss Independence Day with a Cow Parade and Swiss Picnic on the church grounds.



● Yungen Century Farm

Three Yungen brothers (Abraham, Christ and Jacob) immigrated from Switzerland and settled in Helvetia in 1889. The family name was originally "Jungen", pronounced Yungen. Abraham settled on Helvetia Road, while brother Jacob settled on Yungen Road, at the present-day site of Helvetia Vineyards & Winery tasting room. Currently owned and farmed by 3rd-generation Yungens, the crisp white house stands proudly on the hill overlooking the Helvetia Community Church.



The Bishop family barn was built in 1888 by Fred Bishop (originally Bischoff) using strong mortise and tenon joinery. Still a working barn after 125 years, it is a testament to the quality of construction by Helvetia's earliest pioneers. The Bishop Barn and its surrounding farmland are now part of a conservation easement preserved by Greg Mecklem and Diana Yates and monitored by Helvetia Community Association to ensure it remains in farmland use in perpetuity.



Ten varieties of delicious peaches are grown on the 3,000 peach trees on the 1885 Grosse farm. The sixth generation of Grossens are now operating the popular peach u-pick off of Helvetia Road. The early-ripening varieties start in late July and late-ripening varieties continue through August.

This Helvetia landmark was built in 1922 as a grocery store and gas station. A tavern opened in the building the very day that Prohibition ended. You've got to try their signature burgers and homemade fries - and don't forget to leave your hat for the collection on the ceiling!



● Bishop Barn (former Century Farm)

● Grosse Peaches

503.647.0005
www.grossepeaches.com
[@snappages.com](https://www.instagram.com/snappages.com)

● Helvetia Tavern

503.647.5286
www.helvetiatavern.com

Scenic Tour Route...

As you continue south to the Helvetia Interchange, you complete the Helvetia portion of the Washington County Vineyard and Valley Scenic Tour.

Events in Helvetia CENTRAL

April	Burn the Boogg celebration
June	Grosse's Peach Jam Concert
July	Lavender Festival & self-guided tour
July	Swiss Independence Day picnic and cow parade (always on the 3rd Sunday of July, at Helvetia Church)
August	Helvetia Culture Fest
November	West Union Elementary Ham Dinner (always on Veteran's Day, November 11)

We hope you enjoyed this tour!

This mapped guide is sponsored by Helvetia Community Association with a generous grant from the Washington County Cultural Coalition. We encourage and appreciate your feedback. Please send email to President@HelvetiaCommunity.org.



For more information about Helvetia, go to

www.HelvetiaCommunity.org

www.SaveHelvetia.org

www.Facebook.com/SaveHelvetia

www.HelvetiaHeritage.org

To request a tour, call 503.647.5334

A special benefit of joining our organized, guided tours is enjoying our advance arrangements for stops at selected sites along the way. When touring on your own in rural areas, please practice courtesy and caution! Find a downloadable PDF of this tour guide online at www.HelvetiaCommunity.org/directory.php

- Respect private property, including driveways, crops, and livestock.
- Beware that your voices carry well beyond bicycling partners, and rural residents may not appreciate it.
- Allow traffic to keep flowing and be watchful for other users of the roadways -- autos, cyclists, farm equipment and wildlife.
- There are no bike lanes nor shoulders on roads in Helvetia; and the speed limit for cars is 55 mph on most roads.



Helvetia Community Association (HCA) is a cultural, educational 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire understanding and enjoyment of Helvetia's people, land and history.



Save Helvetia is registered as a 501(c)(4) organization to advance policies, leaders, and actions that protect Helvetia's treasured resources. Save Helvetia is an Affiliate partner with 1000 Friends of Oregon.

Photos in this publication are sourced from volunteer photographers, Adrian Amabisca, Mary Pruitt, Faun Hosey and Cherry Amabisca.