

A Personal Journey to Portland

BY MARY ELLEN POLSON

Wandering through a city I love with relatives I seldom see.

NOTHING gives a traveler more pleasure than touring a city you already like in the company of a sympathetic insider.

Or an entire family of insiders. On a recent visit to Portland, Oregon (pronounced Or-uh-gun, thank you), a cousin I hadn't seen in decades rolled out the welcome mat for me and assorted other relatives. I had booked a room at the Jupiter Hotel (jupiterhotel.com), a refurbished Retro motel with white rooms punctuated by blue shag accent pillows—very nice.

But I wish I'd stayed at the Kennedy School (5736 NE 33rd Ave., kennedyschool.com). This 1915 former elementary school is one of many whimsical retrofits by McMenamins (mcmenamins.com), a benevolent empire that specializes in microbrews and turning down-and-out historic structures in the area into bars and hotels. How can you resist a place where you can nap, eat, guzzle beer, do yoga, or watch a movie “in class”? New discoveries—like the pocket bars “Detention” and “Honors”—seem

to lurk around every corner.

My favorite thing about the Jupiter was breakfast next door at the Doug Fir (830 East Burnside St.), a Sixties-era log-lined lounge with Naugahyde booths, Jim Morrison on the sound system, and a hip, friendly attitude. When I assured my server—a curly-haired fellow named Chris—I had everything I needed, his response was, “Right on.”

I would have missed the Kennedy School completely if not for my cousin, Patty Ellis, an interior designer who has lived in Portland most of her life. To a native, Portland's continual winter rains aren't depressing, says Patty—no, they're soothing. She clued me in to Eleek (see “Romping,” pp. 50-52) and accompanied me on a leisurely tour of Portland's period-design meccas: Rejuvenation, Schoolhouse Electric, and Pratt & Larson Ceramics. Talk about coming home.

Patty took my relatives on Portland's new aerial tram that links the Willamette River waterfront to Marquam Hill in southwest Portland, but I prefer the view



OPPOSITE: The new aerial tram offers a quick ride from the valley to the hills. **TOP:** The sweeping vistas of the Columbia River Gorge are just a short drive out of town. **ABOVE:** For a renovator, a visit to Rejuvenation is like walking into a big, welcoming living room.

of the city from the Rose Garden's Queen's Walk in Washington Park. On a clear day, snow-capped Mount Hood—volcanic and not extinct—rises over the city like a white cloud. The garden, which dates to 1917, is well worth exploring, and links to thousands of acres of parkland on the west side of the Willamette River. Not far away in its own park is the Pittock Mansion (pittockmansion.org), the Chateausque Re-



vival home of Henry Lewis Pittock, founder of *The Oregonian* newspaper. Completed in 1914, the mansion offers breathtaking views of the Cascade range and the city 1,000 feet below. The interior features a beautifully scaled limestone entry hall with a spectacular center staircase.

Like many desirable cities, Portland has experienced a building boom in recent years, particularly in the close-in Pearl district. When I asked Patty's son James, an architecture student, about what I presumed was a period Art Deco apartment building downtown, he circumspectly pointed out that it was new construction.

Despite the Pearl's supposed hotness, it's nowhere near as cozy and inviting as Portland Heights, an early-20th-century neighborhood whose steep streets are linked by staircases, or the neighborhoods east of the Willamette. Hawthorne, Sellwood, Alameda, Laurelhurst, and dozens of others bloom with renovated bungalows. When you're



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RIGHT: The hallway outside Honors at the Kennedy School (below). Other walls are covered with what looks like student homework, until you notice the carefully lettered exercises on ruled paper were drawn by an artist.



tired of walking, take a drive along one of the ridge roads (Skyline Boulevard, Vista Drive) in Northwest Portland, where mid-century dwellings cling to the ridges.

Like a visit to Rejuvenation or the Kennedy School, there's a quirky discovery around every corner. In Portland, you get the sense that individuality isn't just encouraged; it permeates the atmosphere, from the lighting design in restaurants to the conversations overhead in Powell's Books (1005 W. Burnside, powells.com). In other words, when you see, handle, or are served something made in Portland, you can almost feel the personality of the individual behind it.

ROMPING in Wonderland

- **ARCHIVE DESIGNS** (541) 607-6581, archivedesigns.com Just an hour south of Portland in Eugene, metalwork designer Joseph Moss turns out everything from repoussé copper friezes and fireplace hoods to bathtubs and lighting. By appointment.
- **CJ HURLEY CENTURY ARTS** (503) 234-4167, cjhurley.com CJ is an artist who channels the work of the Mackintoshes in painterly environments. With his wife, Barbara Pierce, CJ offers expert color consulting, too. By appointment.
- **DUQUELLA TILE** at Art Factors 7035 SW Macadam (503) 245-3625, duquellatile.com Stop by Tuesdays to see samples of brightly colored tubeline and cuerda seca Arts and Crafts tile.
- **ELEEK** 2326 N. Flint Ave. (503) 232-5526, eleek.com Custom metalwork shop that specializes in lighting, hardware, and garden ornament made with recycled aluminum. Showroom weekdays by appointment.
- **GRACEWOOD DESIGN** 6107 NE 32nd Pl., (503) 922-0386, gracewooddesign.com Given Jones designs and hand-paints period floorcloths and custom designs to order in her studio. By appointment.
- **HANDWERK SHADE SHOP** (503) 659-0914, thehandwerkshop.com Hand-sewn Arts and Crafts table linens and pillows to order. By appointment.
- **HIVE** 820 NW Glisan St. (866) MODE-HIVE, hivemodern.com This small Pearl District showroom is loaded with big idea Modernist furniture.
- **HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE** 802 NE Davis St., (888) 223-2545, houseofantiquehardware.com No showroom, but locals walk into the office to order from this internet retailer's vast range of hardware and plumbing.
- **MCCOY MILLWORK** 342 SE Caruthers St. (503) 236-0995, mccoymillwork.com This woodwork specialist is the place to come if you need parts for a missing colonnade or



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■ **MICASHADES** 242 E. Florence St., Stayton (877) 240-9807 micashades.com *Mica lamps shades don't just appear: they grow, layer by layer, in the hands of an artisan like Linda Whitehead in her shop in nearby Stayton. By appointment.*

■ **PRATT & LARSON CERAMICS** 1201 SE Third St. (503) 231-9464, prattandlarsen.com *Reta Larson and Michael Pratt's candy store for tile lovers and designers features proprietary lines plus selections from other artisans.*

■ **REJUVENATION** 1100 SE Grand Ave. (503) 238-1900 rejuvenation.com *Filled with overstuffed furniture, pottery, artwork, fun accessories like vinyl placemats, a fabulous salvage shop, and of course reproduction lighting, you could practically move in. Several smaller dealers have mini shops on the second floor.*

■ **SCHOOLHOUSE ELECTRIC** 330 SE MLK Jr. Blvd. (503) 230-7113, schoolhouseelectric.com *Accented with vintage student desks and lit with globe pendants, the showroom definitely plays up the romance of the old schoolhouse. You can see most of the line in one clear, clean space, including the famous hand-painted shades.*

■ **SIDESTREET GALLERY** 140 SE 28th St. (503) 233-1204, sidestreetgallery.com *Reta Larson selects the "creative, kooky, creepy, and cool" for this side-street emporium near East Burnside. Expect whimsy in the form of artwork, toys, home décor; a specialty are the rigid plastic "light ups" some of us remember from childhood.*

■ **SUSAN HEBERT IMPORTS** (503) 248-1111, ecobre.com *Susan offers pitchers, vases, lamps, and sinks of copper hand-hammered in Mexico through the internet and in local shops, including Rejuvenation.* ✦

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