

2015 Micro-Grant Winner Report #2

Project Title: “Bloody Wednesday Historical Marker”

By Ryan Wisnor, graduate student, Portland State University

The Bloody Wednesday Historical Marker Project examines how Pier Park and its Douglas-fir trees became symbolic witnesses to one of Portland’s most violent labor conflicts. Nestled in the traditionally working-class neighborhood of St. Johns, Pier Park was the site of “Bloody Wednesday” when the police fired upon union picketers during the 1934 West Coast longshore strike. This project utilizes previously recorded oral histories and archival research to publicly interpret the history of the 1934 strike, the Bloody Wednesday incident, and the Douglas-firs through the installation of a historical marker.

On July 11, 2015, Portland State University master’s student of public history Ryan Wisnor led a historical walking tour of Pier Park based upon his research on how the labor community accredited the trees of Pier Park for shielding the workers during the Bloody Wednesday shooting. Seventy-five people attended the tour hosted by the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association. Wisnor has since presented his research on the Pier Park trees at the American Society of Environmental History Conference in Seattle in April 2016 and at local community events.

The Bloody Wednesday Project’s next phase is to organize a planning committee to design, fundraise, and lobby the city for the installation of a historical marker at Pier Park. The \$250 grant awarded by the NHN for the Bloody Wednesday Project assists with the cost of drafting the design for a visible historical marker planned to be located along the bike and pedestrian path connecting Pier Park to Chimney Park. The goal is to create a marker that interprets the local historical significance of the 1934 strike and the Bloody Wednesday incident. Additionally, the marker will use archival photos, newspaper images, and oral histories to highlight how the memory of the incident is embedded within Pier Park’s Douglas-firs. The proposed marker will serve as an anchor for the memory of Bloody Wednesday and its significance in Portland’s history.