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NEWS RELEASE

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Independence Heritage Museum to Host Oregon Historical Society Traveling Exhibit *What If Heroes Were Not Welcome Home?* from July 1 to July 31, 2022

Independence, OR– June 20th, 2022 – In July, the Independence Heritage Museum will host the Oregon Historical Society’s traveling exhibit [What If Heroes Were Not Welcome Home?](#) This poignant display examines the prejudice that Japanese American veterans from Hood River, Oregon, experienced upon their return home from serving our country in World War II. These American citizens served heroically with the United States Armed Forces in the South Pacific and in Europe, yet many of their families were unjustly incarcerated in concentration camps on American soil.

Curated by Linda Tamura and Marsha Matthews, *What If Heroes Were Not Welcome Home?* was originally displayed in August of 2013 at the Oregon Historical Society in Portland in conjunction with the Smithsonian traveling exhibition [American Heroes: Japanese American World War II Nisei Soldiers and the Congressional Gold Medal](#). The Medal, awarded in 2011 to Japanese American World War II veterans in the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), traveled across the country in 2013, visiting only six cities in the nation.

This exhibition, uses first-hand accounts, photos, and scans of letters and historical documents to show how wartime events brought national notoriety to the small community of Hood River. Visitors will be invited to make meaningful connections between the past and present—exploring the promise and reality of American democracy and equality. One soldier depicted in the exhibit, George Akiyama, wrote in his diary that after the war, still wearing his uniform with the Silver and Bronze Star, he stopped to get a haircut at a downtown barbershop. The barber waved his razor, exclaiming, “I ought to slit your throat.” Visitors are asked to put themselves into his shoes, and the shoes of the other returning soldiers, and consider how they would have

reacted in that situation, and further, how they would handle similar situations of bullying or racism in the present day.

The Independence Heritage Museum is open Tuesday – Thursdays from 10AM – 6PM, and Friday & Saturday from 10AM – 4PM. We are closed Sunday & Monday.

Admission is always free, and donations are welcome.

About the Independence Heritage Museum

Independence was known as the “Hop Capitol of the World” from the 1890s to the 1940s, but the history of our City is so much more than just hops. Our museum was formally housed in the former First Baptist Church built in 1888. Today, we are located in a historic building that has served many purposes over the years, located across from the Post Office in Independence.

Come and visit the Independence Heritage Museum and learn about our diverse history, Oregon Trail roots, the Kalapuya Tribe, hop farms, local military service, and more.

The mission of the Heritage Museum is to collect and share the natural history and diverse cultural heritage of the river community of Independence. Visit us in the heart of the Independence National Historic District, at the corner of 2nd and C Streets where we are telling stories, inspiring memories, and preserving local history. www.orheritage.org

About the Oregon Historical Society

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state’s collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website (www.ohs.org), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon’s history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon’s cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.