

*Editor's note: FHFG presented Grave Matters Cemetery Tour on October 7, 2017. During this tour, actors – dressed in attire from the era – portray former Forest Grove area residents. FHFG and the author of this script retains all rights to this script. Written permission is required for using any parts of this script.*



## Dorothy Higby Seymour, Business Woman

April 21, 1871 – August 26, 1972

**Portrayed by** Kathleen Leatham

**Script written by:** Diane Morris

*“Woman facing grave turns around as audience members approach. She looks up in surprise, adjusts her hat, and acknowledges the group. The hat is pink. Note: originally I thought pillbox because of her 100th birthday-but have changed that because she is Grand Marshall of the Gay Nineties Parade....should be dressed in 1890's dress.*

*“Oh, Hello there, I didn't hear you coming, I was just getting ready for the celebration today. Quite an honor, you know. I'm going to be the Grand Marshall for the 1971 Gay Nineties Parade.”*

*Dorothy chuckles, then looks reflective.*

*I suppose anyone who lives to be 100 gets special honors and recognition... sort of a reward for living so long. My daughter-in-law Beatrice took me into Portland to get something special to wear for my 100th birthday party. We love to go to Meier and Frank for “Friday Surprise.” Beatrice asked if I'd like to get myself a black hat. Well, I just looked at her and said, “Heavens, no. Black is for OLD people.” And don't you know, we found a beautiful pink Lilly Daché hat.”*

*I've seen a lot of changes in my hundred years. I was born in Cedar Falls, Iowa, in April of 1871, but we moved to York, Nebraska when I was only a year old. Sad to say, my father died that autumn while he was building our frame house with my Uncle William. I grew up in York and taught school for seven years. After I married Edward, though, we moved to Deadwood, South Dakota. Sad to say, Deadwood was not a very suitable place to raise our family. You might say it was a “wild town”.*

*Goodness me, there were 27 saloons in Deadwood! We wanted to find a quiet town to raise our family, one with a good school for the children. We settled on Forest Grove because they have a fine school here, Pacific University.*

*And we had five good years here. Edward was a real estate developer, and I took care of Elizabeth, George, Dorothy and Victoria. Then came the hard time. Edward had taken little George on the Oregon Electric Train into Portland. When they were returning, Edward put little George safely on the car first, then stepped back down to pick up something that had fallen from his back pocket. When he tried to step up again onto the now-moving railway car, he slipped, and was run over, dying immediately, while everyone watched. I was at home, and a man from the train company rang my door. When I answered it, he said, "Ma'am, here's your boy. Your husband is dead."*

*What was I to do? Back in 1911, it wasn't like it is now, where women often work outside the home. But I had a family to raise; so I went to work for Mr. L. M. Graham, who was a lawyer here in Forest Grove. You've probably heard of him, he's the first man in the United States who thought of raising money for roads by using a gasoline tax.*

*Oh, and that reminds me. Edward was a very forward thinking husband, and he bought me a 1909 EMF Studebaker that I drove long before most women even had been inside a car, let alone knew how to drive one! In fact, I was the first woman in Oregon to get a chauffeur's license. I took people into Portland for \$5.00, and if they wanted to go all the way to the Columbia Gorge, why, then I'd charge them \$10.*

*Because there weren't any service stations nearby, we had to use a rubber hose siphon to fill our gas tank. I could only drive from April until October, because the roads were so muddy that we would have gotten stuck for sure. As it was, I was known as a reckless driver because I would sometimes take a corner at 15 miles an hour! It was a good thing that I was an independent woman, though, because sometimes the car would just stop in the middle of nowhere, and I'd have to patch it up with chewing gum!*

*I did many things in the business world, which as you know in those days was unusual for a lady. I started an insurance business, and I did taxes for people. I was also the Western Washington County registrar for vital statistics. One of my grandchildren once laughed and said that I was such a staunch Republican that I made all my children and grandchildren register as Republicans, too. Come to think of it, he wasn't far off in that regard...but then, that might have been an easier time when it came to voting. Nowadays politics seems to get all muddled up. I did just get a letter from President Nixon wishing me a happy birthday; that was a really nice surprise.*

*There was a lot to do in my life besides work, though. When I lived in the Midwest, I joined a group called PEO. My son George says PEO means "Portland Extremely Often," because I'm always going into Portland and around the state for PEO meetings. Actually, I was one of the founding charter members of the Forest Grove PEO Chapter D, and I was its very first president. I also helped organize other chapters around the state, and I was the state PEO president in 1915. I even served the national organization for six years. For those of you who don't know what PEO is all about, it is a women's group whose goal is to help women through education. We give scholarships and loans and help deserving women further their schooling. We have funded our own institution, Cottey College in Missouri, since 1927. I have been a PEO member for 81 years, and I still go to meetings!*

*I look on all of those women as my sisters, but I am involved in many other groups, too. I helped organize the Oregon Federation of Garden Clubs, and I am known all over the state for my own garden. I live at the corner of 18th and Birch, and I have a full acre of land planted in peonies, as well as other flowers and vegetables. I always have to get after my grandson Richard because he wants to plant strawberries among the peonies. I sell some of those peonies to folks for the Rose Parade, and give them to lots of groups in town for meetings, so the peonies come first!*

*I also have served on the School Board, and was chairman when the new high school was built. And I was treasurer of the Eastern Star. I'm a proud member of the Forest Grove Historical Society-though in the early days it was called the Tualatin Plains Historical Society- and I am also in the Pacific University Guild. They've started a scholarship*

*fund named for me....the Dorothy Seymour Scholarship Fund. I like to paint, and when I finish a painting, I sign it Dorothy H., because my maiden name was Higby.*

*I think probably one of the reasons I've lived this long is that I have had so many wonderful things to keep me busy. I'm lucky because I just never had a whole lot of illness in my family. I did sort'a have problems with my hearing, but I didn't want anybody to know I couldn't hear them.*

*At this point Dorothy takes her glasses off her face and shows them to the audience.*

*So when I first started having trouble hearing, my eyes were fine, but I got some hout the lenses in them, you know, the kind that have the hearing aid in the frames? These days my eyes aren't so good, so I need glasses to see, too, but otherwise, I'm in good health. I have to admit, though, I still have trouble hearing sometimes. Last Sunday I couldn't hear our minister at the United Congregational Church here in town. I looked at the person sitting next to me, and said, "Is he done yet?" Turns out Reverend Osburn hadn't finished, but after he heard me ask that, he wrapped it up right fast.*

*The newspaper lady came to interview me about reaching 100 years of age, and I think she was a bit surprised that I'm still going strong. People don't understand that while I may not be as quick as I once was, I can still get the job done. When my daughter Victoria brought her children up for my birthday party, she expected that I might be really slowing down. She kept asking, "Mother, do you know who I am?"*

*Mother, do you know who is speaking to you?" After a couple of times, I said, "Well, I know you're related to me; you keep calling me Mother."*

*So I just keep doing the things I do, and enjoying each day I've got. And when that newspaper lady asked me about how long I've lived and said how amazing it was, I just laughed, looked her in the eye and said, "Goodness knows how long I'll live. I feel like I've got a few years in me, yet." Now, if you all will excuse me, I have to finish getting myself ready for that parade.*