

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.



Eliza Marsh, Pastor's wife

August 26, 1841 – September 7, 1906

Portrayed by Maureen Andronis Hicks

Script written by: Rebecca Vetkos

Information for this script was written from letters archived at Pacific University Library: 1853-1879 Presidential Manuscript Collection

"My name is Mrs. Eliza Haskell Marsh. I am the wife of the Reverend Sidney Marsh who is the President of Forest Grove University.

He has been traveling back East and has been gone for a few months now. I received a letter from him today.

It is dated December 12, 1866

My dear Lizzie;

I am staying at your Uncles, but tomorrow shall find a place in Boston to stay.

Your letter has made me more cheerful than I have been since I left you.

I have concluded since I left, you should feed the baby; the nursing is too heavy a drain on your strength. You ought to exercise outdoors. If you walk out a little way each day use your muscles you would do better.

I am meeting with the Collegiate Society and businessmen. I hope to gain financial support and endowments for the University.

The work can be done but how soon I cannot tell.

Keep up heart and hope I shall get through. Kiss the dear children. Tell them that Papa wants them to be good. I think you will have to subdue Mary's self-will.

Love to all, yours faithfully,

Sidney

He has been working tirelessly, I worry about his health. His lungs are very sensitive to the climate. The family misses him. It saddens us we will be spending this Christmas without him.

My husband grew up in the East and came from a long line of prominent educators. He had relocated to the Oregon Territory as part of the American College and Educational Society. He was twenty-seven when appointed Principal of the Tualatin Academy in 1853. He became President when the Academy was renamed Pacific University in 1854.

I married my husband in 1860 in Ohio. I was 15 years younger.

Moving West to the Tualatin Plains was an adjustment for us. Forest Grove was almost inaccessible because of bad mountain roads. Within a radius of ten miles there were scarcely fifty voters. Forest Grove could hardly be called a village. The farmers lacked education and used the barter system in trade. How can one sheep or cow equal another? Standards of value in gold and silver should be used as payment in the market place.

Hailing from New England, my husband's mission was to achieve a stable society consistent with his upbringing.

We believed the best way to instill morality in the West was to educate women. Oberlin College in Ohio was the first College to admit women, a practice carried over by the founders of Pacific. "The proper education of a man decides the welfare of an individual; but educate a woman and the interests of a whole family are secured."

As President, he was the guiding force behind the University's early charter and direction, building it up from a little one-room school with a dirt floor. He traveled for many months at a time to gain financial security for the growing College. Over the years he has acquired many books for a fine library.

He was a Congregational Minister and he traveled preaching from Forest Grove to Eugene. He believed that the University should remain Christian but not restricted to anyone denomination.

In 1863, Harvey Scott, was the University's first, and only graduate of that year. His family owned the mill in town. He went on to be the Editor of the Oregonian Newspaper and founding President of the Oregon Historical Society.

By 1870 Pacific became one of the first universities in the United States to grant degrees to students from Japan. Three graduated in 1876. So far away from home Mr. Marsh and I became their second family.

My husband would lead the University for 25 years until his death. He died of tuberculosis in 1879, shortly after, I moved the family into the large Victorian house we had built next door to the University and lived there for many years. We had eight children, three died young.

I was very pleased to be at the groundbreaking of Marsh Hall in 1893. After my death in 1906 the house was purchased for the University and is now known as Knight Hall. According to a long-standing campus myth, the house is haunted by a female spirit named Vera.

Oh, look at the time! I must go and write my husband back! I'm sure he will be waiting to hear news from the Grove."