

Matthew O'Connor Murphy House Museum, St. Paul, Oregon
Open House, May 23 and May 24, 2026, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Matthew O'Connor Murphy House Museum in St. Paul, Oregon, will be open for touring from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 30, 2026, and Sunday, May 31, 2026. View historically significant St. Paul/French Prairie artifacts, ranging from furniture, ceramics, textiles, photos, etc. The house is maintained by the St. Paul Mission Historical Society (SPMHS). *Note:* The house is accessible only by the front porch with three steps. True to the original, there are no bathrooms.

Matthew O'Connor Murphy was born in 1830 in Galena, Illinois, the son of Daniel Murphy, a deputy surveyor for the General Land Office. He came to French Prairie in the Oregon Territory with his parents and siblings in 1851. His father filed a donation claim northwest of St. Paul, and Matthew filed a claim adjacent to his father's. Both Matthew and his father were hired to survey the newly opened territory.

Matthew married Ellen Costello on February 4, 1856, in the St. Paul Catholic Church. The event was recorded in the church register. *Note: Free copies of the transcribed St. Paul church register book will be available at the Open House.*

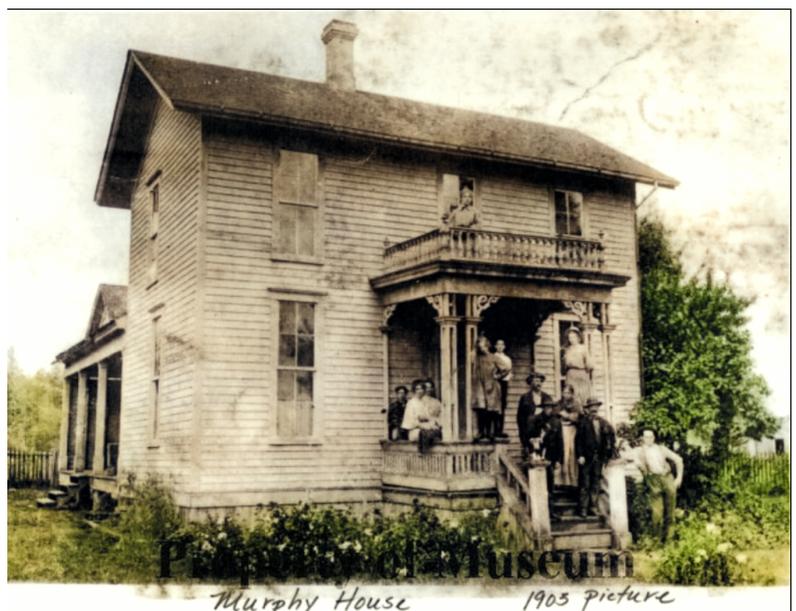
“On the 4th day of February, 1856, after one proclamation of the banns of marriage (a dispensation having been granted for the other two) between Matthew Murphy, son of Daniel Murphy and Catherine Dillon of this parish, on the one side, and Ellen Costello daughter of John Costello deceased and Ellen Burns, wife of John Gearin of this parish, no impediment being discovered, we the undersigned have received their mutual consent of marriage and have given them the nuptial benediction in presence of Andrew Murphy, Rebecca Shiel, and the parents and friends of the parties.”

The Matthew Murphy home was situated on the banks of the Willamette River. There were three rooms on the first floor – kitchen, dining room, and sitting room. Two bedrooms were on the second floor. In 1860, seven people were living in the house: Matthew and Ellen and their two children, James and Catherine, Matthew's father, Daniel, Ellen's brother, Michael Costello, and a T. Pitchie.

During the Flood of December 1861, Mrs. Murphy (Ellen Costello) and her newborn were placed on a mattress and carried out through a bedroom window. When the floodwaters receded, they found that the house, barn, and animals were gone.

A part of the original house was discovered in a nearby tree. It was moved to higher ground one mile east of the river and became part of the new house. In 1871, the house was moved another mile east to St. Paul Road, and a five-room addition was built in front of the original structure. The current kitchen, dining room, and two small upstairs bedrooms are from the 1861 structure, including part of the 1852 house.

1905 photo of the Murphy House,
spmhs.com.



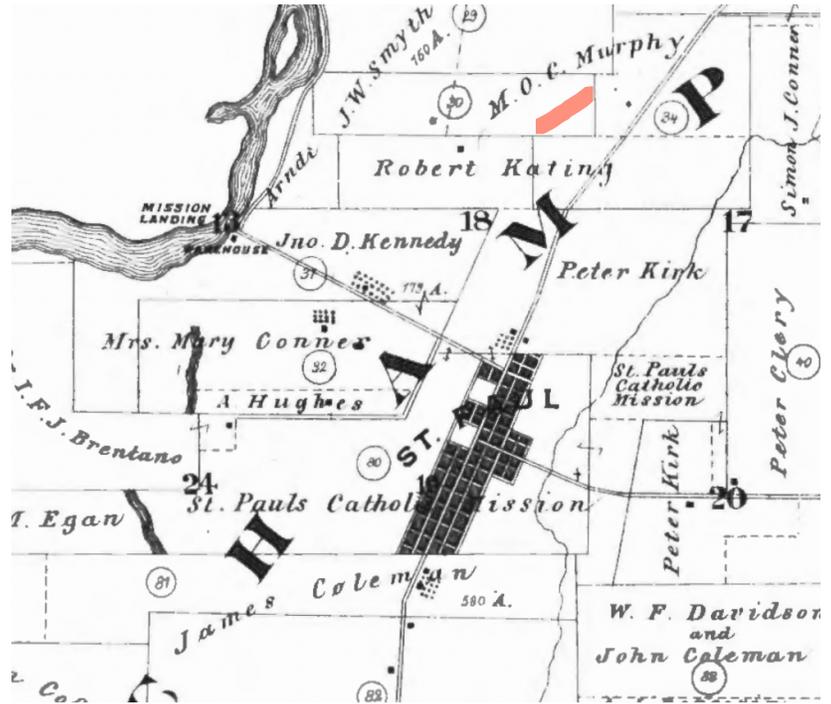
In 1870, there were seven children in the Murphy home. James, age fourteen was the eldest, and Lucy, age one, was the youngest. The Murphy real estate was valued at \$6,000, and the personal estate was valued at \$1,5000.

In 1880, the Murphy household consisted of the parents and nine children ranging in age from three to twenty-years of age. Hung Wong, a Chinese servant, was with the family.

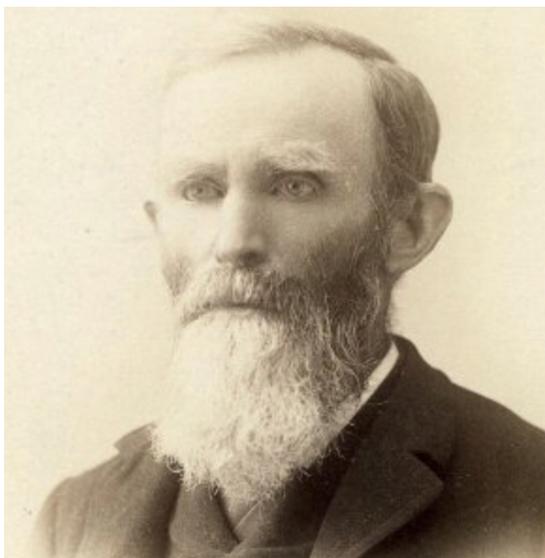
Matthew Murphy died on May 27, 1906 and is buried in the St. Paul Cemetery. His parents and other Murphy family members are also buried in the cemetery. *Note: for information about cemetery burials, see https://www.restinggardens.com/cemetery/st_paul_cemetery_st-paul_or_usa*

This map from the *1878 Historical Atlas of Marion and Linn Counties, Oregon*, shows the location of the M.O.C. Murphy donation claim.

In 1980, Mrs. Al Powers, an early SPMHS board member, purchased land located directly north of the Saint Paul Fire Department on Mission Ave., NE. The house was moved to the property, and she had the house restored.



Over the years, several volunteers worked on upkeep. In 2026, the front porch was repaired. The exterior and interior are scheduled to be painted, and the furnace is to be checked.



Matthew O. C. Murphy, spmhs.com



Ellen (Costello) Murphy, spmhs.com