

Cultural History of the Brian Booth State Park Vicinity
Prepared by Julie Osborne
October 2012

The Beaver Creek area has provided an abundance of resources that have drawn people to the area for thousands of years. The flora and fauna that thrive here have provided food, a way to make a living, and opportunities for recreation. In turn, cultural activities, including timber, agriculture, and recreation, have made imprints on the landscape that have changed over time.

During the early 1800s, two groups of indigenous people living in the area of Beaver Creek, the Yaquina and Alsea, occupied the coast between the present-day communities of Newport and Yachats. The most populous villages were along Yaquina Bay and Alsea Bay. The Beaver Creek area was important because the creek is the only major salmon stream between Yaquina and Alsea bays. It also contains a large Tule marsh, providing resources for food, medicine and materials for making clothing and shelter. Some boiled Tules, made syrup from them, or ate them peeled and raw. Some groups dried the "roots" and used the flour to make bread. Fiber was the most important use. Collected stems were fashioned into baskets, mats, bedding, hats, and bags. The Beaver Creek area was likely a seasonal Alsea community given that both fish and plant resources were extensively used by the tribes. Seal Rock was the site of an Alsea village (perhaps a seasonal village) known as Kitau.

The way in which occupation of the land changed over time was gradual with a slow infiltration of Anglo influence which began in earnest with the fur trappers, who, once they got to know the lay of the land, began running their own trap lines, instead of depending upon the native people selling them furs. Early trade along the coast included the Spanish, Russians, and British, among others, but by the mid 1820s the only two remaining trade competitors were the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) and the Pacific Fur Co. The HBC particularly had a significant impact on the Beaver Creek area. Alexander McLeod led an expedition from Fort Vancouver to Florence, and set up an encampment on Beaver Creek on June 29, 1826 for twelve days. There is a historical marker at Ona Beach State Park dedicated to his legacy as a major figure in the exploration along the Oregon Coast. McLeod was a significant figure in the HBC as a close ally of John McLoughlin, chief factor (superintendent) of the HBC based at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River.

McLeod noted in his journal that the Yaquina had encouraged them to trap beaver on their river, presumably in return for trade. However, he did not write about any negotiations for access to Alsea resources in the area and the extensive trapping and hunting may have been viewed by the Alsea as theft and trespass. It is also thought that a member of the party introduced tuberculosis to the local people, a disease that became prevalent on the Oregon coast by the 1830s. The intense fur trapping and introduction of contagious illnesses of the McLeod party probably precipitated the animosity of at least some indigenous people toward the fur trappers. Significant losses were incurred by the Yaquina Nation beginning in 1832. After two trappers had been killed, a retaliatory expedition was intended to send a message to Native people throughout the region that harming HBC employees could mean death for innocent people. For the Yaquina, the fur trappers' attack was an initial, wide-scale breakdown of principles of justice regarding international relations. The reports of this conflict vary from the killing of six men, to destroying nearly an entire Yaquina community, including men, women and children.

The area around and including Beaver Creek Natural Resource Area, Ona Beach, and Seal Rock, is within the ancestral territory of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians. The Coast

Reservation was established by an Executive Order signed by President Franklin Pierce November 9, 1855, however, the Senate failed to ratify the treaty. Originally, the Coast Reservation was located between Cape Lookout and Dunes City, for a distance of more than 100 miles along the coast, and 20 miles inland (approximately 2,000 square miles). Over the next 40 years, the lands were opened to settlement through the Oregon Donation Land Act (ODLA) of 1850 which promised title to large parcels of land to United States emigrants. Under ODLA, approximately 2,500,000 acres of native lands were claimed by settlers. In 1865, an Executive Order opened the Yaquina Bay region to settlement.

A.W. Chase was with the Coast Survey and assigned to lead the mapping of Yaquina Bay in 1868-69. In July of 1868, he spent time on Beaver Creek, and described the banks as being lined with dense forest. Chase's journal speaks of a great fire that occurred during the summer of 1868. It apparently covered a distance of about 200 miles along the coast, and lasted for several weeks. In October 1868, he and his crew stopped and climbed the top of the rock cliff to see the view of the ocean and rocks. Behind the rocky cliff at Seal Rock, he found an Indian warrior grave. His horse was killed over the grave and his last trophy, a huge pair of elk horns, was nailed up over the headboard, under which sixty half dollars were nailed to a post.

By 1900 the Coast Reservation was down to five square miles. Within the five square miles, the Siletz Agency (located on the Siletz River, north of Toledo) reported in 1892 that there were 568 people remaining from 28 different tribes, farms had been established and houses had been built in the "modern style." The "civilization" of the native population included teaching farming practices—fencing fields, plowing, sowing, and harvesting crops. Unfortunately, crops often failed which meant people had to hurry to gather and prepare salmon, venison, eels, seaweed, camas, hazelnuts, berries, etc., to make it through the winter. A boarding school constructed in 1890 included 120 acres for raising vegetables and keeping dairy cows to provide milk. The school was closed in 1908, which meant that the School Farm Reserve was considered surplus. In 1910, Congress authorized the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to sell timber reserves.

As the Coast Reservation was open for settlement, historical accounts describe a number of homesteading families that were drawn to Beaver Creek during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Lemuel Davis, who had property at the mouth of Beaver Creek (which is now Ona Park), homesteaded 160 acres of land three miles inland from the ocean. Sam Warfield heard about the Beaver Creek valley from Davis and settled in the area. Ephemus and Jennie Fanno came to area in 1878 and used a cabin left by the HBC as their first home. Mr. and Mrs. William Hulse purchased the Warfield homestead in 1890 and opened a post office on Beaver Creek, naming it Ona, the nick-name of the granddaughter of Sam Warfield. The John Guilliams family came to the south Beaver area and set up blacksmith shop, farmed and raised cattle. Fred Muir (from Switzerland) produced lumber from old growth trees, and raised dairy cows and churned cream into butter to ship to San Francisco from Yaquina.

The community included a one-room Baptist church, constructed of lumber that had washed up from a schooner that had wrecked just north of Beaver Creek in 1891. A socialist colony was formed on South Beaver in 1899, and a small building was erected as a meeting hall; later it was used as a school building. In 1909, Dr. Embee, a deputy of the state grange, organized the Lincoln Grange Lodge. Chaney Ohmart is credited with building many of the roads in the Beaver Creek community. He formed "The Ona Good Roads Club" where on the first Monday of each month every settler would take his team and equipment and donate the day working on the roads. They built the North Beaver Creek Road, and the County helped with the south part of the road.

Similar growth occurred at Seal Rock. The Seal Rock area was accessed by a ferry system that was in place to move passengers from the north shore of Yaquina Bay to the south shore. This allowed pioneers to have access to Seal Rock and in 1882; John S. George purchased a land patent from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management as a result of the Homestead Act. In 1883, James Brasfield made his way to purchase land in Seal Rock in hopes of taking advantage of the promise of the railroad and all it would bring. In 1885, John Buckley purchased a large plot of land in the hope of seeing the eventual expansion of the timber industry in Seal Rock. Having been the Benton County Treasurer, Buckley was privy to such plans and staked his claim early on.

The town site for Seal Rock was platted in 1887 when promoters, such as T. Egerton Hogg, began advocating the need for a passenger train line to extend the length of the coast. Upon this premise, the Brasfields began to develop their property, which initially consisted of 600 lots, and eventually the couple opened the "Seal Rock Resort Hotel", which became quite a popular resort destination and in its heyday. Unfortunately it was short-lived when the Brasfields fell into financial hardship and were forced to close the resort and sell their property.

In 1890, the Seal Rock post office was established. At the age of 50, having missed out on the resort and development opportunity, James W. Brasfield became Postmaster. Mail came in along the beach at low tide, as did a stage line bringing visitors, for there was no road to Seal Rock. The long journey usually meant visitors came to stay awhile. Oregon Governor William P. Lord bought land and built a cottage at Seal Rock. The Seal Rock General Store began serving the community in 1923, and continues to this day.

The events of World War I (WWI) also greatly impacted the area. When the war began, the Siletz people showed their patriotism. In 1913, native people had hosted the Wanamaker Expedition on Government Hill, in an early attempt to gain U.S. citizenship for all the Indian people. Many of Siletz men and boys signed up for the armed forces, and women and girls did their part for the war effort.

At that time, airplanes were being designed with increased engine size, speed, carrying capacity, maneuverability, and operating altitude. Internally, the airplanes were made from spruce wood, as were the wing spans and fuselage frames. Spruce was also used for laminating the wood airplane propellers. During the winter of 1916-17 the European aircraft makers had discovered that Sitka spruce was the very best material for airframe construction. Sitka Spruce was available only in the coastal areas of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska.

During WW1, a draft system was instituted and men were encouraged to enlist in special military units, such as Forestry Engineers and Army and Marine flying. They were sent to Europe to provide needed wood for trenches and railroads, and "flying machines." But there was not enough wood for the thousands of new airplanes they were constructing. The Spruce Production Division was implanted on the Central Oregon Coast to harvest Sitka Spruce timber for building airplanes. The Pacific Northwest became the primary supplier of aircraft-quality wood to Great Britain, France, and Italy by supplying Western Sitka spruce and cedar, New England and Southern spruce, and Douglas-fir and other substitutes. Sitka spruce was number one because it had the combination of necessary qualities of lightness, strength, resilience, long and tough fiber, and would not splinter when struck by a rifle bullet.

At the same time, the labor movement, beginning with the Industrial Workers of the World and expanding to the Lumber Workers Industrial Union, organized in 1917. This created a situation that required a diplomatic approach from Colonel Brice P. Disque, commander of the Spruce

Production Division assigned to harvest the timber in and around Beaver Creek. He handled the labor problem on three fronts. First he put soldiers into the camps and mills to undermine the threat of a strike. Then he established an 8-hour day and improved health and safety conditions so that the “radicals” would lose their strongest arguments for reform. Finally, he created the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen as a surrogate union which included both management and labor.

The soldiers had to develop new methods for extraction and transportation due to the sheer size of the large old-growth spruce trees. One of these methods was to split (rivet lengthwise) the fallen spruce into smaller (about 1/6th the size), more manageable pieces for easier transportation. The pieces were hauled from the forests by trucks or teams on wooden plank roads to existing highways and railways for shipment to the sawmills. The Spruce Division’s use of trucks and cars was the first large scale use of motor vehicles in the Pacific Northwest. They built roads for the trucks comprised of two planks wide on each side with a piece going across underneath because much of the ground was soft new ground.

The Division also initiated selective logging of the scattered spruce trees because Colonel Disque believed this seemed the only practical way of securing great quantities of high grade spruce in the largely inaccessible stands. Then they developed railroads that were intended to be temporary structures. To minimize cost and construction time, sections were built entirely on logs, piles, or stringers supported by log cribbing. Various camps were located along the railroad line for service men to cut timber. Camp 2, about two miles south of Ona, was where the first logging began. Camps were about two miles apart with about 200 men in each camp.

The Spruce Production Division left its mark on the land by constructing about 60 temporary military camps, scores of roads and bridges, and 13 railroads with approximately 139 miles of track. It was proclaimed the most ambitious railroad project ever attempted in the Pacific Northwest. Never before were so many miles of railroads conceived, located, surveyed, cleared, graded, constructed and completed all within one season. When the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, the timber activities in Lincoln County came to an abrupt halt. Everything laid idle during 1919 and most of 1920, when the Alsea Southern Railroad, the Toledo Mill, and the Blodgett Tract were sold to a group in San Francisco; the Pacific Spruce Corporation was incorporated in 1920.

The Spruce Production Division had a lasting impact on the lumber industry and unions. Northwest forests, and wartime technological developments in the aircraft industry, stirred new interest in potential military and civilian uses of the airplane. The Boeing Company headquartered in Seattle, as well as airplane manufacturers in the Midwest and East. South Beaver Creek Road, which runs along the south edge of Beaver Creek Natural Resource Area, follows the old railroad right-of-way. The longest trestle has been replaced with fill; however pilings of this trestle are still visible between the first and second sharp bends in the road, approximately 500 east of U.S. Highway 101.

Recreation also influenced the development of the area. Beginning in the 1880s, many visited the Oregon Coast for their health, believing that the climate was good for treating various ailments. Beaver Creek, Ona Beach and Seal Rock areas have a long history of being an area for people to come for retreats and recreation. One of the first major recreational developments was a sportsmen’s club (c.1912-1917) established by a group of businessmen and professionals from Portland and Corvallis, Oregon, and Washougal and Seattle, Washington. A small summer cabin on the property, known as the Satterlee place, was used as their headquarters until it burned down. A new building was constructed on the south side of Beaver Creek and used as a dining

and assembly hall. They erected tents, many that had floors, facing the creek, which at that time flowed into the ocean in a nearly straight line, without a bend in it as it did in 1950. Mrs. Lillian Kirkpatrick was the first “hostess” at the Club, which was reported to have been the site of many parties. The name of the organization was the Beaver Lake Club, although the site was marked on some old maps as “Hunters’ Club.” A number of circumstances including losing their water rights and members leaving to serve during WWI discouraged the owners and they lost interest in the Club and decided not to spend more money on improvements, so the site was abandoned.

The Beaver Crest Lodge and Coffee Shop located along Highway 101 opened on July 1, 1950 by I.B. Solberg of Corvallis and Lester Anderson of Vancouver. They advertised the Lodge as a great place offering “the utmost in comfort and enjoyment to vacationists and lovers of the great outdoors. A quiet slow-flowing stream originating in the surround low hills, Beaver Creek has always been considered one of the best fishing streams in Oregon.” The main building was 7,000 square feet, with a large lobby, a large dining room, a coffee shop, an office, and 16 double guest rooms. There was a large playground and picnic areas on the property. A home for a caretaker was erected on the property, and a duplex building south of the Lodge was used as residences for the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Solberg and Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, with an adjoining cottage for an office. Plans for a gasoline pump and service station, a large moorage to accommodate private craft as well as boats for rent and a swimming pool, did not reach fruition. The Lodge reportedly burned down in the late 1950s.

Historic Significance:

The Beaver Creek Natural Resource Area, Ona Beach, and Seal Rock have been shaped by the many uses of the land. The area represents a beautiful modified natural landscape that has been home to Native Americans, trappers, timber harvesters, farmers, and recreational uses over time. The park has no known significant cultural resources eligible for the National Register. However, cultural associations with the site and the scenic setting indicate that telling its stories is important and will help explain how the natural landscape has been transformed over time.

Archaeological Assessment:

An inventory of the park and a review of report findings were conducted in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). At this time, there are no known archaeological sites recorded within the area. A pedestrian survey of 3.5 acres of a portion of the area resulted in locating no archaeological resources. Given the history of use by Native American tribes, there is a high likelihood of archaeological resources within the Beaver Creek area.

References:

Byran, R. Scott. “Colonial Power and Indigenous Justice.” Oregon Historical Quarterly, vol. 109, no. 3. 2008.

Confederated Tribe of the Siletz Indians Web Page: <http://www.ctsi.nsn.us/chinook-indian-tribe-siletz-heritage/our-history/part-i/>

Case, Samuel, Commissary in Charge, Alsea Indian Sub-Agency. “Indian Agency Annual Report,” August, 10 1872.

Clark, Eugene, Agency Physician; L.C. Walker, Superintendent and Principal Teacher; Report of Siletz Agency, August 15, 1892.

Lincoln County Historical Society Collection:

Personal Histories, Undated, Typewritten:

Hallowell, Florence. "Early Days on Beaver Creek".

Tracy, Tricia. Beaver Creek area.

Twombly, Jennie. "Beaver Creek".

Unknown author. "Guilliams school on South Beaver Creek".

Subject File Folders:

Guilliams v. Beaver Lake Club Lawsuit
Spruce Production Division

Musing on Beaver Creek Marsh blog: <http://beavercreekmarsh.blogspot.com/2010/09/art-inspired-by-beaver-creek-state.html>

Palmer, Lloyd. "At Home in the Woods". December 2005.

Seal Rock History Web Page: <http://sealrockor.com/History.html>

Shetzline, David. "*Squippies*" in the outback of Oregon. Northwest Magazine, November 23, 1969.

The Waldport Record. Articles and advertisements for the Beaver Crest Lodge and Coffee Shop. 1950.

Williams, Gerald W. "The Spruce Production Division". Forest History Today. Spring 1999.