

Willamette Valley Voices: Connecting Generations

A publication of the Willamette Heritage Center

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IN THIS ISSUE

After a three year hiatus, the Willamette Heritage Center is pleased to again publish *Willamette Valley Voices: Connecting Generations*, a journal of scholarly writing pertaining to history and heritage in Oregon's Mid-Willamette Valley. Articles are written by scholars, students, heritage professionals, and historians - professional and amateur. Editions are themed to orient authors and readers to varied and important topics in Mid-Valley history.

This issue is published in conjunction with the Willamette Heritage Center's 2017 Winter Heritage Invitational Exhibit, *Nature and Community*. Both the exhibit and this issue explore the myriad relationships between Mid-Willamette Valley communities and the natural worlds they inhabit. Nature – more specifically: plants, animals, and other nonhuman elements of the natural world – has played a variety of roles in the region's history: as the background for developments in politics, society, and culture; as a source of identity for different groups of people; as an object upon which humans have acted; and as a force of its own, limiting and shaping human activity.

The articles in this issue approach *Nature and Community* from a variety of perspectives throughout time and place in the Mid-Willamette Valley and beyond. Augustine Beard's article, "Reclamation and Imagined Social Changes in Eastern Oregon, 1902-1925," analyzes the stories and narratives developed by irrigation boosters who tried – and often failed – to "reclaim" the dry lands of Eastern Oregon and attract Willamette Valley farmers to an environmental and social "agrarian utopia." Justin Devereaux explores an earlier effort to create such a utopia free of predators, examining the logic and language of EuroAmerican immigrants to Oregon who sought to remove the "Wolves in Paradise." Maddie Mott's article takes a "closer look" at the relationship between humans and microbes in a devastating epidemic in Oregon in 1830-1833, posing challenging questions about existing scholarly consensus on the role of malaria in that epidemic.

This issue includes a new feature: "Exhibit Reflections," in which students and scholars provide some thoughts about the WHC's Winter Heritage Invitational Exhibit. As in previous years, this exhibit was co-curated with a dozen other heritage organizations, each of which contributed a unique perspective on the historical interactions between nature and community in the Mid-Willamette Valley. For the "Exhibit Reflections" piece in this issue, we invited a group of environmental historians – scholars who focus on the relationships (both real and perceived) between humans and the nonhuman natural world – to visit the exhibit and reflect on how the exhibit's contributors displayed, explained, and told stories about "nature and community." The result

is a fascinating dialogue between different kinds of historians and audiences.

This issue was made possible thanks to a grant from the Pendleton and Elisabeth Carey Miller Charitable Foundation, funding from the City of Salem's Transient Occupancy Tax, the hard work and creativity of Editorial Assistant Kelly Lawton Jones, and the patience and persistence of the authors. On behalf of the editorial board, I hope you enjoy this issue of *Willamette Valley Voices*.

Bob H. Reinhardt

Editor, *Willamette Valley Voices*

Executive Director, Willamette Heritage Center

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RECLAMATION AND IMAGINED SOCIAL CHANGES IN EASTERN OREGON, 1902-1925

*Augustine Schuller Beard*¹

INTRODUCTION

“Before we know,” exclaimed the *Daily East Oregonian* in 1905, “the Columbia will be lifted from its bed and made to reclaim the adjacent deserts.”² The author, like many people at the time, held a conviction of the infinite aptitude of American agriculture and the coming transformation of the Great American Desert to the Garden of Eden, reclamation being the next step in the agrarian conquest.³ Between 1902 and 1929, boosters of irrigation, reclamation, and dry farming in eastern Oregon flooded Willamette Valley cities and the eastern United States with brochures and articles about the abundancy of water and land as well as the social changes these were bringing. These brochures helped encourage a new wave of homesteaders and migrants to eastern Oregon from the Willamette Valley and the eastern United States.⁴ The reality of irrigation and semi-arid agriculture in eastern Oregon mostly ranged from mediocre suc-

¹ The author would like to thank the University of Oregon’s Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program and the Vice President for Research and Innovation for their generous support of my research project. Their dedication to extending research opportunities to undergraduates is monumental in creating an academic culture at the University of Oregon that values critical thinking and prepares students for graduate work. I would like to thank my faculty mentor, Mark Carey for his guidance through the project. In addition, Kevin Hatfield, Jennifer O’Neal, and other librarians and archivists at the University of Oregon, Oregon State University, and Oregon Historical Society Research Library were vital to gathering secondary and primary source literature. Thank you to the reviewers for your helpful comments.

² “Millions in Water,” *Daily East Oregonian*, 8 May 1905, 3.

³ Various historians have documented this trope since the 1950s, see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Harvard University Press, 1950) and Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (University of Washington Press, 2009).

⁴ Barbara Allen Bogart, *Homesteading the High Desert* (University of Utah Press, 1987). In this essay, “eastern Oregon” refers to the counties east of the Cascade Mountains including Wasco, Jefferson, Deschutes, and Klamath Counties.

cess to outright failure—not without exceptions.⁵ Many Americans of the time shared the *Daily East Oregonian's* enthusiasm for reclamation encouraging the spread of homesteads across eastern and central Oregon. Journalists, engineers, investors, and other boosters wrote about various methods of turning deserts into arable land and overcoming the challenges of seemingly scarce natural resources. They articulated this faith in both religious and scientific terms boasting the power of reclamation and dry farming—a method of agriculture in arid regions without increasing the water supply.⁶ Almost every county boasted a grand irrigation project that would guarantee the transformation from the “arid waste” into a promising agricultural landscape.⁷ Experiences with these efforts at reclamation and dry farming varied. Klamath County, with a promising United States Reclamation Service project, saw its population almost triple between

⁵ Hugh T. Lovin, “Arid Land Reclamation in Eastern Oregon during the Twentieth Century,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 100, no. 4 (2009): 169–80. Lovin documents numerous reclamation projects in Oregon’s “dry side,” from 1900 to the post-WWII period. Other historians have begun to take interest in failed agricultural and reclamation projects in the early twentieth century. See Amanda Van Lanen, “‘Where Dollars Grow on Trees’: The Promise and Reality of Irrigated Farming in Central Washington, 1890–1910,” *Agricultural History* 88, no. 3 (2014): 388–406 and Jahue Anderson, “The Wichita Valley Irrigation Project: Joseph Kemp, Boosterism, and Conservation in Northwest Texas, 1886–1939,” *Agricultural History* 85, no. 4 (2011): 493–519.

⁶ A. King Wilson, “Irrigation Makes Desert Bear Fruit,” *Morning Oregonian*, 1 January 1904, 12. See also “Irrigation Adds Millions to Oregon’s Wealth,” *Morning Oregonian*, 1 January 1907, 14, and “Irrigation,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, 8 September 1907, 108. See Fiege, *Irrigated Eden* for more on the religious discourse around irrigation. For dry farming, see Obil Shattock, “Harney County’s Station,” in “Research Work Done by Farm Stations of Great Benefit,” *Sunday Oregonian*, 28 August 1921, 2, and Oregon and Washington Railroad and Navigation Company, “Central Oregon,” 1913, Pacific Northwest Promotional Brochures Collection, Mss 6000, Oregon Historical Society Research Library. Hereafter, this collection is referred to as PNW Brochures.

⁷ For “arid waste” reclamation quotation, Columbia Southern Irrigation Company, “Crook County, Government Irrigated Land,” 1915, 10. See also Deschutes Irrigation and Power Company, “Free Homes for You in Oregon,” c. 1905; Burns Commercial Club, “Harney County Oregon: Reliable Information for the Homeseeker,” 1910; Malheur County Chamber of Commerce, “Malheur County: Home of the Alfalfa,” 1906; and United States Reclamation Service, “Umatilla Irrigation Project, Oregon,” 1909, PNW Brochures.

1900 and 1920.⁸ The adjacent Lake County, however, enticed settlers to take nearly 1,500 homesteads in the same period, only to have many of them abandon the plots due to the failure of agriculture in that land.⁹



Seeding and Harrowing Wheat Field. Eastern, Oregon 1915. Oregon State University Special Collections & Archives Research Center, PO62: Acc95:044.

As much as the technical history of the development of irrigation, historians have taken interest in the role of myth, imagination, and symbolism associated with reclamation and agriculture in the twentieth century.¹⁰ Mark Fiege, for example, demonstrates that Idaho farmers and reclamationists developed “hybrid landscapes,” that combined components both the natural and artificial worlds. While numerous historians have detailed the ways in which boosters and farmers conceived of the changing environmental landscape in relation to irrigation and reclamation, fewer have focused on how people imagined the

⁸ Historical Census Browser. Retrieved 3 September 2016, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>.

⁹ Bogart, *Homesteading the High Desert*, provides a rich cultural history of Lake County in this period, drawing on oral and archival history.

¹⁰ Fiege, *Irrigated Eden*.

changing social landscape. The shift in attention from discourse concerning the natural landscape to the realm of class and social conflict will help historians better understand how homesteaders, investors, and reclamationists understood themselves as situated in broader social and historical contexts. This essay uses eastern Oregon during its last wave of homesteaders between 1902 and 1929 as a case study to examine how boosters and farmers understood social change. My source base includes newspaper articles that targeted people in the Willamette Valley and promotional brochures that would have targeted people out of the state as well as those in western Oregon. The authors of these materials ranged from railroad companies, engineers, journalists, commercial clubs, and others whom I hereafter collectively refer to as “boosters.” Their belief in abundant water and soil fertility in the region led them to two conclusions about society and social change: first, that society progresses through stages of history with agrarian municipalism as the final development; and second, that the semi-arid agriculture would provide a “safety valve” relieving western Oregon and the eastern United States of class conflict. In sum, they maintained a deterministic understanding of the relation of people to their environment, devoid of agency from the human or natural worlds. In the end, the boosters’ vision never came to fruition because neither the environment nor the people cooperated with their imagined landscapes.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Writers presented historical narratives in which homesteaders and irrigation projects fit into a natural trajectory justifying settlement and reclamation. With United States Census Bureau declaring the closure of the American frontier in 1890, boosters needed to justify the seemingly anachronistic timing of the homesteading project in the early twentieth century.¹¹ Two narratives emerged from this notion of history as a series of inevitable developments. The first linked the irrigation projects to the classical era and ancient Mediterranean empires. In this narrative, irrigation was a process that followed civilization as it had spread across the world and followed American

¹¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (Penguin UK, 1893).

settlers across the West.¹² One writer compared American westward expansion to the Hyksos shepherd kings who came from East of Egypt, colonized the Nile River, and developed the “first known irrigation enterprise.”¹³ In the same way that the Hyksos hailed the Nile as a “River of Gold,” and turned it into the “granary of the world,” Oregonian homesteaders would see the Deschutes River as a “River of Gold,” and make it the granary of American West.¹⁴

Projecting stories of the past onto contemporary conquest also gave boosters of eastern Oregon homesteading an opportunity to justify the more morally questionable aspects of settler-colonialism. “With the dawn of history armies of invasion and conquest are found,” declared one writer, “and in modern times great nations help themselves to morsels of choice territory rightfully belonging to some lesser light.”¹⁵ Rome, according to the author, expanded its territory without limitations, while contemporary Europe looked “longingly and with hungry paunch at the tempting lands of Asia,” “infested by the heathen Chinese.”¹⁶ The United States, meanwhile, was conquering land through reclamation and semi-arid agriculture and acquiring land much more valuable than that in Asia.¹⁷ This theme of imagining parallels to ancient empires removed human agency from colonialism, casting it as a natural process for civilized states. Further, it portrayed colonized peoples as a “lesser light” who “infested” their own lands. Irrigation and reclamation, while not the most horrifying aspects of American conquest, offered a chance to justify settler-colonialism as necessary for civilization by drawing imagined parallels to past empires. This narrative sought to convince audiences that they too could embed themselves in this triumphal historical determinism if only they took up a homestead in eastern Oregon.

The second narrative looked to more recent history and explained ex-

¹² One such example is “Irrigation,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, 8 September 1907, 108.

¹³ R. G. Callvert, “Deschutes Known as River of Gold,” *Morning Oregonian*, 1 January 1910, 6.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “New Territory Acquired by Conquest of a New Sort,” *Sunday Oregonian*, 20 August 1905, 18.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

pansion and cultivation East of the Cascades as the last step in American westward expansion. A promotional pamphlet from the Umatilla River Water Users' Association advertising the benefits of irrigation in Umatilla articulated this narrative: "Since first Aryan ancestors of our race began to move westward over Europe they have been seekers for homes, and, founding them, have built up great nations. Here, where once roamed a few savage Indians and the wild animals from which they arrived a precarious living, is developing an Inland Empire along the waters of the great Columbia river and its tributaries."¹⁸ Thus, irrigation, dry-farming, and high desert homesteader were all part of the broader history of colonialism dating back to the "Aryan" westward expansion across Europe. This imagined place, the "Inland Empire," was only the most recent agrarian nation that white settlers had established.¹⁹ This idealized version of American history as a series of successive agricultural empires provided new homesteaders the assurance that this was a tried and tested process. One pamphlet recalled Horace Greeley's mandate, "young man go West and grow with the country," claiming that if Greeley were alive then, he would "point the young man to the rich valleys of central Oregon," once again insisting that Oregon east of the Cascade Mountains was the next logical region for the spread of American colonialism.²⁰ Others made the same reference to an idealized age of Western settlement. One 1924 brochure advertised homesteading land "on the 'old Oregon trail.'"²¹ A Baker County promotional brochure encouraged homesteaders to seek the advantages of the "great 'last west.'"²² These examples presented eastern Oregon as the only remaining virgin territory for white settlers to occupy and conquer.

Another piece to this Westward expansion historical narrative was the

¹⁸ Umatilla River Water Users' Association, "Umatilla River Water Users' Association, Hermiston, Oregon," 1906, PNW Brochures.

¹⁹ Katherine G. Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire* (Cornell University Press, 1997).

²⁰ Oregon and Western Colonization Company, "Harney Valley Oregon," c. 1914, PNW Brochures.

²¹ Baker County Chamber of Commerce, "Land of Plenty: Baker County," 1924, PNW Brochures.

²² Baker County Commercial Industrial Committee, "Resources of Baker County, Oregon," 1908. PNW Brochures.

“passing of the Oregon cattle king,” as journalist Randall Howard put it in 1909. Howard explained that while the cowboy had been “one of the greatest civilizers in the early days of Oregon,” the cattle barons of Eastern Oregon were seeing their last days. It was the cowboy, wrote Howard, “who helped to drive back the hostile Indians and to root out the early stock-rustler.”²³ He wrote that the cattlemen courageously formed community militias to combat a “hostile Indian uprising,” likely referring to the devastating wars with the Northern Paiute who fought to retain their lands against the settlers in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴ But Howard believed that just as the cattle kings replaced the Indians, the new homesteaders and irrigators would replace the ranchers. Another writer told a story of a homesteader wagon traveling through Eastern Oregon and stopping to exchange greetings with a cattle boss. As the wagon rode off, the homesteader and the cattle boss both exclaimed, “poor chap,” as both saw the other’s use of the land to be a short-lived endeavor.²⁵ In this way, the westward expansion and uncrowning of the cattle king would offer a new era to the irrigation investor and the homesteader.

Other boosters took a different approach to this same narrative, framing the new wave of homesteaders as rugged individuals coming to break monopolistic holdings on cattle. Further, they often insisted that ranching would forever continue, but would soon take a secondary position behind crop cultivation. A Burns Commercial Club promotional brochure proclaimed, “Harney County today is in an active transitory stage, the breaking up of vast corporate holdings, pending their colonization and the acquisition of the public domain under the liberal and beneficent provisions of the public land laws.”²⁶ The bro-

²³ Randall R. Howard, “Passing of the Oregon Cattle King,” *Sunday Oregonian*, 14 November 1909, 2.

²⁴ For the most comprehensive work on the war with the Northern Paiute see Gregory Michno, *The Deadliest Indian War in the West: The Snake Conflict, 1864-1868* (Caxton Press, 2007). For much better analysis telling the story from the perspective of the Northern Paiute, see Jim Gardner, *Oregon Apocalypse: A Hidden History of the Northern Paiutes*, forthcoming.

²⁵ Anne Shannon Monroe, “Trials and Triumphs of Homesteading Are Pictured,” *The Sunday Oregonian*, 28 June 1914, 12.

²⁶ A. W. Gowan, “Land Values Harney County,” in Burns Commercial Club, “Harney County Oregon: Reliable Information for the Homeseeker,” 1910, PNW Brochures.

chure presented cattle raising as peripheral to the cultivation of crops: “Harney valley has many tributary valleys and nearly every acre of these valleys is tillable land. The remaining territory of Harney County is admirably adapted for grazing purposes.”²⁷ Similarly, the Oregon and Western Colonization Company sought to bring settlers to their newly purchased land in Harney, Crook, and Malheur Counties. It could not afford prospective settlers perceiving any conflict with those already living in the region. The company explained that while the county was “since its earliest settlement a great ranch country,” with free ranges and cattle men rounding up their livestock only once or twice a year, all this changed, “with the settlement of the country and the coming of the railways.” The new semi-arid agricultural methods would produce a vast surplus of alfalfa that could “sustain more and better animals than ten times the amount of land under the former system.”²⁸ Thus, to the more moderate boosters, the end of the cattle king did not mean the end of the cattle industry, only the corporate holdings that had dominated during the late nineteenth century.

The reality of the relation between the cattle kings and homesteaders, not surprisingly, was more complicated than a natural passing of the former. This narrative was in a sense a response to a long history of conflict between homesteaders and cattle ranchers in southeastern Oregon. Eastern Oregon, and especially Harney County, had long been the famed home of “cattle barons” who controlled large herds on the open range. The cattle ranchers often conflicted with others seeking to use the resources from range wars with shepherds and court battles over water rights.²⁹ Occasionally, these conflicts broke into violence such as the case of cattle company owner Peter French’s murder in 1897 by an angry homesteader demanding a road through French’s land.³⁰ At the beginning

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Oregon and Western Colonization Company, “Harney Valley Oregon,” c. 1914; “Harney County Oregon: Reliable Information for the Homeseeker,” 1910, PNW Brochures.

²⁹ For legal battles over water rights, see Nancy Langston, *Where Land and Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed* (University of Washington Press, 2009), 58–101. For an account of a “range war” between sheep and cattle men see Jeffrey Ostler, “The Origins of the Central Oregon Range War of 1904,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (1988): 2–9.

³⁰ Langston, *Where Land and Water Meet*, 62.

of the twentieth century, just before the surge of homesteaders and reclamationists, some cattle ranchers colluded with homesteaders to “fake” the requirement of proving up the land and secure Homestead Act and Desert Land Act land for the sake of preserving their cattle empires. Because of relaxed guidelines and enforcement by the Land Office, individuals could obtain patents and sell off the land to corporations without hardly living on or improving the land.³¹ Using the Progressive Era rhetoric of conservationism and anti-corporation sentiment, critics took to the press to expose the illicit behavior of the cattle kings. In 1905, one journalist wrote that the principle use of homesteads was, “for the fraudulent acquirements of cattle and sheep ranges and the building up of big land holdings by individuals and corporations that are protecting themselves from the gradual contraction of the free range.”³² Another journalist reported that in Northern Montana, one cattle company acquired half a million acres from Desert Land Act fraud.³³ In Oregon at least, the government resolved fraud through the courts and increased enforcement of the homesteading acts.³⁴ This conflict over the use of the homesteading act helped inform the anti-monopolist and anti-corporate discourse that the boosters used to write away the cattle ranchers soon after.

Prominent cattle company owners varied in their ability to adapt to the sudden influx of migrants and homesteaders. Some cattlemen who controlled vast expanses of land, such as Bill Brown, truly did pass in the wake of incoming settlers. Brown saw the gradual breakup and shrinkage of his range empire which had blanketed across Crook, Harney, Lake, and Deschutes counties.³⁵ Some cattle ranchers, on the other hand, adapted well to the coming settlers. The famed cattle king Bill Hanley embraced the new era of settlement, investing in irrigation projects and other entrepreneurial ventures that would profit from the influx of homesteaders. Historians Peter Simpson and Nancy Langston note that those who

³¹ “Free Homestead Fraud,” *The Morning Oregonian*, 25 April 1902, 10.

³² Richard Hamilton Byrd, “The Public Land Frauds,” *Oregon City Courier*, 15 December 1905, 1.

³³ “Secrets of the Land Frauds of the West,” *The Sunday Oregonian*, 29 November 1903, 29.

³⁴ John Messing, “Public Lands, Politics, and Progressives: The Oregon Land Fraud Trials, 1903-1910,” *Pacific Historical Review* 35, no. 1 (1966): 35–66.

³⁵ Phil F. Brogan, *East of the Cascades* (Binford & Mort, 1976).

really won in the conflict between ranchers and homesteaders were businessmen with diversified investments.³⁶ In any case, the homesteading and semi-arid agriculture did not usher in a new historical era precisely as the boosters had hoped.

The historical narratives, alluding to both ancient and recent past, sought to portray the newest settlers as heirs to a long progression of civilization arriving to fully realize the capacity of eastern Oregon's natural resources. This served two purposes. First, these narratives "emptied" eastern Oregon of its inhabitants – indigenous peoples and ranchers – and opened it up for the homesteaders. Second, the narratives established that human and environmental agency could not tamper with the natural progression of events. These were not suggestions for one possible eastern Oregon; to the boosters, these were social facts of agricultural history. In reality, boosters underestimated or underemphasized the complex web of social and natural relations in the region.

CLASS CONFLICT

In addition to the historical narratives, boosters offered eastern Oregon as a way to mitigate social conflicts they perceived in western Oregon and the eastern United States. The boosters painted a picture of eastern Oregon as an emerging social paradise due to new innovative natural resource management and engineering. They presented homesteading in eastern and central Oregon as a way to escape wage labor, crowded cities, and poverty. A Morrow County booster, J. A. Woolery, explained the condition of homesteading and capitalism in western Oregon and the eastern states: "The laboring man has seen the daily wage diminish and the price of land increase until the inspiring hope of someday owning a little farm of his own has well-nigh dropped out of his calculations."³⁷ This problem was rectified in the cheap, fertile lands that Woolery offered prospective settlers in Eastern Oregon. Writer and prominent booster from Bend, George Palmer Putnem wrote that factory workers and "city and book-bred tenderfoots" in the Willamette Valley could find "freedom of the soil" in central and eastern Oregon.³⁸

³⁶ Langston, *Where Land and Water Meet*, 56. Peter K. Simpson, "The Social Side of the Cattle Industry," *Agricultural History* 49, no. 1 (1975): 39–50.

³⁷ J. A. Woolery, "Oregon Wheat Lands," c. 1905, PNW Brochures.

³⁸ George Palmer Putnem, "Homeseeking in Central Oregon," *Sunday Orego-*

This discourse immediately established the region as a land free of class conflict and alienation. Homesteaders could work for themselves and maintain the fruits of their labor attaining liberty unfound in old homestead tracts and cities.

In a much less subtle manner, many writers presented homesteading as a get-rich-quick scheme. One brochure caught the readers' eyes with a flashy design proclaiming, "homeseeker, you can get rich quicker by investing in Oregon wheat lands than anything anywhere else."³⁹ Authored by J. A. Woolery, the preface of the brochure assured that Woolery had "aimed to be conservative in all his statements."⁴⁰ Another brochure titled, "Free homes for you in Oregon," advertised that Oregon was a land where "we neither swelter with heat nor suffer from cold, and where THERE ARE NO CROP FAILURES [emphasis in original]."⁴¹ These writers explicitly stated what others would only suggest: that an abundance of natural resources in eastern Oregon was easily accessible and anyone could escape the instability of urban capitalism.

More frequently than the "get rich quick" rhetoric of some brochures, journalists and boosters would entice urban laborers through the construction of a "virtuous poor man" discourse. Journalist F. G. Burroughs explained the effectiveness in advertising to poor laborers: "In at least seven cases out of ten these settlers are without means. They come from the East or Middle West, usually, and more often than not the cost of bringing themselves and families, their household goods and whatever stock they may possess eats into their little hoard so that when they arrive at the promised land they possess little but boundless ambitions, sturdy bodies and good consciences."⁴² Another booster wrote of "wise men" fleeing the "overcrowded cities," "wage-slavery," and the "treadmills

nian, 10 October 1909, 4.

³⁹ J. A. Woolery, "Homeseeker: You can Get Rich Quicker by Investing in Oregon Wheat Lands Than in Anything Anywhere Else: Morrow County is the Place," c. 1905, PNW Brochures.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Deschutes Irrigation and Power Company, "Free Homes for You in Oregon," c. 1905, PNW Brochures.

⁴² F. G. Burroughs, "Homesteading Under Irrigation Trying Ordeal, But Can Be Done," *Sunday Oregonian*, 23 November 1913, 10.

of business,” and “returning to the land to be freemen.”⁴³ Homesteading and semi-arid farming in eastern Oregon thus seemed to offer an escape from the monotony of wage labor and capitalism itself. Homesteading was the ideal social ladder for any ambitious worker. Under this discourse then, the migrants were not desperate victims; they were wise men making a sound economic decision.

Government organizations, such as the United States Reclamation Service (USRS)—the predecessor to the Bureau of Reclamation—sought to dispel the “get-rich-quick” and “virtuous poor man” accounts, insisting that settlers must possess capital before migrating to eastern Oregon. One Umatilla USRS brochure warned, “do not make the mistake of thinking you can come to the [Umatilla Irrigation] project without any capital or equipment, settle on a homestead and make a success.”⁴⁴ It insisted that prospective homesteaders ensure they were financially secure before coming to eastern Oregon: “you will need a home to live in; fence, a well, barn, provisions for family and feed for stock for at least one year; farm machinery, tools, seed, etc. You will be unable to secure credit at the local stores, as you are unknown, and you have nothing to mortgage on a homestead. Consequently, your capital should be sufficient to enable you to bring your farm to a paying basis, and this will require at least one year.”⁴⁵ Rather than an easy escape from wage labor and poverty, the USRS presented a sobering picture of the financial investment needed for a homestead. However, in the early twentieth century, the USRS in Oregon only had irrigation projects in Klamath and Umatilla county. Others boasting irrigation projects such as those in Deschutes and Malheur counties, did not have the security of the federal government. Further, the USRS’s projects were much more successful than the privately-backed projects in other counties.⁴⁶

Ironically, then, the regions with the most economic security produced brochures that could dissuade prospective settlers, while riskier irrigation proj-

⁴³ Umatilla River Water Users’ Association, “Umatilla River Water Users’ Association, Hermiston, Oregon,” 1906, PNW Brochures.

⁴⁴ United States Reclamation Service, “Umatilla Irrigation Project, Oregon,” 1909, PNW Brochures.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Lovin, “Arid Land Reclamation in Eastern Oregon during the Twentieth Century.”

ects claimed that no financial backup was necessary. Additionally, newspapers and journalists almost ubiquitously supported the image of the virtuous poor man. The closest they came to the USRS's account were stories of "trial and triumph," where homesteaders experienced hardship at first, but persevered and prevailed.⁴⁷ Thus, exaggerations of the success one could have on an eastern Oregon homestead or irrigation project dominated the promotional materials.

The boosters believed that their construction of an eastern Oregon without class conflict would appeal to their urban audiences. With discourse ranging from the "virtuous poor man" to alleged get-rich-quick opportunities, they sought to open up eastern Oregon as a "safety valve" to the class conflict they believed to plague the western Oregon and eastern United States cities. Thus, the boosters developed a contrasting image between eastern Oregon and elsewhere. While eastern Oregon was a classless, agrarian region, the cities of the Willamette Valley and other states were rife with capitalistic exploitation and alienation. This discourse was prolific partly because private investors backed most of the irrigation and homesteading projects in eastern Oregon, and the USRS only supported two—one in Umatilla County and one in Klamath County. While the USRS was more pragmatic and calculated in its rhetoric, other private investors instilled a belief that a migrant could make it in Oregon without any prior experience with farming and without capital to support themselves.

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

The boosters either neglected or failed to understand the environmental complexity of eastern Oregon, suggesting it was climatically homogenous. Prospective homesteaders may have seen brochures advertising Lake County and Umatilla County side-by-side with both exclaiming the success of wheat production in their regions. Lake County however, is one of the driest regions in Oregon while Umatilla sits on the Columbia Plateau and had one of the most successful irrigation projects in Oregon of its time. Whether or not the boosters understood this significant distinction is unclear, but the effect was to sug-

⁴⁷ Anne Shannon Monroe, "Trials and Triumphs of Homesteading Are Pictured," *The Sunday Oregonian*, 28 June 1914, 12. And F. G. Burroughs, "Homesteading Under Irrigation Trying Ordeal, But Can Be Done," *Sunday Oregonian*, 23 November 1913, 10.

gest an agriculturally and socially homogenous region east of the Cascades.⁴⁸

The lived experience for many homesteaders differed greatly from the idealized eastern Oregon the boosters envisioned, especially in places like Lake County. Lake County, like everywhere else in eastern Oregon, appeared in the press as land rich in agricultural resources and equitable social relations. Retrospectively, one homesteader remarked “you thought you was getting a gold mine,” suggesting that the promotional material did have an impact on the social imaginations of the settlers.⁴⁹

However, the rise and fall of Lake County’s homesteader population is likely the most dramatic. Settlers rushed to the area eager to make a living off the land, but when the reclamation project failed, the reality of the semi-arid en-



Fort Rock, Lake County, Oregon, 1908. Oregon State University Special Collections & Archives Research Center, WilliamsG_SEO_Fort Rock.

vironment set in.⁵⁰ One homesteader recalled a family that moved out from Philadelphia after selling all their possessions. He explained the family “just didn’t have any money to go back to Philadelphia on, so they just had to stay. Had no idea how they would survive out here either.”⁵¹ Another explained that many people moved out ex-

⁴⁸ George H. Taylor, *The Climate of Oregon: From Rain Forest to Desert* (Oregon State University Press, 1999).

⁴⁹ Hazel Ward in Barbara Allen Bogart, “Interview with Hazel and Maurice Ward,” *Barbara Allen Bogart papers*, Coll. 392, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

⁵⁰ Bogart, *Homesteading the High Desert*.

⁵¹ DeFrost Stratton in Barbara Allen Bogart, “Interview with DeFrost and Esther Stratton,” *Barbara Allen Bogart papers*, Coll. 392, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

pecting to grow wheat, but could not make a living.⁵² Josephine Gordon, who homesteaded with her family as a girl, told of a similar experience, explaining that those who came from western Oregon had an easier time returning home: “Some of them came from Portland and still had their homes and jobs and could go back, but we couldn’t because we’d sold everything and there was nothing to go back to.”⁵³ In contrast from the trying, but noble, endeavor that would ultimately end in fulfillment in the agrarian ideal, many homesteaders gambled everything and lost.

Although the boosters and homesteaders alike maintained the conviction that eastern Oregon could change through manipulation of its natural resources, these homesteaders were not a homogenous group nor passive victims. Certainly, many homesteaders were poor, had no experience with farming, and landed in regions ill-suited for agriculture. While some could return, for many families such as Josephine Gordon’s, there was no choice but to make a living on the homestead. When dry farming or irrigation did not work, many adapted to raising livestock or worked in nearby towns. Other homesteaders came with experience with farming or were fortunate enough to find land in Umatilla or Klamath Counties where the USRS had successful projects. Others still had no intention of farming and used homesteading as an investment, hoping the price of the property would increase over time. Finally, there were adventure seekers who sought to challenge themselves with semi-arid farming in eastern Oregon.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the homesteading and reclamation projects in the early twentieth century produced as many stories of social change as environmental change, and the beliefs that journalists, engineers, and investors held about the abundance of natural resources in eastern Oregon lead them to imagine idealistic communities as well. Perhaps the most prominent discursive tool was the use of historical narrative. Writers believed that reclamation and homesteading

⁵² Josephine Gordon in Barbara Allen Bogart, “Interview with Josephine and Alice Gordon,” *Barbara Allen Bogart papers*, Coll. 392, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

⁵³ Ibid.

both reflected a natural trajectory of history characteristic of the American West and Western civilization as a whole. They associated the new irrigation projects with classical history, explaining their use by Egyptian dynasties. Further, they used the narrative to explain the shift from cattle kings to farmers to justify a new economic landscape. Seeing crop cultivation and the cattle ranging as incompatible in the same space, the writers sought to rationalize the “disappearance” of the latter. They developed the “passing cattle king” narrative in which the old barons of the industry passively disappeared, waving good-bye to the newcomers. In reality, the relation between homesteading and cattle ranges was much more complex. Further, the boosters perpetuated an understanding of the west as a “safety valve” for the unemployed or discontented working class. Through this, they understood class conflict in America to take the form of mass migration and fulfilment of the agrarian ideal. Workers escaped wage slavery not through revolution, strikes, or unrest, but by taking up a homestead.

The boosters converged two ideological forces of their time period. The first was an urge to continue agricultural settler-colonialism that found success in other regions such as the Willamette Valley in the previous century. Second, like many of their contemporaries, the boosters believed in the infinite capacity of western civilized peoples to “improve” the land – regardless of the given environmental conditions. Furthermore, they capitalized on a perceived dissatisfaction with urban life and wage labor. They thus constructed an eastern Oregon where the “hybrid landscape” of irrigation created a new agricultural empire free of the strife of metropolitan capitalism, and insisted that the natural progression of history had ordained this new era.

Neither the environment nor people perfectly cooperated with what the boosters had in mind for eastern Oregon. The reclamation projects turned up more empty pockets than water in places like Harney or Lake counties. Some cattlemen used land fraud to maintain rights to their land, while some battled homesteaders in court over water rights. Others adapted as entrepreneurs and welcomed homesteaders while maintaining economic dominance. In any case, they did not passively recede when the homesteaders arrived as the boosters hoped they would. Further, more often than not, the sites where boosters and capitalists attempted reclamation to entice homesteaders were unsuited for the grand projects they had in mind.

We cannot know whether the boosters genuinely believed every claim they made about historical development and class. It may have all been a hyper-

bolic sales pitch to compete with other regions with reclamation projects. However, the ubiquity and consistency of the messaging suggests that the boosters' discourse at least resembled, and perhaps exaggerated, the values the general public held at the time. In all, boosters sought to prove more than the technical possibility of reclamation to transform the landscape; they wanted to show that eastern Oregon was an agrarian utopia *socially* as well as environmentally.

WOLVES IN PARADISE: THE CONFLICTIVE HISTORY OF HUMANS AND WOLVES IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

Justin Devereux

In 2011, a gray wolf known as “OR-7,” the seventh wolf in Oregon to be radio-collared by state biologists, dispersed from the Imnaha Pack in eastern Oregon, crossed the Cascade Mountains, and entered Douglas County in the southern Willamette Valley. This marked the first time in over sixty years



OR-7, Grey Wolf, 2014. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

that a wolf entered the Willamette Valley. Ironically, the last known wolf in the region (and in the state of Oregon) was also documented in Douglas County, when a hunter presented its scalp to the Oregon State Games Commission in 1946 for a predatory animal bounty payment.¹

After traveling as far south as northern California, OR-7 returned to Oregon, found a mate, and produced pups every year since 2014.

Today, OR-7 and his pack, named the “Rogue Pack,” live in western Klamath

County and are part of Oregon’s current wolf population of around 110.² Despite the excitement from animal rights and conservation groups in Oregon on the return of wolves to the west, not all people west of the Cascades are

¹ Oregon State Games Commission Annual Game Report 1947, quoted in Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s “Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan,” *Wildlife Division*, 5, http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/docs/Oregon_Wolf_Conservation_and_Management_Plan_2010.pdf. The website *Oregon Wild* also recognizes this “moment of rare historic symmetry,” http://www.oregonwild.org/fish_wildlifebringing_wolves_back_the-journey-of-or7.

² Amanda Peacher, “Wolf Population Booming In Oregon 5 Years After OR-7 Began His Journey,” Oregon Public Broadcasting, November 3, 2016, <http://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-wolf-7-population-boom/>.

happy with what the conservation group Oregon Wild called a “milestone in one of Oregon’s, and America’s, greatest wildlife conservation success stories.”³

The increase in Oregon’s wolf population caused concern with hunters and ranchers in Oregon. Hunters frowned on the potential reduction of local game with the introduction of an apex predator and ranchers feared for their vulnerable livestock. For example, the Medford-based Oregon Hunters Association stated that, “deer and elk populations suffer enough from cougar predation...It won’t do local game herds any good to deal with wolves.”⁴ Additionally, former Oregon Cattlemen’s Association (OCA) President and Cottage Grove rancher Bill Hoyt expressed in 2011 that if wolves were allowed in Oregon, the Oregon ranchers had the right to protect their livestock. “It appears that the political and cultural will of the state of Oregon is to have wolves, and we have no problem with that,” said Hoyt. “We don’t want to kill every wolf that walks. We simply want to get along as well as we can. But if there is a conflict, we need to be able to defend ourselves.”⁵

Indeed, wolves have caused trouble for Oregon ranchers and their livestock. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) reported a total of sixty-four wolf depredations of cattle and sheep from 2009 to 2015.⁶ Although the state of Oregon has a compensation program for wolf-related livestock losses, some, like Wolf Committee Chair for the OCA Todd Nash, illustrated the emotional loss that comes from losing livestock. In a 2014 press release from the OCA, Nash stated, “I’ve seen a number of grown men and women cry.”⁷

Furthermore, the OCA asked, “It is to be expected that a carnivore is going to hunt for food, but what happens when its prey become domesticat-

³ “Conservationists Celebrate First Wolf in Western Oregon,” Oregon Wild, November 1, 2011, <http://www.oregonwild.org/about/press-room/press-releases/conservationists-celebrate-first-wolf-in-western-oregon>.

⁴ “Wolf arrives in Western Oregon,” KVAL, November 1, 2011, <http://www.kval.com/news/local/133021913.html>.

⁵ Jeff Barnard, “Ore. ranchers seek right to shoot wolves,” *KOMOnews*, March 28, 2011, <http://komonews.com/news/local/118813769.html?m=y&smobile=y>.

⁶ “Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management 2015 Annual Report,” Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2016, http://dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/docs/oregon_wolf_program/2015_Annual_Wolf_Report_3-18-16_FINAL.pdf

⁷ Kayli Hanley, “When Wolves Run Wild,” Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, December 31, 2014, <http://orcattle.com/2014/12/31/when-wolves-run-wild/>.

ed animals? For ranchers in northeast Oregon,” they continue, “the answer is devastation.”⁸ Yet, environmentalists and conservationists argue that wolves are “a symbol of freedom, wilderness, and the American west,” and have positive ecological benefits to riparian landscapes (due to their part in keeping prey from overgrazing by keeping them on the move).⁹ The return of wolves to Oregon has been celebrated, criticized, and is frequently discussed in the media across political spheres. The physical presence of wolves on the Oregon landscape is a victory for conservationists, but also viewed as a threat to livestock. The origins of this conflict can in many ways be traced to the early days of Euro-American settlement in Oregon, when Euro-Americans expressed both practical and, in some ways, existential fears of wolves. Between 1843 and 1946, Euro-Americans hunted wolves out of Oregon, because the wolves’ presence ran contrary to the cultural beliefs and customs of Euro-American settlers. An analysis of Euro-American journals, diaries, and newspapers from the nineteenth century reveal how wolves prowled the imaginary landscapes of the people with whom they shared their physical landscapes.

In the 1840s, nearly 10,000 settlers migrated to the Willamette Valley and, along with their livestock, settled on 640 acres of fertile soil.¹⁰ Settlers hoped to start a prosperous life for themselves through farming, as well as from profiting from the potential sale of excess land to incoming settlers.¹¹ Wolves were a primary area of concern for early Euro-American settlements in the Willamette Valley due to the practical reasons that wolves threatened their livestock and hopes for prosperity.

For example, Roselle Putnam, the eldest daughter to the influential pioneer and politician Jesse Applegate, reflected a negative attitude towards wolves in a letter to her mother and sister in 1849. In the letter, she invited her mother and sister to “come and share our unlimited sovereignty over these beautiful

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ “Wolves Come Home to Oregon,” Oregon Wild, <http://www.oregonwild.org/wildlife/wolves>. For a detailed explanation of wolf benefits to ecosystems, see William J. Ripple and Robert L. Beschta, “Trophic cascades in Yellowstone: The first 15 years after wolf reintroduction,” *Biological Conservation* Volume 145, Issue 1 (2012): 205-13.

¹⁰ James A. Henretta, Rebeca Edwards, and Robert O. Self, *America: A Concise History*, (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2012), 386.

¹¹ Ibid.

hills and valley the land all around us is our own.”¹² However, despite her welcoming invitation, she warned them about wolf sightings and howls at night. “The wolves in this country are very large and numerous,” Putnam complained, “there has been a great many of them killed this winter, in this neighborhood with strychnine, Charles [her husband] put out upwards of thirty doses of it, and I suppose every one killed a wolf...we have seen two that died near the house.” However, she admits that wolves “are still to be heard every night or two howling round us.”¹³ The Willamette Valley may have been the “Eden at the End of the Oregon Trail.” However, there were still wolves in paradise.

The Applegate and Putnam families were not the only settlers in the Willamette Valley to have wolf problems. In 1870, historian Frances Fuller Victor reported that “wild animals, whose depredations upon the domestic cattle lately introduced into the country, were a serious drawback to their natural increase. Not a settler, owning cattle or hogs, but had been robbed more or less frequently by the wolves...which prowled unhindered in the vicinity of their herds.”¹⁴ Predator animals were such a threat that they inspired one of the first organized meetings in the Oregon Territory between French-Canadians and American settlers, two groups that were often at-odds over land claims and U.S. expansion into the territory.¹⁵

French-Canadians and American settlers looked past conflicted political interests and came together in the French Prairie of the Willamette, Valley to wage a “defensive and destructive war” against “Wolves, Bears Panthers” that threatened their livestock.”¹⁶ Later dubbed the “Wolf Meetings,” settlers came to-

¹² Sheba Hargreaves, “The Letters of Roselle Putnam,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (1928): 243.

¹³ Ibid., 256. Part of this quote is used in Robbins’s *Landscapes of Promise* as well, 88-89.

¹⁴ Frances Fuller Victor, *The River of the West* (Hartford: R. W. Bliss & Co.; Toledo: R. W. Bliss & Co.; San Francisco: R. J. Trumbull & Co., 1870), 318-319, in Stanley Paul Young’s *The Wolf in North American History* (The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1946), 92.

¹⁵ Oregon Blue Book, “Oregon History: The “Oregon Question” and Provisional Government,” accessed on February 27, 2017, <http://bluebook.state.or.us/cultural/history/history10.htm>.

¹⁶ David C. Duniway and Neil R. Riggs, eds., “The Oregon Archives, 1841-1843,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (1959): 226.

gether and agreed to establish a bounty of fifty cents for small wolves and \$3.00 for large wolves and bounties were set for lynx, bears, and panthers as well. ¹⁷ “Killing wolves,” as historian William Robbins explains, “was a sign of progress, part of an effort to extend the bounds of civilized space. An optimistic and confident lot, settlers saw everything to gain and nothing to fear from those activities.”¹⁸

Many historians credit the 1843 ‘Wolf Meetings’ as foundational meetings that would eventually lead to Oregon’s Provisional Government and later statehood. Champoege historian John Hussey claimed that the meetings, “resulted in the effective establishment of a settler organization and marked the real beginning of civil government in the Pacific Northwest.”¹⁹ Settlers worked past their differences and came together in their shared loathing of wolves. The cooperation in establishing the bounty would later be celebrated, as a 2013 exhibit in the Oregon State Capitol showed, as the start of Oregon’s “Genesis of Government.”²⁰

Few historians, however, emphasize that these same “wolf meetings” that put in motion Oregon’s path to statehood would also set the precedent for wolf bounty systems that would eradicate wolves from Oregon and destroy an animal of cultural significance to many of Oregon’s indigenous cultures that coexisted with wolves for generations before Euro-American settlement. The state of Oregon reports that the scalps of 393 wolves were presented for payment from 1913 to 1946.²¹ The last known wolf in the state before a wolf crossed over from Idaho in 1999 was the wolf killed in the Umpqua National Forest and submitted for bounty payment in 1946.²²

The eradication of wolves from the Oregon landscape was a result of a tan-

¹⁷ Ibid., 227.

¹⁸ Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 6.

¹⁹ John A. Hussey, *Champoege: Place of Transition, A Disputed History* (Oregon Historical Society, 1967), xii.

²⁰ The Oregon Historical Society, “Trail to Oregon’s Statehood, “Wolf Meetings” Genesis of Government,” *Exhibits in the Oregon State Capitol*, accessed June 14, 2013, <http://www.ohs.org/exhibits/current/exhibits-in-the-oregon-state-capitol.cfm>.

²¹ Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, “Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan,” *Wildlife Division*, 5, accessed June 14, 2013, http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/docs/Oregon_Wolf_Conservation_and_Management_Plan_2010.pdf.

²² Ibid.

gible threat to wolves on settler culture involving farming and raising livestock. Wolf depredations equaled to loss of the settler's investment and livelihood. However, some historians argue that, in addition to being a physical threat, wolves threatened the imaginary landscape of settlers as well. As historian Roderick Nash explained, "Wilderness not only frustrated the pioneers physically but also acquired significance as a dark and sinister symbol... In the morality play of westward expansion, wilderness was the villain, and the pioneer, as hero, relished its destruction. The transformation of a wilderness into civilization was the reward for his sacrifice, the definition of his achievement, and the source of his pride."²³

Possible origins to the personification of wolves as evil are explained in various contemporary works. In *Of Wolves and Men*, Barry Lopez argues that wolves were exterminated in America because of "taming wilderness, the law of vengeance, protection of property, an inalienable right to decide the fate of all animals without incurring moral responsibility, and the strongly American conception of man as the protector of defenseless creatures."²⁴ Lopez traces these negative perceptions on wolves to European culture from the medieval and enlightenment time-periods, where men like Thomas Aquinas viewed wolves as the "unwitting tools of the Devil, the means by which God brought pain and anguish that would test men's mettle," and others like René Descartes believed, "that not only were animals put on earth for man's use but they were distinctly lowborn; they were without souls and therefore man incurred no moral guilt in killing them."²⁵

Lopez also considers more concrete reasons for hatred towards wolves based on their predation on livestock in European and American culture.²⁶ There, he goes back further into Judaic laws of "an eye for an eye," that justified killing wolves based on depravations on "innocent creatures unable to avenge themselves, as such, man's wards: 'Kill my sheep and you kill me.'"²⁷ As a result of this personification and use of animals in moral metaphors, Euro-

²³ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (Yale University Press, 1967), 24-25.

²⁴ Barry Holstun Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 148.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 145, 147.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

pean culture began to view wolves as “innately evil...a deliberate murderer.”²⁸

Historian Jon Coleman continues themes of wolves as symbolic animals to Euro-Americans based on European tradition. In the European colonization of the East Coast, Coleman emphasized livestock and folklore as the primary motivations for wolf extermination campaigns. According to Coleman, “The story of wolf killing illustrates the tenacity of two Euro-American conquering devices-folklore and property. Folklore fueled wolf hatred through rituals and legends codified into motifs and transmitted by word of mouth. Wolf lore survived by being remembered and retold, while property in the form of livestock also traveled across landscapes and lifetimes.”²⁹

Historical evidence of nineteenth century language and attitudes towards wolves as evil creatures is an area of research to still be explored. However, the strong desire for settlers to kill-off wolves from the landscape represents a revulsion of the animal that warrants consideration that the hatred was beyond a protection their property. It is also worth consideration that Euro-American settlers arrived in Oregon in the midst of the Second Great Awakening and it is likely that negative Judeo-Christian symbolic references to wolves played a part in their perceptions of them.³⁰

Although there is a lack of hard historical evidence that Oregon settlers believed wolves had evil intents, Oregon Senator John Williamson at the turn of the twentieth century gave a speech that portrayed wolves as both contrary to civilization, as well as eager to attack children.

Williamson was born in Junction City and served in the Oregon State senate from 1900 to 1902 and the Congressional House of Representatives from 1903 to 1907. Williamson was invited to speak to the Oregon Woolgrowers Association in Pendleton Oregon on September 29, 1902 in context of public calls for the end of wolf bounties, out of concern that such bounties had led to fewer wolves and more crop-destroying rodents and rabbits. The theme of Williamson’s address to the Woolgrowers Association was to voice his disap-

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (Yale University Press, 2004), 5.

³⁰ Examples of negative Biblical symbolic references to wolves are found in Gen. 49:27, Ezekiel 22:27, Matt. 7:15, Luke: 10:3, and John 10:12.

proval over such calls. “Two years ago,” Williamson announced to the crowd, I used the following language: “The history of progressive civilization is largely a repetition of wars on barbarous tribes of men on the one hand; on the other, the elimination and stamping out of wild and destructive beasts.” Continuing along this same line, I said: “It occurs that the interests of civilization and the welfare of the wolf do not go hand in hand. The interests of one are inimical to the welfare of the other. In order that the wolf may replenish the earth, civilization must recede and visa versa.” At that time I believed that doctrine to be true. I have found nothing since to cause me to change my opinion, all the field mouse and rabbit theories to the contrary notwithstanding.³¹ To the people calling for wolves to be used to against the animals, Williamson declared,

Did it ever occur to the man imbued with such an idea that, before the rabbits would disappear by way of the wolf channel, to the poor unfortunate who happened to remain in Eastern Oregon there would be no such thing as ham and eggs for breakfast, for the simple reason that there wouldn't be any hog to produce the ham, nor any chicken to produce the egg? Did it ever occur to him that, long before the wolves were plentiful enough to accomplish the destruction of the rabbits, they would be plentiful enough to devour the children while they were on their way to school?³²

Williamson's 1902 speech to the Woolgrowers Association illustrates how wolves were viewed as opposite of progress on the Oregon landscape, the antithesis of civilization. They were part of a wilderness that Euro-Americans meant to overcome and control. His speech also shows that the same fear of wolves as eaters of children from stories like the Brothers Grimm “Little Red Riding Hood.” Although wolves were a tangible threat to Oregon livestock, they were prowlers on settler imaginations as well.

Today, wolves are still a conflictive topic in Oregon. While most of the controversy around wolves involves conservation and livestock preda-

³¹ “For Scalp Bounty, Address of Representative-Elect Williamson, Upholds Law Now in Force,” *Morning Oregonian*, September 29, 1902, 5.

³² Ibid.

tions, there is modern day evidence that some Oregonians view wolves as “cold-blooded killers,” acting beyond their natural predatory instincts.³³ A recent proposal by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to allow public hunting of “problem wolves” that frequently attack livestock is being considered to the future Oregon Wolf Program.³⁴ Hunters and ranchers support the proposal, but groups like Cascadia Wildlands say it will just allow an “annual wolf killing-the very reason this species was wiped out from the Lower 48.”³⁵

Ultimately, as wolf populations continue to grow in Oregon and threaten livestock, more calls to control predations through killing wolves will be called into action. However, consideration towards what wolves mean to all Oregonians, including the voices of conservationists, environmentalists, animal rights groups, ranchers, and others should be a part of any public plan to control wolves in Oregon. From virtuous to vermin, wolves play a significant part in the minds of humans and a repeat of their eradication from the Oregon landscape would be a cultural loss to a diverse group of Oregonians.

³³ Ryan Carhart, “Wolves in Eastern Oregon ruin delicate ecosystems: Letters to the Editor,” *The Oregonian*, April 30, 2016.

³⁴ “Proposal Would Allow Hunting Wolves in Oregon,” *Statesman Journal*, Sunday, February 12, 2017, 1A.

³⁵ Nick Cady as quoted in Proposal Would Allow Hunting Wolves in Oregon,” *Statesman Journal*, Sunday, February 12, 2017, 5A.

THE 1830-1833 DISEASE EPIDEMIC OF OREGON: A CLOSER LOOK

Maddie Mott

Beginning in the era when Native Americans made contact with Euro-Americans, disease epidemics became commonplace in Oregon from the 18th century to the 20th century. Epidemics had a devastating effect on the tribes and villages of Native Americans across the state. Likely the most devastating epidemic in Oregon's history was the 1830-1833 disease epidemic that started in the area surrounding Fort Vancouver. In three years' time, the epidemic spread down into the Willamette Valley and further into California, afflicting both Native Americans and white re-settlers in the area. While only a handful of white re-settlers died as a result of the epidemic, the Native American population suffered an extreme decline in population, with some estimating that the total Native population declined by 80% - 90% over the course of the epidemic. This number is staggering, especially when compared to the likely second deadliest smallpox epidemic of the 18th century, where an estimated 30% of the Native Americans in Oregon perished as a result. Primary source evidence from the 19th century concluded that the disease associated with the epidemic was malaria. The recorded symptoms of the disease and successful use of quinine all indicate that malaria was the disease in question. However, the pathology of malaria indicates that even the worst malaria epidemics would not have mortality rates as high as the ones seen in the 1830-1833 Oregon epidemic, even in combination with other factors historians offer to explain the high mortality rates.

One of earliest recorded epidemics in the Pacific Northwest was an outbreak of smallpox that likely began in the 1770s and spread quickly amongst the indigenous population in Oregon. The origin of the epidemic is debatable and though the epidemic occurred during a time when contact with Europeans had occurred, there were no eyewitness accounts of this smallpox epidemic. In Oregon, explorers recorded seeing Native people with "pockmarks," the scars that mark a person's appearance if they survived smallpox. Using the accounts of Native smallpox survivors, Euro-Americans estimated that the epidemic had occurred roughly in the 1770s. Second Lieutenant William Clark noted meeting an indigenous smallpox survivor in 1806 near the Sandy River, and a

crew member on the Columbia, captained by William Gray, interacted with a couple of smallpox survivors near what would become Lincoln City in 1788.¹

The mortality rate of this epidemic can only be guessed. Because there were no eyewitness records describing the epidemic while it was happening, we can never be sure about how much of the population was affected by or died from smallpox. Historian Robert Boyd conservatively estimates that 30% of the indigenous population in Oregon had died from this first wave of smallpox, stating that this number is the average population decline seen in virgin-soil smallpox epidemics.² According to the World Health Organization, the mortality rate of Variola major (the deadliest and most common form of smallpox) was 30%.³ These mortality rates and percentages in population decline offer another devastating epidemic to compare to the 1830-1833 epidemic.

The epidemic of 1830-1833 began near Fort Vancouver in what is now Vancouver, Washington and on Sauvie Island in July 1830. A trader who worked for the Hudson Bay Company named Peter Skene Ogden reported the first cases of what was deemed an “intermittent fever” amongst employees at the fort.⁴ The most popular theory states that an American fur trading vessel named the Owhyhee brought the infection to Fort Vancouver.⁵ Ogden reported that within

¹ Robert Boyd, “The First Smallpox Epidemics of the Historic Period,” in *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999), 21–60. There are a number of different theories offered up about how smallpox came to Oregon. Russian, and more credibly, Spanish vessels could have brought smallpox to the Pacific Northwest. Another popular theory states that smallpox travelled West from the Great Plains.

² Robert Boyd, “Disease Epidemics among Indians, 1770s-1850s,” *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/disease_epidemics_1770s-1850s/#.WLfqhPkrK01. A virgin-soil epidemic is an epidemic that occurs in a population with no previous exposure to the disease. The mortality rates and loss of life that occur during virgin-soil epidemics are usually higher than average.

³ “WHO | Smallpox,” *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/biologicals/vaccines/smallpox/en/>.

⁴ Robert Boyd, “Fever and Ague’ of Western Oregon,” in *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (University of Washington Press, 1999), 85.

⁵ S.F. Cook, “The Epidemic of 1830-1833 in California and Oregon,” *University*

twenty days, about eighty-five residents of the fort had come down with the illness. By September, Dr. John McLoughlin, the fort's doctor, recorded that 50 men and an unnumbered amount of Native Americans who lived around Fort Vancouver were infected with the fever.⁶ An account



Fort Vancouver, W.T., ca.1855. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LOT 3986-9.

from Ogden from around the same time stated that the disease had killed the entirety of a village of the Multnomah and Clannaquah peoples on Sauvie Island that once numbered around 60 families.⁷ A Chinookan village located down the

of *California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 43, no. 3 (1955): 308. The theory that the Owwhyhee was the “patient zero” of this epidemic can be called into question. The Owwhyhee, an American fur trading vessel, was docked at Fort Vancouver from February 1829 to July 1830 and the crew regularly engaged in trade with the indigenous people in the area. Had a crew member on board have the disease in question, it seems that the disease epidemic would have started earlier and not when the Owwhyhee had left the region. There were also other ships docked at the fort during the same period of time (mostly British fur trading ships), but the Owwhyhee seems to receive the blame of being the “patient zero” of the epidemic. S.F. Cook argues that because the Owwhyhee was an American fur trading ship in British fur trading territory, the Owwhyhee may have been blamed as the infector in an attempt to slander their competitor. It is likely that the disease came from the east, but we cannot be certain about pinning the responsibility on the Owwhyhee. Peter Ogden blamed Spanish settlements and the miasmatic conditions of the land around the fort for the origination of the disease and did not believe that it was spread from person to person.

⁶ Robert Boyd, “Fever and Ague’ of Western Oregon,” 86.

⁷ Ibid., 86–87. This was also the first eyewitness account that claims the disease was wiping out entire tribes and villages of Native Americans. The Multnomah and Clannaquah villages on Sauvie Island, according to Ogden, would be burnt down, in

Columbia river from the fort was also affected by the illness and suffered a severe decline in population. By October, Dr. John McLoughlin states that “The Intermittent Fever...has carried off three-fourths of the Ind[ian] population in our vicinity.”⁸ A Native woman, Victoria Howard, interviewed by Melville Jacobs in 1930, spoke about the effects of the disease on the Clackamas tribe, saying that “[t]heir village was a large one, but they all got the ague... Only a few did not die.”⁹ Some Native Americans fled to Fort Vancouver in order to receive treatment for their illness, but were denied entry and access to medicine because the fort had so many of its own employees to treat. By January 1831, the first cycle of the intermittent fever had ended, having had devastating effects on the Native American population in the area and nearly no effect on the population of white re-settlers.¹⁰

The second wave of the fever began in July 1831 and had spread to the Willamette Valley of Oregon. A letter from Kalapuyan peoples living in the valley confirmed that Native Americans in the valley had been gravely affected by the disease. Dr. McLoughlin recorded in his journal that “the fever and ague... raged with greater violence in 1831...”¹¹ It was stated that the Native Americans

addition to “heaps” of corpses.

⁸ Ibid., 88. The vicinity McLoughlin describes is not limited to the surrounding area and extends east and west quite away.

⁹ Ibid., 90–91. The first wave of the disease was wide-reaching and incredibly fatal. In the same light, Chinookan villages were also affected and saw drastic declines in population due to the disease. Concomly, a prominent Native chief, died from this disease during the epidemic.

¹⁰ This is true for the entirety of the epidemic: indigenous people suffered absolutely devastating declines in population because of this one disease and nearly no white life was lost to the disease. It was stated that the white people at Fort Vancouver had access to medical treatment and quinine, the cure for malaria. Dr. John McLoughlin also noted that whites would recover from the disease with little medical intervention, while their Native wives were much more likely to die from the infection. Peter Ogden blames indigenous medical practices, like sweat bathing and running into a cold body of water to treat fever, for the higher mortality rates amongst Native people. We must not forget that there was an active denial of quinine and medical treatment to Native people that likely contributed to high mortality rates. I also think that we cannot claim that indigenous medical practices were the sole cause for their high mortality rates.

¹¹ Robert Boyd, “Fever and Ague’ of Western Oregon,” 92.

who fought off the fever last year were “carr[ied] off” by it this year.¹² A third wave of the fever began in July 1832 with its usual ferocity. The area affected by the epidemic now encompassed all of modern-day Oregon and a small portion of Northern California. Chinookan and Kalapuyan tribes were again affected by another round of the disease. Dr. John McLoughlin, who became ill during the third wave of disease, stated that “the mortality has been very great” amongst the native population. By 1833, the disease had spread to nearly all of California, seen in the tribes living Sacramento, and by the second half of the 19th century, malaria had become endemic to Oregon. At this point, the Native population in the Pacific Northwest had been so drastically reduced that there were few people left to be affected by the disease. When treating the disease, Dr. McLoughlin used both quinine and Peruvian bark (cinchona) and developed a successful substitute of powdered Dogwood bark to be used when in short supply of the more well-known medicines. After 1834, there were no new flare-ups of the epidemic in Oregon.

It can be safely assumed that the disease of the 1830-1833 epidemic was malaria, based on the primary source documentation from the time. The fever was seasonal, and reoccurred every year at roughly the same time as the mosquito-breeding season.¹³ The phrase “fever and ague,” used most often in the records from the time since the term “malaria” was not yet created, details that the disease caused both fevers and chills, the main symptoms of malaria. The disease caused “tertian fevers,” a distinguishing symptom of malaria that means that the afflicted person experienced attacks of fever every 48 hours.¹⁴ Finally, the documented, effective use of quinine and cinchona bark by white doctors further validates that the disease in question was malaria.¹⁵

We can also conclude that the disease was malaria by ruling out other disease possibilities. Smallpox and measles can be discounted, since the obvious and easily recognizable physical symptoms were not present. The disease did not

¹² Ibid., 94. This statement suggests that the type of illness present did not cause lifelong immunity in those who previously infected by it.

¹³ Robert Boyd, “The First Smallpox Epidemics of the Historic Period,” 107.

¹⁴ James L.A. Webb Jr., *Humanity's Burden: A Global History of Malaria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

¹⁵ Robert Boyd, “The First Smallpox Epidemics of the Historic Period,” 100–103.

present any symptoms that are associated with cholera and “the white settlers... in Oregon...were acquainted with cholera and would have been able to diagnose it.”¹⁶ There were not enough animal vectors present in the area to start an epidemic of either the plague or typhus.¹⁷ Finally, the symptoms present too closely point to that of malaria, rather than of influenza, as the main disease of the epidemic, though there is a possibility that influenza was present at the time and went undetected because it has symptoms that are very similar to malaria.¹⁸ Due to process of elimination, one can safely assume that malaria was the cause of the epidemic.

If the epidemic was an outbreak of malaria (which to clarify, we can only assume that it is), this does not explain the extremely high mortality rate. S.F. Cook believes that this disease epidemic had an extremely conservative mortality rate of 75%; Robert Boyd estimates that 90% of Natives in the Portland Basin and 80% of Natives in the Willamette Valley died as a result of the epidemic.¹⁹ These figures, when associated with a malaria epidemic, are unheard of and quite shocking, especially when compared to the 30% mortality rate of the 18th century smallpox epidemic. A further look at the pathology of malaria will explain why the abnormally high mortality rates do not make sense. The malaria parasites carried by the female *Anopheles* mosquito cause malarial infections in humans. There are four different types of parasites that can spread malaria: *Plasmodium falciparum*, *Plasmodium vivax*, *Plasmodium malariae*, and *Plasmodium ovale*. *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* have caused the most malarial infections throughout history, which makes one of them the likely parasite present in the Pacific Northwest.

P. falciparum is responsible for the vast majority of deaths caused by

¹⁶ S.F. Cook, “The Epidemic of 1830-1833 in California and Oregon,” 304.

¹⁷ Ibid. Typhus was believed to be the main disease in question for quite some time, as a result of “parochialism,” Boyd claims. Despite Cook completely ruling out the possibility of epidemic typhus, Robert Boyd states that typhus may have been present alongside malaria from 1830-1833. If typhus was present at the same time as malaria, this could serve as an explanation for the mass death rates among Native Americans.

¹⁸ Robert T. Boyd, “Another Look at the ‘Fever and Ague’ of Western Oregon,” *Ethnohistory* 22, no. 2 (1975): 146. Boyd here makes a case that influenza may have been present at the time, which caused the high fatality rates among the “immunologically-naïve” Native Americans.

¹⁹ S.F. Cook, “The Epidemic of 1830-1833 in California and Oregon,” 321-322; Boyd, “Disease Epidemics among Indians, 1770s-1850s.”

malaria. Like all malaria parasites, it causes fever and anemia, with victims suffering from tertian fever attacks. What makes *P. falciparum* so deadly is that it often causes severe anemia and if left untreated, can lead to cerebral malaria, which can cause “epilepsy, blindness, cognitive impairments... coma and death.”²⁰ Once a person is infected with *P. falciparum*, they are “free of the disease unless and until [they are] reinfected by another parasite-laden mosquito.”²¹ *P. falciparum* requires that temperatures of an area not drop below 19 degrees Celsius/66.2 degrees Fahrenheit in order to complete its reproduction cycle, which is why it is most prevalent in tropical areas of the world.

In contrast, *P. vivax* tolerates a significantly lower temperature (at least 15 degrees Celsius/59 degrees Fahrenheit for at least a month) for reproduction, making it able to survive in temperate climates. Like *P. falciparum*, *P. vivax* causes the standard fever and anemia, but has a significantly lower mortality rate – only 1 to 2 percent of victims will die if they have a severely untreated infection.²² *P. vivax* also can lay dormant in its host for months to years, only to cause a new infection even after the host was thought to be cured.²³

It is most plausible to state that the disease present in the Pacific Northwest from 1830-1833 was caused by *Plasmodium vivax* for two reasons. First, the temperate climate of the Pacific Northwest and its low average temperature makes it possible for only *P. vivax* to complete its reproduction cycle. Second, the primary source accounts from the time state that those who did not die during the first wave of the malaria epidemic did die in subsequent waves, which shows that victims did not acquire immunity to this type of malarial infections. But, given the low mortality rate of *P. vivax*, even in times of severe epidemic, it seems unlikely that 90% of the Native American population in the Northwest could have died directly from a disease that has historically proven itself to be non-lethal. Is it possible that the 1830-1833 epidemic was not a malaria epidemic at all?

Robert Boyd offers an explanation for the high mortality rate, arguing that “the counterproductive way Indians reacted to the fever” decreased their

²⁰ James L.A. Webb Jr., *Humanity's Burden: A Global History of Malaria*, 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

chances to survive the fever²⁴ Sweat bathing was a therapeutic indigenous treatment for a number of different ailments and common aches and pains. It is believed that the Native Americans would take sweat baths to treat the “ague” stage of the malarial infection. After taking a sweat bath, the bather would then take a plunge in a cold stream or river in order to counteract their fever. Boyd (and Ogden) state that this treatment method “became deadly with the introduction of the new class of febrile diseases,” and may have produced shock or made people more susceptible to other diseases like pneumonia.²⁵ In combination with a *P. vivax* malarial infection, pneumonia definitely could have raised the mortality rate amongst Native Americans. The mortality rate of *P. vivax* does go up if a sufferer is undernourished or starving, contracts another disease while they have *P. vivax* malaria, or if they have a compromised immune system.²⁶ Even if a sufferer has severe, untreated malaria in combination with one or more of the factors listed above, the mortality rate of *P. vivax* malaria would still only be between 2-5%.²⁷

Margaret Humphreys, author of *Malaria: Poverty, Race, and Public Health in the United States*, offers another explanation for the high mortality rates of the 1830-1833 epidemic, stating that the “lack of genetic protection against the disease among Native Americans” may account for the unusually high mortality.²⁸ Malaria was not endemic to the area pre-contact, making it impossible for the indigenous people to develop or acquire any sort of genetic immunity to it. Humphreys argues that it is plausible that the 1830-1833 epidemic and its high mortality rates is what malaria actually looks like when introduced to a “truly virgin population” with no “acquired or inherited immunities.”²⁹ However, even if this was a virgin-soil epidemic, this instance would likely only raise the mortality

²⁴ Robert Boyd, “Fever and Ague’ of Western Oregon,” 108.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ James L.A. Webb Jr., *Humanity’s Burden: A Global History of Malaria*, 6.

²⁷ Ibid.; Dr. James L.A. Webb Jr, e-mail message to Dr. Jennifer Tappan, December 5th, 2016. Email in author’s possession.

²⁸ Margaret Humphreys, *Malaria: Poverty, Race, and Public Health in the United States* (The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 20.

²⁹ Ibid., 22.

rates of *P. vivax* malaria to a maximum of 5%.³⁰ Humphreys also states that in her research, she has found only one other American malaria epidemic that caused such high mortality rates, in the Arkansas Territory in 1819. The Arkansas epidemic had mortality rates similar to that of the Northwest one, but it is likely that this epidemic was due to a *P. falciparum* malarial infection. *P. falciparum* is most common in warm or tropical regions, and has a significantly higher mortality rate than *P. vivax*, especially in combination with other factors. If the Arkansas epidemic was caused by *P. falciparum* malaria, it will not help better understand the high mortality rates of the *P. vivax* malaria epidemic of the Northwest.

These theories offered up to explain the high mortality rates of the 1830-1833 disease epidemic are plausible, but they unfortunately cannot account for the unbelievable spike in mortality rates. Primary source documentation indicates that there was a catastrophic decline in Native populations resulting from this epidemic. Even if the numbers provided were greatly over-inflated by record-keepers of the time, the figures would still be staggeringly high for an infectious disease. Primary source documentation also seemingly proves that the disease in question was malaria. This conclusion becomes especially attractive due to the symptoms described and the documented, successful treatment of the disease with quinine and cinchona bark. However, upon careful examination of the pathology of *P. vivax* malaria, likely the type of malaria that was present in the Northwest, the chance that the epidemic was actually caused by malaria becomes less and less plausible. Even if a population had never been exposed to malaria before, and had the disease in combination with other factors, such as malnutrition and other diseases, it is improbable for a malarial infection to cause an 80% to 90% decline in population. In the case of the 1830-1833 disease epidemic, historians should look beyond malaria for the cause of the high rate of death and destruction.

³⁰ Dr. James L.A. Webb Jr, e-mail message to Dr. Jennifer Tappan, December 5th, 2016. Email in author's possession.

EXHIBIT REFLECTIONS

Editorial note: This issue of *Willamette Valley Voices* includes a new feature: “Exhibit Reflections,” in which we invite students and scholars of history to provide thoughts and questions – reflections – about Willamette Heritage Center museum exhibits. This inaugural “Exhibit Reflections” focuses on the 2017 Winter Invitational Exhibit, *Nature and Community*. That exhibit welcomes visitors with these words:

“This exhibit invites you to consider the myriad relationships between Mid-Willamette Valley communities and the natural worlds they inhabit. Nature – more specifically: plants, animals, and other nonhuman elements of the natural world – has played a variety of roles in the region’s history: as the background for developments in politics, society, and culture; as a source of identity for different groups of people; as an object upon which humans have acted; and as a force of its own, limiting and shaping human activity. Nature and Community provides a unique opportunity to examine those roles from a variety of different perspectives throughout time and place in the Mid-Willamette Valley.

“In this, our seventh Annual Heritage Invitational Exhibit, we are honored by the participation of twelve different heritage organizations from the Mid-Willamette Valley. Each organization contributes a unique perspective on the historical interactions between nature and community in the region. As you tour the exhibit, you might consider how various human communities have tried to control the nonhuman natural world, with varying degrees of success. Consider also how different parts of the nonhuman natural world have acted in their own way and in their own interest, sometimes facilitating and sometimes frustrating the wishes of different groups of people. And, perhaps more than anything else, consider how the separation suggested by the title of this exhibit – Nature and Community – belies the inextricable relationship between natural history and human history.”

I would like to thank the contributors to this “Exhibit Reflections” piece and the institutions that curated this remarkable exhibit: Albany Regional Museum, Bush House Museum, Deepwood Museum & Gardens, Forest History Center, Frank Lloyd Wright Gordon House, Hoover-Minthorn House Museum, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon State Hospital Muse-

um, Oregon State University Herbarium, Polk County Historical Society, Silverton Country Historical Society Museum, Willamette University Archives and Special Collections, and Willamette University Biology Department.

Bob H. Reinhardt, Editor and WHC Executive Director



The entrance to the WHC's *Nature and Community* special exhibit. Photo by Jenna Wyatt.

Where do we draw the line between human communities and “nature”? Is wilderness separate from people, or are we members of ecological communities? These questions lie at the core of what environmentalists call the “nature-culture dichotomy.” In Oregon—land of waterfalls and timber forests and mountains and rivers—this relationship between human communities and wilderness comes to real-life terms. The question isn’t, “Do humans have a place in nature?” The question is, “What is the nature of this vital relationship? The Nature and Community exhibit at the Willamette Heritage Center shows how Oregonians have engaged with these questions over time, carving out a space for human communities within the land we inhabit.

Several common narratives stand out from the diversity of regions, time periods, and organizations represented in the exhibit. First, the exhibit shows how past Oregonians engaged with a “frontier narrative” of wilderness: the idea that nature is a wild horizon to be tamed and harnessed for human good. The Polk County Museum documents the use of watersheds for transportation, irrigation, and hydropower. The Albany Regional Museum shows the harvest of zirconium from Oregon Coast sands to strengthen local economies and contribute to military defense. At the same time, the exhibit attests that Oregonians have long been concerned with using resources in a sustainable way. A display from the Hoover-Minthorn House bears the title, “Preservation of Natural Re-



Displays (clockwise) by the Frank Lloyd Wright Gordon House, Willamette Heritage Center, and Hoover-Minthorn House Museum. Photo by Jenna Wyatt.

sources,” arguing for responsible management of timber and oil for future generations. This idea of responsible use of natural resources ties into the second main theme of the exhibit: a deep respect for the value of nature. Beyond economic benefit, nature enhances human lives through beauty, transcendence, and “escape” from the ills

of civilization. The Museum for Mental Health shows that as early as the 1800s, nature was recognized as a therapeutic tool. Panels document Herbert Hoover’s

fishing trips to Oregon, where he described his love of fishing as “an escape from civilization to natural, a chance for relaxation and renewal.”

But representations of nature as “pristine” and separate from civilization are problematic. As William Cronon argues in his famous essay “The Trouble with Wilderness”: “Wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then...we leave ourselves little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, honorable human place in nature might actually look like.” How have Oregonians explored this ethical human place? The exhibit reveals that we’ve responded in innovative and vibrant ways. The “wildlife-urban interface” in Eastern Oregon documents what humans have done at a literal boundary, where communities become certified as “firewise” to protect both forests and houses from the risk of fire. The exhibit also testifies to the enduring and common presence of Oregonians within the landscape. Old line drawings of Silver Falls from the early 1900s resonate with viewers who have grown up hiking these trails. “Then and now” photographs of Salem bear witness to the co-evolution of human community and landscape, each one informing changes in the other. Yes, humans have altered the natural world. But we’ve also been living here, interacting with and finding value in nature, for a long time. We belong. The exhibit engages one of Cronon’s parting questions: “How can we take the positive values we associate with wilderness and bring them closer to home?” The exhibit, in effect, performs this “familiarizing” move. It brings nature into our shared human heritage and ties human actions to the shaping of the natural world.

Emily Boring

In preparation for its seventh Annual Heritage Invitational Exhibit, the Willamette Heritage Center posed a clever question to its peers: How would you interpret the history of environment and community in your locality? Twelve regional heritage organizations responded with unique interpretations of their community’s relationship with the environment. Some of the exhibitors provided histories we might anticipate when thinking about Oregon’s environment, in particular the development of water and forest resources. Polk County Historical Society highlighted the county’s reliance on waterways for the transport of timber in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the Forest History Center recounted the major forest fires of the twentieth century

that have threatened communities residing in the “wildland-urban interface.”

I was intrigued by a handful of contributors that strayed from the traditional story of water and timber. Of note is Albany Regional Museum’s tale of zirconium production in the mid-twentieth century, originally a research project supported by the



Display by Albany Regional Museum. Photo by Jenna Wyatt.

US Bureau of Mines to convert Oregon’s black sands into the precious metal. Likewise, the Oregon State Hospital Museum of Mental Health showcased its historic Kirkbride architecture, which sought to provide patients with sunlight, open acre-

age, and ball fields as a means of environmental treatment. The Frank Lloyd Wright Gordon House similarly emphasized its design as an example of “organic architecture,” as Wright designed the home to complement its natural surroundings, not compete with them.

A voice missing in the exhibit is that of Native Americans. When white settlers populated the region in the nineteenth century, they brought with them a specific land use system born from their European ancestors. This land use system was quite different from the practices of Native Americans who have inhabited this region, so that distinction is worth noting in future exhibits. Despite this absence, anyone visiting Nature and Community will enjoy comparing each contributor’s unique interpretation. In each story of locality, these heritage organizations have offered perspectives of originality.
Hayley G. Brazier

When we hear the word nature, what do we visualize? Perhaps we envision a clear stream with polished rocks or a grizzly bear fishing for salmon. We may see an old-growth coniferous forest dropping pellets of water onto the ferns and fungi of the forest floor. Are there humans included in this imagined place?

Do we consider the nature within our urban environment or the resources depleted for human progress?

The new special exhibit at the Willamette Heritage Center allows us to imagine nature as more than a pristine space without humans, and to grapple with the ways in which humans and nature are inextricably linked. Called *Nature and Community*, the exhibit features installations showcasing nature as resource, nature as escape, nature as recreation, and nature as therapy. Humans in the Willamette Valley were—and continue to be—reliant on the natural.

Upon walking inside, a visitor will hear a conversation between two men chatting about the future of titanium and zirconium for the aircraft industry and for nuclear reactors. Albany, one voice claims, is the largest producer of zirconium in the world. Tracking down those voices, we find a tiny screen capturing a moment of the past: a black and white 1958 program on KGW TV. It was filmed at the height of the atomic age, when Oregon's richness in zirconium—crucial in the operation of a nuclear reactor—seemed to make it a focal point of the atomic age. The discussion is tantalizing in its confidence, its optimism, and its explicit linkage between nature, industry, and the hopes for progress in the Willamette Valley.

The visions represented in *Nature and Community* portray a long history of humans negotiating a *modus vivendi* with nature. In some ways, it comes across as exaltation of pioneers, of engineering feats, or of “fathers” such as photographer June Drake (who was instrumental in creating Silver Falls State Park). Progress seems inevitable: bridges had to be built; fertile soil was “just waiting to be tilled and planted.” But at the same time the exhibit conveys a sense of fragility. Floods and forest fires deeply marked and scarred human communities and ecosystems alike.

Artifacts and photographs highlight less well-trod visions of nature. An old flower-press, the mainstay of nineteenth-century botanists, looks like a cross between a wizard's spell book and a grandmother's chaotic recipe stash. Photographs of mental institutions and prisons reveal how nature was used in unexpected ways to serve those in need—or to serve those in authority—as mental and even moral therapy. The Oregon State Hospital's architectural design was itself inspired by the mid-nineteenth century Kirkbride Plan, for example, which connected the outdoor environment to the improvement of morals. Also, news clippings of visitors to mineral springs show a widespread faith in their healing powers. In the early twentieth century, nature seemed to cure everything in a “garden-like sanitarium of nature.”

The exhibit explores the ways humans in the Mid-Willamette Valley



Display by the Oregon State Hospital Museum of Mental Health.
Photo by Jenna Wyatt.

have interacted with nature, particularly after Euro-American settlement. Throughout our visit to Nature and Community, we contemplated the communities not represented. We invite other visitors to imagine not only what na-

ture meant to the people included in the exhibit, but also to the often-forgotten human and non-human communities. Nature and Community demonstrates how humans have used nature to lift our spirits and to power our lives.

Sarah Minette Kelly and Jacob Darwin Hamblin

Thank you to the Willamette Heritage Center and participating heritage organizations for allowing me the opportunity to review the Nature and Community exhibit. I had a great time walking through the space that you all have prepared, and I want to commend you for putting forward a thoughtful, well-done display of facts, figures, and images for visitors to enjoy. People often think of human history and the natural world as two separate realms, but, as your work has shown, they are intricately intertwined. The diversity of topics—from rivers to forests, botany to gardens, and mental health to metal production—proves that, in many ways, the history of Oregon is an environmental history.

I have a couple of broad suggestions, with a few more specific comments for particular displays, which I hope you will find constructive. My biggest suggestion is to consider the line that we draw between nature and human communities. This may seem an obvious piece of advice, but my point is that I would have liked to see more about the contention surrounding definitions of nature and ideas about how it should be treated—the gray area of nature, if you will. For example, with the Forest History Center display, what would

compel private homeowners in the wildland-urban interface to not maintain defensible space around their homes, despite the clear threat of fire and nearly a century of public warnings about its danger? If I were to guess, I would think it has to do with notions of purity and maintaining a “natural” aesthetic in their wooded settings. But, of course, what risks do those ideas create for firefighters, land managers, and other homeowners? Alternatively, in the “Power of Water” display, what happens when water reaches cities? How do we import it into our homes, and at what point does it become “tainted?” In Oregon State Parks’ display, what are the biggest threats to maintaining public lands in Oregon, and how are they balanced with the concerns of, say, the private forest industry? Raising these types of questions within your displays could enhance the depth of engagement with visitors and highlight connections to other displays in the exhibit. Overall, I wanted fewer statements/factoids and more open-ended, thought-provoking questions throughout the exhibit.

A few more thoughts to mull over: I thought the best displays were the simplest ones. My favorites did a great job of clearly delineating between topics and presenting ideas concisely, in one or two sentences, or even just one or two words. To put it another way, I wanted you to tell me why you’re telling me what you’re telling me, up front and center. Similarly, photographs are a fantastic way to visualize change over time, as demonstrated by the “Viewing Salem Then and Now” display. Remember that visitors have a limited amount of time and may pass over displays with too many moving parts, or that appear too wordy.

Again, this was a fantastic exhibit, and I really enjoyed it. Many thanks for letting me give my two cents, and I hope you will consider my comments in future endeavors!

Taylor Rose

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