OREGON ODDITIES
and
ITEMS OF INTEREST

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The items in this bulletin, selected from the material compiled by the Federal Writers' Project and the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration, are representative of the significant collections being made by these nation-wide programs.

The Historical Records Survey is inventorying all sources of early Oregon history, including county and state records, church archives, historic cemeteries, old manuscripts and imprints, old printing presses, monuments and relics, private diaries, letters, and memoirs, historic buildings, and Indian records and lore.

The chief undertaking of the Federal Writers' Project has been the American Guide Series of books. In Oregon as in all other states the work includes the state Guide, designed to acquaint Americans with America and to present to the visitor the history, industry, recreational advantages and scenic attractions of the state. The Oregon Guide, now in the final stages of editing will soon be added to the list of those already published which includes Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture; Maine: A Guide "Down East"; Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People; New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State; Washington: City and Capital; Philadelphia: A Guide to the Birthplace of a Nation.
The names of many cities, rivers, and mountains have been changed once, twice, and even three times, since first named by the early Oregon pioneers.

The name Sweet Home on a map brings to mind a peaceful little town in a peaceful valley. It is inconceivable that the town was first called Buck Head after the Buck Head saloon, scene of heavy drinking which frequently caused trouble. Once a quarrel between neighbors over a trivial matter ended in two killings near the saloon. One man was carried to the saloon steps where he died. Several other men were killed at this frontier village in what is now Linn county.

The town of St. Helens was known 80 years ago as Kasenau, and earlier as Plymouth.

Clatskanie, also in Columbia county, was once called Bryantville, named for Elisha G. Bryant.

A curious circumstance was said to be the source of the name Celilo Falls in Wasco county.

In early years in order to load river craft along the Columbia between The Dalles and the Deschutes river, it was necessary to let the freight-wagon bodies down from the steep, perpendicular cliffs by means of ropes. Near the present site of Celilo there is a narrow cleft in the row of rimrock and this chute formed a natural track for the loaded vans.

The name Celilo is credited to one Laurance Cee, who, when he heard of this plan said, "I see, lie low." This saying became contracted to the present Celilo, famous for its primitive Indian fisheries.

The area that is now Douglas county was once known as Umpqua county. In 1852 the new county was created and named for Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. Roseburg, in that county, was named for Aaron Rose of Michigan who settled there in 1851.

Gardiner, The White City by the Sea, was named for a Boston merchant whose vessel, the Bostonian, was wrecked at the mouth of the Umpqua River in 1850.

Smith river was named for Jedediah S. Smith of the Missouri Fur Company, whose nineteen men were attacked by the Indians near the mouth of the Umpqua in 1828 and all killed but three.

Hardman in Morrow county, called so today for the man who was the town’s first postmaster, was once officially Dairyville, but commonly known as Rawdog. Later having united with its former rival village, Yaller Dog, a mile away, it was called Dogtown.

The name La Grande was suggested by Dause, a French-Canadian, in recognition of the beauty of the Grande Ronde valley in Union county. The city grew up around the house of Ben Brown which had been converted into a tavern, and was first called Brown Town and Brownsville. Upon establishment of a post office in 1867, the name was changed to La Grande as there was another Brownsville in the state.

The Dalles in Wasco county was first called Wascopam, Indian name significant of the bowl-like arrangement of the canyon walls surrounding the city.

The present name of the city originated with French voyageurs of the Hudson’s Bay Company who found a resemblance between the flat basaltic rocks hemming in the narrow channel of the Columbia and the flagstones (les dalles) of their native village streets.

Palmehn, now Madras in Jefferson county, was named for a sheep raiser by the name of Palmain. The name was changed when postal authorities found it to be confusing with the name Paulina.

Dallas, the county seat of Polk county, was called Cynthia until 1852, when it was changed after a petition was signed by most of the Polk county citizens.

In pioneer days, Gold Beach, county seat of Curry county, was called Sebastapol. In 1891 the legislature changed its name to Ellensburg, honoring Ellen Tichonor. Eventually it became Gold Beach to avoid confusion with Ellensburg, Washington.
Irving, a village in Lane county, was once called Yellow Dog.

Jefferson, in Marion county, was formerly known as Parish Gap.

Elsie, in Clatsop county, named for Elsie Ione Foster, once bore the Indian name, Mischewake, meaning "clear water".

Morgan, in Morrow county, was previously known as Saddle, then Douglas, before acquiring its present name.

Early Curry county records show the Shix river for the present Sixes.

Namorf, Malheur county, was named for George Froman, a local resident, by spelling his name backward.

The city that is today known as Cascade Locks was once Portageville.

Hoquarton was the first name of the city now known as Tillamook. This was a derivative of the Indian "tower quatton". Later it was changed to Lincoln. Tillamook is named for a tribe of Indians, the Killamucks, or Kilamox. There were numerous other spellings, but the present Tillamook is the Anglicized phonetic spelling of the guttural Indian name.

Early explorers, pioneers, and settlers were severely taxed to find suitable names for the thousands of rivers, creeks, lakes, marshes, mountains, buttes and meadows found in Oregon. Some of these names seem fantastic or odd to us today, but they probably meant something very real to the ones who bestowed them. Some names are prophetic, some dismal--some show evidence of a sense of humor.

The first geographic names were those of the Indians. From them we have Clatsop, Tillamook, Clackamas, Multnomah, Mallow, and Klamath counties; Calapooya, Yaquina, Santiam, Metolius, and Umpqua rivers; and such names as Gumjuwe Sadie, Ketch Ketch Butte, Youtlkat Butte, Hitus Mountain, Tipsoo Peak and dozens of others.

When the Spaniards came, exploring the Oregon coast, they gave us Cape Arago, Cape Blanco, Heceta Head, Cape Perpetua. Years later the English came and left behind Vancouver, Mt. Hood, Youngs Bay, and many others.

Early Americans left us a story of their trials in such names as Desolation Swamp, Dead Horse Creek, Skull Gulch, Boner Springs, Seven Devils Mountain, Murderers Creek, Horse Thief Meadow, Nasty Rock, Hoodoo Mountain, Freezout Saddle and Gum Boot Canyons.

Early optimists left us the villages of Promise, Paradise, Heather, Unity, and such titles as Skookum Butte, Mt. Ray, and Hope Mountain. Students of the classics, no doubt, are responsible for Puck Lake, and Venus, Jupiter, and Lucifer Peaks, and Egypt Canyon.

Animals and plants are both profusely honored, as shown in the list of classified names following.

If a traveller has just been to Hungry Creek, he can be appeased with Strawberry Mountain, Potato Butte, Sugarloaf Mountain, Carrot Butte, and can set Coffee Pot Flat on Teatable Mountain, with Cinnamon Peak, Milk Creek, Vinogar Hill and Whiskey Mountain. He may help himself, but should beware of Skunk Creek, Yellowjacket Mountain, and Bumblebee Creek.

The weather may be judged from Sunrise Butte, Moonrise Mountain, Rainbow Crook, Sunshine Crook, Lightning Butte, Moon Meadows, and Noon.

A fair choice of women may be had from the Three Sisters, Lucky Queen and Forest Queen Crooks, Ruth, Ethel and Maudo Mountains, Violet Hill, and the town of Elsie. Near the Three Sisters is Husband Mountain and the Little Brothers Mountain. Not far away is Fathor Mountain, and Tom and Jerry Mountains. The ladies may be dressed in Brown, White, Blue, Green, Yellow or Black Butts.

Names that cause many conjectures are Rough and Ready Mountains, Separation Creek, Substitute Peak, Crooks Creek, Tallowbox Mountain, Battle Creek, Hurdy Gurdy Butto, Haymaker Mountain, Crazy Creek, Slick Rock, Bark Shanty Creek, 30-30 Crook, Wild Cheat Mountain, Blowout Cliff, Gunsight Butto, Hell's Half Acre, Elbow Gully, Poverity Point, Lickskillet Ridge, Noti, Buckboard Creek, Wagontire, Wagonwheel Creek, Tombstone Creek, Three-fingered Jack, and Conundrum Creek.

These are only a few of Oregon's odd geographic names.
SUBJECT NAMES

Gunboat Canyon
Corset Creek
Whetstone Mountain
Tincup Creek
Spoon Creek
Whistle Creek
Coffin Butte
Button Creek
Coffeepot Flats
Mitten Springs
Backboard Creek
Wagontire, town
Augur Creek
Nipple Creek
Shirt Creek
30-30 Springs
Dollar Basin
Dugout Butte
Tombstone Prairie
Shotgun Hollow
Firecamp Lake
Battleax Mountain
Fishhold Creek
Dairy, town
Choptie Prairie
Pistol Butte
China Hat Butte
Stovepipe Creek
Tastable Mountain
Sellers Marsh
Dipping Vat Creek
Bluebucket Creek
College Creek
Hat Point
Bystack Rock
Washboard Ridge
Milshaker Buttes
High Deck Mountain
Packsaddle Mountain
Lockinglass Creek
Mirror Lake
Tallowbox Mountain
Steamboat Creek
Picket Butte
Bark Shanty Canyon
Bell Mountain
Gunshight Butte

ANIMAL KINGDOM

Rabbit Creek
Mulo Lake
Coyote Hills
Drake Peak
Wildcat Mountain
Hog Creek

Cow Creek
Cougar Mountain
Jackass Mountains
Elk Mountain
Elk Creek
Cub Point
Porcupine Peak
Sheep Creek
Mudpuppy Lake
Horserly Mountain
Pigeon Prairie
Sardine Mountain
Rooster Rock
Magpie Peak
Ant Butte
Lionshead Peak
Badger Creek
Bats Meadow
Grouse Point
Three Lynx Creek
Whale Cove
Camel Mountain
Grizzly, town
Dog Creek
Doghouse Creek
Dead Dog Creek
Hawk Creek
Bear Creek
Deer Creek
Crow Creek
Horse Creek
Dead Horse Butte
Wildhorse Canyon
Bruin Butte
Goose Creek
Eagle Mountain
Hummingbird Mountain
Bug Mountain
Funnbugg Mountain
Grasshopper Point
CrawFish Mountain
Badger Butte
Mosquito Creek
Baboon Creek
Porcupine Creek
Antelope, town
Trot Meadow
Trot Creek
Marmot Creek
Wing Butte
Two Bear Creek
Fox, town
Bull Prairie
Horsepasture Creek
Beaver Meadow
Chicken Hill
Gander Creek
Hereford, town

Frog Pond Butte
Bear Wallow Springs
Horseshoe Butte
Moose Lake
Goosenest Butte
Mule Mountain
Yellow Jacket Mountain
The Camel Hump
Elephant Mountain
Skunk Creek
Swab Creek
Pheasant, town
Goose Lake
Cooseneck Creek
Mt. Bruno
Fawn Mountain
Woodpecker Hill

MINERALS

Agate, town
Gold Hill, town
Gold Beach, town
Nugget Butte
Nickel Creek
Gravel Creek
Granite, town
Marble Peak
Diamond, town
Copper Creek
Ironsides, town
Quartzville, town
Lime Point
Coal Creek
Opal Mountain
Twin Obsidian Buttes
Fumice Flats
Soda Springs

MISCELLANEOUS

Hoodoo Mountain
Dungeon Rock
Bald Peter Peak
Haircut Mountain
Wart Peak
Fuji Mountain
Git'em Creek
Backbone Ridge
Wakeup Valley
Fandango Canyon
Virtue Flats
Grazy Creek
Devil's Grave Butte
Devil's Knob
Devilish Creek
Seven Devils Mountain
Hardscrabble Creek