CELEBRATING THE SIUSLAW

A Century of Growth

SIUSLAW NATIONAL FOREST
CELEBRATING THE SIUSLAW:
A CENTURY OF GROWTH

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INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION AND A NOTE ON SOURCES

This history celebrates 100 years of the Siuslaw National Forest—1908 to 2008. The intent has been to feature the voices of the people who worked on the Forest and lived in the surrounding communities. We are fortunate to have a very rich collection of documents, photos, and interviews to tell the story of the Siuslaw. Forest Archaeologist Phyllis Steeves has done a remarkable job of collecting and curating these materials in her 20-year tenure on the Forest.

Among the documents are the memoirs and photographs of Corydon P. Cronk, who worked on the Siuslaw from 1910 to 1911 as an Assistant Ranger on the Hebo District. Cronk’s photographic skills and his droll narrative style bring his short time on the Forest to life. A few years later, in 1917, the U.S. entered World War I. The Sitka spruce on the Forest and throughout the coast country was deemed crucial for the war effort, and we have excellent records of this period in photos of William Prentiss and Army Signal Corps. We also have the records of the Spruce Production Division.

In 1919, the Forest finalized the comprehensive Lands Classification Atlas, documenting all the land within the Forest boundaries, in its bewildering complexity and diversity. A few years later, Region 6 began publishing the newsletter Six Twenty-Six with excellent coverage of events and personalities on the Siuslaw written by the participants. During the Depression, documents of New Deal agencies active on the Forest, like the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Resettlement Administration, add to the mix of viewpoints.

In 1941 Forest Supervisor Dahl J. Kirkpatrick (1939-1942) circulated a densely-written typescript, “A History of the Siuslaw National Forest, Oregon, as of December 31, 1939.” This history was apparently prepared in response to a directive from the Regional Office in 1940 asking that each Region 6 forest prepare a history documenting their early years. Whether Kirkpatrick wrote the unsigned “History” is not entirely clear, but it provides an excellent view of the inner workings of decision-making on the Forest, especially during the turbulent 1930s. Beginning in 1940 and continuing through the 1980s, the Forest Supervisor’s office prepared annual “History Notes” recording events and personalities on the Forest.

In addition to documents prepared under official auspices, there are memoirs prepared by retired Forest staff. Noteworthy among these are memoirs by Clarence W. Jacobs chronicling his work on the Forest from the 1950s through the 1980s, and District Ranger Edward S. Kerby’s lively account of the World War II years.

The oral history program on the Siuslaw is very active. Book-length interviews of District Ranger F. James Lyne and Forest Supervisor Rex Wakefield (1952–1962) are especially useful. The ongoing oral history program has prepared collections of interviews...
with Heceta Head staff, thirty-year employees of the Forest, conscientious objectors from Camp Waldport, and Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. These preserve the insight and background of participants in recent history. More conventional historical information is available in the excellent materials prepared for the Forest during the 1980s by Stephen Dow Beckham and by Stephanie Finucane.

The few published histories cited will be familiar to anyone who enjoys reading about the coast country. Several works published by the Lincoln County Historical Society deserve special notice. These are *Steam Toward the Sunset* by Lloyd Palmer and *The Land That Kept Its Promise* by Marjorie Hays. Twenty years ago, the Lincoln County Historical Society brought out a re-print of a remarkable publication from 1924 entitled *Pacific Spruce Corporation and its Subsidiaries*. This piece of corporate promotion prepared by B.A. Johnson and Archibald Whisnat provides amazing detail and photos of 1920s logging on Lincoln County lands that would later come into the Forest.

I have spoken with many people about this project in the last few months, and I appreciate their help. Forest Archaeologist Phyllis Steeves and Lloyd Palmer, historian and retired Siuslaw staff member, have added their knowledge and insight on countless occasions. I would also like to thank the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians for their help with Chapter 1.

Individuals who contributed their time and expertise include the following: Loyd Collett, Don Large, Ken McCall, Rich Babcock, Bruce Buckley, Joni Quarnstrom, Mike Harvey, Bruce Gainer, Frank Davis, Cindy McLain, George Buckingham, and Dick Spray.
CHAPTER ONE
ORIGINS
The land that is now the Siuslaw National Forest has a rich history reaching back thousands of years to the first people on the North American continent. The people who were there at the time of initial contact with Euro-Americans were groups of Native Americans living along the coast and maintaining patterns of life suited to the coastal environment. What we know of these people comes from languages and cultural traditions kept alive by tribal members, by Euro-Americans who recorded what they saw during the contact period, by the records of early ethnographers, and by data from archaeological investigations.

The indigenous peoples living on what is now the Siuslaw consisted of five groups differentiated by their languages and cultures. The people living on the coast when Euro-Americans first came into the country consisted of four groups ranging from the Tillamooks in the north to the Coos in the south. Further east, over the Coast Range crest, a group of Kalapuya speakers lived in the Marys River valley.

In the northern part of the central coast, from Tillamook Bay to the Yaquina River, were the Tillamook speakers, who were divided into two sub-groups by their dialects—the Tillamooks and the Siletz. To the south of the Tillamook speakers lived the Alsea speakers, who were also divided into two groups, the Yaquinans and the Alseans. South of the Alsea River, people living in the Siuslaw and Lower Umpqua River areas spoke
Basket weavers, Mary Young and her mother Molly Catfish. Lincoln County Historical Society (LCHS) Collection.

Siuslaw. Further south, on Coos Bay were the Hanis and Miluk Coosan speakers. The Indians in the Willamette Valley spoke dialects of the Kalapuya language. In the Marys River area, the Chepenaфа group predominated.
The Tillamooks lived in favorable areas from Tillamook Head to Otter Rock, including Nehalem Bay, Tillamook Bay, Netarts Bay, the Nestucca estuary, the Salmon River, and the Siletz River. Like other Salish peoples, they built substantial wooden canoes which they used in the bays and ocean for fishing and sea-mammal hunting. Woodworking technology extended to their houses, which were built from cedar planks. They were also sophisticated with fibers, making baskets, weirs, and fishing lines from various plant fibers. U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs Joel Palmer estimated in 1854 the population for the Tillamook groups at around 200 total, divided into six bands. Population figures from the 1800s do not represent the historic norms, since diseases spread after contact with Europeans substantially reduced native populations.

The Tillamooks' neighbors to the south, the Yaquinas and Alseas, were also reduced by imported diseases, especially smallpox and tuberculosis. The language of the Alseas was similar to people living to the south, but they shared elements of material culture with northern coastal peoples. The Alseas also benefited from the sophisticated coastal trade network.

South of the Alsea speakers, the Siuslawn and Lower Umpqua speakers lived on the Siuslaw, Smith, and lower Umpqua rivers. The Coos had a distinct language that was itself divided into two dialects, both spoken on Coos Bay. The Siuslaw, Lower Umpqua, and Coos are now affiliated through a confederation of these tribes. This affiliation grew out of their experiences on the Coast Indian Reservation after 1855 and their common legal struggle with the government for land and compensation. The original territory of
these groups extended north as far as Tenmile Creek (Lane County) and south to the southwest shoreline of Coos Bay. To the east, their territory extended over the Coast Range crest into the Willamette Valley.

The Siuslaws, Lower Umpquas, and Coos lived on fish and large game animals which could be preserved by smoking and drying. They caught salmon, steelhead, lamprey, smelt, and sturgeon in the rivers and bays. Mollusks and crabs were available in the bays and on the beaches. Plant foods included camas, fern root, various berries, and acorns from the Willamette Valley. Elk, deer, and sea mammals were among the large animals regularly hunted. Beached whales were an important source of oil.

The technology of these three groups included woodworking to produce plank houses and canoes which could exceed 20 feet in length. These canoes were capable of going to sea as needed for hunting and fishing. Coos informants at the turn of the century provided a list of ten different structure types built from cedar planks. The planks were used for fencing as well. Nineteenth century visitors observed that the plank houses were built over an excavated area, framed with poles, and sided with tied-on planking. The roofs were gables covered with overlapping planking. Within the houses would be fireplaces, sleeping platforms, and storage areas. The material culture included items made from stone, wood, bone, antler, and a variety of plant fibers. Spruce roots, iris leaf fibers, tules, cedar bark, and sea grass provided fibers for clothing, mats, baskets, fishing lines, weirs, and nets.
East of the Coast Range, groups of Kalapuya occupied the valley of the Willamette River and its tributaries. Beginning with the area east of Tillamook Bay, these were the Yamhill, the Luckiamute, and the Chepenafa, who lived on the Marys River. By 1900, the Yamhills numbered 30, the Luckiamutes 28, and the Chepenafa 25. The Kalapuya came into contact with Europeans and Metis from the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver much earlier than the coastal groups. They had access to ferrous metal trade goods, ceramic items, and perhaps horses. Beginning with the Euro-American settlement of the Willamette Valley in the 1840s, they were displaced from their homes as the valley "settled up."
There are few written records or archaeological data of contact between people of the coast and Europeans or Asians before the European explorations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Tillamook oral tradition of a foreign vessel landing (or wrecking) near Nehalem Bay is generally thought to refer to a Spanish ship from Manila because these vessels made landfall somewhere on the Northwest coast on their annual voyage from Manila to Acapulco. There is also a persistent controversy surrounding the voyage of Elizabethan mariner Sir Francis Drake. Drake sailed north up the coast of North America and possibly landed on the Oregon coast. In more recent years, there have been a few instances of vessels from Asia crossing the Pacific to the coast of Oregon or Washington when lost or disabled. With these exceptions noted, it is probably safe to say that the Indians of the coast lived without much foreign contact until the end of the eighteenth century.

At that time—in 1776—British explorer Captain James Cook sailed along the central Oregon coast mapping and naming prominent landmarks including Cape Arago, Cape Foulweather, and Cape Perpetua. After Cook, there was lively competition between British, Spanish, French, Russians, and Americans for trade along the coast. American mariner Robert Gray made contact with the coastal peoples in 1788, visiting Tillamook Bay and entering the Columbia River on a later voyage in 1792. The Lewis and Clark expedition wintered at the mouth of the Columbia in 1805-1806, and the trading post of Astoria was established in 1810. The presence of foreigners on the coast led to the terrible epidemics that ravaged native peoples in the early nineteenth century.

By 1848, the coastal people had a new challenge. Miners entering the Rogue River drainage came into conflict with the tribes of the Rogue River and Upper Umpqua. Hostilities began in 1851 and continued until the end of 1855. The continuing conflict in southwestern Oregon made the Euro-American settlers as far away as the Willamette Valley nervous, and there was political pressure for the government to pacify the tribes. During the spring and summer, the remaining Rogue and Upper Umpqua peoples were removed to a reservation established at Grand Ronde on the Yamhill River. The Kalapuya in the Willamette Valley—including those in Marys River area—were removed to Grand Ronde at this time as well. Although this reservation was in use as early as 1856, it was not officially established until June of 1857.
In the meantime, the tribes of the central coast—the Tillamooks, Alseas, Siuslaws, Coos, and Lower Umpquas—were generally tolerant of the Euro-Americans. Euro-Americans had begun settlements on the lower Umpqua River and on Tillamook Bay in the early 1850s, but the Indians got along with their new neighbors. Joel Palmer contacted the central coast groups in 1855 to negotiate a treaty. As a result, the Coast Indian Reservation was created in November of 1855.

The new reservation, exceeding one million acres, extended from Cape Lookout south to the Siltcoos River, and extended inland to the Coast Range crest. This encompassed some of the traditional lands of the Tillamooks, most of the traditional lands of the Yaquinas and Alseas, some of the lands of the Siuslaws, but little of the traditional territory of the Lower Umpquas or Coos. Beginning in 1856, the government moved 26 bands of people from western Oregon, northern California, and southwestern Washington onto the new reservation. The Lower Umpquas, Coos, and several groups from the south-central coast were moved forcibly to the U.S. Army's Fort Umpqua in the spring and summer of 1856. The Indian Service established an agency on the Siletz River at Siletz, and later the Alsea sub-agency at Yachats.

The agency at Siletz and the sub-agency at Yachats became centers of the reservation. Total numbers of Indians in the northern portion of the reservation was about 2,000 in 1856; 300 lived
It was summer time, we were all herded down to the ocean at Port Orford by the soldiers of the government. Some people were crying, others were just quiet—nobody talked. Each person was allowed only one package or pack, generally made up in a basket.

George Thompson, of the Coquilles, quoted in Marjorie H. Hays, *The Land That Kept its Promise*

at the Alsea sub-agency in 1872. These numbers reflect the 26 groups from Oregon, Washington, and California moved onto the Coast Indian Reservation. The Siuslaws reportedly lived 30 miles south of the Yachats sub-agency at their traditional locations along the Siuslaw River.

The first reduction of the Coast Indian Reservation came in 1865 when the government opened a corridor through the reservation from the Coast Range crest to the sea, four townships wide from Yaquina Head to the mouth of the Alsea River. No compensation was offered for this taking of valuable and useful land. The effect of this was to divide the reservation into two separate halves. After ten years, in 1875, the government again reduced the reservation. The northern part of the reservation from Cape Lookout to the Salmon River, and the southern part from Alsea Bay to the Siltcoos River were terminated. There were at least 300 Indians living on this part of the reservation, and these people were displaced from their homes. Finally, in 1892, the government applied the 1887 Dawes or General Allotment Act to the remaining part of the reservation. Indians received 160 acre allotments, and the remainder of the Coast

In 1872, the Indians at the Yachats Agency lived in about ten board houses, 16 feet by 20 feet or 8 feet by 12 feet. There were cattle sheds, a blacksmith shop, and buildings to house the farm implements. The fields were divided into seven parcels for convenience of seeding. All told, there were 35 acres of oats, 20 of potatoes, and 14 of wheat and some timothy and general garden of mostly carrots and turnips.

Marjorie H. Hays, *The Land That Kept its Promise*
As a general rule these are industrious [people] and try to make a living for themselves; they no longer live in groups as separate tribes but have nearly all of them, or at least the heads of families, taken their land as surveyed, have built houses on the same and are making, some more, some less, use of the ground... some of their houses would lose nothing by comparison with many of the whites. As a general rule, they go decently dressed.

David Fagan, History of Benton County, Oregon, 1885

Indian Reservation passed into the public domain. For the 191,798 unallotted acres, the tribes were paid $142,600.

The actions of the government in 1892 are difficult to understand, let alone justify. The Dawes Act was the law of the land after 1888, but it was applied inconsistently. Large reservations across the country were able to keep unallotted lands as tribal trust
lands after individual allotments had been made. In Oregon, the Klamath and Warm Spring reservations kept unallotted lands as range and timber lands for the benefit of the tribes. The Klamaths held 863,815 unallotted acres and the Warm Springs held 321,915 unallotted acres after the individual allotments had been made. In Washington, the Yakamas retained 422,444 unallotted acres, and the Colvilles retained 220,000.7

On October 31, 1892, a treaty agreement was entered into, according to the official records, between Reuben P. Boise, William H. Odell (he of the Oregon State School land notoriety) and H.H. Harding, commissioners on the part of the U.S., and the chiefs headmen and other male adults of the Alsea and other kindred tribes residing on the Coast Indian Reservation, whereby the Indians disposed of all their holdings, aggregating ten full townships in extent and embracing some of the finest timber in the world, for the paltry sum of $142,000! What the Indians were coaxed into giving for this relatively insignificant amount represents an area equivalent to about 1,300 homestead claims of 160 acres each, or practically 200,000 acres in round numbers and is worth today [1907] at a conservative estimate more than $8,000,000. If Uncle Sam could do as well on all his real estate investments, he could afford to retire, satisfied with his sagacity, if not his conscience.

Stephen A.D. Puter, Looters of the Public Domain
EURO-AMERICAN EXPANSION AND THE CENTRAL OREGON COAST

The nineteenth century migration of Americans, Europeans, and Asians into the western portion of the United States and Canada is one of the distinctive events of recent world history. The western frontier of North America captured the world’s imagination at the time, and it has become a permanent part of American cultural identity. Crossing the Great Plains, gold mining in California and the Rocky Mountains, and cattle ranching in the Great Basin were celebrated in the literature of the times and in much popular culture that has followed.

There were, however, some areas of the west where Euro-Americans arrived late in the settlement period. For most of the nineteenth century, the central coast of Oregon remained one of these regions, although reasonably close to population centers further inland. Land transportation within the Coast Range was difficult, and the lack of decent harbors made coastal navigation chancy, except at a few favored places. As a result, it attracted few Euro-American immigrants through the middle of the nineteenth century.

The coast offered immigrants an excellent opportunity for survival but a poor outlook for prosperity. The weather was mild; fresh water was plentiful; fish and game abounded. Even the most improvident new-comers could feed themselves. The resources of the coast were difficult to turn into cash, however. The mild climate and ample rain invited

Euro-American settlement on the central Oregon coast occurred in five phases:

A) Ongoing settlement from the 1850s north of Lookout Point, south of the Siltcoos River and east of the Coast Range summit. Settlement between these landmarks closed after the Coast Indian Reservation was formed in 1855

B) Settlement on Coast Indian Reservation lands after 1865 when the east-west corridor through the reservation between Yaquina Head and the mouth of the Alsea was opened

C) Settlement on Coast Indian Reservation lands after 1875 when the reservation south of the Alsea and north of the Salmon River was terminated

D) Settlement on Coast Indian Reservation lands after 1892 when the remainder of the reservation was terminated by the effects of the Dawes Act

E) Settlement on Siuslaw National Forest lands after 1908 as a result of the Forest Homestead Act of 1906
farming, but the narrow river valleys did not produce a high surplus of products. Stock raising was possible in the open areas, but there were few of these available. Dairying was an option in the Tillamook Bay area. Goats did well throughout the coast, but the market for mohair was not reliable.

The impressive stands of timber were worthless without sawmills to manufacture lumber and ships or railroads to bring the lumber to market. Salmon required canning or salting and a means of transportation. Oysters offered some hope for commerce, but the intertidal beds were soon exhausted. The financial mainstay of most settlers was cascara bark—also called “chittum”—which was easy to harvest and process, and brought a price as high as 20 cents per pound.

The pattern of settlement that emerged in isolated valleys of the Coast Range was subsistence farming. Settlers cleared enough land to provide an area for a garden, berry patch, orchard, and pasturage for a few cattle, sheep, or goats. Settlers supplemented the

Were it not for the large amount of Chittum bark in these mountains, it would have been almost impossible for these settlers to have made a living.

Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor Anson E. Cohoon, 1912

production of their “place” by hunting and fishing, especially for the salmon that crowded the streams in the spring and fall. Cash was available by selling cascara bark or working for wages in logging, fishing, or construction. If a homestead had timber, that could be sold to a lumber company.

This pattern of life was comfortable enough and persisted until the Great Depression. At that time, sources of cash dwindled. Settlers with good titles to their homesteads could mortgage them, or they could stop paying local property tax, which was the major cash outlay for many families. But neither of these strategies worked well. Mortgages required additional cash to service them, and withholding property taxes led to county tax liens. In the later years of the Depression, the Resettlement Administration bought up old homesteads that were abandoned, logged off, or tax-delinquent. The Depression, Resettlement, and World War II conscription ended a way of life that had persisted in the Coast Range since the 1860s.
MEANS OF ACQUIRING LAND

Individuals seeking land on the coast for their own use had several options as public land programs developed through the nineteenth century.

OREGON DONATION CLAIMS (1850) Men who had cultivated public domain lands for four years prior to 1850 could obtain title to 320 acres; their wives could obtain an additional 320. Immigrants claiming land after 1850 but before 1855 could claim 160 acres and wives could claim an additional 160.

HOMESTEAD CLAIMS (1862) Citizens or people intending to become citizens who were heads of households, single men, or widows could buy 160 acres or 80 acres in the public domain for $1.25 per acre or $2.50 per acre respectively. Settlers could claim 160 acres and obtain title without purchase by meeting settlement requirements. “Commutated” homesteads could be purchased at $1.25 per acre any time after six months of filing. Legislation in 1904 and 1909 enlarged the size of new claims to 320 acres in the nine Western states.

TIMBER AND STONE ACT CLAIMS (1878, 1892) Citizens could claim 160 acres of timber land “not fit for agriculture” and pay $2.50 per acre for title.

DAWES ACT ALLOTMENTS (1887) Tribal members on the Coast Indian Reservation could claim 160 acres on the reservation for personal use. Normally, the government held these allotments in trust for 25 years, then issued title. However, the Act of May 27, 1902, allowed heirs of tribal members to sell inherited allotments. Further, the Burke Act of May 6, 1906, authorized the Secretary of the Interior to issue title to allottees who demonstrated “competence and capability” in managing their own affairs. Under the terms of the 1902 and 1906 legislation, then, tribal members could sell allotments on the secondary market without waiting for the trust period to expire.

FOREST HOMESTEAD CLAIMS (1906) Citizens could claim 160 acres within the Siuslaw National Forest (after 1908) if the lands were “best suited” for agriculture. The Siuslaw was officially open to Forest Homestead settlement after 1908, then closed, then opened again from 1913 to 1916.
The land now within the Siuslaw National Forest was largely contained within the Coast Indian Reservation between 1855 and 1892. The exceptions are the Dallas city watershed, Marys Peak, and the lands south of Siltcoos River, which was the southern boundary of the reservation. Siuslaw National Forest lands in this southern area include the following: the Umpqua River mouth, lands between the Smith River and the Umpqua River, the dunes south of Winchester Bay, and the Coos Bay north spit. Lands that are now in the Elliott State Forest were originally part of the Siuslaw National Forest, but were all located south of the Siltcoos River and were not in the Coast Indian Reservation.

During the early 1850s, Euro-American settlement on the central coast was concentrated at Tillamook Bay to the north and the Umpqua River and Coos Bay to the south. In 1850, after the Donation Claims were available, a group in California organized as Winchester, Paine, and Co. to explore the south-central Oregon coast and promote settlement. They sailed into the estuary of the Umpqua River and platted ten town sites including Umpqua City, Scottsburg, Elkton, and Winchester. Immigrants settled in the Umpqua estuary during the 1850s. South of the Umpqua at Coos Bay, settlement followed the wreck of the steamer Captain Lincoln in 1852. Passengers stranded in Coos Bay included a number of single men and three families who subsequently settled there.8
Meanwhile, on the north central Oregon coast, a group sailed from the Columbia River to Tillamook Bay in 1850. Joseph Champion, the only member of the group who persevered through the first dismal winter, camped in a hollow spruce tree. Other settlers joined the colony in sufficient numbers to form their own county by 1853. By 1855 the Tillamook settlers were able to build a small vessel, the schooner *Morning Star*, which established regular communication with the outside world.

By 1853, then, Euro-American population centers on the central Oregon coast were established in the Umpqua/Coos Bay area on the south, and on Tillamook Bay on the north. These were relatively robust. In choosing the land between the Umpqua and Tillamook Bay for the Coast Indian Reservation, Joel Palmer was acknowledging the status quo. Euro-Americans were established in navigable bays north and south of the reservation, but the coast between these two points had little Euro-American settlement. After 1856, federal troops were stationed at Fort Umpqua to the south, Fort Hoskins to the east, and Fort Yamhill to the north to keep Euro-Americans out of the reservation and Indians in.
In December of 1865, President Andrew Johnson signed an executive order opening a corridor four townships wide through the Coast Indian Reservation from the Coast Range crest to the Pacific. The avowed purpose was to open a transportation route from the Willamette Valley to the Pacific, but observers noted that it precipitated a land rush as settlers and speculators applied for land through the 1862 homestead program.  

When land was officially available in the corridor in January, 1866, four soldiers from Fort Hoskins were among the first to file claims. The soldiers brought saw-mill machinery from San Francisco to their claims on Depot Slough and built the first mill in the area. A fifth former soldier, Samuel Case, built a lodging house, which he named "Ocean House," and began a community, which he named Newport. Oyster merchants Winant and Company built a store and supplied it by ship from San Francisco. By July of 1866, six months after the first legal settlement, the *Corvallis Gazette* estimated that there were 300 new residents in the bay. Newport was touted as the future "San Francisco of Oregon."

In 1866 the toll road of the Corvallis and Aquina Bay Military Wagon Road Company was opened from Corvallis to Newport. This road provided reasonable access from the Willamette Valley to Newport, and also opened up the inland valleys along its route. These areas further inland also attracted settlers. For example, the upper drainage of Big Elk Creek, a tributary of the Yaquina River, appealed to the Grant family and other settlers in the early 1870s.

The pattern of development on Yaquina Bay reflected tourism, trade, and a certain urbanity from the beginning. Twelve miles to the south, Alsea Bay also got settlers in 1866, but the pace was slower. Settlers arrived on Alsea Bay in 1865 and claimed lands at the head of the bay. The first school was operating by 1871. Unlike Newport, Waldport
was founded after the first settlement period was over in 1884. In her lively account of the settlement of south Lincoln County, Marjorie H. Hays noted that her grandfather came into the Alsea Bay country in 1886 but found all the attractive land on the bay and on the ocean already taken. Nevertheless, the land further up the river was well worth the work of homesteading.

Access to the upper Alsea Valley was delayed by the lack of a road over the mountains to the Willamette Valley. No adequate road was available until 1919, when one was built as part of the Forest Roads Program, combining federal, state, and county funds amounting to $367,000 for construction.¹⁵

You spoke of land for sale here. Well, there is a nice place on the river about four miles below here—160 acres with bottom land a good orchard; house, barn, hay meadow; nice fountain (spring) nearby. It is five miles from Waldport, which is at the mouth of the Alsea River. They are one miles from school and there will be a road—there is a horse trail now. Most of the travel is by water.

Martha French, October 5, 1887 (in Hays, The Land That Kept its Promise)
Termination of the northern portion of the reservation from Cape Lookout to the Salmon River, and the southern portion from Alsea Bay to the Siltcoos River made roughly 1,200 square miles of reservation lands available to settlers and investors after 1875. The southern portion of the former reservation included the drainages of the Siuslaw River, the Yachats River, and several streams with direct access to the ocean. The northern portion included the drainage of the Nestucca and the Little Nestucca and the country around Mt. Hebo.

Early settlement in the lower Nestucca valley led to the establishment of the Oretown post office in 1877. Other communities formed after the northern reservation lands opened in 1875 include Dolph, Hebo, Meda, and Neskowin.16 As with other areas of the central coast, the valley lands attracted immigrants, with the lower valleys and the coast itself exercising the strongest pull.

South of the Alsea River, the lands opened in 1875 offered some of the best opportunities for settlement and commerce on the central coast. Areas targeted included the lower Siuslaw Valley, the lands adjacent to the coastal lakes, and the North Fork of the Smith River. The first cannery was established on the Siuslaw estuary in 1876. Florence, Acme, and Glenada were established on the estuary; Mapleton was near the head of tidewater.

Settlement in this area continued through the 1880s and 1890s with land seekers arriving from the Willamette Valley, but also from other parts of the U.S. and Europe. The Oregon coast appealed to people from northern Europe, especially Germany, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Marjorie H. Hays notes that her family came from northern Europe, stopped for a year in Minnesota, and then found the Alsea Valley. Settlers had difficulty getting established financially. Nearly all of the written accounts mention the resourceful ways the settlers found for getting cash.
Self sustaining farm units could not be developed except in the most favorable spots. There was nothing which could be sold from the ranches. Settlers were obliged to go out at some time during the year and earn a grub stake...

A History of the Siuslaw National Forest, Oregon, as of December 31, 1939

Marjorie H. Hays reports that her family included skilled woodworkers who found employment that saw them through the most difficult times.

You might wonder what people did for a living in those hazardous times and so far from supplies. For three years Papa helped build the Heceta Light House, tediously and skillfully applying his old world techniques doing the interior work in the two keepers' houses, which boasted very impressive stairways... He helped Mr. Gwynn build a large house...copied after those around Dallas and Corvallis...Finally, working out and making oars and floats for Alsea fishermen he was able to buy a circular saw and mandrel to build his long dreamed-of sawmill.

Marjorie H. Hays, The Land That Kept its Promise

Other settlers relied on salmon fishing for cash if there was a cannery nearby, or for home use as salted fish.

It is the running season for salmon, and fishing takes precedence over everything else—the annual harvest of the winter grubstake.

Sioulsaw National Forest Supervisor Clyde R. Seitz, 1907-1908

Cannery at Waldport.
Trapping or hunting fur-bearing animals was another way to earn the much-needed cash.

Our cash income in the first years was from hunting and trapping. We hunted deer for their hides and meat. The red hides, which are thicker, taken in July and August, brought forty cents a pound. A good dry deer hide weighs about six pounds for which we got $2.40. The blue hides of winter brought twenty cents a pound. We also trapped mink, wildcat, and bear. Bear hides brought $8.00 to $10.00 and what is more, bear provided the major source of fat for frying, and in many homes it was used as a spread in place of butter.

George P. Stonefield quoted in Bogue and Yunker, Proved Up On Ten Mile Creek
In 1892, Indians on the Coast Indian Reservation received 160 acre allotments. The lands left after the allotments were claimed amounted to 191,798 acres in what is now northern Lincoln County. The government paid the tribes $142,000 for these lands, and then opened them for homestead entry. Homesteaders filed on some of the new public domain lands, and timber investors acquired others. The allotments were to remain in trust for 25 years under the original Dawes Act legislation, but subsequent legislation in 1902 and 1906 enabled the allottees to receive title sooner.

Many tribal members filed allotments on the last portion of the original reservation, which lay between Yaquina Head and the Salmon River estuary. However, unclaimed public lands on other parts of the former reservation were also available for allotments. The banks of the Salmon River, the upper Siletz River, and the shore north of Cape Foulweather were popular for allotments and were good choices. Similar patterns occurred in Lane and Douglas counties.
The Forest Homestead Act of June 11, 1906 had a significant impact on the Siuslaw National Forest. The law reflected Westerners' concern that they would be deprived of good homestead lands that were included within the boundaries of national forests. Since the newly-formed Forest Service could not survey all the land within the national forests at once, a policy developed under which homesteaders claimed lands, and the Forest

Letter from the Forest Service notifying homesteader that his claim has been denied.
Service determined whether they were suitable for agriculture after the fact. This policy invited abuse, and many forest homesteads were chosen for their timber value rather than their agricultural potential. C.P. Cronk, working on the Hebo Ranger District in 1910 noted that investigating “June 11” forest homestead claims was a major part of his work.

The Siuslaw was officially open to forest homestead claims when it became a national forest in 1908. Then it was closed to homesteading in 1910, re-opened in 1913, and finally closed permanently in 1916. The total number of forest homestead claims filed on the Siuslaw was 1,115. As Cronk and virtually all other commentators point out, some claims were opportunistic and even fraudulent, but many were legitimate. The Forest Service was required to adjudicate forest homestead claims, and—not surprisingly—their decisions were not always well-received. Many of the forest homestead applicants were desperate, as the public land in the U.S. available for entry was rapidly diminishing after the turn of the century. They perceived the forest homestead program to be their last chance. The best lands were gone. Those that remained were not ideal homesteads, but had some potential.

Perhaps the greatest problem with the forest homestead program was the difficulties it created between the Forest Service and the public. Some disappointed homesteaders responded by incendiariism—deliberately setting forest fires to damage the forest and frustrate the Forest Service.

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Old diaries revealed that a hot-bed of incendiary fire was a constant threat in the Niagara drainage during the ’20s. During the late fall and early spring, an east wind prevailed and the fern fields were very dry.

District Ranger Rolfe Anderson, “Hebo District Historical Notes” 1966

Unscrupulous individuals took advantage of the confusion associated with the forest homestead program.

*Lorenzo E. Doel... posed as an official land locator, had a badge proclaiming to all and sundry that he was an official land locator. He would charge $50 to locate suckers on government land that was not open to entry.*

District Ranger Edward S. Kerby, 1945
Sir:

In compliance with your request, you are informed that Portland No. 01149, Homestead Patent, No. 239973, in the name of James L. Hunt, received for the S.W. 1/4, Sec. 9, Tp. 12 N., R. 11 W., in the Hinshaw National Forest, issued Dec. 21, 1911.

Very respectfully,

[Signature]

Commissioner.

Letter from the Forest Service notifying homesteader that his claim is approved.
Once a homesteader had filed and “located” on a parcel of land, removing the family could be quite difficult. All of their capital as well as a significant amount of labor was likely invested in the claim.

The Forest Service was sometimes asked to adjudicate cases where the ownership was far from clear.

Here [to Schooner Creek], for example, came Gustave Granfor, a bachelor, who put up a house and cleared three acres, became homesick, and returned to his native land [Finland], only to be killed in the revolution of 1917, previous to which he had mortgaged his place for $200 to Jack Wick, a storekeeper, who in turn passed it on to his successor in business, who lost it to a wholesale grocer, who sold it to a new settler, who lost it on a mortgage to a Portland bank, who sold it back to the U.S.

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Homestead claims... varied from a real home on burned over fern patches to claims with over 100,000 board feet of old-growth timber per acre where there was no pretense to meet the homestead requirement. On the other hand there were in heavily timbered areas, claims where the homesteader hoped to get something for the timber, yet took the claim because he loved the surroundings and endeavored to conform to the legal obligations. I recall particularly the Wonderly brothers in the Siletz basin. One of them had the unique experience of having three houses destroyed in the time I knew him. The first, built in the creek bottom was washed away. His second, higher up, was demolished by a tremendous boulder which fate directed, fortunately, in the owner’s absence. The third house was burned. His fourth house was home when I knew him.

C.P. Cronk, 1910-1911
In 1907, Stephen A. Douglas Puter, a timber-land broker from Eureka, California, wrote a book exposing his career in land fraud and drew national attention to Oregon’s Lincoln County. Puter’s book, written “in the dismal recesses of a prison cell,” had a strong credibility, since Puter himself had been convicted of land fraud in a dramatic case that made headlines across the nation. He was indicted in Federal Court in Oregon, fled to Boston, was arrested by federal agents, provided evidence against his cronies, was incarcerated in the Multnomah County jail, and was pardoned by President Theodore Roosevelt. The journalists had a field day. In his book, Puter named names, cited specific places, and revealed the complex workings of the “Oregon land fraud ring.” The book was a best seller and may have made Puter more money than some of his fraudulent dealings.

The subject of illegal acquisition of public lands is complex. The idea of wealthy capitalists stealing land from the government is guaranteed to provoke most people. In fact, the methods used by ranchers and timber companies to acquire government lands were generally within the letter, if not perhaps the spirit, of the law. As Puter points out, the safest and most reliable method of getting government timber land after the Timber and Stone Act of 1878 was for investors to buy up Timber and Stone Act claims. Puter and others went so far as to sponsor the original claimants, paying the fees for their 160 acres, and even paying their travel expenses to the land office. Employing subsidized claimants, or “dummies,” was not ethical, but when the government brought J.N. Williamson and Dr. Van Gerstner of Crook County, Oregon, to trial for this practice in 1905, the court decided it was not illegal. After this landmark case, the government generally declined to prosecute Timber and Stone Act cases in Oregon.

Puter and his associates used three principal schemes in Oregon’s Linn, Lane, and Lincoln counties. The first was to use dummy Timber and Stone Act claimants. This practice was widespread and not original to Puter’s group. The second scheme—the state
school section strategy—was more complex. The Territorial Act of 1848 set aside two sections in each township for state schools. If the school sections were incorporated into Indian reservations, Carey Act irrigation projects, timber reserves, or other federal projects, the states would be “indemnified” or compensated for their lost lands with other lands from the public domain. The state could sell the right to claim these indemnity lands. The claimant was required to pay $2.50 an acre to the state and provide the legal description of state lands lost to the federal government. Puter bribed state officials in Salem to tamper with legal descriptions of lost state lands so that his “dummies” could claim them each several times. A Marion County grand jury in 1905 estimated that 500,000 acres of state school land sales were fraudulent.

The third scheme was Puter’s original idea, and he explained it to his readers with considerable pride. The Organic Act of 1897 made it possible for homesteaders whose land was incorporated into federal projects, like the forest reserves, to exchange their lands for other unclaimed lands on the public domain. Investors bought the rights to the exchanges and could get valuable timber land in exchange for ordinary homestead land. Puter’s twist on this legal practice was to find an isolated unsurveyed township on the Cascade Forest Reserve and invent fictional homestead claims in the township. Since the township was unsurveyed, General Land Office records were sketchy. With a few well-placed bribes he was able to turn spurious homestead filings on land near the Cascade summit into claims on Lincoln County timber land.

One of Puter’s best clients was Minneapolis timberman C.A. Smith. Puter helped Smith and his associate Frederick Kribs acquire thousands of acres in Oregon and Northern California. Smith was co-owner of the Smith-Powers Lumber Company in Coos Bay. Smith was also the owner of a 12,700 acre tract of old-growth timber south of Waldport usually called the Blodgett Tract. It was incorporated into the Siuslaw National Forest in 1941 as the Yachats Purchase Unit.

Smith, Kribs, and John DuBois assembled the Blodgett Tract by a variety of means. State school indemnity lands accounted for eleven full sections and six partial sections. Smith and his associates used dubious Santa Fe Railroad scrip and Timber and Stone Act claims as well. The one person associated with the Blodgett Tract who was likely not tainted, ironically enough, was John W. Blodgett, for whom the tract was named. Blodgett bought the land from Smith as a whole parcel in 1917. Blodgett’s agent, P.S. Brunley, warned Blodgett that Smith’s titles to timberland were in doubt, and that the best thing for the “Pacific Coast Country” would be to “shut him out and shut him down.” Smith, Kribs, and DuBois were under indictment for many years, and eventually lost thousands of acres of disputed land. Smith himself lost 38 parcels of land with disputed title in Oregon, California, and Wisconsin totaling over 6,000 acres.
The big cases of land fraud with celebrities like C.A. Smith made the best copy for the newspapers, but small operators were prosecuted as well.

...a number of old soldiers had filed on 160 acres each, thinking that the service they had given in the Army served as residence on the land. ...Willard Jones, who had sold a lot of timber land to some eastern friends had made a lot of money in commissions, had loaned some of these old soldiers a few hundred dollars and took mortgages on their claims, and... had been indicted for fraud [as a result]

A. W. Morgan, *Fifty Years in Siletz Timber*
Land fraud was not confined to the Oregon coast, of course. The Western states had the most public land for unscrupulous people to steal, but the Great Lakes states and the Middle Atlantic states also had their share of fraud. The government responded by investigating and prosecuting, and the courts were generally cooperative. However, enforcement alone could not deal with the widespread violations of various federal land programs. Congress recognized that reform of the land laws was needed to preserve timber, watershed, and other natural resources on public forests.

As a result, Congress passed on March 2, 1891, "an Act to repeal Timber Culture laws and other purposes," generally known as the Creative Act. The new law repealed the much-abused Timber Culture Act and the Preemption Act. It ended government sale of large tracts of land by auction, and tightened up the requirements of the Homestead Act, the Desert Land Act, and the Free Timber Act. Despite the Act's purpose of reforming existing laws, its most significant provision was Section 24, which created the Forest Reserve system across the U.S.

Section 24
That the President of the United States may, from time to time, set apart and reserve, in any State or Territory having public lands wholly or in part covered with timber or undergrowth, whether of commercial value or not, as public reservations, and the President shall, by public proclamation, declare the establishments of such reservations, and the limits thereof.

Act of March 2, 1891

Presidents Harrison and Cleveland set about creating forest reserves at a great pace, but there was little direction from Congress about the management of the reserves until the Organic Act of 1897 provided some direction for the Department of the Interior. The reserves created significant controversy almost from the beginning. Opponents typically included lumber operators, miners, and ranchers. Supporters included a mix of wealthy Easterners like E.H. Harriman, organizations like the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and individual conservationists.

As the forest reserves program continued, the politics became more complicated. Small loggers and lumbermen opposed the reserves, but large lumber companies like Weyerhaeuser supported the reserves. They hoped that the reserves would diminish the amount of timber available, and that their own private timber and would then increase in value. Sheep were excluded from the reserves, so sheep ranchers opposed them, but cattle and horses were allowed to graze, so cattle ranchers withheld their opinion. Advocates for Oregon's Cascade Forest Reserve, for example, included John Breckenridge Waldo and
One of the strongest critics of the forest reserve program was Oregon Senator Charles Fulton, who had himself been implicated in land fraud cases. After several unsuccessful attempts, Fulton introduced legislation that would end the President's power to create forest reserves in 1907. The Fulton Amendment was passed and was to become law on March 7, 1907. Before the new law took effect, however, Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot and his staff hastily drew boundaries for 17 new forest reserves containing 16,000,000 acres. President Theodore Roosevelt signed the new “Midnight” Reserves into existence before the Fulton Amendment became law, creating in Oregon the Blue Mountains, Cascade, Coquille, Imnaha, Tillamook, and Umpqua reserves.

The Tillamook Forest Reserve included the Hebo area, and the Umpqua Forest Reserve included coastal lands near the Umpqua River. According to the author of *A History of the Siuslaw National Forest, Oregon, as of December 31, 1939*, the creation of these reserves was not related to any local issue. There was little notice of the new reserves in the local or state-wide newspapers. In November of 1907, eight months after President Roosevelt had created the “Midnight Reserves,” Senator Fulton spoke in Toledo, Oregon, but did not mention the two new reserves in his speech. Nevertheless, Puter’s much-publicized adventures with the law, and his book *Looters of the Public Domain*, had drawn attention to the central Oregon coast as early as 1905. Two of the public lands areas in Oregon that Puter singled out as hotbeds of fraud were the central coast and the Blue Mountains. These areas accounted for four of the six new reserves in Oregon formed early in March, 1907.
NOTES

1 Stephen Dow Beckham, Katherine Anne Toepel, and Rick Minor, Cultural Resource Overview of the Siuslaw National Forest, Western Oregon (Corvallis, OR: Siuslaw NF, 1982) 62. Beckham’s excellent synthesis of ethnographic and historical information serves as a basis for this section of chapter 1.


3 For history of coastal and Willamette Valley Indians in this period see Stephen Dow Beckham, Requiem for A People: the Rogue Indians and the Frontiersmen (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971) and Stephen Dow Beckham, The Indians of Western Oregon, This Land was Theirs (Coos Bay, OR: Arago Books, 1977).

4 Siletz and Grand Ronde figures from Beckham 1982, 225; Alsea figures from Marjorie H. Hays, The Land That Kept its Promise (Newport, OR: Lincoln County Historical Society) 36.

5 Beckham, 1982, 235.


7 Beckham, 1982, 231.


11 “History,” 12.


16 Beckham, 1982, 238.

17 “History,” 48.


19 James O'Callahan, Disposition of the Public Lands in Oregon (New York, NY: Arno, 1979) 64.

20 Puter, 316.

21 Blodgett Papers, Brumley to Blodgett, December 26, 1918; Oregon Journal, December 22, 1918.

22 Puter, 46-67.


24 Blodgett Papers, Brumley to Blodgett, April 14, 1915.


30 “History,” 2.