

# History Of Area Dates Back To Mid-19th Century

## Sir Francis Drake Refers to Latitude Near Brookings

There is an entry, made in June, 1577, by Sir Francis Drake, in his diary, over which there has been much controversy down the years. In that report he gives details of a landing upon this coast in the vicinity of 38 degrees north of the equator, after having sailed southward about five degrees.

As the mouth of the Chetco stands in approximately 42 degrees, he may have turned southward opposite where Brookings now stands. Sometime later a Spanish wanderer named Ferrollo, put his name to a promontory about three miles up the coast from the Chetco, but there is a long gap until August, 1849, when definitely local stories have their beginning.

About the 25th of that month, the schooner Hackstaff, Capt. Wm White, sailing from San Francisco, intended for the Columbia River, went ashore at the mouth of the Rogue. Jim Chapin, one of the passengers, located the stranded crew by pointing out to them the remains of a campfire he had made a little way up from where they landed, he having come in overland in 1848. Forty-five days later the party reached Eugene, after an extremely ar-

duous hike.

Capt. William Tichenor, with a company of Portland men, arrived at Battle Rock, Port Orford, in the summer of 1851, and immediately got embroiled in a fight with the Indians. From the maze of conflicting stories one may assume that Port Orford had its founding on that date, however, if any Indian records existed there might have been some changes made in this opinion.

Such glimpses as we do have of local pioneer days show that possibly the majority of the earlier settlers and miners made their coastal trails from California, northward, their principal route; it not being subjected to the rigors of snow and cold and also because the natives paid little or no attention to them.

The earliest available data on residents about the mouth of the Chetco tells us that when the white men came in the early '50s, they found two large villages of Chetco Indians, one on either side of the stream, and another village about six miles up from the mouth. In all, this population numbered about 350 grown people and their tribal name, Chetco, attached to the stream, survives in its original form and not suffered corruption, as have most other aboriginal names.

Hearsay evidence tells us that in 1853, twelve middle-western men came to the Chetco and staked out their claims. They report that the Indians were affable, tending to adjust themselves to their new neighbors with whom they lived amicably.

The earliest written evidence this writer has turned up relative to the area bears the date of February 10, 1854, naming the town of "Union City," at the mouth of the Cheate or Chetco River," Territory of Oregon, in the county of Coose, concerning Augustus Miller, and signed by J. L. Parish, U. S. Indian agent.

Miller was among the first earliest settlers hereabouts. Curry county's first recorded deed, outside the town of Port Orford, is dated on April 15, 1865, and concerns land now adjacent to Pedroili drive. The first publicly recorded right-of-way in the county may still be traced in portions between "Moore's Mill, on Jack's Creek, to the old Indian cemetery.

Incidentally, the mill mentioned was that operated by Silas and James Monroe Moore, sons of Robert, and was the first operated in this section. Curry county not named until December 18, 1855, on that date divorced from county of Coos. "Gus" Miller, on January 1, 1857, paid the county \$25 for the privilege of operating the first ferry across the Chetco and in 1858, F. W. Colebrook and

Clements Hazard were licensed to drive "cattle and beef stock" from the north through to California.

Considerable evidence of the Indians who lived here still frequently turns up. Around the mouths of the coastal streams are tremendous piles of shell and bone and marl, from which a patient and pains-taking explorer often turns up priceless treasures preserved through the ages. After making their homes here for countless generations most of these same Indians were herded off to the Siletz Reservation under highly questionable circumstances in 1858.

For the next 50 years or so, nothing really different occurred in this then remote section to distinguish it from any other like district in a similar period of transition. It had its streaks of every phase of life and death common to other western frontiers of the times. One combing the warp and woof of those years will find yarns of all the human passions and patterns which have moulded in the dusts of time immemorial.

In the early years of 1900 lumber visionaries, prompted by the vast expansion of the California cities, appeared on the scene, having an eye on local timber, Chetco fir being the closest to those markets. San Francisco was then re-clothing herself after her devastation. "The Big Ditch" offered better transportation to the timber-stripped east and lumber money was searching westward ahead of their logged-over lands, east of the Rockies.

In October, 1906, William J. Ward, a civil engineer, arrived in the county to look over the mill prospects, and reporting back to his principals that there were billions of feet of merchantable stumpage in the area contiguous to the mouth of the Chetco, they hastened to establish the town of

Brookings and what became the largest electrically-operated saw-mill in the world. From this mill went forth nearly 400 million feet of fir and redwood lumber before the giant plant came to financial grief in 1923 without having made an appreciable dent in the timber stand.

It is not a figure of speech to say that the huge mill melted, the 17-acre log pond will probably remain alone to mark the spot.

The country went back to a routine similar to that which prevailed before the lumber boom, not to even sniff its chance of rebirth before a Portland planter, W. L. Crissey, suspecting its unique climatic conditions, started experimenting here with this form of agriculture.

At first his efforts were anything but encouraging but in persistence eventually turned up as-

tonishing results.

About this same time considerable lily experimentation has been under way around Brookings where they were even then good commercial crop. The late Sidney Croft was working "crosses" of strains and, around

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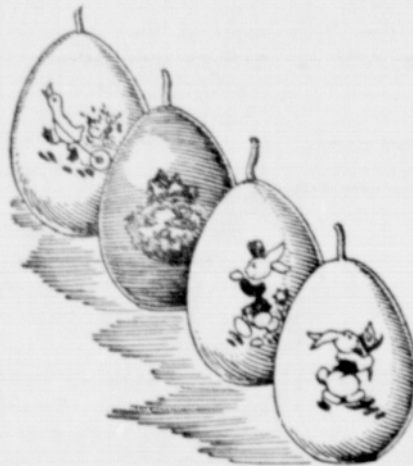
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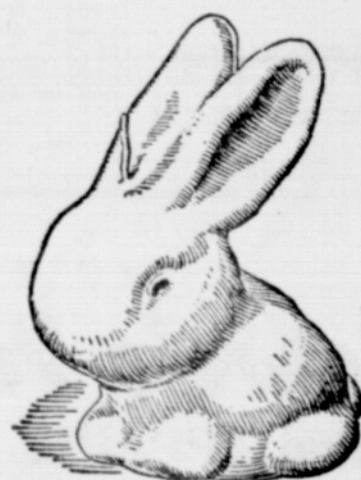
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