

## The Way It Was

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The trees shed their leaves each fall.

The brown and green of the alder, the yellow of the big leaf maple, the red of the vine maple, the orange red of the cascara. In sheltered valleys and on steep river canyons, over slow-moving tidal estuaries, over lakes hidden from view. Into the black, upriver water of the Yaquina, the Salmon, the Alsea, the Siletz, and into countless other streams flowing toward the ocean.

Cold fall winds create showers of leaves, landing without a sound, then floating like small colored boats, joining others, toward the sea.

The bays were almost quiet. The only sounds were the wind-pushed water lapping against the mud flats, herons croaking as they rose off the shallow feeding areas, waterfowl flying in flocks or flying alone, rising off and landing on the bays, flying out to feed, floating in giant rafts on the bay to rest. Large v's of brant flew disciplined formations over the ocean. Migrating pelicans skimmed the surface of the rolling Pacific like well-thrown skipping rocks.

The tide came in, the tide went out, huge schools of fish went far upriver to begin the process all over again, their young smolt, like the leaves, returning to the sea. The chinook, the silver, spawning and dying, century after century, feeding and being fed upon in the sea and in the rivers, then, like the tide, doing it again and again. A natural order of movement.

The cliffs and rocks along the coast hosted huge colonies of sea birds, as well as sunning places for seals and sea lions, resting after feeding just beyond the surf line. Further up river the large land mammals - the elk, the deer, the black bear and the cougar - roamed over a wilderness covered with Sitka spruce, Douglas fir, western red cedar and hemlock.

Through this country roamed the native people, the Yakons, the Alsea, the Umpqua from the south, the Tillamook from the north. They lived as they had for centuries, coming to the ocean to feast, eating the crabs and shellfish on the beach or in the bay, eating the salmon, going inland for berries and roots and plants as well as venison, living off the land and living with the land.

The first Europeans to see what is now Lincoln County were explorers looking for the fabled Northwest passage or fleeing an enemy. James Cook sailed up the coast, and, during his voyage, named Capes Foulweather and Perpetua.

Fur traders also explored the area, trapping beavers and other animals, trading with the Indians along the way. At one time, Russia thought of making a claim for the whole of the Oregon territory, and the British had eyes on it, too, but the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 let the world know that this coast was part of the United States.

In the early 1830's, Salem settler Jason Lee and his wife joined another couple to travel from the Willamette Valley on a honeymoon. They followed what later would become the route of the Salmon River Highway, and spent their time in the north county area. The two couples and their guide were Lincoln County's first tourists.

In 1849, Lt. Theodore Talbot explored the Lincoln County area for the U.S. Army. On August 31 of that year, Talbot wrote in his journal: "Crossing Yaquina Bay with four men, I started on foot to the Alsea Bay, taking with me a Yaquina Indian as a guide."

On another occasion, he wrote, "These Indians

occasionally visit the Umpquas, with whom they are at peace, for the purpose of buying from them prisoners of whom they make slaves. Quite a traffic is carried on, the Alsea and the Yaquina Indians in turn selling these slaves at advanced prices to the Indians living about the Columbia."

Flu, brought by the white settlers, decimated those coastal Indians. The reservation system finished the job.

### The Coastal Reservation: 1855

Try to imagine yourself living where you have always lived. Your parents grew up there, as did your grandparents, your great-grandparents. You and your family were part of the land.

You used the area where you lived for food, recreation, for your total existence. There were other people around you, some with whom you were friendly, some with whom you were not. You and your family had your own belief systems, your own legends, your own way of life.

Suddenly, a new kind of person came to the area. Just rumors at first, then single people who were friendly and wanted to share some of what you had. They in turn had things that you had never seen before. Trade began. These people were strange but you could live with them. They seemed to know the value of the land and it's many treasures.

Gradually, though, more and more of these people came. They seemed to be losing the respect that the first people had for you and your customs. They began taking over plots of land, and not allowing you on them, or driving you away if you came too near them.

Soon the wild game that had sustained you began disappearing. Then came conflict, stealing, violence. Things were not what they had been for all the time you could remember. These people had laws and religion that they expected you to observe and obey. They did not respect your customs.

Men in uniforms came, soldiers, to protect these new persons who had moved onto your land. You suddenly have no rights, you and your family are told. You must make way for the new person. He is right, you and your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents are wrong. Your customs, your way of life, everything concerning your society is wrong.

Then a new rumor starts. The new people their soldiers, the "Boston men" as they are now called, want you to leave this country. They want you to leave your home, the land, your possessions, your way of life, your ancestors.

Some of the bravest of the people say "no", they fight, but it does no good, many die, and you are forced to leave. You are told through an interpreter that you and your family will have to move. You can only take one bundle of personal possessions, and you will either walk 200 miles, or go on a ship.

You are placed with people of different groups, who speak different languages, who have different customs. You are expected to give up your way of life, you are going to be civilized.

Many of your people die. The new climate is wet and cold. There is no food, no game, no shelter. A proud and ancient race of people is reduced to poverty, slavery, and neglect. Your people, your identity are destroyed.

The western expansion of white settlers reached Oregon and the coastal area in the early 1800's.

Clashes developed between the native people and the settlers, and a request to the federal government was made to remove the natives.

The U.S. Congress started the reservation system in the 1840's to remove and isolate the Native American from the western-expanding settlers. Originally, 13 treaties were negotiated with the tribes in the Willamette Valley, whose land was bought for about 3 cents an acre. Later, more