

Coos County Nearly Century Old

Organized in 1853; Empire First County Seat Until 1875, When Moved to Coquille

Coos county was organized December 22, 1853, while Oregon was still a territory. In the Rogue River Indian dialect Coos means "Lake, lagoon, or inland bay." The name was first mentioned by Lewis and Clark, who spell it Cook-koo-oose, and early day residents always wrote it Coose.

In May, 1853, an exploring party under Perry B. Marple left Jacksonville, Oregon, to search for a harbor that would give an outlet for Southern Oregon. They arrived at Coos bay in three days.

Empire Settled in 1853

W. H. Harris, one of the party, selected the ground where Empire now is, and in 1853, he filed claim under the donation land claim act to one-half section land. This was the first land filed on in Coos county under the land laws of the United States.

After taking claim Captain Harris built a cabin, the first in the county. He laid out and platted eight blocks for a town and chose the name of Empire City. A custom house was established there in 1853 with David Bushness collector. Empire City was the first settlement in the county, and served as county seat until 1899, when the seat of county government was removed to Coquille.

Marshfield is part of the land claim taken by Wilkins Warwick in 1855. In 1856 he sold part of his claim to Andrew J. Davis for \$3000. In 1867 there were but two buildings, but in that year John Pershaker started lumber and shipbuilding industries.

The first locomotive was shipped by boat to Coos bay in December, 1874, together with two passenger cars and two freight cars.

In 1869 the first newspaper was established, it being a sheet 6 by 9 inches, and called the "Bumblebee."

First County Judge

Chas. Pearce was the first county judge of Coos county, serving under appointment from April 12, 1854, until December 18, 1854. R. S. Belknap was appointed to succeed Pearce, the former serving until September 4, 1855.

The first county election was held in the summer of 1855, A. N. Foley being named county judge. His term was for four years, ending July 8, 1859.

The remaining county judges, serving Coos county from that time up to the present were:

Samuel S. Mann, July 4, 1859, to July 4, 1866; Gilbert Hall; D. J. Lower; J. H. Nosler, two terms; Geo. M. Dyer; D. L. Watson, father of James Watson, of Coquille, two terms; J. Henry Schroeder, member of the original Baltimore colony, father of W. H. Schroeder, jeweler, of Coquille; L. Harlocker, two terms; John F. Hall, two terms; James Watson, C. R. Wade, R. H. Mast, D. F. Thompson and Hugh McLain, present incumbent. The five last named are still living. Messrs. Watson, Mast and Thompson, residents of Coquille, Mr. Wade of

Bandon and Mr. McLain of Marshfield.

County Seat Removed to Coquille

Empire remained the county seat until April 5, 1899, when, following an election in 1896, it was removed to Coquille, which had been chosen for its central location, being almost in the center of the county. The county court at this time comprised L. Harlocker, county judge, with I. T. Weekly and Donald McIntosh commissioners; Edward Rackleff, now living at Canby, Oregon, was county clerk, his deputy being Louis H. Hazard, at present living in Coquille; the sheriff was W. W. Gage, father of Clyde A. Gage, Coquille, who was his father's deputy sheriff for some years.

Present Court House Built in 1898

The first or original court house in Coquille was the present frame structure, two stories and basement, erected in 1898 by H. Snook of Salem at his bid of \$12,105. Bids were originally opened in April, 1897, but held in abeyance for nine months because proper plans had not been made for funds with which to build. This delay cost the county close to \$500, because the price of material had advanced in the meantime. At the time the structure was erected it was thought that it was being made sufficiently large to take care of the county's needs for many years, but the vision of the most sanguine residents of that day could not foresee what the future had in store for Coos county. For in 1916, the population of Coos county had so grown and its legal business so increased that it was necessary to erect a new and more modern addition to the frame structure. Even the capacity of this addition, known as the Hall of Records, is fast being overcrowded, and the prediction is freely made that before another ten years have rolled around, that Coos County will need a larger and still more modern structure to house its various departments.

Present County Official Family

Coos county's official family today, 1937, is as follows: County Judge, Hugh McLain; County Commissioners, R. H. Lawhorn and T. H. Thompson; county clerk, L. W. Oddy; sheriff, W. F. Howell; treasurer, Chas. Stauff; assessor, J. P. Beyers; superintendent of schools, Mrs. Martha E. Mulkey; surveyor, J. N. Gearhart; district attorney, Ben Flaxell; coroner, Dr. Ennis Keizer.

The first circuit court judge of this district in 1859 was Obediah B. McFadden, then associate supreme court judge, the three supreme court judges then each presiding over one of the state's three districts. The present judges are: James T. Brand, Marshfield; G. F. Skipworth, Eugene, and Carl Wimberly, Roseburg.

The present legislators, serving in the regular 1937 session were: Geo. Chaney, Coquille, senator for Coos and Curry counties; J. H. McCloskey, Norway, state representative for Coos county; Roy Carter, Gold Beach, joint representative for Coos and Curry counties.

Southwestern Oregon has been particularly endowed by nature with recreational spots for the tourist, vacationist, or for one out for a day's enjoyment.

This section offers wonderful facilities for boating, fishing, hiking, swimming, hunting, golf and tennis.

Select your favorite outdoor sport and Coos county will furnish it. You can rough

it out-of-doors or you can stay at a luxurious hotel or apartment or tourist cottage.

Ocean, lake and river fishing is available for the angler. There is trout fishing in the streams, trolling for salmon in the surf or in the various rivers, deep sea fishing off the Coquille river or Coos Bay, duck, deer and wild game hunting, which is an answer to a sportsman's prayer.

months are characterized by extremely high water in the coastal streams while the summer and early fall finds them at a very low stage. Normal precipitation for the coastal country varies considerably from north to south along the coast, being 63 inches at Umpqua Lighthouse, 64 inches at North Bend, 69 inches at Port Orford and 75 inches at Gold Beach and Brookings.

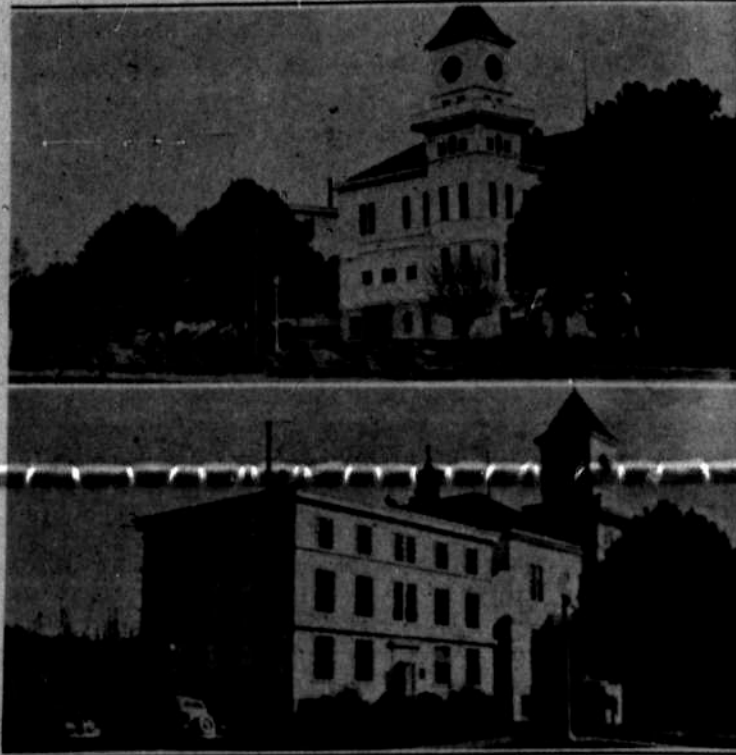
Irrigation is practiced on a limited scale by individual farmers who water small tracts, mostly orchard, garden, or ladino clover plots, and the drainage districts in the vicinity of Marshfield and Coquille have made some use of summer irrigation.

However, the rivers and streams play an important part in the life of a great many of the people in these two counties. Coos River and the Middle and North Forks of Coquille River are used to float logs down to mills, Rogue River is the only route to Agness and Illahe, commercial fishermen get their living from several of the larger streams, while the recreational value of the streams and fresh-water lakes is hard to estimate in dollars and cents but must be a large sum, when we consider the amounts spent by tourists and fishermen at the many resorts and camps scattered all along the coast.

The United States Geological Survey is maintaining river gaging stations on the three Forks of Coquille River. The station on the South Fork at Powers has been maintained since September, 1916. Here the maximum discharge was 25,300 cubic feet per second (11,350,000 gallons per minute) on October 31, 1924, and the minimum 13 cubic

feet per second (5,830 gallons per minute) November 30 to December 3, 1929, and October 4-13, 1932. The mean flow of this fork for the sixteen years of complete record is 444 cubic feet per second (199,000 gallons per minute). The station at the present location on Middle Fork Coquille near Myrtle Point has been operated since October 1, 1930. The maximum discharge was 23,600 cubic feet per second (10,580,000 gallons per minute) on January 2, 1933, and the minimum one cubic foot per second (449 gallons per minute) on July 16, 17, 1931. The mean flow for the five years of published record is 679 cubic feet per second (304,700 gallons per minute). The six years of published record (1930-1935) for the North Fork Coquille River near Myrtle Point shows a maximum discharge of 10,400 cubic feet per second (4,670,000 gallons per minute) January 3, 1933, and a minimum flow of 17 cubic feet per second (7,630 gallons per minute) September 5, 1930. The mean flow for the period is 833 cubic feet per second (373,800 gallons per minute).

During each of the past several years the writer has made a trip along the Coast Highway from Astoria to California during the low-water period in August and September, measuring all the rivers and creeks west of the summit of the coast range that are readily accessible from the roads and highways. As a result of this work we now have a fair idea of the low water flow of some 75 streams in Coos and Curry Counties and as new roads are opened up and improved this work will be extended as fast as possible.



Top—Original frame building, Coos County Court House, erected in 1898.

Bottom—Modern concrete addition to above building, erected in 1916.



COOS COUNTY COURT AND OFFICIALS, 1896

This view was taken on the old court house steps at Empire, the then county seat, previous to removal of the county seat to Coquille. Front row, left to right: Edward Rackleff, county clerk, father of Dave Rackleff, local druggist, now living in Canby, Ore., and L. H. Hazard, deputy county clerk, for many years and until recently president of the First National bank of Coquille. Top row, left to right: Frank Ross, commissioner, then of Coos river; J. Henry Schroeder, county judge, father of Wm. H. Schroeder, jeweler, of Coquille, and Taylor Weekly, commissioner, father of Vance Weekly of Coquille, all now deceased.

Rivers and Streams

Play Important Part in Lives of Many People in This Section

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Assistant State Engineer

Most of us living on the Pacific Coast think of irrigation projects and hydro-electric developments when we hear the term, "Water Resources." Coos and Curry Counties have not yet undertaken any large developments of that nature, and the reason is quickly evident. Except for the Rogue River, which has its head-waters in the high Cascade and Siskiyou Mountains, all the streams in Coos and Curry counties rise on the western slope of the Coast Range. Although this slope is heavily wooded, the hills are steep and well broken up by gullies and ravines, which quickly drain away the falling water. The character of the soil is also a factor in this quick run-off, the top layer of loam being generally underlain by a dense clay hardpan which will not retain much moisture. Practically all of the precipitation falls in the form of rain and at once starts on its way to the ocean. Nearly one half of the total precipitation falls during November, December and January, 80 per cent falls during the six months period October 1 to March 30, while the remaining 20 per cent is spread over the period April 1 to September 30. As a result the winter