

Mystery Mist Impressed Early Day Visitors To Lake Ouse—Upper Klamath Lake

Features

KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON, SUNDAY, MAY 12, 1963

By DICK BRIGGS

In the early morning during winter, and occasionally in summer, a light mist ascends slowly upwards from the surface of Lake Ouse, a saucer-shaped basin 140 miles in circumference, located near the heart of Klamath County.

For several hours on certain days the light, thin fog hovers above the lake as a veil of steam, stimulating the imagination of those who infrequently glimpse through it to see forests shimmering on the other side of its waters.

The mysterious mist that shrouds the lake and part of the land impressed the first civilized men who ventured into Klamath County. They are believed to have been French trappers from the Hudson's Bay Company who sought pelts of beaver and otter

and knew those waters by the name given to them by local Indians—Lake Ouse.

Upon their leaving, they took with them an impression of the land of the veil-like mist, an impression which they expressed as *clair-mote*, a word many historians believe is the derivative of the name of this county and the lake which bears its name—Klamath, "the land of the light fog."

Very probably, it was the trappers who gave the land its name. The mist was characteristic of the area when it was first visited by white men, as it was, later, when the pathfinders led pioneers west by wagon train.

So it is today. So it may have been, too, thousands of years before the coming of the white man when the bed of Upper Klamath Lake was a

more in the form of a bowl and its waters touched the shore 90 feet above its present level.

In those times when prehistoric animals roamed the land, Klamath Lake was part of a great inland sea which would alternately fill and drain, as though its outlet would become first free and then clogged, due, perhaps, to volcanic disturbances.

Such activity may have cut away the rim of the lake at its southeast corner, creating a trench that drained the great inland sea and became the bed of a new river, now known by the name of the county where it is located and the lake which provides its source—Klamath.

The drainage from the vast sea that had earlier flowed to the Pacific Ocean through the Pit River then found its way to the ocean through the channel which formed the Klamath River.

The volcanic disturbance that spawned this waterway may have occurred about 6400 B.C., when Mt. Mazama erupted, spewing magma and fire throughout the Klamath Basin. The eruption loosened the peak of the 12,000-foot mountain and soon after 17 cubic miles of its lofty summit collapsed into the bowels of the mountain which now forms the bed of Crater Lake.

The enchantment of the "land of the light fog" does not come when its veil-like mist blankets the land, but as it dissipates from the rays of a late morning sun, exposing the grandeur of timberlands and the Cascade Mountain Range which enfolds it.

Neither is the mystery of Klamath only that of the fog, but also of other natural phenomena.

Hot springs flow underground in some parts of Klamath Falls and elsewhere in the county, providing some homeowners with free hot water, steam heat, and an automatic snow removal system in winter.

Upper Klamath, the largest body of water in Oregon, ranks 20th in size among lakes of the United States and is the site of one of the few natural nesting places of pelicans.

Within the county are two waterways which rank first among those in their respective categories. Link River, which connects Klamath Lake on the north with Lake Ewauna one mile to the south, is the shortest river in the United States. Sixty miles to the north is Crater Lake, which at a depth of 1,932 feet is the deepest body of fresh water in the U.S.

These phenomena, and many others, are the subjects of this article and three others to follow. They have been written not with the intent of providing a complete history of the area, but merely to comment on certain points of interest along the countryside to add to the enjoyment of tourists as they motor through the more interesting parts of the "land of the light fog."

The first of four tours through Klamath County takes the motorist along the circumference of Klamath Lake—about 140 miles (four hours easy driving time)—past such historical sites as Denny Creek, where pathfinders in Capt. John C. Fremont's exploration party of 1846 were slain by Klamath Indians, and Fort Klamath (marked by a stone monument), an obliterated U.S. Army Fort where Captain Jack, a Modoc Indian chieftain, was hanged in 1872 marking the end of the U.S.-Modoc Indian War.

The sojourn starts at the Link River Bridge near Conger and Main Street in Klamath Falls, which was for centuries the point where Indians forded Link River during their travels north and south.

ANCIENT CROSSING
Klamath Indians generally bypassed the narrow straits to cross the river at a wider point farther south. To the early Klamaths, the huge boulders near the site, now spanned by the Link River Bridge, represented footprints of the gods, and the Indians chose not to risk the wrath of their deities by crossing there.

The straits was one of the narrowest points along a 100-mile stretch of water from Agency

Lake down the Klamath River, but before doing so look quickly to the left for a view of the southern rim of Klamath Lake and a glimpse of the southern Cascades, playground of vacationists coming to the Holiday Lakes Area. Take the ramp leading off of the freeway and follow the signs directing traffic to Lake of the Woods (the subject of another tour).

GLIMPSE CASCADES
One mile north of the Fremont Bridge is the Nevada Avenue Overcrossing, constructed about five years ago as part of the Westside Bypass, which comprises the bridge and two overpasses. Prepare to turn right immediately after crossing the overpass, but before doing so look quickly to the left for a view of the southern rim of Klamath Lake and a glimpse of the southern Cascades, playground of vacationists coming to the Holiday Lakes Area. Take the ramp leading off of the freeway and follow the signs directing traffic to Lake of the Woods (the subject of another tour).

NESTING GROUNDS
Klamath Lake and its northern neighbor, Agency Lake (considered part of the Klamath Lake system), extend almost 30 miles north to Agency, near Fort Klamath.

Its nearly circular shoreline measures 140 miles in circumference and amid the area are waters famed for fishing and excellent for water skiing. Parts of the lake serve as natural nesting grounds for pelicans—one of few such places in the U.S.—and its northwest portion forms part of the Klamath Wildlife Refuge.

Though shallow for its size (40 feet at its maximum depth) it is the largest lake in the state and ranks 20th among other lakes in the continental United States. About a half mile past the Fremont Bridge, and to the left, is Moore Park, a recreation area maintained by the city of Klamath Falls featuring a zoo, playground, tennis courts, ice skating rink, picnicking area, archery range and other amusement facilities.

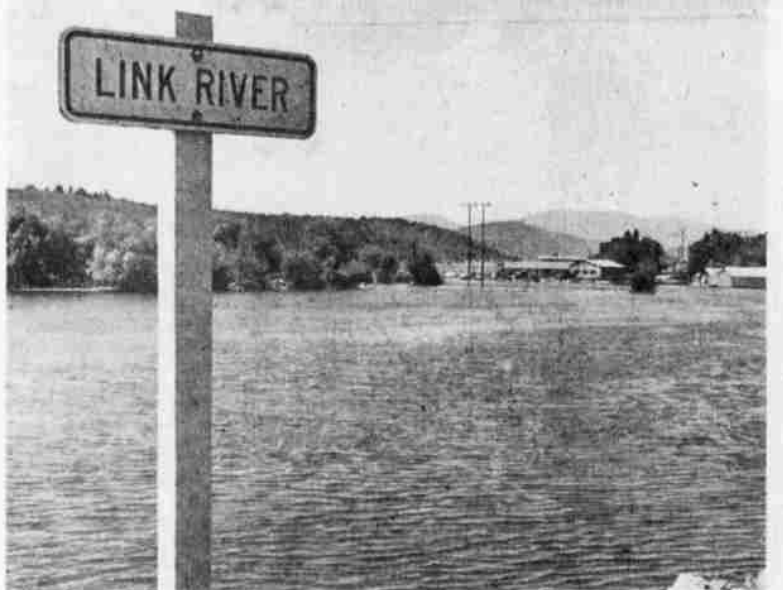
EARLY HOMESTEADS
About two miles farther west along the westside highway is a good view of Buck Island, a 182-acre butte in the southernmost center of Klamath Lake. The island was homesteaded in 1905 by K. P. Hamilton, who wintered his livestock there for a number of years after he found its soil produced an abundance of forage. The island later passed from the ownership of Hamilton and is now registered to Charles Swift of Klamath Falls.

Several miles north of Buck Island is Bare Island, a 141-acre heart shaped piece of land belonging to W. Howard and Lillian Swift of Fairbanks, Alaska. The island contains a hot springs and on several occasions has served as a refuge for people involved in boating accidents on the lake.

Two miles west of the last stop on the lakeshore highway is the first of two early day homesteads which have been incorporated into the Geary Brothers Ranch, a 10,000-acre spread extending from south of Moore Park to Howard's Bay (known locally as Wocus Bay), which was acquired in 1918 by Ed Geary, a one-time



LILY PADS SHELTER WATERS IN WOCUS BAY — One of the more scenic areas along the 140-mile rim of Klamath Lake is Wocus Bay, site of one of several public boat launching sites on the lake and a popular fishing spot of anglers. Howard Bay, located about five miles north of the above setting, is sometimes mistakenly given the name of its southern neighbor, Wocus Bay. The scene is one of many interesting attractions offered on the first of four suggested trips through the county which have become familiar as the Chamber of Commerce Loop Tours.



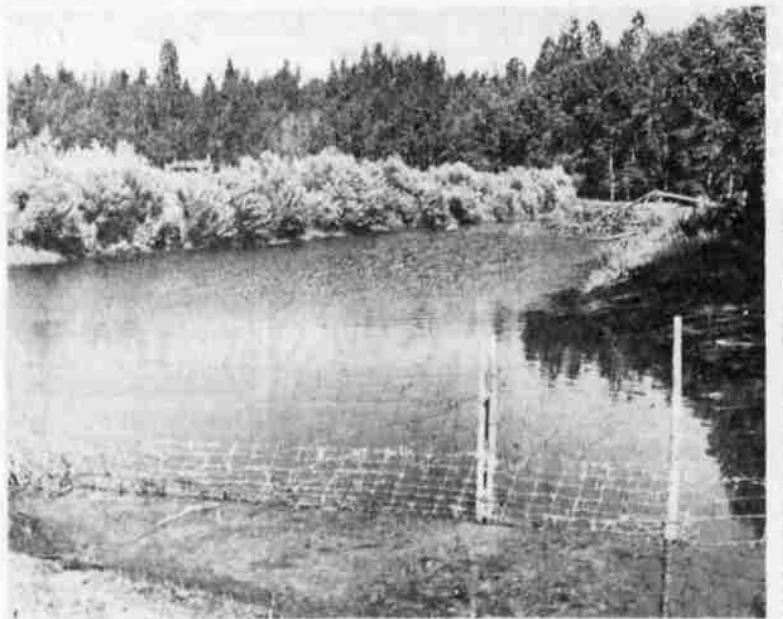
SHORTEST RIVER — Link River, believed to be the shortest river in the U.S., connects Upper Klamath Lake, the largest lake in Oregon, with Lake Ewauna one mile to the south. Waters from Agency and Klamath lakes flow into Link River and then into Lake Ewauna, providing the source of the Klamath River.



PLACID SCENE FROM OLD RUINS — A tranquil scene of Upper Klamath Lake's waters is viewed from foundation stones marking the fire which destroyed the Eagle Lodge and Tavern on Eagle Ridge. Guests arrived at the lodge by steamboats which operated on the lake at that time.



MASSACRE OF 1846 TOLD — An inquisitive third-grader of Peterson School reads a stone monument telling of an incident in which Indians killed three members of John C. Fremont's party of exploration in 1846. The Indians attacked the party as it was sleeping along Denny Creek. Fremont's men attained a measure of revenge during a later skirmish with the Indians along the Williamson River. The monument is on the west side highway at the junction to Aspen Lake.



ODESSA CREEK, BETWEEN BRUSH AND FOREST — Wind ripples the surface of Odessa Creek, about one mile west of its outlet into Upper Klamath Lake. Near its outlet an angler landed a 25-pound rainbow trout, believed to be the record weight for rainbow caught in the lake.



PASTORAL SETTING — Pastoral flatland interspersed with gently rolling hills and views of snowy peaks await the tourist traversing the highway skirting the west side of Klamath Lake. The area is the range of beef cattle while farther west lies the Winema National Forest and the Holiday Lakes, noted recreation area and scene of acclaimed trout fishing.



INDIANS SWAPPED FURS AT TRADING POST — The shell of a trading post where Indians and white traders exchanged their wares early this century stands in a grove of trees at the head of Odessa Creek. Time and weather have ravaged the cabin of hand hewn logs located on the ranch of A. E. "Mickey" Wampler at Odessa.

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