Railroad Survey Brought Explorers To Klamath Lakes Region In 1885

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huge rattlesnake coiled up under a blanket. The reptile was killed; but as we all slept without tents on the ground, unpleasant ideas were suggested by the incident.

Our course lay towards the north, through a narrow valley thinly covered with sage bushes and clumps of bunch grass. It was bordered by timbered hills which gradually closed in upon the trail. We crossed several dry beds of streams, and also the bottom of what, in the rainy season was undoubtedly a small lake. It was now dry, and covered with a white efflorescence. After traveling 9.5 miles we reached a low line of hills, which formed the northern boundary of the valley.

Klamath River forced its way through the ridge by a narrow canon, and, after flowing along the western side of the valley for a short distance and spreading out into a small lake, disappeared among the hills towards the west. On reaching the summit of the very low divide, composed of trap rock, we saw outspread before us Upper Klamath Lake. It was a fine sheet of water, 30 miles long and 12 miles wide, bordered by timbered ridges with an occasional narrow belt of tule.

Light clouds of smoke rising from signal fires upon several of the hills satisfied us that watchful eyes were measuring our advance. We had struck a small arm of the lake, from which Klamath River issued. Following along the eastern side, we crossed a grassy meadow, and encamped at the extremity of a hilly promontory which projected into the lake. Excellent bunch grass, with bushes and small trees for fuel, abounded in the vicinity. East of the promontory, a wide field of tule prevented approach to the water; but the western shore was rocky and bold.

Snakes of various kinds were very plentiful. Several large rattlesnakes were killed before we had been in camp an hour; and I counted nearly a dozen cast-off skins lying within a rod of each other.

Two squaws came into camp in the afternoon, with a few fish which they had caught in the lake. We gave them some presents, and they paddled rapidly away in their canoe to spread the news. The water taken from the lake had a dark color and a disagreeable taste, occasioned apparently by decayed tule. (Algae?)

Aug. 15 — We remained in camp today, waiting for Lieutenant Williamson. Several good observations were obtained for latitude and altitude.

About midnight a sudden alarm aroused camp. The cook's fire had spread, by some dead roots, to the dry grass and bushes; and a general conflagration was prevented only by the most vigorous exertions. It was at first supposed that the Indians had kindled the fire, to engage our attention while they stampeded the mules, and this idea did not tend to lessen the excitement and confusion of the scene.

Aug. 16—Today was spent in taking astronomical and barometric observations, while waiting for Lieutenant Williamson. A thick haze which covered the lake, entirely concealed the opposite shore. The taste of the water was so disagreeable that several vain attempts were made to discover a spring in the vicinity.

Aug. 17—Lieutenant Williamson with his escort came into camp at noon, having made a satisfactory examination of Lower Klamath Lake. A description of his route will be found in Chapter IV. Three broken down mules of the escort train were shot today, and every preparation was made for an early start tomorrow.

Aug. 18—The ridges on the eastern side of the lake, which were composed of vesicular trap, appeared to run parallel to each other in a northeast and southeast direction, and to terminate abruptly at the water's edge. A well-marked Indian trail followed along the shore, but members of the party who had explored it for a short distance reported it very rocky, and impassable for "the little cart" as odometer wheels still continued to be termed.

Lieutenant Williamson had observed several Indian trails diverging to the right on his last day's march; and he therefore determined to follow a southeast course, hoping to discover some good pass by which he could cross the ridges, and thus avoid the rocks and bends of the shore.

After traveling about three miles in this direction through a wooded country, he thought it best to cross abruptly a steep and rocky ridge to the east. We thus reached a narrow valley, lying between two steep ranges of hills, and filled with open pine timber. There was a large Indian trail in it, which conducted us to the lake. A precipitous and rocky ridge rose abruptly from the water, leaving barely sufficient room to pass along the bank.

After traveling a short distance, we reached a point where several springs gushed from the hillside, and disappeared among thick bushes surrounded by luxuriant grass. The water was clear and pure, and Lieutenant Williamson at once encamped.

Elder and service berries were found in abundance. A thick haze prevented astronomical observations, and concealed the western shore of the lake. Snakes, as usual in this region, were very numerous, and one of them glided suddenly among our dishes, as we were sitting down on the ground to eat.

Aug. 19—This morning the trail, for three or four miles, wound along the rocky side of the ridge which bordered the lake, and was, in consequence very rough. Huge rocks, piled near the water's edge, prevented the passage of "the little cart" by that route. The hillside was sparsely covered with scattered pines, but near the lake-shore springs were numerous, and the growth of bushes was often dense. Bartee, the guide, shot three bald eagles with his rifle, as we passed along the base of the crags upon which they were fearlessly resting.

In riding under the projecting limb of a tree, Mr. Daniels was knocked from his mule and quite severely injured. The country had recently been burnt over, and the want of grass compelled Lieutenant Williamson unwillingly to continue the march. The trail soon diverged from the lakeshore, and after passing over a dry plain entered an open pine forest.

In a short time we found ourselves on the banks of Klamath River, which was flowing through a fine, grassy bottom, marked by a few clumps of willow bushes. Here we encamped. The river was about 150 feet in width, and apparently quite deep. There was a ford, however, a short distance below. Every requisite for a good campground was found in abundance in the vicinity.

Aug. 20 — Mr. Daniels was much better this morning and able to ride his mule. As had been usual of late, a dense fog obscured the view for two or three hours after starting. Our course lay up the eastern side of the beautiful valley of Klamath River. The bottom was at first open, covered with green grass, and bordered by low timbered hills.

We passed several cliffs of basaltic breccia, from 20 to 50 feet in height, and occasionally ornamented with rude, Indian paintings. The current of the stream was not very rapid, and there appeared to be several fords.

The trail crossed one large and fine tributary which flowed swiftly over a rocky bed (Sprague River or Spring Creek).

After traveling 12 miles from camp, we reached the mouth of a canon from which the river emerged. The sides were of basaltic rock and pumice-stone and very steep. Lieutenant Williamson estimated their height at 1,000 feet at the highest points.

We followed the trail over the ridge on the eastern side of the river, and several times looked down into the canon. Its course appeared to be straight in the main, but small bends were numerous. The ridge was heavily timbered with pine. The forest was on fire, and an occasional heavy crash reverberating for miles, warned us to beware of falling trees.

The canon was about four miles in length. A short distance beyond its northern entrance, we emerged from the forest and entered a lovely meadow, covered with clover and fine green grass. The ground was miry near the river, which was deep and sluggish, and we encamped at the edge of the timber. The meadow appeared to be an arm of Klamath Marsh, and was evidently flooded at seasons of high water.

Aug. 21 — This morning at daybreak, the fog was so dense that we could not see 50 yards in advance, but the sun soon caused it to melt away. The trail led us over a thickly timbered ridge which projected into the meadow. The soil was light pumice - stone dust, and fallen trees rendered traveling somewhat difficult. At the northeastern base of the ridge we reached the shore of Klamath Marsh. This was a strip of half submerged land, about 12 miles long and seven miles broad. It was covered by clumps of tule and other aquatic plants separated by small sheets of water. Thousands of ducks, plover, and other water birds, made it their home. They were so tame that they would hardly fly at the report of a gun, but it was useless to shoot them, as the deep mud rendered it impossible to secure them afterwards. We surprised two Indians on the shore, and endeavored to make them understand that we were friendly; but they evidently distrusted our professions, and escaped as soon as possible.

Lieutenant Williamson decided to follow the eastern shore of the marsh. We soon reached a collection of Indian huts built near the edge of the water Our two friends had evidently been there before us, for the rancheria had been very recently deserted.

Large quantities of food, consisting mostly of seeds of water plants and dried fish, several canoes made of hollowed logs, many baskets formed of reeds curiously woven together, and diverse other valuables, were scattered around in wild confusion.

The fires were burning in front of the huts, of which there were three distinct kinds. The summer lodges had vertical walls supporting flat roofs. They were composed of a framework of sticks, covered with a matting of woven tule. The winter huts were shaped like bee-hives, and made of sticks plastered with mud. We noticed only one of the

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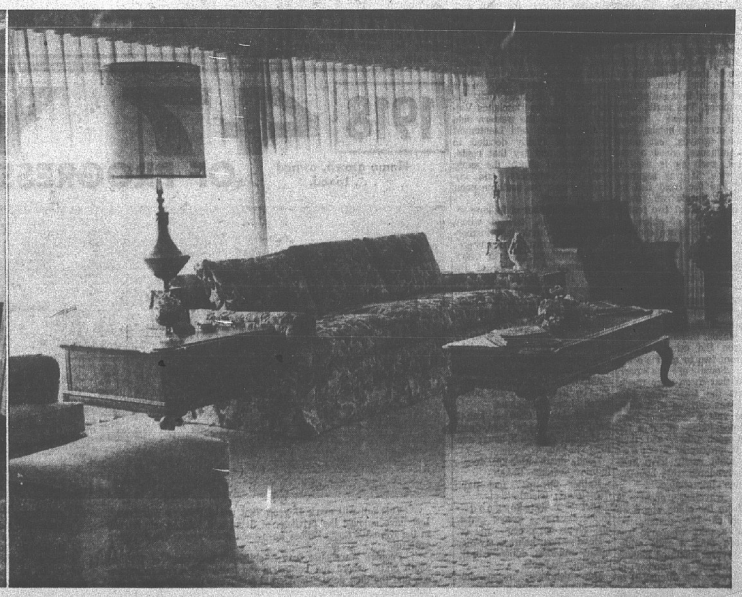
RE QUALITY IS NOT EXPENSIVE!

Bush Furniture recently redecorated the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Davenport on Pine Street. The transitional living room features a floating chain lamp and floating chairs. Quilted sectional is by Sherman Bertram. Italian tables have marble tops. The heirloom cabinet at the left has been in the Davenport family for years and was restored in antique green to correlate with the other furniture. Carpet is Mohawk's newest acrilan.


The home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Micka at Malin is truly a showplace of fine living. The living room in this newly built traditional home features Thomasville pecan Rural French tables, Stiffel lamps, custom drapes, and Firth sculptured wool carpeting. Divan has been in the Micka family for years, and was recovered in beautiful quilted fabric under the direction of Bush Furniture.

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