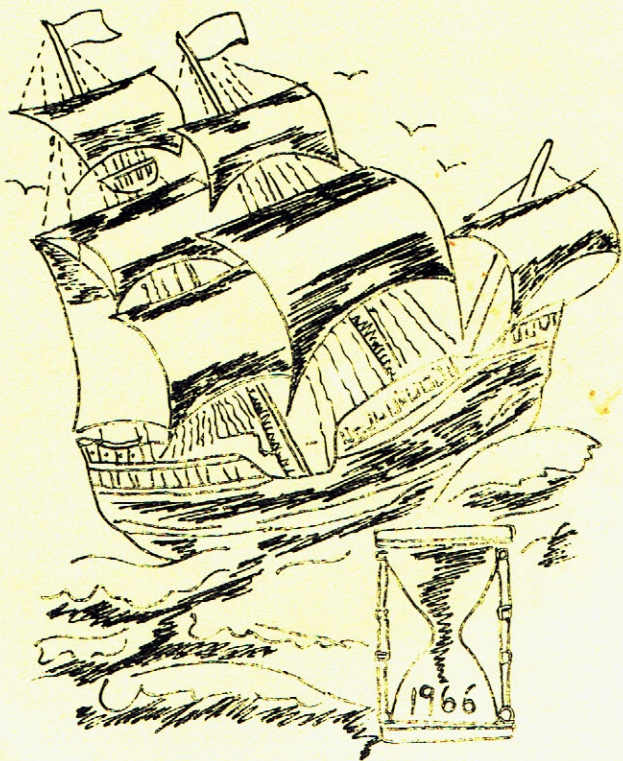


AN  
HISTORICAL SKETCH  
OF  
COOS BAY



## AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF COOS BAY

Wm. T. McLean

### General:

The first recorded settlement of whites in Coos County dates from the night of January 1, 1852. The U. S. Transport Capt. Lincoln, having left the Golden Gate with 35 or more dragoons to be landed at Port Orford to protect Captain Tichenor's settlement of Port Orford, ran ashore just north of the Coos Bay bar. These men founded Camp Castaway. The wreck apparently caused news of the Coos Bay country to be spread to the outside world.

When news reached the Umpqua River country men came down from Gardiner to offer to help. Among them were S. S. Mann and Patrick Flanagan. Both of these men were later to become leading citizens in the early development of Coos County.

In May, 1853, P. B. Marple, a fluent speaker, had little difficulty in drawing listeners in Jacksonville, Oregon. Marple organized and led, at \$250.00 per head, a party of 40 men to colonize Coos Bay.

The Coos Bay Company was formed and the settlement was called Empire City.

In October, 1853, the first four families in the area were Mr. and Mrs. Freeman Lockhart, Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Noble, Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Yoakam, Dr. and Mrs. Abraham Foley, and their respective children. These families held Donation Land Claims.

The Donation Land Law passed by Congress, September 27, 1850, provided that: (1) a survey would be made of the public lands of Oregon; (2) to every resident white, or half-breed, settler over 18 years of age who was either a

citizen or who had or would declare an intention of becoming so before December 1, 1851, a grant of 320 acres of land would be made. If married, the man or wife would each in his or her own right be entitled to 320 acres, or together a total of 640 acres: (3) final title, or patent, would be issued after four years residence on the land; and (4) heirs to claimants would be recognized under the law.

Indians of the area, the Kokoosh, were divided into four tribes—the Me-Lu-Kitz were on the north side of Coos Bay, the Nahi-See-Mi were on the south bank of the Coquille; the Mil-Luk extended from Coos Head to Tar Heel Point; and the Hon-Dus were from Tar Heel to downtown North Bend. These Indians were friendly and most helpful to the white settlers of Empire.

That same year, 1853, J.C. Talmon, a member of the Coos Bay Company, settled at what appeared to him to be a good place for a town. He built a claim cabin and named the place "Marshfield" after his old home in Massachusetts. He induced Grosby and Williams to erect a store and open a trading post.

In 1854, A.J. Davies acquired an interest in the land claimed by Talmon. Leaving Wilkins Warwick to represent him, Talmon returned to Jacksonville and in 1855 entry was made for the whole quarter section in Warwick's name under the Donation Land Act. But eighteen days previous to Warwick's entry, a Congressional Act had been passed providing that no Donation Land Claim could be granted for a townsite or settled upon for the purpose of business or trade, but must be for agricultural purposes. This resulted in a question about the title, causing litigation for a number of years.

From 1854 to 1867 Marshfield was little more than a boat landing, a store in a log house and a trading post. With the coming of

John Pershbaker in 1867 with his sawmill, shipyard and store, the place soon became the center of activity for all the coast region of southern Oregon. The store was run by Mr. Reed and was located on the Gow Why Corner, North Broadway. There seems to be much disagreement concerning the whereabouts of the Gow Why Corner. Many old timers have insisted that it was located at 4th and Elrod. At the same time Charles Pershbaker opened a store and George Hamilton began operating a tavern.

In 1854 on discovery of gold on the beaches north of Bandon, a trail was constructed from Empire City to the Randolph Mines. This trail was a mile and a half west of the Libby Coal Mine. Removed from postal facilities, the miners and settlers arranged to leave their mail for the Libby District and that west of the trail at a box erected there and duly protected from storms.

The letter box became the mail distribution center for Libby, Marshfield and surrounding areas. Customs of the frontier were followed with nobody taking mail that was not theirs. Going to the letter box, the expectant pioneer opened it, looked over its contents, and replaced the letters, papers, and packages that were not directed to him. Many of the land descriptions used the letter box as their starting point.

The first cattle were brought to the bay in 1860. Only elk meat was obtainable prior to this date. However, elk was plentiful. Bringing cattle in was a major problem. Most of them were brought over elk trails from Comas Valley across the range into Coquille Valley. Cattle raising was the main pursuit of the farmers because grazing was unrestricted on uninhabited land. Because of the transportation difficulties, few domesticated animals were brought into the county.

With the coming of the Pershbaker Mill (later the Dean Mill), Marshfield forged ahead. It built up and grew. The post office was established in 1871 with Andrew Nasburg as acting postmaster. The first school, called the Marshfield Academy, was started in 1878. Marshfield became the first incorporated city in Coos or Curry Counties in 1874.

Marshfield was the center of all shipping between Coos County and San Francisco. This was the main route of travel with the outside world until the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1916. The two leading coal mines, Libby and Beaver Hill, had their Bunkers at Marshfield. For 60 years the San Francisco market was the main outlet for Coos Bay coal.

In 1884, the population of Marshfield was reported at 800. There were about sixteen stores of various kinds (hardware, furniture, and general merchandise), plus three doctors, a dentist, and five lawyers. There were three hotels, a restaurant, two livery stables, eight saloons, a brewery, a church being built, and two newspaper offices. In 1899 the City of Marshfield adopted a new charter with E.A. Anderson as Mayor. Since 1878 Mayor Anderson had been in the livery stable business.

William S. Chandler came to Coos Bay from British Columbia in 1899. He was general manager of the Coos County Railroad, and of the Beaver Hill Mines. The C.B.R. & E.R.R. & N. Co. Railroad ran from Marshfield to Myrtle Point. W. S. Chandler was receiver for the United States court pending a foreclosure suit of the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company of New York in the interest of bondholders, the J.C. Spreckles and Brothers Company of San Francisco. The equipment consisted of two locomotives, one passenger coach, a caboose, and 62 freight and logging cars.

Domestic cranberries started in Hauser in 1887. J. C. McFarland brought in the plants from New England. By 1906 he had 4.5 acres under cultivation.

The election of 1944 was locally a very spirited one. Appearing upon the ballot for that November was a proposed new city charter which would unify the cities of North Bend and Marshfield. The charter provided for the city manager form of municipal government. The consolidated area was to be known as the City of Coos Bay. North Bend turned down the proposal, but Marshfield adopted it. This is the reason why Marshfield is now called Coos Bay with the city manager form of government. In 1965 Empire City and Coos Bay consolidated as the City of Coos Bay.

#### Educational Development:

A first settler, Russell Dement, wrote "Now winter had set in and moving was out of the question before spring. This was the winter of 1854-55. At that time there were about 10 or 12 children old enough to go to school. That was before Coos County was on the map. The parents hired Mrs. Esther (Freeman) Lockhart to teach the first school in what was to be Coos County. We had very few books of any kind, let alone school books. Mother taught me my A, B, C's the winter before out of our old Bible that we brought across the plains. I remember what a time I had. She taught me the capitals first. They were not so hard, but when I had to learn the small letters, that was quite different. School books were so scarce that several children had to use the same book."

Mrs. F. G. Lockhart, Mrs. Lockhart's husband, was the first county school superintendent, holding office from 1854 to 1857. He was also county auditor and county clerk. Until

1871 the county school superintendent received \$100.00 per year salary. Henry Schroeder, county school superintendent in 1871, was granted \$75.00 for six months service.

A county school tax was levied in 1854, which varied from one to three mills. In 1887 the county had fifty-one schools and collected a county school tax of \$5,870.00.

The first school was in Empire in 1854-55. A two story building with a lean-to was built about the sixties or seventies, and many a leading citizen of Coos County received his early education in the Empire City School. Among those who attended were John and James Flanagan, Charles Stauff, James Watson, Mrs. Brando, and Flo Fahy. Some of the teachers were the Messers. Rood, Dalrymple, Porter, and the Mesdames Short, Lehman, and Vandenburg. The building stood on the grounds now occupied by the Market Street School in Empire. It was burned in the early 1900's.

The first school in Marshfield was opened in a bunkhouse donated for the purpose soon after 1867. The old Libby school was built sometime in the 1860's, but with the decline in Libby by 1913 due to the reduced sale of coal in San Francisco, the school was changed to Englewood. Englewood is now a part of the Coos Bay school district.

Marshfield has always been interested in good schools. The Academy was completed in 1879 and was conducted by Professor J. T. Mc Cormac who built up a school which was the pride of the town's citizens. A Marshfield woman who attended the early academy gives the following picture: "Standing upon the hill, it was exposed to the full force of the wind; it seemed there was often a regular windstorm blowing there." D. L. Rood succeeded Dr. Mc

Cornac as principal, and his wife taught one of the lower rooms.

Most of the children in the lower grades lived in Marshfield. However, many of the students in the Academy's senior department came from rural homes, and boarded in town. The rural schools did not offer the higher subjects such as algebra, which were then included in the seventh and eighth grade study.

Due to considerable dissatisfaction with the ungraded school where several grades were in one room, a new school in addition to the Academy was built. The new school was known as the Central School and was completed in 1895 at a cost of \$15,000.00. It was located at the site now occupied by the Episcopal Church. There were four high school graduating classes totaling 31 in number since the two year high school course was started. Dr. J. T. McCormac was board chairman and Professor F. A. Golden was school superintendent. Thus, Central School taught the grammar grades and two years of high school.

In 1908 a high school was built and a full twelve year course of study was adopted. This high school building is still being used by the science, mathematics, and business education classes. The first graduating class from the four year high school was in 1909. In 1940 the main unit of the present high school was constructed.

The first Coos River School was located where the Coos River cemetery is now. This was Coos County District No. 1. It was a one room school with forty pupils. School lasted for the three months of summer. By 1906 the school term was six months. The present Coos River School was built in 1916. One of the first teachers was Dr. William Horsfall.

Allegheny had a good school conducted for about three months in the summer. The pupils travelled by horseback three to four miles to school. After the school session was extended into the winter months, the pupils arrived with mud to their waists due to the road conditions. The first eighth grade graduates were two girls and one boy. Miss Inez Chase and Byron Savage were among the earliest teachers at this school.

A school bus was first run from Eastside in 1931. It went up Catching Inlet and to Coos Bay. The bus was a large truck - just a large box, covered over, having two rows of seats on each side. There was one little glass in the back door and one small glass in the cab. There was no way to get out in case of an accident.

School District No.2 was located at Broad-bent in 1861. The school term was for three months, and Binger Hermann was the teacher.

Coquille's schools started in 1867. By 1882 there were 25 pupils in the public school and a like number in the private school.

County school records show that by 1885 there were thirty-eight frame and pine log cabin schools in the county, with twenty-five male and twenty-three female teachers. Teachers' salaries were \$60.00 per month for the men, and \$50.00 per month for the women. By 1897 the county had seventy-two school.

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