

An introduction to the History of the Rogue Valley

With a focus on the Ashland area



Presented by: North Mountain Park Nature Center

A division of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Department

Version 4: December 2012

About this booklet

This booklet, which is one piece of the North Mountain Park Nature Center's interpretation of local cultural history, looks at the use of natural resources and the impact that this use has had on the local ecology. The area represented by the term "local" includes the Rogue Valley of southwest Oregon, with an emphasis on the Ashland area.

While every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, this booklet is not meant to be a formal work but is rather to be used by educators and others seeking an introduction to the topic of local history. It is hoped that readers of this booklet will be inspired to use this information to help make decisions that will enhance the livability of the Rogue Valley for both its people and its wildlife now and into the future. Contributing editors include: Michael Parker, Jeff La Lande and Ben Truwe.

Other background booklets available in the North Mountain Park series on the Rogue Valley: Geology, Water, Plants, Animals, and Native Americans.



History of North Mountain Park

Each section of this booklet contains a box that focuses specifically on the site that is now North Mountain Park. This park, which was purchased from two families, the Hodgins in 1993 and the Gunters in 1994, contains 40 acres of developed ball fields and naturalized floodplain. In addition, the Gunter farmhouse, pictured here, was renovated in 2001 and is now the site of the North Mountain Park Nature Center.



The Gunter farmhouse is now home to the park's Nature Center.

This site has an extensive and varied history, beginning with local Native Americans. All of the people who lived on this land have written its history just as all of the children and adults who now come to the park to learn and to steward this land are writing its future.

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Early Ecology of the Rogue Valley



This mural in the lobby of the North Mountain Park Nature Center depicts what Bear Creek might have been like prior to European contact.

What might the Rogue Valley have looked like before the influence of Euro-American settlers?

Long ago, during the Pleistocene Era (from 1.5 million to 12,000 years ago), the climate of what is now southern Oregon was much wetter and colder than it is today, with tumultuous flooding and heavy sedimentation of streams and rivers. Because of this, there was not an abundance of fish.

Following the Pleistocene, the climate became drier, and salmon, steelhead, small-scale suckers, speckled dace and lamprey began settling into what is now the Bear Creek Valley.

By about 4,000 years ago, these species had become quite well established throughout the region.

From about 4,000 years ago until around 1830, Bear Creek supported a dynamic, biologically rich environment. The channel itself would have meandered greatly and would have contained many side channels and wetland areas. Beaver activity would have been prolific, with thousands of beaver living in Bear Creek and the surrounding tributaries. The beaver used the riparian trees, including ash, alder, and willow, for food and to make dams that created side channels.



Salmonid fish.



Beaver-chewed wood.

The side channels were in turn used by an abundance of other animals and were also important calm water areas where salmon and other fish could rest during high water flows. The side channels were also used by numerous species of waterfowl.

In addition to increased wetlands, prehistoric Bear Creek had a much wider buffer of green. This historic stream corridor would have included a mosaic of large deciduous trees, such as cottonwood and alder, a spattering of large conifers and numerous smaller shrubs

including willow and dogwood. As the larger trees died and fell into the creek, they would have created an assortment of large woody debris, a critical component of stream habitat. Amidst all of this activity, human inhabitants were utilizing many of these plants, being careful to observe where they were growing and how they would change with the seasons.

History of North Mountain Park

Historically, North Mountain Park looked very similar to the mural pictured on the opposite page. Notice the beaver dam and the resulting pond in one of the side channels of Bear Creek.

Trees helped to shade Bear Creek and provide a healthy migratory corridor for mammals. Large woody debris from fallen pines and cottonwoods created feeding and spawning habitat for salmon and steelhead.

Throughout the floodplain, Bear Creek meandered and realigned itself with each flood, providing additional habitat for amphibians and waterfowl while at the same time recharging the groundwater.



Great Blue Heron.
Photo courtesy of FWS.

"(Steelhead) came all the way up to the house, which is 192 North Mountain - there were fish all the way up there." -Bob Hodgins

Native Americans: First Inhabitants



Shasta Indians gathering firewood and elderberries and processing acorns.

To the Native American tribes living here, the Rogue Valley was not just their home; it was what defined them as a culture and a people. Every story they told, every bit of food they ate, every article of clothing they wore and every object they crafted were directly related to their immediate surroundings.

People from three primary language groups came to inhabit overlapping parts of Northern California and Southern Oregon: the Hokan groups (Shasta and Karok people), the Penutian groups (Takelma, Coos, and lower Coquille people), and the Athabaskan groups (Chetco, Tututni, Tolowa, upper Umpqua, Illinois, upper Coquille, Galice Creek and Applegate people).

Although they spoke different languages and had unique nuances to their cultures, all shared a way of life based on a “hunter-gatherer” mode of subsistence and a “seasonal round” pattern of movement. These tribes interacted with each other in order to trade, occasionally to fight, perhaps to intermarry, and certainly to sort out the use of overlapping foraging areas and hunting grounds.

Although they did not farm, these tribal people managed the vegetation they relied upon in a variety of significant ways, including the use of fire, selective harvesting, pruning, transplanting, and — in the case of tobacco — cultivation and fertilization. These practices also had a number of intended impacts on the availability of big game and other wildlife in the area.

For as long as 10,000 years, native people — perhaps the ancestors of the Shasta that lived along Ashland Creek — were part of the landscape of the Rogue Valley. Over time, the ecology of the valley changed as did its people, but their basic lifeways remained the same.



Shasta Indians managing tarweed.

Native Americans traveled from the valley floor to the high mountains hunting deer, gathering willow, burning oak stands, celebrating the return of the salmon, raising families, and mourning the loss of loved ones. Myths and stories were learned and then repeated to the younger generations so that they might learn to respect and care for the land that supported them physically, culturally, and spiritually.

In the mid-1800s, this finely tuned “hunter-gatherer” lifestyle came abruptly into contact with the agriculturally based culture of the arriving pioneers. With the discovery of gold in Jacksonville and the ensuing rush of settlers into the Rogue Valley, the resources that the Native Americans had managed and relied upon for so long quickly became compromised. Salmon runs were impacted by sediment and pollution brought about through mining, while game runs disappeared as forests were cut for timber and hungry emigrants went after deer and elk.

At the same time, camas meadows were being destroyed by newly arriving pigs, and tarweed patches were grazed over by cattle and sheep. Ultimately, entire villages were overtaken as towns such as Jacksonville and Ashland quickly became established.

The Native Americans fought to keep their land and their livelihood, but most of the settlers simply did not care about the people and the cultures they were destroying. After four years of sporadic fighting, culminating in the final Rogue River Indian War of 1855-1856, all of the tribes of southwestern Oregon were relocated to two reservations – the Siletz and the Grand Ronde – both located along the northern Oregon coast.



Camas bulb and flower.

History of North Mountain Park



Many Native American artifacts have been found at North Mountain Park, leading local experts to believe that the site was once used by the Shasta and possibly other tribes for salmon fishing along Bear Creek and for the gathering of plants such as willow and tule.

The upper portion of the park, which today contains numerous oak trees, may also have been used as an acorn-collecting site in autumn.

Explorers & Trappers Arrive



Lewis and Clark kept notes of everything they saw.



When Thomas Jefferson commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on their great expedition in 1803, it was not simply to find a water route to the Pacific. Jefferson also wanted them to notice, record, and collect everything they could relative to the weather, geography, geology, culture, wildlife, minerals, and plants along the way.

The territory was such an unknown that President Jefferson believed explorers might find woolly mammoths, dinosaurs, enormous volcanoes, and a great river that would eventually take travelers from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. The expedition of the *Corps of Discovery*, as it was termed, was planned at a time when the Mississippi River was the western border of the United States. While the Pacific

Coast had become familiar through exploration from the sea, no one knew exactly what existed between the west coast and the territory of the United States. It was hoped that a navigable route could be found to connect the two.

The amount of information the Corps gleaned helped to convince the US government that all this land was worth having. What resulted was a series of acts that allowed emigrants to “legally” settle on land west of the Louisiana Purchase.



Lewis's Woodpecker.
Gary Shaffer



Lewis collected seeds of the common snowberry and sent them to Jefferson.

At the time, Russia, Great Britain, and Spain were all vying for control of various portions of the West, but final control of the Northwest was still up for grabs. The voyage of the Corps of Discovery did much to open the way for the United States to obtain ultimate control of this area.

In the meantime, Great Britain was also eyeing the Northwest, not only to enhance their fur trade, but to increase their land holding. It was in fact a scouting party from the Hudson's Bay Company out of Vancouver that brought the first white faces to the Rogue Valley.

Headed up by Peter Skene Ogden, this party of 28 adults and more than 100 horses came into the valley in 1827. At the time, southwest Oregon, including the Rogue Valley, lay within the last unexplored region of North America (excluding Canada). Ogden, under the command of Chief

Factor John McLoughlin, was on a mission to "trap out the streams." This British policy was to void the region of all beaver and river otter in order to discourage American trappers and settlers from moving west of the Rocky Mountains. While trapping as many as 500 beaver and other



Beaver Pelt Hat

fur-bearing mammals along Bear Creek, Ogden and his party were also directed to undertake geographic exploration. This they did with the help of the local Shasta Indians, who Ogden noted were "bold and stout-looking men" and who were friendly and helpful to the traders.



Many fur-bearing mammals were trapped out of the Bear Creek corridor in the early 1800s.

History of North Mountain Park

Because of its location along Bear Creek, the site of North Mountain Park once contained an abundance of beaver. The creek channel meandered freely across the floodplain, allowing the beaver to create dams and lodges. It is known that the famous explorer and trapper Ogden traveled from Emigrant Creek along Bear Creek to the Rogue River, and so it is quite likely that he travelled along the land that is now part of the park. As a survival adaptation to the intense trapping that took place, beavers have become nocturnal throughout Bear Creek.



Wildlife monitoring at North Mountain Park has revealed recent beaver activity near Bear Creek.

Coming West on the Trail

Once the Corps of Discovery returned with stories of the magnificent West, people set their sights on the Oregon Country. Traveling was not a new concept to citizens living in the Midwest (formerly the West) as many had already moved from further east. As the nation continued to move west, stories of a better life just over the next ridge was incentive enough to make people pack their



Prairie Schooners were smaller than Conestoga Wagons.

wagons. For some it was a chance to escape their past and start a new life. For others it was a way to escape diseases such as malaria, cholera and smallpox. For the adventurous it was a chance to search for raw land to tame. The first wagons to travel to Oregon left Independence, Missouri in 1843. The 2,000-mile trail crossed Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and Oregon.

Most people traveled in ox-drawn wagons. The wagons hauled belongings and provisions for the six-month-long trek. Items taken on the journey fell into six main categories: food, cooking items, household supplies, parts, tools, and weapons.

The wagon trains traveled between 12 and 20 miles per day; however, when crossing rivers or mountains, only 1 to 2 miles were covered each day.

To make the long journey over mountains and deserts carrying up to 2500 pounds, emigrants needed the strongest, lightest wagons they could find. The Conestoga wagons that were being used to haul freight at the time were too heavy for the oxen to move along the trail so the lighter prairie schooners were used for the trail. There were many hazards along the way, and thousands of people died along the trail. The primary cause of death along the trail was cholera, but many others died, or were seriously injured, from river crossings and accidents.



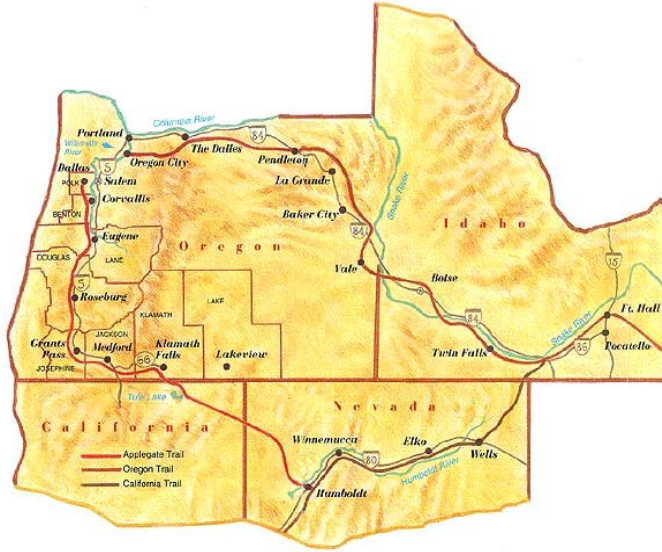
Trail provisions.



Wagon tracks, eastern Oregon. Patty Commons.

One such accident struck the Applegate party in 1843. While rafting the Columbia River, their raft got caught in a whirlpool and two Applegate cousins were killed. After this tragedy, the boys' fathers, Jesse and Lindsay Applegate, maintained an interest in helping to open another, less-dangerous route to Oregon.

The trail that Jesse and Lindsay helped establish was known as the southern route (much later, it took on the name Applegate Trail). This trail headed southwest from Fort Hall, Idaho, crossed the Nevada desert and northern California to Klamath Falls, came down present-day Highway 66 to Ashland and then headed north, approximately following today's I-5 corridor. It was used from about 1846 to about 1868, at which time newer, safer routes were established. At its peak, over 3,500 people followed the southern route in a single year.



Oregon & Applegate Trails. Map from ancestry.com website

History of North Mountain Park

Although there is no direct evidence of early pioneers using the site of North Mountain Park, the proximity of the park to the southern (Applegate Trail) route makes this very likely.

"The valley is about three miles wide here. The cattle that are running around are very fat. We turned ours down on Bear Creek bottom."
-Welborn Beeson, Applegate Trail pioneer



Discovery of Gold

Gold was first discovered in southern Oregon in 1850 by prospectors from the state of Illinois. These early Oregon miners had chartered a boat to the mouth of the Klamath River, hiked over the mountains, and discovered gold in the Illinois Valley (named after the prospectors home state). One year later, in 1851, two men, James Poole and James Clugage, were traveling through the area on their way south from the Willamette Valley to sell supplies to miners in California. They stopped to camp for the night along Jackson Creek and, while watering their horses, noticed something shiny in the creek. The men had accidentally stumbled upon what would be one of the largest gold strikes in Oregon. Poole and Clugage immediately filed claim on the land and named it "Rich Gulch."



Gold pan



Local historic sluice box operation.
SOHS #755

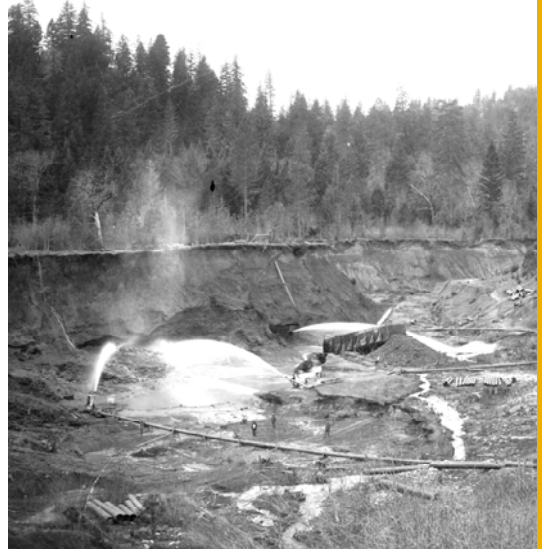
Although they had intended to keep the find quiet, it wasn't long before word leaked out. Within just three months, thousands of miners had arrived in southwestern Oregon to seek their fortunes. With a portion of their land, the two men set up a town site they called Table Rock City, later to be known as Jacksonville.

Many of the early southern Oregon miners worked the streams and banks with only picks, shovels, and gold pans. These miners were looking for placer deposits, or concentrations of gold that had washed out of the original deposit along with sand and gravel. This simple method involves filling a pan with soil and gravel and then moving the material and water up and out of the pan until only the denser gold remains. Other miners used wooden sluice boxes to find gold. With a sluice box, material passes down a wooden trough that has "riffles" built across the

bottom. These riffles help catch particles of gold while allowing the lighter sand and soil to wash down. Because sluice boxes need a continuous flow of water, ditches were dug to supply the necessary flow.

It wasn't until 1862, that hydraulic mining, which involves the use of high-pressure jets of water, was introduced in areas that had an abundant water source. This method employed a large, pipe-fed nozzle to direct a powerful jet of water against a wall of rock and gravel. The high pressure of water excavates the gravels; they then flow through a long sluice box where the gold is caught. The type of hydraulic mining practiced in the Rogue Valley did enormous damage to the streams and their ecosystems. Evidence of this destruction can still be seen today along the Gin Lin Mining Trail and the Sterling Mine Ditch Trail.

It is estimated that over the years more than 80,000 pounds of gold have been taken out of the streams and streambanks of the Rogue Valley.



Destruction from hydraulic mining.
SOHS #14680

History of North Mountain Park



Prospectors came to Bear Creek looking for gold

Although the Bear Creek channel never had the rich veins of gold found in many of its upper tributaries such as Wagoner Creek, early prospectors also worked the gravels of Bear Creek from time to time.

During the Klondike Gold Rush at the end of nineteenth century, Thaddeus Lincoln Powell, the grandfather of Jack and James Gunter (former owners of the park site), took his wife and young daughter and headed to Alaska to seek his own fortune in gold. After several long, cold years up north, Powell brought his family back to the Rogue Valley. The family eventually purchased the land along Bear Creek, where they mined sand and gravel rather than gold.

"He took an awful lot of sand out of the creek."

– Jack Gunter on his grandfather's sand and gravel operation along Bear Creek

While the rush of the placer gold mining had been nearly exhausted in the Rogue Valley by the 1870's, there were many lode mines, or hard rock mines, that operated well into the twentieth century. One of the most successful of these was the Ashland Mine, located in the foothills on the northwest side of town. This mine was discovered and worked for a few years by two cousins in the mid-1880's before it was sold to E.K. Anderson and William Hackett. In 1891, Anderson and Hackett bonded the property as the Ashland Mine and had a 250-foot tunnel dug from which 20 tons of ore was extracted. The ore was turned into three bricks of gold valued at \$3,340.00. In December of 1892, the gold bricks were put on display at the Bank of Ashland. The mining men of the day stated that, "...they show that the hills which shelter Ashland are holding treasures which can be unlocked by the courageous efforts of patient search and the winning combination of local capital."



Ashland Mine workers. SOHS #5966

It was originally believed that the find was just in the one vein, but in 1894 a major gold strike was reported that revealed a rich mineral belt. Some of the veins found were 21 feet thick. The Ashland Mine had tapped a mineral belt which is now known to extend more than 200 miles from Yreka, California to Cottage Grove, Oregon. At the height of production, the Ashland Mine was producing gold worth \$20,000.00 every week.

Although the mine was very lucrative, it was burdened with disputes over property rights and legal problems. Because of this, the mine changed hands often and operated sporadically until World War II when it was closed by order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. President Roosevelt had ordered the closure of all west coast gold mines in an effort to move the labor forces into mining metals which would be needed for the war effort.

During the early development of the Ashland Mine, over 5,000 feet of tunnels were dug with exploration to a depth of 1,200 feet. By the time the mine closed, total exploration included 11,000 feet of tunnels and shafts.



Along with the Ashland Mine, there were a few other prominent mines in the Ashland area including the Barron Mine, which was located near Emigrant Creek, and the Lamb/Bula Mine. The Lamb Mine, which was located above the east fork of Ashland Creek, was never very productive. Evidence of this mine can be seen along the Lamb Mine hiking trail, which is on US Forest Service land above Ashland.

As soon as gold was discovered in Oregon, hundreds of men who had been working the mines in California flocked north. Among them were many Chinese miners. By 1864, in fact, over 2,000 Chinese miners were working the mines around Jacksonville. Many of these men worked in mining areas that had been abandoned by the other miners.

Because the Chinese were sending the great majority of their mine earnings home to China, laws were adopted that made it difficult for the Chinese to own property or mining claims. Despite these laws, many of the Chinese workers did come to own property, businesses and mines. A few Chinese rose to become leaders called “bosses” who provided Chinese workers for mine owners, the most notable being a man named Gin Lin. Lin was an entrepreneur who, after purchasing his first mine, gradually acquired more land and more mines, successfully finding gold with the use of hydraulic mining. It is estimated that



Gin Lin. SOHS #1142

Lin made well over a million dollars from his mining endeavors in southwest Oregon.



The historic **Gin Lin Trail** is open to the public with evidence of the mining operation still visible. This interpretive trail is located 15 miles from Jacksonville on Palmer Creek Road just beyond the McKee Bridge.

An example of the large sluices built in the ravines and man-made gullies to wash down the gold bearing gravel. Photo courtesy of Gary Swanson.

Donation Land Claims



The Oregon Country—still jointly “owned” with Great Britain.

By the time gold was discovered in the Rogue Valley in the early 1850's, the Oregon Country had become an official Territory of the United States. After 30 years of trying to share the Oregon Country with the United States, Great Britain agreed, in the Compromise of 1846, to draw the boundary line of their two countries at the 49th parallel, which is the US/Canada border today.

All of the land within the newly “owned” Oregon Territory became public domain of the United States, meaning that the government had control over its management and ownership. As with the rest of the land of the young nation, the federal land within the Oregon Territory was to be doled out as rapidly as possible to the states and then into private ownership. There could be little more incentive for people to make their way to Oregon than to offer them hundreds of acres of free, farmable, “uninhabited” land.



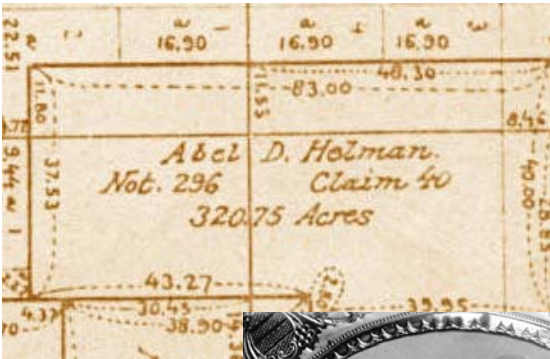
To facilitate the distribution of land, the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 was quickly drawn up. This act awarded 320 acres of land to any white male settler who resided in the territory before December of 1850 and would cultivate the land for four years. If married, a man's wife would receive an additional 320 acres. Those settlers who came after 1850 (up until 1856) were awarded 160 acres.

One of the first men to stake a land claim in the Rogue Valley was Robert Hargadine. Hargadine traveled from the east coast in 1850 to California, where he spent 18 months searching for gold. Failing at that endeavor, in 1852 Hargadine came north to Oregon where he staked a donation land claim near Rock Creek (later renamed Ashland Creek). Hargadine was a merchant by trade and became instrumental in establishing the town of Ashland Mills and the prominent Ashland Woolen Mill in 1868.



The original Helman house can still be seen on the corner of Orange Ave. and Helman St. in Ashland.

Another early pioneer to the Rogue Valley was Abel Helman, who, like Hargadine, sailed from the East Coast around the Cape of Good Hope to California in search of gold. Not finding any big strikes, Helman decided to see if the Willamette Valley really was the "Garden of Eden" people were talking about. After traveling north and then back into California, Helman decided the Rogue Valley was the place for him, and in 1852 he staked his own donation land claim along Rock Creek near the Hargadine claim.



Above: This 1857 donation land claim map shows Helman's 320.75 acres.

Right: The Helman family. SOHS #403



Although he had intended to make a living mining for gold, Helman soon decided that he could be more successful selling lumber to the miners and settlers.

Within a few years Helman, along with fellow pioneer Eber Emery, built a sawmill along Rock Creek. Just a few years later, Helman and the Emery brothers put their efforts into building a flour mill, also along Rock Creek. By this time it was clear that Helman's claim was to become the main commercial district for the new town. In 1855, Helman laid out twelve lots around the plaza, and the town of Ashland Mills (named after Helman and Emery's home county of Ashland, Ohio) was established. Helman Elementary School also sits on the original land claim.



The town of Ashland with flour mill in background (currently the plaza). SOHS #79-A

of Talent. E.K. was very active in the founding of the town of Ashland Mills and was involved in many early business affairs as well as local agriculture. He is known for planting some of the first commercial crops in the area and had one of the earliest orchards where he grew apples, pears and peaches. Anderson was also involved in farming and stock raising and in 1854 helped start the Ashland Flour Mill, along with fellow pioneers Abel Helman and Eber Emery. Anderson also owned and operated the Ashland Woolen Mill with his son George until 1900 when it was destroyed by fire. Not to leave any opportunity unexplored, Anderson was also at one time the owner of the Ashland Mine, as well as many other mines in the area.

One of the most influential pioneers to settle in the Rogue Valley was Eli Knighton Anderson, commonly known as "E.K." Anderson was born in 1826 in Monroe County, Indiana and as a young man worked as a carpenter's apprentice until gold fever lured him to California in 1849. Anderson worked for a time in California as a carpenter and a miner until heading north to Oregon in 1852 with his brother James F. Anderson. The land claim where they settled was on the creek that now bears their name in the town



Above: *Looking north at Granite Street with orchards dotting the background. The future site of the Japanese Gardens is in the foreground. SOHS #4238*



Looking north from the town of "Ashland Mills" prior to 1884. (Plaza on the right and Granite Street on the left.) SOHS #111

James Clark Tolman was another prominent founding father of the Ashland area. Tolman, who was born in Ohio, was a man who, like so many others, caught gold fever and headed for California in 1849. After returning to Ohio he married and almost immediately set out for the Oregon Territory where he settled in the young town of Ashland Mills. Like many of the early

settlers, Tolman had a wide variety of skills that ultimately contributed to the growth and prosperity of his newly adopted home. Among other things, Tolman was involved in stock raising, politics, and education. His skills and services were rewarded in 1878 when he was appointed by President Hayes to serve as Surveyor-General of Oregon. Bellview Elementary School sits on the site of Tolman's original land claim.

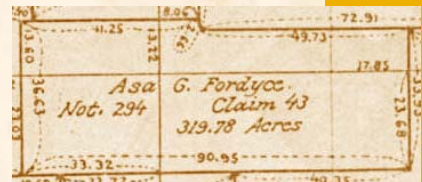


Walker House on E. Main Street.

Another early pioneer, Enoch Walker, who came west on the Applegate Trail, settled in the Ashland area in the early 1850's. The Walker House, which is one of the oldest residences in the Rogue River basin, is located on land that was part of his original land claim along East Main Street. Walker was a rancher and a known advocate of public education. Walker Elementary School, located on Walker Avenue, is a monument to his belief in public education.

History of North Mountain Park

The land that is now the site of North Mountain Park was part of the parcel given to Ashland pioneer Asa Fordyce under the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850. Fordyce brought his family to Oregon from Iowa in 1853. Almost immediately after arriving in the Rogue Valley, Fordyce was involved in an Indian attack. After being shot, he took up refuge with James Tolman until his wounds healed. He was able to eventually make his claim on the land that extended down to Bear Creek and to settle his ranch, which the family owned for many years.



Farms & Ranches Begin to Dot the Valley

The emigrants who put down roots in the Rogue Valley did so in a manner that mimicked the way of life they had left behind in Ohio, Illinois and Missouri. Trees were cut to build cabins as quickly as fences were erected to surround them. Lush bottom-lands were hastily planted with oats, wheat and barley. Around the homestead,

women planted not only cabbage, corn, and potatoes but also lilacs and roses to remind them of their former homes. The new emigrants immediately settled into a life of farming and ranching as the native tribes were pushed out, their traditional camas meadows were destroyed by marauding pigs and traditional acorn-gathering areas were cleared to plant crops.



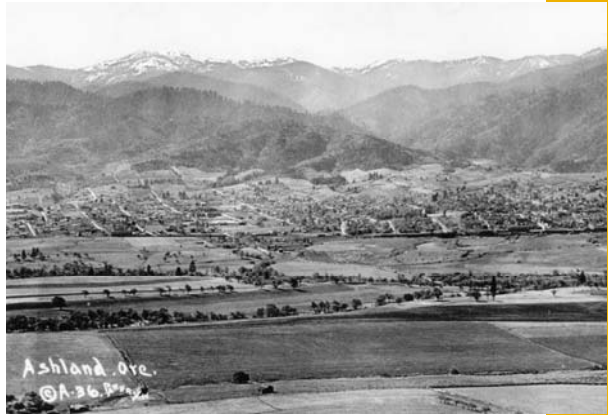
Above: *Eagle Mill, located along Bear Creek, was completed just after the Ashland Mill on the plaza (right). Both mills, which processed wheat into flour, were powered by water from the creek. SOHS #14414 and #1259*



Wheat, which had never been grown in the Rogue Valley, quickly became a common sight. Just one year after Abel Helman arrived in the Rogue Valley, he began work on one of the valley's early grist mills. By 1854, powered by water from Ashland Creek, the flour mill began operating. Because at the time, this was the only flour mill in southern Oregon, it quickly became a mainstay of the valley.

Along with farming wheat, most of the new emigrants also depended on the raising of livestock to support themselves and to help feed the thousands of miners who were spending their time working the streams and hillsides. In just two months during 1853, over 2,000 head of cattle were brought over the trail into the Rogue Valley, most of which began grazing at will on public domain land without any fees or restrictions.

As with the rest of the West, cattle, sheep and even pigs quickly filled in the “empty” spaces which surrounded the homesteads. Some cattle, which were mainly raised for beef, were pastured in the higher mountains during the spring and summer and then driven back into the valley bottom during the winter, where their diet was supplemented with cut hay. Others were allowed to run free.



Abundance of farmland in Ashland (looking southwest). SOHS #5892

History of North Mountain Park



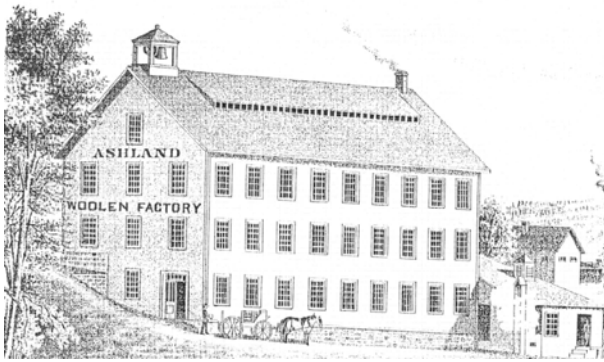
One of many barns used by the former owners of the North Mountain Park site.

After the Fordyce family, the park site property became part of the Carter Land Company, which raised cattle on the land. Eventually, the 40-acre property was divided into two parcels — the Hodgins purchased the upper parcel, while the Powells purchased the lower one along Bear Creek. Both families raised hay and used the land to graze cattle. Although this use helped support the families who owned the land, it also had a significant impact on the vegetation of the site. Over time, many native plants were lost as non-native plants were introduced either accidentally or deliberately to support the grazing of livestock. Others, such as teasel and Himalayan blackberry, which had been deliberately introduced, migrated to the park site where they have since become an invasive nuisance.

“For as long as I remember we had cattle . . . the (field) that was cultivated was mainly alfalfa.”

— Bob Hodgins who grew up on the upper portion of the park site

Burgeoning Industries & Their Impacts



Because sheep were especially well adapted to the climate of the Rogue Valley, their introduction was very successful and their numbers quickly soared from 1,700 animals in 1853 to 80,000 just seven years later. So many ranchers were raising sheep in and around Ashland that businessmen such as Hargadine advanced the idea

of a woolen mill. Originally named the Rogue River Woolen Manufacturing Company, the mill opened on Water Street in 1868 and was run by a turbine that was powered by the waters of Ashland Creek. The mill produced socks, flannel underwear, blankets and a variety of other items. Goods were sold locally and to San Francisco distributors.

After the coming of railroad in 1884, markets increased and business flourished. By 1899, the mill was processing 200,000 pounds of wool annually. Unfortunately, a tragic fire erupted in the mill on January 21, 1900, and the mill burned to the ground and was never rebuilt.



As towns continued to grow, ranching became more marginalized. During the orchard boom of 1905 -1912, the valley floor became more valuable for homes, commerce and orchards. Also, because the upper hills were valued more for their timber, ranching never dominated the Rogue Valley to the extent it did on the east side of the Cascades which had far less forested land.

While farming and ranching were essential to the settlement of the Rogue Valley, they also have had some unintended impacts on the valley's ecology. One of these results has been the spread of non-native, invasive plants, in part due to grazing disturbance. Another consequence has been the loss of native plants through simple overgrazing. Ranchers have also had some intended impacts to the valley's ecology through their efforts to eradicate large predators, including the wolf and grizzly bear.



*Invasive
Teasel*



Cattle in and along Bear Creek. SOHS #9048.

sheep, in accessing drinking water, have caused extensive erosion and pollution, both of which have had negative impacts on salmon and other fish.

The attitude that “the only good wolf (or coyote, or bear) is a dead one” was carried throughout the culture of the emigrants. Although coyotes have been able to survive due to their adaptability, wolves (and grizzly bears) were hunted to extinction in the Rogue Valley.

Livestock have also had a large impact on streams and their associated stream banks. Cattle and

History of North Mountain Park



The future Gunter farmhouse can be seen hidden among the trees. The Silver Crest Dairy is to the right of the farmhouse.

The Nature Center, built as a home in 1905, was part of the Silver Crest Dairy — one of numerous small dairies in Ashland. The dairy was located on North Mountain Avenue just up the road from the park site. It supplied fresh milk for area residents for many years. In 1963, the house was purchased from the Williamsons by the Gunters. The house was placed on rollers and moved to its present location at 620 North Mountain Avenue, where the Gunters continued to reside and raise their family until the city purchased it in 1993.

“We processed the milk and sold it . . . delivery was two times a day: in the morning and the evening, a very hard job.”

Lucille Williamson



Railroad Opens Up National Fruit Market

Some of the first fruit trees were brought to the Rogue Valley in covered wagons with families such as the Billings, who came over as early 1854. Because so many emigrant families hailed from the Midwest where fruit trees grew in abundance, it did not take long for pioneering families to start growing fruit in Oregon. The climate of the Rogue Valley was especially suitable for the growing of apples and pears, so growers began to favor these trees. By 1860, numerous small orchards had become established around Ashland. Apples enjoyed a tremendous boom during the late 1800's and early 1900's peaking at about 400 growers utilizing about 10,000 acres in 1910. By 1930 over 94% of the apple acreage had been removed and pears became the number one orchard crop of the Rogue Valley. While the early growing of fruit in the Rogue Valley remained productive, very little of it was marketed outside of the valley due to the isolation of the area. This situation was not to last, however, as the coming of the railroad opened up markets across the nation, and very quickly the Rogue Valley became known as a premier fruit-growing region of the nation.



Powell's Cider Stand next to the railroad station. SOHS #4733

The building of a north-south rail line through Oregon was long anticipated. Much of the incentive for the railroad companies to build the line, which would connect Portland to Sacramento and run directly through the Rogue Valley, came in the form of a land grant that was offered by the US

government (one of many awarded to railroads). The land was to be given to the first company to lay 20 miles of track. After much competition and reorganization, the grant was awarded to the Oregon and California, or O & C Railroad, and construction began in 1868.

Work progressed slowly, however, due to financial difficulties. Finally, by 1883, the line from Portland reached almost to Jackson County. As railroad land grants were thought by some to be too generous, the land was restricted to "every alternate section of public land," which led to the legacy of the checkerboard pattern of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land that exists in southern Oregon today. One important question remained, however – should the line run directly through the valley or five miles west through the town of Jacksonville, which was at that time the county seat and the leading metropolis of southwestern Oregon?

It was decided that the line would run five miles east of Jacksonville. Medford, benefitting from this location and the accompanying commerce and development that would follow, was incorporated in 1885 and quickly grew to become the largest city in the Rogue Valley.

With the route through the Rogue Valley having been at last established, the north line from Portland and the south line from California were finally connected in 1887 when the golden spike was driven in Ashland. With shipping now available to Portland and San Francisco, Rogue Valley orchards flourished. The Rogue Valley was promoted as a place where anyone could grow fruit and make money. This notion was fueled by real estate speculators who cited the success of men like Joseph Stewart, a horticulturalist who came to the Rogue Valley in 1884, and by 1896 was shipping 95 carloads of pears and apples a year across the nation.



Workers harvest pears at Hillcrest Orchard.
SOHS print.

History of North Mountain Park



Above: Powell's Cider Store stood next to the railroad station along 'A' Street. Courtesy of Terry Skibby.

Right: This café ticket was found during renovation of the Gunter farmhouse.



Thaddeus Powell, the grandfather of James and Jack Gunter, who sold the land for the lower portion of North Mountain Park, worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Thaddeus' father, William Powell, owned property in the railroad district of Ashland and sold apple cider to people on the train.

"My grandfather . . . came west when he was 14 . . . he went to work on the railroad, building it over the mountain . . . when they started running the trains he got a job on the railroad."

- Jack Gunter

Dams Create Much-Needed Reservoirs

From the earliest days of settlement in the Rogue Valley, farmers devised ways to divert water from nearby streams to water their fruit trees and other crops. This worked well for those farmers living close to streams, but, for others, water was in short supply.



Above: *In some years, the water level in Emigrant Lake becomes significantly reduced by late summer or fall due to irrigation draws.*

Left: *Emigrant Lake is recharged every spring by rain and snow melt.*

In an effort to bring water to farmers, and especially fruit growers, water districts were established. Between 1915 and 1921, seven water districts were formed. The largest was the Talent Irrigation District, or TID, which was formed in 1916 to serve residents in Talent and Ashland.

With the help of the Bureau of Reclamation, TID began a project in 1920 to bring water to farmers by putting more water in Bear Creek and delivering it through a system of ditches and canals.

The additional water became available because of three new reservoirs: Hyatt, built in 1923; Emigrant Lake, built in 1924 and Howard Prairie, completed in 1962.



Hyatt Reservoir.
Photo courtesy of BLM
Photo by: John Craig

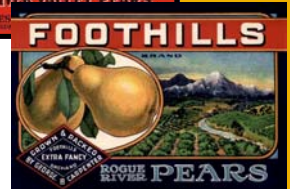
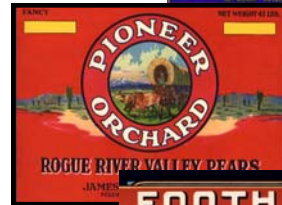


Hillcrest Orchard's fruit packing plant.
Courtesy of Hillcrest Orchard.

With a reliable (and cheap) source of water, orchardists were able to expand both their production and their markets. Fruit was sent to newly established packing houses where it was boxed and prepared for shipment. Training was enhanced in an effort to ensure quick, uniform packing and the safe shipping of a high quantity of fruit. All of these factors helped establish the prominence of Rogue Valley orchards.

Throughout the heyday of the orchards in the early twentieth century, the Rogue Valley saw enormous growth, especially in the towns of Medford and Ashland. The logging industry also benefitted, as much of the cut lumber was made into boxes for the shipping of fruit, which was being sent across the nation and as far away as China and England.

Since the 1950's orchards have been consolidated as the rising value of land for housing developments has led to the loss of much of the former orchard land. Whereas in 1930, there were 400 pear growers in Jackson County, by the early 1990's that number had dropped to just 36 growers.



Historic, local fruit labels.

History of North Mountain Park



With the building of Emigrant Reservoir and the resulting use of Bear Creek as part of the Talent Irrigation District canal system, the creek that runs along the northern border of the park has long been used as an irrigation conduit. This has resulted in a type of reverse flow regime with abnormally high summer flows. This action, along with the channelization of the creek in order to prevent flooding, has resulted the loss of significant amounts of side-channel habitat and the removal of cobbles and small gravels needed by salmon to make their redd, or nest.



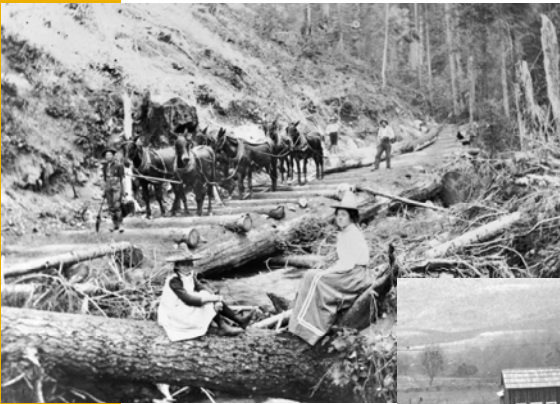
Due to the channelization of Bear Creek, the creek bed has been scoured to bedrock, making it difficult for salmon to spawn.

Local Logging Mills Boom then Bust

Logging in the Oregon Territory began with emigrants clearing the bottomland for homesteads and fuel. In the Rogue Valley, lumber was also needed to support the gold miners, who needed lumber to build sluice boxes, rocker boxes, and flumes. One of the first lumber mills built in the Rogue Valley was constructed by Ashland pioneer Abel Helman, who quickly decided it was easier to make a living supplying timber to miners and emigrants than it was panning for gold. Helman's sawmill operated along Ashland Creek from 1852 until 1879.



Early Ashland-area mill. SOHS #7078A



Above: *Early Ashland-area logging operation.*
Courtesy of Terry Skibby.

Right: *Workers, local sawmill 1889.* SOHS #6511



During the late 1800's, the timber industry grew slowly in southwest Oregon. There were a handful of steam-powered sawmills located along main tributaries of Bear Creek, including Ashland, Clayton, Neil, and Wagner Creeks. These early mills provided lumber for the growing populations of Jacksonville, Talent and Ashland.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the demand for lumber began to increase. This demand was fueled by the ability to ship lumber out of the valley with the help of the Butte Falls

extension line that connected remote mills to the main line that ran from Portland to San Francisco. The Oregon and California Railroad company, which had been granted millions of acres of forest land to support the building of the line, often found it more lucrative to sell large tracts of their land to lumber companies than to

settlers, as stipulated by the federal land grant. In 1900, for example, Weyerhaeuser purchased 900,000 acres of timber land from the railway. This would later cost the railroad company dearly, as the courts eventually found the railroads in non-

compliance with the stipulations of their land grants, resulting in the eventual diversion of the O & C land back into the hands of the federal government.

As a consequence, several Oregon counties, including Jackson and Josephine, suffered from a loss of railroad taxes. To compensate for this loss, eighteen Oregon counties were awarded ongoing compensation from the sale of timber being harvested on these “O and C” lands.

In the early 20th century, with the invention and standard use of the

chainsaw coupled with large logging trucks, both the logging and milling industries became increasingly efficient. With the added



Above: Log train, early 1900s. Courtesy of Terry Skibby.

Right: Large trees, such as this one at Lithia Lumber mill, were a common sight during the peak logging era.



incentive of the post-WWII housing boom, timber production again began to soar. At this time, Ashland had numerous small mills in operation, but it was Medford that became headquarters to the big companies such as Medco and Timber Products. By the 1950's, many of the smaller mills began to fall prey to large companies, who dominated the industry due to their ability to buy land, diversify their products, modernize their equipment, and out-bid smaller companies for federal timber. At the same time, unregulated clear-cutting left little timber on private forest lands. As a reaction, companies turned to the remaining public forests for timber.

This was the beginning of the large timber sales in the national forests and the ongoing debate over the management of what remained of the public timber lands.



Lithia Lumber mill with wigwam burner and saw.

In the late 1970's, with timber sales at an all-time high, Jackson and other counties on the O & C timber dole had more money coming in than they knew how to spend — \$9,000,000 for Jackson County alone in 1974. During the 1980's, increased mechanization and a reduction in the number of available logs significantly reduced the number of timber industry jobs. At the same time, the listing of the Northern Spotted Owl resulted in the closure of much of the remaining federal old growth. Although timber on the O & C lands was supposed to be harvested sustainably into perpetuity, the same pattern of overharvesting occurred on these lands as on other federal land. All counties, including Jackson and Josephine, that had become dependent upon the O & C funds began to suffer to the point of having to close historical societies, libraries, parks, and even county sheriffs' offices. O & C timber revenues, began to suffer. In an effort to undo the gridlock that pitted the "environmentalists" against the "loggers," in the 1990's, President Clinton helped establish the Northwest Forest Plan. A main goal of this plan was to achieve sustainable timber production and protect biological diversity.

History of North Mountain Park

During the time that the Gunters owned and lived on the North Mountain Park property, their rural neighborhood included several farm properties and a sawmill; the Beagle Mill was just across the road. James Gunter worked in one of the Medford mills and also helped with the family business, Gunter Fuel, which provided wood and oil fuel to residents throughout the valley.



This Gunter Fuel truck was found when the city purchased the land.

"My husband was a logger and then after he quit logging he went to work at KOGAP (sawmill)."

-Doris Gunter

Ashland's Historic Sawmills

Although no operating mills remain in Ashland, at one time sawmills were a prominent industry, and their owners among the city's most respected citizens. Below is a sampling of the Ashland sawmills.

BEAGLE MILL: 1946 - 1965

Location: Riverwalk Park, across from NMP.

Currently: A housing development and park.

COTTON MILL: 1940's - 1957

Location: Mistletoe Road in Ashland.

Currently: A city yard to store vehicles.

FIR MILLING AND PLANING: 1946 - 1962

Location: Tolman Creek Road and Ashland St.

Currently: The Bi-Mart store in Ashland.

LITHIA LUMBER: 1950's - 1960's

Location: 1155 East Main Street in Ashland.

Currently: The Ashland Police Station.

MISTLETOE: 1934 - 1963

Location: Mistletoe Road in Ashland.

Currently: A private yard to store vehicles.

OREGON SAWMILL: 1956 - 1967

Location: Fordyce Street in Ashland.

Currently: The Mill Pond Subdivision.

PARSON'S PINE PRODUCTS: 1956 - 1998

Location: 255 Helman Street in Ashland.

Currently: The Yala Company.

TAYLOR BROTHERS MILL: 1947 - 1960

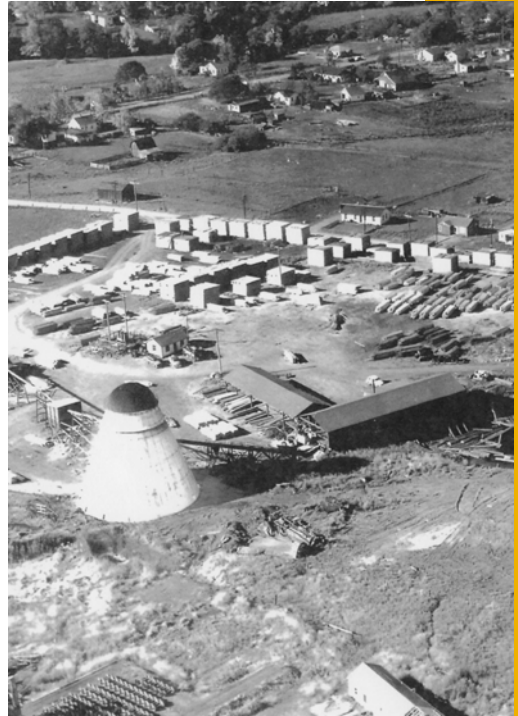
Location: The railroad district in Ashland between the RR tracks and Hersey St.

Currently: The Hersey Street Business Park.

WORKMAN MILL: 1950's - early 1960's

Location: East Main Street in Ashland.

Currently: The Old Mill Village (college student housing).



Taylor Brothers Mill

A Changing Tide

As with the country as a whole, the 1960's was a time of change for the Rogue Valley. It was during this decade that many of the small family-owned farms and mills either became part of larger corporations such as Harry and David and Weyerhaeuser, or they simply went out of business. It was also a time of growth for the valley as much of the orchard and farmland began to be converted into houses and commercial developments.



Above: *Hillcrest Orchard in Medford has converted many acres of pear orchards to wine grapes.*

Right: *Ashland caters to the many visitors that come to see Oregon Shakespeare Festival plays from spring through fall.*



In Ashland, civic leaders, including many of whom were former sawmill owners, began to give serious consideration to the town's economic future. By the mid-sixties, it seemed clear that the standard industries of logging and general manufacturing were not going to remain viable and that other avenues would need to be explored. Tourism linked to the growing Oregon Shakespeare Festival seemed to hold the best hope for the future.

For Ashland, tourism linked with an emphasis on carefully planned growth, including strong support for its park system, has allowed the town to survive and thrive. While other Rogue Valley towns have focused on various economic strategies to see them into the 21st century, all have common roots in the agriculture, logging and pioneer history of the Rogue Valley.

An Historic Timeline

- 1800:** The Rogue Valley is home to numerous tribes of Native Americans.
- 1804:** Lewis and Clark journey west.
- 1827:** Peter Skene Ogden travels through the Rogue Valley, trapping beaver and exploring.
- 1841:** First organized party of emigrants travels to the Willamette Valley.
- 1846:** First use of the Applegate Trail, bringing emigrants through the Rogue Valley.
- 1848:** Oregon Country is officially declared a Territory of the United States.
- 1850:** Donation Land Claim Act: up to 320 acres of land given to qualified settlers.
- 1851:** Gold is discovered near present-day Jacksonville.
- 1852:** A sawmill is built by Abel Helman and the Emery brothers.
- 1853:** Treaty of Table Rock: skirmishes between settlers and Native Americans.
- 1854:** The Ashland Flour Mill is built by Helman and the Emery brothers.
- 1856:** Tribes of southern Oregon are removed to the Siletz & Grand Ronde reservations.
- 1859:** Oregon becomes the 33rd state.
- 1868:** The Rogue River Woolen Mill is built along Ashland Creek.
Oregon & California RR given Land Grant to connect Portland with Sacramento.
- 1884:** Ashland connected to Portland by rail.
- 1887:** Golden spike is driven in Ashland, connecting Portland to San Francisco by rail.
- 1891:** Ashland Mine opens, producing over \$500,000 in gold in the first six months.
- 1899:** Statewide ban on beaver trapping as the population plummets.
- 1916:** O & C Railroad lands revert back to federal ownership.
- 1917:** Medford fruit industry uses over 7,000,000 feet of box lumber to pack fruit.
- 1920's:** Last verified sighting of the gray wolf in southern Oregon.
- 1927:** The county seat relocates from Jacksonville to Medford.
- 1932:** Passage of the O & C Lands Act: 50% of timber sales reimbursed to counties.
- 1943:** Beginning of large-scale timber sales on federal land.
- 1946:** Jackson County has over 140 operating sawmills.
- 1974:** Jackson County brings in \$9,000,000 from O & C timber sales.
- 1987:** Northern Spotted Owl listed as a threatened species.
- 2007:** Jackson County libraries close as revenues from O & C funds plummet.

Ashland's Cemeteries

MT. VERNON CEMETERY: This cemetery, which was adjacent to the Mt. Vernon Schoolhouse, is located on a hill near Ashland Lane Road. The most prominent burial in the cemetery is that of Nathaniel Meyer and his wife. The Meyers came to Oregon in 1855 and staked three land claims, one for themselves and two for their sons. Their land claims covered most of the Valley View area just northwest of Ashland. The Mt. Vernon Cemetery, which became known as the Meyer Cemetery, was used for burying some of the area's earliest pioneers and their children, most of whom died either of wounds sustained in the Rogue River Indian Wars, or from disease. Today, there are very few visible graves left in the cemetery and public access is restricted.



HARGADINE CEMETERY: This small cemetery is located on Sheridan Street. The first documented burial here was of Katie Hargadine, the one-year-old daughter of Robert and Martha who, like many infants of that time, succumbed to disease. Other pioneers buried here include Asa Fordyce and John P. Walker.



HILL-DUNN CEMETERY at Emigrant Lake: This cemetery, which is located alongside Emigrant Lake, was part of the original donation land claim of Isaac and Elizabeth Hill, who came to Oregon in 1852 from

Tennessee. This early burial ground was used by many of pioneering families who lost loved ones during the Rogue River Indian Wars of 1853-56. The cemetery continued to serve the community and the small adjoining crossroads of Klamath Junction, which was made up of a few homes, a café, and two gas stations surrounded by farms and orchards. The Junction and the cemetery survived the building of the first dam built to create Emigrant Reservoir as part of the new Talent Irrigation District. When the second, larger dam was built, however, in the late 1950's, both the Junction and the cemetery were in jeopardy of being flooded. In 1958, members of the Dunn, Russell, Hill and other pioneer families dating back to the 1850's were exhumed and relocated to higher ground. Klamath Junction, however, did not survive.

ASHLAND CEMETERY: The Ashland cemetery is located in the 700 block of East Main St. The oldest known burial date is 1856 and it is the resting place of many of the area's pioneer families including the Applegates, the Helms, the McCalls, and the Tolmans, among others.

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www.nps.gov

Artwork by: Ilona Sweeten, Irene Brady, and Nancy Wylie



Places to Visit

Applegate Trail:

Applegate Trail Interpretive Center

www.rogueweb.com/interpretive
500 Sunny Valley Loop
Sunny Valley, Oregon
541-472-8545

Tub Springs State Wayside

18 miles up the Greensprings Hwy.
Hwy. 66, Ashland OR
800-551-6949

Cemeteries:

Ashland Cemetery

www.nps.gov/nr/travel/Ashland/acm.htm
750 East Main St. Ashland, OR

Hargadine Cemetery

www.nps.gov/nr/travel/Ashland/har.htm
345 Sheridan St. Ashland, OR

Mountain View Cemetery

www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/Ashland/mtn.htm
440 Normal Ave., Ashland, OR
541-482-3826

Friends of Jacksonville Cemetery

www.friendsjvillecemetery.org
541-826-9939

Oregon Parks & Recreation Department:

Heritage programs: Oregon Commission on
Historic Cemeteries
www.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/OCHC/

Gold Mining:

Gin Lin Trail

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/
recreation/trails/gin-lin-mining.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/recreation/trails/gin-lin-mining.shtml)
Contact: Applegate Ranger District
541-899-3800

Golden National Historic District

www.historicgolden.org
Mining town currently being restored
Approximately 3 miles east of Wolf Creek
Golden, OR

Sterling Mine Ditch Trail

From Jacksonville, follow Hwy 238 to Ruch.
Turn left on Upper Applegate Road. Drive 4 miles,
turn left on Little Applegate Road. At 6 miles,
the Bear Gulch Trailhead will be on your left.

Other:

Butte Creek Mill

www.buttecreekmill.com
402 Royal Avenue N., Eagle Point, OR
541-826-3531

Trail Tavern Museum and Upper Rogue Historical Society

www.oregonmuseums.org
144 Old Hwy 62, Trail, OR
541-878-2259

Ashland Historic Railroad Museum

www.ashlandrrmuseum.org
258 A St., No. 7, Ashland, OR
541-261-6605

Talent Historical Society

www.talenthistory.org
105 North Market Street, Talent, OR
541-512-8838

Southern Oregon Historical Society

www.sohs.org
Research Library
106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR
541-858-1724

Gold Hill Historical Society

www.oregonmuseums.org (click on region)
504 1st Avenue, Gold Hill, OR
541-855-1182