

EDWARD GRAY
ESTATE

HOMESTEADING THE HIGH DESERT;
OREGON'S LOST CREEK VALLEY: 1910 TO 1920

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ABSTRACT

According to some historians, much of twentieth century Oregon history is yet to be written. While the dearth of information about the pioneer period provides the readers of history with a fairly clear and concise picture of life in Oregon prior to 1900, the absence of a similar volume of material from 1900 to the present creates an historical void.

One time period which offered an opportunity to partially fill that historical void was the homesteading era between 1910 and 1920. This period was researched as a case study using primary and secondary data, and was documented from various perspectives. Those perspectives included the geographical, historical, social/political, and natural or environmental.

A single area where homesteading occurred, the Lost Creek Valley, was used to exemplify what life was like. Possible reasons for people migrating to the homesteading area are offered, as are possible reasons for the failure of this homesteading experience.

The present use of the area and some possible future uses are offered.

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The private ownership of real property is a measure of social standing in the United States and is one of the basic rights this country's citizens enjoy. Since 1785, the ability of individuals to secure federal land of their own has been encouraged by various ordinances and acts of the national government. This legislation enabled persons to settle on the public domain and make it their own after certain conditions were met. When the Oregon Territory became part of the United States in 1848, the residents and future immigrants used the opportunity of the federal laws to purchase and/or reside on the public domain land to gain ownership. Indeed, by 1899, more than six and one-quarter million acres, of almost nineteen and three-quarter million acres available to individuals, had been granted to private ownership. The remaining, consisting of almost thirteen and one-half million acres, were granted to private ownership after 1900. The historical literature documenting immigration to Oregon is concentrated, however, between 1842 and 1898. The disparity between the volume of historical accounts of the early pioneers and the volume of land transfers of the public domain to private ownership in the twentieth century forms an irony.

The premise that history repeats itself, but not exactly, provides one rationale for investigating this irony. The United States is entering a post-industrial economy. The industrial economy was realized by the earlier transition from an agrarian society. Now, as in the past, periods of change are concurrent with economic cycles, and historically exhibit not only economic stagnation but also

experimentation, innovation, and failure (Kiefer and Senge, 1984). As the United States, and Oregon in particular, continue moving through the current transition, it may be helpful to understand something about the previous change from an agricultural-based to an industrial-based economy.

According to Dodds (1986), much of the twentieth century history of Oregon remains to be written. A possible reason for the dearth of information about Oregon history from the 1540's through the 1890's is offered by Davis (1959):

It was Oregon all right: The place where stories begin that end somewhere else. It has no history of its own, only endings of histories from other places; it has no complete lives, only beginnings. There are worse things. (p. 48).

However, human history is not so much a compilation of events which meet a predetermined criteria, but rather a documentation of choices and decisions made by individuals within a given set of circumstances, possibilities, and constraints. The absence of documented history does not necessarily mean that events important to understanding the present and future did not take place. Rather, it may mean that historians such as Davis have been waiting for documentation which may be significant to understanding how the past, present and future relate. It is understanding the relationship between the past and the present that historians like Dodds (1986) believe prepares a society for the future. Notwithstanding the current transition from one form of economy to another, documenting events of early twentieth century Oregon may help provide additional understanding of the State's historical relationships, much like the documented history through the pioneer period assists in understanding the previous transitions which have taken place.

Documented Oregon History: 1540 to 1899

The early history of Oregon, through the nineteenth century, is relatively abundant with the written activities and observations of explorers, trappers, and merchants who utilized the area for various purposes. The missionary and pioneer settlement period can also be reviewed using documents produced during that era.

In the 1540's, the Spanish and later the British sent expeditions to explore the Pacific Northwest and were the first Europeans to view portions of what now is the southern Oregon coast. The Columbia River was discovered by Captain Robert Gray, an American, in 1792. The mouth of the Columbia became the winter quarters for the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805. Because the preceding explorations were sponsored by governments, the requirements to keep written logs of activities and observations assisted in producing documentation of the earliest Oregon history. Indeed, the logs kept by Gray and Lewis and Clark became part of the documentation used by the United States to defend its claim of ownership of the territory in a later dispute with Great Britain. The merchants and the trappers who followed the explorers also documented their activities.

The Pacific Fur Company Post, established in 1810-11 at the present site of Astoria, Oregon, and the Hudson Bay Company Post, established in 1825 at the present site of Vancouver, Washington, were both in the fur trapping and trading business. As self-sustaining outposts of civilization, each enterprise kept records of the social, political, and environmental activities and observations along with the financial documents necessary for business purposes. When the British returned ownership of Astoria to the United States, in accordance with

one of the conditions of the Treaty of Ghent, the documents produced by the Pacific Fur Company employees assisted in sustaining the American position.

In 1834, Jason Lee, a Methodist, established a mission near Salem, Oregon. Two years later, in 1836, four missionaries, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Henry and Eliza Spaulding, established a mission in the vicinity of Walla Walla, Washington. Over the next decade, these mission stations not only gained in population due to periodic reinforcements from the East, they also created additional substations: The Methodists at The Dalles, Oregon City, and Clatsop Plains near Astoria in Oregon; and the Whitman-Spalding Group at Spokane, Washington. These first permanent white settlements by the American missionaries contributed to written Oregon history in the form of logs, journals, dispatches to the East, and personal diaries kept by the leaders and followers populating the various mission stations. The habit of recording events and observations was also a trait shared by the major immigrations that followed via the Oregon Trail.

Beginning in 1842, wagon trains left Independence, Missouri, on the six month 2,000-mile journey to Oregon. Each train or company was led by a chosen captain to whom the responsibility fell of maintaining social and civil order during the trek. Journals were kept during this time by wagon train leaders; as well, personal diaries were maintained by individuals who made the trip. Events, which culminated in the formation of a provisional territorial government in 1843 at Champoeg, Oregon, were documented by the inhabitants of this pioneer period. Documents from this period assisted the United States in securing ownership of the region. By the end of the nineteenth century, the use of logs, journals, and diaries began to decline, and early twentieth century history of Oregon became more difficult to find in written form.

Documented Oregon History: 1900 TO 1987

The reasons for the decline in writing about one's travels and experiences is not so much an issue of complacency on the part of the twentieth century Oregon immigrants, as much as it is an issue of the time and means utilized in relocating to the region. Although immigration continued to require both physical and financial resources, the railroad permitted immigrants to travel the two thousand miles in a matter of days, rather than the six months required by wagon. The horse drawn-vehicles were also being replaced by the automobile, giving individuals the opportunity to travel greater distances in less time. Utilizing electricity, the telegraph allowed messages to be sent and received over great distances in a matter of hours. And the use of written communication between individuals actually increased, facilitated by a reliable federal postage service. However, once a letter or card was received and read, its utility expired, and this form of documentation seldom survived for historical purposes. Each of the preceding examples is an indication of the freedom of movement and communication choices available to the twentieth century immigrants. Indeed, it was becoming less necessary to relocate with a large group of people over an extended period of time. The previous threats to survival during immigration had been diminished or eliminated, and the individual who was compelled to migrate could now do so on his own. Therefore, individuals motivated to immigrate to Oregon in the twentieth century were a more fragmented population, and the written documentation of this period is more diffused than the more homogeneous migrations of the previous pioneer era.

Although the writings of Davis (1959) and Dodds (1986) speak to the lack of written twentieth century Oregon history, both observers, especially Dodds,

view the void as an opportunity for further study and research. In fact, the opportunity has been taken by various individuals in single works and by authors who have submitted material for editing and publication by the Oregon Historical Society. For example, Samuel N. Dicken and Emily F. Dicken provide the reader with an excellent view of Oregon's historical geography in their two-volume publication, Two Centuries of Oregon Geography. D. W. Meinig's The Great Columbia Plain is a regional historical geography and includes the first decade of the twentieth century from a broader perspective. Gordon B. Dodds has written two recent volumes; the first, Oregon, A History, a general history, includes the first seventy years of the twentieth century, while the second, The American Northwest, A History, of Oregon and Washington, also a general history, documents the region's history through the early 1900's. More geographically concentrated works include: Brimlow's Harney County Oregon and Its Rangeland; Bailey's Main Street, Northeastern Oregon, The Founding and Development of Small Towns; Hatton's High Desert of Central Oregon; Allen's Homesteading the High Desert; Jackman and Long's The Oregon Desert; and the Oregon Historical Society's High and Mighty, Select Sketches About Deschutes Country edited by Thomas Vaughn. Challenged by the desire to know more about this part of the country, researchers have contributed glimpses of the past eighty-plus years and have helped bring parts of twentieth century Oregon history into clearer focus. Encouraged by the Oregon Historical Society and by various other organizations and motives, historians are continuing to provide additional knowledge about the State's past. Nonetheless, there remain events in the twentieth century history of Oregon that have yet to be documented. Just as the periods of the explorers, trappers, merchants, missionaries and pioneers

produced historical documentation which helped shape future events, so too may the history of early twentieth century Oregon produce information which may well shape the next future. Specifically, the homesteading period from 1910 to 1920 took place during the last major economic transition, and may provide insight to the transition in which the State of Oregon and the United States are currently involved. Indeed, during the second decade of the twentieth century, over two and three-quarter million acres of public domain were granted to private ownership, the largest volume of homesteading land transactions of any ten-year period in Oregon's history, and most certainly a transition time for the State and the people involved in the experience. Further, such insight may provide what the future holds for Oregon.

Disposal of the Public Domain

With the establishment of the national government, the disposal of the public domain was regulated under the Ordinance of 1785, which was accepted by the federal Congress but not as binding. In practice, this conservative and orderly land policy favored the speculator at the expense of the actual settler. New land legislation became urgent to meet both Treasury needs and the prospect of expanding the new nation to the West. Alexander Hamilton's "Report of a Uniform System for the Disposition of the Lands" (1790-91) ignored the accurate and uniform survey procedure of the Ordinance of 1785 in favor of a modified system of indiscriminate location. It was not until 1796 that the present survey system became part of the land policy. The Land Act of 1796 provided for a rectangular survey by which lands were to be divided into township units six miles square, and half of these were to be divided into single sections of 640 acres. The Ohio Enabling Act of 1802 adopted the policy by which the

federal government would retain title to all ungranted tracts within state boundaries, except one section in each township being set aside for educational purposes. In 1812 Congress established the General Land Office as a bureau of the Treasury Department for the purpose of administering the disposition of lands in the public domain. During the period between 1821 and 1832, eleven relief acts were passed, the most important being one of preemptive rights, or the confirmation of a squatter's claim to public land as opposed to the rights of a nonresident purchaser. Prior to the Homestead Act of 1862, preemption was the primary means of gaining title to public domain lands by residents, the majority of whom immigrated to the area via the Oregon Trail beginning in 1842, and who, because of their increasing population, helped influence the creation of the Oregon Territory in 1848.

The Homestead Act of 1862 offered any citizen who was the head of a family or over twenty-one years of age 160 acres of surveyed public domain after five years of continuous residence and payment of registration fees ranging from twenty-six dollars to thirty-four dollars. As an alternative, land under the Act could be acquired after six months residence and payment of \$1.25 per acre. It was also during this period that the Pacific Railway Acts were passed by Congress. The Act of 1 July 1862 authorized a central transcontinental railway with rights-of-way, and granted ten alternate sections per mile of public domain on both sides of the railway granted. The second Act of 1 July 1864 doubled the land grants and gave the government a second mortgage instead of a first to railroad property. The Northern Pacific, chartered by Congress in 1864, was granted twenty sections per mile in the states and forty sections per mile in the territories.

Between 1864 and 1909, some two-dozen land acts were passed by Congress to satisfy the needs of settlers, the government, and special interests.

In 1909, to satisfy Western cattle interests, Congress passed the Enlarged Homestead Act. This act increased the maximum permissible homestead to 320 acres per person in portions of Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. A companion piece of legislation, the Stock-Raising Act of 1916, enlarged the maximum permissible homestead per person to 640 acres on lands to be used for grazing or forage, but deemed not suitable for irrigation. The act of 1909 also required that a minimum of eighty acres, or twenty-five percent, were to be cultivated. Notwithstanding the Stock-Raising Act, the Enlarged Homestead Act was the primary factor which caused the final and largest immigration to Oregon for the purpose of starting over and gaining title to land in the public domain. The reason for this was fairly simple. The cost to transport people to a new location was less expensive than transporting or driving livestock, due to the limited degree of railroad transportation to the available land.

By 1900, farmers, ranchers, and timber interests had claimed the majority of the homestead acreage available in the humid areas of the State. Homesteaders arriving after the turn of the century were required to look for land in central and eastern Oregon, both semi-arid regions. In their attempts to settle they tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to make the desert bloom with the fruits of their labors. The altitude and limited moisture in these areas has been identified by historians (e.g. Dicken, 1979) as factors contributing to the failure of early twentieth century Oregon homesteaders. However, experimentation and innovation as well as failure are all exhibited during times of change or transition (Kiefer and Senge,

1984); these are not addressed as factors in either the homestead successes nor failures noted by historians.

Despite the methods available to gain ownership of the public domain, the fact remains that very little documented history exists to explain the infusion of homesteaders into Oregon under the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909. Nevertheless, from 1910 through 1919, 5,380,780 acres were original entries, or filings by individuals intent on gaining ownership of land by means of homesteading. Final entries for the period, or individuals who fulfilled the ownership requirements by homesteading, accounted for 2,873,183 acres. (O'Callaghan, 1979). Claims to over two and one-third million acres failed to be granted a land patent. For the men, women, and children who attempted to participate in this final opportunity to start over, as provided by the Land Acts of 1909 and 1916, the beginning and ending of the venture took place in Oregon. Hundreds of individuals chose to leave their constraints behind and bring their traditional ways of living to one of the few remaining places that offered inexpensive or free land ownership. Doing so would enable them to fulfill hopes and dreams and to build a successful future for themselves and their children. For some, a land patent was granted and the homesteading experience was positive. However, for many, the venture ended in failure. Regardless of success or failure, this period of twentieth century Oregon history is sparsely documented. Why individuals chose to come, what their life was like during their stay, and why they left or stayed are questions for which only fragmented answers exist.

The homesteading period in Oregon between 1910 and 1920 offers an opportunity for research and study to more fully develop an understanding about a period in Oregon's twentieth century history; an opportunity to understand

the past as it relates to the present and how that understanding may provide insight to Oregon's future.

The Past, Present and Future

In an attempt to provide additional understanding of the relationship between the past, present, and future, this study will focus on a single geographic area, which was part of the homesteading lands in Oregon between 1910 and 1920. The period under investigation was in an economic transition and exhibited experimentation, innovation, and failure as part of the change process. Documenting this period of Oregon's history may diminish the imbalance between the abundant written history through the 1800's and the sparse information available regarding the early twentieth century, as well as provide a greater understanding of the present transition. With increased knowledge of their past, the people of Central Oregon may well be better prepared to create a more successful future through the processes of innovation and experimentation.

The section which follows describes the methods and resources this project utilized.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

To examine the homestead experience from 1910 to 1920 in Oregon, the selection of the place known as the Lost Creek Valley was the focus of this research project. Because the selected area was but a small part of a greater activity, the documentation of the experiences of the people at this place may have been similar to experiences in other homesteading locations during the same time. The approach utilized in this research was the case study method.

The case study method "contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena." (Yin, 1984:14). However, far from being a single method, a case study can be several strategies applied in concert, while researching a topic or observing a phenomenon. The blending of multiple strategies into a single context has been called "colligation" (Walsh, 1951:59). By definition, the term "colligation" means this study required several strategies to interpret the past. While each strategy was either exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, or a combination thereof, this study is an interpretation of the phenomenon and the acts of the people who participated in the experience (Kaplan, 1964:367). As the pre-twentieth century history of Oregon was documented from various collated perspectives, so too did this study. Those perspectives, combined into a contextual whole, included the historical, geographical, social, natural or environmental, and the political/economic dimensions. By documenting each perspective and discussing how each may relate to the others, the circumstances which compelled individuals to choose this particular place for settlement at that particular time provided insight to the experience of the homesteaders, and may have also provided an understanding of how that past

relates to present day Central Oregon. Because the current time is a transition period for the state and the nation, just as the time selected for this study was a transition period, understanding how the present relates to the past may provide insight into the region's future. Different sources of information were used to explore each of the perspectives. These source materials are available data and will fall within the three main categories of 1) statistical records, 2) personal documents, or primary sources, and 3) mass communication, or secondary sources (Selltiz, Wrightsman, and Cook, 1976).

Historical Perspective

Journals and diaries of the pre-settlement period were used to identify who the inhabitants of the area were or may have been and how the land was being used or occupied. These journals and diaries, written by visitors to the region, also contained information about the climatic and environmental conditions of the study area. Maps produced by the journal writers or maps indicating the travels of the journal writers through the area were studied to complement the narrative. These personal documents were found in the Oregon Historical Society library, and the University of Oregon library. Additional historical information was provided by mass communication, or secondary sources, including newspapers and books. Two newspapers that were published during the period under investigation, the Bend Bulletin and the Lake County Examiner, continue to be published today, and their archives were of assistance to this study. Books such as Dodds, Oregon, A History, were also used.

Geographical Perspective

This perspective was examined by studying charts, graphs, and maps. The maps indicated the terrain, the elevation above sea level, prominent land

features, and the main routes of travel to and from the area. The charts and graphs indicated the types of soil conditions, groundwater elevations, elevation relationships to other areas, and increases or decreases in population. For the purpose of this study, the charts, graphs, maps, and photographs studied were considered mass communication, or secondary sources, and the census data was considered statistical records, or primary sources. The mass communication information was found at the Oregon Historical Society, the High Desert Museum, and at various federal, state, and private institutions. The statistical records were found at the United States Department of Interior.

Social Perspective

Photographs of the period are used to help show the society of the time under study. Newspaper accounts, when available, are used to indicate the social conditions as well as general and focused histories which contain information of the time researched. In general, the sources of information are considered mass communication, or secondary sources, with the exception of photographs from private collections, which are considered personal documents, or primary sources. The Bend Bulletin and the Lake County Examiner were the primary newspaper resources. The Oregon Historical Society library and the High Desert Museum provided additional photographic resources.

Natural or Environmental Perspective

Documents that have recorded data on the climatic norms and changes were used to research this portion of the study. The federal government bureaus as well as newspapers of the period contain this type of information. The United States Weather Bureau provided useful information, in the absence of local data, by identifying changes in weather patterns or cycles over an extended period,

which did have had an impact on the homesteaders' experience. The Bend Bulletin and the Lake County Examiner contained information regarding weather phenomenon as well. The previous two source types were considered statistical records and mass communication, or secondary sources, respectively. An additional source of information was the Lost Creek Valley. A visit was necessary to gain a sense of the place; to understand the relationship from the graphic and written data to the reality of the valley; to experience the homesteaders' natural environment and appreciate the scope of the challenges they faced during their time in this place. When included in the text, this source is to be considered personal documents.

Political/Economic Perspective

The political/economic perspective, by definition of this study, included the political and economic climate of the time. The political institutions of the past created the land transaction opportunities for homesteading purposes, and the economic conditions created the underlying value system by which that opportunity could be undertaken. Maps were studied to complement the land transactions by identifying the original entry claims, analyzing the various internal and external influences upon the homesteaders, and removing from the maps the failed or sold claims through the study period. In this manner, the process of initial settlement through decline or abandonment was observed. A statistical records source of the initial listing of land claims was the Bureau of Land Management, which presently has documentary responsibility for lands ceded from or reverted to the federal government. The regional office, in Portland, Oregon, provided both the graphical and written references of the homestead land claims. Another federal jurisdiction, the United States Census Bureau, also provided

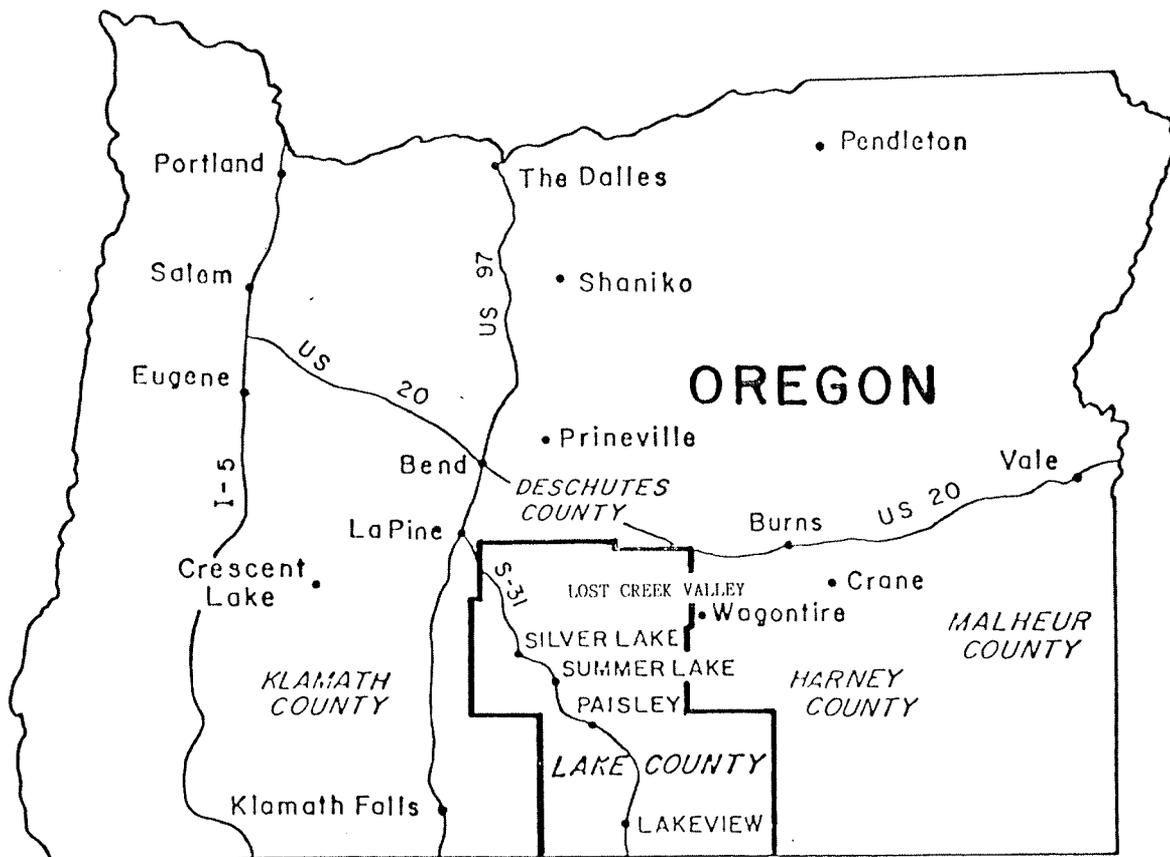
limited additional information about the population of the Lost Creek Valley. The family members of the entry holders, while not accounted for in the land transactions, were partially included in census statistics. The primary data categories used within this perspective were statistical records and mass communication.

By combining each perspective into the whole context of the time and place under study, the present transition through which Central Oregon is moving does have similarities with its historical past; more specifically, its early twentieth century historical past. If those connections between the past and the present can be understood, it may be possible to anticipate what the future holds in store for the region. Just as pre-twentieth century history helped in understanding the creation of an industrial-based society, so too may understanding the sparsely documented period of this study assist in understanding the creation of Central Oregon's next society.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

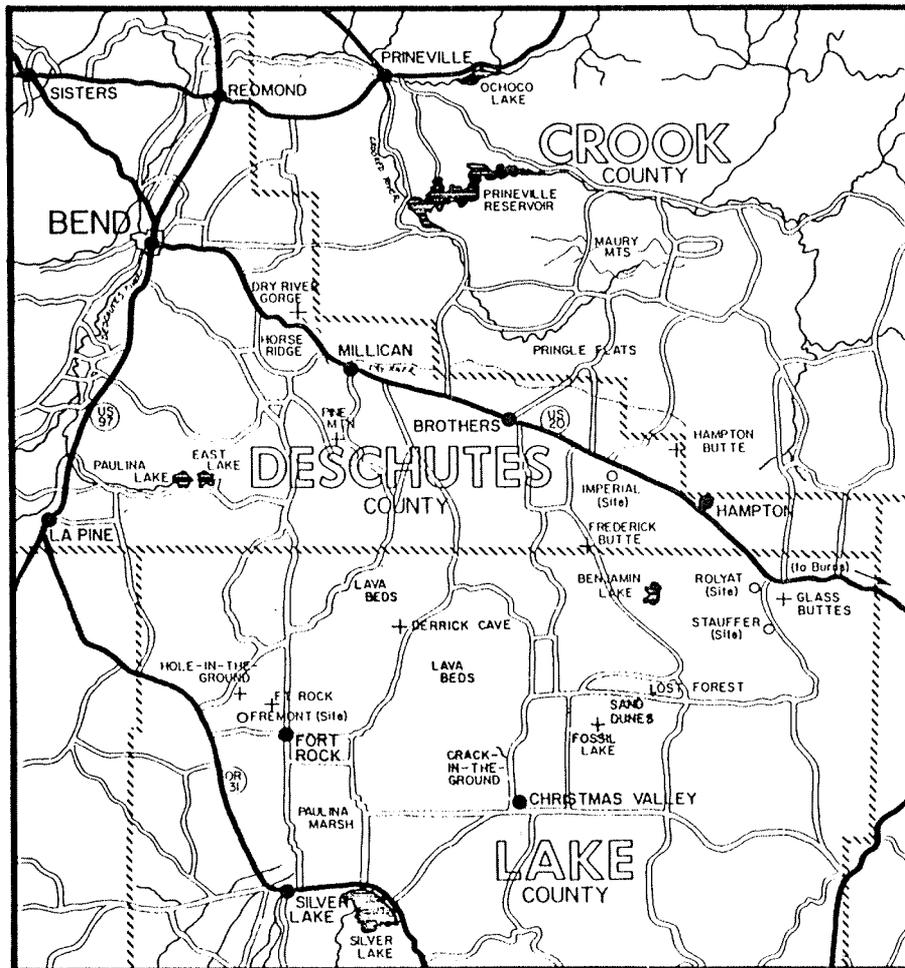
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY HOMESTEADING ERA

Human history is not so much a compilation of events which meet a predetermined criteria, but rather a documentation of choices and decisions made by individuals within a given set of circumstances, possibilities, and constraints. The relationship between human activity and the natural environment was



State of Oregon (Allen, 1987)

especially critical in the American west where the sheer space of the region influenced the patterns of settlement. Coupled to this vastness where other factors such as geographical features, the political and social conditions, and the



The High Desert Homesteading Area (Hatton, 1977)

relationship previous human beings had with the region. Each factor, condition, or relationship had an impact on the attempt to put the homestead lands into an agricultural use. Eventually, the attempt proved to be unsuccessful. While the development of other areas surrounding the region were taking place over a forty year period, the Lost Creek Valley was settled and then nearly abandoned within the span of a decade by the people attempting to farm. The settlement of the entire region occurred between 1905 and 1915, at the same time that tens of thousands of people were moving into other areas of the arid west, including much of the Great Basin and the Northern Plains. However, in this region, as in others, these people were not the first to use the land as short-term occupants.

The Earliest Occupants

While archaeological evidence is sparse, various groups of hunters and gatherers apparently occupied the area thirteen centuries ago. Their occupancy of the region during cool and moist conditions was abandoned when the weather cycled into hot and arid periods. (Cressman, 1942). Little evidence remains of the types or duration of occupancy from the time that the current climatic conditions were established, two thousand years ago, until the first whites entered the area in the early part of the nineteenth century. Within the past two centuries, the Lost Creek Valley area was part of the territory ranged by the Northwest Paiutes, whose homelands included the western part of The Great Basin, Southeastern Oregon, Northeastern California, Southern Idaho, and Northern Nevada. Although there is little agreement among anthropologists on what other tribes may have occupied what territories in Eastern Oregon, the Lost Creek Valley area probably served as both a hunting and temporary camping ground rather than as a permanent settlement site. It is also likely that these tribes shaped arrowheads

and other implements from the obsidian found in abundance in the valley. Because of their nomadic lifestyle, possessions were limited to those items which could be easily transported from place to place. The immigrants that occupied the area later were under similar constraints.

Most of the homesteaders arrived with little more than hope, determination, and whatever equipment they could load on a wagon or pay to have shipped from their previous homes. Whether their final destination was the Lost Creek Valley, or one of numerous other homestead sites, these people were confronted with the desert-like qualities of Central Oregon.

The Desert

The Oregon Desert, the High Desert, and The High Lava Plains are all terms used to define the same geographic area. Most broadly defined, it comprises the area East of the cascades and South of the Blue Mountains. More narrowly, in the context of the homesteading era, the terms refer to a roughly triangular upland area, with an average elevation of 4,500 feet, bounded on the west by the Cascade Mountains, on the East by the Maury Mountains and Sagehen Hills, and on the South by a series of scarps and valleys (Dicken and Dicken, 1979). At the top of the triangle is the town of Redmond; its easternmost point is near Burns; and the Fort Rock-Christmas Lake Valley forms its lower point. The desert like environment is created by the Cascades, which block the rain-bearing storms generated in the Pacific Ocean. The Cascades mountainous barrier is the reason that the Willamette Valley averages forty inches of precipitation per year, while the eastern part of the state receives less than half that amount, and the high desert less than ten inches per year.

The Lost Creek Valley, is located on the northern edge of the Oregon desert, which is also the northern boundary of the Great Basin. As such, this area shares the Basin's characteristic aridity, extremes of temperature, loose porous soil, and internal drainage (Brogan,1964). It is not a valley in the geological sense of having been formed by the alluvial action of a stream. Instead, it was created by the shoulders of the volcanos and cinder cones which surround the area. This geologic activity took place after the Columbia River lava flow halted it's movement short of the Basin and Range province on the south. The result was the formation of a shallow depression with an average elevation of 4,500 feet, just slightly below that of the surrounding area. The volcanic activity that created the valley in ancient geologic times has left its mark. The landscape consists of cinder cones, obsidian formations, eroded craters, and outcroppings of lava. The most prominent features of the volcanic activity are; the Glass Buttes, to the northeast of the valley; Wagontire Mountain, to the south boundary; and, Stauffer Rim, a lava outcropping, on the western edge. The gentle two mile slope into the valley begins on the North and East from shoulders of Glass Buttes at approximately 4,800 feet. A similar slope to the south rises to the same elevation, centering around Wild Horse Butte. To the west, Stauffer Rim poses an abrupt transition from the valley floor, as the elevation changes from 4,500 feet to 4,900 feet in less than 1,000 feet. Because the region is relatively remote, with limited access, similar routes and means were used by the homesteaders who arrived in the Lost Creek Valley.

Arriving On The Desert

Most of the homesteaders arrived in the Lost Creek Valley from their previous homes in the East or the Midwest by riding the Great Northern or

Northern Pacific as far as Spokane or the Dalles, and then traveled to Shaniko or Madras via the Columbia Southern, or after 1911, to Bend on the Oregon Trunk Railroad. The rest of the journey was made by stage to Hampton Station or by wagon to the homestead sites. Roy Stauffer recalls how his family immigrated from the Midwest to the Oregon desert.

Charles Albert Stauffer (C.J.) came from Tekamah, Nebraska to the Oregon high desert by train to Portland, Oregon then by stage, in 1910. This was in the spring of the year.

C.J. stayed with Uncle Horace and Aunt Addie Brookings through the summer. The Brookings already had a homestead across the present highway from Hampton, Oregon.

C.J. returned to Nebraska in the fall of 1910 then came again to the desert the next spring. He took a desert claim, 160 acres.

In the spring of 1911, Page, Roy, Fred and Ted loaded two freight cars with seven head horses, a plow, harrow, other farm equipment and household goods. Then they loaded their Grandpa Brookings' car, a high wheeled, rubber tired, four passenger one into the freight car. A railroad worker came through and made them take it out, saying it would blow up the train.

The four boys, Mary, Elizabeth, Ida Mae (Sandra) their mother, Mae, Grandpa Brookings, and two other families, Ben Kessler and Bert Breed families, came by train to Madras. Page and Roy traveled in the freight car to take care of the horses. The rest of the Stauffer family and grandpa Brookings were in the passenger car.

They shipped two or three wagons, so loaded them at Madras. They stayed two days at Madras and put bows covered with canvas across the wagons.

It took about five days to arrive at the Stauffer homestead. The last night on the trip was spent at Uncle Horace and Aunt Addie's. They slept in the covered wagons. It was about 18 miles from the Brookings' home to the Stauffer home (Stauffer, 1985:pp.1,2).

While C.J. Stauffer had filed on his claim before moving to the desert, other people arrived in the Lost Creek Valley hoping to find suitable tracts. The inexperience of most of the newcomers made them uncertain of their own abilities to judge the suitability of land for agriculture. Even those who had some previous knowledge of farming may have been hesitant to rely upon that knowledge when confronted with the desert landscape. Thus "locating" settlers on government lands became a thriving business.

While no evidence exists suggesting that this locating practice was utilized by the Lost Creek Valley homesteaders, locators advertised in local newspapers, hoping to attract the attention of homeseekers who had not yet found a piece of land upon which to file. These locators represented themselves as familiar with the homestead areas and offered their expertise to landseekers looking for a good piece of land on which to file a claim for fees ranging from \$30.00 to \$300.00 (Brogan, 1964).

Compelled by cheap land and high wheat prices, these twentieth-century homesteaders attempted to extend the agricultural frontier to its full limit (Bowman, 1931). The scope of this effort was monumental. Nationally, more land was taken up under various laws governing the disposition of the public domain after 1900 than in the previous forty years (Shannon, 1936). Within the Lost Creek Valley area, 95 percent of the land was in the public domain prior to 1910. By 1915, over 90 percent of it had been claimed under one or another of the homesteaders laws. The homestead migration occurred in essentially two stages. The first, between 1905 and 1909, involved primarily desert land entries (DLE) and attempts at irrigation; the second, from 1910 through 1920, was prompted by the passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act of February 12, 1909, and provided for 320 acre

homestead entries (HE) and cash entries (CE). The Lost Creek Valley, generally bounded by township 24 South, Range 22 East, Willamette Meridian, was populated during the latter phase. As evidenced by the original entry documents, of the 74 parcels claimed between 1910 and 1920, 13 were desert land entries, 5 were cash entries, and the remaining 56 were homestead entries (General Land Office, T24S, R22E, W.M.).

The Enlarged Homestead Act

The enlarged homestead act allowed an entryman to take up to 320 acres of public domain land designated by the Secretary of the Interior as "nonmineral, nonirrigable, and unappropriated surveyed public lands which do not contain merchantable timber "(Peffer, 1951:147). The law thus excluded entry on lands that could be obtained under any of the existing land disposition laws. There were both advantages and disadvantages to the new law from the point of view of the homesteaders. On the one hand, it doubled the amount of acreage permitted under the original Homestead Act of 1862 and removed the burden of irrigation. However, it did require five years residence on the land instead of the usual three years, along with a requirement to cultivate at least one-eighth of the holding within three years.

In Oregon, most of the lands opened to entry under the Enlarged Homestead Act were in the central desert. Omitted were lands in the forest reserves and land on which potential irrigation projects could be attempted (Whistler and Lewis, 1915).

The opening of the public lands in Oregon under the new Homestead Law was well publicized. Newspapers carried announcements of the openings, and the General Land Office published maps showing exactly what lands were eligible for entry. One newspaper of the time stated; "The land is nearly free from rocks. It needs only a plow to be transformed into a valley dotted with farms."(Bend Bulletin, 1909). Railroads with interests in central Oregon also boosted the area. In addition to these sources of information there was the informal and unofficial promotion of Central Oregon by people who came to the area early on and who wrote or spoke enthusiastically to relatives and friends about the potential of the desert (Allen, 1987).

The response to the opening of the land in Central Oregon under the Enlarged Homestead Act created the desired effect. By the end of 1910, 25 homestead entries had been filed in the Lost Creek Valley. Although people had apparently been attracted to the desert because of publicity surrounding the Enlarged Homestead Act, some of them did not take up 320-acre claims, preferring instead to file on regular 160-acre homesteads. In 1910, for example, 7 of the 25 entries were for 160-acres (General Land Office, T24S, R22E, W.M.).

There were obvious advantages to the 160-acre claims. The residence requirement was shorter, and the claim could be commuted and title gained by paying \$1.25 per acre after fourteen months. An Enlarged Homestead claim, however, could be commuted only after five full years of residence. However, in 1912, the residence requirement for larger homesteads was reduced from five to three years. In addition, an entryman was allowed five months absence each year from his claim and could commute, or buy, the entry after fourteen months continuous residence. In 1913, 22 enlarged entries were filed while only 2 160-acre

entries were claimed (General Land Office, T24S, R22E, W.M.). Also, people who had already claimed 160-acre tracts could also file for an additional 160-acres, in order to bring their total holdings up to the 320 acres to which they were entitled under the law (Gates, 1977).

The Other Incentives

Besides the inexpensive land, one other lure for filing an entry in the desert at this time was the possibility that the Oregon Eastern Railroad would soon be built, using a portion of the grade along the stage road, now U.S. 20, just north of the Lost Creek Valley. Incorporated in 1905 as a subsidiary of the Union Pacific, the Oregon Eastern projected a line from Vale, the terminus of the Oregon Short Line, to the Natron cutoff on the eastern slope of the Cascades. By January of 1906, the Oregon Eastern was reportedly ready "to start work east from the Natron area" (Whistler and Lewis, 1915:pp.18,80). In addition to the people who filed claims near the proposed railroad, a few took up land in townships through which the projected route was to pass. Although the railroad was never built, and the rights-of-way relinquished in the late 1920's, people who filed claims along its proposed route, as well as those who acquired and developed commercial property near the Lost Creek Valley, may have done so on the strength of the promise of growth offered by railroad construction and operation. Randall Howard's comment regarding the attractiveness of locating close to the proposed line reinforces the point; "Settlers, in their haste to reach Central Oregon ahead of the railway and to get a better choice from the open Government Lands, took a chance, freighted their goods a hundred or two miles to the interior, built their homesteaders' cabins and waited" (Howard, 1910:512). Notwithstanding the

promise of rail transport, the Lost Creek Valley settlers were more likely to have chosen the area due to its valley-like qualities.

The People

While previous migrations contained homogeneous groups, including religious, occupational, and demographic, this final pioneering attempt suggests no common purpose other than homesteading, land acquisition, or adventure. The people who began settling the desert in 1910 arrived from all over. A good many of the homesteaders came from within the Pacific Northwest, some from the western interior valleys such as the Willamette, others from the wheat-growing regions of southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon. Perhaps half of them were originally from midwestern, plains, or southern border states. A few may have come from the East Coast. In addition to native-born Americans, there were also foreign-born individuals who made up perhaps as much as 10 percent of the area's population.

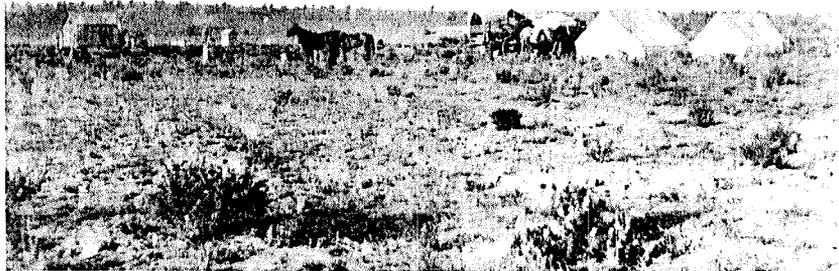
Besides the agriculturally experienced pioneers who had taken up and then relinquished homesteads elsewhere, the Oregon desert also attracted a number of inexperienced farmers. For the most part, this latter group were people from urban centers, such as Portland and Seattle. Many had worked for wages or salaries before taking up homestead claims and were usually the first to admit defeat and leave the area (Allen, 1987). The homesteaders arrived on the desert as single individuals, as couples, and in extended family units. The latter type often filed on adjoining claims, building their houses adjacent to the line between them. This practice was apparently a common one, with one of the houses used for the cooking and living space, and the other for sleeping (Anderson, 1961). In

fact, the general land office tract books, in which homestead entries were recorded, indicate the same surnames on many individual claims.

Individuals who were compelled to homestead were constantly advised in government publications and promotional literature to bring sufficient capital with them to make the initial outlay for stock, equipment, seed, and building materials, as well as enough cash to cover living expenses until the homestead could begin producing an income-earning crop. However, these publications were based upon previous migrations to the Midwest, where the conditions necessary for making a life were much different. The Oregon Voter sounded a typical warning, advising that "the homesteader should have enough money to last him two or three years until his place is in producing condition "(Oregon Voter, 1916:285). The paper's editor suggested between \$1,000.00 and \$2,000.00 as a minimum. How much most of the homesteaders in the Lost Creek Valley actually brought with them is unknown. It is likely that the majority arrived with very little, as the land itself was virtually free, and individuals with a generous amount of capital would just as likely find more suitable land for purchase in other locations. For the most part, the land offered by the government in the Oregon desert was among the least desirable of all the land remaining in the public domain at the time. Individuals willing to homestead the area may have had no other alternative.

Setting Up On The Homestead Entry

Once his claim was filed, the first tasks facing the homesteader were to construct a dwelling and to secure an adequate supply of water. The law allowed a grace period of up to six months before an entryman had to take up residence on his claim. Some people used this time to build their houses before moving



Living in tents while building the house

(Stauffer Family Collection)

themselves and their families onto the homestead site. Others waited until the last minute to move onto their land and met their immediate needs for shelter by pitching large tents until permanent dwellings could be built. Others simply made do with what shelter was available before their houses were built, such as living with other homesteaders.

When the homesteaders were ready to build, they discovered that natural building materials were scarce on the desert. Juniper, although plentiful, was generally too small, too hard, and too gnarled to produce logs suitable for construction. Most of the pine and tamarack growing on the adjacent foothills was either protected in forest reserve land or located too far from building sites to be easily transported.

While most of the homesteaders used logs for only the foundation sills, the remainder of their building needs were supplied by sawmills. At the time, the closest mill to Lost Creek Valley was located at Maury Mountain, a four to five day round trip. When the Stauffer house was ready to build, Roy Stauffer recalls, "C.J. and Roy went to Maury Mountain in two wagons to buy lumber for a house"(Stauffer, 1985:pp. 1,2).

The houses the homesteaders built were small and of a simple design, of box frame construction with board and batten, or occasionally, shiplap exteriors (Beckman, 1982). These "box houses", as the homesteaders called them, were erected over foundations of stone or, more commonly, "of two logs, or more, laid on either side of a pit (used as a root cellar) with the planking nailed to the logs" (Beckman, 1982). The roofing for the houses was mostly of wood shingles.

The houses varied in size, representing a balance between the amount of living space needed and the amount of money available for sawn lumber. The most common sizes ranged from 10 x 16 feet to 16 x 20 feet, and stood a story or a story-and-a-half high. The most common sizes were 12 x 14 and 12 x 16 with a few as large as 24 x 24. Most houses consisted of either one or two rooms, though three-and-four room houses were apparently not uncommon. Single-room houses were sometimes partitioned with curtains into living and sleeping areas, and lofts, used for sleeping and storage, were often constructed to create additional space. A house could also be enlarged by adding a room a lean-to-shed, or an ell onto the original structure. As Roy Stauffer remembers, "It was two stories, 24 x 12, and the boards run up and down. Then on the inside we tacked paper on, and we had a stove right in the middle of the building which we cooked on and used for heat. We all slept upstairs. Then my Dad built on another wing on

the house and had the post office in there." (Suburban Press, B:1, March 10, 1971). Some houses had exterior porches. Because painting the houses was rarely done, they took on the browns and grays of the landscape as they weathered.

The interior of the dwellings were usually double-boarded or sealed with dressed lumber. However, the construction methods and the materials used in most homes provided only minimum protection from the elements. In order to insulate as well as decorate the inside of their houses, the homesteaders often finished the interior walls with a covering of some kind, including purchased wallpaper, "blue building felt", or newspaper. Household furnishing were usually sparse and simple because the homesteaders often sold most of their belongings prior to departing for the desert. Beds were simply rough frames or flat shelves, covered with straw ticks for mattresses. Aside from the houses themselves, the homesteaders constructed varying numbers of out buildings of log, pole, or lumber construction. At a minimum, the homesteader built a privy, as well as a barn for whatever livestock he owned. Eventually, he might add stables, chicken houses, or other animal pens as required.

While constructing buildings to shelter themselves and their animals, the homesteaders also had to establish an adequate and dependable water supply. Some obtained water on a temporary basis by hauling it in barrels from a nearby well until their own supply was secured. Most homesteaders dug wells themselves or with the help of neighbors. The dug wells measured from three to six feet square or round at the top and were "cribbed" by boards, posts, flat rocks, or cement. Frames were built over them that held rope pulleys, or in some cases, a windlass was used. Not everyone who dug wells found water, because the groundwater depth varied between twenty-five to one-hundred feet, depending

on the location and on current weather patterns. A few people even failed to find it on their land before gaining title to their claims.

Most early wells were dug rather than drilled because of the prohibitive cost of well drilling equipment. However, the advantage of drilled wells was their greater depth, and hence the ability to reach a water table capable of producing and adequate water supply.

Aridity was the critical element in the valley's environment. That is not to say there was no water present, but rather its presence was both limited and subject to fluctuation. There was no naturally occurring, continuous surface water. The valley contains numerous shallow lake beds and sinks that periodically filled with runoff from the surrounding hills. As dry years followed wet ones, these lakes and sinks dry up. For much of the twentieth century, these depressions in the land have been dry.



Evidence of a windmill at an abandoned homestead
(Stauffer Family Collection)

The reason there is no water on the surface is because so little falls and the soils are extremely porous. Precipitation in the valley averages about nine inches per year. Most of that amount falls as snow in the winter with some rain in the late spring (Waring, 1908). However, the annual amount of precipitation in the valley is not the critical issue. The cycles of wet and dry years that may bring two inches of rain one year and fifteen inches the next make reliable moisture predictions virtually impossible.

To insure a steady flow of well water for domestic use, livestock, and irrigation, many homesteaders installed windmills. However there is some dispute about the amount of wind on the desert and the effectiveness of the windmill. Visitors to the area claimed that windmills were only a qualified success, for during hot, dry periods in which water was most needed, there was little or no breeze (Waring, 1908). Government irrigation engineers noted in 1915 that one of the chief complaints of farmers was a lack of wind. Although considerable at times, the wind could not be relied upon as a steady source of power.

Cultivating The Desert

Once the homesteaders had secured shelter and water for themselves and their families, they got down to the business of farming or ranching. The initial step was to fence their land in anticipation of clearing, plowing, and planting. Fortunately, juniper, while unsuitable for other building purposes, made excellent fence posts as it is extremely hard and durable. The gnarly posts were strung with either two or three strands of barbed wire. Not only was fencing required by the homestead law, it was also necessary to protect field crops from cattle and horses turned out on the desert to graze.

After the land was fenced, the task of clearing it was begun. The native vegetation consisted of a dozen species of grasses, including bunchgrass and wild rye, various wildflowers, rabbitbrush, wolley sage, greasewood, and sagebrush. The sage was the most difficult to remove. One method was to set fire to it and burn it off. However, if the fire was not hot enough, vegetation remained which had to be removed. A second means was to dig or "grub" the sagebrush out with a hoe. Most people chose this latter method as a more dependable, if slower, way to clear their fields. Once removed from the fields, sage was cut up and burned as firewood. Most of the homesteaders expected to raise wheat by dry farming. Once their fields were cleared, they followed the techniques of that method; plowing, harrowing after each rain to create a dust mulch, and summer fallowing their fields to conserve winter moisture. Their knowledge of these techniques came from word-of-mouth advice and from published sources, including Hardy Campbell's Scientific Farming. The homesteaders paid particular attention to fallowing, regarding it as a "process necessary to produce paying crops" (Beckman, 1982). The homesteaders planted grain crops, including wheat, barley, oats, and rye. However, due to the climate variables, especially drought and frost, the success rate was minimal.

The high elevation of the valley keeps the temperature relatively moderate. The summers are mild, with daytime temperatures in the eighties. In the winter, temperatures during the day average in the thirties and forties (Allen, 1987). The combination of high elevation and low humidity, however, means differences of twenty degrees or more between day and night temperatures, with occasional sharp rises and drops in air temperatures over short periods of time.

The high elevation also creates erratic frost patterns, particularly in the open flats on the valley floor, where severe frost can occur almost any time during the year. Such frosts can be as devastating to crops as is drought, although hardier crops, such as rye, may survive with retarded growth. The possibility of frost year round makes the length of the growing season highly variable. While the average frost-free season is seventy-four days, this figure can be as misleading as the annual precipitation figures. Frost-free season averages cannot predict years in which spring and autumn frosts succeed each other within a few days in late July and early August, nor years with a growing season of 150 days (Castle and Dwyer, 1956). These climate conditions were unknown to the homesteaders who began arriving after the turn of the century, because systematic weather records were not kept for the area until 1909 (U. S. Weather Bureau, 1910). What made the area seem feasible for agriculture was its proximity to the Malhuer and Harney Lakes, where cattle, sheep, and horse ranching had been successfully pursued since the early 1870's.



Harvesting the rye crop
(Stauffer Family Collection)

Edward Gray
190 E. 24 #1
Eugene, OR 97405

After their hopes for raising wheat had been severely diminished most homesteaders relied almost entirely on rye. Rye became the most common crop in the valley because of its resistance to frost and drought. If the grain did not head out, it would still produce a crop of hay or could be used for pasture. By 1913, the majority of the cultivated land in the Lost Creek Valley was sown in rye.

Food For The Family

While the homesteaders were primarily engaged in producing a cash crop, rather than subsistence farming, they also spent a good deal of energy raising foodstuffs. Because their cash supply was limited, the long trip to Bend to purchase supplies could only be undertaken twice a year, and the purchased goods limited to only the necessities. Almost all of the homesteaders attempted to raise vegetable gardens, and usually cleared just enough land in the first year for that purpose. The size of the garden depended on the size and the energy level of the family. The plots were also enclosed with extra fencing to keep out the livestock and jackrabbits. The homesteaders had their greatest success with weather-resistant crops such as cabbages, rutabagas, and turnips, although some raised peas, radishes, and onions as well. People also tried raising potatoes, but often lost them to frost. The homesteaders also provided for their fresh food needs by keeping hogs, cows, and chickens. There was relatively little that the desert offered the homesteader in terms of natural foods, such as fruits, nuts, berries, or herbs. However, wild game, particularly deer, antelope, and jackrabbits, offered sources of fresh meat. The other wildlife of the area, including squirrels, mice, gophers, skunks, foxes, badgers, bobcats, and coyotes, were mostly a tolerated nuisance.

The Homestead Supply Needs

For the most part, the high desert homesteaders had to rely for food on what they could raise themselves. Everything else, including equipment, clothing, hardware, and building materials, had to come from outside the Lost Creek Valley. Supplies were usually secured on annual or semi-annual trips to Bends, an all day ride in a wagon, one way. The homesteaders laid in large supplies of staples, nonperishable foods, such as beans, rice, cornmeal, and dried fruits. The homesteaders also made heavy use of mail orders. Mail order catalogs were standard articles in the homes, and items such as seeds, dry goods, and hardware were ordered from them.

A Sense Of Community

The social and economic institutions that appeared on the desert in the aftermath of the homesteading push were natural outgrowths of the settlement activity. The earliest evidence of social organization was the establishment of post offices and schools. While the Lost Creek Valley remained fairly modest regarding these social organizations, other homestead areas established churches, community centers, and a few became commercial centers.

The Lost Creek Valley, like other small communities, had its post office maintained in one of the settlers' homes. When it came time to secure a name for the post office, it was discovered that Lost Creek was already taken. Therefore, to avoid causing a duplication of post office names, the valley residents chose to name their post office Stauffer, after the person in who's house the mail was being handled. The post office at Stauffer, Oregon was opened on September 13, 1913, and mail was picked-up and delivered once a week (McArthur, 1982).

The isolation of the valley also meant that a school was required, as families with children moved in. The minimum number of children needed to open a school was six. Newly organized schools were often held in homesteaders cabins until schoolhouses could be built. Although the schools were often named after the nearest post office, they were not always located in proximity to them because, "according to law, children living more than three miles from school did not need to attend school" (Allen, 1987). For that reason, school were so located that no child needed to travel more than three miles. Like most of the schoolhouses of the time, Stauffer was the name of the school in the Lost Creek Valley.

The schoolhouse was spartan on the inside, with a shiplap exterior. It served the valley children beginning in 1913. Students walked to school or rode horseback. During very cold weather, some children came to school with their feet wrapped in burlap to protect them from freezing (Jetter, 1969). The pupils also had responsibilities for maintaining the school and performing certain chores, such as building the fire in the school stove in the winter and hauling water year around. The instructors were most often homesteaders themselves, such as Mary Stauffer and Alice Brookings, who both taught at the school in the Lost Creek Valley. The school also served as a gathering point for other social occasions. School programs, attended by the entire community, were scheduled throughout the year to celebrate such occasions as Thanksgiving, Christmas and Washington's Birthday (Allen, 1987). On Decoration Day (Memorial Day) and the Fourth of July, the homesteaders staged pageants, organized community picnics, and held games and races.

In addition to organized community events, the homesteaders also made family outings for picnics, to hunt fowl or deer, to search for arrowheads or



Decoration Day Celebration
(Stauffer Family Collection)

other artifacts, or gathered in private homes in the evenings to play cards, or checkers, or to sing and dance. These activities all helped fulfill the homesteaders' need for fellowship and maintain a sense of community.

The Ending Begins

Throughout the homesteading period, there was constant movement in and out of the area, including the Lost Creek Valley. Homeseekers would come to look the country over and leave again, perhaps to return later as homesteaders. Other families arrived to take up residence on their claims, while other new arrivals were pulling out, finding the area and homestead life not to their liking. Other individuals were coming in and buying relinquished or patented lands while some were commuting between their homesteads and jobs for wages. Some entrymen were giving up their claims before acquiring title and relinquishing them to neighbors or newcomers; some proving up and moving on; while others,

after years of struggle, finally giving up and abandoning their land, patented or unpatented, to be taken over by those remaining or to revert to the government.

By 1916, the tide had turned, and the enthusiasm that had carried people onto the desert began to fade. Weather conditions worsened and economic opportunities beckoned the homesteader elsewhere. Although talk of a railroad in northern Lake County continued to grow stronger, the railroad was to remain only talk. A more solid topic of discussion among residents in 1916 was the opening of sawmills in Bend, propelled by the war-induced boom in the timber industry.

The mills offered employment for settlers on the desert who were tired of their difficult existence, and many individuals left their claims in the Lost Creek Valley for wages. As settlers from the entire high desert area began relocating to Bend, the homesteading experience was coming to an end.

The Final Years

The greatest numbers of homestead entries in the Lost Creek Valley in a single year was recorded in 1910, when 22 claims were filed. By 1913, the total number of filed claims was 52, well over half of the 74 claims that were filed between 1910 and 1920. After 1913, the number of people entering the valley began to decline. At the same time, the residence requirement on enlarged homesteads was reduced from five to three years, accelerating the process of perfecting land titles. Since the government did not require an entryman to live on his claim after he had gained title to it, there was little incentive to stay in the harsh environment of the high desert. By 1916, only three or four families remained in the Lost Creek Valley, and a declining population became the established trend throughout the homesteading area.

Because they had little or no reserves to sustain them through lean years, many of the homesteaders began leaving between 1913 and 1916, which was the beginning of a dry period as well. Even those who managed to sustain themselves until they had gained title to their land were by no means much better situated economically. The value of their improvements, equipment and moveable property ranged from \$300.00 to \$2,500.00, with the average homesteader worth little more than \$1,000.00. "When my Dad quit he sold out to a fellow by the name of Forbes for a thousand dollars. I think he sold the horses, which we had about 75 head, he sold the horses and the land both for one thousand dollars", recalls the son of one of the homesteaders of the Lost Creek Valley (Suburban Press, B:1, March 10, 1971). Compared to other capital investments on the fringes of the desert, the assets of the homesteaders' were considered modest at best.

Motivations For Leaving

A series of factors, both internal and external, contributed to the demise of homesteading in The Lost Creek Valley. One of the most influential was the weather. The initial years of homesteading coincided with a cycle of relatively wet years through 1916. During these years, average annual rainfall was about nine and one-half inches (Burrier, 1936). Not only was the average precipitation relatively high during the homesteading period, it was also fairly evenly distributed from one year to the next, varying less than two inches from the average between 1909 and 1916 (Antevs, 1938). In more humid regions, such deviations would be irrelevant. However, in an area of sparse rainfall, in which a minimum of nine inches is needed to make crop, a variation of two inches in either direction is not a matter of a smaller versus a larger crop yield. Indeed, when precipitation falls below the minimum amount needed, it means having no crop at all.

Because rainfall levels were at or slightly above the critical amount almost every year between 1909 and 1916, the homesteaders had a reasonable chance to make their crops during the period they were trying to prove up on their claims.

Although not as stable as the rainfall patterns, the length of the growing seasons were also generally favorable during the same years. The shortest growing season occurred in 1909, with just thirty-nine frost-free days. In contrast, in both 1911 and 1912 the growing seasons were over one-hundred days long. And in 1914, it was nearly one-hundred days long (Castle and Dwyer, 1956).

Residents, who lived on the desert prior to the arrival of the homesteaders, recognized that these relatively wet and mild conditions were a departure from the norm. Some explained the change as a response to the introduction of agriculture onto the desert. Similar beliefs about weather changing in conjunction with farming activity were reported throughout the arid and semi-arid West, both before and after the turn of the century. Perhaps the best-known articulation of this belief was the "rain follows plow" theory, a theory that compelled successive migrations of settlers on the Great Plains for almost thirty years (Smith, 1947). The underlying principal was that human will could alter natural forces which were obstructing human fulfillment, including farming on the high desert. If the purpose is agriculture, then human activity on the land, in the form of cultivation, can change climatic conditions. In most of the homestead settlements, like The Lost Creek Valley, this belief was difficult to dispel, because weather records had not been kept prior to the homesteaders moving in. Therefore, there was no objective means of comparing data or perceptions of changing precipitation amounts. And, because there had been no agricultural activity in the area

before the homesteaders arrival, the impact of their activities on frost patterns could not be judged either.

Also working to the homesteaders' benefit, in addition to favorable weather conditions, was the fact that they were planting and harvesting crops in previously untilled soil, which may have accounted for the reported productivity of the land during that period (Burrier, 1936). Current dry farming techniques show that land which lies fallow over a season rebuilds not only moisture but also fertility. Therefore, previously untilled land "would have been misleadingly productive at first." (Allen, 1987). Only after several crops did the alkalinity of the soil manifest itself. Extensive cultivation and, in particular, irrigation only increased the problem by drawing salts to the surface.

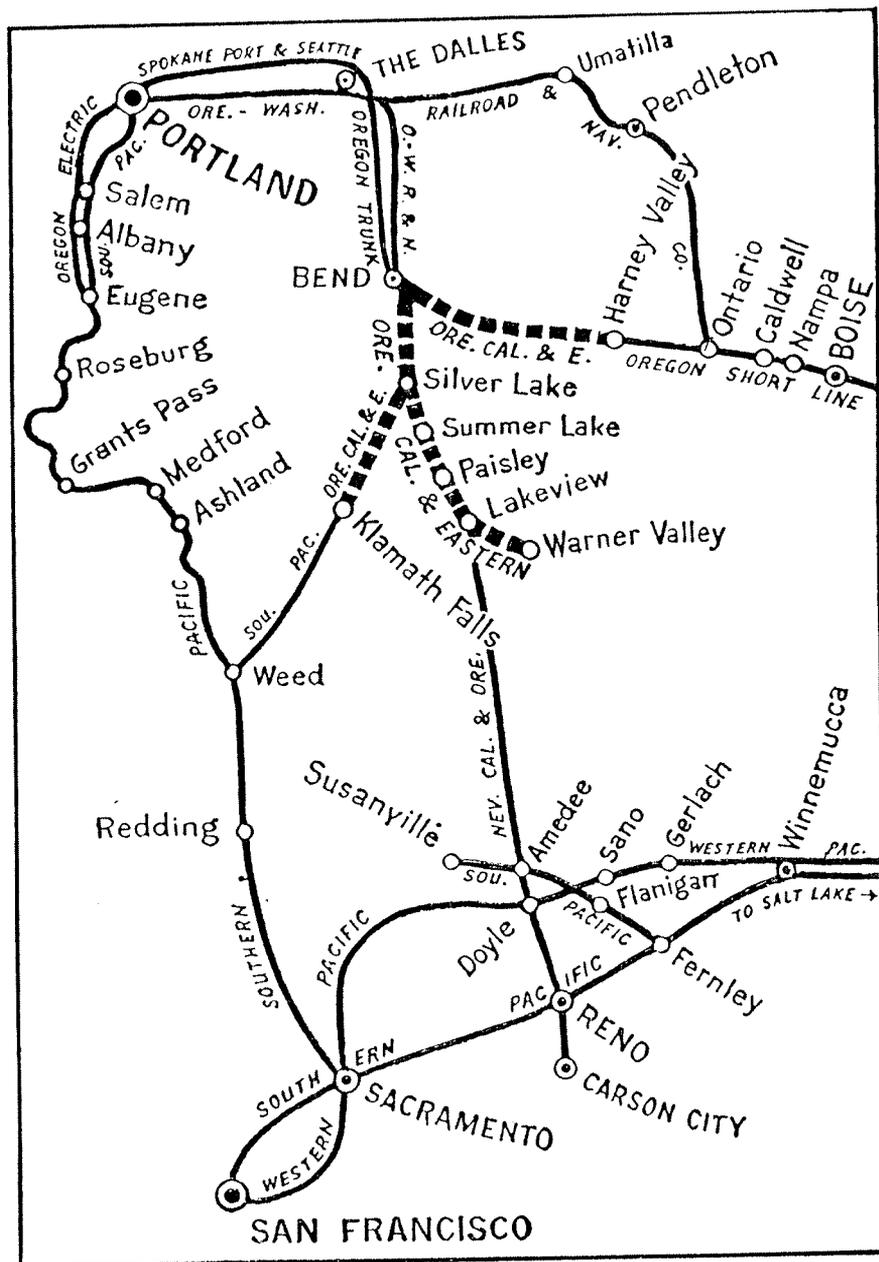
By 1916, the weather had begun cycling out of a wet, mild period into a dryer, harsher one. In 1917, annual rainfall diminished from an average of nine and one-half inches for the preceding five years to just four and one-half inches. The following year, 1918, approximately six inches fell. After two years of drought, the sinks and lake beds in the area dried up and the water in the wells began to recede. The adverse weather, however, was not the only issue the homesteaders' were trying to cope with.

Economic forces, as much as natural forces also affected the homesteaders' ability to succeed. One economic factor, the promise that railroads would be built through the area, failed to materialize. In 1916, the closest railroad was the Oregon Trunk in Bend, eighty miles away. The completion of that line from The Dalles to Bend in 1911 had cut the distance from The Lost Creek Valley to a railhead considerably, and it also raised hopes for the construction of The Oregon Eastern Railroad, which would pass just north of the Valley. In 1910, the holdings of the

Oregon Eastern were transferred to the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company, a subsidiary of The Union Pacific. That company resurveyed the route in 1913 and 1914 (Hatton, 1982). However, by 1916, the Oregon-Washington Line had been completed only as far west as Vale, with no apparent plans to extend it into northern Lake County.

The failure of the Oregon Eastern and another proposed railroad in the southern end of Lake County, the Oregon, California, and Eastern, to become reality was due largely to the federal governments' anti-monopoly suit to separate the Union Pacific and the Southern Pacific, which owned interests in each of the proposed lines. And, it was also during this period that the American railroad industry realized that it had overextended itself, and it began to evaluate new rail lines with a critical eye. They were especially reluctant to extend lines into new territory by 1915 because of developing competition from commercial trucking and bus lines. Railroad growth slowed dramatically after 1915, particularly in the western United States. World War I temporarily halted all railroad expansion. The proposed lines through northern Lake County were two among dozens of lines throughout the west that were never completed. Even when commercial motorized freight vehicles were introduced into the area, transportation remained a problem, for the roads were unimproved until the early 1930's.

In addition to the preceding forces, another motivation was pulling the homesteaders' off their land. After the railroad reached Bend, in 1911, the vast timber resources of the eastern slopes of the Cascades could be harvested for market. By 1916, at least two sawmills were in operation. By 1918, six sawmills were operating. The news of Bend's booming economy and of the jobs available there spread rapidly to the homesteaders in the desert lands to the east and



Fort Rock Times, November 11, 1915

southeast. Even though wartime demand escalated wheat prices, the possibility of making a steady income was appealing to a good many homesteaders still trying to make a living off the land.

Leaving

The coincidence of both the natural and economic adverse conditions on the homesteaders, produced a general abandonment of The Lost Creek Valley, as well as in other homestead communities. Between 1916 and 1920, the majority of the population had selected other locations, and moved away. Some people left their claims before acquiring title, while others left with patent in hand or sold to whomever would buy. Of the 74 original entry parcels filed on between 1910 and 1920 in The Lost Creek Valley, 41 were relinquished or cancelled. Less than half of the entrymen who had filed on homesteads during that decade gained title to their land. And those who were granted a patent, soon left the area. While some homesteaders had spent a full five or three years on the claims before acquiring title to them, others had chosen to commute their entries by paying the government \$1.25 per acre after fourteen months in lieu of remaining on the claim. About 7 percent of the initial homestead entries in The Lost Creek Valley were commuted.

As each family prepared to leave the land that had once given them hope for a brighter future, people sold as many of their belongings as they could. The necessities were packed and loaded onto wagons or into cars or pick-up trucks. What couldn't be packed or sold was left behind. By 1920, only a handful of people remained in The Lost Creek Valley. The homesteading experience had ended.

The Past Seventy Years

Since the early 1920's, little human activity has taken place in the Lost Creek Valley. Land not relinquished to the government was purchased by a handful of individuals who used the area for cattle grazing. In 1943, the military conducted maneuvers in the vicinity (Stauffer, 1985). In 1950, the post office at Stauffer was closed to Hampton on June 30th, and the census for that year indicated the population was four (McArthur, 1982). While the remains of a few homestead structures can still be seen, today the landscape is dominated by sagebrush; a view, perhaps, not unlike that first presented to the Lost Creek Valley settlers.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

Possible Motives For Homesteading

Because the homesteaders did not leave behind statements as to their intentions, only informed opinions can be proffered as to their initial reasons for moving to the desert. Like other settlers in other sections of the arid and semi-arid West, they were compelled by various motives. First, there were individuals who were genuinely interested in acquiring land to provide a living for themselves and their families. Some were inexperienced and had never farmed before, while others had farming experience. Many in the latter group had been successful in other places and came to the desert seeking additional land. Others, having failed elsewhere, were making a final attempt to be successful living on the land.

A second group was primarily comprised of individuals who wanted to gain title to the land as quickly as possible and then return to their previous home. Some may have been anticipating that the value of their land would increase, as development in the area proceeded, and that they could then sell their claim at a profit. Others may have simply wanted the security of land ownership, regardless of the property location. And, other individuals may have wanted to exercise their rights as citizens and acquire title to a parcel of the public domain. Those individuals who did not intend to remain on the desert may have used the commutation provision of the laws to minimize the time they spent there, because after a patent was gained, an entryman no longer was required to live on the land. The fact that 7 percent of The Lost Creek Valley entries were commuted, suggests this method may have been a motive for some. One such entryman in the Lost Creek Valley was J. R. Wiegall who owned a candy factory in Tacoma,

Washington. Wiegall's wife, son and daughter lived on the claim until a patent was issued (Stauffer, p.2, 1985).

Finally, for a few of the homesteaders without serious intentions, the activity may have been a simple adventure. It appears that at least some of the younger single men and women who filed claims regarded homesteading as an opportunity to exhibit their independence rather than viewing the experience as a long-term commitment.

One can only speculate from the evidence what each homesteader's motive was, because each entry represented a unique set of circumstances within which an individual's decision was made. Regardless of the varied reasons for homesteading on the desert, the decision to do so was made during the same time period and within the same set of historical circumstances. Therefore, the fact that so many people were involved in the homestead activity on the Oregon desert, suggests that the motives may have been created by those individuals, to fit the set of circumstances, possibilities, and constraints of the time.

A Reflection of Twentieth Century Homesteading.

The passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 took place in the aftermath of the panic of 1907, the first economic crisis since the 1893 depression. In 1908, the unemployment rate in the United States was over 7 percent. Coupled to these factors was the general acceptance that the frontier era, with free land, was coming to an end. The new land law immediately brought an enormous response, and almost any land would satisfy the landseekers. People who had never considered homesteading before, as well as those who had tried it, wanted to become entrymen, even though the lands opened under the Enlarged

Homestead Act were not the most attractive for agricultural purposes. Thus, a combination of factors compelled the early twentieth century homesteaders.

Besides the Enlarged Homestead Act and the economy, individuals perceived a diminishing supply of public land; prices for agricultural land and its products were on the increase; railroads were promoting the possibilities of successfully settling in the arid West, and, dry farming was becoming the "scientific method" of producing abundant crops where sparse or non-existent harvests had been experienced. The result of all this activity was that more than eighteen millions acres were filed upon in fiscal year 1909-10. That was the largest yearly aggregate of land entries in the history of The Homestead Law. And, in the years between 1898 and 1917, more land was homesteaded than in the preceding thirty years (100 million acres vs. 70 million acres) (Burrier, 1936).

Notwithstanding the economic influences which compelled people to try homesteading, there was, perhaps, an emotional influence compelling them as well. Homesteading had always been connected to the frontier as well as to free or inexpensive land, and land ownership was, and continues to be, a basic right preserved by the government. The sense that the frontier era was ending made the Enlarged Homestead act even more appealing, as individuals perceived this time as the final opportunity to participate in acquiring public domain land. Both farmers and non-farmers became caught up in the propaganda being published by the railroads and land companies, and to a certain extent, by their own sense of national pride.

Americans had been told since the mid-1890's that the frontier was closed. The Enlarged Homestead Act effectively reopened it, and many believed this was, in fact, the last opportunity to gain title to land by homesteading. Even the

conveniences offered by an industrializing, more urban America were not strong enough incentives for many people, who left behind paying jobs, manufactured goods and utility services, for life on the land (Badger, 1979).

Historically, opportunities for Americans had been in settling on the public domain and in creating new centers of culture and civilization, where none had existed before (Hunt, 1982). The homesteaders were not escaping the industrialization, but were indicating that the activity of starting over in a new location was still a practice inherent in the public spirit. Americans had been homesteading for generations, and they would continue to seek out such opportunities until the public domain was exhausted for that purpose. However, the traditional agricultural basis for economic opportunity was shifting to newer forms afforded by an industrial based economy. Perhaps the early twentieth century homesteaders thought of this as an opportunity to return to a more familiar way of making a life. On the other hand, they may have perceived themselves as the "new wave" of farmers, using the dry farming technique, thus keeping themselves current with the times in a traditional role. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, farming was still the traditional American way of life. The current attempts by individuals to realize the American dream of business ownership are not dissimilar to the agrarian past. However, unlike those "new wave" farmers, who had advice from limited and not entirely reliable sources, today's small business owners enjoy an abundance of information, and other types of support, to help insure success or diminish the chance of failure. The government points out the realities of small business ownership and operation, much like it tried to point out the difficulties of homesteading on the public domain. However, no experience of settling on the desert had been attempted, and the government assumed in its

publications that this area could be homesteaded using techniques successful in the Midwest. In addition to agencies like the Small Business Administration, there are currently incubator programs, small business development centers, and consulting groups of various types, to which any business owner can turn when he needs help. And, as individuals continue to begin business enterprises, they are doing so equipped with more than a good idea, a strong work ethic, and the latest technology. That is not to imply that new businesses do not fail, but rather, that there are more opportunities to seek assistance and advice to reduce the possibilities of failure. If the homesteaders also imagined success being a simple matter of applying the then current "scientific" farming techniques, they did so without the kind of network that is currently available to the small business enterprise.

In selecting the homesteading opportunity, these individuals were doing so during an economic and social transition. On one hand, they were continuing a traditional American enterprise, however, they were doing so when the very definitions of the American enterprise were changing. When americans began turning away from civilizing the frontier in the geographical sense, they were, at the same time, creating a new definition of pioneering in the industrial and technical sense. The new definition was innovation. The early twentieth century homesteaders were essentially attempting to duplicate the activities of their predecessors on the Great Plains. And, because the activity of homesteading had become perceived as no longer dangerous or risky, the individuals who pursued it may not have given the exercise the respect it deserved. Homesteading during this period still required the participants to plan ahead and expend vast amounts

of energy. As farming became a less common method of making a life, it also became increasingly associated with the agrarian and pioneering past.

Perhaps stating that early twentieth century homesteading attempts were ill advised is not entirely appropriate. It may not have been possible for the homesteaders to perceive the change to an industrial based economy as a lasting and permanent one. These individuals were not foolish nor without education. To perceive them as victims of the land promoters, the government, and the railroads would be a mistake.

This perception is certainly not an accurate view of the individuals who homesteaded the High Desert of Oregon in general, and The Lost Creek Valley in particular. The homesteaders were living in an age when Americans, as a society, were leaving their traditional agrarian heritage behind. They were, in fact, the last generation to experience an activity practiced by their forbearers, within the context of self-perceived innovators of a new agricultural frontier. While the current perception of this final pioneering venture may not be viewed as a successful effort, the early twentieth century homesteaders did close the frontier, as the industrial based economy became a reality. They were not victims of progress, but rather, one group of individuals who made choices within a given set of circumstances, possibilities, and constraints, in an attempt to succeed in a different manner.

The Future

While human activity is likely to continue on the High Desert, there appears to be a concern for how existing and potential occupancies will affect the land. Perhaps the homesteading experience assisted in calling to attention the need to be more sensitive to land use issues and the underlying economic

considerations associated with land use. One of the most influential forces in identifying appropriate land uses in this area, and throughout the State, is the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. Once viewed as an adversary to private land use and development, this agency is now regarded as a partner in planning how land within the homesteading area can be used in the most appropriate manner. The current Lake County Land Use Plan indicates that the classifications of Range and Agriculture will be the predominate uses of the area. In the Lost Creek Valley, the soils also appear suitable for cropland. However, due to the lack of a reliable source of water and the diversity of public and private ownership, little of this area is likely to be cultivated (Lake County, 1980). The use of this portion of the homesteading region will probably remain as rangeland for cattle grazing by firms such as Viewpoint Ranches (Hatton, 1988). Notwithstanding the land use designations, economic considerations also play an important role in how the area will be used in the future.

While the soils in the Lost Creek Valley, and other locations in its vicinity, may be able to sustain crop production, their remoteness from transportation routes, their rocky terrain, and an unreliable groundwater table make crop growing a risky business at best. Coupled with these considerations is the fluctuation in crop prices. Alfalfa hay, a crop grown in other areas of the desert, is currently selling in the mid-teens per ton. Several years ago, the same commodity sold in the high nineties (Hatton, 1988). When considering the costs of land clearing, irrigation, shipment, and an unstable market, it seems unlikely that crop production will become a predominate use. Even in those areas where crop raising can be more easily accomplished, cultivation of the land is not a reliable proposition.

In the Fort Rock area, deep-well water has been used in crop production since the mid 1950's, when electricity reached the area and made reliable irrigation possible. According to Hatton (1988), the lush green fields are not dissimilar to those one can observe in the Willamette Valley. However, a moratorium is currently in place on future well-drilling, due to a receding groundwater table in the area. In other areas of the region, too much water has been the concern.

During the past decade, a wet weather cycle has increased the water levels in Malheur and Harney Lakes to the point where the normally separate bodies of water have become one, flooding the adjacent rangeland. A study was conducted by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine the feasibility of constructing a man-made outfall for the excess water. The report of the study concluded that such a project was a poor economic investment and that a dry cycle would likely follow the then current wet cycle. The basis for forecasting a dry cycle was partially based upon the historical weather patterns, and in this instance, proved to be correct (Hatton, 1988). During the past two years, below average rainfall amounts have been recorded and the lakes are receding. Notwithstanding the Range and Agriculture designations, some newer classifications which have been included in the Land Use Plan are likely to be a part of the region's future.

Three relatively new land use classifications are Farm Residential, Rural Residential, and Rural Recreation/Community. The Farm Residential classification allows areas to be used for both small scale family-type farms and small-acreage homesites, neither of which is necessarily dependent upon large acreages for economic success. Although the total farmed acreage may not be considered an economic unit, if these types of parcels are utilized efficiently, they could contribute to the agricultural base of the area (Lake County, 1980). The only area in

the homesteading lands where this classification has been used successfully is the Christmas Valley. However, because of the abundance of small acre parcels currently there, it is unlikely that additional Farm Residential lands can be justified.

Another recent addition to the land use classifications, the Rural Residential, allows areas to be used for minimal acreage residential parcels that maintain the rural character of the region. Development of this type must also be in harmony with the adjacent activities, such as rangeland and agriculture. This classification is intended to provide rural living opportunities for individuals who are not necessarily dependent upon the land for their livelihood and in those areas where the demand for homesites is the greatest. The previous homesteading areas currently listed in this category include Christmas Valley, Fort Rock, Silver Lake, Summer Lake, and Alkali Lake. The large number of undeveloped lots are likely to be occupied slowly, especially in Christmas Valley, as the new and current residents are also required to provide appropriate public services, such as water, road maintenance, school busing, and fire protection. While some individuals have chosen to live in these areas because of their close proximity to employment, others use the region as their retirement or vacation residence (Lake County, 1980).

Both the retired and vacation homeowner groups are likely to continue providing the slow population increase to the previously homesteaded areas until the year 2000. The population increases are estimated to be between 6 percent and 18 percent by the end of the century (Lake County, 1980). Several factors contribute to this type of occupancy. The quality of life, with its slower rural pace, clean air, and low crime is one factor. Coupled to that is a relatively mild,

dry climate, and relatively inexpensive living, due to low property taxes. While this type of migration is encouraged by the service industries which have started or grown to support the population increase, the possibility exists that the sense of community that was present in the past may be giving way to a social stratification (Hoyt, 1988). In other words, the people who have the financial ability to reside or vacation on the desert are in a relatively higher socio-economic group than the individuals who support that lifestyle.

As individuals continue to migrate to the desert, they may well be advised to review the homesteading era and the singular purpose that compelled previous occupants to the region. Indeed, it is recognizing that the common purpose of the past ended in failure because the occupancy was not suitable to the conditions. If the present and future migrants hope to live successfully on the High Desert region, they must learn to accept it for what it is. Attempts by individuals to create an area similar to their previous or permanent locations are likely to suffer the same failure as that experienced by the homesteaders. This caution could also apply to another newer type of land use.

The Rural Recreation/Community classification is intended to allow areas to be used for rural residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational purposes which support communities, and in turn, are supported by them. Rural Communities and Rural Recreation Centers have basically the same intended occupancy composition. While the former emphasizes permanent small community development, the latter is intended on supporting a more seasonal or recreational type of use. As with the Rural Residential classification, this type of development must be in harmony with the adjacent rangeland and agricultural uses and be able to provide the appropriate levels of public services. The concentration of

this use is currently found in the Fort Rock, Christmas Valley, Silver Lake, and Summer Lake areas of the homestead region. Future growth in this classification is also likely to remain concentrated in those areas, with population changes occurring during the seasonal uses (Lake County, 1980). This classification is also likely to enjoy the greatest support from both public and private groups in the future (Crisler, 1988).

Funding from the Oregon State Lottery is currently being used to promote tourism in the area. The Deschutes County Historical Society, the Fort Rock Historical Society, and the Lake County Historical Society are also involved in encouraging people to visit the area. The business sector is providing funding for tourist promotion, and realizing the benefits, as it grows to meet the increasing demands for goods and services from both the permanent and transient population. Given the current set of circumstances, a reasonably optimistic future for some of the previously homesteaded areas is understandable.

It is generally accepted that agriculture will continue to provide the economic base for the region, with timber, tourism, and recreation contributing to the slow but steady growth (Crisler, 1988). It is also likely that the previous inappropriate uses of the land, including homesteading, will not be repeated due to the land use planning process currently in place. The process requires that intended uses be sensitive to the delicate balance necessary to sustain life on the desert, in all its forms. While the Lost Creek Valley may never be used for growing crops, become a rural residential community, a recreational area or a tourist stop, the results of this study indicate that other areas previously homesteaded are being and will continue to be used in a diversity of ways. Indeed, the diversity of the desert can accommodate those various purposes much more

successfully than the singular purpose of agricultural homesteading. If individuals can gain insights by understanding this portion of Central Oregon's historical past, perhaps the choices and decisions for the future will be made in a more appropriate manner, given the current set of circumstances, possibilities, and constraints.

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APPENDIX 1

LAND ENTRIES IN THE LOST CREEK VALLEY

Entry #LO 0808 Date: June 1, 1914
Entered by: James McEwen
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #583671 issued on May 9, 1917

Entry #LO 1442 Date: July 5, 1907
Entered by: Horace E. Chapman
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on October 18, 1913

Entry #LO 1443 Date: July 5, 1907
Entered by: Horace E. Chapman
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on October 18, 1913

Entry #LO 2848 Date: December 16, 1909
Entered by: Jason McEwen
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #583671 issued on May 9, 1917

Entry #LO 3407 Date: May 5, 1910
Entered by: Albert W. Breed
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on February 28, 1913

Entry #LO 3408 Date: May 3, 1910
Entered by: Albert W. Breed
DLE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on April 4, 1912

Entry #LO 3409 Date: May 3, 1910
Entered by: Thomas H. Cullins
DLE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on September 30, 1911

Entry #LO 3410 Date: May 3, 1910
Entered by: Alice M. Brookings
DLE 323.06 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on September 18, 1912

Entry #LO 3411 Date: June 7, 1910
Entered by: Gilman P. Brookings
DLE 323.33 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on December 19, 1913

Entry #LO 3540 Date: June 20, 1910
Entered by: Clifford H. Ellis
DLE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on November 17, 1911

Entry #LO 3541 Date: June 20, 1910
Entered by: Elias L. Kirk
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on June 6, 1912

Entry #LO 3609 Date: June 2, 1910
Entered by: Ernest Hester
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #410348 issued on June 2, 1914

Entry #LO 3647 Date: June 10, 1910
Entered by: Clara O. Washburn
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #506838 issued on January 11, 1916

Entry #LO 3648 Date: June 10, 1910
Entered by: George R. Young
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #552051 issued on October 26, 1916

Entry #LO 3649 Date: June 10, 1910
Entered by: Samuel W. Best
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #506839 issued on January 11, 1916

Entry #LO 3653 Date: June 10, 1910
Entered by: Charles J. Stauffer
DLE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on December 4, 1914

Entry #LO 3654 Date: June 10, 1910
Entered by: Charles J. Stauffer
HE 321.93 acres
Disposition: Patent #598211 issued on August 27, 1917

Entry #LO 3719 Date: June 25, 1910
Entered by: Belle Smith
DLE 320.67 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on July 27, 1912

Entry #LO 3728 Date: June 22, 1910
Entered by: Bertrand R. Benson
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Patent #294194 issued on September 27, 1912

Entry #LO 3729 Date: June 22, 1910
Entered by: Bertrand R, Benson
DLE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on December 22, 1911

Entry #LO 3730 Date: June 22, 1910
Entered by: Frederick Benson
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Patent #323876 issued on April 4, 1913

Entry #LO 3731 Date: June 22, 1910
Entered by: Frederick Benson
DLE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on November 14, 1912

Entry #LO 4000 Date: September 10, 1910
Entered by: John R. Weigel
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on December 2, 1913

Entry #LO 4001 Date: September 10, 1910
Entered by: John R. Weigel
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on February 27, 1913

Entry #LO 4002 Date: September 10, 1910
Entered by: Henry J. Mallke
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on June 4, 1913

Entry #LO 4038 Date: October 5, 1910
Entered by: Voorhees D. Harris
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #588735 issued on June 20, 1917

Entry #LO 4041 Date: October 31, 1910
Entered by: George W. McGinty
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #430397 issued on September 11, 1914

Entry #LO 4042 Date October 5, 1910
Entered by: John Ray Giltnea
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on April 22, 1913

Entry #LO 4131 Date: November 22, 1910
Entered by: Henry W. Fuchrer
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on August 28, 1914

Entry #LO 4359 Date: February 16, 1911
Entered by: Halvard Solberg
DLE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on May 24, 1921

Entry #LO 4892 Date: August 23, 1911
Entered by: William Leslie McHoney
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on April 2, 1913

Entry #LO 4994 Date: September 29, 1911
Entered by: Daniel Halton McGeough
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #583677 issued on May 9, 1917

Entry #LO 5700 Date: May 16, 1912
Entered by: Caroline Reed
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #502706 issued on December 9, 1915

Entry #LO 5753 Date: June 6, 1912
Entered by: Charles S. Davis
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #517570 issued on March 7, 1916

Entry #LO 6044 Date: September 18, 1912
Entered by: Alice Brookings
HE 323.16 acres
Disposition: Patent #557648 issued on December 7, 1916

Entry #LO 6105 Date: October 7, 1912
Entered by: James E. Smith
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #533640 issued on June 15, 1916

Entry #LO 6426 Date: February 28, 1913
Entered by: Jennie Overall
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #557655 issued on December 7, 1916

Entry #LO 6511 Date: March 26, 1913
Entered by: Ben DeWitt
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #632759 issued on June 4, 1918

Entry #LO 6539 Date: April 7, 1913
Entered by: Lars Frisvold
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on May 11, 1915

Entry #LO 6557 Date: May 14, 1913
Entered by: Robert Beam
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on June 5, 1914

Entry #LO 6558 Date: April 7, 1913
Entered by: Edward A. Yeck
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #577657 issued on December 7, 1916

Entry #LO 6559 Date: April 7, 1913
Entered by: Don J. Yeck
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on May 11, 1915

Entry #LO 6561 Date: April 7, 1913
Entered by: John S. Driskill
HE 20 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on August 16, 1920

Entry #LO 6615 Date: April 22, 1913
Entered by: John R. McGee
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #632762 issued on June 4, 1919

Entry #LO 6618 Date: May 8, 1913
Entered by: Cecil Ollie Crune
HE 331.69 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on November 18, 1913

Entry #LO 6620 Date: April 24, 1913
Entered by: Jerrile Homer Hassler
HE 322.49 acres
Disposition: Patent #671269 issued on March 22, 1919

Entry #LO 6622 Date: April 25, 1913
Entered by: Henry Kinsman
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #632763 issued on June 4, 1918

Entry #LO 6649 Date: May 6, 1913
Entered by: Charles Overton Ashby
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #631746 issued on May 27, 1918

Entry #LO 6650 Date: May 6, 1913
Entered by: George Henry Mehrer
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #559865 issued on December 28, 1916

Entry #LO 6689 Date: May 21, 1913
Entered by: Benjamin F. Rhodes
HE 322.07 acres
Disposition: Patent #577919 issued on April 14, 1917

Entry #LO 6715 Date: June 4, 1913
Entered by: Howard H. Folkerson
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #583699 issued on May 9, 1917

Entry #LO 6880 Date: September 6, 1913
Entered by: fred N. Overall
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on October 6, 1914

Entry #LO 6955 Date: October 6, 1913
Entered by: Mildred Opal Rose
HE 320.83 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on May 2, 1914

Entry #LO 6985 Date: October 18, 1913
Entered by: Oscar Snavely
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on July 7, 1920

Entry #LO 7000 Date: October 23, 1913
Entered by: Fred N. Overall
HE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on February 5, 1914

Entry #LO 7062 Date: January 13, 1914
Entered by: Edith L. Hubbard
DLE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on August 23, 1926

Entry #LO 7070 Date: December 2, 1913
Entered by: Alice E. Kinsman
DLE 160 acres
Disposition: Patent #910859 issued on June 29, 1923

Entry #LO 7260 Date: January 23, 1914
Entered by: Samuel J. Hubbard
HE 323.34 acres
Disposition: Patent #624336 issued on April 11, 1918

Entry #LO 7276 Date: February 6, 1914
Entered by: Juddy H. Hasch
HE 298.26 acres
Disposition: Patent #697261 issued on July 10, 1919

Entry #LO 7478 Date: April 22, 1914
Entered by: Caroline C. Rhodes
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent # 635064 issued on June 12, 1918

Entry #LO 7507 Date: May 2, 1914
Entered by: William F. Schroeder
HE 317.22 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on December 2, 1914

Entry #LO 7509 Date: May 2, 1914
Entered by: Florence A. Lesferance
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #545312 issued on September 12, 1916

Entry #LO 7512 Date: May 2, 1914
Entered by: William A. Pettit
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on January 2, 1915

Entry #LO 7513 Date: May 2, 1914
Entered by: John W. Pratt
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #641505 issued on July 26, 1918

Entry #LO 8037 Date: September 5, 1914
Entered by: Arthur G. Harley
HE 328.73 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on February 4, 1915

Entry #LO 8294 Date: December 2, 1914
Entered by: Gust W. McLouth
HE 153.61 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on May 25, 1921

Entry #LO 8295 Date: January 6, 1915
Entered by: Maude M. Stauffer
DLE 160 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on August 31, 1921

Entry #LO 8357 Date: February 6, 1915
Entered by: Archie Smith
HE 320 Acres
Disposition: Patent #763410 issued on July 22, 1920

Entry #LO 8463 Date: March 13, 1915
Entered by: John R. Weigel
CE 160 acres
Disposition: Patent issued on April 16, 1917

Entry #LO 8523 Date: March 26, 1915
Entered by: Percy L. Forbes
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Patent #645789 issued on August 22, 1918

Entry #LO 8727 Date: June 10, 1915
Entered by: William F. Williams
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on May 13, 1917

Entry #LO 8869 Date: October 7, 1915
Entered by: James McEwen
CE 40 acres
Disposition: Patent #605168 issued on October 26, 1917

Entry #LO 9409 Date: August 16, 1916
Entered by: Orrin F. Brown
HE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on January 10, 1918

Entry #LO 9488 Date: October 28, 1916
Entered by: James M. Musser
HE 201.51
Disposition: Patent #853216 issued on March 4, 1922

Entry #LO 9808 Date: December 27, 1919
Entered by: Samuel W. Best
SRHE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on March 6, 1925

Entry #LO 9911 Date: November 25, 1919
Entered by: James McEwen
SRHE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on April 21, 1925

Entry #LO 9952 Date: February 27, 1920
Entered by: Howard H. Folkerson
SRHE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on July 21, 1925

Entry #LO 11490 Date: November 8, 1921
Entered by: John R. McGee
SRHE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on January 7, 1929

Entry #LO 11491 Date: January 27, 1921
Entered by: Oscar Snavelly
SRHE 320 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on September 22, 1926

Entry #LO 12891 Date: August 5, 1927
Entered by: Juddy H. Hasch
SRHE 124.42 acres
Disposition: Relinquished on July 28, 1932

APPENDIX 2

Complete text of letter from Roy Stauffer to Charles W. Stauffer, dated October 15, 1985. This letter was written in response to a telephone request to recall Roy's homestead experience.

Charles Albert Stauffer (C. J.) came from Tekamah, Nebraska to the Oregon high desert by train to Portland, Oregon, then by stage, in 1910. The stage horses ran away near Prineville and tipped over. A fat man sat next to C. J., and C. J. fell on him. No one was hurt. This was the spring of the year.

C. J. stayed with Uncle Horace and Aunt Addie Brookings through the summer. The Brookings already had a homestead across the present highway from Hampton, Oregon. Aunt Addie ran a halfway house between Bend and Burns. The stage ran every other day, and she served the meals at that stop. The stage was pulled by six head horses.

C. J. returned to Nebraska in the fall of 1910 then came again to the desert the next spring. He took a desert claim, 160 acres. C. J. did not return to Nebraska.

In the spring of 1911, Page, Roy, Fred and Ted loaded two freight cars with seven head horses, a plow, harrow, other farm equipment and household goods. Then they loaded their Grandpa Brookings' car, a high wheeled, rubber tired, four passenger one into the freight car. A railroad worker came through and made them take it out, saying it would blow up the train.

The four boys, Mary, Elizabeth, Ida Mae (Sandra), their mother, Mae, Grandpa Brookings, and two other families, Ben Kessler and Bert Breed families came by train to Madras. Page and Roy traveled in the freight cars to take care of the horses. The rest of the Stauffer family and Grandpa Brookings were in the passenger car.

They shipped two or three wagons, so loaded them at Madras. They stayed two days at Madras and put bows covered with canvas across the wagons. Kessler always had things done before the rest had started. He put the bows on his wagon fairly high, and two men (Roy thinks it was Jimmy Brickley and his dad, who had a homestead near Stauffer) kidded Kessler. They asked how he could get through the tunnels, so he lowered his bows. Of course there were no tunnels.

Mr. Brickley was good at doing things. His tents were boarded up at the lower part with lumber and had wood floors. His wife was part Indian and kept things spotless.

It took about five days to arrive at the Stauffer homestead. The last night on the trip was spent at Uncle Horace and Aunt Addie's. They slept in the covered wagons. It was about 18 miles from the Brookings' home to the Stauffer home.

There was already a post office, Hampton Butte, at Uncle Horace's, but evidently they need a post office further south. Some one wanted to call the post office Lost Creek, but the office in Lakeview thought it better to name it Stauffer. The Stauffer house was the Stauffer post office with C. J. as Postmaster. Roy thinks the first year they were there that about forty families were on homesteads, but the majority gave up and left. Roy doesn't remember how the mail was handled in the Stauffer home. It came once a week. Nor does Roy remember when the post office was discontinued. Some of the people that he remembers as receiving mail at Stauffer were: Grace and Lyle Hassler (when the Stauffers moved to Bend in 1917 or 1918, the post office was moved to the Hassler Home), Eva and Charley Davis, Ben and Pearl Rodes, two Smith brothers and wives (one brother and wife were not on the ranch much because he was a railroad engineer. Jack was the one who stayed on the ranch), and J. R. Wiegel (Mr. Wiegel had a candy factory in Tacoma, Washington, so his wife, son Howard and Daughter Nelda stayed on the ranch to prove up the title), and Hy Harris.

Grandpa Brookings bought axes for the children before leaving Nebraska. When they arrived the children started cutting sagebrush, so they could put up the tents. In about a week C. J. and Roy went to Maury Mountain in two wagons to buy lumber for a house. They were gone four or five days. There was a small mill at Maury Mountain. After loading and starting down Maury Mountain C. J.'s four-horse team got away before he tried to brake. C. J. kept them in the road and made it to the bottom okay, but according to Roy, it was quite a ride. Roy was more careful and had a good team so went down the mountain slowly. C. J. had a young, skittish team in front.

A man named Hy Harris, C. J. and the boys built the house and other buildings. Hy was a good carpenter and had a homestead south of Stauffer.

The Stauffer family lived in three tents until the house was finished. Their first night on the ranch was a rainy one. After settling down they fenced in the homestead. C. J. had worked with someone during the winter making juniper posts.

Roy thinks it was wrong to plow the bunchgrass, because it was good feed. About half the homestead was plowed and seeded to Rye. The rabbits liked to eat the Rye. Roy said it looked like the fields were moving with all the rabbits out there. The ranchers had rabbit drives, and ate rabbits at first, but then the rabbits got warbles on them so couldn't be used as feed.

APPENDIX 3

Suburban Press (Portland, Oregon) Wednesday, March 10, 1971. Section B:1; "Stauffer lives on" by Ralph Friedman.

This article is reproduced in its entirety. Some of the information contained in this article is the same or similar to the letter in Appendix 2. However, there are additional points of interest which have been used, in part, in the body of the text. The reference to J. C. is a misprint, and should have been C. J. Stauffer.

Stauffer "lives" on

By Ralph Friedman

UNION - There are still Oregon maps around which show the town of Stauffer. One of these is a relief, made by a Denver company in 1957. Somebody should have told them that Stauffer faded out of existence more than a third of a century before the map was made. One of those who knows for sure is Roy Stauffer, a Union rancher. The locals wanted to call the hamlet Lost Creek but the U.S. Post Office, for reasons of its own, chose to name it after the first postmaster, J.C. Stauffer, Roy's father.

J.C. came out from Nebraska in 1910 and took claim on a homestead in the Lost Creek Valley, south of Glass Buttes. The next year, when Roy was 10, the rest of family followed.

From 1911 to 1914 about 40 families moved into Lost Creek Valley. (The post office was established in September, 1913.) By 1916 only three or four families were left. The Stauffers pulled stakes in 1918, retreating to Bend, where J.C. found work in a sawmill.

In 1921 Roy quit home for the woods around Klamath Falls, where he logged until the depression of the 1930s. After that he knocked around the state, spending some years in Eugene as a home builder. Since 1954 he has been operating a farm about a mile out of Union, living with his wife and daughter, now a teenager, on land which was willed to

Frieda Brown Stauffer by her folks who settled here in 1901.

"Well, we came to Oregon in 1911." Roy recalled with a burry twang of sagebrush flavor, " and in March, we landed about March the tenth at Madras, Oregon. That was as far as the railroad run at that time. We shipped a car load of horses and wagons and we put our gear together, covered our wagons, and started out for the high desert, which was about an eight day trip. I suppose you could drive it in three hours now without pushing on the gas."

" We put up three tents and then we went, my Dad and I," Roy continued, "to Maury Mountain to get lumber. I drove one team and my Dad drove another team; he had four horses and I had two. We were about a day and a half getting to Maury Mountain and I think probably about two days coming back. When we got home we started immediately to build our house. It was two stories, 24 by 12, and the boards run up and down. Then on the inside we tacked paper on, and we had stove right in middle of the building which we cooked on and used for heat. We all slept upstairs. Then my Dad built on another wing on the house and had the post office in there."

The first harvest, of rye was a good one. So, was the second harvest, in 1911. But the hordes of rabbits practically ate the fields up. Then the rains ended, the land dried up, and practically all of the families left. " We started a school, all the homesteaders got together and built it, in 1913, and in a couple of years there was hardly no kids around to go there."

" I tell you," Roy went on, a bite of ire cutting into the nostalgia, "the government made a complete mistake by allowing the homesteaders to go in and plow up the bunch grass, which was the best single feed for stock I've seen. Range cattle could be turned out poor and skinny and within two weeks a person wouldn't know them for the change because of the bunch grass.

" I don't know whether it was the government or the promoters, had big ads in the papers about all this land that would grow anything, and of course people thought they were getting a farm for nothing, when actually all they were getting was a lot of trouble. I think it was a complete mistake for the government to have allowed that to have happened, but then these promoters - why, anything to get a little money."

" When the settlers pulled stakes, they mostly just left the land go back, there was no sale for it. When my Dad finally quit he sold out to a fellow by the name of Forbes for a thousand dollars. I think he sold the horses, which we had about 75 head, he sold the horses and the both for a thousand dollars." Roy didn't think there was anything left now to Stauffer. He had been back some years before and had a hard time finding any of the shacks. The government had the land now and leased

it to cattlemen and Roy figured that maybe the cattlemen had torn down the majority of the shacks and concentrated the lumber at a headquarters post.

On a warm May day in 1912 all the families living in Lost Creek got together on Glass Buttes for a day that is still clear in Roy Stauffer's mind.

" There was a spring half way up the butte, and we all went to the top, and the men carried a big, long pole, and we all signed a piece of paper and put it in a tobacco can, and we all agreed to come back there again in 20 years but I haven't heard that anyone ever came back."

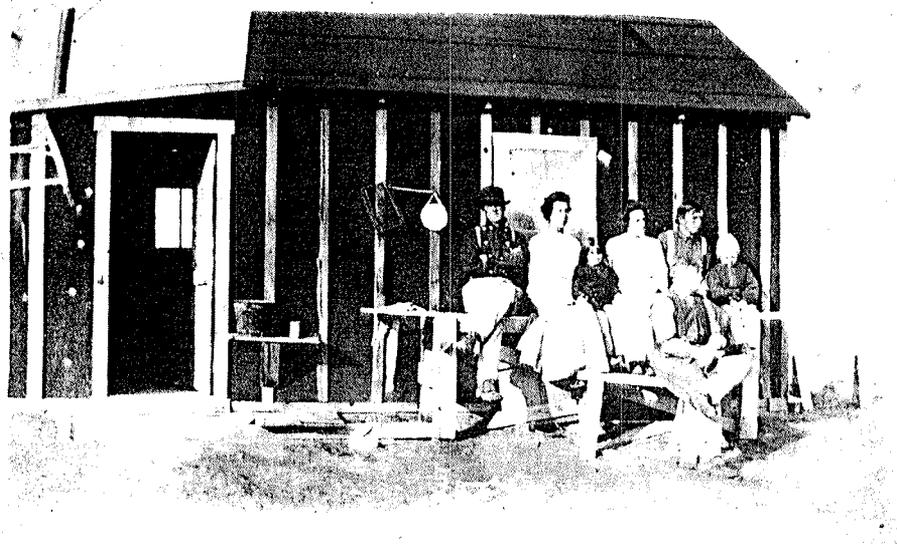
But Stauffer remains on some maps, as big as life, though it has been dead and strewn to the winds for more than a half century.

APPENDIX 4

SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS



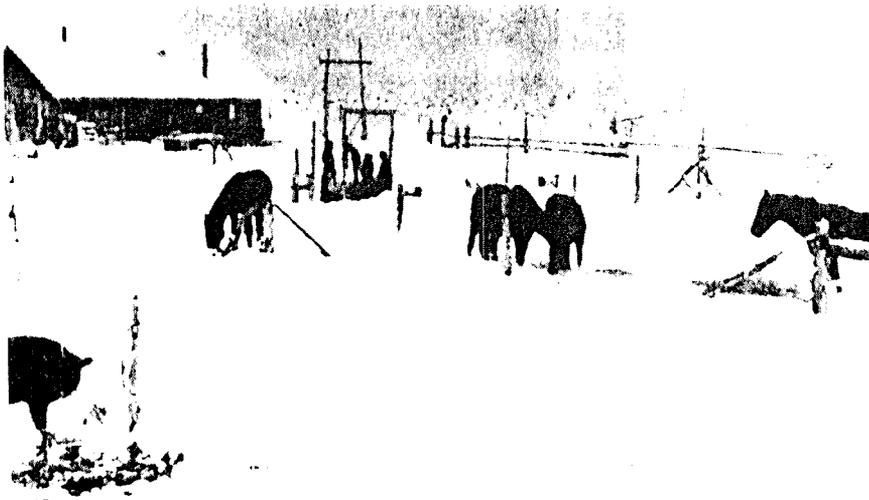
A juniper log house in the Lost Creek Valley. (S. W. Best Family Collection)



An example of the homesteaders' "box house" with tar paper and batten siding.
(Stauffer Family Collection)



(Stauffer Family Collection)



The amount of snow on the ground in this photograph and the one above is an indication of the moisture received during the relatively short wet weather cycle.
(S. W. Best Family Collection)



Living in tents prior to the construction of the house.
(Stauffer Family Collection)



House raising, with the structure partially visible to the left in the background.
(Stauffer Family Collection)



Residents of the Lost Creek Valley on an outing.
(S. W. Best Family Collection)



Christmas Day, 1914 at the Stauffer family homestead.
(Stauffer Family Collection)



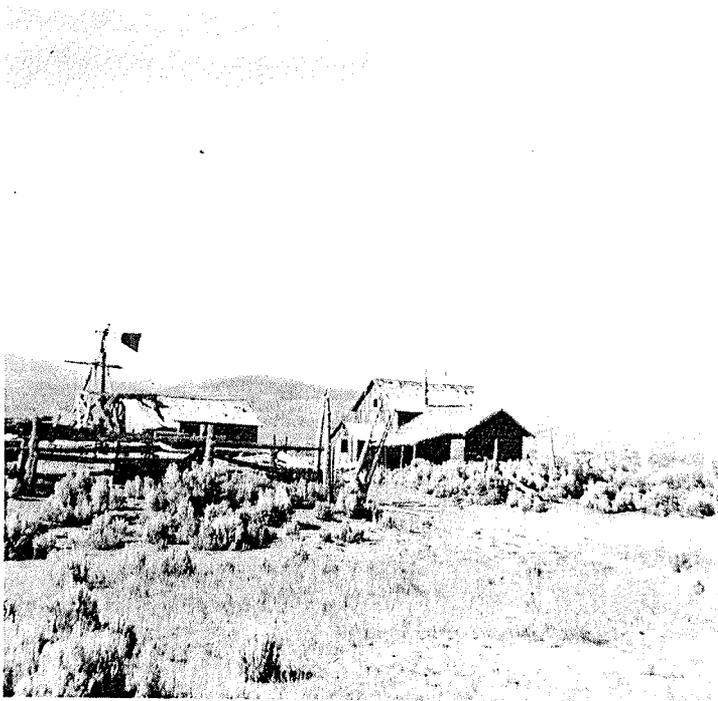
Decoration Day (Memorial Day) celebration, Lost Creek Valley.
(Stauffer Family Collection)



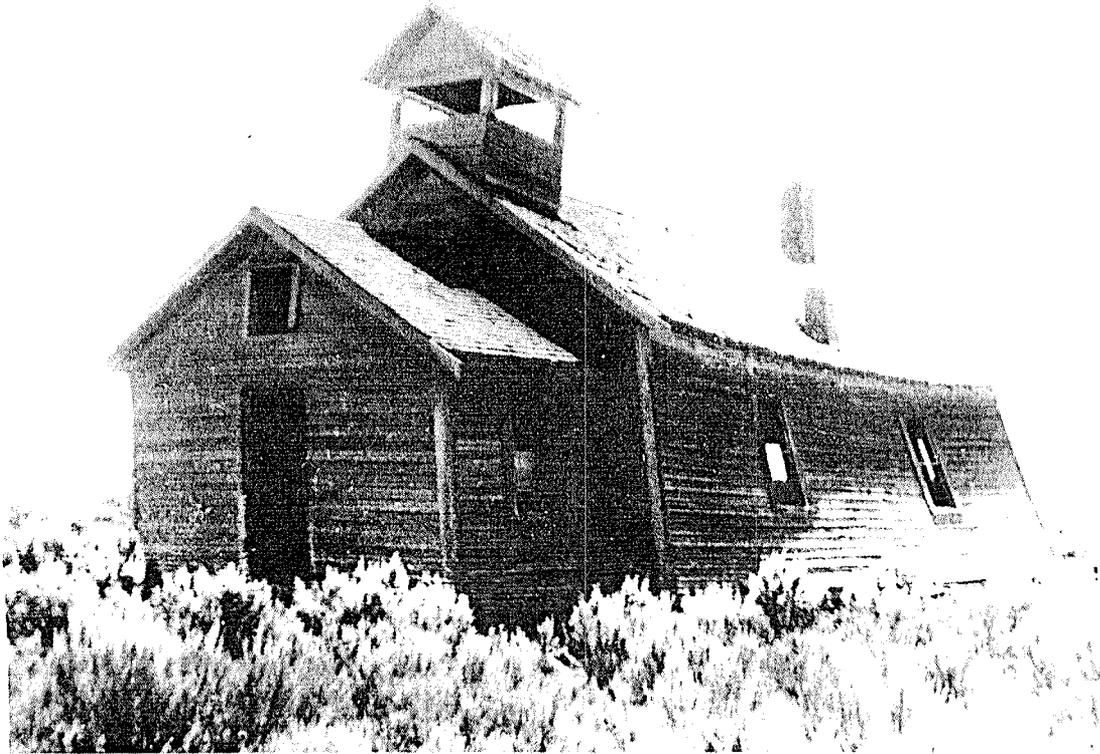
Fourth of July, 1914. (Stauffer Family Collection)



The solitary task of doing the laundry. (Stauffer Family Collection)



The Stauffer family homestead buildings in 1968. (Stauffer Family Collection)



The schoolhouse at Stauffer, Oregon. The top photograph shows the building's condition while it was in use (circa 1913). The lower photograph was taken some years later, after the community was abandoned. (High Desert Museum Collection)