

Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

The Tillamook Forest Center and The Tillamook Burn

by George Cushing

Oregonians are fortunate to have recently acquired the Department of Forestry's Tillamook Forest Center. Set on the banks of the Wilson River in a grove of trees planted by schoolchildren 50 years ago, the Tillamook Forest Center offers a series of excellent exhibits focusing on Oregon's forests and the pioneers who settled there.

The Center was constructed primarily from recycled building products and through the reuse of local materials; it was designed around the concept of sustainability and minimal disruption to the environment. One example of this is the 65,000-gallon pond located near the entrance. The pond collects and stores rainwater off the roof for the Center's water needs, which include both the sprinkler system and the toilets. The fire department also uses the pond as a reservoir.

The Forest Center boasts a climbable, 40-foot tall replica of a fire watch tower and a dramatic 250-foot-long pedestrian suspension bridge (which leads from the building across the Wilson River to the Wilson River Trail and nearby Jones Creek Campground). The lookout tower is an

enticement to today's children and young at heart to rush from the nearby parking lot and explore. The relaxing pond surrounding the entrance to the Center affords a quiet moment for those who prefer to see the tower from the ground.

The Center offers a variety of options to help us better understand this forest recreation area and the pioneers who originally settled it. We learn

about new techniques in both fire fighting and forest management.

We begin to realize just how much we depend on this forest through a variety of interactive exhibits. A major portion of the Forest Center exists to tell the story of the Tillamook Burn (in fact, the story is so dramatic that in 1991 the Oregon Legislature mandated that the story be told). Inside, close to the main entrance, sits a small theater where a brief history of the Tillamook Burn is reenacted. The violent sounds of the raging fire superimposed over actual film footage give the illusion that you are actually there....



After the Burn. Photo courtesy of Oregon Department of Forestry

The series of four wild fires in the Oregon



Coastal Range that destroyed a total area of 355,000 acres of old growth timber is collectively known as the Tillamook Burn.

On a hot, dry day in Gales Creek Canyon on August 14 1933, the first fire was started. A steel cable dragging a fallen Douglas fir rubbed on

the dry bark of a wind-fallen snag. The snag burst into flame. For the next three weeks the fire burned unabated until it was extinguished by seasonal rains. The fire consumed 240,000 acres. Debris from the fire reached ships 500 miles at sea. Ashes, cinders and the charred needles of trees fell in the streets of Tillamook. In 1933 dollars, the loss in processed lumber was estimated to have been \$442.4 million. To a state whose economic mainstay was the timber industry, this was a catastrophic loss.

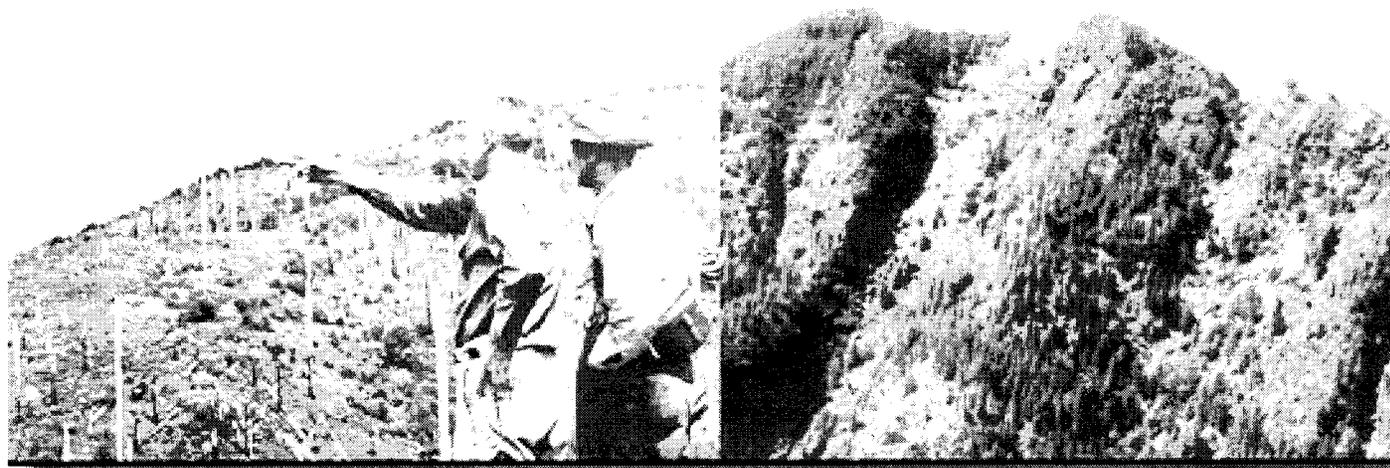
The second fire, having burned 190,000 acres before being extinguished, was started in 1939, allegedly by another logging operation.

The third fire was started six years later and was perhaps the best known because it affected much of the forested mountains along the highways between Portland and popular beachfront recreational destinations. This devastation remained visible to travelers through the area as late as the mid-1970s. The last fire started in 1951, but burned only 32,700 acres.

The devastation caused by the Tillamook Burn was so complete that property owners were literally burned out and could not afford to pay the taxes on their land. The state ended up foreclosing on the properties, and in 1973 the forest became the Tillamook State Forest.

Today, the Tillamook State Forest is the largest state-owned forest in Oregon. A huge reforestation effort was authorized by the Legislature in 1949. More than 72 million seedlings were planted over the next 23 years. The reforestation effort was meant to propel the forest back to its original, harvestable, condition. Interestingly, the reforestation project neglected to include cedar or hemlock seedlings; only Douglas fir seedlings were planted, thus altering the mix of trees that composed the original forest. Because of the lack of variety, the forest's future economic viability is still in question.

The Tillamook Forest Center is a special place to develop a deeper connection with Oregon's



*Tillamook Forest Comparison: After the Burn and the present.
Photo courtesy of Oregon Department of Forestry*

forests through experience and exploration. No other place in Oregon or the Northwest provides the forest-based learning opportunities to be found at the Tillamook Forest Center. They are open daily from 10 am to 6 pm (Memorial Day to Labor Day) and Wednesday through Sunday, 10 am to 4 pm after Labor Day. We hope to see you there!

Letters From The Attic

by Cindy Kistler

Wandering through the attic the other day, I came upon a series of old letters that my aunt Ruth had written long ago. The letters span a number of decades and speak mainly of day to day life in Forest Grove. This one, dated August 6 1902 is addressed to Fritz, Ruth's beau.

Dear Fritz,

Oh! What beautiful weather we are having. The Old Pacific is very beautiful. There are 15 tents on the beach. They are nearly all Forest Grove people. But they seem very shigh [sic] for some cause. I have gotten acquainted with

Hugh Vie and wife and sister Estella. I like them pretty well. Haimers Israhurs and Hydys are camping near us, but havn't gotten acquainted with he girls yet and don't kow as I shall. A week ago last Sunday there was a large whale (yes, a real whale) came in over the bar 50 or 60 ft long. He was a dandy.

I have been home once since I came down to the beach.

The Beck quartet are at Bay City now singing for camp meeting. I thought of going up to hear them

Rocky Canyon Camp -
Bar View
Aug 6, 02 -
Dear Fritz -
Oh, what beautiful weather
we are having. The Old
Pacific is very beautiful
There are 15 tents
on the beach. They
are nearly all Forest
Grove people. But they
seem very shigh for some
cause. I have gotten
acquainted with Hugh
Vie and wife and sister
Estella. I like them pretty
well. Haimers

tonight but it's too H-O-T. But think I'll go sometime this week.

I have been told that they are very good singers. Have you ever heard them? I think that the Vies' have heard them from what they said.

Stella is awfully cute why didn't you fall head over heels in love eith her? Ha!! Ha!!!! Well Fritz I presume you can hardly read what I have scribbled now as I am writing with the tablet on my knee, in a most unhandy position, so must close.

I presume your Voice cartoon will come out next week. I am watching for it.

Ever Your, Ruth

New Grant Funding Available

As most readers know, the Historic Landmarks Board operates a renovation grant program to help property owners offset the cost of doing historically accurate renovation projects. This money is provided by the waste transfer station on the west side of town and is handed out to various groups by the city council. So with each new fiscal year, the HLB gets renewed funding - this year our grant was \$10,000! Have a project that you've been thinking about taking care of on your historic home? Come talk to us. We'll reimburse up to half the cost of the work. Contact James Reitz at 503-992-3233 for more information.

This publication receives federal financial assistance for the identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, national origin, sex, or handicap in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, PO Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013

The activity that is the subject of this publication has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, as provided through the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. However, the contents and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of any trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board Grant Program

Is your house on our local register? If it is, did you know that your house is eligible for restoration / rehabilitation grant funding? The Historic Landmarks Board has funds to help you with your projects. If you are planning any exterior restoration work such as restoring architectural features or if you have structural work to do such a foundation repair, we'd love to help. We fund projects up to 50% of the cost of the job per grant. Come see us! We can also help you find historically appropriate solutions to any problems you may have.

The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board

Jon Stagnitti (chair)	503-357-6369	jonstagnitti@johnlscott.com
George Cushing (secretary)	503-357-3389	greenacres2@verizon.net
Claude Romig	503-359-1886	kalekop@comcast.net
Cindy Kistler	503-359-9148	scrhk@msn.com
Margie Waltz-Actor	503-357-2770	clay.margie@verizon.net

Preserving Forest Grove is a quarterly newsletter published by the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board to help fulfill its duty of public education regarding the preservation of cultural resources. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please call James Reitz at 503-992-3233, or JReitz@ci.forest-grove.or.us.

***Historic Landmarks Board
City of Forest Grove
PO Box 326
Forest Grove, OR 97116***

In this issue:
The Tillamook Forest Center and the Tillamook Burn
Letters From The Attic