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LOOKING BACK

Forest Service
History



Historic Forest Service Documents, Maps, and Photos from Oregon's Blue Mountains

Explore the Umatilla National Forest's [silviculture library archive](#) of historical reference materials. With a few exceptions, only items produced before 1950 are included in the archive. (right: Looking down Asotin Creek. 1913. Photo by George A. Bright. Click to enlarge.)

The archive contains materials for the entire Blue Mountains, not just the Umatilla National Forest. The Web site provides access to printable versions of documents and certain historical maps in the Umatilla National Forest archive. In addition, historical photos dating back to the early 1900s depict the lives of forest rangers as well as landscapes of northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington.



Origins of the Collection

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the advent of ecosystem management, ecosystem analysis at the watershed scale, the historical range of variability, and related concepts placed increased emphasis on using historical information. Historical maps depicting vegetation conditions proved helpful in comparing current or existing conditions with reference conditions. As a result, the Umatilla became interested in the potential value of historical information. Representatives from the forest initially explored materials available at the National Archives in Seattle and consulted regional university libraries, finding a good number of historical maps at the University of Washington. In 1996, a group of three people from the forest visited the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. One person spent all week on the textual records floor, another on the cartographic/maps floor, and a third on the photography floor. This research resulted in the shipping of a dozen boxes of materials back to the Umatilla.



In 1999, forest silviculturist David Powell published “Historical References about Vegetation Conditions: A Bibliography with Abstracts” (Tech. Pub. F14-SO-TP-05-99, 310 pages) which documented the historical materials the forest acquired from the National Archives and other sources. He then proceeded to create abstracts for the documents and photos to help users determine whether the item would help them. The forest is still working with the materials from the 1996 trip and each year adds new items to the Web site, with most of the material coming from that visit. (left: Canyon City, Oregon. [Many of the buildings in the photograph are still standing today](#). 1915. George A. Bright. [Click to enlarge](#).)

The forest continues to update the historical mapping section to include the base maps from which the GIS data was digitized. The 1914 maps, for example, show all of the livestock driveways and homestead claims (by name of settler) on the base maps, and yet none of this data was digitized because it had nothing to do with the thematic info (which was vegetation typing). But knowing the location of driveways, which literally had hundreds of thousands of sheep run across them every year in the late 1800s and early 1900s, would be valuable information and might still be instructive for vegetation conditions in those areas today.

Like many national forests, the Umatilla is celebrating its centennial in 2008. The centennial has served as an additional impetus to add historical materials to the Web site, helping generate public interest in the forest's and region's history. In cooperation with the Umatilla County Historical Society and the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, the forest has also helped bring the “Century of Service: U.S. Forest Service in the High Desert 1905-2005” exhibit to the area through September. The exhibit includes over 1,000 pieces of Forest Service memorabilia and the forest is co-hosting several public events in coordination with the exhibit.

Some Examples from the Archive:

Read Edward Tyson Allen's [1906 Report on the Wenaha Forest Reserve](#). Allen worked for the General Land Office and the

Bureau of Forestry conducting various forest studies and was the primary author of A Forest Reserve Manual (1902). Gifford Pinchot credited Allen's manual with helping form the basis of the 1905 Use Book. In 1905, Allen served as California's first state forester and returned to the Forest Service in 1906. From summer 1907 to November 1908, Allen was chief inspector for the North Pacific District Office, before becoming that district's first Regional/

District Forester. Along with William C. Hodge, Jr., Allen is also credited with the design that became the official Forest Service badge. (above: Looking south into Mottet Valley from a road near Bone Springs Mountain. An early Forest Service pickup with a Ranger leaning on the passenger side. Photographer unknown. Date unknown. [Click to enlarge](#).)



Abstract: After establishment of forest reserves and national forests early in the twentieth century, inspections were supposed to be made at regular intervals. Initially, they were conducted by Forest Inspectors stationed at the District (Regional) Offices. Later, that responsibility was transferred to the Forest Supervisors, who were responsible for inspecting their own Forest (see G. H. Cecil, 1910, “Memorandum regarding Supervisor's inspections” for more information). This inspection report includes the following sections: timber sales; grazing; planting; dendrology; claims and privileges; additions and eliminations; personnel, equipment and protection; and miscellaneous and concluding remarks. Allen offers some interesting insights about forest ecology, as illustrated with this quote: “The timbered area is gaining, rather than decreasing, and apparently only the simplest precautions are needed to provide for restocking cut over

tracts, such as proper disposal of refuse protection of small yellow pine, and, when possible, taking the latter species chiefly from north and east slopes or flats. Generally it will not be necessary to watch cutting methods very closely to insure perpetuation of the forest, for it will be attained with ordinary care."

For a personal account of early days on national forests in Oregon from 1908 to the days of the CCC, explore the [Recollections of Ira E. Jones](#). (right: The original caption read:

"The Caraway Place, homesteaded and later abandoned. The 160 acres comprised in this place can be bought for five hundred dollars on easy terms. It finds no purchaser, although worse places are continually being applied for on the National Forest under the Act of June 11, 1906." 1913. George A. Bright. [Click to enlarge.](#))



Abstract: This interesting memoir recounts experiences of the author while employed on national forests in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. Jones started in 1908 as a Forest Guard on the Whitman National Forest; his first task was to help build a telephone line from the Grande Ronde River to Cable Cove outside of Sumpter, Oregon. In 1909, he was assigned to the North Powder Ranger District of the Whitman National Forest. He then recounts experiences of his Forest Service employment near Granite, Sumpter and at many other places in the Blue Mountains. He ends the memoir with a description of a detail assignment to the Siuslaw National Forest in western Oregon, where he supervised CCC crews performing a variety of projects.



Explore how the forest has used historical mapping. In 2001, the forest digitized a set of [timber classification maps](#) prepared between 1914 and 1916 . After digitizing the thematic information from each map sheet (not the base map data such as streams or stock driveways), it then merged the sheets into a single coverage spanning the whole forest. The merged map and the original maps are available [on the Web site](#). (left: **Multiple use management on Dale Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest. The photo shows a typical summer-time scene on Desolation Creek in the vicinity of Desolation Meadows. 1960. C. M. Rector. [Click to enlarge.](#)**)

And finally, among other things, explore Fred Cleator's [early photographs of recreational development](#). Cleator played a prominent role in the development of recreation in the Forest Service, overseeing the recreation program in Region 6 beginning in the late 1920s.

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