

## CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

The history of the Lower Sprague-Lower Williamson subbasin encompasses the pre-settlement era, the Yainax Sub-agency, the towns of Chiloquin, Sprague River, and Beatty, the timber industry with its logging and sawmills, the Oregon, California and Eastern (OC&E) Railroad, the livestock industry from sheep to cattle, and the Chiloquin Dam. Each of these in some way has influenced and defined the landscape and watershed conditions seen today. Following are brief summaries of these topics.

### **PRE-SETTLEMENT**

Ed Chiloquin, grandson of the renowned Klamath Chief Chal-o-quin [Chiloquin], talks of a time when "...people lived in earth lodges, particularly during the winter months. At other times some lived in tepees, grass lodges, and bark lodges. Their main source of food was fish, wild animals, and native plants and berries, including wocis [waterlily], ipos, chokecherries, serviceberries, etc."

The first white men to arrive in the lower Sprague and Williamson rivers were envoys of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company, who reached the confluence of the rivers for the first time in the fall of 1826. Led by Finan McDonald and Thomas McKay, the group penetrated south from the Columbia River in search of fur trapping locales. Later that fall, on December 5, 1826, Peter Skene Ogden arrived near Chiloquin (Helfrich 1974). Peter Skene Ogden and his party of trappers traded with the Indians, securing foodstuffs to keep them alive until spring. They camped near the present site of Collier Memorial State Park.

Most of the information in this section was taken from the [Chief Chiloquin Interview], Lindsay Applegate Papers, Ax 4, Division of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-1299.

### **YAINAX SUB-AGENCY**

In 1865, after the establishment of the Klamath Indian Reservation, the Yainax Sub-agency was established (Helfrich 1974). The site of the Sub-agency is currently a private ranch owned by the Bartel family. It was located on the southern edge of the Sprague River valley to the south of Council Butte.

Yainax Sub-agency provided reservation management, a doctor, a school, and a jail. There was also a post office at this location for a short period of time in the late 1800s (Helfrich 1974).

## CHILOQUIN



*Picture of Downtown Chiloquin circa 1940 (Chiloquin 2007).*

Many years before Chiloquin became a town, it was a campsite for a group of Klamath Indians. The name of the town came from the renowned Chief, Chal-o-quin, but became known as Chiloquin since some people found the original name difficult to pronounce.

In 1910, when the railroad was extended north from Klamath Falls to the terminal point in Kirk, Chiloquin was nothing more than a few shacks and tents scattered over a wide field at the confluence of the Sprague and Williamson rivers. The Chiloquin Mercantile and the Chiloquin Warehouse were the pioneer businesses in the town. The first movies were shown in the warehouse, where the audience sat on bales of hay and the picture machine was powered by the automobile engine of the itinerant movie operator. The first post office was established in 1912, with Mary A. Whittemore as postmistress.

Newspaper accounts of those times include the following descriptions: *Klamath Echoes*, August 20, 1912: “Chiloquin’s new \$5,000 depot was opened. Twice daily trains will run between Chiloquin and Klamath Falls.”

*Klamath Echoes*, August 5, 1915: “Forty trains per day pass through Kirk (North of Chiloquin). Six railroad companies are operating out of Kirk. Daily shipments of around a million and a half board feet of logs are made over Southern Pacific Railroad to Klamath Falls and its mills.”

During the daily round trip of the train from Klamath to Kirk through Chiloquin, the engineer stopped the train along Klamath Lake to pick up fishermen. One day, the train waited while a fisherman continued to net the last fish for his bag limit.

Because Chiloquin was located in the center of the Klamath Indian Reservation, white men had to purchase Indian allotments to obtain land. The first allotments on the site were sold in 1918. In the early 1920s, Henry Stowbridge, L. B. Robinson and Mary C. Jackson plotted the part of the town east of the Williamson River, on land that was known as the “Juda Jim Allotment.” The west side

was developed by R. C. and Alice Spink. Chiloquin was a boomtown known as the “Little Chicago of the West,” where the keeping of law and order was one of the main problems.

A one-room school took care of the educational needs of the Chiloquin youngsters until the school year of 1918/1919, when two teachers were used rather than one. In the 1920s, Chiloquin’s elementary and high school districts were formed. In the mid-1920s, construction began on a brick and stucco structure, which was finished in 1926 and housed the elementary and high school students. The last two years of high school were offered locally for the first time!

Between May of 1923 and the summer of 1929, a building boom hit Chiloquin. A. C. Gienger and his son Roy constructed the first brick business, a two-story building located on the site of their earlier wooden building, which they moved a block south. The brick building housed three or four stores on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. Henry Wolff, who, with his wife Josephine, had begun a successful bakery in the town the year before, built a brick building on the opposite side of the street from Gienger and moved in during the July 4th celebration in 1926. Three more blocks of brick buildings were completed during this era and ended with the Markwardt Bros. Garage, which opened in the summer of 1929. Gienger had begun a water works company early in 1924, which was later sold to the City of Chiloquin after incorporation on March 9, 1926. Gienger, who had worked hard for the city government, was elected the city’s first mayor. None of the members of the council or of the city administration, who were responsible for drafting the laws of the new city, had ever been connected with municipal work before.

At that time in the area, there were 2,000 inhabitants, three big lumber mills, box factories, restaurants, barber shops, grocery stores, drug stores, doctors, dentists, lawyers, pool halls, dance halls and card rooms. Chiloquin was the trade area for the entire northern part of Klamath County and served Fort Klamath and the Klamath Agency as a mail and freight distribution point. Chiloquin was also the shipping point for the vast Klamath Indian Reservation and for a great expanse of country east of town along the Sprague River. Few small towns in any state could boast of handling the volume of business that daily went on in this bustling little community of so rich a land!

Edward M. Miller, Automobile Editor of the Portland *Oregonian*, said, on May 3, 1931:

Having completed my pleasant duties at Crater Lake, I stepped on the throttle of J. K. Leander’s free-wheeling Studebaker sedan and in less than an hour, found myself on the Williamson River Bridge in Chiloquin. The Williamson River bisects the city and joins the Sprague River a quarter mile below the city. Into this valley, provided by the two rivers, the town of Chiloquin has arisen in the last five years. A brand new city, nurtured by sawmills, lumber camps, railroads, Indians, sheep and cattle. Surroundings are handsome. Creeping into the city from the east and the west is a pine forest. The trees on the east rise high on a range of brown hills. On the western horizon are the peaks of the Cascade Range, snow-capped in winter and spring.

As reported in the Portland *Oregonian* on May 3, 1931: “Chiloquin stands as one of the few communities in the United States without a luncheon club. The town makes no apologies and explains that businessmen can’t afford to take off for lunch.” In addition,

“Chiloquin is the largest livestock shipping point on the Southern Pacific lines in Oregon; 6,000 head of cattle going out every fall and coming in every spring.”

Beginning around 1910, the lumber industry in Klamath County experienced rapid growth, and lumber products became the lifeline of the Chiloquin area. In 1916, Wilbur Knapp built a small circular sawmill on the Williamson River, one mile north of Chiloquin. In 1924, the mill was sold to the Forest Lumber Company from Kansas City, Missouri, who changed the name to Pine Ridge Klamath County Oregon Division. In 1939, a fire burned the entire plant, and it was not rebuilt.

John Bedford and Harold Crane built the Sprague River Lumber Company on the Sprague River, three miles east of Chiloquin in 1919. The mill was sold to William Bray in 1921 and became the Braymill White Pine Company before closing in 1928 after the stock market collapse. Bray let some of the crew that had worked in the mill at the time of the shutdown live in the company houses during the Depression.

In 1918, E. A. Blocklinger and his son, Arthur, organized the Chiloquin Lumber Company and Box Company on the Sprague River at Chiloquin. The box factory burned in 1947. The mill subsequently became The Chiloquin Mill, owned by the Salvage Brothers of Cave Junction, Oregon. It was purchased by Ernest DeVoe and J. R. Simplot in 1955. In 1962, DeVoe sold his interest to Simplot, who operated the mill under the name of the Simplot Lumber Company until it was sold to the DiGorgio Corporation in June of 1969. The plant then operated under the name of Klamath Lumber Company, a subsidiary of the Klamath Lumber Mill in Klamath Falls, until the name was changed to D. G. Shelter Products. In June of 1977, the plant was sold to a group in Bend, Oregon, and was renamed Chiloquin Forest Products. The plant was closed in 1988.

The closures of the lumber mills in Chiloquin, the Depression and a series of disastrous fires had a major effect on the town. The population of the incorporated portion of Chiloquin is now approximately 750 people; this does not, of course, include the many residents who live within the Chiloquin mailing area but outside of the city limits, which is where the greatest growth is now being experienced.

The above section was adapted from the webpage of the City of Chiloquin, which states that this information was compiled by Darlene Lightner (Chiloquin 2007).

## **TOWN OF SPRAGUE RIVER**

The youngest town in the Sprague River valley is Sprague River, begun as a direct result of the construction of the OC&E Railroad. At approximately the same time, anticipating the arrival of the railroad, several logging camp operations were also set in motion, at least two sawmills were planned, and construction on them began (Helfrich 1974).

The post office was opened in Sprague River on September 14, 1923. Today, the post office is located in the café. The Sprague River School, which included elementary and high schools, was started in 1921. This school was later (about 1964) combined with the Chiloquin School (Helfrich 1974). In the mid-1980s the Sprague River school building burned down.

## **BEATTY**

The town of Beatty was originally established by Mr. and Mrs. Peffley, Methodist missionaries, who built a parsonage on this southeast corner of the Klamath Indian Reservation. In 1915, the first store was built in Beatty and called “The Beatty Store.” A new store and motel were built in 1938, on the site of which the Beatty Store and Motel still stand (Helfrich 1974).

Beatty had a school from around 1913 through 1940. At that time, the Beatty school was consolidated with the Bly school, because of the shortage of teachers during World War II (Helfrich 1974).

Beatty never had a mill, though one was established a few miles away on Whiskey Creek. During the 1950s, an active rodeo ground was located on the north side of Beatty. Local crowds attended regular rodeos at this location (Helfrich 1974).

## **TIMBER INDUSTRY**

A number of mills were operated in the areas of Chiloquin and the town of Sprague River. These mills changed ownership regularly, and most were closed after World War II. The history of the individual mills is included in the timeline below. The towns of Chiloquin and Sprague River boomed during the height of the sawmill and logging industries. The towns have declined in services and population since the close of the mills (particularly the town of Sprague River).

The OC&E Railroad used water to move logs to the mill sites and lumber out of the mills. The Sprague River and Williamson River provided much-needed water sources for the mills.

## **RAILROAD**

The city of Klamath Falls (originally known as Linkville) had long desired a railroad, and when the Southern Pacific (SP) Railroad completed its line into town from Weed, California, in 1909, the citizens went wild with celebration. The city had its link to the outside world, and better yet, that link was looking like it might turn into a major mainline railroad running between Oregon and California. However, by 1911 the railhead stopped at Kirk, 40 miles north of Klamath Falls, leaving the city part way up a dead-end branch line.

Business on the new railroad boomed from the start, but the plentiful business very quickly exceeded the capacity of the single-track railroad to the south to transport it. The citizens also felt

that SP was charging too much, and many who celebrated the arrival of the railroad a few years before quickly grew to resent being at the mercy of only one railroad. It was not long before cries for some form of competition to SP were being heard.

Into this scene stepped Robert Strahorn, a railroad builder who had big plans to provide competition to SP. Strahorn's plans called for a 400-mile-long system based out of a central hub at Silver Lake, Oregon. The proposed system would have connected several dead-end railroads in the central part of the state with each other and would have provided the citizens and businesses of Klamath Falls with alternatives to the SP. Strahorn then formed the Oregon, California & Eastern Railroad on October 6, 1915. After a series of complications and slow construction, the railroad to Sprague River was finally completed and a "golden spike" to mark the completion of the first 40 miles was held on October 12, 1923.

The completion of the OC&E to Sprague River did open up vast new stands of timber to harvesting, and in many cases loggers had already accumulated huge decks of logs adjacent to the grade before any rails had been laid. In the summer of 1923, the railroad was already delivering 40 carloads of logs per day to the SP for shipment to sawmills around the Klamath Basin, and new requests for sidings to load log cars on were being received on a regular basis. By the following summer, Strahorn was boasting that his railroad was handling around a billion board feet of lumber each month.

Today much of this railroad line from Klamath Falls to Sprague River and beyond to Bly has been removed. The remaining railroad bed has been converted to the OC&E Trail, which is an Oregon State Park operated by the Oregon Department of Recreation.

This section was adapted from information in the TrainWeb webpage, which was accessed in November 2007 (TrainWeb 2007).

## **LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY**

In the late nineteenth century, as a result of the passing of a federal law known as the Dawes Act, many of the restrictions on non-Indian use of reservation grazing lands were relaxed or eliminated. When the Klamath Indian Reservation was first created, only Indians could graze on the Indian land, but as the nineteenth century ended, more and more non-Indians were leasing allotments on the reservation. Most of the reservation was unfenced, providing little control of livestock numbers in different areas. This situation resulted in an increase in livestock numbers (sheep and cattle) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which meant that the range immediately adjacent to the reservation, including almost all of the territory covered by this Watershed Assessment, experienced very heavy grazing pressure nearly year-round.

During the time of early agricultural development in the area, a number of weirs were built across the Sprague River in the valley reaches (National Archive photographs). These photographs showed brush and logs stacked across the river. The dams created diversions to flood irrigate the pastures and hay ground later in the season. All of these weirs were washed out over time with heavy flood waters. The loss of these dams may have reshaped the channel cross-section, creating the entrenched system that exists to this day.

## CHILOQUIN DAM AND RIVER CHANNELIZATION

The Chiloquin Dam is located just south of the town of Chiloquin on the Sprague River, about a mile above the Sprague confluence with the Williamson River, and about 15 miles above Upper Klamath Lake. The Chiloquin Dam was constructed in 1917 as a control structure for the point of diversion of the United States Indian Irrigation Service project for Modoc Point. When the Klamath Indian Reservation was terminated in 1954, the dam, its canal, and the Modoc Point irrigation project were transferred to the Modoc Point Irrigation District.

During the 1950s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps of Engineers) initiated a program of channelization of flows within portions of the Sprague River and West Sprague River watersheds. It has been difficult to obtain details regarding this channelization, but sections through the Sprague River valley west of Council Butte and the valley reach to the west of the Sprague River valley have been channelized and diked.

There are local citizens who were involved with the construction, who have indicated that the activities occurred at a time when flood control modifications were taking place throughout the western states. This wave of flood control construction stemmed from passage of a National Flood Control Act in 1936, which authorized and funded the Corps of Engineers to implement such projects. Actual implementation was delayed due to World War II, but after the war was over, there were two major flood events in the southern Oregon region, one in 1950 and the other in 1964. With funding, personnel and equipment, as well as a strong interest in preventing further flood damage, the Corps of Engineers made major modifications in a relatively short time. Officials at the Corps of Engineers have indicated that the structures were likely built under an “emergency authorization,” which would mean that little or no planning or documentation of construction activities would have been required (Jennifer Sowell, Corps of Engineers, pers. comm.).

A long-time resident in Bly, Butch Hadley, worked on the dredging and diking of the Sprague River. He explained that the Corps of Engineers was also advocating and conducting willow removal, in order to “conserve” water for agriculture, without realizing the impacts on the streambanks and eventual erosion (need reference here as well).

## TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1826 (fall): Hudson’s Bay Company party led by Finan McDonald and Thomas McKay penetrated south from the Columbia River as far as the neighborhood of present day Chiloquin on the confluence of the Sprague and Williamson rivers (Helfrich 1974).
- 1826 (December or winter): Hudson’s Bay Company Fur Brigade of Peter Skene Ogden arrived near Chiloquin on December 5 (Helfrich 1974).
- 1846 (early May): Captain John C. Fremont, with Kit Carson as guide, entered Klamath Country to circle Upper Klamath Lake. During this stay he had a battle with Indians on the Williamson River, near the present-day Highway 97 crossing (Helfrich 1974).
- 1855: Lt. R.S. Williamson, who was attached to the Pacific Railroad Party, traveled through the Klamath Country from south to north by a route approximating the present-day Highway 97 (Helfrich 1974).

- 1863 (spring): Sprague River was known as Martin's River as a group of miners led by John W. King passed through the area en route from the Shasta Valley to Canyon City. One wonders if the river was named after General R. M. Martin, who trailed 300 head of cattle on this route during the spring (Helfrich 1974).
- 1864 (June 28): Col. C. S. Drew started on an expedition that resulted in the opening of a trail from Fort Klamath, via Sprague River, Drew's Valley and Goose Lake to the Applegate Trail, which crossed the Warner Mountains over Fandango Pass (Helfrich 1974).
- 1865 (July 17): The Oregon Central Military Road Company (OCMRC), under B. J. Pengra, left Eugene looking to build a road over the Cascade Mountains to the eastern boundary of Oregon (Helfrich 1974).
- 1865 (August 8): The OCMRC, under the military escort of Lt. John McCall, arrived at Sprague River and set up camp at Council Butte. Pengra signed a treaty with Paulina on the August 13 (Helfrich 1974).
- 1866: Captain F. B. Sprague was in command at Fort Klamath. It is said that his name was applied to the river as early as 1864.
- 1869: Yainax Sub-agency, with Ivan D. Applegate as superintendent, was established at Yainax for the administration of the reservation. Here he conducted the affairs of the Sprague River Klamaths, Paiutes, and a large division of the Modoc tribe under Chief Schonchin. The sub-agency was located at the foot of Yainax Butte, now known as Council Butte (Helfrich 1974).
- 1882: First school opened at Yainax (Helfrich 1974).
- 1909 (May 20): The Klamath Lake Railroad, operated by SP, reached Klamath Falls. The line eventually reached Chiloquin and Kirk in 1911 (Helfrich 1974).
- 1912: First post office at Chiloquin was established, with Mary A. Whittemore as postmistress (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1913 (Nov. 10): Reverend J. L. Beatty, second pastor of the Yainax Church, secured a post office called Beatty. The Beatty Store was opened in the spring of 1915 by J. L. Sparretorn (Helfrich 1974).
- 1914: Chiloquin Dam was built by the U.S. Indian Service as part of the Klamath Indian Irrigation Project. The purpose of the dam was to encourage farming by Indians (Battelle Memorial Institute 2005).
- 1915 (August 5): By this time, 1.5 million board feet of logs were being sent on the SP Railroad through Chiloquin to Klamath Falls (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1915 (October 6): Robert Strahorn formed the OC&E Railroad (TrainWeb 2007).
- 1916 (November): Issuing of bonds was approved by the Klamath Falls city electorate to raise \$300,000 to begin construction of the railroad. Prominent citizens raised \$50,000 to purchase a lot for a train terminal in Klamath Falls (TrainWeb 2007).

- 1916: Wilbur Knapp built a small circular saw on the Williamson River, one mile north of Chiloquin. The mill was sold to the Forest Lumber Company of Kansas City in 1924 and burned down in 1939. The mill is not rebuilt (TrainWeb 2007).
- 1917 (July 4): First ground was broken in the construction of a 20-mile railroad to Dairy, and the line was completed in early 1919 (TrainWeb 2007).
- 1918: First allotments in Chiloquin, located in the center of the Klamath Indian Reservation, were sold to white men. This is the beginning of the boom, when Chiloquin was known as the “Little Chicago of the West” (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1918: Chiloquin Lumber and Box Company was organized in Chiloquin. The mill changed hands and names various times until its closure in 1988 (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1919 (May): Elections approved Strahorn’s offer to buy the railroad for \$300,000 worth of income bonds and his promise to complete the line to Sprague River. Klamath Falls deeded the first 20 miles of completed railroad to the OC&E Railroad (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1919: The Sprague River Lumber Company was built three miles east of Chiloquin. The mill was sold to William Bray in 1921 and became the Braymill White Pine Company. The mill closed in 1928 after the stock market collapse (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1920 (March 20): Saddle Mountain sawmill (in Sprague River) was first mentioned in newspapers. The mill never opened, because the necessary machinery could not be purchased, and it was sold to Campbell-Towle Lumber Company (Helfrich 1974).
- 1923 (September 16): Line from Klamath Falls to Sprague River was completed, opening vast new stands of timber for harvesting (TrainWeb 2007).
- 1923 (May): A building boom that lasted until 1929 hit Chiloquin. (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1923 (May 11): Frank Mutto, superintendent of Yainax Sub-agency, laid out a townsite of 300 acres that eventually becomes Sprague River (Helfrich 1974).
- 1923 (June 26): Sprague River White Pine Lumber Company sawmill neared completion (Helfrich 1974).
- 1923 (September 14): The post office at Sprague River officially opened, with Benjamin E. Wolford as its first postmaster (Helfrich 1974).
- 1926 (March 9): Town of Chiloquin was incorporated and A. C. Gienger became its first mayor. At this point, the town had a population of 2,000, three big lumber mills and a plethora of businesses. It became a mail and freight distribution point for the Sprague River valley (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1928 (May 10): By this date, the Sprague River White Pine Lumber Company was owned by Edgerton and Adams and had a capacity of 75,000 board feet per day (Helfrich 1974).
- 1928 (June 2): First ground was broken for the construction of the railroad from Sprague River to Bly. It was completed on November 24, 1928 (Helfrich 1974).

- 1928: Sprague River White Pine Lumber Company was bought by G. C. Lorenz and completely rebuilt. It operated under the name of Lorenz Lumber Company until 1930, when it was bought by the Crater Lake Lumber Company (Oregon Historical Society 2007).
- 1929 (May or June): Lorenz Lumber Company began construction of a five-mile-long railroad from the OC&E line near Sprague River to the Whiskey Creek watershed. Also, the Ewauna Box Company began construction of a railroad to extend 15 miles northwest of Sprague River (Helfrich 1974).
- 1931 (May): By this time, Chiloquin is the largest livestock shipping point on the SP Railroad, with 6,000 head of cattle going out every fall (Chiloquin 2007).
- 1937: The sawmill at Sprague River was operated by Crater Lake Box and Lumber Company (Helfrich 1974).
- 1943: The sawmill at Sprague River was shut down and dismantled (Helfrich 1974).
- 1954: The Klamath Tribes were terminated by an Act of Congress. Chiloquin Dam was then transferred from federal to Modoc Point Irrigation District ownership (OWRD 2004).

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