

BATTLE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK  
in  
UMATILLA COUNTY

Battle Mountain State Park is situated on the Pendleton-John Day Highway between Pilot Rock and Ukiah, forty miles south of Pendleton, and is located in Sections 20, 29, 30 and 31, Township 3 South of Range 31 East and Section 4, Township 4 South of Range 31 East, W.M., in Umatilla County and contains 420.82 acres. There are two park deeds, both dated January 10, 1930.

This tract, originally acquired as a forest wayside and now an official state park, is some three miles long, narrow most of its distance along one or both sides of the highway, with a detached twenty acres, a half mile or more from its southern end and the greatest acreage in an irregular block at the northerly end.

The elevation at the park road entrance is 4,270 feet, making it Oregon's highest state park that is fully equipped with facilities for the accommodation of visitors and outing groups.

The name Battle Mountain was chosen for this park at a meeting of the citizens of South Umatilla County, and a committee of the Pilot Rock Commercial Club forwarded it to the Umatilla County Court for their consideration. The proposed name was approved and transmitted to the Oregon State Highway Commission for their action, and was officially adopted by the Commission in 1934. This naming was to commemorate the battles with the Bannock, Piute and Snake Indians of Southern Idaho, which were fought in and around this park area in 1878, and reputed to be the last general uprising of Indians in the United States.

On July 2, 1878, the Umatilla Reservation Agent came to Pendleton and stated that some of his Indians who were hunting on the North Fork of the John Day River, had sent word that a large band of warriors was in the

mountains about seventy five miles south of town. The news caused much excitement and settlers south of Pendleton were warned and they immediately came in. Defenses were prepared, volunteer companies organized, scouting parties went out to reconnoiter and messengers were sent to the military posts at the Dalles and Walla Walla, Advising them of the situation.

On July 4, in the Camas Prairie area, the first hostile, a lone Indian rider, in war paint and wearing a war bonnet, was killed by members of a scouting party, his horse fleeing to the nearby Indian encampment. Soon after, the Indians attacked the small party of scouts, but all escaped and returned to Pendleton. Their story still further alarmed the citizens and many others joined the volunteers, who on the evening of July 5, went to Pilot Rock where other forces awaited them.

On July 6, a detachment of the volunteers went to the headwaters of Birch Creek, to rescue a herder who had been wounded by the Indians in the Camas Prairie raid and taken there by escaping comrades who were forced to leave him in a cabin, alone. This assignment accomplished they set out to rejoin the main volunteer party at Willow Springs, very close to the present north boundary of the park.

A cordon of mounted pickets had been placed to guard against surprise while a meal was prepared and eaten. This was hardly finished when the pickets came in, passing the camp at full speed, shouting as they went by, that the Indians were coming. Several others of the party, who had left their horses saddled, mounted and followed the fleeing pickets, just before the remaining volunteers were surrounded. The party was besieged and desultory firing by both sides was kept up, with some of the Indians behind a rocky ridge only thirty odd yards away. The volunteers were in a sheep shed, with only slender quaking aspen pole walls and a shake roof, which was by no means bullet proof, but did screen them from open sight. Both sides kept up an

intermittent exchange of shots. One man stepped out of the door to get a better aim, a shot felled him and other shots killed him. This exchange of gun fire was kept up until a bright moon had set and full darkness came. Then the team horses were harnessed and hooked up to the wagon, and the horses that were not killed or seriously injured were saddled. Four of the wounded men were placed in the wagon and three others, with lesser wounds, were riding horseback when the party began the escape. They had gone only a few hundred yards when the Indians rode in for an attack and the first volley killed another of the volunteers. These attacks were kept up until morning, the Indians riding in at full speed, firing ineffectively when within range. The return fire, so far as known, was equally ineffectual. About sunrise a cloud of dust was seen and soon a relief party of United States troops was met, and the tension of battle was over. The casualties were two men killed and seven wounded.

Prior to this encounter, from July 2 to 5, inclusive, five sheep herders and one flock master had been killed and several herders wounded. All the wounded recovered.

As an aftermath of these incidents, four freight wagon teamsters were killed and their wagons looted at Deadman's Hill on the Old Oregon Trail. On July 12, one man was killed and one wounded out of a party of three, near the Umatilla River. This wounded man also recovered.

This was the day the war-path Indians moved upon the reservation and an attack on Pendleton was expected at any time. The next day the Indians came down the mountains in full force. However, troops had arrived during the night and with the volunteers they went out to meet the warriors. A three hour battle ensued, ending when the Indians retreated into the timber. This was a long range engagement and there were no casualties among the whites. If any Indians were killed or wounded their losses were not revealed.

The record indicates that all told thirteen white men were killed and as many or more wounded before this abortive attempt to drive all the white people out of the country was suppressed. Two were killed and seven wounded in actual combat, the others were treacherously murdered or injured when defenseless. Three of the Indians were tried, convicted and hung for some of the murders.

Concluding this invasion of the Idaho warriors and their futile attempt to enlist the aid of the friendly Indians of the Columbia River area in their uprising, was the death of Egan, leader of the hostiles, who was enticed into a rendezvous for the discussion of a proposed alliance of the Umatilla Indians with the invading tribes. This was held at the invitation of Tenayowits, son-in-law of Howlish-Wampo, chief of the Cayuses. When Egan arrived he was promptly shot dead and his adherents fled. They were pursued and harassed by Tenayowits and his Cayuse braves for some forty or fifty miles before they were left to go mournfully on their way, their cause lost. The last Indian uprising had ended.

The Battle Mountain State Park was first selected as a wayside forest to preserve a living example of this interesting and appealing type of primeval forest which clothes the elevated slopes of the Blue Mountains, covers the greater part of the park area and borders the highway with fine specimens of Western yellow pine, Douglas fir, Grand (White) fir, Hemlock, both coast and mountain varieties, Englemann's spruce, Larch (Tamarack), and an occasional Western Yew.

While this park area was originally intended to be a forest wayside, the construction of the paved highway brot it into greater prominence, and a desirable portion of it was developed into a state park, which has become a very popular outing place for citizens of the southern portion of Umatilla County, numbers of whom are descendants of the volunteers who participated

in the suppression of the Indian uprising of 1878, which gave the park its name.

The improved portion of the park is situated on the high west slope of the Blue Mountains, where the winter snows are deep and linger late in the spring. The park facilities are some three hundred feet from, slightly below and to the west of the highway in a splendid stand of yellow pine, on a comparatively level mountain shoulder, which drops steeply away on two sides, with the five acre picnic area occupying the most of its length and breadth. From its western edge the view of the open foothills is a wonderful one.

This was the site of the CCC Camp, SP-14, which was built and occupied during the Fifth Period, April 15 to October 15, 1935. While located here, camp members cleaned up the camp site, cleaned up the debris along the highway thru the park area, reduced menacing fire hazard and installed a water supply system. In the picnic area they set up a couple of camp stoves and a half dozen, lumber type, combination tables and benches, and made other improvements.

In 1937 the State Parks Department acquired the former CCC mess hall, a building approximately one hundred fifty feet long by twenty feet wide, with a kitchen all attached. A Parks Department traveling crew covered the roof and sides with shakes, making the building weather proof and comfortable. The interior was reconditioned and improved, and in 1938 a mansion sized fire place was built, a large hot water tank, kitchen sink and other appropriate and necessary plumbing fixtures were installed. These improvements have made the building a valuable adjunct to the park and it is a great accommodation for the frequent group visitations when the weather becomes inclement, and is a boon to skiing parties, Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls on their snow outings in this locally popular winter sports area.

A very practical and highly ornamental feature of the picnic area is

a craftsman's masterpiece in the form of a huge, outdoor fire place, built in 1939. It is twelve feet high, twelve feet wide at the base, with an opening four feet wide from which to radiate heat and glowing comfort. On each wing is an especially made cooking stove for the preparation of outdoor meals. It is a splendid structure, built of native stone in softly tinted, gray, pink and yellow shades of color, cut and laid up in massive, harmoniously blended blocks, all done in Gallo's most masterful style. At this same time, the traveling construction and repair crew, replaced the light, worn tables and benches with new ones, substantially made from heavy, knotty-pine material, cut to specifications, and skillfully put together so that the table tops may be removed and stored under shelter during the frequently long snow periods.

In the Fall of 1937, material was assembled for the construction of a caretaker's cottage, and the building was practically completed before winter set in. This well built cottage is situated above the highway, commanding a view of the park area and its approaches. The resident caretaker looks after the park in the summer months and works with the snow removal crews in the winter.

The citizens of south Umatilla County are proud of the state park they were instrumental in naming, and they foregather there on many occasions to make merry and enjoy its comforts and conveniences amidst the sighing pines, where there are broad, pleasing outlooks, that are particularly charming in the soft waning light of the clear summer evenings.

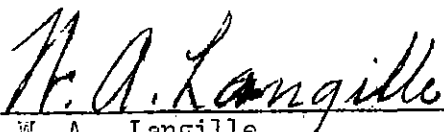
A side from the improvements in the picnic area and its immediate surroundings, the only other development has been the roadside clean up and fire hazard reduction for the protection of the beautiful park forest that is traversed by the highway from park end to park end. It is another delightful, Blue Mountain area that fills a community need for a cool, pleasant gathering place of the neighboring people. A place that should be perpetuated and continually

improved to keep alive the memory of those who died within and near its confines, while helping to protect the lives and homes of Umatilla County citizens, when besieged by those misguided warriors who sought their destruction, but instead, they wrote finis to Indian uprisings in the once extensive Oregon Country, whose white citizens, here and there, had so frequently been embattled by these or other resentful natives, who saw their lands being taken from them, and their chosen way of living fast disappearing in the speedy advance of a civilization whose portents they could not comprehend, nor could they adapt themselves to the rapid changes so suddenly and imperiously imposed upon them, without leadership or opportunity for preparation to meet them.

Originally intended to preserve to posterity a roadside forest, the Battle Mountain park splendidly meets this essential requisite. In addition there is the fortunate circumstance of its having beside the highway a natural park site of such intrinsic beauty, that it has been developed into a well equipped, well kept picnic area and summer playground, beside being provided with a suitable, warm shelter for those who indulge in winter sports, making it an ample and comfortable, all the year around recreational area for the appreciative communities it serves, without immediate need of additional improvements to meet visitor requirements.

It is a splendid park setting that is well adapted to its users needs, which it will fulfill for a long time to come, without fear of being alarmed by the terrifying yells of predatory Indians again on the warpath.

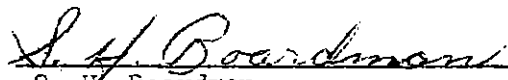
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W. A . Langille  
State Park Historian

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of increasing attendance, more tables should be provided. Many groups visit the park and one long table should be provided for these groups. Additional latrine service should be established; the grounds around the caretaker's house should be landscaped; a garage built. The forest area north of the park should be cleaned up to lessen the fire hazard to the park as a whole. Just to the north of the picnic area is an open area. This should be reforested. Battle Mountain park is a cool refuge to the valley people of Pendleton and Pilot Rock. It should always be kept in 100 per cent perfection.

If the state ever builds overnight cabins in the parks, Battle Mountain should be one of the first priorities.

  
S. H. Boardman  
State Parks Superintendent

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