

THE
BOOTH HILL OVERLOOK

AN
INSPIRING VIEWPOINT

To know intimately all of Oregon's exceptional scenic features is to have a mental storehouse of always pleasant, reflective memories.

Since 1929, S. H. Boardman, State Parks Superintendent, has been acquiring and safeguarding Oregon's wonderful array of state parks, which he knows in all their beautiful and interesting aspects. Yet! with all this background of scenic intimacy he has frequently made the assertion, that the fairest scene Oregon affords is the panorama of the lower Hood River Valley as viewed from the overlook point, beside the Mount Hood Highway, near the top of Booth Hill, some ten miles from the City of Hood River; just before reaching the summit of the hills which separate the lower from the upper portion of the valley. This site elevation is approximately 1,450 feet and six or eight hundred feet above the lower valley, the view including all of it except the margin of its lower east side. The tract is described as being in Section 3, Township 1 North, Range 10 East, W.M., Hood River County, containing 0.96 acres, the deed date December 27, 1941.

Nor is the picture without some historic significance in the early settlement of Oregon. In the years 1843 to 1845, some of the incoming settlers drove their horses and cattle over an old Indian trail from The Dalles, up the east side of the valley, passing the village of Odell, rounded the point of the hill to the westward; thence up the West Fork of Hood River, crossed the divide, coursed the shore of Bull Run Lake and on to Oregon City, known to its users as the Walkup Trail.

"Old George" Tomlike related a prehistoric story of a battle between bands of Klickitat and Simcoe (Yakima) Indians, which began at Hood River and ended in the vicinity of Odell, where the Simcoes were defeated and eighty warriors lost their lives.

Immediately below the overlook is a charming, always green basin, locally known as Duke's Valley; nestling snugly in an angle of the oak clad hills. Down its center Odell Creek blithely courses its way to and thru the area of warehouses and packing plants at Odell, where thousands of boxes of fruit are assembled and prepared for shipment.

Looking northward the Columbia River is visible where the White Salmon River debouches from its rock walls; a power stream fed by the snows of Mount Adams, whose massive form rises far above the maze of hills that lie between it and the Columbia. To the west, lifting well above the general elevation of the Cascade Range in its vicinity, is the watchtower of the lower valley, "next to Mount Hood, the highest peak in the entire region of the Columbia Gorge on the Oregon side, Mount Defiance. Its summit, as the map shows, reaches an altitude of 4,960 feet above the sea. . . . and at its top scoriaceous lava and scattered volcanic bombs, leave no question as to its having been a vigorously active volcano".¹

The east face of its crown is an open, andesite talus where the winter snows linger. In the lore of the local Indians; when the snow has disappeared from this talus face of "Wah-kuht-whallah", the Columbia will rise no more and the spring freshet will begin to recede. In other years, its high north slope, and immediate surroundings were known to the natives as a famous location for huckleberries. A Forest Service lookout station is now on its summit and the peak with its glorious view is quite accessible.

Some sixty years ago, along the foot hills on the west side of the valley, and well up on the east slope of Mount Defiance, active lumbering operations were carried on. Oxen moved the logs to the advancing mill sites, and the product, much of it in the form of railroad ties, was flumed down to the railroad beside the Columbia; thence shipped to its destination. The lower portions of these logged areas have since been cleared and thrifty orchards bearing delicious fruits have

1. See page 102, Ira A. Williams, "Columbia River Gorge" published by the Oregon Bureau of Mines and Geology, 1923 reprint.

taken the place of the lumber forest. It is recalled that a negligible portion of the valley was naturally clear land. For the most part it was wooded with an open stand of pine of varying sizes and density, interspersed with oak trees, large and small, or patches of scrub oak. A considerable portion of the area was laboriously cleared by hand methods or horse power; before the impetus of general orchard planting impelled better and faster methods.

These were some of the conditions that pertained before the fruit growing development that has since made the Hood River Valley famous, and the beautiful place of pleasant homes, occupied by a progressive group of prosperous citizens. Now, most of the homes are modernly equipped, have electricity for all domestic and power purposes. On the west side of the valley water for house use is piped from the City's exceptionally pure, cold supply that passes down the valley high enough to serve most homes. Another line supplies the valley area east of the river. These supplies of pure water contribute greatly to the hygienic welfare of the communities served, and are a luxury unique in rural life; probably not found in such general rural use elsewhere in the United States, if anywhere.

Looking down upon the valley, Mount Hood rises proudly in the symmetry of its most appealing outlines, and the lasting north slope snows keep three of its largest glaciers intact in a constant, but slow movement; assuring an ample supply of water when the need is greatest. The people are also proud of their Lost Lake with its framed reflection of Mount Hood. In summer, when lighted by the highly colored glow of sunset, the mountain is sharply mirrored in all its detail in the peaceful, placid waters of the lake, with the dryads lurking in the woods of the darkening slopes, mocking all out spoken words in reverberating echoes, as the brilliant combination of mountain and lake fade in the deepening shadows of night as they slowly overtake this scene of peerless, inspirational beauty.

This background of scenic features, coupled with the singular rural beauty of the valley itself, lift it out of the commonplace, elevating the spirit of its citizens, and mske it a delightful place in which to live.

W. A. Langille

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State Parks Historian

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Completion of grading and oiling is necessary for the public use. One table should be constructed for lunch usage. No other development should be made.

S. H. Boardman

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State Parks Superintendent

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