

A Coast Trip from Salem to Neskowin in 1893

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It was 6:30 PM on Saturday night, August 6th, when our party of 5 persons with light hearts and grand anticipation started to the coast for a 3 weeks outing. It was quite warm and dusty for traveling during the day, so we chose the cool of the evening to begin our journey. It was 7:00 PM when we crossed the big steel bridge which spans the Willamette River in Salem, Oregon. We had not traveled many miles through the Polk County hills before the western wind from the coast began to blow strong and cool. We soon made ourselves comfortable with robes, blankets, etc.

We proceeded on passing through the village of Zena, and crossing over the hills we were soon in the McCoy Valley. Here we found a long level strip of country with good roads, and it was here that the moon peeped over the hills making our midnight journey more delightful.

On we sped through this beautiful little valley surrounded on all sides by hills, and on our right and left could be seen golden grain moving to and fro by the gentle evening breeze.

Passing through Bethel, McCoy and Perrydale we came into Ballston where we pitched our tents and retired for the balance of the night it being 1:00 Sunday morning. Of course we felt a little weary from our journey, but the excitement was so great that some of our party arose about 6:00 AM, 5 hours after retiring.

They were soon rattling about the camp until all were awakened and had inquired as to whether the early risers had gone to bed at all. Before long we enjoyed a hearty breakfast everyone seeming happy and eager to press on. 10:00 found us packed, loaded, and on the road. We passed through Sheridan and Willamina and "nooned" on the south Yamhill River. In the afternoon we crossed over a few more hills and into the valley so widely known as the Grand Ronde. Here we found extensive farming country inhabited and tilled only by Indians.

Passing through this valley about 2 miles in width we made camp again at 9:00 PM near the tollgate. We soon had supper over and retired for the night. We arose bright and early in the morning feeling much rested, and 2 hours later we were on the road leading into the canyon. We soon began to realize we were in the mountains. We would climb up one side of a mountain, over the divide, and

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descend the other slope repeatedly doing this again. Through this section of country the scenery was most picturesque as the mountains tower high on either side covered with their various foliages and bald caps.

At times one could see at a distance a small cataract as it jumped and tumbled over some high precipice only to momentarily strike some projected point below and then rebound on. About 11:00 we passed the beautiful falls called Estella Falls. They are in the Little Nestucca River which stream we followed for a distance of 10 or 12 miles, and its scenery is beautiful. After leaving the river and a number of divides we could see in front of us a mountain somewhat more elevated over which we were to cross. After ascending and arriving at its summit what met our astonished gaze? It was a beautiful sight for it was the great Pacific like a vast plain before us, and we could see the huge swells roll nearer and nearer until they would break with foam and spread out over the white sand of the beach.

After viewing this sight for some time we moved on a short distance and "nooned", after which we hastened on arriving at the beach and our destination about 6:00 Monday evening or just 48 hours from the time we left home covering a distance of 70 miles. After camp was made and supper over we retired for the first night on the beach.

Before our peaceful slumbers were half finished we were suddenly awakened and startled by the loud shrieks and screams of human voices which pierced our ears and echoed in the mountains until it drowned the roar of the billows. After recovering from the shock we quickly learned it was the womenfolk in our camp who had become frightened by a huge bear which was reconnoitering about in search of food. But before the menfolk would get out to search for the unwelcome visitor he had taken flight to the hills afar. I believe the bear remembered the reception he received at Slab Creek for a long time. We slept the rest of the night in peace.

Tuesday was spent very pleasantly arranging our commodious camp. From this time the days were spent in numerous sports. We would go off for a day's fishing catching some of the finest mountain trout and sometimes fishing at night for the large salmon trout which, needless to say, were well-relished at the table. We had heard that wild game such as bear, deer, etc., were quite numerous, but long, tedious hunts soon revealed the fact they must have gone in search of greener pastures or other causes.

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Bathing in the surf was indulged in by all. When the tide was most favorable for bathing it always found us in readiness eager to enjoy the sport, and after 20 minutes wading, jumping and plunging in the foaming, briny breakers we would return to camp feeling very much refreshed.

We enjoyed walking around the rocky cliffs at low tide visiting the large caves, picking up shells, getting starfish and mussels, etc. from the rocks to which they cling. Returning we would fish for pogies off Pogie Point as the tide came in.

The evenings were very pleasantly spent around the campfire talking over instances that occurred during the day or some other time and singing.

We found it a pleasure strolling or riding on the beach and sitting in the clean white sand watching the seagulls and other fowl flying about or floating on the swells. Now and then a sea lion would appear for a minute or so. Occasionally a mammoth whale or a vessel would put in an appearance. Thus, our stay was enjoyed.

On Thursday morning of August 24th we broke camp, and after bidding good-bye to the ocean and the ocean camp we departed for home. We "nooned" at Estella Falls, and in the afternoon we reached the tollgate camping for the night at an old Indian ranch where the Dave Leno family resided. Here we found a threshing crew hard at work with the entire crew being Indians.

We were all more or less hungry as it was a hard day's travel through the mountains. After eating a hearty supper we retired in a bed well-filled with new straw just fresh from the separator nearby.

I am sorry to say that some of our party put in a sleepless night as they could not accustom themselves to the war whoops of the redskins which echoed from hill to hill most all night long.

We were up at 3:00 Friday morning, prepared a good breakfast, and after doing justice to the same began packing and loading. And at 5:40 AM we were on our way.

Passing through Perrydale, McCoy, Bethel, and Zena we arrived home just as Salem's city clock struck the hour of 6:00 AM. All expressed themselves as having a most enjoyable trip and outing and sincerely looked forward to enjoying the likeness again.

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Note: Dave and Tilmer Leno who resided in a home alongside the toll road were Indians. Their son, Gus Leno, still lives in Grand Ronde, and their grandson, Merle Leno, is the vice-president of the Grand Ronde Tribal Council which represents at least 20 tribes and has offices behind the present Grand Ronde Restaurant.