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Following The Path of Time Across Hebo Mountain

The first use of Mt. Hebo was brought about by the desperate plight of the Tillamook valley settlers during the winter of 1853-54. At that time a half-dozen families and eleven bachelors totaling fifty souls, large and small, occupied the area around Tillamook bay.

Endless winter storms prevented sea going vessels crossing the rough Tillamook bay bar, thus depriving the pioneers of much needed provisions. As winter wore on, flour, groceries, and other necessities were shared by neighbors until their provisions were gone. The settlers had to resort to eating salmon and potatoes three times a day until they could hardly stand the thoughts of the next meal. The nearest grocery store was fifty miles away across the coast range and into the Willamette valley. Realizing the only way to overcome their deplorable situation they laid plans to adopt a means of getting a supply of provisions by trail.

It was May 1854. The hardest of the men agreed to look out a route following a course south from Tillamook valley to about where the now present village

of Hebo is situated, then ascend Mt. Hebo for a better look. From the summit of this 3200 ft. mountain the men expected to get a birds-eye view of the country. The surrounding area was not a beautiful sight. The great 1845 fire had swept from the Willamette valley westward to the ocean beaches leaving thousands of ghost-like dead trees, some standing and others lying prostrate upon the ground. But, from this summit they were joyous to be able to see Tillamook valley to the northwest and the Grand Ronde settlement in the Willamette valley to the southeast.

A correct route for their new trail could be seen following a continuous ridge northwesterly from Grand Ronde, over the summit of Mt. Hebo and down to the Nestucca River near the village of Hebo for a distance of thirty miles; then the route would follow an old Indian Trail for 20 miles to Tillamook valley.

The men, while still standing atop Mt. Hebo, feeling jubilant about their success of the day, suggested, "being we are the first white men on this majestic mountain let's name it 'Mt. Heavo'. This is the correct original name. History does not tell us how it was changed to Mt. Hebo.

The Tillamook settlers then marked logs and snags for the course of the trail to Grand Ronde. They made an agreement with the Grand Ronde settlers to help cut the trail from the Willamette valley end, and the Tillamook valley settlers started from Tillamook bay, racing to see who would reach the Nestucca river first. Everyone laid into his work trying their utmost to reach their objective point first. The Grand Ronde party reached the Nestucca first, but they kept on working.

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When the two parties met, all was excitement with shouts that the mountains and valleys re-echoed again and again, for they were assured of a nearer, safer, and pleasanter route to the Willamette valley. As the news spread that there was a new trail to Tillamook valley, a large number of men flocked into this new land taking up homesteads. The Grand Ronde Reservation Indians used this trail heavily during the 1860's and 1870's to trade their blocks of obsidian for dried salmon and clams provided by the Indians living on the Nestucca bay.

The book "Tillamook Memories" gives an account by Hans Lars Jensen, when he was a boy in 1878, struggling over Hebo Mountain Trail with his parents to Nestucca Valley. At Grand Ronde his father, Lars, hired an old Indian, Mose Hutchens, and his three Indian ponies. Hans's mother rode one pony with her 11 month old daughter. Hans and his brother doubled up on another pony. They packed four sacks of flour and some bacon, their only provisions, on the third pony. Father walked packing his eldest daughter. The old Indian rode on ahead with a huge rifle over his shoulder. Being heavily loaded, their progress was slow. It started raining their first day out and rained day and night on their three day journey. No one got much sleep at night as everyone and everything was soaked through. The pack horse carrying their provisions lost its footing and rolled a distance down a rocky incline on the east slope of Mt. Hebo. They had to unload him and carry their provisions back up to the trail, and lead the horse, which was none the worse for his experience.

They arrived at their 160 acre homestead that lay between Hebo and the Nestucca river. After the guide was paid, Mr. Jensen had only five dollars left. Here they stood in the mud, exhausted to the bone, with no shelter over their heads, possessing 160 acres of timber and brushland, four sacks of wet flour, some bacon, and practically broke. At this point, the Jensen family could not help having second thoughts about pioneering on the coast. Neverthe-

less, Mr. Jensen started chopping down second growth trees to build a much needed log house for his family.

After a few years, the two Jensen boys were old enough to help their father clear the land of trees and brush. They then planted grass seed between the stumps to provide pasture for their milk cows. The cream from the milk was then churned into butter, packed in kegs, and carried by a string of horses over Hebo Mountain to Grand Ronde. The farmers received 10¢ lb. for their butter delivered to the merchants in the Willamette valley.

Today, the former Jensen homestead is divided into several ownerships, consisting mostly of dairymen. Descendants of the Jensen family have moved to various other parts of the country. Wayne Jensen, a great-grandson of Lars, is now director of the pioneer museum in Tillamook.

The year 1882, a road was completed from Grand Ronde, down the Little Nestucca river to the Nestucca valley, thus enabling transportation to the coast by wagon. With this vastly improved transportation route the old historical Grand Ronde-Hebo Mountain-Tillamook trail was not used again.

Being an employee of the Hebo Ranger District, it is one of my duties to evaluate and protect significant Historical or archaeological sites lying within U.S. Forest Service boundaries. The earliest surveyor records and plats showing the exact course of this old trail sparked my interest for further research. Digging through various literature sources I became more excited at each new discovery that added to the story I have related. Realizing the historical value of having this trail in our possession today was important, I felt doubtful if enough of it would be visible to distinguish its course. Nevertheless being enthusiastic and curious about the whole thing,

I decided to make a search for it.

I remember the early surveyors plat showing the course of the trail passing the edge of Hebo Lake. His notes mentioned a section corner nearby that was 1100 feet north of the old trail. On a summer day 1975, I took an assistant with me to help measure the distance between the found section corner and the trail. We were in a state of excitement and anticipation as we neared the last few feet of our measurement; and there it was, a three foot wide trail faintly visible beneath a several inch accumulation of dead ferns and twigs! As we followed more of the trail, the reality of its past historical events unfolded before our eyes. We could see a potential recreational value of developing this site for the benefit of the public to hike and to enjoy it as a nature and historical trail. A further search, lasting several weeks, was made to find as much more of the trail as possible. Roads and Radar base activities have destroyed all evidence of the path on the summit of Mt. Hebo.

The Forest Service has chosen two portions of the trail to save by placing them on the National Register of trails thus assuring their preservation against any activities except public hiking. One portion extends from Lake Hebo easterly for two miles to within one-half mile of the Radar base. The second trail site starts at the east Mt. Hebo campground traversing down the steep east slope of the mountain for one mile to North Lake.

Imagine, if those early people that were joyous to have this one transportation route, could project themselves in time to today and see our networks of paved roads that keep us out of the mud and riding in our comfortable auto's at breakneck speed. Then, we today walk their trail, plodding along at 2 or 3 miles per hour up over the high mountain where the wind blows and facing rain,

sleet, snow, or occasionally a beautiful, bright, sunny day. We then can appreciate the effort and hardships experienced by the early pioneers who used this thread of a path to develop our land west of the coast range.

The next recorded historical Hebo mountain date is 1898. The General Land Office contracted a surveyor to establish all section and quarter corners on Mt. Hebo. The surveyors record show he found a large sheep ranch at Lake Hebo. Wm. Kuykedall homesteaded 160 acres here and built a picket fence around his entire tract of land; his cabin was located on the east side of Lake Hebo. Today, a large pile of stones used for his cabin foundation can be seen on one of the picnic areas.

Years later, a Mr. and Mrs. Johnson owned this ranch. One day, Mrs. Johnson died suddenly. It would have been easier to have draped her over a pack horse and taken her out their narrow trail down Cedar Creek, but Mr. Johnson had the fantasy she would appear more comfortable if she was laid out in a wagon box. Some of the people living along Three Rivers volunteered a wagon and their services to clear logs and boulders from the narrow trail so she could be hauled out in dignity. The year 1904, a woman by the name of Cora Cramer filed a homestead claim of 160 acres on the backbone of Mt. Hebo east of the present Radar site.

Aerial photos clearly show the L shaped parcel of land as having sparsely spaced trees within its boundaries. The Forest Service land surrounding her property was planted to trees in 1912 and now show dense cover of conifers. In 1922 the Tillamook County Sheriff had to take her land for delinquent taxes. He then auctioned it off to the highest bidder for \$52.

In those days the slopes of Mt. Hebo were similarly open as the sage brush hills of Eastern Oregon. Fires until 1911 prevented substantial growth of conifer trees. People from far and wide herded their livestock to this mountain for summer grazing, on its abundant supply of wild pea vine and lush grass. By late fall the animals had layed on a fine layer of fat and it was time for the ranchers to gather up their livestock to be herded down to the lowlands. Some of the cattle, enjoying their independence during the summer days on the mountain, objected to anyone attempting to herd them against their will. When pressed further, they were determined to sever all ties with their owners, by throwing their tails over their backs, and head into the brushy canyons on the lower levels of the mountain. At this point they were fair game for anyone to stalk and shoot them on the spot, quartered, and packed out on pack horses.

The U.S. Forest Service was created in 1905. The Hebo Ranger District became established and organized in 1907. The year 1910 was an unusually dry year and several devastating fires broke out which swept most of Mt. Hebo country and continued uncontrolled long into the fall. The efforts of the Ranger and two assistants travelling by foot and horseback counted little against the thousands of acres of fire lashing out in all directions. This brought about an ambitious Forest Service program to plant 8000 acres of burnt-over land.

In 1911, the Forest Service advertised for people to restock the slopes of Mt. Hebo with trees. Wages were low in those days. The Forestry Department offered tree planters \$1.00 a day, food and tents furnished. Jobs and money in southern Tillamook County were as scarce as hens teeth. Men flocked to the Ranger Station in such numbers they were chosen by first in line, first served, until the quota was filled. A packer was hired with a string of pack

each year. Some day hiking trails, camping facilities, and view points will be expanded to afford a well known mecca for the outdoorsmen of modern time.

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