

Tales of Oregon

Typed January 2023 by Dean Bones

John R. Blalock wrote many articles for for the AAPA - American Amateur Press Association. This article is one of those AAPA articles. It contains a number of short stories mostly about going to the ocean and beach but also a short story about an airplane giving rides at the Tillamook County Fair in 1919. Note that several of the stories about the beach and ocean are about Ocean Park which was later named Pacific City. No date is given of when the article was written, but it must have been in the early 2000s. db

In 1915 my folks lived on the banks of the Big Nestucca River in Tillamook County, Oregon. That river started out high in the Coast Range Mountains, came down the valley north of Mt. Hebo to Beaver, then turned southwest almost to the seashore where it ran south separated from the ocean only by a wide sandbar until it entered Nestucca Bay which emptied into the ocean farther south.

When I was about 5 years old our family decided to go down to the ocean. We traveled in our covered wagon with a team of horses down the road past Beaver.

After crossing the river to the east side we came to Hebo and then Cloverdale before arriving at Ocean Park, now called Pacific City. Over at the Edmonds Hotel we could see that it was full. The veranda, which went across the front and back along the south side of the building, was full of people.

We stopped at the store to visit with Uncle Dwight Edmonds, and then we went out to the campground where we camped with the covered wagon and a tent. We cooked over a campfire. The horses also were fed with oats that were poured into feed bags that covered their mouths and noses and hung by straps from the tops of their heads. And in a fenced-in area nearby there were several deer kept that were almost tame.

The next day after we arrived we all went over to the beach crossing the river in a hand-powered ferry boat. It was shaped like a long box or like a barge. There were round holes near the top of each end, and through these a large rope was strung that was tied fast to posts on opposite sides of the river. The rope slid through those holes as we pulled ourselves across the river. A dozen or more people could cross together.

Out on the sandbar we all walked across to the beach and then up to Cape Kiawanda. There I played in tidepools while most of the adults went out on the cape which at that time extended far out to sea. Groves of small spruce trees

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grew thick on much of the cape. Today the cape is hardly half the size it was then.

While out on the cape my sisters picked up starfish which they carried home. After a few days of enjoying the seashore and Mother visiting her sister at the hotel, Father hitched up the horses, and we traveled back up the river to our home.

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The summer of 1919 after the war was over in Europe many young pilots bought war surplus planes and went “barnstorming” around the country to make a little money. As usual that year my father had a farm exhibit at the Tillamook County Fair. In those days there were always a number of farm exhibits at the county fair. I was with my father at the fair almost every day, and a barnstorming pilot was there with his plane taking off and landing in a pasture right behind the fair grounds. He was making good money at \$5.00 a ride of about 15 minutes each.

One day I was watching the pilot take up passengers. It was a biplane with 2 open cockpits with 1 behind the other. The pilot rode in the rear and the passenger in front. A small grove of trees was a hinderance and kept the plane from making a straight take off. The pilot always had to quickly turn to one side to miss the trees. This time while I was watching him take off he turned to miss the trees but banked too steeply, and the plane turned and dived into the ground breaking in two. The tail section fell down over the front part.

Out of the plane wreckage climbed the pilot and his passenger. The pilot seemed unhurt, but the man passenger had a broken nose. Airplane rides were over for that year.

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In 1935 I went back to visit Pacific City, Oregon. I traveled by bicycle from Sheridan where I was then staying. My aunt Dilia Edmonds was still living in the old hotel that she had managed 19 years before. It was still in pretty good shape, but no one came anymore for those were depression days. My cousin, Mabel, lived with her husband and two boys in a small house near the hotel, and my cousin Ernest Edmonds lived with his wife and teenage daughter only a short distance away.

My aunt Dilia’s maiden name had been Cordilia Florence DONALDSON, and she had been born and grew up a short distance east of the town of Tillamook. She

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was an older sister of my mother's. She was glad to have me visit and proud to demonstrate her skill in cooking sea foods. I slept in one of the 8 or 10 rooms upstairs that were on both sides of a long hall. By the window in each room was a wash stand with a big porcelain wash basin on top, and by its side was a beautiful porcelain pitcher for carrying water. The dining room and lounge downstairs still contained furniture. Most noticeable was the big gold-colored upright piano. I could play church songs, so while there I played and sang old hymns for my aunt.

I found that my cousin, Mabel, was an excellent pianist, and she could play classical music. So I got her to play some for me, but now being a busy housewife and mother of 2 boys she found little time for the piano.

Mabel's 2 boys were very self-sufficient and independent though only about 8 and 10 years old. At that time the bridge across to the beach had been washed away and never replaced, but those boys had a rowboat and took me over to the beach. It was all empty with not a single person around. Here and there the remains of houses protruded from the sand where some ten years before people had built cottages. Then came the hard winter storms and washed them all away. My cousin, Ernest, said he had seen waves come across the sandbar and pour down into the river.

Today that beach is again covered with houses more than ever before, and just south of Cape Kiawanda a 4 story hotel has been built. I think of how Jesus said, "The foolish man built his house upon the sand."

Not far north of Pacific City people who built their houses too close to the shore are now trying to get permission to have rock, riprap, put down on the beach to protect their homes from the waves. But they cannot get permission for beaches in Oregon are all public property and like highways must be kept open for everyone.

When I was a small boy I used to hear people talk about the wonderful town of Bay Ocean. It was built on the peninsula that separated Tillamook Bay from the ocean. It must have been a quarter of a mile wide. There was a hill covered with trees, and on that hill a hotel was built with a wonderful view of the ocean. There were many cottages and a large natatorium. After the railroad from Portland to Tillamook opened in 1912 many wealthy people traveled to Tillamook and on to Bay Ocean to spend the summer in cottages or in the hotel. Then after 1920 the ocean side of that peninsula began to wash away. house after house fell into the

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sea 'till finally everything was gone. It is only a narrow strip of sand now with no trace of the town that used to be.

A good concrete bridge now crosses the river at Pacific City, and a good paved road of asphalt leads north on that sandbar past many houses and behind Cape Kiwanda, as they now spell it, on to Tierra del Mar past Sand Lake and over the base of Cape Lookout. This tree-covered cape is one of the longest on the coast, and a path goes out to the tip. Just north of the cape is Cape Lookout State Park with a parking lot and beach access and a large campground beside it. On the north is Netarts Bay and then the little town of Netarts. A short distance farther you can turn off to Oceanside, a beautiful little town on cliffs above the sea with a parking area and steps down to the little beach. Going on north you can follow the cliffs around to where a side road leads out to Cape Meares Light House. From the large parking lot here you can take a trail into the woods and see the "world famous" Octopus Tree.

Beyond Cape Meares you will soon see where Bay Ocean once was. The road turns back around the bay to the town of Tillamook and Highway 101. When I was a boy and the building of the coast highway started it was called "Roosevelt Highway" after Teddy Roosevelt.