

Long Tom's flood history holds valuable lessons

Editor's note: This is the first of three monthly articles recounting the history of flooding in the Long Tom watershed and Willamette Valley and human efforts to deal with those floods.

By RICK HAYES
Long Tom Watershed Council

Settler Virgil K. Pringle, arriving in the Willamette Valley in 1846, noted in his diary that the place was "the handsomest valley I ever beheld."

For Pringle and others, the valley must have appeared as a paradise — wide and lush. Today we understand that this beautiful landscape of open prairies, savannahs, marshes

and forested river networks was sculpted by a mix of forces, which were at turns, both destructive and restorative.

During their earlier travels here, trappers and explorers encountered vast, blackened grasslands that had been burned over by Native Americans. These regular burnings created the park-like savannahs that made the valley so appealing.

The settlers found that the rivers, with their complex wetlands and heavy thickets, were a challenge. Logically, the earliest settlers took up prime claims at the margins between the upland forests and drier prairies, as had the Kalapuya before them.

Nonetheless, the promise of land and water-borne commerce saw the valley floor almost completely claimed by the time the Donation Land Claims Act expired in 1855.

At this juncture, most transportation was by water. Hence, many farm operations and most emerging towns were near streams on the lower flood plains. Even so, there must have been limited recognition of the risk of being so close to the rivers.

The floodplain river systems were deceptively powerful and active. A stable lava sill, Willamette Falls, prevented the rivers from downcutting or accelerating, and allowed them to freely wander back and forth across the flat landscape.

These streambed migrations produced numerous intricately woven side channels, parallel tributaries, sloughs and oxbows. Because

the storms of each winter season spilled flows over the riverbanks, the margins of the watercourses were thickly forested within the range of high water.


These riparian forest "galleries" were miles wide in many locations, and loaded the braided channel networks with huge tangles of downed trees and brush. This also influenced the active movement of gravel bars within the channels, creating a very unsettled pattern to flow pattern through the floodplains.

This complicated system was wondrous, and many trapper and settler diaries spoke of such things as "millions of geese, brants and

most completely claimed by the time the Donation Land Claims Act expired in 1855. At this juncture, most transportation was by water. Hence, many farm operations and most emerging towns were near streams on the lower flood plains. Even so, there must have been limited recognition of the risk of being so close to the rivers.

The floodplain river systems were deceptively powerful and active. A stable lava sill, Willamette Falls, prevented the rivers from downcutting or accelerating, and allowed them to freely wander back and forth across the flat landscape.

THE NEWS BUSINESS DIRECTORY

<p>RENTAL EQUIPMENT</p>	<p>Westlane Rentals 935-4547 25561 Hwy 126 Veneta</p>	<p>Equipment Rental & Sales</p>	<p>List of Equipment: • Kubota 4WD Tractor w/ Backhoe • Kubota 4WD Tractor w/ various implements • Ditch Witch • Silt Power Equipment • Senco Tools & Supplies</p>	<p>• Lawn Equipment • Gas Pole Pruner - 18 ft. • Carpet Shampooers • Paint/Texture Equip.</p>	<p>Need a Break?</p>	<p>Comfortable Affordable Privately Owned Homes at the Beautiful Oregon Coast</p>	<p>997-RENT</p>	<p>Dolphin Property Management, Inc.</p>
<p>ROCK</p>	<p>Bond Butte Quarry Serving Harrisburg, Hulsey, Brownsville</p>	<p>Gary Waggener 541-513-8600</p>	<p>• Crushed Quarry • Landscaped Rock • Rip Rap</p>		<p>INTEGRITY ROOFING</p>	<p>435 Kamia St Junction City, OR 97448 541-998-1780 334-1581 Pager</p>	<p>Alan Ranch, Owner Financing Available O.A.C. FAFMC LICENSE #AU02141 CCB# 118248</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>
<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>Licensed & Bonded Insured</p>	<p><i>Master Quality</i></p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>• Residential Comp Roof Specialist • Hand-nailed OR staple application • New Construction • Tear-offs • Roof Inspections & Repairs • Flat to sleep roof types</p>	<p>FREE ESTIMATES SENIOR DISCOUNTS (541) 424-3401</p>	<p>CCB# 141627</p>	<p>DAN BENSON CONSTRUCTION & ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>
<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>Licensed & Bonded CCB # 84136</p>	<p>All types of roofing</p>	<p>Family owned & operated Gladly FREE onsite estimates References available Senior DISCOUNTS Let us solve your roofing needs 24 years experience</p>	<p>DAN BENSON CONSTRUCTION & ROOFING</p>	<p>935-0720</p>	<p>25982 Girl Scout Rd. • Veneta</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>
<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>
<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>
<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>	<p>ROOFING</p>

RV PARK

MONROE RV

**VINYL SIDING
 FIRER CEMENT SIDING**

SHOIT

ADD THE PERCENTAGES FOR MORE PROFITS

Flooding from page 19

cranes" and of "flowering vegetables very remarkable and beyond all conception."

The prospect for reworking the maze of physical forces and mobile obstacles must have seemed awesome. Initially, the riverside forests were used largely as woodlots by the settlers, and the buildings and farming operations were confined outside the flood-prone bottomlands. Not surprisingly, periodic floods destroyed mills, barns and warehouses up and down the valley.

In December 1861, the greatest flood ever recorded in the Willamette basin occurred, putting 353,000 acres under water, half of it between Eugene and Albany. The flood crested 19 feet above bank-full at Albany, and discharge flows were measured at 635,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) at Portland (the

springtime high flow at Salem is usually about 25,000 cfs).

Literally everything was affected, and reports of the time chronicled great losses of crops and livestock, flooding of at least portions of every settlement in the valley, and many major building losses. The flood caused numerous deaths, as there were simply no warning or transportation systems that could reach rural residents. The week-long flood transformed the upper half of the Willamette basin into a lake.

Limited help arrived in the years immediately following this disaster. The concept of flood control was something new and peculiar to the Mississippi. The federal government was focused on the Civil War and made significant reduction in all of its western en-

gineering efforts during the war years. Local river "improvement" projects would commence in 1865, but were to be focused on

deepening shipping channels at Portland for oceanic trade.

Next month: What would be done?

Enjoy one of Eugene's finest Chinese dining experiences at

LOK YAUN RESTAURANT

featuring Chinese style family dinners, or if you prefer,
your favorite American food!

CHINESE & AMERICAN FOOD
CHAR-BROILED STEAKS • CANTONESE DELIGHTS
WINE & BEER • BANQUET FACILITIES • ORDERS TO GO

16 oz **TOP SIRLOIN or TERIYAKI STEAK** **\$9.95**
Offer good Tues-Sun Reg. 14.95

SPECIAL CHINESE DINNER **\$5.95**
Offer good Mon-Wed For 2 or more Reg 9.95

LUNCHEON SPECIALS **\$2.95**
Mon-Fri, 11 am-3 pm

LOK YAUN RESTAURANT

2360 W. 11th at City View, Eugene, 345-7448 (Next to Staples)

Open Sun, 12-10 pm • M-Th, 11 am-10 pm • Fri 11 am-11 pm • Sat 12-11 pm

THE NEWS BUSINESS DIRECTORY

CONSTRUCTION

LYNN WHEELER BUILDER

- Custom Work
- New Homes
- Remodeling

998-2892
Junction City
CCB #10561

CONSTRUCTION

Renovations & Repairs

James Sheffler

Specializing in

- Interior Painting
- Sheet rock
- Flooring and more

30 years experience
(541) 847-5553
Monroe, Oregon
CCB#142994

CONSTRUCTION

J.F. Sorensen
Building Contractor

998-8044

New Construction
Home Repairs

CCB #51453
92680 Territorial Rd.
JUNCTION CITY

DAY SPA

Mirage body works

- The Mirage Hair System
- Hair Studio
- Nail Tech
- Clothing & Swimwear
- Fruit Smoothies
- Breakfast & Soy Smoothies
- Hot Coffee & Iced Mochis
- Hawaiian Ice
- Teriyaki Chicken & Rice

998-8300
M-F 7am - 9pm Sat. - Sun. 4pm - 9pm

DAY SPA

Subscribe to the
West Lane News
Tri-County News

935-1882
998-3877

DENTURES

D & J Denture Center

- NEW DENTURES
- RELINES & REPAIRS (same day service)
- Free Consultation
- Most Insurance Plans Accepted

998-8433
Inside Oregon 1-800-541-8433
Dan J. Dettmann L.D.
1680 Ivy St., Ste. 1
Junction City, OR 97448
(Across from Safeway)

EXCAVATION

Bravo

EXCAVATION

Cap you dia it?

EXCAVATING

M.G.

FARM SUPPLIES

The

FARM SUPPLIES

995-8200