

A Sense of Place



*Making connections with the past to the present,
between the events and places that are a distinctive
part of the make-up of the Mt. Hood National Forest
and our Asian/Pacific Islander communities.*

US Department
of Agriculture

Region 6



Pacific
Northwest Region

Mt. Hood
National Forest

Cover photo: Japanese rice bowl depicting Mt. Fuji, recovered from a 1930s railroad logging camp on the Mt. Hood National Forest. Photo in background is of Mt. Hood.

Welcome to the Mt. Hood National Forest

This project is designed to bring closer ties to the Asian/Pacific Islander communities we serve and the Mt. Hood National Forest. Our hope is by describing events, activities, histories, special places, and adding in some photographs we can build connections between the people and the land we manage, thereby giving the Asian/Pacific Islanders a stake in our National Forest, a sense of place.

Asian/Pacific Islanders can trace their origins to countries that span over two-thirds of the world - from the lands east of the Ural Mountains in Russia, south towards the Indian Ocean, and most of the islands in the Pacific Ocean. While over 1,400+ different cultures are represented in this group, the information gathered and presented here focuses only on two cultures, people who came to this country from China and Japan. The information on these people was found in archival records at museums, libraries, colleges, the Internet, historic photographs, and oral histories (visiting with folks).

With your help, future issues of this booklet can be broadened to include other cultures within the Asian/Pacific Islander communities. See the Data Gaps section for how you can contribute to a connection between you, your community, and the Mt. Hood National Forest. This document will also be available in the latter part of 1999 on the Mt. Hood National Forest's web site: www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood . Translations of this booklet in Japanese and Chinese are planned to be available in the year 2000. Other languages will follow.



Chinese camp at The Dalles, Oregon

The Chinese first came to this country to escape a number of natural disasters and social unrest in China. The earliest arrivals were predominately young men who would work as laborers, usually under contract, though sometimes indentured or unwillingly forced to work in America. Many lived in Portland, and often sent to jobs in other parts of the state. Quite often these early Chinese workers expected to return to China after making their fortunes, but for various reasons, many ended up staying in America.



Family portrait on tree stump, 1901

Some of the earliest Japanese people came to this country by accident. In 1832, a ship wrecked on the Oregon coast with only three survivors. The three young men were captured by the local Native Americans and made into slaves. Some years later, Dr. John McLoughlin, chief factor of the Hudson Bay Company, reportedly bought their freedom. Soon other Japanese people would follow and make the United States their home.

As laborers, these men did many things: stump pulling, working in the woods, cooking, clearing of land, cord wood splitting and stacking, road building, railroad construction, cannery work, and in later years were well known orchardists. Doing these jobs was the way most made a living from the 1800s to the 1900s.

Prior to World War II, Hood River County had the second highest population of Japanese citizens in the state; only Multnomah County was higher. Despite the internment during WWII, many Japanese returned to the Hood River Valley. One

reason it is thought that the Japanese have a special bond with the Hood River Valley is because of its lushness, rivers, and towering mountains. Some were said to think that Mt. Hood, and the lands surrounding it, reminded them of the lands surrounding Mt. Fuji in Japan.

For both the Japanese and Chinese, the first generations to arrive were predominantly young men. The Japanese deemed this first generation "Issei". After the men got settled they would send for their wives and families, or new brides. Generally the brides would be through a prearrangement between families or other arrangements, from their hometown and local villages back in their home country.

Hard work left little time for recreating in the National Forest. That would develop sometime in the early 1900s. Because of their role as laborers in American society, discrimination towards them was prevalent most everywhere and well documented. In 1923, the Alien Land Law denied Asians who were not American citizens the right to own land. The Hood River Valley played a major role in the controversy. A loophole in the law said nothing about prohibiting their American born children, who were citizens by birthright, from owning property. It would not be until sometime after the end of WWII that lives and families could really take root in the United States.



Upper Willow Flat (O'Dell), 1930s

Looking at Some Examples of the Events and People

In 1874, Thomas and Sam Johns immigrated to the United States. In 1886, they started a sawmill in the upper Mill Creek area, southwest of The Dalles, Oregon. Many Chinese were living in the Mid-Columbia area at the time. Sam Johns employed Chinese laborers with the help of Doc Sung, who was the illustrious head of the district Chinese Tong. Doc Sung recommended who to hire. The Chinese were excellent laborers and knew how to put up a “true cord of wood” leaving no spaces. They were also employed to do many other laborious tasks. Today this area is part of the City of The Dalles Municipal Watershed.



Stump pulling above Dee Lumber Mill, 1937

In 1905, Masuo Yasui was 19 when he made a trip up the Columbia River to the small farming community of

Hood River. It reminded him of his home in Japan, in the foothills of Mt. Fuji. Several hundred Japanese were working in the valley in logging camps, sawmills, and orchards, when he arrived. He established a small grocery store in Hood River. A few years later, after the huge Douglas-fir trees were cleared off, the stump littered land sold for as little as 25 cents an acre. It is well known that many of the Japanese Americans were paid in land in lieu of wages. Masuo saw the potential of the stump land for development into productive orchard land. So working with other Japanese laborers and using some of his own earnings from the store, Masuo, his children, and other Japanese began to work together to buy land and remove stumps. In 1931, Masuo became the first Japanese to be elected to the Apple Growers Association’s Board of Directors. By 1941 he was one of the largest fruit growers in the state of Oregon.



O’Dell orchard, 1920s



Women working in fields, 1920s

However, by the end of December 1941 his world would be forever changed. Masuo would be sent to an internment camp in Montana, then Louisiana, then New Mexico. His wife and children were sent to another camp at Tule Lake in northern California. While in the camps, the government froze all assets of Japanese Americans and their lands were sold. Without a farm to return to upon his release, Masuo moved to Portland. From his home he could once again see Mt. Hood. When he died in 1957, he was buried in the family cemetery in Hood River, overlooked by the snow-capped peak of Mt. Hood. Several of his descendants live in the Hood River Valley to this day.



Track maintenance workers

The Chinese were often employed to work on the railroads, which not only moved goods and services between Hood River and Portland, but also north and south in the Hood River Valley from the upper valley areas to the Columbia River.

The decision to use Chinese workers in the cannery was made in 1896. Seufert's built and operated their first salmon cannery up at The Dalles fishery. In 1896, they used Chinese labor exclusively. All of the Chinese came from the Portland area. In 1896 the lower Columbia River, according to the Corps of Engineers, listed 3,396 Chinese employed at 39 canneries. They lived in camps and some lived in bunkhouses.

As the Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans became more integrated into mainstream society, they became more involved in activities, events, and clubs outside of their own group. An example of people as a whole becoming more integrated into society can be seen on the last page of this document picturing the Yasui brothers in the company of their boy scout troop at Camp Baldwin. The photo was taken in the 1930s.

Before 1941, many Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans used the Mt. Hood National Forest for the gathering of mushrooms, recreation, and family outings. We can still see this interaction between people and forest occurring. The gathering of matsutake mushrooms is a strong family tradition even to this day.

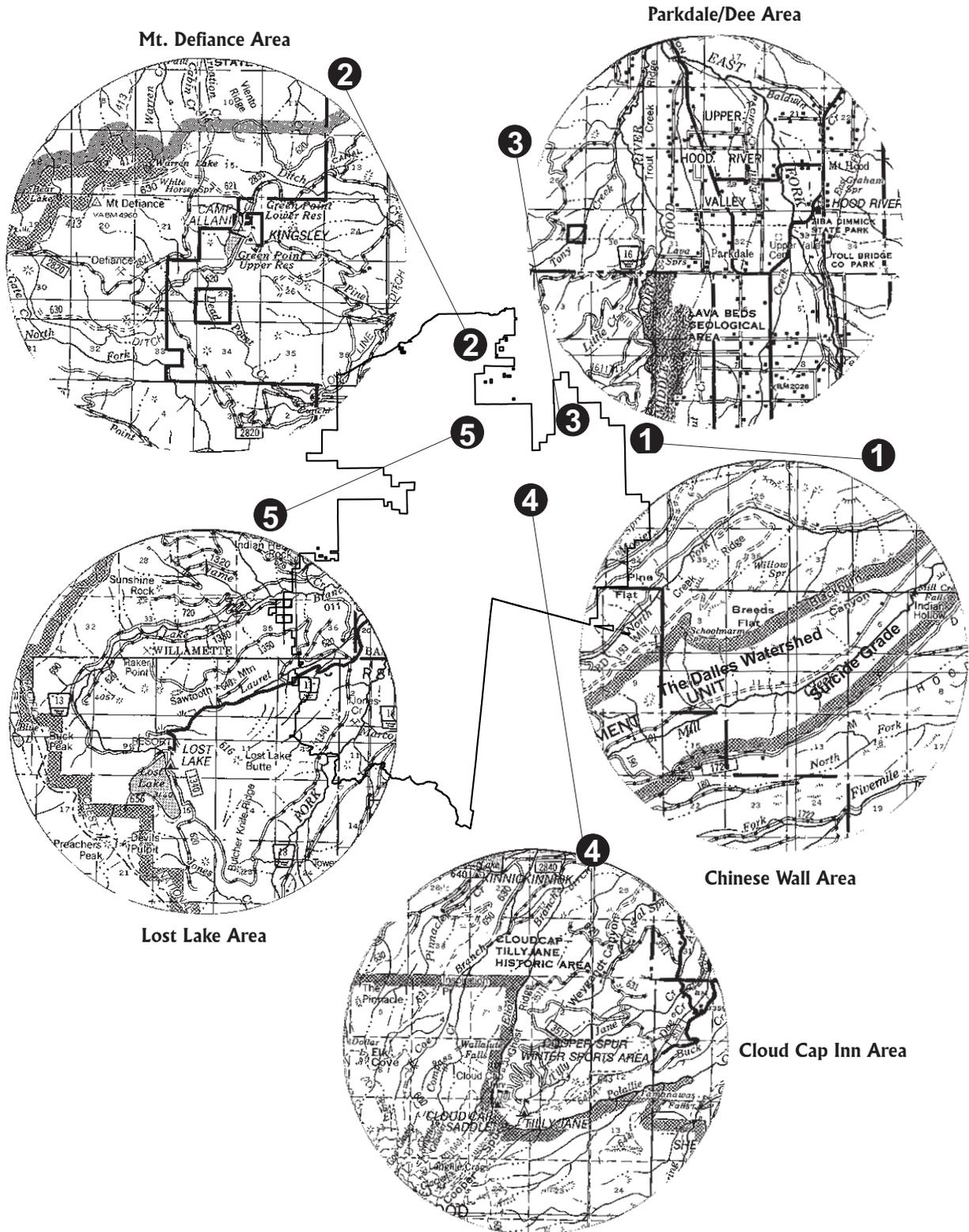
The Mt. Hood National Forest of today is as important to the people of the Asian/Pacific Islander communities as ever, with additional cultures and bringing new traditions enriching the diversity of the Mt. Hood National Forest.

The preceding paragraphs are only a small piece of our rich history. We use these examples to begin our building of connections and linkages from the past to the present.



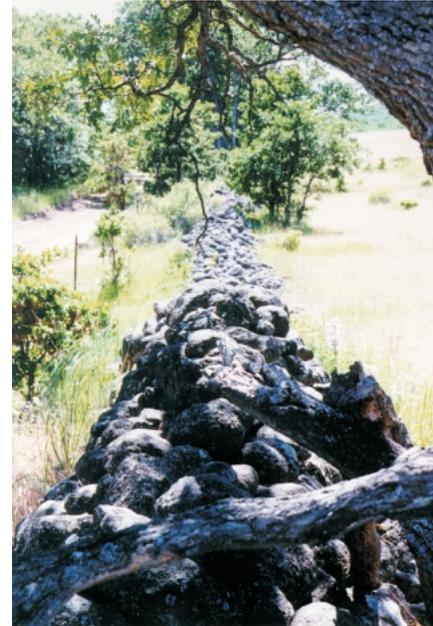
Chinese workers in Astoria Salmon Cannery Company, Columbia River

Mt. Hood National Forest



The Human Story . . .

Site One is a piece of history that still stands as a symbol of a laborious past. The Chinese Wall, as it is described, was constructed by Chinese laborers working for the Johns (two bothers who started the first mill in the Upper Mill Creek community). The rocks shown in the photo were moved to clear land for pasturage of livestock, possibly act as a fence for the livestock, and/or to keep roadways clear so passage would remain possible. This picture was taken near the location of the halfway house. This house marked the halfway point between the Upper Mill Creek community and the City of The Dalles. This wall runs for several hundred feet. At times a parallel wall runs on the south side of the road (Suicide Grade). Access to the wall is restricted by the absence of a bridge that was washed out in the 1980s on the North Fork of Mill Creek (never replaced) and restricted access into The Dalles Municipal Watershed.



On an anecdotal note about the lumber mills, early in the day several of the lumber crew happened into the kitchen. The Chinese cook was busy kneading bread dough. Upon closer inspection, the men noticed the cook had a rather odd motion of spitting into the palm of his hand as he kept up the cadence of kneading. The men were repulsed at the thought of eating the dough with the “added ingredient.” So the woodsmen gave the cook a free ride to The Dalles via a log in the flume. (The flume ran from the community of Upper Mill Creek to The Dalles, sending lumber and drinking water downstream.) Note: We have no follow-up as to what happened to the cook or the woodsman after this incident.



Chinese wall (photo taken 1999)

Site Two is Mt. Defiance. For the Japanese Americans, the Mt. Defiance area holds many grand memories.

Maija Yasui, married to Phillip Yasui, grandson of Masuo Yasui (an Issei). Maija recalls in the early 1900s Japanese harvested matsutake mushrooms in the fall from the forest. They would then trade the mushrooms with the local Native Americans for huckleberries. This activity occurred near Kingsley and the Davenport Mill.

Maija also recalls that Mrs. Ichino Kagiya used the kurotake mushrooms for medicinal purposes. The mushrooms were dried and made into a tea. The tea was given not for any specific ailment but for fatigue, lack of energy, tiredness, general malaise.



Japanese pine mushroom or matsutake

Homer Yasui, son of Masuo Yasui and uncle to Phillip Yasui, remembers the Issei pioneers hunted, fished, gathered mushrooms and fiddlehead ferns, and did some huckleberry picking. Homer went fishing in the Mt. Defiance area. “There were lots of creeks there, and there were no limits on the number of fish or the size of the fish you could catch then” said Homer. It is documented in various documents that other Japanese Americans enjoyed fishing in this area as well.

The stick in the picture is a traditional digging stick used to remove matsutake mushrooms, a favorite of the Japanese Americans.



Site Three is the Parkdale/Dee area. Located in the upper parts of the Hood River Valley.

Homer Yasui recalls the Issei worked in lumber camps on the Mt. Hood National Forest. They did not fall trees or scout timber but worked in the actual camps, sawing wood once it was on the ground, etc.

In 1917, the Japanese laborers built the railroad from the Mt. Hood National Forest area to the Dee area. A Mr. Juvinall, (see photo) a Caucasian man, befriended the Japanese in the logging camp at Oregon Lumber Company. He had fallen into a log pond on a different job and a Japanese man had pulled him from the water, saving his life. He always said he owed them a debt of gratitude. He gave the small Nisei (second generation) children hard candy. He continued his friendship with them after WWII. When the Japanese Americans returned to the Dee area in 1946 after living in internment camps, Juvinall purchased supplies, food, and equipment from those living in the area.



Mr. Juvinall, late 1920s

In 1918, the expanding northwest lumber industry attracted large numbers of Japanese mill workers to the community. Many worked in the Dee sawmill. Mr. Miyozo Yumibe “found he was well suited to the work.” While employed at the Dee sawmill, the Japanese men lived in a camp town, in a clearing along East Fork Hood River. There was a hotel in Dee but most of the Japanese laborers preferred to live in the camp so they could save money and return to Japan sooner.

The Japanese American community got together about 2 times a year in the foothills of Mt. Hood near Parkdale. In the summer, they met during Indokai, a time of picnicking together, with sports activities and competitions for the children. In the winter, they met at individual homes for their get-togethers.



Dee Lumber Mill railroad, 1920

After the timber was removed, stump filled lands sold for 25 cents an acre. The Japanese that were allowed to own land bought land, removed the stumps, and turned the land into productive farms for strawberries, asparagus, and fruit orchards.

Some Japanese lived in boxcars at the lumbermills. Up to 10 people lived in each boxcar. Each boxcar had a pot-bellied stove. Usually, the cooking was done in a cooking tent. The Japanese cooks cooked separately from the Italian and/or Greek cooks. Separate meals were served to the lumbermill workers. The cooks themselves did exchange recipes between ethnic groups, even though they were separated.

Site Four is Cloud Cap Inn. In the summer of 1884, the first explorations were begun to blaze a road through the trackless wilderness of Mt. Hood with the idea of a summer resort on the mountain in the Cooper Spur area. In the spring of 1889, William Ladd and Colonel C.E.S. Wood of Portland bought the road and all rights to it. A hotel was built called Cloud Cap Inn, and lasted as an inn until WWII when it became a private residence. The Forest Service took it over, then in the mid to late 1950s the CRAG Rats took over the maintenance and upkeep of the building.

A Chinese road crew was hired to grade the road to Cooper Spur, the location of the inn. They were paid \$5,000 and did all of the road grading by hand. This section of road was called "China Fill". It had many sharp curves with a road grade of 22%. Local legends claim men were buried in China Fill, but this has never been substantiated. Aakki-Daakki to Zoomorphic, an Encyclopedia About Hood River County; 1994.

Thomas McKay, a railroad contractor, brought in Chinese construction crews to help improve the Mt. Hood Stage Company road in 1939. This road connected the new site of Cloud Cap Inn with the road to Hood River and had been formerly called Mt. Hood Trail and Wagon Road. Old world Chinese men with long queues down their backs were brought in to cook for the road crews. The Chinese did all of the grading by hand on this twelve mile stretch of road.

In building the Cloud Cap Inn road, the Chinese laborers were to dig and fill the sides of the hills. China Fill was the infamous portion of the road mentioned above. China Hill was another steep section of the road climbing out of Evans Creek Canyon that gives its name to the hilltop above the grade. This became the site of the Mt. Hood Lodge. The Mt. Hood Lodge burned down in the 1930s. Nothing remains of the building but the metal cables set in concrete that steadied the high water tower and windmill.



Cloud Cap Inn guests rode all day in "Democrat Wagon"
up from Hood River train station, 1893

Site Five is Lost Lake. Due to the lake's closeness to the Hood River Valley, it became a popular spot for Japanese Americans to go. The photo illustrates canoeing on the lake. Picnicking and fishing were other pastimes at the lake.

Homer Yasui, as mentioned before, enjoyed fishing in this lake. He also enjoyed these activities at Frog and Wahtum Lakes. He remembers the good times of outings and community picnics around 1936 pre-war times.

Others remember Lost Lake as a place to relax and not think of the busy world that surrounds them.



Outing at Lost Lake, early 1930s



Robinhood Campground picnic, 1934

Data Gaps

As we were researching information for this project, we found that other Asian/Pacific Islander groups worked and lived in proximity of the Mt. Hood National Forest. But we found it difficult to find information on these people. We know, for example, that Koreans were in the area but little information exists on how they got here. Why did they come? What brought them to this area? In this brochure we mentioned some folks by name. However, there was a time when some people were not deemed worthy enough to mention their names; they were only known by their nationality.

Recently, we may have found evidence of a Chinese shoe repair shop on the Mt. Hood National Forest. The idea that this is indeed a Chinese shoe repair shop is only speculation as more information and evidence to such is looked at. If this proves to be true, then we might also speculate that the shoe repair might have been done in lieu of payment and/or as a source of income for food and services in the local communities.

There is much we don't know and want to learn. We want to hear from you or people you know who might help us make future connections between the people and the Mt. Hood National Forest.

We welcome more stories about the Japanese and Chinese Americans in this area. We also know that other nationalities have come since and maybe even earlier than those mentioned in this booklet. Also, we are interested in how you use the forest today (i.e. hunting, fishing, camping, gathering medicinal plants, collecting mushrooms, collecting huckleberries, collecting boughs, Christmas trees, etc.) We are sure that there are stories with each one of these activities that others can relate to and make a connection with.



Chinese man fishing on the Columbia River

Let us hear from you. If you would like to share your experiences and family histories, send us a note with the information you want to share or a way for us to contact you. You may contact us at: Mt. Hood National Forest, 16400 Champion Way, Sandy, Oregon 97055-7248 Attn: Asian Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager.

If you send photos, please send only copies and not the originals. You can send photocopies. If you choose to send us a postcard, include a sentence about the information you want to contribute. The information you send will be most appreciated and could be used in future versions of this brochure.

Current Uses

All people are welcome to come and share in what the Mt. Hood National Forest offers. A multitude of opportunities for recreational and commercial pursuits exist on the forest. A popular activity for many people is collecting various native plants. These include:

- Mushrooms and medicinal plants,
- Christmas trees and boughs,
- Huckleberries,
- Bear grass, and
- Fiddlehead ferns.

Recreational opportunities abound on the forest. These activities include:

- Hiking,
- Fishing,
- Picnicking,
- Camping,
- Hunting,
- Boating and rafting,
- Mountain biking,
- Downhill and cross-country skiing,
- Snowmobiling,
- Off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel, and
- Climbing Mt. Hood.

Other activities that go on in the forest are:

- Educational,
- Research studies,
- Outings with the family,
- Picnicking, and
- Organized groups use (i.e. The Boy Scouts of America, corporation picnics, various clubs, etc.).

We encourage you to come and share the Mt. Hood National Forest, and share a piece of your history with us. Learning of our past and making connections to our present secures a connection that will last into the future. Making a connection with the Mt. Hood National Forest may enable others to do the same through your experiences and give them the “Sense of Place” we hope you now have!

Acknowledgments

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- Wasco County Historical Museum
- Hood River County Museum
- Sherman County Historical Museum
- Multnomah County Library
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Camp Baldwin Boy Scout Camp, 1930

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