

Points Of Interest
Along the way
On The
Run To The Rogue

Introduction

Our Siletz ancestors came from Western Oregon and parts of Northern California to create the **Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians**. These ancestors came together at a time when our people were faced with some difficult choices. Some of these decisions that had to be made had only one clear answer...accept reservation life, or die.

When the Coast (Siletz) Reservation was created in 1856, it meant the end of a way of life thousands of years old. No longer would our people have their first salmon ceremonies on each of the rivers that were home to our people. No longer would they travel freely in their own lands to collect acorns, basket materials, medicine plants, or whatever they needed, or even feel free to express (in our traditional way) thanks to our creator for all that has been placed here for us.

Our people have been on a difficult path since that time, with many terrible things happening to us (taking our lands & resources with a total disregard for our rights, forced labor & whipping posts, outlawing of traditional ceremonies, boarding schools and other assimilation policies, etc.). Yet we have survived! And it is that survival that we celebrate here with this symbolic return to what is for many of our people-our homelands.

Along the way, we pass many village sites, cemeteries, hunting & fishing grounds, prayer places, food gathering places, shinney grounds, etc. We will pass the off shore rocks that were the sea lion hunting places, the beaches, bays and shorelines that offered their shellfish to our untold generations. We will pass all these places where our people have celebrated, prayed, laughed, and mourned since the beginning of time.

That is what we should remember when we pass on our way, that we are here because our old people were strong, smart and respectful, and they wanted the generations to carry on. Sometimes there are sacrifices that have to be made, and that is what our ancestors have done for us. Some of them made the ultimate sacrifice and did not make it to the reservation – our new home, others endured and have shown us the way to today.

Significant Points Along the Way

Government Hill

November 9, 1855, President Franklin Pierce signed an Executive Order creating the 1.1 million acre Coast Reservation. Already it had been agreed that the headquarters of the reservation would be in the Siletz Valley. Late summer of 1856, Captain C.C. Augur of the U.S Army built the Army Blockhouse on Raddant Hill (a mile up Mill Creek, near Logsdon). The following spring, realizing that the most advantageous position was the hill overlooking what is now downtown Siletz, the army dismantled the blockhouse & floated the materials to present day Siletz. The logs were dragged up the hill, & reassembled. Officer's quarters, enlisted men's barracks, an agent's house, & other buildings soon grew around the blockhouse. Before long, the new agency location came to be called Government Hill, being the U.S. Government's administrative center for the entire Coast Reservation.

Over the years, the appearance and function of Government Hill has changed. The military control of the agency eventually turned exclusively to Office of Indian Affairs. The Boarding School was built on the edge of what are now the Pow-Wow grounds. Eventually, the Siletz Agency was discontinued, and as the Bureau of Indian Affairs abandoned the agency buildings, they became the community buildings of our Tribal people. In the 1930's or Tribal CCC crew re-modeled the old Agency Hospital, and part of the old school building. They also built elders housing, a new Tribal council meeting hall with a cannery built on the back end, shop buildings, a park facility with benches, a picnic shelter, barbecue pits, etc.

Slowly, Tribal self-determination was evolving. At about the time that federal legislation was beginning to recognize and encourage Tribal governments' role on reservations, the Western Oregon Termination Act was passed. Signed into Law in 1954, the act ended the federally recognized status of our Confederated Tribes of Siletz and all other Indian communities in Western Oregon. As the BIA was disposing of our trust lands, our people voted to turn Government Hill over to the City of Siletz (rather than sell it).

By 1956, Government Hill was no-longer reservation land. In the intervening years, brush grew over the buildings on the hill, and families struggled to maintain the Paul Washington Cemetery. In 1980, when we were preparing to ask congress to re-establish a reservation for us (the first time in history this was going to be done for a tribe) the residents of Siletz voted in favor of returning Government Hill to the Siletz Tribe. In the summer of 1980, the Siletz Reservation Act was passed and Government Hill again became part of the Siletz Reservation. Nesika Illahee Pow-Wow commemorates the return of some of "Our Land" to us in 1980.

City of Siletz

The downtown area of Siletz was primarily administered by the BIA (1856-1908) as "Agency Farm" (a farm to produce beef, pork, garden vegetables, pasture for agency work animals, etc.). In 1892, when Allotment was happening at Siletz, our Tribal members ask the allotting agent for parcels within the Agency Farm. Agent Bufford vigorously refused, claiming the Agency Farm was still needed. He even was so bitter over the Allotting Agent's agreement with our people, that he had the Allotting Agent deported to Hopi land (as punishment). The next Allotting Agent gave Agent Buford no grief over whatever he wanted to reserve for Agency purposes. Then of course the Secretary of the Interior declared all the un-allotted lands within the Siletz Reservation surplus and forced our people to cede them. In 1908, the Siletz Agent closed the boarding school and converted it to a Day School, stating that the Agency Farm was no longer needed and the area became plotted for a town site, from which the U.S. Government sold lots to the public. That is the birth of the City of Siletz.

Newton Hill

The south side of the only real hill between Siletz and Toledo became a dividing line (boundary) in 1865, when 200,000 acres was taken from our reservation by Executive Order. Signed December 21, 1865, the Executive Order diminished the reservation by opening all of the reservation lands between a point two miles south of Siletz Agency and the Alsea River to non-Indian settlement. The removal allowed for homesteaders to enter the former reservation lands and establish the communities that grew into Newport, Toledo, South Beach, Eddyville & Seal Rock.

Depot Slough

The Siletz reservation was supplied (with some difficulty & after some trial & error) through Yaquina Bay. Schooners would bring supplies into the bay and they would be loaded off onto barges, which would then be brought up the Depot Slough to a government shed. Teamsters would bring the supplies over the hill in a buckboard wagon. Many of our tribal members drove team & wagon, Depot (or DePoe) Charlie probably being the most notable. In fact he got his name (which became the family name DePoe) from his job of driving supplies from the Depot to the Agency.

Toledo Junction

Until 1865, there was an important fishing village at what is now the port of Toledo. The original Yaquina people were still living within their home village areas and Coquille, Chetco and other Tribal groups lived around and amongst them. Coquille Thompson, relating the importance of the site up to the time said, "until the government silently took it away".

Yaquina Bay

The main village (of many) was at – what is now – the Bayfront in Newport. A military man stationed at Yaquina Bay in 1856, wrote, the "Yaquina Indians do not hesitate to go out into the open ocean to hunt whales". The army blockhouse on Yaquina Bay was built on the main cemetery; the burial canoes were set adrift to go out with the tide. From the blockhouse, a soldier reported, the light show at night as our people waded in shallows with torches and spears to get flounder.

Ona Beach

Named for the Razor Clams our people went there to dig, "Ona" being Razor Clams in Chinook Jargon.

Seal Rock.

Kitaou was an important Alsea Village way into the reservation era. In the 1940's, Tribal elder John Albert, who grew up at the village, described the plank houses and ocean-going canoes that he and his family had there when he was a boy.

Collins Creek

Just south of seal rock is the homestead of George Collins. He was at one time the Sub-Agent at Yachats and eventually had a family with Jane Shellhead, a full-blooded Tututni woman, daughter of old chief Shellhead.

Waldport

Once the main village site of the Alsea people, the river itself became a reservation boundary in 1865 with the first reduction. In 1875 it also became the boundary of the second reduction of the Coast Reservation, which removed the entire remaining southern section of the Coast Reservation – from the Alsea River to the Siltcoos River. After March 3, 1875, the Alsea people, at what is now Waldport and the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw people at the Yachats sub-Agency and on the Siuslaw River were expected to remove to Siletz. Some did and some didn't. Some of the Coos and Lower Umpqua returned to their old homes down the coast.

Big Stump Beach

Just south of Waldport. Considered to be the center of the world for the Alsea, Siuslaw, Lower Umpqua, Coos and Lower Coquille people, this redwood stump, was prayed to when passing (the trail was on the beach here). It marked the center of the world, because Hummingbird and bumble flew in opposite directions to set the course of the sun there.

Smelt Sands

Once an important food-gathering place for the Alsea people and later for other Tribal members, Smelt Sands Park is one of the few good smelt dipping spots on the Oregon Coast. One of the biggest known shell middens was at one time just to the south, by the Adobe Motel. Standing at about 22 feet tall, most of it was hauled away for garden fertilizer down the coast.

Yachats Sub-Agency

This is where the southern office of the reservation was established around 1860, when the Coos and Lower Umpqua people who had been camped near Ft. Umpqua, were removed to Yachats prairie. The people suffered there for about fifteen years, gradually building comfortable houses and recovering from the shock and poverty of removal. Just when things were starting to go a little better, Congress passed the act which said that that part of the Coast Reservation would be closed and opened to settlement if the Indians living there agreed to move to Siletz Agency. After several unsuccessful meetings trying to convince the Yachats people to remove, former Siletz Agent, Ben Simpson falsely reported that the people had given their consent to be moved to Siletz and the act went into effect based on that line.

Cape Perpetua

One of the most treacherous parts of the old aboriginal trail system, the Cape Perpetua trail had parts with names that translate to “horse roll down place” & “ocean’s penis sticking in place,” – (Devil’s Churn) etc. During the march north to the reservation, this was apparently one of the most dreaded places. On one of the forced marches, an old Coos woman named Amanda was barefoot; the soldier reported that she – tore her flesh on the jagged rocks, leaving blood sufficient to track her by. Adjacent to 101 is “Amanda’s Trail” a rec. trail.

Heceta Head

Right below the lighthouse was an important sea lion hunting camp. In the midden there, large sea mammal bones can be seen all over the surface. It was still in use up into the 1870’s and possibly later. Being at about the boundary between the Alsea and their southern neighbors the Siuslaws, it may have been a joint use area, though L.J. Frachtenburg’s interviews with Alsea elders at Siletz in 1910 claim it as an Alsea camp.

Siuslaw River

Home of the Siuslaw people. Their country is the beginning of the beach dune country of the central Oregon Coast. The non-Indian settlers displaced the Siuslaw people at most of their principal village sites, but by the 1890's Siuslaw and Coos descendants were getting allotments or Indian Homesteads on the North Fork. Some of these properties are still owned by Tribal Members, like the Hatch family (descendants of Ike Martin)... (more recently sold to the Coos Tribes – and their casino located there).

Siltcoos River

This river (the Siltcoos watershed) was the original southern boundary to the 1.1 million acre Coast Reservation. This reservation line was erased with the lie in 1875, when former agent Ben Simpson falsely reported that the southern sub-Agency people had given their consent to remove to Siletz.

Umpqua River

Home of the Lower Umpqua (Kuitsh) people (close relatives of the Siuslaws). Tribal elder Spencer Scott was from the main village here and remembered all the Indians from different tribes who were marched past their village on their way to Siletz. He was just a child. The Lower Umpquas were not removed to Yachats until around 1860.

Coos Bay

The center of Coos country, the Coos people are made up of two related dialects of the Coos Language – Hanis and Miluk. The Hanis people had quite a few villages around the bay and the mouth of the bay. The Miluk people's homes were concentrated mainly on the South Slough of Coos Bay and the Lower Coquille River. Siletz Tribal Ancestor – Annie Miner-Peterson was born at Wilanch Slough on the east side of the Bay, and moved with her family to Yachats, then married Andrew Jackson, an Alsea and they lived at Siletz for some time. He was a Tribal policeman. Tom Hollis, Coquille Thompson's mother and other Siletz ancestors shared this homeland.

Coquille River

Beginning with the Coquille River is where we begin to see coastal rivers that have more than one language represented on one major river system. The Lower Coquille Miluk speakers and the Upper Coquille (Mishi-gwut-me-tunne) Athapascans had distinct territories and languages but apparently knew how to live side by side very well. Many of our Siletz families have Coquille ancestry. There are important village and fishing site all through the Lower and Mid Coquille river area.

Floras Creek

From here south of Crescent City California is one Athapaskan (Tunne or Deeni) village after another along the coast. Each major stream (Floras Creek, Sixes River, Elk River, Hubbard Creek, Mussel Creek, Euchre Creek, etc.) was the home country of an individual Tribe, though related by language, beliefs, and customs to the other Athapascans around them. It was probably at around Floras Creek that everyone south of there was marched to Port Orford for removal, by ship, to the reservation.

Sixes River

Home of Sik-ses-tunne. At the time they were removed to Siletz, they had a fairly large population. Many Siletz families have Sixes roots. Se-qua-chee another term for the local groups, is derived from Tsa-xwi-chit "shinney stick river: - the mouth of the Sixes being shaped like a shinney stick.

Cape Blanco

Kwun-yuu-kwut or kwun-ya-kwut (fingernail upon) the farthest point of land west on the continental U.S. Home country of Tyee Old Wiskers "Kwun-yuu-kwut xush-hi-yu" (Cape Blanco Headman). He was at Siletz and Yaquina Bay in early reservation days, but at different points returned south to Cape Blanco area with his family and is buried near Sixes River. Sailor Mack McDonald was his son.

Elk River

Part of the Port Orford Band, which probably consisted of several related villages in and around what is now Port Orford. Tututni Jenny (daughter of Chief Shellhead who later married Sub-Agent Collins) is suppose to have led the February 1856 Lower Rogue and Port Orford insurrection, killing Agent Ben Wright, and then leaving for Elk River. Ben Wright's scalp was confiscated from the Tribes of this area who were at Siletz around 1857-58. Taken down from a pole they were dancing around (Scalp Dance).

Battle Rock

The scene of the 1851 invasion by a crew set ashore by Capt. Tichenor. He had promised them the local people were friendly, but the crew insisted on being well armed. Some say the Port Orford people appeared friendly at first but then ordered the invaders off when they saw the ship leave. Some say they were talked into helping to pack the supplies to the rock and were told to come to the rock that evening for payment. Whatever happened, the crew fired the cannon and about 17 of our people were killed outright. Some other fighting occurred soon after, and the crew was pinned down on the rock for several days, then made their way back to Portland. Another landing party came and actually established the town site later that year.

Port Orford

The deportation site to the reservation for many of our ancestors. Our people were rounded up and held at Port Orford until a steam-ship could come anchor offshore then skiff. Loads of our people were taken to the ship until 600 – 700 of our people were on deck, then they departed for the reservation, going up the Columbia River & Willamette to Oregon City, from there to Dayton, Grand Ronde temporary camp, and eventually Siletz. It was also used as a detention center for runaways from the reservation. Lucy Metcalf said that she was held prisoner at Battle Rock for about a year. "Had to slip down the back side of the rock at night & slit sea lions throat" (drink his blood to keep from getting dehydrated/starved).

Humbug Mountain

The old trail came to the inland side of the mountain as the highway does now. Place name "lhuuk nipash" (salmon cheek) was for Humbug Mountain or the area on the inland passage – where the road is now.

Mussel Creek

A smaller village on the south side of Humbug Mountain. Mussel and Myrtle Creeks run together there.

Euchre Creek

At the mouth of Euchre Creek, there was a fairly large Indian town before the removal. Hoxie Simmons said there were about 100 Indian houses on that creek at one time.

Geisel Monument

A plaque in a park memorializing the members of the Geisel family that were killed there during the war. What it doesn't say is that 19 of our men and boys were shot there by Capt. Tichenor, who had a government contractor hunt our people down and take them to the reservation. He lined up the men and boys and shot them for resisting removal and running off into the brush every chance they saw.

Wedderburn / Gold Beach

Ya-Shu' Chit-tun, Che-me-tun. Two large Joshua (or Ya-shu-wi, "the good place people") villages were at the mouth of the Rogue River on the opposite sides of the river. When the Rogue River wars came to the people here at the mouth of the river they laid siege to Gold Beach. It was here that the evil Indian Agent Benjamin Wright and 23 others were killed in February 1856. Sixty settler houses burned. After removal to Siletz, the Lower Rogue River people were getting upset at how bad conditions were there, so they had a scalp dance and brought out Ben Wright's scalp. The Agent got word of it and sent the soldiers to confiscate the scalp and break up the dance. This was many of our people's – such as Joshua Louie, Lucy Smith and Depot Charlie's – home place.

Tututun

A big village on the north bank of the Rogue a few miles up the river. Lucy Smith said it was such a large village that it had a "nightlife like white man's town. Big dances held there. Even had suburbs – away from the main village. Abe Logan's Father's place".

Lobster Creek

Main fishing grounds for Tututun people. Big rocks at the mouth of the creek is where volunteers jumped out from and shot Abe Logan's uncle and seven others out of their canoes, made prisoners of a dozen women and children seizing four canoes. Regular army reported having killed six and saw others drown when their canoes overturned in the rapids.

Quosatana

Kush-lhon-tunne ("lots of Bow Wood place people") park is somewhere near the original village site. There must have been lots of good Yew Wood growing there to make bows.

Mikonotun

A large village burned by soldiers on March 26th 1856. Eight men were killed. Home place of many Siletz ancestors.

Shasta Costa

Sist-coo-kwut-sta is at the junction of the Illinois River with the Rogue. A village was on the Rogue side and in upriver junction between Rogue/Illinois. It was attacked and burned on March 18, 1856. Five people were killed.

Shasta Costa Village at Oak Flat

Some of the house pits of this village can still be seen in the yard of the house on the south side of the little creek, just beyond the history sign.

May 19-22, 1856, Headmen Tyee George, Limpy Tyee and Tyee John met with Col. Buchanon at Oak Flat. George and Limpy agreed to surrender & go to the reservation. Tyee John said he would not give up fighting. Capt. Smith went to Big Bend to receive the surrendering bands, and that's when the last real battle of the Rogue River Wars was fought at Big Bend on May 27th 1856.

History sign says site of treaty signing, but no treaty was signed at Oak Flat, just discussions about ending the war.