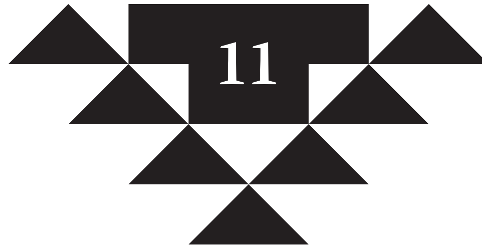

11

CHANGE AND PERSEVERANCE

"I didn't know why they were strapping me."

THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY MARKED THE time when national and local pressures for assimilation, at work for generations, finally took hold. The great majority of Siletz tribal members were born into a society shaped as much by their federal overseers as their parents. They had never lived in the ancestral homelands. With the reservation shattered, non-Indian homesteaders moved in among them. As a result, in contrast to tribes with large, remote reservations, such as those in the Southwest and Upper Great Plains, tribal culture at Siletz necessarily coexisted with the larger society.

Until the Termination Act in 1954, the 1900s saw no single event that even came close to the several dramatic crises of the 1800s. Nonetheless, this was a time of great change. Tribal members experienced continuing land loss, discrimination, poverty, and health problems. Pressures in the schools, towns, and workplaces pushed them to adopt America's values and economy wholesale. There was another aspect, a positive one. The mainstream world had its attractions—friendships, automobiles, radio, paying jobs, hospitals, and universities. The only counterforce to final immersion, frail though it may have been, was a conviction in the hearts and minds of Siletz people that the traditional culture, with its ceremonies and fellowship and its love of the extended family and the land, gave comfort and fulfillment in ways that the white world could never match. The context was different but the central question remained the same as it had been in the 1800s: could the Indian way persevere in western Oregon?

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At the turn of the twentieth century the tribe continued to hold the five sections of timber land under the terms of the 1894 Siletz allotment statute. Almost all of the 551 eighty-acre individual allotments remained in trust. The original idea under the General Allotment Act was that allotments would stay in Indian hands—safe from taxes, creditors' claims, and sale—until 1919, when the twenty-five-year trust period expired. By then, the reasoning went, allottees would be acclimated to the American system of landownership and could manage their affairs. There was a kicker, though: Congress created ways to shorten the trust period and make the allotments taxable and available for sale. Indian agents, attentive to whites with their eyes fixed on Siletz farm and timber land, were all too happy to facilitate the sales of property. As the map on page 232 shows, settlers and developers had much to gain. Siletz allotments lay on nearly every stretch of river and major tributary and, as well, on most of the twenty-five mile coastline.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs was so eager to free up Siletz lands for non-Indian settlement that it devised entirely new and devious strategies to wrench allotments out of trust status. In 1901, the Interior department persuaded Congress to pass the Siletz Inherited Lands Act, which forced any Siletz Indian who inherited an allotment—and thereby held more than one eighty-acre allotment—to sell it. That accomplished, later in the same year the BIA went after all Siletz inheritances, whether or not heirs already held land. The agency recommended legislation that allowed heirs to sell deceased tribal members' allotments, arguing to Congress that "there is too much idle land" at Siletz and that the example of good white farmers would encourage other allottees to farm: "Many of these people would be benefited by the sale of these lands and the mixing in of respectable, thrifty, white farmers." Congress, instead of limiting the policy to Siletz, went further and applied the proposal nation-wide in the so-called "Dead Indian Act" of 1902.

Between them, the two statutes mandated that all allotments of deceased Siletz tribal members either automatically be put up for sale or made eligible for sale with the consent of the heirs—and the BIA could be counted on to pressure heirs to sell. Thus started the drain of allotment land. Not surprisingly, despite the BIA's assurances to Congress, there is no reason to believe that the presence of "respectable, thrifty, white farmers" ever inspired Indians to farm since Siletz tribal agricultural production steadily declined.

Congress then carved out an even larger loophole. In response to demands

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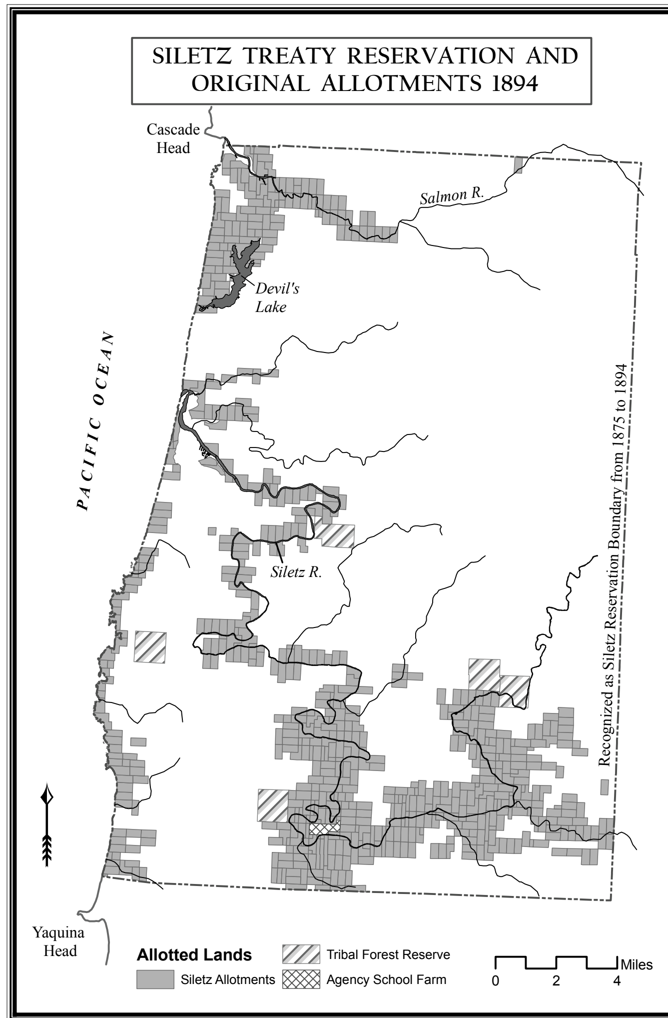

for Indian land, the Burke Act of 1906 permitted the issuance of fee title to those allottees whom the government declared "competent," defined only as a person that the secretary of the Interior "in his discretion" found to be "competent and capable of managing his or her own affairs." Following Interior department policy during the first two decades of the twentieth century, BIA officials aggressively moved land out of trust status. Indian Commissioner Cato Sells, for example, argued in 1917 that eliminating trusteeship over allotments would be "the beginning of the end of the Indian problem." Traveling "competency commissions" were established to determine competency, as determined by factors including an individual Indian's industriousness, education, degree of assimilation, and blood quantum, and led to the transfer of

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large numbers of allotments out of trust. Many of the allotment sales at Siletz were the notorious "forced-fee" patents, which BIA agents across the country imposed on Indian people by declaring them "competent" under the Burke Act and then pressuring them into disposing of their land or watching it be sold at a tax sale.

These policies, a major part of the legacy of the allotment regime, brought ruin to Indian country. Nationally, in addition to the 60 million acres taken as "surplus" lands and opened for settlement under the homesteading laws, 27 million acres of allotments—two-thirds of all land allotted and nearly half the size of Oregon—passed out of Indian hands.

At Siletz, where the rate of allotment land loss was higher than at most other reservations, people found themselves caught on the horns of a dilemma. Virtually everyone was destitute—unemployment was not officially calculated, but it surely reached 50 percent or higher—and yet they had to meet the demands of the cash economy. Few, if any, wanted to sell. After all, one of the few positive aspects of allotment was that Siletz allottees had their choice of parcels before the remaining lands were declared "surplus," and they had selected the best locations. But they needed cash to live. The allotments were their only assets and, with the trust lifted and the land sold, they could spend the proceeds for day-to-day needs. Of course, if an allotment were taken out of trust and failed to sell, money had to be found to pay the taxes—and if that proved impossible, then the land would go up for a tax sale. "Once this machine is put into place," Bob Tom lamented, "we won't know where [the allotments] went. We'll just know they're gone."

The land loss was steady and substantial. By 1905, nearly half of the allottees had passed away and the Siletz Inherited Lands Act allowed heirs, usually encouraged by agents who fast-tracked the process, to sell those allotments. The agent reported that "this land is in demand and brings good prices." While these allotments may have been selling at market value and recognizing that it is difficult to make accurate judgments with the hindsight of a century, one can doubt whether Siletz allottees received a fair return: in 1907, for example, the BIA annual report disclosed that forty allotments (a total of 2,671 acres) of deceased tribal members were sold at an average of just $7.12 per acre—about $180 in current dollars.

When the Burke Act took effect in 1906, any tribal members declared by the Interior department to be "competent" became eligible to divest themselves of their land. (Siletz people were "competent" to do many things, but managing a block payment of cash was seldom one of them.) Historian D. S.

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Otis, writing from the perspective of 1934, when Congress finally put a hold on transferring allotment land out of trust, identified the allotment program's basic dynamic in his comprehensive report to Congress: "For if white land seekers and business promoters did not create the allotment system, they at least turned it to their own good use. Where the land was valuable white interests formed a ring about the Indian reservation; a ring which exerted a relentless pressure in all directions, until the force was felt in Washington itself."

With reservation farming in steep decline and almost no commercial sales of agricultural products, the main function of the Siletz agency was to serve as a real estate office. By 1920, 60 percent of all allotments had gone out of trust and into the hands of non-Indians. The second largest source of annual reservation income—though it would usually be quickly spent—came from allotment sales. When the Siletz agency was closed in 1925, Agent Edwin Chalcraft, a fervent assimilationist, urged in his final report to the commissioner of Indian Affairs that the work of taking allotments out of trust should continue apace because "competent" Indians "should be required to assume their responsibilities" of paying property taxes. In 1931, however, a Lincoln County agricultural agent testified in Congress and told how the unfamiliar but inexorable requirement of paying taxes burdened the Siletz people and separated them from their land:

> Many of the best farms on the Siletz were held by the Indians. . . . Gradually, from year to year, when the patents were obtained—and in my own mind I

Opposite: Allotment affected Siletz land, resources, and people in many ways, not all of them obvious. Before allotment, when nearly the entire Siletz River watershed still remained tribal land, Siletz agents made requests for a tribal commercial salmon canning operation. Each was denied. Then the reservation lands ceded under the 1892 allotment agreement (ratified in 1894) were opened to homesteading in 1895. In 1896, construction began on the Kern Brothers cannery (shown in the upper photograph in the early 1900s) on the Lower Siletz River on former Indian land. The cannery owners operated a large and efficient fish wheel nearby, scooping fish out of the river—salmon that otherwise would have gone upriver to spawn or be caught by tribal families. The new system was unsustainable: overfishing, logging operations upstream, and other factors led to sharply diminished runs. The lower photograph of the interior of the cannery shows the size of the "June Hogs" (the spring chinook salmon run) that were common in the Siletz River in the early 1900s. *Both photographs courtesy of North Lincoln County Historical Museum.*

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> wondered at that time a great many times as to how they had issued them and why, because of a knowledge or thought in my mind a great many of the Indians were not ready to handle their own personal business. I believe there are some of the Indians here to-day that will tell you that their patents were more or less forced on them. . . . As soon as these patents were given to the Indians they either failed to pay their taxes or through the opportunity to borrow on the land when they owned it themselves, . . . a great deal of the land was mortgaged and the mortgage sold, either foreclosed or directly sold. So that from that time to the present time the better lands on Siletz have passed out of the hands of the Indians.

Two other decisions led to land loss. Driven by the same day-to-day financial demands that drove tribal members to sell their allotted lands, support grew for a transfer of the five sections of timbered lands that the tribe had reserved in the 1892 allotment agreement. In 1907, seventy-seven Siletz men petitioned President Theodore Roosevelt for sale of the five sections, saying that "the money derived from the sale of this Reservation would be of vast help to us." The request fit nicely with the Interior department's agenda of breaking up reservation landholdings. The departmental memorandum to the House Indian Affairs Committee on the transfer proposal made clear that "the policy of this department has been to withdraw its control and guardianship over individual Indians and Indian tribes as soon as it becomes apparent that they are possessed of the means and ability to care for themselves." In an ominous foreshadowing of termination, the memorandum added: "I am convinced that it is only a matter of a very short time before patents in fee can be granted these Indians and all governmental supervision withdrawn." Congress passed a bill authorizing the sale of these lands in 1910, although just one of the sections was sold.

Another land provision was included in the 1910 legislation. When the government shut down the boarding school on Government Hill in the town of Siletz in 1908 and switched it to a day school, the official explanation was that "the land allotted to the Siletz Indians is quite productive, and it is essential that the older children receive thorough training [in agriculture]. . . . There are, however, much better facilities at the Chemawa school . . . than there were at the Siletz boarding school . . . ; this will be for the best interest of these Indians as well as a saving to the Government." This was just a euphemism. While true that the allotments were "quite productive," by 1908 it was clear that most of them would be sold, not farmed by Siletz people. To the govern-

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ment, it was long past time to get serious about cutting Indian expenditures, and shutting down the boarding school would save money.

So, what should be done with the Siletz boarding school land—some 200 acres of level, productive ground that had been set aside for Indian purposes? Apparently no thought was given to transferring it to the tribe. Instead, the 1910 legislation declared that the land would be "sold for town lots, or for such other purposes that [the BIA] may deem advisable." In particular, the forty acres known as Government Farm "shall be laid out as a town site and subdivided into town lots" and put up for sale to non-Indians. The town of Siletz then rose up on that land. After all, the future belonged to the settlers, not the Natives.

By the early 1950s, the job of moving Siletz allotments out of trust was more than 85 percent completed. Only 76 of the original 551 allotments—5,390 acres out of 44,470—remained in trust. The tribe also owned four of the five timber sections from the Allotment Act. Then, with the Termination Act in 1954, Congress broke off the trust relationship altogether: the four tribal sections were sold off and the remaining land in allotment status was transferred to Siletz people by the issuance of fee patents.

Siletz children attended Chemawa boarding school in Salem in the 1800s, but Chemawa began playing a larger role in tribal life with the conversion of the Siletz boarding school to a day school in 1908 and with the closing of the BIA day school in 1918. Most students went to the local public schools, but Chemawa appealed to many parents because of its discipline and its status as one of the two flagship boarding schools in the country. For students, the boarding school offered the chance to be around Indians from other tribes. After the BIA office at Siletz shut down in 1925, Chemawa, which then housed the Siletz BIA office and health clinic, was perhaps the most significant federal presence for the tribe.

Chemawa was strict. With administrators and teachers pushing Americanization in every aspect of school life, students wore uniforms and the "cardinal rule" was "No Indian Talk." Although national BIA policy prohibited corporal punishment in 1904, whippings and other forms of severe punishment continued to be administered. The school aimed to send students to non-Indian communities, not the reservations. When graduates did return to their own reservations, Chemawa's reaction was disappointment: they "have

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Drawn by a Chemawa student, this 1908 cartoon extols the benefits of the school. The smaller figure is Army Lieutenant Melville Wilkinson, the school's founder. *National Archives and Records Administration–Pacific Alaska Region.*

been fitted for better things; we cannot do less than fit them for things far above the old reservation surroundings." During the height of the effort to turn fee patents over to "competent" allottees in the 1910s, the express objective was to designate graduating students as "competent" (and open up the possibility of land loss); "every such capable young man and woman should be given a certificate of competency or a patent in fee."

Like other boarding schools, Chemawa has been controversial among Indian people. In part, it depends on the era. During the early years, from the 1800s through the early 1900s, schooling at Chemawa was a blunt instrument, racist and sometimes brutal. Many Siletz people, including Aurilla Tom, who went to Chemawa in the early 1900s, hated the punishment: "They beat us if anyone was caught talking Indian." In the twentieth century, the physical punishment diminished and the quality of education improved, although the schooling continued to be dominated by hard-edged assimilation ideology and a lack of respect for tribal cultures. By the 1980s, with the modern Indian revival, Chemawa evolved into a far more progressive school. Today, it offers several courses in Indian history and arts and emphasizes that education is carried out "in keeping with the tribes' cultural traditions."

One thing was for sure until the past generation or so: the experience was a jolting challenge and the young people who endured it, and often made it through to graduation, showed a resolve and strength of character that is much to be admired. Researcher Sonciray Bonnell, who conducted numerous

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interviews with Chemawa alumni, found that regardless of how much people disliked the experience while actually in school and despite the many criticisms that can be made, many Chemawa graduates offer “positive appraisals” and hold the school in “high regard.”

The experiences of Siletz students at Chemawa were varied and reflected the blizzard of bruises, confusion, successes, anger, and satisfaction that all Indian people encountered during the first half of the twentieth century, as they haltingly encountered still-foreign and often insensitive Anglo communities. Kay Steele recalls that her father, Daniel Orton, learned the trade of tailoring at Chemawa; through his handiwork, the men in his family were known for being well dressed. When June Austin moved to Chemawa, she appreciated the indoor showers and toilets—and the luxury of sleeping in her own bed—and discovered “a whole new world with stores.” A Siletz girl at Chemawa from 1927 through 1933 remembered a kind BIA employee who bought clothes for her and other girls: “We got the dresses and we got shoes that fit our feet, we got to have something to have beside black stockings. Oh, we were white girls then. Really, we were like the kids [in] Salem. . . . He just took us out of the dark ages and put us in the new ages.” In 1934, with talk of closing Chemawa in the air, Wilbur Martin of Siletz argued that “we should not give up Chemawa. Chemawa belongs to our Indian people. It is one of the greatest government institutions. I think our children should go to public schools and when they are fit to go to Chemawa they should go there.”

Although Native traditions were denigrated at the boarding school, much more often than not Chemawa students kept their minds open to the songs and stories of their ancestors. Something visceral told them that they could gain a white education and still remain Indian. Later in life, after graduation, most consciously honored their Indianness even if they were living in a city. One tribal member, for example, was raised by his grandmother in the traditional fashion because his father was being treated for tuberculosis in a hospital. Then in 1934, at the age of five, he was taken away to Chemawa and his world was turned upside down. He was so young that “I didn’t know why they were strapping me for using the language I had been raised with,” he remembered. Yet he rose above all that, served in the Marines for twelve years, and in time became a respected elder at Siletz.

At Chemawa, students felt the undercurrent of faithfulness to Indian culture that ran strong beneath the Americanization. Students gave the name “Pigsville” to the enclave where the hogs were kept, a place where they could claim some privacy. One time, when Gilbert Towner was six or seven, he and

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The Wanamaker Expedition, funded by Rodman Wanamaker, heir to the Wanamaker department-store fortune, visited many Indian reservations and came through Siletz in 1913. The expedition, led by Joseph K. Dixon, professional photographer, lecturer, and former Baptist minister, was designed to instill patriotism in members of the "vanishing race." In this photograph, taken by Dixon, tribal members are folding a large flag presented to the tribe by the expedition. *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

some of his friends staged an impromptu pow-wow in Pigsville, tying tin-can bells around their ankles, shaping feathers out of cardboard, and using a washtub for the drum. School officials heard the rhythms and, "to put disgrace on us," called everyone to the gymnasium, where they forced the boys to perform their pow-wow in front of the whole school. But the punishment backfired. "One by one, everyone came out dancing," even the instructors. Towner beamed when he told that story, including its aftermath: "We still got strapped."

From the time when western Oregon Indians were located on the reservation in 1856, they continually faced a poverty considerably deeper than the nation experienced during the depths of the Great Depression. The federal support trumpeted during treaty negotiations never amounted to much and it dissi-

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Visits by anthropologists often had a celebratory quality to them. Leo Frachtenberg, who visited Siletz several times between 1909 and 1916, is seated at the lower left in this photograph taken at a picnic with the families of Agent Knott Egbert; Arthur Bensell Sr., Mackanutini; and Robert Depoe, Ya-shu-eh. *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

pated over time. After the BIA closed the Siletz agency in 1925, the only federal employee with responsibilities for Siletz, and Grand Ronde as well, was a clerk located at Chemawa. The BIA no longer provided regular health care, much less general welfare support, and even discontinued rations. Lincoln County made some welfare payments, but they were small. The frame houses on the reservation were forty to fifty years old and not in good condition. Tuberculosis and other diseases continued at high levels, with most people unable to obtain proper medical help. Hoxie Simmons testified to federal officials: "You turn an old horse loose in a poor pasture to die. That is the condition of the old Indians to-day."

The land offered some seasonal jobs. Men worked on company road crews and at low-paying but welcome New Deal jobs—usually outdoors on road, trail, and small-building projects—with the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration. Picking was more widespread. Oregon was the nation's second-largest producer of hops, used to flavor beer, and most of

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The BIA agency was an active place in the early 1900s. This photograph shows the buildings on Government Hill and the farmland in what is now the town of Siletz. *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

Siletz boys learning how to brand cattle. *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

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Hoxie Simmons in 1945, with a load of ferns to be sold to the florist trade, once a common way for Siletz families to earn money. *Courtesy of* The Oregonian.

Abe Logan Sr., Tututni, on the left, and Arthur Bensell Sr. harvesting oats in the 1930s. *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

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the state's harvest came from the Willamette Valley. Siletz also labored in the strawberry, prune, and bean fields. Pickers in the 1930s earned about $1.25 to $1.50 per hundred pounds, allowing skilled workers to earn $3 or $4 a day.

The early fall expeditions to the fields were big events, with most Siletz families heading over to the valley in horse-drawn wagons and, later, flatbed trucks. The children had the luxury and excitement of riding on top of the bundles of clothes and hop sacks as the vehicles bounced along on the roads. Many other Oregon tribes worked the harvest: in the 1934 season, for example, an estimated 3,000 Indians picked hops in the Willamette Valley.

The journeys had a cultural grounding. As Lionel Youst explained in his biography of Coquelle Thompson, "The hop harvest fit perfectly with the Indian tradition of seasonal migrations for harvests of various kinds. After eels in the late spring, 'Oat harvest next, then hops, then salmon.'" On the Coast, the lush forests provided another venue for commercial gathering. Florists coveted the ferns, salal, moss, huckleberry branches, and foxglove leaves, all used by Indian people traditionally.

The forests of the former reservation brought even higher-paying jobs in another way—the harvesting of the spruce, cedar, and Douglas fir stands. The era of intensive logging, beginning in the 1920s, provided the largest stream of income yet seen and amounted to one of the most significant events in the history of the Siletz Tribe.

Commercial logging on the Oregon Coast started up in the mid-1800s with horse teams, later to be replaced by "steam donkeys," engines that powered winches equipped with ropes and steel cables for hauling and yarding the big logs. Then, in the early twentieth century, using the "surplus" lands that were taken from tribal ownership by the 1894 agreement, the government put most of the Siletz watershed up for homesteading in 160-acre parcels. It made for a booming real estate market and rampant fraudulent claims, usually in the form of "homesteaders" obtaining patents to heavily forested land without ever erecting the residences and cultivated crops that the law required. A. W. "Jack" Morgan, who bought and sold timber claims in Lincoln County during the first half of the twentieth century, had a twinkle in his eye as he tiptoed through the fraud issue in his engaging memoir, *50 Years in Siletz Timber*:

> I sometimes feel thankful that they did not get us homesteaders indicted for

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A stand of the giant Sitka spruce trees that once stood in the lower Siletz watershed. With nearly all of the spruce logged off, basket weavers no longer have access to roots from these prized trees. *Courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, no. UW120*

fraud or something of the kind, as people were apparently stampeded for awhile. There was some skullduggery going on in the way of someone who had money and wanted to get timber cheap, would have a locater pick up idle men around towns and get them to file timber claims on vacant land, and furnish them money to pay the $2.50 per acre, which was the price then, and give them a few hundred dollars to deed the land to them. . . . There was so much agitation about timber frauds at that time that I think some people thought it was a crime to get any timber from the Government whether it was legal or not. I heard a number of people say the Siletz should never have been open for homesteads, but I think this was mostly from those who were sore because they did not get in on it. In other places, where it was open for timber claims and script, it was soon gobbled up and sold to big corporations, usually for a small price. My observation was that the homesteaders here were mostly good, honest people who took care of their money when they sold their claims and as a rule used it wisely.

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World War I transformed the timber industry in the Pacific Northwest. Several mills in Lincoln County were already cutting dimension lumber, but the combat in Europe sparked a tremendous demand for the strong, light Sitka spruce that was ideal for construction of aircraft. Sitka spruce thrived in the "fog zone," reaching no more than fifteen miles inland along the central Oregon Coast, and the lush forests of the Lower Siletz watershed offered prime habitat. These were virgin old-growth stands in an area that had never undergone a major burn.

The U.S. Army created the Spruce Production Corporation, an enterprise that erected a "war mill," one of the largest wood-processing facilities in the world, at Toledo, nine miles south of Siletz. The operation was not fully completed by the end of World War I, but the corporation was up and running, harvesting and milling nearly 54 million board feet annually of former Siletz Reservation timber at the height of the war, with workers housed in a giant tent city.

When the war ended, with final construction of the mill almost completed, the government decided to divest itself of its Toledo operations. A consortium headed by C. D. Johnson jumped at the opportunity, making the purchase on what historian William Robbins characterized as "generous terms." The private company, the Pacific Spruce Corporation (soon to be the C. D. Johnson Company and acquired by Georgia-Pacific in 1952), with its Toledo mill, quickly became a major Lincoln County institution, the leading employer for most of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It acquired vast amounts of timber land, especially in the Siletz watershed. By 1924, it owned 14,600 acres on the Lower Siletz, holding an estimated 835 million board feet. The Blodgett Tract south of Newport was similarly valuable. Many other purchases were still to come during the historic logging boom, as Oregon became the top timber-producing state in the Union.

The many timber operations on the central Coast (at the high point, sixty-eight mills operated in the Toledo area alone), but especially the Johnson company, employed hundreds of Siletz men over the years. In order to get Siletz timber to the mill, Pacific Spruce Corporation punched a railroad line from Toledo north to serve "Camp 12," a log-collecting center built on the hill just south of the town of Siletz. "Camp 11" was located at the lower end of the watershed and "Camp Gorge" was later built upriver from the town. The Siletz men worked mostly in the mills or out in the woods, felling, bucking, and yarding the towering trees. To this day, tribal members believe that

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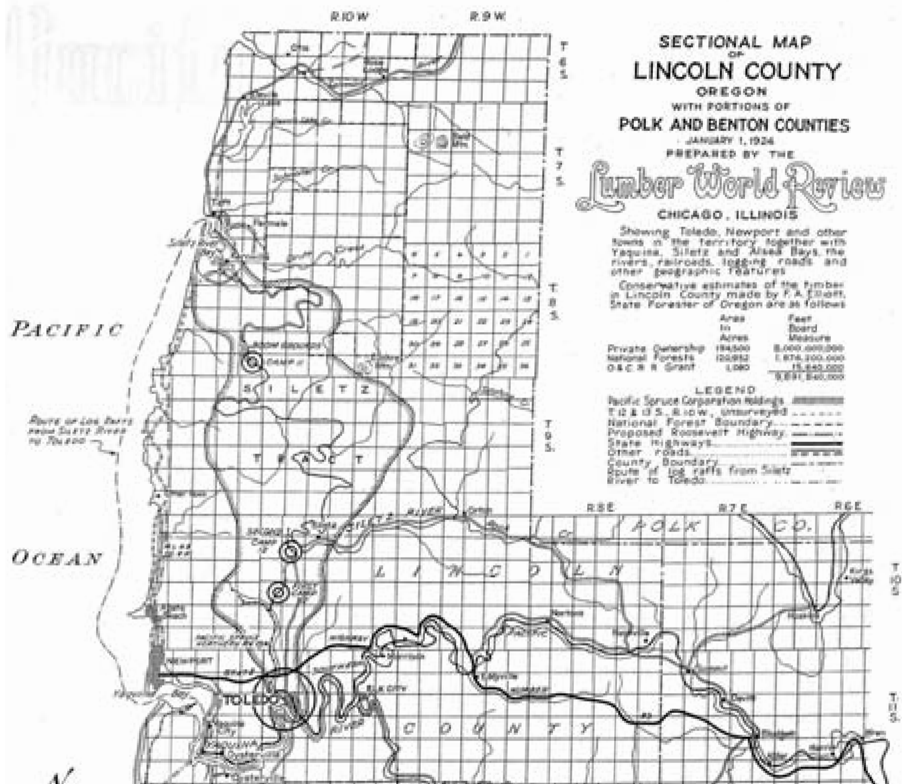

The C. D. Johnson Company logging road map for Lincoln County as of 1924. High-volume extraction was already in full swing by this time but the road system would expand greatly over the next two generations.

discriminatory practices kept them from higher-paying jobs operating heavy equipment. And logging was dangerous—at least four Siletz men lost their lives and many were injured, for even the felling of limbs from those goliaths could cause havoc.

Nonetheless, for generations logging produced good-paying jobs. In the 1940s, tribal members made $225 to $250 a month, and by the late 1980s an experienced logger could make up to $17 per hour. Other Siletz men ran their own logging operations. The industriousness of the men and their skills in the woods were a matter of great pride. They took satisfaction in having, as their workplace, the deep forests where Indian people had always hunted and gathered. Although later in life Eleanor Logan said she would raise her children to get college educations, her approach was different during her child-raising

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years in the mid-1900s: “My boys will be loggers. My girls will marry loggers.” From the 1920s through World War II and beyond, that formula defined the workaday world for a great many Siletz families.

While few people realized commercial returns, hunting and fishing continued to be of importance for subsistence and barter. As was common with the Salmon People of the Pacific Northwest, when Gladys Bolton grew up in Siletz in the 1920s and 1930s, “there were always eels and salmon hanging in the family smokehouse.” Clayburn Arden was one of many who made good use of the river and ocean resources that were so plentiful through the years after World War II. He netted salmon and took eels on the Siletz River, storing them in cans for the winter. He also took oysters and clams, as well as seaweed that he washed on boards and dried on the roof on screens until it was baked crisp. Arden hunted deer and elk as well.

At one point, conflict developed with Oregon wildlife officials over whether, with the reservation mostly broken up, tribal members could fish and hunt under tribal rather than state regulations. The matter was resolved by 1938, when the Oregon attorney general issued an opinion recognizing that the state had no right to control fishing and hunting on trust land, that is, on allotments (a number of which had river frontage) and the four remaining tribal timber sections. The BIA issued tags to tribal fishermen to certify the primacy of tribal and federal law on those lands. More broadly, tribal members carried the belief that they could rightfully hunt, fish, and gather throughout the former reservation. For hunting and fishing outside of trust land, the state—in a time when competition for fish and game was still relatively low and habitat degradation had yet to take its toll—enforced its license requirements, seasons, and bag limits sporadically, if at all. As Reggie Butler put it, “I didn’t grow up thinking hunting was against state law. No one did.”

Siletz people had a special affection for eels, especially into the 1950s when the runs were still strong. (Scientists classify these lampreys, with their toothy, suction-cup mouths, as fish but Siletz people, like many others, refer to them as “eels.”) They were plentiful in the Siletz River and its tributaries and, on the other side of the Coast Range, at Willamette Falls. Eeling was primarily a nighttime activity with fishermen—to the light of lanterns or large bonfires—using gaff hooks fixed on long poles. The eels attached themselves to rocks with their mouths. Fishermen, working from ledges or rocks or boats

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in open water, dragged their hooks along the rocks and then threw the eels on the banks for the women and children to stuff in gunny sacks. They gutted the eels, cut off the heads, and took out the backbones, the translucent cartilage the Siletz called the "gristle."

The cleaned eels were then hung by their tails on strings in the smokehouses to dry. Usually they would be "smoked and baked"—smoked for two or three days and then put in the oven briefly to finish the cooking. The eels made a real delicacy: oily but subtle in taste, not "fishy."

All the fishing, eeling, hunting, and gathering made for a community of sharing and bartering. People came together to help neighbors build a house or dig a well. "If a woman didn't have a man, they'd stock her woodpile." Most people had home gardens and nearby patches of Oregon blackberries—the tangly, snarly gifts that kept on giving. Trading and exchanging cans and jars of preserved seafood and fruit were commonplace.

Then, in the 1930s, the BIA built an elaborate cannery, including two large ceramic tubs for fruit, on Government Hill. It never worked as originally intended, as an economic development project, but the Siletz women made it a fine nonprofit community facility. Families, including the children, pitched in to do the canning. "If we wanted to eat," LaVera Simmons laughed, "we'd have to help." With the elaborate, commercial-type machinery, her family would end the season with 600 to 700 jars packed with salmon, eels, fruit, berries, and vegetables. Although Siletz people as a whole were well below the poverty line, even with the income from logging, the ever-giving land and community support etched a different picture. June Austin spoke for most Siletz families when she said, "We didn't know we were poor."

Gradually, Siletz people began going to college. The first, James Collins, graduated from Oregon State College (now University) in 1888. Coquelle Thompson Jr. followed in 1927 and graduated while starring on the football team as a fullback. Art Bensell studied at Heidelberg College in Ohio, graduating in 1932 as a small-college, All-American football player. Reuben Saunders, a graduate of Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, was an all-around athlete; like Bensell, he was inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame, as a member of the inaugural class of 1972, along with Jim Thorpe. In the 1930s, Bensell's sister, Mary Alice Bensell Munsee, graduated from the Oregon Normal School in Philomath and in the 1950s earned a degree from the University of Oregon. Elwood A. Towner obtained a law degree from Willamette University in the 1920s. In 1947, Ken Hatch became one of the first American Indians to graduate from West Point.

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The Siletz Nee Dosh, or Feather Dance, was an attraction up and down the Coast. This gathering took place in the late 1800s on a wooden plank street, common in that era, in Newport's bay front. Note the man on the far left in a feather shirt and the man second from the right in a headdress of flicker tail-feathers. *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

Living as Siletz people did, intermixed with whites, their society was not as separate as those tribes whose reservations remained intact. Many Siletz people had good social relationships with non-Indians from workplaces, schools, churches, and neighborhoods. Nonetheless, racial discrimination, while it did not raise its head everywhere, remained an unpleasant fact of life for the Siletz. Oregon law had a miscegenation statute—not repealed until 1951—that outlawed marriages between Indians and whites, causing numerous couples to take their vows across the Washington line. Federal law prohibited liquor sales to Indians in Indian country, and many tavern owners refused to sell to Siletz people even when their taverns were no longer covered by the law after termination in the 1950s. Some restaurants displayed "No Indians Allowed" signs and many a fight broke out in those bars and taverns that did serve Indians. Too often, children faced discrimination in the schools. In the white-dominated Bureau of Indian Affairs, some employees refused to work for Art

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Five generations of a Siletz family in 1909: the baby, Stanley Strong (a future tribal leader), is pictured with, from the left, Jane Yanna (great-great-grandmother), Molly Carmichael (great-grandmother), Mamie Strong (mother), and Mary Catfish (grandmother). *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

Bensell, a college graduate who held a supervisory position. Even today, when discrimination is greatly reduced, the emotion over such past treatment is palpable among older Siletz people.

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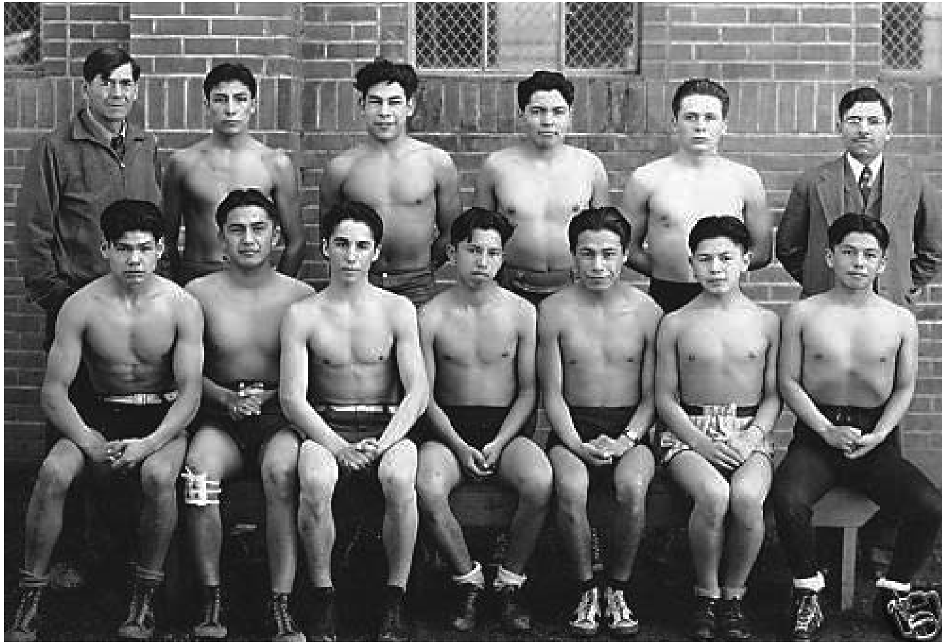

Chemawa boxing team in the 1920s, coached by Reuben Saunders (*upper left*), Siletz star athlete.

Hoxie Simmons and Tom Jackson in the 1920s. Jackson (*right*) served as a tribal policeman and became one of the first Indian photographers. Princeton University acquired a collection of his work. *Siletz Tribal Collection.*

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Just as the Warm House Dance resonated with many Siletz people in the 1870s and 1880s, so did the Indian Shaker Church call out to Siletz spirituality in the first half of the twentieth century. The origins of the church go back to 1885 and John Slocum of the Squaxin Island Tribe at the southern end of Puget Sound. In 1881, Slocum had been taken for dead but miraculously sprang back to life and, in his mind and in some others', the experience was evidence that he had supernatural powers. A year later, when Slocum again took seriously ill, his wife Mary prayed over her husband and fell into uncontrollable sobbing and trembling—a "shaking." When Slocum recovered, Mary's actions were interpreted as medicine from God and he came to be viewed as a prophet. Word spread from Slocum's church at Mud Bay, near Squaxin Island, to Puget Sound tribes and Yakama east of the Cascades, then to Warm Springs and Umatilla in Oregon. By the time Slocum passed away in 1897, the Shaker Church had gained many adherents despite attempts by missionaries and Indian agents to suppress it.

A syncretic religion with both Native and Christian elements, the church resonated with Indian people forced toward assimilation but tugged by their traditional values. Shakers believed they could heal sick people through the shake, resulting from the intensity of prayer, dance, and doctoring while in a trance. Adherents give many accounts of such healings, including one of a Tillamook woman who had severe depression that was cured after a man encouraged her to attend a service: "Whoever believes this thing can learn for himself and after a while they'll shake. You will shake yourself; you can't help it. Any evil people who do not believe cannot learn this. They cannot shake."

Siletz people heard of the religion as early as the 1890s, but a local congregation was not established until the early 1920s. Leone Letson Kasner, who knew many Siletz tribal members, wrote that

> The [Shaker] approach to worship was spontaneous and individualistic which recognized the Indian attitude toward the Spirit world. . . . On the [Siletz] reservation where many Athabascans . . . had already joined Christian missions the missionaries saw, by 1928, that white orthodox churches were losing ground to faiths more comfortable to the demonstrative Indians. White religious standards were too severe. Indian Shaker beliefs were intuitive, emotional—comparable to aboriginal myths and legends."

Anthropologist Lee Sackett found that

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> the equalitarian nature of the Shaker church was . . . a strong attraction. In the Shaker church there was no white leader telling the Indian congregation how to behave. And members could wear any type of clothing without feeling that they were being talked about. In sum, they were all brothers and sisters in the eyes of the Lord, and in their own eyes also."

Eleanor Logan, a Yurok whose Siletz husband, John, led the Siletz congregation for many years, said simply, "God gave Indian people something to meet the Indians' needs, the Shaker Church."

The first Siletz Shaker services were held in homes at the north end of Lincoln City on the site now occupied by the tribal casino. In 1926, with so many church members in Siletz having to make the twenty-mile journey on horseback or by horse and buggy to attend the services, the Shakers bought land on East Swan Avenue in Siletz. Jakie Johnson, leader of the congregation, and John Albert soon purchased lumber and put up a church building.

A year later, Jimmy Jack Hoppell, a Yurok Shaker from California married to a Siletz woman, was having little luck recruiting adherents, and he asked the Siletz for help. Given the historic ties to northern California, the Siletz were quick to respond. Thirty followers, joined by a group from Klamath, traveled to the mouth of the Klamath River. By the end of three weeks, they had recruited thirty new members and witnessed the formation of the Weitchpec–Old Mill Indian Shaker Church. On their way home, the group stayed with friends and relatives of the Tututnis' sister tribe, the Tolowa of Smith River. The trip sparked congregations there and at Hoopa. The California expedition marked the southernmost reach of the Shaker religion, and the church at Smith River is still active today.

Not long after returning home from California, the Siletz Shakers built a larger church behind the existing structure on East Swan, using wood salvaged when the government boarding school was torn down. The older building then served as a kitchen and community dining hall.

The late 1920s and early 1930s marked the highwater point for the Shakers at Siletz. A majority of Indians in the Siletz area were members and about seventy attended regularly. Even among non-followers, the church was held in near-universal high regard. As the Siletz sub-agency superintendent, James McGregor, perceptively wrote at the time, "the Indian Shaker Church ritual allows dancing as a means of expression, which to the Indian is more definite than mere gestures and words."

In a church distinguished by the bright, clear sound of bells, the large bell

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on the top of the building on East Swan rang three times on Friday nights: the first bell at about six o'clock to invite people to the evening meal, the second to announce the beginning of testimony, the third to signal that "church is starting." Entering the neat, one-room building, Shakers—all dressed in white—faced the altar against the far wall and saw a large stove directly left of the entrance. A twelve-piece chandelier hung from the ceiling. Benches lined the side walls up to the altar; a few rows were placed as common church pews are, with an aisle down the center and space left open in front of the altar. After songs, true to the religion's emphasis on equality, the leader would say to the gathering, "I am going to have this person do the service this night," and then indicate the person who would give the sermon.

After the sermon and testimonies, the ceremony began. The preacher called for anyone who needed healing and that person would come to the middle of the open floor and stand. Men who wanted to participate picked up bells from the altar while women took candles, and they stood beside the altar in two lines. With a word, the healing began, and the men and women fell into a circle around the sick person. The preacher alternated between praying and singing Shaker songs, which carry a traditional Indian rhythm and feel, and the circle joined in. Everyone danced in a procession, moving around the room counterclockwise three times, feet softly but purposefully tapping to the driving, jingling rhythm of the bells and songs. Reflecting the Shaker commitment to sobriety, Archie Johnson told stories of the church's early days when visitors would attend the church, standing along the sides and back. The Shakers would dance up to them, eyes closed, and reach into their pockets and take out cigarettes, or whatever else they weren't supposed to be carrying, and dispose of them.

During a healing, which often took two or three hours, women danced out of line and, using the candles, pulled the sickness off a person and burned it. Men healed by shaking their bells in front of the sick person. The church filled with prayer, song, and ringing bells, a rich and full layer over the focused and methodical rhythm of the healers' thoughts as they danced with closed eyes, allowing the spirit to move them. The services continued deep into the night, and sometimes worshippers walked from the church in the early light of day.

The Shaker Church at Siletz started to lose momentum in the late 1930s. Even though membership declined, services continued in the traditional fashion under the leadership of Ethel Gardipee and, later, John Logan. Some tribal members, although not Shakers, came to dinners at the church. Then the cookhouse suffered severe wind damage in 1964 and was rendered unus-

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able. When John Logan, aging and ill, moved to California, the Siletz knew the end of the church was near. In 1969, services ceased and the bells rang for the last time.

Though its membership today is small, the Shaker Church holds a place of respect among Indians in the Northwest. The members are earnest, church doctrine has authentic Native roots, and the services are moving. At Siletz, there have been no services since the 1960s, but some tribal members travel to Shaker services in Mud Bay, Smith River, and other places.

The legacy of the Siletz Shaker Church is manifested in the values and actions of the people it influenced. As a young woman, Gladys Muschamp's problems with alcohol affected her exceptional basket-making talents. She joined the Shaker Church in its early days at Siletz, became a loyal adherent, and made many pilgrimages to Mud Bay and Smith River to attend Shaker gatherings. The experience changed her life. She never took another drink and, in time, became the greatest of all Siletz basket makers. Generous with her time, she passed on her artistry to young people who in turn have taught others. Through spirituality, dance, and basketry, Gladys Muschamp became one of the many Siletz people who maintained the culture through challenging times.

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