Grandmother Rock Introduction

Grandmother Rock is one of the most important spiritual sited of the Coquille people. The rock which originally stood as an imposing monolith at the entrance of the Coquille River for thousands of years, was blasted by early settlers to make the Bandon jetty. The rock stood on the south side of the Coquille estuary and was associated with at least two mythological traditions from local tribes, collected as oral histories in the early 20th century. The traditions suggest that the rock was part of a family of rock, and a group of shore and offshore rocks that were persons frozen in place through immoral or dangerous actions. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Grandmother Rock was renamed Tupper Rock and was quarried to construct permanent jetties to stabilize the Coquille river entrance. The rock quarry also lent rock for the roadbed of a local roadway. Today, the site of Grandmother Rock is an assisted retirement facility, and still sacred ground of the Coquille people. There is a historic marker noting the former rock.

Naming the Rock Family

The original name of the rock is uumashii in Miluk languages. This translates into English as "Grandmother Rock" and is a more proper indigenous name for Grandmother. In the early 1850s, the rock was referred to as Gibraltar Rock during the Battle of the Coquille. It is unclear how long the rock kept this name. In 1881, John P. Tupper bought land in Bandon and erected a hotel, Ocean House. He sold this hotel and bought another hotel which was named Tupper House or Tupper Hotel in 1891. The Tupper Hotel was situated at the base of Grandmother Rock and the rock took the name Tupper Rock by area inhabitants. This is its common name in and around Bandon even today, even though the rock is now demolished.

Granddaughter Rock, nearby, apparently never had any other name. The rock was situated at the base of Grandmother Rock and was covered in a blanket of moss. Granddaughter Rock was demolished with Grandmother Rock as part of the quarrying activities.

Grandfather Rock was situated about a half mile to the north and west of Grandmother Rock. When the Coquille river entrance was artificially diverted by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1880s, the river estuary separated Grandmother and Grandfather Rock. The rock was renamed Rackliff Rock and was leveled to situate a lighthouse on top. The lighthouse was completed in 1896.1 The lighthouse bears the name Coquille River lighthouse.

Grandson rock's location is unknown.

Text from: Grandmother Rock Ethnohistory: Cultural Resources, History and Feasibility of Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by David G. Lewis March 29, 2017

Grandmother Rock Introduction *(Continued)*

Disposition of Grandmother Rock

Grandmother Rock has been severely impacted and deconstructed by the United States to build jetties for the fishing town of Bandon. By the end of the jetty project, the great monolith which stood as a beacon between river and ocean was completely demolished. First impacts on the rock began in around 1892 when quarrying activities began to collect large boulders for the south jetty. Quarrying continued until at least 1908 when the first project was completed. Quarrying on the rock restarted in 1915 to end in early to mid-1916. During this time the whole above-surface rock was demolished. Rubble too small to use in the jetties appears to have been allocated to road grading. It's unclear how many years the small rubble was used in road grading. Presumably, at the same time as Grandmother Rock was deconstructed and leveled, Granddaughter Rock was also quarried. It is possible that the last of Grandmother Rock, on her original site, remains below the surface. An Army Corps of Engineers map from 1936 notes a "quarry" still at the site of Grandmother Rock, suggesting that the remains of the rock was quarried for several decades, at least until 1936. Since, we have established that the small rubble was used in road grading, there may be parts of Grandmother Rock within all of the roads built up to the 1930s in Bandon.

There is now an assisted living facility on top of the site. There are no place names (roads, parks, facilities) in Bandon that preserve the names of either Grandmother Rock or Tupper Rock. Other existing rocks have such place names (ex: Face Rock Dr., Face Rock State Scenic Viewpoint, Beach House at Face Rock).

The local tribes place great spiritual and cultural value on Grandmother Rock and the whole rock family contained in their oral histories. The rocks are literally people to the tribes. The rocks in the jetties represent the remains of Grandmother and Granddaughter rocks and contain their remaining spiritual character. The site of the original Grandmother Rock is significant for the fact that for thousands of years Native people lived near the rock, the nearest known village was Nasomah. Oral histories of the rocks were passed down each generation and the people learned how to live in their world from these stories.

Grandfather Rock is also impacted by the leveling of the rock and construction of the Coquille River Lighthouse. Regardless, part of the rock is still present.

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