

The History of the Cameron Tract appearing here serves two purposes. The first is to provide some background to the property for groups and individuals involved in or curious about the property. The second, which is in line with the learning goals of the Cameron Tract, this to serve as an illustration of a History section in a written Management Plan. It is an example of what a family might develop as an informative, yet informal history of their own property.

An Example of a property history: The Cameron Tract

Early inhabitants

Native people have lived, travelled and traded in the Willamette basin for thousands of years. The Kalapuya Indians actively managed the land of the Willamette Valley. They set fires frequently and regularly to keep the Valley open for travel, hunting and cultivation of camas and other native crops. Early European travelers often made comments on the practice.

“Country the same as yesterday, rich but not yet a vestage of green herbage; all burned except in the deep ravines... As no place could be found suitable for fodder for the horses, we had to travel till four o’clock, we camped at a low point of land near a woody rivulet. Marched twenty-one miles. My feet tonight are very painful and my toes cut with the burned stumps of a strong species of *Arundo* and *Spires tomenosa*.” David Douglas, October 2, 1826

“... The atmosphere during the day had become quite thick, owing to the smoke arising from the burning of the prairies.” Charles Wilkes, 1841

Because of Indian fire management, the first European explorers and settlers found an open landscape. Prairie and oak savanna dominated the Valley.

The Luckiamute band of the Kalapuya Indians occupied an area west of the Willamette River and east of the Coast Range from roughly Rickreall to Corvallis. Archeological artefacts have been found along Soap Creek which flows northeast near the west edge of the Cameron tract.

Diseases introduced by early trappers and white settlers decimated the Luckiamutes by the early 1800s. In 1855 the Luckiamute band signed a treaty negotiated by Joel Palmer and removed to the Grand Ronde Reservation in Yamhill and Polk Counties. Only 22 members of the band were alive at the time of removal to the reservation.

Vegetation maps developed from early survey data suggest the Soap Creek Valley was mostly a mixture of wet prairie and upland prairie, like the Willamette Valley as a whole. Savanna covered upland areas, including most of the McDonald-Dunn forest. There were also some scattered areas of woodland and closed conifer forest. This changed rapidly after settlement when active burning stopped. Many once-open areas quickly filled in with oak, ash and Douglas-fir trees.

Initial white settlers

Thomas Corwin Baker (1842-1938) & Abbie White Baker (1854-1938). Thomas was born in Ohio and was a veteran of the Civil War. He later moved to Oregon and first lived and farmed in Albany, Linn Co. where he married Abbie White. They moved to Soap Creek in Benton County prior to 1900 and farmed and raised their children there. They moved to Corvallis by 1910 and lived there until about 1930 when they moved to Portland and later Seattle to live with their daughter's family. The Baker farm was sold to the Cook family, becoming part of a 1,348-acre holding.

T. P. Cook Ranch later named Sulphur Springs Stock Farm (1910-1925)

John W. Cook (1857-1936) was a Real Estate Investor who found this property (a portion of which was known as the Baker Farm) and convinced his brother, Tyrone P. Cook (1841-1927) to purchase it. Tyrone did purchase it in 1910 with the intent to have his son, Ernest S. Cook (1888-1987) live there and run the ranch.

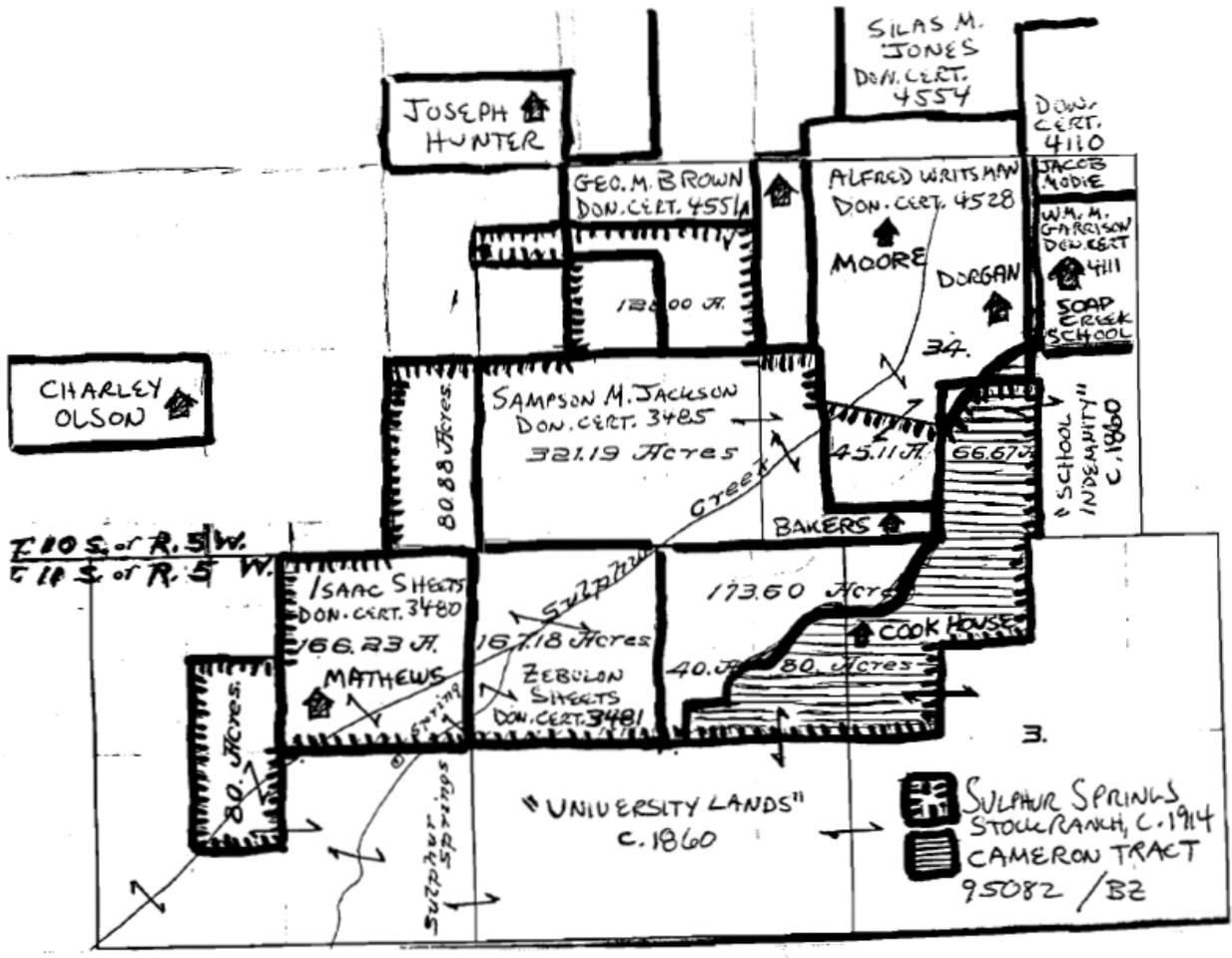
Ernest Sylvester Cook attended Oregon Agriculture College as a special student in agriculture during the 1910/11 academic year (this may have been a crash course of study to learn about farming and ranching.) He married Wanda Marcks in about 1913 (The Marcks family owned property in Soap Creek just north of the Cook Ranch.) Ernest and Wanda and their first son, Roy lived on the Sulphur Springs Stock Ranch until 1922 when they moved to Portland.

Ernest Cook did not thrive at farming on the ranch due in part to pollen allergies. After moving to Portland he worked teaching and as a statistician. He and Wanda divorced and Ernest later married Helen Lewis, a schoolteacher. Wanda Marcks went to beautician school, opened her own beauty shop, and had three employees.

The Cook family rented and/or leased out the ranch property. Eventually, Frank Vincent purchased most of the property.

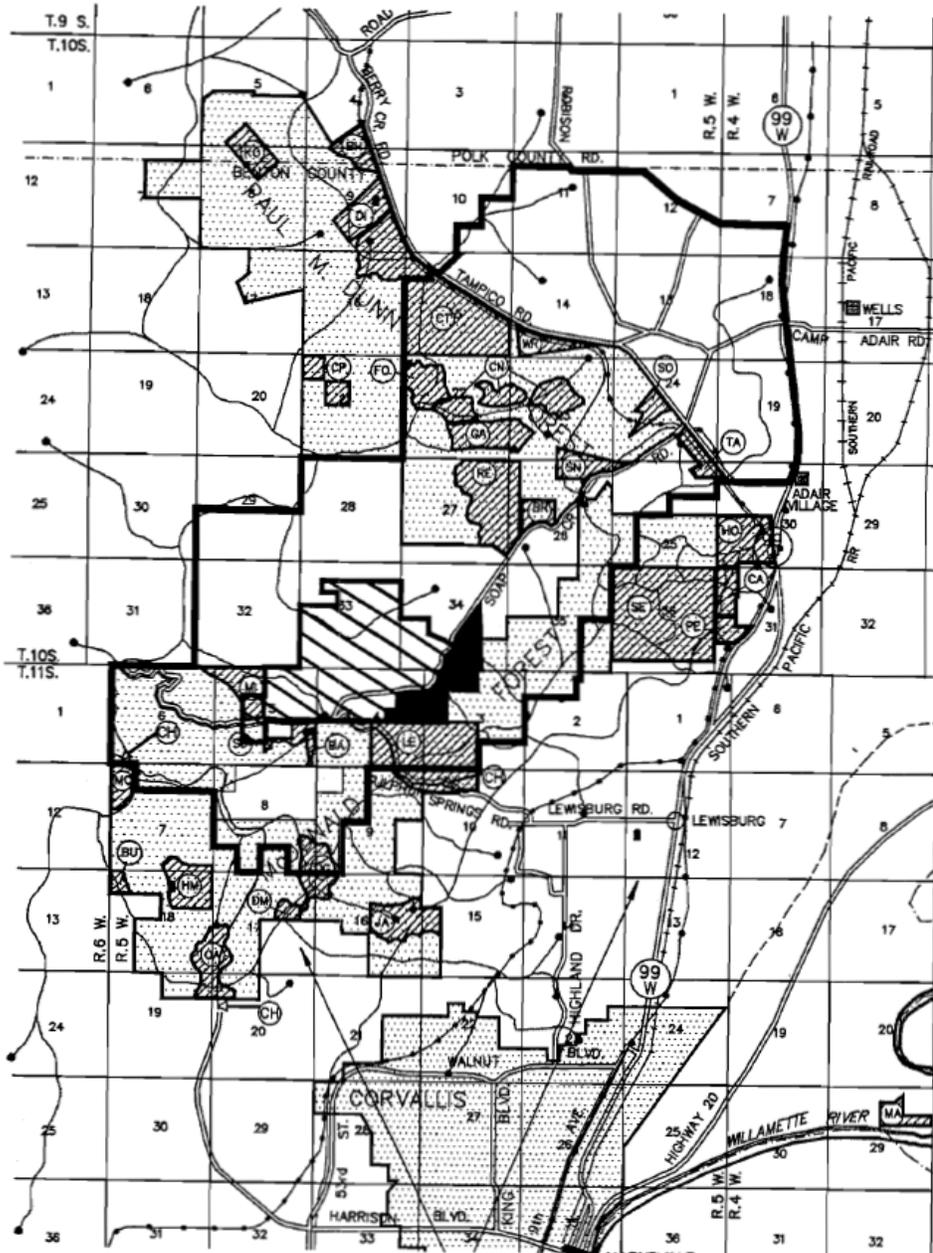
Frank (1881-1947) and Lydia Vincent (1883-1976)

Frank Vincent had many occupations including real estate, farming, dairy business and logging. He leased timber property from the Cook family with an option to buy. In the 1938 Metsker map, shows him as owning a large portion of the former Sulphur Springs Stock farm. Roy Cook, Ernest and Wanda Cook's oldest son, used to work for Frank during the summers felling and hauling trees on the property. Unfortunately, Frank died from a logging accident. A falling limb approximately 3 inches in diameter fractured his skull while working near Yamhill.



This map has been included to show the locations of Pioneer Landowners and neighbors in relation to the Sulphur Springs Stock Ranch. Note the preponderance of "University" and "School indemnity" lands during the time of the Civil War. Ironically, many of those lands are now (once again) in the hands of the OSU Research Forests and the OSU College of Agriculture. The Cook lands of 1910-1925 includes portions of the 1846-1858 pioneer claims of George M. "Mountain" Brown, Sampson M. Jackson, Alfred Writsman, Isaac Sheets and Zebulon Sheets.

From: Zybach and Sherer, 1995. Soap Creek Valley History Project, Monograph #12.



Sulphur Springs Stock Ranch location map. This map shows the 1348-acre Sulphur Springs Stock Ranch as it was located in relation to present-day Corvallis and to OSU Research Forests. It is an annotated version of the map of the Forests' Cultural Resource areas as shown on page 19 of the February 19, 1993 Draft of the McDonald-Dunn Forest Plan (OSU College of Forestry Forest Planning Team, Co-chaired by John Sessions and K. Norm Johnson). The solid colored area depicts a portion of the former ranch that was recently given to OSU Research Forests. It is known as the "Cameron Tract" named for its donor, Elizabeth Bond Starker Cameron (Corvallis Gazette Times, July 6, 1995).

Recent History

1952 Starker Forests purchases the 260 acres of recently-harvested forest land in the Soap Creek Watershed that will become the Cameron Tract.

1952 - 1994 Starker Forests actively manages the tract: fire protection, road building, timber harvesting and reforestation.

1994 - 1995 Elizabeth Starker Cameron donates the tract to OSU College of Forestry with three intents:

1. That \$1.0 million in revenue generated by a timber harvest be given to support renovation of OSU's Valley Library.
2. That the property (known as the "Cameron Tract") be managed to demonstrate good family forest stewardship.
3. That periodic income from timber harvests on the Tract be used to build and support a new program in Private and Family Forestry within the College of Forestry.

1995 - 1996 62 acres harvested to generate gift to Valley Library. Harvested areas are replanted. An ad hoc planning committee for the Tract was convened to develop timber harvesting plans to generate revenue for the required gift to the Valley Library. Two clearcut harvests conducted in the summer and fall of 1995 fulfilled that obligation, and the harvested areas were subsequently planted to a mixture of species including white pine, giant sequoia, redcedar, ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir.



1998 John Bliss appointed Starker Chair in Private and Family Forestry. Oregon Small Woodland Association hosts first annual Cameron Tract Twilight Tour.

1999 Cameron Tract Advisory Committee formed, including OSU personnel, Oregon Small Woodland Association members, and Soap Creek neighbors.

2000 Advisory Committee develops Mission Statement, Guiding Principles and Long Range plan. Comprehensive resource inventory completed.

2001 1.3 miles of road reconstructed featuring innovative road elements. 40 acres thinned using individual tree, free selection, and small group selection methods. Advisory Committee members participate in harvest design and marking.

2002 Seedlings are planted in openings created from thinning. Plans developed for interpretive signing throughout the Tract. First Fernhopper Tour of the Cameron Tract - a tour of the College Forests for college alumni!



2003 A severe winter ice storm knocks down 14 acres of large Douglas fir saw-timber on a steep, NW-facing slope.

2004 The blowdown acres are salvaged. A high lead system is used to minimize soil disturbance. Large snags and downed wood are retained. Some 327 MBF are harvested, at a total value of \$198,522. Logging and road construction costs total \$75,526, for a net income of \$122,996. In August, a field tour visits the site and discusses salvage and reforestation options.

2005 The salvage harvest site is hand planted with Douglas fir and Western Red cedar.

2006 – 2011 The trees keep growing!

2012 Graduate student Ed Cummings completes development of a carbon inventory for the forest. A tour of the forest is conducted for participants in a one day workshop focused on carbon science, management, and markets.

2014 Graduate student Joanie Schmidgall assists in coordinating new efforts to revitalize management activity on the Cameron Tract which include reconstructing the Firehouse Road, a utility pole timber harvest, new trail construction and the installation of several new interpretation signs.

2014 Tamara Cushing is appointed Starker Chair in Private and Family Forestry.

Acknowledgement: Thanks to Pat Wheeler, a forestland owner in Polk County and a Master Woodland Manager, for her efforts to reveal the early history and initial white settlers of the Cameron Tract.

Written March 2017

Resources:

Zybach B, and K. Sherer. 1995. Wanda Marcks Cook. The story of the Sulphur Springs Stock Ranch. Benton County, Oregon: 1904-1939. Oral history interviews by Bob Zybach and Kevin Sherer. Soap Creek Valley History Project, Monograph #12.