



# Hebron

Hebron was a small farming community built around a group of donation land claims. Many of its early settlers traveled west in wagon trains along the Oregon Trail. The valley was picturesque and ideal for hearty farmers, with flat **fertile** land surrounded by hills with timber, and a river that ran all year long. Summers proved warm and sufficient for growing crops, with winters often bringing lots of rain causing soggy grounds and flooded riverbanks. Many farms contained some river frontage and backed up into the hills so animals could be moved to higher ground during the rainy season.

Forests surrounding the valley provided not only timber for building homes and structures but produce and game. Without nearby stores families had to grow, raise, hunt, or harvest their food year-round. Originally called Corpus Prairie, this community was situated at the southernmost part of the Willamette Valley. One newspaper article states the name was changed to Hebron around 1883.

Residents of the area describe being cut off from neighboring communities in the winter and fall when flood waters washed out bridges and made **fording** the river dangerous. These conditions contributed to the heartiness of the community.

*The settlers forded the Coast Fork River until the winter storms caused the river to become too high for man and beast to cross. Then the settlers were almost isolated from the tiny settlement that would, many years later, become Cottage Grove. They had no telephones, radios, automobiles, rescue helicopters, or hospitals. They had to be self-reliant. They raised and preserved their own food, hunted, fished, made their own clothes, doctored their families and their livestock, and sometimes buried members of their families. From "They Called it Hebron" By Marie Gilham Geer*

Newspaper articles share news of Sunday sermons, visits to town, visitors from out of town, birthday celebrations, picnics and basket dinners, children's day activities, and more. This was a hard-working farming community, that enjoyed a good get together.



1895, August: Visitors from Eugene and Junction city visited Hebron's "Blackberry Patch"...

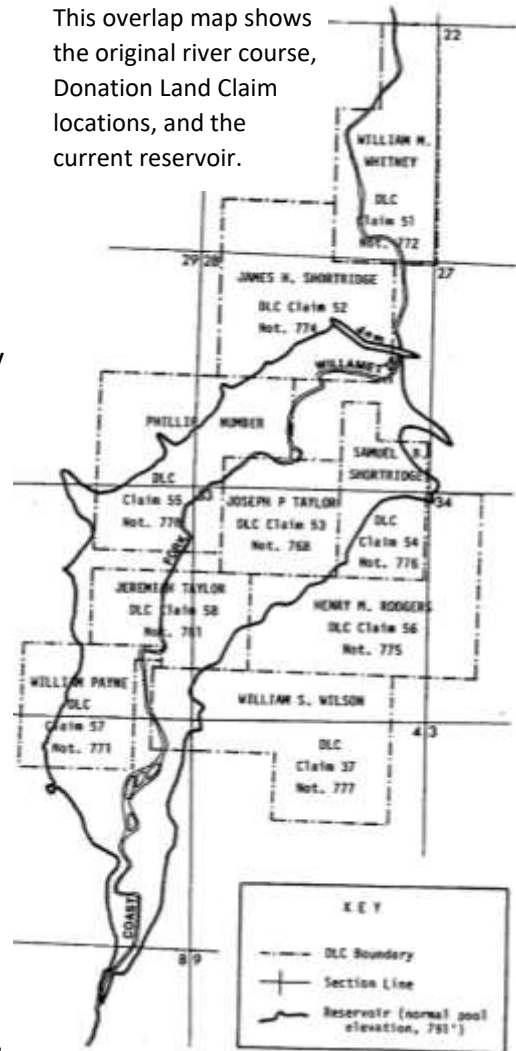
1918, April: "A liberty loan bond rally was held at the church Monday night..."

1928, Feb: Pie Social Held at Hebron Farmers Union Hall. Pie auction...

Sometimes the strength and **vitality** of a community is not enough to save it from the passage of time and the plans of others. Sometimes the price of progress is high. In an effort to control flooding in the valley dams were built along the Willamette River.

The headwaters of the mighty Willamette would be the first to see dams built. In 1940 the construction of Cottage Grove Dam began where the town of Hebron once stood. Families relocated, buildings moved, torn down or burned, roads rerouted, orchards drowned, the land itself reshaped. Cottage Grove Dam was completed in 1942, the land that once was Hebron now lays under the lake. The people of Hebron lost their community and home, leaving only their memories.

This overlap map shows the original river course, Donation Land Claim locations, and the current reservoir.



#### Discussion Points

1. What made the Hebron Valley an ideal place for homesteaders to stake their claim and build their farms?
2. The Cottage Grove Reservoir was named by popular vote held in Cottage Grove. How do think the location of the vote impacted the results?

#### Vocabulary

Fertile: (of soil or land) producing or capable of producing a lot of vegetation or crops

Fording: to cross a river or stream at a shallow place generally with a vehicle (wagon or car)

Vitality: The state of being strong and active; energy

