Two Timber Towns: Saginaw and Walker

Between Cottage Grove and Creswell are a few, nearly forgotten, timber towns including Saginaw and Walker.

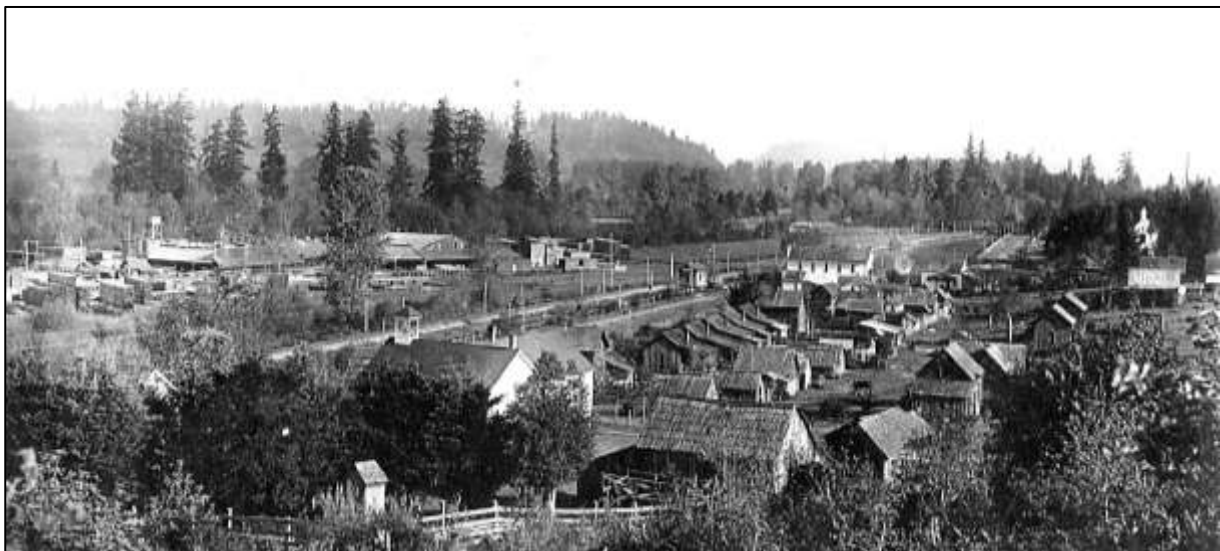Pack team leaves store in Saginaw

Saginaw

Saginaw started with homesteaders who crossed the country in covered wagons. With the arrival of the railroad in 1872 the town experienced a timber boom as this become a lumber shipping location with several area sawmills sending lumber up and down the line. J.I. Jones was the first organized lumbermen of the area. He sold his timber holdings and sawmill to Booth Kelly who built up the industry. The store that remains today was originally built by Booth Kelly Lumber Company.

In addition to the store Saginaw had of a school, a church, a bakery, post office, rows of mill houses, a lumber yard, company offices, a planing mill and loading

Town of Saginaw, year unknown

Flume that brought lumber from Prune Hill into Saginaw

dock. A <mark>flume</mark>, over six miles long, carried rough cut timber from Prune Hill to the planing mill in Saginaw.

Prune Hill, east of town, was one of the areas most productive lumber operations with a sawmill, log pond, supply store, bunk house, cook house and family housing. Booth Kelly operated until 1914. While logging remained in the area, it would never return to its early robust operation of the late 1800's and early 1900's.

A second store was built in the 1950's just a block north of the original store, and in 1921 highway 99 was built running along the west side of the railroad tracks. Charles H. Sharon and Albert Woodard blasted the hill South of Saginaw to make this possible. This new highway improved road conditions, but quickly become another back road when I-5 was constructed in the late 1950's.

Walker

Just north of Saginaw, along highway 99, is the town of Walker. This area was part of the Donation land Claim of Campbell Chrisman who arrived in the area in 1853. By the time the railroad came through in the 1870's Chrisman had a large amount of land <mark>amassed</mark>. It has been reported that it took a lot of convincing to get Chrisman to allow the train tracks to be laid through his land, spitting it in two. Local legend says that as part of the agreement Chrisman was granted the right to flag down a train any time he wanted and ride to any destination and back for free for the rest of his life.

In 1855 Chrisman's daughter Mary married John Walker. John and Mary inherited a large portion of land in the area in 1885. When the post office was established in 1891 the community became known as Walker. While the post office was only in operation until 1925, the Little White Church that was built in 1895 remains

Walker Union High School 1916

standing today. The Walker High School served students from the communities of Walker, Saginaw, Delight Valley and Lynx Hollow.

Most families who called Walker home were either farmers or worked in the timber industry. Mr. Walker operated a large warehouse that stored grain for local farmers till it could be loaded on train cars and carried away. There were also several motel cabins for motorists traveling through town on Highway 99.

Saginaw and Walker are two of the may Northwest towns built by timber. Their heyday may be behind them, but these who remain continue to add to the telling of the towns story.

Prior to homesteaders and early settlers this land was home to the Kalapuya Tribe, to read about the indigenous peoples see the mini lesson titled Local Kalapuya Bands.

Discussion Points

1. Which buildings, that were part of each towns heyday, are still used today?
2. Why do you think these two towns still exist when so many have faded away?

Vocabulary

Amass: gather together or accumulate (a large amount or number of valuable material or things) over a period of time

Flume: a deep narrow channel or ravine with a stream running through it, an artificial channel conveying water, typically used for transporting logs or timber

Planing Mill: facility that takes cut and seasoned boards from a sawmill and turns them into finished dimensional lumber