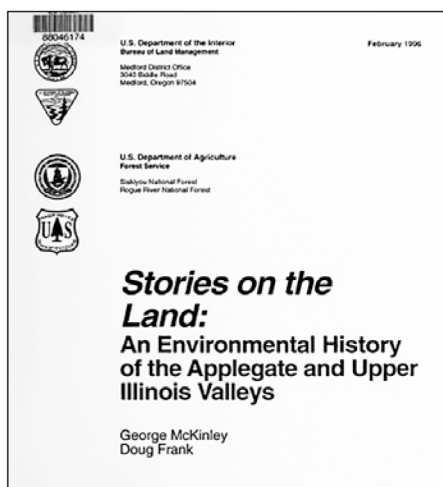


Discover Stories on the Land

Below is another excerpt from the unpublished 1996 book, *Stories on the Land: An Environmental History of the Applegate and Upper Illinois Valley*, by George McKinley and Doug Frank. *The Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc.*, plans to publish the book in its entirety in 2020.



presence but an absence. Across the landscape, newcomers practiced removal. Beavers were removed from riparian communities. Gold was feverishly removed from these same areas. Ponderosa pines were removed for construction,

and oaks to make way for fields and pasturelands. On the dry oak-conifer bottomlands, these latter removals began the most visible alteration of the landscape.

Removal emerges as the central practice in a new regime of regional land management. Of course, removal was also the answer to the annoying presence of an old regime of land managers. These were handily removed at the first opportunity.

None of the specified removals was an end in itself. Beavers were removed for cash and to quell a fear born of national insecurity at the forefront of colonial expansion. Gold was removed to send home or to supplement the farm or to stake a new life. Pine and oak were removed to recreate homes and fields left behind and to provide those spaces necessary for the "expansion of civilization." The natives were removed, quite simply, because the new arrivals to the region could find no room in their vision for sharing the land with a people so different. In none of these cases was the land, its inert mineral contents, or its living occupants understood as deserving of care. It is the inability to care for the land and the native people of the land that fostered the practice of removal.

As settlers came, they imposed settlement patterns brought from Ohio or Kentucky or Illinois. In their minds and hearts were ideas about God and justice which came from the realms of heaven or of reason. In both instances, the land—and its residents—lay as an obstacle to be removed; the wilderness, as a malign presence to be tamed.

Wilderness, etymologically, is "a self-willed land," free from human imposition. It was just such a land that early settlers encountered and strove to change. True, Native Americans imposed their will on the land, but this imposition was of a clearly different order. In the removal of species and minerals, in laying out straight lines, the newly arrived Euro-Americans labored to alter the will-of-the-land and impose their own will *on* the land. It is this imposition of a new human will on the landscape that fueled the environmental changes represented by the earliest era of Euro-American settlement.

*Excerpted by Diana Coogle
from pages 58-59.*

A Language of Encounters: In Conclusion

Government surveys between 1850 and 1917 used a compass-point orientation for landscape description. Straight lines cut across open areas and over hills, irrespective of natural boundaries such as streams, rivers, slopes, and meadows. Because of these new surveying requirements settlers no longer laid out claims with reference to the idiosyncrasies of the local landscape and became estranged from the land. By the time settlers reached the Applegate, they were thinking in squares and rectangles. They mapped and claimed their lands in reference to numbers, chains, degrees, and townships, not to streams, oaks, or springs.

In contrast, the previous inhabitants were not only more likely to inhabit the region in reference to local idiosyncrasies but also unlikely to think of private ownership as an issue of primary importance. The personal exclusion of land from the public base for solely private gain is a notion foreign to native landscape use. In the native world, the landscape, individual, and community are interwoven in relations of obligation.

The Donation Land Claims Act caused settlers to fragment the landscape. Private and public holdings were distinguished. Land use became restricted and focused. The tendency to see landscape more as an assortment of unconnected parcels than as a whole and to withdraw private holdings from discussions of public obligation has fostered a lasting legacy.

This cadastral (showing extent, value and ownership of land) control signified a transition movement. The land that government surveyors walked at the conclusion of this earliest era of settlement was similar to the land walked by the grizzly at the opening of this era. The brush fields surveyors struggled through were the same ones the grizzly had skirted. The marshes and sloughs they noted were the same ones the grizzly had targeted for early season foraging. The expansive conifer forests, dominating the landscape at elevations above settlement, spread roadless as before.

There were also differences, which, in important ways, reflected not a new