

# Pacifica has a long history

BY PEG PRAG

Pacifica's recent articles have been "Horses at Pacifica" and "Art at Pacifica." This article is about Pacifica's fascinating history. But first, some current notes.

Pacifica is happy to be working on a revamped disc golf course. If you are interested in being part of helping create this, e-mail [vanessa@pacificagarden.org](mailto:vanessa@pacificagarden.org).

There are some *great* winter workshops planned during December: felting, ceramics, pine needle baskets, sewing, carving, and weaving. Check the website, [pacificagarden.org](http://pacificagarden.org), for dates and times. Join in, have fun, and create some cool handmade presents.

## Some Pacifica history

People who come to Pacifica say that it immediately feels like home, and, in fact, it has been home to a succession of peoples.

Although Native Americans inhabited parts of Oregon more than 15,000 years ago, it appears that there was a more recent (perhaps 1,000 years ago) migration including, in the Rogue Valley, the Dakubetede (dah-koo-bee-te-deh) tribe, closely allied to the Takelma, and the Latagawa ("those living in the uplands") tribes.

These tribes built round semi-submerged houses and subsisted primarily on acorns, camas and other bulbs, berries, game, and salmon. We have been told that the Williams Valley (including the small valley of Pacifica at the junction of Powell Creek, Camp Meeting Creek, and Williams Creek), surrounded by Grayback Mountain, Sugarloaf, and Medicine Mountain, was considered a sacred place.

Gold mining, logging, homesteading: Pacifica is a large part of one of few homesteads left in the area. (There were no discoveries of gold on Williams Creek until 1858.)

Williamsburg (within sight from high points in Pacifica) was on a bench above Williams Creek just northeast of where the current bridge crosses. The business section of Williamsburg included several stores for miners' supplies and clothes, two hotels, three saloons, a public hall, and a blacksmith shop.

Simon "Si" Messinger, a Pennsylvanian of German descent, came to Oregon by sea, around the Horn, in the 1850s. Si built the first lumber mill on the lower Applegate. He married Martha Lindsay, then age 16, whose father (David Lindsay) was a cousin of the Applegate brothers. She came west by wagon. Their great-great-granddaughter still lives next door and their great-great-great-granddaughter is on Pacifica's board of directors.

Camp meetings were held at Williams, and, according to one account, people flocked there from "all parts, these being the big events of the year." Because "Camp Meeting Creek" flows into this property, it might be assumed that Pacifica's meadows were used for these events.

In the late 1940s the Lippincotts, artists and art collectors from "Hopi country," bought the property that is now Pacifica. They used logs and wood from the property to build a unique, beautiful home: Pacifica's Pond House. It is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Pacifica was part of Williams when it was a small, closely knit farming and logging community. Many of the roads were still dirt, and telephones were still party lines directed by an operator.

In 1964, the 680-acre homestead was sold to the P.L. McNutt Development Company, based in El Monte, California, which divided much of it into smaller lots (on the west side of Water Gap Road, the Dreamhill Drive area), leaving the 420 acres where Pacifica now sits.

Between 1977 and 1985, Steve Miller, the rock musician, owned the property. During that period, he built an oak- and cedar-lined "barn" with a lovely "great room" and a recording studio—little realizing what a wonderful community center it would make!

At that time the small "town" of Williams formed a town council (the first in the county) and a volunteer biweekly newspaper, the *Williams News*, which was published for 25 years. These two things helped to bring together the culturally diverse community of Williams, comprised of 2,000 people

spread out through the valleys and hills, a community with a heart and an identity of being outspoken.

In 1999 the nonprofit Pacifica Garden was formed by Ray Prag and myself, Peg Prag, with the miraculous and crucial help of Lee Price, as a unique natural reserve dedicated to education and the celebration of the environment, plants, the arts, and community—past, present and future—providing programs and enriching visitor experiences for people of all ages, abilities, races, and creeds.

As a nonprofit, Pacifica is run by a board of directors. Our activities include

environmental education, an outdoor school, arts education, and community classes and events.

We primarily serve the five wonderful rural communities of the mid-Applegate.

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This house, once owned by Steve Miller of the Steve Miller Band and now part of Pacifica Garden, was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Photo: Janet Eastman/The Oregon via AP.

# EXPERIENCE MATTERS

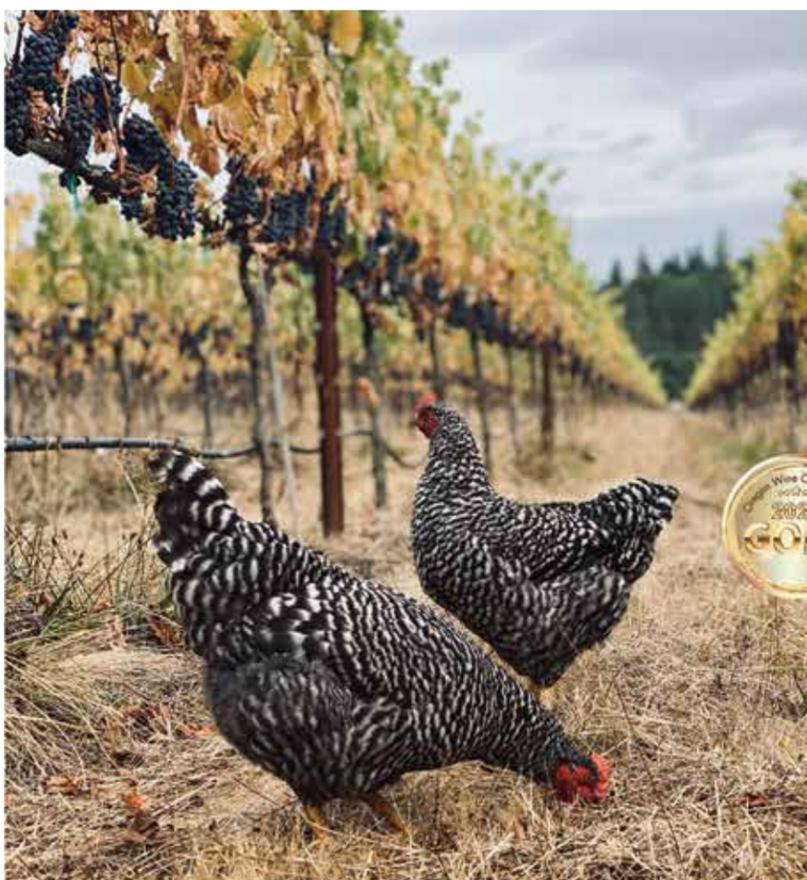
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