

# The Carolina Company

## *Identity and Isolation in a Southwestern Oregon Mountain Refuge*

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**THE TOWN OF POWERS** is one of the most isolated places in western Oregon. The small community of seven hundred people is just eighteen miles from Highway 42 near Myrtle Point, but that drive can take forty minutes due to the many tortuous switchbacks as the road climbs the South Fork of the Coquille River. This stretch of road is so often interrupted by landslides of soft serpentine-laden soil that the Oregon Department of Transportation has established permanent sites for road building material at intervals along the highway. Beyond the town, the road continues unimproved into the mountains, essentially situating Powers at the end of a long *cul de sac*. The South Fork cascades down from the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest flowing south to north over falls and rocky riffles, before traversing a series of small prairies, arrayed like pearls on a meandering string, each circumscribed by high mountains.



**DAVID WAGNER** was a leader of the Carolina Company and migrated to Oregon from North Carolina. His 166-acre ranch, pictured above in September 1914, eventually became the site for the town of Powers, Oregon.

Isolation is in the eye of the beholder, and the perceived inaccessibility of the South Fork Coquille River Valley and the community of Powers is an artifact of a modern industrial mindset.<sup>1</sup> For those who live there, however, the South Fork provides many opportunities and inducements. The cold Siskiyou Mountain waters allow the South Fork to support one of the few sizable runs of Chinook salmon between the Rogue River and the Columbia River, and prior to the industrial logging era, lamprey eels were common in the South Fork valley, as were elk, deer, camas, and other resources. One longtime Powers resident told the authors that the traditional way to fish for salmon was “with a pitchfork.”<sup>2</sup> Native Americans thrived along the South Fork for thousands of years, valuing not only the salmon but also the proximity of the nearby ridgelines that served as trails to link Indigenous communities across the region. In time, a small group of Southern emigrants known as the Carolina Company, the North Carolina Colony, Carolina Settlement, or any number of variations of the three, chose to settle in the area because of its very isolation, not despite it.

One fourth-generation Carolina Company descendent, the late Gordie Hayes, often wondered why his family chose this remote location. His ancestors passed through the Sacramento and Rogue River valleys on their way to Coos County, and life in those areas arguably would have been easier. “I guess they just wanted to be left alone,” he concluded.<sup>3</sup> The small-scale family ranching economy created by the settlers proved an enduring way of life along the South Fork Coquille River, persisting to the present day. Those homesteaders, like the Native Americans, made a life along the South Fork that considered the region on its own terms. Coming from a particular cultural and historical context in war-torn rural Appalachia, they chose the place for its inherent qualities.<sup>4</sup>



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Despite the longevity and success of both the Native Americans' hunting and gathering way of life and the settlers' ranching way of life, the South Fork Coquille River region is best known for the extensive logging operations that began in 1912. That enterprise saw the construction of a railroad from Coos Bay to the small company town of Powers as well as numerous satellite logging camps that allowed for the systematic extraction of the South Fork's timber for distant markets.<sup>5</sup> Within a single lifetime, the old growth was exhausted, and the railroad abandoned. Derelict sidings, twisted rails, and rusted railcars can still be found along the South Fork Coquille River in dystopian splendor that attests to the pulse of industrial logging that swept over the region and extracted its capital wealth. The community still bears the name of the entrepreneur who initiated what was once the center of one of the largest logging operations in the United States. While Albert Powers chose to name his short-lived but ecologically devastating enterprise after himself, the name chosen by the group of Southern emigrants who came before was *Rural* — emphasizing instead the intrinsic quality of the place they called home.

An extensive archaeological and ethnographic record bespeaks of the long-term Native American communities in the area. They lived at the center of a network of trails linking the central Oregon coast, the mouth of the Rogue River, and the interior Rogue River and Umpqua River valleys.<sup>6</sup> Coquille Tribal elders told anthropologists that the Native American people who once lived around the Powers valley were known as the *Nati ji' dunne*, the 'The People by the Big Fish Dam.'<sup>7</sup> Their towns were observed first hand by the earliest European visitors to the South Fork in 1826.<sup>8</sup> These towns were mostly abandoned by the time of the 1850s gold rush. When the American William T'Vault expedition travelled down the South Fork in 1851 in an unsuccessful search for a passable route for a wagon road to link the coast and the interior valleys, he observed only small seasonal Native American campsites.<sup>9</sup> Scholars suggest that many upland areas such as the South Fork Coquille River/Powers area were depopulated through epidemics of Old World diseases and the survivors amalgamated into fewer, but perhaps larger, villages located along the main river trunks in interior valleys and along estuaries on the coast.<sup>10</sup>

The historiography of rural communities often focuses on the impact of extractive industries and in recent decades has emphasized the boom and bust cycles of industrial capitalism, their attendant labor structures and ideologies, and how rural capital is hoarded into urban social arenas at the social and environmental expense of local communities.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, historical works also tend to commodify and exploit rural settlements, presenting their inhabitants as relatively one-dimensional laborers and their communities



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**A COOS BAY LUMBER COMPANY** lumber train is loaded with cedar in a partially logged area in 1932. Logging railroads connected Coos Bay to Powers, Oregon, where the industry systematically extracted the area's timber for export.

as a passive means to a capitalist end. They draw on the written record of census data and newspapers articles, which are powerful tools for writing culture and history but are also artifacts of our recent capitalist past.

Historical archaeology, particularly when conducted over several years within the communities under study, can offer complementary perspectives on past events. Archaeologists and historians are sometimes at odds with their approach to the past. While this is in part a byproduct of the competitive nature of academia itself as traditionally practiced, other tensions stem from longstanding differences in theoretical approach, methodology, and historical interpretation. In the words of Barbara Little, "archaeologists need not be content with providing details or 'facts' that documentary historians may or may not find useful."<sup>12</sup> The interdisciplinary nature of historical archaeology places archaeologists in the position to "create analytic links among written,



**THE HAYES HOMESTEAD**, originally built in the 1870s and later used as the Rural post office, is pictured here in the early twentieth century. This view of the house is looking west-northwest, and the Hayes Creek drainage is visible by the dense stand of trees behind the house.

oral, and material forms of expressions as it continues intertwining history and anthropology. The function of supplementation, then, is more usefully thought of as historical challenge. History thus supplemented is history reconceptualized.”<sup>13</sup> While logging and other capitalist ephemera indeed loom large in the rural areas in Oregon such as the South Fork Coquille River, our long-term experience with both the local landscape and the local residents made it clear that the South Fork has its own unique social and historical context. In response to the overwhelming rhetoric and power of the story of industrial logging in the Pacific Northwest that forces a frame around the region, this article attempts to engage the often overlooked and more subtle aspects of community identity and social experience.

### THE CAROLINA COMPANY

As in the rest of southern Oregon, the Euro-American population grew exponentially in Coos County in the early 1850s, when the California gold

rush extended north into southern Oregon and gold was quickly discovered across what are now Curry and Coos counties. In 1854, a large black-sand mining operation bloomed on Whiskey Run beach just north of the Coquille River.<sup>14</sup> Travelers, following Native American trail systems between there and the interior valleys, soon found prospects on the South Fork Coquille River and surrounding drainages. Until late in the nineteenth century, the unincorporated settlements in the South Fork Coquille River were known by the moniker Johnson Precinct, named after the man who first discovered gold in the region.<sup>15</sup>

The mines along the South Fork Coquille River were not expansive, and throughout the 1860s, the area remained only sparsely inhabited, primarily by Euro-American and Chinese gold miners and isolated homesteaders. Sustained settlement began with the arrival of the Carolina Company — a handful of families and neighbors from the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee who left for Oregon in the spring of 1872.<sup>16</sup> South Fork valley patriarch David Wagner, “a man of true Southern hospitality and enterprise,” was a leader of the Carolina Company, and his original homestead would eventually become the Powers townsite.<sup>17</sup> Wagner nor had visited the area prior to the arrival of the Carolina Company in 1872, and some accounts suggest he had already begun the process of selecting land before returning to North Carolina, where he told tales of “the beauty of the Coquille Valley, and the fertile lands available” to neighbors, family, and friends interested in seeking a new life in the West.<sup>18</sup>

The Carolina Company was formally led by William Penn Mast, a farmer from Laurel Creek, Watauga County, North Carolina, and neighbor of the Hayes family. John Hayes was married to Susanna Wagner, daughter of David Wagner. These families, along with several others, came by rail on an “emigrant train” to Red Bluff, California, via Sacramento and then traveled overland by wagon to Oregon.<sup>19</sup> The group made several stops *en route* to the coast, pausing first in Jackson County’s Rogue River Valley:

*EMIGRATION — Mr. W.C. [sic] Mast, of North Carolina, arrived in town on the stage this week. He informs us that a colony of about seventy persons, comprising several families came through Red Bluff from that State, where he left them fitting up teams. They will arrive in this country in a week or ten days, and propose to settle in our valley, if they can find suitable locations, to devote themselves to farming and stock-raising. This colony comprises the bone and sinew of the State from which they come, and will be a valuable addition to our population, and we hope they may find suitable homes among us.*<sup>20</sup>

The company stayed in the Rogue River Valley for roughly a month, and then continued on to Coos County. The Carolina Company was not alone in

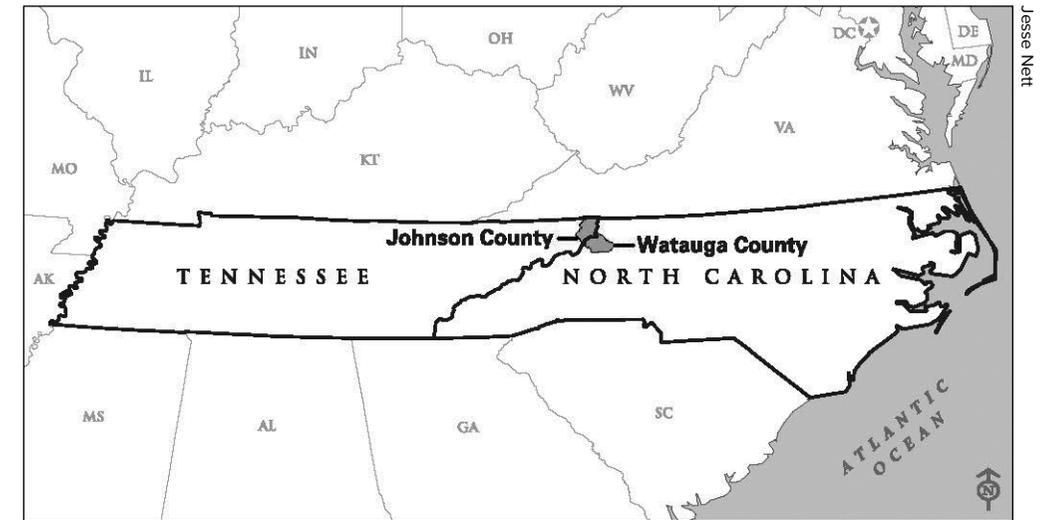
recognizing the opportunities west of the Coast Range, where open tracts of land were still available. Newspapers reported that “emigrants are daily passing through Roseburg bound for the Coquille [sic] Country. This section offers better inducement for settlers than any other part of Oregon.”<sup>21</sup> The Mast family stayed in Douglas County for a year before continuing on and eventually settling along the North Fork on the Coquille River.

In addition to the Wagner and Hayes families, members of the Carolina Company included T.C. Land, John and Alfred Widby, Wiley Isaacs, Mr. Houser, and the Schull and Banner families, among others. A decade after the first wave of Carolina Company settlers came to Coos County, additional families came from Watauga County, North Carolina, and the adjacent Johnson County, Tennessee. In 1884, Wiley Wilborn Whittington and his family came to the area “and located on the South Fork of the Coquille River near Broadbent,” presumably along with Almus MacDaniel (Mack) Arnold and the Baker family from Johnson County, who also arrived in 1884.<sup>22</sup> Census Population Schedule records for the years 1900 through 1920 show many names with ties to North Carolina and Tennessee, all likely associated with one of the Carolina migrations to the Coquille river valley, including families and individuals with the names Brown, Carter, Caudill, Gilbert, Harmon, Hartley, Harvey, Leatherwood, Morley, Norris, Stewart, Sullivan, Summerlin, Whitney, and Woodering. By the 1890s, the Carolina Company — a community of immigrant families primarily from two adjacent counties in isolated and mountainous eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina — was firmly established along the even more isolated and mountainous South Fork Coquille River.

### THE SOUTHERN EXODUS

While the stories have been tempered in the retelling over time, most agree on the reasons behind the Carolina Company exodus. They were “dissatisfied with the slow recovery of the country from the devastation of the [Civil] war” and were motivated to head west after “having heard of the fame of the country ‘where rolls the Oregon.’”<sup>23</sup> An oxen yoke donated to the Coos County Historical Society by Hayes family descendants included a handwritten note recounting that “the Hayes family left their home in North Carolina during the strife from the time following the Civil War when homes and farms were raided by bands of bitter southerners — their homes and farms being situated on the line between north and south. They came to Oregon to live in peace, far from the scene of dissention.”<sup>24</sup> The South Fork of the Coquille River allowed the family to recreate, and perhaps improve on, their pre-war lives in North Carolina and Tennessee.

Like most families in the East, the Carolina Company members were intimately involved in and affected by the Civil War. Many male party members



**THE CAROLINA COMPANY** members originated in Watauga County, North Carolina, and Johnson County, Tennessee. With their families in 1872, they travelled by rail to California and by wagon to Oregon.

served in the Confederate Army. Mast, who was described in one account as casting “his lot with the army of the Confederacy” not out of politics but rather “by virtue of environment,” served first in Company B, Eleventh Home Guard Regiment of North Carolina in 1862. After being promoted to Full First Lieutenant in 1863, he was reassigned to the Company D, Fifty-Eighth P. Rangers Infantry Regiment North Carolina in 1864.<sup>25</sup> Another account described as “family lore” told of Mast being captured by Union soldiers when he was home on leave after he was “signaled out of his home by a secret rebel whistle” and imprisoned at Camp Chase for two years. On release, Mast was described as “malnourished and homesick.”<sup>26</sup> During his time in the war, his wife Charlotte and the family’s slaves ran the farm, “till the close of that lamentable struggle, when her husband returned and together they entered into the reconstruction of their home and of the impoverished country.”<sup>27</sup> T.C. ‘Squire’ Land “fought all through the Civil War on the Confederate side, it is said he fought in 65 battles.”<sup>28</sup> John Hayes, and David, William, and John Wagner also likely served in the war, although having such common names, their specific roles are difficult to pinpoint.

Eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina did not fit easily into the larger Southern cultural landscape. Sometimes referred to as “the Switzerland

of America,” the region was “fiercely independent and often contrarian in its political currents,” becoming a “thorn in the eyes of the Confederate republic, and an enticing and romantic rallying cry for the Union — even though its complex views on race and the government would vex both contemporaries and historians for decades to come.”<sup>29</sup> The diversity in political views, paired with:

*casualties at the front, the depredations of foragers from both sides, the Con-  
scription Act, inflation, and the Confederate government’s tax-in-kind policy —  
which required farmers to turn over one-tenth of their crops to the government  
— left many mountain residents hungry and destitute. . . . As dissent grew, west-  
ern North Carolina became the dominion of guerrillas, deserters, and raiders.*<sup>30</sup>

Thus, while the North Carolina and Tennessee borderlands did not contain key battle sites, they were uniquely affected by the war due to geographic location and mixed political alliances.

The region was devastated at the end of the Civil War by the expeditions of Union Gen. George Stoneman, known generally as Stoneman’s Raids and the inspiration for the popular 1969 song “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down.” Stoneman’s Raid of 1865 was the final of three attempts to end the war by destroying critical Southern infrastructure, thereby quashing the remaining resources of the Confederate Army. In the span of just a few months, Stoneman’s soldiers traveled over thousands of miles, crippling railroads, communication lines, bridges, and other infrastructure. These actions impacted not only the Confederate Army but also civilians, as the raids “directly involved more noncombatants in a military action than any other single event of its scale during the war.”<sup>31</sup> Many argue that Stoneman’s 1865 expedition was too late to affect the outcome of the Civil War, but it was still considered successful as it effectively “demoralized the war efforts of a whole region.”<sup>32</sup> The gratuitous destruction of civilian infrastructure impacted rural areas already struggling from years of war and had a paralyzing effect on the many small communities trying to rebuild. Stoneman and his men had a direct impact on the families who would later immigrate to Oregon as part of the Carolina Company.

Perhaps ironically, Stoneman himself first experienced the method and efficacy of such scorched-earth tactics years earlier, as a young U.S. Army officer in the First Regiment of U.S. Dragoons on detail to the then-uncolonized Coquille River region. In November 1851, Stoneman served under Col. Silas Casey as the dragoons burned to the ground every Native American plank house on the Coquille River between the Pacific Ocean and the confluence of the South Fork, deliberately, at the start of winter, destroying the dried salmon and other food stored inside.<sup>33</sup>

Two decades later, the post-war conditions in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina were described (and certainly enhanced) by local

color writers’ accounts of mountain travels through the South. One wrote of “traveling along the roads out of Tennessee into North Carolina” and encountering the “humble log dwelling of Hopkins”:

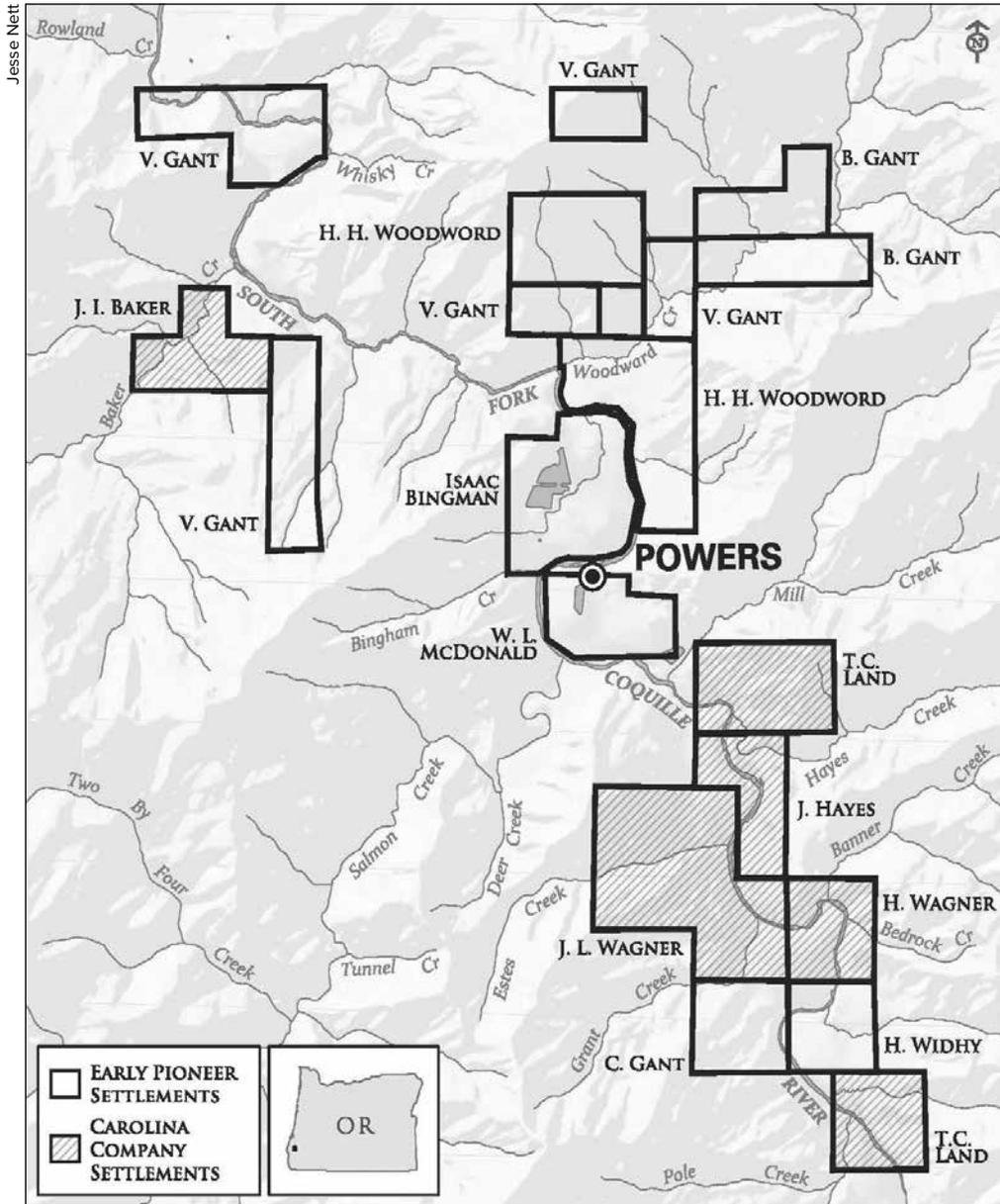
*Once a prosperous farmer, the war had left the venerable mountaineer only the  
wrecks of his home. Both parties had guerrillaed [sic] through the gorges and  
gaps; one “army” burned Hopkins’s cabin, and the other stole his produce. High  
on the hillsides grew the native grape; a little cultivation would have turned the  
whole valley-cup into a fruitful vineyard; but Hopkins said it was too late for  
him to try. It was, too, an excellent sheep-grazing county . . . yet there were no  
frame houses for miles around. “Wal, you uns don’t understand, I reckon,” said  
Hopkins. “I hain’t had a might sight o’ git up since the war.”<sup>34</sup>*

Although likely fictionalized, the story of Hopkins’s farm would have been painfully familiar to many living in the area. A similar sense of hopelessness may have been what motivated the members of the Carolina Company to relocate and start over. The story also contains seeds of what would grow into discrimination towards rural mountain residents in Appalachia and elsewhere. While the author portrays Hopkins as a sympathetic figure, he also notes the potential and fertility of his holdings, thus dismissing the larger impacts of traumatic events by implying that Hopkins’s lack of success at least partially reflects his lack of motivation and personal abilities. The Mast family passed down similar stories of this distressing time, recalling that “during General Stoneman’s raids on Watauga County, Union soldiers took pickets from their fence, building fires to cook the food they had stolen from the local residents.”<sup>35</sup> In light of these accounts, the desire to seek a better life in an isolated place apart from any outside political faction was understandable.

The following newspaper transcript (presumably based on a conversation between William Mast and Jacksonville’s *Democratic Times* editor Charles Nickell, a known Southern sympathizer), outlines some of his frustrations following the Civil War:

*Mr. Mast also informs us that oppressive laws and high taxation is driving the  
best citizens from that State; that carpet-bag, scalawag and negro rule has  
prostrated every business, and that there is a disposition on the part of every  
man of spirit to emigrate, to escape the sad fall and ruin that awaits the continu-  
ation of Radical usurpation in the unhappy South.*<sup>36</sup>

Along the North Fork of the Coquille River, the Mast family established and named the community of Lee, Oregon, reportedly in honor General Robert E. Lee, a small gesture of rebellion over the outcome of the war and an enduring signifier of the values they brought from the South.<sup>37</sup>



**THE CAROLINA COMPANY** leaders included William Mast Penn, John Hayes, and David Wagner. The above map shows early pioneer settlements and Carolina Company settlements in southwestern Oregon

Emigration was bittersweet for the Carolina Company. All left friends and extensive family networks behind. New families were also forged in preparation for the journey. John La Fayette Wagner (of Johnson County, Tennessee) married Mary E. Horton (of North Carolina) on April 5, 1872, “and the following day started for Oregon.”<sup>38</sup> Reuben Mast, son William Mast, recounted years later the emotional departure:

*The old familiar road, along which their feet, the feet of their fathers and grandfathers, had trudged their way to school, and over which many of them would tread no more, was lined with relatives and friends, who assembled to bid them an everlasting adieu and wish them God-speed. Like other things earthly, these sad adieus ended, and they turned their backs on the scenes of their childhood and every loved spot their infancy knew.*<sup>39</sup>

And so, on April 6, 1872, the party of roughly seventy individuals left for Oregon. The majority of the group arrived in Coos County by August of that year.

#### EARLY LIFE ON THE UPPER SOUTH FORK

On arriving in Coos County, Carolina Company members found plenty of available land, but little in the way of infrastructure improvements in the back country:

*There was not any means of crossing streams; hence, the settlers would select a place where they could fall a tree across a stream, level off the curvature of the log, [and] erect hand rails. With such a bridge, saddle and pack horses were led and transportation was established and maintained until settlers built makeshift roads to the Coos Bay Wagon Road.*<sup>40</sup>

Although difficult to access, the South Fork of the Coquille River was “a beautiful basin surrounded by hills covered with mammoth forests.” There, the settlers established homesteads, largely through the Homestead Act of 1862.<sup>41</sup> Individuals who occupied and improved parcels of public land received up to 160 acres after five years of residence.

The colony lived in relative isolation for decades, so they were not only able to obtain free or inexpensive homesteads but also could exploit the surrounding open lands as additional grazing for their herds. When improvements to the rough wagon road up the South Fork were planned in the 1880s, residents actively opposed them, fearing that ease of access would bring in new settlers and “there would be no cattle range for nobody.”<sup>42</sup> This position

was perfectly reasonable to a community that depended on vast tracts of vacant public land for cattle grazing, but it likely signaled to outsiders that the Carolina settlement was backwards. For the members of the Carolina Company, isolation was not merely a social ideal but provided economic opportunity as well.

Early residents described the settlement as idyllic, stating “we are satisfied that no part of the valley has a milder, or more salubrious clime.”<sup>43</sup> Outsiders, however, were skeptical that the Carolina Company could survive in such an isolated valley. T.C. Land recalled in 1896:

*The people of Coos Bay gave us three years in which to “starve out,” saying we never could live so far away from Coos Bay. But we went to work in earnest, and soon had enough of the dense forest removed from the fertile myrtle bottoms on which to make all the grain, grass, fruit and vegetables needed for a good living, and now, I presume, we have as independent settlement as there is in the country.*<sup>44</sup>

The Carolina Company spread out along the valley, establishing homesteads along both sides of the South Fork Coquille River. Most settlers were listed in the 1880 U.S. Census Population Schedule as farmers or stock raisers; however, some took advantage of the nearby goldmines. The early days are glowingly recounted in their utopian simplicity: “the ladies of the household spun yarn and knit socks and brought to market other useful articles of their hand work. Sorghum was raised and manufactured into syrup and everything done that would help to sustain life and prevent useless outlay of money.”<sup>45</sup> While the majority of rural households were, to a certain extent, concerned with self-sufficiency during this era, the Carolina Company also was using many of the logistical realities of homesteading as a means to reinforce their rural identities.

Years of living in the war-torn South had undoubtedly prepared them to be frugal and resourceful. The determination of the little colony is reflected in a poem by Land, “written to show the people of Coos Bay how we could live on the upper South Coquille”:

<i>The upper South Coquille, some say, Is from Coos Bay too far away, But we don't think so; for we love, In cedar groves we love to rove. Here on our upper South Coquille, Our settlers all are living well,</i>	<i>Each has his farm and garden, too, And makes his 'grub' as other do. We have a little mill hard by, A little creek, which doth supply, Us all with flour, as fine and good As any needs for wholesome food.</i>
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*Our hogs and cattle oft' we sell  
To merchants on the Lower Coquille,  
For which our groceries we buy;  
Each year a bountiful supply.*

*We eat fat beef whene'er we choose,  
Fat venison and elk don't refuse;  
We tan the hides and make our shoes,  
And live as happy as the Jews.*

*In summer time we work our farms,  
Which yield enough to fill our barns.  
When winter comes, it is our rule  
To send our children all  
to school.*

*Here we of cedar trees can boast,  
As fine as any on the coast;  
Though we've no sawmills, we can sell  
Our cedar on the Lower Coquille.*

*Our river is both deep and wide,  
And gracefully our logs will glide,  
Down, down the river, till they loom,  
Like specters, in the loggers boom.*

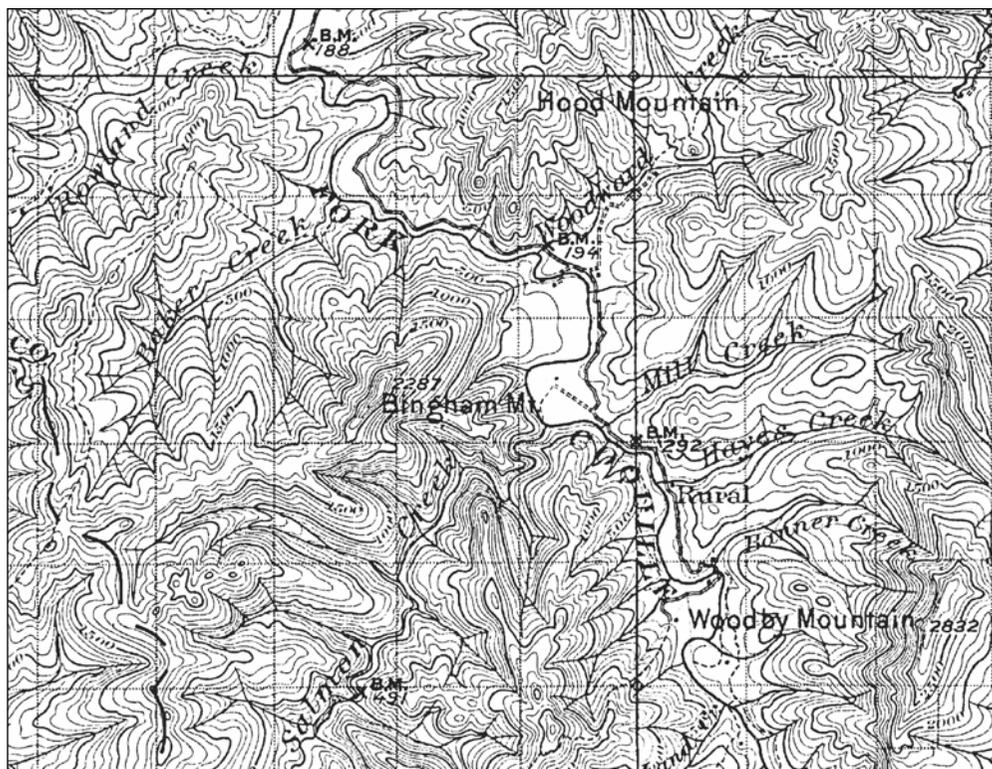
*Here on our upper South Coquille,  
We've no saloon nor gambling hell,  
To mar the morals of our youth,  
And lead them from the ways of truth.*

*Although we live among the hills,  
The mountain creeks, brooks and rills,  
We have our books and papers, too,  
And read the news as others do.*

*From such temptations we are free,  
Why should we then not happy be?  
Why should we not delight to dwell,  
Upon our upper South Coquille?<sup>46</sup>*

This poem, written by a core member of the Carolina Company, provides valuable insight into the community’s relationship with the outside world. Land and his neighbors evidently felt misunderstood by their more urban neighbors and wished to prove that the Carolina Company was thriving. The colony was proud of its self-sufficiency: the raising of abundant livestock for food and income, the availability of wild game, and the growing of “wholesome food” and grains that could be processed in the grist mill, located on what is now known as Mill Creek.<sup>47</sup>

In outlining the Carolina Company’s successes, Land inadvertently indicated how he perceived the group was being externally judged. Many of his examples are popular tenets in discriminatory literature directed towards “mountain folk,” namely lack of education and literacy, relationship with alcohol, and limited economic opportunities.<sup>48</sup> Land’s assertion, for example, that “it is our rule/ To send our children all to school” suggests that at some point this was in question. An 1882 Government Land Office (GLO) map of the area indicates that the original schoolhouse for the Carolina Company was located in the vicinity of Mill Creek, adjacent to the grist mill noted above. Land himself was the first teacher, lecturing between the years of



**THE ABOVE MAP** is a detail of the 1899 U.S. Geological Survey Port Orford quadrangle with Rural noted along the east side of the Coquille River at the base of Hayes Creek and Mill Creek, and the location of the original grist mill and school house is to the north.

1882 and 1884 in a “one-room building with boxes and nail kegs used as the only seats.”<sup>49</sup>As the settlement was small, the original schoolhouse was understandably humble and was important to the community, as evidenced in the poem and by the local parents’ construction of “crude home-made desks [that] replaced the nail kegs.”<sup>50</sup>

Land’s description of the sustainable community, defined to a certain extent by its isolation, is echoed in later accounts of the settlement: “They were quite isolated for several years during which time they farmed all their own food, ground their own flour in a community mill, and grew fruit trees from seeds, grafting the many apple trees until they had great red apples of which any community would be proud.”<sup>51</sup> Other accounts highlight the colony’s determination and resourcefulness, including one oft-cited story of an attempt to preserve an abundant peach harvest:

*Old-timers tell of the time when the women of the colony, then known as the North Carolina colony, hoped to dry peaches on the roof of one of the cabins the men had built. The peaches wrinkled just the right amount, and were beautiful to behold: but the roof had been of cedar wood, and the peaches tasted so potently of cedar they were not edible.<sup>52</sup>*

With time and practice, the community would grow into a series of prosperous farms and ranches, and find a ready market for their high quality products in the nearby communities.<sup>53</sup>

The Carolina Company actively kept connections with Appalachian relatives. In the summer of 1891, Land penned a virtual tour of the southwestern Oregon refuge to the editor of the *Watauga Democrat* of Boone, North Carolina: “I will now proceed to give you and your readers, a few items relative to the North Carolinians in this valley.”<sup>54</sup> Land began with the Hayes homestead (where he once resided) and described the family as “well and getting on finely.” David Wagner, living with the Hayes family at that point, was described as in pretty good health but “rather feeble.” The tour next went to the families of Calvin and Ben Gant (each married to daughters of John Hayes) and John F. Wagner, all also described as “getting along finely.” Mr. Whittington, Ben Shull, W. Widby, Ernest Herman (married into the Wagner family), John Mast, L.L. Harman, J.R. Leonard Ranse, John Summerlin, J.C. Harvey (married into the Hayes family), Lottie Mast, John Brown, Burt Hampton, and Harrison Hartly were all doing well in their Oregon homes. Land ended the letter: “Although these North Carolinians are far away from the homes of their childhood, I am proud to say they are all well situated and honored and respected citizens and are all doing well.”<sup>55</sup> This description of the Carolina Colony is quite different in tone than Land’s poem, as it is directed to friends and family rather than skeptical urban neighbors, but in each case, Land described a successful community well suited to its new environment. Land would repeatedly tour the homesteads and report with pride on the success of the small community over time.

In many ways, the Hayes family homestead was the heart of the Carolina Company. John Hayes and his wife Susan (née Wagner), used the Homestead Act to acquire 160 acres along the South Fork, where they raised their sixteen children, many of whom started their own farms in the South Fork region. Three of the Hayes children married into the well-known Gant family, who immigrated to Coos County from Illinois in 1868 and eventually settled in the upper South Fork area.<sup>56</sup> Whether due to location or simply the family’s willingness to serve, in 1890, a post office was established at the Hayes homestead under the name *Rural*. James D. Hayes served as the first postmaster, and the task was passed on to various friends and family members over time. By 1902, Rural employed Coos County’s first female mail carrier, Eva Arnold (presum-

ably a relation of second-wave Carolina Company member Mack Arnold), who made the twenty-four-mile trek to Myrtle Point twice a week on horseback.<sup>57</sup>

The Rural post office operated at the Hayes homestead until 1915, when the new Powers branch opened and the community center shifted downriver. Albert H. Powers purchased the town site from John Wagner in July 1912 and reportedly considered naming the town *Wagner* but, finding the name already taken, “decided to call it Powers” after himself.<sup>58</sup> The sale made the local newspaper: “John Wagner has sold his farm and will probably move to Myrtle Point. We are sorry to lose these people from our neighborhood, as they have been one of the main props of the community for over forty years. We wish them well wherever they go.”<sup>59</sup> The wording suggests that the community was perhaps ignorant of the sales’ larger implications.

A few years later, the *Oregonian* “discovered” the South Fork region and published an article introducing the “brand new town [of Powers], which is a hum-dinger of a place, considering that it is not yet on the published maps of Oregon.” The article described a journey on the new train line connecting the South Fork Coquille River with the larger community of Myrtle Point while passing through “one of the finest farming sections in Oregon. . . . On every hand were cows and hogs, and many men and teams at work in the fields plowing. . . . It was one idyllic picture after another, showing prosperity a foot thick.”<sup>60</sup> This account highlights the moment when industrial infrastructure facilitated meaningful access for those who would industrialize, commodify, and exploit what the Carolina Company had known and protected for years.

Albert Powers went on to purchase several of the ranches in the area, in order to procure a local food supply for the growing number of Powers employees. Many of the Carolina Company homesteads would supply beef and vegetables to the new settlement, and younger members of the colony would take up work in the new logging camp as sawyers, firemen, loggers, gas and steam engineers, hook tenders, and chasers.<sup>61</sup> The company town of Powers would eventually provide a grocery store, maintenance shop, roundhouse, lodging house, and a schoolhouse and would issue scrip, taken directly from wages, that could be spent at company businesses. A 1916 article explains that, “as this is the headquarters for 600 workingmen, who get good pay and get it regularly, it will be seen that there is a reason for placing Powers on the map — and keeping it there.” The lumber boom also brought a variety of private businesses to town.<sup>62</sup>

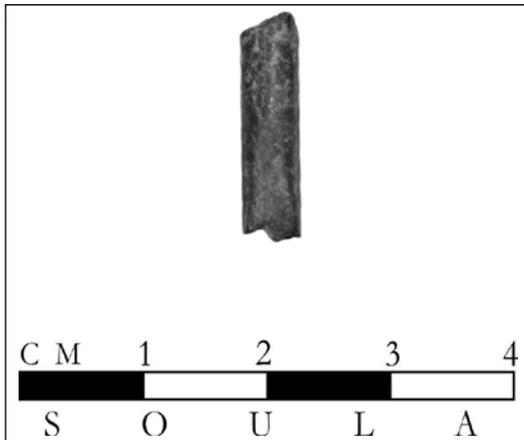
By the 1920s, Powers was “the center of one of the largest logging operations in the United States.”<sup>63</sup> With subsidiary camps at China Flat, Eden Valley, and elsewhere linked by railroad spurs owned by the C.A. Smith Company, four trains each day transported logs to Coos Bay, where they were milled for



OHS Research Library, neg. no 44703

**THIS UNDATED COLLAGE** titled “Building the Town of Powers, Ore.,” documents some of the important people and places during its early years. At the center, above the aerial town view is Albert Powers. Other photographs include the main street, bridges, residences, the school, and rooming house.

export to San Francisco and eastern markets. Within a few decades, however, even the enormous stands of old growth timber on Eden Ridge, the South Fork/Rogue River divide, and elsewhere in the vicinity were exhausted, and the town began a long slow decline. By the 1940s, the “logging operations had gone farther and farther back into the hills, taking the population with them and leaving the city of Powers groping for industry that would bring the people back.”<sup>64</sup> The timber industry would continue to be an important aspect of the local economy, but on increasingly smaller scales. In the post-WWII years, some residents of the South Fork hoped that a proposed highway connecting the community to Grants Pass would help “bring the little city out of its near isolation,” but this, like many other road proposals before and since, did not come to fruition. While logging continued in the region in an ever-diminishing form over the next decades, the descendants of the Carolina Company, as well as newcomers to the valley, also continued



**THIS SLATE PENCIL** was recovered from the Mill Creek archaeological site, which was the location of the Carolina Company grist mill and school house. The pencil is one of a few traces of nineteenth-century settlement in the area.

to work the land as ranchers and farmers — just as they had before the arrival of the trains and timber barons.<sup>65</sup>

### THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CAROLINA COMPANY

In 2010, archaeologists from the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology (SOULA) and the Coquille Indian Tribe conducted archaeological work at two sites associated with the Carolina Company.<sup>66</sup> These included the Hayes Creek site, home of the Hayes family and the location of the Rural post office, and the Mill Creek Site, the location of the

schoolhouse and original grist mill. Archaeological excavations recovered close to 2,000 artifacts dating from the time since Euro-American contact in the region, many associated with the Carolina Company occupation.

Archaeological work was confined to areas slated to be impacted by road upgrades, which at the Mill Creek site meant that excavation was largely limited to places that had been heavily modified by the twentieth-century Coos Bay Lumber Company occupation (a successor to C.A. Smith's operation) and other more modern activities. Despite this, traces of the nineteenth-century settlement were found, most notably through fragments of a slate pencil. Perhaps an unimpressive specimen in and of itself, the slate pencil's association with the early Carolina Company schoolhouse makes it a poignant marker of early Euro-American life along the South Fork. Other items from the Mill Creek site include medicine bottle fragments, a faceted glass tumbler, pieces of a pressed glass dish, and part of a redware flower pot. Although not especially diagnostic — that is, indicative of a specific time or cultural group — all of these items are consistent with the material culture of the Carolina settlement era.

The bulk of the archaeological material was recovered from the Hayes homestead. Today, the homestead is marked by the original family cemetery, which overlooks Hayes Creek and an open field where the house/post office once stood. Due to the deep history of the South Fork area over time, and perhaps as a testament to the quality of the homestead's location, the archaeology of the Hayes family home sits upon that of a much earlier

occupation, as illustrated by thousands of Native American artifacts and an intact stone earthen oven.<sup>67</sup>

As is common with archaeological assemblages, the bulk of the post-contact-era artifacts (by count) was associated with the building itself. Machine-cut nails, window pane glass, and other structural hardware were found in abundance. All were consistent with the historical accounts of the building and reflect construction materials used between the 1870s and the 1920s. The domestic and personal artifacts found at the site speak to the self-sufficiency and relative isolation of the Carolina Company, but also to their participation in regional and national consumer culture then developing in the Gilded Age of the Victorian era. While, for example, local lore suggested that the Carolina Company settlers made their own clothing — as Land described, “we tan the hides and make our shoes” — machine-made shoe fragments, mass produced snaps, rivets, fasteners, and the presence of a cut-glass mourning button suggests that they also imported ready-made goods and kept up with the latest fashions. Mourning buttons were made popular by Queen Victoria, who wore ornately carved jet buttons to mark the loss of her husband, Prince Albert. Most people settled for the less-expensive carved, black-glass version, such as the specimen found at the Hayes House. These buttons were often affixed to mourning attire, and this one could have reflected an outward expression of grief on behalf of Susanna Hayes after the death of one her children.

The ceramics recovered from the site included common undecorated whiteware dishes, a bronze-glazed earthenware pitcher, decal porcelain, and mulberry transferprinted and pressed glass tablewares, all of which are consistent with tableware in both rural and metropolitan homes of the time. The fragments of the mulberry transferprinted dish reflect a decorative ceramic type most popular prior to the emigration of the Carolina Company, which could indicate this was treasured dishware brought west with the family.<sup>68</sup> Three fragments of a “Pattern No. 14” covered dish made by King, Son & Co. in about 1875 were also found in the assemblage.<sup>69</sup> Pressed glassware was a relatively inexpensive way for the average consumer to spruce up a table setting. Cut crystal and flint glass were popular luxury items prior to the Civil War, when the flint was needed elsewhere and the recipe was revised to include soda or lime. The new materials made the glassware much less expensive to manufacture, thus allowing the formal table setting to make its way into households of modest means.

If we were to take literally Land's poem about the Carolina Company, there were no saloons or drinking establishments on the upper South Fork in the early days. Nevertheless, the presence of alcohol bottles suggests

that members of the Hayes family did drink alcohol (in the form of wine and liquor), although the modest assemblage does not imply it was consumed to excess. Alcohol was also prohibited in the Powers logging camps.<sup>70</sup>

Home health-care practices are revealed through the small assemblage of patent medicine bottles. The late nineteenth century was the heyday of the patent drug era, and the presence of these bottles at the remote Hayes homestead further emphasizes the complex links even the most rural of residents had to the global marketplace. Several memoirs and newspaper accounts describe the difficulties of early South Fork residents in accessing medical care in an emergency. “As it was two days’ trip to Coquille,” one account noted, “the settlers had to do without a doctor.”<sup>71</sup> When John Lafayette Wagner accidentally shot himself when his dog treed a bear in 1875, he had to wait those two days for the doctor to arrive.<sup>72</sup> Another story described a child who acquired a nasty cut to her leg from a fall. In the absence of a doctor, her father sewed her flesh tight with silken thread. The child was left with a “crossed scar” but otherwise recovered without incident.<sup>73</sup> Access to patent medicines would have provided the remote settlement with a level of control (whether real or perceived) over their home health care. Patent medicines were designed and sold to cover a wide range of chronic and acute ailments, and having them would have been comforting for residents without ready access to a pharmacy or doctor.

We could not identify all the bottles’ contents or brands, but a few notable items include a bottle of Pitcher’s Castoria (a popular laxative) manufactured in Boston, Massachusetts, and a bottle of Dr. Pilcher’s Pleasant Chill Tonic. Similar to today’s tonic water, Chill Tonic was an anti-malarial and curative manufactured in Memphis, Tennessee. Both of these medicines came a long way to end up on the Hayes family shelf, and although Memphis is not in the vicinity of Johnson County, Tennessee, it is possible that the Hayes family was familiar with Dr. Pilcher’s Pleasant Chill Tonic and believed it to be a trusted brand from back home.

The diversity of imported home goods clearly indicates that the family was participating in larger commercial networks. They are, however, modest in number and ratio to artifacts that reflect the self-sufficiency touted by the community and consistently remarked on by outsiders. The recovery of a fragmented sewing machine sperm oil bottle (circa 1880–1900) suggests that the Hayes family sewed and mended at least some of their own goods. Likewise, the pieces of a large cast iron pot discovered at the site recall a childhood memory of early South Fork pioneer W.B. Neathery, who described a mother who “cooked on a Dutch oven or open fireplace and hung her kettles on a lubber pole.”<sup>74</sup> The fragments of canning jars found at the site, paired with the complete absence of tin cans of ready-made food then eas-

ily available in larger markets, are also indicators that the Hayes family may have been more self-reliant than their neighbors in larger communities. A Hayes family descendant described his family as having smokehouse and potato shed “out back” and noted that his ancestors “had to be frugal or you didn’t survive.”<sup>75</sup>

One historical account highlighted the resourcefulness of Carolina Company members, stating that when “glass canning jars were not available, they saved every bottle and filled them with fruit and sealed them with cloth by dipping them in sealing wax.”<sup>76</sup> In addition to the obvious canning jars and food bottles, more than 300 glass container fragments were recovered from the site (representing at least a dozen individual bottles or jars). While it is difficult to confidently identify adaptive reuse of these items — a common practice on any homestead prior to the introduction of mass-produced, disposable commercial goods — many of the fragments could have been part of vessels that were cleaned, kept, and repurposed for short- and long-term food storage. In contrast, the Shilling Spice bottle (circa 1881) indicates that the family was also supplementing or sprucing up locally available foods with commercial spices imported from San Francisco, California.<sup>77</sup>

The excavation of the Hayes family homestead was further enriched by our interactions with the residents of the South Fork Coquille River area, including descendants of the Hayes and other Carolina Company families as well as newcomers to the area whose rationale for their own immigration and tenure is not unlike that of the original Appalachian immigrants. Visitors to our excavations all shared a basically libertarian perspective and a distrust of outsiders and authority of any political persuasion that would probably have been familiar to the original members of the Carolina Company.<sup>78</sup> Those conversations, together with the geography of the region and the primary documents of the Carolina Company’s emigration to Oregon, offered us an unusually rich context from which to consider the archaeology of what would otherwise be two relatively unremarkable nineteenth-century archaeological sites.

The Carolina Company families suffered greatly through a devastating war, and they risked everything to begin anew, with virtually nothing but their willingness to work hard and their faith in their close knit community. The families that settled along the South Fork Coquille River found little outside support and faced many difficulties, yet successfully lived, and their descendants continue to live, on many of those original homesteads. While the settlers, through both necessity and choice, were frugal and lived simply, they were not without some of the creature comforts of town. This same dynamic is present in modern day Powers, where residents — including many newcomers — resist change and modernization, yet struggle economically. Today’s South Fork Coquille River residents, like the Carolina Company before them, negotiate the contradictory



recovered. As in the Blue Ridge Mountains, residents along the South Fork were not ignorant of consumer culture, and their participation or rejection was a choice “tempered and shaped, but not wholly determined, by the physical environment.”<sup>86</sup> The Hayes family facilitated these choices by establishing the post office, which offered more than just a way to receive letters, allowing residents access to national consumer markets via mail order catalogs. Catalogs offered everything from jewelry and clothing, tools, and equipment to medicines and tablewares.<sup>87</sup> Yet they also retained and reinforced their identity as the remote outpost of Rural, negotiating the influx of modernity on their own terms.

William Willingham’s historical study of the Long Creek Valley community of Southern emigrants to eastern Oregon provides other corollaries. The community, described by Willingham as “not so much escaping their eastern way of life as they were trying to realize its full potential in a new setting,” also settled in Oregon in the later nineteenth century and also originated from the post-war South.<sup>88</sup> Long Creek Valley residents “embraced the need to produce for the marketplace and interact with the outside world when necessary even as they constructed lives and local institutions based on traditional kin and neighborhood networks.”<sup>89</sup> The Long Creek Valley and South Fork communities each faced challenges to their close-knit agrarian way of life in the early twentieth century, but it is unclear how the Long Creek Valley community negotiated change over the long term and whether they retained or rejected aspects of their community roots.<sup>90</sup>

Over the years the Carolina Company identity persisted, there was continued influx of new Southern emigrants to the region. Some residents also returned to Tennessee and North Carolina, either permanently or for extended visits.<sup>91</sup> Many subscribed to the *Watauga Democrat* to keep up on distant news, and one descendant recalled her great-grandmother talking often of her childhood home, saying of her family and neighbors “I don’t think they ever got over missing North Carolina.”<sup>92</sup> Despite the participation in larger social interactions and the fluid composition of the local community, the Carolina Company identity remained strong through the turn of the twentieth century, to the point that many accounts now lump the non-Appalachian settlers of the Powers area (such as the original Bingham, Gant, and Wigand families) with rest of the Carolina Company.<sup>93</sup> This conflation was a re-mythologizing of the particular pioneer narrative of the South Fork Coquille region, creating a more coherent and unified Carolina Company than ever actually existed but that, perhaps, needed to be claimed over generations as a way to assert community values and interests vis-à-vis the outside world.

The Oregon pioneer story is often romanticized and re-mythologized to create a narrative free of internal dissent and heterogeneity.<sup>94</sup> Such historical

restructuring sets the stage for the equally mythologized narrative of the boom and bust years of the Smith-Powers logging operations.<sup>95</sup> In those tellings, the original settlement of the South Fork Coquille River is simply prologue, the same old story of Western immigration. The subsequent flurry of industrial timber extraction, the loss of local political autonomy, the export of the area’s capital, and the subsequent abandonment of the town are mythologized as the apex of life and culture on the South Fork of the Coquille River. We argue here that the situation is more accurate in reverse: The rise and fall of the Smith-Powers era is one that has been seen time and time again in resource rich rural areas in Oregon and elsewhere. The Smith-Powers company was sold in the 1920s to the Coos Bay Lumber Company, which in turn was sold to Georgia Pacific in 1956.<sup>96</sup> While the residents of the South Fork Coquille River would experience punctuated periods of employment opportunity after World War II, the timber industry was never as localized or sustainable as it had been in the decades before.

In the *Pioneer History of Coos and Curry County*, the seminal historical volume of the region compiled by newspaperman Orvil Dodge included a short essay by Carolina Company chronicler T.C. Land on his “first impressions” of the South Fork Coquille River area, followed by an account from twenty-six years later. Of their arrival, he wrote, “whoever lives to see this forest removed and the valley brought to a high state of cultivation, will see the best part of Oregon.”<sup>97</sup> By 1897, he found that Southern utopia fully realized: “where grew the maple forests in 1871, large fields of waving grain may be seen, while on each farm the finest fruit and vegetables imaginable are growing, thus proving my first impressions of the country have been fully verified.”<sup>98</sup> While the industrial narrative has served to overshadow the nuanced experiences of the agrarian Carolina Company settlement era, outsiders often describe the modern community as feeling like a “Southern” town, suggesting that those early settlers created a cultural imprint that survives to this day.

Just as residents fought an improved wagon road in the 1880s, their descendants fought highway improvements in the 1980s. While upgraded infrastructure would no doubt have made life easier on the nineteenth-century upper South Fork, the residents feared that increased population would impact their way of life.<sup>99</sup> “Why would you build a freeway to a graveyard?” asked Gordie Hayes, Carolina Company descendent and Century Farm owner in response to his opposition to road improvements in the community of Powers, Oregon, in the 1980s. “We don’t want no more Californians.”<sup>100</sup> The valley is a beautiful and difficult place to live, and many of the residents like it that way.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, local residents saw improved access to upper South Fork Coquille River as a threat to a way of life. They

offer a sentiment that, even today, reflects a common frustration in resource-rich rural communities, where improved access largely facilitates resource extraction by outsiders and provides little long-term benefit to the local population.

Whether the remaining families of the Carolina Company may have seen these developments as progress, a loss of autonomy, or a conflicting combination of both, but the point is largely moot. Within a few short decades, the enormous stands of old growth timber were exhausted, and as described by Robbins, the town of Powers suffered, “like many rural communities in America, from the forces of modern capitalism that have concentrated wealth in the larger urban centers. From a bustling center of lumbering activity in the second decade of this century, Powers has become the home of retired people and a few logging families who survive on uncertain employment.”<sup>101</sup> Many of these remaining families are the direct descendants of the Carolina Company.

Whether John Wagner was ignorant, shrewd, or indifferent when he sold his father’s homestead to the Smith-Powers lumber company in 1912 is unclear. Nor is it clear whether his actions were a reflection of the will of the local community, or if he was overcome by the sheer force, opportunities, and seductions of industrial capitalism.<sup>102</sup> As company engineers laid out the railroad to link the Upper South Fork Coquille River with Coos Bay, Albert Powers himself negotiated with Wagner, purchasing the property that would become the town of Powers. A cash economy replaced the barter economy of the earlier days based on kinship, affinity, and trust, and the Smith-Powers Company even issued its own scrip for purchase at the company stores. The parcel that was once the Wagner homestead is now part of the newly minted Powers Century Ranch, which has continuously operated within the family since 1913. In fact, the only members of the Powers family to remain in the South Fork area did so as ranchers.

The collapse of the old growth logging industry weighs heavily on the South Fork Coquille River to the present day, manifested in dilapidated and boarded up bungalows in the company town of Powers, in the eerie wreckage of the logging industry evident up and down the river, in the rusted arms of the log skidding equipment that, until recently, stood on top of the Mill Creek site, and in the high rates of poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence.<sup>103</sup> Still, in many ways, the region has returned to what it was in the days of the Carolina Company: a series of reasonably prosperous ranches and homesteads run by people with a strong sense of libertarianism and independence, set intentionally against an isolated and rugged landscape. This world view resonates with the trickle of newcomers who continue to move into the valley. History, culture, and ancestral tenure on this land-

scape — however mythologized — are vital in this local identity, for families living on properties used for generations and for relative newcomers alike. Whether that identity incorporates elements of Native American, pioneer, or logging culture, or some combination of all three, the residents of today’s South Fork Coquille River, like the members of the Carolina Company before them, both struggle with and embrace the contradictory pull between the perceived advantages of participation in a larger cosmopolitan world and pride in self-sufficiency.

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## NOTES

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1. While the populations of Eugene, Portland, Seattle, and other urban areas have grown the thrived, rural Oregon lost about three quarters of its timber industry jobs between 1980 and 2010. Kirk Johnson, “Rural Oregon’s Lost Prosperity” *New York Times*, January 18, 2016. At the expense of other kinds of local stories, historical works about Coos County focus primarily on extractive technologies, the men behind them, and the flow of capital from the periphery to the center. Sometimes these works glorify industrial capitalism (Dow Beckham, *Coos Bay: The Pioneer Period*, Coos Bay: Arago Books, 1973; and Beckham, *Bandon By the Sea; Hope and Perseverance in a Southwestern Oregon Town*, Coos Bay: Arago Books, 1997), sometimes they critique it (William Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise: Coos Bay, Oregon, 1850–1986*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988). Even before conducting our academic research on the Carolina Company, it was clear to us that the South Fork community was different from other rural Oregon communities. In 2001, for example, while seeking medical help for a severe spider bite suffered by an archaeology student, we were somewhat taken aback not only by the forty-minute ride to the nearest medical facility in the small community of Myrtle Point, Oregon (population 2,500), but also by the astonished reactions of the medical personnel in that facil-

ity that we would choose to be working in the Powers vicinity to begin with.

2. Gordie Hayes, interviewed by authors, Gaylord, Oregon, July 2012. Hayes, the great-great grandson of John Hayes, was born in Myrtle Point in 1944 and passed away in 2014. “Gordon Lee Hayes,” obituary, *The World*, October 11, 2014.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Local historical accounts plainly say the Carolina Company “chose this location because it reminded them so much of their old home” in the Appalachian Mountains. Maude Liddell Barry in Emil R. Peterson and Alfred Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry: History of Southwest Oregon* (Coquille, Ore.: Coos-Curry Pioneer and Historical Association, 1977), 216

5. Robbins, *Hard Times*.

6. Travelling without wagons, horses, and oxen, Native Americans found the high ridgelines that meet in the South Fork area to be conduits for travel, social interaction, and commerce, not impediments. Mark Tveskov, “The Hayes Site: Oral Traditions, Ethnohistory, and Archaeology of the South Fork Coquille River,” SOULA Research Report 2004-1, Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology, Ashland, 15.

7. James O. Dorsey, “The Gentile System of the Siletz Tribes,” *Journal of American Folk-*

Lore 3:10 (1890): 227–37,232; Philip Drucker, Coos Ethnographic Field Notes, Manuscript No. 4516 [hereafter Coos Ethnographic Field Notes], National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. [hereafter NAASI], 1934, Microfilm Reel 2, frame 39; and John Peabody Harrington, “Alsea, Siuslaw, Coos, Southwest Oregon Athapaskan: Vocabularies, Linguistic Notes, Ethnographic and Historical Notes,” John Peabody Harrington Papers, Alaska/Northwest Coast, 1942, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Microfilm Reel 6, frame 202.

8. On the Indigenous place-name, see Dorsey, “The Gentile System of the Siletz Tribes.”; Drucker, Coos Ethnographic Field Notes, NAASI; and Harrington, “Alsea, Siuslaw, Coos, Southwest Oregon Athapaskan.” On the early European visitors, see Mark Axel Tveskov, “The Coos and Coquille: A Northwest Coast Historical Anthropology” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 2000); and D.G. Davies, ed., *Peter Skene Ogden’s Snake Country Journal: 1826–1827* (London: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1961). For a discussion of the colonial-era cultural geography of Coos County, see Mark A. Tveskov, “The Cultural Geography of the Coos and Coquille,” in *Changing Landscapes: ‘Sustaining Traditions’, Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Coquille Cultural Preservation Conference*, ed. Donald B. Ivy and R. Scott Byram (North Bend, Ore.: Coquille Indian Tribe, 2002) 139–60.

9. William G. T’Vault, “Massacre of a Port Orford Party” *Alta California*, October 14, 1851. Loren L. Williams, “Captain L.L. Williams and the Exploration Expedition of 1851,” in *Historical Sketches of Oregon’s South Coast*. Mss. on file, Oregon State Museum of Anthropology, University of Oregon, Eugene. For a synthesis of the T’Vault expedition, see Tveskov, “The Coos and Coquille,” 392–98.

10. Tveskov, “The Hayes Site,” 15; Tveskov, “The Coos and Coquille.”; John Draper, “A Proposed Model of Late Prehistoric Settlement Systems on the Southern Northwest Coast,

Coos and Curry Counties, Oregon” (Ph.D. diss., Washington State University, 1988); Jon M. Erlandson, Mark A. Tveskov, and Madonna L. Moss, “Return to Chetlesenten: The Antiquity and Architecture of an Athapaskan Village on the Southern Northwest Coast,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 19:2 (2000): 226–40.

11. See, for example, William F. Willingham, *Starting Over: Community Building on the Eastern Oregon Frontier* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005); Robbins, *Hard Times*. See also William Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise, the Oregon Story, 1800–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999); and William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

12. Barbara J. Little, “People with History: An Update on Historical Archaeology in the United States,” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 1:1 (1994). Little further argues that “part of historical supplementation, then, includes creating ways of writing about the past that do not rely on historical documents or documentary historians as the final arbiters of meaningful or accurate history” (p. 8).

13. Archaeologists have long struggled with their relationship to history. In particular, to reinforce the idea that “Archaeology is not ‘handmaiden to history,’ as Ivor Noël Hume (1964) insisted thirty years ago, but is colleague to history.” Little, “People with History,” 7; Ivor Noël Hume, “Archaeology: Handmaiden to History,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 41:2 (1964): 215–25. In part, our approach to the history of the South Fork Coquille River is conditioned not just by the approaches of historical archaeology (as discussed by Little) and our reading of primary and secondary historical sources, but also by our own social experiences working on the South Fork Coquille River since 2001.

14. George Bennett, “A History of Bandon and the Coquille River,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 28:4 (Winter 1927): 325–26; Orvil Dodge, *Pioneer History of Coos and Curry*

*Counties* (Salem, Capital Printing Company, 1898), 89.

15. Johnson Creek and Johnson Mountain were both named after ‘Coarse Gold Johnson’ who discovered gold in July 1854. Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 264.

16. Prior to the arrival of the Carolina Company, early resident W.B. Neathery recalled that in 1868, “the only inhabitants were old man Bingham, Wiggins, and Wagner.” W.B. Neathery [ca. 1930s] in Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 129. Isaac Bingham, who had been “a conspicuous figure in the Indian wars around Port Orford,” established a Donation Land Claim with his wife, creating “a fine farm at an early day.” *Ibid.* Henry Wigand was a German immigrant, who came to the United States in 1844 and arrived in Curry County in 1860, later settling on a farm on the upper South Fork. Perhaps due to his foreign accent, no two documents spell Henry’s surname the same, and he is therefore described in various records as Wiggins, Wigand, Wygant, Weigant, and Weigant. Although not recalled by Neathery, Henry Woodward also claimed 160 acres through the Donation Land Claim Act in the 1860s, on what would later become known as the Gant ranch. Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 264.

17. Orvil Dodge, *Pioneer History of Coos and Curry Counties* (Bandon, Ore.: Western World, 1898, 1969), 185. The Wagner’s cabin is preserved (although not *in situ*) as a museum to the pioneer era in the town to the present day.

18. Jandi Nay, “A family history through the eyes of its descendants,” *Myrtle Point Herald*, July 31, 2003, p. 6. The *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, January 23, 1913, wrote that Wagner, his wife, and fellow Carolina Company member T.C. Land also had been looking for land in Jackson County in 1869, prior to returning to Appalachia for their families. Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 111.

19. The Transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, providing a far easier and expedited means to travel west. The rail

line linking California and Oregon was not completed until 1887, requiring the early arrivals to complete the journey into Oregon via wagon or stagecoach. Reuben Mast in Dodge, *Pioneer History*, 405; Nays, “Family History,” 6; *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, January 11, 1917, p. 6.

20. See “Emigration,” *Democratic Times* (Jacksonville, Ore.), May 18, 1872, p. 3.

21. *The New Northwest* (Portland, Ore.) November 8, 1872, p. 3, reprinted from the *Pantograph* (Roseburg, Ore.).

22. *Southern Coos County American* (Myrtle Point, Ore.) June 19, 1924, in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 136, 100; Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*; *Watauga Democrat*, February 4, 1937, p. 3.

23. *Southern Coos County American* (Myrtle Point, Ore.), March 11, 1920 in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 110.

24. Henry Schroeder, note along with ox yoke in Coos County Museum, 1961, Coos County Historical Society, North Bend, Oregon.

25. *Southern Coos County American* (Myrtle Point, Ore.), March 11, 1920, in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 110; Joseph Gaston, *The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811–1912, volume III* (Chicago: S.J. Clark Publishing Co., 1912).

26. Nay, “Family History,” 6. Camp Chase was used as a prison for Confederate Soldiers during the Civil War. The prison is near Boone County, Kentucky (not Boone County, Tennessee where many Carolina Company members came from).

27. *Southern Coos County American* (Myrtle Point, Ore.), March 11, 1920, in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 110. Reuben Mast wrote in a letter to the *Watauga Democrat*: “You are aware that our people had slaves before the war and in this connection we had one, Irvin, who stayed with us through the war, made our place his home thereafter and when we came to Oregon, father paid his way here.” Irvin is reported as staying on in Roseburg, where the Mast family was staying for a brief period before settling in the Coquille Valley. Mast further

describes that his father William was raised by Irvin's mother after his own mother died at a young age, and the two were like brothers. Irvin moved to Washington in the 1880s and had a homestead, which he lost before his death. *Watauga Democrat* (Boone, North Carolina) February 4, 1937, p. 3.

28. *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, January 23, 1913, in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 111. After his military career, Land was "a man of gentle habits, never carrying a gun, and the first teacher in the community." Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 267.

29. Aaron Astor, "The Switzerland of America," *New York Times*, June 7, 2011, p. 1.

30. Chris J. Hartley, "Stoneman's Raid, 1865," (Salem, North Carolina: John F. Blair, 2010), 73.

31. *Ibid.*, xvi.

32. *Ibid.*, 376.

33. Tveskov, "The Coos and Coquille," 409–418. These raids were among the first acts of the United States Government in southern Oregon following the illegal colonization of the area by Euro-Americans in the 1850s, as the gold rush brought thousands of settlers to the region prior to any Indian Treaty being signed. Many of miners disregarded the human and legal rights of the region's Indigenous people. The campaigns were retaliations — with overwhelming military force — against the region's Indigenous inhabitants for robberies and murders committed against gold miners and travelers. See reports from Casey and Maj. Philip Kearney, Records of the Division and Department of the Pacific, Headquarters Records 1849–1861, RG 393, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

34. Edward King, "The Great South: Among the Mountains of Western North Carolina," *Scribner's Monthly* 7:3 (March 1874): 521.

35. Nay, "Family History," 6.

36. "Emigration," *Democratic Times* (Jacksonville, Ore.), May 18, 1872, p. 3.

37. Nay, "Family History," 6.

38. *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, January 14, 1917, in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*,

96.

39. Reuben H. Mast in Dodge, *Pioneer History*, 405.

40. Reuben Mast in Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 55.

41. Dodge, *Pioneer History*, 185.

42. S.S. Endicott [1929] in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 206.

43. T.C. Land in Dodge, *Pioneer History*, 410.

44. *Ibid.*, 408.

45. Dodge, *Pioneer History*, 186.

46. *Ibid.*, 408–409.

47. Conflicting accounts suggest either William Daniel Wagner or John Lafayette Wagner established the mill; however, an early map places John Wagner further east of the Hayes Homestead, suggesting it was William Daniel Wagner who built and operated the mill. Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 580.

48. See example in Porte Crayon, "The Mountains," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 44:264 (May 1872): 801–815; Edward King, "The Great South: Among the Mountains of Western North Carolina," and *Scribner's Monthly*, 7:5 (March 1874): 513–45; Sherman Mandel and Thomas R. Henry, *Hollow Folk* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1933). See critique of 'mountain folk' stereotypes in Audrey J. Horning, "In Search of a 'Hollow Ethnicity': Archaeological Explorations of a Rural Mountain Settlement," in *Historical Archaeology, Identity Formation, and the Interpretation of Ethnicity*, ed. Maria Franklin and Garret Fesler (Richmond, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Research, 1999), 132; Audrey J. Horning, "Beyond the Shenandoah Valley: Interaction, Image, and Identity in the Blue Ridge," in *After the Backcountry: Rural Life in the Great Valley of Virginia, 1800–1900*, ed. Kenneth E. Koons and Warrant R. Hofstra (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 162; and Audrey J. Horning, "Archaeological Considerations of 'Appalachian' Identity: Community-Based Archaeology in the Blue Ridge Mountains," in *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*, ed.

Marcello A. Canuto and Jason Yaeger (New York: Routledge, 2000), 215.

49. Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 267; William A. Lansing, *Remember When: Coos County, Oregon Schools* (Coos Bay, Ore: self-published, 2008), 159.

50. Lansing, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 159.

51. "Early History in Powers Section is Interesting," *Myrtle Point Herald*, August 7, 1941, p. 3

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Coos Bay Times*, November 4, 1908, p. 4, reported the sale of a wagon load of "fine, juicy apples" from the Wagner Farm. *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, September 16, 1899, p. 5, reported of the purchase of "fine beef cattle" for sale in a local butcher shop.

54. *Watauga Democrat* (Boone, North Carolina) July 23, 1891, p. 3.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 535.

57. *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, September 5, 1902; Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 190.

58. Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 127. Newspaper accounts suggest the town was actually called Wagner for a time. *Bandon Recorder*, April 6, 1915, p. 2.

59. "Rural Remarks," *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, July 18, 1912.

60. *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Ore.), February 29, 1916.

61. Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise*, 46–48.

62. An early list of business owners in the new town of Powers does not include any known members of the Carolina Company, *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Ore.), February 29, 1916.

63. Robbins, *Hard Times*, 46.

64. "Early History in Powers Section is Interesting," *Myrtle Point Herald*, August 7, 1941, p. 3, with contributions by Warren Deyoe, one of the first babies born in Powers.

65. *Ibid.* While some long-term economic patterns can be seen in census data for the region, the enumeration processes change

over time, lumping and splitting the population in arbitrary ways. Because precinct boundaries shift and divide the South Fork community, it is difficult to meaningfully analyze census data for the Carolina Company. By tracking the Hayes family specifically, some patterns can be observed in the data. The Carolina Company is first recorded in the 1880 Census (Johnson Precinct), when the majority of the households were farmers, with a few miners mixed in. By 1910 (Deer Park Precinct), the household heads are still engaged in farming and ranching, but the second generation has begun to seek work as sawyers and in other aspects of the coming lumber boom. By 1920 (Powers Precinct), the Smith-Powers logging operation is in full effect, and although there are still more than a dozen farms and ranches listed, the majority of the residents in the town of Powers and the lumber camps are engaged in skilled and unskilled labor associated with the lumber industry. By 1940s (South Powers Precinct), the lumber jobs begin to shift from a single effort to a variety of small to medium scale logging operations. Many other Carolina Company members fall outside the above census schedules, and are listed under the Rowland and Broadbent Precincts. Perhaps a more useful metric highlight the continuity of the Carolina Company tenure on the land is the fact that several of the original Carolina Company homesteads are now Oregon Century Farms and Ranches: The William P. Mast Farm (CFR0097 and CFR0098), L.L. Harmon Farm (CFR0095), Benjamin Shull Farm (CFR1014), James D. Hayes Farm (CFR0685), and the Powers Ranch, formerly the Wagner homestead (CFR1201).

66. Field work at the Hayes Creek (35CS229) and Mill Creek (35CS81/230) sites was conducted in the summer and fall of 2010, in response to the Western Federal Lands Highway Division's plans for improvements along a four-mile section of Forest Highway 60 (the Powers to Agness Highway) south of the current town of Powers in Coos County.

Mark Tveskov, Katie Johnson, Chelsea Rose, and Theresa Molino, "Data Recovery Excavations at the Hayes Creek (35CS229) and Mill Creek (35CS81/230) Sites on the South Fork Coquille River, Coos County, Oregon" (Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology, Ashland 2014).

67. Archaeological excavation at the Hayes Creek site resulted in the recovery of more than 7,000 Native American artifacts, including chipped and ground stone tools, and archaeological features associated with the prehistoric occupation of the area. Tveskov et. al., "Data Recovery Excavations."

68. Mulberry transferprint was a popular decorative style used between the years 1814 and 1867. Patricia Samford and George L. Miller, "Post-Colonial Ceramics," in *Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland 2002* [2015] <http://www.jefpat.org/diagnostic/Post-Colonial%20Ceramics/index-PostColonialCeramics.htm> (accessed January 10, 2016).

69. Albert Christian Revi, *American Cut and Engraved Glass* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964), 222.

70. Purchasers of lots in the newly established Powers townsite were reportedly required to "sign a clause in the deed that no liquor would be sold on the premises" and if workers arrived to camp drunk, "before they have sobered up they will immediately get their 'walking papers.'" *Myrtle Point Enterprise* September 9, 1915.

71. Mr. and Mrs. Max Dement [1931] in Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 128.

72. *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, January 11, 1917, p. 6

73. Mr. and Mrs. Max Dement [1931] in Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 128.

74. W.B. Neathery [ca. 1930s] in Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*, 129.

75. Gordie Hayes, personal communication, 2012.

76. Patti Strain and Hal Strain, *The Coquille Valley* (Coquille, Ore: Coquille Valley Museum, 2009), 295.

77. Julian Harris Toulouse, *Bottle Makers*

*and their Marks* (New York: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1971), 52.

78. They included unemployed loggers, marijuana farmers, a retired California policeman, artifact collectors, hobby ranch proprietors, firefighters, and others, some long standing South Fork residents descended from nineteenth-century settlers, others recent immigrants.

79. *Myrtle Point Herald* July 31, 2003, p. 6.

80. Gordie Hayes, Personal Communication, 2012.

81. Anthropologists and other social scientists use the terms *emic* and *etic* to refer to the different ways of researching the human past. The emic perspective is one coming from within the social group (from the subject or insider) and the etic viewpoint describes the perspective of the observer, from the outside looking in.

82. Robbins, *Hard Times*, 57.

83. Quoted in Ibid.

84. Carly Johnson, "Defining Rural Oregon: An Exploration," *Rural Studies Issue Brief*, September 2007.

85. Horning, "In Search of a 'Hollow Ethnicity,'" 132; Horning, "Beyond the Shenandoah Valley," 162; Horning, "Archaeological Considerations of 'Appalachian' Identity," 215.

86. Horning, "In Search of a 'Hollow Ethnicity,'" 132.

87. Margaret Purser, "Consumption as Communication in Nineteenth-Century Paradise Nevada," *Historical Archaeology* 26:3 (September 1992): 105–116. In her study in a contemporary ranching community in Nevada, Purser writes: "Like production, consumption is a continuous process through which people simultaneously impose meaning on and read meaning from material culture, and by extension the rest of their surrounding material and social world" (p. 105). Furthermore, Purser argued that change in consumption over time is not merely a reflection of national trends, but rather a "new framework of meaning was not derived exclusively from either national or local contexts, but required Paradise residents to rework the connection between the familiar, immediate surroundings and some larger notion of national markets, information, and

identity" (p. 110).

88. Willingham, *Starting Over*, 188–89.

89. Ibid., 189.

90. Willingham, *Starting Over*. Willingham's book focuses on the Long Creek Valley between 1875 and 1920s, and references the period of great national social change described in Robert Weibe's book, *A Search for Order, 1877–1920*. Weibe describes the shift within communities from rural "Island Communities" during the progressive era, culminating in the post-World War I boom that disrupted existing social cohesion.

91. T.C. Land made several trips back and forth, and spent his final years in North Carolina. *Myrtle Point Enterprise*, October 29, 1914.

92. Nay, "Family History," 6.

93. *Myrtle Point Herald*, April 25, 1946, wrote in the obituary for Ben Gant, "Powers' Oldest Citizen," that he came to the area with the "Carolina Colony." The Gants were in fact early pioneers from Illinois; members of their second generation in Oregon married into the Hayes family. See also a reminiscence by Mrs. Dement, published in Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry County*, 127, which also included the Gants and Bingham as North Carolina Settlers.

94. See discussions in Tveskov, "A 'Most Disastrous' Affair: The Battle of Hungry Hill, Historical Memory, and the Rogue River War," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118:1 (Spring 2017); Peter Boag, "Death and Oregon's Settler Generation," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 115:3 (Fall 2014): 344–79; and James Joseph Buss, *Winning the West with Words: Language and Conquest in the Lower Great Lakes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

95. Robbins, *Hard Times*, 54, writes that "In the last two decades folklorists and writers of fiction have embellished that vision — of life in the lumber camps, the epic stories of the logging drives down western rivers, and the legendary accounts of free-wheeling hedonism when loggers entered the skidroad districts of far-western towns." Robbins further states that this narrative is described as a "composite of patriotism, apple pie, and duty to family and motherhood." The authors

themselves witnessed this romanticized portrayal of the Powers era in a talk given at the Myrtle Point library by an Albert Powers descendant in 2012. In addition, the town of Powers is now locally known for its popular Independence Day celebrations, White Cedar Days. The annual tradition dates back more than forty years, and has been described "like Fourth of July on steroids." The celebration includes a parade, log roll, the 'Lil' Loggers Shodeo.' Kurtis Hair, "White Cedar Days Kicks off Fourth of July weekend in Powers," *The World* (Bandon, Ore.), July 3, 2015.

96. Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise*; Peterson and Powers, *A Century of Coos and Curry*.

97. T.C. Land in Dodge, *Pioneer History*, 407.

98. Ibid., 408. Land himself was changed by the experience, after a military career consisting of "over 60 battles" in the Civil War, in his Oregon home he was reinvented. In addition to the several accounts and poems highlighting his love of the South Fork Coquille River.

99. S.S. Endicott [1929] in Wooldridge, *Pioneers and Incidents*, 206.

100. Gordie Hayes, July 2012.

101. Robbins, *Hard Times in Paradise*, 46.

102. Wagner's accidental injury years earlier led to a life of medical complications. One account stated that "the doctor bills and several enforced trips to California for his health used up several quarters of real estate of which Mr. Wagner had acquired considerable before the timber became valuable." *Myrtle Point Enterprise* January 11, 1917, p. 6.

103. A report compiled in by the Oregon Department of Human Services in May of 2015 lists the Myrtle Point/Powers area as a Coos County High Poverty Hotspot due to a concentration of residents living under the poverty level. Oregon DHS Office of Forecasting, Research, & Analysis, "High Poverty Hotspots — Coos County" (May 2015), online document <http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/business-services/ofra/Documents/High%20Poverty%20Hotspots%20Coos.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2016).