



SUNRIVER

HISTORY | GEOLOGY | CLIMATE
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT



During World War II this symbolic log structure stood at the entrance to U.S. Army Engineers Camp Abbot, a training center which covered a sizeable part of what is now Sunriver.

THE SUNRIVER STORY

by PHIL H. BROGAN

PEN ILLUSTRATIONS

by LLOYD W. ALLEN

The clear Deschutes River, born in Cascade snowfields, wanders through a broad basin at Sunriver. The setting is sylvan and park-like. Sounds are distant and subdued. Skies are blue. But it was not always like this.

In the distant, geologic past, volcanoes fringed high skylines, belching smoke and spreading ashes. Eventually, earth fires cooled, peaks were sheathed with ice and sculptured in snow.

Man came eventually. Tribal fires blazed on the shore of a vanished lake, upstream from what is now Benham Falls. Ancient hunters left their marks and their artifacts in the basin.



Newberry Crater, a volcanic caldera of prehistoric origin, is a scant half hour's drive east of Sunriver. It contains two scenic lakes, East and Paulina, famed for fishing.



Indian Chief Paulina bitterly resisted the white settlement of central Oregon, terrorized pioneer ranchers throughout the high lava plains. The Paulina mountains are named for him.



Caves in the Fort Rock State Park area, southeast of Sunriver, are among the oldest known habitats of man in North America.



Sagebrush sandals found in the Fort Rock Caves have been dated at about 9,000 years. The area is rich in Indian artifacts.



John C. Fremont was one of the early white men to explore central Oregon. Records indicate he passed through the exact site of Sunriver in 1843.

Centuries later, white hunters seeking beaver pelts appeared. They were the first to explore this inland region. Then came the Williamson survey party, seeking possible railroad routes. John C. Fremont, the Pathfinder, moved through the Sunriver site in 1843, toting a cannon. Other explorers followed. Stockmen in the past century moved herds of cattle into the basin.

In 1943, the Army Engineers established a training base at the Camp Abbot site. Some 10,000 young men trained where Sunriver's development is now taking place.

The story of this crossroad of regional history is told in this brochure.

THE GEOLOGIC STORY

Spectacularly fringing the beautiful Sunriver basin are white mountains and glacier-flanked peaks that tell part of the region's geologic story.

Ancient seas of the fading Age of Reptiles undoubtedly swept over the present upper Deschutes River country, forming deep basement rocks, though records of the old seas remain hidden.

Geologists believe that the ancestral cascades, to the west of the present crest, shattered beds of the ancient seas. Later, lava-spewing mountains of the high, more recent Cascades, whose beautiful cones are visible on the western skyline, reshaped the alpine scenery.

When lava from deep earth fires was still spilling over the inland country, giant Mt. Newberry, a twin to Mazama that mothered Crater Lake, took shape as a highly active volcano to the west of the Deschutes basins, near the edge of the High Desert.

Newberry, ever growing, ruled the area for long ages. Eventually deep earth forces shattered the big mountain. Lava spilled from numerous vents, cones and fissures. In several areas, such as Lava Cast Forest, molten rock toppled groves of pines, forming molds that are still visible.

Some 2,000 years ago Lava Butte, on a fissure that cuts the north slope of Mt. Newberry, became active. It spilled a high flow of lava westward, into the ancient Deschutes channel.

Behind this lava blockade a long lake basin formed and gradually filled with rich soil, thereby creating the expansive meadow on which Sunriver is now being developed.

While Mt. Newberry, screened by smoking volcanic blasts and ruptured by deep seismic forces, ruled the southern skyline in wild fury, the Three Sisters remained majestic and generally quiet along the high Cascade crest. True, there was plenty of volcanic action on the McKenzie summit and in the Sisters foothills, but with the possible exception of the South Sister, the mountains were calm while Newberry was building.

During the world's long winter, the Ice Age, the North Sister was extensively cut by glaciers, as was the Middle Sister. But the young South Sister, highest of the trio, suffered little from the mountain-cutting glaciers.

Eventually, the mountains became quiet and beautiful. Ancient Benham Lake, back of the Lava Butte barrier, cut a new channel over Benham Falls. The expansive area that had long been a lake bottom was completely drained. Now the Little Deschutes and main Deschutes leisurely meander through the park-like meadows.

On these meadows, Sunriver is taking shape as a new and important community of inland Oregon.

OLD CAMPS DISCOVERED

Long before the first trappers, explorers, hunters and stockmen came to the Sunriver area of the Deschutes River basin, the native Indians were here.

They lived in caves to the south, hunted along the Deschutes, and left their artifacts in the silts and soil of an ancient lake. They shaped canoes from logs, and in comparatively recent times built wickiups from lodgepole pines.

The wickiup poles gave their name to the upriver Wickiup Reservoir, where some 200,000 acre feet of irrigation water is stored annually.

There is abundant evidence that the ancient tribal hunters camped for long ages in the Sunriver plain. Artifacts made from obsidian tell part of the story of the ancient habitation.

When winter came to the inland country, the prehistoric hunters apparently sought shelter in lava tunnels. The oldest known habitation of man in the Oregon country was in a Fort rock cave, where waves from a big lake, long vanished, cut into a lava knoll. That habitation as been given an approximate date of 9,000 years.

When the preliminary study for the construction of the Wickiup Reservoir was in progress, obsidian knives were found under Mazama ash. This indicated that the knives could be dated previous to the Mt. Mazama explosion, some 6,500 years ago.

Anthropologists believe that the ancient hunters of the upper Deschutes country lived for hundreds of years along the shores of the big lake that formed behind rocky flows of Lava Butte, and spread southward over the site of the present Sunriver development.

PATH OF IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants who crossed Oregon's lonely High Desert in the mid-1850's found the upper Deschutes country a place of beauty, with the first snows of autumn whitening the jagged peaks of the Cascades to the west.

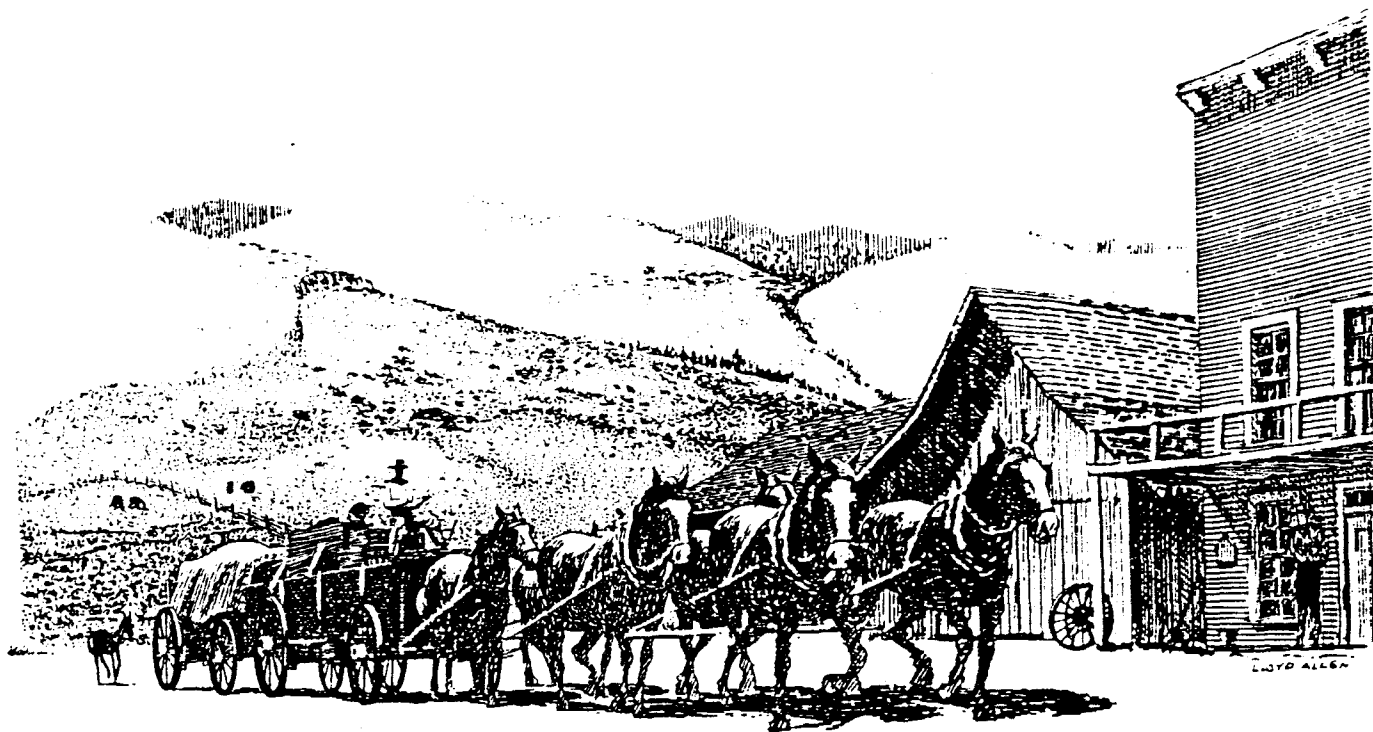
One of the immigrant parties comprised the temporarily lost Elliott wagon train, which was seeking a new route over the Cascades to Lane County via the South Fork of the Willamette. That party apparently mistook the Three Sisters for Diamond Peak and struck the Deschutes at Bend.

From Bend, the train moved south along the Deschutes past the present Sunriver site and eventually reached the new Cascade pass as a fierce storm gathered. Some members of the party died on the high summit. That first crossing of the Willamette Cascades was made in the late fall of 1853.

Lured by the news that riches had been discovered in gravels of the John Day country, gold seekers crossed through Central Oregon in the early 1860's. Some apparently followed the upper Deschutes River for a distance, and possibly test-panned for gold at Sunriver.

In 1867, late in the season, a big wagon train carrying army supplies from Fort Dalles to Fort Klamath stopped at or near the present Sunriver location. Progress through the lodgepole pine country was slow with a company of axemen preceding the wagons. A big herd of cattle, to supply meat for Fort Klamath, accompanied that wagon train of more than a century ago.

Eventually The Dalles, Bend and Klamath Falls were connected by a wagon road, the forerunner of today's fast, straight U.S. Highway 97, which skirts the Sunriver property.



Sunriver's grassy meadows were a natural stopping place during central Oregon's wagon freighting days between 1860 and 1910.

Sunriver Climatological Summary

Moisture: 12.3 inches yearly
 Sunshine: 263 days yearly
 Average Temperature 46°

Latitude: 44° 04' N
 Longitude: 121° 19' W
 Elevation: 4200 Feet

Sunriver, elevation approximately 4200 feet, extends for five miles along the Deschutes River on the western border of central Oregon's high plateau. Its climate is characterized by low annual rainfall and low relative humidity. Moderate days and cool nights generally characterize Sunriver's temperatures the year around. While there is an average of eleven days a year with temperatures above 90°, there is less than one when 100° is reached. About half the nights have minimums down to freezing or lower.

Precipitation is generally light. On an average, there is less than one day a year with rainfall of an inch or more. Slightly more than 50% of the annual total precipitation falls in the four months of November through February, most of which is in the form of snow, whose annual total is approximately thirty-five inches. Snow rarely accumulates to more than a few inches in depth, or lies on the ground for any extended period.

Due to the low nightly minimum temperatures, likely in any month, only the more hardy crops are grown extensively in the surrounding area. From the valley land to the east and the northeast come the well-known Deschutes potatoes. Other important crops include alfalfa, grain, clover and specialty grass seed crops. The raising of beef cattle and dairying are also important activities, along with logging and lumber manufacturing.

A great deal of Sunriver's attraction is that of recreational opportunity. The adjacent forests and plains are among the most popular deer hunting areas in the State. Large herds of antelope have been restored to the sagebrush covered plateau to the southeast. The Deschutes River that flows along and through Sunriver is one of the most famous trout and steelhead streams in the Northwest. Surrounding mountains and numerous lakes offer a variety of recreational opportunities to campers, picnickers, fisherman, hikers and mountain climbers.

From April through October sunshine is predominate, with daytime temperatures generally ranging between 70° and 90°. Night temperatures average between 30° and 40°. Temperatures during the warmer part of most winter days rise well above freezing, as exemplified by the average daily maximum of 40° in January, the coldest month.

TEN YEAR AVERAGE TEMPERATURE & PERCIPITATION FOR BEND/SUNRIVER AREA

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE (°F.)

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Ann'l
1956	31.6	29.5	36.8	44.2	51.9	54.3	64.0	60.3	56.0	45.3	36.4	37.0	45.6
1957	18.0	34.2	38.8	43.5	52.1	58.6	60.6	57.8	37.5	43.5	36.0	36.5	44.8
1958	34.1	40.2	35.2	41.7	56.6	58.5	65.7	67.1	54.3	48.5	36.6	38.2	48.3
1959	34.2	31.4	38.9	44.7	46.3	57.3	64.0	59.7	52.6	47.7	39.7	32.0	45.7
1960	27.2	31.5	38.9	43.6	47.0	57.8	66.1	59.9	55.8	47.9	36.2	33.2	45.4
1961	35.1	38.0	38.1	43.8	48.5	61.3	64.1	66.5	50.3	44.7	34.6	32.1	46.4
1962	30.2	34.5	35.5	46.9	45.6	54.9	60.8	59.6	57.3	47.4	39.5	36.5	45.8
1963	27.4	40.4	36.7	39.8	50.7	54.2	69.0	60.4	60.7	47.4	38.7	35.1	45.9
1964	32.8	34.5	34.6	41.1	46.4	55.2	63.0	59.2	52.7	46.8	35.5	31.0	44.4
1965	33.3	37.6	35.9	43.9	47.5	55.8	63.2	61.0	50.6	51.9	40.6	31.8	46.1

TOTAL PRECIPITATION (INCHES)

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Ann'l
1956	2.80	2.50	0.17	0.66	3.63	0.79	0.26	0.21	0.05	2.24	0.31	0.79	14.41
1957	0.77	1.68	1.68	0.24	1.30	0.01	0.14	0.24	1.02	0.59	0.22	3.28	11.17
1958	2.31	1.30	0.22	0.63	1.96	2.47	0.24	0.01	0.13	0.32	0.70	0.65	10.94
1959	1.26	1.44	0.73	0.07	0.63	0.30	0.12	0.01	0.21	0.44	0.26	0.28	5.75
1960	1.27	1.43	2.28	0.80	0.58	0.01	0.15	0.23	0.05	0.10	4.19	1.04	12.23
1961	0.22	2.23	0.95	0.13	1.04	0.47	0.04	0.17	T	0.91	3.56	2.17	11.89
1962	1.08	0.48	0.99	0.50	2.31	0.26	0.17	1.03	0.45	2.18	1.39	1.56	12.42
1963	1.29	1.78	0.63	0.83	1.44	0.79	0.25	0.15	0.65	0.10	1.84	1.01	10.76
1964	1.95	0.12	0.75	0.05	T	0.80	0.29	0.06	T	0.27	1.59	5.74	14.62
1965	1.99	0.26	0.01	0.44	0.30	1.69	0.80	1.39	0.07	0.25	1.42	0.76	9.36

Lava Butte Geological Area

Part of the scenic grandeur that makes Oregon a tourist mecca is tied to long-ago volcanic activity. Crater Lake and Mt. Hood are among the more familiar of such attractions.

Now an 8,983-acre area in central Oregon's lava country, extending west from U.S. Highway 97, has been given special classification by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture as the Lava Butte Geological Area, in recognition of its geological and recreational qualities. The area's name comes from 5,016-foot high Lava Butte, located seven miles south of Bend (eight miles north of Sunriver).

The U.S. Forest Service maintains a fire lookout on the butte, as well as a public observation building visited last year by nearly 100,000 persons who gazed down from the volcanic cone across hardened lava that flowed molten perhaps 1,500 to 2,000 years ago. Four campgrounds and two trails are in the area, plus three waterfalls formed when the Deschutes River cut a new channel through the lava flows. Another attraction of the region is the Lava Cast Forest Geological Area about 15 miles to the southeast. Within short driving range are winter sports sites, mountain and desert wilderness areas, and a number of the high Cascade lakes.

Long-range Forest Service plans call for further development of the Geological Area, including that of a visitor center near the base of Lava Butte. The area is one of increasingly heavy recreational use, and it is entirely fitting that it be added officially to the long list of things that make Oregon a good state to visit or, better yet, in which to live.

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The Deschutes . . . great for Rainbows

The Deschutes, famous for rainbow trout since the early pioneers first fished it, continues to live up to its reputation. Great catches are still taken from its cold, mountain-born waters. Further, there is reason to believe it will continue indefinitely as a great producer. Besides being rich in natural food, much of the Deschutes is protected by nature and regulation against over-fishing. As a result, the native rainbow population holds up well in spite of fishing pressure. In addition, the Oregon State Game Commission constantly stocks the streams and lakes of the state with game fish. In 1967 the Deschutes received its share of the 1,224,800 pounds of trout, steelhead and salmon released in Oregon waters during the year. It is anticipated that a 10% increase in catchable trout will be released in 1968, and that 1969 will see a comparable increase.

SUNRIVER....IN THE BIG GAME COUNTRY

The 1967 Oregon Big Game season was one of the best on record. It provided 1,863,000 man-days of outdoor recreation for hunters of deer, elk, antelope, mountain goat. Throughout the state, a total of 263,200 hunters bagged 142,000 deer.

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Early-day logging in the central Oregon pine country was distinctive for the "big wheels" used to bring logs out of the forest. Besides horses, oxen and later steam tractors provided motive power.

CATTLEMEN: FIRST SETTLERS

First whites to make their homes in the Sunriver country were stockmen. Lured by fine forage on Deschutes meadows and abundant grass in the pinelands, they moved big herds of cattle into the area. Occasionally there were mild conflicts between owners of competing herds, marked by night "spooking" of cattle and occasional noisy firing of shots.

In the late 1870's John Y. Todd trailed his big herds from Tygh Valley to his Farewell Bend ranch, shifting them to upper Deschutes grass in the summer months. In the meantime, Joel Allen established a spread on upper Deschutes meadows near the Sunriver site. In 1879, Todd built a shelter, long known as the Dorris cabin near the junction of Big and Little Deschutes Rivers. Cattle were also moved to the upriver country over the Cascades from Lane County in 1879.

In the early 1890's W. P. Vandever established the Old Homestead. Other stockmen moved into the area. Communities were established, schools were organized and post offices approved. Rosland, which in 1910 was shifted to the present Lapine site, was founded on the wagon road between Bend and Silver Lake.

One of the early ranches was that of F. A. Shonquest. Its fine, grassy meadows were far-famed. It was this old ranch that formed the nucleus for the Army Engineers camp Abbot, during World War II.

Another early community was known as Lava. There, freighters traveling the long Bend-Silver Lake road stopped for a "breather."

LAND OF THE 'LAVA BEAR'

Oregon's upper Deschutes River country, where Sunriver is located, was early "discovered" by hunters and anglers. Pioneer ranchers virtually fished the Deschutes from their backyards, and hunted deer in their pastures.

At the end of the harvest season it was customary for entire families to set up camps in the present Sunriver country. Men fished and hunted; women joined in trips to nearby huckleberry patches.

Hunters of the "dude" type from eastern cities also found their way to the little-known Deschutes, to hunt mule deer grazing on natural meadows that reached to the river's edge.

One of the most famous of these early-day hunters was Irving S. Cobb, writer and humorist, widely known for his articles in the Saturday Evening Post. Shortly after World War I, Cobb came to the Inland region to hunt the mythical "lava bear." With Norman Jacobson and Bill Vandever as guides, Cobb started his hunt in the upper Deschutes country. He was not successful in bagging a "lava bear," but he gave the region national publicity.

THE CAMP ABBOT STORY

On September 2, 1855, soldiers of the United States Army, following an ancient Indian trail from the south, camped at a scenic, expansive meadow on the upper Deschutes River. They comprised the main body of a railroad survey party under the command of a young engineer, Second Lieutenant Henry Larcom Abbot. The area of their campsite was chosen as the location of the Army Engineers' replacement center during World War II, and named for Lieutenant Abbot, who had a distinguished career in the Army Corps of Engineers. He fought through the Civil War and was cited for gallant service. He was a member of the Board of consulting engineers named by President Theodore Roosevelt to prepare plans for the construction of the Panama Canal.

First to discover the recreational lure of the upper Deschutes country were deer hunters. Early-day ranchers found hunting good. Some stored their venison in the cool inner chamber of Dillman Cave, now known as Lava River Tunnel, on U. S. 97 just outside of the Sunriver boundary.

The timbered foothills of Mt. Newberry just southeast of Sunriver, hold special attractions for "cavers" because of long lava tunnels found in the area. Some of these caves, especially Lava River Tunnel, Skeleton Cave and Lava-cicle Cave, have won national attention. There are a number of ice caves. From one, Arnold Ice Cave, Bend obtained its year around supply of ice early in the century.

Some of the caves, such as Charcoal Cavern, are places of mystery, for it has been found that partly burned wood deep within the caves was cut with stone axes.

Fishing on the Deschutes, which flows through Sunriver, has attracted many nationally-known figures, among them former president Herbert Hoover. He fished the Deschutes in the Sunriver area on several occasions.

There are miles of fine pony trails in the area, and paths for hikers seeking giant cones in the nearby Sugar Pine Butte area, watching for flying squirrels leaping through branches, or otherwise enjoying the natural attractions of the region.

ROADS SERVE SCENIC AREA

Fifty years ago the upper Deschutes country was seasonally isolated from the outside world when snow blocked old wagon roads. The blockades generally occurred when drifts buried the route over Sun Mountain, in the Klamath country, or other mountain passes.

How times have changed!

A year-around, fast and straight highway, U. S. 97, now reaches through the region, connecting Bend and Klamath Falls and the communities between. In addition, the Great Northern railroad passes close to Sunriver.

Throughout the area are many Forest Service, county and state roads. They reach into the Cascades, go over the rim into Newberry Crater, and even spiral Lava Butte to U. S. Forest Service visitors information center, near Sunriver.

Supplementing the road system are the many horseback and backpacking trails extending into the surrounding mountains, forests and high plains.

In the near future, an important connecting road will be built from Benham Falls to the Cascade Lakes Highway providing easy access from Sunriver to Mt. Bachelor ski area.

MT BACHELOR.....A GREAT PLACE TO SKI

Among skiers, Mt. Bachelor is one of the most-favored areas in the Northwest. A 9,000 volcanic peak 36 miles northwest of Sunriver, its popularity is due to its remarkably superior snow conditions, and to its long skiing season, which usually begins before Thanksgiving and lasts through Memorial day.

Bachelor has 70 runs, 11 lifts, 7 express chairs, and 2 surface learning lifts. The vertical drop is 3,365 feet. There are 3,686 skiable acres. 56K groomed cross-country trails. The new Northwest Territory opens up more tree and chute skiing and boarding.

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