

From: [Joel Geier](#)
To: [Benton County Talks Trash](#)
Cc: [Sam Imperati](#)
Subject: Common Understandings document: Suggested draft text to be added to "history" section
Date: Saturday, September 3, 2022 11:16:52 AM
Attachments: [CommonUnderstandingAdditions-History.pdf](#)

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Sam,

Here's a first draft of my attempt to address one of the gaping holes in the "history" section of your document.

There are quite a few parts here that still need to be fleshed out, but it's a lot of work for one individual to do in the short time you've given us. Perhaps the county could spend some of their "trash money" to hire a local historian who could do a far better job on this than either you or me.

Once again, I'll also urge you and the county to engage the Grand Ronde and Siletz Tribes in an appropriate consultation process. That should include -- but certainly not be limited to -- commenting on this document and any later revisions.

I'll be supplying other pieces as I continue to work on this.

Joel

1. A brief history of communities in the Coffin Butte/Tampico Ridge area

Themes:

- *Residents of North Benton County repeatedly displaced, mistreated, misrepresented and ignored by outside interests*
- *Cultural resources threatened by landfill expansion*
- *County's conservation commitments; conservation and outdoor recreational lands impacted by landfill expansion.*

Indigenous people

Coffin Butte and Tampico Ridge are part of the homeland of the Kalapuya people, represented today by citizens of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, and of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

[add more here on current situation, treaty rights and cultural concerns of the Tribes based on consultation]

The Kalapuya managed lands in this area as prairie and oak savanna, using traditional agricultural methods including annual burning to maintain camas and other food and medicinal plants. Examples of these culturally important plants can still be found in prairie/savanna remnants around the neighborhood, including on the portion of Coffin Butte currently under state ownership, as part of E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area.

Ridgeline trail system

A system of ridgeline trails (see historical documents by Zybach) connected from the Willamette Valley all the way to the Oregon coast had its eastern end at the north end of Tampico Ridge. This was likely an important route for trade, by which people starting from annual encampments in the Willamette Bluffs area near the Luckiamute-Willamette confluence could travel to exchange goods with coastal communities in the Yaquina, Siletz, and Alsea areas.

Local residents have observed cultural items including obsidian spear points along the ridgeline, particularly in the vicinity of an artesian spring that still flows year-round, near the north end of the ridge. Thus far no surveys for cultural/archaeological resources have been conducted on the land proposed for landfill expansion at the north end of Tampico Ridge.

Arrival of European-Americans

European-American presence in the area began in the early 1800s. One of the first visitors to record their experiences was the Scottish botanist David Douglas, who traveled south along the west side of the Willamette Valley in late 1826, documenting the native plants along the way. Douglas' journals indicate that he passed through the Coffin Butte neighborhood on October 5, 1826, camping beside a small wooded creek due east of Mt. Jefferson (likely Soap Creek), and near where he could glimpse the tops of two other peaks (likely two of the Three Sisters which are visible from the slopes of Coffin Butte and Tampico Ridge).

Numbers of European-American settlers increased dramatically in the 1840s as wagon trains began to travel west, initially along the Oregon Trail and by 1846, also on the Applegate Trail. A section of the

Applegate Trail crossed from the Willamette Valley into Soap Creek Valley via the topographic saddle at the south end of Tampico Ridge, along the current route of Tampico Road.

Letitia Carson: An early Black pioneer

One of the earliest settlers in the area was Letitia Carson, a Black woman, formerly enslaved, who traveled to Oregon from Missouri with her Scottish immigrant husband David Carson in 1845, giving birth to a daughter along the way. The Carsons settled on a 640-acre claim near the present-day intersection of Tampico Road and Soap Creek Road, on land which is now mainly part of OSU's Soap Creek Beef Ranch. The Applegate Trail passed right through the Carsons' claim. Letitia Carson ran a successful farm stand, selling produce to later migrants headed for Kings Valley and the Dallas area farther north in Polk County.

Following David Carson's untimely death in 1853, a wealthy pro-slavery Corvallis landowner, Greenberry Smith took control of the Carsons' property, selling their land, cattle, and even personal belongings at public auction, pocketing the proceeds for himself.

[https://www.tillamookheadlightherald.com/community_paid/offbeat-oregon-neighbor-s-theft-of-widow-and-orphans-home-was-too-much-for-jury/article_9e5bee8e-1b77-11ea-a436-27f1f68d91de.html]

Letitia Carson left Benton County in favor of the Cow Creek Valley in Douglas County, where she started all over and successfully homesteaded for a second time. More of her remarkable story can be found in this article by the Salem Statesman Journal (which also includes a photo of the current landfill less than a mile away, looming over a team of OSU archaeologists as they investigate the area of her homestead):

[<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/local/2022/06/20/letitia-carson-legacy-project-honors-oregon-only-black-homesteader-pioneer-juneteenth/65361235007/>]

Forced relocation of Kalapuya and other Indigenous people to reservations at Grand Ronde and Siletz
[need more text here; mention Fort Hoskins]

Soap Creek community

[Need more here on the later history of the Soap Creek Valley, including stagecoach routes along the Territorial Road, and the historic Soap Creek Schoolhouse].

Historic town of Tampico

[need more text here, note plaque at intersection of Tampico and Soap Creek Roads]

Historic town of Wellsdale

[add text here; including Rohner family farm on Coffin Butte]

Historic town of Palestine

[add text here]

Town of Airlie

[add text here]

Camp Adair period 1942-1945

[add text here: Eviction of farm families, relocation of cemeteries, construction of Camp Adair, psychiatric imprisonment of legendary blues singer Howling Wolf in 1943]

[<https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/05/24/the-army-aint-no-place-for-a-black-man-how-the-wolf-got-caged/>]

Exploitation of Coffin Butte as crushed rock quarry, then later as army dump; ditching of natural stream courses]

Post-war military presence

[Conversion of Camp Adair to a prisoner-of-war camp for captured German and Italian soldiers; early Cold War period and BOMARC missile project]

Reestablishment of farming and residential communities

[Farmland for returning GIs; establishment of OSU research forests and Soap Creek Beef Ranch in 1948; conversion of Adair Village to a residential community]

Growth of North Benton County

[Growth of North Albany, Adair Village, and Lewisburg; rural residential development; currently home to >10,000 people who live within 7 miles of the landfill; North Benton County Advisory Council discontinued by county planners since 2008(?)]

Conservation, preservation, and outdoor recreation

Establishment of E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area including Coffin Butte Annex: Per acre, most intensively used wildlife area in state of Oregon.

Establishment of Willamette River Greenway including Luckiamute State Natural Area
Oregon Conservation Plan and Benton County's (forgotten?) commitments in area