
Grasslands Were Common, Open Prairies In Almost Every River Basin

Overview Hugo, Oregon like most places has its Native American history, some known, most not. Hugo's first citizens or peoples were the Takelma Indians in the Rogue River Valley.¹

Southwest Oregon State Forest Management Plan²

The uses of fire by Native Americans, as well as natural lightning fires, greatly influenced vegetation patterns in the planning area for thousands of years, until the mid-1800s. When European settlers first arrived in the area, *recently burned over lands were common, grasslands were much more prevalent than today, and trees clustered along streams, ridge tops, and protected valleys.*

American Indian Use of Fire in Ecosystems³ Accounts by explorers many times noted huge burned over areas with many dead trees "littering" the landscape, without knowledge of whether the fires were natural or Indian caused. Written accounts by early settlers and fur trappers remain incomplete *although many noted that there were open prairies with tall grasses in almost every river basin.* The abundance of rich prairie land (ready for the plow without having to clear the land) was one of the primary reasons for heading West.

Overland Exploring Expedition Charting Siskiyou Trail:

1841⁴ Their route lay over hills and through prairies. Page 108. The country in the southern part of the Willamette Valley, stretches out into wild-prairie-ground, gradually rising in the distance into low undulating hills, which are destitute of trees, except scattered oaks; these look more like orchards of fruit trees. Pages 111- 112. Smoke arising from the burning of the prairie, a parched-up prairie. Page 112. Dense smoke. Page 121. Banks of the Rogues' river. Page 125. Rogues' river. Page 124. Rolling prairie. Page 125. Dense column of smoke, on the way, they met an old squaw, with a large firebrand in her hand, with which she had just set the grass and bushes on fire. Page 126. Smoky. Page 127.

Hugo's Takelma Indians Used Fire Creating Open Grass Lands

Overland Exploring Expedition Charting Siskiyou Trail:

1841 The route from Fort Vancouver to San Francisco Bay lay across three-hundred-foot hills, *dotted with white oak groves, and alternating grassy rolling prairies.* Page 290. The air was full of smoke from *Indian-set grassfires* which shut out any view of the countryside and prevented Emmons from getting an altitude at noon with his instruments. Page 290. *All vegetation, save trees, was destroyed by the fires of the Indians intent on making root digging easier.*" Page 290. Hard ground ahead, from summer heat and Indian fires. Page 291. Ascending and descending *burnt hills and dales* interspersed with sugar-pine forests, Emmons saw fresh Indian signs everywhere. Rogue Valley, Page 309. And on an on, the Expeditions notes are thick with references to smoke and burnt grasslands and prairies.

1840s Applegate Trail Diarists⁶ Diarists note only three places they had to cut brush from Louse Creek to Grave Creek: Louse Creek, Jumpoff Joe Creek, and Grave Creek Hills. In 1846 diarist Virgil Pringle reported the country was mostly burnt.⁶

1854 - 1855 Railroad Survey: Explorations & Surveys⁷ Between Grave and Jump off Joe creeks the road passed over a steep and heavily timbered divide. At Jump off Joe creek, a man driving swine had been murdered, and a large number of his animals lay dead in the road. *On leaving this creek, we passed through an undulating and fertile country, sometimes open and sometimes thinly covered with a growth of oak, sugar maple, and a little pine and hemlock.* Page 108. Today we traveled about twenty-five miles to Fort Lane, crossing Rogue river at Evans' ferry. The land appeared to be rich and valuable. *The hills were thinly covered with oak, pine, and other kinds of trees.* Page 109.

1. Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society. January 1, 2010. *Program Overview: Native Americans of Hugo, Oregon.* Hugo, OR.

2. Southwest Oregon State Forest Management Plan. Downloaded January 3, 2010.

Burnt Hills & Dales Interspersed With Sugar- Pine Forests

1850s General Surveyor Office of Oregon⁸ Survey notes on prairies and open woodlands from the 1850s GLO surveys for the Hugo region are one of the most prevalent notes. These open areas were like popcorn on the string of the Applegate Trail.

Want more information? Contact a member of the HNAT.



3. Williams, Gerald W. August 23, 1994. *References on the American Indian Use of Fire in Ecosystems.* USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region Downloaded January 3, 2010. <http://wings.buffaloedu/anthropology/-Documents/firebib.txt>

4. Biobooks. 1958. *Columbia River to the Sacramento* By Charles Wilkes, U.S.N. *Commander United States Exploring Expedition 1839 - 1842.* Chapter III. Southern Oregon, 1941. Oakland 10, CA.

5. Dillon, Richard. *Siskiyou Trail.* McGraw-Hill Book Company. New York, NY.

6. Rose, Karen. 2006. Hugo Emigrant Trails Committee, Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society. *Hugo's Applegate Trail Diaries, Journals & Reminiscences Project.* "Yellow Book Project" For Participants of the Diaries, Journals and Reminiscences Sub-Committee. Hugo, OR. Hugo Neighborhood. 2005 *Diaries & Journals.* Brochure 11 in Emigrant Trail Series. Hugo, OR; Hugo Neighborhood. 2006 *Diaries, Journals & Reminiscences Sub-Committee.* Brochure 11B in Emigrant Trail Series. Hugo, OR.

7. Abbot, Henry L. *Report of Lieut. Henry L. Abbot, Corps of Topographical Engineers, upon Explorations for a Railroad Route from the Sacramento River to the Columbia River, made by Lieut. R. S. Williamson, Corps of Topographical Engineers, assisted by Lieut. Henry L. Abbot, Corps of Topographical Engineers, 1855.* United States War Department. *Reports of explorations and surveys, to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean.* Made under the direction of the Secretary of War, in 1853-4. House of Representatives Exec. Doc. No. 91, 33rd Congress, 2d Session. Nicholson, Washington, 1856.

8. General Surveyor Office of Oregon. *Subdivision Lines For 1856 Map (T.34., R. 6. W., Willamette Meridian).* Field Notes. Surveyor Luke G Hyde. Contract February 19, 1855; Surveyed March 31, 1856; Hugo Neighborhood. 2006. *Hugo's Applegate Trail Field Notes.* Brochures 10A - 10D in Emigrant Trail Series. Hugo, OR.

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission of promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

Land Use & History

The *Hugo Neighborhood's* land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and to preserve, protect, and enhance the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, if requested, as a technical resource assisting neighbors to represent themselves.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Volunteer membership dues are \$10.00 annually per family and normally used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Send us your e-mail address if you want to know what we are doing.

Email: hugo@jeffnet.org

Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/>

Edited by Karen Rose, Wayne McKy, & Mike Walker

Hugo's Native American Team (HNAT) Hugo Neighborhood Association

Jean Boling, Member
Hugo Neighborhood &
Historic Sites Chair,
Josephine County Historical Society
214 NW Booth Street
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Janet McKy, Member
Hugo Neighborhood
6497 Hugo Road
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Wayne McKy, Member & Officer
Hugo Neighborhood
6497 Hugo Road
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Karen Rose, Member & Web Master
Hugo Neighborhood
575 Red Mountain Drive
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Mike Walker, Member & Officer
Hugo Neighborhood
3388B Merlin Rd #195
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Native Americans, Including Takelma Indians And Fire



Brochure NA-15B Of Hugo's
Native American Brochure Series



January 3, 2010
Updated September 12, 2011

**Hugo Neighborhood Association &
Historical Society
Josephine County Historical Society**