

# THE STORY LIVES ON



Written by Ida Lee Knapp      October 2015

Teacher and Member Guide

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### Objectives

All participants will learn what constitutes folklore, legends and myths by playing a matching game. We will meet some men that were known in the area they lived in as ones that tell tall tales and we will see examples of those tall tales. You will learn the origins of the name Oregon by discussing some theories and some ideas from the participants. Where did the name Webfoot come from? You will learn about some Indian legends.

Give 5 minutes to match up the words with their definitions. You can read the words and definitions and have the group pick the definitions.

Folklore

Legends

Myths

- A. Stories whose origins are forgotten
- B. The collected wisdom of people
- C. A story or collection of stories about life.

**Folklore** is B **the collected wisdom of people**. This wisdom is oral by nature and is the traditional expressions and behavior which we learned informally. Since there is a story behind everything, folklore relates to your family stories, superstitions and folk medicine.

**Legends** is C **a story or collection of stories about life**. These stories are regarded, by their tellers, to be true, genuine historical accounts. Legends are very local, dealing with events that have occurred nearby and are often told on the authority of some relative or acquaintance. Like folklore, legends exhibit a good deal of dynamic variation and can change with each storyteller.

**Myths** is A and are **stories whose origins are forgotten**. It can be historical, associated with a belief system, or is a person or thing existing only in imagination.

### The Name Oregon

Ask the participants for any theories that they have heard before reading the list below.

The following are some theories about where the name Oregon came from.

- \*When the Spanish Explorers first came to this country, they found the Indians with big ears (enlarged by the loads of ornaments that dangled from the earlobes) and named the region *oreja*, meaning "ears".
- \*Oregon came from *over-un-gon*, a Shoshone word meaning "a place of plenty".
- \*Joaquin Miller, a frontier poet, thought the name came from the Spanish words *aura aqua*, meaning "gently falling waters". He was referencing the persistent rainfall in the region.
- \*The Spanish explorers, remembering the patronage of Ferdinand of Aragon, consort to Queen Isabella, named the area after the prince's homeland. The homeland was pronounced Aragon.
- \*The name Oregon came from the Spanish word *oregano*, an herb that grows in Oregon.
- \*The most plausible is a mapmaker's error in 1709. The map miscopied "Quisconsin", the way "Wisconsin" appears on early French maps, as "Ouaricon-sint", with the "sint" printed offset below "Ouaricon". (Anyone using this map misread the Wisconsin River; know as the "River of the West", as the "R. de Ouaricon". Major Rogers, an English army officer posted in the Great Lakes area, used the name "Ouragon" or "Ourigan" in a petition he wrote in 1765 requesting permission to explore the territory west of the Great Lakes. The earliest known document with the spelling "Oregon" is Jonathan Carver's 1778 *Travels Through The Interior Parts of North America*, his account of his 1766-77 expedition to the West in which he writes of "the River

Oregon, or the River of the West".)

### **Oregon Nicknames**

- \*The Beaver State
- \*Oregon: Farthest West
- \*Oregon: Nearest Japan
- \*The Valentine State
- \*The State With A Heart
- \*The Sunset State
- \*The End Of The Trail State
- \*The Rodent State

For the pioneers in the wagon trains Oregon was the promise land. One wagon had this sign on it In God we trusted, In Nebraska we busted, and now we are bound for the promised land. For the pioneers the Willamette Valley was the Garden of Eden.

### **Webfoot**

*Webfoot* was used to express the dislike of Oregonians who came to California for gold and then took their gold back to the rainy Willamette Valley. *Webfoot* first appeared in a California newspaper in 1853. In the mid 1860's Oregon newspapers used the word *Webfoot* in regards to Oregon. Oregonians thought it was a humorous acknowledgement of the soggy climate. In 1901, the University of Oregon students adopted the word *Webfoot* as their nickname.

### **Indian Myths and Legends**

Indians believed that the earth was controlled by many gods. They believed that there were no friendly gods. The crafty animals became their earth gods and in time, their helpers.

\*Coyote was the weakest but the craftiest of all the animals, he was known as the trickster and transformer.

\*The fox was ranked second.

\*The eagle was a right-thinking leader.

\*Grizzly bear was unpredictable and dangerous.

\*The raccoon was a spoiled brat.

### *Crater Lake*

From Klamath comes a myth that describes a battle between the Chief of the Below World and the Chief of the Above World. The opening to the underworld was found in a vast mountain (the high mountain that used to be). In a development recalling the myth of Hades and Persephone, the Chief of the Below World falls in love with the beautiful daughter of a Klamath Chief. She spurns him and in revenge the Chief of the Below World tries to destroy Klamath with fire. However, the Chief of the Above World pities the humans and does battle with his underworld counterpart. Amid vast explosions and fire the Chief of the Below World is driven underground and the mountain collapses upon him, creating Crater Lake.

### *Created From The Heart*

A long time ago there was a great monster that was eating up all the animals. There were no people then. This monster was so big he didn't even chew up the animals, he'd just swallow them whole. Coyote was worried about all his brother and sister animals, so he devised a plan to save them all. After the monster had swallowed all other animals, Coyote let the monster swallow him. When Coyote was in the monster's stomach, he held a meeting. He told the animals, "I have a knife and I'm going to crawl up the monster's stomach, up close to his heart, and I'm going to stab him 'til he dies. When he begins to die, all the openings of his body will open up as his muscles relax. When this happens, I'll give the signal and you all run out through his tsitsit."

Coyote went to work stabbing and cutting at the monster's heart. When the monster began to get weak, he said to Coyote, "let's make a deal, you stop stabbing me and trying to kill me and I'll let you go." Coyote refused and just kept right on cutting deeper into the heart of the monster until the monster died. All the animals escaped through the tsitsit as Coyote hollered to them to go. Then Coyote crawled out and ordered all the animals to help him cut up the monster. They cut off the feet and threw them up to the northwestern area of what's now Montana and there grew the Blackfoot people. They cut out the brain and the head and threw them out and that became the Flathead tribe. So they kept right on cutting off all the parts of the body, including the intestines and threw each part to a different section of land, at each place creating a new Indian nation. When they had thrown all the parts away except the heart, the animals asked what Coyote would do with the heart. He told them that he was going to put them in the most beautiful country of all. Coyote placed the heart halfway between what is now Lewiston, Idaho and Wallowa, Oregon. There the Nez Perce people were created from the heart.

#### *The Branded Coyotes*

Livestock brands originated in the early 1800's, a necessity when little homesteads and ranches began to blossom on the open range. Even then, there were constant conflicts over cattle ownership in Northeastern Oregon, like every other western region, was plagued with stories of gun-fights settling the matter of which cow belonged to which rancher at round-up time.

The Indians of the Irrigon area, in Morrow County, looked on these range conflicts, and on the curious practice of branding, with a skeptical eye. After all, putting a stamp of ownership on a cow's rump made about as much sense as trying to buy or sell 100 acres of land.

By the late 1890's there was not a steer, sheep, or ox in Indian Territory that did not bear the white man's brand. The Yakima Indians, who at that time occupied a reservation on the Oregon side of the Columbia, found the proliferation of brands particularly amusing and the elders made jokes among themselves about the industrious folly of the ranchers.

Soon the youngsters of the tribe began mimicking the whites in a quiet but ironic way. The young Yakima's began to rope the reservation coyotes, pressing the hot brand of ID (Indian Department) into their flanks. Soon the people of the Irrigon region noticed great numbers of coyotes slinking around the reservation with the logo of the Yakima's etched into their sides. Some old-timers even claim that the sport become entirely too popular; before long, coyotes were being born with the ID brand etched neatly into their rumps.

#### **Mythical Creatures**

Legends of Bigfoot/Sasquatch have been around since the 1860's. The Indians call him Tsiatko. Tales of huge, hairy humanoid creatures have carried right on in the Northwest from Indian tradition to modern Anglo storytelling.

#### *Big Foot - Adventure On The Rogue*

We were up-river with a tour group looking at all the natural beauties here on the Rogue River when I spied a young Sasquatch hiding in the shadow of a tree near a gravel bank. I swung the tour-boat around so we could get a better look and all the tourists exclaimed and took pictures. It's not too unusual to see a Sasquatch in the spring. That's the time they migrate through here to their summer stomping grounds up North.

We were in for a treat today. The Sasquatch jumped out of the shadows suddenly, leapt into the river and wrestled a 7 foot sturgeon onto the gravel bank. I blinked in astonishment. I didn't know Sasquatch liked sturgeon. As we watched, the Sasquatch belted the big fish with a rock to stop its flopping.

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Right at that moment, a big black bear came stomping down the bank on the opposite shore looking for a snack. The bear took one look at the Sasquatch with the sturgeon, sitting on the opposite shore and leapt into the water. In the blink of an eye, that ol' bear was across the river and wading out of the water, while the tourists babbled and took pictures. The bear shook itself dry like a dog and then jumped onto the back of the Sasquatch, beating on him until he ran away from the sturgeon, leaving the bear to sniff in triumph over the large fish.

Well, I thought that was the end of it, until the Sasquatch came running back down the hill holding a dead tree in his hands. He started beating on the bear and the bear was whomping back at him something fierce. Fur was flying everywhere; blood spurting out like a geyser. I don't know where it would have ended if I hadn't waded in there and broke it up!

#### *Side-Hill Gougers*

You may have noticed that Hart Mountain has many curious ridges. There is a reason for this phenomenon. The ridges are caused by animals that resemble badgers, but are called side-hill gougers. The gougers have shorter legs on one side, so they can run around easily on the slopes. By the way, there are right-sided gougers and left-sided gougers. A right sider can go only in one direction and a left-sider can go only in the opposite direction. If they meet on a ridge, they're stuck forever. Side-hill gougers cannot turn around to face the same direction. They meet head-on and remain that way.

#### *Wizzensnifter*

Wizzensnifter used to be quite common. They were here before the white man invaded North America. They lived with the Indians quite happily. The Wizzensnifter is a shy creature that leaves its mark on the Malheur landscape. It is short and squat, very fast; too large to miss, but too small to see. The Wizzensnifter is known mainly by its eating habits. It chews off trees in the national forest, leaving uneven stumps on hillsides and clearings. The Wizzensnifter has an overbite, so the trees he eats are cut off with an irregular notch. The name Wizzensnifter comes from the sound the animal makes when it chews down a pine tree or Douglas fir: "wizzen...snift!"

#### *Beaver cat*

Beaver cats are equally rare, but more dangerous than a Wizzensnifters. Sometimes called Beaver Panthers, this animal is a cross between the flat-tailed beaver and the sleek mountain cat. Beaver cats lurk in trees at night waiting for prey to cross their trails. They make a sound like a cat: "wrowrr!" They also have flat, flexible tails like a beaver. They are dark-colored and virtually invisible at night. If you walk under a beaver cat perched in a tree on a dark night, that great big tail will whack you right across the face. Few people ever survive a beaver cat attack.

#### *Conser Lake Monster*

Conser Lake is 5 miles northwest of the Albany Wah Chang chemical plant. The creature, resembling a cross between a gorilla and a polar bear, first made its appearance late in 1959, running alongside a truck making a night delivery to the mint fields. On August 5, 1960 the monster made another appearance for seven teen-agers that were out for a midnight stroll. The Conser Lake monster remains a mystery.

## Tall Tale Storytellers

These storytellers are very creative liars. They only want to entertain their listeners. Folklorists call these storytellers **munchhausens** after Baron Munchhausen, who liked to exaggerate his stories.

### *Hathaway Jones (1878-1936)*

Hathaway was a notable munchhausens. He was a contract mail carrier from Gold Beach. He went up the Rogue River to Marial and Agness. He traveled by mule into the Rogue River Wilderness.

#### *Shooting Geese*

Hathaway shot a bunch of geese one time. These geese came down 'n' lit in a gulch, right down in a ditch in a straight row. So he got the rifle, he always said he was a good shot but this time he made a bad shot. They all flew away. So he went up there to take a look. And he said "You know, I pulled off a little bit and I picked up a whole basket of bills."

#### *A Nimble Mule*

Someone asked Hathaway about his mules. He said that he had a very special nimble mule. He rode this mule down the trail at night –in the evening toward the river, ridin' along, gun across the saddle, 'n' he rode up face to face with a big cougar. He said "that little mule just turned a flipflop backwards and hit in the trail a runnin'," He said, "I never even dropped the gun, \I just got the top of my hat a little bit dusty."

### *Benjamin Franklin "Huckleberry" Finn (1823 or 1832-1919)*

Finn was a Civil War veteran and bricklayer by trade. He left Missouri and settled with his wife and seven children in the McKenzie River Valley near Leaburg in 1871. He later made his living distilling turpentine. Finn claimed to have been the "real" Huckleberry Finn whom Mark Twain wrote about. The two met on the Mississippi while piloting riverboats. When asked why he had given up such an exotic life to travel all the way to Oregon, Finn replied, "I got into debt and I told my creditors I'd pay 'em in fur. Well I went to Missouri, but that weren't fur enough, so I come on out West." Finn took great pride in his reputation as a yarn-spinner. It was widely reported, in fact, that of the 3 biggest liars in the McKenzie Valley "old man Pepiot was one and B.F. Finn was the other two."

Here is one of the best known tales about Finn. This is how Finn moved Finn Rock, a well known landmark along the McKenzie. Finn Rock is an enormous boulder between the McKenzie River Highway and the river and it used to be called Pillow Point. He moved Finn Rock for Emma Dunavan because there were a lot of rocks in this location and she wanted to get a wagon through. So he just put a chain around Finn Rock, got his mules and moved it for her.

### *Vern "Pappy" Hucka*

Pappy was in the Dexter-Lowell area and settled on Fall Creek in 1917 and lived there until 1964 when the Army Corp of Engineers placed a dam on the river.

Pappy went fishing one day and caught a good limit of trout. At the end of the day he built a fire to cook these little fish. Just as he got them sizzling in the pan, up walks the local game warden to inspect his fish. The game warden told Pappy that the fish didn't look like six-inchers to him. Well, Pappy said, "It may be true they're a little short in the body. But, John, I'm telling you those fish had the biggest heads you ever saw in your life. Must be some new breed."

### *Abraham "Oregon" Smith*

Abraham lived on a farm near Bloomfield, Illinois. In 1852 he headed for Oregon. Abraham was a farmer and practiced medicine for several years in Linn County but in 1859 he moved to Indiana. He liked to tell stories about how big things grew in Oregon. For example the pumpkins grew so big that all you had to do was cut holes in the ends, hollow them out and you could make barns out of them. The potatoes were a gallon bucket size and after he would dig them up he would just roll them down the hill to his boat. In Oregon you never had to worry about butter. There was a waterfall in the river near his cabin where the buffalo would rush across the river. A little milk would leak out and it would get churned at the bottom of the waterfall and he would collect it a little at a time whenever he needed it.

### *Reub Long (1898-1974)*

Reub was a rancher and sagebrush philosopher from the Fort Rock area. His parents moved from Lakeview to homestead at Christmas Lake when he was 2 years old. His lifetime experiences on the Oregon Desert were the subject of many of his stories. He wrote a book called *The Oregon Desert*, with E. R. Jackman. Water is scarce around the Fort Rock area but wind and dust are very common. A stranger asked Reub if it ever rained around Fort Rock. Reub said yes, once. He asked him if he remembered Noah, the first long-range weather forecaster, who built the ark and floated it during forty days and nights of rain. He told him, "that time they got a quarter of an inch of rain."

### *Prim Ortego, better known as Tebo*

Tebo was a Mexican vaquero that worked on the P Ranch in the Frenchglen area. Peter Finch was one of the owners of the P Ranch. Tebo finished all his stories with if Peter Finch was here, I'd prove it.

It was another cold winter day, Tebo got his wagon mired in the mud after one of the Southeast's infrequent rainstorms. But Tebo trusted his horse and he knew the strong animal could pull the wagon out. Tebo tied one end of a rope to the tail of that horse and the other to the wagon. The horse struggled and strained, trying mightily to recover the wagon from the mire. "That was some horse," Tebo said. "He pulled so hard that he pulled himself right out of his skin. I worked and worked, but I couldn't get the skin back on him. Well, I couldn't let him go around that way, so I got a bunch of sheep pelts and made him a new suit of clothes. The following spring I sheared 500 pounds of wool from that horse, and I got top prices for it on the market. And if Pete French were here, I'd prove it."

### **A Mythical Person**

Most of us have heard of Paul Bunyan. Paul Bunyan is largely the creation of James Stevens who was a logger and Northwest writer in the first half of the twentieth century. James claims that the stories originated in the mid-nineteenth century among French Canadian loggers and lumberman of Maine and the upper Midwest. Because of James Stevens' 1924 book, *Paul Bunyan*, advertising and newspaper columns featured adventures of the mighty lumberjack; Paul Bunyan quickly became a popular culture hero in America. In the 1930's the Paul Bunyan legend expanded beyond its popularity in books and newspapers to pageants, dramas, craved statues at timber carnivals. You have probably heard a lot of these stories.

In Paul's camp was a road so crooked that loggers met themselves several times while traveling it. Paul got a log-chain, wrapped it around the end of the road, had the blue ox pull at it and made the road straight. There were many miles left over and Paul sold them to the state of Oregon for the Pacific Highway.

road straight. There were many miles left over and Paul sold them to the state of Oregon for the Pacific Highway.

Babe also helped Paul solve the problem of the Crooked River. He hitched her to one end. When she pulled it straight, it was too long. Paul went to the North Pole and caught a blizzard south and froze the river, cut off what he didn't need, hauled it out on the prairie and left it. When it thawed, it made Malheur Lake.

### **Blue Bucket Mine**

The story of the Blue Bucket Mine is a familiar one in Oregon. There are several versions of this story. In 1845 a wagon train from Missouri was en route to the Pacific Coast of Oregon. At Fort Boise Rev. Elijah White talked the emigrants to take a more direct route west across the high dessert. Stephen Meek was a member of this wagon train. He said he would guide them over this short-cut. This wagon train had 200 wagons and 800 people. One version had them at Juntura, Oregon when they had a feud over which route to take. They couldn't come to a compromise, so as a result the train was split in thirds. One was going to follow the Columbia River, one was going south along the Applegate Trail and one was going through the center of Oregon. The wagon train going through the center of Oregon ran out of water somewhere between Glass Mountain and Wagontire Mountain. When they made camp in this area members of the train, even the children, went out to search for water. Two brothers, their sister and her boyfriend went north of the camp and found many animal bones within a small area. They thought there may have been a water hole that dried up, so they began digging. The boys found a small spring. The sister was just watching sitting on the dirt pile. She found some small golden nuggets and she put them in her pocket. When they got back to the wagon train someone had already found a larger spring, so there was no need to go back to the spring that the kids found. Some versions have her putting the nuggets in her blue bucket not her pocket. The reason why the bucket was blue was because to identify the buckets, axes, shovels and other equipment each family had a different color for these items. The color for the family that the kids were from was blue.

Before you read about superstitions and home remedies ask the group for their superstitions and home remedies that they learned as a child or adult.

### **Superstitions**

Many superstitions are often psychological. Studies have shown that children of well educated parents have more superstitions than children of less educated parents. The modern person is more vulnerable to superstitions than his ancestors.

\*You must never awaken a sleeper because his spirit might be away on a journey.

\*If the moon is cupped downward and it is tipping so the water can run out of it, then it will rain.

\*A Basque believes a home without a fire is a body without blood.

\*A shepherd will leave several pairs of worn underwear in the trees around his flock of sheep because he knows that it will keep the coyotes away.

\*Evening red and morning grey sets the traveler on his way; evening grey and morning red keeps the traveler in his bed.

\*If you see shooting stars at night, the next day the wind will blow in the direction that the stars were heading.

\*If you should spill salt, throw a few grains over your left shoulder.

\* Don't give scissors to a friend as a gift. It will cut the friendship.

\*At a wedding shower, it is bad luck to break the ribbons on the packages.



## **Home Remedies**

Modern medicine had its origins in folk medicine. Many remedies and cures used by folks at home have been subjected to scientific laboratory tests. For example Digitalis, now used as a heart medicine, has been known in folk medicine for years in its plant form, foxglove. The Native Americans surround a sick person with family and friends who encourages that person to recover. This positive process helps with the healing process.

\*For kidney stones, boil beets with their tops on and drink the liquid. Beet juice is also good for gall bladder trouble.

\*Asthma is eased by crumbling leaves from a myrtle wood tree into your pillow and breathing them while you sleep.

\*For poison oak pack with baking soda and buttermilk.

\*Bee stings put a mudpack on the sting.

\*For colds drink some honey and lemon.

\*For coughs mix the juice from an onion with equal amounts of honey and drink it.

\*For diarrhea eat applesauce and soda crackers.

## **Weather in Southeastern Oregon**

\*When they get an inch of rain it means an inch between drops.

\*One time a couple of guys went out to dig some post holes down at Mann Lake, but it got dark before they finished so they went home and left their tools behind so they could finish the next day. Well, it blew so hard that night that the next day they found that the tools and posts holes had blown to Nevada.

## **Words of Wisdom**

\*A wound inflicted by speech is more painful than a wound inflicted by the sword

\*Riches and all worldly things perish; good deeds remain.

\*How many poor are rich in mind and how many rich are poor in mind.

## Resources

**Spooky Oregon** by S. E. Schlosser

**The Stories We Tell**

An Anthology of Oregon Folk Literature by Suzi Jones & Jarold Ramsey

**Oregon Folklore** by Suzi Jones

**Back Track** by Folklore Students of Medford Senior High School

**Well-Traveled Casket**

A Collection of Oregon Folklife by Tom Nash and Twilo Scofield

**Oregon Main Street: U.S.Highway 99 "The Folk History"** by Jo Brew and Pat Edwards

**Bucket The Search for Oregon's Lost Blue Mine** by Charles S. Hoffman with Bert Webber

**Learning about Oregon: Symbols, Legends and Facts**

A Source Book for Elementary Teachers by Marvin L. and Marjorie A Covey

**A Short History of Oregon** by John B. Horner, A.M., Litt. D., Professor of History

**Tracking Down Oregon** by Ralph Friedman

Picture of Petroglyphs photograph by B.Gifford