



The OREGON STORY



The Oregon Story: Small Towns

Education Program

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Introduction

The story of small towns in Oregon is one of the people who settled the West, their relationship with the natural resources they found here, and the capacity of the land. It's a story that highlights change initiated with European settlement of the area, the enthusiasm of invention and innovation, a vast palette of awe-inspiring resources, courage and optimism of heart and spirit, and lives carved out of the land. Yet it's also a story of displacement of native peoples, reduction and elimination of native plants and animals, and unsustainable harvest of natural resources. It's a colorful story, and a complicated one. The Oregon story of small towns is a story about our use of a resource that has changed as we used it, and of the choices that face Oregonians who live in small towns.

Oregonians are known for their connection with the land. Post-European settlement in Oregon has been defined largely by our relationship with the region's abundant natural resources. These resources have provided the base of the state's economy. Yet increasingly, Oregon is being defined by its urban populations, and employment in the resource-based industries that have supported Oregonians since statehood is giving way to service, manufacturing, and professional positions.

Oregonians of all ages — both those who've lived here for generations and those newly arrived — are acknowledging that changes have occurred in the resource base, and are accepting the fact that the face of Oregon as we now know it, the land and the people, has been altered significantly by the use of that resource base.

Our task now is to consider how we use and manage our natural resources in the next century. Our decision will affect Oregon, economically, culturally, and environmentally. This is our challenge and our opportunity, and will form the legacy we leave to future generations.

Educational Objectives

The Oregon Public Broadcasting video program, *The Oregon Story: Small Towns*, contributes to understanding the land we know as Oregon today and the history of our involvement with it. It also raises important issues about the role of development in Oregon. Suggestions¹ provided in this guide demonstrate ways to support and

supplement the exploration of this history in the context of Oregon Department of Education Content Standards and Benchmarks. Suggestions include activities, explorations, field excursions, and further adventures in reading and viewing.

The Oregon Story: Small Towns has five major objectives, which are to promote:

- Understanding about how small towns have contributed to Oregon's history and development;
- Awareness about the traditions and way of life of families who live in small towns;
- A perspective about change that is occurring in small towns in Oregon;
- Critical thinking about the care, use, and management of Oregon's natural resources;
- Incentive to celebrate the history, celebrate the present, and appreciate the possibilities of the future of Oregon.

¹ Many of the suggestions support Oregon Department of Education CIM and CAM benchmarks and performance standards.

Preview It

Preview the program for specific information and concepts relevant to your goals and materials, and to current events. Adapt the following suggestions for previewing activities, or create your own activities.

Synopsis of video: *The Oregon Story: Small Towns* deals with many issues facing several small towns in Oregon as they struggle to adapt to change without losing the features that make them special.

DO you live in a small town? Or have you visited small towns? What do you think makes life in a small town unique?

DEFINE what you think a small town is. How is it different from a city, suburb, village, and farm community?

DESCRIBE your view of life in a small town. What advantages and disadvantages do you see to this way of life?

BRAINSTORM how your life is related to small towns in Oregon. Do you live in a small town or know someone who does? Are any of these small towns located near you? What products do you use that come from small towns?

USE a road map to locate places featured in the video program. These places include: Gardiner, Wasco, Shaniko, Dundee, Joseph, and Fossil. Also locate Wheeler County, Yamhill County, Sherman County, Wallowa County, Wasco County, Douglas County, Umpqua River, Willamette River, Pacific Oregon, Reedsport, Portland, and Salem. What

major geographical features are located near the small towns profiled in the video? What effect do you think these geographical features have had and will have on these small towns?

View It

Adapt the following suggestions for emphasis while viewing the program, or create your own activities, suggestions, and areas of focus. Remember to stop or pause, back up and review, and take time to replay the video to enhance the viewing experience.

DESCRIBE a typical day and year in the small towns shown in the video program: Gardiner, Wasco, Joseph, Dundee, Fossil, and Shaniko. How has life changed in these towns in the last 100 years?

ELABORATE on Wheeler Judge Jeanne Burch's comments from the video: Small towns today "are in a predicament. There's no question about it ... we have to reinvent ourselves."

ANALYZE a map of Oregon and locate small towns that have succeeded, and those that are still facing challenges to their survival. What generalizations can you make about factors that affect the future of small towns in Oregon?

DISCUSS the evidence presented in the video to support the idea that residents in small towns are "concerned about change" and generally "fear it." Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

COMPARE the stories of each of the small towns in the video. What factors caused each of the small towns to be created? What events occurred that caused each of the small towns to disappear or change? Do you think that these towns should have been able to foresee their futures? Why or why not?

REVIEW the development of the transportation infrastructure and how it has affected small towns in Oregon from the early days to the present. Track technological innovations while watching the video and discuss their impact on small towns.

DISCUSS the effect of Oregon's current involvement in tourism on small towns.

READ or watch the movie of the play *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. What do you think is the message of the play? In what ways is the play an accurate depiction of life in small towns in Oregon today? In what ways is it inaccurate?

THINK about the daily life of students who live in and attend school in a small town. What are the benefits and challenges of being a student in a small town? How would it feel to know "everybody's name at the school and... more about them than they want me to know"?

REVIEW the economic history of the town of Gardiner. Why has it become “one of the last economically depressed areas on the coast?” Contrast the current economic status of Gardiner with that of Joseph, Oregon. How is each town facing the challenges of change?

DESCRIBE the kinds of connections that are made in a small town when several generations have lived there — sometimes doing the same work and living in the same home — for over 100 years. Consider your own ties to where you live. In what ways do you feel connected? In what ways can and do you foster your relationship to the land, water, other organisms, and features of your community?

SURVEY the students in your class or school to find out how long they and their families have lived in your community. What attracted them to come or keeps them in your community?

DISCUSS the idea of a “utopia.” If you could design an ideal community, what would it be like? What natural, government, economic, and social institutions and values would you like your utopia to have? To what extent are they already present in your existing community? What would make it better?

DEBATE this statement by the philosopher Aristotle: “Men come together in cities to live. They remain to live the good life.”

RESEARCH the percentage of Oregonians and Americans currently living in cities, suburbs, small cities and towns, rural non-farms, and on farms and compare these statistics with 50, 100, and 150 years ago. What conclusions can you draw from this data? What predictions can you make about where Oregonians will be living 50 years from now?

Extend It

Adapt the following extensions or create new ones! Remember, the best extension is direct experience of Oregon’s land and people!

Small Towns and the Making of Oregon

WRITE a series of diary entries about life in one of the small towns featured in the video. Use these diary entries to show how life has changed in this town over the years.

RESEARCH the Homestead Acts and their effects on the settlement and development of towns in Oregon. Without this legislation, how do you think Oregon would be different?

EXPLORE museums and exhibits that portray local histories of towns in Oregon. Keep a list of “I didn’t know that!” statements about what you have learned from the displays and artifacts.

CREATE a brochure that explains the history of the community where you live. Even if you now live in a city, your local community may have once been a small town that was absorbed into the city. What caused this to happen?

LOCATE a small town in Oregon. Prepare a local history of this town, describing the industries that helped to build it. Include the “adjunct” industries that were important to the development of the town (e.g., transportation, mills, canneries, mining, ranching, farming, logging, fishing, tourism, ports, and the development of markets.)

DEVELOP a series of maps of the area defined as Oregon today, from the time prior to European settlement to the present. Include the locations of rivers, ports, small towns, farmlands, ranching areas, forests, railroads and other transportation routes, Indian reservations, and public lands.

Small Town Activities and Management

BUILD a three-dimensional model of a small town showing the basic services necessary for its existence and the economic, political, transportation, social, and educational institutions that support it.

ROLE-PLAY a dialogue between yourself and another person, one of you taking the role of a person living in a small town and one of you taking the role of a person living in a large city. Discuss the similarities and differences in your lives by considering typical activities, pace of life, amount of time spent outdoors, viewscape, common sounds, concerns and values, use of technology, and cultural and recreational opportunities. What would you miss if you were to exchange places with one another?

WRITE a fictional account that portrays how a small town affects life and the activities there. Explain the benefits as well as the limitations imposed (e.g., small population, lack of diversity, fewer educational and job opportunities) and how they might contribute to small towns disappearing in Oregon. Consider other works of fiction like *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis, *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, *My Antonia* by Willa Cather, and *A Gathering of Finches* by Jane Kirkpatrick.

PREPARE and deliver a speech about the relationship among transportation routes, economic activities, and the viability of small towns.

EVALUATE the role of the schools and school spirit in the life of the small towns portrayed in the video. Discuss the inherent problems of the “cycle of educating its youth, only to surrender the graduates to the city.” How does a small town’s school spirit and the support from its community compare with that found at your school?

WRITE a descriptive narrative about what living in a company town like Kinzua might have been like at its peak, and contrast it with what it might have been like 50 years later when the timber mill was closing.

“Shop on Main Street”: Small Town Economy

OUTLINE the pros and cons that faced the citizens of Joseph as it instituted an annual Blues Festival and began to remodel its downtown to fit its changing image.

POLL students in your school or community about the characteristics of a living place that they think should be included in a calculation of “livability.” Use these criteria to rate the livability of several small towns and large cities in your area. Publicize the results of your poll in the community newspaper and conclude by making specific recommendations about how livability might be enhanced in your community.

PREPARE a graphic outlining the complete steps in the grape-growing and wine-making industries of Oregon. Include the possible environmental risks (e.g., birds, insects, climate, fungi) that affect this crop throughout the year.

CHART the process used by artists and craftspeople to create bronze statues. What factors contributed to this success story in Joseph?

RESEARCH the issues of growth and development, change and status quo, which have arisen in Dundee and Joseph. To what extent have similar issues arisen in your community?

RESEARCH the geological history of the John Day Fossil Beds. What guidelines do you think the public should follow when digging and collecting fossil materials?

DISCUSS the statement in the video that “for them [people in a small town] to survive, they were dependent on one another.” How does adversity help to forge the feeling of community?

Innovation and Change

RESEARCH how technological changes (fax machines, broadband cable, the Internet, etc.) are affecting life in small towns.

PREPARE a set of questions and use them to interview someone who lives in or comes from a small town in Oregon. Find out what changes have occurred in his/her small town and what effect these changes have had on the town’s relationship to the land. Write an article about this person and submit it to a local magazine or newspaper.

DEVELOP a decision-making process that you think a small town should use when proposing to make changes for its future. What possible obstacles to change should be anticipated? How should consensus for change be built among the town’s citizens?

INVESTIGATE the role of “mega-stores” like Wal-Mart or factory outlets in what has been called “the death of Main Street.” What are the positive and negative effects of these stores on a community? How are “Mom and Pop” stores affected by the competition from these giant stores?

DESCRIBE how changes in the logging, ranching, fishing, and farming industries have caused small towns to adjust.

TRACE settlement patterns in Oregon over the past 200 years.

EVALUATE the history of a small town (e.g., Shaniko, Gardiner, Wasco) where lives were altered as the resource base changed, as the market shifted, or as the modes and routes of transportation changed. Explain how people in these situations adapted to change. How do you adapt to change?

PRESENT a slide program on the history and future of small towns in Oregon. Provide support for your position.

IMAGINE that you are the mayor of an economically depressed town like Gardiner or Wasco. As Wheeler County Judge Burch stated, “we have to reinvent ourselves.” Marketing their fossil beds, bringing broadband cable to the town, and raising gourmet cattle are three ideas the citizens of Fossil are trying. What proposals would you make to improve the viability of your town without sacrificing its special features and values?

The Savvy Citizen

ORGANIZE a debate or panel discussion about the future of Oregon and the issues of livability and quality of life that have arisen as a result of recent growth and development in Oregon.

Oregon now has a population of 3.2 million people, with an estimated one million more people projected by the year 2025. What effect do you think this growth will have on Oregon’s livability, economy, and environment? What effect do you think this population growth will have on the future of small towns?

RESEARCH the pros and cons of current state law that requires cities in Oregon to have at least 20 years worth of developable land to accommodate growth. What effect do you think this law might have on small towns that want to keep the small town nature of their community?

DEBATE the following statement by Andy Kerr, President, Alternatives to Growth Oregon: “Slow growth is like being in an airplane that is going to inevitably crash, but it takes a long time. Smart growth is that you get to ride in first class while the plane is going down.”

Only one in four Oregonians live in a small town today. Conclude what you think the future of Oregon's 1,000 current small towns will be.

In 1989, the Oregon Progress Board published *Oregon Shines*, a statewide vision for Oregon, which was developed by business, government, and community leaders. It states "the strength of communities in rural Oregon will depend upon the success of efforts to diversity local economies, add more value to the commodities produced and increase exports." To what extent do you agree that this recommendation makes sense for the small towns profiled in the video?

DRAW a map of your county and plot the major geographical features and the locations of large cities and small towns. Analyze the zoning and land-use laws and determine the percentage of your county that is urban, rural, agricultural, industrial, forested, etc.

A Chronology of Small Towns in Oregon

Thousands of years before present

Native Americans inhabit the region we define as Oregon today.

1700s

Spanish galleons explore the coast of Oregon.

1792

Captain Robert Gray enters the river we now call the Columbia and names it after his ship, the Columbia Rediviva.

1800s

Oregon's streams, rivers, and lakes teem with beaver, and trade in beaver pelts attracts explorers, trappers, and traders to the region.

1804-1806

Captains Lewis and Clark travel with their party from Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia River. President Thomas Jefferson believes a settlement at Astoria will be a key to expanding the American empire west all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

1811

Astoria is established by the Pacific Fur Company.

1827

The first sawmill is built in the Pacific Northwest.

1829

Dr. John McLoughlin founds a town at Willamette Falls which later becomes Oregon City. Hall Jackson Kelley organizes the “American Society for Encouraging the Settlement of the Oregon Territory.”

1833

The first shipment of Oregon timber is sent to China.

1834

Missionaries led by Jason Lee arrive at Fort Vancouver, and later establish the Willamette Mission near Salem.

1838

The first cattle drive of the West arrives in Oregon from California.

1840s

The Willamette Valley receives cattle from the California surplus. Farming and stock-raising with Andalusian blacks supplant the fur economy in the Willamette Valley.

1843

Civil government is established in the Oregon Country. Major immigration to Oregon begins along the Oregon Trail, with over 53,000 people traveling the Oregon Trail between 1840 and 1850.

1844

Acts to prohibit slavery and to exclude blacks and mulattoes from Oregon are passed.

1845

Small town of Portland is platted along Willamette River — only 16 blocks.

1848

The Oregon Territory is organized.

1850

Donation Land Claim law is passed, causing more settlers to move to the Oregon Territory. Congress provides for the renegotiation of treaties with the Indians of the territory. Gold is discovered in the Rogue River Valley, leading to the establishment of cities and towns in Southern Oregon. Population of Oregon is 12,093.

1851

Portland is incorporated as a city.

1851-52

Gold is found along Jackson Creek in southern Oregon.

1853

Joel Palmer becomes Superintendent of Indian Affairs. He later implements the reservation system in Oregon.

1853-55

Rogue River Indian Wars are fought.

1855

Treaties are signed with the Columbia River tribes. The tribes cede most of their lands, but reserve exclusive rights to fish within their reservations and rights to fish “at all usual and accustomed places...”

1859

Congress ratifies the Oregon State Constitution, and the state accepts the congressional proposal to be admitted to the Union as the 33rd state.

1860s

Daily stagecoach line is established between Portland and San Francisco. Frontier minister Thomas Condon pronounces John Day Fossil Beds a “scientific treasure.”

1860

Population of state is 52,465.

1862

Congress passes the Homestead Act, allowing 160 acres to those who will live on and work the land. Gold is discovered in eastern Oregon, in Baker and Grant counties. Baker City becomes known as “Queen City of the Mines.”

1864

Salem is voted the state capital. Transcontinental telegraph service to Portland via California is begun.

1867

The first salmon cannery on the lower Columbia River begins production.

1870

Population of state is 90,923.

1872

Modoc Indian war.

1873

Henry Villard creates the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company.

1877

Nez Perce Indian War. Chief Joseph states, "I will fight no more forever."

1880

Population of state is 174,768.

1883

The transcontinental railroad is completed.

1885

The first Northwest paper mill is built on the Columbia River at Camas.

1887

Oregon-California railroad is built. Local railroads throughout Oregon are built.

1890

Population of state is 317,704.

1900

Rail lines extend into Prineville, Lakeview, and later Redmond, Burns, and Bend, all of which become active cow and sheep towns. The railroad makes Shaniko one of the world's principal wool markets. Population of state is 413,536.

1912

Railroad bypasses Gardiner, connecting to Florence.

1916

Coos Bay is selected as Southern Pacific Railroad terminal.

1917

The United States enters World War I.

1920s

The timber mill town of Kinzua, near Fossil, is founded. At its peak, 250 people work at Kinzua and 800 live in its company town.

1920

Population of state is 783,389.

1929

The Great Depression begins.

1930

Population of state is 953,786.

1933

Oregon Coast Highway is finished.

1938

Oregon passes Washington as the leading timber producer in the nation.

1940

Population of state is 1,089,684.

1941

The United States enters World War II.

1942

Camp Adair founded near Albany. From 1942-1947 it is the second largest city in Oregon, with 50,000 soldiers and prisoners of war.

Mid 1940s

The lumber industry begins to convert to a diversified forest products industry.

1947

Oregon has 1,573 lumber mills, turning out more than 7 billion board feet.

1950

Population of state is 1,521,341.

1960

Population of state is 1,768,687.

1968

First grapes are planted in Oregon for wine industry.

1970

The National Environmental Policy Act is passed. Population of state is 2,091,533.

1971

The Oregon Forest Practices Act, the first of its kind in the United States, requires resource protection during logging.

1973

Statewide land use planning is approved. Congress passes the Endangered Species Act.

1974

John Day Fossil Beds are designated a national monument.

1978

Kinzua, Fossil's largest employer, is closed.

Early 1980s

A coalition of ranchers, miners, loggers, developers, farmers, and others create the Sagebrush Rebellion and argue for more local control over land management and natural resources.

1980

Population of state is 2,633,321.

1989

Oregon Shines, a statewide vision for the future of Oregon, is adopted.

1990

Population of state is 2,842,321.

1997

Fossil establishes its first Internet access line.

Present

1,000 small towns exist in Oregon. One out of four Oregonians live in small towns. In 2000 population of Oregon is 3,421,399.

More to Read and View**Books and Chapters**

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Materials for Young Readers

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Geisert, Bonnie and Arthur. *Prairie Town*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.

Geisert, Bonnie and Arthur. *River Town*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

“Impressions of the Past,” joint video production of Dayville High School, Portland Art Museum Northwest Film Center, and Eastern Oregon Arts Council, 17 minutes.

Internet Sites Related to *The Oregon Story: Small Towns*

Alternatives to Growth Oregon: <http://www.agoregon.org>

Oregon Progress Board: <http://www.econ.state.or.us/opb/>

National Center for Small Communities: <http://www.natat.org/ncsc>

John Day Fossil Beds National Monument: <http://www.nps.gov/joda/home.htm>

Grant County History: <http://gesswhoto.com/beginning.html>

Oregon State Archives *Echoes of Oregon* primary source facsimiles:
<http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/echoes/introduction.html>

Southern Oregon Historical Society: <http://www.sohs.org>

West Oregon Communities: <http://www.aone.com/~robert/geo0.html>

History of Oregon Cities: <http://www.rr.gmcs.k12.nm.us/oregon.htm>

Historical Gazette: <http://www.aracnet.com/~histgaz/>

U. S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/datamap/www/41.html>

Shaniko, Oregon Web Site: <http://www.shaniko-oregon.com/>

Oregon Community Profiles Web Site: <http://159.121.111.9/profile.htm>

Oregon Field Guide Program Segments *

- 402: Granite's Ghost Stories
- 406: Columbia River/Clifton, OR
- 601: Harney County
- 703: Cattle Drive
- 708: Lumber Families' Economic Change
- 709: Pendleton Bordellos
- 1104: Small Town Skiing

* For information, contact Oregon Public Broadcasting,
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