

MONDAYS MAKE HISTORY

THE VANNOY CROSSING from Ford to Fort to Farm

By Jean Boling, Historic Sites Director, JCHS



Virgil Pringle wrote in his diary in 1846:

"Wednesday, October 14 – Travel 12 miles of good road and camp on Rogue River, a beautiful, pure stream about fifty yards wide, but shut in by mountains. 12 miles.

"Thursday, October 15 – Move down the river 10 miles and camp. Plenty of Indians about, but none come near. Lose some cattle by them. 10 miles.

"Friday, October 16 – Cross Rogue River about 4 miles from last camp. Ford good. Camp on right bank."

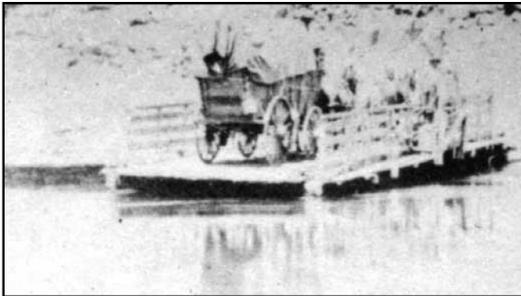
1846 might seem like early Josephine County history, but when the Pringle wagon crossed the Rogue at, or very near, the later Vannoy Ferry, they were not nearly the first, even discounting the Indians. For at least two decades before, as early as 1827, French, English, and American trappers were using this ford and others along the Rogue, Applegate and Illinois Rivers, criss-crossing Josephine County in the search for furs. And, in 1841, the U.S. Navy Wilkes Expedition used this ford. Still, it wasn't until the mid-1800s that the huge influx of new population came to Oregon.

In 1850, a man named Long built the first permanent, non-Indian dwelling on the Rogue River, near the ford, and started a ferry service. In 1851, James Tuffs and James Vannoy bought the ferry, and Vannoy subsequently took up a donation land claim in 1853.

In 1852, Chief Taylor of the Rogue River tribes was accused of murdering several miners from the Galice area. According to Dorothy & Jack Sutton, in *Indian Wars of the Rogue River*:

The bodies of the miners for whose death Taylor and his braves were hanged for were never found. The date that the murders were claimed to have taken place was

in December 1852 on Galice Creek. Some writers have suspected that the miners may have moved on to other fields, but suspicion was directed at Chief Taylor. It was believed that he displayed too much gold on his visits to Vannoy's ferry for any one Indian to have, and he, with three others, were arrested and accused of the



The ferry built by Mr. Long was most likely similar to this one: a basic log barge, controlled by ropes and rudder, using the swift river current to propel it across the river.

murders. Taylor first claimed that the miners had been swept off a river bar and drowned. Under pressure, the Indians finally confessed, telling how they tortured the men with knives and burning brands before putting them to death. Chief Taylor excused himself of the crime, by saying the other Indians used big knives in torturing the miners, but he had used only a little one. They were all hanged at Vannoy's ferry with James Vannoy directing the proceedings. In his "Conquest of the Great Northwest," Lauren Paine states that the entire trial and hanging took only thirty minutes.

Then in 1855, there was a general and concerted attack on the settlers by the Rogue River Indians, from October 7-9. Almost



James Vannoy is buried in Sloan Pioneer Cemetery, not very far from his homestead and the ferry.



James Tuffs lived in this home, built on the site of the Jones family massacre.

every settlement was attacked, the Indians moving down the Rogue from the Jones home, to the Harris cabin, to the Haines place and on to the Niday home on the slopes of an, as yet unnamed, Mt. Sexton.

One of the places the settlers ran to was the Vannoy Ferry. It was one of the few places in the area that could readily be "forted up" and defended. There might have been a stockade-type fence thrown up, but Fort Vannoy was never a fort in more than name only. There was little military presence in Southern Oregon, and the weight of the fighting fell on the volunteers. Since these men were mostly farmers, miners and merchants, it wasn't always easy to follow the Indians into their hiding places

and still earn one's livelihood. Volunteers came and left with the seasons: miners worked their claims in the wet seasons of fall and winter, farmers wanted to plant in the spring, and merchants wanted to fill the needs of the miners and farmers. The "forts" scattered around the

country, like Fort Vannoy and Fort Leland, were rallying points when there was another flare-up in the war, and the men in outlying areas would merge at these forts and sally forth against the enemy as needed.

It was easier when there were many men to defend one site, many women to cast bullets and reload weapons



James Tuffs is buried in the Pioneer Masonic Cemetery.



This sketch of Fort Vannoy was most likely drawn by someone who never saw it first-hand. The "fort" was never so grand, nor the river so narrow.

(and often fire them, as well), all children in the same area. They came together when necessary and returned to rebuild, or plant, or pan, when they could. Once the Indians succumbed to the overwhelming numbers of the newcomers, and were then removed to the Siletz Reservation, things settled again to the normal pace. Settlers returned to their homes, the

ferry operated on schedule, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Today, Fort Vannoy Farms occupies the land around the old fort and the old ford. You can still hear the boom of a

cannon, when the Great Pumpkin Chunker draws everyone out of the Corn Maze and the Pumpkin Patch, but if you listen very quietly, maybe you'll hear the whisper of the old French trapper, "Allez, allez vite!" urging his companions across the ford and into the woods on the far side.

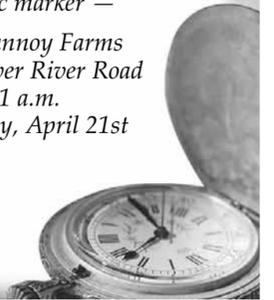


The old Fort Vannoy Historic Marker. You'll have to attend the dedication to see the new one.

The Umpqua Joe Chapter 1859 of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus and the Josephine County Historical Society invite you to the dedication of a new historic marker —

Fort Vannoy Farms
5791 Lower River Road
11 a.m.
Saturday, April 21st

The Josephine County Historical Society thanks Runaway Tractor Farm for sponsoring this week's "Mondays Make History"



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