

A History of Little Whale Cove

by Jodi Weeber

Land Of No Value

After scouting for the most remote and undesirable areas of the new Oregon Territory in the early 1850's, the Coast Reservation was established in 1855 by executive order from the United States government. The government deemed the land unfit for farming and too remote for commerce. The reservation included 1.3 million acres of land from about the Tillamook County line to just below where Florence is now, extending east about 30 miles. About 4,000 Indians from 30 to 40 different tribes and bands were forcibly moved here from the Oregon Territory and Northern California to join the existing tribes and bands already here. To make the accounting simple, these people were all to become the Siletz tribe.

By 1866, many of the natural resources of the area were discovered, such as oysters, fish, timber and the potential for tourism. Little by little, the land was opened up for white settlement until, in 1894, the Reservation was reduced to the area around Siletz, Oregon. The remaining approximate 500 tribal members were each given 80 acres allotments.

What's In a Name?

A young Indian from the Tututney Tribe of Central Oregon often unloaded reservation supplies at the dock on Depot Slough in Toledo, Oregon. Unable to pronounce his name, the reservation soldiers called him Depot Charlie. He was highly respected by the whites and other Siletz tribal members. Even though he was not a chief, he was included in most tribal and governmental meetings. He was a spiritual leader, a ghost dancer and tribal judge for the reservation.

When the allotments were handed out, Depot Charlie, his wife, and children were allotted the area around what is now the Depoe Bay harbor, extending about 1 mile north and south. It appears that his sister Ella (exact relationship uncertain), and her husband Frank Selsig, received the southern portion of Little Whale Cove. Another tribal member, Norman Strong, received the northern part of what is now Little Whale Cove. Depot Charlie's name was changed to Charles DePoe for allotment purposes.

Build It and They Will Come

A couple of years after Charlie's death in 1906, an early investor saw the potential in this isolated spot. Campers, hikers and picnickers had already discovered it by coming over the headlands and walking the beaches for excursions from Newport. The investor formed the Sunset Development Company and bought the land from Charlie's heirs for \$10,000. The Company began developing the town in the early 1920's.

With the completion of the coastal highway and the new bridge, the Sunset Development Co. held the grand opening of "DePoe Bay" on May 29, 1927, selling lots at "bargain" prices. Homesites sold for \$100 each in 1931. The Post Office opened in October, 1928, with the postal service changing the capitalized P to lower case, and the town officially became known as Depoe Bay.

LITTLE WHALE COVE

Prior to Depoe Bay being established in 1927, the area just south of Depoe Bay was purchased by Ben Jones, considered by many to be the 'Father of Lincoln County'. He purchased the property from Norman Strong's heir and immediately sold it to his brother Thomas Jones in 1923. In 1928, Thomas' daughter Margaret and her husband, Edward Conley, built a farm near where our gatehouse now stands. They owned the land from South Point Street on the north to a southerly line from the current gatehouse through the middle of our current Cove Point. They built a farmhouse, cleared the brush, built a barn, had a small herd of cattle and also raised chickens behind the house.

Bertrand E. Maling purchased 225 acres from Charlie DePoe's niece in the early 1930's. This land extended on both sides of the Coast Highway from the current Cove Point on the north to Whale Cove on

the south. Maling owned several food processing plants in Washington and Oregon, and eventually went into the quick-freeze processing business developed by Charles Birdseye. Maling developed the freezing process for fresh fruits and vegetables.

The property he purchased in Depoe Bay reminded him of his boyhood home in Maine. He built a 24 room mansion, a massive white brick block structure located at the top of what is now Breakers Scarp. Very modern for its time, the home included 3 stories and a basement. Ahead of his time, Maling installed indirect lighting in the walls and an intercom system throughout the house that extended into the barn. At a building cost of about \$70,000, the mansion included 5 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, two living rooms, a library/den, a basement party room, butler's pantry, a walk-in stainless steel freezer, wine closet and a bathing area for visitors who had been beachcombing or swimming in the coves. His furniture and master bathroom were custom made to accommodate his 300 plus pounds. The third floor was Mrs. Maling's penthouse and was completely self-contained, including a kitchen.

To the north of the house was a large garage and staff quarters. The top of the garage was a street level deck. The garage extended down to the meadow below, where you can still see the foundation floor of the garage. The barn was built where the Recreation Center is now located and was also heated. The swimming pool at the Recreation Center was once the horse stables. There was a surrey track for show horses nearby.

Mrs. Maling (Myrtle) was an avid gardener. The grounds were spectacular with oriental and formal gardens and ponds.

There were small guesthouses built in what is now The Pines area of LWC. The houses did not have kitchens, as guests were expected to dine at the mansion.

B.E. Maling only lived in the house for 8 years, dying in 1942. Myrtle Maling lived on the property until about 1956. The property subsequently changed hands numerous times and was owned at one point by Newport investors as a horseback riding facility.

BUILD IT AND WE WILL COME!

Halvorson-Mason Contractors of Portland purchased the old Maling property and most of the land farmed by the Conley family in 1976. By this time the Maling house had fallen into disrepair and had been the target of vandalism for many years. The house was razed in 1978. Much was salvaged from the mansion and was used in some of the early homes built by Halvorson-Mason in Little Whale Cove.

The information above is an abbreviated history. More information can be found at the Oregon Coast History Center in Newport. The research library has numerous photographs and articles about Lincoln County, Depoe Bay, and Little Whale Cove. I work there as the museum archivist and would love to share information with LWC residents!

-Jodi Weeber