

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OZETTE LAKE AREA

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 13,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age, the retreating ice revealed the landscape and the lake we see today. The first people to live in the area were the Ozette Indians who lived mainly on the coast near what is now known as Cape Alava. They existed on the riches of the sea and forest and made little physical impact on the the land for 2000 years prior to the arrival of European settlers in the late 19th century.

THE PAST 100 YEARS

Ozette Lake, whose western shoreline is approximately 2 miles from the Pacific Ocean, had a heavy concentration of homesteaders prior to 1900. Third largest fresh water lake in the State of Washington, the relatively flat land surrounding the lake was reputed to be "good agricultural land". In the early 1890s Ozette Lake harbored a distinctly isolated colony of settlers that was remarkably well contained. For many years the only access to the lake was by ship to the mouth of the Ozette River, or by a 25 mile trail along the Hoko River to Clallam Bay.

The land around the lake was quickly taken up by homesteaders, predominantly of Scandinavian extraction. Some of the areas early settlers' surnames, such as Andrews, Borseth, Christensen, Erickson, Jorgenson, Nielsen, Overgaard and Pedersen, reflect these national origins. Clearing the land was accomplished by felling trees by hand with an ax or cross cut saw. Homes, barns and out buildings were constructed primarily of sawn cedar planks. Most of the settlers engaged in farming, planting timothy, hay, potatoes, other vegetables and fruit trees. Cows were brought in as early as 1891, and soon sheep and pigs were added to the stock. The Scandinavian community was short lived. In 1897 when Ozette Lake was included in the newly created two million acre Olympic Forest Reserve, many settlers left. By 1899 most of the Early Settlers had moved away.

Just after the turn of the century, land bordering Ozette Lake was reopened for homesteading and a second wave of settlers arrived in the area. Many of these new arrivals moved into already existing settlers' homes and pursued a lifestyle similar to their predecessors. It was not until 1926 that a road between Clallam Bay and Swan Bay on the east side of the lake was completed. About three miles in from the ocean at the north end of Ozette Lake, Charlie and Ida Keller established the Lake Ozette Resort when a road was completed to the area in 1935. The Lake Ozette Resort included twelve cabins, a store and service station. (In 1940 President Franklin Roosevelt authorized the Public Works Administration to acquire the Ozette Lake area, as well as part of a long, narrow coastal strip, for inclusion in Olympic National Park.)

These, Like other resort cabins along the coast, were occupied by the U.S. Coast Gaurd during World War II. (Little evidence remains of the presence of the coast gaurd in the Ozette Lake area.) In 1981 the Ozette Resort store and cafe closed. By late 1982 the cabins and cafe structures were removed. The final removal of the Resort buildings left the area much the same as we see it today.

All text excluding "Introduction" and last sentence of last paragraph are extracts from the ONP HRS by G. Evans & T. Comp. (CRD, RRPS, PNR, NPS, DI.)