

Old Man River, he just keeps rollin' along...

BY LOYCE MARTINAZZI

Actually, the Tualatin River doesn't roll along; it creeps along. From its headwaters in the foothills of the Coast Range to where it trickles into the Willamette River, there is very little drop, making for a sluggish, lazy flow. Some say the native Atfalatis named the river, which means slow and sluggish.

The river was a highway for the natives, who poled rafts up or down the river to get to their intended destination. Same was true for the pioneers. Old documents show that settlers along the valley would pole a raft down the river to the Willamette, then walk on to Oregon City. James Moore built a dam across the river near the town of Willamette, and harnessed the water to power a sawmill and grist mill.

The dam was to be the focus of important events in later years. In 1861, Dr. Nathaniel Robbins had been poling a raft, and fell over the dam at flood stage and drowned. Dr. Robbins was the head of the Robbins' family wagon train in 1852.

Oregon Iron and Steel, the Oswego company that was to be "The Pittsburgh of the west" needed to get logs to its iron furnaces more efficiently, so they raised the dam at Moore's Mill on the Tualatin

River by two feet. They also put dams on the tributaries that could be raised or lowered according to the company's water needs. The river backed up as far as Scholls. The water inundated the rich farm land along its banks, including the Tualatin swamp and the Cipole Beaverdam, and would not drain off



Suspension bridge across the Tualatin river connecting John L. Smith's mill on the Tualatin side, with a mill in Durham. Logs in the river were branded with the mills' brand.

until too late in the summer for planting—making the land unusable for farming. The farmers appealed to the management of O. I. & S. and received no satisfaction. August Krause sued the company in 1901. The judge found for Krause and directed that the upper 24 inches of the dam be removed and that Krause was

to be awarded damages and costs. Testifying for Krause were other farmers along the river whose land was being flooded: F. H. Page, F. Rowell, J. A. Rowell, Ferdinand Groner, Joseph Galbreath, A. J. Hess, Fred Plieth, Godfrey Shamburg, Wm. Jurgens, Fred Fredericks, S. Werekorb, J. R. C. Thompson, J. W. Hess, J. F. Cooley, Henry Saffron, and A. C. Hall.

The farmers won their suit, but the Iron company appealed. The Appellate Court affirmed the lower court's decision, but the company appealed to the State Supreme Court. The case was still hung up in the courts in August, 1906, and the farmers had had enough.

The headline in The Oregonian of August 16, 1906 read "BIG HOLE BLOWN IN DAM". The next day the sheriff came around looking to find the perpetrators of this outrage, but according to Carl Schaber, whose father told him about it, no one could or would, offer any information. The dam was back to its original height and the farmers began planting again. My dad told me this story, which I later found in the Oregonian files and at the State Archives.

In the 1920's, 30's and 40's river parks sprung up along the banks of the Tualatin, including Roamer's Rest, Avalon, Louie's, and Elsners. One of the first was Jurgens Park, close to the Tualatin Country Club. My great uncle John Jurgens owned the land and opened the park. The park was simple, with a diving board right on the river, some picnic tables, and a bathhouse for changing. It closed after a few years when Uncle John purchased land from Quackenbush and started a motor park up on highway 99.

My dad used to take us kids to Jurgens Park in August after the hay was in and most of the summer work was over. We would walk along the bottom land, stop and visit Uncle Bill Jurgens, then walk on down to the river where dad would fish and we kids would splash around in the water. I remember it so clearly; I sat on the bank once and looked across the river at the reflection of the trees on the water. I remember wishing I was an artist so I could paint the scene and show others the beauty of the spot.

David Parker, my husband Norm's son, recently took me down there to the wetlands below Apache Bluff. It was so different, I could hardly get my bearings. The Country Club has purchased some of the land. David used to play down there when he was a kid, and he said there was a lot of junk thrown onto the banks of the river; old gambling machines, bottles and other stuff.

When the river parks closed, due to the water's pollution, the Tualatin River was called the most polluted in America. But the Tualatin Riverkeepers have brought Old Man River back to its proper place in the community.

Loyce Martinazzi was born and raised in Tualatin and is passionate about Tualatin History. She is currently Lecturer of the Winona Grange, Co-Founder of the Tualatin Historical Society and Co-Author of *Tualatin... From the Beginning*.



Roamer's Rest Park was the place to be on a hot summer day.



Elsner Park along the Tualatin river.



Swim park in Tualatin Park.



One of the oldest covered bridges across the Tualatin. Location unknown.