

Waldo Hills

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By Danielle Strom

Marion County's Waldo Hills are geographically very similar to the Waldo Hills the Oregon Pioneers found in the 1800s. Set in the hills of the Willamette Valley these hills are home to several small towns and even more small businesses. They encompass an area of roughly 50 square miles. The Hills lie in western Oregon, just east of Salem, and with the Silverton Hills form the first tier of foothills for the Cascade Range. The Pudding River rises in these hills.

Euro-American settlement of the Waldo Hills goes back to 1843 when Daniel Waldo settled a claim there. Waldo was born in Virginia in 1800 and died in Salem on September 6, 1880.¹ Waldo was a companion on the Applegate wagon train. He was a highly respected pioneer, a member of the legislative committee of the provisional government in 1844, and a district judge for Champooick district.²

The Waldo Hills were the ultimate destination of many of the early Oregon Pioneers. Families like the Joseph and Fred Geers settled in the Hills, not far from where Daniel Waldo lived. The Geers left behind several accounts of their arrival in the Waldo Hills, one, written by Calvin Geer, who was ten or eleven upon arrival in the Waldo Hills, wrote at the end of his life that upon arriving at his uncle's cabin near Drift Creek, in the Waldo Hills, Calvin's mother noted, "It was as fine a landscape as the eye could wish to see."³ To her last days, "she never gave up what the Waldo Hills was one of the finest places on Gods green footstool."⁴

Famous individuals who lived in the Waldo Hills include Homer Davenport, a world-renown cartoonist; Samuel L. Simpson, a famous poet; Theodore Geer, the first native-born governor of Oregon; and Waldo's sons John and William. Also, in 1846, the hills were the site of the formation and drilling of the Oregon Rangers, a militia formed by the Provisional Government of Oregon.

Bibliography

Geer, Calvin. *My Trip to Oregon as I Remember it*. 1925

McArthur, Lewis A. and Lewis Ankeny, *Oregon Geographic Names*.

Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2003

Endnotes

¹ Oregon Geographica Names 979.5 McArthur 2003 Hugh Morrow Coll

² Oregon Geographica Names 979.5 McArthur 2003 Hugh Morrow Coll

³ Calvin Geer, *My Trip to Oregon as I Remember it* (1925), 7.

⁴ Calvin Geer, *My Trip to Oregon as I Remember it* (1925), 7.