

Bowen, William A. *The Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978. (Reviewed by Jessica Bliss)

Maps! This book is packed with peculiar, theme-specific maps, creating a cartographic representation of frontier life in the Willamette Valley in the early to mid 1800s. Compiled using census data collected during years of considerable settlement and agricultural development, the maps yield insight to the methods of subsistence and the distribution of various social groups throughout the region. A refreshing alternative to standard text, these maps are especially helpful in visualizing the progression of settlement over time in the Valley.

Information on settlers' ethnicities, occupations, homeland, and choice of crop or livestock finds its way on to a map in this book. Densities of swine, sawmills, persons from Kentucky, and other statistics are all depicted, in addition to more familiar data such as age-sex characteristics, general population sizes, and the extent of various ecosystems (e.g., prairie acreage). There's a lot of discussion of agriculture and land-use practices as well. The accompanying text provides speculation about the historical motivations for both migration and settlement.

Critique

For a person looking to for extensive documentation of the patterns and tendencies of Willamette Valley settlers, this is an excellent resource. The depth and breadth of information are impressive, the text is concise and easily read, and the maps are interesting to interpret and compare. Unfortunately, most of the maps have few decipherable landmarks, making it difficult to pinpoint exact locations relative to today's development. There is not much discussion of activity in the Eugene area; the most conclusive data appears to be from areas immediately southwest of Portland.

The Willamette River itself does not receive much attention from this book. The emphasis is more on human occupation and heritage, and less on ecological interactions with the river. I was unable to find much reference to river health or use, aside from a brief mention of the river as a mode of transport.

All said, this is an intriguing history/visual summary of settlement in the Valley. I recommend it simply because it's funny to see where the most swine farms were located in 1850.

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