

## **The Rubie P. Matteson Demonstration Forest: A Property History**

**By Amy Grotta, OSU Extension Forester, October 2016**

The Rubie P. Matteson Demonstration Forest (hereafter called the “Matteson Tract”) was bequeathed to the OSU College of Forestry by Marion C. Matteson upon his death in 2013. The Matteson Tract is situated just upslope from Hagg Lake, the site of the original Matteson farm. What follows is what we know about the Matteson family as well as other early owners of the property from online research and information provided by Henry Scott (Mr. Matteson’s cousin and lifelong area resident).

### Pre-European history

The Atfalati, a tribe of the Kalapuya Indians, inhabited the Tualatin Valley including the area near Forest Grove and along Wapato Lake to the southeast of Scoggins Valley.<sup>1</sup> Their settlements were mainly in the bottomlands. While it is impossible to know whether the Atfalati used the site of the Matteson Tract specifically, it is likely that they would have hunted and gathered in the area. Petroglyphs found in Cherry Grove (approximately two miles south of the Matteson Tract) have been attributed to the Atfalati. Historic vegetation cover maps derived from 1851 surveys indicate that the present-day Matteson Tract was an oak woodland.<sup>2</sup> Native peoples were known to use prescribed burning to maintain oak woodland and prevent conifer encroachment, so it can be reasonably assumed that this was practiced on the site. The Atfalati population was nearly wiped out by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century due to diseases introduced by early white settlers. In 1851 the remaining 65 Atfalati signed a treaty ceding their lands and relocating to a small reservation at Wapato Lake near the present-day town of Gaston.

### Matteson family

Marion Matteson’s ancestors were among the first white settlers in the Gaston area, and were farmers in the Scoggins Valley since the 1870’s. Stephen and Fanny Matteson (great-great-grandparents of Marion Matteson), originally from New York, appear to have traveled on the Oregon Trail, arriving in 1854 with their children<sup>3</sup>. They had a Donation Land Claim to 320 acres in the Fern Hill area in 1873<sup>4</sup>. Their son, Alverus Matteson and his wife Abigail Northrup had a Donation Land Claim to 320 acres where the town of Gaston is now situated, and their son Herbert was the first white child to be born in Gaston. According to the family, there was some dispute over whether the town would be named Gaston or Matteson. While the name became Gaston, there is still a Matteson Road south of town.

Rodell Matteson, the son of Alverus and Abigail (and Marion Matteson’s grandfather), married Olive Wilcox. Olive Wilcox’s mother Mary Ann Butts also was an Oregon Trail pioneer, traveling as a young child and arriving with her father John Butts in 1845 (her mother Catherine Bonnet Butts died on the trail).<sup>5</sup> Mary Ann Butts married Sanford Wilcox and they also had a Donation Land Claim to 320 acres just to the east of what is now the Matteson Tract. Hagg Lake now occupies the site of their land claim.

Sanford “Roy” Matteson, the son of Rodell and Olive (Wilcox) Matteson, was born in 1885. He married Rubie Phelps. Rubie was born in 1886 in California. By the time of the 1920 census she had married Roy Matteson and lived in Scoggins Valley with him and their two sons, Sanford Jr. and Marion<sup>6</sup>. She was a school teacher at the Deerlick School, which was in the upper Scoggins Valley, and rode a horse to and from the school.<sup>7</sup>

According to a 1928 map, Roy Matteson owned property just north of the current Matteson tract (on the north side of Sain Creek, near the site of the current Boat Ramp “C” on Hagg Lake). By 1937 he owned additional property toward the east, on the site of what is now the Sain Creek Recreation Area<sup>8</sup>.

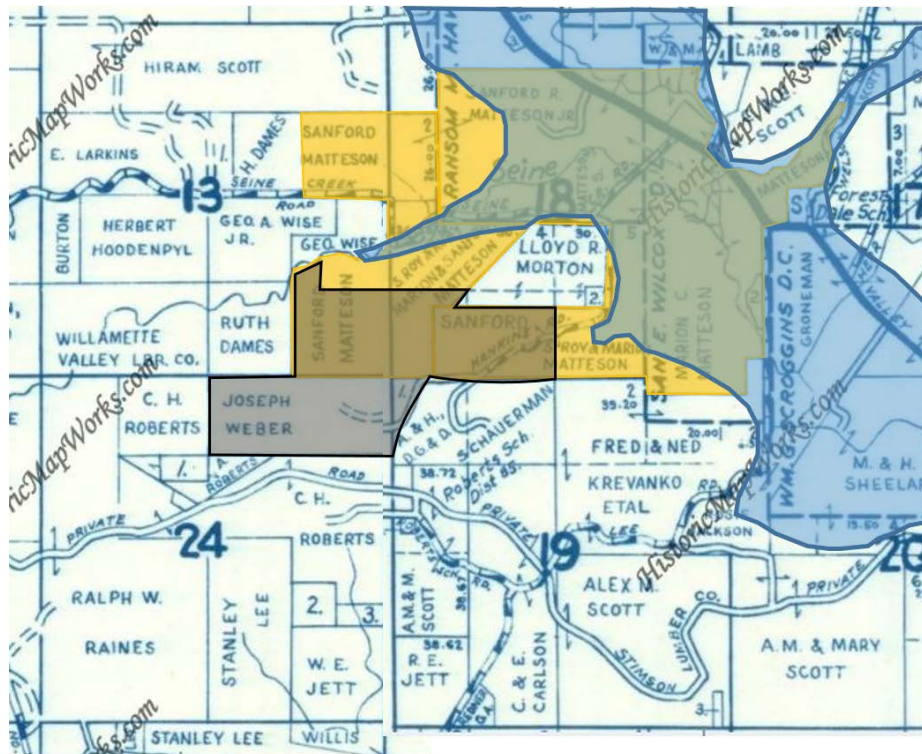
By 1964, the Mattesons owned and farmed approximately 500-600 acres in Scoggins Valley area, including the original family homestead north of Sain Creek, the northern half of the current Matteson tract, and parts of the Sanford Wilcox land claim to the east. Rubie Matteson died in 1965 and Sanford “Roy” Matteson Sr. died in 1968.

Sanford Jr. and Marion Matteson continued dairy farming until Scoggins Dam was built in 1975, at which time they started tree farming on the uplands not inundated by the lake<sup>9</sup>. Marion Matteson purchased the southern 80 acres of the current Matteson Tract in 1976<sup>10</sup>.

The map below shows property ownership in 1964<sup>11</sup>. Superimposed in yellow is the extent of the Mattesons’ property; the black outline is the current Matteson Tract, and the blue is the approximate extent of Hagg Lake today.



*Plaque commemorating the Matteson farm site at Boat Ramp “C”, Hagg Lake.*



### Matteson Tract early owners

The 180 acres that make up the current Matteson Tract is made up of three parts whose ownerships can be traced back separately: the “North” portion, ~40 acres; the “South” portion, ~80 acres, and the “East” portion, ~60 acres. Ownership can be deduced from Donation Land Claim records as well as ownership maps which exist from 1909, 1928, 1937 and 1964.<sup>12</sup>

### North 40 acres

The earliest recorded property owner is Henry Butts, who appears on a 1909 ownership map. Butts had a homestead on the property where he would have lived with his wife Ellen and five children. According to Henry Scott, the Butts homestead may have persisted on the site until the 1950’s<sup>13</sup>. Henry Butts was also a descendant of John Butts (Marion Matteson’s great-great-grandfather). Today there is a clearing in the area of the homestead and a very old Gravenstein apple tree.

The Butts family moved to Polk County in 1913<sup>14</sup>. By 1928 the North portion was owned by James Nichols. Arthur and Frances Dixon sold this parcel to the Matteson brothers in 1955<sup>15</sup>. It is not known whether Nichols or the Dixons lived on the property, but by the time the Mattesons bought the property the homestead buildings were gone.



*Above: 1948 Aerial Photo showing Butts homestead (north-central), Weber homestead (south-central) and extent of area cleared for farming. Source: PBS Engineering & Environmental. 2014 Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, Marion C. Matteson Estate*

### South 80 acres

Grayson Hammack had a Donation Land Claim encompassing this area, dating to 1875. He married Martha Patton (from the family that nearby Patton Valley is named for). They lived in the Scoggins Valley in 1880 and 1890 according to census records (possibly their homestead was elsewhere on their claim), but by 1910 had moved to Cornelius. A 1909 ownership map shows that Michael and John Jackson were now owners of this parcel. They were brothers from Austria. John Jackson built a cabin on the parcel, while Mike Jackson lived further to the east.<sup>16</sup> By the time of the 1928 ownership map, the parcel had changed hands again, this time to J. F. Hayes, and then by 1937 it was owned by a bank.

According to Henry Scott, a man named Joseph Weber owned this parcel from the 1940's – 1960's and lived in the cabin that John Jackson had built. An old oil storage tank, a remnant of the homestead, still remains on the property today. Aerial photos show that the western half of this 80 acres has been in timber since at least 1948, while the eastern half was cleared and farmed throughout Weber's ownership. Marion Matteson bought this property in the 1970's and began planting all the fields and openings to timber.

### East 60 acres

Two settlers from Kentucky, Columbus & America Hughes had a Donation Land Claim to 305 acres including this area in 1866. According to census records, they were living in McMinnville in 1860, 1870, and 1880. By 1900 they had moved to Washington state. There is no clear evidence of their presence or use of their claim in Scoggins Valley, although it may have been farmed (Columbus Hughes was listed as a livestock dealer in the 1880 census).

By 1909 part of this tract was owned by O. & L. Hankins (presumably Ora & Lettie Hankins who were in the 1910 census in Gaston). By 1930 Ora had remarried and relocated to Jackson County. He died in 1940 and is buried in Pike Cemetery in Yamhill (along with many other Hankins). J. E. Baldwin was the next owner of Hankins's former property, except for a small portion near the township/section corner owned by Carl Matteson (relation to other Mattesons is unknown). R. V. Baldwin was the owner in 1937.

The other, eastern part of this tract was owned by C. M. Anderson in 1909, who was still the owner of record until at least 1937.

Sometime between 1937 and 1953 the parcels owned by Baldwin and Anderson changed hands again. Stanley and Millicent Tornblade sold this land to the Mattesons in 1953, retaining the right to remove merchantable timber over the following three years.<sup>17</sup> Aerial photos shows that this eastern part of the property was in timber of varying ages in 1948; but had been largely cleared by 1956.

Marion Matteson managed timber on the property, aided by his cousin Henry Scott, until his death in 2013. He planted and later pruned about 30 acres of plantation Douglas-fir, and carried out several small harvests over the years.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atfalati>

<sup>2</sup> 1851 land cover maps can be viewed in Oregon Explorer Map Viewer:  
[http://tools.oregonexplorer.info/oe\\_map\\_viewer\\_2\\_0/viewer.html?Viewer=OE](http://tools.oregonexplorer.info/oe_map_viewer_2_0/viewer.html?Viewer=OE)

<sup>3</sup> <https://secure.sos.state.or.us/prs/personprofile.do?recordNumber=102187>

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<sup>4</sup> All Land Claim information from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records Search:

<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/1845.htm>

<sup>6</sup> All birth and census information retrieved from: <https://familysearch.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Henry Scott, October 28, 2016

<sup>8</sup> All references to 1909, 1928, 1937 and 1964 property maps: Historic Map Works, <http://historicmapworks.com>

<sup>9</sup> Marion Matteson obituary: <http://obit.fuitenrosehoyt.com/obitdisplay.html?task=Print&id=1321053>

<sup>10</sup> PBS Engineering & Environmental. 2014 Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, Marion C. Matteson Estate

<sup>11</sup> Historic Map Works, <http://www.historicmapworks.com/>

<sup>12</sup> Historic Map Works, <http://www.historicmapworks.com/>

<sup>13</sup> PBS Engineering & Environmental. 2014 Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, Marion C. Matteson Estate

<sup>14</sup> Polk County Pioneer Cemeteries:

[http://www.polkcountycemetery.org/montgomery/records/display\\_record.php?id=91](http://www.polkcountycemetery.org/montgomery/records/display_record.php?id=91)

<sup>15</sup> Property deed, courtesy of Henry Scott

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Henry Scott, October 28, 2016

<sup>17</sup> Property deed, courtesy of Henry Scott