

My Unified Field Theory of Forest Management, Pt. 3

"we are not alone...Uh oh!"

In the photograph gallery of this Section, I included several photos taken in the early decades of the last century. I also included several modern photos of the same subject areas. These paired photos introduce some comments about land use patterns, history, ecology and human hope. In other words, step into the fields and forests that you see in these old photos, step back in time, compare them with the modern photos and see how unified it all really is. It's the same place, but now it's different.

It's the same forest, but everything you see before you is different. The scenes are unified only by the passage of time. The people who took the old photographs are dead, the apple trees and the "Sidney Mansion" are gone, the fields have been graded and plowed so often that the original contours are difficult to find. The big conifers that you see in the photos, the residual old-growth that had survived two prior entries by the time the last photos were taken, has long since been cut and hauled away and milled into timbers that built houses that were bulldozed down when we were small children. They were cleared away to make room for whatever it is we see now.

The people who planted the apple trees we see in one of the photos had high hopes. I've actually seen even much older photos of men and women in black trousers and long black dresses with high, starched white collars standing stiffly in the same field above the front gate as they took a break from dynamiting fir stumps taller than the horses that pulled the broken stumps apart. They had high hopes too. There was a forest on that field once. It hid the view of Mt. Hood from the top of the hill behind the photographer, and so the trees came down one by one, by axe and powder, so that the settlers could have a view of the mountain, and the town of Fir could have a school, post office and houses.

Today, the thin and scruffy appearance of the forests in the old pictures gone. In its' place have grown up stands of timber that have come back while the people (also gone) turned their attention elsewhere.

That doesn't mean we should be careless, or think that everything will be OK with just a few decades of forgetfulness. We need to be careful with our inheritance, and careful with our gifts, and our responsibilities. We have high hopes too.