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From Urban Frontier to Metropolitan Region: Oregon's Cities from 1870 to 2008

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PORTLAND HAS BEEN the largest city in Oregon for the entire span of statehood. Throughout this same period, residents in other cities and in rural communities have resented Portland's economic power, battled its political influence, and wondered whether Portlanders understand the needs and concerns of people living and working in the rest of the state. In recent years, many observers have worried that the divide between urban Oregon and rural Oregon is becoming an unbridgeable chasm. This article puts these concerns in historical perspective with a systematic comparison of Portland's growth with that of other Oregon cities since the 1870s.

Cities in the United States have always developed in dynamic tension, as they have competed for investment, immigrants, and economic growth. Oregon has been no exception — whether Albany promoting itself as a transcontinental railroad terminus in the nineteenth century or The Dalles positioning itself as a high-tech center in the twenty-first century. In these contests, Portland has made the most of the head start it gained in the 1860s, but another dozen cities have made ambitious efforts to push it aside, even as Portland's economic leadership slowly and grudgingly ceded first place in the Pacific Northwest to Seattle.[1] We can best understand the changing relationships between Portland and Oregon's other towns and cities if we set these urban centers side by side, tracing parallel changes in population, economics, and cultural relations in the different parts of the state. In exploring these questions, I borrow some of the fundamental ideas of urban

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Ships and warehouses crowded the Portland waterfront in the early 1900s, even as retailing and office employment had begun to move away from the river.

geography to inform historical analysis. In particular, it is useful to examine the relative sizes of Oregon cities over time and to evaluate the extent to which Portland has functioned as a "primate city" — that is, a city that far outstrips its potential rivals and competitors in region or nation.[2]

An urban-systems approach reveals three roughly equal periods in the state's development. The first starts with the 1870s, when Portland had clearly won out over its close-in neighbors and when the first railroad construction began to give Oregon its modern economic geography. That period runs to 1920, when the rail network was complete and motorists were enjoying the first paved highways. The second covers the period between 1920 and 1970, when Oregon had a relatively stable economy based on the production and processing of natural resources. The third begins with the political and economic transformations of the 1970s and runs to — and through — the present.

PORTLAND ASCENDANT: 1870–1920

The greater Pacific Northwest was the country's hot corner at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. From St. Paul and Omaha westward to Denver and Butte and on to Portland and Seattle, the northwest quadrant attracted the attention of investors, travelers, and journalists. In the decades before World War I, Bostonians and Londoners who came looking for western cities usually covered the region bracketed by Minneapolis, Denver, San Francisco, and Seattle, with stops perhaps in Salt Lake City, Portland, Spokane, Helena, and Bismarck. That vast territory is where authors William Thayer found *Marvels of the New West* in 1887, Julian Ralph explored *Our Great West* in 1893, and Edward Hungerford found candidates to profile in *The Personality of American Cities* in 1913. It is also the same territory that the distinguished English observer James Bryce traversed to research his chapter on "The Temper of the West" in *The American Commonwealth* (1888) and Rudyard Kipling described in *From Sea to Sea* (1889), with chapters on San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Salt Lake City, and Omaha.[3] In 1914, the sober officials who organized the Federal Reserve banking system were "impressed with the growth and development of the States of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon . . . with continued growth of that region it is reasonable to expect that in a few years the capital and surplus of its member banks will be sufficient to justify the creation of an additional Federal Reserve district."[4]

Portland matured with this vast region. It entered the 1870s as the leading city in Oregon and the larger Columbia Basin. It had occupied a strategic location for tapping the trade of the Willamette Valley and the Columbia River and had consolidated that lead with a series of incremental victories over potential rivals such as Milwaukee, Oregon City, and St. Helens.[5] As William Robbins notes, Portland entrepreneurs dominated Columbia River shipping through the "millionaire-making machine" of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and controlled the telegraph and railroads that pushed
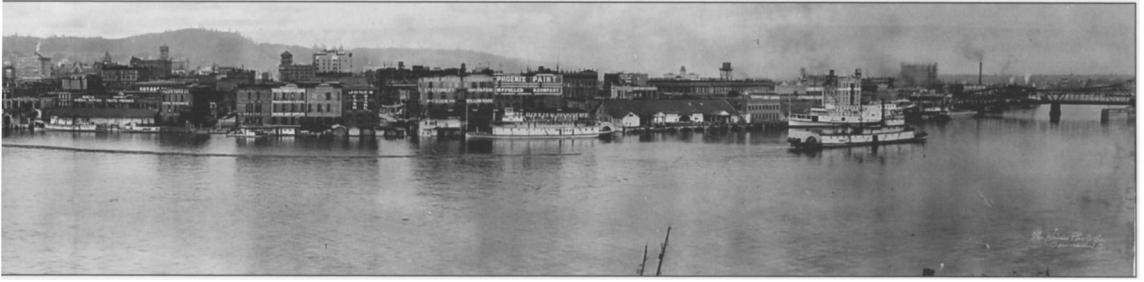
This panoramic view of the Portland waterfront at the start of the twentieth century shows only a portion of the industrial and transportation enterprises that lined both sides of the Willamette River.

south toward California during the 1870s and 1880s. The arrival of transcontinental rail connections after 1883 and the branch lines that opened up the vast interior of the Columbia Basin cemented the city's position. Portland's bankers financed the growing trade in natural resources, and its merchants supplied the needs of small town consumers.[6] The sense of connection shows in a special, January 1, 1910, issue of the Portland *Oregonian*. The city newspaper identified the progress of the entire Columbia Basin as its own with a series of headlined stories: INTERIOR TOWNS FACE BRIGHT FUTURE; RAILROADS WILL PIERCE GREAT TIMBER BELT; WHEAT OUTPUT WILL BE ENORMOUS; DESCHUTES KNOWN AS RIVER OF GOLD; OREGON FORGING TO THE FRONT AS LIVESTOCK STATE.

As loggers pushed into the Cascades and Coast ranges and farmers cultivated millions of acres of new fields and orchards, Portland reached its greatest dominance over competing cities. Observers agreed that Tacoma might be a manufacturing center and Seattle a fast-growing port, but Portland was "a blend of these two, with the added characteristic of the central market town for a region of intensive agricultural development."[7] Data on Oregon's urban system confirm such observations that Portland was a primate city. In some cases, a primate city may be a political and economic capital that has overwhelmed provincial rivals, as with Paris or Bangkok. In other cases, it has emerged as the center through which European imperial powers deliberately dominated colonial possessions, concentrating governmental authority and commerce in places like Accra, Ghana, Manila, Philippines, and Luanda, Angola, while leaving secondary cities far behind. Portland, in other words, was the Buenos Aires of Oregon — the dominant commercial and industrial center that connected a growing resource hinterland to the world (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: LARGEST OREGON CITIES, 1880, 1900, 1920					
1880		1900		1920	
Portland & East Portland	20,511	Portland	90,426	Portland	258,280
Astoria	2,803	Astoria	8,381	Salem	17,679
Salem	2,538	Baker City	6,163	Astoria	14,027
The Dalles	2,232	Pendleton	4,406	Eugene	10,593
Albany	1,867	Salem	4,258	Baker City	7,729

SOURCE: William G. Loy, ed., *Atlas of Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 2001). Compiled by the author.

One way to measure Portland's primacy is by its share of total state population, which grew very rapidly from 9 percent in 1870 to 20 percent in 1890, edged higher to 22 percent in 1900, and shot upward again in the early twentieth century to its maximum of 33 percent in 1920. Despite the headlong development of Oregon's agricultural, ranching, and timber counties, Portland grew even more rapidly.

We can also measure Portland population against that of other Oregon towns and cities. In large mature nations, such as Germany, China, or the United States, urban systems often follow a rank-size pattern in which the second most populated city has roughly half the residents of the largest, the third city has one-third the population, and the pattern continues through populations of one-fourth, one-fifth, one-sixth, one-seventh, and so forth.[8] In contrast, early Oregon was distinctly unbalanced. The second most populated city in 1880, Astoria, had only one-seventh the residents of Portland; Salem, the third most populated city, had one-eighth the residents. Four decades later, the imbalance was even deeper. Salem had only one-sixteenth the population of Portland, Astoria one-eighteenth, Eugene one twenty-fourth, and Baker City one thirty-third. Looking at city population figures in the aggregate, Portland in 1880 was larger than the next sixteen towns added together, and it was more than twice as large as the next four together. The advantage increased over the next forty years. Portland was twice as populated as the next ten cities in 1890, the next thirteen in 1900, the next eighteen in 1910, and the next *twenty* in 1920 (see Figure 1).

These data make clear the degree to which Portland had effectively separated itself from half a dozen potential rivals located across the northern half of the state. From the 1870s through the early 1900s, Oregon had plenty of other cities with big ambitions. There were Astoria, Albany, Salem, The

Dalles, Pendleton, and Baker City, but each had handicaps in competing with Portland (see Table 2).

Astoria was the second largest city in Oregon in both 1880 and 1890, but it then began a slow, steady descent in relative size. Its problem then as now was a geographically constrained hinterland that was limited to harvesting timber and fish — both resources that were and are vulnerable to over-harvesting. As a port, Astoria ironically suffered from being too close to the ocean. It is almost always cheaper to transport heavy cargoes by water than by land. Portland won its early rivalries because it was the effective head of navigation on the Willamette River, and its business interests worked assiduously to maintain a usable harbor and channel to the Pacific, lobbying the federal government and creating the Port of Portland for this purpose in 1891. With railroads also converging on Portland, Astoria remained a secondary port at the end of the rail line.

The Dalles, the state's fourth largest city in 1880, also dropped steadily in rank thereafter. Its problem was opposite of Astoria's, as it lay not too close to the ocean but too far away. The Columbia River rapids — which bracketed The Dalles to the east and west — had been a great commercial emporium for Native peoples. There, coastal traders exchanged fish and cedar products for meat and hides gathered by interior tribes. In the mid nineteenth century, however, shipping cargo past the sets of rapids required portage railroads and expensive canal and lock systems that were not com-
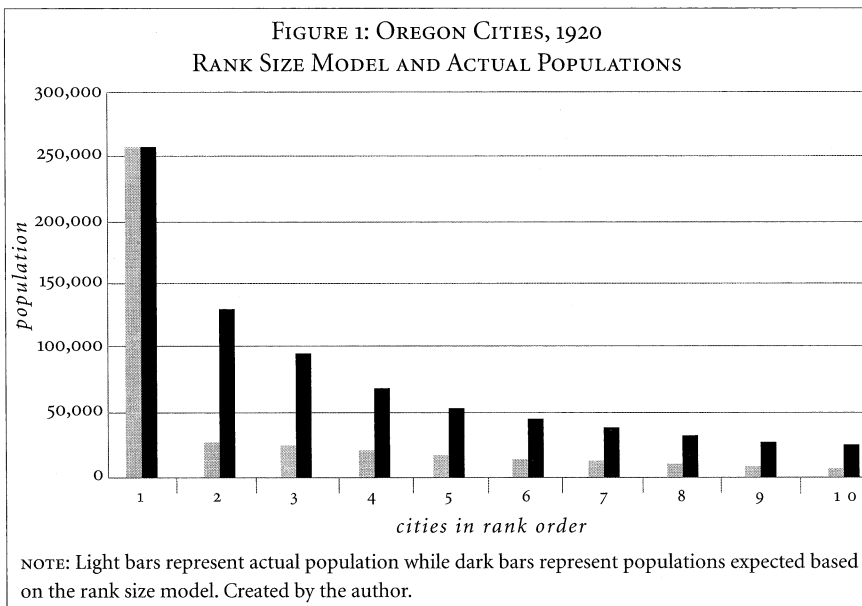

FIGURE 1: OREGON CITIES, 1920
RANK SIZE MODEL AND ACTUAL POPULATIONS

NOTE: Light bars represent actual population while dark bars represent populations expected based on the rank size model. Created by the author.

TABLE 2: OREGON CITIES RANKED BY POPULATION							
	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930
Portland	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Salem	2	3	3	5	2	2	2
Oregon City	3	6	5	7	13	11	13
The Dalles	4	4	6	6	8	8	12
Jacksonville	5	11	22				
Eugene	6	9	10	8	4	4	3
Astoria	7	2	2	2	3	3	6
Baker City	8	7	7	3	6	5	9
Albany		5	4	9	14	13	14
Pendleton		13	9	4	12	6	11
Klamath Falls					17	14	4
Medford			17	15	5	9	5
Corvallis		8	12	14	11	10	10
Bend						12	7
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Portland	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Salem	2	2	3	3	3	3	2
Oregon City	13	*	*	*	*	*	*
The Dalles	12	17	12	14	15	14	16
Jacksonville							
Eugene	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
Astoria	6	7	11	15	17	16	14
Baker City	6	12	15	17	19	21	
Pendleton	9	8	8	11	12	11	8
Klamath Falls	4	6	7	7	8	8	11
Medford	5	4	4	5	4	4	4
Corvallis	10	5	5	4	5	5	9
Bend	7	9	10	9	7	7	5

NOTE: Metropolitan and micropolitan area populations are used for recent decades when designated by the U.S. Census. The table includes every Oregon city that ranked in the top five in any one of the fourteen census years, and it shows rankings from 1 through 25.

* Oregon City included with Portland metropolitan area population since 1950.

SOURCE: William G. Loy, ed., *Atlas of Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 2001). Compiled by the author.

pleted until 1896, at the Cascades, and 1915, at Celilo Falls. Railroads up the nearby Deschutes River also were nonexistent until E.H. Harriman and James J. Hill built competing lines in the early twentieth century. Promoters of The Dalles might have envisioned their city as another Louisville, Kentucky, built at rapids on the Ohio River, but the physical barriers were much greater and the local hinterland more limited; consider the contrast between the rich limestone soils of the bluegrass country and the dry hills of the mid-Columbia region.

Albany and Salem — and McMinnville, Monmouth, Corvallis, Harrisburg, and Eugene — were in a bottle with Portland at the neck. When early railroad builders logically preferred to cross the Cascade Range via the easy grade of the Columbia River Gorge rather than with expensive routes over Santiam Pass or Willamette Pass to the south, the other Willamette Valley communities had little option but to trade through Portland. Efforts to create an alternative transcontinental connection by building from Corvallis and Salem directly eastward through the Cascades failed. Because it housed the state capital and associated institutions, Salem maintained second or third rank, but it never broke through to rival Portland. For comparison, Columbus, Ohio, has slowly caught up with Cincinnati, and Phoenix has eclipsed Tucson. Albany's high point was as the fourth most populated city in 1890, when it benefited from the drainage and cultivation of low-lying lands in the mid Willamette Valley and from railroad connections. Its rank fell to ninth, fourteenth, and thirteenth in the following decades.

Further east, geography also conspired against the emergence of a substantial rival. Pendleton, La Grande, and Baker City each had its own small valley (as did Walla Walla across the state line). The result was a set of small cities, each the metropolis of one or two counties, rather than one larger center. Pendleton made a run from thirteenth in 1880 to fourth in 1900, then dropped back again. Baker City burst impressively to third in 1890, but its growth also stalled in the twentieth century. A contrast here is Boise, Idaho, first the supply point for the state's mines and then the economic center for the Snake River Plain and string of secondary cities from Twin Falls to Nampa.[9] Another contrast is Spokane, Washington, which developed as a railroad center and hub of an Inland Empire that took in parts of three states and a Canadian province. There was always much boosterism in the idea of an Inland Empire, but the fact remained that convergent geography made Spokane one of four key rail nodes in the interior West, along with Denver, Salt Lake City, and El Paso.[10]

Data gathered for the purpose of designating cities for the new Federal Reserve Banks in 1914 show Portland's dominance. The federal government asked the nation's banks to list first, second, and third choices for a Federal
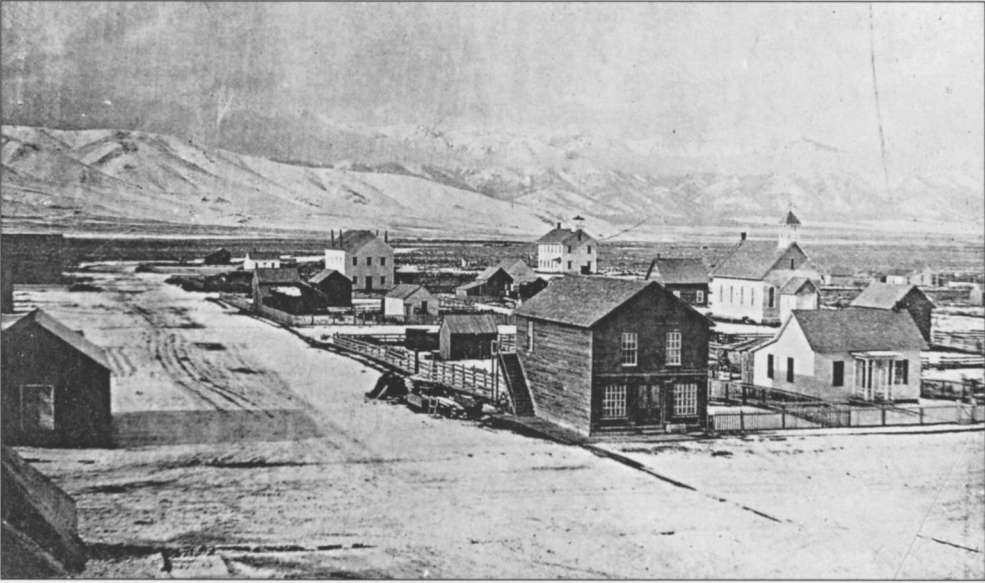
Although Baker City in 1865 looked small and isolated, its first settlers were laying the basis for booming growth as eastern Oregon mining and ranching expanded during the ensuing decades.
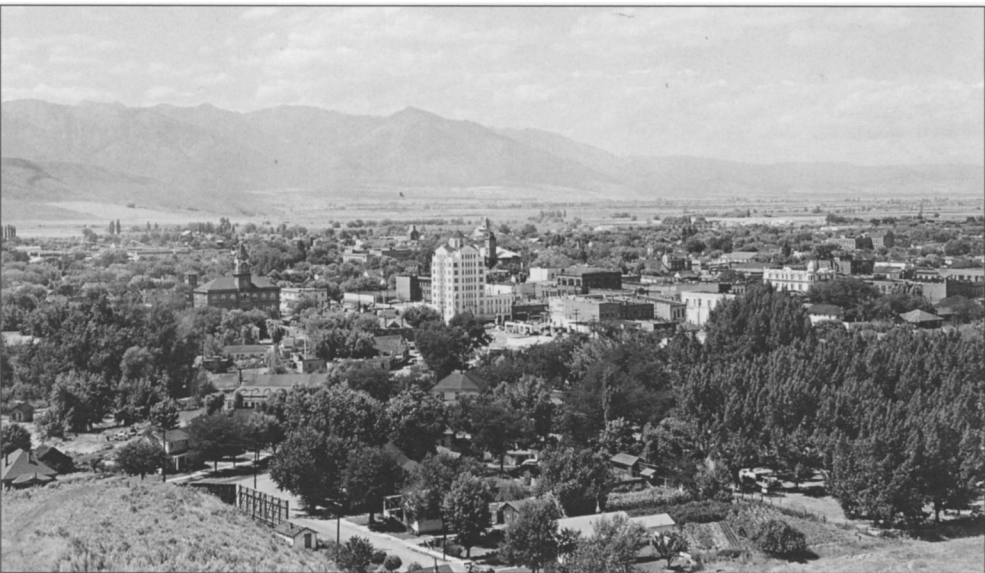
In this view of Baker in 1950, the tallest building is the Baker Hotel, built in 1929. The city hall can be seen to the left of the hotel, and the courthouse towers to the right. The hotel reflected the continuing importance of regional centers, as did similar hotels in cities such as Astoria and Ashland.

Reserve branch.[11] Table 3 shows the cities that received first place and second place votes from Oregon and neighboring states. Among Pacific Northwest cities, Portland received seventy-five first place votes, Seattle forty, and Spokane thirty (including four votes from Montana). A breakout by state shows that Portland received fifty-six first place votes from Oregon, with sixteen Oregon banks preferring San Francisco. Portland also received the first place nod from ten of Idaho's forty-five banks. These were presumably in the southwestern part of the state, since Idaho's votes overall split evenly among Portland, Spokane, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco. Portland was the first choice of nine Washington banks, second choice of twenty-two, and third choice of fifteen, indicative of the importance of Columbia River connections.

The implications are clear. By the early 1910s, Portland may have slipped behind Seattle in population because of that city's Klondike gold rush boom, but it had a much wider commercial and financial reach as the center for most of Oregon, for southwestern Idaho, and for Washington communities along the lower Columbia.[12] At the same time, it is likely the sixteen Oregon banks that gave first place votes to San Francisco came from the south coast and perhaps the Klamath Basin, where transportation connections to California were strong. The votes could also have come from bankers who simply saw San Francisco as a city with greater banking resources. That California gave Portland nine second place votes compared to one vote for Seattle also shows the relative prominence of the two Pacific Northwest ports. This analysis

	Oregon		Idaho		Washington		California	
Portland	**56**	_11_	**10**	_16_	**9**	_22.5_		_9_
San Francisco	**16**	_45_	**8**	_12_	**8**	_17_	**208**	_25_
Seattle		_8_			**40**	_0.5_		_1_
Spokane	**1**	_2_	**9**		**16**	_5_		
Salt Lake City			**12**	_2_		_2_		
Los Angeles							**24**	_81_
Other		_2_	**6**	_15_		_8_	**3**	_18_

TABLE 3: PREFERENCES FOR FEDERAL RESERVE CITY BY PACIFIC AND NORTHWEST BANKS

NOTE: First place votes in **bold**, second place votes in _italic_.

SOURCE: _Location of Reserve Districts in the United States: Letter from the Reserve Bank Organizing Committee Transmitting the Briefs and Arguments Presented to the Organization Committee of the Federal Reserve Board Relative To The Location of Reserve Districts in the United States_, Senate Document 485, 63d Cong., 2d Sess., 349–57. Compiled by the author.

of bankers' votes matches other efforts to map metropolitan hinterlands in the early twentieth century. Roderick McKenzie's mapping of newspaper circulation as a measure of metropolitan influence during the early 1900s, for example, showed the *Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal* as dominant papers in Oregon, southwestern Washington, and southwestern Idaho.[13]

OREGON IN BALANCE: 1920–1970

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, Oregon's farm economy and wood-products industry both prospered as suppliers to fast-growing California and participants in the national prosperity of 1945 to 1974. The strong resource economy made it possible for secondary cities to gradually reduce the imbalance between Portland and the rest of the state — without challenging Portland's economic primacy. This era saw the most rapid urban growth in larger southern cities such as Medford and Klamath Falls, in part the result of new agricultural development with increased investment in irrigation (see Table 4). Medford moved from seventeenth place in 1890 to fifth among Oregon cities in 1930 and 1940 (see Table 2). Klamath Falls, which benefitted from the construction of a north-south rail line east of the Cascades and the Eugene-Chemult connector over Willamette Pass, shot from seventeenth place in 1910 to fourth in 1930 and 1940. Again, however, the fragmented nature of the Oregon landscape led to a scattering of small cities in the south rather than one large city. Roseburg, Grants Pass, Medford, and Klamath Falls each developed in its own valley, meaning there was no southern Oregon equivalent to Bakersfield, Fresno, or Sacramento.

The share of state population within the city of Portland slowly declined from 33 percent in 1920 to 28 percent to 1940, and then more rapidly to 18

TABLE 4: LARGEST CITIES IN OREGON, 1920, 1940, AND 1960					
1920		**1940**		**1960**	
				Portland metro:	
Portland	258,280	Portland	305,294	3 Ore. counties	728,088
Salem	17,679	Salem	30,908	Eugene metro	162,890
Astoria	14,027	Eugene	20,838	Salem	49,142
Eugene	10,593	Klamath Falls	16,497	Medford	24,425
Baker City	7,729	Medford	11,281	Corvallis	20,669

SOURCE: William G. Loy, ed., *Atlas of Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 2001). Compiled by the author.

*Klamath Falls prospered in the mid twentieth century with the expansion of
irrigated agriculture and timber production in southern Oregon. This view shows
the Modoc Lumber Company and part of the city in the 1950s.*

percent in 1970. It is more appropriate, however, to use data on metropolitan
population, defined by the census as the "metropolitan district" in 1920 and
1930 and as a three-county metropolitan area from 1940 to 1970. By this mea-
sure, the Portland share was quite stable: 38 percent of the state population
in the 1920 metropolitan district, and 41 to 42 percent in the metropolitan
area for 1950 to 1970. Using the alternative measure of primacy based on
the rank-size curve, Portland was larger than the next twenty cities in 1920,
but only the next thirteen by 1940 and the next twelve by 1960. It was still
overwhelmingly large, but other places were beginning to catch up.

Oregonians continued to understand their state in terms of reciprocal
relations between resource-producing regions and Portland, a shipping
and processing center. As automobiles became popular, paved highways
extended outward from Portland and other Willamette Valley cities.[14] Port-

land entrepreneurs and engineers, for example, had been chiefly responsible for building a seventy-mile highway through the Columbia River Gorge in the 1910s, letting adventuresome auto drivers parallel the route of the Union Pacific Railroad past deep chasms and waterfalls to roadhouses and hotels built with Portland money. Portland investors helped convince Hood River County leaders to use a good-roads tax levy for the eastern section of the road to link the county's new orchards to the metropolitan and national markets.[15]

Portland industry remained heavily dependent on processing regional raw materials. Shipbuilding in World War I employed twelve thousand workers building steel-hulled ships and seventeen thousand building wooden-hulled cargo carriers. The Grant-Smith-Porter yard at the foot of Baltimore Street in St. Johns, with six thousand workers, was the largest of nearly a score of shipyards that specialized in wooden vessels, buying their material from booming Portland sawmills and drawing workers from the large pool of men with woodworking skills.[16] In 1929, the largest industrial employers were Libby and McNeill, Swift and Company, Jantzen Knitting Mills, and Doernbecker Furniture — all companies that turned the products of Oregon's fields and forests into consumer goods.[17]

The early twentieth century was an era when Oregonians shared common social ties as well as common economic connections. Class interests and class culture spanned the different corners of the state, dividing communities internally while simultaneously shaping shared values from Enterprise to Coos Bay. Working class connections reached widely across Oregon in the early twentieth century. The environs of Portland were a land of rugged loggers, mill hands, railroad crews, bindle stiffs, gillnetters, and cannery workers. There were populists and socialists in Portland, radical Finnish immigrants in Astoria, and Wobblies (members of the radical Industrial Workers of the World or IWW) organizing in the woods. Workers flowed back and forth across the state, migrating from one seasonal job to another. In his novel *Honey in the Horn*, published in 1936, H.L. Davis looked back to the early years of the century, taking his protagonists back and forth across Oregon from mountains to coast to midlands, from sheep-herding to horse-breaking, from hop-picking to hay-making.

When farmers had their harvests in, when bad weather closed the logging camps and shut down railroad building, seasonal workers drifted into Portland, filling a bachelor neighborhood that stretched a mile along the downtown waterfront. They bought new gear, enjoyed clean beds before they drank up their wages, and ended up sleeping in a flophouse or in the back room of one of Portland's two hundred saloons. To find men without families, Portlanders needed only to follow loud music and the smell of stale

beer to waterfront blocks between Everett and Jackson streets. From the Lownsdale district on the south to the Burnside district on the north, this Skid Road was a neighborhood of lodging houses and flophouses, second-hand stores, missions, saloons, brothels, and employment agencies. At its height between 1900 and 1925, the district may have housed as many as ten thousand men, giving Portland proportionately one of the largest skid roads in the country and linking it inextricably to the work of the hinterland.[18]

At the same time, other Oregonians shared a business-oriented middle class culture. The Ku Klux Klan found ready acceptance across the state in 1921 and 1922, organizing successfully in places as physically distant from one another as Tillamook, Portland, Hood River, Eugene, Salem, Medford, Astoria, Pendleton, and La Grande. Kluxers came from homeowning Oregon. The organization was intolerantly anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic, but many members, who ranged from successful businessmen to skilled workers, saw themselves as sharing a positive commitment to business-oriented Protestantism and the 1920s version of "family values" that involved support of Prohibition, concern over changing sexual standards, movie censorship, and similar issues.[19]

Klan voters from across the state helped elect Walter Pierce of La Grande as governor in 1922, but his victory can also be read as an example of the way political leadership was shared widely across the state.[20] La Grande was the gubernatorial hometown most distant from the metropolis. For the whole period from 1910 to 1940, however, the hometowns or home bases for all Oregon governors were widely scattered. They certainly came from Salem (three times) and Portland (twice) but also from Condon, Astoria, Roseburg, Corvallis, Union County, and Polk County.[21]

As late as the 1960s, patterns of political affiliation were similar across the different regions of the state. Data on Democrats as a proportion of all registered voters have been compiled by Richard Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Brent Steel.[22] The numbers show that the strongest contrast, that between the less Democratic mid Willamette Valley on the one hand and the more Democratic north coast and Multnomah County on the other hand, was no more that 10 percentage points for 1966 to 1970, from 50 percent Democratic in the mid Willamette area to 60 percent Democratic on the north coast. The regional differences were enough for politicians to notice but not enough to generate talk about "two Oregons."

THE LONG ARM OF THE METROPOLIS

During the past four decades, it has become necessary to think of the urban system in Oregon as centered not on a single city but on a dominant metropolitan region stretching from Portland (actually Vancouver, Washington) to

TABLE 5: LARGEST OREGON METROPOLITAN AREAS AND CITIES, 1980, 2000, AND 2007					
1980		2000		2007 estimates	
Portland metro: 3 Ore. counties	1,050,418	Portland metro: 5 Ore. counties	1,572,701	Portland metro: 5 Ore. counties	1,734,020
Eugene metro	275,226	Eugene metro	347,214	Salem metro	378,520
Salem metro	249,895	Salem metro	322,955	Eugene metro	343,140
Medford metro	132,456	Medford metro	181,269	Medford metro	202,310
Corvallis	40,960	Bend metro	115,367	Bend metro	160,810

NOTE: If the adjacent Corvallis Metropolitan Area and Albany Micropolitan Area were combined, to reflect the proximity and close ties between the two cities, their 2000 population would be 181,222, bumping in between Medford and Bend (see Table 6).
SOURCE: U.S. Census data. Compiled by the author.

McMinnville — and perhaps even through Salem (see Table 5). This emergent pattern raises definitional challenges, since the census uses counties as metro area components, and there are plenty of folks in Yamhill, Columbia, and Polk counties who do not think of themselves as metropolitan types, let alone Portlanders.[23]

As additional Oregon cities received metropolitan designation by the U.S. Bureau of the Census — Eugene for 1960, Salem for 1970, Medford for 1980, Bend and Corvallis for 2000 — Portland's primate-city edge gave way to a more balanced urban system. The three-county core of the Portland metropolitan area held a steady 40 to 42 percent of the state population from 1950 to 2000. Because of the changing definition of the other metro areas, however, the same three counties were twice as large as the next twelve urban places in 1960, but only as the next two metro areas since 1970.

The source of this changing pattern has been the rise of cities with economies based on information and leisure, namely the university, technology, and recreation cities of Eugene, Corvallis-Albany, and Bend (see Table 5). A century previous, in 1880, Albany had claimed fifth rank and Corvallis seventh because of the expansion of mid Willamette farming, but the cities sagged to fifteenth and tenth by the onset of World War II, as Medford, Klamath Falls, and Pendleton elbowed them toward the rear of the pack. They recovered their earlier standing in the ensuing decades. Bend is a twentieth-century city that surged to seventh place in the 1930s on the basis of lumber and

irrigated agriculture, fell back after the war, and has since climbed into the top five.[24]

Many trends have shaped the new economic and metropolitan landscape, ranging from the emergence of new industries to the technological transformation of the wood products industry. In addition to these long-cycle forces, however, Oregonians made an implicit deal in the 1970s with the adoption of a statewide system for land use planning. Senate Bill 100, which established the system, passed with a partnership of Portland and Willamette Valley legislators who craf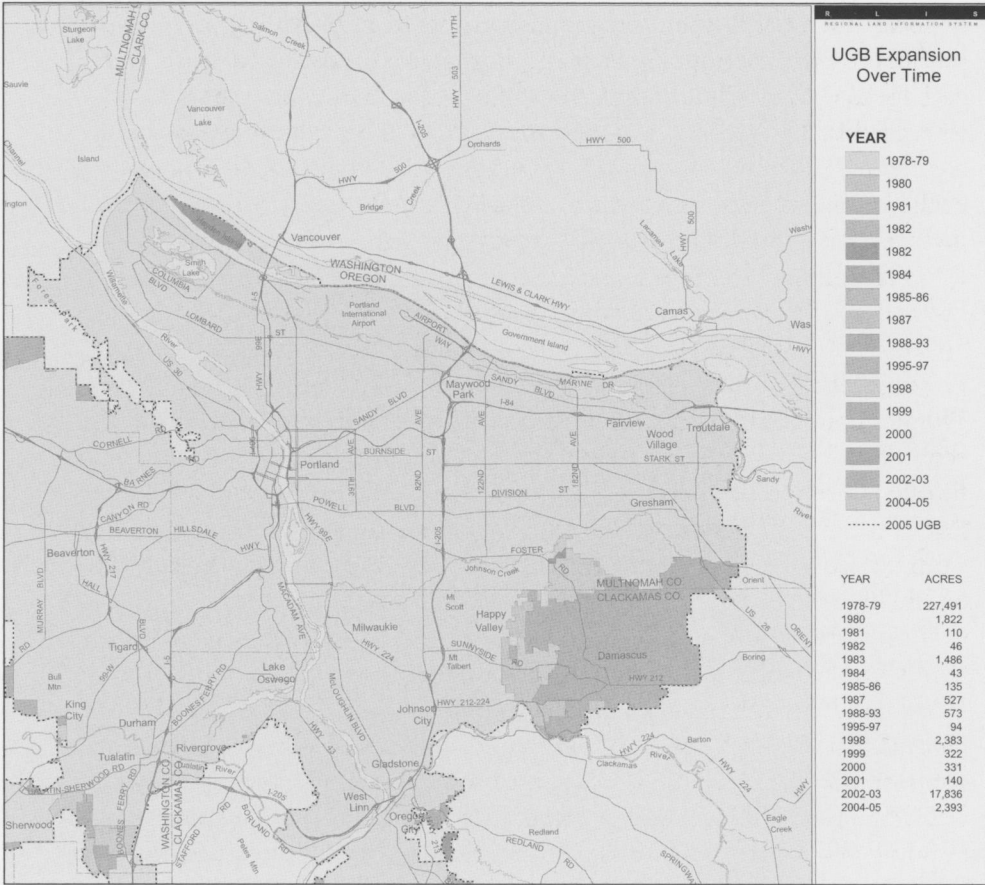ted what has turned out to be a policy of compact metropolitan growth — thus keeping urban sprawl from overrunning the valley's vineyards, filbert orchards, and other specialized agriculture. The legislation passed with forty-nine of a possible sixty votes from Willamette Valley legislators but only nine of a possible thirty votes from their colleagues representing coastal and eastern Oregon.[25]

TABLE 6: OREGON METROPOLITAN AND MICROPOLITAN AREAS, 2000		
metros		*micros*
Portland	1,572,701	
Salem	347,214	
Eugene	322,959	
Medford	181,269	
Bend	115,367	
		Albany 103,069
		Roseburg 100,399
		Pendleton 81,543
Corvallis	78,153	
		Grants Pass 75,726
		Klamath Falls 63,775
		Coos Bay 62,779
		Ontario 52,193
		Astoria 35,630
		La Grande 24,530
		The Dalles 23,791
		Brookings 21,137
		Hood River 20,411
		Prineville 19,182
SOURCE: U.S. Census data. Compiled by the author.		

Portland's side of the implicit deal is to protect the farm economy and to continue to provide the facilities for selling rural products in world markets. It is the junction and transfer point for interstate highway trucking, rail cargo, Columbia-Snake river barge traffic, and international shipping.[26] Portland exports leisure industry jobs and retiree transfer payments to coast and central counties, but resort and second home developments face land-use limitations intended to preserve the resource economy. Metropolitan resi-

Metro originally set the Urban Growth Boundary for the Portland area in 1979. It has repeatedly expanded to meet the legislative requirement that it include a twenty-year supply of developable land.

dents also subsidize downstate school systems and health services through an estimated $450 million net transfer of state tax revenues.

Rural Oregon agrees, if reluctantly, to limits on forestry and to conversion of resource land. The regulation of hunting and fishing dates as far back as the 1910s, limiting rural uses of local resources in the interest of both scientific conservation and urban recreation. Imposition of limits on cougar hunting in the 1990s was a recent manifestation of the same tension. The "bargain" is apparent in Hood River and Wasco counties. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is a product of metro Portland political organizing, but the expectation is that the rural areas will also benefit from protected agriculture, the rise of a leisure economy, and high tech industry attracted

by local amenities.[27] Rural Oregon also profits from providing protective services for the metropolis. Portland has trucked most of its trash and garbage to Gilliam County since 1990, filling deep ravines between the vast wheat fields. The growing number of prisoners in today's carceral society has required Oregon to open or expand ten prisons since 1985. Only two of those prisons have been located in the Willamette Valley, while the state invested in two other facilities on the coast and six in eastern Oregon.[28]

This economic transition is not unique to Oregon, of course. Arguments pro and con flow from the keyboards of both journalists and academics. To some, the transition to a tourist economy is a "Devil's bargain," in the powerful phrase of historian Hal Rothman. To others, such as economist Thomas Power, it is the best hope for salvaging "lost landscapes and failed economies."[29] The resulting "metropolitanizing" of the western landscape through tourism and second-home development in areas like the Colorado Rockies, central Arizona, the Sierra Nevada, and Puget Sound has been summarized by geographer William Travis and in some of my recent work on the urban West.[30]

Rural Oregon also benefits from the fact that Portland itself sits relatively lightly on the landscape, growing much more compactly than most other U.S. cities. From 1980 to 1994, the metropolitan population increased by 25 percent, but the land devoted to urban uses increased only 16 percent. In contrast, population in the Chicago area rose 4 percent from 1970 to 1990 but urbanized land increased by 46 percent. In 1994, the Portland area was building new housing at a density of five dwelling units per acre. By 1998, the density of new development averaged eight dwellings per acre, actually exceeding the ambitious target of the regional 2040 Growth Concept that Metro adopted in 1995 to guide future growth. The average new lot size by 1998 was 6,200 square feet, down from 12,800 square feet in 1978.[31] In 2000, the urbanized areas of the Portland-Vancouver metro area — the actual acreage devoted to buildings, roads, city parks, and other clearly urban land uses — totaled 474 square miles, or .005 percent of Oregon's total land area.[32] Adding in the urbanized areas of Salem (sixty-nine square miles), Eugene (sixty-eight square miles), and Medford (fifty-eight square miles) ups the coverage to only .007 percent of the state.

Oregon's climate and landscape allow Portland and suburban communities to reach relatively short distances for resources to sustain the metropolitan metabolism. Sand and gravel for construction are available from local river deposits. Water for homes and industry comes roughly fifty miles from the Coast Range and Mount Hood, not from hundreds of miles away and even across continental divides as is the case with Denver and Los Angeles. The Columbia River and its tributaries — and now the

windswept bluffs of the Columbia Plateau — provide a large proportion of metropolitan electricity. In total, the metropolitan footprint of Portland and other Willamette Valley cities is much less than that of Los Angeles or Phoenix, and thus impinges less on rural and small town Oregon.

DIVIDING THE HISTORY of urban development in Oregon into three eras leads to a surprising analysis. Portland is not as dominant as it once was. It was far more powerful during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century than it is today. From the 1870s to the 1960s, we find an overwhelming concentration of population and economic power, but that power was balanced by a shared culture shaped around the production, processing, and sale of natural resources. The story of recent decades has been the opposite. Other parts of Oregon have been catching up in population, but the gap between metropolitan and rural culture has been growing. The previously cited voter registration data, for example, indicate that the largest gap in partisan affiliation has grown from 10 percent in the late 1960s to 30 percent in 2006, with eastern Oregon at one extreme and Multnomah County at the other.

A cultural contrast is also apparent in contemporary Oregon literature. Ask an Oregonian to name the novelists who have best dealt with post–World War II Oregon, and the list is likely to include Craig Lesley, David James Duncan, Robin Cody, and Ken Kesey. These are all skilled and perceptive writers, but the Oregon they describe is the Oregon of the 1950s, not the twenty-first century. Their characters live in a state where logging, farming, and the wood products industry dominate community life. Home is Bend and Pendleton, Estacada, Camas (not in Oregon, of course, but a near neighbor and a mirror of Oregon towns like St. Helens), and a place something like Waldport. Big cities are absent in Lesley's work, figure as a realm that destabilizes community in Cody's *Ricochet River*, house insensitive bureaucracies in Duncan's *The Brothers K*, and trouble Hank Stamper with the demands of labor unions in Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion*.[33] In contrast (and leaving aside the children's stories of Beverly Cleary), Portland seems most likely to show up as the seamy setting for crime fiction by Kent Anderson, Alafair Burke, and Philip Margolin.

Voters, however, may be a more sensitive indicator of the future than nostalgic novelists. The results on early efforts to undo the state land-use system put in place by Senate Bill 100 —Measure 10 in 1976, Measure 6 in 1982 — show the division that most would expect, with the Willamette Valley lined up against the coast, southern Oregon, and eastern Oregon. By the 1990s, however, more of the state's northwestern quadrant was voting the same way on statewide races and ballot measures related to social and

cultural values, as measured by county majorities. In 1992, for example, the northern coast (Lincoln, Tillamook, and Clatsop counties), metropolitan Portland, the central valley counties of Lane and Benton, north central counties (Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, and Deschutes), and two southern counties (Coos and Jackson) all rejected Measure 9, which would have allowed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Fast forward another decade and a half to 2007, and things really begin to get interesting for Oregon historians. The vote on one land-use measure suggests that the basic political and cultural division in Oregon does not pit east side against west side or Willamette Valley against everyone else. Instead, the division is between southern counties and the rest of the state. As a proposal to soften the impact of Measure 37, a strong property rights measure voters passed in 2004, Measure 49 rolled back the wholesale granting of retroactive real estate development rights while confirming "retail" or "family-scale" rights. In so doing, it appealed to Union County residents who did not want to see the Grande Ronde Valley filled with a thousand transplanted Californians, Hood River residents who did not want to see development replace orchards on the entire east side of the valley, suburbanites who worried about sprawl, and farmers who did not want to see subdivisions popping up among vineyards and mint fields. Support for Measure 49 was strongest in a solid southern tier from Curry, Coos, and Douglas counties to Harney and Malheur counties. Measure 49 either passed or came in with 49 percent positive votes across the rest of the state, with the exceptions of Sherman and Grant counties.[34]

What may be happening is a new twist on the old story of city and hinterland. Portland — and Salem and Eugene and Corvallis — may now be exporting metropolitan culture along with retirees and recreationists. A metropolitan "weekendland" extends from Newport to Bend to Hood River and back to Astoria. Far larger than the familiar metropolitan areas defined by daily commuting, this is a region that retains much of its rural or semi-rural landscape but is increasingly tied to the Willamette Valley by weekly visitation and telecommuting. In the years just before the 2007 real estate crash, for example, roughly 30 percent of the residential mortgages in Deschutes County and along the northern Oregon coast (45 percent in Tillamook County) were for second homes. In turn, the rise of recreation industries helps to attract migrants directly from out-of-state metropolitan areas to places such as Hood River, further urbanizing local culture. Will Oregon be entering a fourth era of city-country relationships and interaction in the 2010s and 2020s? Historians are not necessarily experts at predicting the future, but my bets are on a continuing convergence that gradually bridges the differences and divides of the late twentieth century.

NOTES

1. Urban competition is the underlying theme of William Cronin's prize-winning book *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991). For the Portland-Seattle rivalry, see Carl Abbott, "Regional City and Network City: Portland and Seattle in the Twentieth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* 23 (August 1992): 293–322.

2. Mark Jefferson, "The Law of the Primate City," *Geographical Review* 29 (April 1939): 226–32.

3. William Thayer, *Marvels of the New West* (Norwich, Conn.: Henry Brill, 1887); Julian Ralph, *Our Great West* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1893); Edward Hungerford, *The Personality of American Cities* (New York: McBride, 1913); James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (New York: Macmillan, 1888); Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea: Letters of Travels* (New York: Scribner's, 1899). Kipling's writing was originally published in magazines during 1889.

4. *Decision of the Reserve Bank Organization Committee Determining the Federal Reserve Districts and the Location of Federal Reserve Banks under Federal Reserve Act Approved December 23, 1913, April 2, 1914, with Statement of the Committee in Relation Thereto, April 10, 1914* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1914).

5. Eugene Snyder, *Early Portland: Stump-Town Triumphant, Rival Townsites on the Willamette, 1831–1854* (Portland: Binford and Mort, 1984).

6. D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 3: *Transcontinental America, 1850–1915* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 73–88.

7. "The Future of North Coast Cities," *World's Work* 18 (August 1909): 11945; Herbert D. Croly, "Portland, Oregon: The Transformation of the City from an Architectural and Social Viewpoint," *Architectural Record* 31 (June 1912): 592.

8. George K. Zipf, *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort* (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1949).

9. Carol Lynn MacGregor, *Boise, Idaho, 1882–1910: Prosperity in Isolation* (Missoula, Mont.: Mountain Press Publishing, 2006).

10. Katherine Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 74–87.

11. *Location of Reserve Districts in the United States: Letter from the Reserve Bank Organizing Committee Transmitting the Briefs and Arguments Presented to the Organization Committee of the Federal reserve Board Relative To The Location of Reserve Districts in the United States*, Senate Document 485, 63d Cong., 2d Sess., 349–57.

12. In 1900, Portland led Seattle by 90,426 to 80,671. In 1910, Seattle led with 237,194 residents to Portland's 207,214.

13. Roderick McKenzie, *The Metropolitan Community* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933); National Resources Committee, *Regional Factors in National Planning and Development, By United States National Resource Committee* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1935).

14. See the maps of paved roads for 1910, 1920, and 1930 in William G. Loy, ed., *Atlas of Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 2001), 105.

15. Ronald J. Fahl, "Samuel C. Lancaster and the Columbia River Highway: Engineer as Conservationist," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 74:2 (June 1973): 137n36.

16. Edgar Sensenisch, "Portland, Oregon," *Bankers' Magazine* 97 (November 1918): 654; *Oregonian*, January 1, 1919, October 19, 1919, and January 1, 1920.

17. Day and Zimmerman, Inc., *Survey of Industrial Activities and Resources and of the Proposed Establishment of an Industrial District in Portland, Oregon* (Philadelphia: Day and Zimmerman, 1930), 136–45.

18. Chris Sawyer, "From Whitechapel to Old Town: The Life and Death of a Skid Road District, Portland, Oregon" (Ph.D. diss.,

Portland State University, 1985).

19. David Horowitz, *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999); William Toll, "Progress and Piety: The Ku Klux Klan and Social Change in Tillamook, Oregon," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 69:2 (1978): 75–85; David A. Horowitz, "Social Morality and Personal Revitalization: Oregon's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 90:4 (Winter 1989): 365–84; Jeff LaLande, "Beneath the Hooded Robe: Newspaperman, Local Politics, and the Ku Klux Klan in Jackson County, Oregon, 1921–1923," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 83:2 (1992): 42–52.

20. William Robbins, *Oregon, This Storied Land* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005), 111.

21. Most governors lived in several Oregon communities before their election. The following list links them to the place with which they were most closely associated at the time they reached the statehouse: Salem: Oswald West, Ben Olcott, Charles Sprague; Portland: Julius Meier, Charles Martin; Condon: Jay Bowerman; Astoria: A.W. Norblad; Roseburg: Frank Benson; Corvallis: James Withycombe; Union County: Walter Pierce; Polk County: I.L. Patterson.

22. Richard Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Brett Steel, "The Politics of One Oregon: The Causes, Consequences and Prospects of Overcoming the Rural-Urban Divide," paper delivered at conference, Toward One Oregon, Salem, Oregon, November 14, 2008.

23. In 2008, the Census Bureau defined a seven-county Portland metropolitan area to include Clark and Skamania counties in Washington and Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Columbia, and Yamhill counties in Oregon. Measurement is also complicated by the fact that the Census in the 1990s also designated Portland and Salem as a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area but has removed that designation in recent years. This article omits Washington population, using the three core counties for 1940–1980 and the larger five county area for the most recent decade.

24. Hugh Roe Davidson, "Bent to Nature: Bend, Oregon as a Case Study in Twentieth Century Property Development" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 2005).

25. Carl Abbott, Deborah Howe, and Sy Adler, eds., *Planning the Oregon Way: A Twenty Year Evaluation* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1994), xiv.

26. See maps of freight corridors in Loy, ed., *Atlas of Oregon*, 113.

27. There are high tech sectors in Deschutes County and in the mid Columbia counties, notably with Google in The Dalles.

28. On the coast, there was prison expansion at Tillamook and a new facility at North Bend. East of the Cascades, there was expansion at Pendleton and new prisons at Ontario, Baker City, Umatilla, Lakeview, and Madras. The federal prison at Sheridan just sneaks into the metropolitan category.

29. Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Thomas Michael Power, *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996).

30. William Travis, *New Geographies of the American West* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2007); Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America.*

31. Data from Metro's Growth Management Section. Until these very recent changes in development patterns, the Portland region was growing more *compactly* than many other metropolitan regions but not more *densely.*

32. Because the figure of 474 square miles includes the urbanized part of Clark County, Washington, the direct impact on Oregon is even less.

33. Robin Cody, *Ricochet River* (New York: Knopf, 1992); David James Duncan, *The Brothers K* (New York: Doubleday, 1992); Ken Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion* (New York: Viking, 1964). See also Craig Lesley, *The Sky Fisherman* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995).

34. It failed in Wallowa County by 23 votes, in Morrow County by 84 votes, and in Baker County by 181 votes.