

# A History of Bald Hill Farm ...

From the Kalapuya Indians practicing fire ecology, cultivating a habitat of oak savanna and native prairies, to the introduction of western settlers in the 1840's, raising sheep and hay, the 587 acres at Bald Hill Farm have seen numerous changes in the last 200 years.

## Kalapuya Influence

For hundred of years, the Kalapuya lived and thrived in the mid-Willamette Valley. The Kalapuya Native Americans were skilled at the art of using fire to propagate the harvest of camas, a native perennial of the lily family. Periodic burning would clear the understory to native grasslands, while strengthening the fire-resistant oaks, and yielding a habitat conducive to elk and deer.

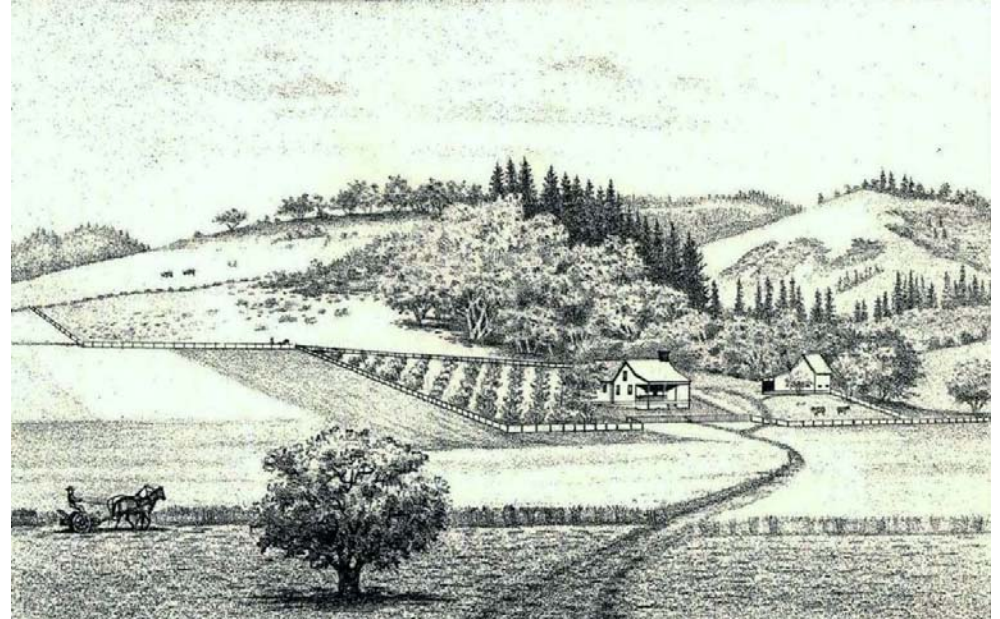
In 1855 the Mary's River Band of the Kalapuya, along with several tribes from the Willamette Valley, signed the 1855 Dayton Treaty, ceding territory from the Columbia to the Cascades.

## Western Settlement

In 1845 brothers Luke and Johnson Mulkey claimed a combined total of 1281 acres under the Donation Land Claim Act, the remaining remnant of which is survived by Bald Hill Farm and the City's Bald Hill Natural Area.

Johnson Mulkey was the first western settler to winter in what is now Benton County, and his family enjoyed the first house with running water in the region. Built in 1847, this farmhouse stood on the edge of current-day Bald Hill Natural Area, with the Mulkeys re-directing a portion of Oak Creek to run through the kitchen. On what is now Bald Hill Farm, the Mulkey's raised sheep and cattle, while harvesting the fields for hay.

The Mulkey's built one of the first school houses at current-day Bald Hill Farm, rather than sending their young on the longer journey to town. Many of the early descendents of Corvallis have recorded their fond recollections of the 'Old Mulkey Schoolhouse' to historians.



*Farm residence of A.G. Mulkey, current-day Bald Hill Natural Area*

*“The soil of Oregon was so very fertile that everything grew with little attention. There were no pests to speak of and very little cultivation needed. All one had to do to grow wheat was to plow, or scratch over the ground a little, and throw on the wheat seed.”*

*~ Maude Cauthorn Keady (1939), granddaughter of settler Johnson Mulkey*

## Footnotes

1. Fagan, David; *History of Benton County, Oregon*; A.G Willing, 1885
2. Phinney, Mark; *Historical Records Survey, Oregon-Benton County*; Works Progress Administration, 1938.