



A Black Logger's Journey: Jackson Parish, Louisiana, to
Wallowa County, Oregon

By Marsh, Pearl Alice Oregon Historical Quarterly, Winter 2015

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THIS MEMOIR is the story of Amos Marsh, Sr., an African American log cutter who, beginning in 1939, worked for Bowman-Hicks Lumber Company in Maxville (Wallowa County), Oregon. Marsh's journey west began in 1932, moving from his family's farm in Jackson Parish, Louisiana, to McNary, Arizona, then to Kyberz, California, and finally to Maxville. Three major factors prompted Marsh's migration from the South to Oregon: crop prices fell severely during the Great Depression, forcing farmers to seek work outside agriculture; the harsh realities of strict racial segregation were enforced by Jim Crow laws and practices, which also kept workers in low-wage jobs with poor working conditions; and the demand for lumber from western states was attractive to many southerners seeking work. (1) Marsh's story reflects those realities: "If the South had worked for us farming and the [Ku Klux] Klan hadn't been ridin', I never would have left Louisiana" He was not alone.