

Footprints Through the Sands of Time

The Story of Roosevelt Beach

Byline: Kelly Calhoun, Executive Director/Curator of Museum of the North Beach

A question asked many times by Museum visitors and by locals, "How did Roosevelt Beach get its name?"

On October 23, 1907, an executive order from the White House proclaimed the coastal area from Copalis Rocks to Arch Island at the northern end of the Quinault Indian Nation as the "Copalis Rock Reservation." This location was set aside for use by the Department of Agriculture "as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds and animals." The order was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt.

This story begins a few months earlier when the executive order was being contemplated. An article in the *Aberdeen Herald* dated May 2, 1907, titled, "New Summer Resort, Aberdeen Capitalists Secure Ideal Location on North Beach" reports that 136 acres of land have been purchased. Judge Will Lanning, R.A. Wiley and the Rowland brothers acquired the property which "promises to make the most desirable summer resort on the North Beach" and will be named Roosevelt Beach. During the previous week, the land was surveyed into lots and clearing began to lay out the streets with the anticipation that buildings would be erected within a month.

Advertisements in the *Aberdeen Herald* for selling lots began on July 15 with prices ranging from \$25.00 to \$75.00 per lot; \$5.00 down, \$5.00 per month. Within the first week, 51 lots had been sold. By the end of July, cottages were already being built; several more were constructed during August and September including a clubhouse for the Young Men's Republican Club. In October, Engineer E. G. Hunt laid out the First Addition to Roosevelt Beach with lots put on the market soon after. A major contributing factor to selling lots was the Northern Pacific Railway's Depot at Pacific Beach. Travelers would disembark at the station and either walk on the beach or take a horse and wagon south to Roosevelt Beach.

In March 1908, photographer Colin McKenzie, took several photographs of Roosevelt Beach and vicinity including the clubhouse. By August, 200 lots had been sold and the prices changed to \$4.00 down, \$4.00 per week. In 1909 with over 300 lots sold, the prices changed yet again – \$50.00 per lot with \$1.00 down, \$1.00 per week.

Tragedy struck on Saturday, June 24, 1911 when a fire broke out destroying the cottages owned by R.A. Wiley and R.A. Buell. Mrs. A. Smith, a caretaker of the Buell cottage, was severely burned while rescuing two children of Mrs. A. Muhlen of Aberdeen. The fire began in the Buell cottage with no determined cause. Campers on the beach made gallant efforts to put out the fire but to no avail. The loss between the two structures was estimated at \$1500.

On December 18, 1915, Grays Harbor County treasurer McGillicuddy began a bargain sale of lots at Roosevelt Beach for five years back taxes. Parcels couldn't even be given away. The asking price of 26 cents was considered too much.

A broadcast in the 1950's on Aberdeen's KXRO radio titled, "Lost Cities of Grays Harbor," Roosevelt Beach was among other harbor locations mentioned as "the dreams of growth and development that were to turn lines on paper into streets lined with buildings never materialized." In an article written in the *Ocean Observer* in December 1965, it was reported that Grays Harbor County would be auctioning off property acquired thirty years earlier from tax foreclosures. The county's budget for 1966 was \$10,000 for surveying and building an access road. Lots were on both sides of State Route 109 and included both beach and upland parcels.

On July 23, 1969, Washington Governor Dan Evans announced plans to build three nuclear power sites including one at Roosevelt Beach. The plant would cover 300-400 acres stretching 3/4 mile of beach front. Evans claimed that urgent selection of sites and completion was necessary to "avoid a serious power shortage by 1974 or 1975." During the summer of 1969, officials at Grays Harbor PUD were seeking endorsement from the public. During this time, PUD was negotiating with Weyerhaeuser, Rayonier, Grays Harbor County, and private owners to purchase the property. In a *Time Magazine* article published on August 8, 1983, WPPSS (Washington Public Power Supply System) defaulted on \$2.25 billion in bonds to be used for partial construction. This put a stop to the nuclear plant construction at Satsop and prevented the eventual construction at Roosevelt Beach.

Severe rains in January 2006 caused a major landslide at Roosevelt Beach that was approximately eighty feet wide and slid about 300 feet onto the beach.

The brightly colored cliffs at Roosevelt Beach have been the subject of numerous photographs both professional and amateur. The orange cliffs have also been painted by local artists.

\$5 Down—\$5 Per Month

\$5 Down—\$5 Per Month

Roosevelt Beach

A Summer Resort

**That is a Resting Place, with Sheltered Groves, Grass and Good Water
No Saloons**

Roosevelt Beach is located on the Pacific Ocean, about two miles—half hour's walk—from Pacific Station. There is a good wagon road from the station.

It is situated on a grassy slope which is from ten to forty feet above the level of the sea at high tide, from any part of which one can look out upon the ocean. There are many groves of scrub spruce and other evergreens, which are well sheltered from the afternoon winds, which at times during the summer make the open beach unpleasant.

In front of this ground is a flat sandy beach, which at low tide extends about a quarter of a mile to the water's edge. At high tide there is only about one hundred feet between the shore line and the surf.

There is a stream of the best and clearest water in the country running through the place, and springs in many places.

Good fishing can be obtained in Joe Creek, to the north of this place, and in Boone Creek and Copalis, to the south. There is a fair number of deer, bear and wild cat, as well as grouse and pheasant, in the surrounding country.

There is no better camping ground on the beach than this place. The ground is high and dry, and there is an abundance of good wood and water.

**For the next two weeks lots will be sold for between \$25 and \$75 per lot
\$5 down and \$5 per month**

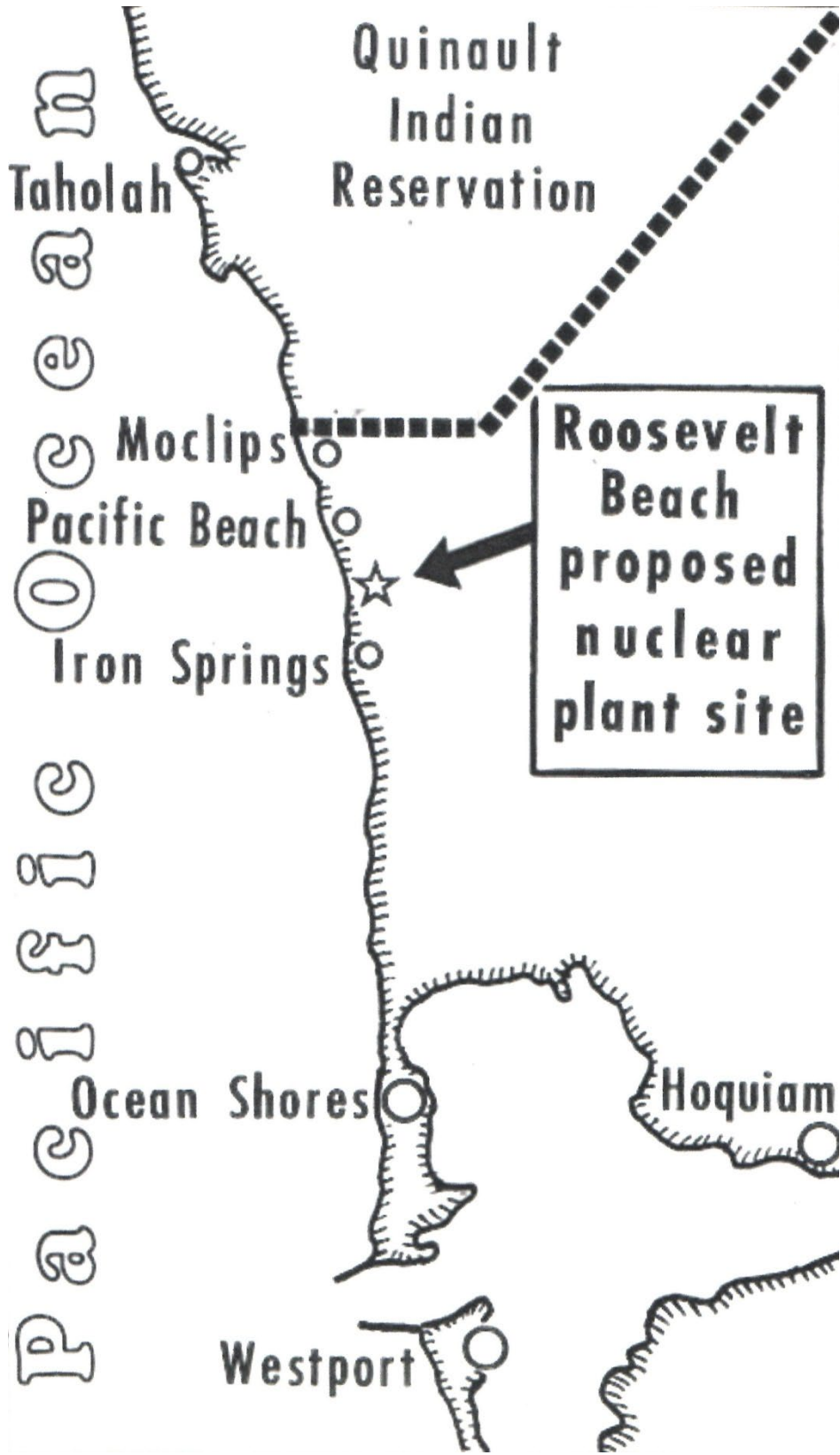
Lots for sale with any real estate dealer in the city. For full information call on

WILL LANNING, 116 S. G St.

\$5 Down—\$5 Per Month

\$5 Down—\$5 Per Month

Ad for Roosevelt Beach August 12, 1907



Nuclear Site Map



Roosevelt Beach