Desertification of the Camp Creek Drainage in central Oregon, 1826 – 1905

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The environment of the Crooked River region, with particular emphasis on Camp Creek, is examined for the period 1826 to 1905. Vegetation is reconstructed from explorer's journals, travelers' diaries, military records, early residents' accounts, and original survey plats and notes. The first year for which a written account of Euro-American exploration in the Crooked River region exists is 1826. Nineteen hundred and five is the first year that the valley floor is described as one criss-crossed by arroyos or small canyons. The objective of this study was to determine whether Camp Creek became an incised stream during this interval as a result of inappropriate land-use practices or in response to climatic fluctuations. Historical evidence indicates that intense grazing, as well as other activities associated with settlement, during a period of prolonged drought weakened the vegetative cover of the floodplain, after which time heavy rains eroded the stream channel.