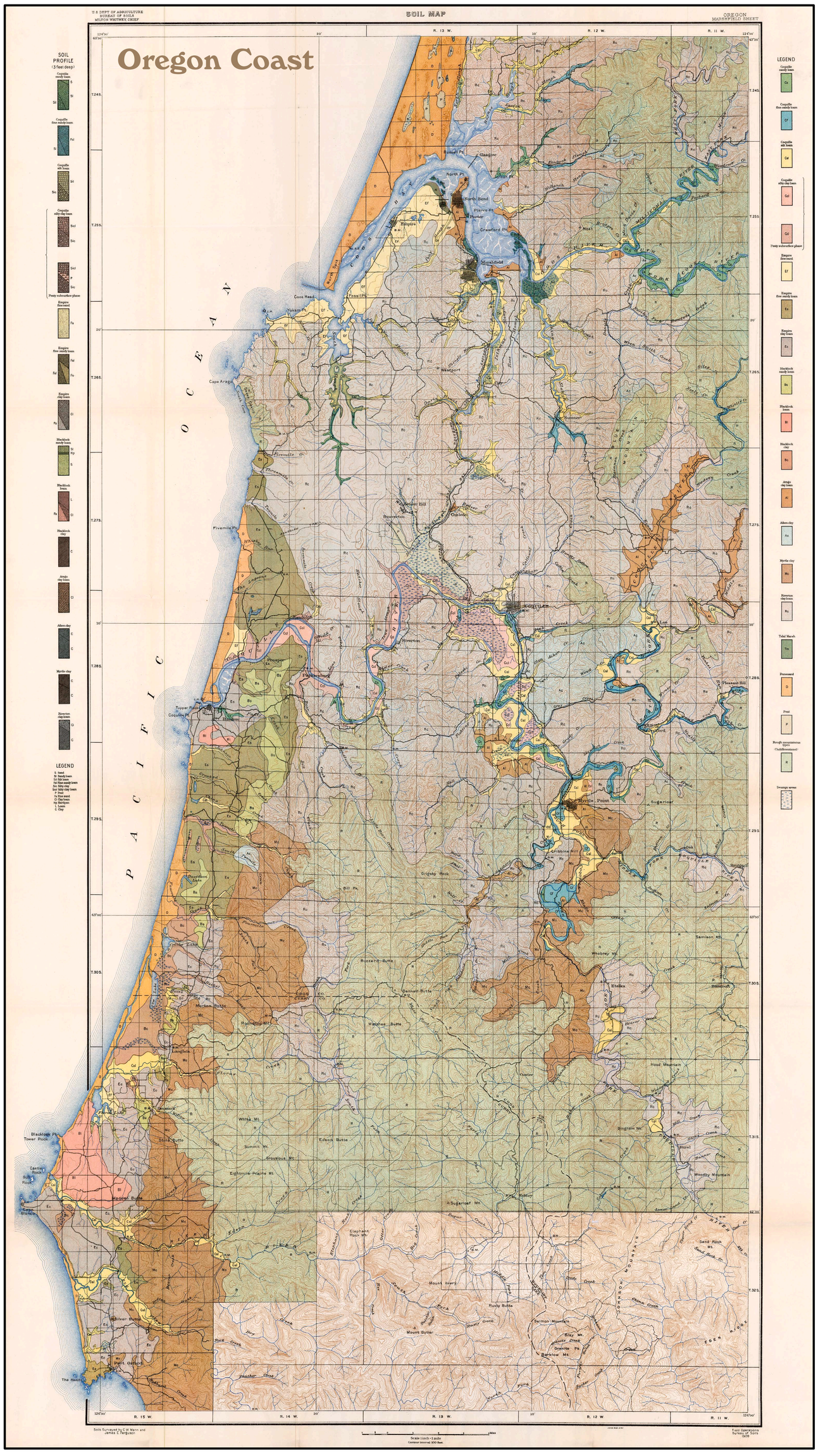
United States Department of Agriculture

Map of the Month

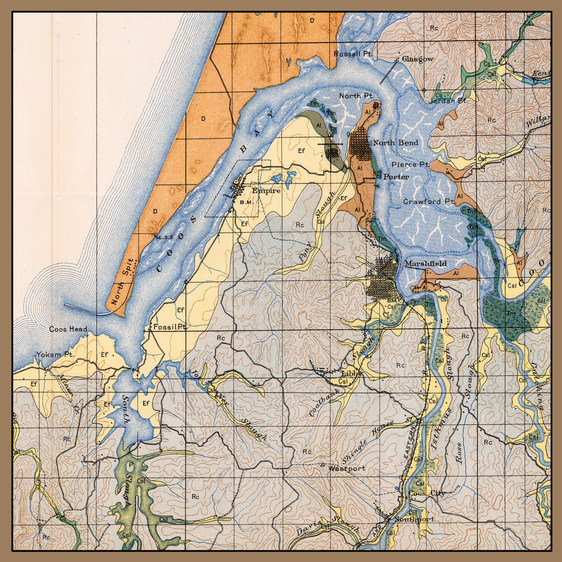
October

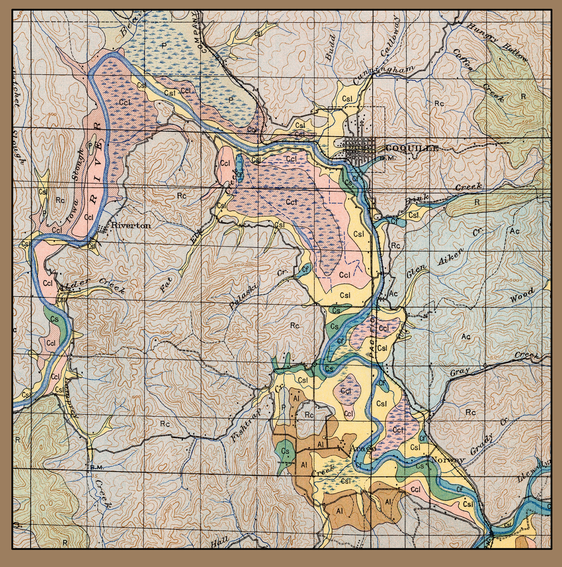


Aesthetic Maps with Historical Records

By the late 1890s, when USDA was taking form, agricultural scientists and legislators widely recognized that more information was needed about the nation's soils. To address that need, the USDA Division of Agricultural Soils and the National Cooperative Soil Survey were formed. They combined the expertise of the Division with land-grant universities and State and local agencies for the purpose of making soil maps. The aesthetic turn-of-the-century maps generated by the soil survey not only show soil patterns across the landscape, they also show features that are now of interest to historians. Examples include homesteads, lighthouses, and city boundaries. The maps also show features of interest to scientists, including shorelines, river meanders, and former wetlands.

This 1909 map is of the Marshfield (now Coos Bay) Area along the coast of Oregon.





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