Camp Day
by Malcolm Epley
excerpted and edited from Klamath Echoes No. 1

Ever hear of Camp Day?
Not many people, even local history bugs, are aware that this county has had an army post other than Fort Klamath, widely publicized Wood River valley cavalry post.

So, as a contribution to Army Day (1948) observance here, the Herald and News presents as its weekly historical feature a picture and some information about Camp Day, which occupied a site on trout filled Spencer Creek for a few months in the summer and fall of 1860.

Camp day antedated Fort Klamath, which was established in 1863 and abandoned in 1889. It probably was set up for the same reason - protection of travelers passing through what was then a remote and unsettled region known as the Klamath Country.

Most of what we know about Camp Day comes from pictures and letters produced in 1860 by the camp’s commanding officer, Lt. Lorenzo Lorain, U. S. Army. They have been presented to the Oregon Historical Society by S. H. Lorain of Albany, presumably a relative of the young lieutenant.
Lorain and a detachment of troops identified as Company L, 3rd Artillery, made a march from Fort Umpqua, near the coast of the Umpqua River, to the Klamath area, leaving on June 26, 1860.

The party moved through the Umpqua and Rogue valleys, turned eastward, crossed the mountains and came into the Klamath area, picking a site for the camp on Spencer Creek, about a half mile from the Klamath River. The creek was not named at the time, but Lorain’s descriptions in his letters pretty closely identified the spot, which is near the Green Springs highway about 22 miles west of Klamath Falls.

Lorain named the camp for Lt. Edward Henry Day, also of the 3rd Artillery, a native of Virginia and a graduate of West Point. Day died on January 2, 1860, apparently at Fort Umpqua, the year of the march to Klamath, and naming the camp in honor of this friend no doubt appealed to the young commanding officer.

Fortunately, Lt Lorain was a good letter writer and cameraman. He set up a dark house for developing his plates, and took several pictures. The best view of the camp is presented above.

On July 28, 1860, Lorain wrote a letter to his sister Mary who was way back in Pennsylvania. Regarding the march, he said: “The distance from Fort Umpqua to the present camp, 250 miles. Our march was quite a pleasant one. After leaving Scottsburg, to which point we were transported by steamboat, our route lay through the valley of the Umpqua for a distance of 75 miles. ... After leaving it we went
through a gap in the Calapooya mountains, known as the by-canyon and struck the Rogue River valley, the course of which we followed for 82 miles.

"This valley is far more extensive than that of the Umpqua but as regards scenery I can't say that it has any advantage. At the southern extremity is Jacksonville, a pretty little town of about 500 to 600 inhabitants. Near this place is the famous gold region of southern Oregon. All kinds of mining are carried on in its vicinity and here it is that of gold-bearing quartz is said to be so abundant and so rich, yielding from 20 to 30 thousand dollars per ton. Yet, notwithstanding this reported abundance of the previous metal, I have never seen a place in which the people appeared more anxious to "make money" or seemed to have less. The more I see of mining for gold the less do I believe in its profitableness. Occasionally a man may strike a rich lead and make a fortune in a very short time, but more leave the mines broken down in constitution and with lighter pockets than when they commenced than even comes from ordinary laborer's wages.

"After we left Rogue River we continued up the Yreka road about 20 miles and then struck across the Siskiyou Mountains to our present camp, a distance of about 50 miles, our route being through a wild, unsettled region and on an old emigrant trail. We were of necessity compelled to move very slowly. Otherwise the trip across the mountains was quite agreeable.

"We are now located about half a mile from the Klamath River and on a small stream that empties into it about one mile from the emigrant crossing. Our camp is situated on the edge of the timber bordering on a small prairie, but so secluded I have endeavored in vain to find a point from which to take a photographic view of it. I have my camera and chemicals with me and as soon as I can arrange a dark house shall endeavor to get some views....We have plenty of grass and mosquitos, trout are abundant in the creek and game of all kinds appears to be plentiful. The Indians are peaceably disposed, though owing to the absence of all their principal chiefs no formal talk has yet to be entered into. Judging from the little we have seen of them, I think no difficulty need be apprehended from the Klamaths, the nearest Indians.

Presumably the Camp Day project was the forerunner of the establishment of a "permanent post" in the Klamath country, which came three years later at Fort Klamath. Camp Day, be it noted, was right on the emigrant trail (the old South Road), whereas Fort Klamath was 40 miles north of it.
It was about seven years after Lt. Lorain was on Spencer Creek with his men that the first definite white settlement began at the crossing of Link River, which later became the site of Klamath Falls.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs for 2010

October 28, 7:00 PM: Program: **Peter Lassen, Early Explorations**
by Ken Johnston
Hostesses: Elizabeth Campbell, Kay Short, Liz Budy

November 14: 1:00 PM, **Holiday Potluck and Elections**
Program: **Klamath Falls Main Street Project**
By: Bill Anderson, Gloria Sullivan, Jackie Bonner

Those attending should bring their own table service and an item for the potluck, be it entree, salad or dessert. Drinks will be provided.

No meetings in December, January or February

March 24, 2011: To be announced

Other dates to remember:

December 4, 8-10 AM: Breakfast With Santa at Main Museum

December 2 and 11: Doll Show at the Baldwin Hotel
Klamath County Historical Society

Meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of the month. See schedule or call 883-4208. We meet at the Klamath County Museum meeting room, 1451 Main St., Klamath Falls, Spring St. entrance. For more information call the museum.

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**KCHS Officers**

Co-Presidents:
- Sue Fortune: 541-882-6041
- Carol Mattos: 541-884-4032

Secretary:
- Phyllis Goebel: 541-884-0610

Co-Treasurers:
- Jackie Bonner: 541-850-8593
- Shirley Joy: 541-545-8662

Board Members:
- Mae Rutherford: 541-882-5246
- Gary Mattos: 541-884-4032
- John Fortune, Past Pres.
  541-882-6041

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**Dues**

Dues are due at the end of each year. If you look on your mailing label, you will see an entry above your name. A date entered indicates you are paid through that year. Initials indicate you are receiving a complimentary issue or are a Life Member. If there is no entry, you either haven’t paid for a while or we are sending you a complimentary issue, hoping you will become a member.

**Membership Information**

- Individual Member: $10.00/yr.
- Supporting Member: $25.00/yr.
- Life Member: $100.00

Make dues payable to:
Klamath County Historical Society
and mail to or drop off at:
Klamath County Museum
1451 Main Street
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

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If you would like to be notified of meetings and other happenings by email, please send your address to klcohiso@yahoo.com

If you would like to be on the Klamath County Museum’s email list to receive the newsletter “The Midge”, send your request to:
midge@co.klamath.or.us