Upcoming Meetings Schedule

September 26: Prohibition: Dry Times in the High Desert, by Bruce McCornack.

October 24: The Region’s Earliest Inhabitants: Archaeological Investigations at the Paisley Caves, by Dennis Jenkins.

November 10: Potluck at the Museum

Museum Events

September 15: Baldwin Hotel Living History Day
September 21: Repeat Chiloquin Sprague Bus Tour
September 27-28: Nights at Fort Klamath Cemetery
October 12: Baldwin Hotel Antique Toys Show

September 26 Membership Meeting

Prohibition: Dry Times in the High Desert
By Bruce McCornack

Bruce McCornack will give a slideshow presentation on the Prohibition Era in Oregon and its impact on the small towns in Klamath County.

Bruce will explore events that captured the headlines between 1915, when Oregon enacted the state prohibition against alcohol, and 1933 when the era ended.

How did Klamath County respond to Prohibition? Was it corrupt and violent? Dry and cooperative? How did we come to outlaw mankind’s commonest and most popular drug?

These questions and others will be discussed at the next meeting of the Klamath County Historical Society at 7 pm on September 26th. Older members who grew up here please bring your stories to share as we explore “Dry Times in the High Desert”.

See Inside

The Modoc War and Multimedia
by Ryan Bartholomew

Klamath County Historical Society
Meetings are held at 7 pm on the fourth Thursday of March, April, May, September and October in the Armory-Museum at 1451 Main Street, Klamath Falls.

Email: klcohiso@yahoo.com
The Modoc War and Multimedia

By Ryan Bartholomew

With the wave of Colonel Hogue’s white handkerchief, Corporal Ross swung his hatchet, cutting the rope that supported four trap doors on the gallows. Within moments, four doomed Modoc leaders were dead, thus ending the Modoc War, Southern Oregon’s most complicated and tragic historical event.

One hundred and forty years later, the public’s interest in the Modoc War has not faded. Historians continue to struggle with the complexity of source documents as they debate with colleagues over the root causes of the war. Books and articles continue to be published adding to the hundreds already in print.

To meet the demands of today’s fast paced multimedia world, websites, documentaries and YouTube videos have been introduced as a way to tell the story of the Modoc War. These modern techniques, however, fail in their over simplicity of this extremely complicated event.

One of the major pitfalls of multimedia sources is the portrayal of the conflict as a simple battle between white settlers and the Modoc Indians. Race and religion are all too often cited as the root cause of conflict. The Civil War and current conflicts in the Middle East are prime examples. While there is no doubt race and religion almost always factor in, the root cause of conflict is economic and more specifically the competition for resources.

Many settlers including Miller, Ball, Fairchild and Dorris had a working relationship with the Modoc; a fact conveniently omitted from many sources. These men benefited from the affordable and abundant labor force the Modoc provided. The Modoc mutually benefitted receiving highly sought after goods and food for their services. Settlers on the fringe of Modoc territory (Keno, Langell Valley, Pine Grove) did not benefit from Modoc labor so it should not be surprising that the famous “Settler’s Petitions” originated from these fringe areas.

The following excerpt from a letter highlights the confusion this often caused among government and military officials: The reports in regards to this Indian are very conflicting. He carries around with him letters from prominent citizens of Yreka testifying to his good conduct and good faith with the whites. Many of the settlers in the district where he rooms are opposed to having him molested...

(Captain Jackson, Fort Klamath Commander, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Columbia 29 August 1871).
Even the onset of hostilities did little or nothing to polarize the war along racial lines:

*I have, as you anticipated, encountered great conflict of opinion as to the character and conduct of the Modoc. Great numbers of gentlemen of well-known character assert that the Modoc as a tribe are an orderly and well-behaved people, who have been grievously wronged, and who earnestly desire peace, while others assert directly the reverse. All unite in saying they are intelligent, brave, and determined people* (General Gillem to General Canby 9 Feb 1873).

Another area where multimedia sources almost universally fail is their omission of the important role General Canby played leading up to the Modoc War. Most sources introduce General Canby as a peace commissioner on the morning of April 11, 1873, just moments before he is killed by Captain Jack. Canby does not fit the war monger, General Custer mold, revisionist historians have created to portray Indian War military officers. The goal is to simplify the story by polarizing the issues while at the same time preserving historical fact. The omission of Canby’s important pre-war role accomplishes both.

By all reputable accounts General Canby was an outstanding officer of impeccable character. Throughout his life his allies and his enemies recognized Canby as a fair and honest man. Known as a great negotiator, he was often called upon to mediate political and racial difficulties brought on by the changing economic landscape in the South during Reconstruction. Upon his assumption of Command of the Department of the Columbia in 1870, Canby was concerned about the Modoc situation in Southern Oregon.

In 1871, A. B. Meacham, then Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon, asked the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, F.A. Walker to consider a new home off the Klamath Reservation for the Modoc. As both Meacham and Canby anxiously awaited the decision from Washington, Canby realized Southern Oregon was a ticking time bomb and any confrontation between Modoc and angry settlers could explode into a full-scale conflict.

General Canby’s objective in dealing with the Modoc situation was to avoid bloodshed. His strategy to achieve his objective was deterrence. In February, 1872, Canby ordered the Commander of the District of the Lakes to establish a Cavalry force of 50 to 60 men in Modoc Territory. He advised the Commander that until the decision of a possible new reservation for the Modoc was made in Washington, military force would not be used to compel the Modoc back onto the Klamath Reservation.

In a letter to General Schofield, February 20, 1872, Canby explains his reasoning for ordering the troops to Modoc Territory:

*I have considered this necessary in order to prevent collisions between the settlers and the Indians, and the presence of troops will allay the apprehensions of the whites, (often the cause of the trouble we wish to avoid) and will exercise a salutary influence over the evil disposed of both classes.....*
Although Canby was in favor of a separate reservation for the Modoc, he realized that the decision was in no way a decision for military authorities to make. He was not afraid, however, to make his opinion known:

*I am not surprised at the unwillingness of the Modoc to return to any point of the reservation where they would be exposed to the hostilities and annoyances they have heretofore experienced. And without adequate protection from the Klamath, but they have expressed a desire to be established upon Lost River, where they would be free from this trouble* ...(Canby to Schofield 7 February 1872.)

While Canby hoped for a separate Modoc Reservation, he knew the idea faced an uphill battle. He was well aware the Modoc question went well beyond complaints and petitions from common settlers, petty thefts and cattle rustling; it was connected to big money, swampland, railroads and corrupt politicians.

*Although you are aware of the general facts, I think it proper to invite your attention to the complication in the affairs of the Modoc and Klamath Indians, growing out of the attempts that have been or will be made to secure a portion of the lands reserved for them, under claims for settlement, grants for military and railroads or as swamplands....It is also understood that draining operations are in contemplation which, although they are to be carried on the outside of its limits, will have the effect of destroying the value of large portions of the reservation for the purposes for which it was reserved. The determination of these questions does not in any way belong to the military authorities, and they are brought to your notice as giving a possible motive for some of the complaints against these Indian*...(Canby to Commander, District of the Lakes 17 Feb 1873).

In July, 1872, the answer to the Modoc reservation question finally came from Washington. As Canby predicted, the Department of Indian Affairs did not approve a separate reservation. F. A. Walker ordered the Modoc back to the Klamath Reservation. With this new guidance, Canby’s objective went unchanged; avoid bloodshed. His strategy, however, changed to compellence.

The Army had many advantages in dealing with the Modoc; the element of surprise, firepower, etc. The greatest advantage was a superior number of men. Fort Klamath may have been short staffed but over 150 men were available within the District of the Lakes.

Canby imagined a force of 150 men riding into the Modoc’s winter camp just after dawn. Captain Jack, Scarface Charlie and Black Jim would emerge from their wickiups to find their camp completely surrounded by blue coats. The overwhelming show of force would “overawe” the Modoc and with no way of escape, they would surrender without incident. In September, Canby authorized the use of troops throughout the District to be used to apprehend the Modoc.

As the winter of 1872 approached, Colonel Frank Wheaton, Commander of the District of the Lakes, made the final preparations based on Canby’s guidance:

*If it should be found necessary or advisable I shall move into the Modoc country with every available mounted man from Harney, Bidwell, Warner and Klamath and compel Captain Jack’s immediate compliance with such orders as the Commissioner of Indian affairs may have given in the case.*

Colonel Frank Wheaton; courtesy Klamath County Museum.
Unfortunately, the execution of Canby’s strategy did not go as planned. The overzealous commander of Fort Klamath, Major Green, sent a force of 35 men to Lost River, disobeying the orders of his superior officers.

As Captain Jack and Scarface Charlie emerged from their wickiups, they were underwhelmed, possibly offended, by the small force sent to apprehend their band of proud warriors and families. With superior numbers, home field advantage and a clear escape route, the Modoc were in no way forced into a position of submissiveness. As the soldiers demanded the Modoc’ weapons, shots were fired by both sides, igniting the time bomb that had been simmering in Southern Oregon for 2½ years. The result was disastrous for the Army, Modoc and Tule Lake settlers.

The Tragic Irony of Two Great Leaders

One could imagine when General Canby heard of Major Green’s actions, he was furious. However, when the military considered disciplinary action against Major Green, it was Canby who came to his defense:

A grave mistake was no doubt committed in attempting their removal before a sufficient force had been collected to secure that result beyond the probability of failure….The original arrangement should have been carried out. The question as to the time and manner of applying force rested in the discretion of the military commanders to whom it had been committed and while I think that Major Green was in error upon this point, I do not think that either he or the Superintendent should be judged wholly by the result. If the mission had succeeded, the conception and the execution would probably have been as highly commended as they are now censured (Canby to Pacific HQ 15 January 1873).

Major Green’s “grave mistake” was all but forgotten when his heroism in the First Battle of the Stronghold won him the Medal of Honor. The debacle of the Battle of Lost River and resulting Modoc War ultimately cost Canby, an advocate for peace, his life.

When Hooka Jim arrived at the Stronghold after the Battle of Lost River and informed Captain Jack of the settler killings, Jack was furious. However, when Oregon and federal officials called for Hooka Jim’s arrest, it was Captain Jack who came to his defense. Jack refused any peace settlement that involved turning Hooka Jim over to civil authorities. Hooka Jim led the crusade to kill General Canby and participated in the assassinations.

Hooka Jim’s murderous spree was all but forgotten when his treason led to the capture of Captain Jack. The debacle of the Battle of Lost River and the resulting Modoc War ultimately cost Captain Jack, an advocate for peace, his life.

Studying the Modoc War is like studying a tragic train wreck. The more you see, the more tragic it becomes; the more tragic it becomes, the harder it is to look away. Cooler heads all too often took a back seat to knee jerk reactions made in the heat of internal and external conflict. Hundreds of lives, the Tule Lake and Klamath Basins, a whole culture, a military, were changed forever.

Hopefully, as multimedia sources evolve and replace written text, authors delve more into the inconvenient truths and complexities not only in regards to the Modoc War, but all of our history. If our past conflicts are not properly interpreted, then we are destined to repeat the same conflicts in the future.
Summer Picnic Highlights

A lovely time was had by all at the summer picnic at Phyllis and Paul Goebel’s cabin on the Williamson River on Sunday afternoon on July 28.

Breezes off the river and the shade tree canopy provided a welcome respite from the smoke and heat in Klamath.

The meeting of friends was complimented by a banquet of tasty dishes, desserts, and Kathie Inman’s and Phyllis’ fantastic homemade ice cream.

Jack Inman led us in a delightful singalong and amused us all with his goat song at the end:

**Bill GROGAN’S GOAT**

Bill Grogan’s goat was feeling fine;
ate three shirts from off the line.
Bill took a stick, gave him a whack,
and tied him to the railroad track.
The whistle blew; the train drew nigh.
Bill Grogan’s goat was doomed to die!
He gave three groans of awful pain, coughed up the shirts, and flagged the train.

*Thanks, Jack!*
Todd Kepple and Ron Loveness provided a lively history of both Native American, early ranching, and important logging sites near Chiloquin and Sprague River on our historical society bus tour on June 29th. Guest speakers at several stops contributed both local knowledge and personal anecdotes.

Todd discussed the pattern of Klamath Indian settlements near Chiloquin and described the massacre of an Indian village by members of John C. Fremont’s 1846 exploring expedition. This was in retaliation for an earlier Indian attack, most likely by an entirely unrelated group.

A tour of the Modoc Point Irrigation District pumping station, established to provide water to irrigators with the removal of the Chiloquin Dam, gave timely insights into the complexity of the water shortages and shutoffs this year. Ed Combs described the function of the pumping station and explained the district irrigation history.

As we toured around the Chiloquin environs, Ron Loveness discussed the once thriving logging history of the area while we viewed several abandoned logging mill sites. Among them, we heard about the Forest Lumber Company mill at Pine Ridge, which was destroyed in a raging fire that threatened the entire town in 1939.

A surprise to most of us was the opportunity to walk around the Braymill Lumber Company office headquarters, with its many collapsing structures testament to its vibrant past (photo). Here, Lance and Wendy Letner gave some very good history.

The Friends Church in Sprague River, with Pauline Middleton as hostess, provided a delightful review of their upcoming history program before we visited the site of the Yainax Indian Agency and heard a talk by its present manager, Jim Dunlap.

Many thanks to Paulette Seybold and the numerous others who prepared our tasty lunch at the Chiloquin Christian Center.

**Repeat Chiloquin & Sprague River Bus Tour**

If you missed the tour, the museum is offering a repeat on September 21. Cost is $25 which includes lunch. To reserve a seat on the bus, contact the Klamath County Museum at 541 883-4208.
In Memory of
Dorothy B. Anderson
January 5, 1919 – August 12, 2013

Longtime member of the Klamath County Historical Society, Dorothy B. Anderson, died peacefully on August 12, 2013, at the age of 94. Dorothy and her husband Oscar, who died in 2011, were valued members of the historical society and active volunteers for the Klamath County Museum.

Dorothy was an accomplished spinner and weaver, a charter member of the Klamath Weavers Guild, and a skilled teacher of the craft.

Dorothy often demonstrated her craft to school children, from farm expos to schoolrooms, to visitors at the Baldwin Hotel Museum. She was willing to teach anyone who wanted to learn.

According to her friend and fellow weaver, Carol Wylie, she was an inspiration to all and, in fact, anyone who spins or weaves in town today probably learned from her.

Carol, a school teacher at the time, first met Dorothy about 30 years ago at Ponderosa Junior High where Dorothy was giving a weaving demonstration. Carol was captivated, determined to learn, and Dorothy became her teacher. Carol now carries on the tradition and demonstrates her craft in the lobby of the county museum.

Dorothy’s friends and fellow volunteers at the Baldwin Hotel Museum fondly remember the many hours Dorothy contributed to the museum.

Sue Fortune recalled all those Wednesday afternoons she watched—with fascination—as Dorothy demonstrated spinning and weaving in the Baldwin Hotel lobby.

Dorothy’s demonstrations especially captivated the children during school tours at the hotel, as Baldwin site manager Carol Mattos recalls. Dorothy described the history of spinning from the earliest hand-held spindles and distaffs to the development of the spinning wheel.

Dorothy kept samples of many different colored fibers in her “basket of wonders.” She told the children about how you could use plant and animal fibers, even dog hair, and then color the fibers with dyes from onion skins, beets, oak tree bark, or almost any plant that grows.

Children were always delighted to learn about weaving wool, which she reminded them, began with the shearing of the sheep—before the wool could be cleaned, carded, and spun.

Dorothy’s memory will remain with us and all who she inspired and taught. *She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle* (Proverbs 31:19).
Nights at Fort Klamath Cemetery

Friday and Saturday, September 27 and 28

Starring pioneers and historical figures resting peacefully at the Fort Klamath Cemetery.

Fort Klamath Cemetery was established about 1865 for Military Fort Klamath, and included both soldiers and civilians who worked at the fort as well as settlers in Wood River Valley.

Actors portray historical characters both humorous and profound dating from the early 1860s fort to the transformation of the valley by homesteaders beginning in the 1870s and the creation of the town in the mid-1890s.

Enactors will recreate the stories of soldiers who died tragically at Fort Klamath, women who settled on early homesteads in Wood River Valley, store and hotel operators in town, and ranchers who settled on the fort military reservation after it was closed in 1890, including the land later set aside as the Fort Klamath Museum.

Living history tours begin every 15 minutes between 5:45 and 7 p.m., each lasting about an hour.

Join your tour group in the Fort Klamath Museum parking lot; a bus will take you to the cemetery.

Important. There is no parking at the cemetery.

Food and music will be available at the Fort Museum before the performances.

Cost is $8 and tickets are available at the Klamath County Museum, 1451 Main Street, or

Call 883-4208 for reservations.
Memberships for 2013 are due!

Membership fees are due at the end of each year.

Check your mailing label. The date above your name indicates if you are paid through the year.

- Individual $15.00
- Supporting $30.00
- Life member $125.00

Make checks payable to the Klamath County Historical Society.

Mail or drop off at
Klamath County Museum
1451 Main Street
Klamath Falls, OR 97601