

No. 103

Spring
2013

KLAMATH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TRUMPETER

Meeting Schedule 2013

March 28: *Civil War Surgeons: Tools of the Trade*, by Daniel Foster.

April 25: *Forgotten Places in Klamath County*, by Cayla Hill and Todd Kepple.

May 23: *Where's My Money? The Lost Coins of J.C. Fremont*, by John Kaiser.

June 29 *Summer Bus Tour: Chiloquin & Sprague River*, by Todd Kepple.

July 21: *Picnic on the Williamson River*

September 26: *Prohibition and Prostitution*, 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*

More Upcoming Events

April 28: Baldwin Hotel Social

May 4: Linkville Cemetery Cleanup

May 25-26: Fort Klamath Heritage Days

May 27: Merrill Cemetery Tour

June 15: Pacific Terrace History Walk

September 7-8: Fort Klamath Re-Enactment

Email: klcohis@yahoo.com

Membership Meeting, March 28

Don't miss our first meeting of the year and Dan Foster's Demonstration:

Civil War Surgeons: Tools of the Trade



Dan Foster, Cascade Civil War Society re-enactor and educator, will demonstrate instruments used by Civil War surgeons in the 1860s, the procedures the surgeons used, and the newest inventions available in that era. Although many of the surgical instruments and methods of the mid-19th century appear crude by modern standards, they were the best available at the time. Dan will show how the surgeons met the challenges of the field hospital during this critical wartime period.

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.

Fort Klamath Celebrates 150 Years

By Todd Kepple

At this time one hundred fifty years ago, the course of history was about to change drastically for the Upper Klamath Basin. The establishment of a military fort was about to occur, opening the way for a few adventurous farmers and ranchers to establish themselves in an arid watershed with a forbidding climate, and hastening the demise of a tribal culture that had existed in the Basin for thousands of years.

A century and a half after the establishment of Fort Klamath, a committee is working under the auspices of the Klamath County Museum to plan a series of events this year that will recall the significance of the fort, as well as review efforts by the Klamath Tribes to deal with the impacts of white settlement while restoring and preserving key elements of their heritage and sovereignty.

The annual Heritage Days living history encampment at the Fort Klamath Museum on May 25-26 will carry a sesquicentennial theme, and a special re-enactment is being planned for Sept. 7-8 to commemorate the establishment of the fort, which was officially commissioned on Sept. 5, 1863.

Other lectures and social events are being planned for the three months between those two bookend celebrations.

This summer's events will be only the latest in a long series of efforts to preserve the fort's history since it was closed by the Army in 1899, and passed into private ownership in 1890. Among the first was a "sham battle" staged in 1893, when soldiers in uniform and Indians in war bonnets participated together in a re-enactment of the Modoc War of 1872-73. Modern sensitivities, of course, make it highly unlikely that such a spectacle could be staged in this day and age.

Fort buildings that had been used by the Army didn't last long once the military post was closed. Some were relocated to nearby ranches, while others collapsed and decomposed on the site.



This photo, obtained by the museum in 2012, shows a horse and buggy traveling past "old Fort Klamath" at a time when the cavalry barracks is still standing, and the guard house is caving in.

Over the next few decades, memory of the fort and appreciation of its significance began to fade. Oliver Cromwell Applegate, a veteran of the Modoc War and the Basin's leading advocate of history, was occasionally called on to share stories about the fort, but there was no concentrated effort to preserve the fort site.

Another generation of history enthusiasts came to the rescue of Fort Klamath history in the 1960s. Francis "Van" Landrum, in his 1988 book "Guardhouse, Gallows and Graves," wrote that efforts to preserve the military post site were initiated in 1962, as the fort's centennial was approaching. Landrum was among those who located remnants of the fort's flagpole.

Buena Cobb Stone published a small book, "Fort Klamath – Frontier Post in Oregon," in 1964. Long out of print, Stone's book is still sought by serious students of the fort's history. (A few copies are available for sale – marked at "out of print" prices – at the Klamath County Museum.)

Klamath County in 1966 purchased six acres of land on the west side of Highway 62 within the main parade ground of the fort. The Zumbrun family donated another two acres of land.

Three years later a cage was erected over the site believed to hold the graves of four Modoc leaders executed after the Modoc Indian War in 1873. A primitive cabin was built in the location where the fort guardhouse had stood. One of the county museum's most treasured artifacts – a chair in which Modoc leader Captain Jack sat during his imprisonment – was displayed inside the cabin.

The Fort Klamath site was added to the National Register of Historic Places on Oct. 7, 1971. The following year, the county opened its property as a park, and a formal dedication of the grounds was held Aug. 19, 1973.

The old jail from the town of Fort Klamath was placed on the county property in 1977, and the old Klamath Agency post office building was added in 1998.

A fire caused by faulty wiring destroyed the cabin in October 2001. The loss of the building was not considered a huge loss, since the structure was not historic. However, the destruction of the Captain Jack chair was considered by some to be a much more significant loss.

An insurance claim paid for construction of a new building on the site. Opened in May 2003, the new structure is styled after the original fort guardhouse, though its fixtures are thoroughly modern.

Starting in 2004, a group of living history re-enactors held an annual event, originally called "Timeline," on the Fort Klamath Museum grounds. The event has since been renamed as Heritage Days, and for the past few years has included a presentation on flint-knapping by the Klamath Tribes, as well as a discussion of the four Modoc graves.

A committee was formed in 2007 to develop a long-range management plan for the Fort Klamath grounds. Long-term goals identified for the property included the acquisition of more land, including a site just north of the museum property known to have included the site of a barracks building and smaller outbuildings. Though no action has occurred in that regard, the expansion of the museum grounds remains a goal of the county museum program.

Other provisions of the management plan for the Fort Klamath Museum include a prohibition on bringing



Grave markers for four Modoc Indians executed at Fort Klamath nearly 140 years ago.

any more historic buildings onto the site that were not directly related to the fort. The plan also called for the virtual elimination of motorized vehicles on the west side of the irrigation ditch that runs through the property. This provision – with exceptions for mowing equipment or moving of equipment – recognizes that much of the property on the east side of the ditch has been heavily impacted by development of a graveled parking area, while the west side has been largely undisturbed since the days when the Army post was closed.

For those of us now tasked with management of the Fort Klamath Museum grounds, it's striking to note how rapidly and completely the original fort structures disappeared. An analysis of aerial photos taken in 1940 shows that even then there was no evidence of any buildings having been located there.

This lack of physical evidence on the surface caused the question to arise as to how we could be absolutely certain that the guardhouse replica is in the correct location. Likewise, how could one be certain that the site believed to be the four Modoc graves could be regarded as accurate.

Landrum, in his 1988 book, claimed the location of the graves had never been lost, though it is well known that the markers for the graves had disappeared long before the county acquired acreage at the site.

Those questions were settled in 2011 when the county, using a grant from the Oregon Heritage Program, hired a team from the University of Oregon to conduct a survey of the site with ground-penetrating radar.

Representatives from the Klamath Tribes' Cultural and Heritage Committee were present on the day the university team ran the radar unit over the site believed to be the graves. Within minutes the radar confirmed the presence of four grave shafts. Though the radar is not sensitive enough to reveal whether any human remains might still be in the graves, there was no doubt that the graves were indeed in the location that had been marked decades earlier when the county acquired the site.

The university's radar survey also revealed the outline of a barracks building precisely where maps indicated it would be.

A question that still lingers is whether any human remains might still be present in the graves. Some archaeologists have stated that, because of the wet soil conditions that prevail in the area most of the year, it's unlikely that any remains would still exist. The only remains that could possibly be found would be teeth, but since we know the four Modocs were decapitated after their execution, there will be no teeth in the graves.

There is also the rumor that persisted for many years that Captain Jack's body was exhumed from his grave under cover of darkness immediately after his execution. The rumor has never been substantiated, however. Landrum, in his 1988 book, discounted the rumor:

"If Captain Jack's body was stolen (as has been alleged) in a ghoulish enterprise on that first evening, a conspiracy of humongous proportions



Pat O'Grady from the University of Oregon describes the process of ground-penetrating radar for members of the Klamath Tribes Culture and Heritage Committee during a 2011 survey of the graves at the Fort Klamath Museum.

was carried out in full view of reporters, Indian captives, guard details, and most important, in front of those Indians permitted freedom from the stockade, Scarface Charley and the four "Bloodhounds" – Hooker Jim, Bogus Charley, Shacknasty Jim and Steamboat Frank. Hardly seems possible."

The Klamath County Museum today operates under the presumption that the bodies of the four Modocs were left undisturbed in their graves. Even if at some point evidence is produced to the contrary, the four graves will always be treated with the utmost respect as the symbol of closure in a war that caused so much grief for so many.

In the same way, the entire Fort Klamath Museum property serves to remind us of the tumultuous times that our forebears lived in.

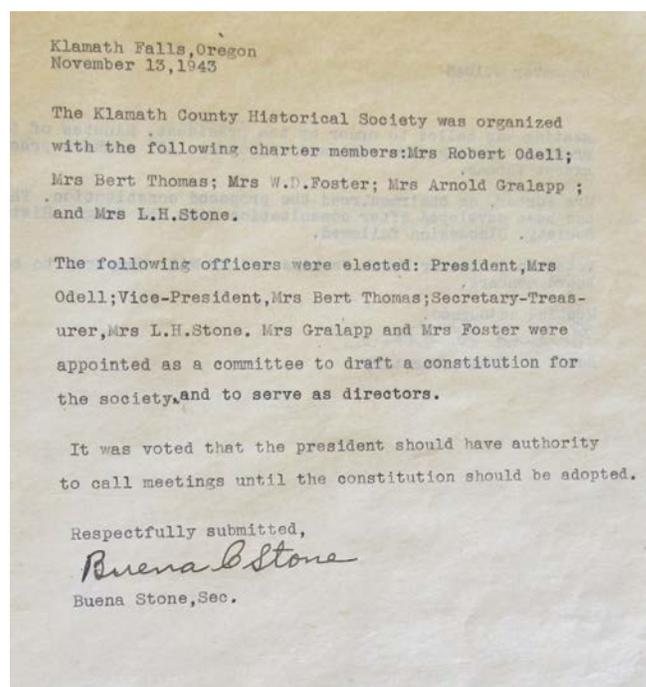
70 Years of Historical Society Records



Future historians will benefit from the work presently being conducted by Phyllis Goebel and Sue Fortune (above), who are organizing and indexing the Klamath County Historical Society records to make these more accessible for future research.

Few present members of the Klamath County Historical Society may be aware that the organization dates from 1943. As early records show, primary objectives in forming the Society centered on the need to establish a county museum. The first general meeting was on July 8, 1944, but organization began months before in 1943. Charter members included Mrs. Robert Odell, Mrs. Bert Thomas, Mrs. Buena Stone, Mrs. W. D. Foster, Mrs. Arnold Galapp, and Mrs. Geneva Duncan.

The Society was formally incorporated on May 2-8, 1946. As Mrs. Geneva Duncan explains in an article in the *Klamath Echoes* in 1964, its mission was to “establish a county museum to preserve, protect, and exhibit artifacts and records pertaining to the history of the region and to educate the public about our history through tours, lectures, and articles.”



In an article “A Library is Sold—A Museum is Born,” Carol B. Howe traced the early history of the Museum so long in planning. In 1946 the first Museum Commission was appointed: “A room was set aside to hold historic objects in the Veteran's Memorial Building;A few objects were collected but otherwise, little was accomplished” (1989).

In 1953, moneys were set aside for a new museum building, but it was decided to construct a joint County Library and County Museum. On Oct. 24, 1955, the new building was opened and artifacts were stored there until the mid-1960s. When the City and County libraries decided to merge, the Klamath County Museum moved into the Armory; the Klamath County Museum held its next grand opening there on February 20, 1970.

Today, the Klamath County Historical Society is proud to be an associate of our wonderful Museum, with its rare archives and unique collections that preserve the record of Klamath County's history. Its educational programs, under direction of Manager Todd Kepple, are matched by no other small town in Oregon.

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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.

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Make checks payable to the

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Mail or drop off at

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