Upcoming Meetings Schedule

March 27. Oliver Cromwell Applegate - A Pioneer Family Legacy, by Carol Mattos and Todd Kepple


May 22. Chasing the Yellow Rails, by Todd Kepple, John Fortune, and Jack Inman

June 28. Butte Valley Bus Tour

September 25. Route Wars: The Politics behind our Transportation Industry, by Ryan Bartholomew

October 23. Catastrophic Weather Events in Klamath Country, by Todd Kepple

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“Buried Treasure in Klamath County,” by O. C. Applegate

“Cross Country in 1928,” by Ron Brown

Highlights Upcoming Spring Events

In Memory of Paul Goebel

Our Mission: Support the Museum

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

O. C. Applegate—A Pioneer Family Legacy

At the March 27 membership meeting, Carol Mattos and Todd Kepple will present a slide show profiling the long and adventurous life of Oliver Cromwell Applegate, historian, veteran of the Modoc War, and one of Klamath County’s most colorful pioneers.

O. C. was born in 1845 near Dallas, Oregon, one of 12 children born to the famous trailblazer, Lindsay Applegate, and Elizabeth Basham Applegate. After teaching for a time in Ashland, he moved in 1865 to the Klamath Reservation as assistant Indian Agent to his father.

Here, he made many friends among the Klamath and Modoc, learned their languages, and led a company of native scouts, the “Ax and Rifle Company,” who guarded provision wagons and opened roads between the Klamath and Yainax agencies.

When the Modoc war broke out in 1872, he was subagent at Yainax. He headed a party of volunteers in the attack on Hooker Jim’s camp on Lost River. At the same time, he used his influence with Chief Schonchin at Yainax to prevent the greater part of the Modoc Tribe from joining Captain Jack in the rebellion.

After the war, he owned three large ranches; all were lost during the Depression of 1895. O. C. died at age 93 after a long and varied career. With his straight figure, flowing beard, and old time uniform, he was a well-known figure in Klamath Falls and kept the history of the county alive with tours of the lava beds and history talks at all county celebrations.
Buried Treasure in Klamath County
by Captain O. C. Applegate, January 10, 1909

One of O. C. Applegate’s adventures is recounted below, which was extracted — in part — from his article reprinted in the Klamath Echoes (1964) Volume 1, pp. 38-39 — where you can read the entire article.

About the time of the beginning of the last Modoc outbreak in 1872 the mail stage was robbed on the south side of the Siskiyou Mountains. The robbers, two in number, escaped to the Siskiyou forests with $12,000, mainly in gold....

Years passed and no evidence appeared to throw any light upon this matter until in an obscure mining camp of the Northwest, a grizzled man in the eve of his departure to another world, confided to a friend the story of the adventure in holding up the stage in the Siskiyou Mountains, and of the escape of his confederate and himself, easterly through the trackless forests and rugged canyons. [and] they entered into the sparsely settled Klamath Basin....

At last overcome with fatigue and hunger and having passed through a hilly region, they ventured to a house which proved to be a stage or mail station. Here they spent the night and during the time cautiously relieved themselves of their treasures.... The dying bandit gave a brief written statement and diagram which he seemed to think would enable his friend to locate the deposit.

Ten years or more ago, after many plans had been examined by treasure-hunters on the various roads leading through the Klamath Country, all of them agreeing with some feature of the description, the writer was taken into the confidence of parties who were making the investigations and was supplied with what was purported to be an exact copy of the data furnished by the stage robber. A careful study was made of the rather vague descriptions and rough map furnished by the stage robber of the geography of the Klamath regions. At the time of the Modoc War the mail from Linkville, now Klamath Falls, to Lakeview was for some months carried by an adventurer through the mountains on horseback, via Swan Lake Valley to Sprague River and not around Lost River Valley as it now is. This adventurer had a cabin near a spring in the woods which was headquarters for his mail line, where he had provided a little hay and some crude shelter for his ponies. His family consisted of his little boy and usually one man to assist him in his work. This mail scheme came to an untimely end, for a man was killed one night in a drunken brawl in a Linkville saloon and the adventurer with his two companions soon disappeared also towards the east as afterwards was ascertained....

It required something of a liberal interpretation of the stage robbers language to call the old log cabin a “stage station,” since the mail was carried on horse-back, but it was on the road to “Swan Lake” and in some other ways seemed to meet the requirements as set forth on the paper. It was in an obscure place, such as cautious men, fearing retributions for their misdeeds, might venture to approach. Pondering over the meager evidence, the conviction grew that the treasure must have been buried somewhere in the vicinity of the cabin, and so it was decided to make a search with the utmost care....

The writer happened to know that the cabin then existing was not the original one, which had been burned several years before, and this seemed to be a decided advantage. From the depression which marked the site of the old cabin he went West to the place where the fence once stood that limited the “potato patch” described in the diagram, then he stepped with the greatest deliberations two hundred twenty paces into the woods and up the hill. Sure enough, there were growing together four trees as mentioned in the description. Turning our back to these trees, facing the cabin according to directions we took nine carefully measured steps on the back track, then two abruptly to the right and dug into one of the hardest beds of natural cement we have ever seen and found nothing. That splendid collection of double eagles probably yet remains somewhere in the bosom of Klamath County doing nobody any good; another promising industry sadly neglected in these latter days.
Cross Country in 1928
By Ron Brown

Ron Brown is an anchor and reporter for KDRV-KDKF TV, and was born in Klamath Falls. Every Friday he produces and airs a historic feature called "Oregon Trails."

Summer will soon be here and millions of Americans will be heading out on the highways for family vacations. This last year marked the 101st anniversary of the first car to drive across the country, from San Francisco via southern Oregon and Idaho, to New York. That was in 1903, and it was a very long, slow trip. Ten years later in 1913, Klamath County pioneer Orson Avery Stearns backtracked over the Oregon Trail from Klamath Falls in a friend's Cadillac to Omaha, Nebraska. Even then, roads were still not much, at least not for automobile travel across country.

Then, in the summer of 1928, an Algoma family of five loaded up their 1927 Hudson sedan, and joining with relatives in Weed, California embarked on an eight week long, eight thousand mile trip around the U.S. and Canada. The Algoma family included my father, Byron Brown, who was six years old at the time, his two older sisters, and parents. This is a brief account of that trip, based largely on personal interviews and a small notebook kept by Clifford Roark of Weed, my father's cousin.

In that little black notebook he noted every place they camped or stayed, how much gas they bought, and where and what they paid for it. He also noted the different license plates they saw on the trip and the colors of the plates. And he noted the mileage from the odometer, including a sixty mile ferry trip across Lake Michigan on the return trip home.

We don't know the exact date the Brown's —Joe and Louise, Eloise, Helen, and Byron — left from Algoma, but it was apparently a big event. Helen Brown, later Freeman, was only eight years old then and says the whole town of Algoma turned out to send them off.

In a December 2000 interview Helen said, "They gave us a big farewell party, and presented the folks with the awning that went on the car. And uh, it was a party for the whole town." Joe was a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge and some of the gifts came from fellow lodge members. He was also a planerman at the Algoma planning mill and Louise worked in the box factory. (Her brother was Henry Uhrin, well known in the basin as a carpenter who built many of the homes in Algoma, a boarding house, and the box factory. He was not on this trip).

One picture gives an idea how crowded they must have been, with camping gear tied on the running boards, spare tires on the back, and some jaunty fringed awnings on the side windows to keep out the summer sun.

The Browns headed south out of Klamath Falls by way of the recently built Dalles-California Highway, to Weed, California. That highway is now known as U.S. 97. At Weed they joined up with Joe Brown's sister Lena, her husband Mike Roark, and son Clifford. Based on Clifford Roark's notebook, they drove to Susanville and stayed there two days before heading on to Winnemucca. At this point they were most likely on the newly created "Lincoln Highway", which closely parallels the I-80 of today.

It was in Elko, Nevada, that a near tragedy happened. Apparently tired of being crammed into the Hudson with her parents and younger brother and sister, Eloise Brown (Logan) switched to the Roark's 1925 Dodge sedan, which only had 3 people. Shortly thereafter the two cars became separated. With no way to determine which car was ahead, the Brown's and Roark's just continued on across Nevada to Salt Lake City. Just by chance, as they were driving around that larger city,
they spotted each other on the second day and were reunited. Helen says, "Sis was with them, and uh, she was really happy to see Mom and Pop!"

Clifford Roark's notebook shows that the little caravan continued on to Colorado, where they apparently took time out to see Pikes Peak. Several brochures and maps from the trip are from the Pikes Peak area. At one time before moving to Algoma, Louise and the Uhrin family lived in Fruita, Colorado, where Henry Uhrin, known as "Hank" to the family, built a schoolhouse.

Regarding travelling, Helen says, "We'd travel from early morning until in the afternoon. Then we'd find a place to either camp or have an auto court. Or, to a relative's home." An auto court was the forerunner to today's motel, and often had camping facilities as well as cabins to rent where a family could cook a meal and get a shower and rest.

After a week they were in Colorado. A week later they passed through Iowa. And by the end of the second week they crossed the famous Cumberland Gap into eastern Tennessee from which the Roark and Brown families had left almost 20 years before. There they spent about two weeks, visiting family and friends, many for the last time.

Clifford Roark had ordered maps the year before of all the states through which they planned to drive. Some were from oil companies. Others were official state highway maps.

The notebook entries left by Clifford Roark show they passed through 23 states and Canadian provinces, travelled over 8100 miles, using 512 gallons of gas in the Dodge, which cost almost 115 dollars in 1928. They averaged 16 miles per gallon. There is no data for the Hudson, but the miles travelled would be about the same.

On the return trip they headed north to Michigan, then Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota. After crossing into Montana, they drove to Alberta, crossing the Canadian Rockies into British Columbia, then down through Idaho, Washington and Oregon. The caravan followed the recently completed Pacific Highway, later known as U.S. 99, from Salem to Grants Pass and on to Klamath Falls and Weed. The entire trip took about two months.

There are no mentions of flat tires or other breakdowns, but it's almost certain they happened. Roads were more than likely not be paved in 1928, and tires were the real weak link for most travelers. The price of gasoline ranged from around 20 cents a gallon to more than 30 cents on the trip. Keep in mind that a gallon of gas then might cost about what a laborer might earn in an hour. And many of those prices remained unchanged for the next 40 years!

The trip was made in the relative prosperity of the late 20's, — a little over a year before the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The Browns remained in Algoma until the mill shut down forever in the labor-short war years, settling in the Rogue Valley in the late 40's. Joe Brown died in 1970. Louise Uhrin Brown lived to be almost 102 years old, passing away in 2001. The Roarks remained in Weed the rest of their lives. Mike and Lena Roark died a few weeks apart, near the end of World War II. Clifford Roark passed away at Weed in the mid-50's.

For 1928, that was quite a trip. It would still be a big trip. But then it was on roads and highways that were often not paved, with gas stations few and far between. However, America was becoming a nation on the move, and more and more families had an automobile. The U.S. was the world's largest producer of petroleum products and the Great Depression was still ahead. For an adventurous family anxious to reunite with family members not seen for decades, it was worth the effort and expense.
Upcoming Spring Events

March 20. Museum 60th Anniversary Celebration, by Gloria Sullivan and Niles Reynolds

Join Museum staff, Gloria Sullivan and Niles Reynolds, and friends in celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Armory-Museum at 7 pm in the Museum Main Hall. Gloria will give a slide show highlighting the museum’s history from its early days to the present. Refreshments will be served.


At the membership meeting in April, researchers from the University of Arizona will explain how their tree-ring studies in the Klamath Basin provide a record of past climates and drought cycles. In the 1920s and 1930s, droughts were long and severe. Even more severe conditions can be found in earlier centuries. Tree-ring studies provide a long term perspective on the challenges we face today in the Klamath Basin. Note: The talk will be held in the Museum Main Hall.

May 3. O. C. Applegate Monument Dedication, by Todd Kepple and Carol Mattos

In the afternoon following the cleanup, from 1 to 2 pm, Todd Kepple and Carol Mattos will dedicate the new monument for O. C. Applegate. The marker was badly damaged and virtually unreadable, so the historical society contracted with Jefferson Monuments to create a new marker, which will be unveiled at this time.

May 17. Merrill Cemetery Tour, by Polly Tickner

Polly Tickner will lead a tour of Merrill Cemetery highlighting the history of important early pioneers. She also will discuss plans to restore leaning and toppled monuments. Meet at the cemetery at 10 am.

May 22. Chasing the Yellow Rails, by Todd Kepple, John Fortune, and Jack Inman.

Beginning in 1974, the Klamath County Historical Society, in partnership with Trails West, undertook a large project to mark the trails across the Klamath Basin. This effort was later expanded by the society to mark a wide range of significant historic sites, from stage stations to early ranches and mills. Todd, with help from John and Jack, has relocated the original markers and will relate their many adventures in the search for the yellow rails at the May membership meeting.

Hikes & Heritage

May 17. History Fitness Hike. Join Todd Kepple for another healthy and fun hiking adventure along the Collman Dairy Road.

May 24. Art of Survival Bike Ride. Cycling enthusiasts will be able to participate in a new ride through the demanding and beautiful Tule Lake landscape with stops designed to refresh spirits and hear about unique history.

May 24-25. Heritage Days at Fort Klamath. Bring the kids and enjoy cannon fire and lots of re-enactments of former days at old Fort Klamath.
In Memory of Paul Goebel

We lost a good friend and loyal supporter of the historical society and museums with the death of Paul Goebel on February 15 this year.

Paul was on the board of the Klamath County Museums Foundation and a long term member of the Klamath County Historical Society. Paul always will be remembered for his quiet humor, gentle resourcefulness, and dedication to the preservation of our heritage for future generations.

Paul was born in 1931 and grew up in Tillamook, Oregon. He married Phyllis Herman in 1957, both graduates from the University of Oregon. After Paul’s service in the Army, the Goebels opened a supermarket in Sweet Home, where sons Todd and Gavin were born, and then moved to Corvallis in 1968. Both adventurers and explorers of the eastern Oregon landscape, they moved to Klamath Falls in 1980 and opened the Goebel’s Office Supply, retiring in 1998.

Our hearts go out to Phyllis in this time of her great loss. We will not forget all the great times we had working together on the Century Bike Ride, exploring the ancient caves at Paisley, eating pancakes at Breakfast with Santa, and picnicking at their beautiful cabin on the Williamson River – among many others.

Our Sincere Sympathy

Donations in Memory of Paul Goebel

Lou and Barbara Turk
Shirley and Laverne Long
Mary Lou Beynon
L. E. Herman
R. Wilson
Jack and Cathy Inman
Bruce and Connie McCormack
Midland Empire Insurance
Todd Kepple
Mae Rutherford
Elizabeth and Jerry Budy
Carol and Gary Mattos

Thank You!

Paul, second from left, and Phyllis (not shown) enjoyed the talk by Dennis Jenkins at Paisley Caves during an expedition to Summer Lake and Fort Rock valleys.
Our Mission

The Klamath County Historical Society was established in 1946 to promote the creation of a museum. In the 60 years since the first museum was established in the Armory, we have been dedicated to preserving our history and educating the public. A primary function has been to support the acquisition and proper curating of its precious artifacts, photographs, and documents and to promote public understanding through the many outreach programs sponsored by the Museums and Historical Society.

Renew Your Support for the Museums!

The modest levy that has supported the museum operations and programs for the past three years is up for renewal. Without renewal of the levy, most museum staff would have to be laid off and most museum programs would be eliminated. Museum hours would likely be reduced.

This would not be a new tax. It would be a continuation of the tax levy approved by 61 percent of voters countywide in 2011. The tax rate is 5 cents per $1000 of assessed property value. For the owner of a $150,000 home, that would be $7.50 total per year. All the funds will stay in our community. For more information, go to www.museumsupporters.org

Vote YES on May 20
2014 KCHS Officers
President: Liz Budy
Vice President: Polly Tickner
Secretary: Sally Bailo
Treasurer: Mickie Vandenburg
Past President: Sue Fortune

Board Members:
  Phyllis Goebel
  Jack Inman
  Carol Mattos
  Bruce McCornack
  Mae Rutherford

Memberships for 2014 are due!
Membership fees are due at the end of each year.
Check your mailing label. The date above your name indicates whether 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 the Klamath County Museum
1451 Main Street
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

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