



Friends of the Siskiyou County Museum

Fall 2023 newsletter

Museum Family Fun Day A Huge Success!

Best one yet, with an estimated 400 visitors! Clockwise from right: Siskiyou Art Council's Art Cart; schoolhouse fun with the stereoscope; 4-H Petting Zoo; vintage cars and YFD vintage fire truck & historic cars. Thanks to all the people that made it happen, including our fabulous museum volunteers. See you next year!



**Siskiyou Stories:
Sat., Nov. 18, 1 pm:
Wildfire History of Siskiyou County
with Jay Perkins**

Artifact Spotlight

Fresno Scraper

There is a piece of equipment in the Outdoor Museum that perhaps you have never noticed. The rusty metal contraption looks so insignificant, but in reality is an important artifact. The gadget, a Fresno Scraper, was quite the innovative piece of equipment in its day!

The tool looks primitive, yet “Fresnos” as they were often called, revolutionized the tasks of leveling fields, digging irrigation ditches, and building roads, tasks that would have been even more back-breaking without them. If you were a shovel man around the turn of the 20th century, you appreciated this.

Earlier scrapers that were little more than glorified boards set up on edge, leveled the ground by pushing dirt along in front. This set up was called a buckboard. But the accumulated soil still had to be shoveled to the side or spread in a low spot using shovels and wheelbarrows.

As a piece of earth-moving equipment, the Fresno Scraper is in essence a small horse or mule-drawn bulldozer. This new device featured a rotating blade that directed the load where you wanted it to go and had a one-yard capacity. The two-horse model sold for \$28.

John Porteous, the inventor, was a Scottish immigrant. He arrived in Fresno, CA in 1877 and opened a wagon shop where he fabricated wagons and other implements. He listened attentively to farmers complaining about the laborious task of leveling fields. Then he started tinkering. He patented his first scraper in 1883, opening the Fresno Agricultural Works to manufacture and sell the ground-breaking (literally!) tools.

And sell them he did. Thousands were sent off around the country and across the world. There followed new improved versions and then various knockoffs, leading to “fresno” (with a small “F”)



becoming a generic name. They were used in agriculture for leveling fields and digging irrigation ditches, highway and railroad grading, canal building (especially the Panama Canal) and general construction, and were used by the army in Europe during the Great War.

A 1912 contract for building a portion of the Pacific Highway (later Highway 99 lists wages for a “two-horse fresno and driver” at \$5 a day, \$6.50 a day for a “four-horse fresno and driver.” A laborer (that man with a shovel) received \$2 a day.

By the 1920s tractors were used to pull larger capacity scrapers, and soon gas or diesel-powered scrapers (dozers) appeared. The humble fresnos, whose design served as the basis for giant earthmovers, were abandoned to rust. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers has recognized the Fresno scraper as a *Mechanical Engineering Marvel*.

Fresnos helped shape the land around Siskiyou County and can be found here and there abandoned and forgotten, or conversely, treasured and used as decorative yard ornaments.

Distilling Whiskey was Risky Business

by Gail Jenner

Whiskey Gulch, located above Old Etna, California, was—as recorded by local historian Jim Denny—one of the nicest little whiskey stills that ever turned out illegal whiskey. It was only out of business when whiskey could be produced legally.

For those who wanted to purchase booze during the years of Prohibition (1920 to 1933), though, it was not always easy, although there were any number of stills all over Siskiyou County. One fascinating bit of trivia included how purchase of booze was an under-the-counter transaction: patrons would ask for peaches!

One of the largest whiskey stills was located at Cinnabar Springs, located several miles up Beaver Creek down the Klamath River, run by a man named Riley. Lester and Willis “Moon” Quigley packed in supplies by mules or horses, and the manufactured whiskey was packed out in barrels, again on mules and horses. Riley also ran another still at nearby Barkhouse Creek; the whiskey here was filtered through gravel and charcoal, making it a higher grade of alcohol.

From 1922 through 1925, sixty-six arrests were made for violations such as: possession of alcohol; bootlegging; moonshining; transporting liquor and whiskey; and more. Most offenders were given sentences starting with 30 days and/or fines of up to \$500 (pretty steep fine for the time). A few more notorious offenders were found guilty of federal charges and sent to San Quentin! In truth, however, the ratio of arrests to offenders remained relatively low, and even with arrests, it did not take long for destroyed stills to be rebuilt.

According to Shasta County historian Dottie Smith, author of *The Dictionary of Early Shasta County History*, and a former curator and instructor at Shasta College, (excerpted here, with some edits):

“During Prohibition and the 1920s, Castella was THE place to go in the upper Sacramento River Canyon. People flocked there because it was a beautiful out-of-the-way place where alcohol flowed like water.

“Illegal stills began popping up throughout Shasta County (as well as Siskiyou County), especially in the Sacramento River Canyon area, and Castella became a center for illegal stills. For the next 10 years, almost every creek, spring and water ditch became home to a still. Popular names of their illegal alcohol products were Jackass Brandy, Bathtub Gin and Rotgut.

“Trains stopped at the Castle Rock Railway Station full of people who came from as far away as the Bay Area to have a rip-roaring time. When the partygoers disembarked, they usually headed straight for Mike Padula’s Saloon across the street from the train station. His saloon was built in the early 1920s, and though Mike was only 5 feet tall, he managed to rule his saloon with an iron hand.

According to a booklet titled *A Holiday Home Tour — December 11, 2004*, published by the Castella Community Education Organization, *Mike’s Place had a large wooden bar running the length of the room with 40 bar stools, a dance floor and stage for the band. Hundreds of pictures of beautiful women covered the ceiling, and mirrors covered the wall with the exception of a small opening covered with glass. A bottle of whiskey was housed in this opening, reportedly worth \$25,000.*”

While the days of Prohibition ended in 1933, the memories of those years live on in stories and a few precious artifacts still remaining. Quite obviously, always
Continued on next page



Mike’s Place was still standing in the 1980s. (Shasta Historical Society photo)

creative and looking for ways to make a little moonshine or money during the days of Prohibition, northern California and Siskiyou County found ways to circumvent the “regulators” and provide locals and visitors with the infamous ‘water of life!’

Sources:

Betts, Doris Wohlfert. “Violators of Prohibition Act Arrested.” *Siskiyou Pioneer*, vol. 6, no. 7, 1994. p.49.

Denny, Jim. “Bootlegging in Etna.” *Siskiyou Pioneer*, vol. 6, no. 7, 1994, p. 39.

Smith, Dottie. “Travelin’ in Time: Castella was a Popular Place During Prohibition.”

<https://castlestoneinn.net/cottages-in-the-news/travelin-in-time-castella-was-a-popular-place-during-prohibition/>

Klamath Falls Museums Worth a Visit

1451 Main St., K. Falls, OR



The **Klamath County Museum** (left) is housed in the historic 1935 armory built of locally sourced brick. Note the New Deal-era Classical Moderne architecture, including a number of cast stone soldiers built into the exterior walls, wearing the typical (leftover) WWI uniforms that soldiers wore at that time.

Inside exhibits feature a good mix of local, western, Native American and natural history and even some vintage cars. The Modoc War, WWII balloon bombs and the Japanese Internment Camp are exhibits of special interest.

Another county-owned historic property is the **Baldwin Hotel** (31 Main St., summer only). It is truly a step back in time! You will be tempted to step up to the front desk and check in. All four floors of the building hold exhibits of local history.

Privately owned **Favell Museum** (right) displays Native American artifacts (100,000 of them!) and Contemporary Western Art. The artifacts come from all over the Americas, not just local tribes, and include arrowheads, stone tools, clothing, beadwork, basketry and pottery.



125 W. Main St., K. Falls, OR

A Little Building with a Lot of History

You may have wondered about the humble little building towards the back of the Outdoor Museum, especially since it has no sign (we're working on that!). It is an authentic skid shack salvaged from near Castella on the southern Siskiyou County border, once located at Camp 2 of the M.A. Burns Lumber Company. This was a railroad logging operation that extended far up into the Castle Creek drainage.

The narrow gauge (36") railroad was built in 1912, the skid shack soon thereafter. This spur off the Southern Pacific mainline was named Dirigo by SP. The spur eventually totaled 30 miles; Camp 2 was at Mile 11.

By 1916 Burns had gone bankrupt. A series of other companies continued to operate until 1929. The track



Close up of the Skid Shack in the Outdoor Museum

A Siskiyou County *Believe it or Not!*

(From the *Sacramento Bee*, July 11, 1923)

Trout Stomachs Yield Nuggets in Siskiyou

YREKA (Siskiyou Co.) July 11. It is reported here that Fred Cleland, of Garretson Springs, caught four rainbow trout in Beaver Creek and that each trout gave up several gold nuggets of diminutive size. Frequently fish caught in Beaver Creek or near its juncture with Klamath River have gold in their stomachs.

remained in place until 1936 when it was taken up and sold as scrap to Japan. The boiler from one of the train engines was used at a nearby CCC camp in the 1930s.

The museum's skid shack is the only tangible piece of the logging operation that remains.

Skid shacks were movable buildings that could be towed on their skids down a "skid road" to the next needed location in a logging show. They were used multiple ways; for storage, an office, a bunk house, etc. The term "skid road" eventually morphed into a mostly unrelated term, "skid row," probably because the rough, unkempt look of a city's "skid row" (and its residents) seemed reminiscent of the rustic appearance of the shacks on the logging skid road, and the hardworking but scruffy resident loggers.

Once again, focusing on our Scholarship awards to Siskiyou County high school seniors.

NORTH STATE GIVING TUESDAY

Powered by the Community Foundation of the North State

* you can also come into the museum to donate

Tuesday, Nov. 28 | **Early Giving starts Nov. 14** | www.NorthStateGives.org/FSCM



A section of quilt on display during Museum Family Fun Day.

Museum News & Events

Donations

We sometimes receive monetary donations, and no matter what the size, we truly appreciate each and every one of them. We recently received an anonymous donation given in honor of **Idabell Crowell**, in recognition of her "kindness and generosity." Idabell has been associated with the Siskiyou County Museum for decades and continues as a volunteer. She also donates handmade items for sale in the Gift Shop.

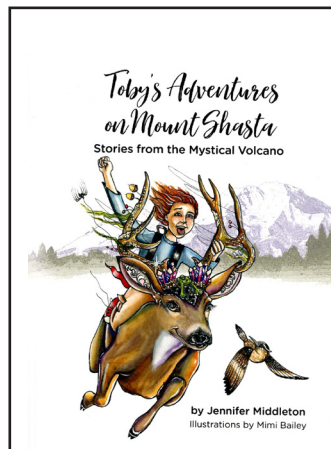
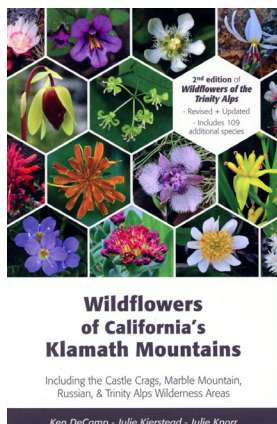
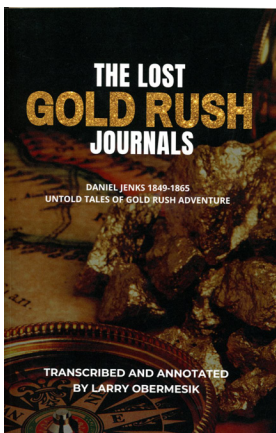
New in the Outdoor Museum

Have you seen our beautiful new brick colored concrete **picnic tables**? These will come in handy during school field trips or for visitors to picnic or rest on. Thank you to the McConnell Foundation for the grant to purchase them. The **new roof** on the blacksmith shop was funded (thanks to memberships, donations, fund raisers, and store profits) by the Friends and installed over the summer.

Museum Closure

The Museum will be closed over the Christmas holidays Dec. 24 through Jan. 9.

New Books in Museum Store:



a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit, EIN 82-1833303
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Newsletter Editor: Jill Livingston
Board Meetings: Second Tuesdays @ 10am
Everyone Welcome!

Siskiyou Stories:

Sat., Nov, 18, 1 pm:
Wildfire History of Siskiyou County,
with Jay Perkins

Coming in January:
Land of Remember,
Tales of Hornbrook and Henley
with Bett Peterson