



Our Historic Love/Hate Relationship with Bears

Close encounters with bears were a fact of life in pretty much all of the frontier west. In California, black bears and even grizzlies roamed all over the state excepting the southeast desert, but their numbers rapidly declined following the gold discovery. The black bear population is now increasing (currently about 25-30,000) due to more restrictive hunting laws. But the grizzlies are long gone. Stories of the state's "Last Grizzly" (and there were several "last" grizzlies) date back to the 1920s.

California grizzlies, a subspecies of those in the Rockies, were awesome animals and legitimately to be feared when met unexpectedly, not to mention a serious threat to livestock. Even a gun was no guarantee of safety. These animals that could weigh nearly a ton could absorb many musket balls and bullets to no ill effect and carry them around for years if they had not landed in just the right place.

An 1885 article in the *Yreka Journal* tells the story of two mounted men searching for stray cattle in Butte Valley in an area riddled with lava tubes. Three grizzlies sprung out from a chasm to attack their horses. Bullets did not stop them and the chase was on. The riders managed to get away but returned with dogs to sniff out their attackers. The bears were cornered deep in a lava tube retreat but the horsemen were able to empty and reload their rifles from a safe distance up above and this time, came out the victors.

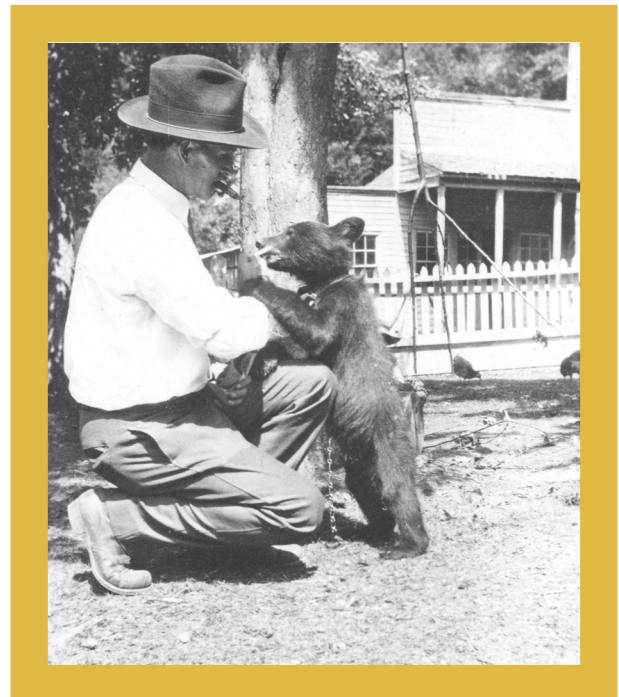


Bears were at once feared for their viciousness and strength (especially grizzlies), admired (for their grandeur and again, their strength), and also valued as a tasty meal. And yes, that's a grizzly bear on our state flag. Oddly, the actual image of the bear depicted on the flag was not firmly established until the state legislature chose one in 1953, so flag bears before that time varied in their appearance. But the official bear image was in fact modeled after a real bear named Monarch.

Bears as Entertainment – Mascots and Pets

The grizzly called Monarch, the model for our flag, was trapped in the mountains in Ventura County in

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A pet bear in Siskiyou County, exact location unknown.

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1889 after a six-month search for a live grizzly at the behest of William Randolph Hearst of the *San Francisco Examiner*. This was something of a publicity stunt. In that time when newspapers were all important and highly competitive with rival rags, the *Examiner* tagline was “Monarch of the Dailies.” So the captured bear was named Monarch and became the *Examiner’s* mascot and namesake.

Monarch was first put on exhibit at Woodward Gardens, a San Francisco zoo/amusement park. 20,000 people are said to have visited on the day of his debut. Later he was moved to the zoo in Golden Gate Park. Clearly unhappy (and why wouldn’t he be?), Monarch occasionally escaped and tried to reach the nearby elk and other caged animals in the zoo. In 1903 Hearst purchased a mate for him from Idaho, and the following year twin cubs were born. In 1911 after 22 years in captivity a sad and debilitated Monarch was euthanized, mounted and put on display at the California Academy of Sciences. Technically, he was stuffed not mounted, as his bones were given to the UC Berkeley zoology department to be studied.

Catching a live bear was usually done with a log trap, and that is how Monarch was captured. Locally,

there was just such a trap at one time on the toll road over Forest Mountain near Robber’s Rock. If a bear ambled in and tried to snag the bait a heavy door would swing down and block him in. Then the trapper (likely the toll gate keeper Yank Johnson in this case) could then shoot the bear, cut out some steaks, render many quarts of lard and tan the hide for a buggy robe, or if the captive were young, sell it for a pet.

Bears are often anthropomorphized. Aren’t they cute how they stand up on two legs, just like people? How they tumble and play just like children? In earlier times, bears were often kept as pets, especially when captured as cubs. They are even trainable, up to a point. Semi-tame bears were paraded around the gold fields to perform dances and do other tricks. The Forest House, the ranch, inn, and social gathering place on the road between Yreka and Fort Jones was known for the pet bears that resided there. The first was a male bear jokingly called Susie. Later, in the 1930s and early 40s, Itchy and Scratchy were residents in the Forest House bear pen. The two were oft-photographed mascots of the 1941 State of Jefferson hullabaloo. But what happened to them, or to the many other pet bears after they matured and grew troublesome is not often recorded, but easy to imagine.

Bears as Entertainment – Bloodsports

A more gruesome form of bear entertainment was introduced in California when the state was part of Spain and then Mexico. Bear and bull fights were just one of several violent staged “sporting events” that were popular in the 19th century. There were also cock fights, dog fights, rat baiting, badger baiting, and at least one bear versus panther (mountain lion) fight. These were raucous occasions with plenty of drinking and most importantly, betting.

One might think that our part of the state would be exempt from Mexican influence (the furthest north Mexican rancho was Rancho San Buenaventura near Redding). But there was at least one recorded local bull and bear fight in the 1860s, and this too was at the Forest House.

These fights were heavily promoted, the bears transported around the state to “perform” in special arenas built with stout upright planks. Spectators would sit



Ad for a Bull/Bear fight in the Sierras.

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Upcoming Museum Events

Friday, Feb. 11

Siskiyou Stories - noon

The Fight to Save the Redwoods

Laura Perrott Mahan, Artist & Activist

A presentation by local writer, teacher & niece
Madeleine Ayres

Friday, March 11

FSCM Quarterly **General Meeting**

11 am - Snacks!

Siskiyou Stories - noon

Legends & Lore of the Diamond Bar

And the Shoot-out of 1912

A presentation by local history researcher
Byran Duncan

Saturday, April 9

Antique Appraisal Day

This month, instead of a Friday presentation we will be hosting certified appraiser Erin Dewell all day Saturday in the Museum. Bring your treasures and get them appraised for a nominal fee. Details TBA.

Walking Tours

**Hawkinsville:
The Portuguese Experience**

Saturday June 4, 11 am

Meet @
Hawkinsville Church

With Tour Guide
Mike Grifantini

Guided Tours

of the **Outdoor Museum**

Friday Sept. 9 @ Noon
(Siskiyou Stories)

Saturday Oct. 8
(Museum Family Fun Day) times TBA



Announcing! FSCM Scholarship!

\$500 to a Siskiyou County High School senior

Deadline: April 1, 2022

Applications will available at all Siskiyou County public high schools and @ the Museum in February



A stuffed Clubfoot on display.

An 1898 newspaper article in the *San Francisco Call* tells the story of a Reelfoot terrorizing in Lake, Sonoma, Mendocino and lower Trinity Counties. This Reelfoot “killed men” and “carried off babies” and was finally “stabbed to death by a hunter whose comrade he had eaten.” One wonders how much is truth and how much is exaggeration; “our” Clubfoot was said to roam from way east of Pilot Rock on the Siskiyou Crest, well up into Oregon, and almost all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

The Siskiyou Clubfoot first appeared in 1869. He was said to be unusually large and ferocious, a remnant of the “old breed” that had populated the state when Europeans first arrived. He had once been trapped near Fall Creek but escaped, leaving behind three

claws. Forewarned, he never fell for that trick again and continued his rampage. “His trail could be followed by the dead cattle left in his path,” according to the *Ashland Daily Tidings*.

So hated that there was a large bounty on his head, Clubfoot continued to terrorize but was unsuccessfully pursued for the next 21 years. He finally met his fate on a frosty April morning in 1890. William Wright ran a small one-man ranch on Camp Creek up the Klamath River. Anger led to fierce determination after witnessing his bull taken down in his own meadow by the legendary grizzly. At least that is one version of the story. But we do know that Bill and his 17-year-old neighbor Purl Bean took off in hot pursuit. After a night and day of tracking came the anticipated confrontation. The first rifle shots hit home and the enraged bear raced straight towards his enemies. Wright and Bean stood their ground, continuing to shoot and reload as fast as they could, one aiming for the head and the other for the heart. With only 40 feet left between them, Clubfoot finally collapsed.

The bear was hauled down the mountain on a sled pulled by horses. A taxidermist was engaged who did a rather poor job of preserving old Clubfoot, who, though still of tremendous size was somewhat misshapen and missing his hump. Like Monarch, he had only been stuffed. Nevertheless, Wright and Bean exhibited Clubfoot all around northern California and

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around the top of the enclosure, on raised platforms or mounted on horses, ready for combat should there be an escapee.

Since the grizzlies were difficult to catch and handle, scarcer as the population dwindled due to over hunting, and were valuable assets to the promoters, they were generally given an unfair advantage in the fight. Bulls, on the other hand, were not hard to come by. They sometimes had their horns sawed off to minimize their threat. A bear might kill several bulls in a single event. But in the case of the bull and bear fight at the Forest House, reports say that the bull was the victor, although he too died shortly after due to the bites, slashes and gashes he had received.

Bears as Adversaries

Most of us have heard of Clubfoot, the wily trap-defying grizzly who wreaked havoc on ranches along the California/Oregon border by wantonly killing valuable livestock for decades. But it should be noted that ours was not the only “Clubfoot” aka, “Reelfoot” or “Slewfoot,” names he (or they) also went by. Bears who had managed to escape from iron bear traps were given these names, as the trapped foot, or what was left of it, was inevitably damaged, leaving the bear with a mangled, misshapen, sideways-turning foot, an odd gait and a distinctive foot print.

Oregon for a couple of years, including on a float in two Yreka July 4th parades. The float was a tableau representing the seal of the state of California, including (besides the bear) a young lady seated in a chair dressed as Minerva, the multi-faceted Roman goddess of wisdom, war, art and commerce, and a miner at work with pick and ax. When he wasn't on tour he resided on the front porch of the Hornbrook store.

Clubfoot was taken to the State Fair in Sacramento in 1892 but by the end of that year was sold to a promoter with a plan of taking him to the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. He would join "a squaw and a buck from the Siskiyou Mountains" in the state's Indian exhibit. (Attitudes and acceptable language have fortunately changed since then.)

Following the Fair, Clubfoot was sent to Europe for a grand tour, and then he disappears from the records. Clubfoot never returned to his old stomping grounds but lives on as one of the great tales of the Siskiyous. © Jill Livingston

Sources: *Siskiyou Pioneer*, 1965 Forest House edition.

Outdoor California, March-April 2012, "Bull and Bear Fights"

"California Grizzly Tales," *Wild West*, June 2012

The Monarch Bear Institute website

"The Life and Death and Afterlife of Reelfoot," Southern Oregon History, Revised website

Bear in Mind, Susan Snyder, Heyday Books, 2003

George Wright, son of William Wright (one of the two men who eventually killed the bear) holding the trap that sheared off three of Clubfoot's toes.



Charles Graves' Yreka Reading Room

Yreka Journal, December 19, 1929

MR. CHAS. GRAVES COMPLETES COZY LOUNGING AND READING ROOM WHERE FRIENDS MAY VISIT

Mr. Charles Graves, one of our splendid townsmen, has demonstrated a very fine friendly public spirit in the erection of a pretty lodge on West Miner close to the street and setting in front of his present home.

Mr. Graves said today, he has always wished to entertain his friends, and now he can do it, in fact the welcome will never cease, as the latch string will always be open, and the friends or general public may come and go at pleasure a friendly abode by the side of the road, for Mr. Graves likes to be a friend to man.

The structure is small and cozy, with a large fire place about which will be arranged easy wicker and buck skin seated chairs. Above the door will be a motto "Welcome, my friends Redskins and whites, to my tepee."

The walls will be decorated with Indian art collections such as baskets, beads, pictures, bows and arrows, and pictures from along the Klamath. The door will always be open.

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Here one may come, rest and read, sit by a cozy fire and chat with his friends, The structure is 16 x 20 feet, built of peeled logs, that dried through the summer. The building has two windows and a French glass door. In the front is a nice large front porch. Mr. Graves is a real benefactor to his host of friends in Yreka. Mr. Harvey Gamer and Mr. M.E. Dillon have put up the building, which is now complete, and have but to finish the beautiful fire place.

The fireplace was constructed of beautiful rocks from all over the county. Charles Graves was born in Massachusetts in 1857, and settled in Siskiyou County in 1875. During his early life he had a varied career, which included work as a professional jockey, construction work on the Columbia River, and as a shoemaker. At one time he operated a shoe repair shop in Yreka.

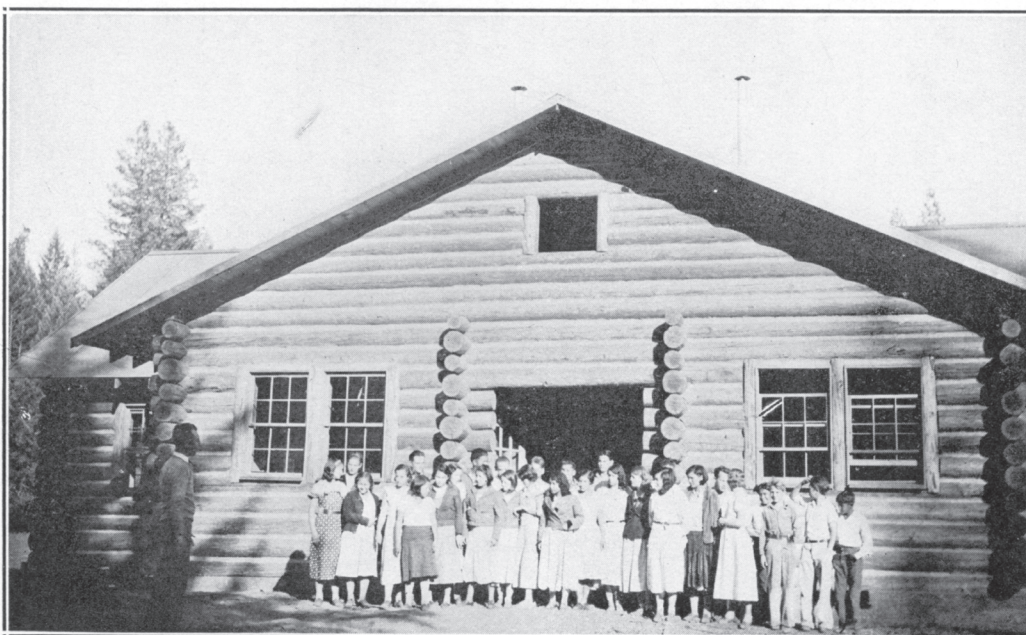
In January, 1921, he was appointed Probation Officer for Siskiyou County and in the same year he received the appointment of Attendance Officer for the schools in Siskiyou County. He served in those positions until 1939.

Mr. Graves had been a friend and champion of Siskiyou County Indians for many years and was noted for his work among them. He arrived in Siskiyou County in 1876 and with three partners built a wing dam in the Klamath River near Happy Camp. He became acquainted with many Natives and listened to their stories. He later authored two books, *Lore and Legends of*

the Klamath River Indians and Before the White Man Came. He also wrote numerous articles for newspapers, chiefly about Indians and local history.

His collection of Indian baskets, most of which were given to the museum at Fort Jones, was said to be one of the best in the state. It is rumored that Graves had an Indian girlfriend by the name of Mollie Oscar, but they never married.

Charles Sumner Graves died in 1948 and was buried in Ft. Jones. The Reading Lounge was inherited by a relative. The lodge was remodeled in 1959 with the addition of a garage, a bedroom and a bathroom. Mr. Graves had a well-tended and prolific garden but when Fairchild Street was widened, the city scraped off all the good soil and artifacts and used them for road fill. The house is located at 747 West Miner Street, on the south east corner of West Miner and Fairchild.



"THE LITTLE LOG HIGH SCHOOL"

NOTE: This is an edited and amended version of a piece first written by Keith Arnold in the 1990s.

Photo of Happy Camp High School from Charles Graves' second book, Before the White Man Came.



Siskiyou Pioneer Jerome Fay and John Muir Tackle the Mountain

“Jerome Fay, 1838-1912” reads a gravestone in the Foulke Cemetery beside the old highway just south of Gazelle. Neither the engraving nor the stone itself exhibit any elaborations or embellishments that might hint at the man’s life. But as with most any gravesite, there is an interesting story to be told, if only we can discover it.

In Fay’s case, his story is discoverable mainly due to his association with John Muir. But before the two men could meet up in Siskiyou County, Fay had to get here. Born into a prominent Vermont family, for whatever reasons many of the men of his generation headed west – Jerome, some of his brothers, cousins, close friends. A cattle and sheep drive brought the first of them to California in 1858. While his companions settled around north-central California (Napa, Bodega, Sacramento) Jerome made his way north. After a time as a teamster in Lassen County, around 1870 at the age of 29 he landed in Gazelle working at stock herding for and boarding with the Edson family. The Edsons ran a large and expanding Shasta Valley ranch operation which later became the Edson-Foulke Ranch. Here Fay became enamored with future wife Lucy Edson, who at a few years his senior was probably already considered a “spinster.”

By 1875 Fay could be found in Berryvale, or Sisson (current Mt. Shasta city). He worked at Justin Sisson’s Tavern where he tended bar when not guiding climbers and hunters on the mountain. Sisson’s was a stage stop and the base for all Mt. Shasta trekkers, including John Muir, who first climbed the mountain in November, 1874 in benign weather conditions. In a few months Fay would accom-

pany Muir on his third ascent of Mt. Shasta, a trip that would have lasting repercussions for both of them. The planned expedition up the mountain was not merely for self-satisfaction but had a special purpose. A government agency called the US Coast and Geodetic Survey had been tasked with placing signal devices on high peaks around the state so accurate land surveys could be made. Rising over 14,000 feet, Mt. Shasta would be ideal, with line-of-sight views to peaks many dozens of miles away. Could a signalman be stationed there, and if not, would an unmanned station be feasible?

With 36 year-old naturalist and mountaineer John Muir in tow, in late April 1875 Captain Rogers of the Coast Survey traveled by train from San Francisco to Redding, then the end of the line, and took the stage on north to Sisson’s, where they met up with Fay. The threesome, along with another guide ascended the mountain on April 27th. Climbing the mountain was a three-day ordeal, first riding horses to Horse Camp at timberline, then a 3am departure for the summit, 12 hours to climb, 90 minutes to look around, then a slide most of the way back down to Horse Camp for the night. The others returned to Berryvale while Muir



Fay and Muir used Sisson’s Tavern as their base for two ascents of Mt. Shasta.

remained in camp awaiting Fay's return for another ascent and a more thorough investigation of the summit.

Muir and Fay started back up the mountain very early on the last day of April carrying a barometer with which they were to take a series of readings for Captain Rogers. By 8:45 they were at the top, signaling by flashing mirror back down to Captain Rogers in the valley below. They took their barometric readings as planned at 9am and noon but weather started moving in before the final 3pm reading was to take place.

Should they stay or should they go? Although only in his shirtsleeves, which had proven to be all he needed on his two earlier climbs, Muir was determined to stay to take the final reading. Shortly after 3, the two men began their descent with limited visibility while being pummeled by fierce wind and hail. Fay, being the guide, feared they would be unable to safely cross the long narrow icy ridge in their path and called for a retreat back up to the relatively safe haven of the hot steamy fumaroles on the volcanic mountainside. Here they lay on their backs for one very long afternoon and night, scooting their backsides around the shifting steam in the hot wet mud, even sustaining some 2nd degree burns, while two feet of new snow fell and their toes and topsides nearly froze.

17 hours later the storm had abated and sunlight finally hit the mountain. The men stood up, weary, hungry, stiff and sore to struggle on down to Horse Camp, legs barely able to bend in their rigid frozen trousers. A worried Justin Sisson, who had just arrived in camp to begin a rescue mission, greeted them with steaming cups of coffee, likely the best cups of coffee the men had ever partaken.

And so ended Muir's third and final ascent of Mt. Shasta. After a day of rest at Sisson's Tavern the famed naturalist returned to San Francisco, but Muir sustained a limp for the rest of his life that he attributed to this (mis)adventure.

Fay finally married Lucy in 1880, when he was listed on the census as a "hotel keeper" in Berryvale. Lucy died only two years later at age 46 but Jerome maintained close ties with the Edsons. In his later years, Fay lived and worked for brother-in-law Josiah Edson at his Klamath Hot Springs hotel in Beswick. Throughout the years, one of Fay's favorite stories to tell was the tale of his nearly fatal ascent of Mt. Shasta with John Muir. He died of a heart attack at age 73 in late December, 1912 while aboard a passenger train near Redding.

Note: As for the proposed signal station, the summit of Mt. Shasta was determined to be a wholly unsuitable location for a manned station (weather too unpredictable, too difficult to get supplies up there). But an unmanned signal station was indeed built. This involved a great effort to transport the heavy iron sections of the tube and the reflective nickel-plated copper cone top up beyond the point where pack animals could travel, then rivet it all together in place. It was in use for surveying purposes only a few years but later became a marker for successful climbers to pose in front of and sign their names on. Parts of it were later brought down off the mountain and put on display. The top cone is now in the Sisson Museum.

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Friends of the Siskiyou County Museum
PO Box 82, Yreka, CA 96097
FSCMuseum@gmail.com

President: Grace Bennett
gben@snowcrest.net
Vice President: Jill Livingston
jandk@livinggoldpress.com
Treasurer: Caralee Scala
cmulelady@yahoo.com
Secretary: Gail Jenner
gforini@sisqtel.net

Members-at-Large:
Frances Stidham
John Lawrence
Selma Schantz

Newsletter Editor: Jill Livingston
Board Meetings: Second Tuesdays @ 10am
General Meetings: Quarterly, second Fridays in
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