



The Meadowlark

Quarterly Newsletter



Crook County Historical Society
246 North Main Street
Prineville, Oregon 97754

May 21, 2021
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www.crookcountyhistorycenter.org

DIRECTORS CORNER

Dear Friends,

Hope all is well, and I especially hope that everyone can start to get out a little bit as we head into summer.

Despite all the challenges of the last year (and more) – and a few stops and starts along the way -- the museum is definitely on the move!

A great deal of progress is being made on our fund raising drive for the new exhibits center. As you know, our design has been selected and approved and the Historical Society has committed a large amount of support to ensure the project gets completed as planned. As of now, large donor naming opportunities are being pursued and many grants – with potentially significant funds available – are being researched and written. A special thanks to Phil Burgess and Lynn Arnett who serve on our fund raising committee.

We hope to go forward soon with continuing our education programs – including the ever popular “People From Our Past” – and we also hope to resume booking our community room for outside events...but we’re still not quite there due to lingering issues with COVID.

We are, however, going forward with our summer tour on June 12, and we are also in the process of doing a virtual version of “May at the Museum.” Our visitation has been very steady (which is great news under the circumstances), and our membership renewals have been absolutely fabulous (especially from our business members).

I am also extremely happy with our activity and overall involvement in social media – this has been an area of true growth for the museum.

Wishing everyone a wonderful summer – stay safe!

Sandy



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Spring everyone!

I remember touring the A.R. Bowman Museum as an elementary student at Ochoco Grade School. We had an intriguing guide who told stories about the items throughout the museum and related them to our experiences in the community. The upcoming Timber Carnival was on everyone's mind and there was a display reflecting some of the tools of the timber trade. Our guide explained how those tools were utilized in the forest and how new technologies have made them obsolete.

There was also a display of dresses on exhibit and I remember thinking they were beautiful, but they looked painful to wear for an entire day. I was glad the fashion had changed and I was able to wear my comfortable jeans and sneakers to the museum. We ended our tour by taking the hike to the top of the courthouse clock tower and signing our names on the inside of the tower. How do I remember this day so long ago? Because the history of the Crook County community is important. It is valuable for us to acknowledge and understand where we came from.

When I strolled through the museum recently, it brought back those memories and reminded me that we are extremely lucky to have this incredible treasure in our community. It allows us to preserve and showcase an important collection of items with significant historical value to Crook County and the central Oregon region. The professional staff are knowledgeable, friendly, and happy to entertain questions about the local history. We should all feel fortunate and proud to have the museum in our small town to remind us of the past.

I hope you visit the museum soon. If so, tell us about your experience the first time you visited the museum.

Suzie

Suzie Kristensen
CCHS President

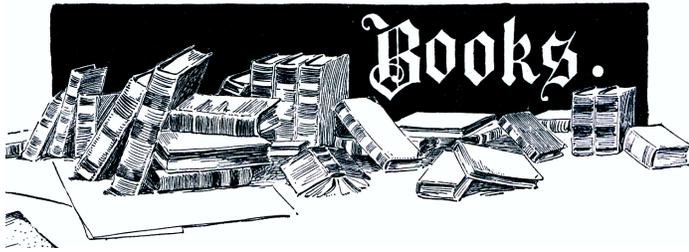


Spring Historical Tour

Saturday June 12, 2021

Following the Lost Meek Trail In Central Oregon

Finally we appear to be cleared for our annual Spring historical tour. The tour planned this year is a repeat of previous tours we have taken along the Meek Wagon Train of 1845. This has been one of our most popular tours and has not been undertaken for several years.. Bowman Museum historian Steve Lent will be the guide for the tour. The tour will begin at the Pioneer Park Museum cabin at 8:00 a.m. Saturday morning June 12. It will take most of the day so bring your lunch and refreshments. Restroom facilities will not be available so plan on using juniper trees as we will have to rough it like the wagon train did. There will be a few rough spots along the route so make sure you have a suitable vehicle with good tires. A ten passenger van will be available on a sign up list on a first come first serve basis. The tour will be limited to 15 vehicles including the van. Make your reservations by calling the museum at 541-447-3715. The tour is approximately 100 miles. Tour guide books are available at the museum and will be for sale at Pioneer Park on the day of the tour. Tour guide books are \$10.00. It should be a fun day!!



NEW BOOKS AT MUSEUM

Members Get 10% Discount

An Honest Enemy

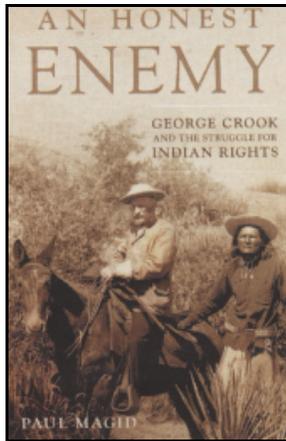
by Paul Magid

\$39.95

Cloth

536 Pages

This is the third volume in the author's trilogy on the life of General George Crook. Over the course of his military career George Crook developed empathy and admiration for American Indians both as foes and allies. This experience prepared Crook well for his metamorphosis from Indian fighter to outspoken advocate of Indian rights. The book is a great conclusion to the epic biography of an enigmatic yet passionate life that culminated in his struggle to reconcile the United States government's treatment of the American Indian and his humanitarian values.



Wildflowers of Oregon

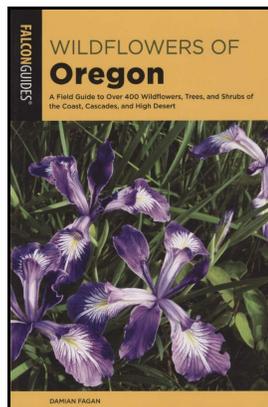
by Damian Fagan

\$24.95

Paper

245 Pages

This book is a field guide to over 400 wildflowers, trees and shrubs of Oregon. It is profusely illustrated with color photos with information on flowering season and interesting facts about each plant. Plants are arranged by color and family. The author lives in Bend, Oregon is trained in botany and wildlife management. It is part of the popular Falcon Guides series of books.



Hang Them All: George Wright & The Plateau Indian War

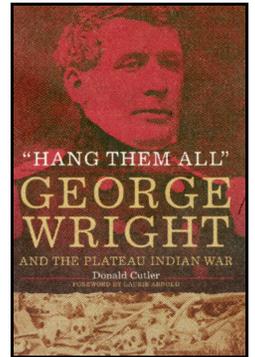
by Donald L. Cutler

\$29.95

Cloth

392 Pages

Col. George Wright had once appeared to respect the Indians of the Upper Columbia Plateau, but in 1858 he led a brief war noted for its violence, bloodshed, and summary trials and executions. Today many critics view his actions as war crimes, but among white settlers and politicians of the time, Wright was a patriotic hero who helped open the Inland Northwest to settlement. This book offers an account of the campaigns and the controversy involved.



And There We Were: The Baker's Son and the Sawyer's Daughter

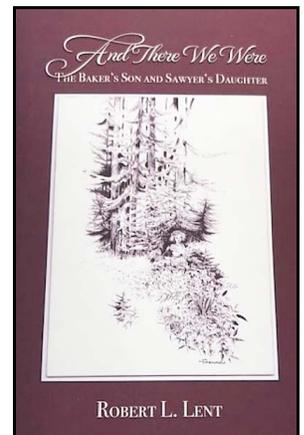
by Robert L. Lent

\$39.00

Cloth

610 Pages

Robert Lent and Shirley Hill grew up in Prineville, Oregon. This book is a memoir and a true story-book romance. Many children from small towns dream big. They are drawn to and dream of the wonders beyond their geography. Sometimes dreams do come true. Bob and Shirley came from modest means and found themselves drawn to each other after tortuous paths in their early lives. Neither could have imagined the journey they would take together. The life of an oil executive led them to live in far off countries and travel to exotic places.



It is the story of a remarkable woman with a passion for adventure. This is the editor's pick of the quarter.

Abandoned Oregon: Ghost Towns of the Painted Hills & Beyond

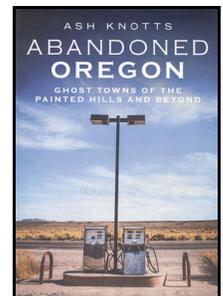
by Ash Knotts

\$23.99

Paper

96 Pages

This profusely illustrated book is an off beat guide to lost places of eastern Oregon. It is a travelog of unusual places to visit A great way to take a road trip though the wild country side of our part of the state. It is part of the Arcadia Publishing Company series of books on America Through Time.



MEMORIALS SINCE FEBRUARY 2021

Ralph Foster

by Gary Bedortha
Dick & Audrie Bedortha
Wayne Breese
Pat & Snoden DeBoard
Jeff & Runinda McCormack

Vestal Kuhn

by Gary Bedortha
Dick & Audrie Bedortha
Jeff & Runinda McCormack

Wayne Kee

by Steve Lent and Barbara Fontaine
Sandra & Philip Hammond
Jerry & Taunie Evans
Sheryl Rhoden
Denny Denton
Ray & Linda Gillett
Anne Porter

Ezra Clark

by Kenneth Bowman

Gene Bernard

by Kenneth Bowman

Bob Logan

by CCHS Class of 1957
Pat & Snoden DeBoard

Sandra Davenport Ream

by CCHS Class of 1957

Stella Cook

by Joe and Judy Allen

Ted Reid

by Barbara Groff

Helen Schnabele

by Pat & Snoden DeBoard
Irene Hurner

Norm Thompson

by Pat & Snoden DeBoard

Shirley Ashley

by Jeff & Runinda McCormack

Red Cole

by Jeff & Runinda McCormack
Irene Hurner

Leatha Nooy

by Jeff & Runinda McCormack

Becky Allen

by Jody Stahancyk
Dr. Denison Thomas

Jerry Reynolds

by Steve Lent & Barbara Fontaine
Stahancyk/Crawford Family

Rick Chrisinger

by Jacquelyn May

Rosa Fannion Teague

by Stahancyk/ Crawford Family

Paul Hess

by Steve Lent & Barbara Fontaine

Gerald Cardin

by Sheryl Rhoden

Sam Bell

by Sheryl Rhoden

Richard Cain

by Sheryl Rhoden

Todd Rhoden

by Sheryl Rhoden

Jeremy Jeuch

by Sheryl Rhoden

Debbie Williams

by Joseph Holland

Cheri Bailey

by Ray & Linda Gillett

Jewel Mae Mooney

by Stahancyk/Crawford Family

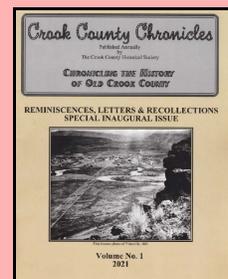
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Clayton & Cathy Baxter
Robin Burgess
Todd & Carol Wasserman
B. Denise Groff
Studio Jay
Monte & Linda Ausland
Daina & Stephen Sirkin
Lenna Comini
Deb Comini
Mike & Michael Custer
Nadine Katz

Crook County Chronicles

Annual Publication

There are additional copies available of the Crook County Chronicles that was sent free to members. It has been a very popular benefit of membership. Extra copies are for sale at the museum for \$5.00



Bill Brown, An Honest Legend

by
Steve Lent

Early Central and Eastern Oregon was a large rangeland that allowed for the rise of romantic livestock barons with names like Pete French, John Divine, and Bill Brown. French and Devine have become a legendary part of frontier lore, but Bill Brown is a figure that little has been written about. Brown is perhaps one of the most colorful figures in the development of the Eastern Oregon high desert area.

William Walter Brown was born on July 15, 1855 in Wisconsin. The Brown family later moved to Iowa, then crossed the Great Plains and settled in the Oregon City, Oregon area. Bill was educated at Oregon City then attended San Jose Normal School in California. A Normal School prepared graduates to teach.

Bill spent the summers of his days at Normal School surveying for a contractor to the U.S. Government. He first worked as a packer and as an axeman for the survey crew. He later did some chain work and instrument work. The surveying work gave him a knowledge of surveying that he put to use later in his life.

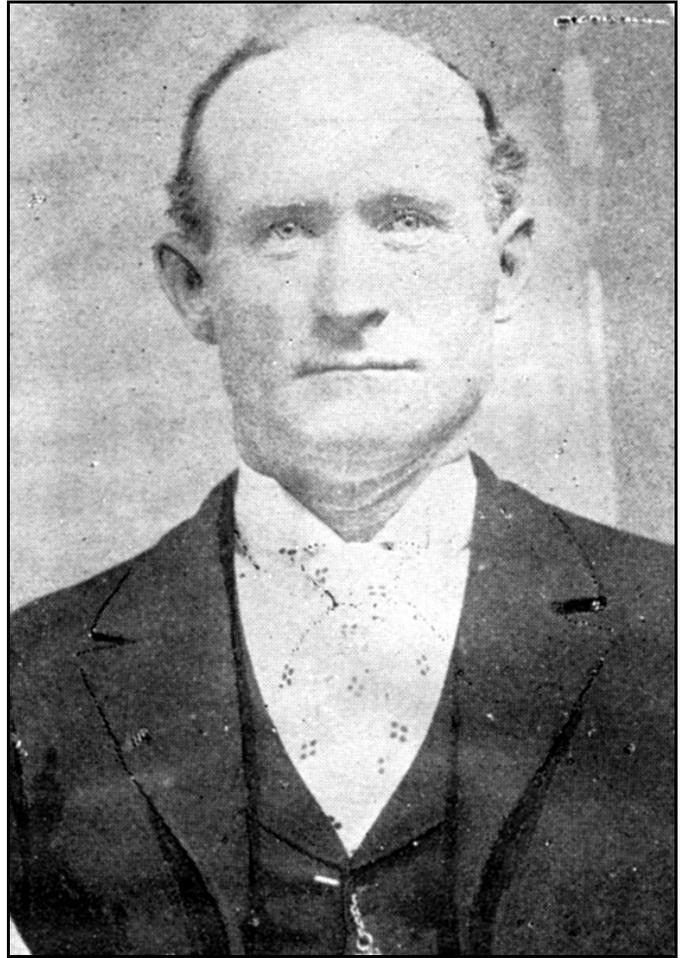
He taught school for one year after graduating from the Normal School and soon discovered that he did not like to teach. He left teaching and went to the Willamette Valley and cut wood for one winter. He is reported to have nearly married a girl that winter, but it ended in an unhappy love affair.

In 1882 Bill and his brothers, Ellis, George, and Bob attempted to find a place where they could homestead. All of the Brown brothers were well educated and managed to accumulate a bank account of \$2700 each. Bill, George, and Bob scouted out areas in Eastern Washington, Eastern Oregon and into Northern California. Ellis, who was a doctor, remained in Portland to continue his practice.

The Brown brothers had passed through the Wagontire country of Central Oregon and decided that it was the best country to start in. They came back to the Wagontire area and each brother filed a land claim. They bought enough supplies to last one year and put their money into sheep.

The first winter they spent at Wagontire was desolate. They had placed their camp equipment under an overhanging rimrock and had a fire in front of the overhang. They weathered the winter storms with this primitive shelter. The next winter they lived in tents and had a camp stove until they could build a cabin.

The brothers did very well in sheep for the first two years and owned over 5000 head of sheep in 1885. That winter, however, was quite severe and by spring the herd had been reduced to 700 sheep.



Bill Brown as a young man

Bob, George, and Ellis became discouraged and decided that they wanted out of the sheep business. Bill had not given up and agreed to buy out his brothers holdings. All of his money was invested in the sheep and land improvements so Bill had to go into debt and promised to pay each brother when he got the money. He agreed to pay them what each of them had invested in the enterprise. It took several years, but he paid his brothers back their investment.

Bill continued to acquire more land and built up his sheep herd to considerable size. As his sheep herds increased and he began to make money, he also began to invest in herds of horses. He did not just buy a few horses, but would actually buy out another person's entire herd, brand and all. Bill once stated that he owned over 10,000 horses, which of course is an estimated figure.

The summer of 1885 Bill was involved in an incident that he was later to have said that he regretted for the rest of his life. A man named Overstreet had moved sheep on a



Bill Brown's Horseshoe Bar Store on Buck Creek

meadow that Bill had staked and posted as belonging to him. He told Overstreet that it would be necessary for him to move the sheep off of his meadow and Overstreet refused. Bill became angered and told Overstreet that he was going back to his camp and get his gun and said "A when I get back, if you are not gone, one or the other of us is going to get killed, because I am not going to let you stay here." He went and got his gun and returned. Some gun fire was exchanged and it is not known who shot first, but Bill fired and killed Overstreet.

Bill then went to the Burdell ranch on Silver Creek and explained what he had done. Burdell and his sons agreed to take Bill to Canyon City, which was the county seat and the only place in the county that had a law officer. Some buckaroos rode up to the Burdell ranch and demanded that Brown be turned over to them to be hanged. Burdell told them that his sons were home and had guns and if they wanted to come and get him to go ahead. The men rode away.

Bill spent nearly three months in the Canyon City jail awaiting trial. He was found innocent of any wrong doing on the grounds that a man had the right to protect his property. In later years Brown stated that he could see where he could have done something else.

Homesteaders began to arrive in Eastern Oregon in the early 1900's and many of those who came were in bad financial shape. A lot of them took up land that was worthless. Bill helped out some of these people until they could move out of the country. He was a respected man with high moral standards. He was honest, kind, and fair in his dealings.

He opened a store near Fife on Buck Creek and carried on business in a unique way. His store was not run for profit and he allowed credit for homesteaders. The foreman was responsible for looking after the store and would record a person's name and purchases in a book, but not the price. When Bill priced the goods they allowed to pay in produce. One of his favorite sayings was "I am morally certain" and he would frequently tell a homesteader that the goods purchased on credit were morally certain to be worth a specified commodity, usually much less than the actual price. Frequently there would be no one to tend the store and he

would leave the door unlocked and have a credit book on the counter. A homesteader would take whatever goods he needed then record it in the record book.

Merchandise for Bill's store was freighted by wagon teams from The Dalles over rough road. He would frequently decide that the invoice cost and the added freight cost for an article was not worth the cost and reduce the price to his customers to what he thought it was worth.

At the peak of his operation he was worth over one million dollars. He, however, never carried large amounts of money on his person and usually paid his bills by writing checks. He quite frequently would write checks on any article he could write on. Sometimes he would write checks on tin can labels, wrapping paper, and even once on a shingle. Banks would always honor his checks.

Bill was a large man of over six feet in height with great strength and endurance. He would occasionally work with a new hired hand for a few days, working at a strenuous pace in an attempt to wear the man out. If the man could manage to hold out he was secured a job.

Bill had spent his younger years busy building his business and it was not until he was nearing fifty years old that he decided he should attempt to take a wife. He was, however, too old for most of the young ladies. He desired to have a family and had designed his house with this in mind, building several bedrooms and a nursery. He is reported to have even offered a young woman a large amount of money to marry him, but she refused. He never became married and later stated that one of his biggest mistakes was in not marrying young.

He had made tremendous amounts of money, but he was also considerably generous. He gave much of his money away to several institutions. Several thousand dollars was given to an elderly person's home in Salem. Large amounts of money was also given out in wages to his hired help.

The Depression of the early 1930's proved to be a disaster for Bill. He was over extended in his operation and was becoming too old to handle his operation with the vigor of his youth. Homesteaders had moved in more and more and it became more difficult to guard his meadows and water holes. In 1930 he had to sell his horses for chicken feed in Portland and the price was only two cents per pound. His creditors began to close in and he lost his rangeland empire.

He applied for entry into the elderly person's home that he had donated funds to and in 1934 he moved to Salem to live at the home. He remained active at the home and would not listen to the complaints of his fellow companions. He insisted that they needed to work to stimulate themselves. He bought shovels for the old folks to raise gardens.

On January 11, 1941, William Walter "Bill" Brown died. He had lived a long life and had left an unforgettable legacy in the high desert country of Central Oregon. His determination and honesty established an empire and made him one of the legendary men of the area.

COLLECTIONS NOOK

From the Desk of Hannah Haney

Hello everyone!

It is starting to feel like springtime in Central Oregon, and I for one am incredibly happy for the warmer weather. With spring also comes time for spring cleaning, and the museum is no exception to this. The museum is constantly in process to better serve the community with our collection, so this newsletter I would like to speak a bit about a complicated (and sometimes controversial topic) – deaccessioning.

Deaccessioning is the process for the removal of objects from the museum collection. This is done for a few reasons such as the object does not fit the museum mission, legal reasons (such as NAGPRA or illegal export), or poor quality, but its intention is to refine and focus the collection so it can serve the museum better and thus the public better. Now before I begin, I do want to mention that this is not a frequent process. The items that are deaccessioned is a much smaller quantity than the items that are donated, but is an essential part of collections maintenance, and it can even be controversial in the museum field and is heavily regulated by our professional organizations and ethics.

The museum never deaccessions an object lightly and it takes multiple processes – including final approval by the board – before it can be completed. I know what you're thinking, "but it's at a museum! It should be there forever!" Well, yes and no. The museum's goal is to keep things in perpetuity (or forever), but sometimes it is just not possible for the museum to do that. Maybe the object is broken or degraded beyond feasible repair or it does not relate to the Museum's mission.

For a somewhat real-world example, the Bowman Museum focuses on the history of Crook County, so it would not really be appropriate for us to have something like a writing desk from George Washington (unless he moved here at some point and left his writing desk). This object would not serve the public at this museum. In terms of a broken object, the museum would not be able to display something in poor condition and it may not be financially responsible to restore it. So, the solution to these problems that a museum can encounter is deaccessioning.

When an object is deaccessioned, there are a few different options that the museum can take to dispose of the object. The first and most desirable option is that the museum tries to find another institution that can take it. Our goal is always to keep items in the public as much as possible. In the example of our earlier desk, it would be appropriate to contact somewhere like Mount Vernon that would have an interest in collecting and preserving items from President



Washington. The second option is to sell the item for benefit of the museum. Museum's have gotten into a lot of hot water about this before - all you need to do is Google "museum" and "deaccession" and you will find dozens of articles about this and I could probably write dozens of more discussing it. Museums are not supposed to sell objects to meet short-term financial needs, and funds from objects are meant to go back into collections – either to buy new objects that better fit the museum mission or to preserve existing objects. The last, and least desirable option is to dispose of the object. Obviously, we want and try to exhaust all other options before we dispose of objects, however if things are found to be in disrepair or broken sometimes that is the best option.

I hope this gave you a little insight into one of the lesser-known museum processes, and I hope you are enjoying the warm weather. We hope to see you soon!

Hannah