Bend’s First Casualty in WWI
Bend’s first World War I casualty didn’t take place in the trenches of France. Percy A. Stevens died on the beaches of Scotland.

Evelyn Ishmael: Lady Logger of La Pine
As a logger’s daughter, Evelyn followed in her father’s boot steps. She and her husband owned the Ishmael Logging Co. in La Pine.

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The Homesteader
Deschutes County Historical Society Newsletter – August 2017

DESCHUTES HISTORICAL MUSEUM SUMMER COOKOUT

August is here. The Solar Eclipse is coming and best of all, so is the Deschutes County Historical Museum and Society Cookout. There is still time to join the fray and get your reservations for the Cookout.

This year’s event is Sunday, August 13 from 3 to 6 PM on the museum’s lawn. Forget the Eclipse, it will come and go in 2 minutes. However, you can avoid dusty campgrounds, smoky campfires, burned hot dogs and beans. Instead, spend a lazy Sunday afternoon relaxing on the museum lawn while being served a delicious meal catered by Baldy’s Barbecue. There’s cold drinks and cool entertainment by our favorite local duo, Down Range. You never know who else might show up but you know they are friendly members of the community and happy diners who like to linger and enjoy some after dinner conversations.

So plan on a lazy afternoon with good food and great company.

Please use our website to make reservations at deschuteshistory.org or call us at 541.389.1813.

Tickets will be available at the door but reservations are appreciated.

SIGN UP NOW!
Percy A. Stevens – Bend’s First Casualty of the Great War

Bend’s first World War I casualty didn’t take place in the trenches of France or hills of Germany.

Percy A. Stevens, 18 years old, died on the beaches of Scotland on the night of Feb. 5, 1918, after the sinking of the SS Tuscania.

Working for the Shevlin-Hixon timber company when he enlisted four months after his 18th birthday, Stevens joined multiple other Oregon men in the 6th Battalion, 20th Engineer Regiment in December 1917. Shipped out on the SS Tuscania from Hoboken, New Jersey in early February 1918, Stevens and more than 2,000 Army troops were headed to France to fight the “good fight.”

Early in the evening of Feb. 5, though, the SS Tuscania would make history as the first U.S. troopship carrying American soldiers in World War I to be torpedoed by the Germans. More than 2,100 U.S. soldiers would survive – 210, including Stevens, would not.

After leaving the East Coast, the Tuscania joined three other troopships and eight freighters. On Feb. 4, eight British destroyers met the convoy to guide the ships between the cliffs of Scotland and the coast of Ireland.

But on Feb. 5, seven miles off Ireland, a German U-boat spotted the Tuscania’s two white smokestacks and, at 5:47 p.m., launched a surprise attack. The second of two torpedoes blew a hole in the Tuscania’s starboard side between the engines and the boiler room.

Stevens, by multiple accounts, boarded his assigned lifeboat and rowed unto the morning as the waves got stronger and a storm blew in. His lifeboat wrecked on rocks along the Scottish coast and Stevens drowned.

Unfortunately, his family was originally told that he had survived the sinking of the Tuscania, but five days later an official cablegram came informing them that Stevens had in fact perished off the Scottish coast.

Originally from Canada, Stevens moved to Bend in 1916 with his sister. One of the most “prominent students in high school,” according to the Bend Bulletin, Stevens served as the track manager and class treasurer and was a member of the tennis team and the secretary of the Emersonian Literary Society. He also was a member of the Bend High music committee and worked as a cartoonist for the student newspaper, The Pilot.

After graduating from Bend High in 1917 he went to work for the Shevlin-Hixon Mill before enlisting in the U.S. Army.

To this day, Bend’s American Legion Post is named after Stevens and John L. Chute, a math and history teacher at Bend High who died in service during World War II.

– Beau Eastes
Recently there was an editorial in The Bulletin concerning the naming of local parks and schools (06/09/17). The editor commented that in recent years places have not been named after people who have been important in the history of Bend, and he said it was a shame because “history matters.” It matters very much in this era of huge growth.

New residents to Bend should have the opportunity to hear and see some of Bend’s historic names. The editor went on to mention Ruth Burleigh as someone worthy of recognition. Yes, she certainly is worthy, and aside from being our first female mayor, she has been active in so many other ways.

Aside from Ruth, I would like to put forth the name of another unsung hero, Percy Drost. His family moved here in 1919 when Percy was 17, and he immediately sought work with the Power and Light Company. A few years later the city of Bend took over the water system, and according to historians, Percy Drost was one of the “assets” acquired when the city bought out the water company. He was appointed superintendent of the water system, and continued working for the city for the next 43 years.

Drost was with the city during the years of important planning and development. During the Depression when the city had to cut back on its staff, he accepted responsibility for the streets, parks, and sewers as well as the water department. Under his leadership, the city of Bend grew from a rustic town to a modern city. When he began, local citizens obtained their drinking water from the Deschutes River. Drost designed and developed a water delivery system from Tumalo Falls that included a complex storage system of reservoirs and 15 miles of pipe running into the city.

As director of public works he experimented with various pavement mixtures which eventually led to a low-cost cinder and oil mix that was used to pave many of the streets in Bend. He introduced other innovations like using red cinders for the purpose of paving some of the roads around Bend. Aside from streets and water, Drost developed many of Bend’s parks. During his tenure the main parks were Drake, Pioneer, and Shevlin. Those beautiful parks still grace our city.

Twice Percy Drost declined offers to become the city manager, but with all of the tasks he oversaw and developed, he basically did manage the city for many years. He retired from public service in 1969. There is a drinking fountain in Pioneer Park in his honor, with the idea that when you take a sip, you are drinking a toast to him.

— Sue Fountain

(Disclaimer: Percy Drost was my uncle, but that doesn’t alter the historical facts about his service to Bend.)

Kindness Project Materials Join Collection

Two different major community projects in 2017 focused on bringing smiles and good will to the Bend community. The Bend Joy Project provided messages of good will through banners, bumper stickers, and ‘share cards’ that offered suggestions for spreading a little joy. A sampling of the materials from this project are among the newest additions to our collections for 2017.

The Bend Kindness Rocks Project spread smiles through more covert action. Individuals were invited to a rock decorating party this past spring, decorating the tops in a wide variety of ways and noting the date on the bottom and instructions. The painted rocks were then hidden around town with instructions to re-hide it. However, the Museum doubled down and has hidden three of the four found at the museum for future researchers to find them! We chose to put one of the lady bugs back in play, and kept the other three to document this project.

Both the Bend Joy Project and the Bend Kindness Rocks projects can be found online by searching their names.
Evelyn Ishmael – Lady Logger of La Pine

Evelyn Elaine Holmes was only 15 years old when she married Lynn George Ishmael. As the daughter of a logger, Bud Holms of La Pine, it seemed only natural that she would follow in his boot steps. In the 1950s, she and her husband, Lynn, owned the Ishmael Logging Co. in La Pine. They cut logs on forest service sales in the upper Deschutes area as contract loggers for the Brooks-Scanlon Mill in Bend. (Contract loggers were often known in the Pacific Northwest as gyppo or gypo loggers.) They had their own trucks and equipment and hauled logs into the mill from La Pine. Evelyn was a small woman, barely topping a hundred pounds; her tiny frame didn’t even reach shoulder high to her tall husband. Her family called her “Little Bird”, but she was capable of doing every kind of logging job. She mainly drove the big logging truck to Bend, but she could fell trees, buck and limb them, skid the logs into landings and load them on the truck. At the end of her work day, she rushed home to prepare dinner for her family of eight. She and Lynn had 6 children, all girls; Elaine, Elizabeth, Phyllis, Mary, Dottie, and Marguerite. After dinner, Evelyn monitored the chores, schoolwork, and taught the girls to sew and knit. The girls each had their own knitting projects to work on; there were no idle hands in that family. There was no television but each night was filled with activities. Then off to bed and up at 5 a.m. to fix breakfast and get the older girls off to school. Baby Marguerite often accompanied her mother to the forest, riding alongside her in the tractor, playing under the watchful eye of her mother who got right to business with a chainsaw. One might imagine that was how Evelyn, herself, grew up as a logger’s daughter.

Evelyn became something of a local celebrity when she was featured in a Bend Bulletin article in 1958 and a follow up in the Brooks-Scanlon in-house magazine, Pine Echoes. Her fame might have gone national when Life magazine scheduled a photo shoot and she was also set to appear on the television show, “What’s My Line?” However, both were cancelled when her car was rear-ended in a serious accident in March of 1959.

She was in traction for 9 months and doctors cautioned that she might not walk again, never mind drive the big trucks. This was not something that Evelyn Ishmael took lying down. In fact, they moved to Shoshone, California where her father had re-located. Her daughter, Elaine, said her mother continued physical therapy and soaked in the Death Valley hot springs, determined to recover.

Indeed, she did, and not only drove the local school bus for eighteen years, she taught school bus driving. “Little Bird” was as tough as ever.

Evelyn and Lynn Ishmael spent their last years in Nevada. They are buried together in The Desert Hills Cemetery in Pahrump, Nevada. Lynn died in 1990 and Evelyn followed in 1995. They are together under one stone dedicated by their daughters.

– Bonnie Burns

Formal Heritage Tree Dedication Held

The Oregon Heritage Trees Committee and members of the Oregon Travel Council visited Bend from July 11 – July 12 to dedicate the Drake Ponderosa Pines and the Huntington Wagon Road Junipers as the newest members of the Oregon Heritage Trees program. Tree enthusiasts and history buffs attended a small dedication ceremony for the trees held in Drake Park on July 12.

Speakers included Ed Washington (Oregon Travel Council), Kelly Cannon-Miller (Deschutes County Historical Society), Sasha Sulia (Bend Park and Recreation), Bill Dean (BLM) and Nate Pedersen (Oregon Heritage Trees Committee).
Local News Items

DCHS is happy to present this year’s Summer Shootout Marble Tournament winners!

The marble tournament took place this year during the Balloons Over Bend Children’s Festival, which was held at the museum for the first time.

Congratulations to Steve Porch and Lance Bevier, who each won Schwinn Cruisers from The Gear Peddler. Isaiah Frenzel took second place in the kid’s category, scoring the Wabi Sabi gift basket, and Tristan Testerman finished third, walking away with gift certificates for Vector Volcano Arcade and Downtown Bend Dollars.

Brian Buchanan took second place in the adult category and won a gift certificate for The Bend Escape Room, and Brian Porch (yes, Steve’s older brother) took third place, winning the Old Mill District Gift Pack. Congratulations to everyone who endured the heat!

DCHS Awarded Preserving Oregon Grant for Odd Fellows Cabins

As previously reported in The Homesteader, the Deschutes County Historical Society partnered with the Deschutes National Forest in fundraising efforts to save the Odd Fellows cabins at Paulina Lake. DCHS was recently awarded a $17,104 Preserving Oregon Grant to aid in restoration efforts scheduled for this October.

Combined with a $30,000 Title II fund award provided to the Deschutes National Forest from the Deschutes Ochoco Resource Advisory Committee, the project has $47,000 to hire HistoriCorps, a non-profit leader in historic preservation work, to complete badly needed stage 1 restoration work.

Top priority for work in October will be stabilizing the chimneys, log foundations and roofing.

In addition, HistoriCorps uses all projects as opportunities to train individuals in historic preservation, recruiting volunteers for each of their jobs.

To find out more about volunteering and about HistoriCorps, visit their project website at: historicorps.org/events/ioof-cabins-or/?platform=hootsuite

– Kelly Cannon-Miller
A couple weeks ago the Fremont Exhibit opened at the National Historic Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City. For about a year it has been at the Discovery Center in The Dalles and just recently was shipped to the Interpretive Center. According to Alex Hutchings, an intern with the BLM at the Interpretive Center, they were able to unpack it as loaded by the Discovery Center in relatively good time. When walking in to the Center the room is to the right and is of ample size to do a nice job of handling the exhibit.

Sally and I travelled to Baker City to put on a Fremont Presentation in their auditorium July 12, and all went well. It’s fun to share the story of the expedition that passed just about 200 yards from the Interpretive Center. After Fremont’s return and subsequent report it is estimated that some 300,000 or more emigrants passed nearby on the way to the Blue Mountains and on to the Willamette Valley and Washington.

One of the folks in the audience was Chuck Rouse. Mr. Rouse was instrumental in the original concept and then also in lining up the finances for the construction of the Interpretive Center more than 25 years ago. Hats off to Chuck and his friends for having the foresight to build an incredible tribute to the history of the West.

So, if you get up to the Baker City area stop in and see our old friend John C. Fremont who is still standing with his sword watching and waiting for you.

– Loren Irving

Mark Your Calendars

AUGUST

5 REFLECTIONS OF HISTORY: ARCHITECTURAL STYLES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD WALKING TOUR
Deschutes Historical Museum
Tour starts at 10:30 a.m. Price: $5, Members free

12 EARLY DAYS OF BEND WALKING TOUR
Deschutes Historical Museum
Tour starts at 10:30 a.m. Price: $5, Members free

13 DESCHUTES HISTORICAL MUSEUM'S SUMMER COOKOUT
Deschutes Historical Museum
3:00 - 6:00 p.m. See page 1 for more details!

19 REFLECTIONS OF HISTORY: ARCHITECTURAL STYLES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD WALKING TOUR
Deschutes Historical Museum
Tour starts at 10:30 a.m. Price: $5, Members free

26 EARLY DAYS OF BEND WALKING TOUR
Deschutes Historical Museum
Tour starts at 10:30 a.m. Price: $5, Members free

29 HISTORY PUB: THE MALHEUR OCCUPATION AND PUBLIC LANDS IN THE AMERICAN WEST. Presented by Bill Robbins, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of History at Oregon State University.
McMenamins Old St. Francis
Father Luke Room, 7 p.m., doors at 5:30 p.m. Reserve your seat today at deschuteshistory.com!
Deschutes Historical Museum's

Summer Cookout Fundraiser

13 August $35 Person

Bluegrass Music by Down Range
Catering by Baldy's BBQ

Pulled Pork | Pulled Chicken | Drinks
Corn on the Cob | Watermelon | Salads
Silent Auction | Boneyard Beer

3 PM to 6 PM

Tickets online at deschuteshistory.org
129 NW Idaho Ave | 541.389.1813