Who Controls Water? A Historical Perspective

The Oregon Historical Society, the Deschutes County Historical Society and Deschutes Public Library host an important and timely conversation about the history of water rights and use in Oregon and beyond. This event takes place Friday, October 10 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Brooks Room of the Downtown Bend branch of the library. It is free and open to the public; no registration is required.

The event gathers renowned scholars with the community to address several topics, including:

- development of the Deschutes River Basin;
- influence of the environmental movement on water control and usage, particularly within the context of climate change; and
- how communities address and resolve water conflicts in the United States and across the globe.

The forum goal is to help provide historical context to water in the west, offer examples of water conflict and resolution from around the world, and how water policy of the past has shaped the Deschutes River Basin as we know it.

Featured speakers:

- W. TODD JARVIS, Interim Director of the Institute for Water & Watersheds at Oregon State University. Todd is a consulting groundwater hydrologist with nearly 30 years of experience working for global water/waste water engineering and groundwater engineering firms. His new book is *Contesting Hidden Waters: Conflict Resolution for Groundwater and Aquifers*.

- JOSHUA HOWE, Assistant Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Reed College. His new book, *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming*, explores the political history of climate change since the 1950s. He works on historical questions about sustainability and the global environment that bridge environmental history, the history of science and the history of American foreign policy.

- WILLIAM LANG, Emeritus Professor of History at Portland State University. William is a member of the Oregon Historical Society Board of Trustees and Chair of the Executive Committee of the Oregon Encyclopedia. He is a work of the Oregon Historical Society Encyclopedia. He is author or editor of six books on Pacific Northwest history, including *Two Centuries of Lewis & Clark* and *Great River of the West*.

- GREG SILBERNAGEL, Watermaster, Umatilla Basin for the Oregon Water Resources Department. Prior to this position, he coordinated environmental restoration projects as Executive Director for the Umatilla Basin Watershed Council. He played a valuable role in planning the current exhibit at the Umatilla County Historical Society entitled “Tomorrow’s Water: Today’s Challenge – Working Together for the Umatilla River.”

Reid School Reunion and Memorial Dedication Saturday, October 11

The Des Chutes Historical Museum and the Daughters of the American Revolution invite you to attend a Reid School Reunion on Saturday, October 11 from 2 to 4 p.m. Former students and teachers get free admission to the museum. (Don’t worry, we’ll take your word for it.) A chance to share favorite stories with staff and each other, help identify photographs, share your own photographs, view historic Reid School memorabilia, and have some cake.

Reunion starts at 2 p.m. with a special building marker dedication from the Daughters of the American Revolution at 3 p.m. If you know someone who is a Reid School Alumni, but is not a member, please let them know about this event.
The Yellow Peril of 1920
By Kelly Cannon-Miller

“As to Burtt, we’ll show him a juniper tree with a rope hung over a limb and see if he can take the hint,” the incensed rancher informed his hearers.
— The Bend Bulletin, May 20, 1920

While researching for our latest temporary exhibit, What If Heroes Were Not Welcome Home?, I had the pleasure of being introduced via email to the son of Yori Tambara, who was born in Metolius in 1920 and graduated from Bend High School in 1940. Through the emails, we eventually got around to discussing the elephant in the room—why was Yori the only person of Asian heritage in his high school yearbooks?

To answer the question, one has to understand American-Japanese relations of a hundred years ago. The rise of Imperial Japan created significant societal changes within Japan as well as Japan’s role as an international power. The relationship between the United States and Japan from 1900-1920 was tumultuous, and a major point of contention was the treatment of Japanese immigrants by the United States. Japanese immigration was treated with suspicion as proof of imperialist goals and a desire to colonize America, particularly in the west and Hawaii.

Anti-Asian exclusion policies were not new. Between 1850 and 1882, measures to exclude Chinese immigration appeared in the western states and culminated at the federal level as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited Chinese immigration for ten years. The exclusion acts created a vacuum for laborers that Japanese immigrants then began to fill. Coupled with the annexation of Hawaii in 1899, which freed thousands of Japanese laborers from contract labor on sugar plantations, as well as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, Japanese immigration to the United States exploded, reaching as much as 1,000 immigrants a month by 1906.

In an attempt to ease tensions, President Theodore Roosevelt entered into “The Gentlemen’s Agreement” of 1907-08 with the Emperor of Japan, in which they agreed to a series of steps to limit Japanese immigration into the United States, while the United States promised fair and equal treatment for Japan’s citizens. A brief success, the issue of treatment of Japanese immigrants and other conflicts led to further tensions and new treaty negotiations between Japan and America in 1917.

It was in that climate that George Shima and George L. Burtt, both wealthy potato farmers from California’s Delta Valley, used Burtt’s Portland-Deschutes Company to buy thousands of acres in Deschutes County for seed farms to supplement their holdings in California. They also had among their investing partners the extremely wealthy and influential financier Herbert Fleishhaker, who was well known for his advocacy in developing irrigation and electric systems in California—and farmers in Central Oregon, especially north Deschutes County, were desperately awaiting irrigation development. Burtt and Fleishhaker were Caucasian, as were their other investment partners, but Shima had immigrated from Japan and many of their California farm employees and experts were Japanese. Regardless of Shima’s success turning unwanted wetlands into a million dollar potato industry in California, or abandoning his birth name to become George Shima the “Potato King,” he could not escape being viewed simply as an example of the threat of Japanese land ownership. Their land purchase led to a flurry of anti-Japanese sentiment and action throughout Central Oregon in a matter of weeks.

Burtt and Shima brought Japanese laborers from their California properties up to their ranches at Powell Butte and Lower Bridge to begin the hard work of clearing their lands. Immediate negative reaction resulted in an agreement to only have three Japanese laborers per ranch at any given time. In May 1920, F. E. Pellett of Terrebonne appeared before the Bend Commercial Club to appeal for assistance in fighting the ‘yellow peril’ occurring north of Redmond.

The report of the meeting in The Bend Bulletin on May 20 clearly shows the situation had escalated to a dangerous point. Pellett makes clear that violence against the owners was not out of the range of action his fellow farmers and ranchers were willing to take. Including a threat to lynch Burtt, he informed the club that Burtt and Shima had hired a gunman to protect their workers. Pellett declared that if the gunman did not leave the country peaceably “there would be need for coffins and a coroner.”

The Bend Commercial Club responded to Pellett’s concerns by denouncing land ownership by aliens and assuring Pellett they would look into the matter. Over the course of several days, they deferred voting on any action before allowing George Burtt to defend the company’s plans. When he did so, Burtt declared it had been necessary to reverse their decision to employ only three Japanese per property because available white laborers could not be found, no matter how hard they had tried. They had informed the Terrebonne Farm Bureau of their immediate need to bring additional Japanese laborers in order to meet spring planting. Burtt outlined many failed attempts to work with the Terrebonne Farm Bureau, citing that a viable business venture was being prevented from enriching the agricultural markets of Deschutes County by individuals who “had an axe to grind.” Despite his assurances that his company had no intention of selling parcels of land to Japanese, the Bend Commercial Club went on record as opposed to land ownership by aliens. One after another, the regional farm bureaus, the American Legion posts, and other organizations throughout Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson County voted on resolutions prohibiting land ownership by aliens, and petitioning state legislators and the
governor’s office to pass a statewide measure to block alien land ownership. On June 3, the paper again reported Burtt’s appeals to the Bend Commercial Club for assistance in smoothing over the matter and stating that they had relieved their security person and stopped work clearing the land. Burtt again asserts the company has the best interests of agriculture in Central Oregon in mind with no intention to allow Japanese land ownership, and citing the continued lack of available labor.

Without their security, on June 10, 1920, *The Bend Bulletin* reported that a group of riders attacked the Terrebonne ranch, forced the Japanese employees out of the fields, threatened them, and even stole from them. Burtt and several of their investors toured ranch post-raid and talked to neighbors. They reported to the Commercial Club that most of their neighbors had absolutely no issues with the Japanese employees or the company plans, and in fact wanted their development plans to move forward. They asserted it was a small group leading the claims and attacks against the business, but they were having an affect on their ability to clear, plant, and harvest their seed potato crops. The Commercial Club walked a fine line between support of the development as long as no Japanese owned any land, including George Shima, while at the same time advocating for passage of alien exclusion laws at the state level.

An investigation into the scandal by the Governor’s office confirmed the sentiments Burtt encountered. The report found that most large land owners in the area favored the investment brought by the Shima-Burtt-Fleishhacker project and while generally opposed to land ownership, they were not opposed to Japanese immigration if it meant development.

It was too little too late. The raid on the Terrebonne property was the beginning of the end. Shima, Burtt, and Fleishhacker faced legal attacks on business ventures back home in California—Fleishhacker was sued for fraud on the auspices that loaning money to George Shima violated the Alien Land Act of California, and Shima struggled to keep his lands under California’s new laws. By 1922, Shima, Burtt’s Portland-Deschutes Company, and Fleishhacker divested themselves of Central Oregon. In 1926, George Shima died of a stroke at the age of 62. Pallbearers at this funeral included the Emeritus Chancellor of Stanford University and the mayor of San Francisco. His estate was valued between $15 and 17 million, and he left a legacy of public service and leadership. Back in Central Oregon, the willingness of Japanese Americans or others of Asian heritage to come here in the wake of the scandal was extremely low and remained low until after World War II. The Tambara family and a few families like them remained unique in the community.

While the governor’s report indicated the community was not united in opposition of Japanese immigration, views expressed in the news through letters and editorials clearly sent the message to stay out. An editorial by *The Madras Pioneer*, reprinted in *The Bend Bulletin* on December 2, 1920, makes it perfectly clear:

*That the people of Jefferson County are willing to bear their fair share of the white man’s burden, there is no doubt. This is definitely proven by the Indian situation and their fair treatment of the negro question. But it is too much to expect them to in any way tolerate Japanese residence in the county. We have no room for the yellow men, and we don’t want them. We desire to see any and every white person reside or own land here and proper, but it is not fair to expect that Oregon people will allow the condition to exist with the yellow people as it now does in California.*

Xenophobic violence and anti-Japanese sentiment at the beginning of the 20th century are the academic answer to the Tambara’s original question of why Yori Tambara was the lone Asian in his 1940 senior year book. The “Yellow Peril” shaped our communities, just as the internment of thousands of families—including the Tambara family—reshaped our communities following World War II. True to Yori’s generation, the Greatest Generation, the childhood memories of 1930s Central Oregon he left his family were not about exclusion; they were about riding his bike up and down Pilot Butte, summer jobs with the irrigation company, and showing them his favorite places on a summer vacation in the 1960s. Yori Tambara was born and raised in Central Oregon and his family’s immigrant history is a part of America’s immigrant history, good and bad.
October Halloween Events at the Museum

Historical Haunts of Downtown Bend

Stories of mystery, love, loss and the afterlife return! Now in our fifth year, Historical Haunts of Downtown Bend takes visitors to visit locations spanning 30 years of history of pioneers who helped shape Bend so much, they had a hard time leaving… perhaps even in death!

Cost is $10.00 per person, children under 12 years and Deschutes County Historical Society members are free. Museum admission included with tour fee. Sign up is first come, first served each day.

All tours begin at the Museum and will end at Crow’s Feet Commons. Please note—because many featured locations are operating businesses inside, tours do not enter into any buildings.

Remember to wear comfortable shoes and if walking after dark, bring your own flashlight.

New! American Gothic with Alastair Jaques

Alastair Morley Jaques, the actor who brought you the one-man show *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*, that critics and Oregon audiences have called “creepily spot-on” brings audiences another chilling night of classic stories with *AMERICAN GOTHIC: A Journey Into the Shadows of American Literature*.

Just in time for Halloween, AMERICAN GOTHIC promises audiences a selection of some of the scariest classic tales from American history and literature. Nathaniel Hawthorne, H. P. Lovecraft, Shirley Jackson, America’s greatest masters of the macabre are offered up in a fearsome feast for the imagination of young and old alike by actor, scholar, storyteller, and Oregon favorite Alastair Morley Jaques.

American Gothic takes place October 29 and 30 at 6:30 p.m. at the Des Chutes Historical Museum. Tickets are $8.00 and are limited to 50 per night. Tickets can be purchased at the Des Chutes Historical Museum. TICKETS ARE LIMITED to 50 per night and are expected to sell out.
Happy Anniversary!

Please join us for another year of membership:

Barb & Russell Abt
Ron & Nancy Alvarez
Craig & Pattie Apregan
Cherie Auger
Jennifer Avery & Thomas Krupski
Connie Axelrod
Melissa Baldwin
James Banks
Camille & Martin Begley
Ben Bowman
Gwen Brock
Ed Byrnes
Shawn Cannon
Tami Chapin
Darlene Child
Early Clausen
Sharon & Jeff Davidson
Phoebe De Gree
Ed Donohue
Teri Dunbar
Karen Duncan
Joan & Lloyd Evans
Phil & Nancy Fischer
Liza & Bill Fish
Jeni Fitzpatrick
Kit Foreman
Dick & Chris Frey
Kerry & Sue Fuller
Kristene Fuller
Eva Gassner
Rebecca Warner Groundwater
Chris & Carol Guthrie
Chris Hamilton
Judy & Harry Harbin
Dalyte & Don Hartsough
Kyle Hawkins
John R. & Karen Hayes
Brian Hickey
Daren & Laura Hildebrant
Gillian Hodgen
Patrick Howard
Kristin Hughes
Julie & Jacob Kampmann
Dkyleah Kellogg
Tim & Serena Kelly
Ed & Kate Kennell
Donna Kribs
Carol Laite
Sparky Lisle & Polly Gribskov
Sheila Lofton
Tom & Sandi Lujan
Kelly Madden & Rick Treleaven
Kathy Malone
JoAnn Marshall
Mike & Kat Mastrangelo
Joaanne & Nelson Mathews
Virginia Maxwell
Jan McDonald
Wendy & Murphy McFarland
Ben & Rachel Miosi
Wayne Morgan
Barbara Mowers
Michael Nehl
Brandi Nelson
Brian Norgaard
Glency O’Connor
Marion Palmateer
Barbara & David Perin
Bev Piper
Joyce Purcell
Lillian Quinn
Mark Rabenstein
John & Marilyn Rice
Shannon Rose
John & Bonnie Rosen
Tony & Sharron Rosengarth
David Sailors
Ted & Carol Schoenborn
Kelsey Sherrick & Shay Forsyth
Kathy Shogren
Carolyn Spaniol
Tom & Teri Stark
Marcie Sweider
Carol Swift
Alan & Bev Unger
Diana Velasquez
Pat Vigal
Mike Vigue & Wanda Hennesay
Harvey Waldron
Joan Walsh
Rob Walsh
James & Cindi Warburton
Heather Wingate
Brian Wingard
Jody Zahniser

DCHS Membership Form

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________________________________________
City: _______________________ State: __________ Zip: _________________
Phone: (______) ________________ _____Renewal _____New
E-mail: _______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Email is needed to receive our monthly newsletter The Homesteader.

_____ Individual - $20 _____ Family - $30 _____ Donor - $50
_____ Business- $40 or $50 _____ Patron- $100 _____ Benefactor - $500
Additional Contribution*: $_________ Total enclosed: $_________

If your name appears above, your membership renewal is now due. Changes to your mailing information can be made on this form.

Make check payable and mail to:

DCHS, 129 NW Idaho Ave, Bend, Oregon 97701

Want to volunteer? Let us know!
Mark Your Calendars:

**October**

10  **Who Controls Water?**  
   **A Historical Perspective**  
   Deschutes Public Library Brooks Room  
   2:00 p.m.

11  **Reid School Reunion**  
    2:00 p.m.

17  **Author Afternoon: David Talbot**  
    1:00 p.m.

21  **Volunteer Meeting**  
    12:00 p.m.

22-25  **Historical Haunts of Downtown Bend**  
    5:00 p.m.

28  **History Pub: Our Vanishing Glaciers**  
    McMenamins Old St. Francis  
    7:00 p.m., doors at 5:30 p.m.

29-30  **American Gothic with Alastair Jaques**  
    6:30 p.m.  
    $8.00 per person, tickets sold in advance

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**Bend Genealogical Society Boot Camp**

BGS Genealogy Boot Camp, an all day event to hone your genealogy skills, takes place on Saturday, October 25 at Williamson Hall; cost is $15.00 members/$20 non-members. For more information, check out their website at www.orgenweb.org/deschutes/bend-gs or call 541-317-9553.

As always, they also offer First Tuesday mentoring on the first Tuesday of the month from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. First Tuesday help can be for beginners or more advanced researchers who are stuck and seeking an extra boost of research power.

**Author Afternoons Continues This Month**

Bring your lunch and spend an hour with the Deschutes County Historical Society as we welcome David Talbot sharing his new book *The Cabin: A Tandem Memoir of Life in the Wild*. A story told through two distinct voices, a mother and her son, of a place a family called home once in 1933 and again in 1944. David Talbot weaves together his memories with the diaries of his mother, Louise Ruddle Talbot giving the reader a heartfelt journey of adventure, survival and the strength of family.

When: Friday October 17th; 1:00 pm—2:00 pm  
Where: The Des Chutes Historical Museum

This will be the last Author Afternoon for the year.