



The Unknown Cowboy

See the objects behind this
mysterious story. See p. 2

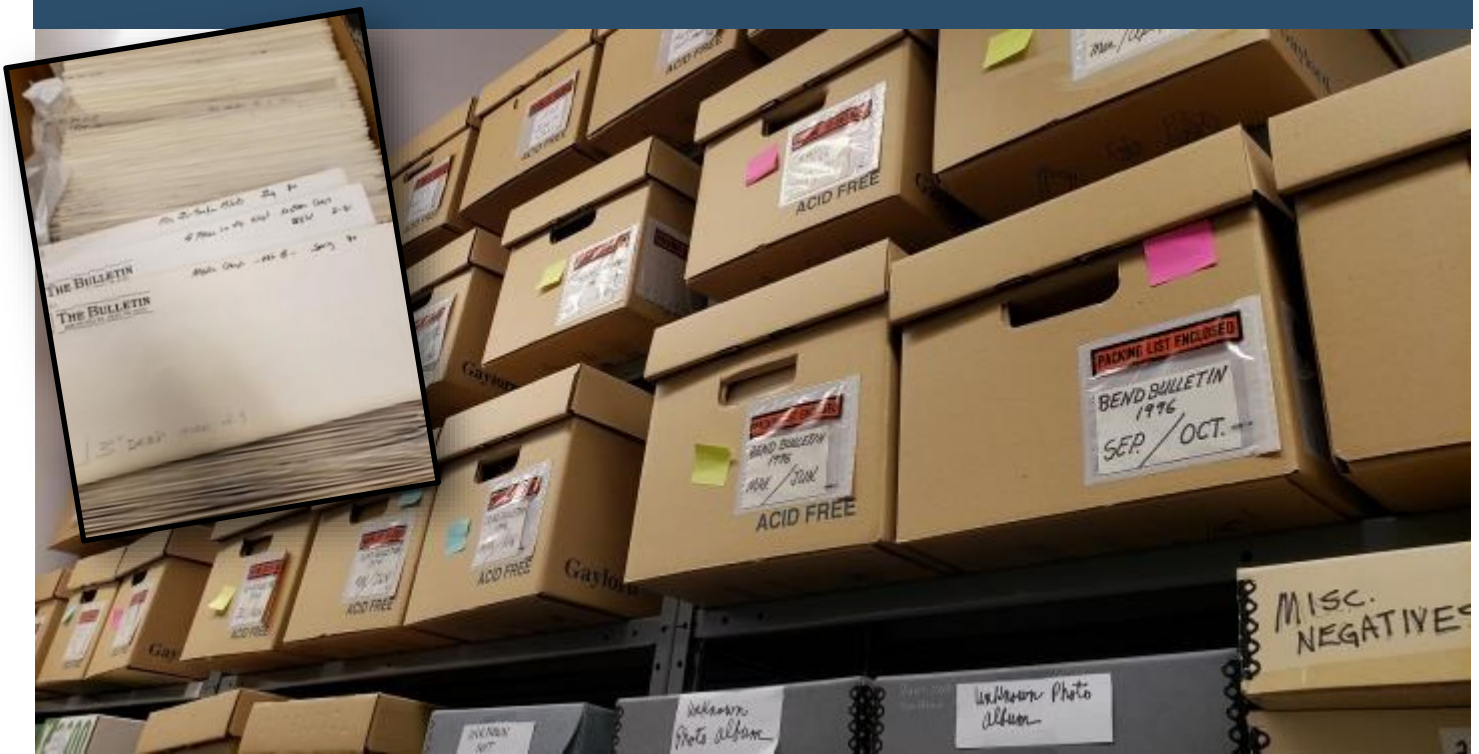
Resident Storyteller

Meet the man behind the
stories, Mike Berry. See p. 4



The Homesteader

Deschutes County Historical Society Newsletter—August 2021



2021 Oregon Museum Grant Award

Oregon Heritage, part of the Oregon State Parks Department, awarded DCHS a 2021 Oregon Museum Grant in June to support the cataloging of 90 boxes of Bend Bulletin newspaper images in the DCHS collections. The boxes contain film negatives, prints, and slides taken by Bulletin photographers from the 1950s until 2000. While these boxes were accessioned into the collection, only a small percentage of images have been fully cataloged and digitized. This means each image receives its own object identification number, is scanned, and a description of the image entered into the catalog record along with a link to the digital copy of the image. Decades worth of images will be made accessible through the cataloging process.



Utilizing grant funds DCHS hired Margaret Maffai as a part-time archivist to process the materials and work with volunteers doing photography scanning to complete the time consuming task of processing these boxes. Margaret previously worked with DCHS as a member of the National Historic Preservation Month committee representing Redmond Parks and Recreation. She also oversees programs at the Tetherow House, the oldest standing building in Deschutes County. The project is expected to take approximately six months.

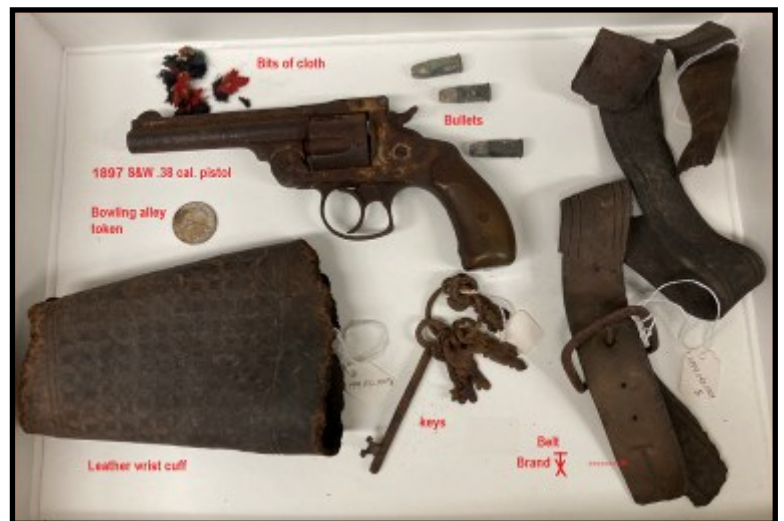


The location of this macabre find was in the vast lava flow that fans out to the west and north of Lava Butte. The lava originally dammed and backed up the Deschutes River until Benham Falls carved a new channel. The flow runs along the Deschutes from Benham Falls to Lava Island Falls and defines the southern and southeasterly boundary of the Deschutes River Woods subdivision. Its area is roughly 10 square miles.

The initial Oregon State Police (“OSP”) report of September 23, 1991 is terse and horrid. Written in all capital letters and short, abbreviated sentences, it paints a bleak picture. I couldn’t help but hear the staccato sound of a teletype machine in my head when I read it. It says, in part:

09/23/1991 15:03 SP BEND –PATROL
 LOCATED SATURDAY SEPT 21, 1991 AT APPX 11:45 AM BY GROUP OF HIKERS, WERE SKELETAL REMAINS INCLUDING SKULL, LEG BONES, ARM BONES AND ONE RIB. LOCATED WITH REMAINS WERE AN OLD SMITH & WESSON .38 CALIB PISTOL, 10 SHELL CARTRIDGES...AND OTHER SMALL ITEMS. ALL ITEMS WERE IN POOR, AGED CONDITION
 ALL REMAINS AND ITEMS WERE DISCOVERED IN CREVICE IN LAVA FLOW APPX 5 MILES SOUTH OF BEND AND APPX 1/4 MILE INTO LAVA FLOW. REMAINS ARE MANY YEARS OLD.
 INDICATIONS AT SCENE ARE SUBJECT SHOT HIMSELF IN HEAD WITH PISTOL LOCATED AT SCENE.
 AT THIS TIME THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF FOUL PLAY.

That same day, *The Bend Bulletin* published an article that fleshed out the story in greater detail. OSP Detective Lynn Fredrickson stated that “*It’s our local version of ‘Unsolved Mysteries’*”. Fredrickson said other items found included a key ring with one skeleton key and nine utility keys; a watch fob; a pocket knife with mother of pearl handles; an old fashioned shaving mirror; remnants of leather pack straps and the rubber soles of a pair of boots. He opined that the answer to the mystery might be solved by two clues. Found with the remains was a metal token, the size of a quarter, which has “Good for one Game” printed on one side. The other, partially corroded side, has a word ending



Some of the artifacts from the lava beds in the DHM archives

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**Deschutes
Historical Museum**

129 NW Idaho Avenue
Bend, OR 97703
Open Tuesdays-Saturdays
10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
541.389.1813

Museum Staff:

Kelly Cannon-Miller, Executive Director
 Vanessa Ivey, Museum Manager
 Rebekah Averette, Collections Manager
 Tracy Alexander, Membership Officer

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2021 DCHS Board of Directors:

Sue Fountain, President
 Adrian Bennett, Vice President
 Jane Williamson, Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members:

Mike Berry, Mark Capell, Paul Claeysens,
 Tony DeBone, Beau Eastes,
 Dan Ellingson, Terry Foley, Greg Fulton,
 Karen Green, Loren Irving, Heidi Kennedy, and
 Susie Penhollow,

Complete minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors are on file with the Museum office.

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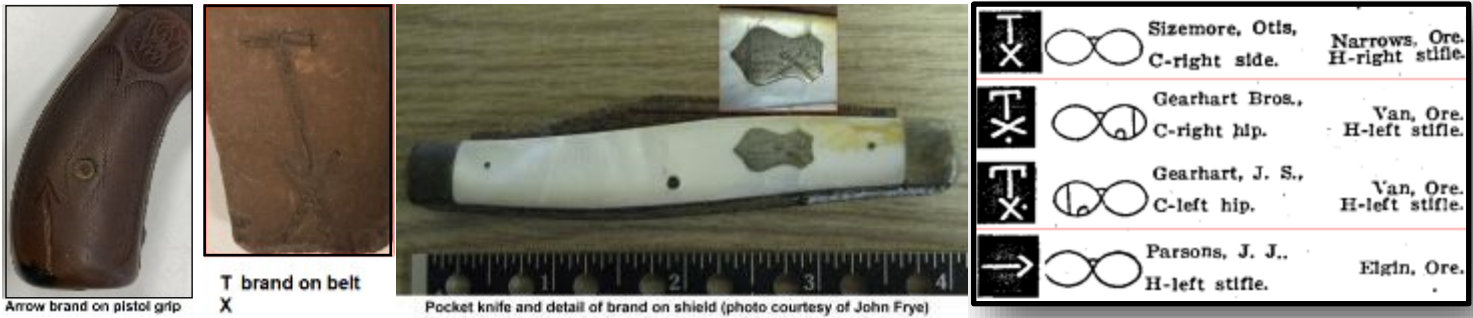
www.deschuteshistory.org
info@deschuteshistory.org

Continued from P. 2— Unknown Cowboy

in “ing” above the word “Alley” with “Prineville Ore.” printed across the bottom. The second clue were livestock brands etched into some of the man’s possessions. The article stated:

“Police speculate that the token came from an early bowling alley in Prineville, and at least one account confirms that a bowling alley once issued tokens for slot machines, card games and bowling. The brand, a tee with an “X” at the base, also might help. Fredrickson wants to hear from anyone familiar with the brand on the chance the man worked for a local ranch or was in a ranching family. “I think this brand is our whole key,” Fredrickson said.”

The article concluded that *“Police haven’t found anything that tells them for sure how the man died, but so far they have no reason to suspect foul play. For now, the mystery remains unsolved.”*



After the skeletal remains were examined by Oregon State forensics lab, it was concluded that the man, likely severely injured and immobilized by a fall into the deep rocky crevice, had dispatched himself with the pistol. The skull had a small entrance hole in the side of the head and a large exit hole in the back. An expended cartridge was found under the hammer and the rest of the cylinder was fully loaded.

Smith and Wesson records showed that this pistol, a .38 caliber S&W Break-Open Double Action 5 shot revolver was shipped to firearms agent and wholesaler Philip B. Bekeart in San Francisco on August 11, 1897. The OSP Crime Lab examined the chemical composition of one of the unexpended bullets and determined that the ammunition was manufactured around 1900.

Two different stock brands were found on some of the items. The pocket knife and a leather belt had a brand of a letter “T” over a letter “X”. The revolver grip and a leather wrist cuff had an arrow brand carved on them. This fella was definitely a cowboy who “rode for the brand”.

In researching this mystery, I had the pleasure of interviewing the 1991 OSP detective who investigated

this mystery, Lynn Fredrickson of Redmond. Lynn retired from the force in 1999 but the details of this case are still sharp in his memory. He said that like any discovery of human remains, the OSP approached this investigation as a possible crime scene until proven otherwise. Hence the ensuing forensic reports on the remains, the weapon, and the ammunition.

Adventuresome hikers notified authorities when they discovered the remains in the lava beds. Lynn met them at the edge of the lava and they led him to the location about a quarter to a half mile into the lava beds. There was no trail to the area and they scrambled over a fractured, rocky hellscape of sharp lava rock - high steep ridges cut with deep fissures, tilting towers of fractured rock and “boulders as big as your living room”.

The remains were in the bottom of a deep, rocky crevice. To retrieve the skeletal remains and belongings, Lynn

had to crawl down through a tight maze of boulders, being held by the ankles from above. He gathered up everything he could see and was pulled back up. The boulder jumble in the crevice continued downward but he was unable to get any farther down. He hypothesizes that more remains and belongings may have settled deeper into the abyss.

Articles were published in *The Bend Bulletin* and *The Oregonian* and local historical societies were notified. The Crook County Historical Society shared newspaper articles about the 1905 disappearance of Sam Branton, a 76- year-old who vanished while camping on the Deschutes River near Lower Bridge, 42 miles river miles north of the Lava Beds. He purportedly was wearing a red sweater the last time he was seen and red cloth was found with the lava beds remains. However, it was reported that Branton was ill and very feeble so it’s not likely he could have walked such a great distance. His son said he had committed suicide by drowning himself in the Deschutes near Lower Bridge. Sam’s body was never found and his disappearance remains a mystery.

Other leads came in to the OSP and the Deschutes

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Volunteer Corner

Mike

Berry

By Sue Fountain

Lucky for us, when Mike Berry retired from his job as County Surveyor he decided to become a volunteer for the Deschutes County Historical Society. He became a board member before his retirement, and with his interest in local history it was a natural fit for him to sign on as a volunteer.

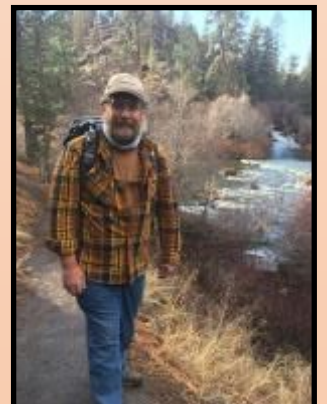
Because Mike's father was in the army, the family traveled around, and Mike was actually born at Camp Zama, Japan. Describing himself as an "army brat," he said they lived at a variety of army posts abroad and in the United States. Mike graduated from high school in Lawton, Oklahoma before the family decided to move to Oregon. Once here, he enrolled at COCC in the Forest Technology program where he discovered his love for surveying. In 1977 he finished his program and began working as a land surveyor. He continued in that career for 45 years. Mike's career included work with the state, federal, county, and private sector. Aside from his volunteer work for DCHS, he also gives time to the statewide Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon.

His love for local history began as a young man when he read the book *Terrible Trails* by Keith Clark. It tells the story of the Meek Cutoff, describing the wagon train and their arduous journey through Central Oregon. Mike found himself going deeper into the back stories of the people who were here before us. For him it is like a mystery to solve as to where the people were headed and what trails they were on. He is also interested in the Elliott Trail and the pioneers who followed it in 1853 before their arrival in Deschutes County.

As Mike describes it, surveying requires skills in following a linear progression; how people get from point A to point B. If the numbers are even one degree off the surveyor has to search the area to see where the correct line truly lies. He enjoys solving these puzzles and figuring out what people were thinking and where they were going. His curiosity about what happened in the past has led him to dive deeply into stories and tales from history.

Mike has shared his knowledge about Central Oregon in several articles for the *Homesteader*, and we look forward to many more. He and his wife, Maureen, are both retired and they enjoy being out in nature as often as possible. Even on recreational adventures he is always looking for clues to the past. He knows where to look for wagon wheel ruts and signs of old roads and trails.

When Mike is at the museum, working at the front desk, he enjoys visiting with the public, and he looks forward to picking up gems of information from the people who come in. Usually they come with questions, but sometimes they have historic information to share or stories to tell. You can listen to Mike speak at History Pub which is returning August 25th at McMenimans. His topic will be the 100th anniversary of both Drake Park and Shevlin Park.





Front and back of metal bowling alley token. (Photos courtesy of John Frye)

sheepherder and rancher in the Prineville area. Dutch John disappeared around 1902-1903 and Shorty Davis disappeared around 1900. Local historians believe Davis was probably a victim of the Crook County Sheepshooters, a vigilante group during the range wars of 1895-1906. The disappearance of both of these men remain unsolved but no documentation has been uncovered to tie them to the brands found in the lava beds.

The main clue, the brands on the various personal items, has proven as vexing as the nebulous reports of missing persons from 70 to 80 years prior. A 1918 Oregon Brand book shows that the distinctive “T” over “X” brand was registered to Otis Sizemore of The Narrows in Harney County. Two similar brands were used by the Gearhart family in Van, Harney County. The simple arrow brand was registered to J.J. Parsons in Elgin, Union County, Oregon.

Detective Fredrickson believes the cowboy must have been a man of some import, given the amount of keys he carried. Evaluating the scene, he believes the man stumbled from the steep ridge above and plummeted into the deep fissure, either breaking his back or a leg, leaving no hope of rescue.

What brought the cowboy to this stark location? A few rough trails crossed the lava beds at a narrow isthmus near Benham Falls in the early 1900s and were used as a shortcut to the falls area. A 1915 map shows such a trail. The BNRR tracks were cut through the lava at the isthmus in the 1930s. But the cowboy’s remains are miles from this crossing, at the edge of one of the widest parts of the lava beds. Perhaps he was unfamiliar with the area and thought he could take a shortcut. Or perhaps, like the hikers who discovered his fate some 90 years later, he was lured by the challenge of venturing into the unknown.

Fredrickson closed his case in 1999. The District Attorney ordered that he transfer the skeletal remains to the State Medical Examiner’s office and transfer the relics found at the scene to the Deschutes Historical Museum, where they reside in our archives to this day... patiently waiting to help future researchers determine who this man was. To quote the newspaper article from 30 years ago, *“For now, the mystery remains unsolved.”*

Note – the location of the cowboy’s accident can only be accessed by crossing private land. Therefore this information will not be divulged by the museum.

County Historical Society. Vague stories. A sheepherder in the Horse Ridge and Bend area named Dave was supposedly lost in the lava beds in 1915. A grandfather, name unknown, had disappeared in Central Oregon in the 1920s. None of these disappearances were substantiated by contemporaneous newspaper accounts.

Other contenders are “Dutch John” Felderwerd, a sheepherder and the namesake for Dutchman Flat near Mt. Bachelor, and Elias “Shorty” Davis, a



Arrow brand on leather wrist cuff

Memorials

Marsha Stout

Mike and Susie Penhollow

Jean Pozzi

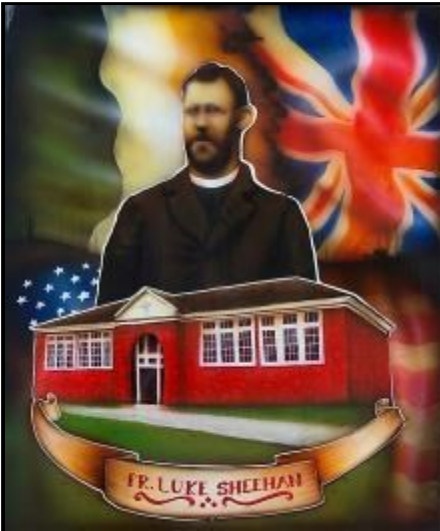
Kim Rhodes

Mary Wallis

Tributes

Ralph C. Curtis

Jean Rotter



McMenamins Old St. Francis School
700 NW Bond Street
Father Luke Room, 7 p.m.,
doors open at 6 p.m.

History Pub Returns

After COVID quarantine hiatus, History Pub is back! Wednesday, August 25 join us as we return to McMenamins Old St Francis in the Father Luke room for a fun evening of history and, dare we say, tater tots? History Pub regulars may be saying to themselves “wait, Wednesday?” Yes, for the month of August, History Pub takes place on Wednesday the 25th. If all goes well we return to the last Tuesday of the month starting in September.

DCHS Board Member Mike Berry is our speaker with “A Pleasant Place for a Sunday Afternoon: Celebrating 100 years of Drake and Shevlin Parks”. Shevlin and Drake parks hold special places in the hearts of area residents; learn the history of their creation and how visionary residents planned for creating and nurturing open community spaces.

Mark Your Calendars

AUGUST

- 7 **HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Early Days of Bend**
10:30 a.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Soul of the City: A History of Drake Park**
2:30 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- 14 **HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Reflections of History: Architectural Tour**
10:30 a.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Soul of the City: A History of Drake Park**
2:30 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- 21 **HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Early Days of Bend**
10:30 a.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Soul of the City: A History of Drake Park**
2:30 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- 25 **HISTORY PUB: A Pleasant Place for a Sunday Afternoon:
Celebrating 100 years of Drake and Shevlin Parks**
Presented by Mike Berry, DCHS Board Member
McMenamins Old St. Francis
Father Luke Room, 7 p.m., doors open at 6 p.m.
First-come-first-served seating, no reservations required.
- 28 **HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Reflections of History: Architectural Tour**
10:30 a.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
- HERITAGE WALKING TOUR: Soul of the City: A History of Drake Park**
2:30 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum



History Pub Returns!



Save the date! Little Woody is Back!
September 3-4 at the Deschutes Historical Museum

