

Murder Mystery

Look back on the century old murder mystery of the Lava Lake Trappers See p. 2

Poetic Praise

Celebrate National Poetry month with books inspired by and about Central Oregon See p. 4

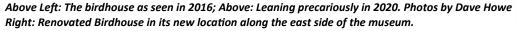


The Homesteader

Deschutes County Historical Society Newsletter—APRIL 2024



Coming Home to Roost: A Brooks-Scanlon Era Birdhouse is Relocated to DHM



This is a story told just in time for the upcoming Historic Preservation Month! The Deschutes Historical Museum has a new "ADU" (Accessory Dwelling Unit) of sorts, thanks to eagle-eyed Dave Howe and talented woodworker Ed Barnum.

Back in 2016, Dave spotted a birdhouse while walking along the old Brooks-Scanlon Mill A area. It seemed to be a miniature replica of the mill:

I used to walk to work every day and would often pass by it. I knew it was just south of where the Crane Shed used to be and often wondered about its origins. Did a millworker with time on his hands put it together with scrap wood during several lunch breaks? Did a bunch of guys work on it? Was there a birding group in Bend who decided to install it? Who knows? Anyway, it was mounted on a big timber post and over time I saw it slowly tilt. I am drawn to the vestiges and remnants of what came before us, so I enlisted the help of my friend and neighbor, Wade Holmes, whose family goes back generations in Deschutes County. He is also quite knowledgeable about birds. We carefully removed the house from the post, after getting permission from the landowner, Windemere Properties, and brought it back to the museum.

The birdhouse was in rough shape, and its former tenants left quite a mess inside. After much TLC, Ed Barnum's finished renovation was ready to be installed. He identified the perfect location, erected the post, leveled the platform, and the birdhouse was secured. Not only do its potential tenants have a beautiful "birds-eye view" of the historic Reid School and surrounding environs, but staff and volunteers have an amazing view of the birdhouse from inside the kitchen window!

This feel-good story truly resembles a successful preservation effort worthy of a Landmarks Commission stamp of approval. It goes to show what can be accomplished when caring citizens take action to protect our county's historic buildings!



1924 Midwinter Murders of The Three Trappers

By Mike Berry

A Rough Character - In the early days, The Bend Bulletin would list the out-of-town guests staying at the various lodgings in the city. These "At the Hotels" columns indicate that in the late nineteen-teens an occasional visitor to Bend was "Lee Collins" from Silver Lake. If you were to belly up to a lunch counter back then and sit next to Collins you'd likely get the heebie-jeebies

when he turned to acknowledge you. Collins was a rough character and had the unnerving mannerism of speaking rapidly through clenched teeth with his lips drawn back into a macabre, toothy smile. He slurred the ends of his words in a hissing, hurried chatter. In his mid-thirties and a compact five foot seven, 160 pounds, this customer was toughened and gnarled from a hard life of working as a ranch hand, teamster, logger, bootlegger, sheep herder and fur trapper. After Collins paid his tab and walked towards the door you'd observe that his gait was noticeably quick and herky-jerky. Fast forward to April 24, 1924 and you wouldn't be surprised by headlines declaring that the unsettling stranger you crossed paths with was suspected of committing three murders at a remote mountain lake in the Cascades. By that time he was identified in the press by his real name: Charles Kimzey.

Kimzey was on the lam from the Idaho State Penitentiary, having escaped in 1915 while serving a 3 to 14 year stint for larceny. His many aliases included Lee Collins, Tom Collins, Bob Dales, Tom Rose, W.R. Howe and William Becker. He roamed throughout Montana, Idaho, Utah and eastern Oregon and in the early 1920s drifted into Deschutes County.

1922-1923 in the High Lakes - In 1922, Alan Willcoxon was building a resort and cabins at Elk Lake. The road from Bend to the lake had just been improved and the high lakes were becoming a popular recreation destination. Five miles south of



Elk Lake, prominent Bend logging contractor Ed Logan had a trappers' cabin and fur farm at Little Lava Lake. In 1922 and 1923 Kimzey worked for both Willcoxon at Elk Lake and Logan at Little Lava Lake. During the winter, he also partnered with Bend resident Ed Nichols running traplines in the Cascades while tending to Logan's penned foxes at Little Lava Lake.

Near the end of the summer of 1923 Kimzey and Ed Nichols got into a heated quarrel when Nichols accused Kimzey of stealing \$500 from him. Soon thereafter, on August 20, 1923, Kimzey caught a ride to Bend from Little Lava Lake with his employer Ed Logan. Once Logan

headed back to the lake, Kimzey broke into Logan's home in Bend and stole a trunk containing an expensive fur coat and a diamond ring.

Kimzey had the trunk freighted to Boise, Idaho and the next morning hired cabbie W. E. Harrison to drive him to a deserted homestead near Frederick Butte, about 15 miles southeasterly of the town of Brothers. The purpose of the trip was ostensibly to purchase horses. Once at the deserted ranch Kimzey cracked Harrison on the back of the head, knocking him unconscious. He bound Harrison's ankles and wrists with bailing wire and started dragging him towards an empty cistern. Harrison resumed consciousness and was forced to drink a vial of either some sort of drug or poison. Harrison passed out again and Kimzey threw him head first into the seven-foot-deep cistern.

Harrison survived and after coming to, it took him hours to unbind his hands and feet and clamber out of the well. He walked four miles to a ranch and the sheriff was summoned. Kimzey was long gone. The stolen car, with license plates on it that Kimzey had stolen from one of Ed Logan's cars, was later found abandoned in Boise, as was Ed Logan's trunk, emptied of its expensive contents. The fur coat was later found by police in a Boise pawn shop.

The Three Trappers - In the fall of 1923 Ed Nichols was

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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

www.deschuteshistory.org info@deschuteshistory.org

Museum Staff:

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

2024 DCHS Board of Directors:

Jane Williamson, President Karen Green, Vice President Heidi Kennedy, Secretary/Treasurer Adrian Bennett, Past President

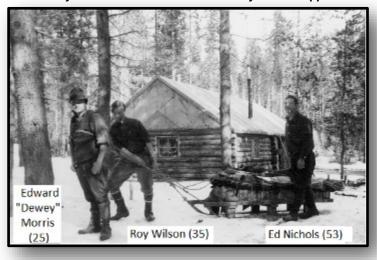
Board Members:

Mike Berry, Paul Claeyssens, Tony DeBone, Greg Fulton, Erik King, Susie Penhollow, Liz Rink

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

Continued from P. 2— Midwinter Murders of Three Trappers





1930 USGS map showing Little Lava Lake

The three trappers at the Lava Lake cabin.

employed by Logan to tend to the Little Lava Lake fur farm through the winter. Logan had a pen with five very valuable foxes that Nichols was to feed and care for. Two of Nichols' friends decided to join him for the winter and run about 30 miles of trap lines through the Cascades. The three trappers wintering over at the Little Lava Lake cabin in 1923-1924 were:

Edward K. "Ed" Nichols (or "Nickols"): A 53-year-old divorcee and father of two. He had been a blacksmith and a logger and more recently worked as a trapper and horse packer.

Harry Leroy "Roy" Wilson: A 36-year-old ex-Marine. He was single and worked as a logger for Brooks-Scanlon. The Wilson family apparently had ties to Ed Nichols' family, having previously lived in Bellingham, Washington and in northern Lake County, Oregon during the same time frame.

Dewey Morris: A 24-year-old logger. His brothers Owen, Ben and Donald lived in Central Oregon, as did his sister Janeva B. Carrol. Dewey and Owen were employed by Brooks-Scanlon.

Why did Wilson and Morris decide to spend the winter trapping with Ed Nichols? Severe weather often slowed down or completely halted woods work. Trapping could be profitable in a good season. Another possibility was concern for their friend Ed Nichols' safety. He had told Ed Logan that after the row with Kimzey over the theft of his \$500, Kimzey said he would come back some day and kill Nichols. Nichols lived in fear of reprisal by Kimzey.

Once the trappers got the cabin stocked up in autumn and the snow began to fall, the only way in or out was by snowshoe. The easiest way to get to Little Lava Lake in the winter was by driving from the Fall River/Crane Prairie area as far as the snow allowed and then snowshoeing up the Snow Creek drainage to the lake. This could be anywhere from a 5 to 25 mile trudge, depending on the snowline.

Just before Christmas Ed Nichols made the trip out on snowshoes and brought a pack full of furs to Bend. He reported that all was well at the lake and the fur take was plentiful. Apparently Morris and Wilson also visited Bend some time during the holidays and Wilson told his mom they'd likely

return to town before Easter.

January 1924 - The entire crew was back at the cabin by January 1 and on the 15 they entertained a visitor. Allen Willcoxon had snowshoed 24 miles from his home at Fall River, heading to Elk Lake to see how his cabins were fairing under the heavy winter snows. It was late in the day when he arrived at Little Lava so he stayed overnight with the trappers, exchanging stories till the wee hours of the morning. He continued on to Elk Lake in the morning and returned back to Fall River via a different route. He reported that the trappers were comfortable and contented with their fur catch.

April 1924 - Not a word had been heard from the trappers since January 15, so on April 13, 1924, Roy Wilson's brother-in-law, H.D. Innis, and Dewey Morris's brother Owen snowshoed up to the cabin. The scene was disturbing. The trappers were absent. An emaciated cat bolted out the cabin door. The breakfast table was set and moldy, burnt food was in pots and pans atop the cold cook stove. The calendar page was still turned to January. Cold weather hats and coats along with guns and traps were still in the cabin so it did not appear the trappers had ventured out to their trap lines. There was no sign of a struggle in the cabin, but it was messy, like it had been rifled through. The five foxes were missing from the pens, as were the two tote sleds. Any furs the trappers had harvested were gone. Innis and Morris hot-footed it back to town.

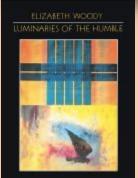
On April 14, Pearl Edward Lynes returned to the lake with Innis and Morris to help search. On April 15 Dewey's other brothers Don and Ben arrived with Deputy Sheriff and game warden Clarence Adams. In the next week the traplines and three other trappers' cabins were searched with no trace of the men. Unattended traps held the frozen remains of 12 martins and 4 foxes. The carcasses of the five penned foxes were found near the cabin. Two had been expertly skinned and the others were bungled... indicating that two people of varying skill had skinned them. Finds around the cabin started to paint a gruesome picture. Bloody snow. A human tooth. A bit of skull. A bloody hammer. Expended shotgun shells and revolver brass.

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National Poetry Month: Poems Celebrating Central Oregon Deserts and Plateau

The beauty and people of Oregon's High Desert region inspire artists to create pieces that reflect the stories, landscapes, and history we all cherish. We are proud to highlight books by two authors celebrated for their work born of Oregon's desert landscapes and people. Please stop by the Deschutes Historical Museum or visit our online store, and be sure to take advantage of your 10% membership discount!





Luminaries of the Humble

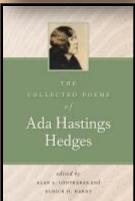
This collection of poems by one of the Pacific Northwest's finest poets, Elizabeth Woody, focuses on the land and people of that region, especially the Plateau Indian tribes and the contemporary issues that affect their lives. *Luminaries of the Humble* offers images of the Northwest's natural environment, with its rivers and diverse landscapes, while also conveying the author's deep personal insights, experiences, and understanding of the relationship between people and their land. Woody's strength lies in her ability to recognize connections to specific places that also define her relationship to a region. Through her work, non-Native readers can learn to see through popular misinterpretations of Native cultures that are often mistaken for truth.

In opening remarks, Woody shares anecdotes of her youth that contributed to her sense of personal history and her development as a poet. "The petroglyphs on rock in the Columbia River Gorge are part of my literary heritage," she writes. Now through the medium of the printed word, *Luminaries of the Humble* marks an important continuation of that tradition.

Elizabeth Woody is an American Navajo-Warm Springs-Wasco-Yakama artist, author, and educator. In March 2016, she was named poet laureate of Oregon by Governor Kate Brown, the first Native American to be so named.

Paperback, 129 pages, published in 1994 *Price:* \$16.20 members, \$18 non-members





The Collected Poems of Ada Hastings Hedges

Hedges wrote in a style notable for precision, clarity, and smoothness of line. More than half of her poems in this collection are sonnets. A poet of the city as well as the desert, her work offers a compelling perspective on mid-century Portland life. In 1930 she published her only book, *Desert Poems*. That collection is reprinted here in its entirety, along with scores of additional poems published in a wide variety of venues, making this the first comprehensive collection of Hedges's work.

A detailed introduction by the editors and annotations to the text provide information about revisions, publication dates, and notable features. Also included is an essay by Hedges asking, "Can Poetry Be Taught?" In her afterword, Oregon poet Ingrid Wendt writes of her admiration for Hedges' "fierceness of spirit, lack of sentimentality, and complex vision."

Except for a twelve-year sojourn in southeastern Oregon and two years in Los Angeles, Hedges lived in Portland from 1910 until her death in 1980. She was assistant editor at Binford & Mort Publishers and a supervising editor in the Works Progress Administration. She taught briefly at Warner Pacific College in the 1960s.

Ada Hastings Hedges (1883-1980) was among Oregon's foremost mid—twentieth-century poets. Famous in her lifetime, she was best known for her superb poems set in Oregon's high desert, which offer a fascinating counterpoint to C.E.S. Wood's seminal The Poet in the Desert.

Paperback, 144 pages, published 2020 Price: \$17.10 members, \$19 non-members

Continued from P. 3— Midwinter Murders of Three Trappers

A quarter mile from Little Lava Lake near the boat launch of (big) Lava Lake one of the trappers' tote sleds was found by the shore. It had human blood on it. A faint trail led out over the frozen lake about 100 yards to a frozen-over hole that had been chopped in the ice. It was all too apparent what had happened to the trappers.

On the afternoon of April 23, Lava Lake suddenly thawed and gave up her dead. The three trappers' bodies were sighted floating a couple hundred feet out in the lake. The bodies were taken back to Bend on April 24, examined by the coroner, and on April 25 buried in Greenwood Cemetery.



Recovery of bodies at lava lake-April 24 1924

The findings of the coroner's inquest is the least gruesome description you'll read of how the trappers died, so it will suffice for this account: "We... find that they all came to their death... in the following manner: Ed Nichols was killed by a shotgun wound. Roy Wilson was killed by a bullet wound through the head. He was also shot with a shotgun. Dewey Morris was killed by being hit on the head with some blunt instrument. He was also shot with a shotgun. All these men were killed by a person or persons unknown to this jury."



1933 Charles Kimzey mug shot

It was speculated that two men slaughtered the trappers by luring them out of the cabin into an ambush. The trappers didn't put on coats or take weapons out of the gun racks. Did they get hailed from outside by a familiar voice? Did they hear the penned foxes raising a ruckus? We will never know.

"WANT IDAHO CONVICT" – April 24, 1924 The Bend Bulletin - Suspicion was immediately cast towards Charles Kimzey, alias Lee Collins. He knew the country, was aware of the prized fur foxes at the lake and in August 1923, just before disappearing from the area, had robbed Nichols, burgled Logan's home, left Harrison for dead after stealing his taxi and had sworn revenge on Nichols. Sheriff Samuel E. "Bert" Roberts circulated a wanted poster throughout the state. The news spread like wildfire in the west.

In Portland, traffic policeman W.C. Bender saw the wanted poster and recognized Kimzey as one of two men who had asked him for directions to a fur store around January 20 1924. Kimzey and the other man were carrying a gunny sack of furs. Bender was positive of his identification because of a peculiar mannerism in Kimzey's walk and the way he slurred the endings of his words. Kimzey and his partner were directed to the Schumacher Fur Company on SW 3rd and Salmon. Carl Schumacher recognized Kimzey's mug shot as one of the men he purchased furs from on January 22, 1924. When he asked for identification he was shown Ed Nichols' trapper's license. The second, unidentified trapper was described as a 150 pound man with a sandy complexion, wearing a khaki suit, beaver hat and leather puttees.

The manhunt for Kimzey and his accomplice fizzled out. Even though rewards of \$750 each for Kimzey and the unknown accomplice were offered, the wanted men had disappeared.

December 1925 Murder – In December of 1925 a Salt Lake City, Utah, architect directed an employee, H. R. Howard, to drive his car from Salt Lake City to his winter residence in Tampa, Florida. Howard placed an advertisement in the paper to have someone share driving duties with him. Howard disappeared and the car was found in Texas. Later, police agencies and private investigators concluded that Kimzey was the man who answered the ad. Howard's remains were found in December 1927 in the desert south of Las Vegas. He had been stabbed in the abdomen and thrown into a draw.

"KIMZEY IS BACK IN BEND AFTER 9 YEAR SEARCH" – March 17, 1933 Bend Bulletin headline - During the ensuing years, Deschutes County Sheriff Bert Roberts and his successor Sheriff Claude McCauley continued to follow leads about Kimzey's whereabouts. In February 1933 a vagrant, Bob Bales, believed to be Kimzey, was arrested in Kalispell, Montana but photos and fingerprints proved

he was the wrong man. Then a simple twist of fate occurred as a Kalispell jailer recognized the real Charles Kimzey walking down the street a couple weeks after Bales was released.

Kimzey was brought to Bend and had an alibi that he was working at the Moffat Railroad Tunnel Project in Colorado in January of 1924. Sheriff McCauley examined Moffat pay sheets that showed "Lee Collins" had worked on the tunnel that winter, but he had drawn his pay and quit on January 6, 1924. Additionally, McCauley interviewed a trapper in Prineville who was acquainted

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Tributes

Ralph C. Curtis

Jean Curtis

Continued from P. 5— Midwinter Murders of Three Trappers

with Kimzey and saw him passing through the area in January 1924. He identified Kimzey on the wanted poster and said Kimzey was on horseback and stated that he was heading to Cultus Lake (6 miles southwest of Little Lava Lake) to meet a partner.

The silver bullet for the case was to be an identification of Kimzey by Officer Bender and Mr. Schumacher. Kimzey was driven to Portland and housed in the Multnomah County jail.

The two witnesses viewed a lineup and neither could positively identify Kimzey. Schumacher said that after a lapse of 9 years, he thought it was the same man but Kimzey had aged considerably and grown quite bald. McCauley later wrote that, in private, Schumacher told him ""I know that's the man. But it's nine years since I saw him and I'd hate to send a man to the chair on what I can remember of a casual customer I bought a few furs from that long ago..."

The Harrison Trial - Kimzey's murder trial was ruined now, but Sheriff McCauley had other charges he could bring up – the assault, robbery and attempted murder of taxi driver W.E. Harrison in August 1923. To Kimzey's astonishment, Harrison had survived the attack and positively identified Kimzey as his assailant. On April 22, 1933 the jury found Kimzey guilty of assault and robbery and the judge sentenced him to life in prison. The severity of the sentence was due to the court's observation that he was a habitual criminal. Kimzey was sent to the Oregon State Prison in Salem. In 1945 he escaped from a work crew but was captured a week later. After serving 24 years in prison he was paroled in 1957, aged 71. He returned to Idaho where he died in 1976 at the ripe old age of 90

Unsolved Mystery - After 100, years this murder can still be summarized by coroner's inquest conclusion "...these men were killed by a person or persons unknown". Clyde McCauley was sure it was Kimzey owing to his reputation of a violent and unscrupulous poltroon. While the evidence strongly suggests Kimzey as one assailant, no mention was ever made publicly of whom Kimzey's partner may have been.

In her book *The Trapper Murders*, author Melany Tupper makes a case of it being one Ray Van Buren Jackson, a sadistic schoolteacher and ex-con from Silver Lake who was in the vicinity of numerous unsolved murders in eastern Oregon through the early 1900s and died by his own hand in 1938. Besides Tupper's book, other accounts of the events include an unpublished account of the murders co-written by Paul Hosmer and Sheriff Clyde McCauley titled "Midwinter Murders". The book *Little Known Tales from Oregon History, Volume III* contains an account written by Don Burgderfer and Jim Crowell summarized the events in

the 2012 edition of *The Deschutes Pioneers Gazette*.

Nichols, Morris and Wilson will forever go down in local history as the "Three Trappers". Three adjacent buttes about 6 miles east of Crane Prairie were named the "Three Trappers" in the 1920s in memory of these men. And in Bend's Greenwood Cemetery the Three Trappers were laid to rest, side by side, as they had lived and died together in 1924.



Then and Now: Bend Union High School Building



Bend Union High School: Construction started 1924, finished July 1925. Hugh Thompson, architect.

2024 marks the 100 year anniversary of Bend Union High School's start of construction. In celebration of this milestone, 520 NW Wall Street in Bend will be featured on the "Reflections of History: An Architectural Tour" heritage walk. See page 8 for a complete schedule of heritage walks.



Bend-La Pine School District Administration Building, 2024

READ/CREATE: A NOVEL IDEA 2024 OPENING MAY 4, 2024!



The Deschutes Historic Museum is proud to continue the collaboration with the Deschutes Public Library with an exhibit showcasing fiber arts inspired by the featured books of the 2024 A Novel Idea program. Since 2003, A Novel Idea has introduced readers to fresh and captivating narratives with new participants joining every year. The idea is simple: pick a great book, engage with community through thought-provoking and relevant programming and wrap up the project with free and accessible author visits. This year's novels are *Shark Heart* by Emily Habeck, and the youth edition title is *No Matter the Distance* by Cindy Baldwin.

Visitors to the museum may recall the "20 Years of Novel Idea" exhibit in April 2023 that featured memorabilia and artwork inspired by featured novels throughout the program's history. In addition to posters, video, and other paraphernalia related to the program's titles, a highlight of the exhibit was a variety of art quilts inspired by the program's books. Once again local quilters are creating artwork related to this year's selected novels, and they have invited other fiber artists to submit artwork for display alongside their quilts.

This exhibit opens Saturday, May 4, 2024 and will be featured in the southeast gallery of the second floor, across from the classroom exhibit.

Mark Your Calendars

APRIL

VOLUNTEER MEETING: Collections Work1:00 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum



SAVE THE DATE!

MAY is National Historic Preservation Month!

MAY 2: Historic Preservation Month Kick-off:

Uncover Redmond's Rich History: A Journey Through Time 4:30 p.m. Meeting Point SCP Redmond

521 SW 6th St. Redmond

MAY 3: Redmond First Friday

Self-Guided tours of historic downtown Redmond

JUNE 1: OREGON ARCHAEOLOGY ROAD SHOW: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF FOOD

Historic Preservation celebrations continue with this family friendly free event at the Deschutes Historical Museum!

11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

 $\label{eq:Visit} \textbf{ \underline{archaeologyroadshow.org}} \ for \ more \ information$

Stay tuned for a complete schedule of events and programming!





Deschutes Historical Museum

Heritage Walking Tours of Downtown Bend May 4- August 31, 2024

Put some history in your future...

Join us for a walking tour of historical significance around Bend's historic downtown district and neighborhoods.

Saturdays May through August.

All tours leave from the museum at 10:30 a.m.

\$15 per person, FREE to Museum Members

Space is limited, Registration is required.

Reflections of History: An Architectural Tour

Stroll through the Drake Park Neighborhood Historic District and take a step back in time when walking was the thing to do and neighborhoods were all about proximity. Participants will be introduced to the architectural styles represented in the neighborhood, hearing stories of a changing community. Tour begins and ends at the Deschutes Historical Museum.

May 11 &25, June 8 & 22, July 6 & 20, August 3 & 24

Time: 10:30 a.m., approximately 1.5 hours

Length: One (1) mile through historic neighborhood. The sidewalks can be uneven.

The Early Days of Bend

Travel back to when the river ran wild, Ponderosa pines were plentiful and Bend the Beautiful was a town in the making. Learn about early Bend through the stories of six "Bendites" and how these residents helped transform a young hamlet into a booming town.

Tour begins at the Deschutes Historical Museum and ends at Lone Crow Bungalow on Wall St.

May 4 & 18, June 1, 15 & 29, July 13 & 27, August 17 & 31

Time: 10:30 a.m., approximately 1 hour

Length: Less than a mile traveling through old neighborhoods and parkways. The ground can be uneven at times and is not recommended for wheelchairs.

RESERVATION IS REQUIRED.

SIGN UP MUST BE BY 4:00 p.m. THE DAY BEFORE THE TOUR.

Call 541-389-1813 or email info@deschuteshistory.org
Tours are subject to change and cancellation.

We recommend the following: wear comfortable walking shoes, dress for the weather, bring water, and don't forget your camera! It does get hot so a hat is good too.

Tours are lead by knowledgeable museum volunteers

Deschutes Historical Museum 129 NW Idaho Ave, Bend Oregon 97703, Tel: 541-389-1813, email: info@deschuteshistory.org