DESCHUTES HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The Homesteader

Inside: Glenn Voelz debuts his new book, *The Deschutes River - A History* with an excerpt and History Pub.

November 2026 — Vol. 53, Issue 11

Exhibit Reception Events in November

Join us for an up-close and personal look at *Music By Hand*



Thursday, November 12
5:30-6:30 p.m.

Members are invited to explore "Music By Hand in Rural Oregon 1879-1940."

Enjoy complimentary refreshments and live music by the Thorn Hollow String Band. Guest curator Zac Stewart, Ph.D. Music History, Rebekah Averette-Zaback, Collections Manager, and Kelly Cannon-Miller, Executive Director will be available for conversations about the exhibit at this relaxed, open-house-style event.

Please RSVP by November 10: info@deschuteshistory.org

Opening Reception



Wednesday, November 18
5:00-7:00 p.m.

The Central Oregon Two Spirit Coalition and the Deschutes Historical Museum celebrate our Two Spirit community and the opening of the exhibit *Transgressors*, a special touring exhibition from the Chachalu Tribal Museum and Cultural Center, presenting now and future Indigiqueer ancestors who move beyond boundaries in life and art.

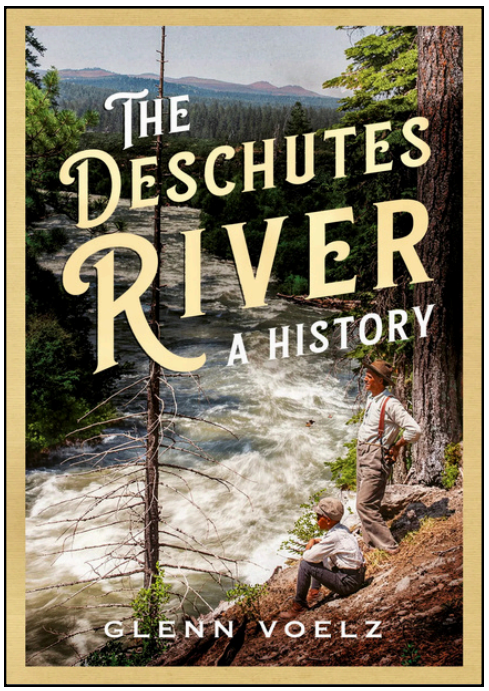
Enjoy complimentary light dinner from Spork, and a short presentation by the Central Oregon Two Spirit Coalition, which is based in Warm Springs.

See page 4 for more information about Transgressors.

THE DESCHUTES RIVER

A History

By Glenn Voelz



The following excerpt is a preview of Glenn's new book about the history of the Deschutes River, available at the Deschutes Historical Museum gift shop in late November.

Humans have lived along the banks of the Deschutes River for at least 10,000 years. For most of that time, inhabitants left little evidence of their presence. Some of these places are now submerged beneath the waters of Wickiup Reservoir and Lake Billy Chinook. Other sites, such as the Lava Island Rock Shelter and Macks Canyon, reveal hints of cultures that lived in close balance with their environment, relying on the river for survival without fundamentally altering its natural state.

When Euro-American explorers first encountered the Deschutes in the early nineteenth century, they found one of the world's most remarkable spring-fed river systems, known for its cold, clean water and steady flow. As colonization expanded, the balance between the river's resources and human demands gradually shifted. By the mid-1830s, fur trappers were rapidly depleting the resident beaver population. A decade later, the explorer John Frémont led an expedition through the basin and marveled at the river and its resources, noting that the rich soil and excellent water "would delight the eye of a farmer."

When the first settlers arrived in the basin in the 1870s, they subsisted mainly on grazing and dry farming, with minimal impact on the river. By the 1890s, they began developing basic infrastructure for irrigated agriculture, drawing water from the Deschutes and its tributaries. That process accelerated significantly after the turn of the century, as settlements grew and entrepreneurs claimed water rights for hydropower and irrigation.

In the early twentieth century, large-scale hydrologic infrastructure began altering the river's natural flow to support a growing population and spur economic development. A series of dams in the river's upper reaches blocked the historical migration of anadromous fish. Meanwhile, on the lower river, rival railroad companies blasted their way through the Deschutes Canyon, racing to reach Central Oregon. As historian Alan Trachtenberg observed, the railroad became the instrument of industrialization, turning nature into "natural resources" for economic exploitation.

This transformation unfolded in Central Oregon with astonishing speed, leaving profound consequences for the forests and the river. A few years after the railroad arrived, two of the world's largest pine mills opened on the banks of the Deschutes, turning a sizable stretch of the upper river into an industrial zone. At the same time, logging operations transformed a once-pristine stretch of the river into a liquid conveyor belt for timber.

Within a few decades of Bend's founding in 1905, the Deschutes had already become a different river, modified to meet the needs of settlement and development. Local boosters called it a "river of gold," touting its potential as a multi-use river that could support irrigation, power, industry, and recreation. During this period of rapid growth, nearly all of today's water rights

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DESCHUTES HISTORICAL MUSEUM

129 NW Idaho Ave.
Bend, OR, 97703
Open Tuesday-Saturday
10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
541-389-1813
info@deschuteshistory.org
www.deschuteshistory.org

Museum staff

Kelly Cannon-Miller	Executive Director
Vanessa Ivey	Museum Manager
Rebekah Averette-Zaback	Collections Manager
Donna Burklo	Development Director
Tracy Alexander	Membership Officer
Rashelle Maplethorpe	Support Staff

Board of Directors

Heidi Kennedy	President
Karen Green	Vice President
Eric King	Secretary/Treasurer
Jane Williamson	Past President

Board Members

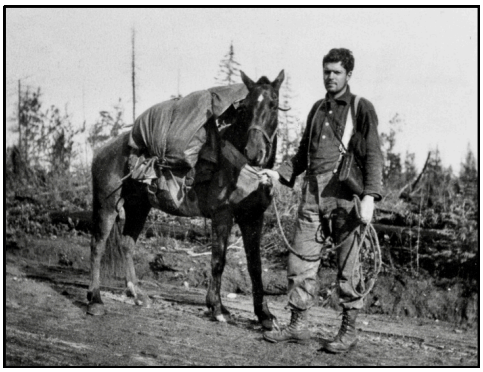
Adrian Bennett
Paul Claeyssens
Tony DeBone
Greg Fulton
Brad Lemmon
Julie Lowy
Liz Rink
Glenn Voelz
Deb Zitella

Complete minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors are on file with the Museum office. Tax ID# 51-0186079

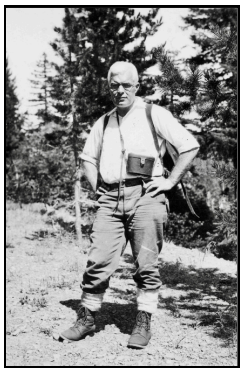
Continued from Page 2



Log drives like this one on the Upper Deschutes in 1939 sometimes blocked the river for a dozen miles.



The river's leading booster, George Palmer Putnam, touted the Deschutes for its almost "limitless" potential to support irrigation, power, industry, and recreation.



Robert Sawyer was arguably the most influential voice in Deschutes River politics for more than 30 years.

were claimed. By 1915, virtually every drop of water flowing through the upper river was spoken for.

At the time, influential voices, including Bend's founder, Alexander Drake, and The Bulletin's publisher, George Palmer Putnam, eagerly promoted the "mighty Deschutes" far beyond Central Oregon. Local leaders embraced Progressive-Era thinking about harnessing rivers, arguing that the Deschutes should be engineered to maximize its productive potential and economic value. Yet there was little discussion of the river's limits. As the early settlement era ended, humans were no longer a benign presence along the Deschutes but a geological force, damming its flow and redirecting its waters as only volcanoes once did.

This breakneck growth in the early twentieth century brought dramatic changes to the river. In 1911, Bend residents lobbied the state legislature to prohibit dumping waste into the river after the town's drinking water turned putrid. Anglers urged the state to help sustain the renowned trout stream as fish populations dwindled. Meanwhile, irrigation companies aggressively marketed arid farmland to new settlers, promising an endless supply of water from the river, a promise that often failed to materialize.

By the 1920s, the changes could no longer be ignored. A new water storage reservoir at Crane Prairie became algae-choked, rendering Bend's municipal water supply undrinkable. For several consecutive years, the Middle Deschutes ran dry because of upstream irrigation diversions and historic drought. In 1924, the water crisis was so dire that the state game warden declared the Deschutes "destroyed insofar as its usefulness as a fishing stream is concerned."

The influential editor of The Bulletin newspaper, Robert Sawyer, was among the first to acknowledge the imbalance in the demands placed on the river. He urged thoughtful deliberation on developing the river for "the greatest good." However, the proposed solutions didn't involve taking less from the Deschutes; instead, they doubled down on reengineering it to meet human needs. By the early 1920s, this led to a tacit compromise: "the Upper Deschutes for irrigation, the Lower Deschutes for power."

However, farmers, businessmen, and politicians realized that the proposed allocation of the river's resources couldn't be achieved without outside help. Developing the complex hydrologic infrastructure required capital and technical expertise. The region's farmers found an ally in the Bureau of Reclamation. For decades, they lobbied the federal government to approve the Deschutes Project. This massive irrigation scheme included giant water-storage reservoirs at Wickiup and Crane Prairie, along with more than 200 miles of integrated canals and laterals. When the project was finally completed in the late 1940s, it diverted most of the water from the Upper Deschutes and distributed it across 50,000 acres of farmland in Jefferson County.

The Deschutes Project marked a significant turning point for the river. Once renowned for its consistent flows, the reengineered Deschutes ran on a calendar schedule rather than the whims of Mother Nature. During the irrigation season, streamflow in the upper river between Wickiup and Bend roughly doubled above natural levels to meet water demand. However, over 90 percent of that flow was diverted around Bend, leaving only a trickle in the downstream channel and dramatically altering the river's ecology and aquatic habitat.

As the Deschutes Project came online, the lower river changed dramatically. In the late 1940s, Portland General Electric (PGE) announced plans for a massive hydroelectric complex on the Middle Deschutes, the Pelton Project. The proposal faced strong opposition from fishermen, conservationists, and state officials concerned about the dam's impact on fish migration. Nevertheless, PGE and the federal government overcame local opposition and legal challenges from state officials. They built the dam with support from the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, which owned the adjacent land. Several years later, they built the Round Butte Dam, six miles upstream.

The dams' impact was dramatic. The integrated Pelton Round Butte Project submerged more than 20 miles of the Middle Deschutes Canyon under hundreds of feet of water, effectively blocking anadromous fish migration through that section of the river. The project also raised concerns about water quality, algal blooms, and water temperatures below the dam. More broadly, it was another dramatic step in transforming the Deschutes from a naturally flowing river into something quite different. As The Bulletin newspaper later observed, "the stream once heralded for its steady flows now is among the most heavily manipulated rivers in Oregon."

By the mid-1960s, the Deschutes was no longer a river but an abstraction, its value measured in kilowatts of electricity generated and in acre-feet of water delivered to distant farms. Engineers, politicians, and watermasters controlled its flow more than nature did. The "mighty Deschutes" operated less like a river and more like a machine, engineered to serve human needs.

Read the rest of the story in *The Deschutes River – A History.*

The Great Escape!



Another Successful Escape Room Season

Once again the Deschutes Historical Museum's fall fundraiser, Escape The Museum: The Curse of the Curate's Collection, has been a huge success.

Due to the program's popularity in 2025, we doubled the number of sessions from 30 to 60, running every Friday and Saturday during October. Family outing, business bonding, date night, gathering of friends, you name it, participants were here learning some local history, following clues, solving the mystery, and having a great time.

"We've had such wonderful feedback from participants, praising how well the escape room was thought out and loving the analog element, as we don't use any high tech, just good old retro artifacts," shared Museum Manager Vanessa Ivey.

"Everyone has come out of the room laughing and excited, whether they've "Escaped" or "Got Lost In" the museum. You can feel the good energy throughout the building," Ivey said.

Over the past five weeks, the museum hosted 51 teams, with an average speed of escaping in around 50 minutes. Most teams escaped, some got lost, and everyone has had fun supporting local history.

Let's not forget to mention some of the odd October mischief the museum couldn't escape from: each week the escape room is set up on Friday morning and taken down Saturday evening, leaving the "stage" set up overnight. On more than one occasion, staff or volunteers entered the room Saturday morning before the first session and found props out of place, not where they were left the night before.

"It's mainly the cat skeleton lying on the floor near the cot. The cat is supposed to be on the desk across the room. This has happened a couple of times," Ivey chuckled. On one Saturday Ivey came into the room, and the framed photo of "Rev. Mitchell" (the image is really past board member Nate Pedersen) that is usually facing outward, was turned around so the photo faced the blackboard. "That one freaked me out a bit," she disclosed. No one has admitted to the hijinks.



New Exhibit Opening:

Transgressors

November 17-January 16

Transgressors is a special touring exhibition by the Chachalu Tribal Museum and Cultural Center, presenting now and future Indigiqueer ancestors who move beyond boundaries in life and art.

The exhibit features art by a.c. ramírez de arellaño, Evan Benally Atwood, Geo Soctomah Neptune, Jeffrey Gibson, Lehuauakea, Qahir-beejee Peco, Roin Morigeau, Steph Littlebird, and Walter Scott.

It is curated by Anthony Hudson (Grand Ronde) and Felix Furby (Chinook and Grand Ronde), who write, "*Transgressors* collects the artwork and ideas of queer Indigenous artists from our Northwest Nations and across Turtle Island and Hawai'i. Each one of them is a transgressor: someone who moves beyond boundaries... No matter who you are, this work is for you. Binary gender roles and sexuality - the idea that to be male looks one way and to be female looks another, among the first boundaries that colonizers drew for us - holds everyone back."

The exhibit will be displayed in the second-floor northwest gallery.



Artwork by a.c. ramírez de arellaño



Artwork by Qahir-beejee Peco

Touring exhibit made possible by:

CHACHALU Tribal Museum and Cultural Center

With additional support from:

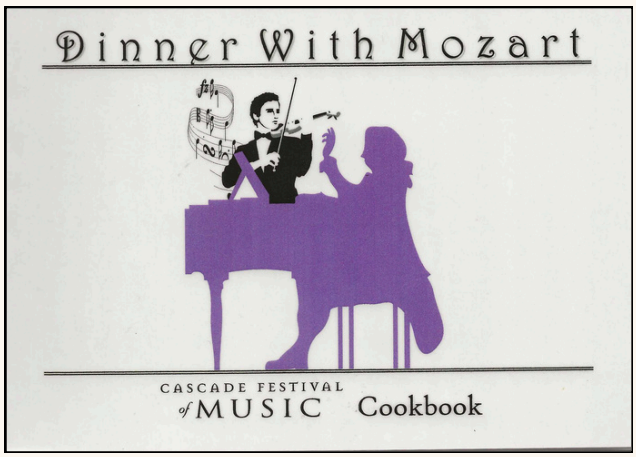
Oregon Community Foundation

N.E.W. New Expressive Works

NATIVE ARTS & CULTURES FOUNDATION

Recipe of the Month

Dan the Piano Man's Famous Fruit Cobbler



With the opening of "Music by Hand in Central Oregon," we've got melodies on the mind! A recipe from the 2002 *Dinner With Mozart: Cascade Festival of Music Cookbook* is a perfect way to celebrate the high desert music scene from days of yore.

Cascade Festival of Music (CFM) was a pioneering Central Oregon event when it began under the name "Central Oregon's Haydn Festival." The festival ran from 1982 until it ceased operations in 2008. The early years featured mostly local musicians playing classical music. As years passed and the stature of the festival grew, so did the breadth of musical offerings. CFM began to attract world-class musicians from near and far. Sadly, financial constraints and debts incurred resulted in the CFM board canceling the festival before the 2008 season. Now part of the DCHS museum collection, the Dinner With Mozart cookbook was sold as a fundraiser during the 2002 season.

Recipe Submitted by Dan Pavillard:

5 cup fruit cut into bite-sized chunks
1 cup self-rising flour
½ cup butter or margerine melted
½ cup buttermilk
½ tsp vanilla
1 cup sugar
½ cup water

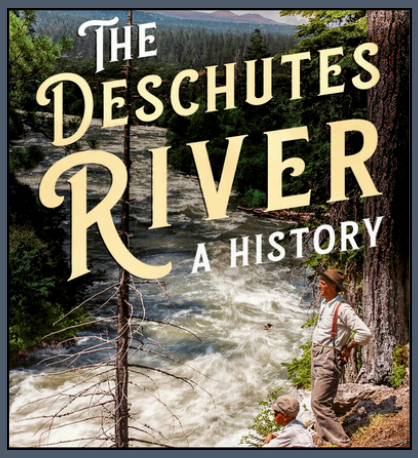
Place fruit in a 7x12x2" dish. Set aside.
Combine flour, butter, buttermilk, and vanilla. Stir well.
Spoon batter over fruit. Combine sugar and water, stirring well. Pour sugar water slowly over batter.
Bake at 350 degrees for 55 minutes. Makes 4-6 servings.

November History Pub:

The Deschutes River: A History

November 17

Doors:
6:00 p.m.
Presentation:
7:00 p.m.
Tickets: $5
required



McMenamins Old St. Francis School, Father Luke's Room

The Deschutes River is one of the world's largest spring-fed rivers, renowned for its steady flow and stunning vistas. Humans lived along the Deschutes for thousands of years without altering the river or its flow. However, that balance shifted when early settlers began using its waters for power and irrigation. In the early twentieth century, railroad companies blasted their way up the lower canyon, while the timber industry turned sections of the upper river into an industrial zone. In recent decades, shifting views of river ecology, scenic values, and recreation have brought new perspectives on the river and renewed hope for its future. Historian and author Glenn Voelz tells the story of how the modern Deschutes came to be.

Glenn Voelz served as an intelligence officer for 25 years in the Army, holding senior leadership positions at the Pentagon, the White House Situation Room, and NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. He was an assistant professor of history at West Point and has authored several books on Oregon history, including his new book, *The Deschutes River - A History*. He serves as a board member of the Deschutes County Historical Society and the Deschutes Historical Museum.

Mark your Calendars and Polish Your Gelatin Molds!

What: The Third Annual Holiday Gelatin Salad Show

When: Saturday, December 12, 2026

Where: The Deschutes Central Library: 61956 SE Santorini St., Bend

Deschutes Historical Museum's



Mark Your Calendar: November 2026

11 **VETERANS DAY**
DHM will be open as usual, stop by after the parade

12 ***MUSIC BY HAND* MEMBERS' RECEPTION**
5:30-6:30 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum
Please RSVP by November 10

17 **HISTORY PUB: The Deschutes River - A History**
Presented by Glenn Voelz
7:00-8:00 p.m. McMenamins Old St. Francis School Father Luke's Room
Tickets Required

18 **TWO SPIRIT, PAST AND PRESENT: A PRESENTATION AND OPENING RECEPTION FOR THE *TRANSGRESSORS* EXHIBIT**
5:00 p.m. Deschutes Historical Museum

26 **THANKSGIVING**
Museum closed for the holiday

Save the Date!

December 12: The Third Annual Holiday Gelatin Salad Show