

New trail touches Camp Polk history

The Deschutes Land Trust has established a new historic interpretive trail at Camp Polk Meadow Preserve. Camp Polk Meadow Preserve is a nature preserve outside of Sisters, Oregon that also protects the remnants of Hindman Station, one of the historic way stations on the Santiam Wagon Road.

The Land Trust's new interpretive trail shares some of the unique human history of the meadow, the wagon road and the Hindman family. The new trail, along with the Land Trust's Santiam Wagon Road trail at Whychus Canyon Preserve, provides the only interpretation of the Santiam Wagon Road east of the Cascades.

Visitors can now walk in the footsteps of Wagon Road travelers along a half-mile trail that winds around the historic Hindman Springs portion of the meadow. Colorful new signs with detailed historical photos tell the story of the many people who visited the meadow over the years: Native Americans, soldiers, and settlers including the Hindman family. The Land Trust also offers free, guided Camp Polk Meadow history walks: deschuteslandtrust.org/events

"The Land Trust recognizes the importance of historical interpretation for our rapidly growing community," said Brad Chalfant, Deschutes Land Trust executive director. "When our Land Trust preserves contain important historical artifacts like a former way station on the Santiam Wagon Road, we do our best to protect and share these resources with the community. This project represents a great partnership between the Land Trust, our local history organizations, and the Oregon Community Foundation and other funders."

Camp Polk Meadow has been a historical crossroads for people for thousands of years. First the meadow supplied plentiful food and water for generations of Native American tribes. Then, it

became a hub when explorers, soldiers, entrepreneurs, and settlers moved West to build the community we see today.

The Hindman family played a major role in the settlement of Camp Polk — and Central Oregon — from 1868-1882. In 1868, Samuel Hindman purchased 160 acres of land where he eventually built a house and barn, which would become Hindman Station on the Santiam Wagon Road. Hindman Station was a stopping place on the Santiam Wagon Road between Cache Creek Station and Lower Bridge. For travelers, the Station offered a store for replenishing goods, a post office, and a place where

travelers made their final preparations for trips east across the high desert or west across the Cascades.

Today, the posts and beams from the Hindman barn and the root cellar from the Hindman home are all that remain of the once-flourishing Hindman Station. Built in 1870, the barn is the only remaining structure from the Santiam Wagon Road era and is one of Deschutes County's oldest structures.

The new interpretive trail is part of a larger Land Trust project to restore the historic Hindman Springs portion of Camp Polk Meadow Preserve. Investments have included trail updating, native plant restoration, and



PHOTO COURTESY DESCHUTES LAND TRUST

The Hindman barn is a historic remnant on the preserve.



PHOTO COURTESY DESCHUTES LAND TRUST

New interpretive signs help orient hikers in Camp Polk Preserve.

historic resource preservation and interpretation. Historic Wagon Road stopping points can also be seen at the Land

Trust's Indian Ford Meadow Preserve and Whychus Canyon Preserve.

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