

A visit to historic Glaze Meadow

By Craig F. Eisenbeis
Columnist

In keeping with our current emphasis on shorter, close-to-home hikes, my hiking buddy suggested that we visit the trails along the eastern edge of Glaze Meadow. I checked my files to see when I last wrote about this trail and was surprised to discover that I never have. So, here's an easy walk in the woods that you may not be familiar with.

Historic Glaze Meadow and the adjacent, more recently dubbed Glaze Forest, have been the subjects of various Forest Service land swaps and rehabilitation projects in an area immediately east of Black Butte Ranch. The site is named for Tillman H. Glaze, who established a small ranch there in 1881.

Glaze himself is an interesting story. He was born in Missouri in 1843 and, as a child, came West in 1852 to Oregon's Polk County, from which arose the volunteer soldier contingent that established Camp Polk here in 1865 — although I can find no record that he was a participant. Regardless, one way or another, he found his way to Central Oregon by 1877, apparently after being involved in some "trouble" over in the valley.

According to historical bits and pieces, he became a saloon and dance hall owner

in Prineville, and founded a popular local band not very imaginatively called The Prineville Band. Historic photos show him playing a fiddle. One source even suggests that he did some sherriffing for a time.

In a somewhat complicated and shady scenario, he also apparently sheltered — at his meadow ranch near Sisters — a vigilante killer who figured in Crook County's wild west era of the 1880s. His affinity for courting trouble ended in 1894, when he was killed in gunfight over a horse-racing dispute in Burns; his widow survived him by 45 years.

In another historical footnote, the access road to the meadow takes off from near the old railroad grade crossing west of town. Most of today's local residents post-date the removal of that railroad overpass, which provided logging access to the lands on and around Black Butte. For years, it provided a convenient landmark for eastbound travelers. "Just turn left immediately after the railroad overpass," we could tell visitors headed to my parents' place at the north end of Indian Ford Road. So, it was against a rather historical backdrop that we decided to re-explore Glaze Meadow area on a bright sunny day last week.

There is some ecological sensitivity in the important

riparian and forest lands that surround this area. Among the special plant species found here is the rare Peck's penstemon, an unusual wildflower found almost nowhere outside the Sisters Ranger District. It is for this reason that the Forest Service has taken special measures over the last couple of decades to preserve and restore the area.

Much of the Glaze Forest project area was clearcut in the 1930s and contains second growth ponderosa pines that are being groomed toward a pre-logging era old growth forest outcome. Toward that end, quite a bit of the smaller new growth timber has been removed, which, combined with other measures — including mosaic thinning — has reduced wildfire danger to the area and to Black Butte Ranch.

Mosaic thinning results in a diverse habitat of finished forest which resembles historic forests with gaps, clumps, snags, atypical "character trees," and patches of trees of different ages. The end result is a forest of varied appearance, rather than one with a homogenous parklike setting.

In conjunction with the historically marshy meadow, the principal riparian feature of the area is an upper portion of Indian Ford Creek, where we began our exploration of the area. The principal



PHOTO BY CRAIG F. EISENBEIS

The trail along the edge of historic Glaze Meadow follows the Metolius-Windigo Trail across Indian Ford Creek through a dense aspen grove.

trail along Glaze Meadow is part of the 100-mile Metolius-Windigo Trail that runs from the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness to the Diamond Peak Wilderness south of Crescent Lake.

Our outing began on the "Met-Win" Trail from the end of the short road off Highway 20 and, almost immediately, crossed Indian Ford Creek on an excellent bridge in a beautiful, dense aspen grove. The last time we were here was in the fall, and the aspens were decked out in their golden autumn finery.

This whole area is absolutely flat, with a network of old trails and logging roads, so there is plenty of room to wander and explore — and socially distance. We were there on a weekend and saw only two other people, and they were at quite a distance. It should be noted, however, that this is also a popular

equestrian area, so horse traffic is to be expected.

We took a couple of hours wandering through the woods and stopped for a short break near a Forest Service restoration project along the southeast edge of the meadow. We returned by roughly the same route; but alternates abound, making for unlimited options of hiking distances. Since the area is bounded by Black Butte Ranch and the highway, it's very difficult to get lost here, unless you have absolutely no sense of direction — in which case, a compass is recommended.

To reach this interesting local historic area, simply travel west from the Sisters roundabout on Highway 20 for about 5 miles. The gravel and dirt road to the edge of Glaze Meadow is on the left, immediately opposite the entrance to Indian Ford Campground.

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