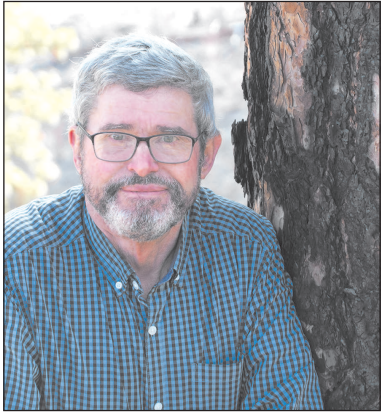


'Fire Stories': **NEW PERSPECTIVES** from old photographs



Josephy Center/Contributed Photo

JOHN F. MARSHALL holds a B.S. in fishery science from Oregon State University and an M.S. in wildlife resources from the University of Idaho. For the last 25 years, he has worked with Dr. Paul Hessburg of the Pacific Northwest Research Station of the U.S. Forest Service to document changes in the role of fire in the modern era.

JOSEPH — “Fire Stories” — a historic and contemporary exploration of wildfire in Northwest landscapes — opens April 23 at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph.

There will be a limited opening at 7 p.m. Friday, first-come, first-served, as the Josephy Center is currently authorized for only 31 visitors. There will be unlimited access via Zoom. Look for the link at www.josephy.org or call the center at 541-432-0505 for instructions.

The exhibit showcases photos

taken from fire lookout towers with Osborne panoramic cameras nearly 90 years ago paired with modern replications from photographer and naturalist John F. Marshall. The paired images provide a unique perspective — the contrasts showing how fire and fire suppression have changed the landscapes of the Wallowa and Blue mountains.

In the 1930s, with a camera designed by U.S. Forest Service worker William Bushnell “Bush” Osborne and built by Leupold-Volpel & Co. in Portland, foresters took pictures from fire lookout towers across the Northwest. Each photo covered 120 degrees, so three photos covered the entire region surveyed from each tower, and, matched with the “Osborne Firefinder,” allowed lookout guards to pinpoint the fires and communicate up the line.

For the past several years, Marshall has trekked the Wallowa and Blue mountains to find these Osborne photo locations — climbing the towers when still there, or in some other way finding a vantage point to match the 1930s viewsheds — and take pictures from the same spots today.

The relationship between humans and fire is tangled with how we live on the land and use its resources. American Indians long learned to live with fire and made it useful. European settlement

brought a different sensibility and the tools and organization to control fire — but it wasn't understood then how fire is essential to the function of nature, and attempting to eliminate fire has only increased its destructive power.

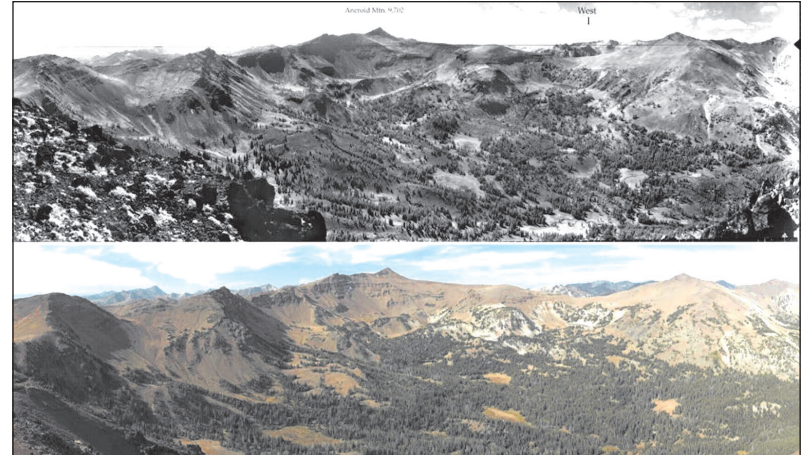
How does nature live with fire, and how can we? According to the Josephy Center's description of the exhibit, these are questions that cannot be ignored in this unprecedented time. This exhibit will provide some answers and stimulate more thought and discussion.

The then-and-now photos illustrate the positive roles of historical wildfires and document changes in the role of fire in the modern era. Works of art on their own, the “Fire Stories” photographs show how art, history and science can work together to teach us about Pacific Northwest forests.

The exhibit will be up until June 15. Gallery hours at the Josephy Center, 403 N. Main St., Joseph, are noon to 5 p.m. on weekdays and noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays.

Complementary programs are planned for May. The Josephy Book Group will meet via Zoom May 4 to discuss “Fire in Paradise: An American Tragedy.” All are welcome.

A special virtual “Fire in the West” discussion May 20 will fea-



Josephy Center/Contributed Image

The top photo, from the U.S. Forest Service in 1936, and the bottom one, from John F. Marshall in 2018, view the Wallowa Mountains in the Eagle Cap Wilderness and show the changes wildfire has made on the landscape.

ture Stephen J. Pyne, an emeritus professor at Arizona State University specializing in the history of fire. Pyne is the author of “Fire in America” and “Between Two Fires,” considered seminal texts on fire. The free Zoom event will run from 2-4 p.m. and is open to all. The link will be posted on the Josephy Center's website.

“The West Is Burning,” a documentary produced and filmed by Cody Sheehy, a Wallowa County native, will be presented via streaming at the center at 7 p.m. May 27. Sheehy will introduce the film, which examines why mega-

fires have become annual catastrophes across the West and what we can do about them. It aired on Oregon Public Broadcasting in February.

Additionally, one of a very few Osborne cameras will be on exhibit at the Josephy Center, and a book with many of the photos and John Marshall's comments is available for sale at the center and at The Bookloft, 107 E. Main St., Enterprise (www.bookloftoregon.net).

The Josephy Center presents the “Fire Stories” exhibit in partnership with Wallowa Resources (www.wallowaresources.org).



Josephy Center/Contributed Photo

The Josephy Center's “Fire Stories” exhibit features historical photographs taken with a unique camera called the “Osborne Photo Recording Transit.” The special cameras were used by the U.S. Forest Service in the 1930s to capture 120-degree large-format panoramic images from hundreds of fire lookout towers and other sites throughout Oregon and Washington. The Osborne panoramic camera had a moving lens in front of a stationary 6” x 13” negative. The photographer would wind it up to do the picture taking. Fewer than 10 of the cameras were built.

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