

HISTORY

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“This shows that the old West was alive and well at Hot Lake in 1883,” Roth said.

The shooting incident was described as taking place at what turned out to be a “dance of death” and was reportedly sparked by an argument over a bottle of whiskey. The man who allegedly fired the deadly shots escaped the dance hall but was captured the next day between Hot Lake and North Powder. The murderer was tracked down by two men named Thomas Johnson and Nick Beli who walked through snow 2-3 feet deep, according to the account in the Albany newspaper.

A guest to remember

Thirty-six years later a man preaching the importance of God’s love was a guest at Hot Lake, famed evangelist Billy Sunday, according to a story in the July 13, 1919, edition of Portland’s Oregon Daily Journal. Sunday, a well-known American evangelist at the time, stayed at Hot Lake after delivering a patriotic address in La Grande on Friday, July 4, 1919.

Several influential people made a point of greeting Sunday at Hot Lake.

“He was the most celebrated and influential American evangelist in the first two decades of the 20th century,” Roth said.

Sunday, who was from the Midwest, may have been returning from Hood River since he owned an apple orchard there.

Complaints and praise

The clippings in Roth’s collection indicate that 102 years ago people had many of the same concerns then that they do today. For example, a story in the April 26, 1919, edition of the Oregon Daily Journal is headlined “Trains



Dick Mason/The Observer

Hot Lake’s main building has served many functions during its long history, including the years it served as a health care facility in the first part of the 20th century.

Will Muffle Noises at Hot Lake.” The article states the Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company officials have agreed to keep the noise of trains passing through Hot Lake to a minimum.

“Considerable discomfort had been caused the patients at the Hot Lake sanitarium due to the noise of train whistles and switching operations,” the article stated.

The story said that in the future only sounds essential to the operation of trains would be permitted. This article appeared a century before the city of La Grande became a whistle free zone, where trains are no longer allowed to sound their horns due to years of complaints from residents and visitors.

Roth’s collection also includes a five-part series about Hot Lake by Fred Lockley in the Oregon Daily Journal of Portland in March of 1919. Lockley wrote that Hot Lake, which then was a hospital, had a bright future as a medical facility.

“The time is approaching when the fame of Hot Lake will be as well known to those in the West who need surgical attention as Rochester, Minnesota, is today through the work done

by the Mayo brothers,” Lockley wrote.

A collection decades in the making

Michael Rysavy said the items donated by Roth will be used to help with the creation of a museum focusing on Hot Lake’s history that he and his wife plan to begin creating in the near future. He said information from the collection will guide them in the process of assembling the exhibits.

Roth’s collection includes articles written through 1990. They cover the many roles Hot Lake has had, for it has served as a hospital, a hotel and an agricultural production site, among other capacities.

Roth gathered many of his clippings from the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program, the Library of Congress Chronicling America Program and microfilm reels from the University of Oregon’s Knight Library.

“I’ve been collecting them since I was in junior high,” he said.

He donated his collection to Michael and Tamarah Rysavy because he wanted to help preserve the history of the region and knew the Rysavys would value the artifacts.

“I did not want them to disappear from the Grande Ronde Valley,” Roth said.

The museum the Rysavys will be creating will display a number of articles and photos from Roth’s collection. The museum is one of a number of features the Rysavys will be adding at The Lodge at Hot Lake. Also in the works is a restaurant, pubs and a 60-seat movie viewing room. Hot Lake’s present amenities include overnight lodging and five soaking pools, which allow people to enjoy some of the site’s geothermally heated water. The soaking pools are available only to overnight guests now but later will be open to day visitors.

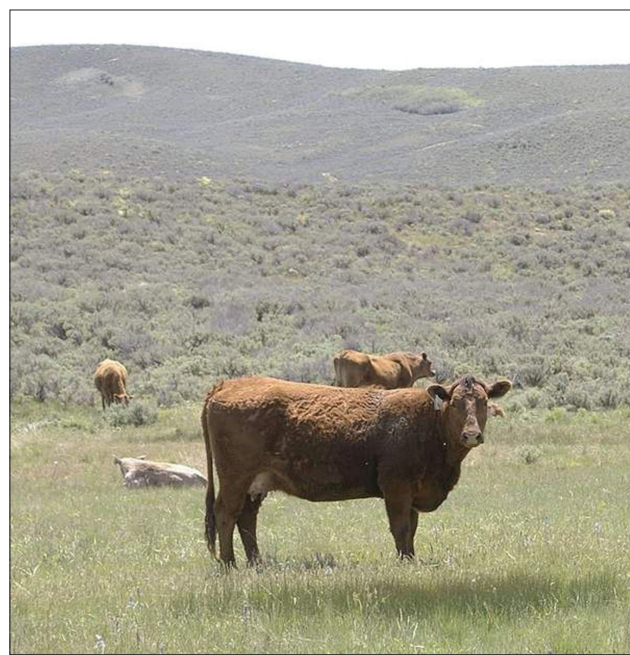
Roth said he is impressed with the work the Rysavys are doing at Hot Lake.

“They are interested in factual history and are dedicated,” he said.

He said it is unfortunate that myths about Hot Lake have arisen over the years. These include stories of ghosts and tales of the facility being used for purposes such as a tuberculosis hospital, which isn’t true.

Roth said Hot Lake’s story does not have to be fabricated or embellished to be captivating.

“Truth is often more interesting than fiction,” he said.



Capital Press, File

Oregon State University and Eastern Oregon University are expanding their joint range-related programs.

SCHOOLS

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“There have been a lot of conversations about, how do we join forces more, share faculty more, use the facilities in a better way for faculty and student research?” said Diebel.

One piece of the expansion includes hiring new faculty and staff.

According to Diebel, OSU is putting together job descriptions for two new positions that will soon be posted: an associate director of the Union Experiment Station and a rangeland scientist who will have research and teaching responsibilities. The scientist will work both at the Union station and on EOU’s campus.

On the curriculum side, one goal of the upcoming expansion is to strengthen the rangeland sciences degree offered in Corvallis and La Grande.

On the research side, the goal is to broaden field research opportunities for students and faculty.

Bryan Endress, OSU associate professor of rangeland ecology and management in the pro-

gram, said the hands-on nature of the program will “help prepare students for the real world,” whether that means working on a family ranch, for a land management agency or elsewhere.

“Graduates from our program will be better prepared to enter the workforce, which will benefit the agricultural and natural resource community across the board,” said Endress.

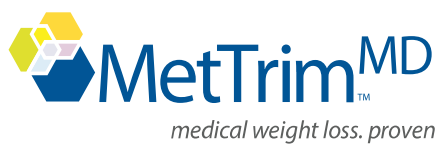
Diebel, the director, said she thinks making the Union station a more active research base will both benefit Eastern Oregon students and provide opportunities for Corvallis-based OSU students to do short-term research projects and field work.

Since much of the research will relate to forage, cattle and dairy systems, Diebel said she expects many of the research findings from the expansion will benefit ranchers.

“There will also be ways for (farmers) to be involved,” said Diebel, who said faculty plan to use both public property for research and rely on private stakeholders, including area ranchers.

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