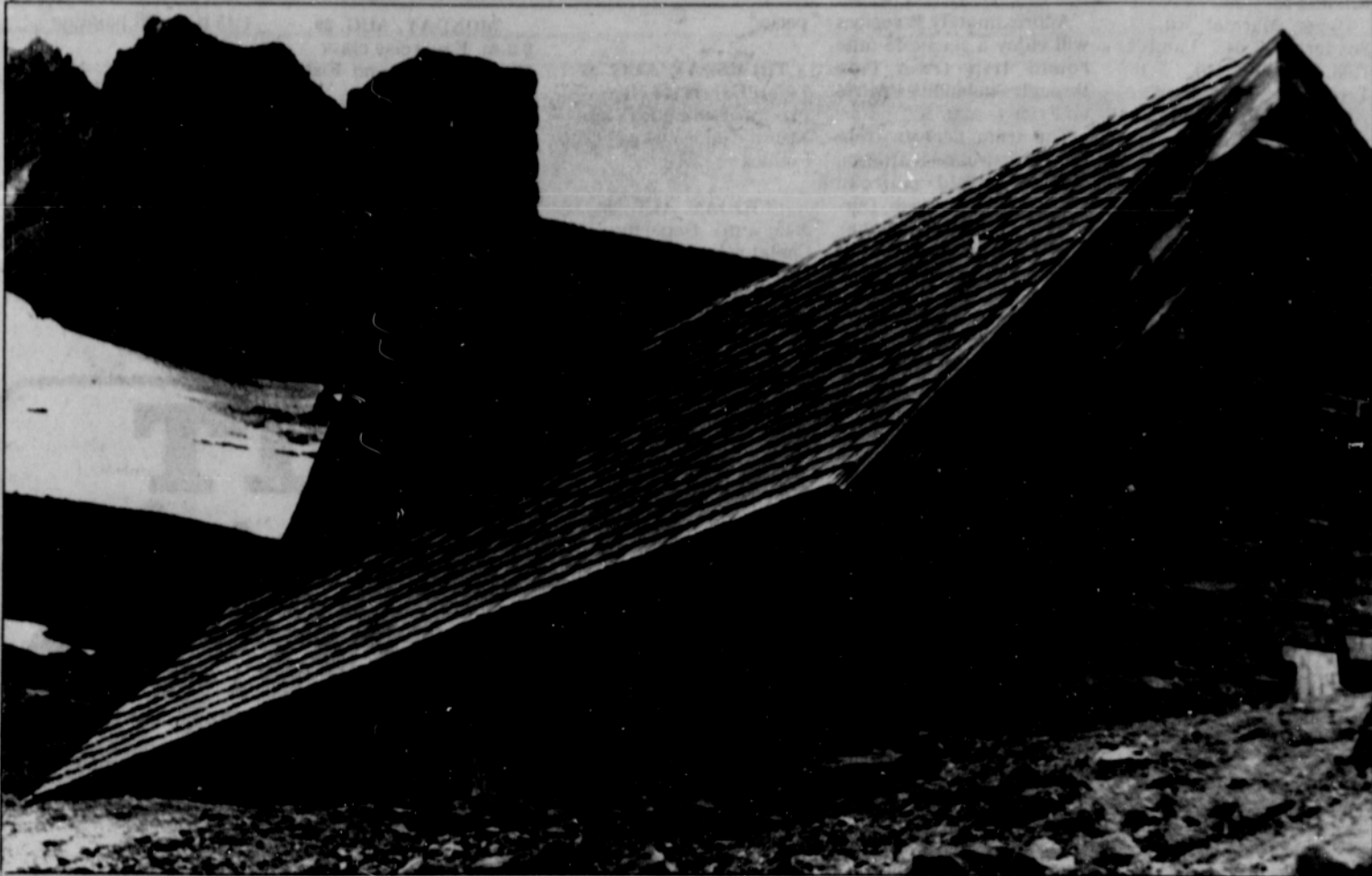


The Sandy Post

Area News

People
Home & Garden
Features



Silcox Hut was the terminal for the original Magic Mile chairlift.

Photos by Hank Emrich

Silcox Hut watches over mountain

by HANK EMRICH
Post Correspondent

For 44 years, Silcox Hut has stood a constant vigil 1,000 feet above the larger and more famous Timberline Lodge.

Only its sturdy construction of stone and timber have kept it from complete destruction by vandals in the years since 1962, when it ceased operation as the upper terminal of the original Magic Mile chairlift.

"The site is slowly degenerating because of vandalism, but structurally, it is still a sound building," said Dick Hoffman, who administers the area for the U.S. Forest Service.

The craftsmen who fashioned Timberline built Silcox in 1939, exhibiting the same skills and care which make the lodge unique throughout the world.

R.L.K. and Co., which holds the permit for the Timberline ski area, stands ready to cooperate with any group that can maintain Silcox, and has done so in the past, according to Dawson Hubert, general manager at Timberline.

The building has been subleased to groups in the past but they have given up maintaining it after a short time.

"The problem is the marketability of Silcox is non-existent to a profit-making organization such as Timberline," said Hubert.

Hoffman hopes that a solution to past troubles with Silcox is in formation. "We are in the middle of negotiations with a non-profit climbing organization and a Portland business group," he said.

"We are trying to work it out so the two of them can work together as a sub-

concession to R.L.K. and Co."

While neither the Forest Service nor R.L.K. and Co. believe they can afford to operate Silcox due to economics, both expressed concern that its rich history not be lost.

The chairlift that ran to the building was dedicated May 22, 1939 by Crown Prince Olaf of Sweden. At the time, Magic Mile was only the second chairlift in America.

The building was not known as Silcox Hut until 1940, when a bronze plaque was placed in the gathering room honoring Ferdinand Silcox, head of the Forest Service during construction of both lodges.

The plaque sits above the most dominating feature of the 30- by 60-foot gathering room, a huge stone fireplace on the east end of the room.

Unfortunately, the magnificent fireplace adds to the vandalism problem. It appears that many shakes have been ripped from the roof to fuel the fires.

Hoffman said the Forest Service has twice re-roofed the entire building to combat the problem.

Still intact in the gathering room is an L-shaped counter made of halved logs resting on peeled log supports. A concession stand served skiers and winter hikers. Others taking advantage of the facilities at Silcox included those who went on "sunset chairlift rides" during the summer. According to an article in

a Portland newspaper from that time, the view from Silcox was considered "one of the finest in the west."

Despite its popularity, skiing on the ridge where Magic Mile was originally located was made hazardous by blizzards that put the lift out of commission several times.

These conditions, coupled with a new lift at Timberline, made Magic Mile available only for overflow during the 1962 season. When it was discontinued at the end of 1962, Magic Mile was the oldest operating ski lift in the U.S.

Silcox is the only remaining structure from the original chairlift and currently serves as a destination for day hikers from Timberline Lodge. Mountain climbers also use the building as a rest stop on the way to the top of Mt. Hood.

At one time the Forest Service attempted to lock up Silcox but vandals cut open a wood door with an ice axe to gain entrance. The doors are fashioned out of three layers of wood laminated together and decorated with recessed metal panels. Both doors remain in the building, though one has been torn loose from the hinges. Both have been marred with graffiti.

If current negotiations fail, Forest Service officials are perplexed as to a permanent solution. They have said if they leave the building open but monitor resource damage, comments come from

historical preservation groups. If the building is closed and secure, the comments come from climbing and skiing groups.

No one need worry that Silcox will be destroyed,



however. Hoffman says that it is eligible for nomination to the national register and any building so eligible cannot be destroyed under Forest Service regulations. Any development of the building, which lacks water and toilet facilities, would also have to meet requirements of those regulations.

At least for the present, Silcox Hut will continue its vigil, regardless of condition.

One dies in accident

Two accidents near Government Camp resulted in a fatality and critical injuries to another man last weekend.

A semi-truck trailer loaded with sheetrock crashed over an embankment three miles west of Government Camp Saturday, claiming the life of a Canby man.

Frank Charles Chais was driving the truck in the westbound lane of Highway 26 when the vehicle apparently crossed lanes and crashed through a concrete barrier and tumbled over a 350-foot embankment.

The accident, which is still under investigation, occurred at 2:15 a.m.

Lane Wintermute of the Hoodland Fire District said it took over three hours for 15 rescue workers, including Alpine Ambulance personnel, to recover the victim.

A head-on collision three miles east of Government Camp at 4:30 p.m. Sunday resulted in injuries to four people, according to Wintermute.

The driver of one of the vehicles, Robert Repp, 37, of Portland, sustained critical injuries in the acci-

dent. Rescue workers freed Repp from the wreckage using a Hearst tool and he was evacuated to Emanuel Hospital in Portland by Lifeflight helicopter.

The driver of the other vehicle, Berl Vernon Landon of Sherwood, 39, was released from Gresham Community Hospital on Tuesday.

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Welches School opening

Welches Elementary School will open its doors to children Sept. 6, with school hours remaining the same as last year.

School will start at 9 a.m. for all students. Grades 1-3 will dismiss at 2:20 p.m., and grades 4-8 will dismiss at 3:30 p.m.

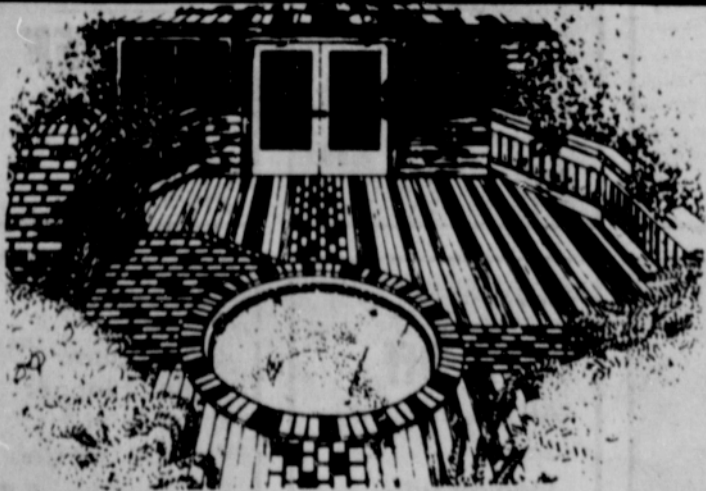
The first session of kindergarten will end at 11:15 a.m. and the afternoon session will start at noon and finish at 2:20 p.m.

School officials have asked all parents to register their children before school starts to insure adequate preparations for opening day. Registration will take place in the new building's administration office Aug. 29 and 30 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

School buses will run on last year's schedule at the beginning of the year. Parents will be notified of any changes during the year.

Lunches will be served the first day at a cost of 70 cents. A 20-day pass can be purchased for \$13. Milk is 15 cents per carton.

Patrons with any questions should call the administration office, 628-3165.



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