

Cabin: Origin of the dwelling is still a mystery

Continued from Page 1A

stacked 17 high, originally fit together so tightly there was no need to add chinking to fill in gaps.

Fine woodworking, similar to making a cabinet rather than a settler's cabin, joined the floor, walls and roof so well that no nails were needed until a century later. In 1892, the whole building was taken apart, moved on a wagon from its original site and reconstructed by craftsmen perhaps with lesser skills than the original builders.

In 2008, the deteriorating structure, which had been a house, animal shelter, machine shed and the Fox Granary, was disassembled and moved again to a storage facility. Here, it's been analyzed, preserved and restored.

Gregg Olson of Historic Building Repair, who has saved several of Oregon's oldest log buildings, has been using antique hand tools to recreate pieces too fragile to be part of the rebuilt structure. Each original piece has been carefully saved and documented.

Moving this hefty remnant of Oregon's pioneer history is daunting. Fragile wood eroded by the elements requires that each log be lifted from its position and hand carried to a flat-bed truck.

But the original builders made it easier: The logs were hand hewn to act like giant Lincoln Log that could be assembled, then disassembled. Pencil marks reveal an ingenious numbering system.

"It's interesting, whatever it is and whoever built it," says Olson, who has been working painstakingly for seven years with architectural historian Pam Hayden to unearth the origins of the dwelling.

Renegade Russian fur



This photo shows the restoration of the Molalla Log House in Molalla. If experts' theories pan out, the 18-foot-wide structure predates the start of Lewis and Clark's 1804 expedition by a decade.

AP Photo/The Oregonian, Michael Lloyd

trappers? Optimistic colonists? Adventurous Europeans allowed to briefly stake a small claim in the western foothills of the Cascade Mountains where Native Americans had lived for centuries?

Olson and Hayden don't know.

But they do have theories, stacks of research and dating methods that lead them to believe the structure may have been built in 1799, or at least between 1795 and 1810.

Their almost 200-page treatise, titled "Molalla Log House-Fox Granary, Theory of the Origins of a Potential Surviving Relic of a 1790s Russian Occupation of the Oregon Country," tracks their exhaustive study of architectural history, archaeology, dendrochronology and historic preservation.



AP Photo/The Oregonian, Michael Lloyd

Gregg Olson, of Historic Building Repair, speaks about the restoration of the Molalla Log House in Molalla. Olson, who has saved several of Oregon's oldest log buildings, has been using antique hand tools to recreate pieces too fragile to be part of the rebuilt structure. Each original piece has been carefully saved and documented.

If it's true, the settlers in the wilderness — Olson thinks from 10 to 50 people — may have agreed to grow food in the fertile Willamette

Valley to trade with the Russian ships plying the Columbia River and supply the fur company headquartered on Alaska's Kodiak Island.

Restore Oregon, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Clackamas County Cultural Coalition and Molalla Area Historical Society have supported the restoration and preservation efforts. The Kinsman Foundation's grants funded much of the work.

"The unique construction and extraordinary craftsmanship of the Molalla Log House offer fascinating clues to a mystery that we didn't even know existed about the earliest white exploration and settlement of the Pacific Northwest," says Peggy Moretti, executive director of Restore Oregon, a nonprofit organization with preservation efforts that span from the pioneer-era to mid-century modern buildings.

"It may well add a new chapter to our history," she adds, "and we hope more

evidence will be uncovered to further substantiate Pam and Gregg's very compelling theory."

In 1991, with Hayden's guidance, Clackamas County declared the log building a historic landmark. In 2007, after she retired as an historic preservation specialist, she rode by the building. The roof had caved in and the structure was in danger of collapsing.

She worked with the property owner to donate both the building and money to save it. Volunteers helped move the pieces inside a warehouse.

Volunteers are needed again.

The structure will be disassembled and moved May 1-3 to another storage facility. People willing to help can contact Hayden at pamela-hayden@gmail.com.

Olson and Hayden hope this is the last time the Molalla Log House will be uprooted until it finally finds a permanent home. Hayden says they are searching for a site and funding so the log structure can be interpreted for its architectural and cultural history.

The project team also needs help to find out the complete story of what could be Oregon's oldest structure: Who built it and why? Anyone with knowledge of 18th-century European construction and Oregon history who has information should contact Hayden.

Restore Oregon's Moretti is also eager to open a new chapter in the state's history.

"As with later settlement-era buildings, we stand in awe of the skills, fortitude and hand-hewn pioneer spirit the Molalla Log House embodies," says Moretti. "It deserves a permanent, protected place where those important lessons can be passed forward."

Sea lions: Port of Astoria turned over surveillance video to investigators

Continued from Page 1A

Sea lions and other pinnipeds are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. NOAA authorizes wildlife managers in Oregon and Washington to trap and kill fewer than 100 sea lions a year seen eating salmon at the Bonneville dam.

But there have been recent reports, from the one in Astoria to others along the North Coast, of them washing up on beaches with what could be bullet wounds.

Anyone with information about any violations of the marine mammal act are asked to call NOAA's hotline at 800-853-1964.

Port of Astoria Executive Director Jim Knight said NOAA went to the basin and found 19 .380-caliber bullet casings, and the Port has turned over surveillance video to investigators. Knight said he's been told of a few dead sea lions, including one on Clatsop Spit, another at the basin and another in between the U.S. Coast Guard cutters on the 17th Street Dock.

Fort Stevens State Park ranger Dustin Bessette said he's noticed six sea lions between Gearhart and the South Jetty washing up dead.

"It's kind of early," he said, adding that sea lions washing up are a yearly occurrence. "I expect them to show up on the beach to molt, but I've only seen one of those."

On one occasion, Bessette said, he went to the beach with an assistant from the Seaside Aquarium and found a dead sea lion with what first looked to him like a wound from a .22-caliber rifle or bird shot.

"It looks to be bullet holes from someone shooting them," he said. "My guess is a fisherman, right off the bat."

Bessette cautioned that only a necropsy can tell for certain whether they were bullet holes.

"If it's one that shows up on the beach, we tell the Seaside Aquarium," Bessette

Clues still sought about seal death a year ago

By NATALIE ST. JOHN
EO Media Group

OCEAN PARK, Wash. — Not even the promise of a \$5,000 cash reward has tempted tipsters into providing useful information about the unsolved April 2014 killing of a mother seal and disappearance of her newborn pup.

"We have closed (the investigation) in our system with no actionable leads," said NOAA Special Agent Sean Stanley in a March 31 phone interview. Stanley, who is based in Portland, oversees the Astoria-based federal enforcement officers who investigated the case.

On April 20, 2014, an Ocean Park retiree and volunteer animal rescuer discovered that someone had driven over the mother seal, who was resting in a protected area after giving birth to her pup. The pup had vanished. The mother, who was mortally injured, had to be euthanized.

The two seals were in an area near the dunes that had been marked off with signs, leading investigators to believe someone had hurt the seals intentionally. NOAA officers launched an investigation, but aside from a fresh tire track, they had few clues to work with.

In May 2014, the animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals offered a \$5,000 reward for anyone who could offer information that resulted in the killer's arrest and conviction. A PETA spokesperson said the group has successfully used this strategy to get informants to speak up in other unsolved animal cruelty cases.

In this case however, no-one who had viable tips came forward.

Stanley said that investigators still think someone might know who ran over the seal. If so, they hope that person will get in touch.

"We're not maintaining it as an open case,

said. "If we don't get to it within three or four days, my response last year was to bury them."

Tiffany Boothe, an administrative assistant at the Seaside Aquarium, said her organization helps with the necropsies and does get reports of a number of shot animals each year.

"In the recent week, we've been getting a lot of calls," Boothe said. "Usually, they're from the Sea Lion Defense Brigade. They're reporting all sorts of things."

Stanley reported earlier this month to the Chinook Observer that NOAA's case into the killing of a mother harbor seal on the Long Beach (Wash.) Peninsula last year was closed, with no actionable leads. The seal had been run over. (See related story)

The Sea Lion Defense Brigade monitors actions regarding sea lions on their Facebook page, decrying their treatment. It has more than 4,000 likes and has been around for several years.

Another Facebook page,



Photo courtesy of Suzy Whitley

A mother harbor seal, who had recently given birth, was found dead on the beach north of the Ocean Park beach approach nearly a year ago, and is thought to have been a victim of an intentional vehicular killing.

but it's easily openable if leads were to come in," Stanley said.

Pinnipeds — seals and sea lions — are beloved by some locals, despised by others. They can create a smelly, noisy nuisance at waterfront facilities, and they compete with fishermen for the catch. Stanley said locals do sometimes harass, haze, or even hurt pinnipeds, but he hasn't heard of any other cases in recent history where a person made such an apparently cruel, deliberate attempt to harm a marine mammal.

Kristin Simon, a cruelty casework manager for PETA, said that the organization will still offer the reward if someone can provide information that leads to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator.

"We want that person brought to justice. We are willing to put our money where our mouth is," Simon said.

Anyone with information about the incident should contact the NOAA tip hotline at 800-853-1964

"You Know You Hate Sea Lions When ..." started March 25 as a sort of online rebuttal, a place for people to voice their displeasure with sea lions. Some of its more than 200 members went so far as to post photos of buckshot shells and other ammunition, talking about the bygone days when fishermen could simply shoot sea lions eating their fish.

"Met a few (sea lions) on the shrimp grounds. They are no longer active," Ted Johnson wrote on the page.

Vandals: There's no way to really secure the lighthouse

Continued from Page 1A

Park rangers say there is no way to really secure the lighthouse. The park has installed gates at various park attractions for security reasons before. A gate, for example, blocks vehicle access to Beards Hollow after hours. But such a gate would be problematic at North Head because of the vacation rentals located at the site. Access must remain open there because of guests coming and going, Schwalb said.

Still, he added, additional security is "definitely something we're looking in to."

He and other rangers could not remember a case of vandalism happening at the lighthouse before. When the news broke online, many readers were outraged, asking who would want to damage such an important, historical structure. "Makes me sick," one reader commented. "Some have no respect or appreciation for anything — seems that beauty brings out the ugly in some people. Very sad."

Could have been worse

In 2010, however, two men wreaked far more expensive havoc on Oregon's Cape Meares Lighthouse when they fired shots at the lighthouse, shattering 15 windows and the historic, hand-ground Fresnel lens made in France more than 120 years ago. The men pleaded guilty to two counts of criminal mischief in the second degree, admitting they had been drinking at the time but still taking responsibility for "one stupid night" where they had done "some really stupid things," in the words of the

Tillamook County District Court judge who heard their case.

They could have faced felony charges for their drunken shooting spree, but a plea deal pieced together by the judge, the district attorney and defense attorneys and approved by federal agencies, state agencies and a local non-profit group sentenced them to serving three 16-day stints in the county jail over the next three years and paying \$100,000 in restitution.

(One of the men, 24 years old at the time, was later arrested for violating the terms of his probation. According to news reports from 2011, he showed up at the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office to claim property investigators had seized during the lighthouse case smelling of alcohol and high on methadone.)

The destroyed Fresnel lens at Cape Meares was virtually irreplaceable; the damage done to North Head is not nearly so bad. Its original antique first-order Fresnel lens, lit on May 16, 1898, is safely housed in the nearby Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. A fourth-order lens that replaced it in 1935 is now displayed at the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria. An electric appliance how provides the lighthouse's light.

North Head's exterior needs to be re-coated anyway, rangers said, though that work is not currently scheduled to occur anytime soon. It is possible it could be re-coated next year, Schwalb said. Right now, contractors are more concerned with the interior where years of accumulated moisture has eaten away at the structure.