

# The towns that drowned

By LISA BRITTON  
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Bob Reinhardt's master's thesis is growing into a full-fledged endeavor that he said will take years to complete.

Probably until he retires. "It's a long-term project," he said. It's also a project that involves a Baker County village that disappeared.

Reinhardt's work started 15 years ago at the University of Oregon when he began researching the old town of Detroit, along the North Santiam River in the Cascade foothills east of Salem.

Detroit disappeared beneath its namesake reservoir after a dam was built in the early 1950s.

While studying the history of Detroit, Reinhardt discovered more towns that had the same fate — including Robinette, at the eastern edge of Baker County.

"I had advisors who said there are dozens of these places in the American West," he said.

Reinhardt learned more about the topic during a stint as executive director at the Willamette Heritage Center in Salem.

"It gave me the opportunity to return to the topic," he said.

He's now in his fifth year at Boise State University, where he is an associate professor in the department of history. He has named his project "The Atlas of Drowned Towns."

In 2020, he received a "digital project for public" discovery grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to help "recover and interpret the history of these towns that were displaced or disappeared," he said.

The list includes Robinette, which was on the banks of the Snake River east of Richland.

Robinette, named for James Robinette, who settled in the area in 1887, had its post



Diane Carrithers, right, and her mother, who ran the post office and store at Robinette.

office established in 1909.

The town, which had a population of 25 to 30 for much of its history, was abandoned in 1957 as construction neared completion on Brownlee Dam on the Snake.

Brownlee Reservoir inundated the site of Robinette in 1958.

Reinhardt is coming to Baker City on Tuesday, Nov. 9, to talk about his project and collect stories about Robinette from local residents.

The event is part of a new lecture series that will be held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Baker Heritage Museum, 2480 Grove St.

His talk starts at 6 p.m. in the upstairs ballroom.

"I'm hoping a lot of people show up who want to share memories," he said.

He'll also have a question-and-answer session to see what local residents would like to see in this project.

## Drowned towns

Although some instances of drowned towns date back to the 1920s, Reinhardt said most



Photos by Pete Basche/Baker County Library Historic Photo Collection

A view of Robinette looking south up the Snake River. The town at the eastern edge of Baker County was inundated by Brownlee Reservoir in 1958.

occurred during 1950s, '60s and '70s when many dams were built across the Northwest.

Some, like Detroit, were moved to higher ground nearby.

But others, like Robinette, just disappeared.

Well, almost. Some of the buildings from Robinette were moved to Richland or Halfway, and still stand.

Reinhardt's goal is to preserve the oral histories of these towns.

"To capture the stories of people who lived in these places," he said.

He plans to hold a "history jamboree" in the future to collect stories and document artifacts tied to the drowned towns. He said graduate students will help with this field work.

During his research, Reinhardt said he's

been surprised at "how little vocal resistance there was" to the building of dams and subsequent reservoirs.

"It's a really traumatic event — the absolute destruction of a place they've come to call home," he said. "It's a really interesting and sad puzzle — how did people come to accept that?"

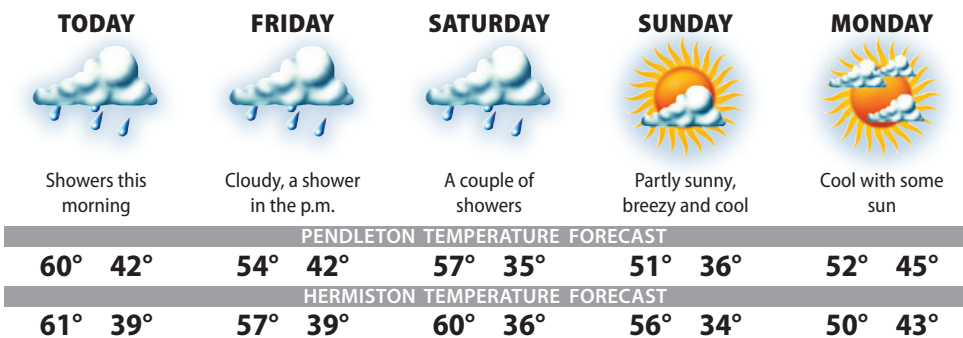
Right now he's working on an inventory of drowned towns, starting with the Snake River.

"It's been a real process of discovery and enlightenment for me," he said.

He has a map posted on the website drownedtowns.com.

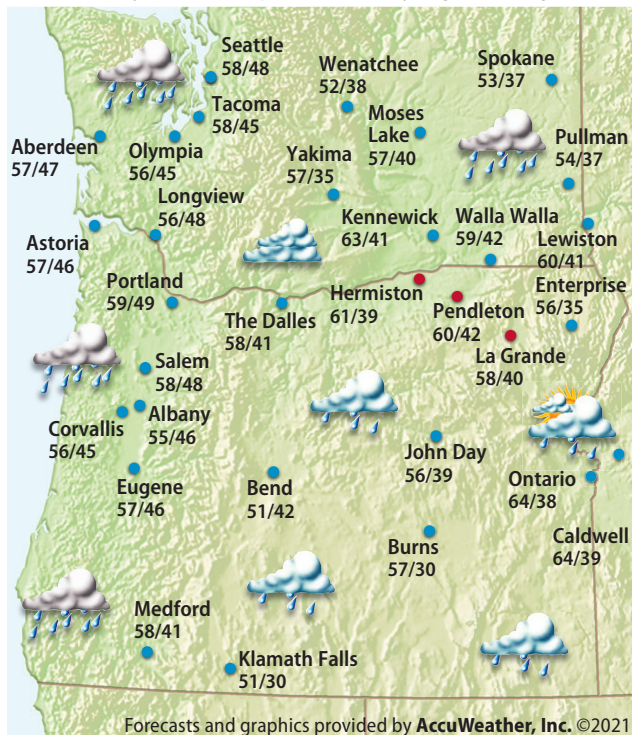
The website also has a place where people can send a note with information about a drowned town.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

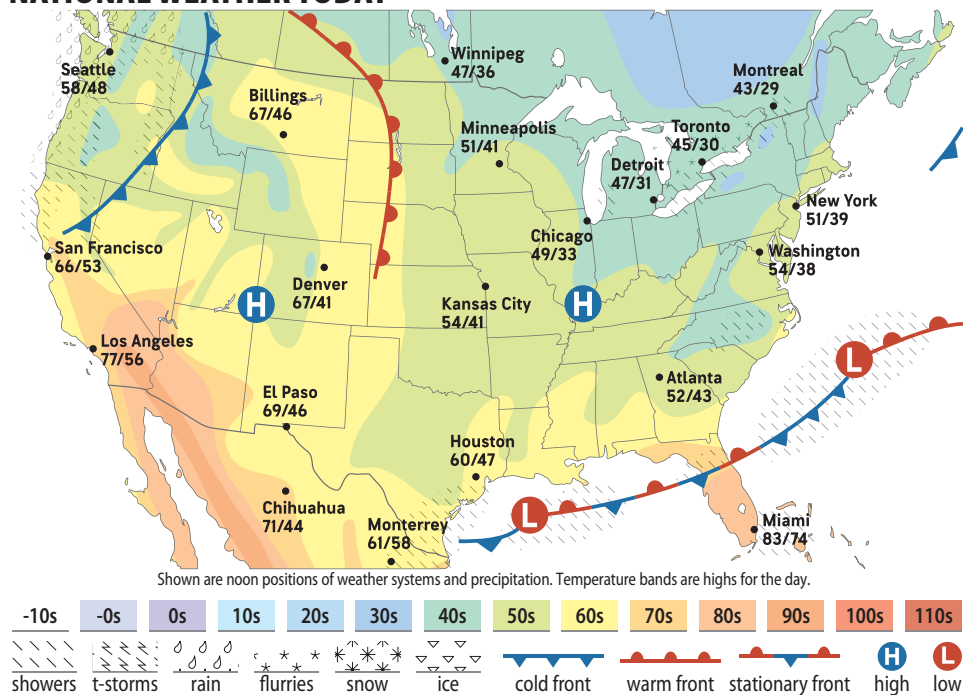
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	46°	42°
Normals	56°	36°
Records	76° (1975)	10° (1935)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date		0.05"
Normal month to date		0.13"
Year to date		6.08"
Last year to date		9.83"
Normal year to date		10.45"
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	51°	46°
Normals	57°	35°
Records	72° (1945)	0° (1935)
PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date		0.06"
Normal month to date		0.10"
Year to date		3.98"
Last year to date		2.29"
Normal year to date		6.57"
WINDS (in mph)		
	Today	Fri.
Boardman	SW 12-25	SW 6-12
Pendleton	WSW 12-25	WSW 6-12
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	7:39 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	5:37 p.m.	
Moonrise today	7:16 a.m.	
Moonset today	5:44 p.m.	
New First Full Last		
Nov 4 Nov 11 Nov 19 Nov 27		

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 93° in San Bernardino, Calif. Low 10° in Heart Butte Dam, N.D.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Elgin man facing charges in killing dog, assaulting Union County deputies

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

ELGIN — An Elgin man facing charges for killing his dog and assaulting Union County sheriff's deputies is back in jail.

Deputies picked up Paul Kevin Sanders, 53, on Saturday, Oct. 30, on a warrant for missing his arraignment on Oct. 26. The arrest went down without incident, according to the declarations sheriff's Cpl. Luke Stonebreaker and reserve deputy Brad Bell filed in Union County Circuit Court, which was an about face from when the sheriff's office arrested Sanders on Sept. 14 following a gruesome finding.

Sheriff Cody Bowen said Sanders had killed his dog and set fire to the dead animal.

Sheriff's Sgt. Travis Schaad documented the arrest in a probable cause declaration he filed with the circuit court on Sept. 15.

According to the declaration, Schaad, two days earlier, responded to Sanders' home on the 300 block of North 15th Street, Elgin. Sanders was suffering mental health issues, and the sheriff's office received a report he killed his dog.

Schaad reported a state trooper also responded to the home and saw someone dash into bushes, but a search did not turn up Sanders. But according to the document, Schaad and others did smell "what I believed to be burning hair and flesh." And a relative of Sanders stated he called her and said he had slit his dog's throat and burned the

animal as a sacrifice.

Law enforcement also heard from an adjacent property owner, who reported that at about 4:30 p.m. that day he heard a dog in distress and realized the sounds came from Sanders' property.

Schaad on Sept. 14 heard Sanders was driving around in his pickup, so he waited for Sanders at his home. There, the sergeant detained Sanders, according to the declaration, and Sanders "admitted to killing and burning his dog because Abraham told him to sacrifice it instead of his son."

Sanders gave Schaad permission to enter the backyard and examine the remains of what appeared to be the dog.

From there, Schaad took Sanders for a psychiatric evaluation. He admitted to using marijuana and methamphetamine within the past 24 hours, according to the document, so the Center for Human Development, which provides mental health care in Union County, would not hold Sanders. Schaad took Sanders to the county jail for aggravated animal abuse.

At the jail, Sanders refused to enter a cell, the document stated, and claimed he was unlawfully arrested.

"I told him again why he had been arrested and escorted him to the detox cell," Schaad reported.

But Sanders shoved his way out of the cell, per the declaration, and struck deputy Mary Tambini in the upper lip and nose, and deputy Kevin Bullock received a superficial

scratch on his arm. State records show Tambini graduated from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training in June, and the sheriff's office hired Bullock on Aug. 1.

Schaad also reported Sanders went after him, grabbing his genitals through his trousers and causing temporary pain.

Sanders stayed in the jail only about a day. He signed a jail release agreement on Sept. 15 stating he would show up for court. Sanders also was to "remain engaged" with mental health services with the Center for Human Development and he was not allowed to possess or care for animals.

The district attorney's office in court filings stated Sanders failed to live up to the deal because he was not engaged with CHD. The court on Oct. 26 issued an arrest warrant for Sanders. And deputy Bell in his declaration noted Sanders had a dog in his vehicle at the time of his arrest Oct. 30 and said it was his.

The court appointed Rick Dall as Sanders' public defender. Dall said because the case was pending, he was not able to discuss the case or his client but is working to resolve it "fairly quickly."

The district attorney's office arraigned Sanders on Nov. 1 on charges of first-degree aggravated animal abuse, assaulting a public safety officer and attempted assault of a public safety officer. The third charge is a misdemeanor, but others are Class C felonies. The court set Nov. 22 as the date for Sanders to enter a plea.

**CORRECTIONS:** The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —  
211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211  
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211  
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Closed major holidays  
**EastOregonian.com**  
In the App Store:  
**EO EO**  
East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.  
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