

Ezra Meeker Oregon Trail time capsule to be opened June 23

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Ezra Meeker, the famous pioneer who spent the later part of his life memorializing the Oregon Trail and reviving memories of it as storyteller, may have one more tale to share.

People opening a time capsule Meeker left in La Grande in 1906 could discover a note or message from the frontiersman that he wanted people to see in the future. The time capsule is set to be opened at 110 Walnut St. at 1 p.m. on Thursday, June 23. The event will be at the site of a stone Oregon Trail marker Meeker dedicated on April 10, 1906, one which had interior space at its base for a time capsule. Little is known about what the time capsule may contain.

“The only thing we know is that it may have the dedication speech the mayor of La Grande gave,” said Ronnie Allen, a La Grande local historian who has done extensive research on Meeker’s stone markers and is a member of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

Allen has organized the time capsule opening event with major help Dale Counsell, of La Grande, a fellow local history aficionado. Counsell said the Oregon Trail has special meaning to him because a number of his relatives came to the Northwest on the Oregon Trail.

A time capsule of distinction

The stone marker is among 35 Meeker set up along the Oregon Trail during the three journeys he made across the United States to promote



Dick Mason/The Observer

Stu Spence, left, the city of La Grande Parks and Recreation director, and Ronnie Allen, a local historian, examine an Oregon Trail stone marker Friday, June 17, 2022, that Ezra Meeker put up in 1906 on Walnut Street in La Grande. Parks and recreation will help open a time capsule in the marker on June 23.

efforts to preserve the overland route. The stone marker on Walnut Street may be the only one Meeker put up that had a time capsule.

“It is the only marker that had a time capsule, according to his diaries,” Allen said.

The time capsule will be opened with assistance from the La Grande Parks and Recreation Department, which will be using a backhoe for the work, according to Stu Spence, the department director.

Once the contents of the time

capsule are removed they will be replaced by items Allen and Counsell have collected for a new time capsule. They will include an Oregon Trail brochure, a copy of the Overland Journal (a quarterly publication of the Oregon-California Association) plus items that are or recently have been integral parts of our daily lives today including two face masks, a COVID-19 home test kit, an iPhone, a \$2 bill and a quarter. Allen said he is not sure if all of these items will fit into the time capsule.

Once the new time capsule items are placed in the stoner marker, it will be reinstalled in the exact place it is now, Allen said.

The marker is in the front yard of the home of Jack and Jennifer Boyd. “I am so excited,” Jennifer Boyd said of her anticipation of the time capsule opening.

Attracting Oregon Trail fans

The stone marker is easy to miss but many Oregon Trail fans have

no trouble finding it after reading about it in books and online. Jennifer Boyd said that in the summer five or six people a week come to her house asking about the marker.

The Oregon Trail was close to Meeker’s heart because he had taken the route west from Iowa in 1852 when he was a young man. He later settled in what is now Puyallup, Washington, and was the town’s first mayor.

In the 1880s, he made and lost a fortune growing and marketing hops. Meeker then went to Alaska to look for gold, returned and experimented with dehydrated foods. He took up writing, producing at least five books before he died.

Meeker made his 1906 stop in La Grande while on an eastbound trip along the Oregon Trail in an ox-drawn wagon. He made a second trip across the trail by wagon, and still later retraced portions of it in an automobile.

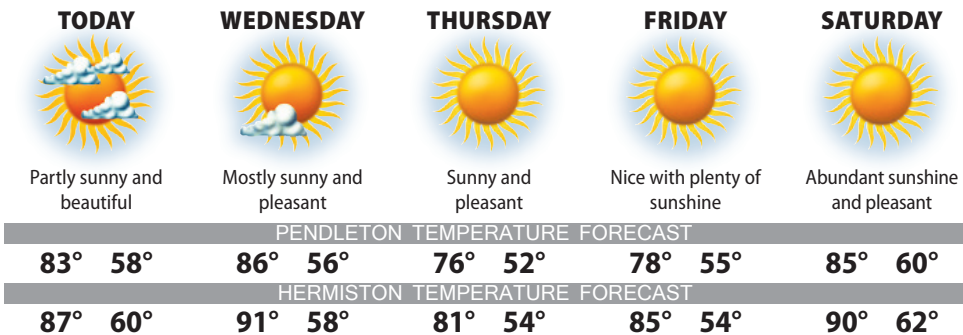
At 94, he made the trip by airplane. He flew over the trail in a week. His 1852 journey took seven months.

Meeker died in December 1928, at the age of 97.

Boyd said a story from a 1906 edition of The Observer indicates that about 600 people attended the dedication ceremony for the stone marker on what is now Walnut Street. She hopes that a crowd of at least that big will be present for the June 23 time capsule opening.

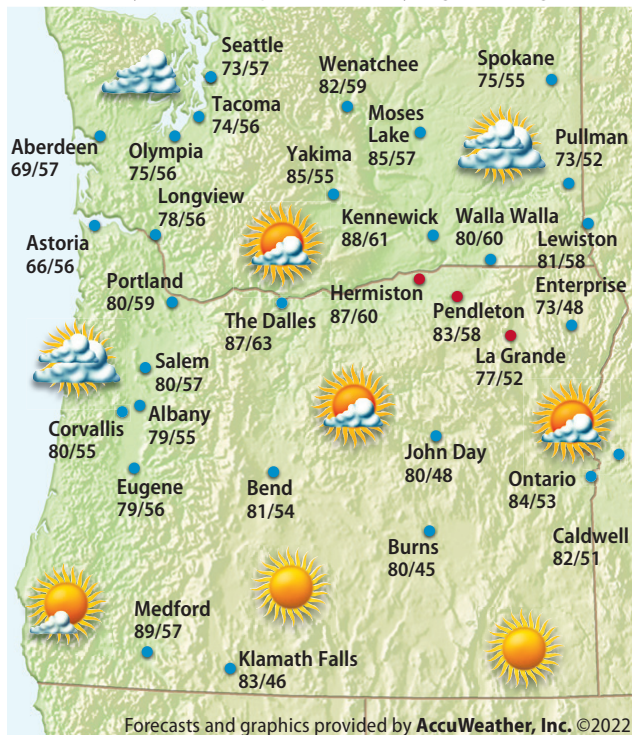
“Ezra Meeker would be so thrilled to know that part of the history he kept alive still excites people,” she said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

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



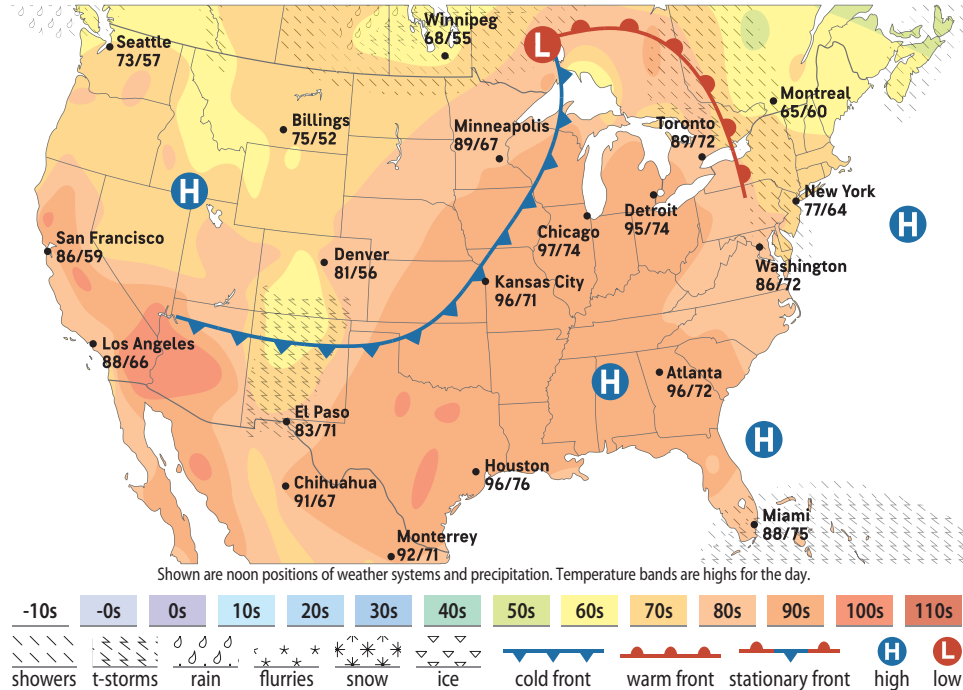
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.	
TEMP.	HIGH LOW
Yesterday	73° 56°
Normals	80° 53°
Records	103° (1900) 38° (1893)
PRECIPITATION	
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	2.16"
Normal month to date	0.90"
Year to date	10.82"
Last year to date	4.29"
Normal year to date	7.74"
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.	
TEMP.	HIGH LOW
Yesterday	75° 54°
Normals	83° 54°
Records	101° (1958) 42° (2012)
PRECIPITATION	
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"
Month to date	1.66"
Normal month to date	0.52"
Year to date	7.45"
Last year to date	2.46"
Normal year to date	4.90"
WINDS (in mph)	
Today	Wed.
Boardman SW 4-8	WSW 8-16
Pendleton NW 4-8	W 7-14
SUN AND MOON	
Sunrise today	5:06 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:48 p.m.
Moonrise today	1:24 a.m.
Moonset today	1:36 p.m.

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 106° in Comanche, Texas Low 21° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



IN BRIEF

COVID-19 levels 'low' or 'medium' in Eastern Oregon

LA GRANDE — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention monitors community levels of COVID-19 to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

The CDC listed the following levels for Eastern Oregon:

- **Morrow County:** low.

- **Umatilla County:** low.
- **Union County:** medium.
- **Baker County:** medium.
- **Wallowa County:** medium.
- **Malheur County:** medium.

The CDC recommends staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. Those who have symptoms should get tested.

For communities with medium levels, additional precautions are issued for those at high risk for severe illness, including talking to a health care provider about the need to wear a mask.

—EO Media Group

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