

# Wallowa History Center celebrates with open house

By Ellen Morris Bishop  
Wallowa County Chieftain

After two years of hard work by volunteers and an occasional contractor, the Wallowa History Center has a new home. Last spring they moved into the historic, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)-built, U.S. Forest Service compound on the west end of Wallowa. On July 4th the Center will celebrate its new digs with an open house from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. where you can learn more about the historic facility, and the History Center's projects and plans for the future.

The CCC began construction of the five buildings of the Forest Service compound in 1936. They are a testament to the long presence of Forest Service in the town of Wallowa. In 1907, the newly ordained Wallowa Forest Supervisor's office was located in Wallowa. In 1936 that office moved to Enterprise, but the District ranger's office remained in Wallowa—along with its brand new buildings that included a home for the district ranger, the Forest Service Office, an ample garage, and a large storage building.

The History Center presently occupies the building that housed U.S.F.S. offices. It includes displays of historic photo-



Ellen Morris Bishop  
**Wallowa History Center director Mary Ann Burrows and Smokey the Bear are ready to welcome visitors to the History Center's open house July 4.**

graphs, and a small store that sells books, maps, and a few other things, including Smokey the Bear memorabilia. But there's much more to the center than that. "We are really a research facility," said History Center board president David Weaver. "We have archived a lot of historic materials. We have digital copies of many photographs. Perhaps our most important resource is Mary Ann Burrows, our founder, director and local historian. We are not a "museum" in the sense that you go around and just look at a lot of things. We



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**The historic Forest Service compound includes an office building, garage, and storage building.**

are a resource for the community and to anyone who is researching or learning about the history of the town of Wallowa."

That includes working with the Wallowa Schools. In May, Wallowa Elementary School's Rendezvous brought about 90 students and teachers to the center to learn about their heritage. Center visitors have included families from Portland, Boise, and even Germany.

It took a bevy of dedicated volunteers from the City of Wallowa, U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Depart-

ment of Forestry, and the community about two years to restore the building. Several local contractors pitched in too. "The carpets were filthy and everything was run down when we started," said Executive Director Mary Ann Burrows. "There was plywood nailed to the floor under them, and a layer of linoleum below that. But underneath all that accumulation there were beautiful wood floors." Today, cleaned and refinished by Christian Niece, the narrow pine flooring glows. The rest of the building proudly pres-

ents CCC craftsmanship at every turn, from the stylish arched entryway and knotty pine paneling, to the geometric wooden border at the top of the conference room walls.

But the USFS office is only one of the multiple buildings on the site. With the help of funding from the Oregon Cultural Trust, the History Center board of directors is developing a timeline for future restoration projects. The History Center's next challenge will be restoring the large USFS shop and storage building into something more akin to

an educational and resource center.

Plans for that work are in the very early stages, board president David Weaver noted. They include providing information about the history of the U.S. Forest Service in Wallowa County, and a historical timeline of the City of Wallowa and Wallowa County, as well as an area for presentations and gatherings.

The History Center is collaborating with the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Interpretive Center, the Wallowa County Museum, Joseph Center, and other Wallowa County nonprofits. "We want to support and collaborate with all these organizations," Weaver said. "We may be one of the first places that people who are coming into Wallowa County to the area will visit. We want to be sure that they know about all the wonderful places where they can learn more, including the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Interpretive Center, the Wallowa County Museum, and all the other great places to get to know Wallowa County."

That project is still several years down the road, with planning and funding needs that will take time. But the Wallowa History Center's restored Forest Service office building that you can explore today is a great start.

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## Wallowa County Museum holds open house

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The Wallowa County Museum, the county's official repository of historical items and information, held an open house on Friday, June 28. It was a popular event, not only because of the cookies, cake and lemonade served, but also because the museum's contents are fascinating. Where else can you see the real tooth and tusk of a 17-foot tall Columbian Mammoth that once walked the prairies just north of Enterprise? Or browse through the careful essays and impressive artwork of Wallowa County first-graders that were proudly displayed at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland Exhibition?

The Wallowa County Museum is housed in the historic First Bank of Joseph building, built in 1888. Local volunteers started the museum in 1976 as a bicentennial project. In 1978 the building, on South Main Street in Joseph, was entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

The museum's first floor includes a Nez Perce room complete with mortars, pestles, and other tools, an authentic teepee and travois (the horse pulling it is life-sized but doesn't move very much). If you follow a passageway to the "back room" which was once the Joseph Fire Station, you'll find



Ellen Morris Bishop

**The Wallowa County Museum is owned and managed by Wallowa County. It is located in the historic First Bank of Joseph building on South Main Street in Joseph.**

buckaroo gear, including an exhibit honoring the centennial of the McClaran ranch, Nellie May Biggs' side-saddle, and a compact 1919

Chandler and Price printing press, which seems a bit out of place, but still intriguing, among the wool chaps, Cliff Wade polo bits, cream sepa-

rators, and butter churns.

The museum's second floor is well-lit and dedicated to schools, homes, and families. You'll find a curious black wedding dress, dioramas that display period dining rooms and kitchens, and information about pioneer and early Wallowa County lives. You'll also discover a variety of military uniforms and history, including glimpses of Wallowa County veterans during the first and second world wars. Photos and information about Wallowa County's 90 (ninety) school districts and their mostly one-room schoolhouses is up there as well. In the 1920's and 1930's most of these schools were busy educating Wallowa County's youth.

The museum includes an extensive archive of historic photographs, newspapers, scrapbooks, and documents that are available for research. They have digital copies of the glass negatives, and volunteers are gradually completing the daunting task of scanning and creating digital copies of their images and negatives. And the museum store carries many hard-to-find books about local history, as well as DVDs and artwork.

The museum's summer hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$3 for Seniors, \$2 for children ages 7-17, and children under 6 are free. For more information (or to volunteer) call 541-432-6095.

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### To our Friends and Business Community

The July 4th fireworks will soon be upon us. We have a long ways to go to reach our goal. We need \$13,500 for the fireworks and \$500 for public services.

**So far we have raised \$5,579**

We are asking residents and businesses to support the fireworks with a donation of \$25, \$50 or \$100 or more. This amount, when added together with all of the other fundraising activities, will make it possible to pay for insurance, public services, and the support of the fireworks crew. All donations of \$25 or greater will be entered into a drawing to win a two person Jet Boat Trip in Hells Canyon. This year Beamer's Landing has provided the drawing prize.

ALL DONATIONS ARE IMPORTANT.

**Fireworks will be Thursday, July 4 at approximately 10 PM**

Please help us keep this celebration alive in Wallowa County. Donations can be sent to the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 427, Enterprise, OR 97828. For further information contact the Chamber, 541 426-4622 or [info@wallowacounty.org](mailto:info@wallowacounty.org).

**SPACE RESERVATION DEADLINES**

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Ad copy is due on **Monday at 10am**. Ads must be approved by **Tuesday at 12pm**.

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