



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

A new half-pipe, foreground, is the centerpiece of the revamped Enterprise Skateboard Park along Highway 82 and School Street. The park will have its grand reopening Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021.

## Revamped skate park set to open Saturday

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The long-awaited revamped Enterprise Skateboard Park will celebrate its grand reopening Saturday, Aug. 7, with new features and a celebrity speaker.

Professional skateboarder and MTV celebrity Brandon Novak, of Maryland, will be on hand for the event, said Ron Pickens, of Enterprise's Alternative High School and Building Healthy Families.

Pickens, who has been the one to spearhead adding new features to the park, said the opening will be at 10 a.m. Novak, who has earned a reputation both on and off his board, is scheduled to speak from 11 a.m. to noon.

Pickens said just Novak's speech is planned, but "hopefully, Brandon Novak will do a skating demo."

A half-pipe has been the major addition to the park, although other obstacles have been added or upgraded. Pickens said Monday that the park is not quite complete.

"We're two ramps shy at this point, but we're pretty close," Pickens said.

He said some signs and benches also need to be

added and will be done this week.

"If all goes according to plan, the park should be finished by Friday night," he said.

Pickens said artwork designed by some of the girls from the Alternative School has been added.

"It's nice to see a breath of fresh air down there and see some color," he said. "The girls' artwork adds some color and some flair."

The project has been underway since December, when original plans called just for the addition of a half-pipe. Then, this spring, the project received a surprise anonymous donation of \$51,500. Pickens expanded his plans and with donations from BHF, the city, community groups, private individuals and businesses, they've brought in about \$77,000 and have been able to add to their original plans. Over the past month and a half, he's been working with the Alternative School kids on benches and signage.

He said the donation dollars do not count the cost of donated labor.

"It feels good to see all these pieces get arranged and this project get successfully pulled off," Pickens said.

## Robbery show included CJD founder's dad

Dave Tucker did his time, came back and became bank VP

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — One of the more unique events during Chief Joseph Days was the reenactment of the infamous 1896 robbery of the First Bank of Joseph.

And, one of the more unique aspects of that was that one of the robbers was Dave Tucker, father of Harley Tucker, the man credited with starting the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo. To continue with the uniqueness, Tucker was caught, did his time and returned to Joseph to eventually serve as a vice president of the bank he once robbed.

The old bank building, which now houses the Wallowa County Museum, was built in 1887 and is believed to be the oldest building in Joseph, according to the county website. After serving as a bank until 1917, it became a doctor's office, a city events center, library and City Hall. Vacated in 1973, it was renovated and in 1978, listed on the National Register of Historic Places and became the Wallowa County Museum.

Darlene Turner, daughter of Harley Tucker and granddaughter of Dave, said her granddad never discussed his wilder days.

"He lived with us for four or five years," she said Monday, Aug. 2. "I didn't know about it until I was in high school. That was never talked about at our house."

She said that given the robbery is both local and family history, she's researched it a lot.

"I've read lots of stories



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

His loot laying on the street or still flying in the air amid the gunsmoke, one of the "robbers" in the reenactment of the 1896 robbery of the First Bank of Joseph fires his gun Saturday, July 31, 2021, after the Chief Joseph Days Parade.

about it," she said.

### The robbery

Dave Tucker was about 25 when he got caught up in the robbery plot. He'd been working in the county herding sheep and two men who were experienced pickup "artists" — James Brown and Cyrus Fitzhugh — came to work with Tucker shearing sheep, according to the recollections of J. D. McCully, who worked as a cashier at the bank, on www.oregonpioneers.com. They got Tucker involved, as well as at least one more local, outside man Ben Ownby. Ironically, it was the locals who would be the only ones to do time for the crime.

The robbers were expecting to find about \$8,000 in the bank, but came away with only about \$2,000, according to www.oregonpioneers.com.

The website also said Tucker wanted the money so he could afford to marry his sweetheart, Minnie Proebstel. As it turned out, she came to visit him in jail after the robbery and told him if he'd man up and do his time, she'd wait for him. She did and they did.

After the plan went sideways, McCully recalled, Brown lay dead in the street of gunshots, Tucker and Ownby were captured and Fitzhugh got away with the loot.

As McCully recalled,

"As (the) robbers (were) attempting escape, some one called out 'Look,' and pointed toward the brow of the hill which makes the west embankment of Wallowa Lake, a mile away, and there silhouetted against the blue sky line sped a lone horseman. He was observed until he disappeared into the timbered fastness of the Wallowa mountains, and the last time to ever knowingly seen by a Wallowa County citizen."

McCully also visited Tucker in jail.

"There standing at the barred door (of the city jail) with his hands clutched to the bars at head level and his head pressed against the bars, stood the most dejected individual I had ever seen, nor have I since seen a picture more depressing," McCully wrote.

Tucker soon had his wounds dressed — he lost a finger to a gunshot — and was taken away by the county sheriff to Enterprise.

### 'Redeemed'

Turner said she has a letter from the state prison in Salem to show her grandfather was received there May 1, 1897, and discharged Sept. 28, 1901. She said he was released a year and a half early for good behavior.

After being released, Tucker decided to go straight, Turner said. He first tried unsuccessfully

to get work in Lewiston, Idaho, but then decided to come home.

"He thought, 'I lost my reputation in Joseph and I want to go back there and redeem myself.'" Turner said.

So Tucker went to work "redeeming" himself, Turner said. He spent much of his time tending sheep. Turner said Jay Dobbin was one of first who hired him. Later, while working for Peter Beaudoin, he and a French sheepherder together rescued about 25,000 sheep during a massive early-winter snowstorm.

Turner said she's not sure how her granddad transitioned to banking, but she knows he managed to buy and build his own sheep ranch, was a director of the local ditch company to help farmers with irrigation, became a school board member, took out stock in the bank and was generally active in the Joseph community.

"He was a pretty big businessman by that time," she said. "He owned quite a few acres."

Tucker lived until January 1953, having helped — at least financially — his son start the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo.

### Reenactment

Turner said it's been a few years since the last reenactment of the robbery and previous incarnations did a better job of telling the story her grandfather was involved in.

"In the beginning it was done very well," she said, adding that they used to have a narrator on the street and music to accompany it. "They told the whole story of how it happened."

She's hoping that now that the reenactment has returned, its presentation will improve, such as by adding a narrator.

"The moral of the story was he made good and did lot for the community while he was here," she said.

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