

FIRE IN THE WEST

NEW PERSPECTIVES FROM OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

JOIN VIRTUAL DISCUSSION WITH STEVE PYNE

FIRE STORIES

JOSEPH — The Josephy Center for Arts and Culture is hosting “Fire in the West,” a virtual discussion with author Stephen J. Pyne, Thursday, May 20, in honor of its spring exhibit, “Fire Stories,” which is now on display at the center, 403 N. Main St., Joseph.

Pyne, author and an emeritus professor at Arizona State University, specializes in environmental history, the history of exploration and especially the history of fire.

The two-hour discussion is free, open to all, and will be held via Zoom beginning at 2 p.m. For access and other details, visit <https://josephy.org/event/fire-in-the-west-discussion>, email info@josephy.org or call the center at 541-432-0505.

ABOUT STEPHEN J. PYNE

Steve Pyne is an emeritus professor at Arizona State University. He has been at ASU since 1985. In 1986 he joined the charter faculty at ASU West, where he remained for 10 years. He transferred to the School of Life Sciences in 1999.

Pyne has published 35 books, most of them dealing with fire, but others on Antarctica, the Grand Canyon, the Voyager mission and, with his oldest daughter, an inquiry into the Pleistocene.

His fire histories include surveys of America, Australia, Canada, Europe (including Russia) and the Earth.

“The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica” was named by the New York Times to its 10 best books for 1987. “Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire” won the Forest History Society’s best book award.

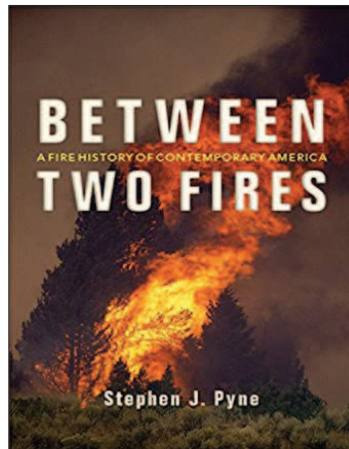
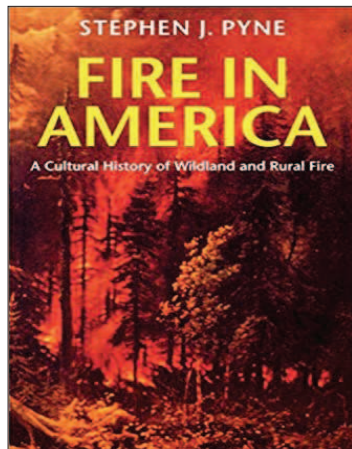
Pyne has twice been awarded NEH Fellowships, twice been a fellow at the National Humanities Center, enjoyed a summer Fulbright Fellowship to Sweden, and has received a MacArthur Fellowship (1988-1993). In 1995 he received the Robert Kirsch Award from the Los Angeles Times for body-of-work contribution to American letters.

Pyne now lives on an urban farm in Queen Creek, Arizona, where he raises Tunis sheep, chickens and citrus.

To learn more, go to www.stephenpyne.com.



www.stephenpyne.com
Contributed photo and bio



JOSEPH — The Josephy Center’s spring exhibit, “Fire Stories,” is a historic and contemporary exploration of wildfire in Northwest landscapes.

The exhibit showcases photos taken from fire lookout towers with Osborne panoramic cameras nearly 100 years ago paired with modern replications from photographer and naturalist John F. Marshall. The paired images provide a unique perspective — the contrasts showing how fire and fire suppression have changed the landscapes of the Willamette and Blue mountains.

In the 1930s, with a camera designed by U.S. Forest Service worker William Bushnell “Bush” Osborne and built by Leupold-Volpel & Co. in Portland, foresters took pictures from fire lookout towers across the Northwest. Each photo covered 120 degrees, so three photos captured the entire region surveyed from each tower, and, matched with the “Osborne Firefinder,” allowed lookout guards to pinpoint the fires and communicate up the line.

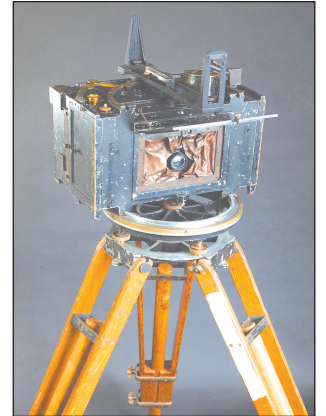
Marshall has trekked the Willamette and Blue mountains to find these Osborne photo locations — finding a vantage point to match the 1930s viewsheds — and take pictures from the same spots.

The relationship between humans and fire is tangled with how we live on the land and use its resources. American Indians long learned to live with fire and made it useful. European settlement brought a different sensibility and the tools and organization to control fire — but it wasn’t understood then how fire is essential to the function of nature, and attempting to eliminate fire has only increased its destructive power.

How does nature live with fire, and how can we? According to the Josephy Center’s description of the exhibit, these are questions that cannot be ignored in this unprecedented time. “Fire Stories” provides some answers and stimulates more thought and discussion.

The then-and-now photos illustrate the positive roles of historical wildfires and document changes in the role of fire in the modern era. Works of art on their own, the “Fire Stories” photographs show how art, history and science can work together to teach us about Pacific Northwest forests.

The exhibit will be up until June 15. Gallery hours at the Josephy Center, 403 N. Main St., Joseph, are noon to 5 p.m. on weekdays and noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays.



Josephy Center/Contributed Photo

“Fire Stories” features historical photographs taken with a unique camera called the “Osborne Photo Recording Transit.” The cameras were used by the U.S. Forest Service in the 1930s to capture large-format panoramic images from fire lookout towers and other sites throughout Oregon and Washington. The panoramic camera had a moving lens in front of a stationary 6” x 13” negative. The photographer would wind it up to do the picture taking. Fewer than 10 of the Osborne cameras were built.

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