

'The Atlas of Drowned Towns'

Learn more about the project to document towns lost under reservoirs at Nov. 9 talk

By Lisa Britton

Go! Magazine

BAKER CITY — Bob H. Reinhardt is gathering stories about places that no longer exist — towns that disappeared underwater after the construction of large dams in the 20th century.

He will be in Baker City on Tuesday, Nov. 9, to talk about his public history project "The Atlas of Drowned Towns," and specifically the town of Robinette, a Baker County town that disappeared with the construction of Brownlee Reservoir.

His presentation starts at 6 p.m. at the Baker Heritage Museum, 2480 Grove St. This is part of the museum's new lecture series, which will take place on the second Tuesday of each month.

Reinhardt is an associate professor in the Department of History at Boise State University, where he teaches, researches and writes about the history of the American West, environmental history,

public history and the history of public health. His current history project seeks to explore the hundreds of communities in the American West that were displaced by the construction of dams, mostly in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Reinhardt is the author of the "The End of a Global Pox: America and the Eradication of Smallpox in the Cold War Era" (University of North Carolina Press) and "Struggle on the North Santiam: Power and Community on the Margins of the American West" (Oregon State University). He served as the executive director of the Willamette Heritage Center in Salem, was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship at Carnegie Mellon University and held teaching positions at Western Oregon University and Willamette University. He is the founder and director of the Working History Center at Boise State University.

The Baker Heritage Museum is also working with Reinhardt on the "community workshop" portion of this project.

"The general purpose of the community workshop is for us to discuss how to explore and interpret the histories of communities displaced or disappeared by large dams on the Snake River," said Gracie Hardy, museum assistant.

She said the museum will also work with Reinhardt to host a "History Jam-boree" — an event to collect stories

from community members about towns displaced by dams, and to work together to preserve memories and artifacts from those lost places. These History Jambores would take place in the spring and early summer of 2023.

To learn more about Reinhardt's project, and to see a map of drowned towns, visit www.drownedtowns.com.



www.bakerlib.org/photo-archive

The former Baker County town of Robinette was on the western bank of the Snake River 1 mile below the confluence of the Powder River. The town's namesake, James E. Robinette, settled there in 1887. The railroad and townsite were inundated in 1958 by the waters of Brownlee Reservoir, which also flooded the road that followed the Powder River from Richland to the Snake River.

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