

Kam Wah Chung a local treasure

Nestled near Canyon Creek in John Day is a building steeped in history.

Constructed more than 140 years ago, the small structure that housed Kam Wah Chung & Co. is now a museum providing visitors a window into the past.

Following the Canyon City gold rush in 1862 and an influx of Chinese immigrants, Ing Hay and Lung On purchased the building after migrating here themselves.

At its peak, the Chinese population in John Day was about 2,000 — the third largest Chinatown in the United States, slightly smaller than those in Portland and San Francisco.

Ing Hay and Lung On operated Kam Wah Chung to cater to the population with a mercantile, apothecary, doctor's office and boarding house that also served as a religious and community center.

When Ing Hay fell ill in 1948, the business closed its doors after more than 60 years.

Everything inside remained as it was when he left, and still remains today to the delight of thousands of museum attendees each year.

The site was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and the city began using it as a museum in 1975.

More than a half century after Kam Wah Chung

closed its doors, a new effort blossomed to ensure they would remain open to those seeking to understand its cultural significance.

Former first lady Mary Oberst, Barbara Sidway and Sharon Leighty spearheaded a \$1.5 million fundraising effort to restore the building and establish an interpretive center, and the site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2005.

The site was transferred to the state, which continues to operate the interpretive center and provide tours of the museum. Kam Wah Chung is expected to draw about 10,000 visitors this summer.

On Saturday, a sold-out crowd gathered to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the restoration by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and the 140th anniversary of Kam Wah Chung.

This historical gem, and the efforts to preserve and share it, deserve applause. Everyone who contributed — from the fundraisers to the park staff to the Friends of Kam Wah Chung volunteers — should be proud of what they have accomplished.

Thanks to the efforts of many, Kam Wah Chung is a historic local treasure that will remain for all to enjoy for many more years to come.



FARMER'S FATE

Say your prayers, wodent!

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

The plant disappeared into the ground as quickly as money is sucked into the pneumatic tube canisters at the bank. I knelt down quickly where the melon plant used to be — there was nothing but a few roots stuck on the side of a freshly dug gopher hole.

My insides were screaming in my best Elmer Fudd impression. "Hewwo! Acme Pest Contwol? Weww, I have a pest I want contwolled!"

If jumping up and down and waving around a gun would have helped Elmer, I may have been inclined to try it too. I stood in the middle of a gopher colony, surrounded by rodent-chewed drip tape fountains. Yesterday, it had been a beautiful field of freshly laid mulch with pretty little melon plants growing down the rows. Today, gopher mounds dotted the field like a traumatic case of teenage acne. And if the pimply field wasn't enough, the rotten rodents had chewed the drip tape into fishnet stockings — holes spraying water every which direction. Some plants were drowning in water, some were bone dry and others raptured — nothing left but a few roots to mark their life in this world. "Eat my pwants and chew up my dwip tape will you, you wasically wodent?"

I wish there was something I could put in the water that wouldn't

hurt the plants, but would repel those horrid buck-toothed rodents. My aunt's vegan, black-bean brownies would do the trick — the first person to take the bite has their mouth glommed shut, and it repels everyone else — but I'm afraid they might kill the melon plants too.

I felt like the star of a cartoon, chasing around a tiny little nemesis who is always getting the upper hand. The only thing missing was to be sprayed in the face with water from the chewed-up drip tape. About that time, I knelt down to start working on another patch. As I put my hand on the plastic, it sunk into a flooded gopher hole. Water didn't spray my face, but my knee, my boot and my arm up to my elbow sunk in the mud. "Kill da wodent!" I breathed.

That evening, covered in mud and scratches, my husband and I headed for home. Neither of us spoke. It had been a long and discouraging day. Our cat purred for attention, and rubbed across our legs, but we weren't in the mood. We tossed him out before changing out of our mud-encrusted clothes and heading for the kitchen — each of us wishing we had a wife who had supper on the table when we came home. Too tired to cook, we just sat at the table staring

dejectedly at each other.

Meow. Meeeeeoooww. MEOW! The cat was demanding to come back in. Our cat, perhaps trying to cheer us up (but more likely to add insult to injury), was sitting at the door with a mouse in his mouth. Before I could shut the door on them, he ran into the kitchen and dropped it. The bewildered mouse took off running under my kitchen counters and disappeared.

"We are not a catch and release family!" I shouted to the cat. "Get him back, get him back!" The cat looked up and lazed off into the living room.

The next morning, with rodent traps set inside the house and in the field, I was not in the best of moods. That's when my son came running in the house. "Look at all my four-leaf clovers!" He opened up his hands to display dozens of the little green lucky leaves.

"Wow, that is a lot!" I exclaimed.

"Yeah, I wasn't finding any, so I just glued an extra leaf onto the other ones."

Simple and profound. Those rodents may have gotten me yesterday, but staring at my son's four-leaf clovers, I felt my luck was just one bottle of Elmer's glue away from changing. "Be vewy, vewy quiet. I'm about to go hunting wodents!"

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

GUEST COMMENT

Preventing the summer slide

By Jennifer Zardinejad
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

This year, 18 SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) volunteers in Grant County spent time each week reading one-on-one with 50 local students and students picked out nearly 700 books to keep for their very own.

Our logic is simple: When kids think reading is fun, they want to do it, and they're more likely to hone the skill. However, encouraging kids to have fun with reading isn't limited to the school year. Students can lose up to one-fourth of their reading skills over the summer, and those losses can add up.

This phenomenon is called the "summer reading slide" and it has negative long-term impacts on student learning, especially when it comes

to reaching the third-grade reading benchmark — a critical benchmark for academic success. According to state statistics, over half of Oregon's third-graders are not currently meeting state reading standards.

The good news is that the summer slide can be avoided by building in some time to read with kids throughout the summer.

Here are four tips for counteracting the summer slide:

- Have books on hand during trips and errands. Keep a stash in the car or in a backpack so they're always within reach.
- Set a bedtime routine focused on giving kids time with books they enjoy. You can even choose a new book to read aloud as a family.
- Switch it up! Explore a range of reading materials such as kid's maga-

zines, comic books or even kid-friendly cookbooks.

• Let your kids see you reading. Sharing your enthusiasm for books helps get kids excited about reading too.

The most important thing is to help kids build reading motivation and enjoy books. It's not about setting a minute or page requirement, but rather, encouraging children to read every day so that when fall rolls around, they're ready and excited for another year of reading and learning.

To learn more about SMART or sign up to volunteer in a local SMART program this fall, visit getSMARToregon.org or call 541-797-7726.

Jennifer Zardinejad is the SMART central area manager who oversees SMART reading programs in Grant County.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

McLeod-Skinner right for Eastern Oregon

To the Editor:

The primary is past, and we now know who we need to support to get Congress working again. Not many people question the fact that Congress isn't functioning well.

To fix that, we need to elect Jamie McLeod-Skinner as our congress member in the Second Congressional District. Jamie is a native of our region and knows the issues of southern and Eastern Oregon well. She has the knowledge, experience and integrity to represent the voters of Eastern Oregon.

In conversations with Jamie and hearing her speak, I know two of her top priorities are seeing there are liv-

able-wage jobs for all Oregonians and that affordable health care is available throughout Oregon. Jamie knows how to get things done and won't settle for business as usual in Washington. She can get things done. When the time comes to cast your vote for Congress, vote for Jamie McLeod-Skinner. She's the right person for Eastern Oregon.

Jack Lorts
The Dalles

Fast ATV driving on closed road puts hikers, horses at risk

To the Editor:

To the young man on the racing-type sport ATV, yes, Forest Road 850 is closed to motorized vehicles,

despite your obscenity-laden insistence to the contrary. The fact that the "Road Closed" sign has been shot up and torn down does not change the law. And, yes, you were driving way too fast, putting pedestrians and equestrians in danger. Those of us who frequent road 850 alongside Laycock Creek know that motorized vehicles often use the trail, and I for one don't mind as long as their drivers are safe and courteous, which you were not. We could see by the type of your ATV and the way you drive that racing is your passion, and that's totally OK. Please locate a designated OHV area where you can safely and legally race to your heart's content without being a nuisance to hikers and horses.

Sheila Swaja
Mt. Vernon



WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** —

(For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
- **Rep. Lynn Findley, R-Vale** — 900 Court St. NE, H-475, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov.

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