

# Dredge

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keeping, surveying, truck driving, management and other roles.

On the outside, a mining dredge resembles a boat floating on a pond of its own making. Projecting from the bow is a boom with 72 one-ton buckets that dug up the countryside at the rate of 20 buckets per minute. Another boom at the stern deposited tailings across the landscape that, seen from the air, resemble worm castings and can be seen for miles along State Route 7.

Inside the dredge, electrically powered machinery duplicated on a larger scale the same processes used by placer miners during the gold rush across the West. Large rocks and gravel were sifted, sorted and separated from finer minerals and then washed over a series of riffles, where gold settled and was trapped.

A film crew shot footage of Sumpter No. 3 for an episode in the 2013 television series "Ghost Mine" about a phantom called Joe Bush. Dredge workers claimed to have seen wet footprints, flickering lights and doors opening and closing on their own.

The name Joe Bush does not appear in company records, but in 1918 an oiler named Chris Rowe was crushed in the gearbox of Sumpter No. 1, and the story goes that his spirit



Sumpter has several museums and a state park that present the rich history of gold mining in the Powder River Valley.

may have ended up inside the third dredge — along with equipment from the earlier dredges.

To reach the historic dredge from John Day, drive east on Highway 26 to Austin Junction, follow State Route 7 for 25 miles, turn left on State Route 410 and drive about

4 miles to Sumpter.

The state park is open May 1 through Oct. 31 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Guided tours, gold panning lessons and other programs are offered on weekends.

Admission to the park is free. For more information, call 541-894-2472 or visit [historicsumpter.com](http://historicsumpter.com).



The Sumpter Valley Railroad depot in Sumpter is located on the same road that leads to the gold dredge state park site.



This machine on display at the Cracker Creek Museum of Mining in Sumpter combined a 1900-era cone crusher with a 1950s-era gasoline engine.



Citywide flea markets are set up across Sumpter for the Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends.

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