Roadside fortress tells a historic horse tale

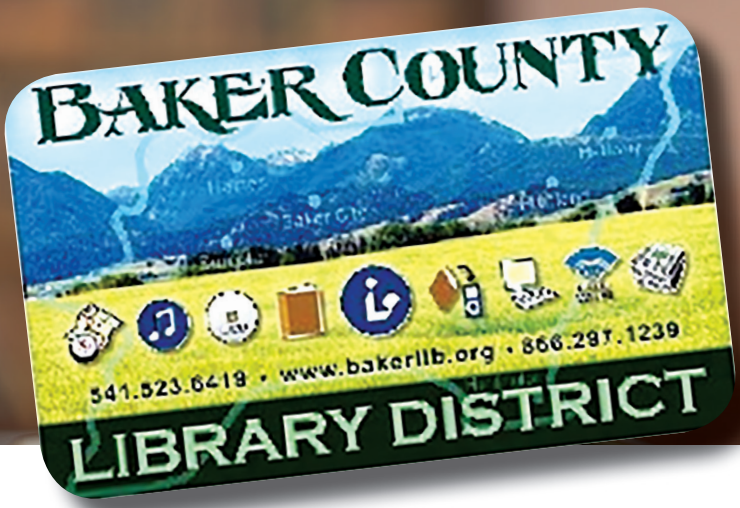## Find the site along Highway 26

By Cheryl Hoefler
GO! Magazine

Cheryl Hoefler/Go! Magazine
This stone structure was built to house a prized racehorse named Mount Vernon, near the animal's namesake town of Mount Vernon in Grant County.

MOUNT VERNON — Old barns and buildings are scattered across the Eastern Oregon landscape.

Ever wonder what tales they would share if only their walls could talk?

A simple, small stone structure near Mount Vernon in Grant County bears an unlikely story — and a slice of local history to go with it.

The building was erected to protect, of all things, a prized racehorse.

As the story goes, in the late 1870s local settler David Jenkins took possession of a sorrel mare from a traveler. From this mare a black stallion was born, which Jenkins named Mount Vernon — and who happened to have racing talent in his blood.

Some years later, fearing theft by Native Americans in the area, Jenkins had a stone fortress constructed to protect his valuable equine possession. As it turns out, no harm or threats ever came to the horse.

In 1877, a post office was established at the nearby community of Mount Vernon, named after the noteworthy animal.

Mount Vernon — the horse — achieved fame for many years competing in trotting races throughout the state before being sold when he was 17 to a Portland man in 1893. He died in 1917 at age 41.

The unmarked stone barn stands today — now protected by a fence — a couple miles east of Mount Vernon on Highway 26.