

# Hell's Half Acre full of Indian and early day history; sites to be mapped



A private land owner and the U.S. Forest Service cooperated Friday in a joint search for significant cultural and historical sites within the Heppner Ranger District Friday—sites which will escape damage from future timber-cutting.

Guiding the anthropologist, Dr. Joseph Feather, Professor Emeritus of Lewis and Clark College, Lewiston, an expert in Native American culture and one of three researchers hired by the Umatilla, Malheur and Walla Walla National Forests to identify cultural sites within planned timber sales was Orville Cutsforth of Heppner, an advocate of preservation of the Willow Creek Watershed or "Hell's Half Acre" and knowledgeable about the county's historical treasures. The pair was accompanied by Orville's wife, Barbara, Assistant District Ranger Earl Fisburn and Gazette-Times News Editor Jim Hackett.

The Cutsforths showed the group several historic and early-day Indian sites where "projectile points" (arrowheads, spear points) and stone implements were collected in paper bags by Professor Feather. The oldest projectile found was estimated to be about 3,000 to 4,000 years old. In the same area it was found, a wealth of artifacts turned up. Several were projectiles made of black obsidian, a black shiny mineral not found locally and thought by Feather to have originated from Lake Lampina, flint projectiles, "pestles" or round rocks worn smooth by the grinding action of long-ago Indian tribes grinding up grass seed, animal scrapers and "manos" or parts broken in half.

Prof. Feather said pieces collected at this site and several others during the full day of searching would be turned over to the Pendleton headquarters of the Umatilla National Forest. He had recommended to Forest Service officials that the artifacts be placed in a Forest Service established museum at Pendleton or at a museum on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

In the area where the greatest number of artifacts were found, there were signs of present day human garbage such as beer bottles, styro-foam cups, an old glass pitcher—even a campfire. As members of the group found the artifacts, they were turned over to Professor Feather who identified them and marked the area on a map.

According to the federal Antiquities Act of 1906, it is illegal to remove historical artifacts from national forest lands. However, fossils and rocks may be taken for private collections.

The Cutsforths led the group to a number of historic sites, an earthquake fault line which according to Orville, extends 200 miles to the Prineville area and marked by pinnacles of rock thrust out of the ground and an interesting variation of rocks lying along each side of the line; two gold mines which were once mined and before that, used by Indians as shelter (later day Indian projectiles were found mostly from the keen observation of Fisburn), two coal mines, two Indian graves near a Forest Service road, which Feather believes may be that of an adult and child (Barbara Cutsforth stumbled across the site while hunting elk) and a mortar bowl or hollowed out

places in a large rock used by Indians long ago to grind their grass seed (again, one of Barbara and Orville's discoveries while hunting and tracking through the Ranger District).

Twenty years ago, Orville found a rock apparently smoothed out in a grinding operation, placed it against a tree, but in Friday's search was unable to relocate it.

The Cutsforths also pinpointed the site of an old still on one stream which the group did not see.

That's not the only such still Feather has located. In fact, in his survey of over 20,000 acres in the Heppner Ranger District, he has mapped and identified three still operations. At one still site, he found 65 barrel hoops (metal rims around wooden whiskey barrels) two 1903 fruit jars, a pig house and from talking to long-time natives of the local area, he has fixed the date of the illegal whiskey operations at between the 1920's and 1930's when the Prohibition Era caused bootleggers to take to the hills to escape revenue agents.

District Ranger Ben Siminoe said the site with the 65 hoops would be classified as an historic site, and timber operations kept free from the boundaries drawn up by Feather.

Also found at the site were Zeroline cans, an old-time motor fuel used in the Prohibition period.

Feather's work consists of first finding historic and cultural sites such as the many shown by local residents such as the Cutsforths, then going back and properly mapping out their boundaries as significant sites to be

protected from man-made disrupting and compiling historical forms with the Umatilla National Forest.

Siminoe said the Western Region of the Forest Service which includes Forest in Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho and Alaska is trying to have all cultural and historic sites identified by 1985. In the Heppner Ranger District, sites are being identified in the Coal Sale, Horse Timber Sale, Ukiah and Hell's Half Acre or Willow Creek Drainage.

Inorganic artifacts such as projectiles can be dated with Carbon 14, said Feather, but by observing their presence with material tested, scientists have arrived at their estimated age.

The scene of the Friday's greatest find of artifacts will be identified with Cutsforth's name.

Before making the tour, Cutsforth showed his fireplace to Feather, an acquaintance of

his when the latter was Supt. of Schools in Lexington from 1947-1950. Set in the rock fireplace was a magnolia leaf fossil dated at 23 million years.

Feather received a PHD from the University of Training and has also taught a total of 22 years and served as anthropology professor at Weston Montana College and Lewis and Clark College, specializing in native American culture. He has written two books, "These Are the Nez Perce Nation" and "These Are the Coeur d'Alene Tribes."

The work of Feather and other anthropologists is hoped by the Forest Service to enable preservation of the cultural heritage of forest lands from logging operations.

Siminoe welcomes people with information and knowledge about the local district's historic treasure to help identify the sites to be saved.



## Photo Credits

Clockwise from top left: Artifacts found Friday in a trip through the Heppner Ranger District were held up in the sunlight by the group's guide, Orville Cutsforth. Professor Joe Feather, an anthropologist temporarily hired by the U.S. Forest Service to locate "significant cultural and historical sites" in order to preserve them from timber cutting operations headed the search through Hell's Half Acre. Displayed at right are black obsidian projectile points dating from 3,000 to 4,000 years old; flint projectiles and mano or broken off pieces. Below the group gathers in one of the gold mines abandoned in the area. According to the Antiquities Act, it is illegal to remove artifacts for private reasons, although Feather hopes to display items found in a future museum.

Story and photos by Jim Hackett

