

Klamath Museum Shows Old Guns Found By Scouts On Indian Reservation

By CLAUDE E. SCHAEFFER
Curator Klamath County Museum

The remains of an old, rusted gun, together with some worn buttons and glass beads, were recovered several years ago on the Klamath Indian Reservation by members of Boy Scout Troop No. 19, of Bly. This material was found buried beneath a pile of rocks near the Sycan River, about 10 miles north of Beatty. The gun parts, to which our interest is confined, consisted of the hammer, the lockplate, the trigger, several parts of the firing mechanism, the brass counter-lockplate ornament and finally, four sections that once formed the barrel. Subsequently these finds were turned over to the Klamath County Museum, where they have since been placed on display.

CERTAIN FEATURES
Certain features of the gun parts as well as the conditions under which they came to light, were sufficiently unusual to raise inquiries as to the original weapon and perhaps, its owner. The barrel sections, for example, were crimped at the ends suggesting that the barrel had been forcibly wrenched or pounded into fragments, possibly after first being softened in a fire. Again, according to our information, there was no indication that the rock pile under which the remains lay, was intended to serve as a grave marker.

The question arose as to what type of gun was represented here and what circumstances served to bring it to its present state of ruin. People who viewed the material speculated whether it might have once been the property of a Hudson's Bay trapper who had entered the Basin in quest of furs, and had been killed and his gun destroyed by Indians. Although it is not possible to answer this and other questions that come up, the gun itself can be dated and identified as to type, and something of its historical significance outlined.

Examination of the metal parts reveals that the weapon represented here was an early, muzzle-loading, smooth-bore gun, designed by the English-fur companies for the Indian trade. Further, the brass counter-lockplate ornament serves to identify it as an old Northwest trade gun. Other clues give additional information. The lockplate, for example, bears the inscription "Wilson 1829"—the name of the maker and date of manufacture. One section of the barrel also carries the name "Clive" and in the way of proof marks, a crown above the letter "V", the letters "R. W." below a star and another crown above the letter "P." The letters "R. W." indicate that the Wilson in question was one Richard. Setting these clues aside, let us consider briefly the role played by the Northwest gun in the life of the Indian, and of the Klamath-Modoc, in particular.

GUNS DESIRED
Of all the articles introduced to the Indian by the white man, none, as John C. Ewers has lately shown, was so keenly desired by the former as was the gun. Indeed the old muzzle-loading smoothbore, the pioneer trade gun, enjoyed a popularity among native tribesmen that was out of all proportion to its effectiveness as a hunting or fighting weapon.

Respect for the white man's gun was kindled in the minds of the Indians when they first saw and heard this strange weapon in action. This curious, hollow rod which made such a frightening noise when the trigger was pulled, hurling such a small missile so swiftly that the eye could not follow its flight and with such force as to kill or cripple wild game or an enemy at a distance, filled the Indian with wonder and admiration. To the unsophisticated red man, this new thing which behaved so mysteriously was a strong medicine, indeed. And of the different types of firearms supplied by the fur companies to the Indians, the most famous, undoubtedly, was the Northwest trade gun.

This musket was originally an English product, made to the specifications of the fur companies of that country by several firms in London and Birmingham. Although the gun's name was derived from that of the Northwest company, a competitor of the Hudson's Bay concern, the gun type was considerably older than the name and was essentially the same as the earlier Hudson's Bay fuke or fusil.

EXAMPLES
Examples of the Northwest weapon, which have survived to modern times, bear the makers' names "Barnett" or "Wilson" on the lockplate. The London gunsmith Barnett must have been a prolific maker of Northwest guns in the early years of the 19th century. The gun shown in the accompanying photos, for example, is a Barnett of 1876 and is in the collection of the museum of the Plains Indian, Browning, Montana. Members of the Wilson family, on the other hand, manufactured guns for the Hudson's Bay Company almost continuously from 1731 to 1833. So far as is known, they did not make guns for any other fur company.

Enterprising Pennsylvania gunsmiths learned to duplicate the English-made Northwest gun at least as early as 1828. And as late as 1873, when America was entering the repeating rifle era, Parker, Field and Company was still manufacturing flintlocks for the Hudson's Bay Company to trade for furs. Nevertheless, private trading firms in the United States continued to order the bulk of their Northwest guns for many years from English and European makers because of their lower costs.

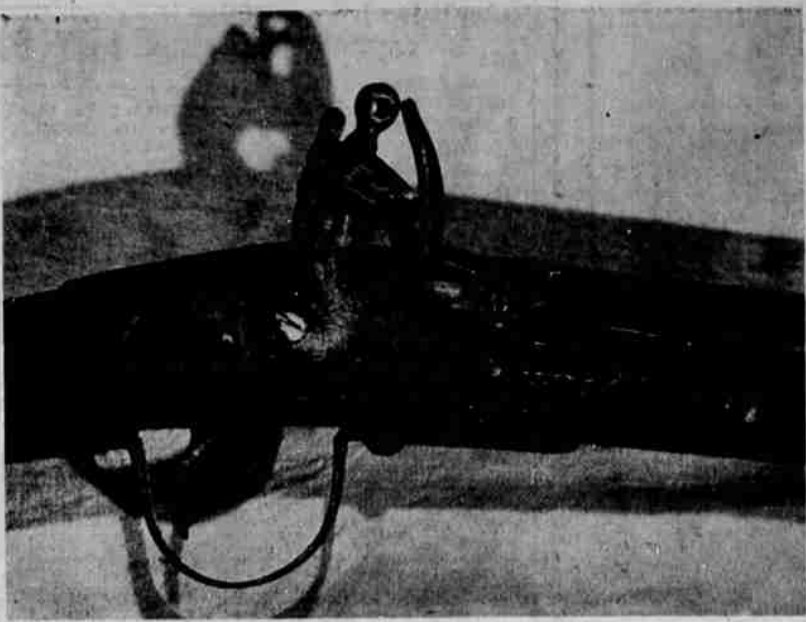
The Northwest gun was a full-stocked flintlock of five-eighths inch smoothbore. It was supplied in barrel lengths ranging from two and a half feet to three and a half feet.

Among the horse-using Indian of the plains, it was not uncommon to file off a section of the barrel, converting the gun into a makeshift carbine. Peculiarities were the large trigger guard designed to facilitate pull of the trigger by a mittened finger in the cold, winter season and the brass, counter-lockplate ornament in the form of a conventionalized dragon or sea monster. The Northwest smoothbore had neither the range nor the accuracy of the better-known Pennsylvania or Kentucky rifle. Yet this gun did answer the Indian's demand for a firearm that was deadly at close range, light in weight, fairly sturdy and inexpensive.

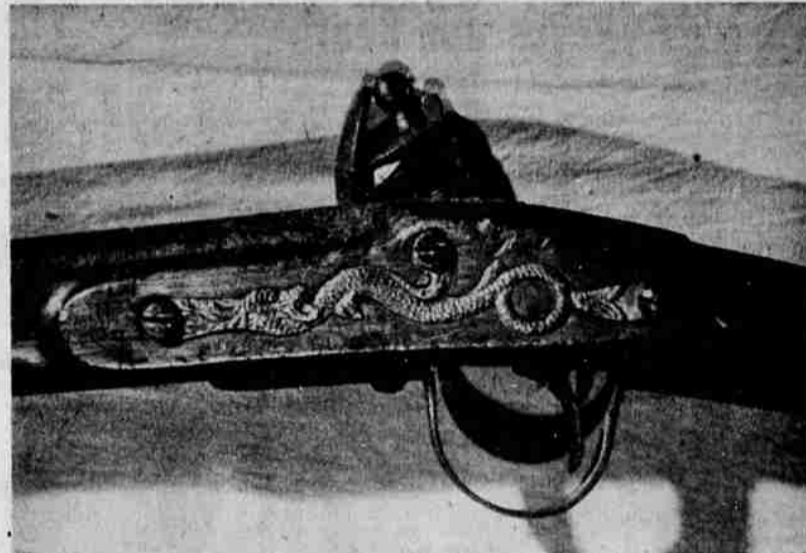
SOUND WEAPON
We have just stated that the Northwest weapon was of reasonably sound construction. Yet it appears the contrary was true at certain times and in certain places, either through the maker's efforts to shave manufacturing costs or as a deliberate attempt by some organized traders or pioneers to keep the Indian poorly armed. Rather than stop the traffic in firearms entirely, these individuals preferred to trade in inferior weapons. The Hudson's Bay Company throughout its history, is said to have maintained a distinction in quality between "trade goods" designed for the Indian and those articles intended for use by Europeans. In this connection, Sir George Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, wrote to his associates in 1821, "The trading guns (marked Wilson) are not to be compared with those of 'Barnett's' make which the Northwest companies import; the locks are badly finished, soft in the hammer, the tumbler and shear not properly tempered and the pan loses the powder. . . . Our iron work is the most important article of trade in this country, the utmost care and attention should therefore be paid to have it of good quality."

We may turn now to a consideration of firearms among the Indians of the Klamath Basin. Guns and ammunition, as Stern has recently demonstrated, were not only introduced into this region fairly late but also, at least until after the 1850's, in relatively small numbers. There were several reasons to account for this. For one, the Klamath habitat, situated at the eastern base of the Cascades, was remote from the waterways mainly frequented as avenues of travel by the fur traders from the early 18th century on. For another, as the early traders found beaver scanty in the Klamath country, they had little inducement to traverse it.

Ogden learned from the Klamath in 1826 that they had no guns.



FUNCTION OF THE FLINT bearing hammer which is striking the cover of the pan, is to ignite the priming, which in turn communicates its fire to the charge through the touch-hole. This part of the old gun found at Sycan is on display at the museum.



THE BRASS DRAGON or Sea Monster ornament on the obverse of this weapon in a Montana museum is identical to the ornament found on remains of a gun that had lain many years under rocks near the Sycan River. The ornament served as a trademark.

A decade later direct contact of these Indians with trading posts on the Columbia was first opened up when some French-Canadians took several of the natives north with them. Thereafter for some years the Klamath were obliged to make their way with difficulty to trade centers at The Dalles or in the Willamette Valley. Even as late as 1850 Chiloquin, a Klamath chief, remarked of a joint raid by western tribes, that the invaders captured the only gun then owned by them. After 1852, however, trading facilities were opened close at hand with the settlement of Yreka and firearms became more plentiful.

Summarizing the inferences to be gathered from the foregoing information, we can identify our find as the remains of a Northwest trade musket made in 1829 by the gunsmith Richard Wilson. Since this manufacturing family seems to have worked entirely for the Hudson's Bay Company, it was undoubtedly through the channels of that trade outfit that the weapon was brought to some post in the Willamette Valley or on the Columbia. Being of Wilson and not of Barnett make, it probably was traded to an Indian in exchange for furs. Unquestionably it became a prized possession of its new owner. The gun was taken to the Klamath country, either by a Klamath or by another tribesman. Here it was employed for warfare rather than the chase, and with powder and ball scarce locally, perhaps reserved exclusively for that purpose.

Possibly it aided the Klamath in resisting their hereditary foes on the east and west or in making raids upon the Pitt River tribes to the south. The trail now becomes obscure. What event led to its final destruction and abandonment? Was the gun "killed," perhaps, at the funeral pyre of its owner to become a "spirit weapon" in the Klamath hereafter? Only the ancient deities of the Klamath can reply.

Merrill Plans Full Round Of Events For Festival

MERRILL — A full schedule of events is being planned for the three big days of the 20th annual Klamath Basin Potato Festival to be held in Merrill on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 19, 20 and 21.

On Friday and Saturday, commercial, agriculture and community exhibits will be on display at the Merrill High School gym. A football game at 2 p.m. Friday will be staged with the Merrill Huskies playing against the Sacred Heart Trojans.

Highlights of Friday evening will be the Potato Festival banquet held at the Merrill Elementary School gym. The coronation and introduction of the queen and her court will be held at 6:45 p.m. followed by the banquet prepared and served by the Ladies Aid of the Presbyterian Church. A speaker will be featured, presentation of awards will be made and various acts made up of Klamath Basin's talent will provide the entertainment. Tickets for the banquet may be purchased at the gym door.

Saturday, October 20, will begin with a parade starting at 11 a.m. sharp. All floats should congregate at the Merrill Elementary School grounds before 10 a.m. for pre-judging.

Saturday noon, a free barbecue lunch will be served at the Merrill Community Hall. The 2 p.m. football game on Saturday will be between Malin and Chiloquin.

The annual Harvest Ball will be held Saturday evening at the community hall. The queen and her court will be presented at this dance.

The final day of the Potato Festival, Sunday, October 21, will include a Jackpot Rodeo at the Hill Brothers ranch in Merrill at 1:30 p.m. The program will include calf roping, team roping and saddle cow roping events.

A new sport feature added this year to the festival sports events is a special hardtop race to be held at the Klamath Speedway in Klamath Falls. Time trials will start at 12:01 p.m. and will feature 250 laps of racing with the final A-Main running 100 laps. Drivers from Alturas, Lakeview, Medford and Northern California will compete with local hardtop drivers. The queen and court will make an official appearance and present the A and B trophies to the winning drivers. The Klamath Racing Association with the Merrill Lions Club and Klamath Basin Potato Festival is presenting this special race.

Youths Join U.S. Navy

Chief Earl A. Carlson of the local Navy Recruiting Office reported Saturday that on October 11 four more area youths enlisted in the Navy. They are, Gayle L. Gueck, son of Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Gueck, P.O. Box 614, Jack R. Gathwright, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd R. Gathwright of 2523 Patterson Street, both of Klamath Falls; Ralph W. Welch, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Welch of Route 1, Bonanza and James L. Weathers of Lakeview.

All four men in addition to an enlistment in the Navy, as a way to further completion of their military obligation, enlisted for training in the Navy's high school graduate training program, which assures enlistees a school in one of the Navy's four career fields.

It was also reported that Gayle Gueck attained a perfect score on the Armed Forces qualification test, he is the second man from the area to make a perfect score in recent months, Cecil Bennett, a 1956 graduate of KHS achieved a perfect score in June.

According to the officer in charge of the Armed Forces Examining Center in Portland, the chances of attaining a perfect score on the test are one and one-half in a thousand.

GUERRILLA KILLED

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaya (U)—Malayan security forces today announced the killing of a top-ranking Communist guerrilla they said directed the slaying of European rubber planters in Negri Sembilan state over the past eight years. The government said a special operation took the life of Ah Ho, state committee member of the Malayan Communist party known as the "Terror of Bahau."

Merrill Legion Group Meets

MERRILL—A regular meeting of the Merrill Legion Auxiliary was held at the home of Mrs. Paul Lewis on Tuesday evening, October 9.

Two comforters were made ready to send to the Child Welfare center in Roseburg. The auxiliary made arrangements to send tools, lacing and leather to their "adopted" veteran at Camp White. Christmas gift suggestions for the veteran were also discussed.

A Camp Fire report was made to the auxiliary by Anne Fruits. Announced by President Anne Fruits was a district conference which will be held at Malin, October 22, beginning with a potluck luncheon at 1 p.m. All members were urged to attend.

HOLIDAY MARKED

NEW DELHI (U)—India Friday began a three-day holiday marking one of the most important festivals of the Hindu calendar—Dussera.

Naval Reserve Plans Exams

Vice Admiral James A. Holloway Jr., chief of Naval Personnel, announced today that the 11th annual national competitive examinations for the Navy's Reserve Officer Training Corps will be given interested high school seniors on December 8. Application forms are now available and must be received before November 17, he added.

Designed to supplement the officer output of the Naval academy, the NROTC program makes it possible for a young man to earn a commission while studying at the civilian college of his choice which has an NROTC unit. All tuition, fees and books are furnished by the Navy, and the student receives an annual retainer of \$600 for four years. During the summers the student goes on fascinating training cruises as a midshipman. After completing the usual four year college course, he is commissioned in the Regular Navy or Marine Corps and goes on active duty with the Navy's far-flung fleets. For those who apply a high quality, immediate assignment to flight training will open new careers in naval aviation.

High school seniors and graduates between the ages of 17 and 21 may apply for the NROTC aptitude test. Those who make qualifying scores will be given a rigid physical exam early in 1957. From the pool of qualified young men remaining in competition, approximately 2,000 will be selected to begin their Naval careers next September.

Application forms are available at all high schools, colleges, Navy recruiting stations or from the Chief of Naval Personnel, Washington 25, D.C.

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Potato Festival Display Planned

MERRILL—Each community of the Klamath Basin may enter one display at the Merrill High School gym to be shown during the 20th annual Klamath Basin Potato Festival.

The major theme of the display should be any type of farm or agriculture produce. A prize of \$15 or a cup will be awarded to the winning community display. Second winning display will receive \$10.

Notification of the intent to enter should be given to John Thompson, potato festival secretary.

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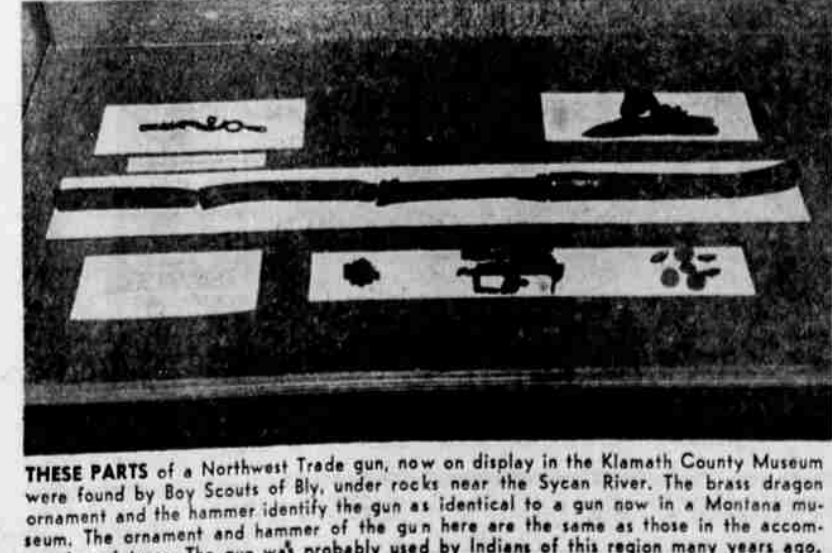
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THESE PARTS of a Northwest Trade gun, now on display in the Klamath County Museum were found by Boy Scouts of Bly, under rocks near the Sycan River. The brass dragon ornament and the hammer identify the gun as identical to a gun now in a Montana museum. The ornament and hammer of the gun here are the same as those in the accompanying pictures. The gun was probably used by Indians of this region many years ago.