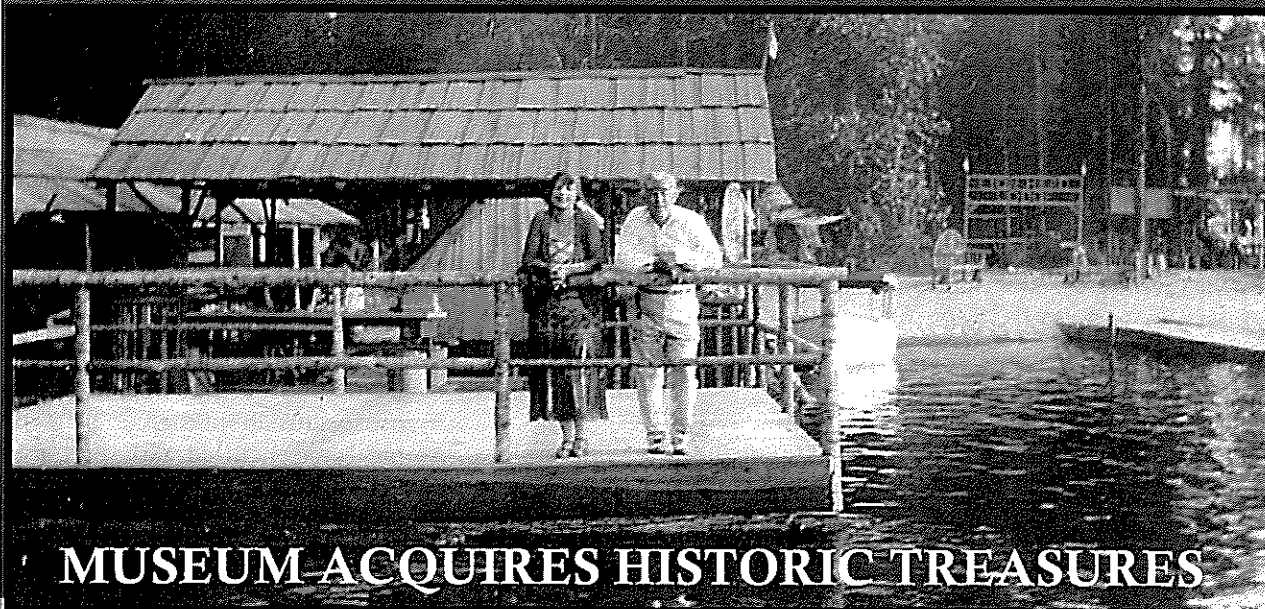


Priest Lake Museum

Spring 2012 Newsletter



MUSEUM ACQUIRES HISTORIC TREASURES

Miner's letters tell sad tale

Back in Salem, North Carolina, Jean Schallenberg was rummaging through her deceased grandfather's papers when she was surprised to discover an old packet of letters from Priest Lake, Idaho. Fortunately, Jean recognized their historical value and sent them off to the Priest Lake Museum.

These fascinating letters relate the harrowing experience of William Burk as he struggled to establish a mining claim on the Upper Priest Lake in the fall of 1904. The letters are addressed to John H. Hearing, an executive with Oliver Iron Mining Company in Minnesota. On September 21, 1904, Burk spoke of his journey to Priest Lake, "I almost choked with dust. It is something fierce, 4 inches, just like flour." He said, "got a crew of men - 1 cook, 1 drill sharper, 3 miners, 1 man to build camp. Got about 5 ton of supplies, stuff for 7 men and 6 months. It will take 2 weeks to get stuff to head of lake."

Burk often mentions nearby claims and mines, the Tom Thumb, Silver Bell, Mountain Lion,

This previously unpublished photograph of Nell Shipman at Lionhead Lodge was donated to Priest Lake Museum by Jim Parsons, Jr.

Cracker Jack, Grub Stake, Dark Horse and Priest Lake Mining Company. "They dug gopher holes all over but the only place that got ore is the big Continental." More problems arose as time wore on, "I have got a hell of a time with miners", he said. "They want to do as they please but I won't stand for it." Late November, he pleaded, "I sent September payroll in and got no checks yet. The men are asking when it is going to be payday." Days later he said, "The men quit you. You ought to have sent the checks before." He adds, "I will not stay here. I am tired of the way you folks are doing business. If I had the money, I would take the train home today."

Two weeks later, on letterhead from Priest Lake Summer Resort at Williams, Idaho (later Coolin), he says, "This is a hell of a place. It has been snowing 8 days and 8 nights. I am a

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Did You Know?

From the Records at the Priest Lake Museum

Andrew Coolin, manager of the Priest Lake Mining Company arrived here yesterday from the mines. They propose to take the ore from the mines to the head of the lake by pack trains and then on barges to Williams, Idaho, and then to haul it in to Priest River with teams. *From Spokesman Review*, ~ July 9, 1904

In January, 1931, the **Nordman** stage became snowbound on its trip up the Priest River Valley and was forced to stand still at the Dalkena Truck Camp. Mail was taken to Nordman by the old reliable method – horseback. *Priest River Times*.

The museum's collection of **76 oral histories** includes many early-day pioneers as well as contemporary families who share their Priest Lake memories. You can check out these disks at the museum or the Priest Lake Library.

The Priest Lake Museum Association was founded to preserve and promote the rich heritage of the surrounding region. The newsletter is published annually and edited by Jeanne Tomlin.

Dear Museum Friends,

I want to thank all the museum volunteers, members, visitors, donors, and the board of directors for making 2011 another successful year at the museum. We registered 3576 visitors from 39 states, 3 Canadian provinces and 7 foreign countries, an increase over the previous year. Memberships and donations, the backbone of our funding, also showed a slight increase.

In this newsletter you will read about a few of our accomplishments this past season. Over the winter members of the museum's board prepared a new temporary exhibit on Fire Lookouts. The exhibit has been so popular we will continue it for another year. In August we placed a large wooden flag pole in the nature garden. The flag pole was originally used at the Forest Service's historic Bismark Ranger Station, which closed when the new Priest Lake Ranger Station was opened. The museum was fortunate to receive a \$2180 grant from Priest Lake People Helping People, Inc to be used for display materials and permanent labels for our outdoor exhibits and nature garden.

Thanks to a generous donation from JoAnn and David Becker, the museum website has been redesigned. Brooke Shelman, an intern on the museum's collection management project a few years ago, built the website. Check out www.plmuseum.org with information about the

museum, wonderful pictures and useful links to other museums and Priest Lake related websites.

Kris Runberg Smith, associate professor of history and editor of our book *Pioneer Voices of Priest Lake*, continued her research on the new history book project. While researching for the book, Kris and the museum staff have discovered exciting maps, photographs and stories which have never been published. A prospectus about the book project is enclosed with this newsletter. This year the museum is actively seeking funding and donations to offset a portion of the publication costs. If you can help us with this project, please complete the enclosed form or contact a museum board member.

This coming season we hope to complete the long delayed historic photo kiosk planned for the Coolin waterfront. Time permitting: we plan to start work on an outdoor mining display. If you have any objects or photographs you would like to donate for this exhibit, contact the museum.

I hope you enjoy your visits to the museum and the efforts the Priest Lake Museum Association is making to preserve and display Priest Lake history. Thank you for your continued support.

Tom Weitz, President
Priest Lake Museum Association

LOOKOUT EXHIBIT WOWS



The living room of the museum was transformed to house a temporary exhibit on fire lookouts for the 2011 season. The display proved so popular it will be continued for another season.

The idea for the exhibit came after the museum received a donation of a Bosworth firefinder from Jim and Ruth Brown of Sandpoint. A firefinder is a precision alidade instrument, consisting of a compass, sights and map base, which help lookouts accurately locate fires. Idaho Department of State Lands employee Pam Aunan, who has spent over 20 seasons as a lookout on Lookout Mountain, presented the museum's firefinder to the museum. The firefinder was used at the former Whitetail Butte lookout (destroyed in 1959), which is about 5 miles south of Coolin.

Last spring a group of museum board members met with Ray Kresek who has a fascinating Fire Lookout Museum in Spokane and is the author of the book *Fire Lookouts of the Northwest*. Ray loaned the museum

several objects from his collection, including one of the earliest two-way semi-portable radios used by the Forest Service and a 1942 Washington Division of Forestry/US Army Warning Service firefinder, made entirely of wood.

A plan was developed to build a mock-up of a lookout tower cabin. Don and Elaine Widman donated the windows and built the walls and shelving for the model. Lincoln Van Auch enlarged and printed a photo taken

from Sundance Lookout, looking down towards the lake. The photo was divided into five window-sized panels and set behind the window frames. The result is a model that gives the visitor the illusion of actually being in the lookout.

Tom Holman and Pam Martin put together posters and a photograph display, and loaded a digital picture frame with over 100 photos from the U.S. Forest Service's Priest Lake Ranger District's collection of historic lookouts in the Idaho panhandle. They also prepared a display of photos, old wire and insulators from the time when many of the lookouts and fire guard stations were connected by hundreds of miles to telephone lines. An old telephone, donated by Bruce and Yvonne Hille, added to the authenticity of the exhibit. The Idaho Panhandle National Forest Supervisor's Office loaned the museum a five-foot tall model of a lookout.

Be sure to stop by our museum at Luby Bay and see the Lookout Exhibit and other fascinating displays about Priest Lake history.

By Tom Weitz

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hard looking man now, have not shaved for 6 weeks and not cut my hair for 2 months so am all the same as a bear." He concludes, "I am doing the best I can. Best regards and a merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all. Yours truly, Wm. Burk." That was the last letter from Burke but his legacy lives on in his detailed description of his brief attempt to survive the Priest Lake wilderness of the early 1900s.

Trapper's Medicinal Remedies

Yet another treasure walked in the museum one summer day in the hands of the Nunemaker sisters of Edmonds, Washington. They came to donate a small black notebook that belonged to trapper George Ducommun, a Swiss immigrant, who arrived at the lake about 1931. In the winter of 1938, he drowned while trying to cross the ice in the Thorofare with a full backpack.

Written in French, the tiny black book contained medicinal remedies for the ailments of the adventurer and his horse. For example, the remedy for cracks in hooves and pasterns were alleviated with a mixture of copper sulfate, zinc sulfate and vinegar which was dissolved in one deciliter of water and washed in the cracks two times a day. We may never know how and why this book got into George Duncommon's hands, but it represents a fascinating artifact in Priest Lake history.

Photos Record the Past

That old adage "A picture is worth a thousand words" might refer to the packet of photographs sent to the museum recently by Jim Parsons Jr. of Sandpoint. Parsons was mounting a public relations campaign for Priest Lake during the late 1950s and early 1960s. His professional images depict campers at Indian Creek, boating, water skiing, even parasailing in that era. There are pictures of the then-new marina at Hill's and a picnic at Elkin's Resort and even images of

silent film star Nell Shipman taken by Parson's grandfather, Jesse Parsons, editor of the *Priest River Times* in the 1920s. They are important additions to our collection.

Old Still Donated

Renowned artist Harold Balazs presented the museum with a small still he discovered during his many years roaming the Priest Lake area. The copper vessel is about 11 inches tall and 17 inches wide and was most likely used for making brandy. A plate attached reads, "The Federal law required that this still is to be registered at the U.S. Revenue collector your district before using same."

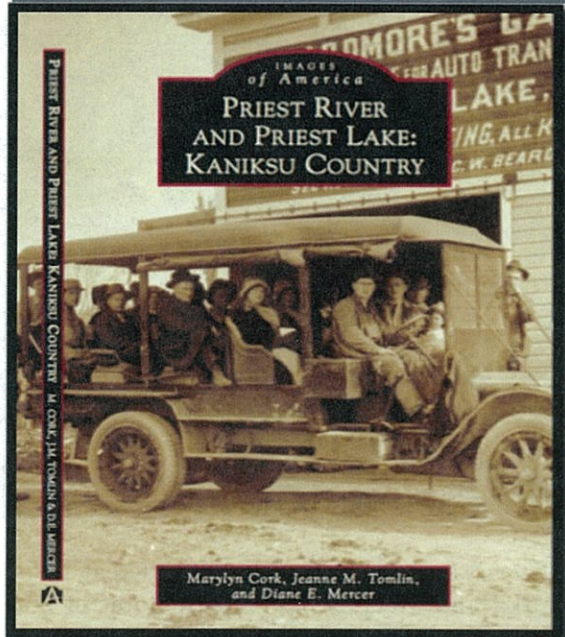


Can you help?

Do you have items specifically related to the cultural, natural or historical record of Priest Lake? They could prove invaluable to illuminating our rich past. "Our Priest Lake Museum was built from many wonderful gifts", said Acquisitions Chairperson Pam Martin. "These photos and objects create displays that help us as individuals know our past, who we were and how we lived. Making rare things available to many allows for a larger picture, a time to reflect, a chance to ask who and why." If you can help, contact Pam at info@entreegallery.com or Tom Weitz at weitzinhel@msn.com.

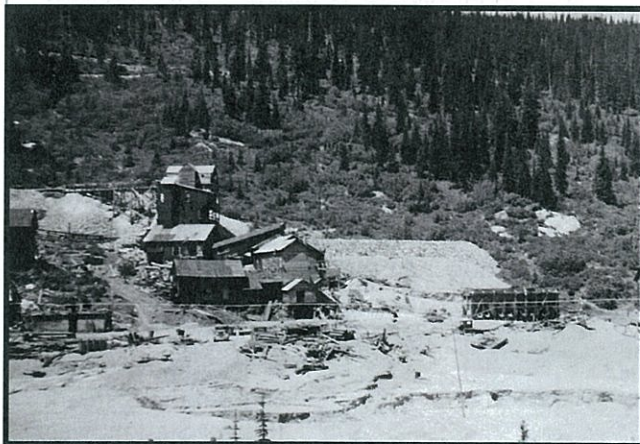
By Jeanne Tomlin

Museum News



IMAGES OF AMERICA BOOK FEATURES PRIEST LAKE

Over 80 historical photos of Priest Lake will be featured in a new 'Images of America' series by Arcadia Publishing. The book, 'Kaniksu Country – Priest River and Priest Lake', was developed as a fundraiser for the Priest Lake Museum and the Priest River Museum and Timber Education Center and is a collaboration of Diane Mercer and Marylyn Cork, Priest River, and Jeanne Tomlin, Spokane and Coolin. It will be available at local stores this summer and priced about \$20. Below are examples from the book.



Albert Kockmann was attracted to the Priest Lake area in 1890 by the promise of a rich ore strike. Following a tip, he located the mine on a desolate mountain between Upper Priest Lake and Bonners Ferry. He established the Continental Mine, the area's most successful mining operation. By 1922 the township of Kockmann supported a population of 350 people. The mine closed in 1937 when metal prices fell.



This aerial view of the Outlet before the Outlet Dam clearly shows the confluence of Priest Lake and the Priest River. At upper right is a boom of logs contained until the spring release during the log drives took them down river. Also shown are a few early cabins and a small mill. The Northern Lights Cooperative built a dam across the river in 1957.

Bismark Flag Pole Finds New Home

Have you noticed the new flagpole at the museum's nature garden? The flagpole is another piece of Priest Lake history that is now being preserved. In 1909 the Forest Service constructed a summer guard station at the north end of Bismark Meadows, located west of Nordman. The agency developed the meadow, pasturing pack mules and raising hay to feed stock during the summer and fall months. In 1919 a two-story log barn was built at the edge of the meadow. From this time until 1926 the station was used quite extensively during the summer season as a pack base, Field Assistant headquarters, and fire guard quarters. The station served as headquarters for the Bismark Ranger District from 1928 until 1964 when it was replaced by the new Priest Lake Ranger Station. Today all that remains at the Bismark Ranger Station location are the barn, pump house, metal gashouse and a few foundations. The site is a pleasant short walk beyond a gate on the old access road.



A few years ago, the flagpole was spotted at Bismark leaning against some trees. Some of the museum's board members thought the flagpole could be better protected and viewed by the public if it was relocated to the museum. The Forest Service was contacted and with their approval, local crews from Northern Lights, Inc. moved the flagpole to the museum's nature garden. The flagpole was repainted and a group of volunteers, lead by Steve Booth, prepared a concrete foundation and set the flagpole in its new location. At the August 2011 board

meeting, a U.S. flag in the museum's collection, reported to be from the Bismark Ranger Station, was the first flag to be raised on the pole at its new location.

By Tom Weitz

Arley Sue Hagman, Michelle Barnes, Don Widman, Debbie Butler, Bob Faulkner, Michael Kain, Pam Martin, Tom Weitz, Mary Toutonghi, Lois Hill, Carlos Landa, and Kay Coykendall.



Priest Lake Museum
Association
P.O. Box 44
Coolin, Idaho 83821
www.plmuseum.org

Priest Lake Museum is a volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our financial support comes from memberships, monetary/in-kind donations and the sale of Priest Lake-related books, DVDs and other museum-related items. There is no paid staff. The museum is maintained and operated by a dedicated corps of volunteers.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

YES, I'd like to become a member (or renew an existing membership)!

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------|
| _____ Gold Club | \$500 or more | _____ Silver Club | \$400 - \$499 |
| _____ Baritoe Island | \$ 300 - \$399 | _____ Kalispell Island | \$200 - \$299 |
| _____ Eight Mile Island | \$100 - \$199 | _____ Four Mile Island | \$ 50 - \$ 99 |
| _____ Twin Islands | \$25 - \$ 49 | _____ Papoose Island | under \$25 |

YES, I'd like to make an additional donation of \$_____

This gift is: In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Please acknowledge this gift to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

YES, I'd like to become a (new) volunteer!

I'd be interested in:

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ Hosting | _____ Nature Garden & Facilities |
| _____ Display | _____ Newsletter |
| _____ Other | |

Museum Hours

The Priest Lake Museum is open from Memorial Day weekend through the end of September. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday from mid-June through Labor Day. In early June and late September we are open weekends only from 10 to 4. The museum is closed Mondays except holidays.

Volunteer Opportunities

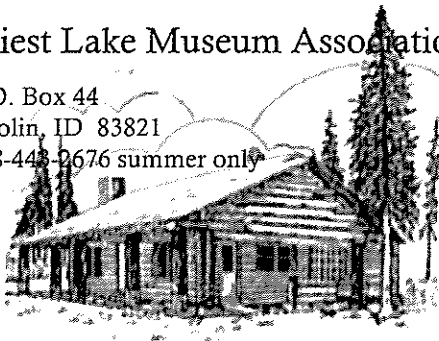
Host volunteers are needed for the 2012 season. If you are interested in hosting for a few hours at the museum, please complete the form in this newsletter, or contact the Volunteer Host Coordinator at 208-443-0210 or 509-993-4445. Volunteers are also needed to transcribe oral history recordings, help with our collection management system, and assist with the nature garden.

2012 Board Members

Linda Anderson
Michelle Barnes
JoAnn Becker
Steve Booth
Kay Coykendall
Bob Faulkner
Arley Sue Hagman
Lois Hill
Tom Holman
Michael Kain
Carlos Landa
Pam Martin
Jeanne Tomlin
Mary Toutonghi
Tom Weitz
Don Widman
Elaine Widman
Debbie Butler,
USFS Liason

Priest Lake Museum Association

P.O. Box 44
Coolin, ID 83821
208-443-2676 summer only



Check out the Priest Lake Museum website at www.plmuseum.org