

# Priest Lake Museum

Spring 2018 Newsletter



A bateau at the mill at the Outlet.

## LOGGING ON EXHIBIT

*This summer the Priest Lake Museum opens a new exhibit on logging at Priest Lake. It traces changes from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through World War II. The exhibit includes photographs, artifacts, videos, and a recreated lumberjack bunkhouse.*

Most lumberjacks working at Priest Lake in the 1910s and 1920s migrated from the Great Lakes timber industry. Scandinavians and French-Canadians made up much of the crews. Some men labored a few days while others worked all winter in the same camp and stayed to drive the logs down the Priest River in the spring. On average, they earned \$40 dollars a month after board. The men, mostly single, moved from camp to camp carrying their bedding on their backs along with their own axe head.

Six days a week men pulled the cross-cut saws, skidded the logs along the frozen ground, and decked timber in the snow and mud. After nightfall, lumberjacks returned to the cold bunkhouse. They hung their wet

socks, pants, coats, and underwear on wires stretched across the stoves. Most wore woolen two-piece underwear winter and summer. On Sundays, men built fires under washtubs and boiled their clothes to get them cleaner. In 1914, lumberjack Bill Whetsler worked 150 days “without ever having taken a bath. I just changed clothes once a week.”

Robert Marshall, a forester working at the Priest River Experiment Station, decided in 1926 to study the lumberjack lifestyle to dispel romantic myths. He observed the men’s language and eating habits at camps

Continued on

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## Dear Museum Friends,

During the summer of 2017, we hosted 3,222 visitors at the museum. We give THANKS to the almost 50 volunteer hosts who served daily to make it possible for our museum to be open and to serve so many people! Without the help of these many volunteers the museum would not be open as many days as it is. If you have an interest in helping as a host at the museum please contact either our volunteer coordinator, Elaine Widman at [dwidman@moosebytes.net](mailto:dwidman@moosebytes.net), or the museum. Hosting is a great way to learn about the history of the lake, meet interesting people, and listen to many visitors tell about their experiences at the lake. We welcome your participation!

The museum continued to offer our Heritage Series programs with four presentations at various venues around the lake. Many thanks go to Kris Runberg Smith, Tom Weitz, and Anna Armstrong of the Kalispel Tribe for presenting these most informative and interesting events in the summer of 2017 attended by over 150 people. The sales of *Wild Place: A*

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

*History of Priest Lake, Idaho* continued at a brisk pace and has even been picked up for retail sales in some Costco stores. It just went into its third printing. The museum now also has hardbound copies of this book available. This detailed and informative history of the area makes a great coffee table book for your lake home! The museum also hosted in coordination with a number of other museums and federal/state agencies a recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Sundance Fire. Tom Weitz did a great job putting together a special program that had over 200 people attend.

This coming summer of 2018 is shaping up to be another fantastic season for us:

*The museum has purchased a third area interpretive sign which will be installed lakeside in front of Elkins Resort. This sign will give historical information of the Reeder Bay area. A huge thanks goes to Priest Lake People Helping People for helping us fund this project.*

*We will once again be hosting the Priest Lake Heritage Series of four programs at locations around the lake. Kris Runberg Smith will present several programs on the history of logging in the area. Teri Hill will offer a program on the history of Hills Resort and Bob Davis will be giving a*

*program on the history of Elkins Resort.*

*Again this summer, Kris Runberg Smith will continue to facilitate the Priest Lake StoryCorps Program. Family members and friends will be given the opportunity to share their personal stories about Priest Lake that will be preserved for future generations.*

*For a number of years, Jaz Malone (aka The Hat Lady) has put together a calendar that sells at local stores. Jaz has chosen to donate the proceeds from this year's calendar sales to the Priest Lake Museum. This is a substantial donation and we thank Jaz for selecting the museum to be the recipient. Please be sure to purchase a calendar!*

I would like to personally thank each of our board members as well as the many volunteers for all they do to make the Priest Lake Museum a very outstanding organization. Finally, I would like to thank each of you who are receiving this newsletter for your continued support. Your dedication of financial resources and time are vital to our success.

Looking forward to this summer,

Mike Rydbom  
President

# Heritage Series 2018

*Check out the new exhibit at the Priest Lake Museum on logging.*



**July 11 Coolin Community Hall @ 7:00**

**The First Loggers:  
Early Logging at Priest Lake**  
presented by Kris Runberg Smith



*Look for the interpretive signs along the beach trail in front of the Museum.*

**July 18 Priest Lake Library @ 7:00**

**The History of  
Hill's Resort**  
presented by Teri Hill

*Sign up to interview your favorite Priest Lake person for StoryCorps.*



**July 25 Coolin Community Hall @ 7:00**

**Get Lit:  
Diamond Match at Priest Lake**  
presented by Kris Runberg Smith



*Stop by Elkins Resort to see the newest museum interpretative sign about Reeder Bay.*

**August 1 Priest Lake Library @ 7:00**

**The History of  
Elkins Resort**  
presented by Bob Davis

**Bring friends and family for a special evening ...**

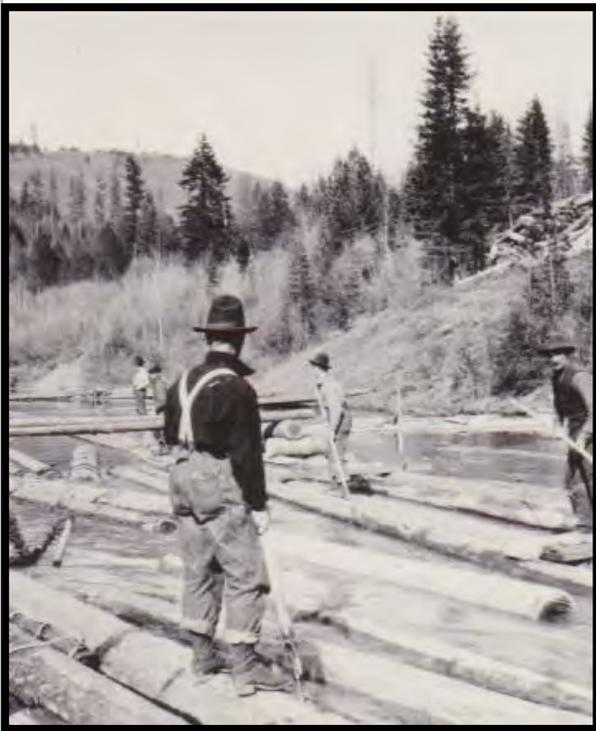
**A great way to discover more about the lake!**

*Continued from page 1*

around Priest Lake. Marshall documented the most popular topics of conversation. He found loggers' laced about a quarter of their talk with words "unmentionable at church sociables" and were of "sexual import and ... excretory in nature."

Real improvements for lumberjacks began during World War I. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), known as Wobblies, unionized the men. Around Priest Lake, they demanded an eight-hour day and a minimum wage of \$60 dollars a month with free board. They pushed for wholesome food, sanitary sleeping quarters with not more than 12 men per bunkhouse, free hospital service, and pay twice a month. Logging camp owners forcefully rejected the demands but those familiar with conditions agreed that the arcane system needed modernizing. Priest Lake ranger Hank Peterson conceded, "Some [lumberjacks] were radicals but most were only trying to better their working conditions."

The Wobblies helped reform conditions in Priest Lake camps but they also hastened the expansion of the "gyppo." The union claimed, "The gyppo 'gyps' his fellow workers and finally himself, out of



*Bob Marshall's research on Priest Lake lumberjacks appeared in the journal Social Forces in 1929. It included this table of conversation topics.*

TABLE II

SUBJECT UNDER DISCUSSION	PER CENT OF TIME
Pornographic stories, experiences, and theories.....	23
Personal adventures in which narrator is hero.....	11
Outrages of capitalism.....	8
Prohibition, bootlegging, and jags.....	6
Logging technique and lore.....	5
Acriminius remarks about bosses and employers.....	5
Wild life, excluding the human.....	5
Agricultural methods and failures.....	4
Tunney-Dempsey and Dempsey-Sharkey battles.....	3
Scientific dissertations.....	3
Personal adventures in which narrator is not hero.....	2
Employment and unemployment prospects.....	2
Lindberg and aeronautics.....	2
Forest fires.....	2
Religious discussions, more profane than spiritual.....	2
Automobiles, particularly Fords.....	2
Reform economic schemes to supersede capitalism.....	1
Sarcastic evaluations of the late war to end war.....	1
The meteorological outlook.....	1
Sears Roebuck vs. Montgomery Ward.....	1
The good old days of the golden past.....	1
Food and the culinary art.....	1
Sickness and quacks.....	1
President Coolidge, with mordant comments on pseudo-cowboys.....	1
Mr. Hoover and Mr. Smith.....	1
The Forest Service.....	1
The Sacco-Vanzetti case.....	1
A local murder.....	1
Miscellaneous.....	3
Total.....	100

the fruits of all our organized victories in the class war." Ike Elkins defined the term for loggers as meaning, "How much you pay him to do the work and that's the fee taken by contract." Timber companies in the Inland Northwest increasingly contracted local men to handle some of the logging jobs in the woods. This piece-work system functioned well at Priest Lake and encouraged more gyppos.

*The title for this photograph from a 1920 scrapbook reads "Cork boots and stag pants are the wearing apparel for river drivers."*

# StoryCorps

Kyle Jones interviewed his grandfather Hank Jones last summer for Priest Lake StoryCorps. Hank first came to the lake in 1954 and worked with the Priest Lake Timber Protective Association. He recalled courting Charlotte Roberts, Leonard Paul's granddaughter, and their honeymoon at the very rustic Trapper Creek Cabin. He shared memories of the dances they sponsored above the Coolin store for the Blister Rust boys. Hank spent his career with the National Park Service and returned to the lake when he retired. He reflected to Kyle, "Priest Lake has got a charisma about it, I can't explain. Its got something that that it seems like no other place has got. We lived in Grand Tetons, we lived in Rocky Mountain National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, and Lake Powell, and Tonto National Monument but none of them compare to Priest Lake."

Max Kendall interviewed his grandfather Ron Walker, a fierce advocate of the Outlet. Ron shared his fishing adventures dating back to when he could rent a cabin for the whole season at Elkins for \$500. He explained to Max the decisions that transformed fishing at the lake.

Joanne Miller interviewed childhood friends, siblings Carolyn Pilcher and Dave Nydell. Their fathers, who were friends, brought them to the lake in the 1940s. Miller's family found a place at

Kalispell Bay and the Nydells across the lake north of Cape Horn. They remembered first staying at A.T. Johnson's cabin with a wrap-around sleeping porch. They were shocked when Johnson got up at night to shoot rats on the sleeping porch. When the friends got older, their fathers bought them matching Crestliner boats so they could cross the lake on their own. The families became early members of the Priest Lake Community Church and remembered services at the Church in the Woods.

The museum appreciates all those who shared their stories with us last summer. We invite you to capture your stories and memories of Priest Lake for posterity this summer. Choose a friend, neighbor, or loved one to interview about lake experiences. The museum facilitator takes care of the technical stuff and makes a CD to take home. We will preserve your interview and also send it to the StoryCorps collection at the Library of Congress.

Sign up at the museum ([priestlakemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:priestlakemuseum@gmail.com) or 443-2676) for a forty-minute recording session Thursday, Friday, or Saturday July 1-August 4. We will send you sample questions but encourage you to create your own. You can find all the interviews with photographs at <https://archive.storycorps.org/organizations/priest-lake-museum/>

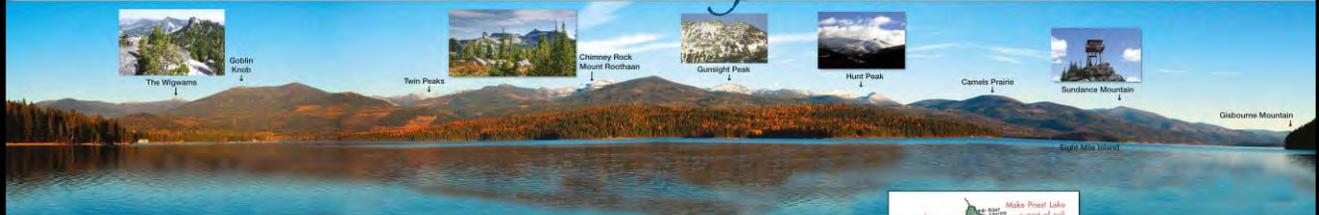
*Max Kendall and Ron Walker*

*Carolyn Nydell Pilcher, Dave Nydell, and Joanne Doyl Miller*

*Kyle Jones and Hank Jones*



# Reeder Bay Views



The rugged Selkirk Mountains frame the east side of Priest Lake and reveal the area's origins. The lake fills a large basin dug out by glaciers that scoured the valley floor about 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. Alpine glaciers, formed on the higher mountains, carved out jagged peaks, like Chimney Rock and the Lions Head. The Selkirk mountain range extends into Canada and was named for Englishman Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, who supported early settlement in the region.

## 1910s Homesteading at Priest Lake

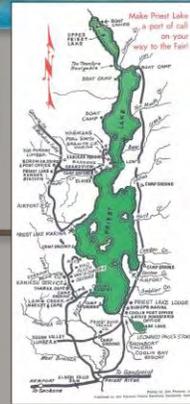


Bert Winslow and his family homesteaded at the mouth of Reeder Creek in 1919. He built a cabin and persevered for three years to grow up. The family attempted to establish a fishing camp using the neighboring Forest Service land.



Mackinaws were introduced to the lake in 1925 but ballooned in size after kokanee were added in 1942. In the 1950s, resorts like Elkins and Grandview (shown here) welcomed "a rush to the new Mother Lode of angling" with the chance of catching macks weighing more than fifty pounds.

## 1950s "A Cult with Many Vacationists"



Ike Elkins and his family

After World War II, a paved Highway 57, electricity, and improved speedboats enticed more families to vacation at Priest Lake. New resorts sprung up, especially north of Reeder Bay to accommodate what the Spokesman-Review called Priest Lake's "cult of many vacationists." Ike Elkins and his son Al renovated the 1932 dining room and added a modern cocktail lounge with a dance floor in 1958. Ike mused, "I didn't figure on the thing turning out how commercial like it is." The Elkins family sold the resort in 1983 to Bob and Sharon Davis who continued the traditions.

If you want to know more, check out the Priest Lake Museum.



## 1900s Forest Service on Reeder Bay



The Forest Service built a guard station on Reeder Bay during the 1910s to watch for forest fires. During the 1930s, with the help of young men from the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Forest Service developed Reeder Bay Campground, sending two summers clearing sites, laying waterlines, building fireplaces and tables, and installing sanitary outhouses.

## 1930s Establishing Elkins



In 1930 logger Ike Elkins lent Dorothy Winslow and friends money to expand the fishing resort on her family's homestead. They gave up after a season, so Ike ended up with the homestead, five cabins, a few boats, and a Forest Service resort special permit. He recalled, "I liked to fish so I figured it would be an investment like that." Ike transformed the fishing camp into a resort by building cedar cabins outfitted with wood-burning stoves and iceboxes.

This 1962 map led to the expanding resorts on Reeder Bay and along the Narrows.

This summer the museum will unveil its third outdoor interpretive panel. It highlights the mountain peaks across from Reeder Bay and provides history of the area. It will be located just north of the boat ramp at Elkins Resort. The museum board appreciates a grant from People Helping People along with the assistance of the Forest Service and Elkins to make this possible. A special thanks to Tom Holman who captured the lovely fall panorama.



## 2018 Calendar Helps Museum

Jaz Malone, aka, "The Hat Lady" has produced a calendar for many years and has donated the proceeds from the sale of that calendar to many non-profit organizations in the Priest Lake area. This year Jaz has chosen the Priest Lake Museum to receive that donation!

The museum would like to thank Jaz for this very gracious contribution!

Please be sure to purchase one of these calendars at a local store in the Priest Lake area this year!

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

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 to 4 daily, Tuesday through Sunday from mid-June through Labor Day, and 10 to 4 on weekends in early June, and in September after Labor Day. The museum is closed Mondays, except holidays.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Are you interested in an opportunity to know more about our Priest Lake history and at the same time serve our wonderful community? If so, our cadre of Priest Lake Museum hosts invites you to join us this summer. Whether your schedule will allow you to volunteer as a host at the museum once or several times during the summer, we would welcome your participation. To tweak the old adage "It takes a village to raise a child", we say "It takes a village to nurture a dynamic museum"- and dynamic it is! So, please join us this summer. I can be reached at 509/993-3749 and will be happy to answer your questions about hosting and getting involved.

*Elaine Widman*

## 2018 Board Members

Barb Conboy  
 Kay Coykendall  
 Mary Driscoll  
 Patty Engle  
 Brent Guyer  
 Arley Sue Hagman  
 Tom Holman  
 Michael Kain  
 Carlos Landa  
 Pam Martin  
 Mike Rydbom  
 Tom Weitz  
 Don Widman  
 Elaine Widman  
 Wes Yasny  
 Debbie Butler,  
 USFS Liaison

### Priest Lake Museum Association

P.O. Box 44  
 Coolin, ID 83821



*Get your hardback copy of Wild Place: The History of the Priest Lake at the museum.*