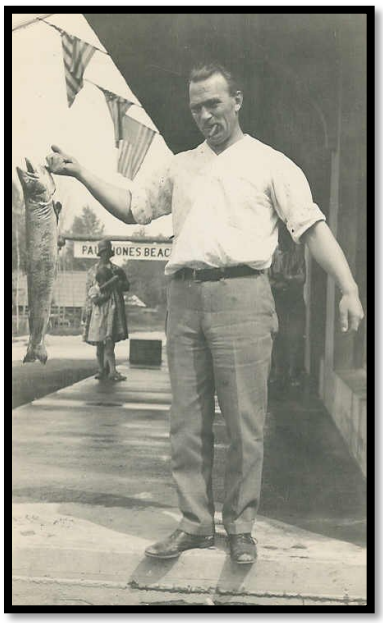
Priest Lake Museum

Spring 2026 Newsletter





LAKE LEGACIES

2026 History Heritage Speakers Series

John Roskelley and Chris Kopcznski, Chimney Rock, 1966
Leonard Paul on the porch of his new store, ca 1928

Our most compelling series yet celebrates true legends of Priest Lake! We kick it off on July 9 with world-renowned climbers **John Roskelley** and **Chris Kopczynski** as they recount their early adventures on Chimney Rock and other sites on the Selkirk Crest. Come discover why John claims, "Our climb of the east face of Idaho's Chimney Rock is why I'm alive today."

They met as high schoolers through the Spokane Mountaineers and became lifelong friends. Over the years of scaling the tallest and most difficult mountains, they have received international accolades for their many contributions to modern alpinism. Both are authors and engaging speakers. The museum is honored that they are sharing their Priest Lake stories.

History Heritage Series Highlights

July 9 – Early Climbs and Adventures Along the Selkirk Crest with John Roskelley and Chris Kopczynski, Legendary Mountaineers

July 16– Leonard Paul's Legacy with Kris Runberg Smith

July 23 - The Early Years of the Forest Service at Priest Lake with Gary Weber

July 30 – Goin' to the Lake with Mike Wagoner

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Hello Again Friends

Dear Members, Supporters, and Friends,

Over the past few years, I've noticed Priest Lake going through some remarkable changes. It has become "famous," with all north Idaho being recognized as a great place to visit or relocate. The changes are startling. The side effects are also noticeable.

Many of my friends, especially those who weren't fortunate enough to buy their own homes, have had to move out of the area as more of the affordable housing has been bought up as second homes or vacation rentals. Our elementary school's population isn't growing because young families can't afford to live here. Resorts and restaurants are having to build housing for their employees. Lack of housing opportunities means we are watching the next generation disappear.

Living in an area where we don't look to government to solve our problems means that *We the People* need to provide and support many services that aren't funded by the State. The schools, libraries, fire departments, EMT services, civic organizations, etc. all depend on volunteers to perform basic community services. Without new, younger people coming into our community we are reaching a crisis point. Every organization in the Priest Lake area is facing a shortage of volunteers.

I feel very fortunate that the museum has been able to stay open six days a week during the summer months, but our volunteer coordinator is finding it harder than ever to reach that goal. We also need help behind the scenes doing archival work, keeping the grounds up, and working on special projects like upgrading exhibits, etc. The Bismark Barn project is now at a point where we need more people power to start rebuilding, and that's just the museum's bit in this changing lake scenario.

I ask each and every one of you reading this letter to consider lending additional help to the community. A few hours here and there will make a huge difference.

See you at the lake,

Carlos



The Job Jar

Get Involved at the Museum this Summer!

+ Help keep our collections and photographs organized

+ Listen to Priest Lake stories as you support StoryCorps and our oral history programs

+ Edit our oral histories. We need folks who can correct the names of people and places at the lake

+ Transcribe a 1900-1901 diary by a young man who explored the lake for two summers. It's faded in places and needs curious eyes to puzzle out some sentences

+ Keep the museum's surroundings looking good and maybe even assist with the Nature Garden

+ Support outreach like social media, the website, or this newsletter

+ Join the crew working on restoring the historic Bismark barn

+ Host at the museum an afternoon or two, talking with visitors about the lake.

Interested? Email us and let us know what you would find engaging!

Priestlakemuseum@gmail.com

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

Listen to Priest Lake StoryCorps interviews!

https://archive.storycorps.org/user/priest-lake-museum/

Heritage Series Schedule

Thursday July 9

Talk – Priest Lake Elementary School @ 7:00 pm

Early Climbs and Adventures Along the Selkirk Crest

John Roskelley and Chris Kopczynski, Legendary Mountaineers

Thursday July 16

Talk – The Inn at Priest Lake (Coolin) @ 7:00 pm

Leonard Paul's Legacy

After the talk, visit a special Leonard Paul Store exhibit at the Civic Center and enjoy an insider tour of the store

Kris Runberg Smith, Priest Lake Museum Historian

Thursday July 23

Talk - The Inn at Priest Lake (Coolin) @ 7:00 pm

The Early Years of the Forest Service at Priest Lake

Gary Weber, Retired USFS District Fire Management Officer

Thursday July 30

Talk – Community Church (Kalispell Bay) @ 7:00 pm

Goin' to the Lake

Mike Wagoner, Musician and Author

Out of the Smoke Field Trips

Saturday July 11

Meet at Nordman to carpool to the trail @ 9:00

Hughes Ridge Lookout

A one-hour drive and a 1-1/2 -hour moderate round-trip hike

Saturday August 1

Come to the Priest Lake Museum @ 11:00

How to Pack a Mule!

Bring the kids to meet Jolene and learn how fire fighters pack mules with everything they needed

Tuesdays **Aug. 11** **Sept. 15** **Oct. 6**

Just south of Nordman, look for the sign @ 10:00

Bismark Mule Barn Restoration Progess Tour

A short mile hike to the former Bismark Ranger Station and Mule Barn

Call Kristen to RSVP and get directions to the Barn (971-563-6681)

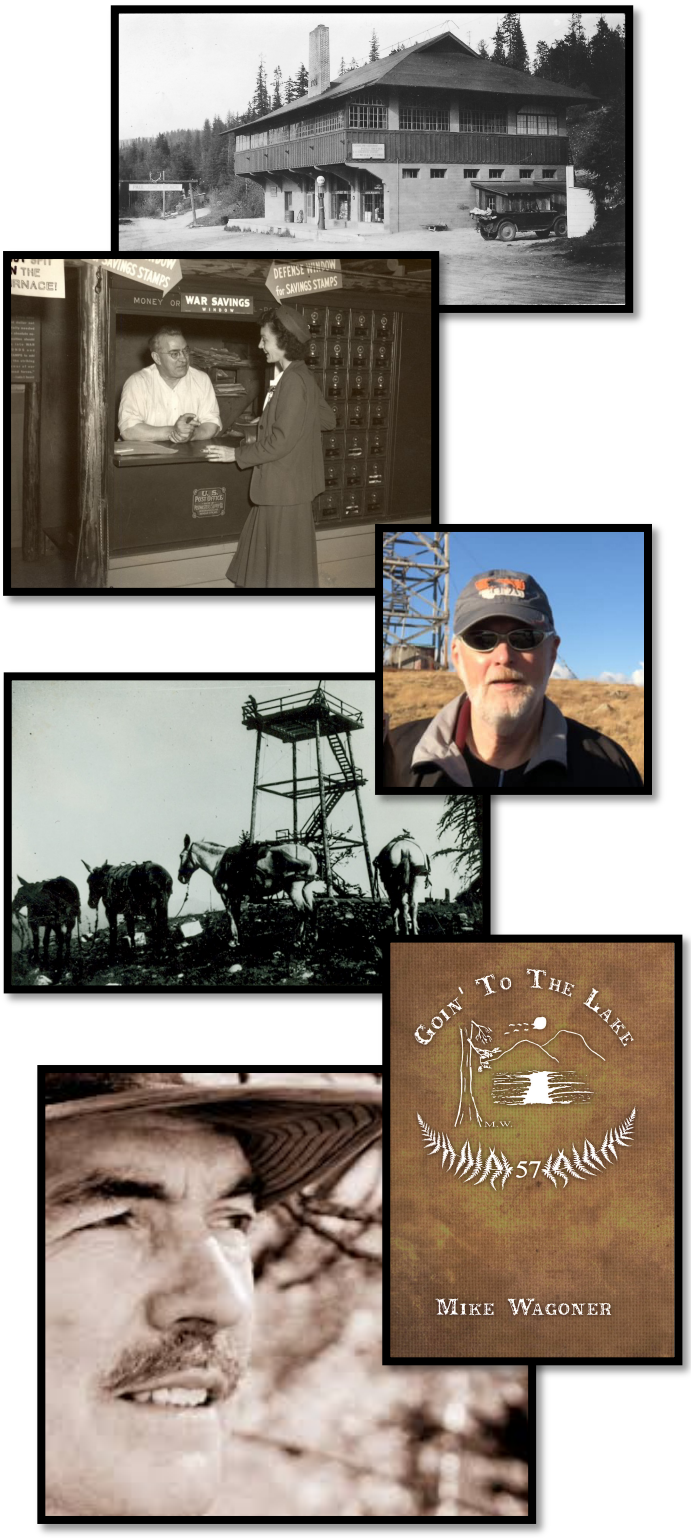
2026 Heritage Series

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The museum celebrates the many legacies of **Leonard Paul** on **July 16**, marking the 100th anniversary of his Coolin store, with PLM historian Kris Runberg Smith. Paul opened his first log cabin store in 1906 but outgrew it by 1926 when he built the present store. He witnessed generations of changes at Priest Lake, beginning with his earliest adventures in 1904. He also instigated and championed many of the lake's changes! After the talk, you can visit a special pop-up exhibit at the Civic Center and then enjoy an insider's store tour.

As part of our featured exhibit, ***Out of the Smoke: Fighting Fire at Priest Lake for Over 100 Years,*** we are honored to welcome retired USFS veteran Gary Weber on **July 23** presenting **The Early Years of the Forest Service at Priest Lake.** Gary offers a rare perspective on the legacy of the early Forest Service. Through historic photographs he collected, he will lead us through the challenges and triumphs of managing the developing wilderness of Priest Lake. Gary draws from his Priest Lake knowledge that began in the elite ranks of the Kaniksu Hotshots, USFS fire management and his leadership with the Idaho Department of Lands. His current role is champion for the Forest Fire Lookout Association.

Rounding out our series is **Mike Wagoner**—a man whose music, alongside the Trapper Creek musicians, has served as the definitive soundtrack of Priest Lake for decades. On **July 30**, Mike will share his personal lake journey through his new memoir, ***Goin' to the Lake***. Drawing from a half-century of performing and living in the region, Mike captures the pull of the lake. "I've visited and lived elsewhere... but I could never completely leave Priest Lake both physically or emotionally."



Bismark Mule Barn

The Bismark Barn team is excited to work again this summer on the mule barn project. Our goal is to remove and replace the rotted side logs and posts, frame the hayloft and roof and put on a new roof. If time, we hope to replace the floors, begin to re-install the artifacts (barn doors, saddle racks, farrier's table, etc.) and complete the finish work. We plan to begin our work as soon as the Wildlife Biologists give us the "bear all-clear."

Before and after pictures for last summer's work!





Come See and Hear about the Barn Restoration Progress

Tuesday, August 11, 10:00 am
Tuesday, September 15, 10:00 am
Tuesday, October 6, 10:00 am

Call Kristen to RSVP and get directions to the Barn (971-563-6681).

Out of the Smoke Exhibit

Step into the heat of history with our featured exhibit, **"Out of the Smoke: Fighting Fires at Priest Lake for Over 100 Years."** Trace the legacy of the 1926 Luby Bay fire through the inferno of the 1967 Sundance fire. We explore innovations from these events and how they transformed firefighting management not just at the lake but nationally. You can compare today's firefighting gear with that of the 1920s, contrast lookouts over time, and consider the causes and outcomes of fires at Priest Lake. And of course, Smoky Bear is featured!

"Out of the Smoke" Programs

July 11 – Hughes Ridge Lookout Hike
Meet at Nordman at 9:00 to carpool to the trail.

July 23 -The Early Years of the Forest Service at Priest Lake talk
Gary Weber, Retired USFS District Fire Management Officer

August 1 – How to Pack a Mule!
At 11:00, Jolene returns to the museum for a mule packing demonstration

Volunteer Call to Action

Fern
by Robert Macfarlane

Fern's first form is furled,
Each frond fast as a fiddle-head.
Reach, roll and unfold follows.
Fern flares.
Now fern is fully fanned.



Our amazing host coordinator Shelly Tucker speaking at the annual Host thank-you event!



View from the host's "office."

These words were crafted by Robert Macfarlane in the beautiful book titled *The Lost Words.* His book and the "spells" within were inspired because some nature-based words were being removed from the Oxford Junior Dictionary. He and the book's illustrator, Jackie Morris, were concerned about children losing their connection to the natural world. Priest Lake is the most magical place to re-connect.

As springtime unfurls at the lake, we are busy planning for the upcoming season. This year, I'd like to focus my recruiting efforts on luring a new generation of volunteers to help with our amazing little museum.

If each of our seasoned volunteer hosts would recruit even a single person to help out, we'd be set for the season. I think hosting at the museum might even be a fun family adventure. I'll be offering a couple "orientation/informational" open-house type events again this year in early June. Hosting at the museum is extremely relaxed and enjoyable. Most of the questions that guests ask are about hiking trails, great places to go for a meal and where the public beaches are located. It's a wonderful time to connect with old friends or new visitors and to find out about their "lake story… everyone has one!

We'll offer full day or half day host shifts again this year, and we'll be using the same SignUp Genius program that we ended the season with last year. I'll have the season's hosting slots available for sign-up by mid-May. If hosting doesn't interest you, please consider other ways to volunteer at the museum. Let's teach the next generation by example how important it is to stay connected by our shared love for Priest Lake and how crucial it is to preserve the physical forest as well as the history it holds.

Any questions about hosting can be submitted to me via our host email: PLMhosts@gmail.com

Shelly Tucker
Host Coordinator

PRIEST LAKE MUSEUM

PO Box 44 | Coolin, Idaho 83821

The Priest Lake Museum is a volunteer 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Our financial support comes from memberships, monetary/in-kind donations, and sales of Priest Lake related items. The museum is maintained and operated by a dedicated corps of volunteers.

Go to our website, priestlakemuseum.org, to learn more about us: about how to volunteer, to donate, or to renew your membership online! Or fill in this form and send it to us!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City:_____State_____Zip:_____

Email:_____

Yes, sign me up as a member or renew my membership!

____ Papoose Island under $25 ____ Twin Islands $50 _____ Four Mile $100

____ Eight Mile Island $200 _____ Kalispell Island $300 ____ Bartoo Island above $400!

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

In Memory of _____ In Honor of _____

Yes, I'd like to donate to the Bismark Barn!
$_____



You can pay your membership or make a donation online!

Front Page History

Local historian Steve Booth researched the 1916 murder of Lamb Creek homesteader Frank Greene and published his findings in 2002. The tale involves poorly drawn homestead boundaries, an adopted child, the former officer of the peace, and three sensational trials. Since Steve graciously allowed the museum to reprint his booklet, you can find out what really happened to Frank Greene.

Buy a copy at the museum or at the Priest Lake Library. Who got away with murder?



Museum Days & Hours

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Memorial Day Weekend	**Saturday-Monday**
May 30-June 28	**Saturday & Sunday Only**
July 3 – September 7	**Tuesday-Sunday & Labor Day**
Sept. 12-27	**Saturday & Sunday Only**

Be a Museum Host!

It's that time of the year again and we're getting close to opening weekend. I know summers get really busy with boating, fishing, hiking, golfing, relaxing, and guests but hosting is actually really fun! Volunteers can opt for a full day (6 hours) or a half-day (3 hour) shift. The museum opens at 10:00 a.m. and closes at 4:00 p.m. Contact Shelly Tucker @ PLMhosts@gmail.com

Shelly Tucker

2026 Board Members

Kelly Bacon-Hord
Michelle Barnes
Paul Bastine
Elizabeth & Nevin Bryant
Mike Coykendall
Patty Engle
Jim Fisher
Brent Guyer
Scott Hill
Carlos Landa
Shelly Tucker
Kristen Winn
Debbie Butler, USFS Liaison



Check in with our Facebook posts and website for Priest Lake history and museum schedule updates!
www.priestlakemuseum.org