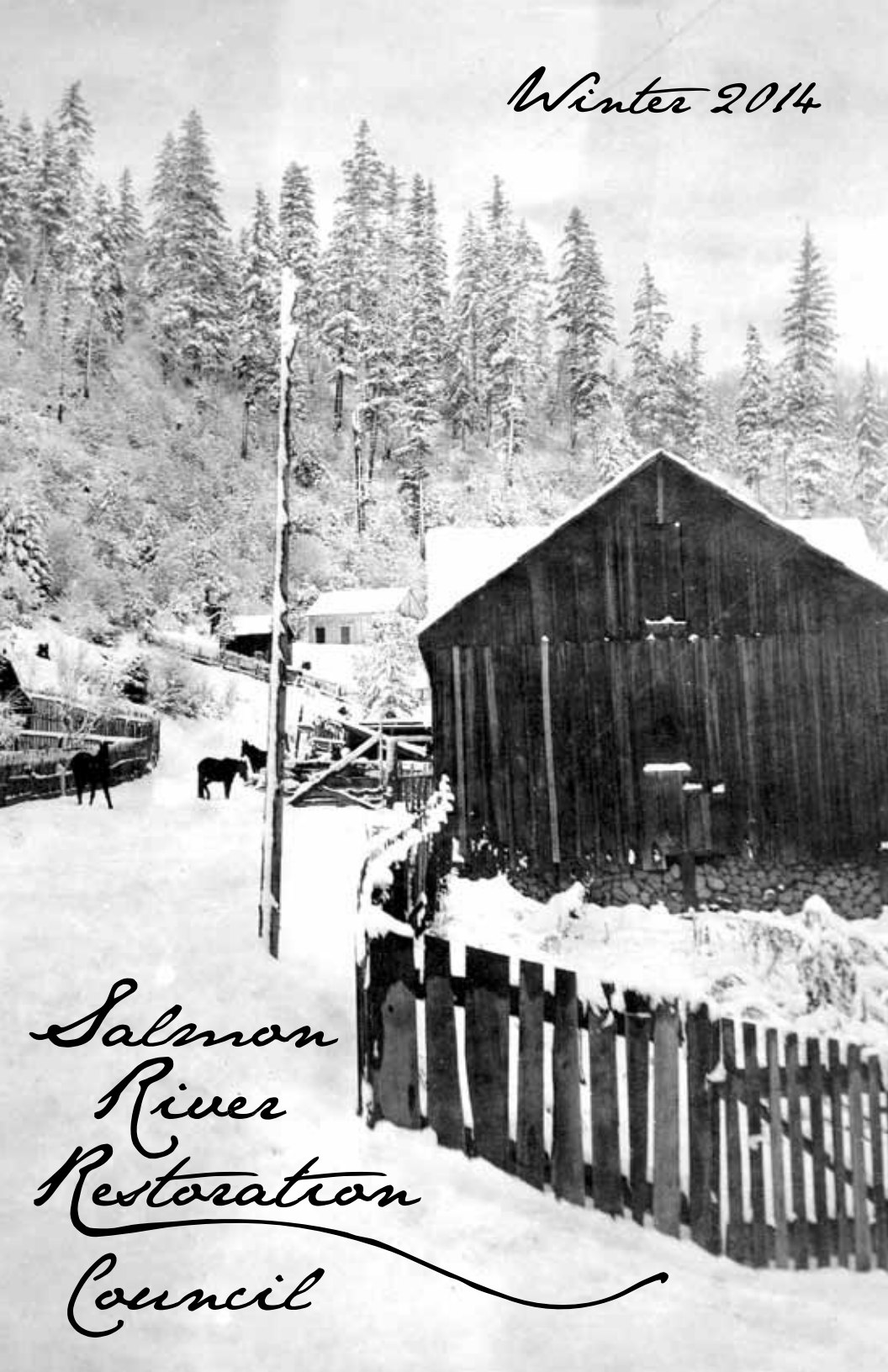
Winter 2014



Salmon River Restoration Council

the History Edition

Welcome to the Salmon River Restoration Council newsletter. In this issue we're taking a step back in time to explore some aspects of the history of the Salmon River watershed.

Unless otherwise noted photos in the newsletter are courtesy of the Siskiyou County Historical Society

Klamath and Salmon River Fisheries

For thousands of years the native people of the Klamath River basin have been inextricably linked to the fishery of the Klamath River and its tributaries. They depended on the runs of salmon for subsistence. *"The awesome cyclical nature of the salmon's yearly migrations over the centuries influenced almost every aspect of their lives. Religion, lore, law, and technology all evolved from the Indians' relationship with the salmon and other fish of the Basin"* (Pierce, 1998). Because of this dependence, the cultures of the Klamath and Salmon River Tribes developed systems to manage the fish population to ensure the health of the fishery for future generations. Fishing weirs and dams were constructed and harvest was conducted within strict cultural guidelines. The tribes worked together to ensure that there was a sustainable harvest of salmon each year. By all accounts, the Klamath River fishery was alive and thriving when the first white settlers arrived in approximately 1850.

The late 19th and early 20th century saw human activities begin to seriously jeopardize populations of anadromous fish. They were reduced to less than 10% of their historic numbers. Hydraulic, placer and dredge mining altered the river drastically and directly impacted salmon runs. Dams and water diversions were a continuous problem. During the late 19th century, mining

dams completely blocked the South Fork two miles up from Forks of Salmon. A fish ladder was installed at the dams in 1911, but it rarely worked. Fish poaching became popular because the fish grouped together below the dam. The California Fish and Game Commission declared the South Fork unfit for spawning due to mining activities and pollution.

Circa 1930

By 1912 *"three [canneries] operated on or near the estuary and the river was heavily fished, no limit being placed on the activities of anyone"* (Snyder). Overharvest of the Klamath River salmon affected the fishery to such a degree that by 1931, Snyder concluded that, *"depletion of Klamath salmon is not only apparent, but it seems to be progressing at an alarming rate. There is evidence also that artificial propagation alone is not able to cope with the situation".*

Beginning in 1917, hydroelectric dams began to be constructed on the Klamath, ultimately cutting off over 100 miles of spawning habitat in the upper Klamath basin, and continuing to affect water quality and flow to this day.

In the 1940's salmon populations began to rebound, and fishing increased again following WWII. By 1976 the Pacific Fishery Management Council began to restrict open fishing seasons and in 1985 commercial troll fishing in the Klamath management zone was completely prohibited. Also in the late 1970's some tribes had their fishing rights reaffirmed. In recent years agreements such as the Klamath Basin Restoration Act and the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement began a multifaceted approach to restoring the river's fisheries, with hopes that eventually the population can be recovered.

Today the fishery faces additional challenges including the impacts of climate change, fire and drought, which put even more pressure on anadromous fish. But restoration continues and with new interdisciplinary approaches and collaborative management we continue to strive for a healthy and hardy Salmon River fishery.

-Tom Hotaling and Maria Mullins

"R.D.Hume in a paper without date, and presumably published by himself, says of the Klamath River: In 1850 in this river during the running season, salmon were so plentiful, according to the reports of the earlier settlers, that in fording the stream it was with difficulty that they could induce their horses to make the attempt, on account of the river being alive with the finny tribe..." John O. Snyder 1931

Pierce, Ronnie M., "Klamath Salmon: Understanding Allocation." February 1998
Salter, John F., "A Context Statement Concerning the Effect of Iron Gate Dam on Traditional Resource Uses and Cultural Patterns of the Karuk People Within the Klamath River Corridor." November 2003.
Snyder, John O., "Salmon of the Klamath River, California". Fish Bulletin 34, 1931.

Snow on the Salmon

Historic photos of the winter months in the Salmon River often show the heroic effort that it took to travel over the 6000ft mountain passes, piled deep with snow. Today we must marvel at the fortitude of the people who brought in mail and supplies by skis, sleds and mules.

Even now, with all their modern snow removal machines, the efforts of our county road crew to keep the roads open are pretty heroic. It's by no means an easy task, or one that we can take for granted. But it's hard not to look back at those old photos and wonder what happened to all that snow; to imagine that it just doesn't snow like it used to.

Other than the photos, there wasn't any regular data collection on snow pack in our area prior to 1951. In 1929 the California State Legislature established a statewide cooperative snow survey program that has continued to this day. The Etna Mountain snow course has been monitored since 1951, and provides the snow pack data closest to the Salmon River watershed. Depth and moisture content of snow is measured each month from January-April. In addition, the United States Geological Survey has maintained a flow gauge near the mouth of the Salmon River since 1911, which provides information on the amount of water in the river through the years.

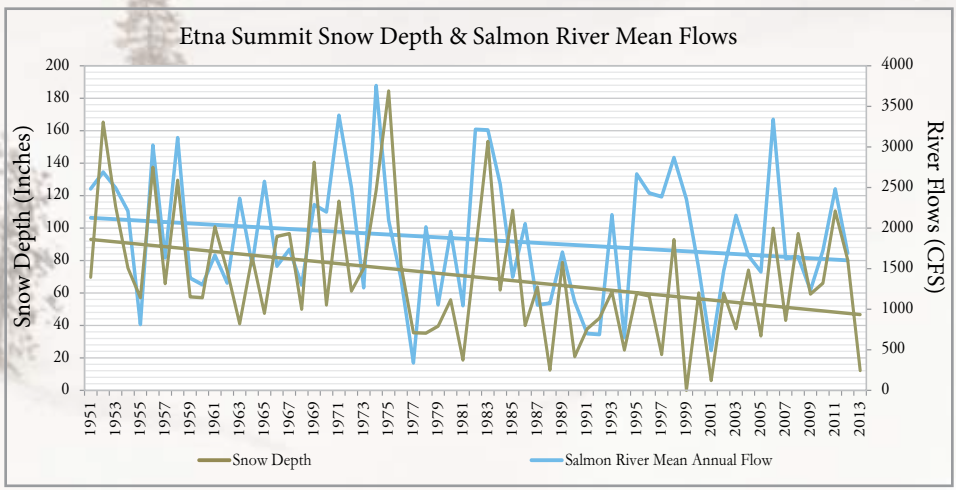
The accompanying graph shows the data from both the snow surveys and the gauge from 1951-2012. You can see that there are slight downward trends for all of the data; however, it is a short time frame, with enough annual variation that the statistical significance of the downward trend is not very strong. The Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath River Basin Study currently in progress, has found that basin-wide, during 1950 to 1999, there was a decline of between 2-13% in the mean annual runoff, and a decline of between 22-44% in April 1st snow pack. This would indicate that we are getting only slightly less moisture than we used to, but that quite a bit less of it is holding on as spring snow pack, which is what keeps our river flowing cool and clean through the hot summer months.

SRRC Archive- Pratt Collection

So those old photos tell a true story, which the data supports – that there really isn't as much snow as there used to be.

-Lyra Cressey

"In 1955, also '64 +'65 I opened the road with a D7 Cat...While I was pushing snow, my swamper dug a tunnel into 50 ft of drift snow. Dug steps up and came out like a bird from its nest up 50 ft." - Wook McBroom



the Salmon River Timeline

Selected events in the natural and cultural history of the Salmon River area.

Prehistory Oral histories of the Karuk and Klamath Tribes say that they were always here on the Klamath River. The Shasta people say that the Great Spirit brought their people to the ancestral lands along the Klamath, Shasta, Salmon, and Scott Rivers.

12,000 years ago Age of the oldest surviving sites of human occupation by ancestors of the Karuk.

7,700 years ago Volcanic eruption forms Crater Lake, reported in Karuk oral history.

850-1300 Wiyot, Yurok, and Hoopa arrive in the Klamath Basin.

1550 to about 1850 Little Ice Age : a cold period with three particularly cold intervals: one beginning about 1650, another about 1770, and the last in 1850, each separated by intervals of slight warming.

1826 1st journal record of British fur trapper, Peter Skene Ogden traveling in what is now Siskiyou County. 1st party to see the Klamath River is led by Alexander McLeod.

1841 Members of the Wilkes Expedition report several condors north of Redding.

1849 1st miners recorded in what is now Siskiyou County- Lindsey Applegate.

1849 James Abrams among the 1st to discover gold on the Salmon River. The town of Bestville is founded.

1850 California gains statehood.

1852 Two Karuk villages at the mouth of the Salmon River are burned by pioneers.

1852 State of CA enacts the 1st fish and game law to protect specific species including deer, quail, waterfowl and salmon.

1855 Klamath and Salmon River War or Red Cap War. Local miners wanted the Indians armed with guns and ammunition disarmed, and any Indian found with firearms was to be killed. US Army was enrolled to stop the war.

1858 Forks of Salmon Post Office opens.

1861 Civil War begins.

1862 Homestead Act signed into law.

1870 State Board of Fish Commissioners is created. Fish ladders are now required at state dams.

1870 Population of Siskiyou County according to US Census is 6,848.

1872 General Mining Act of 1872 authorizes mining on federal public lands.

1890 Population of Siskiyou County according to US Census is 12,163.

1891 Forest Reserve Act establishes the National Forest System.

1892 A road is begun over Etna Summit to connect Etna and Forks of Salmon. It is finished in 1899.

1897 Organic Act of 1897 establishes most of the National Forests, to be managed for timber production, watershed protection, and forest protection.

Stories of the Mail, Water, and Snow

Earl Aubrey

I remember that the water was high, extra high compared with what it is now because we had to build bridges. Every year we had to build bridges out to where we could catch the fish. There is no water now compared to what it was. Our winter days and our weather was different. Every year back then we always had three feet of snow or more down on the Aubrey place at Dillon Creek and that would stay for a month, two months sometimes. Our weather has changed. We ain't got the snow. We ain't got the rain. We ain't got the water. And with everybody taking water out of the water that's here, it even makes it less water than we should have.

What I see is the water change. We just ain't got it. It's just not here. The springs that used to be here. The little creeks, the side lanes and all that's just all dried up.

From Interview with Earl Aubrey, Happy Camp, Dillon Creek, Former Tribal Chairman, Traditional Fisherman, Age 63, Salter White Paper (2003)

Wook McBroom

My Dad… and Luther Lake bought the mail contract from Denny Bar Company… His contract was from Cecilville to Callahan - in one day, out the other, 32 miles, winter or summer. If you didn't make it there was a $75 fine. Six days a week... See now the mail from Cecilville used to go up Indian Gulch, Orton Gulch, down to the King Solomon Mine, down the road and up over the hill to Black Bear, below Black Bear, and then up over the hill to Sawyers Bar... That was a long day. Usually the road was just one way. They shoveled the road open usually in April. People got together from both sides. Salmon Road was the same way. No money involved. The rest of the time it had to go with mules. In to Sawyers one day, back the next. About a 10 hour trip. He did it until about 1937. The road came in from Forks around 1937.

Snow tunnel on Etna Summit

From an interview with Wook McBroom 8/23/13

On the Salmon River Route

William Poole, Detours Column, This World, July 29, 1990

"Charlie Snapp has probably driven the Sawyers Bar Road more often than anyone else on Earth. He has driven it six days a week for nearly 50 years, hauling mail and freight from the Scott River Valley up over Salmon Mountain to the miners, loggers, dope-growers and misanthropic bush-bums in the Salmon River canyons beyond. Before this road was plowed each winter, he crossed the mountain on skis with the mail on his back. Later he pulled the mail on a freight sled, with an R-4 Caterpillar bulldozer that had been specially modified to keep its footing in 20 feet of snow.

Charlie Snapp once ferried mail on the backs of mules over swollen rivers. And when the road washed out in the big-water winter of 1964, he ferried it on his own back for what he guesses may have been 40 miles…"

Wook's comment on the story - "Charlie Snapp did carry the mail on foot a few times - but never on mules and not 40 miles. In the flood years he came by Cecilville and the Klamath after the roads were open but for months we had no mail. The 1st road to be opened to Sawyers Bar was from Cecilville via Black Bear Road."

1898 Scott Valley described as flourishing with "small deer; lots of big dogs (wolves), lots of small dogs (coyote); lots of big bears with white faces; and small bears, both brown and black. The creeks and river were full of many kinds of fish, and there are beaver and many small animals."

1902 Last Grizzly recorded being killed in Northern California, near Hornbrook.

1903 Klamath Hydroelectric Project launched. The following 3 decades saw many penstocks, flumes, and dams constructed.

1905 Roosevelt establishes the Klamath Nat'l Forest. Use Permit system is initiated for grazing, mining and logging.

1906 Newly established Reclamation Service initiates the Klamath Project to drain lakes and wetlands for cultivation.

1910 Logging becomes a growing industry and railroads are built to accommodate sawmills in the Upper Klamath.

1910 A Model T Ford climbs Etna Summit using reverse gear since it was the strongest gear.

1911 Passage of Weeks Act which established the framework for Fire Suppression.

1912 3 salmon cannery plants operate on or near the Klamath River estuary and the river was heavily fished, with no limits.

1913 Hallie Daggett hired on as the 1st woman in a fire lookout at Eddy Gulch.

1914 WWI begins.

1915 Mt Lassen erupts.

1917 Copco dam Number 1 completed on Klamath River.

1918 11 fires are counted in the Salmon River watershed, the 3 largest ones consumed about 56,000 acres.

1918 Bennett Company retire their mules in favor of trucks.

1921 Fish planting on the Salmon River Ranger District is initiated.

1922 Copco Number 2 Dam completed on the Klamath River.

1924 Last wild wolf in California is trapped in Lassen County.

1925 Forks to Somes Bar road completed.

1927 Due to a "tremendous loss of fish" (because of the lack of fish screens in ditches), the Fish and Game Commission established a Fish and Ladder Commission. Fish populations on the Salmon River are managed by stocking fish in barren waters.

1928 Drought year shuts down many lumber companies.

1930 Commercial fishing in coastal streams banned to allow for sport fishing on the Klamath.

1933 CCC's established - there were 7 camps of 200 men on the KNF working primarily on road building projects, but also on facilities and phone lines.

1934 Roosevelt's Fish & Wildlife Coordination Act requires the renamed Bureau of Reclamation to consider the needs of wildlife when planning projects.

SRRC Archive- Dobson Collection

1935 USFS's fire management policy is that all wildfires were to be suppressed by 10 a.m. the morning after they were first spotted.

1936 The Quinn bill prohibits hydraulic mining on Klamath River and its tributaries from July through November.

Traditional Foods on the Salmon River

While it's difficult to provide a complete list of traditional foods historically gathered by family groups living on the banks of the Salmon and Klamath River, this is an attempt to cover the major food groups typically sought after in various seasons.

No country in the world was as well supplied by Nature, with food for man, as California, when first discovered by Spaniards. Every one of its early visitors has left records to this effect – they all found hills, valleys and plains filled with elk, deer, hares, rabbits, quail, and other animals fit for food; its rivers and lakes swarming with salmon, trout, and other fish, their beds and banks covered with mussels, clams, and other edible Mollusca; the rocks on its sea shores crowded with seal and otter; and its forests full of trees and plants, bearing acorns, nuts, seeds and berries. *(Titus Fey Cronise, The Natural Wealth of California, 1868 - cited in Andersen, Tending the Wild, 2005. Karuk Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the Need for Knowledge Sovereignty, Norgaard, 2013.)*

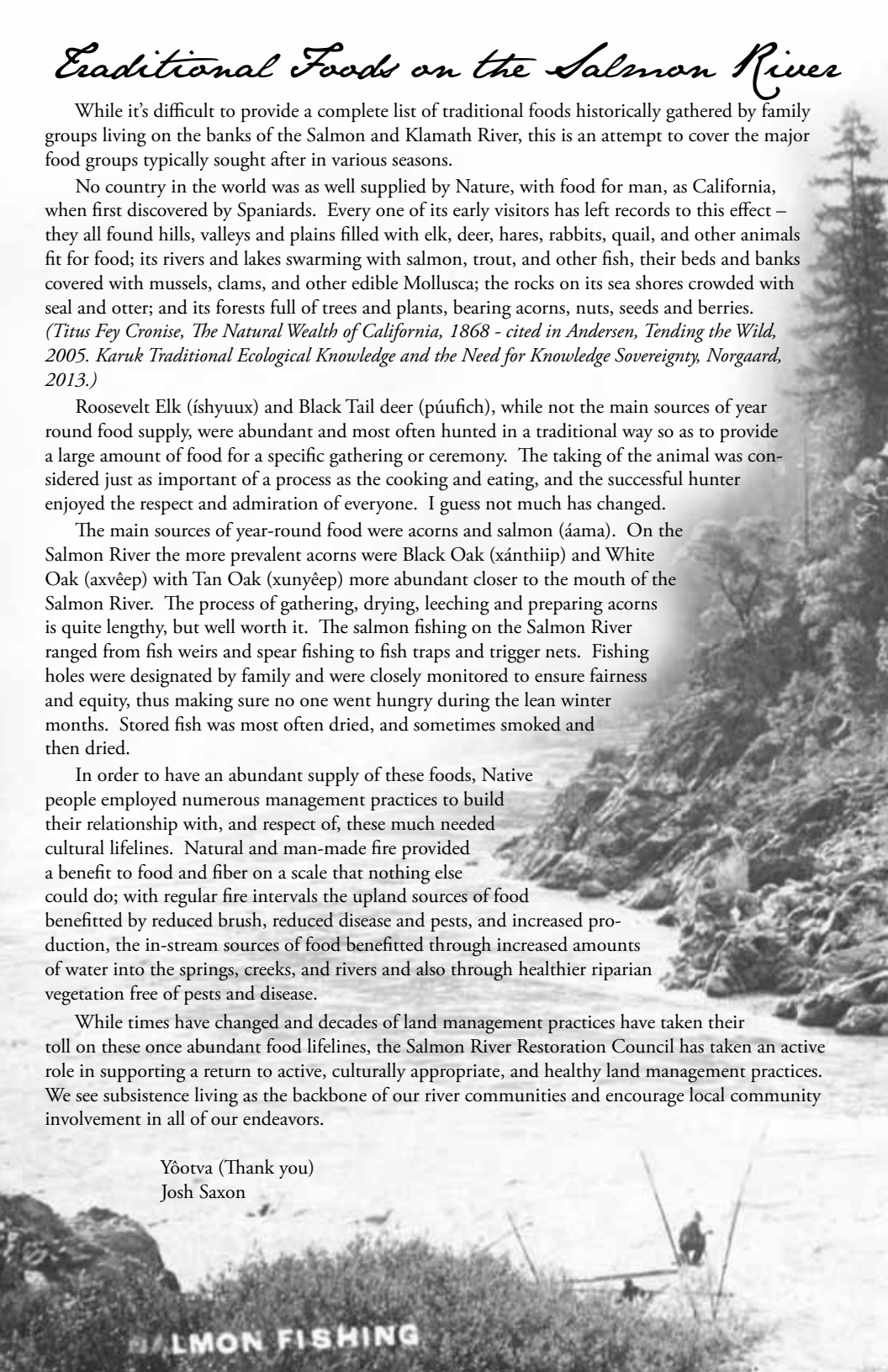
Roosevelt Elk (íshyuux) and Black Tail deer (púufich), while not the main sources of year round food supply, were abundant and most often hunted in a traditional way so as to provide a large amount of food for a specific gathering or ceremony. The taking of the animal was considered just as important of a process as the cooking and eating, and the successful hunter enjoyed the respect and admiration of everyone. I guess not much has changed.

The main sources of year-round food were acorns and salmon (áama). On the Salmon River the more prevalent acorns were Black Oak (xánthiip) and White Oak (axvêep) with Tan Oak (xunyêep) more abundant closer to the mouth of the Salmon River. The process of gathering, drying, leeching and preparing acorns is quite lengthy, but well worth it. The salmon fishing on the Salmon River ranged from fish weirs and spear fishing to fish traps and trigger nets. Fishing holes were designated by family and were closely monitored to ensure fairness and equity, thus making sure no one went hungry during the lean winter months. Stored fish was most often dried, and sometimes smoked and then dried.

In order to have an abundant supply of these foods, Native people employed numerous management practices to build their relationship with, and respect of, these much needed cultural lifelines. Natural and man-made fire provided a benefit to food and fiber on a scale that nothing else could do; with regular fire intervals the upland sources of food benefitted by reduced brush, reduced disease and pests, and increased production, the in-stream sources of food benefitted through increased amounts of water into the springs, creeks, and rivers and also through healthier riparian vegetation free of pests and disease.

While times have changed and decades of land management practices have taken their toll on these once abundant food lifelines, the Salmon River Restoration Council has taken an active role in supporting a return to active, culturally appropriate, and healthy land management practices. We see subsistence living as the backbone of our river communities and encourage local community involvement in all of our endeavors.

Yôotva (Thank you)
Josh Saxon



1936 Paul S. Bartholomew wrote a report listing trouble spots for fish on the Salmon River. There were 9 natural barriers, 17 dams, 6 diversions with a history of screens, 37 diversions needing screens, 21 diversions without screens, and 6 dams with fish ladders.

1937 Flood year. CCC's construct 2 bridges at Forks of Salmon, and worked on the South Fork Salmon road.

1940 Population of Siskiyou County is 28,598.

1948 1st aerial planting of trout.

1950 Commercial logging is being used extensively to harvest Douglas-fir to feed the post war building boom.

1951 Dept. of Fish & Game initiates aggressive removal program of abandoned mining dams.

1953 Klamath River Basin Compact created to manage Klamath River water issues.

1955 Flood year. J.C.Boyle Dam built on the Klamath River.

1962 Iron Gate Dam and Hatchery built.

1964 California Wilderness Act creates the 153,000-acre Siskiyou Wilderness within the Six Rivers, Klamath and Siskiyou Nat'l Forests.

1964 An arson fire in Sawyers Bar takes most of the historic buildings in the center of town.

1964 100 Year Flood Event occurs over the New Year followed by heavy snow.

SRRC Archive- Nichols Collection

1966 Endangered Species Preservation Act is passed by Congress - Bald Eagles listed as endangered.

1974 Forest Service changes its policy from fire control to fire management, allowing some lightning fires to burn in wilderness areas.

1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act ended homesteading. Federal policy shifts to retaining control of public lands. The term "Multiple Use" is brought into play.

1977 Hog Fire burns 58,000 acres. USFS plans to spray herbicides on replanted tree farms.

1977 California's snowpack reaches an all-time low.

1978 State imposes a ban on sports and Indian fishing in the Klamath River estuary.

1978 The Klamath National Forest and Federal Marshals begin eliminating occupancy on federal lands by tearing down and burning cabins located on mining claims.

SRRC Archive

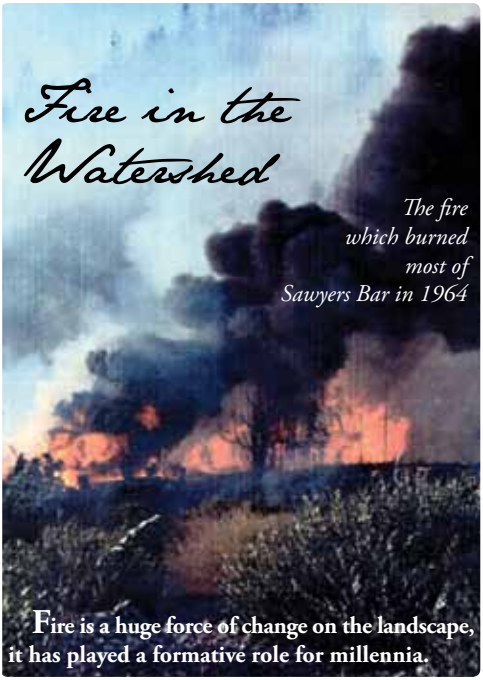
1981 Local citizens group wins a moratorium on the Forest Service's use of herbicides in the Salmon River watershed.

1982 Salmon River is given Wild and Scenic River status along with the Klamath from Copco Lake area to CA-OR border.

1986 Drought, continuing until 1991.

1987 Salmon Complex fires started from lightning strikes, burn 90,900 acres.

1991 National Marine Fisheries Service lists 28 distinctive groups of salmon and steelhead as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.



Fire is a huge force of change on the landscape, it has played a formative role for millennia.

Its affects can be seen on plant species composition, forest structure, wildlife, soils, hydrology, and it contributes to the extraordinary diversity of the Klamath Mountains. Fire is partially responsible for this diversity and has also responded to it, resulting in equally diverse fire regimes. For this reason, it is hard to pin down the historic fire regimes for the Salmon River. It is clear however, that fires were frequent, and affected large areas of the landscape regularly. Studies show that these fires predominately burned at low to moderate intensity with patches of high intensity fire, resulting in a patch work effect across the landscape. Fire scars indicate that south facing, mixed conifer hardwood forests burned ~ every 10 -15 years, but with significant variability. Fires tended to burn at higher intensity and frequency on south/southwest facing slopes and commonly burned from late summer into fall when rains put them out.

Native people of the Klamath and Salmon Rivers used fire to manage the landscape to their benefit. Cultural burning was widely used to improve forest and grassland resources, including the enhancement of food, fiber, ease of movement, and village sites. Historic accounts indicate that grasslands and oak woodlands were burned every few years to increase acorn harvests, reduce disease and insect damage, improve basket making materials, and promote forage for game. It is difficult to differentiate traditional cultural fire from historic fire regimes, since they were closely entwined. It is likely that cultural burning was intensive around village sites and food collection zones, and thus more focused in low to mid elevations. These long-term cultural burning practices were largely interrupted at the time of European settlement in the area (starting around 1820 and increasing in the 1850's) due to the extermination and displacement of native peoples.

European settlers also used fire extensively to clear land for grazing, mineral exploration, and to ease travel. These fires were often very different from traditional burning. They tended to burn at higher intensity, consume larger areas, and were more frequent during the hot dry months. A 1900 account by early forest inspector, J.B.Lieberg notes that fires were, "more numerous and devastated much larger areas in the early days of settlement than they did before." Historic images show large swaths of land adjacent to mines burned or logged to supply wood for stamp mills, buildings, and simply to reveal the underlying geology. It is suggested that many of the regions 80 – 170 year even aged stands are due to settler ignited fires during this period *(Atzet et al.)*. Settler burning continued to have a significant impact until the early 1930's when fire suppression policies took hold.

Offield Mt. Lookout 1925

Government organized fire suppression was initiated in 1911 with the passage of the Weeks Act, but didn't come into its own as a major force in the Klamath until the 1930's and 40's. A century of fire suppression has had a huge impact on Salmon River ecosystems, greatly reducing forest diversity and leading to homogenization of forest stands, both in species composition and stand age. Without fire, many forests have become crowded, with more trees and brush competing for the same resources and increasing fuel loading. The

resulting fires are skewed towards higher severity. By attempting to suppress all fires, only those that are so large and severe they cannot be stopped end up burning the landscape, often with disastrous results. In recent years federal policy and grass roots efforts have worked to bring fire back into the landscape as a management tool. The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy of 1995 allowed agencies to manage wildfire, using "wildland fire use," rather than suppression.

Forest Service on horseback in Sawyers Bar

Forest management practices of the past 80+ years have also had an enormous impact on our native forests and fire regimes. Early logging practices further reduced forest composition and stand diversity.

Through time, timber has been valued above all else in forest management. Commercial timber harvest in the area started in the 1950's but picked up in the 1960's and 70's, continuing into the early 1990's when concern for impacts on the land slowed harvest. Large tracks of land were clear cut, leaving even-aged, single species plantations in their stead, and non-timber producing hardwood forests were consciously removed. Many studies indicate that these homogenous even aged stands are much more susceptible to severe fire and also increase the likelihood of intense fire in surrounding older stands. In a study of the greater Salmon River area, Odion et al. concluded that, "tree plantations experienced twice as much severe fire as multi-aged forests."

All of these effects combined have led to forests that are out of balance on the Salmon River and surrounding region. This is an issue that we can't put on the back burner. Effects of climate change are bound to exacerbate the situation whether we address it or not; in the next 100 years fires are predicted to quadruple in the Western Klamath Mountains! It's imperative that we find ways to better create fire adapted and safe communities and renew resilient fire regimes on a landscape level. At the Restoration Council we hope that together we can make a compelling case for how to bring fire back to this landscape in a positive way.

-Karuna Greenberg

Tribal Use of Fire

The following are accounts of tribal fire management taken from interviews by Kari Norgaard with Leaf Hillman and Frank Lake in 2004 and 2005.

Leaf Hillman: And the use of fire wasn't just willy-nilly....Right here in the valley, my grandfather, he burned that whole slope every three years. He'd burn it in early October and the rains always put it out. Some years the rain came sooner, some years it came later. So some years it went a little further. But it always got this ridge because the fire started on the ridge and you burn down, you don't burn up the slope....And so specific timing and use and special applications....Torching off a bunch of underbrush to produce the smoke to get rid of the bugs out of the trees. Maybe a couple of trees in your place weren't producing well, so actually bringing in larger flammables and doing hot fire applications right to those specific trees creating flame lengths that are actually going to scorch the bark on the tree itself in order to stimulate a response, and that response is production because they think they are on their way out....Most of the tools involved fire, but its not just fire, it is the specific use and applications of fire.

Frank Lake: If you do spring burning...that darkened soil and partially burnt stuff is going to have radiant synergy. It's going to heat up faster. It's going to cause germination of the forbs. Those are going to be potential grains available for you as either a food or that the wildlife are going to browse upon... whether it's the squirrels, the rabbits, the deer. But then also when you burn in the, say, late summer, early fall, when you get the relative humidity come up with a dew and the moisture and such...then you're going to have that kind of fall green-up going into winter....That second flush of green would also support a lot of wildlife, especially the deer and the elk that were going into rut that needed to have energy reserves.

Frost et al, "Fire Regimes, Fire History and Forest Conditions in the Klamath-Siskiyou Region" 2000
Atzet et al, "Fire and forestry in southwest Oregon." FIR report, 1988
Odion et al, "Patterns of Fire Severity and Forest Conditions in the Western Klamath Mountains, California." 2004

Wook McBroom life on the Salmon River

Hank McBroom, known as Wook, is an old timer on the Salmon River. He was born in 1929 in Cecilville and has lived in the area ever since. Wook and his wife, Earlene, were interviewed in their home next to the mouth of the Little North Fork in August of 2013 by SRRC and Klamath -Salmon Media Collaborative. Here are some selected anecdotes from that interview.

What's your first memory of fire out here?

Wook- I'll tell you, fires are different now. The local people were the firefighters. They were the ones that were gotten. Then if the fire got a little bit bigger then they usually shut down the mill in Etna or the woods or whatnot and you'd go. But the policy then - Stop the Fire/Put it Out. It wasn't the Manage the Fire/Let it Burn policy. You see the first thing that happened was they took the lookouts off. Only got one now – Eddy Gulch. There were lookouts all over the country. Boom! They sighted in they knew where the fire was immediately, you was on foot and heading for it. You got on it when it was small. You stopped it, put it out. 1 man, 2 men, 20 men, whatever. That's the way that they did it.

Wook- There wasn't any logging on the Salmon River until about 1951. The first logging was in Counts Gulch and Whites Gulch. The next logging they did was on the Blue Ridge side. I built all those roads out there- Blue Ridge Ranch and the one above that. The method then was a group mark, my brother-in-law marked the whole thing. The group can be 1 tree or a dozen trees, whatever it would be. What they did was take the sick trees and they took the ripe trees and when we were done with it you couldn't even tell they'd logged it. See what I mean? And then … Al Gronki came in and he's the one started to clear-cutting. The first big clear-cutting was right here, Little North Fork. And they clear-cut it when the big yarders came in from Forks. RC Miller Logging Company, I cut for them. That was probably about 1965. Charlie Maplesden and I were partners and he and I went in and cut for him. These areas were replanted and many have been burned with the Let it Burn Policy.

Wook pulling logs with a Cat on steep slope 1952 near Etna

McBroom Collection SRRC Archives

Do you remember any stories about people using fire to clear areas or manage fire?

Earlene- The ranchers did, when they brought the cattle in.

Wook- In the early, early days before my time, the packers late in the fall, after a good rain and whatnot, and the cattlemen too, would set some fires. They would set 'em on top of the hill so they would burn down. The last one I remember was set by Fred Brown up above Trail Creek. It would be probably in 1936, somewhere in there. That was the last one.

George Ranch Tiekner Collection SRRC Archives

1992 A group of Salmon River community members received support from the Klamath River Fisheries Task Force to host a series of cooperative workshops focusing on spring Chinook and summer steelhead, to raise awareness of their dwindling numbers.

SRRC Archive

1992 Cooperative fisheries surveys of Fall Chinook Salmon begin.

1993 Salmon River Community Restoration Program is created to protect and restore Salmon River's anadromous fisheries, eventually becomes SRRC.

1994 Watershed Education program begins in Salmon river schools to give students hands on experience and science education.

SRRC Archive

1994 A team of 600 specialists draft the Northwest Forest Plan to address concerns for the economy and threatened wildlife dependent on old growth forests.

1994 Specimen Fire burns 7,500 acres.

1995 Salmon River Restoration Council given nonprofit status.

1995 Severe windstorm rips through the Klamath mountains causing extensive blowdowns.

1997 SRRC initiates its non toxic weed eradication program of spotted knapweed.

1997 Coho salmon listed as a threatened species.

1997 SRRC begins maintaining temperature probes to track river water temps in the summer.

1997 Regional flood event on New Years eve.

1999 Megram & Onion fires, started by lightening in the Trinity Alps, burn across 14,000 acres.

2000 Salmon River Fire Safe Council established to help with wildfire preparedness and facilitate communication between the community and USFS.

2001 MidKlamath Watershed Council is established.

2002 SRRC co-authors the Salmon River Subbasin Restoration Strategy.

2002 Drought years through 2006.

2002 Klamath River fish kill of 80,000 mature salmon and thousands of juvenile salmon.

2006 330 junk vehicles, 625 tons of scrap metal, & 37 tons of tires are removed from the Salmon River.

Scott Harding

2006 Uncles Complex fires burn 48,085 acres.

2007 Bald Eagle officially removed from list of endangered species.

2008 Ukonom Complex Fires burn 80,000 acres.

2008 SRRC initiates removal of 2 dams at White's Gulch opening 1.5 miles of anadromous fish habitat.

Thomas B. Dunklin

Early Mining of the Salmon River

In June of 1850 prospectors coming over the ridge from the Trinity discovered rich deposits of placer gold near the Forks of the Salmon River. By the next summer, thousands of miners had arrived to stake their claims and a flurry of intense mining activity began, lasting through 1880. In a short time the miners substantially altered the watershed, having dramatic effects on the landscape, vegetation, soil, and river structure. The Salmon River became the richest gold producing river in Siskiyou County. The North Fork alone produced over 1 million ounces of placer gold.

Placer mining deposits were first worked at their surface. Once the surface deposits were depleted, the material just below the surface was mined via "ground sluicing", which involved constructing wing dams, ditches and channels to divert the river or tributaries onto selected areas of riverbank where it could be used to wash away dirt while men with picks and shovels worked the heavier materials left behind.

By the 1860's the rich surface and river placers were largely exhausted and hydraulic mines were the chief sources of gold for the next 20 years.

Pick and shovel miner on the Salmon River

Peterson Mine in Sawyers Bar

Vast systems of reservoirs, ditches, flumes and pipelines supplied water to these operations. With the use of the high pressure water cannon, many tons of rock and soil were able to be removed, along with all of the vegetation within a disturbed area. Many layers of ancient gravel beds laid down millions of years ago were washed away, often removing soil down to bare bedrock. These mines left vertical banks of raw earth up to 60 feet in height and large tailing piles of cobbles and boulders along stream channels. Mined-over floodplains and terraces remain poorly vegetated many decades after large-scale mining ended.

Hydraulic mining activity caused a tremendous amount of change and disturbance to the Salmon River watershed. The effects are evident almost everywhere in the watershed. The structure of the stream channels and flood plain were greatly modified by mining activity, which resulted in wider, shallower channels, reduced pool depth, and large cobble/boulder sedimentation, all of which are major contributors to reduced shade and increased water temperatures.

The Restoration Council is beginning to work on remedying these historic impacts with some exciting new floodplain and riparian restoration projects.

-Lyra Cressey

2009 Backbone & Red Spot Fires burn 6,324 acres.

2010 Upper Klamath communities, tribal leaders, government officials, and environmental organizations sign an agreement calling for the restoration of wild salmon habitat in the Klamath Basin.

2011 The first wild wolf since 1924 is documented in California.

2012 An ongoing statutory moratorium is established by Fish & Game prohibiting suction dredge mining in and near California rivers, streams, and lakes.

2012 SRRC achieves a 99% reduction of Spotted Knapweed across 270 sites without the use of herbicide.

2013 The Forks Complex burned 38,000 acres in the Salmon Watershed. Both fires are arson caused.

2013 California experiences driest year on record, possibly the driest since 1580 based on tree rings.

SRRC Archive

USFS KNF , Salmon River fires 2013

A more in depth Klamath Basin Timeline will be available soon on our website, watch for it!

Salmon River Restoration Council

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Maria Mullins & Sam Berry, *Program Staff*

2013 Fuels Crew, Noxious Weed Crew, Screwtrap & Fish Survey employees -
Steve Adams, Bonnie Bennett, Sam Berry, Sheri Campbell, Gary Collins, Eric Cousineau, Robert Cousineau Jr., Robert W. Cousineau, Kyle Cousineau, Timothy Darling, Kevin Dunbar, Jon Feutz, Rudy Galindo, Steve Gunther, Jessica Hanscom, Daniel Hendrickson, Mike Kerrick, Scott Kingery, Tamara Lightle, Charles Lindsay, Ryan Lindsay, Ken McDonald, Maria Mullins, Riley O'Brien, Nat Pennington, Brian Pierce, Katie Reinhart, Miles Richardson, Adam Robinson, Beulah Simas, Joe Stoltz, Jacob Sutter, Irie Swift, Emily Tornroos, Todd Whitmore
New for 2014 Fuels Crew, Aileen Bammer, Brian Feeney, Rick Metro

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Address Correction Requested

"Picture is Salmon side of Salmon Mountain. The house was used by the mail carrier to stay in or rest. Notice how open it is."
- Wook McBroom

Siskiyou County Historical Society