

GROUSE HOLLOW NOTES

Fall 2019



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OUT IN THE FOREST—BY KIMBERLY JACOBSEN NELSEN

Soon the public will have a chance to discover and explore what could be the oldest pioneer house built in Oregon history at Hopkins Demonstration Forest.

Molalla Log House may predate the start of Lewis and Clark's 1804 expedition. Gregg Olson, an architectural historian and preservation contractor, and Rich Isberg, whose family donated the home from their property 4 miles south of Molalla, are reassembling the house at Hopkins Demonstration Forest with a combination of the original and restored hand-hewn logs.

The building was found south of Molalla in 1984, attracting the attention of historians who discovered it had been dismantled and moved from its original location in 1892. Historians currently believe the Molalla Log House originally was built in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains and in the Pudding and Willamette River watersheds, where fur-animal habitat was extensive in the 1790s.



Molalla Log House's craftsmanship is unlike any other pioneer construction in Oregon. The logs are meticulously hand-hewn with notched and fitted corners that sit flush against one another like a puzzle, locking it all together securely without the use of nails.

"The log house has been a real mystery for us because when we found it we didn't know the age, we didn't know who built it or the original site, so it has been a long process of historical research starting with the pioneers," Hayden said. "Because of its craftsmanship, design and rarity, it was designated by the Board of County Commissioners as a Clackamas County Historic Landmark in the 1990s."

But by 2007 the house's roof had collapsed, and its logs were deteriorating. Hayden contacted Olson, an expert in rehabilitating log buildings in Oregon, and they determined that the structure needed to be dismantled again in order to be saved. *(continued to next page)*

MOLALLA RIVER PROPERTY DONATED TO FFI

This past fall Forests Forever received an incredible gift of a piece of land bordering the Molalla River. The 21-acre parcel was donated to Forests Forever by Hannah Schink and children Andrew Schink and Janice Camp. The property originally owned by the Feyrer family was eventually purchased in 1980 from the Feyrer Estate by Chet and Hannah Feyrer Schink. Hannah now, 99 years old, remembers shooting her first buck on the property when she was 18 years old. She and her husband Chet spent untold hours planting trees on the upper bench and fruit trees on the lower bench bordering the river.



The property is in the Dickey Prairie area about a mile south of the Feyrer Park bridge. "The property gives us a new opportunity to teach students and the community about the importance of water quality, fish and how we can improve habitat while managing our forest property," says Ken Everett, Executive Director of Forests Forever.

Hannah and her family wanted the property to be enjoyed and experienced by future generations providing an opportunity for the community to learn more about Dickey Prairie, the Indians and pioneers that frequented the area.

Next time you are in the Dickey Prairie area watch for the new sign which says Chet and Hannah Schink Demonstration Forest.



OUT IN THE FOREST CONT.

The Molalla Log House was carefully disassembled piece by piece and moved to a storage facility where it was analyzed, preserved and restored. Dendrochronology was used to help date the structure through studying tree rings on the logs, and the search for a new home began.

"The first thing we did was go out into the woods and re-hew the logs that couldn't be saved," Olson said. "We spent over a year dovetailing the new logs and patching the old ones."

The logs were stacked back together in a shop to solve any construction problems and make it easier to reassemble the structure on the Hopkins site, where some of the new wood pieces were harvested.

Forests Forever Inc., the Hopkins Board of Directors, was intrigued by the log house story and its depiction of the history of the family forestry movement in Oregon, in conjunction with the use of wood products in sustainable construction today. They voted to approve the re-homing of the Molalla Log House on the Hopkins site.

"We educate about the use of wood, and the Molalla Log House is the perfect example of bringing the past into the future here in Oregon and why managing our forests ties all that together," said Peter Matzka, a forestry educator at Hopkins Demonstration Forest for the Oregon State University Extension Service.

"We are very fortunate to have Hopkins Demonstration Forest as the home for this building," Hayden said. "It's the perfect setting here in the forest, possibly very similar to the historic context of where the structure was originally built."

Hayden said the origins of the log house most likely always will remain a mystery. For the past 12 years, project researchers have gleaned some understanding about the building based on clues from its design and construction, dendrochronology and log-end erosion studies. They've combed local legends and conducted extensive research of documented historical records spanning the North American continent.

"The building may be the product of skilled craftsmen who learned this technique of building from eastern roots in the U.S. and Canada," Hayden said. "They may have been enlisted by a British/Canadian fur company as freemen hunters to explore new hunting territories west of the Rocky Mountains, in the Columbia River Basin."

People who constructed the Molalla Log House could be from any of the men employed in the fur trade: French Canadians, Iroquois or people of mixed European and Indian descent. They did not document their journeys as did later fur company employees in Oregon.

"It is possible that the original builders were engaged in Canada's westward expanding fur trade in the late 18th century, who traversed over the Rocky Mountains to the Willamette Valley in search of new territories for hunting and trapping beaver," Hayden said. "They may have built this fortified log building between two primary north-south Indian trails leading to trading depots: the Willamette Falls and The Dalles."

Project organizers hope to have the log house completely reconstructed at Hopkins Demonstration Forest by the fall of 2020. Most of the financial support for the building's rehabilitation and reconstruction has come from nearly \$200,000 in grants through the Kinsman Foundation, according to Hayden. A separate grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation has hired private filmmaker Jane Turville to capture the reconstruction process for an educational documentary.

Visitors are welcome to walk the trails at Hopkins to view the reconstruction process, but are asked to stay behind the yellow taped area for safety reasons. When complete, the Molalla Log House will be open for scheduled tours.

Matzka says staff members at Hopkins are exploring interactive log house educational opportunities for the public and the thousands of students that visit the demonstration forest each year.

Upcoming

Events (Fall '19):

October 12th
Community Forest Day
8:30am-2:30pm
'CCFFA Workday'

November 9th
Community Forest Day
8:30am-2:30pm
'Bridge Repair and Seedling Bed Construction'

December 14th
Community Forest Day
8:30am-2:30pm
'Regeneration Maintenance and Inventory'

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