

THE MANIFEST

April 2019



Volunteers are not paid because they are worthless but because they are PRICELESS

GREETINGS ALL:

I hope this newsletter finds you are well and eager to start the new season. That's right folks, the 2019 season is upon us! In less than 2 weeks, we will have our first run day of the year. Mark it on your calendar folks, and please let one of the board members know if you can help in anyway. Our first run day is April 14, 2019. Remember we are open the **2nd and 4th Sundays of the month April –October,** from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. So spread the word, tell your neighbors, your friends, maybe even your enemies 😊

Our story this month comes from our own Tony Johnson with some information regarding the Hobo Monikers on the Tool Shed.

I do not change spelling and/or grammar in the stories, as often the stories do not contain traditional spelling and/or grammar.

OUR TOOL SHED HOBO MONIKERS

By
Tony Johnson

I think the following information may be of interest in our group's MANIFEST newsletter. It concerns our Southern Pacific Section Tool House (aka "Speeder Shed") at the Medford Railroad Park. To refresh, the Ashland tool house was donated to our group in early 1996. We moved it to Railroad Park on April 20, 1996. The outside walls have over 100 carvings (signatures) on it... the earliest being "Jim Slick 8/13/93... that's 1893!

Last year we had three historians who asked if they could see our SP Tool House in person. I was contacted by Susan Phillips. Susan is a professor at Pitzer College in Claremont, CA. On our old website another historian by the name of Devon Hanofski visited our site prior to their visit (he's the one who is crazy for Tex K-T). Phillips added, "I've written this article that I'm attaching based in part on your materials in Medford. In part it was finishing up the report for you that inspired me to do this--so thanks for that."

Professor Phillips adds, "The two people who I visited with were with the Massillon Museum in Massillon Ohio and their names were Andy Dreamingwolf and Scot Phillips. Andy was a guest curator at the museum for a show on Moniker Art, and Scot is a permanent curator there who worked on that same show.

Professor Phillips and I made arrangement for the three of them to visit our Railroad Park on a day we were closed to the public so she could documents our tool house's carvings. The three historians spent about seven hours on the first day documenting every square inch of our tool house. Then before heading back home they visited the park again the next morning to wrap up any loose ends. I also gave them a tour of our equipment.

Attached is Susan's results (so far) of what she has discovered.

Report on Hobo Carvings at the Medford Railroad Park - By Susan A. Phillips

The railroad shed moved from the railroad station at Ashland moved to Medford, Oregon is of historic significance due to the number of hobo carvings that remain on the building. This type of material is extremely rare, and, though some additional documentation or first-hand examples of hobo carving are found in the United States, the carvings at Medford may be the largest collection of in-situ carvings from this era. The carvings date from 1893-1947, with the majority dating between 1893-1915. While some of the markings are worn, many remain in excellent condition.

Context of the Medford Carvings

During the so-called “tramp era” at the turn of the century, hobos took on monikers and developed a form of written communication that shared information about names, location, travel and local conditions. Hoboing was initially a post-Civil War phenomenon. The Civil War had helped to develop railroad lines to carry troops, and the post-War era accompanied the shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy. This shift caused a generation of individuals to take to the road—people who could no longer find their place and who sought out opportunities where the newly built railroads could carry them. They soon developed a culture of the road shared among fellow travelers. Much of the travel was structured around itinerant work opportunities, but a network of so-called “jungles,” or hobo camps, soon developed across the U.S. and Canada.

During this period, hobos wrote or carved their nicknames on water towers or buildings near railroad tracks as they traveled. Carved “monikers” (sometimes written as “monicas”) were based on personal characteristics and places of origin and often included dates with arrows and letters (N, S, E, or W) indicating the direction of travel. Hobos created a unique community of practice with intimate knowledge of train schedules, methods of hopping and riding the rails, traditions of tale telling, tricks to avoid police or railroad “bulls,” and the uncanny ability to earn the sympathy of kind-hearted housewives. “Sit

down” dinners, handouts, or care packages acted as counterweights to the police brutality and targeted incarceration that were frequent companions to hobo life.

With their many uses of a tin can, their bindles, and the mystique of riding the rods, hobos embodied the ideals of freedom, individuality, and resourcefulness, as well as degeneracy and danger. By the early twentieth century, hobos already were known for their graffiti, or the marked carvings they left behind.

Jack London was a hobo beginning in 1892 and most notably in 1894, during which times he went by Frisco Kid and Sailor Jack. London wrote of the moniker tradition in his 1907 memoir *The Road*:

Water-tanks are tramp directories. Not all in idle wantonness do tramps carve their monicas, dates, and courses. Often and often have I met hoboos earnestly inquiring if I had seen anywhere such and such a “stiff” or his monica. And more than once I have been able to give the monica of recent date, the water-tank, and the direction in which he was then bound...I have met hoboos who, in trying to catch a pal, had pursued clear across the continent and back again, and were still going.{Citation}

Some of the styles found in hobo carving are still used today and are evident on the walls of the Medford railroad shed. Arrows or pluses, the idea of the nickname or moniker, the use of a backward N, negative lettering, certain forms of nomenclature, such as the word “Crip,” for cripple, wound their way into graffiti-based subcultures in the latter twentieth century and are still in use today. Several excellent instances of hobo negative lettering carving based on both style and the economy of taking a knife to wood are in evidence at Medford and demonstrate surprisingly contemporary letterforms.

Much better known than these simple marks is the so-called “hobo code” of symbols hobos were said to have used to communicate whether a town was hostile or friendly, where good places for handouts were, and so forth. There is little direct evidence of such marks, and among scholar it is contested as to whether this tradition actually existed (see for example Lennon 2015). The most

basic, well-documented, and surviving forms of hobo writing are simple compositions that include a hobo's moniker, date, and direction of travel. This is the heart of the tradition of hobo writing, examples of which are found in abundance at the Medford Railroad Park.

Significance of the Medford Carvings

Of the many carvings on the Medford walls, four are particularly worth noting.

First is a composition that reads ***Frisco Kid***, which is the appellation Jack London used during his early days hoboing in 1892, when he traveled locally out of Oakland before setting off on his cross-country hobo travels in 1894. A carving by Frisco Kid (undated) was also documented by Robert Ranford in Red Bluff in 1969 and is now destroyed. It is possible that this carving of Frisco Kid is by Jack London—but more likely that someone else carved it due to the stories London published involving Frisco Kid, or simply because it was a moniker taken by more than one person. I am doubtful this is truly his carving, because most of the context of the carvings come from later years, but wanted to note it nonetheless.

The second notable carving is undated but from a later period—the carving ***Tex K-T*** by notable tramp writer Tex King of Tramps. No one knows Tex's true identity, but he wrote and carved his name all over the (western) United States from the 1930s-50s or 60s. A neat-handed writer, Tex is rumored to have been a sign painter, and he made frequent use of black liquid shoeshine to mark his name in various U.S. locations. Tex K-T is a bit of a cult figure among people who follow hobo writing and the moniker tradition.

A third notable carving reads ***Carrie Nation***. Nation was known for her involvement in the temperance movement and was an early proponent of prohibition around the turn of the century. Mostly acting as a solo vigilante, she would physically attack saloons with a hatchet, bricks, or rocks, often getting arrested for her "hatchetations" on the interior and exterior of saloons. She later gave up her pursuit of smashing bars in favor of delivering lectures on temperance around the United States. Nation died June

9, 1911, when she collapsed during a public lecture on temperance. This piece is dated 2-20-11. Carrie Nation was reported in newspaper accounts to be near death during that month, but it is clear that Nation's ideas about temperance had some traction in Oregon during this time. According to the Oregon Secretary of State website, the state was then split between those who supported temperance and those who supported suffrage (<http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/highlights/Pages/prohibition.aspx>), and a hatchet was used as an emblem for the temperance side. The authorship of this carving is ambiguous. With some exceptions, hobos tended to practice the opposite of temperance. But messages such as this usually signal identification with a person rather than being ironic in nature, unless additional marks are made.

As a fourth example, two additional carvings of note read **IWW** and are a reference to the Industrial Workers of the World. Hobos as a social group had underlying currents of anarchism and socialism. Their associations with the Wobbly labor movement made them subject to media and political paranoia regarding forms of hobo sociality, political potential, and collective living. Ties to various labor communities and unions such as the IWW created paranoia around anarchism that ran through media treatments, which regarded Wobblies as a cancer sore that took advantage of the loose social organization of hobo communities to resist police crackdowns.

More About Tex-KT

Devon just sent this further material about Tex-KT.

The second notable carving is undated but from a later period—the carving **Tex KT** by notable tramp writer Tex (The Extraordinary) King of Tramps. Tex, more formally known as James Jesse Wells, took to tramp life in 1915 at the age of 14 and was an avid fan of literary tramps Jack London and Leon Ray Livingston (known as A-No.1), considering both an inspiration. Whether by train or boat, Tex tramped through nearly every part of the world, including Canada, Cuba, South America and Europe. Although well-travelled, Tex spent most of his time in the United States where he placed his moniker in over 8,000 cities and towns by 1931. Tex remained active into the

1970's and has occasionally emerged as a mysterious cultural figure, once starring as the principal character of a fictional story for Esquire magazine, titled Night of the Pig. Marking his name "about 2 o'clock in the morning...when the station and yards are most deserted," Tex not only carved his moniker, but used paint, ink and sometimes shoe polish acquired by money through panhandling. Tex practiced numerous type styles and considered himself a real artist through his often elaborately painted monikers. Once a nuisance to railways across the United States, Tex has since gained a cult-like following among people who follow hobo writing and the moniker tradition for his prolific and distinct writing style.

As the SORHS museum archivist/historian/curator I am grateful when we are able to gather additional information and history about our collection.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Southern Oregon Railway Historical Society Board of Directors Regular Meeting March 12, 2019

1. Call to Order: By Bruce Kelly at 7:30 PM.
2. Roll Call: Bruce Kelly, Jerry Hellinga, Allen Dobney. Chris Manley, Ric Walsh was absent. There were several other members in attendance.
3. Consent of the Agenda: The agenda was approved by consensus.
4. Approval of Minutes: The minutes were approved with one correction regarding the simulator in the museum, should be trans-simulator. Jerry moved that the minutes be approved with the correction and Allen seconded, motion passed.

5. Treasurer's Report: Jerry Hellinga presented the Treasurer's report. Allen Dobney moved to approve the report as presented, Chris Manley seconded, the motion passed.

6. Committee Reports:

- a. Medco 4: No update
- b. Burger Shack: Allen will be replacing part of the floor in the Burger Shack before opening day, as well as repairing, painting, etc. benches. No price changes on the food in the Burger Shack are needed for this coming season.
- c. Newsletter: Sent, no updates.
- d. Website: Allen has added the times and place for our meetings to the website.
- e. Butte Falls: No update
- f. Excess Sales: Allen reported that he had listed 38 books on EBay and that \$250.00 worth of sales had been accomplished so far from them.
- g. RR Park: This next Thursday there will be a meeting. Concession stand proposals (so we are not encroaching on one another's menu). The city maintenance came to see what trees needed trimming.
- h. On May 4 the park will be given an award for having the largest variety of trees, Jerry Hellinga is planning on attending to

represent our group.

- i. Mountain View Paving will help with paving the paths.

7. Old Business:

- a. Trans-simulator is installed and the computer is back in the museum. However, the table for the computer has gone missing.

8. New Business

- a. Allen reviewed and updated the project list.

9. Good of the Order:

- a. A copy of insurance policy is needed for the Board of Governors. Proof is needed that unlicensed drivers, such as the youth members can drive the golf carts.

10. Adjournment: At 8:03 p.m., with motion by Allen Dobney and second by Chris Manley, meeting adjourned.

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UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

If you know of any other events that should be added to our newsletter, please email, me at (chrismanleysteam@gmail.com)/ call, (541-291-1705), with the details.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Meetings are in the Model Railroad Building.

Allen Dobney will be presenting "*Burlington Northern in Washington, Volume 2*".

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