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A brief tour of the Shaw Historical Library

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Shaw Historical Library

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A Brief Tour of the Shaw Historical Library

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Entering the Shaw Historical Library is like stepping into the soothing sanctuary of an old fashioned reading room. The walls of the library's two rooms are lined alternately with glass-doored oak book cases and works of art. A large table surrounded by heavy wood chairs invites the scholar who needs room to spread out, and leather arm chairs provide a comfortable spot for readers imagining the hardships of early pioneers.

The Shaw library is located in the Learning Resource Center of the Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls. It is an archive and a reading room, as well as a library. It was established in 1983 with money, a book collection, and an art collection donated by Laurence Shaw, a local collector and historian whose family has been in the lumber industry for four generations.

Mr. Shaw's intention in establishing the library was to provide students, researchers, and the interested public with a place to learn about the people and history of the area known as the Land of Lakes: the vast, primarily arid landscape dotted with lakes that lies in southeastern Oregon, northeastern California and northwestern Nevada. The collection includes maps, manuscripts, photographs, and taped interviews, as well as 1,400 books. The book collection, which does not circulate, is accessible through OIT's OPAC, and the library is open to the public on weekdays, and at other times by appointment.

Because the Shaw library collection has grown largely through donations, it is somewhat eclectic, reflecting the interests of local historians and collectors. Broadly, the library contains materials relating to the American western migration—the pioneers' trails, their diaries, the Indian cultures that preceded them in the West, and the human activities in this area for the last 200 years.

The locked bookcases in the Shaw library don't promote casual browsing, but the library has bibliographies on a number of subjects such as overland diaries and memoirs, exploring expeditions, forestry and lumbering, the Modoc War, and Klamath history. The Land of Lakes is rich in natural resources and, not surprisingly, the collection includes many materials relating to the timber and lumber industries, as well as water usage in the Klamath Basin.

One of the library's unusual aspects is an extensive collection of materials about the Modoc War of 1873-74. A recent addition to the collection was a bound volume of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* for 1873. The *Illustrated Weekly* covered the Modoc War and contains detailed illustrations based on photographs. The library owns several rare resources relating to the Modoc War, such as Erwin N. Thompson's *Modoc War - Its Military History and Topography* and a photocopied collection of over a thousand pieces of correspondence and documents relating to the war, dated from 1865 - 1877.

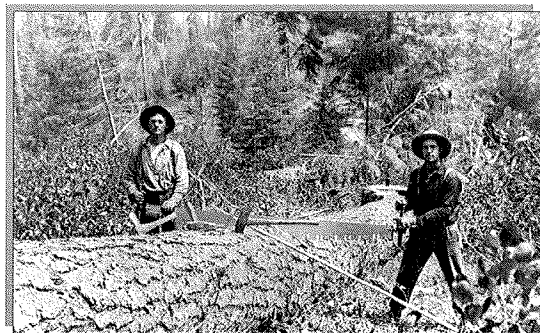
Library users can find information on the Klamath tribe, including M.A.R. Barker's three volumes on the Klamath language and texts, and Gatschet's two volumes on the Klamath culture and language, published in 1890. Government documents on the Klamath Tribe Termination of Federal Supervision Act provide researchers with more current events in the history of the tribe.

Numerous volumes of pioneer women's and men's diaries make fascinating reading for either the casual library explorer or people engaged in more serious research. *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails* is a multi-volume set full of amazing stories. The library has many other published diaries and narratives, from Fremont's expeditions to local memoirs.

The Shaw library is in a transitional phase, having hired its first librarian. Until the end of 1996, the Shaw library was run by a volunteer board of governors. Upcoming projects include organizing the non-book collection for preservation and access, developing finding aids, promoting use of the library on campus, and outreach to researchers and historians outside of OIT.

The main rooms of the library may be soothing, but the cramped quarters that house the archival materials are anything but. Blest with a dry climate (the library and archives are climate controlled) mold is not a problem, but much of the archival collection is in old folders, old photo albums or stacked in metal filing cabinet drawers. The archive is full of treasures, such as original watercolors of wildflowers,

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Photograph of early loggers from the Priest collection, part of the Collier collection, 1911-1913.

Shaw Tour

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historical photographs, and taped interviews with local people: The challenge is to provide access!

During the past year the Shaw has received several donations that lend themselves to illustration. The Collier Collection is a large group of images and papers related to logging. The photographs document a variety of logging and lumbering technologies and show the forests and landscape around Klamath County since the turn of the century. Within the Collier collection are about 100 photographs of Klamath Indians, which also date back to the beginning of this century.

Last fall the library received several dozen books on railroads and a handful of brochures published by railroad companies. This augmented an existing collection on railroads in the West and logging railroads.


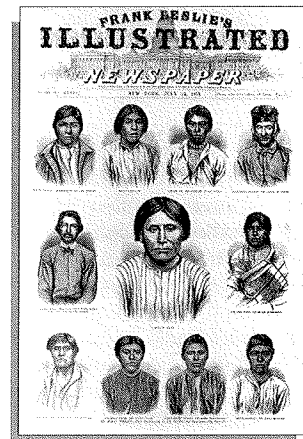
The Shaw library publishes the *Journal of the Shaw Historical Library*, an annual journal with scholarly articles on all aspects of the Land of Lakes. Past articles have included excerpts from journals written by pioneers, soldiers, and early settlers; articles on contact and conflicts between Land of Lakes Indian tribes and early settlers; and articles on other topics such as archaeology, railroads, and water usage. The 1996 *Journal* was devoted to the Applegate Trail, and the 1997 issue will be a celebration of the Oregon Institute of Technology's 50th anniversary. 

Image Database

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Both the Archives and the Historical Society provided additional photos for scanning and inclusion in the database. Additional photos were also added from *Statesman-Journal* newspaper files and historical houses photo projects.

Not being content to limit access to in-library patrons, the Archives, and the Historical Society, the library continued to explore ways to improve access to the collection. The development of the Salem Public Library and Marion/Salem Data Center's OPEN internet project created a new avenue to allow access to the images and database. In December 1996, several thousand images and the related



Front page of Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Weekly* newspaper, New York, July 12, 1973. Portraits of Modoc Indians.



Photograph taken by Maud Baldwin and from the collection of photographs by her: Klamath Indians in a dugout canoe on Upper Klamath Lake, selling baskets to the white people.

descriptions and headings were copied to the data center's internet server. John Mitchell, the OPEN webmaster, was instrumental in converting the images and designing the search engine. The process of converting the images from the Questor System to the internet is ongoing. Volunteers' work, namely Don Christensen's, is cleaning up the images and transferring them to the data center.

At this time, anyone connected to the World Wide Web can link to Salem Public Library's historical photographs web page (www.open.org.library/photo-find.html), search via key word, and retrieve photos and descriptions from Salem's and Oregon's past. 