

Coos County Logging Museum

By Siva Stephens

Coos County's Logging Museum in Myrtle Point is easily recognized by its cedar-shingled, onion-shaped dome. The museum is a nonprofit educational institution that is governed and staffed entirely by volunteers. The museum's focus is the history of the logging industry in and around Coos County, and it features exhibits of logging equipment, photographs, and artifacts, as well as a scale model of the Gardiner sawmill. The Coos County Logging Museum is open from Memorial Day through September.

The building that houses the Coos County Logging Museum was originally the home of the Reorganized Church of the Latter-Day Saints. In the summer of 1910, Samuel Giles, who owned a local brickyard, had recently returned from a pilgrimage to the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, much impressed by that building's acoustics. He was certain he could design a smaller-scale edifice for his hometown church.

Giles used a distinctive framing system with continuous floor-to-cupola "ribs," composed of laminated one-by-fours, nailed together to form the building's signature curvature. The ribs form a solid surface where they meet at the peak, and the walls were shaped by winding one-by-sixes spirally around the ribs to make a smooth shell. In what was a rather daring departure from traditional gender roles, the women of the congregation did all the lathing and plastering work while the men did the framing and shingling.

The sound-carrying perfection the congregation had hoped for in the building failed to materialize. In the new church, the most impassioned sermon could not be heard in the front pews, while whispers on one side of the room were quite audible on the opposite side. As far as is known, it was Samuel Giles's sole foray into ecclesiastical architecture.

The congregation used the building until November 1927, when they sold it to the newly organized Foursquare Gospel Church. This group announced their intention to occupy the building until the world's end—which their local leader, Sister A.T. Train, assured them was imminent. Under Mrs. Train's direction, the first of what would be many false ceilings—this one of burlap, hung sixteen feet from the floor—was hung in an attempt to deaden a few of the echoes.

Armageddon having failed to appear, the Foursquare group quit holding services there and the structure devolved into a general meeting space. Shortly before World War II, the local American Legion Post bought and remodeled the building, adding a kitchen wing. In 1961, they installed a ten-foot-high ceiling inside the dome and replaced the cedar shingles with composition. The Post turned the building over to the City of Myrtle Point in 1978 with the provision that it be used as a museum.

On September 26, 1987, the Coos County Logging Museum was opened to the public. The refurbished building features new cedar shingle sheathing and inside bathrooms. The false ceiling was removed and the original dome-shaped interior restored, acoustical quirks that were distracting in a house of worship being deemed rather interesting in a museum setting. On October 18, 1979, the Logging Museum was added to the National Register of Historic Buildings.

Sources

Oregon Museums Association. <http://www.oregonmuseums.org/SectionIndex.asp?SectionID=140>.

The Oregon Encyclopedia

http://oregonhist-oep-dev.azurewebsites.net/articles/coos_county_logging_museum/