

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Willamette Valley National Wildlife
Refuge Complex
26208 Finley Refuge Road
Corvallis, Oregon 97333
Phone: 541/757-7236
<http://www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/complex/index.html>

News Release



Date: May 5, 2009
Contact: Sallie Gentry, Refuge Ranger

"Barns and Bluegrass Event at Finley NWR on Saturday, May 9th"

Join Refuge staff and volunteers on Saturday, May 9th, to celebrate National Preservation Month. Enjoy a day of touring the historic barns and lodges on the Refuge. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy Dinner on the Ground at the historic Fiechter House, while listening to bluegrass music provided by the Split String Extranauts. Watch a demonstration of old-fashioned horse logging and learn about the oak habitat restoration being conducted by the Refuge. Learn about the new barn tenants and their interactions with other wildlife. Discover which native plants were important to early settlers and Native Americans.

The tour begins at the historic Fiechter House, located on the original Donation Land Claim site of John Fiechter and considered one of the oldest buildings in Benton County. Just across the road at the Cabell Barn, Refuge assistant biologist Molly Monroe will share stories about the new barn inhabitants. Visitors may dissect owl pellets from the barn and discover what prey the owls search for at night. A limited supply of free posters celebrating International Migratory Bird Day will be available.

Tours through the Cabell Barn will highlight farming-related equipment used in the heyday of the homestead. Historic horse logging demonstrations will be ongoing next to the barn, in an area being restored to oak habitat. This type of heritage farming is still used by the Refuge today for selective logging. Exterior tours continue around the Cabell Lodge and the Granary, which was recently moved from its original location near the Refuge shop. A local naturalist will point out native plants essential to early settlers and Native Americans, as well as other wildflowers typical of the Willamette Valley. Live bluegrass music, provided by the Split String Extranauts, will keep the mood lively from 12:00 – 1:00pm, while visitors enjoy picnicking on the grass. Please bring your own picnic!

The tour continues after lunch with a visit to the Big Barn, located next to the Refuge's shop area. Visitors may car pool to the area, which is normally closed to public access. The original barn is thought to have been built around 1904, with the lean-to's added later. The barn's structural components consist of massive posts and beams with spans in excess of twenty feet. The Big Barn is one of the largest of its type in the Willamette Valley.

The tour concludes at the Irwin-Cheadle Barn, located north of Bruce Road on the south end of the Refuge. The barn is situated on a portion of the original 1854 Joel B. Perkins Donation Land Claim of 323 acres. Located on a hill west of Muddy Creek and McFadden Marsh, north of Bruce Road, and east of Pigeon Butte, the barn is the

lone surviving structure of the Richard S. Irwin farmstead, and may be reached by a seasonal refuge foot trail. Foundation ruins of the Irwin Queen Anne style farmhouse remain east of the barn, obscured by vegetation, rambling ornamental plants, and orchard remnants. Irwin owned the property until his death in the 1920s. The Cheadle family purchased the farm in 1947.

In 1900, Canadian-born carpenter Earnest Brimner built this barn for Irwin. Few Brimner barns survive in good condition. Brimner built as many as 20 barns within a 10-mile radius of Monroe, where he lived and farmed with his family. In 1988, only five barns were authenticated as Brimner barns, and of the five, the Irwin Barn is the best example of Brimner's skills as a builder and designer of distinctive horse barns.

Event hours for the Barns and Bluegrass Tour are from 11:00am – 3:00pm PT. The tour begins at the historic Fiechter House, located approximately 10 miles south of Corvallis. Turn west off State Highway 99W onto Finley Road. For more information, please contact the Refuge Headquarters at (541) 757-7236 Monday through Friday from 8:00am – 4:00pm PT or visit our website at www.fws.gov/willamettevalley/finley.

This FREE event is sponsored by USFWS, PreservationWORKS!, Friends of Willamette Valley NWR Complex, Benton County Historical Society, City of Corvallis and Benton County Historical Resources Commissions, with a special thanks to Greenbelt Land Trust, Frank Nussbaum, and Hoffman Horseworks.

XXX