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CRATERS OF THE MOON NM



Historic Find For Craters of the Moon

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Craters of the
Moon NM

Craters of the Moon National Monument is not a park without a history, but it comes close. What it really has is a sort of non-history. Early explorers, pioneers, settlers and Indians all avoided contact with the area. If the treacherous, jagged lavas didn't keep them out, then the hot, dry summers and cold, snowy winters did. And if that wasn't enough, one had to think long and hard for a good reason to venture out onto the lavas that formed such an inhospitable landscape.

The area remained unexplored until the early 1920s. It was then that a man named Robert Limbert led a small expedition into the lavas to map and photograph the area for the first time. The publicity that he generated and his enthusiasm for the area are considered to have been important factors in leading President Coolidge to proclaim Craters of the Moon a national monument in 1924.

Except for a few other people with casual connections to the monument, Limbert became the park's only cultural contact with the past. This association, however, was based solely on one article that he wrote for National Geographic about his trip through the park.

One year ago all of this changed. While in the process of producing a historic overview of the monument, park staff located Limbert's daughter in Boise, Idaho. As it turned out, she had saved hundreds of items belonging to her father.

This collection contained thousands of glass plate negatives and photos, manuscripts and other materials documenting Robert Limbert's life and the early days of Idaho. The collection covered so many aspects of Idaho history that arrangements were made to donate it to Boise State University. The university now has two full-time curators cataloging the collection, and has plans to produce a traveling exhibit so that the people of Idaho can be made aware of the significance of this find. Other plans call for the permanent exhibition of the Limbert Collection at the Hemingway Western Studies Museum at the university.



Although his posing for a photo in full cowboy regalia may appear to be a bit pretentious, the accomplishments and actions of Robert Limbert prove just the opposite. In every way, he represented the spirit of the west in its earlier days. Photo courtesy of Boise State University Library Archives and Special Collections.

Preliminary examination of the collection suggests it may provide answers to questions concerning southern Idaho's early history. The collection has already provided the Bureau of Land Management with background on several important historic structures they oversee. It has also provided Craters of the Moon with the first known photographs of its spatter cone formations. These photos have guided the rehabilitation of these fragile geologic features, eroded by high visitor impact over the past sixty years. If locating some new bit of historic data about your park can be compared to the feelings you have when you open an unexpected gift, then finding the Limbert Collection represents a surprise party with all the trimmings for Craters of the Moon. It is a good feeling to finally have a history.

Looking It Up: A Few Words About Dictionaries

Duncan Morrow
WASO

Limber up your typewriter and the next thing you know, someone is reading what you wrote.

I took the risk anyway, directing some heart-felt views on the uses and abuses of language to the editor of the *Courier*. She, in turn, edited my invectives, then converted my notes into a column back in November. Many, of course, yawned. But to my surprise, that little enterprise spawned a spate of letters. It seems I'm not the only one concerned about the quality of writing in the *Courier* and elsewhere.

One common query was about dictionaries. Most of us use them, sporadically, to check spelling, definitions, or pronunciations. We make little distinction among them. A dictionary is a dictionary is a dictionary.

Wrong!

There are good and bad dictionaries, small and large dictionaries, specialized and general dictionaries. I have firm prejudices about some, little knowledge of others, and, frankly, no interest at all in quite a few.

Rather than expose my prejudices, I'll defer to the professional analysis of the American Library Association (ALA). In 1986, ALA published a consumer's guide to desk dictionaries.

For desk use, ALA "highly recommends" two: "Webster's New World Dictionary of the English Language" (second college edition, published by Simon & Schuster), and "Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary" (Meriam-Webster). Also highly recommended—profusely praised, in fact—is the two-volume "World Book Dictionary," published in conjunction with World Book Encyclopedia, but available for separate purchase.

Four others are "recommended" by ALA. They are: "American Heritage Dictionary" (second college edition, Houghton-Mifflin); "Oxford American Dictionary" (Oxford University Press); "Random House College Dictionary"; and "Webster's II: New Riverside Dictionary" (Houghton-Mifflin).

The general advice offered by ALA is "all but the smallest public and academic libraries will want to purchase