

81° 72° 61°

GENERAL ALERT All MT COVID-19 cases free

SHOW MORE

Search Site



ADVERTISEMENT

Brandy Bar aptly named

by Bill Miller
Sunday, June 8th 2008

AA



The first ship to sail up the Umpqua River ran aground 18 miles from the ocean. The crew members spent the night getting drunk on the ship's supply of brandy while waiting for the tide to rise and float them free.

Early in the morning, the boys were all hung over and Captain Coffin was none too pleased.

Grounded in the middle of the Umpqua River, his sailors had drunk the last of the brandy waiting for the tide to rise and float their schooner free.

It was one of many mishaps that plagued his expedition from the beginning.

It all began in San Francisco in spring 1850, when an adventurous

ADVERTISEMENT

TRENDING

Woman from Medford describes life in Hong Kong under lockdown

Governor's office says Jackson County's request addresses criteria for phase one reopening
Sheriff pushes back on shelter orders

Graduation, remixed

Classic cars to cruise on

1 out of 5 articles remaining

Subscribe

Ever since gold was discovered in 1848, miners had rushed northward into the unexplored territory along the Trinity and Klamath rivers, and had even started to cross over the Siskiyou Mountains into Oregon.

Merchants were following the miners over rocky trails and through roadless canyons but needed a cheaper mode of transport to increase their profit margins. If the Klamath River was navigable, they could easily move their merchandise by sea.

Before Coffin's ship could sail, one of those periodic, ravaging city fires devoured the homes of many investors. Replacements were found and the briefly delayed expedition was back in the water.

On July 1, 1850, the schooner Samuel Roberts pushed away from the wharves of San Francisco with 35 men on board.

Some say it was a bad map and others just bad seamanship, but 14 days after leaving the Golden Gate, the men missed the Klamath and arrived at the mouth of the Rogue River.

Because they were already there, they decided to sail a short way upriver and set anchor for the night. The next morning they found themselves in four feet of water.

A few brief scouting parties upriver and down the coast were fruitless and attracted the attention of the local Indians. Feeling threatened, Captain Coffin ordered everyone back to the ship, fired his cannon and set sail up the Oregon Coast.

At the mouth of the Umpqua River, members of the Umpqua tribe unexpectedly met the schooner in canoes and offered to guide the crew upriver.

On Aug. 6, the Samuel Roberts crossed over the sandbar, becoming the first recorded vessel to enter the Umpqua.

With a small rowboat in front taking soundings, the schooner slowly moved upriver. The water was deep and calm and the surrounding forested hills were beautiful. The men relaxed to enjoy it.

Eighteen miles from the ocean, a grinding rumble shook everyone back to attention. At the foot of a 1,000-foot bluff, the ship was snagged on a gravel bar — at least until the tide returned.

STAY CONNECTED

Like Us

Follow Us

© 2020 Mail Tribune

[Privacy](#) | [Terms](#)

There were only two things to do: wait, and wash away their sorrows with the rest of the brandy on board.

Though there are no reports of the bleary-eyed return voyage down the Umpqua, the expedition was finally a success. The merchant town of Scottsburg took shape upstream and the drunken crew had unwittingly given a name to the gravel bar that, at low tide, is still visible today.

Bill Miller is a freelance writer living in Shady Cove. Reach him at newsmiller@yahoo.com

MORE TO EXPLORE

Raider coach does his part in PPE drive

Gold Hill meth suspect found in mountain cabin

Medford's signature festival remains in 'wait and see' mode

SPONSORED CONTENT

The Funniest Photos Taken On The Road

amomedia.com

Danica Patrick Wins the Red Carpet in Mini Dress

Greeningz

Back In Stock: Disposable Masks Available Here

Stratton Medical Supply

Sponsored Links by Taboola

ADVERTISEMENT