

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 1, 2018

Meeteetse Museums Adds Re-Enactors, Ecology Tour to Annual Kirwin Trip

Meeteetse Museums will host its free, annual field trip to Kirwin, the ghost mining town, on Saturday, August 11, 2018. The event will begin at Kirwin at 10:30 a.m. Tour participants should meet at the museum by 7:45 a.m. to get instructions and also to arrange for a ride with another guest if one is needed (or available). The tour leaves at 8:00 sharp. Those wanting to meet at Kirwin and not wait for the group may do so. A higher-clearance vehicle is needed to get to the ghost town. Those without a higher clearance vehicle can arrange for carpooling that morning at the museum. Rides, however, are NOT GUARANTEED. Tour participants should bring a picnic lunch (and bear spray if going off site). Vault style restrooms are available at Kirwin.

This year we are adding a couple of new twists to the Kirwin Excursion. A couple of **historical re-enactors** will be strategically placed to help interpret the history of Kirwin and everyday life there. One character will be Ethel Broadbent (played by museum Collections Manager Alex Deselms). Broadbent was a schoolteacher who taught at Meeteetse, but who lived at Kirwin during the summer. Another character will be Mrs. Brunell (played by Meeteetse student DaKotta Wheeler). Mrs. Brunell was killed by the 1907 avalanche that basically brought the town to an end.

In addition, Forest Service Ecologist Kassy Skeen will be leading a **free “River Ecology Tour”** along the Wood River at Kirwin! This “side tour” will cover both plant and animal life in the vicinity of Kirwin. Guests will also explore the effects of bark beetles and other natural phenomena on the ecosystem in the Kirwin area. Bring a magnifying glass to get an up-close view of the flowers, animal tracks, and other life along this pristine river. The ecology tour is appropriate for kids and adults and involves easy to moderate hiking. This side tour gets started after the initial Kirwin presentations!

The Kirwin event begins in earnest at 10:30. At that time, US Forest Service rangers will present information about food and bear safety, plus they will discuss the logging that is currently taking place in and around Kirwin. Museum staff will then give a brief overview of the history of Kirwin. Camille Anderson (great-great-granddaughter of Carl Dunrud who owned the Kirwin Mining District in the 1930s and ‘40s) will follow with her take on the Dunrud’s connection to Kirwin and their friendship with Amelia Earhart. Next, geologist Lynn Sessions will provide an overview of the interesting geology of Kirwin and the region and how it has shaped what we see today. A Wyoming native, Lynn is a consulting geologist, primarily for the oil and gas industries, and has done extensive coal work, both internationally and in the US. Finally, US Forest Service Ecologist Kassy Skeen will provide visitors with a brief overview of her River Ecology Tour, which will commence immediately thereafter. The Ecology Tour is also free and no registration is needed.

Participants in Saturday's events will have the opportunity to explore the individual buildings (inside and out), as well as the general layout of the former town. Guests may also hike the trail about a mile to the remnants of the summer cabin that was being built by Carl Dunrud for his friend, aviatrix Amelia Earhart. Construction on the cabin stopped when Earhart's plane disappeared over the Pacific Ocean in 1937.

The ghost town of Kirwin is located in the Absaroka Mountains, 38 miles southwest of Meeteetse. Its mining history began in 1881 when William Kirwin and Harry Adams discovered ore while hunting in the area. Money and people rushed to Kirwin and, by the early 1900s, the mining town had a population of over two hundred.

Extracting the gold, copper, silver, and lead from the mines was difficult, as was the effort that went into it. All the machinery, for example, had to be hauled in piece-by-piece by horse-drawn wagons. Despite the difficulties of living and working in Kirwin, the town grew. Most of the dwellings were one or two room structures, although there were a few duplexes there. The mine superintendent lived in a two-story home. A large bunkhouse housed about 75 miners who were employed by the three mining companies. In addition to houses, Kirwin included three general stores, a hotel, and post office. There were no saloons or houses of prostitution at Kirwin (folks went to Meeteetse for those things).

Because the gold and silver was of low value, Kirwin did not survive long. Its demise was hastened further by a January 1907 avalanche, which destroyed the home and store of C. L. Tewksbury and killed three people. Kirwin never recovered from this deadly event and residents began moving away. Before long, mining operations ended. There were a few efforts to revive the operations there, including one around 1940. Starting in 1969, AMAX, a mining company, also tried to revive mining operations at Kirwin, but this effort was short-lived, as well. In 1992, the US Forest Service acquired Kirwin through the efforts of the Mellon Foundation and the Nature Conservancy. The Forest Service maintains the historic structures to this day. A number of well-preserved buildings from Kirwin's past are accessible to visitors.

Again, the Kirwin event will begin on site at 10:30 a.m. Participants should meet at the museum, located at 1947 State Street in Meeteetse, by 7:45 a.m. The tour will depart at 8:00 sharp. For more information, call 307-868-2423 or email info@meeteetsemuseums.org.