

Camp Latgawa



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SITE HISTORY

Camp Latgawa is known to many in the Rogue Valley by its historic name, Dead Indian Soda Springs Camp, named after the creek and soda springs that run along the periphery of the property. The soda springs are believed to be known by the Takelma, Shasta and Klamath Native American groups. The soda springs remained undiscovered by white settlers until 1871, when John Tyrrell chased a wounded elk up the remote canyon and stopped here to quench his thirst.

The “health-giving” qualities attributed to the mineral water brought increasing numbers of local people to the springs each year. By the 1890’s, Dead Indian Soda Springs was a popular camping spot for many Rogue Valley residents.

After 1900, Charles Wilkinson built a home and several small rental cabins near the mouth of Dead Indian Creek, establishing Dead Indian Soda Springs Resort and Forest Camp. The structures that remain are now part of Camp Latgawa. In the 1920’s, Lou Bean obtained bottling rights to the spring and sold the water to Brown’s Tavern in Medford.

John and Ella Tyrrell, both school teachers, operated the resort at this site for 23 years (1930-1953).

The original resort guesthouse, a few outbuildings, and a gazebo built by the Civilian Conservation Corps are protected and prized by the State Historical Interpretation and Preservation Organization. Over half of the buildings at Camp Latgawa remain from the resort era, allowing guests to experience some of the same spaces used for recreation for over 100 years.

In 1953, the Oregon-Idaho Conference of The United Methodist Church took over the special use permit from the U.S. Forest Service to operate an organizational camp at the site. Since then, Camp Latgawa has served individuals, families, educational institutions, religiously affiliated groups, social service agencies, community service organizations, and other nonprofit organizations that enrich life in the world.

Camp Latgawa is an equal opportunity recreation provider under special use permit with the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.