

HARNEY COUNTY

This is an adventure setting for the Morrow Project role playing game. It takes place in [Oregon](#) and is pegged to my ongoing **Morrow Project Travel Guide**. It is VERY loosely based on the 1987 novel [Shudderchild](#) by Warren Norwood. I changed it extensively but retained some of the details of that book. No offense at all is intended to Mr. Norwood or the forked-tongued cloven-hooved lawyers at Bantam Books, Incorporated.

"Harney County" is just intended to give a little flavor to the region to the north of Prime Base. Teams can enter this area either on their way to Prime Base, or having been sent out from Prime Base on some mission. See the end of the document for some ideas about how this area can become a long-term campaign.

The area that this module takes place is roughly the old Harney County in southeast [Oregon](#). The borders are generally the Blue Mountains to the north and the Catlow Valley and the old [Nevada](#) state line to the south, the Steens Mountains to the east and old Highway 395 in the west. This is called the Harney Basin, centered around the large Malheur Lake area which is part of the old Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. The only town of any size is Burns, which is a few miles northwest of the Lake. Spread out through the region are a few other small settlements, but none larger than a few families. Nearly all the population in the area lives within Burns or within five miles.

The flora of the area is typical of the High Desert, characterized by scrub, sparse grasses, broadleaf evergreen trees, dwarf shrubforms, and greasewoods. The conditions are very similar to those described in *American Outback*. The local fauna is diverse, including coyotes, deer, wild cattle, rabbits, snakes, possums, dogs, doves, quails, ducks, chickens, and turkeys amongst many others. The wild cattle tend to be disease ridden, even dumb people don't eat them or even feed to their dogs. They just shoot them and leave them for the buzzards.

People have remained in this area thanks to the reliable sources of water and the plentiful game and fowl in the Wildlife Refuge. In this area there are about 1,000 people total, perhaps 800 of them in Burns.

Burns, Oregon

The town of Burns will be the main settlement in our area. Formerly the county seat, a small town of maybe 2,500 people in 1989. The nuclear war was too far away from this area to have any direct impact, but the loss of commerce and communications had an isolating effect. Some refugee problems were encountered early on, but these were handled without too much effort. Within a decade of the war, the surviving people of Harney County settled down to do what they had been doing for a century, ranching and farming and making babies. 150 years later, Burns is a neat, well-ordered town of some 800 people, and still the capitol of Harney County.

There are many active businesses in Burns, including Godfrey's Store, Burrton's Store, and Osterman's Store. There is also the County Exchange Center for livestock and the Trade Market, where you can buy everything including watermelons, whiskey, nails, canned goods, fancy green glass jars, and sealed stonewear crocks. An old middle school gym has been converted into stables with one side opened up to let in wagons. This is also where visitors can park their wagons and vehicles for a fee.

Civic institutions include the Central School, which is the old Crane High School on Oregon Avenue, the Militia School, and a museum of old [Oregon](#) history in the former train depot. A sheriff's office is here, as well as administrative facilities for the county. The old Harney District Hospital on West Washington Street is still operating, now home to a Medical School. The Oregon Trail Electric Co-op on West Pierce Street still operates at a reduced level, providing electrical power to most businesses and civic institutions.

There are few cars operating, most people get around on horseback or muleback. Oxen and cows provide heavy pulling for wagons. The local economy is insular, with little trade or travel outside of the region. They use old US coins for currency, though much is also done through bartering. The town uses a telegraph system, called a "tap service", within the town and in the immediate area.

A local system of symbols has developed. On business signs and on the sides of wagons you can find symbols that denote certain things. These include...

A red "CUWW" means Umatilla Indians.

A circled peacebird means Zealander

A crossed red feathers means a Healer is present.

A double H means a Herbalist is present.

A red cross means a Medic is present.

The Harney County Militia

The Militia was originally the men of Detachment 1, Alpha Company 1249th Engineer Battalion ORNG, whose armory was in Burns. They, along with local police and volunteers, helped defend the town during the first few years of chaos after the war. Over time the force became the Harney County Militia.

All men and women between 15 and 40 are required to serve one full year in the Militia plus do annual training. There is a Militia School in Burns which teaches shooting and tactics. There are currently 150 people in the Militia fulltime, with another 100 doing training at the moment and available on short notice for call-up. The Militia wears homespun jackets and pants dyed gray-green and all carry ID cards. Ranks are carried over from the old US Army.

The standard Militia weapon is the .223 Burns-Ruger bolt-action short-barreled carbine. This is a locally-produced reproduction of the classic Ruger Mini-14. Calibrated peep sights give it an acceptable accuracy out to 450 yards or so. As well, Burns still has one old M60 machinegun for emergencies.

They usually patrol in 8-man squads, ranging out into the countryside in all directions and along the roads. At any given time, there are two of these squads out in the field, in opposite compass directions. They are out looking for bandits, wild animals, Indian raiders and helping to assist the locals when needed. A typical squad has 8 members on foot or on horseback, armed with rifles and led by a Sergeant.

New Non-Player Character classes

Some adds to the basic NPC classes in the rule book.

Medics: The equivalent of a doctor, someone trained in specialized medicine. Usually only found at the hospital.

Healers: A person trained in a wide variety of medical arts, from basic surgery to shamanistic trances. There is a Healer's Code that all Healers must abide by.

Herbalists: A person that deals in identifying, growing and selling herbs and plants that have medicinal purposes.

Medwives: A person specially trained to assist women give birth.

The Umatilla Indians

A confederation of Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla tribes, native to the Columbia River plateau. For nearly 150 years after the war, they pretty much kept to their lands north of the Blue Mountains. Starting two years ago, the Umatilla have been moving slowly but steadily south through the Blue Mountains. No one knows for sure why they started moving south, but rumors tell of water shortages or even epidemics in their homelands. The Indians first started to show up north of Burns in small raiding parties, and then in groups of 50 or 60 claiming land for themselves. For a year or so, there was only a series of clashes between braves and Militiamen. However, a few months ago, a Militia squad was ambushed by a force of Umatilla near the John Day River in the mountains north of Burns. The squad was outnumbered 4 to 1, and were wiped out. This "John Day Massacre" has people in Burns both angry and afraid. No one in Burns really wants a war, but they don't want to open up to the Indians either.

Umatilla braves have beautiful tattoos on their foreheads and cheeks, often blue and red feathers. They travel by horse and are armed with Wooley-and-Wolfe carbines made in the Umatilla nation. They are not overtly violent, but are aware that any whites they meet will mostly likely shoot first.

Encounters in the Harney County region

These people and groups can be met anywhere in the region, though most of them are designed to be encountered out in the open.

Militia Patrol: An 8-man Harney County Militia patrol. The squad leader is Sergeant Azle, a 40-year old woman, and her Corporal is Jeremiah Frontierhouse Cody. The six Privates are named Shelia Emery, Ed Kolmer, Juanita Brisas, Donna Melindo, Frederico Santos, and Roland Jessup. Melindo is the squad's best shot with her scoped, long-barreled .308 Winchester. Kolmer is the squad's best brush country tracker. Brisas is the squad's radio operator, carrying a vintage PRC-25 radio, which had only 52 working channels. They will not be hostile, but will not allow an armed team to enter the area unescorted.

Old Man Larkin: Can be met anywhere but usually in Burns. A 105-year old man, the oldest in the region. In his life he has traveled as far as Houston, Texas. Despite his age, he is not respected in the area, and people consider him a bit crazy.

Patricia Brighton: An old woman met in a boat on the Malheur Lake. A former Medic, now long retired. She still sees people who come to her house and has an excellent reputation. Taught nearly every Medic or Medwife in the region at one time or the other. Educated in the Golden Triangle, at the Med School at UC Davis. She lives on the lakeshore with her 15-year old grandnephew, Tomball Abbot.

Lucy Ilseng: A young woman Healer met out walking along a road, on the way to see her aunt. She is just 22-years old, but very talented, an Empath who can "smell" a person's inner trouble. Trained by her mother Mishla Ilseng. She carries a pistol, a map and a Jack Crane survival knife. She has a pack with a copy of *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary* in excellent condition, a small regular dictionary, and a two-volume set of wildflower identification books with notes added about the medicinal properties of many of them.

Zealander caravan: Meet along a road seven wagons from a group of farmers near Crater Lake. Five are made of metal, former pick-up truck beds, with hard rubber tires. Other two are wood and canvas with the same tires. They all have the circled peace bird symbol of their clan painted on the sides of their wagons. The Zealander ancestors had come from New Zealand and Australia years before the war to study at American universities. Many of them from universities in [Oregon](#) were at a retreat in the Cascades when the war started. They took responsibility for the campground there and made that area their clan home. This group is in the Harney County area looking to open up new trade routes for Zealander goods.

Cynthia Ironeyes: A 52-year old wandering Umatilla Healer. Has traveled all over the continent, from the Republic of Cleveland to southern Arkansas, to the Krell lands in Nebraska, and into the Deseret Empire. She will have a load of information, but is leery of white people.

Slavers: Meet out in the open desert a group of freelance Slavers working for the Slaver enclave down in Tahoe. They are from the Klamath area, and are called the "Nimenim". The group has 14 men and 1 woman, and is led by man named Garringer. They are armed with shotguns and .32 caliber black powder rifles. The Nimenim started as a religious cult in the Cascades 40 years ago. Their only identifying marks are snake tattoos on the penis of men and breasts of women. Members of this cult are known for their fundamentalist religious fervor and for their secret societies totally closed to all outsiders, and for their blind allegiance to their leaders, and for a questionable code of ethics. This particular band has just entered the area and has no captives yet.

Kendrick's Crew: In an isolated area a ways from any town, meet an odd group of people heading north at a rapid pace. They have one large ox-pulled wagon and a Hines pickup truck pulling a smaller wagon. The group consists of nine people. The leader is Kendrick Johnson, who has his very pregnant wife Ann with him. There are also the Quentin brothers, Max, Wendel and Hector, along with Hector's wife Suzanne. Most strangely, with these six white people are three Umatilla braves. These are Elroy Sashahunder, Mike Deerfoot Young, and Tinker Oberly. If met, they will first attempt to flee, and failing that will refuse to answer any questions. If pressed, they might attempt to shoot their way out

of the situation. Why are whites and Indians traveling together like this? What is in the wagon, the one covered with that large tarp?

Free-Growers: Meet along a watershed a wagon and ox-team. Once part of the Mountain Home Producers Co-op, free growers from [Idaho](#) to the far east. There are three people here, Leon and Harriet Shaw, and a man named Guido. Their large wagon carries seedling flats containing early peas, tomatoes, beans, dwarf corn, mint, oregano, squash, cabbage, and lettuce. Having grown tired of the regulations in Mountain Home, they now travel around the region looking for good places to plant, then sell the produce to locals. They will be very friendly and open to talking. They just want to find a nice valley near a creek and grow their vegetables in peace.

Hines Truck: A pieced-together pickup truck, made in Hines, a small town a mile from Burns. Often called "Hines-eyes" as they always have two headlights on the right side and one on the left. "Hines" has become a term for anything lopsided or abnormal. They are simple designs, mostly wood and powered by an alcohol engine with four manual gears. They are usually owned by rich ranchers and traders.

The Old Scavenger: An old man with a wagon filled with nameless pieces of metal and plastic. He has a lot of knowledge about the Umatilla nation, having traded there extensively in the past three decades.

Father Goodfox: Meet a team-of-four oxen and wagon, just passing through. In it is Father Murray Goodfox, a nearly famous radio preacher from southern Missouri, and a priest of the New Dominican Order. Along with him are his girlfriend Rhondasue Nyllan, Barton Haggerlotten, his common-law wife Dolores del Noches, and their son Jimmy Jack. The Haggerlottens they picked up in Oklahoma and have been traveling with them since. As the roads are dangerous in America, they are armed with two Ruger revolvers, an old sawed off Stevens shotgun, and a .30-30 rifle with a three-by scope. The wagon also holds a large shortwave radio, which he will protect with his life. The radio is missing its six-volt batteries, stolen by a thief in Colorado, and he will do almost anything to get replacements, up to and including violence. Father Goodfox will not tell anyone where he is going, or why he is traveling this far from home.

The Locketts: Meet a family homestead out in the valley, living in a large underground house. The house was dug out and built by many years ago and is very sturdy, complete with a chimney and a periscope. Cows, oxen, pigs and sows are kept in cattle traps and pens down in the nearby river bottom. Home to eight people, Kenneth Lockett and his wife Maria and their three children, 8-year old Samuel and year-old twin girls. There is also Maria's mother and Kenneth's parents. Kenneth was formerly a Captain in the Harney County Militia before quitting to raise a family. The homestead was hit by cowpox outbreak six years ago, which left Maria and Samuel badly pocked and scarred. That's when everyone became Born-Again Christians, except Kenneth. A pack of wild dogs has been running in the area recently, occasionally taking a pig or a cow. Kenneth would be most grateful for any help in killing this pack, and his contacts within Burns would come in handy.

Odd family: At an isolated farmstead out in the valley, meet the Sherina family, Varginik and his wife Shirlito. They sell pigs and bacon to travelers and locals. They seem like very nice people, open and honest, bright with curiosity, but restrained by good manners. But there is something odd about them♦? Why do they want you to stay the night so bad, and taste their "special food"?

Brother Shackleford: A traveling Baptist preacher from Burns, found almost anywhere. He wears a long, brown duster and a gray hat over his scruffy blond hair, and is bowlegged from near-constant horse riding. He goes on trips around the area every month to visit small churches and farmsteads, offering a sermon for a modest tithe.

Sheriff Bertha June York: Burns' current Sheriff, a graying older woman who knows her stuff. She carries a Ruger .44 Magnum Blackhawk and a pair of handcuffs. While normally in Burns, she occasionally makes the rounds of the county herself.

The Catholic Church: Burns is home to a large Catholic Church, formerly the Holy Family Catholic Church on North Fairview Avenue. The tan-brick Church sits atop a gentle hill on the north side of town. The Sister Superior is Sister Paula Kathryn. With her are Sisters Angelica, Benedict and Joana. There are also Brothers Irving and Jacob, along with a few stablers and gardeners living in the church. The Church has an antique M16 with a bandoleer full of ammo hidden away for emergencies.

Hilltop Motel: Formerly the Days Inn on West Monroe Street, now Burns' only inn for travelers and wanderers. Run by a morbidly obese woman named Maude and her 13-year old son Harold. They will rent rooms to most anyone, except Indians and Mormons. Harold is an aspiring musician, though he seems to have reinvented the punk rock craze from the 1980s...

Play of the game

How you play this is up to you. I left enough clues and hints to provide some extended adventuring in the area, or you can just have your team pass through. I tried to leave many of the encounters open-ended so you can have many possible outcomes, hopefully making a more entertaining game.