BULL OF THE WOODS

The 1920s were a busy time in the Klamath Country. This was especially true for the lumber industry, which by this time had become the mainstay for the county's economy. Sawmills were running day and night in an attempt to satisfy the demands for lumber and boxshook. It was the time when so-called "highball" logging was the norm. Horses, and steam, still provided most of the power to move the logs from the woods to the mill and was steam that powered the saws that cut the logs into lumber. Logging was a dangerous occupation and a good many men lost their lives or were crippled for life in the woods. Certainly, Klamath County was no exception. It was a tough job and it took tough men to survive.

Each logging operation had its own woods boss whose job it was to see that the mill did not run out of logs, for if that happened it would become necessary to shut down the mill. This displeased management for an idle mill pays no dividends. On the other hand he must also keep the crew happy, for it was these men who would be doing the work and without their cooperation little would be accomplished. It was the duty of the woods boss to keep the logs moving. This was not always easy. It was somewhat like walking a tight rope, trying to please the workers and the stock holders at the same time. Only a few had the ability to do that. One such man was William (Bill) Dyche, woods boss for Algoma Lumber Co. for over 20 years. It was said that after he took over as Algoma's woods boss the mill never again ran out of logs.

In this issue of the Trumpeter we look in on Bill Dyche, one of the more colorful individuals in the history of logging in Klamath County.

-Jack Bowden
Klamath County Historical Society

Meetings are held the 4th Thursday of the month — with some exceptions. See schedule or call 883-4208. We meet at the Klamath County Museum meeting room, 1451 Main St., Klamath Falls, Spring Street entrance. For further information call the museum. **Our next regular meeting will be October 26 at 7 pm.**

**PLEASE NOTE THE SEPTEMBER MEETING IS CANCELLED SO THAT OUR MEMBERS MAY ATTEND THE SHAW HISTORICAL LIBRARY BANQUET.**

### 2006 Officers
President: John Fortune  
Vice-President: Paul Fitzhugh  
Secretary: Susan Rambo  
Treasurer: Avis Kielmeier  
Board Members:  
Doris Peters  
Bob Baker  
Carol Mattos

### Dues

Dues will be due at the end of the year. If you look on your mailing label you will see an entry above your name. A date entered indicates you are paid through that year. Initials indicate you are receiving a complimentary issue or are a Life Member. If there is no entry, you either haven't paid for a while or we are sending you a complimentary issue, hoping you will become a member.

### Membership information

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*Make your dues payable to:*

**KLAMATH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

*and mail to or drop off at:*

Klamath County Museum, 1451 Main Street, Klamath Falls, OR 97601

### 2006-07 Meetings

- **Sept 28** - Cancelled  
- **Oct 26** - 7 pm  
- November date to be determined  
- **Jan 25** - 2 pm  
- **Feb 22** - 2 pm  
- **Mar 22** - 2 pm  
- **Apr 26** - 7 pm  
- **May 24** - 7 pm  
- **June** - Annual Tour
BILL DYCHE

ALGOMA'S FAMOUS BULL OF THE WOODS

"Men should have good tools to work with, be well housed, well fed, and should have as good living conditions as possible. Pay them all you can and work them hard and they will like you. But fall down on any of these conditions, and the men will soon begin to get dissatisfied and doggy in their work. Then production goes down and costs go up."

William K. Dyche
William K. Dyche, the legendary logging superintendent was one of the most highly respected loggers in the West Coast pine country. When he first came to Algoma in 1923, he found an inefficiently run operation that was struggling to supply logs to the mill, and not always succeeding. When the plant ran out of logs, as it frequently did, it had to be shut down. Dyche sized up the situation and promptly set about correcting matters. In a very short time he brought about a complete turnaround, dramatically increasing production even as he cut costs, pleasing his new employer no end and setting the stage for a mutually prosperous 20 year relationship.

When Bill Dyche first came to Algoma in 1923, logging was still being done using horses and big wheels.

When Dyche arrived on the scene Algoma was logging in the Middle Mt. Scott Unit northwest of Kirk. He immediately initiated a number of changes in the method of operation and in so doing managed to ruffle the feathers of a lot of local people. Only later, when these changes began to pay off in increased production and reduced operating costs did the establishment begin to warm to him.

Dyche had a knack for sizing up a complex problem, reducing it to its simplest components and then coming up with a solution. He believed in a hard day's work, but willingly paid his workers top wages for their labors. He could never have accomplished all that he did without the cooperation of the men working under him and he knew it. His ability to handle men was the key to his success. It was said that the mill was never again forced to close down for want of logs after Dyche took over. He became so proficient his contemporaries liked to say "magic-ed" the logs out of the woods, meaning that he did it by magic. But there was nothing magic about it. It was simply the result of hard work, an inquiring
mind and his continual search for a better way of doing things. He would figure and then refigure, always looking for a way to cut costs and increase production. It certainly appeared that he did it by magic. How else could you account for this man’s uncanny ability increase log production while at the same time cutting costs to a bare minimum, and keep both management and the logging crews happy while you did it. In a day when the names of logging bosses were legion, the name of Dyche stood near the top of the list.

Dyche lived a long, colorful life. Born in Kansas in 1877, his parents soon left there and moved to Washington State where he grew up. After serving with Teddy Roosevelt’s Rough Riders during the Spanish American war, he returned to Idaho and began working in the timber industry. He later moved to Oregon, to work for the Bridal Veil Lumber Co. where it was said that he participated in the first high-line logging operation in Oregon.

During his 20 years at Algoma, Dyche was witness to many changes not the least of which was the transaction from horses to tractors and from steam to internal combustion engines. In this photo, from the years of the we see the new, in the crawler tractor and the old in the set of high wheels. The high wheels are living on borrowed time and will soon be replaced by iron “arches”.

Dyche was one of those rare individuals with the ability to meet the demands of
his company's owners while at the same time retaining the respect and good will of the men serving under him, a quality too often lacking in the rough and tumble atmosphere of early 20th century "highball" logging. He was woods boss for Algoma when tractors began replacing horse teams in the woods.

Dyche expected his logging crews to work hard. Very hard. Most logging bosses expected that much, but what set Bill apart was his concern for the welfare of the men who worked under him. Perhaps nothing was as important to the logger as the quality and

Dyche believed in a full days pay for a full days work. He could not condone slackers

Dyche expected his logging crews to work hard. Very hard. Most logging bosses expected that much, but what set Bill apart was his concern for the welfare of the men who worked under him. He took the time to find out just what the logger expected in return for his hard work and endeavored to meet those needs. Perhaps nothing was as important to the logger as the quality and quantity of the food being served in the camp cook house. Bill understood this and went out of his way to be certain that his crews were well fed. "On the third or fourth day at that camp, I started in on the cook house. They had been hiring cooks, helpers and waiters that were so dirty and greasy that they were just slick. A miserable fly could not land on them for he would skid off and break his neck. You may not believe it, but I changed cooks five times in one month. Finally I got a cook that would feed my men. The crew were very well pleased at the change for no man likes to eat after a slovenly kitchen crew." Its one thing to please the men, by providing good conditions in the camp and paying top wages but keeping the company's owners happy while you do it is
The large mill at Algoma was never again forced shut down for want of logs after Bill Dyche took over as logging boss.

quite another. The owners have their eye on the bottom line, and rightfully so, for the company was not established to serve as a charitable institution. The owners expect to make a return on their investment and failure to do so will soon bring a company down and the men will be out of a job. This was where Bill Dyche was at his best. When he hired on with Algoma as logging superintendent, he expected to be boss, and would brook no interference from above. If he was to do a good job of logging and still save money for the company they must do things his way or find another.

"There are many ways to improve the efficiency of a logging operation. For instance, a bunch of home guards often get lazy and cut down production. Let me cite you an example. When I took over as superintendent for one outfit, the mill was cutting 250 mbf per day. It was not running steady because they could not get enough logs, although they had 230 men on the logging crew. They were loading with a donkey, a slide, an Ohio crane and ad McGiffert. The first day I laid off the donkey. The second day I laid off the slide. I had them both brought into camp and unloaded and never used them again. Then I laid off the crane and had it brought into camp and left on a side track. I kept the crane engineer and used him as a handy man because I might want him to pick up a wrecked load of logs or move a cabin, but laid off all the other three crews. At that time I
just had one cat and four, four horse outfits on high wheels. I put on another horse-drawn set of big wheels, and logged 300 mbf per day. It was all loaded with the McGiffert. They had been using three locomotives, but I laid off two of them. I used the other one to haul loads to the main line and bring back the empties at night. Then on days that we laid steel, had it ready to hand on the track laying machine.

In a couple of weeks the resident manager drove up to camp and came boiling into his was the first time I had seen him since he hired me. I had just come in from the woods and was washing up for dinner, when he came in and said in a mean, nasty way, 'What the hell are you trying to do up here Bill?' With my face still in the towel, said, 'Trying to get you some logs. Why? Aren't you getting any?' I knew that he was for I had been shipping him 30 cars every day. 'Yes,' he said, 'but you are letting all my good men go.' 'Well,' I said, 'I can't handle so many men and am cutting the crew down to my size.' 'Yes,' he said, 'but some of these men have been with me for 20 years, and I do not want to see them go.' Well,' I said, 'that is just the trouble. They have been here too long and they think they own the place. I can't get logs with them, and there is no law that I know of to prevent you from putting them back to work down at the mill where you can visit with them as often as you want to.' He said, 'Bill, you know that they are not mill men, and can't work there.' I said, 'Well, they can't work here either.' He said, 'I am going to send some of them back up here.' I said, 'If you do, I will send them back to you,' and then I told him, 'You have the reputation of being a mean cantankerous old man who wants to run this camp from the mill. You have been doing it in the past which is one of the reasons why your logging costs so high, and why you can't keep a man up here to run the outfit. Now then, you hired me to run the camp and promised me that there would be no interference. While I may not be here more than a half hour longer, as long as I am here, I am going to run it without interference, but you still have the right to fire me. Come on, let's go have dinner.' I started for the cook house, but he was so mad that he got in his car and left. I never saw nor heard from him for a month, nor did I see any of the men he was going to send back up, either. That fall when we laid off for the winter, we had six million feet of surplus logs in the pond. He was more than pleased, for he could run his mill until Christmas and start it up in the spring as soon as the ice went out, something he had never been able to do before.

A NOTE FROM THE KLAMATH COUNTY MUSEUM
By Todd Keppe

One of the great rewards of doing historical research is knowing your work will, sooner or later, be of great value to someone. I've written on this topic before, but I was reminded of this point again just recently.

Some years ago, when I was still working at the Herald and News, I spent quite a bit of spare time in the county museum's research library. It was there that I became acquainted with two other history nuts – Anne Ezell and Dr. Carl Koutsy.
Dr. Koutskey spent many hours reading through the bound volumes of newspapers from decades ago. When he came to an interesting story, he scribbled a note on a piece of paper, and stuck it in the bound volume before turning the page. Hundreds of his notes now adorn the bound newspaper volumes on our shelves.

A couple of those notes came in very handy last month. We received a request for information about when Stearns Elementary School opened. We knew it was about 1959, but didn’t know any more than that.

A quick search of Dr. Koutskey’s notes turned up two articles, including one that reported on the school board’s decision in 1958 to name the Crest Street School after Modoc Indian War veteran and pioneer settler Orson Avery Stearns.

If you’ve ever spent any time going through old newspapers, you know it’s virtually impossible to spend just a few extra minutes browsing through the pages. So, while I was hunting for items on Stearns Elementary, I came across another of Dr. Koutskey’s notes. The headline read: “County Road Shop Combines Modern Design, Low Cost.”

The story in the March 5, 1959, Herald and News was accompanied by six photos of the new county road facility on Washburn Way. “This is one of the finest buildings in the West for its utilitarian setup,” county engineer Bill Canton was quoted as saying. “It’s efficient, and we can work cheaper.”

The building – still in use though soon to be replaced by the next “new” county road shop – sported concrete walls with a wavy roof that was considered trendy and architecturally superior to a conventional roof.

A 20-ton crane could be used in any of the building’s five bays, and a hot water radiant system in the floor delivered even heat throughout the structure.

As with today’s current debate over the new county road shop, there was in 1959 some question about the expense. Road department officials admitted a simpler, metal building might be a little cheaper, but decided the building’s special features would pay for themselves.

The entire building cost a whopping $132,414 – a tiny fraction of the $25 million price tag for the road shop being proposed now, but no doubt a pretty penny back in 1959.

Thanks, Dr. Koutskey, for helping make this piece of history available to us. And thanks to all the other volunteers helping make even more information available to future generations.

* * *

Have you heard about the Klamath County Museum’s new e-mail newsletter, dubbed “The Midge”?

If you’d like to receive a copy, call the museum at 883-4208 and give us your e-mail address.

The most recent issue of the Midge included announcements about the following upcoming museum events:

- “People, Plants and History of the Link River Trail,” a guided walk along the lower half of the Link River canyon. The walk will take about an hour, and is open to anyone interested. We’d particularly like to hear from any old-timers who have information about the residences that once lined the west bank of the Link
River. Join us at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 16, at the south trailhead of the Link River Trail. The event is free. Bring a pail for blackberries and plums.

-- "Baldwin Hotel Reunion," a gathering of former customers and residents of the Baldwin Hotel. Anyone who stayed at the hotel, bought candy at the lobby's front desk, or got a haircut at the old barbershop is urged to come and share their stories. The reunion starts at 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 17. The event is free, and so is the ice cream left over from last month's ice cream social.

-- Our annual "Volunteer Huddle," a lunch-time gathering to reflect on the work done this year and to recruit volunteers for the coming year. We'll provide the soup. Volunteers can bring a favorite salad or dessert. Noon Tuesday, Oct. 10, at the armory building. Please call the museum at 883-4208 and let us know you're planning to attend.

-- "Oak Woodlands Hike," a discovery tour of native oak trees on the Running Y Ranch Resort. We'll discuss the importance of acorns to wildlife and Native Americans, and demonstrate how to sprout your very own Oregon white oak seedling. 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 14 at the Running Y. It's free.

-- "Linkville Cemetery Tour," a look at the pioneer cemetery in Klamath Falls that many newcomers don't even know exists! 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 14 at the cemetery.

-- "Murder of the Century!" a murder mystery dessert theater at the Baldwin Hotel Museum, featuring a cast of characters that could have been found in Klamath Falls in 1906. 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28. Tickets are $10, and can be had at the county museum.

"Downtown Walking History Tour," an exploration of old theaters and other buildings downtown. Among the highlights: a peek inside the grand ballroom on the third floor of the I.O.O.F. building. 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 11

Rummage Sale

The Klamath County Historical Society will be holding a Rummage Sale in the Klamath County Museum large meeting room on Saturday, October 7 from 9 – 3.

Please bring your items you would like to donate for the sale to the museum on Thurs, Oct 5 & Fri, Oct 6 between the hours of 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

We also need volunteers to assist in set-up and on the day of the sale. Please call 883-4208 if you would like to help.

All funds raised will go toward the reprint of "Echoes".
A message from the
Support Museums – Promote Tourism
Political Action Committee
Sue Fortune, Treasurer

Vote
‘Yes’
on Ballot Measure 18-58!

This measure would create the first-ever dedicated source of funding for the Klamath County Museums by raising the county’s motel tax rate from 6 percent to 8 percent.

Two ways to help support the campaign for Measure 18-58:

1. Join the list of people whose names will appear in a newspaper ad in support of Measure 18-58. To add your name to the list, just call Kate Marquez at 883-2127. (Donations to help pay for the ad would be appreciated, too.)

2. Write a letter to the editor voicing your support for Measure 18-58. For tips on what to say in your letter, ask Kate Marquez for a list of “talking points.”