A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

I took over the job of editing the Trumpeter from Susan Rambo in late 1993. Actually, I didn't take over the job. I just assumed the task of writing the quarterly story while Susan has continued to post the important news items, bring the notices up to date, arrange the news items, print the notices. Meanwhile I assumed the task of writing the feature article and the editorial. It has been a good partnership and I have enjoyed my part in it. I would have gladly continued the arrangement.

Unfortunately I have been plagued by sickness and deteriorating health for the last several months and find it necessary to discontinue my part in putting out the Trumpeter. There are plenty of people out there who are qualified to take over this job and I don't flatter myself with the thought that I cannot be replaced because obviously I can and with better, more qualified people too.

I wish to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy new Year.

Jack Bowden
SISKIYOU RUNAWAY
by Jack Bowden

In railroad parlance a “run around” occurs when one train passes and runs ahead of another train traveling in the same direction. Passenger trains routinely run around freight trains and freight trains frequently run around other, slower moving freight trains. But who ever heard of an unmanned freight “car” running around a first class passenger train? Just such an event occurred on the Southern Pacific’s Siskiyou line in southern Oregon in 1902.

It was clear and cold the morning of March 2, 1902. Traces of snow still spotted the rugged mountains of the Siskiyou range and stately pine trees glistened like silver with heavy frost reflected in the locomotive’s headlight.

The coal stove in the caboose gave off a warm, cozy glow that felt good to the cabooses’ occupants, conductor Josh Billings and swing brakeman, W. E. Bissell who were riding there.¹

After passing through the long Siskiyou tunnel² the train pulled to a stop with the engine just short of the siding switch and waited for head brakeman, Hiram Fox to get off and line the switch for entry into the siding. The train then pulled slowly into the clear to let train No. 12, the Shasta Limited, pass. It was now nearly four a.m.

The summit tunnel (at Siskiyou) was, and still is designated as Tunnel Thirteen.³ At 3,700 feet it is the longest bore on the Siskiyou Line.

The ascending grade encountered by east bound trains as they enter this tunnel is 3.3 per cent. Then, about midway through the tunnel, the grade begins to ease and by the time the engine emerges from the east portal the train has begun it’s 17 mile, 3.3 per cent descent to Ashland.⁴

In the days of steam locomotives heavy, tonnage freight trains in both directions required as many as five extra locomotives to negotiate the steep Siskiyou line grades. Even passenger trains required multiple helper engines.

¹ The flagman who would also have been riding in the caboose was not identified.
² Tunnel 13 is 3,700 feet in length.
³ Tunnel 13 was the site of the infamous DeAutremont Brothers hold-up of train No. 13, on Oct. 11, 1923.
⁴ For many years the Southern Pacific’s Siskiyou Line was a segment of the only rail line connecting California with the Pacific Northwest, but when the new Cascade Line was opened in 1926, through traffic was diverted to the new line and the Siskiyou route was relegated to branch line status.
There was always a considerable amount of delay to freight trains at Siskiyou. Cutting helper engines and turning them on the turntable for their return to Hornbrook or Ashland. Brakemen had to go over the train setting up retainers and testing the air brakes in preparation for the steep descent to Ashland or Hornbrook. All of this took time, and in addition to this, heavy freight trains often found it necessary to pick up empty freight cars at Siskiyou to provide additional braking power on the descent. These empty cars then had to be set out at the bottom of the grade to be returned to Siskiyou by the first available train, for use by the next heavy train.

Engine crews suffered badly in passing through the long Siskiyou tunnel. Smoke and gases from the multiple steam engines threatened their very lives at times and they had to take measures to avoid being overcome. All crewmen working on the engines were required to use a respirator.\(^5\)

But to return to the incident of March 2, 1902. After the freight train had pulled into the siding and the switches returned to normal position the conductor walked up to the station, a short distance ahead, to pick up any instructions or train orders for his train. There he received a message directing his train to pick up a car at Ayers siding, 11 miles east of Siskiyou, near the California – Oregon highway overpass.

At that time telephones were not in general use by the railroad. and of course radios were unheard of. Messages and train orders were transmitted to the outlying stations by telegraph, but of course the telegraph was not available to trainmen at blind sidings such as Ayers.

When they arrived at Ayers the crew found that the car they were to pick up was a gondola load of rock. Unfortunately it was cut in behind an empty flatcar and in order to pick it up they would have to make a switch on the cars. It would be necessary to secure the train, cut off the engine and go into the spur with the engine and pull out both cars, set the rock to the train and return the empty flat car to the spot where they had found it.

All very simple, right? Unfortunately things did not go as planned. While the engine was in the spur track, returning the empty flat car to its spot a chain broke on the hand brake on the rock car and it began to roll away down the

\(^5\) Respirators were made of sheet metal, in the form of a mask which fit over the nose and mouth with a damp sponge at the bottom to filter out as much of the gas and smoke as possible.
steep grade toward Ashland. Since the engine was still in the spur they didn’t stand a chance of catching the run away car and the last they saw of it was when it disappeared from sight around a curve, gathering speed as it went.

There was no way they could notify anyone in Ashland to warn them about the run away car that was headed in their direction, so that someone there could attempt to derail it. And what if No.12, the passenger train was still standing at the station, a sure recipe for disaster. Needless to say there followed several anxious moments as the helpless crew members stood watching as the car disappear around a curve, speculating about what might happen. All they could do was to anticipate the worst and hope for the best.

Fortunately train No.12, the Shasta Limited had left Ashland and was en route to Medford a few minutes before the juggernaut car raced through the Ashland yard.

The dispatcher’s office was located at Ashland, at that time, and an alert dispatcher, E. B. (Ed) Pengra was on duty. He took one look out of the window as the errant car rushed by and immediately wired the telegraph operator at Medford, warning him about the runaway car which had just passed through Ashland at a high rate of speed and would soon arrive at Medford.

Pengra instructed the Medford operator to warn the conductor of No.12, the Shasta Limited which was just then coming to a stop at the Medford station and have him send one of his brakemen to line the siding switch in hope of diverting the car from the main line and possibly derailing it.

This was only seconds before the wild car put in an appearance and quickly passed at an estimated speed of a mile a minute. To every one’s amazement the speeding car passed through the turnout, without derailing, swept past the idle passenger on the main track and out the other end of the siding without derailing and continued on its way, leaving the passenger train behind. It then continued on its wild flight until it reached a point just east of Gold Hill, 16 miles beyond Medford, where the grade ascends and came to a stop because of the incline.

Most of the passengers on No 12 were asleep in their berths, completely oblivious to the drama that was being played out just outside their car.

Arriving at Ashland the crew of the freight train from which the car escaped breathed a sigh of relief on learning that all was safe. The terrible speed the runaway car of rock attained in its mad rush down the mountain overheated the brake shoes, which welded themselves to the brake heads. The brasses in the journal boxes completely melted away.
The crew of the Shasta Limited, after departing from Medford kept a sharp lookout ahead expecting either the runaway car to be derailed or wrecked in a culvert or bridge. They too were greatly relieved when they saw the car standing on the slight incline just beyond Gold Hill.

They cut off their engine after setting up the brakes, coupled to the runaway car and placed it on a spur track at Gold Hill, then restored and coupled to their train and proceeded on their way to Portland.

Total distance covered by the runaway car from Ayer to Gold Hill was 35 miles, with many 14-degree curves and a maximum grade of 3.3 Percent.

The End

Welcome to a New Year with the Klamath County Historical Society

Sue Fortune and Carol Mattos as your new co-presidents are looking forward to an exciting and interesting new year in the organization. We are so grateful for all the work and reorganization done by our past officers. John Fortune, who will continue on the incoming board as past president, carried out many new innovations. Paul Fitzhugh served as Vice-president, providing us with many interesting programs, and later became a board member. Paul and Billie organized a most enjoyable tour in June 2008 to the Langell Valley area. Susan Rambo did a wonderful job as secretary. Susan added many projects to her assigned duties, all of which are beneficial to the group. Avis Kielsmeier will continue as treasurer and is an invaluable asset to the organization. The former board members were Carol Mathew, Doris Peters, and Bob Baker. A special thank you goes to Todd Kepple, Museum Manager and Lynn Jech, Museum Curator for always being there when needed.

A special thank you to Jack Bowden, who furnished so many articles for the Trumpeter. We will look forward to seeing Jack and Marlene at our meeting, as his health allows.

The officers elected for the new year in addition to Sue, Carol and Avis are: Phyllis Goebel, Secretary and Mae Rutherford and Gary Mattos as board members. The plan is to all work together on programs, so if you have any suggestions, let one of us know. With your help we hope to make this an interesting and fun filled year.

The meetings are scheduled for the 4th Thursday of March, April, May and October at 7 p.m. Our September meeting has been moved to the 3rd Thursday so there was no conflict with the Shaw Library Meeting. November is our annual potluck, date to be set later.

Be sure to tell your friends about the Klamath County Historical Society.

Looking forward to a wonderful New Year and opportunity to learn more about Klamath County.

Co-Presidents,
Sue Fortune
Carol Mattos
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 March 26, 2009 at 7 pm.

Dues

Dues are due at the end of each 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.

2009 Officers
Co-Presidents: Sue Fortune & Carol Mattos
Vice-President: vacant
Secretary: Phyllis Goebel
Treasurer: Avis Kielsmeier
Board Members:
Mae Rutherford
John Fortune
Gary Mattos

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
A marker placed by the Klamath County Historical Society sometime in 1976 marks the location of “Old Pokegama.” Aside from the marker, there's no sign that a logging camp and railroad operation ever occurred at the spot.

How fast our history fades

“Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. The wind blows, and we are gone – as though we had never been here.”

— Psalm 103:15-16

Never have I seen these words of wisdom been better illustrated than when a group of us spent a day touring the Pokegama area of southwestern Klamath County in October 2008.

Driving around the 50-some-square-mile section of timbered country we call Pokegama (poh-KEG-guh-muh) on a beautiful fall day, it was hard to believe that a hundred years ago these woods were bustling with logging, lumbering, railroading and freighting activity.
Logging in the Pokegama country began in the late 1880s, and reached a feverish pace by the turn of the 20th century. The Klamath Lake Railroad snaked its way up the north side of the Klamath River canyon to facilitate logging operations, while also hauling freight and bringing travelers to within a good day's stagecoach ride of Klamath Falls. At least two sawmills operated in the area for a few years.

As we learn from Book No. 3 in the Klamath Echoes series, the arrival of the Southern Pacific railroad in Klamath Falls brought a quick end to Pokegama's heyday. The towns of Pokegama and Snow dried up about as fast as they had bloomed.

Today, aside from the tangled network of logging roads and the occasional power line, it's hard to find any sign of human activity at all.

But if one knows precisely where to look, one can find a widely scattered set of small historic markers placed some 40 years ago by members of the Klamath County Historical Society. These sturdy markers – made from sections of rail, painted bright yellow, and set deep in concrete – commemorate the locations where the first generation of the Klamath Basin's logging and lumbering industry took hold.

As our group – led by BLM archaeologist Michelle Durant – traveled from one yellow marker to another, it was hard to believe how virtually all signs of human activity had vanished from the landscape. In a couple of spots we found some sizable concrete forms where sawmills had once stood, and even those were showing signs of rapid deterioration. Long gone were the log decks, lumber piles, railroad spurs, logging camps and general mercantile stores.

The yellow markers also serve to illustrate the valuable role that historical societies play in our society. If it were not for a small majority of people in each generation working to preserve our stories, much of our heritage would simply be forgotten. (Markers were also set around the county by Daughters of the American Revolution and Daughters of American Colonists).

These days we probably wouldn't go to the trouble of manufacturing durable markers and hauling them out into the woods. Instead, we simply record the GPS coordinates for sites we want to document. Regardless of the changing technology, the work of preserving local history remains as valuable today as ever.

By Todd Kepple
Millions of Salmon
Cannot Reach Lake on Account of Rocks in River at Keno
River Below Keno Rapids is One Mass of Fish Trying to Reach Spawning Grounds--
An Opening Needed or Else a Fish Ladder Should Be Constructed

Parties coming in from Keno state that the run of salmon in the Klamath River this year is
the heaviest it has ever known. There are millions of the fish below the falls near Keno, and it is
said that a man with a gaff could easily land a hundred of the salmon in an hour; in fact they could
be caught as fast as a man could pull them in. The law, however, prohibits the catching of salmon
above tide water except with a hook and line.

There is a natural rock dam across the river below Keno, which it is almost impossible for
the fish to get over. In their effort to do so thousands of fine salmon are so bruised and spotted by
the rocks that they become worthless. There is no spawning ground until they reach the Upper
Lake as the river at this point is very swift and rocky.

It is stated that at a very small expense an opening could be made in the rocks to allow of
the passage of the salmon. If this is not done at least some effort should be made to have a fish
ladder built, as it is nothing less than a crime to allow millions of these fish to be destroyed every
year. The attention of the state fish warden will probably be called to this condition and something
done to allow the salmon to reach the lake to spawn. What few fish get past the rapids at Keno are
so bruised up that they are worthless.

Evening Herald
September 24, 1908

Population Increased

County registration shows 300 more voters than 2 years ago.

County Clerk Chastain has made a summary of the county registration books, which show
that 1530 voters have registered for the primary election. This is an increase of more than 300 over
the registration 2 years ago. The records show that there are 966 Republicans, 524 Democrats, 21
Socialists, 25 Independent, 4 Prohibitionists, 1 Populist, and 10 who refuse to state their politics.

Evening Herald
April 8, 1908

Thanks to Anne Ezell for her research.