No. 89 Spring 2009

The Role of Water Craft in Early Transportation and Industry in Klamath County

by John Fortune

Starting with our Native Americans, the Klamath and Modoc Indians used dugout canoes extensively in moving about on the lakes to gather foods such as the seeds of Wocus, the yellow pond lily, and bird’s eggs. Passing around Tule Lake in 1848, members of the Applegate Party noted many canoes being used by the Modocs. At the head of Link River, the outlet of Upper Klamath Lake, in 1857, Martin Frain and his supplies were ferried across by the Klamaths in dugouts and tule-reed boats with holes in the bottom where the Indian women stuck their legs through and paddled with their feet.

Trails and roads into the Klamath Basin were few in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Applegate Trail passed south of the lower lake, crossing Klamath River near Keno and west toward Ashland. The Ashland Road paralleled that emigrant trail, close to what is now Highway 66 of the “Greensprings”, on its way to Linkville, the original name of Klamath Falls. The Rancheria Trail ran from Jacksonville, crossing the Cascades north of Mt. McLoughlin coming down near Rocky Point; it mainly served as a supply route for Fort Klamath but it was rough and narrow and deep with snow in the winter. In the late 1800s, the Topsy Road was built passing up the south side of Klamath River from Ager, California, merging with the Ashland Road at Chase Station, about 4 miles west of Keno. There was a ferry or bridge at Keno crossing Klamath River but the road into Linkville was notoriously bad with mud.
Klamath River and Lake Ewauna were navigable between Keno and Linkville. The “Straits” between Klamath River and Lower Klamath Lake were also passable giving access to that lower lake area. Upper Klamath and Agency lakes were navigable but Link River with its rapids was not. Therefore, travel on the waterways was divided, with one group of boats serving the lower basin and another plying the upper lake and tributaries.

The first recorded freight to travel by boat was in 1865 when 1300 pounds of material from Yreka were transported toward Ft. Klamath on the upper lake. Another reference shows that soldiers from the Fort rowed to Linkville in a Whitehall sailboat and sailed back north. The first ferry across the lower end of Link River was built by George Nurse in 1867. The first wooden building in Linkville was built in 1867 with lumber rafted down from Ft. Klamath. The first wooden bridge over lower Link River was built in 1869. About that time the government adopted Upper Klamath Lake as an official thoroughfare to and from Ft. Klamath. The “road” around the east side of the upper lake was largely a trail for pack trains, that ultimately replaced by Hwy 97.

A small sailboat began working on Upper Klamath Lake between Link River and points north in 1872. The Mary Moody was perhaps 40 feet long and 10 feet wide, a keel bottomed boat operated by Moody, a sea sailor; it ran until about 1879.

Thatcher and Wordon built the Klamath area’s first steamboat in 1881. The General Howard was 65 feet long and 12 wide and drew 4 1/2 feet; powered by a 40 hp engine and a 4 foot propeller, it cost $8000. The boss boat builder was reportedly the man who drew the patterns for the Merrimac of Civil War fame. The General Howard towed logs from Pelican Bay to a new sawmill on Link River.

The water depth boats drew was important since the average depth of Upper Klamath Lake is only 8 feet, and it may have been even more shallow in those early days.

In 1889, Loosley built a flat bottomed stern wheeled boat to navigate Wood River but couldn’t get the congressional appropriations to dredge the bar and deepen the channel so gave up the idea and used Agency Landing instead.

By 1889, Keno had become a busy freight terminal receiving loads coming in on the Greensprings Road and up Topsy Grade. It was easier and cheaper to transfer cargo and passengers to boats for the trip to Linkville, thus avoiding the bad last leg of road. Captain Dustin operated the Mayflower on Klamath River for this purpose. A stern wheeler steamboat, it was later used for hauling lumber from Keno across Lower Klamath Lake, returning with loads of hay. It sank and was replaced by the Canby for hauling lumber to Linkville.

In 1893, the citizens of the growing city of Linkville decided their town was going to be bigger than a “ville”, so changed the name to Klamath Falls, reflecting the rapids in Link River.
At the turn of the century, the steamers Oregon and Hobson were making regular trips to Pelican Bay carrying loggers. The Oregon make all day excursion trips around the upper lake and Agency Lake and return for 75 cents but passengers had to pack their own lunch.

In 1901, the two-deck Alma was making regular trips to Budd Springs on Odessa Creek, Pelican Bay, and Agency Landing. In 1902, the Alma began making Sunday excursions that were the start of an era of excursion boats. All day leisurely trips on the upper lake were made to view the mountain scenery with stops at Eagle Ridge Tavern, Odessa, Rocky Point, and Pelican Bay with bands playing.

The advertisements in the Klamath Republican for excursions on the Alma promised good times for all:

"Steamboat Excursion on Upper Klamath Lake- Saturday and Sunday, June 21-22, 1902. From Klamath Falls to Odessa, the popular rummer resort. Platform has been erected for dancing and the Klamath Falls orchestra will furnish the music. Tickets for the trip: Gentlemen, $1.; Ladies 50 cents. Oyster supper at midnight. A. C. Griffith, Proprietor."

By 1903, the railroad had been built to Pokegema, a logging camp out west of Klamath Falls, north of Klamath River. That then was the primary terminal for passengers and freight coming into Klamath country, but stages and wagons were still required to get to Keno and Klamath Falls. Two gasoline powered launches, the Tule and Ewauna, were brought in by this route to carry freight and passengers on Klamath River below Klamath Falls.

In 1905, the stern-wheeled streamer Winema was launched. Named for the Modoc woman, heroine of the Modoc Wars, the ship was 125 feet long and 22 feet at the beam with two decks and superstructure and drawing only 22 inches of water when empty. Her 14,000 pound boiler was brought to Pokegema on the railroad, then 5 days to Klamath Falls by wagon pulled by 10 to 14 horses. She was the "Queen of the Fleet". The Winema called at every accessible point on the upper lake hauling freight of all kinds and passengers and made regular Sunday excursions. She may have been a bit too tall in the wind that blew her over in 1907 off Eagle Ridge. But she was raised and refurbished, having parts of two decks removed to reduce wind resistance; she went back into service. Excursions were reinstated in 1913 carrying 700-800 people per week. She then operated as late as 1916, finally burning at dock in 1925.

Also in 1905, the Klamath Navigation Company was formed and built the steamer Klamath. She had a new hull design with a tunnel for the shaft and propeller to allow operation in shallow water. She was built for service between Klamath Falls and Laird's Landing on Lower Klamath Lake. There the passengers caught the stage coach connection to the McCloud River RR that was building in that direction and made connection to the Southern Pacific RR. This system supposedly allowed
passengers to leave Klamath Falls after noon on one day and arrive in San Francisco the following morning.

There were also two barges built for the Klamath's work. Each one was 62 feet long and 20 feet wide. The sides were each of one piece 32 inches high, 62 feet long and 5 inches thick, cut with a whip saw from one huge tree.

Between 1905 and 1909 transportation was constantly changing with the building of the railroad toward Klamath Falls. Rival railroads and stage companies competed for freight and passengers. The steamship Klamath continued service on Klamath River and the lower lake until the railroad arrived in Klamath Falls in 1909. Ironically, the Klamath and other boats served in moving supplies for railroad construction. Again with some irony, the Klamath was moved by rail to the upper lake where she carried passengers from Shippington to Agency Landing to meet stages for the trip to Crater Lake. (Shippington was the major landing and industrial location along the lake in northern Klamath Falls.) The Klamath also made regular trips to Eagle Ridge Tavern and Rocky Point.

An article from December 11, 1913 told of the Klamath coming in from Pelican Bay with 80 men and a load of Christmas trees for Portland; it was slow going through 4-6 inches of ice. Some of the men got off and walked across the ice and overland to Klamath Falls. By 1913 the Klamath was mainly used for towing logs and breaking ice, working until 1918.

In 1908, the Hornet towed logs and hauled wood for the steam cleaners in Klamath Falls.

The Mazama was a small twin-screw steamboat put in operation in 1909 on a run between Klamath Falls and Fort Klamath which entailed navigating up the narrow and crooked Wood River. She hauled in supplies and returned with loads of hay on round nosed barges.

Also in 1909, the steamer Eagle was built to transport sand which it pumped from the mouths of Williamson and Wood rivers and transported it to the growing city of Klamath Falls. It also hauled volcanic cinders from Coon Point on the west side of Klamath Lake for roads in the city.

The following quotation from the Evening Herald of May 8, 1919 describes well the continuing role of these hard working boats on Upper Klamath Lake (Early Transportation on Klamath Waterways, page 26):

"Boats Busy on Upper Lake Now- the movements of the Klamath Lake steamers today are as follows: The Wasp is away to the upper camps with a cargo of twenty-five tons of hay, grain, a logging truck and six horses. She will call at Howards Bay and Caledona on her return. The Modoc is towing a big log raft from Ball's Bay to Lamm's Mill at Modoc Point. The Eagle is on her way down from Coon Point with one hundred and fifty tons of cinders presumably to be used on the
Pelican City road. After discharging this load, she will go to Williamson River for a barge load of sand, about one hundred and fifty tons. The Klamath goes up the lake today with a long string of boom poles and a barge load of fuel oil. This boat last year transported from here to the upper lake 250,000 gallons of fuel oil. It is estimated that an equal amount will be used this season, and the transportation of other camp supplies will be greater now than ever. Captain Van Camp is a very busy man just now."

Another important service preformed by several boats was to carry the mail to various various points around the upper lakes. For example, from 1909 to 1913, the Curlew ran 90 miles a day from Agency Landing to Buena Vista via Odessa. (The Buena Vista Landing is where Pelican Marina is now.) The Oakland was still carrying the mail from Klamath Falls to Recreation (Rocky Point) in 1922.

Some other water born tools that shouldn't be forgotten are the big dredges that worked around the basin. The Adam's dredge was brought up in pieces from Fall River Mills, CA in 1903 to Keno where it was rebuilt and towed to the lower lake where it dredged the channel to White Lake and Merrill Landing. It also dredged the channel to Laird's Landing allowing the Klamath to bring passengers on their way south. It worked many jobs around Klamath Falls before being moved to the upper lake in 1909 where it worked on reclamation projects. Even larger dredges, the Klamath Queen and James Grady were built by the Southern Pacific RR for work on the upper lake before being sold to Copco (California Oregon Power Co.).

Of course, along the way there were many other launches and pleasure boats plying the lakes, even house boats providing for sportsmen, tourists and workers at the north end of the lake.

Acknowledgments: These bits of information about early Klamath water transportation were gleaned mainly from the following publications:

Early Transportation on Klamath Waterways by Harry Drew
Klamath Echoes No. 2 by the Klamath County Historical Society

---Ray Telford Photo

The Steamer Klamath on Lake Ewauna, a few minutes after being launched, July 29, 1905.
KCHS March Meeting

Thursday March 26, 7:00 PM
museum meeting room, Spring St. entrance

Program

Folk Song Sing Along
with Holly Fields and Carrie Rarden
from the Thrown Together Band
also

Hear about the Society plans for 2009
Bring your friends

"I have never before encountered such an enemy, civilized or savage, occupying a position of such great natural strength as the Modoc Stronghold.
Nor have I ever seen troops engage a better-armed or more skillful foe."
Lt. Col. Frank Wheaton to Gen. Canby, Feb. 7, 1873

from Modoc, The Tribe That Wouldn't Die by Cheewa James

In Memorial

Dr. William "Bill" Bechen 1937-2009

Dr. Bechen, a past member of the Klamath County Historical Society, was a proud member of a family with a long history in Klamath County. He was a supporter of Klamath County Museums. His latest contributions were for most of the cost of the large portrait of Winema now in the museum lobby and the purchase of fifteen squares on the new Baldwin quilt commemorating members of his family. He will be missed in the Klamath community.
Klamath County Historical Society

Meetings are held on 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 St. entrance. For more information call the museum. **Our next regular meeting will be March 26, 2009 at 7 PM.**

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<th>2009 Meetings</th>
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<td>March 26 - 7 PM</td>
<td>Co-Presidents: Sue Fortune &amp; Carol Mattos</td>
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<td>April 23 - 7 PM</td>
<td>Secretary: Phyllis Goebel</td>
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<td>May 28 - 7 PM</td>
<td>Treasurer: Avis Kielsmeyer</td>
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<td>June Tour</td>
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<td>July Potluck</td>
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<td>September 17 - 7 PM</td>
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<td>October 22 - 7 PM</td>
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If you would like to be notified of meetings and other happenings by email, please send your address to klochiso@yahoo.com

If you would like to be on the Klamath County Museum’s email list to receive the newsletter “The Midge”, send your request to: midge@co.klamath.or.us

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Co-Presidents: Sue Fortune & Carol Mattos
Secretary: Phyllis Goebel
Treasurer: Avis Kielsmeyer
Board Members:
Mae Rutherford
Gary Mattos
John Fortune, Past Pres.

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**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.

**Membership Information**

Individual Member: $10.00/yr.
Supporting Member: $25.00/yr.
Life Member: $100.00

Make dues payable to:
Klamath County Historical Society
and mail to or drop off at:

Klamath County Museum
1451 Main Street
Klamath Falls, OR 97601