

BRIEFS

Leaf drop Nov. 23 and Dec. 14

SILVERTON – Got leaves? Drop them off at free events for city residents on two upcoming Saturdays.

Residents can bring their leaves to Silverton's City Shops Nov. 23 and Dec. 14, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or until the bins are full. Participants should bring bagged leaves only. No other materials or commercial leaf debris will be accepted. Leaves must be dumped into bins and bags must be disposed of.

The City Shops are located at 830 McClaine St.

Shop Hop passports now available

A Silverton tradition created to boost local holiday shopping begins Nov. 29.

Shoppers who visit 32 (or more) of 40 businesses participating in the Silverton-Mt. Angel Shop Hop can be entered into a drawing for a grand prize of \$1,000 in gift certificates. Forty winners will also earn \$25 gift certificates.

To enter, shoppers should pick up a Shop Hop passport at Silverton

Chamber of Commerce or any participating business and get it stamped while shopping. No purchases are necessary, although spending money along the way does generate additional prize drawing entries.

This is Shop Hop's 17th year in Silverton, and the second year Mt. Angel businesses have joined. The event runs Nov. 29 through Dec. 17.

Brewery hosts trivia Mondays

Silver Falls Brewery has begun hosting free trivia nights for interested patrons every Monday at 7 p.m. Geeks Who Drink Trivia features first-place and second-place prizes, music and drinks. The brewery is located at 207 Jersey St.

'Ignite Delight' showing at art gallery

This month at Lunaria Gallery, Lori Rodrigues' watercolor and acrylic paintings and Susan Brandt's books and boxes are on display. The theme is "Ignite Delight." Located at 113 N. Water St., the art gallery is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day.

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Train

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due to arrive at 8:18 p.m. on Nov. 12, 1890.

The train was crowded, some passengers traveling on business, others for pleasure. Among them were a U.S. marshal, a frontier celebrity, a doctor and his wife just back from a trip around the world, and a couple with their six children headed for California.

All their travels suddenly came to a screeching halt in what the headline labeled "The Lake Labish Horror."

The eight-car train plunged through an expansive wooden trestle over a swampy area locals know as Lake Labish. The engine and tender, followed by the mail car, careened off the tracks and fell 15 to 20 feet. The express and baggage cars were flung at right angles across the tracks.

The bents supporting the trestle tumbled like dominoes and the rest of the train — two day coaches, two sleepers and one tourist — dropped with the tracks.

The coaches were described in newspapers as "blood-stained" and one of the sleepers as "broken in two." Miraculously, though, none of the passenger cars were overturned.

Three people died instantly — the engineer, the fireman and an unknown man believed to be a hobo hopping a ride.

Virtually every passenger was injured, many seriously.

News didn't reach town for nearly an hour. There were no radios or automobiles in those days. Doctors didn't arrive for nearly three hours.

A student from Chemawa Indian School, less than a mile from the crash, reportedly was the first to arrive in town on horseback, announcing 100 people had been killed.

Tales of inaccuracy were rampant in the days that followed.

Rumors of railroad track sabotage circulated throughout the investigation.

Even today, farmers in the area talk about the "lost" locomotive.

The legend of Lake Labish

The low-lying area north of Salem was never a massive lake.

Survey notes from the state office of the Bureau of Land Management described Lake Labish in 1851 as a few feet deep during the wettest season and nothing but a swamp the rest of the year.

Still, when the railroad came to town, a trestle more than 2,500 feet long was needed.

If you look across Interstate 5 from Keizer Station or Volcanoes Stadium, you can see a short railroad bridge on the east side of the freeway. That's about where the crash happened, running across virtually the same stretch trains do today parallel to I-5.

Drainage work was completed at Lake Labish in the early 1900s to create more farmland, but for decades the bog-



A Southern Pacific passenger train plunged through a dilapidated trestle at Lake Labish on Nov. 12, 1890. COURTESY OF THE ED AUSTIN COLLECTION

like soil propagated tales of everything from fence posts to farm implements sinking out of sight — even a certain locomotive.

Newspapers described the engine as being upside down and half-buried in mud after the crash. Perhaps that's where the legend began.

Two farmers independently broached the subject when asked about access to the existing trestle and earthen fill for this story.

"Is that the locomotive that's buried out there?" one said.

And then the other: "They say it's in there."

Crashes frequent across Oregon

Traveling by train was dangerous in the late 1800s. Only 20 years had passed since the arrival of passenger service in Salem, and the Oregon & California and Southern Pacific didn't meet at the state line until 1887.

Accidents were commonplace, caused not by just decrepit trestles, but switch errors, miscommunication, even wandering cows and sheep.

Between 1890 and 1901, according to the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, there were more than 6,000 accidents involving trains with mail cars. It was common for mail cars to be placed between locomotives and passenger cars to help protect passengers, taking the brunt of the impact in the event of a collision.

Passengers on the Lake Labish train had even more cushion. In addition to the engine and tender, there were mail, express and baggage cars in front of the first coach.

Locally, during that decade-long stretch, there were more than three dozen crashes on Southern Pacific lines in the Portland Division, which included Salem. A list of those wrecks and a collection of photographs is housed in the Douglas County Museum library in Roseburg.

The late George Abdill, a longtime

railroad employee and historian, compiled much of the list, which has since been added to by Lloyd Palmer.

Palmer, who lives in Waldport, has been interested in train wrecks since the 1970s. He ranks the Lake Labish crash among the top-five most serious from that era.

"It's one of the most well-known, and it's one of the most photographed," he said.

When the dust settled

Photos will never do justice to the scene. The trestle was referred to in print as "a pile so rotten it crumbles in moth-eaten dust." Doctors summoned to the site called it "the worst aggregation of wounded ever seen together in one accident."

They arrived to find farmers and able passengers caring for the seriously injured. Some of the farmers transported the wounded to their homes and provided aid.

One of the Pullman sleeper cars was turned into a hospital. Other passengers were treated on the soggy bed of Lake Labish, supported with cushions from the train. Fires were started to keep passengers warm and light the way for rescuers.

The injured also were cared for in the study hall at nearby Chemawa and beginning the next day, at the Willamette Hotel in downtown Salem.

Word soon spread that 100 fatalities had dwindled to ten, then five, and finally three.

Two passengers later died of their injuries, bringing the total to five.

More than 125 were reported to have sustained injuries. A roster of 80-some passengers and their injuries ran in the Capital Journal. Spinal injuries and broken arms and legs were common. One man bit off his tongue. Some escaped only bruised, like the frontier celebrity known as the "Poet Scout."

A few, such as the doctor and his wife from Philadelphia just back from a trip

around the world, were shaken but not injured.

The family with six children headed to California had a host of head, chest, back, foot and hand injuries. But they survived.

The U.S. marshal from Utah, on his way to meet with the Oregon secretary of state, suffered a broken leg, broken nose and internal injuries.

Railroad officials showed up at the hotel within just a couple of days and began offering settlements to injured passengers.

Some accepted, but others eventually filed lawsuits.

Posing at the scene

In the days following the wreck, people flocked to the site to gawk at the collapsed trestle and crumpled cars. Imagine an airliner going down near Salem, only you had to rush to the crash site in a horse-drawn buggy instead of an SUV. That's what it was like.

Photographers came, too, and the images are remarkably sharp.

Fourteen black and white prints from rail historian Ed Austin offer various views of the tangled wreckage. They're meticulously labeled in one of 800 binders in his collection of 100,000 rail-related photos at his home just south of Salem.

Most of the images are posed and show several men standing on top of or leaning against train cars with their thumbs casually tucked inside their vest or pant pockets. One photo, with the engine on its side, has a throng of people 12 deep behind it.

Clackamas County Historical Society also photographs, too, from the William Howell Collection. Credit is given to F.J. Catterlin, who had a studio in downtown Salem.

One of his photos offers a different perspective of the engine from atop what's left of the trestle looking down. Another shows an interior shot of an elegant coach.

When Austin examines his collection of photos, he can't help but notice the train doesn't look that bad, especially when you consider wooden cars were involved.

"If this had been a high-speed derailment, a car like this would be crushed," he said.

The train was traveling 20 mph when it approached the north end of the trestle. It appears, from what Austin can make out in the photos, that the bents of the trestle simply fell like dominoes and the train settled down.

"The rear cars of the train are all just sitting on the track, only about 15 feet lower than they're supposed to be," he said. "If you were going to be a train wreck, this was the one to be in."

Local newspapers reported the trestle wasn't inspected the previous year as it should have been. A trade journal, the "Railroad Gazette," offered this explanation for why it was passed over:

"The Commission, on its annual inspection a year ago, recognized the poor

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- Affidavit Fee - \$10.00 per Affidavit requested

NORPAC

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ment, assigned contracts, intellectual property assets and packaging material and approximately \$72 million in estimated inventory.

The filing says competing bids must be submitted by Dec. 9 and must exceed Oregon Potato Company's \$93.5 million offer by at least \$1 million.

NORPAC owes over \$165 million to more than 5,000 creditors and is valued at \$315 million, according to bankruptcy filings.

"Debtors and buyer desires a closing as soon as possible," the filing states. "It is in the best interest of

the Debtor and the estate to close the sale as soon as possible."

A hearing on the motion has been scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Dec. 10 at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Portland.

NORPAC has filed notifications with Oregon it could lay off nearly 1,400 workers at its Stayton, Salem and Brooks locations, but didn't file a similar notification with Washington about the Quincy facility.

The filings with the state indicate the Stayton processing plant, which is the company's original location, will close Nov. 27 and the Salem and Brooks facilities will close Jan. 12, 2020.

NORPAC attorney Al Kennedy stated in court Tuesday the company is entertaining offers from four suitors to purchase parts of its operation.