

# BANDITS HIT EAGLE CAP TRAIN!



Photos by Paul Wahl/Chieftain  
An unidentified member of the Gold Rush Bandits takes a U.S. Marshal at gunpoint during Saturday's robbery of the Eagle Cap Excursion Train.

The Eagle Cap Wilderness Train makes its way through fall foliage on its way back to Elgin after Saturday's robbery.



Engineer Matt Siriine was philosophical after Saturday's holdup by armed bandits on the Eagle Cap Excursion Train. "I've seen worse," he said. "Heck, I've smelled worse."



By Paul Wahl  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Riders on the Eagle Cap Excursion train Saturday got more than a look at the bucolic setting. The train left the Elgin Depot at 10 a.m., and shortly before noon made a brief stop.

Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, a gang of bandits on horseback descended upon the train and its 150 passengers, firing pistols into the air and yelling threats.

A U.S. Marshal was aboard the train because of persistent rumors that robbers were lurking. He had deputized a number of passengers throughout the morning, including women and children.

But all resistance was futile when the gang, believed to be part of a group known as the Gold Rush Bandits, boarded the train taking the marshal captive and dispatching his deputies with ease.

Two members of the gang proceeded to walk through the cars gathering cash and valuables from distraught passengers.

Eventually, they left the train, forcing the marshal onto the ground and firing shots over his head as they rode away. The bandits were about 12 in number, including women and children.

The train resumed its journey to Kimmel, where it reversed courses and headed back to Elgin.

No injuries were reported among the passengers, which included a 97-year-old woman celebrating her birthday.

Conductor Max Griffen apparently sustained a foot injury in the fracas as his left shoe was seen wrapped in duct tape.

It is unknown how much of a haul the train robbers collected prior to departing.

Representatives of the Eagle Cap Excursion Train reported that similar robberies have occurred in previous years and are planning strenuous steps to avoid a repeat on Oct. 14 and 21 when the train makes its last runs for



Photo Illustration  
An unidentified member of the Gold Rush Bandits on the Eagle Cap Excursion train out of Elgin. The scofflaws demanded cash and valuables from the 150 passengers on the train shortly before noon.

the season.

The train operated throughout the summer — except for August when fears that sparks from the wheels might ignite a wildfire — without any sign of robbers.

"We are taking every possible step to prevent these scandalous heathen from bothering our passengers again," a spokesman for the excursion train said.

Passengers arrived back in at Elgin Depot around 2 p.m. relieved that no harm had befallen them and rife with stories to share with children and grandchildren.

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