

# BREAKING THE LIMIT

An Engineer's Ride For Life and Lives

By JARED L. FULLER  
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Pug Donaldson, who had been the roundhouse foreman so long that he thought he owned the entire system, gave out his opinion of Lannigan at the end of the latter's first week on the M. and S. P. And this was it: "That Grandfather Longlegs never'll get to hold down a passenger lever on this road, whatever he's done back east. It ain't in him."

Then the old man chucked up the limit on the side of his little smoke-colored office, spat with emphasis and—well, that closed the subject as far as Pug was concerned.

I reckon if Lannigan hadn't begun by blowing about his eastern record he'd made more of a hit with us.

He was a tall, awkwardly built man, with a shock of sandy hair and a smooth, humorous face. His legs and arms were remarkably long and thin, and old Donaldson's sobriquet stuck to him. "Daddy Longlegs" seemed to fit.

Lannigan got a freight, and the worst bunch of scrap iron on the road, which, in moments of enthusiasm, Pug called an engine. If there was any man handicapped in the race to break the limit it was the new man from the land of tenderfeet.

The system of advancement followed by the M. and S. P. did not include length of service or "pull." Just one thing counted—the ability of a driver to get speed out of his machine over the worst track the law ever allowed man to lay.

The country was new when the M. and S. P. was surveyed and laid down. It had been a race between the M. and S. P. and another corporation to see which should reach the terminating town where connection could be made with the Pacific road first.

We won, but at a cost which crippled the road financially for years, and the renewing of the first roadbed was a slow and laborious job.

We ran one fast passenger—the Limited. The through mail cars were attached to that train too.

It was a continual fight all through the year to keep that one train alone up to the schedule called for by the contract with the government.

If any man on any other train showed the ability to get speed out of his engine he was watched, and if he "broke the limit" he stood a good chance of displacing the driver then running the mail train.

The M. and S. P. in those days was a "farmers' railroad." Most of the way stations were merely huts and water tanks in forest clearings, tapping a certain section of farming country stretching westward of the line.

Lannigan had been with us since the winter before. He was a good driver, but not brilliant. Anybody but a prejudiced old fool like Donaldson would have recognized his good points, but you never could stir the roundhouse foreman when he'd once made up his mind.

Lannigan had learned the road and his engine. If he followed another train he was on its heels all the time and got himself well cursed for it.

Some of us began to see that there really was more to the eastern man than we had believed.

That fall was dry, the sun and wind all day and every day drying the sap out of the trees and brush and burning the leaves brown before the frost could make them pretty.

By and by the inevitable happened. Fires began to light up the heavens nightly, and by day streaks of blue smoke hid the tops of the higher hills.

Reports reached us from all directions of families burned out and settlements threatened, but for a week the conflagrations kept away from the line of the road.

Then suddenly one Sunday morning a flood of fire swooped down the mountain side and crossed the tracks some miles south of Yardsley.

The Limited came through somewhat scorched, and the next day traffic on the road between Lattell and the junction was cut off altogether.

This shut off several settlements as well as Yardsley, except by telegraph. The wires were still working, and our operators stuck to their posts like the brave fellows they were.

Pretty near every living soul in a hundred square miles of territory lit out for less dangerous ground. But Yardsley was caught napping, and its 300 people were practically hemmed in by the fiercest forest-fire the state had ever experienced.

The entire system of the M. and S. P. was pretty well tied up. We had pulled freight as near the fire line as we dared, and the sidetracks were about full of waiting cars.

The fire was still burning fiercely beside the roadbed in more than one place, and we weren't asked to try to pull a train through to the junction.

Naturally there were plenty of locomotives and plenty of drivers at Lattell that day when the news came from the Yardsley operator. It was his last dispatch, for he had remained until it was too late to escape by any track through the forest, and there wasn't even a handcar left at the station.

"Wind changed. Fire will reach us

in one hour. Three hundred people in danger. Can you reach us?"

That was the message which the yardmaster read to us from the steps of the station at Lattell. He was pale, and his hands shook as he spelled the words out slowly.

He didn't have any need to tell us the danger. Nor did he call for volunteers. To try to get to Yardsley was like buying a through ticket for death and be done with it.

We stood around and discussed the terrible news and did nothing—except Lannigan.

He appeared at Pug Donaldson's window and, leaning his arms on the sill, looked in with the same humorous twist to his lean features.

"Them three boxes there empty?" he asked, jerking his head backward toward the sidetrack.

Donaldson nodded.

"I'm going to hitch my engine on to 'em. Jimmy and me'll see if we can get down there and beat that barbecue. Gimme a clear switch!"

The roundhouse foreman only stared; but, after Lannigan had disappeared from the window, he rushed to the door and yelled after him:

"Hey, you, Grandfather Longlegs! You'll be fried like a pancake on a griddle!"

But Lannigan only grinned and leaped aboard the old engine. We didn't know what he was up to until he'd coupled on the three empty box cars and rattled away over the switches and out of the yard.

"He's making a bluff," some of us said.

Others who respected the pluck it took to approach the fire thought he'd never get through, but would waste his steam for nothing.

"Well, Jimmy, it's going to be a hot run," the long legged Yankee told his stoker as they neared the first belt of fire. "You fill up the furnace, and I'll slow down so you can jump. I don't want to take another man to perdition with me."

"Oh, I guess I'll stop," says Slosson, kind of shamefaced.

Then they shook hands on it, and from that moment neither questioned the other's intention of sticking to his job.

But Jimmy had loaded the old engine for bear all right before they reached the fire line. She was whirling miles under her drivers at a rate to beat even our one fast train, and the empty boxes behind were dancing like mad over the rough roadway.

"We're getting there, Jimmy!" sings out Lannigan at last. "Shin over into the water tank and fling a pail or so over me when you get a chance."

He stood out on the running board with a hand on the lever, his cap visor shielding his eyes from the smoke and flying sparks, peering ahead as best he could at the rails. Jimmy, up to his neck in the tank, flung pail after pail of water over his long figure.

Suddenly the engine seemed to run into a veritable wall of flame. It extended far across the roadbed, and it wrapped the train about in a living, seething mantle as she rushed on.

It seemed as though no man could go through that sea of fire alive, but when the old engine staggered out of the fire belt Lannigan still stood upright at the lever.

His sparse mustache, his eyebrows, his shock of sandy hair were gone. He was as bald as a parrot, and his clothing was afire in a dozen spots. But he turned a horrible grin upon Jimmy and waved his hand.

"Give us another bucket!" he croaked. And the stoker climbed out of the tank, more dead than alive himself, and put out the burning garments.

Then they reached Yardsley.

I guess if any two men were ever welcomed as angels straight from heaven it was Lannigan and his stoker, though they must have looked a deal more like devils from the pit.

Two hundred and ninety people, who had given up their last hope of continued existence, piled into those three box cars like cattle. The doors were closed, and then it was up to Lannigan and Jimmy to run them back to Lattell.

The old engine was reversed, and back through the awful belt of flame and smoke she went with the three boxes.

Lannigan certainly showed that day what he could do when he had the right of way.

Scorched almost to a cinder one instant and saturated the next, Lannigan stood at his post and brought the rescue train through to Lattell. The box cars were afire and the passengers half suffocated when they arrived.

Jimmy was pretty nearly drowned in the tank, and we picked Lannigan off the engine just as he caved completely.

"Daddy Longlegs" was some time in the hospital and came plaguy near losing his sight, and all because of that run. But if a man was ever popular along the line of the old M. and S. P. his name was Lannigan.

The first day he got down to the yard the super happened to be there himself. The line was open again and everything running smoothly by that time, only the miles upon miles of charred forest and the heap of ashes where Yardsley had stood telling of the forest fire.

"Humph!" said the super, trying to pick out the engineer's hand which was least bandaged to shake. "I hear you've been doing some tall running down here, Lannigan."

And the driver grinned sheepishly, as though he had done something to be ashamed of.

"Donaldson's got your record chalked up on his office wall over the Limited. Guess we'll have to find you something better than a freight to pull out when you're well enough."

And Lannigan got the mail train the next fortnight.

## FALLS CITY, OREGON

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Manufacturers and Homeseekers who want to know the facts concerning Falls City and its possibilities for future development are requested to read the information given in these two columns. For further and more particular information, address The News.

#### The Name

The city derives its name from the falls of the Little Luckiamute River, which flows through the city from the West.

The first sale of town lots occurred in 1889, though donation land-claim settlers came here many years before that date. In 1900 the population was 269; in 1910, 969; 1914, about 1,250.

#### The Location

Falls City is situated in the south central part of Polk County, Oregon, in section 21, township 8, S., range 6, W., Willamette meridian, 27 rail miles southwest of Salem, and 73 rail miles southwest of Portland, in the narrow western end of the Little Luckiamute River valley, surrounded on the north, south, and west by the foothills of the Coast Range mountains. Elevation, 386.38 ft above sea level. Transportation—Salem, Falls City & Western Railroad, which extends from Salem to Black Rock, a rail distance of 30 miles, with S. P. main line connections at Dallas, Gerlinger, and Salem, and with the Oregon Electric at Salem.

Falls City is incorporated as a city, and contains 753.33 acres, valuation for taxation \$268,837. The city administration is composed of mayor, seven councilmen, auditor and police judge, marshal, treasurer, engineer, health officer. Salaries: Marshal and water superintendent, \$60; auditor, \$25; attorney, \$25.

#### Water and Wood

The city of Falls City owns the gravity water system. Its first cost was \$80,000. Pure mountain water is piped from springs on Judge Teal's ranch, 3 miles away, at an elevation of about 300 feet above city level.

Oak and fir fire wood is plentiful and cheap.

#### Lumber, Fruit, Vegetables and Berries

Electric-power planing and saw mill, log pond, dry kiln and lumber yard in the city, lumber flume, logging roads and logging outfits, all owned and operated by the Falls City Lumber Co.

The surrounding bench and hill lands are as well adapted to the production of fruits and berries as any other section of the Pacific Northwest, and development on these lines is going on.

Vegetables and berries of many kinds grow to perfection, in and adjoining Falls City, and many acres are planted to strawberries and loganberries. Market conditions are improving steadily, as production is increased.

#### Schools, Churches, Societies, Clubs

Falls City has a 12-grade school with a four-year high school course, with principal, assistant, and eight grade teachers. Its diplomas are accepted by the higher schools in lieu of examinations. The entire community is justly proud of the school.

The Religious organizations are: Adventist, Catholic, Christian, Free Methodist, Methodist Episcopal, German Lutheran.

The Fraternal societies: Ind. Order of Oddfellows, Rebekahs, Masons, Knights of Pythias, Pythian Sisters, Modern Woodmen of America, Royal Neighbors of America, Woodmen of the World, Women of Woodcraft.

Free reading room. Gem theatre, photoplay.

Hydro-electric light generated by the power of the falls; owned by the Falls City Electric Co., W. B. Stevens president, H. C. Brown vice-president and manager, A. W. Stevens secretary and treasurer.

Telephone system, with long-distance connections. C. J. Pugh local manager.

#### Business Enterprises

Falls City is well provided with the usual business enterprises. The News contains the announcements of the following business and professional men of the city:

- Bakery, D. Toller,
- Bank of Falls City, W. F. Nichols cashier.
- Barber shops, Wm. Bohle.
- Carpenters and Builders, Elle & Elle, S. Ouderkirck.
- Clothier, Tailor and gents' furnisher, Chas. Hartung.
- Confectionery stores: B. L. Ellis, R. B. Harrington.
- Drug store, M. L. Thompson.
- Dentist, Dr. A. G. Atwood.
- Department store, N. Selig.
- Funeral director, R. L. Chapman.
- Furniture, J. C. Talbott & Co.
- General stores, N. Selig, F. C. Lumber Co., F. C. Merc. Co.
- Hardware store, J. C. Talbott & Co.
- Hotels: Falls City Hotel, Fritz Droego, owner and manager; The Madena, Mrs. Mae Nichols, Mrs. Dennis, managers
- Jewelry store, W. A. Persey.
- Newspaper, the Falls City News, D. L. Wood & Son.
- Photoplay theatre, the Gem, C. J. Pugh.
- Physicians, Dr. W. B. Officer; Dr. F. M. Hellwarth.
- Pressing and cleaning parlor, I. A. Johnston.
- Railroads, Salem, Falls City & Western, Southern Pacific.
- Real estate agent, F. K. Hubbard Realty Co.
- Restaurant, The Madena; Wm. Finley, owner.
- Saloons: The Oregon, C. W. Matthews; The Idaho, Chas. Mix.

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## REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

1. Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14, block E.
  2. Two fine building lots in block G, East View add.
  3. For rent, house, barn, 3 lots; \$6; Ellis street. Property for sale.
  4. For Sale, 2 good lots, on Pine street in block K, cultivated.
  5. Lots 13, 14, 15, 16, block O, at a bargain; \$100 cash, bal. on terms at 8%.
  6. Two lots, 6-r. house; fruit, berries, city water, electric light; close in, bargain.
  7. For sale, One acre, adjoining city limits, with 5-room house. A bargain at \$425, terms. House to rent.
  8. For sale—9 acres, partially improved; house, timber; spring and living stream; near western city limits; price, \$1000, half cash.
  9. For sale, one acre, cultivated, fruit, berries; 6-r. house insured for \$1400; elec. light, city water, cesspool; price \$1050; all cash, or \$700 cash, terms on balance.
  10. For sale, 7 lots (all of block A) in Montgomery's addition to Falls City; good garden ground, fenced; city water; price \$1100 if bought within the next 30 days.
  11. For sale, fine home in city, with 25 acres, 10 cultivated.
  12. For sale, lots 7, 8, 14, 23 block K, and lots 11 and 12 block E. Will trade for Portland property.
  13. For sale, lot 2 block M, M. ad.
  14. For sale, 80 a. 1 1/2 mi. north of city 20 a. improved; 25 a. good timber; plenty of pasture and water.
  15. To rent, 12-r. house.
  16. Two acres, cultivated, fruit, berries; 6-r. house, sheds; water, electric light; will divide.
  17. Three acres, adjoining city.
  18. Five acres, in city.
  19. Six lots, no improvements; cheap
  20. Lot 5 and 20 ft. of lot 4 blk D, 70 feet front, on North Main street, is for sale at a bargain; best building lot in town. See F. K. Hubbard.
- F. K. Hubbard Realty Company  
In The News office, Falls City
- Abstracts of title promptly furnished. Rates reasonable. Brown & Sibley, 610 Mill St., Dallas, Or.
- The Falls City Electric Light & Power Co., will sell 40 watts Tungston globes for 35 cents. 60 watt for 50 cents.



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Suite 11 Bush-Breyman Bldg., phone 295  
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