

Klamath Falls Once Had Horse-drawn Trolley

By FLOYD L. WYNNE

The population explosion hit Klamath Falls in 1906-1907.

As the 20th Century pulled over the horizon it found a sleepy little town along the shores of Link River somewhat isolated from the rest of the world and apparently content to stay that way.

After the excitement engendered by the Modoc Indian War of 1872, the town had lapsed back into its commonplace existence as a town of hardy pioneers dependent upon the stock raisers of the area mainly for its commerce.

The effects of irrigation had already been explored, but not to any great extent.

However, after 1900 arrived, the Klamath Canal Company made an enlarged effort at irrigation and prospects for farming in the area began to blossom.

Simultaneously, there was talk of timber development with big companies moving into the area to secure timber stands for future development.

These developments, in turn, brought talk of a railroad that would end the isolation of the Klamath Basin. Each month brought new rumors, new reports of rail lines headed for the Klamath country.

In the meantime, the two main routes in or out of the area were tortuous ones indeed. One could go by stage or boat to Keno, by stage from there to Pokeyama where they could meet the rail line. Or, one could go by steamer to Laird's landing on the south end of Lower Klamath Lake and make railroad connections near there.

Into this setting came the promoters, the developers.

The Klamath Canal Company purchased and began to promote the Buena Vista Addition, lying north in the California Avenue area now, and up along the lake on Front Street.

Another company, known as the Klamath Development Company (or KD Company) purchased what is now the Hot Springs area and began to promote this area.

In 1906, with the railroad coming nearer and nearer, irrigation expanding and timber coming to the front, competition between the two companies became keen and intense.

Late in 1906, the KD Company applied to the council for authority to operate a trolley car which would travel from downtown to the Hot Springs area. The Klamath Canal Company countered in January, 1906, by also asking for a franchise to operate a trolley car, this one to go down Conger Avenue, the California Avenue area and up to Front Street, then back to the Main Street area terminus. C. N. Hawkins was president of the Klamath Canal Company and the organization owned 400 acres in the Buena Vista Addition they were promoting.

Actual route of the Klamath Canal Company's trolley was outlined in the franchise as: beginning at northerly end of Prospect Avenue in Nichols' Addition, thence south along Prospect to 10th Street, then southeasterly along 10th to Washington, then southwesterly along Washington to Ninth, then along 9th to Pine Street, then along Pine to 7th Street, then on Seventh to Walnut, along Walnut to Third, along Third to Main, along Main to Conger, then along Conger to its northern terminus. Also, beginning at intersection of Sixth and Walnut, thence southeasterly along Sixth to Elm, then southwesterly along Elm to the terminus.

Only area of conflict with a similar franchise granted earlier to A. H. Nafziger of the KD Company, was on Main Street from Third to Conger Avenue.

The Hawkins franchise provided that work would commence by July 1, 1906 and be completed within 18 months.

In mid-March of 1906 work commenced on the \$4,500,000 government canal by the Mason Davis Company, including the digging of the 3100 foot long tunnel. Meanwhile, the Klamath Canal Company announced grandiose plans for eight miles of boulevards, a huge tourist hotel and boat-house on the lake.

Meantime, the council had stipulated that the first company to lay its rails on Main Street would be able to collect usage money from the other company for the Main Street rails since they would permit only the one set of rails on Main Street.

Newspaper files for the period from March of 1906 to November of 1905 are not available so it is not possible to document all facts of early line construction. For that reason, we must refer to a newspaper article by Doris Palmer Payne which was written prior to 1940 in the Evening Herald.

In her article, she notes that Major Charles Worden and D. B. Campbell were the principal local figures of the KD Company and William K. Brown of the Klamath Canal Company.

She reports that each faction then vowed to have the first rails down, and that Major Worden bet \$500 with Brown that they would get their rails in first. The money was put up and the stage

set for a thrilling turn of events. The Kirkpatrick brothers were grading streets in the Hot Springs area for KD, and Campbell asked them to have some six-horse teams ready at a moment's notice to go and get the rails for a streetcar.

In the meantime, Brown hired a teamster, J. M. McIntire, to haul rails from Pokeyama for the Klamath Falls Land and Transportation Company, a subsidiary of the Klamath Canal Company.

Each side was carefully check-

ing in San Francisco and was the trip. It reads: "The first streetcar to be operated in this city was run from the corner of Main Street and Conger Avenue last Saturday afternoon under the direction of Mr. Buell of the Klam-

ath Falls Land and Transportation Company. While it was an improvised affair it sufficed to carry nearly twenty guests of Mr. Buell to the Upper Lake where

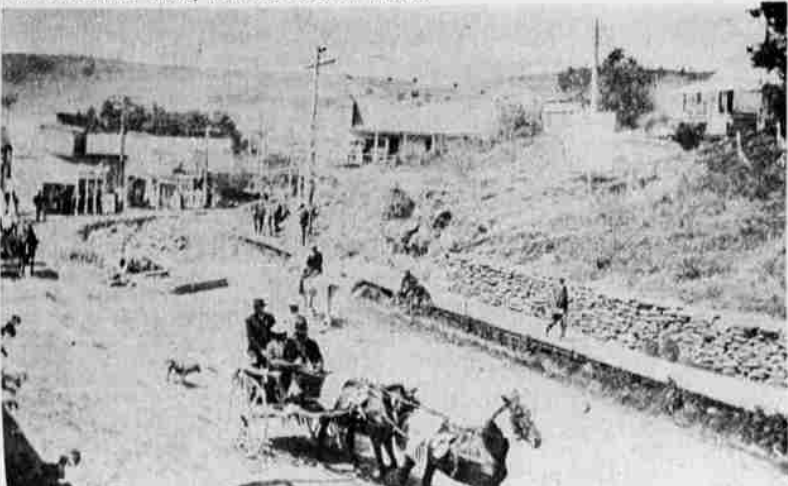
they enjoyed a ride on the new Buena Vista launch. The launch got its initial bath Friday afternoon when a large number of citizens were present to witness the christening and the trip Satur-

day afternoon was the first long trial trip of the new boat." as possible." However, there appears to be some discrepancy in the details, because a later article in the Herald dated June 20, 1907, says: "The first streetcar to reach this city was brought in Saturday

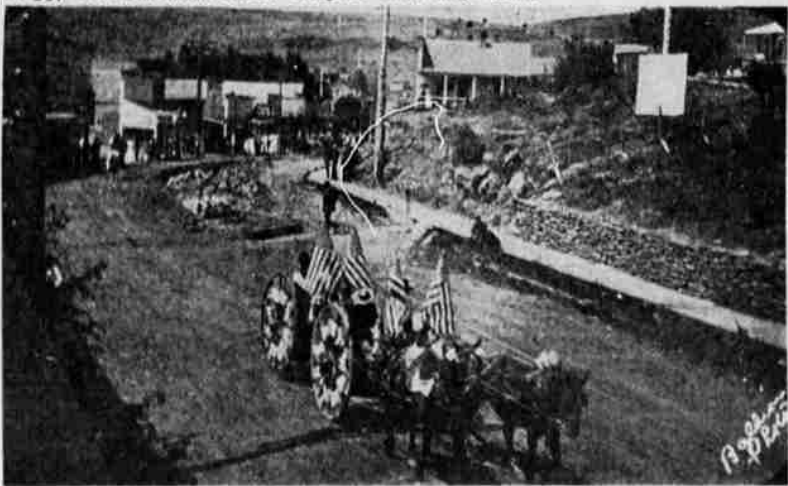
The preparation of this story and the acquiring of pictures to document the story would have been impossible without the assistance of Hal Ogle, Mrs. Minnie Grizzle, the Klamath County Museum and a number of other sources. We are indebted to them for their aid.



STREET CAR ARRIVES — This was the great day of June 15, 1907, when the street car arrived from San Francisco. One can see the words "Sutter" on the front. The trolley was from the proud Bay City fleet and traversed Sutter Street. R. E. Hunsaker drove the two-teams that pulled it into town. It is shown halted in front of the Baldwin Hardware Store, now the Baldwin Hotel.



JULY FOURTH PARADE — The horsecar was officially put into service as a part of the July Fourth celebration in 1907. The parade that day also turned out to be one of the most festive in the history of the town. Here, a decorated pair of horses and buggy roll down Main Street alongside the trolley tracks.



GREAT THINGS BREWING — The feeling of optimism and coming growth dominated activities of the 1907 Fourth of July celebration. Weyerhaeuser and other big timber interests had only recently purchased big stands of timber, the railroad was slowly moving toward Klamath Falls, and land speculation was rampant. This was typical of the well-decorated floats that took part in the 1907 parade.

ing on the ether and knew just what they were planning.

One morning, Campbell ordered Kirkpatrick to hitch up, and would not tell them where they were going until they had left town. Then, they were told to head for Grass Lake where they would pick up tracks for the trolley.

Brown immediately dispatched McIntire to Pokeyama to pick up rails for the trolley, also. He realized that the KD Company had the jump on him, so he dispatched Bob Hunsaker with a gallon jug of whiskey to meet the outfit coming from Grass Lake.

Hunsaker apparently did his work well. The hard-pressed teamsters enjoyed a brief respite from their labors and accepted the advice from Hunsaker about the best road to take to get to Klamath Falls.

As a result they wound up hopelessly mired in the mud and lost the race to have the first rails put down.

Brown won the \$500 and the race as McIntire pulled into town with the rails for the trolley. The Payne dispatch says that Brown did not wait for the rails but hired every man available and began tearing up the streets for the track at midnight on a Saturday. The crews worked feverishly throughout Sunday and into Monday preparing the roadbed for the tracks.

Brown promptly threw a big party to celebrate the triumph.

Work, however, on the grading for the rails continued for many months, and it was not until mid-April 1907 that the first streetcar began operation. The streetcar was purchased

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