

OUT OF THE PAST

A STEAMBOAT ON THE SNAKE RIVER

A true adventure recalled from the history of Treasure Valley
by Bob Thompson

Back in the mid-1800's, a paddle-wheeled steamboat operated on the Snake River between Olds Ferry and Fort Boise. The story goes like this....

IT WAS AN ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE SIGHT to the half dozen Plutes camped near the mouth of the Owyhee River that spring morning in 1866. Before their very eyes from down the Snake River came a huge canoe belching smoke and churning the water with a big paddle wheel attached to its stern.

The Indians scrambled onto their ponies and rode hell-bent for their village to report the phenomenon, knowing full well they would be accused of overindulgence in the white devil's "firewater."

But what the Redskins had witnessed was real enough as was Captain Joe Myrick commanding the "Shoshone" and its small crew. Captain Joe had ordered full steam and was headed for Salmon Falls as fast as his paddle could take him.

Thus, a dream was born and financed by the Oregon Steam Navigation Company with the intent of plying a profitable trade from Olds Ferry, near Farewell Bend (northwest of Ontario), to the Riverside Ferry, near Fort Boise, and on up the river to supply the fabulous Owyhee mines.

The venture was an expensive one, and was completed on the bank of the Snake River near Fort Boise. The lumber to build the hull was hewn from far away pines and hauled, dragged and packed for many rough miles. The construction iron was packed in by animals all the way from the lower country and forged to shape on the banks of the river. Mr. Gates was construction supervisor and he and his crew laboured long and hard to shape the materials into a boat.

The launching ceremony was poorly attended, even though ample parking space was available. In fact, it was rather a lonesome spectacle out there in that vast area of sagebrush and silence.

The boat was christened "The Shoshone" without the benefit of the usual bottle of champagne broken over its prow. It successfully slid down her way into the waters of the Snake River. The great event was witnessed only by the crew, a few skeptical Indians, and an unknown number of curious jack rabbits.

However, the brave attempt was doomed to failure. The noble vessel could not navigate the Snake River above the mouth of the Bruneau River, and even then a shorter route to the Owyhee mines had been found.

It was a sad and disillusioned crew that returned the good boat to its berth near Fort Boise, where it remained until 1870. The owners, though, had not given up. Hoping to salvage a part of their huge investment, they sent Captain Cyrus Smith to pilot the craft through Hell's Canyon to Lewiston where it could be employed in trade down the Snake River and Columbia River to The Dalles.

Captain Smith did not aspire to become a dead hero, and when he sighted rough waters and sheer cliffs ahead, he headed for the comfort of dry land. The company, with its eye on the profit and loss column, found another captain with the handle of Sebastian Miller, who, with a crew of four, repaired and attempted to rescue the "Shoshone" from her plight.

On April 20, that year of 1870, the courageous captain and his equally courageous crew upped anchor and took off down river. It was a wild voyage. Many times the occupants stared bug-eyed into the face of death. At one place the rapids dropped fifteen feet within two hundred yards. Waters were divided by islands of large boulders. The "Shoshone" spun around on swirling rapids like a piece of straw in a hurricane. It was dashed against rocks and damaged considerably. Finally, dazed and shaken, the crew was able to bring the craft to shore where they spent a couple of days repairing the damage.

The remainder of the rapids were navigated successfully, and seven days later the crew brought their boat into Lewiston. It is not known what compensation they received, but their experience would have made the Perils of Pauline as exciting as a checker tournament.

A Captain Holmes took the "Shoshone" from Lewiston to The Dalles where it was operated as a cattle boat until 1873, when it was piloted over the Cascades and up the Willamette River and worked until late 1874. It was then the steamboat struck a rock and sank near Salem. That winter it came to the surface, and was taken ashore and converted into a chicken house.

Thus came the ignoble end of a brave and adventurous boat that had navigated waters in three important rivers.

Celebrate Anniversary

The children of Mr. and Mrs. John Craner cordially invite friends and neighbors to an open house reception in honor of the 50th wedding anniversary of their parents.

The reception will be Sunday, September 4 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the parental home on Route 2, Parma. No gifts, please.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

September 2 - Cathy Seuell, Renate Hansen, Deborah Hirai

September 3 - Mark Gantenbein

September 4 - Gary Garrison, Kelly Williams

September 5 - Marcia Smith

September 6 - Mr. Bidwell, Guadalupe Grimaldo

September 7 - Patricia Werner, Greg Theil, Charlene Dault

September 8 - Rodes Baker, Dee Stam

SURPLUS CARPET SALE 1 DAY ONLY

NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY

720 N.W. 8th St., Ontario
Friday, Sept. 2 - 9 A.M. to 8 P.M.

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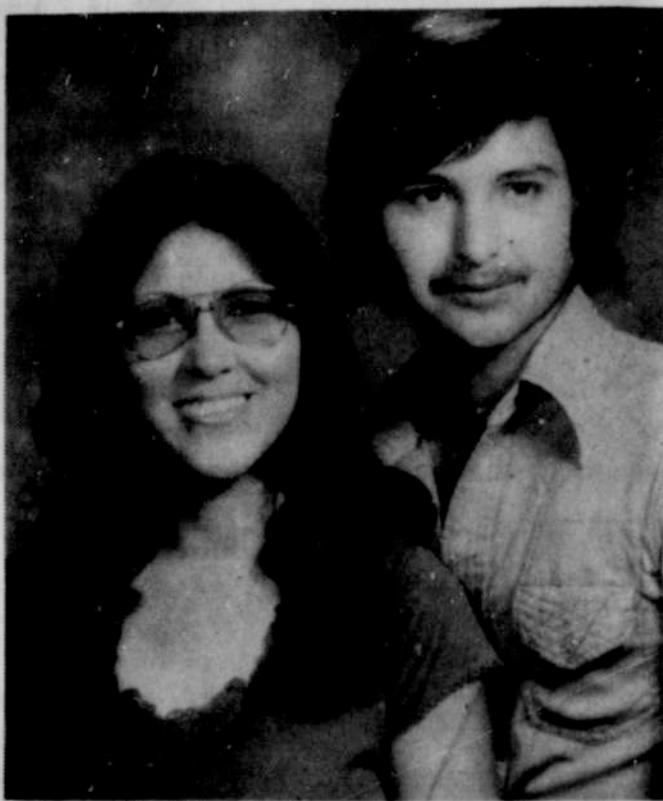
Due to the Nature of this Sale, All Sales Will Be Cash. No Personal Checks Accepted

Vows Exchanged



Selma I. Simpson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John A. (Al) Simpson of Nyssa became the bride of David A. Woodard, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Woodard of Battleground, Washington, August 6, 1977, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Vancouver, Washington. Brother Elder White officiated at the ceremony. Baskets of white carnations pink rosebuds and blue daisies decorated the church. Maid of honor was Helen Day of Vancouver and Mike Woodard, brother of the groom acted as best man. Kathy Woodard, sister of the groom was in charge of the guest book. Assisting with the reception which followed the ceremony were Mrs. Judy Woodard, Mrs. Carol Fenske and Mrs. Marilyn Combs. The bride is a graduate of Adrian High School and the groom attended Battleground schools. They will make their home in Vancouver, Washington.

Engagement Announced



Mr. and Mrs. Ed Montoya announce the engagement and forthcoming marriage of their daughter Connie to Raymond Haro, son of Mr. and Mrs. Democio Haro of Nyssa. The couple has selected September 24, as their wedding date.

The wedding will be held at the Nazarene Church and the reception will follow at the United Methodist Church Hall. The couple are both Nyssa graduates, and will make their home in Nyssa.

Home Extension Group to Meet

The Thunderegg Hens will hold a Malheur County Home Extension meeting Thursday, September 8 at 1:30 p.m. Flower arranging will be demonstrated at the Katrine Bakker home.



EAGLES AUXILIARY

A special meeting of the Eagles Auxiliary to transact needed business will be held Tuesday, September 6 at the Eagles Hall at 8 p.m. All members are urged to attend.

Town And Country Garden Club

The Town and Country Garden Club will meet September 8 at the home of Mrs. John Stam in Nu Acres. All interested persons are invited to attend.

AMITY CLUB

The Amity Club enjoyed a picnic lunch hosted by Marion Child at the Cow Hollow Park August 18. A short business meeting was held. Lavin Roberts won the traveling prize.

GOOD NEWS FOR RETIREES...



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With the travel season here, there's no time like the present to take advantage of First National's Direct Deposit Service.

Now you don't have to worry about having your retirement check delayed in the mail, lost, stolen or sitting in your mailbox while you're traveling. Because with First National's Direct Deposit Service you can be assured that your retirement check will be deposited directly into your checking or savings account. And it's all FREE!

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Sizes Age 6 to 18
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