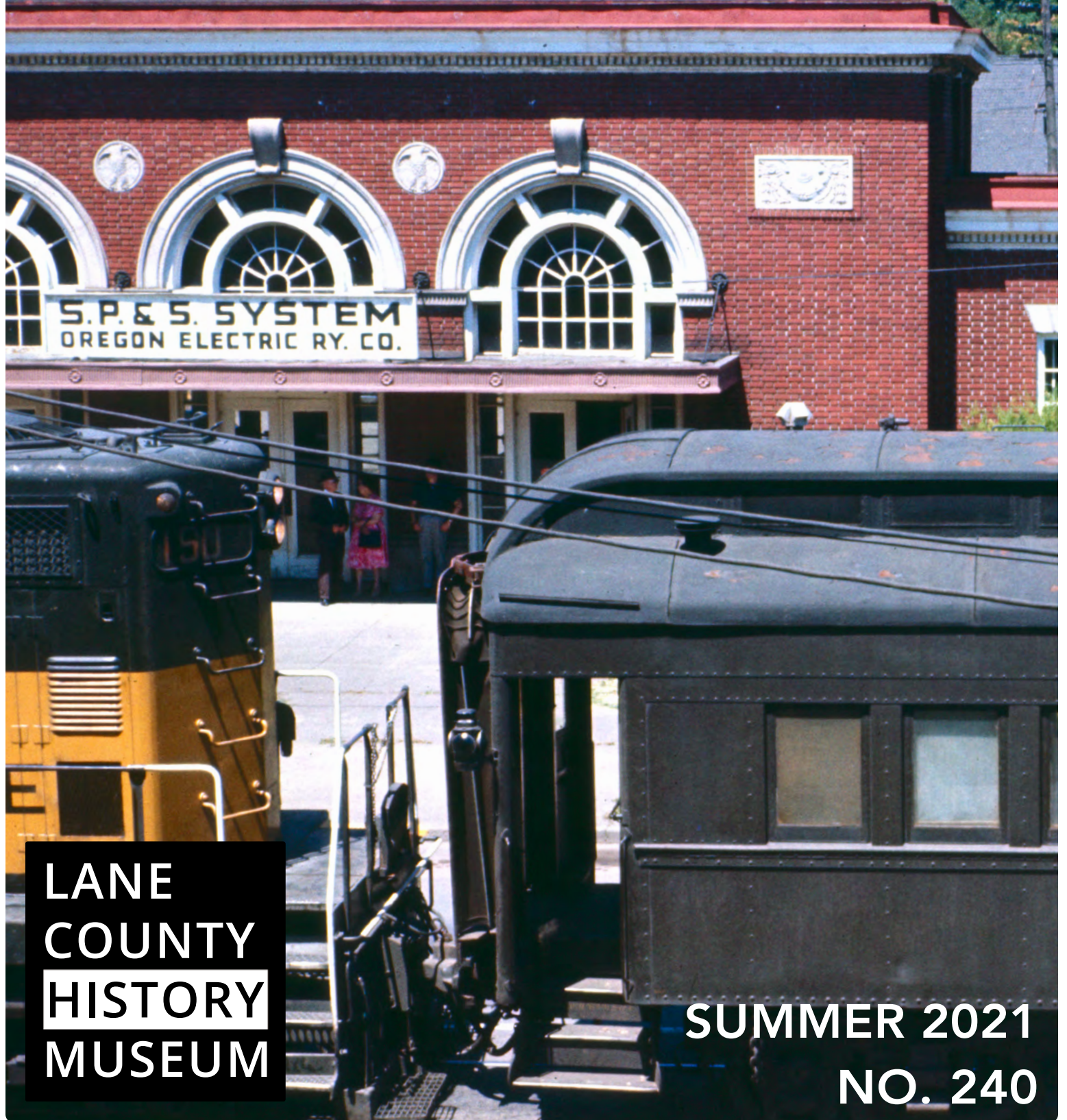


the ARTIFACT



LANE
COUNTY
HISTORY
MUSEUM

SUMMER 2021
NO. 240

LOOKING FORWARD • DIRECTORS CORNER
OREGON ELECTRIC STATION • RURAL ELECTRIFICATION
WELCOME MARIN

LANE COUNTY HISTORY MUSEUM

740 West 13th Avenue, Eugene, OR

MAILING

Lane County Historical Society
P.O. Box 5407
Eugene OR 97405-3819

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Office (541) 682-4242

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Kids (14 & under)..... FREE
Members. FREE

LCHM.ORG

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BECOME A MEMBER

Sign up! The benefits include:

- Free admission to the museum
- Invitations to members-only events
- Subscription to *The Artifact* & *Lane County Historian*

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Front cover: DH10841. View of train outside of Oregon Electric Station. c. 1966

LOOKING FORWARD

JULY

21-25

Lane County Fair

We will be open from 11 am - 5 pm during the fair. Admission is free to attendees.

We need volunteers! If you're interested in helping us out, please email Jennifer Yeh at **volunteers@lchm.org** or call the museum.

Get a limited edition LCHM shirt when you volunteer during the fair!

AUGUST

•

Our exhibit space is now air conditioned, so you can beat the heat at the museum!

SEPTEMBER

13

In Person History Pubs Return!

TBA

Viking Braggot Southtowne

Co-Sponsored by the UO Department of History and Viking Braggot.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

by Bob Hart, Executive Director

In our spring issue of *The Artifact* I ended with our board's continuing investigation of potential museum relocation possibilities. Since then the investigation first reached the point of selectively revealing the site under consideration and listening carefully to the individual reactions.

And now in this issue we will boldly state for public consumption that the Lane County History Museum has been very seriously looking at the now closed Oregon Electric Station restaurant property on the NE corner of Willamette and 5th in downtown Eugene.

Our institutional response to this opportunity has been nothing short of the commonly heard realtor drumbeat of "location, location, location!" What is there not to like about the offer of a 1914 National Register of Historic Places listed building and associated property located on one of the best historically preserved corners in our community? Please see the accompanying article in this issue for more detail on this attractive opportunity.

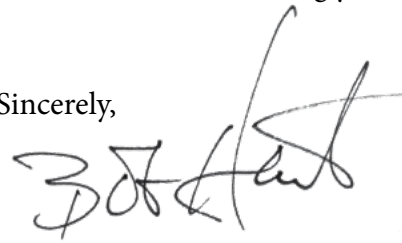
The museum reopened on Wednesday, June 16, masks still required, but with a focus on the new drift boat exhibit fashioned by our equally new curator of exhibits, Marin Aurand (see her intro later in the newsletter). If you are an avid flyfisher, then the exhibit is a must see. And if you just appreciate the McKenzie River for its beauty and function, you, too, will appreciate the exhibit for it honors both the boaters and the challenging waters within its banks.

This year the Historical Society presented its first Ethan Newman Scholarship award to a college bound high school senior. Florence High School graduate Jessica South was selected from a field of several applicants and will be headed to Corban University this fall. The scholarship award is named for Eugene's revered and longest serving postmaster, as well as a former LCHS president and champion of historic preservation. Ethan's son Doug authored the LCHS-published book, [Finding Fire: A Personal History of Fire Lookouts in Lane County, Oregon.](#)

LCHS also collaborated with both the McKenzie River Trust and the McKenzie Education Foundation to help financially support the collection of Holiday Farm wildfire related oral histories collected by students in the UO's Environmental Leadership Program taking Professor Kathryn Lynch's class last quarter. Transcripts of those interviews will be made available through the LCHM library and archive.

With pandemic requirements slowly lifting, the museum staff looks forward to seeing your smiling faces soon.

Sincerely,



Bob Hart

Our Stories.



CAN LCHM FIND A NEW HOME AT THE OREGON ELECTRIC STATION?

by Bob Hart and Staff

LCHS members who remember the Museum's interest in relocating to the downtown Eugene Post Office in 2011 should not be surprised at our current interest in the Oregon Electric Station across the street. The restaurant was an apparent pandemic casualty and has been closed for more than a year now. Some months ago LCHS was approached by the property owners with an amazing inquiry. Was LCHS interested in relocating the Museum there?



The first answer was easy. A National Register property dating to 1914 and upgraded to city code in the last five years or so? LED lighting! A fire suppression system! No asbestos floor tiles! ADA compliant restrooms! And the promise of foot traffic adjacent to a rapidly developing area of downtown, as well as the possibility of helping to create a future cultural nexus downtown in proximity to the Hult Center. What was there not to like?

But could we afford to operate downtown? The answer for this question has taken awhile to arrive at, but our seriousness may be gauged by the fact that we have engaged architect Nir Pearlson (Aligned Architecture), with whom we have worked before, to draft plans for a phased approach to OES museum operation.

What OES does do for the Historical Society is to facilitate the Museum becoming a must see destination and the Society a far more a far more active community partner. A move to OES would be truly transformational for our organization and its community roles. A more vibrant and rejuvenated organization, more representative of our county's demographics, can be telling a broader range of previously untold stories and a site for various community events and celebrations.

OES does not solve all of LCHM's concerns. What it does solve is the Museum's visibility problem, isolated as it is at the Fairgrounds in a building demonstrably inadequate according to professional museum standards. In its current setup OES cannot adequately address LCHM collection storage requirements. But 12,000 sq ft of the site is non-historic and developable in the future. And, without an extension, the current LCHS Fairgrounds lease with the county runs out in four years!

DH10870: View from above of train outside Oregon Electric Railroad Company building, Shelton McMurphey Johnson House in background, c. 1966

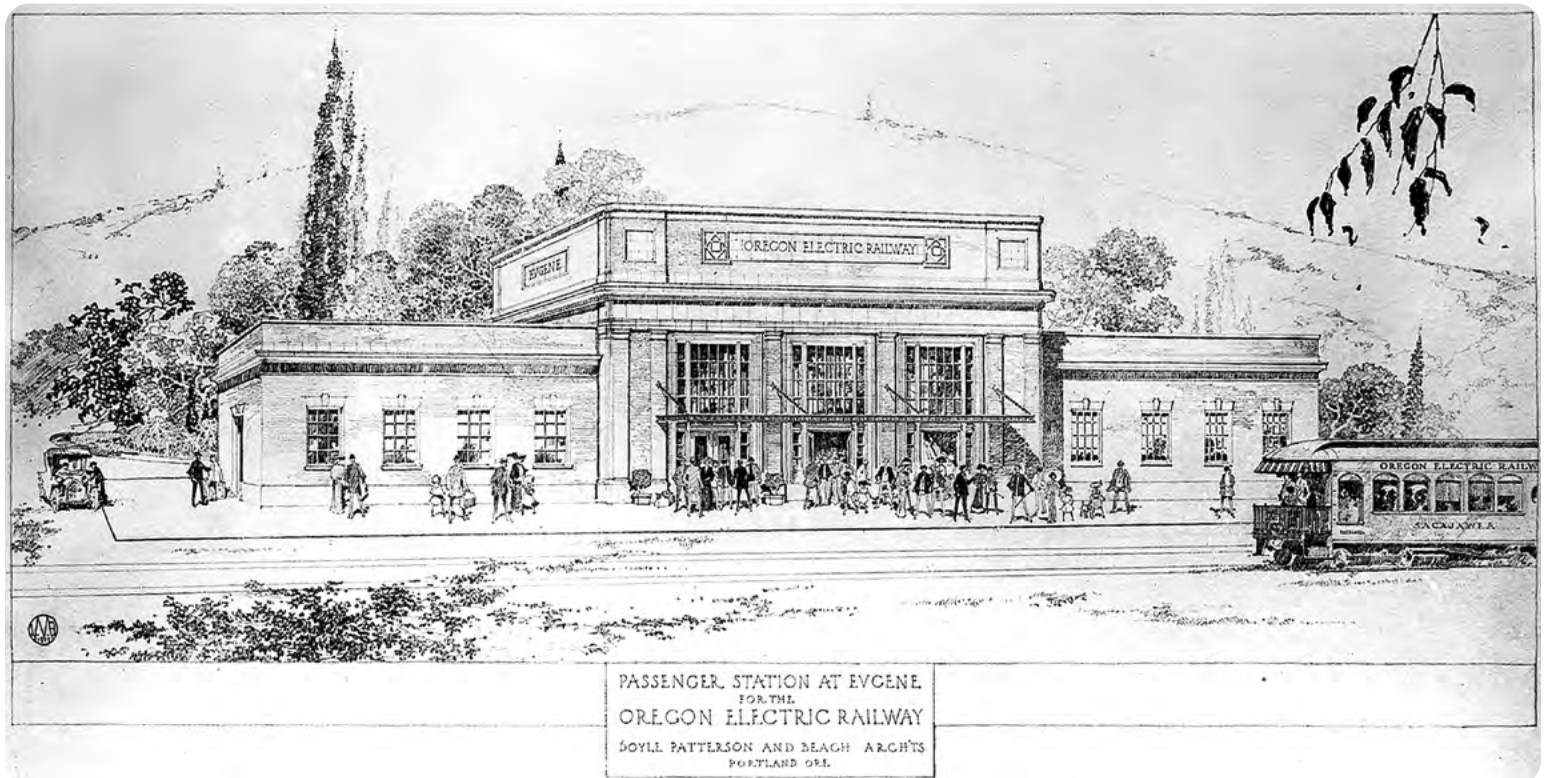


Your continued financial support and the expected income streams that can result from a prime location, meeting rental space, a popular site for regular public events and special celebrations, and dramatically increased admissions will assure a healthier organizational future, less dependent on a public subsidy for its museum function.

More specific details will follow as your board, staff, and museum advisory council move us closer to that previously elusive strategic goal of relocation.

CS257: Oregon Electric Railway Station on the northeast corner of 5th Avenue and Willamette Street, Eugene. Exterior View of brick structure with arched windows over entry doors. c. 1931

GN4405: Architects' rendering for Oregon Electric Railway passenger station, by architectural firm Doyle, Patterson and Beach. c. 1910



COTTAGE GROVE-LORANE DISTRIBUTION FEEDER LINE AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL ELECTRIFICATION IN LORANE AND THE LORANE VALLEY

by Guest Author, Karry L. Blake, MA, RPA

Project Manager and Senior Archaeologist, WHPacific, Inc. an NV5 Company

The Emerald People's Utility District's (EPUD) proposes the undergrounding of a 4.1-mile segment of Cottage Grove-Lorane electrical distribution feeder line in Lane County, Oregon to improve the reliability of service to people along the line. As part of the proposed project, the existing overhead distribution line infrastructure would be removed. The proposed undergrounding project is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This funding source requires compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This distribution feeder line played an important role in the early electrification of the Lorane Valley and it has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. To mitigate the loss of the overhead

infrastructure, research was done, and this article written to detail the importance of early electrification in rural areas as well as the role the Cottage Grove-Lorane distribution line played in the local history of the area.

Today it is difficult to imagine life without electricity. From our coffee machines and computers to our automobiles, electricity powers modern life. Many in the Pacific Northwest today do not have living relatives that can describe life, even in rural communities, before electricity. Electrification began in the Pacific Northwest in the late 19th century generating power with steam and water-powered turbines. These facilities were supported by the waste generated by the massive timber industry and the abundance of deep powerful rivers. In the rest of the United States, electrification did not begin to reach rural and low population areas until after 1936 and many places not until the mid-20th century.

CS678: The Pacific Highway (Highway 99) in southern Lane County. Scene shows early automobile on highway winding along low, tree-lined bluff. Railroad track and powerlines run through shrubs and trees in valley at right.





Privately held electricity providers in the early 20th century had a general disinterest in investing in the infrastructure necessary to bring power to low density population areas. Investors were unwilling to spend the money to provide power to only a few people while the farmers could not as individuals afford to construct distribution lines to their own property (The Living New Deal 2020b; Kramer 2010). In response to seeing the advantages of electricity for farm life, people began lobbying their state and federal representatives for a public utility option to do something about this gap in service.

Rural electrification became a focal point of the 1932 presidential election. At this time, the United States Army Corps of Engineers published their analysis of the Columbia River drainage system as a large integrated region that could be developed for the financial benefit of the entire Columbia River Basin (Kramer 2010:15). This report established a plan for the publicly funded development of the Columbia River system that addressed hydroelectric power, irrigation, water distribution, and navigation issues. In 1935, President Roosevelt signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) (The Living New Deal 2020a; Kramer 2010:21). Then, in 1936, Congress passed the

KE789: Mountain States Power Company plant, probably located near the Booth Kelly Lumber Mill in Springfield.

Rural Electrification Act giving the REA full authority as an independent agency (The Living New Deal 2020b; Kramer 2010:21). REA had the power to make loans to finance the construction and operation of electric infrastructure built to provide power to rural locations (The Living New Deal 2020a; Kramer 2010:22).

By 1923, legislatures in Washington and Oregon were considering bills that answered this call by farmers and rural populations. These bills attempted to establish cooperative power companies that would solve the gap in power distribution. It was not until 1930, when both Oregon and Washington put the issue on the state election ballots, that actions were passed by the voters to allow the formation of municipally run power cooperatives (Kramer 2010). The extension of feeder lines to the rural farming areas of the Pacific Northwest generally preceded the national movement in the 1930s to bring power to rural Americans.

Article continues on next page

RURAL ELECTRIFICATION, CONTINUED

People living in the Lorane Valley and town of Lorane had their first experience with local electric power in 1922 when a family installed a battery powered generator to which they wired their house and general store (Edwards 2006:200). In 1930, the Lorane High School had a Kohler electric light plant that ran during school hours (Edwards 2006:120). The neighboring town of Cottage Grove had electricity by 1920 and its grid was purchased by the privately-owned Mountain States Power Company in 1921. This purchase occurred at the same time a high-tension transmission line was built from Springfield to Cottage Grove and beyond to connect to the Rogue River (Guzowski 1992). The electric generators and neighboring towns familiarized the people of Lorane Valley with electricity before it widely arrived in the area.

By 1935, residents of the Lorane Valley and Lane County were discussing and voting on actions to start a public utility district to serve their communities though the initial vote failed (The Eugene Guard 1935). Women were a major instigator of the effort to bring power to rural areas (Kenyon 1989:5). The electrical assist to their daily lives was tremendous with labor saving devices like washing machines and electric irons. This local lobby gained momentum with changes to the Public Works Administration's grant programs for rural communities which allowed grants of up to 45 percent of the construction cost (The Eugene Guard 1935). Before a local cooperative could be affirmed by vote, the Pacific Power Company strung the first electric power lines to Lorane in the late 1930s brought over from Cottage Grove. These were then extended along Territorial Road to the south and north of Lorane as well as to the intersection with Old Lorane Road (Edwards 2006:200).

One important electrical line to the town of Lorane and the Lorane Valley is the distribution line along the Cottage Grove-Lorane Highway originally erected in 1940 by Mountain States Power Company as a small, single feeder line to connect the town of Lorane to Cottage Grove. This line has remained in use since construction (The Eugene Guard 1940). Today, this line is owned and maintained by the Emerald People's Utility District (EPUD) having acquired it from Pacific Power & Light in 1983. This line has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of the distribution line's

role in the early electrification of the Lorane Valley. This information is being presented to document the historic significance this line has played in the local history and electrification of the area as well as the historic, and continuing, role in providing power to EPUD's customers. Although electricity will still flow between Cottage Grove and Lorane along this route, a portion of that feeder line originally constructed in 1940 will no longer be visible above ground.

The placement of power lines within the town of Lorane and roads to the wider Lorane Valley inspired families to wire their houses for electricity. The advent of electricity enabled the inhabitants of this region to invest in modern electrical appliances such as stoves, refrigerator/freezers, and washing machines. Most of the community had switched over to indoor plumbing in the 1920s, through use of gravity fed lines and interior handpumps. The advent of electric water pumps helped tremendously by reducing the need to pump water inside houses (Edwards 2006:201). According to Edwards (2006:201) lighting before the arrival of electricity was primarily in the form of carbide lights, kerosene lamps, and gasoline lanterns. Individuals interviewed in the late 1980's indicated that the memory of the day the lights turned on was always full of wonder and amazement (Kenyon 1989).

Author's Note: I want to give special thanks to Emerald People's Utility District and the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the opportunity to write this article. I'd also like to thank Patricia Edwards of Lorane and the Lane County History Museum for their help with this research.

GN 3424: Mountain States Power Company substation in Cottage Grove, c. 1942





KE 1107: Mountain States Power Company. Office located at 550 Main Street, Springfield. Exterior. View of brick building. Sign lit by small bulbs says "Gas and Electric Company". February 1, 1927.

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2020a *Rural Electrification Administration (REA) (1935)* [REA]. *The Living New Deal*, Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley. Electronic document, <https://livingnewdeal.org/glossary/rural-electrification-administration-rea-1935/>, accessed July 7, 2020.

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WELCOME, MARIN!

by Exhibits Curator, Marin Aurand

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to members and supporters. I'm the new Exhibits Curator here at the Lane County History Museum. This is a challenging time to start out in a new museum, COVID restrictions meant zoom interviews and socially distanced orientations, and it is only in this new era of vaccinations that I am seeing the smiles of my coworkers for the first time. But this is also a time of great enthusiasm within the organization. I've been swept up in the excitement of the potential move, a new drift boat exhibit, and finally reopening our doors to the public after a long hibernation.

Before coming to LCHM, I worked for 7 years in various museum positions and nearly 10 years in nonprofit management. I have a Master's degree in history with a concentration in public history from Portland State University and I am finishing up a PhD at the University of Oregon with a focus on the history of masculinity and labor in Oregon. In addition to my studies, I have worked with Oregon State Parks and Recreation on a variety of contracts, including co-authoring a book celebrating 100 years of Oregon parks.

I also served as the Director of the Yellowstone Historic Center located at the west entrance of Yellowstone National Park. The museum focused on transportation to and through Yellowstone, and gave me the opportunity to design exhibits, drive a 1935 touring bus, and help my organization with a strategic re-brand. The history and the scenery kept me there for three years, but the Montana winters eventually drove me back to beautiful Oregon.

My first task at LCHM was to highlight Wally Larsen's beautiful drift boat and I hope that I have honored his story with our new exhibit, "The Boat the River Built" which is open now. I look forward to the next challenges that come my way and I am grateful to be part of such an incredible staff.

THE BOAT THE RIVER BUILT

The story of the McKenzie River Drift Boat



C.Y. quickly learned to not wash cotton candy!

Readers: help us make history!

Do you have any photographs of the Thurston Union High School (also known as the Old Thurston High School) gymnasium? The Springfield History Museum would like to know! If you have information you would like to share on this topic, please contact SHM Curator Madeline McGraw at 541-726-3677 or mmcgraw@springfield-or.gov. Thank you community historians!

Donate an Artifact

In response to the historic events and changes to our ways of life in 2020, LCHM is adding new materials to our collection to document how COVID-19 has affected Lane County community members, small businesses, and local organizations. To contribute to this history for future generations, visit lchm.org/covid-collection/. You can print the form or fill it out online.

Share your Story

Do you have a story to share? As history unfolds around us, we are asking for community submissions to our digital archive. Eye-witness accounts, personal stories and insights will help inform future interpretation of our local story. Visit lchm.org/share-your-story/ to submit.

Help support the telling of

Our Stories

with a donation!

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☐ Put this donation in the scholarship fund

☐ I would like my gift to remain anonymous

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EXHIBITS, EVENTS, AND HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

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