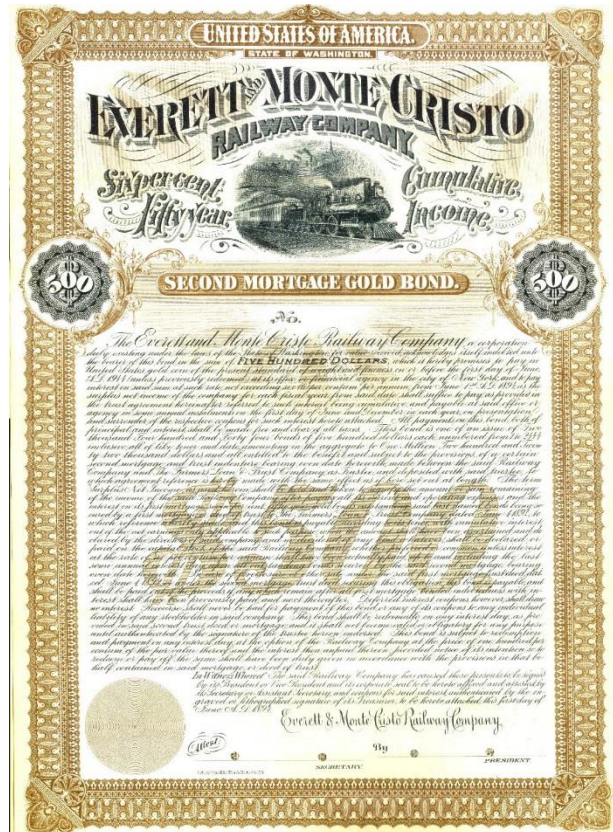


Early Iron

The Sno-Isle Library system is conducting a program to collect images from throughout the County to document local history. Granite Falls Historical Society provided 130+ photos, and we are pleased to share some of them here with our readers. You can browse pictures from Granite Falls and other communities at: <http://www.sno-isle.org/catalog/photos> .In this issue, we're taking a look at images from beyond the immediate Granite Falls downtown area.

In Oct 1892, the Everett & Monte Cristo railway reached Granite Falls, in its march toward the mines of Monte Cristo. Needless to say, folks were investing in the mines, the railroad, and the smelter required. The railroad itself was well-equipped, with "road engines" that were intended to pull heavy loads. One of the earliest locomotives was E&MC #3, a 4-6-0 Baldwin, built in Lima, Ohio.



But mining didn't last very long, and the railroad was incredibly difficult to maintain due to the ravages of the river, particularly through Robe Canyon. One of the logging companies built a bridge to cross the river downstream from the canyon, and re-join the mainline in Robe (above the canyon), but that path was not meant for a mainline locomotive.

Over the ensuing years, most of the locomotives used in this area were specifically designed to run on the "temporary" rails generally laid by the logging companies. Turns were sharp, grades were steep, and three specific brands of locomotives were designed specifically to address such challenges. Perhaps the best-known was the Shay locomotive. It was all-wheel-drive with a collection of gears and universal joints that allowed it to negotiate the challenging railways. The Johnson-Deane Lumber Company owned Shay #928, and it stood proudly to be photographed in 1912. The primary Johnson Deane mill stood just at the upstream end of Robe Canyon, adjacent to the original townsite of Robe, WA. If you hike the "Old Robe Trail" today, you emerge at the river where the mill stood, and you can see any number of remains.

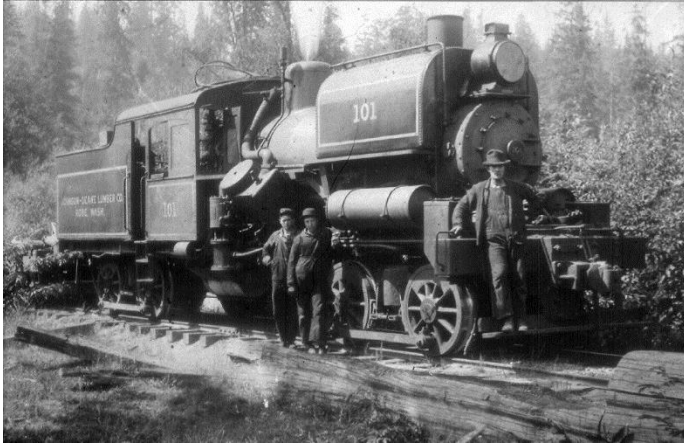


Most Shay locomotives sported three vertical cylinders, placed on one side, and had a long boiler that was offset from the centerline of the engine. Some had two “trucks” (sets of wheels) like #928, and some had three, carrying extra-large loads of fuel. The drivelines and universals were a mechanical marvel.



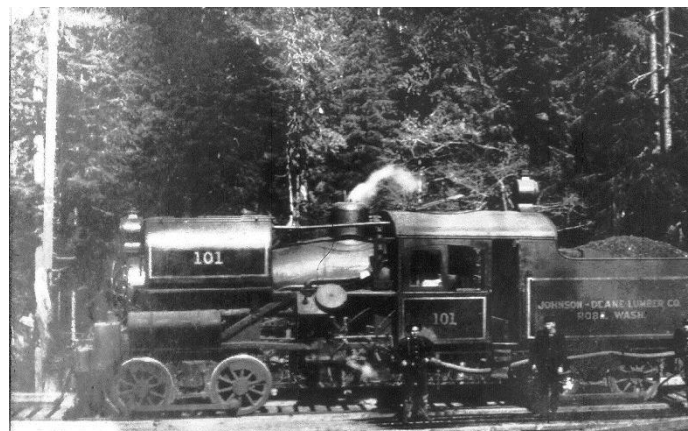
Another type of logging locomotive common in the Northwest was the Climax, characterized by two cylinders, mounted at an angle fore-and-aft, one on each side of the engine. Sobeys Mfg Co., later Waite Mill, operated a Climax locomotive, shown here being refueled near the mill.

Finally, there was a third brand of locomotive, Heisler, that was also popular for its pulling power and its ability to handle sharp turns and uneven trackage. Heislars were characterized by two cylinders mounted in an opposing “V” configuration. Johnson-Deane had a Heisler that was unique in another way, as well. Their #101 had a “saddle tank” which carried extra water . . . and added extra weight for improved traction.



All of these logging engines hauled millions of logs out of the woods to the mills and to the mainline railroad (when it was operating). Tracks were laid, used, pulled up and moved, and used again.

There were tracks in surprising places! In Granite Falls, tracks came from Waite Mill, along the base of Iron Mountain, to a wye located where the old-high-school-now-the-junior-high is located. Tracks wandered around Canyon Creek, and multiple spur tracks branched off along the mainline in areas like Lochsloy.



When the mainline tracks were finally removed in the mid-1930s, truck roads replaced rails in the woods. We were fortunate that in 1934, the bridge across the Stillaguamish was completed just upstream from Granite Falls, so that the heavy log loads could be carried out of the hills to local mills and beyond. The local railroad era was over.

