

THE MANIFEST

August/September/October 2020



Greetings!

I sincerely hope this letter finds you all well. Unfortunately, we are still unable to have meetings, or our annual show, but we are nevertheless continuing to maintain our park, and have received some good news regarding a grant. Below are the updates provided by Allen Dobney, who has worked tirelessly (well maybe he is tired), but he keeps working for our organization, thank you Allen!

3rd Time is a Charm - Funding Update

By: Allen Dobney

In the recent months I have applied for 3 Covid-19 relief grants for the Society. In the first 2 we did not get a grant. The 3rd one from the Oregon Cultural Trust has awarded us a grant for \$5,561.00. According to Jerry this grant plus the \$3,000.00 from the go-fund-me page should cover our operating costs for this year.

I am also selling off my entire railroad slide collection. 75% of the proceeds from the auctions are being donated to the

Society. So far I have generated over \$1,000,00 from the auctions. If operating costs are covered by the above these donations will go to the Butte Falls project.

Butte Falls Project Update

By: Allen Dobney

Because of Covid-19 we expect the project will be delayed by at least a year. The town is continuing work on their land funding. I recently I met with the Mayor, Town Planning Commission, The Fire Chief, & Chris Bray Public Works Director. We discussed the truck road access. We agreed to limit access to most of the truck road to emergency access only. The only public access will be one grade crossing and local public access near the baseball field for 3 residences.

More recently Jerry Hellinga and I met with David Schott, (a land owner next to the landing), to discuss access across a corner of his property and new access for his property. The meeting went well, David agreed to work with us on the needed access and his access changes.

Lastly I have been nominated by the Town of Butte Falls to be the Commissioner of Special projects reporting to Linda the mayor. And of course my special project is the Butte Falls Scenic Railway. This appointment allows me to continue to work closely with the town and coordinate our project with the other projects and activities in the town and continue receive support from the town.

RAILROAD PARK GO FUND ME PAGE



Twice a month, from April through October, crowds flock to the Medford Railroad Park, a seven-acre collection of all things railroad from historic logging locomotives to model trains winding their way over the Cascade Mountains.



Since its establishment in 1979 the park has been free to the public, supported by their donations and operated by four clubs which volunteer their time to create the exhibits and maintain equipment. On a typical 2nd or 4th Sunday of the month, several thousand people visit, riding on small trains and looking at full-sized locomotives and model railroads.



We rely on donations made at the park on our Sunday run days and on income from the late-November Rogue Valley Train Show—which may not happen this year.



It's the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public health concerns mean the park can't host any visitors under guidelines which ban mass gatherings of people.

The result: No donations.

Our clubs are hurting. Without help, the 40-year-old park is in trouble.

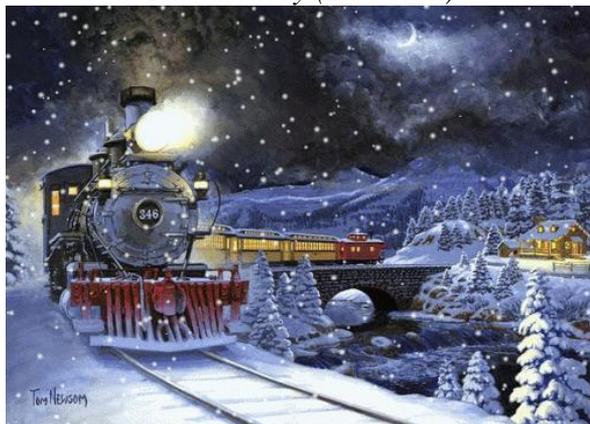
- We have on-going expenses including insurance premiums and utility bills.
- We have seven acres of landscaped grounds to maintain, and tens-of-thousands-of-dollars' worth of equipment to keep in operational condition.
- We have dozens of structures from big locomotive barns to small exhibit buildings. All need ongoing maintenance.

Our goal is to ask the public, fans of the Railroad Park, to help us raise \$50,000 to be divided equally between the four clubs—all of them non-profit organizations—to tide us over so we can be ready to welcome the public back in 2021.

Share the link with others: <https://gf.me/u/yfp242>

The Christmas Train By Lawrence Dumas

A chilling tale of a tragic passenger train accident in the late 19th century (Fictional)



Every Christmas Eve for the past 100 years, at ten minutes to midnight, a mournful wail floats through the frosty silence shrouding the 468-foot railroad bridge near Route 117 in Essex Junction, Vermont. It's the cry of a steam locomotive; a piercing shriek that climbs to a feverish pitch, only to end abruptly, plunging the night back into darkness. To the old timers in the area, it's a grim reminder of the demise of Engine 93, and Engineer, Edmund Johansson. For hours, the wood and steel railroad bridge just outside town had endured the paralyzing minus 39-degree temperature that had silently descended on the wings of darkness. Deeper and deeper, the cold wormed its way into the metal, torturing the bolts in the thick, steel splice plate until their surrender sounded like gunshots in the empty night air. Unfortunately, because of the late hour and the terribly frigid night, there was no one about to hear the horror that had just spawned that December 24, 1898.

It was by far the coldest night of the year when Johansson's train -- two coaches full of French immigrants en-route to Montreal -- left White River Junction, winding its way

through the moon lit, picturesque snow-covered hills of central Vermont. But inside the darkened locomotive cab the gangly Engineer wasn't interested in the scenery. Ignoring the billowy clouds of white steam rushing past the frost-etched windows of the locomotive, Johansson's steel gray eyes were coolly scanning the gauges, verifying what he already knew. He was pushing the iron 2-0-2 monolith close to its limits. Then, without so much as a care in the world, he nudged the throttle another notch.

At thirty-one years of age, Johansson's shock of unruly, chestnut-colored hair and lean six-foot frame made him the heart's desire of all the women in town. And despite his outgoing appearance, deep down he was shy, the reason his cheeks always warmed whenever a woman stared at him. But tonight he wasn't 'warm', at least not that way. No. A cold anger gripped him an anger as cold as frigid as the steel rails the train was traveling over. And while much of his anger was directed at 93's regular engineer who reported in sick, the gangly Johansson was angrier with himself for not saying no when asked to take the unscheduled, last-minute Montreal run. Further, he hadn't had time to say good-bye to Mary and the children. Maybe Hector, the ticket agent, would brave the cold, and get a message to Johansson's honey-haired wife who was waiting in the cottage in West Lebanon, just across the Connecticut River in New Hampshire.

She'd be disappointed, but she'd understand. The severity of the early winter had drastically reduced their firewood supply, and they had already discussed his taking extra runs to earn more money with which to buy more wood. Absently unbuttoning his heavy duffel coat -- the roaring blaze in the firebox was making the cab uncomfortably warm -- his thoughts drifted back to Alfy Magna, the red-faced conductor, and a young, skinny new brakeman, named George something-or-other.

Earlier, the two men had made the precarious trip from the rear coach on the pretense of wishing Johansson a Merry

Christmas. The truth be known, they had originally braved the elements and swaying railroad cars in order to question the train's dangerous speed. However, one look from Johansson convinced them otherwise. His brow furrowing, Johansson nudged throttle another click just as the train shrieked into the State Capitol of Montpelier, its wheels spinning even faster over the hoar frosted rails.

For a brief moment Johansson's heart warmed at the sight of the amber glow in the windows of the houses flying by. They reminded him of his promise this morning to Mary that he'd be home in time to help wrap the precious few presents for Alicia, Sarah, and Thomas. Then his heart hardened again at the thought that his would be the first Christmas morning he wouldn't be there with them.

Brushing at the cold wetness trickling down his cheek, he yanked his pocket watch from his coveralls. In the flickering glow of the open firebox he saw it was just a little after 9 p.m. Glancing at the fleeting countryside, then at engine's gauges again, he mentally calculated that if he kept up his speed, there was a chance he might make it home in time for dinner. Another perilous click of the throttle and a surge of fresh steam sent the train roaring even faster into the darkness.

Even though the cab was overly warm, Johansson still felt a shiver course through his body. Maybe he would head to the rear car for a swig from the whiskey flask it was rumored the bulbous-nosed conductor always carried. No! That would mean leaving the engine unattended. And despite his bitterness, Johansson knew that would be negligent, something he could never be, no matter what the reason.

Magna and the new brakeman, meanwhile, were trying desperately to ignore what they knew was a perilous situation. Braving the biting wind on the caboose's tiny portico, they took turns at Magna's whiskey flask. But even the spreading warmth of the alcohol did little to slow down the tree line that was flying by, nor steady the frightening

swaying of the train. Hopefully the passengers were too caught up in their holiday cheer to notice the danger. Casting a troubled look forward, Magna remembered Johansson's earlier, frosty reception, and pulled his coat collar tighter against the biting cold. Then with a final glance at the blurred countryside, he struggled to get slightly-intoxicated George what's-his-name back inside, to the warmth of the glowing wood stove.

Not many miles ahead, another man was out this frigid night, struggling to keep his oil lamp's pathetic flame from being extinguished by the corkscrewing arctic wind threatening to pluck him from the bridge. Sam Tower, a willowy slip of a man with haunting dark eyes that mirrored more than fifty years of railroading, had been with the company since he was old enough to swing a sledgehammer. A quiet, cautious individual, Tower's inherent sense for danger had made him the company's official troubleshooter for more years than anyone could remember.

It had been a half hour earlier, while sitting in front of a warm, cozy fire, that he began feeling uneasy about the Montreal run. Nodding to his knowing wife, he donned his hat and heavy overcoat. Then he and his kerosene lamp began the freezing, quarter mile trek to the foreboding span across the black abyss of the Winooski River. Little did he know that when he stepped on the bridge, Engine 93 was in Richmond an alarming forty-three minutes ahead of schedule!

His beard tinkling from the tiny icicles formed by his freezing breath, Tower was barely half way across the span when suddenly his blood froze. In the flickering light of the lamp he saw the rail joint and its missing splice. But what really horrified him was that the ends of the two rails were bent several inches out of alignment!

He had to stop the train! But how? The nearest stop, Williston, was at least three miles up the track. Could he

make the trip in time in the numbing cold that was already beginning to seep into his bones? He would have to try.

Johansson, meanwhile, shifted his bulk on the hard, wooden seat while the locomotive tore across the Richmond crossing, barely missing a horse and rider that had just crossed the tracks. "Fool!" Johansson muttered. "A man should be home with his family on Christmas Eve, not traipsing around the countryside!" Then the horse and rider were forgotten, and his thoughts turned to the small, yet succulent goose, sweet potatoes and hot, mincemeat pie Mary would have for dinner - a dinner he prayed he wouldn't miss. At this his fury increased, and he slammed the throttle lever against its stop, nearly breaking it off.

Glancing at the coal supply, he knew he should take more on in Essex Junction. But because it was Christmas the yard would be closed. Before he left Montreal, however, one way or another there would be a full coal tender and 3,200 gallons of water in the boiler.

A tight smile creased his face ten minutes later when he saw the pale amber lights of the Williston Station ahead. He fondly remembered the countless times he'd visited with old Gaty who, through the good graces of the company, was allowed to live at the Williston stop as part-payment for serving as Station Master. The old man always had a hot cup of coffee and a story ready for the trainmen, regardless of the time of day or night.

But there was no time for pleasantries tonight, and flicking a discerning eye at the steam gauge he saw that the needle was in the red danger zone. Still, he wasn't concerned. Once he reached the flat track the other side of the Junction, he would be able to cut back on the pressure and still maintain his speed.

It was less than five minutes when the final curve before the straight run to the bridge berthed in the glow of the head

lamp. Suddenly, on a breeze the sound of muffled merriment from the rear of the train reached Johansson's ears, and for the briefest of moments he was consumed by a burning jealousy for the sixty-odd people who, thanks to him, would be home on Christmas morning.

While Johansson struggled with this new emotion, less than a mile ahead Towers was hunched over, exhausted and gasping into the frozen air. Suddenly the ground began shaking, and the sound of a rapidly approaching train reached his ears. Appalled at what was about to happen, he ripped his duffel coat off, and in the pathetic glow of the lamp began waving it madly over his head.

The curve was already a memory when Johansson began inching the throttle back. He knew the old, deck-style bridge at Essex was notorious for cross winds. And while they wouldn't bother the fifty-ton locomotive, the two wooden coaches trailing behind were another matter.

Craning his neck back, looking to see if the new brakeman was on the job, was probably the reason Johansson never saw Towers. Without so much as a tremor, the roaring train smashed through Towers, its blurred wheels rapidly eating up the final mile of track. Too late, the massive locomotive began slowing when a sudden heart-wrenching shriek breached the frigid night. With a massive lurch the steam engine sailed out into the void, its still-turning wheels clawing at the empty air while it plummeted into the forbidding darkness below.

Its death toll -- the roiling thunder of hundreds of pounds of steam breaching the darkness as the boiler casing tore open on the rocks -- desecrated the silence. Within minutes' hundreds of sleepy townspeople were scurrying to the scene of the tragedy that had just befallen this most joyous of nights.

It was three days before the last broken body was wrested from the twisted wreckage, and another two days before Towers fate was learned. Johansson's body, however, was nowhere to be found and it was assumed that it would be found further downriver in the spring. But when spring came and no body was found, there where whisper that another power had been at work that night.

A year went by, and the calamitous events of the previous Christmas Eve were all but forgotten -- until December 24th. It came just before midnight, the forlorn whistle of another train approaching Essex High-Bridge. Again the townspeople were awakened by the shrieking and rumbling of what had to be another train going to its death on the river bed. Scrambling from their warm beds they again made their way to the bridge, only to see in the glow of the oil lamps, the snow from that afternoon's storm laying virgin upon the rails.

It's been over a hundred years since Edmund Johansson delivered all those innocent people into the hands of the Grim Reaper, yet every Christmas Eve the people living around the bridge swear they hear what sounds like a steam locomotive. And while someone is always quick to offer some explanation or other, there is still one or two who remember the old tale. Handed down from generation to generation, it says that because of his horrendous deed, a power not of this earth mysteriously snatched Johansson from his train that night. And he is destined to spend eternity trying to complete his Christmas run of 1891.

The End

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UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

At this point, we are still closed due to the COVID pandemic, so there are no scheduled meetings.

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