



Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation

Winter Newsletter -- December 2011

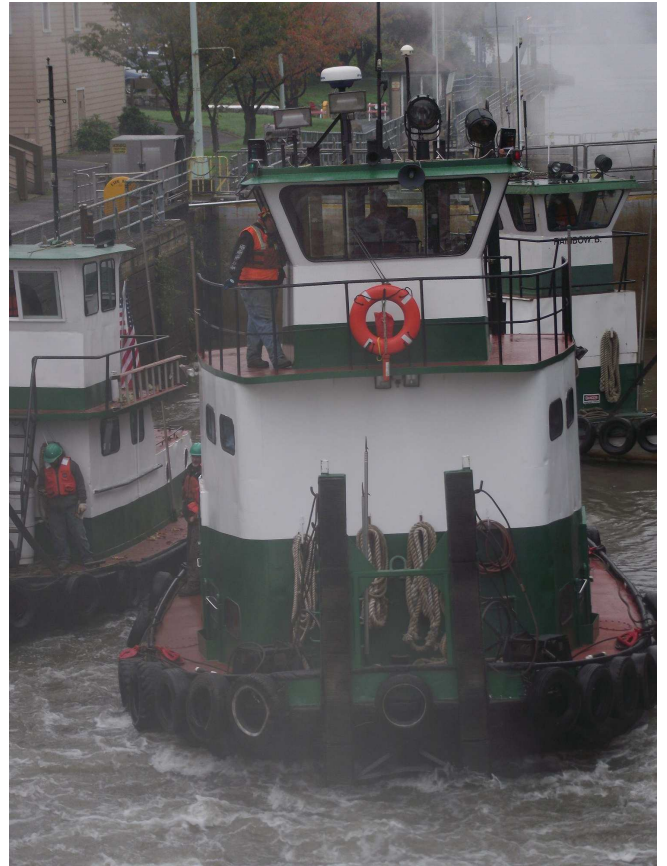
**Corps warns of possible
'catastrophic failure' —
closes locks until repairs can
be done.**

Carter

Jim Mahar and Jerry Carroll, US Army Corps of Engineers Portland District and Bonneville staff, had very bad news for the assembled One Willamette River Coalition Advisory Committee November 3. They were seriously worried about the gudgeon arms and anchors that function to help swing the massive gates of the 1873 Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Lock. The plan was to close the locks after allowing marine businesses one last day to move their equipment up or down river.

The week of Thanksgiving, the news got worse. A call to Sandy Carter, present coordinator of the Coalition (formerly an Oregon Solutions project), was to inform the group that the locks were closed, period. There would be no opportunity for river users to get ready for what might be an extended closure, since the Corps' engineers, after a site inspection, feared the possibility of metal failure and fracture.

The news rocked the Coalition, which had spent the summer and early fall outlining a plan to try to enter into another Challenge Partnership with the Corps—a partnership to allow locks supporters to locate resources for lock operation and direct that money into incrementally increasing days of operation for the next 3-5 years. The partnership would support a build up of commercial traffic on the river by paying for half of the 'open' days—firm dates that would be published ahead. Without a concrete schedule, river businesses have nothing upon which to base a business plan. That plan is off the table until the repair crisis is past. (Cont. on page 4.)



Wilsonville tugs Princess B, Duchess B and Rainbow B lock back upstream after bringing barges downriver Nov. 1. Photo: Sandy

2011 Director's Message: Saving history, with your help, since 2002...

Recently I had to submit a summary of our charitable/educational work to the Clackamas County Tax Assessor, and it was a very instructive exercise. In order to qualify for a waiver of office space property taxes, one of the assessor's requirements is that a non-profit actually give something to the community—something in rare supply. After lots of rummaging in file cabinets, gray matter and bookcases, we came up with the following list of accomplishments that is focused on what we contribute to you, the community. Our Board found it impressive and urged me to share it with you. Here's our brag list, slightly edited for length.

- Our **historical research** benefits the community: through our website, www.willamettefalls.org, which contains bountiful public information on the history of the Willamette Falls area, developed by our programs and volunteers; through access to our growing collection of digital photos and artifacts; and through frequent public presentations on numerous local history topics.
- We deliver benefit by serving as a safe, non-profit repository for various **photo archives** relating to the history of communities, structures and industries around Willamette Falls.
- Our photos and documents provide direct benefit through their availability to other researchers, students and the public, to study and use in various history projects, because **appreciation of our local history** is one avenue to a better quality of life in this community.
- We provided direct benefits to the community at large through the heritage education developed in our two full length video **oral history documentaries**: "Grindstones, Boomsticks, Tattletales and Nips—Stories of Crown Zellerbach International West Linn, Oregon, Division: 1928-1986" and "Friends, Fish and \$1.09 an Hour—More stories from Crown Zellerbach West Linn, Oregon, 1928-1986." This information was not available to the public from any other source.
- We gave similar benefit to the community at large through the production and publication of the **non-fiction oral history** volume "\$1.09 an hour and glad to have it—Conversations with 17 mid-20th Century Crown Zellerbach millworkers." This information was not available to the public from any other source.
- We gifted copies of that book to **County and State libraries** for benefit to students, researchers and future generations and for the gift of education for all public library patrons.
- We've created and shared the gift of **public art, focused on old powerhouses**, through the development of our three historic "Art Contemplates Industry" fine art collections, displayed for the public benefit in public libraries (Sandy library and West Linn library), hospital galleries (Providence Milwaukie and Willamette Falls Hospital), and the Mt. Hood Museum and Visitor Center. Our art allows the community to see historic industrial sites that are private and normally off-limits to the

public. This public benefit was not available from any other source. We maintain the two largest collections on our website to continue the 'gift' of this art.

- We received grants to create permanent, high-quality **art catalogs for our three collections**: T.W. Sullivan Powerhouse, Hawley Pulp and Paper Company Powerhouse, and Bull Run Powerhouse. The resulting publications were donated for the public benefit to County Libraries, where they keep 'giving' to the heritage education and enjoyment of all library patrons. There is no other source for this material.
- We've provided the public a free non-commercial, volunteer-run **community heritage festival**, Lock Fest, six times since 2004. The event provides all ages with the rare experience of seeing a working 1873 navigation lock in action. The public can tour an operating 1895 mill and an operating 1895 power plant and witness government navigation lock operations. There is no other local provider of this public benefit.
- Working with Lake Oswego, we organized and hosted a well-attended **field session on "Industrial Firsts"** in West Linn for the National Trust for Historic Preservation national conference in 2004.
- We accept items of historical importance into our collection, such as property abstracts that date back to the Donation Land Claim pioneers, **preserving them for future research** into the early settlement of the communities at Willamette Falls. Such materials are readily available by appointment, for educational purposes.
- We conducted a free **community oral history project in West Linn** that invited the public to attend several videotaped McLean House events to capture stories of the early history of West Linn. We are working to make the content of those tapes available to the community.
- We publish at least two **free newsletters** during the year that provide heritage-related information for the benefit of the communities around the falls.
- We developed a set of five **lesson plans on local mill history** for junior-high level students, supplying information that had not been included in local school curriculum.
- Our educational and charitable products and activities would not be possible without a place in which our volunteers can work and maintain our archival materials, our fundraising inventory and our non-profit corporate and financial records, so we **maintain an office**.
- We have taken the history of Willamette Falls millwork, power, and transportation into our work and our subcommittee participation with the board of the new **Willamette Falls Heritage Area** Coalition, and the importance of our themes is now accepted as contributing to the national significance of the Oregon story.

We hope that you continue to support us, at any level, so we can continue to bring these and similar 'gifts' of history to our communities around the falls.

Happy Holidays.

Sandy Carter, Editor/Director

The closure news came as an ironic shock given an encouragingly full day of commercial lockages earlier that week, when Wilsonville Concrete Products mobilized for a Port of Portland dredging job, bringing barges down throughout the day, while the Pit Bull, based in Oregon City, pushed a crane barge and a new private dock upstream.

The announcement arose from an INCA engineering report that has not as yet been available to the locks stakeholders. The study is said to contain other safety issues, including wall seepage and seismic stability that may come with a high price tag. The effect of the announcements has been to divert the Coalition back into a reactive, crisis-response mode.

Timing is everything, so the fact that the Corps still needs to do the costing and create a budget and work plan for the repairs before putting the request into its 2014 federal budget request looms as a huge threat to the businesses that work the river as well as potential recreational users of the Willamette River Water Trail. The public, which benefits from the locks being open and operational, supporting low local dredging bids for contracts at regional agencies such as the Port of Portland and the Corps itself, is urged to contact Oregon Congressional Delegation to support expediting the Corps' request and the repairs themselves.



Preservationists representing several groups toured the closed Blue Heron paper mill with Oregon City planners and a Metro representative August 2, to inspect the historic resources on the property, which is on the auction block in December. The tour raised hopes for an ambitious adaptive reuse plan for the site. Photo: Sandy Carter

Book Sales and Talks

As we continue to place our Crown Zellerbach oral history book in the hands of history buffs and library reference sections, we look with hope and anticipation into the Foundation's post office box several times a week. Imagine our surprise and excitement at the end of November when an envelope materialized from The Book House, Inc., a Michigan book distribution company, ordering 22 books for sales to Michigan Libraries.

With book talks scheduled for **Jan. 22** (Tigard Public Library, 1 p.m.), **February 7** (Federation of Active and Retired Federal Employees, Hometown Buffet, Tigard, noon), and **March 7** (Oswego Heritage Council's 'First Wednesday', 7 p.m.) we might get close to selling out our fourth printing of one hundred books by Spring. Happy New Year!