

Sahalie Historical Note #13: The Railroads II

I hope you enjoyed my summary (Sahalie Historical Note #12) of the four railroad companies that were so influential in opening up the Northwest in the late 1800s and early 1900s, plus the stories about the Milwaukee Road ski trains that began in the late 1930s. Wouldn't it be great to be able to ride the train to the Pass today, dancing both to and from?! Extend the party! They had it good 74 years ago. I'll write up a separate note with more details on those ski trains to Hyak.

Here is another rare shot of steam locomotives at Snoqualmie Summit (the station was called "Laconia"), taken sometime between 1909 and 1915. This one is from the archives of the Ellensburg Public Library:



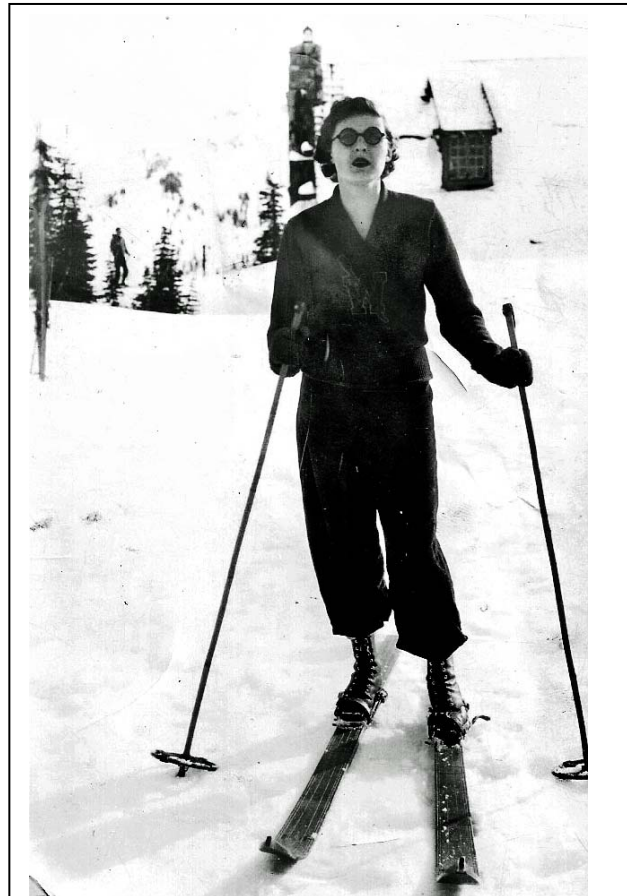
Early Milwaukee Road train at Laconia, Snoqualmie Pass, c. 1909-1915. Looks kinda like the "Polar Express."

(Photo from the Ellensburg Public Library, published on-line by the Washington State Library, Resource Identifier TRN353, accessed at

http://content.statelib.wa.gov/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/ellensburg&CISOPTR=1192&DMSCALE=12.5&DMWIDTH=700&DMHEIGHT=469.967355822&DMX=0&DMY=0&DMMODE=viewer&DMTEXT=&REC=8&DMTHUMB=1&DMROTAT

[E=0](#) . Used with permission.)

John Lundin, a former Sahalie member who brought Mary Sue and me into the club in 1990, recalled that his mom, Margaret Odell, had served as an advisor for the Queen Anne High School ski club on the Milwaukee Road trains before she was married. Sure enough, we found not only numerous mentions of her name in print, but her photo and quote about how wonderful it all was, back in the day (1938-1940).^{1 2 3} "We're glad to see skiing taught to them [the high school students] so sanely and effectively," said Miss [Margaret] O'Dell [school advisor of Queen Anne High School]. "Another thing: The presence of the Milwaukee's special agents on the train as supervisors is an excellent idea. That is a remarkably well-controlled ski special."⁴



John Lundin's mother, Margaret Odell, at the Snoqualmie Ski Bowl, c. 1939. (Photo from the Lundin family, used with permission.)



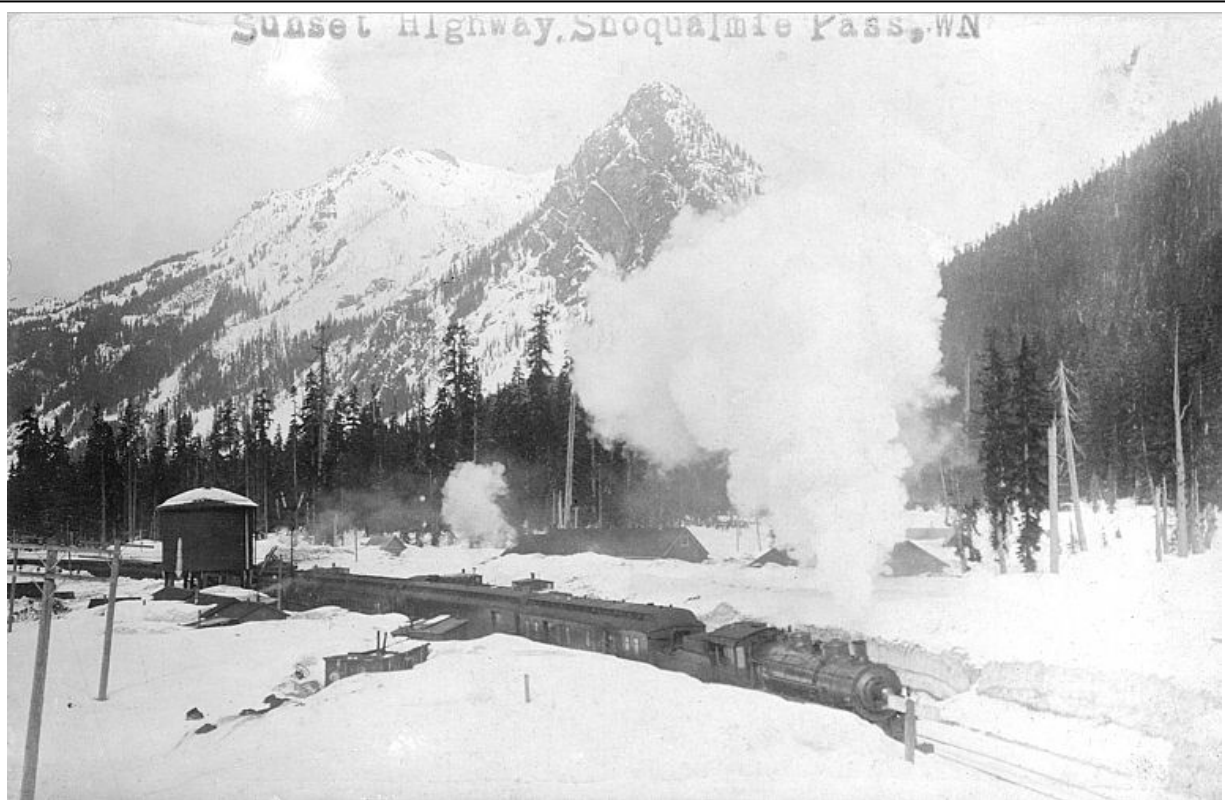
John Lundin's mom, Margaret Odell, at Snoqualmie Ski Bowl, c. 1939 (*Seattle Sunday Times*, date unknown).

The high school special trains also had an open car for dancing to 78s. "At the electric phonograph in the dancing car was Alex Carlson, Queen Anne senior," reports the *Times* in January, 1940. "I can't keep up with 'em," he declared. 'Too many requests, not enough "hot" records. They love to ski and they love to dance in ski clothes. I'll bet I've played, "Oh, Johnny, Oh, Johnny!" fifty times. That's the best thing about this trip to the Bowl: you not only have fun learning to ski, but you have fun on the train, too."⁵

And then John came across www.craigmagnuson.com/Laconia1.htm . Check it out. Wonderful old photographs, compiled by A. Craig Magnuson, a local train and history buff, show the early Milwaukee Railroad's steam trains going over Snoqualmie Pass between 1909 and 1915. This was before the Turn Verein bought the Northern Pacific Railroad's property north of the Pass and built Commonwealth Ski Club's lodge. But very fun to look at today: steam engines billowing smoke with Snoqualmie Mountain and Guye Peak in the background. Quite a sight. Here are two of my favorites from Craig's site, used with his permission:



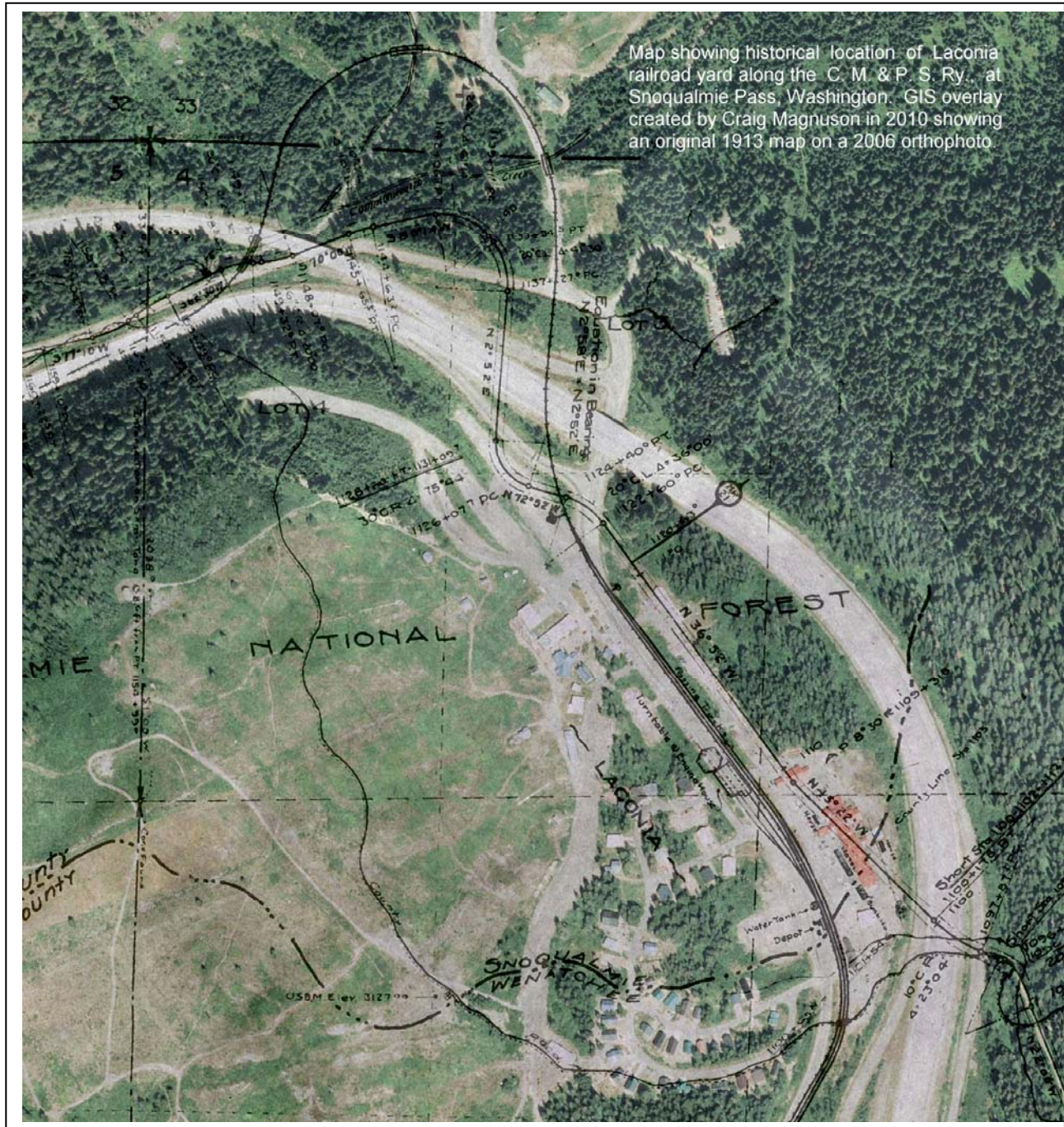
Color-tinted scene of the engine house and turntable at Laconia, Snoqualmie Pass Summit, c.1912. That is probably Snoqualmie Mountain in the upper left (Guye Peak is hidden behind the billowing steam). This photo was taken by Alex J. Holzman from North Bend around 1912 and reproduced on a post card of that era. It is borrowed with permission from A. Craig Magnuson (www.craigmagnuson.com/laconia1.htm).



Another great old photo uncovered by A. Craig Magnuson. This shows an eastbound steam train of the Milwaukee Road sometime between 1911 and 1914, at Laconia, Snoqualmie Pass Summit. Photo was taken by Louis Sheldrew of North Bend and reproduced on a postcard of that era. It is borrowed with permission from A. Craig Magnuson (www.craigmagnuson.com/laconia1.htm).

I nearly fell off my chair when I looked at Craig Magnuson's map on his Laconia website (see close-up, next page). He superimposed an old sketch of the location of the original Milwaukee Road tracks onto a recent aerial photo of Snoqualmie Pass. The original train tracks that were used from 1909 until the tunnel was completed in 1915 came up the same final grade as the current east-bound I-90, and then ran in an arc across the Snoqualmie River, around what is now Washington Alpine Club's lodge and then right where the road right-of-way is now between WAC and Sahalie! I had no idea that the original trains ran right in front of what is now Sahalie lodge! There is a lot more exploring to do to uncover the interesting history of this area.

-- Dave Galvin (November, 2011)



Map showing historical location of Laconia railroad yard along the C. M. & P. S. Ry., at Snoqualmie Pass, Washington. GIS overlay created by Craig Magnuson in 2010 showing an original 1913 map on a 2006 orthophoto.

Craig Magnuson's fantastic map overlay, borrowed here with permission, from his website: www.craigmagnuson.com/laconia2.htm . This map combines a 1913 map of the railroad superimposed on a 2006 orthophoto. Click on the link to see the whole map and move around within it. Note Sahalie Ski Club's lodge at the very top center of the photo.

¹ "Ski Bowl Bids for Junior Enthusiasts: Opposition To Weekend Trips Cut By Trains," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 5, 1938, p. 25.

² Ken Binns, 1939a, "Saturday Will Be Big Day In Times Free Ski School; Pupils Should Return Cards By Tomorrow," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 25, 1939, p. 15.

³ Ken Binns, 1939c, "Times Ski School Races Due Saturday; Slalom Meet Will Be Run Off At Final Class; Students to Vie for Many Trophies Along With Lesson No. 10," *Seattle Daily Times*, March 21, 1939, p. 18.

⁴ Ken Binns, 1939b, "Times Ski School Draws 365 to Snoqualmie Bowl; Young America Gets Feel of Snow, Rhythm," *Seattle Sunday Times*, January 29, 1939, p. 7.

⁵ Fergus Hoffman, 1940, "Kuays Swing To New Record At Times Ski Class," *Seattle Sunday Times*, January 21, 1940, p. 17.