



Spring 2007 Volume 2 Edition 1 www.skykomishhistoricalsociety.org

Meet
JoAnn Roe
author of
**Stevens Pass -
Gateway to Seattle**

Two p.m. June 2nd. at Skykomish Library, followed by related display materials and refreshments at the Museum.

see related article on pg.3

Art Show Successful

Night Metal in Moonlight, the first ever SHS "Art" show was held at the museum two weekends in April and May. Well over 140 visitors enjoyed the remarkable images of Seattle artist Robert DeFreest, self-described nocturnal wandering railroad photographer. The comments were very positive and sales were considered very good by DeFreest, as people from as far away as Georgia wanted to own his work. An article about this interesting man and his unique art appears on page three.

Oral History Book Coming This Fall

Our first volume of Oral History Stories of the Upper Skykomish Valley is due to be printed this fall, in time for the holidays.

With its colorful past, diverse cast of characters, and wondrous location, the stories of Skykomish old timers are long overdue. Miners and railroaders, skiers and hikers, factory workers and housewives, Norwegians and Hungarians and Native Americans, all of these and more have shared their memories to make this book possible. Their heart-felt words speak of special times in a special place capturing the spirit and rhythm Skykomish life in years gone by.

Stories like that of a retired railroad engineer taking the last steam engine out of Sky at 4:00 a.m. He just "tied the whistle down and let her blow until he was clean out of town."

SHS had been collecting individual histories for more than a decade, but things really took off when then president Hank Barber asked Nancy Cleveland and Anne Sekor to focus on the project.

Upon concluding previously gathered interviews and information lacked properly signed releases Cleveland and Sekor made the decision to start over, interviewing more than two dozen people with first-hand memories of the town, the school, the people, and local businesses as they once were. SHS will be seeking proper releases for material gathered earlier in the hope much of it will appear in subsequent volumes.

Readers of these pages will be able to travel back through the years and visit Skykomish when passenger trains still served the town several times a day and skiers relied on a few rope tows to get them to the top of the run at Stevens Pass. Life was different then in Skykomish Valley in an age long before the advent of microwaves and cell phones and the Internet.

Adding greatly to the book's impact will be vintage photographs from our own collection and private sources. It will also feature images of the area taken by Northwest legend Josef Scaylea.

A portion of the printing cost is supported by King County through their affiliation with 4Culture.

Masonic Lodge Resurges

Thanks to Masons from all over the northwest, Skykomish Masonic Lodge #259 is breathing new life.

As institutions go, the Masonic Lodge is in its way as entwined in the history of Skykomish as the school or the Whistling Post. A quick glance at the photos of Past Masters on the back wall of the Lodge reveals names and faces of dozens of people I remember from the few years I lived in Sky, and another dozen I'd heard of so often it seems like I knew them.

There was even one face I'd neither heard of nor met, but recognized from Historical Society photographs. His name was C. W. Miller, and his face and distinctive eyebrows appear prominently in baseball team photos from '10, '11, and '12, and in school board, or shooting club, or other "town father" type pictures down through the decades. He became a Past Master in 1931, and seeing him there was like meeting an old friend, just from all those old pictures.

There are two generations of Gibsons and McCauslands at least on that wall, and probably some I missed. Herald Gibson is there for 1941, and again '76 - '79. Johnny Maloney and Bryan Thompson are on that wall, and Cecil Pasley and Elmer Peter and Mike Shawver and all kinds of folks.

"We want this lodge to be an active partner in a thriving Skykomish."

-- Mason John Henry Williams

According to Karl Warren, secretary of Lodge #259, last year there was discussion that something had to change. Membership was less than 35, the building was costing nearly \$3,000 a year to maintain and operate, and many members were getting old. "I'm 80 myself," he said, "I just can't do all the things I used to do. Something had to be done?"

They sought guidance from other lodges, and within weeks people started coming from all over to make things work. "Masons simply were not going to let this lodge die. It's like it was almost out of our hands. We could mostly stand back and let the magic happen. Our membership is well over 70 now, and there is new energy and new life all around us."

According to the *Historical Overview of the Town of Skykomish, WA*, "In 1922 a Masonic brotherhood was formed when a number of Masonic railroad men relocated from Gold Bar to Skykomish to work in the new roundhouse. Skykomish Lodge 259 was constituted in 1924, about the time that a substantial two-story hall was completed with volunteer labor and donated materials. The still-active lodge has played a significant role in the social history of the community, and its [now] 80-year old meeting hall on Old Cascade Highway is a recently designated King County Landmark"

"We have designated #259 as a Railroad Lodge and have scheduled a Masonic railroad event for the weekend of 18 August," John Henry Williams said. "It will bring probably 120 Masons from western states and Canada, and they'll spend a few dollars in town, I can assure you. We want this lodge to be an active partner in a thriving Skykomish."

by Warren Carlson

Masons Pledge Help In Acquiring Engine 1246

Two anonymous Masons have pledged \$1000 each as dollar for dollar matching seed money for a Masonic Lodge #259 donation toward acquiring Engine 1246.

"I can't promise we will match all \$2000, but I'm guessing we will have close to \$4000 for that engine before too long," says Mason John Henry Williams.

SHS has been working toward acquiring 1246 which was retired in 1953 as the last steam engine to work the Cascade Sector. It was on display at Woodland Park for several decades, but now is in southern Oregon.

SHS is seeking grants to acquire and bring 1246 to Sky, and grants often require matching funds, thus the Mason's generosity will greatly help us in bringing the 1246 home.



Summer Events:

Graduation: June 8
Old Timers' Picnic: July 21
Show-n-Shine Car Show: Aug 25
Farmers' Markets: June 23, July 28,
August 18, Sept 22

Photographic Artist Robert DeFreest, No Ordinary Guy

Seattle photographic artist Robert DeFreest understands he is weird. Nearly no one, sane or otherwise, lurks along railroad tracks in the dead of night waiting in the fog for a train to come along and light the perfect picture he has envisioned. Some nights his labors and planning pay off with the perfect shot. Some nights he misses it and has to come back next week or the next foggy night or full moon to try again. He gets it right often enough his photographs, his art, capture the imagination of viewers and buyers who want one or more of his remarkable images to adorn their homes.

In this era of digitally altered “everything,” DeFreest is a purist. The magic of his art is captured on slide film or negative and it all happens at the time he takes the photo... or it doesn't. If he gets the planning right, and the train moves or parks at the right place and the right speed, he might create a brilliant image. If not, he comes back another foggy night and tries again. Often he opens the shutter, then uses a black card to block or “edit” the light as it “paints” his vision onto the film. He never knows until it has been developed if his vision has been fulfilled.

Talking about his preparation for a recent shoot of a steam train which came to Puget Sound, he mentions checking the tide tables and being happy it would be an out-going tide so the beach in the

shot would be shiny. That's attention to every detail.

In discussing DeFreest and his work with people around town one often hears, “Oh. Him? Heck, I know him. Ran into him out along the tracks one night.”



Robert DeFreest at the SHS Museum

as well as locals who visited for the first time.

Cascadia Inn will be featuring DeFreest's images, both as adornment for the premises and available for purchase in the coming months.

DeFreest loves Skykomish seeking every opportunity to visit and translate his one-of-a-kind vision into unusual, often arresting, images of our remarkable town.

SHS Museum featured DeFreest's unique work two weekends this spring. Sales were excellent strengthening our profile as a meaningful contributor to Skykomish Valley's resurgence as a tourist destination, and the event gave the museum exposure to a wide range of valley travelers,

Author JoAnn Roe, Local and Prolific

Bellingham writer JoAnn Roe is a career feature writer for magazines and newspapers, as well as author of fifteen books, a public speaker, and a photographer. She is particularly familiar with Washington and British Columbia, but writes about all of the West and beyond.

Roe writes Stevens Pass always has had an aura of mystery about it. Even while Seattle boomed during the great gold rush of the 1800s, there was no way to cross the formidable North Cascades Mountains.

Inspired by potential Orient trade, railroaders spent years looking for a suitable route over the Cascades until surveyor John F. Stevens discovered a pass in 1890.

The history of the opening of Stevens

Pass is a saga of nearly superhuman feats by railroad construction crews, ghastly design mistakes, natural catastrophes, and the determination of magnates to connect communities by rail.

Another part of the Stevens Pass saga is the story of individuals who traversed the mountains, built crude homes and schooled their children at home or in drafty log school houses. But there also was an element living in the mountains who took advantage of the isolation to work scams, fight, steal

Volunteers Needed

Come learn to catalog our collection and enter items into PastPerfect, the software which will make it available to everyone. It is interesting and fun and rewarding. See Bob Kelly on Tuesdays or Mike Moore for a brief training session.

Or keep the museum open some Saturday. Or learn to catalog and do it while you are at the museum. Henry Sladek (360 677 2030 and hsladek@msn.com) is maintaining the roster and schedule of volunteers for the museum.

Bob Kelly Recognized

It came as no surprise to anyone close to SHS that our collection manager Bob Kelly well deserved the Western Washington Museum Association **2007 Award of Individual Excellence**.

Award recipients will be acknowledged at a special *Welcome and Awards* program at the WMA Annual Conference in Wenatchee June 21st. Since Bob will be away at that time, SHS Vice-President Henry Sladek plans to attend to represent Bob and SHS.

The letter announcing the award said, "It's the unsung heroes like Robert that truly deserve recognition." SHS has recognized Bob's contributions for years, but it is exciting for us the wider heritage community likewise recognize his amazing contributions.

SHS Membership Categories

Heritage Lifetime Membership (single or family)	\$1000
Patron	500
Benefactor	100
Family	35
Individual	20
Senior/junior (60+ and under 18)	15

Category benefits:

Members receive free museum admission, a calendar, newsletters, recognition, and discounts at events and on all items for sale.

Benefactors receive the above plus "History of Skykomish" DVD.

Patrons receive all of the above plus a framed historical print.

Heritage Lifetime members receive all of the above plus a permanent plaque in the museum and no annual dues.

Skykomish Historical Society

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