A Brief History of Engine #7

Business was brisk in 1923 for William Andrews Clark's Western Lumber Co. at Milltown, MT. They already had a 1920, 60-ton Shay Locomotive built by Lima Locomotive Works, but they needed another "Shay" or "geared logging locomotive". So, they contracted with Willamette Iron & Steel out of Portland, OR to build such an engine.

Willamette Iron & Steel offered several improvements to Lima Locomotive Work's design. Among these was an "all weather cab", different cylinder arrangement for ease of maintenance, improved springs, air brakes, and electric headlights. For West Coast loggers, Willamette also could offer shorter (thus less expensive) shipping from their Portland location rather than Lima, OH.

On January 10, 1923, Willamette started the construction of the engine to be delivered to Arthur Spur, MT on May 10. It would become Western Lumber Company's Engine #3.

Shortly after delivery, Engine #3 was leased to **Heron Lumber Company** out of Arlee, MT. Records show Heron ordering repair parts from Willamette as early as July of 1924 and as late as November 1927. Not much is known about Heron Lumber except they were most likely a contract "faller" for Western Lumber Co.

In 1928, the Anaconda Company purchased Western Lumber Co., from Clark's heirs (Clark passed away in 1925). The Willamette Engine #3 was part of this sale. It was renumbered to #7 as the seventh logging locomotive that Anaconda operated. Engine #7, as it was now known, became a staple locomotive for Anaconda.

Anaconda Lumber's Engine #7 was primarily used on logging spurs to haul logs from the woods to a landing, at which point the logs were loaded onto flat-cars of the Milwaukee Road, who then took the logs to the mill in Bonner, MT. Anaconda had a huge appetite for Square Stulls as mine supports for their Butte, MT mines. Most of the logs went for this purpose.

Records show that as Western Lumber #3 (Heron

Lumber), the locomotive worked in the 9 Mile Creek Area in Mineral County from 1924 to 1927, then (lettered Anaconda Lumber #7) it worked until **1934** in Greenough and Elk Creek and in the Woodworth and Cottonwood Creek area from 1934 to 1948, and throughout 1942 to 1946 it was also used in the Chamberlin Creek area.

By 1948, trucks had developed far enough to be a very dependable mode of transportation for logs, so Anaconda stopped all railroad operation in the woods. All of Anaconda's logging locomotives were scraped except for #5, a Shay/geared locomotive, and our Willamette #7. Both #5 (the non-operable Shay) and #7 remained on mill property at Bonner, MT.

In 1954, along came "Hollywood". Republic Pictures wanted to make a motion picture about rival logging companies, staring Sterling Hayden and Vera Ralston. Set in Montana's forests and mountains, #7 fit the bill to take a staring roll in the film. Anaconda crews dusted it off, oiled it up, and it was off to the movies. After filming, #7 was placed back in storage, but Anaconda decided to place #7 on display at the park next to the sawmill. By the mid 1980's Champion Lumber (the corporate successor of Anaconda) donated #7 to the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, and the locomotive was trucked to the Fort for display.

Not only does the Willamette #7 have a rich history about Western Montana's timber industry, it is the oldest Willamette surviving today. It is also the only Willamette that used coal as fuel and only one of two



ever built with the crown jewel of spark arresters, a Radley Hunter Stack. **The other locomotive with the Radley stack was scraped in 1956, making #7 the only remaining example of this stack on a Willamette in the nation!**

Anaconda #7 served Montana well during its lifetime. The sound of its whistle was the sound of prosperity and that people were working in the woods, valleys, and mountains.



Engine #7 has been outside and subject to deterioration from the weather since being taken "Out of Service" in 1948. Current explorations of the locomotive have revealed that while it needs vital restoration, the bones of Engine #7 are still in salvageable condition.

The purpose of a "protective" shed is multi-faceted and designed to protect the artifact and enhance the visitor experience.

- ✓ Protect Engine #7 from additional weather damage
- ✓ Built of materials representing the timber industry
- ✓ Creates the ability for visitors to tour both outside and inside the cab of #7
- ✓ Includes interpretive signage showcasing mechanical and historical aspects of #7
- ✓ Provides year around access for visitors

The "Shed" will be an open timber structure allowing visitors to photograph Engine #7 from all angles and allow for easy access while restoration work is underway. Engine #7 will remain in its current location.

Engine #7 represents the history of the logging industry in Montana and is an important part of America's history and culture. The construction of a shed and restoration of #7 will preserve this locomotive and local history for future generations.





