



WEBFOOTER EXTRA

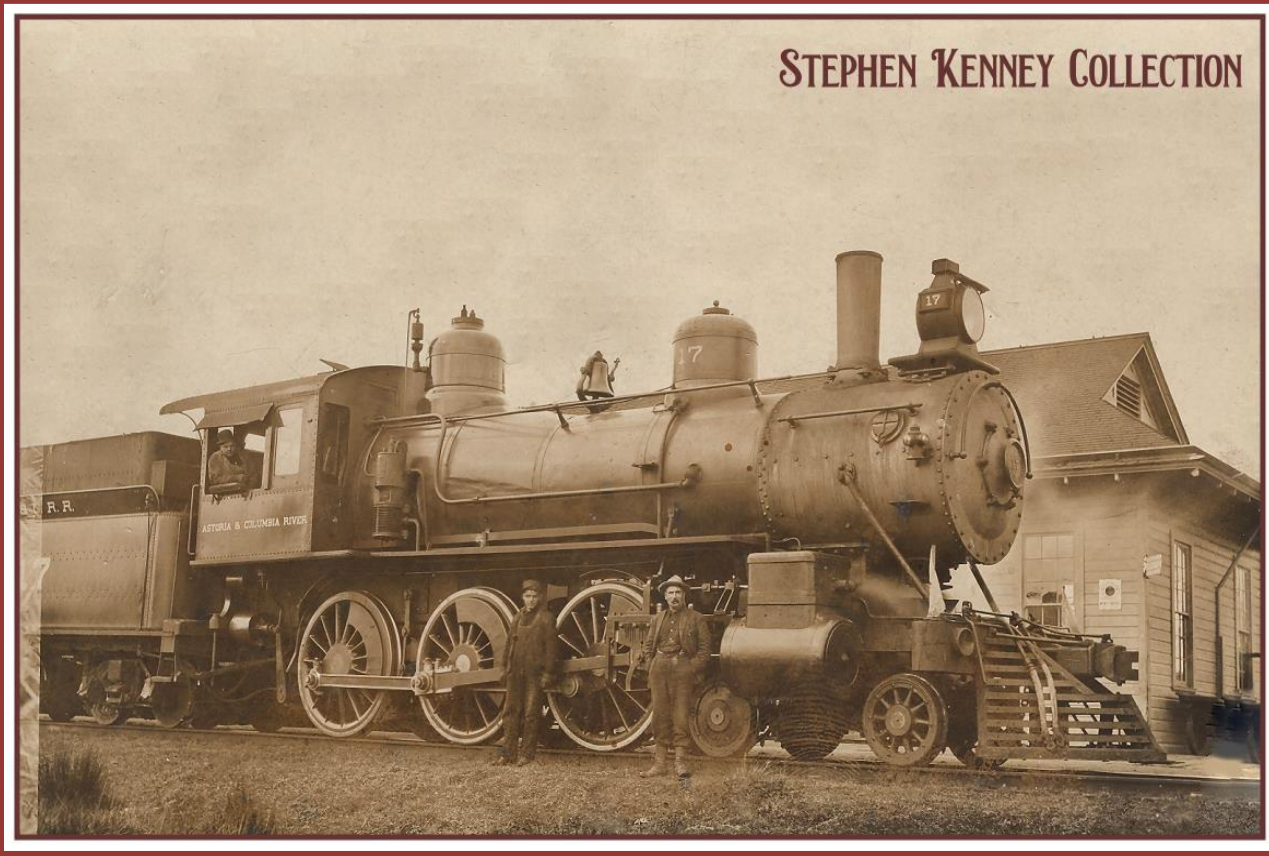
NOVEMBER 2023

REMEMBERING THE ASTORIA & COLUMBIA RIVER RAILROAD DADDY TRAINS

BY DAN SIMMERING



Real photo postcard by James Waterhouse of Seaside, Oregon showing the Astoria & Columbia River Railroad train pulled by Engine 17 as it comes into Astoria from Portland, circa 1907.



Real photo postcard of the Astoria & Columbia River Railroad train led by Engine 17, circa 1907.

From time to time, I have been buying Railway Post Office cancellation postcards because they are railroad related and they have a few riddles on them that I like to solve. The cancellation on RPO mail shows the train number, the mail route's end point locations, "RPO" and the date of the cancellation. The hardest part of trying to decipher the cards is determining which railroad the RPO route was traversing.

The card does not tell you the railroad traveled, just the end point cities. Once you identify the railroad line, then you can determine the name of the train if you can find it on that railroad's timetables or in a Railroad Gazette. Of course, the number of a train could change over time. As a result, you need a complete set of timetables for any railroad which you may want to search. The internet can be beneficial in providing a source for images of some timetables.

The Astoria & South Coast Railway was completed from Astoria south to Seaside in 1890. However, it had no outside rail connections. Meanwhile, Northern Pacific had built its orphan rail line from Kalama to Tacoma, Washington. To get to Portland, a ferry was used to move trains from Kalama across the Columbia River to Goble, Oregon, where a track to Portland was located along the south side of the river. That ferry and rail line started operation in 1884 and it continued to 1908. Northern Pacific had built a bridge over the Columbia River from Vancouver, Washington into Portland which made the train ferry obsolete.



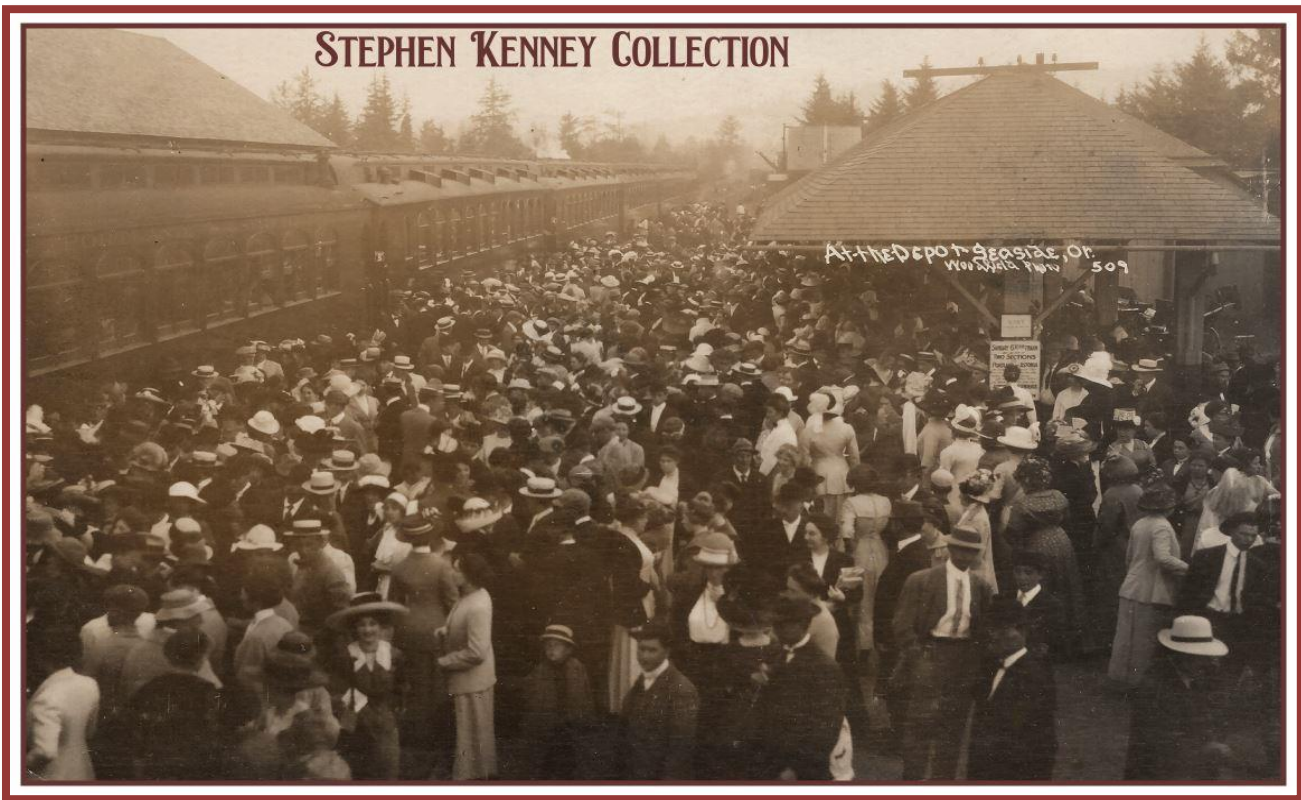
Real photo postcard by James Waterhouse of the ACRR train pulled by Engine 7 at the depot in Seaside, circa 1908.

Recognizing their need, the people of Astoria wanted their rail line to be a part of the national rail network to increase their business footing and to become a major seaport. In 1898, a 50-mile rail line was extended to Goble in order to link to the Northern Pacific track. That railroad then became known as the Astoria & Columbia River Railroad and it had trackage rights over Northern Pacific tracks all the way to Portland. Even with the new railroad, Astoria did not become a major seaport. However, with the help of the railroad, Astoria did develop as an active center for the lumber industry for a number of years.

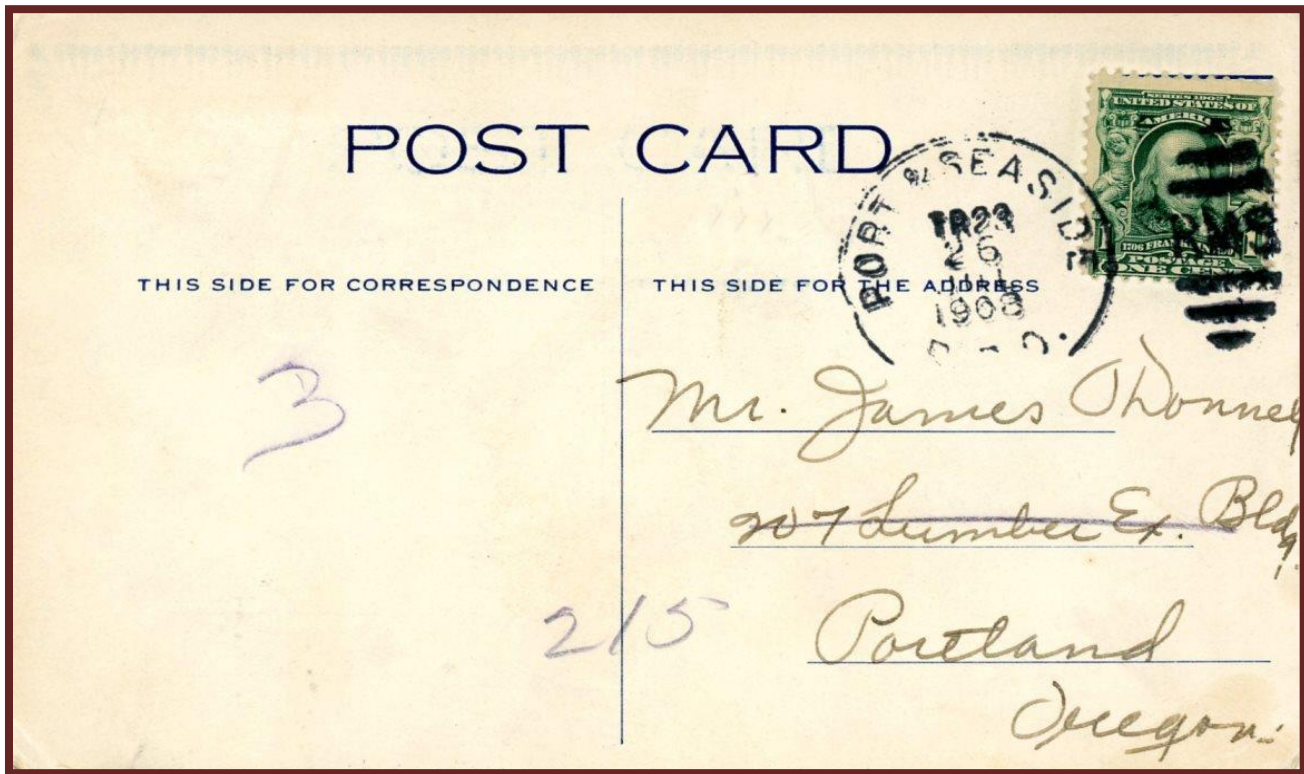
Besides lumber shipments, the new railroad's mainstay developed by utilizing the extension to Seaside. Over that route, tourist trains flourished as people from Portland fled the hot summers for a day or longer on the beach. That train ride was a scenic 118-mile trip from Portland through Astoria to Seaside. In 1898, the fare per person was \$4 round trip with the journey taking four hours one way.

For the moderate-income residents of Portland, "Daddy Trains" became popular. A family would travel to Seaside for a weekend. Father would return to Portland by train on Sunday night for the work week while the rest of the family stayed at the beach. Then "Daddy" would return the following weekend. These crowded trains ran from 1898 through 1938. (A highway was built to Seaside in 1938 which allowed people to drive to the beach in their cars.) Passenger trains to Seaside were discontinued in 1952.

STEPHEN KENNEY COLLECTION



Real photo postcard by Frank Woodfield of Astoria showing immense crowds at the depot in Seaside, Oregon, circa 1908.



Reverse side of a postcard mailed on the Astoria & Columbia River Railroad on July 26, 1908 from the author's collection.

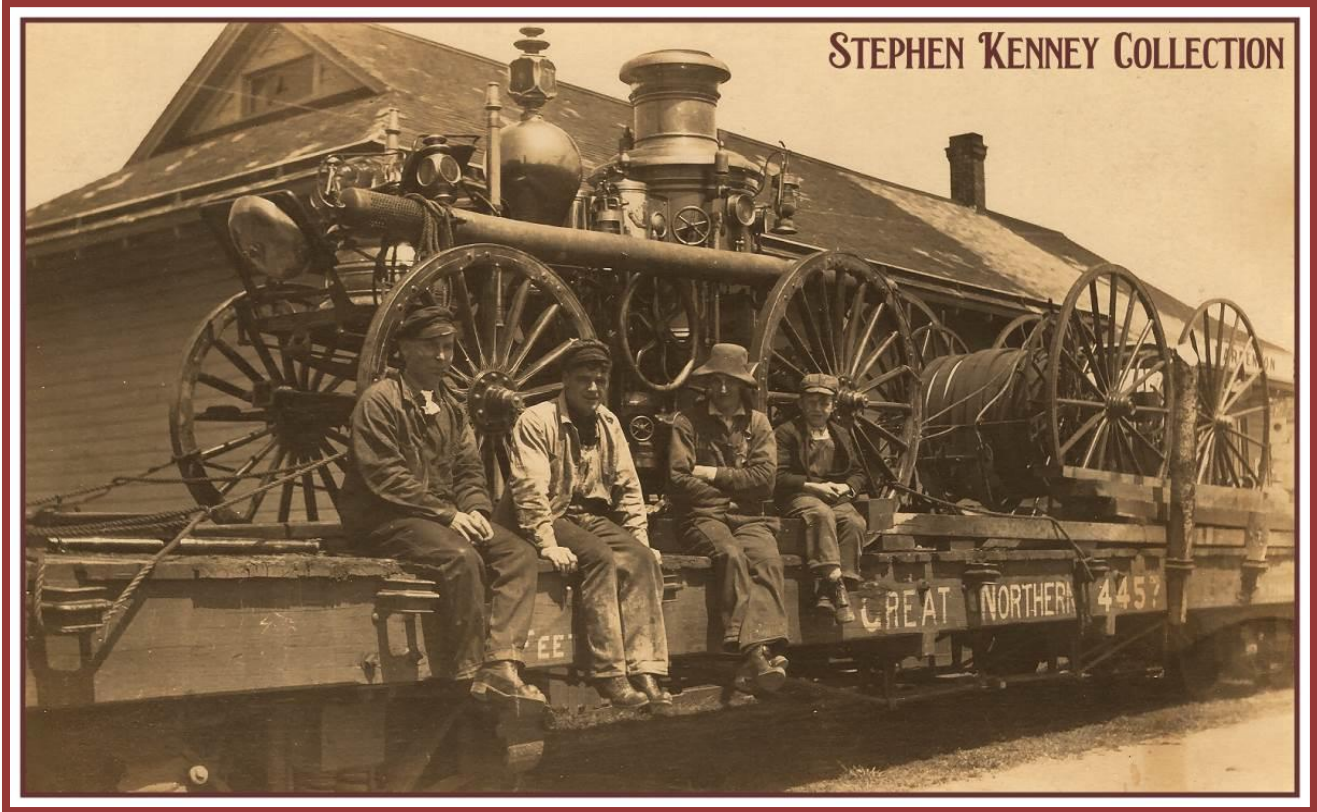
I purchased the postcard above that had an RPO cancellation on it. The end points of the RPO were Portland, Oregon and Seaside, Oregon. The cancellation showed that the train was number 23 and it was mailed July 26, 1908. I started to explore the card's origin by trying to determine the railroad that hosted train #23. I first tried accessible Southern Pacific, Northern Pacific and Spokane Portland & Seattle timetables, but had no luck. After a little internet time, I found that the card was mailed on the Astoria & Columbia River Railroad. That lead me into a hunt for the history of that railroad.

With that information, my RPO postcard mystery was solved, and I learned a lot in the process. Someone on a daily Portland bound train (#23) in the summer of 1908 mailed the postcard that I had bought. The train was due into Portland at 10:00 pm on that Sunday evening. It is an historic echo from 115 years ago.

The Astoria and Columbia River Railroad was sold to James Hill of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroads in 1907. Astoria's railroad eventually became a part of the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railroad.



Real photo postcard by Patton Post Card Company of Salem, Oregon of the train arriving at the depot in Seaside, circa 1914.



Real photo postcard showing fire equipment at the depot in Warrenton, Oregon. It was likely returning to Astoria after being loaned to Seaside for use during the Seaside fire of May 1912.

Back cover photo: View at the depot in Seaside, Oregon sometime between 1898 and 1900. The coaches are labeled for the Astoria & Columbia River Railroad. From the author's collection.

Editor's Note:

This featured guest article was submitted for publication in The Webfooter by Northwest rail enthusiast Dan Simmering. It took a number of months to find postcards to illustrate the article.



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