



*“Preserving and sharing stories of human enterprise  
and the power of the great Falls of the Willamette River.”*

## High Water and High Hopes at The Falls

As April rains pushed the Willamette River toward flood stage at Oregon City, Willamette Falls turned into a raging rapid that reached from bank to bank. Scores of visitors stopped at the Highway 99E viewpoint to watch with fascination as the churning waters plunged with unstoppable force over every rocky ledge and precipice.

The momentum of this high water seems to reflect the high hopes that have also risen on the good news surrounding the Falls. We will report on some of those developments in this issue.

The Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation has positive developments of its own to report as well. As seen above, our newsletter has a new, colorful masthead designed by Board member, **Peter Schwarz**. Peter is also rebuilding our webpage with an updated and more user-friendly format.

In addition, our communication team will be providing more news items, photos, and stories of historical interest on our Facebook page. And finally, as mentioned in the previous issue, an expanded, digital version of this newsletter will be available via email and links on our webpage.

We hope that these enhancements in social media will do a better job of telling our story and bringing the heritage of the Falls to life.

### \$7 million donated to Riverwalk Project

Thanks to two philanthropic families with local ties to the area, the Willamette Falls Trust and the Willamette Falls Legacy Project have received \$7 million in donations for their proposed Riverwalk project.

\$2 million came from the Portland-based Ann and Bill Swindells Charitable Trust and the Ballmer Group donated \$5 million. Ballmer Group co-founder Connie Ballmer was raised in Oregon City and worked at the Crown Zellerbach mill when she was a student in college.



*This part of the Falls on the Oregon City side usually doesn't have any water flowing over it. That was certainly not the case in mid-April as high water poured over the gates of PGE's dam and surged around the former mill's old foundations and clarifier.*

The Oregon City Riverwalk will allow public access and viewing of the Falls through the former Blue Heron paper mill site, as depicted below.

Phase one of the project is expected to cost \$35. This recent \$7 million donation adds to the \$19.5 million already contributed to the project. With 75% of the funding already in hand, a campaign to solicit the last \$8 million is planned.

These generous and much-needed donations are welcome news for this project!



*(Artist's rendering of the proposed RiverWalk around Blue Heron's former clarifier — courtesy of Willamette Falls Legacy Project)*



**Troy Bowers,**  
President WFHF

## President's Message

Thank you for reading our Spring Newsletter! There is currently much in play around the Falls, and we have good momentum to achieve some long-lasting, meaningful results.

- Progress continues in Oregon City at the Blue Heron mill site for the first phase of access to the site and the falls.
- Things are picking up again with the Locks Commission work as they get newly elected members up to speed so we can find a solution for Locks repairs, ownership transfer, reopening and operation.
- Planning for upgrades to historic West Linn City Hall are underway so nonprofit organizations like WFHF will have a presence at this historically and culturally significant locale.
- Proposed roadway access improvements to the uplands of the West Linn mill site are being supported by the City, PGE and the mill owners to better manage traffic flow and improve access for redevelopment of the site, the mill, and viewing of the falls and other historic, cultural resources.
- PGE owns Moore's Island that houses the West Linn mill and the Sullivan power plant. With the mill shutdown, PGE hopes to redevelop the island. As they do so, we are actively encouraging PGE and the mill owner to preserve significant facilities, machinery and artifacts so we can share the long history of industry and the economic power house that supported thousands of families and provided the resources for other Northwest industries. Check out the stories in this newsletter and our newly updated website for more information.

We need your continued support to make a difference. Please send us your good insights, ideas, encouragement, and make a donation to help support our efforts. Without the vision and drive of WFHF, much of the above progress would not have found the light of day.

Thank you to our Board members for making a difference for the future of our past!



### *WFHF Board Member Profile:* **Peter Schwarz**

**Elected to the Board in 2018, Peter Schwarz** brings interesting and valuable talent to WFHF's table. Peter is not only a professional photographer but is also a former West Linn Paper Co. employee with a passion for preserving and documenting the mill's history.

Starting in the production end of the mill, Peter eventually moved to the steam plant where he worked as Utilityman. This job required that he make twice-daily inspections of the entire island, putting him in the rare position to visit every corner of the historic mill – something most employees never had the opportunity to see. He was promoted to boiler operator and where he was responsible for supplying a steady supply of steam to the mill, as seen in the photos right.

Since the mill's steam and water systems had to remain operational even after it ceased making paper in October 2017, Peter had the unique distinction of being the *last* remaining hourly employee on site.

Peter now works for the Oregon National Primate Research Center as a Stationary Engineer responsible for the facility's many boilers and cooling systems.

As part of WFHF's communication committee, Peter has taken on the sizable task of revamping our website. He has also made his extensive collection of mill photographs and archived documents available to the Foundation.

Thank you, Peter, for all your efforts and contributions!



# Historic Maps of Willamette Falls

By Sandy Carter and Joe Bernert

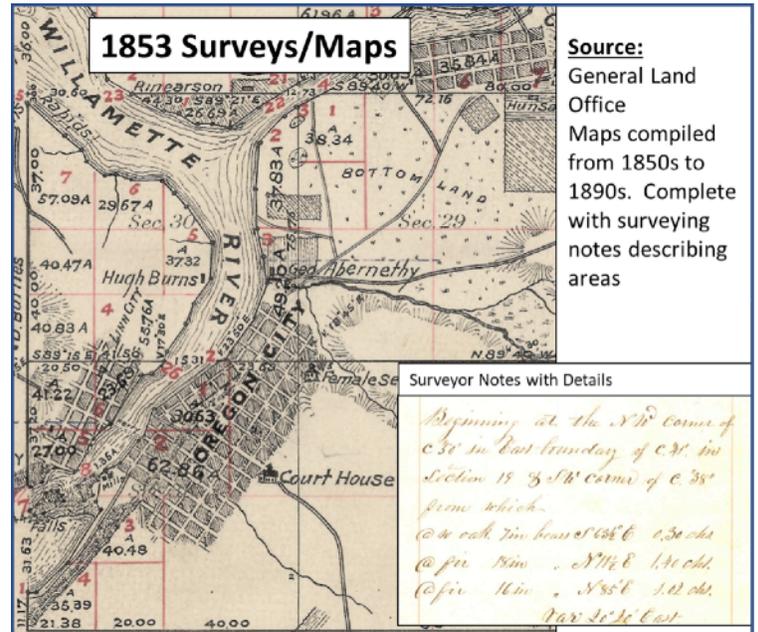
The Foundation is currently inventorying and cataloging a fascinating collection of historic maps and Locks-related schematics donated by Alan Lewis. These documents provide a new perspective on the history of the area, including a detailed, oversized General Land Office (GLO) Map from 1883.

A survey by P. Miescher shows a large area near the falls including the mouth of the Clackamas River and historic Oregon City, complete with the locations of the old churches downtown, many of which were moved uptown after the turn of the century.

We are fortunate that all of the historic General Land Office surveys maps from the 1850s to the 1890s have been digitally scanned and are available online at: <https://library.uoregon.edu/map/GIS/Data/Oregon/GLO>

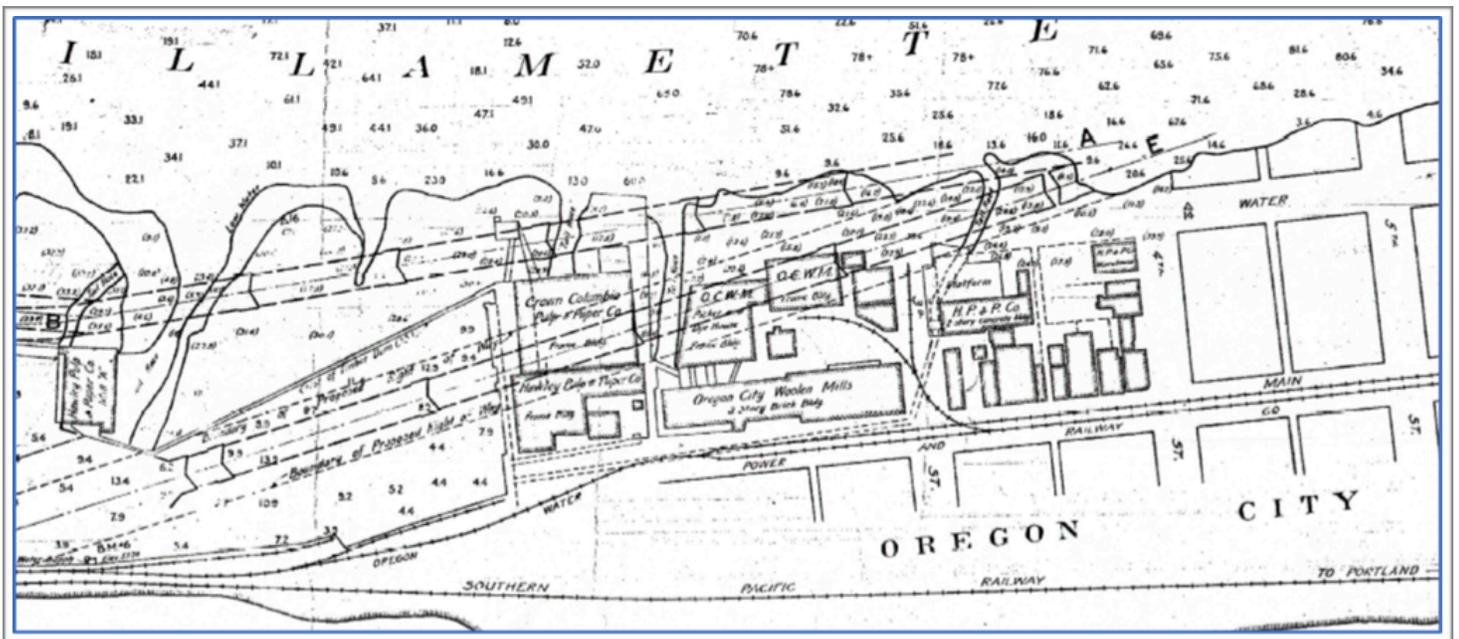
Other maps and schematics in the Lewis Collection include detailed engineering illustrating the geology of the canyon around the Falls, as well as water levels from the December 7, 1861 flood, and low water lines from 1883. A comparison of navigation maps for steamboats and other commercial marine traffic completed by the Corp of Engineers over years show the developments and changes near the river.

Digital images from the Lewis collection and from the Thiess and Matile collections will soon be posted on our website for people to explore.



Maps are a great way for many of us to look back in time and see how this area has changed. The earliest maps show landowners, vegetation and other features that met the early settlers and indigenous populations. Their detailed surveyor notes are also available to be downloaded from: <https://www.blm.gov/or/landrecords/survey/ySrvy1.php>

Board members are now hard at work documenting the Foundation's collections and creating digital copies of each item as we seek grant funding to support the original documents' conservation and archival storage. We hope to have a virtual museum on the website to let the public see and explore all of these amazing images.



This fascinating map from 1911 shows a second set of locks that were proposed for the Oregon City side of the river. The outline of the locks can be seen going through Hawley Pulp and Paper Co. and past the Woolen Mills. We're grateful that the Corps of Engineers bought the existing West Linn canal instead.

# Locks Commission Update

*(WFHF board members **Joe Bernert** and **Sandy Carter** are appointed members of the Willamette Falls Locks State Commission. This is their update on the work of the Commission since December.)*

Willamette Falls Locks Commission Leadership, consisting of **Mayor Russ Axelrod**, **Sandy Carter**, and **County Commissioner Martha Schrader**, have spent much time in Salem during this session of the Legislature. They have been testifying and meeting with the Governor, key State Senators and Representatives to talk about the importance of a repaired and reopened Willamette Falls Navigation Lock and Canal. The Commission's legislative 'ask' is \$14.4M in Lottery fund capital construction bonding for the needed repairs and updates.

Another top priority has been to name an entity willing to be responsible for managing funds (if funds are granted by the State) for repairs, overseeing the repairs, and performing the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) of the Locks until a new, permanent owner accepts transfer of ownership from the Corps of Engineers.

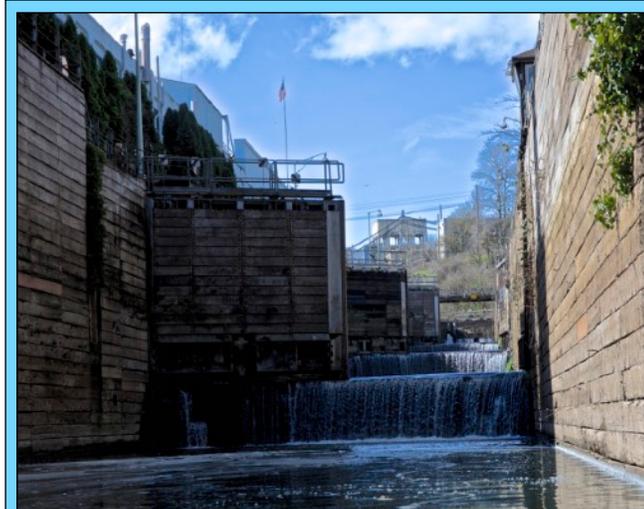
The third goal of the Commission is to identify that future owner and the ownership model. Various funding mechanisms for short and long-term O&M have also been researched and presented to the Commission, which believes the Lock should remain a public asset and under some type of State ownership or partnership of State agencies. The Commission's preference leans towards a public corporation model or a 190 partnership, which could offer considerable future flexibility.

The Commission is facilitated by Oregon Solutions, from Portland State University, and supported by an integrated contracted team of policy analysts, engineers, advocates who work with key agency staff, analyzing and evaluating options. KPFF Engineering developed a detailed budget for the needed updates.

Commission leaders and staff have led tours of the Locks (*as seen below*) to familiarize legislators and Governor's staff. All members of the Commission deserve the Foundation's appreciation for their hard work in moving this project forward.



*(photo courtesy of Sandy Carter)*



A rare view from inside the Lock's lower chamber, looking upstream with all the gates, except the upper most, open for inspection.

We encourage all to thank these folks for their dedication to finding a public transferee for the Willamette Falls Locks as the Corp of Engineers moves to dispose of this valuable historic and transportation resource.

## State Locks Commission Members:

Clackamas County Commissioner **Martha Schrader** (*Locks Co-Vice-Chair*); Marion County Commissioner **Sam Brentano**; Yamhill County Commissioner **Rick Olson**; Metro Councilor **Christine Lewis**; **Jack Giffen, Jr.**, Tribal Council Member, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; **Gary Burke**, Chairman, CTUIR Columbia River Treaty Tribes; **M.G. Devereux**, Deputy Director, Oregon Parks & Recreation Department; **Stan Watters**, Chief Officer of Project Delivery and Safety, Port of Portland; **Paul Scarlett**, Region 1 Metro East Area Manager Oregon Department of Transportation; **Karen Homolac**, Program Specialist, Oregon Business Development Department; Oregon City Mayor **Dan Holladay**; West Linn Mayor **Russ Axelrod** (*Commission Chair*); Wilsonville City Councilor **Ben West**; **Joe Bernert**, Wilsonville Concrete (*local business representative*); Clackamas County Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Local Tourism & Recreation, Executive Director **Danielle Cowan**; Citizen Representative **Sandy Carter** (*Clackamas County*); Environmental/Ecological, **Chad O. Brown** (*President, Soul River, Inc.*); and honorary members **Sen. Rob Wagner**; **Sen. Alan Olsen**; **Rep. Andrea Salinas**; **Rep. Mark Meek**; **Rep. Rachael Prusak**; and **Rep. Christine Drazen**.

*Newsletter printing was generously donated by:*



# A Powerhouse Preserved

By Dan Butler, Editor

Last April, fellow board member Peter Schwarz and I had the opportunity to tour the retired Bull Run Powerhouse outside of Sandy. The site consists of couple buildings and a small museum, but the main attraction is the powerhouse, which houses four massive turbines and generators that rest in silent, industrial splendor.

Built in 1912 and operated by PGE, this historic 22-megawatt hydroelectric plant ran continuously until 2007 when Marmot Dam on the Little Sandy River was removed. After decommissioning, PGE decided to sell the powerhouse and 110 acres of surrounding land. The plan was to offer the property to a responsible party; if none could be found then the plant and its adjoining buildings would be demolished.

Three preservationists had visited powerhouse when it was still in operation and were enthralled by the roaring turbines. Finding that the plant was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, they formed Powerhouse Re Gen, LLC to acquire it. After three years of negotiations, and using their own funds, the group took ownership in 2011. Zoning issues quickly arose that were finally settled with help from Restore Oregon, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to preserving Oregon's historic resources.

Powerhouse Re Gen plans to maintain the powerhouse as a museum and eventually open it for public tours and events.

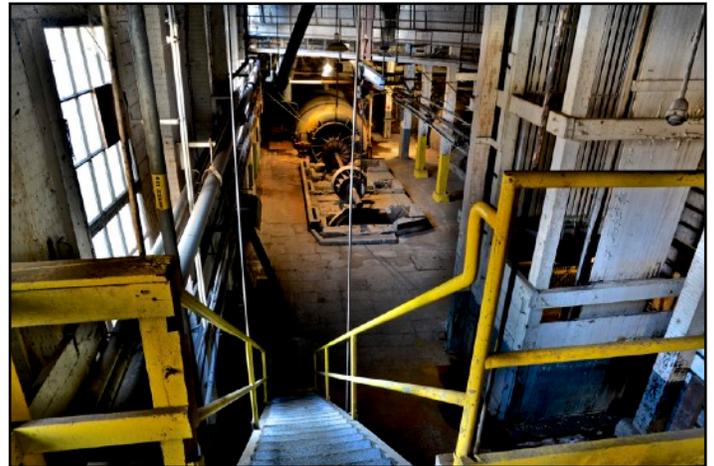
So how does any of this relate to Willamette Falls? It doesn't, directly – but it does show how a vision and dedication can preserve the past for future use.

Although the challenges faced at The Falls are far more involved than those at Bull Run perhaps this group's efforts can serve as an inspiration for moving forward with the proposed preservation of West Linn Paper's Mill A. It's something to ponder!



(above) One of the generating units on the main floor of the Bull Run Powerhouse.

(below) Imagine the interest visitors would have as they gazed into one of Mill A's intriguing grinder rooms.



## The Falls: More than Power and Paper

### It's also a fine place for paddling with pooches!

Earlier this year before the high water arrived, we were blessed with a run of summer-like weather and low river levels. Many folks, including this duo, took advantage of the pleasant conditions and scenery.

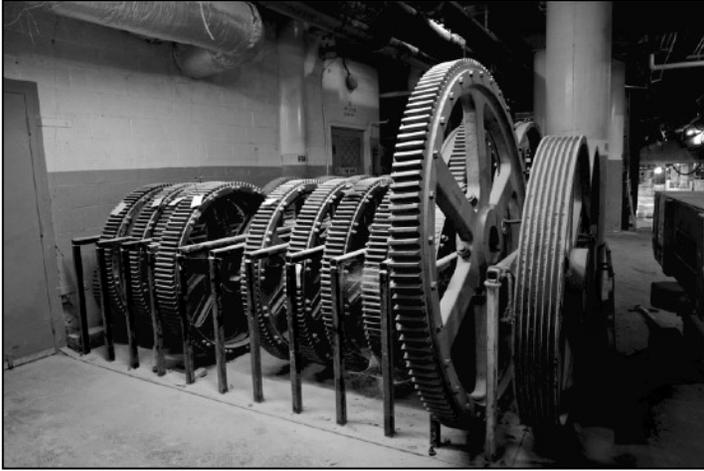
Besides a long established fishing ground, it is encouraging how increasing numbers of kayakers, paddle boarders, and jet boat tourists recognize the recreational options that Willamette Falls has to offer.

— Photo Gallery —  
*Hidden Treasures*

Here are a few industrial images of places not typically seen on the ‘normal mill tours’ at Willamette Falls.



If one knows where to look on a Blue Heron mill tour, they would be surprised to see the face of an old boiler that remains on PGE’s dam. The brick structure sits directly next to the upper side of the dam and was part of Hawley Paper’s original Mill A.



Used to transmit power to the paper machine rolls, these massive gears wait silently in West Linn Paper’s Mill K basement for the call to be repaired or reused. Sadly, that call will probably never come.



Mill G’s Recovery Boiler as seen from the upper levels of Blue Heron’s steam plant.



Midway up West Linn Paper’s towering Mill B, is the top of the five, multi-story digesters that were used in the sulfite process for making pulp.

*(All photos in this issue provided by Dan Butler unless otherwise credited)*