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Mr. Martin's article on Tekoa is based on his master's thesis, and continues a series of articles which appeared in *Bunchgrass Historian* in 1985. Mr. Martin now lives in Butte, Montana. The review of *Slow Train* was submitted by Mr. Abraham, Special Collections Librarian at the University of Idaho.

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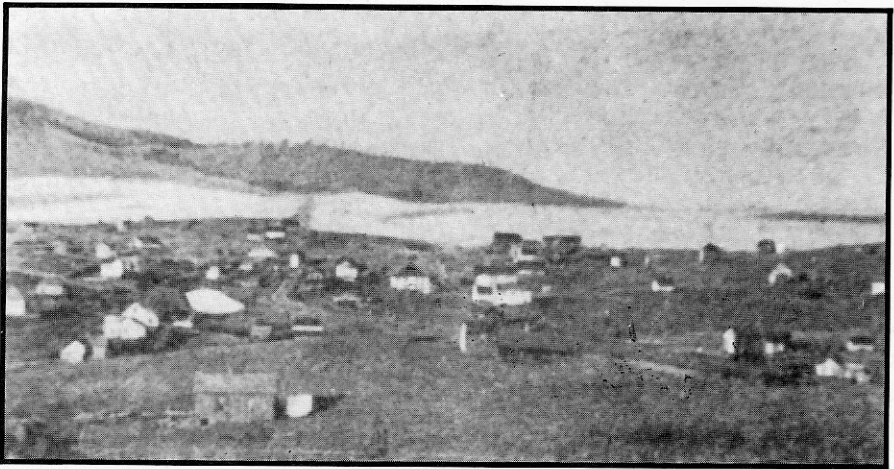
Life in a Railway Town: Tekoa, Washington

by Dale L. Martin

Late one evening the callboy left the Union Pacific station with a list of twelve men assigned to run two freight trains out of Tekoa after midnight. The sixteen year old bicycled through downtown and into the residential areas. He searched in bars and restaurants, climbed outside stairways to second floors of boarding houses, and knocked on doors of homes and confronted uncooperative wives. Using his knowledge of the town and the habits of the individuals on the list, he eventually found the men, signed them into his callbook, and returned to the depot. The callboy bicycling among the dark houses was just one of the many ways the Union Pacific touched the lives of Tekoa's citizens. In other ways as well, the railroad exerted a strong influence on the social and economic character of the town and its residents for over sixty years.[1]

The railroaders who helped create Tekoa's social character had a varied background. The 1910 manuscript census listed approximately 150 railwaymen. About two-thirds were married, although the proportion varied among job areas, and they lived on all three hill sections of town. Since transfers involved in railroad work prevented many from purchasing residences, less than twenty-five owned their homes. Over one hundred either rented houses or rooms in the hotels and boarding houses that provided accommodations for the railway labor force in Tekoa and crewmen from other terminals sleeping in Tekoa between runs.[2]

Among these railroaders existed levels of status based on type of job and pay. At the top were train crewmen (with locomotive engineers highest among these), who earned greater wages than most workers in commerce and industry. The hierarchy ranged down through station and shop employees to track laborers, often regarded with condescension by other



Tekoa in 1896

railway workers. This order was not so pronounced in Tekoa, with its relatively small population and Union Pacific payroll, as in larger division points, but certain wives of engineers still acted "snooty" to spouses of other railroaders and other women in town.[3]

Overriding social differences, the nature of railway jobs provided employees and their families with common concerns. Work occurred at all hours of the day and night, was frequently hazardous, and took many away from Tekoa on overnight train runs or sometimes for several years because of transfers. Trainmen on the extra board were subject to call at anytime. Married crewmen expected their wives to prepare meals on short notice. Children saw their fathers irregularly and infrequently. In addition, all men in train operations faced not only the discomfort of work outdoors in bad weather, but also many dangers, including collisions, derailments, and brake failures. After Hank Shultz, a brakeman from Tekoa, was mortally injured in the Starbuck switchyards in 1892, the *Tekoa Globe* commented on the perils of work and the grief experienced by families that were unavoidable aspects of railroading. These common risks resulted in support among employees and friends for victims of accidents. In February 1911 a special train carried about one hundred people and a local band from Tekoa to Starbuck for a dance to benefit the widow of a railroader who had been killed in the yards. Two halls were required for all the dancers.[4]

Response to hazardous working conditions and the appeal of social functions brought many railroaders into craft unions. The strongest national oraganizations were the "Big Four" of the train crewmen, each with members in Tekoa: the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen (BLFE), the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), and the Order of Railway Conductors (ORC). Other unions represented the shop workers, car repairers, telegraphers, clerks, and track laborers of Tekoa, but these never attained the national power or local prominence of the Big Four. Tekoa railroaders at first belonged to locals in other cities such as Walla Walla or Spokane, but eventually formed lodges in their own town. For example, thirty-four men, including twenty-five transfers from the Walla Walla local, organized the Tekoa Lodge of the BLFE in November 1912 and a Spokane member of the ORC directed the establishment of the Tekoa chapter in June 1916 with thirty-seven charter members, all but seven of whom brought their memberships from other towns.[5]

The brotherhoods at first concentrated on life insurance coverage and fostering fraternal ties among their members, but later added important union functions (such as collective bargaining and grievance representation before management) and disability and widows' pensions. Negotiating a pay raise and other concessions from railroad officials, engineer George Barnhart and fireman Ross McLean, both of Tekoa and chairmen of the adjustment committees of their unions, spent two weeks in Portland in June 1903. Ten years later August Miller, operator at Tekoa and regional general chairman of the Order of Railway Telegraphers, likewise conferred with company management in Portland. Brotherhood locals also became involved in community services. For example, in November 1931 the Tekoa lodges, represented by engineer Frank Horner, joined with the merchants of the Commercial Club and women's organizations to form the Community Relief Fund.[6]

Even after assuming a wide range of negotiating and pension functions, the social role of the brotherhoods remained important at the local level. The *Tekoa Blade* recorded the dinners, dances, and holiday events of the Big Four, at least two of which had Ladies Auxiliaries. The calendar during 1930 and 1931 was typical. The BLFE lodge met almost every week, including once each month together with the women's group, as in January 1930 when the wives served luncheon to forty-five people. Two months later about 150 couples attended the BRT local's Saint Patrick's Day dance, which featured a five-piece orchestra from Spokane. Dance bands also played at grand balls of the ORC in December 1930 and the BLFE in February 1931. Social activities continued to the end of Tekoa's railway era. In November 1948 seventy men and women (including Spokane lodge members) celebrated the tenth anniversary of the founding of

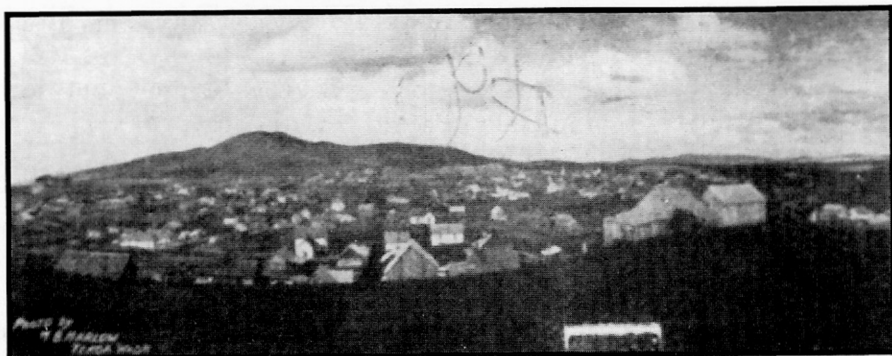
the local Ladies Auxiliary of the BRT with a potluck supper, skits by children, and a performance by the women's drill team.[7]

Railroaders and their families also participated in cultural and social programs sponsored by the Union Pacific. Shortly after the founding of Tekoa, the company helped support the YMCA Reading Rooms, a small library maintained for railway people. After corporate backing of the Reading Rooms ended in January 1892, the establishment added "bath rooms" and set aside Wednesday afternoons as ladies' day. Union Pacific's social activities included the formation in Spokane in June 1925 of a branch of the "Old Timers Club," open to employees (including those in Tekoa) with over twenty years of company service. The next month a picnic and field meet at Bonneville, Oregon attracted railway families from Oregon, Washington, and northern Idaho. Tekoa people joined an excursion from eastern Washington to the event.[8]

Sports organized by the railroad involved Tekoa railwaymen, who competed against fellow employees and other teams in the Palouse area. In May 1910 a group of Union Pacific officials from Spokane came to Tekoa to play baseball and defeated the home team by a score of 18 to 10. As part of the Fourth of July activities in 1925 a squad of Tekoa railroaders pulled against a number of townsmen in a tug-of-war contest. The heavier town team drew the railwaymen through a two-inch stream of water shot from a fire hose as a "seething, yelling crowd of more than a thousand people" watched. In the late 1920s the company sponsored the Union Pacific Athletic Club in Tekoa, which combined sports and social functions, such as a public dance with orchestra in April 1929. Due to a lack of "young men," the Tekoa club disbanded in March 1930 and merged with the Spokane branch, donating the remaining fifty dollars in the treasury for a new city park in Tekoa and giving its baseball equipment to the high school team.[9]

The Union Pacific also provided more essential services, such as health care. Company medical staff traveled throughout the system in a special car to conduct periodical physical examinations. Furthermore, certain Tekoa doctors on retainer examined and treated railroaders in work-related cases. Another corporate program, the Union Pacific Hospital Association, offered medical insurance to employees. Company response to emergencies brought special actions. After Harry Spencer, young son of an employee, badly injured himself in a sledding accident in 1914, the railway quickly assembled a special team and cleared the tracks to Spokane for its urgent trip. In spite of this effort the child died that evening.[10]

Townspeople and area residents benefited as well from the Union Pacific presence in Tekoa. For instance, the constant availability of rolling stock and crews served the town in emergencies. Because a switch engine always had operating steam pressure, its whistle served as the community's fire alarm. During the blizzard of February 1937 the company sent a



Tekoa in 1906

locomotive and caboose from Tekoa to carry a doctor to a sick man in Seltice. Between emergencies, the railroad provided economic support beyond that indirectly supplied through employees' paychecks. The Union Pacific used some city services (fire and police protection, and sometimes water), for which it paid taxes into Tekoa's treasury. In 1930 the railroad contributed $3,673, over one-quarter of the city's budget for the year.[11]

While Tekoa citizens recognized the economic worth of the Union Pacific and its employees, some perceived social differences between themselves and railway workers and their families. Certainly most townspeople were aware that many railroaders would not reside in Tekoa all their lives. Pauline Hevel, daughter of a blacksmith, experienced this as a child. Born and raised in Tekoa, she graduated from high school in 1918 in a class of nine students, of whom only three had spent all twelve years of school together.[12]

The mobility of railroaders and the irregular work hours of train crewmen made consistent, long-term participation in community affairs difficult. Union Pacific employees took part in Tekoa politics, but not in proportion to their large share of the working population. Of the fifteen men who served as mayor between 1901 and 1939, most were merchants and businessmen with only two railwaymen: brakeman J. W. Hutchison (1901-1905) and storekeeper (supplies manager) R. V. Curtis (1925-1929). In the years before World War I the Tekoa city council of five to seven members usually had one or two railroaders, and these were mostly men with regular work hours, including a machinist, a mechanical foreman, and a hostler.[13]

In other ways railwaymen were able to take a larger part in the town's life. National fraternal orders were important to a community's life and many Union Pacific employees in Tekoa belonged to the local lodges, including the Masons, Odd Fellows, Elks, and Eagles. Some even used the traveling required by their jobs to join groups in several towns. Conductor

Edward (Ted) Hensley was a member of the Masons in Tekoa, the Elks in Wallace, and the Woodmen in Kellogg.[14]

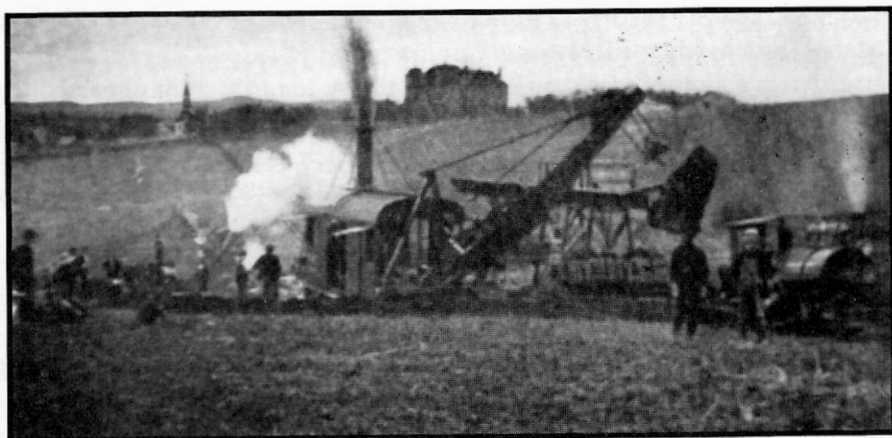
While railroaders played minimal roles in much of community life, some aspect of their work shaped the character of division points. Train crewmen, with relatively high wages and many days and nights away from home, and transient workers among the shop and maintenance labor forces turned to alcohol, gambling, and prostitution for recreation. Consequently, Tekoa and most other railway towns had reputations as disorderly, even violent, places.[15]

The most obvious evidence of this in Tekoa were the flourishing saloons. In 1889, one year after the Union Pacific entered town, Tekoa (with about 160 residents) had four saloons, two more than each of the older and larger neighboring communities of Farmington, Oakesdale, and Rosalia. Following a reduction of the railway work force in 1901, the number dropped to two. The Union Pacific restored full employment several years later and by 1912 a maximum of seven taverns served Tekoa. While eight Whitman County towns voted for local-option prohibition in December 1909 and Colfax and Palouse stayed "wet" by only small electoral margins, Tekoa citizens chose by a ratio of more than three to two to keep the saloons open. These were also centers for gambling, with professional gamblers appearing on the streets late each afternoon as they walked to the taverns in which they "worked."[16]

State prohibition closed the saloons, but alcohol consumption continued in Tekoa. Approved by Washington voters in November 1914, prohibition began at the end of 1915, with only the bar of the Hotel Tekoa staying open until the New Year's Eve midnight deadline. Afterwards moonshiners in Idaho vied for railroaders' wages and Tekoa residents made their own home-brew and dandelion wine. Some of this alcohol appeared at the frequent public dances, which often resulted in "more fighting than dancing."[17]

After prohibition ended in 1933, legal alcohol consumption resumed on a scale similar to twenty years earlier. In April five people in Tekoa obtained approval from the city council to sell 3.2 percent beer on their premises. Five bars prospered during the high employment of World War II. Even after the railroaders left Tekoa in the 1950s, its rough reputation persisted, which along with the ruins of the roundhouse was another reminder of Tekoa's decades as a railway community.[18]

The influence of the Union Pacific on Tekoa was in many ways unique to division points with their large rail payrolls, but in other aspects it reflected experiences common to all towns on rail lines. Until road travel became convenient after World War I, railroads, the primary means of transportation, supported thousands of communities. For over thirty years the Union Pacific carried almost all passengers, mail, express, news-



Construction of the Milwaukee Road near Tekoa

papers, food, coal, and other freight moving in or out of the Tekoa area. Even after completion of the Miwaukee Road in 1909, the Union Pacific continued its dominant role because of its extensive network of tracks in the Palouse region and direct trains to Spokane and Colfax, the Whitman County seat.[19]

The arrival and departure of townspeople and visitors made the Union Pacific depot major social focal point of Tekoa. Young people often gathered there in the evening to watch the arrival of the train from the north in order to see who had been to Spokane. Politicans briefly visiting Tekoa attracted even larger crowds.[20]

The presidential campaign of 1900 brought William Jennings Bryan to Tekoa in late March. Two weeks earlier townspeople had raised fifty dollars for the state Democratic party, which arranged a thirty-minute stop in Tekoa for Bryan's special train. The candidate arrived at noon and spoke from a platform erected near the depot. About 1,500 people listened to him speak in support of free silver and an income tax and against trusts and imperialism. Bryan continued to talk as the engineer blew the whistle several times to signal departure. After forty minutes, Bryan finally finished and the train left for Spokane.[21]

Three years later Whitman County's reception for President Theodore Roosevelt occurred at Tekoa, his only stop in eastern Washington between Walla Walla and Spokane. Through the morning of May 26, 1903 people arrived in Tekoa on three special and two regular trains: others came by horse teams, until about four thousand people and brass bands from four towns awaited the presidential train. The two locomotive and two passenger cars backed into the depot at 12:40 p.m. and Roosevelt mounted a stand nearby. He spoke on the need for the nation to take risks

to stay great and for a foreign policy which did "not wrong the weak, and must not flinch from the strong," remarks which drew cheers and applause. After a stop of less than one hour the residential train departed for Spokane. Many people spent the rest of the afternoon in Tekoa watching horse and foot races and a baseball game in which Garfield defeated Rosalia. Other activities included a ball in the opera house and a banquet for visiting Whitman County newspapermen.[22]

The railroads also brought less notable visitors to Tekoa — hobos in search of food, work, and a place to wait for trains. Transients gathered in many towns along railroad lines, and the junction and switchyard at Tekoa, with many freight trains passing through and stopping, attracted a large number. In Tekoa the hobo "jungle" (camp area) was located on undeveloped ground along Hangman and Little Hangman creeks, and, after 1909, along the Milwaukee Road tracks on the north hill. From these jungles the vagrants walked into the residential areas, where they exchanged work such as splitting firewood for sandwiches or a meal, begged for food, or stole from gardens.[23]

Sometimes they caused greater disturbances. In late May 1900 a large number of hobos camped at Tekoa, fighting among themselves, drinking, and disturbing the residents. The town tried to force them to do street work, but some found whiskey and the group was put in jail. That night a crowd of townspeople took from the jail one vagrant who had been especially obnoxious during the street work and led him to a telegraph pole with a rope around his neck. He pleaded with his captors and they doused him with a fire hose. The mob then chased him one-quarter mile down the railroad tracks. The next day the tramp reappeared in town and was quickly returned to jail.[24]

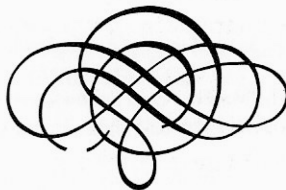
A large number of hobos arrived in the Palouse region every summer seeking work on harvest crews. Farmers came into Tekoa to choose laborers from the men sitting on the wooden sidewalks, judging them by the size and condition of their bedrolls. In August 1936 one of them, Robert Delaney, fell asleep on the tracks after several days of looking for a harvest job in Tekoa. The night yard switcher ran over him, severing both legs and one arm; he died in Colfax the next day. The era of hobos camping at Tekoa ended in the 1940s as changes in grain harvesting reduced the demand for seasonal labor.[25]

Both the Union Pacific and Milwaukee Road brought another transient group into Tekoa which sometimes caused disturbances. The "extra gangs" employed by the railways to make major repairs to track and structures traveled around the companies' properties from spring through fall. They lived and worked out of "outfit" trains, composed of old passenger and freight cars adapted for sleeping and eating quarters and tool storage. When working near Tekoa these trains were kept on a siding in town,

where the laborers spent much of their free time. In October 1950 about eight men from an extra gang spent one rowdy weekend in Tekoa. Many of them passed Saturday night in jail, including J. B. Hansen, who was arrested and fined twice within twelve hours for disorderly conduct and fighting in the streets. The city treasury profited from this disruptive weekend by collecting fines from the exuberant workers.[26]

While the Milwaukee Road never approached the economic and social impact on Tekoa of the Union Pacific, it was important with its large trestle and long trains. The bridge, considered by town people to be an essential part of Tekoa, had a plank walkway on each side of the track and was a popular place for spending Sunday afternoons. A resident reminisced, "you just never could tell [when] maybe three or four girls out for a stroll might meet three or four boys out walking!" Over this viaduct rode transcontinental traffic of a scale not seen on the Union Pacific in the Palouse region, including long freights, troop trains during the two world wars, and some of most exotic trains during the early part of the twentieth century.[27]

The whistle of an eastbound train sounded for a road crossing west of Tekoa. Soon the fast, rugged exhaust of the steam locomotive interrupted the slow chugging of the switch engine in the Union Pacific yards. Townspeople sensed the speed of the approaching train, paused in their activities, and looked toward the trestle. A passenger locomotive appeared on it, followed by express cars full of raw silk from the Orient bound for eastern mills. Worth nearly one million dollars, the cargo was insured against transportation risks at high hourly rates. Dozens of wheels set the bridge girders into roaring vibration. Whistling for the Washington Street crossing and the depot, the train passed through north Tekoa without slowing. Within one minute the train disappeared among the hills east of town and the crashing of freight car couplers in the switchyard was again noticeable.[28]



Notes

[1]In the early decades of the twentieth century the telephone began to replace the callboy for summoning crews. Scarcity of sources concerning Malden limits the scope of this chapter to Tekoa.

[2]U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, manuscript returns for Tekoa city precinct. Marriage and residential status varied depending on age and pay. Most engineers and conductors were married and owned or rented homes while about one-half the firemen and brakemen were single and lived in rented rooms. Two firemen and one brakeman boarded at St. Joseph's Academy, a Catholic school on the north hill. Hiring practices also determined social circumstances. The car repair department usually hired locally. Of the fifteen employees in 1910, twelve were married and eleven owned or rented homes. The company sought more skills for its roundhouse and shop workers and often brought in outsiders with less permanence. Of the eighteen men in Tekoa, less than one-half were married and more boarded than owned or rented houses. See W. Fred Cottrell, *The Railroader* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1940), pp. 24, 27 and "The Tekoa Story: From Bunch Grass to Grain" (compiled by the History Committee of the Community Development Study, Tekoa, 1962), p. 78. Among all the railroaders, about sixty rented houses, over forty boarded in hotels or rooming houses, and more than fifteen lived with parents or older siblings.

[3]Cottrell, *The Railroader,* pp. 91, 95; Bob Walters interview, Pullman, 12 June 1982 (unless noted otherwise, all interviews are by the author); Al and Ann Peterson interview, Tekoa, 7 July 1982; Fred and Frieda Berger interview, Tekoa, 30 June 1982. Among railroaders there existed a complex hierarchy based on job status and pay. For example, locomotive engineers in regular passenger service earned more and ranked higher than those in extra board freight duty. Skilled roundhouse and shop workers than those in extra board freight duty. Skilled roundhouse and shop workers had greater wages and prestige than car repairers. The situation was not always clear. While the conductor was officially in charge of his train, the engineer received more pay and generally got more respect from both railroaders and the public. For a detailed discussion of these levels of railway labor, see Cottrell, *The Railroader,* pp. 12-41. Contemporary evidence for this hierarchy in Tekoa is absent; looking backward from the 1980s most residents claimed that their town was too small for such differentiation.

[4]Pauline Hevel interview, by Margot Knight, Tekoa, 5 May 1978, Whitman County Historical Society Oral History Collection; *Tekoa Globe,* 2 April 1892, pp. 2-3; *Tekoa Blade,* 17 Feb. 1911, cited in issue of 19 Feb. 1931, p. 4.

[5]Cottrell, *The Railroader,* pp. 38, 119; "The Tekoa Story," pp. 93-95; *Tekoa Blade,* 5 Dec. 1913, cited in issue of 7 Dec. 1933, p. 4; 30 May 1919, p. 1; 8 Aug. 1919, p. 1; 16 June 1922, p. 1; Bob Walters interview. THe BLFE was called the brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen until 1907. The lst active union lodges in Tekoa, those of the Big Four, moved to Spokane in the 1950s.

[6]For details on the activities of one union, see *Feeding the Iron Hog: The life and Work of a Locomotive Fireman* (Clevland: Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, 1927). *Spokane Spokesman-Review,* 29 June 1903, p. 10; *Tekoa Blade,* 5 Dec. 1913, cited in issue of 7 Dec. 1933, p. 4; 19 Nov. 1931, p. 1; 26 Nov. 1931, p. 1.

[7]*Tekoa Blade,* 16 Jan. 1930, p. 5; 13 March, p. 1; 20 March, p. 5; 4 Dec., p. 5; 5 Feb. 1931, p. 1; *Tekoa Sentinel,* 26 Nov. 1948, p. 4; "The Tekoa Story," pp. 85, 93-95. The rail lodges shared the Fraternal Building, built in 1912, with the Masons, Odd Fellows, and Knights of Pythias.

[8]*Tekoa Globe,* 16 Jan. 1892, p. 2; 9 April 1892, p. 3; *Tekoa Blade,* 12 June 1925, p. 5; 24 July 1925, p. 1.

[9]"The Tekoa Story," p. 62; *Tekoa Blade,* 27 May 1910, cited in issue of 29 May 1930, p. 6; 26 June 1925, p. 1; 10 July 1925, p. 1; 11 April 1929, p. 5; 13 March 1930, p. 1.

[10]*Tekoa Blade,* 6 March 1925, p. 5l; 18 Sept. 1930, p. 7; "The Tekoa Story," pp. 332, 385; Dale and Bonnie Smith interview, Tekoa, 5 July 1982.

[11]"The Tekoa Story," p. 258; *Tekoa Blade,* 15 May 1925, p. 5; 10 Oct. 1929, p. 6; 6 Aug. 1931, p. 1; 5 Nov. 1931, p. 1; 4 Feb. 1937, p. 1; Fred and Frieda Berger interview.

[12]During the the time for which appropriate sources exist (1890s through 1920s), railroad employees comprised from just under ten percent to over fifteen percent of Tekoa's population (see figures in Chapters 1 and 2). With spouses (over one-half the employees were married in 1900 and 1910) and children, the percentage of railroaders and their families among Tekoa's population would be doubled or more. While social differences between railroaders and townspeople were not openly stated in Tekoa, they were occasionally revealed. One woman, who had worked at a bank and the telephone exchange and who married a businessman, told an interviewer that she had had friends among railway workers and that her female cousin had worked in the Union Pacific railway workers and that her female cousin had worked in the Union Pacific offices during World War II, but she hastened to add that her cousin had not married a railroader. Pauline Hevel interview, by Margot Knight, 5 and 16 May 1978; "The Tekoa Story," p. 32. For a general discussion of relations between railroaders and townspeople in division points, see Cottrell, *The Railroader*, pp. 42-111.

[13]Cottrell, *The Railroader*, p. 48; "The Tekoa story," p. 9; *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Directory of Whitman County, Washington* [for] *1904, 1905-6, 1908-9,* and *1910-11, R. L. Polk & Co.s' Whitman and Garfield Counties Director* [for] *1912-13, 1915-16,* and *1917-18.*

[14]Earl and Catherine Rawlings interview, Tekoa, 5 July 1982; G. C. and Marjorie Chaffin interview, Tekoa, 6 July 1982; *Tekoa Blade*, 2 Jan. 1925, p. 1; 26 June 1925, p. 1.

[15]The preference of many railroaders for alcohol was recognized in the 1880s by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which in its first five years formed a permanent committee to promote temperance among railwaymen, the only occupational group to merit such attention so early. James H. Ducker, *Men of the steel Rails: Workers on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, 1869-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. 60, 62 (the latter page concerns railroaders and prostitution). For a study of drinking problems on one railway, see Paul v. Black, "Employee Alcoholism on the Burlington railroad, 1876-1902," *Journal of the West* 17 (Oct. 1978):L 5-11. Although prostitution existed in Tekoa, evidence of its forms and extent is not available. Wayne Bowmer interview, Tekoa, July 1, 1982.

[16]Minnie Brandon interview, by Margot Knight, Tekoa, 29 March 1978, Whitman County Historical Society Oral History Collection; *Oregon, Washington and Idaho Gazetter and Business Directory, 1889-90* (Portland: R. L. Polk & Co., 1889), vol. 4, pp. 628-630, 688, 735-736, 882-883; *An Illustrated History of Whitman County, State of Washington* (n.p.: W. H. Lever, 1901), p. 193; Polk, 1912-13; Tekoa Blade, 3 Dec. 1909, cited in issue of 5 Dec. 1929, p. 5. In the second half of the twentieth century some Tekoa people remembered when their town had "seven saloons and seven churches." "The Tekoa Story," pp. 150, 173, 185; Pauline Hevel interview, by Margot Knight, 5 May 1978.

[17]*Tekoa Blade* 24 Dec. 1915, p. 1; 31 Dec., p. 1; 7 Jan. 1916, p. 1; Greg Smith interview, Tekoa, 5 July 1982; Fred and Frieda Berger interview; Al and Ann Peterson interview; *Tekoa Standard-Register*, 1 July 1982, p. 7 (holiday supplement).

[18]*Tekoa Blade*, 20 April 1933, p. 1; G. C. and Marjorie Chaffin interview;l *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, 4 Spril 1982, p. A17.

[19]For studies of towns when railroads dominated transportation, see John A. Jakle, *The American Small Town: Twentieth-Century Place Images* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982) and John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

[20]"The Tekoa Story,"pp. 169, 361.

[21]*Spokane SPokesman-Review*, 20 March 1900, p. 3; 31 March, p. 6.

[22]*Spokane Spokesman-Review*, 26 May 1903, p. 1; 27 May, pp. 1, 3.

[23]Minnie Brandon interview, by Margot Knight; Dale and Bonnie Smith interview; Fred and Frieda Berger interview. For backgrounds on hobos, see Roger A. Bruns, *Knights of the Road: A Hobo History* (New York: Methuen, 1980).

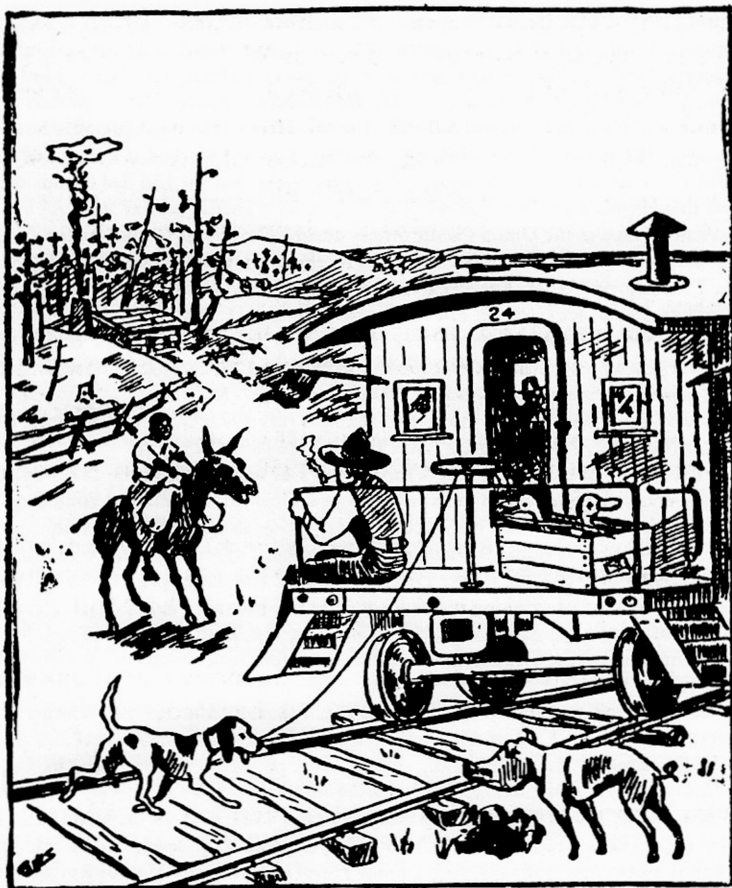
[24]*Spokane Spokesman-Review*, 24 May 1900, p. 3.

[25]"The Tekoa Story," p. 150; *Tekoa Blade*, 27 Aug. 1936, p. 1; Earl and Catherine Rawlings interview; Bruns, *Knights of the Road*, pp. 189-190.

[26]*Tekoa Blade*, 13 Nov. 1925, p. 1; *Tekoa Sentinel*, 6 Oct. 1950, p. 1 (the article does not indicate which railroad employed the laborers); *Tekoa Standard-Register*, 11 Nov. 1982, p. 1.

[27]Fred and Frieda Berger interview; Earl and Catherine Rawlings interview; Pauline Hevel interview, by Margot Knight, 16 May 1978: "The Tekoa Story," p. 170, 185, 360.

[28]Described by Thelma Bruce and Addie Mae Sienknecht, Tekoa, 8 July 1982.



The Slow Train

On a Slow Train through Eastern Washington

A book review article

by
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The recent republication of *On a Slow Train Through Arkansas* by the University Press of Kentucky (Thomas W. Jackson, *On a Slow Train Through Arkansas,* edited by W. K. McNeil, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1985) signals an event of interest to residents of eastern Washington. Thomas W. Jackson, the author of this popular 1903 railroad jokebook, a skillful raconteur but nearly illiterate, worked for a time as a brakeman on the Oregon, Railroad & Navigation Company (OR&N) line between Spokane and Pendleton. He would tell his jokes to the conductor and if he got a big enough laugh he would have his wife write them down. Publishing them himself for distribution on the trains and in the depots — a novelty in itself, he had soon sold over ten thousand copies and quit his railroad job to move to Chicago. He continued to compile and sell joke-books in the same format for the remainder of his life, although he turned the business over to his son in 1920. By 1950 over seven million copies of *Slow Train* had been sold.

Included in this little book — it originally sold for a quarter — are several hundred jokes and stories common to oral tradition, minstrelsy, and vaudeville at the turn of the century. Editor McNeill demonstrates that some of the jokes are literally half-a-millenium old. The use of Arkansas as the locale for many of the jokes and stories played upon and contributed to the stereotype of Arkansas as backwoodsy and unsophisticated. Combining that with the "slow train" genre of story almost guaranteed a best-seller. "It was down in the state of Arkansas I rode on the slowest train I ever saw. It stopped at every house. When it came to a double house it stopped twice." (p.35) And — "A lady said, 'Conductor, can't this train make any better time than this?' He said, 'If you ain't satisfied with this train, you can get off and walk.' She said she would, only her folks didn't expect her til the train got there." (p.35)

Jackson also discovered that his test audience (the conductor) liked puns; purely terrible puns found today only in children's books of monster riddles: "I remember the first number on the program was a young lady. She came out to sing. She had a kind of Montana voice. It was Beaut. It was Hell-ena. She had it vaccinated but it didn't take." (p.49) Some of the jokes contain ethnic and/or racial sterotypes that are not acceptable today; while others merely malign cities and states other than Arkansas:

"Have you any children?"
"Five"
"All living."
"Three are."
"Where are the other two?'
"They are in Omaha." (p.76)

Perhaps because of Jackson's western experiences, many of the jokes

refer specifically to western locales. For instance: "A gentleman sitting in the next seat told him that Spokane was a good place to go through after night, providing you don't stop over ten minutes." (p.104) This sounds like AMTRAK's current schedule.

Seattle got its share as well: "It is different from any place I ever saw. It gets so foggy there you can't see at all.....You can go from Seattle to Alaska by sound. Seattle is a very pretty place. They say it is a prettier place than Portland because it is laid out nicer, but you wait till Portland has been dead as long as Seattle and she'll be laid out just as nice." (pp.107-108) This rivalry continues even today; it is said about Seattle's new skyscrapers that "Seattle got the boxes that Portland came in."

Of course, Portland was a fair target as well: "When the sun shines in Portland they always take a photograph of it. When I was there the latest picture of the sun was nine months old. I asked a fellow in Portland what the people did when it rained so much. He said they just let it rain." (p.106) Earlier, Jackson noted: "The next morning when I woke up I looked out and said, 'We are in Oregon.' A fellow said, 'How do you know?" I said, 'Because it's raining.' I looked to see if I had my umbrella with me. I knew if they caught me in Oregon without an umbrella I would be arrested."' (p.103)

Fifty years after the first publiation of *Slow Train* the Spokane Daily Chronicle (May 9, 1933 (p.19)) ran a filler titled: "'Slow Train' was right here." Although identifying Jackson as one Frank L. Swanson, the Chronicle reported that in 1912 he told a Spokane reporter "the book was based upon humorous happenings on passenger trains running from Spokane via Tekoa and Colfax to a connection with the main line in eastern Oregon." McNeill, more accurately, suggests that his ability as a skillful joke teller was enhanced by "replenishing his supply of material with yarns he heard from other crew members and passengers on the train." (p.35) So perhaps some of these stories originated in Whitman County; at the least it is likely that some were told while the train rolled through the county.