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Mount Emily Shay #1 Locomotive Finds New Home in Portland

Portland, OR — September 2, 2022 — The Oregon Historical Society (OHS) and the [Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation](#) (ORHF) are pleased to announce the permanent transfer of the Mount Emily Shay #1 locomotive to ORHF.

The Mount Emily Shay was manufactured at the Lima Locomotive Works in Ohio in the 1920s. Shays are geared steam locomotives, specifically suited for mining and timber industries. While almost three thousand Shays were manufactured, only around 115 still exist today; even less are still operational.

The Mount Emily Shay was originally purchased by the Hofus Steel & Equipment Company of Seattle, Washington, then sold to the Independence Logging Company of Independence, Washington. It was eventually sold to, and named after, the Mount Emily Lumber Company, located in the city of La Grande in eastern Oregon. The Mount Emily Shay was owned and operated by the company until it was retired in 1957 and donated to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) for use at its facility in Washington Park. When it couldn't safely be transported to Washington Park, ownership was transferred to OHS in 1958.

The Mount Emily Shay went on long-term loan to the state of West Virginia beginning in the 1970s. The borrower restored the engine to working order (twice — it was damaged once due to fire), and the locomotive was operated on the Cass Scenic Railroad. In the mid-1990s, OHS, with the guidance, expertise, and help of train enthusiast Martin E. Hansen, recalled the locomotive from West Virginia to be of service educating and thrilling Oregon constituents. From several choices, the City of Prineville Railway was chosen as the new borrower/caretaker/operator of the Mount Emily Shay. From its return from West Virginia in 1994 to the present, the City of Prineville has housed and operated the Mount Emily Shay for excursions and fundraising programs.

The City of Prineville requested an end to the loan agreement, and, since OHS is not equipped to house nor operate a locomotive, the organization sought a new steward. A request for proposals was released in April 2022, and the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation was selected to be the new owner of the Mount Emily Shay on September 1, 2022.

Once physically transferred, the locomotive requires a federally mandated inspection before it can be operated again. ORHF plans to use the Mount Emily Shay to operate holiday and some weekend excursions between their museum location near OMSI to Oaks Amusement Park and back. Keep your eye on their website for updates!

OHS Deputy Museum Director Nicole Yasuhara says of the transfer, “The Oregon Historical Society sincerely appreciates the support of the City of Prineville in stewarding and operating the Mount Emily Shay for decades. We are thrilled that the Mount Emily Shay will have a new, permanent home at the [Oregon Rail Heritage Center](#), where it will be on view and used for excursions, balancing preservation and access to this important piece of Oregon history.”

“The Mount Emily Shay will allow the Oregon Rail Heritage Center to show the public the important role logging railroads played in the development of the timber industry in Oregon,” said Roy Hemmingway, president of ORHF. “Specialty locomotives like the Shay, which could operate on steep and rough track, were able to access timber not available by other means. Shays were key to bringing logs to the mills and developing Oregon’s timber economy,”

About the Oregon Historical Society

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state’s collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website (www.ohs.org), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon’s history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon’s cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.

About the Oregon Rail Heritage Center (ORHC)

The Oregon Rail Heritage Center is a working rail museum in Portland, Oregon, that opened to the public on September 22, 2012. The museum houses three steam locomotives owned by the City of Portland. Of the museum’s three steam locomotives — Southern Pacific 4449; Spokane, Portland & Seattle 700; and Oregon Railroad & Navigation Co. 197 — the first two are restored and operable. Portland is the only city in the United States to own two operational steam locomotives. These magnificent steam engines are at the Center for all to see. Visitors are welcome to explore the Center and meet the volunteers who keep these

engines in tip-top condition. General admission is free to the public during regular hours of operation. The project to establish the Center was led by the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation (ORHF).

About the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation (ORHF)

The Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation is a registered nonprofit organization established in 2002 that is based in Portland, Oregon. Comprised of several all-volunteer groups dedicated to maintaining vintage railroad equipment, ORHF's mission is "to provide for the preservation, operation, and public enjoyment of Portland's historic locomotives, railroad equipment, and artifacts, and to educate the public about Oregon's rich and diverse railroad history."