

A Railroad Ran Through It

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY KAREN BOSSICK

It took John Lundin's grandparents nearly three weeks to travel by wagon from Eureka, Nev., to Bellevue when they moved from the North-Central Nevada town in 1881.

The railroad arrived in Bellevue and Hailey two years later, making it possible for people to travel to Boise in several hours. They could travel to New York in just seven days.

"The railroad changed people's lives," said Lundin, whose grandparents Matt McFall and Isabel Campbell McFall built the International Hotel in Bellevue. "It made it possible, for instance, for the circus to come to town in 1884, bringing tigers and an elephant, which escaped and ran wild in the

took in the exhibit, which includes photographs from the Community Library in Ketchum's Regional History Department and original Sun Valley promotional posters.

At the center of the exhibition is Bruce Hathaway's model railroad, which he built out of foam, using sagebrush for the trees.

The Paul Tillotson Trio hammered out music that might have been heard on the Snowball Express that brought skiers to Sun Valley from Los Angeles.

Lundin said the railroad addressed the problem miners found when thousands of people wanted to flock here in the wake of the area's silver strike.

"You couldn't get here from there," said Lundin.

That was solved when the Utah-Northern built a line from Blackfoot, and another railroad

Library's executive director. The library recently took over the museum's operations from the Ketchum/Sun Valley Historical Society.

"One of the reasons we're doing this is to highlight the Regional History Department, which is one of the crown jewels of the library," Dillon said.

Did you know?

- The Union Pacific lobbied to establish the Sawtooth National Forest, as well as the Grand Canyon, Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks.

- Families moving to the Wood River Valley in the early days of the railroad could rent a boxcar for themselves, their furniture and their cows.

- Jay Gould and John Jacob Astor came to the Wood River Valley in their own private rail cars to spend time at Guyer Hot Springs in Ketchum. The hot springs featured a hotel, gym, bowling alley, plunges and cottages. Eventually, Hailey and Clarendon hot springs were added to the railroad's list of attractions.

- In the late 1800s a train ticket cost \$14.40 from Boise and \$9.40 from Pocatello.

- In the early 1900s the train left Shoshone at 7:30 a.m. and arrived in Ketchum at 11:15 a.m.

- Shoshone in 1906 was described as "a wild and wooly railroad town with nine saloons and nine girlie houses." Cowboys rode their horses into the saloons and shot them up. Fifty tramps hung out at the stockyards, which was called "the jungle." And members of Butch Cassidy's Hole in the Wall Gang once honeymooned at Shoshone's McFall Hotel with their new wives, whom had been prostitutes until the moment they were married.

- In Sun Valley's early days it cost \$34.50 for a first-class ticket from Seattle or \$13 for a lower berth.

- Sun Valley Resort sent its dirty laundry to Omaha, Neb.—Union Pacific's headquarters—when it first opened. It brought in coal for its heating the lodge by trains, as well.

- "Lock up your women! ... The Sun Valley Ski Train just got here," was the motto for the ski train that ferried Los Angeles

residents to Sun Valley in its early days.

- Passenger service ended in 1971 but a special car brought 130 Union Pacific executives to Ketchum for a board meeting



Bruce Hathaway built this model train, which is at the heart of the exhibition. Hathaway said he wanted to do the turnaround but couldn't get the materials to do it with in time. Instead, he created a model featuring the historic Roundhouse Restaurant.

streets of Hailey."

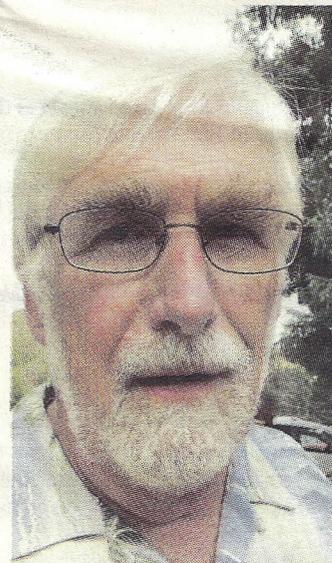
Lundin and others gathered last Wednesday evening to celebrate the opening of the newly formed Sun Valley Museum of History's inaugural exhibition, "Railroad Ties: Tracking the History of Sun

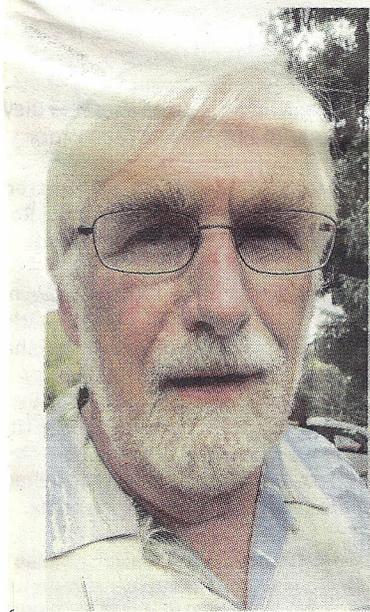
company built a line 160 miles from Kelton, Utah.

"Before, it was an arduous trip," Lundin said. "You had to go on the Big Hitch ore wagons 145 miles to Blackfoot."

Originally, the Wood River branch was to stop at Hailey. But the Philadelphia Smelter brought it north to Ketchum in 1884 to move ore out quickly, said Lundin.

It was the railroad that instigated the building of the Sun Valley Lodge in 1936. Averell Harriman bought the 3,081-acre Brass Ranch for \$4 an acre because he wanted to build a destination ski resort to boost passenger service at a time when automobiles were beginning to impact railroad revenues.





John Lundin is writing a book on the history of his family, which built and operated hotels in Bellevue and Sho-

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Lyman Drake, chair of The Community Library board, told attendees that the library is holding a "reimagining session" on Thursday as it charts its future.

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Union Pacific abandoned the Wood River branch in 1982.

A business man offered \$750,000 for it to operate it as a tourist attraction, but Union Pacific held out for \$20-plus million and ended up walking away with nothing. The railroad removed the rails in 1987; the Blaine County Recreation District built a \$4 million bicycle path along the railroad right-of-way in 1992.

Source: John Lundin.

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Valley."

The exhibition, which celebrates the 130th anniversary of the arrival of railroad transportation into Ketchum in 1884, was funded by the Wattis Dumke Foundation and the Idaho State Historical Society.

Patrons ate lamb ribs catered by Tom Nickel and The Sawtooth Club, toasted coconut ice cream provided by Yellow Belly Ice Cream and railroad tie cookies furnished by Cristina's as they



Cynthia Dillon, The Community Library's executive director, said that author readings and other intimate discussions will occasionally be held at the museum. The third building in the museum's collection will always honor Sun Valley's ski heritage, she added.

Union Pacific borrowed buses from Zion National Park to run passengers from the train depot to the lodge during the early years.

The museum plans to change exhibits three times a year, said Cynthia Dillon, the Community

The Sun Valley Museum of History is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesdays through Saturdays. Cost is \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for students and seniors over 65. Children under five get in free.

The museum is located in Ketchum's Forest Service Park at the intersection of First Street and Washington avenue.