

LEE SAMS

and Unidentified Lady

Interviewed by Ivan Donaldson — 1975
Skamania, WA

Ivan: Today we are having an interview with Mr, Lee Sams, one of the pioneer family of Sams. His father came here in 1887, and Lee was born in Cascade Locks.

Ivan: Lee, how long did you live at Cascade Locks before you moved down to some other place?

Lee: Well, he wants to know how long you lived in Cascade Locks. He didn't live in Cascade Locks. His mother went up there. They were living in Warrendale, where Lee's father's fish wheel was at Warrendale, you know.

Ivan: You were born there at the Williams wheel.

Lady: Well no, she went up to Cascade Locks to a doctor up there. Or a midwife, I believe it was, and then she came back.

Lee: I was born at Rock Creek or born at Cascade Locks.

Lady: Yes, but you were living at the rock crusher where the wheel was up there for a few days then back home.

Ivan: I see. How long did you live at the rock crusher site?

Lee: Quite a while. I don't know just how long it was.

Lady: Well, do you know what grade you were in? Because you graduated from the eighth grade when you were in Skamania.

Lee: Yeh.

Lady: So it must have been about a . . you were probably in the sixth . . .

Lee: Lived there from 1905. 1905 we moved from, over to . . .

Lady: Over to Skamania.

Lee: Mmm huh.

Lady: Well, that would have been in 1905.

Lee: Yeh.

Lady: Well, that's fine. And you have memories of growing up here on the river.

Lee: Oh, yes. Actually they're terrific.

Lady: What kind of a place did you have? What kind of a home did you have there at the Rock crusher site?

Lee: Well, we had a . . . we had a good home.

Lady: It wasn't a bad house.

Lee: There was, ah, how many Kids were there? Four or 5 of us there at that time.

Lady: More than that.

Ivan: I see, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Lady: All together there were 14 in the family, seven girls and seven boys.

Ivan: Seven girls and seven boys, remarkable.

Lady: And the girls are all living.

Ivan: Oh.

Lady: Three boys left.

Ivan: Three boys left, I see.

Lady: No, two boys left now isn't there?

Ivan: Well, Bob,

Lady: You and Bob

Ivan: Three

Lee: And Will, three.

Lady: And, yah, Will. Three boys left.

Ivan: And were you there when your father had the scowl wheel at the crusher site.

Lee: Yeh, yes, it was stationary.

Ivan: The stationary wheel, do you remember the scowl wheel that was there? The old Catermerand scowl wheel, do you remember that?

Lee: No, I don't.

Ivan: Do you remember him constructing the stationary wheel?

Lee: Oh, yes, yah. I remember that very well.

Ivan: And who drove the piling for him, was it Tommy Davidson?

Lee: Tommy Davidson. Yea, I'll never forget him.

Ivan: Did he come out of Portland?

Lee: Yes.

Ivan: What year was that?

Lee: Oh, I can't think, that must of been in . . .

Lady: We moved in 1905, it must of been about 1900 anyway.

Lee: Yeh, I'd say anyhow it was then.

Ivan: About 1900.

Lee: Yeh, yeh, probably be a little before then. We went to school down here at . . .

Lady: Yeh, they went to school, the school was down here at Dodson at that time.

Lee: We walked from there down.

Lady: They walked the railroad track there was no highway.

Ivan: And do you remember when your father sold it, the wheel, to whom?

Lee: Columbia Packer Association.

Ivan: Alright, what year was that, 1905?

Lee: Yeh, yes, it . . .

Lady: It would have been when you moved . . .

Lee: That was when we moved there to Skamania

Ivan: Did your father have at this time, 1905, did he have the wheel up at the upper end of Ives Island. Did he have that one yet?

Lee: Yes, yes, he had that one.

Ivan: Do you know when he built that one?

Lee: No, I don't

Ivan: And do you remember the scowl wheel that he had down farther on the face of the island. Ives Island, just above the package wheel.

Lee: Yes, I remember that. I don't remember when he . . . didn't amount to much, that one.

Ivan: Will told me that it didn't win very much.

Lee: No, it didn't.

Ivan: Do you remember the Hamilton wheel on the south side of the island?

Lee: Oh, yeah.

Ivan: Do you remember about when that disappeared?

Lee: Well, when they voted them out.

Ivan: It was 1927 then?

Lee: Yeah.

Ivan: It lasted that long, who owned at that time?

Lee: Inquist.

Ivan: Inquist.

Lee: But I think he got that _____.

Ivan: Then do you remember when the first gasoline engines came onto the river, about what year?

Lee: I couldn't say.

Ivan: 1908, 1910, 1917?

Lee: No, it was before that.

Lady: When you were over in Skamania, it wasn't before that.

Ivan: Were there any gasoline engine boats on the river when you went over to Skamania?

Lee: Well, not that I know of, cause we went over there with a sailboat. Had the scow loaded everything on and sailed it over.

Ivan: Did any other people have gasoline engines?

Lee: Not that I know of, not at that time.

Ivan: What is the first one you remember?

Lee: Oh, that was in, when did I go in the Army? 1917. That was in about 1910, I'd say.

Ivan: First one you say about 1910.

Lee: Yeah.

Ivan: What kind was it?

