It was a warm October day 21 years ago and there was a festive feel in the air. Activity ramped up as a group of locals gathered to move a 90-ton locomotive and its tender from their perch in front of City Hall to the newly designated Scenic Six Park, located on the old Potlatch mill site. Railroad employees such as Larry Smith, Rick Swinney and Scott Winther were joined by a host of locals lending muscle power and creativity to the ambitious project. In preparation, the City of Potlatch collected donations and ponied up $3,500 for the work, as the Dan F. Gmeiner Company of Spokane took charge of the operation.

Gmeiner was considered an expert hauler, having moved a 220-ton ferry overland in 1981. But the locomotive presented its own challenges and could not merely be loaded on a lowboy and driven across the fields. Instead the volunteers had to lay track on the two lowboys so they could roll the engine and its tender onto the transporting vehicles. Getting the track just right was critical as the lowboys were moved into position against the hillside. Then the magic began as the locomotive was winched along like a stubborn dog on a leash. Control and strength were everything and one weak link could spell disaster. The crowd along the roadside stood watching, talking in hushed tones. Men on the work team barked orders. There was clearly a sense of drama to the whole mission.

It was quite a sight as the work crews finally pulled the locomotive on board the lowboy and lashed it into place. This photo came from a scrapbook prepared by the Bovill Improvement Group in honor of the Scenic Six Park dedication on October 12, 1990.

A couple looks on as a group of volunteers prepares to roll WI&M locomotive Number 1 onto a flatbed trailer for transport to the Potlatch Scenic Six Park. This photo came from a scrapbook prepared by the Bovill Improvement Group in honor of the Scenic Six Park dedication on October 12, 1990.

Photo reprinted here courtesy of the Potlatch Historical Society.