

Taking Star Trails

May 19, 2017

Portland Photographic Society

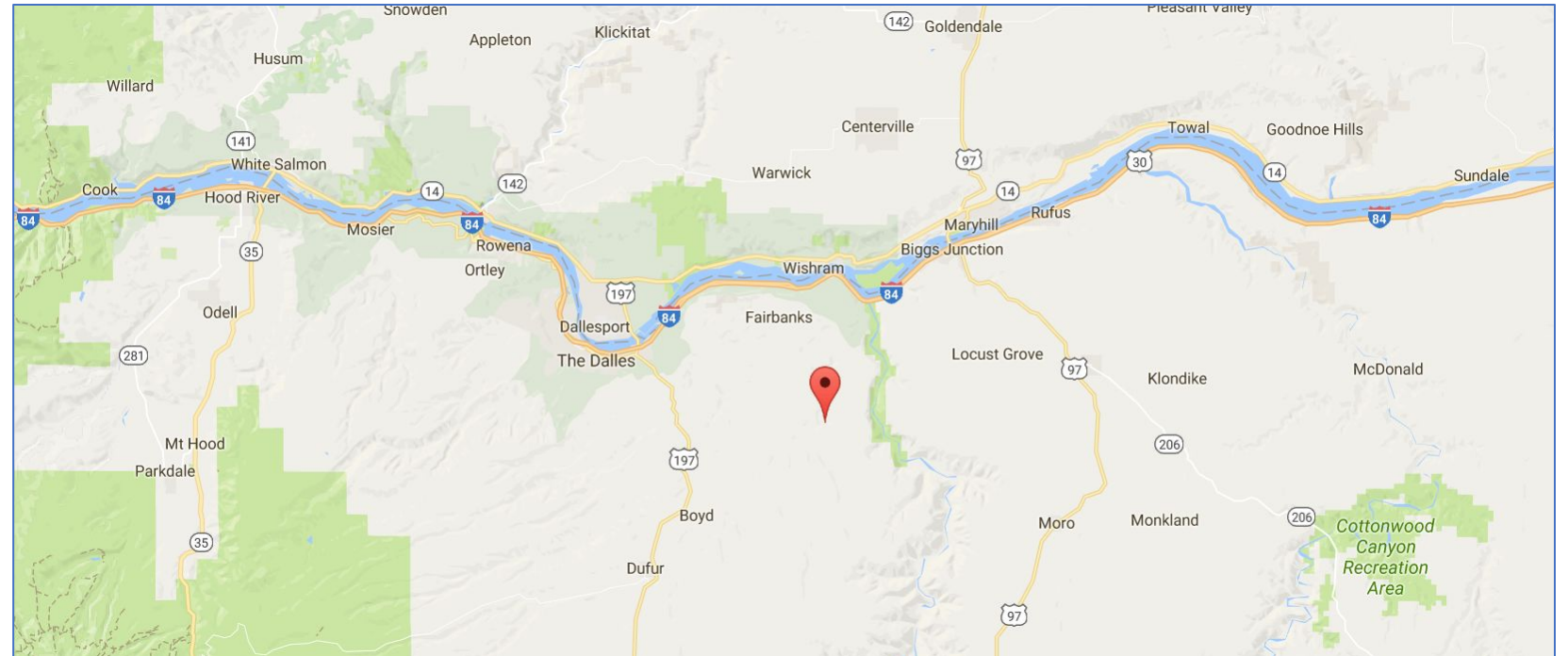
DJ Meier ♦ Dotty Weber ♦ Elaine Aragon ♦ Karen McClymonds

Lee Moore ♦ Meei Lum ♦ Ross Kaplan ♦ Victor Dallons

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Location: Douglas Hollow School House, Oregon



Dufur, Wasco County, Oregon

Lat: 45.5333945, Long: -120.9494725

Then & Now: Douglas Hollow School House

- One room school house
- Dating to 1905 and closing in 1949.
- Currently has a new roof.
- Fence around the perimeter.



How To Shoot Star Trails

With modern digital cameras, star trail images are made by combining multiple exposures of the night sky to produce an extended duration image. Typically, exposure lengths are 30 seconds, collected over a duration of an hour or more. An f-stop appropriate for a depth of field that includes both foreground and stars in the background is used, and the ISO adjusted to properly expose for the stars.

The files are combined in post processing with a technique called stacking. Stacking can be accomplished manually in photoshop or with a dedicated star stacking program. To stack in Photoshop, the files are added in layers, and the layer blend mode set to lighten. Unwanted artifacts such as airplane trails can be removed by painting over them with black in the individual files.

DJ Meier

I wish I had:

Played around a little more with light painting the scene and foreground with different warm colors.

Played with light beams

On a solo trip, perhaps include a person such as in the doorway or outside looking upwards to the heavens.



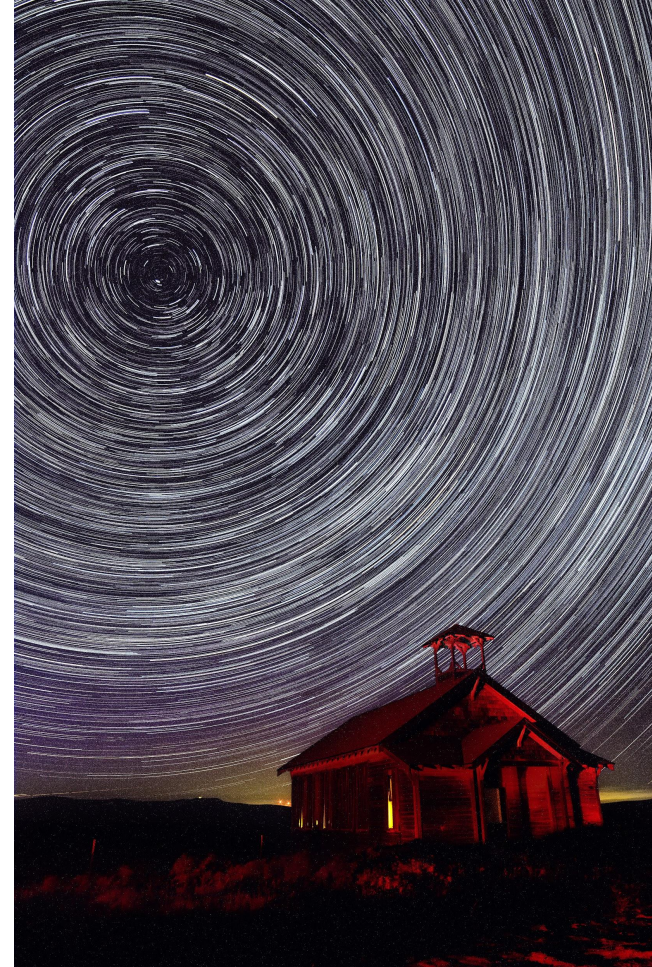
Dotty Weber

I wish I had used my Canon 6D (full frame) & my wired remote cable release.

Instead I used my Canon 7D Mark II as it had an intervalometer built in & a Rokinon 14mm lens to get the North Star. The crop frame gave me lots of hot pixels which you can see if you look closely at this image.

Plus I wish I had removed the one file with the schoolhouse when it turned red.

It was a fun experience and eager to give it another try! It's all a learning experience!



Elaine Aragon

-My Sony camera does not support continuous shooting so I needed an intervalometer which I bought and used for the first time. Fortunately it worked -- thanks to Meei who helped me read the instructions and set it up.

- When post-processing I learned how to: a) Sync files in LightRoom and, b) open in layers and then blend those layers in Photoshop. I also learned how to: c) erase airplane lights and d) edit schoolhouse as a separate layer.

Thanks to Karen and especially Victor for the tutorials in pre- and post-processing.

Next time I'll use a wider angle lens for a different composition.



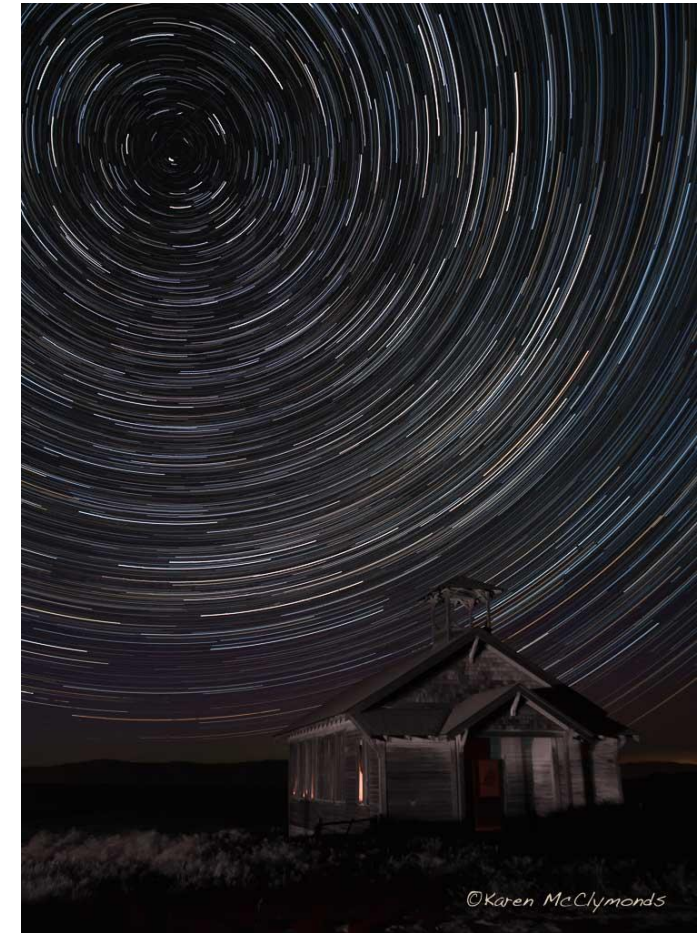
Karen McClymonds

My biggest regret was not bringing my back up body and gear. When you are spending 45-90 minutes on a single composition, it would have been helpful to be taking two different compositions at once.

In my first attempt I felt like a vortex is trying to swallow the schoolhouse. So I tried two more times. I learned that once you have the files, the possibilities are almost endless.

I second about making sure you park the cars further away from the fleet of tripods.

During the many, many exposures we even had a few minutes of Aurora Borealis in the shots when examined individually. Very exciting.



Meei Lum

I wish I had

- Included the North Star in my images
- Brought a cabled remote
- A second tripod for the non-star camera to shoot with
- My audiobook to pass the time while my camera was doing the work!



Ross Kaplan

I planned to shoot for 1 hour using an intervalometer which would produce about 120 images. I wasn't looking for the full circle.

But I set the interval incorrectly at 33 sec and only got 60 images.

As a result my trails are not continuous lines but I am happy with the result.

The schoolhouse came out too dark. I had to use curves and selective color on one of the images and then select and past the schoolhouse on the final stacked image.

Next time I would set my intervalometer to 5 minute exposures giving me 12 images to stack. Camera settings would be f/3.5, ISO 1600

After:



Victor Dallons

I wish I had brought a second camera to get a second composition that included the north star.

Setting up the interior and exterior foreground lighting was a new experience for me. I learned that I will need to give more care to balancing light intensity and temperature. It is hard to gauge these at low light, perhaps with more experience I can improve. In this photo, I had to make a lot of adjustments in photoshop.



Equipment - Photography

Essential

- Camera
- Tripod
- Wired, locking Cable Release
- Or Intervalometer - pretty cheap on Amazon - camera specific
- Extra charged camera battery
- Memory card > 16G (?) space

Suggested

- Second camera/tripod/cable release to shoot a different composition
- Back up photography gear for when star trail camera is operating
- Red flashlight, headlamp

Equipment - Other

- GPS. Map.
- Food, season appropriate beverage
- Chair
- Rug (to lie on or view stars)
- Bug spray
- Appropriate clothes to keep warm enough or cool enough for the conditions of night shooting.

Tips & Techniques

Do-s

Park vehicles further away,
preferably out of sight

Check your focus thoroughly
before starting your series of
exposures. Perhaps during blue
hour

Don't-s

Don't bump your tripod at any
time!

Tips & Techniques

- Park vehicles further from shooting location so that if someone decides to drive away, their car lights do not affect your shot.
- If the cars are not out of sight, turn off dome lights so those don't affect any ones shots either.