

# THE WEST SHORE.

VOL. 7—No. 10.

L. Samuel, Publisher,  
2 Washington St.

Portland, Oregon, October, 1881.

Entered at the  
Postoffice.

Per Annum, | Single copies  
\$2.00. | 25 cts.

## RAILROAD HISTORY OF OREGON.

Forty years is a long time to look back, at least in the history of Oregon. The earliest emigration was on the road here. The pioneers of that day were the mountaineers and trappers who ranged the wilds in the employ of the Hudson's B. Co. and various missionaries who came to convert the Indians, who usually disappeared from the face of the earth without being converted. At that time there was an enthusiast knocking at the doors of congress with a proposition that made wise men smile and never caused excitement in Wall street, that has since then gone wild with similar propositions. This enthusiast's name was Whitman, and it was about 1840 that his proposition to have government appropriate land as a subsidy for a railroad across the continent to Oregon made congressmen open their eyes with wonder and caused the financial magnates to smile at the absurdity of the scheme that he urged with considerable persistency. It would be a matter of some interest to re-read the proposition as he made it public, and see what inducements he believed existed for spanning the continent with an iron road long before California had become a national territory, and when Oregon was not defined by metes and bounds, but was an unknown territory extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

After this premature beginning it surprises one to see how long the project slept before it was again brought before the public. The time came when a transcontinental road was aided by a grant of lands of imperial extent, and was helped by a loan of government bonds that was sufficient in itself to build such a road, but Oregon history has never defined why at that time, when congress was so liberal, and even munificent in granting aid for branches, some effort was not made to secure sufficient subsidy to send a branch through from some point on the Central route to the Columbia river. It looks very much as if, while it rained subsidies, our congressional delegation failed to hold the Oregon porringer right

side up. Land grants and subsidies seemed going for the asking and no one asked for Oregon, and finally, when in July, late in the session of 1866, the grant was passed for the Oregon and California road, it does not appear that Oregon congressmen were prominent in securing it. If land grant and subsidy had been procured twenty years ago, at the time when other grants were legislated so liberally, and connection had been made with the central line soon after its completion, our state would have made a very different showing, and have long since competed with California, more successfully, in securing population and in achieving production.

In the winter of 1865-6, a bill was introduced to aid, by a land grant, the construction of a railroad from near Sacramento to Portland or the Columbia, which was urged by Simon G. Elliott on the part of incorporators in California, who included W. C. Ralston, Alpheus Bull, Thomas Bell, C. Temple Emmett and a number of others, and probably no such bill would ever have passed had not Elliott been there, paid by his friends in California who provided the expense of attending to it. The subsidy that Oregon finally procured she did not seek. In course of time the California part of the grant went into the possession of the Central Pacific people and Elliott himself came to Oregon, hoping to push the enterprise through from this end. The land grant was a bone of contention for awhile, as a rather unscrupulous adventurer got hold of the first incorporation and sold it out to Portland speculators, but it was left for the legislature to designate what company should enjoy it, and the legislature of 1870 designated the company incorporated by Elliott's agency, and which was then controlled by Ben Holladay, the Oregon incorporators having withdrawn in favor of Ben Holladay & Co. A further resolution passed congress confirming the designation. It is not necessary to recite all the squabbles and lawsuits that have resulted, so we proceed to give a brief synopsis.

S. G. Elliott was unsuccessful in

operating under the firm name of "J. Cook & Co.," and after making a commencement secured the aid of Ben Holladay, and figured as company in that firm. Ben Holladay and Emmett and Elliott were the firm. They operated with a syndicate of Californians who negotiated the sale of bonds to Zulsbach Bros., bankers at Frankfort, and the evidence of Holladay, given in court, shows that he only realized about 50 cts. on the dollar for the bonds issued, and the syndicate made a heavy profit on the transaction. The road was pushed through to Roseburg, 200 miles, and under Holladay's management the West side road was built to St. Jo, in Yamhill Co., and since then has been built to Corvallis. Holladay soon put Elliott out on some pretense or other, and made a serious mistake when he did so, as Elliott has devoted his life for the ten years past to prosecuting his claims through the courts, and has caused much more expense in that way than a fair settlement of those claims would have cost. The story of that ten years of lawing is equal to a romance and reminds one forcibly of the case of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce, made so famous by Dickens. Mr. Elliott still prosecutes it, though his hair has grown gray and he surrenders all other prospects of life to do so—a rather lamentable conclusion to the energy with which he entered into the scheme when comparatively a young man seventeen years ago.

Ben Holladay came to Oregon full of the idea of becoming a railroad king, dazzled by the splendid success of Stanford and Huntington. He owned the ocean steamers running between Portland and San Francisco, which was a princely fortune in itself, and his earlier career showed to what success an American can attain.

Holladay managed to get rid of his securities without building the road through to California, and the roads he did build proved so poor a speculation that he finally turned them over to the bondholders, and also his steamship line, and disappeared from the field of active labor in Oregon, the common acceptance being that he has not much of his