

# EXPLORING THE BACKWOODS RAILROADS

Book revision details regional railroad changes



D. C. Jesse Burkhardt is the author of 'Backwoods Railroads.'

BY ALYSSA EVANS

Thanks to a new book, readers can flip a page and experience local railroad history. Author D. C. Jesse Burkhardt recently released "Backwoods Railroads," which tells the story of branchlines and shortlines throughout rural Oregon. Delving into changes within Oregon's regional railroad lines, he explores many on the North Coast, as well as in the Cascade and Siskiyou mountain ranges.

Burkhardt, who lives in White Salmon, Washington, worked as a newspaper editor, reporter and photographer in the Pacific Northwest for over 20 years. Now semi-retired, he's updated a 1994 title with more than 100 pages of new detail, including added photos.

This revised edition took Burkhardt about a year to complete after being contacted by Washington State University Press. "I hadn't thought about the book for 20 years," Burkhardt said. "I updated each chapter one by one. Maybe two-thirds of the book is the original '94 information."

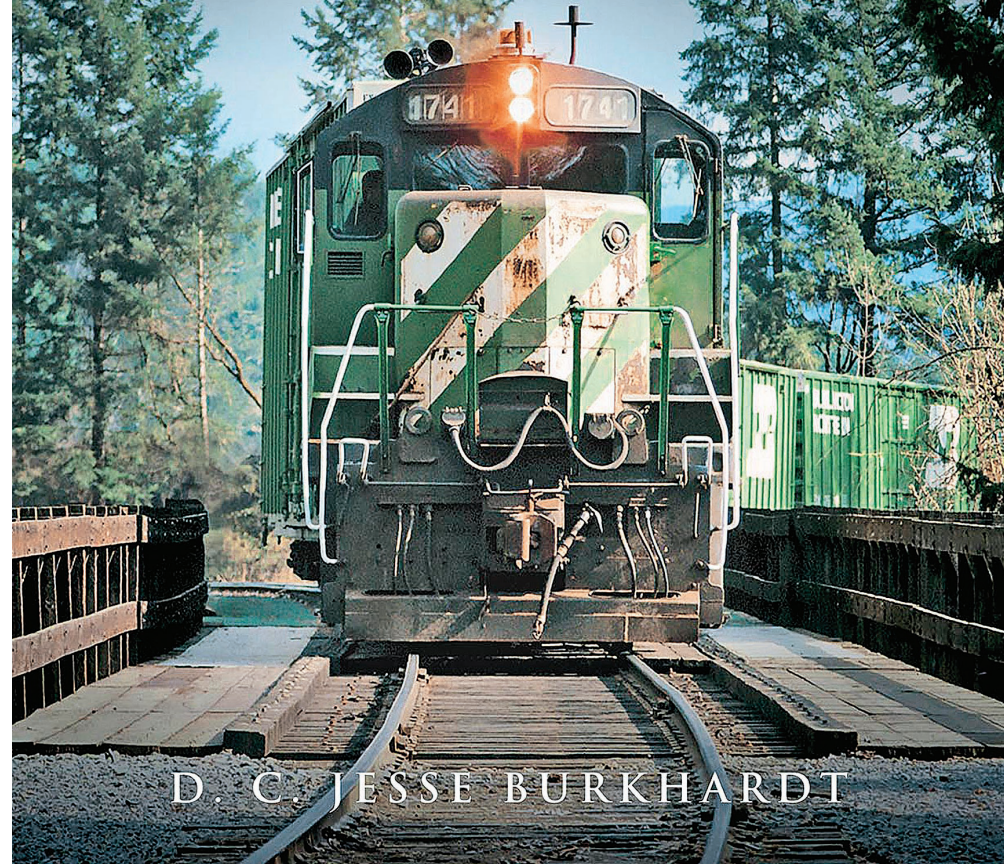
The book's photos track railroad line changes, including photos of new trains and lines that are either abandoned or little used. Content primarily focuses on railroads between the 1980s and present day.

"I love to capture the way things change, to preserve history. Each moment captures a moment in time. Even a month or a year later, an area could be totally different," Burkhardt said.

One of the themes Burkhardt realized while researching for the book is that many railroad lines have transitioned to be used by several small companies rather than a few large companies. Before the larger companies disappeared, they worked to remove smaller railroad lines that didn't get much service.

# BACKWOODS RAILROADS

BRANCHLINES AND SHORTLINES OF WESTERN OREGON  
UPDATED EDITION



D. C. JESSE BURKHARDT

## 'Backwoods Railroads'

By D. C. Jesse Burkhardt

Washington State University Press – \$60

[www.wsupress.wsu.edu](http://www.wsupress.wsu.edu)

Some railroad lines, once active daily, are now active only a couple days a week, if that. "I find it incredible to see all the changes that have happened. It's been about 30 years of changes now," Burkhardt said.

The author grew up in Jackson, Michigan, near two busy railroad lines. Their activity has been a source of interest throughout his life. After retiring from newspaper publishing five years ago, he

now works for a private contractor that transports railway train crews.

"They've always been a sense of wonder for me," Burkhardt said. "When I moved to Oregon, I just followed that. It's part of my element." Growing up, Burkhardt and his friends would spend hours each week watching trains come and go in their neighborhood.

"For me it was a place to get away from the roads and people," Burkhardt said. "The tracks were kind of like an oasis to get away," he added.

The railroad line closest to his home is no longer in use and is instead used as a trail. "When I was growing up, it was completely active. It's sad. It shows the changes of life," Burkhardt said. As does this book, now a new part of the historical record.

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