

# Your guide to all things BMD!

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*“Last week we saw an ingenious contrivance used to overcome the muddy roads of Oregon, which have no bottom, which if traveled much during the winter, is generally the case. It was nothing more than a scow with two horses hitched to it; but instead of being used in water, it is used to run in the mud. The owner said he was able to haul a good deal on his scow, where if he used a wagon it would be impossibility.”*

— Cottage Grove Leader,  
April 24, 1897

## TRANSPORTATION

*Continued from page 1*

Cottage Grove became one community again.

At the turn of the century, the need for a railroad connecting the mines to the mainline via the Row River Valley was great and gave birth to the Oregon and Southeastern Railroad, (the Cottage Grove version of the Cannonball in the Petticoat Junction TV show). A single engine made two daily trips up the valley and back, pulling both passenger and freight cars. Using the initials O&SE, locals began referring to the short line railroad as “Old Slow and Easy.”

In 1905, economic hard times fell upon the mining district, which contributed to the rapid rise of the local lumber industry. In 1914, new management changed the name to Oregon Pacific and Eastern. In 1919, a

special excursion train, nicknamed the Galloping Goose, carried more than 17,000 passengers. Wildwood Falls was a favorite place for picnics and baseball.

The automobile proved to be a slow death for railroads across America, but cars got off to a slow start here in Oregon due to the muddy roads. Mahlon Sweet arrived in Lane County in 1909, opened a Eugene car dealership and became a champion to develop better roads. In 1919, inspired by Sweet’s slogan, “Get Oregon out of the mud!” Oregon became the first state in the nation to levy a tax on gasoline sales to pay for the construction and maintenance of state highways. The Pacific Highway (99) was constructed in the 1920s and the paved roadway became a vital artery for interstate commerce. On June 14, 1919, the first airplanes in Cottage Grove landed in a field on

South Sixth Street. After performing at the Portland Rose Festival, four biplanes from a flying circus stopped here for the night. Several thousand spectators gathered to watch many thrilling stunts. In the 1930s, Oregon was a national leader in experimental aircraft manufacturing and began issuing pilot’s licenses before there was an FAA. The present state-owned airport was partly funded by the Woodard Foundation and the Bohemia Lumber Company and was dedicated on July 23, 1965. Transportation played another key role in Cottage Grove’s prosperity in the 1950s when Interstate 5 was constructed through town. At the time Lane County was commonly known as the “Lumber Capital of The World.” Seizing an opportunity to get his wood products to market faster, local lumberman W.H. Woodard successfully

lobbied to have the freeway’s original design through the Lorane Valley re-routed past his mill south of town, which today is owned by Weyerhaeuser.

This year Bohemia Mining Days celebrates the advancements of transportation in Cottage Grove’s history. In that spirit, festival goers are invited to visit the antique engine display, ride the train and transport yourself back in time by visiting the museums, hang out near the new cultural stage to hear interesting talks on historical topics, or – for an exotic transportation twist – ride a live camel!

**(Source for this article: *Golden Was The Past: 1850-1970, published by the CG Historical Society*)**