

Rogue Valley Railroads Date to 1863

North-South Lines Joined in Ashland In December, 1887

Local People Recall Great Celebration

BY JACK JACKSON
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

It was July, 1863. A few days earlier Robert E. Lee had been defeated in the bloody battle of Gettysburg and short months earlier, on the first day of the year, President Abraham Lincoln had issued an emancipation proclamation which had freed 3,000,000 slaves in the South.

But that month in Jacksonville, 89 years ago, every conversation centered around two subjects not connected with the battle between the states—survey and railroad.

The town's two newspapers, the pro-Union Sentinel and the Democratic Times, then edited by the fiery pro-southern Col. W. G. T'Vault, entered into the discussion.

Cause of the furor was the arrival in town of two parties of surveyors, one from California and the other from Salem, for the purpose of surveying a route for a railroad to connect Jacksonville with the major cities of the Pacific coast.

This was news of the first magnitude. Jacksonville had everything else—schools, churches, business, mining and farming. With a railroad, there was no limit to what the town, and all of southern Oregon, could do.

Dispute Arises

Things looked rosy. But not for long. The two parties, one headed by George H. Gelden, chief clerk in the office of the surveyor general of Oregon, and the other by Simon G. Elliott, who had brought his surveyors north from Marysville, Calif., reached a complete disagreement as to the party which would direct the survey northward.

But, southern Oregon was not to be stalled by a disagreement among surveyors. Joseph Gaston of Jacksonville raised funds to keep the surveyors in the city through the winter months. The response was good. The payments were partly in cash, but for the greater part they were in wheat and oats and in room and board for the surveyors.

Those contributing included such well known families as the Hanleys, the Applegates, the Colemans and the Van Dykes.

In the spring of 1864, the survey, headed by a Colonel Barry, was carried northward through Canyonville to the Willamette valley.

To carry on the business end of the undertaking, and to present the railroad proposition to Congress, the California and Columbia River Railroad company was incorporated at Jacksonville in 1863. The line went out of existence in 1865 without laying a mile of track.

Jacksonville Headquarters

The California and Oregon was formally incorporated in 1865 with headquarters in Jacksonville and in 1866 it was designated to build the California portion of a line connecting the Central Pacific in California with the city of Portland. The contemporary Centennial History of Oregon called formation of the C and O "a carefully planned scheme gotten up in California with not a single Oregonian connected with it."

In the same year, 1866, Joseph Gaston's Oregon Central Railroad company was designated by the Oregon legislature to build the Oregon portion of the line. On April 15, 1868, in Portland, with Col. W. W. Chapman, one of the founders of Chapman in the audience, Gaston's line broke ground, only to lose federal aid when a line headed by Ben Holladay was first to build 20 miles of road, thereby qualifying for land grant aid. In 1870, Holladay reorganized his railroad under the name of "Oregon and California Railroad company."

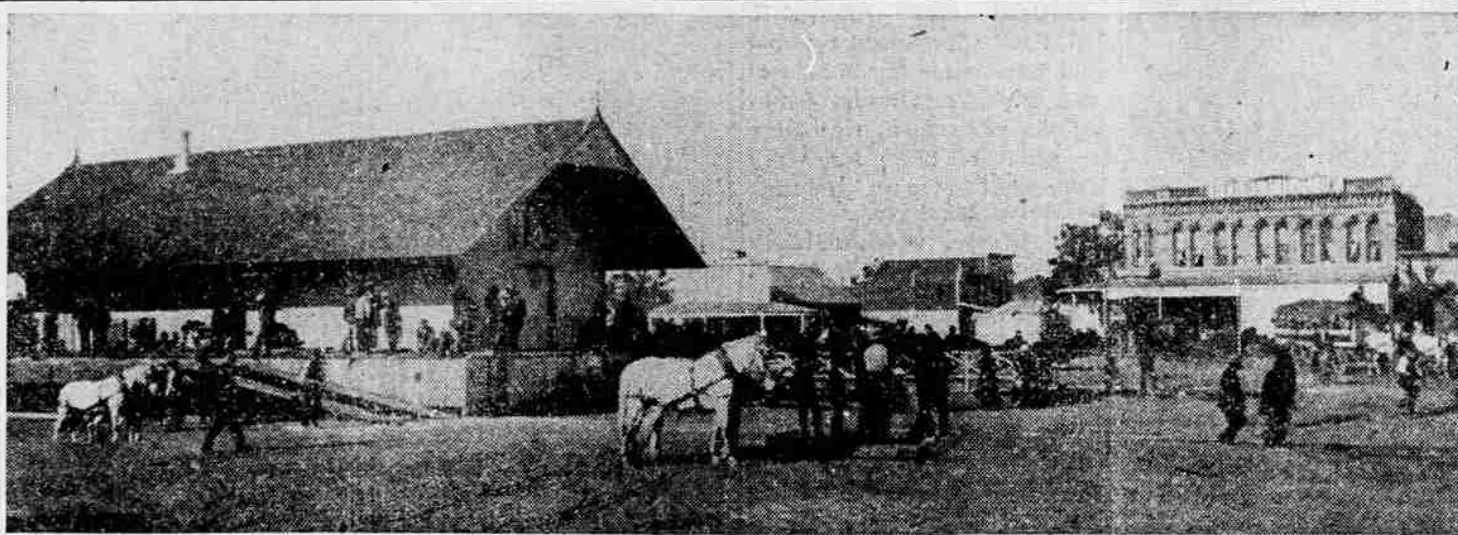
The O and C reached Roseburg on Dec. 3, 1872 and there construction halted for nine years and Holladay went broke. He was forced out by the line's German investors, who installed Henry Villard to look after their interests. Villard drove the line south from Roseburg, and it was under his guidance that Jacksonville, scene of the strongest efforts to back the railroad through southern Oregon, was bypassed in favor of Medford.

Line Reaches Ashland

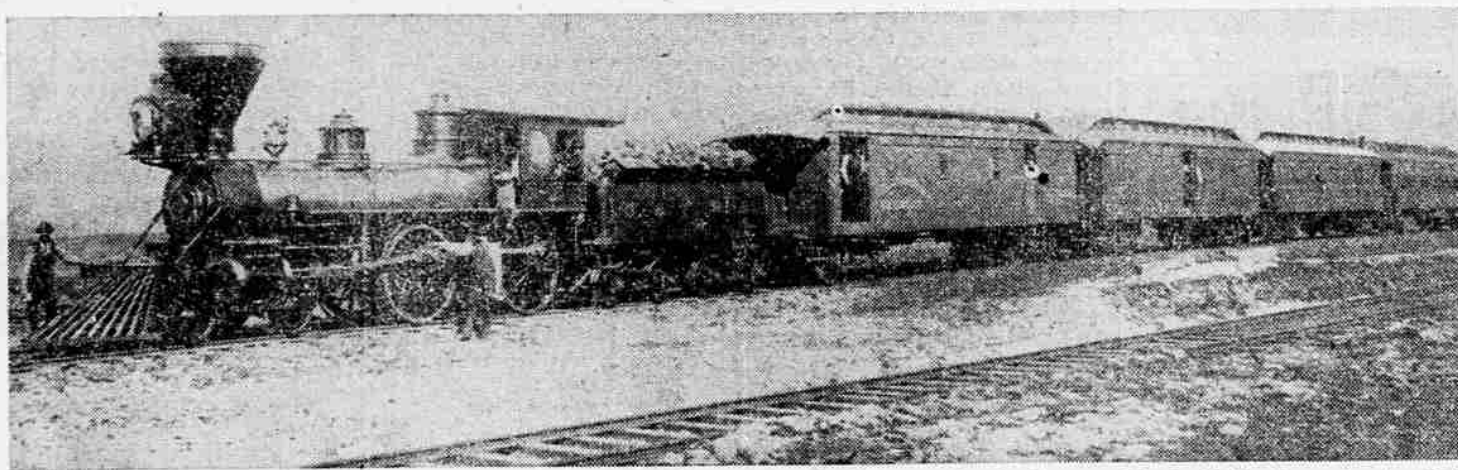
The O and C reached Ashland on May 4, 1884 and then Villard fell heir to the lot of so many other railroad builders and failed financially. The line was taken over by the newly formed Southern Pacific.

As the railroad inch its way south from Roseburg, southern Oregonians came into their first contact with the "big railroad interests."

R. V. Beall, Central Point, for whose family Beall lane was

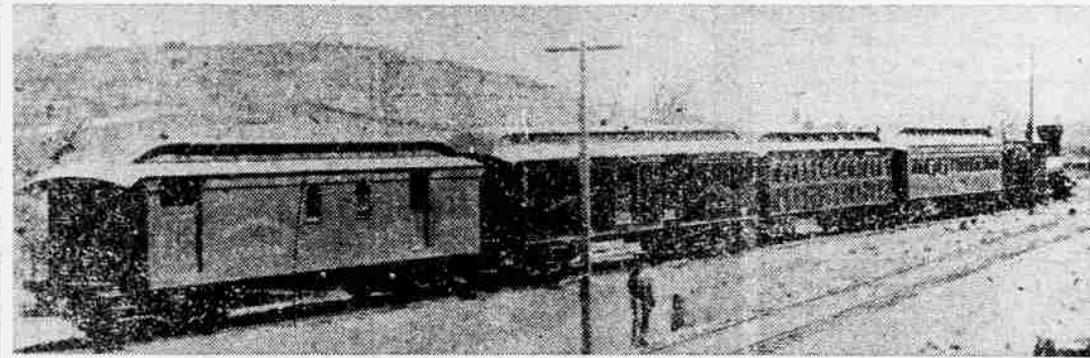


MAIN AND FRONT STREETS—Pictured above is the intersection of Main and Front streets in Medford during the 1880's. At left is the first Southern Pacific railroad station and at right is the Riddle house, then owned by an uncle of R. V. Beall.



FIRST TRAIN TO ASHLAND—Shown above is the first regular passenger train of the Oregon and California Railroad to reach Ashland from Portland in May, 1884. D. McCarthy, the engineer of the locomotive, is shown with an oil can standing beside the engine. Directly above him, sitting on the running

board of the engine is his son, H. G. McCarthy, who in 1930 was trainmaster at Dunsuir. James Porter, fireman, is at the front of the engine and the man in the cab is thought to be Joe Marshall, who was then engine wiper at Ashland and later was an engineer at Sacramento.



FIRST PASSENGER TRAIN—The first passenger train of the Oregon and California railroad into the Rogue valley after the railroad was opened for operation early in 1884 is pictured above. The picture was taken on the site on which the town of Phoenix now stands. The railroad was opened to that point on Feb. 25, 1884.

named, remembers Rogue valley reactions to these contacts. A small boy at the time, Beall recalls that Holladay was considered to be "an unscrupulous speculator," while Villard was almost universally admired as "a very able man."

As the construction crews advanced into the Rogue valley Beall was in a position to watch their every move. The new line ran about a quarter of a mile east of his home, even as it does today, and the mules and horses used on the construction job were fed in the two large barns built of hand cut timbers, which still stand back of the Beall home.

One of Beall's most vivid memories of those early railroad days is of the Chinese construction crews which camped near his home. "They were large men, probably Manchurians," Beall says, and he adds that they were scrupulously honest.

The Chinese, whose games of fan tan and dominoes brought something new to an area that had seen almost everything in the way of gambling, spoke little or no English, Beall recalls. They received their orders from translators.

Highwaymen Active

The advent of the railroad, here as well as elsewhere, brought an end to the profitable profession of the highwaymen who preyed on stage coaches traversing the sparsely settled region. But they were not to be put out of business until the railroad was completed, as a letter received recently by Beall testifies.

The letter, from Herbert G. McCarthy, son of one of the first O&C engineers, quotes a portion of his mother's diary, written while they were en route here from the Midwest to join his father. One of the final entries of the trip came in January, 1884.

It tells how, as their stage made one of the last laps of the trip, from Grants Pass to Rock Point, it was held up by armed robbers. The robbers escaped and Mrs. McCarthy and her son made the rest of the trip without further excitement, stopping for a while with the Bealls before continuing on to Ashland.

The rails advanced from Central Point south, not toward Jacksonville as originally planned but toward the tiny town of Medford, then on to Phoenix and on May 4, 1884, it reached Ashland. Beall was one of the first passengers on the first train to make the trip from Central Point to Phoenix.

Railroad regulations and time tables were a great deal more lax in those days than they are at present. Beall remembers numerous occasions on which Engineer McCarthy stopped his locomotive at Beall crossing for a few minutes and went over to the Beall home for a glass of buttermilk or ice tea before continuing his run.

While the railroad reached Ashland and started the laborious climb up the steep slopes of the Siskiyou, the crew working north from Redding, Calif., was also making progress. Late in 1887 it became apparent that the rails from the north and those from the south would be joined that year.

Ashland Chosen

Ashland was chosen to be the scene of the great event some-

time in December. The ceremony was tentatively slated to begin at 2:30 on the afternoon of Friday, December 16. Then, as plans were nearing completion, they were delayed by the weather. The situation was explained in an editorial in the Dec. 16, 1887 issue of the Jacksonville Democratic Times, which said:

"General Supt. Fillmore of the Southern Pacific Co. recently said that rains had so loosened the earth in the newly laid road-bed of the California Oregon Ry. that it was impossible to lay the track. Operations will be suspended for several days on that account. A soaking rain descended four or five days making the roadbed very 'mushy.' It was not raining in northern California the fore part of the week and if the weather continues good the roadbed may be sufficiently dry to permit of the laying of track to close the gap between the two lines. It may be necessary to postpone the celebration of driving the last spike until after the holidays. This will be done if the track is not laid today."

As it happened, the track was laid that day. And thus it was that on Dec. 17, 1887, just 65 years ago this coming Crocker, one of the Pacific Coast's original "Big Four" of railroading, stood in the gathering gloom of the south end of the Ashland railroad yard and hammered home a golden spike. The Pacific Coast's first north-south railroad was complete.

Unlike many places and occasions when history silently slips by unnoticed, only to be discovered by the searching eye of later generations, Ashland, on that chill, foggy day, was well aware that, momentarily at least, the eyes of the nation were on it.

Town Gaily Decorated

The streets were gaily decorated with flags and evergreen boughs and by early in the day everybody in the area who could find the time was on the way to town, by wagon, buggy, horseback or by foot. Some of the luckier ones waited along the recently completed Oregon and California railroad line to board the train for Ashland. Residents of the valley gathered at points along the line, probably including Beall crossing, to take what for most of them was their first railroad trip.

Among the southern Oregonians who were at the ceremony and who remember some of the happenings are Miss Mollie Britt, Jacksonville, and Lydia McCall, Clarence Lane and George Dunn, all of Ashland. The official representative of Medford at the cere-

mony was J. D. Whitman, and Jacksonville was represented by Judge P. P. Prim and Charles Nickell, editor of the Jacksonville Democratic Times.

Jacksonville could have been expected to be bitter over having been bypassed by the railroad some three years earlier. But in the Dec. 16, 1887 issue of the Democratic Times, under the special heading "Invitation Received," was an article which said:

"Although Jacksonville was left on the outside by the railroad co., that corporation fully recognizes the commercial importance of the pioneer town and is always inclined to show it the same courtesy that is extended to any of the others. A cordial invitation to participate in the driving of the last spike has been issued by Manager Koehler of the Oregon and California Ry. Co. to our people. Mgr. Koehler also sent the following dispatch on Tuesday: 'Inviting the mayor to attend the celebration. The following is the answer: Mayor Numan being unable to be present, the editor of the Democratic Times, who is also a member of the city council will represent Jacksonville at the ceremonies.'"

Thus, with Jacksonville making it unanimous, the entire valley, as well as most of the leading cities of the coast, was represented at the spike driving ceremony.

Weather Looked Bad

While the day was auspicious at the scene of the ceremony, the weather definitely was not. Those who arrived early shivered under fog laden skies, which hid the tops of Wagner Butte, Mount Ashland and the Greengrass to the east.

It was not until 10:30 a.m., that the train arrived from the north, bearing Gov. Sylvester Penney, a representative of the Seattle Board of Trade, numerous Oregon state officials and the mayors of most of the cities served by the railroad between Portland and Ashland. As the train chugged into the Ashland depot, the fog lifted to show the white ridges of the mountains, gleaming under a heavy fresh snow. But heavy clouds still threatened rain.

The train carrying Crocker, other Southern Pacific officials and representatives of San Francisco civic groups, was not due until 3 p.m. so after brief welcoming ceremonies, the delegation from the north sat back in their plush train to take it easy.

On the far side of the Siskiyou, the San Francisco delegation was starting to run into one trouble after another. Things had gone fine until the train

reached Hornbrook. From that point on, soft track and bad weather made the going slow, and near the south entrance to the fabulous 3,070-foot Siskiyou tunnel the special came to a complete halt when a construction train was derailed, blocking the tracks.

Despite feverish efforts by the SP gangs under the urging of work train Foreman Jack O'Neill and his assistant Gus Leow, it took two hours to get the construction train back on the tracks.

Meanwhile, in Ashland, it got colder and the wind which had blown down some of the decorations increased in velocity. Many prospective spectators, chilled to the limit of their endurance, refused to await history at the risk of pneumonia, and went home. The rest foraged for wood and built large fires in an effort to battle off the cold.

To many that day, the arch over the tracks bearing the motto "Welcome Oregon & California—Linked at Last," only added irony to what was already becoming a frustrating wait.

Special Arrives

Darkness was well on its way when the headlight of the pilot engine, running ahead of the special, tested the track finally flashed into the yard. At 4:35 p.m. the special, with Engineer Jack Clark at the controls, rolled to a stop just north of the speakers' stand. Dignitaries conferred and it was decided to go ahead with the ceremonies, despite the approaching darkness.

Telegraphers made final adjustments, seeing to it that wires were fastened to the spike and the mast so that, as each blow fell, the circuit would close and, at stations up and down the line, telegraph sounders would click out the driving of the spike, blow by blow.

Speakers stood on a table on the speakers' platform, 20 feet above the ground, to read their prepared talks by lantern light. The blessing was invoked by the Rev. F. F. Strong and Governor Penney mounted the table portentously to expound on the glories of the day.

Malice aforethought is not recorded by history, but it was at

that moment that Crocker, an avowed enemy of the Oregon governor, chose to start driving the spike. Penney was momentarily forgotten in the rush to witness the spike driving ceremony.

The colorful Crocker, an old hand at driving golden spikes, having gained the audience, played his advantage to the hilt.

The Oakland Tribune's story of the event, published Dec. 19, 1887, two days after the ceremony, stated, in part: "... (the spike) ... was driven at 5:10 o'clock on Saturday afternoon. At the time mentioned Charles Crocker held up the same golden spike that united the Pacific (Pacific) and Central Pacific roads, and with the same silver hammer in his hand, he said:

"I hold in my hand the last spike. (Cries of 'Hold it up!') With this golden spike I propose now to unite the rails between California and Oregon, and I hope it will be the means of cementing the friendship of the two states, and make them as one people. (Applause.)"

Spike Finally Driven

Crocker set the spike into the hole prepared for it, picked up the maul, set himself and swung three times, neatly setting the spike in the tie. Each time the maul hit the spike, telegraph instruments in Portland, Chico, San Francisco and Eugene clanged—three times in all. Fire bells in Portland and Sacramento sounded three times and steam whistles chorused in San Francisco. In Ashland the crowd cheered and screamed.

Meanwhile, Governor Penney was still teetering on top the table, 20 feet in the air, in almost pitch dark, still waiting to make his speech. Probably unmoved by the experience, he didn't have a great deal to say when he regained the attention of the crowd.

There were other speeches, a poem, the Rev. Mr. Strong gave the benediction and the crowd broke up. The whole thing was over by 6 p.m. As the spectators left the ceremonies, many of them dipped into a barrel of spikes standing by the tracks and took one home for a souvenir. Most of these spikes were gilded and hung on the walls of Rogue valley homes as mementoes of the great day.

Of all the glowing platitudes passed off by speakers that day, the one which seemed destined to be handed down to posterity was that by Crocker, who said: "I am a citizen, I feel proud that I am able to get up as high as a table as I could 40 years ago. I am 65 years old and it is pretty hard climbing on top of a table."

'Dangerous'

Speaking later at a celebration in Portland, Crocker produced the golden spike he had driven at Ashland and stated: "It is dangerous to leave it where it was driven." The spike is now on display in the Wells Fargo Bank and Trust company in San Francisco.

Of the spike driving ceremony, Harvey Scott's Portland Oregonian, in part had this to say in its first story of the event, published six days later, just two days before Christmas:

"The train from Portland arrived in Ashland Saturday, Dec. 17, 1887, at 10:30. It consisted of Pullman cars 'Roseburg' and 'Triumph,' Villard's private car which had been four years in building, and a kitchen car. It was greeted by music by the Ashland band, under the leadership of B. R. Willits. The crowd numbered 2,000 or more."

Paper's Editorial Policies Divided

Purcellville, Va. — (U.P.) — There will be no one-sided editorial opinion in the weekly Blue Ridge Herald during this presidential campaign.

John Eisenhower and his wife are co-editors. One thinks Dwight D. Eisenhower would make the best president. The other favors Gov. Adlai Stevenson.

In editorials of equal prominence and space, the paper has endorsed both candidates.

No one seems to know which editor is in favor of what candidate. And the editors are not telling.

THAT WAS A DRUG

Buffalo, N. Y. — (U.P.) — The Nestorians of the fifth century probably created the most elaborate drug prescription of all time, says Roy Y. Sanders, Jr., vice president of the Arner Co., drug firm. Sanders reports the formula was known as the "gold antidote." It contained 40 ingredients, including gold and silver.

Lucky You

by Dick Shaw



Lucky you—you got away with reckless driving

Stevenson Picks Manager For Presidential Battle

By UNITED PRESS

Latest developments in the presidential race:

DEMOCRATS

Stevenson — Gov. Adlai Stevenson picked Wilson Wyatt, former mayor of Louisville, Ky., and one-time federal housing expediter, as his "personal campaign manager" with headquarters in Illinois. The Illinois governor was reported considering jumping off to an early campaign start so voters will have a chance to know him.

Sparkman — Sen. John J. Sparkman pledged to "work wholeheartedly for the Democratic program" but refused to give "blanket assurance in advance" on every controversial measure that may arise. The vice presidential nominee made the statement in answering ques-

tions from Negro Congressman Adam Clayton Powell (D-N.Y.) whether he would campaign for a compulsory FEPC or an anti-filibuster rule for the senate.

REPUBLICANS

Eisenhower — Dwight D. Eisenhower emphasized he would be his own "boss" in his presidential campaign in which he expects the "great issue" to be a sound program for world peace.

Sen. Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois, a pre-convention supporter of Sen. Robert A. Taft, pledged he would work "with vigor" for Eisenhower's election.

PLAN RAIN-MAKING

Hartford, Conn. — (U.P.) — A committee of farmers hoped to get a rain-making project underway over the drought-stricken Connecticut Valley late Saturday.

Window Kept Unlocked To Assist Burglars

St. Louis, Mo. — (U.P.) — Harry Duncan has what he claims is a sure-fire way to keep burglars away. After burglars had ransacked his house four times, breaking windows to get in, Duncan put a sign on one of them which read: "Open for your convenience." Duncan keeps the windows unlocked and hasn't been bothered by intruders since.

Today only 1.7 per cent of U.S. national income is spent on education, compared with 2.5 per cent in 1940.

The bluebottle fly completes its life cycle in little more than a week.

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