

# Valley Railroad Had One Passenger Car

## Interesting Part Of History Noted For Entire Area

(Editor's note: Following is a re-creation of a talk given by Dr. Francis D. Haines, Jr., at the dedication of a plaque at the site of the old Rogue River Valley Railroad station in Medford. The plaque was dedicated Saturday at the Crater Lake Motors building on Main st., where part of the tracks still are visible. The following is not the text of Dr. Haines talk, but a re-creation of it in manuscript form.)

By DR. FRANCIS D. HAINES, JR.

Some of you may be wondering why we have chosen to commemorate the Rogue River Valley Railroad. It was such a small railroad. It ran only from Medford to Jacksonville, a track distance of five and one-half miles. It never had more than two locomotives in service at one time and had only one passenger car.

This little railroad is an interesting and vital part of our history. It was begun and built by local capital. It was a local enterprise and it had an important part in the development of our Rogue River valley. In its colorful history, it played a part in the lives of the citizens of the valley, socially and economically, that cannot be overlooked.

The Oregon and California Railroad was responsible for the construction of the Jacksonville line. The decision of the builders of the O and C to by-pass Jacksonville left the county seat in a predicament. The Rogue River Valley Railroad was their answer to the problem.

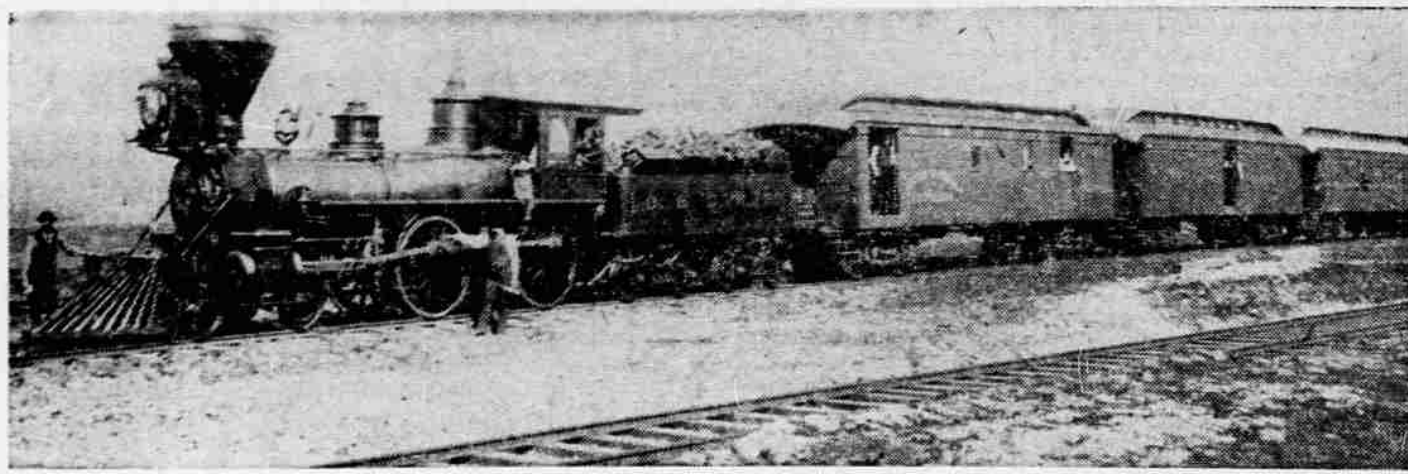
**O and C Bankrupt**  
The O and C was broke when it hit the valley. It was only by a last gasp, superhuman effort that the line was built as far as Ashland. The effort forced the line into bankruptcy. After two years, it was taken over by the Southern Pacific and the line to California was completed, but Jacksonville was still off the railroad.

There were several good reasons for by-passing Jacksonville. The owners of the townsite of Medford made the railroad an offer that was difficult to refuse. The road was given enough land for its right of way, yards, warehouses and every other block in the townsite.

From an engineering standpoint, Medford was a better point than Jacksonville. A line to Jacksonville would be an expensive detour with difficult grade problems. Then, too, there was nothing to be gained by building to Jacksonville. The railroad would still have all of the Jacksonville trade. Jacksonville had to come to the railroad.

The only reason for the railroad to go to Jacksonville was to pay taxes and that did not require track. Had the town of Jacksonville raised a large enough cash bonus, the railroad probably would have built to Jacksonville anyway as it was in desperate financial straits but the citizens of Jacksonville could not do this.

By 1890, Jacksonville was becoming desperate. The cen-



**VALLEY 'CANNONBALL'** — Above is a picture of the old Rogue River Valley railroad, which operated between Medford and Jacksonville in the late 1890's. The railroad received commemoration by the Siskiyou Pioneer Sites Foundation recently when it dedicated a plaque at the site of the Medford depot of the railroad at the Crater Lake Motors building.

Every person in town made the trip during that first month. Regular train service was established on Feb. 12. The track was not yet completely ballasted and the depots were still under construction. A further problem was in rolling stock. The locomotive and cars for the line had not arrived so service was continued with the little locomotive borrowed from the Union Pacific and cars borrowed from the Southern Pacific.

**Charter Train**  
The railroad became an important part of Jacksonville life. In addition to the regular train service, the people frequently chartered the train for special occasions. Baseball was the big sport of the valley in those days. There was a regular league and the towns turned out en masse to cheer the local favorites. When the play-offs came around in the fall, the local teams were frequently strengthened with major league or coast league ball players for the occasion.

The train was chartered to take Jacksonville people around the valley to follow their team. The line of the Southern Pacific was borrowed for runs to Ashland, Gold Hill and Grants Pass. Special trains were run to the county fair, to Fourth of July celebrations, to special events at the hot springs above Ashland, and to the Chautauqua. Special attractions at the theaters of Medford or Ashland also called for special trains as the prominent citizens of the community turned out to roperas, plays and other touring attractions.

**Important to Children**  
The train became an important part of the lives of the children, too. A favorite sport was to grease the track near the Jacksonville school. The children could then watch the frantic efforts of the locomotive to make the grade outside their school room windows. Others took the hand cars for evening trips to Medford, flying down the grade at high speed.

On one occasion, the editor of the Jacksonville paper became irate. He was bound for his mail as the evening train arrived. As it passed him, several forty-five cartridges set on the track were exploded, fragments nearly wounding him. Had juvenile delinquency been invented, he would have flayed the delinquents. As it was, he had to be content with such terms as "hooliganism", "ruffians" and "young scoundrels". He predicted a bad end for all of them.

The train had its share of encounters with livestock, too. A prize Jersey heifer came out second best in one meeting and some horses were seriously damaged dashing against a barbed wire fence when caught on the right of way by the little engine.

**Prime Source of Dreams**  
The railroad was a prime source of dreams for the residents of Jacksonville. It was hailed as the Jacksonville Pacific and all sorts of schemes were proposed for extending the line either to Crescent City or Port Orford. Once this was done, it was believed that Jacksonville would become the big metropolitan between Portland and San Francisco, rivalling both of them. Lines were proposed to Eagle Point via Central Point, and on to the interior.

Hopes were revived in 1915 when the Bulls interests purchased the road. The line was connected with the Medford street railway system and electrified as far as Jacksonville. The railroad was not profitable, however, and a trip to the coast convinced the new owners that a coast route was not feasible. The road was turned back to the Barnums in 1918.

Valley residents were not to give up so easily. The road was taken over by Mr. Gagnon and re-incorporated as the Medford-Coast Railroad and the talk revived of a seaport connection. Mr. Gagnon failed to make a go of the line. An auto jitney service

on the new highway from Medford to Jacksonville ate into his passenger traffic so heavily that he was forced to install his own jitney line to compete.

**Long Awaited Prosperity**  
Hope revived, however, when Mr. John Opp of the Opp mine purchased the route. To the people of Jacksonville, the line was going to bring the long awaited prosperity.

This effort, too, came to naught. The line was not operated as a common carrier deteriorated and the rolling stock went into the yards. The road again reverted to the Barnum interests.

Mr. George Barnum of Medford, (who unveiled the plaque), made a run over the line in a locomotive in 1925. He feels fortunate that he was able to make the run without an accident. The roadbed was shot. Operation of the line would require a complete rebuilding of the road bed.

Mr. Barnum petitioned the Oregon Public Utilities Commission for permission to dismantle the line. In the hear-

ing, one die-hard petitioned that the line continue in operation. The Commission ordered the sale of the line to any group interested in continuing operation, provided they met the value of the property dismantled.

**Purchased by City**  
No group appeared willing to operate the line. In November, 1925, the line was purchased by the City of Medford and was dismantled. The Rogue River Valley Railroad had passed out of existence.

It is not surprising. Not only was the road in poor condition but Jacksonville was rapidly diminishing in importance. It was obvious that Medford was going to get the county seat in the next election. Mining had dwindled away to nothing. Continued operation of the railroad was no longer possible.

Thus closed one of the most interesting and colorful chapters in the rich history of southern Oregon. The old depot in Jacksonville and the plaque that was unveiled are all that remain of this pioneer enterprise.

# Trailer Owners Seek Pleasant Sites, Settle In City's Residential Areas

By ERIC WENTWORTH  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer  
(Second in a Series)

More than two million Americans live today in house trailers—or to use the preferred term, "mobile homes."

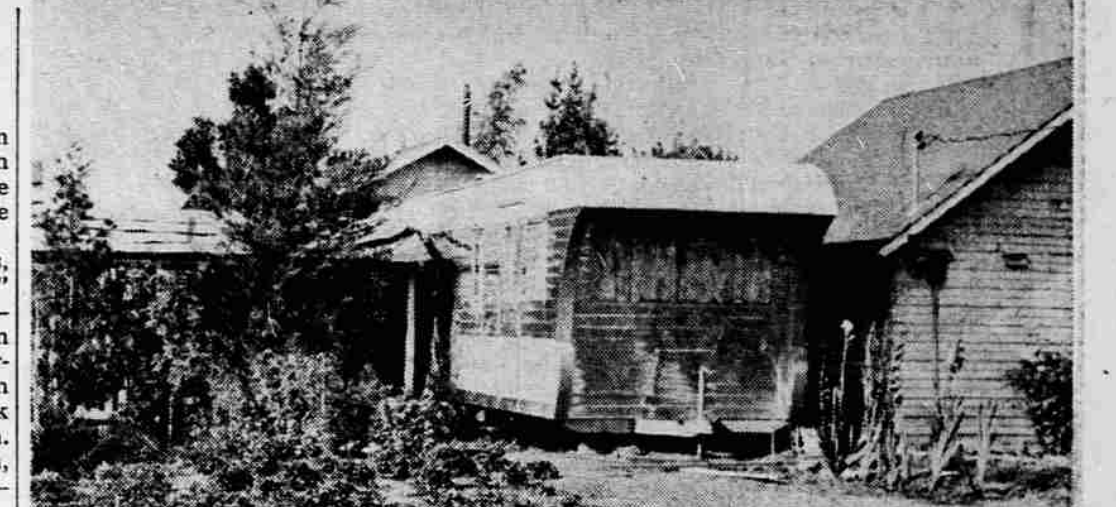
Many live in trailer courts, or "mobile home lodges." Some people in this group—construction workers, farm laborers, retired people touring the country—move from place to place as their work or inclination leads them. They may stay one month, three months, six months—and then push on.

A majority of trailer court residents, however, are more permanent. They are generally gregarious by nature, and enjoy the atmosphere of a close-knit community.

**Neighborhood Attitudes**  
A well-run trailer court encourages neighborly attitudes and cooperation in such various ways as setting up magazine libraries, baby-sitting and the formation of social clubs.

Some people live in trailer courts simply because they cannot afford buying and improving a lot of their own. A modern trailer court provides sewer, water and electric connections, a concrete stand and patio and often a carport.

But trailer courts—at least in most communities, and Medford is one of them—suffer from one great disadvantage. Thanks to a traditional



**BACKYARD** — In this case, the trailer has apparently no effort has been made to be wedged between a shed and a garden. Improve the trailer's site and appearance. Note the roof of the main house behind it.

prejudice on the part of the general public and city officials alike, they are limited by zoning laws to commercial or industrial areas.

**Unpleasant Conditions**  
In such areas they are often subjected to a variety of unpleasant conditions. The roar of trucks and heavy traffic, exhaust fumes and odors from nearby factories, unsightly storefronts and the glare of neon signs by night—these are but a few of the drawbacks.

It is difficult for the court proprietor and the individual trailer owners to take pride in the appearance of their property in such surroundings.

For this reason, and perhaps in the interests of greater privacy, other trailer residents prefer a more exclusive existence. Tucked away in the back yards of other houses or set up on small lots of their own, there are single trailers scattered throughout many of Medford's residential areas.

It is difficult to figure out how many trailers are so situated, since a person would have to go out and count them one by one. The city building department, while responsible for them, cannot begin to keep track.

"We lack the manpower," says Oliver R. McNeel, Medford's building inspector. "It would be a fulltime job for one man."

**Becomes Building**  
According to the city's existing trailer ordinance, passed Jan. 20, 1942, a trailer becomes a building as soon as its wheels are removed. As such, it is subject to all the restrictions of the city's zoning and building code.

And the city must grant it a building permit before its existence becomes legal.

Going by the ordinance, there are apparently dozens of illegal trailers in Medford. McNeel recalls issuing but "two or three" permits to trailers on single lots, and none to trailers parked in back yards.

**Refused Applications**  
He has refused several applications for permits and ordered some trailer residents to comply with the legal requirements or leave the premises. But he is one of the first to agree there are many violations existing today.

The city's requirements for single trailers as for houses, include a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet, and a solid foundation—not just up on blocks. The trailer must be connected with the municipal sewer and water systems. Its wiring must conform to the electrical code.

Furthermore, the dimensions of its rooms must be at least the building code's minimums. In 1942, this particu-

lar requirement successfully slammed the door to almost every trailer in existence. To fit the minimums, a trailer would have to be at least 40 feet long, according to McNeel. They just didn't make them that big in those days.

**Larger Trailers**  
The recent trend to larger trailers has changed the picture radically. The big trailers can, in fact, fulfill the code's specifications. Because of this, and because the owners had met the other requirements, the building department has issued permits to "two or three" trailers.

City officials, including McNeel and City Manager Robert A. Duff do not like this "loophole" by which trailers qualify as houses. It is a known fact, according to Duff, that they tend to lower neighborhood property values. He states that the city's next trailer ordinance will almost certainly prohibit them.

Trailer owners who buy lots for their trailers plan as a rule to remain for several years—"legally" or not. They must provide water and sewer pipes to connect with city facilities and run wiring to the nearest utility line.

**Improve Appearance**  
Most here in Medford have taken steps to improve the appearance of their property. In some cases, they have sought to camouflage their dwellings by erecting sheds over them or screening them with shrubbery or lattice-work. Many have added porches or patios. Quite a few have put in lawns, flower beds and vegetable gardens. Others, of course, have not made such an effort.

Backyard trailer sites, however, are at least as numerous here as individual lots. There are several off Jackson st. a short way east of Bear creek.

Some, it is understood, are rented from the occupants of the main house. In other cases, the landlord may own the trailer himself—and rent it as an apartment.

**Accommodate Dependents**  
The majority of such trailer sites, however, are apparently designed to accommodate aged parents, young married offspring or other dependents of those in the house. Such an arrangement provides a convenient way of keeping the house-dwellers and their relatives in close proximity without the disadvantages of crowding in under one roof. Each can "keep house" independently.

In any case, a backyard trailer can be hooked up to water, sewer and electrical systems of the house and thus have the advantages of trailer court site plus relative privacy and a quiet, more at-

tractive neighborhood.

At present, trailers in some residential areas of Medford appear definitely "substandard" in comparison to adjacent houses. But in other areas, they actually look more substantial, and more attractive, than the jerry-built frame houses surrounding them.

It depends on the neighborhood. And the standards the trailer owner sets for himself.

It seems a safe bet that so long as the boom in trailer sales keeps up, the need for providing them with suitable accommodations will continue. And so long as the trailer-dwellers seek semi-permanent or permanent locations for their "mobile homes," the demand for sites in attractive, residential surroundings will increase.

**Effort to Escape**  
On the other hand, so long as cities like Medford relegate trailer courts to commercial or industrial zones, it appears that a certain proportion of trailer-dwellers will attempt to locate their trailers on small lots or in back yards of residential areas in an effort to escape unpleasant conditions.

No matter how well landscaped or efficiently operated a trailer court may be, it will inevitably be subjected to traffic sounds, odors and unattractive views in these zones.

And thus, so long as these trailer owners strike out on their own while the city apparently lacks manpower to actively regulate them, one can expect the number of violations of both zoning ordinance and building code to rise.

This brings Medford, and other cities, to the following alternatives:

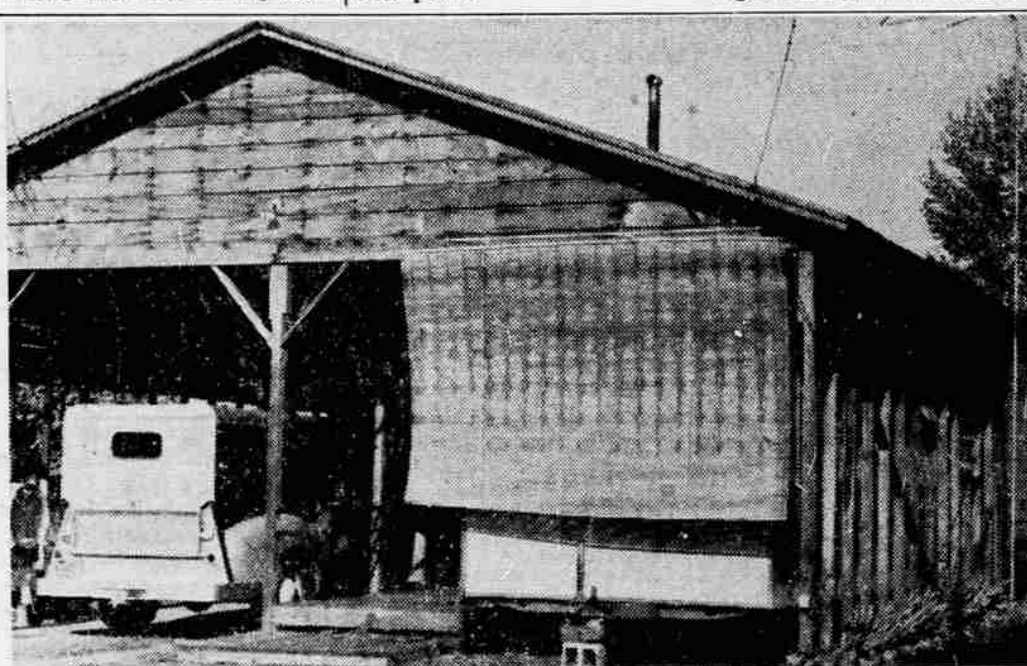
It can add the position of trailer-inspector to its staff and set about enforcing the present regulations.

Or, it can revise its regulations in the direction of leniency and thus "legalize" today's violators.

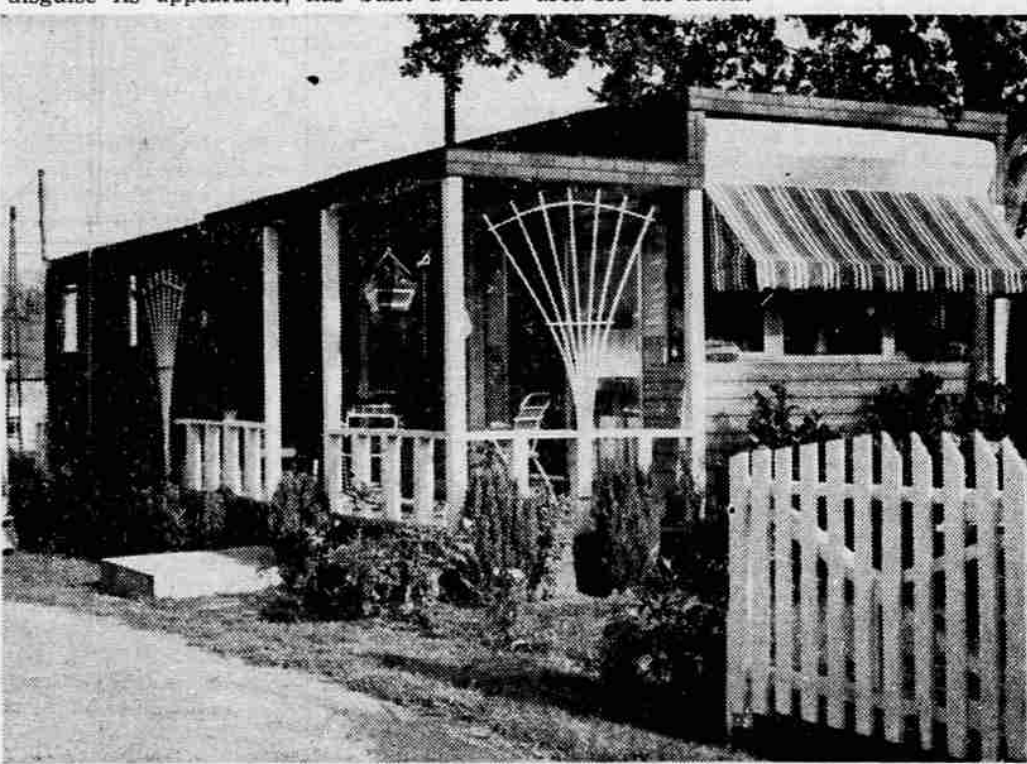
Again, it can plug that loophole and explicitly prohibit trailers from any residential zone.

Finally, it can revise its zoning and trailer ordinances in such a way as to permit the development of high-quality trailer courts in pleasant surroundings.

**SUB VISITS FRANCE**  
Paris—(UPI)—The U. S. atomic submarine Skate will pay a visit to the French port of Cherbourg Sept. 5, French naval officials announced Friday night. The Skate, which has been denied permission to land at Denmark because of possible radiation dangers, will visit the Dutch naval base of Den Helder Sept. 1.



**CAMOUFLAGED** — This trailer-owner, to protect his dwelling from the elements and disguise its appearance, has built a shed over it and rigged a screen at one end. A such, it is subject to all the restrictions of the city's zoning and building code.



**SPRUCED UP** — Here is one example of how trailer-dwellers can improve the appearance of their trailers when they settle on single lots in residential areas. Roof, porch, awning, trellises, landscaping — all contribute to a look of permanence.

## New "Happy" Pills\* Released to Public

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(Note: Tired is available in limited quantity, sells for \$3.49. Also available are smaller trial sizes for \$1.95 and economy sizes for \$5.95, guaranteed safe and effective.) At all drug counters.

\*Based on well-being created by relief from temporary mental and physical fatigue, and does not imply that there is any habit-forming or harmful drug in Tired.

## Lumber Prices Continue Increase

Lumber prices continued to increase last week on standard and better dimension items of all species, according to Crow's Lumber Market News service, Portland.

Factors contributing to the climb were log shortages due to fire weather shutdowns, a scarcity of box cars, uncertainty as to whether there will be a mill and woods strike, plus strong, steady demand from consuming areas. Crows said,

Standard and better grades of Douglas fir, White fir and hemlock have gained a dollar or two in price, the news service said. Studs have shown an upward trend, but not so pronounced as dimension.

## 400 National Guard Officers Plan Meeting

Salem — More than 400 Oregon Army and Air National Guard officers will attend the 31st annual conference of the National Guard Association of Oregon at the Portland International Airport Sept. 6. The conference will be held in the Oregon Air National Guard hangar.

According to Maj. Gen. Harry C. Brumbaugh, association president, the one day conference will be represented by Guard officers from 90 Oregon National Guard units located in 39 communities throughout the state.

**AN UNNEEDED PRIZE**  
Wellingborough, England—(UPI)—Harry Clegg, who won free haircuts for a year in a competition, wondered today whether he shouldn't just settle for a scalp massage. He is bald.

## ARABS GET LOAN

Berlin—(UPI)—East Germany granted the United Arab Republic a \$20,250,000 loan in an economic agreement signed here Friday after six days of negotiating. The East German press office said the loan would be in the form of long-term deliveries of complete industrial plants, industrial equipment and machine tool products.

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