

# Lane County Historian



## OREGON & CALIFORNIA R. R. CO.

NO. 14. TIME SCHEDULE. NO. 14.

**TO TAKE EFFECT SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15TH, 1871,**  
at 6 o'clock A. M.—for the government and information of employes only; the Company reserve the right to vary therefrom as circumstances may require.  
Daily Trains will run between

### PORTLAND AND EUGENE CITY

AS FOLLOWS:

LEAVE		ARRIVE	
Portland.....	6:30 A.M.	Eugene City.....	7:30 P.M.
" .....	1:00 P.M.	Eugene City.....	8:00 P.M.
Eugene City.....	6:00 A.M.	Portland.....	1:00 P.M.
Eugene City.....	6:45 A.M.	" .....	8:00 P.M.

The 1:00 P. M. Train from Portland, and the 6:00 A. M. Train from Eugene City are Passenger Trains and run Daily.

The 6:30 A. M. Train from Portland and the 6:45 A. M. Train from Eugene City are Freight Trains (with Passenger Cars attached) and run Daily (except Sunday).

Oregon & California R. R. Ferry makes connection with all Regular Trains.

Trains No. 5 and 6 are Freight Trains, and do not carry passengers.

Close connections are made at EUGENE CITY with the Stages of the Oregon and California Stage Company.

Tickets for sale over the Stage Line to the below given points:

IN OREGON—Oakland, Roseburg, Jacksonville.

IN CALIFORNIA—Yreka, Butteville, Soda Springs, Sacramento Ferry, Pitt River, Red Bluff, Tehama, Shasta, Calahan's Ranch, Fort Jones.

Storage will be charged on all freight remaining in Warehouse over 24 hours, except when through Bills of Lading are given.

Freight will not be Received for Shipment after 5 o'clock P. M.

Tickets for sale at Company's Office,  
Cor. F and Front sts., at the Ferry Landing, Portland.

H. THIELSEN, Gen'l Supt.

J. C. HILDRETH, Asst. Supt.

E. P. ROGERS,

229dtf

Gen'l Freight and Passenger Agent.

The first railroad schedule showing service to Eugene City, effective October 15, 1871. Copied from an advertisement in the "Oregonian."

## LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XVII, No. 1

Eugene, Oregon

Spring, 1972



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# LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## LANE COUNTY HISTORIAN

Inez Long Fortt (Mrs. James G. Fortt) .....Editor  
3870 Watkins Lane, Eugene, Oregon 97405

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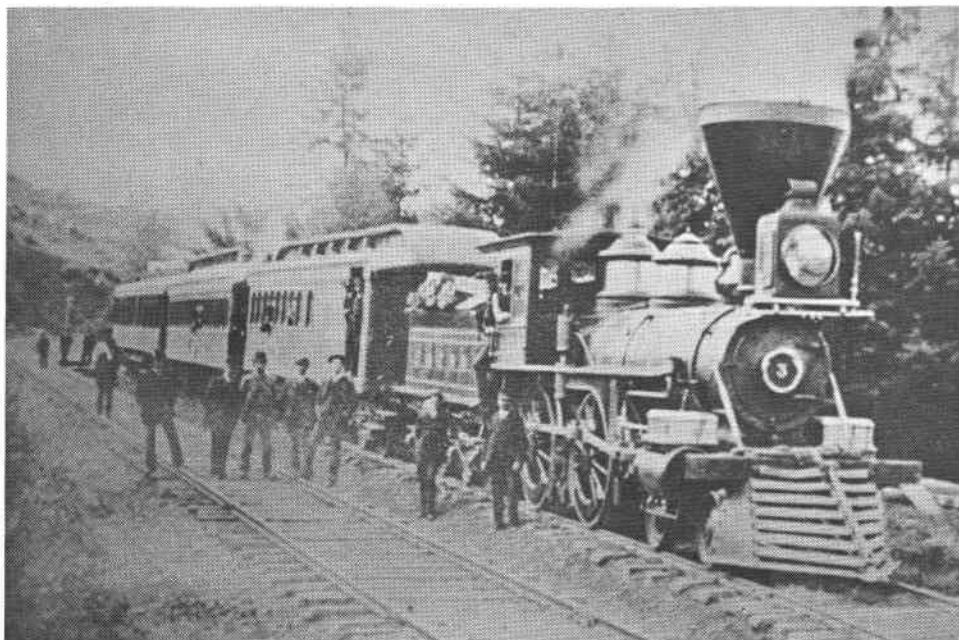
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By Dale Steinhauer, Graduate student, University of Oregon; Grandson of Herman Steinhauer, great-grandson of Thomas Pope, Lower Lake Creek pioneers, 1877



An Oregon & California Railroad passenger train waits at New Era in 1870, a year before tracks extended south to Eugene City. —Southern Pacific Collection



# *All Aboard for Eugene City\**

By Gilbert Hulin

"From Sacramento to Portland in Seven Days" by Inez Fortt, published in the Spring Issue, 1971 of the Lane County Historian is a story of the stagecoach era in Western Oregon. "All Aboard for Eugene City" continues the story of early transportation in Oregon with the arrival and the expansion of the railroads.

The driving of the Golden Spike at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869, theoretically linked the East and West by rail. A sizeable railroad network was developing east of the Mississippi River to funnel travelers and immigrants to the new transcontinental line, but west of Omaha the Union Pacific and Central Pacific tracks were an isolated projection across the frontier. Other trackage did exist here and there, but connections with the transcontinental route were nonexistent and passengers who wished to continue their journey beyond Sacramento had no choice but to return to highway or water transportation.

Oregon, on its tenth birthday in 1869, knew of railroads primarily as promoters' dreams. The only tracks which had been in practical operation were a trio of portage lines shuttling river traffic around falls and cascades at Celilo, Bonneville and Oregon City.

Two promoters dreamed of a railroad which would extend south from Portland through the Willamette Valley and California to make a connection with the Central Pacific's transcontinental line. Joseph Gaston and Simon Elliot each formed companies bearing the Oregon Central Railroad name, but they were better known as the "West Side" and "East Side" lines, respectively, because of their pro-

posed locations on opposite sides of the Willamette River.

Throughout the mid-1860's the two Oregon Centrals were in competition for the federal land grant to build the railroad to California, and it was up to the Oregon legislature to make the choice. Gaston's "West Side" company was awarded the franchise at first, but the "East Siders" contested the decision, contending that the "West Side" company was not legally organized at the time.

While surveyors trod both sides of the valley, the battle continued in the legislature. The struggle for supremacy was won by the "East Side" company in October, 1868, after Ben Holladay, fresh from financially successful exploits with the Pony Express and Overland Stage, cast his lot with the "East Siders." Gaston, meanwhile, was without substantial finances and much of the support promised him failed to materialize.

A provision of the land grant called for the completion of 20 to 25 miles of track by the end of 1869. Despite a struggle against Clackamas River floodwaters that washed out the railroad's first bridge, a train was operated on Christmas Day, 1869, to save the land grant and definitely establish the "East Side" Oregon Central as the winner in the state's first great railroad battle.

Before construction was resumed in 1870, Ben Holladay had forced Elliot out of the organization, arranged for the sale of mortgage bonds to German and English capitalists, acquired control of Gaston's "West Side" Oregon Central, and reorganized the company as the Oregon & California Railroad.



The pace of construction quickened in 1870 and on September 5 of that year the Oregon & California Railroad published its first schedule in a front page advertisement in the Portland *Oregonian*. "Two daily trains" were listed in each direction between East Portland and Waconda (about a mile from Gervais), where the stages of the O. & C. Stage Company offered close connections to and from Southern Oregon and California points.

As the railhead continued to push south through Salem, Albany, Eugene, Roseburg and Ashland over the ensuing 17 years, the stage transfer points accommodated the extension.

Prior to the start of scheduled service on the railroad on September 5, 1870, the O. & C. stages had advertised a schedule of 24 hours from Portland to Eugene City, a five day service to the California railhead at Chico and five and one-half day service to San Francisco. Within 13 months, the trip to Eugene City would be reduced to "only" seven hours on the train.

The O. & C. Railroad schedules

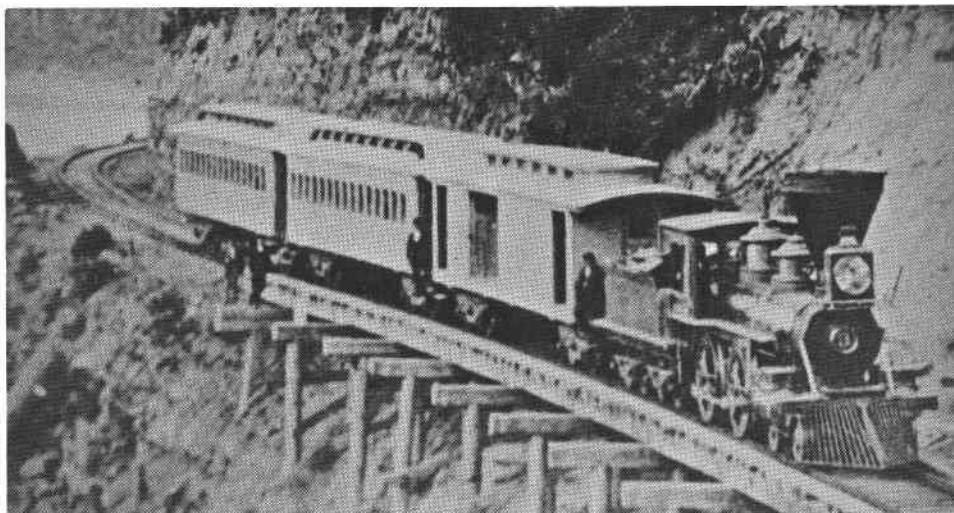
in the fall of 1870 usually remained in effect only a few days, rarely more than two or three weeks, before a new schedule boasting a new railhead superseded the old table.

The rails reached the State Fairgrounds at Salem on September 29, 1870 and were in downtown Salem a week later. Trains were running to Jefferson by late November and into Albany on Christmas Day.

In early 1871, construction south of Albany slowed briefly while the opening of a Willamette River bridge at the north end of the line moved the terminal from East Portland to Portland proper. By May the daily express trains were delivering California-bound passengers to the waiting stages at Halsey.

On June 25, 1871, schedule No. 13 of the Oregon & California Railroad advertised through trains to Harrisburg. The tracks were now on Lane County's doorstep and the local railroad era was about to begin.

Construction halted on the east bank of the Willamette River at Harrisburg for over three months



Locomotive No. 3 of the Oregon & California Railroad poses with its three car train near New Era in 1870.  
—Southern Pacific Collection



while a major drawbridge was built. The structure was ready for use as October arrived, but by then the tracklayers were compelled to lay 17 miles of track in five days in order to reach Eugene City by the promised date of Sunday, October 8, 1871.

Eugene City had two newspapers at the time, the *Oregon State Journal* and the *Eugene City Guard*, both weeklies, each published on Saturday. Neither of the papers' October 7th edition mentioned the likelihood of the rails reaching the city the following day, but while the *Guard* failed completely to mention the railroad construction, the *Journal* did publish two seemingly incompatible stories. One concerned the site for the station:

"THE DEPOT—It was reported during the week that the Railroad Company was going to locate the passenger depot on Oak instead of Willamette Street. This caused some dissatisfaction among the businessmen on Willamette Street, who have shown a commendable degree of enterprise and liberality in making improvements. We believe the matter has been satisfactorily arranged, however, and the depot will be at the north end of Willamette."

While this story does not convey the feeling of the immediate arrival of the railroad, another story in the same newspaper gives the opposite impression that trains may already be running. The second story announced the operation of passenger trains between Eugene City and the Oregon State Fair without any mention of the necessary completion of the railroad into Eugene between the publication date and the beginning of the Fair service.

"RAILROAD TIME TABLE—The Portland papers publish a timetable showing that the cars of the O. & C. Railroad will leave this place during next week at 6:30

a.m. and arrive in Salem at 10 a.m.; leaving Salem on the return trip at 5 p.m. and arriving at Eugene at 8:40 p.m. This will give our citizens an opportunity to visit the State Fair and return the same day, having seven hours in which to see the sights."

The railroad reached Eugene City the day after the publication of these stories, but as no local newspaper would be printed again for six days, the first accounts of the event appeared in the daily newspapers of Portland and Salem. One detailed record is this account in *The Daily Oregon Statesman* of Salem for Wednesday, October 11, 1871:

"We take from the Portland *Bulletin* the following account of the construction of the O. & C. Railroad to Eugene and the great feat performed by (Supt. John L.) Hallet and his hands.

"The bridge over the Willamette River at Harrisburg, built by the Railroad Company for the railroad, is one of the finest in America, and we unhesitatingly pronounce it superior to any other bridge on the Pacific Coast. It is built with a turn-table for the purpose of permitting steamboats navigating the upper Willamette River to pass it.

"The bridge is constructed on what is known as the Howe Truss plan, upon which all good railroad bridges are now built. There are three spans of two hundred feet each; the abutments are of solid masonry, and above the bridge has been built a breakwater in such manner as to prevent the possibility of the banks washing away, no matter how high the water may get. Crossing the bridge we came upon the new road.

"One week ago this morning this bridge was completed and Mr. Hallet commenced laying track on the west side of the river. He had seventy-two men employed in assisting him in this work, and as he



had declared that he would have it laid into Eugene so that a train could go into that place on Sunday, October 8th, he was compelled to push along and keep moving.

"These men had to distribute the ties, carry the rails to their position and spike them down. If Mr. H. kept his word, they would have to lay seventeen miles of track in five days. The men jumped in and worked with a will and would have accomplished the task without any great exertion, had not a delay of several hours occurred, owing to some mistake in sending forward some of the material necessary.

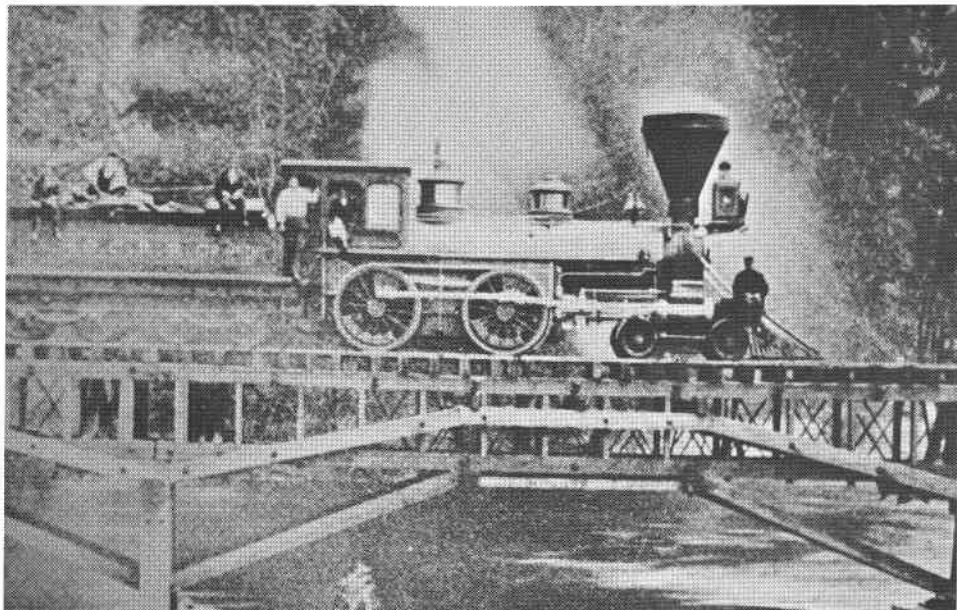
"This delay caused the men to have a big day's work to perform, and on Saturday they performed a feat in track-laying that has never been equaled. They laid down and put in good condition—drove the spikes etc., and made the road ready for the trains—five miles and three hundred feet. Eight men handled every bar of iron and carried them from the car to their

position on the ties; eighteen men did the spiking, and the remainder distributed the ties, chair etc.

"During the latter part of the day, when the task was nearly finished, the men carrying the iron became so faint and tired that they would stagger like drunken men under their load, but Mr. Hallet was 'here, there and everywhere' cheering them on and encouraging them to renewed exertion.

"When Saturday night arrived he was yet two miles and a half from Eugene, and no one supposed the trains would be able to go into town before Monday evening, except Mr. Hallet. He knew his men and offered to bet any amount that he would have the track in readiness by the time the train arrived.

"On Sunday morning a telegraphic dispatch was sent from this city (Portland), asking if a train could go to Eugene, and Mr. Hallet telegraphed back for a reply, 'Yes, sir.' He was out and at work as soon as it was light enough to see,



The Oregon & California locomotive "J. B. Stevens," power for the construction train that completed tracklaying into Eugene City on October 8, 1871, is pictured on the Clackamas River bridge near Portland.

—Southern Pacific Collection



and the men worked with a vim, being constantly stimulated by the cheers of those directing the work, and by the plaudits of the citizens who had collected from all sides anxious to see the last rail laid.

"By noon five hundred persons were on hand, and when at one o'clock the depot foundation was reached, a cheer went up from the throats of the five hundred pleased and happy Lane Countyites."

When the Eugene newspapers finally printed their accounts of the events of the 8th a week later, the coverage was brief, but a few additional facts were revealed. The October 14th *Guard* reported:

"THE RAILROAD—Tracklaying was completed and the locomotive J. B. Stevens was at the depot at one o'clock on Sunday last. Many of our citizens turned out to observe the process of tracklaying, and to witness the arrival of the first train of cars, which made its appearance at a late hour in the afternoon, after a large portion of the people had 'froze out' and gone home."

The *Oregon State Journal* also reported the activities of the previous week, and like the *Eugene City Guard*, relegated the story to an inside page beneath the featured news of the week, the first reports of the Chicago fire. The *Journal's* story:

"THE LAST SPIKE—The 'last spike' was driven on the O. & C. Railroad between this city and Portland about 1 o'clock last Sunday. A vast crowd of citizens gathered at the depot grounds to see the first train of cars. About 7 o'clock in the evening a palace car arrived, bringing Mr. Holladay, President, Mr. Halsey, Vice President, and several other gentlemen connected with the railroad company, who remained till Monday evening.

"We would be unmindful of that which deserves especial mention

were it not to speak in this connection of the wonderful exertions of Mr. Hallet, the contractor, in finishing the road to this city in the time mentioned. He and his men worked almost day and night for several days, with a will that was akin to madness, and laid more miles of track than has probably ever been laid before by the same number of men in the same number of hours.

"The railroad has been completed to this city much sooner than the most sanguine anticipated two years ago, and we feel that the people of this county are indebted to Mr. Holladay for the great degree of enterprise and energy which has characterized his efforts in this magnificent work."

The same issue of the *Journal* also mentioned what undoubtedly was the first train derailment in the county. Coming only three days after the "last spike" ceremony, it apparently involved a train which was returning from the State Fair.

"TRAIN OFF THE TRACK—The passenger train ran off the track last Wednesday night about a mile and a half north of town. No serious damage was done, and passengers arrived after a delay of an hour."

The October 14th *Journal* included two other references to the new railroad in Eugene:

"STREET LAMPS—We understand it is the intention of the Council to order a few street lamps at the north end of Willamette Street, near the depot grounds."

"SLOW TIME—A letter was received here last Wednesday which was mailed at Salem on the 26th of June. We can expect to get mail a little quicker now the railroad is in operation."

Although the first train arrived in Eugene on October 8th and roundtrips to the State Fair were operated the following week, it was Sunday, October 15, 1871, before



a scheduled passenger service was started between Eugene and Portland. Again, the daily Portland newspapers carried the announcement of the scheduled service early in the week, while the Saturday-only Eugene newspapers were not able to print the new schedule until the 21st. On that date the *Guard* reported:

**"NEW TIME SCHEDULE —** A new time schedule for the Oregon & California Railroad went into effect last Sunday. The passenger train leaves here at 6 a.m. and arrives in Portland at 1 p.m. Leaves Portland at 1 p.m. arriving here at 8 p.m. Freight trains with passenger cars attached leave here at 6:45 a.m. arriving at Portland at 8 p.m. Leave Portland at 6:30 a.m. arriving here at 7:30 p.m. Passenger trains run every day and freight trains every day except Sunday."

The new time schedule of No. 14 of the O. & C. Railroad, reduced the stage journey to the California railroad, then at Red Bluff, to 345 miles in five days. The schedule advertised close connections with stages of the Oregon & California Stage Company at Eugene City, and indicated that tickets would be sold to Oakland, Roseburg and Jacksonville, Oregon.

California destinations reached by the stages were Yreka, Butteville, Soda Springs, Sacramento Ferry, Pitt River, Red Bluff, Tehama, Shasta, Callahan's Ranch and Fort Jones.

Two months later the railroad schedules were again revised, perhaps for the improvement of stage connections, but obviously not for the benefit of Eugene travelers. Table No. 15, effective December 13, 1871, called for the departure of Eugene's two passenger trains at 4:30 and 4:40 a.m. The daily express, leaving first, reached Portland at 11:45 a.m., while the daily-except-Sunday mixed was on the road until 4:50 p.m.

Construction south of town continued in 1872 and soon Eugene City was no longer the southern terminal of the O. & C. On February 3, 1872, the *Oregon State Journal* reported the latest shift of the railroad-stagecoach transfer point:

**"NO MORE STAGES—**The Oregon & California Stages now stop at Creswell, and passengers and mail are brought from that point by the cars. It will seem strange never to have any more staging through our city, after having been accustomed to it for over ten years; but we have perhaps had the last.

"Many of the marks of early days in Oregon are giving way to the progress and advancement of a more perfect civilization. Horse power is giving way to steam, and the toot of the stage horn is superceded by the shriek of the engine."

The *Journal's* editor failed to foresee that stages would continue to link Eugene with Siuslaw Valley and McKenzie River communities for several decades, but was correct in reporting progress for the Portland to California route. By mid-July trains were running to Oakland, and on December 3, 1872, the railroad was completed to Roseburg. There, the Oregon & California Company ran into trouble.

According to a *Historical Outline* published by the Southern Pacific Company in 1933, "Holladay failed financially. Money acquired by the sale of bonds in advance of construction was spent with reckless abandon. Traffic revenue from sparsely settled regions was not sufficient to meet the expenses of operation."

When bond interest could not be met in 1873, Ben Holladay was forced out and the property was taken over by the German bondholders, who sent Henry Villard to Oregon in July, 1874 to manage the O. & C. Railroad.

Under Villard's reorganization, the company's construction efforts



were centered in the Willamette Valley through the late 1870's, while the southern terminal remained at Roseburg. The "West Side" line had reached St. Joseph on the Yamhill River at the time of Holladay's collapse, but by January, 1880, it was completed through McMinnville to Corvallis. Later in 1880 a branch line from Albany to Lebanon was opened.

Construction south from Roseburg was resumed in June, 1881, after a pause of more than eight years. Trackage was completed to Glendale in May, 1883; to Grants Pass in December, 1883; through Medford to Phoenix in February, 1884; and into Ashland on May 4, 1884.

In Ashland, Villard's regime crashed, due principally to his Northern Pacific Railway and Oregon Railway and Navigation Company exploits, and Henry Villard followed Ben Holladay's path of departure from the O. & C. Railroad.

The O. & C. was forced into receivership in January, 1885, and on July 1, 1887, the properties were acquired under lease by the Southern Pacific.

Meanwhile in California, the railroad was gradually pushing toward Oregon. Branching north from the Central Pacific mainline at Roseville, the rails reached Chico in 1870, Red Bluff in 1871 and Redding in 1872. There, the terminal remained for a decade while the Oregon builders struggled out of financial difficulties which had halted construction at Roseburg.

Tracklaying north from Redding was resumed in 1883 and reached Delta in 1884, Dunsmuir in 1886 and Montague on February 8, 1887. Crossing the Siskiyou provided the biggest challenge, 16 tunnels were required and trackage curvature totaled 88 complete circles in the 171 miles between Redding and Ashland. Southern Pacific completed the Oregon construction

south of Ashland and on December 17, 1887, Charles Crocker, one of the participants in the original Golden Spike ceremony 18 years before, drove another "last spike" at the south end of the Ashland yard. Regular passenger service between Portland and San Francisco began immediately.

Eugene was now on a through railroad between Portland and California, 16 years and two months after the first train had puffed its way into town. The first chapter in Eugene's railroad story was at a close, but the "second coming" was yet to follow.

As the Twentieth Century opened, steam railroads were already becoming outmoded. The electric railway, particularly in interurban passenger trains, was the modern way to travel and the Willamette Valley was not to be left out of the fad.

The Oregon Electric Railway was in operation between Portland and Salem by 1908 and four years later, after becoming part of the James J. Hill railroad interests (Great Northern Railway etc.), it reached its southern extreme at Eugene. The final construction into town in October, 1912, was not as frantic as the Oregon & California Railroad's had been exactly 41 years earlier, but the celebration that followed far outdid anything that had been seen before in the city. Fifty people reveled in the arrival of the Oregon Electric for each one of the 500 who had cheered the O. & C.'s first train in 1871.

The Eugene *Morning Register* for Wednesday, October 16, 1912, reported the previous day's celebration of the completion of the Oregon Electric in great detail:

"Twenty-five thousand people who thronged the streets of Eugene yesterday broke all records in the history of this city. . . . From early in the morning the streets were crowded. . . . Everybody was happy.





A gateway arch across Willamette Street just north of Sixth Avenue was part of the \$1,700 celebration organized by Eugene for the arrival of the Oregon Electric Railway in October, 1912.

—Oregon Collection, University of Oregon

Everybody rejoiced with Eugene in the coming of the new railroad.

"Never has Eugene experienced such a general excursion. The first train to arrive over the Oregon Electric was the Albany local, jammed to the doors and windows, every available inch of space used, bringing 500. This train carried 250 from Corvallis. It undertook to pick up all those waiting at the small way stations, but before reaching here had to pass them by. Even the baggage car was filled, by converting it into a coach and supplying it with depot benches.

"The second train was the Albany special, with 12 cars pulled by an electric locomotive. On this train were 876 guests from Albany. It was a delegation that made Eugene open its eyes. They were loaded with noise making devices, fog-horns to hundreds of packages of firecrackers.

"The Salem special brought 500 in seven cars. The next train was the Roseburg special on the South-

ern Pacific, bringing 502 in five cars and picking up two additional cars from Cottage Grove with 100 from that city. Creswell, with its delegation of 200 upon No. 18, was due to arrive at 10:55, but came in 10 minutes after the Roseburg train. This train also brought crowds from Drain, Yoncalla and a half dozen other way points.

"The Oregon Electric train that set the bells ringing and whistles blowing was the Portland special at 12:30. It came in two sections, the first of four cars carrying 181, Rosarians, Ad Club men and railroad officials. The second of three cars brought 193 Portland businessmen.

"The 2 o'clock Southern Pacific train also brought a few of those who were left, but otherwise the old road's business from the north was remarkably light.

"In addition to these thousands that came in upon the trains were hundreds, in fact thousands, of others . . . coming up the valley in automobiles. Even circus day was



put in the shade in this respect.

"The remarkable feature of this enormous crowd in Eugene yesterday was its order. The police report no trouble anywhere. At noon every eating house in the city was filled, but there seemed to be no overflow. The hotels were crowded and had to distribute some of the guests to nearby rooms, but few, if any, were turned away.

"The crowning feature of the big celebration was the monster street pageant which required a period of 50 minutes to pass a given point.

"The huge crowd left last evening, still happy and enthusiastic, for the half day's program did not tire nor did the flurry of rain dampen. The first train to leave was the Albany special with the Corvallis delegation at 5:30.

"The Portland special bearing day coaches and sleeping cars left at 6:30. This train carried pianos and was equipped in true excursion style. The Salem special left at 7 and the Albany train half an hour later, marking the close of the greatest day in the history of Eugene."

Cost of the Oregon Electric celebration was later announced as \$1,-701.28, but the amount had been fully subscribed in advance by Eugene merchants. Regular passenger service began over the new railway on Thursday, October 17, with five trains daily in each direction between Eugene and Portland.

With the Southern Pacific also operating five trains between the two cities, the companies were ready to enter a battle for the traveler's dollar. The *Portland Telegram* commented upon the choices

available to the Portland-Eugene passenger:

"It takes four hours on the Oregon Electric and three hours and fifty minutes on the Southern Pacific. It costs \$3.70 on the Southern Pacific and \$3.60 on the Oregon Electric. It all depends whether your time is worth more than a cent a minute.

"The Southern Pacific endeavors to slip one over on the Oregon Electric by having a superb 'dining car service' on one of its trains. The Hill trolley line comes right back and says that it has observation parlor cars on limited trains.

"Its a question of whether you'd rather have a square meal or a view of the Willamette Valley's gorgeous, transcendental and panoramic beauty."

Although no new railroad companies followed the Oregon Electric into Eugene, construction of additional trackage did not stop. Southern Pacific opened a direct line to Corvallis by way of Alvadore and Monroe in 1913, and three years later the long-awaited Coos Bay branch extending as far as Powers opened.

Southern Pacific tracks extended east from Eugene to Wendling and Oakridge, but the latter community was at the end of the line only from 1912 until 1926, when the Natron Cut-off" linking the Willamette Valley with Central Oregon was completed.

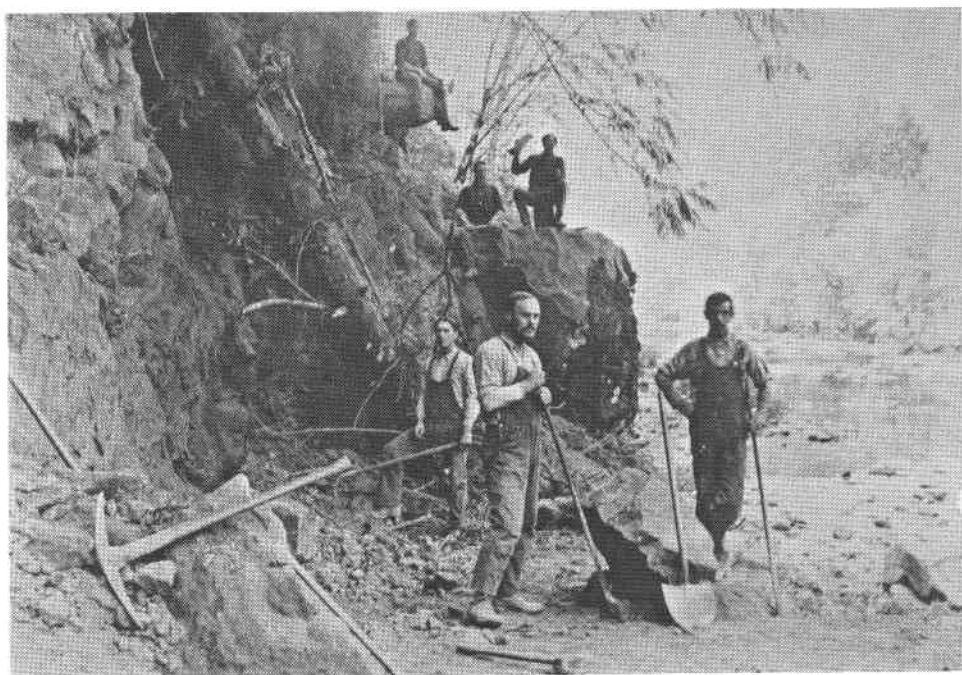
On April 17, 1927, the new "Cascade line" by way of Klamath Falls became the main Oregon-California railroad and the original O. & C. "Siskiyou line" through Ashland fell into secondary usage.







The Lake Creek Road east of Deadwood



Road construction at Cape Horn, about 1905



# *Early Days on Lower Lake Creek, 1880-1910\**

By Dale Steinhauer

Lower Lake Creek in the Coast Range of Western Lane County extends for over fifteen miles from Triangle Lake close to Swisshome on the Siuslaw River. The rich but narrow bottom-lands along Lake Creek and its principal tributaries, Nelson and Deadwood Creeks, attracted settlers in the early 1880's and by 1890 over eighty were living in the area.

Lake Creek surrounded by mountains was isolated from neighboring communities. Its isolation demanded a self-sufficiency and toughness from the thinly dispersed population. Its geography predetermined the locale to remain a hinterland, one which could never develop a town. But in 1900 when almost all the bottom-lands had been claimed by homesteaders there were three communities, Deadwood, Alpha and Greenleaf, with their own farmhouse post offices and schools which served the one hundred fifty residents.

Very little is known of Lower Lake Creek's history prior to its settlement. Several Indian tribes hunted and fished in the mountains and along the streams. At the mouth of Deadwood Creek, a favorite fishing spot for the Indians, settlers found evidence of a sweat house and scores of arrowheads. Eels had been trapped by the Indians at the mouth of Lake Creek. The area was part of the Siletz-Alsea Reservation until 1875 when the land was returned to the public domain and open for settlement.

Though there were visitors at Lower Lake Creek when it was a trackless wilderness little is known of their impressions and activities. One story remains of a prospector who around 1870 sluiced about

eight hundred dollars worth of gold on Deadwood before he was driven away by the Indians. Near Blachly in the neighboring Upper Lake Creek country, an early settler found an old, rusty beaver trap believed to be a relic from the days of the Hudson's Bay Company when trappers ventured into the Lower Lake Creek region.

In 1880 Lower Lake Creek was reached from the east by Nelson's Trail which left the surveyed but uncompleted Siuslaw River road at Elk Prairie and laboriously crossed Chickahominy and Nelson Mountain before it descended to Nelson Creek and then to Lake Creek. It is unknown how much the trail was used at the time nor is there any information of Nelson after whom the trail was named.

As early as 1880, a year before the first survey was made of the country, Joseph Whisman, thirty-one years old, built a cabin near the south end of Nelson Creek but did not remain for the winter. It is doubtful there were any permanent settlers in the area before 1882; at that time about a dozen homesteaders arrived who took out claims between the mouths of Deadwood and Nelson Creeks on Lake Creek. At the end of 1883 possibly forty people were living at Nelson Creek who soon drew up a petition to have Nelson's Trail made into a public wagon road.

On the petition were the names of the earliest settlers on Lower Lake Creek; Louis Atherton, a carpenter from New York; Peter Holle, emigrant from Norway and Emile Robert from Switzerland; Ed and Charles Potterf, brothers and Thomas Pope and his sons, John and Howard, all from Ohio; John

\*All photographs used in story, "Early Days on Lower Lake Creek, 1880-1910," are from collection of Dale B. Steinhauer, with exception of the Charles A. Potterf photos.



and Joseph Whisman from California. In addition there were others who did not remain long enough to "prove up" on their homesteads.

In the early years the Lower Lake Creek area was a melting pot. Almost half of the settlers were from the midwest, some were from California and New England, others emigrants from foreign countries. In contrast with Western Lane County's first pioneers, those on the Old Territorial Road, there were few from the south—and only a handful of Democrats. Voters on Lake Creek almost always handed landslide victories to Republican candidates.

Though only a quarter of the early settlers were foreign born, they set their roots down much deeper than the usually restless native Americans. Emigrants who had known harsh, impoverished conditions on small farms, usually rented or leased, in their native countries were grateful for the free land and opportunity to establish a permanent home.

One of the most important figures in Lake Creek's early days was Thomas Pope who settled at the mouth of Deadwood Creek, a most central location. He was a civil war veteran and the head of a large family, several of whom took out nearby claims on Deadwood Creek. In 1884 when Deadwood Post Office was established, the first in Lane County between Cheser (near present-day Noti) and Florence, he became the first postmaster. Pope along with Louis Atherton and Joseph Whisman set up the first school on Lower Lake Creek which was located near the mouth of Hollo (now Huks) Creek. Two years later when Lake Creek precinct was established which encompassed all but the eastern extreme of Lower Lake Creek, Pope became the justice of the peace and

his son, Howard, the constable.

When the Siuslaw River road was surveyed in 1879, optimists expected the road would be completed shortly. But in the mid-1880's when the Whisman brothers became the Eugene-Florence mail carriers, the Siuslaw route was still impassable for wagons. The Whismans improved the Lake Creek road which was more mountainous than the Siuslaw road though several miles shorter and began to operate a stage line. The brothers operated the stage line until about 1894 when Eli Bangs of Eugene became the proprietor and changed the route to the Siuslaw road. By the end of 1895, the new "low pass" road was completed which connected Lower Lake Creek with Upper Lake Creek and provided a better route to the Willamette Valley—roughly the same as Highway 36.

Roads were a constant problem. Slides, fallen trees and mud often made roads impassable while floods, especially the disastrous one of 1890, washed away bridges, created havoc and destruction in its wake. It was difficult and dangerous to ford swollen creeks in winter time.\* Roads were also hazardous in good weather. At each end of the Lower Lake Creek Valley a ledge-like road had been blasted from the rock itself. The narrow traverses known as Cape Jennie and Cape Horn were as perilous as similar spots on the Siuslaw road.

In 1890 Alpha Post Office named for the young daughter of the postmistress, Flora Lundy, was set up five miles north on Deadwood Creek. At the same time a school was started which had five students.

After 1890 other homesteaders arrived. Deadwood and its neighbors offered the best bottom lands in the Lower Lake Creek country. By 1898 Deadwood was "settled

\*"Lane County Historian," Vol. XIII, No. 3





**Charles A. Potterf**  
—Courtesy of Charles L. Potterf

for 11 miles from its mouth" and contained "103 persons, 16 wagons and 31 horses."\*

The central figure on early Deadwood Creek was Charles Potterf who soon replaced his sister, Mrs. Lundy, as postmistress at Alpha. A Democrat in one of the three or four most strongly Republican precincts in the county, Potterf continued to serve as its justice of the peace for almost the entire decade of the 1890's. In 1898 he was within a hair of election to the state legislature. Potterf was also a volunteer weather observer for the Department of Agriculture. The weather station which was established in July, 1899 at Alpha was one of only two in Lane County (the other was located at Eugene). At the time of his death in 1904, Potterf had "the best farm and prettiest home" in Deadwood.†

In the eastern portion of Lower Lake Creek a school and post office



**Charles A. Potterf and family, about 1892**  
—Courtesy of Mrs. Fronk Townsend

were established at Greenleaf in 1892 with Irish-born Catherine Downing, a widow, as the postmistress. Of the three post offices mentioned, only Greenleaf, now located four miles down stream from its original position at the mouth of Greenleaf Creek, has maintained an unbroken existence to the present. Alpha was discontinued in 1940 after several changes in location. Deadwood was discontinued in 1914 but was re-established in 1950.

For many years William H. Wheeler and his son Marion were regular newspaper correspondents for the Greenleaf area. The elder Wheeler was a veteran journalist who had served as a member of the editorial staff of the *San Francisco Chronicle* before he moved to Oregon. "Glenarbor," his farm on Nelson Creek was the first dairy farm in the Lower Lake Creek country and was described by Joaquin Miller as "the prettiest place in the

\*"Alpha Clippings," "The West," Florence: October 14, 1898

†"Greenleaf," "Eugene Register": June 23, 1904





Marion F. Wheeler, about 1906

world.”\* In August, 1910, only a few months after Wheeler sold his farm, a forest fire left the Nelson Creek valley a charred ruin.

Marion Wheeler, postmaster of Greenleaf from 1908 to 1947 became well known as a photographer. He obtained his first camera in 1903 and his pictures, many of which were made into postcards, are the best pictorial record of the early days on Lower Lake Creek.

Lake Creek west of Deadwood and settled in the late 1880's was virtually uninhabited within a few years. Settlers on Indian Creek near Reed and Hermann reached their homes from the Siuslaw by way of Thompson Creek, thus avoiding Lake Creek and the lower section of Indian Creek.

General farming was the principal activity of the first settlers. The rich soil produced large harvests of vegetables and the small orchards prospered. However, fam-

ilies were forced to supplement their income by other work, such as peeling Chittum bark.

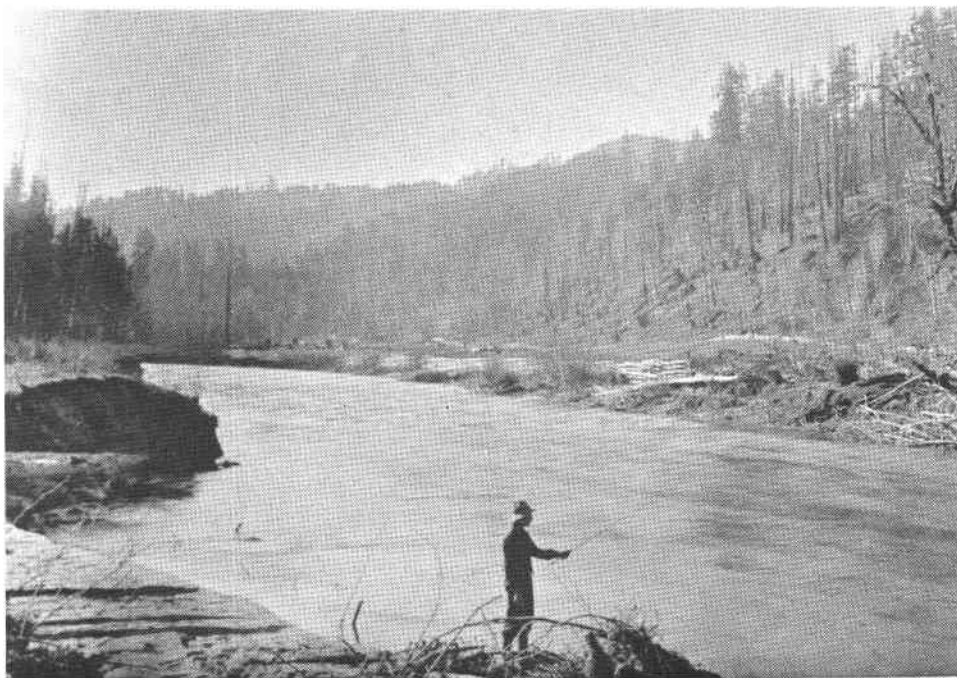
Forest fires destroyed much of the timber in the country, especially along Deadwood Creek. As early as the 1880's the fern-covered hills attracted cattlemen from neighboring communities. One cattleman, Joel Mays, had a stock ranch on the once barren hills near Windy Creek, an area still known as the "Mays cabin country." But the shortage of wintertime feed eventually forced the cattle ranchers to move away.

Dairy farming was introduced in the area in 1893. It soon rose to predominance. Creameries sent their wagons to Lake Creek for the dairy products famed for their excellent quality.

Many of the unmarried men left their farms at intervals to prospect or work in the mines. German-born Herman Steinhauer was perhaps

\*"From Glenarbor," "The West," Florence: July 27, 1906





Herman Steinhauer, on Lake Creek

the only settler who became a regular prospector on Lake Creek. He plated his spoons with silver which he found in the area. In 1900, he claimed he had discovered "a ledge of rock as rich in gold as any in the Bohemia mines."\* However, an analysis of the ore revealed it had been greatly over-estimated. There was no bonanza mine.

About 1890 the Whisman brothers began to log their claims and floated the logs down stream to mills on the Siuslaw. Other settlers on Lake Creek also logged in the 1890's but it was not until after 1900 that small logging camps which used oxen or steam-operated donkeys first appeared.

Small steam-engine mills were usually family operations. Mills were run by Frank Potterf, younger brother of Charles and Ed, Levi Berkshire and Byron Hutchins on Deadwood Creek and by Seth Simmons near Greenleaf. Marion

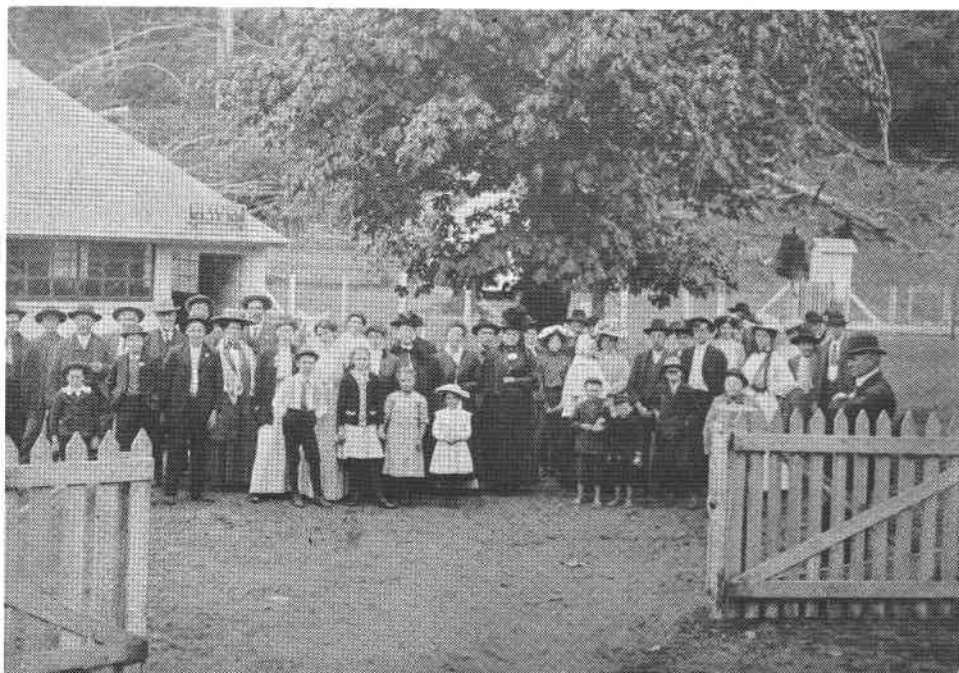
Wheeler used water wheels to operate his mill. It was the most important mill on Cherry Creek, now Wheeler Creek. None of these mills or logging operations were of much consequence or to be compared with the larger ones on the Siuslaw or in the Triangle Lake area.

There was not an adequate number of people on Lake Creek to attract a general store. Early settlers had to travel to Mapleton, Blachly or even further to trade. When a railroad was built along the Siuslaw about 1915, a store, the first, was established at Swisshome. For many years, the store was operated by Charles Atherton and his sons, George and Joe, emigrants from Ireland, who settled in Alpha in 1890.

In February, 1893, a group of Presbyterians incorporated a church at Deadwood with Albert Robinson as moderator. All of the twelve original members were emi-

\*"Greenleaf Items," "The West," Florence: October 12, 1900





**Picnic at the State Salmon Hatchery, June 10, 1910**

grants. In early 1894, a church building was constructed on the hill just east of Deadwood. However, settlers who lived near Alpha or Greenleaf used their respective school-houses for church services and only traveled the longer distance to Deadwood for special services.

Construction was begun in 1905 on a salmon hatchery at the mouth of Middle Creek, now Green Creek, with Joseph Slemmons as the director. For many years the hatchery buildings and grounds served as a community center and a site for picnics, dances and political meetings with speeches.

Today, few vestiges remain of the early days on Lower Lake Creek. The old Cszro Wilcut house located on Highway 36 just west of the Nelson Creek road intersection, built in 1906, barely sur-

vived the great fire four years later. About five miles north on Deadwood Creek is the abandoned Alpha school-house which faces away from the road. It dates from 1912. The quaint covered bridge which is visible from Highway 36 is on the Nelson Creek road and the weathered church east of Deadwood are more recent. The cemetery behind the church has markers which date as early as 1889 and include graves of many of Lake Creek's pioneers.

On Deadwood Creek, many once-cleared areas are now grown over with brush and tall timber. All traces of early farms are gone. The only reminders of the early days are the old, forgotten orchards and the tombstone-like snags together with evidences of early and recent fires.





**Herman Steinhauer at his homestead at Lake Creek**



LEAVE	ARRIVE AT
Portland at 5 A. M.	Eugene next day at 5 A. M.
Eugene at 5 1/2 "	Canyonville " 4 "
Canyonville 3 1/2 "	Yreka " 1 1/2 "
Yreka at 1 1/2 M.	Shasta " 2 1/2 M.
Shasta at 3 P. M.	Chico " 3 A. M.
Chico at 3 1/2 A. M.	Sacramento same day 11 "
Sacramento at 11 1/2 A. M.	San Francisco " 8 P. M.

Time through to San Francisco.....	5 1/4 days.
" " New York.....	12 "

The route passes through the principal agricultural districts of Oregon, the valleys of the Willamette, Umpqua and Rogue River. To the immigrant coming here in search of a home or investment, this route is strongly recommended.

Also Agent for Chicago, Burlington and Missouri  
River Railroad. Office with the Portland Gas Light &  
Water Co., Stark street.  
Portland, Oregon, June 14, 1870. jcl5dtf