



THE MANIFEST March 2022



Greetings!

Spring is just around the corner, and so is our opening day at the railroad park. I hope I will be able to see many of you there. Opening day is **April 10, 2022**. We will need as many volunteers as we can get, so if you can volunteer, please let a board member know and I am sure we can find a spot.

I have been doing some research into Ashland's railroad history, and that has taken me to southern Oregon railroad history in general. Many of you may already be aware of our railroad history, but I am going to outline it in this newsletter for anyone who may be interested.

My research started with the Southern Oregon Historical Society, which took me to an article in Walk Around Ashland regarding the railroad. I also found information regarding the railroad in Southern Oregon in general. Below is a brief summary of what I found in my research.

Southern Oregon Railroad History

Information for this article was largely found in Peter Finkle's article in Walk Ashland, as well as all of the photographs. Thank you, Peter, for kindly giving permission to use your article and photographs for this newsletter.

In early 1889, the people of Southern Oregon had heard the news that the railroad was coming. From the website for the Southern Oregon Historical Society, I followed a link to the Southern Oregon History, Revised. Here I found the article *The Pacific & Eastern Railroad*. This article chronicles the coming of the railroad in Southern Oregon.

People from the various towns (probably more like villages in 1889) were excited to hear about the coming of the railroad. I found it amusing that, according to the article *The Pacific & Eastern Railroad*, one gentleman was even looking to route the railroad through his garden, and another was going to map out $\frac{1}{4}$ acre and sell it by the foot ("Eagle Point Notes," *Valley Record*, Ashland, April 25, 1889, page 2

It must have been such an exciting time to be living in the area. Today, I live in Ashland and the citizens of Ashland were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the railroad. Before the railroad, anyone traveling from the east to the west had to go by horseback, horse and buggy, wagon, or just walk some 2400 miles. You can imagine that took months. In an article by Peter Finkle in Walk Ashland, he notes that the Northwest Railway Museum said it took 4-8 months to make that journey, but with the transcontinental rail travel it only took one to two weeks. This must have been almost unbelievable to many citizens of the time.

On May 4, 1884, the first train came into Ashland from Portland (as there were no tracks yet over the Siskiyou Mountains, and the Railroad District was formed.



While the tracks over the Siskiyou Mountains were being built, train passengers were taken over the mountains from Ashland to Northern California by stagecoach. The last stagecoach crossed over the Siskiyou's about December 16 or 17, 1887, as the tracks were finally finished.



LAST COACH SOUTH 1887. C.L.S. SEC.

In the Railroad Park in Ashland there is a plaque (seen below), which memorializes when California and Oregon were linked by rail on December 17, 1887, and the driving of the golden spike, which brought national attention temporarily to the little town of Ashland, Oregon. This marked the completion of the tracks around the perimeter of the continental United States.



The railroad boosted Ashland's economy, as it was a meal stop between San Francisco and Portland, as well as a place for the Southern Pacific crews to stay. For years there was as many as four trains a day that passed through Ashland, Oregon. Marjorie O'Hara noted in *Ashland: the first 130 years* that 75 company men (Southern Pacific) made their home in Ashland, Oregon, largely in the Railroad District.

There are many historic photos showing travelers and peddlers surrounding the depot. One of the most successful of the peddlers was William Powell, known as the Apple Cider Man. Mr. Powell lived at 462 A Street and had apple trees in his backyard. His trees can still be seen today from the Peerless Hotel parking lot behind the hotel. The photo below

shows Mr. Powell at the depot with his wagon full of his apple cider.



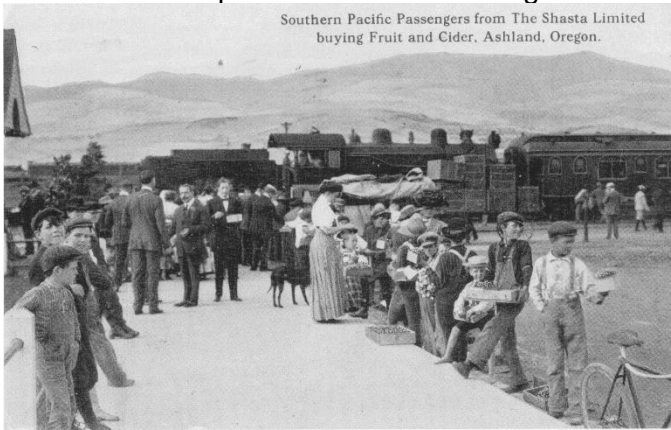
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Industrious children would also sell fruit to travelers at the depot. Peter Finkle included an interview with Albert Myers, who was one of those young entrepreneurs. However, Albert sold more than fruit. Mr. Myers informed the interviewer that he had moved to Ashland with his family in 1919. Below is the interview which was in Peter's article:

“My brother and I also had a lot of cherries at our old house and we used to bring them in little paper boxes and sell those to the people for 5 cents.”

The boys did more than sell fruit. Locals are aware of the Lithia waters and how it was used and that it did not taste very well. Passengers coming into the station would want to try it, but there were no cups, and it was not a regular drinking fountain. So the industrious boys bought cups at a local five and dime store and sold the customers a cup for 5 cents, asking them to leave the cups on a board they had set up when they were finished. They would let the cups dry and use them for the next load. Ha, imagine doing that today!

Below is a picture of the kids selling fruit.



The Ashland Depot Hotel was constructed in 1888 and it accommodated passengers between San Francisco and Portland. It had a large dining room, rooms to rent, and sold tickets for the train.





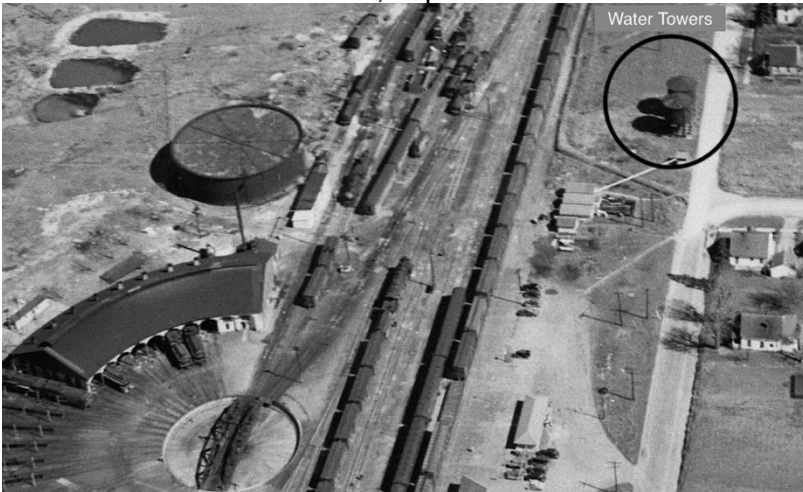
The hotel was torn down in 1937. .All that is left a small depot building depicted below:



There are a few concrete slabs left holding benches in the park.



However, originally, they were concrete piers supporting two water towers next to the tracks, depicted below





The Roundhouse

The Railroad District lost its luster when the Southern Pacific rerouted rail traffic from Ashland to Klamath Falls in 1927. Going over the Siskiyou Pass was steep, slow moving and quite dangerous. So, with the faster and safer route through Klamath Falls, came the fall of the Railroad District. They not only lost the customers from the train, but the crews were no longer housed in Ashland, so the Railroad District slowly died.

After 1955, even the limited service through Ashland ended, sealing the fate of Ashland's Railroad District.

This story is courtesy of Peter Finkle, and most of the photos were from the Terry Skibby collection, courtesy of Peter Finkle. Peter conducts Walk Ashland tours, and I strongly recommend taking one this summer. I know I plan on it. The website for Walk Ashland is <https://walkashland.com/walk-ashland-walking-tours/>.

Again, thank you Peter for generously sharing your story and pictures with us.

I hope you all enjoyed the story as much as I did, and it can be read in its entirety (and probably more accurately) at the website noted above.

Our next meeting is **April 12, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.** in the model railroad building at south end of parking lot at the Railroad Park.

Our volunteers don't get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are **PRICELESS**

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