

AMERICAN RAILWAY EXPRESS COMPANY
FREIGHT BUILDING
1060 NE Division Street
(At the foot of Kearney Street)
Bend
Deschutes County
Oregon

HABS No. OR-168

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Columbia Cascade Support Office
National Park Service
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

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AMERICAN RAILWAY EXPRESS COMPANY FREIGHT BUILDING

HABS No. OR-168

Location: 1060 N. E. Division Street at the foot of Kearney Street
Bend, Deschutes County, Oregon. Mapped on the USGS Bend
Quadrangle, UTM zone 10, E. 635.680, N. 4879.850

Dates of Construction: 1922

Present Owner: Oregon Department of Transportation

Present Occupants: Burlington Northern Railroad, Inc.

Present Use: Railroad administrative offices and storage

Significance: The American Railway Express Company Freight Building is a good
example of a standard railroad building of the era. It also has integrity of
design, materials, and workmanship and is a contributing structure to the
Oregon Trunk Passenger Station.

Report Prepared By: The American Railway Express Company Freight Building will be
affected by highway development during the next few years. The
buildings on the site are scheduled to be moved by 1999. This
documentation was prepared by Ward Tonsfeldt, under contract to
CH2M HILL Engineering, Rosalind Keeney, Cultural Resources
Specialist for the Oregon Department of Transportation Environmental
Section, and edited by Leslie Schwab, HABS/HAER Specialist for the
Oregon Department of Transportation Environmental Section.

Date: July 1999

I. PHYSICAL CONTEXT

American Railway Express Company Building

The American Railway Express Company Building was constructed in 1922 to facilitate the handling of goods shipped into and out of Bend via the Oregon Trunk/Union Pacific railroads. It is located on the east side of Division Street near Greenwood Avenue. It is approximately seventy-nine feet south of the Oregon Trunk Railway Passenger Station and twenty-two and one half feet west of the railroad tracks.

It served as an express agency until the express service went out of business in the mid-1970s. The building was then taken over by the railroad and now served as a warehouse/storage area for Burlington Northern.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Central Oregon in 1900

At the turn of the century, when local railroad service had become an established part of the economics and culture of most rural communities in the United States, Central Oregon was perhaps the largest geographical area left without railroads. In 1905, one source remarked that Lakeview, Oregon, “enjoyed the distinction of being the farthest from a railroad of any county seat in the United States” (Shaver, *et al.*, 1905). For George Palmer Putnam, scion of the New York publishing family and owner of Bend’s first newspaper, Central Oregon in the first decade of the 20th century was a “railless land...the largest territory in the United States without transportation” (Putnam, 1915).

Oregon’s interior counties, including Deschutes, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Harney, Grant, Wheeler, and Crook, encompassed an area of nearly 36,000 square miles, equivalent to the state of Indiana. To the west, across the Cascade Mountains, the Southern Pacific Railroad ran through the Willamette Valley. To the north, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Northern Pacific Railroad served the Columbia Gorge. East of the Blue Mountains, the Union Pacific ran through the Grande Ronde valley and the Snake River drainage. In Central Oregon, however, the daunting topography, slender resources, and a sparse population did little to encourage rail construction.

In the first years of the 20th century, the picture began to change. The one solid resource of Central Oregon was ponderosa pine timber. By the 1890s the white pine forests of the Great Lake states were expended, and the southern states’ pine forests were fully developed and reaching their peak production. Future pine lumber for the woodworking industries would have to come from the “ponderosa belt” of Central Oregon and Washington, and northern California. One account noted that Central Oregon held “the greatest body of standing pine timber now existing in America” and estimated the total volume at 45.6 billion board feet (*The Timberman*,

Jan. 1910). If we assume that pine for remanufacturing constituted 10% of the total U.S. lumber consumption at the time, then Central Oregon's pine resources represented 15 years supply.

Taking note of the obvious, pine producers from the Great Lakes states and the South began to acquire Central Oregon ponderosa timberlands. Among those in the vanguard were such national figures as Frederick Weyerhaeuser, James J. Hill, and Robert A. Long. Through purchase or option, Weyerhaeuser and Hill controlled 1,500,000 acres of Central Oregon timberland (Hidy *et al.*, 1963). When Weyerhaeuser and Hill's confederates from Minneapolis were counted, the acreage rose to nearly 2,500,000 (US Bureau of Corporations, 1914). Without railroads, however, the timber could not be manufactured into lumber and sold in the national market.

As owner of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads, Minnesota financier James J. Hill was well-positioned to build a branch line from his Northern Pacific line south into Central Oregon. This move would create additional traffic for his rail system and put his Oregon real estate on the market.

James J. Hill had a competitor in Central Oregon railroads and property in E.H. Harriman. Harriman controlled the Union Pacific Railway and the Southern Pacific Railway. When Harriman acquired the Southern Pacific in 1901, part of the package was the Oregon and California Railroad Company grant lands. This immense body of land covered 3,728,000 acres in southwestern and south Central Oregon, including Klamath County (O'Callahan, 1960). Harriman visited the area and liking it decided to build a lodge on Upper Klamath Lake, where he spent several summers (Kennan, 1922; Klamath Falls Evening Herald, Aug. 20, 1908).

Railroads to Central Oregon, 1900-1912

By 1900, railroad builders had approached Central Oregon from all points of the compass. The first serious attempt to reach the area came from the west in the late 1880s. The Oregon Pacific Railway, under the leadership of Thomas Egerton Hogg, built a line east from Corvallis up the North Fork of the Santiam River to Idanha. Hogg then began building east from Idanha across the Cascades. In 1889, with most of the route graded and some rail in place, Hogg's creditors forced the Oregon Pacific into receivership and the line was abandoned. From the north, the Columbia Southern Railroad had built a line from Biggs on the Union Pacific, down the Deschutes Plateau 70 miles to Shaniko. A parallel line, the Great Southern, was built in 1904 from The Dalles south into Wasco County for 40 miles. Neither of these two railroads could negotiate the terrain that led to the Deschutes Valley, however, so they remained dead-end routes.

At the southern border of the state, the narrow-gauge Nevada-California-Oregon Railway reached Lakeview in 1912. This provided service to Lake County, but because narrow-gauge equipment was incompatible with broad-gauge equipment, the railroad had little utility in transcontinental commerce. For this reason, plans to extend the NCO to other Central Oregon towns died and this railroad became another dead-end.

From the Union Pacific line east of the Blue Mountains, the Sumpter Valley Railroad, another narrow-gauge line, built west across the mountains to the John Day Valley in 1905. Here again, the impracticality of narrow gauge equipment and the daunting Central Oregon terrain stopped further development.

In Klamath County, on Central Oregon's southern border, E.H. Harriman and others built the California and Northwestern in 1909. This line was a branch of Harriman's Southern Pacific extending from Weed, California, to Klamath Falls. Harriman and some associates from San Francisco were heavy investors in Klamath County industry and commerce. Among their holdings were the California and Northwestern Railway, the Klamath Development Company, two lumber companies, a large hotel, and their extensive timberlands (*American Lumberman*, Aug 24, 1912).

Harriman and the Southern Pacific investors wanted to reach into Central Oregon, but they also wanted to control the region by connecting through to their other railroads-- the Southern Pacific line in the Willamette Valley and the Union Pacific in the Columbia Gorge. This triple connection would dominate the Central Oregon market and assure that all cargoes originating in Central Oregon would enter the interstate market on a Harriman railroad. Better than this, it would also prevent Harriman's rival, James J. Hill, from extending his Northern Pacific line south into California through Central Oregon (Martin, 1976).

The conflict between Hill and Harriman was not confined to Central Oregon, of course. The two great financiers locked horns over the purchase of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railway in 1901, and on other matters as well (Martin, 1976).

While Harriman was the first to reach into Central Oregon, his plans to extend his California and Northwestern Railroad north from Klamath Falls were thwarted by the Interstate Commerce Commission. Invoking the Sherman Anti-trust Act, federal regulators began to scrutinize connections between the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific as early as 1908 (Austin and Dill, 1987).

With Harriman blocked from the south, it became apparent that the only remaining railroad route to the pine country would be a passage up the Deschutes Canyon from the Columbia River. Since Hill's Northern Lines ran through the Columbia Gorge on the Washington side of the river and Harriman's Union Pacific ran on the Oregon side of the river, Hill and Harriman once again found themselves rather evenly matched.

Whoever built a railroad up the Deschutes Canyon would find no easy task. The gradient was gentle enough, but the rocky passage through the canyon would require careful engineering and several major bridges. In the 1854-55 survey of Pacific Coast railroad routes, Henry Larcom Abbott had declared the route impassible. The Deschutes Valley, he found was "separated from the rest of the world by almost impassible barriers, and nature seems to have guaranteed it forever to the wandering savage and the lonely seeker after the wild and sublime" (Abbot, 1857).

In 1906, W. F. Nelson, a Seattle railroad builder, had incorporated the Oregon Trunk

Railway and planned a route from the Columbia River to Madras, Oregon. Because of the Seattle connection, local speculation held that Hill was somehow “behind” the Oregon Trunk (Due and Juris, 1968). Nelson’s plans were blocked by the General Land Office, however, because projected dams on the Deschutes would raise the level of the river over the railroad right-of-way.

This complicated matters. In 1907, the Oregon Trunk secured permission from the Bureau of Reclamation to build a higher elevation line up the canyon. This route would be significantly more expensive, however. Ironically, one of Nelson’s Seattle associates in the Oregon Trunk was R.A. Ballinger, who became Secretary of the Interior in 1909 (Gaertner, 1990). Not surprisingly, Ballinger was able to expedite approval from the agencies of the Interior Department who were frustrating the railroad plans.

Meanwhile Harriman’s Union Pacific associates were also busy in 1906, incorporating the Des Chutes Railroad Company as a branch of their Columbia Gorge line. Crews were said to be surveying their own route up the canyon in 1907. But like the Oregon Trunk, the Des Chutes railroad project languished through 1907 and 1908 as the Bureau of Reclamation considered conflicting uses between railroads and dams. Besides, from Harriman’s perspective, the southern route into Central Oregon through the Klamath Country was preferable since it would be less expensive to build and would generate additional traffic through the Klamath Basin. Harriman could reach Bend much more quickly by building north from Klamath Falls than by building south from the Columbia.

Then, perhaps because the Interstate Commerce Commission squelched Harriman’s plans for extending the southern route in 1908, both sides became motivated to build the Deschutes Canyon route. In 1909, Hill bought the Oregon Trunk from Nelson’s successors and assigned his best engineer, the legendary John F. Stevens, to design a route to Bend. In the spring of 1909 the Bureau of Reclamation approved both railroads’ plans. By the late summer of 1909, crews from Hill’s Oregon Trunk and Harriman’s Des Chutes Railroad began the work of building two parallel railroads up the Deschutes Canyon on opposite sides of the river.

Building the Oregon Trunk, 1909-1911

During the winter and spring of 1909, John F. Stevens located the route of the Oregon Trunk from the Columbia River to Bend. He then personally contacted ranchers along the right-of-way, and purchased their properties for the railroad. Legend has it that Stevens disguised himself as a sportsman interested in fishing on the Deschutes and used the name John F. Sampson (Due and Juris, 1968). Stevens then purchased the stock of the Oregon Trunk in a clandestine transaction conducted “about midnight in the rain under a tree in a public park in Portland” (Stevens, 1935).

Stevens contracted with Porter Brothers Construction Co. of Seattle for the construction from the Columbia to Madras, and with Henry and McFee, also of Seattle, for construction from

Madras to Bend (Railway and Engineering Review, March 18, 1911). The rival Des Chutes Railroad mobilized its forces under the command of Chief Engineer George W. Boschke. Boschke brought in the Twohy Brothers Construction Co. of Portland for the grading and track work.

By mid-summer of 1909, the Hill forces were working on the west bank of the river, and the Harriman forces were grading on the east bank, with advance parties from both lines claiming strategic points in the canyon. Materials and supplies for the two railroads swamped the local wagon roads, and the Columbia Southern and Great Southern railroads enjoyed their last profitable months. In the rival construction camps, feelings ran high. Dynamiting, sabotage, and occasional brawls punctuated the long summer and fall. George Palmer Putnam covered the scene for the wire services:

At one point the Hill forces established a camp reached only by a trail winding down from above, its only access through a ranch. Forthwith the Harriman people bought the ranch, and "no trespassing" signs, backed by the armed sons of Italy, cut off the communications of the enemy below. (Putnam, 1915)

By the end of the year, the silliness of the Deschutes Canyon War was apparent to even the most partisan participants. E.H. Harriman had died in the fall of 1909, so Hill and Robert S. Lovett, who succeeded Harriman, worked out an agreement for joint operation in May of 1910. Both railroads would use the Oregon Trunk line from North Junction to South Junction (10.4 miles) and from Metolius to Bend (42.6 miles). Both railroads would also use the 24 miles of Des Chutes Railroad track from South Junction to Metolius (Oregon Trunk Railway Articles of Incorporation). With the drama gone, the railroad building proceeded smoothly enough.

The Oregon Trunk was a difficult and expensive railroad to build. Reports of the cost vary from twelve to twenty-five million, with the latter figure more probable. The accounting confusion is no doubt due to the fact that the railroad was built as two railroads, both of which were financed by their parent companies. In 1953, the Oregon Trunk's debt to its parent, the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle, was \$26,139,229.19 (Oregon Trunk Railway Articles of Incorporation). This sum represents more than the construction costs, but it confirms the level of funding that the Oregon Trunk required. The route to Bend was a successful one, however, with 0.4% grades on most of the line, and maximum grade of 1.3%. Curves were kept within 6 degrees/100'. Total mileage, Columbia River to Bend, was 157 miles.

Relationship of Bend Depot to the Development of Bend and Central Oregon

During the settlement period, 1910-1920, the railroad was the most significant social force in the growing town of Bend. In 1903, A.M. Drake, a fast-talking promoter, arrived from St. Paul, Minnesota, and purchased land along the Deschutes from a local rancher. Drake platted the town of Bend in 1904, and then sold out and moved on. James J. Hill and his associates eventually purchased the town site, the irrigation company, and much of the surrounding land. Their vision of "Oregon's Spokane" created the new town of Bend as surely as the first settlers had created the first community there twenty years before. The depot site and the passenger station, the end of the line, was the symbol of the powerful economic forces that had built Bend. It was also the only tangible connection with the outside world.

On Railroad Day, October 5, 1911, the Bend depot site was the focal point of two days' festivities. James J. Hill, who would drive the traditional golden spike that officially finished the railroad, was the featured speaker.

For James J. Hill and his business associates, Railroad Day in Bend marked a milestone on a long and expensive investment program in the Pacific Northwest. Hill's investments in Central Oregon included railroads, land companies, and development schemes. Hill literally owned Bend. Based in Seattle's Empire Building (also owned by Hill), his Bend Company and Bend Park Company owned all the real estate in Drake's development and were actively selling lots for commercial or residential use.

The Oregon Trunk would soon take pine lumber out of Bend, and eventually move California-bound cargoes through Bend, but for the present, the railroad's most significant contribution to the local economy would be to bring newcomers to Central Oregon.

Bend and the surrounding Central Oregon country was not well suited for agricultural settlement, however. The altitude of 3500' meant a short growing season with frosts to be expected in every month of the year, including July and August. The Jeffersonian ideal of the self-supporting diversified farm was never really an option for Central Oregon settlers. The best chance for success lay in cattle or sheep ranching, which required a significant initial investment and operating funds beyond most immigrants' means.

In 1915 two lumber firms from Minneapolis (Shevlin-Hixon and Brooks-Scanlon) built large mills in Bend, and the economic basis of the town began to shift. Logging and lumber manufacturing provided jobs for disappointed settlers and a much surer opportunity than farming the dusty sagebrush plains. Hastily-erected communities in the desert east of Bend were emptied as the economy surged through the 1920s.

In 1926, the Oregon Trunk built south to Chemult, where it joined its old rival, the Southern Pacific, for joint trackage into Klamath Falls. In 1931, the Oregon Trunk extended into California to join the Western Pacific and become for the first time the true "trunk line" that James J. Hill envisioned.

III. HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN RAILWAY EXPRESS COMPANY FREIGHT BUILDING

This building is the second historic structure on the Bend Depot site. Because the passenger station was built without freight facilities, a freight station was necessary. The American Railway Express Company was a parcel and freight service, operating in conjunction with the railroads but offering specialized services. The freight station was built in 1922, based on plans prepared by James H. Humphries, a designing engineer from San Francisco. The building also appears on Sanborn maps after 1924.

The freight station is a plain frame structure with a hip roof. Photos show the original windows as 12-over-1 double hung and few 12-light fixed windows. Decorative features are limited to the extended rafter tails and a wooden belt molding which matches the belt course on the passenger station. The freight station has vertical side-match siding below the belt molding and pebble-dashed stucco finish above.

Although the vertical siding on the lower portion of the building is common to Oregon Trunk freight and passenger stations, the rafter tails and the stucco are distinctive elements. Most Oregon Trunk service buildings had doors paneled in a herringbone pattern. This detail is not found on the Bend freight station.

The American Railway Express Company Freight Building is a good example of a standard railroad building of the era. According to Harold A. Edmonson in his book called Railroad Station Planbook (1977):

Variations in the design of freight stations depended on the date of their construction and on the region in which they were built. But whether they were built in the 1800s or 1900s, freight stations were likely to be simple rectangular boxes with large sliding doors and a scarcity of windows.

The American Railway Express Company Freight Building was constructed in 1922 to facilitate the handling of goods shipped into and out of Bend via the Oregon Trunk Railroad. The express agency owned its own railway cars and operated in a similar fashion as United Parcel does now and was a separate company from the railroad (although the railroads owned the buildings).

It was the first parcel service in Bend and originally operated out of the Oregon Trunk Passenger Station building. By 1921, it was managed by agent C.G. Bertrand at 126 Minnesota Avenue and by 1922 business was sufficient to warrant the construction of this building. In 1929, it became the American Railway Express Company as part of the merger of most railway express companies in the United States and by 1939, the Railway Express Agency Corporation controlled all railway express service in the United States. In 1960, the Railway Express Agency Corporation changed its name to REA Express and subsequently went out of business. These companies originally handled parcel post and package shipments of perishable goods.

The express service declined when it lost delivery of perishable goods to trucks, and the

parcel post to the U.S. Postal Service and United Postal Service (Tennessee Engineering Corporation, 1989).

IV. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AMERICAN RAILWAY EXPRESS COMPANY FREIGHT BUILDING

The 1922 American Railway Express Company Building is a rectangular shaped single story wood frame building measuring thirty-feet three-inches by sixty-feet two-inches and is thirteen-feet two-inches tall. It is topped by a hipped roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. The building is oriented with its long axis parallel to the rails which run north and south. A cement slab foundation supports the structure.

The upper portion of the exterior walls are finished with pebble-dashed stucco. The lower portion is finished with two-foot high tongue and groove vertical wood skirting. The two finishes are divided by a horizontal board on the top and bottom that form a belt course.

Typical windows on the north side are seven feet four inches by three feet five inches with six inch casing. Original wood sash windows were twelve lights-over-one double hung, however, the top sash is now covered by a wooden board.

Typical windows on the west, south, and east sides are wood frame windows, four-feet eight-inches wide and three-feet seven-inches tall and are located three-feet eight-inches above the top board of the wooden belt course. Windows have twelve glass panes covered by wire mesh. A large four-foot six-inch wide by seven-foot one-inch long window opening is located on the north end of the west façade.

The south elevation has a centrally placed ten by four foot door opening (originally for a sliding door) with an adjacent four foot eight inch by three foot seven inch window just east of the door. The door and window openings have been covered by plywood.

The east elevation has two four-foot eight-inch by three-foot seven-inch windows on either side of an eight-foot wide by ten-foot three-inch tall door opening. The opening has been covered with plywood and has a regular size door opening implanted into it. The original office door with transom light is located at the north end of the east (track side) façade.

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