

OREGON TRUNK RAILWAY FREIGHT DEPOT
Southwest First Street & Cascade Avenue
Redmond
Deschutes County
Oregon

HABS NO. OR-181

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Pacific West Regional Office – Seattle
National Park Service
909 First Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

OREGON TRUNK RAILWAY FREIGHT DEPOT HABS NO. OR-181

Location: Southwest First Street & Cascade Avenue
Redmond
Deschutes County
Oregon

Date of Construction: 1913

Builder: Oregon Trunk Railway

Present Owner: State of Oregon

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Oregon Trunk Railway Freight Depot is significant for its association with the development of the Oregon Trunk Railway, which fostered the economic and agricultural growth within the Central Oregon region. At the time of its completion in 1911, the Oregon Trunk Railway initiated rail service to what was regarded as the largest remaining portion of the United States not served by rail. The Oregon Trunk Railway was the last hand-built railroad in Oregon. The Freight Depot was completed shortly after the Passenger Depot to increase the capacity of the Redmond station. Significant individuals associated with the Oregon Trunk Railway include James J. Hill of the Great Northern Railroad and John F. Stevens and Ralph Budd, railroad engineers of national prominence. The completion of the Oregon Trunk ended what has been called the last great railroad war in the United States between the Great Northern and Union Pacific Railroads.

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I. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Oregon Trunk Railway Freight Depot is located between the Pilot Butte Canal and the Oregon Trunk Railway on the eastern edge of the historic core of Redmond. The Freight Depot sits just north of the 1912 Passenger Depot, constructed of local Tuff stone. The Freight Depot was designed to handle the large quantity of freight that poured into the Redmond station to support the surrounding homesteads. It is a reflection of the extraordinary influx of people and materials following the completion of the 156 mile long Oregon Trunk Railway to Bend, located to the south of Redmond in Deschutes County.

The Freight Depot is located on the west side of the Oregon Trunk Railway tracks. This single story structure sits on an elevated platform that surrounds the building on all sides to facilitate freight transfer from trains and wagons. The platform is constructed of creosote treated timbers, with 2" x 12" boards forming the deck surface. The platform is supported by a post and beam foundation, as is the rest of the building. The building is covered by a medium pitch hipped roof clad with wood shingles. A single brick chimney penetrates the roof near the south end of the main ridge. The building has deep enclosed eaves, and is primarily clad with horizontal drop siding finished with cornerboards. Vertical tongue and groove wainscoting covers the base of the exterior below the level of the window sills. A blank frieze board encircles the building at the wall / eave intersection, and serves as the window head throughout the building.

The east elevation, facing the tracks, features four cargo doors regularly spaced along the façade. These doors slide horizontally on interior tracks, and are topped by seven light transom windows. The doors have four panels each, with a large dimension frame and diagonal tongue and groove boards in each panel. A single person door is located near the southern end of the east façade, and is a five panel door with a two light transom window. Just south of this door, near the southeast corner of the building, is a pair of four-over-four double hung wood sash windows. These windows have plain board trim and the top of the siding wainscot serves as the sill. These windows are typical of the larger fenestration in the building.

The north elevation features a large extension of the freight platform, constructed to accommodate the outdoor storage and staging of freight. This elevation has a single seven light transom window near the center of the façade that is identical to those on the east side of the building. The south elevation has five symmetrically arranged four-over-four double hung wood sash windows. Just south of the platform on this side of the building is a small water storage tank.

The west elevation is a mirror image of the east elevation in terms of composition. The four cargo doors and single person door are all present, but the siding has been altered above the wainscot. Much of the original horizontal siding has been replaced with vertical groove plywood siding, and most of the building eave has been removed. The freight platform on this side of the building is approximately four feet deeper than the platform on the south and east sides, and is slightly lower to accommodate wagon or truck loading. A single staircase leading up to the platform is located on the south end of the west façade.

The building is no longer used for its original purpose, and is currently vacant.

II. HISTORIC CONTEXT

Central Oregon in 1900

At the turn of the century, when local railroad service had become an established part of the economy 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 Lakes 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.

Significant Engineers Associated with the Oregon Trunk Railway

John Frank Stevens

When he began work on the Oregon Trunk, John F. Stevens (1853-1943) was widely known as America's best railroad civil engineer. By the end of his career, thirteen years later, that appraisal

was extended beyond the U.S. and beyond railroad work. Stevens' largest projects were the Great Northern Railroad, the Panama Canal, and his work on the Russian railroad system.

Stevens was born in Maine and educated at Maine State Normal School, which offered no formal training in engineering. He learned to survey, however, and found his first professional position as a surveyor for the city of Minneapolis in 1873. He switched to railroad work in Texas two years later, becoming a "location engineer" on railroad construction projects in New Mexico, British Columbia, and Minnesota. At the age of 33, with his apprenticeship behind him, Stevens supervised the construction of the Duluth, South Shore, and Atlantic Railway across Michigan's Upper Peninsula (Stevens, 1935).

James J. Hill recognized Stevens' talents in 1890 and hired him as a location engineer for the Great Northern. In "locating" or designing the route of the Great Northern, Stevens demonstrated his uncanny sense of space and form. A location engineer's job is to create the route of the railroad through the terrain. Working on foot in the wilderness, frequently alone, Stevens discovered Marias Pass across the Rockies and Stevens Pass across the Cascades.

Stevens was able to translate the tortuous mountain country of Montana, Idaho, and Washington into the continuum of straight lines and flat planes that a main line railroad must follow if it is to succeed. As a result of Stevens' work, the Great Northern was built on a shorter route and at lower elevations than any other east-west transcontinental railroad. This engineering success permitted the railroad to operate longer trains at higher speeds than the competing lines. Hill, for his part, was able to translate this technological advantage into a financial advantage for the Great Northern.

By 1895 Stevens was Chief Engineer for the Great Northern, and in 1903 he was Chief Engineer for the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific. Then, in 1905, Hill and President Theodore Roosevelt persuaded Stevens to take over as engineer on the Panama Canal project, which was hopelessly mired in mud, heat, disease, and politics (McCullough, 1977).

Stevens reorganized the dispirited canal workforce and set into motion the efforts at sanitation that would eventually mitigate the disease problem--which included dysentery, pneumonia, and malaria as well as the dreaded yellow fever. Stevens also lobbied the American government to re-consider the design of the canal itself, changing the old French idea of a sea-level canal into one with locks and a fresh-water lake at its center. Finally, with this crucial decision in hand, Stevens set about coordinating the construction of the canal, the locks, the dam on the Chagres River, and the railroad system that would move the millions of yards of earth. In David McCullough's analysis, "The Panama Canal was among other things one of the greatest of all triumphs in American railroad engineering."

When Stevens left Panama in 1907 he was very much a national figure. He returned to work for Hill, and began designing the Oregon Trunk. He then became President of the Oregon Trunk Railway in 1909 and later President of the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle after the Oregon Trunk was completed in 1911. In 1917, he was sent to Russia by President Wilson as head of a commission to advise the Russian government. He worked in Russia until his retirement in 1922.

Ralph Budd

Ralph Budd (1879-1962) was Stevens' close associate and the second Chief Engineer of the Oregon Trunk. Budd's career was more conventional than Stevens', beginning with an engineering degree from Highland Park College in Des Moines, Iowa. He first worked as a draftsman for the Chicago Great Western Railway, and then in 1903, as a division engineer on the

construction of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific line from St. Louis to Kansas City (Overton, 1955).

Budd reported to Stevens on the Rock Island Railway, and the two apparently worked well together. Their talents and temperaments seem to have been well matched. Stevens was the archetypal surveyor--a rugged outdoors man, blunt, visionary, and more than a little mercurial. Budd, the draftsman, was perhaps more detail oriented, and possessed a calm and mild-mannered demeanor notably lacking in Stevens.

When Stevens went to Panama, he asked Budd to accompany him as railroad engineer for the project. After 1906, when Roosevelt had been persuaded to build a canal with locks, the relative importance of railroad operations in Panama abruptly changed. With the sea-level canal plan, spoils from the canal would have been moved by dredging. The new plan would require another means to move the spoils, however. Only a state-of-the-art railroad system could move the immense volume of earth from the canal excavations to the earth-fill dam on the Chagres River or to a dumping ground. The Panama Railroad, such as it was, dated back to the California gold rush and was barely adequate to bring supplies to the construction camps. Worse, it was built on ground that would soon be inundated by the lake that would form behind Gatun Dam.

Budd's first task in Panama was to double track the old Panama Railroad and bring it into the 20th century. His second task was to design and build a new railroad on higher ground that would meet the requirements of moving earth and supplying materials for the canal construction (Martin, 1988). He succeeded admirably at both tasks. After Stevens left Panama in 1907, Budd remained until 1909, when Stevens lured him to Oregon.

Ralph Budd signed on as construction engineer for the Oregon Trunk, with Stevens in the position of Chief Engineer. Soon, Budd became Chief Engineer, and Stevens became President. As Chief Engineer, Budd supervised construction of the railroad from the Columbia River to Bend, the portion designed by Stevens. In the summer of 1909, however, before construction was well started, Budd assumed the task of designing a route south from Bend into California.

Despite his advancing years and his official retirement in 1907, James J. Hill was still in charge of the Hill railroads and he had grandiose plans for the Oregon Trunk. He reportedly told this to Budd in very clear terms: "This is not a railroad that is being built up on to the plateau of Central Oregon to stop there. It is the Oregon Trunk" (Overton, 1955). Hill's point was that in railroad terminology the word *trunk* refers to a main line rather than a branch line. Budd got the message and set to work surveying a route from Bend to Klamath Falls, and then on to Beiber and Keddie, California, where the Oregon Trunk would join the main line of the Western Pacific. This extension of the Oregon Trunk was completed in 1931.

Hill also wanted to bring a transcontinental extension of the Burlington west from Wyoming across Idaho and eastern Oregon, through Bend to Portland. Covering the "vast reaches of central and southeastern Oregon in and on virtually every sort of conveyance," Budd personally surveyed most of the Oregon portions of this unlikely route, which was never built (Overton 1955).

After bringing the Oregon Trunk to Bend in 1911, Budd continued as Chief Engineer for the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle, the parent of the Oregon Trunk within the Hill system. Later, he worked directly with Hill as his assistant until Hill's death in 1916. Finally, at age 40, Ralph Budd assumed the presidency of the Great Northern Railway in 1919.

Budd's subsequent work for the Hill lines put him in the presidency of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy. As president of this large and profitable railroad, he influenced the direction of American railroads through the Depression and the World War II period. Among his many accomplishments was pioneering the use of diesel-electric locomotives.

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 trackwork.

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.

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