

GOLDEN SPIKE DAY AT MONROE

OCCASION OF BIG CELEBRATION

Event Marked Completion of P. E. & E from Eugene to Corvallis

Monroe Or. Sept 3, 1913 -- Despite the fact that rain interfered largely in the Golden Spike Celebration, Monroe did itself proud.

Four hundred people from Corvallis, as many from Eugene; 50 from the town of Ferguson and many from Springfield and Albany, and a large number from the district surrounding Monroe, were in attendance. It is estimated that 2000 people surrounded the speakers.

Dr. H. B. Bennett of Monroe was chairman of the exercises. Following brief remarks by the chairman, D. E. Yoran (Mayor) of Eugene was introduced. He said he could clearly see from the preparations that Eugene is in favor of the "Monroe doctrine".

Strahorn Speaks.

Other speakers following the Eugene mayor were Luke Goodrich, president of Eugene Commercial club, W. K. Taylor, mayor of Corvallis, J. S. VanWinkle, president of Albany Commercial club, N. R. Moore of the Corvallis Commercial club, and President R. E. Strahorn of the Portland, Eugene & Eastern Railway Company (owned by Southern Pacific Railroad).

After the speaking the excursionists spread their lunches under the tent. During the dinner delegations kept up a continual yelling for their districts, reached by the railroad.

At 2 o'clock (on Sat., June 7, 1913) the golden spike was driven by President R.E. Strahorn at the intersection of Commercial (and 6th) Street, where the last rails were laid.

"We are today celebrating an event of unusual moment to three different interests, in addition to those I represent. To Corvallis, because it fixes that city on the main line of what we firmly believe is destined ultimately to be one of the greatest electric railway systems of the world. To Eugene and Springfield, because it gives them all the manifold advantages of our chief southern terminal. To you whose fortunes are so happily cast with the magnificent territory between, because it ends your day of pioneering, brings you in closest touch with the world you have so long looked at from a distance and with the aid of your responsive touch will quicken into new life every possible activity.

"When next year, as we expect, electrification will be complete in Portland, this pleasing vista should be greatly enlarged.

For Mutual Good.

"You will find the Portland, Eugene & Eastern henceforth entering into your lives and activities far beyond any present comprehension. We will need to draw very closely together and to consult, plan and cooperate for our mutual good. It follows that this means the very best service and facilities we can give, consistent with the revenue derived.

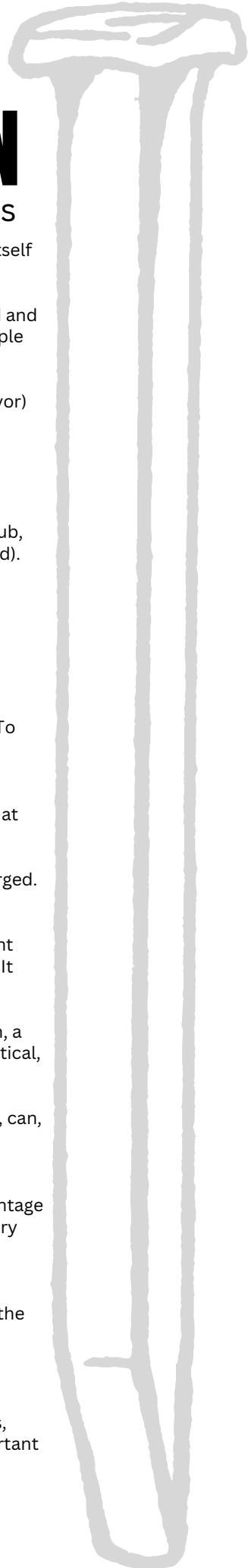
"I would preach the gospel of more thoroughness in everything that is being attempted, less land and lot speculation, a return of the good old plan of greater diversity of farm products, more efficient farming, and a multiplication of practical, tried-out industries, best designed to utilize and get the most money out of our raw material. It is absolutely indispensable that we do more dairying, more poultry raising, more cattle, horse and hog raising, that we grow more alfalfa, corn, flax, peas, beans and other vegetables, more fodder and root crops, more berries, produce more honey, can, preserve, dry or otherwise make up at home a good many things that are wasted or are now supplied by enterprising distant states.

"The success and experience gained at the Eugene and Corvallis canneries argue as nothing else could the vast advantage to the community of these efforts. Also that they are conservative and safe enough when thus handled to justify every grower to lend them all the financial and other support in his power and to secure liberal advances at the banks.

Must Stop Waste.

"We can get rich by stopping waste. It should be made a crime to kill an immature pig or calf, or to longer fall to turn the evergreen grasses of our thousand hills into cheese, butter and beef. During a recent year 8,000,000 calves were slaughtered, which if permitted to live one year would then have supplied eight times more food, or enough beef to furnish a city like Portland its total meat supply for 60 years.

"I need hardly tell you that I am ready at all times to meet you face to face, to talk over your problems as well as ours, first, because I enjoy it; and second, because we are henceforth necessarily partners. What involves you in any important degree interests me personally and involves the organization which I represent. You will be doing a large service to yourselves by keeping closely in mind the fact that our prosperity is so interdependent that whatever affects us adversely will in the end react upon and seriously affect you."



The Railroad & The Last Spike



Prior to the arrival of the railroad, Monroe and the surrounding area was isolated, dependent on commercial river traffic to deliver freight for their needs. In July 1911, the Corvallis & Alsea Railroad was sold to Portland, Eugene & Eastern Railway. The PE&E wanted to link Portland to San Francisco via rail and connecting the line from Monroe to Eugene was necessary, a missing link.

Monroe's railroad depot, located at 555 Depot Street, was built in 1913 by Southern Pacific Railroad. Work progressed with track being laid from north to south and south to north towards a connection in Monroe. At this time Monroe was the only town between Eugene and Corvallis.

One major obstacle remained to complete the railroad, Coffee Butte, which was located 1 1/2 miles south of Monroe. In October 1912, 25,000 pounds of giant powder was discharged blasting the railroad cut through Coffee Butte. The big blast used a rope that was one foot thick by a mile in length. Also, five miles of wire was required and purchased from Adam Wilhelm. All the holes for the blast were discharged at the same time when Wilhelm pressed the switch. A huge cloud of earth and smoke shot hundreds of feet in the air, leaving a hole 600 feet long and 38 feet deep. Hundreds of those who had gathered at a safe distance were amazed, after the air cleared they were able to see the results of the blast. In addition to the Coffee Butte blast, over 5,580 feet of trestle had to be built to keep the rails above the meandering Long Tom River, which often overflowed its banks, leaving sloughs in low lying areas.

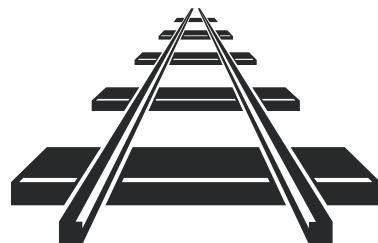
With Wilhelm's urging the railroad workers completed the last sections of track in Monroe. Newspaper headlines like "GOLD SPIKE TO BE DRIVEN AT MONROE" brought more than a 1,000 visitors to Monroe for the Golden Spike Day Celebration. President R. E. Strahorn of the PE&E Railway (owned by Southern Pacific Railroad) drove the golden spike in front of the Wilhelm house on Saturday, June 7, 1913 at 2:00 p.m. Excursion trains from Eugene, Springfield, and Albany arrived simultaneously with whistle cords tied down. Many speeches were heard, bands played, and even the rain could not dampen their spirits.



Wilhelm House circa 1920

Wilhelm (now Baker) House 2020

June 1913

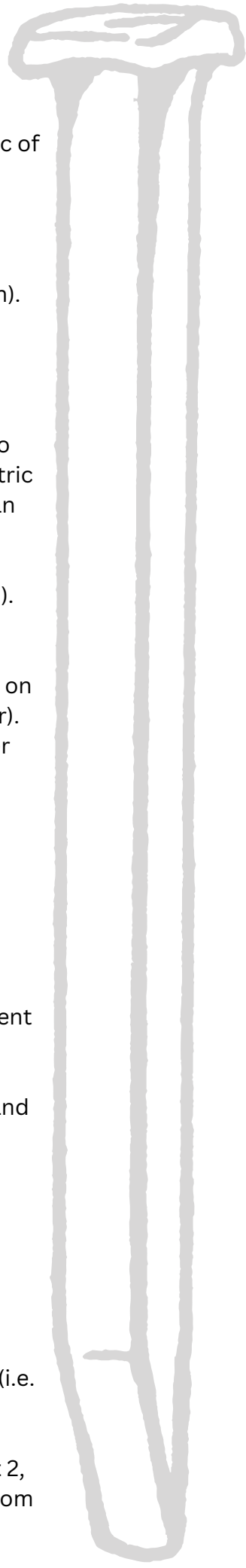


June 2023

Celebrating 110 Years of Monroe History

Monroe Railroad History Facts

- 1907: Corvallis & Alsea River Railway (C&AR) was incorporated by Stephen Carver. Carver's plan was to extend the railroad from Alsea to Oregon's Pacific Coast. The Panic of 1909 prevented Carver from securing the funds to complete his plans.
- 1908: A new rail line from Corvallis to Alpine Junction was completed on June 5, 1908.
- 1909: The rail line was continued from Bailey Junction to Glenbrook (i.e., Alpine Branch).
- 1910: The rail line was extended south from Alpine Junction to Monroe (i.e. Lower Westside Branch) and from Bailey Junction west to Dawson (i.e. Bailey Branch).
- 1911: Corvallis & Alsea River Railway was purchased by Alvadore Welch and renamed to Portland, Eugene & Eastern Railway (PE&E). Welch wanted the C&AR as a link in an electric interurban system between Portland, OR and San Francisco, CA. The electrification plan never came to fruition and Welch sold PE&E to Southern Pacific (SP) Railroad.
- 1912: Southern Pacific Railroad acquires the Portland, Eugene & Eastern Railway (PE&E).
- 1913: Monroe's railroad depot was built by Southern Pacific (SP) at 555 Depot Street. PE&E (owned by SP) joined the final sections of rail in Monroe and drove the last spike, on June 7, 1913, which completed the railroad between Corvallis and Eugene (i.e., Transfer). At Transfer, a streetcar system connected passengers into Downtown Eugene, however the line between Corvallis and Transfer was never particularly busy. Daily passenger service continued until 1924, then frequency was reduced to tri-weekly service.
- 1914: Southern Pacific Railroad began operating freight service between Corvallis and Eugene, which ended commercial river boat traffic on the Long Tom River.
- 1915: PE&E's name is officially change to Southern Pacific Railroad on July 1, 1915.
- 1920: Philip "Mac" McGovern arrived in Monroe to be the Southern Pacific Railroad Agent at the Monroe train depot. McGovern held his position until 1957.
- 1924: Passenger service is reduced from daily to tri-weekly service between Corvallis and Eugene.
- 1932: Passenger service ceased between Corvallis and Eugene with the demise of SP's Red Electrics.
- 1935: Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) approved abandonment of the line between Transfer and Cheshire on September 20, 1935. Rails were removed in 1936.
- 1950: ICC approved abandonment of the line between Bailey Junction and Glenbrook (i.e. Alpine Branch) on April 20, 1950.
- 1957: ICC approved abandonment of the line between Cheshire and Monroe on August 2, 1957. Rails were removed in 1958; leaving only the line from Corvallis to Monroe and from Alpine Junction to Dawson in service until 2007.



Monroe Railroad History Facts

- 1957: Philip McGovern retires with 37 years of service as Southern Pacific's Railroad Agent in Monroe. During his railroad career, he watched the local economy transition from lumber to agriculture.
- 1968: The passenger portion of Monroe's railroad depot was torn down. The freight portion of the depot remained in use by railroad shippers until 2007.
- 1968-1993: SP continued operating freight service between Corvallis and Monroe (i.e., Lower Westside Branch), including Alpine Junction, as well as between Alpine Junction and Dawson (i.e., Bailey Branch) until Willamette & Pacific Railroad/Portland & Western Railroad took over operations in February 1993.
- 2007: The freight portion of Monroe's railroad depot remained intact and in place for use by railroad shippers, including Wilbur Ellis. On March 11, 2007, the depot was moved 300 yards north from its original location, at 555 Depot Street, to the corner of Ash Street & Highway 99 to be part of the new Monroe Community Library. In May 2007, Portland & Western Railroad's last freight train served the Lower Westside Branch, including Monroe.
- 2011: The Surface Transportation Board (STB) granted a request by Southern Pacific Railroad's successor, Union Pacific (UP) Railroad, to abandon the Lower Westside Branch & Bailey Branch. SP merged with UP on September 11, 1996.
- 2012: Crews from 2G Construction began work on the new Monroe Community Library at the new site of the depot and the groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 29, 2012.
- 2013: The freight depot was incorporated as a wing of the new library, which was completed in June 2013. It coincided with the 100th anniversary of the depot completion and driving of the last spike in Monroe. Benton County purchased the right-of-ways of the Lower Westside & Bailey Branches on October 1, 2013 from UP for \$486,000.
- 2014: SRC Industries arrived in Monroe, at Kelly & N. 6th Streets, near the original location of the railroad depot to begin scrapping the Lower Westside & Bailey Branches on January 27, 2014.
- 2023: At the Monroe Festival, we celebrated the 110th anniversary of the last spike driven in Monroe with a re-enactment of the event that originally took place on June 7, 1913.



Monroe Passenger Depot 1940s



Philip McGovern, SP Agent



Monroe Freight Depot 2006