

BENTON COUNTY CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY II
1984 - 1986

LINEAR RESOURCE RESOURCE #: 620

PHOTO #: EEE 12 PROP. CLASS: NA
ORIGINAL USE: Railroad SIZE: NA
PRESENT USE: Railroad

PROPERTY ADDRESS: See Map

TAX LOT: NA

COMMON NAME: Yaquina Branch of the Southern Pacific Railroad.
HISTORIC NAME: The Oregon Pacific Railroad / The Willamette Valley and
Coast Railroad / Corvallis and Eastern Railroad.

PRESENT OWNER: Southern Pacific Transportation Company
OWNER'S ADDRESS:

ORIGINAL OWNER: Oregon Pacific Railroad

ARCHITECT:
BUILDER:

THEME: Commerce and Industry : Transportation
PERIOD/ DATE: Railroad era / c. 1885
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNATION/ TYPE: Railroad

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GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND IMMEDIATE SETTING

In Benton County this railroad line extends from the Willamette River at Albany to Corvallis and then west from Corvallis through Philomath, following the Marys River to Blodgett and Summit. After entering Lincoln County it follows the Yaquina River to the end of the line which is located in Toledo today.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In the 1870's, when Benton County extended to the Pacific coast, residents dreamed of a railroad from Corvallis to Yaquina Bay. At that time many products from the eastern United States were shipped to San Francisco and then transferred to steamers for transport to Oregon. Landing at Astoria, the goods were then shipped up the Columbia to Portland for further distribution. Local residents reasoned that if goods could be unloaded at Yaquina Bay, shipped by railroad to Corvallis, and then redistributed from there, Corvallis would have an economic advantage over Portland.

In 1872 Colonel T. Edgerton Hogg incorporated the Corvallis and Yaquina Bay Railroad Company for this purpose. In 1874 the company was reorganized under the name of the Willamette Valley and Coast Railroad.

SHPO # 805

By 1879 only about ten miles of track had been laid. The company lacked the capital it needed; so, in 1880 the company was reorganized once again in an effort to attract eastern investors. The new name of the company was the Oregon and Pacific Railroad. Bonds were issued but construction proceeded very slowly. With a crew largely composed of Chinese laborers, the line was completed from Corvallis to Yaquina City on Yaquina Bay in 1884. Yaquina City, located east of Newport, was built specifically for the railroad terminus. Here, in conjunction with ocean-going steamers, freight and passenger traffic was established with San Francisco. It wasn't until 1885 that the first train left Corvallis for Yaquina City.

In addition to freight service and passenger service to San Francisco during the late 19th century, passenger excursions by train to the coast for outings were very popular.

Only one railroad depot associated with this line is known to have survived. This is the wooden depot on 7th and Washington Streets in Corvallis. The depot has been moved from its original location several blocks to the west. No examples of depots associated with this line are known to exist in the county area.

In 1887 a line was completed from Corvallis to Albany. Colonel Hogg had devised a plan whereby the railroad would be extended east from Albany, then over the Cascades to a connection with an eastern line. Thus, the Oregon and Pacific Railroad would be a transcontinental railroad. The railroad reached Idanha, near the current Detroit Dam area. There it stopped. Shortly thereafter, the railroad went into receivership. Andrew Benoni Hammond purchased the line for his lumber interests and renamed it the Corvallis and Eastern Railway Company. In the early 20th century the line was acquired by Southern Pacific.

In the 1920's the western terminus of the railroad became Toledo instead of Yaquina City. The shallow bar and harbor of Yaquina Bay was never suited to the purpose the railroad intended. However, during World War I, a large sawmill was constructed at Toledo to process spruce for the manufacture of airplanes. Today, this large mill is owned by Georgia Pacific. Passenger service to the coast was discontinued in 1928 after ridership decreased, the result of increased reliance on automobiles and busses. Today Southern Pacific's main customer on this line is the Georgia Pacific mill at Toledo.

The Oregon Pacific Railroad was the second railroad line to be built in Benton County. The first line was completed in 1880 by the O. and C. Railroad (see inventory form #621). The Oregon and Pacific Railroad reflects the dreams of 19th century capitalists who envisioned Corvallis as a great transportation center and the hub of trade in the Willamette Valley. Although this vision was never realized, the railroad did serve to increase communication and travel between what was then the eastern and western portions of Benton County. In the 20th century, the railroad has served the timber industry.

SOURCES CONSULTED

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Clark, R. C., History of the Willamette Valley, S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, Chicago, 1927.

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Recorded by: Mary Kathryn Weber
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BENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

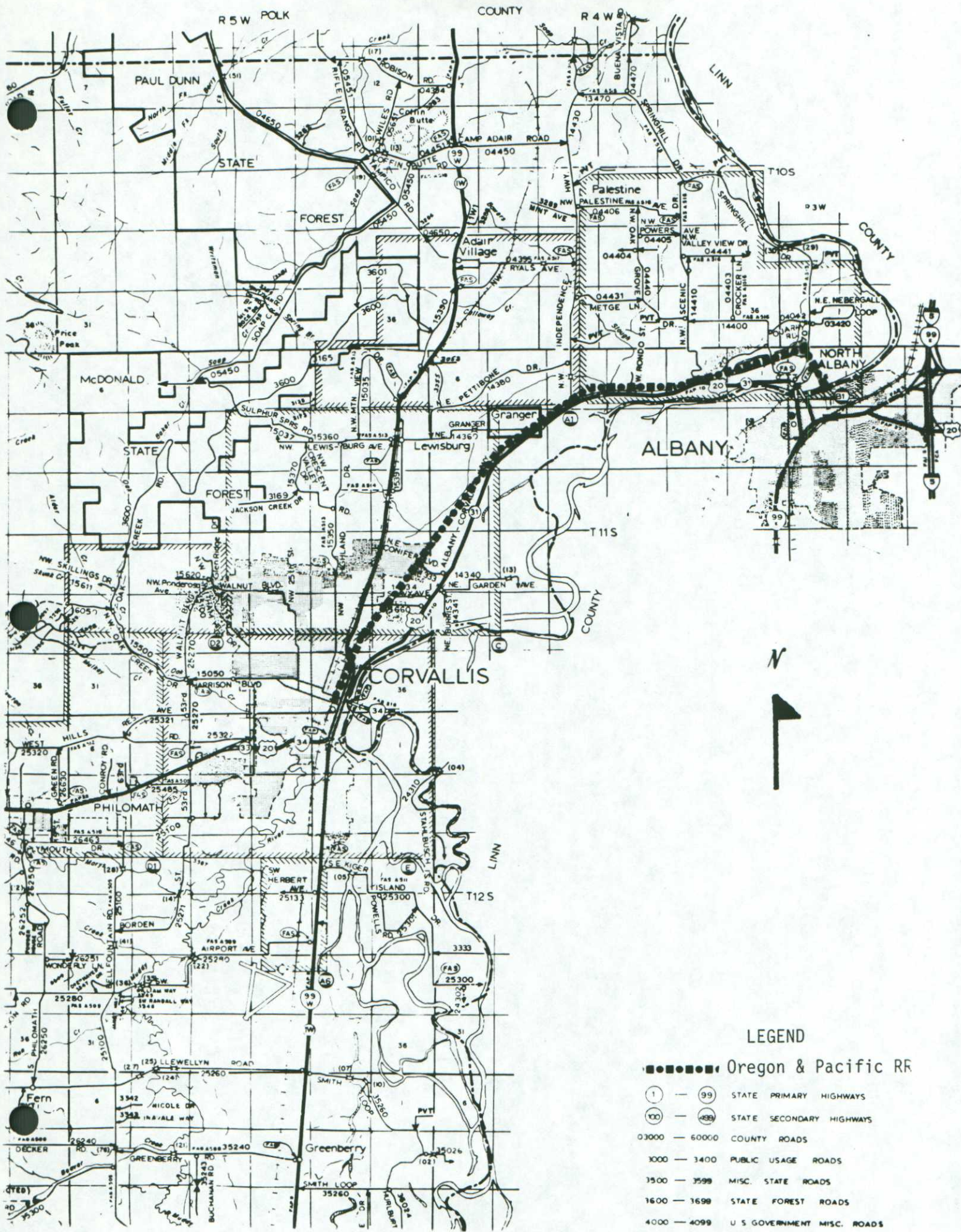
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Photo No. EEE 12

View to south

Near Blodgett



LEGEND

- Oregon & Pacific RR
- ① — ⑨⑨ STATE PRIMARY HIGHWAYS
- ⑩ — ④⑨⑨ STATE SECONDARY HIGHWAYS
- 03000 — 60000 COUNTY ROADS
- 3000 — 3400 PUBLIC USAGE ROADS
- 3500 — 3599 MISC. STATE ROADS
- 1600 — 1699 STATE FOREST ROADS
- 4000 — 4099 U S GOVERNMENT MISC. ROADS