

# Preserving Forest Grove

The Southern Pacific "Red Electric" depot at Main and 19th, built 1914.  
Drawing by Janet Lamb.

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

## Riding the Interurban Rails

By Jim Casto

From about 1900 to 1925, in the years between the invention of the automobile and the paving of country roads, the electric "interurban" train, a sort of glorified trolley, provided small-town folk with easy mass transit to other towns. Forest Grove was served by two interurban lines.

### Oregon Electric Railroad Company "Yellow Electric"

On October 29, 1908, service to Hillsboro opened. On December 25, the first electric trains from Portland arrived in Forest Grove. The Forest Grove Oregon Electric depot stood on the northeast corner of Ash and 19th streets. The depot boasted a waiting room, ticket office, baggage handling area and freight handling office. It was a triangular building, with the smaller waiting room on the west end and the larger freight office on the east, and with the ticket office next to the waiting room and the baggage counter between the ticket office and the freight area.

Some of the freight handled by the train was farm produce, grown in the area and brought into town primarily by horse-drawn wagon.

The "Yellow Electric" car barn stood on the northeast corner of Council and 19th.

The fare was 60 cents one way, and \$1.15 round trip.

May 13, 1933 saw the last "Yellow Electric" passenger train to Portland, but the line continued to carry freight for a time.

### Southern Pacific Railroad Company "Red Electric"

On July 22, 1914, the first trains from Portland arrived on the Southern Pacific electric line. The McMinnville Loop of this line ran from Oswego to Forest Grove to McMinnville, passing through Dilley, Gaston, Yamhill and Carlton, and from McMinnville through Newberg, Sherwood and Tualatin to Oswego.

The Forest Grove passenger depot, erected in 1914, stands on its original site on the southwest corner of Main and 19th. The handsome brick building has been remodeled to house the offices of the E.F. Burlingham and Sons.

The freight depot was on the southeast corner of Main and 19th, now a parking lot. The route of the former roadbed may still be traced along the south side of 19th, between A and Council Streets.

The last Red Electric train to Portland ran in July 1929.

## Steamboats on the Tualatin

By Walt Wentz

Throughout the 19th century, most roads were dusty ruts in summer and slippery bogs in winter. Traveling or sending cargo any great distance by road was time-consuming, arduous and expensive. So most transport was by water.

From 1865 until around 1890, the Tualatin River carried regular steamboat traffic, connecting Forest Grove with the outside world.

These steamboats were not the gingerbread-bedecked floating palaces of the Old South, but small, severely utilitarian craft, generally loaded with livestock, crops and sweating deckhands—and even some passengers.

The earliest steamboat on the Tualatin was the *Hoosier*, a ship's longboat powered by an engine from a pile-driver. In 1858, the Territorial Legislature chartered the Tualatin River Transportation and Navigation Company to dredge and "straighten" the stream. Hampered by their rickety craft and the very crooked channel, *Hoosier's* crew did one summer's work before that idea was wisely abandoned.

Veteran steamboatman Joseph Kellogg, who founded Tualatin River Navigation & Transportation, had established a passenger and cargo service in 1865.

The mouth of the Tualatin, where it joins the Willamette, is blocked by rocks and rapids. So steamboat passengers from Portland landed below Oswego, portaged around the lake and rode the horse-drawn cars of the Sucker Lake and Tualatin River Railroad—a wood-railed line serving a pioneer sawmill—to Colfax, where they boarded the side-wheeler steam scow *Yambill*, commanded by Captain Edward Kellogg, Joseph's brother.

Beginning in 1865, the *Yambill* began making semi-regular trips as far as Hillsboro—and, although her crew spent much of their time winching snags and sunken logs out of the stream, there was plenty of farm produce and other cargo to carry to the depot at Colfax.

In 1868, the steamer *Onward*—a slim, shallow-draft stern-wheeler of 100 tons, built at Oswego by Joseph Kellogg—was added to the Tualatin run.

By 1869 the *Onward* was making a regular weekly run from Colfax 60 miles upstream to Emerick's Landing, just south of present-day Cornelius. In particularly rainy seasons, the boat might push as far upstream as Forest Grove.

Throughout the shipping season—from the time of the fall rains until the river was too shallow to navigate in the late summer—the boat left Colfax on Thursday morning, and

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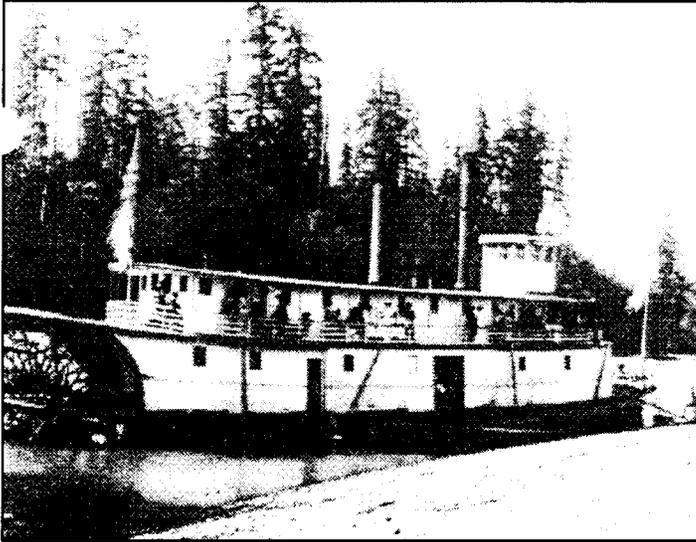


Photo from an unknown book, captioned "Steamboats plied the Tualatin River after 1865, transporting goods and farm produce between Bridgeport and Forest Grove." Courtesy of Tom Meier.

started back from Emerick's Landing at 6 a.m. on Monday.

Considering the extreme crookedness of the river, a great deal of travel was required to cover relatively few miles of westward distance. Some of the most spectacular meanders of

the stream had names such as Jackson's Horse Shoe, Goose Egg and Grecian Bend. Legend has it that passengers could get off the boat at the beginning of such a loop in the stream, stroll slowly across the intervening pastureland, picking blackberries, and rejoin the boat at the next bend.

The main landings along the 60-mile route were Taylor's, Scholl's, Farmington, Harris, Hillsboro, Centerville and Forest Grove (Emerick's). Many intermediate landings lined the river, and would-be passengers—or a farmer with cargo to ship—could flag the boat at any of them.

By the early 1870s, railroads were beginning to encroach into the valley. Although the new railroads could carry more passengers and heavier cargo more swiftly than the old steamboats, the railroads set their freight charges high, so boat traffic on the Tualatin hung on for a time.

In 1873, the *Onward* successfully negotiated a narrow canal which had been cut between the Tualatin and Lake Oswego, to avoid the portage around the shallows at the stream's mouth and make the Tualatin a "highway of commerce." This merely postponed the the inevitable.

In 1895, government engineers surveyed the Tualatin River and declared it unsuitable for navigation. But steamboat traffic had effectively ended some years before.

**Source:** Howard McKinley Corning, *Willamette Landings*, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, 1947.

## Forest Grove Transportation Company

By Jim Casto and Janet Lamb

Early passenger trains did not enter downtown Forest Grove, due to a dispute with the railroad magnate of the day, Ben Holladay. The city fathers refused to pay the \$30,000 demanded by the Oregon & California Railroad for a downtown depot; consequently, when the railroad arrived in 1872, the nearest stop was located south of town at Carnation, where Lumberman's Building Supplies now stands.

Horse-drawn wagons or carriages hauled passengers and cargo to and from the depot. This "station wagon" service lasted from about 1872 to 1906, when Forest Grove started its own trolley line, the Forest Grove Transportation Company.

Work proceeded quickly. In March 1906, rails were down; in June, wires were strung; in August the trolley was in full operation.

The route ran from the train depot at Carnation north on Elm Street, west on Pacific, north on A Street and east on 21st to College Way.

Forest Grove was one of the few Northwest cities with its own "in-town" trolley company.

The venture was not without its teething problems. On Friday, July 13, 1906, a telephone wire of relatively low voltage and a trolley wire carrying 550 volts made contact about 9:15 p.m. The surge of high voltage burned out the local telephone switchboard and fuse board and set the Central Telephone office afire, causing damage to Schultz's butcher shop, as well as the butcher shop of the McNamer family.

The trolley served many of the hotels and boarding houses along its route: the Forest Grove Hotel, that stood on Pacific between Main and A Streets; the Nucleus Hotel, which would become the Western; and the Laughlin, that stood on

the corner of Pacific and A and would eventually become the Oregon Hotel, the largest hotel in Forest Grove. It was torn down in 1953.

Despite stories that this trolley was originally horse-drawn, that is apparently not true—except for the very first trolley that was brought to town from the train depot, before the power to the overhead wires was turned on.

With the coming of the interurban railroad and the Model T, passenger service to the railroad depot was affected.

In July 1911, the Forest Grove trolley line ceased operation. In October of that year the trolley tracks were removed and the route paved over. But Forest Grove's trolley line did not vanish without a trace. Some of the rails were used to reinforce the walls of the building that once housed the Forest Grove Press newspaper office, and now Forest Grove Travel, on the corner of Council and Pacific.

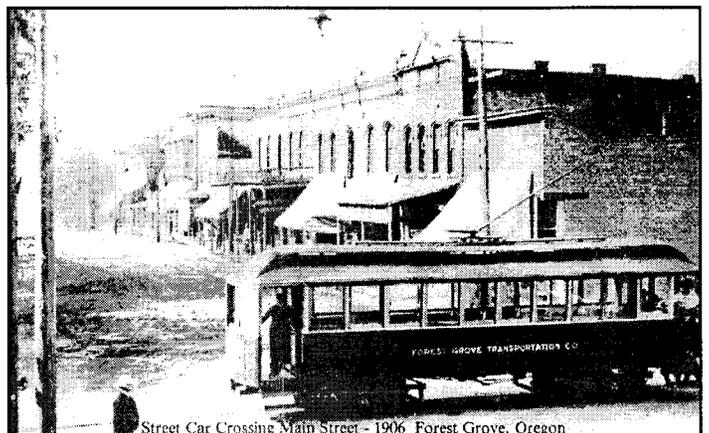


Photo courtesy of Friends of Historic Forest Grove.

# Calendar of Coming Events

**“Early Oregon Missionaries, the Forest Grove Connection,”** lecture by historian Jim Tomkins, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, Forest Grove Power & Light Building, 1818 B Street.

**Tour of Historic Forest Grove Homes**, sponsored by Friends of Historic Forest Grove and the Historic Landmarks Board, Saturday, May 16. Contact Martha Khoury, 357-7309, to volunteer your home for exhibit, or to provide staffing for the event. Additional details in the next issue of this newsletter.

**Tour the Museums Day**, open house of five Washington County museums, including Old College Hall, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 7 and Saturday, April 25. Contact Martha Beck at 357-1680 for information, or to volunteer as a docent at Old College Hall.

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## Eric G. Stewart Award

During National Historic Preservation Week in May, the Historic Landmarks Board, in conjunction with the City of Forest Grove, presents the Eric G. Stewart Award to a person who has shown outstanding achievement in historic preservation in Forest Grove. The award was named after the first recipient, Eric Stewart. Last year's recipient was Gladys Haynes, long-time HLB member and community preservation volunteer.

This year, the selection committee is soliciting nominations from the community. If you know a person or organization who deserves recognition for work in historic preservation in Forest Grove, please fill out the form to the right and submit it to the Community Development Office on Council Street, or mail it to the HLB, City of Forest Grove, PO Box 326, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

# 100 Years Ago

*Washington County Hatchet-Forest Grove Times*

Go to Abbott & Roe and rent a Crescent bicycle and never walk home.

Johnson's freight wagon ran away Wednesday morning but no damage was done. The wagon had a load of stoves for Tommie the tinner but was backed up in front of Wells' when the sprinkler passed and startled the team. Jake Buxton caught them before they had gotten to the bank.

J.E. Hubbard, a real estate and insurance agent of Lafayette, was in the city Monday. He missed the train in the morning and drove to the Grove.

Mr. McNamer has devised an arrangement for the comfort of the stage passengers, which will make the trip to Tillamook delightful all the way even on very warm days. The stage has heretofore been drawn by two relays of four horses each the entire distance. Now another relay of two fast horses is stationed nine miles from the Grove. Just before the stage comes out of the cool woods into the burning glare of the open country, these horses are put on and they come at a lively trot making a breeze by their speed, going at a ten mile an hour rate.

A long bridge is being built near Farmington by Mr. Johnson. It is substantially put up and there will be no further trouble in passing through there next time high water comes.

### Nomination for the Eric G. Stewart Award

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Nominee  
(person or organization) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for nomination (continue on reverse if necessary):



*Frank Miller's gas station, the first in Forest Grove. Eric Stewart Collection.*

### A Little Mystery

*By Jim Casto*

Sometime around 1910—or earlier—an unusual gas station made an appearance on the northeast corner of Pacific and College Way. It had an odd, medieval look to it, with heavy columns, a rounded roof and a sharp ridgeline.

It has been suggested that the building was moved from the Lewis and Clark Exposition, held in Portland in 1905, but this has never been confirmed. Photographs of the buildings of the Exposition suggest that this theory is entirely possible—it certainly has an exotic look—but it is obvious that such a small building would never have been a prominent feature on the Exposition Grounds, and likely would not be featured in souvenir photographs.

Perhaps it was one of the small buildings that housed the carnival-arcade attractions strung out along the Trail and the Bridge of Nations.

The odd little building was eventually replaced by a Standard Oil station, one of some two dozen different service stations that have existed in Forest Grove over the years.

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*Preserving Forest Grove* is a quarterly newsletter published by the Historic Landmarks Board to help fulfill its duty of public education regarding the preservation of cultural resources. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please call James Reitz at

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