



An early version of the Pacific Railway Act of 1862, which authorized the first transcontinental railroad, included a branch north from the Central Pacific line into Oregon, but this was left out of the final law. Instead, an 1866 law offered land grants to build a railroad from the valleys of northern California to Portland, Oregon. The law specified grants to the California & Oregon Railroad of California and a company to be designated by the Oregon Legislature, which was ultimately the Oregon & California Railroad. In 1870, the CP acquired the C&O, which commenced construction north from Roseville, California, on the CP (1869) line about 15 miles northeast of Sacramento, then followed the flat Sacramento River Valley northward to Redding, at the north end of the valley, where the tracks arrived in 1872. Construction stopped at Redding due to the expense of building through the Klamath Mountains and because of difficulties experienced by the O&C in progressing to the state line from the north. The CP ran several surveys to find the best route to Oregon from Redding, and their favored route was a route through Klamath Falls. However, the C&O had an agreement to join up with the Oregon & California Railroad, which took the more direct route south of Eugene, Oregon (north of map area), via Siskiyou Pass. In 1887, the difficult construction through the Klamath Mountains was completed when the C&O linked with the O&C in Ashland, Oregon (this location), about 15 miles north of the state line, and created the "Siskiyou Line," fulfilling the mandate of the 1866 law. By the time the railroad was completed in 1887, the C&O was merged into the O&E and these and the CP were merged into the Southern Pacific. The O&C had arrived in Ashland in 1884, and when the C&O finally arrived on December 17, 1887, SP vice-president Charles Crocker drove a golden spike in the Ashland railroad yards.

In 1905, with the Siskiyou Line unable to handle the volume of traffic, the SP and Union Pacific started construction of three new lines, two built in Oregon north of the map area and a third -- the California & Northeastern Railroad -- built northeastward from the Siskiyou Line at Weed, along the CP's original survey via Klamath Falls. The C&NE completed the line to Klamath Falls, Oregon, in May 1909, and reached Kirk, Oregon, north of the map area, in September 1912. Financial and legal issues delayed completion of the lines in Oregon, and finally in September 1926, the "Natron Cutoff" was completed to Eugene, Oregon (north of map area) and the Siskiyou Line became the secondary route between California and Oregon. Since 1994, the Central Oregon & Pacific Railroad operates the Siskiyou Line between Weed, California, over Siskiyou Pass to Eugene, Oregon, for local hauls of logs and lumber.

Southward view of the C&O (now CORP) line on the south side of Ashland. The C&O built northward (toward viewer) in 1887 and met the O&C a mile or so farther north. Today, a northbound CORP consist plies its secondary route, which was circumvented in 1926 by the Natron Cutoff. Note the bolted track of the once-important connection between California and Oregon.





Same train as previous.







Northward view of the C&O (now CORP) line on the south side of Ashland, a few steps north of previous location; this is the first switch to the Ashland yard where, in 1887, Charles Crocker drove the C&O – O&C golden spike.





Southward view of the CORP line, one mile northwest of previous location. This is the north end of the Ashland sidings, where four tracks converge to two tracks. The Ashland yard represents the meeting place of the C&O and O&C in 1887, fulfilling the mandate of the 1866 law, so this is the south end of the O&C.





A change in rail weight is welded together at the north end of the Ashland sidings.





Northward view of the O&C (now CORP) line at the same location as previous. The siding continues a quarter mile farther north, then a switch takes the line back to single track. Note the welded main line track (the siding is bolted), in contrast to the bolted main line at the south end of town (first photo).



One mile north of Ashland; northward view of the O&C (now CORP) crossing of historic U.S. 99, which parallels the C&O-O&C route in Oregon and California. Both routes have been supplanted by Interstate 5. Note the vintage SP lettering.