



In 1887, the Central Pacific-owned California & Oregon Railroad connected with the Oregon & California Railroad at Ashland, Oregon, to complete the first railroad between the namesake states. However, the route of the "Siskiyou Line" was not the CP's preferred route and in 1905, the Southern Pacific (successor to the CP) and Union Pacific cooperatively started the construction of three new lines, two built in Oregon north of the map area and a third built northeastward from the Siskiyou Line at Weed, California, to connect to the new Oregon lines via Klamath Falls (this location). The SP incorporated the California & Northeastern Railroad to build the line northeast from Weed; the C&NE reached Klamath Falls 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 line was completed to Eugene, Oregon (north of map area) and the Siskiyou Line over Siskiyou Pass became a secondary route between California and Oregon. The new SP line from Weed to Eugene became known as the "Cascade Line" or "Natron Cutoff" and made Klamath Falls an important railroading center, where three separate railroads ultimately built from the C&NE-built mainline.

This southward view of the C&NE (1912) (now UP), a few miles south of Klamath Falls, with 14,000-foot Mount Shasta volcano, in California, in the distance.



The first railroad to build from Klamath Falls was the Klamath Falls Municipal Railway, organized and owned by the City of Klamath Falls (not shown separately on the SWRRH Map). The City of Klamath Falls contracted Robert Strahorn to build the first 20 miles of the line to Dairy, Oregon, which was completed in early 1919. Also in 1919, Strahorn incorporated the Oregon, California & Eastern Railroad, with big plans to connect to other railroads, including the narrow-gauge Nevada-California-Oregon Railroad (1912n). Thus, in 1919, as soon as the Klamath Falls Municipal Railway was completed, Strahorn made a deal with the City, approved by voters, in which the first 20 miles of completed railroad was transferred to Strahorn's OC&E, which in turn had to build the next 20 miles of line to Sprague River (about 10 miles north of the map area). The OC&E arrived in Sprague River in September 1923 with a "golden spike" to mark the completion of the first 40 miles of the OC&E. The completion of the OC&E to Sprague River opened new stands of timber and loggers had already accumulated huge stacks of logs adjacent to the grade before any rails had been laid. The SP purchased the OC&E in 1925, and despite the OC&E's big plans, the OC&E was extended only 26 more miles from Sprague River eastward to Bly, Oregon, in 1927 (the SP's extension is entirely north of map area). Six different lumber companies built logging branch lines supplying logs to the OC&E. The largest and longest lasting logging branch was the Weyerhaeuser "Woods Line" extending 45 mi into forests north of the map area. Log carloads increased in the 1960's and in 1975 Weyerhaeuser upgraded the mill at Bly and purchased the OC&E from the SP. Business peaked in the late 1970's but dropped to less than half that number in the early 1980's as local forests became completely harvested. Weyerhaeuser ceased operations on 1 May 1990 and in 1992 tracks were removed and the line's right of way was given to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, which converted it into the OC&E Woods Line State Trail.

The rail cars in this photo are on the C&NE (1912)(now UP) line built through Klamath Falls in 1909, and the grade in the foreground is the original starting point of the OC&E (1923). The OC&E rails are now gone here but are still present just behind this view (see following pictures).



The steam is hot groundwater, common in this volcanically active area, encountered when this ditch was dug for soil to build the OC&E grade. Note the rails at the top of the OC&E grade; the rails are gone a few feet to the right (previous photo).



The current (2015) end of track on the OC&E (1923) grade, just a few feet from the active C&NE/UP mainline. There was a switch for a siding here, and double tracks extend about a half mile to the east, where the tracks end and the grade east is now the OC&E Woods State Trail.



Westward view of the OC&E abandoned tracks and the active C&NE (1912).



Southwestward view of the OC&E abandoned tracks and the active C&NE (1912) with stored cars for lumber products.



This is where the OC&E once joined the C&NE; the old bolted track is interpreted as the OC&E siding.



Westward view of the OC&E (1923) about 4 miles east of the C&NE (1912), now the OC&E Woods State Trail.







Eastward view of the OC&E grade, now the OC&E Woods State Trail, at the same location as previous photo. Note pavement patching where rails were removed.



The second railroad to build from Klamath Falls was the Modoc Northern Railroad, a non-operating subsidiary of the Southern Pacific, which built 160 miles of track from the SP's C&NE (1912) at Klamath Falls, Oregon, to Alturas, California, where it connected to the SP's recently standard-gauged Nevada-California-Oregon Railroad at Alturas, California, in 1929. In the 1970's, SP abandoned the N-C-O line south of Alturas, after which the MN existed only to access perlite traffic at the end of the N-C-O at Lakeview, Oregon, and local lumber traffic along the route.

This is an eastward view of the MN (1929) where it makes a wye with the C&NE (1912) in Klamath Falls.



The MN (1929) about 5 miles east of Klamath Falls.



The third and last railroad to build from Klamath Falls was the Great Northern Railway, which made its only foray into the Southwest map area when, in 1931, it completed a line southeast from Klamath Falls to Bieber, California, where it met the northward-building Western Pacific Railroad to complete the "Inside Gateway."

This northward view of the C&NE (1912)/SP/UP mainline catches a northbound mixed train crossing the connection from the GN Inside Gateway (1931).



Closer view of the C&NE (1912) at the far left (behind the "Bieber Line Junction" sign) as the northbound mixed train leaves the GN Inside Gateway (1931). Bieber is a lumber town near the location where the GN Inside Gateway (1931) meets the Western Pacific Inside Gateway (1931).



Westward view of the GN (now BNSF) Inside Gateway (1931) about 5 miles east of Klamath Falls, where it crosses over Oregon Highway 39.



Eastward view of the GN Inside Gateway route about 5 miles east of Klamath Falls. Note the viaduct that crosses the tracks in the distance; this is the "G Canal," a diversion of the Lost River.



Now we are back on the C&NE (1912) in downtown Klamath Falls, north of the three junctions and looking southward at the Amtrak Station and active passenger boarding. The station looks great, I was surprised to find out it was built in 1910.





Southward view of the Klamath Falls rail yard, steps from the depot.



Old sidings at Klamath Falls rail yard/depot.