



Public Relations Dept.

15 N. 400 West  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101  
(801) 350-3339

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD'S

IDAHO DIVISION

Rails first came to Idaho in 1874 from Utah in the form of a narrow gauge railroad started to serve Mormon farmers in Utah's Cache Valley.

The Utah Northern Railroad Co. was organized on August 23, 1871, by John Young, one of Mormon Church leader Brigham Young's sons, with the help of some eastern capitalists. The line reached Franklin, Idaho, from the Cache Valley in 1874.

John Young resigned from the line on October 19, 1875. Connecticut investor Joseph Richardson then worked to get Union Pacific interested in helping the line build to the Montana mines. On October 24, 1877, noted railroad figure Jay Gould, then influential in UP affairs, authorized work to begin from Franklin northward.

Union Pacific took the property over and reorganized it as the Utah & Northern Railway Company in 1878.

Richardson and Gould, along with members of the Mormon Church, built the line from Utah to Blackfoot, Idaho. Union Pacific completed the line north of Blackfoot, extending it into Butte, Montana by 1881. The line, which opened as a 3-foot narrow gauge, was converted to standard gauge in 1890.

Meanwhile, interest was growing in building a railroad from Idaho to the Pacific Northwest.

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By June, 1879 Sidney Dillon, president of Union Pacific, met with his directors and Northwest railroad builder Henry Villard to discuss a line to Oregon. Villard had been consolidating some small transportation companies in Oregon and wanted a link to the east.

In that year Villard incorporated the Oregon Railway & Navigation Co. which was to connect Oregon with the mining districts of Northern Idaho. That action convinced Dillon it was time to move the Union Pacific into Idaho and on to the coast.

Dillon named the new enterprise the Oregon Short Line which was incorporated on April 11, 1881. Work began from Union Pacific's line at Granger, Wyo. Fifty miles were completed in the first year. Rails reached Idaho on June 16, 1882 and by the end of that year 321 miles of track had been laid, reaching Shoshone.

A 70-mile branch line was built from Shoshone, with work starting on June 7, 1882 to the Wood River mining district. Track reached Hailey in the spring of 1884 and was completed to Ketchum on Aug. 16, 1884.

The main line progressed across southern Idaho, generally following the old Oregon Trail, bypassing Boise in 1884 because of the steep grade required to reach the Idaho capital. The O.S.L. line reached its terminus in Huntington, Ore. on Nov. 19, 1884 where it connected with the Oregon Railway and Navigation Co. for a through route to Portland.

Headquarters for O.S.L. was established in Pocatello,

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moving facilities from Eagle Rock (now Idaho Falls). On April 29, 1889 Pocatello was incorporated as a city.

Not long after the Oregon Short Line Railway Co. was completed, it was affected by a series of corporate events. On July 27, 1889, various Utah lines built by the Mormon Church with the aid of the Union Pacific were consolidated into one railroad--the Oregon Short Line & Utah Northern Railway Company. In October, 1893, both the Oregon Short Line & Utah Northern and the Union Pacific Railway went into receivership. On March 16, 1897 Oregon Short Line & Utah Northern was purchased by the new Oregon Short Line Railroad Company.

On July 1, 1897 Union Pacific Railway was reorganized as Union Pacific Railroad. By November the railroad was sold at auction in Omaha, Neb. to a group of investors that included E. H. Harriman. Harriman eventually emerged as the dominant figure in the group. During the receivership Union Pacific lost control of Oregon Short Line, but regained it by 1900. O.S.L. has been a wholly-owned subsidiary of Union Pacific Railroad ever since.

Meanwhile numerous efforts to lace Idaho with branch lines were started. These branch lines were absorbed by Oregon Short Line into the Union Pacific system.

Idaho Central Railway Company was incorporated on June 26, 1886. It was originally proposed to run from Nampa to Yaquina Bay, Ore. and from Nampa via Boise northwesterly to a junction with the Northern Pacific railroad.

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It was only constructed, however, from Nampa to Boise, 19 miles, with construction done 1886-1887. It was consolidated with the Oregon Short Line & Utah Northern on July 27, 1889.

The Boise City Railway and Terminal Company was incorporated on March 20, 1893. Construction was started at Perkins, the end of the branch line from Nampa to Boise, in April and completed to Boise by August of 1893. However the company never operated any part of the line which was turned over to the Oregon Short Line and Utah Northern Railway for operation and leased to Oregon Short Line on June 1, 1899.

An extension from Boise to the Barber mill was begun in December, 1904 and completed on March 27, 1905. The company was sold to O.S.L. on Oct. 31, 1910.

The next line proposed also was projected from Nampa. It was the Boise, Nampa and Owyhee Railway Company, Ltd. which was incorporated on Feb. 7, 1896. It built a line south from Nampa, across the Snake River to Murphy, about 30 miles. Plans were made to extend the line into the Owyhee Mountains to Silver City, then a booming mining camp, but the track never extended beyond Murphy. Construction was begun at Nampa on Aug. 1, 1896 and was completed to Murphy during 1899.

The property was transferred to the Idaho Northern Railway on Jan. 21, 1907. The Idaho Northern sold it to Oregon Short Line on Dec. 30, 1912.

The Idaho Northern Railway, which operated the Murphy line for a time, was incorporated on Dec. 14, 1897. After acquiring the railroad to Murphy, it built its own trackage between Nampa

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and Emmett. Work was begun in 1900 and completed on May 19, 1902. Grading of an extension into the mountains to the north was started on June 27, 1911 and completed to Smith's Ferry in the Payette River Canyon on Oct. 29, 1912. Grading of the remainder of the line from Smith's Ferry to Lakeport, near what is now McCall, was completed Aug. 11, 1913 which was subsequent to the purchase of the entire railroad by Oregon Short Line on Dec. 30, 1912. The O.S.L. completed track-laying to Lakeport on June 20, 1914.

Also reaching up into the central mountains was the Pacific & Idaho Northern, built in 1899 from Weiser on the O.S.L. main line near the Oregon border to Cambridge. Work to extend the line was done 1901, 1906 and finally in 1911 rails reached New Meadows.

The independent line became part of the Union Pacific system on Aug. 22, 1936. It is now called the New Meadows Branch.

At the turn of the century branch lines were built in the Kemmerer, Wyo. area to serve coal mines.

The Wyoming Western Railroad Company was formed on Sept. 14, 1900 and built a line from Myoer Junction via Glencoe Junction to Cumberland, a branch from Glencoe Junction to Glencoe and a branch from Glencoe to Elkol. In total some 23 miles of track were laid in the area between 1900 and July 15, 1908 to the spring of 1909.

The branch lines were conveyed to O.S.L. on Oct. 31, 1910. These are now known as the Cumberland Branch and Elkol Branch.

In the same area work started on a branch from North

Kemmerer to Quealy in June, 1907 and was completed on Jan. 12, 1908. O.S.L. also built a branch from Moyer Junction, Wyo. to Conroy between October, 1912 and June, 1913 using part of the old roadbed which had been constructed by the Oregon Short Line and Utah Northern Railway from Hams Fork to Conroy (formerly Adaville) in 1891 and abandoned in 1894.

In eastern Idaho railroad projects also began to flourish. The St. Anthony Railroad Company was organized on May 11, 1899. Its main line from Idaho Falls to St. Anthony through Orvin, Ucon and Sugar City was constructed between July 10, 1899 and the spring of 1900.

A branch line from Ucon northerly to Menan was built between July 1, 1905 and Dec. 30, 1905. A branch from Sugar City southerly to the Snake River was built from Aug. 1, 1905 to November, 1905 and the branch from Orvin east to Lincoln was laid during the summer of 1903.

The main line from Idaho Falls to St. Anthony was turned over to Oregon Short Line for operation in June, 1900 and the branch lines were all being operated by the O.S.L. by 1906.

The Oregon Short Line completed the branches started by the St. Anthony Railroad Company which came to be known as the West Belt and East Belt branches.

O.S.L. extended the branch from Ucon to Menan (the West Belt) on May 20, 1914, completing track-laying on Nov. 9, 1914. Track on the line's crossing of the Snake River bridge was laid on June 30, 1915.

The East Belt link was completed by O.S.L. between May 18,

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1914 and Dec. 21, 1914 from Lincoln to Belt, just north of St. Anthony.

Another shortline which quickly became a branch for the Oregon Short Line was the Salmon River Railroad Company. Organized on April 15, 1901, the firm built its main line from Blackfoot to Mackay with a branch from Moreland to Aberdeen. Work started in April, 1901 and was completed by March 1, 1902. Oregon Short Line took the property over before all work was done and assumed ownership on Oct. 31, 1910. It is now called the Mackay Branch.

Southern Idaho also became attractive to the railroad builders and the Minidoka and Southwestern Railroad Company was incorporated on Jan. 18, 1904. Starting out from the O.S.L. main line at Minidoka, the company built a line to Buhl through Twin Falls working from November, 1904 to 1907. Construction from Twin Falls south to Rogerson started on April 29, 1909 and was completed by spring 1910.

The Minidoka and Southwestern also began grading what eventually became known as the Northside Branch from Rupert west to a junction with the O.S.L. at Bliss in September, 1909. Track-laying was not completed when the O.S.L. took over on Oct. 31, 1910. The Minidoka and Southwestern also started grading from Burley to Oakley. The Oregon Short Line, however, completed the project now called the Oakley Branch. Track-laying from Rupert to Bliss was done by Aug. 11, 1911. The O.S.L. finished track on the Oakley Branch on May 24, 1911.

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In Southwestern Idaho a railroad with the ambitious title of San Francisco, Idaho and Montana Railway Company was incorporated on Dec. 1, 1904. Despite the title, right-of-way was obtained and surveyed for only 16 miles from the Oregon Short Line at Caldwell southwesterly to the Snake River.

Work started in 1907 and continued through 1908 by the Canyon Construction Company. The railway company defaulted and the construction company acquired the property on April 18, 1909. On June 16, 1909 the construction company deeded the property to the Oregon Short Line.

This line is now the Wilder Branch.

Another expansion of the rail network in that area was started by the Payette Valley Railroad Company which incorporated on Feb. 3, 1906. It built 10 miles of track in the spring and summer of 1906 from Payette easterly to New Plymouth. The property was sold to Oregon Short Line on Aug. 5, 1914.

The Payette Valley Extension Railroad Company was formed in May, 1910 to extend tracks from New Plymouth to Emmett. Construction was begun April 1, 1910 and completed to Emmett on Oct. 10, 1910. The property was sold to O.S.L. on Aug. 5, 1914. The trackage is now referred to as the Payette Branch.

In Southern Idaho the Salt Lake and Idaho Railroad Company was incorporated on Aug. 9, 1909 to extend a line from Burley to Marshfield, slightly more than nine miles. Work was completed on Oct. 24, 1912. This became part of the O.S.L. on Aug. 5, 1914 and is now the Raft River Branch.

Another railroad which was to become a branch of the O.S.L.

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was organized as the Central Idaho Railroad Company on Feb. 4, 1910. It built a line from Richfield on the O.S.L. Wood River Branch to Hill City, 58 miles. Work started on June 5, 1911 and moved slowly due to bad weather with completion of track-laying on Aug. 21, 1912.

The line was sold to Oregon Short Line Aug. 5, 1914. It is now called the Hill City Branch.

A line which was to become the longest of the branch lines of the Oregon Short Line started as the Malheur Valley Railroad, building a line from Ontario, Oregon to Vale in 1907. A branch was constructed from Vale to Brogan in 1910. Work resumed on the main portion in 1911 progressing across Oregon piecemeal, reaching Juntura in 1913, Riverside in 1915, Crane in 1916 and finally ending at Burns, Oregon, 156 miles from Ontario, in 1924.

The railroad was operated as the Oregon Eastern and the line is now commonly called the Burns Branch.

In the following years Oregon Short Line itself built even more branch lines in Idaho.

The Paris Branch, Montpelier to Paris in southeastern Idaho, was started on Oct. 5, 1910 and completed on June 22, 1911.

Trackage was extended from Firth in eastern Idaho on the Idaho Falls-Pocatello main line northeasterly to Goshen in 1917 and from Goshen to Ammon in 1918 and connecting with the East Belt Branch at Lincoln Junction in that same year.

The branch to West Yellowstone, Mont. was put into operation by Oregon Short Line from St. Anthony to Ingling, Idaho on June 15, 1906 and from Ingling to Warm River on June 6, 1908 and finally

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to Yellowstone on June 1, 1909.

Eastern Idaho trackage was further expanded from Ashton to Victor with grading started on Sept. 23, 1910 and continuing until Oct. 31, 1910 when the line, organized as the Yellowstone Park Railroad, became part of the O.S.L. which continued construction, completing work on Dec. 18, 1912.

The last of the branch lines built in that era were the Homedale Branch and Grace Branch. The Homedale Branch runs from Nyssa, Ore. on the main line to Homedale, Idaho on the west side of the Snake River. Work was done 1911-13 with track reaching Homedale on Dec. 30, 1912 and extended to Marsing in 1922. The branch from Alexander to Grace was built April 25, 1913 to Nov. 23, 1913.

The Twenties saw even more expansion with the formation of the Idaho Central Railroad to extend tracks from the O.S.L. at Rogerson, Idaho south to Wells, Nev. The effort was under O.S.L. direction and construction began in 1924. A celebration marking completion of the line was held in Wells on Feb. 15, 1926.

In that era when a large railroad such as O.S.L. wanted to build a branch line, it formed a separate company to do the job. This protected the stockholders of the parent line if the new branch was unprofitable. The UP built many branches this way.

The O.S.L., however, built the branch to Conda from Soda Springs in eastern Idaho under its own auspices for the Anaconda Copper Mining Co. in 1920-21.

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One of the more notable programs of the Twenties was the opening of the Boise Cut-off in 1925. The new line left the main line at Orchard, running northward up to the capital city and rejoining the main line to the west via the branch line from Nampa.

The first through passenger train reached Boise on April 16, 1925, triggering a massive celebration and parade. The beautiful passenger depot, with its Spanish architecture and park, was opened on that day, also. The building remains a landmark on the UP system.

One of Union Pacific's most unique projects in Idaho was development of the Sun Valley resort.

It was conceived in 1935 by Averell Harriman, then chairman of the board of directors of Union Pacific Railroad. A site was located in 1936 in a valley of the Sawtooth Mountain Range just north of Ketchum on the north end of the Wood River Branch. Ground was broken in April, 1936. In the following years the resort became famous as a winter playground for movie stars and other celebrities, particularly during the 1940s and 50s.

Union Pacific Railroad sold the resort in 1964.

Railroad construction in later years in Idaho has included the Gay Branch in 1949, a 22-mile line built from the Pocatello-Idaho Falls main line near Fort Hall eastward to a mining area.

The most recent addition was the construction of the Dry Valley Branch off the Conda Branch to Dry Valley, a distance of 18 miles. It was built in 1965 by UP for El Paso Gas Products Co.

As economic conditions changed over the years some of the branches have been trimmed.

The coal mine branches in the Kemmerer, Wyo. area were cut back beginning in 1926. Part of the tiny Blazon Branch was cut in 1926, 1954 and finally eliminated in 1964. The main branch, the line to Cumberland, was cut back in 1930 to a stub. Some of the line was later rebuilt to serve as a mining spur. The rest of it was abandoned in 1964. The Glencoe Junction to Glencoe line was abandoned in 1964 also. The Conroy Branch from Moyer Junction to Conroy was abandoned in 1932. The Kemmerer Branch was abandoned beyond milepost 6.5 in 1964.

In Idaho the first line cut came with the abandonment of the Paris Branch in 1943. The Nampa-Murphy line was reduced in 1947, ending near Murphy on the north side of the Snake River.

Other changes in trackage are more recent. A portion of the West Belt Branch from Edmonds to Menan was abandoned on Sept. 26, 1977. The Wells Branch was abandoned from Rogerson south to Wells, Nev. on Aug. 29, 1978.

In 1979 about six miles of track on the end of the New Meadows Branch from Rubicon to New Meadows was abandoned on May 9. In July 22 miles of the Goshen Branch between Firth and Lincoln Junction (Ammon) and the Brogan Branch in Oregon from Vale to Jamieson was abandoned. And in November of 1979 the Yellowstone Branch from Ashton to West Yellowstone, Mont. was abandoned, a distance of about 56 miles.

About 34 miles of the northern end of the Idaho Northern branch from Cascade to McCall was abandoned on May 14, 1980.

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About six miles of track was abandoned on Sept. 22, 1980 on the East Belt Branch from Newdale to Belt.

On Sept. 23, 1981 the end 15 miles of the Teton Valley Branch from Tetonia to Victor was abandoned.

Today Idaho is one of Union Pacific Railroad's major sources of originated traffic which is primarily farm, mineral and forest products.

Major terminals on the Idaho Division are Pocatello, site of a large freight classification yard, car shops and salvage operations; and Nampa, hub of the many branch lines in western Idaho

The Idaho Division connects with other UP lines at McCammon in southwestern Idaho, Granger in western Wyoming and Huntington in southeastern Oregon.

Important traffic today on the Idaho Division main line consists of general merchandise on high-speed "piggyback" and container trains, grain bound for export to Asia, imported goods eastbound and forest and agricultural products.

## Chronology of events of Union Pacific in Idaho

- Aug. 23, 1871---Utah Northern organized.  
Oct. 24, 1877---Jay Gould authorized work from Franklin northward.  
April 3, 1878---Utah Northern reorganized by UP as Utah & Northern  
Railway.  
1881-----Utah Northern completed to Butte, Mont.  
April 11, 1881--Oregon Short Line incorporated.  
June 16, 1882---O.S.L. tracks reach Idaho.  
1882-----O.S.L. tracks reach Shoshone.  
1884-----Ketchum Branch completed.  
Nov. 19, 1884---O.S.L. reaches Huntington, Ore.  
1887-----Nampa-Boise line built.  
July 27, 1889---Utah lines consolidated into Oregon Short Line &  
Utah Northern Railway Company.  
1893-----Perkins-Boise extension built.  
July 1, 1897---Union Pacific Railway reorganized as Union Pacific  
Railroad, UP loses control of O.S.L.  
November, 1897--E. H. Harriman buys Union Pacific.  
1899-----Nampa-Murphy line built.  
1900-----UP regains control of O.S.L.  
1900-----Cumberland Branch (Wyo.) completed.  
1900-----Idaho Falls to St. Anthony line completed.  
1902-----Nampa-Emmett line built.  
1902-----Mackay Branch and Aberdeen Branch completed.  
1903-----Orbin to Lincoln Branch built.  
1905-----Barber Branch built.  
1905-----Ucon to Menan Branch completed.  
1905-----Sugar City to Snake River line completed.  
1906-----Payette to New Plymouth completed.  
1907-----Twin Falls Branch completed.  
1908-----Kemmerer (Wyo.) Branch completed.  
1908-----Wilder Branch completed.  
1909-----Glencoe, Elkol (Wyo.) branches completed.  
1909-----West Yellowstone Branch completed.  
1910-----Twin Falls to Rogerson completed.  
1910-----New Plymouth to Emmett completed.  
1911-----New Meadows Branch completed.  
1911-----North Side Branch Rupert to Bliss completed.  
1911-----Oakley Branch completed.  
1911-----Paris Branch completed.  
1912-----Raft River Branch completed.  
1912-----Hill City Branch completed.  
1912-----Victor Branch completed.  
1912-----Homedale Branch completed.  
1913-----Conroy (Wyo.) Branch completed.  
1913-----Grace Branch built.  
1914-----McCall Branch completed.  
1914-----Ucon-Menana line extended to Menan (West Belt).  
1914-----East Belt completed from Lincoln to Belt.  
1915-----West Belt link completed over Snake River.

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- 1917-----Firth to Goshen completed.
- 1918-----Goshen to Ammon and East Belt link completed.
- 1921-----Conda Branch completed.
- 1922-----Homedale to Marsing extension built.
- 1924-----Burns Branch completed.
- 1925-----Boise Cut-off opened.
- April 16, 1925---Boise receives first through train, opens new depot.
- 1926-----Blazon Branch (Wyo.) cut.
- 1930-----Cumberland branch cut to stub.
- 1932-----Conroy Branch abandoned Moyer Jct. to Conroy.
- 1936-----Sun Valley resort started.
- 1943-----Paris Branch abandoned.
- 1947-----Nampa to Murphy line cut to north side of Snake River.
- 1949-----Gay Branch built.
- 1964-----Glencoe to Glencoe Jct. abandoned.
- 1964-----Blazon Branch abandoned.
- 1964-----Kemmerer Branch abandoned beyond M.P. 6.5.
- 1965-----Dry Valley Branch built.
- 1977-----Edmonds to Manan abandoned.
- 1978-----Rogerson to Wells abandoned.
- 1979-----Rubicon to New Meadows abandoned.
- 1979-----Goshen Branch between Firth and Lincoln Jct. abandoned.
- 1979-----Yellowstone Branch from Ashton to West Yellowstone  
abandoned.
- 1980-----Cascade to McCall abandoned.
- 1980-----Newdale to Belt (East Belt) abandoned.
- 1981-----Victor branch Tetonia to Victor abandoned.