A PUBLIC SPIRIT
George H. Atkinson’s Written Legacy

Transcribed and with a foreword by
Donald J. Sevetson
Our treasure lies in the beehive of our knowledge. We are perpetually on the way thither, being by nature [...] honey gatherers of the mind.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The “Bee Tree”, an iconic ivy-covered tree that stood on the Pacific University campus for many years, was already old and hollow when pioneer Tabitha Brown arrived in Oregon in 1846. Mrs. Brown started a home for orphans that would grow into Pacific University. According to the Forest Grove News-Times, the tree was “said to have housed a swarm of bees who furnished the little old lady with honey which she sold to buy provisions for her orphan children.”
Occasional Writings on the Railroad

George Atkinson’s family was significantly involved in railroads. His father, William, was a founding director of the Vermont Central. Older brother Charles, of Moline, Illinois, played a key role in beginning the Chicago and Rock Island. The town of Atkinson, Illinois, thirty miles east of Moline, is named for him. Even George’s son married into a railroading family when he wed Clara Chamberlain. Her father, Horatio Nelson Chamberlain, had laid out two rail lines. One, the Massawippi Railroad, connected Newport, Vermont with Sherbrooke, Quebec. The other, the Connecticut and Passumpsic Rivers Railroad, connected Newport, Vermont with Wells River, Vermont.

George was convinced that railroads would be the key to the growth and economic development of the Pacific Northwest.

The first transcontinental railroad, the Union Pacific/Central Pacific, extended across the midline of the U.S. from Omaha, Nebraska to Sacramento, California. It had been completed in 1866, with the driving of the “Golden Spike” near Promontory Point, Utah. Congressional legislation that authorized it also gave initial support to the concept of parallel transcontinental railroads across the northern and southern tiers of states.

By 1873 the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPRR) was well under way, with lines completed from Duluth, Minnesota to Bismarck, North Dakota and from Kalama to Olympia, in Washington. Everything came to a halt, though, when a massive national financial crisis was triggered by the sudden collapse of the financial empire of Jay Cooke, lead financier of the NPRR.
Later in the decade, as the economy began to grow again, there was strong interest in completion of the railroad (as well as substantial opposition). George submitted several articles to the *Oregonian*. Four of them appear here.

An additional railroad article is also found here, following the earlier four. It, too, was published in the *Oregonian*. George had secured a seat on the first passenger train to travel east from Portland through the Columbia Gorge. When the train arrived at its destination, Dayton, Washington, he telegraphed the story to Portland.
The Northern Pacific Railroad

Source:
The Oregonian Archives
Multnomah County Library
April 4, 1876

EFFECT OF THE NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD AND ITS BRANCH TO PUYALLUP COAL MINES UPON THE MANUFACTURING INTERESTS OF THE NORTHWEST

The first effect of the Central Pacific railroad was to produce excessive speculations in San Francisco lots, and in California lands.

Its second effect was to overrun California with Eastern goods, sold mostly by sample, among country merchants, thus tending to dry up the city trade and depress city property.

The third effect was to arouse the capitalists and business men of San Francisco to protect themselves at once by establishing and encouraging all kinds of manufactory, and thus give employment and the means of living to all the people, to shut out Eastern goods by competition, and furnish a home market for their own productions, while sending an increasing margin of manufactured as well as farm and mine products for the markets of the world.

The fourth effect was to bring in a large supply of all kinds of skilled laborers, while increasing greatly the employment of the unskilled—the women and girls, the boys and the Chinese in all manner of trades; also the importation of all varieties of the most improved machinery. Under this fourth head, too, is the great increase in importation of raw materials, such as coal, iron, hides, jute, cotton, lumber, and some classes of provisions.

The fifth effect has been to stimulate by a surer market at home a larger variety of agricultural productions, thus raising the price of farm lands to the former speculation prices, and increasing immigration over one hundred per cent, and carrying city property
steadily and strongly above the rates in 1868-9, those years of special excitement in such property.

The sixth effect has been to make San Francisco one of the great manufacturing centers of the world, able to compete with many classes of goods in any market, while excluding others from their own. The editor of the *Journal of Commerce* says that San Francisco produced in 1874 nearly $300 worth of manufactured goods per capita, and over $2,000 for every artisan employed. Three years ago, in 1871, the manufactures of the city equaled $52,603,475 in value, besides the value of gold and silver refined. The exhibit for 1874 was $67,333,930 —a little over $2,600 for every artisan employed. The exhibit for 1875—the panic years—was $63,000,000.

The eighth effect has been to overcome every natural hindrance to the growth of the business of San Francisco and vicinity, by the use of capital to supply the raw materials for goods of the motive powers. Their great want is iron, coal, and water. By every means and at any cost they propose to get these things cheap, and thus compete forever with the world.

Reasoning from these facts, the building of the Northern Pacific Railroad ought to produce like effects at its termini—Portland and Tacoma. The success of the first is proof that a second and a third continental road will bring about similar results. The fact that manufactures can be built up on the sand hills of San Francisco and the State made rich and populous by connecting that spot with all the interior and the East by the iron track, and with all parts of Western America and Eastern Asia and Polynesia by steamer lines, is proof also that a like result can be attained for Oregon and Washington and for the cities which enjoy such facilities of commerce. The experience of San Francisco may be ours in the way of sudden speculations in lots and land, in the influx of goods as well as population. We may not have the same capital, but what there is will be compelled to be invested so as to employ labor and be productive. The town or city that refuses to use its means and employ its people, preferring to raise and export the raw materials,
and buy goods, will decline relatively if not absolutely. It is to be hoped that our pupilage of a quarter of a century in buying furniture, clothing, hardware, implements, glassware, crockery, groceries and many kinds of provisions from other people's labor, and paying them in gold and silver, wheat, lumber and wool, leaving us out of funds and out of work much of the time, draining our soil and exhausting our resources, and enriching only those merchants who make the exchanges and those bankers who loan the money, will be a lesson that we shall not continue to learn for the next twenty-five years. Oregon and Washington have exported over $28,000,000 of gold since 1848.

The manufacturers of San Francisco have proven that almost every variety of goods can be made at a profit even there, although they have to buy water, wood, lumber, coal and iron. They find that in the future these materials must be at rates common in the East and in England, in order to hope for success. Their extending commerce with the countries that furnish the raw materials is their mode of supply, yet they must contend at a disadvantage with any of those countries that furnish the raw materials and manufacture them also.

Oregon and Washington have this opportunity if they choose to use it. They have the lumber for the finest furniture, as the factories show, and also for all manner of farming implements. They have the iron and the coal in abundance. It has been found that they export to San Francisco increasing quantities of these articles. The Seattle coal displaces for steam and domestic purposes that of other mines. The Puyallup coal, as tested, proves superior to that from Nanaimo for gas, for coke and for steam. For the forge and steel welding it equals the Cumberland. The anthracite veins thus far found give promise to be a smelting coal, so much needed in place of the Lehigh. No doubt iron will be found in the same vicinity.

On Guemes Island, in Puget Sound, a copper and an iron ore have been found, but the tests of quality and quantity have not yet been fully made. The iron ore bed of Oswego has enough in sight to last a
half score of years, Its quality ranks highest in the market. Oregon and Washington furnish the lumber for the markets of the Pacific, and possibly it may be sent to Atlantic and European ports.

The wool product of Oregon in the last fifteen years was 18,000,000 of pounds. That of Washington Territory was 3,000. The total wool product of the Pacific States and Territories was, from 1855 to 1875, inclusive, as per record of the San Francisco Journal of Commerce, 321,570,223 pounds, California having produced of the amount 274,224,433 pounds and exported to the East 249,668,890 pounds, for which she received $53,818,442. They cannot compete in its manufactories with the Eastern factories. In this Oregon and Washington have the advantage. Our facilities for the supply of wood can be superior to that of Eastern manufacturers. Our water powers and means of supporting operatives are superior to theirs.

These facts have been tested by the small manufactories in operation. With a railroad connection eastward, the supply of skilled labor and the best machinery can be easily obtained. Our unemployed men and women, boys and girls, will furnish a ready supply of help. In the sharp competitions of labor our manufacturers have the same opportunities as those of California. As it is now, we send off the wool at twenty-five cents a pound and buy it back in clothing at $5 to $15 per pound, paying the bonus to the eastern laborer and capitalist.

We export hides to the amount of a few thousand dollars, and import leather, boots and shoes to the amount of more than a million dollars annually. We send away hides, paying freights and tanners, while the best hemlock forests go to decay near Astoria. Our fields will raise the choicest flax, but we buy over $300,000 worth of poor jute bags that perish quickly and waste a large per cent of their cost of grain, while we are paying for them with six or seven cargoes of the choicest of our wheat.

Our grain and lumber are shipped to foreign ports in foreign vessels, compelling us to pay one-half their value, for the freights, or which is the same, lose half of the price. While our ship timber is cut down
for cord wood, or burnt off to clear the land. We exhaust the soils, and destroy their natural resources for the sake of a mere pittance, instead of putting labor and skill upon that which will return lumber and riches, and develop the industry, economy, intelligence and virtue of the youth of the land.

Since the overland railroad has been in operation, the Californians have been reversing this suicidal process and have now got well on in the high road of sure prosperity. They make all people pay tribute to their skill and enterprise. Their contact with the Eastern manufacturer daily by train and telegraph stimulates them to an intense and steady activity not known in the days of mere gold mining and speculation. If we get into that contact by the completion of the Northern Pacific R.R. we shall either wake up and go to work or be run over. Plodding and guessing, and ‘waiting for something to turn up’ will not do by the side of the men who see the finest furniture in a maple, an ash, a cedar or an alder; or by the side of the men who see a grand ship in one of those tall firs, or by the side of him who sees the linen factories of Dundee and Belfast springing up near these waving fields of flax.

In the manufacturing centers of the East and of England the great want is material to work upon and good food and home comforts for the workers. These are the costly things. The sight of forests like ours, of waterfalls so high and constant, of iron mines and coal mines so near at hand and so exhaustless, of wheat fields and orchards so luxuriant, of an ocean so vast for commerce, and of rivers and bays so convenient, means to such men the most varied and most extensive plans and enterprises. Cheap lands invite immigration; climates favorable for work invite those whose life is given to toil. Regions little infected with malaria will be sought by those worn with the heat and miasma of eastern and southern climes. Such are the prospects opened by the railroad to the northwest coast.

To illustrate more definitely these business prospects, the following items taken from the San Francisco Journal of Commerce of January 12, 1876 are appended:
OCCASIONAL WRITINGS ON THE RAILROAD

THE COAL DEMAND AND SUPPLY

Imports (in tons) and receipts at San Francisco for the past two years are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>(1874)</th>
<th>(1875)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>130,281</td>
<td>138,164</td>
<td>268,445</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>31,981</td>
<td>65,634</td>
<td>97,615</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>28,843</td>
<td>30,126</td>
<td>58,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
<td>47,982</td>
<td>62,339</td>
<td>110,321</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL FOREIGN</td>
<td>242,087</td>
<td>297,043</td>
<td>539,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellingham Bay</td>
<td>17,949</td>
<td>10,440</td>
<td>28,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coos Bay</td>
<td>48,451</td>
<td>29,078</td>
<td>77,529</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>7,840</td>
<td>59,327</td>
<td>67,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Townsend</td>
<td>. . .</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>. . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PAC. COAST</td>
<td>73,920</td>
<td>98,881</td>
<td>172,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>316,007</td>
<td>395,924</td>
<td>711,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Diablo</td>
<td>205,256</td>
<td>142,808</td>
<td>348,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RECEIPTS OF COAL (IN TONS) FOR 16 YEARS, 1860 TO 1875, INCLUSIVE

Cumberland, 107,603; Anthracite, 448,053; English, 413,100; Australian, 869,534; Chile, 75,523; Vancouver Island, 307,880; Coos Bay, 252,932; Bellingham Bay, 196,817; Russia, 440; Seattle, 102,695; Rocky Mountain, 4,270; Mount Diablo, 1,591,914.

The increasing production of Pacific Coast coal diminishes the prices and imports of foreign coal. The value of the coal deposits of the Pacific Coast is just now known. The increase of Australian for 1875 was 8,883 tons. Prices $8.50 to $9.00—$2 less than at the beginning of the year. Imports of English and Scotch increased 50,653 tons during the year. Imports of Eastern increased 1,283. Cumberland held its own. Lehigh got scarce and rose to $37 per
ton; new supplies have reduced it to $22. Receipts from all Pacific Coast, except Seattle, have declined: Bellingham Bay, 7,000 tons; Coos Bay, 17,000; Mount Diablo, 62,448 tons. The owners expect to ship 100,000 tons of Seattle coal this year. The Renton supplies its shareholders at $8 per ton. Australian and English quoted, to arrive at $8.50 to $9; Scotch splint, $10 to $10.50; Pittston egg, $18; Cumb., $14 in bulk, $15 in casks; Lehigh, $22; Pacific Coast, $10; Coos Bay, $6.25; Mt. Diablo, $8.50; Nanaimo, $10; Wellington, $10 to $10.50; Seattle, to $10.50.

In January, 1874, the editor of the San Francisco *Journal of Commerce* remarked:

Among the drawbacks to manufactures in San Francisco is the lack of certain descriptions of material. Dear coal and dear iron have long stood in the way of the manufacturer and do so still, the cost of the former ranging from $8.50 to $17 per ton, averaging $12, and the price of the latter at the present time being $16 per ton for jobbing lots. The dearness of good coal is not so much felt as (?) by and by. The foundries in 1874 used 9,256 tons, of which 4,250 tons, used for smelting, was Lehigh, and 4,296 tons was Mt. Diablo, used for steam. Most of the imported coal is used by glass and steamship companies and for domestic purposes. But as we advance in the manufacture of articles from iron and steel, we shall require cheap and good smelting and steam coal. With cheap iron ore the way to produce iron for pig and railroad, for home use and for exportation the way is opened unto us, as also the manufacture not only of millions of dollars worth of hardware, which we yearly use, but also the manufacture of supplies for every nation bordering on the Pacific. Coal and iron—the two main factors of industrial progress now-a-days, we possess in sufficient abundance. Of wool we produced 40,000,000 pounds last year, It is increasing at the rate of 33% per annum. In a dozen years we shall largely produce flax, cotton and the sugar beet. The acclimatization of the blue gum promises abundant supply of hardwood lumber, while the leather of California is among the best in the world.

The question of cheap water supply is of particular interest to the manufacturers, as some of them pay over $1,000 a year for this
article, but most of the establishments south of Market and east of First Streets have solved the question for themselves, procuring all the water they require from artesian wells.

The labor employed in the manufactories of the city represents, with those dependent on it for support and the trades people patronized, at least one-third of the whole population. The total number of hands employed last year was 24,496, of which 10,813 were Chinese. Of the rest, 6,713 were white men, 2,697 white women and girls, and 1,483 white boys. The wages amounted to $11,251,943, or about $500 per annum. The average white man employed had about $700 per annum. Skilled artisans got from $3 to $5 per day.

With such an outlook before them, we may surely follow the California pioneer manufacturers on the Pacific. Their success may be in part ours. Their failures may admonish us. Their materials can be exchanged for ours, and jointly the industries along the coast may use the resources so bountifully provided in promoting the welfare of all the people.

G.H. ATKINSON

January 8, 1878

A FACT ABOUT OVERLAND RAILROADS

The C.P.R.R. have spent fifteen millions of dollars—more or less—to head off Col. T. Scott’s Texas P.R.R. and control its rates, and direct its traffic to San Francisco. They have gained the point. Their Southern P.R.R. is in fact the continuation of the Texas and Southern P.R.R. San Diego was its objective point in Col. Scott’s plan. That city can be now only a side station. Gov. Stanford & Co. have bagged the game. San Francisco is the real terminus. The business of Arizona must pay tribute to that city. All traffic, freight and passengers across the continent on that route must conform to the rates of the C.P. and U.P.R.R. Col. Scott is understood to yield, and to unite now with Mr. Huntington to get the Texas P.R.R. bill through Congress.
A Public Spirit

The Southern members of Congress are a unit for the measure. If they do not ask too large a money subsidy their bill will pass. The second railroad will soon be completed across the continent. The Texas Pacific railroad will own the eastern end, and the Central Pacific will own and operate the western end, and dictate rates. The Union Pacific railroad own and operate the eastern end of the present overland road and the C.P.R.R. own and operate the western end. They control the U.P.R.R., so that the latter cannot extend their own road to the Pacific ocean at any point. The C.P. Co. do and will control the Texas R.R. so that they cannot extend their railroad to the Pacific ocean at any point. Side or branch railroads, say to Dakota, the Black Hills, Montana and Colorado and Utah and Idaho along and against the Union Pacific railroad route will be allowed to them to buy or build and control.

Side or branch railroads along and against the route of the Texas Pacific will be allowed to that railroad company to buy or build and control. Roads to Arkansas, Indian Territory, New Mexico, Colorado, south Utah on the north and the provinces of Mexico on the south must and will pay tribute and be more or less controlled by Col. Scott’s road. A branch road to western Mexico must and will be built by the C.P.R.R. This latter company is pressing eastward so as to control Arizona and get a large per cent of all branch roads north and south.

It already owns and controls nearly the entire system of branch railroads in California. It owns or controls all in Nevada. It proposes a branch railroad to the Columbia River at or near The Dalles, along that comparatively level route east of the Cascade Mountains. It wants timber, and it will thus have a sure and abundant timber supply. It will tap the upper Columbia basin, as the Northern Utah narrow gauge railroad will tap Montana, and will divert the trade of both regions to their route and to San Francisco on the west, and to their eastern terminus. The plan is to leave the Willamette Valley to its ocean route, which will soon be in control of the C.P.R.R.

The only competing line to this almost completed scheme is the N.P.R.R. The only rival to the grand consolidation plan of these
C.P.R.R. magnates is the N.P.R.R. company. If they can divide the counsels of the people of Oregon and Washington, and Montana and Idaho, they will have the whole northwestern Pacific, as they have the whole southwestern Pacific under permanent tribute in themselves. San Francisco will be the sole metropolis on the entire Pacific coast. There will be no large city on the Columbia or on Puget Sound. Our goods will be imported under taxes and commissions paid to outside companies.

It is a business operation worthy of the C.P.R.R. Co. They work for money, not for glory. They work for money, not for glory. They work for money, not for glory. They show wise forecast. They work with energy and skill and unchanging purpose. We admire and honor their pluck. We commend their wisdom. Seeing their opportunity, they would be unwise not to use it. Knowing the present crisis, they do not rest, and they will not rest until they have closed the gap and shut out the N.P.R.R. from the coast and compelled it to own and hold only the eastern end of the northern overland railroad, while they hold or prevent the western end. This is the effect if not the aim of the Mitchell bill.

G.H. ATKINSON

March 8, 1878

THE RAILROAD SITUATION
THE N.P.R.R. CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MISSOURI AND COLUMBIA RIVERS

It was the plan of the government to aid three transcontinental railroads. Congress granted a large sum and sent surveyors to explore the three best routes for the northern, the central and southern proposed roads, and to make preliminary surveys and profile outlines of the gradients of the same—to collect all possible facts about these several regions, their climate and their resources. Able scientific men were employed in this initial work; one of them was Gov. I.I. Stevens who, as general in the Union army, lost his life in the war.
In about two years their reports were received and published by the government, which was a further pledge to the people of its purpose.

The Central road received very large government subsidies—partly as a war measure and partly in view of the supposed difficulties and the unknown facilities and helps along this route. The southern road was arrested by the civil strife. Since that is over government can aid it now. As a stronger bond of the union and peace, it will add force to the original argument for its construction.

Doubtless it will be built on the Texas Pacific or on the Southern Pacific, or as a union of the two.

To the North Pacific railroad was granted a large land subsidy. It began to build on a grand scale at both ends of the route. Confident of means to finish the road, and in full faith that the government would trust and aid their plans, its builders loaned their money and their credit. The sudden and widespread bankruptcy in 1873 involved them. In 1875 all their property, with 550 miles of finished road and the land earned and their ‘corporate life’ passed into the hands of their creditors, the bondholders, who became the new board of stockholders. The lost years caused by this bankruptcy and the honest transfer of all assets to the creditors, took most of the time granted by Congress to finish the whole road. To do it and get more funds they must have more time, and they have asked Congress to extend their time. The Senate, last Congress, by a large majority, voted the extension. The house, by a majority of 30, would have done the same but Speaker Randall ruled it to be a new grant or subsidy—which, by the rules, required discussion, and carried it too far down the list to be reached during the electoral commission excitement (ed.: the reference is to the disputed 1876 presidential election).

THE SOLE GROUND OF OPPOSITION

Meanwhile the opposition to subsidies documented as reported by the C.P.R.R. and the U.P.R.R.—has put in peril both the Southern and the Northern roads.
CONFIDENCE BETRAYED

The people along both lines are liable to be defrauded. Pioneers moved along the routes of both at the risk of Indian wars—which they have had—and invested all their means to make farms and houses in the wilderness. During the Nez Perce War last summer in Whitman and Stevens counties and in northern Idaho the people fled to the towns for safety, leaving houses, gardens, wheat fields, stock, butter in the churn and flour in the sack, utensils, beds, trunks of clothing, all they had on earth, the savings of years, and the hope of the future. Some lost all. (Line missing) . . . until their capture, removed all danger, and let most of those families return to their homes. Over 3,000 more settlers moved into that region of natural wheat fields last autumn. They may this year be followed by as many more.

THEY RELY ON THE N.P.R.R. CO. TO TRANSPORT THEIR GRAIN TO MARKET

After the middle of August the Snake River is too low for navigation. Their grain must lie over at a loss, or they must raise stock to get money for the comfort of their families and to pay taxes. They represent the long waiting pioneers in Montana and Dakota.

The N.P.R.R. pledges to connect the Missouri and the Columbia—the two great highways of commerce—at their first step, and then finish the roads to both oceans. It pledges to sell its lands to be thus earned, at $2.50 per acre. It protects the settlers in all their rights and hopes. It inspires their confidence. If it is defeated, those settlers must suffer more than any others. They must also remain in peril of new Indian outbreaks, which the road built would prevent. If Congress is misled to load the new bill so as to destroy it, those settlers, with all those in this northwest, will be defrauded of their just expectations and their rights.
August 13, 1878

THE OLYMPIA AND TENINO RAILROAD

This enterprise was thought impossible two years ago. When the plan was completed and the county bonds pledged for the iron and rolling stock, and when the citizens had graded most of the road bed, many said it would not be finished, and more distrusted its value as an investment to the city and the county. A few men, five years ago, saw that Olympia and Thurston County could not afford to do without it.

The N.P.R.R. had located its terminus at Tacoma. In order to keep a fair portion of the business, which had centered at Olympia, and in order to grow with the sure growth of Washington—which must soon be a sovereign state—this enterprise was a sine qua non. They felt that it must be pushed on and made tributary to their own welfare, and thus to that of the public. It is the old story, which all sections must learn, that every trunk line railroad must have branch lines, as much as a tree must have branches in all directions. The vital sap of the trunk and branch is the business, which flows to and from every settlement, village and city. The only question is that of economy of transit. Time and power are the chief factors in the problem. It is the wagon against the railroad car. It is here a trip of two to six days, hauling a load of grain to market from Tenino or the Chehalis valley, and a load of goods back over rough, dusty or muddy roads, at a cost to the farmer of $2 a day at the least, instead of hiring the railroad to do the job in one day or two at one fourth the cost. In the former case you wear out your teams, wagons and harnesses on the road and spend money every day. In the latter your team is at work on the farm, opening new fields and cultivating the old ones better, while you board and lodge at home. The iron horse does your marketing cheaper and quicker than you can do it, and the $5 you save per week you can add to the value of your acres and the increase of your comforts.

This branch road was opened August 1st, when the first passenger train went through to Tenino. About 50 men, in small gangs, are
leveling up, lining and ballasting the track. A powerful engine, named the E.N. Ouimette, for the gentleman who has been among the foremost in the enterprise, does the construction and train work, making two trips per day between Olympia and Tenino. Side tracks and turntables are to be made and cars completed immediately. The engineers have shown skill in the selection of the route and the construction of the track. When completed the road will be smooth, of easy grade, capable of a large freight and a quick transit business.

THE USE OF OUR NATIVE WOODS

The passenger car was built at Tumwater and furnished with the native ash and curly maple, shellacked and varnished, showing a neatness, beauty and durability far superior to every style of graining or painting. Too much cannot be said in favor of the use of our native woods in house finishing and furnishing. Their cheapness now commands their use. Their rich and ever-varying contrasts in texture of growth and coloring furnish a constant and pleasant picture in the hall—the parlor, the dining room, the library and the chamber, as well as in the public offices, steamboats and railroad cars. Examples of them can be seen in the finishing in part and furnishing of the Palace Hotel in San Francisco; in the custom house at Portland, mostly done in Oregon ash; and in the fine and tasteful furniture made by O.F.M. Co. for the O.B.N. Co.’s magnificent steamer Wide West. It is to be hoped that the O.S.N. Co. will finish wholly as well as furnish one of their new steamers with our native woods. Oil and shellac and varnish will give all the protection which painting and graining now do. The public taste is changing from dark mahogany and black walnut to the lighter colored ash, maple, cedar, spruce, oak, poplar or cotton wood and alder. It is a pity that farmers along the Cowlitz, Toutle, White, Chehalis, Willamette, and Columbia rivers have been burning off those trees to clear the land for grain, hay and vegetables. Soon every tree thus wasted would bring more money than the acre on which it grows. Such lumber sells now in market at an average of $30 per M.

A system of narrow gauge railroads running into our numerous valleys will bring those products of the forest, with those of the fields and orchard and pasture, into the manufacturing centres and
marts of trade. The Seattle and White River railroad is one pioneer in this business. The Olympia and Tenino railroad—to be extended, we trust, into the Chehalis valley—will be another.

Yesterday, August 8th, Messrs. McMicken, Glover and Treadway, a committee appointed by the county commissioners to inspect and report upon the road-bed, construction and rolling stock, made their first official visit along the whole line, with a large excursion party from Olympia. Ex-Governor Gibbs being present on official business with the company added much to the pleasure of the occasion. The present officers of the company are Hon. J.P. Judson, President; Gen. P.I. McKinney, superintendent; Mr. Mason, Engineer.

When finished, the road can be run with three or four men. Trips will be made twice a day between Olympia and Tenino, connecting with the N.P.R.R. trains south and north; fare $1 and freight $1 ton from Olympia to Tenino, 15 miles.

**EFFECT OF THE ROAD**

It has given more confidence to property holders and business men in Olympia. People can come and go easily to all points. Freight and fares from Portland avoid the circuit via Tacoma, which will bring, it is said, more purchasers from Portland. The completion of this and other narrow gauge railroads into the valleys of Oregon and Washington, connecting them easily at all seasons with the navigable rivers and bays, and thus with the ocean will give more proof of the economy of this system for interior commerce. The energy and enthusiasm of the promoters deserves success. As a question of law, the late Judge McFadden, while in Congress secured an enabling act so well drawn and carefully guarded that the county bonds rest on a sure basis. If the managers put rates low enough to do all the present carrying business of the people, and increase it, as they can do annually, the investment will pay the banker and secure funds for an extended line.

G.H. ATKINSON
The First Train

Source:
The Oregonian Archives
Multnomah County Library
It will not surprise the reader to learn that George’s interest in railroads extended beyond the theoretical to the concrete, so it was fitting that he was an enthusiastic passenger on the first passenger train headed east from Portland through the Columbia Gorge and on to Walla Walla and Dayton, Washington, November 21-2, 1882. Writing as he rode, his telegraphed report to the Oregonian appeared on the day after he arrived in Dayton. — Editor

REFLECTIONS OCCASIONED BY THE RAILROAD RIDE UP THE COLUMBIA

BY REV. G.H. ATKINSON

(Oregonian, Nov. 23, 1882, p. 3)

DAYTON, W.T., Nov. 21, 1882

The O.R. & N. Co. had laid the plan and arranged all the details. The river steamer R.B. Thompson waited at the dock to welcome passengers. Clerks at the offices had tickets on sale all day. The large wharf boat lay quietly at the Albina incline as it had lain at other landings above. The train was ready with coaches and Pullman cars. At 4:15 the transfer steamer glided gracefully down to the wharf boat, guided as usual by the skillful hand of Capt. Troup. A hundred or more passengers quietly passed into the various cars. At the minute fixed, 4:35 P.M., the car bell rang and the train moved out. Scores of spectators on the boats and along the line gazed at the first through train to Montana, signal of the first through train to New York, less than twelve months hence. Children cheered and friends waved adieu and safe trip. At the first station, at the Depot of the O & C. R.R., Willamette Valley passengers on the afternoon train, destined for the upper Columbia valley, came aboard, having had little delay. At 4:50 o’clock the train moved eastward, and at 6:50 we were at Bonneville, 42 miles from Portland. A half hour
for supper at the crowded restaurant of Mrs. Lee, gave a chance to those who had to wait for the second tables. Three hours later we were at The Dalles, 45 miles further, or 87 miles from Portland, thus saving 21 miles by the direct R.R. route to the Cascades. At 4:45 A.M. the train arrived at Umatilla, 99 miles from The Dalles, and 186 miles from Portland. At 6:30 we were called to breakfast at Wallula Junction, 26 miles from Umatilla and 214 from Portland. After thirty minutes for transferring to the N.P.R.R. we were en route to Walla Walla, 30 miles east and 240 from Portland, arriving at 8:30, dropping Pullmans and many passengers and receiving more, we were off at 8:45 for Prescott, 10 miles, near the junction of the Texas Ferry R.R. Here at 9:35 passengers separate for their respective destinations, either the Snake River and Palouse region, or Dayton and its numerous tributary valleys. At 10:15 AM with mixed train we leave Prescott and arrive at Dayton at 11:00, twenty miles more, or 282 miles from Portland, the end of the branch road.

INCIDENTS

The misty rain at Portland ceased at the Cascades, and further on the moon shone through the clouds. At The Dalles, the lighted hotels received a few passengers, but the throngs of past months had disappeared. It was pleasant for Mrs. Gov. Moody to leave part of her family at Salem at 1 P.M., and meet her older sons at her house in The Dalles at 10:30 P.M., riding in Pullman cars for the first time.

Above Hood River the light shone clear from the window of Mrs. Warner’s hospitable home across the Columbia, but the sadness came to the heart, that one who had for many years looked out of that window, upon the grand river, would look out no more and greet friends and welcome them no more to her earthly home. Her work is done. She is welcome to the “mansion prepared”.

THE SEASON

Mild weather and clouded skies indicate rain or snow. The mountain crests are already white. Light frosts have trimmed the deciduous trees and induced the plowed lands to finer tilth. Fall sown wheat
in a few fields, already spreads a thick green carpet in the contrast with the sere, dry, brown of the bunch grass plains. Plows are in motion on the hills and the whole region is fast coming under the hand of the diligent cultivator.

The enterprise of Dr. D.S. Baker in building a railroad from Wallula to Walla Walla marked a new era in the upper Columbia basin. The mines had ceased to furnish business for the O.S.N. Co. and stock shipped down and goods shipped up, even at high rates, were insufficient factors to support a costly line of transportation. Its business was becoming dull part of the year and its future of uncertain outlook. A few farms were tilled along the streams, but wheat would not bear the tax of freight wagons 30 to 50 acres for through shipment, neither could it be brought to the river steamers in amounts large enough and so promptly as to win ships to our ports. It was a drug on the farm and at the mills.

Dr. Baker saw the absolute necessity of railroad transportation, at least from the interior valley to the boats on the Columbia river. He devised the plan for the Walla Walla valley first and laid it before the business men of that community. Some thought well of it. Others sneered at it as a wild scheme. Few helped and fewer sympathized when he undertook the work alone and with no experience at such things.

Having built and equipped the road as well as possible, mostly at his own cost, the light began to break. Freight and passengers sought the line. Plows broke wider areas of land. Agricultural implements came in larger quantities. Warehouses were built and filled. Steamers were piled high with merchandise. Thrift succeeded on the farms, and towns and villages grew. Prices were high, but crops were large. The upper Columbia was opened. A new empire was begun. Dr. Baker has been rewarded by dollars. He deserves the reward of honor among the people.

On a grander scale, the O.R. & N. and the N.P.R.R. have taken up and extended that initial enterprise of the O.S.N. and Dr. Baker. With combined wealth and energy, they proposed to do for the entire valley what Dr. Baker did partially for one valley. They push

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out railroad lines to all settlements with goods from the wholesalers, and in return receive the cereals, fruits, wood and stock of the farmers, within sight of their homes, and convey these products to central markets for foreign commerce. They have greatly lowered freights on necessities. They seem to work on the plan that it is wise railroad enterprise to create and extend business by giving the men who produce and who exchange products the chance to make profits. This is business. It pays them and secures their future. It pays the people and invites immigration.

OUTLOOK

With such opportunities of investment of cash and of labor, and such saving of time by quick and reliable transportation, the vast and varied resources of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana bid fair to be rapidly developed.
Illustrations
Much of Atkinson’s ‘Report on Prisons’ discusses the physical structure and inmate program at Charlestown, Massachusetts.

West Union school in Washington County, Oregon, circa 1900.
School classroom, late nineteenth century.

School furniture, mid-nineteenth century.


School classroom design, mid-nineteenth century.
Student enrollment and attendance forms were sent on to county superintendents. This attendance record is from Cornelius Public School, 1883.
Teaching certificates were required in order for local districts to receive state funding. This certificate is from Yamhill County.

An instructional singing book from the 1880s meant for students of all ages.
REPORT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF MULTNOMAH COUNTY FOR 1871-72.

Thirty-one districts have been laid off in this county, twenty-five of which have been organized. Twenty-three have reported schools the last year, and received their orders for school money. Two failed to report, and thus forfeited their right to funds. Four districts of other counties reported pupils in this county, and drew their pro rata of funds.

The following summary of the reports will give an outline of the condition of the districts:

Number of voters reported............................................. 2,407
Number children between the age of 4 and 20 yrs...3,759
Number of males .................................................... 1,923
Number females ..................................................... 1,807
Number of terms of school taught............................... 124
Number of pupils enrolled......................................... 2,165
Average attendance.................................................. 1,730
Number of teachers employed..................................... 66
Number of male teachers employed.............................. 33
Number of female ................................................... 32
Amount paid teachers during the year...................... $20,889 49
Average paid teachers per term during the yr. ........ 188 54
Amount paid teachers from county fund................. 14,402 08
Amount of incidental expenses.............................. 4,454 73
Amount of district taxes levied............................. 22,301 73
Amount of district taxes collected....................... 20,504 73
Amount of cost of new buildings, lots and repairs..... 15,137 11
Whole amount paid for school purposes.............. 40,693 00
Value of public school buildings........................... 46,300 00
Value—approximate—of school lots..................... 53,700 00
Value of public school property......................... 100,000 00

District No. 1, Portland, reports 2,452 children of school age—a gain of 82; of whom 1,126 are enrolled in the public schools, and 815 in private and corporate schools, leaving 511 who do not attend any school.

Great credit is due this city for the liberal provisions made by voluntary taxation to support and improve the public schools the past year.

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The lesson of history is that the better we make our schools, and the more completely they reach and train the masses, the safer and happier shall we be, and the more assured will be our future prosperity. G. H. ATKINSON, Sup’t. Public Schools of Multnomah Co.


Atkinson’s “Report of the Public Schools of Multnomah County for 1871-72” as it appeared in the Oregonian on March 23, 1872.
In 1873 the Northern Pacific Railroad was well under way. However, progress halted when a massive national financial crisis was triggered by the sudden collapse of the financial empire of Jay Cooke, lead financier of the NPRR.
Projected route of Northern Pacific Railroad in 1879 advertisement. At this time the eastern end of the line had been completed as far as Bismarck, North Dakota, and the western end completed from Kalama, Washington as far as Tacoma, Washington.
Source: Northern Pacific Railroad Company, 1879. *It is the shortest, quickest and best route: and the fare is always as low as the lowest.* Rand, McNally & Co., Printers. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Detail from 1879 Northern Pacific Railroad advertisement.


Detail from 1887 Northern Pacific Railroad route map.
This 1879 view of Portland was used in a Northern Pacific Railroad viewbook, showing scenery along their rail lines.

Northern Pacific Railroad locomotive during the opening of their first New York to Portland run in 1883.
Capt. J.C. Ainsworth, President of the Oregon Steam Navigation Co. and officer in numerous banks, played an important part in river and railroad transportation in the Columbia River Valley.

The Oregon Steam Navigation Company’s Lower Columbia River Steamboat “S.G. Reed”, 1878.
Fear of wreckage on the Columbia River bar hampered full development of the harbors along the lower river. George Atkinson stated that the deployment of river pilots in the Astoria area had greatly reduced the risk of wreckage, leading to greater commercial development along the river, and lower insurance rates.


Ferry loading structure in Kalama, Washington. The ferry Tacoma transported Northern Pacific Railroad trains across the Columbia River between Goble, Oregon and Kalama, Washington from 1884 to 1908.

Source: Kiehl, H. Ambrose. Northern Pacific Railroad loading area for the ferry TACOMA, November 8, 1900. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 36698. (Used with permission)
John Mitchell represented Oregon in the United States Senate during two separate terms. He was accused by George Atkinson and others (including editor Harvey Scott of the Oregonian) of using his role as chair of the Senate Railroad Committee to sabotage completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad, in order to facilitate a connection with the Union Pacific Railroad through Salt Lake City.
Tabitha Brown, a founder of Pacific University and "Mother of Oregon". Her school for orphans of the Oregon Trail grew into Tualatin Academy and Pacific University.
Harvey Clarke, a graduate of Oberlin College, was the pastor of the Forest Grove Congregational Church at its founding in 1845. His gift of land was a critical step in beginning Tualatin Academy and Pacific University.
**Source:** Jackson, E.A. Old College Hall and Academy Hall c. 1864-65. Pacific University Archives. (Used with permission)

*Oldest known photograph of the Pacific University campus, dating from 1864 or 1865.*

**Source:** Pacific University 1866-67 freshman class. Pacific University Archives. (Used with permission)

*Pacific University freshman class of 1866-7. The son of George and Nancy Atkinson (also named George) is in the front row, second from the right.*
Agero Nosei [Nose Sakae] (top left), Kin Saito [Sato Momotaro] (bottom left), and Hatsutaro Tamura [Tamura Hatsutaro] (above), Japanese students who graduated from Pacific University in 1876.

Source: Shuster & Davidson. Portrait of Agero Nosei, c. 1870s; Shuster & Davidson. Portrait of Kin Saito, c. 1870s; Portrait of Hatsutaro Tamura, c. 1875. Pacific University Archives. (Used with permission)
Group photo of the Pacific University Class of 1878. Front row—from left—Mrs. Mary A. (Creswell) [sic] Eagen, Miss Elvia H. Fearnside, Mrs. Laura M. (Hoxter) Whalley; 2nd row—from left—Deacon DeWitt Clinton Latourette, Milton W. Smith, Samuel R. Stott, Horace Sumner Lyman; 3rd row—from left—Mrs. Mary F. (Lyman) McCoy, [Mrs.] Ella Scott Latourette (Mrs. D. C.), Miss Mary Stacey Eaton. DeWitt Clinton Latourette married Ella Scott (sister of Pacific alumnus Harvey Scott) and they lived in Oregon City.

Source: Abell, Frank G. Class of 1878. Pacific University Archives. (Used with permission)
A side view of Old College Hall in its original location in the foreground and Academy Hall in the background.

An early photo of Old College Hall, Academy Hall, and Herrick Hall on the Pacific University campus.
**Source:** Buchtel & Stolte. Portrait of Sidney H. Marsh, c. 1860s; Davidson, I.G. Portrait of Jacob Frank Ellis, c. 1883; Thwaites. Portrait of Henry Failing, c. 1870s. Pacific University Archives. (Used with permission)

*Sidney Harper Marsh (above), first president of Pacific University. Served 1853-1879.*

*Jacob Ellis (top right), third president of Pacific University. Served 1883-1891.*

*Henry Failing (bottom right), a prominent Portland business leader and three term mayor, served Pacific University as both trustee and treasurer.*
George Atkinson (1819-89), missionary, educator, “public spirit”.

Source: Dalton, F. Portrait of George Atkinson, c. 1870s. Pacific University Archives. (Used with permission)