
Oregon & California (O & C) Railroad Grants Of Four Million Acres

Railroad¹ The first transcontinental railroad was built in 1869. In 1866 Congress enacted legislation authorizing a grant of lands (about 4 million acres of forestland in western Oregon) to be conveyed to a railroad company to help finance construction of a railroad from Portland, Oregon to the California border. The O & C Railroad's first rail out of Portland was laid in 1869 and by 1872 it was completed to Roseburg. After a long hiatus due to shaky finances and high expenses, the first official train arrived in Grants Pass December 2, 1883. The Southern Pacific Railroad acquired control (i.e., 40-year lease) in 1884 and the railroad connected Oregon and California in 1887.



Chinese¹⁻² Single Chinese laborers without families provided much of the back breaking toil to make the cuts for the O&C Railroad. Historically, it was the wish of these Chinese O & C railroad workers, like most Chinese, who came to this country for railroad construction, to be buried in their homeland. As far back as the Gold Rush and well into the 1930s and even later, literally tens of thousands of individuals who were buried in temporary graves throughout the west were regularly disinterred and the remains shipped back to the native villages. With the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which banned Chinese immigrants from entering the United States, Chinese populations began to dwindle.



O & C Railroad Grant No. 38 For 110,000 Acres: 1896

Interim Interment Site For Chinese Local anecdotal information is that the O&C Railroad had first used the land that would become the Pleasant Valley Cemetery (PVC) as an interim interment site for Chinese railroad workers.³⁻⁴

Early Memories Of Wooden Stakes Old-timers, now passed away, had remembered that in the past the lower, flat, western part of the PVC had many wooden stakes.³⁻⁴ For example, Ruth Refna Crow Sackett was born July 22, 1915. She passed in 1998 and rests in the PVC. She was a friend of Fred and Nancy Sharp and told them stories of having seen wooden stakes in the western portion (closest to Monument Drive) of the PVC when she was a kid. Local stories Ruth



passed on were about the Chinese working on the O & C railroad and worker deaths on the job (e.g., Tunnel No. 9, etc.). The conclusion was that the wooden markers had marked the graves of Chinese railroad workers.⁵

While Larry McLane was researching his book, *First There Was Twogood*, a couple of old-timers had informed him that they remembered some tombstones and many wooden stakes in the western portion of the PVC.⁶

Cemeteries Two private platted cemeteries adjacent to the PCV have two tombstone death dates between 1870 - 1877 and six tombstones within the PVC have death dates between 1881 and 1887.³⁻⁴

Chinese Workers

Death Dates Death dates on four tombstones in the PVC and in adjacent private cemeteries are from 1869 - 1878.³⁻⁴

1896 Oregon & California Railroad Patent¹ For a variety of reasons the final patents to the railroad for building the railroad were issued later than the work was completed. On March 17, 1896 the O & C Railroad Company was issued a railroad grant Patent No. 38 for 109,827.83 acres (July 25, 1866: Grant-RR O & C (14 Stat. 239)).⁴⁻⁸ It would sell/grant to the PVC Association 40 acres of that patent three years later.



Want more information? Contact an officer of the *Hugo Neighborhood* on how you can become involved in your community's history and land use.

1. Hugo Association. 2008. *O & C Railroad*. Hugo, OR.
2. Oregon Blue Book. 2007. *Oregon History: Chinese-Americans*. Web.
3. Hugo Neighborhood, Josephine County Historical Society, & Rogue Advocates. 2008. *Pleasant Valley Cemetery: 1870s?*. Hugo, OR.
4. Hugo Neighborhood, Josephine County Historical Society, & Rogue Advocates. 2008. *Pleasant Valley Cemetery's Beginnings*. Hugo, OR.
5. Fredrick Sharp, President, Pleasant Valley Cemetery Association. December 10, 2007. Telephone Interview About Ruth Refna Crow Sackett: December 10, 2007 of Fred and Nancy Sharp by Mike Walker. Hugo, OR.
6. Larry McLane, March 23, 2007. Telephone Interview by Mike Walker. Hugo, OR.

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission of promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

Land Use & History

The *Hugo Neighborhood's* land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and to preserve, protect, and enhance the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, if requested, as a technical resource assisting neighbors to represent themselves.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Volunteer membership dues are \$10.00 annually per family and normally used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Send us your e-mail address if you want to know what we are doing.

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O & C RAILROAD: CHINESE WORKERS

Brochure 52 in Hugo's Pioneers Brochure Series



*Part of the 1.5 mile Applegate Trail nomination to
Federal Register of Historic Places*



Chinese Railroad Workers

May 12, 2008

**Hugo Neighborhood Association &
Historical Society
Josephine County Historical Society
Rogue Advocates**