



Orphan Road: The Railroad Comes to Seattle

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At two o'clock in the afternoon on July 14, 1873, Seattle founder Arthur Denny received a telegram from agents of the Northern Pacific Railroad in Kalama: "We have located terminus on Commencement Bay." Staring at the wire, the stolid Denny must have reeled. So it would be Tacoma! This was a potential death blow to the young city on Elliott Bay, which had long considered itself the "natural and lawful terminus" of the nation's second transcontinental railroad.

Settled by whites in 1851, Seattle became the likely western terminus for a northern transcontinental railroad as early as 1853. That was the year Isaac Stevens, Washington Territory's newly appointed first governor, took charge of the War Department's northernmost or "Northern Pacific" reconnaissance party charged with locating a feasible rail route from the Mississippi to the Pacific. After 12 months of exhausting but comprehensive labor, Stevens found that there was indeed "a very excellent railroad connexion from the valley of the Snoqualmie to that commodious and beautiful harbor," Elliott Bay. Subsidiary expedition leader Brevet Captain George B. McClellan went even further, noting in a report that, while pessimistic on the feasibility of Snoqualmie Pass for railroad use, "Of all the harbors between the north end of Whidby's Island and Olympia, that of Seattle is by far the best....It is therefore, in my opinion, the proper terminus for any railroad extending to the waters commonly known as Puget Sound."

These conclusions appeared in the War Department's summary and the press, establishing Seattle in official and popular eyes as the probable terminus for the line all knew would one day-soon-be built. The Northern Pacific Railroad was at last chartered by Congress in 1864. Initial western Washington surveys taken in 1870-71 centered on Seattle as both terminal point and junction of lines over the Cascades and up from the Columbia River. Construction of the NP's Pacific Division between the Columbia and Puget Sound began at Kalama in April 1871.

But if Seattle figured herself a shoo-in for the terminus, she was in for a shock. Under growing financial pressures, the Northern Pacific fell into the role of cunning suitor in pursuit of the biggest dowry, inciting competition among all the hopeful Puget Sound communities: Olympia, Steilacoom, Tacoma, even Bellingham Bay and Port Townsend, to offer the best "inducements" for railroad favor. As the directors weighed all the factors in choosing the "Future Great City," Puget Sound was delirious with "terminal fever." As the region's leading port, Seattle remained confident. But during an October 1872 inspection cruise of Puget Sound, the Northern Pacific directors were unimpressed with the city's railroad potential: there seemed to be little level ground for terminal facilities, too much hill and tideland. All the best waterfront properties were occupied, and Elliott Bay was said to be too deep for good anchorage.

Among the most influential of the directors was Charles B. Wright, the NP's largest stockholder. Viewing Commencement Bay from the deck of the paddle steamer North Pacific, Wright was convinced "This is the place!" In July 1873, as track advanced northward, fever reached its peak: Seattle offered the Northern Pacific over \$700,000 worth of cash and land. But Tacoma offered all her waterfront land and much more inland. And Tacoma was a virgin: the railroad would have its way with her, reaping maximum benefit from the land rush that would invariably follow a terminus announcement. Seattle was also, in the words of Northern Pacific president George Washington Cass, "about a million dollars beyond" Tacoma - an expensive 40 miles of track for a company that was by then approaching bankruptcy. At the insistence of railroad financier Jay Cooke, the Northern Pacific "headed in" at Tacoma.

"Land Ring Triumphant!" howled Seattle, blowing up a storm of anger and disappointment that, in the wake of the railroad's decision, would result in war - sometimes hot, sometimes cold - between the jilted city and the Northern Pacific for the next 17 years. "So ends the miserable farce played upon the people of Seattle," cried the Puget Sound Dispatch. In the dejected town signs went up in shop windows: "Gone to the Terminus!" Rejection hurt all the more since Seattle had already had her first sweet taste of railroading. Since 1872 the little city had listened to the daily tootings and chuffings of the tiny engines Ant and Geo. C. Bode of the Seattle Coal & Transportation Company as they lugged cars of Newcastle coal from Lake Union along Pike Street to the waterfront.

On July 14, 1873, in the wake of the infamous telegram, almost 400 of Seattle's 1,200 disappointed citizens convened at Yesler's Pavillion and pledged its \$700,000 Northern Pacific fund to a new enterprise that would cross Snoqualmie Pass and give the city a railroad connection with the East: the Seattle & Walla Walla Railroad and Transportation Company. The S&WW spent \$350,000 and took almost four years to attain Newcastle, a coal mine barely 20 miles distant. Seattle's little railroad was nevertheless a roaring success hauling San Francisco-bound coal and became a vital cash nexus in the city's growth. "That's the way to do it!" beamed the Dispatch: "Seattle marches right along, looking neither to the right or left, increasing in population, building piers, warehouses, and buildings just as if there was no such thing as the Northern Pacific Railroad." This sense of united purpose aroused by the NP rejection all but ensured the town's survival, and by the 1890s it was immortalized as the "Seattle Spirit." But the Seattle & Walla Walla was a dead end.

Enter Henry Villard. Having created a formidable transportation empire in the Columbia and Willamette valleys of Oregon, the German-born entrepreneur came calling on Puget Sound in April 1880. There he was taken in hand by Seattle landowner-capitalist Watson Squire, who later became territorial governor and a United States senator. Squire suggested to Villard that he could do worse than invest in Seattle's busy coal mine and railroad. Villard nodded and his geologist cousin, E. W. Hilgard, came to confirm the potential of the Cascade coalfields, while Seattle pulses quickened to rumors that "eastern capital" was about to make their town the "Great Metropolis" of the Northwest. The Seattle & Walla Walla still had eyes on southeastern Washington, a region Villard considered tributary to his Oregon Railway & Navigation Company. And there were rumblings that the Northern Pacific would build a branch into the Cedar River lignite beds - perhaps even into Seattle. This would never do.

In October 1880 Villard wired his trusty lieutenant, Thomas F. Oakes: "For reasons of policy in connection with Northern Pacific and in order to get in position to control coal trade of eastern Washington territory, I have decided to purchase Seattle road." He then formed the Oregon Improvement Company to "build, purchase, own, and operate" railroads, docks, warehouses, wharves, locks, ferryboats and a line of steamers from Alaska to California, all dedicated to reaping the Northwest's bounty and keeping out rivals. Before the month was out, Oregon Improvement tendered an offer of \$350,000 for the purchase of the Seattle & Walla Walla. Villard assured the line's directors, those same Seattle elders who still had their hearts set on a line to the east, that in excess of \$5 million was at hand to complete their coveted railroad to

eastern Washington. In addition, there would be a web of Cascade branch lines, including one to connect with the Northern Pacific at Wilkeson or Lakeview, and bring Seattle through service to Portland, California and points east maybe even giving Tacoma the go-by! The bid was accepted. On November 26, 1880, the Seattle & Walla Walla was conveyed to the Oregon Improvement Company and a subsidiary incorporated in Olympia to operate the line: the Columbia & Puget Sound Railroad. The Seattle elders remained as directors. "Seattle's Future Assured!" crowed the Post-Intelligencer; Seattle was now "virtually the terminus" of a great national railroad system!

Well aware that his growing enterprise would soon find itself cowcatcher to cowcatcher with the Northern Pacific, Henry Villard captured control of the transcontinental in June 1881, after six months of financial legerdemain. His stature on Wall Street was such as to enable him to purchase controlling interest in the Northern Pacific by means of a subscription circulated among 50 leading investors the famous "Blind Pool," so called because those buying in were not told what they were buying. Not that they really needed to be; Villard's say-so was sufficient in any case. Worn out and disgusted, president Frederick Billings stepped down in June, and on September 15 Henry Villard took the reins of the northern transcontinental and his place as Colossus of the Northwest.

On June 24 Villard penned into life the Oregon & Transcontinental Company to serve as controlling and financing umbrella for the NP and his other holdings. O&T was the prototype of the 19th-century's great holding companies, and since Northern Pacific had no chartered franchise to build branch lines, one of the new company's primary missions was the building of "such branch lines to the main line of the Northern Pacific as would, upon careful examination, appear indispensable for the protection and development of its traffic and the enhancement of the value of its land grant."

Touring his new domain in October 1881, the railroad king was greeted in Seattle with a rousing cheer as he promised them "within 12 months of today, an unbroken railroad from St. Paul to Tacoma and Seattle. We expect to put in an extension of the Washington territory branch from some point south of Tacoma to Seattle." Villard cited Puget Sound's natural superiority over Portland and the sandbar-plagued Columbia River as an ocean outlet, and declared that the sound would soon be the grain-loading center of the Northwest. Seattle, Tacoma and Portland would all be termini! Expanded terminal facilities would of course be needed on Elliott Bay, requiring railroad right-of-way along Seattle's waterfront. For that, Villard would promptly bring the long-frustrated city her railroad connection.

In January 1882 Villard began making good on his pledge. Northern Pacific's western counsel, James McNaught, opened negotiations with the city council for waterfront right-of-way. To queries from the council as to what entity would build and operate the line, Villard wired on February 22: "It being doubtful whether the Northern Pacific Railroad Company can build the line under its...charter, we propose to connect your town with Tacoma by a standard gauge line to be owned by the Transcontinental Company, but operated by the Northern Pacific."

City Ordinance 259 was ratified by mayor and council on March 7, granting Oregon & Transcontinental and Oregon Improvement companies a corridor not to exceed 30 feet in width, from South King Street to Cedar Street, one mile north. In return, O&T was to "construct and operate a standard gauge railroad from Seattle to a point on the North[ern] Pacific Railroad Company's constructed line, so as to connect the City of Seattle with Eastern Washington, either by way of Portland...or the Cascade mountains within two (2) years, and on failure to do so this right herein granted shall be void. The council further stipulated that the right-of-way was to be held in trust for joint use by any other line that might come to Seattle. This rail corridor curved along the meander line of Elliott Bay and between business houses, a twisting right-of-way that would in the 1890s become known as the "ram's horn."

During 1882 Henry Villard papered Washington Territory with would-be O&T branch lines, slamming the iron door against any and all invaders. On September 1 articles of incorporation were entered at Olympia to "construct, equip, and operate a line of railroad between Seattle and Green River," there to connect with the Northern Pacific. Villard himself was president of this new company, and fellow directors included his friend and Oregon Railway & Navigation Company manager C. H. Prescott, NP chief engineer R. M. Armstrong, Oregon senator J. N. Dolph and Seattle wholesaler Bailey Gatzert. Though all but the northernmost two miles of the new line would run well inland, it was named the Puget Sound Shore Railroad.

R. M. Armstrong and James McNaught busied themselves during September obtaining right-of-way easements from farmers in the White River Valley. By mid October these had been secured and the line surveyed between Puyallup and Black River Junction, formerly an important Native American site at the confluence of the White and Black rivers called Mox La Push. On October 6 the Northern Pacific general manager's office in Portland announced that it would solicit bids for construction of the Seattle extension, which would be comprised of two lines: a Northern Pacific spur off that road's Tacoma-Wilkeson coal branch (built 1876-77), diverging just east of Puyallup and running seven miles up the White River Valley; and the Puget Sound Shore Railroad, running 23 miles south from Seattle. The two companies would meet at the Stuck River, about two miles south of Slaughter (present-day Auburn).

The narrow gauge Columbia & Puget Sound ran southward from Seattle over the old Seattle & Walla Walla's 10 miles to Black River Junction, where it turned east toward Renton. From the inception of the Puget Sound Shore line, intentions were for it to share the C&PS right-of-way into Seattle. The PSS would simply lay a third rail alongside the C&PS, allowing both roads' trains to use the same track. To secure "ample and separate" terminal facilities in Seattle, PSS would diverge from the C&PS in the Judkins Addition, half a mile south of King Street, and enter town over the tide flats on a 2,000-foot-long pile trestle, terminating near the C&PS depot at South Second and South King streets. Terminal facilities in Seattle would be modest at first: in the absence of turning facilities, "Shore road" trains would stop at the end of track, detrain passengers and freight in the open, and back up to Tacoma.

On November 1, 1882, the contract for construction of the Seattle railroad from Puyallup to Black River was given to the Joseph F. Nounan Company of San Francisco and partner J. R. Myers of Portland. By the 25th Nounan was able to report:

We have 300 men at work, 50 of whom are whites and 250 Chinese. The white men clear the way, and the Chinamen do the grading. These men are all employed on the southern end of the road, and are working this way....We expect to have our contract completed on or before the first of June, next. High water is the only thing that will prevent.

Wages were two dollars a day for whites and one dollar a day for "Chinamen." Nounan also hired valley farmers to slash and clear, "thus making friends along the route." As things turned out, high water did prevent, Both the White and Stuck rivers overflowed their banks that winter, as they had for eons, putting large areas of the valley under water. The ground was permanently marshy in many places, and extensive piling was necessary to anchor the roadbed, slowing construction, drastically. On March 4 work stopped to let everyone dry out and resumed in April, dragging well behind schedule. Rails began creeping northward from Puyallup Junction at the rate of half a mile a day.

Meanwhile, Tacoma seethed. Since his takeover of the Northern Pacific, the town had been suspicious of Villard, fearing he would remove the terminus to Seattle in favor of his mining and railroad interests there. And now, sure enough, Seattle was "virtually the terminus!" The Daily Ledger sniffed:

Seattle, it appears, is to have a broad gauge railroad branch...and great excitement in consequence of the expectation is reported from that town including unusual activity of spirits and prosperity to the gin mills....It is not a little astounding that the denizens of Yeslerville [after Seattle pioneer Henry Yesler] should, instead of promptly seizing their grip-sacks and hieing with speed to the site of the future great city, continue in fancied security and idleness to nurse the fond hope for the supremacy of Yeslerville.

The Post-Intelligencer lobbed back:

It is almost painfully amusing to observe the efforts made by our contemporaries of Tacoma to suppress the connection of the Northern Pacific Company with the railroad now building into Seattle. As the rose smells the same no matter what you call it, so it will be with the thirty mile section of railroad now building in this country. It will be Northern Pacific to all intents and purposes, and will make this city the extreme Northwest terminal city of the vast railroad system of the United States.

Not that everyone in Seattle was thrilled with the Villard dispensation. There were grumblings he would have his way with Seattle, then leave her high and dry. He would never lay tracks over Snoqualmie Pass. He was a monopoly, pure and simple. Don't trust him! In March 1882 the city's railroad stalwarts - Thomas Burke, John Leary, Arthur Denny and others - once again took up the crusade to lay a rail line over Snoqualmie Pass, this time calling it the Seattle, Walla Walla & Baker City. Things simmered for a year, and in April 1883 Villard came west to parlay with the impatient city:

We have been described as a monopoly. I took occasion during my last visit to the Pacific coast to say that, part seriously and part humorously, we were a benevolent monopoly. I mean by that, simply, that whatever financial power we commanded through this monopoly should not be exercised for the exclusive benefit of our corporations, but for the benefit of the community from which we derive our prosperity as well. I think what has been done here by us during the last three years bears witness uniformly of that fact...but for the fact that we have represented strong concentrated financial power, the great enormous and rapid development that has been going on in the last three years you would not have seen in the next twenty years....My paramount duty is to give this isolated coast communication direct by rail to the rest of the United States.

The wily capitalist not only pacified Seattle, he came away with a pledge for a \$150,000 subsidy to help him convert the Columbia & Puget Sound to standard gauge, extend it into the Cedar River coalfields, and connect at some future date with the Northern Pacific Cascade Division. Again the city congratulated itself: "Seattle Virtually the Terminus of the Main Line and Cascade Branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad!" No more was heard of the Seattle, Walla Walla & Baker City.

By mid August rails reached the Stuck River, and the eight miles from there to Black River were graded and ready for ties. Armstrong's bridge crews were framing the Stuck and White River bridges, and four pile drivers were going full speed.

On September 1 a subcontract was let to J. F. Fountain & Company of Seattle to widen and improve the shared right-of-way between Black River and Seattle. Fifty men, four yoke of oxen and several teams were pressed into service. An "Oriental army" of "1,400 Chinamen and 60 teams" hastened the work that fall laborers swarm through the fields like bees, and the grading and leveling give one the impression that the whole face of nature is being torn up." By the end of September the trestle into King Street was finished and ready for rails. This "railroad on stilts" would promptly be dubbed the "broad gauge strip."

On September 8, 1883, the last spike of the Northern Pacific was driven at Gold Creek, Montana, 50 miles west of Helena. Henry Villard took his turn swinging the maul with his wife Fanny and Ulysses S. Grant, then

he and his party headed west. At 4:30 in the afternoon of September 14, Villard and retinue stepped off the Queen of the Pacific in Seattle to a 38-gun salute. He had hoped to ride his private car directly into Seattle, but unfortunately the line was not finished: some three miles of track between Titusville (later Kent) and Black River remained to be laid, as well as into Seattle and on the broad gauge strip. Two great ceremonial arches adorned with pine boughs and clusters of red mountain ash berries had been run up on Commercial street, along with Japanese lanterns, hastily planted fir trees, and a blizzard of flags and bunting; a veritable herd of roast oxen and acres of baked clams had all been laid on for the man of the hour.

Escorted uptown to the grounds of the territorial university, Villard raised cheers with his usual suave diplomacy "I told my guests that they should see one of the most enterprising towns found on the North Pacific coast" and poked good-natured fun at engineer Henry Thielsen, who had been unable to finish the track into Seattle in time for the Villard special: "I have brought the culprit along. You may try him by a jury of twelve good, honest and wise men, and punish him as you like!" Unfortunately, Villard could scarcely enjoy the festivities: even then his great financial house of cards was swaying ominously, and he was anxious to get back to Wall Street. After little more than an hour in Seattle, Villard made profuse apologies and reboarded the steamer for Tacoma and the train east, leaving fireworks and feast to the citizens.

Seattle eagerly awaited her railroad to the outside world. The Post-Intelligencer crowed happily that within a matter of a few weeks Tacoma would be relegated to "a place where the locomotives running from Seattle to Portland will stop to water and oil up. That's the milk in the cocoanut which has soured the stomach of our neighbor. It isn't pleasant to be a way station close to a live metropolis like Seattle." The Ledger snipped back: "If, with all her pretensions to greatness and her boasting about tributary coal mines, Seattle's trains must get their motive power from Tacoma, is it not possible that they will go no further? Tacoma is what every other town on Puget Sound would gladly be. It is what Seattle, especially, would be the Western Terminus." Feud or no feud, the gap between cities was fast being closed. Then Villard went broke.

Northern Pacific and Oregon & Transcontinental stocks hit the skids in the fall of 1883, and Henry Villard's empire collapsed. On January 4 he stepped down as head of both corporations, and Seattle mourned with good reason. During the three-year Villard boom, Seattle's population had gone from 3,500 to 6,000 inhabitants, her diverse and robust economy was flourishing. Now, none other than Charles B. Wright the "Abraham Lincoln of Tacoma" took Villard's board seat and wasted no time indicating where his sympathies lay:

I am quite positive that the Northern Pacific has no landed interests at Seattle. The NPRR Company has no interest in the line to Seattle further than Stuck Junction, 16 miles from Tacoma. I can say that the NP Company has no intention of spending any money at Seattle on account of railroad or any other facilities. I think you will find the trains between Tacoma and Seattle treated as local trains.

That January, construction on Villard company lines, including the Puget Sound Shore, ground to a halt.

Seattle feared the worst but took heart in the election of the Northern Pacific's new president, Robert Harris, a practical business and railroad man, free from the domination by any petty cliques or rings...who will waste no strength on terminal sideshows." Harris announced that all points would be treated fairly and without discrimination, and that construction of the Cascade Division over Stampede Pass would be rapidly prosecuted. In February 1884 things brightened even more as Oregon Improvement Company general manager John L. Howard of San Francisco affirmed that the company would assume Oregon & Transcontinental's obligation to finish construction of the Puget Sound Shore Railroad "I have telegraphic instructions from New York to lay the rails from Black River to Seattle on the prepared roadbed, and finish the road along the city front." No time was wasted, and by the end of March construction superintendent

Stone announced that the Puget Sound Shore was virtually finished, as forces busily drove piles for the Seattle waterfront right-of-way.

The Seattle-Tacoma railroad was ready to roll but nothing happened. Rumors of the impending start-up of Seattle-Tacoma rail service continued to fly in the spring of 1884, but peace in the White River Valley remained undisturbed by the Iron Horse. The Post-Intelligencer sighed, "So many lies have been told about this piece of road that the people won't take stock in these reports until the whistle of the locomotive is heard." Even the Portland Board of Trade got into the act, sending a memorial to the Northern Pacific board calling for "speedy operation" of the railroad between Portland and Seattle. Fully and probably more than half the passengers over the Northern Pacific north of Portland are destined for Seattle. There is no good reason apparent why they should be compelled to get out of the cars in the night." NP and Oregon Improvement Company officials met and shook their heads over rate divisions and schedules, agreeing only that Northern Pacific would provide a locomotive and rolling stock. Cows wandered onto the tracks, and the press dubbed the rusting line the "Orphan Road."

Then, on the morning of June 17 James McNaught received a telegram at his Seattle office from NP vice president Thomas Oakes in Kalama: he was on his way to Seattle and would arrive, by train, that afternoon. Quickly the excited lawyer spread the word and arranged for the requisite flags and bunting to be run up on hotels and business houses. Town cynics promptly made book on the odds of the train actually showing up. But show up it did.

The first standard gauge train into Seattle arrived at 2:45 P.M.: Northern Pacific 4-4-0 locomotive no.306 and a single coach bearing Oakes, superintendent J. M. Buckley and John C. Bullitt, a Philadelphia lawyer and friend of C. B. Wright. McNaught had hunted up a small artillery piece, and as the little train clanked across the trestle and approached King Street, "the roar of the cannon announced to the city the fact that Seattle was at last the tenninus in reality!" Twenty-one guns were fired as engineer P. R. Church and fireman Ben Holgate brought the engine and coach to a stop, and an estimated 1,000 people cheered and waved their toppers. Reporters buttonholed Oakes: Why weren't trains running? Ask the Oregon Improvement Company, he tartly responded; it's their fault "Northern Pacific owns no line into Seattle." The Post-Intelligencer took a jaded view of the "great train with three men on it":

Mr. McNaught is the only loser by the visit, as he will have a powder bill of \$15 or \$20 to foot, but he don't care, he's rich, and then it was necessary to raise a crowd to witness the arrival of the "first train." In a month or so there will be another batch of railroad officials out from the East, and perhaps they'll conclude to ride into Seattle on the "second train." In case they do, the cannon will be brought out again, and we'll have a regular old "parrot and monkey time."

The cynics appeared to have won the day; no more trains ran and rumors spread that the rails would be taken up.

And then suddenly, there it was. On Sunday, July 6, 1884, Northern Pacific engine no.315, a baggage car and coach steamed miraculously up the broad gauge strip after a 3-hour-25-minute run from Tacoma. According to an incredulous Post-Intelligencer, "The trains were started so suddenly that people could not fully realize the road had been opened to traffic, and in Tacoma, where the idea was entertained that we would be disconnected from rail communication by taking up the track, they could not believe it." If the train had to back out of town, nobody much minded. The first timetable appeared on July 10: Train 23 departed Tacoma at 10:15 P.M., arriving in Seattle at 1:38 A.M. Train 24 left for the south the following afternoon at 1:50.

Complaints were quick to surface. On July 17 Robert Harris called at Seattle and was presented with a full plate of grievances: Northern Pacific refused to connect with either steamers or the new Seattle trains patrons going either way were stranded overnight in Tacoma. Freight rates discriminated against Seattle, consignments were broken up at Tacoma and delayed without explanation, and NP ticket agents played deaf and dumb when asked for passage to Seattle. And the confounded train didn't get into town until two o'clock in the morning!

Like the well-intentioned neighbor blundering into a domestic spat, the courtly Harris tried to sort things out:

To get all these things working smoothly takes some little time, and the officials who have managed the business did not understand their business properly. The matter of the arrival of the trains we cannot change any. We leave Portland as soon as our [transcontinental] train gets there...we are running very carefully on some parts of our road, and are liable to slides in some places. I will try to see to it that there is not discrimination, nor shall you have any just grounds for complaint.

The Villard plan for connection between the Columbia & Puget Sound and the NP at a "common point" in the Cascades would be realized if Harris had anything to say about it, and he vowed that "the door will be wide open at the junction point. We want open doors for what business may come along from China and the islands." The Cascade Division was being built, and everyone would win if they would just pull together.

On the train up the valley, Harris had been puzzled to hear the line called "Orphan Road." He tried to clear up the confusion:

It is a property which belongs, if I am not mistaken, to the Oregon & Transcontinental Company. All the money that has been expended on it has been by the OT Company. Its stock is owned by the OT Company. The confusion that has got into our relations would not have happened if each company had had a separate head looking out for its own interest. I suggest that every question between the Northern Pacific Company and the Improvement Company will be satisfactorily adjusted.

John Leary had escorted the Harris party up the Orphan Road, and it had not been a happy ride. "I went to Tacoma to meet Mr. Harris and his company," declared Leary, "and they were very candid in their expressions that Seattle was to be ignored so far as the Northern Pacific is concerned. Let us build a road in our own county to bring its products to our own city, and we will stay by it to the last day. Give us Seattle, or give us death!"

Seattle's railroad militants were at the moment in full cry against the Northern Pacific's vast King County land grant. The city's lead in demanding forfeiture of the grant and equal treatment of corporations and individuals had lately become known far and wide as the "Seattle Idea," and it was left to Judge Thomas Burke, the city's leading NP-baiter, to serve Harris his full dose:

We have built our towns and cities and developed the country. We are building our own railroads, and after all this is done, in comes the Northern Pacific railroad and demands to give them more than half the country. For what? Broken promises? For retarding the growth of the country by holding it in bondage? The people of Seattle have never received any favors from the company, and they have never expected any. All we want is fair play. As a simple illustration of the childish hostility shown by the company to Seattle, I will refer you to the course of the company when, about a year ago, an edition of the Northern Pacific folder was published in which Seattle was spoken of as the "Queen City of Puget Sound." With the change of administration, the great corporation was stirred to its lowest depths, and promptly the whole edition was

suppressed! Today your trains are run so as to cause this city and the travelling public coming here as much inconvenience as possible.

Harris swallowed and thanked the chamber of commerce courteously for the "frank discussion." He took his leave saying, in all innocence, "The main thing is to place a tunnel of two miles in the Stampede Pass, and to put you in full communication with the East. And then you can go down to Tacoma as often as you want, and catch a train." Red-faced Judge Burke-Seattle Spirit personified-blustered, "We will never want to go there!"

Apparently, though, many others did. "Very handsome traffic" was quick to develop during July, The Post-Intelligencer noted:

The trains of the first week consisted of a single engine, one baggage car and one passenger coach. No provisions were made for freight. Pretty soon more passengers were offered than one coach could carry, and immediate demand for freight transportation arose, while it was known that a large number of cars came through to Tacoma for this city, the freight from which has heretofore been brought from that place by boats, involving more or less delay, breakage and cost. The slow time made over the road has been against it, as well as the lack of a trainman with gumption enough to tell passengers arriving from Portland they could continue on to Seattle for a dollar. These things are now changing. A mail car and one bonded car have already come over the road, and they will soon be followed by like cars, regularly put on. Freight cars are also run, and all the business is gone for that can be got. The other day two passenger coaches came and went full, and yesterday three. The road passes through an exceedingly productive country, which annually sends out many shiploads of hay, hops, potatoes and other bulky articles of farm growth. One of the next things to be added to the service is a Pullman sleeper within a fortnight, which will come and go every day, making St. Paul and Seattle its eastern and western terminal points.

The Seattle Pullman was, alas, wishful thinking no such carriage would enter the city in regular service until 1890. But Seattle's transportation prospects never looked better. The town's early motto had been "New York Alki" New York, by and by. Now one could get on a train within spitting distance of Henry Yesler's mill and ride in style to Gotham's gate.

Then the trains stopped. Puget Sound Shore general manager T. J. Milner received a telegram on August 21 from NP Tacoma agent Otis Sprague stating, "I am instructed to discontinue the interchange of traffic between the Northern Pacific and the Oregon Improvement Co." There was no further explanation. The Tacoma Ledger gloated over the demise of "the back-down-from Seattle bobtailed train," chuckling, "The city of sawdust today is not even the terminus of an accommodation train, and we miss our guess if the Northern Pacific Railroad Company does not get the d___l from the press of that city worse than ever before this action."

Memos flew between NP and Oregon Improvement Company officials; the Orphan Road was barely operable, major improvements were needed, including terminal facilities at Seattle, before anything like mainline operations could begin. Who would pay for them? Who would pay the train crews? How would receipts be split between the 1,800-mile-long Northern Pacific and the 23-mile Shore road? Oregon Improvement Company president Elijah Smith was succinct on that question: "If it don't pay, we should shut it up." The standoff at Stuck Junction continued, and cows reclaimed the Orphan Road.

On August 23 the Northern Pacific undertook to deal with the Orphan Road and the "Seattle problem." Robert Harris, James Buckley, Newman Kline, James McNaught and Samuel Wilkeson met in Tacoma and incorporated the Northern Pacific & Puget Sound Shore Railroad,

to acquire and to hold, equip, maintain, run and operate the railroad connecting the Cascade branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad at Puyallup Junction...with the Puget Sound Shore Railroad at a point known as Stuck Junction...to acquire by purchase, lease or otherwise, and to...operate the Puget Sound Shore Railroad Co. from Stuck Junction to the city of Seattle.

The articles also stipulated that the NP&PSS would build railroad and telegraph lines north from Seattle to "eligible points on or near Bellingham Bay and Fidalgo Bay." Northern Pacific & Puget Sound Shore made no immediate offer to buy the Puget Sound Shore, but given the reality of steadily increasing trade through Seattle and the entirely pragmatic business sense of Harris and many of the NP directors, this was a logical first step to expanding Northern Pacific's scope on Puget Sound. NP could serve Seattle or other roads would: best get the foot in the door. The venture was also a step toward the Villard plan of absorbing branch lines into the NP and giving the unchartered NP Puyallup-Stuck Junction "orphan" legal standing. Still, Harris and Smith feuded, Wright boomed Tacoma, and for another year the Orphan Road rusted.

On July 7, 1885, a two-car special bearing Robert Harris roused the cows on the Shore line. Closeted again with the city fathers, Harris was informed that Seattle's businessmen wanted the line run, "in first class shape and making first-class connections." T. T. Minor lectured:

This community is paying out considerably over \$100,000 per year on freight, which ought naturally to have transport over your road. As it is now, much the larger proportion of this comes by way of San Francisco. Eastern freights today are received in quicker time, and in as good condition, by way of San Francisco. The Northern Pacific is the natural route for our freight to take, and with good facilities it would receive the patronage of our community....Seattle is the distribution point for nearly all the communities resident on Puget Sound.

The specter of Canadian Pacific-Union Pacific incursion - which Seattle was beginning to find a very handy "club" against the NP -was duly summoned. Always conciliatory, Harris agreed that business was business and vowed, "It will be no fault of mine if that road is not soon in operation!"

But it wasn't, and exasperation grew along the Orphan Road. Especially irked were White River valley farmers: they had signed over liberal rights-of-way for a railroad that refused to run, and now their produce had to slog to market in wagons, over poor or nonexistent roads. One of them, a noted orator named Erastus "Foghorn" Green, figured he'd raise a holler: he ballyhooed a mass meeting in Kent, then known informally as Titusville, to "discuss ways and means for securing operation of the Puget Sound Shore Railroad." On September 26 several hundred cigar-smoking, tobacco-chewing businessmen, farmers, politicians and railroad eyes and ears crammed into Templars Hall. Judge J. R. Lewis opened the proceedings of the Seattle district court with the declaration that "the Seattle, or King County, Idea" was due first credit for the growth of the land grant forfeiture movement into a powerful popular movement across the nation and that the railroads were chartered and existed primarily for the public interest. The complications of the interlocking Villard companies caused folks to be "at a loss to locate the responsibility for the non-operation" of the line. But Lewis opined that the "aggrieved parties" the farmers and others who had deeded rights-of-way to the railroad had the right to file suit for the line's operation or force its condemnation and sale to another entity that would operate it. Railroad ears pricked up.

James McNaught ventured that it would be difficult to force operation of a railroad "which was without money, without motive power or rolling stock, and which under the circumstances would only involve a money loss to its owners." He reviewed the failure of the O&T and NP to agree on operating terms but did point to the ongoing negotiations between Robert Harris and Elijah Smith as evidence of their good faith. McNaught counseled patience and chided proponents of the "Seattle Idea" they had "forfeited for the town of Seattle the favorable consideration of the Northern Pacific railroad." Loss of business establishments in

Seattle and King County, loss of four million dollars in tax assessments and "tenantless houses" in a depressed Seattle were the result of antagonizing the corporation.

Judge Cornelius Hanford rose next, grumbling that he was sorry the audience "had not been served with more substantial pabulum from Mr. McNaught." Folks were not interested in the petty squabbles among railroad officials, only that

the railroad should serve the purposes of its creation and be available for the public use and benefit, and if the corporation differences could not be harmonized on account of a dog-in-the-manger policy on the part of anyone of the companies, the dog should then be lifted out and the willing ox be permitted to eat.

Hanford produced figures given him by Shore line superintendent T. J. Milner showing a handsome profit during the line's short period of operation.

Oregon Improvement's John Howard summarized the "corporation differences" as best he could, doubtless only adding to the confusion: The Puget Sound Shore, he noted, was owned by the Oregon & Transcontinental and not by the Oregon Improvement Company, which had "no interest" in the line and was "not responsible for its idleness." It was NP's fault that trains weren't running they wouldn't interchange with the Shore line. McNaught shook his head. Howard then read a day-old telegram from Elijah Smith stating that negotiations with Northern Pacific to reopen the Orphan Road were at that moment proceeding in New York and promised "a favorable outlook for a prompt settlement."

Debate continued until suddenly John Howard rose and asked for recognition of the chair. He had just been handed a telegram hot off the wire from "Lijer" Smith. It had been received in Seattle at the McNaught law office, rushed to Black River Junction by train, and from there to the meeting by McNaught law partner John Mitchell on a fast horse. It read: "Negotiations referred to yesterday resulted in arrangement that will enable us to open road about October 1st." Fresh cigars were lit and the "Great Railroad Meeting" adjourned with hearty applause and high hopes.

Predictably, the reopening was delayed. On October 15 Thomas Oakes arrived in Seattle and announced that NP was now prepared to give Seattle

full and satisfactory service, with close connections and faster time than the steamboats are making now. We shall furnish such trains as the trade demands and run to the joint interests of the people and the road .You should remember that the Northern Pacific owns no line into Seattle, though it naturally should be the possessor of the track owned by the other two connecting companies. It was no doubt part of Villard's program to merge the lines into the Northern Pacific system, and who knows what may be the ultimate outcome? The opening of traffic now is about all that the people should expect. Things must have a beginning and this one seems to me to be a promising one.

Service would begin "on or about" the 25th.

Rehabilitation work on the Orphan Road began in the first week of October 1885. The line had never been ballasted and had suffered several washouts in the year it had lain idle. A gang of 50 men shooed away the cows and set to work between Seattle and Stuck Junction, where the two operators would now exchange engines and crews. A 54-foot turntable was set into place on pilings adjacent to the Columbia & Puget Sound roundhouse no more backing down to Tacoma. Best of all, there would be two trains a day! A through connection train to Tacoma was scheduled out of the Queen City at 2:25 A.M., to reach Tacoma two hours later. The northbound run would leave Tacoma at 8:10 P.M., and reach Seattle at 10:35. The

"accommodation" local for valley business was to leave Seattle at 3:10 P.M. and run only as far as Stuck Junction, where engine and crew would lay over for the night and return to Seattle next morning at 7:30. Milner leased "one first class locomotive" and a passenger coach from the OR&N, and fixed the PSS fare at one dollar to any point between Seattle and Tacoma, competitive with steamer fares. On October 26, 1885, trains began running and haven't stopped since.

Seattle's railroad service gradually improved and expanded, and growth, growth and more growth was the order of the day on Puget Sound. By the end of the decade the Queen City's busy population exceeded 40,000, and Northern Pacific was suing for peace with its old nemesis, anxious to establish full terminal facilities there. In January 1890 the Puget Sound Shore was bought by the Northern Pacific & Puget Sound Shore for one million dollars. Terminal fever, Seattle Spirit, and the Orphan Road passed into Northwest folklore.

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