

track every morning towards West Yellowstone before the train was due to check for any problems.

Slides occurred at Warm River which resulted in the railroad building a tunnel to bypass the slide area. Often times trains would jump the tracks giving the villagers something to talk about and wrecks to visit.

With tourists, agriculture, freight, and local traffic keeping the trains busy, Ashton was booming. Each winter the Oregon Short Line ran a train to Ashton for the dog derby. The American Dog Derby became famous throughout the land.

When Yellowstone Park opened to automobiles, people began using their cars instead of the train. In 1960 the passenger train made its last run north to West Yellowstone and the line was abandoned in 1979. The line to Victor was officially abandoned in 1990. The Eastern Idaho Railroad has since bought the remainder of the line between Idaho Falls and Ashton.



In 1940 the railroad had a special train which toured southern Idaho to inform



Construction of Conant Creek Bridge. George Amen photo.

and educate people about potatoes. It was called the Spud Special. Ashton had the honor of having the train make a side trip to town, stop so the local population could tour the train and then return to Idaho Falls to continue its trip through Wyoming and Colorado.

H. G. "Fess" Fuller spent most of Ashton's life helping the village to grow. He fondly became known as the "Father of Ashton."

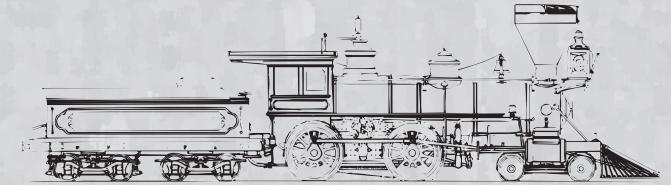
C. C. Moore was destined to cast his shadow further afield although he always considered this area his home. "Charley" Moore served Idaho as its Governor from 1923 through 1926.

It is hard to imagine Ashton without H.G. Fuller and C. C. Moore using their expertise to guide the new town. Thanks to their foresight, Ashton and the "whistles and smoke" legacy of the railroad, created a town which has lasted 100 years and been enjoyed and appreciated by those who choose to live here.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE  
ASHTON CENTENNIAL 2006



# WHISTLES AND SMOKE



ASHTON'S RAILROAD LEGACY



Photo by Thornton Waite. Special thanks to Mr. Waite who answered many questions and shared his expert railroad knowledge.

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Photo courtesy of June Misseldine.



Railroads were expanding and Yellowstone Park was a destination waiting to be reached. William Ashton, chief engineer for the Oregon Short Line railroad, had the job of choosing the route. Many early settlers expected the Yellowstone branch to lay tracks through their land at Marysville and they held out for a better price for their property. Instead, Ashton decided to use a survey from 1881 and the tracks went west of Marysville.



C. C. Moore and H. G. Fuller were educators who were running a real estate office in St. Anthony. C. C. Moore was a planner and realized that a town would be needed. He and Fuller started the Ashton Townsite Committee which was composed of 13 business men, most of whom were from St. Anthony. As early as 1904 they purchased 640 acres from George Harrigfeld, R. E. McGavin, and Asa Hendricks. They raised \$15,000 for a new school and made building materials for the future village available. In early 1906 the tracks reached the new town which railroad surveyor, W.J. King, had platted and even included street names.



George Amen photo of snowy Ashton train.

Naming a new railroad town after a railroad official was common and the town of Ashton was named for William Ashton. Other local stations named for railroad men were Drummond, Eccles, and Ingling.

February 14, 1906 was a celebration day for Ashton. A trainload of well wishers descended on the town and a dance and party began at the newly finished Miller Brothers elevator. There was no shortage of spirits for the occasion, which led to interesting memories and some headaches.

By July the town was ready to apply for incorporation. It had signatures of 200 local residents, listed five men to be the village council until an election was held, and had fulfilled the other legal requirements. On July 11, 1906 Ashton became a legally incorporated village in Fremont County.

North of Ashton the railroad built the Ingling depot, named after a master railroad mechanic, William J. Ingling. A four bay enginehouse was erected which housed the extra engines needed to help pull the trains up the grades to West Yellowstone. Both Ashton and Ingling had beet dumps. After the Ingling depot burned down, all that remained was a cement foundation.

The Yellowstone branch of the railroad was opened to a full summer schedule in 1908. The railroad built a new depot in Ashton and the small town boasted three grain elevators. Ashton was the transfer point for freight heading to Jackson Dam. The freight was loaded onto wagons from the railroad cars and hauled over the Reclamation Road to the dam site.

Ashton was a busy place punctuated by "whistles and smoke" as the Yellowstone Special made its morning trip north and evening trip south through town. Many Ashton residents woke up and went to sleep by train time.

In 1912 the railroad added a line which went through Marysville and on to Driggs and Victor.

William Ashton was using a horse and carriage to show a businessman the coal mine area near Driggs when he had an accident, and was thrown out of the buggy severely injuring his head. A Mr. Drummond finished his job and that is how Drummond got its name.

After a slow recovery, Ashton went on to become Vice President of Utah Coal Company in 1912. William Ashton faded away from the town which bears his name.



Rotary blowing snow near Ashton

Snow always played a factor in the railroad's schedule. Each winter the track to West Yellowstone blew shut and in March a rotary would be brought in to open the tracks north of Ashton. To signal the coming of spring, school in West Yellowstone would be let out when they heard the rotary coming.

In order to keep the track safe once the rotary had opened it, an open car called a speeder was sent up the