

Hayward's Railroad History

The arrival of rail transportation to the Hayward area contributed greatly to the community's growth. Trains gave farmers easy access to markets in Oakland and San Francisco for their goods. This made Hayward an ideal location for agricultural development. The different rail lines and the frequency of stops meant that people could live in the more rural Hayward area and commute to jobs in the more populated cities of Oakland and San Francisco. This document provides an overview of the specific railroads that traveled through the Hayward area.

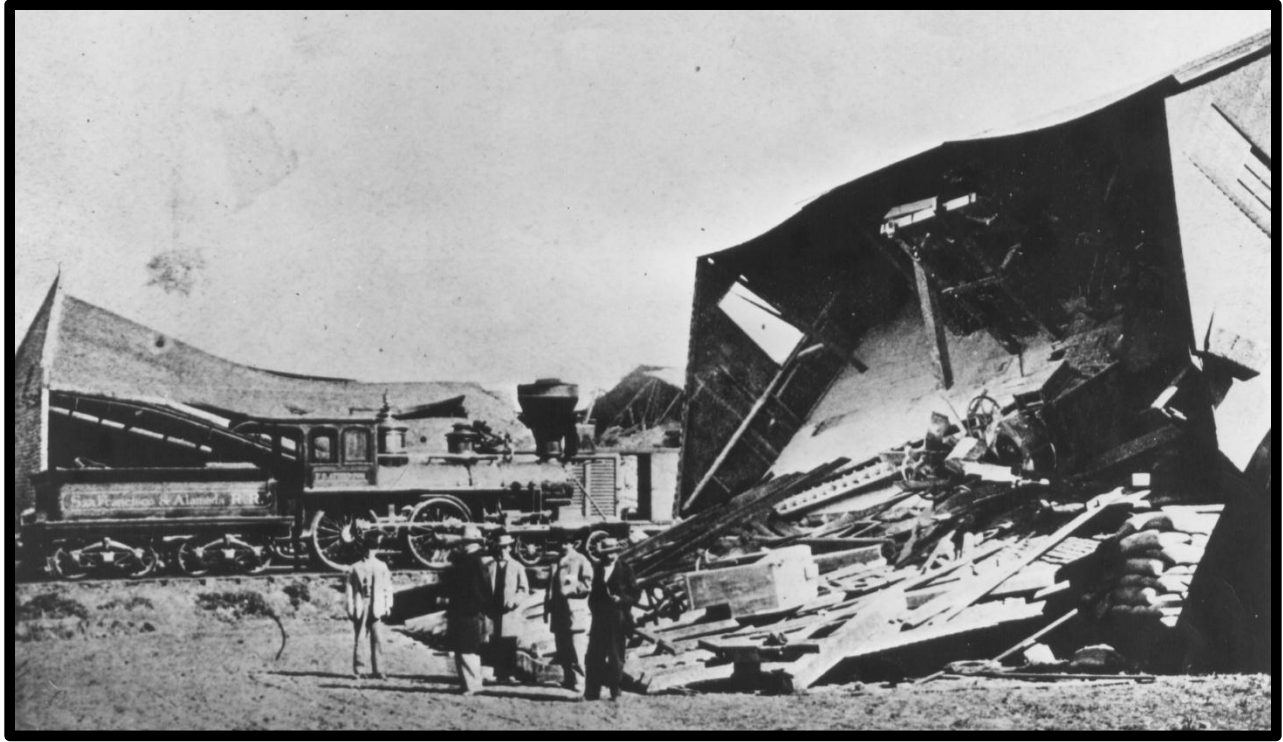
The San Francisco and Alameda Railroad:

By the early 1860s Hayward was in need of a railroad to move the town's agricultural goods and people to San Francisco, the commercial center of the region. The first train to arrive in Hayward was the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad in 1865. Alfred A. Cohen was the driving force behind the creation of the line. Cohen was a London native, born in 1829 to plantation owners in the West Indies who lost their fortune with the emancipation of British slaves. In 1850, Cohen came to California to capitalize on the Gold Rush. He found work with a merchant in San Francisco and studied law. In 1857, Cohen passed the bar and became a lawyer. He was instrumental in handling the affairs of the great banking firm of Adams & Co. when the company failed in 1859. Cohen was prosecuted for mishandling funds during the process but was eventually acquitted and remained a leading lawyer in San Francisco.

In 1863, Cohen saw the opportunity to connect Hayward to the larger cities of Alameda, Oakland and San Francisco via railroad and ferry. He had interest in a resort in Warm Springs and saw a railroad through Hayward as being a great way to bring customers to his hotel and therefore, greater profits. He also noticed Alameda becoming more residential and Haywards growing importance in the trade of wheat, barley and cattle. To capitalize on the growth of the area Cohen formed a board of directors, including Faxon D. Atherton who owned much of the land in the Hayward area, for the new San Francisco & Alameda Railroad Corporation. The train traveled from the City of Alameda over to East 14th Street down to San Leandro where it turned east and traveled to Hayward along Watkins Street. The station was located at D Street and Watkins, close to the present day Hayward Heritage Plaza. At the time, there were only thirty homes located in Hayward.

The San Francisco & Alameda Railroad was a standard gauge railroad that mostly moved passengers and some agricultural products. A newspaper advertisement listed the going rates to ship livestock at only twenty-five cents per head of cattle, ten cents per calve, and pigs or sheep a nickel. Passengers could choose to pay seventy-five cents a ticket or purchase five for only two dollars and fifty-cents. There were five trips daily, linking Hayward to San Francisco (passengers had to get on a ferry in Alameda to travel to San Francisco). The line made commuting for Hayward area residents a viable option for the first time. The railroad made \$21,000 in freight and \$40,000 in passenger tickets in the first year (which would be about \$308,847 and \$588,281 today) but the cost of construction had been \$1 million so even with daily commuters utilizing the service, the investment did not bring a great return for Cohen and his associates.

The line suffered a setback in October 1868 when a massive earthquake struck on the Hayward fault. The quake caused severe damage to sections of track along the route and the D Street station collapsed. Fortunately, no trains or employees were hurt. After the quake and rebuilding the station, Cohen recognized the competition of the Central Pacific Railroad, which was absorbing smaller rail lines throughout the Bay Area. In 1869, the Central Pacific convinced Cohen to sell his controlling stock in the San Francisco & Alameda. Cohen remained president, but Central Pacific installed their own General Superintendent to oversee day-to-day management.



***San Francisco & Alameda depot and nearby flour mill following the 1868 Earthquake.
(HAHS Collection)***

The Central Pacific:

Also in 1869, the San Francisco Bay Railroad built a connecting line between Oakland and Niles about a mile west of downtown Hayward. Central Pacific took over this line in 1870.

The Central Pacific trains, which were part of the transcontinental railroad, and the local commuter trains of the San Francisco & Alameda line shared the tracks from roughly San Leandro to a spot just south of Fruitvale in Oakland for a short period. A fatal collision between a main line train and one of the commuter trains caused the Central Pacific to build separate tracks for the transcontinental trains. Around 1873, Central Pacific decided to tear up the San Francisco & Alameda tracks and effectively ended commuter passenger service to Hayward. Farmers in the Hayward area were not happy with this development because it forced them to use the Central Pacific line to move their product to market. The Central Pacific was perceived as a large corporation gouging prices. Farmers briefly boycotted the Central Pacific and shipped their products by ferry but quickly found it was more costly then dealing with the Central Pacific.

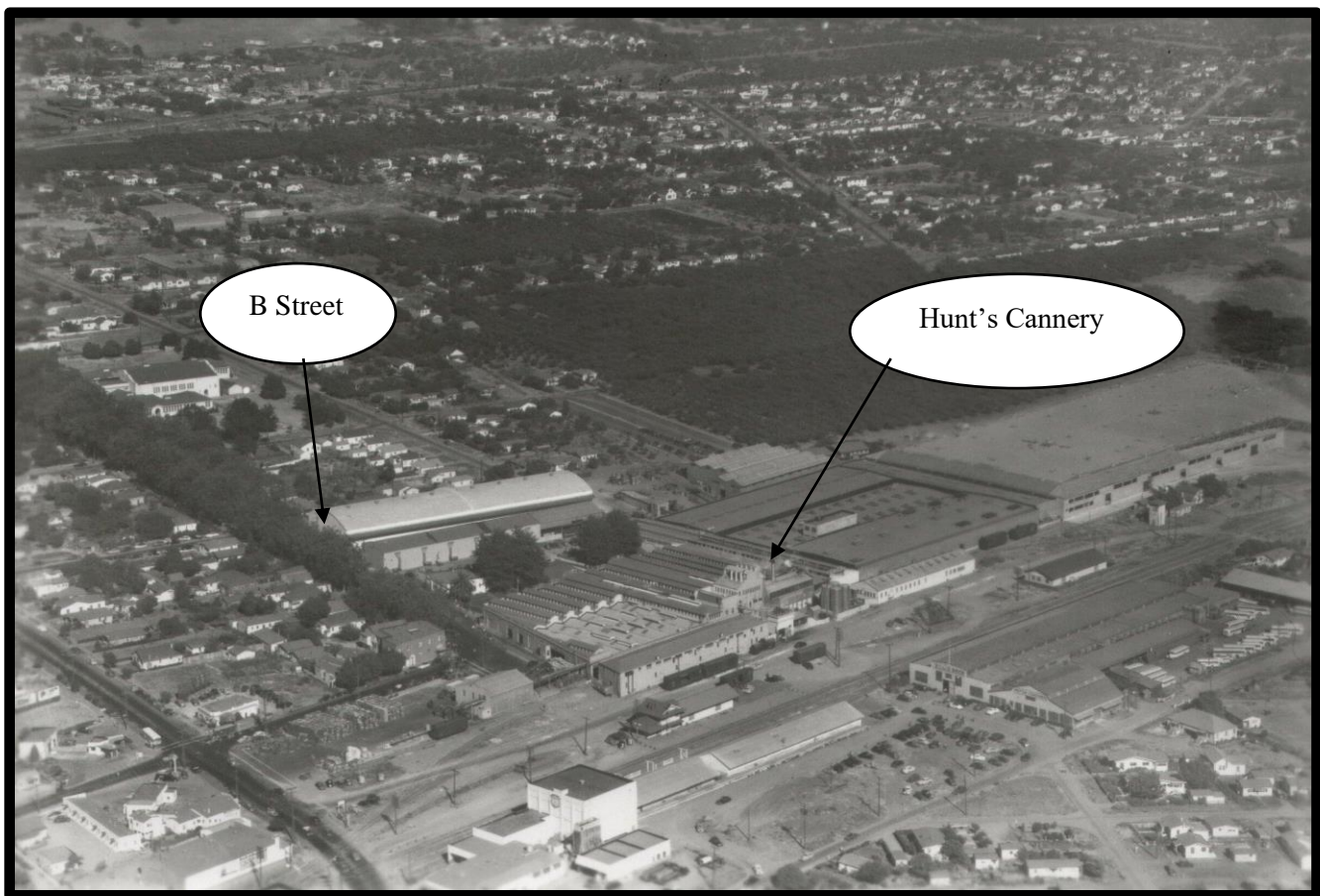


Hayward Station, c. 1900 (HAHS Collection)

The Central Pacific built a station close to the tracks about a mile outside of Hayward. Originally, the station was called Marion and later changed to the designation of "Hayward." The exact date of construction is unknown but appears to be from the early 1870s. The station was just far enough outside of town to be inconvenient for passenger service so a horse car line was established about

1889 from the depot up B Street, down Main Street to the Hayward's Hotel (the biggest hotel in town) on the corner of A and Main Streets. By this time, the route of the transcontinental trains had shifted to a more direct path to Oakland via Martinez. However the route through the Hayward area remained an important rail line for moving cargo, mail, and some passengers (though it was not used as much by daily commuters as the previous San Francisco & Alameda because the trains ran less often and were more expensive).

The Southern Pacific took over the Central Pacific in 1885. The Southern Pacific continued to use the Hayward Station as a stop for many years to come. Hunt Brother's Cannery came to town in 1896 and built their cannery right next to the Southern Pacific station. This was convenient for the cannery and a boom in business for the railroad. The station was in use through the late 1970s and closed when Hunt's Cannery closed and moved out of the area. The station burned down in January 1982 but the tracks are still in use by Amtrak and Union Pacific trains.



Aerial view of depot and Hunt's cannery, c. 1940 (HAHS Collection)

The Western Pacific Railroad:

Another important rail line that ran through Hayward was the Western Pacific Railroad. The Western Pacific was a rival to the Southern Pacific, building their line from San Francisco to Salt Lake City. Construction began on the Western Pacific line in 1906 on the Oakland waterfront and the last spike was driven in 1909. Freight service began that year while passenger service started in 1910. The WP tracks ran through Hayward just on the outskirts of downtown, much closer than that of the Southern Pacific tracks. WP built a station at 691 C Street in 1909 at a cost of \$10,000. The station was built in an adobe western style.

Two trains a day ran through the station each way. Mostly Hayward served as a “flag stop”, meaning it only stopped at the station when a passenger(s) requested the stop, otherwise the train did not stop. However, area residents used the WP. In 1915, WP trains carried five loads of locals to the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco on “Hayward Day”. Two years later in 1917, the WP transported Hayward soldiers to fight in Europe during World War I. The old C Street station was eventually torn down to make way for the new BART station parking lot in 1963, but the Western Pacific continued operations until 1982 when they were absorbed by the Union Pacific. The tracks are still used on occasion, including during emergencies.



Western Pacific Station, c.1910 (HAHS Collection)

The South Pacific Coast Railroad:

The South Pacific Coast Railroad began in March 1876 as a competitor to the Central Pacific. The railroad, a narrow gauge line, ran from Alameda to Santa Cruz close to the bay shoreline. Narrow gauge railroads use tracks that are only 3'6" apart while a standard gauge was 4'8". These types of railroads were usually less expensive to build and more maneuverable in mountainous terrain, like the Santa Cruz mountains.

The section of the track between Alameda and Los Gatos went into service in 1878. Stations were built in Mt. Eden and Russell City. The railroad was financed by James Fair, whose wealth came from the Comstock Mining District (in Virginia City, Nevada), and built under the direction of Alfred "Hog" Davis. The line was known for its speed in moving passengers and freight. In fact, at one point, passengers on a South Pacific Coast train could get to Alameda faster than riding a Central Pacific train the same distance.



Mt. Eden Station



Russell Station

Southern Pacific Railroad bought out the South Pacific Coast Railroad in 1887 (a year after absorbing the Central Pacific). SP switched the track between Oakland and San Jose to standard gauge tracks around 1906. Interestingly, Arthur Cohen played an important role in the purchase of the South Pacific Coast Railroad. After joining Central Pacific with the sale of his San Francisco & Alameda line, Cohen was charged (again) with a misuse of company funds. After being acquitted (again), Cohen

helped the South Pacific Coast plan their line into Alameda to provide competition to the Central Pacific. By the mid 1870's however, the Central Pacific took Cohen back as a member of their legal team. Then Cohen proceeded to lay the groundwork for the eventual absorption of the South Pacific Coast by the Southern Pacific.

The South Pacific Coast line stopped running in the 1930s but the section of track from San Leandro to San Jose is still used by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Railroads in Hayward Today:

In the last half of the 20th century, Hayward saw the opening of the Amtrak rail line. A small station is located in Hayward, not far from the original location of the Southern Pacific Depot, at the end of B Street. The grand opening for the stop was May 29, 1997. Amtrak uses the same tracks used by the Central and Southern Pacific Railroads for many decades. The Union Pacific Railroad also uses these tracks and those of the old South Pacific Coast Railroad closer to the Bay.



Amtrak platform in Hayward, c. 2000