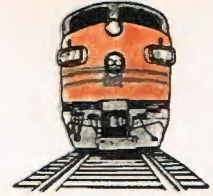




## WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD

El Rio de las Plumas "The River of the Feathers"



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A history of the Western Pacific Railroad and related events.  
Compiled by Stephen M. Hayes

1851 James Beckworth first proposed an Emigrant road through the Feather River canyon. <sup>1</sup>

1860 Arthur Keddie located in Quincy and began to survey the North Fork of the Feather River and Beckworth Pass for a wagon road, it soon became apparent that the route was best suited for a railroad and was dropped. (1867)

1861 San Francisco and Alameda Rail Road incorporated, to run from Alameda Wharf to east Alameda.

1863 The San Francisco and Oakland Rail Road Co. formed to run from Oakland Wharf to east Oakland. This railroad and the San Francisco and Alameda Rail Road would become the western end of the Central Pacific in 1869.

1863 Peter Donahue of the North Pacific Coast Railroad formed the Western Pacific, an outgrowth of the San Jose and Stockton Railroad. Proposed to Run from San Jose, North to Vallejo Mills, [Niles], East up Alameda Creek, [Niles Canyon] through Amador Valley, [Livermore] over Livermore Pass, [Altamont] and on to Stockton and Sacramento. Donahue built to Vallejo Mills where he ran out of money.

1864 California Northern R.R. completed from Marysville to Oroville. <sup>2</sup>

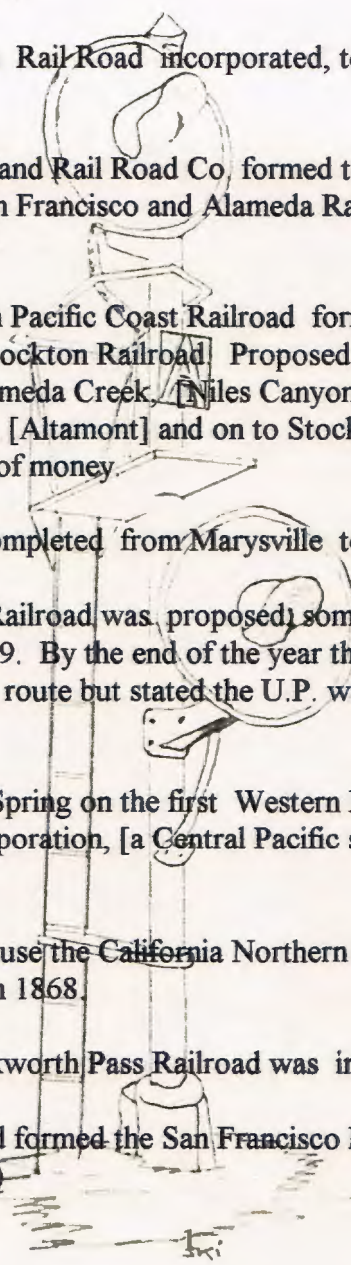
1867 Oroville and Virginia City Railroad was proposed, some grading was done and the first spike was driven in March of 1869. By the end of the year they were defunct. Dodge of the U.P. sent engineers to look at this route but stated the U.P. was only authorized to build to the California state line.

1867 Work was resumed in the Spring on the first Western Pacific. Funds were provided by the Construction and Finance Corporation, [a Central Pacific subsidiary] to complete construction.

1868 Any plans for the O.V.C. to use the California Northern to reach S.F. were blocked when C.P. gained control of C.N.R.R. in 1868.

1868 The Feather River and Beckworth Pass Railroad was incorporated.

1868 The Central Pacific Railroad formed the San Francisco Bay Railroad to bridge from San Leandro to Vallejo Mills. (W.P.)



1869 The San Francisco and Oakland Railroad connected the Central Pacific with the Western Pacific and the Western Pacific became a Central Pacific subsidiary.

1870 The San Francisco and Oakland and the San Francisco and Alameda Railroads were merged to become the San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda Railroad. Two months later they were taken over by the Central Pacific.

1880 The Nevada and Oregon Railroad was organized. In April of 1881 the name was changed to Nevada and Oregon Railroad.

1884 Nevada and Oregon Railroad failed and became the Nevada and California Railroad.

1885 The Sierra Valley and Mohawk Railroad was formed. During the winter of 1894/95 the name was changed to Sierra Valleys Railway. In 1901 the N.C.O. acquired control of the Sierra Valleys Railway. In 1911 was reorganized as the Sierra and Mohawk Railway, soon to be absorbed into the N.C.O. as it's Plumas Branch. In 1917 it was sold to the W.P. and abandoned in 1918. This was the first railroad through Beckworth Pass.

1888 The Oroville and Beckworth Railroad was incorporated. It was thought that this road was to tie into the Northern California R.R. [California Northern] at Oroville, which was sold by the C.P.

1889 The Union Pacific Railroad made a survey of the Feather River canyon.

1889 In May the Southern Pacific purchased the Northern California R.R., possibly to block the Oroville and Beckworth R.R. and Union Pacific R.R. in the canyon.

1892 The San Francisco and Great Lake Railroad was incorporated, but there was never any construction. Huntington of the C.P. said he would sell the Central Pacific for 35 million, less than was proposed to build the SF & GL R.R., which killed the financing for this project. Kennedy a former U.P. engineer, filled maps which held the route for 5 years.

1893 The Nevada and California became the Nevada, California and Oregon Railroad, a narrow gauge railroad running from Reno to Lakeview Oregon. This would later become the Reno branch of the Western Pacific.

1895 The Alameda and San Joaquin Railroad, a subsidiary of the San Francisco and San Jose Coal Company, was built from Tesla to Stockton, 36 miles, through Carbona [Tracy]; this was to become part of the W.P. main line years later.

1900 Walter Barnett had control of the Alameda and San Joaquin R.R., the San Francisco and Terminal Railway and Ferry Company, the Stockton and Beckworth Railway Co. and the Sacramento and Oakland Railway Co. The A & S.J. was the only company that had actual track, the others were just holding companies.

During 1900 Huntington died and Harriman acquired control of the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific. In the past the Denver and Rio Grande and Union Pacific had interchanged all west bound traffic with the Central Pacific. Harriman closed all overland traffic to the D & RG, planting the seed for the Western Pacific Railroad.

1900 Boca and Loyaltan incorporated. The D & R G acquired controlling interest in 1905 to protect W.P interests.<sup>3</sup>

During 1900 two railroads were being considered between Oakland and Salt Lake. George J. Gould of the D & R.G. and Walter J. Barnett of the A. & S.J.

1902 Borax Smith consolidated all his street railway holdings into the S.F., Oak. & San Jose Railway Co.

1902 Stockton and Beckworth Pass Railroad was proposed by Arthur Keddie and Walter Barnett, for which they received a 5 year franchise. Kennedys U.P. maps were used.

During February of 1902 the D & R.G. sent surveyors into the Feather River Canyon to make preliminary surveys and acquire right of way. In consequence, The Butte and Plumas Railway and the Indian Valley Railway were incorporated. Some real estate and right of way were acquired but no construction was done. Both were deeded to the W.P. in 1905 and dissolved in 1906. These were to cloak Gould intentions.<sup>4</sup>

Early in 1903 Barnett and Gould had agreed to cooperate in the building of the Western Pacific, a fact that did not come out until 1904 when Gould admitted he was behind the W.P.

1903 On March 3rd the following gentlemen held a meeting in San Francisco to form the Western Pacific Railway: Walter Barnett, John LLOYD, Henry Fortman, A. Kains, George Batchilder, Charles Gray, Dalzell Brown, David Walker, John Treadwell, James Treadwell, and Fred West.

1903 March 6, the Western Pacific Railway was incorporated. The 4 Barnett roads were taken over by the W.P. They then formed the Marysville and Susanville Railway which was deeded to the W.P. in 1905. but never built.

The bankers forced restrictive clauses on the W.P. There were to be no branches, which created a bridge route between terminals. This was not eliminated until the first reorganization. Grades were not to exceed 1% compensated, with a maximum curvature of 10 o 15'.

Bonds were offered, but in 2 1/2 years only 200 thousand dollars worth had been sold. Interim capital for construction was provided by the D & R G and the Missouri Pacific, both controlled by Gould. 50 million dollars in W.P. bonds were underwritten by the Rio Grande, just about ruining their credit.

1905 Construction of the Western Pacific begins. 1st spike was driven at 3rd and Union in Oakland on January 2, 1906, while the first spike at Salt Lake was driven on May 5, 1906. Construction was speeded and simplified because of all the earlier railroads all along it's route.

On January, 1906, Barnett with W.P. construction men along with 30 armed guards built a crude mile of track on top of rock quay into the bay at Oakland to break S.P.s hold on the water front. S.P. claimed ownership of everything along the waters edge, but due to filling of the bay, W.P. felt they could go beyond on new ground so to speak, so they did and prevailed. S.P had title only to the low tide mark of 1852. S.P. also tried to claim the Western Pacific name from the 1896 W.P. but again failed.

Work on the W.P. was completed at 4.05 pm on November 1, 1909, the last spike being driven at mile post 280.51, the west end of Spanish Creek Bridge, driven by Leonapdo di Tomasso a track foreman.

The Western Pacific started out life with 41 steel bridges, 43 tunnels, [45,494'] and 930 miles of track. On December 1, 1909, the first through freight was run, followed in August of 1910 with the first passenger service. The W.P. would run short fast trains and run a 2nd section if needed.

1909 The ferry "Telephone" was purchased.

1909 Fernley and Lassen Railway ( an S.P. subsidiary ) incorporated to build to Westwood. Construction started 1912 and completed in 1914. <sup>5</sup>

1912 W.P. adopted the slogan "Feather River Route", first used in 1913 timetables.

1915/16 the W.P. was in receivership, due in part to the restriction put in the original bonds as to no branches and 1% grades. Costs of construction were double what was projected. The Interstate Commerce Commission placed a value on the railroad of 72.5 million dollars, it sold for 18 million.

On June 29, 1916, the Western Pacific Railroad Corporation took over and on July 13th the Western Pacific Railway passed on.

1916 The Boca and Loyalton R.R. was sold to the W.P.

1916 Indian Valley Railroad incorporated and built from Paxton on the W.P., to Engles Mine within 20 miles of Westwood. ( Not the 1902 I.V.RR. )

1917 A 75% interest was bought in the Tidewater Southern. At this time a comprehensive program of car building and purchase of new equipment was started. Prior to this all W.P. equipment was leased from the D.&R.G.

1917 At noon on December 28 the President of the United States took over control of the Nations railroads, due to World War 1.

1917 W.P. acquired the following railroads, Indian Valley R.R. , Toole Branch and the Blarsden Branch to Davies Mill.

1918 Purchased the Deep Creek R.R. , from Wendover to Gold Hill.

1918 July 1 the Western Pacific was put under the control of the U.S.R.A. The first move they made was to close the W.P.s lucrative Ferry and Barge service. Passenger trains were moved to S.P.s Oakland Mole. Freight went to the S.P Dumbarton cut off. As of November W.P. and S.P. were forced to pair trackage from Winnemucca to Wells. [182 miles]

1918 N.C.O sold 64 miles of it's main line to W.P. and 39 mile Plumas Branch plus it's station and shops in Reno.

1918 Northern Electric renamed Sacramento Northern.

1918 Ellderbeck branch.

1920 March first the W.P. was returned to private ownership. The government paid 9 million dollars in damages to the W.P.

1920 W.P. surveyed to Westwood.

1921 W.P. built from Niles to San Jose.

1921 W.P. purchases the Sacramento Northern.

1922 Purchased the Bidwell Bar Branch, to be operated by the Feather River Railroad .Cal-Pine Branch also acquired.

1924 S.P. and W.P. returned to the paired trackage of 1918.

1926 Arthur James of the Great Northern takes over control of the W.P. [1926/1939]

1927 San Francisco, Sacramento R.R. [Sac Short Line] is purchased. This was the former Oakland, Antioch and Eastern. This gave the W.P. a direct connection into the Bay Area.

1928 Purchased 1/3 share in the Central California Traction., with S.P. and A.T.S.F. This line ran from Sacramento to Stockton.

1928 Termonious . Included a wharf and warehouses to service Delta growers. Closed in 1964.

1928 Wells [OSL] .

1929 The Sacramento Northern and The San Francisco, Sacramento R.R. are merged.

1930 Red River Lumber Co. incorporated the Northern California Railroad to run from Westwood to Lake Almanor.

1931 The Northern California Extension is built from Keddie to a connection with the Great Northern at NuBieber. Red River Lumber Co granted trackage to W.P. from Westwood to Clear Creek Junction, to become the Inside or Inland Gateway mainline. The extension provided W.P. 112 miles of new track, the last major railroad track to be built in North America, at a cost of 10 million dollars. It was thought that James was looking for access into California for his Empire Builder, but this never happened. This section is sometimes referred to as the North Line or Highline. The maximum grade on this line is 2.2% compensated, with a 10o-12' curvature.<sup>6</sup>

1932 Alameda Belt Line was purchased from the city of Alameda, in joint ownership with the A.T.S.F.

1933 In June operation of W.P passenger trains to and from the S.P. Mole were discontinued, transferred to the S.P. Oakland pier. At this time the ferry "Feather River" was sold to S.P.

1935 W.P. filed for reorganizational bankruptcy. The railroad continued to operate under the District Court, until it was restored with no change in name, in 1944.

1937 First thoughts of the California Zephyr were persued, only to be deferred until 1939, then suspended due to the war, revived in 1945.

1939 The Exposition Flyer replaced the Scenic Limited.

1939 In September the first diesel locomotives were delivered to the W.P. They were Elector-motive SW-1 switchers. Numbers 501 ,502 & 503.

1941 The first freight diesel, number 901 arrived.

1942 W.P. and A.T.S.F. purchased the Oakland Terminal Railway, which was part of "Borax" Smiths holdings.

1943 Work started on CTC, completed on entire system, June of 1945.

1947 On July 10, the first California Zephyr locomotive arrived at Stockton, number 801.

1949 March 20 the first C.Z departed Oakland for Chicago. known as trains 17 and 18, there were 6 trains of 10 cars each. Pulled by F3s in an ABB. configuration. The ABA was a rare configuration.

1950 Budd Rail Diesel cars, known as Zephyrettes, were introduced to run between Oakland and Salt Lake. These units replaced W.P. secondary trains, such as the Royal Gorge, trains 1&2.

1952 S-2 locomotives were delivered in Aluminum and Orange with black stripes, 913 was also painted Orange with metallic gray sides.

1953 In January all C.T. C. was completed., also in June the last regular steam train was run.

1955 Large 15" letters were introduced on locomotives. Spark arrestors installed on diesels.

1958 Sp/Wp ended passenger ferrys. W.P. bussed passengers to the 3rd and Washington depot.

1962 Oroville Dam relocation track was first used on October 22.

1963 First regular use of West/North leg of Keddie Y.

1965 F7s to Pumpkin 2. Last GP-35, #3022

1967 W.P. changes from PFE to FGE.

1970 March 22 last California Zephyr, also the last Annual Report of the Western Pacific Railroad, on December 21, became W.P. Industries Inc.

1972 Introduced new green locomotives.

1974 Traffic was as such, 31% originated on line for off line, 32% through traffic, 32% from off line to terminate on line and 5% local.

1979 New image paint and logo.

1978 End of freight ferry service and the railroad was sold to Newrail.

1980 Railroad is sold to the Union Pacific Railroad.

1987 Legally merged into the U.P. system.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The road was built from a point near the future site of Reno, over Beckworth Pass, across the Sierra Valley, then along the ridge of the Middle Fork to Bidwell's Bar and into the Sacramento

Valley.

<sup>2</sup>California Northern Rail Road ( Marysville to Oroville ) was incorporated in 1864, into receivership by 1877, sold at foreclosure in 1881. Reorganized in 1885 as the Northern California Railroad, became the Northern California Railway in 1888. In 1889 was purchased by the S.P.. By 1891 had built from Marysville to Knights Landing .

<sup>3</sup>During 1908 W.P. utilized a portion of the B&L mainline from B&L Junction to Portola, which was realigned for W.P. mainline use. The B&L was then given use in perpetuity.

<sup>4</sup>There was also a Butte and Plumas Railway Company incorporated by the Truckee Lumber Co. in 1910 as a logging railroad out of Oroville.

<sup>5</sup>The W.P. was within 40 miles of Westwood, but Red River went with S.P. out of Fernley Nevada (135 miles), possibly because of W.P.s financial troubles, that resulted in bankruptcy in 1915.

<sup>6</sup>Red River leased operating rights on the W.P. between Clear Creek Junction and Westwood, which was electrified. Red River engineers had to be W.P. qualified.

W.P. leased S.P. track from the mill at Westwood to Mason.

Red River Logging Railroad would deliver log trains to Halls Flat on the W.P. from the woods. W.P. crews would then take them to Westwood. W.P. kept a local crew for this traffic.