

Chapter 2:

The History of the Indian Valley Railroad

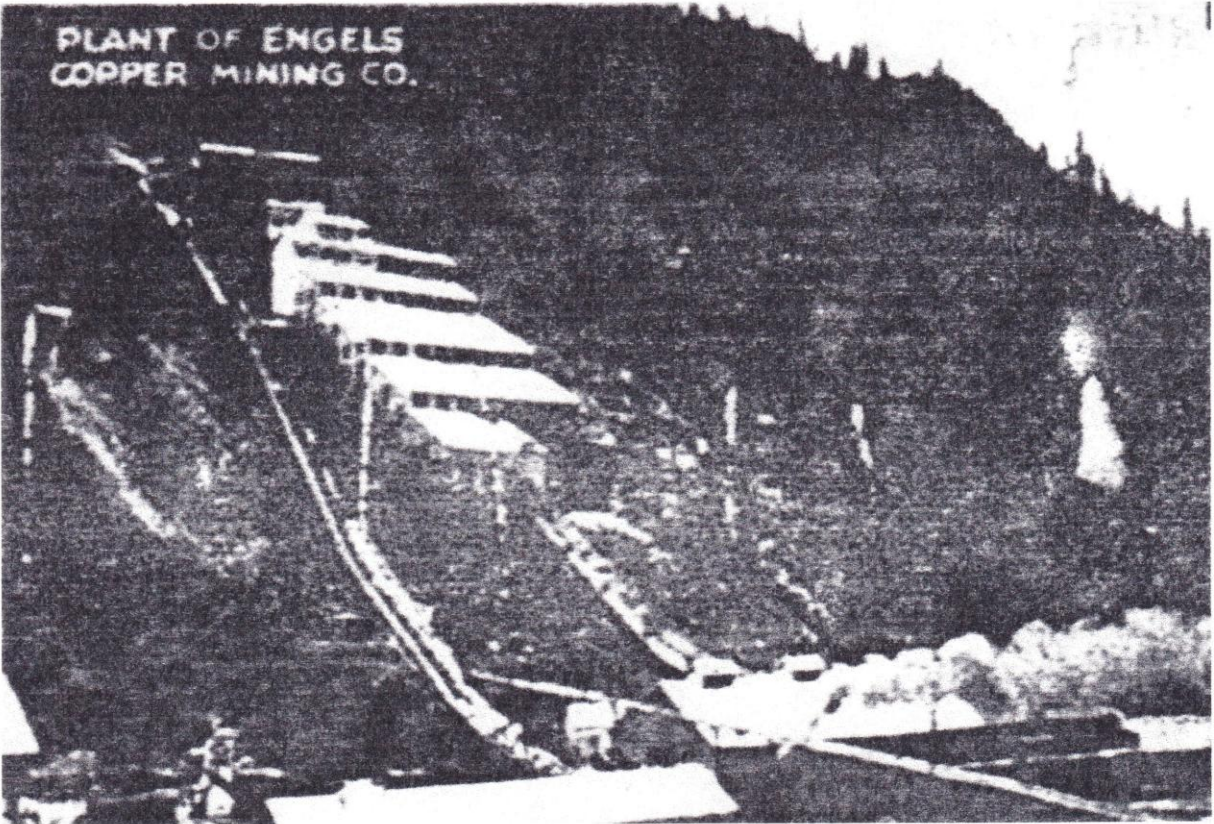
Early in the 1850's, gold was discovered in Indian Valley, causing Greenville, one of the valley's major communities to become an active mining camp. \$500,000 in ore were mined over a 20 year period at near by Lights Creek, named after Ephriam Light, a prospecting pioneer.

During his mining time, around 1865, Light also discovered that the area was rich with copper ore as well as the gold that was by then widely talked about. He built a small smelter just to the north of the gold camps to mine this copper. However, when he abandoned all gold mining and focused on the copper ore, which he thought would make him rich beyond his wildest dreams, no one followed him. Everyone either stayed in the gold business or flocked to Virginia City, where the copper mines were far more appealing. This caused Light to abandon his mine and smelter entirely.

One man who saw logic in Light's theory was Henry Engels, Sr. Being the manager of the Pacific Brass Foundry in San Francisco, he too thought that copper ore was where the money was at the time. In San Francisco, he was unhappy having to pay 35-40 cents per pound for ore brought west from the Lake Superior area. In 1870, Engels and his sons discovered what became known as Engels Copper Mine.

Early ores from this mine were so rich that they were shipped over seas to Swansea, Wales for treatment. Business boomed for years and in 1906, the company was incorporated, headed by the family with Elmer E. Paxton as General Manager. Numerous tunnels were driven in the area and the work continued. In 1911, a 500 ton blast furnace was built. This furnace, however, was never operated because of government objection to the fumes it would create.

In an effort to make transportation of the ore easier, the company was reorganized in 1914 and a unique copper flotation device was built. This device was placed into operation in Feb. 1915. Concentrates were sacked, loaded onto a tramway and taken to the lower terminal. Here, it was loaded onto trailers drawn by a Holt Caterpillar tractor. Next, the sacks were loaded onto trucks and endured a long, slow trip to Keddie, where they were put on the Western Pacific Railroad and taken to a larger smelter in Garfield, Utah.



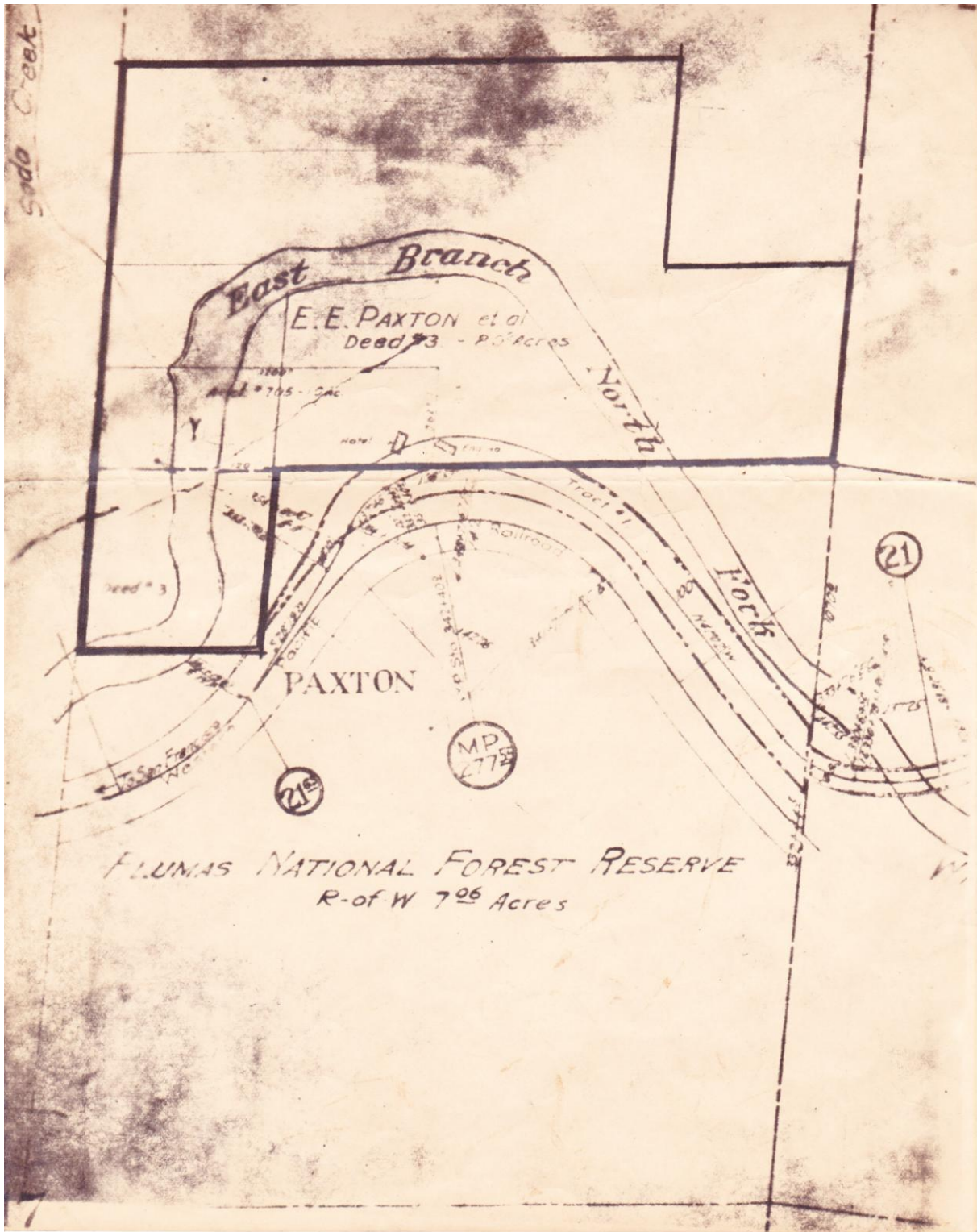
Engel Copper Mine as it appeared in 1930.

When World War I spurred the price of copper upwards, the mine was swamped with demand. The flotation device was no longer fast or efficient enough to keep up with the industry. They had to find a better way to transport the ore. The answer they finally arrived at was the development of a railroad.

A preliminary survey for the railroad was done in September of 1915. The initial plan was to join the Western Pacific at Twain, 8 miles west of Keddie, using a switchback to climb the canyon. This climb was not to exceed 2.5%. It was to be a narrow gauge railroad. Later, however, it was suggested by Willis Walker, of the Red River Lumber Company, that it be a standard line. This idea was accepted and the Standard Realty and Development Company agreed to pay the difference in cost (\$75,000) of the different type of line and would own 15% of the stock in the railroad.

C.H. Goodhue created an extensive resource map of the proposed line. According to this map, the line would run from the Western Pacific line, at Paxton, past Indian Falls to Greenville, following the north side of Indian Creek, over the pass to Nevis, by Lake Almanor, and on to Westwood. A separate branch would split off at Crescent Mills, go through Taylorsville, 4 miles due east to Veramont, which was the station for Taylorsville and the Genesee Valley and would continue 3 miles further to Genesee. This branch was known as the Genesee Branch. A third branch called the Diamond Mountain Branch would split off at Taylorsville and continue on north to Engel's mine.

Surveying for this line was conducted in June, 1916, by H.D. Graydon. Incorporation took place on June 30, 1916 and called for a 26 mile line running from Paxton, near Keddie to Engle's mine. Grading began by the Utah Construction Company on July 31, and was almost finished by November. Rail laying using rail leased from the Western Pacific started on November 30. This rail was later purchased from the Western Pacific in 1921. During this time, there was a two week strike due to the change in the management at the mine. Although the work on the railroad got very slow, wages averaged \$200 per month and it continued. By December, 1916, there were rails in Crescent Mills. By March 15, they had reached Veramont, and actual transportation of ore began on July 12 from the mine. The line was declared finished on September 1, 1917 and was celebrated by much rejoicing and a huge party at Crescent Mills.



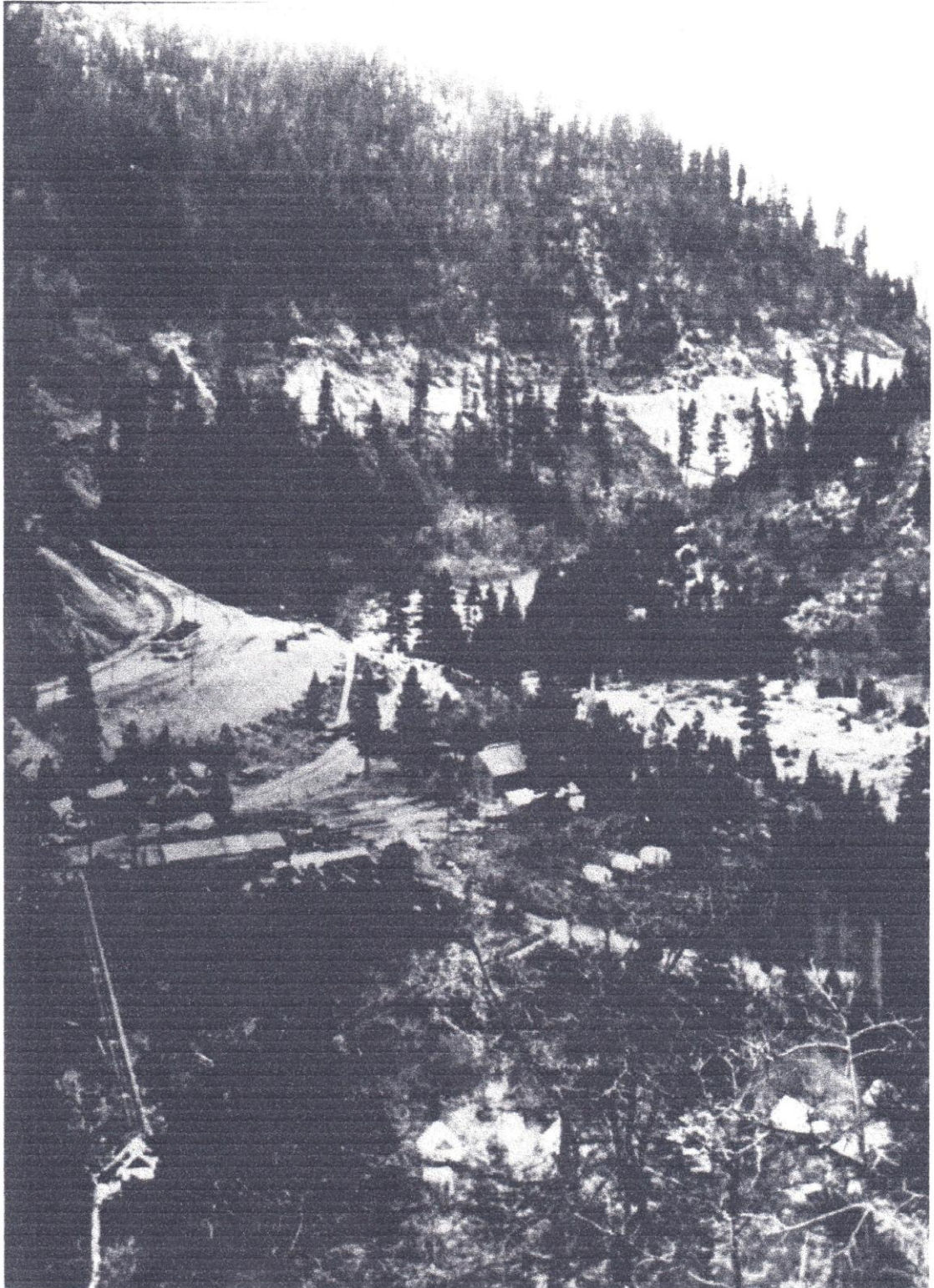
Proposed line for the Indian Valley railroad; 1916-1917

At Paxton, the place where actual physical connection with the Western Pacific was made, the Indian Valley Railroad, as the new line was now known, built a large electric light plant and hotel. Known as the Feather River Villa and later as Rainbows End, it was among California's most luxurious hotels and served as a good place for passengers of the Western Pacific to spend the night. Also built here were cottages, 8 bunk houses, a small station, and, just to the east, a two stall roundhouse and a turntable.

The Indian Valley Railroad's equipment roster included 2 locomotives; Locomotive 1 and Locomotive 2, both of which were EX-D and RG-2-8-0 Baldwin models purchased from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroads. They also had one freight car, a steam shovel, 2 passenger cars, one of which derailed and burned near Engel mine on May, 1938, and a combination mail and passenger car.



The hotel at Paxton and the surrounding area as it appeared in 1919.



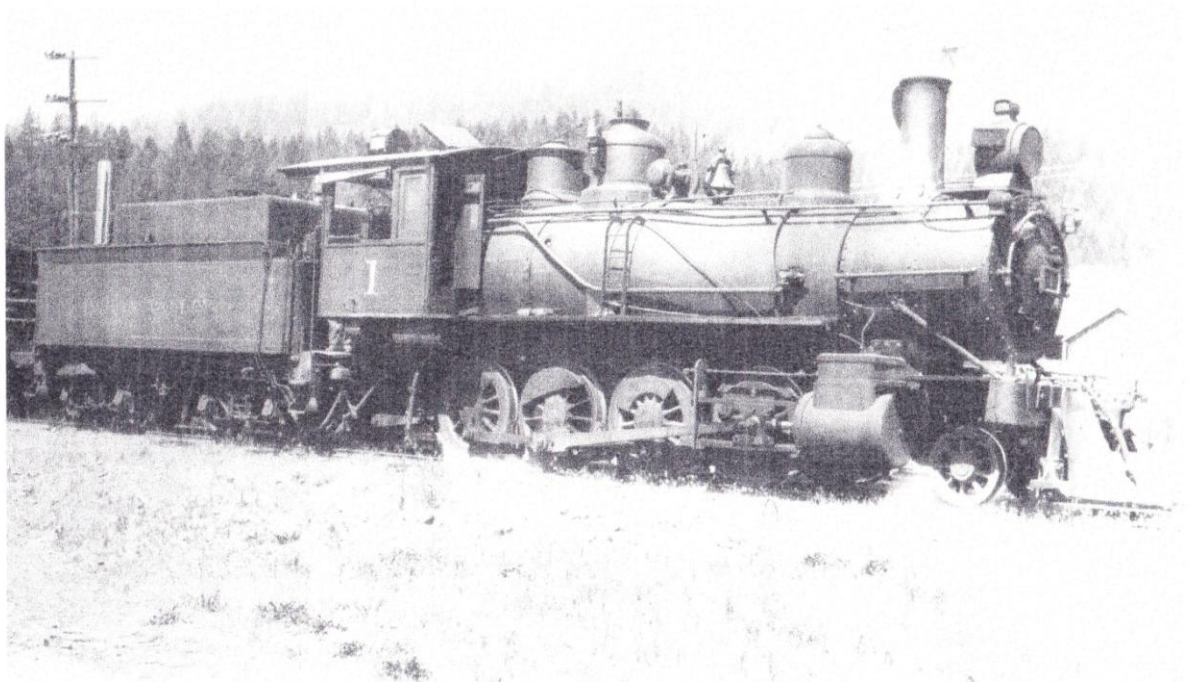
The hotel at Paxton and the surrounding area as it appeared in 1920.



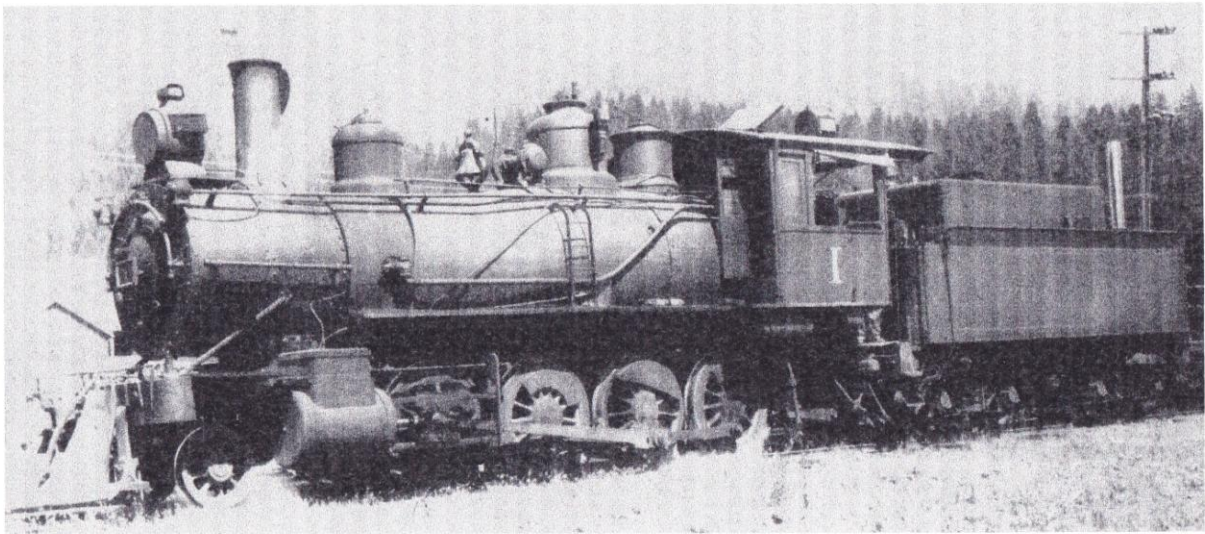
The turntable at Paxton; 1938.



Engine #1 at Paxton; 1934.



Engine #1 at Paxton; 1935.



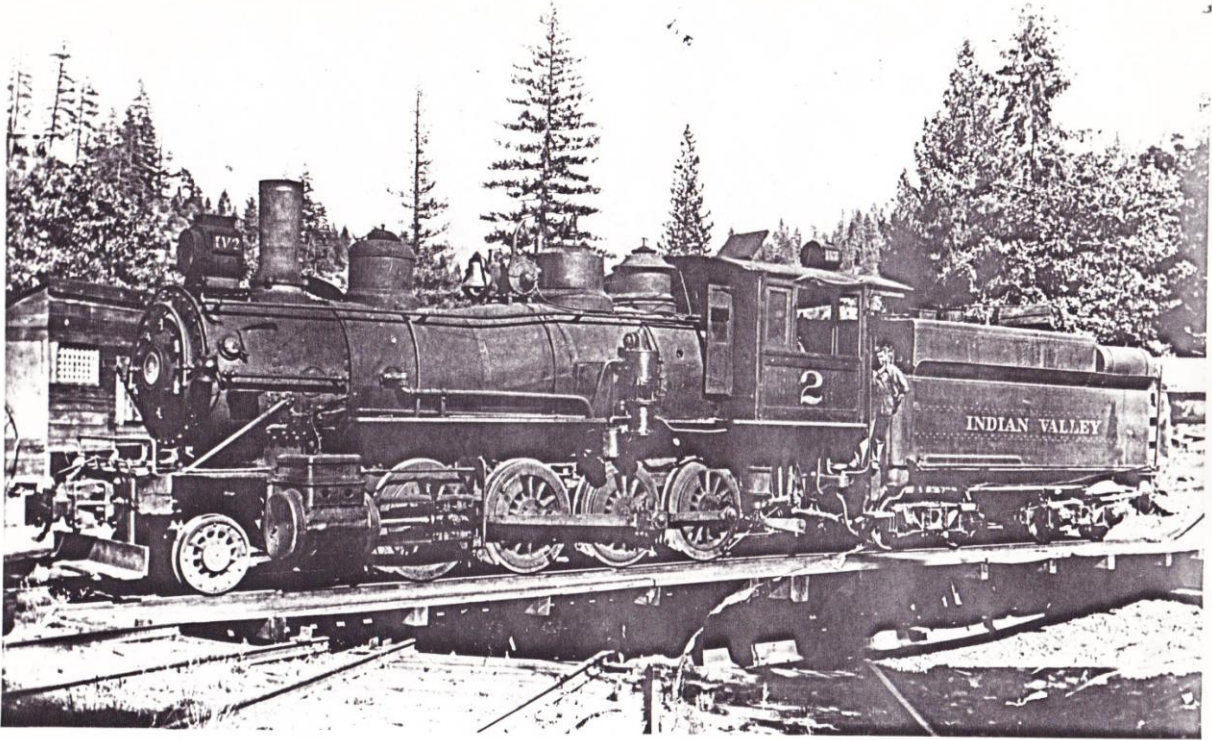
Engine #1 at Paxton; 1935.



Engine #1 at Crescent Mills; 1935.

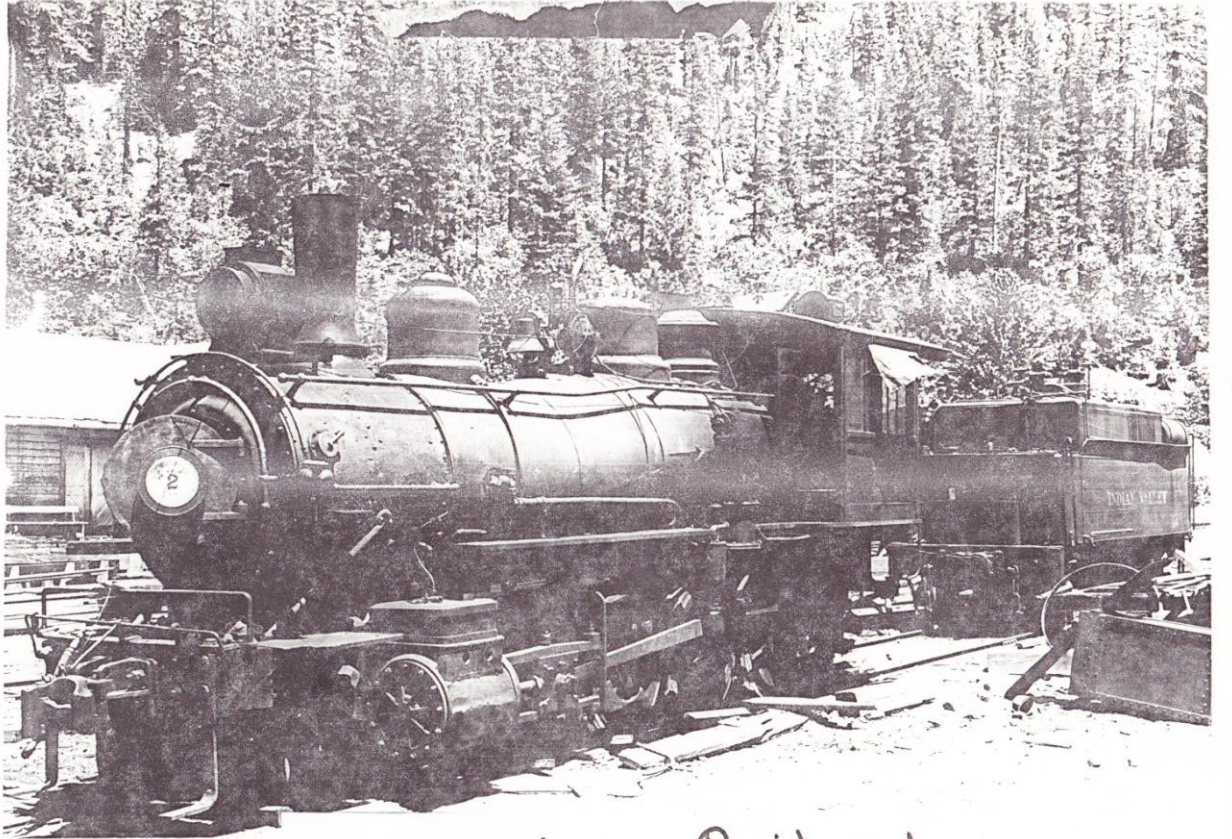


Engine #1 at Crescent Mills; 1938.



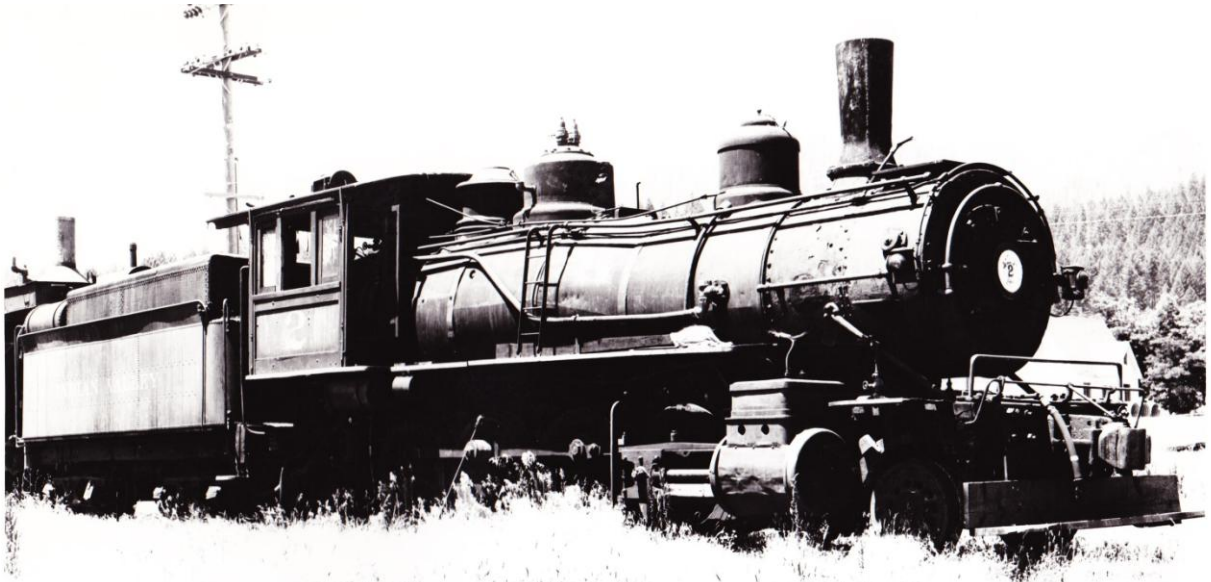
*Paxton, CA. August 10, 1937
Engine #2 on turntable at Paxton. Solon Ruzzader, Engr. in gangway.*

Engine #2 at the Paxton Turntable; Aug. 10, 1937.

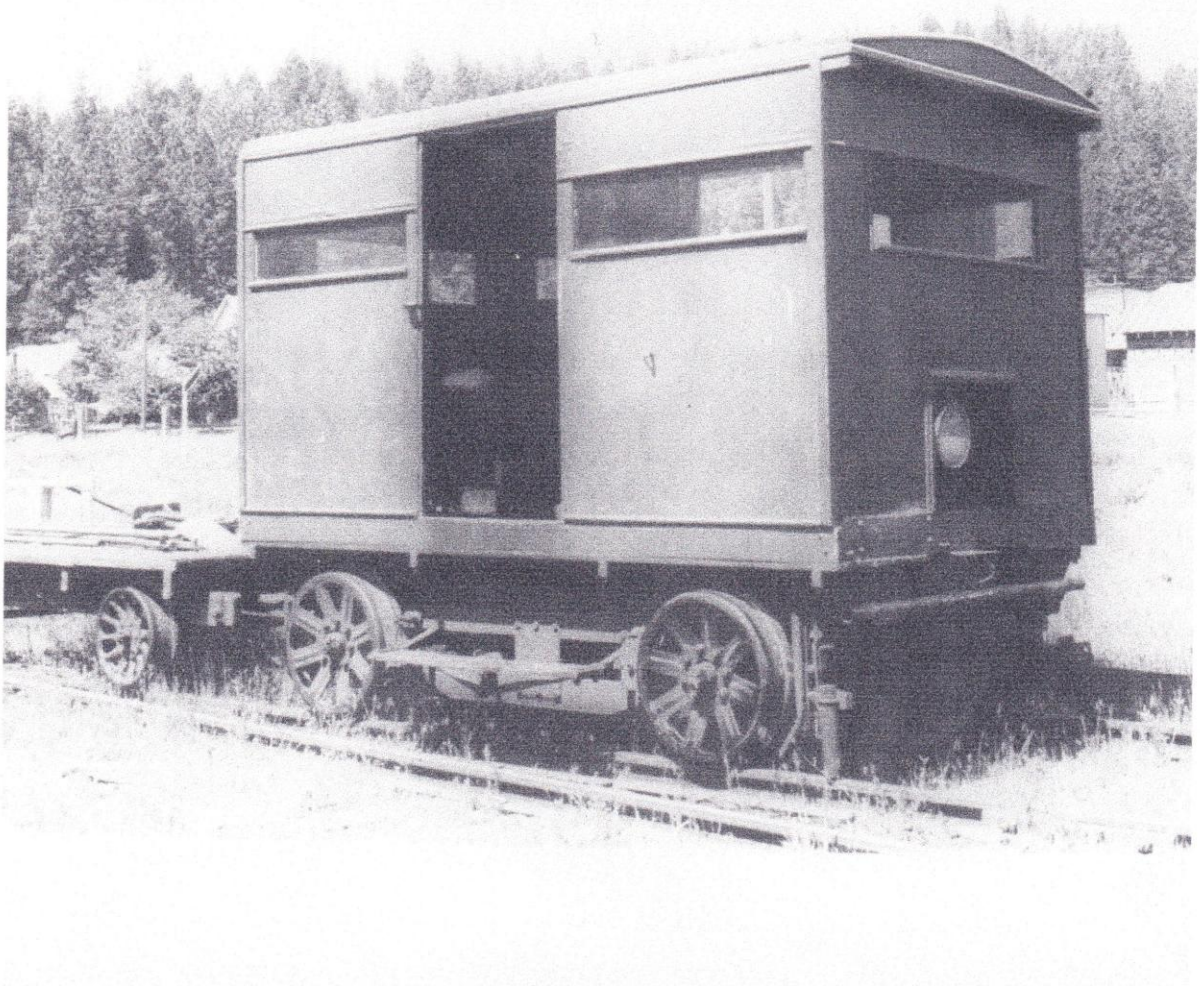


Indian Valley Railroad
Engine #2 Paxton, Ca.
1938

Engine #2 at Paxton; 1938



Engine #2 at Crescent Mills; 1938



Indian Valley Railroad combination car at Crescent Mills; 1938

INDIAN VALLEY RAILROAD COMPANY

TIME TABLE NO. 18
Cancelling Time Table No. 17*

ISSUED March 5, 1935

EFFECTIVE March 10, 1935 .

E A S T B O U N D			W E S T B O U N D		
TRAIN NO. 2	TRAIN NO. 4	MILES	S T A T I O N S	TRAIN NO. 3	TRAIN NO. 1
AM	AM			AM	AM
8.30		0.00	Lv. PAXTON	Ar.	10.30
8.50		4.21	Lv. INDIAN FALLS	Lv.	10.00
9.10		8.34	Ar. CRESCENT MILLS	Lv.	9.30
	9.20	8.34	Lv. CRESCENT MILLS	Ar. 12.15 PM	
	9.45	12.45	Lv. VERAMONT	Lv. 11.49	
	10.05	17.17	Lv. STARKS	Lv. 11.28	
	10.25	21.57	Ar. ENGELS	Lv. 11.10	

AUTHORITY: C.R.C. Decision No. 27702, Application #19777

No. 1 and 2 will operate for shippers convenience, when carload shipments require transportation as per schedule except Sundays. Less carload shipments between Paxton and Crescent Mills will normally be handled, daily except Sundays, by motor truck leaving Paxton (Motor Truck Schedule No. 1) at 8:00 AM and arriving at Crescent Mills at 8:30 AM, and leaving Crescent Mills at 11:30 AM and arriving at Paxton at 12 o'clock NOON.

No. 3 and 4 will be operated in connection with No. 1 and 2 for the movement of freight when transportation is required as per schedule, except Sundays.

Time table No. 17 is cancelled by motor truck schedule No. 1 for less carload shipments between Paxton and Crescent Mills (See notation above).

Subject to delays for shippers convenience, train connections, and other conditions beyond the control of the Company.

EASTWARD TRAINS are superior to WESTWARD TRAINS of the same class. Engines and trains must not exceed (4) miles per hour over Weather River bridge at Paxton and Indian Creek bridges at Crescent Mills and Veramont, nor more than ten (10) miles per hour over other bridges.

Switch for SAFETY TRACK located west end of Engels yard will be KEPT LOCKED for safety track.

Switch for SAFETY TRACK at Paxton will be KEPT LOCKED for safety track. Before trains start down grades, it will be necessary to test the air for leaks; brakes must be applied and the piston travel examined. If any car has more than EIGHT inches piston travel, trainmen will TAKE BRAKES OFF TO GIVE THE PISTON A SIX INCH TRAVEL.

No train must be taken over the Indian Valley Railroad at any point regardless of grade with less than 85% of the total braking power. In handling a train of loaded cars from Engels to Starks all retainers must be turned up and in cases when descending the four percent grades.

In a train of empty cars, not less than half of the retainers must be turned up, or, as many as, in the judgment of the engineer, will be required to handle the train in safety.

Switch at junction with tail track at Paxton will be kept locked for main line.

ISSUED BY:
CLARK COB

Mileage chart for the Indian Valley Railroad.

The railroad was primarily a copper ore hauler and made plenty of money until a decline in copper prices caused Engle mine to shut down in 1930. From 1925-1929 the annual tonnage averaged 41,000 tons, 28,000 of which were ores. From 1932-1936 the annual tonnage plummeted to only 11,000 tons, 200 tons of which were ore, 9,000 tons of which were forest products, and 1,800 tons of which were petroleum products. The freight train operated three days a week. In addition to being an ore and product hauler, the railroad was also a passenger train. Connections were commonly made at Paxton with overnight trails to San Francisco and Sacramento. Service ran from Paxton to Crescent Mills on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday on engines #1 and #2. Service between Crescent Mills and Engel mine ran on Tuesdays only on newly acquired engine #3 and #4. In all, it took nearly 2 hours to travel from Paxton to Engel mine, and this included a change of trains at Crescent Mills. There was also a gasoline motorcar that was “known to handle the occasional passenger” that operated 6 days a week to Crescent Mills.

Warren Wing gives an account of his experience on the Indian Valley Railroad:

“I rode the line from Paxton to Engel Mine in 1929 and have fond memories of our trip to that part of the country.

My ancestors were pioneers in Indian Valley through which the railroad crossed.

It was late in June, 1929 the three of us set off for a visit with my uncle near Taylorsville in Indian Valley. My Grandmother, I was 12 and my brother was 9.

We had left Sacramento late at night on the Western Pacific arriving at Paxton in the early hours the next morning. I remember leaving the train and walking down a path to the inn, where we had breakfast served family style.

Then I remember having to wait quite a while for the Indian Valley train. It consisted of a couple of boxcars, several gondola cars, and a combination car, baggage and mail. There were only a handful of passengers on the train. We left Paxton and crossed the Feather River. We sat on the right hand side because all of the pretty scenery was on that side.

I remember the conductor taking our tickets. He had on a regular uniform and was quite old and short and fat.

The train reached Veramont 1 hour and 5 minutes after leaving Paxton. A pretty slow time for just 21 miles.

My uncle lives about 5 miles North of the Veramont station. I remember the wait we had at the station for my uncle to come pick us up in his open Model T. Grandmother had to crank the old style telephone to reach my uncle.

Everyone called him “Hoot” Wing because of his big blue eyes.

On our return trip we arrived at Paxton around 5:30 p.m. We had dinner at the inn and had to wait quite a while for the train to Sacramento. I remember the wait quite well because my brother and I got quite restless.

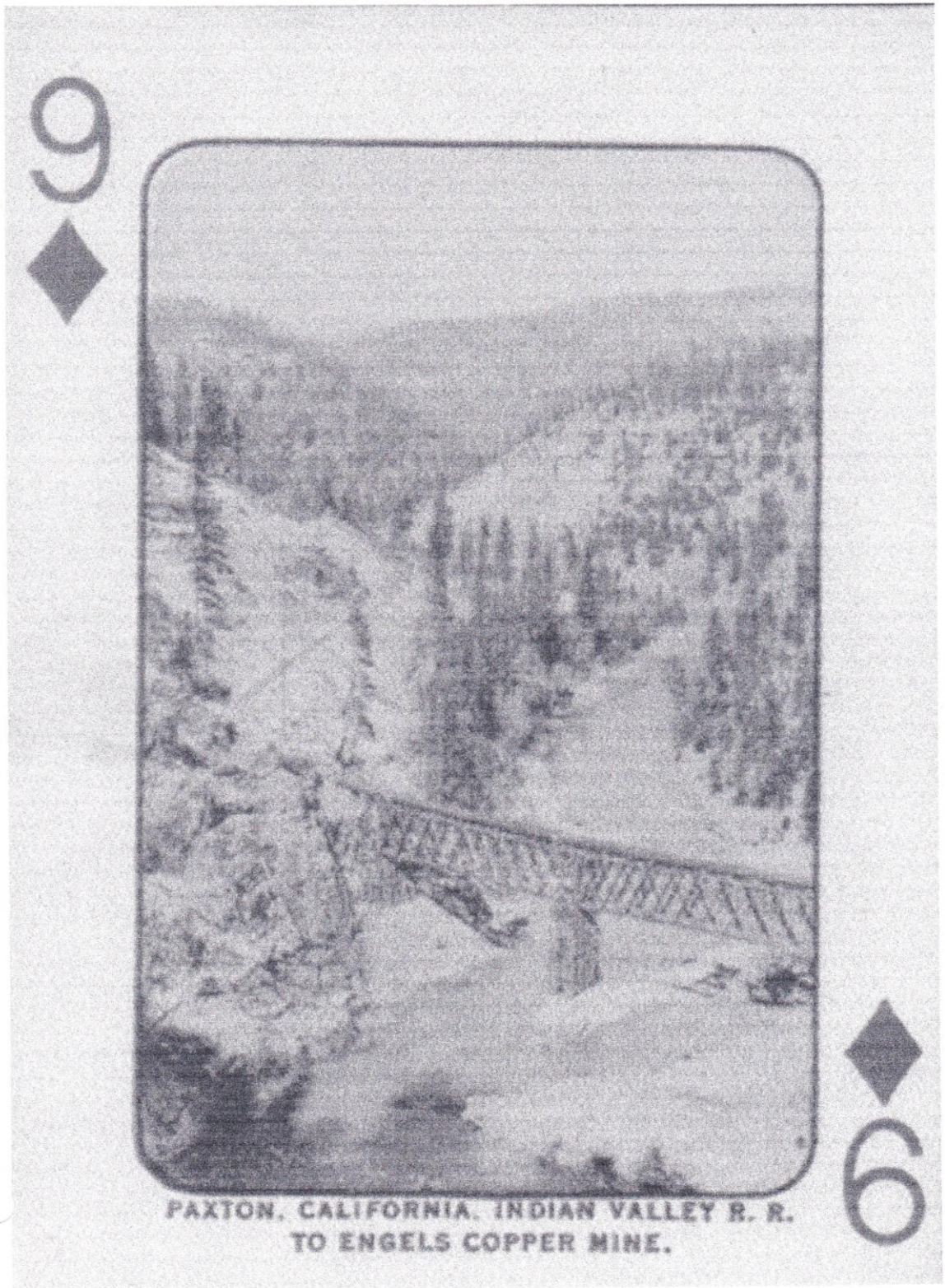
I have a picture of the Indian Valley train coming around the bend. It has a boxcar or two and the open combo car.”

The railroad built a timber howe truss bridge near Paxton to enable the trains to cross the East Branch of the North Fork of the Feather River.

After the abandonment of the mine, the Indian Valley Railroad sought permission to abandon its 8 mile line from Paxton to Crescent Mills on July 26, 1937. The state highway department offered to buy the right of way for the present day Highway 89 for \$300,000. This seemed far more lucrative than spending the required \$18,000 to repair the 1,600 feet of track on the tressel near Paxton.

An account of the condition which the tressel was in at this time is given by Wayne Batchelor:

“That tressel at Paxton. They didn’t trust it. This was in the thirties, just before they tore it down. It swayed and wiggled so much.... and they had a couple of cars and an engine. They had a couple of great big, heavy set engineers and firemen. Well, they would stop, set the throttle, run across and wait for it on the other side. Byron Clark would stop the school bus so us kids could watch these two big fat guys run across... and we would laugh, hang out the windows and wave and holler.”



The tressel at Paxton as it appeared shortly after it's construction; 1918



The tressel at Paxton as it appeared in May, 1938.



The tressel at Paxton after it's destruction; 1938.

Feather River Journal
June 16, 1960



Photo by Dan Erickson

Solon Luzzader stepped down from the cab of Quincy Railroad's diesel at the end of the run on May 31, ending 41 years of railroading which began in 1909 as an apprentice in the shops of the Southern Pacific and continued until interrupted by World War I. He served in Co. H, 364th Infantry of the 91st Division, taking part in three major engagements. Solon worked the Indian Valley RR 1921-38, when that railroad discontinued operations. He went over to the Quincy Railroad, which he served until his retirement, with the exception of a few years of local farming.

Solon Luzzader is the 3rd generation of steam engineers. His grandfather, Levi Stokes, began railroading in Tennessee during the Civil War. He served with the Southern Pacific and was the oldest engineer on that road in 1894 when he went over to the newly laid road of the Santa Fe, taking the first passenger train into Point Richmond at that time, where he completed 60 years of service.

An uncle served 50 years and his father, Walter Franklin Luzzader, served with the Southern Pacific for 30 years before retiring due to disability.

When Luzzader signed in for the final time his co-workers, Orval Myers, Leonard Thayer, Harold Huber, Frank McCollum and the Quincy Railroad presented him with a beautiful set of the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy's Science and Health.

Known locally as a doughty fisherman, Solon can now indulge in his favorite pastime whenever he chooses.

Solon Luzzader; the fat man who ran across the shaky tressel at Paxton every day.

The railroad maintained its line from the mine to Crescent Mills until the remaining ore was mined. Approval of abandonment was granted on December 10, 1937, and actual abandonment of the Crescent Mills – Paxton line was made on March 1, 1938. The rest of the line was abandoned on December 5, 1938 and all of the equipment owned by the railroad was either junked or sold. The rails were torn up the following year.

The following is a historical account as told by Grant Allen, a former Paxton resident and railroad assistant superintendent:

“It will be recalled that when I was assigned this job on December 15, 1931, it was the understanding that my salary would be \$200 per month, and if things went well, it would be raised after the first of the year.

My various titles included Chief dispatcher, Trainmaster, and finally Assistant Superintendent. My superintendent was Mr. T.M. Price, an aggregate engineer who designed the gravel plant. He told me that the only thing he knew about a railroad was when he bought a ticket.

It turned out that by the time I left in September, 1934, my salary was still \$200 per month. This, in spite of the fact that when the bid was put in on the job, the estimated cost of the railroad operations would be 1.9 cents per net ton mile. At the time I left, it was at 1.3 cents, but I did not get any of that money. Such is the politics in some organizations, when one is not a fair haired boy.

On the afternoon of September 23, 1934, I received a Western Union telegram from Mr. Mcsweeney at Portola that he was going to start hiring brakemen the next morning. It was almost quitting time and as soon as I was relieved, I hurried home and packed up a suitcase, drove all night and I was sitting on Mr. Mcsweeney’s doorstep by 8:00 a.m. the next morning. This was how I started my career with the Western Pacific Railroad. I was the first brakeman hired since the depression had set in 1929. It was for only the fall perishable rush and knew that it would not last very long, but it did establish a seniority date on a common carrier railroad.

The work lasted until October 20, 1934, at which time the extra board was reduced, and was preparing to return to Boulder City where could find some other work to do, as I could not expect to return to my former position.

That morning when I was packed up, a man by the name of Mr. Coe drove up to the Hotel and offered me a job as superintendent of the Indian Valley Railroad at Paxton, California. Apparently they had approached Mr. Mcsweeney about the job and he had referred them to me.

I accepted their offer since we liked that kind of country and there was not much to go back to in Boulder City. The damn was about completed as far as heavy rail hauling was concerned. Furthermore, I wanted to be close by when I got called back to the board on the Western Pacific.

The offer was for \$150 per month. The hotel at Paxton was to be turned over to us for whatever we could make of it. The former superintendent was also the postmaster and this job was to go to Peg (Wife). I was promised a raise which I never did get.

Accordingly, I drove back to Boulder City and moved my family to Paxton. The Indian Valley paid for moving our effects.

This railroad was constructed in 1917 from Paxton, a station of the Western Pacific about three miles west of Keddie and ran up the west side of Indian Creek to Crescent Mills and then on to Engel Mine, about 19 miles. The mine was a rich copper deposit. The deposit ran out about 1930, taking away the principle traffic of the railroad and after that time it had operated in the red. They had about \$600,000.00 left in the treasury at the time we went there and they were paying their deficits out of that.

The purpose of the management making a change was because the Highway Department wanted to buy the right of way to build the present Highway 89 to Crescent Mills, Greenville, Chester, and the Mt. Lassen area. Because the railroad was operating in the red, their offer was for \$100,000.00, but if the operating income could put it in the black, the management would be in better position to bargain for more.,

Even at the time we went there, the Feather River Highway was completed downstream only as far as Belden. In fact it was not opened until 1937. This meant the only way one could drive out of the west was via Quincy, and the Bucks Lake Road to Oroville, out via Portola and Reno and the Donner Summit or over a very treacherous road from Paxton to Crescent Mills, thence to Chester and out via Chico or Red Bluff. Thus the entire area was very dependent on the Western Pacific Railroad for access to it. Particularly in view of the fact that the Bucks Lake Road was closed due to snow in the winter.

With this background the railroad built, owned and operated a hotel known as the Feather River Villa. It was equipped with only 14 bedrooms but had a dining room capacity of about 100 people and a small lunch counter. People traveling to and from Engel Mine and Crescent Mills used the railroad and would come in on Western Pacific train #4 at about 5:00 a.m., have breakfast, and take the Indian Valley Railroad at 8:00 a.m. On their return trip, they would leave Engel Mine in the afternoon, have dinner at the hotel, then go west on Western Pacific #3 at about 9:00 p.m.

The railroad had two small 2-8-0 locomotives purchased from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, their numbers being 661 and 668. They were renamed Indian Valley #1 and #2 respectively.

There were two passenger cars. One of them was a combination baggage express and mail section in the front end and the other end was a coach section and the second car was a full coach. Both were open platform cars. Outside one or two cars used for maintenance purposes, all of the rest of the freight equipment came from the Western Pacific. Since the Western Pacific owned a 50% interest in the Indian Valley Railroad, they stored cars on the Indian Valley for prospective loading and did not charge any per-diem.

The mine at Engel Mine reduced ore to concentrates and then shipped it in gondola cars to the smelter at Garfield, Utah. Their production was two cars every day and on alternate days they shipped a third car. The division of revenue that occurred to the Indian Valley was \$200 per car. This in addition to all the mining supplies, living supplies, along with express and mail, it was a profitable venture. The fare between Crescent Mills and Paxton was 75 cents one way and from Paxton to Engel Mine was \$1.50 one way.

Later, when the dam was being built that created Lake Almanor, large amounts of materials and machinery were moving between Paxton and Crescent Mills, then by truck over the highway. In addition, many passengers used this route. There was some unfinished lumber being shipped by a small mill at Engel Mine and from Frizzie's Mill just west of Crescent Mills. Also the Standard Oil Company had a distribution depot for that area at Crescent Mills that provided some tank car and box car traffic.

At the time we went to Paxton, there was a full time joint Western Pacific-Indian Valley agent at Paxton, a full time agent at Crescent Mills and a full time section man. There was also an engine watchman on duty in the roundhouse at night not only to keep them serviced for the next day, but to furnish steam heat to the hotel. The engineer and firemen did the maintenance work on the engines while the conductor and one brakeman worked on the section on the days that the train did not run. The traffic had dropped to a little lumber out of Engel Mine and Frizzie's Mill and about once a week a shipment for the Standard Oil Company at Crescent Mills.

They had scheduled runs shown in the official railway guide making a round trip three days a week to Engel Mine regardless of whether or not there was any traffic. This included any passengers or express.

The first thing I did was to apply for and receive permission to cancel this regularly advertised service and offer freight service when offered. This kept the locomotive in the

roundhouse when not needed and gave the engine crew more time to do maintenance work. It also gave the train crew more time to do track work.

In lieu of passenger service, purchased a ford station wagon and offered daily passenger and express service upon demand.

I abolished the station agents jobs at Paxton and Crescent Mills and took over those duties myself. I would open the Paxton station at 7:00 a.m. help with the mail and express that had been left in the freight house by the crew of the Western Pacific #4, then take off about 8:00 a.m. in the station wagon and kept the station at Crescent Mills open until about noon, return to Paxton for lunch, and afternoon. None of these duties were particularly arduous in the view of the amount of traffic although the reports to the Interstate Commerce Commission and the State Utility Commission required about as many forms as did a larger railroad.

As previously mentioned, Peg was appointed postmistress. Her income was from any stamps canceled at the office. Quite a few local people around used it. In addition, there was a truck star route from Paxton to Crescent Mills, Taylorsville, Greenville, and communities around the south side of Lake Almanor. The truck was owned and operated by a man named Ira Short, who had been in that vicinity since he drove horse and wagon and stage routes before the days of automobiles. The mail that he picked up was handled through the Paxton office outlying points to go out on #3. Whenever possible, he would keep all the uncanceled mail for Peg to cancel and get the revenue.

Much of the mail that came in on #4 was parcel post, particularly from Greenville, as the Indian Valley did not run through Greenville and the Western Pacific had no passenger service on the Bieber-Keddie line or the Northern California Extension as it was known.

Upon checking the express tariffs and the parcel post rates, found that the express rates were cheaper than the parcel post to either Crescent Mills or Greenville. Then we made a deal with Ira Short that his truck became about half empty by the time he reached Crescent Mills and we could haul the express from Paxton to Crescent Mills on our station wagon, and if we could get the merchants in Greenville to ship in by express, we could share the agent's express commission between us and both make a little extra money.

Ira and I went calling on the merchants at Greenville and since they knew him so well and since they could not only get their merchandise cheaper, it would be delivered to their place of business instead of going to the post office to pick it up, they were glad to make the exchange in routing. The express business boomed and many days I had to make two trips with the station wagon to get it all at Crescent Mills. We not only split the commissions, but increased the express revenues for both the Western Pacific and the Indian Valley. At the same time, Ira did not receive any reduction in his pay at the post

office. At the time, the road from Paxton to Crescent Mills went up the highway almost as far as Keddie, thence under the Western Pacific Railroad. This would be the Keddie-Bieber line of the Western Pacific. From this underpass, it turned west and around a sharp turn called Aeroplane Point, up the east side of Indian Creek, past Indian Falls to Crescent Mills. A mighty slippery place in bad weather, but the only road outlet to the north.

The Western Pacific had some logging flats stored on the Indian Valley and Frizzie and I worked up a deal with the Taresch Brothers to cut and load logs at a place called Veramont, about 8 miles east of Crescent Mills, where they were handed to Frizzie's Mill. This increased our revenues for the logs, but increased Frizzie's rail shipments of lumber.

Peg made a little money out of the hotel in addition to her postmistress income. The first thing we did to the hotel was to put in a bar to replace the lunch counter and we had a good trade for meals.

All of the above actions put the railroad back in the black again. Things went along this way until September 1, 1935, when the Railroad Department Act was finally passed and I was recalled to service as a brakeman for the Western Pacific. There were many men on the railroad over the 65 age bracket and they immediately took their pensions. Because of this, I was never cut off again on the Western Pacific.

In view of this, I resigned from the Indian Valley and returned to the Western Pacific. As an aside, my \$150 per month salary was never increased as promised but instead of the first offer of \$100,000.00 for their right of way, the Indian Valley eventually got \$300,000.00 for it. Such is the manner in which some corporations keep their promises.

I marked up on the brakeman's board at Keddie. We had to move out of the hotel and moved into a cabin we rented from the Indian Valley at the foot of the hill until we could get a house in Keddie, which occurred just before Christmas. The two girls rode a school bus to Quincy every day.

We had a most pleasant house in Keddie. It had been built by Mr. A.G. Perkins, who worked there as a brakeman, but later became General Manager of the Harbor Railroad in Los Angeles. He built it with his own hands.



GRANT S. ALLEN
(RETIRED)

SUPERINTENDENT OF TRANSPORTATION
THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD CO.

SAN FRANCISCO

Grant and Peg Allen with their daughters.