

was appealed and in the summer of 1963 a trial was held in the court of federal Judge Sherrill Halbert in Sacramento. Not guilty was the verdict! But with red tape and more appeals from the government, it was not until November of 1964 that the #8 and the Quincy RR were com-

pletely vindicated. The result of this unnecessary situation meant that #8 never ran again under steam. She was moved from her pad at the Quincy RR depot to the Plumas County Fairgrounds where she sat quietly for twenty two years. But the day soon will come when she

will feel steam in her boiler and will be a very lively part of the Portola Railroad Museum. (We have the complete text of the trial, etc. for anyone interested in the whole story.)

The following article is from a March 1942 "TRAINS"

## Feather River Route

★ Western Pacific, newest of the transcontinentals, crosses the high Sierras with only one per cent grade.

By A. C. Kalmbach.\*

GEORGE GOULD, son of Jay Gould, worked late in his office on the fifth floor of the old Western Union Building on lower Broadway in New York. He worked hard with shirt sleeves rolled up, and he carried bulging cases of papers out to his country place over the week ends. It was 1905, and Gould was the overlord of some 15,000 miles of railroad, not just a financial manipulator but a progressive, fighting operating officer.

The Gould lines centered about the wealthy Missouri Pacific, dominating the Mississippi Valley and extending along the Arkansas River Valley to the foot of the Rockies. The connecting Wabash rolled east over the corn country and the Great Lakes Basin to Toledo

and Buffalo. The Wheeling & Lake Erie brought the system within plunging distance of Pittsburgh, originating point of as much tonnage as Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia combined. The new Wabash Pittsburgh Terminal audaciously put the Gould lines right into this traffic fortress of the Pennsylvania. The Western Maryland, with a few more miles of connecting up, would be the seaboard end of this mighty aggregation of mileage.

To the west the Denver & Rio Grande carried the Gould banner from the Missouri Pacific connection at Pueblo across the Rockies to Salt Lake City and Ogden. But here the Gould trackage ended, with no hope of friendly traffic connection, for west of Ogden was only the Southern Pacific, then united with the Union Pacific under Harri-

man. Even any hope of using Senator Clark's new Los Angeles & Salt Lake as a West Coast feeder was stymied when UP secured an interest in the Los Angeles road. But Gould's eyes lit on a new venture, the Western Pacific Railroad. It had been

chartered in 1903 by a group of San Francisco bankers to build a competitive route across the high Sierras to Great Salt Lake but Gould soon took over.

The ukase came down that the Western Pacific must be built so well that it could efficiently compete with the solidly estab-

lished Southern Pacific, the one-time Central Pacific and first of the transcontinentals. The Denver & Rio Grande, solid, substantial road safely embedded in the rich local traffic of the Colorado Rockies, took two-thirds of the capital stock and guaranteed the interest and sinking fund payments for Western Pacific. The bond trust agreement provided that the new road must have no grade steeper than one per cent compensated, no curve sharper than 10 degrees (573-foot radius) in its thousand miles or so of main line.

Little does it matter that in the panic of 1907 the Gould financial house of cards toppled under the weight of the Pittsburgh Terminal and the Western Pacific extension. The individual roads were sound. Denver & Rio Grande and its affiliate, Missouri Pacific, went right ahead. They needed a friendly West Coast connection, and they got it. The last spike was driven November 1, 1909, near Keddie, Calif., and marked the completion of the last major transcontinental railroad.

In four years the road had been built complete almost as it exists today, and engineers called it the finest railroad construction job since the West Shore. In the new picture, Southern Pacific had competition in its home territory and Denver & Rio Grande had its West Coast extension.

"FEATHER RIVER ROUTE," says the Western Pacific herald. And Feather River Route has been advertised in timetables, tourist circulars, and on the sides of box cars so well and so often that the route is almost better known than the railroad itself.

The three forks of the Feather River flow down into California's Sacramento Valley from the east and north, from sources high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. These are the mountains that must be conquered by any railroad entering the Central Valley of the Golden State from the east; and appropriately

named they are, for Sierra is Spanish for jagged or saw-tooth

mountains and Nevada means white as snow. The range is, geologically, a giant granite block some 350 miles north and south and 80 miles east to west, heaved up at an angle by some prehistoric convulsion.

Through this formidable natural barrier the Feather River (named because early explorers found pigeon feathers floating on the water) cuts a natural path from the summit to the great level valley of Central California. In its upper reaches the Feather River Valley is broad and green, in its lower portions a veritable canyon cut deep in the red and brown rock, with feathery foam rising from boiling rapids.

Before the coming of the railroad the Feather River was well known. The miners of '49 worked the canyon and the surrounding hills, and Rich Bar, a station on the Western Pacific 16 miles below Keddie, was the scene of a veritable bonanza. There are no official records extant, but estimates of the gold taken from this one spot range from 14 million to 23 million dollars.

The old histories record that in July of 1850 a man named Greenwood realized \$2900 from two pans of gravel from the river bar, whence the name Rich Bar. Thereupon a stampede of gold seekers ensued and Rich Bar's population rose to 2500. "So rich was the gravel," says George Mansfield in a booklet on the Feather River Canyon, "that claims on the bar were limited to 10 feet square."

In the later gold boom days, when the chartering of the Central Pacific made railroad connection with the East seem a near reality, the Feather River Valley was considered for the route by that grandfather of Sierra railroad surveying, Theodore Judah. He ran a line through the valley of the Middle Fork, south of the present Western Pacific North Fork Route, but the construction work would have been too heavy for the pioneering railroad. Grades and operat-

\* With the assistance of the following people in gathering illustrations and data: T. B. Aldridge, W. C. Whitaker, Guy Dunscomb, and Thomas E. Brown, publicity manager of the Western Pacific Railroad with offices in San Francisco.