

County of Nevada
State of California

Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission
Application for Registration of Historical Landmark

Name of proposed landmark. WOLF CREEK AND OLYMPIC CREEK NARROW
GAGE RAILROAD TRESTLE STONE ABUTMENT

Location. APN#: 035 - 412 - 024 - 000 COORDINATES: 39.22455 -
121.03473

Name of applicant. CITY OF GRASS VALLEY

Address. 125 E. MAIN STREET, GRASS VALLEY, CA, 95945

work phone. 530-274-4711

Name and address of owner upon whose property proposed landmark

is located, if owner is not applicant _____

I consent to this application and authorize the placing of a plaque or marker
on site.

Owner's signature

Date

Brief history and description of proposed landmark

(attach additional sheets as necessary)

Please see attached history of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad construction prepared by Andrew Brandon, Historian for the Nevada County Railroad Museum

Historically significant aspects or properties of proposed landmark

This stone abutment for one of the Narrow Gauge Railroads trestle crossings of Wolf Creek along the current alignment of Idaho Maryland Road is one of the few remaining trestle abutments for the railroad. In addition this is one of the few abutments constructed of stone. It is in relatively good condition and suitable for preservation

How will the landmark be protected and maintained?

The stone abutment is located at the terminus of the proposed Idaho Maryland trail before it enters the Loma Rica Project trail system at the corner of Idaho Maryland Road and Sutton Way in Grass Valley. The City is proposing a parking area at this location. The site will be maintained by the City of Grass Valley as part of the city park system. At some point in the future it may be possible to erect a close replica of the trestle across the creek for use by walkers and bicyclists.

Bibliography. Cite or attach available books, records, articles or other materials pertaining to the proposed landmark.

Books and articles:

See attached history

Historical or civil records: (e.g., ownership, assessments etc.)

See attached history

Other: (e.g. photographs, prints or drawings. Please list and attach separately)

See attached photographs and Union Newspaper articles about events near the railroad crossing.

Applicant's signature

Date

=====

This completed form and all related documents shall be sent to the:

Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission
Attention: Chairman
P. O. Box 1014, Nevada City, Cal. 95959

Attachments and related documents may be submitted in electronic format.

An application must be considered solely on its historic or architectural merits and not for commercial gain, political benefits, or other non historical reasons.

An individual Commissioner can advise and counsel an applicant, but all applications must be considered by the full Commission, meeting in regular session.

Proposed landmark

Olympia Creek Trestle or Second Wolf Creek Trestle

Location

200ft north east from the intersection of Idaho Maryland Road and Sutton Way, south of the confluence of Olympia and Wolf creeks.

History

The trestle was built for the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad (NCNG) in early February 1876. Though it was not given an official name on railroad documents it is located at the second crossing of Wolf creek by the railroad route to Nevada City. Construction of the railroad grade from Grass Valley to Nevada City was let to local contractors in several segments. On April 8, 1875 the contract for the for the grade, trestles and fill work between Grass Valley and the Town Talk tunnel was issued to Nevada City resident W. J. Organ.

As built the structure was built of wood including the abutments from locally harvested timber sourced from the Mohawk Lumber Company. At that time the Mohawk Lumber Company and Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad were both operated by Coleman Brothers (John and Edward). The lumber company supplied the timbers used for the trestles of the railroad.

In 1884 the Coleman brothers sold their stake in the company to the John F. Kidder. Under his leadership the railroad began upgrading the railroad infrastructure. In the final months of 1885 the grounds of the Grass Valley depot site received a substantial stone retaining wall backfilled to expand the usable space. During the same timeframe the granite abutments for two trestles across Wolf creek east of the Grass Valley depot were constructed.

The source of the granite and the contractors hired to perform the job are currently unknown. At the time of construction The Morrison Brothers operated a granite quarry near Rock creek on Purdon road. Their quarry supplied granite for use in road crossings and curbing in Nevada City and Grass Valley. A second local firm, Ahearn & Bro., marble cutters, regularly performed granite work for monuments and curbing during the mid-1880s.

In 1912 the California Public Utilities Commission performed a valuation study of the entire railroad. The Olympia creek trestle was recorded being of frame construction, consisting of a single panel and 27 feet long overall. From this description it can be determined the trestle was of simple construction. The trestle consisting of a set of stringers or sills laid across the abutments. Ties and wooden guardrails were constructed on top of the stringers.

No photographs of the structure are available at this time.

Historically Significant aspects or properties of proposed landmark

Hand fit granite wall constructed by local craftsmen in 1885 utilizing granite quarried locally in Nevada County. The railroad grade and trestle abutments were constructed with hand tools and horse carts in 1875 and used by the Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad until 1942.

Bibliography

California Public Utility Commission Valuation, California State Archives.

Morning Grass Valley Union Issues February 3, 1875, December 17, 1885.

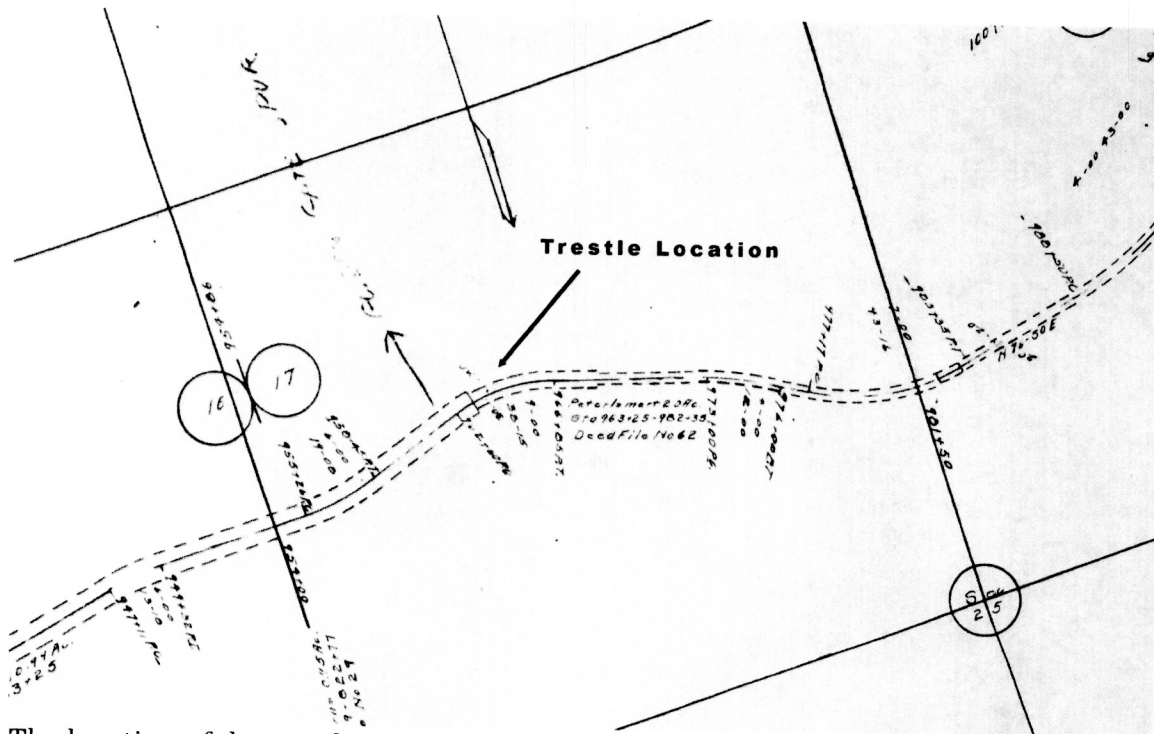
Best, Gerald M. *Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad*. Howell-North Books. 1965

USGS Topographical Map Grass Valley Quadrangle, 1949.

California Public Utilities Commission - Valuation Documents.

Name of Owner: Nevada Co. N.G.R.R. Co.		Operating Company: Same		Division: Colfax		From: Colfax To: End of line		Miles Main or Branch Line: 20.412		Date Completed: Oct. 1912		Office Compiler: 1912							
CALIFORNIA RAILROAD COMMISSION PHYSICAL VALUATION OF STEAM RAILROADS PILE AND FRAME TRETTLES										ORIGINAL COST		REPRODUCTION VALUE		TOTAL PRESENT VALUE					
Location Engineer Sta. or mile post	Bridge No.	Kind of bridge	Number of panels	Length ft.	Year built, Cond. per cent	PILING-DRIVEN (Under cap)		TIMBER		Iron. Box.	Metal guard rail, lbs.	Excelsior	Masonry footings (cu. yds.)	Per unit	Total	Per unit	Total	TOTAL PRESENT VALUE	
						Number	Untreated lin. ft.	Treated lin. ft.	Untreated lin. ft.										Treated lin. ft.
112+70		Wood																	
144+94		Stringer	1	10				559		50									
144+94		4 Post Frame	31	494								6	17		14 70		14700		
935+44		Frame	1	27					112170		8468				11 86		585900		
												20	65		43 11		116400		
962+42		"	1	27				1964		175									
997+78		4 Post Frame	1	12				1696		175		40	125		77 85		210200		
1030+33		Frame	1	8				2825		129					12 00		14400		
1143+35		4 Post Frame	28	448				1026		41					7 25		5800		
(Out off) 27+00		Frame	1	6	1906			64952		4340	5540				8 46		379000		
75+60		"	1	8	1908			2742		84					21 67		13000		
113+56		4 Post Frame	35	518	1908			2742		84					16 75		13400		
								60795		3273	108				7 00		362600		
				1558															
TOTAL OF SHEET																		1715400	

Pile and frame trestles recorded in the 1912 PUC valuation. The Olympia Creek is trestle outlined in the photograph above. The valuation outlines general information about the trestle including the design, length, and cost to replace.



The location of the trestle is faintly visible on the 1912 PUC valuation map.



MARTINI







Curved granite abutment on the east side of Wolf creek viewed from the western bank. When the railroad grade constructed in 1875 followed the route of the creek with wooden approaches and dirt fill. Subsequent winter storm damage led the railroad to reinforce the trestle abutments with granite here.



View across the trestle location from the western edge of the creek. Both abutments were designed to direct the flow of Wolf and Olympia creeks.

Photographs.



Location of the former railroad grade and granite trestle abutments viewed from the southwest. The simple wooden trestle used by the railroad was laid across the top of both abutments.



Example of local granite used in construction of the abutments.

Then, in mid-July, tragedy struck when Mrs. Margaret Schaeffer, an 88-year-old resident of Oakland, died as a result of injuries suffered in a freak Narrow Gauge accident. Details of exactly what caused the accident were sketchy. Conductor Theodore Rundy, Brakeman Ed Horton, Fireman Eugene Katzer, and Engineer Melio Solaro each testified that the train had been stopped near the crest of Town Talk ridge and two freight cars and a passenger coach left on the main line according to routine procedure as the locomotive switched some oil cars onto the spur track.

Conductor Rundy stated that when they had almost finished shunting the cars onto the spur line they noticed that the two boxcars and the coach were rolling backwards. The crew jumped onto the locomotive and tried to catch the runaways as the cars picked up speed descending the grade, careened around the turn near Banner road, and crashed at the crossing about one-half mile beyond the Idaho-Maryland mine.

Miners, who were the first at the scene and helped remove Mrs. Schaeffer, noticed a young man get out of the wrecked coach and walk away apparently uninjured. Mrs. Schaeffer was rushed to the Jones Memorial Hospital where she was treated for a fractured skull, shock, and numerous cuts. She never regained consciousness and died within 2 hours.

The train crew was unable to account for the

runaway of the standing cars, which had been stopped with full air brakes applied. Taylor, who heard of the accident while he was in San Francisco, telephoned that his faith in the employees was not shaken. He regarded them as highly efficient and capable, and, to him, the accident was one of those "unaccountable incidents for which there is no explanation."

First reports indicated that the cause of the accident would probably never be known as Claude O'Rourke, the only other passenger on the "racing death train," could not be located. An appeal was made for O'Rourke to communicate with Narrow Gauge and law officials so he could testify at the formal inquest and help unravel the mystery of the crash.

Papers later reported that the missing mystery man was not Claude O'Rourke but Melvin Auld, a member of the CCC at North Bloomfield. Auld told a reporter that he had left the scene of the accident because his leave from camp was about up and he didn't want to report in late. He later testified that when the passenger car started moving he didn't realize that the engine wasn't attached until they had picked up considerable speed. He then tried to set the brakes of the coach. When that failed, he climbed to the top of a boxcar and tried unsuccessfully to set the brakes on the middle car.

Auld said that he then reentered the coach and noticed an elderly woman sitting in the front part of the coach apparently oblivious to the problem. Although he realized that danger lay ahead, Auld claimed he resignedly sat down in the baggage section of the coach. When the coach crashed, he crawled from the wreckage, brushed himself off, and struck out for camp. He didn't mention the wreck to anyone until he heard of the fatality and the need for him to give testimony.

General Agent Charles Murchouse and Master Mechanic Marrin Ries testified that a thorough examination of the cars involved in the crash revealed that their air hoses and brakes were in first class condition.

After hearing the testimony, the coroner's jury rendered a verdict that Mrs. Schaeffer's death resulted from a fractured skull and shock sustained in an accidental derailment of a runaway coach owned by the Narrow Gauge. Some railroad employees later contended that the runaway was caused by Auld who

was messing with the brakes and accidentally released them.

The Union credited Providence with riding on the cars. Although the passenger coach was badly smashed, the two freight cars, which were loaded with blasting powder, were relatively undamaged. If Providence had not been along for the ride, the dynamite might have exploded.

When the giant powder was unloaded from the wreckage, it was first reported that only one of 500 wooden boxes was cracked. Later reports claimed the dynamite had not moved even a half inch, and expert packing and handling were credited for averting a catastrophe.

Providence apparently continued to ride with the Narrow Gauge when a train filled with passengers stopped for water and mail at Chicago Park. As the heavy train restarted with a jolt, it snapped the coupling pin between the locomotive and the seven following cars. As the locomotive surged forward, the bell cord, which ran the length of the train, tightened and snapped, which sounded the alarm whistle that signaled for an emergency stop. The engineer immediately stopped the locomotive, and the loose cars, which were moving on a slight descent, caught up and bashed into the rear of the locomotive. The minor consequences were a damaged tender and a few scratched passengers.

Providence struck around when bad luck struck a third time. As 400 gallons of gasoline were being transferred from Southern Pacific cars into the Narrow Gauge tanker in Colfax, improper grounding apparently caused a spark that ignited the gasoline, which burned out with no property damage.

In mid-August the Narrow Gauge was converting Engine No. 8 from a coal-burner to oil to replace fire-damaged Engine No. 2. No. 8 was a 36 ton compound type engine that had been recently purchased from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad.

In late September, Mrs. Kidder died at her home in San Francisco. Her estate, which was to go basically to her adopted daughter Beatrice Ward Black and her three children, was valued at above \$100,000.

On 21 October, large headlines in *The Union* blared: "Machine Shops of Narrow Gauge Rent by Fire: Two Engines in Midst of Hot Furnace." According to the reports, Elmer Crase, who was returning home from the Strand Theater where he was employed, sighted the flames as they broke through the



*Aerial map shows the old NONGRIB result in the Olympia Park and Glenbrook area, 29 July 1952
(Courtesy: Lanyon Inghestres).*