The Great Northern Railway made its first and only foray into the Southwest map area when, in 1931, it completed a line southeast from Klamath Falls through this location -- called Lookout Junction -- to Bieber, California, where it met the northward-building Western Pacific Railroad to complete the "Inside Gateway" route. The route provided the GN access to California via the WP (1909) and provided revenue for the WP (GN payments to the WP for trackage rights).

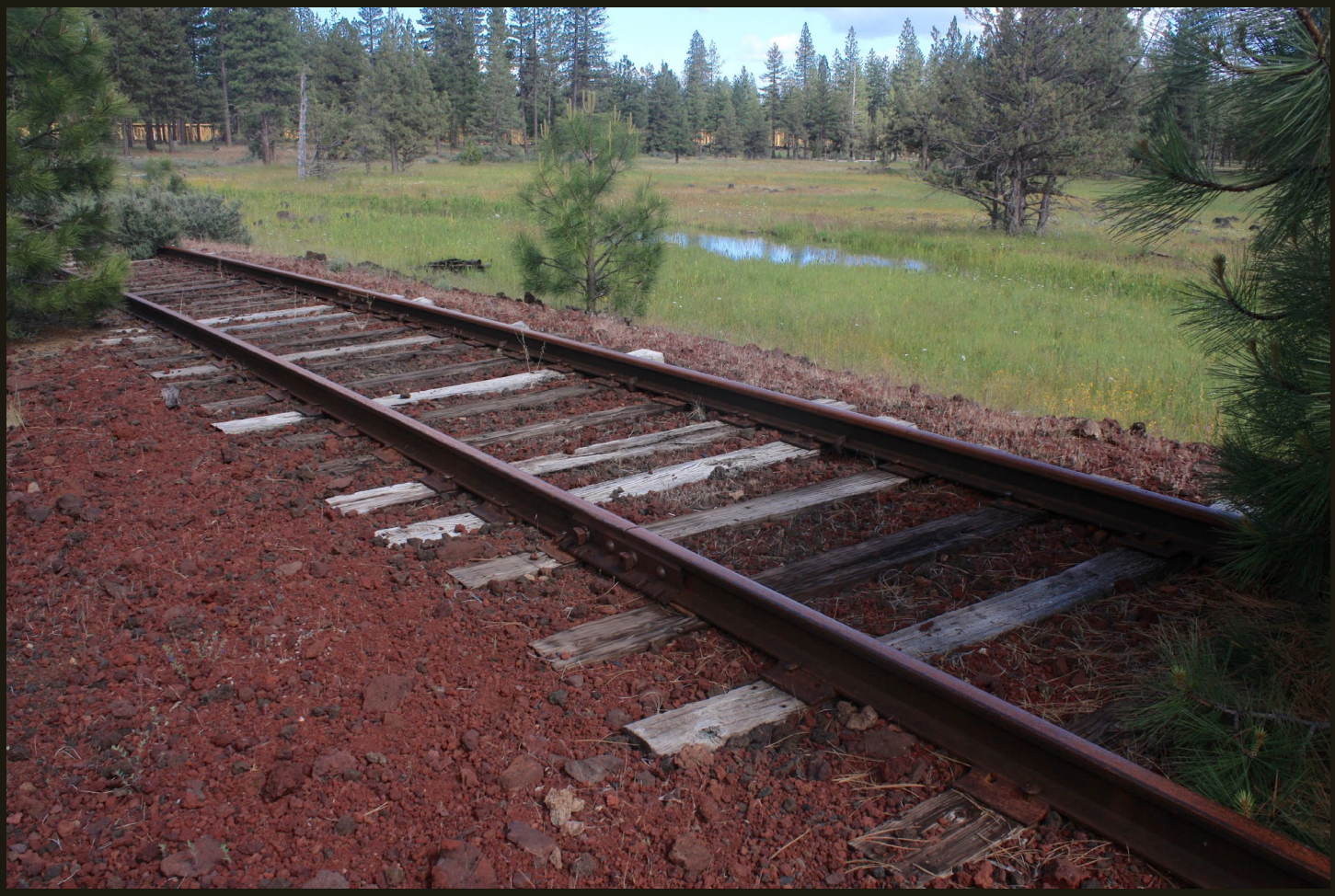
The McCloud River Railroad was chartered in 1897 to commence construction at a connection with the California & Oregon Railroad at Mount Shasta, California, and to build east into logging areas. The MR reached McCloud in 1901 and Bartle in 1905. In 1931, the GN built a 34-mile branch line westward from its then-new Inside Gateway line at Lookout Junction (this location) to connect with the MR end-of-track at Hambone, about 10 miles northeast of Bartle. In 2005, BNSF (successor to the GN) abandoned the Hambone Branch.

Southward view of the GN Inside Gateway (1931) at its junction with its Hambone Branch (1931). The Inside Gateway mainline is the track on the far left. There are two sidings to the right (west) of the mainline with a crossover track. The track in the foreground and curving to the right is the Hambone Branch. This junction is unique in the Southwest map area in that, as far as I know, it is the only loop junction in the Southwest. Loops occur occasionally at ends-of-track to turn trains, but I am not aware of a loop junction – there is no wye at Lookout Junction but trains can turn around on the loop. The loop runs as follows: the track in the foreground curves to the right (west), goes through about 230 degrees of curvature to head northeast (behind the viewer), then curves left 90 degrees to head west-northwest toward Hamburg. At that point, to continue the loop, there is a switch to a track that runs east-southeast and curves to right to the south-southeast and runs parallel to the mainline back to this point; that track is the closer of the two sidings. In other words, if you start at the closer of the two sidings and follow the track north (toward the viewer), you would make a 360-degree turn and emerge from behind the shed (in the shadow at the far right) onto the track in the foreground. Therefore, the crossover track between the two sidings is the only junction between the Hambone Branch and a siding of the mainline. We'll start our exploration of Lookout Junction by heading south toward the shed; note the shed and the cars stored on sidings in the distance for reference.

Westward view of the shed at Lookout Junction. The track in the foreground is the GN Hamburg Branch loop track. I assume the shed is some sort of maintenance shed and I've seen similar sheds with rails between the track and the shed, but I don't know what the rails are for. Maybe some sort of cart was run on the rails or maybe the rails are just to establish a pathway.

Southward view of the loop track 200 feet south of the shed. Note the same stored cars on sidings of the GN Inside Gateway (now BNSF) mainline.

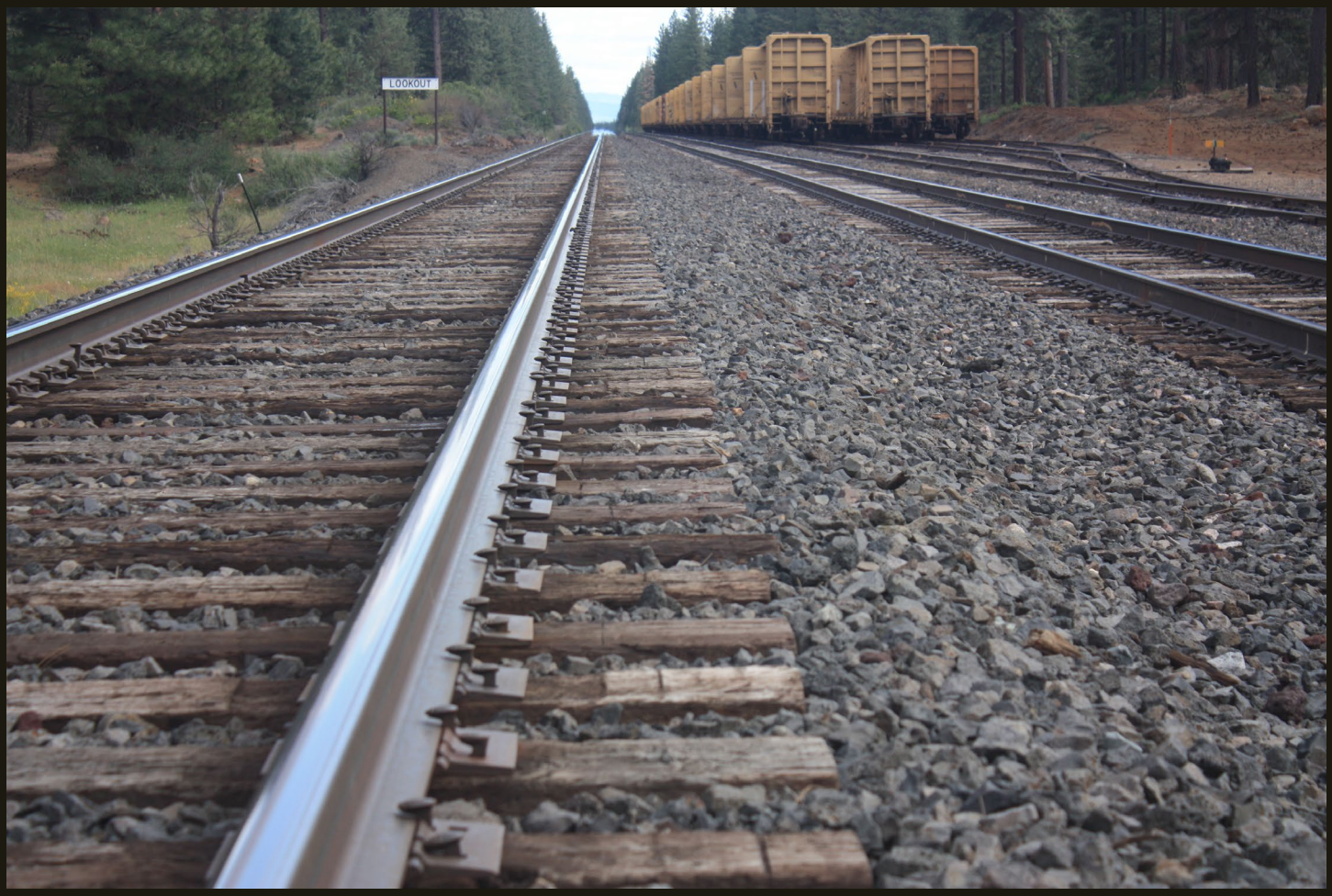
Southwestward view of the loop track 600 feet southwest of the shed. Note the young ponderosa pines growing in the unused track.



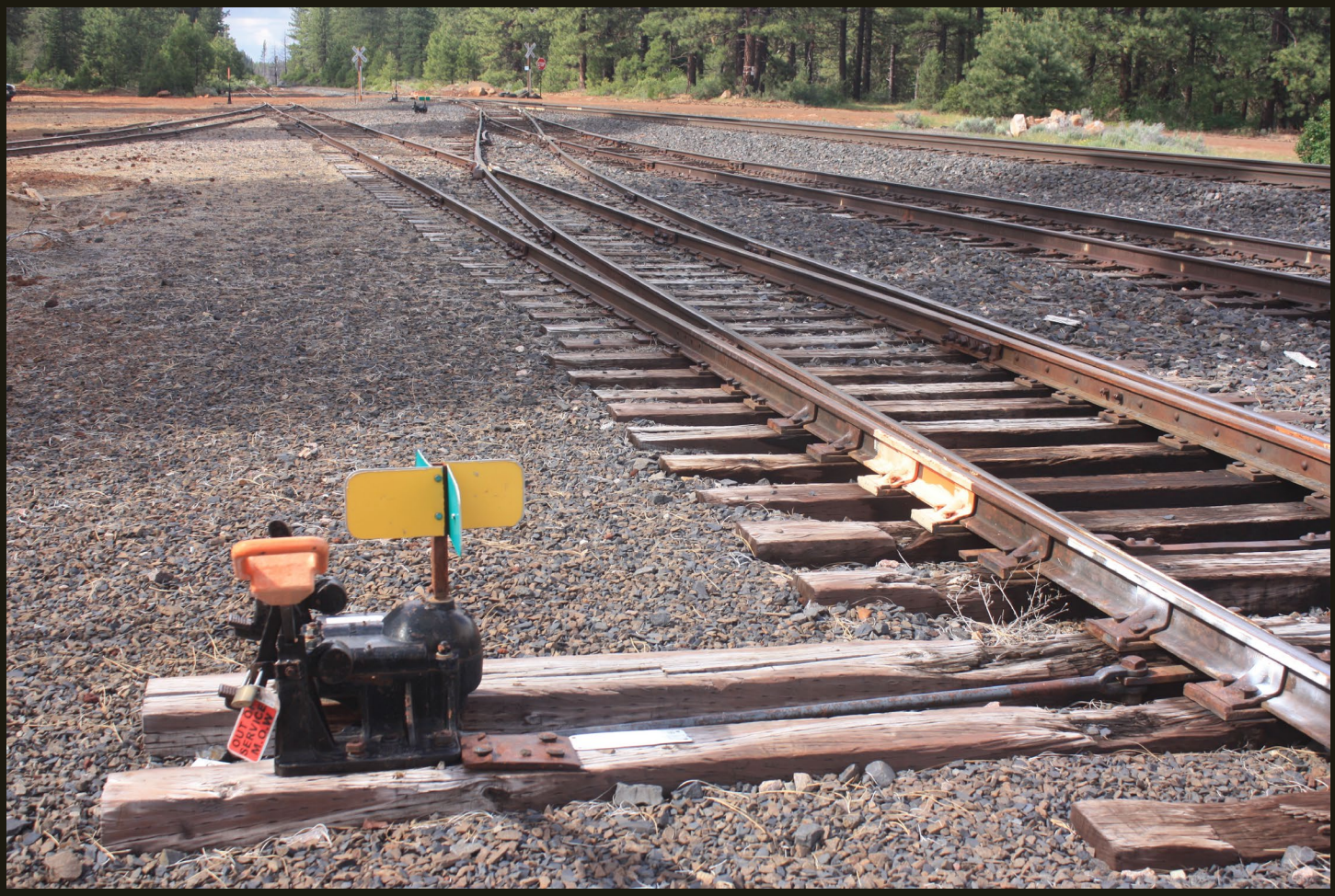
Eastward view of the loop track, same location as previous. Note the red ballast rock, which is volcanic cinder, a common rock type in northeastern California. Note also, through the distant pines, the same stored cars on sidings of the Inside Gateway (now BNSF) mainline.

Westward view of the loop track, 200 feet west of the previous location, as the track curves to the northwest.

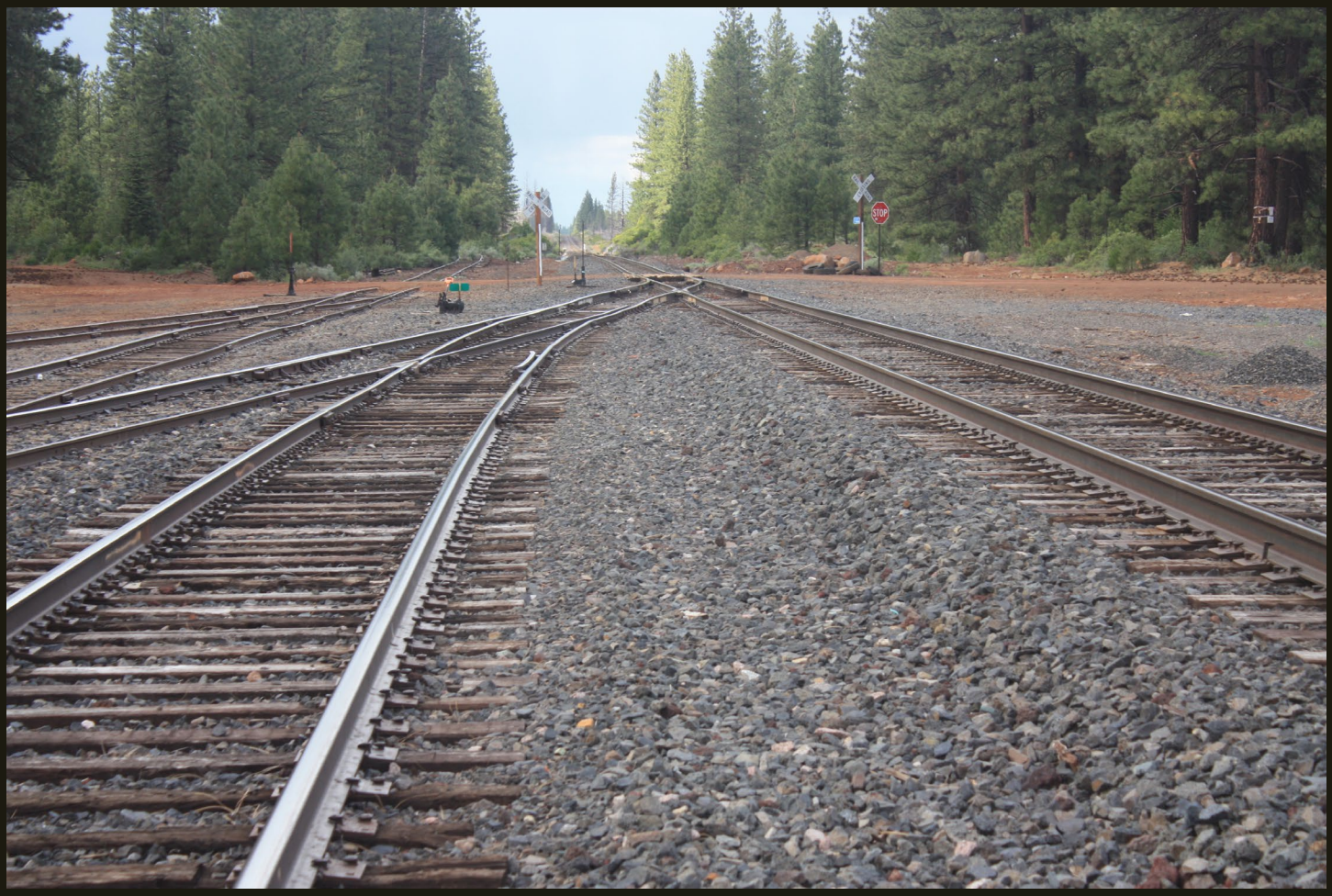
Northwestward view of the loop track, 200 feet west of the previous location, as the track curves to the northwest. The loop continues another 2,000 feet to the switch at the west tip of the loop. Tracks are still present on the GN Hamburg Branch (1931) for about 4 miles to the northwest, presumably for possible car storage, and the tracks have been removed west of that point 30 miles to Hamburg, where the MR (1905) tracks are also gone.



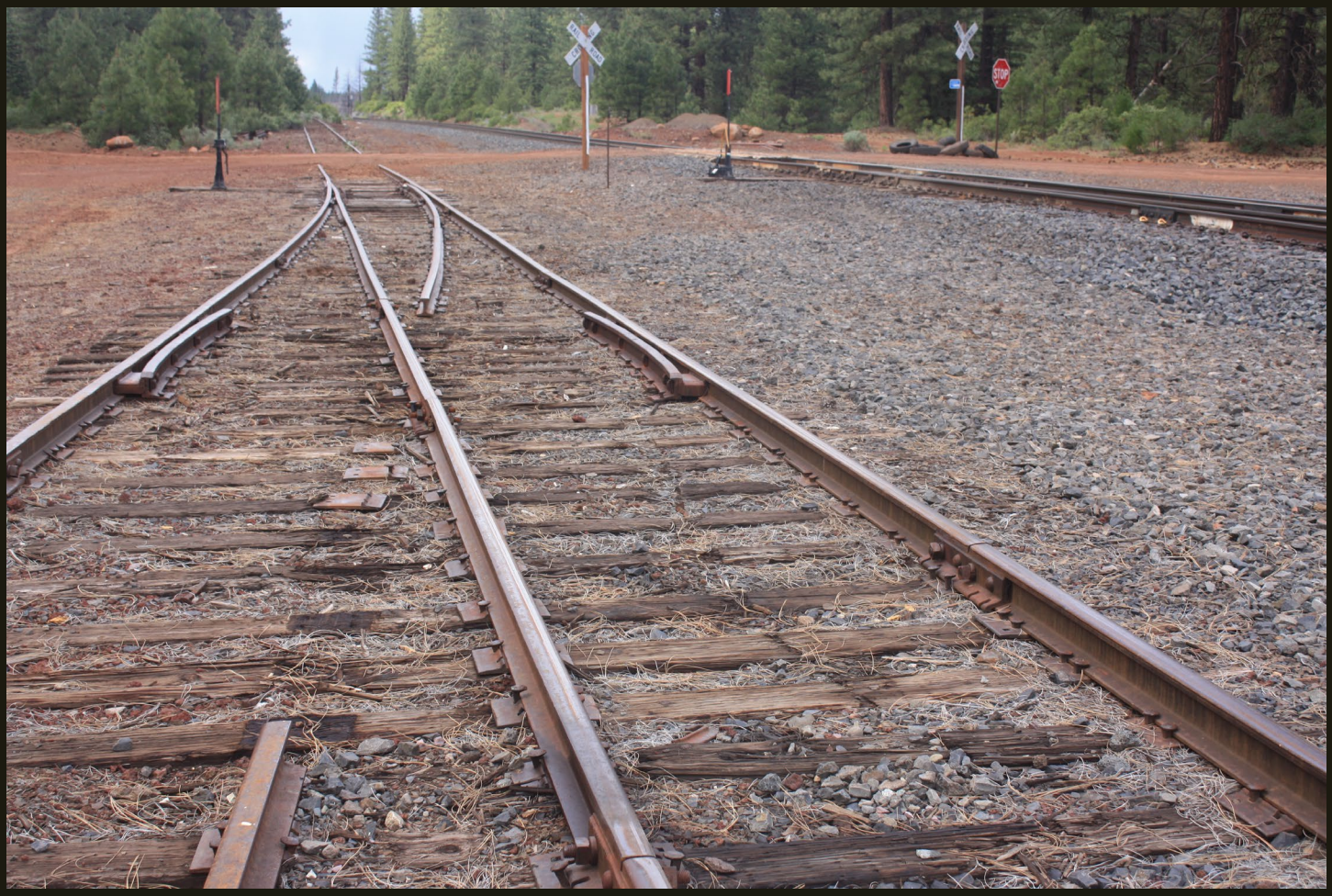
Now we are back at the GN Inside Gateway (1931) mainline looking south at the same stored cars. From left (east) to right the tracks are: the Inside Gateway (now BNSF) mainline; the primary siding (for passing trains); and the loop line track (Hamburg Branch, with stored cars on it) and two additional sidings for car storage.



Northward view of the GN Inside Gateway (1931) a few steps west of the previous location. The closest line is the loop line and the switch is for the crossover to the loop line. The branch to the left is the southern part of the loop; the shed is just out of sight to the left.



Northward view of the GN Inside Gateway (1931) a few steps north of the previous location; the shed is just out of sight to the left. From left (west) to right the tracks are: the loop line track (Hamburg Branch), including the south branch of the loop (far left) and its connection to the north branch of the loop line, which can be seen curving to the left in the distance and will be explored in the remainder of this geolink; the crossover track; the primary siding; and the Inside Gateway mainline.



Northward view a few steps north of the previous location. Here we can see that the southern access to the Hamburg Branch loop line (explored above) is actually disconnected. At the far right, the primary siding joins and the Inside Gateway mainline such that beyond the railroad crossing there is only the loop line and the mainline.

Southward view a few steps north of the previous location showing the same disconnection. Note the same shed and stored cars as before.

Northward view 700 feet north of the shed, where the abandoned Hamburg Branch (1931) loop line starts to curve westward (to the left), away from the GN mainline (on the right).

Southeastward view of the loop line, 200 feet northwest of the previous location.

Northward view of the loop line, same location as previous. The switch that joins this part of the loop with the south part is another 1,000 feet up the line. Tracks are still present on the Hamburg Branch (1931) for about 4 miles to the northwest, presumably for possible car storage, and have been removed for 30 miles west of that point to Hamburg, where the MR (1905) is also abandoned.