



The Western Pacific Railroad's Feather River Route was built in 1909 to compete with the Southern Pacific's (original Central Pacific) route over Donner Pass. While significantly longer, the Feather River Route crosses the Pacific Crest at Beckwourth Pass (about 5,000 feet) compared to the SP/CP Donner Pass Route (elevation about 7,000 feet). However, the Feather River watershed was so rugged it required heavy engineering, including 34 tunnels, a loop, and numerous trestles to reach Beckwourth Pass. Once over the pass, the WP had relatively clear sailing through the valleys of the Great Basin.

The first valley east of Beckwourth Pass is north-south-trending Long Valley, which afforded the WP flat terrain and straight grades, as seen in this southward view at Doyle, California. The grade of the Nevada-California-Oregon Railroad, which was built through this same valley just a few years before the standard gauge WP, ran basically parallel to the WP in this area and I believe is the line of green in the upper left part of the photograph.



Northward view of the WP from the same location as the previous photo, with the town of Doyle in the distance. The N-C-O grade should be in the upper right part of the photograph heading into Doyle, but it's hard to tell.