



The 6.6-mile Fort Bragg Railroad was built in 1885 to carry redwood logs from the forest to a newly built lumber mill near this location in the coastal lumber port of Fort Bragg, California. In 1905, three years after the California Northwestern Railroad (1902) was completed to its northern terminus at Willits, the FB was renamed the California Western Railroad & Navigation Company. In 1911 the CNWR&NC completed an extension of the FB (1885) eastward 40 miles, roughly following the Noyo River, to an interchange with the CNW (1902), which by 1911 had been merged into the Northwestern Pacific Railroad, at Willits. In 1947, the CNWR&NC name was shortened to the California Western Railroad. In 1987, the CW was sold to the Kyle Railways subsidiary Mendocino Coast Railway and in 2003 the CW was rescued when it was bought by the Sierra Railroad. Today the CW or "Skunk Train" is a tourist railroad owned and operated by Mendocino Railway. This line was been effectively isolated from the national rail system since the CNW (1902)/NWP line through Willits was closed in the 1990's.

This southwestward view shows the FB/CNWR&NC/CW yard, shops, and water tower at the west end of the line in Fort Bragg. Behind the structures there is a sea cliff and the Pacific Ocean. The Skunk Train depot is out of sight to the left and the building in the left distance (behind a shack), which has a spur curving left toward it, is the locomotive shop. The rustier tracks on the right, which curve to the right in front of the water tower, is the north branch of a wye for the Ten Mile Railroad (1916), discussed below. The large buildings in the right distance, behind the fence, are part of the now-abandoned Union Lumber Company mill; the TM (1916) once transported logs to the mill.





Southward view a few steps north of previous location. The FB/CNWR&NC/CW Skunk Train depot on the far left and the locomotive shop is in the middle of the photo. The rustier tracks on our side of the water tower are the north branch of the wye for the TM (1916). The two branches of the wye and about 100 feet of track beyond the tip of the wye are all that remains of TM (1916) trackage. The abandoned lumber mill is out of sight to the right.

The flat topography of Fort Bragg is a “wave-cut terrace,” cut by waves then tectonically uplifted to form a terrace well above the water. Such terraces are common on the otherwise rugged northern California coast and are used for transportation, grazing, and development.



During 1915 and 1916, Union Lumber Company constructed the Ten Mile Railroad (also cited as being called the “California Railroad”) to transport logs to the company’s mill at Fort Bragg. The line extended 8 miles north from the mill and a junction with the CNWR&NC (1911) at Fort Bragg (the two previous photos) then over Pudding Creek (this location) to the end-of-track at the mouth of the Ten Mile River; there, logs floated down the river were loaded onto rail cars. The railroad ceased operations in June 1949 and the tracks were removed in 1954. The railway roadbed was then paved over and converted into a haul road for the company’s logging trucks. Today, logging operations are a thing of the past and much of the TM (1916) grade is a rail-to-trail.

Northwestward view of the locally famous Pudding Creek Trestle, the engineering highlight of the TM (1916), one mile north of the Fort Bragg wye and abandoned mill. The trestle is 527 feet long and 44 feet high with 34 uprights. The trestle was used by logging trucks beginning in 1954 and for the past several years by pedestrians delighting in this rail-to-trail along the Pacific shoreline.





Closer northwestward view of the Pudding Creek Trestle. The beach and ocean are in the fog beyond the trestle.



Westward view of the Pudding Creek Trestle on this typically foggy morning, the trestle reflected in the still water of the Pudding Creek estuary.



Southwestward view of the Pudding Creek Trestle.





Northwestward view of the TM (1916), 3 miles north of the previous location and 4 miles north of Fort Bragg. The paved surface is the 1954 haul road; Pacific Ocean in the distance. Note the sand dunes on which the grade is built; the northern half of the TM (1916) is built on coastal dunes.





Northeastward view of the TM (1916), from the beach one mile north of the previous location and 3 miles south of the former end-of-track at the Ten Mile River. The eroding 1954 haul road pavement is evident on top of the dune sand.





Northwestward view of the TM (1916), same location as previous (5 miles from Fort Bragg and 3 miles south of the Ten Mile River). The eroding 1954 haul road pavement is evident in the foreground.