



During the early 1900's, western railroads boosted passenger traffic by developing rail access and tourist facilities for western national parks. The AT&SF's national park was the Grand Canyon, which the AT&SF reached in 1901 via a branch line from its Atlantic & Pacific-built mainline (A&P [1883]) at Williams, Arizona. Although the Grand Canyon is the most significant barrier to railroad construction and all forms of transportation in the desert southwest, the grade from Williams to the South Rim is easy due to the flat Kaibab Plateau, which forms the canyon rim. The Grand Canyon Railway is still very popular and runs both steam and vintage diesel trains, as seen here.

GC locomotive #6793 was the last model FPA-4 built, originally for the Canadian National Railway. The GC purchased #6793 and its "B unit," along with another FPA-4 A-B pair, in the 1990's. This northeastward view is 1,500 feet west of the end-of-track of the GC (1901) and just steps from the rim of the mile-deep canyon. The #6793 and the entire train has turned around at a turning wye, the east branch of which is just behind the viewer, and then backed into position to load passengers returning to Williams. The switch for the east branch of the turning wye is just to the right of the locomotive. Note the sign in the distance just to the right of the train and that there are two tracks here (the second track is in the train's shadow at the far left).



Eastward view of the GC (1901), 1,000 feet west of the end-of-track (500 feet east of previous photo). A bit of an abandoned siding is in the foreground, next to the same sign visible in the previous photo. This and the remaining shots were taken in the summer, thus no snow.



Northwestward view at the end-of-track of the GC (1901). The train in the left distance is the same one in the previous photo. The #6776 waits on a siding. The iconic tower of the historic El Tovar Hotel is on the right skyline. There are four tracks here; the two tracks in the first photo split via switches to four tracks and the end-of-track is just out of sight to the right. The building just in front of the vintage diesel #6776 is the Grand Canyon Depot, constructed in 1909-1910 and still used today for railway passenger services.



Northward view of a passenger coach and the El Tovar Hotel, with its view of the Grand Canyon, is behind the train.



Westward view at the same location as the first photo. The switch for the east branch of the turning wye is on the far left. The wye is on the south side of the GC (1901) alignment, which runs east-west (parallel to the canyon rim) here and turns southward toward Williams in the distance.



Eastward view of the switch for the east branch of the turning wye. The yellow and green switch is the same one seen in the first photo



Southward view of the tip of the turning wye; the east branch is in the left foreground, 800 feet southwest of previous location. Note the building in the center distance.



Southward view, 300 feet south of the tip of the wye (previous photo), where the track splits off a siding. Same building as previous photo to the left (east) of the track. The end of the turning wye track is 1,500 feet in the distance.





Northward view of the building noted in the previous two photos. This building houses the Grand Canyon National Park River Permits Office and Backcountry Information Center. It appears to be a historic building for railroad loading, but I could find no information on its history.



Southward view of the turning wye end-of-track, same location as previous.



Now we are back at the tip of the turning wye looking north, about to explore the west (left) branch of the wye. The north rim of the Grand Canyon is visible in the distance, behind a utility pole.



Northwestward view 800 feet northwest of the tip of the wye (previous location). The west branch of the wye is in the foreground and the GC (1901) mainline is in the distance.



Northeastward view, same location as previous. The east branch of the wye is in the right foreground and the GC (1901) mainline is to the left carrying passengers who have just seen the Grand Canyon back to Williams.



Westward view, the train has just passed the wye at the west end of Grand Canyon Village and is turning south toward Williams.



This southward view from the North Rim makes it clear why the Grand Canyon was historically an obstacle to all forms of transportation. The flat topography in the distance is the Kaibab plateau, over which the GC (1901) was built. The GC station is on the South Rim, on the horizon at the right-hand edge of the image.