



The Carson & Colorado Railway was incorporated in 1880 with plans for a 600 mile, narrow gauge line to connect the Carson and Colorado rivers and traverse the mining country along the route. The line started from the standard gauge Virginia & Truckee Railroad (1870) at Mound House, Nevada, and by the time the line reached Keeler, California, in 1883, the owners realized they'd built "300 miles too far or 300 years too soon." They hung on for 20 years and then sold out to the Southern Pacific. The sale was well timed for the SP; only months later there was a mining boom at Tonopah, Nevada, allowing the SP to recoup its investment quickly. In 1905, the SP-controlled Nevada & California Railroad standard gauged the line from Mound House to Mina, Nevada, and there connected with the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad, which standard gauged the former Tonopah Railroad (1904n) in the same year. The combined V&T (1870), N&C (the SP's standard-gauged C&C [1883n]), and the T&G (the standard-gauged Tonopah ([1904n]) formed a standard gauge line from the SP (original Central Pacific [1869]) mainline at Reno to the Tonopah mines. This standard gauging also resulted in isolating the remaining N&C narrow gauge line (original C&C) from the junction with the standard gauge N&C south of Mina to the end of the line at Keeler. The narrow gauge line south of Mina was abandoned in stages from 1942 to 1960. Around 1950, standard gauge trackage was removed from Tonopah back to the southern end of Walker Lake at Hawthorne, Nevada. The remaining standard gauge trackage, as far as I know, went to the Union Pacific when it absorbed the SP in the 1990's.

Eastward view of Walker Lake, a saline terminal lake in a normal-fault-bounded valley in the Great Basin and a remnant of Pleistocene Lake Lahonton. The C&C (1883n) alignment is on the other (east) shore of the lake but is not visible at this distance. Standard gauge tracks are still present, first installed in 1905 by the SP's N&C.



The C&C/N&C/SP/UP has one remaining customer, as far as I can tell, and that is the Army Ammunition Depot at Hawthorne, located at the current end-of-track. In this northward view at Hawthorne, Walker Lake is visible in the distance. The track in the foreground is a branch line that extends 6 miles from the C&C alignment at a junction called Thorne Siding, which is within the depot and inaccessible, southwestward to this location near the branch line end-of-track. As seen in satellite imagery, tracks are present on the C&C (1883n) alignment for only 2,000 feet southeast of the Army's branch line junction at inaccessible Thorne Siding.





Northeastward view at the same location as previous with the same switch in the foreground. The switch is for a siding for an apparently abandoned Army loading facility.



Westward view at the same location as previous. The branch line ends in the spurs across the road, including a locomotive maintenance facility (behind the locomotive). The road crossing is U.S. Highway 95, which allows us to see this part of the otherwise off-limits railroad.



The 6-mile branch that ends in the previous photo has two junctions, which are for tracks that head southeast and join 5 miles southeast of the junctions to form a loop through the ammo depot. The loop crosses U.S. Highway 95 in two locations near the southeastern loop closure and this is the western of the two crossings. In this northward view of the loop track 3 miles southeast of the previous location, Walker Lake is visible in the distance. Before I could turn around and take a southward photo I was stopped by a guard who indicated photography was not allowed.



Northward view of the Army's loop track, 4 miles east of the previous photo at the second crossing of the loop track across U.S. Highway 95. An earthen ammo bunker, one of many, is visible in the far left distance. The track is curving west to complete the loop.



Southward view of the Army's loop track, same location as previous (after crossing to the south side of U.S. Highway 95). Several bunkers are visible. The track is curving to the right (west) to complete the loop.