



The Western Pacific Railroad (now part of the Union Pacific) completed the Feather River Route across the Sierra Nevada in 1909 to compete with the Southern Pacific Railroad's (originally Central Pacific's) route over Donner Pass. The key to constructing the Feather River Route, which had a gentler grade and lower crossing of the Pacific Crest (Sierra Nevada) than the SP/CP Donner Pass Route, was a crossing from the North Fork to the Middle Fork of the Feather River at Spring Garden. The crossing involved heavy engineering, including the Williams Loop on the North Fork side, the Spring Garden Tunnel under the summit of the divide between the North Fork and Middle Fork drainages and the longest of the 34 tunnels on the Feather River Route, and the Clio Trestle on the Middle Fork side. The Clio Trestle crosses Willow Creek, a tributary of the Middle Fork of the Feather River. The trestle is 172 feet high above Willow Creek and 1,005 feet long. The Clio Trestle is a favorite railfan spot and is one of the Plumas County and Western Pacific Railroad Museum's "7 Wonders of the Western Pacific Railroad World," which also includes the Williams Loop and Spring Garden Tunnel.

In this northward view up Willow Creek, the Clio Trestle is 172 feet above the creek and about 300 feet above the Middle Fork Feather River, which the WP grade follows down the Middle Fork for another 12 miles and does not leave until it is within a few hundred yards of the east portal of the Spring Garden Tunnel.



Southwestward view of the Clio Trestle with the canyon of the Middle Fork of the Feather River in the distance.



The Sierra Valley & Mohawk Railroad was incorporated in 1885 to build a narrow gauge line westerly from the end of the narrow gauge Nevada & Oregon Railroad over Beckwourth Pass to Mohawk, near the town of Blairsden, California, located 3 miles downstream/northwest of Clio on the Middle Fork of the Feather River, to access timber. The name changed to Sierra Valley Railroad before it was completed in 1896. Meanwhile, in 1888, the owners of the N&O formed the Nevada-California-Oregon Railway to build northward, so by the time the SV was completed in 1896, it was a narrow gauge branch of the narrow gauge N-C-O and came under the control of the N-C-O in 1900. The SV was abandoned in 1918 after purchase by the WP, which had built a parallel line.

The SV grade is obscure. This not-so-great photograph of a linear pile of dirt near Clio is the SV grade where some fill was required.



Downslope view of the SV grade near Clio from Clio State 40A Road. At this location the SV grade is a cut grade. The SV followed the Middle Fork of the Feather River through the own of Clio to Blairsden.



Closer view of the SV cut grade near Clio.