





In 1850, Mormon emigrants on their way to the California Gold Rush discovered gold in Nevada (then part of the Utah Territory) and by 1858 prospectors were permanently camping in the area around what is now Virginia City. In 1859, gold was found with bluish chunks of silver ore, which was later identified as the first silver from what became the Comstock Lode. Numerous mills appeared along the Carson River and Virginia City grew to over 20,000 people. However, the costs to transport ore down to the mills and to transport lumber and supplies back to the mines made only the highest grade ores financially viable. Enter William Sharon, Nevada agent for the Bank of California, which owned many low-grade mines through foreclosures. He planned a railroad to run from Virginia City to the mills along the Carson River and ending at the state capital, Carson City. Ground was broken on the Virginia & Truckee Railroad in February 1869, the first track was laid in September 1869, and the first passenger train pulled into Virginia City in February 1870. This route covered 21 miles, gained 1,575 feet of elevation, and had curves to make 17 full circles in the 14 miles from the Carson River to Virginia City. The V&T grade featured seven tunnels and an 85 foot tall, 500 foot long trestle over Crown Point Ravine. In late 1872, the V&T extended the line from Carson City to Reno to connect with the Central Pacific Railroad (1869) and the national rail network. This connection completed the V&T mainline, which ran 30 - 45 trains per day at the peak of operations in 1876 - 1877. By 1924, the V&T was no longer profitable, in 1938 the V&T went into receivership and dismantled the Virginia City branch, and in 1950 abandoned the entire line.

In the 1970's, some of the old lines were rebuilt by private investors, and today the privately owned Virginia & Truckee Railroad Company operates as a heritage railroad on 14 miles of track between Virginia City and a station located about a mile south of the former Carson & Colorado (1883n) connection at Mound House.

Northward view of the north end of the historic and current V&T (1872) at the south end of Virginia City. The switch in front of the water tower leads to the V&T yard to the right and to the Virginia City Depot to the left.



The V&T end of track in Virginia City.



The same view as previous when steam is operating excursions at the V&T end of track in Virginia City.



Historic cabooses on display at the V&T end of track at the Virginia City Depot.



Northward view of the V&T Virginia City Depot. The end of track is in the right foreground.



Southward view of the V&T (1872) just south of Virginia City; the foundation of an old mining-related structure is visible at the far left.



Tunnel on the V&T (1872), one mile south of Virginia City. The foundation of another old mining-related structure is visible at the far left.





The V&T tracks near the southern end of track, about a mile south of Mound House. In this southwest view, the nearest valley on the left is the Carson River and the high mountains in the distance are the Sierra Nevada (Pacific Crest drainage divide).