



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 access the mining country along the route. The line started from a connection with the standard gauge Virginia & Truckee Railroad at Mound House, Nevada, through this location at Zurich, California, to Keeler, California, in 1883, at which point the owners realized they'd built "300 miles too far or 300 years too soon." The C&C hung on for 20 years and then sold to the Southern Pacific. The sale was well timed for the SP; only months later there was a mineral strike at Tonopah allowing the SP to quickly recoup its investment. In 1905, the SP-controlled Nevada & California Railroad broad gauged the C&C (1883) alignment from Mound House to Mina, Nevada. The remaining N&C narrow gauge route, from a connection with the standard gauge line a few miles south of Mina to Keeler, operated until 1943, when the N&C shut down the line from Mina to Laws, California (17 miles north of this location, so the rails through Zurich remained after the 1943 abandonment). This reduced the narrow gauge line down to 70 miles between Laws and Keeler (including this location), detached from the rest of the N&C; the line survived for 17 years on sparse local traffic and transfer of ore and cargo with the outside rail network via the SP's Jawbone Branch at a juncture a few miles north of Keeler called Owenyo. The N&C narrow gauge track was pulled up after the last train ran from Keeler to Laws in April 1960.

In this northward view at Zurich, California, the C&C/N&C/SP narrow gauge alignment runs straightaway from the viewer and just to the right of the loading ramp. Zurich was the rail depot for the agricultural center of Big Pine, California, located 3 miles to the west. There was no agriculture, or people, on the dry east side of Owens Valley, where the C&C was built. The loading ramp was built on top of the foundation of Zurich Station, apparently for loading of trucks after abandonment of the railroad in 1960.



Southeastward view at Zurich, California. The C&C/N&C/SP narrow gauge alignment is now to the left of the loading ramp. Note the cracked pavement on the railroad alignment, apparently trucks using the post-1960 loading ramp. The flat area to the right is the foundation of Zurich Station. The Inyo Mountains are in the left and center distance and form the east side of Owens Valley; the Sierra Nevada foothills are in the right distance.



Southward view at Zurich, California. The C&C/N&C/SP narrow gauge alignment is in the foreground and the loading ramp is left of center. Note the concrete foundations and slabs of Zurich. The Inyo Mountains are in the left distance and the alpine peaks of the Sierra Nevada, which inspired the name "Zurich," are in the right distance.



Southeastward view of the foundation of the depot building at Zurich, California. The same post-1960 loading ramp is visible right of center.



Westward view from on top of the C&C (1883) depot foundation Zurich, California. The Sierra Nevada is in the distance; the trees at the base of the mountain in the left distance is Big Pine, the community that was served by the Zurich Station.



Northward view of the C&C/N&C/SP alignment a few steps north of Zurich. This is now to the left of the loading ramp. Note the cracked pavement on the railroad alignment, apparently trucks using the post-1960 loading ramp. The taller brush in the left distance is the riparian growth along the Owens River.