The Golden Gate Live Steamers' Track
by Victor T. Shattock

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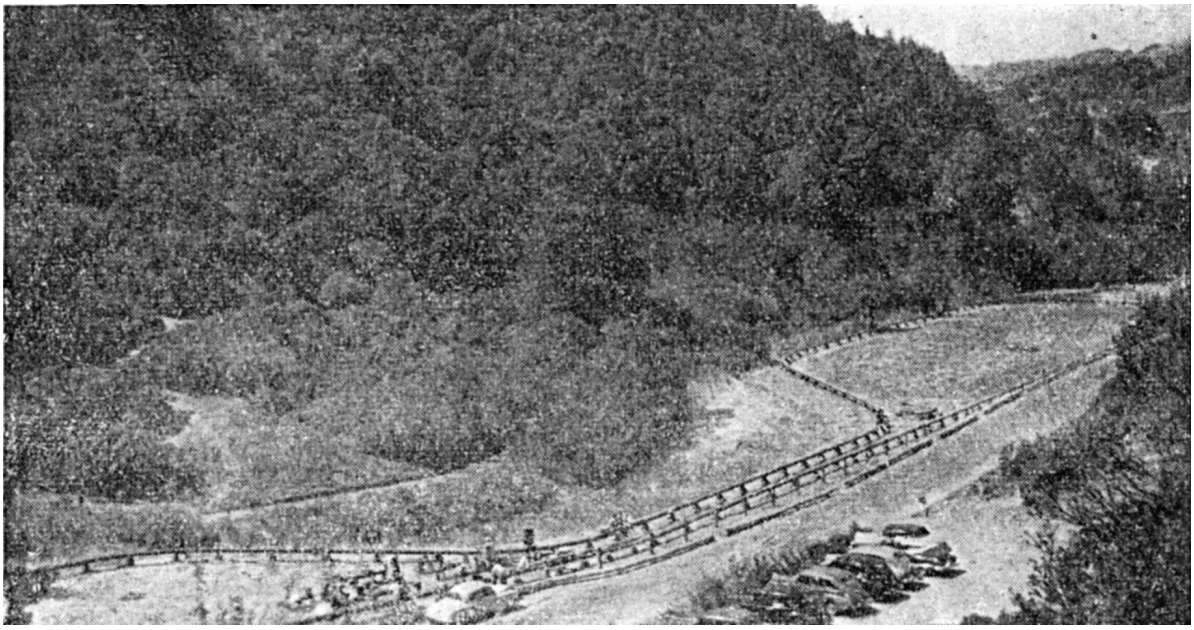
From the library of Mr. John Arata with our thanks.



A general view of the Golden Gate Live Steamers' track, Redwood Park, Oakland, California

[Editorial Note. In our issue for December 7th last (1950), we published a "Smoke Ring" briefly describing the fine track built by the Golden Gate Live Steamers Inc., at Oakland, California, U.S.A. We have now received from Mr. V. T. Shattock, the President of the Golden Gate Live Steamers, some excellent photographs and a further description of the track. We leave this material, which is published below, to speak for itself. We would merely remark that we think that, not only the track, but also its scenic setting are more than likely to excite the envy of some of our readers. — Ed., "M.E."]

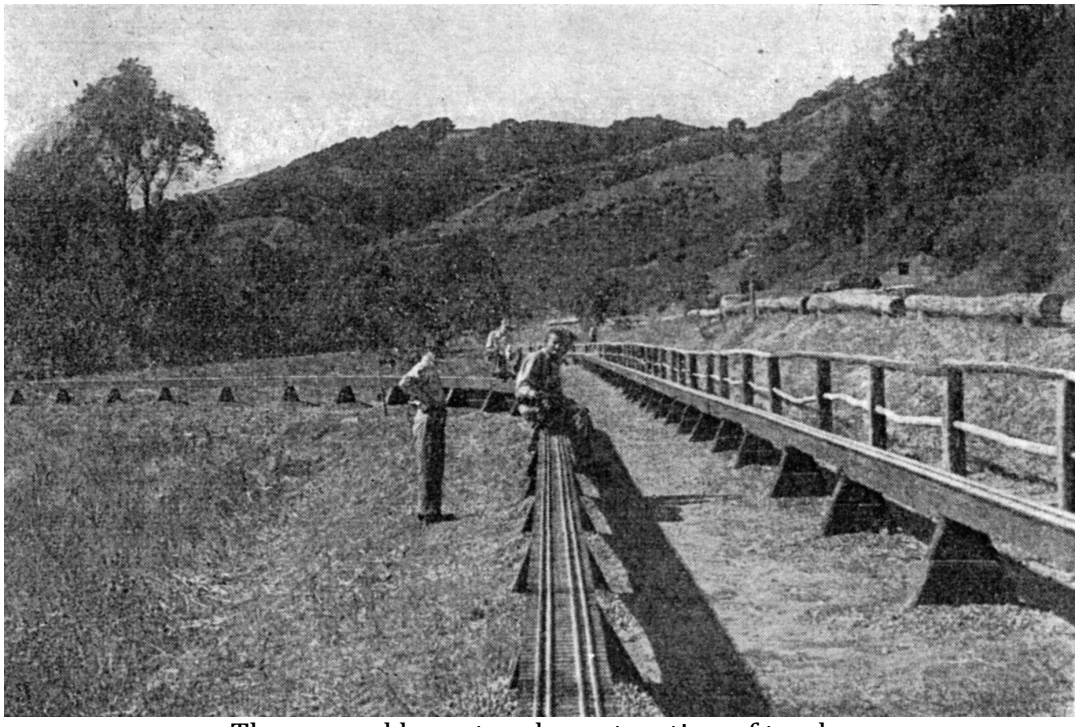
The Golden Gate Live Steamers organization was formed early in 1939 by a few enthusiastic followers of the hobby, but it was not until 1940 that actual passenger-hauling by 2-1/2 inch gauge engines was demonstrated publicly in this part of the country, and then only on temporary tracks in public buildings. During 1948, permission was obtained to erect a track in one of the public parks and after three years of spare-time labor a continuous multi-gauge track, 1,330 feet long, which accommodates 2-1/2 inch, 3-1/2 inch, and 4-3/4" gauge locomotives, was built.

The roadbed consists of discarded ties (sleepers to you), which carried standard size locomotives and trains over trestle bridges. These ties, which are about 9 feet long, rest on tiers also cut from heavy bridge timbers and which sit on a bed of crushed rock or gravel.

The cross ties, or sleepers, were cut to suit the largest gauge, 4-3/4" inch, or 1 inch to 1 foot scale. The rail is of duralumin, and is of an "inverted T" pattern; it is fastened to the ties by drilling holes through the base of the rail and nailing with screw nails. Fish plates of galvanized sheet iron were formed for use at each rail joint. The question may arise as to why we did not use small spikes for fastening the rail to the ties in the same way as is the practice on big railroads in this country. To this I would reply that this method cuts down rail creeping caused by various temperatures. The standard railroads use anti-rail creeping devices which would not be practical for our purposes. The nailing of the rail through the base does not weaken the rail we are using, and the method has proved satisfactory in holding the track in line. The use of screw nails prevents the loosening and raising that would occur if straight nails were used.

The track takes the form of a figure "9" and it was intended to make two complete loops. The maximum radius of curves is 80 feet and the minimum 30 feet. A transfer table about 6-1/2 feet long to facilitate moving engines to and from firing-up tracks and the main line, is fitted at a convenient spot in the small loop beside which water and electric power is provided for "firing up" purposes. Plans are under way for a shelter to be erected over the firing-up tracks, also for "take-off" tracks to be installed for the convenience of those who are unfortunate enough to have engine failures. Such take-off tracks will enable the driver to remove his engine and look it over and perhaps fix it without getting in the way of others who wish to be steaming along.

Another item I would like to include in this letter. Last September following the opening of our track we received a telegram of congratulations from the



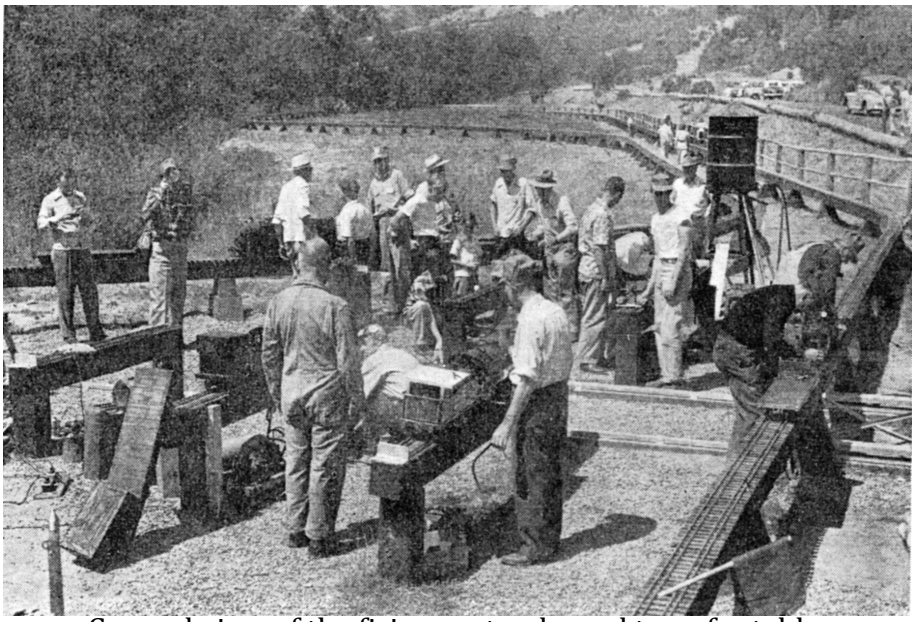
The general layout and construction of track.

Birmingham Society of Model Engineers, signed Campbell, society secretary. The telegram said a letter would follow. I have been wanting to acknowledge this telegram and thank the Birmingham Society and Mr. Campbell in particular for his kind thoughts for us so far away, but I have not received a letter or anything which would give me the address so that I could take care of the matter. Would you be kind enough to let me know where I can reach this gentleman and I will make up for what may seem to him a lacking courtesy.

It was through the sympathetic interest on the part of the officials of the Southern Pacific, Mr. E. D. Moody, assistant general manager plus the directors of the East Bay Regional Parks Board, that we were able to build a track for live steamers in Oakland. The Park Board graded the right of way and Southern Pacific furnished the ties and timber as well as transportation of material to the site which latter, in itself, was no small item.

The track was officially opened on September 2nd, 1950. The golden spike, formally completing the loop, was driven by Mr. E. D. Moody, assistant general manager, Southern Pacific Company, and Mr. John MacDonald, director of the East Bay Regional Park District. The ribbon stretched across the track was cut by Mrs. Irene Evans, daughter of President Vic Shattock of the G.G.L.S., thereby removing the only barrier to the dozen steam locomotives lined up ready to pass the reviewing stand. The parade was led by Jim Keith's 1-inch scale 4-6-4 with Jim's son, Sid, at the throttle, followed by members of the Southern California Live Steamers and the San Diego Live Steamers, with one or two engines from the home gang.

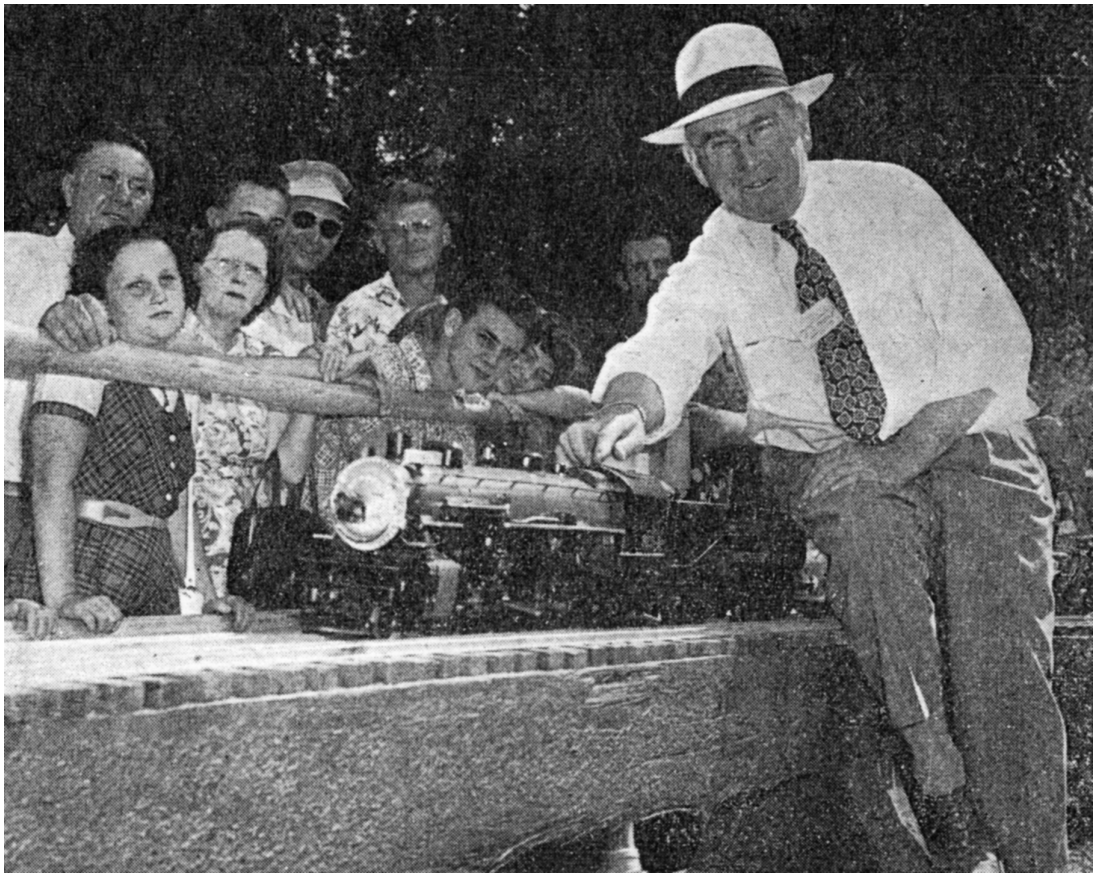
It should be mentioned that John Matthew's *Rocket* was not placed under steam, but in order that everyone present might have an opportunity to observe the wonderful work in this little model it was towed round the track layout back of the Southern Pacific 2-8-2, with John riding on the car ahead.



General view of the firing-up tracks and transfer table.

The big engines of Jim Keith and Gordon Corwin really got a workout over the three days of the meet; kept their engines going most of the time. They had no failures and are to be congratulated on the fine mechanical condition of their locomotives.

One incident marred the smooth running of the railroad on the third day of the meet. Tim Reardon, vice-president of the G.G.L.S., was at the throttle of Gordon Corwin's 4-8-4. The S.C.L.S. operate their machines by sitting on the tender with the feet resting on stirrups fastened to the frame just under the firebox, due, no doubt, to the fact that their home tracks are laid on the ground. This driving position looks, and undoubtedly is, somewhat precarious when the engine is running on tracks elevated 2 feet or more above the ground and balancing is not so easy. However, whatever may have been the cause, after rounding one curve the engine appeared to lift at the front end and rolled off onto the ground with Tim on top of it. Other than a slight bruise or so Tim was unhurt which was fortunate as it takes very little imagination to realize that a fall could have had serious results. The damage amounted to a few bent brake rods and some twisted piping and there appeared to be no reason why the engine could not have been fired up and run again; which is exactly what was done and proved to all and sundry that a steam locomotive can take a flying leap and keep going if you will give her a helping hand to get back to the track.



Mr. E. D. Moody, assistant general manager, Southern Pacific Company, pulls the throttle on Vic Shattock's 2-1/2 inch gauge 2-8-2 Southern Pacific "Mikado"

As for our home gang's engines, Walter Brown's 1-inch scale S.P. switch engine made its first appearance and its first run on rails, under steam. It is a beautiful piece of work and it performed just about the way it was expected to. It uses a minimum of fire and water and handles its loads with little or no apparent effort. Walter is to be congratulated on his handiwork and its results. Our genial secretary, Harry Dixon, had lubricator trouble with his side tank engine. This engine is a very fine piece of work and no doubt when the valve oil difficulty is overcome it will run and work just the way the builder expects it to.

On the evening of the track opening day, visitors, guests and hosts met at Vic Shattock's basement where a number of locomotives built by some of the G.G.L.S. members were on display; some were finished to the point of being able to operate under air pressure, while others were in the embryo stage. Among these were Tim Readon's 4-6-4 and Fred Daley's 4-6-4, both 3-3/4 inch gauge; both engines should be ready for the track next year. Larry Duggan showed his fine moving pictures, following which coffee and doughnuts were served. All in all, everyone appeared to enjoy the occasion and went home to bed feeling tired but happy.