

*Track Plans:*

# Recreating a Mainline/Branchline Junction

## Cache Junction, Utah, circa 1916, 1948, 1955 and 1989

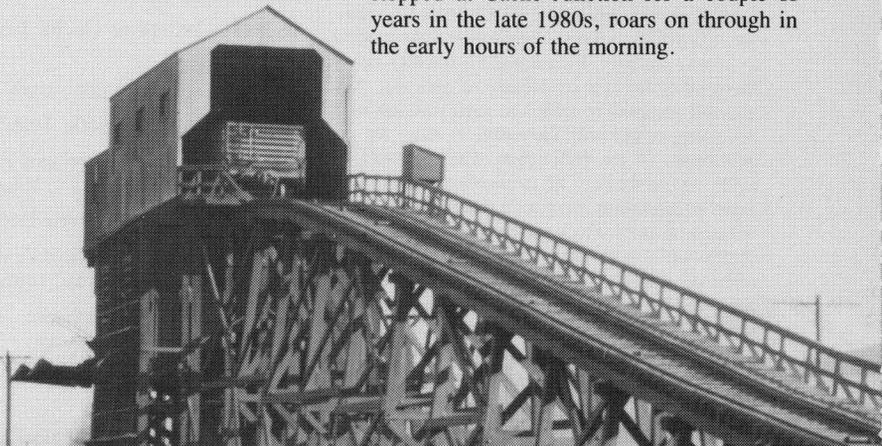
*The junction: What it was, why it was, train patterns, industries, freight cars and loads, passenger cars, typical locomotives . . . from several eras.*

**Thornton Waite**

**Photos by Emil Albrecht from the James Watson collection unless noted**

**C**ache Junction, Utah, is an unlikely railroad junction, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, but it was once an important, busy location. There were freight trains and passenger trains arriving from and departing to the north and east on the Union Pacific's mainline, connecting with the local freight and passenger trains on UP's Cache Valley Branch that left the mainline to the south at Cache Junction. In addition to the normal facilities needed to run and operate the trains, Cache Junction was complete with a well known "beanery" that lasted until 1986. Today these operations, in common

with the entire railroad industry, have changed, and there is only a single local freight on the branchline, and the through freights only pause for meets. The lone passenger train, Amtrak's *Pioneer*, which stopped at Cache Junction for a couple of years in the late 1980s, roars on through in the early hours of the morning.



*Photo 2 — Circa 1949: A view of the 230-ton coal trestle from the north, with a feed mill in the background. The coal trestle had two tracks leading up to it, one for loaded cars and one for empty cars, and a hoist pulled the cars up the incline. The trestle could load locomotive tenders spotted on both sides of the structure. One of the feed mills can be seen towering over the loaded coal cars.*



The junction's basic purpose was to interchange passengers and freight between the mainline and branchline trains and to provide a base for the railroad crews and equipment, but other than that, the location was never very important. The typical grain elevators, a team track, a sugar beet loading spur and stock pens provided freight revenue at the junction. There were additional facilities, including an enginehouse and a coaling tower, since Cache Junction was the base for the branchline trains. When the railroad phased out its operations at Cache Junction, the population declined, and today there are only a few farmers and others who still live in the area. But they live away from the tracks, and the railroad facilities have all been razed, and the building foundations are overgrown with weeds.

With this wide variety of trains and rail traffic over the years, a model railroad patterned after Cache Junction and its operations would provide an ideal layout for trains of almost any era.

## Historical Background

The first railroad to reach the Cache Valley was the narrow gauge Utah Northern

Railroad Company. This line was planned to extend from Ogden north to Montana, although the first section of the line was to run only from Willard north to Logan, Utah, with the intent of using the Central Pacific line from Willard south to Ogden. The line was then to continue north to Soda Springs in Idaho, although the mines of Montana were the railroad's final goal. Construction of the Utah Northern began on August 26, 1871, under the auspices of the Mormon Church, which controlled the line and provided much of the money and construction assistance. Although the survey recommended going north through the Bear River Canyon, it was decided that the line instead would go through Logan, necessitating construction of the line up the difficult Cache Hill. This decision was made in large part because the Cache Valley was potentially a source of significant revenue, and the Mormon Church wanted to influence its growth and development.

This route, however, slowed the construction of the line, since extensive cuts and fills were required to connect Box Elder County on the west and the Cache Valley on the east. After numerous delays, the line was completed to Logan on February 3, 1873. Unfortunately, severe winter storms prevented a large group of citizens from Salt Lake City and Ogden from reaching the completion ceremonies at Logan, and the train was forced to turn back.

The Utah Northern was then extended north, reaching Franklin, Idaho, in the spring of 1874. This short extension helped the freight business on the line, and Corinne, formerly the railpoint for all traffic to and from the Montana mines, faded away, being replaced by new warehouses in Franklin, closer to Montana. The Cache Valley also

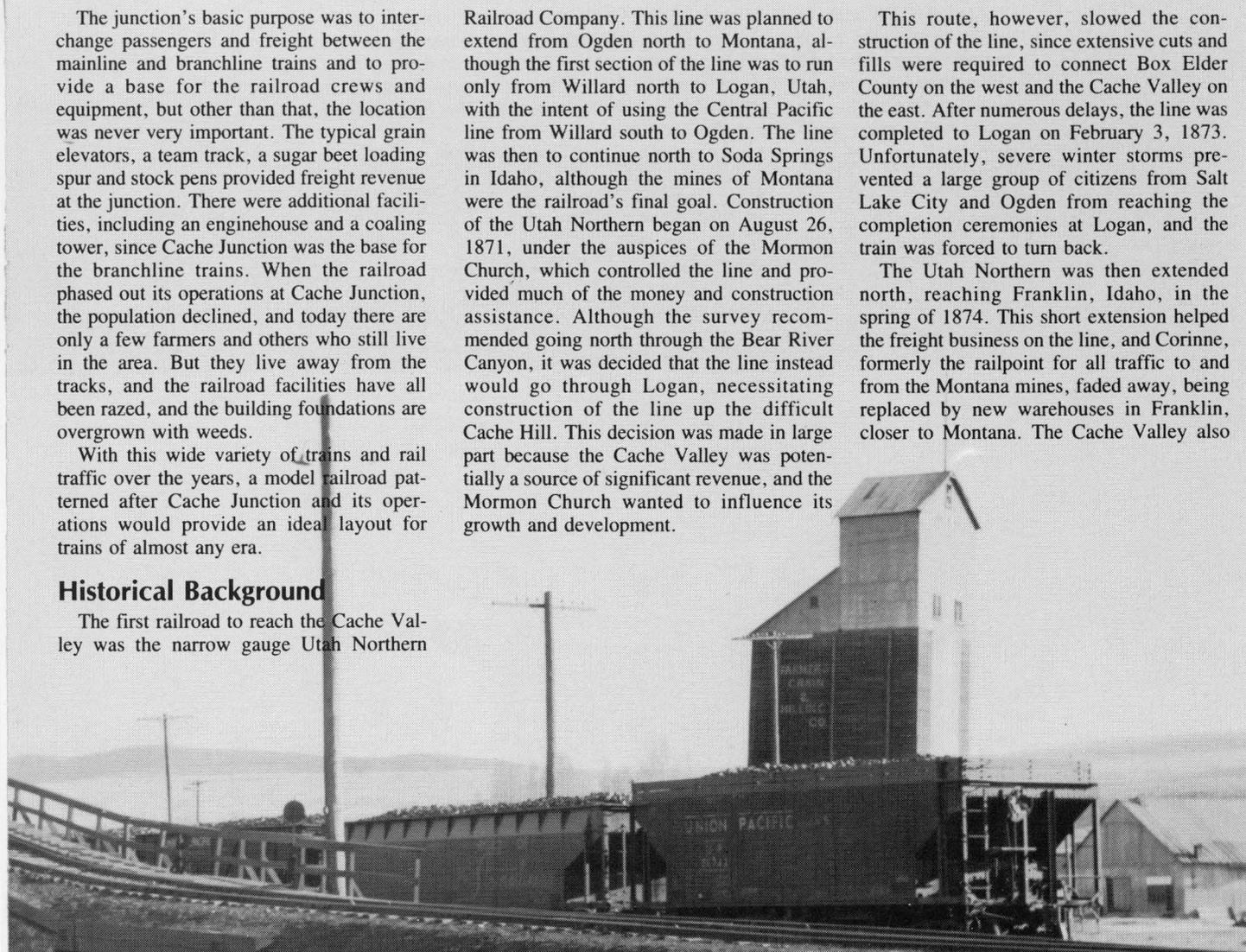


Photo 10 — Circa 1971.

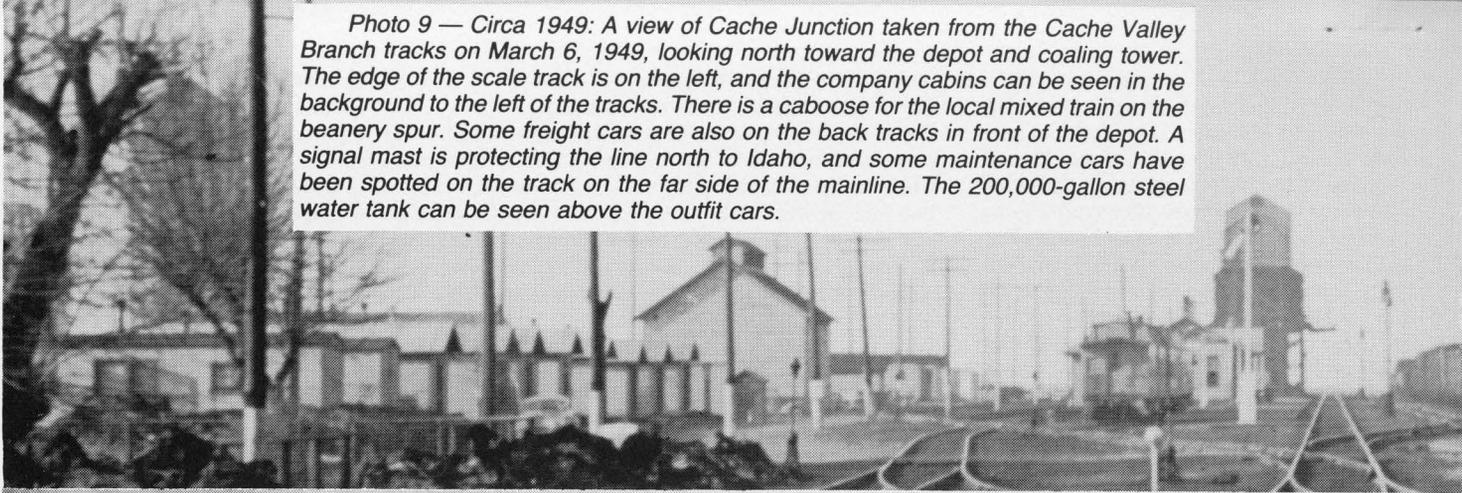
Photo 11 — Circa 1949.

Photo 12 — Circa 1975.

Photo 13 — Circa 1975.



Photo 9 — Circa 1949: A view of Cache Junction taken from the Cache Valley Branch tracks on March 6, 1949, looking north toward the depot and coaling tower. The edge of the scale track is on the left, and the company cabins can be seen in the background to the left of the tracks. There is a caboose for the local mixed train on the beanery spur. Some freight cars are also on the back tracks in front of the depot. A signal mast is protecting the line north to Idaho, and some maintenance cars have been spotted on the track on the far side of the mainline. The 200,000-gallon steel water tank can be seen above the outfit cars.



## Freight Traffic Through Cache Junction, Utah

### Inbound Freight

Farm Machinery  
 Agricultural Supplies  
 Sprinkler Piping  
 Coal  
 Plastic Pellets  
 Paper  
 Merchandise  
 Automobiles

Empty cars  
 Sugar Beets

### Outbound Freight

Woodchips  
 Tallow

Meat Products

Scrap Iron  
 Livestock

Agricultural Products

Business Forms  
 Molasses  
 Sugar

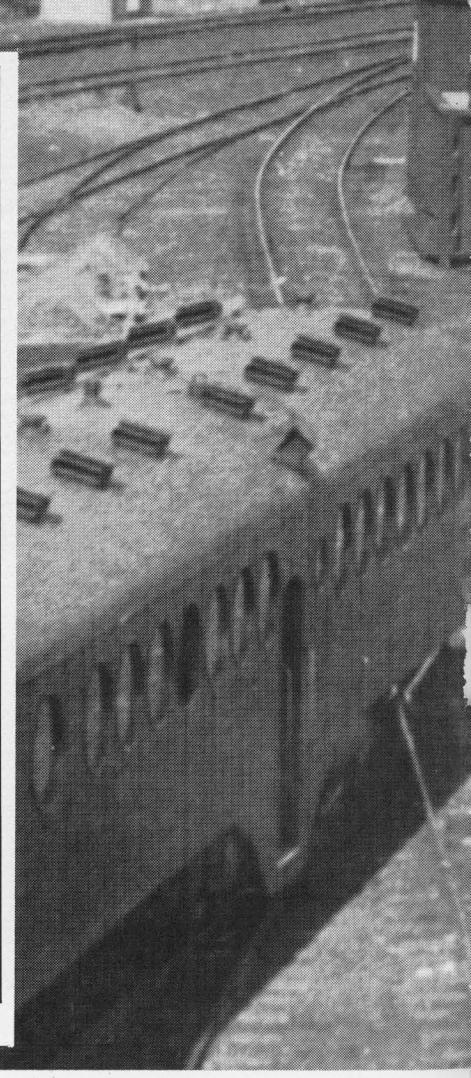
Limestone

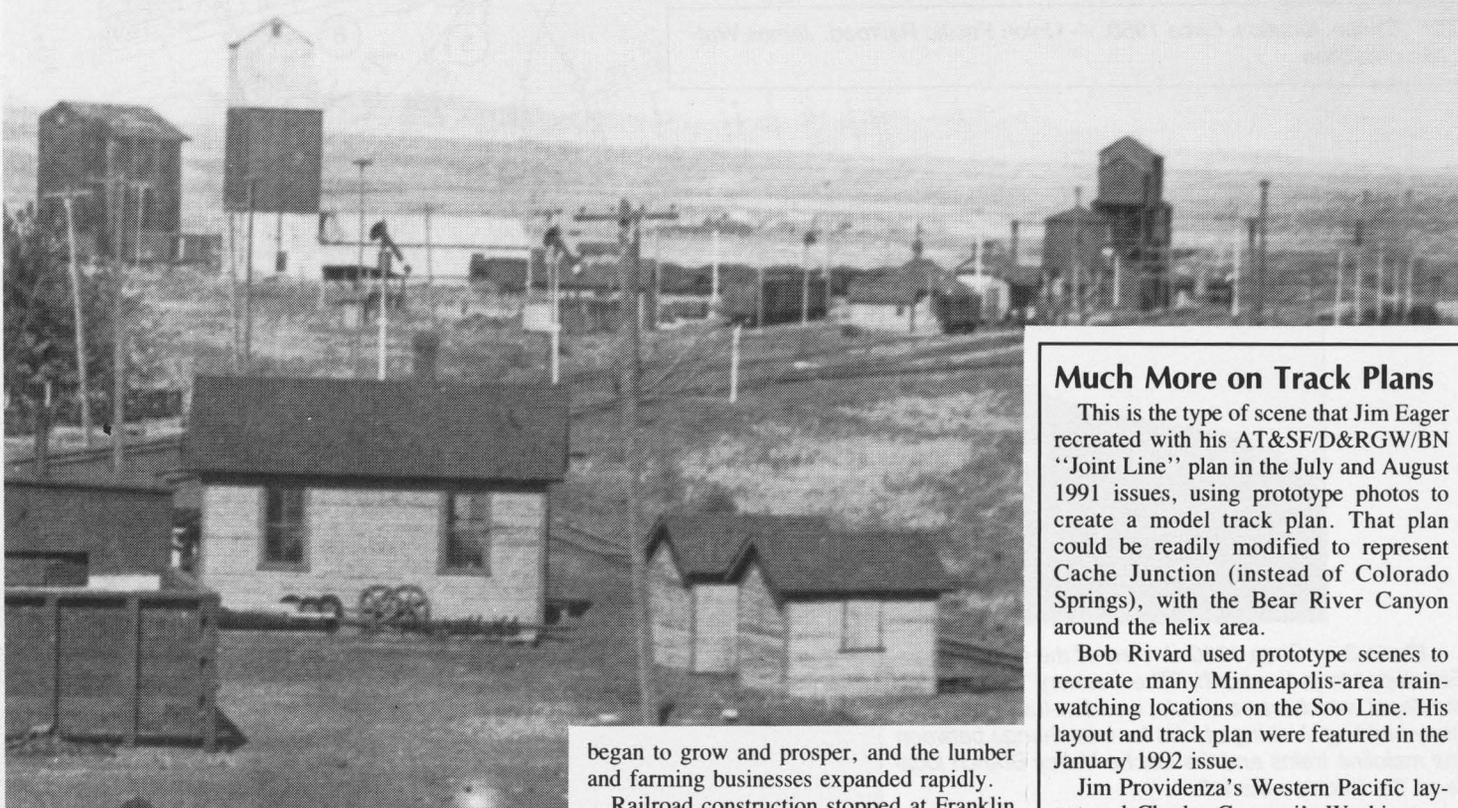
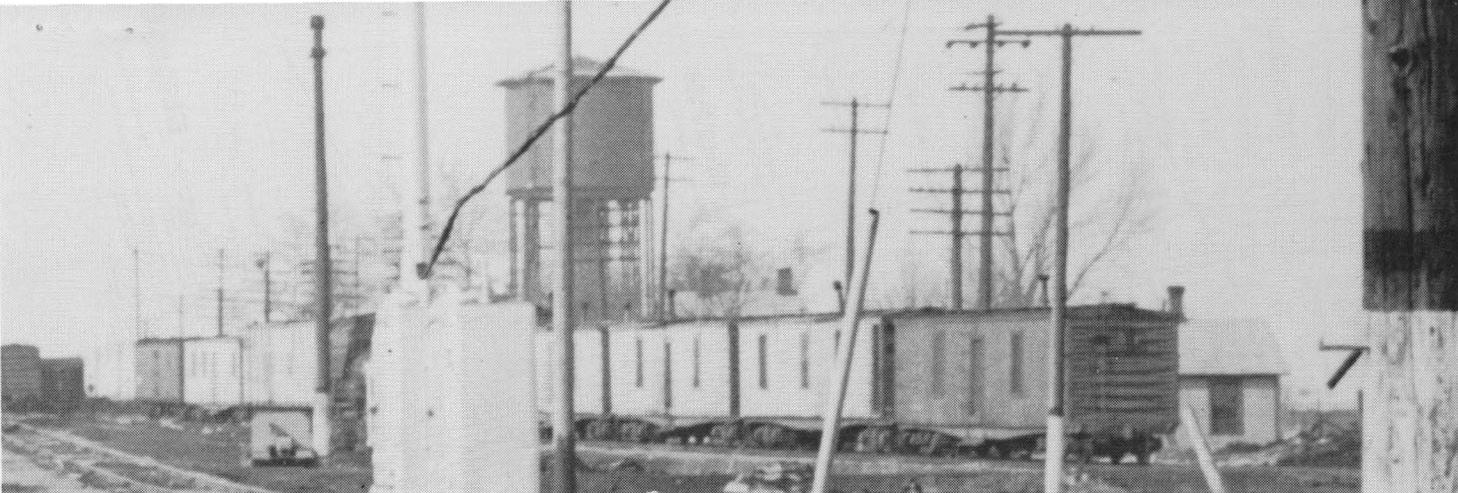
### Notes

To all towns on line  
 To all towns on line  
 To all towns on line  
 Largely to Logan  
 To Preston in covered hoppers  
 Logan  
 5 cars/day to Logan  
 Logan, approx. one car/week  
 Box cars and auto racks  
 As required for outbound shipments  
 To Lewiston, seasonal, from  
 branchline and mainline

### Notes

Woodchip cars  
 Tank cars from Hyrum meat-  
 packing plant  
 Refrigerator cars, also from  
 Hyrum meatpacking plant  
 Gondolas, from Logan  
 Stock cars, seasonal, picked  
 up by southbound fast freights  
 to Salt Lake City for food,  
 rest and water  
 Including canned milk,  
 largely seasonal  
 From Logan, in box cars  
 Tank cars, from sugar plant  
 Covered hoppers, from sugar  
 plant  
 To sugar plant off branchline





*Photo 1 — Circa 1916: A view of Cache Junction, Utah, taken from atop the enginehouse, with a McKeen motor car in the foreground. This railcar was economical to use on lightly traveled branch lines such as the Cache Valley Branch. Since William McKeen, the builder of the McKeen car, had close ties with Edward Hariman, it was only logical that the Union Pacific Railroad owned and operated his cars. The grain mills, beanery, depot, water tank and coaling tower can all be seen in the background. The water tower, which is on the far side of the depot, was replaced by a steel tower on the opposite side of the tracks a few years after this picture was taken. Maintenance sheds are in the foreground. The mainline goes off to the right toward Idaho, while the Cache Valley Branch leaves on the tracks to the left. — Collection of Thornton Waite*

### Much More on Track Plans

This is the type of scene that Jim Eager recreated with his AT&SF/D&RGW/BN "Joint Line" plan in the July and August 1991 issues, using prototype photos to create a model track plan. That plan could be readily modified to represent Cache Junction (instead of Colorado Springs), with the Bear River Canyon around the helix area.

Bob Rivard used prototype scenes to recreate many Minneapolis-area train-watching locations on the Soo Line. His layout and track plan were featured in the January 1992 issue.

Jim Providenza's Western Pacific layout and Charles Carrangi's Washington, D.C., terminal, both featured in the December 1991 issue, are still additional samples of prototype-based operations that can be built into a model railroad.

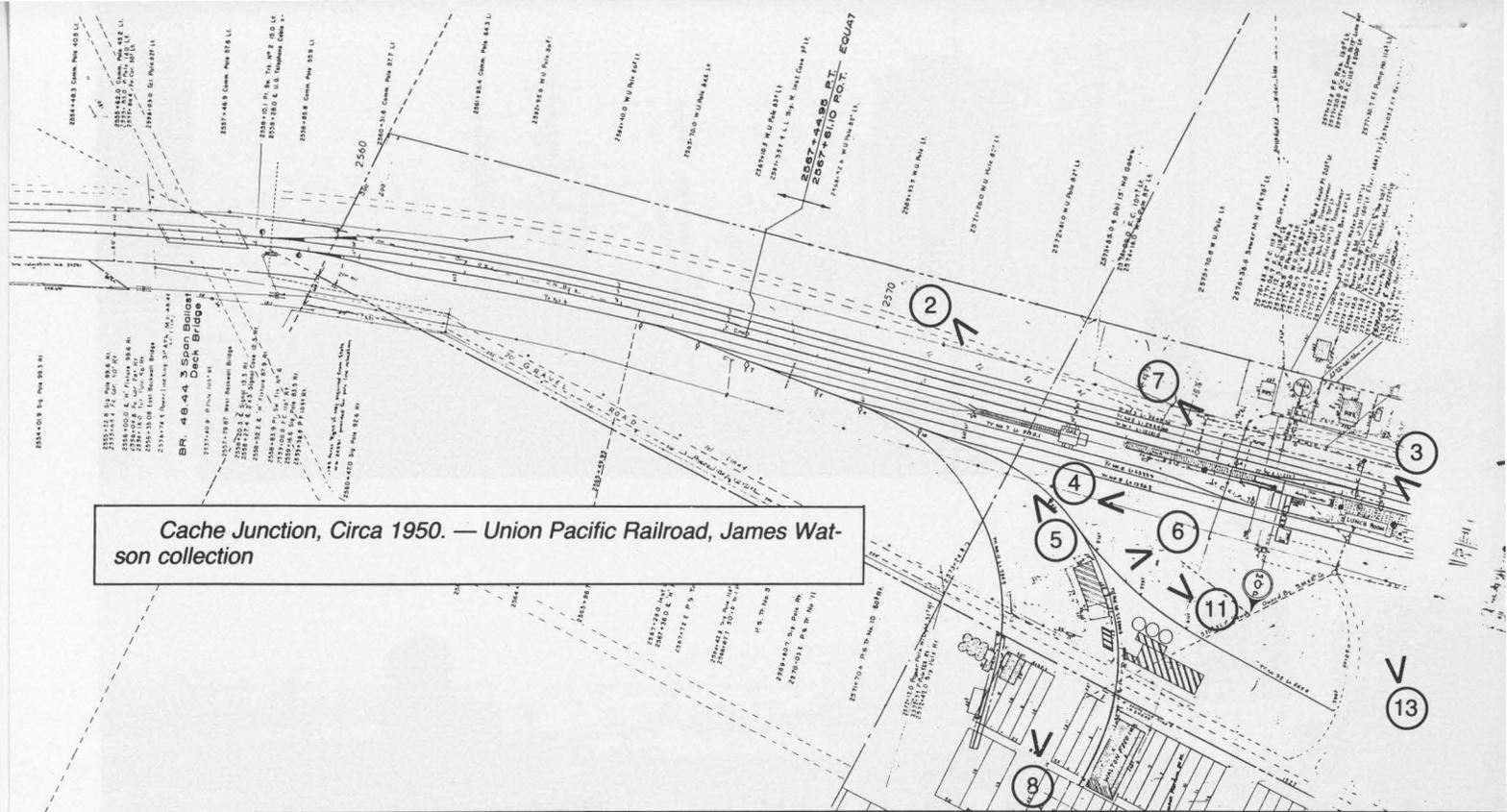
For more information on modeling from the prototype at the track planning stage, consider joining the Layout Design SIG.

began to grow and prosper, and the lumber and farming businesses expanded rapidly.

Railroad construction stopped at Franklin due to the financial Panic of 1873, and it was not until 1878 that the Utah & Northern Railway Company, successor to the Utah Northern Railroad, was organized. Significantly, the road was now controlled by Sidney Dillon and Jay Gould of the Union Pacific. Construction of the road was started once again, but on a new route that bypassed Soda Springs and instead went further to the west through Preston, Oxford and Inkom in Idaho. What is now Pocatello, Idaho, was reached in August 1878. Construction of the line continued until Montana was finally reached in 1880. The line was immediately busy transporting goods to the Montana mines and bringing back ore. It was soon found that the narrow gauge cars were inadequate to handle the traffic, and that a standard gauge line was needed, both to eliminate the time-consuming transfer between standard and narrow gauge cars and to increase the capacity of the line. Consequently, in 1886 part of the line was standard gauged in Montana, followed by widening of the line north from Pocatello in 1887. This allowed easy interchange with the new

Oregon Short Line, which had been constructed west from Granger, Wyoming, to the Pacific Northwest through Pocatello. The rest of the line from Pocatello to the south was no longer as important, so it was not until 1890 that the section running through Logan was widened to standard gauge.

It was at this time that Cache Junction was established. When the line was standard gauged, a new line, 20 miles shorter than the route through Mendon to Logan, was built along the route of the original survey up the Bear River Canyon. Not only was the route shorter, but it also avoided the stiff grades up Cache Hill. The new line left the original



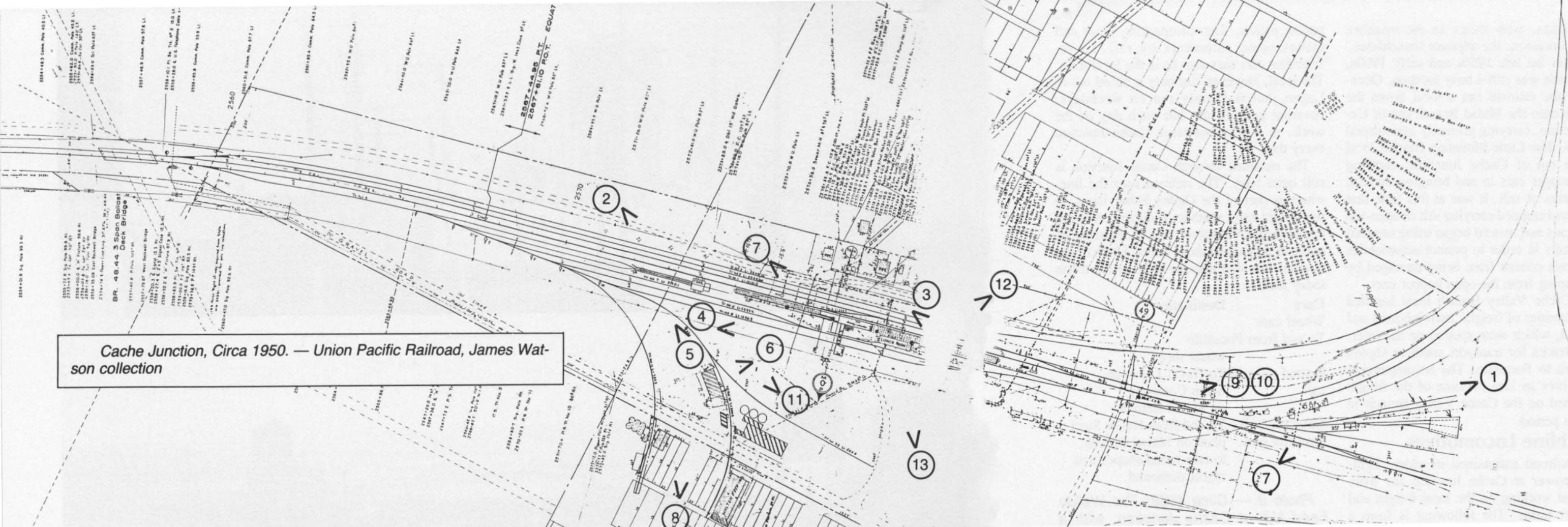
Cache Junction, Circa 1950. — Union Pacific Railroad, James Watson collection



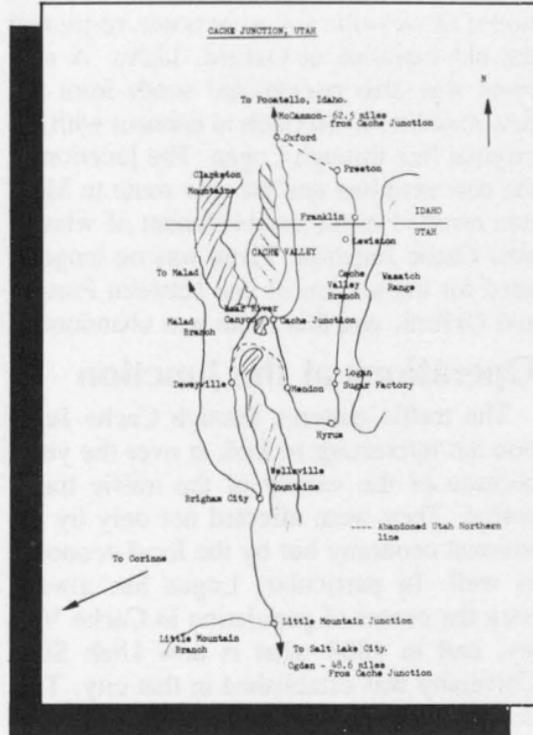
Photo 3 — Circa 1960: A view of the Cache Junction depot from the north, "The beanery" was behind the depot, which was a simple, wooden-framed, single-story building. A string of cars for interchange between the mainline trains and the Cache Valley Branch local is on the track on the left.



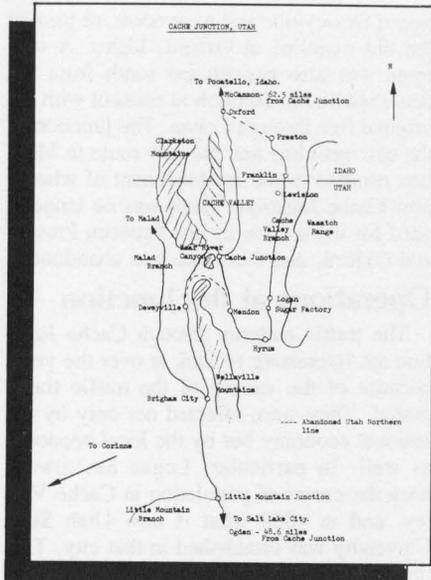
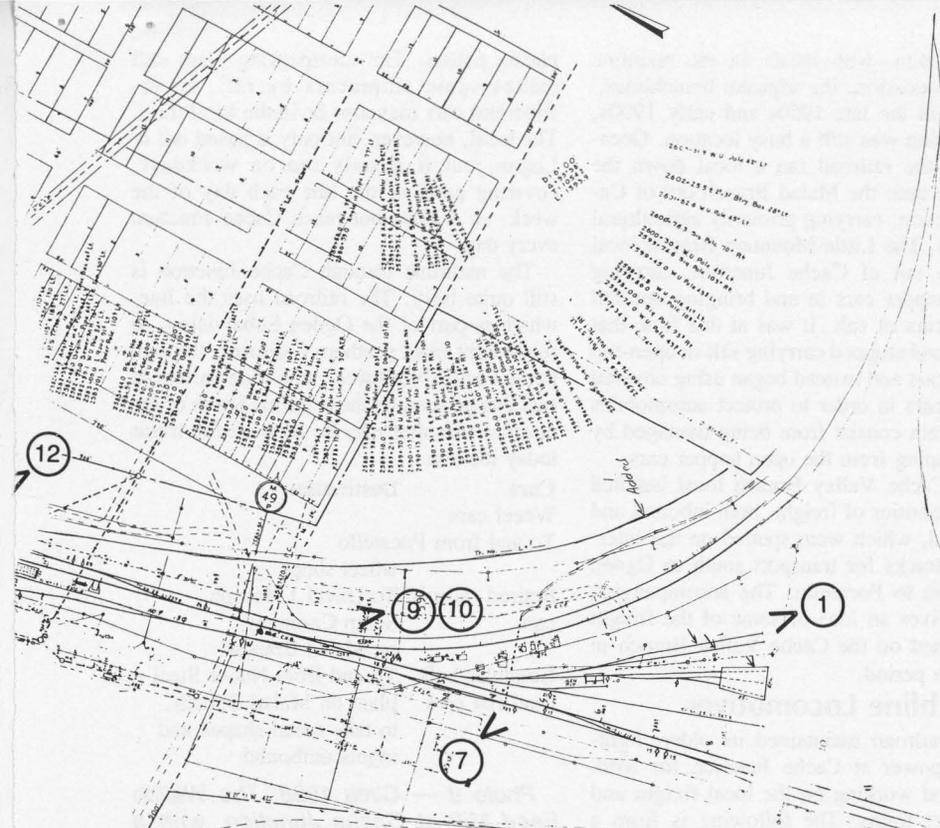
Photo 5 — Circa 1950: A view of the second feed mill at Cache Junction, the Walton Feed Mill. A string of stock cars is spotted on the siding, ready for loading at the single stock pen. The Beet Spur (for loading sugar beets by conveyor or front loader) is out of sight to the left center.



Cache Junction, Circa 1950. — Union Pacific Railroad, James Watson collection



The Cache Junction area at the Idaho and Utah state line, circa September 1991. — Thornton Waite



The Cache Junction area at the Idaho and Utah state line, circa September 1991. — Thornton Waite



Photo 6 — Circa 1950: The stock cars are spotted at the West Cache feed mill and silos, ready to be loaded. Once these cars were ready to be shipped, they were spotted in front of the Cache Junction depot on one of the interchange tracks to be picked up by one of the fast freights for rapid shipment south to Salt Lake City.

line at Deweyville and went north, re-joining the old mainline at Oxford, Idaho. A new route was also constructed south from the new mainline to Mendon to connect with the original line through Logan. The junction of the new mainline and the new route to Mendon resulted in the establishment of what is now Cache Junction. There was no longer a need for the section of line between Preston and Oxford, and this route was abandoned.

## Operations at the Junction

The traffic patterns through Cache Junction are interesting to look at over the years because of the variety of the traffic transported. They were affected not only by the national economy but by the local economy as well. In particular, Logan has always been the center of population in Cache Valley, and in 1888 what is now Utah State University was established in that city. This in turn created significant traffic over the years, and in about the year 1898, the present Logan depot, a large, attractive stone building, was constructed to serve the local and student population. On the other hand, Cache Junction, since it was only a transfer point between trains and had a small population (predominantly railroad workers), was the site of a typical one-story wooden depot. The other facilities at Cache Junction needed to run and operate trains were much more substantial and included a large water tower, a coaling facility, crew quarters, an enginehouse and "the beanery," a dining hall kept open 24 hours a day for the railroad workers. In addition, there were set-out and interchange tracks for the local and through freight trains. Other tracks were used to store equipment and to maintain it. Since the traffic varied so much over the years, the track layout was flexible and was able to serve many different purposes.

What sort of traffic passed through Cache Junction over the years? It varied, of course, depending upon the era and the time of year. It will be covered by discussing the freight and passenger business separately, since both were important sources of revenue for the railroad.

## Freight Traffic

The mainline of the railroad, which has always been under the control of the Union Pacific, carried the "normal" carload freight. All traffic from Ogden and Salt Lake City to the Pacific Northwest passed through Cache Junction, and the locomotives used were typical of those used on the railroad through the years, since the mainline was a heavy duty, well-maintained track. In addition to merchandise freight, there was a large quantity of agricultural traffic. Refrigerator cars and box cars of grain were common. Since Cache Junction was not a crew change point, many of the trains simply passed through or waited in the siding for an opposing train on the single-track mainline. However, some of the freights between Salt Lake City and Pocatello would pause to set out or pick up interchange cars from the Cache Valley Branch. The mainline also had the normal local freights working out of Ca-

che Junction, with locals on the mainline and, on occasion, the adjacent branchlines.

Even in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the junction was still a busy location. Occasionally the railroad ran a local down the mainline onto the Malad Branch out of Cache Junction, carrying primarily agricultural products. The Little Mountain Branch local also ran out of Cache Junction, carrying empty hopper cars in and bringing out full hopper cars of salt. It was at this time that the railroad stopped carrying salt in open-top hopper cars and instead began using covered hopper cars in order to protect automobiles in the train consist from being damaged by salt escaping from the open hopper cars.

The Cache Valley Branch local handled large quantities of freight, both inbound and outbound, which were spotted on the interchange tracks for transport south to Ogden and north to Pocatello. The accompanying listing gives an idea of some of the freight transported on the Cache Valley Branch in this time period.

## Branchline Locomotives

The railroad maintained its older, light-weight power at Cache Junction for work trains and working on the local freight and passenger trains. The following is from a listing dated January 1, 1950. Other steam locomotives, of course, were also used as necessary on both the branchline and mainline trains.

### Working Out of

Cache Junction	Notes
Engine 617	2-8-0 Consolidation, Cache Junction/Logan switcher
Engine 622	2-8-0 Consolidation, Cache Junction work train
Engine	2-8-2 Mikado, Cache Junction-McCammon local
Engine 7859	4-8-2 Mountain, Salt Lake City-to-Pocatello Butte Special
Engine 7867	4-8-2 Mountain, Salt Lake City-to-Pocatello Northwest Special
Engine 3559	Mallet Compound 2-8-8-0, Salt Lake City-Pocatello freight

Older photographs indicate that 4-4-0s were common on the Cache Valley branch at the turn of the century, but Consolidations seem to have been the common motive power in later years. When the Union Pacific began converting over to diesels, GP9 no. 274, built in 1954, was typical of the locomotives used to replace steam on the Cache Valley Branch. Even now, the locals often use only a single GP40, B23-7 or SD40-2.

On the mainline, the railroad ran large steam locomotives including 4-8-2 mountains and 2-8-8-0 Mallet Compounds in the Thirties and Forties. The UP assigned its newest diesel to mainline trains through Cache Junction, including the Centennial 6900s, and it is now normal to see SD60s and Dash 8-40Cs on the trains.

## Freight Operations in the Nineties

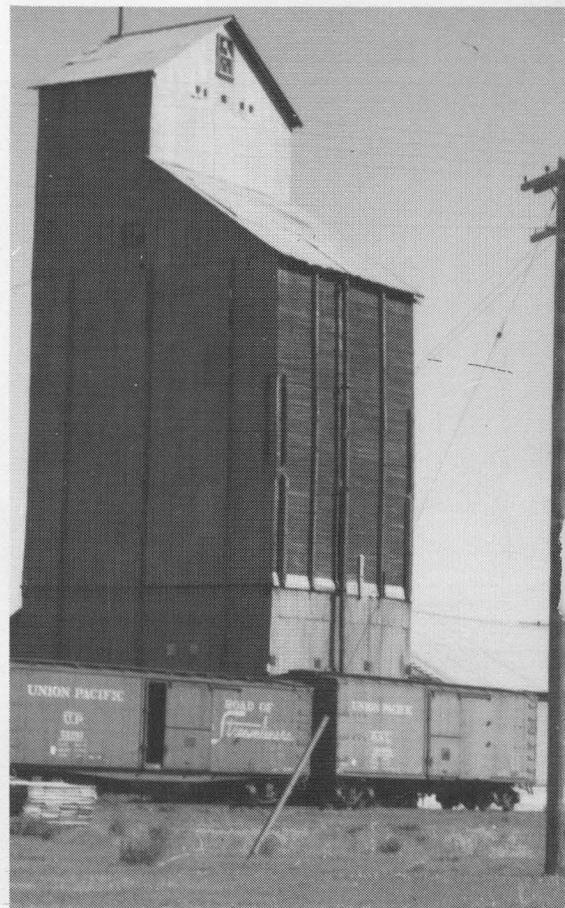
Today the freight business on the Cache Valley Branch is greatly reduced. The sugar beet business is gone, but there are still canned goods and other agricultural products being shipped out, and the plant at Preston still receives covered hopper cars filled with

plastic pellets. The meatpacking plant still makes some shipments by rail, so refrigerator cars may also be in the local train. The local, however, not only is based out of Logan, but it is only run on weekdays, covering parts of the line each day of the week, so it does not reach Cache Junction every day.

The mainline through Cache Junction is still quite busy. The railroad uses the line, which is part of the Ogden Subdivision, to run freight from southern California through to the Pacific Northwest, so a wide variety of cars can be seen on those trains. Some of the unusual cars that may be seen on the trains today include:

Cars	Destination
Wheel cars	
To and from Pocatello	wheel shops
Retired railroad cars	To David J. Joseph Scrap Company on Malad Branch
Gondolas/bulk-head flat cars	To and from Nucor Steel plant on Malad Branch, to take metal shapes and ingots outbound.

*Photo 8 — Circa 1938: The Walton Feed Mill at Cache Junction, with a couple of box cars spotted in front of it. The Cache Valley is a fertile, productive area, so agricultural products were, and still are, a source of revenue for the Union Pacific. The use of box cars, of course, has been totally superseded by covered hoppers. The feed mills were tall, distinctive structures, often made of wood covered with metal siding.*

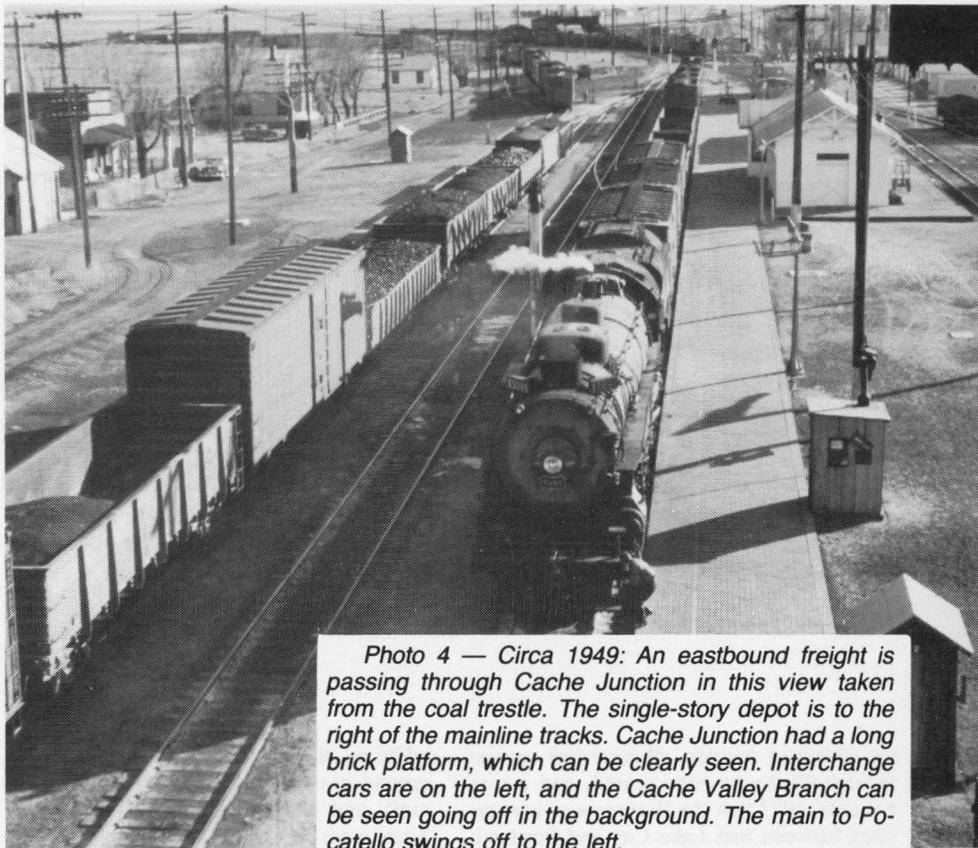


In addition, the Union Pacific uses its Salt Lake City shops for diesel locomotive inspections and maintenance. Consequently, there are often trains with an excess of power as diesel units are moved to and from the shops.

## Passenger Traffic

Passenger traffic was also an important source of revenue for the railroad for many years. Originally, of course, the through passenger trains passed over what is now the Cache Valley Branch between Ogden and Montana. With the rerouting of the standard gauge line through Cache Junction, passenger traffic changed so that passengers on the Cache Valley Branch transferred to the mainline trains at Cache Junction. The passenger train from Cache Junction to Logan was still important for many years. In addition to the express and mail, it brought in the newspapers from Salt Lake City, and fresh dairy products were transported back down. The transfers between the trains were all made by crews working out of the Cache Junction depot.

Passenger service at Cache Junction went through a decline typical of railroad passenger service on branchlines throughout the country. The conventional passenger train with a locomotive pulling passenger cars was replaced first by motor cars, then mixed trains, before finally being totally discontinued due to lack of use. At the same time, the mainline passenger trains were consolidated and cut back as people stopped traveling by train over long distances. These changes provided an interesting variety of



*Photo 4 — Circa 1949: An eastbound freight is passing through Cache Junction in this view taken from the coal trestle. The single-story depot is to the right of the mainline tracks. Cache Junction had a long brick platform, which can be clearly seen. Interchange cars are on the left, and the Cache Valley Branch can be seen going off in the background. The main to Po-castello swings off to the left.*

passenger equipment on the Cache Valley Branch over the years.

A schedule from 1893 shows that there were two branchline trains connecting with the mainline trains at Cache Junction, and a

third train was being run on the branchline with no connections to the mainline trains. Trains at this time were the only realistic means of long distance travel, and even travel in the valley was easier by train than by horse and buggy.

This changed over the years, however, as the automobile became more popular and the roads improved. The frequency and size of the trains on the branchlines changed to accommodate the decreasing traffic. A 1930 timetable shows that there were two motor car trains a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, connecting with the mainline trains, of which there were five. One of the motor car trains only ran to Logan, while the second ran to the end of the line at Preston. By 1937, the railroad was advertising a single motor train, with connections with the Salt Lake City trains. There were also three motor buses run each day. Four years later, only the single motor car was being advertised.

By 1951, service was still a single train, with no connections with the Salt Lake City trains. By 1959, the railroad was advertising a mixed train, again with no connections with the mainline trains. The combine for this train was stored on the spur track next to "The Beanery," where express and other items were loaded onto the car. The car was then coupled onto the rear of the local when it left for Preston. This mixed train was finally discontinued a few years before Amtrak took over the passenger traffic on the Union Pacific and all of the nation's railroads. At this time, only the *Butte Special* ran tri-weekly through Cache Junction on the mainline, between Salt Lake City and Butte, with Cache Junction being only a flagstop. With





*Photo 7 — Circa 1948: The three-stall enginehouse with what are, likely, four Harriman-standard 2-8-0 locomotives, each with a vanderbuilt tender. The wood gondola is sitting beside the cinder pit.*

the advent of Amtrak, all passenger service through Cache Junction ceased, and it was not until 1977 that the *Pioneer* was inaugurated between Salt Lake City and Portland/Seattle. This train passed through Cache Junction in the early hours of the morning, and in the late 1980s Amtrak moved the station stop, which was one of the so-called "Amshacks," from Brigham City to Cache Junction, but it was closed after a couple of years due to lack of business. However, the *Pioneer* still passes through Cache Junction in the early hours of the morning.

## Track and Facility Layout

Although the track layout at Cache Junction was relatively simple and straightforward, the facilities were quite extensive. It was not a crew change point, but it was the origination point for numerous local trains.

The railroad had numerous buildings and facilities that were necessary to run the railroad. The Union Pacific's list of facilities in 1946 shows that Cache Junction had a three-stall enginehouse, each stall 78 feet long. It had apparently recently been reduced in size, since a previous listing indicates there were two additional stalls, each 83 feet long. The station agent and telegrapher worked out of the depot building, which had a long brick platform in front. There was a coal trestle with a capacity of 230 tons of coal, and the steel water tank had a 200,000-gallon capacity. The water tank was originally a wooden structure located adjacent to the depot, but at some point the steel tank was constructed across the tracks from the depot. The water was pumped into the tank from the adjacent Bear River with a 258-gallon-per-minute pump, and there was a water softener, installed in 1929, with a capacity of 218,000 gallons per hour. There were three water columns at Cache Junction to serve the mainline and branchline trains. In

addition, there was a 1,350-gallon underground gas tank, another 1,000-gallon gas tank, and a 3,250-gallon distillate tank. There were car scales, 50 feet long and with a capacity of 100 tons, built by Fairbanks, and the ice house, 30x45x18 feet, had a capacity of 500 tons of block ice.

Cache Junction also was the source of some traffic, since there were two large feed mills and a two-pen, single/double-deck livestock loading chute with watering facilities. There was also a sugar beet dump on one siding for loading cars during the beet season. The railroad even owned cabins at Cache Junction to provide permanent as well as temporary housing for both full-time and seasonal railroad workers. At one time, the railroad maintained 13 cabins that could hold a total of 26 employees for the trains operating out of Cache Junction.

Special note should be made of "the beanery," which was subsidized by the railroad for many years until it was closed and razed in 1986 after 75 years of use. The building had been built in 1890 and converted to the "cafe" about 1911. It replaces the original railroad eating house, located in another building, which in turn was converted to other uses until it was razed in 1975. "The Beanery" was patronized by people from throughout the Cache Valley, not only by railroad employees. The latter men received priority, of course, since they often had schedules to meet. Prices were reasonable, and some of the dishes, such as steak and shrimp, were popular. It was not uncommon for a freight train to slow down as it passed "the beanery," stop to let the caboose crew out, then back up so the locomotive stopped in front of the building and the crew could have a meal. Since "the beanery" was open 24 hours a day, it was a popular spot used by the locals in the early hours of the morning.

The track layout at Cache Junction was

simple, with the westbound trains from Salt Lake City coming in on the mainline from the north and curving around to the east toward Pocatello. The Cache Valley Branch, which was to the east, left Cache Junction headed south. The tracks needed to support the train operations at Cache Junction were basic and were not many, considering the activity at this location. A map from 1902, shortly after the establishment of Cache Junction, shows a passing track on the west side of the depot, with a spur track on the south side of the depot. There were two interchange tracks on the west side of the mainline, opposite the depot. A single track went up to the coal chute, and there was on track for the single-stall enginehouse and a parallel track for the ashpit. The Cache Valley Branch continued to the south with no other sidings. The wye was present, of course, since it was necessary to turn steam locomotives.

The track layout changed over the years to meet the increasing traffic. Within a few years, the mainline had a passing track no. 1 to the east of the depot, and there were two back tracks, numbered 2 and 3. Track no. 2 was used for the set-out of cars by westbound trains to Pocatello, while track no. 3 was used for pick-up of cars by westbounds. The Cache Valley Branch also had two tracks, Branch no. 1 and Branch no. 2. Branch no. 1 was used by the local to receive and set out cars for Ogden and Salt Lake City. The cars were sorted for the two destinations on this track. Branch no. 2 was used for storage of cars such as beet cars prior to the harvest season.

Other tracks at C.J. were the scale track to weigh cars coming off the Cache Valley Branch, the enginehouse spur tracks, a spur for the ashpit, and other storage tracks for maintenance equipment such as a Jordan spreader and outfit cars. "The beanery" spur was used for the motor car and the combine. It was also used to store the ice car for "the beanery". Track no. 5 was a team track for unloading local freight; track no. 6 was for the storage of cars, and track no. 7, the original passing track, could be used as necessary. There were two sidings for the local feed mills, and another spur for loading sugar beets. Another pair of tracks was used for the coal chute, one for the loaded coal cars and one for the empties.

Today "the beanery," depot and all of the engine facilities are gone. Only a few maintenance sheds remain beside the tracks, dating from the time when Cache Junction was a busy location. Many of the siding tracks have been pulled up, although the mainline passing tracks and the branch tracks are still present and in service. Even the tracks, though, are now isolated from the village of Cache Junction, which is virtually a ghost town (the 1980 population was 55 and dropping). The roads leading to the tracks are just gravel roads, and the area is overgrown with sagebrush and weeds.

Special thanks go to Rex Winn, who started a long career with the Union Pacific Railroad at Cache Junction, for providing valuable information for this article. **RMJ**

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