

1. Sequoia Valley Railroad provides a funeral train for the locals because of the bad roads. The funeral car was built from plans in a *Narrow Gauge & Short Line Gazette* article by Tom Yorke. It has a casket inside and doubles as a battery car. The coach is from LGB and was kitbashed into the larger 15mm scale. It is based on a San Joaquin & Sierra Nevada Railroad coach built about 1882. The trailing car is an upsized model of a Maine two-foot car (WW & F No 6). It has a complete interior and lights.



My wife and I began our garden railroad in 1999, after years of negotiation with the eventual stockholders. We wanted a long-term hobby that we could enjoy together. Over the seven years of its life, the railroad has slowly expanded to eventually reach its

historical, as well as real-life, terminus.

Some history

Between 1885 and 1892, the area along the North Fork of the Kaweah River in Tulare County, California, was the scene of an experiment in utopian socialism.

This was the Kaweah Co-Operative Commonwealth, more commonly known as the Kaweah Colony. Its members came from all over the world and eventually reached some 500 before its demise.

The colony was based upon the theory of a society in which working members

The Kaweah Box & Barrel Co. and its Sequoia Valley Railroad

A marriage of histories

by Tom Rey | San Diego, California

Photos by Bob Treat



would jointly own and control the product of their labors. One of the ways to accomplish this, and produce income, was to harvest lumber from the vast forests that are now part of the Giant Forest Area in the Sequoia National Park. In order to get the logs—and subsequently

the lumber—to markets, a method of transportation was needed. Key members were assigned the task of investigating the most economical way to achieve this. Both a flume system and a railroad were investigated. The railroad finally won out and, in 1885, the Tulare Valley & Giant

Forest Railroad was incorporated.

The railroad was to run from either Tulare City or Traver, on the Southern Pacific, to the Giant Forest. According to local accounts, grading was actually in progress when political and economical events halted it. These particular developments were



2. The freight agent wants to know who damaged that citrus shipment. Nobody knows nothin'. The freight house is made of Precision Board and the flatcar was

made following plans of a Nevada County Narrow Gauge car. The small, airy tree (left) is a young fernleaf heavenly bamboo.



3. "Camilla House," is a typical British Cotswold cottage and the home of Purcilla Throckmorton, who was forced to leave her native country and now resides in the wilds of the Sierra foothills. Moss adds to the scene, creating a lush "grass" around the cottage.



4. The Kaweah depot. The passenger car is the first class observation-coach "Mineral King," a scratchbuilt replica of Oahu Railway's N° 48 "Pearl." Behind the coach sits a round-headed miniature New Zealand tea tree (*Leptospermum scoparium* 'Nanum Rubrum') with beautiful burgundy foliage.

far too complex to cover here but, needless to say, first the railroad, then the colony was abandoned by 1892.

At its height, the Kaweah Colony boasted some 100 dwellings, a company store, barber shop, planing mill and box factory, a post office, and a newspaper. When the railroad idea was abandoned, they had completed 18 miles of track from Kaweah to a point at an elevation of

some 5,400 feet, where a small sawmill had been built in the forest.

The marriage of past and present

My family settled in Tulare County, in the San Joaquin Valley, in the early 1870s. They originally came from Switzerland. My father, grandfather, and great uncle were all veterinarians and, as a boy, I would accompany my grandfather on

calls into the back country. I especially enjoyed our trips to the Three Rivers and Kaweah areas.

When I graduated to large-scale model railroading from N and H0, I needed a location in which to anchor my new railroad. At first I tried Colorado narrow gauge, but it never felt right. I've never lived in Colorado and just couldn't get the "feel" of it. After a lot of frustration, I

The railroad at a glance

Name: Kaweah Box & Barrel Company RR and Sequoia Valley Railroad

Scale: 15mm=1' (1:20.3)

Gauge: N° 1 (45mm)

Size: 50' x 90' (around the perimeter and into the front yard)

Theme: Narrow-gauge short line and industrial

Period: 1917

Railroad height: Ground level to two feet.

Track: Llagas Creek code-250 flex track and handlaid

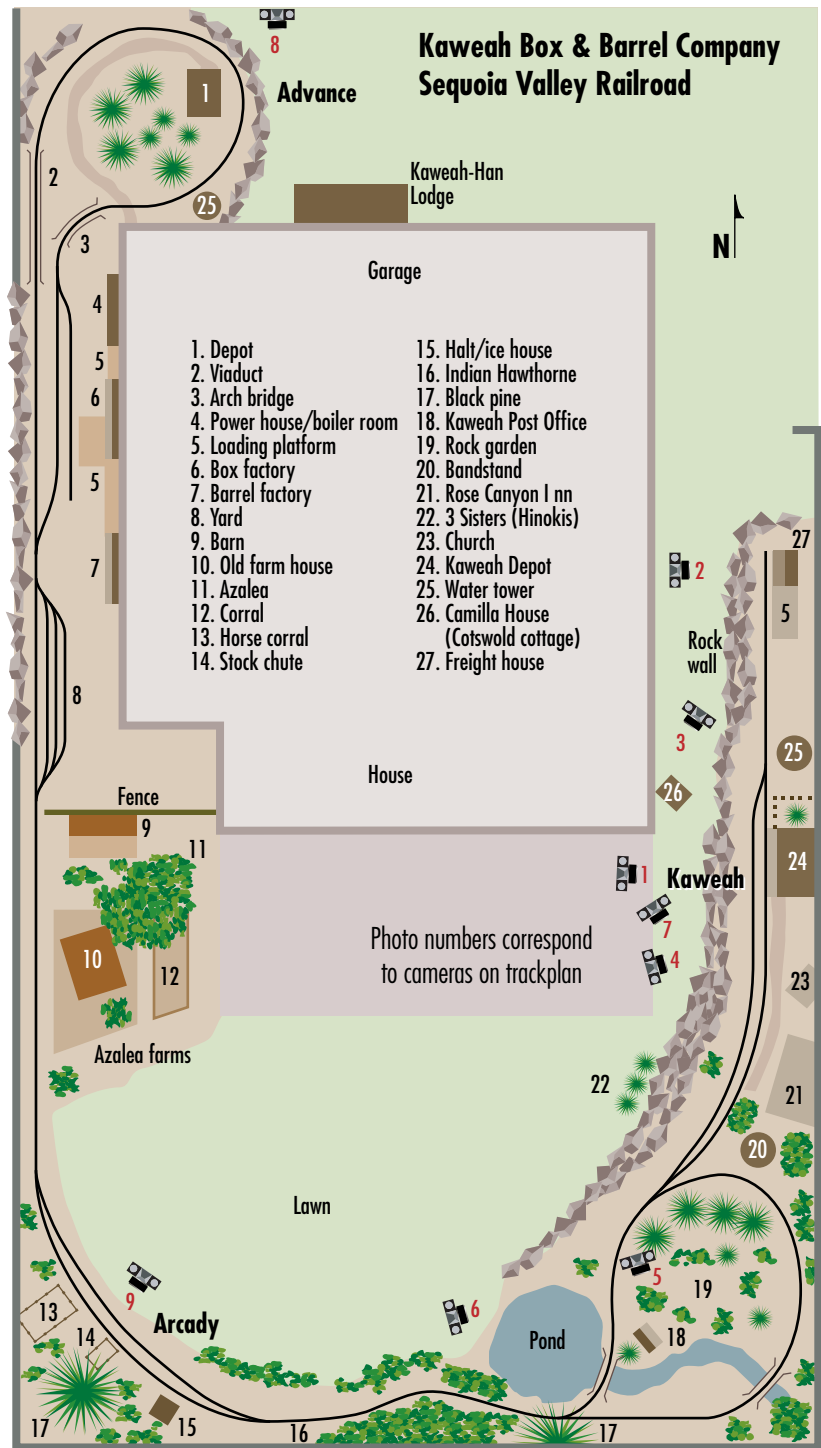
Minimum radius: 5'

Maximum grade: 2.5%

Control: Radio control, battery power, using Reed's R/C system, as well as straight battery power



5. A farmer awaits the postmistress at the Kaweah post office. The actual post office, built in 1910 for about \$15, is only 10' x 12' and is still in operation. The author measured and photographed it a few years ago, then built the model to 15mm scale.



realized that I'm a fourth generation Californian and needed to look in my own backyard. I began searching in earnest for a small, short-line railroad I could feel good about. My favorite has always been the Nevada County Narrow Gauge, but even that was too large. Then I discovered the Kaweah Colony's aborted line. Wow! This was something I could get my teeth into. I knew the area and had a

personal feeling for both the land and its people. My next epiphany was that I could incorporate regional history with family history and invent a railroad that could have (and should have) been.

The metamorphosis

The Sequoia Valley Railroad is a narrow-gauge short line owned by the Kaweah Box & Barrel Company. The box-and-barrel

company produces citrus boxes and oak barrels for the growers and wineries down in the Valley. After the demise of the Kaweah Colony, the story goes, my grandfather and his two brothers bought the land and formed the company with financial backing from their sisters, who had married into wealthy San Francisco families.

The Kaweah Box & Barrel Company has its own internal railroad to bring



6. An overview of Kaweah. The northbound train is heading to the mills at Advance. An interesting variety of dwarf and miniature plants, small-scale groundcovers and perennials with seasonal color enhance the railway's landscape while creating a beautiful garden for all to enjoy.



oak “bolts” and pine to the mills located at the town of Advance. Motive power consists of Porter 0-4-0s and 0-4-2s, plus a Lima three cylinder, two-truck Shay for mainline work. Rolling stock is made up of small, 20-foot bolt cars and a smattering of tank and supply cars, plus a small caboose.

In 1912, the company decided to expand. They felt that if they could form a common-carrier railroad, they could get their boxes and barrels to market more economically. Also, tourists could be transported to the hotel at Kaweah and the lodge at Advance. From there, stages would take them into Sequoia National Park. Other sources of revenue were quickly realized. There was livestock to be delivered. Milk, farm equipment, citrus produce, and supplies for the locals, as well as the hotel and lodge, were other revenue sources. The new railroad was named the Sequoia Valley Railroad, and would connect with the Visalia Electric Railroad at either Lemon Cove or Woodlake. After negotiating with the Southern Pacific and promising not to expand any further, the operation was a go.

The present

My wife Laura and I now live in San Diego, but I have tried to recreate a feeling of the back country of my native Tulare County as both how I remember it from my childhood and the way it was in the early 20th Century.

Our garden line is built to 15mm scale (1:20.3). All motive power has either been modified to, or purchased in, that scale. I have scratchbuilt all but two of the buildings and other structures, as well as all but two pieces of rolling stock. The structures are all based on actual historical buildings and bridges that fit into the scheme of our railroad. For example, the depot at Kaweah is a scale model of the Sierra Railroad’s Sonora Depot. The Rose Canyon Inn was modeled after Hotel Marre on the Pacific Coast Railway.

The Kaweah post office is still there. A few years ago we went there and measured and photographed it. It now sits in its rightful place in our garden. In 2004, the San Diego Garden Railway Society hosted the Western Regional meet. A couple of visitors came up to me and said, “We know that post office.” They, too,



7. Some luckless tourist got their Model T touring car stuck on the track during some switching operations in front of the Rose Canyon Inn. The local agent is pretty disgusted as Doc Rey, the local veterinarian, looks on. The small-scale backdrop is supplied by a “wall” of creeping fig (*Ficus repens*).



8. An overview of Advance. The Kaweah-Han Lodge is on the left. It's a demi-building made of carved Precision Board. The roof is covered with split cedar shingles fastened with Marine Goop.



9. The stock pen at Arcady, halfway between Kaweah and Advance. That Hereford bull got ahead of the loaders. That cowboy sleeping on the stockcar must have left the gate open. Stockcar N° 81 was built from SP narrow-gauge plans.

were transplanted Tulare County natives. Our latest addition is the Kaweah-Han Lodge at Advance. The prototype is located near Mineral King in the southern part of Sequoia National Park at about 7,000 feet. I transferred it down the mountain to give tourists a stop-over place before they continue up the Old Colony Road into the Giant Forest.

More structures

As mentioned previously, we have tried to use structures that anchor our railroad to a specific locale and time period. However, there are a few exceptions. I built a typical British Cotswold-style cottage to honor our closest friends and mentors, Patricia and Frank Curtis, UK natives. This house is built off the railroad in

order to give the feeling of expansion. Laura is a native of Wisconsin. She once found a birdhouse she wanted to include on the railroad. Coincidentally, it looks like a typical Wisconsin ice house. It has become the station stop at Arcady, where Miss Penelope Throckmorton is perpetually awaiting the next train.

I have never liked the look of trestles,

Plants on the Sequoia RR

San Diego, California
USDA Hardiness Zone 10

CONIFERS

Gold thread cypress

Chamaecyparis pisifera
'Mops'

Dwarf false cypress varieties

Chamaecyparis pisifera
'Boulevard', 'Himuro',
'Tsukumo'

Dwarf hinoki cypress

Chamaecyparis obtusa
'Nana Gracilis'

Dwarf Atlantic white cedars

Chamaecyparis thyoides
'Red Star', 'Top Point'

Dwarf Japanese garden juniper

Juniperus procumbens
'Nana'

Dawn redwood

Metasequoia
glyptostroboides

Dwarf Alberta spruce

Picea glauca 'Conica'

Japanese black pine

Pinus thunbergii

PERENNIALS, GROUND COVERS AND ANNUAL FLOWERS

Chocolate Chip bugleweed

Ajuga 'Chocolate Chip'

Summer forget-me-not

Anchusa capensis 'Blue
Angel'

Million Bells

Calibrachoa (several
varieties)

Dwarf Mexican false heather

Cuphea 'La Chiquita'

Silver carpet daisy

Dymondia margaretae

Creeping fig

Ficus repens

Green carpet

Herniaria glabra

Blue star creeper

Isotoma fluviatilis

Miniature brass buttons

Leptinella gruveri

Pratt's Black brass buttons

Leptimella x 'Pratt's
Black'

Creeping lithodora

Lithodora diffusa 'Grace
Ward'

Blue lobelia

Lobelia 'Crystal Palace'

Dwarf pennyroyal

Mentha pulegium

Corsican mint

Mentha requienii

Shrub rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis

Creeping rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis
'Prostratus'

Irish, Scotch moss

Sagina subulata, *S.s.*
'Aurea'

Bluemoss stonecrop

Sedum hispanicum
'Minus'

Trailing Irish moss

Selaginella kraussiana

Baby tears

Soleirolia soleirolii

Creeping thymes, many varieties

Thymus spp.

Georgia Blue creeping veronica

Veronica peduncularis
'Georgia Blue'

Waterperry Blue creeping veronica

Veronica x 'Waterperry
Blue'

SMALL SHRUBS & TREES

Dwarf Japanese maple

Acer palmatum

Dwarf barberry

Berberis stenophylla
'Nana Compacta'

Green Mountain boxwood

Buxus x 'Green
Mountain'

Christmas bells heather

Erica canaliculata

Teenie Genie miniature

brush cherry
Eugenia myrtifolia
'Nanum'

Stokes Dwarf yaupon holly

Ilex vomitoria 'Stokes
Dwarf'

Dwarf New Zealand tea tree

Leptospermum scoparium
'Nanum Rubrum'

Fernleaf heavenly bamboo

Nandina domestica
'Filamentosa'

Dwarf pomegranate

Punica granatum
'Emperor'

Red Elf pyracantha

Pyracantha x 'Monelf'

Micro miniature roses

Rosa 'Hi', 'Si', 'Tom
Thumb', and 'Trinket'

Miniature white snowrose

Serissa foetida 'Kyoto'

Tree of a thousand stars

Serissa japonica

Cedar elm

Ulmus crassifolia

Corkbark elm

Ulmus parvifolia
'Corticosa'



About the author

Tom Rey and his wife Laura live in the Clairemont area of San Diego. Both are retired, Tom from the San Diego Police Department and Laura from University of California, San Diego. Tom has been the president of the San Diego Garden Railway Society since 1999.

so our bridges are either of the stone arch or viaduct type. I picked up a rock at Kaweah a few years ago and have used its colors as a basis for our bridges. Even the three-arch viaduct south of Advance is patterned after one that spanned Marble Creek on the General's Highway within the borders of Sequoia National Park.

The garden

Our railroad is primarily a garden railroad. Yes, there are commercial

customers along the railroad's right-of-way, but it is still a railway in a garden. When I first got into this hobby, Laura was the gardener and I was the train nut and building aficionado. But a funny thing happened along the way. Laura now has her own trains and has become something of a fanatic on the use of battery power. I, on the other hand, do most of the railroad gardening. I think this is one of the things that makes this such a wonderfully magical hobby.

I have been extremely fortunate to have met and followed the gardening advice of fellow San Diego Garden Railway Society members, Patricia Curtis and Tanya Rose. I actually listened to them and soon took botanical names to heart. The outcome has been a garden that is a cross between an English garden and a representation of the wild back country of the Sierra foothills.

The future

As per the agreement with the shareholders and the mighty Southern Pacific, the railroad has probably reached its furthest extent (unless new oak groves are discovered, of course). However, there are always new additions to be fitted in. Presently, the box factory and barrel mill are being constructed and a new produce warehouse is being built at Arcady. In the meantime, there are new plantings to be discovered or replaced, as well as the day-to-day maintenance chores that keep the railroad running. **II**