

RIDING THE VIRGINIA AND TRUCKEE RAILROAD

by
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In September 2014, I had traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada for some re-certification training. Mary Ann, my wife, tagged along with me to keep me out of trouble. We added some extra days to our stay do some sightseeing. This included a three day trip north to Virginia City, Nevada to ride the V&T.

The original V&T opened in 1870 and from then until 1950 its train's moved raw silver ore from Virginia City, Nevada, to Carson City, Nevada, for refining. When the mines played out the railroad closed and its track was taken up and its equipment sold. Then in 1972, Robert C. Gray, laid a mile of track on the former V&T right of way from Virginia City to the collapsed Tunnel #4. This track was later extended to Gold Hill, Nevada, located 3 miles west of Virginia City. In 2009, the track was extended from Gold Hill west to Eastgate Station, 14.1 miles from Virginia City. Plans to extend the line from Eastgate Station to Carson City, a distance of 7 miles, and a connection with the Nevada Railroad Museum have been derailed by the lack of money.

At present V&T operates two different rail excursions. Daily V&T using D-1, an ex U.S. Army, #1694, 1953 built GE 80 ton diesel locomotive, offers passenger service between Virginia City and Gold Hill. While on Saturday and Sunday V&T, using ex-McCloud River Railroad No. 18, a Baldwin 2-8-2 built in October 1914, offers rides between its Eastgate Station and Virginia City. Locomotive #18 is still in its McCloud River paint. The railfans amongst the passengers were allowed to feely move around the Eastgate Station track taking photos of #18 being coupled to her train.

The 14 mile ride, 45 minute ride, from Eastgate Station to Virginia City is via a 2.2 percent continues grade. For the best view as the train climbs for Virginia City one should be seated on the right hand side. During the trip up and back we were treated to a nice narrative concerning sites we were passing and wildlife encountered. Unfortunately one cannot open the window or stand in the vestibule to shoot a photo of the steam locomotive as she rounds a curve.

Upon reaching Virginia City we had a three hour layover to visit the historical town. It is here V&T has their shops and yard but it was closed for visiting. Virginia City lived up to its reputation. There was a biker convention going on. Even though it was 40 degrees, the wind was blowing, and rain falling we were treated to ladies in summer time outfits riding behind their man. I will not mention the number of occasions a LADY flashed me, none of whom, as I told Mary Ann, were as pretty as she. The bars were doing a great business, with crowds flowing out from the bars onto the sidewalk; it was just like a movie Wild West town.

On returning to the train for our ride back to Eastgate Station I found that while the locomotive had run around the train it had not been turned. We would return to Eastgate Station with #18 running tender forward. V&T's diesel locomotive, D-1, which left Virginia City after we arrived was now setting trackside. I was told she would pull for another trip to Gold Hill after we left for Eastgate Station. Our ride back to Eastgate Station was accompanied with narrations

that differed from the ride up. At Mary Ann's encouragement I passed on purchasing a souvenir baseball hat during our ride down the hill.

We both enjoyed our train ride to Virginia City, but there is not enough time to see everything in a 3-hour layover. Fortunately we had spent a day in Virginia City a few years earlier, so we spent our 3-hour layover enjoying the street activities.



McCloud River #18 sitting at ease at Eastgate Station



McCloud #18 backing up for a couple with its train.



McCloud #18 coupling up to her three car train



A view back down the grade at Gold Hill.



Arriving at Virginia City.



Preparing for the parade down Virginia City's main drag.



D-1 resting at Virginia City before her run to Gold Hill.



McCloud Railroad #118 coupled to the train for our return journey back to Eastside Station.