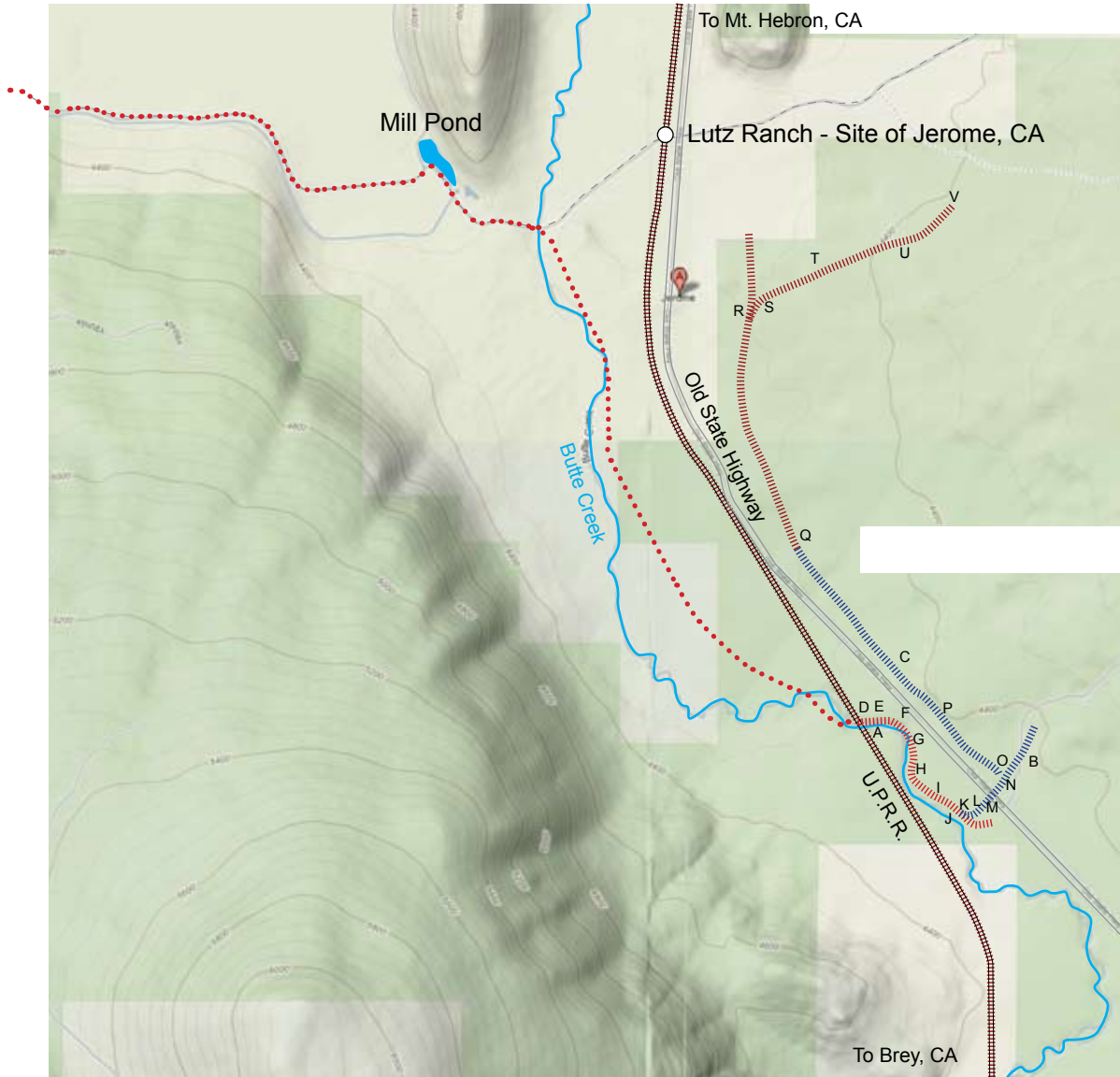






Johnson & Pollock Lumber Company

Jerome, California
36" gauge logging railroad
Eastern extension
circa 1914-1918

*Written, photographed and
illustrated by Scott Gavin © 2010*



-  Unexplored grade visible on Google Maps satellite photography
-  Grade located 2006 by Jack and Marlene Bowden
-  Grade located 2006, 2007 by Jack Bowden and Scott Gavin
-  Grade located 2010 by Scott Gavin and Clive Ellis
- x = Photo locations

A brief history of Johnson & Pollock Lumber Co.

In the spring of 1912, the Johnson & Pollock Lbr. Co. built a sawmill along Butte Creek, south of the town of Mt. Hebron, near the foot of Mount Hebron and Jerome Butte. The company harvested pine logs along the base of Mount Hebron in 1912-1913, using steam traction engines to haul the logs to the mill and sawn lumber to the nearby Southern Pacific railroad at Jerome, California. The steam tractors were satisfactory on the flat ground at the base of the mountain but were impractical for reaching timber up on the mountainside.

In 1913 or 1914, the Johnson & Pollock Lumber Company began construction of a narrow gauge logging railroad, running westward from the sawmill and up the slope of Mount Hebron into a box canyon¹. When Highway 97 was later built over Mount Hebron summit, replacing the old gravel highway between Mt. Hebron city and the town of Bray, the highway was built right up the logging railroad route. Portions of the railroad grade may be seen on both sides of the highway as it begins the climb up Mount Hebron.

1. Rails in the Shadow of Mt. Shasta, John Signor, Howell-North Books, 1981 and Southern Pacific's Shasta Division, John Signor, Signature Press, 2000.



Photo A: Jack Bowden at the Southern Pacific bridge across Butte Creek. The J & P logging railroad passed under this bridge on the far bank. Dashed line indicates railroad grade. February, 2006



Panoramic mosaic of the eastern approach to the Johnson & Pollock Lumber Co./Southern Pacific underpass at Butte Creek. February 2006. High water has partially flooded the railroad grade in the foreground. Dashed line indicates the location of the railroad grade. Photos by the author.



*Shay locomotive No. 154, abandoned in the woods near Jerome.
Photo: www.shaylocomotives.com*

The Johnson & Pollock Lumber Co. acquired a narrow-gauge Shay locomotive for use on their railroad. This locomotive was an early Shay, builder's number 154, constructed in 1886 for the Mason & Oceana Railroad in Michigan. The locomotive was sold to the Brookings Lumber Co. in Fredalba, California in 1900. This company moved its operations to the southern Oregon coast in 1913, to a town it established and named "Brookings". Shay No. 154 was sold to the Johnson & Pollock lumber company in 1913.

The gauge of this locomotive is in question. Records of the Lima locomotive works list the engine as being built to 36" gauge. Various sources claim that the Shay was regauged to 30" when it was sold to the Johnson & Pollock Lumber Co. while other sources claim that it was never regauged. In 2006 and 2010, this author measured spike holes on surviving ties found along the Johnson and Pollock railroad and was able to establish the gauge of the railroad as 36".



Photo B (above) and Photo C (left): Surviving railroad ties with spikes and spike holes allowed the gauge of the line to be established at 36" between the rails. Photo B: April, 1010, Photo C: June, 2006 by the author.



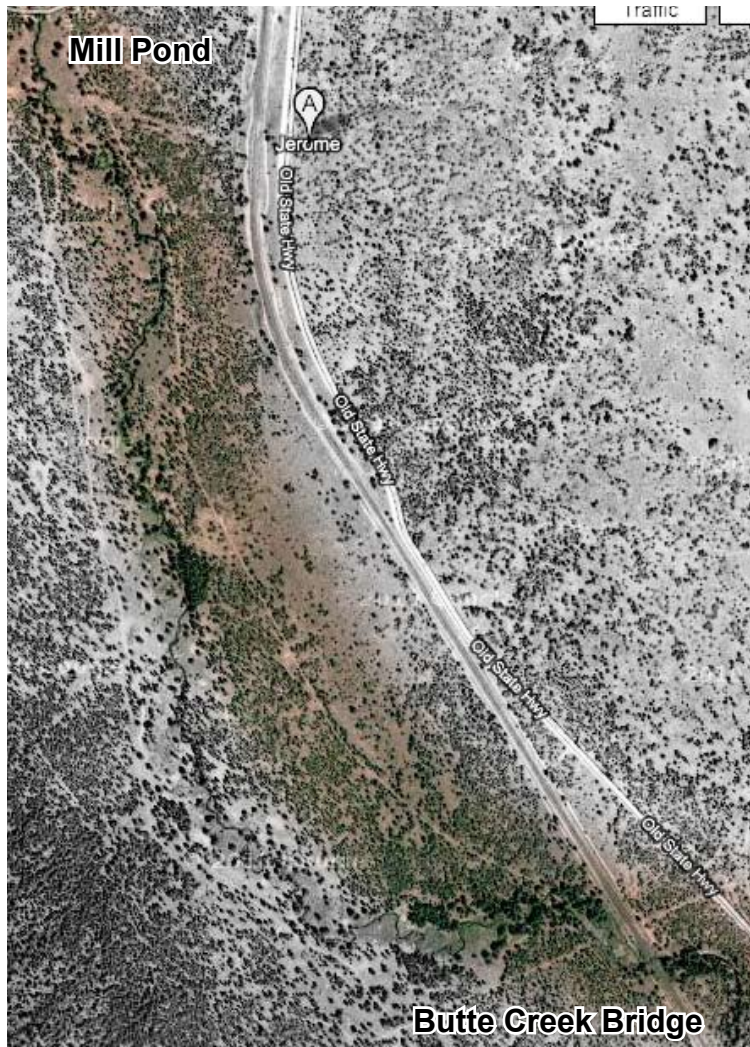
Jack Bowden at Southern Pacific Butte Creek Bridge, February 11, 2006. Photo by author. Dashed line indicates location of railroad grade.

2. <http://www.shaylocomotives.com/data/owner/own-j.htm>



Shay locomotive No. 154, identified as on the Johnson & Pollock logging line. However, there are no known switchbacks on the Johnson & Pollock railroad, so this was probably taken on the Mt. Hebron Lumber Co. railroad on the side of Ball Mountain. Photo: California State Library

However, to confuse the issue, the Shay locomotive was later used on the nearby Mt. Hebron Lumber Co. railroad on Ball Mountain. Examination of surviving ties on the Ball Mountain railroad established the gauge of that line at 30". All sources seem to agree that the Mt. Hebron Lumber Co. not only used the Johnson & Pollock Shay, but the Johnson & Pollock's small fleet of logging flat cars as well. Why the Mount Hebron Lumber Co. would have reduced the gauge of the Shay and the flatcars by six inches remains a mystery.



This unexplored portion of the Johnson & Pollock logging railroad between the sawmill pond and the crossing at Butte Creek is clearly visible on Google Map's satellite images. www.Google.com.



Photo D. The Johnson & Pollock railroad grade begins to climb out of the canyon along Butte Creek after crossing under the Southern Pacific tracks. Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo February 11, 2006 by the author.

In 2005, railroad author Jack Bowden and this author explored the Johnson & Pollock westward grade along the side of Mt. Hebron. Aside from the grading itself, little evidence of this branch of the railroad remains, though the portion of the grade from Highway 97 to the mill site was not examined as this part of the grade is located on private property. It is likely that this entire branch of the railroad was removed when the lumber company built a second logging railroad branch eastward from Jerome.



Photo E. The Johnson & Pollock railroad grade along Butte Creek. Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo July 7, 2007 by the author.



Photo F. The railroad grade along Butte Creek. Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo July 7, 2007 by the author.

In 1914 the Johnson & Pollock Lumber Company requested permission to cross the Southern Pacific railroad at Jerome, California using an overpass. Permission was denied, which has led several railroad historians to assume that the eastward extension of the Johnson & Pollock railroad was never built. However, in early 2000 railroad author Jack Bowden and his wife Marlene located portions of the eastward extension of the Johnson & Pollock line, where the logging railroad crossed under the Southern Pacific's bridge over Butte Creek, about a mile south of Jerome. After crossing under the Southern Pacific railroad, the Johnson & Pollock line followed Butte Creek southward, gradually climbing out of the creek bed.



Photo G. The railroad grade along Butte Creek. Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo July 7, 2007 by the author.



Photo H. The railroad grade climbing out of the gully along Butte Creek. Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo July 7, 2007 by the author.



Photo I. The railroad grade approaching the fence line near the first junction. Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo July 7, 2007 by the author.

Upon leaving the canyon, the railroad forked, with the east branch heading due east across what is now the Old State Highway. The south fork continued a short distance, ending in a small clearing just north of a meadow, possibly the site of a logging camp or log loading spur.



Photo J. Fence line across railroad grade near first junction. Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo July 7, 2007 by the author.



Photo K. The first junction on the Johnson & Pollock railroad. The left fork crosses the Old State Highway and continues northward to the end of track. The right fork continues southward and then turns eastward, ending in a small clearing near the edge of a meadow (see map insert, right - www.google.com). Dashed line indicates location of grade. Photo July 7, 2007 by the author.



Photo L. Johnson & Pollock railroad turning eastward towards the Old State Highway. Photo April 18, 2010 by the author.





Photo M. Railroad grade approaching Old State Highway. Dotted line marks location of the road. Photo April 18, 2010 by the author.

After crossing the Old State Highway, the railroad turned northward. There was another spur continuing a short distance eastward across this meadow. A few old cans with solder holes, which date around the time of Johnson & Pollock operations, are scattered through this area, indicating the possible site of a logging camp.



Photo N. Railroad grade turning northward after crossing the Old State Highway. Photo June 11, 2006 by the author.



Photo O (above). Railroad grade turning northward after crossing the Old State Highway, June 6, 2006. Photo P (right) Grade crossing under power line. Photo April 18, 2010 by the author.

After crossing today's Old State Highway, the railroad turned northward, paralleling the road. Directly east of Jerome, the railroad forked once again and continued eastward up a gradual slope to a low saddle overlooking Butte Valley, where the railroad ended.

In 1918, the Johnson and Pollock mill burned down and the company ceased operations at Jerome. The locomotive and logging flatcars were abandoned at Jerome and were acquired by the Mt. Hebron Lumber Co. in the spring of 1918. After the Mt. Hebron Lumber Co. ceased operations in 1928, the old Shay was abandoned either on Ball Mountain or at Jerome, where it remained until it was cut up for scrap in 1937.



Photo R. Long switch ties mark the location of the third junction on the Johnson & Pollock logging railroad. All other ties were only 5' long. Photos 4-18-2010 by author.



Photo Q. Johnson & Pollock railroad grade north of the power line is indistinct in many areas and was located only by the remains of railroad ties. Photos 4-18-2010 by author.



Photo S. View at third junction. Grade is very indistinct Dotted line indicates location of railroad grade. Photos 4-18-2010 by author.



Photo T. Johnson & Pollock railroad grade east of the third junction. Photo 4-18-2010 by author.

Jerome saw more activity when the Siskiyou Lumber Company began logging operations on Mount Hebron in 1924. This company built a logging railroad from the Southern Pacific tracks at Jerome that switch-backed up the side of Mt. Hebron, paralleling the original Johnson and Pollock Lumber Co.'s westward line. Some sources claim that the Johnson & Pollock locomotive and cars were used on the Siskiyou Lumber Company's railroad, but since the Siskiyou Lbr. Co.'s railroad was standard gauge, this seems unlikely. The photos showing the old Shay on a switchback and abandoned on the side of the mountain might have been taken on the Siskiyou Lumber Co. line if the Siskiyou Lbr. Co.'s railroad had been initially built as narrow gauge and was later widened to standard gauge.



Photo U. The railroad grade climbed a gradual slope east of the third junction. Photo 4-18-2010 by author.



Photo V. The Johnson & Pollock railroad grade ended in this low saddle. Photo 4-18-2010 by author.