

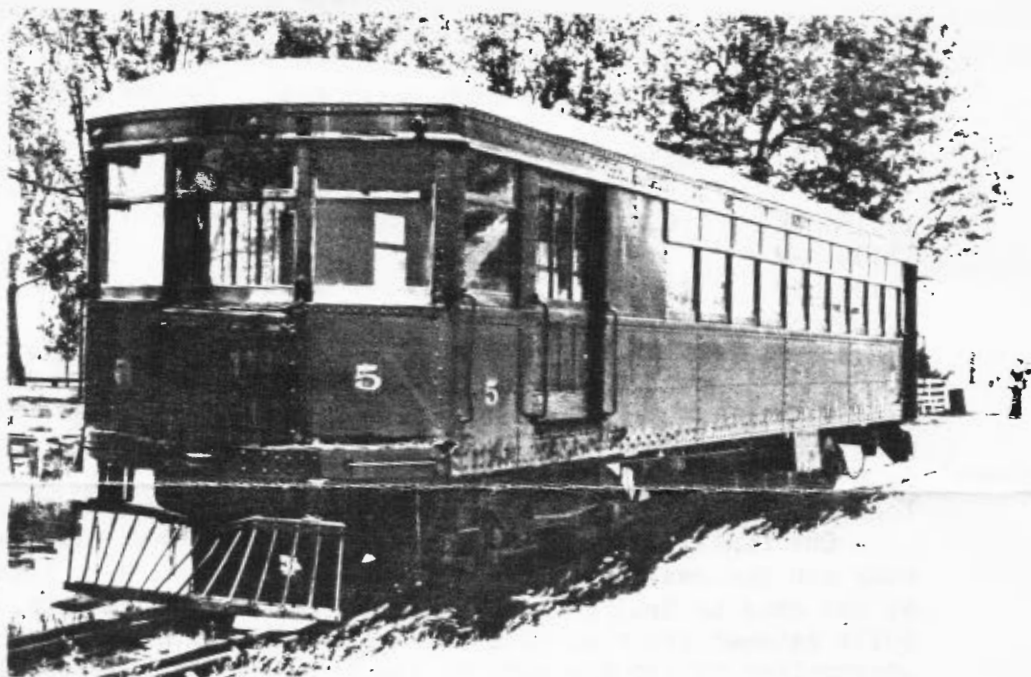
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NGLLMD-WR-TAMR



DVRR motor-car #5 sits on display at Laws, CA.

THE DEATH VALLEY RAILROAD COMPANY

By Ken Keels

The Death Valley Railroad had its beginnings about 1914 when it became apparent that the borax supply at the Lila C. Mine would be exhausted by 1913. A new mine, the Biddy McCarty Mine, was to be developed. Since the Borax Consolidated Ltd. owned the Pacific Coast Borax Co. and the Tonopah & Tidewater RR, the logical solution to transportation problems was to have the T&T build a 16 mile branch from the already existing Lila C. branch to connect the new mine.

Surveys were made and a 16.95 mile line from Horton (on the Lila C. branch) was laid out. The branch would be financed by the sale of \$364,000 worth additional bonds. Everything was set. The T&T filed an application with the California Railroad Commission to issue the bonds. The commission denied the T&T's application. The reason being: "The T&T's earning power was so poor that any additional bonds would create an undue financial burden on the road resulting in abnormally high rates to the shippers."

Another approach was taken. The Borax Consolidated Ltd. would form a new railroad company. Thus the Death Valley Railroad was incorporated in January, 1914. Construction began on March 1, 1914 at Horton and progressed westwardly. A third rail was laid from Horton to Death Valley Jct.

A second-hand narrow gauge Heisler named "Francis" served as initial power during construction. She was slow but fairly dependable. She came from the Borate & Daggett RR in Calico, CA. The B&D served another of PCBCo's mines. The DVRR purchased two new 2-8-0's from the Baldwin Locomotive Works to serve as power for the line.

On December 1, 1914, the road was formally opened to traffic. Track-age rights over the T&T from Death Valley Jct. to Horton (3.19 miles) were obtained. At Horton, the DVRR track diverged and headed to Ryan. The line encountered several high trestles and grades of up to 3.5% at the western end of the line. The sharpest curves encountered were 24°. By 1916, the T&T removed its standard gauge rails and sold that part of the property to the DVRR.

The DVRR was never a high speed road. Trains averaged 15 mph.

<u>No. 1</u>	<u>Miles</u>		
11:15 AM	0.0	D.V. Jct.	3:15 PM
11:30 AM	3.5	Horton	3:00 PM
12:30 PM	18.0	Colmanite	1:50 PM
12:40 PM	20.0	Ryan	1:40 PM

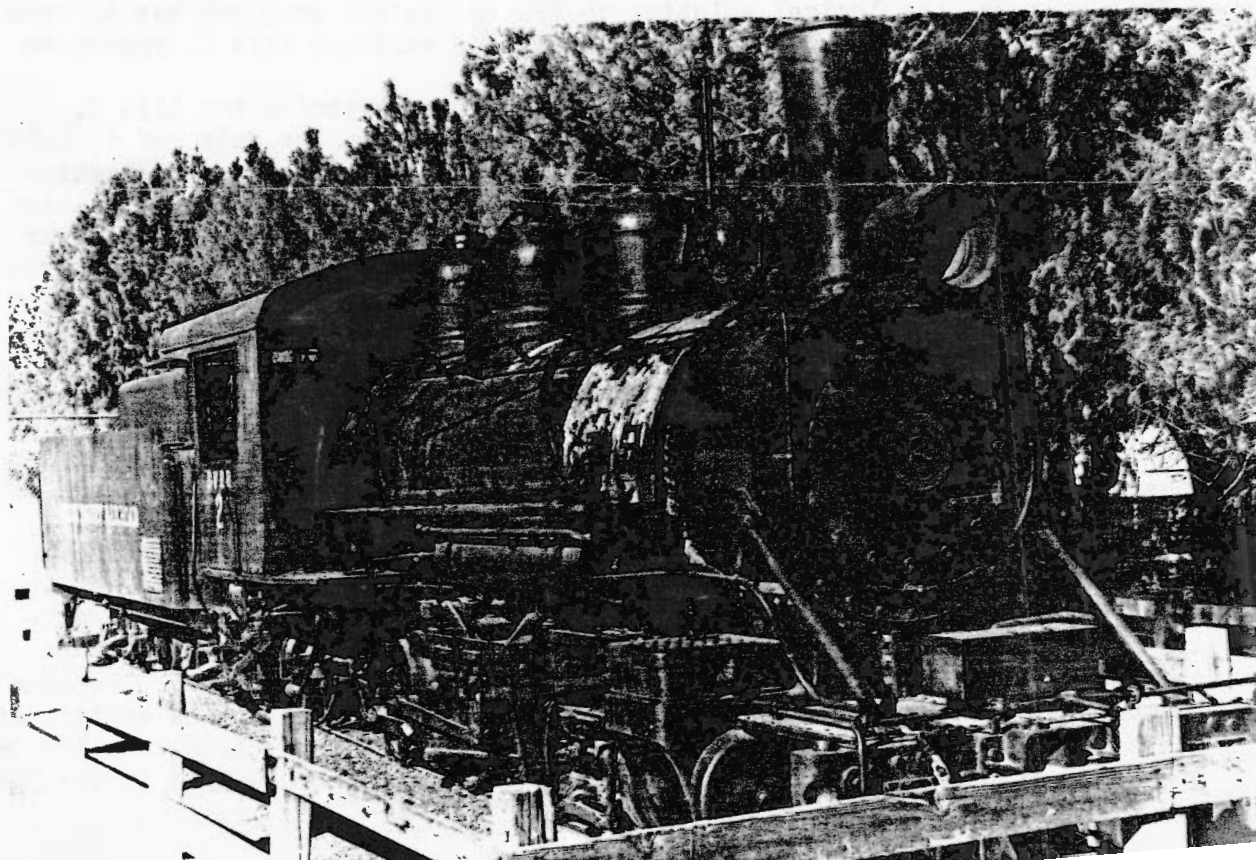
Many plans to expand the line came about. Some were carried out. A proposal to get rail service to the Widow Mine(4 miles down Furnace Creek Wash) never materialized. However, the Widow Mine did get its rail service in the form of a 2ft. gauge railroad— nicknamed the "Baby Gauge". Gasoline locomotives hauled little ore cars over the extensive "Baby Gauge" trackage.

One final expansion of the DVRR occurred when clay deposits were found near Ash Meadows, Nev. The clay was hauled by a Holt Tractor over 4 miles of bad road to Bradford on the T&T. Around 1926, a 3 ft. gauge railroad was built between the clay pits and Bradford Siding. Plymouth or Milwaukee gas locomotives pulled ore cars on the line. A 3rd rail was later added between Bradford Siding and Death Valley Jct. This enabled DVRR trains to go directly to the clay pits. No interchange was necessary over the new route.

Death came to the DVRR in 1927-28 when a new borax deposit was found near Boron, CA. In 1927-28 the general closing of the Ryan mines took place and the machinery was slowly moved to the new location.

The Pacific Coast Borax Company tried to develop Death Valley as a winter tourist resort. A new hotel, the Furnace Creek Inn, was built. Other hotels were located at Ryan and Death Valley Jct. Water was very scarce out there, water was brought in by railroad.

DVRR #2 on display at Furnace Creek, CA.



Death Valley Railroad

COLMANITE

TRESTLES

RYAN

WIDOW MINE

MOUNTAINS

DVRR

GREENWATER RANGE

BRADFORD SIDING

DEATH VALLEY JCT.

HORTON

DVRR-(T&T)

T&T (Also used by DVRR)

DVRR-T&T

T&T
LILA C. BRANCH

ASH MEADO

T&T

DEATH VALLEY RAILROAD COMPANY

<u>No.</u>	<u>Wheel Arang.</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Builders Number</u>	<u>Date Built</u>	<u>Drivers</u>	<u>Cylinders</u>	<u>Tractiv Effort</u>
1	2-8-0	Baldwin	41473	June 1914	42	18X20	120,000
2	2-8-0	Baldwin	42864	Feb. 1916	42	18X20	120,000
5		Brill	22499	1928	Rail Motor Car		
Francis#2	2T	Heisler	1026	Jan. 1899			70,000

#1 Purchased new from Baldwin in June 1914. Sold to U.S. Potash Co. in 1931. Now sitting in the Carlsbad City Park.

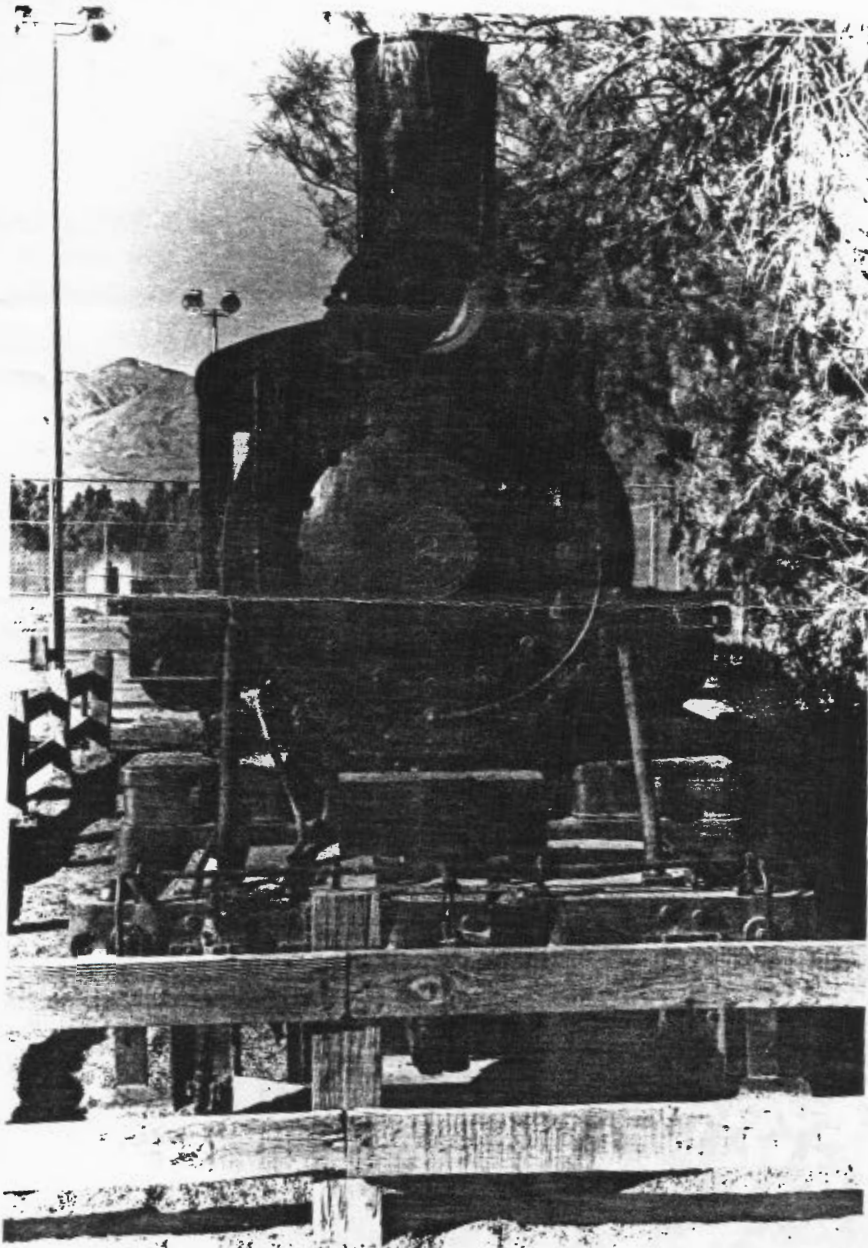
#2 Purchased new from Baldwin in Feburary 1916. Sold to U.S. Potash Co. in 1931. Returned to Death Valley in 1956, on display at the museum at the Furnace Creek Ranch.

#5 Purchased new from the J.G. Brill Co. in 1928, sold to U.S. Potash Co. in 1931. Now on display at the Laws Railroad Museum near Bishop, California.

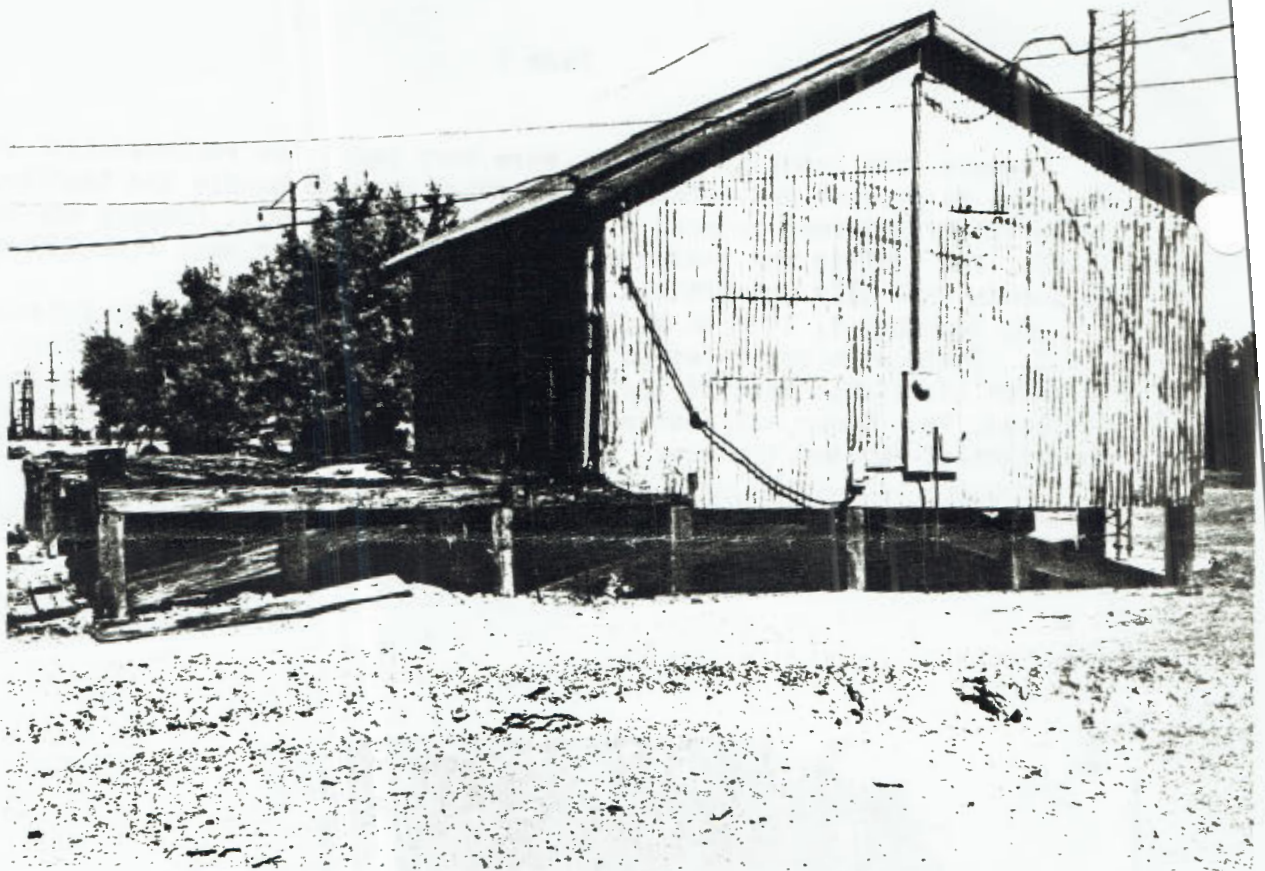
Francis Originally owned by Borate & Daggett Railroad. Used in 1914 to build the Death Valley Railroad. Never owned by DVRR. The B&D RR later sold it to the Nevada Short Line (#2), then Terry Lumber Co. at Round Mountain, California.

Because the roads in the area were very poor, the railroads(T&T and DVRR) expected to prosper and purchased new motor cars to handle the traffic. The Death Valley Railroad ordered a motor car from the Brill Company and numbered it #5. The traffic was scarce and insufficient. Ryan went from 150 people to become virtually uninhabited.

On December 1, 1930 an application to abandon the line was filed with the I.C.C. There were no protests; no one was left who cared. Operation ceased on March 15, 1931. Most of the equipment went to a Potash Mine railroad near Carlsbad, NM. Today all that remains of the DVRR is a few rusted spikes along the right-of-way and the scars the railroad left on the desert.



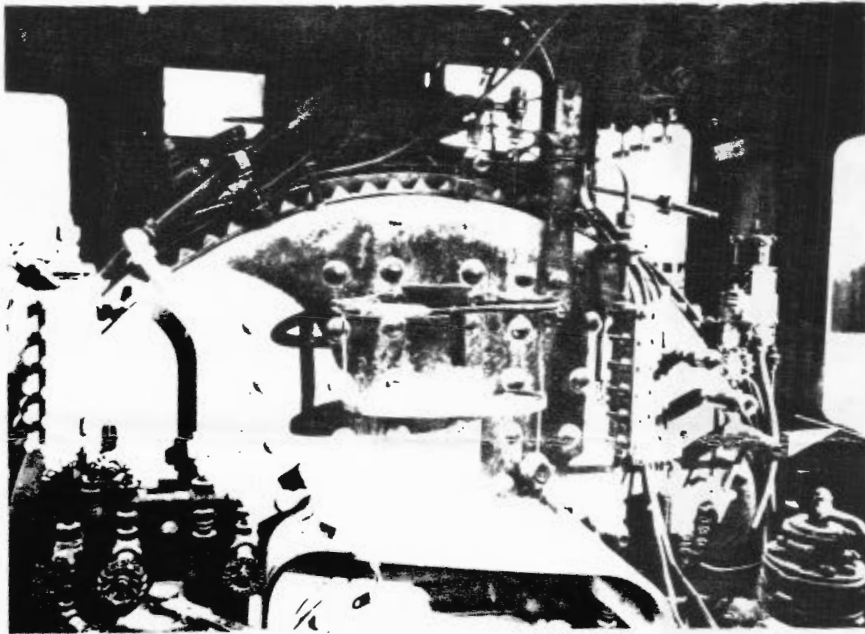
Front view of engine #2 at
Furnace Creek, CA.



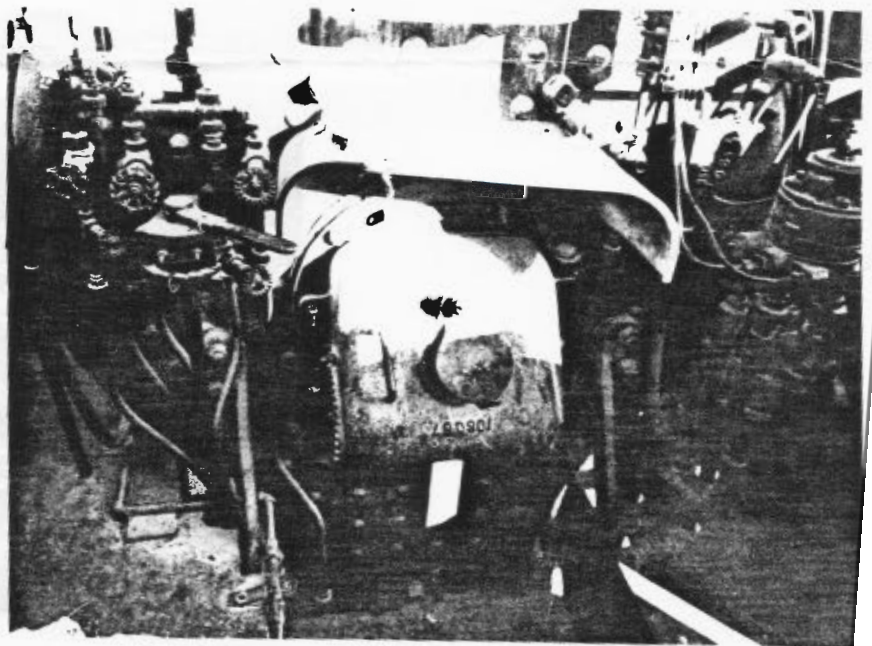
T&T freight house at Death Valley. T&T's tracks would be in the front of the platform and DV tracks would be behind the building.

DV RR grade, looking NE, about 2 miles before the first trestle.

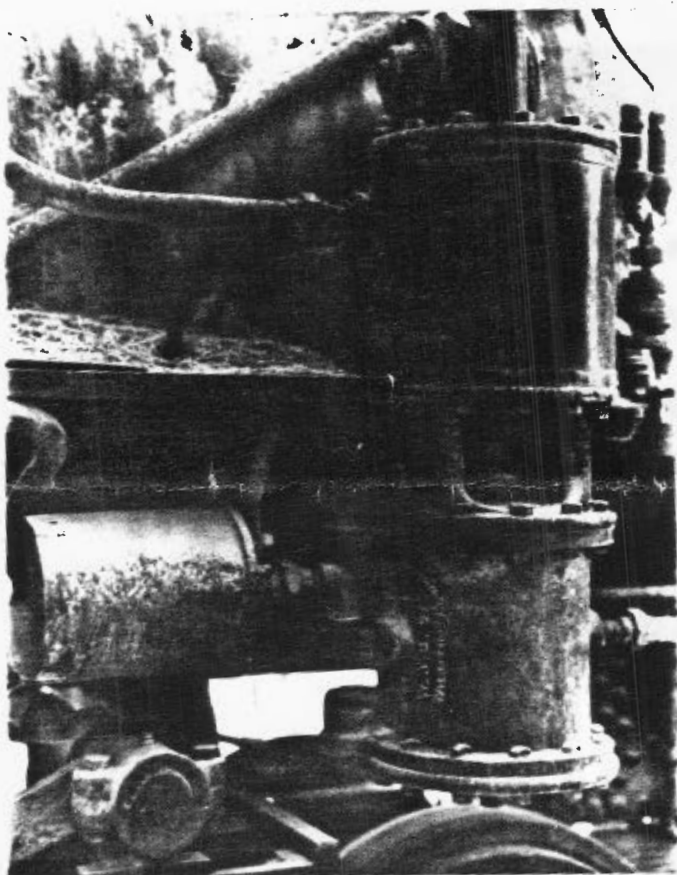




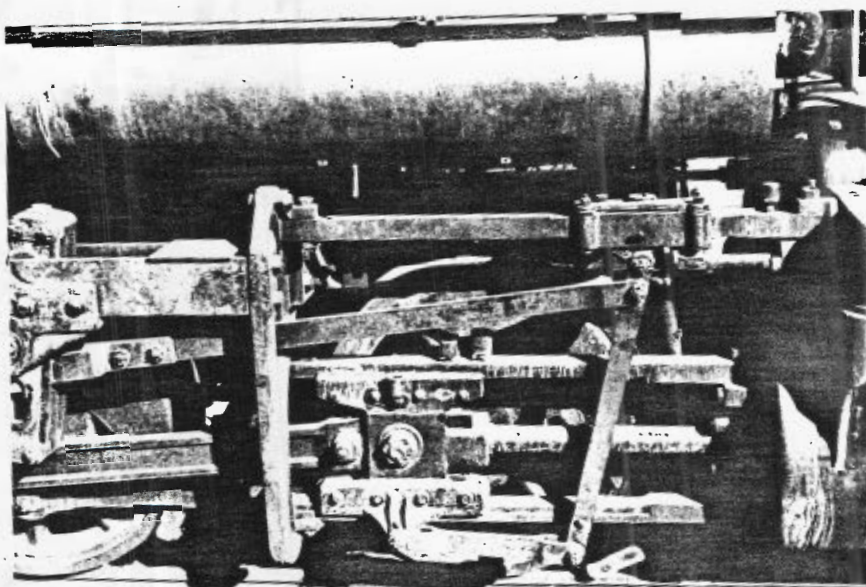
The upper portion of the boiler on loco. #2.



The lower portion of the boiler on loco. #2.



The air compressor on loco. #2 is located on the fireman's side of the engine.



Locomotive #2 shows off valve gear.