

Vasona Branch:

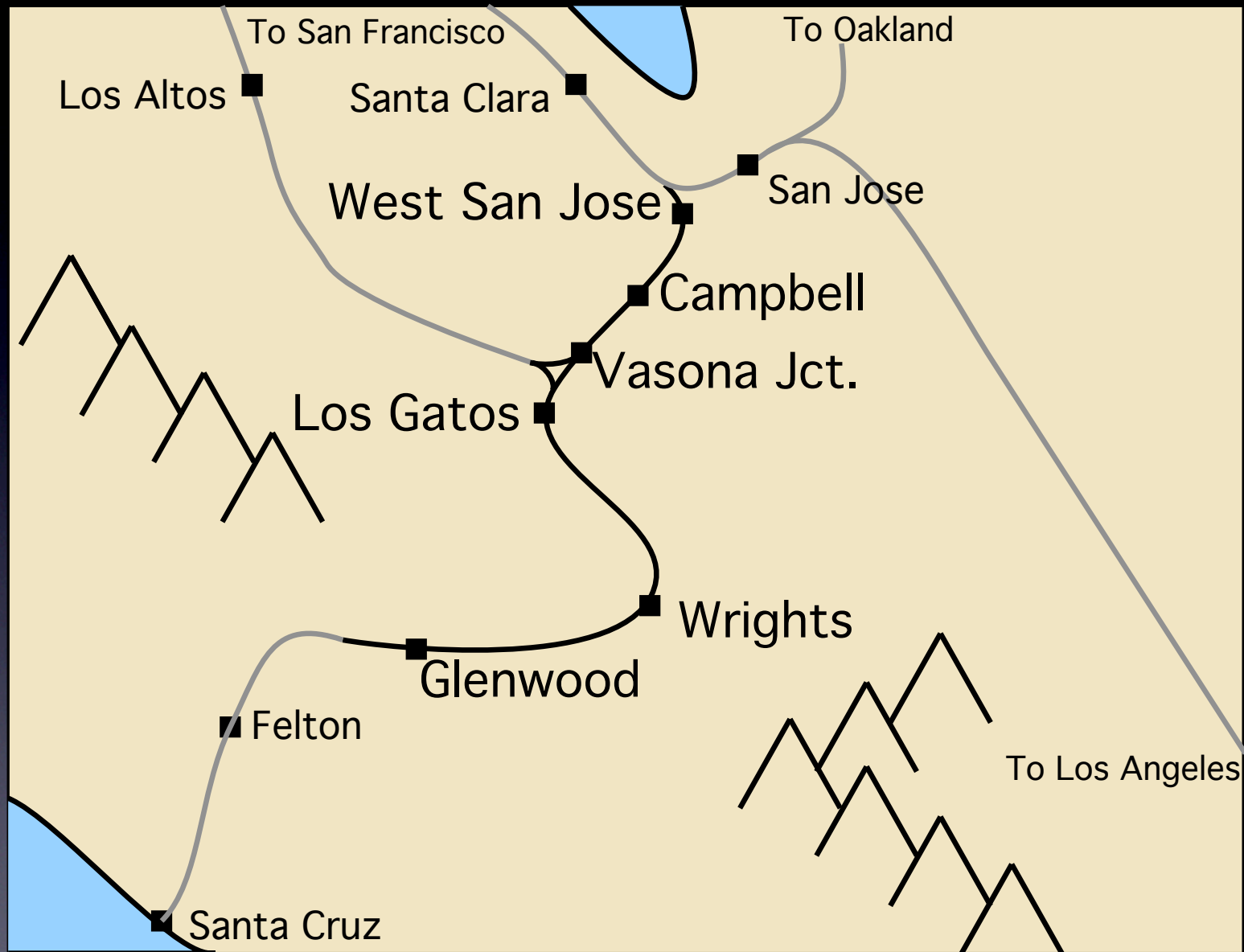
What went right?
What went wrong?

Robert Bowdidge

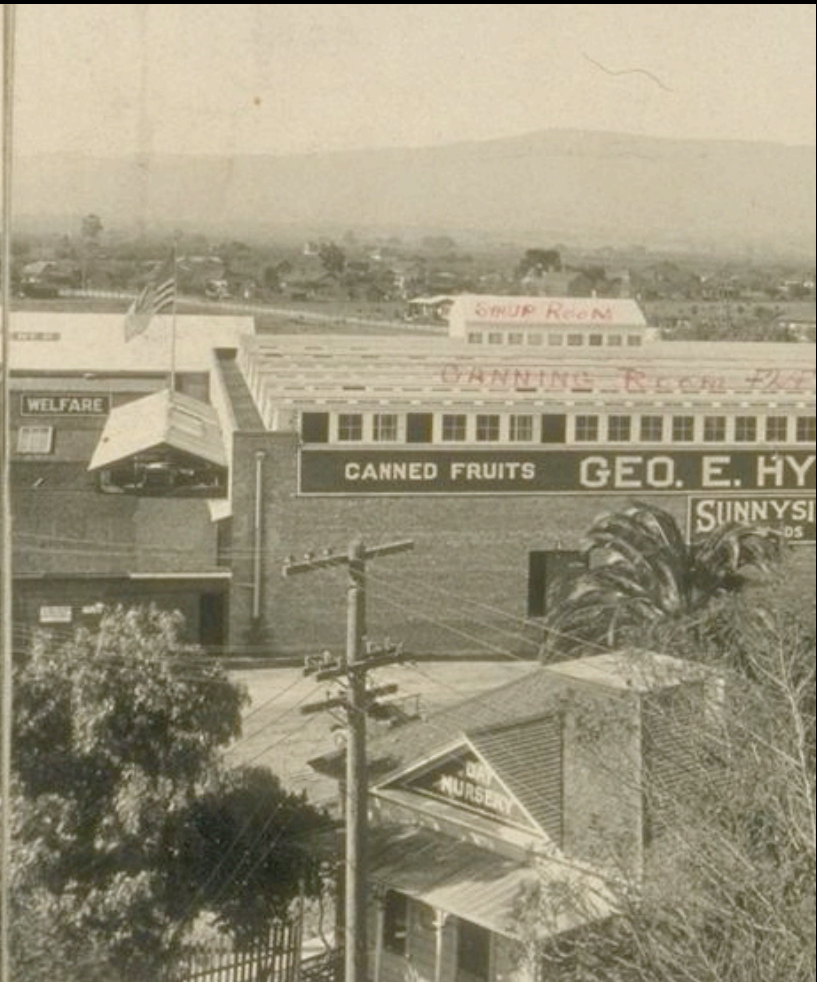
Vasona Branch: Summary

- HO double-deck, half-garage layout
- SP in Santa Clara Valley in 1930's















Givens and Druthers:



Crew size: 2-3

Minimum radius: 22"

Operating Priorities:

Local freight & passenger

Small town switching



Garage
Door

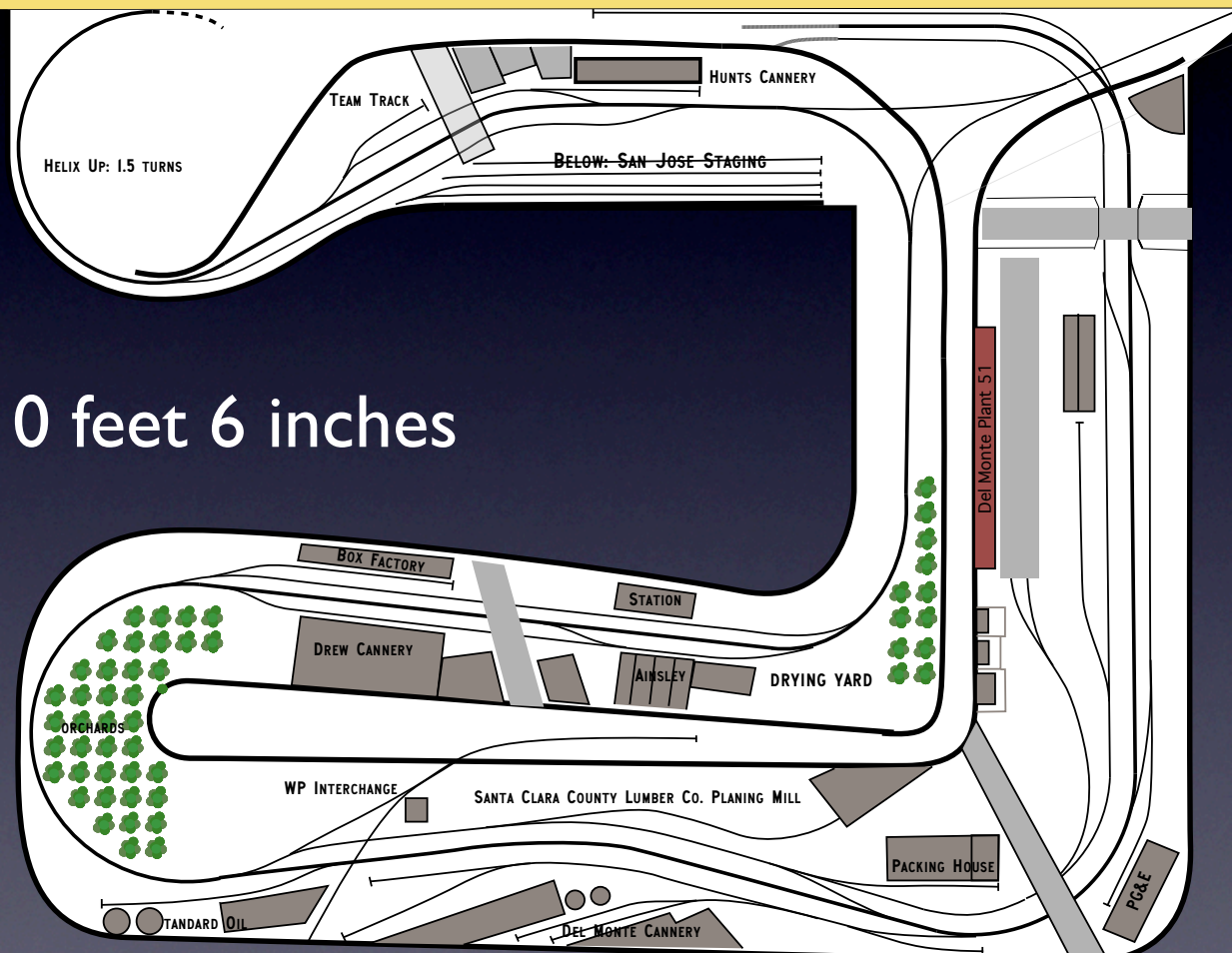
Furnace

Water
Heater

Work
Bench

10 feet 6 inches

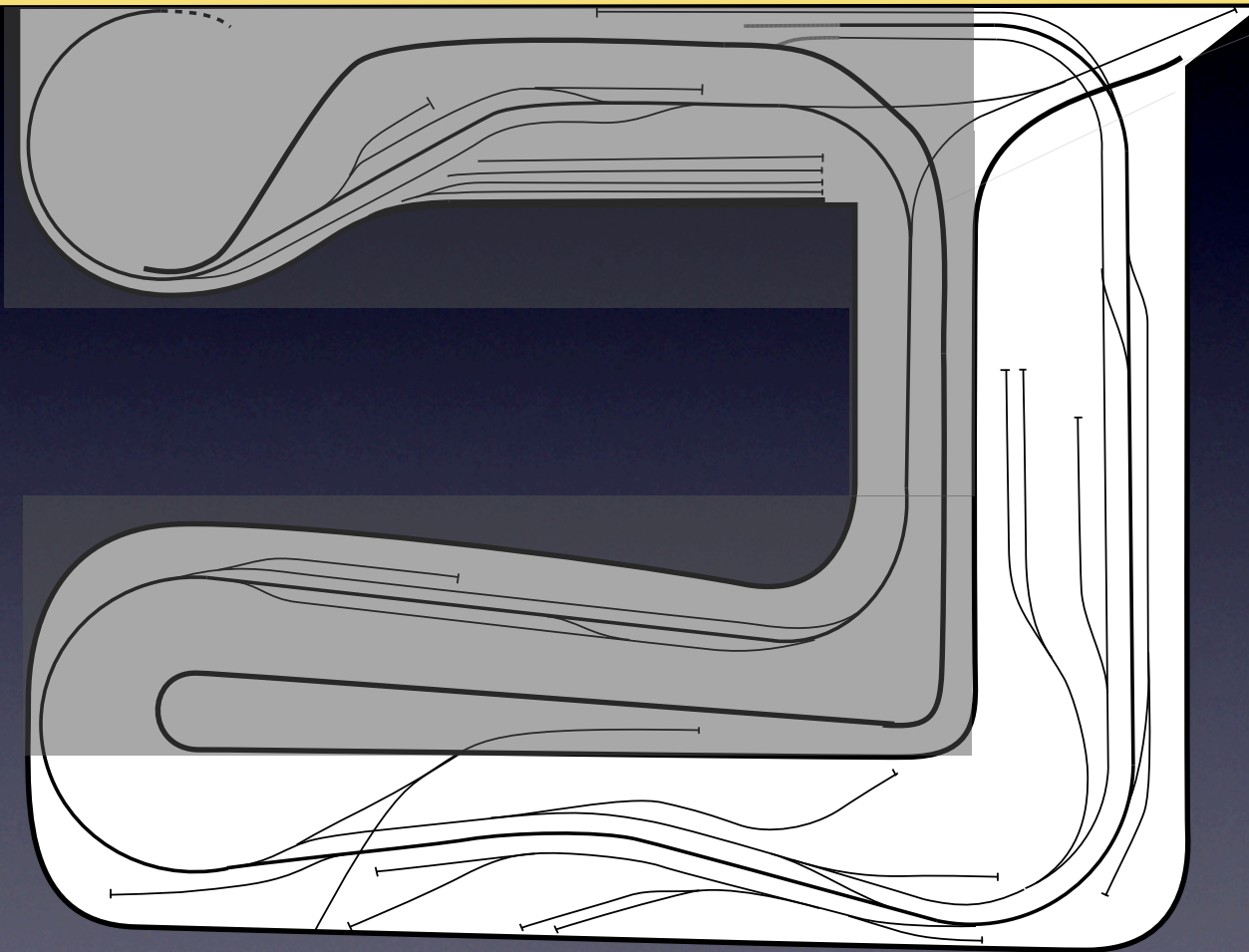
14 feet





The diagram illustrates a complex staging area with multiple lanes and paths. A large, light gray rectangular area is defined by a thick yellow border. Inside this area, a dark gray rectangular region is labeled "San Jose Staging". Above this label, a white rectangular box contains several horizontal lines, possibly representing a queue or a set of instructions. The diagram features numerous curved and straight lines, some with arrows, indicating the flow of traffic or movement within the staging area. The overall layout suggests a detailed plan for a large-scale event or operation.

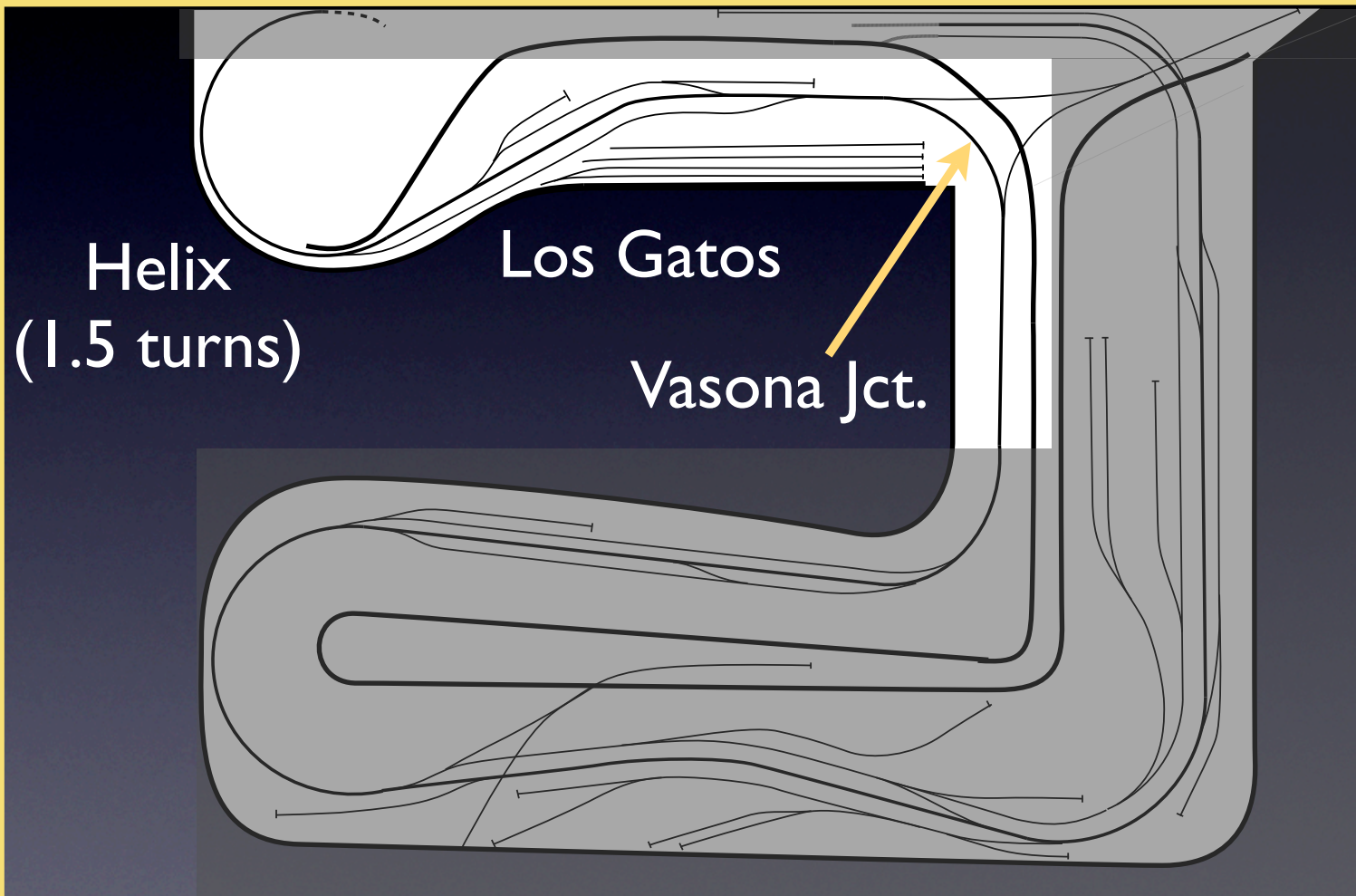
San Jose Staging



West San Jose



Campbell



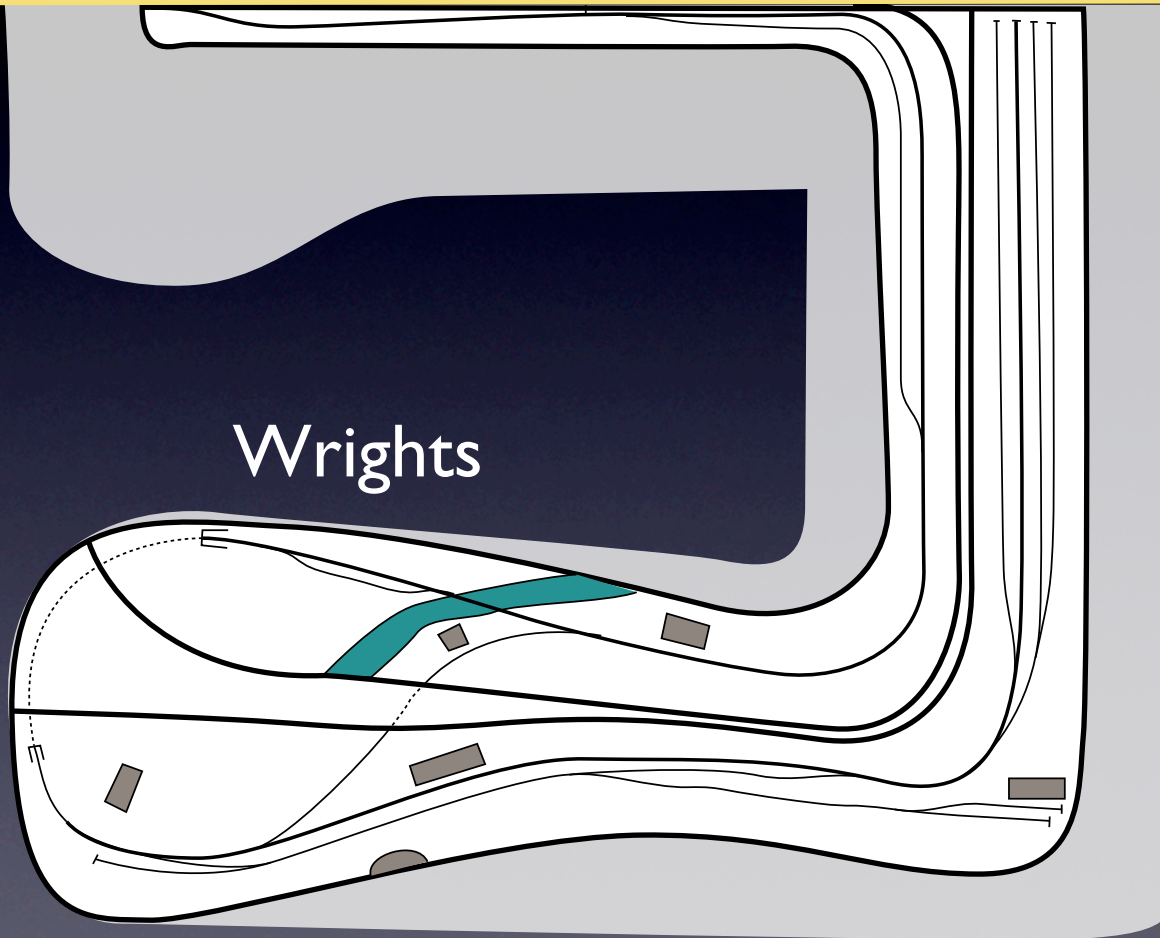
West San Jose

Alma

Santa Cruz
staging

Wrights

Glenwood



What Went Right?

- When do I start building?
- Leave out the yard
- A few big industries, not many small ones

When Do I Start Building?

- Too much uncertainty to start building
 - Is the plan perfect?
 - How to build the multiple decks?
 - What about lights, environment, storage?

This will not be my last layout.

It's a Five-Year Layout

- Decided against time-consuming room prep
- Built decks with assumption they'd work
- Various labor-saving tricks

Where Does the Yard Go?

- Layouts need a yard, right?
- Is it worth losing 1-2 towns?
- Couldn't reproduce actual yards
- Idea: treat like a shelf layout with staging only

Where Does the Yard Go?



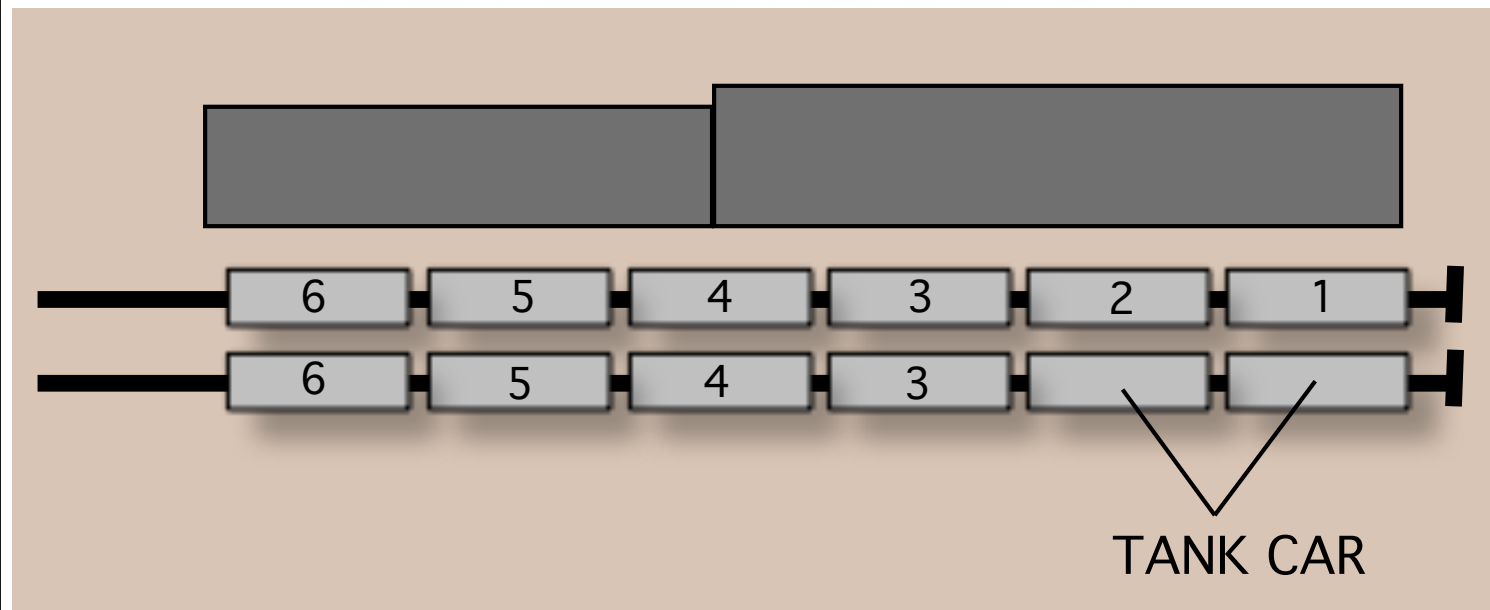
Make the Industries Big

- More complex switching
- Adds drama to operating session
- Subdivides a town into several areas





Del Monte PLANT 51

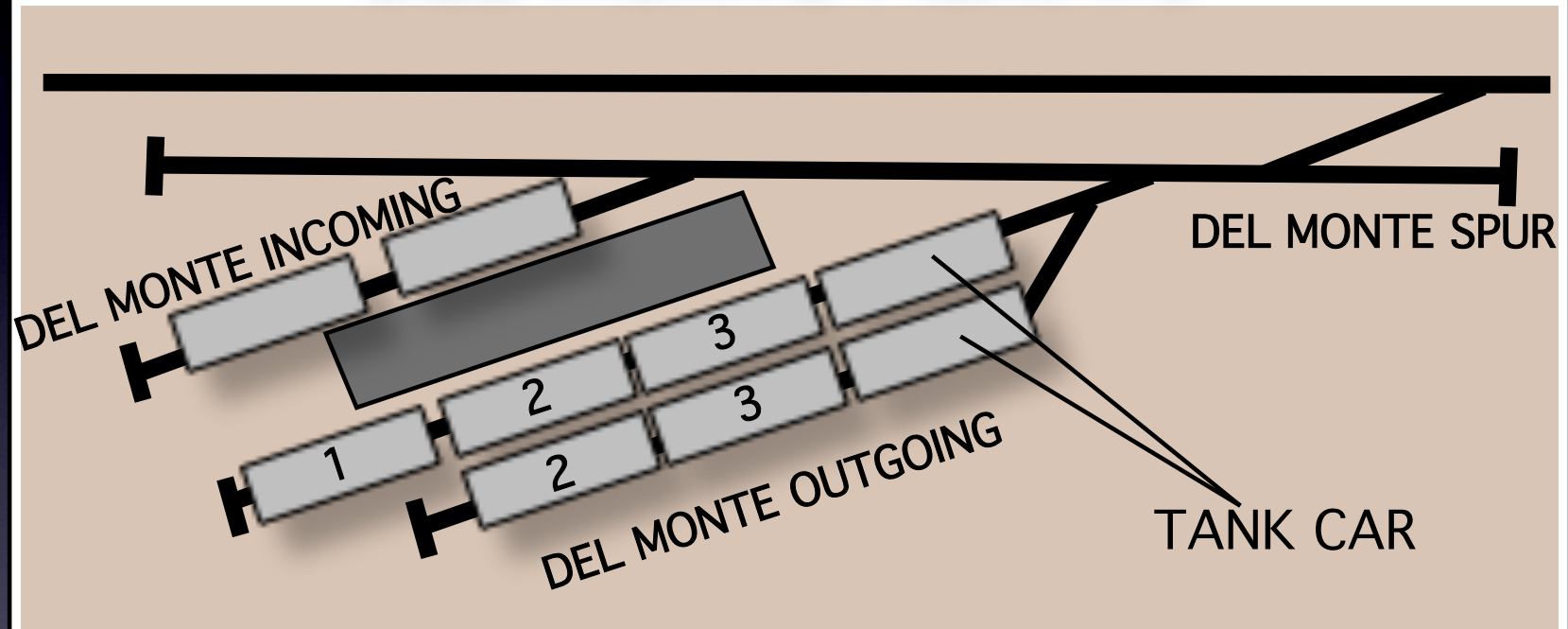


If door is specified, spot as in diagram above.
If space is taken, spot car in any free space.

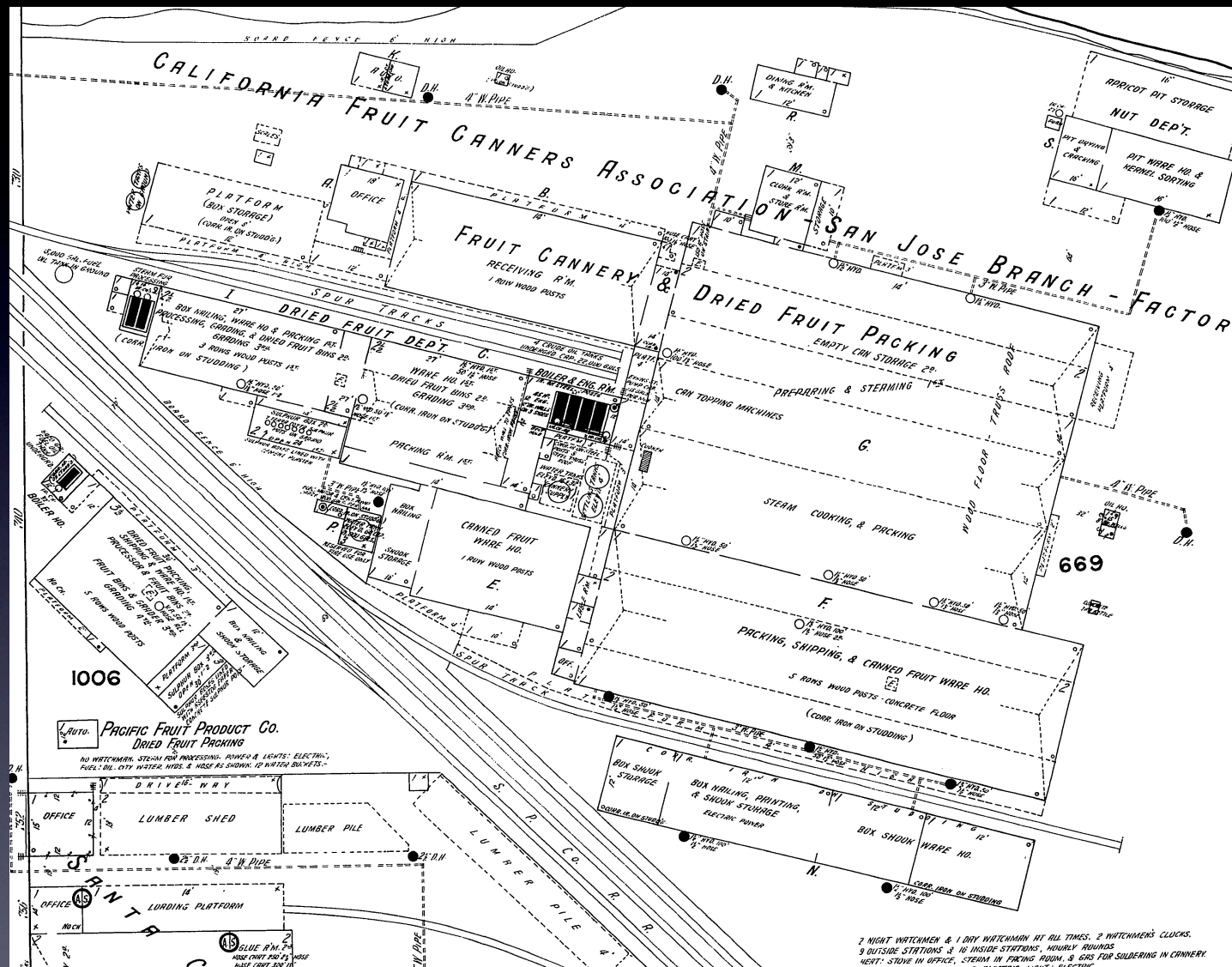


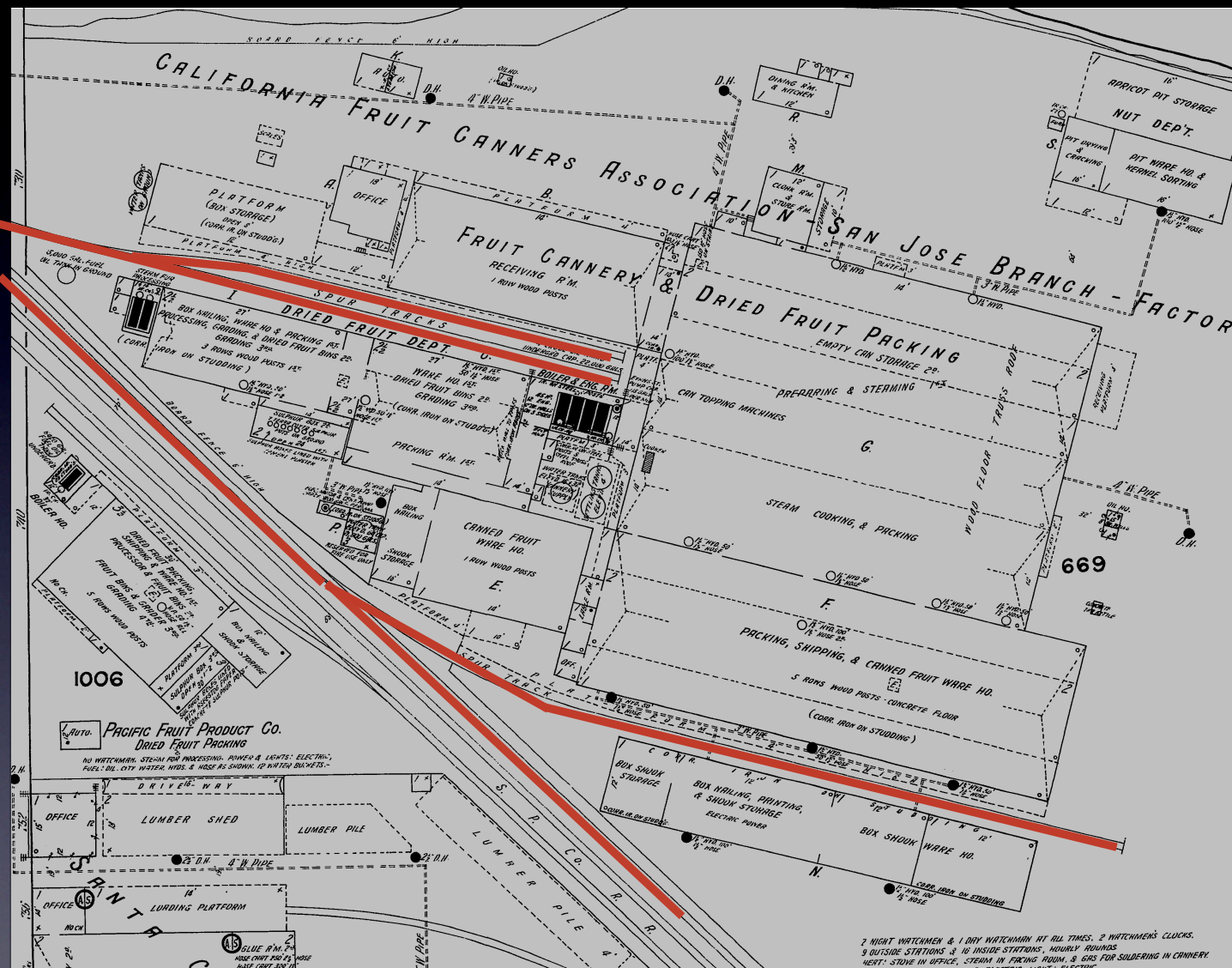


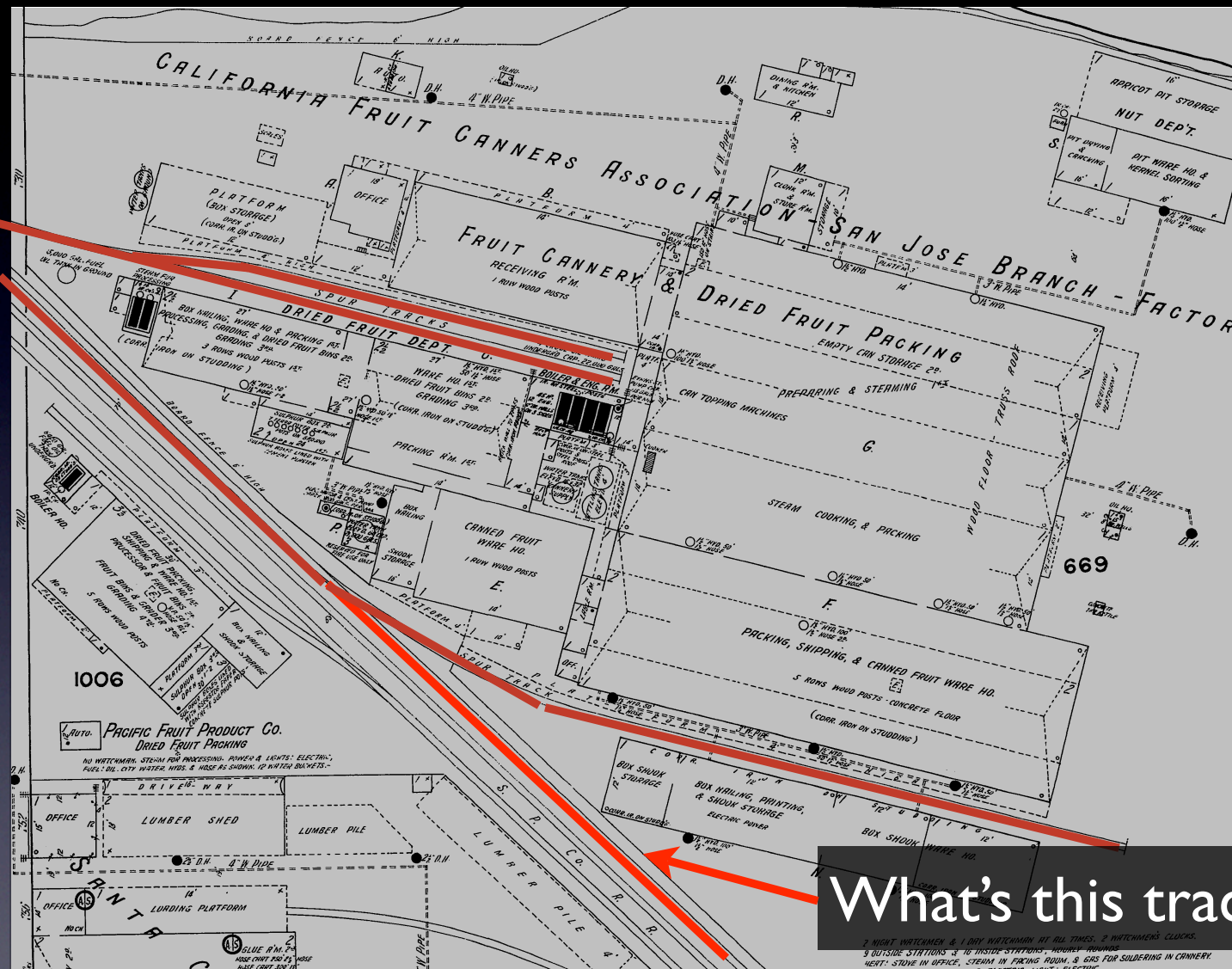
DEL MONTE Plant #3



If door is specified, spot as in diagram above.
If space is taken, spot car in any free space.







What Went Wrong?

- Reliability
- Still not enough staging
- Decks too close together
- Tight fit for five operators

Bad: Reliability

- Keep failures below 1 in 100 movements
- My problems:
 - Stalls from no power at frogs
 - Dirt on wheels
 - DCC decoders powering down

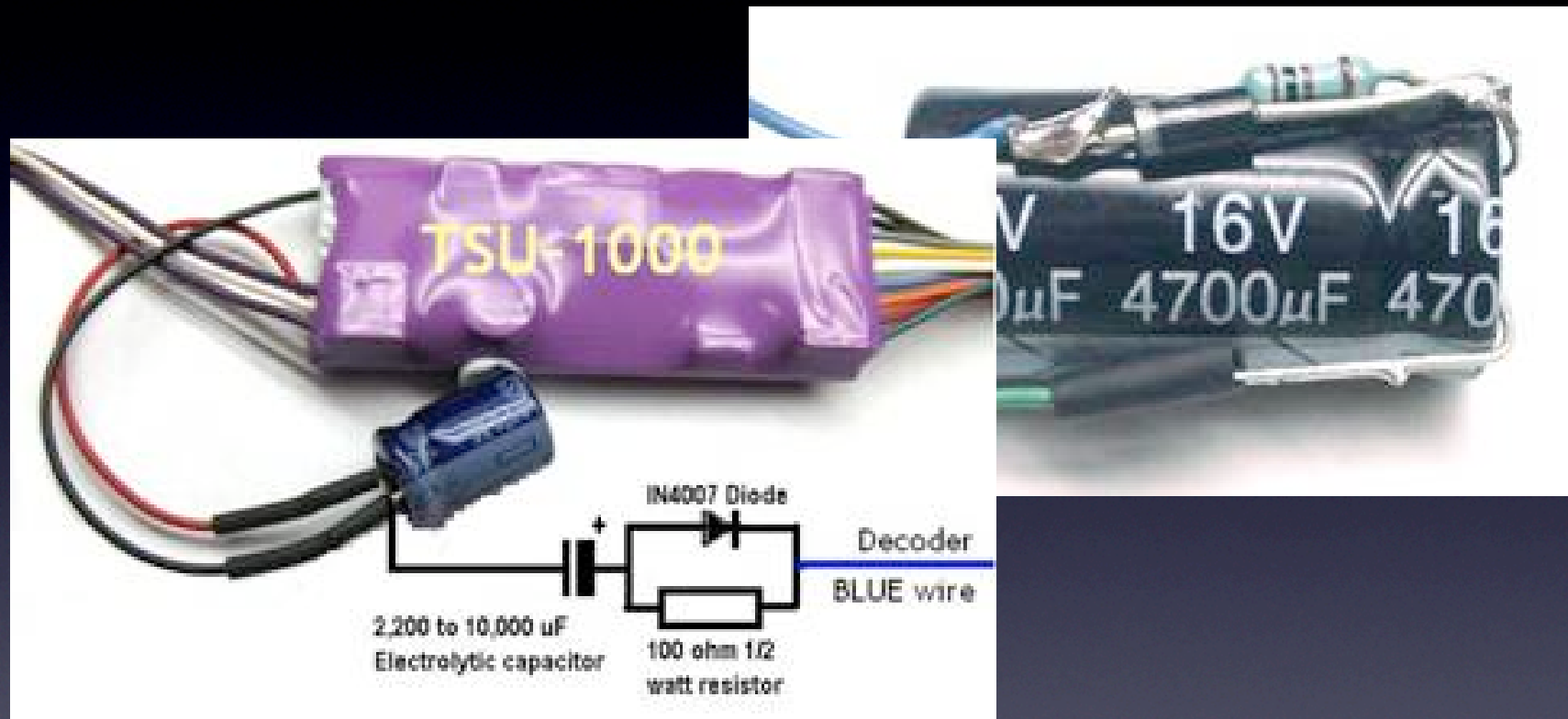
Replace Ground Throws, Power Frogs



Pre-Operations Checklist

- ☐ Vacuum entire layout and all track
- ☐ Wipe all track with a clean cloth
- ☐ Clean all locomotive wheels
- ☐ Clean 10 freight car wheels
- ☐ Toggle all switches, check for frog power
- ☐ Run balky engine around layout
- ☐ ...

Keep-Alive Capacitors for DCC



(Google for “DCC stay alive soundtraxx”)

Bad: Still Not Enough Staging

| <i>Assumption</i> | <i>Planned</i> | <i>Actual</i> |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Operators</i> | <i>2-3</i> | <i>4-5</i> |
| <i>Train length</i> | <i>10 cars</i> | <i>12 cars</i> |
| <i>Siding / staging length</i> | <i>10 cars</i> | <i>10 cars</i> |
| <i>Reuse trains?</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |

Bad: Decks Too Close Together

63" to floor
8" clearance
50" to floor



Acceptable!

Bad: Decks Too Close Together

61" to floor

5.5" clearance

52" to floor



Less Acceptable - access, scenery, etc

Bad: Decks Too Close Together



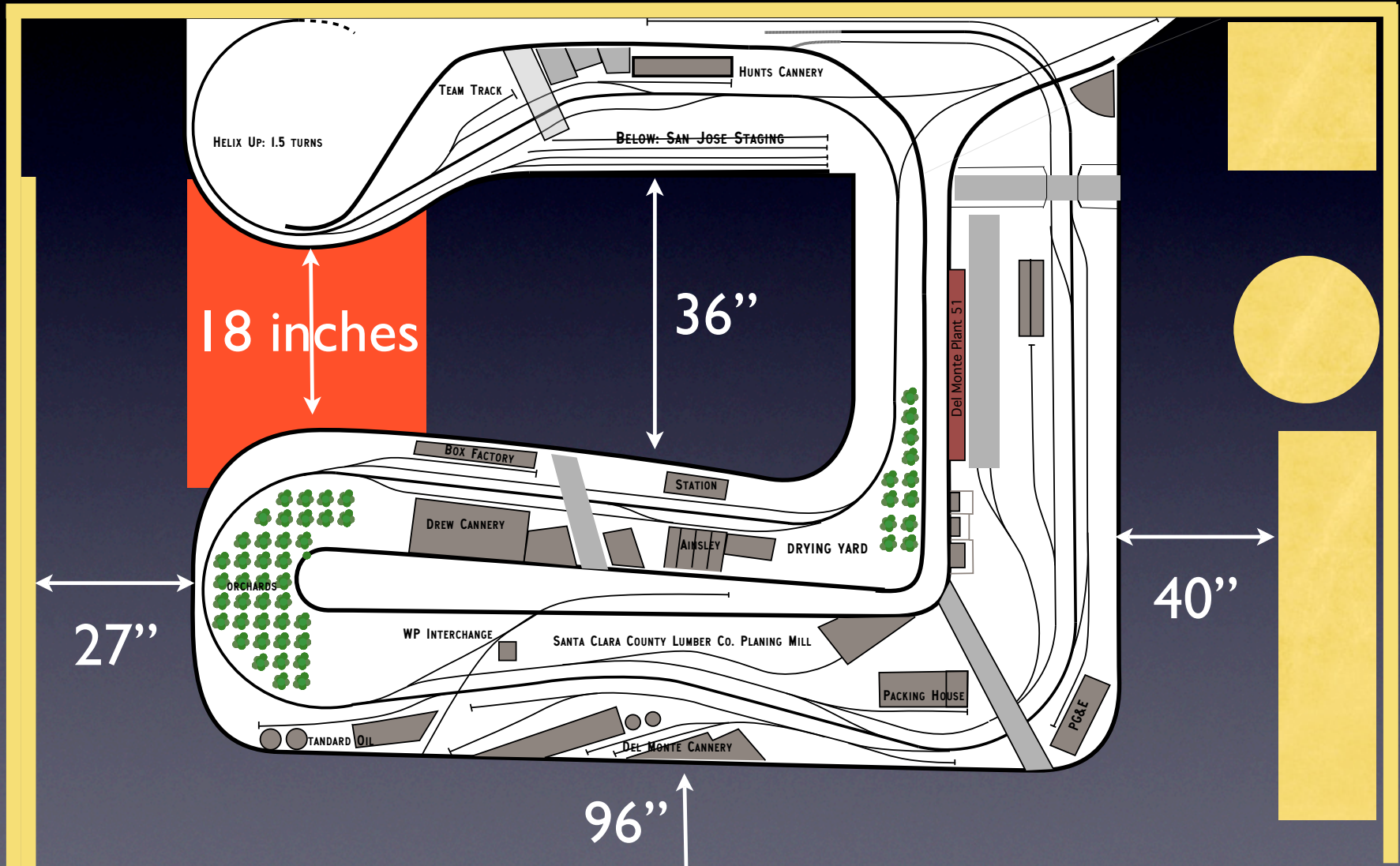
Recessing upper deck helps some...

Bad: Decks Too Close Together



... but blobs at end of peninsula are same width

Bad: Tight Fit for 5 Operators



Bad: Tight Fit for 5 Operators



Not too bad as a passage

Bad: Tight Fit for 5 Operators



Less acceptable when it's a spot to work

Overall?

- I'm happy with what the layout's become
 - Big enough to be interesting
 - Small enough for me to maintain
 - Space tradeoffs worth the pain

Take-home Lessons

- Don't wait for the perfect space.
- Even small layouts can be fun to operate
- It doesn't have to be right the first time.
- Look for prototype inspiration and examples

Questions?

- E-mail: rbowdidge@mac.com
- Layout is open tonight in San Jose