



The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe was a late comer to central California, but was given the opportunity by the Southern Pacific's apparent greed and generosity. In the 1890's, people in California's Central Valley formed the San Francisco & San Joaquin Valley Railroad to compete with the Southern Pacific, which local customers thought was price gouging. The plan for the "People's Railroad" was to connect Stockton and Bakersfield, parallel to the SP mainline and crossing the SP line once (at Fresno). The construction struggled until the AT&SF invested in the railroad and also obtained trackage rights over the SP trackage that ran east from Bakersfield over Tehachapi Pass to Mojave, where the SP line connected to the AT&SF mainline (comprising the Atlantic & Pacific [1883] and SP Mojave Branch [1883]).

The SF&SJV was completed in 1898, and the AT&SF wasted no time in extending the line west from Stockton to the San Francisco Bay. The line west of Stockton require extensive earthwork to build a grade through the marshlands of the San Joaquin River Delta. Then, when the line reached the upper Bay, the SF&SJV alignment had to work around the SP's San Pablo & Tulare Railroad (1878), which had already taken the optimal route along the south and east shores of the upper San Francisco Bay. The SF&SJV accomplished this with two crossings of the SP&T, one near Pittsburgh at the east end of the Bay, where the SF&SJV crossed the SP&T and ran south of and inland of the SP&T along the south shores of San Pablo and Grizzley bays. The second crossing was in Richmond (this location), just 3 miles shy of the SF&SJV's terminus at its new port of Richmond and 10 miles north of the SP&T end-of-track at the SP's port at Oakland. The first AT&SF freight train arrived at Point Richmond on May 1, 1900, passenger service began July 1, and ferry service across the Bay commenced July 6. In May 1904, the AT&SF completed the 10-mile Oakland & East Side Railroad from Richmond to Oakland (not shown separately on the SWRRH Map); in 1979, AT&SF abandoned this short line and shifted to SP trackage rights to access Oakland.

Northward view of the SF&SJV (1900), 3 miles northeast of downtown Richmond and 500 feet east (inland) of the SP&T (1878). From here we'll explore southwestward toward Richmond and the SF&SJV (1900) end-of-track.



Southward view of the SF&SJV (1900), same location as previous. Note the slightly rising grade in the distance; that is the beginning of the ascent to the SP&T (1878) grade crossing.



Southwestward view of the SF&SJV (1900), 300 feet south of previous location. Note the rising fill grade and bridge over the SP&T (1878) (just right of center) grade crossing as the SF&SJV alignment turns southwestward toward Richmond.



Northward view of the SP&T (1878) and sidings, a quarter mile north of its crossing of the SF&SJV (1900). Note the weird Ben and disconnection in the middle of the crossover trap; this indicates the former presence of another other track in the middle.



Another northward view of the SP&T (1878) and sidings, a few steps south of previous location showing the abandoned center track that has not been removed yet from the street crossing.



Southward view of the SP&T (1878) and its crossing of the SF&SJV (1900). The branch to the right (west) connects the SP&T/SP (now UP) to petroleum and port facilities 3 miles to the west, just north of Richmond at San Pablo Point. The overpass is the SF&SJV/AT&SF line to Richmond, which we will explore below.



Now we are 3 miles southwest of the of the SP&T (1878) crossing looking northeastward at the SF&SJV (1900) (now BNSF). There is a branch barely visible to the right, just behind the engine, which leads to an active port facility on the south side of Point Richmond. The track in the foreground leads to a former ferry facility on the north side of Point Richmond; we'll explore the ferry line first.



We are a few steps southwest of the previous location, still looking northeastward at the SF&SJV (now BNSF). The train has moved on, the track in the foreground leads to the ferry facility on the north side of Point Richmond, and the same branch to the active port facility is still barely visible just on this side of the highway overpass. The Mercantile Bank looks railroady and indeed it is – this is the AT&SF's trainmaster building, built in 1903.





Southwestward view of the SF&SJV (1900), same location as previous. To access the location of the ferry landing at what became Ferry Point on the larger Point Richmond, the AT&SF had to build this tunnel through the Potrero San Pablo Ridge. Commercial use of the ferry ended in 1975 and the ferry facilities burned in 1984. The track is usable only to the tunnel and the end-of-track at the former ferry pier is a mile down the line.



Northeastward view of the Ferry Point spur of the SF&SJV (1900) on the other (southwest) side of the same tunnel as in the previous photo. Note that the tracks are much rustier on this side of the tunnel.



Northwestward view of the Ferry Point spur of the SF&SJV (1900), with multiple sidings. The ship is transferring oil on the Chevron Long Wharf, beyond the wharf is the Richmond Bridge, and the peak on the far left is Mount Tamalpais, a Marin County landmark.



Northeastward view of the end-of-track of the Ferry Point spur of the SF&SJV (1900). The tunnel in the distance with the red outline is an automobile tunnel and the railroad tunnel is just out of sight to the left of the red automobile tunnel.



Southwestward view of the end-of-track of the Ferry Point spur of the SF&SJV (1900), same location as previous. The structures in the right distance are the remains of the SF&SJV/AT&SF ferry building at Ferry Point; the intervening track has been removed.



Now we have moved 1.3 miles east to the active port facility and the end of track the active spur of the SF&SJV (1900). This is the spur line that we saw in a previous photo behind the Mercantile Bank in downtown Richmond. The Richmond port for is used mostly for ship to rail transfer of new cars from Asia.