



The story of America's transcontinental railroad is legend. In 1853, Congress authorized surveys of potential routes for the "Pacific Railroad," which were completed in 1855 and identified a Northern Pacific, a Central Pacific, and two Southern Pacific routes. The 1862 Pacific Railway Act chose the Central Pacific route due to gold in northern California, silver in northern Nevada, and the absence of Southern Congressmen == due to the Civil War -- to advocate for the Southern Pacific route, which would have been a much easier build. The Act specified two railroad charters: the Union Pacific Railroad would build railroad and telegraph lines west from the eastern shores of the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, Iowa, and would meet the Central Pacific Railroad and telegraph line built eastward from the navigable waters of the Sacramento River in California. On January 8, 1863, grading for the CP commenced at "K" Street at the waterfront of the Sacramento River and the first rails were laid later that year. On April 26, 1864, the CP opened to Roseville (this location), 18 miles from Sacramento, where the route began its climb over the Sierra Nevada. The CP crossing of the Sierra Nevada required 15 tunnels, the most difficult being the summit tunnel at Donner Pass, and other engineering feats. The first train passed through the Donner Pass summit tunnel on June 18, 1868, and on May 10, 1869, the CP met the UP at Promontory Summit, Utah, with an honorary golden spike that henceforth bound the nation.

When building through Roseville (this location) in 1864, the CP crossed the tracks of the California Central Railroad. The CC was incorporated in 1857 and built a 5-foot gauge line northward from Folsom, at the terminus of the Sacramento Valley Railroad (1856), across the American River then 20 miles north to Lincoln, where the line arrived in 1861. In 1868, the CC was foreclosed and purchased by the CP's California & Oregon Railroad, which used the CC alignment north of Roseville (see below) and abandoned the CC south of Roseville to Folsom.

An early version of the Pacific Railway Act of 1862 included a branch north from the CP line into Oregon, but this was left out of the final law. Instead, an 1866 law offered land grants to build a railroad from the valleys of northern California to Portland, Oregon. The law specified grants to the California & Oregon Railroad of California and a company to be designated by the Oregon Legislature, which was ultimately the Oregon & California Railroad. In 1870, the CP acquired the C&O, which commenced construction north from Roseville (this location) on the CP (1869) line, using the CC (1861) alignment as far as Lincoln, then followed the flat Sacramento Valley northward to Redding, at the north end of the valley, where the C&O arrived in 1872 and further construction stalled. The C&O and the O&C finally met in Ashland, Oregon, in 1887, fulfilling the mandate of the 1866 law. Commencing with a lease in 1885, the CP, O&C, C&O, and other railroads were merged into the Southern Pacific over time.

Southwestward view of the CP (1869) at Roseville, 2,000 feet southwest of its junction with the C&O (1872) and the crossing of the CC (1861). The SP built a huge yard here, which is now UP; the trackage in this view is all sidings, with the mainline off to the right (northwest).



Northeastward view of the CP (1869) at Roseville, same location as previous (2,000 feet southwest of the C&O [1872] junction). The locomotives are on sidings near the mainline and a truck is on a crossover track.



A SP rotary snow plow on display at the Roseville yard. Built in 1917, this unit cleared the line over Donner Summit until its retirement in the 1980's.



SP steam on display at the Roseville yard. Built in 1897, this unit plied SP tracks until its retirement in 1956.



Northwestward view of the CP (1869) mainline in the foreground and the C&O (1872) wye in the distance. This is presumably the location of the crossing of the CC (1861) and the track beyond the tip of the wye (beneath the overpass in the distance) is on the alignment of the 5-foot-gauge CC. There is no evidence of the CC on the ground and I found no evidence of any major re-alignments; a 1908 topo map shows the wye in the same location as today.



Westward view of the CP (1869) mainline in the foreground and the C&O (1872) wye veering off to the right (north).



Northeastward view of the CP (1869), same location as previous, as it heads east into the Sierra Nevada and beyond.



Southward view of the C&O (1872) wye; the train is on the CP (1869), now UP, mainline.





Another southward view of the C&O (1872) wye, the tip of which is two parallel tracks for a short distance.



Northwestward view of the C&O (1872), same location as previous. The two branches of the wye join at the switch in the left foreground.