



On its push eastward from Los Angeles, California, to build out the southernmost of the five 1855 Pacific Railroad surveys, the Southern Pacific reached Yuma, Arizona, in November 1878, Tucson in March 1880, Willcox, Arizona (this location) later in 1880, and El Paso, Texas, in May 1881. The line was completed as a transcontinental route in 1883, when the route east of the map area through Texas to New Orleans was completed. This route came to be called the "Sunset Route."

Southwestward view of the now-double-track SP Sunset Route (1881) at Willcox, Arizona. The depot, located across the street and to the right (northwest) of the tracks, was built by the SP in 1914 and today houses City of Willcox offices. The railroad is now Union Pacific.





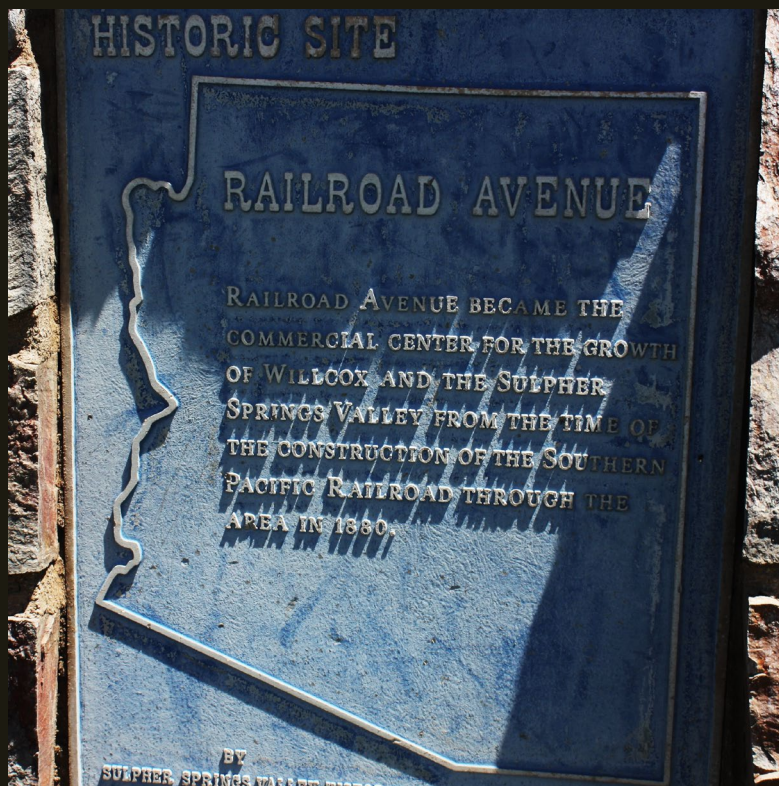
Northeastward view from the other side of the Willcox Depot (upper left), showing an old spur to a loading platform. The double-track SP (now UP) mainline is on the right.



Southward view of the loading platform next to the 1914 SP Willcox Depot as a UP container train passes by on the double-track SP Sunset Route (1881).



Mural and historic marker in Willcox, one block northeast of the depot.





Passenger car on display across the street from the depot.



Now we are 1,000 feet southwest of the depot looking southwestward at a switch that may be the junction with the Mascot & Western (1915). In 1915, the Mascot Copper Company completed the 15-mile Mascot & Western Railroad from a connection with the SP Sunset Route (1881) at Willcox (this location) eastward to Mascot Copper's mine at Dos Cabezas. By 1928, mining operations had declined and the population of Dos Cabezas had dwindled so the M&W (1915) was abandoned.

All evidence of the M&W (1915) and its connection to the SP mainline is obliterated in Willcox, but the abandoned grade can still be discerned in satellite imagery east of Willcox. According to a 1922 topo map, the alignment of the M&W (1915) was absolutely straight for most of the distance east of Willcox; a straight line drawn along the discernible M&W alignment in satellite imagery east of Willcox projects westward to the location of the switch in the distance. This switch now leads to a short spur (foreground), which may be right on the M&W (1915) alignment, but more likely has been reconfigured since 1928 and the original M&W (1915) alignment, which was somewhere in this view, likely has since been obliterated. The tracks in this view are, from right to left, the SP doubletrack mainline (elevated above the other tracks), two sidings, the industrial spur (foreground), which is connected to the closer of the two sidings, and on the far left a siding (with cars stored on it) that ends just out of view to the left.



Westward view of the industrial spur, 400 feet east of the previous location. The M&W (1915) was either on the alignment in the foreground or somewhere in the cleared area to the left.



Eastward view of the industrial spur, same location as previous. There is no obvious reason for this jog in the track, which may have something to do with the M&W (1915) junction reconfiguration for the spur.





Eastward view of the industrial spur, 200 feet east of the previous location. Note that the track turns left (north) just beyond the stored tank car.



Northeastward view of the industrial spur, 600 feet east of the previous location. The curved track at the previous location is just out of sight to the right. These cars contain concrete ties that will be used to upgrade UP tracks somewhere along the line. The track ends just beyond the cars. This track was not on the M&W (1915) alignment and is probably new, but it is not inconceivable that a spur or turning wye once existed on this alignment.



Now we have moved 3 miles southeast of the previous location, which is the closest point to Willcox at which the M&W (1915) grade is visible in satellite imagery. We are looking northwest, toward Willcox (its rooftops visible in the distance), and the M&W (1915) runs parallel to and to the right (northeast) of the fence. The grade is not very impressive and I couldn't tell where it is without the satellite imagery.



Southeastward view, toward Dos Cabezas, of the M&W (1915), at the same location as previous.