



The Southern Pacific Railroad's Coast Line had its origin in the San Francisco & San Jose Railroad (1864). Some of the founders of the SF&SJ then organized the SP, which was incorporated on December 2, 1865, and authorized by Congress to build south through the San Joaquin Valley to the Arizona state line at Needles, California (on the Arizona border on the yet-to-be-built northern of the two Southern Pacific railroad routes surveyed in 1855; see Southwest Railroad Framework). The original organizers did no construction; instead, in early 1868, they sold the SP along with the SF&SJ to the Big Four of the Central Pacific. Early in 1868, the SP under the new ownership started its first construction south from San Jose on what would become its Coast Line; on March 13, 1869, the line was opened to Gilroy (30 miles south of San Jose), to Pajaro (Watsonville Junction) on November 27, 1871, through this location at Castroville south to Salinas on November 1, 1872, and to Soledad, 90 miles south of San Jose, on August 12, 1873. There the terminus remained for 13 years while construction forces concentrated on completing the SP (1876) and SP Sunset Route (1883); thus, the SP reached Arizona and points east via these routes and the Coast Line no longer had the goal of reaching Needles. In early 1886, work finally resumed south from Soledad and was completed to Santa Barbara in 1901, where it met the SP Santa Barbara Branch (1887), thus opening the SP Coast Line from San Francisco to LA.

Northward view of the SP Coast Line (1873) at Castroville. The mainline is the shinier track on the left and foreground; there is a rustier siding to its right, which connects to the mainline via switches located a half mile north and a half mile south of this location; and there is a spur on the far right for an agricultural loading dock, which connects to the rusty siding just behind (south of) the viewer. The SP Monterey Branch (1879) once joined the mainline from the left (west) via a switch that was located about where the puddle is on the far left. The switch was obviously completely removed.



The SP Monterey Branch was built in 1879 and opened to traffic on January 1, 1880. It linked San Francisco to Monterey and Pebble Beach via a wye at Castroville (this location) on the SP Coast Line (1873). It served the U.S. Army's Fort Ord, the canneries and packing houses of Monterey and Seaside, and a lumber yard in Pacific Grove. The line hosted SP's longest running "named" passenger train, the Del Monte, which ran from San Francisco to Pacific Grove. The train was mainly used by wealthy tourists. The Del Monte made its last run on April 30, 1971, and freight traffic diminished through the 1980's and into the 1990's; the last train on the Monterey Branch ran in 1999. In November 1999, Union Pacific (SP successor) removed the switch at the junction (this location).

Southward view of the SP Coast Line (1873) at Castroville a few steps west of the previous location; the speeding Amtrak train is on the mainline. There are two tracks in the foreground that join in the right distance; the track on the left is the north branch of the wye for the SP Monterey Branch (1879), which ends in the far left foreground (it was detached in November 1999) and the track on the right is a spur to an agricultural facility. The south branch of the abandoned wye is visible in satellite imagery 1,300 feet south of this location.



Southeastward view of the spur to an agricultural facility. The north branch of the wye for the SP Monterey Branch (1879) is near the orange cone and the SP Coast Line (1873) mainline is visible in the distance in front of the loading dock; the Amtrak train has passed through.



Now we've moved south about 100 yards south looking southwestward at the north branch of the wye for the SP Monterey Branch (1879); the switch in the foreground is the spur to the agricultural facility. The south branch of the abandoned wye, visible in satellite imagery, joins the south branch 1,000 feet down the line (in the distance to the southwest).



Three miles southwest of the previous location looking eastward at the bridge that carries the SP Monterey Branch (1879) over the Salinas River.



Northeastward view of the bridge that carries the SP Monterey Branch (1879) over the Salinas River.