



In October 1902, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad incorporated the Eastern Railway of New Mexico and began construction of the "Belen Cutoff" the next January. The entire line was completed to the Atlantic & Pacific route at Dalies, New Mexico, in July 1908, allowing through freight trains to bypass the original AT&SF-A&P route via Raton Pass. The ERNM Belen Cutoff shortened the distance from Chicago to Belen by only six miles, however it decreased the average grade from 158 feet per mile through Raton Pass to 66 feet per mile. Today, the combined California Southern-Southern Pacific Mojave Branch-A&P-ERNM line is entirely double tracked and is the premiere transcontinental route in the Southwest.

In this westward view at Dalies, the 1883 A&P route comes in on the right from Raton Pass and Isleta and continues westward in the distance. The track on the left is the western end of the 1908 ERNM. The A&P route between Dalies and Isleta is now a secondary route and, as can be seen in this photo, the A&P west of Dalies and the ERNM are the double-track mainline, which will be followed by the oncoming BNSF container train.



The BNSF container train speeds toward the Dalies junction.





The BNSF container train speeds through Dalies, bypassing the Raton Pass route on the right.



The BNSF container train speeds through Dalies so fast it makes its own dust storm, which enveloped my truck in this eastward view. The Raton Pass AT&SF-A&P line is in the foreground.





Close-up of Dalies switch, looking west.



Another BNSF container train speeds through Dalies, going in the opposite direction and on the other track.





Southwestward view of Dalies from the A&P line to Isleta.



Northward view of the foundation of a 1927 loading facility along the ERNM at its western terminus at Dalies; the A&P line to Isleta is behind the foundation.