The Southern Pacific Jawbone Branch, aka Lone Pine Branch, was 90 miles long and extended north from the SP mainline at Mojave through the Jawbone region and Owens Valley to Owenyo (a few miles north of Lone Pine). The branch line arrived at Owenyo in 1910, where it joined the SP-controlled Nevada & California narrow gauge (former Carson & Colorado) and a transfer station was constructed. The Jawbone Branch helped build the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

The Jawbone Branch line north of Searles was abandoned some time between 1972 and 1984. The grade is still visible from many sections of US Route 395, such as this eastward view of the grade with dry Owens Lake in the background. Owens Lake is the terminal lake for the Owens River; ironically, the aqueduct that the Jawbone Branch helped build to divert the Owens River to Los Angeles also resulted in the desiccation of Owens Lake. It is hard to believe that during the 1860's and 1870's, steamships plied Owens Lake, transporting ore from the Keeler area to the west shore, where mule teams hauled the ore first to Los Angeles then, in 1876, to the new SP railhead at Mojave.

The Jawbone Branch winds along the western shore of dry Owens Lake and past an abandoned industrial building known as Bartlett. The facility likely was used to load minerals taken from the Owens Lake salt flat. The Inyo Mountains rise in the distance along a normal fault that forms the east side of Owens Valley.

The Jawbone Branch grade south of Owens Lake.

Several miles south of Owens Lake, the Jawbone Branch grade crosses young (few thousand years) basalt. The youth of the basalt lava is indicated by the fact that it forms a flat surface on recent alluvium. The hills in the background of this westward view are the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, which rose along a normal fault that dips toward the viewer along the front of the range. Normal faulting thins the earth's crust and allows mantle to rise and partially melt to form basaltic lava, which is common in the Basin and Range (Great Basin) near the range-bounding normal faults.