



In 1880, the Southern Pacific built its Sunset Route (1881) through the southern Arizona Territory, including this location at present-day Maricopa located about 25 miles south of Phoenix. The townspeople of Phoenix were seeking a connection with the SP. In 1886, after receiving authorization from Congress to build a railroad line through the Gila River Indian Reservation, the Maricopa & Phoenix Railroad commenced construction with mainly Mexican immigrants. The line started from this location, then called "Phoenix Junction," and was completed to Phoenix in 1887. The line contributed greatly to the growth of Phoenix in its early years. By 1915, the M&P was under control of the Arizona Eastern Railroad (itself a subsidiary of the SP), as indicated by a 1915 topo map showing this line as the AE; the M&P/AE line was commonly known as the SP Maricopa Branch. In the middle 1920's, the SP built two new lines to Phoenix that replaced the M&P (1887). The SP abandoned the M&P around 1945, except for a few miles of track south of Phoenix that became an industrial spur.

Westward view of the SP Sunset Route (1881) and a huge water tower from the days of "big steam." The M&P/AE wye and sidings occupied the gravel area to the right of the water tower.



Southeastward view of old foundations for tanks and a large gravel area that hint at spurs and loading facilities around the M&P (1887) wye.



Westward view of the SP Sunset Route (1881), showing the same water tower as before. The autos are on Arizona Highway 347, which is built over the M&P alignment for much of the distance to Phoenix. The wye and loading facilities extended beyond the water tower, as seen in the previous photo, and to the location of the building on the right, which is now an Amtrak station.



Closer view of the Maricopa Amtrak station. Note the vintage rolling stock in the distance (see below).



I don't know how a Chicago, Burlington & Quincy passenger car ended up in Maricopa, but it is a beautiful site!





Detail of California Zephyr and its famous observation dome.



A UP container train, with traction in both UP and SP livery, speeds through Maricopa on the SP transcontinental route. The highway and other development have obliterated the M&P (1887) wye and associated features, except for the water tower and the old tank foundations.