



In the late 1870's and early 1880's, the Southern Pacific focused its resources on completing its southern transcontinental route through southern Arizona and New Mexico to El Paso and beyond. The SP was in no rush to build east from Mojave, California, until 1880, when the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway came to an agreement with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad to jointly control the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad. The A&P built west from the AT&SF mainline at Isleta, New Mexico, to meet the SP at Needles, California. A&P construction reached Kingman, Arizona, in 1882, which prompted the SP to begin building its branch from Mojave to Needles, where it met the A&P on August 9, 1883. The AT&SF-controlled A&P leased the SP's new Needles Branch, and in 1885 the AT&SF-owned California Southern Railroad completed its line from San Diego over Cajon Pass to the AT&SF/A&P-leased SP Needles Branch at Barstow, giving the AT&SF access to the southern California coast. The AT&SF also entered California's Central Valley via Tehachapi Pass using trackage rights over the SP route.

Westward view of the SP Needles Branch, which the A&P leased as soon as it was built, then was merged into the AT&SF and now BNSF.



A westbound BNSF consist rides the rails at the same location as above. This is the location of the wye for the now-abandoned Randsburg Railway, which was built north from this location in 1898. The RR grade has been obliterated by the dirt road in the foreground, but can be explored to the left of this photo.



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The RR was a 28.5-mile branch line that originated at the main line of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad (originally the SP Needles Branch) at a location 3 miles west of Kramer Junction, California, and terminated at Johannesburg, California. The line was completed in 1898 and was acquired by the AT&SF in 1903. The RR served mining operations and provided passenger service. Johannesburg was founded as a rail head to support mining operations at nearby Randsburg, which was too high on the mountain for direct rail access. During the first half of the 20th Century, the Rand Mining District was the principal gold producing region of California. The RR ceased operations in 1933 and the rails were removed the following year.

Satellite image of the same location as the previous photos; the active BNSF (former SP then A&P then AT&SF) runs east-west across the bottom of the image. The RR grade is apparent and has two wyes: a wye for the RR junction with the main line, and just to the north a turning wye that actually crosses the eastern branch of the junction wye.



Southwestward view of the west branch of the RR junction wye. The BNSF main line is in the distance with cars on California Highway 58 just beyond.



Southwestward view of the west branch of the RR junction wye, farther north than the previous photo. The bare area to the left, which merges with the RR junction wye just where the curve begins, is the south branch of the turning wye.



Northeastward view of the west branch of the RR junction wye and the RR line continuing straight just left of center. The bare area to the right, which merges with the RR junction wye in the foreground, is the south branch of the turning wye. The bare elevated grade that crosses the turning wye and merges in the distance with the RR line is the south branch of the turning wye.



Four miles north of the previous photos, northward view of the RR grade.