

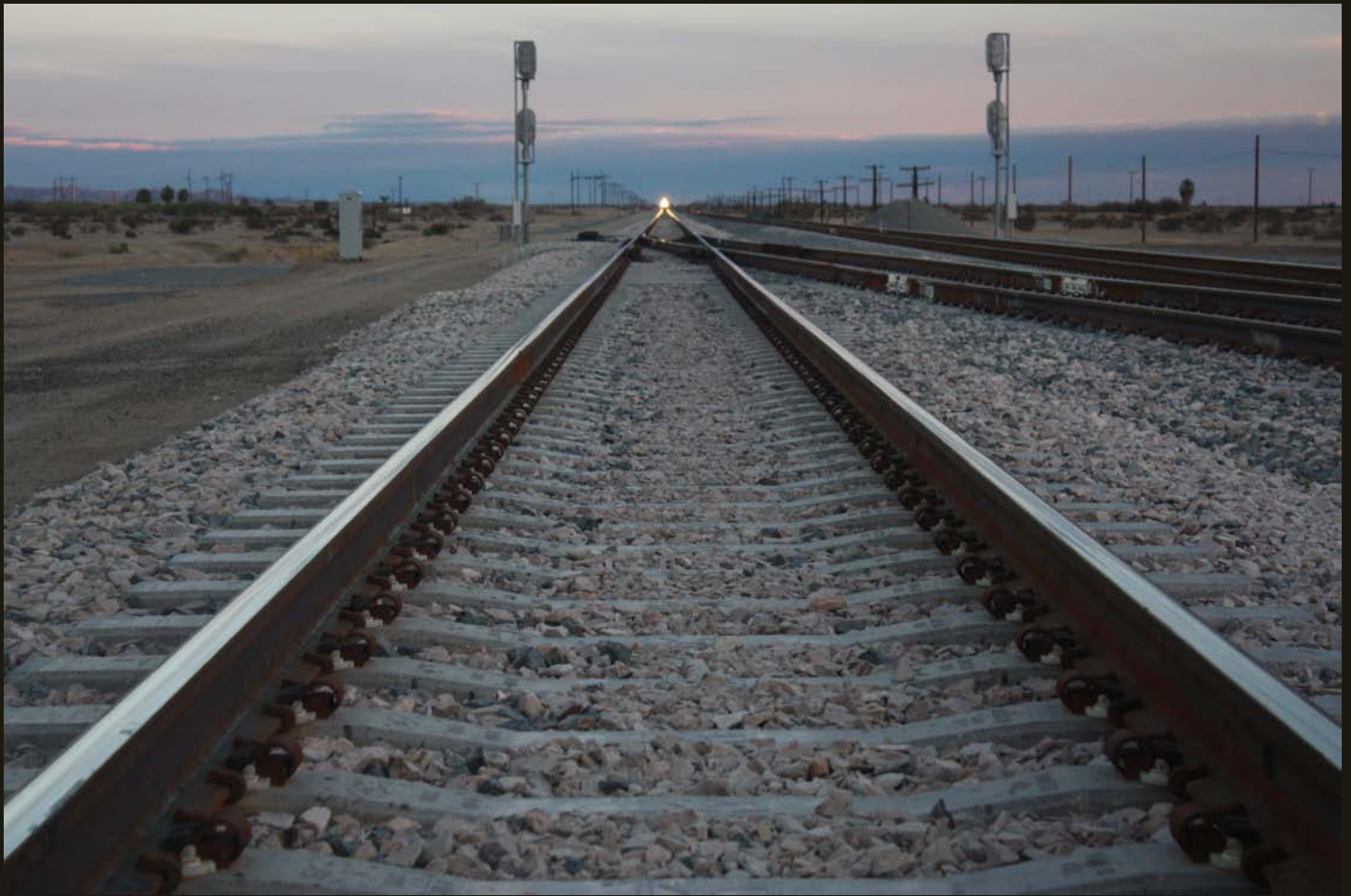


In 1904, the Southern Pacific completed its Inter-California or "Inter-Cal" line, which branched from the SP's Sunset Route at Niland, California, ran southward and entered Mexico at Mexicali, Baja California, then ran 50 miles east to re-connect with the Sunset Route at Araz Junction, about 5 miles west of Yuma, Arizona. It was this railroad that the SP used to block the Colorado River flood of waters into the Imperial Valley that formed the Salton Sea (253 feet below sea level) in 1907. In 1948, a few miles of the Inter-Cal grade in Mexico was used by the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California, and in the 1950s the remainder of the Mexico line and the few U.S. miles near Yuma were removed. The line from Niland to the border is still in use by Union Pacific.

This northward view of the Niland wye shows the north end of the Inter-Cal line where it joins the SP Sunset Route, on which a westbound speeds containers to a Los Angeles port. Though the Sunset Route is already in shadow, the sunset still illuminates the Chocolate Mountains, which bound the east side of the Salton Trough.



The SP mainline, built around 1880 through the Salton Trough, has two tracks with a cross-over just southeast of the Niland wye. The right track is older, with wooden ties except where this cross-over was built. The older line interchanges directly with the Inter-California line.



A westbound container train approaches on the newer, all-concrete-tie SP mainline. This track has fresh gravel ballast and does not interchange with the Inter-California line.



The westbound speeds through Niland.



As the train speeds past Niland on the new track, note the older track ties are wooden just past the cross-over.