



In the late 1870's and first years of the 1880's, the Southern Pacific focused its resources on completing its 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, to build the northern of the two 1855 southern "Pacific Railroad" surveys (see tab Southwest Railroad Framework), 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 would build west from the AT&SF's New Mexico & Southern Pacific (1881) at Isleta, New Mexico, to build the northern "Pacific Railroad" survey. A&P construction reached Kingman, Arizona, in 1882, which prompted the SP to begin building its branch eastward from Mojave through this location at Barstow, California, to Needles (on the Arizona border), where the SP met the A&P on August 9, 1883. The AT&SF-controlled A&P leased the SP's new Needles Branch (including the line in this photo).

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 this location in Barstow, giving the AT&SF access to the southern California coast. Thus, Barstow became the center of the AT&SF's California operations – traffic from central California came through Barstow via the SP's Tehachapi Pass Route (using trackage rights) and traffic from southern California came through Barstow via the CS's Cajon Pass Route. Additionally, since 1905 when the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake completed its route through Las Vegas, its trains (now UP trains) pass through Barstow using trackage rights.

Eastward view of the "old" AT&SF classification yard in Barstow. This yard was developed and changed over almost a century of use, beginning when the railroad was built in 1883. The building in the left distance is the beautiful Casa del Desierto station and hotel, which we'll explore more below. The tracks are on the SP Needles Branch (1883) alignment, but a quarter mile to the west (left), the active mainline is on the CS (1885) alignment and the SP alignment is abandoned. The SP line west of this location was abandoned, apparently in 1976 when the "new" AT&SF classification was built west of this location on the CS (1885) alignment (see below).



The Casa del Desierto station and hotel, also known as the Barstow Harvey House, was built in 1911 by the AT&SF to replace an earlier station built in 1885 that burned in 1908. Fred Harvey, a freight agent for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, began his company in 1875 with two railroad eating houses on the Kansas Pacific Railway. His employer declined his offer to establish a system-wide eating house operation, but the AT&SF contracted with Harvey for several eating houses. Fred Harvey created the first restaurant chain in the U.S., with service courtesy of waitresses who came to be known as the Harvey Girls, one of whom was portrayed in 1946 by Judy Garland in the film version of *The Harvey Girls*.

Casa del Desierto closed in 1971, when the "new" AT&SF yard was being designed, and became derelict until the City of Barstow bought the building in 1990 and restored it in 1992. Casa del Desierto is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a California Historical Landmark. Today, the building houses the Barstow Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center, the Western America Railroad Museum, the Route 66 "Mother Road" Museum, and an Amtrak station.

BARSTOW HARVEY HOUSE

HARVEY HOUSES WERE LEGENDARY IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN RAIL TRAVEL. OPERATED BY FRED HARVEY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SANTA FE RAILWAY, THE NETWORK OF RESTAURANT-HOTELS SET A NEW STANDARD IN QUALITY MEAL SERVICE. BARSTOW'S SPANISH-MOORISH "CASA DEL DESIERTO", OPENED IN 1911 AND CLOSED IN 1971. IT WAS REGISTERED AS ONE OF THE LAST AND FINEST REMAINING EXAMPLES OF THE WEST'S FAMOUS HARVEY HOUSES.

CALIFORNIA REGISTERED HISTORICAL LANDMARK NO. 892

PLAQUE PLACED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION IN COOPERATION WITH BILLY HOLCOMB CHAPTER OF E CLAMPUS VITUS, MOJAVE RIVER VALLEY MUSEUM, SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY MUSEUM, AND FRED HARVEY, INC., MAY 1, 1983.



Northeastward view of Casa del Desierto showing the numerous passenger loading platforms. The tracks are now gone except for the two closest to the station.





Eastward view of Casa del Desierto showing the remaining two passenger loading tracks, which are on the SP (1883) alignment and today used by Amtrak.





Southward view of the passenger loading tracks and the "old" yard from an elegant room within Casa del Desierto.



Southeastward view of the passenger loading tracks and the "old" yard from Casa del Desierto.



Rolling stock on display at the Western America Railroad Museum, at the east end of Casa del Desierto.



Now we are 4,000 feet west-northwest of Casa del Desierto, which is just to the right of the hill on the far left, behind a car bridge over the "old" yard. We are looking east-southeastward and the deep cut into the hill in the center-right distance is for the active AT&SF (now BNSF) on the CS (1885) alignment. The brushy flat area in the middle-ground is the Mojave River and the flat area in the foreground is the SP Needles Branch (1883) grade. Note the piece of wood, possibly a tie, in the near foreground. A bridge once carried the AT&SF tracks (originally SP-built Needles Branch [1883]) over the river from this point to a point just to the right of the hill on the far left, but the bridge and SP-CS junction are completely gone.



East-southeastward view of the grade of the SP Needles Branch (1883) a few steps west-northwest of the previous location. The grade ends at the Mojave River, and there is a clear area to the left of that point (just behind the tires). That clear area is the southeast branch of an abandoned turning wye.



East-southeastward view, 500 west-northwest of the previous location. The grade on the right is the SP Needles Branch (1883), which was operated by the AT&SF since the time it was built, and the curved grade of the left is the northwest branch of an abandoned turning wye.



West-northwestward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), same location as previous. The alignment curves in the distance to head due west.



Westward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), 1,000 feet west of the previous location. This grade was presumably abandoned in 1976 when the "new" yard was built.



Westward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), 1 mile west of the previous location. The grade ends at a wash, then picks up on the other side where it turns slightly to the right (a bit north of west). Whatever bridge or culvert that was once here is now gone without a trace.



Eastward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), 1.2 miles west of the previous location and 3 miles west of Casa del Desierto and the former junction with the CS (1885). The grade crosses Community Boulevard, which has been repaved since the tracks were removed.



Westward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), same location as previous.



Eastward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), 4,000 feet west of the previous location.



Westward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), in the foreground, same location as previous. The grade projects into the distance, where tracks are still present. The curved track is a new alignment, presumably built around 1976, when the "new" yard was completed.



Northwestward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), a few steps west of the previous location. The straight track in the left distance is on the original 1883 alignment, the gray (not pink) gravel in the right middle-ground is the abandoned continuation of the 1883 alignment, and the curved track is the 1976 re-alignment. This location is 4 rail miles west of Casa del Desierto and the former junction with the CS (1885).



Eastward view of the 1976 re-alignment, same location as previous. The abandoned SP Needles Branch (1883) is visible in the dry brush beyond the tracks. The 1976 re-alignment curves to the south (right) to intersect the CS (1885) alignment 3 miles west-southwest of the original junction and the Harvey House depot.



Northward view of the 1976 re-alignment, 1 mile south of the previous location. The bridge carries the alignment over the dry Mojave River.



Southward view of the 1976 re-alignment, same location as previous. A switch splits the single wooden-tie track into a double concrete-tie track, which curves to the left (east) as it approaches the "new" (presumably 1976) junction with the CS (1885) alignment.



Northward view of the 1976 re-alignment, 1,500 feet south of the previous location.



Southeastward view of the 1976 re-alignment, same location as previous. The double track crosses an overpass and then goes into a wye. Beyond the overpass, the left (east) track makes a broad curve to the left, which is the east branch of the wye (track with a train on it at far left). The right (west) track splits just beyond the overpass; the split to the left is a second track on the east branch of the wye and the track to the right is the west branch of the wye. The track that runs straight across the image in the distance is the AT&SF (now BNSF) mainline to southern California on the CS (1885) alignment.



Eastward view of the same BNSF train as the previous photo on the new (1976) wye. The distant track at the left (north) tip of the wye is the 1976 re-alignment. The track in the foreground is on the CS (1885) alignment, now the BNSF Southern Transcon to Los Angeles. Union Pacific trains use these tracks (trackage rights) for trains on the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake (1905) route. The new (1976) yard begins just out of sight in the right distance. This wye is the point at which AT&SF (now BNSF) trains from the east access central California via Tehachapi Pass (track in left distance on the 1976 re-alignment) and southern California via Cajon Pass (track in foreground on the CS [1885] alignment).



Southwestward view of the CS (1885) alignment, where the west branch of the new wye joins the mainline.



Southwestward view of the west branch of the new wye, a few steps northwest of the previous location. The CS (1885) alignment is visible to the left.



Northeastward view of the CS (1885) alignment, one mile west of previous location.



Southwestward view of the CS (1885), same location as previous. The track on the far right is the siding from the wye and merges with the center track under the signal.



Now we have moved east 2 miles for a northward view of the AT&SF's (now BNSF) massive, new (1976) yard, which uses the entire 3 miles of the CS (1885) alignment from the new wye (on the west) to the old yard/Harvey House and original SP (1883)-CS (1885) junction (on the east). This is the main classification yard on the BNSF Southern Transcon. The old yard/Harvey House/SP-CS/junction/Casa del Desierto are one mile east (to the right) of this location.





Control tower at the new yard.

