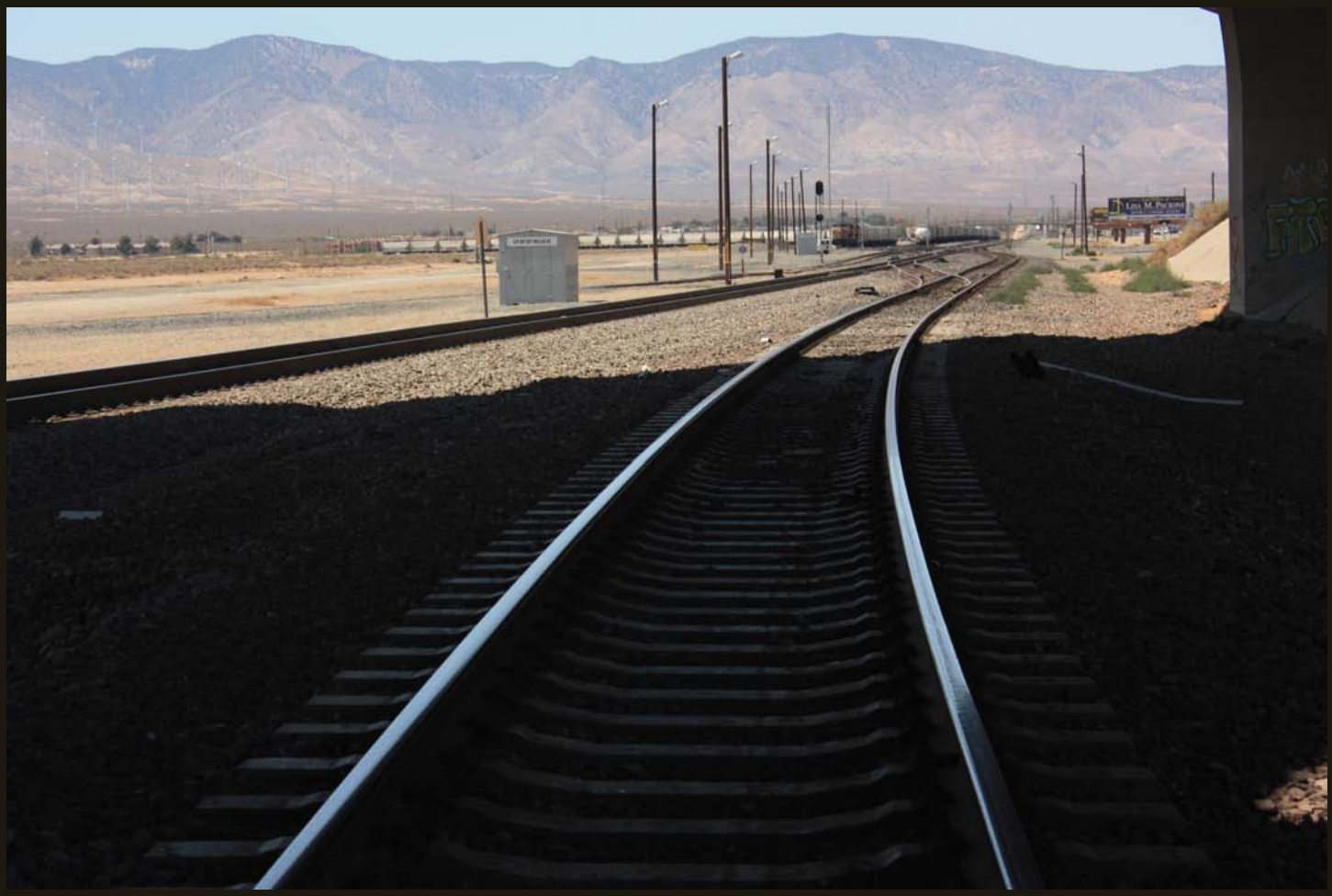
Mojave, California, was founded by the Southern Pacific Railroad when its rails arrived on August 8, 1876, after conquering Tehachapi Pass, the most difficult obstacle on the SP's entire main line from Sacramento/San Francisco to Los Angeles (1876) and then to El Paso, Texas (1881). SP laid out the town and established a yard and division point in Mojave. Mojave has some railroad history so we'll explore the town chronologically, starting with this photo of a southbound Union Pacific (SP successor) container train barreling through Mojave in 105°F heat after descending from Tehachapi Pass. This is the 1876 SP main line. The Tehachapi Mountains, which are the southern continuation for the Sierra Nevada, are visible in the distance.

After reaching LA in 1876, 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 to complete the "northern" of the two Southern Pacific surveyed routes (from the 1855 Pacific Railroad Surveys) 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 mainline at Isleta, New Mexico. 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 above photo is a northward view of the SP mainline in Mojave and the branch to the right (east) is the junction with the 1883 SP Needles Branch.

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. In 1897, the AT&SF traded its Sonora (1882) and New Mexico & Arizona (1882) railroads (in south-central Arizona) to the SP in exchange for the SP's Needles Branch. The western part of the SP Needles Branch, between Mojave (here) and Barstow, would be needed the following year (1898), when the AT&SF-financed San Francisco & San Joaquin Valley Railroad was completed in central California, which the AT&SF accessed via SP trackage rights over Tehachapi Pass. The junction in this photo provided AT&SF access to agricultural, passenger, and other traffic from northern and central California, and like the CS junction in Barstow, gave the SP a competitor in California.



A few steps south of previous location; SP Needles Branch (1883) in the foreground and SP mainline to the left beneath an overpass for California Highway 14.

Southward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883) in the foreground and SP mainline to the far right beneath California Highway 14.

Another southward view of the SP mainline (1876) in the foreground beneath California Highway 14 and SP Needles Branch (1883) to the left.

Northward view of the SP mainline (1876) in the foreground with a train beneath California Highway 14 and the SP Needles Branch (1883) to the right. This is a UP train; the BNSF trains take the branch line to Barstow and the BNSF Southern Transcon.

In 1910, the Southern Pacific completed its Jawbone Branch, aka Lone Pine Branch, which extended 90 miles north from this point on the SP mainline at Mojave, through Owens Valley to Owenyo where, in 1910, it reached the SP-controlled Nevada & California narrow gauge railroad (former Carson & Colorado Railroad). The Jawbone Branch was built primarily to support construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

This southward view of the SP main line on the right and the Jawbone Branch on the left (east) foreground is 2 miles north of the junction of the 1883 SP Needles Branch/AT&SF line. Although most of the Jawbone Branch has been abandoned, the section from here to Searles Junction is still used to access the 1914 Trona Railway.

A few step from previous location; the SP (1876) main line is in the right distance and the Jawbone Branch is in the left (east) foreground.

Northward view, a few step from previous location; the SP main line on the left and the Jawbone Branch on the right foreground.

Northward view of the Jawbone Branch, a few steps north of previous view, as the track curves northeastward and crosses California Highway 14.

Both the 1883 Needles Branch and the 1910 Jawbone Branch are single-switch junctions that go east from the SP mainline. Between these two junctions is the wye for the SP Oak Creek Branch (1956), shown here. The Oak Creek Branch extends about 8 miles west from the SP mainline to the California Portland Cement Company plant that was built in 1956 and I assume dates the railroad.

In this southeastward view of the wye, the cars lined up on the left of the view are on a siding of the SP mainline, the cars on the curved track to the right are on the southern leg of the Oak Creek Branch wye, and the bolted track in the foreground is the northern leg of the wye. The curved track in the mid-ground is a weird connection of the two legs of the wye.

Another view of the SP Oak Creek Branch wye, a few steps west of previous location.

Eastward view of the apex of the SP Oak Creek Branch (1956) wye.

Westward view of the apex of the Oak Creek Branch wye, where the line heads 8 miles into the desert and the cement plant.