



During the 1880's, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad rushed to compete with the Southern Pacific for Southwestern rail traffic. The AT&SF's first objective was to reach a Pacific Coast port, when the SP was already in Los Angeles and the affiliated Central Pacific was already in the San Francisco Bay Area. The AT&SF first reached tidewater at Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico (south of map area), in 1882, via its New Mexico & Arizona Railroad (1882) and Sonora Railroad (1882). The AT&SF built the NM&A southward from Benson, Arizona (on SP's Sunset Route), along the San Pedro River to Fairbank, then west up the tributary Babocomari River to grasslands at Sonoita, then over a low pass in the Conejo Hills to follow Sonoita Creek southwestward through the town of Patagonia to the Santa Cruz River at Calabasas (also known as Rio Rico; this location), and finally south along the Santa Cruz River to Nogales, on the border with Mexico and the connection with the Sonora Railroad.

The AT&SF was busy building to other ports. The AT&SF reached the Pacific Coast at San Diego in 1885 (via its Atlantic & Pacific (1883) and California & Southern (1885) railroads), Los Angeles in 1887 (via the California Central (1887) and other lines), and the San Francisco Bay in 1900 (via its San Francisco & San Joaquin Valley (1900) and other railroads). The line to Guaymas became less important to the AT&SF. In 1910, the SP-controlled Tucson & Nogales Railroad completed a line south from Tucson to this location at Calabasas and used the NM&A grade from this point south to Nogales (on the border). In 1929, the segment of the NM&A (1882) between Calabasas (this location) and Patagonia was damaged by floods and abandoned, and the line from Benson to Patagonia became a branch line of the El Paso & Southwestern Railroad and then the SP, which was abandoned later.

Westward view of the T&N (1910) at Calabasas. The trestle carries the T&N (now Union Pacific) grade over Sonoita Creek, which the NM&A (1882) followed from Patagonia to this location. As far as I could tell, regrading and erosion have obliterated all evidence of the junction with the NM&A (1882), but the road probably came in on the south side of Sonoita Creek, i.e. just to the left (south) of the photo.





Southward view of the T&N (1910) at Calabasas, just south of the trestle over Sonoita Creek. The junction with the NM&A is probably in this view, but I could find no evidence for it on the ground, in aerial images, or in on-line maps.