



In April 1892, Isaac G. Blake, a mining magnate from Denver, built the Needles Reduction Company mill in the town of Needles (on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway). In December 1892, he began building the Nevada Southern Railway northward from the AT&SF (originally Southern Pacific Needles Branch (1883)) at Goffs 25 miles to a location south of the silver mining center of Vanderbilt in the New York Mountains. In July 1893, the NS line was extended 5 miles nearer the mines to a location named Manvel. Manvel was renamed Barnwell and was the nearest railhead for the nearby mining camps of Vanderbilt, Goodsprings, and Searchlight, Nevada. In 1895, the railroad was reorganized as the California Eastern Railway. In early 1902, the CE completed a 15-mile extension over the New York Mountains, past Vanderbilt, into the Ivanpah Valley, to a railhead named Ivanpah, to serve as the shipping point for the Copper World Mine. Several months later in 1902, the AT&SF bought the CE. Around 1904, the Ivanpah extension was crossed by the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad (1905). In 1906, the AT&SF/CE incorporated and in 1907 completed the 22 mile Barnwell & Searchlight Railway to access the boomtown of Searchlight. In November 1918, the Copper World Mine shut down and the Searchlight boom was winding down; in 1924 the CE tore up all its tracks following washouts the previous year.

Southwestward view of the B&S (1907), 2,000 feet west of the end-of-track in west Searchlight. The Piute Range in the distance is in California and Barnwell lies in the higher New York Mountains beyond.



Northeastward view of the B&S (1907), same location as previous. The B&S fill grade is the mound of dirt in the foreground and breached by a paved road. The line extended through the mobile home park in the left distance and ended just beyond the park. A turning wye, water tower, and depot were once present in this view. Much to the chagrin of Searchlight residents in 1906-1907, the CE/AT&SF did not do the extra work to extend the line up the hill another half mile to the town of Searchlight, which is just beyond the old water tower on the hill in the upper right of the photo.



Gold was mined in the aptly named El Dorado Mountains, on the west side of the Colorado River, since at least as early as the 1850's. In 1897, gold was discovered in the western foothills of the El Dorado Mountains at a location that would become the town of Searchlight. By 1900, several of the most promising mines, including the Quartette, were consolidated as the Quartette Mining Company, which in 1902 completed a 16-mile narrow-gauge railroad from its mines on the southwest outskirts of Searchlight (this location) to its mill on the Colorado River. The rolling stock, ties, rails, and other railroad materials were shipped via the AT&SF to Needles (where the SP Needles Branch (1883) meets the Atlantic & Pacific (1883)), then up the Colorado River via steam-towed barge to the mill site (at today's Cottonwood Cove). From 1902 until 1906, Searchlight boomed and the narrow gauge QM (1902) conveyed people, freight, and ore between Searchlight and the Colorado River, where they transferred to and from steamships such as the *Searchlight* to Needles, the AT&SF, and the world. In 1906, the mill was moved from the river to Searchlight in anticipation of the approaching B&S and the Quartette Mining Company Railroad fell into disuse at age 4. The tracks were removed in 1910.

Northeastward view of the Quartette mines, including pits and a headworks on the slope. The flat area in the foreground with old foundations is as near as I could tell at the QM (1902) end-of-track. I could find no evidence of the narrow gauge grade at Searchlight, which ran south of town to avoid its hills and approached the Quartette mines from the south. This location is a mile due south of the B&S (1907) end-of-track.



A mural in Searchlight commemorates April 13 as Railroad Day. The B&S was completed to its terminus on March 31, 1907, train service began the following day April 1, Searchlight's planned celebration was held the following weekend, and somehow Searchlight's Railroad Days celebration became April 13 (at least in 2017 when this photo was taken).