



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), and finally south along the Santa Cruz River to Nogales, on the border with Mexico and the connection with the Sonora Railroad (this location).

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 at Calabasas and used the NM&A grade from there south to Nogales (this location). In 1929, the segment of the NM&A (1882) between Calabasas 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.

Southwestward view of the NM&A (1882) at Nogales. There is a mainline and to its left a siding, which converge to a single track before entering Mexico at the border gate in the distance. The location of the gate is the 1882 junction of the NM&A and Sonora railroads, and today is the operational junction of the Union Pacific and the Ferrocarril Mexicano.





Northeastward view of the NM&A (1882) at about the same location as previous. This line was taken over by the T&N in 1910, then by the SP and now UP.