



There were two Western Pacific railroads, both of which pass through Ashland, California. The first WP was formed in December 1862 by a group associated with the San Francisco & San Jose Railroad (1864) to build a railroad connecting San Jose to Sacramento with the plan that the first transcontinental railroad would follow the WP from Sacramento to San Jose, where passengers and freight would continue to San Francisco on the SF&SJ. In October 1864, the Central Pacific Railroad assigned all its rights under the Pacific Railway Act to the WP for the route between Sacramento and San Jose, including land grants. In 1866, the first 20 miles from San Jose had been completed when funding problems halted construction. Part of the difficulty was that federal land grants were not available where Mexican land grants had previously been made.

By 1867 the CP determined that the route via San Jose to San Francisco was too long and that it would be better to change to a route to Oakland and from there use ferries from the CP's Oakland Pier to San Francisco. The CP bought the WP and construction started again in the spring of 1867. The railroad was completed through this location at Ashland and in 1869 arrived at San Leandro (on San Francisco Bay, 3 miles north of this location) where it joined the local San Francisco & Alameda Railroad (not shown separately on the map). The first transcontinental train to reach San Francisco Bay arrived at the SF&A's Alameda Pier on September 6, 1869, and the passengers took the SF&A ferry to San Francisco. Two months later the rail connection to the local San Francisco & Oakland Railroad (not shown separately on the map) was in place and the transcontinental trains now ran through Oakland instead of Alameda. In 1870, the WP was absorbed into the CP. By 1879, the CP had built shorter routes from Sacramento to Oakland via the north San Francisco Bay and the WP's route (including this location) became a secondary route between the East Bay and the San Joaquin Valley.

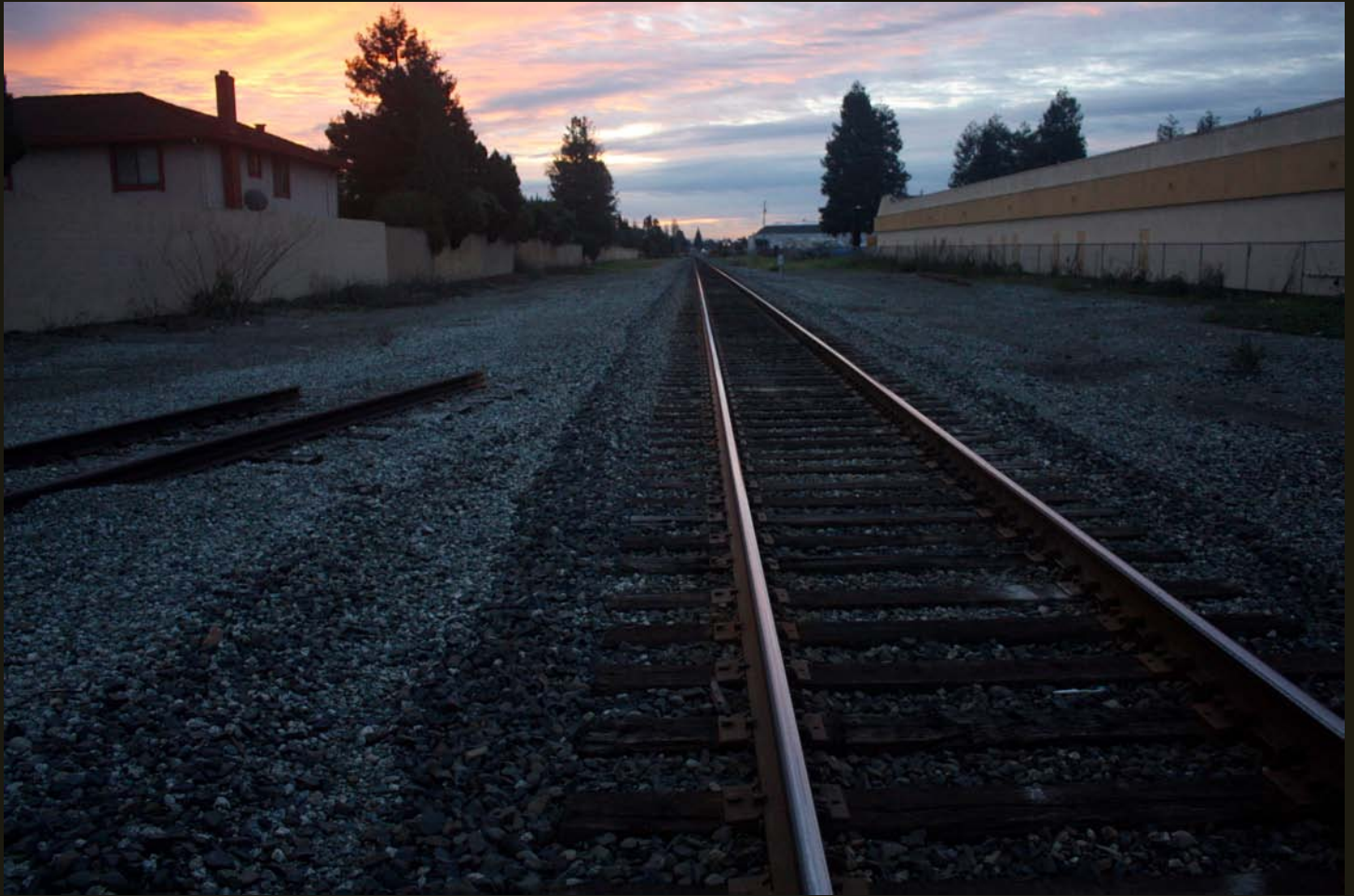
In 1903, a second Western Pacific Railroad was formed by Union Pacific interests to build a line between Oakland and Salt Lake City, Utah, which was completed in 1909. The part of the WP (1909) route from Sacramento to Oakland with a branch to San Jose closely parallels and in a few places crosses the original WP (1869) alignment. In 1979, the Southern Pacific Railroad (successor to the CP) obtained trackage rights over the WP (1909) and abandoned its parallel WP (1869) track over Altamont Pass. The other sections of the WP (1869) route, from Sacramento and south of Stockton, and to Oakland (including this location) and San Jose remained as part of the SP (now UP) system.

The idea of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District began in 1946 due to increased post-WWII migration and congestion in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1951, California's legislature created the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit Commission, which in 1957 concluded the most cost-effective solution for the Bay Area's traffic would be a high-speed rapid rail system. The San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District was formed and in 1959 a state bill was passed that provided funds for the expensive trans-bay tunnel between San Francisco and Oakland, which was the key to the whole system. BART construction officially began on June 19, 1964, with President Lyndon Johnson presiding over the ground-breaking ceremonies. BART utilized several rail and freeway corridors, including the WP (1869) rail corridor shown here. BART service began on September 11, 1972, and the trans-bay tunnel opened on September 16, 1974.

Northward view of the WP (1869) tracks by early light at Ashland, California. Original WP 1867-1869 construction ends 3 miles north of this location at San Leandro, where in 1869 the first WP joined the SF&A to connect the first transcontinental railroad to the Bay Area. A BART commuter trains speeds overhead.



Southward view of the somewhat rusty WP (1869) tracks and elevated BART at the same location as the previous photo.



Southward view of the second WP, the rust-free WP (1909), now UP, at Ashland, one-quarter mile west of the WP (1869) line in the previous photo.



Northward view of the WP (1909) at the same location as the previous photo, showing an abandoned spur to a generating plant.