



In 1891, the Silver City & Northern Railroad was built north from a connection with the Silver City, Deming & Pacific Railroad at a location called Whitewater through Hurley to San Jose (now Hanover Junction), a total of 14 miles. The AT&SF acquired this line in 1898 and extended it another 4 miles to Santa Rita. The line struggled until 1910 when the Chino Copper Company acquired the copper resources, developed the open pit Chino mine, and built a smelter at Hurley (located about halfway between Whitewater and the end-of-track at Santa Rita). In 1990, the Southwestern Railroad acquired the SC&N/AT&SF trackage.

The SC&N splits at a location called Cobre. The line to the right is active and services the open pit Chino mine, visible as the mountain-size tailings pile in the background; this is the line that extends to the end-of-track at Santa Rita, near the mine. The track to the left is inactive and goes to a mine at Fierro.



South



Southward view of the same SC&N switch at Cobre. The line to the left is active and services the open pit Chino mine and the track to the right is inactive and goes to a mine at Fierro; the central track is a siding. Note the gleaming active track to the Chino mine and the rusted track to Fierro.

The Chino mineral deposit was mined by Native Americans and later by Spaniards and the open-pit mine began production in 1910. The original concentrator went into operation in 1911, but was replaced by a new facility in 1982. A smelter was commissioned in 1939 and was modernized in 1985 to increase capacity and achieve compliance with the Clean Air Act. In 2005, the smelter was permanently closed. Today, the Chino operation includes a 36,000 metric ton-per-day concentrator that produces copper and molybdenum concentrates, and a 150 million pound-per-year solution extraction/electrowinning plant that produces copper cathode.