



In the late 1870's and first years of the 1880's, the Southern Pacific focused its resources on completing its transcontinental route through southern Arizona and New Mexico to El Paso and beyond. The SP was in no rush to build east from Mojave, California, until 1880, when the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway came to an agreement with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad to jointly control the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad. The A&P would build west from the AT&SF mainline at Isleta, New Mexico, to meet the SP at Needles, California. A&P construction reached Kingman, Arizona, in 1882, which prompted the SP to begin building its branch from Mojave to Needles, where the SP built through this location and met the A&P on August 9, 1883. The AT&SF-controlled A&P leased the SP's new Needles Branch (including the line in this photo), and in 1885 the AT&SF-owned California Southern Railroad completed its line from San Diego over Cajon Pass to the AT&SF/A&P-leased SP Needles Branch at Barstow, giving the AT&SF access to the southern California coast and completing the northern of the two "Southern Pacific" transcontinental routes identified by the 1855 "Pacific Railroad" surveys.

A BNSF oil tanker train works westward across the Mojave Desert on the SP-built AT&SF (now BNSF) main line. This line is now double tracked from LA to New Mexico and points east and is the busiest railroad in the southwest. The road to the right is U.S. Highway 66.



Eastward view of the same BNSF oil tanker train as the previous photo on the SP (1883) Needles Branch (now BNSF Southern Transcon).