

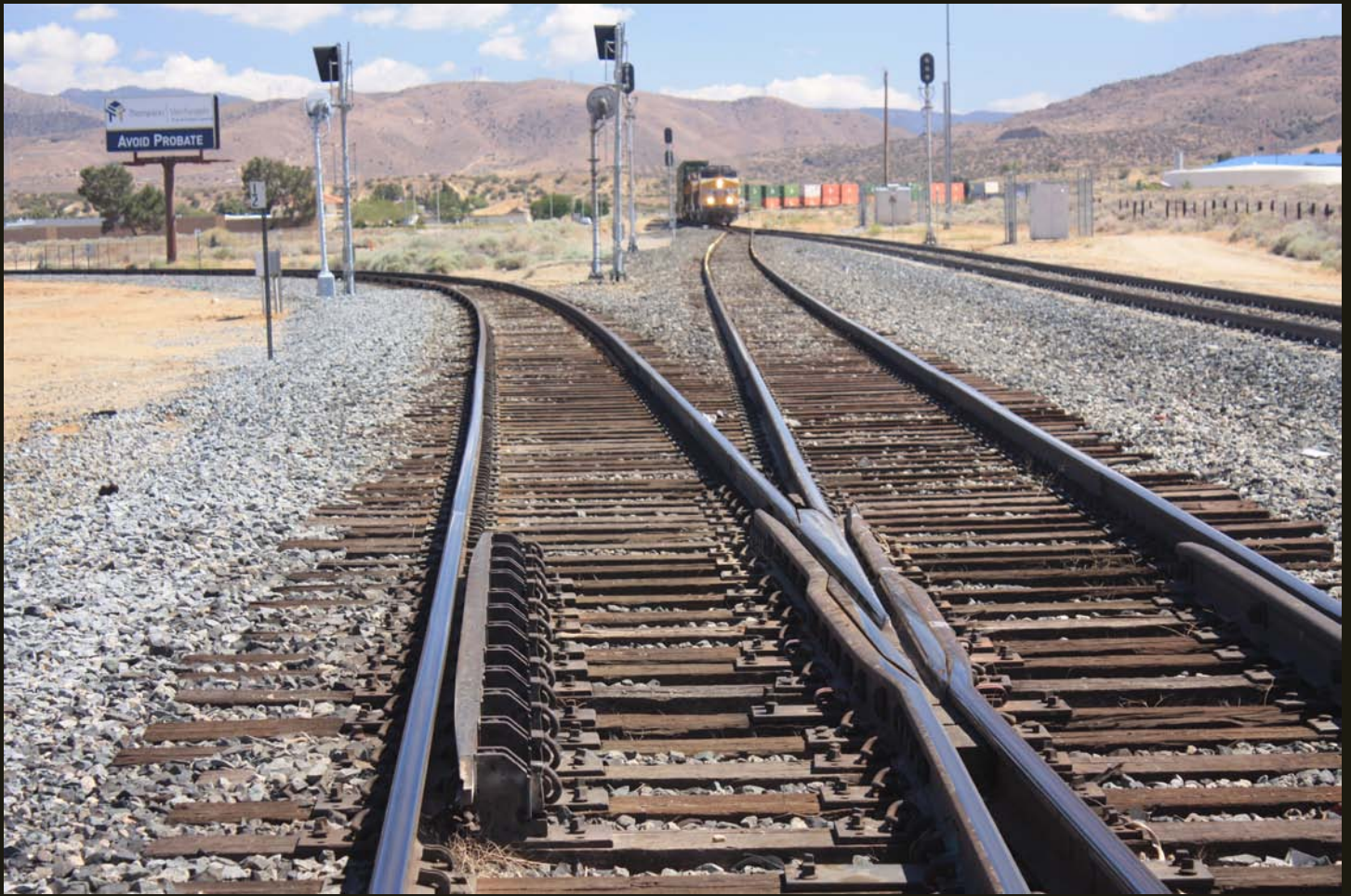


When the Southern Pacific laid its first tracks in the early 1870's and built southward from Sacramento through California's Central Valley then over Tehachapi Pass to southern California, its destination was El Paso, Texas, to build the southernmost transcontinental route identified in the 1855 Pacific Railroad surveys. Once over the Pacific Crest at Tehachapi Pass, the most direct route would have been to build southeastward to Cajon Pass then eastward over San Geronio Pass on the 1855 "Southern Pacific" transcontinental route. However, Los Angeles business interests persuaded SP to build instead a more difficult route southward over Soledad Pass to LA, then east to San Geronio Pass and El Paso. In 1967, nearly a century after the SP's decision to go through LA, the SP finally built its "Palmdale Cutoff" over Cajon Pass.

In this southeastward view at Palmdale, California, in the Mojave Desert, the closest track is the SP mainline, originally built through here in 1875-76, the middle track is a siding for the Palmdale Cutoff, and the farthest track, curving to the left (east) is the start of the 1967 Palmdale Cutoff.



Southward view of the switch for the Palmdale Cutoff, with the SP (now UP) mainline on the far right. There is no wye, only this one switch, because this is a cutoff and there is no reason for a complete wye.



This northbound container train approaches the the Palmdale Cutoff, which curves to the east toward Cajon Pass.



The northbound UP train surprised me when it tuned onto the siding for the Palmdale Cutoff, perhaps to let a southbound train pass.



The UP consist passes the Palmdale Cutoff.