



When the Southern Pacific laid its first tracks in the early 1870's and built southward 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 (this location) 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.

Northeastward view of SP (1876) grade, 5 miles southwest of Soledad Pass on the Pacific Crest.



In 1873 Charles "Tom" Vincent, following the lure of "California Gold" that had drawn so many to California, settled in the rolling juniper hills of the high desert and staked a claim near the pass across the San Gabriel Mountains. A tent city grew, which came to be known as "Soledad Summit" or "Vincent's Gap," with an economy based on the few gold strikes in the area and trade on the trail from the Sierras to LA. In 1876, the SP laid track through Vincent's Gap, where a turning wye was constructed. In 1897, the Vincent Depot was built at the summit on land granted to Joseph Puentener by President McKinley and by the 1930's there was a café, ranch house, some rock cabins, and a gas station to service automobile traffic on the new Sierra Highway.

In 1985, family entrepreneurs rebuilt the decaying buildings and opened Vincent Hill Station and the Top of the Grade Saloon. Their website states "customers can feel the train station atmosphere as we preserve the history of Southern Pacific Railroad's years traveling to the Vincent Depot."





Same show-switch as in previous photo, with SP (now UP) barely visible just beyond the corral. The road is Sierra Highway.



Another view of Vincent Hill Station and its railroad-themed décor.



Vincent Hill Station has a nice collection of vintage SP and other rolling stock just behind the restaurant.



The Vincent Grade-Acton Metrolink passenger station at Soladad Pass, a few hundred feet from Vincent Hill Station.



Sidings at Soledad Pass, adjacent to Vincent Hill Station. Note overpass in the distance, which is the grade summit.



Same overpass as in the previous photo, showing a summit cut grade at Soledad Pass. The cut is in soft alluvium.