



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, to build the northern of the two 1855 southern "Pacific Railroad" surveys (see tab Southwest Railroad Framework). That was 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's New Mexico & Southern Pacific (1881) at Isleta, New Mexico, to build the northern of the two southern "Pacific Railroad" survey. A&P construction reached Kingman, Arizona, in 1882, which prompted the SP to begin building its branch eastward from Mojave through this location at Essex, California, to Needles (on the Arizona border), where the SP met the A&P on August 9, 1883. The AT&SF-controlled A&P immediately leased the SP's new Needles Branch (including the line in this photo); the SP never operated on its Needles Branch.

Southeastward view of the SP Needles Branch (1883), which has always been an A&P/AT&SF route and is now BNSF's Southern Transcon, at Essex, California. Although this railroad traverses a vast, unpopulated desert, it is the busiest line in the SWRRH Map area. U.S. Highway 66, the "Mother Road," closely follows the railroad.