



The Sacramento Valley Railroad (1856) was the first railroad in the Southwest (see tab “Southwest Railroad Framework”). The SV was incorporated in 1852, its first president was future Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, and its Chief Engineer was Theodore Judah who would later design the Central Pacific (1969) transcontinental route. The survey for the SV route, completed in 1854, ran 30 miles northeastward parallel to and south of the American River to Folsom (this location). Grading began on February 12, 1855, on the levee at Front and L streets in Old Sacramento and track laying began August 9, 1855, using a broad gauge of 5 feet 3 1/2 inches. The first train arrived in Folsom on February 22, 1856. The SV (1856) came under Central Pacific control (but not name) in 1865 and I suspect the line was standard-gauged at the time or soon thereafter. In 1888, the SV (1856) came under the control of the Southern Pacific (CP successor) and became part of its Sacramento & Placerville Railroad, which also included a branch from the SV (1856) a half mile south of the end of track (this location) eastward to Shingle Springs. Also in 1888, this branch line was extended east from Shingle Springs to the gold-belt town of Placerville; this branch is identified on the SWRRH Map as Sacramento & Placerville (1888) although construction began in 1863 (see below). Today the SV (1856) right-of-way is used by the Union Pacific Railroad (SP successor) for freight from Sacramento to a customer south of Folsom and by the Sacramento Regional Transit District for its Gold Line passenger service between Sacramento and Folsom.

The California Central Railroad was incorporated in 1857 and built a 5-foot gauge line northward from Folsom, at the terminus of the SV (1856)(this location) across the American River then 20 miles north to Lincoln, where the line arrived in 1861. In 1868, the CC was purchased by the Central Pacific’s California & Oregon Railroad, which used the CC (1861) alignment north of Roseville, on the CP (1869) transcontinental line, and abandoned the CC south of Roseville to Folsom (this location). As far as I can tell all traces of the CC (1861) south of Roseville, including here at Folsom, have been obliterated.

Northeastward view of the SV (1856) end of track in old town Folsom. Similar nonfunctional/decorative trackage built into the pavement is at the other end of the SV (1856) in Sacramento’s historic district and I think it’s really cool that the historical tracks were left in place to preserve the railroad history. All traces of the CC (1861), which was abandoned in 1868, are gone. The branch from the SV (1856) to Placerville begins south of town (explored later in this geolink).

And yes, this is the Folsom with the State Prison that inspired Johnny Cash to write *Folsom Prison Blues*. The prison is located 2.5 miles northeast of this location, which is the closest railroad to the prison and was probably the train he heard “a comin’, it’s rolling ‘round the bend!” This was an active railroad in the late 1960’s, inmates won’t hear the train a comin’ today.



Southward view of the SV (1856) end of track (left foreground), same location as previous. The train depot on the left was first built in 1909 and enlarged in 1916. A vintage passenger car adorns the tracks.



Northeastward view of the SV (1856) on the other side of the same passenger car as before and with a SP caboose on display. The SP depot is just out of sight on the right.



Same view as previous, taken a few steps to the left showing the depot. The track to the left in the foreground is the SV (1856) mainline and the track to the right leads to the Folsom turntable (next photo).



Southwestward view of the Folsom turntable, a few steps southwest of previous location. There was no turning wye at the Folsom end of track, which necessitated a turntable. The depot and end of track are behind the viewer. The track in the foreground leads back to the switch to the mainline in the previous photo (behind the viewer). A clockwise turn of the turntable of about 30 degrees aligns the turntable track with the continuation of the siding for the turntable on the other side.



Detail of the turntable.



The history of Folsom began with the arrival of the SV in 1856.



Northeastward view from the other side of the turntable. There are four tracks visible, from nearest to farthest: two sidings of the SV (1856), which are truncated at the new building; the SV (1856) mainline; and, in the right distance just in front of the row of rocks, the siding for the turntable.



Northeastward view 300 feet southwest of previous location; the brick building in the distance is the same one that truncates the two sidings in the previous photo. Two tracks converge toward the viewer but are cut off before the switch to make way for a planter and the Gold Line. The track on the left is the mainline and the track to the right is the siding for the turntable. This is the south end of the renovated historic district and the end of track of the first railroad in the Southwestern U.S., as modified by the CP and SP over more than 150 years and as represented today by these tracks.





Southward view just steps south of the previous location. The straight track in the middle distance projects northward (toward the viewer) to the SV (1856) alignment in the previous photo and thus is on the SV (1856) alignment. The tracks are the Sacramento Regional Transit District's Gold Line commuter train. The curve in the foreground leaves the historic alignment and leads to a 400-foot track on a new alignment for Gold Line passenger loading.



Southward view 300 feet north of previous location. On the new alignment for Gold Line passenger loading.



Northward view of the Gold Line end of track, steps north of previous location.



Now we've moved a half mile south to explore the branch to Placerville, but first some background. The first railroad to be named Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad was incorporated in 1862, and construction from Folsom (this location) towards the gold mining center of Placerville began in late 1863 from this location on the SV (1856) a half mile south of the end of track (previous photos). The line reached Latrobe in 1864 and Shingle Springs in 1865, 26 miles from Folsom (not shown separately on the SWRRH Map). At some point prior to 1877 either the name was changed and/or a portion of the construction was built by a company called Folsom & Placerville Railroad. In either case, on April 19, 1877, the SV (1856) was consolidated with the Folsom & Placerville Railroad and the Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad to form the Sacramento & Placerville Railroad. The new railroad operated over 49 miles of track between Sacramento and Shingle Springs. The S&P came under the control of the Southern Pacific's subsidiary, the Northern Railway, in 1888, the same year in which the line was finally extended east from Shingle Springs to Placerville. The 25-year history of construction from the SV (1856) in Folsom (this location) to Placerville, including the first Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad, the Folsom & Placerville Railroad, and the extension from Shingle Springs to the gold-belt town of Placerville, is summarized on the SWRRH Map as "Sacramento & Placerville (1888)." The SP's route from Sacramento to Placerville became known as the SP Placerville Branch. At some point after 1888, shortline Camino, Placerville & Lake Tahoe extended the line 7 miles east from Placerville to Camino to support lumber operations (not shown separately on the SWRRH Map). The SP Placerville Branch was used to haul forest products and was in service until about the 1980's. Sometime after the 1980's, the former S&P (1888) trackage was detached from the SV (1856), as seen in this photo, and the 7 miles of tracks east of Placerville, i.e. the shortline Camino, Placerville & Lake Tahoe trackage, was removed. The trackage between Folsom (this location) and Placerville is under the ownership of the second Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad, which is restoring the line and running excursions using equipment from the California State Railroad Museum.

Westward view of the Gold Line running down the center of Folsom Boulevard, today's successor to the SV (1856), a half mile south of the end of track in downtown Folsom. The rusty line in the foreground is the south branch of the wye for the SP Placerville Branch. Construction of the branch started here in 1863 under the moniker Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad. The north branch of the wye is cut back even farther than this branch.



Northeastward view, same location as previous. This is the south branch of the wye for the beginning of the line shown on the SWRRH Map as the Sacramento & Placerville (1888), and its successor -- the second Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad -- is putting on a gala event! This branch of the wye is used for storage of historic rolling stock owned by the railroad.



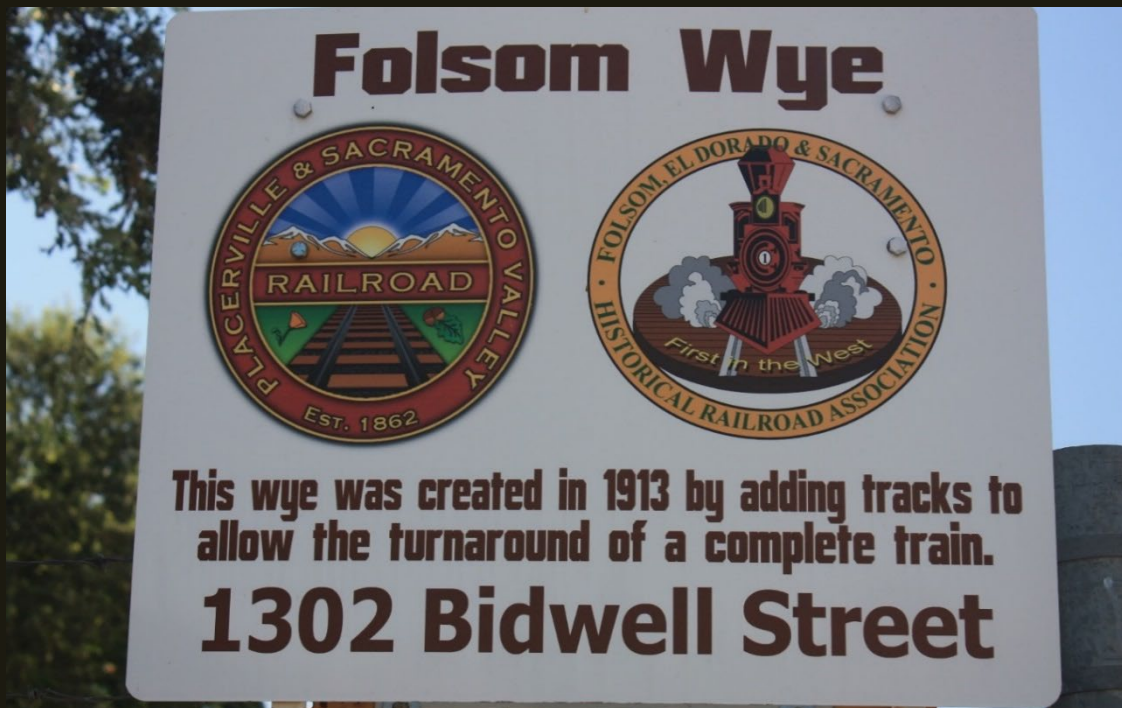
Closer view of the of rolling stock on the south branch of the wye for the S&P (1888).



Westward view of the south branch of the wye for the S&P (1888), 400 feet northeast of the previous location and outside the fenced area of car storage. The yellow vehicles are gas-powered rail-runners owned, I presume, by either today's Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad or El Dorado Western Railroad, both of which run excursions on the S&P (1888).



Westward view of the tip of the wye for the S&P (1888), 200 feet east of the previous location.



The wye was reconstructed in 1913 by the SP. I interpret "to allow the turnaround of a complete train" to mean that this junction was once a single switch and before 1913 the locomotive and tender would detach and turn around at the turntable in downtown Folsom.





Now we've moved 4 rail miles east-southeast from the wye and are looking northwestward (toward Folsom) at the S&P (1888).