



Representation of the Sacramento Valley Railroad by Artist, George Mathis.

THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY RAILROAD

California's first railroad, the Sacramento Valley Railroad (SVRR), was incorporated on August 16, 1852. The line was surveyed by Theodore Judah, who went on to greater fame as the surveyor of the Central Pacific's Sierra route. The original line was 22.9 miles long and was laid to a gauge of five feet. Although the line was opened to Folsom on January 1, 1856, the formal opening celebration did not occur until February 22, 1856. In 1859, SVRR built a twelve mile branch from Perkins Station to the Sacramento River, known locally as the Freeport Railroad. Later, this branch was abandoned by the Central Pacific Rail-

road, which had purchased the SVRR on August 16, 1865. Also in 1865, the sizeable shops of the Sacramento Valley Railroad were dismantled by the Central Pacific and moved to Sacramento and the line was relaid to standard 4' 8½" gauge.

The western terminus of the SVRR was at Second and R Streets in Sacramento. Much of the line is still in existence today. Beginning at the terminus, the line goes east up R Street and joins the Southern Pacific's main valley line to Stockton at Brighton, under the U.S. Highway 50 Bridge. Beyond Brighton, the line, known as the Southern Pacific's Placerville Branch, parallels Folsom Boulevard to Folsom, California. A plaque on the corner of the warehouse south of the tracks at Third and R Streets commemorates this railroad.

MAP

Showing the location of

SACRAMENTO VALLEY RAILROAD.

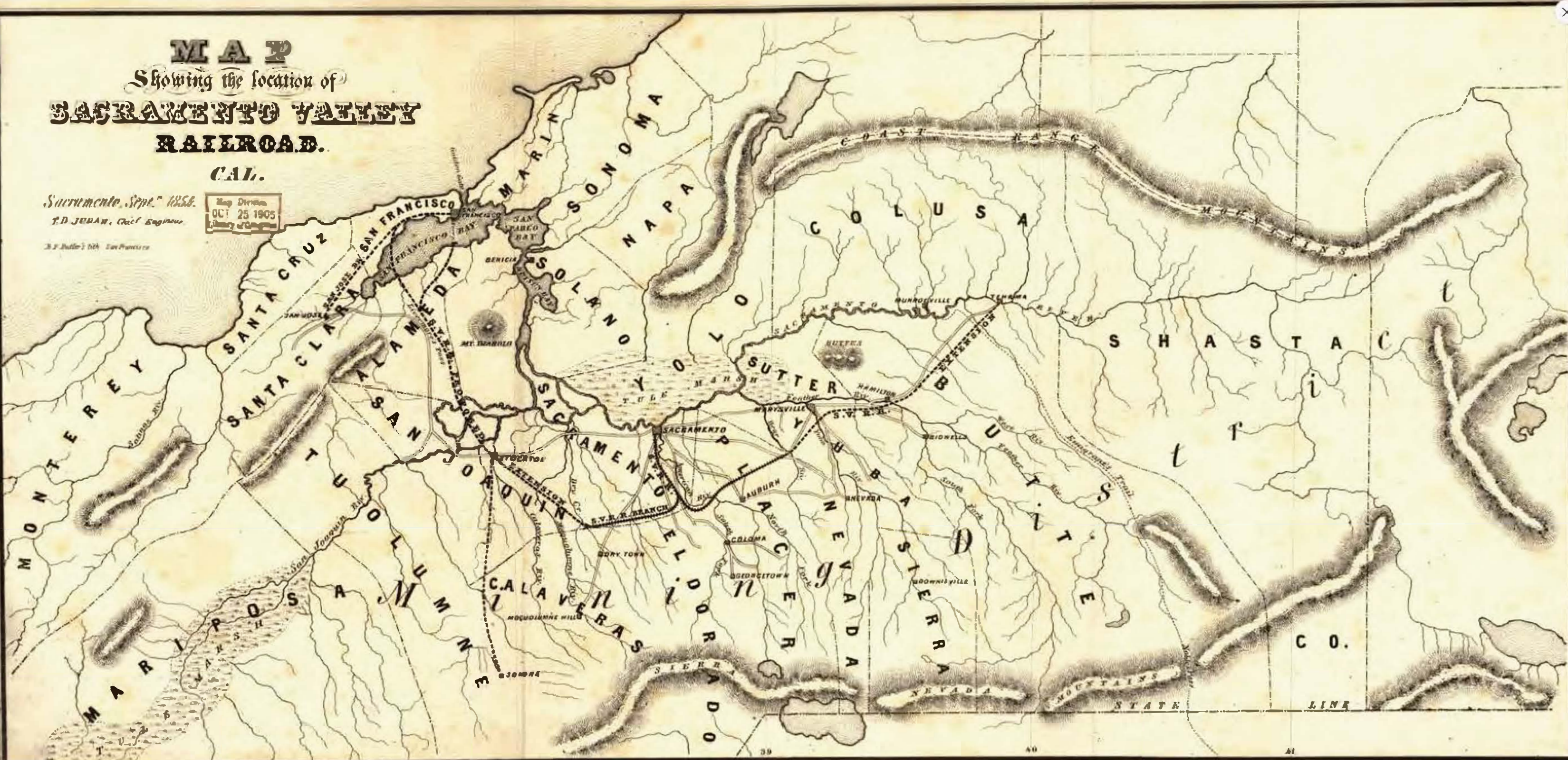
Cal.

Sacramento, Sept. 1858.

T. D. JUDAN, Chief Engineer.

J. P. Butler & Co. San Francisco

Map Division
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Sacramento Valley Railroad

"First in the West"

In 1852, shortly after the Gold Rush, forward-thinking businessmen led by Charles Wilson incorporated the Sacramento Valley Railroad (SVRR), the first railroad west of Missouri. Wilson hired 28-year old Theodore Judah to design the alignment which runs along R Street in Sacramento and the open flat land that is today's Folsom Boulevard.

Built in 1855-1856 along the south bank of the American River with eventual plans to continue over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the 23-mile SVRR was constructed from English iron, 5-foot gauge rails laid two blocks at a time. By January 1856, the SVRR had reached Granite City (today's Folsom), and Judah was off to larger projects with the famed Big Four and what would become the Transcontinental Railroad.

Meanwhile, passing through rich farmland and open prairie, local railroad stations were soon established along the SVRR at Routier, Mills and Citrus to enable Rancho Cordova farmers to get their produce to market.

In 1862, during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act, spurring the creation of the nation's first transcontinental railroad. Bypassed by the newly incorporated Central Pacific Railroad constructed from Sacramento over Donner Pass to the north, the SVRR built its final extension -- the Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad (built 1863-1865), from Folsom to Placerville, in a failed attempt to beat their rival over the mountains and fulfill SVRR's original vision.

Known as the Southern Pacific "Placerville Branch" since 1898, and in continuous operation since 1856, the Union Pacific Railroad still carries freight along a portion of this route. During the 1950s through the 1970s, the rail supported Cold War and Space Race efforts at both Mather AFB and Aerojet, making Rancho Cordova something of a Cold War boomtown. The historic Mills Station Building was relocated and rebuilt, and light rail transit service was opened to the Mather/Mills Station in 2002 by Sacramento Regional Transit to serve a burgeoning Rancho Cordova job center, further evolving the economic importance of rail along the Rancho Cordova Heritage Corridor.

American Society of Civil Engineers
Sacramento Section

Local Historic Civil Engineering Landmark

Sacramento Valley Railroad

References

<u>Sacramento Valley Railroad (1852-1877)</u>	<u>Sacramento Valley Railroad (SAV)- Patriot Rail</u>	<u>The Historic Placerville Branch</u>
<u>Sacramento Valley Railroad "First in the West"</u>	<u>Maps of Theodore Judah</u>	