**[A look back: Kite Shaped Track rail line](http://www.pe.com/2011/09/17/a-look-back-kite-shaped-track-rail-line/" \o "A look back: Kite Shaped Track rail line)**

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September 17, 2011 at 11:38 pm



The Kite Shaped Track was a rail line that “looped” along a  
158-mile figure eight configuration from the Santa Fe rail yards in  
Los Angeles to Mentone and back. It provided both freight and  
passenger service.

The line began after the Santa Fe Railroad came to San  
Bernardino in 1885. Historian Kay Beattie wrote that after that,  
prominent Redlands citizens started planning a branch line for the  
east valley. They raised more than $42,000 to buy land for a depot  
and rights of way. The line was built in 1888 from San Bernardino  
to Redlands, and then extended to Mentone.

Railroad officials continued the line back from Mentone to San  
Bernardino through Highland. The configuration made a loop in the  
valley.

The line was scenic, running along the southern rim of the San  
Gabriel Mountains from Los Angeles through Pasadena, San Dimas,  
Claremont, Cucamonga, Rialto and San Bernardino. The loop continued  
from the Third Street Santa Fe yards into Redlands.

The track had stops in Mentone, East Highland, Highland, Patton,  
West Highland (Del Rosa at the time), Shandin Hills, back to San  
Bernardino, then on to Colton, Highgrove, Riverside, Corona,  
Richfield, Placentia, Fullerton, La Mirada, Whittier and Los  
Angeles.

Railroads helped promote land development and immigration to the  
state. In 1886, a rate war between the Southern Pacific and Santa  
Fe railroads resulted in a huge jump in train travel. Tourists  
flooded in and some of them stayed, growing the state population by  
almost 348,000 people between 1880 and 1890.

The Kite Shaped Track drew tourists to the San Bernardino Valley  
by advertising: No Scene Twice Seen. The loop brought goods and  
mail to all stations. The loop made it easy for locals to go into  
town to shop, leaving behind the old horse and buggy. In 1891, one  
Redlands newspaper advertised a 60-ride book of tickets for about  
12&#xbd; cents a ride.

Special trains were run from Redlands to take people to the  
theater in San Bernardino and to the beaches in the summer.  
Typically, three train cars were used on the loop, leaving every  
two hours. As the train’s popularity grew, depots were enlarged to  
accommodate the travelers.

From a boxcar office in 1888 in Redlands, the depot grew to a  
grand depot in 1909 that was 311 feet long and 36 feet wide.

The loop helped build the citrus industry, with 40 packinghouses  
along the route. Citrus growers called the loop the Golden  
Horseshoe for that reason.

While passenger service on the Kite Shaped Track ended in 1938,  
freight service continued until the early 1970s.

The Santa Fe Railroad tore up the nearly 100-year-old tracks in  
1981. Two depots remain, one in the Patton area on Highland Ave.  
and one in Redlands on Orange St. Some of the tracks, which were  
made in an iron plant in Germany, went to build tracks in Mexico,  
and many railroad ties went into homeowners’ gardens.

