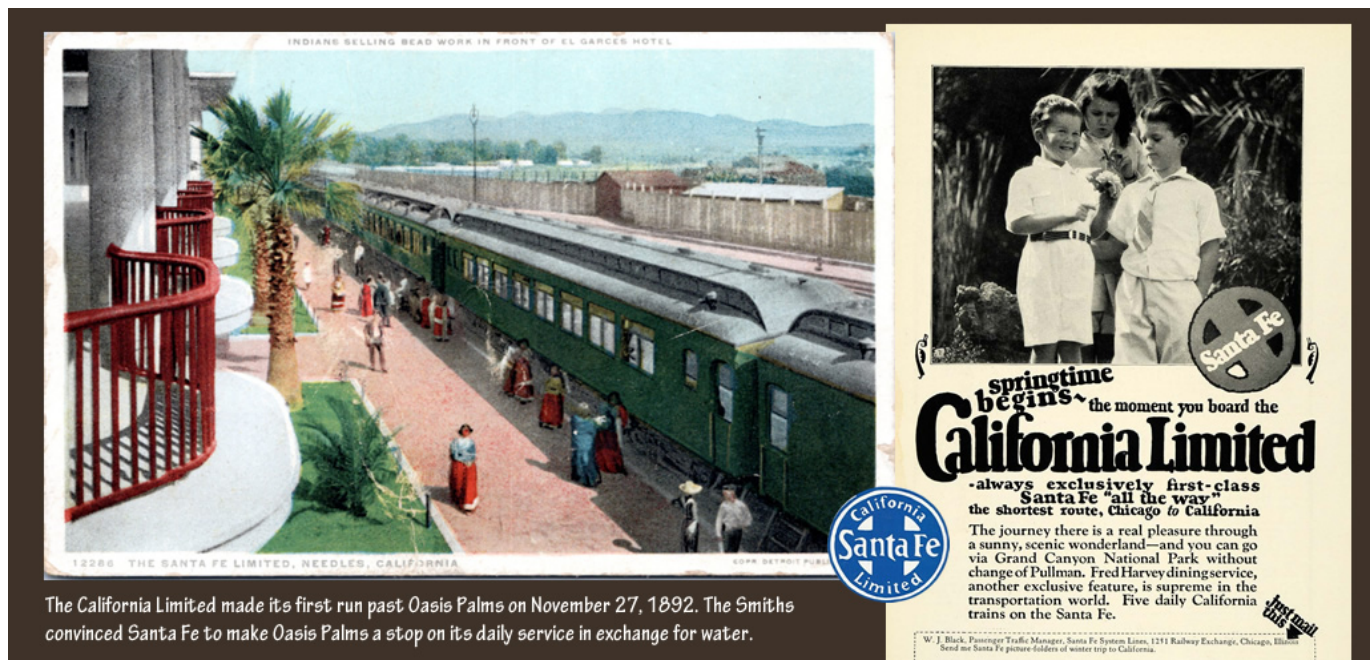


1892 – Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Launch the California Limited

The Santa Fe California Limited was billed as the “*Finest Train West of Chicago*,” and embarked on its inaugural journey from Chicago to Los Angeles on November 27, 1892. This ambitious transcontinental route was the brainchild of AT&SF president Allen Manvel, who envisioned it as a means to symbolize the completion of the fundamental Santa Fe railway system. Manvel believed that this venture could not only attract business but also elevate the prestige of the railroad by offering a daily first-class service from Chicago to the vibrant West Coast.

As the California Limited made its daily voyage, it would pass by Oasis Palms, a mere 10 miles north of the town. However, with only a brief water stop in Cadiz, the California Limited carried a wealth of potential business opportunities past Oasis Palms. Emmet and Jackson Smith recognized that they held the key to capitalizing on this potential bonanza, and it all revolved around one critical resource: water.



In the world of steam engines and arid railroad towns nestled in the desert, water was the lifeblood, and Oasis Palms had an abundant supply. During that era, Santa Fe boasted one of the largest and most visible fleets of water tanker cars on the railways. Santa Fe's practice involved filling these tanker cars at reservoirs and public water sources and transporting them to remote towns scattered across the eastern California and Arizona deserts. There, they played a crucial role in replenishing water towers to feed thirsty steam engines, or they could be stationed in sidings for swift delivery, ensuring that a railroad town's water supply remained uninterrupted. As the volume of trains traversing the Santa Fe line surged, so did the demand for water.

On December 1, 1895, as the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway emerged from receivership and [Edward Payson Ripley](#), became Santa Fe's new president. After the financial scandals that brought on the railroad's bankruptcy in the earlier part of the decade, Ripley had his work cut out for him to restore the public opinion of the railroad. As good fortune would have it, Ripley also happened to be Emmet Smith's brother-in-law. Emmet's wife Susan Harding Smith (1846-1934) was the sister of Ripley's wife Frances Emma Ripley (born Harding).

In 1896, Emmet Smith successfully persuaded Ripley to construct a spur line to the east of Cadiz. Emmet convinced Ripley this strategic addition would enable Santa Fe trains to access Oasis Palms and fill their water tanker cars for use at various stops in the Mojave Desert. Smith made a compelling case, highlighting the added benefit that the trains could also transport larger quantities of gold ore from the Barco mine to nearby Daggett for processing. In exchange for this mutually advantageous arrangement, which included commercial opportunities and access to water, Ripley agreed to build the spur line and designate Oasis Palms as a daily stop for the prestigious California Limited.