



The Los Angeles & Independence Railroad Company was incorporated in January 1875, so build a line east from Santa Monica to San Bernardino, then north to Independence, California, via Cajon Pass to serve the Cerro Gordo Silver Mines. Local ranchers who were anxious to have access to a railroad provided the right-of-way between Los Angeles and Santa Monica. The LA&I opened its 16.67-mile line between Los Angeles and the wharf at Santa Monica (near this location) on October 17, 1875, with two trains a day running between Santa Monica and LA. When the LA&I was completed to LA, southern California still had no access to the national rail network, but the Southern Pacific Railroad was building north from LA and would complete its line to Sacramento and the Central Pacific-Union Pacific (1869) transcontinental line in the following year (1876).

The SP refused to allow the LA&I to cross the SP main line at downtown LA and the LA&I never went any farther east. On July 4, 1877, the SP acquired the LA&I, which became the SP Santa Monica Branch. In 1891, the SP extended the existing wharf to allow access to larger ships and ship-to-shore offloading, making the line a freight and passenger hauler of growing importance. However, the U.S. Government's 1899 decision to build a breakwater at San Pedro and create the Port of Los Angeles effectively doomed Santa Monica's future as a commercial shipping center. The SP leased the former LA&I line and Santa Monica wharf to the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad, a forerunner of the Pacific Electric Railway. The wharf was demolished in 1913. The right-of-way was purchased by Los Angeles Metrolink in 1990 and is now used for the Expo Line of Metrolink's light rail system.

Eastward view at Santa Monica, California. The straight tracks in the distance are on the LA&I (1875) alignment. The curved track in the foreground is a new alignment to today's Metrolink Station and the end of track.



Westward view at Santa Monica, same location as previous. The curved track is a new alignment to today's Metrolink Station and the end of track. The archway in the distance is the entrance to today's Santa Monica pier; the original wharf was a little to the right (north) of the current pier.