



In 1911, the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad started constructing its St. Thomas Branch from Moapa (this location), which lies on its mainline between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles (SPLA&SL [1905]). By March 1912, construction was completed to St. Thomas, a Mormon agricultural community established in the 1860's at the confluence of the Virgin and Muddy rivers. During the 1930's, following the construction of Hoover Dam (using the Los Angeles & Salt Lake Boulder City Branch [1931]; the SPLA&SL was shortened to LA&SL in 1916), the waters of Lake Mead rose and by the late 1930's St. Thomas was submerged. In 1938 and 1939, the track was removed from St. Thomas back to the agricultural community of Overton, on the Muddy River, where the track currently ends at a silica sand plant.

Southwestward view of the SPLA&SL (1905) at Moapa, Nevada. The gleaming track in the foreground is the mainline (now Union Pacific), the parallel track to its left is a siding, and the switch connected to the siding at the far left is the west branch of the wye for the SPLA&SL St. Thomas Branch (1912).





Eastward view a few steps south of previous location. The same mainline and siding are to the left and in the center distance, where the siding splits into an additional siding. The west branch of the wye for the SPLA&SL St. Thomas Branch is in the foreground. The fill grade for the east branch of the wye is in the right distance. Note the rail cars lined up on the siding.





Southwestward view of the SPLA&SL (1905), 600 feet northeast of the previous location. The west branch of the wye for the SPLA&SL St. Thomas Branch (1912) is at the far end of the dirt area on the left. The same line of cars is on the siding, with rail-to-truck loading facilities.



While I was there, a truck showed up to show us how the rail-to-track loading facilities work. I suspect they are loading silica sand. A topo map labels the sidings as “Moapa Siding.” The rail in front of the truck is the east branch of the wye for the SPLA&SL St. Thomas Branch (1912).





Northward view of the east branch of the wye for the SPLA&SL St. Thomas Branch (1912) where it joins the siding for the SPLA&SL (1905). I think the gravel covering of the track is temporary.





Northwestward view of the tip of the wye for the SPLA&SL St. Thomas Branch (1912). The same cars are lined up on a siding for the SPLA&SL (1905).





Southwestward close-up of the converging tracks at the tip of the wye. Note that the bracket for connecting the rails is bent to accommodate rails of two different weights, the rail to the right being the lighter of the two rails.





Southeastward view of the switch at the tip of the wye, where the SPLA&SL St. Thomas Branch (1912) heads southeast toward Overton and St. Thomas. The pile of ties testifies to recent tie replacement work.