



In 1923, the Southern Pacific Railroad built southeastward from its SP (1876) mainline at Bakersfield to the agricultural center of Arvin. The SP Arvin Branch crosses flat land with no topography to contend with and could have been a straight 11-mile track from Bakersfield to Arvin, but instead followed property lines based on section lines. Thus, the railroad alignment heads due south 7 miles from Bakersfield, then turns 90 degrees left and heads due east for 5 miles, then turns 90 degrees right and heads due south for 4 miles to Arvin (total 16 miles). The line services agricultural and petroleum areas southeast of Bakersfield and is now part of the San Joaquin Valley Railroad, which owns several branch lines in the southern Central Valley of California.

Northward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), 6 miles south of Bakersfield. Note the very flat land, which was a lake during the Pleistocene (ice ages).





Southward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), same location 6 miles south of Bakersfield. There is a siding to the left (east) of the main track, probably for an agricultural facility that has been removed, and an agricultural facility to the right of the track where another siding probably once existed to service the facility.





Northwestward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), one mile south of the previous location where the line makes its 90-degree turn to the east. Note the orchard on the left.





Southeastward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), same location as previous.





Westward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), 300 feet southeast of the previous location, still in the 90-degree turn to the east.





Eastward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), same location as previous, where the 90-degree curve ends and the line straightens out to a due east alignment.





Closer eastward view of the sidings in the previous photo.





Westward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), 1.3 miles east of the curve at the previous location. The mainline is in the foreground, an agricultural siding ends in the right (north) foreground, and another siding splits off to the left of the mainline in the middle distance.





Eastward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), same location as previous, where the line crosses a small depression.





Northward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), same location as previous. There is a vertical wooden post on the far left, a few feet beyond the track. That is a post for the railing of the bridge over the small depression in the previous photo. The water-filled ditch in the center middle distance is the East Side Canal, an irrigation diversion of the Kern River, which runs beneath the railroad, the small depression, and DiGiorgio Road (which is just behind the viewer).





Westward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), 3.4 miles east of the previous location. The orchard to the right (north) makes way for yet another agricultural siding.





Westward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), a quarter mile east of the previous location. The curved track to the right (north) is the east branch of a wye that leads 1,500 feet to a petroleum storage facility. The west branch of the wye splits from the mainline where the orchard starts to the right of the track in the left distance.





Southward view of the east branch of the wye, 500 feet northwest of the previous location. The track is obviously not being used.





Northwestward view of the east branch of the wye for the petroleum storage facility. The west branch of the wye is visible in the left middle distance. The tip of the wye is just out of sight behind some brush and enters the fenced facility immediately north of the tip.





Eastward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), 800 feet east of the wye.





Northwestward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), 900 feet east of the previous location, where the alignment makes its second and final 90-degree curve to head due south to Arvin. The tracks cross east-west-running DiGorgio Road.





Southeastward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), same location as previous, where the alignment makes its second and final 90-degree curve to head due south to Arvin. In the distance, the tracks cross north-south-running Tejon Highway.





Northward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), 3.5 miles south of previous location, on the south side of Arvin. There's a switch and the track splits; the track on the left continues due south for 0.5 mile and the track on the right turns due east for 0.5 mile then due south for 0.5 mile, all three alignments still following the property-boundary grid. First, we'll look down the left branch.





Southwestward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), a quarter mile south of the split in the track, looking at the White Wolf Potato Company.





Southward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), same location as previous. The White Wolf Potato Company is on the right and various warehouses, mostly for potatoes, line the right-of-way. I couldn't tell if any of these facilities still use the railroad or are even in business.





Northward view of the SP Arvin Branch (1923), a quarter mile south of the previous location and 0.5 miles south of the split in the track. The end of track is within the fenced area in the shadow at the right. The agricultural warehouses and loading facilities on the right are now a reclamation facility. The Gold Ribbon Potato Company warehouses and loading facilities of the Gold Ribbon Potato Company are just out of view on the left and appear to be out of business.







Now we've moved 0.5 mile east of the previous location, looking northward at the end of the other track at the split in the track. The large, fenced facility to the left (west) of the track is Grimmway Farms-Arvin, which is active and may still be a customer of the San Joaquin Valley Railroad.