



The San Manuel Arizona Railroad Company, often referred to as SMARRCO, was incorporated in 1953 to serve the San Manuel Copper Corporation's mine near San Manuel. SMARRCO's San Manuel Arizona Railroad was constructed southeastward from a junction with the Phoenix & Eastern (1904) at Hayden (Winkelman), where it crosses the Gila River and its tributary the San Pedro River at their confluence and then follows the San Pedro River southeastward to the smelter at San Manuel. The railroad was completed and began operations in 1955. SMARRCO built a second line, probably also in 1955, that runs northwestward 7 miles to the San Manuel copper mine. This line runs west of and at a higher elevation than the line from Hayden and forms a switchback at the smelter; the switchback to the mine is shown as part of the SMA (1955) on the SWRRH Map, but I could find no hard evidence of when or by whom it was constructed. The San Manuel mine ceased operations in 1999 and was permanently closed in 2003. In 2012 work was started to construct a new locomotive inspection and servicing shop and upgrade the 30 miles of mainline track between San Manuel and Hayden. The switchback line from the smelter to the mine was abandoned, probably in 2012 when the other railroad work was done, but information on the timing of the abandonment is lacking. In 2013 SMARRCO, including the upgraded SMA (1955) trackage, was purchased by Capstone Mining Corporation to support its other mining operations in the region. The railroad has since operated sporadically.

Westward view of a spectacular trestle that carries the SMA (1955) over a wash 6 miles north of the end of track at San Manuel. The bare hill in the upper right distance is part of the San Manuel copper mine, which is only a mile west of the trestle, but to gain the necessary elevation is 13 rail miles on the SMA (1955) via the abandoned switchback railroad to the mine.





Northwestward view of the SMA (1955), 2,000 feet south of the previous location. The trestle is just around the distant bend.





Southward view of the SMA (1955), same location as previous, showing the crossing of Arizona Highway 77. The valley to the left is the San Pedro River.







Southwestward view of the SMA (1955), just across the street from the previous location.





Northwestward view of the SMA (1955) at the current end of track at San Manuel. The buildings constitute the SMARRCO "Depot."







Southeastward view of the SMA (1955) at the same location as previous. This is the former site of the San Manuel smelter, which has been completely removed and the land re-graded, obliterating all evidence of the railroad. A topo map from 1986 shows the SMA (1955) extending another mile southeast through the facility. A quarter mile before the former end of track there was a single switch, the switchback for the railroad to the mine. The track was located a quarter mile due west from the switch, at which point there was a wye connecting to the line to the mine. All this has been obliterated by the regrading of the smelter site, but the abandoned grade leading to the mine emerges from the regraded area a half mile due west of this location and at a higher elevation (next photos).





Northwestward view of the SMA (1955) switchback line to the San Manuel copper mine, a half mile west of the previous location where the grade emerges from the regraded smelter site. It's hard to tell in this view but this present dirt road is on a substantial fill grade.



Broken up slag is often used as ballast for mining railroads.





Culvert under the fill grade for the SMA (1955) switchback to the San Manuel copper mine, a few steps south of previous location.





Southward view of the SMA (1955) switchback line to the San Manuel copper mine, 5 miles northwest of the previous location.





Northward view of the SMA (1955) switchback line to the San Manuel copper mine, same location as previous, where the grade crosses under Arizona Highway 77. The mine and the former end of track are 2 miles north of here but there is no public access north of here.