



In 1878, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway's subsidiary, the New Mexico & Southern Pacific Railroad, entered New Mexico from Colorado via Raton Pass. From Raton Pass the NM&SP headed south through this location near Hebron and met the Southern Pacific at Deming, New Mexico, in 1881 (via another AT&SF subsidiary, the Rio Grande, Mexico & Pacific Railroad). This was the AT&SF's first transcontinental linkage (via the Southern Pacific [1881] west from Deming). After 1908, the Eastern Railway of New Mexico (1908), together with the AT&SF's Atlantic & Pacific Railroad (1883), became the AT&SF's (now BNSF's) primary transcontinental route. In 2006, the State of New Mexico purchased the segment of the NM&SP (1880) line between Raton Pass and Belen (including this location near Hebron); at Belen, the ERNM (1908) crosses the NM&SP (1880), with the BNSF retaining operating rights over the Raton Pass-Belen section (including this location near Hebron). Amtrak leases passenger service over the line for its Southwest Chief trains between Chicago and Los Angeles.

Southeastward view of the NM&SP (1880). The junction with the AT&SF Van Houten Branch (1902) at Hebron is 3 miles down the line from here.





Northwestward view of the NM&SP (1880) at the same location as previous. Note the underpass for US Hwy 64.





Westward view at the same location as previous, with the cut for the US Highway 64 underpass for the NM&SP (1880) in the foreground. The yellow arrow on the left points to a cut grade and the arrow on the right points to a fill grade. This is the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Railway (1907).

The St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Company was incorporated in New Mexico in 1905 and almost immediately formed the Swastika Fuel Company in Raton, whose purpose was to mine coal and other minerals in the area. To assure competitive rail service for their coal and coke traffic the company formed the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Railway. The line started at Raton, New Mexico, parallel to and about 200 feet west of the NM&SP (1880), which by 1905 was fully incorporated into the AT&SF, with a crossover track connecting the two railroads at Ration. Construction commenced in late 1905 and headed south from Raton, crossing the Dawson Railway (1903) at Colfax and arriving in 1906 at Cimarron, New Mexico, after having laid 50 miles of track. In 1907, the line was extended another 12 miles west from Cimarron to Ute Park, which became the western terminus of the SLRM&P. Also in 1907, SLRM&P built eastward; according to a 1914 topo map, the SLRM&P tracks at Raton headed due south, crossed the NM&SP (1880) at a point 2 miles south of Raton, then paralleled the NM&SP (1880) southward for another 5 miles where the SLRM&P constructed a wye called Clifton House. This wye was the starting point for the 1907 eastern extension of the SLRM&P, which ran 45 miles east from Clifton House to a connection with the Denver, Texas and Fort Worth (1888), which by 1907 was owned by the Colorado and Southern Railroad, at Des Moines, New Mexico (east of the Southwest Railroad History Map area). In 1907 the SLRM&P reached its maximum trackage of 120 miles, which included a few coal spurs.

The company sold coal under the Swastika brand and the railroad was known as the Swastika Route (note that the Swastika is an ancient Indian symbol and in the early 1900's had not yet been usurped by the Nazis). In 1913, after 6 years of operation, the company sold the SLRM&P (1907) to the AT&SF and in 1915 changed its name to the Rocky Mountain and Santa Fe Railway. Meanwhile, the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Company remained in the coal and other businesses and remained a major force in the coal development of the area until 1955, when it sold its holdings to the Kaiser Steel Corporation. All the SLRM&P (1907) trackage is now abandoned, a process that apparently commenced in the early 1940's and continued at least through the 1970's as the various coal mines were abandoned. Much of the land today is incorporated into the 923 square mile Vermejo Park Ranch.





Now we have moved 2 miles southwest of the previous location along US Hwy 64 and are looking eastward at the AT&SF Van Houten Branch (1902). This branch line connected to the NM&SP (1880) (AT&SF mainline) at a wye called Hebron, 2.2 rail miles down the line to the southeast.





Westward view of the AT&SF Van Houten Branch (1902) at the same location as previous (US Hwy 64 in the foreground). This branch line crosses the SLRM&P (1907) 2 miles up the line and continues another 3.5 miles northwestward to its terminus at Van Houten and its coal mine.