



The Arizona & South Eastern Railroad was built in 1888-1889 by Phelps-Dodge to connect its copper mines at Bisbee, Arizona, with the national rail network via the AT&SF-controlled New Mexico & Arizona Railroad (1882) at a junction called Fairbank. In early 1901, the A&SE built a branch line from Corta Junction (located 3 miles south of Bisbee) 20 miles east to its new smelter at Douglas. Later in 1901, the A&SE was renamed the El Paso & Southwestern Railroad, which in 1901-1902 built eastward from Douglas to El Paso (this line and the 20 mile A&SE line from Corta Junction to Douglas, are labeled EP&SW (1902) on the SWRRH map). In 1904, the EP&SW realigned the former A&SE track south of Bisbee to circumvent the Mule Mountains; the new alignment ran 3 miles south of Corta Junction and through this location 8 miles southeast of Bisbee.

The worldwide collapse of copper prices after World War I severely affected the mines and the EP&SW, and in 1924 the SP leased the entire EP&SW. The SP re-configured the EP&SW trackage to supplement its Sunset Route (1881), which became the SP's North Line between Tucson and El Paso and the EP&SW became the SP South Line. The SP purchased the EP&SW from Phelps-Dodge in 1955. In the early 1960's, the SP abandoned most of the South Line, leaving the trackage from Benson to Bisbee and through this location to Douglas. Around 1993, the SP sold the remaining trackage to the short line San Pedro & Southwestern Railroad, which operated freight and excursions for a while but in the early 2000's abandoned the line almost all the way back to Benson, including this location on the EP&SW (1904) re-alignment.

Northward view of a significant fill grade on the EP&SW (1904). The hills are the southern foothills of the Mule Mountains, which required a summit tunnel 2 miles east of this location (Crook Tunnel, see below).



Eastward view of the approach to the west entrance of the Crook Tunnel on the EP&SW (1904), 2 miles east of previous location. This section of the line was abandoned in July 2006.



Eastward view of the west entrance of the Crook Tunnel on the EP&SW (1904). On-line sources indicate the tunnel was built in 1902, but the entire re-alignment south of Bisbee was completed in 1904. Note that the west entrance is unfinished rock, whereas the east entrance is concrete.



Eastward view of the west entrance of the Crook Tunnel, showing detail of the slag ballast, which is essentially man-made obsidian (volcanic glass).



Eastward view of the west entrance of the Crook Tunnel on the EP&SW (1904), showing the unfinished rock entrance and the smoother outline of the concrete east entrance at the far end. The small trees are mesquite. The piece of a tie pictured below is all I could find of the EP&SW other than the grade and tunnel.





Westward view of the west entrance of the Crook Tunnel on the EP&SW (1904).



Eastward view of the EP&SW (1904) grade in the Crook Tunnel.



East entrance to the Crook Tunnel.





Northeastward view of the cut grade of the EP&SW (1904) just east of the Crook Tunnel.