



The development of the railway that became the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad began in 1871 when the Union Pacific-controlled Utah Southern Railroad began laying track southward from Salt Lake City. The US (1875) and a second UP subsidiary, the Utah Southern Railroad Extension, took up the work, completing trackage as far as Milford and the nearby mining town of Frisco, Utah, in 1880. By the end of the century, these and other lines had been absorbed into the Oregon Short Line Railroad, a larger UP subsidiary. Work on extending the Milford line southward began in 1889, but no tracks were actually laid, and resumed in 1899, when the route was completed as far as the Utah–Nevada border, with some grading completed into Nevada.

In 1900, William Andrews Clark acquired the struggling Los Angeles Terminal Railway and in 1901 reincorporated as the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad. Clark's forces began construction work in Nevada, along an existing OSL/UP grade, and a brief "railroad war" ensued before Clark and the UP called a truce in 1903. Their agreement called for Clark's railroad to acquire the existing OSL (US (1875) and USE (1880) tracks south of Salt Lake City and UP received a 50% interest in Clark's SPLA&SL. Construction of the remaining line proceeded rapidly to Daggett, California, where it connected to the AT&SF (SP Mojave Branch (1883)), and Clark negotiated trackage rights from Daggett to Riverside, California, on AT&SF (original California Southern (1885)) tracks over Cajon Pass. The Salt Lake–Los Angeles line was opened on May 1, 1905. Nearly the entire route traversed rugged and largely unpopulated desert terrain, but triggered the phenomenal growth of the city of Las Vegas (this location), thanks largely to Los Angelenos who rode the SPLA&SL to Las Vegas gambling halls. By 1921, the railroad's name had been shortened to the LA&SL and the UP acquired Clark's half of the railroad, after which the LA&SL lines were operated as part of the UP system.

Northeastward view of the SPLA&SL and the southern outskirts of Las Vegas. The mainline is on the left (west) and a long siding is on the right. The 9,000-foot Sheep Range, a Basin-and-Range normal fault, looms in the distant haze.





In 1928, the Federal Government appropriated \$165 Million for the construction of the Boulder Canyon project, soon renamed Boulder Dam and later Hoover Dam. To support the project, the LA&SL in 1931 constructed a branch line from its SPLA&SL (1905) mainline at Boulder Junction (this location) just south of Las Vegas eastward to Boulder City. To directly support dam construction, the U.S. Government Construction Railroad Branch extended the line from Boulder City to the dam site on the Colorado River, which required five tunnels to negotiate Boulder Canyon. The construction railroad grade was abandoned and is now a walking trail. UP decommissioned the portion of the line from Boulder City to Henderson in 1985 and donated the land and track to the Nevada State Railroad Museum. The museum operates an excursion train on the donated tracks under the name "Nevada Southern Railway."

Eastward view of the SPLA&SL (two tracks in foreground), same location as previous. The track in the right distance is the south branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931). The north branch of the wye has been disconnected, which is why it is not visible in the previous photo. The dark pyramid is the Luxor Hotel.





Southward view of the SPLA&SL (two tracks in foreground), same location as previous. The track to the far left is the south branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931).





Southwestward view of the SPLA&SL a few steps east of previous location. The track in the foreground is the south branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931).





Another southwestward view of the south branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931), with its connection with the SPLA&SL (later LA&SL and now UP) in the distance.





Northeastward view of the south branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931). The New York New York Hotel is in the left distance.







Northeastward view of the south branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931). The north branch of the wye is barely visible in the left distance in front of the blue graffiti.





Westward view of the two branches of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931).





Eastward view of the two branches of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931), same location as previous. The single track heads east to Boulder City in the right distance.





Another eastward view of the east tip of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931).





Southeastward view of the north branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931).





Northwestward view of the north branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931). The track is cut just to the left of the chain-link fence and the SPLA&SL/LA&SL/UP mainline is on a higher grade in the distance.





Closer view of the cut end of the north branch of the wye for the LA&SL Boulder City Branch (1931).