



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 was completed in 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 (not shown on map) 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 was operated as part of the UP system.

In 1907, the SPLA&SL built the Las Vegas & Tonopah Railroad to access the new gold strikes around Tonopah, Nevada. The line ran northwestward almost 200 miles from Las Vegas through the boom town of Rhyolite to Goldfield, Nevada, where it connected to the Goldfield Railroad (1905) to access Tonopah. The LV&T was abandoned in 1918.

Northeastward view of the SPLA&SL (1905) (later LA&SL and now UP) at Las Vegas. Three tracks are present; the graffiti-decorated cars are on a siding, the mainline is visible beyond the cars (visible looking under the cars), and another siding is in the foreground. According to a 1908 topo map, the LV&T connected to the SPLA&SL just about in the foreground of this photo via a single switch to the SPLA&SL northbound (not a complete wye). A 1952 topo map shows the connection completely obliterated, replaced by a turning wye that is also long gone.





Northeastward view of the SPLA&SL (1905) a quarter mile northeast of the previous location. The mainline is on the right, the only remaining siding is in the foreground, and a rusty industrial spur heads to the left (west).





Southwestward view of the SPLA&SL (1905), same location as previous, showing the mainline (left), the siding (foreground), and switch to an industrial spur to the right (west). The spur is present on a 1952 topo map and we'll explore that spur a little more. The skyline of downtown Las Vegas looms above all. I suspect the Main Street Station Hotel refers to the SPLA&SL Las Vegas Station, which is long gone.





Northeastward view of the pre-1952 industrial spur; the SPLA&SL (1905) is in the distance. Old track in the foreground hints at possible additional spurs.





Eastward view of the pre-1952 industrial spur; a short siding is in the distance and a switch for another siding is in the foreground.





Westward view of the pre-1952 industrial spur, with a siding and remnants of a second siding. The spur goes to a single track in the distance.



Westward view of the end-of-track of the pre-1952 industrial spur, 3,500 feet west of its junction with the SPL&SL/LA&SL/UP mainline.