



In 1904, the Southern Pacific completed its Inter-California or "Inter-Cal" line. The Inter-Cal branched from the SP's Sunset Route at Niland, California, ran southward through this location at El Centro and entered Mexico at Mexicali, Baja California, then ran 50 miles east to re-connect with the Sunset Route at Araz Junction, about 5 miles west of Yuma, Arizona. It was this railroad that the SP used to block the Colorado River flood waters into the Imperial Valley that formed the Salton Sea (253 feet below sea level) in 1907. The entire length of the Inter-Cal in both Mexico and the U.S. traverses the rich agricultural lands of the Colorado River Delta, irrigated by diversion of the entire flow of the Colorado River, which no longer has surface water flow into the Sea of Cortez. In 1948, a few miles of the Inter-Cal grade in Mexico was used by the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California, and in the 1950's the remainder of the Mexico line (east of the 1948 junction with the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California) and the few U.S. miles near Yuma were removed. The line from Niland to the Mexican border, including this location, is still in use by Union Pacific.

Northward view of the SP Inter-Cal (1904) at El Centro, California. The mainline is the shiny track in the foreground, the tracks to the right are sidings leading to the Holton Interurban Railway (1904) and the track to the left is a siding for the junction with the San Diego & Arizona Railway (1919); we'll explore both junctions, starting with the latter.



Northward view a few steps west of the previous location. The SP Inter-Cal line is the straight track to the right and the north branch of the SD&A (1919) wye is in the left foreground.



In 1907 John D. Spreckels, co-founder of Spreckels Sugar, broke ground at San Diego, California, for a railroad that would give the city a direct route east. Financial backing for the San Diego & Arizona Railway came from Spreckels and from E. H. Harriman of the SP, which sought to break the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway's monopoly on San Diego traffic. The route of the railroad was south from San Diego across the Mexican border to Tijuana, east to Tecate via the subsidiary Tijuana & Tecate Railway, back to the U.S. and north over the Tecate Divide, then through Carrizo Gorge to a connection with SP Inter-Cal (1904) at this location in El Centro. It was slowed by a revolution in Mexico and a ban on new construction during World War I, the last spike was finally driven in 1919. The SD&A was one of the most expensive ever built in the U.S., costing almost \$19 million in 1919. In the Carrizo Gorge, the railroad crosses 14 trestles and goes through 21 tunnels in only 11 miles. From San Diego to El Centro, the railroad rises and falls over 3,700 feet.

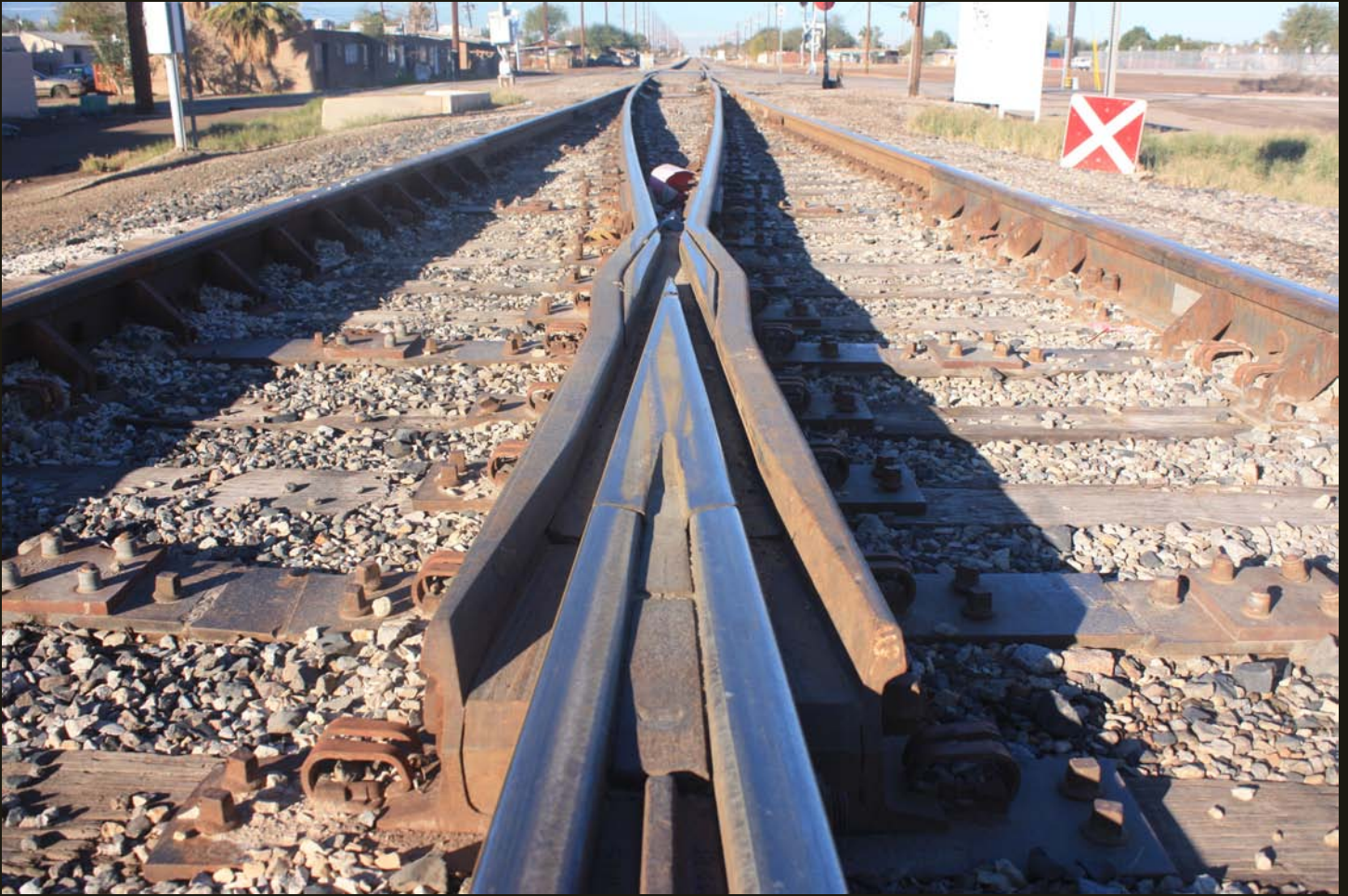
Southward view of the SP Inter-Cal (1904) at the same location as previous. The wye for the SD&A (1919) is just to the right (west) of the tank car.



Closer view of the SD&A (1919) wye, same tank car as in previous photo.



Eastward view of the west tip of the SD&A (1919) wye; the SP Inter-Cal line runs across the image in the distance.



Westward at the tip of the SD&A (1919) wye, where the line heads west to San Diego.



Northward view of the SD&A (1919) wye, whose south branch is on the far left. The SP Inter-Cal main line is the less rusty track in the foreground.



Southward view at the same location as previous. The south branch of the SD&A (1919) wye is on the far right.



In 1904, the Holton Interurban Railway built east from a junction with the SP Inter-Cal (1904) at this location in El Centro and ran 11 miles eastward to the town of Holtville. Both the Holton Interurban Railway and Holtville were named for W.F. Holt, their mutual founder. In 1925, the SP purchased the HI and in 1930 extended the line almost 30 miles north from Holtville to Calipatria, where it re-connected with the SP Inter-Cal. This line became known as the SP "Imperial Valley Branch" and carried significant amounts of hay, wheat, sugar beets, carrots, cattle, melons, lettuce, onions, and other vegetables on the Pacific Fruit Express and other trains. The line was abandoned in stages from the 1960's to the 1990's, and now all but the first two miles east of El Centro is gone.

This is a northward view at the same location as the previous two photos, but a few steps to the east. The SD&A (1919) wye is in the center distance. The track in the foreground, diverging away from the SP Inter-Cal mainline, is the north branch of the wye for the HI (1904).



Southward view from the same location as the previous photo. The track in the foreground is the north branch of the wye for the HI (1904), with a switch to a spur. The engine in the right distance is on the south branch of the wye for the HI, and the wall of the huge building behind the engine is curved parallel to the south branch of the HI wye.



The spur in the previous photo leads to this abandoned warehouse.



Westward View of the same spur and crossing as the previous photo. The HI (1904) wye is in the left distance, and the big building in the left distance is the one with the curved wall.



Westward view of the east tip of the HI (1904) wye.



Eastward view of the HI (1904) wye. Note that just behind the switch for the wye, a track comes in from the right for sidings south of the track, but is disconnected from the mainline. Just beyond that, the track splits into active sidings for the facilities in the center distance. Current end of the track is about 2 miles east of this location.



Westward view of the disconnected track to sidings south of the HI track.



Westward view; the engine in the distance is on the south branch of the HI (1904) wye. Note the building wall curved parallel to the south branch of the wye.



Northward view of the south branch of the HI (1904) wye, with the same parked the engine as in the previous photo. The SP Inter-Cal (1904) is on the left.



Southward view of the SP Inter-Cal (1904) at the same location as previous. The switch for the south branch of the HI (1904) wye is in foreground.