



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, 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 1923, the Blue Diamond Branch was built from the LA&SL's mainline at Arden (this location) westward for 10 miles to a gypsum plant near Blue Diamond. This line was abandoned, most likely in the 1980's, when the gypsum plant started using trucks for their shipments. The first mile or so of the branch line was left in place for car storage.

Eastward view of the starting point of the LA&SL Blue Diamond Branch (1923) at Arden. The cars that run across that image in the distance are on a siding of the SPLA&SL (1905)(now UP). The switch in the foreground is the western tip of the wye for the Blue Diamond Branch. Note the locomotives stored on the south branch of the wye.



Eastward view of the wye for the LA&SL Blue Diamond Branch (1923), a few steps west of the previous location, where the front of another stored locomotive is visible.



Westward view of the Blue Diamond Branch; the front of this locomotive is visible in the previous photo. The snowcapped Spring Mountains are visible in the left distance.



Eastward view of the LA&SL Blue Diamond Branch (1923). The locomotives in the previous photo are visible in the distance, as are the cars on the mainline siding.



Westward view of the LA&SL Blue Diamond Branch (1923), same location as previous. A siding splits off the line and is used for car storage. The 11,000-foot Spring Mountains are visible in the distance; Blue Diamond and the gypsum deposits are in the foothills.



Westward view of the LA&SL Blue Diamond Branch and siding, west of the previous location and the stored cars. The track ends a quarter mile farther up the line.