



On its eastward push to build the southernmost of the five 1855 Pacific Railroad surveys, the Southern Pacific reached Yuma, Arizona, in November 1878, Tucson in March 1880, and this location west of Mescal, Arizona, a few months later, finally reaching El Paso, Texas, in May 1881. The line was completed as a transcontinental route in 1883, when the route east of the map area through Texas to New Orleans was completed. Mescal is on the high point of the line between the Santa Cruz River (Tucson) and the San Pedro River (Benson).

Westward view of the double track SP Sunset Route (1881) (now Union Pacific) a half mile east of Mescal. Only a slight cut is needed for the grade on the approach to the flat topography at the summit at Mescal.



In 1888-1889, Phelps Dodge built the Arizona & South Eastern Railroad to connect its copper mines at Bisbee, Arizona, with the national rail network via the AT&SF's New Mexico & Arizona (1882) at Fairbank. The A&SE expanded northward from Fairbank in 1894, parallel to and just west of the NM&A line to join directly with the SP Sunset Route (1881) at Benson. In 1901, the A&SE was renamed the El Paso & Southwestern Railroad, which extended the line east to El Paso in 1902 and to Tucson from Fairbank in 1912 to bypass the SP entirely between Tucson and El Paso. 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 abandoned the EP&SW (1912) from Fairbank to the line crossing at Mescal, probably in the 1960's when much of the EP&SW was abandoned, and used parts of the EP&SW (1912) alignment from Mescal (this location) west to Tucson.

Southward view of the EP&SW; viewer is standing on the SP (now Union Pacific) tracks. The high berm on the left is a fill grade for the EP&SW (1912), which once connected to an overpass that carried the EP&SW (1912) over the SP (1881) then continued north of and parallel to the SP alignment. The cut grade in the center was built by the SP in the 1920's (not separate from the EP&SW on the SWRRH Map); it branches from the EP&SW (1912) alignment 2,000 feet to the south and brings the grade to the SP track at the same elevation to make the connection for the SP's South Line. After this connection was made, the SP (1881) line east of this location (previous photo) became the SP North Line.



Northeastward view of the end of the EP&SW (1912) fill grade for the Mescal overpass. Note the black slab ballast (upper right) high above the SP (1881) North Line (tracks to the left). The San Pedro River is between here and the distant Dragoon Mountains.



Northwestward view of the end of the EP&SW (1912) fill grade for the Mescal overpass (foreground) and the SP's 1920's re-alignment to the left and lower down (same level as the SP tracks, visible in upper left). From the 1920's until 1960's, that lower grade is where the SP's South Line split from the North Line to rejoin in El Paso.



Northwestward view of SP's 1920's re-alignment; the SP tracks are where the utility pole is.



Southeastward view of the EP&SW (1912) fill grade for the Mescal overpass (foreground) and the SP's 1920's re-alignment to the right and lower down (in the cut grade on this side of the house).



Southeastward view of the SP's 1920's re-alignment; the EP&SW (1912) fill grade for the Mescal overpass is to the left and coming down in elevation. These alignments merge about 1,000 feet farther southeast.



Southeastward view of the EP&SW (1912)/SP South Line 6 miles southeast of Mescal.





Now we are back at Mescal looking north, a few hundred feet west of the former overpass for the EP&SW (1912) and the SP's 1920's re-alignment for the South Line. The SP (1881) is in the foreground, and cut on the ridgeline is the parallel, abandoned EP&SW (1912).



Eastward view of the EP&SW (1912) cut grade, a quarter mile west of Mescal. The SP/UP double track is off to the right (south).



Westward view of the EP&SW (1912) cut grade, filled with tumbleweed, same location as previous. The parallel SP/UP double track is off to the left (near power poles).



Westward view of the SP/UP double track one mile west of Mescal. The track to the left continues into the distance on the SP (1881) alignment. The track to the right is a 1920's vintage crossover that joins the EP&SW (1912) alignment just out of sight to the right and uses the EP&SW (1912) for 20 miles before the two routes rejoin.