



In 1905-1907, the Pacific Coast Borax Company constructed the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad to transport borax from Death Valley, California, to coastal markets, and to reach the booming gold fields around Tonopah, Nevada. The T&T was constructed northward from the (SP-built) AT&SF mainline at Ludlow, California, through this location at Death Valley Junction, California, to the town of Gold Center, Nevada, where it connected with the Bullfrog Goldfield Railroad (1907). The T&T accessed Death Valley borax via a 7-mile branch, also built in 1907, which ran from the T&T mainline at Death Valley Junction (this location) west to the Lila C Mine with the station named "Ryan." The T&T reached neither Tonopah nor ocean "tidewater." From 1908 to 1914, the Bullfrog Goldfield Railroad was combined into the T&T, and then combined again in 1918 after the demise of the Las Vegas & Tonopah Railroad (1907).

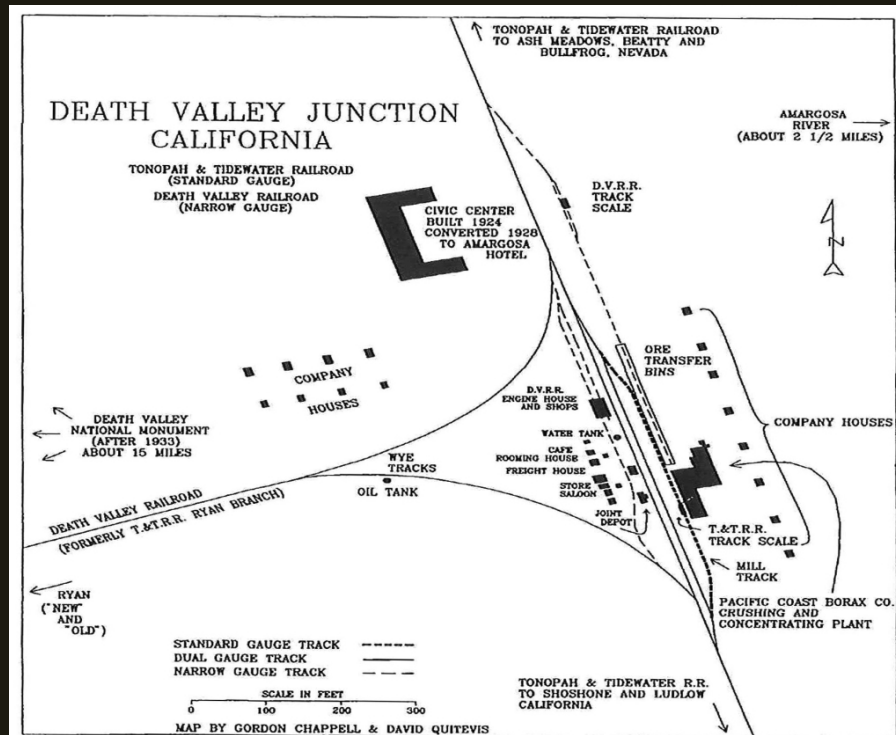
In 1914, the Death Valley Railroad built a narrow gauge line from a junction with the standard-gauge T&T Ryan Branch at a location called Horton, 4 miles southwest of Death Valley Junction (this location), westward about 17 miles to ship borax from Devar, later renamed "Ryan." The track and equipment that was used in building the DV (1914) was salvaged from the recently-abandoned Borate & Daggett Railroad (1897n). The 4 miles of the T&T branch line from Death Valley Junction (this location) to Horton had dual gauge tracks (three rails) so DV narrow gauge trains could run all the way to Death Valley Junction. One train per day brought food and water to the workers at the Ryan mine and brought ore back late in the afternoon.

After better deposits of borax were discovered at Boron in southern California in 1927, the DV tried tourist operations by bringing in a Brill railcar to transport tourists to the old mines. That didn't work; the DV (1914n) was abandoned in 1931 and the equipment, track, and rolling stock were used to construct the United States Potash Railroad near Loving, New Mexico (east of map area). After a flood in 1933, Ludlow was abandoned and T&T operations ran north from Crucero, where the T&T crossed the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad (1905) (by the then the LA&SL). By 1940 the entire line was out of service and the T&T was torn up in 1942.

Southward view of the T&T (1907) at the south end of Death Valley Junction. The platform in the foreground is the loading dock for the former Pacific Coast Borax Company Crushing and Concentrating Plant. The T&T mainline ran just to the right (east) of the farther of the two tanks, where there was a switch for a siding to the loading dock.



Northward view of the T&T (1907) at the same location as previous, from the loading dock for the Pacific Coast Borax Company Crushing and Concentrating Plant. The wonderful map below, which we will refer to throughout this Geolink, indicates that the siding to the loading dock was standard gauge and a narrow gauge siding terminated at the north end of the dock.





Westward view of the T&T (1907) from the same location as previous on the loading dock for the Pacific Coast Borax Company Crushing and Concentrating Plant. The two branches for the yew for the Ryan Branch are visible in the middle ground. The flat area between the loading dock and the yew once contained several sidings of standard, narrow, and dual gauge (see above map).



Southeastward view from the same loading dock as before. Note the foundations for the Pacific Coast Borax Company Crushing and Concentrating Plant, a dirt-fill loading ramp in the left distance, and two water towers to the right.



Southeastward view of the T&T (1907), with some ties still in place in the foreground. These ties are on the standard gauge siding between a narrow gauge DV siding the T&T the mainline, which according to the map was dual gauge within the map area. Note (from left to right) the same dirt-fill loading ramp, two water towers, loading platform, and two tanks as before.



Southward view of a trackside loading facility just north of the wye and just west of the "D.V.R.R. TRACK SCALE" on the above map. Note the same water towers as before in the left distance.



Southward view of the T&T (1907) mainline at the north end of Death Valley Junction, with two ties in the foreground. The narrow gauge siding with the "D.V.R.R. TRACK SCALE" on the above map is just out of site to the left (east).



Southward view of the T&T (1907) mainline at the north end of Death Valley Junction, 200 feet north of previous location. Note the same water towers as before. The narrow gauge siding with the "D.V.R.R. TRACK SCALE" is clearly visible (nearest power pole is set into the narrow gauge fill grade). The straight T&T main line was built to standard gauge in 1907 and converted to dual gauge when the narrow gauge DV was completed in 1914.



Eastward view of the T&T (1907) mainline at the switch for the narrow gauge siding. The straight T&T main line was built to standard gauge in 1907 and converted to dual gauge when the narrow gauge DV was completed in 1914. The nearly 12,000-foot Spring Mountains are visible in the distance, beyond which lies Las Vegas, Nevada.



Now we have moved back south to the wye for the Ryan Branch. Northeastward view of the north arm of the wye, which joined the mainline about where the trailer is visible in the right distance.



Southwestward view of the north arm of the wye, same location as previous. Note the breach in the fill grade in the foreground and the curvature to the right (west).



Southwestward view of the north arm of the wye, a few steps southwest of previous location. Note, from left to right, the south branch of the wye, it's junction with the north branch before crossing California Highway 127, and the straight alignment of the T&T Ryan Branch/DV beyond the highway.



Eastward view of the western switch of the wye. Note the same loading ramp, water towers, and loading platform as before, visible in the right distance. A dual gauge switch, which is a very complex thing indeed, was once present in the immediate foreground.



Northeastward view of the south arm of the wye.



In 1924, the Pacific Coast Borax Company completed construction of a Civic Center to house company offices, employee quarters, and recreational facilities for the employees. In 1927, the year the Ryan operation closed down, the Civic Center was remodeled to become the Amargosa Hotel in an effort to entice tourists. Today, the Spanish Colonial Revival building is operated as the Amargosa Opera House and Hotel. A plaque (below) summarizes the history of Death Valley Junction, but the authors confused the Las Vegas & Tonopah Railroad with the DV.

DEATH VALLEY JUNCTION

THIS HISTORIC CROSSROAD HAS BEEN USED BY INDIANS, CLAMPERS, DEATH VALLEY 49ERS, RANCHERS, FARMERS, SETTLERS AND TOURISTS. THE TOWN WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED AMARGOSA. IN 1907, THE NAME WAS CHANGED TO DEATH VALLEY JUNCTION. AT THIS JUNCTION, THE TONOPAH & TIDEWATER RAILROAD CONNECTED WITH THE LAS VEGAS-TONOPAH RAILROAD TO SERVICE THE RYAN AND LILA C. BORAX MINES NEAR RYAN DURING THE YEARS 1914-28. DEATH VALLEY JUNCTION HAD RAIL SERVICE UNTIL 1940. AT IT'S PEAK, THE TOWN HAD A POPULATION OF 300. TODAY, THE TOWN IS ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.

PLAQUE PLACED BY
BILLY HOLCOMB, JOAQUIN MURRIETA, SLIM PRINCESS AND
JOHN P. SOUIBOB CHAPTERS
OF E CLAMPUS VITUS
OCTOBER 29, 1988