



The Arizona & South Eastern Railroad was built in 1888-1889 by Phelps-Dodge to connect its copper mines at Bisbee, Arizona (in the distant hills), with the national rail network via the AT&SF-controlled New Mexico & Arizona Railroad (1882) at a junction called Fairbank. The A&SE expanded northward in 1894 to bypass the AT&SF/NM&A line and join directly with the SP Sunset Route (1881) at Benson. In early 1901, the A&SE built a branch line from Corta Junction (located 3 miles south of Bisbee) 20 miles east to its new smelter at Douglas. Later in 1901, the A&SE was renamed the El Paso & Southwestern Railroad, which in 1901-1902 built eastward from Douglas to El Paso (this line and the 20 mile A&SE line from Corta Junction to Douglas is labeled EP&SW (1902) on the SWRRH map). In 1904, the EP&SW realigned the former A&SE track southwest of Bisbee to circumvent the Mule Mountains (including this location).

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 purchased the EP&SW from Phelps-Dodge in 1955. In the early 1960's, the SP abandoned most of the South Line, leaving the trackage from Benson to Bisbee and Douglas. Around 1993, the SP sold the remaining trackage to the short line San Pedro & Southwestern Railroad, which operated freight and excursions for a while but in the early 2000's abandoned the line almost all the way back to Benson.

Eastward view of the EP&SW (1904), which was owned, upgraded, and operated by the EP&SW, the SP, and the SP&SW before it was abandoned in the early 2000's. Tracks are still in place where the grade crosses Naco Highway.



Northeastward view of the EP&SW (1904) where the grade crosses Naco Highway. The tailings pile in the distance is one of several around Bisbee in the Mule Mountains.



Westward view of the EP&SW (1904) at the same crossing of Naco Highway as before. The junction with the Naco-Cananea Railroad (1902) is 1 mile to the west.



Northwestward view of the EP&SW (1904), one mile west of the previous location and a few steps west of the junction with the Naco-Cananea Railroad (1902).



Cananea is a copper mining district in Sonora, Mexico, about 30 miles southwest of Naco, Arizona (south of map area). In 1899, the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, headed by American William Cornell Green, began operations at Cananea and the need for a railroad grew. Construction of the Naco-Cananea Railroad began in 1901 from the A&SE (1889), 2 miles northwest of this location on the EP&SW (1904), and was completed to Cananea the following year. (The 2 mile segment of the N-C (1902) between the A&SE (1889) and this location on the EP&SW (1904) is too short to show on the SWRRH Map.)

Southeastward view of the EP&SW (1904) at the same location as previous. The grade that curves left into the distance is the EP&SW (1904); this view and the previous view are within a big curve of the alignment from west to northwest. The junction with the N-C (1902) is within this curve and is the grade to the right (southeast), which is the west branch of a wye. Note also the grade that goes out of the picture to the left (north). That grade is the original 1901 alignment of the N-C (1902) to connect with the A&SE (1889) 2 miles to the northwest.



Southward view 200 feet east of the previous location. The grade in the foreground is the EP&SW (1904). The grade that extends away from the viewer into the middle distance is the short, east branch of the wye for the N-C (1902).



Northwestward view of the N-C (1902). The darker ballast of the EP&SW (1904) is visible in the middle distance. Look closely at the road bed and note the impressions of the former ties.



Same location as previous, with a closer look at the impressions of the ties.





Northwestward view of the N-C (1902), 100 feet south of the previous location; the darker ballast of the EP&SW (1904) is still barely visible in the distance. Note the tie still in the road bed in the foreground; it is wood, not an impression.



Northwestward view of the N-C (1902) at Naco, a half mile south of the previous location (junction with the EP&SW (1904)) and 200 feet north of the Mexican border. The railroad grade runs just to the left of the yellow iron equipment and heads straight to the viewer. There was a junction in this view, which ran where the gravel road runs in front of the yellow iron and due east off to the right. This branch ran a half mile to the east and included a turning wye. The building in the center distance may have been the Naco Station, but I could find no information on this building.



Southward view of the N-C (1902) at Naco, same location as previous. The N-C (1902) ran northwest-southeast through the dirt area to the right and through the gate at the far left, which is the Mexican border, then onward to the Cananea mines. Tracks are still present on the other side of the fence, from Naco, Sonora, to Cananea. A quarter mile south of the border, a newer(?) line runs from the N-C (1902) directly east along the border to a connection with the Nacozari (1902) at Agua Prieta, Sonora. I could find no information about the history of this Mexican railroad, but today it is part of Ferromex and may have been built when the EP&SW line between Douglas and Naco, Arizona, was abandoned in the early 2000's. The bricks in the foreground could tell a story, but I don't know what it is. The historic Gay 90's bar is behind the viewer.



Southward view of the old Naco Port of Entry; the N-C (1902) entered Mexico at the location of the gate in the right distance. The historic Adobe-style border station was built in 1937 and now serves as Customs and Border Control office space. A new border inspection station was built in adjacent space in 1994.