

Report

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A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

It's here! A special edition! The REPORT of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum and the Southwest Railway Library JOURNAL have combined to bring you a fascinating story. The story was originally given in a speech by Mr. S. A. Lamey.

Mr. Lamey's speech told the story of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway's struggle for existence. It was first given on February 26, 1953, and may well have been presented at a RHSofSD meeting.

We hope you enjoy our special edition.

Eric Sanders and Charles Kent,
Editors

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very happy to come here tonight and tell you about our San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway. This railroad has had a terrific struggle for its existence.

Plans were first proposed for this railroad in 1853, when Congress authorized surveys for a railroad along the 32d parallel to the Pacific Coast. A company was organized in San Diego under the name of the San Diego and Gila, Southern Pacific and Atlantic Railway. Nothing more than a preliminary survey was accomplished by this company.

Another was organized in 1867, but nothing came of it.

5 But in 1872, the Texas & Pacific Railway made a survey between San Diego and Yuma. They later decided to route their line north into Los Angeles.

Again in 1879, a project was started with the backing of the Santa Fe Railway. This line was to go to Yuma, where the Santa Fe would build on east. But that was changed, and the Santa Fe was then built from San Diego to San Bernardino. A few years later the

line was extended to a connection with the Atlantic and Pacific at Barstow.

But the idea of a direct outlet to the east from San Diego would not stay dead. Again in 1893, plans were made. The San Diego and Phoenix Rly. was incorporated, but, this too, was never completed. They did, however, build out of San Diego, and by 1895 had a total of 13 miles of track to Otay. This project died for lack of support and became a steek-promotion scheme along with the others of the era.

In 1906, the San Diego and Arizona Railway was chartered by Mr. John D. Spreckels in December. Mr. Spreckels promised the people of San Diego a direct and picturesque railroad to the east.

The first shovel of dirt was turned at 28th street in 1907. The S, D. & A. had begun.

In the course of construction there were to be four tunnels in Mexico. Tunnels 1 and 2 were completed in 1910. These tunnels have concrete portals and 30 foot concrete approaches on each end. The balance of the bores were timber. Tunnel No. 1 is 186.80 feet long and Tunnel No. 2 is 305.30 feet in length.

Construction was started from the east end of the line in 1911. The work begun just west of the New River bridge at Seeley, about ten miles west of El Centro. At that time the Holton Interurban Railway terminal was at Seeley. At this same time work was under way on Tunnels 3 and 4 in Mexico. These tunnels also have concrete portals and approaches. This is something the other 17 tunnels on the line do not have. Tunnels 3 and 4 were finished in 1915.

By 1917, construction had progressed on the east end to a point of entering Carriso Gorge where 17 tunnels were to be built. The railroad was originally capitalized for \$6,000,000. Because of the tunnels