



On December 5, 1887, the Southern Pacific Railroad commenced its East Side Line to access agricultural traffic in the east side of the San Joaquin Valley. The SP East Side Line runs east from the SP main line at Fresno to Sanger, then southeasterly through Dinuba, Exeter (this location), Lindsay, Porterville, Ducor, and Richgrove, and connects with the SP main line at Famosa (a few miles north of Bakersfield). Work on the road was pushed forward rapidly and completed in November 1888. The road passes through more than 100 miles of rich citrus country. In 1992, the San Joaquin Valley Railroad acquired the SP East Side Line.

This southward view of the SP East Side Line just south of Exeter is a fine example of the rows of citrus on the line's route. Note the rusty bolted track, I'm not sure if this stretch of SJV track is even being used.



Eastward view of the SP East Side Line at the same location as previous. The hills are the foothills of the 14,000+ foot Sierra Nevada, whose rivers have been entirely diverted to irrigate the fertile soils of California's San Joaquin Valley, one of the breadbaskets of the world.



In 1881, Visalia business interests promoted hydroelectric power from the Kaweah River and in 1899 power began to flow from the hills. There was a surplus of power, and local interests proposed an electric railroad. The Visalia Electric Railroad Company was incorporated in 1904, ground was broken in February 1905 at Exeter (this location) and in August the line reached 11 miles northeast to Lemon Cove. In 1908, the system was electrified from Visalia to Terminus Beach (2 miles beyond Lemon Cove). The existing SP line from Visalia to Exeter (original Visalia & Goshen Railroad, which was built in 1874 between the SP (now UP) main line at Goshen to Visalia and completed to Exeter by the SP in 1898), was electrified and used as the first leg of the system. In 1909, the line was extended a total of 10 line miles in two branches extending from north of Lemon Cove.

The line was extended 15 miles southeast from Exeter to Strathmore in 1916 - 1918. This part of the line was not electrified, but used gas-electric locomotives on a route that ran just a mile or two east of the SP East Side Line, which at that time was mostly used by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe under SP trackage rights. The VE prospered by transporting produce, mostly oranges. Passenger service peaked in 1912, but was discontinued in 1924. The electric overhead from Visalia to Exeter was removed in 1925 and all electric propulsion ended in 1944, with subsequent operation by diesel locomotives. Freight traffic declined in favor of trucks; abandonment of the VE began in 1942 and the VE was closed in 1992, at which time all but the 6 miles of VE track between Exeter and Lindsay remained. In 1992, the San Joaquin Valley Railroad acquired from the SP, in addition to the entire SP East Side Line, the 6 miles of VE track between Exeter and Lindsay (including this location) and the Visalia & Goshen (1898) trackage connecting the SP (now UP) main line at Goshen to Exeter.

Westward view of the VE (now SJV) at Exeter, a half mile east of its junction with the SP East Side Line (also now SJV) where VE construction started in 1905. The track is not rusty and appears to be in active use by the SJV.



Eastward view of the VE (now SJV) at Exeter, same location as previous.