



The Tidewater Southern Railway was incorporated in 1910 to build an interurban system, connecting to the Central California Traction Company, Western Pacific Railroad (1909), Southern Pacific Railroad, and Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway. Construction southward from Stockton began in 1911, and service to Modesto, 8 miles north this location, began in 1912 with steam locomotive-hauled passenger service. Electrification using an overhead system was completed in 1913 and regular electric car service began on a 2-hour schedule; the TS also operated extensive freight service. In 1916, the railway was extended 8 miles south from Modesto to this location, a curve in the track known as Hatch, where the line turned due east 6 miles to Turlock, California, on the SP (1876). In 1917, the TS built an 8-mile branch southeast from Hatch to the agricultural center of Hilmar. The TS south of Modesto was never electrified and never operated passenger service. The Western Pacific Railroad (1909) began influencing TS actions as early as 1913 and purchased most of the TS stock by 1917, after which the TS was operated as a WP subsidiary.

Passenger service on the TS ended in 1932 and the railway operated solely as a freight line, but carried some passengers in the cabooses. The electrification north of Modesto was dismantled in the 1960's, after which the TS became increasingly operated by WP locomotives and crews. The TS's traffic, however, expanded with the construction of several grain silos near Turlock, used to supply animal feed, and eventually required long unit trains to bring in the volume of Midwestern grain required to fill them. One of those long unit trains approaches in this view. By the late 1970's, these trains were the main traffic on the line and led to much anger from the city of Modesto, where the main line occupied the middle of 9th Street, the major north-south roadway. The end for the TS as a company came in 1983 when the Union Pacific absorbed the WP and in 1986 the TS corporate structure was dismantled. Since 1983, the TS trackage has been the Tidewater Subdivision of the UP. In 2001, the line north of Modesto through 9th Street was abandoned, severing the railroad in the middle, but still, of all the former interurban railroads in California, the former TS retains the highest percentage of still-operating trackage.

Eastward view of the TS (1917), now Tidewater Subdivision of the UP, with a long grain train, presumably of empty cars that just discharged their grain in Turlock. The junction in the foreground, in the process of dismantling, connects to the TS Hilmar Branch.



Westward view at the same location as previous. The grain train is curving to the north-northwest toward Modesto on the TS 1917. The branch to Hilmar runs directly in front of the trees in the distance and connects to the active line to the north and to the abandon connector (south branch of wye) in the foreground.



Southward view at the same location as previous. The grain train was on the track in the foreground. The branch to Hilmar runs directly in front of the trees in the distance. The Hilmar Branch tracks extend 2 miles southeast to Chemurgic, California, and are abandoned for the remaining 6 miles to Hilmar.



Northwestward view of the TS (1917) Hilmar Branch one mile south of Hatch.



Southwestward view of the TS (1917) Hilmar Branch, same location as previous (one mile south of Hatch).



Northwestward view of the TS (1917) Hilmar Branch 2 miles south of Hatch at Chemurgic. The line to Hilmar once extended straight to the viewer but, as can be seen here, all traces of the line to Hilmar are gone; I could find no evidence of the line south of here, either on the ground or in satellite images, all traces of the line having been re-graded for agriculture and residential development around Hilmar. The curve to the right (west) is the spur to the Chemurgic facility.



Eastward view of the TS (1917) Hilmar Branch at the current end-of-track at Chemurgic, a few steps east of previous location. The Chemurgic facility produces agricultural chemicals.