



During the 1880's, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad rushed to compete with the Southern Pacific for southern California traffic. The AT&SF's first objective was to reach a Pacific Coast port, when the SP was already in Los Angeles and the Central Pacific was already in the San Francisco Bay Area. The AT&SF first reached tidewater at Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico, in 1882, via its New Mexico & Arizona and Sonora railroads. But the AT&SF was already building its Atlantic & Pacific line toward the only major California port without rail service, San Diego. The AT&SF formed the California Southern Railroad to build north from San Diego up Temecula Canyon, past this location, and over Cajon Pass to reach the SP-built, AT&SF-leased mainline at Barstow. CS/AT&SF trains first arrived in San Diego in 1885 to form a new transcontinental route.

Just 3 years later in 1888, the southern half of the CS was circumvented by the AT&SF's coastal route to San Diego, built by the Riverside, Santa Ana & Los Angeles and the San Bernardino & San Diego railroads. The CS mainline through Temecula Canyon (between Oceanside on the coast and the top of the canyon at Temecula) suffered washouts and was abandoned in 1891. After 1891, Temecula was at the end of a branch line. In 1928, construction of Railroad Canyon Dam (about 15 miles north of Temecula) submerged the section of track between Lake Elsinore and Perris beneath today's Canyon Lake. The track above (north of) the new reservoir to Perris and below the reservoir (south) to Lake Elsinore were abandoned. But the now-isolated 15 miles of track from Temecula north to Lake Elsinore was left in place to connect to the new (1927) AT&SF Lake Elsinore Branch, which extended 20 miles north from Lake Elsinore to the AT&SF (original 1888 RSA&LA) mainline at Corona. Train service to Temecula ended in 1935 and the Temecula and Lake Elsinore branches were cut back in stages and by the 1980's had been cut back to the current end-of-track 2 miles shy of the AT&SF mainline in Corona (original 1888 RSA&LA, now BNSF).

This northward view of the abandoned KEA Mill is in the CS railroad town of Murietta, about 6 miles north of the 1891 end-of-track at Temecula. The CS grade is hard to follow, but I think the grade is under Clay Street, which is the road in the foreground. The Mill was originally constructed around 1918 so local farmers could bulk-store their grain for shipment to milling companies in Los Angeles. Presumably, the Mill originally shipped via the CS/AT&SF's Temecula Branch, which was definitely somewhere in this view; the rails were removed in the late 1930's. KEA business remained steady after the removal of the railroad, presumably shipping via truck, through the early 1970's and was boarded up in 1991. Most internet information about the KEA Mill concerns paranormal activity, but none of the ghosts have provided any information of interest to georailfans!



We'll explore the abandoned CS grade from north to south. Here we are in Temecula, 6 miles south of Murietta and the KEA Mill. This 1927 caboose was donated to Temecula in 1983 and was appropriately place right on the former the CS alignment.





Old foundations along the CS grade at the south end of Temecula, but I don't know whether they date to CS days or are more recent.





Eastward view at the head of Temecula Canyon, about a mile south of the caboose and Old Town Temecula. I-15 is in the middle distance and the tile roofs of Temecula suburbia lie beyond. The Elsinore fault, part of the San Andreas system, has raised the bedrock granite in the foreground above the alluvial plain. The puddle of water is the confluence of Temecula Creek, which is under the thickly vegetated riparian area that extends away from the puddle to the east (directly away from viewer) and Murietta Creek, which comes in from the left (north) and was followed by the CS to this point. West of this confluence (toward viewer) the stream is called the Santa Margarita River, which flows to the Pacific Ocean and was followed to the ocean by the CS. The rugged upper part of the river, starting west from here, is Temecula Canyon, where the CS was washed out in 1891. The uplift of the granite along the Elsinore fault over the past million years or so formed the San Ana Mountains, but westward flow and erosion by the Santa Margarita River kept pace with uplift and maintained a water gap through the mountains. The Temecula Canyon water gap is the main topographic feature that controlled the routing of the CS and also led to its demise in 1891.

The CS entered Temecula Canyon, in the lower right of the photo, somewhere around that puddle, but little evidence of it remains.





The puddle on the left is Murietta Creek, just upstream (north) of the confluence in the previous photo. Note the cut grade into granite in the center and right of the photo; I think this is the CS grade.





Southward view at same location as previous, Murietta Creek to the right. The grade ends here; maybe there was a bridge prior to 1891, or the cut grade continued but was washed out. The slot canyon in the distance just right of center is the beginning of the Santa Margarita River and Temecula Canyon.





Southwestward view of Temecula Canyon as it cuts through the Santa Ana Mountains. The CS grade is at the bottom of the canyon, but I could find no way down there. Note the very steep inner canyon and the gentler slopes above, almost level in the foreground. The gentler slopes are likely the flanks of the pre-Elsinore-fault valley of the Santa Margarita River, and the steep inner canyon is the water gap formed as the river eroded through the rising Santa Ana Mountains due to movement on the Elsinore fault. The photo below is a close-up of the break in slope, and the CS is down there somewhere.

