



In 1858, asphalt deposits were noticed by a land survey party west of Bakersfield at the future site of the Sunset Oil Field. The Buena Vista Oil Company incorporated in 1864 and began refinery operations near modern McKittrick and produced over 4,000 gallons of kerosene by 1867. The field continued to grow, and in 1892-1893 the McKittrick Sunset Railroad was built from the SP mainline at Kern Junction in Bakersfield west to McKittrick to service the oil industry as well as agricultural traffic.

In 1901, the Sunset Western Railroad built 30 miles southwestward from a junction with the MS (1893) at Gosford (this location) to the town of Sunset (now called Hazelton) in the oil-rich area south of McKittrick. A portion of the line was built atop the existing grade of a former narrow-gauge line, the Buena Vista Reservoir Railroad (not shown separately on map). In 1904, the track was extended 2.5 miles from Hazelton (end of track) to Maricopa. In 1909, the SW built a 17 mile branch north from a point 2 miles east of Hazelton through Taft to Shale and Fellows, thereby completing the final extent of the line. The western half of the line was subsequently abandoned to a point 8 miles northwest of Hazelton, and the eastern half is still in use by the San Joaquin Valley Railroad, a subsidiary of RailAmerica.

Eastward view of the junction at Gosford. The straight track in the foreground is the MS (1893). The curved track that splits off to the right (south) is the east branch of a wye for the SW (1909).



Westward view of the junction at Gosford, same location as previous. The straight track in the foreground is the MS (1893). The curved track at the far left is the east branch of the wye for the SW (1909). The curved fence line that encloses the residential area in the distance between the two tracks is just behind and parallel to the west branch of the wye, which can barely be seen in the right distance where it joins the MS (1893).



Westward view of the junction at Gosford, 200 feet south of the previous location. The curved track in the foreground is the east branch of the wye for the SW (1909). The curved fence line that encloses the residential area behind the "Gosford" sign is behind the west branch of the wye. The track in the right distance is the MS (1893).