



## Japanese Railway Scenery 22

An almost empty local EMU train runs against the dawn along the Pacific coast between Suetsugu and Hirono stations on the JR East Joban Line. The entire line was opened by 1898 by the private Nippon Railway and nationalized in 1906. The southern half was used to carry coals from the Joban coalfield to industrial areas around Tokyo. American-built 2-8-2 tender locos (known as *Mikado*) were used for the first time in the world (1897) to haul heavy coal trains on this line. With grade-free tracks along the coast, the line was heavily used for long-distance passenger and freight services until the parallel Tohoku Main Line was fully double-tracked and electrified in 1968. The line's mission as one of Japan's main arteries was terminated by the decline of the coal industry in the 1970s and the opening of the Tohoku Shinkansen in the early 1980s.

(Photo: M. Mashima Photo Office)

EAST JAPAN RAILWAY  
CULTURE FOUNDATION



¥ 1,000