

GA-131

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The Santa Fe in West Texas had a different look than the rest of the System. This was in part due to the assignment of unusual cars to a local shipper.

In the mid-Sixties, Ozark Mahoning began shipping salt cake from both Brownfield and Seagraves. The Santa Fe assigned 70-ton PS-2 covered hoppers similar to Concor's model to this service, then almost immediately assigned cylindrical covered hoppers of the GA-131 class.

GA-131s were unlike anything else on the railroad. They were an early, more rounded version of ACF's Center Flow design. Few cars were built to the early design, and most of them were fifty-footers. Almost none measured 43 feet. The GA-131 class did.

Ozark Mahoning might ship 100 cars in a month; not in long cuts, but in individual consignments, a car or two to a customer at a time. They traveled nation-wide, but were stenciled for return to Brownfield and Seagraves.

In West Texas, they seemed to be everywhere. Their round sides and grey color made them standouts. Every train and yard seemed to have one. Lubbock was full of them. Brownfield and Seagraves seemed to be growing the things. I used to think the class contained thousands of cars. It contained only two hundred, and only 145 were assigned to this service.

GA-131s hauled salt cake for three decades. In the mid Eighties, their salt-corroded sides began sending them to scrap. The last one I saw in revenue service was in 1995. That summer, the few survivors waited at Brownfield for a call to duty that may never come. It would be proper to retire one to a museum.