

# ATSF Eastbound Drag Freights - Final Report

JThomp1945@...

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To all:

It's time for our final report on ATSF EB Drag Freights, so here goes:

**Train:** ATSF's Drag Freight.

**Direction:** Eastbound only. (We'll cover the WB drag freights another time.)

**Description:** "Drag" freight from SB (mostly empty freight cars, low priority).

**Origin:** San Bernardino (after other trains brought the cars from LA).

**Destination:** Barstow and points east.

**Railroads Represented:** ATSF and railroads from all over the country, returning empty cars to their home roads. It would primarily have empties returning to Northeastern and Midwestern connections.

**Products:** Mostly empties. Not many loads and no priority empties (such as auto cars). And no semi-priority empty boxcars, which went east in the Boxcar Special (BCS) train.

**Train Length and Weight:** Typical postwar train lengths were 70 to 90 cars, average weight was about 3000 to 4000 tons. (Longer and heavier in the 1950s than the 1940s.)

In Jan. 1946, the Drag freights had about 80 cars of all empties or almost all empties. In July 1947, the Drag freights had about 85 cars, sometimes with some loads included.

**Car Types:** Everything, including D&RGW empty coal gons going back to the UP at Barstow.

## Typical Schedule:

During the first week of May, 1945, there were 19 Eastward Drags (almost three per day).

Jan. 1946: the Drag trains were leaving SB at all hours of the day. Same for July 1947.

Aug. 2, 1947:

Depart SB B Yard - Train No. - Helpers - Train Loads-Empties--Total Tons

5:20 am "X" 3820 946, 1261 Drag 23-45-2446  
(2-10-2) (2-10-2, 4-6-2)

12:45 pm Extra 135 3899 Drag 0-90-2242  
(FTs) (2-10-2)

2:35 pm Extra 145 945 Drag 21-46-2930  
(FTs) (2-10-2)

Feb 13 1948:

2:30 am Extra 157 3130 Drag 6-89-2301  
(FTs) (2-8-2)

**Road Power:** 4-unit freight FT sets, until 4-unit freight F3/F7 sets arrived in 1948-53. 2-10-2s during the June Spud Rush in the 1940s, and sometimes at other times in the 1940s.

**Helper Power:** 2-10-2s, 4-8-2s, 2-8-2s (often 2 or 3 steam helpers), also FT sets (full or partial), until GP7s arrived in 1950-53, and GP9s in 1956-57. Number of helpers depended on train weight.

### **Operations Details:**

Westbound loads greatly outnumbered eastbound loads, so a lot of foreign-road cars were returned empty to the north and east. And since it was Santa Fe practice to run freight trains at frequent intervals, empty cars to be returned east were collected at Hobart Yard, adjacent to the LA Stockyards and UP's East Yard, and eastbound 3rd district trains stopped there on the way out of town and picked up enough empties to bring them up to full tonnage for the climb up Santa Ana Canyon East of Atwood.

The Bulldog - (also called "BDX") was a long drag freight, about 100 cars long, mainly empties for the east. It was a long, slow train. It left Hobart any time of day, but usually in the late afternoon, and got into SB around 9 or 10 p.m. It ended in the B yard, so there were no "Bulldog" trains on Cajon Pass. It was mainly empty boxcars lettered for northeastern railroads. It carried whatever garbage cars were left in the middle of the night or late afternoon.

Train sheets from 1947 and earlier show that there could be more than one Bulldog on a given day, that one or more of the Bulldogs could operate as a local (the dispatchers wrote "local" at the top of the column or sometimes within it), that Bulldogs might originate at First Street in LA as well as at Hobart, and that they might run at least a short way down the Fourth District from Fullerton - presumably do some kind of work - before doubling back to the Third District and proceeding to San Bernardino. With all those possibilities, there are examples of Bulldogs starting out one afternoon or evening and arriving in San Berdoo in the early hours of the next morning.

At San Bernardino, eastward loads and waybilled or "special" (XAR, XAP) empties were either blocked into GFX perishable trains to fill them out or run in eastbound and northbound redball trains like 34, TDX, and NCX. Other empties were collected into solid trains called "drags," which were so identified on dispatchers' train sheets, call boards, and by crews.

If an EB train didn't have a hotshot symbol, it received a symbol such as XE, SB (from San Bernardino), or Drag. They all meant the same thing: a track full of mine run (mixed) tonnage to be moved out of town to become a headache for the next terminal's yardmaster to sort out.

Drag freight trains were loaded down to the maximum tonnage rating of their locomotive. In the steam engine days that meant less than 10 mph eastward on Cajon Pass between San Bernardino. With the diesels, this meant 11 mph, the minimum allowable speed for the EMD FT, F3, F7, and GP7 types. The freight FT's had a minimum continuous speed of 14mph vs. the later F3/F7's 11mph.

It can be determined that it would take a 1950s drag about two hours to go from San Bernardino to Summit, while a hotshot could do it in about one hour and 40 minutes or a little less. The running time from there to Victorville was about 30 minutes, with about an hour from there to Barstow. That results in a running time between San Bernardino and Barstow of about three hours for hotshots and three and a half hours for drags.

Eastward trains ran out of the B Yard in San Bernardino and were called about one hour before departure, which was the time they started to move in the departure track. The arrival time shown by the crews was the time they hit the heading in switch at the old West Tower at Barstow. It

usually took at least thirty minutes to reach the Red Barn diesel facility next to the diesel shops and tie up.

The departure time at San Bernardino was from the B Yard, with 10 or 20 minutes required to get from there to the depot at San Bernardino, which was where the Cajon Pass running time began.

Sometimes a drag freight carried a bad order to the next terminal behind the caboose, as it would have a drawbar pulled out.

On pages 50-51 of Stan Kislter's "Santa Fe in Black & White" there are three photos of an eastbound freight near Pine Lodge. First we see ATSF 2-10-2 #3855 leading the train ("a 79-car drag") out of the Sullivan's Curve area (not visible from here), with the downhill track visible to the left. Then we see two older 2-10-2's, #1626 and #979, helping ahead of the caboose, which has wig-wag signals on the cupola. In the third photo, we see the rear half of the train heading away from us toward Pine Lodge.

**Modeling the Train:** Use a mix of ATSF cars and cars from all over the country, especially the Northeast and Midwest, mostly boxcars, and some empty open cars, but cars of any types could be in the train. Run about three of them each day, at various times of day.

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Let us know if we can improve this with any additions or subtractions.

Thanks,  
John Thompson