

Santa Fe's Oro Grande/ Hodge Turn - Final Report

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12/09/19 [#22338](#)

To all:

I've been too busy to work on this for the last several days, but it's time to wrap it up now:

Train: ATSF's Oro Grande/ Hodge Turn

Direction: Eastbound to Victorville and Oro Grande, then return Westbound.

Description: Santa Fe local freight from San Bernardino to the industries and cement plant at Victorville. Usually listed as the Hodge Turn to attract better crews for the better pay.

Origin: San Bernardino.

Destination: Victorville and Oro Grande, then back to San Bernardino.

Railroads Represented: ATSF and possibly others from connecting railroads.

Products: Cement in covered hoppers and bagged in boxcars, supplies in boxcars, fuel oil for the cement plant at George AFB, lumber, empty cement bags, limestone, clay, talc, household goods, cement clinkers, products.

Train Length and Weight: Relatively short, up to twenty cars. Much heavier westbound than eastbound.

Car Types: Covered hoppers (such as Ga-52s, Ga-58s, and Ga-65s), Bx-11 and Bx-12 boxcars with rock gondolas, reefers.

The tank cars for the cement plants were black and carried crude oil. The tank cars with airplane fuel for the military.

Typical Schedule:

The train went to work at or before noon and worked eight to fourteen hours.

1956 sample: On duty San Bernardino at 11:15 a.m. and off duty 8:30 p.m.

Road Power: Pairs of GP7s or pairs of H16-44s. By 1956, four GP7s or F7 ABBA sets.

GP7s 2656-2659, 2662, 2678-2679, 2681-2697 were equipped with dynamic brakes and (by 1956) work presumably -5s) were assigned the same as the GP7s.

Helper Power: Often needed westbound from Victorville to Summit (when there were only two road engines).

GP7s 2656-2659, 2662, 2678-2679, 2681-2697 were equipped with dynamic brakes and worked in helper service.

Operations Details:

After the First District locals were abolished (c.1951), a new assignment was established and identified as a Turn. The mileage included a side trip of 10 miles on the Adelanto Spur. It was advertised in that way in case there had been bulletined to turn at Oro Grande, a second day's pay would be in order for the crew going east of the guaranteed mileage and short hours on the job.

The name of the Turn could flip back and forth from Oro Grande Turn to Hodge Turn, depending on the location where trains were advertised for crew members to bid on in a Bid Book. Sometimes the trainmaster re-

The assignment was advertised to run about 140 miles, which was an incentive for the crew to get over the Turn in 6, 7 or 8 hours they had a day and a half pay in their pocket. On the other hand, if the work was heavy overtime.

For all practical purposes, Oro Grande was the turning point. The train rarely, if ever, ran to Hodge. If it

The train went to work at or before noon in San Bernardino and worked eight to fourteen hours.

The UP's Leon Turn and the Santa Fe's Oro Grande Turn operated each day except for Sundays. Each railroad picked up the cars that were destined for customers on its own railroad. Both were daylight jobs. The Oro Grande Turn didn't leave San Bernardino until late morning.

The shippers didn't have preferences for using one railroad over another (Santa Fe vs. UP). It depended on the location with the fewest interchanges.

The Oro Grande Turn was normally longer than UP's Leon Turn (which also went to Oro Grande each day) and consisted mostly of cross-hoppers, covered hoppers, a few empty boxcars for loading with sacked cement, and some

Preliminary Work by the Victorville Switcher:

The Victorville Switch job served both cement plants and left cars to be picked up by through trains at the cement plants were switched several times a day. So the Hodge Turn and Leon Turn, although they stop switching those plants.

When the local switcher took cars to Leon, they combined the cars with the cars from Leon, and they set them on separate tracks there for separate trains to pick up.

The Leon plant had an "oil spur" where the switcher delivered tank cars of fuel oil. The cement plant at Oro Grande only a few were shipped in or out at a time. Same for the Oro Grande cement plant. At the cement plant at Victorville where the Victorville switcher would spot supplies for the cement plant, such as boxcars of empty cement

The Leon plant (Southwestern Portland Cement) had a large, open clinker pit, and there was a spur that had an overhead traveling crane could load clinkers into the cars for shipment elsewhere.

When the cement cars were loaded at the cement plant, the Victorville switcher would pull the loads out

of the plant (in the case of the Victorville plant at Leon). The westbound Oro Grande Turn would pick up

The direction of the cement traffic depended partly on where the big construction projects were at the m

If the switcher brought a few (up to a half-dozen) westbound cars into Victorville, it would set out the ca there, for a westbound freight to pick up. This way, the freight train didn't have to cross over the mains ; cross over at Leon (the plant was on the RR east side of the mains).

At each location where the switcher set out cars for pick-up by local or through freights (Victorville, Lec have to do any extra switching to pick up their cars. The switcher separated cars into four categories: ea UP. They tried to put the four blocks onto separate tracks, so that a passing train could directly reach the

The eastbound Oro Grande Turn would set out empty cement hoppers and supply boxcars at Victorville which were easy for the local switcher to take to the cement plants, but the pick-ups were mostly loads, t the cement plants (after the switcher had placed them on a convenient track).

Leaving San Bernardino Eastbound:

The train left SB around 11 a.m. or noon. It departed San Bernardino with empty covered hoppers for th traffic in and out of Ono was handled by the Redlands Loop local. The train picked up repaired bad orde switching.

Going east, the train wouldn't have headed into any sidings, because it had mostly empties and could clir normally didn't stop at Summit, unless it had to pick up an empty domestic water car from the stock trac do at Hesperia when heading east.

But they might stop at Thorn to set out empty cars for storage there, or to pick up empty cars that were n needed and was no longer used as a passing siding. The only industry there was a short (double-ended) s

Arriving Eastbound in Victorville:

When the eastbound train arrived in Victorville, they set out the "Victorville shorts." The cars were put : Most of these were cars that the Victorville Switch would later take to the cement plant at Leon, but som

Storage tracks 1 and 2 (across the mains from the Victorville depot) were only used for set-outs from loc there. Neither track was assigned to a particular railroad.

The train set out empties at Victorville proper (track 1 or 2), not at Leon, but it took them to Leon if ther

The cars that were spotted in Victorville might be a tank car of fuel for the Standard Oil spur, empty cars track (for unloading into trucks, team track style), and a flat car or gondola of granite slabs (only about o

At the Victorville Lime Rock plant (later Pfizer) trucks brought in the limestone. The railroad spotted bo clay and talc, and it went out in bulk in covered hoppers and also in bags in boxcars. They loaded 3 to 6 push in the empties.

They also set out any cars that were destined to go up the Adelanto Spur to George AFB, which included machinery and airplane parts. There were tank cars of airplane fuel, until a pipeline was built into there moved in and out of the base.

Then the train would continue across 6th Street and into the eastbound siding, where they parked it, and by the caboose on the siding. From there, they walked to a restaurant in Victorville (such as the Red Rooster).

Leaving Victorville Eastbound:

After the meal, they took the engine back to the front of the train and departed eastbound out of the siding. Victorville Switch normally handled the work at the cement plant and brought the cars back into Victorville.

Arriving at Oro Grande Eastbound:

Then it went to Oro Grande to drop empties in the yard there (not at the adjacent Riverside cement plant ended storage track (because they needed a run-around). They got a switch list from the agent and set out.

The Turn did not normally switch the plant. That was left to the Victorville switcher. But sometimes the the loads down away from the loading hoses to make room for more loads as the plant dropped them down.

They sometimes had to spot oil tank cars to fuel the cement plant too, and empty boxcars for bagged cement. A lot of open hopper traffic at the cement plant, besides the covered hoppers for cement.

Then they picked up the loaded cement cars, both UP and Santa Fe on the same track, and weighed each (they already weighed them).

The train would get the westbound Santa Fe loads from the Oro Grande yard, assuming the switcher had them.

The Oro Grande plant was also shipping limestone in open-top cars to Kaiser Steel (in Fontana). In the yard where they picked up cross-hoppers of limestone for Kaiser. In San Bernardino, the hoppers of limestone went to the mill. The limestone rocks could also be shipped to other cement plants in open hoppers for processing.

Another semi-raw material would be the clinkers, which are the marble-size balls of cement that come out of the mill. They could be shipped to other plants in open hoppers. Conversely, clinkers could also be shipped into the cement plant.

Leaving Oro Grande Westbound:

After they built their train of westbound loads, they put the caboose onto the other end of the train and started from the timetable in 1945, but the railroaders still called the siding by that name.)

They took sidings for passenger trains as needed, but usually that was only for Train 7 (the westbound Foothill).

Arriving Westbound at Leon and Victorville:

At Leon, if the Victorville Switch hadn't taken the loads "uptown" (into Victorville), the Turn would stop at Leon.

as tank cars). The Leon plant used their trackmobile to spot cars for weighing on the scale track within t

Then they headed into Victorville and into the westbound siding, with the Leon cars (if any) in the front westbound loads on the Santa Fe engine track inside the wye, in the years after helpers were no longer u (double-ended) storage tracks inside the wye, pull the cars out, and couple them onto the front of its train

In Victorville, they parked the train in the westbound siding and went for coffee or another meal (depend 6th St. grade crossing, so there was no need for it to run around the train to get closer to the restaurants.

Often the Turn got a helper from Victorville to Summit, if it had many loads of cement, and if it had onl

And sometimes (every two or three weeks) they picked up the domestic water car from Victorville and t track near the 6th St. grade crossing, using a standpipe that swung over above the dome and had a fire hc

If the Turn was going to need extra braking power for descending Cajon Pass westbound, they would ge they would use empty covered hoppers for braking. Or they might pick up empty cars at Hesperia (from front of the train, for easy adding and removing later. They needed one empty for every three loads. Go braking power.

Leaving Victorville Westbound:

Then they headed west out of Victorville towards Summit. They might stop at Hesperia to pick up a reef track there, where they might deliver a car of lumber (a boxcar or a flat car), or spot a carload of plaster l of the siding that went down a hill to two spurs; one was the potato house, and the other was for lumber

Then they stopped at Summit for a brake test and to turn up retainers on the cars. They cut off the helper the way home the train was just another freight and observed the timetable rules about stopping at Sumn

The train finally pulled into the A yard at San Bernardino.

Months without the Oro Grande Turn:

The Oro Grande Turn only ran about six months out of the year, depending on the cement traffic. In son the Victorville switcher would take the loaded cement cars into Victorville itself and put them on the Sar tracks were busy). In helper days, if their engine track was full of cement cars, the helpers would wait or

The drag freight out of Barstow did the westbound cement pick-ups during the other months.

Later the locals were pulled off, and through freights would set out and pick up cars at Victorville and O

Modeling the Train: Use mostly ATSF cross-hoppers, covered hoppers, Bx-11 and Bx-12 boxcars with cars, and gondolas. Sometimes include some cars destined to George AFB (boxcars, reefers, and UTLX

Comments and corrections are welcome.

John Thompson