

Santa Fe's Redlands Loop Local - Final Report

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To all:

I'll try now (finally!) to finish a report on the Redlands Loop Local, but there may be corrections later:

Train: Santa Fe's Redlands Loop Local

Direction: Westbound (counterclockwise) only (and no eastbound counterpart).

Description: Local train to serve the Redlands Loop, running at night to leave empties and pick up loads at the fruit-packing houses on the Loop. Its final run was in July, 1956, and after that it became a Turn, as the Loop was cut at the west end, near Highland Jct.

Origin: San Bernardino.

Destination: San Bernardino, after going counterclockwise around the Loop, or later, returning clockwise as a Turn.

Railroads Represented: SFRD, ATSF, and others.

Products: Mostly citrus fruit from local packing houses, and some shook lumber for the packing houses, and supplies for local towns, including clay to manufacture toilets at Mentone, and including lumber on flat cars.

Train Length and Weight: About 40 cars, depending on the season. Weight unknown, but mostly empty reefers going west and mostly loaded reefers coming back east.

The length of the train varied a lot, depending on the citrus season. When the citrus was being picked, they would take about 20 to 30 empty reefers to the packing houses and bring back that many loads (not counting the boxcars and other cars in the train).

Car Types: Mostly 20 to 30 reefers, plus eight to ten boxcars, and one or two tank cars of smudge oil (mostly in the winter), and a flatcar of lumber.

The train usually had about eight to ten boxcars with loads for the Loop. The boxcar loads included shook wood for packing crates, clay for making toilets, wallboard, and general supplies.

During the winter months, they would take one or two tank cars of smudge oil to the packing houses. Sometimes they did this in other seasons, when the tanks were being filled in preparation for winter.

The train could have a flat car of lumber for buildings.

Of course, the empty boxcars, tank cars, and flat cars would be in the returning train, along with the loaded reefers.

Typical Schedule:

circa 1943-1944:

8:30 p.m. -- LA-17 Train 501 leaves for the Redlands District (except Sunday)

- "Loop Fruit Pickup"
- connections from trains 43, SCX, VMX, and local trains.
- it goes counterclockwise around the Redlands loop
- it will arrive back in S.B as Train 502 at 1:10 a.m. the next morning

Postwar: The train left the San Bernardino X Yard at 6 pm and returned to SB via Highland Jct after 11 pm.

Road Power:

The most common power used would have been the 1900 and 1950 class 2-8-0s and 3100 and 3129 class 2-8-2s, and an occasional 900 or 1600 2-10-2 when needed.

With the arrival of GP-7s in 1951, they quickly took over most fruit turn work, displacing the 2-8-2s and 2-8-0s. Also, H16-44s, Alco switchers, and GP9s were used then.

Helper Power: Not needed.

Operations Details:

The Redlands Loop train went "westward" or counterclockwise. This allowed it to run with the current of traffic on the First District westward from Highland Jct. without crossing over.

The assigned local was made up in the X Yard, which was a very short yard located north of the passenger yard and used by locals. The Redlands Local returned to the B Yard with the fruit.

Most locals, including the Redlands Loop, were built in the X Yard. Cars for the PE transfer may have been put in that yard as well. The first two tracks north of the passenger yard (507 and 517) had a direct connection to the mainlines, and to the crossover just west of the Redlands Loop diverging switch, hence there would have been no need to zigzag through the passenger yard to enter the Loop.

Loop trains in both directions had to stop at the red boards and flag over the PE.

After the war, the Redlands Loop Local was advertised to make a side trip to Ono and would switch Culligan. The Culligan plant got in zeolite and other chemicals, etc. Box cars, gondolas, and hoppers were the cars that they had in there, and once in a while they would have a load out.

The Loop's loco went up to the Culligan plant at Ono about twice a week, taking one or two loaded boxcars there, but with no caboose. Less often they brought back a loaded boxcar. They didn't bring the empty boxcars back, so maybe the 1st District Local or (after 1951) the Oro Grande Turn did that.

All traffic in and out of Ono was handled by the Redlands Loop local. The Loop Job went to Ono before going out on the Redlands District. Maybe they skipped the team track at Highland Jct. at that time, as they would also be able to access it on their normal trip around the Loop.

The engine went up to Ono first, without its caboose, then back down to San Bernardino to get its train and caboose and headed out the Redlands District (in the 1950's sometime).

The Yard Limit board on the west end of the Redlands Loop was placed so that yard crews could switch the Highland Ave. team track without having to get train order authority to operate on that short piece of branch line.

January was during the Navel orange harvest. The number of cars loaded varied with day of the week, weather condition, size and condition of the crop, and market demand. May would be during the Valencia orange season.

Jan. 1936: The longest train arriving Berdoo had 29 cars, the first run returning with the loaded cars usually had 10-20 cars, mostly loads, and the second trip usually arrived with only about 5 cars or less.

The Santa Ana river crossing north of Mentone was a wood pile trestle which was washed out in the 1938 storm and flood. This ended passenger service on the loop. When the trestle was rebuilt it was for freight service only. But Santa Fe did not receive permission to abandon the service until many years later. In that interim Santa Fe public timetables carried a notice that "limousine service" would be provided to passengers from San Bernardino. But the passenger agent and ticket clerks there were instructed to issue vouchers for taxicab service for passengers requesting transportation to points on the Redlands District.

May, 1945: By this time the Santa Fe is running the Loop Locals only in the westward direction. Until May 25, 1945, the crew makes two trips per night, with the first one getting out of Berdoo about 5:30 PM and making the fruit pickup.

There were two Loop trains on May 1, 1945. The first train departed San Bernardino at 5:05 am and handled 3 loads and 26 empties. The second train departed San Bernardino at 5:20 pm and handled 32 loads and no empties. It appears that the first train distributed empty reefers to the packing houses in the morning, and the second train picked up the loaded reefers in the evening.

Business was good, with as much as 34 carloads coming off the district on a single day. The second trip goes out and spots the empties and finishes work about 6-7 AM. The 1950 class 2-8-0 is the regular power for the locals. During this time it does not seem that the local is going to Ono. The trains returned with few or no empties, indicating that empties were distributed to online shippers,

Starting on May 25, 1945, the operation changed. The dispatcher started noting that it was the Ono-Loop local, and while its start time was still around 5:30 PM, it did not get out onto the Redlands District until midnight to 2:00 AM, and there was only one trip.

During the month of May, 1945, there were some Ono Turns run between Berdoo and Ono. These trains might use the Loop Local's power or other locomotive (the 3836 was listed as power on one Ono Turn), and the engineer and conductor were the same as the Loop Local's crew.

A look at the May 1945 train sheets shows that there were 6 days that an Ono Turn were operated from San Berdoo (B) to Ono and back. These trains ran on May 23, 26, 28, 29, 30 and 31, with the DS listing these runs as Ono Turns on 4 days and using the term Ono or Ono Loop on the other runs. These trains used the same crew as the Loop Locals and the same locomotives, except 5/28 when 2-10-2 3836 was used to Ono, and on 5/31 when the 2-10-2 911 was used. The Loop train used 2-8-0s as regular power.

For the first week of May, 1945, the following interesting picture has emerged:

- There were 10 trains operated during the week.
- All trains were westward, going around the Redlands Loop in a counter-clockwise direction from San Bernardino to Highland Jct. and then back to San Bernardino on the First District.
- All were pulled by 1950 class 2-8-0 Consolidations, specifically, Nos. 1983, 1984, 1987 and 1991.

- There were two trains on most days of the week: one departed in the afternoon around 5 pm, and the other very early in the morning, around 1 am.
- There was only one train on Thursday, May 3, 1945 (the very early morning train).
- There was no train on Sunday, May 6, 1945.
- The very early morning trains carried mostly empties; the afternoon trains carried mostly loads.
- The trains took an average of 5 hours and five minutes to traverse the loop and return to San Bernardino.
- The trains averaged 5.4 miles per hour over the 27.5 miles of the trip—which means that there was a lot of switching done.

The second run of the local during this period moved mostly empties. Maybe the Santa Fe used the Redlands local to serve the military depot at Ono. Looking at the trains on the Redlands District, you see that the second run has the same locomotive and crew that is working on continuous time (CT).

September 1945 train sheets indicate that the Loop Local made one trip per day except on Sundays. The crew went on duty usually at 4:30 pm and left San Berdoo 5:10 to 6:00 pm. There were two cases when the crew went on duty at 8:00 pm and 8:40 pm. Power was a 1950 class 2-8-0, except one trip on Sept. 29 when 4-6-2 3526 was used.

The 25 trains that ran during the month averaged 11 loads per train with as high as 18 loads and as few as 2 loads. 17 trains had 10 or more loaded cars, and trains had between 0 and 6 empties into San Bernardino, except one that for some reason had 14. There was no indication on the First District sheets of the engine on the Loop Local going to Ono, although there was one reference to Ono on the Redlands sheet, but no details.

In January, 1946, 1950 class 2-8-0s were used on all Loop Locals. The crew was on duty most days that the Local ran 6:00-6:30 pm. Starting Friday, Jan. 11, the crew made two trips around the loop, mostly picking up fruit on the first trip and spotting empties and general cars on the second trip. On Sunday, Jan. 20, there was a Mentone Turn with the 2-8-0 1965 that left Berdoo at 7:35 pm with just a caboose and returned with two empties, so someone must have needed some cars moved around.

The train sheets for July, 1947, show that the Santa Fe ran a daily except Sundays and holidays. The Locals were on duty at 6:00 pm and ran, as usual, counter-clockwise around the loop. While San Bernardino County was noted for the Navel Orange, which is normally shipped November to April, a considerable amount of Valencia Oranges are picked and shipped from packing houses on the Redlands District in July.

It is safe to assume that most of the loaded cars coming off the Loop were loads of citrus. During July, 1947, 393 carloads were reported to arrive at San Berdoo on the Loop Local, or as it was sometimes called, the Loop PUX. There were 26 locals run during the month, with loads arriving San Berdoo ranging from 22 to 8 and averaging 15 loads per day. The local was powered on 12 days by 1950 class 2-8-0s, 8 days by 2-8-2 3100s, and 6 days by 1800 class 2-6-2s. The Loop Local returned to San Bernardino between 11:05 pm and 6:00 am, depending on the work and other operation factors.

The Railway Club of Southern California made two trips around the complete Redlands Loop on March 6, 1949. They used 2-8-2 3121 and conventional non-AC coaches and a baggage car with doors open and barred. Then the following Sunday, March 13, another special ran with 2-10-2 979.

As of Jan. 1, 1950, 2-8-2 3146 was assigned to the Redlands Local.

The NCX's 2:00 am scheduled departure from San Bernardino indicates that it was waiting for the last cars to be added from Train 501-502 (Redlands District Loop Fruit Pickup).

Only a few local freights whose only destination was Patton would go in the clockwise direction via Highland Jct. and turn back at Patton.

Yard jobs used to go out on that branch to serve some industries and transfer cars to and from the PE yard just west of E St. The Loop job ran in the evening.

There was a short section of ascending 2.2% grade between San Bernardino and Redlands with a spur that had to be switched from the west. If they had a GP7, they took the car to Redlands, ran around it, and brought it back for spotting on that spur. If they had an FM, they just dropped it into the spur. Only an FM could do that.

On Saturday, July 21st, 1956, Extra 3009 pulled out of the yards at 6:10 PM for the last trip entirely around the Loop. This was not known til after it had happened, so there were no rail fans on hand to witness the event. From then on, trains operated only as far as they have business, then turned back to Berdoo, but in no case past Del Rosa. Switch engines were still taking cars up to the Highland Ave. Team Track, but since the last train, there have been no trains between the yard limit board and Del Rosa.

Another last trip around the Redlands Loop was on October 13, 1956. This is documented in records from paperwork from Santa Fe's Los Angeles Public Relations Office found in the SFRH&MS Western Archives files, and in a newspaper article in the Redlands Daily Facts date 10-16-56. The train had two coaches attached to it for the last trip around the Loop. Also indicated was that the portion of the Loop from Del Rosa to Highland Junction had not been used for several months due to the numerous street and highway crossings.

In Coast Lines Depots - LA Division, the Redlands District is on pages 65-75. The section between Highland Jct. and Del Rosa was terminated on July 23, 1956. Del Rosa to Patton was terminated on May 6, 1967, and Patton to Mentone was terminated on Dec. 13, 1980. Since 1987, only SB to milepost 11.2 remained in service, and that is being replaced by a commuter rail line.

In Signor's Santa Fe - LA Division book, the modern Redlands history is on pages 484-487. It says that the loop freight was Train 501/502 and ran as an extra, counter-clockwise around the 21.5 mile loop. Speed was limited to 30 mph (later 15 mph). The train left the SB X Yard at 6 pm and returned to SB via Highland Jct after 11 pm. There was a 2.2% grade to the summit at Mentone, and a 1.6% grade returning to Mentone (after the loop was cut). Yard crews switched the industries at the lower end of the loop in SB.

There were no wyes on the Redlands District. There probably were phone booths at all named sidings.

There were many Church Picnic Special passenger trains running on the Redlands District, but this was in the 1960s after the branch was truncated at Del Rosa, and they always reversed direction at Sylvan Park after the picnic was over.

From 1964 to 1971 you could see a string of ice reefers being pulled by two GP9s or GP7s during citrus harvest season on the Loop. The track died in the weeds at Del Rosa. East Highlands had a packing house, as did Mentone, and there was the Pure Gold and Sunkist in Redlands. The Santa Fe also switched the Frank H. Dill Lumber Company in Redlands.

Modeling the Train: A typical train would be mostly SFRD reefers, plus some boxcars, and sometimes a tank car or two and a flat car of lumber. The loco without a caboose sometimes first ran up to Culligan at Ono and took one or two boxcars there (or a gon or a hopper), before

returning and then taking its normal train around the Loop, or partway around the Loop after 1956.

Please review this and send your comments and corrections.

Thanks,
John Thompson