

The Kimberly Clark Spur

By Clifford Prather*

The 1950's saw many changes to northern Orange County as agriculture gave way to housing tracts and industrial development. In Fullerton, one area that was zoned for industrial development was east of Raymond and between Commonwealth Avenue and Orangethorpe Avenue. One of the major companies that built in this area was the Kimberly Clark Co. that established a paper plant on Orangethorpe between Acacia Avenue and Cypress Ave. (later State College Boulevard).

In order to serve this plant and other industries in the area, the Santa Fe Railway constructed a spur track off the Fourth District line to San Diego. This spur ran parallel and 1/4 mile south of the Third District mainline to San Bernardino. The junction did not have a wye and the switch faced towards San Diego. A small six-track yard with a car cleaning facility was built adjacent to the paper plant. The spur extended beyond Cypress Avenue to Placentia Avenue and then curved slightly to the north and ended for a period of time at the eastern edge of Melrose Street (in fact, up against a concrete curb, but with flashing light protection).

Kimberly Clark needed to be served by daily and round the clock Fullerton Road switchers to supply raw materials and haul away finished product from the enclosed warehouse track. This was the era when even local deliveries were often made by rail.

Additional companies located in the area including Aerojet General, who built an ordinance plant on a site now occupied by Home Depot. Several other companies installed operations in the area and track extended north and south of the spur to serve them, many crossing Kimberly

Avenue that follows the spur from Raymond to Placentia Avenue. Fender guitar, a propane dealer and a cold storage firm were some of the industries along the line.

Times change, companies move, transportation needs are altered and new companies arrive. So it has been with the Kimberly Clark Spur. Kimberly Clark no longer ships finished product by railcar from Fullerton. The car cleaning facility is no longer needed as a result. Aerojet has been gone for many years and for a time Home Depot (who moved on to the site) was a good customer until they opened a new distribution facility in La Mirada. Now a new warehouse has been built that blocks access to the home Depot site. Quaker Oats opened a warehouse near Placentia Avenue and was quite busy with railcars, but now does not use them. A single blue Quaker Oats boxcar has sat on the warehouse lead for several months as a monument. Thomas English Muffins has a siding but never has cars delivered to it.

What is the status of the spur today? A La Mirada Road switcher (currently the second switch) works the spur Monday 0 Friday. It can be seen mid days with two units and they use a caboos on the job because of backup movement. The first shipper still active is American Cold Storage that gets an occasional reefer or two on it's two car spur. Plasticolor at Acacia Avenue gets a tank car of chemical from time to time, however they stay at the facility for a long time. Part of the yard is used by a bulk commodity transfer firm and numerous covered hoppers are located on the northern tracks. The yard may have other boxcars and tank cars for other customers. Kimberly Clark receives boxcars of wood pulp on one of the two entering the plant. The other track into the enclosed

warehouse has wheel stops attached to prevent entry.

Continuing east of State College, there is a storage track where the lead to Home Depot at one time was connected. Future Foam has a plant on the south side of the spur and receives numerous tank cars of chemicals, but the warehouse is closed off. Just before Placentia Avenue is the unused Quaker Oats lead and across the street is Thomas English Muffin with their unused track. Before the spur passes under the orange freeway, a rather new warehouse that receives numerous boxcars of paper and on the other side of the freeway is the propane dealer who gets tank cars. The spur now continues east of Melrose Street to serve a warehouse (normally no business) and to Knott's Berry Farm Foods operation where tank cars of corn syrup are spotted.

The Kimberly Clark Spur has changed a great deal since it was first constructed, but it is still an active part of Orange County's railroad system.

By the way, this has no data to back it up but just an idea that I have had for a long time. The way that the spur was built with the junction switch face towards San Diego and the East end near the Third District. Could the ATSF been thinking of abandoning the Santa Ana River bridge on the Olive District and making the spur a connection? The bridge was expensive to maintain and subject to washouts. Well, just a thought and today with Metrolink using the line through Olive not possible.

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