

# Dispatcher

ISSUE 52

PACIFIC

SOUTHWEST RAILWAY MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, INC.

NOVEMBER 2, 1974

## LOW RAILS IN LOWER CALIFORNIA

### PART FOUR

by Richard V. Dodge

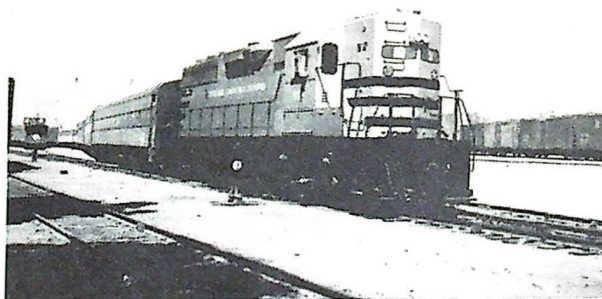
#### MEET THE SONORA-BAJA CALIFORNIA

Unlisted in most timetables, unknown to most Westerners, serving "la frontera," and itself a small railroad -- that's the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California (S-BC). A primary link between Mexico's northwest frontier and the mainland, a segment of the important West Coast of Mexico railroad route, and a railroad which is continuing to upgrade its services --- that's also the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California!

The S-BC, which connects Mexicali to the mainland, is the left arm of a long-legged Y. Remainder of the Y belongs to the Ferrocarril del Pacifico (FdLP). Top of the

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Low Rails in Lower California - 4 is the last in a series of articles covering the railroads of Baja California and Baja California Sur. These articles were written by the late Richard V. Dodge, noted San Diego rail historian. The articles were written when the states were still Mexican territories. Parts 1 and 2 tell the story of the Peninsular Railroad of San Quintin and Part 3 tells the story of the Du Boleo Railroad of Santa Rosalia. The lesser railroads are covered in this issue. Back copies of all three parts are available.



"El Rapido" - 2109 & seven cars - leaves Mexicali on Sep. 29, 1974 for Benjamin Hill and connection with "El Yaqui."

other arm is Nogales; bottom of the Y is Guadalajara. The S-BC is of short length but its operations are closely linked with those of the larger and older Pacifico.

Benjamin Hill, Sonora, is 332 miles from Mexicali. It is the junction of the Y where passenger trains from Mexicali and from Nogales merge for a 1002-mile trip southbound to Guadalajara. (Benjamin Hill is 93 miles south of Nogales.) Northbound, the trains separate into two sections for their respective runs to Nogales and Mexicali. S-BC also has a six-day-a-week freight on its main line.

S-BC country! With familiarity comes appreciation. The industry and agriculture of the Mexicali valley; sand dunes, salt flats and vegetation of the Gran Desierto; the glimpse of the waters of the Gulf of California; Father Kino country with a history linked to that of California;

(Continued on page 52-4, column two)

#### LAS FLORES

Little is known of a narrow gauge mining railroad which was operated in the northern territory of Baja California at Las Flores.

The town of La Flores is located about ten miles southwest of Los Angeles Bay (Bahia de Los Angeles) on the Gulf of California. By road, the large bay is some 415 miles from Tijuana or, as scaled, about 135 miles south of San Felipe.

Beginning in 1889, the San Juan Mining Company, as an American concern, started the operations of a silver mine. A refinery was constructed at Las Flores, a railroad was built from the mill to a loading point, about seven miles west, and an aerial tramway, two and one-half miles long, brought down the silver ore from the mine to the transfer dock. The company possessed at least one steam locomotive.

The venture was highly successful. Over two million dollars worth of silver was produced up to 1910 and vast quantities of ore were still in sight.

But along came the Mexican Revolution and the company was compelled to cease operation.

According to Mr. Paul G. Jacot, of San Diego, the abandoned ore mill and the remains of one engine can still be seen. (1957)

#### EL TRIUNFO

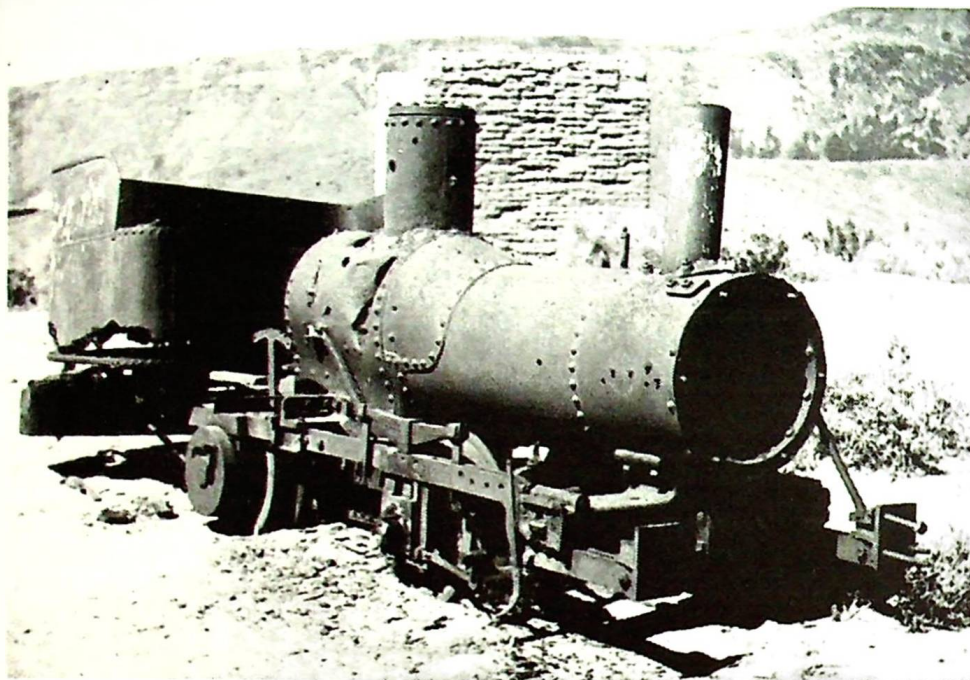
In "The Mother of California," the author, A. W. North, mentioned there was a rail line at the El Triunfo or Triunfo Mines in Territorio Sur, Baja California.

El Triunfo is located approximately 34 miles south of La Paz, at an elevation of 1800 feet.

The El Triunfo Gold and Silver Mining Company had been organized in 1862 by German capitalists. Other mines

were worked in the vicinity for gold, silver, lead and copper, but only the one at El Triunfo proved to be a reliable producer of silver.

In 1874 a large reduction plant with a 36 stamp mill



Las Flores Mill, 10 miles south of Los Angeles Bay, Baja California  
(Collection of Southwest Railway Library)

was in operation and \$50,000 worth of silver was shipped to La Paz.

Prior to 1907, the El Progreso Mining Company, an American concern, had acquired the properties which had been "steadily productive for over 40 years."

It is probable that the Porter-built little saddle tank engine, O-4-O T type, as shown in the picture, was purchased and operated when the Americans took over and that a railroad was constructed to a mine location. The illustration was reproduced from Mr. North's book.

Then came the Revolution and Porfirio Diaz was ousted from the Presidency of the Mexican nation in 1911. The El Progreso Company was forced out of business.

The grade of ore had declined. Tropical storms flooded the mines.

Sometime after 1918, the du Boleo Company, of Santa Rosalia attempted to rehabilitate the facilities and tried to establish a shipping point at Bahía de Los Muertos (Dead Men's Bay), on the Gulf of California, about 44 miles south-east of La Paz. The efforts were abandoned in 1926. Now only a few mining claims continue to be worked on a small scale.

#### References:

Nelson, Natural Resources of Lower California

Gerhard & Gulick, Lower California Guide Book

Engine picture is courtesy of the Union Title Insurance & Trust Co.,

## EXISTING HIGHER IRON

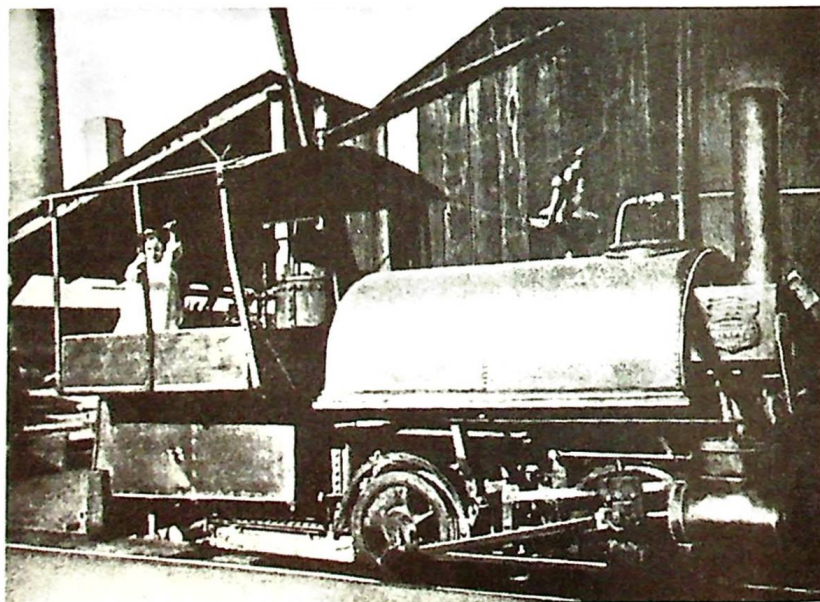
The two ultra-short lines of Baja California - Norte vanished decades ago. However the Twentieth Century brought three more substantial standard gauge railroads to the territory near the International Boundary. These continue to operate (1959) though one has been cut back and will probably be abandoned.

## TIJUANA Y TECATE

The Tijuana River Valley is the most attractive gateway from the east to San Diego. Numerous schemes were formulated for railroad lines and surveys were completed to utilize the route.

In 1868, when the Memphis, El Paso & Pacific Railroad was being promoted, one of the proposed locations, surveyed by General Thomas S. Sedgwick, passed through the valley.

After the construction of the California Southern Rail Road (Santa Fe) was started from National City towards San Bernardino via Temecula Canyon and Perris, the Santa Fe completed the building of the Sonora Railway from Guaymas to Nogales in Mexico and to Benson, Arizona. Then someone proposed the "Bee Line" as a natural and more direct outlet from San Diego to El Paso and Galveston. The Baja California & Sonora Railway was organized, to build from San Diego to Tijuana and across Baja California and Sonora to a connection just north of Nogales. Impressive ground-breaking exercises were conducted in the valley in December 1882 but no construction materialized.



El Triunfo, then-Terr. Sur, B. Cfa., Mexico, prior to 1907. Picture copied from A. W. North's "The Mother of California." Locomotive is a Porter #1389, O-4-OT, built in 1893, purchased from a mining company in Nevada. (Title Insurance & Trust Co., San Diego, picture collection)

**SPECIAL NOTE** At the request of Mr. & Mrs. Edgar Dodge, the Richard V. Dodge collection of railroadiana became the nucleus of the collection of the Southwest Railway Library. This collection is housed in Room 5 of the Santa Fe San Diego railway station.

The plans for the San Diego & International Railroad in 1887 and the Peninsular Railroad have been discussed. William H. Carlson's San Diego & Phoenix and the Southern Pacific proposals have been mentioned.

Following the unexpected announcement in December 1906 that the San Diego and Arizona Railway would be built by the Spreckels' interests to Yuma, additional surveys were run and three more or less practical routes were located. After careful consideration, the one via Tijuana Valley was selected. John D. Spreckels obtained the necessary concessions from the Mexican Government and the Ferrocarril Tijuana Y Tecate corporation was formed to cover the construction and the operation in Baja California, a distance of 44 miles.

Between 1910 and 1915 the railroad was built, surmounting Mexican revolutions, difficult terrain and financial obstacles. The International Line is crossed in Tunnel Number Four, east of Tecate. The first passenger train from the east passed through Baja California on the way to San Diego on December 1, 1919.

Through passenger service on the San Diego and Arizona was discontinued in January 1951. The road is now freight only except that the daily train has a combination baggage car and coach and will and sometimes does carry passengers between Tijuana and Tecate.

**Editor's Note:** Mixed train (passenger service) on the Ferrocarril Tijuana & Tecate was discontinued effective August 10, 1963. About four years ago the Ferrocarril Tijuana & Tecate became the property of the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California. S-BC today is in control of the line but train operation continues to be the responsibility of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway Company. S-BC keeps the books and maintains the line.

## INTER-CALIFORNIA RAILWAY

Imperial Valley developed rapidly after the rampages of the Colorado River were controlled and the Imperial County was formed, taking the easterly half of San Diego County, in 1907. The Southern Pacific's main line to the east lay along the enlarged Salton Sea. Rail connections became a necessity through the territory, linking El Centro and other valley communities. A junction was established by the Southern Pacific at Niland and tracks were laid south through the new townsites of Imperial, El Centro and Heber. Calexico was reached by the first train in May 1904.

The San Diego and Arizona had proposed to terminate at Yuma, but the Southern Pacific decided to build on from Mexicali, across the border from Calexico, through Baja California to Algodones, 51.4 miles. For this purpose the Inter-California Railway Company or its Mexican counterpart was formed. This line was extended from Algodones, across the border to a connection with the Southern Pacific's main line in California, west of Yuma, in 1911.

The trackage formed links from El Centro to Niland and to Yuma over which the San Diego & Arizona's traffic could be transported.

In October 1946, the Southern Pacific routed its passenger train, the Imperial, between Niland and Yuma via El Centro and Baja California. San Diego & Arizona Eastern's trains were then cut back to Calexico, where the through cars were switched to the Imperial.

Following the abandonment of passenger service by the San Diego & Arizona Eastern, the Imperial was returned to the main line routing in September 1953.

Subsequent to these moves, there was little traffic over the Inter-California except for the local mixed train. The easterly connection from the border to the Southern Pacific main line was abandoned in 1951 when San Diego & Arizona Eastern passenger service was discontinued. Rumors in 1959 indicate that the tracks in Baja California east of Pascualitos will also be torn up.

**Editor's Note** On or about March 1, 1959, the Inter-California Railroad discontinued its weekly mixed train to Algodones and the line between Pascualitos and Algod-

ones was abandoned. One Southern Pacific leased locomotive was used for switching in Mexicali and another served the line between the border and Pascualitos. In 1960, track between Pascualitos and Algodones was removed. By 1964 the Inter-California was no more. Its line between the border and Pascualitos was sold to the Sonora-Baja California and its yard facilities at Mexicali were removed.

## MEXICALI e GOLFO

To form the southern division of the Inter-California Railway, tracks were laid from a junction point, named Pascualitos, about nine miles east of the boundary at Mexicali. Rail laying was completed south to Fuente Brotantes (69 kilometers) in 1923. An extension was made to El Doctor (92.2) in the Mexican State of Sonora and then on to Puerto Peñasco on the Gulf (Golfo) of California in 1936.

The section of this line from Pascualitos to Rio Colorado, 48 kilometers or approximately 30 miles, is in Baja California.

The Mexican Government's Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California took over the Inter-California Sur and the Mexicali e Golfo and extended the tracks in 1947 to Benjamin Hill, Sonora, making a junction with the former Southern Pacific of Mexico, now known as Ferrocarril del Pacifico, between Nogales and Hermosillo.

Regular service is scheduled between Mexicali and Benjamin Hill and doubtless the Sonora-Baja California will take over the section of the Inter-California from Pascualitos to Mexicali when the latter is abandoned.

**Editor's note:** As noted above, S-BC has taken over the old Inter-California line between the border at Mexicali to Pascualitos. Previously, S-BC had trackage rights on the Inter-Cal between the S-BC station and Pascualitos.

## SLEEPY GIANT

An article entitled: "A Sleepy Giant May Come to Life," written by John Gorby in the Dispatcher, the publication of the Railway Historical Society of San Diego, Inc., Issue 18, May 10, 1958. About that time, according to Gorby's story, a well financed group of German engineers, interested in the developing of the mining operations in Baja California, appeared in Mexicali and established headquarters in that city. Moving mysteriously, local gossip associated the group with surveys for railway extensions, from Rio Colorado on the Sonora-Baja California Railway, south through San Felipe and along the gulf coast to tap the mining districts around Santa Rosalia, Baja California, Territorio Sur. Drilling rigs were busy taking core samples around the Providencia mine site in February.

A branch was evidently planned from San Felipe over the San Pedro Martir mountains to San Quintin with a northerly stem along the Pacific Ocean to Ensenada. This would be a revival of parts of the old plans for settlement of Lower California.

Nothing more has been heard of these elaborate plans, which would mean so much in the development of the two Bajas. Perhaps the Germans, like their English predecessors, can't be hurried.

John says: "Take it for what it is worth."

**Editor's note:** Mr. Dodge wrote the Lower California Railroad series in 1958-59. Since that time a story about a proposed railroad which would follow the route mentioned above appeared in the house organ of the Ferrocarril del Pacifico. A few years back there were additional news reports about engineers surveying a possible railroad route.

## THE DISPATCHER

A feature and news publication issued occasionally as an official publication of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association, Inc. Association officers are: H. C. Kerr, Jr., president; Herb Kehr, vice president; Bob DiGiorgio, secretary; Dave Hobson, treasurer; Jack Stodelle, director; George Geyer, director. Association mailing address is: P.O. Box 12096, San Diego CA 92112. Perry & Gretchen Timmermans are editors of Report. Dick Pennick is Bd. Chrm. Dispatcher staff includes:

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Following a seven year hiatus, Dispatcher has come to life again. Through Issue 51, Dispatcher, a nonprofit newsletter published by Douglas Duncan and Eric Sanders, was sponsored by the Railway Historical Society of San Diego, Inc. Effective with this issue, Issue 52, Dispatcher will be published as an official publication of the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum Association, Inc. Dispatcher looks forward to a long association with PSRMA.

A Dispatcher subscription will not be included in a PSRMA membership. Instead, subscriptions are available at three issues for \$1 or six issues for \$2. Individual copies will sell for 50¢ or three for \$1.

Your editors hope to produce on occasion a special issue in booklet form. This product will not be included in the subscription but will be sold separately.

In order to cut costs - and survive - this and succeeding issues will be printed totally or in part by the "instant print" process. When finances permit and picture quality is important, a page or pages will be printed in regular offset.

As before, Dispatcher will continue to offer special articles, general railroad news, local railfan news, and other special but related news. Primary coverage will be given to this Southwest Corner and secondary coverage to the Pacific Southwest. Readers contributions will be appreciated.

We are happy to be back in business!

## - - - ABOUT ISSUE 53

Dispatcher, Issue 53, will offer a summary of railroad and transportation developments of the Southwest Corner for the years 1967-1974. Last news roundup published in Dispatcher was that of Issue 51, issued December 15, 1966.

The editor has a file of news items compiled from personal observations, news stories, reports in other publications, and documents contributed by friends or obtained from the various transportation agencies.

Since December, 1966, much has happened. Amtrak appeared on the scene, the ferries disappeared from San Diego Harbor, local industry built and continues to build rapid transit cars and ferries, railfan accomplishments have been many, the Comprehensive Planning Organization has been established, many local government agencies are looking at transit, and federal financing has brought major changes in bus operation.

Readers contributions for Issue 53 will be appreciated. Help finance the next issue and succeeding issues by subscribing and by purchasing back issues.

## Meet the Sonora-Baja California (continued)

the red soil and low profile trees and shrubs of the high desert; and towns with names like Peñasco, Caborca and Pitiquito.

Two passenger trains are scheduled on the S-BC - and the Pacifico - each day each way. Many Mexicans ride the sleepers (coche dormitorios) and first and second class coaches. The Americans who ride the trains include those who are Mexican-born, those who have ties with Mexico, and those who enjoy travel below the border.

Baja California, particularly the Mexicali area, is generating an increasing amount of freight for the S-BC. There is also the U.S. freight from Calexico and the north-bound freight from Mexico's heartland.

El Mexicali, trains 1-2, for many years was S-BC's only train, a train which then as now crosses S-BC country during the evening hours. A few sleepers and first class coaches trailed many second class and headend cars. Southbound, the train was lengthened at Benjamin Hill with the addition of the Nogales section. Added were a diner and more second class and headend cars. Most cars on the train were - and are today - heavyweights of ancient U.S. vintage. The combined train continued on to Guadalajara with a sleeper going on to Mexico City on a National Railways of Mexico connecting train.

That was quite a trip! There were - and still are - several 30-minute station stops each day when passengers can stroll the platform, patronize stationside vendors and glimpse activity in the town.

The writer well remembers a family trip to Guadalajara and Mexico City on El Mexicali. Eighteen large, mostly heavyweight cars, wound their way through mile after mile of varying Mexican scenery. Just like railroading in the twenties! One wasn't locked into streamlined and air conditioned cars. One could lean out the top section of the vestibule doors or take a seat in an open-window second class coach. Air conditioning, food service and the last 30-minute stop were all favorite topics of discussion by passengers. Two unscheduled and exciting stops were made for hot boxes. And all the while, there was Mexico - the people and the landscape - that most had come to see. That was a great experience and a contrast, in degree, at least, with life aboard the streamlined lightweight "El Yaqui," a train which did not serve Mexicali at that time.

On January 10, 1973, S-BC inaugurated Trains 3 and 4, "El Rapido." Rapid because this train like the connecting El Yaqui makes fewer and shorter stops.

El Rapido on September 29, 1974, had a consist of seven cars, two first class coaches for Guadalajara, one for Benjamin Hill, a comedor (dining car), and three coche dormitorios, one for Mazatlan, one for Guadalajara, and one for Mexico City. At Benjamin Hill, all El Rapido cars were merged into the much larger El Yaqui which had come down from Nogales on the Pacifico. The combined train numbered 20 or more lightweight, streamlined cars. Lightweight or not, that's a long, heavy train on a tight schedule. And it often, if not usually, runs late. A new timetable has not been issued but the Mexicali train board shows the train now arriving at 3 p.m. instead of the 1:35 p.m. time. Apparently the schedule has been lengthened to give the train added running time.

Want to ride the train? El Mexicali? Better think several times about this one unless you're a railfan. El Rapido/El Yaqui has attracted most first class business and today's El Mexicali is down to one first class car, plus of course, the second class and headend cars. No sleeper! No diner! Anytime during the trip! It's still a fun ride if you can take it. Train vendors sell pop, beer, tea, sandwiches and other snacks. Stationside vendors sell corn on the cob, tacos, shrimp, bakery products, many meat dishes and juices and fruits of all descriptions. A ride on El Mexicali has its rewards but also inconvenience and perhaps discomfort. If you ride the train, ride it when the weather is mild.

How about El Rapido and the connecting El Yaqui? This train gives one less intimate contact with the coun-

# The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe

Four freights run six days a week, each way, on Santa Fe's Surf Line. They are: 1). Nos. 3251-3252, San Bernardino (4 p.m.) - San Diego (9 p.m.) - San Bernardino (2:30 a.m.); Nos. 3254-3253, Los Angeles (7:30 p.m.) - San Diego (12:40 a.m.) - Los Angeles (6:30 a.m.); Nos. 3255-3256, the Fourth District Local, leaving San Diego at 5 p.m. for Oceanside, Fallbrook as needed, San Onofre, and return to Oceanside and San Diego; Trains 3258-3257, Oceanside - Escondido - Oceanside.

The above schedule, effective January 5, 1975, differs slightly from that listed in a July 15, 1974 timetable which shows Train 3254 (daily except Saturday from Los Angeles) turning around in San Diego to head north not to Los Angeles but to San Bernardino as Train 3250. Cars for Los Angeles were dropped off at Atwood for pickup by another train to Los Angeles. At that time Trains 3251-3252 were running seven days a week.

Listed below are freight train schedules listed in the Los Angeles and Los Angeles Terminal Divisions Time Table No. 1, in effect January 5, 1975. Readers will note that contrary to passenger schedules, even numbered trains are westbound and odd numbered trains eastbound. Trains Nos. 891 and 198 are the Super C.

## WESTBOUND

| Tr. No. | Needles Lv. | Barstow Arr. | Barstow Lv. | San Bernardino Arr. | San Bernardino Lv. | Hobart Arr. |
|---------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 728     | 12.15A      | 5.45A        | 8.45A       | 12.45P              | 1.15P              | 6.00P       |
| 338     | 12.50A      | 5.20A        | 6.05A       | 8.35A               | 9.05A              | 12.05P      |
| 319     | 2.50A       | 7.20A        | 8.05A       |                     |                    |             |
| 968     |             | 8.30A        | 9.15A       | 12.45P              | 1.00P              | 4.00P       |
| 518     | 4.30A       | 9.10A        | 9.55A       | 2.00P               | 2.30P              | 7.00P       |
| 348     | 4.50A       | 9.20A        | 10.05A      | 12.35P              | 1.05P              | 4.05P       |
| 408     | 5.00A       | 10.00A       | 11.00A      | 2.05P               | 2.25P              | 6.00P       |
| 119     | 5.10A       | 9.35A        | 10.15A      |                     |                    |             |
| 108     | 5.20A       | 9.50A        | 10.35A      |                     | 1.30P              | 4.30P       |
| 358     | 8.50A       | 1.20P        | 2.05P       | 4.35P               | 5.05P              | 8.05P       |
| 118     | 9.50A       | 2.20P        | 3.05P       |                     | 6.00P              | 9.00P       |
| 308     | 11.50A      | 4.20P        | 5.05P       | 7.35P               | 8.05P              | 11.05P      |
| 508     | 12.10P      | 5.30P        | 6.30P       | 9.30P               | 10.30P             | 1.30A       |
| 309     | 1.50P       | 6.20P        | 7.05P       |                     |                    |             |
| 668     | 2.35P       | 6.10P        | 6.30P       |                     | 9.30P              | 11.59P      |
| 908     |             | 6.30         | 7.30P       | 11.30P              | 12.30P             | 5.00A       |
| 318     | 3.50P       | 8.20P        | 9.05P       | 11.35P              | 12.05A             | 3.05A       |
| 198     | 4.00P       | 7.00P        | 7.05P       |                     | 9.15P              | 11.00P      |
| 678     | 5.25P       | 9.30P        | 10.00P      | 1.00A               | 1.30A              | 4.00A       |
| 128     | 5.50P       | 10.20P       | 11.05P      |                     | 2.00A              | 5.00A       |
| 568     | 6.45P       | 10.20P       | 10.40P      | 1.40A               | 2.20A              | 4.30A       |
| 129     | 7.10P       | 11.35P       | 12.15A      |                     |                    |             |
| 328     | 7.25P       | 11.35P       | 12.15A      | 2.35A               | 2.50A              | 6.10A       |
| 679     | 9.10P       | 2.35A        | 2.55A       |                     |                    |             |

## EASTBOUND

| Tr. No. | Hobart Lv. | San Bernardino Arr. | San Bernardino Lv. | Barstow Arr. | Barstow Lv. | Needles Arr. |
|---------|------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 801     | 12.01A     |                     | 3.15A              | 6.15A        | 7.15A       | 11.05A       |
| 905     |            |                     |                    | 6.35A        | 8.00A       | 12.10P       |
| 865     | 2.00A      | 4.30A               | 5.15A              | 8.15A        | 9.15A       | 1.05P        |
| 803     | 3.00A      | 5.30A               | 6.15A              | 9.15A        | 10.15A      | 2.05P        |
| 869     | 4.00A      | 6.15A               | 7.00A              | 11.00A       |             |              |
| 805     | 5.00A      | 7.30A               | 8.15A              | 11.15A       | 12.15P      | 4.25P        |
| 813     | 7.00A      | 9.30A               | 10.15A             | 1.15P        | 2.15P       | 6.05P        |
| 816     |            |                     | 11.00A             | 2.00P        | 2.30P       | 5.00P        |
| 811     | 8.00A      |                     | 11.15A             | 2.15P        | 3.15P       | 7.05P        |
| 901     |            |                     |                    | 3.15P        | 4.00P       | 7.45P        |
| 943     |            |                     |                    | 4.30P        | 5.00P       | 9.05P        |
| 891     | 9.30A      |                     | 11.05A             | 1.05P        | 1.10P       | 4.05P        |
| 823     | 11.00A     | 1.30P               | 2.15P              | 5.15P        | 6.15P       | 9.55P        |
| 903     |            |                     |                    | 5.50P        | 6.50P       | 10.40P       |
| 917     |            |                     |                    | 7.35P        | 9.00P       | 1.00A        |
| 833     | 3.00P      | 5.30P               | 6.15P              | 9.15P        | 10.15P      | 2.05A        |

| Tr. | Hobart | San Bernardino | Barstow | Needles |
|-----|--------|----------------|---------|---------|
| 821 | 4.00P  | 7.15P          | 10.15P  | 12.45A  |
| 809 | 6.00P  | 9.00P          | 9.45P   | 2.00A   |
| 843 | 7.00P  | 9.30P          | 10.15P  | 1.15A   |
| 804 | 8.00P  | 10.00P         | 10.30P  | 1.30A   |
| 853 | 11.00P | 1.30A          | 2.15A   | 5.15A   |
| 913 |        |                |         | 6.15A   |
|     |        |                |         | 10.05A  |
|     |        |                |         | 5.50A   |
|     |        |                |         | 6.50A   |
|     |        |                |         | 10.40A  |

Other schedules listed in the timetable include Nos. 3251, 3252, 3253 and 3254. Others are:

|     |                 |                     |        |
|-----|-----------------|---------------------|--------|
| 708 | Lv. Parker      | 5.30A; arr. Barstow | 12.01P |
| 807 | Lv. Barstow     | 9.00A; arr. *       | 3.30P  |
| 788 | YK Coal         | - no time listed    |        |
| 887 | Coal Mtys       | - no time listed    |        |
| *   | Probably Parker |                     |        |

Other freight schedules were shown on July 15, 1974 time sheets. They were:

|           |                                                                              |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3214-3213 | Blythe (1C p.m.) - Rice (5 a.m.) - Blythe (8 a.m.) Daily or "as required."   |
| 3212-3211 | Barstow - Saltus - Barstow; exc.Sun, day                                     |
| 3291-3292 | San Bernardino - Highland - San Bernardino, exc.Sun, eve                     |
| 3282-3281 | Corona - Elsinore - Corona; exc.Sun, day                                     |
| 3261-3262 | Hobart - Wilmington - Hobart, exc.Sun, day                                   |
| 3221-3222 | Victorville - Cushenbury - Victorville, exc. Sat, afternoon                  |
| 3231-3232 | San Bernardino - Highland Park - San Bernardino, exc.Sun, daytime            |
| 3241-3242 | San Bernardino - Fullerton - San Bernardino, daily, evening                  |
| 3263-3264 | Barstow - Watson - Barstow, daily, two sets of equipment                     |
| 3271-3272 | San Bernardino - San Jacinto - San Bernardino, exc. Sun, daytime             |
| 3265-3266 | San Bernardino - Watson - San Bernardino, exc. Sat., early morning & morning |
| 3243-3244 | San Bernardino - Riverside - San Bernardino                                  |

Perhaps readers can report freight trains not listed above. Elsinore Branch freight is one of the missing.

Switch jobs in San Diego, currently, are 101, 102, 202, 301, 302, Relief No. 1 and Relief No.2. Generally, San Diego switchers are assigned to the 22nd Street Yard and South, 22nd Street Yard and North, and Amtrak. The crew of Trains 3257-3258 handle Oceanside switching.

In recent weeks, local switchers have been CF7s 2515, 2531 and 2535. (At least two of those named were replaced about two weeks ago.) GP 35s 3389 and 3352 powered the Fourth District Local on December 27; GP 30 3257 and GP 35 3350 the Escondido Branch train. That same evening Train 3251 was delayed in Riverside and arrived late in San Diego. It left a day later for the return to San Bernardino. Consist was SD-45-2 5665 and SD45s 5594-5517-5598-5559 followed by 31 gons and hoppers, 25 flatcars and box cars, five piggyback loads and caboose.

San Diego-based Alco S2 switchers 2325, 2333 and 2357 in February, 1974, were replaced by S4s 1513, 1525 and 1526. These gave way in October or November to the "new" CF7 class.

Extras come into town occasionally with potash or borate. The Preamble Train was in town September 7 and 8. It was parked on Marine Corps Recruit Depot track not far from PSRMA's 1509.

Computerized symbols for Santa Fe freight trains have three digits, including first - origin, second - traffic or service, and third - destination. 803 represents 8-So.Calif., Barstow and East and South; 0 - general service; and 3 - Kansas City. 3200 series are local trains.

Symbols for Santa Fe's computerized train identification system are as follows:

First digit designates area where the train originates and third digit the destination:

1. Chicago (Corwith-McCook included)

2. Illinois Junctions (all points between, but not including McCook, Ill. and Sibley, Mo.)
3. Kansas City (Sibley, Mo. to Morris, Kan.)
4. Kansas (all points west of Morris, Kan.); Oklahoma north of Durcell or Altus; Colorado north and east of Trinidad; also Superior, Neb.)
5. East Texas (all points Sweetwater and San Angelo east)
6. West Texas (all points south and west Sweetwater-San Angelo, except El Paso and Pecos)
7. New Mexico - Arizona (all points New Mexico and Arizona and Colorado west of Trinidad, also El Paso and Pecos in Texas)
8. Southern California (Barstow east and south)
9. Northern California (north of Barstow)

Second digit shows type of traffic handled or service performed by the train:

- 0 to 3 General Service
- 4 & 5 Trains handling predominately perishable traffic
- 6 & 7 Trains scheduled in conjunction with another railroad
- 8 Unit Trains
- 9 Special Trains

An alphabetical letter denotes the day of origin, and these follow the three digit symbol.

A - Z Days of the month, first through twenty-six  
BG represents 27; BH -28; BI-29; CJ-30; and CK-31.

Example 841-CK-2

The "2" represents second section

An add in the October 15, 1974, Los Angeles Times listed the following run-thru super freights:

Whirlwind - via Sweetwater, Texas, between the SE and the Pacific Coast (MoPac, T&P, ATSF)

Transcontinental Highball - Richmond, Va., to Richmond, Calif. and Southern California via Aard, Okla. (SCL, F&W, ATSF)

El Venado - Memphis and Little Rock via Amarillo to California (RI, ATSF)

Dixie Western Connection - SE to Argentine Yard in Kansas City, for the W and SW (ICG, ATSF)

Supercharger - Detroit and other Eastern cities to Argentine Yard for California and Texas (N&W, ATSF)

B-Line - The Bieber Route from So. Calif. and Phoenix to Vancouver (ATSF, WP, BN)

Streator Run-Thru - Elkhart, Ind., to Argentine Yard for east-west and southwest (PC, ATSF)

Lomax Run-Thru - Peoria and Lomax to Argentine Yard for west and southwest (T&P, ATSF)

On June 1, 1972, Santa Fe reported ownership of 28,738 box cars, 4781 flat cars, 9191 pondolas, 5225 hopper cars, 14,258 covered hoppers, 7507 refrigerator cars, 3603 piggyback trailers and 279 containers, mostly mail.

In California, the following cities have piggyback ramps plus trailer and container handling cranes: Los Angeles, Richmond, San Bernardino, San Diego and San Francisco.

The future of the San Diego Santa Fe station (used by Amtrak) remains uncertain. Santa Fe had planned to demolish the facility and replace it with a \$16.5M complex, including two 12-story towers and a three-story commercial plaza housing passenger rail facilities and retail stores on the ground level, with parking in the basement and on the office floors. Tile work, chandeliers and lighting fixtures from the present structure would be used in the new facility.

However, the station has been identified as a landmark and the City of San Diego has obtained a federal grant to convert the station to a transportation center. Local funds will also be needed. The City is moving ahead with the project. Outcome is not certain, however.

The main building presently houses Amtrak's ticket

offices, baggage and express, Santa Fe's freight traffic department, a Lexi-Coach ticket office, and a newsstand-snack facility. Upstairs are the special agent, another Santa Fe office or two, the Southwest railway library, storage areas and the Safety Room, used monthly by the Railway Historical Society of San Diego.

Most of the baggage area in an adjacent building is unused. BSA is located at the north end. The old freight building to the west houses Santa Fe engineering and leased space.

San Juan Capistrano is (or is being) converted to a restaurant. An Amtrak train stops once each way each day, but passengers purchase tickets on the train.

It's thank you and best wishes to four fine people who have served San Diego railfans for many years. Retiring or returning to Santa Fe are Ward Musick who has headed up passenger traffic in San Diego for Santa Fe and Amtrak, Florence Weingartner, also of the passenger traffic office, and D. K. Dunbar, who has been in charge of the station ticket office facility for many years, and Granville H. Walton, baggage handler and custodian. Mr. Walton's career at the San Diego facility dates back to January 11, 1928.

San Diego area railfans and railfan organizations will miss these folk and the excellent service they have given. It is to be hoped that we'll keep in touch. To all four, thank you and best wishes.

Data above was obtained from timetables, freight traffic brochures, newspaper stories and advertisements, and personal observation. Thank you to Phil Middlebrook who also assisted.

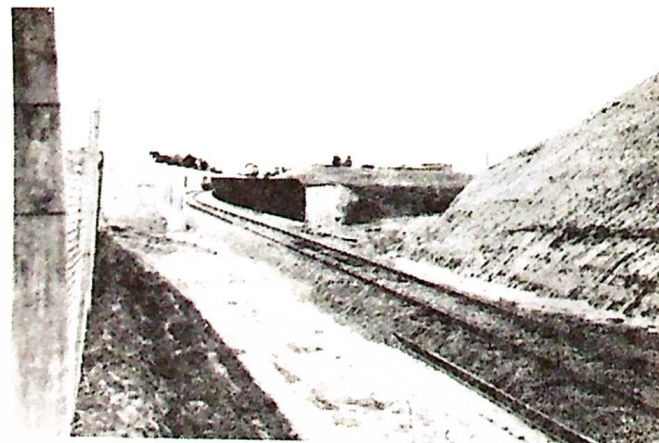
## SAN DIEGO & ARIZONA EASTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

### THE LA MESA BRANCH

The La Mesa Branch of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway Company is being upgraded and resurfaced.

William T. Harral, superintendent of the SD&AE, said heavier loads and longer cars make upgrading necessary. Resurfacing now underway is probably the most extensive in the line's history.

According to Harral, work includes widening of some cuts, minor realignment, grading of access roads where needed for off-rail maintenance equipment, transportation of fill from cuts and road work to locations where roadbed needs widening, some rail replacement including the laying of 112# rail on some curves, replacement of many ties, laying and tamping of new ballast on the greater part of the line and general cleanup.



As one looks west toward Greenwood Cemetery, one sees the new overpass which spans Interstate Highway 805; one cannot see the former roadbed on the left. It's gone!

east of Greenwood Cemetery other construction work is underway. An overpass which spans the now-being-extended Interstate Highway 805 and a new cut west of the overpass have been completed. A short distance to the east, a shoo-fly, including a temporary bridge, is in service while the old 47th Street bridge is dismantled and replaced. (47th Street is due for widening.) An old cut between the two projects has been removed and there has been minor track realignment.

The branch is beginning to have that "neat and clean" look, even though much has yet to be done. Work began over a year ago and will continue for some time.



As one looks east along the La Mesa branch toward 47th Street, one sees a trestle on the right - it's probably dismantled now - and beyond it the 47th Street bridge which is now being replaced.

Changes in the Lemon Grove "yard," shortening of a "team" track in La Mesa, and removal of the Grossmont siding have also been effected. Harral said the goal is to generally equip the branch with 90# rail. This will be done as and when rail is available and finances permit.

Track work on Commercial Street will be undertaken shortly. The Houstabout has continued to make its six days a week runs, pausing to have a couple of gons filled with or emptied of dirt or to perform another chore needed for the track work.

Other projects have also been undertaken. Crossing gates have been installed and track has been improved at Broadway in Lemon Grove and at Allison, University and the Interstate 8 access roads in La Mesa.

#### THE MAIN LINE

The laying of welded rail between El Centro and Plaster City is in its last stage as the last five miles into Plaster City is now being laid, according to Harral.

Major tie replacement is underway between Division and Hipass as is track and bridge work in Carriso Gorge. Harral said he hopes in time the entire main line will have three to four inches of ballast under the ties.

#### BUILDINGS

All buildings in the San Diego yard except the still-new one stall engine house and two small adjacent buildings have been torn down. (Who has pictures of the buildings which were torn down?)

Still around are the old engine house and other shop facilities, all of which are in non-railroad use, and the Freight House. The latter houses SDG&N's general office and freight traffic department as well as a freight forwarder.

#### TRAINS AND LOCOMOTIVES

Train 452, effective December 28, 1974, dropped its Saturday runs; train 451, effective December 29, 1974,

dropped its Sunday runs. This means that power for both trains is in the yard late Saturday night and early Sunday morning.

It's difficult to generalize - but business is down. Perhaps 15 to 35 cars on 451 and 452, six to 18 cars on the Houstabout. Don't know about the Salt Works and Plaster City runs.

Harral said the following locomotive classes are authorized for SDG&N mainline service: U25B, U28B, GP9, GP20, GP30, GP35, GP40 and RS32.

Observed Saturday, December 21 on Train 452 with about 27 cars were: GP35 6653, U28B 7028, U25B 6712 and GP 35 6562.

Report, Issue 43, stated that GE 70-tonners 5101 and 5119 were replaced in October, 1967, by two EMD SW8 units 1111 and 1115. (Both are 800hp, weigh 212,000 and are equipped with dynamic brakes and MU controls.) 5106, in town for a long time, left a few weeks later.

Southern Pacific switchers in San Diego on December 8, 1974, were: 1102, 1110, 1111, 1118, 1125 and 1126. All are SW-8s except 1102, a TR-6. Usually five or six switchers are based in San Diego.

On December 28 last, power for Train 452 was SP 3707, SP3654, and CB5000; SW8s 1111 and 1118 were assigned to the Houstabout and SW8 1110 was in the yard. Each of the SW8s is to be overhauled in Houston and the dynamic brakes will be reconnected, a "treatment" which will make the San Diego SW8s unique, according to Allen Copeland.



What are you seeing when you see this picture? When you send in your subscription tell us what you know about the house in the picture.

## PSRMA

Three dates are now on the 1975 PSRMA Excursion Calendar. They are:

On March 22, 26 members and friends of PSRMA will depart Mexicali for the "Creel and Copper Canyon Adventure." See the brochure enclosed in this issue of Dispatcher. Send or call in your reservation immediately - yes, immediately.

On May 4, PSRMA has scheduled a visit to Busch Gardens. Excursion Committee member George Geyer told Dispatcher the "under \$20 fare" will include the bus ride, admission to Busch Gardens and a dinner at Knotts Berry Farm.

Circle the date of Saturday, November 15 on your calendar. You guessed it - that's the date of this year's Puerto Leñasco excursion.

PSRMA President Dick Pennick is coordinating the restoration project which will result in the display of a steam locomotive and that great car, ex-Santa Fe cafe-observation car No. 1509 at San Diego's Bicentennial Display. Help with the project - enjoy the exhibit. Call Dick at 714-463-2276 and say, "I'll help!"

## Amtrak

The Greyhound strike, November 18-24, had little impact on Amtrak's San Diegans and only two cars were added to each train to handle additional passengers. Indeed, passenger loads on Surf Line trains have been light since the spring of 1974. Then, consist included six to nine cars weekdays and up to 13, occasionally 14, on weekends on Trains 770 and 775.

Last summer (1974) trains had six to nine cars; in the last quarter, train size ranged from four to eight cars and train size hasn't exceeded nine, even during holiday season. It should be noted, however, most seats are occupied sometime during the run.

Cars on the San Diegans at off-peak times are the ex-AT&SF 45-, 48- and 52- seat coaches. SP coaches now tagged Amtrak's 7500 series appear before, during and after peak travel periods. Surprise, car 7520 has been refurbished! Inside, that is.

While passenger load on the San Diegans appears to be light in recent months, the first quarter 1974 count was 98,585 passengers, up 57% over 1973. Other counts then were: Chicago-LA 71,543 (up 29%); New Orleans-LA 28,015 (52%); Los Angeles-Seattle 89,831 (74%); Chicago-Oakland 78,084 (78%); Chicago-Minot-Seattle 100,101 (46%); Chicago-Wenatchee-Seattle 59,301 (43%); Seattle-Portland 46,534 (53%); Seattle-Vancouver 13,977 (50%); Oakland-Bakersfield 9,013. Presumably, Seattle-Portland listing was for the two local trains.

Amtrak's San Diegans 771 and 776, the two which connect with the Starlight, stop at San Juan Capistrano instead of San Clemente. Change first appeared in the Sep. 15, 1974 timetable but is understood to have taken effect during the summer.

Sometimes, particularly weekends, one to four cars from Train 770 are switched out at San Diego for return to Los Angeles on Train 775. All trains are turned at the Marine Base wye after arrival. (The action at the wye has been known to interrupt PSRA work crews. They are restoring ATSF coach 1509.)

Lounge cars on the San Diegans are usually drawn from 1720, 1721, 3820 and 3821. 3501 and others have also been drafted. (It is assumed most readers know that two sets of cars are assigned to the San Diego service.)

As of November, meals are being served in the lounge cars. They are pancakes and "butter smokies" for breakfast at \$1.85; complete, except for drinks, Salisbury Steak or Chicken DaVinci lunch/dinners for \$2.25. Don't really know how one car attendant does it all!

Press reports indicate that the Surf Line will soon have two round trip commute trains. Designed primarily to serve Los Angeles, most financial support will be provided by the State of California, Los Angeles County and Orange County. San Diego County will provide token support. Schedules reported most recently in newspapers should have impact on the regular runs, however. These schedules are: leave San Diego at 5 a.m. and arrive Los Angeles at 7:45 a.m.; leave Los Angeles 5:25 p.m., arrive San Diego at 8:10 p.m.; leave Los Angeles at 2:00 p.m., arrive San Diego at 4:35 p.m.; leave San Diego at 6 p.m., arrive Los Angeles at 8:35 p.m.

The first named train, obviously, is a "commute to Los Angeles" train although the return run will look good to many southbound passengers. This train is sponsored by the County Of Los Angeles. The second train is supported by all counties.

For the first-named train Los Angeles County has purchased eight cars for \$200,000 from the Oregon, Pacific & Eastern Railway Co., Cottage Grove, Oregon. Included are five ex-ICG coaches, an ex-WP dome, and two ex-Milwaukee lounge cars. Last press report is that Amtrak will provide cars for the other train.

It's still all up in the air but it appears some action is forthcoming.

On the other side of the coin, Dispatcher heard that Amtrak is much concerned about patronage on the regular

San Diegans.

Well, we'll see.

Fares as of November 15 jumped from \$6.25 to \$7, one way. Other fares are: LA-Chicago \$104 (coach), LA-Fresno \$13.50; LA-Phoenix \$26, LA-SF \$21.75; LA-Seattle \$64.25, LA-Vancouver \$73.

A comparison looks like this:

|            | miles | running time     |         |
|------------|-------|------------------|---------|
| LA-Phoenix | 424   | 9:30, 10:30 hrs. | \$26.00 |
| SD-LA      | 128   | 2:35             | 7.00    |
| Sea-Ptld   | 186   | 3:45, 4:00, 3:50 | 7.50    |
| Sea-Van    | 155   | 4:30, 4:45       | 8.75    |
| Sea-Spok   | 225   | 3:40             | 17.50   |

And then for variety, KSDO San Diego has carried an announcement about reduced Amtrak excursion fares - but not to LA from SD.

And - - there are hints the commute train(s) fares may be less than Amtrak fares. It's going to be interesting. If and when.

### AMTRAK EXPRESS SERVICE

Amtrak has three Package Express Services. They are: Priority Express has one price of \$7.50 for shipments on specified routes, regardless of distance. Two of 32 cities are San Diego (SD-LA) and Los Angeles (LA-SD, LA-Sea, the latter also including Oakland, Portland and SF) Package delivery remains in a specified route.

Economy Express, shipments up to 250 pounds for varying cost, is also limited to routes. San Diego-Los Angeles includes Fullerton and Santa Ana, Los Angeles-Seattle includes seven other cities, and LA-NO includes five other cities. Available in 110 cities.

Custom Express is an individually arranged service for regular shipments and is available between any of the 110 cities. Normally, home delivery is not available and pickup must be at the stations. Service apparently began in June, 1973. Baggage car express service is available on all trains between San Diego and Los Angeles, with intermediate points served by Trains 772 and 775.

## Sonora - Baja California Railway

ICARAMBA! CORRECTION! Look at the Mexicali station train board shown on page 52-7. No. 3 llega (arrives) at 15.00 Hs (3 p.m.). Your editor looked at the board and said to himself that arrival was now later than before because No. 3 was usually late. Well, it wasn't so. The time schedule on the board had been corrected for that one day.

So! Let's correct the schedule to the left of the picture. In the Train 3 column, change 3 p.m. to 1:35 p.m.; 2:16 p.m. to 12:51 p.m.; 1:28 p.m. to 12:03 p.m.; 12:20 p.m. to 10:55 a.m.; 12:10 p.m. to 10:45 a.m.; 10:27 a.m. to 9:02 a.m.; 9:38 a.m. to 8:13 a.m.; and 9:20 a.m. to 7:40 a.m.

Also! Train 44, extreme left column, of course, should be Train 4.

S-BC's daily except Sunday freight (Trains 11-12) usually runs 20-50 cars. One 80-car freight was observed two years ago.

A new railroad bridge is being built at the Rio Colorado; a new bridge, new roadbed, new cuts and new rail have been observed at the far end of the line.

### THE EDITOR'S CORNER

Please do subscribe. In order to keep going we'll need a minimum of 150 subscribers immediately. If we don't make it your money will be returned or it will be credited to a Dispatcher special. Do subscribe! And order back copies.

Thanks to "Ol Rod" Varney for sending your editor his "Short Circuit Bulletin" all these years. Send a mule story to him if you have one. Thanks, too, to Addison Laflin for sending me the BAFRA Review. Great!

tryside and less time on the station platform. It's not the Super Chief but the ride will probably be a good ride and it just might give one a great trip.

For overnight trips coche dormitorio space is definitely recommended.

Let's talk some more about train travel in Mexico. Maken's Guide to Mexican Train Travel comments: "There is probably more 'bad news' connected with these two railroads (the S-BC and the Pacifico) than all the rest in Mexico. Even so, they have a devoted following from Arizona and California and continue to carry increasing numbers of Americans each year."

Maken attributes most of the troubles to late arrivals, lack of air conditioning, heat and uncouth Americans. (Late arrivals are rarely the fault of S-BC. If trains from the south arrive on time at Benjamin Hill they will have an on-time arrival at Mexicali.) As elsewhere, weather conditions can play havoc with roadbed and schedules. Washouts from tropical and semi-tropical storms happen once in a while.

Just as Amtrak is experiencing equipment failures in cars decades old, so do Mexican railroads suffer similar problems from equipment as old or older.

Fare structure in Mexico is great for patrons but revenue generated doesn't provide funds for cost of remodeling older cars and for buying new equipment.

Summarizing, if you're a railfan, then it's GO for train travel in Mexico. If you're fastidious and want Super Chief amenities, don't go. That might go for travel in the U.S., too.

On the other hand, if you enjoy unique and interesting travel experiences, you'll enjoy Mexican train travel. Most of the time El Rapido/El Yaqui will give the patron a satisfactory or better ride. And go coche dormitorio!

#### WHERE CAN YOU GO?

Where can you go? On the S-BC you can travel to Puerto Peñasco. Travelers will find there several hotels and motels, taxis, a local bus system, beaches, fishing - even a museum. As a bonus, El Rapido will take you there and back during daylight hours.

How about Caborca? It's a small town but Sunset Magazine in its October 1974 issue listed it as a place to visit. A Father Kino mission. Several motels, including one near the station. A quaint town center.

Benjamin Hill? That's for the railfan. The hotel has a water pitcher, wash basin, clean linen, and unlighted outdoor facilities. And, of course, the S-BC general shops and lots of train activity.

Where else? Many places on the Pacifico. For example, Guaymas, Ciudad Obregon, Navojoa, Culiacan, Mazatlan, Tepic and Guadalajara. Talk to a travel agent about hotel accommodations.

The Copper Canyon trip on the Chihuahua Pacific Railway Company is reported to be the top train trip in Mexico. Scenery ranges from the desert to lush tropical vegetation. The mountains and the primitive Tarahumara Indians! Maken's Guide to Mexican Train Travel will be of help to you. Most guides cover this attraction.

For a starter, ride PSRMA's annual "One Day Train Trip in Mexico," scheduled yearly on a Saturday in November. It will introduce you to a foreign railroad in a foreign country.

E.S.

## **S-BC PRIMER**

So you want to take a ride on the Sonora-Baja California Railroad and perhaps the connecting Pacific Railroad (Pacifico)! With enthusiasm - and some hesitation - Dispatcher offers a few suggestions.

TRAVEL AGENTS Travel agents' assistance with travel in Mexico is largely confined to tours, air transportation and hotel and resort accommodations. Agents rarely assist with train travel. Instead, they

suggest travelers make direct contact by mail or telephone or in person with the railroad passenger traffic office. They also recommend the help available from the Mexican Government Tourism Department.

#### TOURIST CARDS

Obtaining a Mexican Tourist Card isn't the headache it used to be. Go to the nearest Mexican Consulate or Mexican Government Tourism Department office for your card. "Proof of citizenship must be presented at the time the Tourist Card is issued, and should remain in the possession of the traveler during the entire trip (Birth Certificate, Army or Navy Discharge Papers, Identification Card, Naturalization Certificate, Voting Certificate, Passport or Affidavit of Citizenship. Canadian citizens by birth, must present a valid passport."

An official will examine your "proof of citizenship" and then make a notation or two on a Tourist Card. You may or may not be asked to complete the form at the office.

It is understood a Tourist Card may be obtained by mail providing appropriate documents and a stamped self-addressed envelope are enclosed. Remember that it is illegal to copy certain U.S. documents. Call the Consulate or Tourist Office if your party includes a minor other than your own. A notarized parents' consent form must be completed if a child is traveling with anyone other than his own parents.

San Diego Mexican Consulate hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., weekdays; Tourism Department office hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., also weekdays. Offices are closed on U.S. and Mexican holidays.

#### MEXICALI RAILROAD STATION

The railroad station is easy to locate now that Boulevard Lic. Adolfo Lopez Mateos has been completed to and beyond the S-BC station. Drive through the Mexican Port of Entry and you're on the Boulevard, a divided highway with a railroad track in the center strip. Watch the traffic signals, avoiding the left lane and the left turn signals, and drive 2.1 miles to the station. Advance reminders are a monument of a man on horseback, a Cali Max Supermarket on the left, a miniature traffic circle curve, and then a left turn into a road which leads to the station area. If you miss it you'll soon know it. Continue ahead and soon you will be able to make a U-turn. The terminal facility includes the station, employee homes, a freight yard and car shops.

#### CAR PARKING

A patron may leave his car for a day or two at the S-BC station. Some have parked their cars there for a longer period but most passengers store their cars in Calexico on the U.S. side of the border. In Calexico, State Highway 111 skirts the western edge of town. To the left, about four or five blocks from the border is the Hotel De Anza where there is a fenced but unguarded parking lot in which for a fee you may leave your car.

Some folk prefer to drive to the station, unload, and then have a family member drive the car back to the U.S. He then returns to the station by taxi. Carry some dust rags in the car. You'll need them when you return!

#### BAGGAGE ROOM

The baggage inspection room is adjacent to the first class waiting room. Inspection is perfunctory and a seal is affixed on each major piece of luggage. Keep sealed until the train is well on its way.

At about 10 a.m., for El Rapido, the main entrance to the first class waiting room is locked and all passengers will enter or leave through the baggage room. Those already in the waiting room must take their baggage into the baggage room to be checked. Once your baggage has been inspected it must not be taken outside. That means someone must stay with it.

Subscribe to the Dispatcher

STATION RESTAURANT

The station restaurant is adjacent to the first class waiting room. so passengers may fill in time with a late breakfast or a Mexican plate. The restaurant serves snacks and plate lunches and breakfasts. Menu is in both English and Spanish. The station restaurant at Benjamin Hill is smaller and open fewer hours.

TICKET RESERVATIONSSOUTHBOUNDCOCHE DORMITORIO

You can reserve space on a coche dormitorio several weeks in advance by calling the S-BC station at 1-903-762-6175 or 1-903-762-8502. Call Mondays through Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call early as the telephone lines across the border are much in demand. When an employee answers, ask, "Hable usted, ingles?" If he doesn't, he'll say, "Un momento." And then, almost always an English-speaking ticket agent will come on the line.

State your needs which will be the date of departure, destination, number of passengers, and space desired. Usual coche dormitorio space will be roomettes - 1, bedrooms-2, double bedrooms-4. There are variations. A section includes an upper and a lower berth. If you prefer you can go to the station in person or you may forward your request by mail.

If you go to the station in person, look for the passenger traffic office which opens on to the station platform. It might be advisable to confirm your telephone reservation in writing. Make it clear you are confirming a reservation and not asking for a new reservation. You need not pay in advance. They seem to prefer - if not require - that you pay on the day of the trip. That's why you must arrive at the station well ahead of departure.

On the day of departure arrive at the station by 10 a.m. or earlier, stand in line at the ticket window, pay for and get your tickets. Write details on a slip of paper as the ticket agent will probably not speak English. Agents accept only cashier's checks, travelers' checks, or better yet, cash. Personal checks are not accepted. Then, proceed with baggage inspection, and the processing of Tourist Cards.

Señor J.M. Salgado is the superintendent of traffic, Señor Alberto Basua is an English-speaking assistant as is another official whose name is not known by the writer.

Train gate opens about 45 minutes before departure. Coche dormitorio cars are at the rear of the train, adjacent to the first class waiting room.

SOUTHBOUND  
FIRST CLASS COACH

As we understand it, first class coach seats may not be ordered in advance. (Suggest you double check

this by calling S-BC at 1-903-762-6175 or 1-903-762-8502.) Sometimes there aren't seats to accommodate all prospective passengers. So, arrive early. Waiting room opens at 8:30 a.m. A ticket line forms immediately and the ticket window opens at 9 a.m. One agent handles both coche dormitorio and first class tickets. Ticket window opens at 4 p.m. for El Mexicali. It may close for a time during the dinner hour and then reopen. For this train purchase your tickets early and then go uptown for supper. Again, you might want to put your ticket needs in writing in case the agent does not speak English.

Train gate for El Rapido opens about 45 minutes ahead of time of departure. Seats are on a first come first served basis so be ready for the opening of the door to the station platform. Coach nearest the locomotive will probably be a local to Benjamin Hill; others will probably go through to Guadalajara. Train gate for El Mexicali also opens 45 minutes ahead of departure. Be sure to have your baggage checked and your tourist cards processed. The latter is accomplished at the counter near the train gate.

SOUTHBOUND  
SECOND CLASS COACHES

We're not sure of details but the same procedure is followed. Passengers sometimes board these cars hours in advance of departure. Ticket window for second class seats on El Mexicali probably opens at 4 p.m. Processing of baggage may be in the same baggage room as for first class. Don't know where Tourist Cards are checked. Write ticket details on paper if you do not speak Spanish.

THE RETURN TRIP

Travel agents and travelers are delightfully vague and sometimes in disagreement about ticket reservations. Our best information is the following:

NORTHBOUNDON THE S-BC

Reservations may not be made in advance at Benjamin Hill, Puerto Feñasco and other points for northbound travel. Buy your tickets at the station ticket window just prior to departure. Once on the train, find a seat and then change seats later on if better seats become available. The writer has purchased first class seats at the Benjamin Hill station and then found seating only in the second class coaches. Coche dormitorio space is ordinarily not needed on El Rapido and not available on El Mexicali.

NORTHBOUNDPACIFICO &  
NATIONAL RAILWAYS

At Mexico City, Guadalajara and at Mazatlán, you order return coche dormitorio space at the city ticket office. Try a telegram

or send a letter. You may want to telephone the office to determine the details. If you reserve space by telegram or mail, visit the office immediately on arrival to confirm the order and, possibly, make payment. First and second class tickets are purchased at the station on the day of departure. This means it's first come first served. That's the way we understand it. At other large cities along the way it might be possible to reserve space in advance. We just don't know. If your departure is from one of these cities inquire about a reservation at the station immediately on arrival. Or you might want to call the station by telephone. Anticipate communication problems if you do not speak Spanish. *\*in advance*

At other way points, your first objective will be to get on the train. Purchase your ticket, board the train, look for good seating then or later, and possibly keep in touch with the conductor. Sometimes en route, coche dormitorio space may become available. A Trains Magazine party boarded the northbound El Yaqui at Sufragio and found their space was occupied. The conductor did find other space for them. And so it goes.

PERSONAL NOTE

The writing of the above has served as a catharsis for the writer. When he goes south again he'll have a different mindset. He'll allow several days for delay and he will not worry about seating. He'll buy whatever ticket he can get. He'll then board the train, find a seat in one car or another, and enjoy the train experience. Why all the hurry? Why all the worry?

OTHER COMMENTSSECOND CLASS TRAVEL

If you don't mind straightback seats, facing seats, and dust coming through open windows, you might find that second class travel can be a lot of fun. The people are great. They're friendly and helpful. You'll possibly better understand and appreciate Mexico.

DELAY

Relax. The train will leave sometime. It won't stay forever in Sanchez Islas or Carbo or Las Enchilayas.

ESSENTIALS

Vendors sell beverages in enormous quantities. However, you might want to carry

some water to drink or to brush your teeth. Carry some toilet paper, too.

PREVIOUS ISSUES OF DISPATCHER ARE AVAILABLE

A list of available back issues of Dispatcher is being prepared. While some of the more popular issues are out of print, there are many others available for purchase.

Content includes detailed histories of Pacific Southwest railroads, past and present. Included are stories of main line railroads, short lines, street car systems, and interurban lines.

Write or call the Dispatcher, 7861 Normal Avenue, La Mesa CA 92041 (469-1299) for a list of available back issues.

ONE WAY FARES IN EFFECT IN MAY 1974

| Mexicali to:<br>Miles | Roomette | Bedroom | First<br>Class | Second<br>Class |
|-----------------------|----------|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| 42 Coahuila           | 4.24     | 6.56    | 0.88           | 0.46            |
| 156 Puerto Penasco    | 6.58     | 11.24   | 3.22           | 1.68            |
| 254 Caborca           | 8.95     | 15.80   | 5.28           | 2.75            |
| 332 Benjamin Hill     | 11.63    | 20.54   | 6.88           | 3.58            |
| 411 Hermosillo        | 16.64    | 28.64   | 8.53           | 4.64            |
| 700 Sufragio          | 24.09    | 42.49   | 14.14          | 7.94            |
| 969 Mazatlan          | 31.40    | 55.16   | 18.06          | 10.02           |
| 1334 Guadalajara      | 40.62    | 71.36   | 23.34          | 12.90           |
| 1713 Mexico           | 51.18    | 89.42   | 28.56          | 15.82           |

Roomette - 1 person; bedroom - 2 persons

#### S-BC INFORMATION ON RATES AND SERVICES

Mexico City: Navarra No. 210 1st Floor. Phone 5-47-30-18  
Guadalajara: Libertad No. 1518. Phone 25-72-98  
Mexicali: Traffic Superintendent, P.O. Box 182.  
Mazatlan: Calle Belisario Dominguez, No. 7 Sur, phone 20-36

**Picture taking** Mexican law decrees that photographs are not to be taken if the scene is derogatory to Mexico. What does this mean? To an officer in Puerto Penasco, it meant a 1 a.m. flash picture of the tempting assortment of food being sold by the vendors on the platform was derogatory. The police officer mimicked removing the film from the camera, throwing it on the ground and stamping on it. He didn't take the film - and the writer made a graceful retreat.

**Helpful hints** Watch the travel sections in the Union and Times. Watch for articles in Sunset and Westways. Purchase a travel guide or two. Best of all, talk to those who have traveled in Mexico. Hasta luego, mi amigo.

The S-BC data was compiled by the editor

#### TRAIN TIMES ARE LISTED

Mexicali is in the Pacific time zone but Sonora-Baja California Railroad trains operate on Mountain time. Train departures and arrivals are:

|                       | M.S.T.     | P.S.T.     | P.D.T.     |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| El Mexicali - leaves  | 9:45 p.m.  | 8:45 p.m.  | 9:45 p.m.  |
| El Mexicali - arrives | 6:20 a.m.  | 5:20 a.m.  | 6:20 a.m.  |
| El Rapido - leaves    | 12:35 p.m. | 11:35 p.m. | 12:35 p.m. |
| El Rapido - arrives   | 3:00 p.m.  | 2:00 p.m.  | 3:00 p.m.  |

#### FERROCARRIL SONORA-BAJA CALIFORNIA, S.A. DE C.V.

| 44     | 2      | Mls. | Daily                    | Kms.   | 1      | 3      |
|--------|--------|------|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1235 p | 945 p  | 0    | Lv. Mexicali, B. Cfa.    | Ar 0   | 620 a  | 300 p  |
|        | 1000 p | 6    | Pascualitos, B. Cfa.     | 11     | 608 a  |        |
|        | 1016 p |      | Cerro Prieto             |        | 550 a  |        |
|        | 1030 p | 26   | Delta, B. Cfa.           | 42     | 538 a  |        |
|        | 1044 p | 33   | Victoria, B. Cfa.        | 53     | 526 a  |        |
|        |        |      | Rio Colorado, Son.       |        |        |        |
| 129 p  | 1105 p | 42   | Coahuila, Son.           | 68     | 511 a  | 216 p  |
|        | 1114 p | 45   | Riito, Sonora            | 73     | 459 a  |        |
|        | 1139 p | 65   | El Doctor, Sonora        | 104    | 431 a  |        |
|        | 1210 a |      | Kilometro 121, Son.      |        | 409 a  |        |
| 215 p  | 1225 a | 86   | Sanchez Islas, Son.      | 139    | 401 a  | 128 p  |
|        | 1237 a | 94   | Torres B., Son.          | 152    | 339 a  |        |
|        | 112 a  | 115  | Lopez Collada, Son.      | 184    | 311 a  |        |
|        | 141 a  | 136  | Gustavo Sotelo, Son.     | 218    | 237 a  |        |
| 322 p  | 210 a  | 156  | Ar. Puerto Penasco, Son. | Lv 250 | 211 a  | 1220 p |
| 332 p  | 235 a  | 156  | Lv. Puerto Penasco       | Ar 250 | 150 a  | 1210 p |
|        | 252 a  | 167  | Irigoyen, Son.           | 269    | 132 a  |        |
|        | 315 a  | 184  | Almejas, Son.            | 296    | 107 a  |        |
|        | 336 a  | 200  | El Sahuaro, Son.         | 321    | 1246 a |        |
|        | 400 a  | 215  | Las Enchilavas, Son.     | 346    | 1225 a |        |
|        | 415 a  | 226  | El Coyote, Son.          | 363    | 1205 a |        |
|        | 434 a  | 237  | Los Sapos, Son.          | 381    | 1147 p |        |
| 516 p  | 505 a  | 254  | Caborca, Son.            | 399    | 1125 p | 1027 a |
| 526 p  | 522 a  | 264  | Pitiquito, Son.          | 424    | 1102 p |        |
|        | 530 a  |      | La Ventana, Son.         |        | 1052 p |        |
|        | 550 a  | 282  | La Verbena, Son.         | 454    | 1033 p |        |
|        | 605 a  |      | La Pera, Son.            |        | 1020 p |        |
| 602 p  | 625 a  | 299  | Trincheras, Son.         | 481    | 1010 p | 938 a  |
|        | 655 a  |      | Ruiz Diaz, Son.          |        | 942 p  |        |
| 637 p  | 725 a  | 332  | Ar. Benjamin Hill, Son.  | 533    | 920 p  | 905 a  |

Notes: Times shown are Mountain Time. Schedule for Train 3, El Rapido, northbound, is not available except for the 3 p.m. arrival. Other Train 3 northbound times are estimated times.



Mexicali Station  
Sep. 29, 1974



The G. T. San Francisco, the first of three ferries Campbell Industries of San Diego is building for the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, was launched at 3 p.m., Saturday, October 5, 1974.

Because of the narrow width of the ways the San Francisco was subjected to a controlled launch, meaning it was winched slowly down the ways while workers checked the sides for clearance.

The Honorable James R. Mills, California State Senator - 40th District - and railfan, commented that in earlier years San Francisco's Moore Dry Dock Company built ferries for San Diego while today San Diego's Campbell is building ferries for San Francisco. He commended the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District for its "initiative in establishing a workable system of mass transportation without resorting to taxation or long-term indebtedness."

Senator Mills also spoke again of the need for transbay ferry service in San Diego.

Philip Spaulding designed the G.T. San Francisco.

Lower deck has high-back upholstered seats in the forward half and seats and tables in the rear. Middle deck houses the restaurant facilities along with some seating. Topside are additional seats, some under shelter and some on the open deck.

Larkspur is the home port for the new ferry. The two ferries still under construction, reportedly, will be named the Marin and Sonoma.

Until the new Larkspur landing is ready for service the San Francisco will replace the M.V. Golden Gate on the San Francisco-Sausalito run. The latter ferry was constructed in 1969 by San Diego Marine Construction Corporation for Star & Crescent's harbor excursion service. For a time the vessel was assigned to whale watching runs. In 1970 it was sold to and remodeled by its present owners.

The San Francisco while smaller than many early-day ferries is larger than the Golden Gate and the various excursion boats.

Propulsion machinery includes three Avco/Lycoming Model TF 35 gas turbines, 2800 hshp each; three Sier-Bath reduction gearboxes; and three Jacuzzi Model 36YJ Marine Jet Propulsion units. Other vital statistics are: length overall 165', breadth over guards 33'4", maximum draft 6'3", loaded displacement 280 long tons, service speed 25 knots, and passenger capacity 750.



Top: The G.T. San Francisco just after launching, October 5, 1974, at Campbell Industries, San Diego.

Bottom: Site of the Larkspur Ferry Terminal in August 1974. (Eric Sanders pictures)

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