

Dispatcher

Issue #7 Railway Historical Society of San Diego, Calif. Sep. 5, 1956

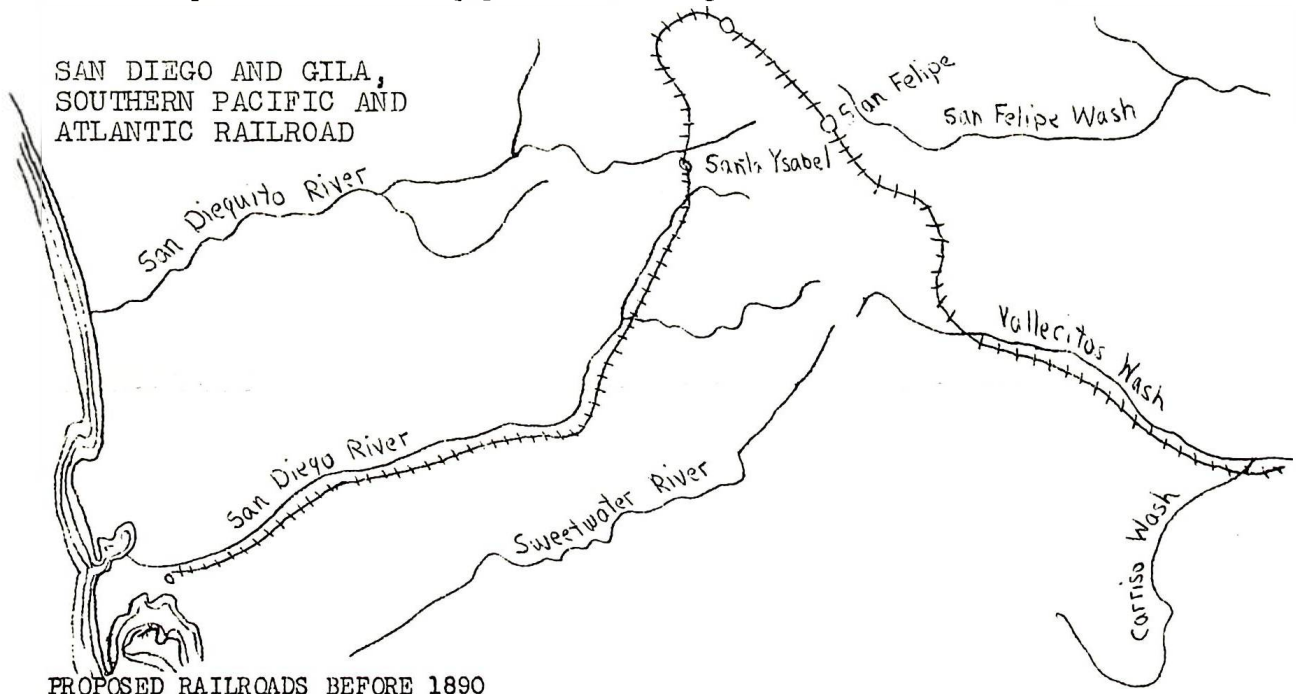
FIRST OF A SERIES: A STUDY OF WISHFUL THINKING

PAPER RAILROADS OF THE 90'S

— — — BY SPENCER MENZEL

Railroads, maps and history are intriguing. The writer takes delight in seeing dark lines leading across the spaces of maps and in speculating upon how the railroads which these lines represent got there. Likewise, the sight of abandoned railroad grades and the thought of people who constructed these are always items of interest. Therefore this study was undertaken with an idea of having fun; not with the idea of writing a monograph. The summer of 1943 was spent in browsing through old papers and records searching for news of railroads. This paper is the result of that vacation's fun. This running account is taken from materials which have never been published, and so the writer's enjoyment in working with source materials has been great.

The two most useful newspapers of the period under consideration have been the National City Record and the San Diego Union; the latter in particular is an excellent source of all types of California history of the American, that is the United States, period. It is unfortunate that more issues of papers like the Julian Sentinel have not been preserved because in them the flavor of the early frontier life is better preserved than in papers of the larger cities.



Before the '90's several railroads were planned as San Diego's transcontinental connections. The most important of these were the San Diego and Gila, the Memphis, El Paso and Pacific, the Texas and Pacific, the Los Angeles, San Diego, and Yuma Bee Line Railroads. In addition, the Fort Yuma Turnpike and the Ensenada Railroad affected the planning of paper railroads.

The San Diego and Gila, Southern Pacific and Atlantic Railroad Company

became organized as a result of the efforts of Louise Rose, the founder of Roseville, and Judge James W. Robinson. Their efforts led to the incorporation of a \$4,000,000 company, on November 7, 1854, which had as its objective the "constructing of a Rail Road from the City of San Diego, California to the Colorado River, opposite the mouth of the Gila River, a distance of one hundred fifty miles."¹ Soon after organizing, the company sent out Charles H. Poole to survey a suitable route. Mr. Poole chose the San Diego River route which followed up the river to Santa Ysabel Valley. From this point the route proceeded north to Warner's Ranch and Warner's Pass to San Felipe Valley. The proposed railroad then followed down San Felipe Creek and Carriso Creek to New River and passed to the north of Pilot Knob to the mouth of the Gila River. Sectional struggles in the United States prior to the Civil War halted the continuation of the line; to have completed the road would have aided the South against the North. Not until after the war did affairs become active again, this time under the direction of San Diego's second paper railroad, the Memphis, El Paso and Pacific Company, to which the San Diego and Gila transferred its franchise, capital stock and property on February 27, 1869.²

The route of the Memphis and El Paso Railroad and the so-called "Tom Scott route" survey of its successor, the Texas and Pacific, followed the same general direction of what was called the "New Road" of the Fort Yuma Turnpike Company.³ This joint-stock company spent \$14,000 in an attempt to construct a serviceable freight road from San Diego to the desert and the Burro Mines near Tucson. The road, which was completed as the Memphis and El Paso line was being surveyed, ran from San Diego into Rancho Nacional through Telegraph Canyon to Jamul Valley. Eastward the road ran up Dos Potreros Valley to Milquatay (Campo) Valley and over the ridge to Walker's Valley. Walker's Cut-off then led to Jacumba Valley from whence the turnpike extended through Mountain Springs, Coyote Wells, Gardner's Wells, Cook's Wells, and Algodones to Fort Yuma. This road provided San Diego with the shortest, although not too satisfactory, overland connection with Fort Yuma and Arizona.⁴

In 1869 General M. C. Hunter, acting as attorney for the Memphis and El Paso Railroad Company, entered into an agreement with Frank and Warren Kimball, the owners of Rancho Nacional and National City. Bonds under a forfeiture of two million dollars to locate the terminus of that transcontinental road at National City were issued. The Memphis and El Paso made a failure of its attempt to build to the coast, and, as a result, the bonds were turned over as a part of the bankrupt corporation. There they remained until Colonel T. A. Scott and his Texas and Pacific Company arrived upon the scene.⁵

Colonel Scott's appearance in 1871 gave National City and San Diego their second boom which lasted into 1873. Scott had purchased the charter and franchise of the Memphis and El Paso Company. As an inducement to the new company to build to the bay region, San Diego gave 9,000 acres of city land on a verbal promise. The National City developers would not accept a verbal agreement, but entered into a bond with the new company in return for a donation of 11,000 acres of Rancho Nacional and one-half of the National City tract.⁶

The "initial stake" of the Texas and Pacific Railway from which all their lines were projected, stood about half a mile from the bay and about three and a half miles south of the north line of the National Ranch. From this place which is at the foot of G Street, Chula Vista, Scott's line passed through San Diego and Old Town and up the coast to the Santa Margarita Valley through Juan Forster's Santa Margarita Rancho to Temecula and thence to San Geronimo Pass. From here the line followed southwest to Ft. Yuma and El Paso on its route to Marshall, Texas.⁷

The failure of Colonel Scott and the Texas and Pacific Company in the panic and financial troubles of 1873 returned to the Kimball brothers, by the limitations of the bond, the 11,000 acres and the National City property.⁸ With the collapse of San Diego's third paper railroad times became dull indeed, but the

people were becoming railroad minded and entertained high hopes for the times ahead.

San Diego's next proposed railroad enjoyed more success than those preceding. Undaunted by the failure of their first two attempts at securing a transcontinental railroad connection, the owners of Rancho Nacional, the Kimball brothers contacted the owners of the new Santa Fe Railroad which was forcing its way westward toward the Pacific. By arrangements similar to those given the Texas and Pacific, they secured the construction of the California Southern Railroad in 1880-82. This line connected National City with the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad at Barstow, and provided the Santa Fe system with a deep-water harbor at its western terminus, National City. Train service began in 1881, and through service to the East commenced on November 15, 1885. Large terminal yards, shops, and a wharf were built at National City for use of the new line. However, the Santa Fe line, which took control in April, 1886, in 1889 "temporarily" moved the shops to San Bernardino, and the San Diego line of the railroad has remained since a branch and not the main line as hoped for at the time of the California Southern's construction.

No sooner was the California Southern successfully completed than a flood of proposals for other projects hit the bay region. Perhaps they were merely by-products of the resulting boom caused by railroad development throughout all Southern California, but plans without number sprang up. Among the first to appear was that advocated strongly by the National City Record, the Los Angeles, San Diego and Yuma "Bee Line." This road was to run from San Diego to National City through Mexico to Yuma. The company went so far as to contract for rails, locomotives and passenger cars, but no construction was ever accomplished.

The Pomona and Elsinore Railroad Company organized in 1887 as a purely local affair at Pomona. In a few months their fancy made them increase their plans to include a connection to San Diego via Elsinore and Escondido.

During the year 1888 the San Diego and Ensenada Railway Company developed its plans and surveys for a railroad which was to connect the bay region with the country to the south. The surveyors ran their line from the company's proposed wharf at South San Diego, near the head of the bay, through the Tia Juana Valley

to the Monument, located near the beach at the western end of the international boundary. The survey as completed from there ran along the coast to Ensenada.¹² Like many other projects, this survey represented the final accomplishments of the company.

References: 1,2,3. Lewis B. Lesley, "San Diego's Struggle to Secure A Transcontinental Railroad Connection." Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, 1943

References: 4,5. San Diego Union
References: 7,8,10,12. National City Record

Reference: 14. Spencer Menzel, "Development of the Sweetwater Area." M.A. Thesis, U. of Southern California.

Reference: 16. Julian Sentinel

PLASTER CITY LINE HAS NEW EQUIPMENT

New General Electric Diesels are now in service on the Plaster City line. Locomotives 1303 and 1403, operating MU, alternate with the larger and older locomotive, known as the 75 tonner. The new locomotives are Class B-B-108-108. Horsepower is 500 with 390 at the draw bar. They have four wheel trucks.

90# rail is on order for rerailing approximately five miles of track. Heavy rail is now in place from the Plaster City plant to approximately MP 7.0 and again from MP 18.0 to 22.0. Five new gondolas are also in service. Temporarily they replace older cars which are being overhauled and repainted. Trains are still of the same size although one 19 car train was operated August 10 for test purposes. Operation eventually calls for the two GE's operating MU to haul all the cars in a single train. When the 75-tonner is in service trains will be shorter.

Data supplied by Billy Calbert, engr.

NEWS BRIEFS

SANTA FE Trains Magazine reports that Santa Fe's RDC's will be rebuilt but will not be returned to the San Diego-Los Angeles run. The RDC's have been shipped out. Bill Garner reports that Santa Fe's Grand Canyon runs from three to five sections per day. Santa Fe's fare to Los Angeles jumped from \$2.37 to \$3.16 one way including tax.

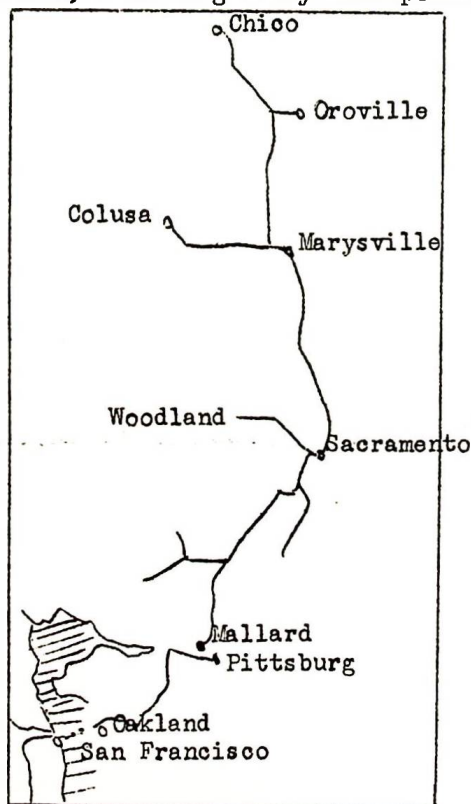
SAN DIEGO & ARIZONA EASTERN. SD&AE locomotives 105 and 106, along with SP motive (Continued on Page 6, Column 1)

AN OLD INTERURBAN REJUICENATED

by Richard V. Dodge

When Henry A. Butters organized the Northern Electric Railway Company and started the construction of a railroad with the conventional overhead trolley wire in November 1905, from Oroville north to Chico, California, little did he imagine that his road would become part of the longest third rail electric interurban system in the United States. This distinction was attained when the Western Pacific Railroad bought out the successor of the Northern Electric, changing the corporate name to Sacramento Northern Railroad Company, in 1921; acquired control of the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad in 1927; and combined the two into the Sacramento Northern Railway Company in 1929.

The San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad was commonly known as the "Sacramento Short Line" and owned the trackage from 40th St. and Shafter Avenue in Oakland to Sacramento, including ferry transporta-



From a WP map

tion of the electric trains across the Suisun Straits near the present city of Pittsburg. The original companies which built the electric railroads between Oakland and Bay Point (now named Port Chicago)

Chicago) were the Oakland & Bay Shore Railroad and the Oakland & Antioch Railway. These two were consolidated into into a new company known as

the Oakland, Antioch & Eastern Railway, the immediate predecessor of the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad, when track was laid south from Sacramento in 1913. The Short Line's trains operated over the Key Route's 40th St. line to the Pier, connecting with the ferries to San Francisco.

An extraordinary excursion was operated over the still electrified portion of the Sacramento Northern Railway, from Oakland to Pittsburg, on July 8, 1956. Only under the auspices of the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association was such a trip possible and, now, the approval of the Interstate Commerce Commission has been granted to abandon the portion of this trackage from Oakland to Lafayette, 16 miles.

The rolling stock used on this notable event is owned by the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association and several members of the group pitched in and did a splendid job, under the supervision of the Excursion Director, Richard Reynolds, in getting the equipment in running order.

The train consisted of the former Sacramento Northern "combine" No. 1005, a fine looking interurban which had been built in 1912 by the W. L. Holman Car Company of San Francisco for the Oakland, Antioch & Eastern Railway, and a passenger trailer with a roomy observation platform No. 751, which had been obtained from the Salt Lake and Utah Railway. This was the first time that these cars had operated coupled together.

The story of No. 1005 reflects the troubles and problems of the electric traction companies with falling revenues and rising costs. When the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge was opened to traffic, the Sacramento Northern deeded five of its interurban cars, including No. 1005, to the California Toll Bridge Authority as compensation for operating equipment required on the bridge in 1939, and, for a time, San Francisco boasted direct rail service to Sacramento. But schedules soon had to be cut back and cut back until the final regular passenger train ran on June 30, 1941.

The California Toll Bridge Authority then sold the interurbans to the Key Route and they were repainted from the Sacramento Northern deep "Pullman" green

to Key orange. When the Key System Transit Lines took over they were repainted the National City Lines' standard "fruit salad" color scheme of yellow, green and white. The 1005 was renumbered #495. The BAERA obtained the car, which had been partially stripped, from the Key System. The old lettering and color were restored. Two San Francisco Municipal Railway's pole trolleys and a pantograph salvaged from the Interurban Electric Railway were installed on the car by the club. The third rail collector shoes remain in place. What more could a juice fan ask for? But the Sacramento Northern generally had abandoned third rail operation in 1947.

Observation trailer No. 751 is a steel car which was built by the Niles Car and Manufacturing Company in 1915.

Difficulties developed in getting No. 1005 to Oakland from Sacramento, where it had been in storage in the Western Pacific's Shops. Undoubtedly it caused several dispatcher's headaches. Due to the light draft rigging and couplers, the interurban could not be handled in regular freight trains. Finally, a routing was worked out and the car was moved by the Southern Pacific to Polk, near Sacramento, then by the Central California Traction Company to Stockton. There it was turned over to the Western Pacific but was delayed several days until a short freight train was called. Then it was hauled to the Western Pacific's Roundhouse in Oakland, where the club members put on the finishing touches. When ready for operation, the car was again turned over to the Southern Pacific for transfer to the Oakland Terminal's Yard, thence to the Key System and to the Sacramento Northern.

In reliving the old days, it would have been wonderful to start the excursion out of San Francisco but it was found to be impossible to operate over the Bay Bridge. The next most realistic bet was to make the initial point the Key System's Division One Yard, near the Oakland Army Base. It was so arranged.

Now to reach Division One, the two car train had to run "backwards" or observation platform first, from 40th and Shafter, over the Key System's line. This was easy as the observation end was equipped with a master controller, whereby the motorman could sit just inside the closed section of the trailer and operate the controller on No. 1005 by remote control. All went well until the Southern Pacific underpass was reached. Suddenly something caused the fuse to blow and the motorman

had to retreat to No. 1005 to complete the backing movement.

Shortly after pulling out of the Yard a stop was made on 40th St. It was a chilly, foggy morning but the absence of sunlight did not deter the ardent photographers there or again at 40th and San Pablo Avenue or at 40th and Shafter.

At the latter point, the short was cleared and the remote control was ready for later back-up operations.

Stored at the terminal was Sacramento Northern Birney "One Man Safety" car No. 62. This was one of the San Diego Electric Railway's "cootie" cars, being S.D.E.Ry. No. 301, built in 1920 and sold to the Sacramento Northern Railroad in 1923. It now belongs to the BAERA. Also there was another odd-looking single truck trolley car. This one formerly operated on the Municipal Railway of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, and it is now owned by Eldon Lucy, of the BAERA. In addition, electric locomotives Nos. 652, 653 and 661 were parked there.

Leaving the terminal at 10:29 a.m., the attention-attracting train travelled out Shafter Avenue, past Lake Temescal and through the Oakland hills where a 4.4% grade has to be negotiated. Passing through a long tunnel, the train emerged into Moraga Valley and warm sunshine.

Attempts were made to use the pantograph but, in many places, the trolley wire was too high. Trouble was also encountered with the pole trolley and showers of sparks, resembling those of an acetylene cutting torch in action, descended at certain points. The Sacramento Northern has stepped up the voltage from 1,200 to 1,500, according to Addison Lafflin of the B.A.E.R.A., an authority on such subjects. Luckily the trolley wire was not burned in two.

A "coffee break" was announced for the stop at Concord at 11:35 a.m., 25.8 miles from 40th St., but many fans preferred to spend the time shooting more pictures. Sacramento Northern Maintenance of Way car No. 302 was on the siding. This was originally one of the interurbans, bearing number 1020. Repairs were made on the pole trolley during the interval.

24 minutes later the nostalgic express was off again, to a photo stop east of Port Chicago. More pictures were taken at Pittsburg, 39 miles from 40th St., then the train proceeded into the Yard of the steel plant, the scheduled destination.

DISPATCHER

At the time, the steel workers were "on strike" and soon a picket drove up to investigate the suspicious looking vehicles and the zealous mob milling about them. The return to Pittsburg was made using the remote control.

After lunch, the return journey began at 2 p.m. The train continued running backwards two miles to West Pittsburg, which was formerly the junction with the line leading to the ferry landing at Mallard. Since the ferry "Ramon" was condemned, through freight service to Sacramento was discontinued, thus isolating the electric division on the south shore. The cars were turned on the wye formed by the connecting switches.

More stops for photos were made at Walnut Creek, 19.5 miles from 40th St., several in the scenic Redwood Valley and at Havens, 5.5 miles from 40th St., at the summit of the grade.

Still the insatiable appetites of the boys for more pictures resulted in the flagging down of automobile traffic in Oakland. Some rare shots were made of the train on Shafter Avenue, crossing through the intersection of College Avenue.

Thus ended the memorable journey when 40th Street was reached. But whoever heard of a railfan club having a car with windows which you couldn't get open?

Acknowledgments: To Dick Reynolds, Fred Hust and the Editor of "Circuit Breaker" of the BAERA for data furnished for the excursion; Addison Laflin for answers to questions; and various articles in The Western Railroader, Francis A. Guido, Editor-Publisher, including the reprint of the "Sacramento Northern's 50th Anniversary" story which appeared in the publication "Mileposts" of the Western Pacific Railroad.

August 12, 1956

NEWS IN BRIEF, Continued

power, may be seen on a dead storage track at the Glendale engine yard..... City of El Cajon and the Division of Highways reached agreement on the Marshall St. overpass. Effect of agreement will be to allow SD&AE to extend line to Gillespie Field.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC. SP has applied to abandon the West Coaster which operates between Los Angeles and Sacramento, also to consolidate the Lark and Starlight, also to drop the Gerber local. SF ferry fare up from 26¢ to 50¢....SP's PMT has purchased Pacific Freight Lines. Also is constructing 150 flat cars for piggyback.

Published four to six times a year as the official publication of the Railway Historical Society of San Diego. Mailing address is 7861 Normal Avenue, La Mesa. Subscriptions: 5 for 50¢; 10 for \$1.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

We're short on news space this time, so we thought we'd let you know that all the back news will be included in the next issue along with a story by Clive Foss about early day local transit in Escondido and Oceanside. Main feature in the next issue will be a story about the Electric Division of the National City and Otay Railroad. We might even include a page of pictures.

The Dispatcher's paid subscription list now totals 50. In order to provide multilithed material-with pictures-at least 200 subscriptions are needed.

Here's the box score on the special SD&AE issue. We sold about 800 at the Fairgrounds. Approximately 100 copies were given to Southern Pacific-San Diego & Arizona Eastern for their use. Regular mailing and special orders accounted for the remainder.

Send in your contributions. Help us increase our subscriptions!

The Editor

ELECTRIC TRANSIT NEWS. Thirtieth Street Bridge across which once operated SDTS #2 street cars is to be replaced by a dirt fill....SDTS said to be again negotiating with a South American concern for sale of eight remaining PCC cars.....Two former LATL street cars spotted on deck of "President Taft" when it docked recently in San Diego....LATL requested permission to substitute Line W....SFMun will probably lease 61 new PCC cars.....Due to bridge reconstruction the Portland Railway & Terminal Lines to Bellrose and Oregon City have an uncertain future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS to Timepoints and Ferro-quinologist for their mention of our SD&AE issue. Also to Laurence Veysey and Bill Garner for their kind comments.