

## TEXAS HIGHWAYS--RAILROADING IN TEXAS, PART TWO (EXCURSIONS)

What muscled the heightening pulse of Texas railroading's heyday proved its most enduring symbol--the pounding, resounding, smoke-belching, cow-catching, whistle-blowing, chug-chugging steam-powered locomotive.

Some Texas cities had multiple train stations. Travelers often had to transfer to a different depot, sometimes across town, to connect to a different rail line.

In 1912, eight railroads in Dallas agreed to build a jointly-owned union station. Jarvis Hunt, the architect who designed Kansas City's union station, designed Union Station, which was dedicated during the 1916 State Fair of Texas. At first passengers went from waiting rooms to the train platform via an elevated walkway, replaced around 1950 with the present tunnel.

Major railroads built monumental train stations not only for shuffling passengers and freight, but as regional headquarters they symbolized railroading's prowess.

In 1906 the International & Great Northern hired architect Harvey Page to build a grand station for San Antonio. The design he chose, author T. Lindsay Baker calls "one of the finest mission revival styles in Texas." The depot takes the basic form of a Greek cross, each corner featuring a three-story bell tower and rose windows like those in San Antonio missions. The depot was restored in XXXX.

and now serves as

Rail mileage in Texas reached its peak in 1932 with more than 17,000 miles of line in use. That included 514 miles of electric interurban line (see TH.....for the story of the interurbans). Shortly thereafter, the economic significance of the railroad industry began to diminish, Zlatkovich reports.

Early on, trains, where available, were the transportation of choice for people, as well as freight, providing important revenue to rail companies.

In 1872 the first Pullman car in Texas ran between Houston and Austin, featuring two wooden cars just over 50 feet long, open platforms equipped with candles for light and a hand pump and tank on the floor for washing up on the dusty ride.

Texas' first interstate passenger service began in 1876, running from Houston to St. Louis, Missouri.

The Railway Express Agency, operated separately from the myriad rail lines, was the UPS of railroading's heyday. It offered package and freight service on virtually all Texas steamers, offering expedited service but at a higher rate than standard rail freight.

As early as the 1850s, such express companies handled money and other valuables on stagecoaches connecting to steamships. Later, express companies added other items and even offered pick-up and delivery service. Railway Express even expedited carloads of valuable livestock and racehorses.

With the advent of trucking, profits dropped rapidly.

Before displaced by the telephone in the Forties, telegraphy handled all messages that coordinated the movement of trains across the state.

The first telegraph in Texas, explains S.G. Reed, emanated in the 1850s from Galveston with a submarine cable under the bay which linked island rail communications to the mainline. By the 1860s Western Union was the primary telegraphy service.

A telegrapher and railroad agent for more than 50 years, Clarence Gaston of Pittsburg wishes he had a nickel for every train order he took via telegraph. "The dispatcher would telegraph the orders to me, and I'd bind them up with string and loop them onto a long-handled, Y-shaped hoop. When the train rolled through the station,

sometimes at 40 miles an hour, I'd hoist the hoop up where the engineer could stick his arm into the "Y" of the hoop as he passed by. He untie the orders and toss out the string a little down the tracks so we would use it again next time." Gaston, whose son also was a train telegrapher, adds with pride that he could send telegraphic messages, or take them down by hand or typewriter, at 65 words a minute.

Dispatches from Uvalde and nearby Waldo nearly caused a collision along the Southern Pacific in West Texas because of the similarity of the names when written down. To avoid further problems, Waldo was altered to Odlaw.

From the Teens until World War II, railroads campaigned for more tourist traffic, although freight was a more important source of revenue.

Beginning in the Twenties, the rising popularity of motor bus and automobile transit put a dent in train passenger traffic. Railroads responded with improvements such as air-conditioned coaches, reduced fares, more modern diners, and shortened schedules. In some areas they even initiated a service to pick up passengers' baggage at their homes, delivering them to their destination. Santa Fe boosted its food service through a relationship with Fred Harvey during the Thirties (see TH...)

Excursion trains took football fans during the Thirties each fall to gridiron clashes at the Cotton Bowl, the Sun Bowl, and the annual University of Texas vs. Texas A&M classic rivalry.

Perhaps the most noticable response to declining passenger traffic were the light-weight, stainless steel, streamlined trains of the Thirties. In 1936 the Burlington-Rock Island began the Sam Houston Zephyr from Dallas-Fort Worth to Houston, adding another, the Rocket, the next year on the same line.

The Southern Pacific countered in '37 with its Sunbeam on the same route, steaming the 265 miles in 265 minutes.

In the Fifties came the domed sightseeing cars...

During the Sixties, an era of major rail mergers, most railroads became eager to drop their unprofitable passenger service. The final straw came when U.S. mail contracts were shifted from passenger trains to truck lines. In 1970 Congress created the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, commonly called Amtrak.

During the Eighties deregulation curtailed many federal regulations on railroads, many of which merged into larger railroads and abandoned unprofitable lines. Several abandoned rights of way became hiking and biking trails in the growing "Rails to Trails" movement. Major rails-to-trails in Texas are in Quitaque, Tyler, and ———.

After the Cotton Belt's turn-of-the-century successful experimentation with burning oil did railroads begin converting from coal as the fuel source for their locomotives.

In 1902 Swift and Armour companies each built packinghouses in the newly-organized Fort Worth Stockyards. Railway spurs were built to serve them, including amaze of sidings. In the 1950s livestock transport shifted to trucks as livestock auctions opened in small towns across the state. By the early Seventies the packinghouses closed. (Baker book)

America's era of inventiveness touched railroad technology. In 1869 George Westinghouse developed the first air brakes. Before that, brakemen halted trains by manually turn wheels for as much as a half-mile before they wanted to stop. In 1873 came the autocoupler, which along with air brakes became required equipment in 1893.

In 1877 the invention of the refrigerated rail car opened up new markets for perishable agricultural products.

In 1910 came special tank cars for transporting milk.

Rugged terrain of the West required powerful locomotives, some of the most powerful land engines built to that time.

To do so, designers increased the number of wheels. The standard 4-4-0 (with four driving wheels) was not powerful enough. Double heading was common.

After World War II, railroads converted from steam-powered to diesel-powered engines (invented in 1910 by Dr. Rudolph Diesel), which ushered in a new era of profits, but ended what train buffs considered the Golden Age of railroading. Within 15 years steam locomotives were part of history, recently revived by steam enthusiasts on excursion trains (see.....)

The conversion was slowed by the Depression, after the first diesels appeared in the Twenties. The diesels were easier to operate, required fewer personnel who could be trained quicker.....response to unionization?,,,cut labor costs.After the Cotton Belt's turn-of-the-century successful experimentation with burning oil did railroads begin converting from coal as the fuel source for their locomotives.

During the Thirties, competition required heavier, longer trains for added freight profits (with passenger serv. increasingly unprofitable). Oil had become the main fuel for steam locomotives (first ones having converted in the 1890s)

2-10-2 was popular, then replaced by 4-10-2 (So-Pac type) with third cylinder.

After World War II, steam still ruled, but its days were numbered. With gas and tire rationing finally gone after the war, the public rediscovered its fascination with the highways. Civilian air transportation also revived. Railroads responded with classy streamlined rail service, while focusing their eyes on the long-haul freight business.

With the retirement of steam locomotives, some lines like the Cotton Belt gave the engine's bells to local churches as goodwill.

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