

The next chapter meeting will occur at the Las Cruces Santa Fe depot where RIC and Lynn Brightman have arranged for a meeting room. The meal will be catered Lorenzo's (salad, 2 entrees, drink and a dessert, cost about \$12/person) with a surprise program to follow. Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2013, 6 pm. We need to have at least 15 members/guests.

## Special points of interest:

- Phoenix car barn fire
- Phoenix abandons
- SP No. 2510
- Mexico update
- Chapter News

Coming  
Soon!!

Vernon Glover writes about a 1910 boiler explosion near Tucumcari.

## The Phoenix Car barn Fire (1947)



(This was once the Phoenix car barn. Note how the intense heat of flames melted and twisted track, cars and girders. Car 505 at the right.)

*Donn Nobles photo and caption*

### The National Electric Railway News Digest, Sept.-Oct. 1947

*Phoenix, Arizona, Oct. 4, 1947:* A spectacular \$70,000 fire late yesterday swept a Phoenix landmark, the municipal streetcar barn at 13th and Washington Streets, and destroyed six cars and damaged a seventh, the seven cars comprising half the remaining cars.

Firemen prevented the conflagration from spreading across a 20-ft. alleyway to a highly inflammable paint shop, from which it could have flashed through the rest of the transportation plant, valued at another \$150,000.

The blaze assertedly started from a short circuit in the motors of one of the cars inside the half-block-long sheet metal barn. Spreading rapidly through the grease-laden pits, the fire was out of control when the first firemen arrived. The fire occurred at the height of the afternoon rush hour, and the dense clouds of smoke attracted thousands of spectators to the scene. Hundreds of automobiles jammed the streets and firemen found difficulty getting equipment to the scene

The city's eight-month-old automatic bus washer, valued at \$3,800 was destroyed, as was the machine shop, a carpentry shop, about a dozen spare streetcar motors, 12 to 15 generators, and many other tools and pieces of equipment. Jess Hardy, city transportation

superintendent, said the remaining cars now on service on the Washington Street line (the sole line remaining) will be augmented by buses and schedules will not be interrupted. No fire insurance was carried either on the destroyed cars or the barn.

The blaze was first noticed by a worker as he was reporting in for work in the barn. He shouted to an official in an office near the barn. The fire was then blazing through the floor of a car. Fed by inflammable gases from the barn's long grease pits, the fire mushroomed against the high sheet metal ceiling and spread in all directions. The building was engulfed in an estimated five minutes. The heat inside the barn was so intense that it twisted heavy steel rails like taffy and melted machinery and some metal parts of the streetcars. Concrete floors cracked and buckled.

Fire chief Barnum sounded a second alarm after reaching the scene and firemen laid almost a mile of hose from five hydrants close to the barn. The work lay in confining the fire to the barn structure.

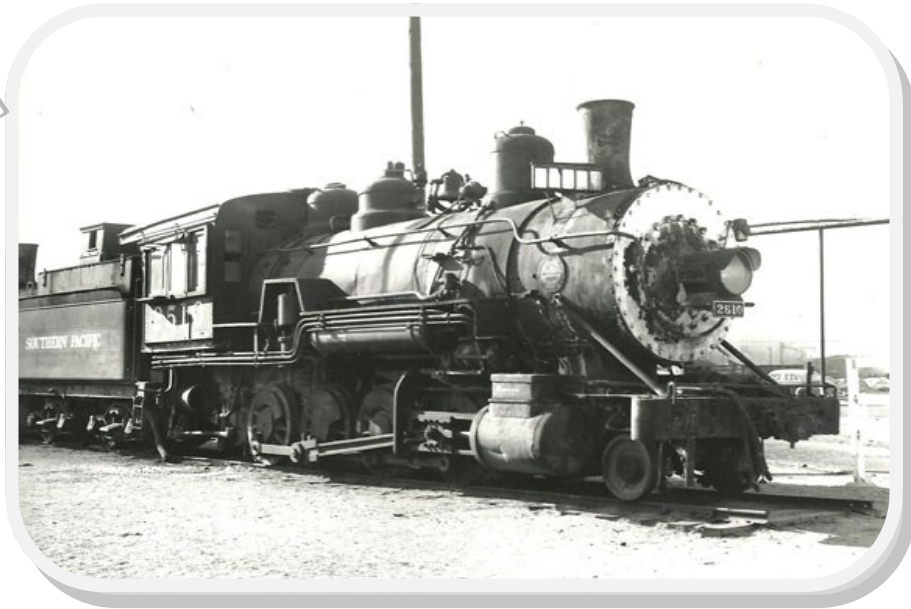
The barn was built in 1913 and was the nucleus of the "U"-shaped transportation plant. Had the fire caught in the paint shop which for a time was lapped by flames, it probably would have spread through the bus machine shop, electrical shop, bus repair pits and body and tire shops. They constitute the bottom and east sides of the plant. Superintendent Hardy claimed the cars cost \$10,000 each when they were purchased early in the twenties, but probably would not bring much more than \$500 each in scrap at the present time. Much maligned because of their noise, the few which remain have been kept in service only because buses were unavailable. They served the city well before intra-city buses were born and before Phoenix's tremendous growth made their exclusive use impossible. In good mechanical shape, they were more economical to operate than buses. The early demise of the Washington line is now considered inevitable.

## Phoenix Abandons

**PHOENIX, Feb. 19, 1948 (Special)**-The Phoenix Street Railway system made its last run on Tuesday noon, February 19th, ending an era of rail transportation that began in 1887. Streetcars, either horse drawn or electric, had served the city since that early date. Actually the last public run was Monday evening. I boarded the last car at the barn on Washington St. about 8:00 PM and rode it to the end of the line, 16th Street; there we changed poles, reversed the seats and began the last trip westbound at 8:13. Bob Martinez was at the controls of 503 on this last run. At First St. we passed car 508 on her way back to the barn. At 17th St., end of double track, we had to wait for car 511 on her last eastbound run. At 22nd Ave. we were greeted by a lone reporter complete with camera and flash gun. Several photos of Bob were taken as he changed poles turned seats and polished the headlight for that last run. All rides back to town were on the house and the few folks we picked up seemed to get a big kick out of the last ride. By that time we were the only car on the system and had no meets to make so we made good time for the crosstown run, 18 minutes.

At 16th St. we again changed the poles, flopped the seats over, and were ready to make the last run back to the barn. No one else was on the car but Bob and me, so he graciously allowed me to take over; I gave her a fast and non-stop run to the west end of the block in which the barn is located-there we changed poles for the last time and took her onto the easternmost of the two tracks still in operation after the fire. Thus ended the last public run of the electric era in Phoenix with 503 having won the distinction of being the last car to operate. The next day, Tuesday, at noon, 3 of the cars, 508, 511 and 513, were taken to the courthouse on Washington St. There they took part in the official ceremonies marking the end of the streetcar service. After some talks by the mayor and other prominent people about 250 of the old timers present were loaded onto the cars and taken out to the Capitol. There they were transferred to the new 45-passenger diesel buses and brought back to the city hall. The three trolleys were taken back to the barn and there they will be stored with the other four for an indefinite length of time. The trolley wire is to be left up and the cars are to be kept in good condition in the event there should be a shortage of fuel oil for the buses at any time in the near future. Some day the gods of chance or war, may dictate the streets of Phoenix once again echo the rumble of these staunch old veterans.

image of the month



S.P. 2-8-0 No. 2510 in October, 1947 on the El Paso dead line after end of service on the Cloudcroft branch.

### Update on Operations around Tijuana, B.C.



The San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway (SD&AE) is still a railroad now controlled by MTS. Basically a Board that promotes freight service on the U.S. part of the line, in this case two operators: San Diego & Imperial Valley/ SDIY (a Genessee & Wyoming operation) and Pacific Imperial Railroad/ PIRR (private investors):

San Diego-San Ysidro (SDIY)

San Diego-El Cajon (SDIY)

Division-Plaster City (PIRR)

The San Diego to El Cajon line is triweekly or so. The San Diego to San Ysidro is five nights a week or so, most nights two trains meet halfway between SD and SY. The line is CTC and good for 40mph for freights operating when the light rail "San Diego Trolley" is not in service. SDIY's major source of revenue is interchange freight from BNSF @ San Diego to BJRR @ San Ysidro.

Operations on the Tijuana y Tecate line are managed by ADMICARGA (State of Baja California), and they have Baja California Railroad (BJRR) as their operator of the line end to end. BJRR is owned by private investors.

BJRR has three leased LTEX GP38's for power (ex-BNSF, nee ATSF). They are parked and kept at the Tijuana depot and maintained in it's house track. They cross the border light power to receive interchange loads from SDIY @ San Ysidro, since there's a yard that make s the interchange possible, unlike Tijuana. SDIY no longer comes to Tijuana.

BJRR runs loads from San Ysidro, CA to Redondo (east of Tijuana) Monday to Friday or so, sometimes Saturdays.. Most of that traffic is LPG, second is grain. East of Redondo is run triweekly or so. East of Tecate is temporarily out of service since tunnel 3 collapsed in 2009.

PIRR has been performing repairs to the desert line and hopefully we will see work trains by 2014 with limited freight operations.

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## Chapter News

### NOVEMBER MEETING:

The Meeting of the Southwest Chapter was held at Amigo's restaurant on Nov. 13. Nine people were present and Chairman Stephen Heetland presided. Guest Ron Leiman presented the images of a photo survey of the Rolling stock held in trust at the Freeport McMoRan Plant. The James Watt, Pullman car owned by the Southwest Chapter, was the primary subject of discussion. Ron's excellent documentary photography showed details of the car interior.

Planning for the next meeting was turned over to Ric Brightman and Phil Wiborg. The consensus of those present was that the next meeting should be held at Las Cruces for the benefit of Southern New Mexico members, and to feature the Las Cruces Railroad Museum located in the historic Santa Fe RR Station. Prince McKenzie discussed the El Paso Railroad Museum planning issues. He reported that the Museum board had received an invitation to meet with the staff of the Insights-El Paso Science Center for a tour. Dr. Richard Worthington and Prince McKenzie Museum Director, met with the Education Committee of Insights, where they exchanged questions about future plans.

### TEXAS & PACIFIC RAILROAD HISTORY:

In his book "Rails at the Pass of the North," Dr. Ed Leonard, former board member of the Southwest Chapter, described the intense competition between the Southern Pacific Railroad and Texas & Pacific Railroad for the Southern Transcontinental Railroad link across the West. After the S P built into El Paso in May and the A T & S F built into El Paso in June of 1881 the Texas & Pacific arrived on December 26. The El Paso History Radio Program will discuss the historic arrival of the T & P Railroad into El Paso. The program will be aired on Saturday January 4, 2014 at 10 am. Prince McKenzie will discuss the construction of the line his ancestor helped to build. Tune in to KTSM radio at 690 on the am dial.