

El Paso & Southwestern Flyer

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 4

The next meeting of the Southwest Chapter will be Wednesday, February 12, 2014 at Avila's Restaurant, 6232 N. Mesa, El Paso at 6 pm. Visitors welcome.

Special points of interest:

- *El Fronterizo*
- Mexico's Non-Existent Railroad
- N de M 7 & 8
- Museum and Chapter News

Traveling on Trains 7 & 8, Cd. Juarez to Mexico City "El Fronterizo"

By John Kirchner

What that train (Nos. 7 & 8) looked like in the 1940-1970 "Pullman" period depends on the year. There were very few sleeping cars on it. The number reached a maximum of four in the 1960's, but even then only one or two ran the full distance from Cd. Juarez to Mexico City. The others were added on cars at places like Chihuahua, Aguascalientes, and Leon, but that varied from year to year as well.

There was a reserved seat first class coach for a time, but gone by early 1960's. Aside from an RPO and Baggage-Express car (or two), there was one first class coach and three or four second class coaches.

The dining car service is the most interesting part. Eight section buffet lounge cars were very popular on NdeM up until the 1960's. In the 1940's and 50's I do not think that Nos 7-8 had a full diner, but rather an 8 Section Buffet Lounge car. The only car I've identified is NdeM 3634 Bahia Magdalena (8 Sec Buffet Lounge), seen in a photograph taken at Aguascalientes on No. 8 in 1960.



By 1964 when I made the first of many trips on the train, a full diner was operated, and an ex NYC lightweight Budd lounge obsy brought up the rear. It was the only lightweight car on the train. Below I have listed the identified Pullman space at various times, derived from NdeM public timetables, both English and Spanish versions. Regular non-air conditioned coaches were not listed.

1948

Mexico-El Paso: 12 Sections, 1 Drawing Room, 1 Compartment

Mexico-Ciudad Juarez: 8 Section Restaurant Lounge (8 Section Buffet Lounge)

1957

Mexico-Ciudad Juarez: Dining Lounge Car (8 Sec Buffet Lounge)

Mexico-Ciudad Juarez: 80 Seat Reserved Coach

Mexico-Ciudad Juarez: 10 Sections 1 Drawing Room 2 Dbl Bedrooms

Mexico -Ciudad Juarez: 12 Sections 1 Drawing Room/Mexico-Aguascalientes 12 Sections 1 Drawing Room

1960

Mexico-Ciudad Juarez :Dining Lounge Car (8 Sec Buffet Lounge)/Mexico-Ciudad Juarez 62 seat Reserved Coach

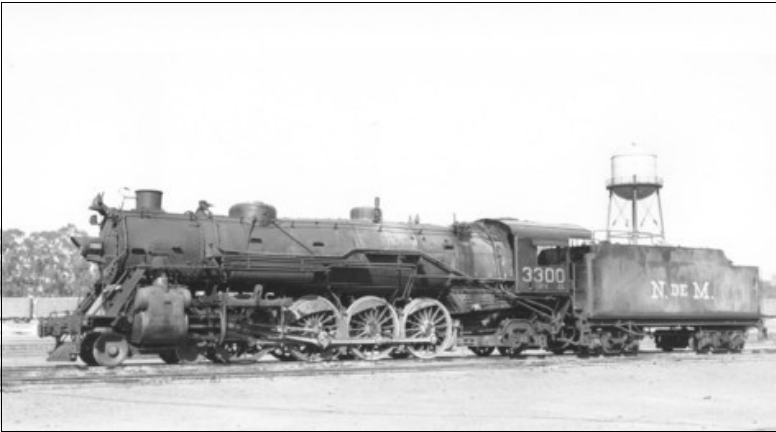
Mexico-Ciudad Juarez :10 Sections 1 Drawing Room 2 Dbl Bedrooms /Mexico-Ciudad Juarez 14 Sections

Mexico-Aguascalientes: 12 Sections 1 Drawing Room/Mexico-Leon: 8 Sections 1 Drawing Room 2 Compartments

1964

Mexico-Ciudad Juarez: Dining Car/Mexico-Ciudad Juarez: 12 Sections 1 Drawing Room/Mexico-Chihuahua 10 Sections 1 Drawing Room 2 Dbl Bedrooms/Mexico-Aguascalientes 12 Sections 1 Drawing Room/Mexico-Leon 10 Sections 3 Dbl Bedrooms/Mexico-Ciudad Juarez: Observation Lounge Car (lightweight ex NYC)

Motive power on No. 7-8 into the 1960s usually consisted of an A-B set of EMD F-units, with mostly likely an FP-7A or FP-9A on the point. In the 1950's, when steam still hauled the train, the common power was an NdeM TR-1 or TR-3 USRA 4-8-2 (ex FEC) in the 3200 and 3300 series.



I rode Nos 8 and 7 the first time in 1964 from Cd. Juarez to Mexico City and return in a section sleeper. Had a lower berth both ways. The diner was great and served up a super fillet mignon wrapped in bacon for about \$3.00 US at the time. It was an afternoon departure southbound. I spent a lot of time in the ex NYC Obsy Lounge ("Club La Laguna"), and remember a blind man getting on and playing the accordion for tips, which even this college kid contributed to. The crew greeted him as an old friend.

At one point we had a three way meet, with No.8 sandwiched between two freights, which had to saw by us in a

fashion quite unlike anything I had ever seen in the U.S. The daylight Chihuahua part of the run was flat and dusty, but the scenery started getting better the next day, especially the climb up to Zacatecas, as we wound our way around the hills and into the beautiful old mining town. The most exciting part of the ride was in darkness at Irapuato. I must have awakened the whole sleeping car, because I let out a yell and pressed my face to the window. A steam locomotive rolled by, hissing away in the darkness. It was my first look at a beautiful QR-1 4-8-4, though I never did get its number. I hardly slept the rest of the night, and indeed, I saw the headlights and dramatic flashing fireboxes of a half dozen more engines before dawn. Rolling by Valle de Mexico yard in morning sunlight showed more than just 4-8-4's - we passed several classes of Mikados (#2124 and #2208"), an ex FEC 4-8-2 ("3316"), and best of all, two modern 4-8-0s, Nos. 3000 and 3002. Not a 4-8-4 in sight, but that would change wonderfully in the months to come. Spanish class met only in the morning on weekdays, so whenever I could, I would hop the employee bus at Buenavista Station and ride out to Valle de Mexico yard. Nobody ever bothered me, not even with a camera in hand.

The ride from Cd. Juarez to Mexico,DF covered 1971 kms and took over 43 hours, including delays.

Ed. Note: Prior to WWII, there was a through sleeper from Los Angeles to Mexico City via El Paso/Juarez. There continued to be a coach and express connection from El Paso Union Passenger Station to No.7 in Cd. Juarez until about 1957. You can see a short video of that operation on the Railroad Museum's website at <http://elpasorails.org>.

Mexico's Non-Existent Railroad

Contributed by John Kirchner

Hollywood has created many fictitious railroads, but have you heard of the Mexican railroad that ran trains in the United States for many years, but never existed? The small locomotive in the photograph, seen in El Paso, Texas, in December 1946, was on a cross-border transfer run between the NdeM station in Ciudad Juárez and Union Station in El Paso. Lettered GFM, or Gobierno Federal Mexicano, the switcher is actually an NdeM B-12 class 0-6-0 (Baldwin, 1907) in disguise. The heavyweight cars also carried false identities.

In the chaotic years during and immediately after the Mexican Revolution, U.S. citizens filed claims against the NdeM for nonpayment of money owed for delivery of locomotives and other rolling stock. With vigilant sheriffs on the U.S. side of the border ready to seize NdeM property in compensation, the Mexican carrier used an alias and maintained its international connections. The engines that worked the Juárez–El Paso link were also seen at times lettered for FCM, the onetime British-owned Veracruz–Mexico City line, but it is doubtful whether that carrier ever knew that it provided direct service to the United States.



Photo by Al Phillips, John A. Kirchner Collection

Ref: Encyclopedia of North American Railroads, 2007, U. of Indiana Press

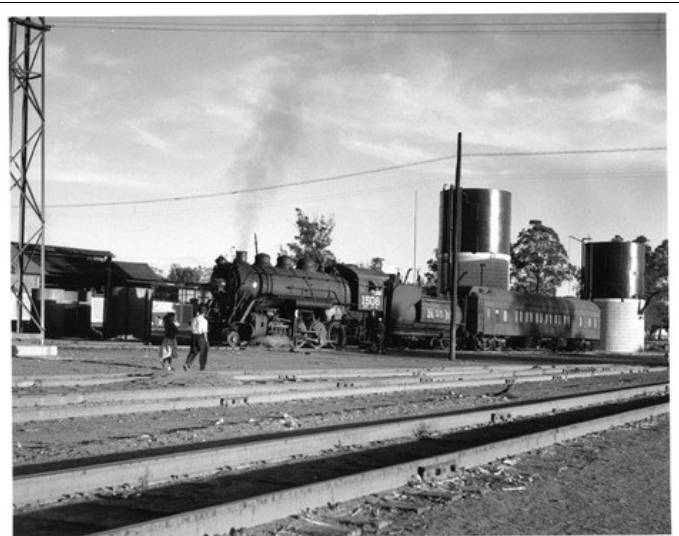
ed.note: John A. Kirchner is the author of Baja California Railways and co-author with John Signor of Southern Pacific of Mexico West Coast Route.

- 1) The Aguascalientes switcher pulling the Aguascalientes sleeper out to attach it to No. 8 (1961). Steam fans will recognize the 1506 as a GR-42--the only NdeM engines I ever saw with Vanderbilt tenders. (Many of these were transferred to the FCM when NdeM acquired that road in 1946).

Photo and caption by Paul Barry

- 2) Meet between No. 8 and the northbound local freight (No. 433, on which I was riding) at a remote siding called Mendoza, south of Felipe Pescador, in 1962. Engine No. 1570, a GR-43, one of NdeM's biggest 2-8-0's, was purchased second hand from the C&NW in 1942.

Photo and caption by Paul Barry





Southwest Chapter
Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

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**EP&SW Flyer
February 2014**



Tucson 2014 Lecture Series/History Talks

When: *Sundays at 3 PM*

Where: *Southern Arizona Transportation Museum at the Historic Rail Depot, 414 N. Toole Ave, Tucson, AZ*

Admission: *Free*

- ⇒ Feb. 16: Riders on the Orphan Train— Allison Moore and Phil Lancaster. A Mixed Media Program about the Orphan Train movement and its Ties to Arizona.
- ⇒ Feb. 23: Railroads of the Sulphur Springs Valley (updated)- Richard Dick. An update from 2013's presentation with more information and current photographs.
- ⇒ Mar. 2: Tucson's Historical Streetcar System-Gene Caywood. A look into Tucson's early streetcar systems.
- ⇒ Mar. 9: What Does a Conductor Do? - Mike Bording. A presentation of how conductors' jobs have changed over the years by a retired railroad conductor.
- ⇒ Mar. 23: The Arizona Southern Railroad—Richard Dick—The railroad that went to the Silverbell Mountains.

(No lecture March 16—Book Festival Weekend)