

The origins of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen's label Tropicco for its Division 660? All that follows comes through me from old-old heads hiring out as early as 1904. I took notes. Back in the 19th century when our BLE divisions were forming, just a number, like 5 for Espee LA was thought to be cold and impersonal. So, all BLE divisions selected a name. For example, during the time of the Great Pullman Strike and Boycott of 1894, in the north, the Golden State Division was in the center of things, including dealing with a hoghead killed in sabotage to the track. At BLE conventions and other gatherings, we were known in general by our Division name and sometimes wore a division pin.

Around 1900, Tropicco was small farming and flower-growing area, founded in 1887 on what was once our Glendale Branch. A Tropicco station existed at milepost 7, from milepost 0.00 at First Street in Los Angeles. The City of Glendale annexed Tropicco in 1918. (Our former Glendale and Pasadena branches were the two original lines of our railroad; nothing else, in the beginning.) In 1890, the new Los Angeles Terminal Railway took over both lines and built along the East Bank to Long Beach and, then, westward out along a narrow sand spit called Rattlesnake Island, to East San Pedro at the far end of the spit. There commercial piers were built. "The Terminal" changed its island's name to Terminal Island and thus began the long-term land filling of water, which continues to this day.

With the new, expanding, regional LAT Ry., more jobs developed and the locomotive engineers on the property met in Tropicco and named their new division after that location. In 1901 the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad was formed and absorbed the LAT. The new road built from L A to the west switch of Caliente, NV, where it met Utah lines under UPRR control. Thus our seniority, for the two divisions in LA and Las Vegas (Span., The Meadows), went only to this west switch, as enshrined in our labor agreements. In 1907, we had 7 pioneering 1901 engineers on our district, L A to Caliente. In 1905, with the last spike driven on the line LA-SLC, traffic boomed and 23 1905 hogheads were on our seni list. Thirty-one additional engineers were either hired or "made their date" through 1907. Life and traffic were great on the SP,LA&SL, running through the intensively agricultural countryside with its clear air! Men liked running on through freight from 4th Street Yard to San Berdoo and, then, back on the same day. They usually lived in adjacent Boyle Heights and the crew caller would come on his bicycle to call them on duty. They walked to the roundhouse. Our former back shops, displaying our arrowhead-in-circle LA&SL logo, is still on the former shops building on Anderson just north of 6th Street.

Oh yes, I almost forgot. Bad news, the men told me. In 1905, new oil-burning Consolidation type engines (2-8-0s) appeared on the property and seni took a hit with these monsters hauling and helping more cars than before. Can you imagine it, these Hogs could haul 503 tons San Berdoo to Summit and Kelso to Cima? Because 2-8-0s consumed so much fuel and water, they were called Hogs, beginning with the earliest versions late in the 19th century, and the man behind the throttle? You guessed it. He was a Hoghead or Hogger. The last LA&SL 6000-class Hog is in a park in Riverside but I have never seen it. UP terminated in 1988 its corporate subsidiary name Los Angeles & Salt Lake RR Co. But Division 660 hogheads, historically, are still guys and gals of "the Salt Lake Line."

By 1916, the SP,LA&SL listed Tropicco as a non-agency station (no one of duty there) on the Tropicco and Glendale District. By then, only a pair of passenger trains remained on that line, 42 to Verdugo Park and 41 from Verdugo Park. The more frequent Pacific Electric cars from downtown LA to Glendale had taken away most of the traffic. PE's was a more convenient service because the Salt Lake service from both Glendale and Pasadena put passengers at First Street on the East Bank of the LA River in lower Boyle Heights where the railroaders lived but which had no office buildings. The 9-mile run from First Street LA to Verdugo Park took 37 minutes. Although Pasadena on the Pasadena District was a telegraph station, none existed on the Tropicco and Glendale District. Six passenger trains remained each way on the LA-Pasadena route of that 10-mile district. Among other passengers, the Pasadena trains fed traffic to and from the crack *Los Angeles Limited* (Nos. 7 and 8, "Speed and Luxury, Chicago-Los Angeles") and the ordinary *Pacific Limited* (Nos. 19 and 20).

In 1917, the railroad dropped *SP* (San Pedro) from the railroad name, which became Los Angeles & Salt Lake (thus, LA&SL). When I hired out in May 1955, wooden cabooses for the locals were still initialed LA&SL as were two steam engines, a diesel locomotive crane, various gondolas used within East Yard only, and all of the oil wells on Terminal Island busy pumping the giant Wilmington oil field of the LA&SL. Today, in the Cheyenne steam roundhouse a cosmetically restored LA&SL engine of the 5500 class, a 2-10-2 of 1917, rests. Oscar Bumcrot, a 1909 SP,LA&SL man, told me, "Those [powerful] engines ate up our seniority after the war" (W W I, that is).

By 1923, the Union Pacific fully owned the LA&SL (done in 1921), and the Glendale and Verdugo Park Branch had schedules 41 and 43 downgraded to a daily except Sunday mixed train (freight with a passenger coach on

the rear end). Tropic no longer appeared in the public timetable. Three passenger trains in each direction ran from LA the 27 miles to East San Pedro, with the route to Terminal Island not yet having the cutoff of 1932, thus, running down the middle of Ocean Blvd. in Long Beach. When Long Beach was establishing itself as a resort town, it welcomed our local passenger trains and their day-trippers but in the automobile age of the 1920s, the city wanted our steam trains of all kinds off its street. Californians now drove to the beaches or rode the network of frequent Pacific Electric "Big Red Cars." (These were first class trains whose time we had to dodge while switching on the Harbor Belt Line, formed in 1929.)

In 1929 "luxurious motor coaches" (that is, buses) replaced the branch line passenger service out of LA, except for a pair serving East San Pedro and lasting until 1930. The discontinued service on the Anaheim branch had used single-unit McKeen motor cars, which had the designation "Motor" in the timetable. Beginning in 1930, the LA&SL E-100, a Baldwin-Westinghouse electric locomotive, serviced freight customers on the Glendale Branch.

During 1924, the original LA&SL passenger depot, at First Street on the East Bank of the LA River burned. Built by the Los Angeles Terminal Railway in 1891, the two-story wooden structure held division and dispatcher's offices. The adjacent LA&SL freight depot with its tower stood at First Street through at least the early 1970s. After some difficulties with the city, the LA&SL passenger service relocated to the Southern Pacific's Central Station of 1914 on Alameda Street. (I can recall its lettering on the outside wall: Southern Pacific /Los Angeles and Salt Lake.) Our passenger trains, then, ran south of this depot on the double track in Alameda Street to Washington Jct. where the LA&SL line began with a left (eastward) turn to Santa Fe's Redondo Jct. and onward to our Soto Street Jct. This short single-track line operated under the staff system. A train or engine had to have a staff for authority to occupy the line. When a traincrew took a staff, the staff machines on each end of the line locked and no additional staff could be taken until the only removed staff returned to a staff machine.

The year 1924 also saw the opening of the new, expansive LA&SL freight house and related facilities on Alameda Street. Also new were the freight-car classification yards, coach yard, roundhouse, and back shops relocated from First through Seventh streets on the East Bank to the brand new East Yard, then in the midst of farm plots and fields of weeds. The yard's pair of mammoth back shops towered over the flat landscape.

In the early 1920s, full UP ownership of the LA&SL found construction of handsome, stucco depots and employee clubhouse dormitories across the system. (My two favorites were at Yermo [Span., desert] and Caliente, although I did spend pleasant time living in the clubhouse-depot at Kelso in the shade of its cottonwood trees.) UP upgraded main track and relayed the remaining 75-lb. rail of the SP,LA&SL with 90-lb. rail. One 1910s hoghead told me that, back before full UP ownership in 1921, some main track was so rough-riding that when you "went on the ground" and bumped along the ties, the ride became smoother.

My favorite of all SP,LA&SL depots was in Pasadena. Built in 1910 of red brick, in the exquisite Craftsman style, it fronted Colorado Street. California authorities razed this architectural gem to build a freeway. Progress!? After all, Californians do not need local passenger rail service because America has an inexhaustible supply of cheap oil. The automobile, often with one passenger inside, is the sustainable answer to our need to transport people, then, now, and forever. Drive on! Pave on! Just as with the Tropic station, the Pasadena station is a forgotten memory from a past before abundant oil.

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