

BSRA Entertainment Report for June 7, 2014

LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for June 7, 2014

June 7, 2014. Key System & Sacramento Northern. Clark Frazier presented a visual tour of the electric suburban Key System Transbay lines from San Francisco (connecting to the surviving Municipal Railway streetcar lines) to Oakland and Berkeley from 1956 to 1958, and then the freight-only electrified Sacramento Northern during the same time period. Most of these slides were from a Winterail show in California in 2002, but we got to see additional slides after the Winterail slides..

We started with a map of the Key System, which was a privately owned company formed from consolidating several streetcar systems and a realty company (Realty Syndicate of Francis "Borax" Smith and Frank C. Havens, which built and ran such properties as the Claremont Hotel which survives today as Claremont Resort), and then taken over by National City Lines in 1948. Before seeing the Key System itself, we saw some photos of the Bridge Terminal area, including Bridge Terminal itself (eventually named Transbay Terminal, and finally closed in 2010 for replacement with a new facility), which was the San Francisco terminal of the Key System and for a short period also the Southern Pacific (by way of its subsidiary East Bay Electric) and the Sacramento Northern, and then some modern photos of some of the San Francisco Municipal Railway's heritage streetcars running on the Market Street (Muni F) line, followed by some views of Muni streetcar service from the time period we would see covered for the Key System: 1956 to 1958. This included some extinct Muni streetcar lines, such as the Muni B line.

We moved on to the last years of the Key System. It provided both local streetcar service on numbered lines (eventually taken over by AC Transit buses) and interurban service from Oakland to points south, east, and northeast on lettered lines A - K skipping D, I, and J (although G and K were really local streetcar shuttles), with a "Bridge Line" also extending across the Bay Bridge to Bridge Terminal in San Francisco, as noted above. Local streetcars were not of unusual appearance, although they included notable examples such as ex-Lehigh Valley streetcars made by St. Louis Car Company, including car 271 of which we saw several photos, and such cars also provided shuttle service at the ends of main lines. The bulk of passenger traffic on the main lines rode on rebuilt 1917-vintage articulated interurban cars that were originally of a Center Entrance design, but of remarkably modern appearance after the rebuild; we also saw some older non-rebuilt interurban cars. Some examples of both streetcars (including the aforementioned car 271) and main line cars have been preserved at the Western Railway Museum. The main lines used 600 V DC overhead wire by means of pantographs where possible, but on the tracks over the lower level of the Bay Bridge to get to Bridge Terminal, the main line cars had to use 600 V DC third rail, because the catenary there was 1200 V DC to power interurban trains of the other 2 systems that ran over the same tracks for a short period: the Southern Pacific and the Sacramento Northern noted above. The main line cars engaged trip arms to switch automatically on the fly between third rail power and overhead power (including automatic raising and lowering of the pantographs). The infrastructure in this area also looked fairly modern, resembling a rapid transit system in some parts and a heavy rail system in other parts, including a control tower than Clark showed us and also took some photos from. The Bay Bridge lower level was largely reserved for train tracks, but also had motor truck lanes, the upper level was reserved for automobiles (which now use both levels). In both this area and the Bridge Terminal area, Clark Frazier did a remarkable job of getting photos of aerial appearance without getting into an aircraft.

In contrast to the Bay Bridge section, large parts of the lines in Oakland (even downtown) and points beyond had street running (in some cases together with local streetcars), over notably poorly maintained streets, and in areas that did have private right of way featured running through suburban areas of very rural appearance. During the best times for the Key System, headways on the branches during non-rush times were about 20 minutes, but by the last years (1956 - 1958 as seen in the photos), headways during non-rush times were about 1 hour. We started with the A line, which was already truncated in 1950. This line mainly served downtown Oakland and had a freight connection to the Western Pacific; it had been extended to East Oakland over tracks abandoned by the Southern Pacific/East Bay Electric in 1941. Along the way, we got to see an interior photo of one of the Key System main line cars. Next, we saw the B line,

which served Lakeshore and Trestle Glen and formerly served a Realty Syndicate hotel (the Key Route Inn, which burned in 1930 and was demolished in 1932). This was one of the lines that ran through a suburban area of rural appearance, and we saw some people riding free on the back anticlimber of one of the cars, in the style seen in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* Along the way we also saw the Oakland Terminal Railway and the Santa Fe station in Oakland. After this was the C line, which ran to Piedmont via 40th Street and Piedmont Avenue, again through suburban areas of very rural appearance. Then we saw the E line, which ran to the aforementioned surviving Realty Syndicate property, the Claremont Hotel, with the tracks coming in between the tennis courts. After this, we saw the F line, which ran to Berkeley via Adeline Street and also got an extension over Shattuck Street consisting of abandoned Southern Pacific/East Bay Electric tracks, which also took it through the Northbrae Tunnel, which has since been converted to automotive use. The last line running transbay trains was H running on Monterey Avenue on old Southern Pacific/East Bay Electric tracks; as noted above, the G (Westbrae) and K (College Avenue) were actually streetcar shuttles connecting with the H and F lines, respectively.

The second part of the Winterail-derived show was of the Sacramento Northern. This system had run interurban passenger service and local streetcar service until 1941, but then became freight-only (except for streetcar service in Chico until 1947), only 2 years after reaching Bridge Terminal in 1939. First we saw a map showing the Sacramento Northern lines and connecting railroads. The Sacramento Northern ran from Chico in northern California to Oakland, by way of Sacramento. Operations were surprisingly complex due to a combination of piecemeal construction and the other connecting electric railroads, including the Key System. The Sacramento had been 2 interurban companies (the Northern Electric Railway and the Oakland, Antioch, and Eastern Railway) connecting at Sacramento, which merged in 1925. The former of these used 600 V DC from third rail of a different type than that used by the Key System, while the latter of these used 600 V DC from overhead wires with trolley poles. The very compact yard in downtown Oakland used 600 V overhead wires, but then many other parts of the system used overhead wire at 1200 V DC, eventually raised in some areas to 1500 V DC. Only a subset of Sacramento Northern equipment could operate over the whole system, and equipment coming from the north to San Francisco had to have their Northern Electric third rail shoes removed to avoid clashing with the incompatible Key System third rail in the Bay Bridge area, and then put back on when returning north; such equipment had third rail shoes (when installed), trolley poles, and pantographs. In addition, some parts of the Sacramento Northern (such as the Oakland Hills) had grades up to 4.3% and numerous S-shaped curves. The Sacramento Northern also had some ex-Key System cars. To reduce the electric bill, trains often waited for specific hour boundaries (at which electric rates decreased) before getting under way. Interspersed with extensive coverage of the Sacramento Northern operations, we also saw Western Pacific trains running alongside; the Western Pacific owned the Sacramento Northern, but kept it as a separate subsidiary to be able to charge customers interchange fees. The Western Pacific itself used F-series (mostly F7) diesel locomotives at this time. The Sacramento Northern started to get diesel locomotives in 1944 and gradually dieselized as the system became cut into isolated sections by the 1951 Lisbon Trestle collapse and the condemnation (as unseaworthy) of the Sacramento Northern's ferry Ramon in 1954; the last electric operation ceased in 1965. The Sacramento Northern name disappeared when the Union Pacific acquired the Western Pacific in 1983, although a piece of Sacramento Northern track connecting the California ghost towns of Montezuma, Dozier, and Cannon in Solano County survives as an operation of the Western Railway Museum, which has some Sacramento Northern equipment, some in operational condition. We got to see some photos of Sacramento Northern facilities, including some photos of Birney cars that were used for service between Marysville and Yuba City before World War II, and an unusual visitor to the Sacramento Northern system during the time of taking some of the photographs: a British Columbia Electric interurban streetcar that operated on parts of the system for about 1.5 days.

This ended the Winterail-derived part of the show, but after this Clark Frazier showed us related photos that did not make it into the Winterail show. This started with a Southern Pacific ferry, and then the Bridge Terminal again with Key System articulated trains and car 271, and then other Key System service, including the F line in Berkeley. At this point we got a note that the D line designation had been reserved for a proposed but never implemented Key System branch running over Sacramento Northern track. After this we saw more Sacramento Northern photos and connecting Santa Fe and Southern Pacific service.

Finally, Clark Frazier showed us a New England potpourri, starting with the MBTA B (Commonwealth

Avenue) line in the Blizzard (actually 2 blizzards) of 1978. Then we went back to 1958 - 1959 to see the New Haven Railroad service from New Haven to Stamford, CT, followed by a 2 foot gauge railroad in Connecticut, and then the Grafton & Upton Railroad, which still survives today. We saw the Narragansett Pier Railway, the Maine Central Railroad, and the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad. Back in Boston, we saw the old North Station and Boston & Maine RDC commuter trains, and then South Station (also with some RDCs). Moving to more recent times, we saw the old Southwest Corridor with Amtrak, the old elevated Orange Line, and Commuter Rail service, and the old Back Bay Station (built in 1899 and rebuilt in 1925) before the 1981 demolitio rebuild (the current Back Bay Station opened in 1987). We also got to see the Commuter Rail service that operated briefly to Concord, NH in 1981, and then went back to the Blizzard of 1978 to see the Blue Line and the Mattapan High Speed Line.

SHORT FORM (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for June 7, 2014

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