

LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for June 4, 2016

June 4, 2016. More Trolleys in the South, and the Sacramento Northern in Motion. Donald Nevin presented two DVDs, the first of which was Nolstagic Trolley Tour: The Southern States. Donald had shown most of Part 1 in a previous show, which was terminated prematurely by DVD playback trouble, so the show started most of the way through Part 1 with Savannah, GA. The trolley system here featured running over private right of way, side-running next to rural/suburban dirt roads, and city street running, all with pre-PCC cars.

Part 2 started with the Hagerstown & Frederick Railway, in central Maryland. This was constructed starting in 1896 as two separate railways, the Frederick & Middletown Railway serving the simultaneously constructed resort of Braddock Heights, and the Hagerstown Railway, and merged in 1911. The first footage showed a yard of the railway, including passenger and freight interurban streetcars as well as steeplecab and boxcab locomotives. The next footage showed service to Thurmont. Interurban freight streetcars often pulled heavy rail boxcars (and sometimes other types of freight cars) as trailers -- usually just one, but occasionally more, thus doubling as light duty locomotives. As in Savannah, operation was a mixture of private right of way and street running, although the side running was along paved rather than dirt roads. When larger trains had to be hauled, the aforementioned electric locomotives were called into service. Footage was mostly taken from ground level, but also included some footage taken from the cab or other areas within the interurban cars or locomotives, in some cases also including sound recorded with the film footage. Ground-level footage also included connecting Western Maryland steam train service. The Hagerstown & Frederick Railway provided both interurban and local passenger service. A winter 1935 fan trip was also shown, complete with snow piled up along the sides of part of the route.

The next stop was at the Baltimore & Annapolis Railroad (originally the Annapolis and Baltimore Short Line). This operated starting in 1887, and was electrified in 1908, using 6600 V @ 25 Hz instead of the usual low voltage DC interurban power supply, but then converted to low voltage DC in 1914 by new owners. The Baltimore & Ohio provided track access into Baltimore, but was wary of the electrified overhead wire, and so built a separate track for the interurban trains. The neighboring Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Electric Railway took over this system in 1921. This railroad went bankrupt in 1931 when the law exempting it from taxes was not extended, but operated under bankruptcy until 1935, when it was sold at public auction, with much equipment being sold for scrap, but the remaining equipment and right of way being sold to the Bondholders Protective Society to form the Baltimore and Annapolis Railroad Company, which also entered the motor bus business. World War II and the accompanying gasoline rationing produced a temporary revival, but did not permit modernization, and so all rail passenger service was replaced by bus service in 1950, while freight service was dieselized. The loss of coal traffic caused abandonment of all but the spur from Baltimore to Glen Burne, which ceased operation in 1979 and was eventually converted into the Baltimore & Annapolis Trail and part of the Baltimore Light Rail system (meanwhile, the local bus service became Route 14 of the Maryland Transit Administration system in 1973, although privately operated charter bus service continued into the mid-1980s). As with the Hagerstown & Frederick Railway, footage was mostly taken from ground level, but also included some footage taken from the cab or other areas within the interurban cars or locomotives, in some cases also including sound recorded with the film footage, and even including brief footage of operation of the controls in an interurban streetcar. On this railroad, most of the operation was over private right of way, although some of it alongside rural streets. The interurban streetcars had odd bi-level double couplers (glimpsed briefly), seemingly to connect to both heavy rail cars and rapid transit vehicles (presumably other interurban streetcars). The film footage also showed some diesel operation.

The last stop on this DVD was in Knoxville, Tennessee, with streetcar service operated by the Knoxville Power & Light Company, using pre-PCC streetcars. This was mostly ground level

footage, but also featured some cab and behind-cab filming. Although this was a city transit system, some of the routes went out into the suburbs over private right of way of semi-rural appearance. The end of the DVD showed derelict streetcars in the yard; one of these, someone (presumably of the transit system) had professionally painted text commemorating the replacement of streetcar service by bus service in 1947.

The next DVD was The Sacramento Northern, featuring the railroad of the same name operating in 1940, shortly before the end of passenger interurban service in 1941 (the last electric freight service ended in 1965, although diesel operation continued until the Union Pacific absorbed the Western Pacific in 1983). This began with a map of the predecessors of the Sacramento Northern: the Oakland, Antioch, and Eastern Railway (briefly named the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad), which was a trolley wire-powered railway running from Oakland through a tunnel in the Oakland Hills to Moraga, Walnut Creek, Concord, Pittsburg, and thence to Sacramento; and the Northern Electric Railway (initially the Chico Electric Railway, and taking Sacramento Northern Railroad name in 1914), running largely on third rail power from Sacramento to Marysville-Yuba City, and then Chico (running under trolley wire in Chico city streets). Neither system was restricted to a single line -- both had spurs to other cities (and connected to other electric railways in Sacramento, as noted below). See http://www.abandonedrails.com/Sacramento_Northern_Railroad for a similar map that can be zoomed to higher resolution, and that shows the locations in relation to modern highways. In 1928, these electric railways merged to form the Sacramento Northern Railway under the control of the Western Pacific, but retaining separate operating entity status to enable collection of railroad interchange fees for freight passing between the Sacramento Northern and the Western Pacific. The Western Pacific operated a similar arrangement with two other electric interurban railways that it owned that also had terminals in Sacramento: the Tidewater Southern Railway running from Stockton to Modesto, and the Central California Traction Company running from Stockton to Sacramento. The Sacramento Northern Railway featured interurban passenger and freight service, with both electric multiple unit (trains of up to five cars being common, and including passenger and mixed passenger/freight cars) and locomotive hauled service, as well as a train ferry to get across the San Joaquin River (more on this below). Equipment had trolley poles and pantographs to operate with different electrical supply infrastructure, being able to run on 600 V DC, 1200 V DC, and 1500 V DC service; third rail shoes were required to operate to Chico, and were installed in Sacramento on north/east-bound trains and removed there from south/west-bound trains. The Key System that shared trackage from Oakland into San Francisco also used third rail, but at the time of the film footage, the Sacramento Northern used overhead wire on this section, even though at some times it used third rail power here. Sacramento Northern electric locomotives could work in multiple to pull heavy trains up and down steep grades, and these trains sometimes included an extra locomotive at the rear. Much of the footage included sound recorded with the footage, featuring the peculiar air whistles (sounding almost like monotone steam whistles) characteristic of much of the equipment on this system, although some equipment had air horns more similar to rapid transit equipment. In addition to regular passenger service, the Sacramento Northern also ran frequent excursion specials. Interurban streetcars often pulled and pushed steam coach trailers (inserted in between power cars) to provide extra passenger capacity. Maintenance of the right of way in both hillsides and marsh areas was difficult due to soil instability.

The Sacramento Northern owned a single train ferry, the Ramon, which went into service in 1915, and an interview with the captain was featured along with footage of the ferry. This was an early gasoline-electric boat, and had trolley wire for the rail equipment, although cars disembarking tended to dewire while passing through the wire junction between the ferry and the dock. Rough weather was often problematic not only for passenger comfort and peace of mind, but also made it difficult for the underpowered boat to get across the San Joaquin River (almost a bay at this point), although no accidents occurred. The Lisbon Trestle used by the railroad to run through tidal flats (with a large tidal difference shown in the footage) eventually collapsed in 1951 under the weight of a train of steel (freight) cars.

In Sacramento, the M Street/Tower Bridge provided access to trains running in mixed traffic, provided with 600 V DC power, but with the controls set for operation under 1500 V DC power, to restrict speed in the city streets. The views in Sacramento also featured local streetcar service, on tracks shared with the interurban trains. Sacramento was one of the few cities having an interurban Union Station, including the Sacramento Northern and the other interurban services mentioned above. North of Sacramento, trains pulled down their trolley poles on the fly and switched to third rail, on the way to Woodland. Sacramento featured local streetcar operation by all three interurban electric railway companies. Flooding often overtopped testles of the Sacramento Northern (and the Southern Pacific) in floodplains, interrupting service. The main shops for the Sacramento Northern were in Chico, while the shops in Okaland were insufficient for more than minor repairs. Chico featured operation under trolley wire in city streets, with trackage shared with local streetcars.

Parts of the Sacramento Northern are in railway use today. The Western Railway Museum acquired 20 miles of the Sacramento Northern and rebuilt it to run museum equipment, including preserved Sacramento Northern equipment. Yolo Shortline runs from Woodland through West Sacramento to Tasco. Sacramento Light Rail uses the Swanston branch of the Sacramento Northern running northeast from downtown. Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) uses a section running through the hills east of Oakland between Walnut Creek and North Concord.

SHORT FORM (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for June 4, 2016

June 4, 2016. More Trolleys in the South, and the Sacramento Northern in Motion. Donald Nevin returned with more DVDs. First, we saw trolleys and interurbans in the South and Mid-Atlantic, featuring Savannah, Georgia; the Potomac Edison Railway in Maryland; the Baltimore and Annapolis Railway on a fantrip in 1935; and Knoxville, Tennessee. Then we saw a DVD of the Sacramento Northern in 1940, featuring passenger and freight rail operation in California in Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, and Chico, as well as an interurban train ferry.

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