

Tramp Pullman

Contributed by Bob Burton

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Let us say that it is the Summer of 1931 and that we are standing on the platform at the Santa Fe depot in San Angelo, Texas. We have time and money to waste and train #94, gleaming in the colored light of sunset, beckons us to adventure. Our eyes fall upon a twelve Section, one Drawing Room sleeper, and we resolve to stay with that particular car until it is once again part of #94, northbound out of San Angelo. So with tickets and June 10 timetable in hand, we board for the 9:50 departure. Number #94 deposits us in Amarillo at 11:25 AM, just in time for lunch at the Harvey House.

Southbound #95 leaves at 7 PM, but a different Pullman is going to San Angelo. A note in the timetable explains that the car from #94 rolls eastward that night. The car awaits us on a track adjacent to the depot. Berths are already made down, and soon we are asleep. We are awakened about 2 AM as we are switched into #2, The Navajo, and with the dawn we are treated to the squeals of brake shoes and wheel flanges on winding track near Waynoka, OK.

The car is cut out and we spend the day getting acquainted with Waynoka. But come 7:40 PM it is incorporated into #22, The Missionary, and twelve hours later we disembark in the vast shadow of Kansas City Union Station.

Probably, the sleeper from San Angelo would usually vanish into the Pullman pool at Kansas City, but this is our daydream through the timetable and the same car is returning. We roll westward aboard #17, The Ranger, at Midnight and ride as far as Wichita at sunrise. Number #21, The Missionary, picks us up at 5:20 PM, and hustles us to Amarillo, where our car is cut out at 8:30 AM.

At the previously mentioned 7 PM #95 takes us into our sixth night and we are back in San Angelo at 8:30 in the morning. Our car could go out on #94 again that night, but it probably didn't.

A 12-1 sleeper is supposed to arrive from Dallas at 12:55 PM and the run back is due to leave at 4:45. If everything is on time, the doubtlessly small staff that Pullman stations at San Angelo has about three and a half hours to clean, service, and stock the car. It can be done, but it seems more sensible to send the car from Amarillo out that afternoon to Dallas and to send the car from Dallas to Amarillo that night. That's probably what happened, so we're back aboard our old friend, part of #78, bound for Dallas.

The Santa Fe in 1931 does not have a direct line between Brownwood and the Metroplex, so we take the scenic route, unfortunately at night. Our car becomes part of #92, The Texas Express, at Brownwood, then at Temple is passed to #18, The Ranger. At Cleburne, #67 assumes our transport and a 9 AM we are switched out at Dallas.

Twelve hours later, #68 picks us up and passes us to The Ranger, this time #17. Temple sees our car integrated into #91, The California Special, and at Brownwood #77 forwards us into San Angelo in the early afternoon.

That night we stand on the platform and watch #94 wheel our friend into the darkness. After eight nights, uncounted miles, and entirely too many train numbers, who can resist a parting wave as the markers vanish into the distance?

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