

Book Review - Route of The Chiefs: Santa Fe In the Streamlined Era

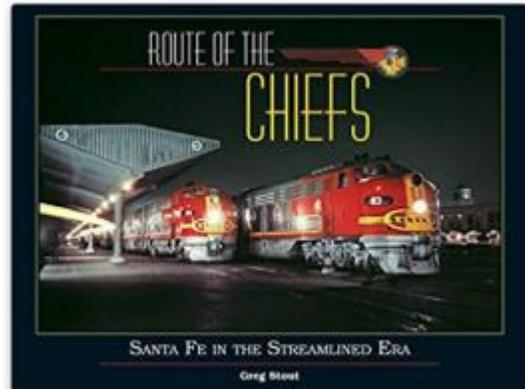
Reviewed by Michael W. Flick

Route of the Chiefs-Stout

Route of The Chiefs: Santa Fe In The Streamlined Era – A Second Look

By Greg Stout. White River Productions. 256 pages library bound. \$79.95
2017. Reviewed by **Michael W. Flick**

This large and well-illustrated book on Santa Fe passenger trains and service was released in the second half of 2017. I had a chance to glance at the book quickly when first released, but did not purchase it, as I hinted strongly to my family that it would make a good Christmas gift. The Fourth Quarter 2017 issue of *The Warbonnet* had a review of the book which was mostly positive and did not raise any questions as to my wishing to have the book. I did receive the book for Christmas, and I know several other Society members did as well. In the weeks after receiving the book, I casually sat down and paged through the book a couple of times, not reading it, but going through page by page, occasionally stopping to look at a photo and read its caption.



Route of the Chiefs: Santa Fe in the Streamlined Era. By Greg Stout. White

Overall, the appearance of this book is very positive and appealing. Though it is not all-color, there are many high-quality color photos, plus some black and white, as well as other illustrations such as Santa Fe passenger timetables and brochures. Many of the photos I had not seen before, or at least not in publication. The layout of the book is well done, and the photo reproduction, including photos filling a full page, is of high quality. There is coverage of Santa Fe passenger trains from the Super Chief and El Capitan, to the La Junta-Denver and Amarillo-Lubbock connecting trains, and many more in between. A casual look through of the book is very positive and entices one to want to read the book thoroughly.

So, I did sit down to read the book. I try not to “speed read” through books, I simply begin from the title page and read, usually to a convenient stopping point, usually the end of a chapter; and continue throughout the book in that manner. But, from the early pages of this book, and continuing throughout the book, including its Appendix rosters, there are multiple problems or issues, which end up making the book very unenjoyable. Basically, the text of the book is full of factual errors. This is not a subjective view, and not a matter of differing opinions with conclusions the author may make; there are simply multiple errors of fact. I will offer a few, but certainly not all, of these errors to illustrate the depth of the problem.

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- Page 21 – “...following the introduction of the original streamlined *Super Chief* consist in 1938” The *Super Chief* began as a heavyweight train in 1936, and the original streamlined Budd consist debuted in 1937.
- Page 25 – “...lounge *Aglatha* took the place of *Acoma*” *Acoma* was the mid-train lounge in the 1937 *Super Chief* consist, *Agathla* (not *Aglatha*) was the mid-train lounge in the 1938 consist, not a replacement.
- Page 28 – regarding the *Valley* series smooth side 6-6-4 sleeping cars as delivered “... the cars were painted medium gray with white lettering and silver roofs” The paint scheme described is how most of these cars appeared in the 1960s, they were delivered in the Pullman pool scheme of two-tone gray with black roofs. Later on page 241, the author describes a different as delivered paint scheme and initial assignment for these same cars, that description of paint and assignment is also inaccurate.
- Page 77 – regarding *The Chief* “...in 1954, the *Vista*-series observation lounges were withdrawn and rebuilt...” The *Vista*-series cars were never regularly assigned to *The Chief*, the observation lounges which were withdrawn and rebuilt in 1954 were the prewar *Denehotso* series cars. The *Vista*-series cars were assigned to the *Super Chief*, and not rebuilt until 1956.
- Page 97 – “The RDCs were subsequently sold in 1970 to the Baltimore & Ohio...” Only RDC DC-191 was sold to the B&O.
- Page 98 – regarding Alco PA diesels “...this is the trio that was re-powered with 2,000-hp EMD 567-series prime movers...” The EMD prime movers were rated at 1750-hp, not 2000.
- Page 111 – regarding the *Tulsan* “...was a heavyweight café-observation...” No heavyweight café-observation cars were regularly assigned to the *Tulsan*, a heavyweight café-lounge did operate between 1949 and 1954. The author repeats this same error again on page 133.
- Page 131 – “The *Oil Flyer* received an upgrade of sorts in the fall of 1946 as it was assigned a heavyweight café-lounge observation...” The *Oil Flyer* and other unnamed Tulsa-Kansas City heavyweight trains had operated with café-lounge observation cars continually since the 1920s until 1954.
- Page 135 – regarding the *Oil Flyer* “...and the sleeper, along with the Chicago-Tulsa through coach, was removed for good in September 1967.” The *Oil Flyer* never had a through Chicago-Tulsa coach assigned; the through coach which was discontinued in September 1967 had operated on the *Tulsan*.
- Page 185 – “...the 24-roomette cars were being withdrawn from service for rebuilding into 12-double bedroom cars...” The *Indian* 24 roomette cars were rebuilt as 11 double bedroom sleepers.
- Page 207 – regarding Santa Fe Baldwin diesel switcher 2291 “The 2291 is one of 41 2260-class S-12...” Santa Fe had no Baldwin S-12 diesels, the class in question were Baldwin DS-4-4-1000.
- Page 215 – “...leaving the *Texas Chief* as the last Santa Fe train operating in the Lone Star State.” The *San Francisco Chief* continued to operate in Texas for the Santa Fe until Amtrak in 1971. This error is also ironic, as it is contained within the chapter on the *San Francisco Chief*.

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- Page 218 – “...coach observation car, a 1947 Pullman-Standard product that had been built along with two sister cars for *El Capitan* and *Texas Chief* service.” No observation cars were built for the *Texas Chief*, nor were any ever regularly assigned to the *Texas Chief*.
- Page 226 – “Trains 25/26 – which carried the unofficial name of “The Cavern”” Trains 25 and 26 were officially named the *Cavern* between 1940 and 1954.
- Page 238 – cars 1378, 1507, 3197, and 3482 are all listed in the Appendix roster as being built by Budd; they were all built by Pullman-Standard
- Page 240 – Dormitory-lounge cars 1339-1344 are called Dormitory cars, and listed as being built for General Service. These dormitory-lounge cars were built specifically for the *Super Chief*, and that is the only train these cars were ever assigned to. The Appendix passenger car roster contains numerous instances of cars being listed incorrectly as being built for a specific train (usually listing the incorrect train as built for) or built for general service when many had a specific assignment when built.

The above specific errors are not a complete list; this is only about one third of the specific factual errors I found by simply reading the book, I was not intentionally looking for errors.

Of a more subjective nature, the author also sometimes makes odd usage of words or terms. Several times throughout the text, the author refers to original box cab road diesels 1A and 1B (which he erroneously indicates as 1 and 1A) by the nickname of “Mutt and Jeff.” Most of the time, these two diesels have been nicknamed as “Amos & Andy” or the “One Spot Twins.” I tried searching various sources, and could find exactly one other reference to these locos as Mutt and Jeff. On page 70 discussing the competing RI/SP *Golden State*, it is said that “...partner Southern Pacific crawfished at the last minute...” In reality, the SP never followed through on ordering new equipment; I find the usage of informal contemporary slang terms (crawfished) in what is supposed to be a history rather odd. On page 113 in a discussion of the *Kansas City Chief* heavyweight lounge Centennial Club cars, the author suggests their interior décor was reminiscent of “cat houses.” Again, a rather subjective odd term! Then there is the Appendix locomotive fleet roster. The author indicates “...that this is a road number roster, not a locomotive roster.” This means that the roster is numerical by loco number, even if a loco was renumbered, so that more than one loco may be listed with the same number, and one loco may be listed under more than one number. The author has also chosen to use the term F5 for any passenger F3 numbered 30 and above, even though he acknowledges that “...model “F5” was not officially listed in the EMD catalog.” This entire loco listing is therefore confusing and difficult to use.

Finally, there is an assertion on page 36 that the Santa Fe considered a Hi-Level *Super Chief*, with full width sleeping rooms on the upper level. This is a claim that I have never seen before, and I will not state it to be false nor correct. For such a claim, I would have hoped that the author would have cited a source for this information; alas, there is no citation mentioned, and the book also lacks any bibliography; even the Acknowledgements page has virtually no reference to source material of any kind (the

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author does cite the many photographers for their photos). Thus, without any source mentioned, I find this claim to be rather dubious.

For individuals such as myself that already own this book, we can take solace in looking at its fine photography; for someone considering this book, especially at what is a rather high retail price even by today's standards, I cannot suggest using this book as any type of reliable source for information, it is much more of a very nice pretty picture book. The author states that the manuscript for this book was complete in 1999, and that 17 more years went into the book before publication; it is too bad that someone did not do even minimal fact-checking during that 17-year period of time.

Additional comments from Michael W. Flick

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Following the publication of this title's book review in the *The Warbonnet*, Second Quarter 2018, the reviewer received suggestions to provide a complete listing of errors found in this book which were not included in the book review. The following is the list of additional errors and issues found in this book by the reviewer from his reading; it is likely that there are additional errors not included in either the book review or this addendum.

- Page 25 – “Apart from changes in schedule frequency and equipment, the *Super Chief* ran for the next two decades in more or less its original form.” In fact the *Super Chief* went from weekly, to twice-weekly, to every other day, to daily operation, all within twelve years from inauguration. It went from heavyweight to lightweight equipment; from custom box cab diesels, to the first warbonnet paint scheme E1 locomotives, to newer E type locomotives, to F unit diesels in the same timeframe. Streamline passenger equipment was replaced and updated multiple times; the first dome cars on the Santa Fe appeared fifteen years after inaugural; coast to coast sleeping cars in conjunction with three other railroads appeared eighteen years after inaugural. The types of sleeping car accommodations were greatly changed and updated from open section style sleepers to an all private room train. The first private dining room on any passenger train also was placed into service fifteen years after the train's inaugural. Very little remained of its original form after two decades of operation!
- Page 31 –“(10-2-3) cars in the *Blue* series.” The *Blue* series sleeping cars were the only sleeping cars built for any railroad in the 10-3-2 configuration – 10 roomettes, three bedrooms, two compartments. This error of calling these cars 10-2-3 sleepers was repeated throughout the book.
- Page 74 – regarding through transcontinental sleeping car service “The usual New York Central car was a 4-4-2 or a 10-5.” When the service began in 1946, the NYC car was a 4-4-2 sleeper; in 1948 a second through NYC car was added, a 10-5; in 1950 the 10-5 sleeper was changed to a 10-6.

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- Page 74 – regarding through transcontinental sleeping car service “...a colorful assemblage of stainless steel, NYC two tone gray, B&O blue and gray...” No B&O sleeping cars were ever assigned to the through service with the Santa Fe. The ATSF provided all of the necessary cars, initially *Valley* series 6-6-4 cars, later *Pine* series 10-6 sleepers.
- Page 77 – regarding *The Chief* “Also in 1954, the *Vista*-series observation lounges were withdrawn and rebuilt with squared-off ends” The *Vista* sleeper-lounge observation cars were not assigned to *The Chief*, its observation cars were from the pre-war *Denehotso* series. They were withdrawn in 1954 and rebuilt with squared off ends; the *Vista* cars, assigned to the *Super Chief*, were not rebuilt until 1956.
- Page 91 – regarding the original consist of the *San Diegan* in 1938 “...chair cars from the 3072-3101 pool...were assigned.” The original consist of the *San Diegan* included chair cars 3113 and 3114; cars from the 3072-3101 series were added as the service gained popularity resulting in enlarged consists and a second train set.
- Page 112 – regarding the *Chicagoan/Kansas Cityan*, it is indicated that at the same time that the Big Dome lounge cars were added in mid-1954, “...parlor observation returned to its original Chicago-Tulsa routing.” The parlor observation cars were actually returned to *Tulsan* service between Chicago and Tulsa in January 1953.
- Page 113 – regarding the *Chicagoan/Kansas Cityan* trains “In 1960 the dome lounge cars were withdrawn” Three paragraphs later with no further comment the author lists the Big Dome lounge cars in the train consist. The Big Dome lounge cars were not withdrawn in 1960, and remained in assigned service on these trains from 1954 when the cars were built until 1968 when the trains were discontinued.
- Page 115 – ““class” (of two) engine E3 11...with mate 11A” E3 locos 11 and 11A were not the only locos in the 11 Class. The E6 locos numbered 12-15 and their B units (except no B unit for 14) were also included in the 11 Class.
- Page 122 – “Equipment purchased for the new *Golden Gate* trains included...coaches 3090, 3091, 3093, and 3095” These four cars were all part of the 3072-3101 series of cars built for the *Scout* and general service in 1937. The *Golden Gate* trains did not debut until mid-1938; the assigned chair cars at that time were 3115, 3116, 3117, and 3118.
- Page 122 and 236 – Author indicates cars 3117 and 3118 built for the *Golden Gate* trains were coach-lounges. These two cars were delivered as chair cars in the 3103-3118 series; very quickly 3117 and 3118 had their interiors modified to chair-lounges.
- Page 127 – “Platform signs at Tulsa for trains 212 and 48.” In reality there was one sign, with different train information on each side of the sign. The author also suggests that “the signs implied” that the trains operated to California. It is obvious that the signs show the primary routing of the trains as Chicago and Kansas City, with connections to the west.
- Page 133 – regarding the *Tulsan* “parlor observation was withdrawn in favor of a heavyweight café-observation.” No heavyweight café-observation car was ever

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assigned to the *Tulsa*. A heavyweight café-lounge (not an observation) was assigned for several years.

- Page 133 – “In 1959, the *Tulsa* began handling through coaches from Chicago” The *Tulsa* had a through Chicago-Kansas City-Tulsa chair car assigned beginning June 2, 1946.
- Page 146 – regarding Los Angeles Union Passenger Depot “Today, it is the only one of the four depots presented in this chapter...” The depots discussed in the chapter are Dearborn Station in Chicago, Kansas City Union Station, and LAUPT – which is a total of three depots, not four.
- Pages 157 and 159 – photos of *Texas Chief* are Amtrak trains, not Santa Fe (contributed by Ralph Back)
- Page 196 – “...on the same day the *Texas Chief* departed Chicago” The train being discussed is actually the *San Francisco Chief*, not the *Texas Chief*.
- Page 197 – “That container “flat” directly behind the power set is one of several built at Barstow, California, in 1962 from the 200-225 series of surplus heavyweight dining cars.” These mail container flats were rebuilt from heavyweight cars, but the rebuilt flat cars were the ones numbered 200-225, not the original heavyweight cars.
- Page 204 – regarding the *San Francisco Chief* “only the 48 seat coaches and the Big Domes were new” The only cars built specifically new for the *San Francisco Chief* were Big Dome lounge-dormitory cars 550-555; the 2816-2860 series of 48 seat chair cars were delivered in 1953 and operated on *The Chief* and other trains prior to the June 1954 inaugural of the *San Francisco Chief*.
- Page 204 – here and elsewhere throughout the book, the author describes various 48 seat or 44-seat or 60-seat lightweight ‘coaches.’ On the Santa Fe, there were no lightweight coaches ever built! The cars were referred to by the Santa Fe as ‘chair cars’ as they contained individually adjustable chair seats. On the Santa Fe (and several other railroads), a ‘coach’ seat was a common non-adjustable back for two passengers. Even when considering heavyweight cars, Santa Fe used the same nomenclature for chair cars and coach cars.
- Pages 204-205 – regarding the *San Francisco Chief* “...and a 4-drawing room – 1 double bedroom lounge. The lounge was one of the old *Vista*-series observation cars...” The rebuilt observation cars added to the *San Francisco Chief* in 1955 were not the *Vista* series cars, rather they were the rebuilt pre-war *Denehotso* series cars. The *Vista* cars were not rebuilt until 1956. Beginning in 1958 these two series of rebuilt observation cars were assigned together on the *San Francisco Chief* in mid-train service.
- Page 210 – “...we see five coaches ahead of the Great Dome Lounge.” The term ‘Great Dome Lounge’ was a description used by the Great Northern for their full-length dome lounge cars on the *Empire Builder*. The Santa Fe terminology was either Big Dome lounge or simply full-length dome lounge. And again, there are no ‘coaches’ in the train, rather they are chair cars.
- Page 232 – A number of cars are listed as being built for the 1938 *Super Chief*, but they were actually built in 1938 for *The Chief*. Cars incorrectly listed as being built for the *Super Chief* are: *Chinle*, *Wupatki*, *Klethla*, *Polacca*, *Yampai*,

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Chaistla. These cars substituted on the *Super Chief*, and some later did regularly operate on that train, but all were built for *The Chief*.

- Page 235 – “baggage-dormitory-coach 3481 was built by the Budd Company in 1938 for *El Capitan* and *Kansas Cityan/Chicagoan* service.” The 3481 was built by Budd in 1938, but it and 3480 were built for and assigned to the *El Capitan*.
- Page 236 – dormitory lounge car 1371 *Nambe* mis-spelled as “Nambre”
- Page 238 – Hi-Level chair cars 726-730 and 733 are listed in the roster as being 68 seat cars configured with step-down stairs. The series of Hi-Level chair cars 725-736 were built as convertible cars; as normally configured they seated 72 and operated with both end doors arranged for Hi-Level height; but they could be reconfigured with steps down at one end. Some of these cars were configured as such after 1968 when Hi-Level service was expanded to the *Texas Chief* as well as the *El Capitan* and *San Francisco Chief*.
- Page 240 – 4-4-2 sleeping car *Saydato* mis-spelled as “Saydatch”
- Page 241 – regarding the *Valley* series 6-6-4 sleeping cars “The 26 cars in this series were built for transcontinental service involving the New York Central and the Pennsylvania Railroad.” “After the transcontinental service ended, the cars were repainted solid gray.” These sleeping cars were delivered in 1942. The inauguration of through transcontinental sleeping car service did not begin until 1946. These 6-6-4 sleepers were never assigned to the through service with the New York Central, and were only assigned in through service with the Pennsylvania for one month. The 6-6-4 sleepers were used in through service with the Baltimore & Ohio from 1946 until 1951; the end of transcontinental sleeping car service did not come until 1958. Initially the 6-6-4 cars were painted in the Pullman two tone gray scheme with black roofs and underbody; while in through service on the B&O most of these cars were repainted into the shadow line paint scheme, and then once again repainted into a Santa Fe version of two-tone gray with silver or aluminum roofs and underbody. Though many of these cars ultimately did receive a solid gray paint scheme, others went to retirement or scrap still in two-tone gray.
- Page 254 – “Santa Fe’s three H-12-44TS switchers were designed expressly for heavy-duty passenger switching at major terminals like Chicago and Los Angeles.” These three Fairbanks-Morse switchers were assigned exclusively to Chicago, never in Los Angeles.