Old Trails Museum

Journeys To Winslow

PANEL 5

A City in Motion: The Heyday of the Santa Fe Railway

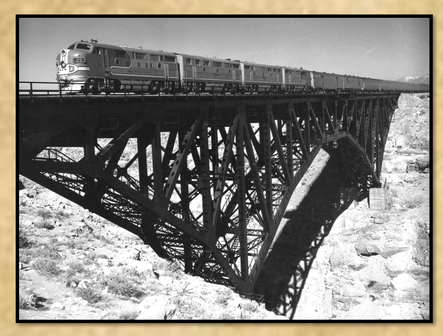
The Santa Fe Railway

Cyrus K. Holliday founded the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, better known as the Santa Fe, in 1859. The Santa Fe bought the Atlantic and Pacific's Western Division in 1897 and transferred the division headquarters from Gallup to Winslow. The influx of infrastructure and employees transformed the railroad boomtown into a major city along the principal rail line to the West Coast. Railroading dominated the lives of most residents during the first half of the 20th century.

In 1929, more than 450 roundhouse mechanics, machinists, and boilermakers (welders) worked in three eight-hour, around-the-clock shifts to keep engines and boxcars working.

In 1930, these "trainmen" worked as conductors, engineers, firemen, and brakemen. They could be called to work anytime, day or night, to work two days on and one day off. Robert McNelly went to work for the Santa Fe in 1919. He shoveled coal to the engine during 3-1/2-hour passenger train trips and 8-hour freight train trips:

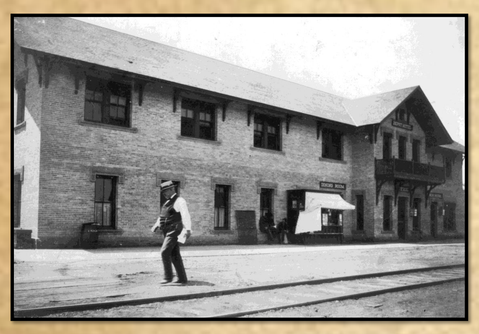
"We firemen had a saying: 'I bent down in Winslow and straightened up in Gallup'. . . The long hours together developed camaraderie among us. We depended on one another." Janice Henling interview, *Winslow Mail, 1980*



Fourteen Santa Fe passenger trains passed through Winslow daily during the peak years of railroad travel. The *California Limited*, *El Capitan*, *Grand Canyon Limited*, and *Super Chief* (seen here crossing the 1947 incarnation of the Canyon Diablo Bridge) were known for their deluxe accommodations and Fred Harvey dining service.

Harvey Houses and Harvey Girls

Starting in 1876, entrepreneur Fred Harvey opened a series of dining houses along the Santa Fe line in cooperation with the railroad. Considered America's first restaurant chain, the family-run "Fred Harvey" company operated through the 1960s. Harvey opened Winslow's first Harvey House in 1887, and "Harvey Girl" waitresses from the East Coast and Midwest soon followed. Harvey Girls had to work hard, adhere to strict rules, and remain unmarried during their terms of service. Like tens of thousands throughout the West, many of Winslow's Harvey Girls eventually married local men and settled in town.



Left: Built south of the tracks and east of the current underpass, the Harvey House included a ticket office, waiting and baggage rooms, lunchroom and dining room, newspaper stand, and second-floor hotel. Right: The elegant dining room provided delicious, affordable meals to railroad passengers, employees, and townspeople alike.

Some Winslow Harvey Girls stand on the railroad platform with their manager, W.E. Belding, around 1920. The Hopi woman seated on the left is selling handmade pottery to train passengers and hotel guests, which Fred Harvey encouraged. Joan MacLean Haydukovich, former La Posada Harvey Girl, reflected on the legacy of Harvey's iconic employees:

"They say the Harvey Girls were responsible for settling the West. Because they came out here and they made these cowboys and railroaders shape up and quit drinking so much . . . they said, 'Well, I'm going to church. If you want to come with me, you have to get cleaned up.'" Interview by Mary Tolan of Northern Arizona University, 2008

La Posada Hotel

After 1900, both the Santa Fe and Fred Harvey began promoting travel to the Southwest. The Fred Harvey company promoted Southwestern history and cultures as a way to encourage tourism and sell Native-made goods. Railway travelers experienced the Southwest through Fred Harvey's grand hotels, retail sales of Native American arts and crafts, and the Harveycar Indian Detours. La Posada, Fred Harvey's last grand hotel and company architect Mary Colter's masterpiece, opened north of the tracks in 1930. Colter designed La Posada as if it had been the grand hacienda of a wealthy Spanish *don*, housing rare furnishings in an elegant atmosphere.

In 1930, the staff poses on the South Lawn, the hotel's original front entrance facing the tracks. The north side faced Route 66 and featured a cooling tower that helped ventilate the building in summer.

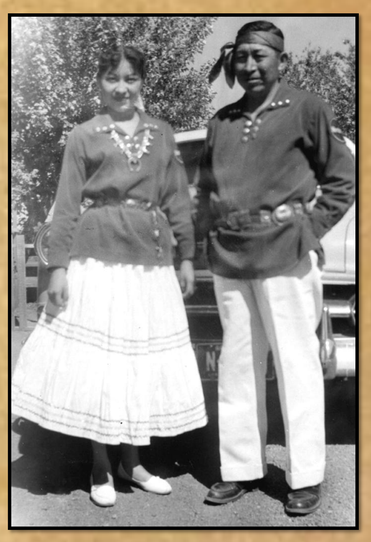
The Harveycar Indian Detours, the company's first-class automobile touring service, operated from 1926 to 1931. Harveycars, like the one seen here outside La Posada's north entrance in 1930, toured from the grand hotels to unique natural and cultural sites such as nearby Meteor Crater, Hopi and Navajo lands, and the Petrified Forest National Monument.

The Sunken Garden shielded guests from Winslow's frequent winds. The hotel was surrounded by eleven acres of gardens with a greenhouse, band shell, and tennis courts. Despite opening during the Great Depression at a cost of $2 million, La Posada remained open for almost three decades.

The Santa Fe Indian Band

The company-sponsored Santa Fe Indian Band, seen here at La Posada in 1948, consisted of Navajo, Hopi, and Laguna employees and their family members. The Santa Fe employed Laguna men in exchange for crossing their Pueblo lands in New Mexico. Laguna families lived in converted boxcars on Santa Fe property. Dressed in velveteen shirts and Native jewelry, the band logged thousands of rail miles performing at Arizona State Fairs, Gallup Intertribal Indian Ceremonials, the Union Station Opening Day Parade in Los Angeles in 1939, and President Eisenhower's inauguration parade in Washington, DC, in 1953. They also played local Winslow Christmas Parades and weekly concerts in the La Posada band shell.

Right: Rosemary Siow Natseway poses with her father, Tony "Lefty" Siow, in their band costumes in the late 1950s. She reflected on her time in the band from 1952 to 1962: *"I was fortunate to belong to that . . . (those were) my best years of my life . . . traveling and playing . . . I think I was on the road more than actually being at home . . . traveling on the train and eating in the diners and sleeping in the coaches."* (Courtesy of Rosemary Siow Natseway)



Rosemary also described living in the Laguna Colony: "*Parents put two boxcars together, used one as the bedrooms and then there was a kitchen and they made a living room . . . they made it livable. They made it nice . . . the women, they had their own little get-togethers . . . Some did sewing together…they were always cooking . . . And it was beautiful because the people just gathered and we had our own activities, like . . . baseball . . . social dances . . . I miss those days."* Interview by Mary Tolan of Northern Arizona University, 2010

Acknowledgments: This printing of the Old Trails Museum's *Journeys to Winslow* exhibit was funded by Tess and Lawrence Kenna of Kenna Properties, Inc. The exhibit was originally developed by OTM Director Ann-Mary Lutzick for the Arizona tour of Museum on Main Street's *Journey Stories* exhibit, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and Arizona Humanities. Unless noted, all images and interviews are from the Old Trails Museum Collection. For more Winslow history, visit the Old Trails Museum (across from the Standin' on the Corner Park) or www.oldtrailsmuseum.org.