Old Trails Museum

Journeys To Winslow

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

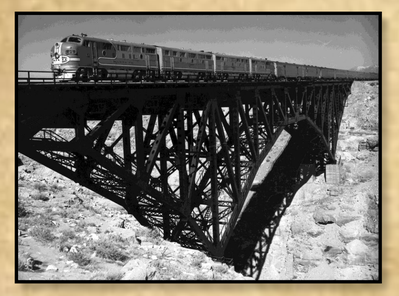
The Santa Fe Railway

In 1897, the Santa Fe bought the Atlantic and Pacific's Western Division, which ran from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Needles, California. They soon transferred division headquarters from Gallup, New Mexico, to Winslow. The subsequent influx of employees transformed the boomtown into a major city along the principal rail line to the West Coast. The Santa Fe dominated Winslow's growth and workforce from the 1890s through the 1920s, when most freight and travelers crossed the country by rail.

In 1929, more than 450 roundhouse mechanics, machinists, boilermakers (welders), and others 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:

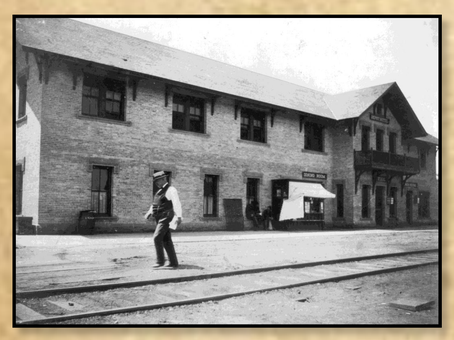
"We firemen had a saying: 'I bent down in Winslow and straightened up in Gallup'. . . The long hours together developed camaraderie among us. We depended on one another." Janice Henling interview for the *Winslow Mail, 1980*



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

Harvey Houses and Harvey Girls

Entrepreneur Fred Harvey established fine-dining facilities along the Santa Fe line that evolved into America's first restaurant chain. Harvey opened Winslow's first Harvey House in 1887. "Harvey Girl" waitresses from the East Coast and Midwest soon followed. Harvey Girls had to be well-mannered, neat in appearance, 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.



Winslow's Harvey House included a ticket office, waiting and baggage rooms, lunchroom and dining room, newspaper stand, and second-floor hotel.

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.'" Mary Tolan interview, 2008

La Posada Hotel

After 1900, both the Santa Fe and Fred Harvey companies began promoting travel to the Southwest. "Fred Harvey," as the company was known, 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. Winslow's proximity to Meteor Crater, Hopi and Navajo lands, and the Petrified Forest National Monument made it an ideal tourism destination. La Posada, Fred Harvey's last grand hotel and architect Mary Colter's masterpiece, opened north of the tracks in 1930.

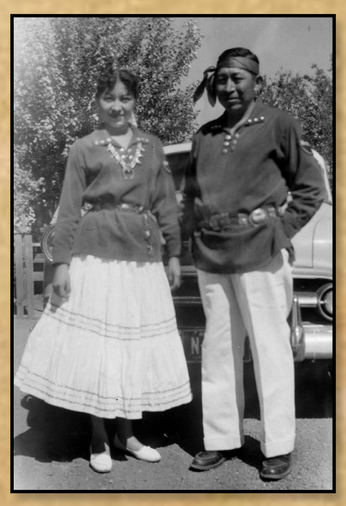
The Harveycar Indian Detours, the company's first-class automobile touring service, operated from 1926 to 1931. Harveycars, like the one seen here outside La Posada in 1930, toured from several of the grand hotels to natural and cultural sites unique to the Southwest. (Photograph by Edward A. Kemp; Courtesy of the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives [NMHM/DCA], 053652)

La Posada staff members Refugio Guzman, LeRoy Garcia, Benny Rodriguez, Avelino Perea, and son Tony Perea load box lunches onto the *Super Chief* in the 1950s. Santa Fe passengers also enjoyed Fred Harvey meals served in luxury dining cars.

Colter designed La Posada as if it had been the grand hacienda of a wealthy Spanish *don*. The hotel's original front entrance faced the tracks to the south. The hotel staff (above , left) poses on the South Lawn in 1930.

The Santa Fe All-Indian Band

Seen on the right at La Posada in 1948, the company-sponsored Santa Fe All-Indian Band consisted of Navajo, Hopi, and Laguna railroad employees and their family members. The band logged thousands of rail miles playing around the country from 1923 to 1964. They performed at Arizona State Fairs, gubernatorial inaugurations, and President Eisenhower's inaugural parade in 1953.



Rosemary Siow poses with her father, Tony "Lefty" Siow, in their band costumes in the late 1950s. (Photo courtesy of Rosemary Siow Natseway) Natseway reflected on her time in the band from 1952 to 1962:

"I was fortunate to belong to that . . . I played clarinet . . . (those were) my best years of my life, I think . . . 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." Mary Tolan interview, 2010