

Riding on the *City of Los Angeles*

How I researched my dad's sleeper car on a trip
he took in 1947



Presented by
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May 24, 2025

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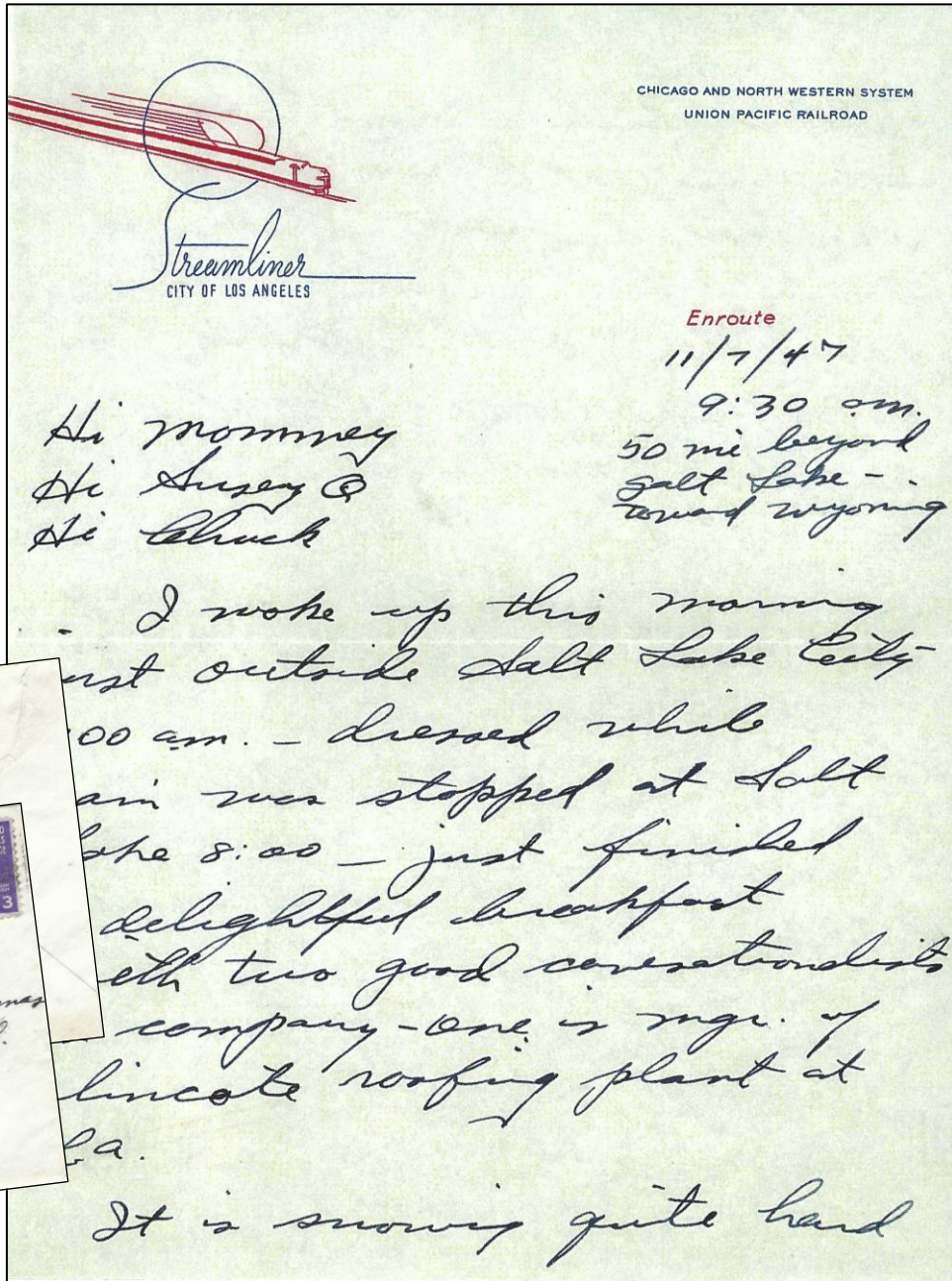


Background

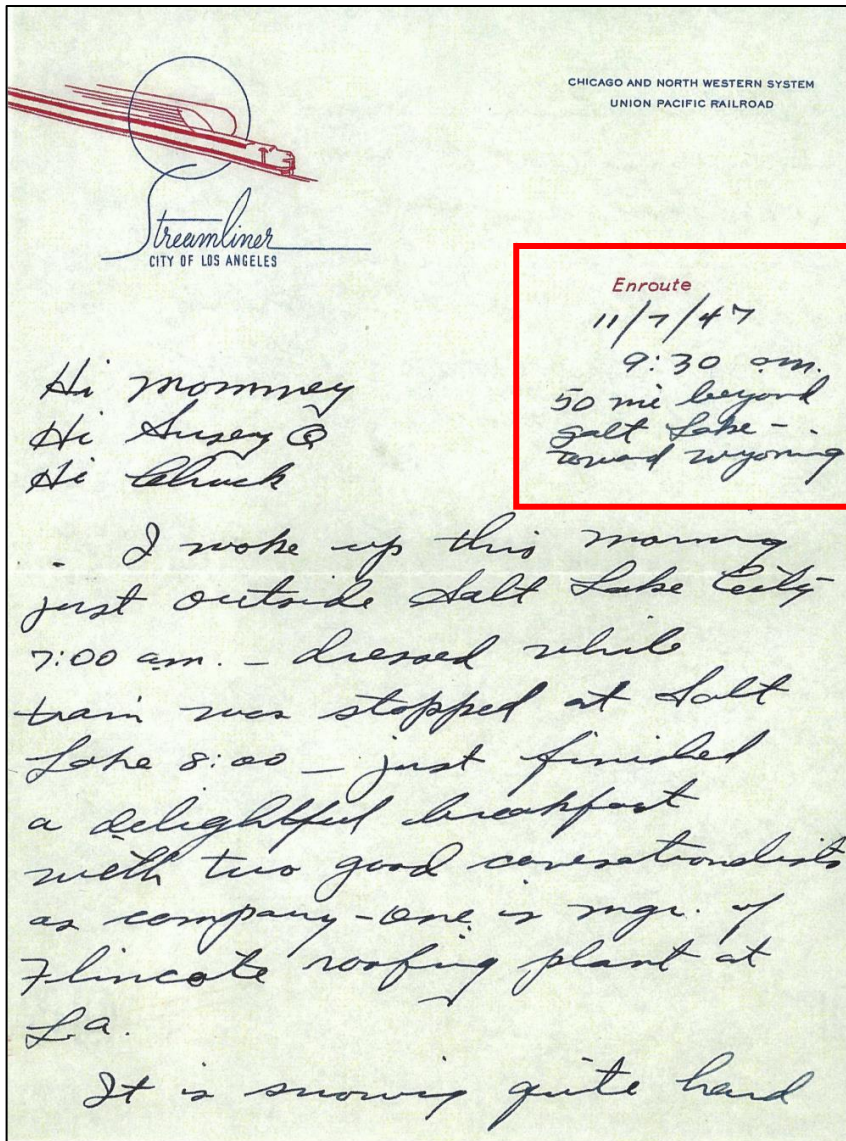
- My father, Cal Thomas, rode the Union Pacific *City of Los Angeles* on a business trip from Los Angeles to Chicago in November 1947 when I was 7 months old.
- Enroute, he wrote a letter to the family on *City of Los Angeles* stationary that included a few clues to as to the car he was riding.
- I found the letter after he passed away and wanted to see if I could identify his actual car.
- I model the Union Pacific in the Los Angeles basin in 1955 and I thought it would also be fun to have a model of his car on my layout.



Dad's Letter



Clues in the letter



11/7/47
9:30 am
50 miles beyond Salt Lake
toward Wyoming
"My car 1045 is the tail-end car."

my car 1045 is the tail-end
car. I was afraid we would
play whip-washer around
the curves - but it is o.k.
and I had an excellent
rest last night.



What I knew so far

- ✓ Dad was riding on the *City of Los Angeles*.
- ✓ The train left Los Angeles on November 6, the evening before he wrote the letter.
- ✓ He was riding in a sleeper car rather than a coach.
- ✓ He was in the last car on the train.
- ✓ The “car number” was 1045.
- ✓ It was snowing hard in Northeastern Utah



Where to begin?

- In 2008 I turned to two contacts in the Union Pacific Historical Society; Dick Harley and Dave Seidel.
- First, I learned that UP sleeper cars were not “numbered,” they were “named.”
- Second, “1045” was the “Passenger Loading Number” (versus Car Road Number) displayed by the car door to facilitate boarding.
 - Therefore, 1045 meant “Train 104, 5th Sleeper.”
- Third, I needed to identify the “trainset” that left Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal (LAUPT) on November 6



***City of Los Angeles* (aka “COLA”) in 1947**

- **The Union Pacific operated four trainsets on the COLA in 1947 – 7th, 16th, 9th, and 17th – in that sequence.**
- **A “trainset” were the coaches, sleepers, diners, and lounges that remained more-or-less intact, and in position, as a consist over time.**
- **Trains from Los Angeles to Chicago were numbered 104; trains from Chicago to Los Angeles were numbered 103.**
- **Beginning on May 14, 1947 trains “sailed” daily in both directions.**



***City of Los Angeles* (aka “COLA”) in 1947 (cont’d)**

- **Dad’s train, #104, was scheduled to leave LAUPT on Thursday evening, November 6 at 5:00 pm, and arrive in Chicago 39 hours and 40 minutes later on Saturday morning, November 8 at 10:40 am.**



First Conclusion: Dad's car was the *Baldy Mountain*

“The car in question is the *Baldy Mountain*. It was the only one of the four rear-end lounge/observation cars used on the COLA in 1947 that also had sleeping rooms and carried Pullman loading number 1045.” Dave Seidel, October 2008



SOURCE: UPHS expert files, *The Union Pacific Streamliners* by Ranks and Kratville, and Utah Rails website

The answer appeared to be straight-forward

OK! Now I just needed a builder's photo, have the photo and letter framed, and see if I could find a model of *Baldy Mountain*.



Baldy Mountain Builder's Photo

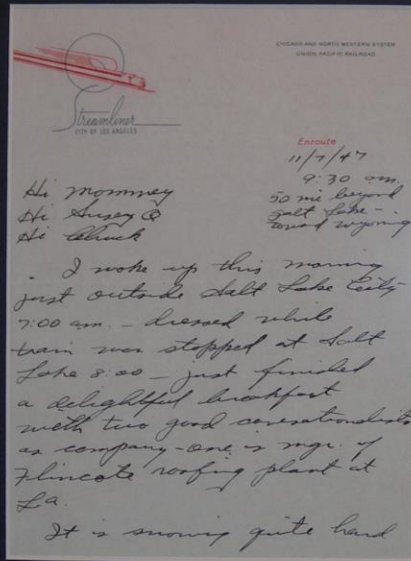


Baldy Mountain
July 1941, Pullman, Illinois



SOURCE: Union Pacific Railroad Museum archives

Framed Letter and *Baldy Mountain* Photo



*my car 1045 in the lead-end
car. I was afraid we would
play whip-wacker around
the curves - but it is a.k.
and I had an excellent
rest last night.*



But wait, *Not So Fast*

“Sorry, but the car was not the *Baldy Mountain*. Further research has revealed that the COLA leaving Los Angeles on November 6, 1947 was scheduled to be the 17th Train.

Thus, your father was very likely riding in an *American* series 6-6-4 sleeper when he wrote the letter, assuming a normal trainset that day.

Which *American* sleeper is still unknown.

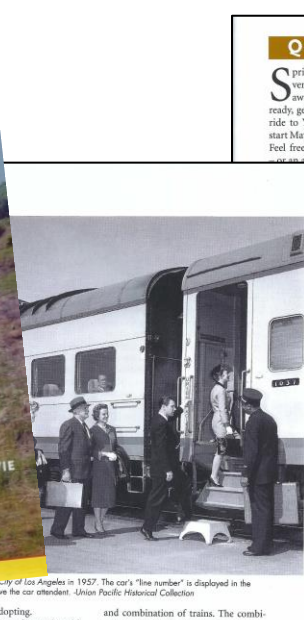
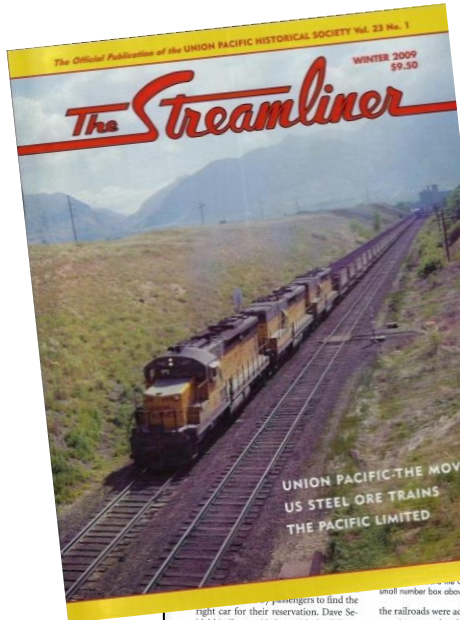
I hope you haven't purchased a model yet ...!”

Dick Harley, February 2009



SOURCE: UPRR Complete List of Pullman Sleeping Cars, Issues #16, 17 and 18

These insights were discussed in the 2009 UPHS Streamliner Winter and Spring issues



Q & A By Dick Harley

Spring is here and the UPHS Convention in Cheyenne is not far away. If you have not done so already, get your tickets now for the train ride to Yoder. General public sales will start May 15th. We hope to see you there. Feel free to bring us a question or two to the answer.

It is very important to get the most accurate information in *The Streamliner* and in this particular. However, occasionally something gets published that is inaccurate, and it needs to be corrected as possible. That is the purpose of the "Q & A" column in the last issue. Several conclusions were drawn from the information presented in the magazine, and I believe that the information presented in the magazine is accurate.

The original question involved what we now know was a UP Car Number, and I believe that the post-WWII version of those is fairly well understood. That Car Number assignment system used the train number and the car's location in the train to establish its car number. At first, only the sleepers were given car numbers, however, after the reserved seat chair cars were introduced, they were eventually also given a number. Any reserved accommodation needed a way to be identified. A sleeper or chair car that would be interchanged to another train would carry the original car number until the completion of its journey—the carriers didn't want through passengers wondering where their car went. Car Numbers were used by ticketing agents and train crews to let passengers know where their reserved

accommodations could be located on the train. Whether passengers were or were aware of Pullman Line Numbers is uncertain. The method of assigning Car Numbers pre-1940 or exactly when Car Numbers were actually started is still unclear to us. We are still seeking much information about the Pullman Line Number system, so that it can be explained in a future issue of *The Streamliner*. Readers can help with knowledge of the system, please contact us at info@uphs.org.

So, it became very clear that the answer to this question was true. With much help from Jeff Koeller and Dave Seidel, the original question was answered. Please let me know if it's not.

Q419—A reader had found from his father written aboard the *City of Los Angeles* in 1947, east of Salt Lake City. The father had written that the car, #1045, is the tail-end car. He wanted to find out what car #1045 was.

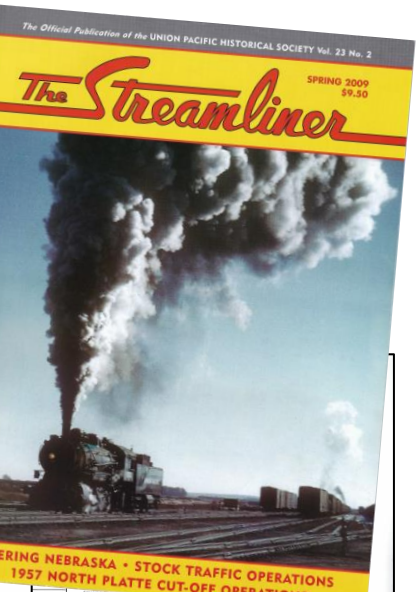
A419 (corrected)—Since the road number of any UP passenger car, let alone a train, was quickly determined to not be the UP car road number, had begun daily service on with four train-sets used on 4 Double Bedroom-Ob

ervations. A similar car, Russian

Section-6 Roomette-4 Double Bedroom sleeper (Pullman Line No. 4359 [typo] and 4300 respectively).

Further investigation showed that since No. 17 of that document dated September 1, 1947, had Car Number #1045 being the same type 2-4-4 cars (Pullman Line No. 4300) on the 7th and 9th trains and type 6-6-4 cars (Pullman Line No. 4300) on the 16th and 17th trains, but the *Baldy Mountain* and *Russian Hill* were no longer on the COLA trains, and there was no car #1046. This may be another type, since *Baldy Mountain*, was reportedly still on one COLA train-set.

Finally we found issue No. 18 dated November 1, 1947 which showed one of the 4 Double Bedroom-Ob



GERING NEBRASKA - STOCK TRAFFIC OPERATIONS 1957 NORTH PLATTE CUT-OFF OPERATIONS

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So, now we know that the father's Car Number #1045 was not a sleeper-observation car (as one might have guessed), but we still don't know in what type of car he was riding. Here is where another detail from the letter falls into place and tells the story. The father's letter was dated 11/7/47, 4:30 pm, 30 miles beyond Salt Lake toward Wyoming, which means he was riding on the COLA scheduled at 5:00 pm, the afternoon of November 6, 1947. Some additional data in the sleeping car list documents is the train-set number and departure dates

in good weather or bad—there's no mere dependable way to travel than by U.P. Train

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD
Ask your Agent for full information

...the City of Los Angeles in 1957. The car's "line number" is displayed in the small number box above the car entrance. Union Pacific Historical Collection

right car for their reservation. Dave kindly provided us with the following explanation of those numbers:

For reservations and ticketing, the railroads and Pullman used a system of "line numbers" (also known as "loading numbers") for the sleeping cars used for service. A letter/number system was used by Pullman from the early days of its operations up until about 1946. Then, a new system was started that used the train number and the location of the car in that train. An example of a "line" would be to provide sleeper accommodations of compartments, bedrooms and drawing rooms between Chicago and Portland. This "line" would use a 2 drawing room-4 compartment-4 bedroom type car with a line number of "1054" (C&NW/UP train 105 and car 4). The "line" number would be based on the original train/location of that sleeper.

A sleeper that would be interchanged to other trains would carry the original number until the completion of its journey. At first, only the sleepers were given "line" or "loading" numbers, however, in time the coaches were also given a number due to the newer reservation systems

the railroads were adopting. An example of a train consist with "line" numbers is the C&NW/UP *City of Los Angeles*, train 103, westbound at Omaha, Nebraska on October 11, 1955 shown in the accompanying table. In the 1960s, the UP line number system reflected the changes of traffic

and combination of trains. The combination of the "City of Everywhere," in the mid and late 1960s, reflected this change the most. Chicago-Los Angeles cars had "line" numbers of 103/104, but cars to other destinations were assigned other numbers, even though in the same train. The Chicago-Portland cars carried "line"

Train 103, COLA, westbound at Omaha, Nebraska on October 11, 1955			
UP 5047	Baggage		
UP 52-104	Baggage/dorm		
CNW 3442	Coach	line 1039	
CNW 3448	Coach	line 1038	
UP 4206	Lounge		
UP 4812	Diner		
Pull 1031	4 bedroom-4 compartment-2 drawing room	line 1037	
Pull 1032	4 bedroom-4 compartment-2 drawing room	line 1036	
Pull 1033	6 section-6 roomette-4 bedroom	line 1035 (x)	
Pull 1034	10 roomette-6 bedroom	line 1034 (1)	
Pull 1035	4 bedroom-4 compartment-2 drawing room	line 1031 (2)	
Pull 1036	8 section-6 roomette-4 bedroom	line 1032 (3)	
UP 9000	Dome observation lounge		

X. Sometimes on this consist the regular scheduled 6 section-6 roomette-4 bedroom, "line 1035" was substituted by a 10 roomette-6 bedroom car.

1. This sleeper was the New York - Los Angeles thru sleeper via the PRR and carried this special three-service "line" number on PRR's Broadway Limited.

2. This sleeper was the New York-Los Angeles thru sleeper via the NYC and carried its NYC train number 459, *The Chicagoan*. Note: This "line" was to interchange with C&NW/UP Los Angeles Limited, however on this date, it missed connections in Chicago and was added to the City of Los Angeles.

3. This sleeper was the Minneapolis-Los Angeles thru sleeper via the C&NW and carried its C&NW train #203, *The North American*. Note: Car added at Omaha.



Projected COLA trainset departures from Los Angeles to Chicago as of May 1947

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
May	11	12	13	14 7th trainset	15 16th trainset	16 9th trainset	17 17th trainset
	18 7th trainset	19 16th trainset	20 9th trainset	21 17th trainset	22 7th trainset	23 16th trainset	24 9th trainset
	25 17th trainset	26 7th trainset	27 16th trainset	28 9th trainset	29 17th trainset	30 7th trainset	31 16th trainset
June	1 9th trainset	2 17th trainset	3 7th trainset	4 16th trainset	5 9th trainset	6 17th trainset	7 7th trainset
	8 16th trainset	9 9th trainset	10 17th trainset	11 7th trainset	12 16th trainset	13 9th trainset	14 17th trainset
	15 7th trainset	16 16th trainset	17 9th trainset	18 17th trainset	19 7th trainset	20 16th trainset	21 9th trainset
	22 17th trainset	23 7th trainset	24 16th trainset	25 9th trainset	26 17th trainset	27 7th trainset	28 16th trainset
	29 9th trainset	30 17th trainset					
July			1 7th trainset	2 16th trainset	3 9th trainset	4 17th trainset	5 7th trainset
	6 16th trainset	7 9th trainset	8 17th trainset	9 7th trainset	10 16th trainset	11 9th trainset	12 17th trainset
	13 7th trainset	14 16th trainset	15 9th trainset	16 17th trainset	17 7th trainset	18 16th trainset	19 9th trainset
	20 17th trainset	21 7th trainset	22 16th trainset	23 9th trainset	24 17th trainset	25 7th trainset	26 16th trainset
	27 9th trainset	28 17th trainset	29 7th trainset	30 16th trainset	31 9th trainset		
August						1 17th trainset	2 7th trainset
	3 16th trainset	4 9th trainset	5 17th trainset	6 7th trainset	7 16th trainset	8 9th trainset	9 17th trainset
	10 7th trainset	11 16th trainset	12 9th trainset	13 17th trainset	14 7th trainset	15 16th trainset	16 9th trainset
	17 17th trainset	18 7th trainset	19 16th trainset	20 9th trainset	21 17th trainset	22 7th trainset	23 16th trainset
	24 9th trainset	25 17th trainset	26 7th trainset	27 16th trainset	28 9th trainset	29 17th trainset	30 7th trainset
	31 16th trainset						
September		1 9th trainset	2 17th trainset	3 7th trainset	4 16th trainset	5 9th trainset	6 17th trainset
	7 7th trainset	8 16th trainset	9 9th trainset	10 17th trainset	11 7th trainset	12 16th trainset	13 9th trainset
	14 17th trainset	15 7th trainset	16 16th trainset	17 9th trainset	18 17th trainset	19 7th trainset	20 16th trainset
	21 9th trainset	22 17th trainset	23 7th trainset	24 16th trainset	25 9th trainset	26 17th trainset	27 7th trainset
	28 16th trainset	29 9th trainset	30 17th trainset				
October				1 7th trainset	2 16th trainset	3 9th trainset	4 17th trainset
	5 7th trainset	6 16th trainset	7 9th trainset	8 17th trainset	9 7th trainset	10 16th trainset	11 9th trainset
	12 17th trainset	13 7th trainset	14 16th trainset	15 9th trainset	16 17th trainset	17 7th trainset	18 16th trainset
	19 9th trainset	20 17th trainset	21 7th trainset	22 16th trainset	23 9th trainset	24 17th trainset	25 7th trainset
	26 16th trainset	27 9th trainset	28 17th trainset	29 7th trainset	30 16th trainset	31 9th trainset	
November							1 17th trainset
	2 No Train	3 7th trainset	4 16th trainset	5 9th trainset	6 17th trainset	7 7th trainset	8 16th trainset
	9 9th trainset	10 17th trainset	11 7th trainset	12 16th trainset	13 9th trainset	14 17th trainset	15 7th trainset



So, Which “American” was Dad Riding?

Pullman Standard built 119 *American* sleepers in 1942; 42 were sold to UP in 1945 and leased back to Pullman:

- American Ace
- American Adventure
- American Ambassador
- American Army
- American Beacon
- American Captain
- American Classic
- American Clipper
- American Command
- American Courier
- American Cruiser
- American Eagle
- American Emblem
- American Ensign
- American Escort
- American Falls
- American Flyer
- American Fortress
- American Haven
- American Heights
- American Hills
- American Home
- American Lake
- American Light
- American Marine
- American Monitor
- American Navy
- American Park
- American Progress
- American Rapids
- American River
- American Royal
- American Sailor
- American Scene
- American Sentry
- American Shores
- American Skipper
- American Soldier
- American Star
- American Trails
- American Trooper
- American Woodland

“Cars assigned to the COSF, COLA, and COP were painted yellow and gray; Cars assigned to the COSTL were painted two-tone gray.”

➤ **Second Conclusion: If Dad was on the 17th Train, then his car may have been *American Royal*.**



SOURCE: Utah Rails website

City of Los Angeles Trainsets as of May 1947

7th Train Leaving LAUPT May 14, 1947

UP 5622	Baggage
Las Vegas	Coach
C&NW 3423	Coach
Salt Lake	Coach-Lounge
UP 5101	Diner
Little Nugget	Dormitory-Club
Arroyo Seco	11 Bedroom
Beverly Hills	12 Section
Santa Monica	4 Comp-3 Drawing Rm
San Fernando	13 Roomette-1 Section
Cabrillo	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Sun Valley	Lounge-Observation

9th Train Leaving Chicago May 14, 1947

UP 5603	Baggage
Pasadena	Coach
Boulder City	Coach
C&NW 3428	Coach-Lounge
UP 5100	Diner
Hollywood	Club-Lounge
San Dominguez	11 Bedroom
Wilshire	12 Section
Rose Bowl	18 Roomette
Los Feliz	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
San Gabriel	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Baldy Mountain	4 Bedroom-Observation (but as 1046)

16th Train Leaving LAUPT May 15, 1947

UP 5624	Baggage
UP 5361	Coach
C&NW 3417	Coach
C&NW 3429	Coach-Lounge
UP 5102	Diner
Little Nugget	Dormitory-Club
Figueroa	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Arcadia	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Palos Verdes	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Lakeside	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
American Courier	6 Section-6 Roomette-4 Bedroom
UP 1522	Club-Lounge

17th Train Leaving Chicago May 15, 1947

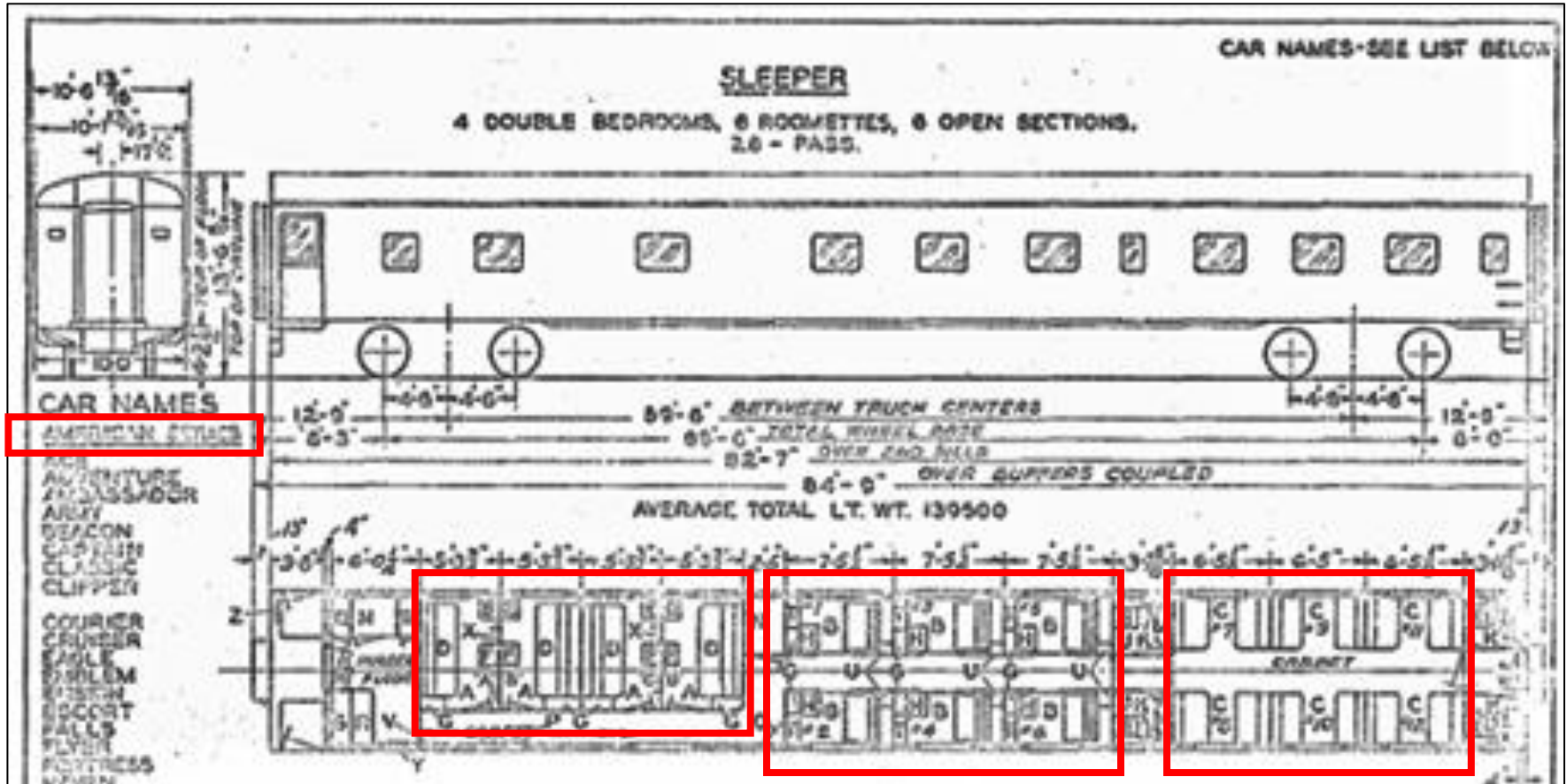
UP 5611	Baggage
UP 5359	Coach
C&NW 3426	Coach
C&NW 3430	Coach-Lounge
UP 5103	Diner
Olivera	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Playa del Rey	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Imperial Hour	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
American Plains	6 Section-6 Roomette-4 Bedroom
American Royal	6 Section-6 Roomette-4 Bedroom (1045)
UP 1523	Club-Lounge



SOURCE: The Union Pacific Streamliners by Ranks and Kratville

What does a “6-6-4” sleeper mean?

It has 6 Sections, 6 Roomettes, and 4 Double Bedrooms



4 Double
Bedrooms

6 Roomettes

6 Open
Sections



SOURCE: Union Pacific Railroad Co. Passenger Car Diagrams – 1941-1967

American Series Roomette Accommodations



Looking toward rear of car



Looking toward front of car



SOURCE: The Union Pacific Streamliners by Ranks and Kratville

But, “This is not The *City of Los Angeles*”

“Due to very heavy rains throughout Nebraska and Iowa the regular Streamliner *City of Los Angeles* was delayed and did not arrive in Los Angeles in time to make the trip to Chicago. The train you are on is one made up of extra equipment, the best cars we were able to assemble” June 1947

- In other words, “stuff happened” and the planned sailing days of trainsets shifted to the right from time to time. Therefore, the original projected trainset schedule was of little value.



SOURCE: Union Pacific Railroad Museum archives

So, determining which car Dad was riding came back to answering the two original questions:

- 1. Which actual trainset left LAUPT on November 6, 1947?**
- 2. Which sleeper on that trainset was the last car; that is, which car was “1045”?**

Both questions were answered in 2014 by Dave Seidel who personally researched the Union Pacific museum archives.



Answer #1: Dad was on the 16th trainset

FORM 2191-THIN Cola 3-46-2M

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

Time F _____ M

TELEGRAM

Omaha - Oct 23, 1947

H C Duvall C&NW Chicago

X-11. Effective with No 104 from LA Nov 3. Cabrillo will be
car 1043, Santa Monica 1044 San Fernando 1045. C-96

C J Collins UPRR 1130am

This October 23rd telegram alerted C&NW of sleeper changes on the 7th trainset that will arrive in Chicago on November 3. This means that the 7th trainset will depart LAUPT on November 1.



SOURCE: Union Pacific Railroad Museum archives

Answer #1: Dad was on the 16th trainset (cont'd)

- If the 7th trainset departed LAUPT on November 1, given normal sequencing, five days later the 16th trainset will depart LAUPT on November 6th.

Revised schedule leaving Los Angeles

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
November							1 7th trainset
	2 16th trainset	3 9th trainset	4 17th trainset	5 7th trainset	6 16th trainset	7 9th trainset	8 17th trainset
	9 7th trainset	10 16th trainset	11 9th trainset	12 17th trainset	13 7th trainset	14 16th trainset	15 9th trainset



SOURCE: The Union Pacific Streamliners by Ranks and Kratville

Answer #1: Dad was on the 16th trainset (cont'd)

- American Courier** was normally sleeper 1045 on the 16th trainset.

(Note, Dad's letter suggests that the club-lounge may have been dropped on November 6 leaving *American Courier* as also the last car on the train.)

16th Train Leaving LAUPT May 15, 1947

UP 5624	Baggage
UP 5361	Coach
C&NW 3417	Coach
C&NW 3429	Coach-Lounge
UP 5102	Diner
Little Nugget	Dormitory-Club
Figueroa	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Arcadia	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Palos Verdes	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
Lakeside	4 Comp-4 Bdrm-2 Drawing Rm
American Courier	6 Section-6 Roomette-4 Bedroom
UP 1522	Club-Lounge



SOURCE: The Union Pacific Streamliners by Ranks and Kratville

Final Conclusion: Dad's car was *American Courier*

➤ This November 5 memo confirms that *American Courier* was the rear sleeper on the 16th trainset at the time of Dad's trip.

"The *American Courier* operating as the rear sleeper in the 16th COLA"



SOURCE: Union Pacific Railroad Museum archives

Memorandum

Omaha - November 5, 1947

File: C-5718-701-2
Cy: 1205-4502-1

The American Courier operating as the rear sleeper in the 16th COLA, needs to be withdrawn for installation of new trucks. We have no extra American Series cars for shopping margin and if we were to withdraw one of them from some other regular line to substitute for the American Courier on the rear of the 16th COLA, it would not be any more satisfactory than the American Courier.

We have suggested that the sleeper Olvera be used as a substitute for the American Courier; also for the two American Series cars in Trains 9-10 between Kansas City and Denver. The Olvera is now enroute to Calumet shops and we have suggested that Mr. Gogerty appeal to the Pullman mechanical people to give this repair work preference.

As soon as the Olvera is outshopped, it can be placed on the rear of the 16th COLA, relieving the American Courier. Before the American Courier is returned to the 16th COLA, it could relieve the two American Series cars operating on the rear of Trains 9 and 10 between Kansas City and Denver.

E. A. KLIPPEL

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E. A. Klippel", written over the typed name.

Mystery Solved

- So, the odds are very good that Dad was riding in *American Courier* on his trip from Los Angeles to Chicago when he wrote his letter to the family
 - not 100%, but very good.
- He was most likely in a Roomette rather than an Open Section, and certainly not in a Double Bedroom.



Now, how to get a model of *American Courier* ?

- In 2018, The Coach Yard announced plans to release *The Portland Rose* in brass, plus two additional *American 6-6-4* sleepers – *American Royal* and *American Classic* – “sometime” in the future, so I ordered one.
- In 2022 at the Amherst train show I asked The Coach Yard co-owner, Fred Hill, how I could re-letter one of *The Portland Rose* cars for *American Courier* once they were released.
 - Fred offered to just change the planned production run and rename *American Classic* to *American Courier*!



My Coach Yard *American Courier* arrived in April



.... and here is the “builder’s photo” as no actual photo of the car has yet been found



American Courier
May 1942, Pullman, Illinois

What's Next?

- Update the framed letter and builder's photo.
- Take Dad's spirit for a ride around the layout, and thank him playing trains with me 78 years after *Riding on the City of Los Angeles*.

Needless to say, I'm indebted to Dick Harley and Dave Seidel of the UPHS, two men I have never met nor talked to directly, for helping me solve the mystery of Dad's sleeper car, and to Fred Hill at The Coach Yard for reproducing my memory in HO scale



Questions?



“On the green light you go and on the red light you stop, because no engineer would ever run a red light.”

“Engineer Bill” Stulla, KHJ-TV Cartoon Express, Los Angeles, 1954

