I REMEMBER TRAVELING BY RAIL
THE S.L.G. & W.

We had no automobile when I was a small boy. The only transportation to Salt Lake City was a small railroad which played an important part in my life. The Salt Lake Garfield and Western Railway was our vital link to the outside world. Salt Lake City was located about 13 miles to the east of the salt works where I lived.

This unique line had a roadbed no longer than 25 miles, but as far as I was concerned, it was the best and biggest railroad in the whole world. The big shiny locomotives were an inspiration to me, and I admired them very much. I suppose that's why I was determined to become a locomotive engineer.

The depot in Salt Lake City was a small ten foot by ten foot ticket office with a wide roof overhang under which were placed a few benches. There was no waiting room. Adjacent and parallel to the tracks at the depot was a refreshment stand which operated only in the summer time.

THE UNIQUE OPEN AIR CAR ON THE SALT AIR ROUTE
There were no platforms or shelters. A tall wooden fence separated the tracks from those of the Union Pacific Railroad switching yards at 2nd South and 4th West. The barns, shops and operating headquarters of the railroad were just east of the Jordan River at South Temple Street.

The main (and only) line extended westward from Salt Lake City to the Saltair Resort at Great Salt Lake. The resort accounted for practically all of its traffic during the summer months. Trains ran to the resort every half hour.

The salt works where I lived fits into the picture because of its location on the southeastern shore of the lake. It was just a little over a mile from the resort. The railroad carried freight to and from the salt mill daily. Empty cars were brought to the mill from Salt Lake and the loaded cars were transported in the opposite direction. Thus, the railroad was in operation the year round.
Sometime in the middle 20’s the steam locomotives were taken out of service and the line was electrified. Two electrical substations were built, one near the salt works and the other near the airport in Salt Lake. One of them still stands like an empty shell near the old site of the salt works.

The electric locomotives were of the interurban type, with passenger and baggage compartments. There were six of these in service. They could pull various coaches, including the unique open-air coaches that were used during the summer months. They were surprisingly powerful. They could pull eight or ten coaches. When more cars were needed, two locomotives were used.

In the late 1920’s and early 1930’s I rode this train to school in Salt Lake where I attended West Junior High School and West High School.

... later the line was electrified
**UTAH'S INTERURBAN RAILROADS**

The Salt Lake Garfield and Western Railroad was the smallest of the four electric railroads that served Utah during a 50-year period between about 1900 and 1950. In this era of the interurban railroads, passengers could travel along the Wasatch Front for 200 miles, more or less, all the way from Preston, Idaho to Payson, Utah. The Utah Idaho Central covered the stretch from Preston, Idaho to Ogden; the BamBerger Electric Railroad extended from Ogden to Salt Lake City; and the Salt Lake and Utah Railroad served the area between Salt Lake and Payson.

The interurban station in Salt Lake was located on the southwest corner of South Temple and West Temple streets. It was an imposing structure indeed. I was impressed with the high-vaulted ceiling of the waiting room, the ticket office, and the ramp leading to the trains. Furnished with marble and tile, it rivaled in many ways the larger Union Pacific and Denver and Rio Grande stations, although on a smaller scale. It served both the BamBerger and Salt Lake and Utah Railroads.

Originally conceived by businessman Simon BamBerger in 1892, the first steam train on the BamBerger line did not reach Ogden until 1908. After that, things moved more rapidly. In 1910 he electrified his railroad and provided unprecedented passenger service between Salt Lake and Ogden on trains that ran every hour and used only one operator. Plush new cars were added and the "Bam," as it was affectionately called, became an institution.
A spinoff of Bamberger's railroad project was the building of the Lagoon resort near Farmington to stimulate business for his rail line. It seemed to be almost an afterthought. But the resort still survives and flourishes long after the demise of the Bamberger line itself.

There was no mistaking the cars of the Salt Lake and Utah Railroad: they were painted a distinctive red. They approached the Salt Lake station with bells clanging until they came to a stop at the platform. On more than one occasion, I rode this line to Provo. The coaches were less sophisticated than those of the Bamberger, but they were comfortable enough.

Between 1913 and 1915, A.J. Orem, an eastern capitalist, constructed the line, hoping it would one day extend as far as Nephi. It never got beyond Payson. Almost from the beginning, his railroad became known as the "Orem," and the name stuck.

SALT LAKE AND UTAH RAILROAD
"THEOREM"

THROUGH UTAH VALLEY TO PAYSON
I learned that one of the subcontractors on the construction of the Orem Line was a woman—perhaps the only woman railroad contractor in the world. Mrs. W.M. Smith was noted for her independence, determination, and ability. She believed that a woman could succeed in the contracting business just as well as a man. She proceeded to prove her point by supervising the track-laying and bridge-building crews and by making her own estimates for the bids.

Although I never rode on the Utah Idaho Central, I often saw their cars speeding through the countryside north of Ogden. On occasion I saw the trains roar past on the tracks close to the back yard of a friend of mine who lived in Deweyville.

I remember that the Utah Idaho Central shared the Ogden terminal with the Bamberger and that their locomotives had a distinctive sunburst design painted on the front. It is said that the entire roadway of the line was built with wagons, scrapers, and horse-power. This was labor intensive perhaps, but was also undoubtedly cost-effective for financier David Eccles, who dreamed of extending his line to Yellowstone Park.

The interurban railroads were right for their time: many of the smaller communities in Utah were nearly as isolated as they had been in pioneer days. People depended on wagons or buggies for transportation. Freight was hauled by teamsters in painfully slow and inefficient wagons. The steam railroads, in general, were interested only in through traffic. Consequently, the electric interurban railroads filled a critical need and were enthusiastically received by the populace.
These railroads are all gone now, victims of the automobile age. The rails are gone; the poles and power lines have been removed; and the roadbed and right of way have disappeared with hardly a trace. While electric trains bridged the gap between the horse and buggy and the automobile, not a one has operated in Utah for more than 35 years.

However, the most unlikely of the quartet of railway companies still owns about ten miles of track. Over this short stretch, a small diesel locomotive transports freight cars to and from the International Center near the Salt Lake Airport. The Saltair resort has disappeared without a trace. The salt works have been closed down. But the S.L.G.& W. still goes on.
AGE OF THE TROLLEY

The Salt Lake street car system was a traction empire that was intended to serve as a world model. Under the direction of Edward Harriman of the Union Pacific Railroad, a multi-million dollar operation was created in Salt Lake City, and a part of this great undertaking was the construction of the huge car barns.

Anyone who has visited Trolley Square in Salt Lake City cannot help but be impressed with the immense size of these barns that housed the street cars of Salt Lake City during the Twenties and Thirties.

Trolley Square, a modern shopping and entertainment center, is the realization of a dream of Wallace Wright, Jr., who developed the center by remodeling the old car barns and transforming them into the unique center it is today.

The Car Barns
When the barns were utilized to full capacity, about 140 street cars would leave them each morning and then return each night. I remember the barns during the years of their full use. Riding past them in my boyhood days, and later in my youth, I was impressed with the activity that seemed to be going on there all hours of the day and night. I seldom passed there without seeing the bright flashes from the welding torches where repairs were being made.

When the Utah Light and Traction Company took over the street railway system in 1914, each year about 38 million passengers rode the trolleys and interurban trains in Utah. There were over 190 pieces of rolling stock and 50 or more work cars of various kinds. The people of Salt Lake continued to ride the street cars in great numbers until the advent and development of the automobile, when ridership began to dwindle.
In 1941, the last trolley car came home to the barns, closing an era of mass transportation unique to the age. The trolleys were replaced by trolley buses. Eventually, gasoline and diesel buses were used.

During my high school years, Main Street and State Street were alive with people riding the trolleys. It seemed like there was a street car going past a certain point in either direction every few minutes.

I still remember the interior of the cars with their wicker-woven seat coverings and the advertising cards on the walls above the windows. The clanging of the trolley bells was a vital part of the street sounds in those days.
PROMONTORY SUMMIT

Although I learned at an early age about the Golden Spike and the joining of the transcontinental rails at Promotory, it wasn’t until about 1940 that I ventured into that desolate area to see for myself where this momentous thing had occurred.

Traveling the forty or so miles west from Brigham City seemed much farther. The roads were very poor and ill-defined once I left the main traveled routes. A more barren and drab landscape was hard to imagine: there were no trees for miles around, only knee-high sage covering the dry earth as far as the eye could see. Low undulating hills could be seen on both sides of the old railroad grade.

It was disappointing, however, not to find any rails or other indications of trackage. In the forty years since this part of the line was abandoned, all the rails and ties had been uprooted and taken away. It was in this general area of dusty terrain, during the last days before the link-up, that a Central Pacific crew of men was goaded to the extreme effort of laying a record ten miles of track in one day. Nothing of this great accomplishment was still visible—just the vague reminder of an old embankment over which trains had moved half a century before. Contemplating this scene, I was greeted by nothing but silence.

Further inspection of the area revealed traces of the old roadbed and the sawed-off supports of a water tower. There was nothing further to indicate where Leland Stanford, on May 10, 1869, had taken spike maul in hand and gently tapped the Golden Spike into the pre-bored hole of a polished laurel tie.

Not until the laurel tie had been removed and replaced with a regular pine tie and the rails had been secured with iron spikes driven by a regular worker was the word sent out over the telegraph: "Done."
PROMONTOARY SUMMIT

CENTRAL PACIFIC'S JUPITER
My first trip to the Promontory site was not an exhilarating one. I came away deeply disappointed because what I considered an important historical site seemed to be dead and forgotten. Perhaps if the rail line had continued to be used, the site would have appeared much different. However, a glance at the map will reveal that the site is in a loop that encircles the northern part of the Great Salt Lake. This fact was recognized soon after the joining of the rails, and plans were laid to reroute the line by going west from Ogden directly over the Great Salt Lake, thereby shortening the route by about forty miles. Shortly after the turn of the century, a rock fill and wooden trestle structure was built across the lake, and trains thereafter used this new route — called the Lucin Cutoff.

In recent years the wooden trestle portion of the lake crossing has been replaced with a rock fill throughout its entire length.

My second visit to the Promontory Summit, in the 1980’s, was prompted by the knowledge that a Golden Spike National Historic Site had finally been established there in 1965. After my initial encounter over forty years before, I was thoroughly delighted to know that something had been done to commemorate the great achievement that culminated here in 1869.

I found a good paved road that led to the site, a very impressive visitors’ center, and automobile access roads along the old railroad grades to the big fill and trestle sites.

At the visitors’ center, there was about a mile of railroad track and an engine house to accommodate the two completely functional steam locomotives which are perfect replicas of those that touched pilots on Golden Spike Day — the Central Pacific’s JUPITER and Union Pacific’s NO. 119. These locomotives are on display from May to October, during which time special steam demonstrations are given. On May 10th of each year a reenactment of the Golden Spike ceremony is performed.
These locomotives did not become a part of the site display until 1978. In the years between 1967 and 1978, there were annual reenactments of the golden spike ceremonies, but mock-ups of the locomotives were used.

At the visitor's center I heard the story of the joining of the rails and other facts pertaining to the site. Usual practice among guides during such tours was to ask those present where they came from. Our guide was quite interested to learn that in the group of about a dozen people there were two people from opposite ends of the original transcontinental line—a gentleman from Omaha and myself, from Sacramento.