

"Golf is nothing but a good walk spoiled."—Mark Twain

# Ray Remembers

by Raphael F. Long

## The Cahuenga Valley Railroad

*Hey neighbor, let's go visit my Aunt Hortense. We'll take the train to Diamond & Texas and stop at County Road for a bite at the diner. Then if we get off at Midway, we can walk home.*

*If you're thinking these streets are in the Midwest or some distant state, think again. A tour through Hollywood and Los Angeles in the 1800's included Cahuenga Valley; and sightseeing would have been impossible in that day without the little steam engine company (that could), called The Cahuenga Valley Railroad.*

Back in 1875, L.A. County Sheriff William R. Rowland had been trying to apprehend a scoundrel by the name of Tiburcio Vasquez. Each time he mounted a posse in pursuit of the evildoer,

extend north along Texas to Temple and then westward to the Los Angeles City Limits at Hoover Street and beyond.

At one time Los Angeles had real honest-to-goodness cable cars

meant walking to Temple and Main Street. Then, as now, thank you City Council!

In 1889, Temple and Main was a town-center without a town hall; City Hall was way down on Fort Street between 2nd and 3rd.

However, too many people confused Fort with Fourth Street, so the City Council changed "Fort Street" to "Broadway."

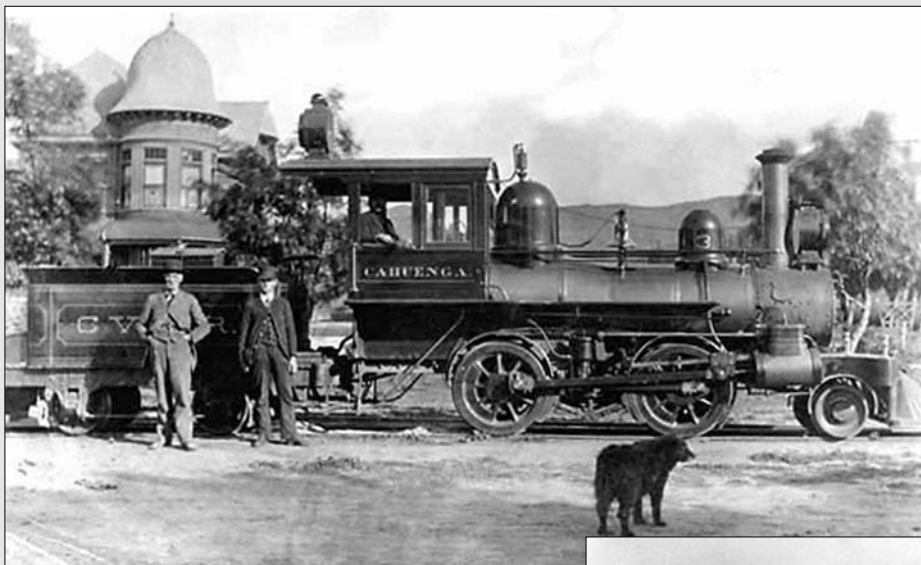
Leaving the city limits, the little

New York publisher who had furnished the money to construct the railway, became extremely ill. So James sold the company to E. C. Hurd and S. A. Mattison and returned to New York.

During the latter part of 1894, the new owners decided to extend the line westward along Prospect Avenue to a point immediately east of present day La Brea. Then the line ambled across the open fields to Gardner Street and Sunset Boulevard where it swung west along Sunset to a terminus at Laurel Canyon Boulevard. Fearing noise, smoke and soot from the little steam engines, local property owners opposed the scheme.

Knowing that there is more than one way to skin the proverbial cat, Hurd and Mattison had all the materials required for the new line laid out along the proposed right-of-way. Then after the court closed one Saturday afternoon, feverish construction commenced. It was the following Monday morning before anyone could get into court to get an injunction, but by that time the railroad was completed and operating. It was then and only then that a franchise was applied for. The final length of the line between Hoover and Temple and Laurel Canyon and Sunset was seven miles long.

The little line had three locomotives. As there were no turntables, it was necessary to back the engines in one direction, so it went forward to Los Angeles,



**Above:** Cahuenga Valley Railroad train. The camera is facing north along Wilcox Avenue with the train standing on Prospect Avenue (Hollywood Boulevard). Named Cahuenga, it was the third and last locomotive purchased by the CVRR. The mansion on the left belonged to James McLaughlin owner of the railroad. It was later sold to Hobart J. Whitney developer of Whitley Heights and charter member of the LA business hierarchy. The photo was taken in 1893 shortly after delivery of the locomotive from the Porter Locomotive Works. And for a totally worthless piece of trivia, the works serial of the engine was 1518!

**Right:** The little engine is standing on Sunset Boulevard at Laurel Canyon in the year 1893. The railway was responsible for the unusual configuration of Crescent Heights which was used as a connection to the Santa Monica Boulevard steam dummy line. There was a rock quarry just west of Laurel Canyon. Trains hauling rocks required large radius curves to turn onto Crescent Heights at Sunset and again at Santa Monica Boulevard. Those curves are still visible to this day.



word got out and Vasquez would vanish. The outlaw's sympathizers knew that if Rowland was leading the posse, then Vasquez was the target. Rowland soon realized that his presence made any chance of catching Vasquez slim to none, so when an informant told him the outlaw was hiding out at 'George Allan's shack' in Cahuenga Valley, he decided on a new strategy: his posse would go ahead without him. That did the trick and Vasquez was soon on his way to the gallows in San Jose.

Of course... if they'd waited a dozen years, the posse could have taken the train.

The beginnings of a railroad which would link Los Angeles with far off and god-forsaken Cahuenga Valley occurred on January 11th, 1887 when James McLaughlin obtained a franchise to build a steam dummy line connecting to the 2nd Street Cable Railroad at Diamond (Beverly Boulevard) and Texas (Belmont Avenue) Streets. The line would

just like San Francisco. You could climb on board at 2nd and Fort Streets and ride over Bunker Hill which, in 1888, looked more like the back hills of Hollywoodland than the urban jungle it is today. As you crossed the summit at what later became Grand Avenue, you'd pass the future site of the Disney Center which appeared 115 years later. The cable car eventually found its way to Diamond and Texas Streets. 2nd Street between Figueroa and Grand was the steepest cable incline in the nation; even steeper than San Francisco's famed Hyde Street grip.

At Diamond and Texas, the rider would transfer to the diminutive steam train for the journey to Cahuenga Valley. However, within a year the ever-vigilant City Council banned steam engines from Texas Street and all other city streets. So now instead of taking the 2nd Street line, it was necessary to take the Temple Street cable car, which

train wandered west across open fields eventually finding County Road where it turned north. County Road later became Western Avenue. Next stop, Coleville or Coles Crossing (later, Santa Monica Boulevard). At this point, the Cahuenga Valley line crossed the steam dummy line to Santa Monica. The train continued north to Prospect Avenue (Hollywood Boulevard) where the line turned west. That was called Grand Round. Today we know it as Hollywood and Western. Next stop, Midway (later called Bronson Avenue). The end of the line was at Prospect Avenue (Hollywood) and Wilcox. It was here that McLaughlin built himself a rather imposing "McMansion" on the northwest corner of that intersection.

In 1890, McLaughlin's father, a

backwards to Hollywood. On May 7th 1896, the Cahuenga Valley Railroad was sold to Moses Sherman and Eli Clark. It continued as a steam line for several years before being electrified in 1899.

Today's Red Line follows a somewhat parallel route to the Cahuenga Valley Railroad; Wilshire instead of 2nd or Temple; Vermont instead of Western Avenue and under Prospect Avenue/Hollywood Boulevard.

Just for some perspective, the cable car traveled at 8 miles an hour and the little steamer around 10; but ironically, today's rush hour drive is probably no faster than the trains and cable cars of 120 years ago and, with or without your 'posse' it's almost certainly not as much fun.