

## History Of "La Condesa"

This car was built for the Santa Fe Railroad by the Pullman Company in 1926 as car number 1512, lot # 4986, specification # 1040. It was one of five cars built as cafe-observation cars. It was built with 24 lounge seats and 18 dining room seats using tables that sat two or four. The lounge contained a writing desk and chair as well as a single section which could be made into a lower berth. This was presumably for the steward, where the rest of the crew slept is anybodies guess. Because of this configuration the car could and did function as a diner, lounge, and in view of the large open platform, as an observation car.

As far as we know the car continued in this configuration for it's entire service life. Sometime, possibly around 1940, air conditioning was added to the car. It ran extensively on the Santa Fe train "The Scout" as the only amenity afforded the coach passengers. It was modernized in the late 50's and retired some time in the late 60's. A sister car, in almost the original configuration, still exists today at Campo, Ca

The "La Condesa" and a sister car were purchased by Mr Tad Finley, possibly around 1966. He made some major renovations to the car. He completely removed the kitchen, pantry and dining room, and installed a permanent partition between the former kitchen and pantry.

He converted the kitchen into a double bedroom by installing a crosswise convertible sofa and a lengthwise upper berth. Also a "combolet" was added. This "combination" unit was apparently removed from a prewar lightweight car and contains a fold out toilet, a fold down sink, and a medicine cabinet. It is complete with it's own lighting and shaver outlet. The former icebox in this room was converted into a large closet.

The pantry was also converted into a double bedroom. In this room a lengthwise convertible sofa and an upper berth were installed. A standard railroad "through the floor" toilet was added as was a sink and a small closet.

Two thirds of the dining room was converted into another double bedroom. It had a fixed double bed, a "combolet", and a desk. Since it was the largest bedroom on the car with two large windows, it was used exclusively by the Finley's and was designated "Bedroom F".

In order to do this and provide a hallway around this bedroom one of the old ice boxes was removed and the passageway placed on one side of the car. Formally passengers passed through the center of the dining room. The

remaining ice box was converted into a shower. The former ice loading hatch for this ice box was covered with glass giving this shower the unique feature of having a skylight!

Mr Finley added a small kitchen on one side of the remaining one third of the dining room and a "card table".

The lounge was redone in red flock wallpaper and painted red and gold. A small piano was also added. The writing desk was removed and a wet bar installed in this space.

Also added at this time to the underside of the car where two small generator sets and a fuel tank. The steam activated air conditioning was dismantled and some of it's components were used for the installation of a more modern AC system using Freon refrigerant.

Mr Finley called the car "La Marguerita De Oro", and used it along with several other cars for his "Finley Fun Time Tours" trips. It was on of these trips to Mexico in 1968 or 1969 that Gordon Crosswaith first became acquainted with the car. It seems that he was apparently quite enamored with the car and it's features. Mr Finley sold the car to Gorden in 1969.

Gordon made several improvements to the car. He started by replacing the two small generator sets with two larger units and a larger fuel tank. With Bill Farmer's help modifications to the electrical system where also made to accommodate these generators. Gordon ran the car for several years. The early trips where mostly on the SP to Reno NV, although it was seen occasionally in Bakersfield on the S Fe. This was before Amtrak's requirements forced it's temporary retirement in 1990.

In 1989 work commenced on refurbishing and improving the car. Extensive modifications to the car's electrical, plumbing and heating systems where made during this hiatus. Repairs to the car body and other rusted out areas was also done at this time. A new toilet system was installed along with a holding tank.