

FRANK LAING

Interview 104a

1954

Clyde Thompson, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this short 1954 interview with Clyde Thompson, former Texas Southeastern conductor Frank Laing remembers working on the Texas Southeastern Railroad hauling passengers, freight, and longs from Diboll to Lufkin, and then out to Bluff City.

Clyde Thompson (hereafter CT): This is an interview with Mr. Frank Laing, who is old-time conductor on the Texas and Southeastern Railroad.

Frank Laing (hereafter FL): When I first came here, I didn't have no regular job. I worked in both engine service and train service. They was running a mixed run from Diboll to Lufkin one trip a day, and they was running a log train two trips a day. That is as far as the road went at that time. They later on, they built on out to Bluff City, which was thirty-five miles. When they built out there, we would make one trip to Lufkin and one trip out there. In 1909, I was regular conductor on the mixed run; and we had quite a job in doing all the work, the local work, handling the lumber, switching the burner, the sawmill, and at times we would have to haul logs. But later on it got to where we didn't handle no logs; that was along about in 1913 or 1914 when we got to where we didn't handle no logs. It was just a mixed run, a local run. Mr. Walker all this time was superintendent of the mill, and he was the overseer of the log train; but Mr. Durham had charge of them. He was a very fine fellow, too.

Mr. Tom Temple, the old gentleman, the man that built the mill, he lived in Texarkana and he would come down here on a trip, and we would have to haul him all over the road and make a special run for him. I forget the year that he passed away.

It come on down then until they built the GL & N [Garrison Lufkin & Northern] road. It run over the TSE [Texas Southeastern] from there into Lufkin. They didn't have nothing more than just a mixed run. But later on they went to hauling logs from over on the T & NO [Texas & New Orleans] and at one time here, that was along in 1916-18, the TL & N had a log train. TSE then put a log train on out to White City and turned on the steam cap and run over the cotton belt; and there was eight trains a day then over the TSE.

Of course, as it went on, the G.L.& N. cut out, and they quit operating. They moved the camp then from Bluff City. That cut the train down just to walking, twenty miles an hour. They then cut it out to just going back there again. Then it come on down to 1922, and they cut the log train out through White City and just left the one log train and the one

local; and the local just operated to Lufkin then. It didn't go no further out. The log trains operated from there. It operated that way for quite a while.

It went on up to 1936, and Mr. Durham resigned as general manager of TSE, and it was turned over then to Mr. Jordan, T. A. Jordan. Mr. Jordan is still operating the road.

In 1942, I taken my retirement, and I just worked around in the Company store for seven months; and then I went to night watching until October, 1953, and I retired.

Now is there any more questions you want to ask me?

CT: Mr. Laing, you were the conductor on the TSE. On these mixed trains you had both passengers and freight?

FL: Oh, yes.

CT: When you ran all the way out to there, did you charge fare for people riding all the way?

FL: Just the same as any other railroad. It was a chartered road.

CT: It was a chartered road. Do you remember the number of cars you would have over the TSE back in its flush times, when it was really going back in 1910, 1911, and 1912?

FL: We would average eighteen cars. They were small boxcars at that time. We would average about fifteen to eighteen cars to the train.

CT: Fifteen to eighteen cars to the train. Who did you say hired you here?

FL: Pat McInroe, the master mechanic. He handled the crews then, as well as Mr. Durham.

CT: How many hours a day did you work, say in 1910 and 1912?

FL: In 1910 and 1912 we would put in around twelve or fourteen hours a day.

CT: That was all they were doing at that time?

FL: At that time. That was before the sixteen hours. Then it took that much for us to do our work.

CT: That was how many days a week?

FL: Six days a week.

CT: You never operated on Sunday?

FL: No, sir, not unless something special came up.

CT: Something special. And you say when Mr. Tom Temple came down you would run a special trip for him?

FL: Oh, yes. Always.

CT: He never had any private railroad car or anything like that? He just rode with the rest of the passengers.

FL: Yes.

CT: Can you think of any stories of Mr. Tom Temple in the early days when he was here?

FL: He wasn't here too much in those days.

CT: Thank you ever so much, Mr. Laing.

FL: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW