## The Pacific Electric Railway in Orange County

For more than 40 years, the Pacific Electric Railway played an important role in the development of Orange County. Henry E. Huntington began acquiring Southern California streetcar lines in the 1890s, and in 1901 he and his partners formed the Pacific Electric Railway Company. In 1902 the PE built its first line from Los Angeles to Long Beach. The company continued to grow, buying and building more lines. By the mid-1920s, the PE operated more than 1,000 miles of track throughout Southern California.

But by the late 1920s, the PE was already beginning to abandon passenger service on some of its lines. The company sold the last of its passenger lines in 1953, and the "Big Red Cars" made their last run in 1961.

Three main lines and several branches served Orange County, providing passenger and freight service.

*The Santa Ana Line* left the Long Beach Line at Watts, and angled across the center of the county to Fourth Street in Santa Ana. Service began in 1905. Cypress and Benedict (later Stanton) were founded beside the tracks that same year, and the Garden Grove area also got a boost from the new line. Passenger service continued until 1950.

A branch line served Orange via Main Street, La Veta Avenue, and Glassell Street (then Lemon Street after 1914). Passenger service to Orange ended in 1930.

Another branch line went south and then west to serve the farming communities at Greenville, Talbert, then south again to connect with the PE's Huntington Beach branch. Completed in 1907, the Santa Ana-Huntington Beach line carried more freight than passengers, and passenger service was abandoned in 1922.

*The Newport-Balboa Line* was the first Pacific Electric line into Orange County. It ran down the coast from Long Beach. The trains reached Huntington Beach via Seal Beach in 1904, and the tracks were extended to Newport Beach in 1905, and finally to Balboa in 1906. The PE considered continuing on down the coast, but those tracks were never built. They began reducing service on this line in the 1940s, and the last passenger run was in 1950.

In 1903, while the Newport-Balboa Line was still in the planning stages, Henry Huntington and his partners bought the Pacific City tract along the proposed route and renamed it Huntington Beach. Sunset Beach was laid out along the tracks in 1905, and even Corona del Mar hoped to take advantage of the proposed extension down the coast.

The PE also took over the Southern Pacific's Smeltzer branch, running inland from Huntington Beach, and converted it to electric service in 1911. Though largely a freight line, passenger service was offered until 1928.

*The La Habra-Yorba Linda Line* began in Whittier. It was built in stages, first to La Habra in 1908, then Brea in 1910, and finally to Yorba Linda in 1911. Plans were made to extend the line

out the Santa Ana Canyon to connect with the PE's inland routes, but they were never carried out.

A branch line was built south across the Bastanchury Ranch to serve Fullerton in 1917. Passenger service on both these routes continued until 1938.