

COMMENTARY ON RAILROADING AND RAILFANNING



Ferrocarril del Pacífico Alco RSD-12 507 and FA 904 lead the *Mexicali* at Benjamin Hill, Sonora, on August 8, 1970. J.J. BUCKLEY PHOTO, LLOYD TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY

Mexican Alcos and More

THE RAILWAYS OF MEXICO are fascinating to me. At one level, they are very familiar, for they often have a shared history with railroading north of the border. In fact, several early main lines were laid north-south, sometimes because they were financed by American investors hoping to extend their reach into Mexico, and sometimes because Mexican investors (and occasionally the state) hoped to benefit from northern trade.

One of the more famous examples of this is Denver & Rio Grande. That second place name, the river that divides the U.S. from its southern neighbor, was included by the company's investors because their original goal was to link Colorado's largest metropolis with Mexico City. There are, however, several more obscure examples. Few now recall that the southernmost terminus of Southern Pacific was not San Diego or Houston or Brownsville, but Guadalajara, a thousand miles into Mexico. And did you know that the first western terminus of the mighty Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe was established, in the early 1880s, not in Los Angeles or San Francisco, but in Guaymas, in the Mexican state of Sonora? Or that, until 1971, it was possible to ride a through sleeper on Missouri Pacific from St. Louis to Mexico City?

Much of Mexico's railway equipment is likewise shared, including a penchant for the diesel products of American Locomotive Company. Nacionales de México, Ferrocarril del Pacífico, and others rostered everything from end-cab switchers to big, six-axle freight motors, and after Alco shut down U.S. construction, Mexico's railroads turned to Alco's Canadian licensee, Montreal Locomotive Works, for additional units. Well into the 1970s, it was possible to see big, new, Alco-powered engines south of the border, alongside the many former U.S. units living their second lives.

Some of the best-known examples

are the secondhand purchases of units discarded by American railroads after Alco closed in 1969. Consider the case of the PA-1, a rakishly styled passenger unit of the late 1940s. Examples survive today because FCP purchased four ex-Santa Fe units from Delaware & Hudson in 1978. Today, two remain in Mexico, while two are now back in the U.S., with one being restored to operating condition by Delaware-Lackawanna in Scranton, Pa.

And it's not only Alcos that went south. Perhaps the most interesting U.S. equipment to cross the border was two H-16-44 models from Fairbanks-Morse. Sold to Bosques de Chihuahua — a Mexican logging railroad — one unit was from the mid-1950s, while the other was built in 1961, long after F-M had effectively given up on the U.S. railway market.

Alongside such famous examples of these, add in scores — if not hundreds — of heavyweight Pullmans and streamlined Budd-built sleepers and coaches, and in more recent years, even secondhand Amfleet equipment.

Yet there is also a spark of the unusual in Mexico's railway equipment. Since at least the 1960s, the country's railways have preferred bold "supergraphic" paint schemes, or liveries that turn away from traditional, "railroad" combinations. Thinking outside of the box also extends to equipment choices. Alongside North American locomotives and cars, Mexican railways also made use of diesel railcars built by Italy's Fiat and the U.K.'s Metro Camel. Passenger consists, late in the last century, mixed secondhand U.S.-built equipment with head-end cars from Switzerland and coaches built in Japan.

Whether in the pages of books and magazines, or in person, there's much to railfan if we look south. 📍

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A MEXICAN RETROSPECTIVE 1944-1981

ALCOS MEXICANO

GORDON LLOYD JR./PHOTOS FROM THE LLOYD TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY (LTL)

PERHAPS TOO OFTEN OVERLOOKED, Mexico was a melting pot for American Locomotive Company (Alco) and subsidiary Montreal Locomotive Works (MLW) products long after their American and Canadian *amigos* were retired. I use the word “perhaps” as a qualifier, for sadly, while those locomotives may not have drawn the attention they rightfully deserved, fortunately, neither were they ignored by the adventurous.

Point in fact — Mexican Alcos and MLWs were plentiful and frequently enjoyed a longer productive life than their American cousins. Nacionales de México (NdeM) was the dominant player, but Alcos were popular on the smaller, regional properties as well — Ferrocarril del Pacífico (FCP), Ferrocarril Chihuahua al Pacífico (CHP), Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California (SBC), and Ferrocarril del Sureste (Fdels, later Ferrocarriles

Unidos del Sureste, or FUS). Mexican short lines were few, but industrial properties benefited from the internal combustion motive power.

The Dieselization of NdeM

The NdeM dieselization saga began in 1944, though its foray was not the first Mexican diesel locomotive purchase. (That honor apparently goes to two off-center-cab 68-ton locomotives built by General Electric in 1939 for Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas [SCOP]). A late wartime acquisition, 10 Alco S-2s introduced themselves to NdeM in 1944, numbered 5500-5509, their builder's plates displaying an August date. In short order, five S-1s appeared, too; they were the only purchased-new S-1s in Mexico, numbered 5000-5004 with a builder's date of September. Thirteen additional NdeM S-2s

arrived in 1950, closing out such NdeM purchases; these S-2s were 5510-5522. Noteworthy, of more than 1,400 S-2s, NdeM 5522 was the final S-2 built.

In 1946, NdeM became the only non-U.S. government buyer of the RSD-1, while simultaneously bringing the road switcher concept to the railroad in one of its earliest forms. Built between January and May 1946 under order number S3008, six were delivered as NdeM 5600-5605; six were renumbered 5700-5705, numbers which they wore for most of their lives. In concert with maintenance practices of the time, all were rebuilt in-kind by Alco in 1956, at their Schenectady, N.Y., birthplace, which extended their lives into the 1970s. These were C-C locomotives, with six traction motors.

Far more RS-1s were carried on the NdeM roster than their cousins, the RSD-1s. In reality, when it came to the



RS-1, few railroads were in a league with NdeM. In all, 64 RS-1s were found on the roster, occupying the number series 5600-5663. When reviewing this huge group, keep a roster close at hand. There were renumberings, RS-1s with both Alco and MLW origins (NdeM 5619-5621 were the only MLW RS-1 production), some with multiple-unit capability, some with a steam generator, and the last groups arrived with the final carbody style of hood, which has come to be known as the “feather-edge” lip. As did

5522 for the S-2s, NdeM RS-1 5663 took the honors for the last production RS-1 built.

NdeM's RS-1 buying spree spanned a full decade, with deliveries beginning in February 1950 and extending into 1960, fully two years beyond the last American sale of RS-1s, which were Grand Trunk Western units 1950 and 1951. NdeM's RS-1s found themselves in all types of service — switching in yards, on local freight and mixed trains, or with passenger assignments. So dominant was the



ALCO

OPPOSITE: NdeM's distinctive green, red, and yellow looks good on a 1957-built RS-1 at the shop facility in Valle Yard on March 2, 1974. The 5645 featured additional versatility due to its m.u. option. MATTHEW J. HERSON JR.-LLOYD TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY

ABOVE: In the city of Durango, 5001 displays a remarkably original appearance nearly 30 years after its arrival. Despite a complete overhaul by Alco at Schenectady, N.Y., the little 660-hp switcher still lacks an extended exhaust stack in this January 3, 1974, view. PAUL HUNNELL-LTL

ABOVE LEFT: NdeM's first diesels were 10 Alco S-2s delivered in 1944. Those original S-2s lacked an exhaust stack, a common practice at the time, but by the time 5522 was built, the exhaust stack was standard. NdeM 5522 was the very last S-2 built, seen at Torreón, Coahuila, on January 2, 1974. PAUL HUNNELL-LTL

LEFT: Most RSD-1 units worked for the U.S. Army. The exceptions were six for NdeM, numbered 5700-5705. They differed from military versions with a standard cab. At Saltillo, Coahuila, on December 1, 1967, 5704 toils in black paint; all were built with m.u. KENNETH L. DOUGLAS-LTL

BELOW LEFT: All NdeM RS-1s were classed as DE-6, regardless of steam generator or m.u. equipment — or lack thereof. The application of roller bearings enhanced their ability to operate in road service. NdeM 5638 was the last in its group of four, with delivery starting in January 1957. At Saltillo, 1,000 horses are summoned to shuffle freight in November 1967. KENNETH L. DOUGLAS-LTL

RS-1 that competition from EMD's GP7 and GP9 units of the same era generated sales of only two and 10, respectively. As envisioned by Alco, the RS-1s were truly the maid of all work.

NdeM also repowered several RS-1s, using both 12-567C EMD engines and Alco 6-251C engines. Many worked into the 1980s, and at least one, 251-repowered 5654, was adorned in the final two-tone blue and red of NdeM. In spite of their popularity with NdeM, no other Mexican property purchased new RS-1s. In a note of irony, that final RS-1 was repowered by NdeM with an EMD engine.

Government Assistance

To assist fledgling Mexican properties in acquiring assets, the government agency SCOP stood in for many locomotive acquisitions. In our Alco diesel review, the first of many such procurements involved four FA-1s, ultimately

for Ferrocarril del Sureste. They arrived with five-digit numbers, 23031–23034, but were renumbered with an equally cumbersome group-and-unit system, as 7121-1 through 7121-4. When Sureste numbers were applied, initially they wore 211–214, and later, 201–204. Ultimately, they came under control of FUS as 201–204.

A fifth FA-1 came to Mexico, again via SCOP. In April 1950, 23039 arrived. It was renumbered as 7121-5; on CHP it was known as its 500, but moved on to join similar cousins on FUS, and was assigned number 305. This rounded out Mexican FA-1 history; there were no FB-1s.

By November 1950, FPA-2s 6500–6501 were added to the ever-increasing NdeM diesel roster. The nod to Alco for these passenger-capable units came after FP7s 6329A–6334A. After 17 years, both were sold for continued service, 6500 to Ferrocarriles Unidos de Yucatán and 6501 to FUS.

For NdeM, the Alco FPA-2 and FPB-2 played a significant role. FPA-2s outnumbered the EMD competitor FP7 by two, but NdeM found value in the more traditional FA-2 as well (NdeM's greatest EMD cab-unit stronghold was 25 FP9s).

RIGHT TOP: Jim Buckley was an early traveler to Mexico and Central America. Ferrocarril del Sureste FA-2 7121-10 harkens to original acquisition by Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas in 1952, but it later wore FUS numbers 220 and 310. This view was captured in Mérida, Yucatán, on July 14, 1963. J.J. BUCKLEY-LTL

RIGHT MIDDLE: In the city of Apizaco, Tlaxcala, NdeM FA-2 6516A powers a traditional mixed train on February 28, 1974. By this late date, members of the FA population were dwindling. The sign on the water tank honors 100 years of Ferrocarril Mexicana. MATTHEW J. HERSON, JR.-LTL

RIGHT BOTTOM: Fdels operated 14 Alco cab units, a mix of FA-1, FPA-2, and FA-2 locomotives. FUS FA-2 313 was the newest of the fleet. Two former NdeM FPA-2 units are included in the total of 14 units. FUS 313 was captured at Campeche on January 11, 1974. PAUL HUNNELL-LTL

BELOW: NdeM FPB-2 6502B is the first of 11 similar units (six were built by MLW). Note the covered vent on what would be the front end. Sixteen-year-old 6502B was comfortable hauling passengers or freight, as seen in Saltillo, the capital of Coahuila, on November 11, 1967. NdeM owned 34 FB-2 and FPB-2 units. KENNETH L. DOUGLAS-LTL



Both FA-2/FPA-2 and FB-2/FPB-2 variations were found on the roster; the A-unit contingent outnumbered the cabless version by two, with a total of 36. Just a bit of number comparison is applicable here — NdeM featured 128 EMD covered wagons ranging from early F2s to the late FP9; Alco made a sizable contribution with 70 units overall.



Late in 1952, SCOP began to receive the first of six FA-2s, assigned numbers 7121-8 through 7121-13. As a group, they saw several renumberings, first as Ferrocarril Unidos del Sureste 218-223 and later as FUS 308–313. Certainly, due to their location, these were some of the least-photographed FAs in North America.



FCP signed on for four FPA-2 units, intended for dual freight and passenger duties. Deliveries commenced in May 1954. FCP 901–904 spent their entire lives on the FCP roster, with nary a notation except that 903 lingered long enough to be renumbered to 905 to avoid a conflict with CHP C-628s 901–904 when the railroads were renumbered with NdeM assignments.

Road Switchers Head South

With an eye on the advancing Alco catalog, 15 S-4s were delivered to Mexican properties between 1951 and 1961. The first of this model was number 111 for steel manufacturer Altos Hornos de México (AHMSA), with a plate date of April 1951. Three months later, eight for NdeM were delivered (numbers 5523–5530) and

two for Marina Nacional. Ultimately, the two Marina Nacional units, 101 and 102, were conveyed to CHP and renumbered as 201 and 202. Across 10 years, AHMSA took delivery of a total of five S-4s, numbers 111, 115, 117, 118, and 121.

Built-new Alco 244-engined road switchers took just two forms in Mexico — RS-3s and RSD-5s. After 44 NdeM FA/FB-2 or FPA/FPB-2 units, four RS-3s arrived in July 1952, numbers 6700–6703. They left the Alco plant amidst RS-3s being built for Reading; Pennsylvania; Erie; Gulf, Mobile & Ohio; Inland Waterways; and two distinct orders for Chicago & North Western and subsidiary Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha.

It is notable that the RS-3s did not stem the flow of NdeM RS-1s. After the delivery of 6700–6703, 45 additional RS-1s were added to the roster, the first group (5619–5621) being the previously mentioned contribution from MLW.

For NdeM, the next 244-powered road switchers arrived more than three years after those first RS-3s. These sure-footed units were numbered 6900–6901, both RSD-5s. Although they featured m.u., they remained orphans on a roster that had many orphans, as though each order was little more than a test drive.

Although the RS-3s seemingly sparked little interest, NdeM continued to acquire

LEFT: The S-4s were delivered with roller bearings, but without m.u., like 5525 seen in January 1974. There were only eight S-4s, three more than the S-1 fleet, but 15 fewer than the S-2s. PAUL HUNNELL-LTL

LEFT MIDDLE: Ferrocarril del Pacifico had 27 RSD-5s on its roster before 6900 and 6901 arrived for NdeM. FCP continued to purchase the burly units; NdeM stopped after its two-unit order. NdeM 6901 is at Fronterra, Coahuila, on March 6, 1974. MATTHEW J. HERSON JR.-LTL

LEFT BOTTOM: Viewed from the rear, RS-3 6700 flaunts its seldom-used dynamic brake option in the short hood. From NdeM's first (of two) order for RS-3s, 6700 was at Valle Yard on April 2, 1971. Although more modern, NdeM continued to order RS-1s long after the RS-3 was being delivered. GORDON LLOYD JR.-LTL

new FA/FB-2 and FPA/FPB-2s for road assignments. Finally, nearly six months after the two-unit RSD-5 acquisition, three additional RS-3s arrived, numbers 6704–6706. With little fanfare, they soldiered on throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and into the 1970s. A respectable career was achieved, but recognition was hard to document.

In 1951, Southern Pacific de Mexico was sold. Private assets were transferred to a government entity, and FCP was formed. At the time, the railroad was entirely powered by steam locomotives not recalled by parent Southern Pacific. In 1953, that situation was about to change in an unmistakable fashion.

For FCP, the RSD-5 seemed to offer potential which NdeM could never find. Beginning in November 1953, several groups of RSD-5s began a southward trek from Schenectady in eastern New York to the relatively arid climate of northwestern Mexico and onto the rails of FCP. The first group, 10 in total, was numbered 801–810. These were the first diesels on the FCP and the beginning of a solid relationship with Alco, which extended into the MLW and Bombardier eras. One can seldom find loyalty with that sincerity.

In short order, Alco graduated three additional RSD-5s in December 1953. In August 1954, 14 additional RSD-5s, FCP 814–827, headed for warmer temperatures. In common with all the FCP RSD-5s, dynamic brakes, located in the short hood of course, were included. The FCP RSD-5 roster concluded with eight final units in January 1956, its 828–835; 835 was the final RSD-5 built.

It was an impressive collection, with 35 in total. In comparison, only Santa Fe, with 53, and the Southern Pacific system (including Texas & New Orleans and St. Louis Southwestern) with 63 RSD-5s, bested first-time diesel buyer FCP in the RSD-5 department. In all, they offered 56,000 horses to the new diesel roster.

Next up was the Alco S-6 providing 900 horses from six cylinders. Though not the



ABOVE: The first diesels on FCP were RSD-5s, with 35 purchased in just over two years. Crisp cream and green paint is displayed on 828 on February 12, 1965, at Hermosillo, Sonora. The entire fleet was equipped with m.u. and dynamic brakes, and they were the only diesels until S-6 deliveries started in 1955.

MATTHEW J. HERSON JR.-LTL

RIGHT: FCP dieselized late, but made up for that quickly with multiple orders for the 900-hp S-6, powered by Alco's six-cylinder 251B engine. In all, 24 units graced the roster, though several moved on to secondary owners. At Culiacan, Sinaloa, 715 switches cars on March 15, 1975.

BOB WILT-LTL

BELOW RIGHT: With the exception of NdeM, the S-6 was a relatively popular model in Mexico. Originally acquired through SCOP, FUS 103 was in the last group delivered for Mexico. FUS had the second-largest S-6 fleet, behind FCP. At Empalme, Sonora, FUS 103 posed for a photo on January 10, 1983.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Hand-me-down Ferrocarril Chihuahua al Pacifico 102 was originally FCP 702. The 102 was later moved to FCS, then was included on the FUS roster. It is at Los Mochis, Sinaloa, on April 28, 1971, but is also included elsewhere in this review as FUS 111.

JOE MC MILLAN-LTL

first in North America, FCP first tested the water in Mexico in June 1955. Initially, eight units embellished the FCP Alco roster. Numbered 701-708, their intent was clouded by m.u. and train-indicator boxes. Although the S-6 was a switcher, FCP saw that it was equipped for more than just yard work. Before year's end, FCP added 16 more units, and the roster stretched to road number 724. FCP's S-6 fleet size was second only to SP's 70-unit assemblage.

But others in Mexico had need, too. With barely two years of service, 701-703 were shipped to CHP in 1957, becoming 101-103, then to FdelS and FUS. Sadly, S-6 711 never saw its first birthday before being wrecked. After rebuilding, it assumed road number 725, permanently



vacating number 711. Others, including 714 and 716, went on to work for CHP, FdelS, and FUS.

Nine additional S-6 locomotives found a home in Mexico as well, but no more for FCP. CHP took one for its own, its number 60. Eventually it was renumbered to 106, but was then shuffled off to FdelS; the well-traveled unit filled out its career as FUS 105. Again, NdeM did not share much interest in the S-6, but did sample one, known simply as 5300 on the roster.



SCOP 7133-1 and 7133-2 emerged from Schenectady in October 1956. The first was soon renumbered as Sureste's 331, then 101, then FUS 101, but in a complex roster of 10 FUS S-6s, it ultimately came to be renumbered 109:2 (2nd). The other, 7133-2, followed a similar path, first Sureste 332, then 102, and becoming FUS 102 before ultimately accepting its final number, FUS 110:2.

A single-unit S-6 addition, Ferrocarriles

Unidos de Yucatán came numbered 301. Obviously intended to work with others, it was equipped with m.u., a far-sighted choice. It later became FUS 106, and was assigned NdeM 5303 in the later, larger, general renumbering. The final SCOP S-6 in Mexico came in November 1960 as 7133-3. It became Sureste 333, then was renumbered 103. Ultimately, it became FUS 103.

Steel mill service in Monterrey, Nuevo



Laredo, was the destiny for three Alco graduates in 1958, 1959, and 1960, with Cia Fundidora de Fierro y Acero, numbers 1-3. There is little documented history associated with these three S-6 units to fall back upon. They are among the very last S-6s built; number 3 (Alco b/n 82308) bore a December 1960 builder's date.

The RS-11s Arrive

With RS-1 acquisitions still ongoing for NdeM, the RS-11 was introduced to Mexico. The first came in October 1956 for SCOP, as its 7123-1 through 7123-3. They eventually became SBC 2301-2303. A fourth unit, 7123-4, was equipped with a steam generator. All had high short hoods; 7123-4 became SBC 2103.

NdeM took five RS-11s in December 1956, its 7200-7204. They were equipped with high short hoods. It was nearly a year until the next RS-11 ventured into Mexico, this time for FCP. It, too, modeled a high short hood and steam generator, plus dynamic brakes, and wore number 1501; in time it was renumbered 501.

In April 1958, the trickle of RS-11s became far more noticeable when 13 arrived, all for NdeM, numbered 7205-7217. It was the beginning of a love affair

LEFT TOP: NdeM RS-11s 7205-7217 were delivered with steam generators tucked under a high short hood, the telltale cover visible on 7205 in Puebla on March 1, 1985. There was no difference between passenger and freight RS-11s; all were equipped with 74:18 gearing.

JAMES C. HEROLD-LTL

LEFT MIDDLE: NdeM RS-11 7252 rests in filtered sun in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, on April 20, 1976. The RS-11s outnumbered any other NdeM Alco/MLW model on the roster.

THOMAS H. CHENOWETH-LTL

LEFT BOTTOM: Built in 1960, NdeM RSD-12 7411 was one of 19 units equipped with a steam generator. It oversees a mixed train at Saltillo in 1967.

KENNETH L. DOUGLAS-LTL

BELOW: FUS RS-11 402 displays its fourth number since delivery in October 1956 with SCOP number 7123-2. In the interim, the locomotive passed through Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California and FdelS ownership. On February 26, 1975, FUS 402 has been pressed into passenger service at Rueda.

JAMES C. HEROLD-LTL



that would make the RS-1 contingent (which continued to arrive) bluish. These featured a high short hood too, but with a steam generator.

In April 1961, a single NdeM RS-11 arrived. NdeM 7218 was different from its predecessors and displayed an attractive low short hood. With its arrival, NdeM RS-11 deliveries took a two-year hiatus.

By the time NdeM determined that the RS-11 was its next "do-all" locomotive, Alco had ceased production of the 1,800-hp machine. But MLW stood in to capably fill the void the Alco production line created. From June 1963 into 1964, MLW cranked up RS-11 production. In all, two groups of RS-11s were constructed for NdeM, totaling an impressive 75 locomotives, with road numbers 7219–7293. These were MLW's only RS-11s. This closed out new RS-11 acquisitions for Mexico; in all, 99 were built for three customers, more than 20 percent of total RS-11 production. Only Norfolk & Western bested NdeM with RS-11 purchases, its total being 99 (not including Nickel Plate units); NdeM rostered 94.

RSD-12s Up Next

If NdeM found the RSD-5 wanting, those concerns were addressed with the introduction of the RSD-12, equipped with a 12-251B engine and GT-586 main generator. Serious roster additions began



in August 1958, although NdeM started down the track to RSD-12 fame modestly with just two, its 7400 and 7401 (the same quantity as its RSD-5s).

Just a month after NdeM's first pair of RSD-12s, FCP added two to its roster (its first new units in nearly three years). They were delivered as FCP 1502–1503. Pictures with those numbers are apparently few. The locomotives had both dynamic brake and steam generator options. Due to the steam generator, the short hood was high.

Although plate dates were out of order based on serial number, FCP 1504–1508 began to show up in February 1959. They featured the same options as the first two. In October 1959, 509–510 arrived, the eighth and ninth on the ever-expanding roster.

NdeM RSD-12 acquisitions ramped up in 1959, bringing four more of the modern Alcos to the railroad. All were equipped with a steam generator and high short hood, carrying numbers 7402–7405; they arrived just two months after FCP 509–510. Keep in mind, NdeM



RS-1s were still being delivered, even as those early RSD-12s arrived.

Throughout 1960, FCP 511–514 and NdeM 7406–7418 were delivered. All had dynamic brakes and high short hoods due to the steam generator. Curiously,

BELOW RIGHT: After 16 RSD-12s with steam generators and high hoods, Alco delivered an order to FCP starting in February 1962 which included four short hood units. Blue and yellow paint has replaced the original green and yellow, but the appealing design still passes the test of time. FCP 519 is at Nogales, Sonora, December 19, 1980. THOMAS H. CHENOWETH-LTL

BELOW LEFT: RSD-12 7456 was another 1962 delivery whose appearance has been updated at least once. It reposes in Nuevo Laredo in the eastern state of Tamaulipas on October 30, 1977. THOMAS H. CHENOWETH-LTL

BOTTOM: In somber, yet dignified, as-delivered paint, RSD-12s 7417 and 7410 dutifully stop in Nuevo Laredo with Train 2. The daily service offered through sleepers from St. Louis to Mexico City. The locomotives are not yet one year old in this Sunday, March 19, 1961, view. KENNETH L. DOUGLAS-LTL



although the "billboard" NdeM paint scheme had been introduced, the early NdeM RSD-12s were delivered in a version of the previous scheme; photos show a lack of lettering except the locomotive class "DE-24" stenciled on the cab side under the road number.

In March 1961, NdeM RSD-12s 7419–7423 shipped, then in April 7424–7440 headed to Mexico. All lacked a steam generator but continued the dynamic brake option. Consequently, beginning with 7419, a low short hood became the NdeM standard.

The year 1962 was huge for Mexican RSD-12s. FCP 515–520 began delivery in February; 515–516 continued the dynamic brake and steam generator tradition, but 517–520 debuted a low short hood as was deployed on 1961 NdeM deliveries that also lacked a steam generator. In August, NdeM 7441–7472 shipped, thus filling out the RSD-12 rosters for both railroads. All told, the FCP roster contained 19 units, while NdeM's blossomed to 73 units — in total, more than 50 percent of all RSD-12 production. Size-wise, the NdeM fleet was second-to-none, the

LEFT: Montreal Locomotive Works built just five RSD-35s for light branch line duty. NdeM 5903 was at Aguascalientes on January 4, 1974. The RSD-35s weighed one ton more than EMD's G12s, but offered 110 fewer horsepower. They were built with m.u.; the steam generator option is evident in the short hood by the covered exhaust vent. PAUL HUNNELL-LTL

LEFT MIDDLE: Following 94 RS-11s, NdeM returned to Alco for 45 C-424s, delivered in 1964 and 1965. That quantity surpassed any sale to a single U.S. railroad. Canadian National operated 41, but Canadian Pacific outpaced NdeM with 51 total. In Mexico City, from the first group of C-424s, 8109 basks in warm sun on June 1, 1983. R.C. TINKHAM-LTL

LEFT BOTTOM: Although best known for an abundant F-M inhabitation, several Alcos populated the CHP roster for added intrigue. Of four C-628s, 904 stood out for its steam generator option. Note the traditional vent cover just behind the cab. At La Junta, Chihuahua, in 1974, 904 shows off its decidedly obvious aspect. JAMES C. HEROLD-LTL

closest competitor being Pennsylvania Railroad with 25 RSD-12s.

Ongoing RS-11 deliveries continued during the time frame when the next Alco/MLW variant arrived. NdeM standardized on the EMD G12 for operations where lighter rail prevailed. In all, 90 were acquired, in deliveries stretching from 1955 until late 1964. Late in that timetable, NdeM asked for five RSD-35s, a 1,200-hp, six-axle locomotive, also intended for light-rail branch lines. They weighed in at 173,500 pounds (just over 86.5 tons) and thus had a very light axle loading, and were equipped with steam generators; in contrast, even early Alco end cab switchers were near or more than 100 tons in total weight. MLW provided five such token locomotives in May 1963, diminutive in stature and total number; they occupied the 5900–5904 series.

Century Units

With deliveries of RS-11s barely concluded, in June 1964 NdeM accepted its first Alco Century-series units. NdeM 8100–8106 were actually the second group of C-424s intending to wear those numbers. A financial snafu diverted the first group to the Wabash, its B900–B906, built just three months earlier. The arrival of 8100–8106 (2nd) signaled the start of another solid Alco relationship.

In all, Mexican Alco Century purchases were almost equally divided between B-B and C-C units. NdeM's 45 burly C-424 fleet constituted the largest agglomeration; they were numbered 8100–8144, with deliveries in June 1964 and October 1965. None had steam generators, but all were equipped with dynamic brakes. The only other Alco B-B Century purchase went to Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes, two C-420s destined for



ABOVE: FCP 610 was significant on several fronts. It was the last FCP C-628, it was the last C-628 built, and it also has the dubious honor of being the last Alco Century-series locomotive built. We pay homage here at Nogales on November 29, 1974. LTL

RIGHT TOP: At Tepic, the capital of Nayarit, southbound FCP Train 4, *El Mexicali*, makes a 10-minute stop for passengers and head-end business. In a quasi-Southern Pacific paint scheme, C-628s 605 and 603 have the honor of piloting the daily train between Mexicali, Baja California, and Guadalajara, Jalisco, on February 23, 1974. MATTHEW J. HERSON JR.-LTL

RIGHT: What appears to be a tranquil scene at Sufragio, Sinaloa, is suddenly overtaken by the intrusion of M-636 652 and RSD-12 508 on March 15, 1975. The RSD-12 not only provides an additional 1,800 hp, but also a steam generator. This is FCP Train 3, *El Mexicali*, running from Guadalajara to Mexicali. JIM ALDRIDGE-LTL

FdelS numbered 7123-10 and 7123-11, then later FUS. They were probably best known (and photographed) with their later numbers, 510-511.

In total numbers, C-628 purchases exceeded C-424 units by just one, but were spread across three properties. First across the border were six for FCP, its 601-606 with builder dates of April 1966. In December 1966, a four-unit order arrived for CHP. They were more or less "standard," but of the 901-904 group, C-628 904 carried a decidedly non-standard steam generator. Ample room behind the cab (as intended by Alco) negated the need for the front short-hood to be tall.

As you might expect, NdeM took the bulk of the C-628 units, with purchases spread over two years, in December 1966 and February 1968. The 32 locomotives were road numbers 8300-8331; many were later upgraded to C-630 equivalents. The final group of 10 for NdeM, numbers 8322-8331, bore steam generators.

Following the NdeM deliveries, four more arrived for FCP; these were 607-610, built in December 1968. With perfect hindsight, this set revealed itself to be the last C-628s built. Century-628 production lasted for five years, beginning with Atlantic Coast Line 2000; 186 were built for U.S., Mexican, and Australian service. Indeed, FCP 610 proved to be the last Century-series locomotive built. FCP 606 is preserved and displayed in Merida, Yucatan.



You would be excused if you missed the only T-6 units built for a Mexican property during the period when RS-11s, C-424s, and C-420s were crossing the border. In December 1964, about four years after Altos Hornos de México purchased its last S-4, the steelmaker bought state-of-the-art T-6s for its Monterrey operation. They wore numbers 126-127 and essentially worked in obscurity.

Alco Gone, But MLW Continues

American Locomotive Company's exit from the locomotive production business did not terminate either FCP or NdeM interest in the locomotive line. Three years after Alco ceased domestic production, both FCP and NdeM extended purchase orders to MLW for new units.

In June 1972, 20 M-630s for NdeM, 8600-8619, and eight M-636s for FCP, 651-658, began to arrive. The NdeM order satiated its need for the 3,000-hp locomotive, but FCP returned to MLW in 1973 for eight additional M-636 units. Those second M-636s had road numbers 659-666.

FCP was looking for a lower-horsepower

locomotive in 1975. The MLW solution brought another new model to both Mexico and FCP in the form of the M-420TR. MLW had built two somewhat similar (not identical) locomotives for Canada's Roberval & Saguenay, but there were no other takers.

In Canada, MLW was simultaneously building M-420W locomotives for Canadian National and British Columbia Railway, eventually achieving a total of 100 units when BCR's eight cabless M-420Bs were considered. FCP's choice went against the grain regarding road switcher configuration, and 15 switcher-style M-420TR locomotives were the result. Adding to the intrigue, the cab end was designated as the "front," with control stand positioned accordingly.

In July 1975, MLW began delivering FCP's M-420TR fleet, numbered 522-536, just above the quirky SLP-3 rebuild from NdeM, FCP 521. They arrived in blue and pale yellow paint. In application, they worked with almost every type of FCP motive power and were frequently seen powering passenger trains.

Allegiance to the brand continued

after MLW was sold to Bombardier. Locomotive sales in the early 1980s were depressed due to the recession. Still, Bombardier landed its most significant locomotive order, large even when compared to the MLW era. That sale brought another new model to Mexico, the M-424W, for NdeM, FCP, FUS, and SBC, with a grand total of 72 units.

Deliveries of the new model commenced in July 1980. In all, FCP took 16, numbered 560-575; NdeM signed up for 52, but eventually the single-unit SBC order was diverted to NdeM, bringing

the total to 53, numbered 9500-9552; LUS 525-527, delivered in August 1981, rounded out the model's production, and Mexico's affair with Alco and its successors' new-locomotive production.

Bombardier had promised and made significant improvements with its new HR line of locomotives (stressing, as the name implies, "High Reliability"), but the economics of the time also worked against additional new Alco variants being added to the various rosters. An unanticipated headwind was the availability of second-hand Alco or MLW locomotives, when

relatively modern models were purged from American and Canadian railroads and could be acquired for very reasonable cost.

Secondhand purchases will be the basis of another discussion, however. ■

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LEFT: Three M-636 units, led by 655 from the first order, hustle Train 52 near Guadalajara on March 11, 1976. Individual car weight and overall train tonnage caused RSD-5s to be shouldered aside in favor of larger, higher-horsepower options, including 16 M-636 units. JAMES C. HEROLD-LTL

BELOW LEFT: A spotless FCP M-424W 567 was at East St. Louis, Ill., on July 13, 1981. This was one of 16 built for FCP, the final order of Alco-designed motive power. In spite of the huge 72-unit order for M-4242Ws, Bombardier would soon bow out of the business. MICHAEL A. WISE-LTL

BELOW: Fresh out of the box from Bombardier, NdeM M-424W 9525 is en route to Mexico from Montreal, sitting in Chicago on March 15, 1981. The 9525, one of 72 built by Bombardier for four Mexican customers, features a safety cab and dynamic brakes. JAMES CLAFIN-LTL

BOTTOM: The intended purpose of the M-420TR was apparently utilitarian, while the Delaware & Hudson PA-1 is a streamlined classic. Either design would be at home powering the FCP passenger train seen here at Empalme on March 11, 1980. JAMES C. HEROLD-LTL

