L.A. in the 1930’s

Southern Pacific facilities dominate three views of Los Angeles. Much in this 1934 scene is gone, or greatly changed. SP’s Los Angeles General Shops, the most complete railroad maintenance facility the city has ever seen, was replaced by an intermodal yard in the 1960’s. Officially named Los Angeles Transportation Center, it’s still commonly called Shops Yard. Across the Los Angeles River (not yet lined with concrete) is Mission Tower, crossing of SP’s main line to Yuma, Ariz., and Santa Fe’s line to Pasadena and San Bernardino. This location would assume greater importance and be modified with the 1939 construction of L.A. Union Passenger Terminal. Nothing remains of so-called Taylor Yard but some locomotive-servicing facilities.

1 Los Angeles Yard (official SP name; usually called Taylor Yard after Taylor Brothers Feed Mill)
2 Southern part of “Taylor” Yard; now occupied by Metrolink commuter-rail shops and yard
3 SP Dayton Avenue Tower
4 Los Angeles Railway Cypress Ave. streetcar shops
5 SP Midway Yard
6 ATSF LA-Pasadena-San Bernardino main line, now route of MTA light-rail Gold Line (on new bridge)
7 N. Broadway viaduct
8 N. Spring Street viaduct
9 SP Ball Ring Yard (see following pages)
10 N. Main Street bridge
11 SP “East Bank Line” (also used by UP to reach its Glendale and Pasadena branches)
12 SP East Bank Junction
13 SP Mission Tower
14 SP Taylor Junction
15 L.A. General Shops Tender Repair Shop
16 L.A. General Shops Boiler/Blacksmith Shop
17 L.A. General Shops Car Paint Shop
18 L.A. General Shops Car Repair Shop
19 L.A. General Shops Locomotive Erecting Shop
20 L.A. General Shops Machine Shop
21 L.A. Genl. Shops Roundhouse; 100-foot turntable
22 L.A. General Shops oil tank car repair shop
23 Stockyards (Mission Road Coach Yard after 1939)
24 SP “West Line” to Dalton
SP’s Bull Ring and Cornfield yards

Fitting together like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, Bull Ring and Cornfield yards were just north of downtown Los Angeles. This area was also the site of SP’s River Station, one of the earliest passenger facilities, literally nothing more than a storefront, as well as one of the earliest SP freight yards. With the building of Los Angeles (“Taylor”) Yard, around the bend at the top of the photo, Bull Ring and Cornfield became responsible for sorting and classifying local traffic radiating in all directions, especially to and from the south, down Alameda Street, continuing all the way to San Pedro and the harbor, some 24 miles away. Switch engines were still hauling cuts of freight cars from here and walking them down the middle of Alameda Street four and five decades later. Today there is little left of these yards and if the camera panned to the left, it would see Dodger Stadium, home of baseball’s Los Angeles Dodgers.

1. Bull Ring Yard
2. Cornfield Yard
3. N. Broadway (Los Angeles Railway streetcar route)
4. Site of first SP roundhouse in Los Angeles (razed early 1900’s)
5. N. Spring Street (Pacific Electric car route)
6. Freight House “A”
7. Freight House “B” (inbound freight)
8. Freight House “C” (outbound freight)
9. Team tracks
10. Electric overhead crane
11. To Mission Tower and Yuma, Ariz.
12. N. Main Street (L. A. Ry. streetcar route)
13. Footbridge across yards
14. Dexter Transfer interchange with ATSF
15. Los Angeles River
16. ATSF LA-Pasadena-San Bernardino main line, now route of MTA light-rail Gold Line (on new bridge)
L.A. Union Passenger Terminal

Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, now called Union Station, was one of the last major railroad stations built in the U.S. Behind its serene façade, however, was decades of political fighting among L.A.'s three major railroads—SP, Santa Fe, and Union Pacific—and the city fathers, who were tired of trains running down Alameda Street on their way to and from SP's Central Station (shared with UP). The Santa Fe didn’t have as much street running, but its station near the L.A. River was outdated and in poor condition. A multi-day celebration preceded Union Station’s May 7, 1939, official opening, and that’s what we see here in this photo from May 3; note the crowds of pedestrians but absence of trains at the platforms and cars in the parking lots. Carefully restored, Union Station is today as beautiful as it was 65 years ago. There are 13 tracks instead of the original 16, and the three original railroads have been replaced by Amtrak (intercity and long-distance), Metrolink (commuter), and MTA’s Gold Line (light rail). A freeway now stands where Aliso Street was, the big gas holders are gone, and public and private renovation has changed the area around the station considerably over the years.

1. UP “East Bank Line”
2. Southern California Gas Co. plant
3. LAUPT tracks and platforms
4. Macq Street (L.A. Ry.; renamed Cesar Chavez Ave.)
5. Terminal Tower
6. LAUPT private-car tracks
7. Post Office Terminal Annex under construction
8. Viennes Avenue
9. To Mission Tower
10. To Ball Ring and Cornfield yards
11. Naud Junction tower
12. N. Main Street (L.A. Ry. streetcar route)
13. Alameda Street (SF tracks to Central Station)
14. Los Angeles Railway LAUPT station and loop track
15. LAUPT offices
16. LAUPT baggage, mail, and express building
17. Grandstand for LAUPT grand-opening pageant
18. LAUPT main concourse and waiting room
19. LAUPT Harvey House restaurant
20. Pacific Electric baggage, mail, and express tracks
21. Aliso Street (Pacific Electric tracks)
22. ATSF First Street Yard
23. ATSF freight house
24. First Street viaduct
25. Los Angeles River