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The last of the steam locomotives



It takes a lot of steam to power 454 tons of steel down the tracks. With 23,500 gallons of water on board, the Union Pacific Railroad's steam locomotive No. 844 chugged through Iowa in late June on a mission to celebrate the rich heritage of railroading in the United States.

The locomotive pulling 10 cars spent 16 days traveling more than 3,000 miles from its base in Cheyenne, Wyo., to North Platte, Neb.; Denison, Boone, Des Moines and Carlisle, Iowa; Kansas City, Mo.; and circling back through Topeka, Kan., and Hastings, Neb., on its way back to Wyoming. The vintage engine and rail cars serve as a moving museum of 145 years of railroad history.

"This was the first time No. 844 has stopped in Carlisle, Iowa, Trenton and Liberty, Mo., and Fairbury, Neb. We were pleased to bring a piece of living history to this part of our rail network," said Steve Lee, Union Pacific's manager – operating practices and locomotive engineer. "We are extremely proud of our collection of historical railroad equipment, which is the largest of any U. S. railroad."

Steam locomotive No. 844, delivered in 1944, is the last steam locomotive built for the Union Pacific Railroad. A high-speed passenger engine, it pulled such widely known trains as the Overland Limited, Los Angeles Limited, Portland Rose, and

Challenger. When diesels took over passenger train duties, No. 844 was placed in freight service in Nebraska between 1957 and 1959. It was saved from being scrapped in 1960 and held for special service.

The engine was returned to service in 2005 after one of the most extensive steam locomotive overhauls in the United States since the 1950s. The work began in 2000 and affected its running gear, pumps, piping, valves and springs, along with replacement of its firebox and extensive boiler work. The cab interior also was refurbished.

No. 844 has run hundreds of thousands of miles for UP's Heritage Program. It has made appearances at the Expo '74 in Spokane, the 1981 opening of the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento, 1984 World's Fair in New Orleans, and 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Los Angeles Union Station in 1989.

July 1, 2007, marked the 145th anniversary of the UP.

Information for this article was taken from the Union Pacific Railroad Web site at <http://www.uprr.com>

