

Union Pacific Railroad 6946

Dual Engine Road Freight Locomotive

The Union Pacific, which formed one half of the first transcontinental railroad, was long famous for its large, powerful steam locomotives, culminating with the grandest of them all: the fabled "Big Boy". In the diesel era, that tradition continued as UP tried to find the most powerful locomotives available. In 1969, the railroad began operating the largest and highest horsepower diesels ever built: the DDA40Xs.

A custom model for UP, these 270 ton, 98 foot 5 inch long monsters produced 6600 HP from two 16 cylinder diesel engines. They were capable of 90 MPH and averaged over 200,000 miles per year before 1980. Their builder, the Electro-Motive Division of GM, also used them as prototypes for redesigned electrical systems and other advances which would surface in their new locomotives in 1972.

The DDA40Xs were called "Centennials" in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Golden Spike Ceremony, May 10, 1869, that completed the transcontinental railroad. In all, 47 units, numbered 6900-6946, were built from May, 1969 to September, 1971. The engines worked UP's mainlines through the American Midwest reaching to Portland, Oregon and Los Angeles, California. For brief time after the Western Pacific merger, a few of these unique machines operated over the former WP mainline from Salt Lake City to Oakland. Those who operated the locomotives also called them "Big Jacks".

By 1986, new model diesels and an economic downturn led to the retirement of the Centennials. The UP retained one unit, 6936, for its historic fleet and donated 12 others for preservation. Our 6946 was the last Centennial ever built and the first donated. The unique history and awesome size and power of a Centennial has garnered it iconic status in the railroad world. Even as new locomotives boast 6000 HP from one engine, the Centennials reside in a class all their own.

builder

Electro-Motive Division
of General Motors

built

September, 1971

type

DDA40X

horsepower

6600 from two prime movers

serial number

35520

original cost

\$551,168.00

top speed

90 MPH

operating weight

545,432 lbs

acquisition

donated by Union Pacific