

Observations on following the Big Boy.

I hadn't planned on going out west to see the Big Boy, but after my wife drove to Wisconsin to see it while I was visiting my brother in New York, I wavered. When Tom Schultz and Matthew Malkiewicz invited me to come along for the next leg of the Big Boy tour, I decided to see what the fuss was all about.

Now that I'm back, I've been thinking about the Big Boy trip and how my expectations changed as we went along. I started out feeling that the extra water tenders and the diesel in the consist just wouldn't be the real deal. As I saw how amazing the locomotive was and how the crowds of regular people turned out to see it, my perspective changed 180 degrees.

"Like you, over time the entire Big Boy experience has set in for me also. I was originally not crazy about going to see it, but now two trips in I am wanting and needing more. Way beyond the photos captured, it's the entire ball of wax of being there. Union Pacific has hit a major homerun in the community public relations department – I hope they realize that." - Matthew Malkiewicz

From the families that came down the dirt road to watch the train at Mona to the Peruvian sheepherder on the Altamont grade to the 84 year old back country jeep explorer and the crowd at Las Vegas, it just goes to show how wide the appeal is of that locomotive.

When the Union Pacific ordered the 4000 series 4-8-8-4 locomotives back in 1941, the plan was to name them the Wasatch class for the mountain range they were designed to conquer. When an unidentified ALCO employee chalked Big Boy on the smokebox door, the name stuck. In service the locos did not retain this marking but every day on the Big Boy tour, the crew redid the chalk marking.



Because Tom was unable to get off from work in time to follow the Big Boy all the way from Cheyenne, we decided to pick it up at Green River and follow it to Las Vegas. We wanted at least part of the trip to cover territory that the Big Boys covered in actual service. The section from Green River to Ogden was the line over which they were designed to operate. From Ogden to Las Vegas there may have been some test runs and the 135 foot long turntable in Caliente seems to indicate that operation to Los Angeles was at least considered.

What follows are a few images from our trip. As an oil burner, the 4014 makes very little smoke and except for the morning leaving Evanston, when it was 21 degrees, there wasn't much steam effect either. Steam from the engineer's side feedwater pump exhaust would occasionally help to silhouette the loco against the scenery. The boiler jacket was so shiny that it frequently reflected the image of the passing scenery as well.

At Green River, we were trying to duplicate an Otto Perry photo from 1941 and found the location but not the light. The shadow from the smoke blowing over spoiled what would have been a nice back lit photo. Even so, on the 0.82 percent grade the 4014 was really barking as it passed us, going around 45 mph.



4014 climbs the 0.82% grade of Peru Hill, West of Green River, Wyoming.



4014 continues up grade towards Peru, Wyoming.



While we waited on the Altamont grade for the 4014, a Peruvian sheepherder came along and pulled out his cell phone to capture the Big Boy! According to a local rancher who was out with his son to see the 4014, the Basque sheepherders have become too expensive so the sheep ranchers are now importing Peruvians.



Another great sounding runby on the grade to Altamont. The dirt road in the background is the original Lincoln Highway. The bridge is dated 1921.



4014 Climbing the grade towards the tunnels at Altamont



After arriving in Evanston, 4014 was serviced and then secured for the night. Unlike most places, the crowds left early and I was able to take an unobstructed photo later in the afternoon.



Blue flag and blue light for safety. The loco cannot be moved nor can anyone couple up to it until the blue flag and blue light are removed, and only the person or craft that placed the flags and lights can remove them.

The next day, October 1st would prove to be the best day of the trip. The temperature was 21 degrees (-6 Celsius) when the 4014 whistled off a few minutes after 8 AM. After a fantastic runby at Evanston, we headed west, not expecting to get any more photos, but we soon caught up as 4014 was loafing along on the yellow block of a line of double stack trains that had been delayed by a defect detector. Racing ahead to the Wahsatch exit (yes, that is how it is spelled), we back tracked a mile to a bit of rising ground for a second bite at the apple! The temperature was now 24 degrees.



4014 tackles the grade heading west out of Green River on a frosty morning.



It doesn't get much better than this!



The final shot Leaving Evanston. Steam courtesy of 21 degrees!



But wait, there is more! We caught the 4014 again just east of Wahsatch.



Heading towards Wahsatch and the summit of the grade.

Leaving Wahsatch, we headed for a previously selected location in Echo canyon, where some magnificent red rocks would provide a fantastic background. We arrived with plenty of time to spare, but as we heard the 4014's whistle an eastbound stack train pulled in on the siding. We were completely skunked! The 4014 rolled by, completely hidden behind the double stacks!



4014 passes through the twin bridges at Tunnel Hollow.



4014 exits Weber Canyon at Uintah.

This was our last shot of the day. From here we drove 390 miles to Caliente, where we would spend the next two days scouting out the line in Clover Creek Canyon and the Meadow Valley Wash as well as locations south of Provo. Meanwhile, the 4014 would lay over in Provo for two days.



The largest remaining Mission Revival style LA&SL depot is at Caliente, Nevada.

After a day exploring around Caliente, we headed back towards Provo to check out the line from Provo to Lynndyl. After Lynndyl the scenery becomes flat and barren, all the way to Milford where the

4014 would spend the night. We decided that we would take one shot before Nephi and one shot after and then abandon the chase to make the long drive back to Caliente.

Our first shot was at a private road crossing north of Mona, in a field of golden grasses with Lake Mona in the background. The property owner graciously allowed us access. He and about 30 of his neighbors all came down to see the train. It had been well publicized on local TV. Everyone had a great time and the kids went nuts when the train came. Sadly, not a trace of smoke or steam.



Amber waves of grain!



Matthew thanking the property owners.

From Mona, we drove south to Mills, where the railroad follows Chicken Creek into the entrance of the Sevier River Canyon. Spotting a sharp curve that we felt would show off the 4014's front engine articulation, we set up for our second and final shot of the day.



4014 crossing Chicken Creek, near Mills, Utah.

Leaving the 4014, we headed off for a 250 mile journey to Caliente, where we would catch the arrival of 4014 the next day. This was to be a one shot day.

Next morning, an hour of driving brought us to Islen, only 15 rail miles from Caliente. Matthew and I hiked up the canyon and climbed high for a nice shot of a curve with cliffs in the background.



When an eastbound freight pulled in on the siding, we knew we were doomed once again!



Snake bit again. An east bound merchandise train took siding as the 4014 rolled slowly by. The 4014 would tie up at Caliente at 1:30 pm.

We did get to meet an interesting individual, Frank Lopez who had been born in the former section house at Islen and had come to see the Big Boy at his birthplace. Mr. Lopez now lives in Utah, having retired from the railroad as a section foreman.



Caliente station, built by the LA&SL in 1923.

The following morning we headed down into Rainbow Canyon. We had decided on three different locations but there was no way we could beat the train to them all, so I set up north of Etna, while

Tom and Matthew set up further down the canyon. Although the 4014 left a few minutes after 8:00 am, it was too warm for steam effect. Fortunately, John Pierson, an 84-year old member of the D&RGW 315 group, had also picked the same location. He knows Ed Dickens and had asked for smoke, which we got, at least a little bit!



4014 at MP 455 east of CP Etna

A long drive ensued before we were able to get back to the tracks at Moapa where we continued on towards Las Vegas, stopping for our final action shot at Apex.



4014 just short of the summit at Apex, a few minutes outside of Las Vegas.



UP Observation 119, Kenefick



Arrival at Las Vegas. The crowd greets the 4014 with a cell phone salute!



Everyone was having a great time. The crowd was well mannered and lots of families with young children. A real feel good moment.



Blue flag with employee tags. Lock out, tag out. 4014 cannot move until all tags are removed by their owners. Safety First!

The End!