



The Pioneer

The Pioneer is the oldest Locomotive around built by Baldwin Locomotive of Philadelphia, Pa. Built in 1843 as engine #184 as a 4-2-0 type for the Tonawanda Railroad of New York. This Railroad ran from Rochester to Buffalo and named the engine Batavia .

The Galena & Chicago Union formed in 1836 to get the Lead out of Galena , and Chicago had only a few thousand people then. A financial depression stopped any work until 1845 when the Mayor Wm. Odgen of Chicago & President of the G&CU promoted sale of stock.

The Illinois Michigan Canal was being built at this time and they saw a need for over land commodities movement.

In September of 1847 Richard Morgan surveyed to run from Kinzie Street to the DesPlaines River .

Strap Track is laied April of 1848. (explain the track also known as snake track)

The Railroad purchased their first engine from the Rochester & Tonawanda for \$3800 in stock and it is delivered by the ship Buffalo October 10 1848.

The original engine had a wooden cover on the boiler to keep the heat inside and no cab. We do not know when those changes were made.

On October 24 the engine was taken on its first run by engineer John Ebbert & fireman Daniel Sheadan. The next day it made its trip from Kinzie & Canal Street.

A party of Stockholders & Directors took a trip on November 20 1848 ten miles west to Oak Park . They had no passenger cars so they must have ridden in the few covered freight cars. On the return trip a farmer was given a free ride into Chicago with his bushels of wheat.

A Mellican Hunt claims his was the first shipment from the DesPlaines River to Chicago of his Hogs in December. The First shipment of goods by the dispatcher was December 18 1848 and it was Hides & Pelts.

On July 4 1849 the first passenger coach from Welch & Launder of Chicago was delivered at a cost of \$2000. The same day it was tried out using a mule or horse as the Pioneer must have been out on the road.

A new locomotive of the American type a 4-4-0 is delivered on July 17 and was built by Norris and named “ Chicago ”.

Two more coaches arrive in September and another locomotive the “ Elgin ” arrives in November making the Railroad Prosper.

With the larger equipment the Pioneer saw work in building the railroad westward until September of 1850 when it was loaned out to the Aurora Branch Railroad (CB&Q) making it their first Locomotive also. The two railroads also shared the same station and track for a while.

Galena & Chicago Union goes to Freeport in 1853 & puts in a second track in 1855. Now we have a left handed railroad which is still true only in the Metra service area.

Sometime around 1860's the Pioneer was involved in a collision which destroyed several cars and the tender which acted as a buffer.

The Galena & Chicago Union was purchased by the Chicago & North Western Railroad on June 2 1864.

The first photo of the Pioneer is of it with a pile driver over the Rock River in Rockford in 1869.

The Chicago Fire of Oct 6 1871 destroys the headquarters and station with all its records.

It was time for the old work horse to retire in 1874.

A resident of Turner appeals to the directors of the railroad to preserve the Pioneer as it was sitting in weeds in 1880.

Turner, now West Chicago was home of the Pioneer and we have a picture of it on the turntable believed to be about 1881.

Restoration begins in 1883 and it goes on to its first exhibit. The National Railway Appliance Exposition under the rare and oddities exhibit. This made everyone aware of its importance.

The next exhibit was at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and its first engineer John Ebbet ran it under its own power in 1893.

Pioneer is placed in the Field Museum in 1894 until 1904.

The B&O Railroad moves it to Martinsburg , WV .

Pioneer is on display for the B&O's Semi-Centennial at Wheeling , WV in 1913.

The Chicago Station was the next place to be shown in 1928.

The Chicago Worlds Fair in 1933 & 1934 exhibited the Pioneer "Wings of a Century".

From 1934 to December of 1947 it was at the Museum of Science & Industry.

The Chicago & North Western now has the Pioneer at their 40th. Street shops for restoration. Construction of the coach & tender approved but not to run the Locomotive under it's own power.

The railroad wanted to show its history by having a movie made. The Pioneer was used in making the movie "Song of the Pioneer" January 1948 for its 100th anniversary.

The Pioneer with the tender, coach on flat cars and baggage car (exhibits) went on a 7 state 58 city tour from May 1 1948 to June 28 1948 on what was called the Centennial Train.

Opening day for the Railroad Fair was July 20 1948 and the Pioneer made its grand entrance in a pageant known as Wheels a Rolling. The fair was so successful that it was put on in 1949 too. Over 2 million people went to see the Fair each year.

When the 1948 show ended the Pioneer was painted to its current scheme.

When the fair ended in September 1949 it was moved for storage back at the 40th Street Shops.

The Pioneer is now taken partly apart and put into the 2nd story of the Chicago Historical Society on August 15 1972. Last December the Museum closed, moved the Pioneer and added #1 El Car to its collection. Reopened this September as the Chicago Historical Museum preserving this great piece of history.

Remember this is the oldest Baldwin Locomotive, The first Locomotive of Chicago and the Galena & Chicago Railroad (C&NW) plus the first locomotive of the Aurora Branch Line (Burlington).

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