

Kennecott Copper Company 778

Electric Steeplecab Locomotive

From its beginnings as an Alaskan copper mine founded in 1906, the Kennecott Copper Company would grow into one of the world's largest mining operations. By the 1930s, it had acquired companies with workings in Utah, Nevada and New Mexico. Kennecott was one of the most important customers on the eastern end of the Western Pacific, which connected with KCC operations in Nevada and Utah. Successor Kennecott Utah Copper operates today as a subsidiary of mining giant Rio Tinto.

Kennecott was a leader in using electric locomotives in its operations, beginning with the famous Bingham Canyon Open Pit Mine in 1927. Other KCC operations would be electrified, including the mine at Santa Rita, New Mexico in 1940. The locomotives used by KCC were typically of a design referred to as "steeplecabs", with a raised operators cab centered between two equipment hoods. This style was very common on electric railroads and most were built by General Electric, the famous appliance and lighting company. In 1958, the Santa Rita Mine took delivery of two large steeplecab locomotives, which were probably the last of this type ever built in North America.

Numbered as Chino Mines (the name for the Santa Rita operation) 4, this engine was the last electric locomotive delivered to Kennecott. In December 1971, it was moved to Bingham Canyon for use on trains in the huge pit and renumbered as 778. In 1976, it was repainted in red, white and blue colors to celebrate the American Bicentennial.

Retired in November 1983 with the close of KCC electric railroad operations, this historic unit was donated to represent the mining industry that sustained the east end of the Western Pacific. It is the only fully electric locomotive in our collection.

builder
General Electric Company

built
April, 1958

type
125-ton

horsepower
900

supply voltage
750 volts direct current

serial number
33348

operating weight
250,000 lbs

acquisition
donated by Kennecott
Copper Company