

Iron Horse



Transportation has evolved over time from foot to air. During the industrial revolution, steam powered many manufacturing operations. Rails had been used for centuries to move loads over rough terrain using animals for power.

Steam powered locomotives combined these technologies. During the 19th century, the United States experienced an explosion of railroad construction for transportation of goods and people to mining and logging.

The term Iron Horse became popular as horse power began to be replaced by steam power. Steam engines were replaced by diesel electric engines in the 1940's, only to see an overall decline in railroads as vehicle roads and trucks appeared. Today, the government owned Amtrak system handles much of the passenger rail transportation and freight rail transportation has seen an increase due to the introduction of cargo containers.

Sadly, steam locomotives have almost completely disappeared. Many surviving steam engines are found in museums and a few functional engines still see service on scenic rail lines such as the Durango and Silverton Scenic Railroad. Built over a century ago, the Nevada Northern Railway serviced the copper mining in and around the town of Ely, Nevada. These operations ended in 1986 when Kennecott donated the entire line, all the rolling stock, the rail yard and shops to the White Pine Historical Railroad Foundation. This railway has become a major tourist attraction and is regarded as one of the best preserved steam railroad facility in the nation. The shop facilities are essential to maintaining the functionality of the railroad as replacement parts can be manufactured locally.

I have an interest in many historic things, including cameras and photographic processes. I have been taking photographs of steam locomotives and riding scenic railroads since the 1990's. This portfolio includes images taken with 35mm, large format and digital cameras in New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, California and Alaska. The printing processes are mostly the Platinum process that dates back to 1873. Hand coated paper is contact printed using digital negatives of the same size as the final prints. Combination prints add color to enhance the subject in some of the prints. These prints are printed twice using the platinum process and either the Gum Arabic process (Gum over Platinum) or digital inkjet printer (Platinum over Pigment) to add color. The gum Arabic process dates back to 1855.

It seems appropriate to me to preserve scenes of the steam railroad, its facilities and equipment with historic photography equipment and processes. The images add to the esthetic historic feel of the photographs of the Iron Horse.

Les Allert