

The Union Pacific Streamliner Era in Advertising: 1933-1964

by Martin C. Brennan; Advertising art collection of Mike McBride

By the time that 20th Century advertising techniques began to sell travel, the choices of focus were limited to two things: accommodation and destination. Railroads sold both but their equipment was, with two exceptions, not very different than at the turn of the 20th Century. The passenger train's two final improvements were the diesel locomotive in the late 1930s and the Vista-Dome car in the 1950s. Together, they made the decade-and-a-half following World War II the highest level of luxury in American railroading history. Arguments could be made for other decades, but the atmospheric nuisances and high maintenance of the steam locomotive puts those decades at a disadvantage versus the era of modern diesel power.



Union Pacific's City of Denver has just arrived at North Platte, Neb., from its namesake city, en route to Chicago on Dec. 28, 1970. Mike Schafer



Ahead of the Future

● The keynote of American progress is individual enterprise and initiative. As a nation, we plan ahead—not only for tomorrow but for the day after tomorrow. Thinking “ahead of the future” resulted, for example, in the building of the fleet of America’s first streamlined trains—the Union Pacific Streamliners.

Far-sighted planning and individual enterprise have played a tremendous part in America’s growth. Abraham Lincoln, in 1859, foresaw the vital need for a trans-continental railroad that would unite the

East with the West in peace and in war. Today, over the Strategic Middle Route of the Union Pacific Railroad speed hundreds of trainloads of troops, foods, and materials of war. Rail transportation makes it possible for America to carry on the fight for freedom.

* * *

Many thousands of Union Pacific employes are working—many thousands fighting—to keep alive the American tradition of equal opportunity for all; to insure a just reward in return for hard work, for enterprise and for faith in the nation’s future.



**THE PROGRESSIVE
UNION PACIFIC
RAILROAD**

*BUY AND SAVE MORE WAR BONDS

The EMC E2-series locomotives shown here date the ad to about 1937 or 1938. At the time, dieselization was a bold, new concept not yet fully

Railroads promoted what train travel had to offer that air travel did not:

- A constantly changing, ground-level view of what lay between home and one's destination.

- A reliability and safety record that reassured people who were afraid to travel by air.

- A relaxing, do-whatever-you-want trip requiring no personal attention to getting there.

- Arrival in the center of the city, rather than out in the country at an airfield which required a taxi ride of varying length and cost.



Better sights along the way means better ads

Union Pacific stands out as one of a handful of railroads that used the beauty and allure of the scenery along its route and its destinations. This, along with luxurious accommodations and first-class service, was the dual focus of its advertising. Because the railroad connected the Middle West and the Pacific Coast, with long stretches of scenery along the way, the UP needed to balance the two concepts in its advertising. If one was going to spend hour after hour on the rails, one needed to be reminded of what wonders would pass by the windows and what a pleasant time one would have inside the train. Promises of fine food, attentive service, and comfortable accommodations were essential to the persuasion process.



SYMBOL OF PROGRESS

Like radio, electric refrigerators and many other modern conveniences, the streamlined train has become an accepted part of our lives. It symbolizes the progressive spirit of American industry—of individual enterprise.

Union Pacific developed the first streamlined train *during the depression era*; an outstanding example of far-sighted engineering and executive genius. It is largely due to

this same spirit of progress that miracles in war production have been achieved by our country's industrial plants; it is the spirit that has spurred our railroads to accomplish seemingly super-human tasks in the transportation of war materials and troops.

It is this spirit of progress, this truly American characteristic, that will eliminate the Axis. Union Pacific, for its part, will continue to "keep 'em rolling."



The Progressive

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

ROAD OF THE STREAMLINERS AND THE CHALLENGERS

The distinctive, grille-nosed M-10000-series Electro-Motive Corp. locomotives, built in 1936, plus reference to the beginnings of World War

When UP introduced the streamlined train to the American public in 1934 by making a record 57-hour trip from Los Angeles to New York, the country took notice. The original distillate-powered locomotive was shortly succeeded by the motive-power force that has never been replaced: the diesel. One of the earliest appearances of the Pullman-built articulated M-10000 train is in a Time Magazine ad dated Nov. 6, 1933 (not shown), placed by SKF Bearings. It shows an artist's conception by abstract painter Thomas Benrimo of what the train looked like, differing from the final product by its lack of ventilation grilles on the front of the locomotive. Other companies featuring the train after its debut included Pennzoil, General Motors, and Bantam Bearings.



The "City of Portland" Domeliner skirting the Columbia River Gorge

Miles and Miles of this...

Green forests coming down to meet the majestic Columbia River, waterfalls lacing high rugged rock. Your eyes drink in the ever-changing panorama through wide windows of Union Pacific Domeliners on your way to or from the Pacific Coast.

You can dine in the Astra Dome Dining Car, enjoy

the luxurious Astra Dome Lounge, or relax in the restful Astra Dome Coach. All the extra pleasure at no extra cost.

Whenever you travel through the West, ask for reservations on *Union Pacific Domeliners* and *Streamliners*...between Chicago and Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle, as well as many other western cities and National Parks.

UNION PACIFIC HONORS RAIL TRAVEL CREDIT CARDS

UNION PACIFIC
Domeliners

"CITY OF PORTLAND"
"CITY OF LOS ANGELES"
"The CHALLENGER"

Between Chicago and the Pacific Coast

Let us help you

PLAN YOUR TRIP THROUGH THE WEST



UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

Room 755, Omaha 2, Nebraska

I am interested in a Domeliner trip to California
To Pacific Northwest Send descriptive booklet.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

Phone No. _____

This enticing scene of the City of Portland along the Columbia River is arguably one of the most well-remembered of UP's pre-Amtrak publicity photos.

Everything streamlined, including the scenery

By the late 1930s, almost every Union Pacific ad showed a streamliner, now headed up by more conventional locomotives from Electro-Motive. The ads continued the tradition of named trains: City of Los Angeles, City of San Francisco, City of Portland and City of St. Louis. Using illustration and photography, with color prevailing over black-and-white, the railroad emphasized destinations, on-board amenities, and the diesel locomotive. During World War II, the railroad pushed its ability to get you there, even in wartime, along with its particular contributions to the war effort. Future president Ronald Reagan appears in a 1959 ad, touting the relaxation the Union Pacific train provided so he could “study scripts” (PTJ 2018–2, p. 27). Sun Valley, the Idaho ski resort, is featured in several ads; it was developed, owned, and operated by the railroad. In late 1954, UP’s first dome cars were put into service, transforming all of UP’s City trains into “Domeliners”—perfect for viewing the spellbinding scenery of the American West. Over the years other specialty cars were added, including the prewar “Little Nugget,” a Gay 90s-theme saloon club car. The “Pub Car” was introduced in 1954, followed by dome-dining cars in 1955, and the “Redwood Lounge” recreation car in 1956.



"Smooth as Silk"

That's a very natural remark after a Streamliner trip on Union Pacific's *cushioned* roadbed. Gliding smoothly, swiftly over the steel rails, you relax in perfect comfort on the—

Streamliner

"CITY OF LOS ANGELES"

—in *daily* service between Chicago and Los Angeles—offering Pullman and Coach passengers the finest in modern travel.

* * *

Also in daily service are the famous Streamliners—

"CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO"
(Chicago—San Francisco)

"CITY OF PORTLAND"
(Chicago—Portland)

"CITY OF DENVER"
(Chicago—Denver)

"CITY OF ST. LOUIS"
(St. Louis—Kansas City—Denver—
and through cars to West Coast)



UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD
Road of the Daily Streamliners

HOLIDAY / DECEMBER

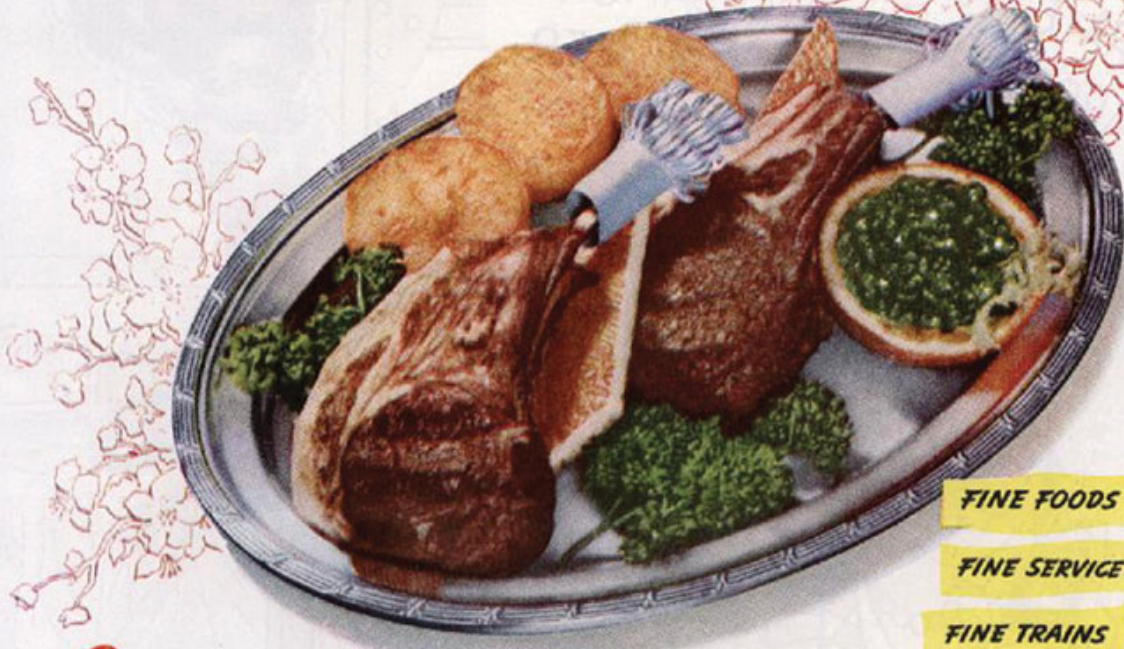
This ad, which ran in Holiday and probably other magazines around the start of World War II, conveyed the same message about dieselization. One of the many benefits for passengers was that diesels provide smoother train handling.

Passenger travel by rail as a matter of habit passes away

Many PTJ readers know this all too well: by the mid-1960s, the jet airliner was becoming standard for most coast-to-coast travelers. The Railroads felt the same pinch the ocean liners did: inability to compete in speed of transit. If one was able to travel in a leisurely manner, then the railroad was still the way to go. But deteriorating rights-of-way, aging equipment, and expensive labor contracts—when added to the overall slowness of the trip—spelled the end of passenger travel by rail as a dominant institution in the United States.

Passenger service had been a money-loser for many years by the time the railroads gave it up through discontinuance, merger, or bankruptcy.

UNION PACIFIC SUGGESTS



FINE FOODS

FINE SERVICE

FINE TRAINS

Lamb Chops for "MAYTIME" travelers



The enjoyment of good food is a highlight of any journey. That's why Union Pacific makes a special effort to provide its guests with top quality dining-car meals and service.

During May, for example, the featured attraction . . . among a variety of tempting entrees . . . is thick-cut, tender lamb chops. These are "U. S. Prime" loin chops from spring

lamb raised in the "Union Pacific West." They are charcoal-broiled, just right, to retain the savory juices . . . and served with piquant mint jelly.

* * *

Dine as you ride . . . and rest as you ride in the comfort of spacious Pullman or Coach. Ask your ticket or travel agent to route you "Union Pacific" through the West.

THE DAILY

Streamliners



"CITY OF LOS ANGELES"

(between Chicago-Los Angeles)

"CITY OF PORTLAND"

(between Chicago-Portland)

"CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO"

(between Chicago-San Francisco)

"CITY OF DENVER"

(between Chicago-Denver)

"CITY OF ST. LOUIS"

(between St. Louis and West Coast)

and other fine trains between Chicago or St. Louis and the West Coast.

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

Road of the Daily Streamliners

socialize, look out the windows at the scenery, get pampered by the staff. They did not have to be explained and readers did not need to be reassured about safety and reliability because the railroads had been doing all of that quite well, thank you, for almost a hundred years. So the creative process almost always came back to scenery and accommodations. Which meant somewhat repetitious pictures of mountains, canyons, and meals. This was standard for all of the railroads serving the states south and west from Chicago. Given this limited creative opportunity, Union Pacific's marketing and advertising people created campaigns that were among the most inviting and attractive of the era.

"traveling by Domeliner
is one of the
happiest habits
I've ever acquired"

Ronald
Reagan

"Union Pacific Domeliners certainly are the answer to the modern conception of luxury travel. I find they offer a wonderful opportunity to relax while enjoying service as superb as the surroundings."



"Dome dining? That's for me! It's one of the extras I can enjoy on a Domeliner. Another thing—I like my comfort. Take the new Pullman accommodations, for example. For six footers like me, the wide long-length beds assure a good night's rest. And, during the day, I have a 'private room' where I can study scripts or just take it easy, as though I were home.

"The relaxing moments in beautiful lounge cars, the leisurely enjoyment of the trip and the thoughtful service all add up to my being such an enthusiastic Domeliner fan."

Mr. Reagan is a frequent guest on the "City of Los Angeles" Domeliner. The "City of Portland" Domeliner, in service between Chicago and the Pacific Northwest, provides the same attractive Dome cars and modern Pullman equipment. Ride Union Pacific Domeliners and we feel sure that you, too, will become an ardent Domeliner traveler.

**UNION
PACIFIC**
Railroad
Omaha 2, Nebraska

DEPENDABLE PASSENGER AND FREIGHT SERVICE

**A collective impression, built week by week in
magazines**

4th Quarter 2018
Volume 42, No. 4



Here it is!

The first and only DOME DINING CAR
between CHICAGO • LOS ANGELES and PORTLAND

You'll find it a new and thrilling experience to dine in splendor while viewing the beauty of the scenic West. One vast, colorful panorama replaces another while your Domeliner speeds quietly over smooth-as-glass rails.

In this Astra Dome dining car, Union Pacific introduces innovations such as wide, clear-view windows and double-capacity air conditioning.

There is also a downstairs dining room with unusual color and charm. Secluded from this main dining room, is a delightful smaller room available for private parties.

When arranging a trip between Chicago and the Pacific Coast, ask to be routed on the "CITY OF LOS ANGELES" or "CITY OF PORTLAND" Domeliners. There's *no extra fare*.



The richly appointed private dining room is really a "show piece."

• Enjoy the finest in relaxing rail travel and wonderful meals, graciously served. On arrival you can drive a new car provided by Hertz Rent-a-Car service. Rates are reasonable and include insurance coverage. Your car can be reserved in advance.

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD
OMAHA 2, NEBRASKA

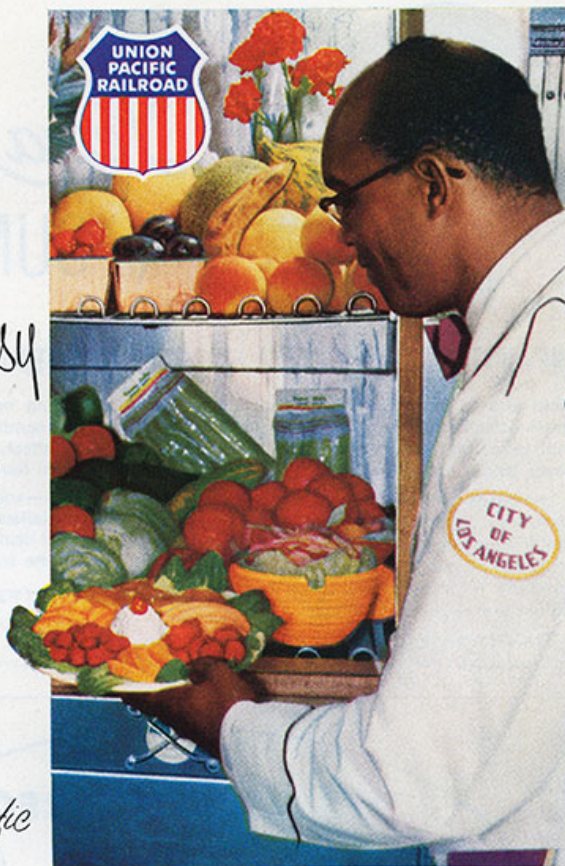
The images featured in these classic ads are typically unique to that printed medium. They rarely appear in brochures, folders, flyers, or annual reports. The magazine ad was the way corporations kept their presence in the mind of

impression of beautiful sights, attentive service, and delicious food aboard modern streamliners. This cumulative impression helped the traveler to make UP the choice when the time came to go out West.

Fresh as a Daisy

The Flavorful
FRUIT
PLATE

Served on Union Pacific
Dining Cars



During August, this tempting *fruit plate* will be featured on all Union Pacific trains. The finest of fruits are obtained fresh from western orchards, their natural flavor retained by being placed in dining-car refrigerators just before train departure time.

And speaking of freshness . . . you, too, will feel "fresh as a daisy" after a cool, restful ride on Union Pacific's smooth roadbed. Ask to be routed by Union Pacific through the West. Fine foods...fine service...fine trains.



DAILY
Streamliners

- "CITY OF LOS ANGELES"
(Between Chicago-Los Angeles)
- "CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO"
(Between Chicago-San Francisco)
- "CITY OF PORTLAND"
(Between Chicago-Portland-Tacoma-Seattle)
- "CITY OF DENVER"
(Between Chicago-Denver)
- "CITY OF ST. LOUIS"
(Between St. Louis-Kansas City-Denver and the Pacific Coast)

Also between Chicago and Pacific Coast—
LOS ANGELES LIMITED
SAN FRANCISCO OVERLAND
AND COAST

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

The UP upheld its longtime tradition of fine food service right to the last days of operation prior to Amtrak. This 1950s ad focused on seasonal fresh fruit platters. Note the City of Los Angeles patch on the server's jacket arm.

Many railfans collect these ads by buying old magazines and carefully removing them to save in an album. Others buy individual ads from flea market and antique paper show dealers or through on-line auction sites, where individual ads are offered at modest opening bids. A CD-ROM published by [The Archives of Advertising](#) contains over 120 of these ads published between 1943 and 1962.

ON THE RAILS IN DECEMBER...

New, Exciting!



Domeliners



What a wonderful opportunity to view the ever-changing scenic beauty of the romantic West while enjoying restful, luxurious travel! Astra-Dome Coaches . . . Diners . . . and Observation Lounge Cars; the very latest, very finest, in modern design with smart, colorful decor and appointments. Union Pacific is the only railroad to provide dome-type dining cars.

Many Union Pacific innovations including double capacity air conditioning for "all weather" comfort . . . Coach seats with adjustable head-rests. Astra-Dome Coaches in service this December. Astra-Dome Diners and Observation Lounge cars to follow in early 1955.



Plan your next trip to or from the Pacific Coast on a Union Pacific Domeliner: "CITY OF PORTLAND" . . . "CITY OF LOS ANGELES" . . . or "The CHALLENGER." You'll enjoy a marvelous travel thrill at *no extra fare*.

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD
OMAHA 2, NEBRASKA

Dome cars were a landmark advancement for rail travel in the post-World War II years. Although domes couldn't "save" the privately operated passenger train, they did stem the decline to a degree. UP made the most of its dome fleet; post-1955 UP ads were rife with dome-car accolades.



The combined City of Los Angeles, City of Portland, and City of Kansas City near Dale, Wyo., in April 1971. Mike Schafer

In sum, Union Pacific was a significant and memorable advertiser in the streamliner era when rail travel was at its zenith. We know we can't go back to that time in reality. But by reading and enjoying these old ads, we can imagine, dream, and, in some small way, arrive again . . . by train.