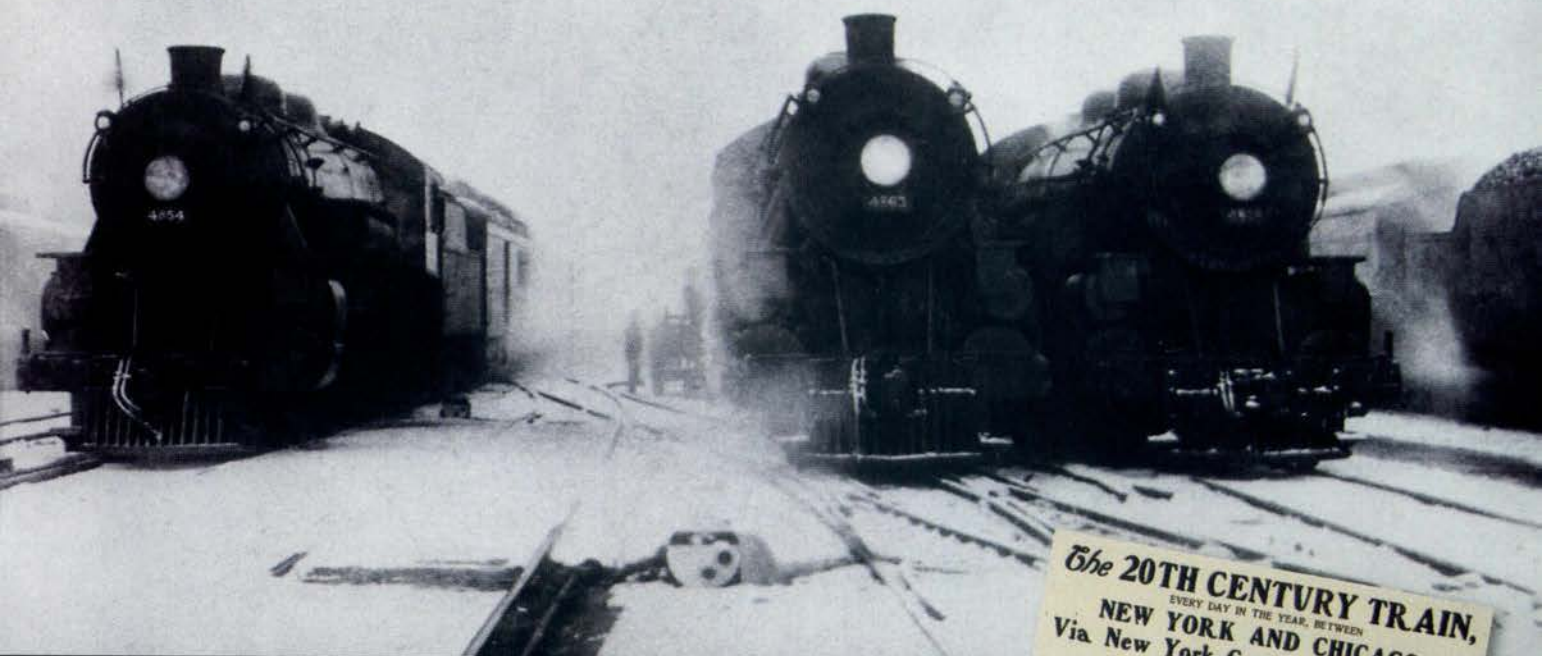


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3 Great
Trains

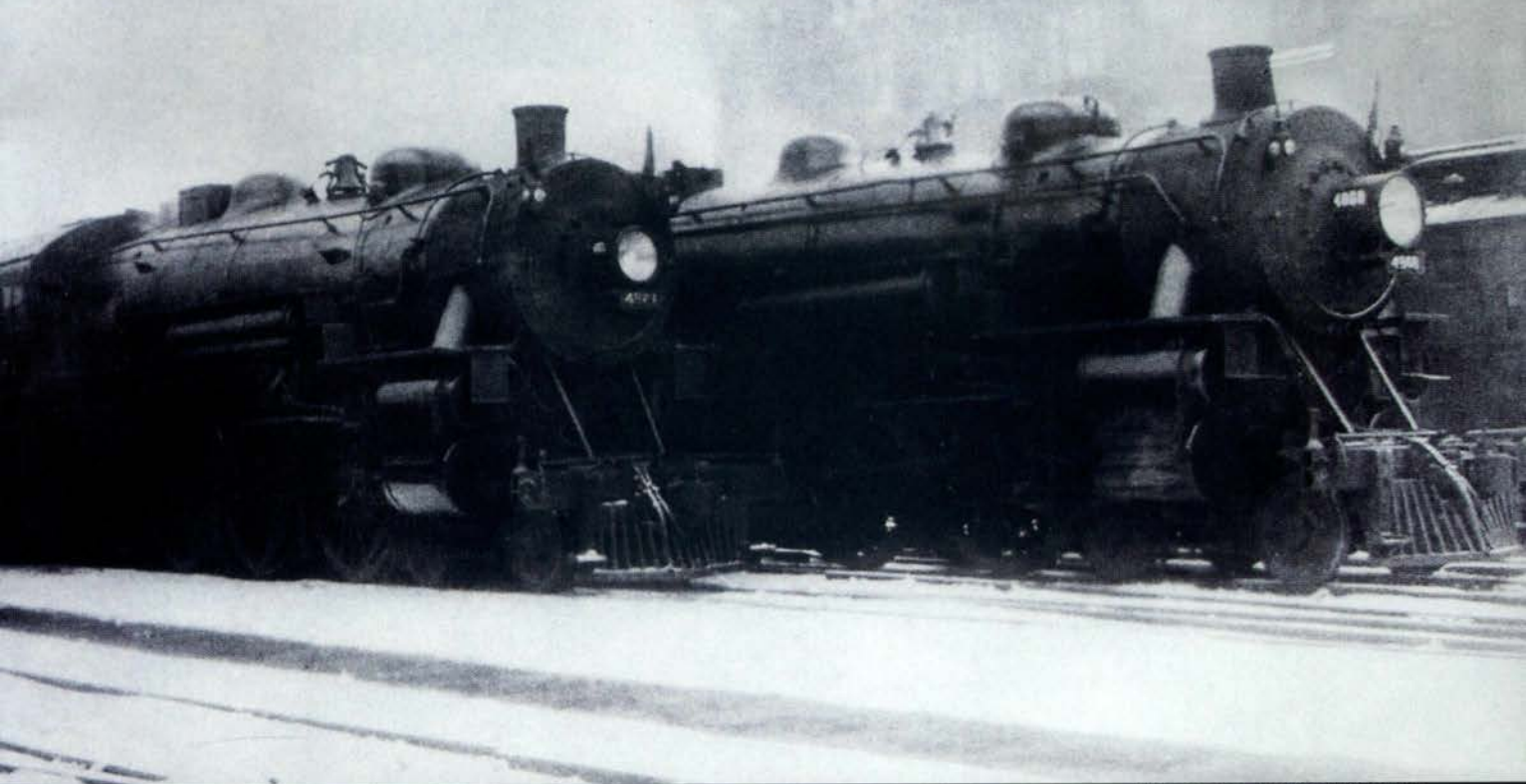


Marketing a national institution: 20th Century Limited

Brilliant promotion in its early years helped establish
New York Central's flagship as the nation's greatest train

By Michael Zega • Illustrations from the author's collection

Powerfully demonstrating the *Century's* success, five sections of train 26 are ready to leave Chicago in 1924. Pacifics gave way to Hudsons in 1927.



TWO PHOTOS: NEW YORK CENTRAL

FOR NEARLY HALF OF ITS NAMESAKE ERA, New York Central's *20th Century Limited* exercised a uniquely powerful pull upon the popular imagination. Above all, the *Century*, as it became known early on, was a feat of marketing skill and ingenuity. Bold advertising claims and a consistent media presence were key to a strategy that created an allure based on exclusivity, reliability, and modernity. NYC sold the *Century* as an unmatched melding of speed and comfort, which it summed up in the Latin term *sui generis*, liberally translated by the railroad as "the only one of its kind."

Within a decade of the train's inauguration, Central's aggressive posture more than paid off—ads declared it among the world's wonders, both ancient and modern, and few thought to disagree. By the advent of its 25th anniversary, the *Century* thrived in reflected glory. *Time* magazine extolled the "flawless operation" of the train that "was named after the fresh, human division of Time that had just begun." *Vanity Fair's* editors, the era's arbiters of style and achievement, measured their standing in proximity to the

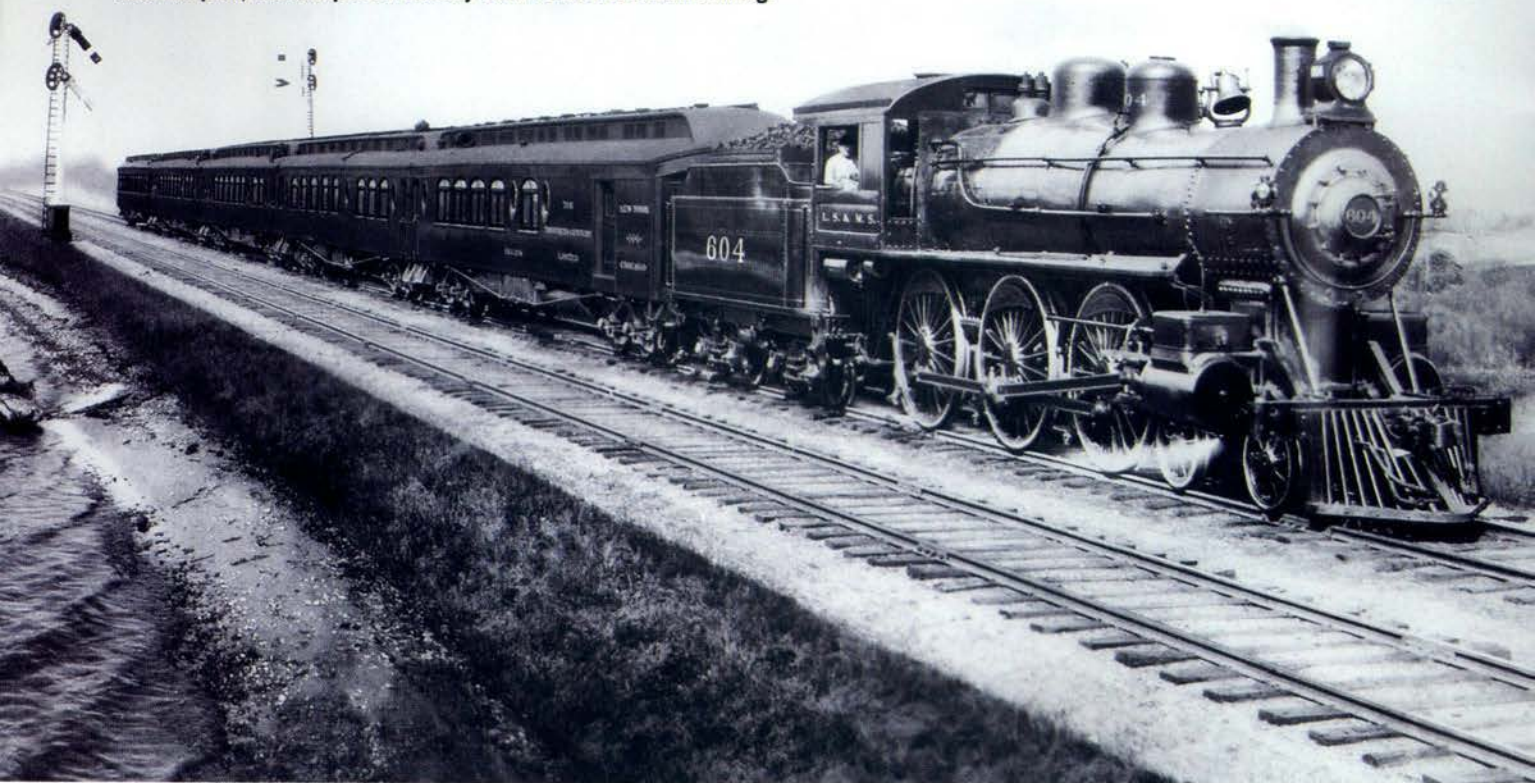
flyer's New York terminus. Even in the train's final decade, after it had lost both premium clientele and extra-fare status, motion-picture director Alfred Hitchcock incorporated its dinnertime service traditions into the plot of *North By Northwest*. One hundred years after the train's inauguration, it is appropriate to revisit the beginnings of the *Century* name and legacy.

The story begins with George Henry Daniels (1842-1908), Central's longtime general passenger agent, and his selection of a name. Contrary to myth, Daniels was neither a seller of patent medicine nor a P. T. Barnum-like publicist; instead, he made his name managing the unwieldy affairs of railroad traffic associations, or pools, thereby acquiring a matchless command of competitive detail. When he signed on with Central in 1889, in short order he built a reputation as an advertising pioneer, coining the name *Empire State Express* and making it known as "the most famous train in the world." Consistently counted among the leading orators of his day, Daniels so excelled at shaping public opinion that he was known as "the Dean" in



George Henry Daniels

In a photo purported to be of the *Century's* first run, a 4-6-0 of NYC's Lake Shore & Michigan Southern is in charge. Though crudely retouched onto this print, the semaphores correctly show LS&MS's left-hand running.



CLASSIC TRAINS COLLECTION

professional circles long before the events of 1902.

Daniels' choice of a name proved remarkably prescient, but it was not the first use of the "Century" moniker. In 1898, Chicago & North Western advertised its newly electric-lighted *North-Western Limited* as a "20th Century Train." That same year *The Inland Printer* ran an illustration of a circular for the *Century Flyer*, "The South Jersey Railroad's famous 100-minute train [from Camden, N.J.] to Cape May." Closer to home, a Pennsylvania Railroad notice in the *New York Times* of December 2, 1901, headlined: "Twentieth Century Ingenuity . . . is constantly at work to keep the *Pennsylvania Limited* as near the point of perfection as possible . . ."

Indeed, very much like its name, the Central's new flyer itself was born of circumstance and a meeting of minds. NYC management had debated the introduction of a fast New York-Chicago train for years. But President Samuel R. Callaway, who abruptly resigned in June 1901, opposed such trains. His successor, William H. Newman, shared Daniels' appreciation of high-profile promotional ventures.

By early 1902, the booming economy had filled NYC's flagship *Lake Shore Limited* (plus two additional flyers) well past capacity. The two men agreed: Although the competitive arena was rife with uncertainty, it was time to make a move.

Daniels himself announced the new flyer's name on June 3, 1902: "It will be called the *Twentieth Century Train*." The Pennsylvania countered with its own new premium New York-

Chicago train, the *Pennsylvania Special*, a prosaic name that, thanks to its similarity to *Pennsylvania Limited*, was to prove problematic from the start. Both trains would dash between the nation's two greatest cities in 20 hours. Then, on June 9, Daniels telegraphed a last-minute revision: "Am advised that name of 20-hour train has been changed to *The 20th Century Limited*. Please have advertising changed accordingly."

The new trains of the two Eastern titans entered service on the same day: June 15, 1902.

High-speed sensations

The 20-hour trains attracted vast amounts of publicity and nationwide editorial encouragement, cutting the need for all but the most basic advertising. Daniels' pre-inauguration strategy emphasized Central's unparalleled experience in running fast trains, citing the *Empire State Express* (on which 4-4-0 No. 999 hit 112 mph) and 1893's *Exposition Flyer* (the first New York-Chicago 20-hour train). The *Century's* first run proved him out: newspaper stories contrasted its smooth, stately pace to the *Pennsylvania Special's* race to make up lost time. Rolling east aboard the inaugural *Century*, the *Chicago Inter-ocean's* reporter confirmed Daniels' assertion that practice makes perfect: "The wheels caressed the rails with a touch of velvet; on curves the sway was gentle as the roll of a yacht on a mild sea." At New York's Grand Central Station the next morning, Daniels met his daughter Harriet, who had hosted

"The Busy Man's Train."

Appropriate in its Name,
 Appropriate in its Route,
 Appropriate in its Character==
"THE 20th CENTURY LIMITED."

This is *The* century of all the ages.

The New York Central's 20-hour train between New York and Chicago (the two great commercial centers of America) is *The* train of the century, and is appropriately named

"THE 20th CENTURY LIMITED."

A copy of the "Four-Track News," containing a picture of "The 20th Century Limited," and a deal of useful information regarding places to visit, modes of travel, etc., will be sent free, post paid, on receipt of five cents, by George H. Daniels, General Passenger Agent, New York Central, Grand Central Station, New York.

Like a shot out of a gun

LIKE A SHOT OUT OF A GUN goes the "20th Century Limited" on the new eighteen-hour schedule between Chicago and New York. The magnificent speed performance of these trains may readily be likened to one of those huge projectiles shot out of the giant guns of modern times.

To the business man this service means a greater saving of time, and that to all intents he is no more out of touch with his business interests than though he had simply left his office for home.

Starting in either city from stations located in the very heart of the business district, the hours of departure from and arrival at both Chicago and New York are adjusted so as to afford an entire day for business before departure and an arrival in either city at a correct hour for the following day's business.

These trains represent the highest development of perfection in elegance and convenience of appointments and although covering distance at a sustained speed of about 60 miles per hour, the well-known excellence of the Lake Shore's physical condition assures perfect comfort to the traveler.

CHICAGO and NEW YORK

"Twentieth Century Limited"

Lake Shore
New York Central

18 Hour Service

CENTRAL TIME Lv Chicago, daily 2:30 pm	EASTERN TIME Lv New York, daily 5:30 pm
EASTERN TIME Ar New York, daily 5:30 am	CENTRAL TIME Ar Chicago, daily 8:30 am

Most comfortable fast service route in America

C. F. DALY, Passenger Traffic Manager
Chicago, Ill.
A. J. SMITH, General Passenger Agent
Cleveland, O.

the trip. Upon alighting, she quipped to the press that the trip had not been the "breathless ride" her father had promised—indeed, she thought the pace was too slow.

From the first, both lines' advertisements sold the 20-hour schedule's time-saving benefit. Daniels introduced the "Saves A Day" slogan, ultimately one of its most effective sales claims. As *Time* explained years later, the 20-hour schedule "made it possible for a businessman in either city to snap on his cuffs around lunch time, entrain, and be dictating or telephoning in the other city by a bright 10 o'clock the next morning." By contrast, all other New York-Chicago trains of 1902 cost virtually an entire day's business hours. In the first months, *Century* ads skipped illustration and ran almost exclusively in newspapers, only expanding to magazines as winter neared.

Daniels sold the *Century* as the latest in a series of innovative, customer-friendly services introduced over the prior decade. Led by the *Empire State Express*, Central's product line also featured *The Four-Track News*, a popular monthly of "travel and education," introduced in 1901, and Grand Central, long-promoted as the only station on Manhattan Island. With the addition of the *Century*, he dubbed them the four aces, "Our Leading Cards."

As summer passed, Daniels' wager on promoting Central's attributes of reliability and natural advantage began to show results. Throughout the summer of 1902, Central's flyer averaged 35 New York-Chicago passengers per trip, while the

George Daniels' "appropriate" theme was among the *Century's* early advertising successes. Likenesses of Chicago's La Salle Street Station and New York's old Grand Central Station adorned an ad keyed to the train's speed.

PRR, constrained by mountains and a Hudson River ferry crossing, managed barely a dozen. The disparity so concerned PRR President A. J. Cassatt that he called on his managers to account, but they counseled that improvement was unlikely.

Then, in November, Daniels found his most enduring and powerful theme in one word: "appropriate." Ads bearing the simple copy—"The 20th Century Limited: Appropriate in its Name; Appropriate in its Route; Appropriate in its Character"—filled national magazines. In response, PRR featured a halftone of a locomotive fireman shoveling coal, headlined "How the Speed is Made." PRR's photograph illustrated the competitors' contrasting cultures—Central was the showman; Pennsy, the engineer.

Faced with a difficult and unprofitable operation, PRR decided to drop the *Special* as of February 1, 1903. An elated Central spokesman declared in response: "[The *Century*] will probably be a permanent institution."

Daniels promoted Central's newfound advantage by increasing advertising, following his prime rule: advertise consistently in schedule and theme. *Century* ads now evidenced a more aggressive posture, with the headline "If In Haste Take The New York Central" filling the pages of *Harper's Weekly*

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

The Best Train Service on Earth
has helped in a great degree to make that section of the United States covered by New York Central Lines one of the wealthiest, most prosperous and important areas on the face of the globe.

20th Century Limited

—the famous Direct Line between New York and Boston and Chicago, over the notable feature "Water Level Route," is the stupendous extension of this service throughout the year.

<p>to NEW YORK from BOSTON to CHICAGO</p>	<p>8:00 a.m. 4:30 p.m. 8:55 a.m.</p>	<p>Every day in the year</p>	<p>to CHICAGO from BOSTON to NEW YORK</p>	<p>8:00 a.m. 11:55 a.m. 4:25 p.m.</p>
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If You Are Going to Travel, Write Our Travel Bureau

NEW YORK CENTRAL LINES

HARPER'S WEEKLY

From The Four-Track News

**THE NEW YORK CENTRAL'S
20th CENTURY LIMITED**

A GLIDING HAMMOCK SWINGING BETWEEN NEW YORK & CHICAGO

R. K. MUNKITTRICK

The jolly editor of *Judge*, in his New Year's number, SAYS:

"The TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED train is so much of a flyer that traveling on it has been justly called flying. Time flies and money flies, and the man who allows his time to fly on the TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED makes enough by the operation to buy money not only to fly but to burn. The TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED is an air-ship on tracks. In fact, it is all wings, and, as time is money, the traveler plying between New York and Chicago can save so much time by taking this train that he can feel his bank account increase with each and every revolution of each and every wheel. Any man of ordinary discrimination would prefer the TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED to the empress steamer known as an air-ship, for the reason that, like the Empire State Express, it is faster, much more luxurious in appointments, and is simply a gliding hammock swinging between New York and Chicago."

Copyright, 1903, by George H. Daniels, General Passenger Agent

throughout 1903. Another boasted "You may fly some day but the quickest way now is . . ." over a rendering of a futuristic airship. By spring 1905, the *Century* was operating so smoothly that Central acceded to Chicago businessmen's wishes by cutting a half hour from the eastbound run that May. Central's largess evidently annoyed PRR management, who within a week announced the reinstatement of the *Pennsylvania Special* as an 18-hour train. A speed war had begun.

As the national media again focused on the contest, humor magazine *Puck* made light of its escalating claims, suggesting a giant mortar that would propel people from New York to Chicago in two hours. Soon thereafter, railroad ads blurred fact with fiction, displaying the headline "Like a Shot Out of a Gun" and depicting a cannon based in La Salle Street Station's trainshed, pointed at New York!

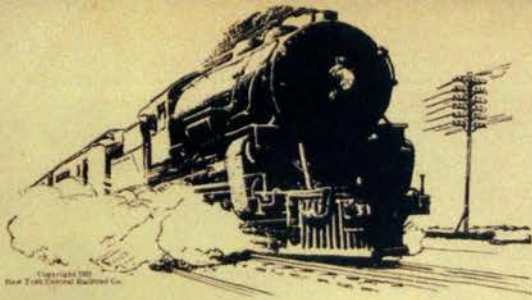
June 18, 1905, marked the *Century's* first 18-hour run, which went like clockwork, posting early arrivals at every station. Then, on its fourth expedited trip, the *Century* hit an open switch at Mentor, Ohio, derailing at speed and killing 12 of the 67 aboard. As officials debated blame and slower schedules, Daniels showed his prowess by endeavoring to divert popular attention. Within two weeks, a series of ads selling NYC's great natural advantage, on the theme "Nothing More Level Than Water," began running in national newspapers. The campaign continued for a month, and apparently it worked, for by August patronage on the *Pennsylvania Special*

had declined to just nine passengers per trip.

Daniels' health deteriorated soon thereafter, and he passed away July 1, 1908. His absence produced a sea change in Central's promotional strategy. His successor, Charles F. Daly, made the *Century* the subject of most advertising, in the expectation that its reputation would burnish the road's overall image. Also, the "Water Level Route" theme became an increasingly important part of the campaign. It and its "You Can Sleep" tag line were the inspiration of St. Louis ad man Harry Lesan. "One day," Lesan later recalled, "I overheard a club-car conversation in which one man told his friend that he rode the Central because of less engine noise going up hills and less brake noise going down. He said he could sleep better on the Central." By 1911 the slogan completed most every Central ad.

Building mass appeal

The great achievement of Daniels' heirs was building the *Century's* mass appeal. The 1912 observation of ad man A. Rowden King best summed it up: "Almost everyone who travels . . . would like to have you believe he just got in town on the *20th Century Limited*." King attributed the *Century's* success to "continuous and systematic advertising." From the beginning, Central had positioned its flyer as a businessman's staple, as necessary as breakfast cereal or soap. PRR, meanwhile, spent more on advertising but did so intermittently and without a consistent theme: "The big difference between the [two trains]



The Century— the world's most famous train

The Twentieth Century Limited, when it inaugurated the 20-hour service between New York and Chicago, brought the two greatest markets of the country within overnight reach of each other. This saving of a business day has been of incalculable value to industry, commerce and finance.

With ceaseless regularity this world-famous train—for more than 7,000 nights—has been making its scheduled flight between the port of New York and the head of Lake Michigan over the water level route of the New York Central Lines.

Travelers whose business takes them frequently back and forth between Chicago and New York

habitually use the "Century" because of its deserved reputation as the most comfortable long-distance, fast train in the world.

The equipment of the "Century" is maintained at the highest standard; its appointments, conveniences and cuisine are planned to meet the desires of the most exacting travelers; it lands its passengers in the heart of Chicago and New York.



New York - Chicago
20-hour service

"Century" Westbound
New York 2:45 p.m.
Chicago 9:45 a.m.

"Century" Eastbound
Chicago 12:40 p.m.
New York 9:40 a.m.

The Twentieth Century Limited is the pride of the employees who operate it and guard it night after night, and it is the standard bearer of a service known the world over as the highest development of railroad transportation.

NEW YORK CENTRAL LINES

BOSTON & ALBANY - MICHIGAN CENTRAL - BIG FOUR - LAKE ERIE & WESTERN
KANAWHA & MICHIGAN - TOLEDO & OHIO CENTRAL - PITTSBURGH & LAKE ERIE
NEW YORK CENTRAL AND SUBSIDIARY LINES

· LIFE ·

A World Wonder

One of the famous and acknowledged wonders of the world today is the great overnight train

20th Century Limited

All-Steel Train

Lv. New York 4.00 p.m.	Lv. Chicago 2.30 p.m.
Lv. Boston 1.30 p.m.	Ar. Boston 11.50 a.m.
Ar. Chicago 8.55 a.m.	Ar. New York 9.25 a.m.

It affords every comfort known to modern travel, and saves a business day. From Grand Central Terminal every day in the year via

New York Central Lines

Railroad and Pullman tickets will be delivered upon request by Special Messenger without extra charge.

Sleeping-Car Accommodations
Railroad and Pullman tickets can be secured at City Ticket Office, 204 Washington Street, Boston; Phone 2140; Port 110; 1215 Broadway, New York; Phone 6110; Madison and 186 Clark Street, Chicago; Phone 700 Hartman.

is the fact that the first is now an American institution," King contended, "while the second is a golden opportunity of great potentiality as yet undeveloped." King sealed his point by quoting a survey in which a Chicago newspaper asked for the name of the world's most famous train; 23,750 of 25,000 respondents answered, "20th Century Limited."

Advertisements promoting the *Century's* 10th anniversary boldly proclaimed the flyer as an integral part in the business life of the nation's two great commercial centers. Headlines named the *Century* the "Ideal Train," "Best Train Service on Earth," "99%⁹⁹ Perfect," and "The Key to the Industrial Life of New York and Chicago." Conversely PRR's claims were exceedingly cautious: One dubbed its Special "A Real Train"; another cited it as merely "An Important Commercial Factor." And, again, Central's claims proved out in the ridership numbers—the *Century* carried two to three times the passengers as its competitor.

Amid these successes, however, technological improvements introduced to increase the flyers' safety and reliability also produced an unforeseen impact. New all-steel cars and heavier locomotives produced forces that snapped brittle rails, inviting doubts about the 18-hour schedule's safety. In November 1912, both railroads returned to a 20-hour timing. PRR took the opportunity to address a perennial source of confusion, renaming its train *Broadway Limited*; Central, meanwhile, sold the more relaxed pace as an opportunity for

Century advertisements from (left to right) 1911, 1903, 1921, and 1910 emphasized the train's service quality, speed, and worldwide fame.

discriminating luncheon aboard its diners.

As the 1910's progressed, the *Century's* growing prominence also secured the advantage of premium advertising placement. Its bi-monthly national newspaper ad increasingly ran adjacent to that of the Santa Fe's *California Limited*, or ATSF's winter-season *de Luxe*. By contrast, heavily advertised competitors—the *Broadway* as well as the transcontinental *Golden State* and *Overland*—received standard run-of-press handling. As the specter of war loomed, Central advertised its flyer as a necessary public service. And few were surprised that the *Century*, but not the *Broadway*, survived the U.S. Railway Administration's World War I tenure. Even so, *Century* ads (along with all other railroad promotion) were discontinued in late 1917, not to resume until October 1921.

With the onset of the 1920's, *Century* ad copy increasingly set the standard to which others were compared. The new decade also brought change in the form of a standard illustration and slogan. Now a charging locomotive and train sped across the page above a bold copyline: "The *Century*—the world's most famous train." As the years passed, the *Century* "carried more passengers . . . than were booked first cabin on all the ships that crossed the Atlantic," and, in a bit of a stretch, the *Graf Zeppelin* flew "As smoothly as the *Century*."

NEW 20TH CENTURY LIMITED



Never before a dining car like this! A never-to-be-forgotten restaurant—a colorful combination of grace and dignity—where passengers will enjoy the wit of famous Century chefs.



The new Century's bar lounge is spacious, comfortable and air-conditioned. Its large windows provide daylight cheerfulness, while at night its unique lens lighting system gives the liveliest of daylight.



The new Century's private drawing room is a spacious living room by day, with full private toilet facilities.



When you are ready to retire you merely lower the bed from the wall. Artificial temperature and ventilation at your device.



The new 20th Century's private drawing room is a spacious living room by day, with full private toilet facilities.

Sensational new air-conditioned streamlined train brings hitherto unknown comforts for New York-Chicago travelers, starting June 15th!

CLEAR THE TRACKS for a stirring new chapter in American travel! On June 15th comes the new, streamlined 20th Century Limited—thrillingly new, from headlight to observation lounge.

On its 35th anniversary America's most distinguished train, in its new, sleek, streamlined beauty, presents many features heretofore unknown in travel of any kind.

Every accommodation in this epoch making train, built by the Pullman-Standard Car Manufacturing Company, will be an individually air-conditioned private room, with complete toilet facilities and clothes locker, air-conditioned with individual temperature and ventilation control, and a really home-like bed. There are new-style compartments, bedrooms, drawing rooms and roomettes—America's first all-room train!

The roomy, air-conditioned dining, bar lounge and observation cars, exterior of locomotive and many new features of the train are designed by Henry Dreyfus, one of America's foremost industrial designers.

As the new Century spreads its way between New York and Chicago—faster than ever before—you are undisturbed by motion or noise of travel, so carefully has this great super-streamlined train been designed and engineered. The new 20th Century Limited, over the famous Water Level Route is built to give you the smoothest, safest ride in America!

NEW YORK—CHICAGO 16 HOURS

Beginning June 15th
 L. N. New York 8:00 P.M. A. Chicago 9:00 A.M.
 L. N. Chicago 8:00 P.M. A. New York 9:00 A.M.
 Daylight Saving Time

THE WATER LEVEL ROUTE
 YOU CAN SLEEP!

NEW YORK CENTRAL SYSTEM MORE THAN EVER — IT PAYS TO RIDE THE CENTURY

But no matter what the message, the two elements, charging locomotive and "The Century" slogan, remained unchanged.

"The appeal to human emotions is just as plain in selling the 20th Century Limited as in selling Palmolive or Lucky Strikes," declared NYC ad agency Lord & Thomas and Logan in 1928. Perhaps longtime director and former President Chauncey M. Depew best understood the connection; it was his inspiration that produced the train's famed red-carpet tradition, which debuted in observance of its "grown-up" 21st birthday.

Indeed, the 1920's marked the apex of the Century's advertising success. Undeniably a substantial portion of Central's business was due to the natural advantage of its Water Level Route. But a good deal also came from the line's astute maintenance of the 20th Century image. As the years passed, Central's assertions increasingly became fact. In 1922 *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the Century had won "undreamed-of success": it now grossed upwards of \$6 million a year and carried four times as many passengers as the *Broadway*. Two years later *Baron's* pegged its earnings at \$7.5 million, noting that "four-fifths of the railroads in the country do not enjoy earnings so large." That put the Century on a par with the entire passenger operations of Seaboard Air Line, Chesapeake & Ohio, or Wabash. Beginning in 1925, the train consistently grossed more than \$10 million annually, accounting for 10 to 12 percent of Central's passenger revenues!

By the Century's 25th anniversary, journalists competed to

burnish its reputation. The *New Yorker*, resolutely partial to the Century's progress down the years, observed that out of all the limiteds serving the city, only it and the *Broadway* seemed "to possess that peculiar swank which compels the patronage of genuinely fastidious travellers—ladies who entertain at bridge while travelling, gentlemen who conduct big business while Pullmanized."

Henry Luce's new weekly, *Time*, marked the anniversary with a cover story titled "The Century." The train's combination of the newest equipment handled by the most senior crews, wrote the reporter, made good on its boast of "most famous . . . in the annals of railroading." The article continued: "Like a smooth serpent, the long steel caravan slides over the rails with a heavy murmur that is broken only by oily sounds as soft and satisfying as the solid *clock* of a custom-made limousine's door as it shuts." By 1927 the Century was all about demeanor; George Daniels couldn't have asked for more.

But it was Christopher Morley, whom Central often quoted in its ads, who waxed most reverent: "And as you walk by that long perspective of windows, you are aware that they are not just a string of ten Pullman cars. They are fused by something even subtler than that liaison of airy pressure that holds them safe. They are merged into personality, become a creature loved, honored, and obeyed."

Even the Century, though, couldn't outrun the Depression. When in November 1929, on occasion of the train's 10,000th

Half a Century of THE CENTURY

FOR FIFTY YEARS... "THE FAVORITE TRAIN OF FAMOUS PEOPLE."



WHO WAS WHO IN 1902. Many noted men and women of the day rode the original 20th Century Limited between New York and Chicago. They included William Jennings Bryan, Booth Tarkington, Theodore Roosevelt, Lillian Russell, J. P. Morgan, Miss Schumann-Heink, "Uncle Joe" Cannon.

WHO'S WHO IN '52. A paragraph is far too brief to call the roll of leaders in business, the professions and the arts who ride this flagship of New York Central's dreamliner fleet. For, year in, year out, daily passenger lists, prepared by the Train Secretaries on *The Century*, read like "Who's Who in America."

New York Central

The Water Level Route—You Can Sleep



DON WOOD

trip, NYC bragged that "in 27 years [it] carried 3,080,000 passengers and grossed over \$100 million, running an average of three sections daily," it could not know that its flyer had reached its apex. By 1932, hard times forced Central to suspend all advertising. When it resumed in fall 1935, ads again sold comfort and speed as always. "It Pays to Ride the Century!" headlines declared, over portraits of prosperous patrons by photographer Edward Steichen.

Streamlining and decline

The landmark year of 1938 proved to be unexpectedly difficult for Central. The protracted economic decline dimmed the inauguration of Henry Dreyfuss' stylish new streamlined edition of the *Century*. Although heavily advertised, the new equipment did little to boost ridership, and the train grossed just a quarter of its of pre-Depression levels.

After World War II, NYC was faced with the prospect of daunting air competition but maintained its tradition of the finest in advertising illustration and typography. A 1950 magazine ad headlined "Unlimited Service" depicted a steward seating a female model dressed by Dior. "Sure as Sundown," the classic 1951 image of patrons making their way down Grand Central's red carpet, was directed and shot by fashion photographer John Rawlings. Female models in other ads wore gowns by Hollywood designer Adrian. Even 1952's golden anniversary maintained the grand manner: two sold-out

Heavy advertising for the 1938 *Century* did little to boost ridership. A 1952 ad mixed likenesses of turn-of-the-century personages with a classic red-carpet photo at Grand Central. By the early '60's, when a GCT gateman raised the train's time-worn sign, the *Century's* heyday was but a memory.

sections lined up beside a replica of 1902's brass-railed observation platform, occupied by likenesses of William Jennings Bryan, J. P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and Lillian Russell.

But advertising alone could not change the inevitable. In reporting the *Century's* 1958 downgrading, in which coaches were added for the first time, *Advertising Age* noted that in the year before, the train had carried 71,896 passengers. At first glance an impressive sum, this amounted to only 112 per trip—roughly that of a single section from the 1920's. NYC's ad agency, J. Walter Thompson, corroborated the decline, noting that the road had cut ad spending by half that same year, to \$1.1 million. Ironically, *Ad Age*, which termed itself "The Nation's Leading Marketing Weekly," deemed the *Century's* December 3, 1967, discontinuance unworthy of mention.

Perhaps most ironically, the Dreyfuss streamlined consists which we best remember today operated in the service for which they were intended for barely a decade. Wartime disruptions and the inroads of air travel caused their premature downgrading. In retrospect, the *20th Century Limited's* greatest years were those of the century's first three decades, a time of few limitations and great dreams. ■



100
YEARS
3 Great
Trains

The Broadway's

After decades as second-fiddle to the *20th Century*, Pennsy's top train hit it big in the post-World War II era

By Joe Welsh

HAD IT OPERATED in any other railroad market, it would have been the unquestioned leader. But between New York and Chicago the Pennsylvania Railroad's *Broadway Limited* lived most of its life in the shadow of New York Central's *20th Century Limited*. That is, until the 1950's, when the *Broadway* began to outdraw the *Century*, and a fateful day in April 1958 when the NYC threw in the towel, consolidating the all-first-class *Century* with a lesser run-



FRANK TATNALL

best years

ning mate. Finally, it was the *Broadway's* turn to shine.

The *Broadway* and the *Century* shared remarkably similar fates, largely a byproduct of the cut-throat competition which characterized their relationship. Introduced on the same day—June 15, 1902—as fast, all-Pullman trains, both flyers were re-equipped at regular intervals. (PRR trains 28 and 29 debuted on that 1902 date as the *Pennsylvania Special*, were suspended from February 1903 until June

1905, and were renamed *Broadway Limited* in 1912.) When one's schedule was shortened, the other's also would be. But while the *Broadway* struggled, even in the flush times of the 1920's, the *Century* was building a reputation as one of the most successful passenger trains in the world. Between 1918 and 1930, the *Century* amassed more prestige and earnings than any other passenger train in history.

To combat the influence of the *Century*, which boasted a 20-

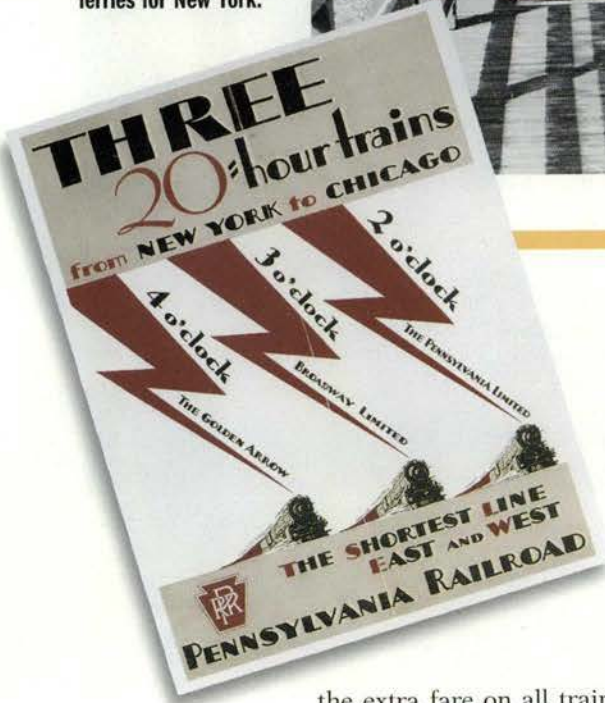
hour schedule, Pennsy established a fleet of three 20-hour trains (including the *Broadway*) in the New York-Chicago market in September 1929. Central followed suit, but the skirmish was soon overshadowed by the impacts of the Depression, which made extra-fare trains difficult to fill. In 1932, Central and Pennsy (now cooperating to reduce unnecessary competition in tough times) jointly reduced their average speeds to yield 21- to 24-hour schedules, and eliminated

At Haverford, 9 miles west of Philadelphia on the Main Line, GG1 4908 rolls the New York-bound *Broadway Limited* past an M.U. commuter train on August 28, 1961.

PRR train 28 stands at North Philadelphia in 1908, when it was still called the *Pennsylvania Special*. Ahead for E2 Atlantic 1973: a fast run up to Jersey City, where passengers boarded ferries for New York.



CLASSIC TRAINS COLLECTION



the extra fare on all trains . . . with the exceptions, of course, of the 18-hour *Broadway* and *Century*. The two flagships each carried a \$10 “service charge,” the term “extra fare” being eliminated from the vocabulary as penny-wise practicality replaced the excesses of the 1920’s.

In the difficult times of the Depression, the few who had the money to pay a service charge gave their business almost exclusively to the *Century*, and the *Broadway* withered. From 1932 to ’36, the *Broadway*’s revenue per train-mile dropped from an al-

ready depressing \$1.29 to \$1.10.

In April 1937, however, PRR struck back, with its most effective step yet to combat the influence of the *Century*, introducing the *General*—a no-extra-fare, coach-and-Pullman New York-Chicago train on a competitive 17-hour, 10-minute schedule. In the words of railroad executive and theorist John W. Barriger III, who tracked the change, “The effect of the ‘General’ was electric. It instantly gained high prestige and popularity which dug deeply into competitive patronage. . . . The 17 hour, 10 minute trains reduced the patronage of the ‘Century’ and ‘Broadway’ [now both 16-hour, 30-minute trains with a \$7.50 service charge] to such an extent that the ‘Century’ was soon running with few *revenue* passengers and the ‘Broadway’ with almost none.”

The numbers told the story. The *General* earned roughly \$3.40 per train-mile in 1937 and \$3.20 in ’38, making it one of the top money-makers in Pennsy’s fleet. By contrast, in 1937 the

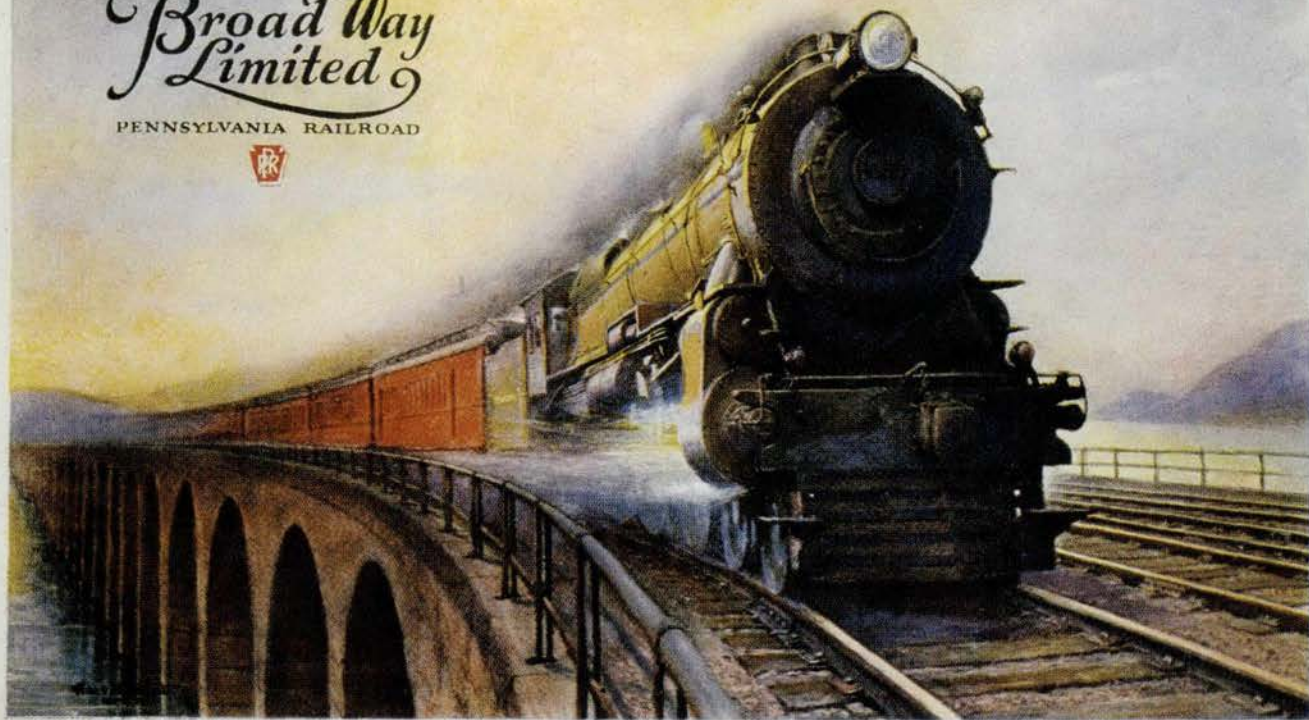
Broadway’s revenue was a mere 97 cents per train-mile. By 1940, despite being re-equipped as a beautiful all-room streamliner two years earlier (on June 15, 1938, the same day the *Century* got new cars), the *Broadway* was earning a pitiful 75 cents per mile. Pennsy’s flagship had hit rock bottom.

Barriger’s better idea

Pennsy really had only two options. One was outright discontinuance, something the company discussed. PRR felt, however, that discontinuing the *Broadway* would cause a loss in prestige and business in excess of any saving to be gained. Barriger, a former Pennsy man, future railroad president, and bona fide operating genius, had a better idea. In a letter to PRR in 1937 referring to the *Broadway*’s extra fare, he said, “The questionable return for this negligible addition to the gross revenues of the P.R.R. is that it operates its finest train at a direct loss. . . . Even more regret-

Broadway Limited

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD



SPEED AND SECURITY

ARTWORK AND BROCHURES, COLLECTION OF JOE WELSH

table, P.R.R. has erected a practical barrier against virtually all its New York to Chicago passengers enjoying its best train because other available schedules are so near the former's standard that the service charge is not justified. . . . Whether it was the conscious object of P.R.R. passenger strategy (as evidenced by the 'General') or not, it is the logic of it to eliminate the New York-Chicago extra fares . . ."

In spite of Barriger's wise advice, it took a war for PRR to make the right choice. On February 7, 1943, to attain maximum loading of equipment, the railroad discontinued the service charge on the *Broadway Limited*. It would never be reinstated.

The turnaround in the *Broadway's* revenues was dramatic. By July 1946, owing to war patronage, the revenue per train-mile of the Pennsy's whole east-west fleet had increased 217 percent since 1940. The *Broadway's* revenue had risen an amazing 525 percent, and the train was earning a healthy \$3.94 per mile.

PRR never looked back. NYC re-equipped the *Century* in September 1948 but continued to charge an extra fare. By March 1949 the *Broadway*, too, boasted a completely re-equipped train with modern accommodations. Included was a postwar version of the "Master Room," Pullman's largest and most lavish accommodation. While master rooms had been offered on the pre-war *Century*, they had been eliminated from the postwar version.

The *Broadway* may have offered more deluxe room accommodations than the *Century*, but some of the frills were missing. One of the interesting side-effects of eliminating the *Broadway's* extra fare was PRR's reduction in special services on the train. For example, when the train's postwar, mid-train "Harbor" series lounge cars were ordered, Pennsy was debating whether to reinstate the extra fare. Barber, bath, and train secretary facilities were included in the cars to provide deluxe service should the extra fare be brought back, but shortly

before the postwar train was inaugurated, PRR's board decided the new *Broadway* would remain a normal-fare train, so the barber, bath, and secretary space was never used. By 1956 the facilities were replaced with revenue bedrooms.

The lack of deluxe services didn't seem to affect the *Broadway's* patronage. Based on a review of the numbers and the correspondence of PRR Executive Vice President James Symes, there is every reason to believe the *Broadway* had eclipsed the *Century* in popularity by the early 1950's. A comparative ridership report for May 1954 shows the *Century* carried an average 119 passengers per trip; the *Broadway*, which had the advantage of serving two large East Coast markets (New York and Philadelphia), carried 140.

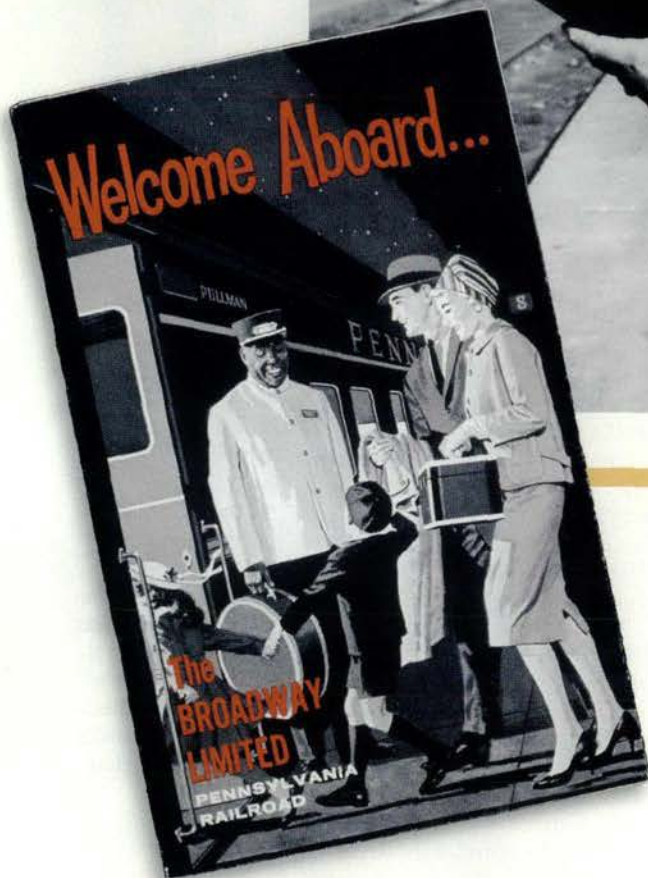
In 1953, Symes exhorted PRR's troops to better performance lest the *Century* try to steal the *Broadway's* passengers: "I happen to know from authentic sources that the New York Cen-

In a postcard made from a painting featured on PRR's 1925 and '26 calendars, a K4 Pacific steams across the Rockville Bridge near Harrisburg, Pa. Used to promote other PRR flyers as well, the image is labeled here for the train which took its name from the road's "broad way" of steel.

Attention to detail helped make the *Broadway* great in the 1950's. Here, PRR's Tom Murphy supervises the make-up of trains in Sunnyside, Pennsy's sprawling New York coachyard.



PRR PHOTO, HAGLEY MUSEUM & LIBRARY COLLECTION



tral are going 'all out' in attempting to re-establish the *Twentieth Century Limited* to its former position in the New York to Chicago service," he wrote. "The patronage of the *Broadway*, together with the favorable comment of the passengers (many of them very important ones) with respect to superior service and more comfortable ride as compared with the *Century*, is causing this improvement drive on

the part of New York Central."

Just how good was the *Broadway*? Listen to its passengers. E. I. du Pont Assistant Director J. W. Brown commented, "Recently (Spring 1956) I took the *Broadway* to Chicago and had plane reservations for the return trip to Philadelphia. The equipment, as usual, was of the best, and the ride was smooth going out, but the service of the train crew, particularly in the diner—the waiters and steward—was such that somehow they made you feel they were glad to have you aboard. Now, as far as I could tell, it was the same group of your employees I have traveled with in the past, but this time something happened—in any event, I was so impressed, I canceled the plane reservation and came back on the *Broadway*, and the trip back was just as nice as in the other direction."

In 1955 Samuel Felton, president of American Car & Foundry, highlighted the personal service of the *Broadway Limited's* crew: "My sleeping-car porter was exceptionally good. Some friends of ours—the Solidays of Philadelphia—lost a key, and the porter even took the trouble to deliver it to them at the Rock Island station some hours later. I know they were most appreciative. . . . As you know, I am traveling almost constantly and it seems to me that over the past years the service on the *Broadway* has come very close to reaching perfection."

Perfection came at a price. Running long-distance trains in the tough Eastern market was no place for the faint of heart. The flying time of the airliner was a small fraction of the running time of a passenger train—and to a businessman, the *Broadway's*

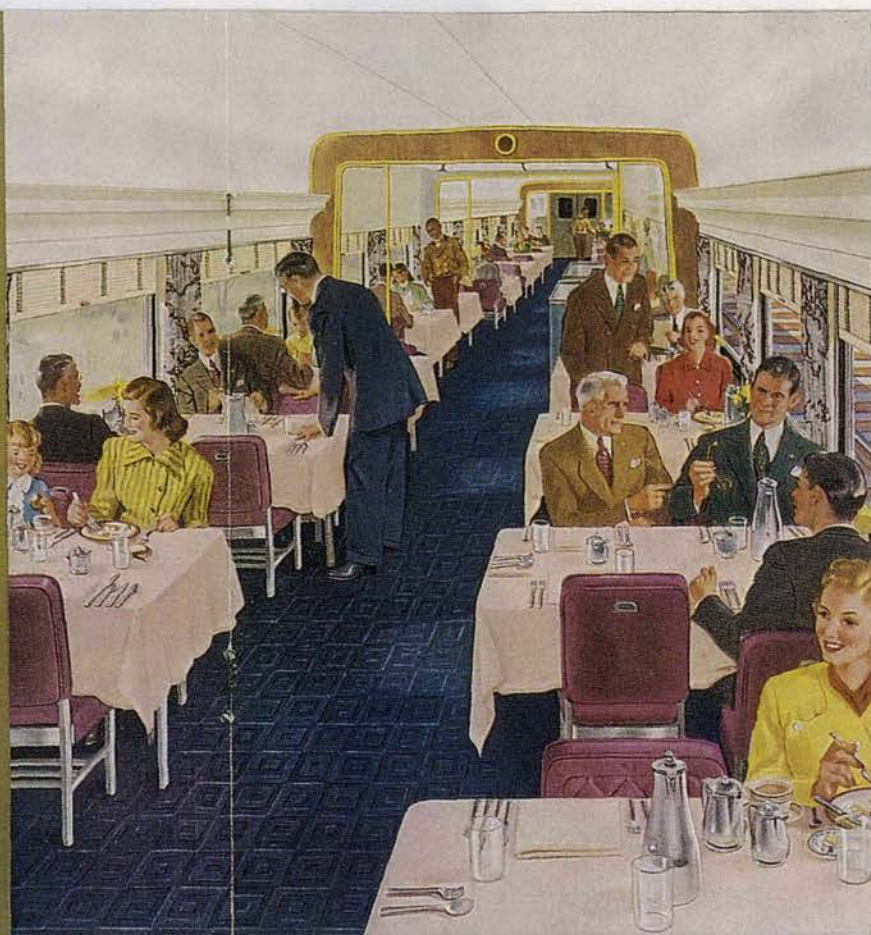
SO INVITING —

THE *Master Dining Car*

You'll detect it the moment you enter . . . sense its significance when the steward greets you. New beauty . . . new spaciousness . . . the *Broadway Limited's* traditional high standard of courteous, meticulous service . . . the festive experience of dining out and the anticipation of delicious food—served you by carefully trained personnel. Pastel-shaded linens, gleaming silverware, the soft harmony of color and charm, the diversified menu—*there's a new treat in dining awaiting you here!*



Fine foods are prepared in the *Broadway Limited's* modern stainless steel kitchen—located in an adjoining car.



main customer, time was money. As operating costs rose and revenues dropped, Pennsy had been suffering huge passenger deficits for years and worked feverishly to eliminate unprofitable trains. By 1956, even the *Broadway* began feeling the pinch. Records for February '56, one of the train's busiest months, indicated that on a fully allocated basis the eastbound *Broadway* ran at a deficit. The combined east- and westbound train earned a slim net profit of about \$11,000.

Cutbacks and bragging

The same problems that affected the *Broadway* hit the *Century* even harder. In the mid-1950's, Central was operating three top trains in the New York-Chicago market and still charging an extra fare on the all-Pullman *Century*. First to go was the deluxe, all-coach *Pacemaker*,

whose coaches were incorporated into the formerly all-Pullman *Commodore Vanderbilt*. Then from August 4 to September 3, 1957, the *Century* and the *Commodore Vanderbilt* were temporarily combined; on April 27, 1958, the combination became permanent. Essentially the *Commodore* was discontinued as its name and train numbers disappeared from the timecard. So did the *Century's* extra fare and its distinctive "Century Club" lounge with barber and train secretary. Now the *Century* carried coaches. The change left the *Broadway* as the only all-Pullman train in the New York-Chicago market.

PRR responded immediately with a campaign entitled "Let's Brag About the *Broadway*," designed to steal the *Century's* passengers. Ticket clerks and sales reps went into high gear. Cars were touched up, maintenance

intensified, an extra sleeper added to the consist, dining-car fare improved, and PRR and Pullman employees made a special effort at courtesy. The all-room *Broadway* remained a beautiful operation despite the chaos and catastrophe which befell its rivals and running mates. Its Tuscan red cars gleamed a little brighter, its staff, at ease in dealing with the great names of the country, exuded an air of friendly competence. There were still flowers on the dining-car tables and waiters in formal white jackets standing at attention as you arrived. Pullman porters remembered your name, brought you coffee and room service when you wanted it, and slipped a memo under your door each morning with the printed weather forecast for your destination—just in case you were wondering how to dress.

At least temporarily, the effort

In a brochure produced to showcase the *Broadway's* 1949 rolling stock—the last new cars it would receive—passengers enjoy a meal aboard the twin-unit diner.



J. W. SWANBERG PHOTO; COLLECTION OF JOE WELSH

On November 19, 1966—just over a year before the *Broadway's* discontinuance—a lone businessman occupies observation-lounge car *Mountain View*.

reversed a downward trend in *Broadway* ridership. According to Pennsy's General Manager of Passenger Sales Earle Comer, "In June 1958, we halted the steady decline in *Broadway* patronage. . . . In the first 12 months of our campaign, the *Broadway* carried 13,000 more passengers than in the previous 12 months." Much of the extra business came from former *Century* patrons who transferred their allegiance to the *Broadway*. One of them was Lucius Beebe, noted author and devoted *Century* man, who said of the *Broadway*, "I personally think it is one of the great trains of all time."

But the ridership trend didn't reverse permanently. In 1958 the airlines introduced the jet airliner, and getting there by air got a lot easier. By 1961 the *Broadway* was earning less than it did in 1956 and costing more to operate. That same year, Symes, now PRR's president, initiated studies

to determine how to combine the *Broadway* with the *General*. Pennsy's goal was the complete elimination of the long-distance passenger train. To put it another way, even the all-Pullman *Broadway*, PRR's flagship train, was expendable.

Pennsy anticipated eliminating the *Broadway Limited* on October 25, 1964, using a state-by-state approach. Employing a similar tactic, it also sought the discontinuance of its only other all-Pullman train, Nos. 60 and 61, the *Pittsburgher* between New York and Pittsburgh. Essentially the *Pittsburgher's* death saved the *Broadway*. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission granted the PRR permission to eliminate 60 and 61, but admonished the railroad not to try the tactics it had used too often. The railroad backed down, and for a time the *Broadway* was safe.

While biding its time with the *Broadway*, PRR attempted to



stem what had once again become a serious decline in ridership. The Pennsy initiated an ad campaign for the train in November 1965 designed to re-educate passengers on the advantages of a great name train while poking fun at the airlines. The ads ran in major magazines and newspapers such as *Time* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The railroad even targeted businessmen's wives by placing a series of ads in *Good Housekeeping*. The clever copy drew positive letters from the public, and the *New York Times* even ran a story about the cam-



ANDREW SPIEKER

paign. But the ads didn't help the *Broadway*. At the start of the effort, the *Broadway* was averaging 70 passengers each direction; one year later it was carrying 54.

Endgame

By spring 1966 PRR was again plotting the consolidation of the *General* and the *Broadway*. Further, the railroad—unwilling to pay operating fees to the Pullman Company any longer—took over operation of local-line sleeping cars effective August 1, 1967 (interline cars remained with Pullman). This ended a 65-year relationship between the *Broadway Limited* and Pullman. That same season, the *Broadway* also lost its Railway Post Office car.

Once again the railroad's accountants sharpened their pencils and got to work defining just why the PRR should be allowed to discontinue the best train in the nation. It turned out, though, that even in 1967 on a direct-cost

basis, the all-room *Broadway* was making a net profit of \$144,000 annually. Of course, using the fully allocated cost logic, operating a passenger train required a host of supporting staff and facilities known as indirect costs which, when added to the equation, completely eliminated the profits. Pennsy argued that by combining the *Broadway* and the *General*, it would save \$1.4 million annually. Permission was granted to discontinue trains 28 and 29, the *Broadway Limited*, effective December 13, 1967. Its name was transferred to Nos. 48 and 49, and the name *General* disappeared from the timetable.

To its credit, PRR operated 28 and 29 in the grand manner to the bitter end. The consist wasn't diluted with coaches, and the service was never downgraded. Patrons could still enjoy the special comforts of an all-room train, sip a cocktail in the observation lounge, and sample excel-

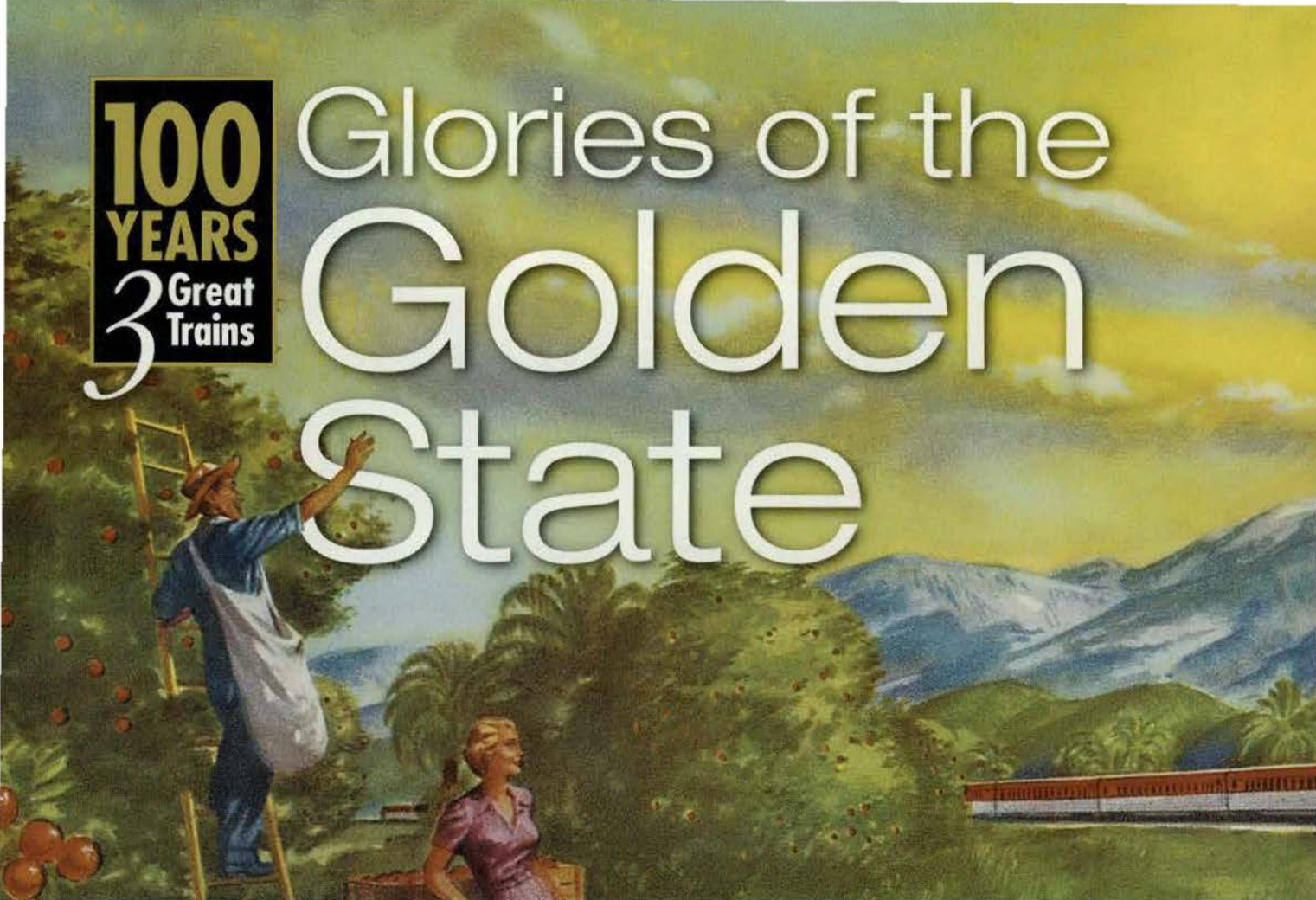
lent entrees such as prime rib in the twin-unit dining car right up to the day the train came off. Despite the fact that it was living on borrowed time, the *Broadway*, like a fine wine, just got better with age. Perhaps Pennsy maintained the train as a symbol of what a great transportation organization could do—even if it couldn't afford to keep it running forever. Poignantly, one of the ads produced for the train in that desperate last stand of 1966 asked "... don't you sometimes wistfully remember the *Broadway Limited*?" Rest well, Pennsy, we remember. ■

POSTSCRIPT: The Broadway Limited name would survive the Pennsylvania Railroad, which merged with NYC in 1968, to be used by both Penn Central and Amtrak. In 1972, the Broadway became the first train completely refurbished by Amtrak, which discontinued the train on September 10, 1995.

Still sporting its two-tone prewar equipment, train 28 pulls out of Englewood, Ill. The time is August or September 1948—the *Broadway's* best years are just beginning.

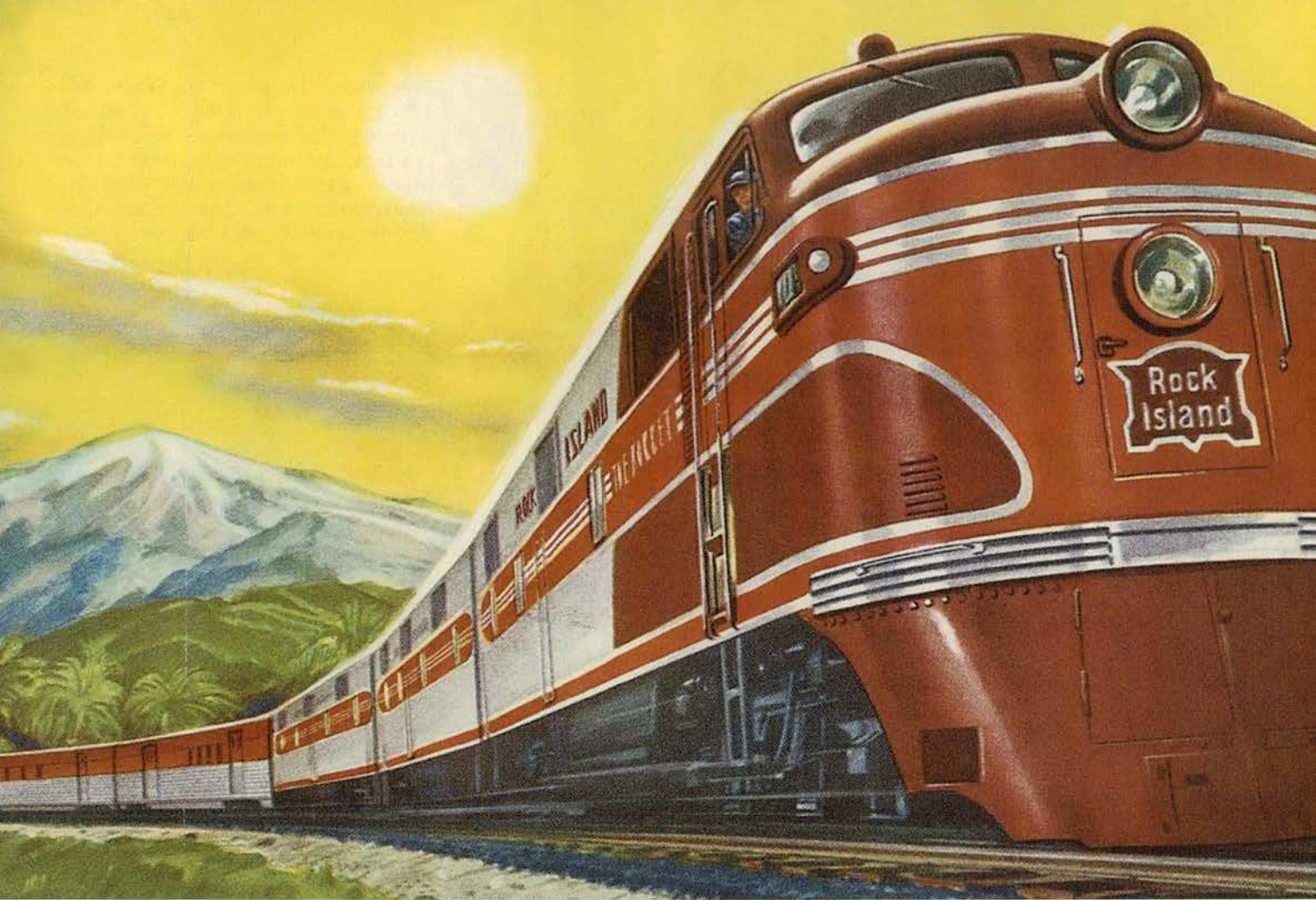
**100
YEARS**
**3 Great
Trains**

Glories of the Golden State



Though it lived in the shadow of other Chicago-to-California trains, the Rock Island-Southern Pacific flyer was luxurious, colorful, and long-lived

By Warren Taylor
Illustrations from the author's collection



AMONG CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES luxury trains, the *Golden State Limited*, operated by Rock Island and Southern Pacific, might not have been as famous as its Santa Fe and Union Pacific competitors, but it was one of the nation's longer-lasting name trains. Like its top-of-the-line Eastern contemporaries, the *20th Century* and the *Broadway*, it made its first run 100 years ago as an all-Pullman, extra-fare flyer. Yet unlike those other great names, "Golden State" achieved permanence as the name of the train's route, especially across the nation's mid-section.

Even today, owner UP employs the name for its freight route, but previous to the train's November 2, 1902, launch by RI and a somewhat reluctant SP, the new route was known by the Rock Island as the "El Paso Short Line." The portion between El Paso, Texas, and Tucumcari, N.Mex., had just been completed, on February 1, 1902, and the Rock Island in particular was eager to tap into the growing demand for direct service between the Midwest and Arizona and southern California.

Creation of the Golden State Route

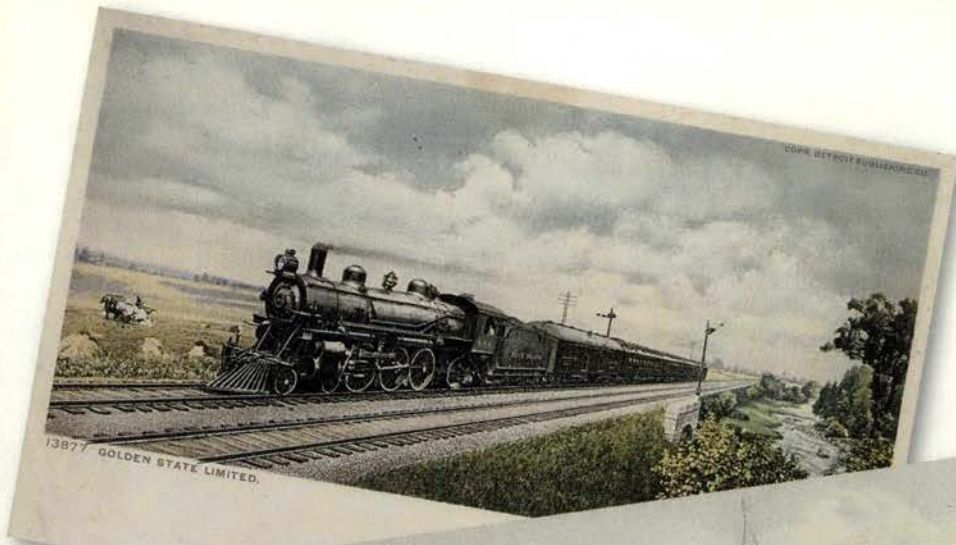
was a product of the nation's general westward expansion, but SP had built eastward from Los Angeles. It reached El Paso in 1881 and soon connected with the Texas & Pacific east of there, at Sierra Blanca, Texas, to form the nation's second transcontinental route. Meantime, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific was building southwest from Kansas and met the El Paso & Northeastern, part of Phelps-Dodge Corporation's El Paso & Southwestern system, at Santa Rosa, N.Mex. The Chicago & Rock Island, dating from 1847, was the first railroad to bridge the Mississippi River; it became the CRI&P in 1866.

The Southern Pacific bought the EP&SW system in 1924. Although ownership of the Golden State Route changed at Santa Rosa, as the railroads matured, they established Tucumcari as the operational interchange point, and SP leased the 128-mile Santa Rosa-Tucumcari portion from RI.

3 days a week, 66 hours

The new *Golden State Limited*, train Nos. 3 and 4 for most of the service's 66-year run, operated three days a week, offering first-class equipment

Rock Island E7's speed the *Golden State* through a California landscape in artwork from a 1951 brochure promoting the newly streamlined train.



Postcard views from about 1909 show the *Golden State* behind a 4-6-2 on the Rock Island and eastbound at El Paso on the SP. Brasswork glitters on the platform railing and the GOLDEN STATE tailsign in a 1920's publicity photo. Boldly lettered bridge carries train 3 over the South Canadian River west of Logan, N.Mex., in May 1941.



growing popularity of the passenger service on their competitor to the north, so when Santa Fe announced its new, ultra-fast *California Fast Mail*, SP and RI decided to re-think their *Golden State Limited*. It should be noted that at the time, many of the passenger trains to the Southwest were regarded as seasonal, to be re-invented yearly. The area was not yet highly populated, and most train service was not daily—even SP's New Orleans-Los Angeles *Sunset Limited* ran only once a week.

From the beginning, advertising aimed to set the *Golden State* apart from its competitors. The train's southerly route and low-altitude crossing of the Continental Divide were promoted as desirable features, especially in winter. Nevertheless, it was not immune from weather problems. The snowbelt of southwestern Kansas and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas complicated wintertime schedule-keeping on many occasions.

The route between Hutchinson, Kans., and Tucumcari, though, was flat and straight, enabling high speeds. One portion, from Guymon, Okla., to Dalhart, Texas, was a perfect tangent of almost 72 miles, the second longest in the U.S. behind Seaboard's route in North Carolina to Wilmington.

Several years went by before the roadbed problems of the route, especially between Pratt, Kans., and El Paso, were ironed out. Grades were lessened and curvature was eased, allowing higher speeds with greater safety. Rock Island's goal was to have no grade in excess of 0.5 percent between Chicago and Dalhart.

A new start

In summer 1904, when Santa Fe advertised its new train and the *Golden State* partners began talks to resuscitate their new limited, the negotiations were anything but smooth. Rock Island wanted a separate *Golden State* west of El Paso, not a train combined with the *Sunset Limited*. Southern Pacific wanted to use the new train as an excuse to discontinue a local, which distressed cities along the route. As it turned out, the joint SP-RI trains used the southern

and service from the start. A companion train, Nos. 29 and 30, operated between Chicago and El Paso, offering chair-car and tourist-sleeper service, but it should be noted that both trains were a year behind the Santa Fe in offering through Chicago-El Paso passenger service.

The November 2, 1902, first run was made with much fanfare and corporate pride, at least on Rock Island's part. The consist was a baggage-combine, a dining car, and three Pullman sleeping cars. One sleeper went to the San Francisco area via SP's San Joaquin Valley line. The stateroom Pullman went only to Los Angeles, while the observation-sleeper went through Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, Calif., on SP's Coast Line. A stateroom ticket from Chicago to Los Angeles cost \$53. The service required 10 trainsets and was scheduled for 66 hours from Chicago to L.A.

The *El Paso Herald* reported that one of the first trains in from Chicago sported such a fine dining car that it was made open to the public in El Paso during the hour-long station stop. The car

boasted individual electric lights at each table and custom-marked silver, china, and glassware. El Pasoans were invited to meet chef Pierre Albeyre, who had been recruited from Chicago's Blackstone Hotel. Rock Island did not interchange the dining car with SP, turning it back eastward at El Paso.

The train's beginnings were fraught with more problems than its already-established competitors (in later years, Chicago travel agents sarcastically called the *Golden State* "the overflow *Chief*"). Much of the roadbed had been hastily laid; some bridges were of un dependable construction; and wet weather caused washouts. Two rivers were the big culprits: the Cimarron near Liberal in far southwestern Kansas and the Canadian near Logan in eastern New Mexico. Further, SP and Rock Island seemed to be at odds frequently on basics such as level of service, operating frequency, and schedule. Plagued with deficits while trying to remain all-first-class, the train was canceled for the 1903-04 winter.

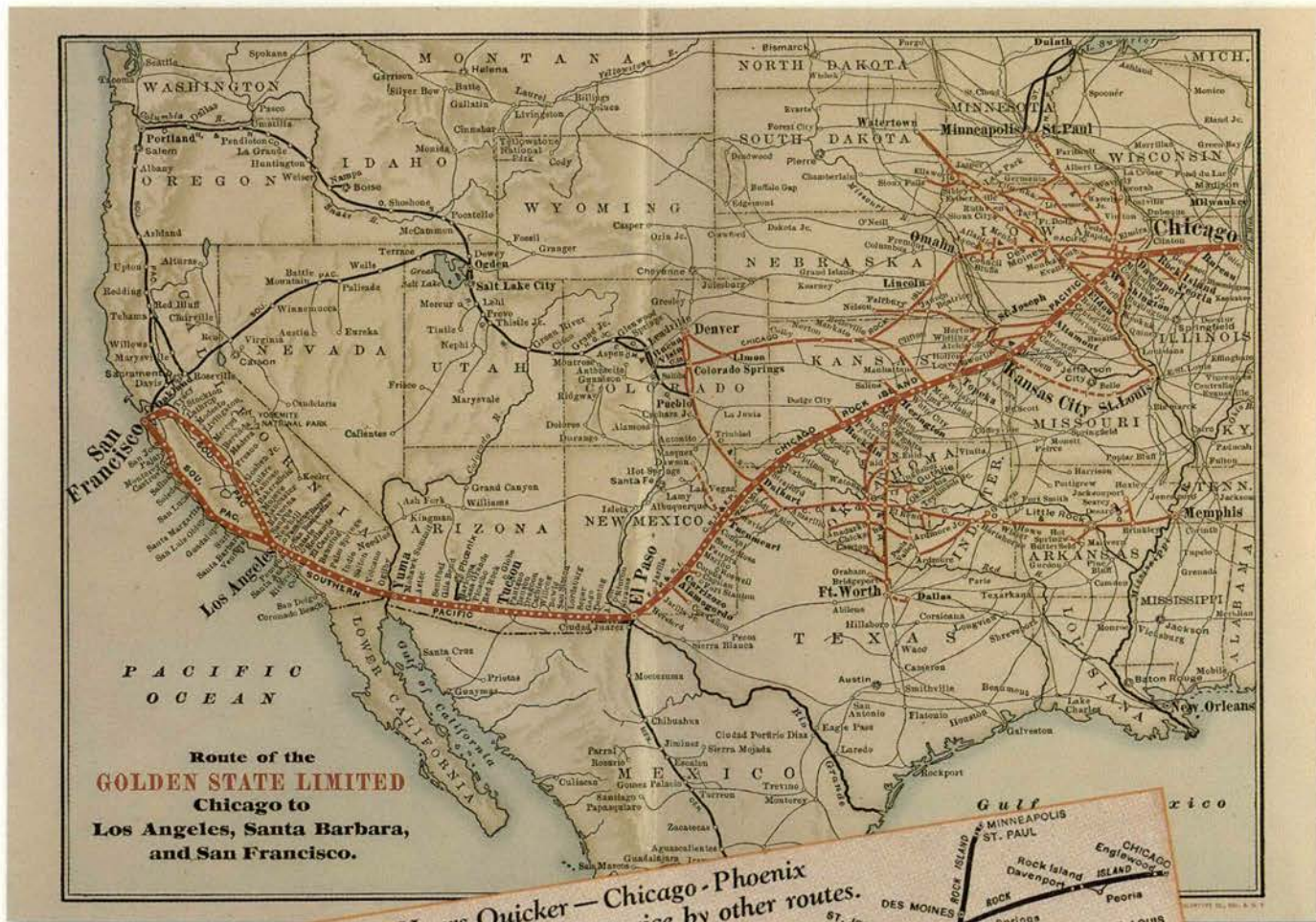
The hiatus would be short-lived. SP and Rock Island were very aware of the



WARREN TAYLOR COLLECTION



CARL J. BACHMANN



Route of the **GOLDEN STATE LIMITED** Chicago to Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Francisco.



Maps dating from 1902, 1936, and 1951 show the Golden State's Chicago-Los Angeles main route, including the variations west of El Paso. Through-car services to and from points beyond the State's main stem also are indicated.

EP&SW route via Douglas, Ariz., while SP's own trains such as the *Sunset Limited*, and later the *Argonaut*, used the northern line via Deming and Lordsburg, N.Mex. Advertising began in October for the return of the deluxe, fast *Golden State Limited*, as the partners were satisfied they would successfully compete with the Santa Fe, even if with only one train.

The revised and improved train debuted on Christmas Day 1904, on better tracks and with a faster schedule. The first westbound *Golden State* arrived in

El Paso with six mail cars, a combination baggage-buffet car, a tourist sleeper, and three Pullmans. With the mail cars and tourist sleeper, the train may not have been totally first-class, but the two railroads had better expectations for it in terms of its cash flow. The equipment was completely new and almost totally booked.

Gradually, equipment changed from wood to steel, and new advances in air-conditioning made year-round service sensible. (Passenger traffic through the deserts of New Mexico and Arizona had been at a minimum during the heat of summer. Dining cars were first to be air-

conditioned, followed by sleeping cars and lounges, and finally, in the 1930's, chair cars.) Full-length diners became part of every consist, and the popular observation car included a library and sitting room, which featured a Victrola concert every afternoon. The train also offered valet service, a barber, and a shower chamber with an ante room for changing, and a "gentlemen's smoking club" room.

With prosperity on its side, Rock Is-



D. L. INGERSOLL PHOTO; GORDON BASSETT COLLECTION

land launched an aggressive ad campaign to promote the train. Stone Van Dresser produced first-rate illustrations, mostly in charcoal drawing form, for a full spectrum of periodicals. This campaign did much to promote snob appeal. Most brochures for the *Golden State Limited* listed golf, tennis, and polo facilities, and of course, country clubs in California. In summer 1924, group tours were organized and special rates offered to help fill the train. As a result, on May 22 of that year, the first effective date of the new rate, a record nine sections of the *Golden State* left Chicago. This “top-drawer” approach carried over to employee pride. In

years attempted to be the “Handsomest Train in America” and was strictly first-class, some off-seasons saw the addition of tourist sleepers and chair cars, though they were not promoted or advertised. In the early years, unassigned space—a berth or a room—could be sold by the conductor as day space.

As the train’s popularity grew toward the end of its first decade, and with both roads’ desire to keep the *Limited* as first-class as possible, they added another train, the *Californian*. Later called the *Golden State Express*, this “adjunct train,” as the companies phrased it, featured more tourist sleepers and chair cars. During much of its life, this additional train was scheduled 15 to 30 minutes behind the flagship, emulating Santa Fe’s postwar *Super Chief* and *El Capitan*. The *Californian* had more stops, so as the trains reached the far end of their journeys, the times between them lengthened. At other times, the trains ran as morning and afternoon opposites. For most of the years, the *Californian* used SP’s North Line west of El Paso. In 1946, the *Californian* was replaced by the *Imperial*, offering sleeping cars and a diner between Chicago and Los Angeles, but with a schedule that allowed it to be the route’s mail-hauling workhorse.

In advertising the *Golden State*, Rock Island promoted it as a deluxe, high-quality service. The route was 2281 miles versus Santa Fe’s via Albuquerque of 2246, so speed was not unimportant, but the push was to present a train of uncommon quality. From its early 66-hour schedule, the *Golden State*’s timing was reduced in 1946 to 49 hours westbound and 48 hours eastbound. After total streamlining was

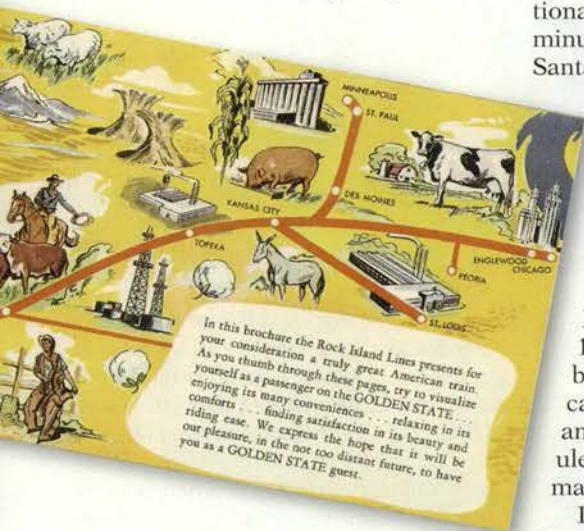
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A grounded Rocket

The *Golden State* was remodeled and re-equipped on an average of about once every 10 years. The final major makeover took place after World War II, the result of a companion streamliner that was never launched—the *Golden Rocket*. Planned amid the postwar passenger-train euphoria, the *Golden Rocket* was to be a triweekly train on 39½-hour schedule between Chicago and Los Angeles. Two trainsets, one owned by each partner, would be required. Full-color magazine ads announced the new silver-and-vermilion train, to debut in 1947, and Rock Island’s set of equipment was delivered by Pullman-Standard. For reasons never widely detailed, though, SP abruptly changed its mind and backed out of the deal before its cars were built. Relettered, Rock Island’s *Golden Rocket* cars, though, would be employed right into the last days of RI’s intercity service in the 1970’s.

Instead of a *Golden Rocket*, the partners made the *Golden State* into a silver-and-vermilion lightweight streamliner, perhaps the *Golden State*’s handsomest version. As a streamliner, the word “Limited” was dropped from the name. This enhanced train sported RI observation cars, a full-length diner and lounge for first-class passengers, and an “El Cafe” grill-lounge for coach passengers (who could, if they chose, patronize the main dining car)—but no dome



March and June 1925, the train posted a perfect on-time record.

With a desire for further flexibility and to help fill the train in the slack season, Rock Island started selling “Hundred Mile Tickets” on the *Golden State*, which allowed a passenger to travel to any on-line point within 100 miles. While the *Golden State* in its earlier



SANTA FE

At Tucumcari, N.Mex., an A-B-A set of SP E units backs down to No. 3, replacing an A-B set of RI E's. Obs car *La Mirada*, lettered for the stillborn *Golden Rocket*, was exhibited (with grill-lounge *El Cafe*) at the 1948 Chicago Railroad Fair.

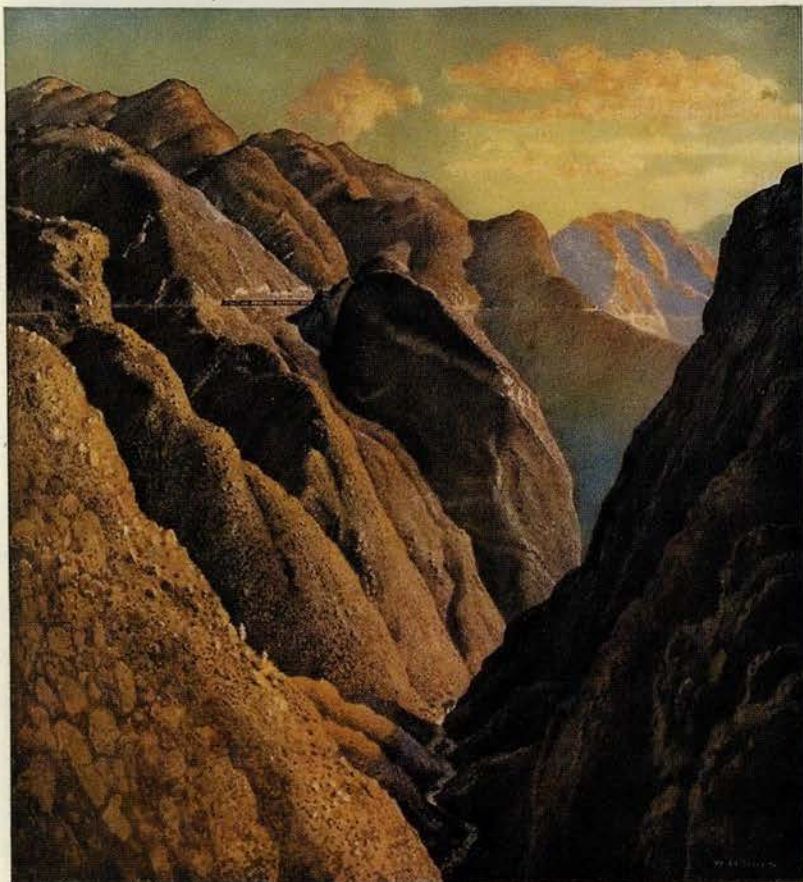
cars. On the middle segments of its route, the stunning train would operate with as many as seven sleepers and five chair cars.

The lightweight cars' interiors were decorated in the colors of the Southwest. Exterior letterboards bore the "Golden State" name, and the coaches and sleepers were all named in the *Golden* series. SP and Rock Island both continued to custom-order the "Golden State" china pattern for dining-car serv-



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To St. Louis, San Diego, and St. Paul



California's Newest Scenic Marvel, the Wonderful Carrizo Gorge, on San Diego Short Line "Golden State" Route—Many Miles the Shortest to San Diego.

ice, by that time one of the oldest existing patterns. Ever economical, though, Rock Island also continued to utilize the limited quantity of *Golden Rocket* dining-car china, with which car *El Comedor* had been stocked when built; the surviving pieces have become valued collectibles.

The final revision of *Golden State* equipment occurred in 1959 when RI purchased two surplus buffet-lounge cars from New York Central. After that, RI just leased equipment from other lines when necessary, and toward the end did not bother to change the exterior or interior colors of the original owner. With the tide turning against the passenger train, RI in 1963 combined

DURING THE *Golden State's* 66 years of service, many Pullman car connections were made with other routes. Sleeping cars from Minneapolis rolled south to Kansas City on Rock Island's Mid-Continent route, a connection that lasted almost to the end of service. Early on, to promote the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, a car for St. Louis connected in Kansas City, originally staying on the Rock Island but later taking the Missouri Pacific. This car line finished its career, in the streamline era, on the *Colorado Eagle*. Also in the early days, during winter season, *Golden State* sleepers to and from Dallas and Fort Worth would interchange with the T&P at El Paso. An obvious sleeper connection was at Tucumcari to and from Rock Island's own Choctaw Route to Little Rock and Memphis. In the heavyweight era, *Golden State* cars also ran to and from San Diego via scenic Carrizo Gorge (illustrated above in a 1922 route guide).

After World War II, during the last revamping of the *Golden State's* equipment and Rock Island's right of way, both New York Central and Pennsylvania, on alternating days of the week, made direct connections with through cars in Chicago [see "Postwar Transcontinental Trains—Close, but No Cigar," pages 30-39 in *TRAINS CLASSIC* 1999]. This arrangement lasted until 1951. Probably the *Golden State's* most obscure connecting sleeping-car line was one between El Paso and Denver via Dalhart, interchanging at that Texas crossroads with Burlington Route's Fort Worth & Denver/Colorado & Southern. The car was advertised as "Here today . . . there Tomorrow" and offered a \$35 round trip. Toward the end of *Golden State* service in the 1960's, when SP combined the train with the *Sunset Limited* west of El Paso, there was again a Los Angeles sleeper connection with T&P to Dallas.—Warren Taylor



the *Golden State* and *Rocky Mountain Rocket* between Chicago and Rock Island, and similarly in 1964, SP combined the *Sunset Limited* with the *Golden State* between El Paso and Los Angeles. (By state order, a two-car remnant ran for a time between L.A. and Niland, Calif.)

West of El Paso, the *Golden State* shifted routes for the final time when SP installed CTC signaling on its North Line between El Paso and Tucson in the late 1950's. SP abandoned the old EP&SW line via Douglas in December 1961.

The *Golden State's* connecting sleepers began to disappear, as well, and after 1964, the last year Rock Is-

land turned a profit, the two partners began to significantly downgrade the service. Always the train's more committed of the two partners, Rock Island seemed the more reluctant, and did not subject the *State* to carrying piggyback freight as it did the *Rocky Mountain Rocket*. Yet, the custom-made marmalade SP and RI had for the morning toast was gone, and the full-length diner was dropped in favor of a grill-lounge car. For 1966, Rock Island suffered a loss of \$576,000 in operating the train, and with the loss of mail contracts, the train's 1967 loss approached an unacceptable \$1.4 million.

Golden memories

My only glimpse of the once-great *Golden State* came in fall 1967. I was driving to a student-teaching position in Hutchinson, Kans., one morning and saw the train approaching fast near Inman. The consist still had the front-end menagerie of mail and express cars, and the passenger section had dwindled to six cars, including some from Chesapeake & Ohio, which helped present a rag-tag image. Little did I know that day how rare my encounter would be—

Dressed in the striking livery of the *Golden State* cars, SP E7's roar east at Nicklin, Calif., in January 1948. RI E's bring No. 3 into Rock Island, Ill., in February 1967; though it still carries an extra fare, the *State* has only a year to live.

the train came and went almost before I knew what I was watching. It was a far cry from the days when a 12- to 15-car streamliner would slice through the Kansas prairies like a knife.

If one marks the 1902 date as the beginning of *Golden State Limited* service, with its final run on February 21, 1968, the train completed 66 years, making it one of the longest-lasting American named trains. The *Golden State* left us with quite a history, and generally happy memories. It had its devotees, ranging from the Rockefellers to big-league athletic teams. It was the funeral train for Rudolph Valentino. It was the train my parents rode on several occasions to conventions in the East. It was a train without much of an identity gimmick or advertising twist. In many ways, the train was the consummate Western limited, then streamliner.

A century after its inception, remember the *Golden State*. ■



See more *Golden State* brochures and other items from author Warren Taylor's collection at our website,
classictrainsmag.com



FRANK PETERSON PHOTO; ALAN MILLER COLLECTION



JIM NEUBAUER