



In 1937 EMC built six early streamlined TA diesels for the Rock Island, Nos. 600-605. Here, 604 is mated to an F7B at Omaha in July 1953. Brian M. Schmidt collection

# EMC's TA: A Locomotive That Kind of Didn't

An early passenger diesel, the TA was a Rock Island oddity

**If it looks and sounds** like an early EMC E-series streamlined diesel passenger locomotive, there is a good chance it is. But don't bet the family farm.

The locomotive in question is the EMC TA diesel, a one-off design built specifically to power Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific's new *Rocket* streamliners, a series of semi-articulated trainsets built by the Budd Co. in 1937. Six units were built, numbered 601-606, in 1937. (EMC, or Electro-Motive Corp., became GM's Electro-Motive Division, or EMD, in 1941.)

Despite their similarity in design, once you know they exist, the TA units are easy to tell apart from Es. They were physically a little smaller, with recessed headlights and two-axle trucks. Inside hummed a standard Winton 201A V16 diesel, like the company was offering in other locomotives. The 201A, in this application rated at 1,200 hp, was succeeded by the 567 design that powered the majority of EMD's first-generation locomotives.

The TA factory paint scheme was a snazzy maroon, red, and silver design with liberal amounts of stainless steel to match the accompanying passenger cars. It was never clear if the TA was a special design for the *Rocket* trains or if it was just not marketed to other railroads.

Over their operating careers, the TAs were very successful, proving to be dependable little work horses. As they aged, the railroad

added larger number boards and a grating light in the nose to complement the original headlight. For ease of maintenance, over the years the stainless steel went away, as did the flexible diaphragm between the back of the locomotive and the first passenger car.

Normally, nearly unique locomotives such as these see their original assignments disappear, and the locomotives themselves usually follow suit. As more modern power and shifting passenger-car directives changed, the TA units eventually found themselves as standalone locomotives assigned to the Rock Island's general passenger and commuter fleet. All six wound up on locals and commuter trains radiating out of Chicago until they eventually were retired in the late 1950s.

All six EMC TA diesel locomotives were scrapped. — *David Lustig*



The Rock Island's TA diesels appear at first glance like early E units, but they are shorter and ride on four-wheel trucks. Rock Island