

## History Behind GN #1355 for GNRHS Website

*The following information is a short detail of history behind the Great Northern Railway steam engine #1355. This information is displayed on the GNRHS website, so that others may gain an appreciation for the only engine of its kind left in the world. GN #1355 is a nationally recognized historical industrial treasure. \*\*\* This information updated 2-23-09. \*\*\**

October 16, 1909 – On this date, after being built at the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, PA, Engine #B1477 (#33908) coal burning radial stay boiler, was fired up and tested. It was one of 25-E14 class 4-6-0 engines to be built by BLW, for the GN. The 25-E14's were shipped to St. Paul, MN to the Dale St. Shops. On November 13, 1909, Dale St. GN workers fired the boiler again to test it. On November 19<sup>th</sup> it was ready after inspections and was given the number of #1020. It was a numbered series from GN that ran from #1008-1032. #1020 was sent directly to work in the Hillyard, WA region. In August, 1919, #1020 was sent to Spokane, WA Division passenger service until Feb. 19, 1924 when it would become a future historical engine. That is the date it was rolled into the Dale St. Shops for a major rebuild. The other 24 E14's would also become new H5 class engines in time. #1020 would be the 8<sup>th</sup> E14 to be rebuilt to an H5 4-6-2. It would receive 23.5"x 30" cylinders, Belpaire boiler at 210 psi, type "A" header super heater tubes, larger fire box, longer boiler, Delta trailing trucks, pilot wheels replaced with solid wheels, brake modifications, new paint and converted from coal fired to fuel oil fired. (The change between coal and fuel oil would happen 4 times in its career, ending with fuel oil).

When it was rolled out of the plant on May 29, 1924, it was now numbered #1494 & had been converted from fuel oil to coal fired. The rebuild cost was \$32,118.96 total. In 2008 dollars, that would be \$391,888.44 total. Through interviews and records from Engineer's and Firemen, it was unanimous that the H5's, with the added power and traction, were compared to be as strong, faster and more economical than the 2-8-2, O1 class engines on the GN. Then, #1494 started to run on the Willmar Division (Old St. Cloud). It is believed that it pulled the "Gopher" passenger train.

January 1925, #1494 was put in the Dale St. Shops. It received a "Booster" (*This and the Delta trucks would be removed in May-June 1929*). On April 10, 1926, #1494 was renumbered to #1355 and converted again from coal fired to fuel oil fired. The number series now ran from #1350-1374. #1494 was the last H5 to be renumbered from the 1400 series into the #1350-1374 bracket. It was then sent to the Butte Division. GN #1355 was assigned to handle the "Oriental Limited" for about 5 years. In its career, it is known that it handled the "Empire Builder" as well as the "Winnipeg Limited" from 1944-49 (by eyewitness accounts). GN #1355 also pulled the "Oriental Limited", the #223 local from Williston to Havre, and Snowden to Bainville, MT route. It is believed that it also handled the "Cascadian", and "Gopher".

#1355 ran passenger service until about 1950. In 1953, #1355 was sent into the Mesabi Iron Ore Range for hauling ore. With the closing of the steamer age, #1355 was retired in 1955 after 46 years and awaited the torch. In late 1954, a letter from Mr. I.W. Reck of Sioux City, IA, reached GN, requesting they donate a steamer to the city as a tribute to the railroad workers that were and are yet, a major part in the industrialization and expansion of the U.S.A. The request was granted on June 6, 1955. In July 1955, #1355 was cleaned, then brought from the Kelly Park, MN area to the southernmost part of GN's lines in Sioux City, IA. It was placed on outside display July 14, 1955. In 1984, a group, of city and business leaders, retired railroad men and interested volunteers, formed a group called the Siouxland Historical Railroad Association to save #1355. This was spearheaded by Larry Obermeyer, Sr. of Sioux City, IA.

In mid 1984, many volunteers moved #1355 and Tender #1451 to the old IC Shop site. Work was begun and in 1995, the operation was moved across town to the former Milwaukee Railroad Shops and Roundhouse. The site had seriously deteriorated. It was a salvage yard with many trees and weeds. Volunteers, besides working on the engine, commenced to clean the site up. A grant was issued and a new roof was placed on the roundhouse over #1355 and tender #1451 along with masonry tucking and new windows. The entire site has been saved and so has GN #1355 and Tender #1451. In 2008, #1355 sits dry, on static display with new paint, boiler skirting, piping, interior works and components cleaned and/or rebuilt on both units. It sits absolutely proud and ready for visitors and pictures. It is an official project of the Federal, "Save America's Treasures Program", by the White House and the National Trust of Historic Preservation.

**"Of all the surviving steam locomotives in the U.S.A., only Great Northern Railway Steam Locomotive #1355 is the best remaining national resource to illustrate the historical associations between the railroads and the National Park Service, along with the historical development of visitation to the National Parks".**