

Union Pacific and U.S. Presidents



From Abraham Lincoln to George H.W. Bush

Beginning with Abraham Lincoln, presidents recognized that railroads were vital to America's growth, and their policies helped ensure that railroads served communities across the nation. The railroads carried coal and cows, cotton and cantaloupe. They also carried presidents, and their messages, to the American people.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Lincoln created Union Pacific by signing the Pacific Railway Act of July 1, 1862, authorizing construction of America's first transcontinental railroad.

Union Pacific acquired the Lincoln funeral rail car in 1866 and later sold the car but preserved many of its furnishings and accoutrements. Union Pacific's Lincoln collection contains many of the items removed from the Lincoln car and is on display at the Union Pacific Railroad Museum in Council Bluffs, IA.

RUTHERFORD HAYES

Hayes was present during the 1866 celebration when Union Pacific reached the 100th meridian as part of the transcontinental railroad construction.

He took the first transcontinental railroad trip to California and back, traveling on the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, Western Pacific and Central Pacific railroads.

ULYSSES GRANT

While campaigning in 1868, Grant was the first person who became president to see the true western United States, traveling from Washington, D.C., to Denver. He wrote to his wife, "This will probably be the last chance I will ever have to visit the plains, and the rapid settlement is changing the character of them so rapidly, that I thought I would avail myself of the opportunity to see them."

CHESTER ARTHUR

In July 1883, Arthur traveled to Yellowstone on Union Pacific president Sidney Dillon's private car.

WARREN HARDING

Harding traveled more than 32,000 miles while in office from 1921-1923. His 1923 trip, on which he eventually died while in San Francisco, was particularly significant for Union Pacific. Harding's train was the first to travel on the new track laid to Cedar City, Utah, which provided access to the state's new national parks at Zion, Bryce Canyon and Cedar Breaks.

Union Pacific and U.S. Presidents *(continued)*

HARRY TRUMAN

After Truman's June 1948 trip that by most accounts helped him win re-election over Thomas Dewey, Truman sent the following note to new Union Pacific president George Ashby:

It was such a comfort on my recent West Coast trip to be so well taken care of by you and the employes (sic) of the Union Pacific Railroad Company that I feel compelled to send this assurance of my deep appreciation. The many thoughtful courtesies extended by all of you to Mrs. Truman, Margaret and me certainly made our trip most enjoyable and we want you and your employees to know how grateful we are for your kindness to us. /s/ Harry S. Truman

DWIGHT EISENHOWER

Union Pacific was part of the effort to bring Eisenhower back to Kansas upon his death in 1969. The railroad was responsible for transporting the president on the Kansas City- to-Abilene leg.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH

In September 1992, and again in October, George H.W. Bush took two campaign trips by rail totaling five days across six states – the most extensive presidential campaign trip since 1964 and the longest rail trip for an incumbent president since Truman. By 1992, only a handful of premium rail passenger cars were still in existence, including those loaned by Union Pacific for President Bush's train: the Selma, Walter Dean, City of Portland, Challenger, Overland, City of Los Angeles, Sunshine Special, Portland Rose, Texas Eagle, and City of Salina. Security kept crowds away from the tracks, to the disappointment of the president.

He said of his trip, "I love the American people, and this train trip is fantastic. You get outside of that Beltway, you take your case to genuine Americans."