



THE COUNCIL BLUFFS

Baggage Recreation Car – Stabled at Council Bluffs

The *Council Bluffs* originally was built as postal storage car No. 5769 for Union Pacific. Details of its early history are not available. It was converted for use as a baggage recreation car for a special train sent to the U.S. political conventions in 2000.

Abraham Lincoln designated Council Bluffs, Iowa, as the Eastern Terminus for Union Pacific in 1863 and it remained so for 130 years, until the merger with the Chicago and North Western in 1995. As railroads from the East arrived in Council Bluffs in 1867, their tracks ended at river's edge. Locomotives, cars and other supplies were then ferried across the Missouri River to Union Pacific tracks on steamboats. When the railroad bridge over the Missouri River was completed in March 1873, the final link in the transcontinental railroad was completed.

Under the leadership of Thomas Durant, Union Pacific began construction in 1866 of a large shop complex in Omaha, Neb., not Council Bluffs as Lincoln had ordered. This oversight remained a sore point until 1874 when the city of Council Bluffs sued Union Pacific to force acknowledgment that the Eastern end of the railroad should be Council Bluffs. The city won, and in 1876 Union Pacific began construction of a large transfer depot at the east end of its mile long approach to the Missouri River bridge.

Fire destroyed the first transfer depot and a grand brick building with depot and hotel opened for business in 1878. It had the finest and largest bar between Chicago and Denver.

A sign in the waiting room noted that “the West begins here.” In 1939, during Golden Spike Days, UP Chairman Averell Harriman dedicated the Golden Spike Monument in Council Bluffs, at milepost zero, the beginning of Union Pacific.

The yards and engine terminal in Council Bluffs expanded as business grew. Because of its position at the eastern end of Union Pacific, Council Bluffs remained an active transfer point between UP and the seven eastern railroads, all converging on the UP yards. While freight could be passed through by the carload, mail could not. So by World War II, Council Bluffs became the largest mail transfer point in the U.S. Mail transfer remained an important part of Union Pacific's place in Council Bluffs until the early 1970s. The yards remain as an important point on Union Pacific today.



Configuration: *Council Bluffs* is a typical wide-open Baggage/Display Car.