

39 Boston & Maine RR Locomotive #494

100 Railroad Way, White River Junction, Vermont



The 1892 Boston & Maine (B&M) locomotive #494, located within the village of White River Junction, and town of Hartford, Vermont, is the oldest surviving “American 4-4-0” in its original configuration, built by the New Hampshire-based Manchester Locomotive Works. The historical significance of Engine #494 resides in the locomotive’s type and manufacturer. Of the 1,577 engines built in North America, only 34 are the 4-4-0 type, and only 14 locomotives built by Manchester Locomotive Works remain in existence today.

While Engine #494 was originally built for the Eastern Railroad Company, it was later acquired by the B&M Railroad. Weighing 52 tons and exerting 39.5 tons on the driver wheels, Engine #494 was built to haul passenger cars and light freight. Modernizations to Engine #494 over its lifetime included a steel cab to replace the wooden cab, an electric headlight to replace the oil headlamp, and the installation of a steam-powered electric generator. Towards the end of its active life, the locomotive hauled coal from Fabyan Station to Marshfield Station, a steep climb up to the 2,700 foot level of Mount Washington in New Hampshire. The Mount Washington Cog Railway then used the coal to climb to the top of Mount Washington, a summit at 6,288 feet.

Following its retirement in 1938, Engine #494 was prepared for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City by retrofitting most of the updated equipment back to original type equipment. However, the steam-powered electric generator was not removed during the restoration, and as such, the engine was never restored to full steam. The restoration was completed at the Boston & Maine Railroad shop in Billerica, Massachusetts.

After the excitement of the 1939 World’s Fair had faded, Engine #494 was stored at the Fitchburg and Lowell yard in Massachusetts for many years. Perhaps due to its age and retirement status, there was talk of scrapping Engine #494; however, a Boston-based group, The Railroad Enthusiasts, Inc., purchased the locomotive. Aware that Engine #494 could no longer be kept at the Fitchburg and Lowell yard, the Enthusiasts began searching for a permanent resting place. In 1957, ownership of Engine #494 was transferred to the Town of Hartford, which sought to commemorate the rich railroad culture and history of its White River Junction village, where as many as 50 trains arrived and departed daily from their station at the height of rail travel.

In the early 1990s the Town of Hartford proposed that a preservation committee be formed to begin restoring Engine# 494. To give more credence to the preservation effort, the committee decided to pursue listing Engine #494 on the National Register of Historic Landmarks, and also applied for membership into the National Railway Historical Society. With both successful achievements in hand, "The Friends of 494" preservation committee began restoring the locomotive to its original condition. Between the years of 2004 and 2006, a permanent structure was built to help protect Engine #494 from the elements, and remains the final resting place for this historic steam engine.

Today, the Welcome Center and New England Transportation Museum welcome over 20,000 visitors each year. The Welcome Center and Museum can be found in downtown White River Junction, at 100 Railroad Row.

Sources:

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"Preserve America Community: White River Junction." *Preserve America: Explore and Enjoy Our Heritage*. 27 May 2009. Web. Accessed 10 March 2013.<<http://www.preserveamerica.gov/11-23-07PAcommunity-whiteriverjunctionVT.html>>