

SOUTHERN PACIFIC CLASS MK-5 AND MK-6 2-8-2

Most of the Southern Pacific 2-8-2 Mikado locomotives were based upon a design created when the road was under common management with the Union Pacific and other Harriman managed railroads. The Class MK-5 and MK-6 locomotives, although built later than Southern Pacific's first Mikados, were also based on the Harriman designs. The first MK-5's were built for the Texas & New Orleans lines in April 1913 as numbers 750-774. Numbers 3236-3249 followed, also from Baldwin, the next month. In November and December 1914 Lima built MK-6 numbers 3250-3269 which were similar in most respects to the MK-5's. In October 1914 Baldwin built another MK-5, number 3270, which was exhibited in San Francisco at the Panama Pacific Exposition of 1915. In 1916 more MK-5's were built for the Texas lines as numbers 775-794, being built by ALCO-Brooks. In 1917 two MK-5's were built for subsidiary Arizona Eastern by Lima as numbers 906-907. When the Arizona Eastern was absorbed in 1924, numbers 3236-3240 were renumbered to 3271-3275 and the two Arizona Eastern locomotives became Southern Pacific 3276-3277. The need for more 2-8-2's on the Texas lines led to the Houston and Algiers (New Orleans) shops building T&NO numbers 738-749 from 1919 to 1921. After 1924 the MK-5's were numbered 3241-3249, 3270-3277 and (T&NO) 738-794 while the MK-6's were numbers 3250-3269 on the Pacific Lines.

As built the MK-5 and MK-6 locomotives were oil burners. Numbers 3251, 3252, 3254 and 3255 were converted to coal burners for use on the New Mexico and Rio Grande Divisions. They were later converted back to oil. As the engines were built before the cast steel trailing truck became common, all were equipped with the fabricated Hodges trailing truck. When new the 2-8-2's had rectangular tenders of the 90-R class. In the 1920's and 1930's the Southern Pacific performed a number of upgrades and rebuildings to these engines. Many received feedwater heaters. Numbers 3269 and 3270 even received the rare (for Southern Pacific) Elesco tank type heater. Most of the feedwater heaters were removed in later years. Most received Class 90-C cylindrical or Vanderbilt type tenders. As built the MK-5 and MK-6 locomotives had extended smoke boxes, these were shortened in the late 1920's.

The MK-5 and MK-6 classes were primarily freight power. They could generate more steam because of larger fireboxes than the 2-8-0's, so were used for fast and heavy freights on the more level sections of the railroad. The 2-8-2's were also used as helpers, in work service and occasionally in passenger service. Use in passenger service was irregular, but during World War Two they were used to pull troop trains and held down a regular assignment pulling the Dunsmuir-Grants Pass connecting train. In the later days of steam the engines tended to be concentrated along the Coast Line, in the San Joaquin Valley and in Oregon on the Pacific Lines, and on the main lines in Louisiana and Eastern Texas on the T&NO. Their steaming ability made them very useful in mainline work, where they could run quickly for the nearest siding with their freight locals and work trains to clear the more important passenger and freight trains. They continued in this service right to the end of steam on the Southern Pacific.

Most of the MK-5 and MK-6 locomotives were disposed of in the mid-1950's, particularly during 1953-1955 when a majority were sold for scrap. Lima 3251, however, remained serviceable until 1959 when it was removed from the roster and sold for scrap. As the last run of any kind of Southern Pacific steam locomotives had taken place in 1958, the MK-6 was one of the last survivors of this form of motive power on the railroad. Texas & New Orleans number 786 was donated to Austin, Texas for display and has since been restored to operating condition in 1992. Key Imports is pleased to bring you this model of a significant western steam locomotive.