

SOUTHERN PACIFIC CLASS MT-1 4-8-2 (SHASTA VERSION)

The busy Southern Pacific mainline between the San Francisco Bay Area and Oregon is noted for grades and curving trackage, especially north of Redding, California. Heavy snow is typical of the mountainous section, and numerous tunnels exist on the route. A number of MT-1 class 4-8-2's were assigned to passenger service on this route, both over the new Natron cutoff linking Eugene and Klamath Falls and the older Siskiyou line with its 3.3% grades. The 4-8-2's pulled such trains as the SHASTA, the KLAMATH and the CASCADE, as well as unnamed mail trains and special movements. Because of very tight tunnel clearances, the 4-8-2's assigned to these routes were equipped with "clam shell" smoke deflectors to prevent exhaust blast damage to the roofs of tunnels. The 4-8-2's were also equipped with snowplow pilots to handle drifts and the occasional rockfalls that plagued the line, and your Key model is equipped with these features.

The MT-1's assigned to the SHASTA ROUTE maintained their unique appearance until the application of "Skyline Casings" began to be applied to all Southern Pacific 4-8-2's in 1939. As this feature was added to the Shasta engines, the special smoke deflector was usually removed. It is believed that the last Shasta 4-8-2 was equipped with the new feature in 1946.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC CLASS MT-1 4-8-2 (FORTY-NINER VERSION)

In July 1937 the Southern Pacific (in collaboration with the Union Pacific and C&NW) inaugurated a new streamlined all-Pullman train between San Francisco and Chicago. The train was called the 49er and took its name from the Gold Rush and from the fact that 49 hours were scheduled for the train to make its run from one terminal to the other. The train ran on a schedule that allowed it to make five round trips a month. The train consisted of eight cars. The Southern Pacific used 4-8-2's to power the FORTY NINER on the 781 mile run from Oakland to Ogden (and the Union Pacific connection). Soon after the first run, the Southern Pacific applied a "Skyline Casing" to the top of the locomotive boiler, which gave it a semi-streamlined effect and a special paint job. The skyline casing was found to not only improve the appearance of the 4-8-2, but also aided in lifting smoke above the engine at speed and soon the road started applying this feature to all 4-8-2's and some 4-6-2's as well. The special paint for the most part consisted of extra white trim. The engine assigned to the train was also kept very clean and highly polished.

The 49er operated until July 1941 when it was replaced with a second CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO. The special cars were disbursed elsewhere, but the legacy of the special locomotive lived on in the appearance of Southern Pacific's 4-8-2 fleet with their skyline casings.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC CLASS MT-4 ("SACRAMENTO" VERSION)

As passenger trains increased in weight and length during the 1920's, the Southern Pacific found that the heavy 4-6-2's in use to that time were inadequate and larger power was needed. The road turned to 4-8-2's, the first two classes of which were built by Alco, and the third by the Southern Pacific in the Sacramento Shops. From 1926 to 1929 the Southern Pacific built numbers 4346-4366 in the Sacramento Shops and these were classed as MT-4. They were equipped with trailing truck boosters and were used on all major routes of the system, not only for heavy passenger service, but also for fast merchandise trains between Los Angeles and San Francisco. As delivered the class was painted in a very colorful scheme which lasted only as long as the depression when all Southern Pacific power was painted in black.

Eventually 4-8-4's replaced the 4-8-2's for most assignments, but the MT's continued as primary passenger power on the Oakland-Ogden route, and on the other lines were used for secondary runs, mail trains and passenger helpers. Starting in 1939 the class was equipped with a Skyline Casing on the top of the boiler which gave them an entirely different appearance. After World War Two it became common to see the 4-8-2's in freight service for which they were well suited and performed well.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC CLASS MT-4 4-8-2 ("VALLEY DAYLIGHT" VERSION)

From 1926 to 1929 the Southern Pacific built in their Sacramento Shops a group of locomotives of the 4-8-2 wheel arrangement, numbers 4346-4366. These 4-8-2's were used on every major route of the company for heavy passenger service, and were also used for merchandise trains on the Los Angeles-San Francisco line as well. In later years the 4-8-2's were bumped by newer 4-8-4 locomotives, the famous Golden State class (most of which were streamlined). To match the streamlining of the 4-8-4's, starting in 1939 the 4-8-2's were rebuilt with a Skyline Casing on the top of the boiler, giving them a semi-streamlined appearance. Conversion of the MT-4 class to the new appearance continued until the last locomotive was completed in 1946. About this time five of the engines were given "Daylight" colors and used on the San Joaquin Daylight trains.

Arrival of the 4-8-4's bumped the 4-8-2's into lesser roles, such as secondary runs, mail trains and passenger helpers, but they continued to be used as primary passenger power on the Oakland-Ogden route. The class was particularly invaluable during World War Two when they were used for troop train service and other special passenger movements. After World War Two, traffic levels and new diesels caused a surplus of 4-8-2's. The use of 4-8-2's by the Southern Pacific continued down to 1958, when the road was essentially dieselized. All of the MT-4's were scrapped.