

WHERE'S THE STEAM LOCOMOTIVE?

Though the 786 is currently sidelined for a complete overhaul, all of ASTA's trains are still running as usual!

Southern Pacific steam engine No. 786, centerpiece of the Austin Steam Train Association's historic excursion operations through their first seven years, is undergoing a thorough rebuilding that will return her to service as good as new, and as soon as possible.

In the meantime, all of ASTA's regular trains, including the *Hill Country Flyer* and the *Bertram Flyer*, are continuing their schedules uninterrupted, using our historic Alco diesel, A&TC No. 442.

Work is still under way to bring the 1916 steam engine back into active operation, in a comprehensive rebuild funded by ASTA and generous donors, public and private.

The reconstruction of 786 has been in the hands of the best steam-locomotive experts available, working in shops scattered across the country.

Her boiler and firebox, now finished, were rebuilt in Steele, Ala., by Bob Yuill's Historic Machinery Services Corporation. Also complete are her eight 63-inch driving wheels, overhauled at the Tennessee Valley Railroad shops in Chattanooga, and her air compressor, cold-water pump and dynamo, rebuilt by Back Shop Enterprises in Wheat Ridge, Colo.

Still under way is completion of work on 786's frame and running gear, including mounting a brand-new cylinder saddle (more on this below) on the frame, a task being performed in Muscle Shoals, Ala., by Scott Lindsay's Steam Operations Corporation.

The 786's original cylinder saddle--a massive 6½-ton casting that includes the engine's steam cylinders and valve chambers, as well as supporting the front of the boiler--is being replaced with a brand-new casting manufactured at the Fairmount Foundry in Hamburg, Pa., probably the first such item made in the U.S. in half a century.

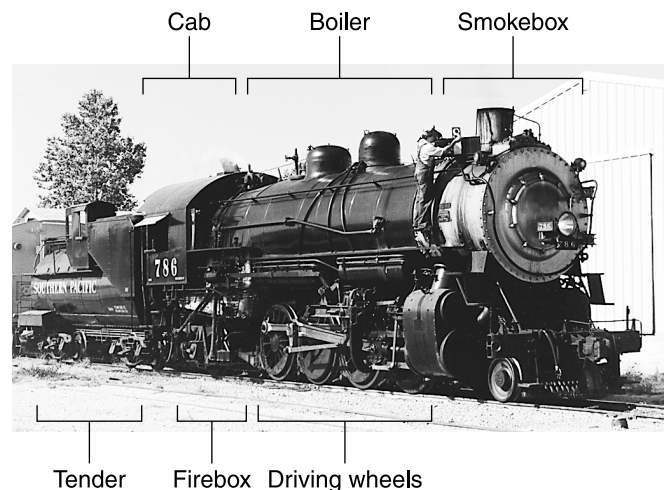
Professionals from Steam Operations and Listerhill TMC in Muscle Shoals used one of the largest horizontal boring mills in the country to machine the new casting to its final dimensions. The cylinder saddle has been mounted

Cylinder saddle casting

Contains the locomotive's valves and pistons.



Other key components



You can help!

While the goal is in sight for the restoration of 786 to active service, reaching that goal requires yet more dedication, hard work and financial support from her friends! See ASTA's website, www.austinsteamtrain.org, for 786 updates and ways you can help, or give us a call at 512-477-8468...and *thank you!*

on the frame, and work is under way on the painstaking job of bolting it down so that the new cylinders and valves are parallel to the frame and precisely lined up within a few thousandths of an inch.

It was metal flaws in the 786's old cylinder saddle that necessitated taking her out of service in the summer of 1999, and it was the discovery that the vital casting could not be fixed, but would have to be replaced, that turned a repair job into a complete overhaul of the engine.

When all the 786's pieces are ready, they will be brought back to Texas where the engine will be re-assembled in ASTA's Cedar Park Yard. This final reconstruction, which will include re-mounting the cab, installation of refurbished appliances, the running of hundreds of feet of piping and finishing an ongoing overhaul of the 786's tender, will be carried out by qualified steam-engine mechanics with the help of ASTA's volunteers. (These volunteer railroaders, while putting more than 7,000 man-hours into the project to date, also regularly crew all of the association's excursion trains, running on their usual schedules every weekend.)

By the time a fire is lit again under the 786's crown-sheet, everything about her--firebox, boiler, wheels, frame, brakes, cylinders, running gear, springs and bearings, piping, tender and all the thousand little details of a steam locomotive--will have been carefully replaced or refurbished into the best shape possible for many more years of reliable service.

The final tab will probably be in the neighborhood of \$2 million, funded both by ASTA and by greatly appreciated contributions totaling more than \$1 million from the Mary Carol Boone Joy Foundation, ASTA volunteer Bill Nash, City of Austin, City of Cedar Park, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation, the Cedar Park Tourism Board and the Heritage Society of Austin.

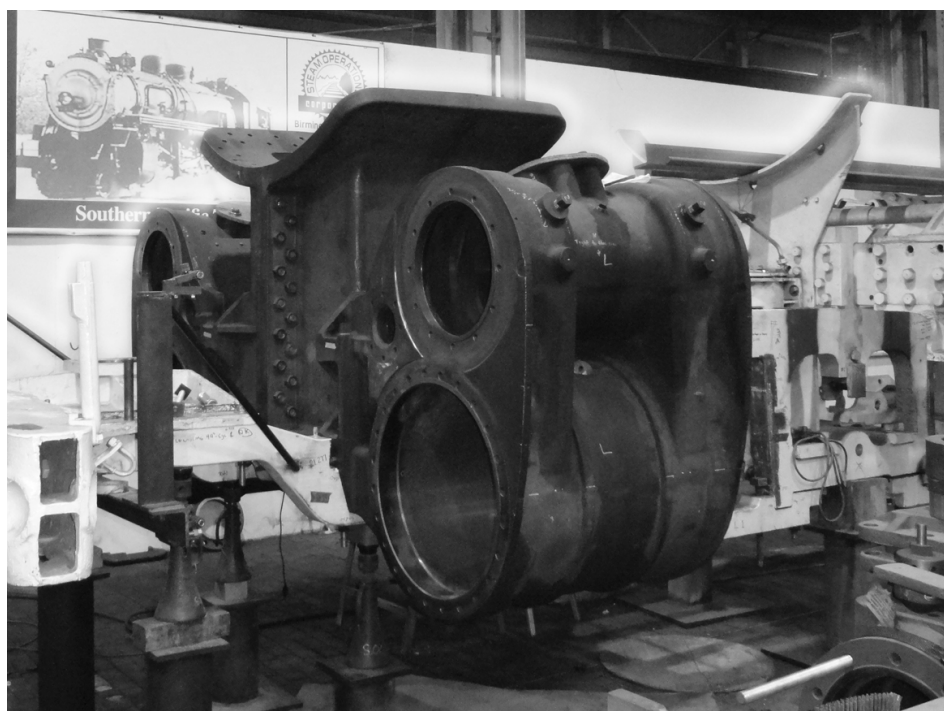
The current rebuild will be even more thorough than the 786's first restoration in 1990-91. With more than \$800,000 in private credit and contributions, ASTA first put the 786 back into operating condition after she had rested for 34 years in a downtown Austin park. Volunteer and profes-

sional crews rebuilt the engine and tender in a two-year effort, and in July, 1992, she pulled the first of many excursion trains that would put 60,000 miles under her drivers over the next seven years.

The 786 was built in 1916 by the American Locomotive Co.'s Brooks Works in Dunkirk, N.Y. Constructed for the Southern Pacific subsidiary Houston & Texas Central, she put in 40 years of freight and passenger service on SP lines in Texas and Louisiana before her retirement to static display in Austin in 1956. She is an oil-burning "Mikado" type engine (two pilot wheels, eight drivers and two trailing wheels) and is one of two survivors of the SP's "Mk-5" class restored to operation. (The other, No. 745, is operated by the Louisiana Steam Train Association.)

Such a complete rebuild of a large steam locomotive necessarily takes a lot of time as well as a lot of money. The work as it has proceeded has often demanded much creative problem-solving, and the engine itself is a machine that has seen almost a century of rugged use, so time and money projections during the life of the project have generally been educated guesses.

But the help of generous donors, and the continuing success of ASTA's excursion operations, have kept the work going, and now the last lap of the project is in sight. Whenever 786 is finished, Central Texas' own handsome steam engine, back where she belongs, will be well worth the wait!



The 786's newly finished cylinder saddle, mounted on the engine's frame in the Alabama shop where it was machined. (Photo courtesy Steam Operations Corporation.)

Rev. 11/11