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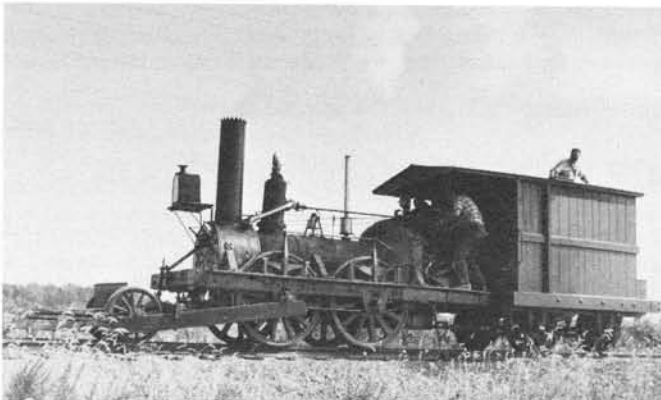
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THE BULL & THE FABER: A NEW STEAM AGE AT NMAH

The past fall witnessed events at the National Museum of American History in Washington that may have brought us two steps closer to a revival of serious interest in the use of steam in North America.

In mid-Oct. one of the holiest relics of the age of steam transport was roused from the sleep of decades and, for the first time in fifty-three years, hurtled through the landscape under its own power. The locomotive *John Bull* had been purchased by the Camden & Amboy RR in 1831 from the pioneer manufacturer Robert Stephenson & Co. of Newcastle upon Tyne. (It was Stephenson, you will recall, who built the revolutionary *Rocket*, winner of the Rainhill Trials staged by the Liverpool & Manchester in 1829 to determine the most suitable form of locomotive for commercial service. The *Rocket* is regarded as the first "modern" locomotive on the basis of its arrangement of fundamental elements, a plan that stuck for the entire history of the steam locomotive.)

The *John Bull* saw service for some thirty-five years on the C&A, the principal link in the rail and water route between N.Y. and Philadelphia. Late in its career, the engine was relegated to service on passenger locals, work trains, and other light duties befitting the line's premier engine. By the grace of sentiment on the part of the Stevens family, founders of the C&A, when final retirement came in 1866 the old veteran was spared scrapping. This enlightened and uncommon philosophy later was maintained by the Pennsylvania RR after it had absorbed the C&A. Alert to the *Bull's* publicity value, the PRR in 1876 withdrew him from storage, performed a bit of misguided "restoration," and steamed him off to arouse nostalgia at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.



Where can be found another sight to produce the sheer excitement of a 149-year-old steam locomotive moving under its own power in a landscape that, through only slightly squinted eyes, appears to have changed not at all in the same span of time? The *John Bull*, seen stepping along near Calverton, Va., stands today somewhat altered from his original form. The cowcatcher-cum-pilot truck and headlight were introduced by the Camden & Amboy to adapt him to the exigencies of N.J. frontier railroading, and the side rods coupling the two driving axles were removed as apparently unnecessary. The spiked smokestack is one of the "antique" touches added during the PRR's restoration prior to exhibition at the Centennial, replacing the spark-arresting stack. At that time the eight-wheel tender that had become the *Bull's* companion while in service was truncated to its present form.

A decade later the PRR became conscious that they were not necessarily the best caretaker for so significant a treasure, so in 1885 they presented the *John Bull* to the Smithsonian Institution, where he became the National Museum's first specimen relating to the history of technology. He turned out to be also one of its most peripatetic. In 1893 he was sent to the Columbian Exposition, astonishingly making the round trip to Chicago under his own steam! Then again, in 1927, a jaunt to Halethorpe, Md. (near Baltimore), to take fitting part in the pageant celebrating the centennial of the Baltimore & Ohio RR. That was the last time the *Bull* was under steam, although he participated, inert, in the world's fairs at Chicago and N.Y. in 1933 and 1939.

Sept., 1981, will mark the sesquicentennial of the arrival of *John Bull* on American shores. It struck his NMAH custodians that nothing would more suitably celebrate the occasion than once more to bring him to life. Accordingly, preparations were undertaken which consisted of little more than testing the boiler and ensuring the operability of all working parts and lubrication devices. Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection & Insurance Co., in an act of singular generosity, performed gratis an extensive series of boiler tests, including complete X-rays. As there were no ominous shadows (although the *Bull* is an occasional smoker), Hartford declared him fit for steam pressure up to 50 psi. There followed a successful run-in-place under compressed air, with wheels jacked off the rails.

The final and crucial preliminary was an actual trial run, performed last Oct. on a lightly used Southern Ry. branch connecting Calverton and Warrenton, Va. The old fellow was trucked to the spot, set upon the metals, and fired with indigenous cordwood. Then—thrill of a lifetime—curator John H. White, Jr., the scheme's author, cautiously cracked the throttle and, lo!, as though it were only yesterday that he had rolled from the Stephenson shops, *John Bull* moved slowly down the track with no apparent effort and no sound but a thoroughly workmanlike chugging. He cleared his throat of a bit of accumulated water, threw it out the stack, and was off at a stately trot to the cheers of a small group of admirers. Then, back and forth a few times while White and his crew relearned the lost art of driving a locomotive with hook-type valve gear and no brakes to speak of. As confidence grew, so did speed and distance. By day's end there was the next thing to regular service, with several long-distance runs to the hamlet of Casanova (2 mi.) at full cry (15 mph).

The event was a complete success from all standpoints: not only did the *John Bull* operate to near perfection, showing himself fully up to the main event scheduled for next Sept. when he will perform on the day precisely 150 years after that on which he reached American soil, but verifying that he is indeed the oldest operable and operating steam locomotive in the world.

On Dec. 8, a second event celebrating the heroic age of steam occurred at the National Museum. That evening title to one of the half-dozen earliest extant American-built stationary engines was handed over to Roger G. Kennedy, the museum's director, by