



Alaska Railroad official 2023 Art Print and Poster

Explanation of locomotives pictured in the original oil painting by
North Pole, Alaska, artist William “Art” Chase

The painting depicts a line-up of nine influential locomotives over the Alaska Railroad (ARR) first century of operations (1923-2023), and during its decade-long construction (1914-1923).

Below are brief locomotive descriptions provided by the artist. They include the railroad’s historical significance and/or how it contributed to the railroad’s transportation development.

NOTE: Numerical notation (#-#-#) for some locomotives refers to wheel arrangements. The first number is the number of leading wheels. The middle number (or numbers) give the number and arrangement of drivers. The last is the number of trailing wheels (typically under the firebox).

Locomotives pictured from left to right:

1. ARR No. 618

ARR Locomotive No. 618, 2-6-O, was built by ALCO/Brooks built for ICC/Panama in January 1906. The Alaska Railroad acquired the 2-6-O locomotive in January 1922. Important ARR centennial footnote: In mid-July 1923, No. 618 pulled a special train headed for Nenana, Alaska, where the Alaska Railroad organized a construction completion ceremony on July 15. At the ceremony, President Warren Harding drove a golden spike to commemorate the milestone event that joined the southern and northern segments of the railroad to form a complete route (Seward-Anchorage-Fairbanks). Under the engineer’s watchful eye, President Harding actually operated No. 618 on part of the route. No. 618’s retirement date is unknown.

2. ARR No. 801

ARR Locomotive No. 801 was a rugged and resurrected unite built by Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia. Transported to Alaska in pieces, it was assembled by the Alaska Railroad mechanics in Anchorage and then placed in service on August 24, 1932. No. 801 was used primarily to haul freight trains. It is a Mountain (4-8-2) type freight locomotive equipped with Type "A" super-heater, stoker, three thermic syphons, power reserve, booster and had a vestibule cab. No. 801’s claim to fame was that she was wrecked, rebuilt and wrecked again.

3. ARR No. 1029

ARR Locomotive No. 1029 was built by American Locomotive Company (ALCO) in 1942 for the U.S. Army. Originally numbered 820, the ALCO-RSD-1 was a diesel-electric locomotive model.

ARR acquired it in 1950 as military surplus, and the numerical designation changed to No. 1029. It was ARR's first diesel electric locomotive. The addition helped spur ARR's efforts to modernize away from steam power in the 1950s. No. 1029 retired in 1964.

4. ARR No. 3008

ARR Locomotive No. 3008 is one of ARR's 15 General Purpose (GP)-40-2 locomotives (numbered 3001 to 3015). With 3,000 horsepower capability, the fleet has been a flexible and robust asset. The GP40-2 series was built by Electro Motive Division (EMD) of General Motors between 1972 and 1986. As the Alaska Railroad looked to support construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline 1975 to 1977, it needed more powerful locomotives to pull trains laden with supplies and materials. The first two orders of the GP-40-2 locomotives were painted in the black and yellow freight scheme. Over the years, the fleet has been repainted to the ARR's blue-and-gold scheme.

5. ARR No. 4015.

ARR Locomotive No. 4015 is one of ARRC's 28 SD7OMAC locomotives that are the backbone of daily train operations. The SD7OMACs comprise more than half ARRC's 51-unit fleet. "SD" refers to Special Duty and "MAC" translates to "M" for Modified cab and "AC" for Alternating Current traction motors. The first 16 SD7OMACS were delivered in 1999 and 2000; followed by eight more in 2004, and the final four in 2007. They produce 4,000 horsepower and are equipped for Distributed Power (DP), meaning that one or more unmanned units can be positioned in the middle or at the rear of a long train to help haul. The final 12 units have dual modes for freight and passenger. In passenger mode, half the horsepower is used to pull/push the train; while the other half powers a 480-volt head-end power (HEP) generator that supplies electricity to trailing passenger railcars.

The first 16 locomotives (No. 4001 - 4016) were given honorary names for the communities along the route. No. 4015 bears the name *City of North Pole*.

6. ARR No. 2807

ARR Locomotive No. 2807 was purchased new in 1985 as one of the railroad's nine General Purpose (GP)-49 series locomotives. The robust GP-49 locomotives were built by Electro-Motive Diesel (EMD) in 1983 and 1985; and ARR was one of only two railroads that included the GP-49 series in its fleet. ARR purchased the GP-49 locomotives in 1983 (Numbers 2801 to 2804) and in 1985 (Numbers 2805 to 2809). They came equipped with 645F3B engines capable of producing 2,800 horsepower. The GP49s were known for SLOW acceleration, due to a radar system for anti-wheel slip. The GP-49 had a unique design among ARR's other locomotives given their large ice cream scoop plows, L windows, and awnings behind the cab.

7. ARR No. 1512

ARR Locomotive No. 1512 was purchased new in 1953 and dubbed *Spirit of '76*. Built by Electro-Motive Diesel (EMD), it was one of two FP-7 series locomotives (No. 1510 and No. 1512) in ARR's fleet. The FP designation indicated it was suitable for both freight and passenger service. The

Alaska Railroad commissioned a special bicentennial paint scheme applied in 1975, in time to celebrate nation's birthday in 1976. The locomotive received dual headlights in 1978. Both locomotives 1510 and 1512 were preferred passenger leaders and were frequently seen in work train service. They were retired in 1986, still sporting bicentennial paint.

8. Steam Engine 557

Steam Engine 557 was built as an S-160 class Consolidation 2-8-0 locomotive for the U.S. Army Transportation Corps between 1942 and 1945, becoming part of the largest single class of locomotives ever built in America. Of the 2,120 units built, 12 came to Alaska. The 557 was the Alaska Railroad's last steam engine operating in regular service, kept around to help during high water conditions. In Nenana, the Tanana and Nenana Rivers regularly flooded the entire town site and the rail yard. While diesel locomotive traction motors did not do well in water, the 557 steamer could easily ford two feet of water over the rails.

Sold to a scrap dealer / museum owner in Washington, the 557 left Alaska in June 1965. She returned to Alaska in January 2012. Located in Wasilla, the non-profit Engine 557 Restoration Company is restoring the locomotive..

9. ARR No. 1

ARR Locomotive No. 1 was built as Davenport #763 in 1907. With a 3-foot gauge, she was designated No. 6 and worked the narrow gauge sites along the Alaska Railroad's construction route. Re-outfitted with standard gauge wheels in 1930, she became a "yard goat" for ARR. When the railroad's new streamliner service *AuRoRa* was inaugurated in October 1947, No. 6 was refurbished and came out of the shops as honorary No. 1. She operated next to the new diesel locomotive No. 1050 during the ceremony at the Anchorage Depot. On Nov. 17, 1952, ARR celebrated completion of its rehabilitation program with a dedication ceremony at the Anchorage Historic Depot. The historic steam locomotive was officially unveiled as ARR No. 1, and permanently seated on a pedestal in front of the Anchorage Historic Depot, where she still sits today.