

Out of China and Into the Quad Cities in Tandem

This double-header debut of locomotives shakes
the ground, charges the air, pounds
the heart and aims the laser eye
of the first locomotive
on yours. Switch engines
and it's the same enlightening spirit. You know
you're in the presence
of something very different. Today these Chinese
excursion engines work
like yin and yang
as one
special passenger train. Ladies, wave your hankies;
gentlemen, tip your hats; and children, rouse
a cheer. What a double barrel blast
of fun, of pulsating steam,
of smoke trailing
the stacks like a plume
of silver hair
in the wind, of twenty driver wheels rolling
into Rock Island! The Mississippi River's no stranger
to firsts. It remembers 1856
when the first locomotive *Fort Des Moines* crossed
the first railroad bridge
over the Rock Island Rapids. It recalls
civil engineer Henry Farnam
setting new benchmarks
for railroad bridge construction, waiting
for passage himself, and traversing
the first bridge amid cheers. So relive
this event of a hundred and fifty years ago
as you board this cultural express
beside the Father of Waters. The boiler's hot,
the pressure's on, the throttle's
open to move you back
to steam rail days. Remember you never come
back the same person
after an excursion. Prove the sages right again.
Everything's changed. You've changed.
Welcome QJ Chinese Locomotives #6988 and #7081, welcome
to America, to the Middle West, to the Quad Cities,
to Modern Woodman, and to
a special place in American railroad history.