BAS 087 Mastadon Hog Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

In February 1901, Butte and Anaconda were abuzz with the announcement of the arrival of a new engine for the Butte, Anaconda, and Pacific Railway. The “mastodon hog,” No. 19. was built by the Schenectady Company for the express purpose of hauling ore from Butte to the then new smelter being built in Anaconda.

Here are some of her specs: The Gauge, the distance between wheels, was 4 feet, 8½ inches, with a Wheel base length of 26 feet 9 inches.

The Engine weighed 110 tons and carried a Water and Coal load of 54 tons. Ten tons of that was bituminous coal, and the rest was in 5,500 gallons of water. The round steel sheet on the front of the Hog containing the boiler was 84 inches in diameter and was an inch thick, in comparison to most previous engine boiler plates that were just five-eighths of an inch thick. That was needed to contain the boiler pressure, at 210 pounds of steam per square inch.

The smokestack was cast iron, engine frames were hammered iron, and piston rods were made of steel made at the Cambria steel works in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and hardened by the Coffin process of quick quenching and slow cooling. The tires were Krupp crucible steel four inches thick, and the drive springs were installed by the A. French Spring Company of Pittsburgh. The cab was wood, with steel running boards. The whole engine was painted “B.A. & P. standard black.” She had two Dressel headlights 16 inches in diameter.

The first test run, under the command of Engineer Tipton, was accompanied by the builder’s agent, L.S. Watres, Master Mechanic Harrity, and an Anaconda Standard reporter. The engine traveled from Anaconda to Rocker pulling 41 cars. The engine’s maximum capacity was rated at 60 cars of ore totaling 4000 tons, which it could pull at 30 miles per hour.

The engine came in on the Great Northern Line, and its size proved a problem in many places where bridges were too low for it to pass. They had to lower the stack in order to do so. It jumped the track at Minot, North Dakota, the only serious incident en route to Anaconda.

The Anaconda Standard reported “Elaborate and complete in every detail, the new freight engine marks a new epoch in freight hauling in the United States, and especially in the transmission of ore in mining states to the smelters.”

But within a dozen years, the B.A. & P. was moving from steam locomotives to electrical systems, erecting the first heavy-haul electric railway in the world. No. 19 was sold to the General Equipment Company of New York City on July 24, 1917. General Equipment in turn sold it to the Peñoles Mining Company in Mexico, and it was probably scrapped by the late 1940s.

As writer Edwin Dobb has said, "Like Concord, Gettysburg, and Wounded Knee, Butte is one of the places America came from." Join us next time for more of Butte, America’s Story.