

The O'Mahony Dining Car

The O'Mahony Dining Car #1107 in Oakley, Utah, is a custom-built stainless steel monitor-roof dining car manufactured by the Jerry O'Mahony Company in 1939. The Streamlined Moderne and Art Deco-style Dining Car #1107 is being nominated for its architectural significance under Criterion C for its contributions to the mobile diner industry, and in particular, the national trend toward stainless steel diners that emerged in the pre-World War II period. Dining Car #1107 is a one-of-kind,



custom-built model that marks the pivot point in diner design for the O'Mahony Company and represents the transition from the standard pre-war design of diners to the post-war direction of the mobile diner industry in general. Just a few years prior to World War II, the O'Mahony Company began adding rounded corners and applying steel/porcelain bands to the exterior of its traditional monitor-roof dining car model. Historic photographs from company brochures and extant examples show the typical model of the period was compact with steel bands above and below a wide porcelain panel base with room for lettering. The design of Dining Car #1107 broke with the company's tradition with the emphasis on alternating bands of stainless steel and porcelain that more fully realized the design objectives of Streamlined Moderne movement, invoking the sleekness of the stainless steel rail cars of the period. In size and materials, Dining Car #1107 was the prototype for the O'Mahony dining cars of the late 1940s and early 1950s: much larger and all stainless steel-constructed two-part dining cars.

Because the Dining Car's significance is based on architecture, the period of significance has been limited to the year of manufacture, 1939. And as the only dining car in Utah, it is being nominated at the statewide level of significance. Dining Car #1107 was originally custom-built for exhibition and use at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. At the close of the fair, the dining car was purchased by Al McDermott, who moved it to Fall River, Massachusetts, where he operated it as McDermott's Diner. In 1953, McDermott replaced the O'Mahony dining car with a newer model. It was sold to Tommy Borodemos, who moved the dining car to Middletown, Rhode Island, where it operated as Tommy's Deluxe Diner for fifty-three years. Dining Car #1107 has a remarkable level of historic

integrity and is an excellent example of the Modern Movement in architecture as applied to a pre-World War II-era dining car. In 2007, the current owner, Keith Walker, purchased the dining car and had it transported to Oakley, Utah. The dining car was restored and opened for business in July 2008 as the Road Island Diner. The O'Mahony Dining Car #1107 was completely rehabilitated to its original appearance using extant physical evidence, historic photographs and contemporaneous O'Mahony dining cars as a reference. All of the original elements of the Streamlined Moderne and Art Deco design of the original dining car have been preserved or replicated. All recent modifications, including the addition of a kitchen/banquet room annex, are compatible with the historic function of mobile diners and do not impact the overall historic integrity of the building. With the exception of the time spent in transport or rehabilitation, the Dining Car #1107 has been a functioning roadside diner for six decades. The dining car qualifies under Criterion Consideration B, as a moved building. It was designed as a moveable building type and therefore the most recent move should be considered compatible with its original function.