



The story of one plate.

The history of the ŠKODA brand dates back to 1859, when Count Waldstein founded an ironworks and engineering workshop in Pilsen, in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, later Czechoslovakia and now The Czech Republic. The first important turning point for the future society was when Emil Škoda was appointed senior engineer in 1866.

In 1869, the factory was bought by him, whose name the company later bore (as the so-called Škoda plant). In 1899, the company was transformed into a joint-stock company under the new name Joint-Stock Company ŠKODA, (formerly ŠKODA's plants), based in Pilsen. At that time, it focused mainly on the production of weapons and ammunition, becoming the largest industrial enterprise in Austria-Hungary.

Emil Škoda was a visionary businessman who had an excellent estimate of the future development of engineering as a whole and foresaw trends that would be decisive for the coming years.

ŠKODA plants have gradually expanded their product portfolio to include steam locomotives and gas engines, steam turbines, mining equipment, food processing machines and large and complex castings for the shipbuilding industry. In the 1920s, ŠKODA (after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), in Czechoslovakia became one of the largest and most important industrial enterprises in Europe. Acquisitions at the time included the engineering and metallurgical plant, the aircraft plant and the Laurin and Clement car plant in Mladá Boleslav. These acquisitions have significantly expanded the company's product portfolio.

The production of the steam locomotives began in the Pilsen ŠKODA in 1920 with the 434.1100 locomotive delivered to the Czechoslovak State Railways (ČSD). In the years 1920–1958, ŠKODA produced a total of 3,247 steam locomotives of 68 different classes for ČSD, industry and exports. Of the other types, these were mainly the classes 387.0, 534.0 and 534.03, 475.1, 498.0, 498.1 and 556.0.

These locomotives included 15 locomotives of the 19D series for The South African Railways, numbers 2626-2640. The locomotives were ordered in 1937, manufactured and delivered to South Africa in 1938, shortly before the outbreak of World War II. The first locomotive number 2627 was scrapped in 1984 in Bloemfontain, others were scrapped later, up to 2007 in different loco depots. In the spring of 2022, only 4 locomotives of the following numbers were still preserved:

No. 2626 BCL at Selebi Phikwe Mine, Botswana, No. LO813,
No.2633 at Sandstone,
No. 2637 stored in poor condition at Masons Mill Depot Pietermaritzburg (owned by the Umgeni Steam Railway),

No. 2640 in Voorbai depot, working order, TRANSNET Museum

In 1923, the company began using a new ŠKODA brand: a winged arrow in a circle. One of the most famous Czech brands is the long-standing ŠKODA logo - a winged arrow. It symbolizes speed, its wings progress and freedom. The eye in the wing points to the accuracy of production and sensitivity to the environment. The circle in which the arrow is placed is a symbol of unity, completeness, world and harmony. The author of the emblem is Mr. František Michl, who designed it in 1923. In the years 1924–1925, the arrow had five squadrons on the wing, from 1926 until now it has only three.

An impressive plate made of an alloy of brass and other metals was made for steam locomotives. The plate weighed 8 kg and was placed only on the deflectors on each side of the locomotives, having deflectors. The donated plate comes from the express steam locomotive n. 498.040, which ceased operations in 1972 at the Tábor locomotive depot. The plate was removed and later placed on a steam locomotive 556.0368. This locomotive did not end its operation until the spring of 1980! and again in the Tábor depot. The plate was removed and in 1981 the plate was given to me in memory by the employees of the Tábor locomotive depot.

In the fifties, ŠKODA entered (among other) to the transport industry by producing steam and later electric locomotives and trolleybuses. With the onset of the 1960s, ŠKODA maintained its position as a major engineering group, but its products went mainly to the former COMECON bloc and developing countries.

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In 1993, the company was privatized. Over the next few years, it reduced the large scope of its product portfolio and underwent a comprehensive restructuring.

On April 15, 2022, the plate of SKODA Works was dedicated to Wilf Mole, and all other friends of the locomotives in Sandstone in memory of the rescue of the steam locomotive SKODA 19D 2633.

Svatopluk Šlechta



Our pictures, courtesy of Sváťa, show locomotives 498.040 and 556.0368 which carried the Skoda plate during their working lives.

Locomotive 556.0368 (top picture) is shown at Benesov Depot in 1979 with express passenger locomotive, 498.040, photographed in 1968 near Prague by P Vancura. The Skoda plate, donated to Sandstone, can be clearly seen on the smoke deflector of each locomotive.

