



SPARKS AND CINDERS

Our purpose as members of Wisconsin Chapter—National Railway Historical Society is to gather, preserve and disseminate information, both historic and current, pertaining to railroading in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest.

Since 1950

Preserving Wisconsin Railroad History for 72 Years

Visit the Chapter Webpage www.nrhswis.org



WC #6521 SD45 leads a southbound train at Green Road at Duplainville on January 1, 2001. Photo by Tom Hoffmann

In This Issue

- ◆ *From the Prexy*
- ◆ *Do You Know*
- ◆ *Friends of 261 makes big purchase*

Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule



Friday, February 4 - 20 Years Ago - Tom Hoffmann and chapter elections

Friday, February 11 - Railroad Gabfest (online only)

Tuesday, February 15 - Online slide show (Zoom only) featuring Jerry Pyfer, Dan Grudzielanek, Jeff Wojciechowski, Erik Lindgren and Eric Shicotte

March 4 - program TBA

March 11 - Railroad Gabfest (online only)

Monthly meetings are held in the lower level of the North Shore Congregational Church at 7330 N Santa Monica Dr. in Fox Point. The church is handicap accessible. Refreshments are available for a donation. For more up to date information on meetings and speakers, and also any weather cancellations, check the chapter's webpage at www.nrhiswis.org.

Doors open by 7:00 pm, so arrive early to socialize. Meetings start at 7:30pm sharp. Please bring a friend! Our meetings are live-streamed on the Zoom platform. Connection details are shared with chapter members and other interested persons via email the day of the meeting, or before. To ensure you are made aware of this info, we must have a working email address on file - send yours to president@nrhiswis.org.

If you have a program idea please contact Program Chair Dave Nelson at engine1385@aol.com

The Big Picture is your page!

We've changed the format of the Sparks & Cinders back page, giving us room to run a large photo. Member submissions are solicited. Please send one or two of your outstanding pictures to Keith Schmidt, editor@nrhiswis.org.

Meeting Summary January 7, 2022

Sparks & Cinders is published by and for the members of the Wisconsin Chapter, Inc., National Railway Historical Society monthly except for July and August. The Chapter meets at the North Shore Congregational Church, 7330 N Santa Monica Blvd, Fox Point, Wisconsin, on the first Friday of each month, except June, July and August, at 7:30 p.m. The Wisconsin Chapter is a not-for-profit corporation, affiliated with the National Railway Historical Society and the Wisconsin Historical Society, organized to preserve the history of railroading in Wisconsin and the surrounding area. Additional information is available on the chapter's website, www.nrhiswis.org.

Membership in the Chapter is open to anyone having an interest in any aspect of railroading who is also a member of the NRHS. Paying \$20 annually to the Chapter will entitle you receive Sparks & Cinders. Paying the National dues of \$50 to the NRHS will entitle you to membership and subscriptions to the NRHS Bulletin and NRHS News. Full NRHS membership is required to participate in chapter business discussions and to vote in annual chapter elections. All address changes should be sent to Mike Yuhas president@nrhiswis.org (or via USPS at PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207).

Wisconsin Chapter officers are: Mike Yuhas, President (president@nrhiswis.org); Keith Schmidt, Vice-President; Tom Marcussen, Secretary; Tara Grudzielanek, Treasurer. Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Ralph McClure, Andrew Roach, Cathy Wegner and Neal Wegner.

Contributions to Sparks & Cinders should be sent to Editor Keith Schmidt at editor@nrhiswis.org (or USPS at PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207) by the 15th of the month to be considered for the following month's publication.

All original material published in Sparks & Cinders may be reprinted in other railfan publications provided credit is given to "Sparks & Cinders, Wisconsin Chapter, NRHS." If an author is indicated for the item or article, credit must also be given to the author. The views, opinions, and comments published in Sparks & Cinders are those of the authors and do not reflect the policies of the Wisconsin Chapter or the National Railway Historical Society. Copyright ©2022, Wisconsin Chapter, Inc., NRHS.

Gathering Time

Wisconsin Chapter President Mike Yuhas ran our fifth hybrid (both in-person and virtual) chapter meeting. The in-person site was the basement of the North Shore Congregational Church, at 7330 North Santa Monica Boulevard in Fox Point, Wisconsin. Members and guests started gathering, both in person at the above site, and in the Zoom meeting room, about 7:00 pm (the usual timing).

Introductions & Announcements

Chapter President Mike Yuhas muted the informal conversation on Zoom at 7:30 pm. He started recording on Zoom at 7:31 pm. He greeted everyone at 7:32 pm.

Mike Yuhas individually announced and welcomed nine official new members, since the last introduction at the meeting of December 3, 2021. A 10th new member, who joined today, is still being processed. They are not listed here. They will be individually listed elsewhere in the February issue of Sparks & Cinders.

Keith Schmidt was acting for Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek tonight, collecting and processing dues. Renewing is easy. We now offer multiple options for doing so—on-line, via paper check, or in person at meetings.

President Mike Yuhas reported receiving a Thank You note from Fresh Meals on Wheels of Sheboygan. This was for the \$350.00 collected from members who attended our tour of the private Christopher Museum on Saturday, November 13, 2021.

Presentation

Mike Yuhas introduced former Chapter President Bob Baker at 7:38 pm. Bob has just written a new book on the Milwaukee Road. The title is Photographing the Route of the Hiawathas. It is published by Four Ways West Publications. Copies were available at the meeting for \$60.00 each (with no shipping cost). Mike Yuhas collected a list of interested virtual attendees for forwarding to Bob Baker.

Tonight's presentation was "Milwaukee Road Days," a collection of historic Milwaukee Road photos from the above book taken in Wisconsin.

From the Prexy

Zoom attendance peaked at 58 devices during the presentation. Three devices were in the church basement. We had about 24 attend in person tonight. Total peak attendance was therefore at least 79—24 in person and at least 55 remote. The Zoom log showed a total of 86 unique Zoom users, some of which stayed for only a few minutes. Counting all of those resulted in a total attendance of 107.

The presentation ended at 9:19 pm. A short question and answer session followed.

Added Announcements

President Mike Yuhas publicly thanked Sal Ciofani and Keith Schmidt for administering the Zoom part of the meeting.

We are going to have a second informal Gab Fest on Friday, January 14, 2022. It will start at 7:30 pm. These are normally held on the 2nd Friday of each month. They are 100 % virtual, on Zoom only, very informal, with no presentation or recording made. They are just unstructured conversation on railroad topics. (Your secretary attended both of these, and was treated to some excellent pictures.)

There will be a Chapter board meeting, on Zoom, at 7:30 pm on Monday, January 17, 2022. All members will be invited, via e-mail, to observe.

The annual business meeting will be on Friday, February 4. That is now moved to the first Friday in February (by a vote at last year's January 2021 business meeting) so that a full and complete treasurer's report would be available.

Virtual Post Meeting

Terry Peterson took over as our remote host, after Mike Yuhas stopped recording, at 9:25 pm. That way remote members could continue conversing, while allowing in-person attendees to clear out of the church basement at a reasonable hour.

Respectfully Submitted

Thomas W. Marcussen

2021 Annual Business Meeting Summary

This is the annual formal business meeting. A quorum was confirmed. The minutes of the 2020 annual meeting were approved. Mike started with a recap of our activities in 2020, which included three in-person meetings at the beginning of the year, three board meetings, five online (Zoom) meetings, and two online slide shows.

Mike then turned to new projects and other initiatives—upcoming in 2021:

We are planning to publish a poster-size wall map of Wisconsin railroads from 1893 to 1970, based on Secretary Tom Marcussen's research of that subject.

We are also planning to publish a wall calendar for 2022.

We are planning a joint virtual meeting with the North West Illinois Chapter in May.

Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek presented a preliminary treasurer's report for 2020. The report was accepted.

Banquet Committee Chair Ralph McClure said that the plan was and is to return to Pallas Restaurant on 108th Street in West Allis. That date is unknown.

All 2020 incumbent directors and officers ran for re-election, with no opposition. All were re-elected.

A motion was made that beginning in 2022, the regular February meeting will be designated the chapter's annual meeting. The motion carried.

The official business meeting was declared adjourned at 8:02 pm,

NOTE—The full minutes of the 2021 business meeting can be accessed at the Chapter website at <http://nrhswis.org/images/minutes/2021AnnualMeetingMinutes.pdf>

At the end of the month, Canadian National will relinquish control of about 900 miles of lightly-used branchlines in Wisconsin, Upper Michigan and Ontario. As of press time, Watco Companies, through its subsidiaries Wisconsin & Southern (WSOR) and new railroad Fox Valley & Superior Rail System, LLC (FOXY), are poised to take control of the Wisconsin lines at midnight January 29. (See the May 2021 issue of Sparks & Cinders, available at www.nrhswis.org, for additional info and a detailed map.) At some point after startup, we hope to have a presentation on the new operation by senior Watco managers. This will likely be an online-only program, so be sure to watch your email for info (and for heaven's sake, please tell us your email address if you're not already on our list).

Bob Baker's Milwaukee Road presentation at our January meeting was wonderful. Bob shared plenty of photos from the Wisconsin-related portions of his new book, "Photographing the Route of the Hiawathas." There were about two dozen people in attendance, plus about 65 tuned in via Zoom. Thanks again to Joe Shine at Four Ways West Publications for supplying the scans shown in Bob's program.

Speaking of scanning slides, Dave Nelson has been working feverishly over the past few weeks, digitizing Tom Hoffmann's legacy media for Tom's lookback program on February 4. Dave makes note that this is the longest-running series of Wisconsin Chapter programs. If you can't make it in person on February 4, tune in the simulcast via Zoom. Details will be shared with members a few days in advance.

Also, the February meeting is designated our annual business meeting. After a few short agenda items, and election of our 2022 board and officers, Tom will present his program.

I'm happy to announce that a handful of very generous chapter members have donated over \$2,200 to the AV Fund. These donors, listed elsewhere in this issue, have contributed more than the purchase price of the AV equipment. On behalf of the board and officers of the Wisconsin Chapter, we extend deepest gratitude to every donor in helping make our programs available to a wide audience.

You may know that most of our meetings and online slide shows are archived for later viewing on YouTube.

We now have an easy-to-remember YouTube address: youtube.com/WisconsinChapterNRHS.

Please extend a warm welcome to the following new members of the Wisconsin Chapter:

Dean Sauvola, New Richmond
Eric Hendricson, St. Augustine, FL
James Westover, Wales
David Perkins, Huntsville, AL
David Cinotto, Keller, TX
Bon French, Glen Ellyn, IL
Gary Oudenhoeven, Plover
Charlie Hunter, Bellows Falls, VT

Thank you your membership in the Wisconsin Chapter. Your support helps preserve railroad history.

Stay safe, healthy, and warm,



Consider running for chapter leadership

Chapter elections take place at our annual meeting February 4. If you're a member of both the Wisconsin Chapter and the NRHS, and would like to help chart the future of our chapter, please consider running for an officer or board position. Contact chapter president Mike Yuhas (president@nrhswis.org or 414-698-6625) to discuss. All member input is solicited!

A Look Back at 2001 with Tom Hoffmann

On Friday February 4, 2022 longtime chapter member Tom Hoffmann presents another in his series of "lookback" programs. Join us as Tom turns back the dial to 2001, as he presents a selection of railroad photographs taken across Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan and Indiana... even some shots from California and Utah! Among the highlights are photos from consecutive days showing the last day of operations on the Wisconsin Central, and the first day of Canadian National operations. Tom's 20-year lookbacks are the chapter's longest continuing series of presentations.

Hat tip to Dave Nelson for digitizing Tom's legacy media.

Dues are due

At press time, 83.2% of our members have renewed for 2022. The address label on this edition of Sparks & Cinders bears info about your membership status. To continue as a member in the Wisconsin Chapter NRHS, and to support our programs and to maintain your Sparks & Cinders subscription, renew today! Send \$20 to Wisconsin Chapter NRHS, PO Box 070758, Milwaukee WI 53207. Or pay \$20 in person at our next meeting. Or conveniently pay \$21 at www.nrhswis.org (click the join/renew link). As a membership organization, the Wisconsin Chapter depends on your annual support. (Please remember that NRHS national dues are paid directly to the national organization.) Thank you!

Call for Photos

Ed. note: Chapter member Norm Carlson, president of the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society, asked us to publish the following:

Shore Line is asking the members of the Wisconsin Chapter to contribute photographs and experiences of riding trains in the Chicago-Twin Cities corridor for publication in a future Dispatch.

Over the course of history there were nine routes between these cities; this publication will focus on that competition. We will compare and contrast service levels, and share the human experience of riding the various railroads. We hope to bring out the philosophies of the railroads throughout history up to the current and proposed Amtrak service.

We're looking for pre-Amtrak photos of trains on the Burlington, Milwaukee Road, North Western and Soo Line. Photos of Amtrak operations encompassing the Empire Builder, Hiawatha Service and North Coast Hiawatha are also being requested.

We are seeking photographs that emphasize the service and human experience, particularly scenes that relate the geography and/or people to the railroad. Also requesting photos of stations, as well as trains at the stations, in Milwaukee, Madison and all intermediate stops. "People shots" are eagerly solicited. In short, if you have any photos depicting the many passenger trains between Chicago and the Twin Cities, we'd love to see them! We're asking you to help us to portray the experience of these trains and why there was such intense competition in this corridor.

If you can help with photos or stories, please contact Shore Line at president@shore-line.org.

Thank you Donors !

Remote meeting software enabled us to successfully present our programs to a wide audience during the coronavirus pandemic. When we resumed in-person meetings, we didn't have the proper equipment to allow our remote audience to appropriately experience these live presentations.

In October, your chapter board approved the purchase of items necessary to professionalize our remote meeting stream and enhance audio quality for the in-person audience, which amounted to a little over \$2,000.

Several members gave freely to our "AV Fund:"

Ward Wells
Tony White
Neal & Cathy Wegner
Ralph McClure
Robert Cronin
Anonymous
Fred Rieder
Mike Grosko
Richard Hawthorne
Thomas Sharratt
Richard Tollefsen
Robert Hoffmann
Jeff Wojciechowski
William Becker

Together, these individuals contributed \$2218 toward this essential purchase. Please join me in thanking these members for their generous support!

Because the funds collected exceed the purchase price of the gear, the AV Fund is now closed. However, if you wish to make a donation to the chapter in support of our programs, send a check for any amount to Wisconsin Chapter NRHS, PO Box 070758, Milwaukee WI 53207. Thank you!

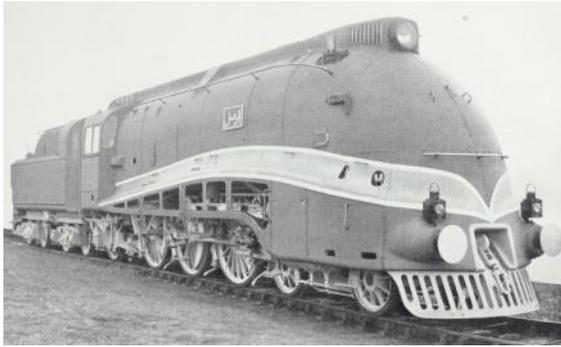
Call for Photos - Special Edition

On or around January 29, the Canadian National will cease operations on several branchlines in Wisconsin, Michigan and Ontario. These lines are being taken over by Watco. Watco is forming a new railroad company Fox Lake and Superior Rail System LLC (FOXY) to operate some of the new trackage in Wisconsin (we believe WSOR will assume control of some southern branches). If you photograph the end of the CN and beginning of FOXY and expanded WSOR, we would like see the results of your labors. Please send photos for possible use in a special photo section of the March 2022 issue of Sparks and Cinders. Please email photos to editor@nrhswis.org. To find out more information about the FOXY and to see an excellent map of the lines that are being taken over by Watco and retained by Canadian National check the May 2021 Sparks and Cinders. The issue can be read online at the Wisconsin Chapter website www.nrhswis.org. Deadline for submitting photos is February 10, 2022.

Do You Know ? - Part One

by Dave Nelson

"Streamlining," wrote design historian Sigfried Giedion in 1948, "began on trains," noting the 1934 Pioneer Zephyr, with its sleek diesel-electric locomotive, steel framing, and Budd Company fluted stainless steel sides, as the first truly streamlined train put into service. The Zephyrs, and the shockingly different Pierce-Arrow "Silver Arrow" concept car first shown at the January 1933 New York Auto Show, kicked off a world-wide craze for all things streamlined: architecture, home decor, radios, home and kitchen appliances, even farm tractors. But far too much "streamlined design" of the era was, according to Giedion, bloated with superfluous curves, violating the precepts of a true "streamline" in its technical sense of shape so curved that it moves through a medium (fluid or air) with the least resistance. Railroading had its share of "streamlined" steam locomotives that looked more like upside-down cast-iron bathtubs on wheels. Exhibit A is this Iraqi Railways Pacific.



Technological developments aided the sudden vogue for streamlining, and point to the different directions railroad streamlining took. As early as the 1920s industrial designers made increasing use of unpainted aluminum, chrome-plated steel, and stainless steel in home and industry. The 1920s Marcel Breuer cantilevered chair, using a single bent tube of plated steel (said to be influenced by bicycle handlebars), still looks "modern" today. But it was inventor and businessman Edward G. Budd whose Budd Company invented a shot-welding technique in 1932; this made stainless steel practical for the large, strong fabrications railroading needed. Budd was no stranger to transportation, having worked with Pullman and the Pennsylvania Railroad in developing the first all-steel passenger car body in 1906, and with the Dodge brothers who were aided by his development of arc welding to pioneer the first all-steel automobile sedan in 1916. But it was a 1932 meeting of Edward Budd and the head of the CB&Q railroad, Ralph Budd (no relation), that set the tone for the fluted stainless



steel Zephyrs to come, including the 1936 Mark Twain Zephyr preserved by the Wisconsin Great Northern, and the 1936 Twin Zephyr preserved at the Illinois Railway Museum in its final guise as the Nebraska Zephyr. These and later cars for the CB&Q, the Santa Fe, and other railroads still look sleek, clean and fast -- even, thanks to stainless steel, after years



of neglect and outdoor storage.

Advances in metallurgy and welding were behind the development of the smooth-sided streamlined passenger cars preferred by many railroads (Milwaukee Road's rib-sided cars being a style unto themselves). Just doing away with the obtrusive rivets made any passenger car look more mod-



ern. Famed industrial designer Raymond Loewy transformed the Pennsylvania Railroad's initial test GG1 electric locomotive into an ageless symbol of grace and power simply by eliminating the overlapping riveted metal plates, smoothing out curved contours, and adding his beautiful striping and lettering scheme, to the point where many still credit Loewy with the basic design of the GG1, which was not the case.

This Do You Know ? on railroad streamlining will be continued next month.

Sources for this article include Sigfried Giedion's "Mechanization Takes Command" (Oxford Univ. Press 1948); Karl Zimmermann's "The Remarkable GG1" (Quadrant Press 1977); The Railway Magazine, Oct. 1941 (U.K.); and "Route of the

Montana Rail Link to end Operations BNSF to take over

Montana Rail Link will end its long-term lease on BNSF Railway lines in its namesake state, Idaho, and Washington, with BNSF resuming operation of those routes, MRL President Derek Ollmann told employees in a memo today (Monday, Jan. 10).

No timeline for the changeover was indicated in the memo.

Montana Rail Link said in a press release that while it and BNSF have an agreement in place, the Surface Transportation Board must approve termination of the lease.

"There have been many changes in the rail industry since this long-term lease was signed, and given the need to be competitive in the current environment, we believe that this was the right time to revisit our longstanding agreement with BNSF," Ollmann said. "This agreement protects our workers, our customers, and our long-term commitment to safety, and it will ensure a more seamless operation of rail services in Montana."

In the same release, BNSF CEO Katie Farmer said, "We are excited to bring an important part of our railroad's history back into our operations at BNSF. The line will become the MRL Subdivision of our Montana Division in recognition of the shared heritage of BNSF and MRL."

Ollmann wrote in the memo that the decision "was made after a great deal of thought including securing BNSF's commitment to continue employment for all MRL employees." Employees will have the ability to remain in their current locations and BNSF will preserve payments that match MRL profit-sharing payouts, he wrote, once an agreement is negotiated.

Montana Rail Link was formed in 1987 through the lease of 937 miles of former Northern Pacific Railway trackage between Huntley, Mont., and Sandpoint, Idaho, from Burlington Northern. It employs more than 1,200 workers. The railroad was founded by Missoula businessman Dennis Washington and is part of The Washington Companies.

Courtesy Kalmbach Media TRAINS Newswire



MRL #4400 at Greycliff, MT May 13, 2016 by Dan Grudzielanek



Friends of the 261/Railroading Herit- age of Midwest America to expand to Silvis shop complex

In one of the largest expansions in railroad preservation in recent decades, Minneapolis-based Railroading Heritage of Midwest America/The Friends of the 261 will expand operations into the former National Railway Equipment (NRE) shop complex in the Quad Cities community of Silvis.

The 90-acre facility was once the main shop of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. The Silvis facility has more than 10 miles of track; the main shop building is 400,000 square feet with multiple overhead cranes. It includes a wheel shop, warehouse space, locomotive wheel drop table, multiple overhead cranes and several other smaller shop buildings. The complex is served by Iowa Interstate Railroad, BNSF Railway, and Canadian Pacific Railway. The group has been negotiating to move into the complex throughout the last half of 2021.

RRHMA subsidiary Friends of the 261 owns and operates Milwaukee Road steam locomotive No. 261 based in Minneapolis. Steve Sandberg, president and chief operating officer of the RRHMA/Friends, said the organization currently has no plans to permanently move No. 261 to the complex, although it could be moved to Illinois to pull excursion trains on a temporary basis.

"This takes our organization to a whole new level," Sandberg said in a news release. "We are excited about the possibilities; I believe this is one of the boldest moves for historic and railroad preservation in recent history."

NRE closed the Silvis shop in March 2021 as part of a plan to consolidate rail operations to its shops in Mt. Vernon, Ill., and Paducah, Ky. Since its founding in 1984, NRE has grown to become the world's largest independent supplier of leased locomotives and new and remanufactured locomotives; electrical components; and field services.

Milwaukee Road 261, built in 1944 by American Locomotive Co., has pulled excursion trains around the United States, including the Quad Cities since it was restored to operating condition in 1993. It was donated by the Milwaukee Road to the National Railroad Museum in Green Bay, Wis. in 1956 and moved to the museum in 1958. After leasing the engine from the museum in 1992, in 2010 the Friends purchased the locomotive. In addition to the 4-8-4, the Friends owns a large fleet of passenger cars and former Milwaukee Road E9 No. 32A, all located in Minneapolis. Some of the equipment could be displayed at a new Silvis museum when not in excursion train use.

The Friends of the 261 is accepting donations to offset the cost of the project and is urging supporters to donate and become members of the organization by visiting www.261.com. A new website has also been developed for Railroading Heritage of Midwest America at www.rrhma.com.

Courtesy Kalmbach Media TRAINS Newswire



Milwaukee Road #261 and QJ steam locomotives sit in Silvis, IL at NRE facility in Sept 2006. Photo by Keith Schmidt

From the Archives

February 1957 - 65 Years Ago

It is not often that much of rail hobby interest is found in a railroad employees magazine, however the Soo Liner for Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 1955 (Vol. 6, No. 4) contained quite a bit of interest. It was shown to the S&C staff by Laird Ross, and the following is quoted from it. "Stevens Point is the second largest city on the Wisconsin River with a population of 18,000 of whom the Soo provides employment for 421 with an annual payroll of \$1,500,000; the city's largest. 'The Point' has been important to the Soo Line since 1871 when the first line of the Wisconsin Central reached it from Menasha. It is a terminal with large yards, roundhouse, and division headquarters of the Stevens Point division which is made up of all the former Wisconsin Central lines. Ten freight trains are made up daily for Chicago, Minneapolis, Duluth, and Ashland. The largest LCL platform between Chicago and the Twin Cities makes possible the loading of 10 to 12 cars of LCL freight daily. The paper mills provide the railroad with its largest tonnage originating at 'The Point.' In a year, they receive 4000 or more carloads of raw material and ship about 1000 cars of finished paper and 600 to 700 cars of wood pulp.

February 1962- 60 Years Ago

The Milwaukee Road added a Super Dome to Trains 27 and 23 from Chicago to Milwaukee, returning on Trains 12 and 58. There are six "spare" Domes since the Olympian Hi was discontinued. During summer and Christmas holidays they are used on The Challenger. They are also used during peak travel times on the Hi's which then carry two Super Domes.

February 1967 - 55 Years Ago

Due to the severe snowstorm in Chicago, C&NW routings have been changed considerably. Freight from St. Louis or Chicago has been coming to Butler for classification. The St. Louis- Chicago train, No. 380 has been running through to Butler. Westbound freight is being routed via Butler, Twin Cities, Sioux City, and Omaha....The M-15 at East Troy has been repainted to a dark forest green body, traction orange letter board and aluminum roof....The last of the trackless trolley overhead on Michigan and Milwaukee streets is coming down, including the single (shades of streetcars) wire on Michigan which was used to power the Michigan and Broadway lift bridges.

February 1972 - 50 Years Ago

A slide contest will be held at the April Chapter meeting. Each member may enter one slide of Milwaukee Road Trains 12 and 23, the Cannonball, taken any time after dieselization. Wreck shots may not be entered....The Milwaukee Road announced on January 18 that it had petitioned the ICC to abandon the line from Calamine to Platteville; on January 20, the petition was withdrawn.

February 1977 - 45 Years Ago

Once again, the weather is causing problems, Amtrak has cancelled service on eight routes due to the weather; reservations are not being accepted prior to February 15. The former Penn-Central coach yard in Chicago was unable to provide equipment for the San Francisco Zephyr, James Whitcomb Riley, Broadway Limited, Lake Shore Limited, Inter-American, or Panama Limited.

February 1982 - 40 Years Ago

Snowplows have been in use a lot in the Milwaukee area. Milwaukee Road plowed from Portage to Madison and Watertown, then plowed from Brookfield to Waukesha.. Wisconsin & Southern plowed the Menomonee Falls branch CM&N is plowing Madison to Mineral Point. C&NW and Milwaukee Road have been using snowjets and C&NW plowed Butler Yard with a carbody-style plow....Mid-Continent's snow train the scheduled for February 20-21- snow is expected.

February 1987 - 35 Years Ago

The Soo Line announced plans to close most of Bensenville Yard, making 420 acres available for sale and development.... The increasing popularity of dinner train operations in various areas of the country was noted....Power switches are being installed at Duplainville, to be controlled by the dispatcher in Milwaukee....C&NW has closed the Florida St. piggyback ramp; trailers are hauled to Chicago for loading onto railcars there.

February 1992 - 30 Years Ago

Wisconsin Central Transportation Corp. announced on January 8 that it had acquired, through its wholly-owned subsidiary Fox Valley & Western, Ltd., the Fox River Valley Railroad Corp., the Green Bay & Western Railroad Co., and the Ahnapee & Western Railway Co....Algoma Central Railway of Canada recently announced that all 565 of its employees were susceptible to layoff if Algoma Steel closes its operation. Ore traffic accounts for about 60% of the railroad's freight revenue....Burlington Northern is testing liquid natural gas (refrigerated methane) as a diesel locomotive fuel in the northern corridor. Preliminary tests have shown significantly less wear on engine parts and reduced emissions.

February 1997 - 25 Years Ago

The snow out west is so bad that CP reclaimed a snow plow from a small museum at Sturtevant and sent it to Minnesota to fill in for other equipment sent west....U.S. Senator Russ Feingold has sent a letter to the FRA opposing one-person train crews in Wisconsin.

February 2002 - 20 Years Ago

WSOR has painted several box cars with patriotic slogans and American flags to honor the country and commemorate the 9/11 terrorist attacks....WSOR is acquiring six used SD40-2s to replace aging power....In January CN kicked off the winter iron ore shipment season from the Minorca taconite plant near Virginia, Minnesota to Escanaba, Michigan.... Spokespersons for GM say that "there are no current plans" to sell its struggling Electro-Motive Division.

February 2007 - 15 Years Ago

Gil Reid, one of the great railroad artists, passed away on January 2 at age 88....The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Transportation Authority put on hold a request for a regional sales tax to help finance the proposed KRM commuter line....CN will be retiring the last of the former WC SD45s....Tom Hoffmann chronicled a winter detour of Amtrak 4 (the Southwest Chief) in New Mexico due to heavy snow....Other items in railroad history noted: First run of North Shore Line Electroliner on February 8, 1941; Soo Line takes over Milwaukee Road on February 19, 1985; Last streetcar (Route 10 - Wells) operates in Milwaukee on February 23, 1958; First train Milwaukee to Waukesha on Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien on February 25, 1851

February 2012 - 10 Years Ago

On February 4, 2012 the Chapter is scheduled to tour the Talgo Car Factory in Milwaukee. The Talgo Co was contracted to build Talgo Train Sets for Wisconsin and Washington. The plant being used is a former home of A.O. Smith automobile frame plant on 27th street. The State of Wisconsin along with Minnesota are looking at the possibility of adding a second local edition of the Empire Builder that would run from Chicago to Minneapolis. The train would leave Chicago in the morning and return in the evening. This would be the opposite schedule of the current Empire Builder.

February 2017 - 5 Years Ago

The Lake Superior Railroad Museum's first excursion trips featuring newly restored Duluth & Northeastern 2-8-0 No. 28 will be June 10 and 11 when the Consolidation will pull two special trips for project donors. American Locomotive Co.'s Pittsburgh Works built the engine in 1906 for DM&IR predecessor Duluth, Missabe & Northern as No. 332. The locomotive remained in service on D&NE until 1964, much longer than most other steam engines in revenue service. The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad has announced that the WM #1309 2-6-6-2 Articulated steam engine will be pulling its first trains on the railroad July 1st. The #1309 was built in 1949. It has been undergoing restoration for several years at the museum. *Note - The first run of #1309 happened in November 2021.*

The Big Picture



MRLE #4400 leads a train along the Yellowstone River near Columbia, MT May 13, 2016 Photo by Dan Grudzielanek