



NRHS

WISCONSIN CHAPTER



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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.

Preserving Wisconsin Railroad History for 75 Years

Visit the Chapter Webpage www.nrhwis.org



Chapter members pose with #1003 in Burnett WI on Saturday August 23 2025. The #1003 was out running due to a donation from the chapter to celebrate the 75th anniversary. There were crowds trackside to watch as railroad history rolled past them. Photo taken with Keith Schmidt's camera by willing bystander

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Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule

Upcoming chapter events

Oct 4 2025 75th Anniversary Banquet Polish Community Center Franklin WI

November 7 2025 To Be Announced TBA

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. For more up to date information on meetings and speakers, and also any weather cancellations, check the chapter's webpage at www.nrhwis.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@nrhwis.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@nrhwis.org.

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.nrhwis.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 membership@nrhwis.org (or via USPS at PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207).

Wisconsin Chapter officers are: Keith Schmidt President Ward Wells Vice President, Tom Marcussen, Secretary; Tara Grudzielanek, Treasurer. Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Mike Yuhas, Ralph McClure and Neal Wegner. One Vacancy

Contributions to Sparks & Cinders should be sent to Editor Keith Schmidt at editor@nrhwis.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 ©2025, Wisconsin Chapter, Inc., NRHS.

Meeting Summary for June 6 2025

President Keith Schmidt ran this meeting from the North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point. We were in the first-floor Friendship Lounge near the front entrance door. Our usual basement meeting room was flooded during the rainstorm of August 9-10. Repairs are still in progress. There was no word on whether we would be able to return to the basement for our next regular meeting, at the church, of Friday, November 7. Recording started at 7:30 pm. Keith started the meeting at 7:30 pm. He welcomed all attendees to the first regular monthly meeting of the 2025-2026 season.

75th Anniversary Event Updates

Keith started with a summary of our "Summer of 75" (75th anniversary year) events to date. These began with a return visit to the Christopher Transportation Museum, north of Sheboygan, on Saturday, June 7. We had a good weather day, allowing us to tour the gardens.

The East Troy Electric Railroad / Museum held a Wisconsin Chapter Day on Saturday, July 19. Some early light rain ended fairly quickly. We got unlimited rides on the regular trains, a special daylight photo session with their newly restored North Shore Line dispatch / merchandise car #228 and a local antique truck, and a private evening excursion tour of the line. A 1956 Chevrolet sedan showed up at the photo session at St. Peters Road on the return leg of that trip.

We had our charter trip with Soo Line 1913 2-8-2 #1003 on Saturday, August 23. We got off to a late start because host railroad Wisconsin & Southern's regular revenue freight train was returning late. Publicity apparently had been good. There were lots of cars following the train, and people in lawn chairs waiting for it. The train ran slow enough to allow for multiple photo opportunities. Switching operations at Horicon were well observed. There were dwell-time opportunities in Hartford, Horicon, and Burnett. The trip ran as far north as Burnett, reached about 1:30 pm. Refilling the tender with coal there was well observed. This day was Cathy Wegner's birthday. We signed up one new member in Hartford. The trip banner that was applied to the back of the caboose will be auctioned off, and the proceeds donated for the preservation of Soo Line #1003.

Fall Conference and Banquet

Mike Yuhas took over for an update on the upcoming National Fall Conference, on October 3-4, 2025. The headquarters hotel will be the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee Downtown, at 333 West Kilbourne (3 blocks north of Wisconsin Avenue). Attendees will be able to sign in starting on Thursday, October 2. Friday, October 3 will have a bus trip to two local rail attractions. The first, for the morning, will be the Christopher Transportation Museum north of Sheboygan. The bus will return south for lunch at the Bavarian Bierhaus in Glendale. Then it will go southwest to the East Troy Electric Railroad / Museum. It will return to the conference headquarters hotel in the evening. Saturday, October 4, will be a day of meetings, for the Advisory Council, Board of Directors, and others, followed by a bus trip to the banquet (see below). The cost of the banquet is included in the registration cost for the fall conference.

We are the host chapter for the Fall Conference. We could make or lose a little money on the event. About 30 have signed up already. That is a good sign. We got a few more today. We are looking for volunteers to handle registrations, direct attendees, and generally supervise events. NRHS National President Tony White will be in attendance. Ed Koehler from New York said that he would be coming.

Our 75th anniversary banquet will be held at the Polish Center of Wisconsin, at 6941 South 68th Street (north of Rawson Avenue) in Franklin, on Saturday, October 4, 2025. Events open up at 5:00 pm. Dinner will be served (buffet style) at 6:00 pm. The cash bar will open at 5:00 pm, and remain open through the night. We are working on getting a cake. Our featured main speaker will be noted Wisconsin rail historian and author Arlyn Colby. His main focus has been on lesser-known Wisconsin branch lines. Members can sign up and pay online at our Chapter web site, or send us a check (at the address below). Cost is \$45.00 per person for chapter members and spouses. An e-mail with a link was sent out to all members of record on Thursday, September 4.

Miscellaneous

The key to all of the above good stuff is membership. There are three options to join or renew Chapter membership. You can pay in person at a chapter meeting. You can send a check to the chapter at PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207 or pay \$21.00 at www.nrhswis.org

We are looking for presentations for meetings from November 7 on. Members with ideas should contact our program chair Dave Nelson at engine1385@aol.com.

We signed up one new member today: Doug Scott, who had earlier given us a presentation of operations on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. He said he might have some other material to present.

Presentations

The presentations part of the meeting began at 7:46 pm. Tonight is Members Favorite Slide (or other media) night. In-person presentations will be first. There will be four of those, followed by four remote presentations.

Mike Yuhas thanked Keith for all of his work in organizing all of these events.

Keith Schmidt, Dan Grudzielanek, Mike Janke and Dave Nelson were the in person presenters.

Remote presentations started about 8:22pm

First presenter was Dax Macklin. The chapter sponsored Dax to attend NRHS RailCamp. The chapter paid his entry fee. Dax provided a great presentation about his experience at Railcamp and thanked the chapter for the opportunity. Dax was presenting from Scotland where he will be attending school. The time in Scotland was 2:22am.

Ed Koehler, Al Baker and Mike Yuhas were the other remote presenters.

From the President

It's been a great summer of 75. Not 1975 but 75 years. The chapter has had 3 great anniversary events. Christopher Museum, East Troy Railroad and the charter of the Soo #1003 on August 23rd.

Just want to say THANK YOU !! To everyone that helped with all of these events. The Soo #1003 turned out better than I expected. The chapter chartered the steam engine to highlight railroad history and it did. People lined the tracks all the way from Hartford to Horicon and then to Burnett. There were close to 200 people in Burnett to see the 2-8-2 Mikado. It was a great day.

The crew of the #1003 were great to work with. Plans were flexible and everything ran smoothly. A dozen members took advantage of the chance to check out the cab of #1003 and the interior of the cabooses before the locomotive was back to bed in Hartford.

75th Anniversary banquet is coming up on Saturday October 4 at the Polish Community Center. Come and enjoy some great food and good fellowship with other chapter members. Arlyn Colby, Wisconsin rail historian and author is our speaker. We will have some door prizes available to win too.

KH

Trainfest 2025 is right around the corner

Do you enjoy talking trains with people? If so, the Chapter is looking for you. The Wisconsin Chapter NRHS will be hosting a table at Trainfest 2025 Saturday November 1st and Sunday November 2nd. This year's show is at the Baird Center in downtown Milwaukee. The show's hours are 9am to 5pm Saturday and 9am to 4pm Sunday. We would be grateful if you could help us staff the table at any time during the show. There are no specific shifts or minimum time required. Unfortunately, we do not have any free passes to the show, but if you buy online, you can save a few dollars. If you are interested in helping out please contact Ward Wells at wwardw@hotmail.com.



meeting summary continued

Conclusion

There was no count of in-person attendees at the church. 22 attending in person. Your secretary saw a peak of 29 devices connected to Zoom during the presentations.

The last presentation ended at 9:25 pm. That left very limited time to put everything away and clear the church by their requested 10:00 pm time limit. There was no opportunity for anyone to present any more "seconds." Recording stopped at 9:27 pm. Mike Yuhas, who was working from his home in Trempealeau, and was not subject to the above time limit, took over as remote host. That allowed for an informal on-line discussion group to continue until 9:49 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Thomas W. Marcussen

Chapter 75th Annual Banquet Saturday October 4 2025

Make plans to be a part of the 75th Anniversary banquet for the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society. The banquet is going to be something special to celebrate the anniversary. Our chapter will be joined by NRHS members attending a fall conference being held in Milwaukee that weekend. The chapter is sponsoring the fall conference. Come and meet fellow members from all over the country and enjoy some food and fellowship.

Our menu will be Mixed Greens Salad, Rolls and Butter, Roast Beef and Gravy, Southern Fried Chicken and Polish Sausage, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Italian Pasta Salad, Cheese and Potato stuffed Pierogi, Cookies and/or Brownies.

When Saturday October 4 2025 Social Hour from 5pm to 6pm

Dinner at 6pm Cash Bar will be available

Where Polish Community Center 6941 S 68th Street Franklin WI

Speaker Arlyn Colby Local Railroad Historian and Author

Cost for Chapter Members and spouses is \$45 per person.

Reservations and payment need to be made by Friday September 26 2025

Our guest speaker will be Arlyn Colby. Arlyn is a Wisconsin railroad historian and author. Arlyn has done a presentation at one of our regular chapter meetings. Arlyn's books focus on branchlines in Wisconsin. It should be a great evening.

We will also have the honor of having Tony White President of the National NRHS in attendance. He will be asked to say a few words. I am hoping to have some historic chapter items on display.

DOOR PRIZES - We have made arrangements to have a few door prizes available. We will have door prizes available from

Arlyn Colby Books

East Troy Railroad Museum

Cratville Publications

Chapter Publication "Wisconsin Rails 2" by Bob Baker

Chapter 75th Anniversary apparel collection

Full Year of TRAINS Magazine 1950

A Railroad Atlas of the United States Volume 4 Illinois, Wisconsin and Upper Michigan by R Carpenter

For the door prizes each attendee will receive ten (10) tickets. Each item will have a container in front of it. You can place your tickets in the container for the prize you want to win. Put all 10 in one or spread them out.

Make plans to attend. Payment can be made by cash or check at the September meeting or by sending a check (no cash) to Wisconsin Chapter NRHS PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207. We will also be setting up an online payment option through the website www.nrhswis.org



Polish Community Center Banquet Room and Exterior

Soo Line #1003 Charter

Saturday August 23 2025

On Saturday August 23 2025 the Soo #1003 was steamed up for a special charter run. The Wisconsin Chapter NRHS chartered the #1003 for a public run to celebrate the chapters 75th Anniversary. The #1003 was going to run from Hartford WI to Burnett WI and back. The run was to celebrate railroad history in Wisconsin. Lots of people lined the track to see the #1003 steam past. It was a great day. BIG THANK YOU to Steam Locomotive Heritage Association and the crew of the #1003. Let's do it again sometime.

From the Ground Photos by Keith Schmidt



Steamy Morning



Prepping the fire for the trip



Morning onlookers in Hartford waiting for departure



WSOR T4 passes #1003 in Hartford running a bit late.



Onlookers and runby's in Burnett WI Photos by Keith Schmidt





Photos by Dan Grudzielanek

From the Air

Aerial Photos by Keith Schmidt



Iron Ridge WI westbound



Photo Run By Burnett



The crowds in Burnett



Departing Burnett



Maple Road Horicon WI



Iron Ridge WI

From the Archives

October 1955—70 Years Ago

DSS&A has received their RDC for service between St. Ignace and Ishpeming....MT&W is using a second hand diesel for its operations. Ex-Milwaukee Road steam engines are in standby service....The UP will begin using the Milwaukee Road between Omaha and Chicago for its transcontinental trains on October 30. The trains formerly ran on the C&NW between Omaha and Chicago.

October 1960 - 65 Years Ago

Wisconsin Chapter is operating an excursion via the C&NW to Baraboo on October 16. Ticket price is \$7.75 per person....The Milwaukee Road Magazine for July-August, 1960, had a good article on the 25th Anniversary trip of the Hiawatha which we were privileged to take. Ninety-plus members and guests of WC-NRHS made the trip, viewing the Minirama at the Dells, also." – CWS. (Carl Solheim) (Minirama was an operating model of the rock formations, river, tour boats, and trains in the Wisconsin Dells area.

October 1965 - 60 Years Ago

"In Minneapolis this past Friday I saw a GN freight leaving with the following consist: a GP35 leading, a U25B, and a GP30. Units are apparently mixed as needed." – JFH (Jerry Hilton)...."A Pictorial History of C&NW Steam Power" by Charles T. Knudsen, 208 pages, 8 1/2 x 11, 300+ photos, text and rosters, is available for \$10.00 from the author. (Mr. Knudsen presented a program about C&NW steam at a Chapter meeting shortly after publication of his book)

October 1970—55 Years Ago

The Milwaukee Road has scheduled three "Football Specials" running from Milwaukee to Madison via Watertown. The Specials will operate on October 17, 31, and November 7. Since October 1, 1969, the Milwaukee Road has discontinued Train Nos. 2 and 3, and 1 and 4. The North Western has discontinued Trains Nos. 214 and 125-121....On September 4th MILW No. 117 from Chicago to Madison operated with two parlor cars instead of coaches....News item: Santa Fe plans to get out of Chicago's Dearborn Street Station and switch its five passenger trains to the Illinois Central terminal on Michigan Ave. GTW, L&N, and N&W will also have to vacate Dearborn before the city can tear it down.

October 1975—50 Years Ago

C&NW GP18 No. 1776, in its Bicentennial paint scheme, has been highly visible at Butler Yard and on local assignments.... C&NW suburban service to Lake Geneva, Pell Lake, and Genoa City ceased on August 12. The trains now terminate at Richmond, Illinois....The Milwaukee Road has petitioned to abandon approximately nine miles of line between Republic and Champion, Michigan. This is a portion of the former Copper Country Limited route.

October 1980 - 45 Years Ago

Plans are being finalized for MidRail '80, hosted by Wisconsin Chapter, on November 7, 8, and 9. Scheduled events are the Chapter auction on the 7th; on the 8th a tour of the Butler Yard and trip on the Kettle Moraine Ry. followed by lunch at the Depot Restaurant in Waukesha. A visit to Williams Siding where the Wisconsin Central (not WCL) keeps its engine and a visit to the NMRA meet at State Fair Park are on the schedule for the after-noon. A banquet at the Ramada Inn with speaker Dave Ingles followed by the slide show "A Sentimental Journey" are slated for the evening. Sunday morning the 9th will feature the NRHS Board meeting....The "Revive the Cannonball" Committee will sponsor a two-week trial of the resumption of commuter service from Oconomowoc to Milwaukee beginning October 13.

October 1985 - 40 Years Ago

Plans continue for the annual auction on November 1. A complete list of locomotive re-numberings on the Soo/ Milwaukee was published....CNW has signed contracts with Wisconsin Power & Light to move two million tons of low sulphur coal per year from the Powder River basin in Wyoming to the Edgewater plant in Sheboygan and via CNW to St. Paul and Soo/Milwaukee to Portage....Red and yellow will be the colors applied to the SP and Santa Fe locomotive fleet after the proposed merger is completed. (The so-called "Kodachrome" paint scheme. – ed.) The first unit in the new colors, SD45 No. 5394, emerged from the ATSF shops in San Bernardino.

October 1990 —35 Years Ago

On September 29, the Wisconsin Central named their shop switcher No. 1 the "Francis J. Wiener" in honor of their greatest fan, unofficial official photographer, and long-time employee of the predecessor Soo Line in North Fond du Lac, who passed away recently. The PBS series "Tracks Ahead," produced and aired locally by Channel 10 last season, begins national distribution this season

October 1995 —30 Years Ago

Fiscal year 1996 funding for Amtrak is in serious jeopardy in Congress. Although the House has voted a total of \$546 million and the Senate has voted \$515 million, none of the funds will be available until a reauthorization bill is passed. It is currently hung up in Congress over two labor-related issues: reducing wage protection for laid-off employees from six years to six months and contracting out repair work to non-Amtrak shops

October 2000— 25 Years Ago

Trains Magazine celebrated its 60th Birthday Party at Rochelle Railroad Park on October 7....Extension of Amtrak service to Fond du Lac, scheduled to begin August 21, has been delayed. No freight contracts or operating agreements have been signed as of August 23

October 2005 — 20 Years Ago

Ground breaking for a new Amtrak depot in Sturtevant was scheduled for Saturday, September 24. The new \$3.2 million depot will replace the 104-year-old former Milwaukee Road depot which appeared in countless photographs over the years. Amtrak said that owing to a Canadian Pacific Railway rail replacement program in Wisconsin, train No. 8, the eastbound Empire Builder, will be detoured over the BNSF Railway between Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago on specific days in October. The CP project is replacing 29,200 feet of continuously welded rail in three locations on the Tomah Subdivision, from one mile west of La Crosse to three miles east of Wisconsin Dells. Train No. 7, the westbound Empire Builder, will not be affected by the work and will operate on its regular route and schedule

October 2010 — 15 Years Ago

Union Pacific Railroad said on August 24 that it will spend more than \$9 million to improve the rail line from Milwaukee to near Lebanon in south-central Dodge County. Work on two projects covering more than a 40-mile stretch of railroad track began August 18 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of November, the UP said in a statement. The projects include removing and installing more than 33,000 ties, replacing the surfaces at 57 grade crossings and replacing nearly 24 miles of rail. The track handles six freight trains per day and does not handle passenger traffic, said Mark Davis, a UP spokesman. "This is an important line" for Wisconsin, said Mark Davis

October 2015 — 10 Years Ago

The state of Wisconsin will pay Spanish train builder Talgo Inc. \$9.7 million in a settlement agreement between the parties, the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel reports. Additionally, the company will retain title to the two trainsets for the state built under contract that was later voided by Gov. Scott Walker. On Saturday and Sunday October 10th and 11th the Milwaukee Road #261 4-8-4 steam locomotive will pull excursions out of Minneapolis, MN. On Saturday the #261 will head north from Minneapolis to Superior, WI. Then on Sunday October 11th #261 will proceed west out of Minneapolis to Willmar, MN on former Great Northern track.

October 2020 — 5 Years Ago

With Covid 19 restrictions firmly in place the Chapter switched to Zoom based remote meetings. The September 2020 featured Members Favorite slide night. 10 different members used the remote format to show photos from the past summer or many summers ago.

One feature was the rebuilding of the UP Brown Street bridge in Mapleton WI. This is former CNW. Harry Evans gave a short presentation on its removal and replacement.

The Big Picture



BIG THANK YOU !! To the crew of the Soo #1003 and Steam Locomotive Heritage Association. The charter was great. Will have to do it again sometime soon. Photo by Keith Schmidt