

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 76 Years

Visit the Chapter Webpage www.nrhwis.org



An empty BNSF trash train heads west along the rugged Columbia near Home Valley, Washington, August 21, 2025. Photo by Mike Yugas

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Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule

Upcoming chapter events

April 10 2026 Along the Columbia River by Mike Yuhas NOTE THE DATE CHANGE !!! Also to begin the evening there will be short presentation from Randy Christopherson our newest member

May 1 2026 Shortlines I have Visited by Dan Grudzielanek at Cudahy Depot

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, Neal Wegner, Ralph McClure and Brian Hechel.

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.

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Meeting Minutes for March 6 2026

President Keith Schmidt ran this meeting from the upstairs first-floor Friendship Lounge at the North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point. He welcomed all attendees, both in person (20) and via Zoom (30), at 7:31 pm. Keith had brought treats for the in-person attendees, in honor of his 62nd birthday the day before. Recording started at 7:32 pm.

Keith started with one very important announcement. Our usual first-Friday meeting date will next month fall on Good Friday, April 3. The church will need all of their rooms for Good Friday events and observances. Therefore our next meeting is moved to the second Friday, April 10. Keith is actively looking for material for the April issue of Sparks & Cinders.

The 250th anniversary of the United States is coming up quickly. Some locomotives are being repainted, similar to what was done for the Bicentennial year of 1976. The two Canadian railroads have taken the lead. Canadian National (CN) has two—numbered 1776 and 2026—with two different anniversary paint schemes. Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) has one—numbered 1776. Keith showed images of all three schemes. Union Pacific (UP) has one in progress. It is expected to make its debut when Big Boy 4-8-8-4 #4014 starts its tour of the western states in late March. There was no mention of whether any other US railroads intend to follow suit.

Membership Chair Mike Yuhas had some additional announcements. The first was to please renew membership for 2026. There are still a few, some of them in attendance tonight, who have not yet done so. There are three options to renew (or join) Chapter membership. The first way is to

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pay by cash or check in person. The second way is on-line payment via our website at nrhswis.org. That second option includes an extra \$1.00 fee for credit card processing costs. The third way is to send a \$20.00 check to Wisconsin Chapter NRHS, P. O. Box 070758, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Members and subscribers receive 10 issues of our monthly newsletter Sparks & Cinders, plus admission to members-only events, and member discounts on other events and merchandise. If you see value in what we are doing here, please renew now, or consider joining us as a Wisconsin Chapter member. Dues payments support Chapter meetings like this one, other activities and publications. Your support is much appreciated.

Mike asked one of our newest members, Randy Christopherson, age 15, and a high school student from Monona, Wisconsin (in attendance via Zoom) to introduce himself. Randy had a picture of CPKC in Rio (northwest of Columbus on the former Milwaukee Road main line) for his background. Randy has applied to attend NRHS Rail Camp this summer. Wisconsin Chapter has discussed sponsoring him with a scholarship if he is successful.

Presentation

Keith introduced our presenter Tom Hoffmann at 7:42pm. There were technical difficulties in getting the program to load and run. Tom started his presentation at 7:47 pm. It was the latest in his popular "20 Years Ago" series, covering the calendar year of 2005. Tom started with local photos taken in January 2005. He then expanded to Illinois. He took several trips to northern Indiana and southern Michigan. There were images from two more trips to Missouri and Oklahoma. He went to Atlanta, Georgia. There were several shots of damage done by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. The above presentation ended at 8:50 pm. Your secretary saw a peak of 42 devices connected to Zoom. There were 20 in-person attendees at the church. Removing the duplication from the one device in the church yielded a total attendance of 61.

Recording stopped at 8:53 pm. There was no informal on-line discussion group. The Zoom meeting room closed at 8:56 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Thomas W. Marcussen
Wisconsin Chapter Secretary

From the President

March has been an interesting month here in Wisconsin. Some days in the 70's. There was a major snowstorm with blizzard warnings that covered most of the state in the middle of the month. Within a few days most of the snow had melted and things were back to some spring weather. Looks like March may go out like a lion with an ice storm and other messy weather again. Have to love Wisconsin

July 4 2026 the United States of America celebrates 250 years of freedom. Several railroads have unveiled anniversary painted locomotives. The Canadian National and Canadian Pacific have great looking paint schemes and the locomotives are out in service. The CPKC #1776 came through Milwaukee on Saturday March 28th in the morning headed to Minneapolis. It might be returning soon.

The UP #4014 Big Boy has departed for the western leg of its trip across the United States. After Memorial Day it will begin an eastern trip with the Big Boy being in Philadelphia on July 4th.

CHANGE OF MEETING LOCATION—The Chapter meeting on Friday May 1st will be held at the Cudahy Depot located at 4647 S, Kinnickinnic Ave. The Cudahy Historical Society reached out to me about having the depot host a chapter. They are excited to actually have a railroad historical group meet in the depot. The depot was built by the CNW in 1893. The depot has been restored by the historical society and features a collection of historical items from the railroad and Cudahy history. The UP tracks still run next to the depot. There's a slight chance of a train going by during the meeting.

The depot will be open starting around 6:15pm for members to come down and check out the historical displays. See Page 4 for more information. Get Busy Livin'

Milwaukee Road #261 to pull 250th Anniversary Excursions

It was recently announced the Milwaukee Road #261 4-8-4 steam locomotive will be powering several excursions in celebration of 250th anniversary of the United States.

The excursions will be held on Friday July 17th, Saturday July 18th and Sunday July 19th on the Twin Cities and Western railroad.

The Friday July 17th excursion will depart Chahassen MN and head west on the TCW. There will be a mid day stop in Danube MN with box lunches being provided. There will also be a special photo run by opportunity.

Saturday July 18th will feature two separate excursions. There will be two morning trips that will go from Montevideo MN to Granite Falls and back. Then an afternoon trip will be to the Appleton wye to turn the train and return to Montevideo.

Sunday July 19th will depart Montevideo in the morning with a midday lunch stop at Buffalo Lake MN. Box lunches will be provided and a final photo run by.

APRIL MEETING DATE CHANGE !!

The April 2026 Chapter meeting will be held on Friday April 10th due to April 3rd being Good Friday. The time and location will be the same.

Mike Yuhas presents "Along the Columbia River" Friday April 10, 2026

Chapter Director Mike Yuhas spent a few days along the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington and will share some photos depicting trains on both sides of the river. In addition to trains on the BNSF Fallbridge Sub and Oregon Trunk Line, and on UP's Portland Sub, we'll see a little action in the Seattle-Tacoma area, and perhaps a picture or two in Idaho or Montana. There will be towboats! And a few other whimsical delights thrown in to prevent insomnia.

The meeting takes place at the North Shore Congregational Church, 7330 North Santa Monica Boulevard, Fox Point, Wisconsin. Arrive early to socialize with your fellow members. Doors open at 7pm on Friday, November 7, 2025. Announcements and the presentation at 7:30 pm CST. The presentation will be available remotely on Zoom. For those participating remotely: This event requires advance registration. To register please contact membership@nrhswis.org to receive the meeting link.

Before Mike's presentation we will be treated to some photos from our newest chapter member and NRHS Railcamp candidate Randy Christopherson. Randy was introduced in the March meeting. Randy has applied for NRHS Railcamp and if he is accepted the chapter will be paying his tuition.



Amtrak's westbound Empire Builder screams through Doylestown, Wisconsin, March 14, 2025. Photo by Randy Christopherson



UP's Chicago-Portland Z train hustles along the Columbia River near Rufus, Oregon, August 23, 2025. Photo by Mike Yuhas

May 1 2026 NEW Meeting Location Cudahy Railroad Depot

I had the opportunity to visit the former CNW depot in Cudahy WI in October of 2025 during an open house. I ended up talking to the President of the Cudahy Historical Society Cheryl Orlando. The Cudahy Historical Society are the owners of the depot and the caretakers that have been restoring the depot since 1975. Cheryl and I talked for some time during the open house. She was pleased that someone that knew a little bit about railroad and railroad history had stopped in. They have some items in the collection that they aren't sure what they are.

A few weeks ago I got an email from Cheryl wondering if the chapter would like to hold a chapter meeting there. So I made another stop at the depot just past Saturday to check things out. I believe we can make it work. The historical society just purchased 40 new folding chairs that we can setup in the biggest room of the depot which would have been the men's waiting room. In the same room there is a large pull down screen. I told Cheryl that the chapter would be more than happy to meet at the depot.

The way things will work for the Friday May 1st meeting is that the depot will be open around 6:15pm for members to come and check out the items on display. Then at 7:30pm the zoom meeting will start and I will do a walking tour with a phone showing the zoom attendees the depot. After about 10-15 minutes we will get everyone together to make some announcements and enjoy Dan Grudzielanek's presentation. Dan has said he is going to add some photos that he has taken in Cudahy.

Some information about the depot. It was built by the Chicago and Northwestern railroad in 1893. It has five different rooms. A ladies waiting room, the ticket agents area, the men's waiting room, cold storage room and the freight area. All of the rooms have been restored. The most interesting room is the cold storage room. It has been left pretty much in tact. This was also a break room for employees. There is some interesting hand written graffiti on the wood walls. The freight area has been turned into the museum area. It features several different sections including items from local companies like Patrick Cudahy and Ladish. There are some railroad items on display including a couple of velocipedes hanging from the rafters.

Make plans to attend if possible. There is parking available and a restroom. If we're real lucky a train will go past. There will be more information in the May issue. *by Keith Schmidt*

Model Railroad Show and Swap Meet 28th Annual Metro Spring Train Show

Sunday April 12 2026 9am to 4pm

Ozaukee County Fairgrounds—Curling Building
W67N866 Washington Ave. Cedarburg

Several Operating Model Railroad Layouts
70+ Swap Tables

Admission \$5.00 12 and under Free
For more information <http://members.trainorders.com/scrimjimmy/index.html>

New Daytime Operations on UP's Clyman Sub.

By Dan Grudzielanek

Recently the Union Pacific modified the operating plans for most of their local trains in the Milwaukee area. One of the major changes was modifying the schedule of the train from Butler Yard to Jefferson on the Clyman Subdivision. Previously this job ran at night. Currently it runs on Monday mornings as train LBU51C. The following photos were taken during a chase of the train on Monday, March 2, 2026.



UP train LBU51C has just come off the Adams Subdivision and is now on the Clyman Subdivision at Clyman Jct. The local train originated at Butler Yard, about 37 miles east of here, and is on its way to Jefferson, WI. The steam locomotive era coaling tower in the background straddles the Adams Subdivision.



Passing the coaling tower at Clyman Jct., WI.



After contacting the CPKC dispatcher, train LBU51C crosses the CPKC's Watertown Subdivision at Watertown, WI.



LBU51C working at the Nestle Purina plant in Jefferson, WI.

We are now about 20 miles south of Clyman Jct. at Jefferson Jct. Today the Clyman Sub. is a branch line that extends from Clyman Jct. to Fort Atkinson. At one time it was part of C&NW's through route from Fond du Lac to Janesville. Jefferson Junction was the location where C&NW's Milwaukee-Madison route crossed this line.



Do You Know ?

by Dave Nelson

On April 30, 2011, I was railfanning in Shawano, WI after attending the Titledown Train Show in Green Bay (which this year will be held May 9-10). I saw no trains, but I happened upon an asphalt shingle brick-look siding wood railroad depot in Shawano that, except for a collapsed back platform, seemed well-preserved. Some rail-served industries including United Co-op were nearby. This former Soo Line structure had Wisconsin Central signage but by that time the Canadian National had already acquired the WC so the trackage I saw was CN. Now it would be Fox Valley & Lake Superior according to the latest Wisconsin DOT map. I was able to take photos of all sides from a variety of angles, and a selection of those photos is presented here.

Had I thought to explore more in Shawano I would have found a second depot in town, the former C&NW station. And just a couple of years later the Shawano County Historical Society erected a full-size replica of the Zachow WI C&NW depot in Shawano (this is the exact replica depot that houses the building-by building historical reproduction of the entire village of Zachow circa 1949, meticulously researched and built in N scale by Jim Rindt and John Dornfeld, and an accurate version of the C&NW's 1949 trackage in Zachow, constructed by Chris Comport) so for a brief period, there were three depots in Shawano. (The Wisconsin Chapter heard a full presentation about "The Zachow Project" several years ago.)

Recently I posted all my Shawano depot photos on the Wisconsin Railroad Depots Facebook page. This is a great way to generate new and useful information about your depot photos. It was a Soo Line depot, but it was constructed in 1906-07 by one of the predecessor railroads, the Wisconsin & Northern, which the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway (Soo Line) acquired in 1921. In 1926 the Soo Line added a 30-foot extension to the depot. Shawano had been a division point for the railroad, and trains on the Fond du Lac to Gladstone run would change crews here. At one time according to Al Rehme there was a turntable south of the depot but if there was still evidence of that in 2011, I missed it.

The Shawano depot witnessed the last remaining fragment of Soo Line passenger service, which otherwise ended in 1967, and the last remaining mixed trains on any railroad. For a variety of reasons relating to mandated service perhaps required by old real estate deeds, the Soo Line offered, but did not promote, mixed trains (seats in cabooses) on certain freight train runs, as late as 1986. The Fond du Lac to Gladstone run was one of those. Lance Erickson wrote "I must be the last passenger to get off there! I rode one of the mixed trains. ... I was in the caboose and that engineer spotted with one try the 120-car freight right at the depot for me to get off there. That is not an easy thing to do. The depot was closed, not a light on even at night. Soo Line said the mixed trains were dangerous. But they could not name even one incident in over a hundred years of a passenger getting hurt on this line! They kept the train a secret, because people might find out about it and ride! It was in the employee time table and some locals knew about it."

As I wrote the depot was in reasonably good shape in 2011 but evidently it deteriorated quickly thereafter. Kim Kafura wrote "Last photos I have of it show a shrub growing out of the roof and several holes. Shawano didn't show much interest in saving it. They issued a 'repair or raze' order to the CN. The rest is history." The structure was razed in November, 2013. The old C&NW depot still exists but the CNW track is a bike trail.



From the Archives

April 1951—75 Years Ago

Milwaukee Chapter – NRHS celebrated its first birthday....Excursion No. 2. Milwaukee Chapter will run a fantrip on the North Shore's 2:00 p.m. Electroliner to Kenosha and return via the North Western's Sunday local from Chicago. The C&NW train is usually operated with the new Budd RDC cars. There will also be an opportunity to photograph some C&NW steam locomotives, as Kenosha is the northern terminus of the Chicago suburban district. The cost of the trip will be slightly over \$2, including cab fare between the de-pots in Kenosha. For further details call HI2-2676 and come to the April meeting

April 1956— 70 Years Ago

The Transport Company is now getting ready for the Milwaukee Braves baseball season. All regular cars have been cleaned and inspected so they will be ready to go when the season starts. Five cars which were in storage at KK Station have been prepared again for operation. Cars at National Station have also been cleaned and groomed for the coming baseball season. Several 930- and 940-class cars are being used as trippers on Wells Street to get them back into good operating condition.

April 1961 - 65 Years Ago

Walt Bubbert and Bill Englehorn took a "streetcar" ride from Milwaukee to South Bend recently. They left on the 8:00 a.m. North Shore Electroliner, made a seven minute walk from the "L" to the IC station, and boarded the South Shore. The IC track was a bit rough but things smoothed out a bit at 115th Street when the big orange car moved onto South Shore track. Trains magazine for April notes that a Milwaukee Road bi-polar electric locomotive has been donated to the National Museum of Transport at St. Louis, Missouri....Railroad Model Craftsman for April 1961 featured an article by Russ Porter about changing a Mantua General into a 4-4-0 inspection Locomotive. GB&W has purchased a second DL-640 from Alco....The Milwaukee Road has sold two streamlined coaches to CGW.

April 1966 - 60 Years Ago

The old Milwaukee Road depot (at Third and Everett St.) came down as follows: January 24: the concourse was the first to disappear, followed by the baggage room (west end of building). February 19: the west quarter of the building completely torn down, part of the roof and part of the south wall of the second and third floor demolished. February 27: both ends of the building are nearly down on the street and track sides. March 4: everything west of the tower demolished; about half of the east end is down. March 11: demolition begins on tower. March 18: tower completely down, ending demolition of the building.

April 1971—55 Years Ago

A watershed in the provision of rail passenger service in the U.S. was scheduled to begin on May 1 with the startup of Amtrak. Locally, it was learned that the Chicago-Seattle service would operate via Milwaukee.

April 1976—50 Years ago

Jim Scribbins reviewed the new Amcoaches on Train 301 to Joliet....On May 8 Wisconsin Chapter will host the Metropolitan Regional Convention of the Wisconsin Council for Local History

April 1981 - 45 Years Ago

Amtrak will remove the last GG-1 electric locomotives from service in May, ending their lengthy tenure on the electrified portions of the former Pennsylvania Railroad lines east of Harrisburg.

April 1986 - 40 Years Ago

Exceptionally heavy traffic was reported on the Soo/Milwaukee system in the area....In 1986, ex-C&NW steam locomotive No. 1385 will make its only Milwaukee appearance on the Circus Train on July 8 and 9....Flooding in the Reeseville Marsh has forced rerouting of rail traffic (including Amtrak).

April 1991 —35 Years Ago

The City of Brookfield is unhappy with malfunctioning crossing gates on the Soo Line in the city and has threatened to impose "user fees" of \$75 for the first 15 minutes and \$25 for each additional 15 minutes for crossings blocked by malfunctioning gates. There were 27 incidents reported in 1990....After studying bids from several manufacturers, Amtrak has decided to purchase 52 new diesel-electric locomotives from General Electric. All will have DC propulsion systems. Amtrak had requested bids for both AC and DC systems. The bid price for the AC units was approximately three times higher than the DC bid price.

April 1996 —30 Years Ago

About 1,700 residents of Weyauwega began returning to their homes on March 19, two weeks after the derailment and subsequent burning of propane-filled tank cars in a Wisconsin Central train. A total of 37 cars derailed and the flames were so intense that siding was buckled on a house 350 feet from the accident scene....The UP is interested in selling a section of isolated former C&NW track running north from Duck Creek in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

April 2001—25 Years Ago

Citing the failure of mail and express service to develop as anticipated, Amtrak will discontinue the Chicago-Janesville Lake Country Limited on September 24. It was reduced to Saturday-only service on March 24....Amtrak announced a fare reduction on multi-ride tickets between Milwaukee and Chicago. A monthly ticket will be reduced from \$508 to \$280 and a 10-ride ticket from \$158 to \$150..Former Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson will step down from his post as Amtrak Chairman of the Board. He has been appointed Secretary of Health and Human Services by President George W. Bush. UP is applying a smaller version of its winged shield to standard-body units after its re-introduction on wide-body units.

April 2006 — 20 Years Ago

Ex-Milwaukee Road 4-8-4 No. 261 will make its first appearance in the area since returning to service in 1993. The first trip on June 21 is a positioning trip from Minneapolis to Milwaukee. Friday, June 23, will see a round trip dinner excursion to Sturtevant. Saturday June 24 and Sunday June 25 will see round trips to Wisconsin Dells....The proposed commuter rail extension from Kenosha to Milwaukee is moving along. The newly-constituted Regional Transit Authority held its first meeting on February 20.

April 2011 — 15 Years Ago

Canadian National Railway is outlining plans to replace a swing bridge over the Fox River on its Chicago- Winnipeg, Man., main line, the Oshkosh Northwestern has reported. Under CN's plan, a new lift bridge would be constructed over the course of three years approximately 40 feet to the east of the existing bridge. The current bridge is 112 years old and is "at the end of its useful life," said Patrick Waldron, a CN spokesman. "It's time to replace it." The current three-span bridge, built by CN predecessor Chicago & North Western, limits train speeds to 25 mph. Its condition could force speeds to drop to 10 mph. CN wants to begin construction of a foundation for the new bridge starting this fall and replace utilities in early 2012. Final work would occur in early 2013

April 2016 — 10 Years Ago

According to the March 10, 2016 issue of North Shore Now, a railroad theme lighting display is planned for the new Oak Leaf Trail pedestrian bridge over Capitol Drive that replaced the original C&NW railroad bridge. Using LEDs, the display will create the illusion that the C&NW's famous "400" is running at speed over the bridge, while a sound system recreates the impression of the fast moving train. The "northbound" ghost train will appear at 6:30 pm and the "southbound" will be seen at 8:30 pm. The times may be adjusted during the longer days of summer. Traffic lights will be synchronized so that traffic will be stopped during the 30 second light shows. Pedestrians and bikers on the bridge itself will not see the light show but will hear the train noises. According to the article, 90% of the cost of the project has already been raised. The Capitol Drive bridge is near to a cut-off that routed some C&NW trains directly from the main line through Whitefish Bay

April 2021— 5 Years Ago

The Wisconsin Chapter is holding its first-ever joint online meeting with the North West Illinois Chapter. Each year the NWI chapter presents a program devoted to the railroad photography of John Dziobko. Frequently referred to as "The Godfather," Mr. Dziobko has been photographing trains since the 1950s, primarily on expertly exposed Kodachrome. These annual programs have become one of NWI's most popular meeting topics.

The Big Picture



An eastbound (running on the westbound main) CPKC unit tank car train is approaching Pilgrim Road at Wirth Park in Brookfield on Monday morning March 2, 2026. Photo by Glenn Schaefer