

NRHS

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Volume 76 Number 5

EST  1950

May 2026

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.nrhswis.org



Mineral Range #1323 leads a train over a gravel road crossing. Photo by Dan Grudzielanek

In This Issue

- ◆ *From the President*
- ◆ *May Meeting Location—Cudahy Depot*
- ◆ *Do You Know*

Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule

Upcoming chapter events

May 1 2026 Regionals and Short Lines by Dan Grudzielanek at Cudahy Depot 4647 S Kinnickinnic Ave

June 5 2026 Video Presentation featuring the SS Badger carferry with Brian Hechel and Drayton Blackgrove

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.nrhswis.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@nrhswis.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@nrhswis.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.nrhswis.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@nrhswis.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@nrhswis.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 April 10 2026

President Keith Schmidt ran our April meeting from the large basement meeting room at the North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point. He welcomed all attendees, both in person (pretty light at 13) and via Zoom (28), at 7:31 pm. Recording started at 7:32 pm.

The planned bus trip on Saturday, April 25, to the public open house at the Railroading Heritage of Midwest America (RRHMA) (former Rock Island) steam restoration shop in Silvis, Illinois, just east of Rock Island in the Quad Cities area, is cancelled due to lack of interest. Only ten members had signed up. The cost for a charter bus was over \$2000.00. We could not offer a reasonable price without absorbing a significant loss. The museum will still be having their public open house on Saturday April 25 2026. Admission is \$20.00 per person at the gate. The only way to get there is by driving.

Our next regular membership meeting, on Friday, May 1, 2026, is being moved to the former Chicago & North Western Cudahy depot. It is on the west side of the south end of Kinnickinnic Avenue, just north of Layton Avenue. It is on the east side of the former C&NW Old Line Subdivision (now the Kenosha Subdivision of the Union Pacific). The depot was built in 1893. The Cudahy Historical Society took it over in 1975. They have restored the building to close to its original condition. It houses a museum of Cudahy history, including the C&NW. Cudahy's two largest industrial plants are still in operation. Ladish is now ATI (offering casting, forging, and precision machining). They made parts for the Artemis II lunar orbit mission that just splashed down as a success earlier tonight. Patrick Cudahy, now operating as a division of Smithfield Foods, still packages quality bacon, ham, and pork meat products. The depot will open at 6:30pm for in-person attendees to enjoy tours and social time. Zoom attendees will not see any changes from their usual routine / procedures. Dan Grudzielanek will present "Regionals and Short Lines" Other planned details of the evening are covered in the April issue of Sparks & Cinders—pages 3 and 4.

From the President

There was one extra caution not in April Sparks & Cinders. Parking at the depot is somewhat limited. Street parking is available nearby. Attendees should avoid parking in the lot in front of Affordable Heating—in the former Kohl's food store on the east side of Kinnickinnic, across from the depot. Keith reminded all of us who are providing material for the May issue of Sparks & Cinders of reduced turn-around time (only three weeks to the next meeting).

If you see value in what we are doing here, please consider joining us (or renew for 2026, if you have not already done so) as a Wisconsin Chapter member. There are three options to join (or renew) Chapter membership. The first way is to 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. Dues payments support Chapter meetings like this one, other activities and publications. Your support is much appreciated.

Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) locomotive 1776 (painted in honor the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States) has been appearing in the Milwaukee area (on former Milwaukee Road trackage). There are reports that CPKC will similarly repaint four more locomotives to be numbered 704, 726, 2026 and Presentation

Membership Chair Mike Yuhas took over at 7:41 pm. Mike introduced our youngest and newest member, Randy Christopherson, age 15. NRHS National just accepted Randy's application to attend Rail Camp 2026. The Wisconsin Chapter had planned to sponsor his \$1575.00 tuition. NRHS National reduced tuition to \$1000.00 for Chapter-sponsored attendees. Wisconsin Chapter will present Randy with a \$575.00 stipend to cover his transportation and other attendance expenses. Randy took over at 7:43 pm. He showed us some of his photographs taken around Wisconsin, and a video of Amtrak #7, the westbound Empire Builder, taken from Pewaukee Lake.

Mike took the floor back at 7:48 pm for the main presentation. Mike showed images from two trips to the Columbia and Snake River Gorges, in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, with some more from his roundabout travels to get there and return. Some more details on Mike's presentation appear on Page 4 of the April issue of Sparks & Cinders.

The above two presentations ended at 8:28 pm. There was a question and comment session. Gordon Bachinsky from the Wheel Rail Interface (WRI) Conference offered some significant encouragement for Randy Christopherson. The railroad industry will be needing a lot more interested young people like him.

Your secretary saw a peak of 33 devices connected to Zoom. There were 13 in-person attendees at the church. Removing the duplication from the one device in the church yielded a total attendance of 45. Keith Schmidt reminded everybody that our next meeting is only three weeks away, on Friday, May 1, 2026.

Recording stopped at 8:37 pm. There was no informal on-line discussion group. The Zoom meeting room closed at 8:44 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Thomas W. Marcussen

Wisconsin Chapter Secretary

April showers bring May flowers. April has definitely had its share of showers. On the evening of April 14th the Wisconsin Chapter held a board meeting via Zoom. Typically Zoom is not really affected by weather because everyone is at home. Not so that night. There was severe weather in southeastern Wisconsin that night and two of the participants at one point were under Tornado warnings and had moved into their basement for shelter. Luckily there were no issues with either of them being directly affected by the weather and the meeting continued.

May 1, 2026 meeting will be held in the historic Cudahy WI depot. I am looking forward to the meeting being held in this restored CNW depot. There's a slight chance that a train could go past but the chances are pretty slim. There's more information on the meeting on page 4.

This summer is turning out to be a very steamy summer. The UP #4014 Big Boy is running right now and will be coming east for the 4th of July. The Milwaukee Road #261 has announced excursions on the Twin Cities and Western. The "Queen of Steam" NW #611 has recently announced excursions on the Virginia Scenic Railway in June and July.

Watch for more information about some possible Wisconsin Chapter sponsored charters with the East Troy Railroad and the Soo Line #1003.

Get Busy Livin'

KJ

The "Queen of Steam" NW #611 pulling excursions

In June-July 2026 the Norfolk and Western #611 4-8-4 steam locomotive will be pulling excursions on the Virginia Scenic Railway. There will be three different excursions run during that time. The first group of excursions will be from June 12-June 21. The trip will leave from Staunton VA and run about 20 miles out of Staunton and then return. The #611 will lead on the outbound trip and then a diesel will pull the train back on the return trip. #611 will be live and steamed up in both directions. The trip lasts about 90 minutes.

There will be a one day 8 hour excursions that will leave Staunton and end in Charlottesville VA on June 22nd. This is a one way trip with the #611. The locomotive will be turned on a wye for the second half of the trips. Passengers will return to Staunton on a diesel powered train.

Starting June 26 until July 6 the excursions will run from Louisa VA for about 20 miles powered by #611. The return trip will be assisted by a diesel locomotive with #611 still under steam. For more information on these trip please check out Virginia Scenic Railway at www.virginiascenicrailway.com



Dan Grudzielanek presents "Regionals and Shortlines Friday May 1 2026

Looking for some variety in North American railroading these days? Look no further than the more than 600 short line and regional freight railroads found across the continent. Short lines often operate older or unusual locomotives you won't see on major systems like Union Pacific or BNSF Railway. You might catch rebuilt engines, rare paint schemes, or even locomotives from defunct railroads still in service. Many short lines operate former branch lines of larger railroads, sometimes preserving routes that would otherwise be abandoned. For railfans, it can feel like stepping back in time—especially when older equipment is still in use. Because short lines rely on whatever equipment they can acquire and maintain, there's a lot of unpredictability—which railfans love.

Chapter Director Dan Grudzielanek has been able to photograph many of these unique railroads over the past few decades. His presentation will include visits to more than 40 different short line, regional, and even a few industrial railroads. We'll see railroads such as Florida East Coast, Wisconsin & Southern, Wisconsin Central, Iowa Traction, Montana Rail Link, Indiana Railroad and many more.

The meeting takes place at the Historic Cudahy Depot 4647 S Kinnickinnic Ave Cudahy WI. We will have the depot open around 6:30pm for members to check out the preserved depot. 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.



Historic Cudahy Depot

On Friday May 1st the Wisconsin Chapter NRHS will have the pleasure of having its monthly meeting at the historic Cudahy railroad depot. The depot has been restored and is being maintained by the Cudahy Historical Society.

In 1893 the Chicago and Northwestern railroad built the Cudahy depot on land donated by the families of John and Patrick Cudahy.

The depot served the city of Cudahy and especially Patrick Cudahy meat packing plant as a convenient way for employees to get to and from work.

In 1957 much of the passenger service to the depot had been discontinued and freight service was minimal.

In 1971 the city of Cudahy condemned the depot and in 1975 it was abandoned and slated for demolition. The Cudahy Historical Society was formed in 1972 to hopefully preserve the depot and restore it. In 1978 the Cudahy Historical Society acquired the deed to the depot. The society has been working on repairing the restoring the depot ever since.

Please consider coming to the depot on Friday May 1st and seeing what has been done. There are historical displays from the railroad and the city of Cudahy. Below are some photos of the Cudahy Depot.



CPKC #1776 Visits Wisconsin

The CPKC railroad recently unveiled its special painted locomotive to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States. The striking paint scheme is similar to the new CPKC standard paint scheme but the white stripes and blue field make it a very patriotic scheme. The CPKC led a couple of trains between Chicago and Milwaukee in late March and early April. Enjoy some shots below. (The shots are much better in color, check it online at www.nrhswis.org)



CPKC #1776 the first of five CPKC 250th anniversary painted locomotives. The top two photos were taken by Randy Christopherson 04-01-2-2026. The one on the left was taken in Rio, WI the one on the right was taken in Reeseville, WI. The middle two photos were taken by Keith Schmidt. Left aerial shot at Duplainville WI and the right in Burnham Yard in Milwaukee. The aerial shot to the left was taken by Mike Yugas near Winona MN.



Do You Know ?

by Dave Nelson

For years a prized target for railfan photographers, at least those west of the Mississippi River, has been the rail shipments of Boeing 737 fuselages and other parts from their manufacture in Wichita, Kansas, to the Boeing assembly plant in Washington. I myself have only been lucky enough to see and



photograph a nose section, presumably for a 737, in September 1995 at Argentine Yard when railfanning in Kansas City. But I have found two

World War II era "bomber boxes" which were used by the Chicago Burlington & Quincy to ship fuselage parts of the famous B-29 bomber from their various initial factories to at least one of the four points of final assembly, the Glenn L. Martin Bomber Plant in Bellevue, Nebraska, where 526 out of the total of 3,970 B-29's were assembled, including Enola Gay which dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima Japan.

Here is the story as best as I have been able to piece it together. The government's War Production Board geographically dispersed the locations where B-29 parts were manufactured and assembled to minimize the risk of crippling attack or sabotage by the enemy. Because the Board controlled all manufacture of war related materials



for the duration of the conflict the body parts for the B-29 were parceled out to such familiar names as the Hudson Motor Car Co. in Detroit; Fisher Body Division of General Motors in Cleveland;



Goodyear Aircraft in Akron; Chrysler/DeSoto in Warren, Michigan. Four dispersed plants were chosen for final as-

sembly. The Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad (CB&Q) built special containers for fuselage parts at its shops in Galesburg, Illinois, and these containers were designed to fit atop CB&Q FM-14 class flatcars in such a way as they could be removed when no longer needed. The containers were semi-

permanently made part of the flatcar, in that they were fitted with the ladders, running boards, handbrake platforms, and other safety appliances as would be seen on a full boxcar. Visually, a bomber box on a flatcar would somewhat resemble a rounded-roof



boxcar, with full-width end doors of the kind seen back then on boxcars used to ship automobiles.

The B-29s were enormous four-engine airplanes for their day, and the fuselage was

built in four sections perhaps because not all portions were pressurized. Thus the CB&Q "bomber boxes" were not of a size to ship an entire fuselage. It is possible the CB&Q bomber boxes primarily served the Martin plant in Nebraska. The bomber boxes were extremely sturdy but were so purpose-designed that they found no other railroad use once the war was over. When Japan surrendered, orders for 5082 more B-29s were abruptly canceled and the bomber boxes immediately became surplusage. At least some of them found use, with appropriate modifications such as side doors and windows, as storage/work sheds. I found and photo-

graphed one in an Elmwood IL residential back yard (Elmwood is along the CB&Q/BN/BNSF line between Galesburg and Peoria) in 1996, 2009, and 2010, and another alongside (and seemingly being used by) the CN (formerly Illinois Central) tracks in Independence, Iowa in 2013. That one also retained more remnants of its original railroad appliances such as ladders and a handbrake step.

Reportedly, other bomber boxes exist in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Lincoln, Nebraska. Although I have read accounts of people seeing these covered flatcars holding airplane components at the

CB&Q's Gibson Yard in Omaha, because wartime photography of militarily sensitive subjects was controlled and photographed by the government, photos of bomber boxes in original service are rare enough that I have been unable to find any online.



From the Archives

May 1951—75 Years Ago

This month we are having as our guest E. L. (Lew) Pardee, NRHS Vice-President in charge of membership. Mr. Pardee resides in Collingwood, New Jersey. For the program portion of the meeting, he will show movies on assorted subjects such as Pacific Electric, Havana (Cuba) Electric, Atlantic Coast Line, Seaboard, Florida East Coast, and B&O....Ten fans had a very enjoyable Sunday afternoon on April 15th. This was the day they went to Kenosha via CNS&M Silverliner and returned via C&NW air conditioned (?), streamlined (?) coach on the Sunday local. Present were Wayne Suchow, Ralph Schmidt, Jim Mayer, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pratt, Joe and John Barth

May 1956— 70 Years Ago

At the April meeting, the membership of Milwaukee Chapter voted to cancel the June meeting and in its place take a fan-trip to Churchill, Manitoba. The coach fare for the 1763-mile round trip will be \$10.88, including tax. Contact Gene Knol, ticket seller at Milwaukee Rah Rah Road Depot. (The June meeting was indeed cancelled, however, the Canadian trip announcement was an April Fool joke by the editor.)

May 1961 - 65 Years Ago

The monthly meeting was held at the West Allis YMCA and featured the CSS&SB and a film on UP 4-8-8-4s, "Giants of the Rails."...A Chapter fantrip, C&NW Flambeau 400 to Waukegan -CNS&M Electroliner return, is set for June 25. Cost is \$3.62....The demise of the Olympian Hiawatha was announced

May 1966 - 60 Years Ago

The annual Chapter banquet is scheduled for Nino's Steak Roundup on Plankinton Ave. Cost is \$3.75 per person. The featured speaker will be Paul Larson. His subject will be the Circus Train and Parade

May 1971—55 Years Ago

The big news was the startup of Amtrak on May 1. The first Amtrak train in Wisconsin was No. 24 which left the Milwaukee depot for Chicago with two freshly-painted (in MILW colors) E9s, five coaches and a cafe-lounge at 7:20 a.m....The C&NW will remove one track of its double-track Milwaukee-Kenosha main line following termination of passenger service. The double track will remain in place south of Kenosha....On March 1 the East Troy Village Board approved use of the MET (ex-TMER&L) electric line between Mukwonago and East Troy for museum use by the Wisconsin Electric Railway Historical Society....The NMRA National Convention is scheduled for the Pfister Hotel on May 21-23....The C&O carferry dock has been repaired after being out of service for several weeks during the past winter.

May 1976—50 Years ago

The Chapter will be hosting the regional meeting of the State Historical Society on May 8....Details of the design and operation of the first LRVs (Light Rail Vehicles) were listed in an article from Design Report magazine.

May 1981 - 45 Years Ago

The Annual Chapter Banquet will be held on May 15th at the Downtown Ramada Inn, featured speaker will be James MacDonald, VP-Public Relations for the C&NW....The D&RGW has sold the Silverton narrow gauge line to Florida citrus grower Charles E. Bradshaw, Jr., for \$2.2 million....A derailed tank car in Louisville, Kentucky, drew large crowds when it began leaking and officials had trouble keeping the public away. The car did not contain any toxic chemicals but rather Scotch whiskey. Some 200 gallons of the liquid spilled before it could be transferred to another car....Amtrak announced that all remaining GG-1 electric locos would be retired by the end of 1981. The venerable units were constructed between 1934 and 1943.

May 1986 - 40 Years Ago

S&C devoted four pages to a listing of errors and inaccuracies found in the recently published book "Trains of Wisconsin" by Malcolm Rosholt....It is rumored that the Soo Line may sell Bensenville Yard to the State of Illinois for a runway extension for O'Hare International Airport....The Annual Chapter banquet will be held on May 2nd, featured speaker will be Joe Darling, Director of Special Projects for the Soo Line....The Kettle Moraine Scenic Railway is looking for volunteers to help in the operation of the line.

May 1991—35 Years Ago

Former Milwaukee Mayor Frank Zeidler will be the featured speaker at the Annual Chapter Banquet on May 3. Mayor Zeidler, who was employed by the Milwaukee Road as a transit-man from 1943-1946, is a long-time advocate of public transportation.... On April 7 Amtrak consolidated all of its New York service in Penn Station. The move affected approximately one million passengers a year who formerly used Grand Central Station. With the change comes the opening of the first direct rail connection between the Hudson and Delaware Valley routes and other rail routes into New York.

May 1996—30 Years Ago

UP 4-8-4 No. 844 will be in the Midwest this summer. A trip from Elmhurst, Illinois, to St. Francis is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, September 1....The WC has pulled several rails on the Neenah Sub. through Oshkosh, making its original ex-Soo Line route through the city impassable....Ex-Milwaukee Road No. 261 will be returning home in early June after spending the winter at Steamtown. A June excursion on the WC is tentatively planned along with other trips in Illinois and Minnesota

May 2001— 25 Years Ago

John Gruber, noted rail photographer, presented a program on the Green Bay & Western at the annual Chapter banquet on May 5....On April 4 WC shareholders overwhelmingly approved the sale of the WC to CN....Spring flooding along the Mississippi River forced both CP and BNSF to detour trains, mainly via WC. Amtrak Empire Builder passengers were bussed between Chicago and the Twin Cities....The last two steam trips on the WC took place on June 16 and 17 with ex- Soo Line No. 2719 powering the trains. On June 16, the train operated from Ladysmith to South Itasca and return. On June 17 it operated from Ladysmith to Junction City and return.

May 2006 — 20 Years Ago

The annual Chapter banquet speaker was Chris Burger, retired railroad executive and former C&NW Wisconsin Division Superintendent who presented a program on Chinese steam operations....Ex-Milwaukee Road 4-8-4 No. 261 will visit the Milwaukee area in June and operate on several trips....UP ended rail service to Sheboygan Falls on March 31 after 100 years.

May 2011 — 15 Years Ago

The state of Wisconsin is considering purchasing Union Pacific's Madison-Reedsburg branch to preserve it for future freight service, the Wisconsin State Journal has reported. The roughly 50-mile branch is isolated from the rest of UP's system, and Wisconsin & Southern Railroad has operated it under lease since 1996. Gov. Scott Walker announced on March 29 that the state will apply for at least \$150 million in federal high speed rail grants to add equipment and facilities for Amtrak's Hiawatha corridor. The upgrades apparently would not increase the speed of the 79 mph line, but could provide the capacity to increase passenger train frequency from the current seven round trips daily

May 2016 — 10 Years Ago

Wisconsin short line Wisconsin Great Northern, long known for its popular "bed and breakfast" tourist trains train powered by former Chicago & North Western F7 No. 423, has loaded its first car of online freight. The car was loaded at the railroad's new pulpwood-hardwood load-out at Springbrook, Wis. The location has room for expansion and currently has three tracks and room for 12 cars. The outbound traffic is interchanged with Canadian National at Hayward Junction with other traffic

May 2021— 5 Years Ago

Canadian Pacific will buy Kansas City Southern in a cash and stock transaction worth approximately \$29 billion, CP has confirmed. Financial Times first reported the story Saturday night. In an announcement posted Sunday morning, CP said the deal has the approval of both boards of directors, and confirms the previously reported price valuing KCS at \$275 per share, representing a 23% premium on KCS's closing stock price on Friday.

The Big Picture



CPKC #1776 leads an eastbound train in Portage WI on April 1, 2026 No Foolin'. Photo by Randy Christopherson