



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



The Ford Fast passes the Duplainville Tower on July 7, 1975 Photo by J David Ingles

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Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule



Friday, January 7 – Bob Baker's Milwaukee Road (in-person and Zoom)
Friday, January 14 – Railroad Gabfest (online only)
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)

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.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.

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.

Meeting Summary December 3, 2021

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 Yuhás president@nrhswis.org (or via USPS at PO Box 070758 Milwaukee, WI 53207).

Wisconsin Chapter officers are: Mike Yuhás, President (president@nrhswis.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@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 ©2021, Wisconsin Chapter, Inc., NRHS.

This was our fourth hybrid (both in-person and virtual) chapter meeting. Wisconsin Chapter President Mike Yuhás ran it from our usual pre-pandemic meeting site in 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 and at the above site, and in the Zoom meeting room, about 7:00 pm (the usual timing).

Introductions & Announcements

Wisconsin Chapter President Mike Yuhás started recording on Zoom at 7:29 pm. He greeted everyone at 7:31 pm.

Mike Yuhás introduced our six new members, since the last introduction at the meeting on November 5. Two of those six joined in October, and four joined in November.

Dues are now coming in for 2022. Renewing is easy. We now offer multiple options for doing so—on-line, via paper check, or in person at meetings.

The new audio and video equipment was all set up and working. There were no issues with sound or picture quality. As of 6:00 pm yesterday (Thursday, December 2) we had \$1778.00 collected in the audio-visual equipment fund. This covers a significant portion of the \$2038.00 equipment purchase cost.

On Saturday, November 13, twelve members and spouses toured the private Christopher Transportation Museum, in the Town of Mosel, close by Lake Michigan north of Sheboygan. The main attraction was an extensive collection of railroad dining car china. The event went well. We will try for a picnic in late spring or early summer. Their 16-inch gauge train should be running then.

We are going to try to have Ward Wells take over as host remotely after the auction. That way remote members can continue conversing, while allowing in-person attendees to clear out of the church basement at a reasonable hour. A number of members miss the extended conversations after our all-virtual meetings from September 2020 through June 2021.

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We are also going to try to start an informal Gab Fest on the 2nd Friday of the month. These will be 100 % virtual, on Zoom only, very informal, with no presentation or recording made. It will be just unstructured conversation on railroad topics. The first of these will begin at 7:30 pm on Friday, December 10.

Our next bi-monthly slide show will start at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, December 21. Five presenters are lined up:

Mark Lynn—Santa Fe

Matt Brozowski—Matt's Colorado Adventure

Brian Hechel—20 Years of Digital Photography

Bon French—Rochelle: North Central Illinois's Trans continental Junction

Mike Yugas—30 Years Ago—1991

The NRHS Iowa Chapter will hold a virtual meeting at 3:00 pm on Sunday, December 19. Dave Kroeger will present the Iowa (before it became Iowa Interstate) Railroad. They are selling a 2022 Iowa calendar for \$15.00. Full information can be found at iowanrhs.com.

Our presenter on Friday, January 7, 2022, will be Bob Baker with "Milwaukee Road Days." That should be a good one. The annual business meeting will be on Friday, February 4. That is now moved back to the first Friday in February last year, by a vote at last years' meeting, so that a full and complete treasurer's report would be available.

We signed up one more new member during the meeting—Eric Hoyem of Port Washington.

Presentation

Kevin Keefe took over at 7:42 pm. Our presentation tonight was David P. Morgan's Milwaukee. This was a collection of really good historic photographs from the Kalmbach Publishing archives taken in the Milwaukee area in the late 1940's and the 1950's. That was the early part of David P. Morgan's long tenure as editor of Trains magazine. It was an expanded version of the presentation that Mr. Keefe gave at the NRHS National Convention in late August.

We had 29 attend in person tonight. Zoom attendance peaked at 68 devices. Three devices were in the church basement. Total attendance was therefore at least 94—29 in person and at least 65 remote.

The planned presentation ended at 8:50 pm. A short question and answer session followed.

Auction

The last event was a fourth auction of selected railroad books and timetables, donated from the estate of local railroad enthusiast Leroy James Burlingame. Only old timetables were offered tonight. This was the last auction. The collection is now sold out. The auction ended at 9:07pm.

Recording stopped at 9:08 pm. Ward Wells took over as meeting host. The informal discussion continued until 12:24 am. Respectfully Submitted

Thomas W. Marcussen

Dues are due

The address label on this edition of Sparks & Cinders bears information 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 for 2022 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!

From the Prexy

December got off to a great start with Kevin Keefe's presentation of "David P. Morgan's Milwaukee." As secretary Tom Marcussen notes in his meeting summary, there were 29 people in the room, plus 65 on Zoom, for a total of 94 attendees, which is probably a record for recent meetings. If you missed the program, it's available for viewing on YouTube. Just go to YouTube.com, search for Wisconsin NRHS to find our channel. Thanks to all who attended, and special thanks to Kevin for a terrific program.

A week later, we inaugurated the Second Friday Railroad Gabfest, an informal online (Zoom), gathering of people talking about trains. It's just another way to help our members stay in touch with one another. Next Gabfest is January 14; check your email for Zoom info a day or so beforehand.

I'm looking forward to January 7, when longtime chapter member (and past president) Bob Baker presents his program on the Milwaukee Road. We saw a handful of Bob's fine photographs at our Member's Favorite Slide Night in September. During that brief showing, Bob mentioned that he was at work writing a book featuring many of his photos, and other photographers' work, as well. Through special arrangement with Joe Shine of Four Ways West Publications, we've obtained scans of a sampling of those photos and will present them in full size and brightness using the chapter's digital projector. If these photos excite you, and they will, you'll have an opportunity to obtain a copy of the new book directly from Bob at the meeting. The program will be shown live in Fox Point, and simulcast via Zoom.

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

John Lehnen, Pewaukee

Edward M. Koehler, Bayside, N. Y.

Fred Rieder, Mount Juliet, Tenn.

Mike Slater, Sturtevant

Thomas Mielke, Sister Bay

Scott Lothes, Madison

Eric Hoyem, Port Washington

Ed Pavlovic, Gurnee, Ill.

Glenn Schaefer, Brookfield

We appreciate your membership in Wisconsin Chapter. Your support helps preserve railroad history.

Stay healthy and remain safe,



Consider running for chapter leadership

The next chapter leadership election takes place February 4. If you are a member of the Wisconsin Chapter and 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 Yugas (president@nrhswis.org or 414-698-6625) to discuss. All member input is solicited!

January 7 2022 Bob Baker's Milwaukee Road

Longtime chapter member (and past president) Bob Baker recently wrote "Photographing the Route of the Hiawathas," a 144-page hardcover book about Milwaukee Road's electric and diesel freight and passenger operations over the entire system. Join us for a program of selected Wisconsin-area images from the book, along with anecdotes delivered in Bob's cheerful, easygoing style.

Bob says, "the history of the Milwaukee Road has been documented in numerous editions. And there have been many photo books which have visually displayed the railroad's rise, development, prosperity, and then the slow painful decline, and eventual abandonment of many lines. I am a "baby boomer" and have many, many memories of the Milwaukee Road. Early recollections are of growing up in Racine.

"In between school and dating my future wife, the depot at Sturtevant became the headquarters for the railfan Bakers. We got to know the swing shift operator Chuck Sabatino and learned how the CTC board worked. We always knew the trains were coming on the Southwestern line from Beloit. Unfortunately, we never chased, but waited for the freights to show up at the west yard.

"By now the Milwaukee Road was in serious decline. Track conditions resulted in many slow orders, even on the main lines. To be sure, there were new SD40-2's, but there also many F units still on the road (the F units never strayed far from the maintenance bases) in addition to the many lease engines from other Class One railroads.

"The retrenchment of the Milwaukee affected many cities and in several states. The electrification started decades earlier was deenergized. But no city suffered more than Milwaukee, once home for thousands of railroad employees. The Shops where freight and passenger cars were once built, were torn down. The massive yards of the Menominee Valley were lost, even the hump yard."



A rare shot of SD9 508 switching at the New Glarus depot in June, 1971. *Terry Norton photo*

Thank you Donors !

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

We identified the items necessary to professionalize our remote meeting stream and enhance audio quality for the in-person audience. In late October, your chapter board approved the purchase of this gear, 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
Anonymous
Fred Rieder
Richard Hawthorne
Jeff Wojciechowski
William Becker

Together, these individuals contributed \$1,778 toward this essential purchase. Please join me in thanking these members for their generous support!

If you would like to contribute to the AV Fund, send a check for any amount to Wisconsin Chapter NRHS, PO Box 07058, Milwaukee WI 53207. Your gift will be acknowledged in a future issue of Sparks & Cinders.

Bill Flynn to Retire as Amtrak CEO

Bill Flynn will retire as Amtrak CEO as of Jan. 17, 2022, with Stephen Gardner, the company's president, becoming both president and CEO, the company announced Wednesday.

Flynn became CEO in April 2020, succeeding Richard Anderson. His retirement after 21 months comes as a surprise in light of comments from Amtrak board chairman Tony Coscia at the time of Flynn's hiring, indicating Flynn would likely serve in the position for at least five years.

Instead, Gardner will become the passenger carrier's fourth CEO in a little more than five years. Wick Moorman and Anderson were co-CEOs in the final portion of 2017; Anderson became sole CEO on Jan. 1, 2018, followed by Flynn in 2020 and now Gardner. Flynn served as both president and CEO until Gardner was elevated to the president's job in December 2020.

As president, the company says Gardner has overseen day-to-day operations, customer growth initiatives, and strategies to modernize Amtrak's products, services and fleet. Flynn will serve as a senior advisor to Gardner until the end of the current fiscal year on Aug. 31, 2022.

Gardner arrives as Amtrak receives a record level of funding through the recently passed infrastructure bill.

Courtesy Kalmbach Media TRAINS Newswire

Do You Know ?

by Dave Nelson

Books, articles, poems, photographs, movies, and even music (think "The Wreck of Old 97" or "The Ballad of Casey Jones") all reflect the public's fascination with railroad wrecks and accidents. In the old days curious onlookers could and did wander freely around the site of derailments or collisions, even as wreck crews were trying to do their jobs. The site of a railroad accident can still draw a crowd but these days the public is kept safely distant from the wreck itself.

Obviously, many more folks have seen the aftermath of a wreck than have seen the actual accident take place. To satisfy that curiosity, at one time entrepreneurs would acquire old steam locomotives cheaply, and deliberately stage head-on collisions at fairs and festivals for the amusement of a paying public; old movies of such collisions can be readily found on YouTube. It seems unthinkable to us, but the railroads themselves sometimes organized these spectacles. In 1896 the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway (the "Katy") staged the most famous of all deliberate head-on collisions, "The Great Crash at Crush," as a way of generating publicity for its freight and passenger train service. It was the talk of the nation for weeks and months, before and after the event.

The Katy had laid pioneering track in Kansas, Oklahoma Territory, and Texas in the 1870s and 1880s, opening up huge areas for settlement, areas that in many cases had been set aside as Indian Reservations. In the 1890s the Katy's new general passenger agent, William G. Crush, was ordered to create enough publicity that the entire world would know that thanks to the Katy, America's great Southwest was open for business and travel. Crush went to work, scouting out an ideal site on the railroad a few miles north of Waco, Texas that he modestly named "Crush." It was a long prairie, wooded on its sides and sloped towards its center, creating a natural amphitheater. The date of September 15, 1896 was chosen, and Crush placed newspaper advertisements throughout the country to promote the event. No admission was charged, but most of those in the crowd, as many as 50,000 people, paid to ride the Katy's thirty special trains to get to Crush,

William Crush's preparations were painstaking. Two miles of track were laid just for the collision. A station with a 2100-foot-long platform was built; a huge tent from Ringling Bros. Circus served as a restaurant. Even a sizable and secure jail for the inevitable thieves and pickpockets was built. Water wells were drilled and eight tank cars with water, faucets and tin cups were available to quench thirst. Tents were set up to sell food and drink and offer games, medicine shows, cigar vendors, and carnival side shows to the public. It was an entire city built to last but that one day. Crush, assured by Katy motive power officials that the boilers on the two tired old thirty-ton 4-4-0 steam locomotives would withstand the collision without exploding, had them freshly painted in gaudy colors, one red, the other green, with every bit of brass polished so the engines gleamed in the sun. Their top speeds were tested so an exact spot for their collision could be calculated. Each would pull a short train of old boxcars loaded with heavy railroad ties for even more momentum. Crush sold the elaborately painted advertising that adorned the car sides. The link and pin couplers were supplanted with heavy chains. Crush left nothing to chance. Or so he thought.

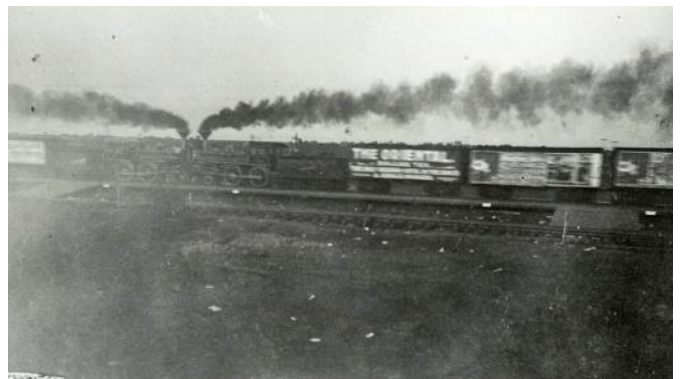


The enormous throngs were staking out vantage points (many men and boys climbed high in trees) or wandering around the area, when suddenly lo-

comotive whistles were heard from both directions. Was this it? The two trains steamed towards each other as the crowd grew tense with excitement -- but it was just a tease. The engines slowed, touched pilots in "Golden Spike" style, people posed, photos were taken, then each backed away a full mile to await Crush's signal. It took deputy sheriffs on horseback nearly an hour to force the crowds back to locations deemed to



be safe. Crush himself was on a white horse galloping up and down trackside to stir up the crowd and when the moment arrived, he gave a dramatic hand signal that was relayed to the waiting engineers, who were two miles apart. They tied down the whistle cords to create noise and drama, jerked the throttles wide open, and jumped down from the cabs as the engines gathered speed. Torpedoes had been placed on the rails, creating a sound like machine gun fire as the locomotives sped



towards each other. Each had reached about 45 miles per hour (some witnesses said it was much faster than that) when with an ear-splitting roar they collided head on, more or less exactly where planned, telescoping into each other as the freight cars behind piled into the wreckage. After a brief instant of stunned silence, the crowd cheered and whooped.

And then the boilers did explode.

Both of them, in a thunderous burst of sound and energy, sending a shower of jagged-edged metal pieces, large and small, high into the air and towards the crowd with the speed and lethality of bullets. A man standing between two women

TRAINS and NRHS partner for 2022 Photo Contest

was all but decapitated by a flying chain; the women were unharmed. Men and boys who had climbed high into trees to watch were hit by shrapnel and were flung to the ground, breaking limbs. A 14-year-old boy screamed in agony as a flying piece of metal hit him after passing entirely through the body of a woman standing in front of him. A farmer's wife rid-



ing in a wagon a half mile away was knocked out by a flying piece of timber. Joe Deane, one of the official photographers, who had caught the very instant of the collision as well as the immediate aftermath of the explosion, suddenly could see only red out of one eye: a nut and bolt had pierced his eye and would have gone into his brain had the nut not caught on his eye socket. A photographer standing next to him was unharmed. Amazingly, only three people, two men and a woman, were killed, but six were gravely injured, and many more suffered wounds or broken bones. Meanwhile the crowd rushed towards the crash site to gather souvenirs, mostly splinters of wood from the freight cars.

The Great Crash at Crush was over; it was time for everyone to leave, and the "City" of Crush to be dismantled. William G. Crush was summarily fired by the Katy right after the explosion ... and quietly rehired the next day. He then had a distinguished 46-year career with the Katy, but he and the Katy staged no more train collisions. The Katy certainly got the publicity and attention it sought, but it also spent quite a bit of money settling lawsuits, including \$10,000 paid to photographer Deane, who made money selling his spectacular photos of the event. And within weeks, ragtime composer Scott Joplin published his best-selling "Great Crush Collision March," which tried to depict the build-up of excitement, the locomotive whistles and speed, and the explosion, all that on the 88 keys of a piano.

Sources for this article include Vincent V. Masterson's book, "The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier" (University of Oklahoma Press 1952). *Note: the photos of the hogwashers in last month's "Do You Know?" were from the Doug Harding collection.*



TRAINS is happy to announce its partnership with the National Railway Historical Society for the 2022 photo contest. The NRHS is a nonprofit that promotes the interest and study of the railroad industry, a mission the Trains brand shares. The NRHS, which was established in 1935, is a perfect match for a magazine that's been around since 1940. Both groups celebrate railroad history and present-day operations. The two organizations believe that supporting and encouraging photography is beneficial to the individuals who practice and enjoy images of railroading.

The 2022 contest theme is "Still Soldiering On." "We see this as relevant to nearly any type of railroading — steam, diesel, tourist operations, transit," says Jeff Smith, "NRHS Bulletin" editor and head of the photo contest committee. "Still Soldiering On doesn't have to be about old locomotives still in operation, it could be a line, station, or intercity passenger service that has been around for a hundred years."

As always, you can illustrate the theme however you like, but be ready to provide an explanation.

Please submit no more than three low-resolution images (1200 pixels on longest edge). Do not alter your images beyond minor color corrections, burning, dodging, and levels adjustments. Send JPGs to TrainsContest@nrhs.com no later than June 1, 2022. Include your full name and phone number. If your image is selected, we'll request the high-resolution format. We do not accept mailed submissions.

We are excited that the NRHS will be awarding the Grand Prize winner \$1,000 in cash. As we've done in the past, there will be eight winners: grand, first, second, and five runners up. From Trains magazine, the first prize winner will receive \$500, second will receive \$250, and five runners up receive a three-year subscription to Trains or equivalent Trains products. All winners will also receive a complimentary one year membership in the NRHS.

All the rules for Trains Photo Contest 2022 can found at <https://www.trains.com/trn/railroads/photography-tips/trains-photo-contest-2022-still-soldiering-on/>

Winners will be announced in the November 2022 issue.



Semaphores and Amtrak in New Mexico Photo by Keith Schmidt

From the Archives

January 1957 - 65 Years Ago

The North Shore Line has leased a portion of its Milwaukee depot to Greyhound Bus Lines for use as a Greyhound Travel Bureau.

January 1962- 60 Years Ago

Walt Bubbert reported on a trip on the C&E's Meadowlark, which runs for 360 miles from Chicago to West Vienna, Illinois. "You can take the 5:00 p.m. No. 9 from Dearborn Street Station, arriving Danville at 7:27 p.m. where you can skip out for a snack at the traveling restaurant which meets you at the coach. One coach is taken off, then it goes southwestward, meeting the St. Louis branch at Willow Grove. It's on this stem for 40 miles to Findley, then on the Salem branch for 195 miles through St. Peter, Shelbyville, Salem, Mt. Vernon, West Frankfort, Johnson City, and Marion to West Vienna at 1:10a.m. The depot is locked so if you get on good terms with the crew, you might ride the Meadowlark to the wye at Joffa Jct. The crew sleeps a bit at Cypress and pulls out from West Vienna at 3:15 a.m., arriving Chicago at 11:25 a.m."

January 1967 - 55 Years Ago

National dues have increased to \$4.00, therefore dues for 1967 will be \$6.50.

January 1972 - 50 Years Ago

The ICC has proposed stiff new rules for passenger train service. Among them: passenger trains may not be sidetracked for freight trains, trains must arrive within 15 minutes of the advertised for every 500 miles traveled, passengers are entitled to refunds up to 50% of the ticket price if accommodations for which they had reservations are not available or if the train is cancelled and the railroad did not get passengers to their destination within four hours of scheduled arrival....A bill to repeal Wisconsin's "full crew" law has been passed by the State Senate. Predictably, labor and management positions on the legislation were in opposition....The protracted strike on the Florida East Coast, which began in 1963, has been settled. Wages will be increased by 31% this year with an additional 6% raise in 1973....On December 28, the ICC approved the merger of the IC and GM&O to form the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad....Little Chief Mountain, an ex-GN round-end observation car was among the cars damaged in an Amtrak derailment near Bonner's Ferry, Idaho.

January 1977 - 45 Years Ago

BN announced a ban on Amtrak SDP40F locos on its rails, citing safety concerns....Mid-Continent Railway Museum announced Snow Train '77 would operate on February 19 and 20, 1977.

January 1982 - 40 Years Ago

The Milwaukee Road has reached agreement in principle to acquire the Rock Island's West Davenport-Washington, Iowa line. It will become a part of the main line to Kansas City. The existing Muscatine-Washington line will be abandoned.

January 1987 - 35 Years Ago

The new C&NW radio dispatching system was featured, including copies of the current employee's timetables, radio frequencies, and train symbol information.

January 1992 - 30 Years Ago

The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railway has received a federal grant of \$549,291 for restoration of locomotive No. 463 and construction of three new passenger cars....WICT moved three trains of 15 piggy-back cars on December 1st, 3rd, 5th, and an 18-car consist on December 7th from Swiss Colony in Monroe to Chicago. The trains represented about one fourth of the total shipments from Swiss Colony in the two-week period.

January 1997 - 25 Years Ago

New Metra service between Chicago and Antioch, Illinois, via the Wisconsin Central has begun. The service runs west from Chicago on the ex-Milwaukee Road line via Elgin to River Grove, then at Tower B-12 it turns north on the WC to Antioch. Service is currently week-day only....The Midwest Rail Initiative was announced on December 3. Studies are underway for a high-speed rail network linking Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, St. Louis, and Minneapolis-St. Paul....The Milwaukee Association of Commerce on December 5 proposed a commuter rail line running between Milwaukee and Waukesha or Oconomowoc. The plan met with mixed reaction from government officials. Advocates want the service in place before reconstruction of I-94 begins in the spring.

January 2002 - 20 Years Ago

Norfolk Southern announced in December that it was taking the line over Saluda Mountain - the steepest mainline grade in North America - out of service because of a shift in coal traffic. NS says it has no plans to abandon the 33-mile line between Hendersonville, North Carolina and Mascot, South Carolina. It will be railbanked, an NS spokesman said....The fifth season of the MPTV-produced PBS series "Tracks Ahead" will begin airing in February....Passenger service between Middleton and Madison on WSOR will be restored after five months of negotiations. The train will be operated by the Middleton Community Development Authority

January 2007 - 15 Years Ago

While construction workers were attempting to remove the upper portion of the bell tower at the Milwaukee Amtrak station during major remodeling on Thursday, December 21, it came crashing down and crushed two parked cars. There were no injuries reported....The new Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority is considering asking the Legislature for authority to levy a .05% sales tax in the three counties to cover the local share of building and operating the KRM Commuter Link - rail service between Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee, and intermediate stops. Federal and state aid and fares would cover most of the line's estimated \$237 million construction cost and \$14.7 million annual operating cost....Soo Line 4-6-2 No. 2719 was moved by Union Pacific in early December from its long-time storage spot at Altoona to Adams, 111 miles to the east. The 1923 Alco is owned by the Locomotive & Tower Preservation Fund of Eau Claire. After extensive negotiations, an agreement was reached for the 2719, which was restored by the L&TPF in 1998, to move to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum (LSRM) in Duluth for display and operation. The locomotive last operated in 2001.

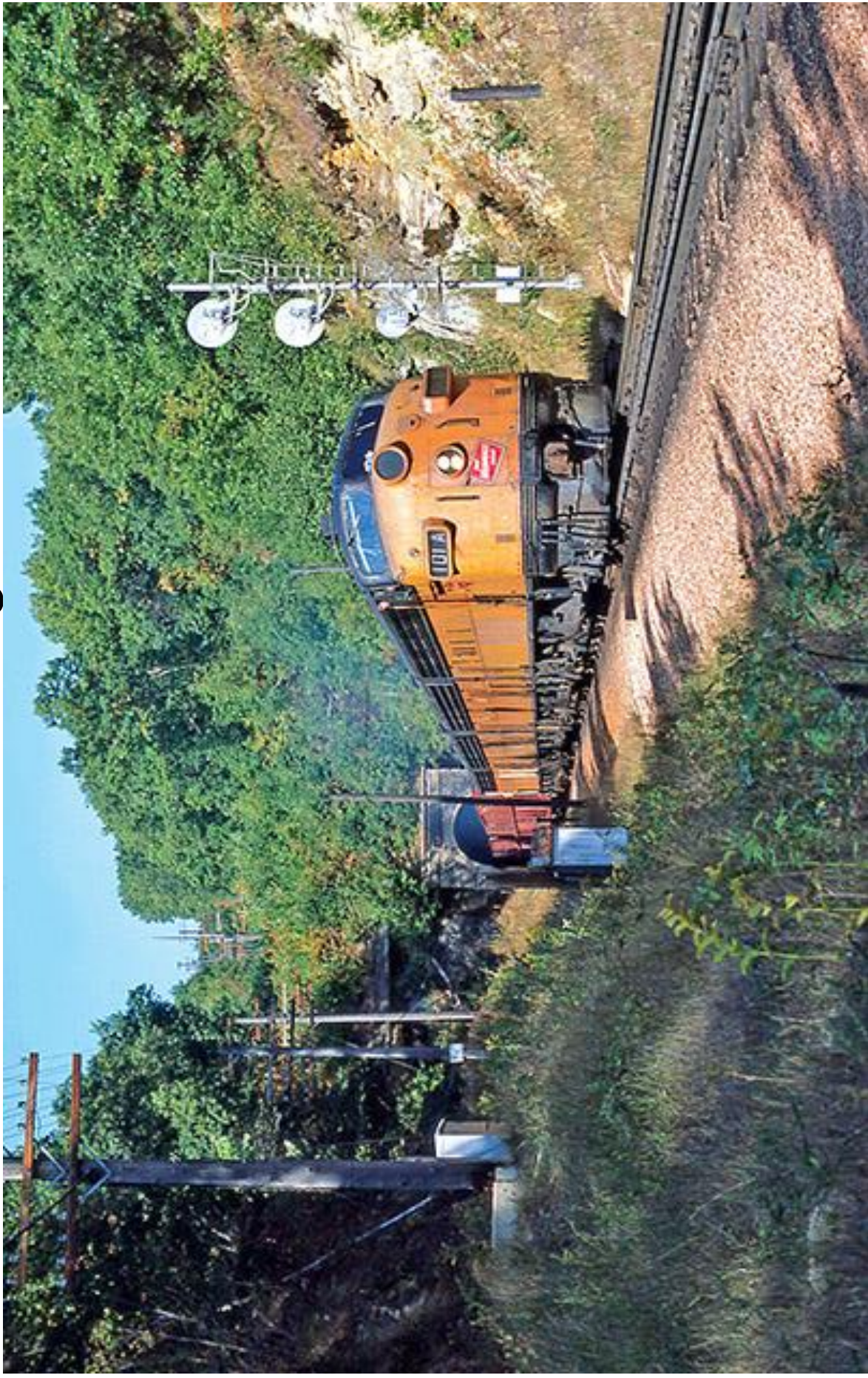
January 2012 - 10 Years Ago

Shortline conglomerate Watco has announced it will buy a 90 per cent interest in Milwaukee-based regional Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Co. Current WSOR President William Gardner will remain president even as he relinquishes control of the line. Watco said it plans to expand WSOR's footprint while seeking out new markets and more cost-effective routings for the railroad's customers. Under the deal, all current agreements for track use will continue. WSOR's corporate structure will remain the same, and its Milwaukee headquarters will remain home to the railroad's dispatching, customer service, and other administrative functions. Watco filed to acquire WSOR at the Surface Transportation Board on November 29, and plans to close on January 1, 2012.

January 2017 - 5 Years Ago

A pair of rare, former Chicago & North Western wigwag signals at Baraboo, Wis., wigwagged their last in March. They were replaced by cross bucks at Vine St. on the line operated by the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad. Railroad crews dismantled the signals and delivered them to the Mid-Continent Railway Historical Society, at nearby North Freedom, Wis. There is no documentation, but observers believe that the Baraboo wigwags were built by Western Railway Supply Co. and installed in the 1920s.

The Big Picture



An ABBA set of F units exit the tunnel at Tunnel City on September 18, 1976. Photo by Mike Hoff