

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 73 Years

Visit the Chapter Webpage www.nrhwis.org



Chris Burger presents "Workin on the Railroad" at the Chapter's annual banquet on Saturday October 7th. The banquet was held at Pallas Restaurant in West Allis WI Photo by Keith Schmidt

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Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule

Upcoming chapter events

November 3 2023 NRHS Conventions Past and Present with Bob Joyce and Mike Yuhas

December 1 2023 Photography of Linn Wescott with Kevin Keefe

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: President (currently vacant) Keith Schmidt, Vice-President; Tom Marcussen, Secretary; Tara Grudzielanek, Treasurer. Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Mike Yuhas, Andrew Roach, Ward Wells 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.

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No Meeting Summary for October

With the Chapter Banquet being held on Saturday October 7 instead of the monthly meeting there is no meeting summary.

Wisconsin Chapter NRHS will turn 75 years old in 2025. Let's plan something

On March 17 1950 the group that is now the Wisconsin Chapter had it's first meeting with President Jim Scribbins, Vice President James Grace and Secretary-Treasurer Don Ross and 6 other members. So in March 2025 the Chapter will turn 75 years old. I think the Chapter needs to be celebrate that Diamond Jubilee in some kind of way. I would like to have a brain storming session to get some ideas.

Does the chapter want to sponsor a project somewhere. Maybe another book or whatever. I would like to get together on a weeknight at a central location. Possibly a Pizza Ranch where they have free community room and food. I would like to have this meeting before the end of the year. Please consider coming to the meeting and providing some insight. I would like to eventually form a 75th Anniversary committee. If you would like to be a part of the brain storming session let me know at kschmidt626@gmail.com and I will pass along more information.

Here's a few things that were going on in 1950.

Popular Songs in 1950

Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer
Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy
Mona Lisa by Nat King Cole

From the Editor

Popular TV Shows in 1950

I Love Lucy
Hopalong Cassidy
Lone Ranger

Popular Movies in 1950

Annie Get Your Gun
Disney's Cinderella
Father of the Bride

1950 was also the year that Silly Putty was introduced

Again please consider helping out and coming together for some food and fellowship and discuss some ideas for the 75th anniversary Diamond Jubilee.

A Look Back at the Chapter in May 2000

At the Chapter's annual banquet on Saturday October 7 2023 we honored one of the chapter members with a 50 year pin. Paul Bergen has been a member of the chapter since 1973. Here is an article he wrote for the 50th Anniversary Sparks and Cinders. Interesting reading.

As this local organization marks its 50th anniversary I'd have to say that it's been a fun ride for the 25 years I've been a member. For those pioneers of the group in 1950, steam was being pushed aside, passenger trains were soon to start their decline and traction in the area was down to the final phases before the North Shore would pass on in a little over a decade.

At the time I joined in 1973, Fs and Geeps still ruled a lot of trains, the 40 foot boxcar still received class repairs and fresh paint, passenger service was a potpourri of equipment under the Amtrak flag and, yes, traction could be found at East Troy, which brings us to 2000. Is this a dead hobby? At times one feels it as youngsters are more interested in video games, extreme sports, and computer related hobbies. Let's face it, even a look at the meetings shows us getting older (I know my gray hair gives it away) with fewer young members joining. Those members with younger sons (and daughters) can be an influence in making them hobby enthusiasts, but don't force it down their throats. Perhaps some of the games available on computer (dispatching, etc.) as well as the Steamtown Summer Camp may be a way to steer younger ones into the hobby.

From the time I became a member it's felt like a large family. I've learned some photo tips, enjoyed many a show, listened to tales of the "golden days" and met new travel partners. Would I do it all over again? Sure! There's just something about that train that draws me trackside. So next time you see someone who might have even just a small interest in the railroad hobby don't forget to talk up the group! — Paul Bergen



THANK YOU !! To everyone that attended the Chapter banquet on Saturday October 7th. It was a great event. It was great to see everyone in person and enjoy some food and fellowship. I made an announcement regarding the upcoming 75th Anniversary of the Chapter. See an article about that in the newsletter. Mike Yugas put together a list of long time members of the Chapter. Paul Bergen received his 50 year pin at the banquet. THANK YOU for being a member of chapter for a half century. With the weather changing and the daylight getting shorter it's time to get out and enjoy one of the best seasons of year in Wisconsin – FALL. Enjoy the colors and the crisp cool air. Catch some trains with the backdrop of colors.

We have a great presentation coming up in November featuring two members of the Wisconsin Chapter Bob Joyce and Mike Yugas. Bob will talk about attending past NRHS National conventions. Mike will finish with talking about attending the 2021 and 2023 NRHS National Conventions. Should be a great night. Make plans to attend in person at North Shore Congregation Church in Fox Point or via Zoom. Be Aware, Be Safe and Enjoy. To quote a good friend "Get Busy Livin"

A small, handwritten signature in the bottom right corner of the text block.

50 and 25 Year Membership Awards

Two members of the Wisconsin Chapter reached milestone membership terms. Paul Bergen has been a member for 50 years. Larry Graff has been a member for 25 years. Both of them were mentioned at the chapter banquet on October 7th. Paul was in attendance. Larry was not able to attend but will be receiving his pin and award soon.



Chapter Membership director Mike Yugas presents Paul Bergen with his 50 year membership pin and recognition letter. Photo by Keith Schmidt

NRHS Conventions Past and Present Friday November 3 2023

The Friday November 3 2023 Chapter meeting will feature a two presenter show— Bob Joyce and Mike Yugas will be focusing on one topic—NRHS Conventions.

Bob Joyce was a fixture at NRHS conventions for many years during the steam fantrip heyday and beyond. The first portion of tonight's program will feature Bob's many splendid memories of the excursions, camaraderie and tours of NRHS meetups from 2004 through 2011. Featured are photographs taken by Bob and others.

One of the hallmarks of the typical NRHS convention is an abundance of activities. As the modern steam excursion landscape has changed, NRHS conventions have evolved. In the second part of tonight's program, Mike Yugas will look at two post-covid conventions: Milwaukee in 2021, and South Florida in 2023.



SP 4-8-4 4449 near Stampede Pass, Washington. *Photo by Bob Joyce.*



US Army 2-8-0 610 at Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, Chattanooga. *Photo by Bob Joyce.*



US Sugar 4-6-2 148 near Moore Haven, Florida. *Photo by Mike Yugas.*

CPKC Holiday Making Wisconsin Stops

CPKC US Holiday Train will be running again this December. The Holiday Train is celebrating 25 years of running and helping to raise money for local food pantries. This train decorated with thousands of LEDs draws large crowds where ever it stops. The purpose of the train also benefits the communities. The stops also feature a concert from the specially designed stage car. The concerts are a highlight of every stop. People attending the stops are encouraged to bring food items to donate. Those donations are given to local food pantries. Come out and see the train at one of these Wisconsin stops.

Sunday December 3 2023

6:45pm Arrival 7:00-7:30pm Event Sturtevant WI
Amtrak Depot 9900 E Exploration Ct
8:05pm Arrival 8:15-8:45 pm Event Caledonia WI
Railway Crossing 11402 County Road G

Monday December 4 2023

4:00pm Arrival 4:15-4:45pm Event Wauwatosa WI
Railway Crossing Harwood Ave
5:30pm Arrival 5:45-6:15pm Event Hartland WI
Railway Crossing Cottonwood Ave
6:40pm Arrival 6:45-7:15pm Event Oconomowoc WI
Railway Crossing South Silver Lake
7:50pm Arrival 8:00-8:30pm Event Watertown WI
Brandt Quirk Park Parking Lot
9:05pm Arrival 9:15-9:45pm Event Columbus WI
Amtrak Depot 395 N Ludington St

Long-term NRHS members

At the banquet in early October we honored the 50-year NRHS membership of chapter member Paul Bergen. We also recognized many others for maintaining their NRHS membership for ten years or more:

Randy Bedore - 10 Years	James Lembke - 34 Years
Tara Grudzielanek - 12 Years	Sandy Lembke - 34 Years
Ron Zeise - 13 Years	John Stoeger - 36 Years
Jack Savlan - 14 Years	Keith Schmidt - 36 Years
Dave Nelson - 18 Years	Kevin Keefe - 36 Years
Mark Wietenbeck 19 Years	Mike Yugas - 38 Years
Ralph McClure - 21 Years	Clark Johnson - 40 Years
Dan Grudzielanek - 23 Years	Neal Wegner - 40 Years
Bob Sherman - 23 Years	Alan Baker - 42 Years
Bill Stadler - 23 Years	Jerry Reiter - 42 Years
Larry Graff - 25 Years	Andrew Roach - 43 Years
Tom Sharratt - 26 Years	Bradley Barteck - 45 Years
Jim Sponholz - 26 Years	Paul Bergen - 50 Years
Charles Parrott - 28 Years	Phil Borleske - 51 Years
David Perkins - 28 Years	Gary Johnson - 52 Years
John Welter - 29 Years	Tom Hoffmann - 52 Years
Mike Grosko - 30 Years	Jay Lentzner - 53 Years
Cathy Wegner - 32 Years	Bob Joyce - 56 Years
Tom Marcussen - 33 Years	Joseph Hunter - 59 Years
Doug Fast - 34 Years	Jerrold Hilton - 62 Years

We salute all NRHS members for their long-term commitment to the preservation of railroad history.

Chapter President Needed !!

Renew your Chapter Membership Today

As of Friday February 3, 2023 the Wisconsin Chapter NRHS is without a President. This office really needs to be filled. The President runs the chapter meetings on the first Friday of the month. The President also runs several board meetings throughout the year. The President is also the host of the annual banquet. Please consider running for this position. A special election can be held at anytime. There will be help in running the monthly meetings to help eliminate any fears of what is involved with that. Please consider this.

Check your Sparks & Cinders address label. If it says your membership expiration date is 12/31/2023, it's time to renew! There are three ways to continue supporting the chapter:

1. Hand \$20 to Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek at our next meeting.
2. Send a \$20 check to Wisconsin NRHS, PO Box 070758, Milwaukee, WI 53207.
3. Renew online for \$21 at www.nrhiswis.org - click the Join or Renew button.

Chapter banquet a success

About 50 chapter members and guests attended the chapter's annual banquet at Pallas in West Allis on Saturday, October 7. The goal of the confab was food, fellowship, and fun - we succeeded in all three! After a buffet meal. Chris Burger, former C&NW Wisconsin Division manager, regaled us with photos and stories of his 39-year railroad career.

Neal and Cathy Wegner handled the arrangements with the ever-changing staff of the restaurant, and Cathy hand-crafted the table decorations. The banquet was sponsored by Wheel Rail Seminars, the producers of the annual Wheel Rail Interaction conference, www.wheel-rail-seminars.com



Do You Know ?

by Dave Nelson

In rural Iowa this last May I drove for seven miles along a string of covered hoppers on a little used ex-Rock Island branch, stored in preparation for that time-honored railroad tradition, the annual grain rush. By now, these 100- to 125-ton covered hoppers have started to carry the 2023 harvest to large customers, or to river barge loadings and Great Lakes and ocean ports. Covered



hoppers began to capture the grain business away from 40-foot boxcars around 1960, due to their obvious advantages of higher capacity and superior ability to keep the load dry and free of contamination. But the obsolete boxcars still had a role to play, because covered hoppers were far too heavy to run on the frail rail lines that still served so many older grain elevators. Vintage 40-foot boxcars with their narrow 6-foot doors could be seen in grain service well into the 1980s.

Much of the grain business infrastructure dated back to a time when modest family farms hauled their harvest in simple wagons pulled by horses or tractors to the nearest local grain elevator.



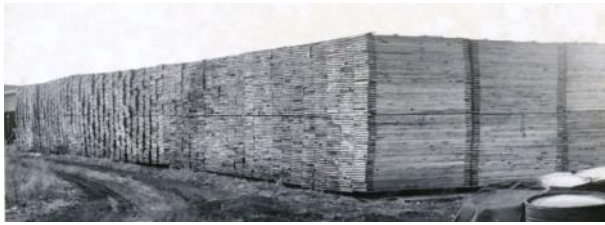
Those small grain elevators were located every few miles on a complex web of railroad branch lines that reaching deeply into nearly every corner of farm country. Farms

got larger and grain elevators got more centralized, but until a railroad decided either to upgrade or abandon the light rail and dirt roadbed of its rural rail lines, the 40-foot boxcar was still needed. Indeed, the railroads could get so desperate during the grain rush that even coal hoppers and stock cars (lined with plywood) might be pressed into grain service -- not the most appetizing thought.

To make a boxcar suited to hauling grain it had to be



"coopered" or the load would leak out the sliding boxcar doors. Wooden grain doors were nailed across the 6-foot-wide boxcar door openings to retain the load. The wood grain doors



were 7 feet wide, leaving 6 inches of wood on either side to nail the grain door to the inside of the door opening,

sometimes with pieces of heavy kraft paper used as a sort of gasket. At grain-rush time, mountains of carefully stacked grain doors would be provided to the shippers. These grain doors were marked with the name or logo of the owning railroads, which expected to get their grain doors back, so the recipients of the grain would carefully remove the grain doors before unloading and sort them by railroad. Entire boxcars full of grain doors would return to the owning railroad.

In the late 1950s heavy duty paper grain doors, reinforced with metal strapping, began to supplant and then replace the wood grain doors. To unload the car the single-use paper door would simply be smashed in, and the load would pour out of the car; workers with brooms would then finish the job. In 1982 I photographed a loaded boxcar with a paper grain door at Humbolt Yard on the Milwaukee Road's "beer line." Similar reinforced paper doors were also used for boxcars in woodchip service.

Those old 40-foot boxcars are all now retired or scrapped, and of



course precious few 7-foot grain doors were saved. In 1999 I was lucky enough to find one old wood grain door, marked with the herald of The Milwaukee Road, at a derelict grain elevator in Scar-

boro, Illinois, on the abandoned Milwaukee Road line that went south from Rochelle to Mendota IL. I photographed and measured



this battered relic and left it behind for other railfans to find and enjoy. The next time I drove through Scarboro the grain door was gone. And the time after that, the

grain elevator was gone.

The historic old grain door photos in this article are courtesy of the Doug Harding collection.

From the Archives

November 1953—70 Years Ago

Jim Scribbins reports that the GB&W's 400-series Mikes, featured on last year's fan trip, are still preserved in the roundhouse at Green Bay....Milwaukee's Union Station lived up to its name for a couple of days recently. It was used by the Soo Line's two daily trains each way on November 7 and 8 because of a freight derailment on the Soo south of Mukwonago. Soo switched its trains onto the Milwaukee Road at Burlington, thence to Sturtevant, finally rejoining their own rails at Rugby Jct.

November 1958 - 65 Years Ago

The Chapter conducted a surprisingly successful fantrip on October 12 over the Milwaukee Road from Milwaukee to Fox Lake and return. There were some problems getting the exact motive power we had hoped for, and the exact consist was somewhat of a mystery until very late in the negotiations. The trip was operated with GP-9 No. 2433, coaches 4400 (the original Hiawatha prototype), 4432, 4433, 4440, and 3357 (a suburban coach from the Chicago pool). Railfan and foliage fan alike were treated to a pleasant day and the Chapter actually turned a profit on the trip....The Milwaukee County Zoo's 4-4-0 steam engine began operations on October 19.

November 1963 - 60 Years Ago

There was no Sparks & Cinders for November 1963. A lament from the editor asking for news was printed in the December 1963, issue (editor note - sounds familiar, this editor's note also—sounds familiar)

November 1968 - 55 Years Ago

The Milwaukee Road has deactivated the Automatic Cab Signal system on the Chicago-Twin Cities main line. Train speed is now limited to 79 mph. This will add about 30 minutes to the scheduled running time. This was one of the last half-dozen installations in the U.S. and was one of the few segments of trackage where passenger trains still regularly exceeded 90 mph. This is the first serious retrenchment of passenger service on the Milwaukee Road's Chicago-Twin Cities line which until now had boasted service basically as good as the late 1940s. The railroad finds it difficult to justify the continued expense of ACS since freight trains cannot be operated in excess of 79 mph in any event.

November 1973—50 Years Ago

Milwaukee Road electric operation ended west of Deer Lodge, Montana, on October 9. All electric operation is expected to end by November 1....C&NW has placed orders for 50 SD40-2s for 1974 delivery.

November 1978—45 Years Ago

Amtrak has announced an implementation schedule for the new SuperLiner equipment. The first SuperLiner-equipped Empire Builder is scheduled to depart Chicago on February 18, 1979....Southern Railway has worked out most of the bearing problems on the pilot truck of ex-T&P 2-10-4 No. 610. However, they are still looking for blueprints or spring rigging diagrams and have appealed to NRHS members for help in obtaining them.

November 1983 - 40 Years Ago

A \$7.1 million track improvement project on the Milwaukee Road Kansas City gateway is nearing completion.

November 1988 - 35 Years Ago

WC celebrated its first anniversary with a special paint job on loco No. 6655. The WC paint shop at North Fond du Lac is turning out newly-painted locos at the rate of one a day and newly painted freight cars are emerging at the rate of three a day

November 1993 - 30 Years Ago

There were a number of passenger extras on the WC recently. On September 12, WC president Ed Burkhardt traveled through Oshkosh on the way from the Missabe ore fields to Chicago. Then, on September 18 and 19, ex-Milwaukee Road 4-8-4 No. 261 made its inaugural fan trips to the area. On September 30, Illinois Railway Museum's Zephyr passed through. And, on October 9, there were two round trips from Green Bay to Kewaunee.

November 1998 - 25 Years Ago

Wisconsin Central opened four miles of double track at Lake Villa, Illinois, on September 27. The double track extends from MP 52.5 to MP 48.5. This project was part of a long range plan for double track from Antioch to Tower B12....Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson was elected Chairman of the Amtrak Board of Directors....The historic antebellum ex-Milwaukee Road depot in Mineral Point has been put up for sale.

November 2003—20 years Ago

Amtrak posted its highest total ridership in its history during FY2003, ending September 30, carrying more than 24 million passengers. This broke the previous record of 23.5 million passengers set in 2001....At a summit meeting of Wisconsin officials in Kenosha on September 29, it was agreed to move ahead with plans for extending Metra service to Milwaukee from Kenosha....Mid-Continent Railway Museum will operate the Santa Express on November 29 and 30 with diesel power. All of the museum's steam locomotives are currently out of service.

November 2008 — 15 Years Ago

Rail lines between Chicago and Milwaukee will get a \$10 million upgrade as more passengers switch from driving to riding the country's trains. U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters announced a new grant program in September that includes \$5 million in federal funds for the upgrade. The Canadian Pacific Railway will match that contribution. Crews will replace the remaining 18 miles of track between Milwaukee and the Illinois state line that's held together by joints with a welded track. The upgrade will allow trains traveling through that section to travel 79 mph. With the current track, those trains can't go faster than 70 mph. Kodachrome slide film, beloved by railroad photographers for decades and the subject of a 1973 Paul Simon hit song, may soon go the way of the dinosaur, the Associated Press has reported. Kodachrome hasn't announced that it will discontinue the film, but speculation has been growing that the film's time is nigh. Kodachrome is especially beloved in railfan circles for its archival quality. Its inks are remarkably slow to shift over time, and countless color photos of the late steam and early diesel era survive in near-perfect condition because they were shot on Kodachrome.

November 2013 — 10 Years Ago

More than 100 industry and rail executives joined state government officials for the annual Wisconsin Freight Rail Day in Madison on Wednesday. Gov. Scott Walker provided the key-note address, his second appearance at this meeting in the past three years. "Freight rail is vital to Wisconsin's economy. We count on freight rail as an integral player in moving Wisconsin forward," Walker says. "Frac sand is Wisconsin's 21st century gold rush," says Rick Shearer, president and CEO of Superior Silica Sands. His company operates two modern frac sand mines and processing facilities in Barron and Chippewa counties. Superior's newest plant, near Clinton, is served by the long out-of-service and now completely rebuilt former Soo Line main line west of Ladysmith to reach Superior's facility. Canadian National invested \$40 million to rebuild the 35-mile line in the past year.

November 2018— 5 Years Ago

Canadian National is testing Positive Train Control PTC in Wisconsin. The train consisted of two locomotives and a caboose sandwiched in between. John Gruber passed away on October 9 2018 at the age of 82. John had numerous photos published in TRAINS magazine. In 1997 John founded the Center for Railroad Photography and Art based in Madison WI. John also co-authored several books.

The Big Picture



S00 #1003 on a snowy morning November 14 2021 in Brandon WI. Photo by Kim Kafura