

Wisconsin Chapter National Railway Historical Society

Volume 70 Number 4



April 2020

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 70 Years

Visit the Chapter Webpage www.nrhswis.org

April 3, 2020 Chapter Meeting Canceled !!



With everything going on right now let's just slow down and remember a slower simpler time. Enjoy Soo #1003 and some vintage vehicles.

Photo by Keith Schmidt

In This Issue

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Wisconsin Chapter Meeting Schedule



Friday May 1, 2020 Dave Sima FRA Modern Day Steam Regulations and Other FRA Regulations
Saturday June 6, 2020 Annual Chapter Banquet at Pallas Banquet Center

Chapter (and the world) rocked by uncertainty

April meeting canceled

May meeting and June banquet on, for now

The highly communicable nature of the covid-19 coronavirus has led to an upending of the social aspects of our lives. The April chapter meeting has been canceled. The program will be rescheduled.

It is too early to know what the effect will be on our May meeting (featuring a program by Dave Sima of the Federal Railroad Administration), but for the moment we're operating under the premise that we'll meet May 1 as scheduled. Likewise for our banquet, scheduled for June 6. Additional banquet information will be published in the next edition of Sparks & Cinders. As decisions are made, we will communicate through Sparks & Cinders, via email, and via notices on the chapter's website, www.nrhwis.org.

Feel free to reach out to me at president@nrhwis.org or 414-698-6625 with any queries or suggestions. Wisconsin Chapter values your membership, and wishes you health and safety during these difficult times. Cordially, Mike Yuhas President

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.nrhwis.org.

Doors open by 7:00 pm, so arrive early to socialize. The meeting will start at 7:30pm sharp with introductions and railroad-related news and announcements. Please bring a friend!

If you have a program idea please contact Program Chair Dave Nelson at engine1385@aol.com

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 May, 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 Tom Hoffmann, treasurer@nrhwis.org (or via USPS at 1102 Aspen Dr, Waukesha, WI 53188).

Wisconsin Chapter officers are: Mike Yuhas, President (president@nrhwis.org); Keith Schmidt, Vice-President; Tom Marcussen, Secretary; Tom Hoffmann, 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@nrhwis.org (or USPS at 3286 S Springfield Ave, 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 ©2019, Wisconsin Chapter, Inc.,

Meeting Summary March 2020

President Mike Yuhas opened the March meeting of the Wisconsin Chapter NRHS. There were 46 members in attendance that evening. The breakdown of those in attendance was 14 regular NRHS members, 1 NRHS family member, 15 non-member subscribers, 2 non-member family subscribers and 15 friends and visitors. A good attendance.

Last month's presenter Jim Wades left some his society's newsletters Dots and Dashes on the rear table.

April Meeting will be "Mayhem" Night with presentations featuring Chris Barney and Dave Nelson both discussions fatal train wrecks. CANCELLED !!

May Meeting will feature Dave Sima from the FRA discussing current regulations of steam engines.

Annual Banquet in June. A reminder was given that the annual banquet was moved to June. This years speaker is Stefan Loeb from WATCO.

Fred Hyde a well known Milwaukee Road historian gave a somewhat brief presentation on the Milwaukee Road East from Aberdeen SD. The program was well received. Fred also answered questions from those in attendance.

Notes from the Prexy

I never expected to write this monthly letter about a public health concern, but here you are. Let's talk about the Wisconsin Chapter and covid-19.

You're surely following the news about the coronavirus and the importance of social distancing. As this is written in mid-March, there is still much uncertainty - do we hold our meetings? If we do - if the church doesn't bar the door - will we need to disinfect environmental surfaces before and after? Will the meeting room end up smelling like a hospital? What about our banquet? Chapter leadership has been discussing all the above, and we anticipate the answers to these questions to become evident as the days and weeks roll by.

We believe in the power of crossed fingers, so we're planning to hold our scheduled events... but we're sensitive to the concerns and health of all members, so rest assured, we'll cancel if necessary. Your best source for up-to-the-minute chapter information is, as always, the chapter's website, www.nrhwis.org. Check it from time to time; meeting info and other details will be shared there.

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I'd like to thank my friend Fred Hyde for his Milwaukee Road program meeting at our March meeting. Forty-six MILW fans turned out for Fred's great photos from the 1980s from Aberdeen east. The program ran a little short, but Fred was gracious about answering questions from the appreciative audience. Our April meeting program will focus on two specific calamitous railroad grade crossing incidents. Look for details elsewhere in this issue.

Can you suggest a meeting program? Check in with Dave Nelson or me.

Until next time, be safe out there!



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## UPCOMING EVENTS !!

With the current situation involving COVID-19 and attempts to contain the spread of the virus. PLEASE check before heading to any of the events listed to make sure they will still be happening. Events are being cancelled and postponed daily so please check before leaving.



## Chapter Annual Banquet Saturday June 6, 2020

Where: Pallas Family Restaurant  
1657 S 108th St  
West Allis, WI

When: 4pm to 9:30pm

Dinner will be served banquet style with a choice of 2 meats, salad, potatoes, vegetables and dessert. Cash Bar will be available.

Speaker for the evening is Stefan Loeb from WATCO

Watch for a reservation form in the May 2020 Sparks and Cinders.

Also watch for any announcements regarding this event. If the banquet needs to be postponed please watch the Chapter's website at [www.nrhwis.org](http://www.nrhwis.org)



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## The Extra Board - Upcoming Events

NRHS National Convention

[www.nrhwis.org](http://www.nrhwis.org)

2020 National Convention Fullerton, California

June 9-13, 2020

TMER&THS (Traction and Bus Club)

[www.tmer.org](http://www.tmer.org)

Waterstone Bank

Check website for updates on meetings

WISE Division NMRA [www.wisedivision.org](http://www.wisedivision.org)

Check website for updates on meetings

C&NW Historical Society

[www.cnwhs.org](http://www.cnwhs.org)

National Convention

May 28- May 31 Mankato, MN

Milwaukee Road Historical Association

[www.mrha.com](http://www.mrha.com)

2020 National Convention - Elgin, IL

June 18-21, 2020

Soo Line Historical and Technical Society

[www.sooline.org](http://www.sooline.org)

Green Bay & Western Historical Society

[www.gbwhs.com](http://www.gbwhs.com)

No Meetings Scheduled

## Looking for Some Help

Reid Van Sluys is looking for some help with the feature length article he has written. If you can help please contact him via email or snail mail. Thank You

I've written a feature-length article for THE MILWAUKEE RAILROADER about the Great Blizzards of 1936. The manuscript is essentially completed (8,000 words) and focuses almost exclusively on the Milwaukee Road's Milwaukee and Superior Divisions. Basically, southern/southeastern Wisconsin was clobbered by three blizzards between January 18th and February 14, 1936. In a thirty-four day period, the temperature climbed above ZERO on just four days. At one point, the Milwaukee Road called in two rotary snowplows to clear the Milwaukee and Superior Divisions (try wrapping your mind around that vision; as an aside, the C&NW also called in a rotary to clear its Lakeshore Division). The story is a bit too complex to recount here, but needless to say, it was an amazing historical event in Wisconsin railroad history.

In any case, while the manuscript is essentially done (and still tweaking it here and there), I don't have a lot of support (i.e. photographic) material to compliment this article with. I'm hoping that after I pack this article off to Mike Schaefer at White River Productions, he'll round up some suitable Milwaukee and Superior Division photos and maps from Jim Scribbins' collection. I've got a handful of good photos, but not really enough to support the article.

What I'm specifically looking for—and what I'm hoping that maybe somebody out there in the Wisconsin Division membership can provide—are good, sharp photos of the following items:

1. I need photos of the Milwaukee Road depots at: Cedarburg, Saukville, Fredonia, Random Lake, Waldo, Plymouth and Sturtevant. Period photos (ca. 1930s/40s) would be best.
  2. I know this is an extreme long shot: but does anyone have photos of the Milwaukee Road rotaries at work on either the Milwaukee or Superior Division?
  3. I'm also looking for a good roster-type shot of one of the Milwaukee's converted gondola-type wedge plows and box-car flangers (NOT the steel stuff that was built from retired steam locomotive tenders in the 1950s).
- Finally, does anyone know which Milwaukee Road rotary snowplow was assigned to Aberdeen, SD ca. 1936 or so? Alas, they ain't much glory in this. Contributors will get a credit line with their photos if they're used, and my thanks at the end of the article. I think I can probably wrangle a free issue of the finished magazine from White River when this article is finally published for each contributor (sometime in 2021, I presume).

Reid Van Sluys  
W61 N327 Washington Avenue  
Cedarburg, WI 53012-2404  
E-mail: [rvansluys@wi.rr.com](mailto:rvansluys@wi.rr.com)

Kansas City Southern power leads a westbound freight train on the CP at Canal Street by Keith Schmidt



# Do You Know ?

Story and Photos by Dave Nelson

The beautifully maintained Charter Manufacturing/Charter Wire private cars have been familiar sights at the Milwaukee depot for years, and in their classic New York Central colors have been seen around the country behind Amtrak trains. As business offices for Charter they help sell steel and to thank good customers with unique dining, entertainment and travel opportunities. Charter was founded by the Mellows family in the 1930s, but it was thanks to the railfan and model railroading interests of the late Charles N. Mellows and his son John A. Mellows that the Company got into the ownership of private rail cars. First came "Hampton Roads," now decommissioned, a classic business car formerly owned by the Southern (and before that was a baggage/buffet/parlor car for Pullman and the C&O).

The longest-tenured of the current four cars are "Imperial Leaf" and "Golden Moon." Imperial Leaf is a 1942 Pullman Standard 4-4-2 (4 bedrooms, 4 compartments, 2 drawing rooms) sleeper used on the Union Pacific's Overland Limited, and later ran on the Southern Railway. Charter acquired the car in 1971 from the Chicago & North Western, and major modifications were made by Charter's own work force. It now has the dining salon, a bathtub, and other luxury features. Golden Moon (a 1942 Pullman Standard 4-4-2, later converted into a 2 master bedroom, 1 double bedroom) served the Southern Pacific for its Golden State Limited and later passed into private hands; Charter acquired it in 1973. It has a stand-up shower but more importantly, the dark wood paneled "saloon" lounge, with a glass fronted bar specially cooled to hold fresh flowers. The walls are lined with displays of rare railroad china and silverware. Eric Lundberg in the January 1986 NMRA Bulletin wrote that Imperial Leaf and Golden Moon could operate 30 days without running out of tonic water for drinks, and that in their 150 or so days on the road the cars would travel 10,000 to 12,000 miles, entertain 3000 Charter executives and guests, and serve 32,000 meals!

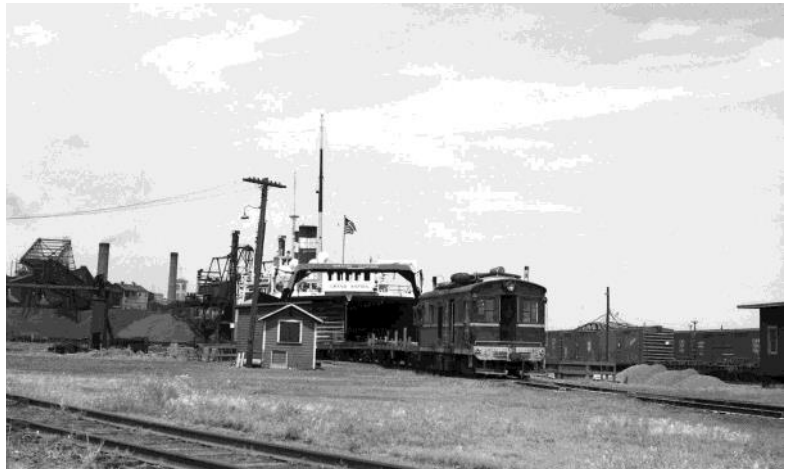
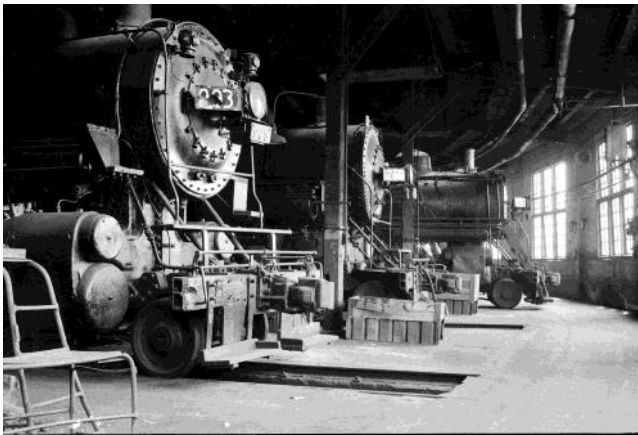
More recent additions are "St. James Place" and "Charter Club" (the dome car). St. James Place was an Illinois Central 11-double bedroom car named Belleville, built by Pullman in 1953. Butterworth Tours renamed the car Bonnie B and ran it on the Rock Island (which did not join Amtrak) as a day parlor car in passenger service. Eventually Kasten Railcar acquired it and sold it to Charter in 1985. "Charter Club" was a Union Pacific dome/coach car built by American Car & Foundry and numbered 7003.

The cars tend to move in "married" sets - Charter Club and St. James Place as one; Imperial Leaf and Golden Moon as the other -- but they have been photographed moving together. Railfans rightly regard private cars behind Amtrak as a prime "catch" and the Charter cars are among the most prized subjects.



# A Look Back at the Past

Photos by Russ Porter



# From the Archives

## April 1955- 65 Years Ago

Soo Steam for Waukesha Park — At the April 1 special meeting Milwaukee Chapter voted unanimously to go on record as favoring the tentative project of placing a Soo steam locomotive on permanent exhibition in the park adjacent to the Waukesha depot. (After over 30 years in Waukesha, Soo No. 2645 was moved to North Freedom in the Spring of 1989. See S&C, February, 1989, for details of its stay in Waukesha — Chuck Porter)....The Transport Company has extended its Stadium siding from 680 ft. to 1,380 ft., increasing capacity from 14 to 28 cars. This could well be the last streetcar track laid in the state of Wisconsin. (That honor now belongs to Kenosha. — ed.)

## April 1960 - 60 Years Ago

The roster of Wisconsin Chapter — NRHS, March 1960, listed 37 members.

## April 1965 - 55 Years Ago

Seldom do we hear anything about the Madison District of the Illinois Central. The Capital Times for Friday, March 19, reports that the IC train leaving from Madison on Thursday afternoon, March 18, for Freeport became stuck in a snow drift about three miles south of Monticello about 8:30 that night. The crew hiked through the drifts to a nearby farmhouse to stay overnight. A plow was sent from Freeport the next morning to free the train and “rescue” the crew....The Frisco has requested permission to abandon all passenger service effective April 19.

## April 1970 - 50 Years Ago

Chapter members are awaiting the 20th Anniversary Chapter Banquet scheduled for April 24. The speaker will be Chappie Fox, Director of the Circus World Museum in Baraboo.... Jim Harper recounted the history of the TMER&L “10” series cars (the last new cars purchased).... On March 10, Penn Central filed a request to discontinue trains 48 and 49, the Broadway Limited.

## April 1975 - 45 Years Ago

The speaker at the annual Chapter Banquet on April 18 will be Linn Westcott, editor of Model Railroader magazine....The IC’s freshly-painted Bicentennial loco “American Eagle” hit a tank truck in Mississippi on its first run and burned....The Chessie System has filed a request to discontinue the Lake Michigan car ferries operating between Milwaukee and Ludington and Manitowoc and Ludington.

## April 1980 - 40 Years Ago

The saga of the Arizona DOT “Sardine Express” was recounted. It was a short-term shuttle train put into operation after a bridge on I-10 was closed due to flooding in the Phoenix-Mesa, Arizona, area....Efforts to preserve the C&NW downtown Chicago depot are being organized by the Friends of the North Western Station. Closer to home, the C&NW must cease use of County property on the lakefront, now being used to unload automobiles.

## April 1985 - 35 Years Ago

The third operator of the former MILW and IC lines which cross in Monroe has begun operation. The new operation is the WICT which replaces the failed CM&N and CW operations.... Butler Railroad Day is scheduled for July 28 and C&NW No. 1385 will again be in operation

## April 1990 - 30 Years Ago

The C&NW engine house at Butler has been sold to a company who will use it for non-railroad purposes. It has been unused for approximately two years....The FRVR had a successful first year with revenues of \$30 million and movement of nearly 80,000 carloads. The FRVR Milwaukee-Fond du Lac line was rehabbed at a cost of \$1 million. Train speeds have moved from 10 mph to 25 mph....The U. S. DOT has committed \$10 million to study magnetic levitation as a way to modernize rail transportation.

## April 1995 - 25 Years Ago

The Virginia Museum of Transportation, Inc., in Roanoke, Virginia, announced that it will construct a protective cover for ex-N&W No. 611, retired from excursion service by the N&W in November 1994....Amtrak increased Milwaukee-Chicago fares by 50% on March 12. The one-way fare is now \$25. Three round trips per day will be eliminated on April 1. The Chicago- area railroads are planning to test ties made of recycled plastic.

## April 2000 - 20 Years Ago

Gov. Tommy Thompson announced on February 28 that two new Amtrak routes in Wisconsin would begin operation at some time in the future. They are an extension of the Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawatha service with one trip each way extended to Fond du Lac and also a Chicago-Janesville service via WSOR....The Great Circus Train will make the trip from Baraboo to Milwaukee in three days this year, down from four days last year. It will not go into Janesville from Milton Jct. Overnight stops will be in Waukesha and Appleton.

## April 2005 - 15 Years Ago

Mayors and county executives from southeastern Wisconsin plus SEWRPC officials signed an agreement on February 25 to work together to expand the Metra UP North commuter service from Kenosha to Milwaukee. Greater Milwaukee Committee President Julia Taylor said she thought this was the first time so many Milwaukee-area leaders had agreed on a public transportation initiative....A UP rail-grinding machine working west through Rochelle on the north main line track struck an eastbound BNSF intermodal train at the Rochelle diamond on March 11. The collision tied up both UP’s Geneva Sub. And BNSF’s Aurora Sub. No cars derailed but some containers on the BNSF train were ripped open, their contents spilling out along the right-of-way.

## April 2010 - 10 Years Ago

Spanish train manufacturer Talgo will assemble four trainsets at a closed Milwaukee automotive parts plant, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported on March 1. The four trainsets will be split evenly between the Wisconsin and Oregon departments of transportation. Wisconsin supports Amtrak service between Chicago and Milwaukee, and work will begin this year to extend the route west to Madison. The state announced last summer it would buy two Talgo trainsets to upgrade the current service. At the behest of state officials, Talgo agreed to conduct final assembly in Wisconsin. Earlier plans had called for components to be mostly manufactured in Spain, but Oregon’s contract specified that most parts be American-made. The plant site to be used manufactured automotive frames, and has rail service via the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Co

## April 2015 - 5 Years Ago

Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary Mark Gottlieb will join other state and local officials to mark the reconstruction of a disused rail line between Plymouth and Kohler on March 24. The public event will take place at 3 p.m. at the Wisconsin & Southern yard, between Thayer and Reed streets in Plymouth. Wisconsin & Southern serves Plymouth on a former Milwaukee Road line from North Milwaukee. Once reopened, the new line will enable access to potential customers in Sheboygan Falls and Kohler, and open the possibility of a new interchange point with Union Pacific.

The former Chicago & North Western line once connected Fond du Lac and Sheboygan. Union Pacific’s famed 4-8-4 No. 844 will likely return to steam in 2016, according to Senior Manager for Heritage Operations Ed Dickens. The railroad has decided to perform the 1472-day inspection and work while the locomotive is down for other work, Dickens says. He adds that there is a chance it will be operational in late 2015, but 2016 is a more likely scenario. The return of the locomotive would end a multi-year steam drought on the Class I railroad. Dickens says the restoration timeline for 4-8-4 Big Boy No. 4014 has it operation in 2019 for the 150th anniversary of the driving of the golden spike on the nation’s first transcontinental railroad. (That prediction came true - ed)

Sparks & Cinders  
1102 Aspen Dr  
Waukesha, WI 53188

**FIRST CLASS**

## The Final Frame



A patriotic ending on the Amtrak Hiawatha train inbound to Milwaukee at Waterford Ave in Jan 2020.  
Photo by Keith Schmidt