Rails & Rivers - Mankato 2020

CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
May 28-31, 2020 ------ Mankato, Minnesota
City Center Hotel, 101 E. Main St, Mankato, MN 56001
For reservations call 877-345-5577 Use the rate code, 'C&NWHS', to get the convention rate of $89.99, single or double per night plus tax. All reserved rooms will be released May 1, 2020.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Meet hotel is across the street from the C&NW depot/UP mainline.
- All day SW Minnesota bus tour; See depots at New Ulm, Sleepy Eye, Walnut Grove, Currie & Westbrook. New Ulm swing bridge, and museums at Tracy & Currie.
- Veterans panel and discussion by former C&NW Mankato area employees.
- Presentations by railroad historians on southern Minnesota railroading.
- Program on Laura Ingalls Wilder and railroading during the harsh winters of the 1880s.
- Bus trip to the St James railroad park & model railroad club.
- Banquet speaker- Jeff Otto on the planning and building of the Wyoming coal line.
- Society model railroad and photo contests.
- Company store and silent auction.
- Non-rail tours of New Ulm and Mankato.
- Swap meet and home layout tours.

Questions? Looking to Volunteer?

Registration questions: Registrar John Berg jberg@hbci.com (507)-429-2922
Meet questions and volunteer offers: 2020 Meet Co-Chairs Terry Davis ptdavis@hutchtel.net & Dave Mikelson Davem1385@Comcast.net

DAILY MEET ACTIVITIES

Thursday, May 28th
12:00-1:30 PM  - Board of Directors Meeting
2:00 PM        - Registration, Company Store, Silent Auction and Model/Photo Contest Set-up
3:30-4:45 PM   - Presentation: Southern Minnesota Railroading
5:30-6:45 PM   - Meet & Greet Reception. Build your own sandwich buffet with cash bar
7:00-9:00 PM   - Craft event for non-rail participants. Poolside. (see details below)
7:00-8:00 PM   - Veterans panel
8:00-9:15 PM   - Presentation: Mike Lenzen. St James, Minnesota railroad history
9:30 PM        - Open showing of members’ slides & videos

Friday, May 29th
7:00-7:45 AM   - Registration open. Model show & photo contest drop-off
8:00 AM-4:45 PM - Southwest Minnesota bus tour. Box lunch at Currie
9:00 AM-4:30 PM - Non-rail tour of New Ulm area (see details below)
5:00-6:30 PM - Dinner at the hotel – Burger Buffet with cash bar
7:00-7:30 PM - Archives update
7:45-9:15 PM - Terry Davis - Loren Johnson & Davis’ slides. Mankato area railroads 1966-1996
9:30 PM - Open showing of members’ slides & videos

**Saturday, May 30th**

8:30-9:30 AM - Cindy Wilson – Laura Ingalls Wilder & railroading during the 1880s winters in SW Minnesota
9:30-10:30 AM - John Luecke – Winona & St. Peter
10:00 AM-3:30 PM - Non-rail tour. Greater Mankato area (see details below)
10:30 AM - Voting ends for photo & model contest, and silent auction bidding
10:30-11:15 AM - Annual membership meeting
11:15 AM-12:45 PM - Lunch on your own
1:00-5:00 PM - Bus tour. Brief view of Mankato railroad sites, followed by trip to St. James Railroad Park, Museum and the model railroad club
5:30-6:00 PM - Happy half hour
6:00-8:00 PM - Annual banquet. Jeff Otto speaker. Coal line planning and construction
    - Raffle drawings, Door prizes
8:00 PM - Pick-up Silent Auction Items & Models/Photos
8:30-9:30 PM - Presentation: Photo collection of Mankato in the steam & diesel eras

**Sunday, May 31st**

7:00-8:30 AM - Set up for the swap meet
8:30 AM - Swap meet open to meet attendees
9:00 AM-3:00 PM - Swap meet open to the public
11:00 AM-3:00 PM - Home layout tours on your way home

**SATURDAY EVENING BANQUET:** Jeff Otto – Director of Administration, C&NW’s Western Railroad Properties Inc. subsidiary. Jeff was heavily involved in the proposal, planning and construction of the western coal line. He will discuss how the coal line came about, and the challenges and construction of this large project.

**OTHER PRESENTATIONS:**

**The C&NW Across Southern Minnesota.** A C&NW veteran presents a program on the mainline and trains that ran from Winona to the South Dakota border.

**Veterans Panel.** Several C&NW veterans will talk about their experiences of working for the North Western in southern Minnesota.

**Mike Lenzen – The story of the railroad in St James, Minnesota.** Mike is native of St James and had a long career with the C&NW and Union Pacific. He has done extensive research on St James railroading.

**Terry Davis – Mankato area railroading, 1966-1996.** Loren Johnson and his family ventured from their Cleveland, Minn., home almost every weekend to photograph the North Western in the Mankato and southern Minnesota area from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, including the Alco Line, Omaha Road line and ex-M&StL mainline from the Twin Cities through Waseca. This presentation will also include rare shots of the Milwaukee Road in Mankato and along the Farmington to Wells line.
Cleveland, Minn.-native Terry Davis attended college in Mankato 1975-79, but didn't discover the railfan hobby 'til 1990. He missed the Alco era, but captured the final years of the C&NW. This presentation has a lot of early Geeps, SD18s, SD40-2s, GP38-2s and more along the ex-Omaha Road from Worthington to Valley Park. He also captured ex-C&NW and Milwaukee Road SD7s, 9s and 10s in the early years of the DM&E.

Cindy Wilson – Cindy is the author of the new book The Beautiful Snow: The Ingalls Family, the Railroads, and the Hard Winter of 1880-81. The Long Winter is one of the most memorable novels in Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House series. It beautifully details the dramatic events of a harrowing winter with months of never-ending blizzards leading to railroad blockades that all but cut off fledgling communities.

This fast-paced presentation focuses on the railroad blockades that kept food and fuel from reaching the newly formed towns in southwestern Minnesota and southeastern Dakota Territory during the Hard Winter of 1880-81. Using the newspaper record, historic photographs, railroad maps, drone photography, and video, the presentation introduces the factors that caused the tracks to clog with snow, preventing the trains from running. After delving into the weather that was so difficult that winter, we will then go through the struggle to fight the drifts that blocked the trains.

John Luecke - Winona & St Peter. John is an accomplished rail historian and author, having published countless books on Minnesota railroads. He will be telling us the story of the Winona & St Peter as it was built & operated west from Winona.

Mankato railroading in the steam and diesel era. The railroad scene in Mankato was well-documented by the cameras of C&NW employees Roger Mueller, Mark Halverson and Steve Horn, along with Mankato-native railfans John Hallman and Spencer Wood. Their collection of rail images spans the steam era of the 1950s to the final years of C&NW in the 1990s. To complete the steam era review you will see photos from the C&NWHS archives and the John Teskey collection.

BUS TOURS

Friday, 8:00 AM-4:45 PM - Bus tour of southwest Minnesota. You will see the New Ulm swing bridge, seven different C&NW and Omaha Road depots. Wheels Across the Prairie Museum at Tracy, and the End-O-Line Railroad Park & Museum at Currie, where a box lunch will be served. Westbrook and both Sleepy Eye depots will be opened for us.

Saturday, 1:00-5:00 PM - This afternoon tour will offer a brief look at Mankato railroad sites, followed by a trip to the St James railroad park & model railroad club.

NON-RAIL EVENTS

Thursday, 7:00-9:00 PM – Join other non-rail attendees in a mixed media "Seascape Escape" craft event.

Friday, 9 AM - 4:30 PM – Bus tour to New Ulm area. Visit Harkin store, reception at the New Ulm Chamber of Commerce. See the John Lind House – Minnesota’s Sweden-born 14th governor. Lunch will be at historic Turner Hall (individual settlement). Guided tour of New Ulm, including Herman the German monument, followed by a visit to the Morgan Creek Winery.

Saturday, 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM – Guided history tour of Mankato, lunch at Rapidan Dam Store (individual settlement), olive oil and balsamic vinegar tasting at Blue Sky Mercantile in North Mankato. Make a souvenir craft at Sharon’s Craft & Floral Center.