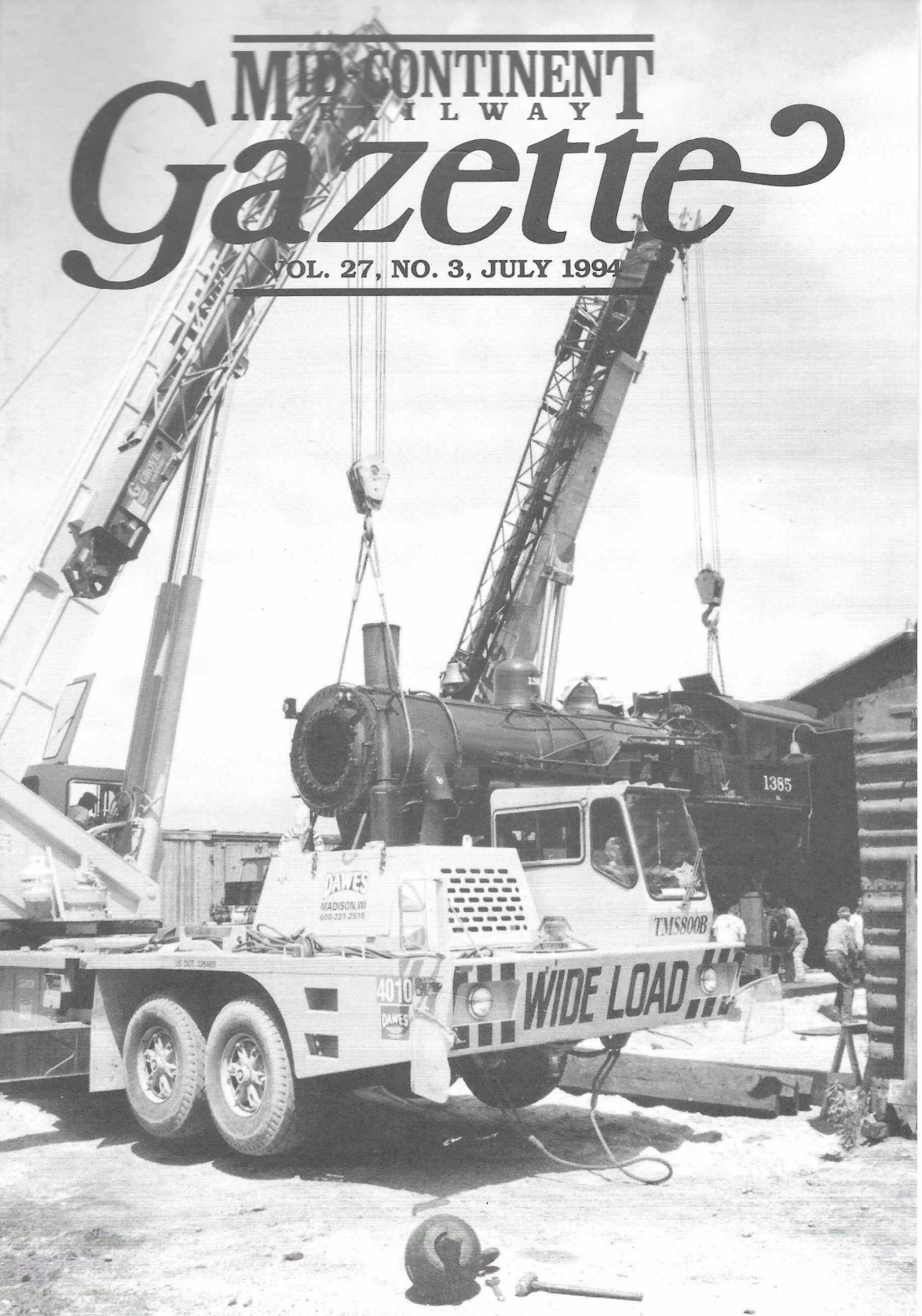


MID-CONTINENT  
RAILWAY

# Gazette

VOL. 27, NO. 3, JULY 1994



# 1385 Repairs Begin

Drive wheels and axles from steam locomotive no. 1385 are in Birmingham, Ala., for repairs.

While two cranes from Dawes lifted no. 1385 about four feet on June 28, the six wheels were rolled away from the locomotive. At the end of the 3-hour operation, the cranes placed no. 1385's boiler and frame behind the engine house on wood cribbing. No. 1385 weights about 72 tons light, without water in the boiler; its drive wheels are 63 inches in diameter. After cleaning, the wheels and axles waited outside next to the C-415 diesel (below). They left North Freedom Friday, July 8.

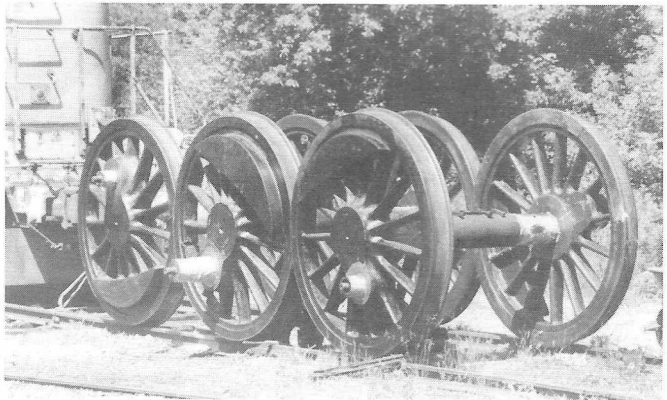
The repairs at Steam Operations Corp., Birmingham, are expected to take about a month. An inspection there showed more problems than anticipated. The work includes re-shimming the three wheel sets and turning six tires, plus axle machining. The locomotive was taken out of service because the first drive wheel had moved inward 5/8-inch on the axle.

When the wheels and axles return to the museum, reassembly begins. If all goes well, the locomotive will be back in service in September, before the Autumn Color weekends in October.

Locomotive 1385, purchased by Mid-Continent in 1961, pulled the first museum trains at North Freedom in 1963.

In Midwestern tours since 1982, it has visited five states. No. 1385 was built by American Locomotive Co. in 1907 for the Chicago and North Western Railroad.

A fund raising campaign, to help with the 1385 repairs and boost the locomotive restoration fund, is beginning. Letters are being sent to members and friends.



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# ROUNDHOUSE 1

At the midpoint in the summer operating season, Mid-Continent continues active and remembers the disastrous rain storm of a year ago.

Trains carried 14,576 riders through the end of June. The totals, with 1993 numbers in parenthesis, are 2,025 (2,714) at Snow Train, 417 in April; 5,280 (3,953) in May, and 6,854 (7,402) in June. Revenue is down from a year ago.

A \$126,000 mortgage at Valley Bank, Sauk City, signed July 6-7, consolidates previous loans, pays the remaining 1993 accounts payable, and includes funds allocated for the sewerage holding tank. Accounts payable are declining slowly.

An IRS form, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax, shows an excess of \$30,633 over expenses for Mid-Continent's fiscal year ending Oct. 31. Total expenses for the year were \$406,829, according to McGladrey & Pullen, Madison, Mid-Continent's auditors. Income for the year included \$254,588 from train fares. The auditors spread the cost of repairs (some \$83,000) to Saginaw Timber #2 over ten years. The full audit report including a cash flow statement is expected by the end of July.

A fund raising letter has been sent to chief executive officers of 150 Wisconsin corporations, asking for gifts "to establish a contingency fund for capital improvements and equipment restoration."

**At its June 5 meeting**, the board of directors elected Darcy Welke as treasurer, replacing Skip Lichter. John Gruber, interim secretary, was elected secretary. The board voted 6-2 not to publish minutes in the *Gazette*. Minutes are available at the museum office.

**A pre-election forum** is scheduled at 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 13, at the American Legion Hall in North Freedom. The nominating committee is asking candidates for the board of directors to sign an 11-point commitment, which says, in part, that

candidates pledge "to establish as a high priority ... attendance at all meetings of the board, committees, and task forces."

Terms of three directors expire: Jeff Bloohm, John Gruber, and Jerry Pitzen. All are eligible for reelection. Nominations are due by Aug. 24. Ballots must be returned by the annual members meeting, Saturday, Oct. 8.

**Don Pingel**, conductor on the weekday train crew, is summer manager. Other summertime employees include Kevin Rice, engineer; Ken Ristow, fireman; Andy Ebbers, brakeman; Darlene Cox, Marlene Schulte, ticket office; Clayton Seekins, Edna Armbruster, James Trudell, maintenance; Nancy Miller, Judy Shelton, gift shop; Mike Oaks, David Lee, track crew; and Jim Bertrand, engine house. Wava Verstein, Lovina Tisler, and Robert Ristow work year around.



**Pingel**

**National recognition** continues in *Locomotive & Railway Preservation*. "We rely increasingly on reconstructed settings like the Mid-Continent Railway Museum as stand-ins for experiences no longer available on branch or main lines," John Hankey, a contributing editor, said in the July-Aug. issue (page 10).

**Curator's department** is requesting funds to add a 100 foot concrete working surface down the middle of the Car Shop. About half of the \$1,000 needed for the project has been received.

**In preparation** for the C&NW Historical Society convention at Baraboo in 1995, Paul Swanson has revived the C&NW drover's caboose restoration.

*Continued on page 6*



# THE GREAT DODE FISK SHOWS

*During the month of the circus train and Milwaukee parade, the Gazette recognizes Wisconsin's circus/rail heritage.*

Baraboo, which called itself "the greatest show center in the world" at the turn of the century, was home for many well know circuses, including Ringling Brothers and Gollmar Brothers. Their fleets of circus cars added to Baraboo's stature as a railroad center.

But smaller circuses, not as well known today, also moved by rail. Dode Fisk's Great Combined Railroad Shows at Wonewoc, 30 miles west of Baraboo on the C&NW, was an example.

Fisk's circus grew out of an act featuring a trained horse, Bobby. Fisk purchased railroad cars, obtained two wagons from Moeller & Sons of Baraboo, and added an assortment of animals including a baby camel in 1908.

The *Wonewoc Reporter* called the winter quarters at the race track, a mile and a half north of the village, Circustown. "The inhabitants are not all of the human race for beautiful ponies, intelligent canines, educated horses, chattering monkeys, roaring lions, the graceful zebra, the ponderous elephant, the sacred ox and numbers of wild birds help to make 'Circustown' the most interesting spot in this neck of the woods," the newspaper said. After a grand opening in Wonewoc ("hundreds of people will testify that they got their money's worth"), Fisk loaded the show on the special train for the first time.

Circus contracts, although incomplete, give a glimpse of the routings and costs.

The show left Wonewoc May 16, stopping at Galesville, Wis., and Plainview, Minn., before arriving at Owatonna, Minn., May 20. The C&NW charged \$450 for the special train of 2 flat, 2 box, and 2 passenger cars, plus an advance car carried in regular trains. The final move of the season, for 7 cars from Freeport, Ill., Nov. 23 to winter quarters at Wonewoc without stops, cost \$200.

For the 1909 season, the *Reporter* described the Fisk show as "twice larger than ever before and positively the largest circus under the sole ownership of one man." In an editorial, the newspaper praised the "energy, perseverance and grit displayed by our fellow townsman, Dode Fisk." Eleven more wagons came from Moeller. Railroad cars were painted yellow. About 1,200 turned out for the afternoon opening performance Saturday, May 15, half that number for the evening program, and later the same evening the circus was on its way.

The C&NW charged \$160 to move 3 passenger, 3 stock, and 4 flat cars in the special train to the first stop, La Crosse, plus the advance car moving in scheduled trains. For transportation between Watertown and Bangor, Aug. 10-17, with stops at Jefferson, Lodi, Baraboo, Kendalls, and Norwalk, Fisk paid \$900

to the C&NW. For the next move, Bangor to Lake Benton, Minn., Aug. 17-Sept. 11, with 1 stop in Wisconsin, 12 in Minnesota, and 8 in South Dakota, C&NW's charge was \$3,300.

By contrast, the Ringling Brothers paid \$750 to C&NW for moving 83 cars in 4 trains from Baraboo to Chicago in April for the circus' opening event. Gollmar Brothers with 22 cars paid \$225 for the move from Baraboo to its opening May 10 in Rockford. According to a list from *Show World*, published in Chicago, nine railroad circuses were smaller than Fiske. Seibel Brothers Show, a dog and pony show from Watertown with a passenger car and a baggage car, paid \$765 for transportation in regular trains from Negaunee, Mich., to Madison, Aug. 6-27, 1906, including 17 stops.

Fisk's opening afternoon crowd in 1910 increased to 1,500 Saturday, May 14, again with about half as many for the evening performance. "All agreed that it was one of the best little shows on the road. The improvement over last year was marked," the *Reporter* said.

The only contract for 1910 lists \$975 paid to Green Bay and Western,

Kewaunee, Green Bay and Western, Ahnapée and Western, and Waupaca-Green Bay for the 10 car train and advance car from Waupaca to Green Bay in August with stops at New London, Seymour, Kewaunee, Algoma, and Sturgeon Bay.

The show never returned to Wonewoc. It reached the end of the line in December in Texas, and had to be sold.

A showman to the end, Fisk did not lose interest in circuses or Wonewoc. His funeral, which he arranged with a Columbus, Ohio, funeral director a few weeks before his death Dec. 31, 1940, included music and remembrances of "good times" by circus friends, and national publicity. "It was a great show," reported the *Ohio State Journal*. A sign on the coffin said, "Dode's request. No crying or whispering. Laugh. Talk. Walk around and have a good time." After the burial a few days later in Wonewoc, the *Reporter* noted that Fisk's instructions resulted in "probably one of the most unconventional funerals of all time." JG



**Gollmar Brothers circus train at Larned, Kan., in 1914-15. Circus artifacts and photo from Ralph Pierce collection**

# Roundhouse 1

Continued from page 3

Work, started in 1984 and resumed this summer, includes new siding, windows, steps, and platforms, and painting.

**Sixty-one** members and friends attended the Spring Fling banquet April 24 at Farm Kitchen. Arthur Dubin's slide talks on the impact of railroads on the country and a chartered trip on the Trans Siberian Express were well received.

**The last building** from the Vodak saw mill came down April 2.

**One Year Later**, a poster prepared in cooperation with the Chicago and North Western, marks the first anniversary of the July 17, 1993, storm. Posters are being sent to Sauk County civic leaders; a copy is posted outside the ticket office.

**For the second time**, a member has received a national railroad history award in photography from the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society.

The 1994 award went to John Gruber. He deserves recognition, "long overdue, for his own leading role at the forefront of contemporary interpretative photography of the railroading arena," said William L. Withuhn, curator of transportation at the Smithsonian Institution and chairman of the awards panel.

At its annual meeting in Pomona, Calif., the R&LHS announced four winners for 1994, the 13th year it has presented the awards. *Trains* praised Gruber's work and *Focus on Rails*, published by Mid-Continent, in an editorial ("The triumph of the 'squash' shot," page 6) in the magazine's July issue.

Phil Hastings received the award in 1985. Hastings, Mid-Continent president in 1984-86, died in 1987; a business car at the museum is named in his honor.

**Deaths.** *Harold Armbruster*, 74, North Freedom, July 13. He retired from Libby McNeil in 1981-82, had worked as a maintenance person for Mid-Continent for about 12 years.

*Jack Ahles*, Mosinee, March 8.

*James P. Kaysen*, 83, April 25, Cedarburg. He received a B.S. degree in 1933 and civil engineering certificate in 1938 from the University of Wisconsin. He is known for *Railroads of Wisconsin*, published by the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society (1937) and careful mapping of Wisconsin logging railroads.

*Arthur M. Nessler*, 87, April 25, Baraboo. He worked as a railroad section man, and then for the Baraboo Police Department for 30 years until 1961. He served on the Baraboo City Council and the Baraboo Police and Fire Commission.

## Volunteers Needed

Volunteers (or, unpaid staff members in terms used today by many nonprofit organizations) are needed for many Mid-Continent projects.

**Curator**, restoration of the Copper Range coach, no. 60, sanding and priming on the exterior or refinishing of the oak interior; preparing the C&NW combine for painting. Bill Buhmaster, 708-246-9736.

**Engineering**, track work. Jeff Nelson, 715-693-2970.

**Mechanical**, locomotive #1385. Jim Eng, 414-730-2250 or Bob Ristow, 608-356-0443.

**Operations**, qualified crews for weekend service and others for special events. Crew caller, Al Joyce, 612-423-2730.

For other activities, Doug Crary, membership secretary, 608-837-4542.

After a day's work, please leave a card with your name and number of hours for Shirley Emhoff, 608-356-2673.

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## Gifts to Mid-Continent

Your continued support of Mid-Continent's annual fund is vital as we begin our 1994 season at North Freedom with renewed dedication to enhancing educational resources, improving museum services, and continuing preservation efforts. Funds have added importance as we rebuild momentum lost by the disastrous rain storm in July 1993.

Send gifts now to Mid-Continent Railway Historical Society, North Freedom, Wis. 53951-0055.

# Depot Marks 100th Year

Mid-Continent's depot, built 100 years ago, is a well maintained example of an 1890s railroad structure. It serves as a representative of the golden age of railroading, when stations occupied a central place in the life of communities.

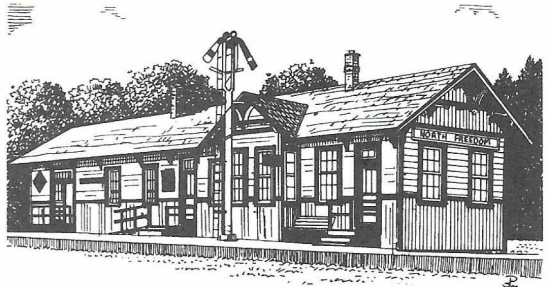
From its beginning in 1894 at Ableman's, three miles west of North Freedom, the frame depot has undergone transitions typical of rail stations. It replaced a building destroyed May 30 by fire. It shared its design with many other stations. For example, in the 74 miles between Madison and Elroy, C&NW built similar stations at Waunakee, 33 miles east, in 1896, and Wonewoc, 24 miles west, in 1888.

As business grew and communities expanded, citizens demanded station improvements. Again, the situation at Ableman's was typical. Mid-Continent has a drawing showing alterations made in September 1916, including a 27-foot addition, to 83 feet, and interior remodeling and larger waiting rooms.

The station served Ableman's (renamed Rock Springs in 1949) through the Depression and World War II. C&NW operated 255 stations in Wisconsin when it proposed a central agency plan in 1958; as approved in 1959, about 100 resident local agents could be withdrawn, and Rock Springs closed in 1961.

The Rock Springs building was available, recalled Bill Armstrong. "We were glad to get anything. This building is more attractive than the standard plan of later years. It's a nice looking depot," said Armstrong, who was in a unique position to influence a C&NW-style restoration. He worked for the railroad's engineering department from 1946 until retiring as engineer of buildings in 1981.

The C&NW officially "retired" the building in 1964, and donated the building in the next year. Mid-Continent volunteers



**A post card with a drawing of the depot is on sale at the Gift Shop.**

prepared for the move. They removed the roof, to lower the height of the building so it could clear power and telephone lines, and cut it in two. In December 1965, a contractor moved the two pieces on a back road, with a steep hill, to the new foundation at the museum.

Somehow, the foundation got 4-5 feet too long, so an extra piece was added to the building. "It didn't hurt anything," said Armstrong. Mid-Continent members spent many hours to re-install the rafters, apply roofing, and scrap and burn paint. With restoration nearly complete, the building opened for passengers in 1967. The former freight room became a gift shop in 1968. Another challenge, faced in 1970: repairing extensive damage from a fire April 4, 1970. Fortunately, the museum's insurance helped out.

When repainted in the early 1980s, Armstrong matched C&NW chips as closely as possible with commercial paint, resulting in a building today more in tune with the C&NW's main-line paint scheme, a subdued dusty color with brown trim.

The restored depot was honored in "Depots and Preservation" in the Nov.-Dec. 1992 issue of *Locomotive & Railway Preservation*. In 1994, more honors are headed its way, as it marks its first 100 years. JG



# SCHEDULED

## August

- 6-7 Caboose rides
- 13 First class service, 12:30, 2, 3:30 p.m.
- 13 Pre-election Forum, 8 p.m.,  
American Legion Hall, North Freedom
- 14 Board meeting, 9 a.m.,  
Papa's, Baraboo  
Brunch train at 12:30 p.m.
- 19- Badger Steam and Gas Engine Show,
- 21 Baraboo, fair grounds, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- 24 Deadline for nominations  
for board of directors.

## September

- 3-5 Caboose rides
- 4 Members Picnic, after last train.
- 5 Last day of daily operations.
- 11 Board meeting, 9 a.m.
- 14 Association of Railway Museums,  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, to Sept. 18.
- 17 C&NW appreciation day

## October

- 1-2 Autumn Color
- 8-9 Autumn Color
- 8 Annual members meeting, election  
of board of directors, 8 p.m.
- 16 Weekend operating season ends.

## November

- 2-6 TRAIN convention, Birmingham, Ala.
- 26- Santa Express. First class service
- 27 Saturday, brunch train Sunday.

Meetings are at the office building unless announced otherwise. Call 608/522-4261 for information.

**Cover.** Cranes lift #1385, so wheels and axles can be rolled away from locomotive for repairs. See page 2.

**MID-CONTINENT**  
R A I L W A Y

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