

Illinois Railway Museum Trip
October 1-3, 2010

Friday, October 1, 2010

This fall, the club decided to tour the Illinois Railway Museum for our annual fall trip. The club departed Ames around 4:30PM, heading to our lodging reservation in Rockford, IL, by way of I-35 and US 20. Patrick Johnson, Jeff Brown, Aaron Williams, and Ben Hucker were along for the ride. Courtesy of ISU Transportation Services, we all traveled in style in a brand new, 2010 Ford Fusion. A dinner stop was made at Arby's along US 20 near Holland, Iowa. We arrived in Rockford, Illinois, shortly after 10:00PM. Since we were rising early on Saturday for the museum, we decided to call it a night.

Saturday, October 2, 2010

On Saturday morning, we left the hotel promptly at 8AM and stopped for breakfast on our way to Union, Illinois. We arrived at the Illinois Railway Museum shortly after their 9:00AM opening. Since each member has their own interests and viewing interests, we decided to split up and meet back at the depot for lunch. As a respite from the brisk morning, several members started in the large gift shop and used book store before touring the museum. Upon our arrival at the museum, the staff was preparing the equipment for the day's operation. A trolley, an electric interurban, and a diesel-powered passenger train were to operate that day. Most members took advantage of the operating equipment and caught at least one ride on each type of rolling stock. Since the museum has been operating since the 1960s, they have a huge collection in various stages of repair or restoration. About 70% of their inventory is under roof, with the rest being stored in outdoor yards, most of which are open to the public. The vast collection ranges from trolleys, interurbans, and rapid transit cars, to steam locomotives, passenger cars, freight cars, and more modern diesel electric locomotives. Among the more recent acquisitions, CNW 6847, WC 7525, and BN-1 were spotted in Yard 8. Freshly repainted, EMD SD24 CB&Q 504 was spotted in Barn 9.

The group met at the depot at noon and since we weren't terribly hungry, we took the opportunity to catch a ride on the diesel passenger train, powered by EMD E9AM BN 9908. BN 9908 started its life as CB&Q 9976, alternating between CB&Q's intercity passenger trains and their Chicago-Aurora commuter service. After the BN merger, the E9A was renumbered BN 9976. When the West Suburban Mass Transit District (WSMTD) was formed to operate commuter operations along the BN line, the unit was one of 25 E9As sold to WSMTD and renumbered BN 9908. In the mid 1990s, WSMTD sold BN 9908 to Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) service and renumbered MARC 68, then MARC 92. Upon retirement from MARC, the unit was acquired by the IRM, and listed on their roster as CB&Q 9976. At the conclusion of the ride, passengers were invited up to the locomotive to experience the feel of the cab. As prototypical of its 1953 construction, it sported EMD's typical offset control stand; a stark contrast to the desktop controls of today's diesel locomotives.

At the conclusion of the ride, we ate lunch on-site at the museum diner. After lunch, we agreed to tour for a couple more hours and meet up again at 3PM. After reconvening, we decided to head back to Rockford to check out a few hobby shops. On our way to the first shop, we spotted the Oscar Meyer Weiner Mobile at a gas station and pulled in to

check it out. The crew said they were traveling from one event to another, but offered us a peek inside the vehicle and complementary “weenie whistles.”

Our first stop was Midwest Rail Junction in Loves Park, IL. This was a new location for the shop and he had an ample supply of both HO and N scale equipment. Since 1/3 of our participants are N-scalers, this shop was a great find. The other 2/3 also lightened our wallets on the HO stock. Our second stop was Hobby Town USA in Rockford. While our usual experience with these shops have been less than desirable for quality model railroad equipment, the Rockford store is an exception, with 5 aisles of quality HO and N scale merchandise. The Club purchased some parts to repair its rolling stock at this stop. A great dinner at Applebee’s just down the street was to follow.

Following dinner, we decided to check out railfanning opportunities in the city of Rockford. The combination of impending darkness and little to no railfanning information hampered our efforts. We decided to return to the hotel and call it a night.

Sunday, October 3, 2010

Since we were approximately 300 miles from home and the group wanted to spend some time at the Rochelle, IL, railroad diamonds, we awoke early on Sunday morning and checked out of our motel. We arrived at Rochelle Railroad Park around 9:00AM. While at the park, four trains passed: an EB BNSF mixed freight led by BNSF 4635; an EB UP double stacker with UP 7788, UP 4909, and UP 3912 on the front end; an EB UP mixed freight; and a WB UP empty unit coal train. All too soon, it was time to leave for Ames. On our way out of town, we made our way past UP’s Global III intermodal terminal, just west of Rochelle. The east and south sides had a large grassy berm (likely for a sight screen), but the west side was open for viewing. However, due to UP purchasing plenty of extra property for expansion, the relocated road is quite a distance away from the intermodal action.

Since we were in a hurry to get back to Ames, we opted to take I-80 across Iowa rather than parallel the UP mainline on US 30. We arrived back in Ames around 5PM and all agreed it was a good trip.