

Midwest Central Railroad

ORDER BOARD

Distributed to Friends and Members of the MCRR

May 2004

Get Ready for the Events of 2004 at Midwest Central Railroad!

Midwest Central Railroad will be hauling Lions on Friday, June 4. No, not zoo Lions! These Lions are part of the **State Lions Convention** that will be held on the grounds of Midwest Old Threshers. Jean Ballinger, one of the event coordinators, expects a crowd of about 200-300 Lions to experience steam railroading during evening opening ceremonies.

Boy Scouts from all over Southeast Iowa will again be able to learn a little about railroading as they participate in the annual **Boy Scout Camporee** the first weekend in June. A locomotive and coach will be operating on the grounds during festivities on Saturday, June 5. The boys may even be lucky enough to observe track being built as track work is expected to continue most of the summer.

Due to the low participation by 2002 Red Power Round Up attendees, the Board of Midwest Central Railroad decided not to operate for the event unless approached to do so. Red Power attendees are on the grounds of McMillan Park to see the tractors and red equipment and other attractions. The event is scheduled for June 24, 25, and 26. By starting on a Thursday and ending on a Saturday it is more difficult for railroad volunteers to participate.

The **Cedar Rapids YMCA** will venture south to Mt. Pleasant on Thursday, July 29 for a tour of Midwest Old Threshers and a trip around the tracks of Midwest Central Railroad at 10:30am. About 100-150 visitors are expected. While the trip on the train is only a small part of the field trip, the opportunity for steam railroading education is good and volunteers helping on the train will have a chance to share their railroading knowledge.

Ghost Train is scheduled for October 15, 16, 22, and 23 from 6-10pm. Ghost Train, which has grown to the largest Halloween event in Southeast Iowa, will again live up to its reputation.

The North Pole Express will be held December 3, 4, and 5 as it makes it way north to visit with

Santa Claus and Snowball the Polar Bear. The Elves are primed and ready for another fun year of fun, frolic, and elfin mischief.

Volunteers are asked to mark their calendars for these dates. While it is important to participate during the events, there is also pre-operation work to do, such as coach cleaning, ticket office prep, and track work. Contact any of the directors if you are interested in helping.

Unfortunately, one of the events that won't be held this year is the Wizard Fest. Sometimes the best plans of mice and men (and women) can go awry. The copyright infringement on Harry Potter imitation events reared its ugly head after continued investigation by committee members. Time-AOL-Warner owns all copyrights to anything pertaining to Harry Potter and therefore, to do an event without their blessing was not in the best interest of MCRR.

TRAINS was recently contacted by other organization members regarding events such as Polar Express type trains and wizard trains. It was their decision that unless such events could be completely sanitized, it would be their advice to completely avoid anything to do with themed events. After several meetings by community volunteers from the Mt. Pleasant Chamber Alliance and the Henry County Convention and Visitors Bureau, it was decided that in order to avoid the possibility of a legal suit, that the Wizard Train would not be held.

Time-AOL-Warner is scheduled to release "The Polar Express" movie starring Tom Hanks in November. The rights to Polar Express were sold to Time-AOL-Warner by Chris Van Alsbury, the author. After much discussion with the TRAINS organization, event coordinator Mary Bixler had already started to "sanitize" the event in 2003 and will continue to follow up on ways to avoid any future copyright problems.

— Mary Bixler

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The Order Board is a newsletter of the Midwest Central Railroad. Photos and articles may be submitted to the Midwest Central Railroad office or to the Editor. The Order Board reserves the right to edit for length and clarity. Any opinions expressed are those of the author and may or may not reflect the opinion of the Board of Directors.

The Midwest Central Railroad was incorporated in 1960 as a non-profit educational organization, dedicated to the preservation and operation of narrow gauge steam powered railroad equipment. Donations of cash or materials are welcomed and are tax-deductible under section 501(c)3 of the federal tax code.

The next issue of the Order Board will be July 2004. If you have articles, photographs, or story ideas, please send them to the Editor or the MCRR office by Thursday, July 1, 2004.

From The President's Desk: Change and Conflict

Over the last several years Midwest Central Railroad has seen some radical changes. The building of a new museum, new off season events, and many others. The organization has grown ten fold. Unfortunately our volunteers have not grown as fast.

Over the last year I have seen a great division forming within the organization. If these divisions cannot be resolved, all the changes we have made for the better will become our organization's downfall. As always, with change comes resistance, and with resistance comes conflict. Everyone has their own ideas of what is best for the organization. As a Board, we have to look at each idea and decide which ones are in the best interest of the organization as a whole, and with that the ones that only benefit a small area are sometimes put on the back burner to make way for the ones that help the organization the most.

I will bet that if we were to take a poll of everyone involved with the MCRR, and ask the question "Why do you volunteer for the Midwest Central?" the answers would likely be virtually the same. Meeting and working with the public, being part of railroading history, to help ensure the organization is here for future generations, etc.

We are currently in need of unity more now than ever. There are only three months left before the reunion, and there is still much work to be done with the new building. There are still two tracks to be built, the gift shop has not even begun to be built, and the M&E center needs to be completed. We are currently working every Saturday. All hands are welcome and needed. The time has come for us all to lay our differences aside and pull together for the betterment of the Midwest Central Railroad.

— Matt Crull

MCRR Dates of Operation — 2004

- State Lions Convention - Evening of Friday, June 4
- Boy Scout Camporee - Saturday, June 5 - Time T.B.A.
- Cedar Rapids YMCA - Thursday, July 29 - 10:30 a.m.
- Old Threshers Reunion - September 2 - 6
- Ghost Train - October 15, 16, 22, & 23 - 6-10 p.m.
- North Pole Express - December 3, 4, & 5

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From The Shop by Greg Roth — “It’s ALIVE!”

When I first stepped foot in the Midwest Central Railroad shop, Engine 9 was in pieces and so were my nerves as I timidly opened the door to help restore the Shay. The initial problem was I didn’t know what a “Shay” was! As I spent my first few hours as a “volunteer,” it soon became apparent to a small group of “seasoned volunteers” that I knew nothing about trains but I was willing to get very, very dirty. Since this was the only qualification I needed, I was allowed to stay the entire day and to return.

My first impression of MCRR was that of opportunity, an opportunity that would have otherwise been non-existent in my life or my generation. This opportunity was to restore, care for, and operate steam locomotives. My second impression was that of complete awe. This awe was not only for the equipment, but more for the volunteers themselves. They had a working knowledge of an era that I had never known, and what they did not know, they figured out through applied reasoning and creative problem solving.

I have now been with MCRR since 1999 and I am still in awe of the creative problem solving that continues today. Presently a new problem has needed to be addressed and a new “contraption?,”... “configuration?,”... “contrivance?,”... “apparatus?,”... “Thing-A-Ma-Bob?” What is an appropriate name for this new invention? The answer is clearly painted in stencil letters on its arm, “The Van Winkle.”

“The Van Winkle” is named in honor of volunteer Jesse Van Winkle who, it is rumored, is the inspiration for this latest creation. Along with his hands, and those of Jim and Matt. Simply put, “The Van Winkle” is a quad-tamping, tamper shifting, air-drill driven, compressor baring, ore car framed tamper. Yes, that was the shortest accurate descriptor I could come up with.

Imagine this: at The Van Winkle’s base is the frame of an old Ore Car with the hopper removed. Sitting astride the frame is a two-wheeled trailer

containing a Ford 4 cylinder air-compressor. The air compressor is the life of The Van Winkle. An air-hose connects the compressor with a mining type drill. This drill is attached to the center of the frame and acts as a driveshaft connecting to the transmission. The transmission was removed from an old, nonfunctioning track tamper for standard gauge railroads. The transmission then drives a chain which drives the axle of the ore car frame. It can now move but is not the complete picture.

The creators went on to attach a 3’ boom style arm to the front center of the ore car frame. Hanging from the extended end of this arm are four hand-tampers all neatly connected to the air-compressor. All four hand-tampers are functional and spaced so they, all with a single lowering of the arm, tamp both sides of the rail and both sides of the tie. “The Van Winkle” has been track tested and, as the old horror movie states, “It’s alive!”

These simple two words are the summation of this article “From the Shop.” The words “It’s alive!” not only are applicable to “The Van Winkle” but also to the creative, intuitive thoughts of those that keep the Midwest Central Railroad alive for the next generation. As we enter another season of summer fun, please remember, it is the volunteers that make this railroad so unique. It is you that give another generation opportunities they would have otherwise not known. It is you that can put a smile on the face of a child, and give credence and understanding to stories passed down from one generation to the next. So this season, come for the fun and have an impact on thousands; volunteer for any of our upcoming summer events!

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Museum and Education Center Fundraising Efforts Continue

Twelve wrought iron and wood benches have been purchased and are being made ready for the 2004 summer events. The benches are part of the continued fundraising effort for the Museum and Education Center. Each bench was sponsored for \$1,000 and will have a plaque attached that will announce the donor or a memorial for whom the bench was purchased. The benches, which will undergo some modification by MCRR volunteers, will provide additional seating in the area of the Museum and Education Building.

Midwest Central Receives Money from Wal-Mart and the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association

As part of the Grand Opening festivities of the new Wal-Mart Super Center in Mt Pleasant, several community organizations were the recipients of checks from the Wal-Mart Foundation. Midwest Central Railroad's Board of Directors accepted a check in the amount of \$1,000 from store representatives.

The money will be used to continue the funding of the new Museum and Education Center that was started in January of 2003. The volunteers and members of Midwest Central Railroad wish to express their sincere thank you to Wal-Mart for their support in helping to educate future generations and helping to preserve our railroad heritage.

Midwest Central Railroad is a member of the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association (EITA) based in Dyersville, Iowa. The tourism association helps to promote, develop, and support efforts for increasing tourism opportunities and events throughout Eastern Iowa. Representatives of the approximately 250 member organizations meet in other tourism locations to learn about the tourism industry, network, and share information from the State Tourism Department. Scholarships and grants are also offered to help promote tourism. Midwest Central Railroad was a recipient of a \$300 grant to

help with promotion and marketing for the North Pole Express. Mary Bixler is the MCRR representative to the association and will be working on the North Pole promotion.

— Mary Bixler

Midwest Central Railroad to Host Alive After Five

Midwest Central is scheduled to host "Alive After Five" in August 2004. Alive After Five is a monthly event organized by the Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce, to give members of the various businesses and organizations in Henry County an opportunity to meet and socialize. Alive After Five will allow MCRR to show off our new Museum and Education Center to the Mt. Pleasant area community.

MCRR will be hosting Alive After Five on Wednesday, August 4, 2004; from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Planning is underway for this event, and volunteers will be needed to help with the event, as well as to ensure that the Museum and Education Center is ready to host the event. This will be an exceptional opportunity to highlight MCRR's upcoming schedule, as well as inform local community members about the fundraising needs of Midwest Central Railroad.

Fundraising Postcards

Larry Raid has found a supply of color postcards showing the Shay as she was when she arrived in Mt. Pleasant in 1966, and is offering a postcard for free with your \$10 donation to the South Station project. If you are interested, contact Larry at his home:

Larry J. Raid
503 South 2nd Street
Denmark, IA 52624

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In Sympathy

Samuel Osier died as the result of an accident near his home in Van Meter, Iowa in April. His brothers Dave and Walt Osier are long-time MCRR volunteers, and Dave currently serves on the Board of Directors. Midwest Central Railroad expresses our deepest sympathy to Dave and Walt and the entire Osier family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time.

Long-time volunteer Gilbert “Digger” Barker of West Liberty passed away earlier this month at the Crestview Care and Rehab Center in West Branch, Iowa. “Digger” was an active conductor for the Reunion for many years, and his antics as an especially interested and active participant in the train robberies by the North Village Gang were enjoyed by his fellow conductors as well as the passengers. He will be greatly missed by all for his friendly smile and his positive attitude in making a ride on the Midwest Central Railroad fun and interesting.

We also convey our sympathy to the family of Jeffry Mehler of Fort Madison, who passed away in December.

From the Editor

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the newsletter over the past year, and in particular, I wish to sincerely thank Greg Roth, Mary Bixler, and Matt Crull, who write most of the articles that appear in the newsletter.

I want to encourage all of you to send in items for the newsletter — written articles, story ideas, photographs — anything that might be of interest to Midwest Central members and volunteers. This newsletter is for all MCRR members, and everyone’s ideas are welcome. Thanks!

— Amy Frantz

Shop Keys

As some of you have probably heard, the shop keys have once again been changed. Last year shortly after the reunion I discovered that there were eight keys missing from the safe in the office. I was appalled to discover this, but not shocked. Many times I had walked into the office to discover that the safe was standing wide open in the office and no one was around. Consequently the only way to resolve this was to re-key the shop. The only problem with this is we have had to do this several times over the last few years and it is not a cheap thing to do, so we are trying something new.

The east door to the shop has been fitted with a combination lock. The plan is to issue the combination to all authorized key holders. Don’t throw away your old shop keys as these still fit the fuel barrels and the storage trailers in the west parking lot. At this time I am the only person authorized by the Board to give out the combination. If you are an authorized key holder you need to call me with your current key number and I will give you the combination. I can be reached at 319-385-4592 (home) or 319-931-0695 (cell). If you are not an authorized key holder and wish to have the combination, contact any one of the Board members and they will bring it to the full Board for approval.

The downfall to this new system is it will be very easy for someone to give out the combination without authorization. The current plan is to change the combination each year after the show, and re-issue the combination to everyone on the list. If at any time throughout the year someone gains access that is not on the list, we will change the combination at that time. So far this system is working great. At first we had some grumbling from people that they didn’t feel they belonged because they didn’t have a key in their pocket. This quickly faded away once they discovered how much faster and easier it is not to have to fumble with keys.

— Matt Crull

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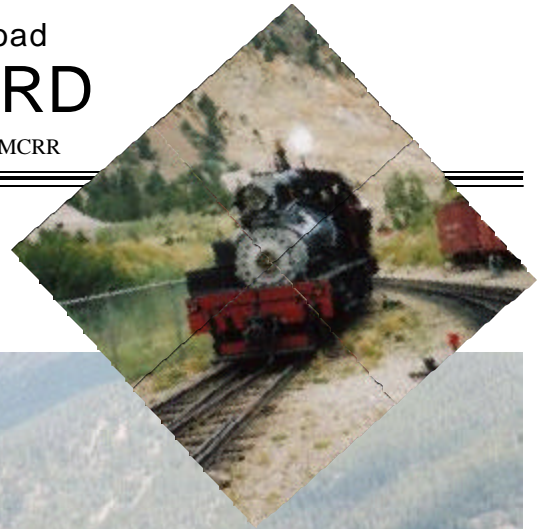
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The Georgetown Loop's Final Season

Many MCRR members have visited the Georgetown Loop Railroad in Colorado. If you haven't been there, or want to take another ride on the loop, this summer may be your last chance. The Georgetown Loop Railroad, Inc. was unable to come to a new agreement with the Colorado Historical Society, which owns the track, so this season will likely be their last to operate there.

The railroad runs between the towns of Georgetown and Silver Plume. The 4 1/2 mile track includes the Devil's Gate Viaduct, which offers a fantastic view of the mountain scenery.

For more information on the Georgetown Loop Railroad's history and operating schedule, visit their website at www.georgetownloop.com.



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