

Steam Triple Header

by Katharine Dokken

On a warm day in August along a quiet siding outside of Marine St. Croix Minnesota a spectacular display of iron power was taking place.

A steam lover's dream unfolded in front of my eyes, as three majestic engines roared by. Their smokestacks billowing white and black smoke. The rails vibrating with the power of their turning wheels. Their whistle shrieks echoing down the valley. The cinders and soot shooting from their stacks showering those of us taking photographs.

The Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway, a joint venture of the Minnesota Transportation Museum and the Osceola Historical Society sponsored the day's event dubbed "Steam Fest in the Valley."



This steam "triple" header ran on the Osceola & St. Croix Valley's regular line along the St. Croix River Valley. Passengers were let off at the Marine St. Croix siding for several photo run-bys of this special event.

The Triple Header consisted of the following engines hooked together in various configurations.



Northern Pacific #328 was built in 1905, by the Rogers Locomotive Works of Paterson, NJ, for the Northern Pacific Railroad. It is a 4-6-0 "Ten Wheeler" type and is hand-fired with coal. It was retired from service in 1955 and donated to the city of Stillwater, Minnesota where it sat in a park for many years. In the seventies it was restored to operating condition and subsequently leased to the Minnesota Transportation Museum.

Soo Line #2719 is a 4-6-2 "Pacific" type steam locomotive built for hauling passengers in 1923 by the American Locomotive Works (ALCo), in Schenectady, New York. In 1959 it became famous as the last steam engine to operate in Wisconsin. Displayed since 1960 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, its restoration has just been finished by the Chippewa Valley Railroad Association. The engine has now been renamed the "City of Eau Claire." This run marks its first in 28 years.

Soo Line #1003 is a 2-8-2 "Mikado" type built in 1913 for hauling freight. A main-line engine, it ran between the Twin Cities, Duluth, and Sault Ste. Marie. Today it is owned by the Wisconsin Railway Preservation Trust, who restored it to operating condition in 1997.

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This wonderful event was repeated several times as the locomotives stopped up track from me, rearranged the order of the locos, and repeated their thunderous performances. By the end of the photo run-by sessions, my hair was truly another color!