



Mission Statement

The Bayview History Committee exists to collect and preserve the history of the Town of Bayview and to make it available to residents and the general public.

The Railroad in the Town of Bayview area and on the Bayfield Peninsula

Think about life before trains and understand the reasons that railroads were highly sought and welcomed. The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad (the Omaha), incorporated in 1880, came this way from Hudson, WI. "Rails laid to Houghton Point entered the community in July 21, 1883," [1] and arrived in Bayfield October 12, 1883, at 4:04 PM," [2]. This railroad expansion increased the capacity of local people to ship their products on freight trains: farmers ship their products, gardeners their produce, and commercial fishermen shipped their catch. Stores were able to receive goods. The "Scoot" shuttle provided passenger service for commuters, tourists, and salesman. Donna Bodin Kramolis said her mother "dragged the kids to the depot to go shopping in town."

When was the build date of the Houghton Depot? A quote from the Washburn News, 12 Sept 1891, under the heading "Houghton Hits," stated: "That wealthy corporation known as the C.St.P.M. & O. Ry. still lets us stand out on a 16x24 platform and freeze while waiting for the train. We all wish

that it would erect some kind of a wind break before winter sets in." The build date has not yet been found. Quarrying began on the Apostle Islands as early as 1870. When the Omaha came through, quarrying came to Houghton by way of several companies. Eight quarries were established nearby, and a brownstone sawmill was built on present day Singer Road. Brownstone was not only shipped to many cities, but also to build the 40 brownstone-built or dressed buildings of Ashland, Bayfield and Washburn. The Dupont Company had over 40 buildings constructed from Houghton sandstone for their explosives factory.

In 1909, Sioux Spur (near Friendly Valley & Kjarvick Roads), with more business, received a boxcar depot. In 1924, the Omaha continued service with 4-4-0s and two coaches. In 1925, a Chippewa pageant at the Red Cliff Reservation starred 400 Native Americans and drew a large crowd that filled the Omaha's coaches. On March 31, 1934 the last regular passenger train ran. Thereafter a coach could be added to freight trains (called a mixed train). Freight service ended in the late 1970s and the tracks were removed. The Chicago and Northwestern Railroad (C&NWR) expanded with the merger of the Omaha Railroad. [3]

Today the Houghton Depot has had three lives: as a depot, repurposed as a living room, and repurposed again in 2018 as a classroom. There is a telegraph line that runs from the depot to the paymaster's office. Local fourth-grade school children

enhance their Wisconsin and local history requirement by visiting the depot where they try their hand at Morse code and learn about the movement of lanterns as train signals. They receive train whistles to practice the engineer's intentions, and then blow as needed in the operation of the model railroad that is winched down from the attic cavity in the twelve foot high ceiling. This year we added a restored putt-putt speeder and a flat car, a baggage cart, and the Houghton sign to help the imagination picture both the practicality and the romance of the railroad running through our Town of Bayview.

[1] & [2] Railways of the Harbor City Bayfield Heritage Association, Inc, Robert J. Nelson transcriber, January 2015 [3] The Omaha Road (Mukilteo, Washington: Hundman Publishing, Inc.), Stan Mailer, 2004, pg. 64.

