



St. James Railroad Museum

Welcome to the St. James Historical Depot Museum. The railway depot was constructed in 1894 and served the Chicago and Northwestern Railway at Amboy, Minnesota until the railway company closed it at that location.

It was purchased by the St. James Salutators and moved to St. James in 1973, trucked across 35 or 40 miles, and placed on a cement block foundation on June 29th, 1973.

Some years later the Salutators deeded it to the City of St. James. It is maintained by the City and operated by the local historical society. Since its arrival here, it has been stocked with railroad antiques and artifacts by retired CNW station agent Bill Lenzen.

The 24X80 foot structure was one of the first buildings constructed at Amboy when that city was founded.

At one time, as many as eight people were employed in the operation of the depot there.

After the depot was moved to St. James, a brick platform was installed, a number of railway items were brought here for display, and a portion of track was laid for accommodation of the caboose, which was added to the museum grounds in 1980. The adjacent signal tower was added later.

St. James Salutators had first purchased (for \$1.00) the CNW depot which stood at Mt. Lake, about 15 miles west of St. James. When Mt. Lake residents decided they wanted to retain their depot for historical purposes, they negotiated a trade with the St. James group.

The railway company was about to give the Amboy depot to Mt. Lake, but the switch was made and both factions were then satisfied.

Some of the fixtures from the Amboy depot were moved to St. James prior to the moving of the entire building.

Moving took about 18 hours and involved various stops for clearance of electrical lines along the way. At Amboy, the depot faced west, while here at St. James it faces eastward.

The Caboose

The Salutators, a group of men who acted as a promotional arm of the Chamber of Commerce, purchased the caboose from the D.A. Wilson Co. of Ames, Iowa on February 2nd, 1977. The purchase price was \$3,500.

It had been in service on the Grand Trunk Railroad, a subsidiary of the Canadian National Railroad, a subsidiary of the Canadian National Railroad. When in service, its number was GTW 77940. This number was retired and a new number, 5, was given to the caboose.

No. 5 left Port Huron, Michigan on March 7, 1977. It arrived at Chicago on March 14, and arrived at St. James on March 20. Charges for moving the caboose to St. James amounted to \$246.82, paid by the Salutators organization.

The 21-ton caboose sat in the freight yards at St. James for three years until funds and expertise were put together to move it to the depot museum location.

It was officially dedicated at the site on July 6, 1980, during the annual Railroad Days celebration.

The Signal Tower

The installation came later but also involved a considerable job of moving.

It had stood at the south Minneapolis location for many years, where signalmen controlled switch yard and mail line rail traffic at Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad intersection.

The tower was trucked to St. James and placed on its foundation as an addition to the railway museum “family.”

The Sand Tower

Another item which was involved in railroad history is the old sand tower, also on the grounds of the museum. It was used in the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha rail yard here at St. James until it was no longer needed by the railroad company.

Sand was carried by steam locomotives and applied to rails when there was a problem in traction. Driving wheels often slipped when locomotives started pulling their heavy trains, and sand provided a firm grip.

Thank you very much for your interest in railroad history!

