

TimeRail

1776 - Thirteen American Colonies declare independence from England

1776 – Oglala and Brule bands of Lakota Sioux inhabit most of current-day South Dakota

1776 - Scotsman James Watt perfects first "modern" stationary steam engine in England

1800 – American Oliver Evans creates the earliest successful non-condensing high-pressure stationary steam-engine

"The time will come when people will travel in stages moved by steam engines from one city to another, almost as fast as birds can fly, 15 or 20 miles an hour.... A carriage will start from Washington in the morning, the passengers will breakfast at Baltimore, dine at Philadelphia, and sup in New York the same day..." Oliver Evans, 1800

"The introduction of so powerful an agent as steam to a carriage on wheels will make a great change in the situation of man." Thomas Jefferson, 1802

1803 – United States acquires Louisiana Purchase from France

1804 - Lewis and Clark Expedition moves upstream through what is now South Dakota

1815 - First North American railroad charter for Camden & Amboy in New Jersey

1825 - Colonel John Stevens builds a "steam waggon" which he placed on a circular track around his New Jersey home

1826 - Switch Back Gravity Railroad in Pennsylvania began operation in May; first freight common carrier railroad

1827 - Baltimore and Ohio Railroad is chartered in Maryland; the first passenger and freight common carrier railroad

1828 - 23 miles of railroad in the United States

1829 - English-built steamer Stourbridge Lion, is operated on the Delaware & Hudson

1829 - Peter Cooper builds the Tom Thumb, (1.4 HP), for the Baltimore & Ohio (it hauled 36 passengers at 18 mph in August, 1830)

1831 - The 3.5 ton De Witt Clinton hauls 5 stage coach bodies on railroad wheels at 25 mph on the Mohawk & Hudson Railroad in New York

1831 – Locomotive "John Bull" placed into service on the Camden & Amboy Railroad in New Jersey (the first locomotive fitted with a bell, headlight and cowcatcher; remained in service until 1866)

1832 - The American No. 1, the first 4-4-0, was designed by John B. Jervis, Chief Engineer for the Mohawk & Hudson. It was capable of regular speeds of 60 mph

1844 - Samuel Morse sends the first long-distance telegraph message from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, ushering in a new era in communication

1848 - First steam locomotive (the Pioneer) arrives in Chicago, Illinois; operates on predecessor of the Chicago and North Western Railway (C&NW)

1850 - President Millard Fillmore signs the first Railroad Land Grant Act to attract settlers, increase taxable wealth, and unify and strengthen the growing nation

1850 - 9,000 miles of railroad in the United States

"Railroad iron is a magician's rod, in its power to evoke the sleeping energies of land and water."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

"We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."
Henry David Thoreau

1851 – Telegraph first used for dispatching trains

1851 – A treaty establishes a Sioux Reservation west of the Missouri River and north of the Platte River/Overland Trail

1852 - First rail connection between East Coast and Chicago

1853 - Scottish immigrant Andrew Carnegie launches his career as a \$35-per-month telegraph operator

1855 - First land grant railroad, The Illinois Central, arrives in Dunleith, Illinois (now East Dubuque)

1856 - First railroad bridge (Rock Island Railroad) across the Mississippi River is completed between Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa

1857 - Settlement at the site of present day Sioux Falls

1860 - 30,000 miles of railroad in the United States

1861 - Civil War begins (the first war that railroads play a significant role in transporting soldiers and equipment)

1861 - Dakota Territory (east of the Missouri River) is established by President Buchanan, with Yankton as the first capital

1862 - President Abraham Lincoln signs the Pacific Railway Act, authorizing the construction of a transcontinental railroad with federal land grants

1864 - Second Pacific Railway Act doubles the size of federal land grants

1865 - First railroad sleeping car, designed by George Pullman, appears in the United States.

1866 - In Jackson County, Indiana, the Reno Gang, a band of outlaw brothers, is credited with the first organized transcontinental train robbery

"The one moral, the one remedy for every evil, social, political, financial, and industrial, the one immediate vital need of the entire Republic, is the Pacific Railroad." The Rocky Mountain News, Denver -1866

"The more we can kill this year the less will have to be killed the next year, for the more I see of these Indians the more convinced I am that they all have to be killed or be maintained as a species of paupers." General William T. Sherman regarding the Plains Indians - 1866

1867 - Pullman introduces the refrigerator car

1868 – Fort Laramie Treaty redefines the Great Sioux Reservation, including lands west of the Missouri River and Black Hills

1868 - Major Eli Janney, a confederate veteran of the Civil War, invents the knuckle coupler – replacing the "link and pin" coupler, a major cause of injuries to railroad workers

1869 - George Westinghouse, an inventive Civil War veteran, develops the straight air brake, and patents the first automatic air brake three years later

1869 - Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads meet and drive the golden spike at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory - completing the first transcontinental railroad

"What has been done in my country I did not want, we did not ask for it; white people going through my country... I have two mountains in that country – the Black Hills and the Big Horn Mountains. I want the Great Father to make no roads through them." Red Cloud, Oglala Chief -1870

1870 - 53,000 miles of railroad in the United States

1871 - Federal government discontinues its Railroad Land Grant policy

1872 - Winona and St. Peter (C&NW) extends one mile of line to Headquarters (Gary), Dakota Territory – satisfying its land grant in Dakota

1872 - Dakota Southern Railroad becomes the first railroad to operate in regular service in current-day South Dakota, running from Vermillion, Dakota Territory, to Sioux City, Iowa

1873 - Dakota Southern completed to Yankton

1873 - Winona and St. Peter extends to Lake Kampeska (Watertown)

1873 - Jay Cooke & Co brokerage fails because of problems financing the Northern Pacific Railway. Failure of Cooke and 37 additional brokerages and banks precipitates the Panic of 1873. New York Stock Exchange closed for 10 days. Five-year depression follows

1874 - Lt. Colonel George Custer's military expedition to the Black Hills confirms presence of gold near present-day Custer City

1876 - Gold discovery in Deadwood Gulch

1876 - The Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana Territory

"My God, It talks!" - Emperor Dom Pedro of Brazil exclaimed after putting Alexander Graham Bell's strange telephone device to his ear, and then quickly dropping it, at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition

1877 - Black Hills region annexed into Dakota Territory

1878 - Without federal assistance, railroad builder James J. Hill commences the expansion of his St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba (later the Great Northern Railway) across northern Dakota toward the Pacific Northwest

1878 - Worthington and Sioux Falls (C&NW) and Sioux City and Pembina (Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul/Milwaukee Road) lines reach Sioux Falls

1878 - First telephone exchange in (South) Dakota completed between Deadwood and Lead City

1879 - Dakota Central (C&NW) reaches Brookings and Volga

1879 - Thomas Edison devises the first practical electric lights

1879 - Homestake Mining Company puts the J.B. Haggin locomotive into service - the first railroad steam locomotive in the Black Hills

1879 - Milwaukee reaches Big Stone City

1879 - Worthington and Sioux Falls (C&NW) extended to Salem

1880 - 93,000 miles of railroad in the United States

1880 - Dakota Central (C&NW) reaches Huron and Pierre

1880 - Milwaukee builds from Big Stone to Milbank and Webster

1880 - Milwaukee rails reach Madison, Mitchell and Chamberlain

1881 - Two lines of the Milwaukee reach Aberdeen from Webster and Mitchell

1881 - Dakota Central builds from Huron (James Valley Jct.) to Redfield, Aberdeen, and Ordway

1881 - Homestake begins construction of the narrow-gauge Black Hills Railroad (renamed the Black Hills & Fort Pierre Railway in 1882)

1882 - C&NW builds connecting route from Hawarden, Iowa through Beresford, Centerville, Parker, and Salem to Iroquois to meet Dakota Central mainline

1883 - Transcontinental Northern Pacific Railway is completed at Gold Creek, Montana

1883 - General Time Convention, a railroad trade group, replaces local time with standard time in the United States and Canada; four standard time zones go into effect.

1883 - Milwaukee extends west from Aberdeen to Ipswich

1884 - Charles Dow creates stock average (precursor to Dow Jones Industrial Average) which includes nine railroad issues: Chicago, Milwaukee & St Paul, Chicago & North Western, Delaware Lackawanna & Western, Lake Shore, Louisville & Nashville, Missouri Pacific, New York Central, Northern Pacific, and Union Pacific

1884 - Minneapolis and St. Louis completed to Watertown

1884 - C&NW builds branch from Centerville to Yankton

1884 - Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern (Rock Island) extends from Pipestone, Minnesota to Watertown

1885 - Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley (C&NW) completed to Buffalo Gap, Dakota Territory - the first standard-gauge railroad to the Black Hills region

1886 - Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley completed from Buffalo Gap to Hermosa and Rapid City

1886 - Dakota Central builds branch from Redfield to Faulkton

1886 - Milwaukee builds from Ipswich to Bowdle

1886 - Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern (Rock Island) reaches Sioux Falls

1887 - Congress passes the Interstate Commerce Act. The legislation establishes the ICC to control aspects of the railroad industry, the first in America to be subject to regulation by a federal government agency

1887 - St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba (GN) builds from Benson, Minnesota to Watertown

1887 - The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha (C&NW) extended from Salem to Mitchell

1887 - Illinois Central arrives in Sioux Falls

1888 - Nikola Tesla patents the first alternating-current electric motor. Tesla's motor, purchased by

the Westinghouse Company, paves the way for the manufacture of automobiles

1888 - Construction begins on the narrow-gauge Deadwood Central Railway between Deadwood and Lead

1888 - St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba (GN) builds from Watertown to Huron

1889 - South Dakota becomes the 40th State

1889 - The Grand Island and Wyoming Central Railroad (CB&Q) reaches Edgemont

1889 - St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba (GN) line completed to Aberdeen

1890 - Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley reaches Belle Fourche, Deadwood, and Hot Springs; Black Hills and Fort Pierre reaches Piedmont

1890 - Forest City and Gettysburg built between its namesake cities

1890 - Grand Island and Wyoming Central (CB&Q) reaches Custer, Hill City, and Mystic

1890 - 164,000 miles of railroad in the United States

1891 - Grand Island and Wyoming Central reaches Deadwood and Hot Springs

1893 - After 12 years of trying to improve on the efficiency of the steam engine, Rudolf Diesel debuts his internal-combustion engine

1893 - Grand Island and Wyoming Central reaches Spearfish

1893 - Great Northern Railway drives its last spike on its transcontinental line at Scenic, Washington; builds line from Sioux Falls to Yankton

1893 - Federal Railway Safety Appliances Act instituted mandatory requirements for automatic air brake systems, automatic couplers, and specifications for safety appliances in interstate rail traffic

"Yet there isn't a train I'd rather take, no matter where it's going." Edna St. Vincent Millay (from "Travel")

1897 - Ransom E. Olds receives a patent for a horseless carriage

1900 - 193,000 miles of railroad in the United States

1900 - Illinois Central Railroad engineer Casey Jones rode the "Cannonball" into history, and immortality, at Vaughn, Mississippi

1900 - Milwaukee builds from Bowdle to the Missouri River at Evarts. Evarts quickly became a major shipping point for cattle from western South Dakota

1901 - Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Saint Marie (Soo Line) builds branch to Pollock

1902 - CB&Q converts the former Deadwood Central Line between Deadwood and Lead for electric trolley service

1902 - C&NW extends "Rosebud" route to Bonesteel

1903 - Henry Ford founds the Ford Motor Company

1903 - First coast-to-coast crossing of the North American continent by car - 65 days from San Francisco to New York

1903 - Orville and Wilbur Wright make their first airplane flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina

"If God had meant for us to fly, he wouldn't have given us the railways." Unknown

1903 - Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley is merged into the Chicago and North Western Railroad

1903 - Milwaukee builds from Woonsocket to Wessington Springs

1904 - Grand Island and Wyoming Central, Burlington and Missouri River, Black Hills and Fort Pierre, and Deadwood Central Railroads all formally merged into the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (CB&Q)

1904 - Pierre wins bitter state capital election campaign that pitted East River against West River South Dakota. Both the C&NW, which served Pierre, and the Milwaukee, which served Mitchell, transported large numbers of visitors to the cities at greatly reduced rates, or on free passes

1904 - South Dakota Central builds from Sioux Falls to Colton

1906 - Missouri River and Northwestern Railroad (Crouch Line) is completed from Rapid City to Mystic

1906 - Milwaukee began construction of its Pacific Coast extension from the new town of Mobridge
1906 - Minneapolis and St. Louis completed from Watertown to Aberdeen and Leola

1907 - C&NW and Milwaukee lines reach Rapid City from Pierre and Chamberlain, respectively
1907 - South Dakota Central completed as a through route from Sioux Falls to Watertown
1907 - Minneapolis and St. Louis completed from Conde to LeBeau

1908 - Billy Durant incorporates General Motors. Within days, GM buys Buick, and later Oldsmobile and Cadillac
1908 - Henry Ford introduces his first Model T, a car that will achieve unparalleled popularity and change the automotive industry, American life, and railroading forever

1909 - Milwaukee completes construction of its Pacific Coast route. The extension puts South Dakota on a transcontinental rail line. The Olympian and The Columbian passenger trains are introduced to operate on a 72-hour service between Chicago, Mobridge, and Seattle

1910 - 240,000 miles of railroad in the United States
1910 - New capitol building in Pierre was opened for use
1910 - Milwaukee builds branch lines to Isabel, and from Trail City to Faith

1911 - C&NW's "Rosebud Line" extended from Colome to Winner

1913 - First commercially successful internal combustion engine locomotive in the U.S. built by General Electric

1914 - Soo Line branch completed from Fairmount, North Dakota to Veblen and Grenville

1916 - National rail mileage peaks at just over 254,000 miles
1916 - South Dakota Central purchased by GN

1918 - The Standard Time Act is passed, instituting the standard time zones that have been in use in America since 1883. The act also implements daylight saving time, in an effort to conserve resources for the war effort

1918 - C&NW and CB&Q begin to abandon narrow gauge lines in the northern Black Hills

1920 - Passenger rail travel reaches its all-time high, with 1.2 million passengers boarding 9,000 inter-city trains and racking up 47 million passenger miles every day

1923 - The Electro-Motive Engineering Corporation begins building gas-electric railcars in Cleveland, Ohio

1924 - M&StL abandons Akaska to LeBeau line

1925 - Milwaukee files for reorganization; re-emerged in 1928 as the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad

1926 - Commercial airlines carry 5,800 passengers nationwide

1927 - Designers produce prototypes of air-conditioned passenger cars
1927 - Construction of Mount Rushmore and Rapid City's Alex Johnson Hotel begin
1927 - Milwaukee Road introduces Chicago to Sioux Falls/Rapid City train service named The Sioux

1928 - Wyoming and Missouri River Railroad abandoned from Belle Fourche to Aladdin, Wyoming

1929 - C&NW extends line from Winner to Wood

1930 - Last of the northern Black Hills narrow gauge lines (CB&Q) abandoned from Piedmont to Lead
1930 - Milwaukee abandons its Springfield to Running Water line

1934 - Union Pacific M-10000 is dedicated in February. This 3-car all-aluminum articulated train was the first streamliner in the U.S.

1934 - CB&Q's Zephyr is dedicated in April. On May 26, this 3-car articulated train made a record breaking run from Denver to Chicago, 1016 miles, at an average speed of 77.6 mph and a top speed of 112.5 mph
1934 - CB&Q abandons its flood-ravaged line through Spearfish Canyon

1939 - Warren-Lamb Lumber Railroad abandoned southwest of Rapid City

1940 - 233,000 miles of railroad in the United States

1940 - Milwaukee introduces The Midwest Hiawatha streamlined passenger service between Chicago and Omaha, Sioux City, and Sioux Falls

1946 - Railroads handle two-thirds of the nation's commercial passenger traffic. Yet the railroad industry fails to revitalize itself after the war, even though it invests millions in new passenger equipment

1947 - Milwaukee's streamlined Olympian Hiawatha began service from Chicago, Aberdeen, Mobridge, and on to Seattle

1948 - Rapid City, Black Hills and Western Railroad (Crouch Line) abandoned from Rapid City to Mystic

1948 - First American Freedom Train visits Rapid City, Pierre, and Aberdeen

1949 - The infamous "Blizzard of '49" cripples most of the Northern Plains for weeks beginning in early January

1949 - Number of airline passengers in the United States reaches 16.7 million

1949 - Last passenger train operates on CB&Q from Deadwood and Hill City to Edgemont

1950 - C&NW debuts the streamlined Dakota 400 between Chicago and Huron (extended to Rapid City in 1955)

1950 - U.S. railroad mileage - 224,000 miles

1951 - Last Milwaukee Road Sioux passenger train operates between Rapid City and Chicago

1952 - To service Americans' growing love for car travel, Holiday Inn opens the nation's first motel chain. Americans are increasingly taking car vacations; the chain is an instant success

1953 - Rock Island abandons service to Watertown

1954 - Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha formally merged into C&NW

1956 - Federal Aid Highway Act authorizes the construction of an interstate highway system of more than 40,000 miles. Railroads and public transportation systems remain unsubsidized.

1957 - For the first time, air travel boasts more passengers than rail travel, and airlines introduce jet airplanes

1957 - Black Hills Central Railroad's steam-powered tourist passenger trains begin operation on the Burlington's Hill City to Keystone line

1958 - ICC issues a report stating that the passenger train is becoming obsolete, and will "in all probability take its place in the transportation museum along with the stagecoach, the sidewheeler, and the steam locomotive."

1960 - Last Chicago and North Western Dakota 400 passenger train leaves Rapid City for Chicago

1960 - Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway merged into the C&NW

1965 - Last Milwaukee Road Arrow passenger train leaves Sioux Falls for Chicago

1969 - Last Milwaukee passenger train operates from Aberdeen to Minneapolis in April

1969 - Last CB&Q passenger train operates through Newcastle and Edgemont in August

1970 - CB&Q, GN, Northern Pacific, and the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railroads are merged to form the Burlington Northern Railroad (BN)

1970 - Congress passes the Rail Passenger Service Act creating Amtrak, the national network of intercity trains; no routes established in SD

1972 - Flooding destroys last mile of BN/Black Hills Central line to Keystone - line is rebuilt to a mile west of Keystone

1972 - Rock Island abandons service to Sioux Falls

1975 - Second American Freedom Train visits Sioux Falls

1977 - Milwaukee files for bankruptcy

1979 - Milwaukee abandons its Woonsocket to Wessington Springs, Isabel and Faith lines

1980 - President Jimmy Carter signs The Staggers Act. The legislation triggers massive reforms by allowing railroads to function competitively, placing increased reliance on the marketplace and not on total government regulation

1980 - Milwaukee abandons service on over one thousand miles of track in South Dakota, and ends services west of Miles City, Montana, to the Pacific Coast. The abandonment idles more than half of South Dakota's total railroad mileage

1980 - Illinois Central Gulf abandons service to Sioux Falls

1981 - Governor Bill Janklow calls a special session of the state legislature to deal with the Milwaukee abandonment. Much of the in-state Milwaukee track purchased by State and forms an essential state core rail system with most track leased to the Burlington Northern Railroad for operation

1981 - The D & I Railroad is incorporated by L. G. Everist Inc., in Sioux Falls, to operate part of the ex-Milwaukee between Dell Rapids and Sioux City

1982 - South Dakota purchases former Milwaukee line from Ortonville to Miles City, Montana. BN assumes operation of the line under a lease-purchase agreement

1982 - Dakota Rail (later Sisseton Southern, then Sisseton-Milbank) resumes operations on the ex-Milwaukee Milbank to Sisseton line

1983 - BN abandons High Line north from Custer to Hill City, Deadwood, and Lead

1986 - C&NW sells track from Rapid City, Pierre, Huron, and Brookings to Winona, Minnesota, to the L. B. Foster Company; new operating company renamed the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad (DM&E)

1986 - BN abandons High Line south from Custer to Edgemont

1986 - D&I begins service on the SD-owned lines from Sioux Falls and Canton, and from Hawarden, Iowa, to Beresford.

1987 - Dakota Southern Railway takes over operation of former Milwaukee line from Mitchell to Chamberlain

1988 - C&NW abandons service into Sioux Falls

1988 - Dakota Southern Railway begins operation of Chamberlain to Kadoka line

1989 - Ellis and Eastern assumes operation of former C&NW at Sioux Falls

1991 - Ownership of the SD-owned Ortonville, Minnesota, Aberdeen, Mobridge, to Terry, Montana, main line was transferred to the BN

1995 - C&NW merged into the Union Pacific Railroad

1995 - BN merged into the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF)

1996 - Union Pacific line from Chadron to Rapid City and Belle Fourche sold to the DM&E

1998 - Dedication of the entire 106-mile George S. Mickelson Trail from Edgemont to Deadwood on former CB&Q High Line grade

2001 - Black Hills Central rebuilds line into Keystone/resumes tourist passenger service into Keystone after 29-year absence

2005 - SD sells the Core System (Aberdeen to Mitchell, Mitchell to Canton, Canton to Sioux Falls, and Mitchell to Sioux City) to BNSF

2007 - U.S. railroad mileage -140,695 miles

2008 - Canadian Pacific Railway given formal approval by Surface Transportation Board to purchase and operate DM&E

"This is all happening because my father didn't buy me a train set as a kid." Warren Buffett, investor, on his company's \$26 billion purchase of BNSF in 2009

2009 - Dakota Southern Railroad sold to new owners

2010 - Amtrak serves passengers at more than 500 destinations in 46 states on 21,000 miles of rail lines - none in South Dakota

2013 - Since 1872, 4,420.5 miles of railroad have been constructed in South Dakota. Beginning in 1909, rail abandonments reduced the maximum system to today's 1,839.5 miles of operating rail lines in South Dakota