

The Railfan Chronicles: Documenting the Railroads of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, from 1975 to 2024

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is a sparsely populated region known for its rugged beauty and rich railroading history. Over the past century, the region's railroads have played a vital role in transporting people, goods, and resources, and they continue to be an important part of the local economy and culture.

In this article, we will take a look at the railroads of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, from their early beginnings in the mid-19th century to the present day. We will explore the region's major railroads, including the Soo Line, the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad, the Marquette and Huron Mountain Railroad, the Lake State Railway, and the Wisconsin Central. We will also take a look at some of the region's smaller railroads and railfanning hotspots.



The Railfan Chronicles, Railroads of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, 1975 to 2024 by Byron Babbish

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The Early Years

The first railroad in Michigan's Upper Peninsula was built in 1857, connecting the cities of Marquette and Escanaba. This railroad was eventually acquired by the Soo Line, which became one of the major railroads in the region.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several other railroads were built in the Upper Peninsula, including the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad, the Marquette and Huron Mountain Railroad, and the Lake State Railway. These railroads played a vital role in the development of the region's mining, logging, and tourism industries.

The Mid-20th Century

The mid-20th century was a time of transition for the railroads of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The decline of the mining industry led to a decrease in rail traffic, and many railroads were forced to consolidate or abandon their lines.

In 1960, the Soo Line merged with the Wisconsin Central Railroad. This merger created one of the largest railroads in the Midwest, and it played a major role in the transportation of iron ore and other bulk commodities from the Upper Peninsula.

The Late 20th Century

The late 20th century saw a resurgence of interest in railfanning. This hobby, which involves watching and photographing trains, became increasingly popular as people began to appreciate the beauty and history of railroads.

In Michigan's Upper Peninsula, there are several popular railfanning hotspots, including the Soo Line bridge over the St. Marys River, the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad depot in Gladstone, and the Marquette and Huron Mountain Railroad depot in Marquette.

The 21st Century

In the 21st century, the railroads of Michigan's Upper Peninsula continue to play an important role in the region's economy and culture. The Soo Line, the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad, the Marquette and Huron Mountain Railroad, and the Lake State Railway all continue to operate in the region, and they provide vital transportation services for both people and goods.

In addition to the major railroads, there are also several smaller railroads operating in the Upper Peninsula. These railroads, such as the Copper Range Railroad and the Upper Peninsula Railroad, provide scenic train rides for tourists and help to promote the region's railroading heritage.

The railroads of Michigan's Upper Peninsula have a long and rich history. From the early days of logging and mining to the present day, railroads have played a vital role in the region's economy and culture. Today, the Upper Peninsula's railroads continue to operate, providing both transportation services and opportunities for railfans to enjoy the beauty and history of these iconic machines.







Buckingham, PA 8/23/87 ©J Petko (E Gross Collection)



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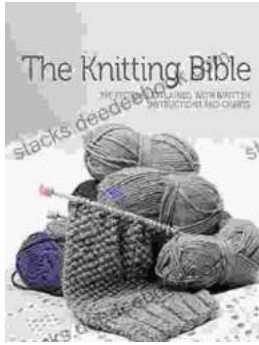
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