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Padre says:

“The life you have led doesn’t need to be the only life you’ll have.”

Midland Railroad Keeps Train Rides Of Yesteryear Alive From Baldwin City

“All aboard for Ottawa,” welcomes Allen Kinsley, conductor on the Midland Railroad, an operating historical excursion train.

While that passenger call is far shy from with the heyday of railroad service at Baldwin City starting in 1867, it is survival of the Baldwin Line which became defunct several decades ago.

“In 1983, train lovers formed the Midland Railway Historical Association as a not-for-profit corporation to put trains back in operation and help keep this important part of history alive,” explained Kinsley, one of more than 100 members of the volunteer organization.

The association and individual members purchased train engines, passenger cars and cabooses, started renovating dilapidated tracks, and repairs were done in the Baldwin City Depot at 1515 High Street.

All of that took four years, but the Midland Railway began operations in 1987 between Baldwin City, and a location called Nowhere.

“It was called Nowhere, because the place did not appear on any map. However, that was the southernmost point to which track had been sufficiently restored to permit train operations,” detailed Kinsley.

“Through continued support of the Midland Railway Historical Association supplemented with funds from the Kansas Department of Transportation, the entire ten-mile line from Baldwin City to Ottawa Junction was opened in 2004,” Kinsley explained.

“While major improvement projects were handled by contractors, Midland’s routine operation and maintenance activities are all performed by volunteers,” emphasized Kinsley.

Train and engine crews, track workers, mechanics, ticket agents and others associated with the Midland Railroad all volunteer their time and abilities. “More than 65 people from as far away as Oklahoma and southern Missouri help keep the trains rolling,” Kinsley said.

Advertised and promoted heavily on 580 WIBW and The BIG 94.5 Country, many special 25th anniversary events are scheduled for the Labor Day Railfest Weekend, September 1-3.



“All three days, we will have trains pulled by a coal-fired steam locomotive, the first operation of steam on the Baldwin Line in at least 50 years,” Kinsley noted. A railroading tent is planned Sunday, Sept. 2, with memorabilia for viewing and purchase.

“Although much has been accomplished at Midland Railway in 25 years, we are far from ready to rest on our past. We are constantly striving to improve the experience for train passengers,” Kinsley welcomed. Information is available at www.midland-ry.org.