



Flambeau 400, train 153, stops at Green Bay during winter 1968-69. The train has just been reduced to two coaches, with its baggage-tap, Green Bay coach, diner, and one Ashland coach having been pulled from the train and sent back south.

Three photos, Mike Schafer

Chicago & North Western's bilevel *Flambeau 400*

Passengers enjoyed top service between to northern Wisconsin on bilevel equipment

Into the 1960s, Chicago & North Western passenger trains blanketed the Upper Midwest, especially in Wisconsin — a popular vacationland until the jet airliner beckoned travelers instead to the likes of Southern California, Miami, and Las Vegas. In the late 1950s, new C&NW management saw the writing on the walls of the railroad's majestic North Western Terminal in downtown Chicago that the future of the intercity passenger train involved a guillotine.

This did not go over well with Wisconsin, which threatened to block train-offs unless some sort of agreement could be made. The result? The state established an agreement with C&NW to upgrade selected principal trains while chopping runs that had fallen victim to competitors (notably Milwaukee Road). The result? C&NW's lucrative Chicago-Milwaukee-Green Bay corridor would stay busy and

with all modern lightweight equipment (notably that from the discontinued *Twin Cities 400*) and new bilevel rolling stock for the *Peninsula 400* and the *Flambeau 400*, both of whose routes extended well beyond Green Bay to Ishpeming, Mich. (393 miles), and Ashland, Wis. (450 miles), respectively.

North Western made a wise move here. Already, in the 1950s, the railroad had established a modernized suburban train network fanning north and northwest of Chicago with bilevel Pullman-Standard rolling stock (some of which remains in service). To upgrade the *Flambeau* and *Peninsula 400s*, C&NW ordered more P-S bilevel stock but outfitted with long-distance interiors: reclining seats, rotating seats for parlor-car service, cheery wall

coverings, and luggage compartments. Lightweight, single-level dining and club cars from discontinued trains (notably the *Twin Cities 400*) were rebuilt with false roofs to match the new bilevel coaches and parlor cars.

Some of you readers have already figured out the long story. Should these trains ever be discontinued (which of course happened when Amtrak began operations), then C&NW could simply modify the coaches for suburban service — although the reality was that the cars

Serving the storied North Woods territory of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, the *Flambeau 400* became a favorite name train for this writer, who rode this train in the mid-1960s to do some vacationing.



400s - Chicago & North Western		
Train	Cities served	Route miles
Capitol 400	Chicago - Milwaukee - Madison	167
City of Milw. 400	Chicago - Milwaukee	85
Commuter 400	Chicago - Milwaukee	85
Dakota 400	Chicago - Huron - Rapid City	940
Flambeau 400	Chicago - Ashland	452
Green Bay 400	Chicago - Sheboygan - Green Bay	213
Kate Shelley 400	Chicago - Boone	340
Minnesota 400	Wyeville - Mankato	191
Peninsula 400	Chicago - Ishpeming	392
Shoreland 400	Chicago - Green Bay	201
Streamliner 400	Chicago - Milwaukee	85
Twin Cities 400	Chicago - Minneapolis	419
Valley 400	Chicago - Appleton - Green Bay	213



Car 600 interior coach section shows bilevel gallery type seating with reclining seats. Jim Scribbins, Milwaukee Road Historical Association collection



Southbound train 216 passes its namesake station on Jan. 3, 1971, through the Lac du Flambeau Reservation in northern Wisconsin. This was a scheduled stop at a road crossing.

were sold to Amtrak.

Serving the storied North Woods territory of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, the *Flambeau 400* became a favorite name train for this writer, who rode this train in the mid-1960s to do some vacationing. I never covered the entire 450-mile route and nearly 12-hour ride to Ashland, though, detraining instead at Rhinelander, Wis.

The *Flambeau 400* was an efficient operation. Northbound, the train left Chicago in late morning, allowing for an excellent lunch before arriving at Green Bay in late afternoon. There our northbound train met the southbound *Flambeau*. During the extended stop, the station switcher pulled the baggage-tap-lounge car, coach-parlor car, and diner off the front of the northbound train and shoving them onto the back of the southbound train. Very efficient!

Of course, as the '60s grew to a close, the cutbacks began. *Flambeau 400* service north of Green Bay became seasonal only — summer and the Christmas/New Year period. On Jan. 3, 1971 — the next-to-the-last day of *Flambeau 400*



Train 216 stops at Rhinelander, Wis., on Jan. 3, 1971, the second-to-last trip north of Green Bay.

holiday service — three of us photographers followed the southbound run out of Ashland as far as Antigo, Wis., when a snowstorm forced us to cut and run back to Illinois.

At this time, the new Amtrak law was already in effect, prohibiting railroads that had signed on to join Amtrak to discontinue any of their intercity trains until

April 30, 1971. My claim — arguably, I suppose — is that, in a sense, on that snowy day in January 1971, we had photographed an intercity passenger train that would be the first intercity passenger train to be discontinued per the Amtrak law. (Yes, the Chicago-to-Green Bay portions of the *Flambeau 400s* did make their last runs on April 30, 1971.) 📷