

There were some pictures floating about Facebook recently of the old train depot in West Concord. Some people were sharing some of the memories they have about the depot and about riding the train from West Concord to the Twin Cities. I never had the pleasure of riding a train out of West Concord and really don't remember the depot much except for one day when I was about 8 years old, I rode my bicycle into town and was hanging out with some friends and we decided to go over to the depot. As I recall, it was locked up and we just looked inside the windows. At the time, there wasn't much to see and very little activity going on around there. The thing I remember most is how hot the rails got in the summer sun.

My recollections about the trains were watching them travel up and down the rails that were just on the east side of highway 56. When we happened to be sitting outside at our farm and a long train was going by, we would count the cars. Again the memory is a bit fuzzy about all of this but I think the highest I recall was around 150 cars.

The picture included with the column to the right is of an old railway marker that happens to be about a mile east of my house in Cannon Falls along the Cannon Valley trail. It's one of those rails to trails projects that popped up after a number of rail lines were abandoned and sold around the country. When the line quit out of West Concord, Tom Avery bought a number of acres of railroad right of way. He did a lot of dirt work with his heavy equipment. He had dug out a similar cement marker that was along the rails almost due east of our farm. It said KC469. It told the railroad engineers that it was 469 miles to Kansas City much like the one in the picture that told the engineers that it was 75 miles to Mankato.



In the early 1980's I bought the KC marker from Tom for \$50 and put it at the end of our farm driveway. A few years later I sold it to Scott Nelson who put it up in his yard on his place which was about two miles east of highway 56 on County Road B or 530<sup>th</sup> Street. I happened to drive by there a few weeks ago to see if it was still there and it was not. If you're reading this and happen to know where it went, let me know. I don't want it; I just would like a picture of it.

As a youth, I couldn't wait to be in 6<sup>th</sup> grade so I could be one of the crossing guards who would get out of the bus at railroad crossings, look both ways, and then wave the bus driver across the tracks. My dad was the driver and I think he thought it was a dumb way to do it because, first if he saw a train, he would not open the door to let any kid out so they could get run over by a train. So a driver before he or she would open the bus door would already know if a train was coming. My dad said any driver could see and hear enough to know if there was a train

coming. The government eventually agreed and thought the same way. There would be those few crossing guards who would run out and go as fast as they could across the tracks waving the driver over as they're running across the tracks without even looking up. Today's law has the driver open the window to their left and after stopping, open the door to look and listen, then close the door before moving on across the tracks.

I have one final note about the old depot that was used in West Concord for many years. If the story threads are correct on Facebook, the old depot was sold and moved to Dodge Center where today it still sits near a rail line but is used as a storage shed and/or garage at a place near the old water tower. And not the water tower that's out by the school but the one just east of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and just north of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE which would put it just northwest of the DC airport.

The arrow just to the right of the water tower on the picture below points to what I believe and what I was told is the old West Concord railroad depot.

