

South Shore #25



Type: Steel Interurban Car

Built - 1927

Modernized in 1947

Seats - 50

Width - 10' 1"

Height - 13' 5"

Length - 80'

Weight - 77 tons



In the early 1900s, electric interurban railroads crisscrossed the midwest, ferrying people, mail, and supplies between cities and towns. At this time, Samuel Insull, a powerful electric utility magnate, owned almost all of the Chicago-area interurban lines, including the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad.

The "South Shore Line" carried passengers between downtown Chicago and South Bend, Indiana, by means of South Chicago, Gary, and Michigan City. The company operated with old wooden cars that had gotten worn down from years of service along the sand-strewn lakeshore. When Insull took control of the railroad in the early 1920s, he sought to swiftly modernize with modern steel cars.

Car 25 was built and delivered by the Pullman Car Company in 1927, and then began serving the railroad for over 55 years as a coach car. Between 1942 and 1947, some of the cars, including 25, were modernized by increasing the length and capacity of the car due to increased ridership. A new interior was also put in, along with large sealed windows and air conditioning.



By 1983, the old orange steel cars were becoming unreliable. With new stainless-steel cars taking over, the iconic, but run-down, orange cars were retired. Many of these historic cars were saved, with car 25 going to the Wisconsin Trolley Museum, now the East Troy Railroad Museum. The car went through a full restoration into a dining car in an ETRM paint scheme and renamed "Ravenswood," after one of the old stops along the South Shore. The car can seat 50 patrons, and hosts a full cash bar. Car 24 has also been restored as a near-identical dining car, bringing the dinner train capacity up to 100.

The East Troy Railroad Museum is currently the only regular operator of historic South Shore equipment, currently having 6 operable interurban cars from the railroad. Cars 24 and 25 continue the legacy of dining on electric railcars, as they serve the only electric dinner train service in the United States.

