



2015 ST. LOUIS NRHS RAILROAD STATION TOUR

Mattoon, Arcola, Pesotum, Champaign-Urbana, Cisco

MATTOON, IL

Railroad—Illinois Central

Date Built—1916-17



The History of The Illinois Central Railroad Depot

By 1855, both The Terre Haute & Alton Railroad and the Illinois Central Railroad reached the crossing that would become Mattoon. A three-story brick union depot/hotel called the Essex House was erected in 1859 on the southwest corner of the crossing. The Essex House continued to serve in this function until early in the 20th Century.

As early as 1885, the Essex House was in poor shape. This combined with the construction of a subway through Mattoon for the Illinois Central Railroad from 1913-4, ended the Essex House's usefulness as a railroad depot. As a result, two depots were built, one by the successor of The Terre Haute & Alton Railroad, the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railway or "Big Four" for short. And the second was built by the Illinois Central Railroad and is the subject of this web site.

Railroad Architect Daniel F. McLaughlin designed Mattoon's three story Illinois Central Railroad Depot. A retaining wall along the east side of the building needed to be in place before construction could start. Gould & Company of Iowa was the contractor for the concrete wall that was started in late October 1916 and required considerable excavation. The wall construction was complicated by collapsing walls in the buildings just to the east of the site which was caused by pile driving and by poor January weather.

The last sections of the \$14,000 retaining wall on its north end were going in when work, on the depot foundation began in December 1916. A. W. Stoolman & Co. was the contractor for the depot. The contract included the depot building, freight elevator, connecting stairway and the \$7,000 heating plant to be built just north of the Big Four(Mx) Bridge in the subway. Stoolman employee, C. W. Gwinn, was placed in charge as building superintendent and construction costs were now projected to \$100,000. Glen Huntington, IC Engineer for the project had his office under the west end of the Mx Bridge.

Construction continued throughout early spring under the watchful eyes of Mattoon citizens who eagerly awaited the opening of the new Illinois Central Railroad Depot. On February 14, 1917, three north panels of the Broadway Avenue Bridge on the east side were removed along with a light post to make way for the depot entrance. The April 13, 1917, Daily Journal-Gazette reported that the street level floor girders had been moved into place. An IC yard engine was called into service to elevate these heavy pieces of steel.

On July 31, 1917, the Daily Journal-Gazette reported that the tile roof was being laid and the interior walls were going up. Excavation work for the power plant was advancing and materials were in place to construct the walls. The Power Plant was to supply heat for the IC and Big Four Depots and power for the freight elevator. On August 1, 1917, the paper reported that the "depot may not be completed before the first of the November, notwithstanding the fact that great headway is being made in all sections."

The project superintendent and the building inspector moved their offices into the mezzanine level on December 12, 1917. The new Illinois Central Railroad Depot was opened the morning of January 21, 1918 at a time when the nation was heavily immersed in World War I. On that date, the Daily Journal-Gazette contained a front page article with the headline, "New Depot In Service" located on the page just below the two main headlines stating, "U.S. War Aims Stir Austria" and "Ruling Effects Men Married Since May 18, 1917." The depot was well described in the two-column, 4,000-word article. A stairway down from the south center of the Mx Bridge to the three-track IC platform below connected the two lines. The fireproof building reportedly cost \$130,000 in the final analysis.

Fourteen passenger trains per day traveled through Mattoon on the Illinois Central in 1918 and busy railroad activity continued for at least thirty-five years. The railroad was the main mode of transportation at the time of the construction of the Illinois Central Depot. The nation's road system was in its infancy and airplanes were just beginning to be used.

The IC depot was a dynamic place with families, business and professional people coming and going continuously. Lovington resident, Janet Shuman Roney, fondly remembers the Mattoon IC Depot as the place where her father would return to the family from Chicago. Charles B. Shuman (1907-1999) was the President of the American Farm Bureau Federation from 1954 until he retired in 1970. The AFBF office was in the Chicago Merchandise Mart and Mr. Shuman traveled between his Moultrie County residence and his weekly workplace by way of the Panama Limited, a crack IC "stream liner" stopping in Mattoon going north bound at about six in the morning and returning in the evening. Mattoon resident, Judge Jacob Berkowitz was also traveling weekly to his job with the court in Chicago on the Panama Limited at this time and the two men became friends. The depot would be full of people with lines at both ticket windows. A large chalkboard on the east wall of the waiting room listed the arrival and departure times so passengers could tell if their train was on time. Mattoon residents remember about ten trains leaving the depot each day in the 1950's. They included the north and south bound City of New Orleans and Panama Limited, a north and south bound Chicago daily train, the Seminole and the Illini. Other trains running Creole, Louisianne and Southern periodically during the week included the City of Miami, Express.

Mail was taken from the mail cars to the mailroom in the depot. It was processed and then transferred to the local Post Offices. Long distance mail was primarily transported by rail from the beginnings of railroad history into the 1950's.

Mattoon had a Railway Express Agency and its building is located just north-west of the IC depot adjacent to the Big Four-tracks. This agency handled express items in Mattoon from 1918 to 1971 for both the IC and Big Four, transferring the baggage and goods by way of the freight elevator between the upper and lower levels.

The United States Congress created the National Railroad Passenger Corporation or AMTRAK in 1971. It was funded to operate passenger service nationwide and six AMTRAK trains per day stop at the Mattoon Illinois Central Depot. The depot doors are open only at train arrival and departure times in the evening and early morning.

In June of 2001, a committee was formed to save and restore the Illinois Central Depot. On March 1st, 2002, the depot listed on National Register of Historic Places. By July of 2002, a new tile roof had been installed.

The IC corridor has been targeted for a future high-speed rail line. It is hoped that the IC depot will see greater use in the future.

Coles County Historical Society—http://www.coleshistory.net/Project_Depot/History.htm



ARCOLA, IL

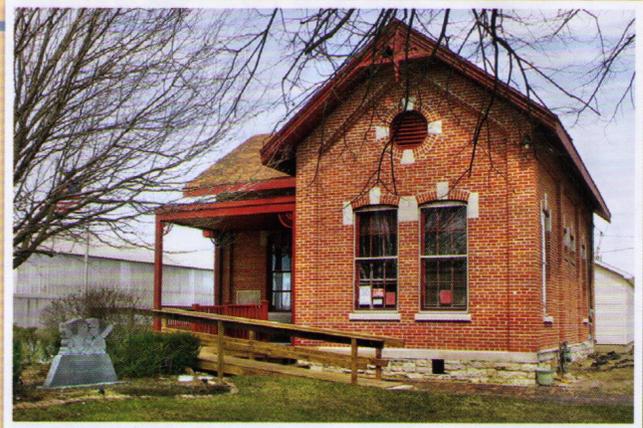
Railroad—Illinois Central

Date Built—1885

ARCOLA'S HISTORIC RAILROAD DEPOT

The Historic Arcola Illinois Central Railroad Train Depot is a Welcome Center, Tourist Information Center, Museum and the Arcola Chamber of Commerce office.

The Depot should be your first stop when you come to our area. It contains useful visitor information about points of interest in Arcola, the Amish neighborhood, and the surrounding areas. This historic restored railroad depot houses a museum containing a display of railroad memorabilia and an exhibit of old and new Raggedy Ann & Andy dolls. It also has books on the history of Arcola, broomcorn and the depot. You will also find the largest brush and broom collection donated by Louis Klein who traveled the world collecting all kinds of brushes and brooms. There is Arcola memorabilia from the school, the old pharmacy including the famous Coffee Club cups and lots of photos, potbelly stoves and much more.



The depot also sells a variety of types of corn brooms and festival souvenirs. Our hours are 10 am to 3 pm, Monday through Saturday. We are closed on Sunday and some holidays. The staff is happy to greet you and help you find information for an Amazing Arcola experience.

ARCOLA RAILROAD DEPOT HISTORY

During the early 1800s US Senator Steven Douglas (our county was named for him) was instrumental in obtaining the government authorization for the tracks that brought the Illinois Central Railroad to our area. History reports that the railroad charter was granted in 1850 and the route was completed through the county in 1855. This was the first public work that received subsidies from the United States government. Details about the depot itself are scarce, but the original structure was built in the early 1800s. The depot was the first building in the village of Okaw (Arcola) and was made entirely of wood. It was located on the west side of the tracks. The post office was also to be located in the depot but first there had to be a name change. Apparently there already was a town with a post office named Okaw. So, the name of the town was changed to Arcola.

In September of 1881 a fire raged through Arcola's buildings, burning most everything including the newly constructed railroad depot. The new brick building, the present one, began soon after the fire and a new location was picked. It was built on the east side of the tracks across from the old building. It is the only Arcola depot remaining of the three that were here. Building diagrams indicate that the present one was built in 1885.

After World War II the passenger train stops in Arcola gradually dwindled and stopped altogether in the early 1950s. The depot was still used as a ticket office and for freight for a while then it was officially closed February 28, 1973.

Arcola has seen many trains rumble through our city, including the famous City of New Orleans. Now they are mostly freight trains, which do not stop except to pick up or drop off cars. There are still a few passenger trains and sometimes the City of New Orleans, enough to satisfy the children and the railroad buffs who wait patiently for the sounds that signal a train is coming.

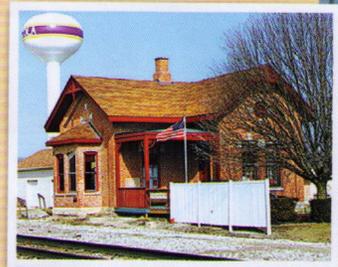
After the closing in 1973 the depot fell into major disrepair and there was a rumor the railroad had decided to tear it

down. Thanks to Mrs. Thomas (Mary) Monahan, a community leader and Chairperson of the Chamber of Commerce, that did not happen. Many towns' people felt the depot was a historic landmark and should be saved. Mary had one of her sons, Pat, contact the Illinois Central Railroad and arrange to purchase the depot for \$3,000 and obtain a lease for the surrounding land. And so the "Save the Depot" project was started in the spring of 1984. This was a real success story of a small town pulling together to accomplish this goal. Not only did they raise the money needed, but also volunteers did more than half of the renovations.

Two years after the project started, an open house was set for Sunday, August 17, 1986. The depot was now a combination of tourism information and a historic museum. The two south rooms were used for tourist information, Arcola memorabilia and broomcorn displays and sales. The north room was to be used by the Douglas County Museum. The Douglas Museum eventually moved to Tuscola and the Arcola Chamber of Commerce moved into that space.

A lot of changes have been made in the depot in recent years. The southwest room now contains the Louis Klein brush and broom collection, brooms for sale, railroad memorabilia, and items from the Arcola Pharmacy including the famous coffee cup collection and other Arcola items. The southeast room houses the tourist information center, the Raggedy Ann & Andy Museum collection and other memorabilia. The north room houses the Arcola Chamber of Commerce office.

The story of the depot shows that a town called Amazing Arcola values its history, buildings and community. Arcola knows how to work together to get things done and to honor its heritage.



PESOTUM, IL

Railroad—Illinois Central
Date Built—unknown

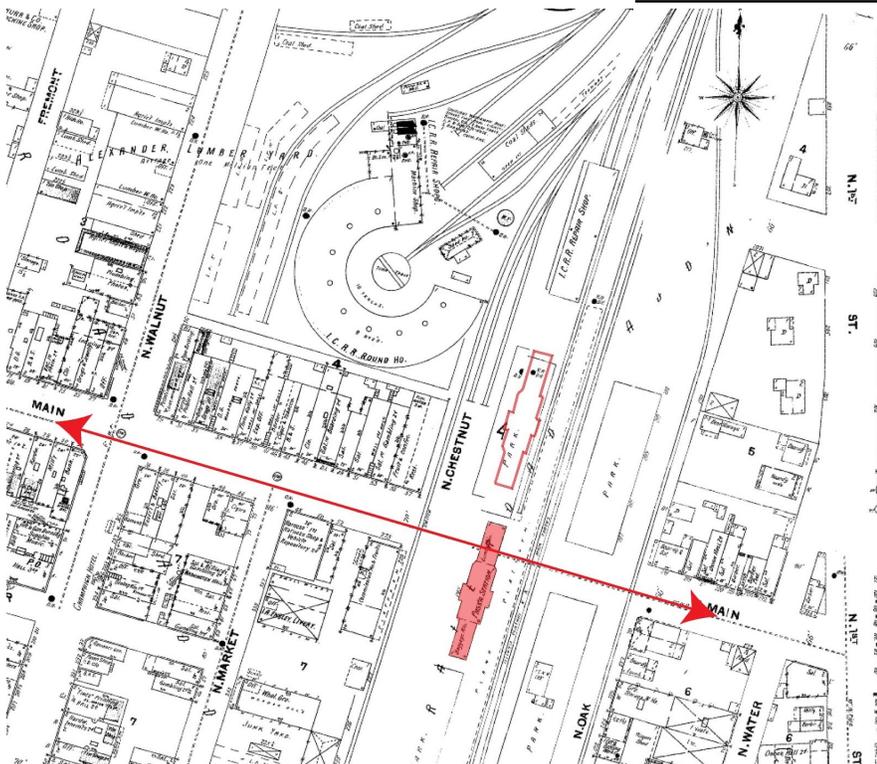


CHAMPAIGN, IL

Railroad—Illinois Central
Date Built—1899
Moved—1923



This photo from 1903 shows the recently constructed Illinois Central Railroad station located at the terminus of Main Street. Photo courtesy of the Illinois Central Railroad



This image shows depot as it appeared in its original location at the terminus of Main Street. The outline shows the current location of the depot

Illinois Central Railroad

The first passenger train in the area arrived two miles west of Urbana in 1854. The track missed Urbana, not out of spite —as some have accused, but because of the need to avoid areas that would make laying track difficult. Originally, there were four routes under consideration. The Western route was chosen because it did not require the track to cross swampy land or require bridges to be built across the Salt Fork or Embarrass rivers. The railroad also claimed that this route allowed them to cross Yankee Ridge at a low point. Although the railroads were notorious for avoiding towns so they would be able to sell off their huge tracts of land, that was not necessarily the case in Champaign County.

The area was not considered the best place to put a railroad. Workers feared a variety of diseases, including cholera, milk sickness, ague and fever. It was also considered dangerous to eat local beef, butter or milk. While it's hard to imagine now, workers then described the area as "one vast pond ... whose green, scum-coated surface was crossed by the trail of water-moccasin."

Despite the "cholera and water-moccasin," a small town popped up along the Illinois Central rails, it was given the name of West Urbana. In 1858, the town's population was 3,358 and boasted over 30 businesses. This was even greater than Urbana's size. The rapid growth caused Urbana to attempt to incorporate West Urbana. However, the people of West Urbana resisted the idea and filed for separate incorporation. The incorporation was granted by the state, and West Urbana was renamed Champaign. Hence, two cities were formed in which transportation would forever play a role in their development.

The first passenger trains that the Illinois Central (IC) operated through Champaign took over 50 hours to make the trip from Chicago to New Orleans. By 1889, the introduction of The Chicago & City of Orleans Limited had cut that time to 23 hours. On February 4, 1911, IC renamed the route The Panama Limited. On November 15, 1916, the train became a luxury, all-Pullman car service. While The Depression led to its withdrawal from service in May of 1932, it was only a temporary hiatus. In December of 1934, the Panama Limited returned to service, along with the first air-conditioned cars in the country.

In 1909, the Seminole Limited was created to carry passengers from Chicago to Jacksonville, Florida. The route discontinued its Carbondale-to-Jacksonville branch in 1969, and the Chicago-to-Carbondale leg of the route was renamed the Shawnee.

Eventually, an all-coach train named The City of Miami began every-third-day service between Chicago and Miami. In 1949, sleeping cars were added and service was increased to two of each three days in 1950. By 1957 the service was increased on the line to every other day.

Service between Chicago and New Orleans was increased in 1947 with the introduction of the City of New Orleans. Originally a "daytime" train, its service was aimed at the rural and intermediate income markets and provided a 16-hour schedule between the two cities.

In 1971, passenger service through Champaign changed drastically, when Illinois Central joined the Amtrak passenger system and all passenger service through Champaign was immediately discontinued, except for the City of New Orleans and the Shawnee. The City of New Orleans was renamed the Panama Limited, but Amtrak changed the name back after a short time. Eventually the Shawnee was renamed the Illini.

Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District—<http://www.cumtd.com/about-us/history/railroads>





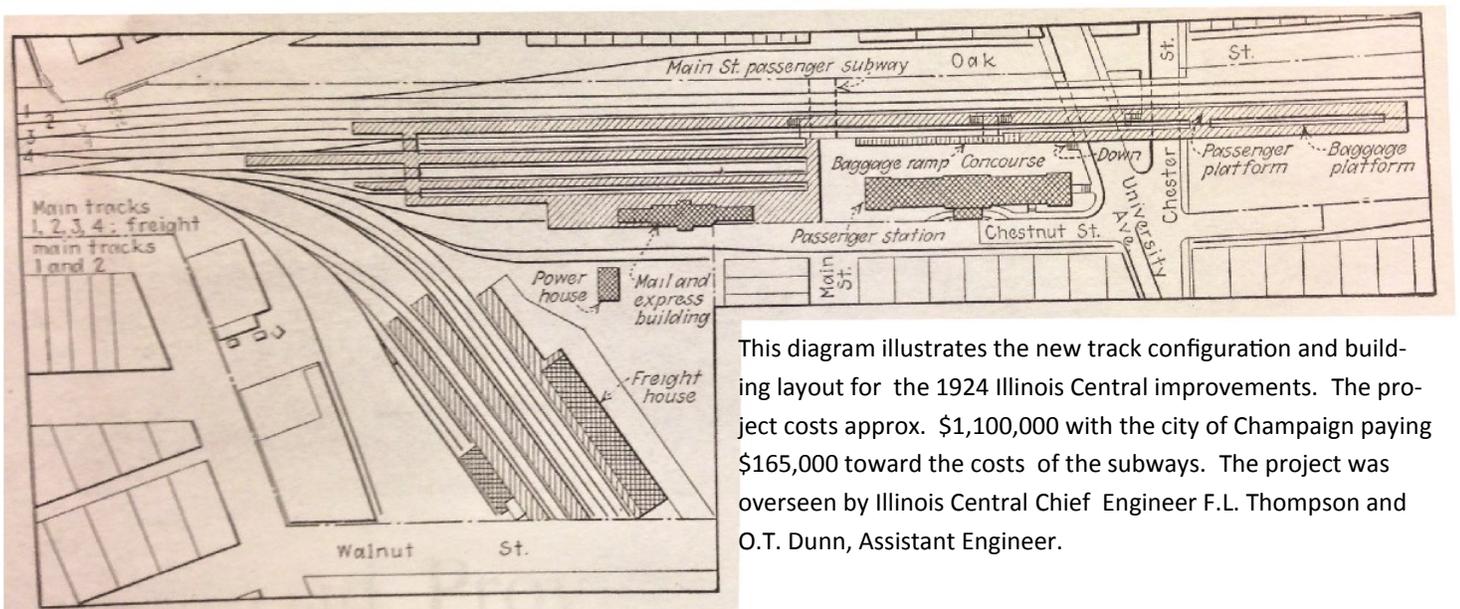
Crews prepare the depot for its move north. The depot remained in service



The depot is pulled north by a series of rails and pulley's.



Another view of the rail system set up to move the station north. Photo courtesy of the Illinois Central Railroad

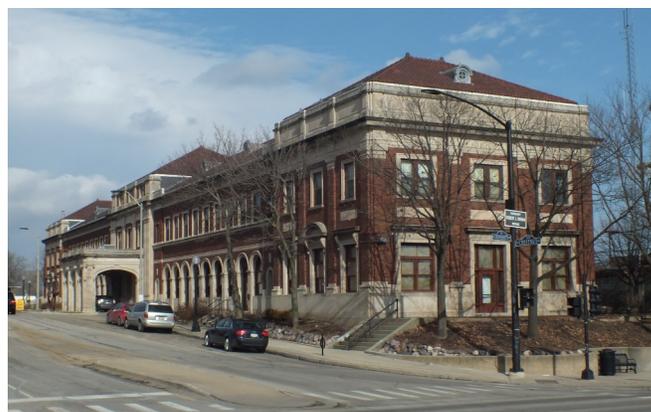
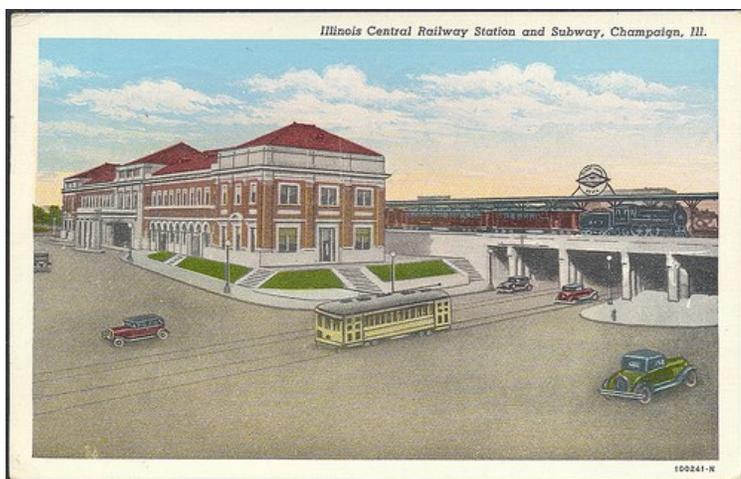


This diagram illustrates the new track configuration and building layout for the 1924 Illinois Central improvements. The project costs approx. \$1,100,000 with the city of Champaign paying \$165,000 toward the costs of the subways. The project was overseen by Illinois Central Chief Engineer F.L. Thompson and O.T. Dunn, Assistant Engineer.

CHAMPAIGN, IL
Railroad—Illinois
Central
Date Built—1924



This 1967 aerial shows the newly painted roof of the depot along with the track and platform configuration for both the depot and passenger terminal. Photo courtesy of the Champaign County Historical Archives



Every station has a story.

The first train station in Champaign was little more than a shed. The Doane House, West Urbana's first real train station, was built in 1856, serving as a depot, hotel, telegraph office and social center for the community until it burned to the ground in 1898. In early 1899, the ICRR built a depot. And while it may not have been the grand building the community was expecting, it served as a reception center for many landmark events in C-U history. President McKinley, President Roosevelt and President Diaz of Mexico all spoke from its platform. The Liberty Bell was also displayed there on its way to the St. Louis exposition.

On July 2, 1923, many changes began taking place around the Champaign train station. The old depot was settled onto its new foundation that day, after having been moved 114 feet north of its original location. Even when moving, it remained in service with hoses providing gas and water. On August 9, 1924, the new Champaign train station was dedicated. The depot served as many as seven trains and included a waiting room, smoking room, ticket office, railroad offices and dining facilities. Along with the construction of the depot, the track was elevated to relieve track congestion. The earth for this project was dredged from the section that passes through Paxton.

Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District—<http://www.cumtd.com/about-us/history/railroads>

CHAMPAIGN, IL-Illinois Traction Bldg

Railroad—Illinois Traction

Date Built—1913



The **Illinois Traction Building**, located at 41 E. University Ave. in Champaign, Illinois, was the headquarters of the Illinois Traction System, an interurban railroad serving Central Illinois. Built in 1913, the building held the railway's offices and served as the Champaign interurban station until 1936; it later housed the offices of the Illinois Power Company, which descended from the Illinois Traction System. Architect Joseph Royer planned the building in a contemporary commercial design. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places on September 20, 2006



HISTORY—The Illinois Traction System was established by William B. McKinley in the 1890s and 1900s. McKinley began his system by purchasing and electrifying local streetcar lines. In 1902, the system opened its first interurban line between Champaign and St. Joseph, and by 1911 it linked most major cities in Central Illinois, as well as St. Louis, Missouri. The company built the Illinois Traction Building in 1913 to replace its previous Champaign station; the new building had a central location and office space for the company. In 1928, the Illinois Traction System became part of the Illinois Terminal Railroad; its utility division became the Illinois Power and Light Company and maintained offices in the Traction Building. Streetcar service to the building ended in 1936, when a new owner replaced the lines with bus service; while interurban trains continued to serve Champaign, they stopped at a different station. The building continued to house the utility company, which became known as the Illinois Power Company, until it moved to a different building in 1985.

ARCHITECTURE—Architect Joseph Royer designed the Illinois Traction Building in a contemporary commercial style. The building was a departure from Royer's previous work, which was primarily done in rustic or massive styles such as Romanesque. The three-story building is built from red brick and has terra cotta detailing. Four piers divide the three-bay front facade; the two side bays are slightly bowed. Terra cotta medallions top each pier, and scrolled shields on the piers mark the top of the first floor. The windows on each floor feature terra cotta sills and lintels. The building's original terra cotta cornice has been replaced by a white brick pediment - WIKIPEDIA



CHAMPAIGN, IL—Intermodal Facility

Railroad—Amtrak

Date Built—1999

Illinois Terminal

Illinois Terminal provides travelers access to

- inter-city bus services
- local bus services
- Amtrak trains
- taxis

Located at [45 E. University Avenue](#) in downtown Champaign, this handsome facility was opened in 1999 by the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District, and offers spacious waiting areas, a restaurant, gift shop, and other amenities.



URBANA, IL

Railroad—Big Four Route

Date Built—unknown



Urbana—Wabash Depot



The Big Four Railroad

The Danville, Urbana, Bloomington and Pekin Railroad Company, incorporated August 28, 1866, eventually built a road from Danville to Pekin and to the eastern boundary of Illinois. This rail line merged with a line in Indiana to form the Indianapolis, Bloomington and Western Railway Company. The railroad was opened to traffic on October 1, 1869.

The IB&W, or the "I Better Walk" as it was affectionately known, made Urbana a stable and independent community. Prior to its construction, freight shipments were made between Urbana and Champaign via a horse-drawn streetcar system. Direct rail made delivery easier and more reliable. The new railroad had been a bargaining factor in obtaining Danville's strong support for locating the University of Illinois in Champaign County. The IB&W eventually became the Peoria and Eastern Railway Company (P&E).

On February 22, 1890, the P&E "surrendered to The Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway Company (The Big Four) the operation and control of its railroad." This was one of three railroads to provide passenger and freight service to Urbana. People were also transported to and from Urbana via the Wabash Railroad and the Illinois Traction or Illinois Terminal Line (See the Interurban and Trolley section).

The Big Four opened a yard and shops on the east side of Urbana in April of 1871. This location now houses MTD's garage and offices, but before that there were machine shops, switching yards and a roundhouse capable of servicing 15 steam engines. In 1897 the shops underwent major renovations. A smoke stack for a power plant was erected, becoming a landmark in the Urbana area. The stack was 133½ feet tall and 13 feet square at the base. There was also a water tower with a capacity of 100,000 gallons. After the turn of the century, the "Big Four" reverted back to the Peoria and Eastern Railroad.

Urbana's train station was located near the Downtown area. It now houses a small theater on Broadway Street. This station provided service for both the Big Four and the Wabash Railroads. The Big Four had a second station on the line in Champaign, which was located near Neil and Randolph. The last passenger train passed through Urbana in 1959.

Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District—<http://www.cumtd.com/about-us/history/railroads>

1951

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY WABASH RAILROAD COMPANY ILLINOIS TERMINAL RAILROAD COMPANY

Champaign Terminal Joint Time Table No. 28

Governing the movement of all trains between
MAIN STREET URBANA AND STALEY CONNECTION
TAKING EFFECT AT 12:01 A. M. SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 1951
SUPERSEDING TIME TABLE NO. 27 DATED SEPTEMBER 24, 1950

SOUTH OR WESTWARD

Time Table No. 28 April 29, 1951	FIRST CLASS						SECOND CLASS		
	I. T. 61	I. T. 63	I. T. 65				I. C. 693	WAB. 31	I. T. 209
	Local	Local	Local				Local Freight	Local Freight	St. Louis Freight
	Daily	Daily	Daily				Monday Wednesday Friday	Daily Ex. Sunday	Daily Ex. Sunday.
STATIONS									
MAIN ST., URBANA	7.28 AM	12.03 PM	5.31 PM				10.08 AM		7.15 PM
URBANA	7.30	12.05	5.33				10.12		7.16
WASHINGTON ST.	7.36	12.08	5.36				10.18		7.21
L. C. JCT.	7.37	12.09	5.37				8.05 AM	10.27	7.24
CHAMPAIGN	7.38 7.48	12.13 12.18	5.39 5.42				8.06	10.30 AM ³²	7.25
ELM STREET	7.50	12.20	5.44				8.07		7.29
BONNER SIDING	7.53	12.23	5.46				8.10		7.32
STALEY CONNECTION	7.56 AM	12.25 PM	5.49 PM				8.14 AM		7.40 PM

NORTH OR EASTWARD

Time Table No. 28 April 29, 1951	FIRST CLASS						SECOND CLASS		
	I. T. 60	I. T. 62	I. T. 64				I. T. 204	WAB. 32	I. C. 694
	Local	Local	Local				Danville Freight	Local Freight	Local Freight
	Daily	Daily	Daily				Daily Ex. Monday	Daily Ex. Sunday.	Tuesday Thursday Saturday
STATIONS									
MAIN ST., URBANA	9.20 AM	2.18 PM	6.10 PM				3.00 AM	11.47 AM	
URBANA	9.18	2.16	6.08				2.55	11.44	
WASHINGTON ST.	9.12	2.12	6.02				2.48	11.36	
L. C. JCT.	9.11	2.11	6.01				2.45	11.32	1.59 PM
CHAMPAIGN	9.10 9.05	2.10 2.06	6.00 5.55				2.41	11.30 AM ³¹	1.58
ELM STREET	9.03	2.04	5.53				2.37		1.56
BONNER SIDING	9.01	2.02	5.51				2.33		1.55
STALEY CONNECTION	8.59 AM	2.00 PM	5.49 PM				2.23 AM		1.51 PM

S. F. LYNCH, Gen. Mgr. I. C.	R. A. MESSMORE, Asst. Genl. Mgr. Wab.	F. L. DENNIS, Genl. Mgr. I. T.	O. C. GENUNG, Supt. I. T.	E. H. BUELOW, Supt. I. C. Clinton
E. J. BROSEAU, Asst. Supt. I. C. Decatur	L. E. CLAYTON, Trainmaster I. C. Decatur	J. F. NELLIS, Supt. Wabash Decatur	C. E. FOUNTAIN, Trainmaster Wabash Decatur	D. B. HILL, Trainmaster I. T. Springfield

(See Rules on Back)

CISCO, IL
Railroad—Illinois Central
Date Built—1873

