



The Iron Horse of the Prairie State



Case 1

Piece of rail and spike used on the first railroad in Illinois, circa 1830s-1847. Northern Cross Railroad, F.625.15 P594.

This fragment of strap rail and spike came from the Northern Cross Railroad, the first railroad to operate in Illinois from 1838 to 1847. These pieces are reported to have been excavated in Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1901.

Letter from Henry Brown to Jacob Barnes describing rail travel, May 30, 1871. Jacob H. Barnes Correspondence, Bills, Receipts, and Legal Documents (MS 451), Box 1, Folder 1.

Henry Brown wrote a number of letters to Jacob Barnes from 1866 to 1871, often urging him to move to Kansas. In this letter he described the coming of a new railway, which directly connected Chicago, Illinois, to Fort Scott, Kansas.

Bloomington and Ohio River Railroad Company Announcement, June 27, 1870. Jacob H. Barnes Correspondence, Bills, Receipts, and Legal Documents (MS 451), Box 1, Folder 7.

This announcement notified citizens of Bement, Illinois, of an upcoming referendum that called for “a donation of Fifty

Thousand Dollars to the Bloomington and Ohio River Railroad Company, on the condition that they build their road before the first day of December, 1873." The text was written to persuade readers to vote in favor of the referendum for the prosperity of the township, and it was signed by Joseph Bodman, one of the founders of Bement, Illinois.

Letter from Mary Jane Foster to her father describing transportation between Evanston and Chicago, 1869. Mary Jane Foster Letter (MS 1047).

Mary Jane Foster moved from the East Coast to Chicago, where her husband George owned a business. In this letter to her father she describes how Evanston was cheaper to live in than Chicago, but that after moving there her husband had to stay in the city during the week instead of coming home to Evanston every night. She also described the prices for a train ride to Chicago and how the trains were full of businessmen on their way to the city.

Photograph of the Lincoln funeral train, 1865; reprinted in Newman, Ralph Geoffrey, *"In This Sad World of Ours, Sorrow Comes to All": A Timetable for the Lincoln Funeral Train*, 1965. 973.7L63 D2N467i.

***The Lonesome Train (A Musical Legend): A Cantata*, text by Millard Lampell, music by Earl Robinson, circa 1945. 973.7 L63H5R561L.**

On April 21, 1865, a train carrying the coffin of President Abraham Lincoln left Washington, D.C., to travel 1,654 to Springfield, Illinois, for the assassinated president's burial there on May 4. The train traveled through 180 cities and

seven states, and scheduled stops were published in newspapers so thousands of mourners could gather. As the funeral car traveled through the countryside, even more gathered along the train's route to pay their respects as the train passed through.

Stead, William T. *If Christ Came To Chicago! A Plea for the Union of All Who Love In the Service of All Who Suffer*, 1894. 977.311 ST31I.

William Stead was a British newspaper editor and investigative journalist who lived in Chicago between 1893 and 1894. He published *If Christ Came to Chicago* as part of a campaign against Chicago's political corruption and underground economy. The frontispiece depicts Charles T. Yerkes, an American financier who used complex financial deals to control the majority of Chicago's street railway systems. Stead's work is highly critical of those who obsessed over money, which he argued Yerkes and the street railway industry were guilty of. In this image Yerkes is clutching a cable car and scooping up money at the feet of Jesus, and Stead went on in his writing to characterize the Chicago railway systems as "public robbers."

***Schedule of wages and rules governing Yardmen and Switchtenders*, 1920. 385.4 I1623sc.**

While engineers and conductors had gained a sense of glamor and cultural recognition by the 1920s, most rail employees worked behind the scenes. Yardmen and switchtenders worked in rail yard service to maintain, sort, and load or unload railroad cars and locomotives. They were often paid less and had longer hours than other employees like railroad engineers or conductors. This booklet outlined wages and rules for yardmen and switchtenders and

provided procedures regarding wages, hours, and working conditions. These rules were signed by the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, a labor organization for railroad workers that helped negotiate contracts and provide insurance for members.

Photograph taken by the Illinois Central Railroad's Office of Photographer, October 6, 1915. Facsimile, Illinois Central Railroad Photograph Album (MS 862).

This photograph comes from a photograph album of about 102 photographs taken by the Illinois Central Railroad's Office of Photographer. Many of these record the damage caused by the New Orleans Hurricane of 1915 and the bridge, levee, and railroad reconstruction that followed. This photograph has the following caption: "This engine and crew went through the storm and rescued many people. The water was up to the top between steam chest with high wind blowing. None of the crew lost their lives."

Case 2

**Peoria, Decatur, and Evansville ticket, 1899.
George H. Douglas Photograph Collection (MS 908), Box 2, Folder 8.**

The Peoria, Decatur & Evansville Railway (PD&E) dates back to 1857 when two charters were granted for railroad lines, one between Grayville, Illinois, and Mattoon, Illinois, and the other between Grayville and Mount Vernon, Indiana. The line had several stops in central Illinois through Peoria, Decatur, and Parkersburg before plans to extend to

Evansville, Indiana. The tracks reached Grayville in 1881, and in 1900 the PD&E became part of the Illinois Central Railroad.

Illinois Central Suburban Trains time table, 1883. George H. Douglas Photograph Collection (MS 908), Box 2, Folder 8.

The Illinois Central Railroad's suburban and intercity trains played a significant role in Chicago's development. By the early 20th century they were operating up to 300 steam trains every day. When suburban lines first became a fully electrified operation in 1927 they carried 26 million passengers, and ridership rose to 35 million in 1929. They reached an all-time peak of 47 million in 1946 before services began to decline with population shifts and competition from the automobile industry.

Advertisement for the Gates South Shore Sleeping Car Line, circa 1869. Reproduced from unknown publication for the George H. Douglas Photograph Collection (MS 908), Box 2, Folder 8.

A sleeping car, or sleeper, was a railroad coach designed for overnight passenger travel. The first American sleepers, used as early as the 1830s, were crude and uncomfortable. George Pullman sought to remedy this by designing the Pullman sleeper, which was tailored for comfortable overnight travel. He introduced these luxurious cars in 1865, and although the cost was initially a barrier for many travelers and train lines, their popularity grew. Eventually sleeping cars were designed for a range of price points, from expensive luxury coaches to affordable reclining seats. Even today, Amtrak offers sleeping accommodations on their long-distance routes.

This Is Our Railroad: The Illinois Central Family Book, circa 1948. 385.0683 I16t.

Chartered by the Illinois General Assembly in 1851, the Illinois Central (IC) Railroad was the first land-grant railroad in the United States. It was also known as the Main Line of Mid-America because its north-south line ran all the way from Chicago to the Gulf Coast. This employee handbook is divided into three parts –employee information and details about benefits, the organization of the company and its various departments, and additional information with maps and details about the different rail lines.

Plan for the West Elevation of Oakland Passenger House for the Illinois Central Railroad, May 1893. Facsimile, Adler and Sullivan Oakland Passenger Station Drawings (MS 001).

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition drew more than 27 million people throughout its six-month run, and the Illinois Central Railroad Company commissioned renowned architects Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan to draw plans for an Oakland Passenger Station located on 39th Street in Chicago. The plans were prepared in May 1893 to accommodate local passenger transportation to the fair.

Pullman bar of soap. Roger C. Clark Railroad Ephemera Collection (MS 905), Box 3.

Pullman bars of soap were supplied in each Pullman sleeping coach from the late 1940s through 1968 with the end of Pullman service. The Pullman Company was founded in 1862 with a focus on luxury, and each detail, from bars of

soap to drink coasters, was accounted for and branded with a Pullman logo.

Chicago Rapid Transit token, circa 1924-1947. Roger C. Clark Railroad Ephemera Collection (MS 905), Box 3.

The Chicago Rapid Transit Company (CRT) was a privately owned firm that provided rail service in Chicago and several nearby communities between 1924 and 1947. The CRT was one of the predecessors of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), which is now Chicago's mass transit operator. Tokens may have been used as early as 1859 with Chicago's fixed-rail horsecar line, but they became much more popular as a method of fare payment after 1918 when prices for mass transit began to increase.

Amtrak paper conductor hat, circa 1985. Richard Skagenberg Railroad Ephemera Collection (MS 909), Box 1, Folder 10.

Amtrak's Nationwide Rail Passenger System map, 1980. Richard Skagenberg Railroad Ephemera Collection (MS 909), Box 1, Folder 10.

In the second half of the 20th century private railroads began to decline; many had suffered from the Great Depression and World War II, and the nation's new focus on automobiles, airlines, and highway expansion weakened the industry. Amtrak, a federal program, was created to sustain the use of passenger trains when the private sector could no longer afford to do so. President Nixon signed the Rail Passenger Service Act and set Amtrak's transition date for May 1, 1971. Twenty railroads opted in to participate, turning their passenger services over to Amtrak.

Manual for Enginemen, circa 1950-1960. Richard Skagenberg Railroad Ephemera Collection (MS 909), Box 1, Folder 16.

In the 1930s many railroad companies began to replace their steam locomotives with diesel-electric because the cost of operating and maintaining steam locomotives was causing railroads to lose money. While diesel engines had a higher initial price, they required fewer fueling stops and no water stops. This manual contains technical details for the enginemen operating and maintaining these machines, providing information on how to control, care for, and troubleshoot diesel-electric locomotives.

Chicago and North Western Railway trade card, circa 1876-early 1880s. Reproduced from unknown publication for the George H. Douglas Photograph Collection (MS 908), Box 2, Folder 8.

The Chicago and North Western Railway was created in the late 1850s with the merger of several smaller railroads in Illinois and Wisconsin. Guided through its early years by William B. Ogden, Chicago's first mayor, the Chicago and North Western became one of the longest railroads in the nation as a result of mergers with other railroads. Between 1872 and 1910, the length of track throughout the rail network expanded from about 1,400 miles to 10,000 miles.