▲ From time-to-time C&ME rented space in various buildings on 2nd Street in the block between what is now Wisconsin Avenue and Wells Street as needed for their downtown Milwaukee terminal station. In 1918 the railroad leased this building at 185 North 2nd Street. In 1923 they moved into a newly constructed off-street terminal, which filled the entire block between 5th and 6th Streets, Michigan Street on the north and Clybourn Avenue on the south.—*Company photo, Author's Collection. All of the North Shore Line and elevated line photos in this article were taken by A. F. Scholz for the Insull companies unless otherwise noted.*

Where Do We Begin: The Rebuilding of an Interurban Railroad

By Edward W. Tobin
Captions by Norman Carlson

Introduction, Part 2

In Part 1 of this series[1] we surveyed the corporate reorganization of the bankrupt Chicago & Milwaukee Electric Railroad entities by Samuel Insull and his Midland Utilities holding company to form the soon to be celebrated Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad (North Shore Line or NSL). While the new company officially began operations in July 1916, evidence was presented in Part 1 to point out that Insull had effective control of C&ME through ownership of the corporate bonds issued by C&ME's Illinois and Wisconsin corporations for some years prior to 1916.

Insull's business adroitness was readily demonstrated in following his career path in the greater Chicago area. In 1892 he arrived in Illinois to become president of inventor Thomas Edison's Chicago Edison Company[2], then a small power generating company with a modest scattering of clients. Under Insull, the company developed efficient central generation, and accurate metering needed for the production and sale of electrical power. To make this a marketable proposition a fairly consistent base load of power was necessary to achieve the required economy of scale.

To this end, Insull persuaded the elevated and surface railway companies of Chicago to purchase their electric power from his Edison Company. In this he succeeded even though the electric railway companies had built their own energy plants thus tying up valuable investment capital. But Insull managed to convince the electric railways that their capital could be reallocated by exclusively purchasing reliable electrical power directly from him through his centralized approach to the production and distribution of electrical energy.

In 1902 the first such power contract was finalized with the Lake Street Elevated Railroad Company. Within a short time,

[1]See Autumn 2024 issue of *First & Fastest* magazine.

[2]From this kernel was to spring forth the Commonwealth Edison Company and Public Service Company of Northern Illinois.

Barbara Lanphier, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▸ On August 6, 1919, the North Shore Line began operating to downtown Chicago. They leased the building at 209 South Wabash as their Chicago Terminal Station. In 1926 NSL moved their Chicago Terminal further south on this block to 223 South Wabash Avenue.—*Company photo from Author's Collection*

contracts were made to supply power to all the elevated railways and the surface street railway companies in Chicago.

It must be recognized that Insull's main interest from the beginning was in the production and distribution of electrical energy with electric railways as an important part of that overall mosaic by providing the base load. So too was the case of the new NSL in enhancing that mosaic as a direct constant load consumer for electricity but also as a real estate developer within the attractive countryside it served. In an era when kerosene household lighting was not uncommon, full electrification of both city and rural homes was a huge market to be pursued. The sale of compressed natural gas for home cooking and heating was also in this development mix.

From this point of view, it must be understood that the creation of the NSL was not motivated as a purely altruistic contribution to the greater community. Instead, investment in the railroad was a purely profit driven growth business decision by Insull that provided a concomitant growth benefit to the towns and cities it served. Today, we might phrase this as a "win-win" development for everyone affected.

In this segment of "Where Do We Begin" we will concentrate on terminal station developments, primarily in Chicago and Milwaukee. These terminal facilities were an essential requirement at each end of the railroad for the operation of the envisioned high speed electric railroad and received immediate attention. But we will also acknowledge the extensive efforts to provide other upgraded stations and related amenities provided for the passenger public. The period covered in this article will be the late teens and early 1920s.

Chicago Loop Terminal Problem Resolved

"The business of America is business" according to a comment famously attributed to former U.S. President Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929). The American

▲ This interior photo taken in 1919 shows the main floor and the staircase leading to the second floor and providing direct access to the elevated platform on the east side of the Adams-Wabash Loop elevated station.—*Company photo from Author's Collection*

Jeanette Dresdow, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ We are looking southeast at the corner of 6th Street which is on the right side of this image and what was then Sycamore Street, now Michigan Street in 1923. The tracks are for TM's streetcars. After TM's Rapid Transit Line was completed in September 1930, interurbans headed west and southwest turned at the corner. There is a very sharp rise in elevation between 5th and 6th Streets. In pre-historic times this was Lake Michigan's shoreline. ▼ We are looking north from Clybourn Avenue at the terminal trackage and platforms. Note the Merchandise Despatch cars along the west side of the freight house.—*Two Company photos, Krambles-Peterson Archive*

public was fully in tune with this outlook as it sought to put the horrors of the Great War (1914-1918) behind them following a "move on" philosophy so prevalent at the time. Hence, Samuel Insull's expansionist plans could not have found more fertile commercial ground. Nonetheless, the war had impacted civilian commerce throughout the nation and the impact on the NSL was no exception as briefly referenced in Part 1 of this series. In spite of tightening of financial resources, together with construction material shortages, the railroad steadily pursued its modernization program.

As we know, C&ME's objective from its earliest days was to gain direct entry into the City of Chicago which was eventually achieved by successor NSL in 1919. However, a large question remained as to where to construct a main passenger station within the confines of the Elevated Loop. The ease of transfer between North Shore and "L" trains, in the heart of the thriving Loop business and shopping district, had to be maintained as a marketing tool. No competing steam railroad could match this convenience factor no matter how fast their trains might operate. Consequently, the construction of an off-Loop grand terminal along the lines of steam railroad practice was not in the offing.

But where to provide a suitable station in a built up and crowded busy Loop environment? The best compromise available resulted in the purchase and remodeling of a store front building at 209 South Wabash (Adams & Wabash) opening concurrently on August 6, 1919, when train operations began into Chicago. The *Electric Railway Journal (ERJ)* reported this to be a two-story structure with direct train access via a second floor waiting room with a connecting bridge to an "L" platform, a portion of which was exclusively reserved for NSL passengers.

Caryl Rine, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ On June 11, 1925, we are looking northwest at the freight house and passenger car storage tracks along 5th Street.—*Company photo, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

On the first floor of the edifice were located cigar, candy, fruit and magazine stands, a soda fountain and a quick-lunch counter, all open to the public. Included was a check room featuring an arrangement with leading downtown department stores whereby patrons could check their purchases at the store for delivery directly to the North Shore station. Here, patrons could retrieve their parcels prior to boarding their train. Interior station finishes were described as being of the highest order of the day including a dome-shaped ceiling finished in sky blue with a large skylight from which was a suspended a trelliswork of wood finished in white ivory.

The first-floor level featured a three-window ticket booth with green cathedral glass at the sides of and above the window openings. A smaller similar ticket booth could be found on the second floor. Also on this floor were door entrances with more cathedral glass leading to a men's smoking room and a lady's rest room. At the back of the main floor was a direct entrance to a restaurant if your downtown business or shopping adventures required gastronomic sustenance. No passenger amenity was overlooked in providing a first-class passenger experience in this space restricted facility.

While this elegantly solved the Chicago station problem, the central area storage of trains between runs without running up unwanted deadhead switching miles was not so readily solved. Initially, there is evidence that the North Water stub (to the east of what later became the Merchandise Mart) was used for this purpose when the North Shore first began operations into Chicago in1919. But this was an extremely busy piece of two-track railroad and switching North Shore trains would have undoubtedly adversely impacted train operations of the Northwestern Elevated.

Instead, the center track of the South Side Elevated at Roosevelt Road (12th Street) was remodeled, as a less than ideal but workable site. With its close proximity to the new station at Adams & Wabash, trains could be turned, cleaned and made ready for northbound service at Roosevelt. A new baggage facility was also created on what was referred to as the "Congress Street Stub" on what was former South Side Elevated trackage. So, we can mark a Chicago terminal station issue as a problem solved.

Enter Arthur Gerber

While work was proceeding on the Chicago terminal station, numerous other station improvements were taking place throughout the railroad. At this time, it seems propitious to reintroduce an extremely talented engineer, architect and designer named Arthur U. Gerber who had much to do with Insull capital projects. Born in Chicago, Gerber spent his college years studying business and later was a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

George Rimnac, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

The Milwaukee terminal was very spacious with many amenities for both passengers and the public. ▲ We are in the front lobby looking at the entrance on Michigan Street.—*Company photo, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

Showing a flair for design, he subsequently was apprenticed to two architectural firms and in 1903 had joined the Chicago Elevated Railroads (CER) where in 1909 he became Chief Engineer. By 1924 Insull had formally merged the four CER properties into the newly formed Chicago Rapid Transit Company (CRT) and in 1925 named Gerber as Chief Architect for all of Insull's Chicago area electric railway and real estate properties.

Among Gerber's chief early design accomplishments were the Wilson Avenue station and platforms for NSL and the McJunkin Building in the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago. Gerber also designed all of the station buildings and bridges on the new CRT Niles Center (Skokie) branch, particularly the widely praised terminal building at Dempster Street. His building design and engineering authority could be recognized all along the NSL as well as along the length of related interurban lines and the CRT.

While his building design principles were reflective of Prairie and Spanish influences, his technical capabilities were eclectic enough to make him a sought-after problem solver within the Midland Utilities organization. His facility designs and constructions, as completed under Insull management, are still widely recognized and appreciated for their Midwestern stability and practicability.

About Wilson Avenue

While Adams & Wabash was now the primary NSL Chicago terminal, Wilson Avenue might also be recognized as a secondary terminal. Wilson's upper yard was not only the home of the Northwestern Elevated's main shop for many years, but its extensive lower yard offered additional operating and car storage facilities as well.[3] A number of early NSL steel cars were made ready for service at Wilson Shop which could also be counted upon to make emergency running repairs to in-service cars. Furthermore, some NSL local trains originated and terminated at Wilson. A Merchandise Despatch station was located at the west side of the lower yard at Montrose, the southern boundary of that yard.

However, not only was Wilson Avenue a significant secondary operating terminal, it was also located in a very prestigious section of Chicago. So, it is not surprising that the Uptown Station was another magnificent Arthur Gerber station. Although built on Northwestern Elevated property at the northwest corner of Wilson and Broadway Avenues it was designated as being owned by the NSL. It was neatly tucked largely beneath the Northwestern Elevated's structure with an imposing entrance façade. New station platforms were constructed at Wilson for the nearly

[3]For an outstanding review of the entire Wilson complex, please refer to Bruce Moffat's article on the topic appearing in the Winter 2018 issue of *First & Fastest*.

Thomas Lorenz, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ Dining options included white cloth dining tables, a considerable number of counter stools and concessions with everything from candy to cigars. This was in addition to the dining car service on the trains.—*Company photo, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

exclusive use of NSL patrons. Located In the basement was a NSL commissary used to stock supplies for NSL dining cars.

The ERJ described the newly opened facility in part as follows:

…The new station is of quite imposing appearance, both inside and out. It is located on the north side of Wilson Avenue at the intersection with Broadway, which is at the center of the uptown district on the North Side. It will serve the through passengers of the North Shore line and the Evanston division of the elevated. Local passengers from and to Wilson Avenue will be handled from the station on the opposite side of Wilson Avenue, and therefore the local and through passenger business will be separated.

The building is of brick and tile construction with terra cotta facing. The interior is decorated with art marble for flooring and side walls up to the height of the wainscoting. The grand staircase leading up to the track level is exceptionally attractive and provides a generous passageway for passengers. The total cost of the building, including the cost of removing the building which previously occupied this site and was owned by the elevated railroad, was approximately $200,000.

Milwaukee Terminal Problem Resolved[4]

NSL operations in Milwaukee were always hampered by street running on Fifth and Sixth Streets as neither the C&ME nor NSL was ever able to obtain a private right-of-way north of Harrison Street into the downtown area.[5] Aggravating the whole issue was the dominant presence of a competing locally based interurban, streetcar and power company, The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company (TMER&L or TM).

In the greater Chicago area, the North Shore enjoyed the warm corporate embrace of Insull and his Midland Utilities empire. No such embrace was to be found in the Cream City where just about any street in the central area contained TM trackage being used by their streetcar and interurban operations. Nonetheless, the need for an

[4]Much of this Milwaukee material has been previously presented by the author but is repeated here to unify the story of the beginning of NSL operations. For this reason, the reader's indulgence is requested.

[5]Although the line came close in the 1950s when the Interstate High System was being designed. On what became I-94, in Milwaukee, the original plans included a new highway center ROW for the North Shore Line. However, the railroad would have been required to furnish the actual trackage, electrical equipment and all infrastructure to make it happen. The railroad politely declined the opportunity as eventual abandonment was by now the company's current objective.

Robert Hansen, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ On April 19, 1961, the new Track 4 alignment was placed in service. The northbound six-car North Shore Line train is on Track 4. The eight-car CTA train of 6000-series cars is on Track 2. Track 1 at the far right was used by southbound North Shore Line trains. In the background on the structure is Wilson Shops. The McJunkin Building is the large structure on the west side of Broadway Avenue south from Wilson Avenue. Beyond the tower was North Shore's office on Montrose Avenue for the Merchandise Despatch and Ferry truck intermodal operation. The ramp to the furthest right in this photo was the connection to the Milwaukee Railroad's interchange in Buena Yard between Montrose and Irving Park Boulevard. Wilson Avenue was also the terminal for rapid transit local trains. North Shore Line's Merchandise Despatch and Ferry Truck intermodal services operated from and to this station on the surface at Montrose Avenue.—*Courtesy of CTA*

Carl Lantz, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ We are looking south from the southwest corner of Broadway and Wilson Avenue in 1913 when the Northwestern Elevated converted to right-hand from left-hand operation. This enabled through service with the South Side Elevated. The Wilson Lower Yard is in the foreground. In this era Wilson Avenue was the northern terminal of the Northwestern Elevated. It is not known what train service used the lower-level station at that time.—*Company photo* ▼ Regular train service to the lower level ended on July 31, 1949, when CTA revamped its North-South service. The Jackson Park-Howard express trains, Englewood-Ravenswood through service and Kenwood-Wilson locals were terminated. In their place CTA implemented an "A and B skip stop-service." The predecessor companies were incorporated and operated as railroads. CTA was organized as a public transit agency so that when CTA's operation of the "L" began it was operated as a transit company rather than using railroad operating practices. These cars are stored out of service pending scrapping at Skokie Shops.—*Ed Mizerocki photo, Two photos Bruce Moffat Collection*

Daniel Hawtree, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ This incredible photo was taken on October 15, 1923, by A. F. Scholz. Construction of the McJunkin Building is underway. The loop track in Lower Wilson Yard was removed to clear the land for the building's construction. The new two-track stub end terminal is at the left. We can see the buildings along the east side of Broadway Avenue, the business center of the upscale Uptown neighborhood. If you look carefully at the large building on the

northeast corner of Wilson and Broadway that has frontage on both streets you will see a streetcar. This is one of the Surface Lines *Big Pullmans* which were delivered to Chicago Railways Company, the company that operated on the North and West sides of Chicago. This is a rare photo of the paint scheme on these cars which was first applied in 1922-1923. It is cream above the belt rail and red below.—*Krambles-Peterson Archive from Bruce Moffat*

Ronald D. Weslow, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ The three-story McJunkin building, completed in 1924, extended 465 south along Broadway from the southwest corner of Wilson and Broadway. This is a view from the south end of building looking northwest along Broadway to Wilson on May 3, 1924. The building was nearing completion. There was access to the lower Wilson station through the building. The construction cost was $663,382, $12.6 million in 2025 dollars. William D. McJunkin was the owner and president of an advertising agency in his name. His agency was a publicist for the North Shore Line. He made his real money building retail stores on land leased from the elevated railways. The McJunkin Building was owned by Central Broadway Building Corporation whose corporate secretary was the general counsel of the North Shore Line. The Insull interests retained ownership of this building until it was sold to private interests in March 1947. The building remains in active existence in 2026. This raises the question of what other commercial property did the Insull railways own and obtain a return on their investment?—*Krambles-Peterson Archive from Bruce Moffat*

off-street terminal in Milwaukee was an increasingly serious imperative for the NSL as growing street traffic in the downtown area made the old C&ME store front station at Second and Grand (Wisconsin Avenue) totally unsatisfactory. As a stopgap measure the old facility had been remodeled including a new waiting room and ticket office pending the planned opening of the new terminal.

Yet, any potential new downtown station sites in the central area were not readily available to the NSL due to the dominance of the TM. This meant the TM could effectively block track access to any station site this aggressive competitor might acquire. So, what to do?

As presented in Part 1, the railroad had historic ties to an off- street Parcel Despatch facility at Sixth and Clybourn on the western edge of downtown Milwaukee. But this rough patch of land was better suited to mountain goats than a modern railroad facility. But could the site be made suitable for construction of an off-street passenger and package express terminal, nonetheless? It turned out that it could be, but with severe limitations.

What made the site difficult is that it was located on a steep hillside that dipped to the southeast that overlooked the St. Paul's main passenger station in Milwaukee. Despite the hillside constraint, Arthur Gerber and NSL Chief Engineer B. J. Fallon, who later became NSL's president, went to work and managed to design a suitable facility.

However, the difficult urban geography of the site necessitated that the terminal lead tracks had to be laid in the street pavement at Sixth and Clybourn with a very sharp curve radius of 50 feet, more typical of street railway than interurban design. The gradients of the tracks within the terminal yard itself were so steep that adjacent tracks in the same yard varied in elevation by as much as ten feet. Yet, the railroad creatively made optimum use of the site for both passenger and Merchandise Despatch service that lasted until abandonment of the railroad in January 1963.

In formulating the architectural elements of the passenger terminal building, Gerber incorporated the Prairie design characteristics that came to be known as "Insull Modern." Reminiscent of much of Gerber's work for Insull interurban properties, the station was described in the *ERJ* as "being constructed of red tapestry brick with wide raked-out joints and all brick, set with a template, giving a very attractive appearance." A composition wood and steel roof was constructed the steel trusses having been erected in the areaway of the attic.

The floor of the main waiting room was constructed of concrete covered with red tile, with variegated colored tile arranged in an art deco design. All of the white cement stone trim for the building proper and the ornamental wall extending along Sixth Street were cast on the job. This

Douglas Rundell, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

◂ On December 12, 1923, with the appropriate private ceremonies, the Northwestern Elevated opened the Uptown Station on the northwest corner of Wilson and Broadway Avenues. There was a large lobby at street level with the typical marbled walls of that era. The station was under the elevated structure along Wilson Avenue. Along Broadway Avenue there was a series of retail stores.—*Company photo from the Author's Collection*

▲ On December 13, 1946, Charles Nustra (left) and Thomas Graham were working in the North Shore's commissary in the basement of the Uptown Station building. During the summer of 1955 our author had a summer job with the North Shore. He spent one week that summer working in the commissary. Ed recalls that the conductor would call in the order to restock food and beverages for the tavern-lounge car 415 and the Electroliners. Full dining car service had ended in 1947. Commissary staff would pick the orders, load the items on a cart, and move the cart via an elevator to the platform located between tracks 3 and 4. During the station stop commissary staff would transfer the load as quickly as possible so as not to delay the train. Onboard personnel would move the delivery into the onboard storage facilities as the train headed to Howard Street.—*Charles E. Keevil photo, W. R. Keevil Archive.*

Robert Hansen, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

◂ In 1920 Northwestern Elevated car 1005 was inside the west bay of the main Wilson Shop building that opened in 1900. The car was lifted so the original Hedley trucks could be replaced. Space in this building was severely cramped as Skokie Shops did not exist. At 9:01 p.m. Saturday evening October 26, 1996, the first fire alarm was received that Wilson Shop was on fire. Within 2-½ hours the shop building, the elevated structure on which it was built, and the buildings below were destroyed. It was the largest fire in the City of Chicago during 1996, a 5-alarm fire with two special alarms resulting in 42 fire apparatuses responding to the scene. No rolling stock was damaged as repair and inspection of cars at this facility was terminated on March 3, 1996. Scrapping of the remaining steel started the following day. Service between Belmont and Wilson did not resume until the following Tuesday morning rush hour. The land was sold for commercial development and retailers such as Target and Walgreens, among others, rented stores in this development. The cause of this fire was not disclosed.—*Krambles-Peterson Archive*

was top notch construction, then and now, with no compromise components being utilized.

The hillside facility was further described in the *ERJ* as occupying a strip of ground 420 ft. long by 150 ft. wide featuring a stub-end station, served by three tracks, two of which could accommodate five passenger car trains and a third able to house a four-car train for a total capacity of fourteen cars. These three tracks were located on the only flat street level portions of the overall construction site paralleling Sixth Street to the west.

Included in the commodious structure were a sizeable restaurant, a confectionery and lunch concession, together with a smoking room, barber shop and a lady's waiting room as well as washroom facilities. A large basement provided room for company offices and storage. It is strongly suspected by the author that a commissary facility must have been located there also for the stocking of dining cars but no proof of this has been found thus far.

Additionally, the completed facility contained a baggage room, train sheds and track pits. The train platforms were steel structures decked with wood, not unusual construction for the time. In a precursor of what was to come, space was provided for the parking of ten to twelve automobiles "so that anyone may drive up to the station and leave his car off the street in a protected place while he goes to Kenosha, Chicago, or some other point on the line" optimistically reported the *ERJ*.

The Journal continued: The south end of the main waiting room of the station opened through a group of doors onto a platform which connects with the two long loading platforms. These platforms were constructed of steel, one being an island platform 16 feet wide with the overhead shelter centrally supported, while the other is a side platform 10 feet wide with the roof supported on a single cantilever. The platforms are supported on steel columns which rested on concrete walls, butt walls extending out from the track wall.

The entire space underneath the platforms has been left open and openings provided at 50-foot intervals in the track walls so that inspectors may pass from one pit to the others directly without the necessity to climb out of the pit or go around to the ends. The inspection facilities thus provided for looking after the equipment are a distinct feature of the new terminal. Two of these tracks are provided with a pit 260 feet long, while the third track, which will generally be used for local cars, is provided with a pit 80 feet long. Concrete stairways were built at the outer ends of the pits, while at the station end, they connected directly with the basement."

As mentioned above, the project included the installation of new track and complex special work at Sixth & Clybourn, to provide entry into the new facility. Installing the terminal track switches in the middle of a busy street intersection was an unfortunate but necessary design compromise. Both motorists and trainman would subsequently lament the need to hold up automotive traffic at Sixth and Clybourn to permit trains to enter and leave the station as well as for some switching moves.

John B. Bradbury, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▲ Construction of the five-mile segment from Howard Street to what in 2026 is the Dempster Street terminal of CTA's Yellow Line was started in 1924. This segment was the start of the Skokie Valley Route. The North Shore Line created a subsidiary the Chicago North Shore & Northern to build a new railroad to Lake Bluff. An existing segment of railroad between Lake Bluff and North Chicago Junction was rehabbed to create the Skokie Valley Route. In the 1920s what was known as Skokie was in Lake Forest. The original name of the Deerpath Road station in Lake Forest was Skokie Manor. The Village of Niles Center in the 1920s was a sparsely populated settlement at Oakton Street. The development of this village and its renaming to Skokie in 1940 was significantly influenced by CRT's Niles Center locals and the North Shore Line. Arthur U. Gerber introduced a new design with this building, the Prairie School bungalow. Stations of this design were also built at Mundelein and Kenosha. The Mundelein station did not survive the railroad's abandonment. For decades after abandonment the Kenosha building housed a pizza restaurant and then became a child care center which still exists in 2026. With the opening of the Skokie Swift Service in April 1964, CTA rented the building to various retail stores and to Greyhound as a bus station. The building received a new beginning in 2002 when a partnership of developers purchased the building from CTA for one dollar and moved it 145 feet east to make room for parking and transit improvements. With the blessing of the Village of Skokie, the assistance of Shore Line members Tom Burke and J. J. Sedelmaier to provide information on the original design, an architect was engaged to restore the station. $1.4 million was spent on the restoration. Starbucks did some of the interior buildout. The restored building reopened on Monday, November 24, 2003. You can still get your favorite Starbucks drinks and pastries in 2026.—*Company photo, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

The official public entrance to the new terminal was from Michigan Street on the north side of the building. The official opening on September 14,1920, was a grand affair attended by various public, civic and company officials, the latter including Chairman Samuel Insull and President Britton I. Budd. *ERJ* reported that a special three-car train was run from Chicago to Milwaukee and luncheon was served in the diner to some eighty guests from Chicago and points enroute. At Milwaukee Mr. Budd gave a luncheon at the Milwaukee Athletic Club to ninety-four guests who went from there to the new terminal for the opening. The former C&ME president A. C. Frost, who threw grand dinners complete with special trains upon completion of the road to both Kenosha and Racine, would have undoubtedly approved of the event.

ERJ further reported that Samuel Insull informed the more than 200 guests present of the fact that the service improvements on the NSL were being realized only through the expenditure of large sums of money. In an indirect nod to A. C. Frost[6], Insull pointed out that in financing various improvements on the road the present management had had to cope with the disadvantage of the history of the road, it having gone through the courts, (meaning bankruptcy proceedings) but that a high-speed railroad was being developed, nonetheless. Insull continued that "the primary object of the management was to make the property a great financial success by establishing with the communities served a reputation for it as the 'Road of Service'" an advertising slogan that had been adopted by the company.

With the opening of the new terminals in Chicago and Milwaukee, the railroad was now poised to compete with the steam railroads for the passenger traffic between Chicago, Milwaukee and intermediate points. The "Roaring Twenties" were indeed beginning to roar for the NSL. However, Insull had to be looking over his shoulder as the Ford Motor Company announced it intended to build a new 2.8 million square foot automobile factory in the Hegewisch neighborhood on Chicago's far southeast side at a cost of eight million dollars. Opening in 1924, this factory was designed to manufacture thousands of Model T's and Model A's each year to the point that the "rich man's toy" was quickly becoming "everyman's aspiration."

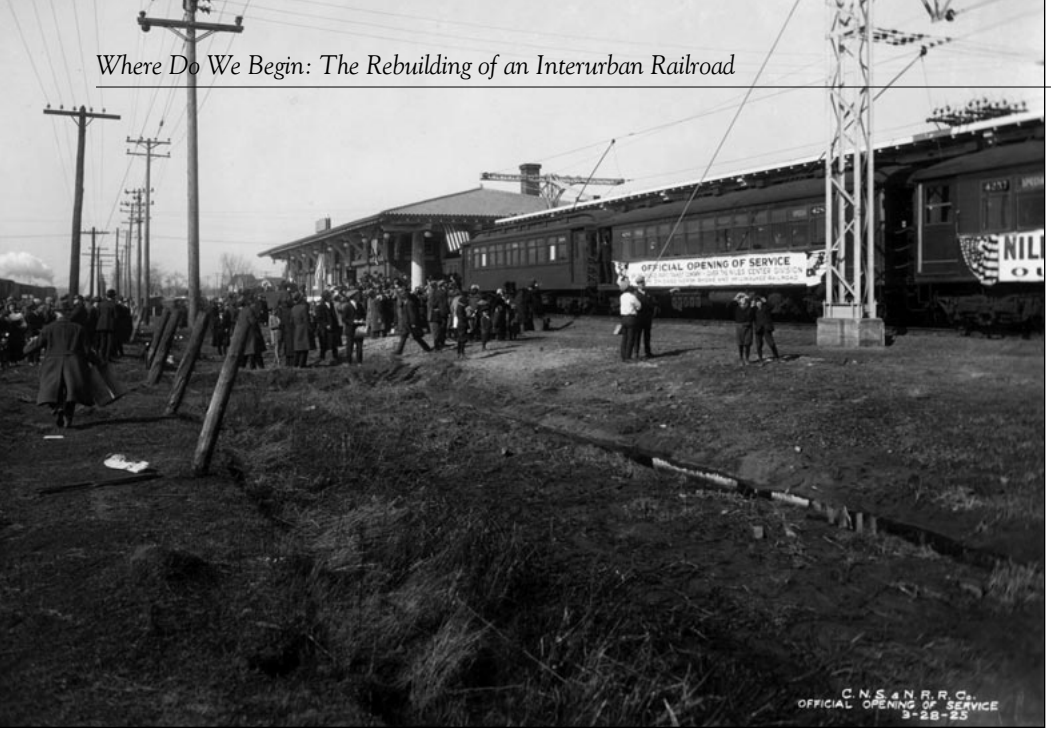
Other Notable Station Improvements Undertaken

While this article is primarily intended to deal with terminal station improvements in Chicago and Milwaukee, it must be recognized that a major improvement was made to the Mundelein terminal as well. A modest C&ME passenger station facility had been located in Mundelein near the Soo Line Railroad interchange point that was now deemed to be inadequate. Instead, a new station site was chosen further uphill to receive a splendid new Gerber designed station following the "Insull Modern" blueprint. New car storage facilities were included in the design so that both passenger and freight traffic could be readily accommodated.

Surprisingly, other than for a bit of sprucing up. NSL's active and earliest terminal located on County Street in downtown Waukegan was left untouched. With

[6]Frost was the previous owner of the former C&ME entities who had driven the entire railroad into a very convoluted bankruptcy.

David A. Bohn, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page



◂ The official opening ceremonies of the station and the start of the Niles Center local trains was on March 28, 1925. Where the people are standing became the right-of-way for the Skokie Valley Route which opened on June 5, 1926. Can you image that a 23.4 mile railroad was built from Dempster Street to Scranton Avenue in Lake Bluff in 14 months? ◂ These 4000-series cars were delivered in 1923-24. These new cars with their plush seats carried dignitaries from Chicago to the new station. Car 4271 was the head car on the train to the right. Cars 4271 and 4272 are still in service on special occasions as part of CTA's historic fleet. —*Two Company photos, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

◂ The station's interior on April 13, 1925.—*Company photo, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

the opening of service to Zion and beyond this became the northern terminal for the Shore Line Route.

This lack of attention was deliberate because the railroad had announced plans to construct a new office building on the downtown site which would incorporate a new interurban terminal. Alas, the plans were delayed until the arrival of the Great Depression finally killed the project. The old converted wooden hotel building would serve the railroad until the cutback of the Shore Line Route to North Chicago (Tenth Street and Sheridan Road) in November 1947.

In addition to all of this terminal activity, new stations of various types were being built all along the line as summarized in Part 1. In Part 3 of "Where Do We Begin" we will survey the evolution of the passenger car fleet and the modernization activity being simultaneously undertaken all along the new North Shore Line.

It was to be the last great burst of system wide rail interurban reconstruction in the United States as now citizens were seeking other means of moving themselves about their cities and rural places.

Author's Disclaimer: No Artificial Intelligence applications were used in the research or writing of this article.

Sources:

First & Fastest, Autumn 2018 "Wilson Lower Yard"
First & Fastest, Autumn 2024 "Where Do We Begin, Part One
The Electric Railway Journal
North Shore Line corporate documents

Fred Lonnes, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page

▸ On October 17, 1929, one week before the stock market crash, a southbound Chicago Limited is unloading passengers at Dempster Street. The consist was three coaches and a parlor-observation car on the rear. The 4000-series car was probably a car from a Jackson Park-Howard express train that was cut at Howard Street. The wood car was probably a Niles Center local that served the six intermediate stops between Dempster and Howard.—*Company photo, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

▲ Car 775, the second to the last standard car delivered to the North Shore, was on the rear end of this four-car train at Dempster on June 18, 1930. The car was placed in service by March 15, 1930. The destination sign has not been changed from its northbound trip as the Cream City Limited. The Skokie Valley Route was placed in service on June 5,1926, and the last full day of service was Sunday, January 20, 1963, a period of 36.5 years. In contrast, the Niles Center Local operated for 23 years from March 25, 1925, to March 27, 1948. On April 20, 2026, CTA will have operated the Skokie Swift/Yellow Line for 62 years.—*Company photo, Illinois Railway Museum Archives*

Matthew Dowd, by substantial contribution, has made it possible to publish this page