

The Legacy Lives On: A Tribute to Illinois Central's Mini-Corridor

By Paul Jaenicke
Captions by Norman Carlson



▲ Train 1, the *City of New Orleans*, is arriving at Effingham, Illinois, on August 25, 1955. In the foreground are the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to St. Louis, Missouri. ▴ Leading the train at Effingham was E7A 4007 followed by an E8B and another E7A. ▾ Ahead are stops in Centralia, where there will be a crew change, Du Quoin, known for the annual State Fair where racing events are held and souped-up vehicles are displayed, and Carbondale where the main campus of Southern Illinois University is located.—Three photos Dick Neumiller, Bon French Collection



When studying 21st Century United States passenger rail corridors, high-density east and west coast corridors come to mind because they can operate trains frequently due to their large population centers. Chicago to Carbondale does not fit this category due to the rural nature of the communities south of Chicago. Thanks to the many years of good service, reputation and devel-

opment by the Illinois Central, the current Amtrak operations of three trains in both directions would not have been possible.

This development is a fascinating one with the Illinois Central Railroad being chartered in 1850 to build to Dunleith, now East Dubuque, in the northwest part of the state. Going east to Freeport, it then veered south down through the center of the state to its southern tip at Cairo. Cairo, a busy

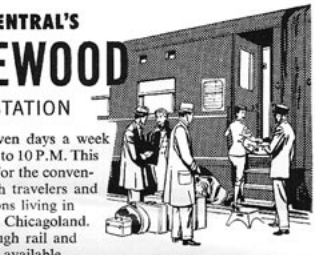
port was located near where the Mississippi and Ohio River met. Before the 1850s, water courses were the principal means of transportation. The Illinois Central was to provide inland transportation to develop the interior of the state by connecting the hinterland between major rivers.

Funded with federal lands given to the state and then awarded to the railroad, the IC was granted surrounding prairie land



Another
ILLINOIS CENTRAL
Convenience!

ILLINOIS CENTRAL'S
HOMEWOOD
 ILLINOIS STATION



is now open seven days a week from 6:00 A.M. to 10 P.M. This arrangement is for the convenience of through travelers and commuter patrons living in south suburban Chicagoland. Suburban, through rail and Pullman tickets available. No baggage checked.

these famous Illinois Central trains now stop at Homewood to receive and to discharge passengers

Southbound	Chicago-New Orleans	Northbound
5:26 PM	PANAMA LIMITED	8:58 AM
8:11 AM	CITY OF NEW ORLEANS	11:10 PM
7:59 PM	The Louisiane	6:26 AM
---	The Creole	6:46 PM
Chicago-All Florida		
9:41 AM	CITY OF MIAMI	5:56 PM
5:38 PM	The Seminole	10:07 AM
Chicago-Springfield-St. Louis		
8:35 AM	GREEN DIAMOND	7:44 PM
Chicago-Springfield		
4:25 PM	Springfield Special	10:05 AM



Homewood Station—18000 Park Avenue—is convenient to most of Chicago's South Suburban Communities
 Phone—Sycamore 8-7170

ILLINOIS CENTRAL
Main Line of Mid-America



▲ We are looking north at Matteson, Illinois, on October 21, 1962, as the train pictured on the cover will soon start to slow down for its stop at Homewood. When your Managing Editor rode northbound on the *Panama*, the Pullman porter in your sleeping car would wake you up at Effingham. Before going to sleep the porter would advise you of this wake-up call and when wakened you should immediately dress and go to the dining car for breakfast. This, in his words, was “so you would beat that crowd that will get on at Champaign and head straight for the dining car.” The Pullman porter in the observation car would handle documents and small parcel items for all destinations in both directions between Chicago and Carbondale. This was well before the creation of Federal Express and the expansion of United Parcel Service’s operations beyond store deliveries.—Dick Neumiller photo, Bon French Collection

was estimated during construction (1851-1856) 100,000 men were brought to Illinois due to the requirement that the railroad be completed within 5 years.

The charter called for a railroad between Cairo and Galena, with a branch line to Chicago. The point to be called Centralia was chosen for their junction. Centers of population and trade existed along the state’s waterways (rivers, lakes and canals), but only eight communities with under 100 population each existed along the proposed IC route. Building the IC brought the economic stimulus needed to develop central and southern parts of the state. Carbondale, for example, went from no population when the railroad was surveyed, to 300 when it came through. In five more years, its population again quadrupled. From 1850 to 1860 the population of the 31 counties along the IC increased 150%; elsewhere in the state grew 52%. When building the railroad, division points were established approximately 100 miles apart, the distance the average train could travel. Champaign and Carbondale were such towns.

A noteworthy passenger who rode the IC in its early days was Abraham Lincoln, an attorney for the IC between 1852 and

1860. His most important case prevented counties and municipalities in Illinois from levying taxes on the railroad on top of the Charter tax, 7% of gross earnings, they paid the state. In 1861 Union troops transported to Cairo from Chicago in the early days of the civil war kept the city out of Confederate hands. Close to 600,000 troops were transported from 1862 to 1865. Confederate soldiers were brought the opposite way to Camp Douglas in Chicago, located at 31st Street and Lake Michigan, location of a prisoner of war camp from 1862 to 1865. A reported 6,000 died due to its poor health conditions.

Timetables indicated two passenger trains each way from Chicago to Cairo (365 miles) in the late 1850s, taking 18 ½ hours including meal stops at West Urbana (later renamed Champaign) and Centralia. Trips to Carbondale were under 15 hours from Chicago (308 miles). Early locomotives were 4-4-0 Americans built by Rogers Company in New Jersey. Passenger cars were constructed of wood; had no wheel springs; were lit with whale oil lamps; and were heated with wood-burning stoves. Some had no heat at all. Double track laid by 1902 between Chicago and Carbondale resulted in faster

▲ Homewood became a stop for all Illinois Central mainline trains February 3, 1959.—Author’s Collection

which it sold to farmers at a profit. Financing was also obtained from investors in New England and Great Britain. English iron rail was sometimes lost at sea due to storms on the Atlantic Ocean.

Telegraph, a new development in communication, was strung the length of the railroad. Few towns existed along the proposed line and recent European immigrants were recruited along with laborers from eastern and southern states to come to Illinois and build the new rail line. It



CHICAGO, MEMPHIS AND NEW ORLEANS

READ DOWN

All time shown is Central Standard Time unless otherwise indicated

Effective October 28, 1962

READ UP

	3	9	+5		▲53	1	25	Miles	Table 1	4	+6	10	▲52	8	2	
	PM	PM	PM		AM	AM	AM		(Central Station)	AM	AM	AM	PM	PM	PM	
	7.30	4.45	4.30		8.45	7.45	12.25	.0	Lv. CHICAGO, ILL. Ar	7.00	9.00	10.45	6.10	7.00	11.40	
	c 7.40	c 4.55	c 4.40		c 8.55	c 7.55	c 12.35	6.6	Lv. 63rd St., Woodlawn Lv	6.45	8.50	10.30	5.55	6.50	11.28	
	m 8.00	m 5.15	m 4.55		m 9.10	m 8.10	12.50	22.1	Lv. Homewood Lv	r 6.25	r 8.30	r 10.05	r 5.35	r 6.30	r 11.10	
								45.4	Lv. Manteno Lv					xe 6.04		
	8.32	5.44	a 5.26		k 9.42	8.40	1.30	54.5	Lv. KANKAKEE Lv	5.55	a 7.55	9.35	k 5.00	5.55	10.35	
	9.00						1.55	79.8	Lv. GILMAN Lv	5.25		d 9.05		5.15		
								83.4	Lv. Onarga Lv							
	9.20						2.20	101.5	Lv. Paxton Lv	b 5.01				4.45		
	9.35	6.39					2.45	112.4	Lv. RANTOUL Lv	4.48		8.36		4.32		
	9.55	7.00	6.25				3.15	126.5	Ar. CHAMPAIGN Lv	4.30	6.55	8.20	4.00	4.15	9.35	
	10.10	7.10	6.30				3.35	126.5	Lv. (Urbana) Ar	4.10	6.48	8.12	3.55	3.45	9.30	
							3.57	135.8	Lv. Tolono Lv					3.31		
		d 7.31					4.23	148.5	Lv. Tuscola Lv			b 7.48		3.17		
							4.32	156.5	Lv. Arcola Lv	b 3.38				3.07		
	10.57	8.00	at 7.05		k 11.28	10.39	5.15	171.0	Lv. MATTOON Lv	3.24	6.06	7.30	k 3.09	2.50	8.50	
	11.45	8.28	at 7.26		k 11.51	11.10	6.06	197.9	Lv. EFFINGHAM Lv	2.53	at 5.41	7.02	k 2.38	2.18	8.23	
							6.50	243.0	Lv. Odin Lv							
	12.45	9.15	8.10		12.35	11.50	7.00	251.1	Ar. CENTRALIA Lv	1.55	4.55	6.10	1.50	1.20	7.35	16
	1.00	9.20	8.15		12.40	11.53	7.10	251.1	Ar. CENTRALIA Lv	1.45	4.50	6.00	1.45	1.10	7.28	
							7.30	265.0	Lv. Ashley Lv					12.48		AM
	1.46	9.54					8.01	287.2	Lv. DU QUOIN Lv	at 1.06		5.22		12.24	6.55	5.17
	2.20	10.15	9.06		1.30	12.45	8.30	306.9	Ar. DU QUOIN Lv	12.45	4.00	5.03	12.45	11.59	6.35	4.50
	2.45	10.33	9.21		1.40	1.00	9.00	306.9	Lv. CARBONDALE Ar	12.25	3.48	4.30	12.30	11.33	6.22	3.30
							9.12	315.0	Lv. Makanda Lv							
	2.59						9.24	322.1	Lv. Cobden Lv					r 11.11		2.58
							9.36	327.5	Lv. Anna Lv	11.55				11.04	5.51	
	3.35	11.02					9.50	336.7	Lv. Dongola Lv					10.28	5.16	
	3.40	11.39	10.28		2.44	2.00	10.01	343.3	Lv. Ullin Lv	11.19	2.43	3.23	11.16	10.28	5.11	2.21
		11.47	10.34		2.50	2.03	10.13	355.0	Lv. Mounds Lv	11.11	2.38	3.15	11.11	10.22	5.11	2.11
							10.23	360.2	Ar. North Cairo Lv							
							10.32	360.2	Lv. North Cairo Ar							
							10.49	369.0	Lv. Wickliffe, Ky. Lv	ma 10.45						
							11.08	376.9	Lv. Bardwell Lv	ma 10.30						
	4.35	4.55	12.38		3.43	2.53	11.17	382.7	Lv. Arlington Lv	10.15	1.45	2.15	10.13	9.30	4.20	1.20
	4.50	5.05	11.31		3.40	3.02	11.40	404.8	Ar. FULTON Lv	10.05	1.35	AM	AM	9.20	4.10	1.00
							11.55	404.8	Lv. FULTON Ar							
								415.2	Lv. Gibbs, Tenn. Lv							
							12.14	419.6	Lv. Rives Lv							
								429.8	Lv. Obion Lv							
								441.2	Lv. Newbern Lv							
	5.36	5.55				3.47	449.9	460.7	Lv. DYERSBURG Lv	9.15	az 12.51			8.32	3.27	12.12
							463.4	473.3	Lv. Halls Lv							
							473.3	479.3	Lv. Gates Lv	8.43				8.01		
							479.3	487.9	Lv. Ripley Lv							
							487.9	495.8	Lv. Henning Lv	8.25				7.41		
							495.8	499.8	Lv. COVINGTON Lv							
							499.8	502.9	Lv. Brighton Lv							
							502.9	509.4	Lv. Atoka Lv							
							509.4	525.8	Lv. Tipton Lv	7.58				h 7.17		
	v 6.35	h 7.03					525.8	527.2	Lv. Millington Lv							
	6.55	7.24					527.2		Ar. Poplar Ave Lv							
	7.00	7.35	1.40			5.10			Ar. MEMPHIS Lv	7.30	11.25			6.50	2.00	10.40
									(Central Station)							
	4.45		9.00				12.25	8.30	Ar. NEW ORLEANS Lv	11.35	4.30			8.45	7.10	
								921.1	(Union Station)							
	AM	PM	AM				AM	AM		AM	PM			PM	AM	PM

8

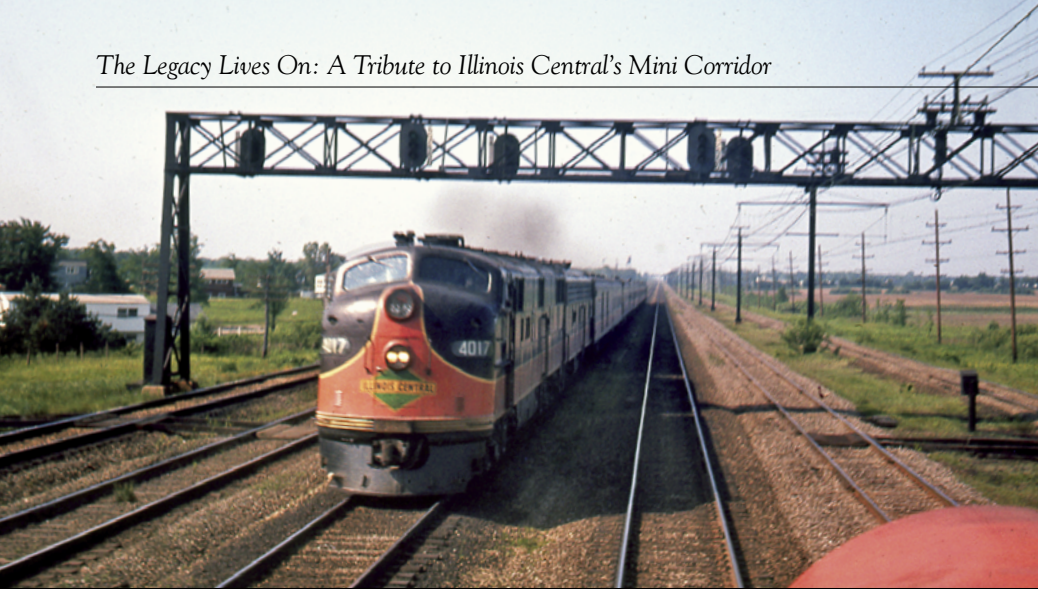
Reference Notes, see page 7. Equipment, see pages 4, 5, 6.

▲ Timetable effective October 28, 1962.—Lee Hastman Collection, Lake States Railway Historical Association

passenger schedules (9 hours). During the late 1800s two prominent universities started south of Chicago: University of Illinois (1868) in Champaign and Southern Illinois University (1874) in

Carbondale. Champaign was originally called West Urbana because the IC bypassed Urbana by two miles. In 1855 Urbana tried to annex West Urbana but the citizens revolted renaming it

Champaign after a county in Ohio. Both universities contributed substantial passenger business to build the Chicago to Carbondale corridor. Rantoul added additional passengers after the 1917 opening of



◀ The southbound *City of New Orleans* departed Homewood at 8:10 a.m. The northbound *Panama* was due at Homewood 8:30 a.m. Both trains were on time on this June 1963 day as they meet near Vollmer Road (19900 south) between the suburban stations of Flossmoor and Olympia Field. While the reported speed limits were 79 mph Chicago to Champaign and 100 mph between Champaign and Centralia, once you cleared Otto Junction south of Kankakee it was closer to 100 mph to Champaign. You did not need a speedometer to advise you that the train reached 100. The hatch covers in the cab of the locomotive would start to levitate about one inch above their normal resting place. On a trip south of Champaign on the *City of Miami* we were doing 113 mph, the maximum gearing on the IC's E-units.—Norman Carlson photo



◀ This is train 8, the *Creole*, on track 1 at the Champaign, Illinois, station during its long stop. This train was on track 1, the nominal southbound track, as the *City of Miami* used track 2 to pass the *Creole*. E6 4001 is leading this “maid of all work” that made virtually every station stop between Carbondale and Chicago to handle mail and express business. The *Creole*'s southbound counterpart, train 25, the *Southern Express* which left Central Station around midnight, made virtually all stops between Chicago and Fulton, Kentucky.—Norman Carlson photo

▼ While this may look like the *City of New Orleans* crossing New York Central System's Peoria & Eastern at Champaign Tower, it is a Football Special for a University of Illinois game in the Autumn of 1963. The train pulled through the station and onto the siding at the University's power plant that was used to receive coal. This was a three-block walk from the stadium. During the game the train would be wyed and backed to the power plant to await its return to Chicago. Football Specials would make this 126-mile trip in little over two hours. In this era driving was almost twice that time as the only piece of roadway that became part of I-57 was the Kankakee By-pass. From Kankakee to Champaign-Urbana your trip was on US 45, a two-lane road, watching the IC trains flying by you.—Norman Carlson photo



Chanute Air Force base brought recruits during the war years.

Major stops included Homewood, Kankakee, Rantoul, Champaign, Mattoon, Effingham, Centralia and Carbondale. The two notable Chicago stations were Great Central Station opened in 1856 and Central Station replacing it in 1893. Intercity station stops on Chicago's south side prior to the World War II era were 43rd Street, closed in 1940; 53rd Street closed in 1946; 63rd St which lasted until Amtrak day on May 1, 1971; and Kensington which stopped serving secondary through trains in 1954. The closings were due to urban population shifts and the post-World War II suburban migration. Homewood was made a stop for all intercity trains in 1959.

Passenger service growth was steady with five trains in each direction serving the double tracked corridor by 1902. The fastest train took a little under eight hours between end points. By 1926 this number had grown to seven trains in each direction with the best time being seven and

one-half hours. During World War II the diesel hauled *City of Miami* was scheduled to do the Chicago to Carbondale run in five hours. The fastest times achieved were in the late 1940s and 1950s when four and one-half hours was carded for the *City of New Orleans*, *City of Miami* and *Panama Limited*. The maximum of eight trains in both directions came in the 1940s, but by 1953 the two Chicago to Carbondale locals were discontinued and the total settled down to six trains each way. This unbelievably lasted until 1971. The line up during the 1950s was: *The City of New Orleans* (train numbers 1 and 2); *The Louisiane* (3 and 4); *Panama Limited* (5 and 6); *Southern Express* and *Creole* (25 and 8); *Seminole* (9 and 10); and the every-other day *City of Miami* (53 and 52). Service was also offered between Chicago and Gilman on the *Green Diamond* (21 and 22), *The Daylight* (19 and 20), and the *Night Diamond* (17 and 18). These St. Louis trains branched off at Gilman.

The route was known for speed. Streamlined diesel trains on the Chicago Division had a 90 mph speed restriction between 51st Street in Chicago and Richton in 1939. This was lowered during World War Two to 79 mph. The Illinois Division speed restriction was 100 mph for diesel trains between Richton and Champaign from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, then lowered to 79 mph. This was unique in that it had automatic train stop installed in 1925 between Champaign and Branch Junction (north of Centralia). No way side signals existed except for train orders, interlocking and absolute signals. A color light signal displaying red or green in the cab gave the engineer the track condition ahead. A change from a green to a red indication had to be acknowledged within six seconds by operating an acknowledging valve or an automatic brake application occurred. This system allowed 100 mph running and was used into the Amtrak era. Lastly Centralia to Carbondale had a speed restriction of 79 mph. This was high speed rail at its best, long before studies by governmental agencies were done in the late 20th century. From the mid 1950s to the early 1970s, *Trains Magazine* had a yearly speed survey authored by Don Steffee. During this time most non-local passenger trains averaged from 75.6 to 82.2 mph on the stretch between Kankakee and Centralia.



▲ IC Business Car 1 was built for Wayne A. Johnston, the railroad's president from 1946 to 1966 and chairman until his death on December 4, 1967. A graduate of the U of I, he joined its Board of Trustees in 1951 remaining on that board until his passing. It was not unusual to see car 1 parked at Champaign as seen here late in 1963. Next to car 1 are two IC heavyweight "Harriman Cars" that were used for student traffic from Champaign and Carbondale and on secondary trains. Car 1 remains in service in 2024, complete with the IC Green Diamond logo on the tail gate, as a part of Canadian National's business car fleet.—Norman Carlson photo



▲ The *Creole* is passing through Thomasboro, Illinois, then a hamlet just north of Champaign, on its way to Chicago in May 1964.—Norman Carlson photo

Infrastructure improvements had helped to raise the maximum speeds on the corridor between Chicago and Carbondale. Four mainline tracks, two for passenger and two for freight, were in service espe-

cially from 51st Chicago to Monee. From Monee to Otto Junction, south of Kankakee where a number of north central Illinois branch lines were accessed, three tracks were used for passenger and freight.



◀ Led by E7 4009, the City of New Orleans is rolling through Gilman, Illinois about to cross the Toledo, Peoria & Western circa August 1967. Note the two Flexivan containers next to the locomotives most likely carrying US mail. Gilman is where the line to St. Louis left the Mid-American corridor.—Photographer unknown, Art Peterson Collection

The Mini-Corridor idea:

Make IC's service between Chicago and Carbondale, Ill. so convenient, so exciting, so attractive that everyone will want to use it. Make every passenger train comparable to our fastest. Schedule departure times that passengers want most and set them at times easy to remember. Provide economical, quick food and refreshment service on all trains. All this at easy to pay coach fares.

Examples:

Mini-Corridor trains will run from Chicago to Champaign in two hours and five minutes, and to Carbondale in four hours and 55 minutes, except the Panama Limited which will run slightly faster.

All trains will leave Chicago on the hour at 8:00 am and 3:00, 5:00, 6:00 and 9:00 pm. All trains will also leave Carbondale for Chicago on the hour and from Champaign at 10 minutes to the hour. These are "memory schedules."

Most trains will have food bar coaches.

Some trains are being speeded up more than two hours to meet the new schedules.

When will Mini-Corridor service start?

Notices covering proposed changes have been filed or will be filed before the end of June. Service may begin this summer or as late as November, depending on approval of changes.

▲ A description of the forthcoming Mini-Corridor service was published in 1968. ◀ In what may be the first Mini-Corridor timetable, the Chicago departures are essentially those of the recent schedules. The southbound *Mid-American* and *Campus* replacing the *Louisiane* and *Southern Express*, respectively as these secondary trains no longer operate south of Carbondale. ▶ Northbound the *Campus* fills in a historic gap of no afternoon arrival and the *Mid-American* essentially replaces the *Creole*. These two northbound trains originated in Carbondale.—Three items, Author's Collection

Mini-Corridor Service							
CHICAGO to KANKAKEE, CHAMPAIGN, CARBONDALE							
Miles	Effective July 14, 1968	No. 1	No. 5	No. 9	No. 3	No. 25	
		City of New Orleans	Panama Limited	Seminole *	Mid-American	Campus *	
SOUTHBOUND	.0	Lv Chicago (Cent. Sta.)...	AM 8.00	PM 5.00	PM 5.10	PM 9.00	PM 11.30
	6.6	Lv 63rd Street.....	8.10	5.10	5.20	9.10	11.40
	22.1	Lv Homewood.....	8.30	5.30	5.40	9.30	11.55
	54.5	Ar Kankakee.....	8.55	a 5.56	6.10	9.55	12.35
	112.4	Ar Rantoul.....	9.45		7.00	10.45	1.35
	126.5	Ar Champaign-Urbana....	10.05	6.55	7.20	11.05	1.55
	171.0	Ar Mattoon.....	10.49	7.35	8.12	11.49	2.55
	197.9	Ar Effingham.....	11.17	8.00	8.40	12.17	3.30
	251.1	Ar Centralia.....	12.00	8.45	9.25	1.00	4.20
	287.2	Ar DuQuoin.....	12.35		10.05	1.35	5.01
	306.9	Ar Carbondale.....	12.55	9.40	10.25	1.55	5.20
				PM	PM	PM	AM

*Application has been filed for improved faster schedule.
 ■All Coach Seats reserved. Special Service Charge.
 aStops on signal to receive passengers for Cairo and beyond.

Mini-Corridor Service							
CARBONDALE to CHAMPAIGN, KANKAKEE, CHICAGO							
Miles	Effective July 14, 1968	No. 6	No. 10	No. 28	No. 4	No. 2	
		Panama Limited	Seminole *	Campus *	Mid-American	City of New Orleans	
NORTHBOUND	.0	Lv Carbondale.....	AM 4.00	AM 5.30	PM 12.30	PM 4.00	PM 7.00
	19.7	Lv DuQuoin.....		5.47	12.50	f 4.18	7.18
	55.8	Lv Centralia.....	4.55	6.30	1.35	4.55	7.55
	109.0	Lv Effingham.....	5.41	7.19	2.23	5.41	8.41
	135.9	Lv Mattoon.....	6.08	7.47	2.53	6.08	9.08
	180.4	Lv Champaign-Urbana....	6.50	8.40	4.05	6.50	9.50
	194.5	Lv Rantoul.....		8.55	4.20	7.04	
	252.4	Lv Kankakee.....	7.53	9.40	5.18	7.53	10.53
	284.8	Ar Homewood.....	8.25	10.15	5.55	8.25	11.25
	300.3	Ar 63rd Street.....	8.40	10.30	6.10	8.40	11.40
	306.9	Ar Chicago (Cent. Sta.)...	8.55	10.45	6.20	8.55	11.55
			AM	AM	PM	PM	PM

*Application has been filed for improved faster schedule.
 ■All Coach Seats reserved. Special Service Charge.
 f—Flag stop.

Beyond, two tracks stretched to the Ohio River. The early 1920s were optimistic times for the IC, which looked for increased southern Illinois and Kentucky coal shipments destined to feed Chicago's growing industrial base and increasing passenger traffic. Interlocking plants were built between Homewood and Gilman averaging one every six miles allowing passenger trains to be routed around slow freights. In addition, over 31 miles of right of way was grade crossing free, built over a 35-year period between Chicago and Richton. It was a railroad speedway.

The Edgewood Cutoff completed in 1928 was a 169-mile freight by-pass constructed between Edgewood, Illinois, south of Effingham, and Fulton, Kentucky. It eliminated steep grades along the original mainline south of Carbondale. It was never used as a scheduled passenger route except as a bypass during Cairo bridge construction and when special trains were chartered in the spring and fall.

In addition to conventional trains, a one car ACF motorcar was introduced between Chicago and Champaign in January of 1941 called the "Illini." It had two Waukesha six-cylinder engines, coupled to a hydraulic torque transmission turning a shaft connected to the axle on one truck. The car was painted orange and blue to honor the University of Illinois' school colors. Train 55 departed Chicago at 8:00 p.m., arriving at Champaign at 10:35 p.m. Returning train 54 left Champaign at 7:00 a.m., arriving in Chicago at 9:35 a.m. The car's seating capacity was 69 with a buffet section in the rear. Unfortunately, the motorcar's service was only 8 months, being discontinued in August 1941. It was returned to ACF and had a second life on the Susquehanna Railroad until replaced by RDC cars in 1950.

As roads were built in the northern Illinois, the IC saw a marketing opportunity to capitalize on new road construction and the upcoming Chicago World's Fair. The new four-lane Governors Highway (Route 49) opened between Chicago and Kankakee in 1929, partially on right of way of the recently abandoned (1927), Chicago and Interurban Traction between Monee and Bradley. The IC bus subsidiary, Central Transportation Company, established service between the 211th St suburban station to serve Matteson, Olympia Fields and Kankakee. It used Governors



▲ IC's famous Green Diamond logo was introduced in 1936 and gave way to the "Split-Rail" logo in 1966 as shown here on E8 4019 leading what we believe is the *Panama Limited* into Homewood circa June 1966. As a result of the acquisition of the Gulf Mobile & Ohio in 1972 and rails were put together and the ball was centered about the rail. In 1988 with the renaming of the railroad back to Illinois Central the "Death Star" logo was created. This logo had vertical lines through the prior logo with the words Illinois Central spelled out on the right side of the redesigned logo. To say that the Green Diamond logo was missed would be a huge understatement. The names of the following logos certainly can create conversation, especially with CN acquiring the IC in February 1998.—Photographer unknown, Art Peterson Collection



▲ Based on the sun angles we believe that this is the *Panama Limited-Magnolia Star* prior to its departure from Central Station Chicago on June 6, 1969. Effective with the timetable issued December 15, 1967, coaches were added to the *Panama Limited* as a means to increase revenue. The Pullman first class section was referred to as the *Panama Limited* and the coach section was named the *Magnolia Star*. In 1900 school children in Mississippi elected the Magnolia as the State Flower. In 1952 the Legislature selected the Magnolia as the Mississippi State Tree. IC timetables listed the Pullman and coach sections as separate trains for a brief period of time. The locomotives are E9A 4026, E9B 4108 and E9A 4034.—Photographer unknown, Bruce C. Nelson Collection

Highway, which paralleled the mainline most of the way. Service started in August of 1931 offering four scheduled departures to Kankakee and three in the opposite

direction. Service did not catch on and was discontinued in June 1933, a demise due to the Great Depression, new roads and the growth of the automobile.



On Jun 17, 1970, Art Peterson journeyed to Kankakee to photograph some of the morning trains. ▲ The first train was the *City of New Orleans* led by E8A 4031. ▼ Following close behind was train 21 the *Governors Special* to Springfield, Illinois. This is the remanent of IC's premier Chicago-St. Louis train, the *Green Diamond*. The cutback to Springfield took place on May 20, 1968.



▲ Northbound train 10, the *Shawnee*, pulls into Kankakee with a very dirty E10A 2024 in the lead.—Three photos Art Peterson

► The first timetable with the memory schedule was effective July 1, 1969. This is the July 1970 version. Notice the reference to the *Magnolia Star* is gone. This memory schedule was a considerable improvement in serving passengers than the initial Mini-Corridor schedule.—*Author's Collection*


Train Robberies

The corridor was not immune to train robberies. During the depths of the Depression in April of 1935, four men boarded the *Louisiane* train number 3 at 63rd Street. Seated in the club car, they remained quiet until the train reached Matteson at 6:50 p.m. The gunmen ordered passengers in the car to lie down. One fired a bullet into the roof of the car to prove they were not joking. Money was the only thing taken. The robbers locked both club car doors and forced the conductor and porter to proceed with them to the rear of the train consisting of four Pullman cars firing once into each car. They eventually jumped off the train near Chestnut Street in Kankakee and commandeered an innocent bystander near St. Mary's Hospital. Taken hostage, they drove to Wheaton where they released him. The robbers escaped with over \$800.00 and were never found.


Possibly the last train robbery on the IC was an attempted robbery in July 1939 on train number 31 at Del Rey when two armed men burst into a Railway Post Office car in hopes of robbing over \$56,000 in payroll money for Chanute Field Air Corps in Rantoul. One of the bandits was shot by a mail clerk and the other escaped to a waiting automobile on US 45. It is unknown if the escaped robber was apprehended.

Passenger Operations

Passenger trains arriving Chicago Central Station with observation cars and directional equipment had to be turned for southbound departures. This required the train to be deadheaded to Fordham Yard at 87th Street, which had a loop track to turn the train so it faced the proper direction when heading out from Chicago. If time did not permit the cleaning of the train at the 16th Street coach yard, staff would board at Central Station and clean the train on the trip to Fordham Yard and back to save time. This was common practice in the 1930s and 1960s. Locomotives were

		Mini-Corridor Service CHICAGO to KANKAKEE, CHAMPAIGN, CARBONDALE					
Effective February 2, 1970		No. 1 City of New Orleans	No. 7 Illini	No. 5 Panama Limited ☐	No. 9 Shawnee	No. 3 Mid- American	
SOUTHBOUND	Miles						
	.0	Lv Chicago (Central Sta.)	AM 8:00	PM 3:00	PM 5:00	PM 7:00	PM 9:00
	6.6	Lv 63rd Street	8:10	3:10	5:10	7:10	9:10
	22.1	Lv Homewood	8:35	3:35	5:35	7:35	9:30
	54.5	Ar Kankakee	9:03	4:05	a 6:03	8:05	10:15
	79.8	Ar Gilman		f 4:27		8:18	10:35
	101.5	Ar Paxton		f 4:44			
	112.4	Ar Rantoul	9:47	4:55		8:55	11:05
	126.5	Ar Champaign	10:02	5:15	7:02	9:15	11:20
	148.5	Ar Tuscola				d 9:41	
	171.0	Ar Mattoon	10:48	6:01	7:48	10:01	12:25
	197.9	Ar Effingham	11:13	6:28	8:13	10:28	1:05
	251.1	Ar Centralia	11:59	7:12	9:00	11:12	1:45
	287.2	Ar DuQuoin	12:40	7:52		11:52	2:30
306.9	Ar Carbondale	1:05	8:20	10:05	12:20	2:55	
		PM	PM	PM	AM	AM	

☐ All Coach Seats reserved. Special Service Charge between Chicago and Carbondale. Excursion fares not valid.
a Stops on signal to receive passengers for Cairo and scheduled stops beyond.
d Stops on signal to receive or discharge passengers to or from Chicago.
f Flag stop Stops on signal to receive or discharge revenue passengers.
■ No facilities for checking baggage.
City of Miami service also available, every other day, consult agent. Excursion fare not valid.

		CARBONDALE, CHAMPAIGN, KANKAKEE to CHICAGO					
Effective February 2, 1970		No. 6 Panama Limited ☐	No. 10 Shawnee	No. 8 Illini	No. 4 Mid- American	No. 2 City of New Orleans	
NORTHBOUND	Miles						
	.0	Lv Carbondale	AM 4:00	AM 6:00	PM 1:00	PM 4:00	PM 7:00
	19.7	Lv DuQuoin		6:19	1:19	4:19	7:19
	55.8	Lv Centralia	5:02	7:02	2:02	5:02	8:02
	109.0	Lv Effingham	5:43	7:45	2:45	5:43	8:43
	135.9	Lv Mattoon	6:08	8:10	3:10	6:08	9:08
	158.4	Lv Tuscola		d 8:27			
	180.4	Lv Champaign	6:50	9:00	4:00	6:50	9:50
	194.5	Lv Rantoul		9:14	4:14	7:03	
	205.4	Lv Paxton					
	227.4	Lv Gilman		d 9:40	4:40		
	252.4	Lv Kankakee	7:48	10:03	5:03	7:48	10:48
	284.8	Ar Homewood	8:18	10:35	5:35	8:18	11:18
	300.3	Ar 63rd Street	8:40	10:57	5:57	8:35	11:40
306.9	Ar Chicago (Central Sta.)	9:05	11:20	6:20	8:55	12:05	
		AM	AM	PM	PM	AM	

☐ All Coach Seats reserved. Special Service Charge between Chicago and Carbondale. Excursion fares not valid.
d Stops on signal to receive or discharge passengers to or from Chicago.
■ No facilities for checking baggage.
City of Miami service also available, every other day, consult agent. Excursion fares not valid.

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serviced at the 27th Street roundhouse with major repairs done at Burnside. Later Woodcrest Shops performed this service after Burnside and 27th Street closed in 1970 and 1971.

New terminal facilities in Chicago were proposed by the IC from time to time to give the city a more aesthetic looking passenger station on the lakefront. The first proposal was in 1916 to build near the Field Museum replacing Central Station and accommodate all Chicago railroads except those using the C&NW and Union Stations. In the early 1920s another plan focused on a new station to serve the

Illinois Central, New York Central, Rock Island and the railroads serving Dearborn Station. This station would be along the south side of Roosevelt Road. which would bridge the tracks and continue through to Lake Shore Drive. In 1932 another proposal was made for the IC to build a new 50-story union passenger station serving all 15 railroads then using south side terminals. It was to be at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street and house offices of the railroad companies serving the terminal. A final proposal came as late as April of 1970 when the *IC Magazine* reported of a proposed passenger terminal

and home office for IC Industries in the vicinity of Central Station. None of these plans got off the drawing board for various reasons, mainly due to economic issues, disagreements among railroads, and the political climate at the time.

Ever since the 1920s, long-distance passenger volume declined due to the building of roads and rising automobile popularity. The Egyptian Trail, an "improved road," was started in 1915 between Chicago and Cairo and paralleled the IC almost its whole route. It was later overshadowed by better constructed US 45 and Illinois 49 in the 1920s. Except for suburban service, IC passenger miles peaked in 1920, went down during the Great Depression before rising to an all-time high in 1945 due to war time traffic. It then took a downward spiral all the way to 1970, the last full year of IC passenger service. Passenger deficits ranged from 12 million in 1951 to 18 million in 1956 and finally 17 million in 1970. During the post war era, president Wayne Johnston was addressing the deficit issue by reducing the number of local trains along with, cutting back Chicago and St. Louis round trips from three to one in 1958. Ways of cutting losses implemented in 1964 included Flexivan containers carrying U.S. Mail added to the *Louisiane*, *Creole* and *Seminole* between Chicago, Champaign and Carbondale. In 1961 RPO cars were purchased from the New York Central and modernized at Burnside to prove to the U.S. Postal Service that the railroad still cared about this business. Converted IC sleepers were also used for this service. Since 1951 U.S. mail was increasingly transported by truck contributing to the Railway Post Office's decline despite railroad investment. Many mail contracts were cancelled in October 1967, eventually being eliminated by 1969, when the Chicago to Carbondale RPO was discontinued on the City of New Orleans.

The early 1960s was a good time to acquire second hand equipment. Between 1958 and 1963, 19 ex-NYC sleepers; seven chair cars and a diner from the C&EI; and eight sleeping cars from the Nickel Plate were acquired. An interesting accommodation on the all-Pullman *Panama Limited* between 1948 and 1967 was addition of a parlor car between Chicago and Carbondale using a heavyweight rebuilt in Burnside Shops seating 40. This



◀ The last *City of Miami*, train 53 is captured departing Central Station on April 30, 1971. Signal Maintainer William Jaenicke, the author's father, had the honor of hooping train orders to the fireman on that momentous day. The next day May 1st, was the first day of Amtrak's operations. Amtrak's Chicago to Florida train was the *South Wind* using a different route as a daily service to Florida. Prior to Amtrak the *South Wind* departed from Chicago and Miami, respectively, on the days the *City of Miami* did not depart from these cities. The last run of Amtrak's *South Wind* was on November 14, 1971.—Author's Collection

permitted college students or businessmen to avoid the cost of purchasing sleeper space between these two points. These acquisitions and services proved that the IC still cared about their passengers. But they couldn't prevent what was happening nationwide to the railroad passenger business. Throughout the 1960s the Chicago to Carbondale corridor maintained strong ridership despite the completion of I-57 in the late 1960s which paralleled it the entire distance. Special trains catering to students at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and Southern Illinois University in Carbondale offered coach accommodations in mostly heavyweight cars and cars leased from other railroads. These "Student Specials" ran northward on Friday afternoon, southward on Sunday evenings, and semester breaks. In addition, multiple football specials operated to Champaign from Chicago during the fall season. The July 1961 *IC Magazine* ran a story of a special post prom train consisting of 15 cars and 486 students from Rich East High School in Park Forest, riding overnight from Homewood to Carbondale. Students were entertained by staff and students at SIU on arrival the next morning, returning back to Homewood that day. En route was dancing in a specially outfitted baggage car with legendary Chicago DJ Dick Biondi spinning records. These were some of the specials the IC offered student groups. Proof of the popularity of the IC trains during this era can be shown in the train sheets from Monee (MX) interlocking on November 25, 1964, the day before

Thanksgiving, showing the southbound *City of Miami* and *Seminole* operating in two sections. Both trains also operated in two sections northbound. On Thanksgiving Day (26th) the northbound *City of New Orleans* operated in two sections arriving at Central Station in the wee morning hours.

Presidential candidates also used the IC for reaching potential voters. Dwight Eisenhower rode from Chicago to Tolono in 1952. In October of 1960 Vice President Richard Nixon rode a campaign special from Tolono, where the train was delivered to the IC by the Wabash, to Carbondale. Intermediate stops were made at Tuscola, Mattoon and Centralia. Barry Goldwater, Republican presidential candidate in 1964, also used a campaign train making stops at Carbondale, Centralia, Effingham, Mattoon and Champaign.

The Grand Finale

The pro passenger Wayne Johnston years ended with his 1966 retirement. William B. Johnson, an attorney by profession and president of Railway Express Agency, became the new IC president. Johnson immediately addressed the passenger deficit by eliminating secondary trains with little chance of earning money and by promoting ones with earning potential. Paul Reistrup, former director of passenger services at the B&O, was hired in the summer of 1967 to cut the \$18 million a year passenger deficit. This was a major task considering that some U.S. Mail contracts were cancelled that year.

He combined passenger operations with sales, head-end traffic, pricing, dining and market research into a "profit center." Out of this effort was born "Mini-Corridor Service" between Chicago and Carbondale reducing both local stops and travel time (5 hours) between the two points. Service was geared toward travel to and from state universities: the University of Illinois (Champaign), Southern Illinois University (Carbondale) and Eastern Illinois University (located in Charleston but served through Mattoon). Another traffic source was Chanute Air Force Base (Rantoul). Rescheduling of trains resulted in a "memory schedule" of departures from Chicago and Carbondale, catering to the needs of students. Five trains in each direction were listed in the timetable as serving this corridor including the *City of New Orleans* and *Panama Limited* that were destined beyond Carbondale. The *City of Miami* that operated every other day was not shown in the Mini-Corridor timetables. The *Campus* (25 and 28) was the former southbound *Southern Express* to New Orleans. It was discontinued south of Carbondale in March of 1967, becoming the first train scheduled only between that city and Chicago. The old schedule leaving Chicago at 11:30 p.m. was followed until March of 1969 when, renamed the *Illini* (7) its departure was changed to 3:00 p.m. During this time the *Louisiane's* (3 and 4) destination was cut from New Orleans to Memphis. Renamed *Mid-American*, it later was also cut to Carbondale. The *Seminole* (9 and 10) became a corridor train after

discontinuance south of Carbondale from its previous Jacksonville, Florida destination. It was renamed the *Shawnee*. All changes were meant to benefit the Mini Corridor traffic. Scheduled times for the *City of New Orleans*, *City of Miami* and *Panama Limited* remained the same, but dining services were reduced and their round end observation cars eliminated. The *Panama Limited* added a coach section called "The Magnolia Star" to supplement its declining sleeper business. Seven dome cars and five food-bar-coach cars were purchased second hand from Missouri Pacific in 1967 and 1968, respectively, with the dome cars being used on the *City of New Orleans* and *City of Miami*. The food-bar-coach cars were used on Mini Corridor trains. During this time, it was decided something had to be done to replace the worn out E unit fleet. New locomotive power was considered but management considered it cost effective to trade five older E7 units to Precision National for five ex-FEC E9 units in better condition. Four of the IC's vintage E units were rebuilt at Paducah from 1967 to 1969, but this rebuilding program was cancelled after the arrival of the ex-FEC E units.

It was in 1969 when I had my first encounter with the *Mid-American* at the Matteson suburban platform. My dad was a signal maintainer at Central Station (Weldon tower) and every Saturday night I would beg him to walk the few blocks with me from our house to the IC suburban platform. Train 3 left Central Station at 9:00 p.m. due in Homewood at 9:30 p.m. which put it in Matteson a little past 9:30 p.m. Dad would call the dispatcher at Central Station to check its status from the company phone inside the platform warming house. I was hoping some waiting passenger would see how important my dad was by unlocking the metal box which housed the phone and engaging in railroad talk with the dispatcher.

After we knew it was running on time, the suspense began by looking for the headlight coming down track 3 from the north. It didn't take long for this dim headlight to get bright and hearing the loud sound of singing wheels coming at me. Before I knew it, three roaring E units blasted by me. I have to admit I did step a few feet in back of the yellow line on the suburban platform as this was happening. I would always try to get a glimpse of the



▲ On March 5, 1972, IC 4038 is leading an early Amtrak train at Central Station that is an all IC consist. This photo was taken the day before Central Station closed on March 6, 1972. Until this time, trains operating on the IC were the only Amtrak trains not operating out of Chicago Union Station. Thus, Amtrak was using a pool of IC cars and locomotives for its service between Chicago, Carbondale and New Orleans. Thereafter, all Amtrak service used Union Station and what IC equipment Amtrak acquired was scattered across Amtrak's system. The locomotive consist is E9A 4038, E9A 4034 and "E10A" 2021. IC's 2000-series E-units were E8s rebuilt at IC's Paducah, Kentucky Shops into what the railroad called "E10" models. Only four were completed (three E8As and one E8B) prior to Amtrak assuming responsibility for intercity passenger train operation. The 2021 was originally E8A 4029. Note that the Green Diamond logo is still on the Annex Building's roof.—Paul Hunnell photo, Bruce C. Nelson Collection

engineer, but all I could see was the dimly lit cab of the head E unit. Almost all the time I would wave, hoping the engineer would see me and sometimes I would be rewarded with a quick acknowledgment of his horn.

As the train sped by, I could see the lights of passing coaches, trying to get a glimpse to see who was lucky to be riding on this train. The smell of diesel exhaust along with the sounds of the passing cars going 70 mph at night was breathtaking for a 10-year-old. After the train passed, I could see the home signals to the south in distant Richton Park changing from green to red which added to the drama. After this great show, it was time to stop at IC Pizza across the street from the station and pick up the sausage pizza we had ordered. Upon arriving home, I asked my mom if she heard a short blast of a railroad engine horn about 10 minutes ago. She would just smile and say, "I've might have heard something" and then wanted to know if we were ready for our pizza.

Even though ridership increased with the emphasis on the corridor schedule, deficits were still rising with an \$8 million

out-of-pocket loss in 1970. In addition, equipment needing replacement was estimated to cost over \$66 million. As a side note, it was decided to eliminate dome cars on both the *City of New Orleans* and *City of Miami* in February of 1971 as a cost cutting move. Former Secretary of Transportation, Alan Boyd, who became IC president in 1969 said in a 1970 interview that railroad passenger service was either unnecessary or should be viewed as a social service paid for by the government.

When Congress passed legislation in 1970 to take over the nation's intercity passenger service, it was a no brainer for the IC to join the new corporation called Amtrak, paying a onetime charge of \$28 million to rid itself of the trains. On May 1, 1971, Amtrak took over the IC passenger business and kept the *City of New Orleans* and the Chicago to Carbondale *Shawnee* in its new schedule. To this day, Chicago to Carbondale is a viable passenger operation with Amtrak offering three daily trains in each direction, thanks in no small part to the IC developed mini-corridor.

We wish to thank Fred Ash for his contribution to this article.