

The



# GREEN DIAMOND

ILLINOIS CENTRAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CHICAGO 1856

GREAT CENTRAL  
STATION



# All Concerned

ISSUE NUMBER SIX

Does The Green Diamond carry the stories and information that you want to see? While the magazine made great strides during the past year, much remains to be done to make The Green Diamond both informative and appealing. The history of the Illinois Central provides us with rich and varied subjects. There are, however, three factors which limit our efforts.

The first constraint is financial. The number of pages and photos per issue and the total number of issues per year is dictated by our funds. While membership is increasing, our total resources have barely kept up with inflation. There are favorable signs, however: hobby shop sales have tripled this year as more shops carry the magazine. We are also near the minimum number of issues necessary for getting a non-profit postage permit.

The second concern is staffing. Increasing the number of people involved in the production of the magazine does more than easing the workload. Bringing various viewpoints to the work not only broadens the scope, but also improves editorial accuracy. Several individuals have expressed an interest in helping with production so this area will improve as well. It is not too late to express an interest in learning magazine layout or production--and you will undoubtedly find it a gratifying endeavor.

The final constraint is adequate material for publication. Work in this area has involved both short term projects and long term plans. For the long-term, a card catalogue of IC articles is being constructed with over 2000 entries to date. The card catalogues of twenty libraries and a detailed listing of Illinois Central Magazine (1916 to 1930 complete) indexed by subject, location, engine or car number will support future research projects. Several projects already in process include:

1. The 1942 Panama Limited
2. The Green Diamond trainset
3. Dining cars and crews
4. Strawberry/Banana trains

A complete listing of potential articles is available upon request. Members having useful information or photos are encouraged to send a short description of there material to the address below or to call Publication Chairman Fred Ash at (312) 764-0417.

John D. Mitchell	- President
Terry McMahon	- Vice President
Jeanine Cox	- Secretary
Andy O'Brien	- Treasury
R.W. O'Brien	- Membership
Joe Zydlo	- Board Member
Dave Fraser	- Board Member
Kevin Kurt	- Board Member
David Daisy	- Board Member
Peter Roehm	- Board Member
Mark Rendak	- Board Member



**ILLINOIS CENTRAL  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

556 South Elizabeth  
Lombard, Illinois 60148

*THE*

*WAGON FLEET*



## *the illinois central in chicago*

The Illinois Central without a line to Chicago? It almost happened that way. The earliest proposals for a central railroad were unanimously in favor of a Galena to Cairo route designed to open the interior of the State of Illinois to settlement. The Land Grant legislation which laid the financial foundation for the Illinois Central Railroad contained an article which had been absent from the two earlier charters; it stipulated that a branch was to be built from the mid-point of the Galena -Cairo mainline to the town of Chicago on Lake Michigan. This clause only partially reflected Chicago's rising commercial importance--an increasing stature which cannot in retrospect be denied as Chicago like many other prairie towns was booming. The towns of Milwaukee, Galena, St. Louis, and Peoria, however, were considered the major trading centers of the Midwest. And despite the fact that Chicago was terminus for the Illinois and Michigan Canal and of the short but flourishing Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, future prospects did not look promising. The sand dunes and marshes which surrounded the fledgling city were shunned by farmers and other settlers; Chicago had no local market to serve.

What motivated Congress to stipulate a branch to Chicago in the Land Grant Act of 1850? A growing sectionalist feeling had gripped the nation during the 1840's, a feeling most evident in the halls of Congress. To obtain the critical support of Southern legislators for the Central railroad grant, the Act provided for a connecting road, the Mobile and Ohio, which was a popular project in Dixie. This latter inclusion,

however, alienated many potential Eastern backers. The commerce of the Mississippi Valley floated down to New Orleans markets, but the businessmen of the east saw different possibilities for the future. If the IC were to build to the northeast corner of the Illini State, a connection could be made with the rail lines the Easterners were slowly pushing westward. The trade of the Midwest would then flow to the Atlantic seaboard. Out of conflicting interests, the bill for the first Land Grant railroad was forged. It dictated that the Illinois Central would build a wishbone-shaped line with one end in Chicago.

Not everyone was happy with the compromise effected in Congress. Supporters of the project feared that overly-ambitious requirements would jeopardize the entire scheme. The original sponsor of the Land Grant Act, Sydney Breese, had a more damaging charge; he claimed that Stephan A. Douglas, the "Little Giant" famous for his debates with Abraham Lincoln and author of the compromise, had purchased large land holdings along Lake Michigan south of Chicago for speculation and had pushed for the compromise to further his own interests.

As the likelihood of a lakeside terminal for the IC increased, the iron rails of other companies were drawn to the lodestone of Chicago. The Michigan Central and Michigan Southern companies affirmed Chicago as their western goal. A new enterprise, the Chicago and Rock Island, was organized, and the Aurora Branch (CB&O) entered Chicago over trackage rights. These activities attracted a new type of settler. Many of the people who came to the West were city dwellers who brought skills in specialized trades; they were masons, brewmasters, and coopers. In the process, they transformed Chicago from a retail and outfitting town into a regional wholesaling center. Between 1850 and 1853 the population of Chicago doubled to almost 70,000.

The fact that six railroads either served or intended to serve Chicago placed the Illinois Central in a difficult situation. While the IC organized, arranged financial support, and recruited a professional staff, the speculators secured the best terminal properties. The land speculators knew that a specific type of property was needed. The best sites were close to the business district and of adequate size to hold railyards. Wharfage on either the river or the lake was also necessary since the majority of freight would be exchanged with lake vessels.

Another storm was brewing on the horizon. Two Michigan firms, the Central and the Southern, were building toward Chicago and both needed the permission of the Illinois legislature to construct trackage within the state. This right was denied by legislative vote much to the horror of Chicagoans. They knew that Michigan City, Indiana, a minor harbor and proposed terminus of the New Albany and Salem Railroad, had openly courted both Michigan roads for terminal status. Banner headlines charged legislative graft, but several sources suggested an economic motive for the denial of the Michigan charters. The solons of Illinois certainly did not seek to lose forever a major trade advantage to another state. Rather, the state had a vested interest in seeing the Illinois Central in operation and the trade of the prairies moving south before the Easterners could tap this new market. The IC's charter provided that seven percent of its revenues would be paid to the State treasury in lieu of property taxes. Obviously, a long haul for the IC meant more money in the public treasury.

Chicago's problem with the Michigan roads was aggravated by William Butler Ogden. Ogden was Chicago's most successful real estate promoter, first mayor of the city, and president of the Galena and Chicago Union and the Northern Indiana railroads. The latter line was being graded from Michigan City to the Illinois state line and Ogden sold it to the Michigan Southern to facilitate their construction in Indiana. The Michigan Central made similar arrangements with the New Albany and Salem, but both Michigan firms remained about twelve miles short of Chicago. Chicagoans soon realized that Ogden already had a charter from their city to the state line. The Galena and Chicago Union charter was sufficiently vague to allow construction of the missing link. Ogden now proposed to build this line and allow both Michigan roads and the New Albany and Salem trackage rights into the city. Were Chicagoans happy with this resolution of their problem? Hardly. They almost ran Ogden out of town on one of his own rails. In Ogden's plan the actual transfer point between east and west was at the state line adjacent to Lake Calumet, the only spot on the south shore of Lake Michigan capable of offering better harbor facilities than the Chicago River. Since Ogden had made his fortune platting townsites, the people who had invested in Chicago's future were understandably dubious of his plan. Under pressure Ogden retracted his proposal.

If the legislature would not give the Michigan companies charters, then existing Illinois charters would have to be found. Coincidentally, two new Illinois companies had just been chartered: the IC and the Chicago and Rock Island. The Rock Island soon agreed to build a branch to connect with the Michigan Southern. With one eastern road guaranteed a Chicago terminal, the IC had little to gain by freezing out its rival, the Michigan Central. This arrangement met with general public approval since no single party could build a city to rival Chicago. For the IC, there was much to be gained by this new union even if it lost its long haul to the South. Besides gaining a friendly connection, the IC got the Michigan Central to survey and build the twelve mile line. Since the IC had yet to hire surveyors and contractors, this deal was a great time-saver. The contract also called for the MC to purchase certain IC securities which were not in great demand on Wall Street. In return the MC was to receive lucrative down-state construction contracts from the IC.



TOP RIGHT:

Chicago had a population of 60, 662 when this view was published in 1853. Four years later this number had climbed to 93,000. This view is the only rendering of the temporary depot built by the IC prior to the erection of Great Central Station. The G&CU depot is north of the bridge to the right of the fork of the river.



LEFT:

Even before it erected a permanent passenger station, the IC built a stone fronted building to house its land department. Land sales were of greater importance to the new company than passenger comfort.

CHICAGO HISTOICAL SOCIETY PHOTO

BOTTOM RIGHT:

The map which infuriated Chicagoans in 1851 when it was file with the Federal Land Office. The original plan of the Railroad was to build a depot and yards in the area labeled DDDDD and to build a bridge at CCC. The map, taken from an exhibit in the litigation between the MC and the IC over terminal charges has never before been published.

COURTESY OF THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLECTION OF THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY

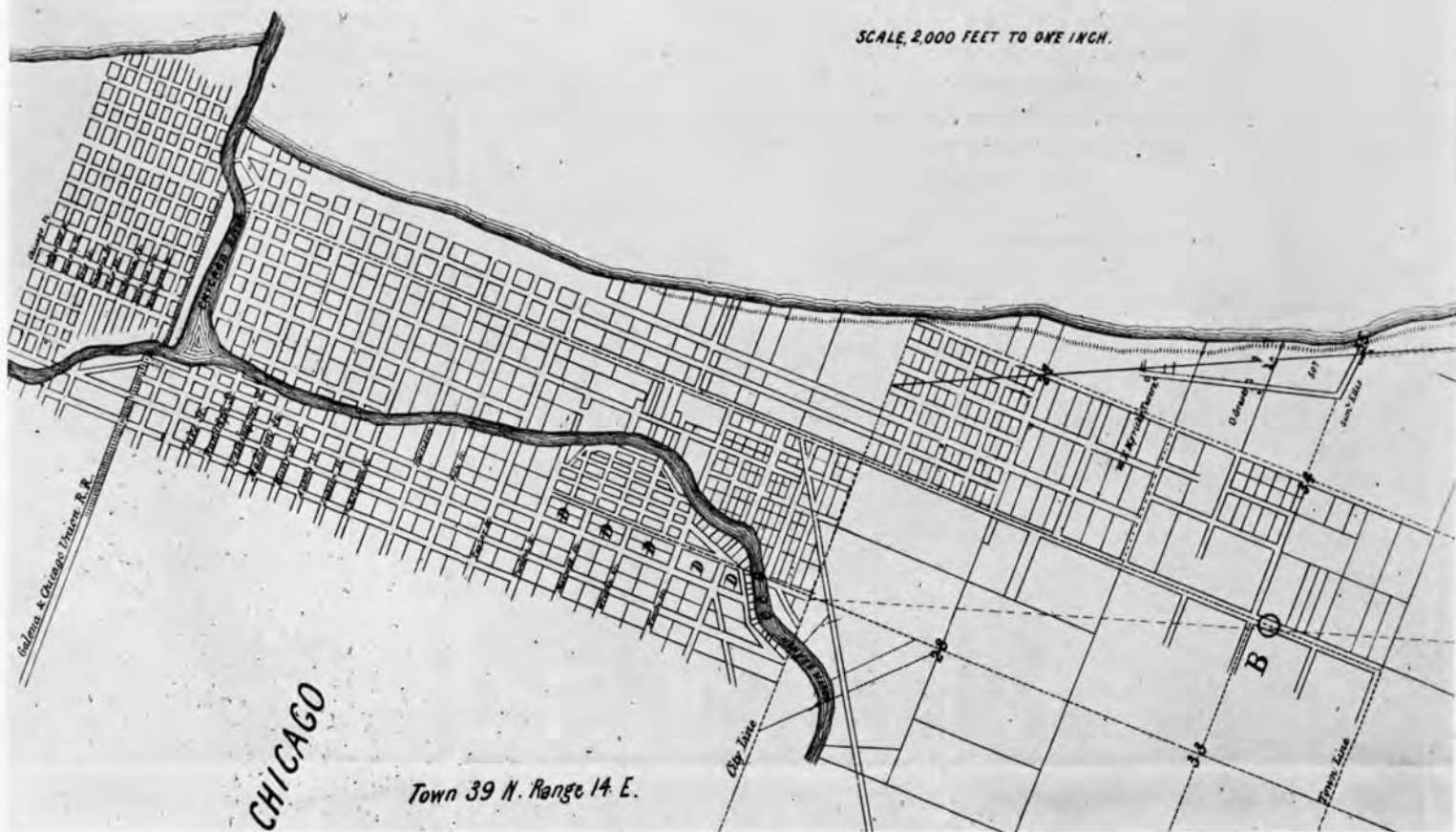




**E**

*January 1851.*

*SCALE, 2,000 FEET TO ONE INCH.*



The IC/MC leaders made several costly mistakes in their planning. Unlike the Rock Island, which quickly purchased station grounds and then surveyed a route to its land holdings, the Central roads tried the opposite approach. The sight of R.H. Murray, the Michigan Central surveyor, and his chainmen scurrying over every lot south of town was hardly a balm for speculative fevers. Murry ran a dozen lines into town to confuse his enemies but, as we shall see he only succeeded in confusing his employers.

On July 7, 1851 IC President Schuyler wrote Roswell Mason, the newly appointed Construction Superintendent "that (we) should build to a G&CU connection and to the northerly boundry of the city...to occupy all approaches." Shortly thereafter the IC submitted a map of its proposed line with the Federal Land Office. This map did not show the line running directly from downstate to Chicago as expected; rather, the IC made a bee-line to the Indiana border near Lake Calumet. After it joined the Michigan Central at the border, the line headed on an inland route to a terminal on the west bank of the Chicago near the present location of Union Station. Publication of this map caused the IC much grief even though the survey had been made by the MC. For one, land speculators held some of the property shown as the terminal grounds. Two, the survey was politically naive. It missed the landholdings of Stephen A. Douglas by a mile. This was coupled with the fact that the proposed route almost duplicated the earlier proposal of William Butler Ogden. It also received duplicate public response. IC officials reported that they were physically accosted in the streets. The Chicago City Council went so far as to appropriate \$10,000 to send a representative to Europe to dissuade investors from buying IC bonds. At the same meeting, the Aldermen subscribed to \$100,000 in Rock Island bonds, the only city funds ever authorized for the promotion of railroads in Chicago history.

On October 18, 1851, IC President Schuyler again wrote Roswell Mason to: "arrange a route satisfactory with (Mayor) Gurnee and (Senator) Douglas." In November, Mason sent the Board of Directors the "satisfactory" route. From the City limits at Twelfth Street, the line hugged the shore of Lake Michigan for twelve miles and then headed due south. A branch from Kensington would connect with the Michigan Central. North of Twelfth Street, a trestle and breakwater over a mile in length and two hundred feet into the lake would parallel the shore. Finally, a portion of the Fort Dearborn Reservation would be used as the base for an extensive landfill at the mouth of the Chicago River for the subsequent erection of a station and yards.

The Michigan Central was displeased by the new route, even though it was one of the lines drawn by their own surveyor. They claimed that it was proposed only to fool speculators. The MC was furious at another change in the plans too. The IC Board abrogated the construction contract and replaced it with the singular condition that \$2million in IC bonds be purchased; trackage rights would then be sold to the MC based upon a percentage of use. The MC had no alternative but to accept this contract if it did not want to see its rival, the Michigan Southern preempt all of Chicago's traffic with the East. The relationship between the MC and the IC became complicated at this point. On the one hand, the high cost of the line prompted a decade of law suits over astronomical trackage charges. On the other hand, the MC came to hold the largest block of IC securities. Several officers such as James Joy held posts on both railroads.



In later years, the IC insisted that it had been forced into the lake by a City Council intent upon having a private company build the protective breakwaters which the municipality could not afford. This argument is partially true. The dredging of a ship channel at the mouth of the Chicago River had so altered the natural lake currents that the fashionable home along Michigan Avenue were in danger of being washed away as the beaches eroded. There were, however; other compelling reasons for the lakeside route which the IC later chose to forget. In a letter dated April 20, 1860, William Osborn, one of the principals, listed what he remembered of the lakefront routes appeal:

1. No street crossings.
2. A direct line to the center of the Business District then located along Lake Street.
3. The right to use locomotive power at unrestricted speed.

The last item refers to a portion of the Chicago City Code which prohibited the operation of locomotives within the city limits. Osborn wrote: "It was suggested that the savings by hauling by locomotive in place of horses would compensate for any possible extra cost of the line." The ordinance prohibiting locomotives was repealed before the IC completed its lakefront line into the city.

The legal machinery was put in gear. Bills transferring the lake-bottom "land" from the State to the City and then to the Railroad were drafted. The IC was so certain that this route would be approved that in December 1851 it started construction from the city limits to Calumet (now Kensington). It did not, however, build to the state line, and the Michigan Central was forced to build two miles of track into Illinois without the legal authority to do so and after paying two million dollars to the IC. On May 21, 1852, the Michigan Central ran a train from Detroit into a temporary station erected at Thiteenth Street. Built on the east side of Michigan Avenue, this station was reached by " a temporary track laid over the prarie from Twenty Third Street."



On June 22, 1852, the Chicago Board of Aldermen authorized the transfer of the right-of way in the lake to the railroad. An attempt six months earlier to execute this transfer had been vetoed by Mayor Gurnee as "giving away the lakeshore of our city." The Mayor was upset that the trackage spoiled the shoreline of the city's major park; a park given to the city by a land grant corporation even older than the IC: The Illinois and Michigan Canal. The Canal Commissioners' stipulation that the land remain "forever free and clear of buildings" was the reason the Railroad had to build its tracks into the lake rather than along the shore. The Aldermen over-rode the Mayor's veto but a century of feuding between the Railroad and the City had begun.

Work on the trestle commenced in September 1852, and the landfill was strated shortly thereafter. They took nearly two years to complete.

Mr. Bross, the construction contractor, described the fill stating, "This great work commences at the south pier (of the Chicago River) and extends one thousand two hundred and fifty seven feet into the lake... in all six hundred and fifty nine feet( in lenght). The upper portion of the crib work is built of square timber twelve by twelve, locked together every ten feet and the intermediate space is filled with stone. The area thus enclosed and rescued from the domain of the lake is thirty-three acres."

The trestle was started from Sixteenth Street and hugged the western boundry of the right-of way, while a breakwater protected the lakeward side. Two-thirds of the trestle was double track resting on four lines of piles. The south end was single track resting on but two lines of piles.

The Michigan Central had been correct in its objection to the lake-front line's cost. The final cost for trackage from Kensington was:

Right of way	\$189,488
Lake shore protection	440,452
Grading and piling	<u>559,041</u>
	\$1,188,981

In comparison, the Michigan Central-Rock Island line cost but \$150,000. Ten years later the Pittsburg, Fort Wayne and Chicago entered the last named city with twelve miles of Illinois track costing \$121,000 which included a bridge over the Chicago River.

A temporary passenger station was constructed as soon as sufficient land had been filled. Little is known of this structure which measured 100 feet long by 30 feet wide. Constructed of wood, entrance was gained from South Water Street. The first train into this station arrived December 3, 1853; it arrived empty, reportedly because no one trusted the safety of the long trestle.

Construction of Chicago's permanent passenger station was started in July of 1855, along plans which were worthy of any of the world's capitol cities. The train shed was a startling 504 feet long by 166 feet wide. The pioneer bridge builders of Stone and bloomer had erected this train shed which was large enough to hold a 125 foot, two story building for baggage and trainmens' offices entirely under its roof. On the north the arched shed was connected to a headhouse and office building which towered three and a half stories over South Water Street. The only local criticism of the station design was that it was too large for practical operation. What other fault could be voiced of a structure whose train shed leaped eight tracks with a single span. The iron Howe trusses supporting the roof spanned 166 feet and were reported to be the longest in the world.

The terminal, quickly named "Great Central Station" was the first Chicago work of architect Otto H. Matz, recently arrived from the East. Matz quickly established himself as the city's leading designer of large structures, and Great Central which cost \$180,000, was the town's largest building for several years. The station was, in fact, one of the few buildings in town designed by an architect. Most of the city's buildings were erected by local craftsmen—skilled but without formal training. The contrast in building construction methods which several decades of settlement had brought to Chicago was apparent the moment a traveler left the station; next door stood the decaying stockade of Fort Dearborn.

Great Central was lavish compared to any other building in town. The exterior was faced with cream-colored limestone from the Lockport quarries. When the offices of the Illinois Central were opened, on the top two floors, they were among the first in Illinois completely illuminated by gas. These offices were opened in January 1856 and trains were using to station well before the official opening on June 21.



GREAT RAILWAY STATION AT CHICAGO—DEPARTURE OF A TRAIN.

FRONT COVER:

The main entrance to Great Central Station was the scene of considerable activity even when there were no passenger trains in the depot. As the railroad and express companies did not have their own local delivery wagons, local teamsters carried most local deliveries to the freight houses which surrounded the station. Abraham Lincoln made many visits to the IC offices located on the second floor and a half dozen IC officials became Generals in the Civil War which followed because of their long association with the President.

PREVIOUS PAGE:

Chicago took its name from the Indian designation "place of wild onions" and the native population was much in evidence among the newer inhabitants—at least the artist for Appletons Journal, a predecessor of the Official Guide, saw it that way in 1870.

BELOW:

Illinois Central, Michigan Central and Chicago Burlington and Quincy equipment can be seen at the south end of the station. All arrivals were handled on the eastern (right) tracks which extended through the station. This feature allowed locomotives which, at the time, had water pumps powered by connection to the drivers, to leave their trains in the train shed. Engines which stood still required hand-pumping of water to their boilers, a task eliminated by this design of the station tracks.

ALL OF THE ABOVE: Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

