

Using the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections

Illinois Central Railroad: Its formation, growth, and commemoration

RAILROADS. VOITC
ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD.

New Station is Tribute to Civic Pride of Twin Cities

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD.
TRAINS LEAVE TOLONO.

Going North.....	9:00 P. M
“ “.....	1:00 A. M
Going South.....	1:00 A. M
“ “.....	1:20 P. M

TRAINS LEAVE DECATUR STATION.

Going North.....	5:42 A. M
“ “.....	6:20 P. M
.....	6:35 A. M
.....	6:35 P. M

W. P. JOHNSON,
General Passenger Agent.

RAILROAD  GAZETTE.

The Illinois Central Railroad connects the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, running through the length of Illinois. Founded in 1851, the Illinois Central Railroad played a vital role in American industry, commerce, labor, and tourism, especially in Illinois. This guide compiles articles from historical Illinois newspapers found in the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections. It is divided into four research areas: Early History; Champaign, IL Depots; Labor and Industry; Tourism and Recreation; Advertisements and Visual History; and Commemoration and Reflection.

The Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections hosts digitized historical newspapers from across Illinois. Digitized newspapers in the IDNC are freely available for anyone, anywhere to use.

Suggested newspapers:

- [Western Railroad Gazette](#). Chicago, Ill. Digitized dates: November 15, 1856, through March 19, 1870 (290 issues)
- [Strike Bulletin](#). Clinton, Ill. Digitized dates: April 9, 1913, through May 12, 1915 (106 issues)

Suggested searches:

- **Keywords:** “central station,” “Doane House,” “Illinois Central,” “Illinois Central Railroad,” “Illinois Central Rail Road,” “Illinois Central Railway,” “I.C. Rail,” “IC Railroad”
- **Dates:** 1851, 1898, 1923, 1924

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ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD: EARLY HISTORY

Starting in the first half of the 19th century, railroad companies worked with governments to establish railroads in Illinois to transport trade goods and people through key cities in the state. In 1851, the Illinois Central Railroad (I. C. R. R.) company received a land grant to use federal and state land to construct a railroad to span the entire length of the state. In the years surrounding the construction, there were numerous legal battles about appropriate taxation and liability, including *Illinois Central Railroad v. McLean County*, 17 Ill. 291 (1855), *Sprague v. Illinois River Railroad Co.*, 19 Ill. 174 (1857), and *The State of Illinois v. The Illinois Central Railroad Company* 27 Ill 64 (1861), in all which Abraham Lincoln defended I. C. R. R. in the Illinois Supreme Court.

Sangamo Journal / Illinois State Journal (Springfield, IL)

["CHICAGO AND CAIRO RAIL ROAD,"](#)

December 13, 1848 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18481213.2.193>

["The Illinois Central Rail Road."](#)

February 14, 1850 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18500214.2.149>

["Illinois Central Rail Road."](#)

January 29, 1851 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18510129.2.132>

["The Central Rail Road Bill."](#)

February 10, 1851 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18510210.2.132>

["Synopsis of Senate Bill."](#)

February 10, 1851 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18510210.2.130>

["Meeting at Chicago,"](#)

March 24, 1852 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18520324.2.147>

Articles on Lincoln's legal connection to the ICRR:

["CAN COUNTIES TAX CENTRAL RAILROAD LANDS?"](#)

January 23, 1856 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18560123.2.60>

["OFF."](#)

July 15, 1859 (page 3)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SJO18590715.2.68>

Galena Daily Advertiser (Galena, IL)

["THE RAILROAD LAWS --- HOW DO WE STAND?"](#)

December 20, 1850 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=GDA18501220-01.1.2>

Urbana Daily Courier (Urbana, IL)

["Retrospect--Early Experiences of Newspapers--Boys of '53: TALES OF URBANA BY HER PIONEERS,"](#)

July 1, 1911 (page 5)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19110701.2.44>

["LINCOLN FIRST MET GEORGE B. M'CLELLAN IN COURT AT CLINTON,"](#)

February 17, 1923 (page 8)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19230217.2.73>

Daily Illini (Champaign, IL)

["FINAL DECREE IS RENDERED IN I. C. SUIT: Twenty Year Court Contest Ends in Railroad's Paying Taxes, Assuming Costs,"](#)

November 25, 1926 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19261125.2.2>

DEPOTS OF CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

The Illinois Central has had a long history in Champaign County. Throughout the years, there have been several train depots throughout the town.

Prior to a dedicated train depot in Champaign, the Doane House served as a train station, hotel, meeting space, and eating house from 1856 until it was destroyed in a fire in 1898. On the same day as the fire, Champaign citizens were quick to vocalize support for a new union depot that could provide more spacious accommodations.

The Champaign Daily News (Champaign, IL)

["THE DOANE HOUSE IN ASHES: Champaign's Oldest and Best Known Hotel Destroyed by Fire Early This Forenoon,"](#)

July 12, 1898 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18980712.1.1>

["FOR A NEW UNION DEPOT.: Citizens Sign Petitions to the Illinois Central Railroad Company."](#)

July 13, 1898 (page 5)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18980713.1.5>

The first dedicated train depot was the Illinois Central Depot built by the Illinois Central Railroad Company in 1898. The station was constructed on the east side of E. Main Street in downtown Champaign. The depot functioned as Champaign's passenger station from 1899 until 1924, when a more spacious depot was needed for the growing community. For the new central depot to be built, the old station was moved slowly on rails to the northern freight yard, while also functioning as a station during relocation. Since 2013, the old station building has been the location of Black Dog Smoke & Ale House, a local restaurant.

The Champaign Daily News (Champaign, IL)

["THE NEW CENTRAL DEPOT.: It Will Be a Strictly Modern and Commodious Structure,"](#)

August 10, 1898 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18980810.1.4>

["OUR NEW \\$25,000 DEPOT.: Some Indications That the Central Is Getting Ready to Begin Work,"](#)

August 20, 1898 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18980820.1.1>

["THE NEW CENTRAL DEPOT: A Chicago Company Writes That It Has the Contract,"](#)

October 25, 1898 (page 5)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18981025.1.5>

["THAT NEW CENTRAL DEPOT.: Latest in Regard to the Mayor's Attitude on This Question,"](#)

November 12, 1898 (page 5)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18981114.1.5>

["TO RECONSIDER ITS ACTION: City Council Meeting Friday Night for That Purpose: I. C. DEPOT MAY BE RELOCATED,"](#)

December 7, 1898 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18981207.1.1>

["NEW DEPOT GOING UP FAST: Illinois Central Has 107 Men at Work on the Structure,"](#)

December 17, 1898 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=CDN18981217.1.4>

In 1923, the Illinois Central Railroad Company proposed to construct a new Illinois Central Depot in Champaign to accommodate for increasing traffic caused by university students and the rich farming industry in the region. The improvements included the new train station, connected business offices, elevation of the train line, construction of subway passages, and adjustments to multiple streets downtown Champaign. The joint project between the city of Champaign and Illinois Central Railroad Company opened in August 1924.

Daily Illini (Champaign, IL)

"I. C. MAY BUILD NEW \$1,500,000 DEPOT, VIADUCT: Elevation Project Assured if Champaign and Traction Company Share Expense,"

January 28, 1923 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19230128.2.1>

"I. C. WILL BUILD \$800,000 DEPOT; WITH CITY HELP.: Ordinance Drafted in Chicago To Come Before Council Tomorrow; Ready in Fall,"

March 11, 1923 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19230311.2.1>

"New I. C. Station and Improvements Approved By Voters Yesterday,"

April 25, 1923 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19230425.2.33>

"I. C. ENGINEER PLANS SUBWAY WITH CITY: Thompson Arranges Details of Elevation with Officials of Champaign,"

May 3, 1923 (page 6)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19230503.2.80>

"Old Timers Recall Bits of Champaign's History As Subway Builders Move I. C. Station To Oblivion,"

June 20, 1923 (page 7)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19230620.2.87>

"NEW EQUIPMENT FOR STATION IS ARRIVING DAILY: Division Quarters Already in New Building; Furniture Being Installed in Offices,"

July 10, 1924 (page 3)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19240710.2.48>

"Station Ceremony Today Marks Realization of Long Felt Need: President Markham To Dedicate \$400,000 Building at 2:30 O'clock; Dobbins Will Reply for City,"

August 9, 1924 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19240809.2.30>

"The Realization of a Long-Needed Twin City Improvement," [ILLUSTRATION]

August 10, 1924 (page 3)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19240810.2.48>

"Illinois Central Completes Big \$1,500,000 Improvement Here,"

September 21, 1924 (page 10)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19240921.2.117>

["BACK TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS! BACK THE TEAM!" \[ILLUSTRATION\]](#)

October 27, 1934 (page 7)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19341027.2.88>

The Urbana Daily Courier (Champaign, IL)

["The Proposed Illinois Central Passenger Station for Champaign,"](#)

March 12, 1923 (page 8)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19230312.2.66>

["ASSOCIATION OF COMMERCE CONGRATULATES CHAMPAIGN,"](#)

July 7, 1924 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19240707.2.3>

["CHAMPAIGN INVITES URBANA TO HELP DEDICATE STATION,"](#)

July 8, 1924 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19240708.2.4>

["Put Finishing Touches on Job,"](#)

August 7, 1924 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19240807.2.9>

["The New Illinois Central Station in Champaign," \[ILLUSTRATION\]](#)

August 8, 1924 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19240808.2.20>

["CHAMPAIGN'S GREATEST DAY: NEW \\$400,000 I. C. STATION DEDICATED,"](#)

August 9, 1924 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19240809.2.1>

["THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD,"](#)

August 9, 1924 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19240809.2.41>

["2,000 PEOPLE HEAR ADDRESS AT DEDICATION: O. B. Dobbins Replies for Champaign; Station Inspected and Gets O. K."](#)

August 10, 1924 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19240810.2.5>

LABOR AND INDUSTRY

The railroad system transformed the American economy in the 19th and 20th century by amplifying the ability to transport economic goods. Railroads also transformed American communities and provided additional means for connecting the country. However, the demand for rail affected those in the rail industries, and workers often faced dangerous conditions and long hours.

One paper of particular interest is The Strike Bulletin, a weekly paper marketed to labor unionists in the railroad industry. It was published from Clinton, Illinois, for the entirety of its run. The Strike Bulletin was the creation of a labor organization called the Illinois Central System Foundation. It was edited by Carl E. Person, who was affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World. The Illinois Central System Foundation organized laborers who worked for the Illinois Central Railroad.

Prairie Farmer (Chicago, IL)

["'Bull Day' Celebration Big Event at Carbondale,"](#)

April 8, 1916 (page 5)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=PFR19160408.2.7>

Daily Illini (Champaign, IL)

["Illinois Central System Helps to Arouse Interest in Better Farming,"](#)

April 1, 1923 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19230401.2.49>

["Illinois Central System Third Largest Railroad in Freight Traffic,"](#)

October 2, 1923 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19231002.2.74>

["State Commerce Owes Growth To Railroads,"](#)

July 9, 1948 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19480709.2.55>

["STRIKE SHUTS DOWN IC,"](#)

April 4, 1964 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19640409.2.3>

Strike Bulletin (Clinton, IL)

["I Do Not Travel Over the Illinois Central, Do You? Wrecks Are Taking Place Everywhere on the Illinois Central Railroad."](#)

November 4, 1913 (page 16)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=STB19131104-01.1.16>

["The Road To Justice,"](#)

March 3, 1914 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=STB19140303-01.1.1>

Urbana Daily Courier (Urbana, IL)

["A Call to Industry,"](#)

July 1, 1929 (page 11)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19290701.2.108>

TOURISM AND RECREATION

The birth of the rail system fostered social tourism and exploration across the state of Illinois and beyond. Marketed as a unique commuting experience, the railroad industry boasted leisurely rides, cheap fares, and fun travel.

["The World's Exposition,"](#) Farm, Field, and Stockman.

January 15, 1885 (page 22)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=FFS18850115.2.79>

["Take to Train for a Care Free Vacation this Year,"](#) Sycamore Tribune

May 20, 1955 (page 15)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SYT19550520.2.114>

["A Screwball? No, Just a Rail Fan,"](#) Daily Illini

August 1, 1955 (page 8)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19550801.2.53>

["Rail Club Gets Historic Car,"](#) Daily Illini

January 25, 1956 (page 9)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19560125.2.62>

["I.C. Leads To Many Points Of Intrest \[sic\],"](#) Sycamore Tribune

May 25, 1956 (page 6)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SYT19560525.2.107>

["Illinois Central Railroad Suggest Mid-American Vacation Possibilities,"](#)

Sycamore Tribune

May 20, 1960 (page 10)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=SYT19600520.2.66>

["History rides the Illinois Central,"](#) Daily Illini

March 24, 1961 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19610324.2.28.3>

ADVERTISEMENTS AND VISUAL HISTORY

The Illinois Central Railroad printed advertisements to communicate messages to newspaper readers. Today's researchers can draw on advertisements to consider the values of a company or the public image a company intended to convey. The Illinois Central Railroad placed several advertisements in Champaign County newspapers, often commenting on current events (such as war or labor issues), praising its employees, and promoting the use of railroad for business and leisure.

Daily Illini (Champaign, IL)

["Illinois Central System is Proud of Its Courteous Employes \[sic\]"](#)

May 1, 1924 (page 8)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19240501.2.132.1>

["Three-Quarters of a Century,"](#)

February 2, 1926 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19260202.2.44.5>

["Declaration of War Policy,"](#)

January 6, 1942 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19420106.2.58.3>

["From Peace to War via Railroad,"](#)

March 10, 1942 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19420310.2.56>

["Illini Central Leads in War Drive,"](#)

September 3, 1942 (page 6)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19420903.2.56>

["Highball,"](#)

December 13, 1944 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19441213.2.35.1>

["Able railroader - and good citizen,"](#)

June 8, 1948 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19480608.2.60.2>

["Vote for the one that's better for you,"](#)

April 14, 1949 (page 4)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19490414.2.62.1>

["What makes a railroad?"](#)

April 26, 1950 (page 2)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19500426.2.31.4>

["Good Neighbor to Mid-America for 100 Years,"](#)

February 13, 1951 (page 7)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19510213.2.70.2>

["Birthday of the Banana Split,"](#)

April 10, 1951 (page 5)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19510410.2.78.4>

Urbana Daily Courier (Urbana, IL)

["New All=Steel Indestructible DAYLIGHT SPECIAL,"](#)

August 25, 1911

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=TUC19110825.2.27.2>

COMMEMORATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Throughout the years, newspapers printed articles looking back on the history of the Illinois Central Railroad and its impact on the Champaign-Urbana community.

Daily Illini (Champaign, IL)

["75th Anniversary of I. C. R. R. Recalls Scenes in Early '50's,"](#)

July 24, 1929 (page 3)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19290724.2.51>

["Illinois Central Began Champaign Line 75 Years Ago: At Time Route Was Projected Urbana With 210 Inhabitants Was Only City On Map"](#)

July 24, 1929 (page 3)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19290724.2.54>

["Illinois Central Railroad Dedicates 2 Plaques on 100th Anniversary,"](#)

August 2, 1951 (page 1)

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19510802.2.1>

["Champaign-Urbana grows into thriving community,"](#)

August 15, 1975 (page 33)

Note: article written by Roger Ebert

Permalink: <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=DIL19750815.2.68>