

With a half day, pick and choose depending on your specific interest.

4. **ARCHITECTURAL BOAT TOUR:** Take a cab to a location near the mouth of the river for a two hour tour of the Chicago River and the skyscrapers next to it. There are two companies which provide these tours. Learn about the details of each building, the dates, the architect, the architectural features. The narrators are friendly, knowledgeable and humorous. It is a good way to see downtown from a unique vantage point.

5. **TROLLEY TOUR:** Take a cab to the historic water tower's Chicago Visitor Center. There you can buy tickets for a two hour "trolley tour" of downtown buildings, parks, Soldier Field, and the Lake Front. The trolley makes a loop around the city with stops to allow passengers to get off, explore, then get on the next trolley to continue the journey. There is a stop at Sears Tower. For those with limited time, stay on the trolley for the round trip. Although there is some duplication with the boat tours, the tours are mostly different.



The robotic burro "Zeph" tells visitors about the Pioneer Zephyr's first run from Denver to Chicago. Zeph was the mascot for the run. Zeph now works at the Museum of Science and Industry.

6. **METRA:** Train buff? Take a Metra train out to the suburbs and back. The BNSF route goes along the same tracks used by the Zephyr. Or take the "L" (elevated light rail) around the loop.

7. **CHICAGO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY:** Another train buff attraction is the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. The special feature is the restored Pioneer Zephyr, which set a speed record on a run between Denver and Chicago. A robotic burro on board introduces visitors to the Zephyr and mannequins in the coach tell the visitors about the design, comforts, and speed of the train. In another part of the museum, there are other locomotives and an excellent and very large model train layout.



Model train layout at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.

8. **PULLMAN:** People with an appreciation of architecture, history, labor and railroads will enjoy walking around the historic community of Pullman (now within the City of Chicago). Take the train from Randolph/Water Street Station, the Metra Electric Line, to 111st St (Pullman) stop. The row houses for workers, the church, the hotel, and Market Place are all still there. There is also a Pullman Porter Museum in an old firehouse. The factory area is closed to the public because the ruins are unstable.

9. **RESTAURANTS:** Hungry? Chicago with its cosmopolitan population is home to a wide variety of excellent ethnic restaurants. Grab a restaurant guide and choose. It is hard to go wrong!

While you are having fun, Amtrak is busily preparing your train. The train is serviced in the rail yard near the station. The rail yard crew has about 22 hours to complete the job (if the train comes in on time the day before). Sometimes, this is a close call - the crew is still working hard inside the train as it pulls into the station.



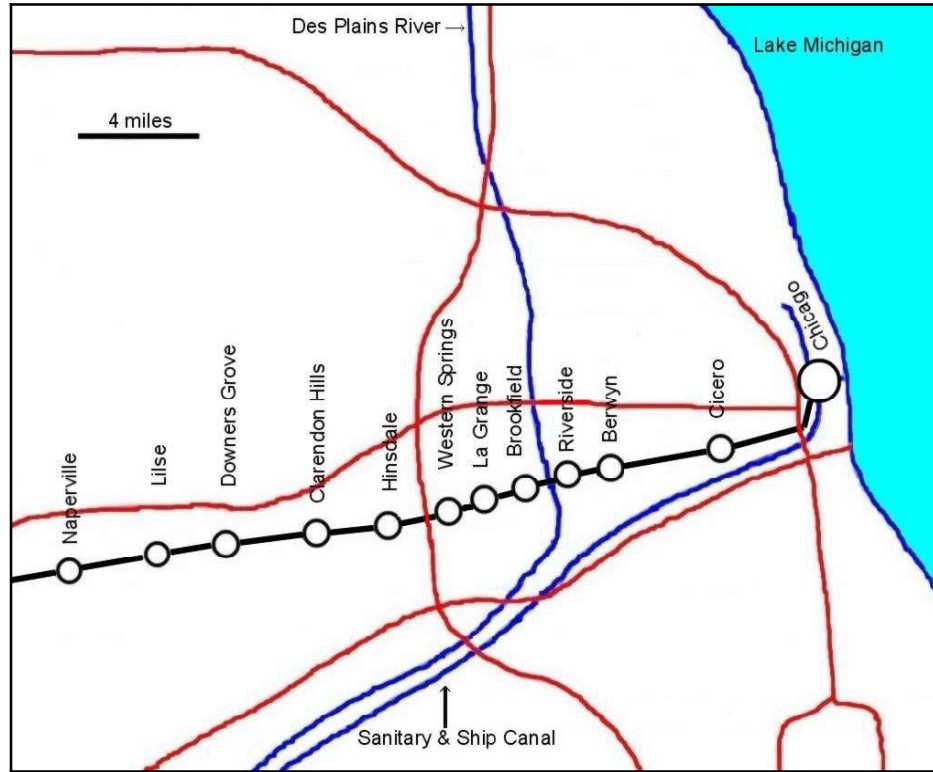
METRA commuter trains are a great way to visit the suburbs.



The Chicago Skyline as seen from the Aquarium, a photo stop on the Trolley Tour.

CHAPTER 3

LEAVING CHICAGO



BNSF tracks through the Chicago western suburbs. Waterways are blue; interstate highways are red; the BNSF tracks used by Amtrak to exit Chicago westward are black.

Only seconds after the California Zephyr pulls away from the platform, the train bursts into the afternoon sunshine and begins its long journey to California. The first sights (out the north side windows) are warehouses which have been converted to condos and warehouses in the process of conversion. Warehouses grew up around the Chicago's rail terminals, but they are no longer needed near downtown. However, housing near that area downtown has grown popular, leading to condo conversion of former industrial and warehouse properties. One architect referred to this as the "balconization" of Chicago because balconies are often added to the plain old exteriors.

The train then enters Roosevelt Yard, formerly the CB&Q coach yard. The yard out the south side windows is used to store and service Amtrak's cars and has a locomotive service area. Out the north side windows is a storage area for BNSF-METRA commuter train cars and locomotives. METRA locomotives pull the commuter train cars as far as Aurora on the same set of tracks used by the Zephyr. When the METRA trains get to Aurora, the train is not turned around. Rather, the locomotives then push the train cars back to Chicago. For this part of the trip, the train engineer sits in a control booth in the

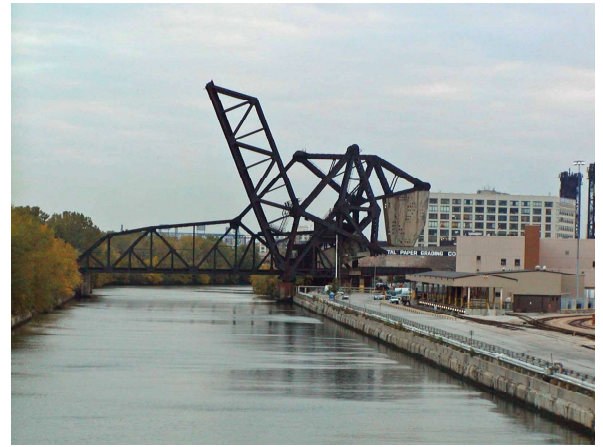
last car from which he (she) can control the locomotive. All the diesel-powered METRA trains use this arrangement.

METRA owns cars which have balconies. They were first used by the Burlington in 1950. The lower floor with double seats on both sides seats 96 and the balconies with single seats, accommodate another 52 passengers. (Some passengers seem to prefer sitting on the stairs leading to the balcony for some reason.)

Off in the distance out the south side windows are two moveable bridges of the Bascule type. These bridges cross the Chicago River. One is always in the up (open) position. This was a railroad bridge for the B&OCT (Baltimore and Ohio Chicago Terminal); it has been abandoned and the rails removed. It was formerly used by trains going to Grand Central Station. When Amtrak began in 1971, the Grand Central Station and the bridge to it were no longer needed. The other moveable bridge is also a railroad bridge on what is known as the St. Charles Air Line. These elevated tracks cross the railyards on the south side of the river; they connect with tracks on the north side and from the lakeside Canadian National tracks (former Illinois Central tracks). Amtrak trains, such as the Illini and the City of New Orleans use this bridge to get to Union Station. It is also used by freight trains when cars are delivered to the CN yards on the other side of the river. City officials would like to use this bridge as a bike path to a new park, but extensive rail re-routing (and dollars) will be required since the bridge is still in use (10 -16 trains per day). Right now, nothing has progressed other than talk and study. Amtrak is involved in those discussions.

Both of these bridges date back to 1919, replacing an original swing bridge of 1856. Both bridges were moved somewhat in the late 1920s when the tracks were elevated to relieve congestion around the new 1925 Union Station.

The tracks quickly swing toward the west through an industrial neighborhood. For example, Ryerson Tull (on the north side) is a metals distribution firm dating back to 1842. They provide metals to manufacturers on a just-in-time basis.



Railroad bridges over the Chicago River.
One is open, the other closed.

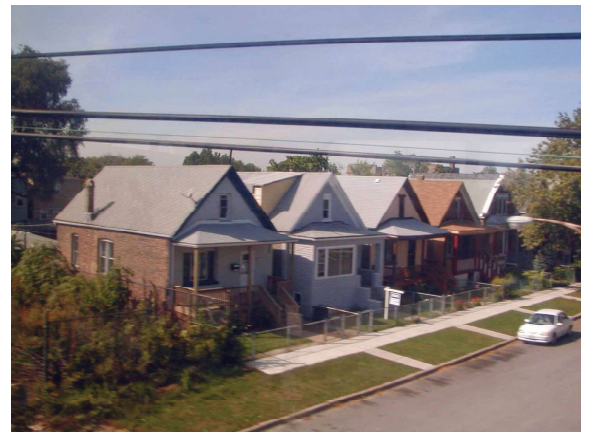
CICERO (population 71,000)

Cicero is one of Chicago's oldest suburbs, founded in 1857. The population swelled as Czech, Polish, Germans, and Italians moved in to work at the industries in and near town. More recent immigrants include Mexicans and Asians, who are attracted to the affordable small brick houses close to Chicago. The polyethnic base has given the town quite a diversity of restaurants. Cicero was also the home of Western Electrics Hawthorne Works, which made telephones for the Bell System. During WWII, it employed 40,000 workers. It was also here that W. Edward Deming (the father of modern day quality action teams) began his management and quality assurance studies. Because of the railroads in town, it was the second largest center of manufacturing in the state (second to Chicago itself). The Western Electric Plant was so large it had its own railroad. This railroad entered the yard at Manufacturer's Junction.

What the official histories don't speak of is the dirty side and most famous aspect of Cicero history. When things became too hot for organized crime in Chicago, Johnny Torrio and his side-kick Al Capone moved their headquarters to Cicero. Torrio let Al Capone manage a brothel in town. It wasn't long before the politicians and police were all working for Capone. (Capone's headquarters at the Hawthorne Inn on Cermack St. burned down years ago.). Sadly



Tower at Hawthorn Works, formerly a huge telephone assembly plant in Cicero, now being redeveloped.



Chicago style brick bungalows along the tracks (photo taken from the train).

public corruption in city government has been a tradition only occasionally prosecuted. Recently, the town president (mayor), the police chief and several others went to jail for fraud and racketeering (among other things). Ironically, earlier the mayor was quoted in the newspaper as seeking to improve Cicero's image.

Visible from the train in the distance toward the south, is the Hawthorne Race Track (controlled by Al Capone in the 1920s). Visible to the north is City Hall. The tower, a remnant of the Hawthorne Works, is a part of a new business park being developed on the former Hawthorne Works land (North side). The north side of the land is a shopping center, and the south side is being cleared for development. Also on the north side of the train are the compact houses of the old suburb and the Corey Steel Co, founded 1924, a manufacturer of steel bars and copper and aluminum alloy bars, rods, and wire. The most noticeable feature of Cicero to train passengers is the BNSF Intermodal Yard. Formerly called Hawthorne Yard, it was completed in 1889 by the Burlington and was expanded in 1918. In 1958, a part of the yard was converted to an automatic classification yard where cars were sorted using a hump with cars rolling down a slight incline onto different tracks depending on destination . Before that, the yard was flat and the cars had to be hauled around using switch engines. The new intermodal yard has cranes that lift containers off the railroad cars and onto trucks. The yard is on both sides of the train.

If the yard is full, the rail cars block most of the views of Cicero.

How heavy is the train traffic on the tracks through Cicero? On one day in 2002, there were 40 freight trains, 6 Amtrak trains, and 94 Metra trains.

BERWYN (population 54,016)

Time from Chicago = 0:06

The next suburb along the tracks is Berwyn. The town began as a subdivision of Cicero about 1890 when developers advertised the convenient location along the tracks. Although the area was incorporated in 1907, the main spurt of growth began in the 1920s when Czechs and other eastern Europeans from Chicago bought homes in Berwyn. The houses are a mixture of Victorian and Chicago style brick bungalows. Visible along the tracks are Connie's Restaurant and the backsides of homes. The one skyscraper (5 stories) is the Art Deco Berwyn State Bank.



Riverside Water Tower and Depot.



Riverside's original commercial building (1871).

RIVERSIDE (population 8,895)

Time from Chicago = 0:15
Time from Berwyn = 0:04

Riverside is one of the first planned suburban communities in the US. The design of the community, completed in 1869 by Frederick Law Olmsted (designer of New York City's Central Park) featured streets which followed the contours of the land (rather than a grid) and had a rural atmosphere with urban services. People began to move out to Riverside after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Not only was Chicago dangerous, it stunk and was dirty. Riverside was well drained, free of mosquitos and conveniently located at the end of suburban train service by CB&Q. The village grew slowly at first,

but growth accelerated in the 1890s. The mansions in Riverside are not visible from the tracks, but the Water Tower and the adjacent 1890 pumphouse are visible on the north side adjacent to the tracks. The commercial district is on the south side. Next to the tracks on the south side is a 1871 Victorian Gothic multi-shop commercial building and 1902 CB&Q depot building (now housing a realty business). About a block to the south from the street crossing is the 1895 Chateausque style town hall.

DES PLAINES RIVER

Just west of Riverside is the Des Plaines River, a tributary to the Illinois River (which flows into the Mississippi River). In the days of fur traders it was used as part of the portage route from the Mississippi River to Lake Michigan. Muddy Lake (upstream of this train crossing) is a Des Plaines tributary, sort of. In the old days floods in the Des Plaines watershed would spill over into the Chicago River. Now there are dikes to prevent this. The land adjacent to the river at Riverside is preserved as open space.



Riverside's version of the Golden Gate Bridge (a pedestrian bridge over the Des Plaines River).

BROOKFIELD (population 19,085)

Time from Chicago = 0:16
Time from Berwyn = 0:01

Brookfield, formerly Grossdale, was developed as a suburb starting in 1889 by a real estate developer named Gross, who envisioned a working class village. Incorporated in 1893, the name was changed to Brookfield in 1905. The original Grossdale station was moved and is visible on the other side of the park to the north of the tracks. It is now a historical museum. Brookfield now includes the communities of Congress Park and Hollywood.

Between Brookfield and La Grange is a major crossing of two rail lines, the BNSF and the IHB (Indiana Harbor Belt). A bridge carries the North - South IHB tracks across the BNSF tracks. In 1977, there was a spectacular rail accident here. Something on a freight train passing on the BNSF tracks under the bridge caught one of the bridge girders and pulled down the bridge. In the meantime, rail cars on the IHB started to fall into the gap created by the missing bridge. Railcars and cargo (mainly lumber) collected in a heap below the overpass. To make things worse, a Burlington Northern freight train plowed into the still growing pile between the bridge abutments on the tracks underneath the missing bridge. To cap this all off, an Amtrak train then ran into the rubble. Most of the cars ended up on their sides between the tracks. Local residents (alerted by the loud noises) rushed to the scene to care for the passengers. It took quite a while to get the tracks reopened. In the meantime, buses were used to ferry train passengers around the wreck site and freight trains had to use the interchange tracks to get past. In order to get service back, railroad officials "stole" a bridge from another location in Chicago (Ridgeway Ave.) and moved it to the site.

LA GRANGE (population 15,058)

Originally a settlement of scattered log cabins, the area was developed into a suburb with the coming



La Grange's Stone Ave. Depot.

of the CB&Q commuter trains in 1869. The railroad named the station Hazel Glen. The area was incorporated in 1879. By 1895, it was the largest settlement of the new suburbs along the tracks. The town features Victorian, Queen Anne and Prairie School Style homes (visible on both sides). There are two depots in town - LaGrange Road (1925) and Stone Avenue (1901). Downtown is parallel to the tracks on both sides.

WESTERN SPRINGS (population 12,493)

Time from Chicago = 0:21
Time from Brookfield = 0.05

The earliest settlement here was a Quaker farming community which developed between two plank roads used by trappers and stagecoaches in the early 1800s. The village was incorporated in 1886. The town began to grow when the citizens convinced the railroad to make regular stops. In 1890, the original depot was replaced by the current depot. The water tower (on the north side) dates back to 1892 and is currently a historical museum. The trees near the tracks are very colorful during the fall. The older smaller houses have been torn down for new construction as the town wants to keep the village upscale. The springs have dried up.



Western Springs Water Tower, now a museum.



Hinsdale City Park fountain, adjacent to the tracks on the north side.

HINSDALE (population 17,349)

Time from Chicago = 0:23
Time from Western Springs = 0:02

Hinsdale is yet another upper middle class railroad suburb developed on land along the railroad right of way. Originally planned in 1866, Hinsdale attracted wealthy people and tradesmen. A huge variety of housing styles with a range of costs are found in Hinsdale, and because most date from 1870 to 1920, a historic preservation ordinance was passed to preserve this architectural collection. The downtown buildings (south of the tracks) date 1881-1945. The railroad station (south side of tracks) was built in 1898. City offices built in 1928 are in the Memorial Building, about a block north of the tracks. The train station is occupied on the west end by a restaurant. Look for the Victorian houses east of the station and a fountain in a park on the north side across from the station. The whole thing is lovely in the fall.

CLARENDON HILLS (population 6,994)

Time from Chicago = 0:24
Time from Hinsdale = 0:01

Just west of Hinsdale is Clarendon Hills, another western suburb made possible by the railroad.

This town was laid out in 1873 with crooked streets and none of the lots were the same. Downtown is parallel to the tracks on the north side. The Methodists had already started a school within a year of settlement.

WESTMONT (population 24,600)

The area around Westmont was first a Pottawatomie farming area. After the Indians were removed in 1833, New England settlers arrived, began farming, and then shipping their products across the marshland to Chicago via a plank road (completed in 1851). The railroad arrived in 1864. The first industry in this farming area was the Excelsior Brick Company founded in 1872 to provide bricks for the rebuilding of Chicago following the Great Fire of 1871. This area had the highest mound of clay on the CB&Q line. In 1900, however, the brick operation was abandoned and the area reverted back to agricultural use.

Suburban development began around 1919 and the area was incorporated in 1921. The most excitement in town came when residents went to war with the power company in 1925. The power company wanted to erect poles along the streets, but the residents wanted the poles in the alleys. The company began installing poles along the street and the residents cut them down each night. (The power company eventually won.) Growth was slow until the

1960s when apartments sprung up along the tracks and the population tripled. Now the village has adopted development codes, and the growth rate has stabilized. The Westmont commercial district is on the south of the tracks. There is a new train station and a new village hall across the parking lot from the station.

DOWNERS GROVE (population 48,000)

Settled in 1832 by the Downer Family, the area grew into an agricultural community with log cabins. By 1850, eighty families were in the community and there was at least one store. After the railroad arrived, the farmers had a more convenient way of getting their produce to market. Suburban development began shortly afterward.

One of the Zephyrs of the 1930s was involved in an accident in Downers Grove. A bulldozer fell off a passing freight train and the Zephyr crashed into it. The locomotive derailed and plowed into the station. The bay window of the station was heavily damaged. The bricks on the station were replaced with bricks which were a close match, but not exact. Those who look closely can see where the repairs were made. The Zephyr involved in this accident is now on display at the Illinois Railway Museum in Union. This train has been featured in the movie "A League of their Own, and is used occasionally as a dinner train and for special excursions sponsored by the museum.

An older industry in town (1937), the Pepperidge Farm Bakers, located on the south side of the tracks just west of downtown, now has about 600 employees. More recently, the highways constructed in the area brought industrial development along the highways. Now the land in Downers Grove has been fully developed.

Downtown, a mixture of old and new structures, is on both sides of the tracks with a number of older houses on the north side. The Tivoli Theater downtown (north side of the tracks) shows movies, but has a theater organ and fully equipped stage for live theater productions.



Tivoli Theater in downtown Downers Grove.

LILSE (population 21,182)

Time from Chicago = 0:30
Time from Clarendon Hills = 0:06

Lilse began as an agricultural village on the Du Page River. Lilse was reportedly named after a town in France to honor Lafayette, a Frenchman who aided the US in the War for Independence. The lumber in a plank road through town to Chicago was pulled up and reused when the railroad reached town. Early industries in town included a brick manufacturer and a limestone quarry. Suburban growth began with the coming of the railroad. Lilse has preserved its



Depot Park on west side of Du Page River in Lilse.

agricultural heritage (Depot Park) near the Du Page River railroad crossing with a depot, a way car, a tavern, blacksmith shop, barn, and house (visible to the north as the train crosses the river).

NAPERVILLE (population 136,400)

Time from Chicago = 0:34
Scheduled time from Chicago = 0:59
Time from Lisle = 0:04

Naperville is the first station stop on today's California Zephyr.

On the route used by fur traders, the first settler here was Joseph Naper, who established a trading post. The village was incorporated in 1857 and became a city in 1891. Since it was a bit too far from Chicago to be an early suburb, it developed its own identity. One early industry (located adjacent to the tracks on the north side) was the 1913 Kroehler Furniture Company (formerly the Naperville Lounge Factory, destroyed by a cyclone). They manufactured heavy duty high end sofas under the brand name Pullman (the furniture was not used on trains.)

In 1946, Naperville was the site of one of the nation's worst train accidents. The *Exposition Flyer*, Burlington's premier passenger train, plowed into the rear end of the *Advance Flyer*, a extra train which was running three minutes ahead of the regularly scheduled train. Running extra trains either a few minutes ahead or behind the regular trains was a common railroad practice when the regular train sold out.

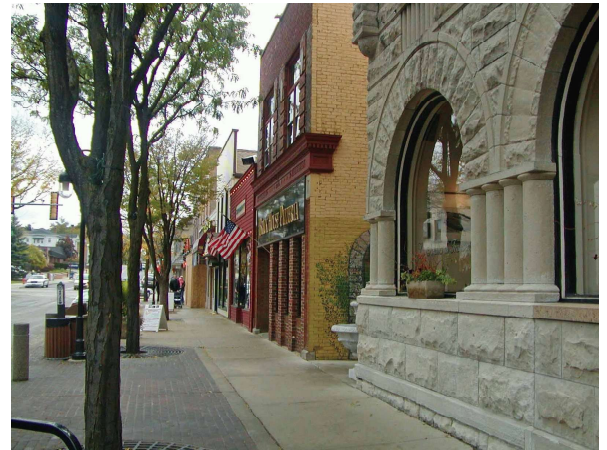
The *Advance Flyer* had stalled at Naperville station. Although a red stop signal had been activated, the *Exposition Flyer* was going too fast to stop and rammed into the back of the stalled train. The last car of the stalled train was unrecognizable following the wreck.

There were over 100 injuries and 45 deaths. The injured were taken to three hospitals in Aurora. The Kroehler Furniture Factory was turned into a temporary morgue. Residents from Naperville and

nearby communities rushed to help. Many residents still remember the wreck because of the community's willingness to help strangers. But the wreckage and carnage was so bad, some of the residents had nightmares for years.

At first, officials blamed the tragedy on the second train's engineer. Then it was learned that the brakes had failed on the second car of his train. As a result of the wreck, the Burlington ceased running trains that close together and stopped running advance extras altogether.

Due to proximity of freeways, new industries have been built on former agricultural land. Naperville's growth has occurred with new industry and new suburban growth (the parking lots at the METRA Train Stations are packed with commuters going to Chicago.) In 1960, the population was 13,000. It has grown ten-fold since then.

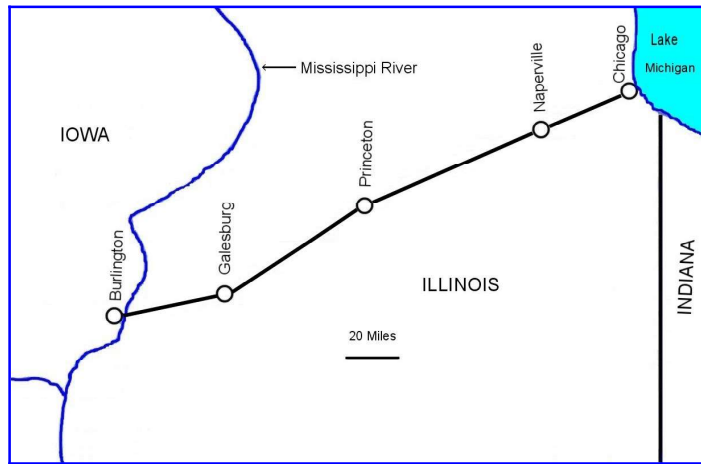


Downtown Naperville.

Naperville downtown is about five blocks south of the tracks, some of the buildings dating to 1867. Business is good. Neither downtown or the malls on the western edge of Naperville are visible from the train.

CHAPTER 4

ON TO RURAL ILLINOIS



Map of California Zephyr Route across Illinois

AURORA (population 142,990)

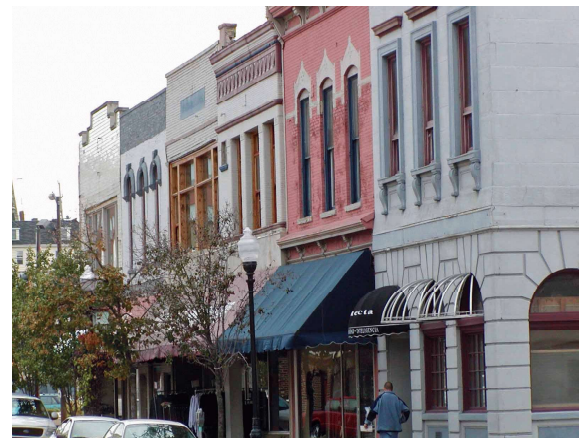
Time from Naperville = 0:09

was the Aurora Silverplate Company founded in 1869. On Stolp Island in the Fox River you will find a casino in the historic downtown..



Historic building of the Aurora Silverplate Company (1869).

Aurora is Illinois' second largest city with a strategic location on the Fox River. Its first industry (1834) was a gristmill and sawmill and barges transported the lumber and grain down the river. These mills used water wheels on the river as their power source. Another industry using water power



Historic downtown Aurora.

In 1849, Aurora took off when businessmen in Aurora formed the Aurora Branch Railroad which originally went 12 miles north to join with the Galena and Chicago line. Later, in 1864, the state legislature allowed several small railroads to merge. The result was the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy (CB&Q)



Aurora's casino on the Fox River



Exterior of Walter Payton's Roundhouse.

Railroad which provided service all the way to the Mississippi. Construction of shop facilities for the new railroad began a year after the merger with a 32 stall roundhouse completed in 1866. Locomotives were built and repaired at the huge facility. About 250 locomotives were built here between 1871 and 1910 - the facility employed 2000 men at certain times. The railroad (called Burlington Northern by that time) abandoned the roundhouse in 1972. It began to deteriorate, the walls fell in, and the roof collapsed. It was a mess. Walter Payton and a



The central courtyard of Walter Payton's Roundhouse. This is where the turntable was originally located. Locomotives would move onto the turntable would rotate the locomotive to align with tracks leading to the appropriate stall for repairs. This roundhouse completely surrounded the turntable.

partner bought the ruins in 1995 (for \$10) and restored it. It now has a landscaped courtyard for concerts (where the turntable used to be), a brewpub, restaurant and the Walter Payton Museum. The restoration work was finished in 1999. Payton died shortly after the new roundhouse opened. (Walter Payton, "His Sweetness," was a famous running back with the Chicago Bears NFL Team.) When folks visit his museum, there is a very reverent attitude, respect for his football skills, respect for his personality and character, and respect for his contributions to the community.

Walter Payton's Roundhouse is on the east side of downtown, north of the tracks, near the METRA station.



Fox River, street bridge, and Hurd Island.
This photo was taken from the train.

In 2002, two METRA trains ran into each other near the Aurora Station. Because the track usually used at the station was out of service for maintenance, the outer tracks were being used instead. Unfortunately, the engineer on the in-bound train couldn't see the signal on the outer tracks very well. He started up on schedule, but began to brake after the dispatcher told him to stop his train. The out-bound

train on the same track had stopped. The in-bound train crashed into it at 12 mph. Several cars on both trains derailed. There were 47 injuries. If expressed in terms we understand, this one was a "fender bender," but did cause \$292,000 in damages.

FOX RIVER, HURD ISLAND

Time from Naperville = 0.11

Time from Aurora = 0:02

There are two crossings of the Fox River with Hurd Island in between. The railroad bridges date back to 1922-1923. The Fox River is a tributary of the Illinois River. There are 15 dams on the river, so barge traffic is a thing of the past. (The dams were built to power sawmills and grist mills in the 1800s.) Hurd Island is now a city park.



The *California Zephyr* crosses the Fox River. This photo was taken from Hurd Island.

MONTGOMERY (population 7,800)

Shortly after Aurora, the tracks go through the town of Montgomery, founded in 1835. An early business was a grist mill on the Fox River. In 1964, a Burlington passenger train plowed into the rear of a Rock Island passenger train here. Although there were over 400 passengers on the two trains, there were only 4 fatalities, all of which were train crew members. A faulty signal and switch were later found to be the culprits. Suburban growth in Montgomery is expected in the near future as METRA extends their line.

OSWEGO (population 13,326)

The tracks go through the outskirts of Oswego, a town first settled in 1833 at a popular ford of the Fox River. Because of the ford, the town was at the crossroads of stagecoach lines and visitor services were early industries. Caterpillar moved into the Oswego area in the 1950s. Now, Oswego is undergoing a spurt of residential growth as a Chicago-area suburb. Residents are hoping that Metra service will be extended to them

PLANO (population 5000)

Time from Naperville = 0:22
Time from Fox River = 0:11

Settled in 1835, the first industry in Plano was a grist mill which opened almost immediately. The Fox Indians, originally from Wisconsin, made their last stand near here, and were wiped out by other Indians and the French. Plano citizens were fairly successful in keeping saloons out of town. However, a baker augmented his income by providing the town men with spirits from his back room. This worked until the local ladies noticed the popularity of pastries. Soon they descended on the bakery with hatchets and clubs and did quite a bit of property damage. The ladies were arrested, but no witnesses showed up for the trial. The tracks go by the Plano Molding Company. Founded in 1952, the company makes plastic containers, such as fishing tackle boxes and Caboodles.



Plano Depot.



Downtown Sandwich.

SANDWICH (population 6,7000)

Time from Naperville = 0:26
Time from Plano = 0:04

Sandwich got its start when an early settler gave property to C,B&Q Railroad for a depot and offered free town lots. Look for the Opera House and City Hall on the south side of the tracks. It was built in 1878 and restored in 1982. On the east of town is the Stone Mill Museum, the Stone Mill, built in 1856, used steam power to produce 100 barrels of flour a day. A fire in 1883 gutted the building leaving only the stone walls and chimney.



Library in Sandwich.

The steam engine was replaced but the mill closed in the late 1890s. In the early 1900s, it was used to manufacture repair parts for farm equipment. In 1964, the owner donated the building for use as a historical museum for the town.

SOMONAUK (population 1,263)

Time from Naperville = 0:30
Time from Sandwich = 0:04

Incorporated in 1859, the town is largely rural in flavor. The largest employer is Imperial Marble Corporation. Highway traffic must be important to Somonauk; even during the height of the 2004 election season with political signs everywhere, there were many signs imploring the state highway department NOT to build a bypass around town: "Save Somonauk and Hwy 34 - Say NO to the Bypass."

LELAND (population 862)

Time from Naperville = 0.36
Time from Somonauk = 0.06

A farming community beginning in 1837, Leland was designed by four pioneer families to be a central point of grain collection and shipment. The first businesses in town were a store and a tavern.



Building in downtown Leland with town water tank.

The railroad arrived in 1853 and the town was organized in 1859. This small town had an active underground railroad station. Leland has a grain elevator (the Leland Farmers Coop), one of the first of many elevators along the route.

EARLVILLE (population 1435)

Time from Naperville = 0.41
Time from Leland = 0.05



Building in downtown Earlville.

Another rural community, train passengers mainly see the backside of the downtown businesses, south of the tracks. At one time, Earlville had two small rail yards, and two branch lines. Earlville also has a grain elevator (Earlville Farmers Coop).

MERIDEN (population small)

A very small community with few businesses, Meriden is just a collection of houses near a grain elevator.

MENDOTA (population 7,200)



Historic steam locomotive in front of the Mendota Railroad Museum, with downtown Mendota in the background.

Time from Naperville = 0:50
Time from Earlville = 0:09

The first coal in the US was discovered near here in 1673 by early French explorers. Mendota began in 1853 as a railroad town where the CB&Q east-west line met with Illinois Central and the Milwaukee Road railroads going north and south. Outlaw leader Bill Quantrill was working in a lumberyard here when he killed his first man in 1856. In 1922, the CB&Q had a roundhouse on the east side of town. To service all the passengers, the railroads built a huge brick depot in 1885. When the other railroads discontinued passenger service in the 1930s, CB&Q demolished the big depot in 1942 and replaced it with a small one.

Early industries included washboards, buggies, farm equipment, and pump organs. Although Mendota is not a railroad-dominated town anymore, there are lots of railroad retirees here. They have converted the eastern half of the depot into a railroad



Malden's Methodist Church.

museum. It has a model train layout inside, and a 1923 steam locomotive outside. The way car at the museum was built in the Aurora shops. The museum has been open since 1997 on the weekends.

ARLINGTON (population 200)

Time from Naperville = 0:59
Time from Mendota = - 0:09

MALDEN (population 370)

Time from Naperville = 1:04
Time from Arlington = 0:05

Not much of downtown is left, but what still exists is on the north side of the tracks. Malden has a colorful water tower. The town is small enough that the church doesn't need a parking lot. Folks walk to church.

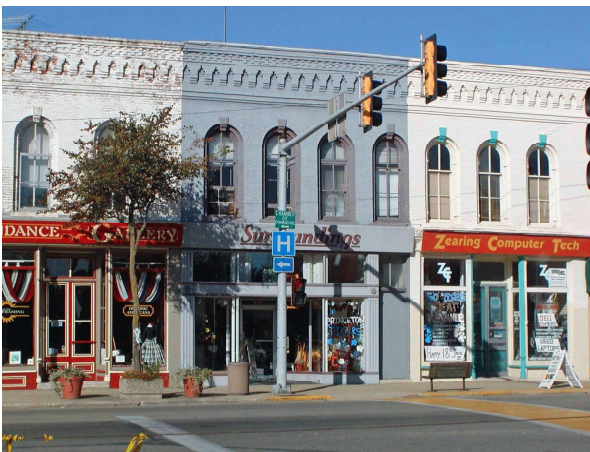
THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

For those travelers who are not knowledgeable about American Civil War history, the Underground Railroad might not be familiar. The Underground Railroad was not a railroad at all, but a series of loosely organized routes which were used by runaway slaves to escape bondage in the Southern States.

They would travel long distances to find freedom in Canada. It seems to have gotten its name when a Kentucky planter who, hunting his runaway slaves, remarked that his prey “seemed to have just vanished as if traveling on a road under the ground.”}

The people who helped the slaves on their journey to freedom took on railroad job titles. “Conductors” would take a slave or group of slaves to houses, farms, or churches which were safe havens or “stations,” run by “station agents.” Typically the slaves would travel at night and rest at the stations during the day. Sometimes they would travel in the false bottoms of farm wagons driven by the conductors. In one case, a whole group of slaves traveled in a wagon “train” which had been rigged to look like a funeral procession. The stations had signaling systems using quilts with different codes sewn into them, or drinking gourds hung on wells and barns.

The stations had false walls with hidden rooms, or hidden niches in basements or attics. Sometimes the stations were barns with hay lofts which had hidden rooms behind the hay bales.



Buildings in downtown Princeton.

Helping slaves, even in Northern anti-slavery states, during the period before the Civil War was illegal and dangerous, so the activity was highly clandestine. Each station was an independent operation so that there would be no leaks, even

inadvertently. As a result of the secrecy, not many records exist and most of the participants remain anonymous even today.

There were several main routes. One went from the South through Maryland, then through the Quaker communities of eastern Pennsylvania and New York, and on to Canada. A shorter route went through Ohio to Canada. Another route followed the Mississippi River north to Illinois and across Illinois to Chicago and Lake Michigan. When they got to Chicago, they could blend into the free-black population and take jobs along the waterfront. There were ship owners in Chicago who were on call to transport the runaways across the lake to Canada. The rail network entering Chicago undoubtedly helped get the slaves to the area.

Why would normally law-abiding citizens engage in this dangerous activity? The station agents were typically deeply religious individuals who favored the abolition of slavery (abolitionists). They believed they were following the law of a higher authority. They viewed it as their religious duty, no matter what the risks.

The Underground Railroad was most active between 1841 - 1861. Although no records were kept, scholars have estimated that 100,000 slaves found freedom via the Underground Railroad.

There are several stations on the Underground Railroad along the route of the California Zephyr.

PRINCETON (population 7,600)

Time from Naperville = 1:10
Scheduled time from Naperville = 1:10
Time from Malden = 0:06

Princeton is a station stop for the California Zephyr.

Princeton was settled in 1831 by people from Massachusetts seeking religious freedom. One Congregational minister was influential in

establishing an important station on the Underground Railroad. The house used as the Underground Railroad Station has been restored and is open to the public. Abraham Lincoln spoke at several anti-

slavery rallies here. The railroad came to town in 1854, passing to the north of downtown. Don't look for the brick streets. They are buried under asphalt!



Mendota RR Museum.



Historic RR Equipment at the Mendota RR Museum.

CHAPTER 5

ILLINOIS HEARTLAND

WYANET (population 1017)

Time from Princeton = 0:06

HENNEPIN CANAL

Time from Princeton = 0:07
Time from Wyanet = 0:01



A lock on the Hennepin Canal (near the RR crossing).

The Hennepin Canal (originally called the Illinois and Mississippi Canal) was built as a “shortcut” from the Illinois River at Bureau Junction nearly due west to Coloma on the Mississippi River. Constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1890-1907, it was nearly obsolete by the time it opened. Shipping costs by railroad had decreased and barges had gotten bigger. Nevertheless, the 104-mile canal remained open to boat traffic until 1951. Although there was no fee for boating use, the canal operators harvested ice (for iceboxes) to make money for canal maintenance.

There were 33 locks (32 still visible with 5 still in working condition), and 9 aqueducts (6 remaining). There is a lock near the train crossing, but it is not visible from the trestle.

Today, the now-grass-covered tow paths are hiking and biking trails. The canal, tow paths, and adjacent roads are a state park. Snowmobiles and ice skating are allowed in the winter.

BUDA (population 563)

Time from Princeton = 0:10
Time from Hennepin Canal = 0:03



Hennepin Canal near the tracks.

Buda, named from the capital of Hungary, was laid out along the railroad in 1854. It had a small roundhouse and turntable. The Chicago Bridge and Iron Works was an early industry. Downtown is north of the tracks.



The tracks go through Buda.

NEPONSET (population 488)

Time from Princeton = 0:16
Time from Buda = 0:06

Originally two villages until the railroad came through, Neponset became the official name in 1855. Downtown is south of the tracks about one block away.

KEWANEE (population 13,000)

Time from Princeton = 0:24
Time from Neponset = 0:08

The Kewanee area was first settled in 1835 as a village of 130 people called Wethersfield. When the railroad decided to build a station 1 ½ mile to the north, a new town was laid out near the railroad right of way. Businessmen put their businesses on rollers and move their establishments to the new town. As Kewanee grew, Wethersfield became a residential area. The scene of the action was next to the railroad tracks. Although the towns later merged their services in 1924, the schools and government didn't.

Kewanee (an Indian name for prairie chicken) was named the "Hog Capital of the World." This gave the town a good excuse for an annual festival. Downtown is about 7 x 8 blocks south of the tracks. One furniture store (Goods) bought property on both sides of a street and constructed an overpass across to



Former Kewanee Boiler Co. administration building.

connect their two buildings. An industry along the tracks on the west of town (north of the tracks) is called the Kewanee Corporation, (formerly the Kewanee Boiler Co.), which makes steel doors.

THE CENTRAL MILITARY TRACT

Land between the Illinois River and the Mississippi River was designated by Congress in 1813 as land to be given to veterans for their services in the War of 1812 for their services. The land was parceled out, but settlers did not move in immediately. Congress didn't know or didn't care that the land was already occupied by several Indian tribes. It was only after 1832 when the government relocated the Indians that settlement of this area became feasible.

GALVA (population 2,742)

Time from Princeton = 0:28
Time from Kewanee = 0:04

Galva, in the Central Military Tract, was laid out as a town in 1853 when the Central Military Tract Railroad (later merged with the CB&Q Railroad) decided to build a station there. Galva also had a branch railroad that went to the Mississippi River. The first brick commercial building in the town was erected by colonists from nearby Bishop Hill, who didn't want the railroad to come through their village, but saw that the railroad was useful in transporting their products.