

# Remnants of the Rails



**A Journal of Illinois Railroad Depots**

**Volume 1, Issue 1  
October 2010**

**Mary Nugent Twigg**

**Edited by Karen Rodriguez'G**

# **Remnants of the Rails: A Journal of Illinois Railroad Depots**

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This journal series is dedicated to my husband, Patrick J. Twigg; and my parents, Robert and Helen Nugent.

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*Note: Many towns have or had more than one rail line and depot.  
This series features only one depot per town per journal issue.  
Additional depots will be featured in future editions.*

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# Introduction

***Remnants of the Rails*** is a journal series that documents the remaining railroad depots of Illinois. The purpose of the journal is to promote the preservation of these depots; each edition features depots from different rail lines, geographic locations, and stages of preservation or decay.

Photography for this project began in the mid-1980s and continues through the current day. All photographs in this series have been taken by Mary Nugent Twigg; photos after 2007 are digital.

The journals are organized into chapter sections by the depot's status, according to the following classifications:

- **Restored / Museums** (purpose of the depot is now a museum)
- **Converted** (now in use by a business or other entity)
- **Active** (currently being used for passenger or freight services)
- **Abandoned / Inactive** (no longer in use)

Each journal features depots from the following geographic areas of Illinois:

- **Northern**(towns and cities north of I-80)
- **Central** (towns and cities between I-80 and I-70)
- **Southern**(towns and cities south of I-70).

In recent years, the general trend has been to preserve and restore the state's abandoned depots. Largely, this has been through the grassroots efforts of local towns and historical societies. In other instances, private owners and industries have led the effort to convert the depots into businesses, and thereby save these historic structures. Where possible, "before and after" restoration photos are included. Sadly, some depots that were previously saved are now facing decay due to a lack of maintenance. The photos in this journal series capture it all - from the abandoned to the restored - offering a historical snapshot of depots of Illinois.

Enjoy your travels through the pages of Illinois railroad depot history in ***Remnants of the Rails***!







## Acknowledgements

I have always enjoyed trains and traveling for as long as I can remember. Both of my grandfathers, Nugent and McMahon, were street car drivers on the Chicago Surface Lines, and my father and uncle were motormen for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). As a youngster I lived near the old Chicago, Aurora & Elgin (CA&E) and Chicago & North Western (C&NW) lines, as well as the Proviso Freight Yard. As I grew up, the CA&E line disappeared and was replaced by the Illinois Prairie Path - an early model of the “rails to trails” hiking and biking paths. I remember seeing one of the last steam trains at the Hillside Quarry in the late 1970s and knew that the old trains and old ways were quickly vanishing.

The impetus for this project came in the 1980s when a friend mentioned that the railroad companies were tearing out the old depots. My reaction was that I just *had* to photograph the remaining stations. After visiting the restored Chattanooga, Tennessee, depot I was inspired to capture the spirit and place of a people in transit. Even though the focus of this project is only Illinois stations, the scope of this venture has turned out larger than initially imagined. It has taken nearly a quarter century to document Illinois’ depots.

A number of people have assisted with various aspects of this project throughout the years. I am thankful for the encouragement of friends, especially in the early days when the “end of the line” seemed far down the track. Many weekends have been filled with “railroad research” trips and I’d like to thank those who have joined me, including: Charlie Lewis, Anne Farnham, Patty Harrington Velasco, Francis and Virginia Holley, Bob McGarry, and especially my husband Patrick Twigg - who has seen countless miles of railroad tracks over the years. Thanks also to friends and family who were occasionally detoured so that I could photograph a nearby station. Also traveling with me were the voices of my favorite performers including Nanci Griffith, Carrie Newcomer, Kate Wolf, Alison Krauss, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Tim O’Brien, Tony Rice, Vince Gill, the Flecktones, and Norman Blake whose music accompanied me for many miles. Thanks also to Anne Carew Grant for helping with the title, Pete Kelly and Art Ketchum for encouraging my early interest in photography, Matt Stewart for building a great computer to do all this work, and Maryann Mulvihill-Decker, John Kaparakis, Carol Kinsey, Pete Borger, Steve Moose, Shawn Carlson, and Debra Berg for their friendship and encouragement.

For this first edition, I would also like to thank: Gary Auerswald, WB9UDJ, for his “over the air” directions to the Mt. Carmel depot, Anne Nugent for checking facts and details, and, especially, Karen Rodriguez’G, professional historian, for her expert research and invaluable assistance in verifying dates, facts, and “tracking” down source information. Thanks to Shawn Carlson, Coree Clark, Sue Seiwert, Karen Rodriguez, and Patrick Twigg for proofreading. I would also like to thank my parents, Bob and Helen Nugent, for their assistance in publishing this first edition and answering my interminable questions about Chicago and its railroads.

### **Sources:**

For this journal series, town names were verified using the *Illinois Department of Transportation Official Highway Map*, 2009-2010 edition. County names were verified using Wikipedia online at [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com). Railroad company names were verified and standardized using the *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*, 2007 edition.

For this edition (Vol. 1, Issue 1), special recognition goes to the assistance of Illinois librarians, historians, and historical society members including:

**Ken Konsis**, Executive Director, Vermilion County Conservation District, Danville

**Orrin Merritt**, Vice President, Kishwaukee Valley Heritage Society, Genoa

**Janet Moss**, Vermilion County Conservation District, Danville

**Lynne Noffke**, Librarian, Wilmington Public Library, Wilmington

**Beverley Oberley**, Librarian, Rankin Library, Rankin

**Sharon Schaefer**, Librarian, Hayner Public Library, Alton

**Marilyn Turner**, President, Olmsted Historical Society, Olmsted

**Mayreta Weber**, Director, Chenoa Public Library, Chenoa

**Colleen Yonda**, Historian, Galena History Museum, Galena

**Mike B.**, Research Committee, Jackson County Historical Society

**Jacqueline Record**, Chairman, Coles County Historical Society Depot Restoration Committee

**Sue Jones**, Secretary, Crawford County Historical Society

All other sources are cited in the Endnotes section of each chapter.

For further information on historical depots, see the Railroad Station Historical Society Web site at <http://www.rrshs.org/>.

## On the Cover



**Winfield**, DuPage County, Illinois. **G&CU**, Galena & Chicago Union Rail Road, depot built 1849 (note the recreated strap rail). Illinois' oldest depot, Hedges Station, moved to town park in 1981; restoration ongoing. Photos: 2009.





**Top:** Interior floor, walls, and ceiling

**Bottom:** Left section of the building is the original depot (note the freight door), which operated as the station from 1849-1854. The depot was originally known as the Warren and later the Winfield Station. After restoration it was named the Hedges Station, after its first station agent, by the local historical society. For more history on the building visit: <http://www.winfieldhistory.com/hedges.html>.

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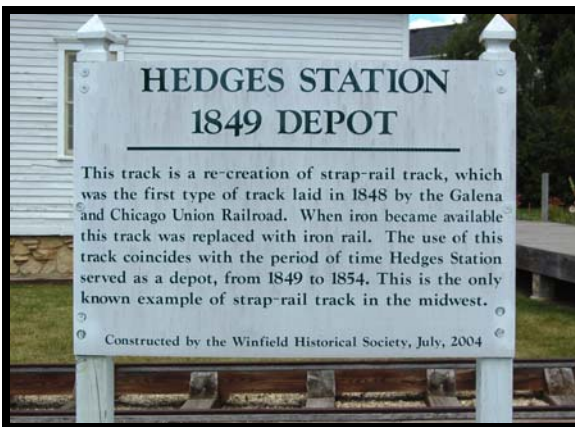
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*Note: The Hedges Station is the oldest remaining railroad depot in Illinois, but it served as a depot for five years (1849-1854). The oldest station in continuous operation is the Marengo depot, now part of the Illinois Railway Museum in Union.*



Left: Sign describing strap-rail track (recreation of 1848 rail that was laid with original depot).

Right: Interior restoration of depot entrance.





# Chapter 1

*Railway termini are  
our gates to the  
glorious and the  
unknown.*

*Through them we  
pass out into  
adventure and  
sunshine, to them,  
alas! we return.*

*~ E.M. Forster*



## Restored and Museum Depots







**Bismarck**, Vermilion County, Illinois. **C&EI**, Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad, depot built 1874; restoration 2001-2005, moved to Bunker Hill Historic Park, Danville. Top photo: 1993 at Bismarck, bottom photo: 2007 at Bunker Hill.



## 6 Restored and Museum Depots



Interior of  
restored  
Bismarck  
depot



Exterior  
detail

On site at  
Bunker  
Hill  
with  
restored  
dining car





**Elizabeth**, Jo Daviess County, Illinois. **CGW**, Chicago Great Western Railway, depot built 1888; restoration 1997- ongoing. *National Register of Historic Places*, 1996. Photos: 2003.



**Flora**, Clay County, Illinois. **B&O**, Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, depot built 1917; restored 2008. *National Register of Historic Places*, 1996. Top photo: 1991 (abandoned), bottom photo: 2008 (restoration progress).





**Genoa**, DeKalb County, Illinois. **CMStP&P**, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (Milwaukee Road), depot built 1882, moved and initial restoration 1977-1979. Photos: 2008

**Olmsted**, Pulaski County, Illinois. **CCC&StL**, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway (Big Four), depot built 1872, enlarged 1910, restoration begun 1989. *National Register of Historic Places*, 1989.







**Springfield**, Sangamon County, Illinois. **IC**, Illinois Central Railroad, depot built 1898 and restored in 2007. *National Register of Historic Places*, 1978. Photos: 2008

## 12 Restored and Museum Depots



Ticket window and waiting room, banister details (2008), Tower reconstruction (2006).





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New York  
Central System  
(NYC) caboose at  
Olmsted Depot.



## Chapter 2

*The railroad track is miles away,  
And the day is loud with voices speaking,  
Yet there isn't a train goes by all day  
But I hear its whistle shrieking.*

*All night there isn't a train goes by,  
Though the night is still for sleep and dreaming,  
But I see its cinders red on the sky,  
And hear its engine steaming.*



*My heart is warm with the  
friends I make,  
And better friends  
I'll not be knowing,  
Yet there isn't a train  
I would not take,  
No matter where it's going.*

*~ Edna St. Vincent Millay*

(c) copyright 1921, 1948 by Edna St. Vincent Millay

## Converted Depots

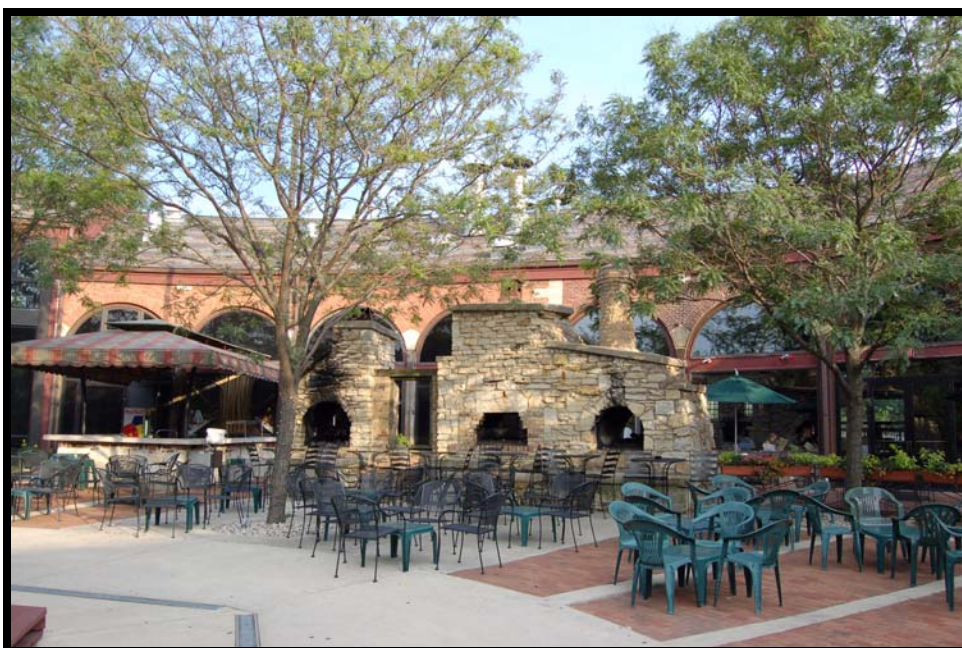




**Aurora**, Kane County, Illinois. **CB&Q**, Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Roundhouse and Locomotive Shop, built 1856-1865 and restored 1996. *National Register of Historic Places*, 1978. Was converted to Walter Payton's Roundhouse Complex and is now operating as America's Historic Roundhouse. Photos: 2008.





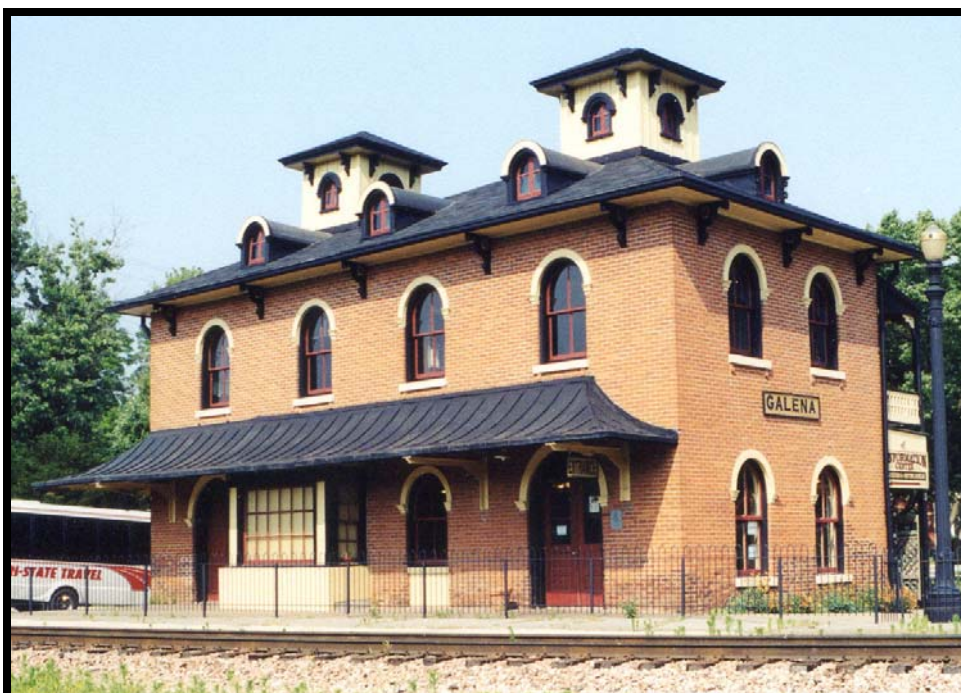






**Decatur**, Macon County, Illinois. **Wabash** Railway, depot built 1901 and restored c. 2002. *National Register of Historic Places*, 1994. Photos: 1995 (abandoned), 2008 (restored). Now operating as the Wabash Depot Antique Centre.

**Galena**, Jo Daviess County, Illinois. **IC**, Illinois Central Railroad, depot built 1857 and restored c. 1995. *National Register of Historic Places*, 1969 (included in *Galena Historic District*). In use as Galena's visitor center. Photos: 2003.







**Mt. Carmel**, Wabash County, Illinois. CCC&StL, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway (Big Four), depot built 1872. *Illinois Historic Landmark*, in use as a business office. Photos: 2008.

**Murphysboro**, Jackson County, Illinois. **IC**, Illinois Central Railroad, depot built 1910 and donated by the railroad in 1969. Currently used as an administrative office for S.T.A.R.T. (Specialized Training for Adult Rehabilitation). Photos: 2008.





**Top:** Centennial marker at IC depot in Murphysboro: "For 100 Years 1851-1951 Illinois Central, Main Line of Mid-America"



**Right:** Weathered door of freight house adjacent to IC passenger depot at Murphysboro



**Rankin**, Vermilion County, Illinois. **LE&W**, Lake Erie & Western Railway, later the Nickel Plate Road, depot built 1872 and transferred to village c. 1976. Photo 1993. Now operating as the village hall, library, and police station.





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UP, Union Pacific Railroad caboose 903014 at Kankakee in 2006.



## Chapter 3

*"A helping word to one in trouble  
is often like a switch  
on a railroad track ...  
an inch between wreck and  
smooth, rolling prosperity."*

*~ Henry Ward Beecher*



Railroad mural in Lincoln, Illinois

## Active Depots





**Alton**, Madison County, Illinois. **C&A**, Chicago & Alton Railroad, depot built 1928. Now in use as an Amtrak stop. Photos: 2006.



**Chester**, Randolph County, Illinois. **MoPac**, Missouri Pacific Railroad, depot build date unknown. Now in use by the Union Pacific Railroad. Photos: 2008.





Geneva  
Depot  
1988  
White  
paint

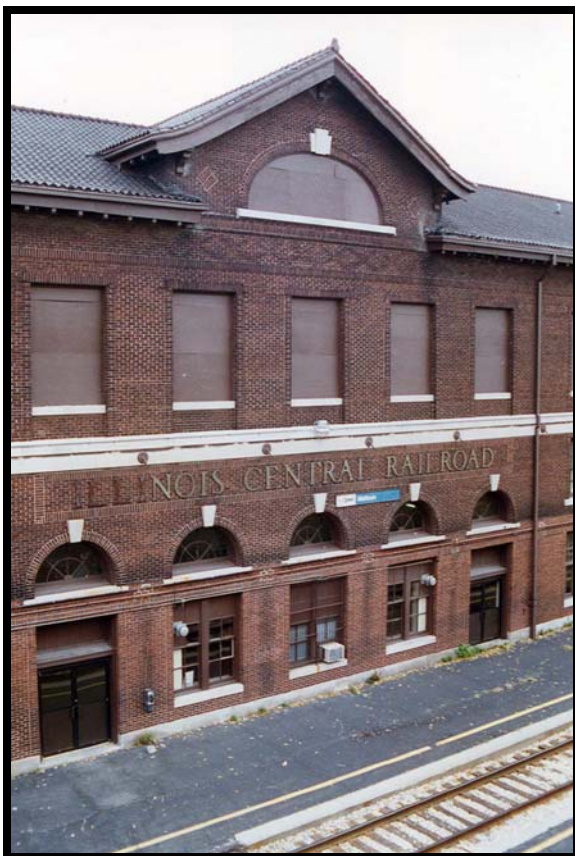


2008  
(Left)  
Brown  
paint with  
tan trim  
(Below)  
Trackside  
view with  
shops



**Geneva**, Kane County, Illinois. **C&NW**, Chicago & North Western Railway, third depot built 1893 and rebuilt 1959. Photos: (Top) 1988, (Bottom) 2008. Now operating under Metra commuter rail - Union Pacific/West Line.

**Mattoon**, Coles County, Illinois. **IC**, Illinois Central Railroad, depot built 1918. *National Register of Historic Places*, 2002. In use as Amtrak stop; restoration began 2008 - ongoing, see [www.projectdepot.org](http://www.projectdepot.org). Photos: 1996 and 2010.



(Left) 1996 Photo shows boarded windows and window air-conditioners on west side (track side of depot).



(Above) Illinois Central Centennial Marker on south side of depot at street level.

(Below) Restored windows and doors at street level (2010).

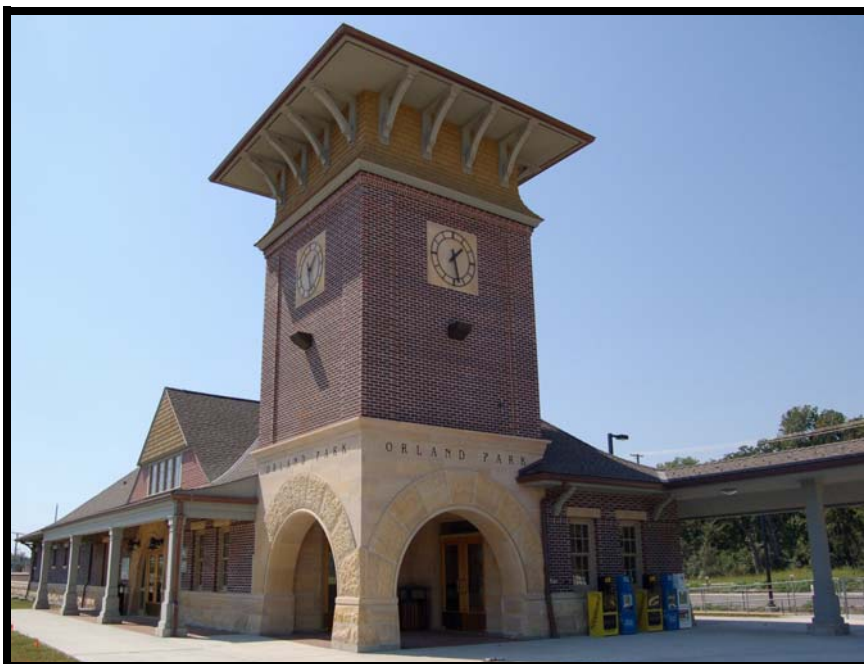






(Above) Renovated west side of depot, note the restored windows on all levels.  
(Below) Interior remodeling in process, note the original ticket booth (2010).



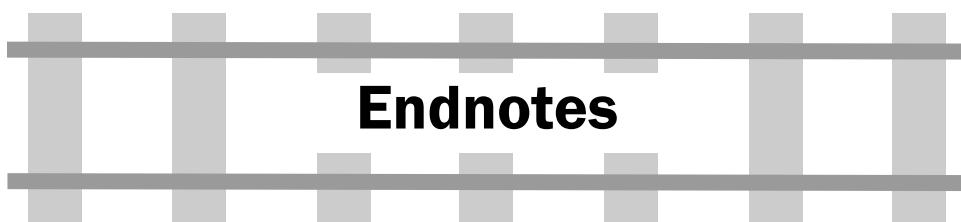


**Orland Park**, Cook County, Illinois. **Wabash**, Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Railway Co., depot built c.1880 and renovated in 2007. Was known as the Sedgewick Station now operating as **Metra**, Southwest Service, 143rd Street Station. Photos: 2007

**Palestine**, Crawford County, Illinois. **INRD**, The Indiana Rail Road, yard office (build date unknown). INRD began yard operations in Palestine in 1986 for the line between Palestine and Indianapolis, Indiana. Photos: 2008.







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**IC, Illinois  
Central  
Railroad  
caboose at  
Palestine,  
Illinois  
Photo: 2008**

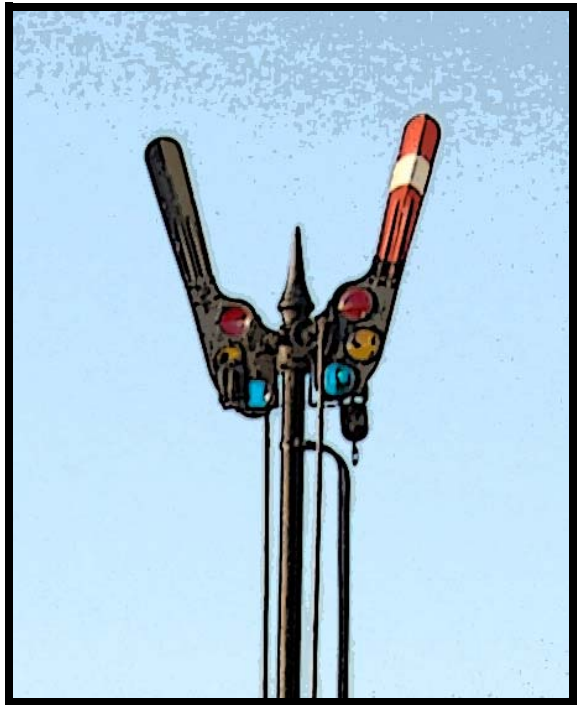


## Chapter 4

*It was a perfect  
night for a train.*

*The occasional  
whistle told Louis  
of all the farewells  
he had ever known.*

*~ Charles Turner*



**Abandoned Depots**







**Chenoa**, McLean County, Illinois. **C&A**, Chicago & Alton Railroad, depot built 1899 (see Endnotes). Photos: 1996 (top) and 2001 (bottom), showing progressive decay.



**Lake Zurich**, Lake County, Illinois. **EJ&E**, Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway, depot built c. 1890. Photo: 1993. The depot has decayed considerably since this photo was taken. See the EJ&E website photo gallery <http://www.ejarchive.com>.





**Mt. Vernon**, Jefferson County, Illinois. **L&N**, Louisville & Nashville Railroad (formerly the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad), depot built c. 1876. Photos: (Top) 1997 and (Bottom) 2008 with overgrown weeds and further decay.



**Wilmington**, Will County, Illinois. **C&A**, Chicago & Alton Railroad, depot built 1869. Photos: 1991 (this page), 2010 (next page). For more information on saving this depot go to: <http://www.blackhawknrhs.org/depots.htm>.





Top: South side of depot (2010) note the roof decay and missing “Wilmington” sign since the 1991 photo.

Bottom: North side of depot (2010).





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*Note:* According to the *Chenoa Community Centennial*, this (current) third depot was built by the TP&W in 1918 and the C&A rented space. Other sources indicate it was built in 1899.



UP, Union  
Pacific Caboose  
25257 near  
Sheldon, Illinois  
1987

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**CB&Q**, Chicago, Burlington & Quincy caboose at Princeton, Illinois  
Photo: 1996

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