

PH 06 80729

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

RECEIVED **AUG 1 1978**  
DATE ENTERED **NOV 30 1978**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

*Mackinaw Depot*  
ILLINOIS TRACTION SYSTEM/ILLINOIS TERMINAL RAILROAD

AND/OR COMMON

COMPANY DEPOT/SUBSTATION (Mackinaw, Illinois)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

North Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Mackinaw

*217-7823840  
Kath Smith  
name change OK  
8-4-98*

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Illinois

VICINITY OF

CODE

012

COUNTY

Tazewell

CODE

179 ✓

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Illinois Power Company ✓

STREET & NUMBER

319 North Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Bloomington

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Clerk, Tazewell County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Pekin

STATE

Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1909-1910, when the P.B. & C. changed from the AC power system, it constructed a new depot/substation to replace the "original" buildings. The new structure, ITS Station #572, was built to standard McKinley Lines blueprints. (Note: See ITS Elkhart Depot/Substation drawings for similar architectural details--ITS/ITC Mackinaw Depot Floor Plans.) The Spanish-style Traction depot/substation was constructed of red brick, pitch-faced, nine courses high around the base of the building, buff brick walls to the roof line, and red Spanish tile (Ludowici) hip roof. To support the weight of the roof, steel trusses were utilized in the roof structures. The Mackinaw Depot/Substation (27' x 93') consisted of a waiting room/ticket office (25'3" x 16'6"); a machinery room or substation (53'4" x 25'3"); a freight room (18' x 24'); and a lineman's room (7'3" x 24'). The machinery room (substation) including the tower contained a General Electric 500 kilowatt six-ring rotary DC converter with three Westinghouse transformers with a primary field of 33,000 volts and a secondary field of 443 volts each. The entire depot/substation contained 2396 square feet of space. The interior walls were lath and plaster except for the freight and lineman's rooms which were of brick. The building was amply illuminated with standard wooden casement windows some of which were replaced in the machinery (substation) area with louvers for better circulation around the electrical equipment at a later date. The machinery tower contained circular ports (2'4" diameter) to allow for entrance and exit of the inter-urban power supply wires. Electricity for the depot proper was wired through conduits. Heat for the depot was provided from coal/wood stoves. The floors of the structure were made of five inch concrete. On the trackside of the structure there was a 11' x 109' passenger platform (north side). On the east end and southeast corner there was a concrete freight platform serving the freight room, lineman's room and the Mackinaw station track. The name of the depot, "Mackinaw," was prominently displayed on the east and west ends of the building as well as in the center of the machinery (substation) tower on the trackside (north). To the rear of the depot (south) was located Mackinaw siding track some five hundred fifty feet long with a capacity of ten cars. This track connected with the main track just to the east of the depot.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1909-1910 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Illinois Traction System Architect - unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
ITS/ITC - MACKINAW DEPOT PRESERVATION PROJECT

The Illinois Traction System (ITS)/Illinois Terminal Railroad Company (ITC), which was a five-hundred fifty route mile electrically operated interurban, constructed a large brick depot/substation located at Mackinaw, Illinois. The depot/substation is one of a few surviving examples of ITS/ITC (McKinley System) Spanish Style architecture in Illinois. It was constructed in 1909-1910 and utilized by the ITS/ITC from 1910 to 1953 as a passenger-freight agency station. A subsidiary, the Illinois Power and Light Company, from 1927 to 1955, used it as an electrical substation for conversion of alternating current (AC) to direct current (DC) which supplied power for operation of the interurban on that section of the system. Personnel operating the depot/substation were responsible as well for neighboring interurban properties at the Gravel Pit, Cash Siding, and Evan's Pit to the West and Porter Siding to the East. Seven-tenths of a mile west of the Mackinaw Depot, the ITS/ITC line from Bloomington to Peoria connected with its line to Lincoln, Springfield, and St. Louis. At that location, called Mackinaw Junction, offices were built for a dispatcher and superintendent to operate the Northern Division of the ITS/ITC. While the successor railroad corporation utilized the Peoria-Lincoln-Springfield segment until October of 1977, all of the Mackinaw Junction buildings have been torn down. Hence, the Mackinaw depot becomes significant as a remarkable example of the interurban period of our local, state and national development. The Mackinaw ITS/ITC depot/substation is a pristine survivor of William B. McKinley's Illinois Traction System and its successor corporation, the Illinois Terminal Railroad Company. The interurban, the building, and its personnel contributed to the development of Mackinaw, Taxewell County, and central Illinois, as well as the nation. The ITS/ITC provided transportation, employment, industry, and electricity for the local area. While a few other examples of this architectural style survive in the state, the Mackinaw Depot is the least altered from its primary function as an interurban depot/substation; and, deserves and needs recognition as a National Historical Place in order to guarantee its preservation and survival for future generations.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Illinois Terminal Railroad Company  
 P. O. Box 7282  
 St. Louis, Mo. 63177  
 (AC 314) 231-3435

A. Gill Siepart, Assistant Professor of History, ITS/ITC Historical Research Project, ~~Illinois Central College, East Peoria, Illinois~~  
 61635 (AC309) 694-5309

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre (.069 of an acre)

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 310,015,0 449,010,8,0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

E \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

F \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

G \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

H \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED SHEET - CONTINUATION ITEM #10, Page #2

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

- 1a. Peg Clark
- 1b. Geraldine Naffziger
2. A. Gill Siepert

ORGANIZATION (1a/b) Mackinaw Historical Society  
 (2) Illinois Central College

DATE

(AC 309)

STREET & NUMBER (1a) 402 Juliana (1b) 100 S. Kruse  
 (2) Illinois Central College

TELEPHONE

(1a) 359-3541

(2) 694-5309 (1b) 359-4511

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

(1a/b) Mackinaw, Illinois 61755 (2) East Peoria, Illinois 61635

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_\_

STATE X

LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Dad Kenny*

TITLE

DATE

7/6/78

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*for Charles Adams*

DATE

11.30.78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Ruby B. Franklin*

DATE

11-29-78

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENT PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE ILLINOIS TERMINAL  
DEPOT, MACKINAW, ILLINOIS

INTERIOR

Doors and Windows: Intermittent deterioration ranging from parts totally intact to absolute rotting of wood.  
Interior Walls: Plaster falling in spots.  
Floors: Baggage room floor - difficult to determine condition due to snow cover from holes in roof at the time the inspection was made. Machinery room and ticket-waiting room area - the floor appears to be structurally intact.  
Wainscoating and Original Ticket Counter: Could be restored.

EXTERIOR

Brickwork: Needs major repairs or replacement in spots.  
Guttering: Needs to be repaired. The guttering is galvanized and in remarkable shape considering the age of the building.  
Soffit: Rotted, needs replacement.  
Braces on roof line: Need replacement or repair.  
Roof: Roof over baggage area is about 40% damaged. Roof directly over waiting room area is about 20% damaged.  
Loading Dock: Concrete deteriorated; frost damage.  
Station Platform: Satisfactory condition considering age.

Photographs of interior and exterior of the depot reveal detailed explanation of the building's deterioration and the location of that deterioration.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

The real estate situated in the County of Tazewell, State of Illinois and described as follows, to-wit:

Beginning at a point 11.9 feet south of (measured at right angles to) the center line of the single main track of Grantor, as said track is now located and constructed over and across the Northwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 17, Township 24 North, Range 2 West of the Third Principal Meridian, Tazewell County, Illinois, said point being 1110.9 feet East, measured along the center line of said main track, from the intersection of said center line with the West line of said Northwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of said Section 17; thence South at right angles to said center line of said track 30.5 feet; thence West at right angles 99.3 feet; thence North at right angles 30.5 feet; thence East, parallel to and 11.9 feet South of, said center line of said Track (measured at right angles thereto) a distance of 9913 feet to point of beginning.

Containing sixty-nine thousandths (.069) of an acre, more or less; all situated in said County of Tazewell, State of Illinois.

Property Illinois Traction System Mackinaw Depot

State Ill. Working Number 8.1.78.3745

**TECHNICAL**

Photos 11  
Maps 1

**CONTROL**

OK pl  
8.3.78

Structure has significant associations w/ the Illinois Traction system, one of the largest interurban systems in the U.S. Such transportation facilities were of primary importance prior to the spread of the highway systems in the 1920's & 30's in Illinois. Refer to arch. historian re: value as example of Spanish style

**HISTORIAN**

ACCEPT  
DUBIE 11/22/78

Architectural significance could have been discussed further, structure is significant primarily for industrial nature. Design is interesting - in a Spanish colonial revival mode but with an overall "feel" to roof overhang and roof decorations.

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

accept  
Brabham  
11.24.78

**ARCHEOLOGIST**

**OTHER**

~~HAER does not clearly state significance of site~~  
~~but the structure may be eligible as documented~~  
I presume all machinery is missing from structure, though nomination fails to address this question #8 part II documents significance of site and its relationship to interurban transit system

**HAER**

Inventory 1/11  
Review 11/17/78  
accept Don Jackson

Illinois Traction System was largest interurban (in miles) in U.S. local significance of structure is evidenced (Phone report 11/29/78 - machinery gone)

**REVIEW UNIT CHIEF**

Accept  
Franklin  
11.29.78

**BRANCH CHIEF**

**KEEPER**

National Register Write-up \_\_\_\_\_  
Federal Register Entry 2-6-79

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_  
Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_

Entered NOV 30 1978

S.S. Station

Mackinaw, Ill

Ehrlicher Bros. Druggist.

5426



PHOTO # 1 ITS/ITC  
Mackinaw Depot/Substation  
Mackinaw, IL Photographer:  
Unknown ca. 1910 Postcard  
Copy Neg: A. Gill Siepert  
Postcard view showing the  
northside (trackside) of the  
building. AUG 1 1978

NOV 3 0 1978

1



PHOTO # **2** ITS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-Mackinaw, IL  
John Harrigan Photo (Peoria)  
Copy: A. Gill Siepert  
1952/November/30

Eastbound ITC# 282 (orange)  
leaving Mackinaw Depot as  
Train # 43 on 1952/Nov/30.  
Shows east end with freight  
platform and machinery tower.

AUG 1 1978

NOV 30 1978



**IP** ILLINOIS  
POWER  
COMPANY

PHOTO# 3 IFS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-1978/March  
Photographer:Howard Eveans  
Mackinaw Historical Society  
Mackinaw, IL

View shows westend(Ill.Power  
sign)and northside(trackside)  
as taken from NorthMain St.  
Notice concrete passenger  
platform and damage to dark  
brick base(northside)and to  
tile roof on the westend.

AUG 1 1978

NOV 30 1978



4  
PHOTO # 4 ITS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-1978/March  
Photographer: Howard Eveans  
Mackinaw Historical Society  
Mackinaw, IL

View taken from SW of North  
Main St. of the southside of  
the building. Note roof  
damage to leftside and right-  
side on the structure.

AUG 1 1978

NOV 30 1978



**IP**  
ILLINOIS  
POWER  
COMPANY

PHOTO # 5 ITS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-1978/March  
Photographer: Howard Eveans  
Mackinaw Historical Society  
Mackinaw, IL

View taken from NorthMain  
shows the westend(Ill Power  
sign) and the rear(southend)  
of the building.

AUG 1 1978

NOV 30 1978



LINDIS  
OWER  
OMPANY

6  
PHOTO #6 ITS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-1978/March  
Photographer: Howard Eveans  
Mackinaw Historical Society  
Mackinaw, IL

View from North Main (Looking  
NE) at the SW corner. Note  
the damage to the tile roof.

AUG 1 1978

NOV 30 1978



7  
PHOTO# 7 ITS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-1978/March  
Photographer: Howard Eveans  
Mackinaw Historical Society  
Mackinaw, IL

AUG 1 1978

View looking ~~N~~W at the SE  
corner showing the freight  
platform, freight and line-  
man's end of the building.

Note the extensive roof  
damage on the leftside AND

RIGHTSIDE. NOV 30 1978



PHOTO # 8 ITS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-1978/March  
Photographer: Howard Eveans  
Mackinaw Historical Society  
Mackinaw, IL

8

View of the northside (track-  
side) looking towards the NE  
corner of the freight room  
portion of the building. Note  
the extensive damage to roof  
(eastend) as well as red base  
brick on Northside of building

AUG 1 1978

NOV 30 1978

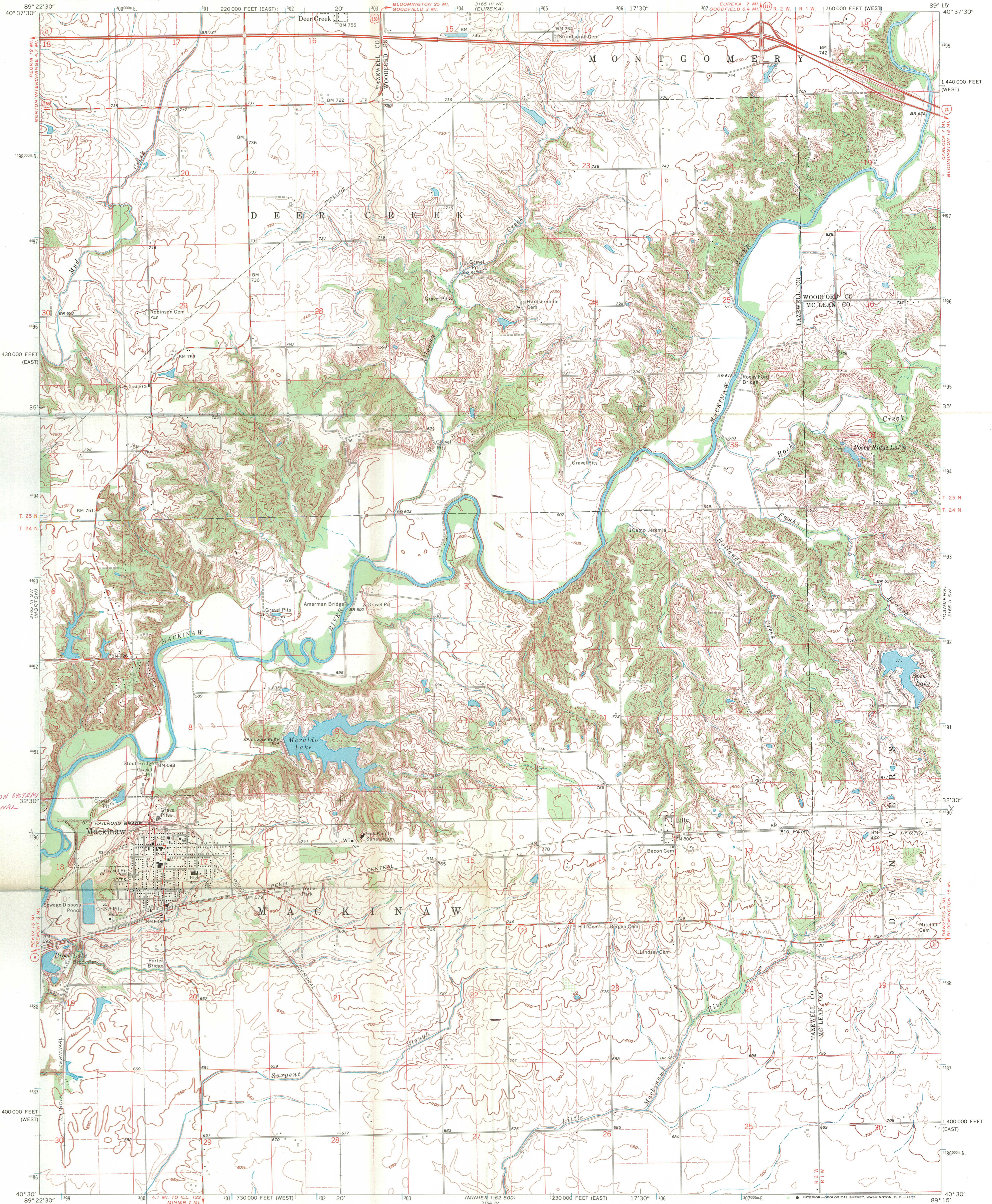


9  
PHOTO# 9 ITS/ITC Mackinaw  
Depot/Substation-1978/March  
Photographer:Howard Eveans  
Mackinaw Historical Society  
Mackinaw, IL

View of the SE corner of the  
building showing the damaged  
freight room roof on the east  
end and the rear of the  
building(southside).

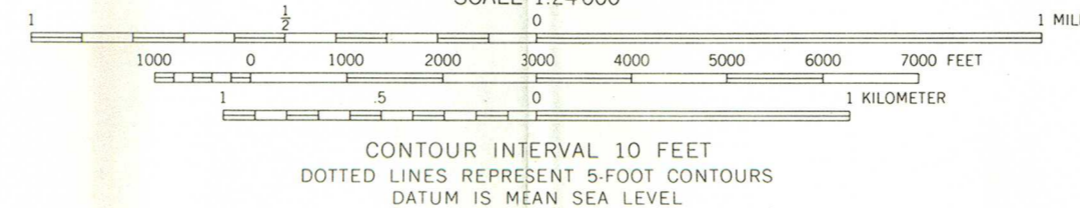
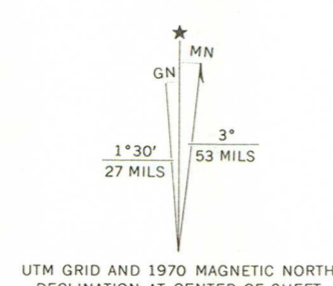
AUG 1 1978

NOV 30 1978



ILLINOIS TRACTION SYSTEM  
ILLINOIS TERMINAL  
RAILROAD  
ZONE 16  
E-300150  
N-4490080

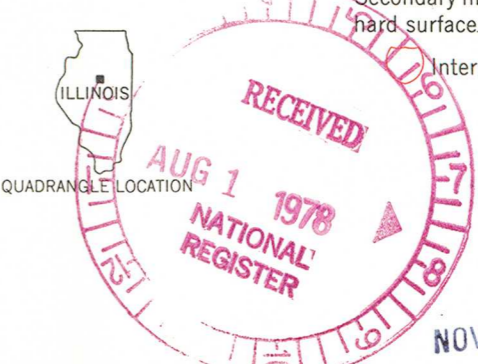
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1968. Field checked 1970  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grids based on Illinois coordinate system,  
west and east zones  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 16, shown in blue  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where  
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
AND BY THE STATE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



MACKINAW, ILL.  
SE/4 MACKINAW 15' QUADRANGLE  
N4030-W8915/7.5  
1970  
AMS 3165 III SE-SERIES V863

NOV 20 1978

*Mackinaw Historical Society, Inc.*

BOX 534  
MACKINAW, ILLINOIS 61755



October 20, 1978

Honorable Adlai Stevenson III  
United States Senate  
Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stevenson:

Subject: Illinois Traction System Depot, Mackinaw, Illinois  
Historic Site Designation

Our depot has been nominated as a National Historic Site. We are anxiously awaiting the news that we have been entered on the National Register. It is our understanding that your office will be notified approximately a month before we are notified. We would appreciate it greatly if you could let us know when you receive your notification thus saving us an additional month of suspense.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Corresponding Secretary

es

BOR Mail Control No. 44978

Do not Film

NOV 9 1978

## United States Senate

Office of Senator Stevenson  
456 Old Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

ATTN: LYNN CLARK

Respectfully referred to:

Congressional Liaison Office  
Department of the Interior  
Interior Building  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Because of the desire of this office to be responsive to all inquiries and communications, your consideration of the attached is requested. Your findings and views, in duplicate form, along with return of the enclosure, will be appreciated by



U.S.S.

Form #2

NOV 14 1978

United States Senate

NOV 17 1978  
Office of Senator Stevenson  
456 Old Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

ATTN: LYNN CLARK

Respectfully referred to:

Congressional Liaison Office  
Department of the Interior  
Interior Building  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Because of the desire of this office to be responsive to all inquiries and communications, your consideration of the attached is requested. Your findings and views, in duplicate form, along with return of the enclosure, will be appreciated by



U.S.S.

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# TELEPHONE REPORT

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OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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PROJECT: Ill. Traction system

---

TO/FROM: Ann Manuell

DATE: 11/22/78

---

ADDRESS: 111 SHPO

PHONE:

---

STAFF MEMBER: DUBIE

DIVISION: NR

---

REPORT: interior machinery?

Inside — all machinery is gone —  
replaced by substation machinery — modern  
ticket booth remains. equipment  
w/in last  
five years

She thought we had received  
photos of interiors — told her no — she  
said she would check their files & send  
press along if available.

---

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE      ILLINOIS

Date Entered      NOV 9 1978

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Illinois Traction System Mackinaw Depot	Mackinaw Tazewell County
Bowen, Joseph T., Country Club	Waukegan Lake County
Lyons Township Hall	LaGrange Cook County
Danville Public Library	Danville Vermilion County
Griggs, Clark R., House	Urbana Champaign County

Also Notified

Honorable Adlai E. Stevenson

Honorable Charles H. Percy

Honorable Robert H. Michel

Honorable Robert McClory

Honorable Edward J. Derwinski

Honorable George E. Shipley

Honorable Edward R. Madigan

State Historic Preservation Officer

Mr. David Kenney

Director, Department of Conservation

602 State Office Building

400 South Spring Street

Springfield, Illinois 62706

B. Frandsen  
12.1.78  
Franklin  
12.1.78  
Hury  
12.1.78  
Anty  
12/1  
Connally  
12.4

12/12/78

Honorable Adlai Stevenson  
United States Senate  
456 Old Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stevenson:

Tazewell

Thank you for your inquiries of November 9, and 14, 1978, on behalf of Ms. Geraldine E. Naffziger concerning the nomination of the Illinois Traction System Depot, Mackinaw, Illinois, to the National Register of Historic Places.

We are pleased to inform you that the Illinois Traction System Depot was entered in the National Register on November 30, 1978.

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

John Single

Gary R. Catron  
Assistant to the Secretary  
and Director of Congressional  
and Legislative Affairs

cc: Mr. David Kenney  
Director  
Department of Conservation  
602 State Office Building  
400 South Spring Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62706

bcc: Secretary's File  
Secretary's Reading File (2)  
FW / ES  
Director's Reading File  
Associate Director, Connally  
Chief, OAHP / FHR-Lumpkin / FHR-CL / CL / NR / BOR's - 44978 and 44973  
FHR:B Frandsen:lw:343-6401:11-30-78

FW 12/7/78



Not affiliated with the  
Illinois Terminal Railroad Company



HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

ITEM #8 -- PART II



THE ILLINOIS TRACTION SYSTEM:

A BRIEF HISTORY\*

BY

A. Gill Siepert  
Assistant Professor of History  
ITS/ITC Historical Research Project  
Illinois Central College  
East Peoria, Illinois 61635  
(AC 309) 694-5309

(\*adapted from an article published in December, 1977; researched  
and written by the author)

For forty-six years, the electric interurban rumbled past the Mackinaw, Illinois depot. Today, only automobiles travel there while the Traction's still-operating descendant travels a block to the south using the trackage of the old Vandalia (PRR) which the existing Illinois Terminal Railroad now owns.

The Illinois Traction System (ITS), or simply "the Traction" as it was called by many, was built during the boom decade, 1900 thru 1910, of interurban construction in the United States. Electric interurban service on the ITS ending in 1955, long after most similar companies had been abandoned.

The Traction had the distinction of being the largest (in mileage) and the longest (in mainline) interurban to operate under one management in the State of Illinois. It survived longer than most because it very early diversified its business into freight of all kinds which enabled it to remain solvent through several troubled periods as passenger revenues declined in the face of paved highways and the automobile.

The Traction's route southward through Mackinaw Junction to Springfield was more direct than competing steam railroads principally the Illinois Central and the Chicago, Peoria and St. Louis and offered better service out of Peoria. Good management capitalized on the advantage. The Traction developed and encouraged on-line industry to build up its freight business (e.g. sand, gravel, coal and grain). The Traction constructed "belt lines" around most major cities which provided for easy entrance and exit without vehicular competition from running on city streets (like in Morton). The construction of a high-speed entrance into St. Louis made the Traction competitive with the steam passenger trains and the paved, all-weather road system in that part of the State.

Basically, the interurban thrived due to a need for short-distance intercity travel. As technology was changed, many railroad companies went into bankruptcy. Like the long-haul steam railroad passenger train, the electric interurban was a victim. The former was a victim of the airplane and the interstate highway; the latter (electric) was a victim of Illinois' pioneering in paved highways. For example, by 1926, of the

550 miles of mainline ITS track, approximately 515 miles were paralleled by hard-surface highways.

The development and construction of the Traction was very much the product of its founder, William Brown McKinley. In a rapidly developing career, he went from the farm into banking and investments, electric utilities, street railways and interurbans to Congressman and finally United States Senator from Illinois.

William B. McKinley was born in Petersburg, Illinois, on September 5, 1856. When his family moved to Champaign, he attended public school and later spent two years at the University of Illinois. At sixteen he went to work in a drug store in Springfield. He entered into his uncle's business, a farm mortgage brokerage, at Champaign. Eventually, he became a partner and then the entire business passed to him. By 1855 he had entered public utilities by building a water works treatment facility for the Champaign-Urbana area.

The Urbana and Champaign horse-drawn street railway was absorbed by McKinley in 1890 and the following year he electrified that system. In 1899 McKinley expanded his electric utility holdings again by purchasing the Danville Street Railway. From these small lines, William McKinley then developed the electric system, known in the beginning as the "McKinley Lines," between 1900 and 1911.

The electric interurban was not McKinley's only interest. He was described as a "life-long Republican who consistently adhered to the major principles of his party . . ." He served as a trustee of the University of Illinois from 1902-1905. Citizens of Champaign-Urbana area elected him to represent them in the House of Representatives in Congress from 1905 to 1913 and again from 1915 to 1921. In 1920, after a hotly contested race, William B. McKinley was selected to a term in the United States Senate. He served in all of these public offices, concurrently controlling his public utility and interurban empires until his death on December 7, 1926.

At the turn of the present century, "trust-busting" became politically strong. Partly for this reason, the founder of the Traction sought to develop his street

railway and interurban holdings under separate corporate identities to forestall any "trust-busting." This practice also limited the liability for such speculative enterprises. Most competing steam railroads were already well established and the automobile was in its infancy. Building electric railways was risky and costly. By creating separate corporation to build the interurban, the hazards were far less formidable.

The coming of the interurban to Morton was a part of the whole Traction network. The "McKinley Lines" began in Danville with the incorporation of the Danville, Paxton and Northern Railroad (D.P. & N.) on December 2, 1899. The line operated between Danville and Westville, located to the south.

Encouraged by the success of this operation, the Danville, Urbana and Champaign Railroad (D.U.C.) was incorporated and opened between Champaign and St. Joseph in 1902 with the remainder between St. Joseph and Danville being completed in 1903. This company also extended the Danville-Westville line to Georgetown further south.

Early in 1903, the McKinley associates organized the Illinois Central Traction Company (ICT) to build between Decatur and Springfield. The St. Louis and Springfield Railway (St.L. & SP.) was incorporated in 1903 to build between Springfield and Carlinville to the south. These two segments were opened in 1904. In May, 1904, all of the McKinley interests were placed in control of, and operated by, a holding company called the Illinois Traction Company.

Construction south of Carlinville towards Edwardsville, Granite City and St. Louis was begun, but not completed by the St. Louis and Staunton Railway until 1905-1906. Operation to Granite City and East St. Louis was accomplished by obtaining trackage rights over another interurban company, the East St. Louis and Suburban. This service lasted four years.

Recognizing the importance of a direct St. Louis entry, a bridge was constructed by the St. Louis Electric Terminal Company, a McKinley operation, cross the Mississippi River at a cost of \$4.5 million. The steel bridge was the only independently-owned railroad bridge across the Mississippi River. It was 2450 feet long and at its

center was fifty feet above the high water mark. The bridge was dedicated on November 10, 1910. The Illinois Traction gained access to downtown St. Louis. In retrospect, this costly bridge proved to be extremely beneficial to the Traction's economic survival.

In 1904, the McKinley interests purchased the Peoria Street Railway Company. This company operated Peoria's streetcar system of over fifty miles serving the city and its suburbs. Entrenched in Peoria, McKinley began discussion about a proposed electric line to connect with his interurban system which was being assembled between Danville, Springfield and St. Louis.

To accomplish this proposal, the Chicago, Bloomington and Decatur Railway (C.B. & D.) was incorporated in 1904 to build northward between Decatur and Chicago via Clinton and Bloomington. (The citizens of Clinton also had similar ideas but had been unable to adequately finance the proposed line until McKinley came along.) The C.B. & D. opened the section from Decatur to Clinton in 1905.

Entry into Bloomington was accomplished by July 4, 1906. Operating into Bloomington required negotiating from the City of Bloomington a franchise to utilize the city streets. The street trackage in Bloomington retarded easy movement through town due to tight radius curves. The franchise also restricted speeds. All freight movements were limited to the hours of 10 P.M. to 5 A.M. These arrangements were not untypical, but Bloomington's regulations restricted its effective use for mainline passenger and freight trains.

To get around restrictive franchise agreements, the Traction constructed freight belt lines outside Springfield, Decatur, Edwardsville and Granite City, but not Bloomington between 1906 and 1911. In any event, these restrictive factors partially led to the Bloomington line's abandonment effective on February 21, 1953, just one year short of the original franchise expiration date of fifty years.

The Springfield and Northeastern Traction Company (S. & N.E.) was incorporated on April 27, 1906, to build from Springfield northward to Bloomington by way of Lincoln,

roughly paralleling the Chicago and Alton Railroad (and later U.S. 66/I-55). Work was started from Lincoln to Bloomington, with franchise agreements negotiated at Atlanta, but that portion was never built. Lincoln developed an interurban outlet to the north when the Peoria, Lincoln and Springfield Traction Company (P.L. & S.) was begun in 1907. Service was opened from Lincoln to Mackinaw Junction in 1908.

Construction of the P.B. & C. in 1906 and 1907 proceeded from Bloomington towards Peoria by way of Lilly and Mackinaw. In order to avoid steep grades to descend into the Mackinaw River Valley and because of the location of the Vandalia's trackage in town, the Traction passed through the north edge of Mackinaw. Eventually a large, red-tiled, buff brick depot was located at Main Street. This building still stands today, and is the structure nominated for special consideration in this application.

Heading down a 2.4 to 2.7% grade, the ITS crossed the Mackinaw River and proceeded up Herberger Hill. Of particular note was the practice of the P.B. & C. to name its "stops" for the adjoining property owners. This particular P.B. & C. right-of-way was purchased from George Herberger for \$650.00. "Herberger Stop" was located where the Traction right-of-way crossed a public road now called Herberger Road.

The designation of this stop was by two small signs approximately eight inches wide and 24 inches long with black lettering on a white background with black trim around the edge. The signs were attached to one of the interurban line poles so that they could be read by approaching interurban trains from either direction. This process of naming locations for adjunct property owners was continued all along the interurban. At the top of Herberger Hill, the Traction passed by Clyde Siding and entered Allentown. From Allentown, the Traction proceeded westward to Morton, East Peoria and Peoria.

Since the trains of the McKinley Lines were designed to be propelled electrically, design and construction usually followed the latest that the technology of the day had to offer. Up to the construction of the lines north of Springfield and west of Bloomington, the McKinley interests had chosen the standard low voltage direct current (DC) system. The interurban properties as well as the city street railways operated on 650 volts DC.

In the later decades of the 19th Century, the Westinghouse Company had developed the high voltage, single phase, alternating current (AC) system. The McKinley management decided to experiment with this system on its lines to be constructed west of Bloomington through Mackinaw and Morton to Peoria and on its line north of Springfield through Lincoln to Mackinaw Junction where connections were made with the Peoria-Bloomington lines.

The value of this system was to be realized in better power distribution and lower cost of construction and operation. The Traction chose a 3300 volt, single phase, AC system with the power being generated in Peoria for the entire Northern Division of the railroad.

Hopefully the AC system was chosen to eliminate the costly direct current (DC) sub-stations located every eight to ten miles and for lessening of problems from voltage drop and power loss inherent with the DC system.

This is not to say the AC system did not have its shortcomings. Because the Peoria, Bloomington and Springfield street railway systems all used 650 volts DC, the Traction had to purchase interurban cars and freight motors which could be operated on either AC or DC depending on the portion of the line they were on at the time.

The Traction wished to have access over the trackage of the street lines into the downtown parts of the cities. Upon entering the cities, the Motorman and Conductor would have to change the operation from AC to DC and reverse the process upon leaving. The AC-DC equipment installed in special cars to operate on this part of the line, were more costly to install and added a great deal of weight to the cars.

The entire overhead system of the Peoria, Bloomington and Champaign Company, the Peoria, Lincoln and Springfield (Mackinaw Junction to Lincoln) and the Springfield and Northeastern (Lincoln to Springfield) were constructed to 3300 volts AC operation with 650 volts DC available for city street operation in Peoria, Bloomington and Springfield. The McKinley Lines operated with this dual system from 1906 to 1909.

The Traction's power plant at Peoria provided the current for both AC and DC operations. The current was delivered to the railside by copper feeder wires which

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were attached to the line poles which paralleled the interurban right-of-way. These line poles were generally 40-50 foot northern white cedar or butt-treated western red cedar or fully creosoted yellow pine. The feeder wires would tap into the overhead trolley wire at regular intervals. The overhead trolley wire was suspended on brackets some 18-22 feet above the top of the rail over the center of the track.

Overhead wire distribution was found in two types. One type was "Direct Suspension" system consisting of a single hard drawn cooper trolley wire supported at intervals of about 100 feet from either metal bracket arms mounted on the line pole or on insulated span wires suspended between poles mounted on either side of the track.

The other type of overhead distribution system was called "Catenary". In this system, the trolley wire was suspended from a messenger wire by hangers of varying lengths. The messenger was hung between bracket supports or on span wires as mentioned under the "Direct Suspension." "Catenary" was slightly more costly to install and to maintain but more economical to operate. Catenary was used through Mackinaw.

Power collection on most interurbans required the use of the trolley pole mounted on the top of the car on either end or only one end depending on the operating controls within the car. The trolley pole was held against the wire by the tension of springs mounted in a swiveling base. At the end of the pole was a "wheel" which could rotate or a "shoe" which would slide along the wire.

In the case of a dewirement while operating, a "trolley retriever" retracted the trolley pole. The "retriever" was located on the end of the car to which the trolley pole was attached.

The requirements of the heavy voltage AC system first used through Mackinaw required the use of a "pantograph." The pantograph consisted of a flat surface area which was held against the overhead wire by a collector supported by springs and lowered by air pressure. The major advantage of the pantograph was the ease with which backward and forward switching operations would be made. It did not require manipulation of the collecting device pole. It would take less time to complete a switching move using a pantograph collection system.

However, pantographs were more expensive to install and maintain properly. Current from the overhead wire was transmitted to the Motorman's controller which could regulate his speed, then was sent to the electric traction motors which were mounted on the axles of the wheels. The electric circuit was returned via the rails which were bonded together to complete and provide an adequate electrical connection.

Most of the main track of the Traction was constructed of AC catenary for pantograph operation. Sidings, tracks and station tracks were typically constructed using the direct suspension system which could use either collection system.

Operation from one track to another, such as a train taking the siding for a "meet" with another train approaching in the opposite direction, required the conductor to lower the trolley pole to allow the "wheel" or "shoe" to make contact with the overhead wire on the track that the train was then entering. At first, there were no "switches" in the overhead wire that allowed the interurban car trolleys to follow automatically. In the thirties the Company would install some overhead devices to accomplish a part of this switching which was otherwise costly and time-consuming.

All this electrical overhead system was quite susceptible to the changing weather of central Illinois. Wind, snow, sleet and ice were always problems for the electrical circuits on the interurban.

The McKinley Lines right-of-way construction work from the beginning was planned by the highest grade of engineering ability. Since the Traction was constructed in stages, each successive stage allowed the builders to combine the experience gained in earlier work with the highest known theoretical advancement in the art of electric railway building.

The general construction plan included the building of track and roadway, comparable in every respect with that of the steam roads, and so designed for heavy freight and passenger usage. The duration of the Traction into the 1950's showed how far-sighted the builders and designers had been.

Practically the entire mileage of the Illinois Traction System was on private right-of-way. The greater part averaged 66 feet or more in width and sometimes extended



to 80 or 100 feet. Rail weighing 70 pounds per lineal yard was spiked to standard ties. In general the crossties were the standard 6"x8"x8' spaced on 22-24 inch centers. After 1909 the Traction installed only creosoted ties of red oak and other similar hardwood to help maximize their life expectancy. The crossties and rail were ballasted with crushed rock (usually limestone), gravel or cinders to facilitate water drainage.

Starting in the 1920's the Traction gradually replaced most of the 70 pound rail with 90 pound rail which was more suited to heavier traffic requirements of the system. Such rail replacements were mainly confined to the Peoria-Springfield-St. Louis line. The upgrading continued through the 1950's.

According to contemporary sources, the average construction cost for right-of-way and overhead for interurbans in 1909 was \$60,000 per mile. W.A. McCulley, chief engineer on the construction of the P.B. & C., stated that it cost approximately \$37,000 per mile to build the line from Peoria through Morton to Bloomington (1906-1908) while the rest of the Northern Division from Mackinaw Junction southward to Lincoln and Springfield (1906-1908) cost on the average \$25,000 per mile.

The McKinley Lines was well under the national average, it would appear, except that in late 1907, there was a severe national financial panic which drove construction costs upward dramatically and also helped to end the "interurban building boom."

By April 13, 1907, the interurban through the Village of Mackinaw was ready. Extensive tests of the AC-DC equipment was conducted by Company officials and representatives from the manufacturers of the interurban equipment on the thirteenth. The tests were conducted between Mackinaw and East Peoria. For the first time, electric powered interurban equipment operated in Mackinaw.

The tests were very successful, so the following day, the Traction took its first local revenue passengers between Mackinaw and East Peoria, stopping some 400 feet south of Farm Creek near the yet uncompleted Illinois River bridge. Excitement must have been great, for one account of that day stated that ". . . nearly everyone in the villages of Morton and Mackinaw rode the Traction . . ."

Clean-up work and finishing touches to the newly constructed line were completed over the next few days. At approximately 3:00 P.M. on April 17, 1907, the first McKinley AC-DC car made a trip across the newly-completed Illinois River bridge, going west from East Peoria into Peoria.

The powerhouse had been completed by construction crews in February, 1907, and was located at the west end of the bridge with the interurban line actually passing through it. The completion of the crossing of the Illinois River by the Traction had taken a little longer. Including its approaches, the bridge was about 1600 feet long and was made up of four through-truss steel spans, four through-girder steel spans, six deck-girder steel spans and one double-lead steel lift span 100 feet long that extended over the river channel. The lift span was necessary to allow river traffic to pass under the bridge. Construction difficulties had delayed the overhead power system installation.

Local revenue service over the line from Mackinaw to Peoria was begun on April 20, 1907, with full service officially commencing the following day for the rest of the P.B. & C. from Peoria to Bloomington. This was an important day for the Village of Mackinaw.

Originally, the P.B. & C. constructed a crude depot at Mackinaw. The "depot" was an old boxcar nine feet wide and forty-one feet long. Adjacent to this "depot" was a shelter shed twelve feet wide and twenty-two feet long; and a tool house approximately nine feet by twelve feet. (See ITS Station Grounds Map - 1908/Aug/19, Map # ) These structures were to serve the village until the construction of a standard ITS combination station/substation in the electrical modernization program of 1909.

The ITS schedule for 1908 called for seven westbound limiteds and seven eastbound limiteds and ten westbound and ten eastbound locals daily through Mackinaw between Peoria and Decatur. The Vandalia only offered three trains each direction, while the Peoria and Eastern only offered two trains daily in each direction. On the ITS, limiteds stopped at major stations only, but locals would stop at any location

in addition to regular stations. One of the real advantages for the people who lived near where the Traction passed was that they could simply stand along the right-of-way and hail the passing train, and if it were a local, it would stop and pick them up. Such service afforded passengers access to the major cities and towns for a relatively small cost (two cents per mile) and with little expenditure of time.

As long as the Traction was able to offer frequent service, the line was a major asset to those who would benefit from it. The Traction's frequent service was difficult to maintain as revenues fell below operating expenses. Patronage would drop off corresponding to the encroachment of the automobile and the paved highway.

As mentioned earlier, the last part of the system to be completed was the line northward from Lincoln. The Traction interests incorporated to become the Peoria, Lincoln and Springfield Traction Company on April 16, 1907. The right-of-way was procured and construction from Lincoln passed through Union, Mindale and affected a junction with the Peoria-Bloomington line just to the west of Mackinaw at a place called Mackinaw Junction.

With the completion of the P.L. & S. the McKinley interurban system was basically completed. A passenger could travel from Peoria through Morton to Mackinaw Junction. From there the passenger could go to Mackinaw, Bloomington, Decatur and beyond or he could go south to Lincoln, Springfield, Granite City or St. Louis (after 1910).

The P.L. & S. linkage at Mackinaw Junction caused many changes. The number of trains through the town increased. To better facilitate the dispatching of trains, the dispatchers and the superintendent of the P.B. & C. relocated from Bloomington to a newly constructed facility at Mackinaw Junction. At this location a wooden structure was built to serve as a central dispatching location and to provide a place for passengers to transfer trains from the Peoria-Bloomington line and the Lincoln-Springfield line.

Using the telephone, dispatchers operating out of the second story of the building, supervised the operations of the lines west of Bloomington and north of Springfield.

Related to demands caused by the increased traffic, the experiment with an AC-DC electrical power system proved unsatisfactory. The McKinley management decided in March, 1909, to change the entire Northern Division over to 650 volts DC. The Company invested \$350,000 for new equipment to provide the DC power and for renovation of the AC equipment.

Since it takes a greater amount of energy to transmit lower voltages, transmission of the current was to be 33,000 volts AC but the Company would construct substations every 8 to 10 miles to convert the high voltage AC current into 650 volts direct current. In the 1920's, the Traction began to add an additional transmission line of 66,000 volts AC at 25 cycles, three-phase. This system was carried on specially designed steel high tension towers which paralleled the right-of-way.

Substations were to be constructed at Morton, Mackinaw, Danvers, Union, Mindale, Elkhart, Ridgley Junction and Emery, a station located between Decatur and Clinton. Basic substations were usually equipped with transformers to reduce the voltage of alt. current from the transmission lines and either motor generator sets of synchronous or "rotary" converters (which had a loud, whining noise) to change alternating current to direct current.

When a train entered the "electrical section" supplied by one of these substations, the resulting voltage would be recognized by a substation attendant. He would turn on the substation's equipment to supply the needed voltage. Later technological developments permitted the utilization of "automatics" which did not require constant attention.

As mentioned when the P.E.& C. changed from the AC power system, it constructed a new depot/substation to replace the "original" buildings. The new structure, ITS Station #572, was built to standard McKinley Lines blueprints. (Note: See ITS Elkhart Depot/Substation drawing for similar architectural details--ITS/ITC Mackinaw Depot Floor plans.) The Spanish-style Traction depot/substation was constructed of red brick, pitch-faced, nine courses high around the base of the building, buff brick walls to the roof line, and red Spanish tile (Ludowici) hip roof. To support the weight of the roof, steel trusses were utilized in the roof structures. The Mackinaw Depot/Substation (27' x 93') consisted of a waiting room ticket office (25'3" x 16'6"); a machinery room or substation (53'4" x 25'3"); a freight room (18' x 24'); and a lineman's room (7'3" x 24'). The machinery room (substation) including the tower contained a General Electric 500 kilowatt six-ring rotary DC converter with three Westinghouse transformers with a primary field of 33,000 volts and a secondary field of 443 volts each. The entire depot/substation contained 2396 square feet of space. The interior walls were lath and plaster except for the freight and lineman's rooms which were of brick. The building was amply illuminated with standard wooden casement windows some of which were replaced in the machinery (substation) area with louvers for better circulation around the electrical equipment at a later date. The machinery tower contained circular ports (2'4" diameter) to allow for entrance and exit of the inter-urban power supply wires. Electricity for the depot proper was wired through conduits. Heat for the depot was provided from coal/wood stoves. The floors of the structure were made of five inch concrete. On the trackside of the structure there was a 11' x 109' passenger platform (north side). On the east end and southeast corner there was a concrete freight platform serving the freight room, lineman's room and the Mackinaw station track. The name of the depot, "Mackinaw," was prominently displayed on the east and west ends of the building as well as in the center of the machinery (substation) tower on the trackside (north). To the rear of the depot (south) was located Mackinaw siding track some five hundred fifty feet long with a capacity of ten cars. This track connected with the main track just to the east of the depot.

Between 1910 and 1923 many corporate changes were to effect the development and success of the ITS. On December 1, 1909, the McKinley interests organized the St. Louis, Springfield and Peoria Railway, a corporate arrangement to manage all of the Traction properties between St. Louis and Peoria. The lines wouth of Springfield were merged into this structure.

From 1911 through 1913, other mergers organized the rest of the lines and all of the McKinley interurban lines were operated as part of the Illinois Traction System. For administrative purposes, they were officially divided into six divisions. The line running through Morton from Peoria to Mackinaw Junction (eastward to Bloomington and southward to Lincoln and Springfield) was called the Northern Division or sometimes the "Peoria Division."

On April 1, 1910, a new service was begun with the overnight sleeper train from Peoria to East St. Louis. The 164-mile trip was made from each city leaving in Peoria at 11:30 P.M. and East St. Louis at 11:59 P.M. and arriving before 7:00 A.M. respectively. In November, 1910, this service was extended into St. Louis, a distance of 172 miles. This service met with instant success and lasted until 1940.

The Traction was not without difficulties. The lines of the Northern Division (as well as the rest of the system) were slow in developing freight business due to poor cooperation by the steam railroads and the lack of on-line industries. The Traction dealt with this by attracting a number of industries to its line.

In the Northern Division the first on-line industry was the McGrath's Sand and Gravel plant located between the Mackinaw station and Mackinaw Junction on the Northside of town. Similarly, the Company constructed or assisted private individuals in the building of a number of grain elevators.

Elevators were located at Burt, Walnut-Wood, Mindale, Sutter, Union, Wilmert, and Belsley. The elevator at Belsley Siding, two miles east of Morton, was operated for a time by J.C. Moore and later as the Turner Hudnut Grain Company. Over the years, the Traction continued to expand its freight business, an effort which ultimately prolonged its life.

The Traction managed to develop a considerable charter business. Local clubs and groups often chartered interurban cars for their occasions. Public school athletic teams often journeyed to play opponents using the Traction. Businesses sometimes chartered trains to encourage shoppers to utilize local establishments. Such a train was chartered by Bloomington businessmen and stopped in Mackinaw in 1909.

Another major problem that faced most interurbans was their relationship with steam railroads. Primarily, the steam railroads would not allow the interurbans to cross their tracks unless they built bridges overhead or subways underneath. They also refused to interchange electric road freight cars with their railroads.

In some cases, the question of interchanging cars with a steam railroad made the difference in a freight contract. Without joint tariffs and interchange agreements, freight had to be reloaded to affect an interchange with the steam railroads. This was costly in time and labor.

The Illinois Traction was particularly successful in negotiating such agreements with the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad in 1910. A physical connection was built at Glover, Illinois located between Champaign and Danville.

The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway negotiated a similar agreement through Peoria in 1910, followed shortly by the Iowa Central (Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad) in 1911. By 1916, the Southern, Chicago and Alton, Wabash, Chicago, Peoria and St. Louis, Peoria, and Pekin Union and the Terminal Railroad of St. Louis had made physical track connections with the Traction at various locations along the interurban.

Of these, the Peoria and Pekin Union (P & PU) was the most difficult. The United States Interstate Commerce Commission finally had to order the P & PU to establish rates and an interchange with the ITS in 1913.

By 1919, McKinley had negotiated agreements with every steam railroad except the Pennsylvania and the New York Central System. These two railroads were reluctant to cooperate. For example, the Vandalia, owned by the Pennsylvania, which passed through

Mackinaw just South of the Traction Depot would not allow the P.P. & C. to come anywhere close to the Russell grain elevator which still stands (1977) in Allentown. The Traction's right-of-way had to jog out and away from this elevator, also known as the Mackinaw Grain Company, which was serviced by the Vandalia.

Similarly, when the P.L. & S. was constructed southward to connect with the McKinley lines at Lincoln in 1908, the Traction had to dig an underpass (called a subway) under the Vandalia and also the Peoria and Eastern, which was part of the New York Central System, just south of Mackinaw.

Further to the south, at Mindale, so named by the Traction since it was located half-way between Minier and Hopedale, the Traction construction crews had to build a ramp and bridge to cross the Chicago and Alton tracks. Illinois Route 122 also passes under this structure. The structure is often referred to as the "Mindale Hump". All of these difficulties made constructing the Traction more costly and difficult.

By August 1911, the Illinois Traction System inaugurated an expanded parlor car service on all lines of the system with the arrival of five new parlor-buffet cars. Each division originally operated two parlor trains a day but by the mid-teens, only the St. Louis-Peoria parlor trains managed to survive and thrive.

The parlor-buffet was a reserved seat, extra-fare service that rivaled anything that the steam railroad competitors had to offer. Parlor buffet trains were also run as limited service, so that they were kept on fairly tight time schedules, stopping at major designated stations.

Between 1911 and 1914, the ITS made a major commitment to improve safety and reliability of the movement of its trains. All trains, in 1914 were operated under orders transmitted to the train crews by telephone from divisionally centered dispatcher locations. For the Northern Division, dispatching was controlled from Mackinaw Junction. A complete system of Blake Dispatchers' Signals was installed at sidings and other key locations to enable the dispatcher to notify an approaching train crew that they have a telephone message or train order. In addition to the train order telephone dispatching system, the Traction installed automatic block signals on the mainline between Granite

City and Springfield and between Springfield and Peoria where such protection was required.

The major portions were between Peoria and Mackinaw Junction and from Springfield northward to Selbytown which was located two miles south of Williamsville. These signals of the semaphore-type were powered by a separate electrical circuit supplied from a 2300 volt AC line carried on the line poles.

In the 1920's, the semaphore signals were replaced with the three-position, colored light signals (red, amber, and green). Color position lights have a higher visibility for trains approaching them.

The ITS made the first extensive use of automatic block signals on a single track electric interurban railroad in the United States. While the system made operations safer, it did not prevent accidents caused by mechanical failures or human errors. There were few accidents of this nature during the 48 years of electric operation of the ITS. (This aspect of the ITS story is still being researched at this time.) However, it would appear that travel on the ITS was as safe, if not safer, than comparable travel on the steam-powered railroads.

Service on the ITS remained pretty much the same for the next decade to about 1923. The impact of America's involvement in the "Great War" was a boon to the ITS profit sheets. (Luckily, the Traction avoided being swallowed up in the 1917 nationalization of the nation's railroads under the United States Railway Administration.) The war effort greatly increased passenger business and freight traffic so the cost of operating fell well below the income.

In July, 1919, the Adams Express Company was replaced by the Traction's own express service which charged rates 25% lower than the former company. By 1921, it became necessary for the Traction to supply drayage in major communities to support this vital service. In smaller communities, like Mackinaw, private companies were contracted to provide drayage for the Traction's express service.

Soon the Traction was able to boast that express packages brought to a depot by 5:00 P.M. could be delivered anywhere on the system by the next morning. It was

advertised as "express service at freight rates." During the 1920's, the Traction developed the slogan "the road of personal service" to describe its concern for passenger as well as freight customers.

When William B. McKinley was elected to the United States Senate, he had to make a decision as to how the affairs of the Traction could best be managed. During the time since the completion of the Traction (ca. 1911-1913), the Company had not occupied the major interest of the interurban leader.

On May 23, 1923, a dramatic corporate reorganization took place. All McKinley corporations were merged into Illinois Traction, Incorporated, which was a subsidiary of the Illinois Power and Light Company (I.P. & L.). All the capital stock of the I.P. & L. was owned by the Illinois Traction Company. The interurban properties were operated as the Illinois Traction System: "Main Division."

The Illinois Power and Light Company and Illinois Traction, Incorporated were all controlled by the North American Light and Power Company, a holding company. It directly (or through its subsidiaries) served the populations of 520 municipalities in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska.

To manage this vast system, Clement Studebaker, Jr., of South Bend, Indiana, automobile fame was chosen to act as President of the Illinois Power and Light Company in April 28, 1923. On November 12, 1924, he was elected President of Illinois Traction, Incorporated. (He also was chairman of the North American Light and Power Company.)

Studebaker's immediate response was to change the image of the Traction. Service and condition on the Traction's equipment was not up to what it had been at the beginning of the decade. The old paint scheme of pullman green sides, terracotta red or black roof, maroon window trim, and gold lettering enscripting the Traction's name on interurban passenger and freight motors was gradually replaced. The new color scheme was a bright orange exterior, black or terracotta red roof, maroon window trim, and black lettering.

New trains were added to the schedules. The newly painted and remodeled mainline limiteds were called "Tangerine Flyers" because of their paint scheme. The sleeping

trains were given names ... the Peoria-St. Louis sleeper was called "The Owl" while the St. Louis-Champaign sleeper was called the "Illini."

In addition, there was new mid-morning limited service provided in the form of the "Capitol Limited." The Peoria-St. Louis "Flyers" or "Tangerines" made the run of 172 miles daily in each direction in five hours and fifteen minutes or a rate of about thirty-five miles per hour. While this does not seem too fast in 1978, it was a good average speed from Peoria to St. Louis including all station stops.

Sometime between 1910 and 1924, the village of Mackinaw began to purchase electricity from the Traction. Many communities benefited from the Traction's electric power. Some other examples were Tremond, Minier, Hopedale, Armington, and Morton.

Late 1924 and early 1925 presented real difficulties for the Traction. In December of 1924 the Traction's line through Mackinaw from Peoria, Bloomington, and Springfield was closed by an ice storm. The ice broke overhead wires and put communications systems out of order. It took several days for the Traction to get back on the published time schedule after this ice storm. It is interesting to note that advertisements were placed in the Morton and Peoria papers announcing the resumption of normal interurban service.

On Thursday, January 8, 1925, at about 6:00 A.M., the dispatching office at Mackinaw Junction burned to the ground. The weather caused a telephone line to come into contact with one of the 33,000 volt AC transmission lines. The resulting short-circuit set the facility on fire.

The dispatcher, William L. Knowles, was on "third trick" from 11:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M. When the building caught fire, the dispatcher attempted to remove company records, but barely escaped from the structure due to his having a cork leg. The northbound St. Louis-Peoria sleeper train, "The Owl" arrived as the building became engulfed in flames. The crew of "The Owl" managed to assist Knowles, but all of the Company records were destroyed along with the Mackinaw Junction building.

For about fourteen days, the Northern Division operations were controlled from two locations. The old P.B.& C. line from Peoria to Bloomington through Morton was

dispatched from a temporary facility erected at Mackinaw Junction. This was an old interurban car which was set on the ground after its wheels had been removed. The line south of Mackinaw Junction was dispatched from Elkhart. In late February, all operations were centered in the temporary facility at Mackinaw Junction.

By March of 1926, the ITS opened a new brick building at Mackinaw Junction. This structure was twenty-two feet six inches square, two stories tall, and was made of buff colored brick walls, dark red brick base, and a red Spanish tile roof. The windows and doors were trimmed in dark green paint. The facility contained the dispatcher and division superintendents offices in addition to a waiting area for transfer passengers between the Bloomington line and the Springfield line. Dispatching continued at this location from 1926 to 1929.

In late 1929, the Traction concentrated all dispatching and supervision for all divisions on the main interurban lines to Springfield. This was an economy move prompted by the stockmarket crash and the ensuing depression of economy which followed in the 1930's. Given the enroads of the automobile and the impact on service, the relocation of the dispatching function to Springfield was probably a good move for the economic stability of the Company.

On December 7, 1926, William B. McKinley died. The leadership of the McKinley lines fell into a struggle as to who would be in control of the vast public utility holdings and interurban system. The struggle centered around the North American Company and Samuel Insull's utility group both of whom wanted to take control.

Samuel Insull of Chicago controlled many public utilities and particularly some Chicago-area interurbans. The real issue appears to have been Insull's fear of competition in the Chicago area if the Traction managed to affect its long-talked about line between the mainline trackage and its Illinois Valley Division.

As early as 1905, discussion had taken place about building northward from Peoria to Bureau or from Peoria to Washington and Eureka where a connection was to be made with the Santa Fe using its tracks to get to Streator. The Traction had planned to

electrify the route to Streator. The Illinois Division of the ITS served Streator which would have been ideal for a connection using the Santa Fe.

In addition, there was talk of extending the electrification from Eureka to Morton over the Santa Fe tracks or to Mackinaw over tracks that were to be constructed. Early system maps showed these "proposed" lines. The discussion persisted as late as 1927 concerning the possibility of building such a linkage to develop an entrance into Chicago from downstate via the Traction.

In 1927, James Walker, a consulting engineer, was hired to study the feasibility of making such a connection as well as an overall analysis of what the ITS needed to do to improve service. This report suggested a connection of little over a mile in length running from where the Traction entered the east corporate limits of the village to a point running due north to intersect with the Santa Fe tracks. This connection approximately would have been made near the I-74 Santa Fe overpass on the north side of Morton.

The "Chicago Connection" never materialized because of the power struggle between Insull and the North American Company. The power struggle resulted in agreeing to split control of the Traction between these two groups. Apparently, Insull was able to block further consideration of "Walker Plan" even though the Santa Fe had agreed to allow the Traction to construct the necessary overhead power distribution system on their line between Morton and Streator. Without new business, the Illinois Valley Division lines were abandoned gradually from 1929 to 1934. The Traction concentrated its available capital on construction of four new passenger and freight depots. Such facilities were constructed at Walnut and Adams in Peoria (1930), Decatur (1931), St. Louis (1931), and Springfield (1937).

In 1927, the Walker Report also mentioned that the livelihood of the Traction was in freight business and not in carrying passengers. This was due to a straightforward recognition of the impact of the paved road and availability of the automobile. While the Traction would continue to maintain a high degree of service in its pas-

senger operations, it pursued freight business ruthlessly and successfully. The freight business would sustain the Traction into the present.

By 1927, the ITS owned some 285 pieces of passenger and freight equipment. Of this total 69 were passenger motors, six were sleeping or parlor cars, 38 were passenger trailers, 51 were express motors, 91 were express trailers, and 30 were freight motors. The Traction also owned some 884 freight cars of various types and 84 other pieces of miscellaneous equipment.

As the Traction attempted to increase tonnage of the freight trains, the limitations of the existing power system in relation to grade considerations became evident. Typically, the average freight train would consist of about eighteen to twenty cars, each car weighing approximately 100 tons. Due to grade considerations from East Peoria to Caldwell west of Morton, southbound from Mackinaw Junction to Summit and Mackinaw Junction to Porter on the Bloomington line, and northbound from Wilmert north of Lincoln to Union, and Mackinaw Junction to Clyde Siding (Herberger Hill), "doubling the hill" was often necessary. "Doubling" meant taking the freight train up a steep grade in two sections or parts. This process was costly and time consuming. It also created traffic congestion on a single track interurban line. The old 1909 vintage overhead system was a limiting factor to the success of this endeavor. The Traction continued to explore many possibilities of getting more out of the 650 volt DC system, but in the end it will not be until the arrival of the diesel-electric locomotive in the 1950's that tonnage grade limitations would cease to be as much of an obstacle.

In early 1930, Illinois Power and Light Corporation decided to change the transmission system from 25-cycles to 60-cycles. To accomplish this change, crews working at various points along the system shut off substation power and made the necessary alterations in equipment.

Beginning at Mackinaw and ending at Emery, which is just north of Decatur, on March 2, 1930, each substation along the line was converted. The job was completed

and the entire system was activated for 60 cycles on March 9, 1930. In Mackinaw, a second-hand rotary converter of 500 kilowatts was installed to replace the 25-cycle model installed in 1909. The three original 1909 Westinghouse transformers were used with slight modifications.

Most public utilities and interurban properties who generated electricity for sale, converted to the 60-cycle system with the widespread adoption of house-hold electrical appliances at the frequency in the 1920's.

By 1929, the "Flyers" time between Peoria and St. Louis was reduced to five hours. Other adjustments were made to the schedule to effect a more balanced utilization of the lines equipment. Two new name trains were added. In March 1928, the "Illmo Limited," a reserved seat parlor-buffet car train was added, soon followed by the "Peorian." Most of these trains continued to operate as "limited" until the outbreak of World War II.

During the decade ending in the 1920's, the McKinley interests had been buying up and leasing small steam railroads around East St. Louis, creating a small network of switching roads. In the 1923 reorganization of the corporate properties, these were collectively known as the "Steam Division" of the Illinois Traction System.

In 1928, all interurban and steam properties were reorganized as the Illinois Terminal Railroad System. The interurban properties were called the "Electrified Lines" while the other was called the "Steam Division." With this corporate change, the Illinois Terminal Railroad System logo replaced the ITS logo as equipment and Company property were repainted.

The net effect of the consolidation of these freight lines was to make the freight business of the Illinois Terminal Railroad System very profitable in the St. Louis area, which in turn, had an effect on the freight business over the mainline from St. Louis to Peoria through Mackinaw Junction. From 1928 onward, people referred to the interurban as the "Illinois Terminal" or the "Terminal" or just "IT" as well as still calling it the "Traction."

The impact of the automobile and declining passenger patronage is evident in some of the decisions made by the Terminal in the 1930's. One of the reasons that the Terminal decided to build new passenger and freight stations in some of the major cities was to avoid the automobile congested streets.

The Walnut and Adams Street station in Peoria eliminated costly and time-consuming operations over city street car lines to get to the Peoria County Courthouse "loop." While access to the new Peoria depot still required street running at Walnut and Washington, expense and wasted time were reduced.

The trying years of the Depression and World War II also brought about many changes for the interurban. In 1935, the Terminal introduced ice-activated air-conditioning on some of the St. Louis-Peoria limited trains. By 1937, eight limiteds a day between these two cities offered "reserved seat," air-conditioned comfort. To accomplish modernization, some of the open-ended observation parlor cars had their observation platforms enclosed. These cars continued in service until the arrival of new equipment in 1948-49. The sleeping cars would not be as fortunate since they were retired from service in 1940.

In May of 1937, the Illinois Power and Light Company changed its name to Illinois-Iowa Power Company. On October 18, 1937, the railroad properties were reorganized as the Illinois Terminal Railroad Company controlled by the Illinois-Iowa Power Company. During the last 1930's, the Traction constructed additional substations to provide better power distribution for the overhead system.

Under the New Deal leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Congress passed the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) ruled that this legislation applied to holding companies which were comprised of electric power companies and electric railways. As a consequence, street railway and electric interurbans were separated from the public utility portion of their operations. Many such separations resulted in the demise of the electric railway or interurban operation while the electric utility continued to prosper.

While the Illinois Terminal Railroad Company was ultimately affected by this legislation in 1945, it appears that the interurban properties and the public utilities functions already had made a partial separation. In 1930 the Illinois Power and Light Company had taken over ownership of all electrical power generation, the transmission lines to the substations, and the substations proper. The Illinois Terminal purchased electric power which was metered at the substation. In 1927, the Mackinaw Depot/Substation was owned by Illinois Traction, Inc., with I.P. & L. having a transformer and rotary converter in the machinery section of the building and paying rent to I.T., Inc. for the space.

The Substations and depots combined were transferred to the Illinois Power and Light Company with the railroad retaining rights to occupy and use the space as controlled by Illinois Traction, Incorporated who controlled the entire capital stock of Illinois Power and Light Company (as of 1923). In Mackinaw's combination depot and "sub" this arrangement allowed the Terminal use of the ticket agent, waiting room and freight room, while the rest of the space was utilized by the Illinois Power and Light Company and the building owned by I.P. & L. (as of 1945).

The reorganization continued in 1943, the controlling company, the Illinois-Iowa Power Company was renamed the Illinois Power Company. In turn, on September 21, 1945, a purchaser railway corporation was established to separate the Illinois Power Company interests in the railroad effective December of 1945. At this time, the railroad became a separate entity from the public utility. The Illinois Terminal Railroad Company did continue to purchase power at the substation from the public utility. The effect of these corporate transactions was to remove a valuable financial investment from the railroad and to situate the railroad to a "make it" on its own merit merits basis. (Note: This is why the Mackinaw Depot is still owned by the Illinois Power Company long after the railroad was abandoned.)

High density passenger traffic had been deceiving on the electric lines as it had been on the steam railroads during World War II. Anticipating continued public

utilization of the railroads after the wartime restrictions had been ended, nearly all railroads made heavy investments in new passenger equipment.

The Illinois Terminal in June 1946 made the decision to purchase new equipment. President of the Illinois Terminal, A.P. Titus, ordered from the St. Louis Car Company, eight PCC-type streetcars for the East St. Louis-Granite City lines, and three complete streamlined electric interurban passenger trains. One was to be utilized on the Decatur to St. Louis service, while the other two were to be placed on the Peoria to St. Louis runs. The cost of these improvements was in excess of \$1.5 million.

These trains consisted of a motor-baggage chair car, a reclining chair car, and a coach-dinette car at the rear of the consist. The exterior of the streamliners was a natural polished aluminum trimmed in brilliant blue with silver lettering "Illinois Terminal" on the side of each car. The roof was aluminum colored also. These cars were advertised as "all reserved seat coach" with individual reclining seats and "a-la-carte" dining service.

Due to the operational problems, the Terminal spent over \$100,000 to construct a new passenger facility at 111 West Washington Street, East Peoria. Upon completion of this facility, the Peoria Depot, freight house, power house, and the Illinois River Bridge were abandoned on June 8, 1950. All operations after that were out of East Peoria. This decision probably cost the railroad passengers, since going to East Peoria was more "out of the way."

By August, 1950, the "City of Decatur" was re-assigned to a Peoria-St. Louis run. Shortly thereafter, this new assignment was called the "Sangamon." In September, 1951, all "names" were dropped from the streamliners. The last car of the three-car trains were taken out of service and placed in storage. All "reserved seat" service was dropped on September 30, 1951. As 1951 ended, the Peoria-St. Louis service consisted of four trains in each direction daily and four trains each way daily to Bloomington and Decatur by way of the Mackinaw Depot. All of these runs were now classified as "locals."

The end of the electric interurban operations began in April, 1952, when service was abandoned between Danville and Watkins, just east of Champaign-Urbana. Lack of business and more highway construction in Danville caused this original section to be abandoned.

In 1953, on February 21, the old P.B. & C. "main" through Bloomington between Mackinaw and Forsythe just north of Decatur was abandoned. Due to problems with governmental regulatory agencies, the Terminal was forced to continue "service" on the stubs of line between Mackinaw and East Peoria and Forsythe and Decatur. Even that "service" was abandoned on April 26, 1953, and with it the Terminal's usage of the building.

On June 14, 1954, the Illinois Terminal petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Illinois Commerce Commission to discontinue all remaining passenger operations effective March 13, 1955 (except the St. Louis Granite City line). Communities had an opportunity to protest, but after several delays, the Terminal was allowed to cease passenger operations on the Northern Division and the Central Division (east of Springfield) effective June 12, 1955.

The end of the interurban era was in 1955 and 1956. On June 10, 1955, the Terminal was purchased by a corporation made up of eleven competing railroads for \$20 million dollars. By March 3, 1956, all remaining electric service was abandoned. (Only the St. Louis-Granite City service continued until 1958). In less than fifty years, the Traction had come and gone with only a few artifacts remaining.

But the Terminal is still around the the thriving today as a diesel-powered freight railroad. Its predecessor, the Traction, has left a legacy of development and contribution to the people and the towns which it served. Certainly the development of the village of Mackinaw was assisted by its forty-eight year presence.

*Mackinaw Historical Society, Inc.*

BOX 534  
MACKINAW, ILLINOIS 61755



October 20, 1978

Honorable Adlai Stevenson III  
United States Senate  
Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stevenson:

Subject: Illinois Traction System Depot, Mackinaw, Illinois  
Historic Site Designation

Our depot has been nominated as a National Historic Site. We are anxiously awaiting the news that we have been entered on the National Register. It is our understanding that your office will be notified approximately a month before we are notified. We would appreciate it greatly if you could let us know when you receive your notification thus saving us an additional month of suspense.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Corresponding Secretary

gs

BOR Mail Control No. 44973

*gc*