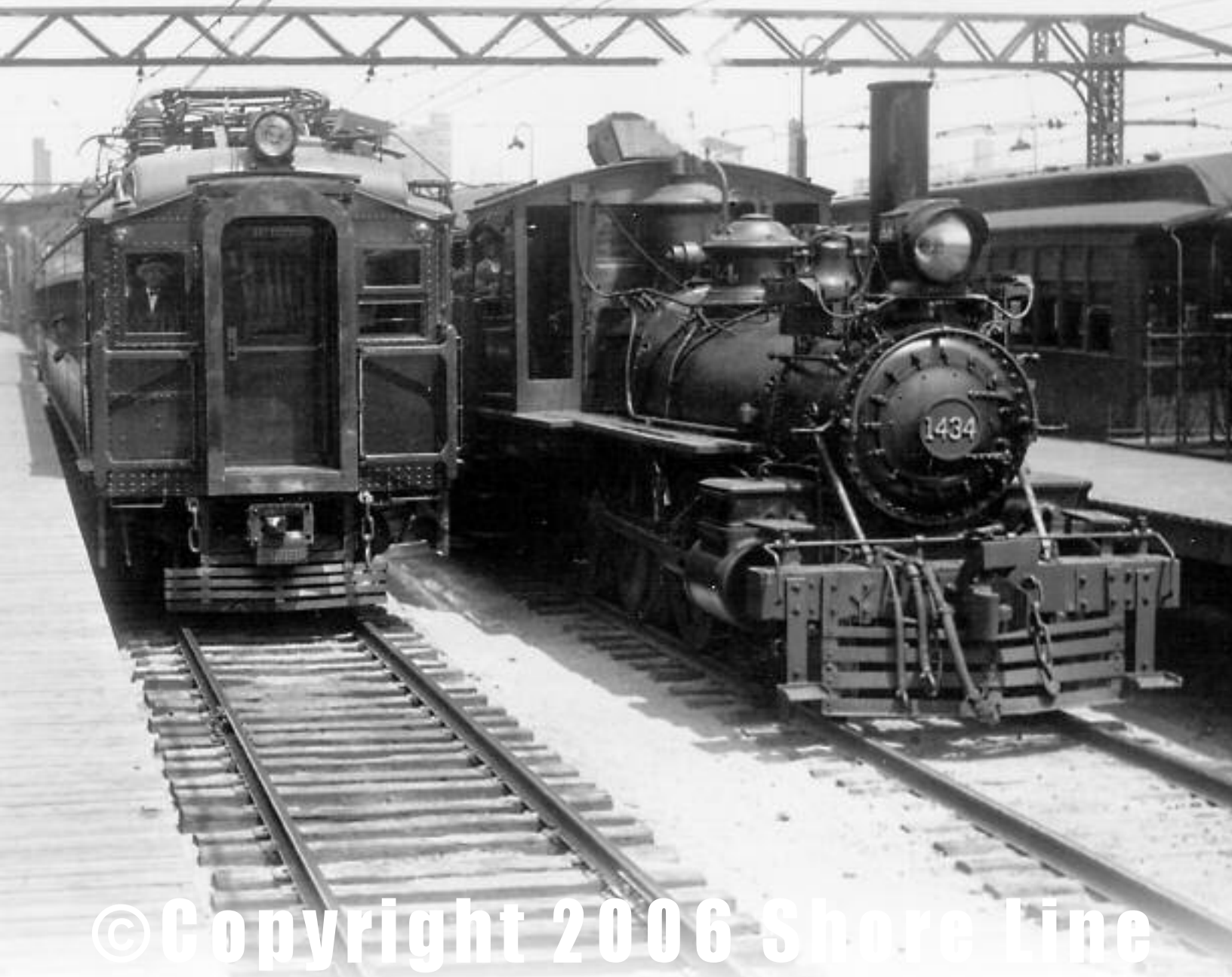


# *Train from Randolph Street*



©Copyright 2006 Shore Line

150 years of service on the  
Illinois Central and Metra Electric

By Norman Carlson

***“Prior to the 1960s, people living in South Shore (a neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side) did not carry a driver’s license in their wallet; they carried a ten-ride ticket on the IC.”—Dick Lukin***

Illinois Central suburban trains were not simply a part of life; they were the doorway out of the neighborhood for those living on the South Side and south suburbs of Chicago. They were the “knitting needles” that wove together the fabric of life so one could reach beyond “the neighborhood” to the world outside. It was the “rapid transit system” that reached beyond 63rd Street and, perhaps, the very reason why Chicago’s “L” never went south of 63rd Street until September 1969.

Illinois Central’s suburban trains (only outlanders called them commuter trains) were the South Side’s connection with the rest of Chicago. Whatever the reason - a trip to work, to visit family, to shop at Marshall Field’s, to see a movie or a stage show at the theaters, to attend the symphony or the opera, a visit to the doctor or another professional or even to travel beyond the Loop - you rode the “Illinois Central Electric.” As a young person you did not think twice about escorting your date to the IC station to see a movie and have a late meal downtown, virtually unthinkable in today’s life that revolves around the automobile.

Since May 1, 1987, the service has been owned and operated by Metra, the commuter rail agency in Chicago. Metra acquired a property that was seriously in need of rehabilitation. Nothing significant had been done since the 1920s other than the acquisition of the “Highliners” in the 1970s. Metra has been investing in the track structure, signals and communication, replacing the wooden platforms with new stations of substantial construction and, in 2005, introducing the first of twenty six of the new “Highliners.” Metra is carrying on a storied service that in many ways built Chicago’s South Side and south suburbs.

Paul Cornell is responsible for the birth of the suburban service back in 1856. In order for the Illinois Central to gain a line of road through Cornell’s real estate development known as Hyde Park, he insisted on train service to his developing community. The initial schedule was four trains each way daily, except Sunday.

The service commenced on July 21, 1856 with “nary a passenger up or down.” It followed by one year the first suburban train to Chicago in the summer of 1855 between Waukegan and Chicago on the Chicago & Milwaukee, a predecessor of the Chicago & North Western. As with the IC’s service, a guiding force was a real estate developer—Walter Gurnee—who was developing real estate in what are now the suburbs of Chicago.

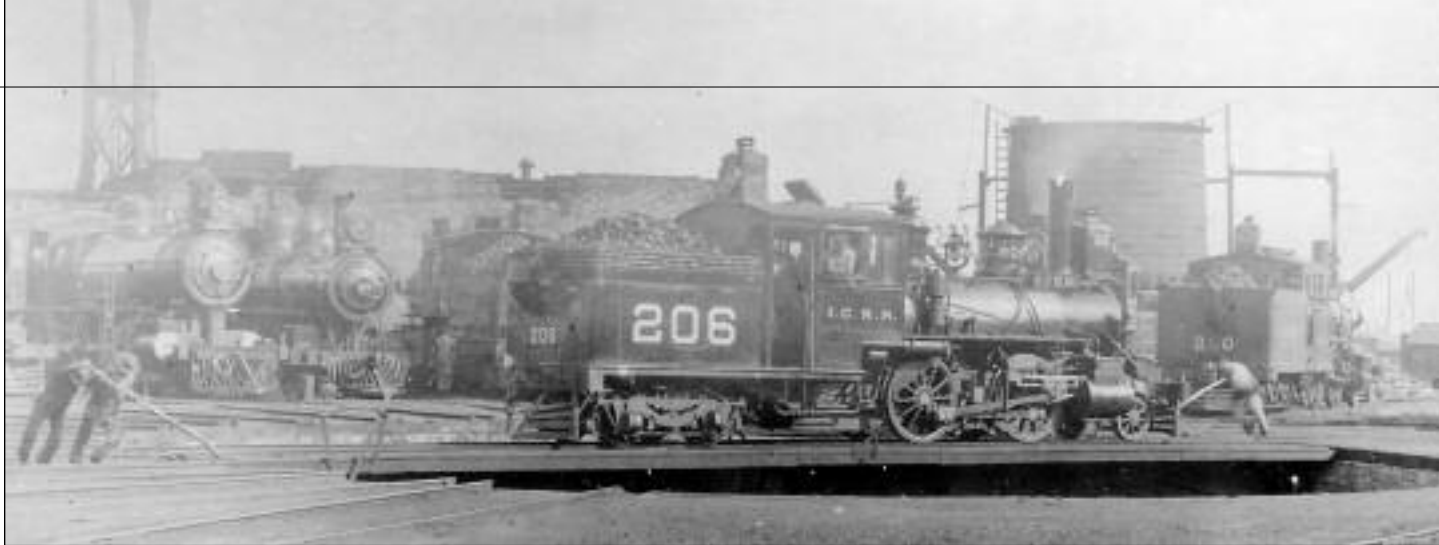


▲ Dick Lukin, 1952, summer trainman.—  
Dick Lukin Collection

◀ Previous page: In July 1926 one of the first electrified trains is preparing to leave the upper level of Randolph Street Station.—Daily News Photo courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society.

▼ At 3:21 p.m. on Sunday, September 29, 1957, train 519, cars 1138 and 1428 are stopping at the Olympia Fields station. The Olympia Fields Post Office was in the station. The agent at this station served the railroad for about 40 years and was also the long-time postmaster. His name was Wales S. Stamper and a small park dedicated to his honor exists west of the station adjacent to the present post office building.—John F. Humiston photo, Norman Carlson Collection





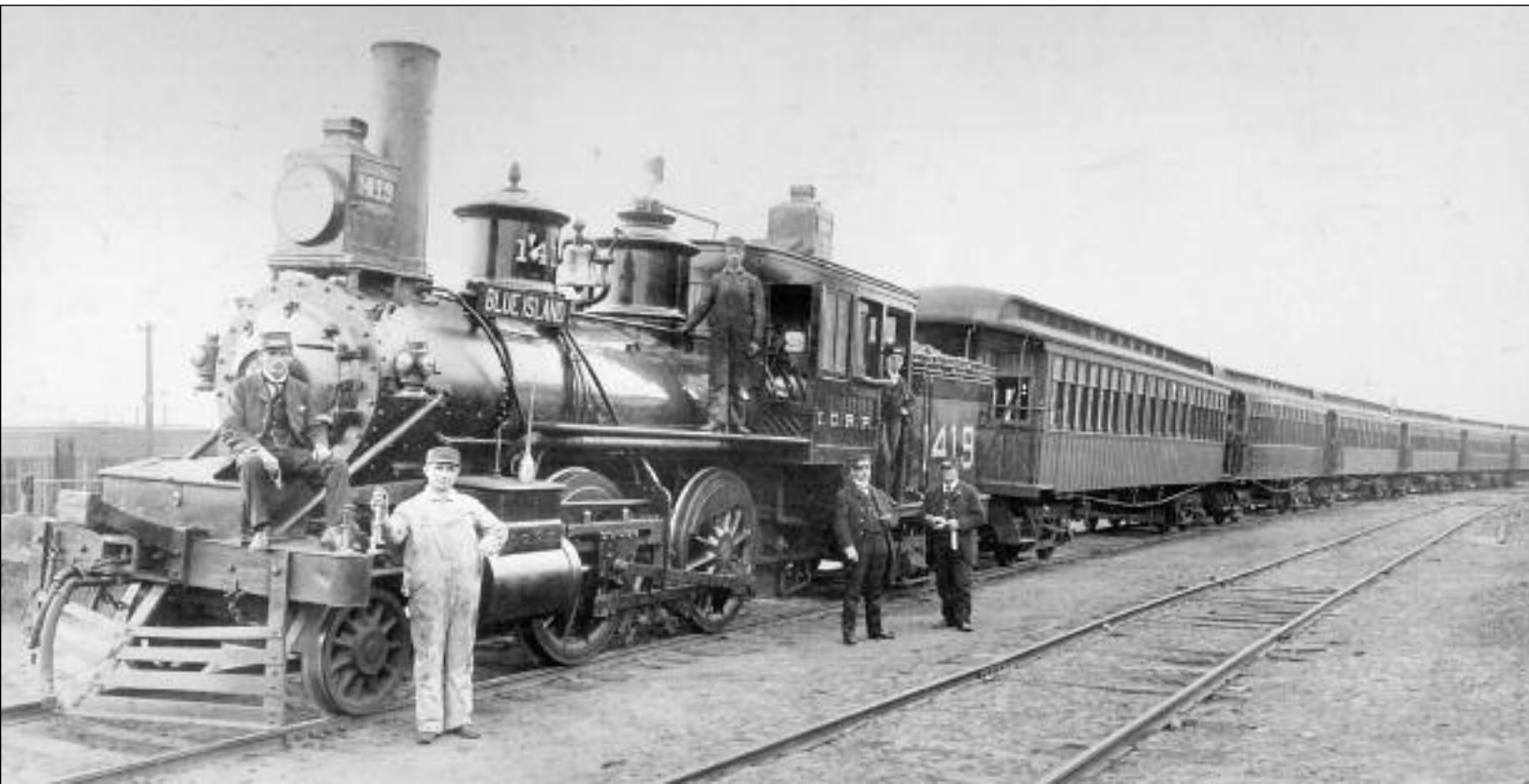
▲ In May 1880 the IC received its first “Forney-type” locomotive dedicated to the suburban service. The first locomotive, now numbered 201, is on display at the Illinois Railway Museum. Ultimately 56 of these Forney locomotives, some built by Rogers, but mostly built new or rebuilt from existing locomotives by the IC were used in the suburban service. In addition American-type (4-4-0) steam locomotives, built in the 1890s, were assigned to the suburban service as the traffic grew. These 4-4-0s, originally in the 900-series and renumbered into the 1900 and later 4900 series were generally used on the Matteson trains and the Golf Specials to the south suburbs. Locomotive 206, originally 228 and later 1406, was delivered by Rogers in February 1883 and was sold as scrap in July 1928. On September 6, 1897, the 206 was on the “Armstrong” turntable at Weldon Yard. The engine facilities at 27th Street came as a part of the Chicago Terminal Improvement Program.—Illinois Central photo, Gerald M. Best Collection

▼ Locomotive 1419 is at Blue Island on an unknown date. Engines were assigned to engineers who took pride in their maintenance and appearance, thus the shiny locomotive. At this time the Blue Island station was on the south side of Vermont Street. The 1419 was built in the IC Shops in 1890 as number 79, later renumbered 219 and finally 1419; it was sold as scrap in March 1928.—Illinois Central photo, Norman Carlson Collection

Until the aftermath of the Chicago Fire in October 1871, the service languished. Cornell even had to provide a subsidy of one-third of the losses for a few years to sustain the service. Because the fire barely touched the South Side, people moved into the area and the ridership grew immediately. The IC extended their service territory and added train service. Sunday service started in 1873 to accommodate the people who moved south but continued to attend their churches downtown.

A disease that killed dray horses in street railway service caused even more riders to switch to the suburban railroads. Ridership grew to such levels that the IC dedicated new steam locomotives and coaches to its suburban service.

In the 1890s the IC's suburban service became a rapid transit operation, intensive service at high-level platforms with equipment designed for the purpose. Most of this work was done in anticipation of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, America's first World's Fair. On October 9, 1893, “Chicago Day,” 541,312 passengers were carried on the IC, 241,843 on regular suburban trains, 263,282 on World's Fair specials and apparently 36,187 on other trains. Express train services instituted for Fair riders were retained at the insistence of the regular riders after the close of the Fair.





Passage of the Lake Front Ordinance in 1919 forced the electrification of all IC operations in Chicago by 1940. What resulted was a tremendous civil engineering effort known as the Chicago Terminal Improvement Program that completed the grade separation of the railroad to Richton Park, 29 miles from Randolph Street, and electrification of the suburban service in 1926. (The diesel locomotive was accepted as “electrification” of the intercity passenger and freight service.) By 1956, the 100th anniversary of the service, 107,000 daily passengers rode 335 suburban trains with 76 daily South Shore trains sharing the tracks from Kensington north.

During the peak rush hour periods, trains departed on an average headway of less than two minutes. Considering the “deadheads” into the station, there was a train movement every 60 seconds or less through a three-track throat between 11th Place and Randolph Street. All outbound trains used track 1 while inbound trains used track 3. The line-up of trains on track 2 awaiting entry during the evening rush hour and the parade of trains to the storage tracks in the morning is still a vivid memory for many. Using track 2 for inbound revenue trains in the morning and outbound revenue trains in the evening has been the practice since at least the 1960s.

Before the 1970s the majority of the riders lived north of 67th

▲ *Delivered by Rogers in April 1893, locomotive 1425 was originally numbered 242. All 200-series suburban locomotives were renumbered into the 1400 series in July 1900. This photo is around 89th Street on the South Chicago line circa 1910 or prior. Note the tool box above the pilot. This engine was sold for scrap in March 1928.*—Illinois Central photo, Norman Carlson Collection

Street or on the South Chicago line. IC employee (operating) timetables referred to the South Chicago and Blue Island lines as “districts.” The term “branch” was not used on public timetables until 1969. It came about when a single timetable was issued for all stations on the South Chicago line instead of the individual timetables for each station. The stations on the Blue Island line had been consolidated into a single timetable before 1969 but the term “branch” was not used on that consolidated timetable until 1969.

The service to South Chicago was incredible. From 1935 to 1949 there was a train every 10 minutes on the branch. During the rush hour a train would depart from Randolph Street with its first stop being Stony Island Avenue on the branch. As soon as this train cleared Balbo Drive, a train originating from the pocket track would depart from Van Buren Street, making a stop at Roosevelt Road and then running non-stop to Stony Island Avenue.

► *This print was made from the original IC negative in the 1970s and illustrates a train at 43rd Street around 1920. There was a substantial interlocking facility at 43rd Street prior to the electrification as the east end of the Chicago Junction Railroad was at the IC at this point and headed west to the Union Stock Yards. Storage tracks for the 42nd Place Terminal of the South Side Elevated’s Kenwood Branch is at the left. The 1417 was built by the IC in 1887 as number 63, renumbered 217 in July 1890 and 1417 in July 1900. The engine was sold as scrap in July 1929.*—Illinois Central photo, CGLP Collection







◀ When the South Chicago line was built virtually nothing existed between 67th Street and the independent community of South Chicago. A station named Bryn Mawr was established 1.33 miles from 67th Street. On September 7, 1896, the photographer placed his child on the station steps so some life would be in the photo. Note the high level platform as the rapid transit style of operations date from the 1890s.

tracks south of 72nd Street and 67th Street to serve Woodlawn and Hyde Park. Hyde Park locals did the same from a pocket track south of the 53rd Street station to serve Kenwood and the neighborhoods to the north.

Kensington trains served the mainline stations from 72nd Street to Kensington (115th Street). Suburban development, changing demographics, competition from the automobile and CTA rapid transit service (the Dan Ryan line) and express bus service changed all of this.

Physically the system was one of contrast. Twenty nine miles of right-of-way were grade separated from Randolph Street to Richton. You sped along above the street traffic in an era before the express highways. At various locations there were three, six, four and two tracks as well as an awesome view of Lake Michigan. If this were not enough, there was also plenty of mainline passenger and freight activity to keep one occupied. For over 30 years between 23rd and 49th Streets, the Illinois Central's combined suburban/intercity right-of-way contained ten mainline tracks, plus yard and industry tracks north of 35th Street.

On the South Chicago branch you ran on double track between the stations faster than the automobiles, mere inches from you in a narrow medium on 71st Street and on Exchange Avenue, and then behind a myriad of homes, small businesses and major factories to the industry of South Chicago. Single track through similar surroundings took one past the homes of south Roseland, the industry of West Pullman and the kaleidoscope of rail yards, homes and industry on the Blue Island branch.

◀ Some movie fan can probably tell us the date of this photo circa 1950. Bryn Mawr Station is now 71st Street and Jeffery Boulevard, named for Edward T. Jeffery, the General Manager of the railroad. The gate across the station access was mandated by the Illinois Commerce Commission.—Two Illinois Central photos, CGLP Collection

### Frequency of Base Service on the South Chicago Line

September 29, 1935 to April 23, 1949 —

Every 10 minutes

April 24, 1949 to July 26, 1958 — Every 20 minutes

July 27, 1958 to April 24, 1965 — Every 30 minutes

April 25, 1965 to June 30, 1973 — Every 20 minutes

July 1, 1973 to September 5, 1981 — Every 30 minutes

September 6, 1981 to present — Every 60 minutes

Prior to 1958 there was 40-minute service to Richton. Between 1958 and 1973 there were varying intervals to Richton, the IC's attempt to adjust to changing traffic patterns as the development of the suburbs accelerated and the demographics of Chicago's neighborhoods changed. In 1973, 30-minute service intervals were provided to both South Chicago and Richton and they both changed to 60-minute intervals in 1981 after the Regional Transportation Authority imposed a fare increase from 80% for in-city riders to 110% for suburban riders.

Bryn Mawr station (71st Street and Jeffery Blvd) was a sight to behold. It was one of the shortest platforms on the system; the north end of a six-car train was off the platform, and a crew member had to "isolate" the doors on the north end of the train. In the morning, arriving trains were greeted by a crowd of people occupying every inch of platform, extending through the warming house and down the steps onto Jeffery Blvd. The dwell time seemed like forever as the people on the street worked their way onto the train. The Jeffery Express of Chicago Motor Coach, and later Chicago Transit Authority, transferred most of their passengers to the IC who charged a second fare for the privilege. In the evening, the returning crowd descended on a fleet of motor coaches to head home as far south as Jeffery Manor, south of 95th Street.

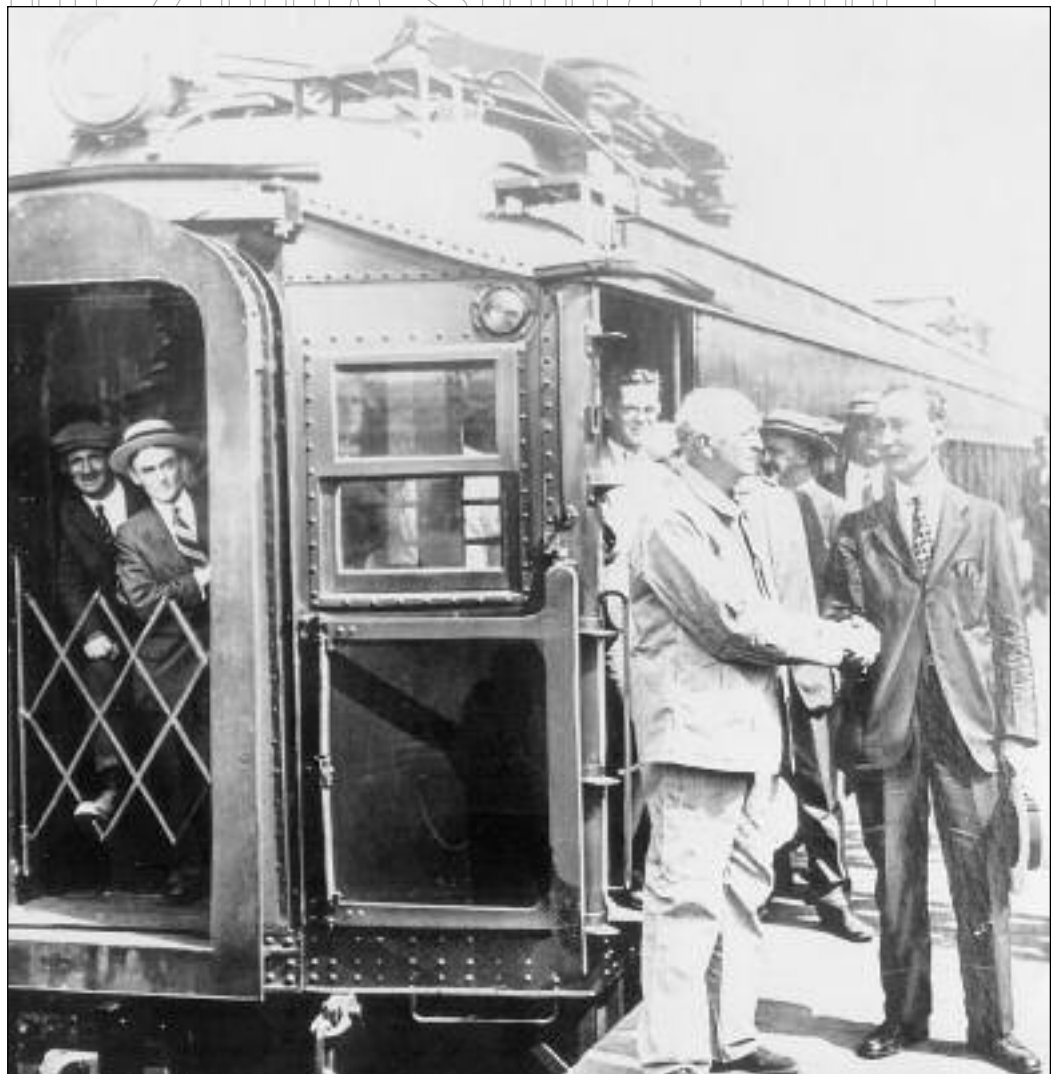
Trains originated and terminated in stub





▲ August 7, 1926, was “Electrification Day,” a day of great civic celebration and events into the evening. Two trains from Matteson and one each from Blue Island and South Chicago posed at 47th Street before a side-by-side run to Roosevelt, arriving around 2:00 p.m. Five steam specials took the guests south from downtown. The body language of the woman on the stairs says it all; ‘Oh, my gosh! Just what is going on here?’ The first “all electric” timetable took effect on August 29, 1926.—Underwood & Underwood photo, Norman Carlson Collection

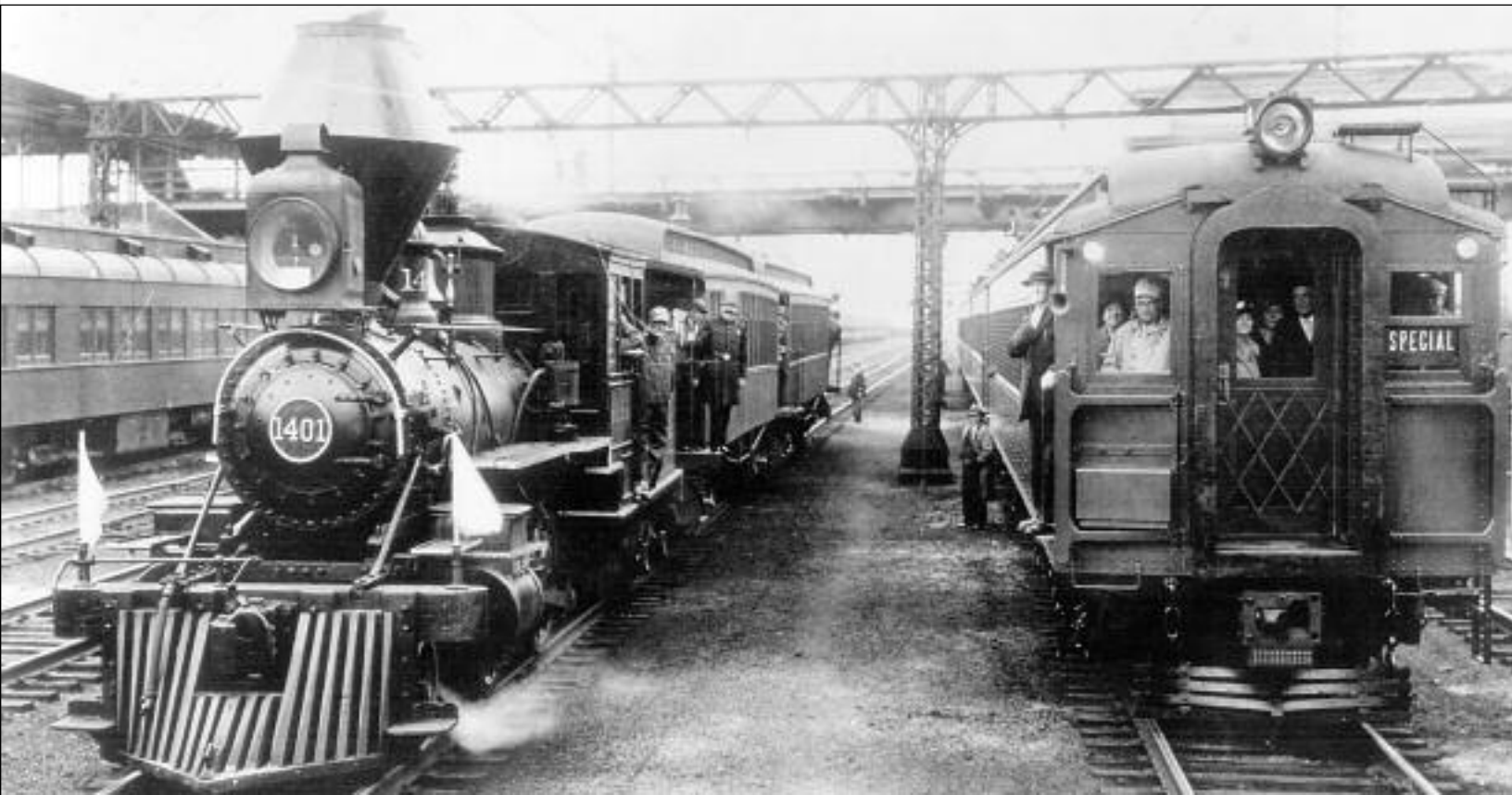
► Superintendent of Passenger Service A. Bernard wishes Engineer Peter P. Schlax well prior to the departure of the first revenue service electric train on July 21, 1926, the 70th anniversary of the suburban service. Riding on this trip with Schlax, who was engineer number one on the seniority roster and who operated steam locomotive 1421, was conductor William Clark, and flagman G. F. Haldorsen along with Schlax’s daughter Veronica Schell. Veronica, a suburban ticket agent, was carrying her new-born son Bill. Bill was the conductor on the last trip of these “old cars” in 1979. There were many family members working in the suburban service. This first trip was unannounced; however, 108 passengers rode this 67th Street local.—Illinois Central photo, Alan R. Lind Collection





▼ For some reason the IC did not get copies of the photos from Electrification Day so what to do in the decades ahead? A resourceful IC public relations person made use of this photo from September 17, 1933, when more than 100 members of the "93 Association" boarded this special steam train at South Chicago to ride to the World's Fair for the "1893 Day" celebration. The crew on the steam train was conductor John Hall, flagman William Clark, engineer Thomas F. Murphy and fireman Ambrose "Andy" Finn. The "policeman" is John O'Donnell. The engine was actually fired by traveling engineer Otto Larson. "At 53rd Street a modern Illinois Central Electric train met the strange possession and accompanied it to the 12th Street station. The engineer on the electric is Jim McDonald. Thanks to Otto Larson the record has been set straight once and for all.—Illinois Central photo, Norman Carlson Collection

▲ The Lake Front Ordinance required the suburban service to be electrified by 1927, freight service by 1935 and through passenger service by 1940. In 1929 the first steps were taken to electrify the freight service. The plan was for steam locomotives to bring cars to a new yard at 31st Street from where electric locomotives would handle the cars north to Congress Street Yard, which was between 12th Street and Monroe Street. IC received four 98-ton Baldwin-Westinghouse locomotives in January 1930 and sold them to the South Shore Line in 1941. Renumbered into the 900-series on the South Shore the locomotives continued hauling freight between Kensington and South Bend into the 1960s. On August 4, 1938, engine 10003 is switching on the south lead of the 31st Street Yard. These "straight-electric" engines were short lived as the diesel-electric locomotive was accepted as "electrifying" the service.—John F. Humiston photo, Norman Carlson Collection





## Train from Randolph Street



▲ In the steam days Randolph Street Station was a completely open environment with no protection for the passenger. During rush hours there was considerable hazard for passengers. We believe this photo is taken in the late 1890s. —Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

◄ On December 28, 1952, a Blue Island express is preparing to depart the station. Until construction of the Prudential Building in the mid 1950s the station was open from end to end with wooden staircases to reach the platforms from headhouses at both Randolph and South Water Streets.—Illinois Central photo, Stephen M. Scalzo Collection

► Construction of the Prudential Building covered over the platforms between Lake Street and Randolph Street and resulted in a partially enclosed mezzanine that became somewhat of a wind tunnel. Cars 1636 and 1524 are between runs on Friday, February 16, 1979. Further development of the air rights over the railroad came in the 1980s when construction of the Illinois Center development covered the station from Lake to South Water Streets. During 2000 and 2001 construction of Millennium Park resulted in covering over the access to the station from Monroe Street. —John F. Humiston photo, Norman Carlson Collection





▲ Oil-electric locomotive 9004 is one of five 600 horse-power units built in February 1930 by General Electric Ingersoll-Rand at a cost of \$102,501.37 each. The unit is making up a train at 93rd Street on the South Chicago District for movement to Markham Yard on Friday, July 13, 1945. There were a number of packing houses in South Chicago which accounts for the refrigerated cars in the train. At one time there were four freight round trips daily on the line, three to serve the packing houses and a local serving the coal yards and other customers on the line.—John F. Humiston photo, Norman Carlson Collection

For those of us who grew up on the South Side, there was a certain romance – a mysterious, exciting, sentimental and nostalgic quality to the incredibly spartan, yet utilitarian “green machines” that came to the railroad in the 1920s. Real men and real women enjoyed “40-60 air conditioning” — 40 open windows and a 60-mph speed to create a breeze on those sultry summer evenings. (The 40-60 air conditioning also helped to clear out the odor of the 60-40 cheese-caramel popcorn mixture that was sold by the bag in the Randolph Street station and carried onto the trains, along with an assortment of pungent roasted chicken and other aromatic cuisine sold by the station vendors.) The railroad even maintained an intercity passenger sales office and ticket agency at Randolph Street.



Open window coaches only added to the experience - the smell of ozone from the motors (Who rode the trailers?), the grinding of gears, the aroma of brake shoes, the clattering of the automatic bell and an occasional blast on the monotone horn to fend off some wayward soul.

Even the woven pattern of the cane seats served a very useful purpose in the days of mini-skirts. A young man could immediately tell if a young woman was “GD” or “GU” (Geographically Desirable or Geographically Undesirable) by the pattern on the back of her legs as she walked to her job downtown.

The IC was always looking for ways to reduce cost, and less to clean meant fewer car cleaners. As a result, there never were restrooms on the trains. Management viewed the suburban service as a “rapid transit service” and rapid transit trains did not have onboard restrooms. Further, since most of the IC’s original suburban business was short-range, in-city traffic, resulting in the people not being on the trains for very long; management thought the logistics for servicing restrooms on a large fleet of cars in such high density service were extremely impractical. Interstate Commerce Commission rules called for onboard restrooms in interstate service and on runs of over one hour. Even the run to Richton took less than one hour.

This need to reduce manpower created other chapters in the suburban service’s history. Previously, restroom facilities were provided in the stations but, when the station personnel were elimi-

nated the station restrooms were closed. Nonetheless, there are many stories about accommodating passengers in dire distress.

The “crew consist agreements” of the early 1960s were an attempt by the IC to reduce manpower on trains. These were a key part of the program for automatic fare collection that was introduced on July 1, 1966. Prior to that the IC had an ingenious system of fare collection that was, in today’s language, a “closed loop system.” Ticket agents and gate personnel in the stations sold color-coded tickets that the onboard trainmen could instantly recognize. Short haul riders had their “transportation lifted” in the stations while longer haul riders were subjected to onboard audits. There was even a system of punch images that described where one had boarded a train and who had audited the ticket.

The program to replace this system with an “automated fare collection system” consisting of gates and ticket vending machines at the stations was never completed. Immediately after its implementation, revenues went down and costs went up. Fare evasion and “short riding” significantly reduced revenues and ticket machine failures plus PAL, Passenger Assistance Link, resulted in higher labor costs for the required “back shop operations.” The initial gate system had the nasty habit of pinching passengers in the posterior, adding to the “excitement” of the ride. Rotating bars solved this embarrassing issue. Metra resumed onboard auditing of tickets and removed the gate system in 2003, though the ticket vending machines remain at most stations.



▲ South Shore Line crews began operating their trains from Kensington directly to Randolph Street on Sunday, August 29, 1926. Bulletin Order 3597 issued on August 25, 1926, by J. K. Gray, South Shore’s General Superintendent, warned crews not to use the trolley poles on the South Shore cars on the IC as the “wire is so constructed that trolley poles cannot be used.” The original order of South Shore cars delivered in 1926 had a trolley pole on one end and a pantograph on the other end. The IC insisted on their removal as they did not want the trolley poles to become unhooked and get entangled in the overhead catenary wires. On that same day Gray issued Bulletin Order 3598 instructing the crews to stop at Van Buren, 12th, 53rd and 63rd Streets as well as Kensington unless Kensington was a flag stop for your train. Train 117, motor 16 leading, is approaching 66th Street on Tuesday, January 31, 1939. The large building to the right is the IC’s accounting offices at 63rd Street where the Jackson Park rapid transit line bridge crosses over the IC.—John F. Humiston photo, Norman Carlson Collection



▲ Early in 1969 the South Shore Line lost a number of cars to weather-related problems so they borrowed six cars from the IC for service to Gary. The South Shore washed the windows. When this was noticed by the IC, their car inspector was dispatched to Randolph Street and dutifully found enough things “wrong” to bad order the cars. Six more were sent over only to be bad ordered upon IC’s discovery of more clean windows. In the words of trainmaster Al Williams, “that was how we got our windows washed that winter!”—Richard R. Gill photo



▲ Washington Park Race Track was originally in the Chicago park of that name located just west of the University of Chicago. Steam-powered race trains operated to the race course over a branch near 60th Street until the facilities were moved to Homewood. On summer weekends, especially on holidays, a parade of 8-car “specials” carried the fans to the races. Utilizing a series of crossovers at Harvey, race track specials entered a branch line on the east side of Markham Yard that paralleled Center Street into the race track. This branch continued beyond the race track and reentered the main line at the Homewood interlocking; however, passenger service was provided only on the north through Harvey. On Saturday, August 5, 1939, Extra 1327 North is leaving with the typical eight-car train. Only roundtrip tickets could be purchased to ensure that the rider had a ticket for the ride home. After experiencing a long-term decline in riding the last special train operated on December 7, 1971, amid rumors that robbers would relieve the passengers of their cash before they got to the pari-mutual windows The Highliners made only two trips to Washington Park, one was a fan trip and the other for a special race event.—John F. Humiston photo, Norman Carlson Collection

▼ The snow storm of snow storms began on Thursday morning January 26, 1967. The snow continued into Friday with a total accumulation of 27 inches. Frozen switches at Kensington stalled evening trains north of there and no trains left for South Chicago between 5:30 and 8:30 p.m. Limited service was offered on Friday. It was not until Saturday when any semblance of a schedule was restored This is one of those first trains “plowing” its way down 71st Street at Paxton Avenue between the Bryn Mawr and South Shore stations on the South Chicago branch.—Two photos, Richard R. Gill



◀ Newspapers were distributed in Chicago on suburban and inter-urban trains. This is a modest load of paper on a six-car South Chicago train sitting across Euclid Avenue at the north (geographically west) end of Bryn Mawr station. Often the entire rear vestibule of the rear car, and well into the car, was jammed with newspapers. It was the flagman’s job to unload the papers. On the South Chicago line trucks would be lined up on 71st Street and Exchange Avenue next to the stations and the newsstands at 75th and 79th Streets received their bundles by “airmail” as the rear of the train crossed the street.



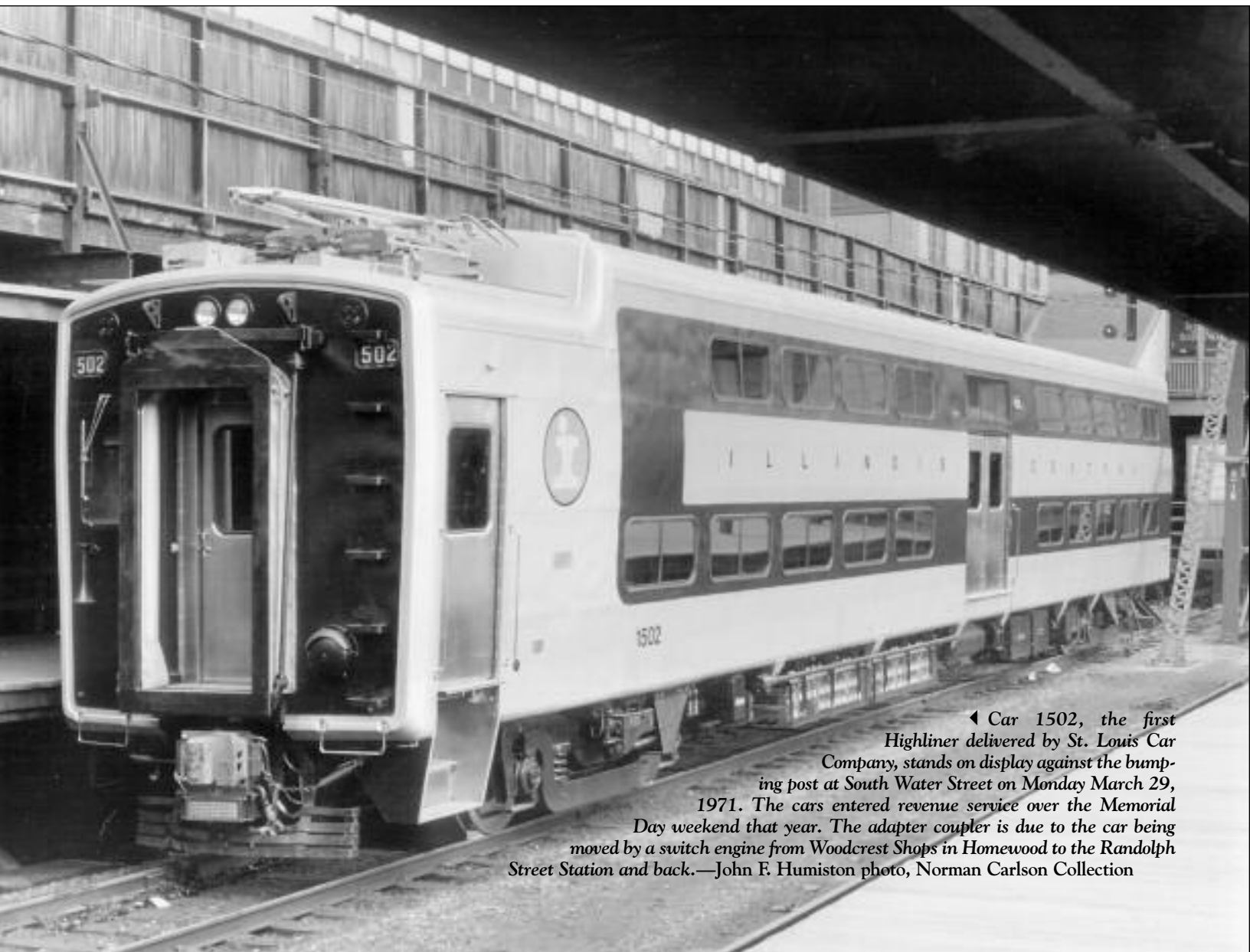
## *Train from Randolph Street*



▲ There were two railroad grade crossings in the suburban territory, the Brookdale Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Chicago Terminal on the South Chicago line and the Pennsylvania Railroad's (later Penn Central) Panhandle Division just east of Halsted Street (West Pullman) on the Blue Island line. Car 1406 is leading a northbound train across the Penn Central at West Pullman at 10:45 a.m. on February 22, 1968.



▲ Cars 1216 and 1331 are southbound at Walnut Street in Blue Island approaching the Vermont Street terminal in that city at 4:20 p.m. February 28, 1968. A classic midday scene on "The Electric."—Two photos, Stephen M. Scalzo



◀ Car 1502, the first Highliner delivered by St. Louis Car Company, stands on display against the bumping post at South Water Street on Monday March 29, 1971. The cars entered revenue service over the Memorial Day weekend that year. The adapter coupler is due to the car being moved by a switch engine from Woodcrest Shops in Homewood to the Randolph Street Station and back.—John F. Humiston photo, Norman Carlson Collection



Riding Metra Electric today in sealed coaches is very sterile compared to the days of the “green machines.” The arrival of the “hermetically sealed,” air-conditioned “Highliners” in 1971 caused this feeling. While the “Highliners” preserved one tradition on the suburban trains, they eliminated another. There were still no restrooms on board but smoking cars were discontinued.

But those “Highliners” brought something else to the property in their early days – speed. After a CERA meeting one night John Humiston asked the engineer, as we were leaving 67th Street headed south, “How fast do these things go?” The engineer’s response was, “Let’s find out!” Well, we bounced under the Belt Railway at 94th Street, Burnside, at 83 miles per hour. A few of us were worried we would leave the rails. Legend has it the cars reached 90 mph between Harvey and Hazel Crest where there was a long distance between stations and a downhill departure from each station. Shortly thereafter the motors were adjusted to limit the speed to around 70 miles per hour.

There was no such thing as a “Lowliner” until Art Peterson named the bi-levels the “Highliners.” Art, a member and a past director and president of Shore Line, was a high school student when he won the Illinois Central’s contest to name the new cars.

The Highliners were acquired via a capital grant from UMTA (Urban Mass Transit Administration), now the FTA (Federal Transit Administration), by the Chicago South Suburban Mass Transit District, an agency created for this purpose. IC provided the local share on the first 130 cars and a replacement car while the State of Illinois provided the local share for 25 cars on the second order. In the interest of holding down maintenance, CSSMTD agreed with the no-restroom design as well as abolishing the long standing practice of the smoking car on the north end of the trains. Their objective was to keep fares as low as possible.

A fire of significance was the Riverdale trestle fire of June 22-23, 2003. Because the former connections with the “steam road tracks” at 67th Street, Harvey, Homewood and Richton had been systematically removed, the majority of the rolling stock was trapped south of the fire scene. Passengers were encouraged to use the Rock Island District, where they found amenities such as coffee shops, ticket agents in the suburban stations, restrooms on the trains, and they did not have to put their ticket in a gate as they passed through LaSalle Street Station.

Suddenly the Metra Electric commuters believed that they were being treated as second-class citizens. The conditions at Randolph Street Station during a protracted rehabilitation and the lack of facilities at other stations added to this feeling. The remedies came quickly. On November 18, 2003, the turnstiles were shut off within an hour of the Metra’s Board of Directors passing a resolution to eliminate the gates at stations.

The gates are gone but the ticket vending machines remain at most stations. Agents have always been in a few stations and remodeling of some stations with comfort facilities is in progress. Most significant was the redesign the new “Highliners” to provide onboard restrooms. On December 19, 2005, for the first time in the history of this service, a train operated with onboard restrooms.

The Illinois Central Railroad’s, and subsequently Metra’s, south suburban service has been a major influence on the history of Chicago and its southern suburbs for 150 years. Let us now relive this history in capsule form through the following timetable and some photographs that hopefully will convey more than words can express, so that each of you may share in this experience.

## Service extensions and major events

1871	To Woodlawn (63rd Street), after the Chicago Fire
1872	To Kensington (115th Street) and Dolton Junction, near Riverdale
1873	Sunday service inaugurated to bring people to downtown churches
1880	To Harvey (154th Street)
1880	First dedicated suburban locomotives purchased
1883	South Chicago branch opened
1883	First dedicated suburban coaches purchased
1890	To Homewood (179th Street)
1892	Blue Island branch opened
1893	Express service commenced to the World’s Fair
1900	To Flossmoor (191st Street)
1903	“Sullivan” cars introduced
1909	Chicago Lake Shore & South Bend reached Pullman (111th Street)
1912	To Matteson
1912	Through coaches to Gary on South Shore Line
1919	Lake Front Ordinance enacted
1921	First steel cars (trailers) enter service
1926	Electric operation begins
1926	South Shore Line through service begins
1946	To Richton *
1966	Automated fare collection system begins operating
1971	“Highliners” enter service
1977	To Park Forest South, later renamed University Park
1979	Last of the 1920s electric cars retired from revenue service
1987	Metra acquires the physical assets and assumes service
2000	South Chicago branch extended two blocks to new terminal at 93rd Street
2003	Automated fare collection system gates removed from service
2005	Randolph Street Station renamed Millennium Station
2005	New “Highliners” enter service

\* The station near Sauk Trail is located in the village of Richton Park; however, the station name on the IC was simply “Richton.” Metra changed the name of the station to Richton Park.



## Train from Randolph Street



▲ During the spring of 1971 cars 1501 and 1502 were tested on track 4 between Kensington and 67th Street during the mid day period. The cars are north of 103rd Street during one of the test runs. —Illinois Central photo, Stephen M. Scalzo Collection

▶ Shortly after the Highliners entered revenue service train 744 is pulling into Homewood. Scheduled for a 7:30 a.m. departure, its next scheduled stop is Roosevelt Road (12th Street). The next train 754 is two minutes behind and it will make all stops to Kensington plus 53rd Street before heading nonstop to downtown. —Illinois Central photo, Stephen M. Scalzo Collection



▶ In January 2006 a southbound train stops at the recently constructed Bryn Mawr station. The theater building remains in the background, see page 5. In 2006 Metra is completing the renewal of all stations on the South Chicago line. The wooden platforms from the 1920s have more than outlived their useful life. —John G. Allen photo





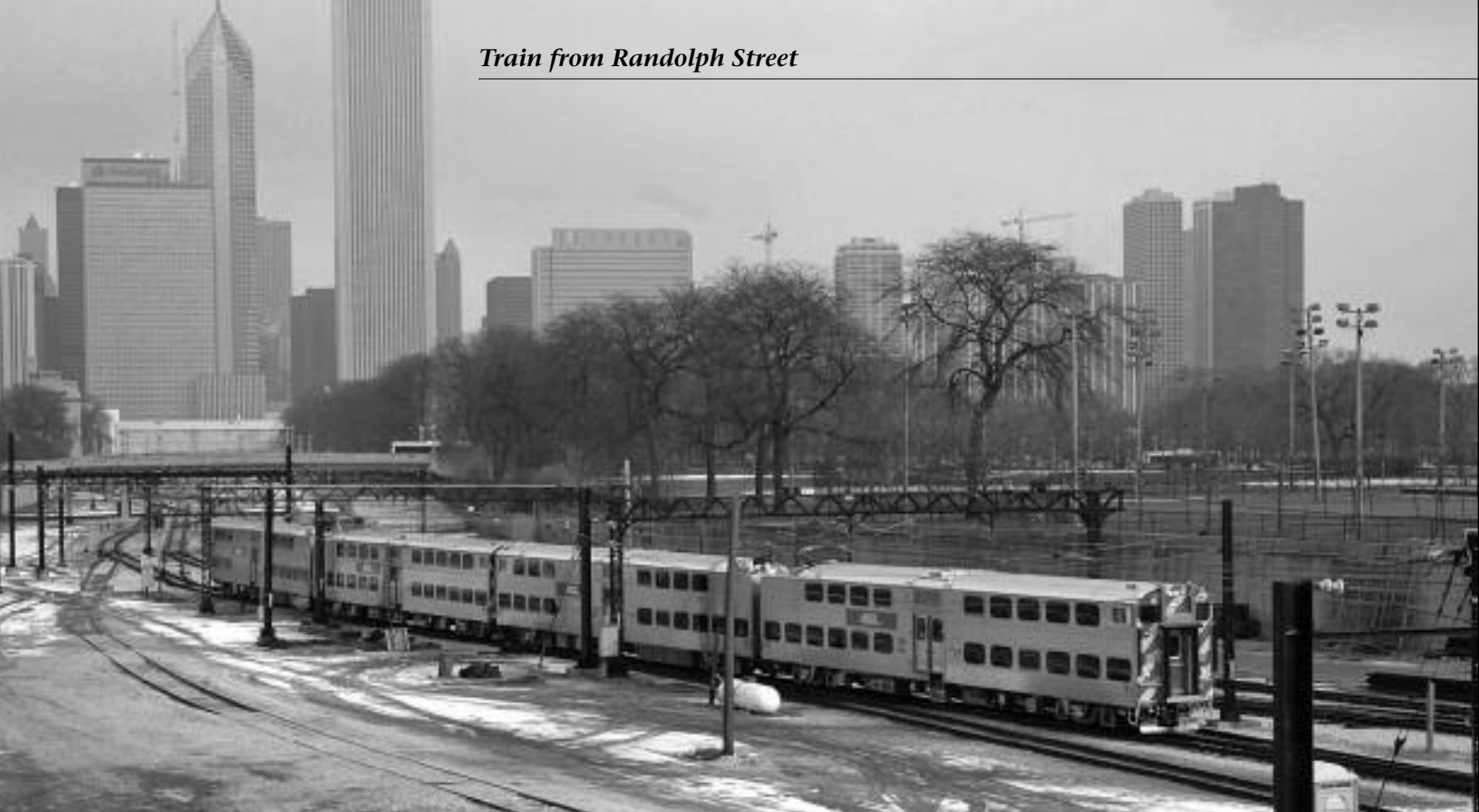
◀ On Saturday, February 11, 2006, a northbound train is crossing 80th Street as it approaches Cheltenham Station (79th Street) on the South Chicago line. Decades ago the open space on the right was occupied by a retail coal company and the Cheltenham electric substation is just to the right out of the photo.—Eric Bronsky photo



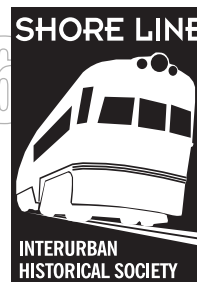
▶ Looking north from the south end of the 63rd Street platform on Sunday, June 19, 2005, it is a completely different scene from prior decades (see page 10). Most of the buildings and the rapid transit structures are gone and new life is being breathed into the neighborhood. The Metra switch engine is hauling one Highliner to provide shuttle service on the South Chicago branch while work is underway on the new Stony Island station.—John G. Allen photo

▼ At 1:16 p.m. on Monday, December 19, 2005, the first southbound revenue service trip of the new Nippon-Sharyo Highliners is leaving the Flossmoor station. The old station building is now an excellent restaurant in which to enjoy dining and trains. Car 1205 is leading 1206, 1203 and 1204. Delivery of the first 26 of the new Highliners was completed in March 2006. The cars have faster acceleration and very consistent braking, with a regenerative feature, as compared to the old Highliners. Contingent upon receiving funding from the State of Illinois, Metra hopes to order an additional 160 new cars, 60 motors facing south and 40 trailers with restroom facilities and 60 motors facing north without restroom facilities. This will meet the mandate from the Metra Board to have 67% of the cars restroom equipped. The design of the cars is an adaptation of the “pull cars” on Metra’s diesel divisions to take advantage of existing engineering, save initial unit cost of the cars (savings estimated in the hundreds of thousand dollars per car) and simplify spare parts inventories and maintenance procedures. The principal design changes to the “pull car” design, thus creating the new Highliners, were the electrical propulsion system, adding the pantograph (power collection device) on the roof and to provide for high level platform boarding while leaving a set of steps on each side of the car for ground loading and unloading.—Walter R. Keevil photo





▲ Most of the buildings in the background are standing on land once occupied by IC's freight yards and terminal facilities. When the IC first came to this site at 11th Place, a trestle carried the tracks over the waters of Lake Michigan. Grant Park and parks along the lake to Hyde Park came about as a result of protracted negotiations between the railroad and the City of Chicago. The skyline has changed dramatically, as seen here on Saturday February 11, 2006. Since assuming ownership of the IC's suburban service on May 1, 1987, Metra has invested tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements in this service. The wooden platforms of the 1920s in Hyde Park and at mainline stations from Kensington south have been replaced with concrete platforms and warming houses of substantial construction. Station renewal on the South Chicago branch is in progress; however, the old platforms remain at Roosevelt Road and many local stops on the main line between 59th Street and Kensington as well as on the Blue Island branch. Signal and communication circuits have been replaced and bi-directional signaling installed. Metra hopes to completely replace the existing Highliner fleet which will require an investment of approximately \$600 million. The future for this service looks very bright and riders will enjoy the amenities aboard in the new cars, comfort facilities at certain stations and the new retail shops in the new Millennium Station at Randolph Street.—Eric Bronsky photo



For more information on joining Shore Line or ordering back issues of First & Fastest please visit our website [www.shore-line.org](http://www.shore-line.org) or write to us at P.O. Box 425, Lake Forest, IL 60045-0425. First & Fastest, the premier magazine on rail passenger service in the Upper Midwest, is published on a quarterly basis.



For information on joining CERA or ordering available CERA books please visit their website [www.cera-chicago.org](http://www.cera-chicago.org) or write to them at P.O. Box 503, Chicago, IL 60690-0503. CERA publishes annual books, also known as Bulletins, on selected electric railway topics, generally in the Midwest.



For those seeking more information on the history of the Illinois Central Railroad you are urged to contact the Illinois Central Historical Society by visiting their website [www.icrhistorical.org](http://www.icrhistorical.org) or write to them at P.O. Box 288, Paxton IL 60957. ICHS publishes their official magazine the Green Diamond on quarterly basis.

**T**rain from Randolph Street is published by the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society as a result of a grant from Central Electric Railfans' Association. It is being distributed to members of both organizations as a benefit of their memberships. This article will be republished in the Green Diamond, the official magazine of the Illinois Central Historical Society, for the benefit of their members as well.

Train from Randolph Street is based on substantial research done by Roy G. Benedict and Norman Carlson. The publication would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of John Allen, Eric Bronsky, George Earle, Graham Garfield, Dick Gill, Lee Hastman, Walter Keevil, Dick Lukin, Bill Middleton, Paul Oppenheim, Art Peterson, Stephen Scalzo, Bill Schwartz, Bill Shaptokin, Rick Tidwell as well as Mike Galbraith and the staff of North Shore Printers.