



Illinois Central Railroad Co.
Records, 1920-1972

Collection 136

Champaign County Historical Archives

Compiled by: Donica Martin, December 2018; Matthew Mayton, August 2019

Creator/Corporate name: Illinois Central Railroad Co.

Inclusive Dates: 1920-1972, bulk 1921-1949

Physical Description: 8 boxes

Provenance:

Records in this collection were donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives.

Access:

The records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

Historical Note:

The Illinois Central Railroad Company (ICRR), known as the Main Line of Mid-America, was one of the oldest Class I railroads in the United States. First conceived by the Illinois General Assembly in the 1830s, ICRR became the first federal land grant railroad in the United States by the passage of the Federal Land Grant Act of 1850, sponsored by Senator Stephen A. Douglas. On February 10, 1851, the Illinois General Assembly chartered the railroad. Initially, ICRR had two north-south lines. The original main line went from Cairo, IL to Galena, IL, since Galena was the major industrial center in Illinois at the time. The branch line diverted at Centralia, IL, and traveled northeast to Chicago, which later became the main line. When its lines were completed in 1856, ICRR was the longest railroad in the United States, with 706 miles of track, all within Illinois. It was also the largest building project of its time with 10,000 workers lying track at any one time, and possibly up to 100,000 workers worked on the rails over the five-year project.

During the outbreak of the Civil War, ICRR was essential for transporting soldiers, munitions, and supplies to the Union army. After the war, the railroad looked to expand its operations. It first expanded its operations to Sioux City, Iowa, in 1867 and acquired existing rail lines in the southern states during the 1870s and 1880s. ICRR had lines as far south as Mississippi, with its main line extending south to New Orleans, Louisiana. In the 1880s, ICRR expanded to Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Nebraska. At its height, the ICRR operated over ten thousand miles of tracks in fourteen states, operating both freight and passenger lines with its most profitable line running from Chicago to New Orleans.

The Illinois Central Railroad was essential to the growth and development of Champaign County and Illinois. It created dozens of towns, like Champaign, along its routes and brought many European immigrants to Illinois. The expanding population changed Illinois from a grand prairie to one of the United States' agricultural centers. The railroad helped bring the University of Illinois to Champaign-Urbana by offering the state of Illinois \$50,000 in free freight to locate the university along its line in



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1867. The railroad worked closely with the College of Engineering's railroad program in the early 1900s and was crucial to the construction of Memorial Stadium. ICRR located several division headquarters in Illinois. One of these headquarters was in Champaign, which employed 1,500 people at its height and had a roundhouse, switch tower, and other facilities. Many of these buildings are no longer standing, with its depot being converted to restaurants.

In 1962, ICRR developed its holding company, Illinois Central Industries, and diversified its business ventures due to declining business. In 1971, ICRR sold its passenger line to Amtrak. On August 10, 1972, ICRR and the Gulf, Mobile, & Ohio Railroad merged to form Illinois Central Gulf Railroad (ICG). The new company would sell off most of its east-west lines and redundant north-south lines to other railroad companies during the 1980s. By 1988, the parent company of the ICG, Illinois Central Industries, separated from its remaining railroad assets and was acquired by the New York Prospect Group. ICG dropped the "Gulf" and became the Illinois Central Railroad once again. The company would operate independently for another decade until 1998 when the Canadian National Railway (CN) bought the Illinois Central for \$2.4 billion. By 2001, Illinois Central was fully absorbed by Canadian National.

Scope and Content Note:

The Illinois Central Railroad Co. Records consists primarily of completion reports from various construction and improvement projects in Champaign County and East Central Illinois. These project completion reports include expenditure forms, retirement (lines or building) forms if applicable, and correspondences pertaining to the specific projects, estimates, and blueprints of the plans. This collection also contains reports of high water level data collected by the company and oil spill contamination plans to reduce pollution.

Arrangement:

The Illinois Central Railroad Co. Records are arranged in the following series:

Series 1: Project Completion Reports: This series includes expenditure and retirement forms, estimations, blueprints, and correspondence from various project reports. This series is divided into two sub-series. **Sub-series 1** is organized alphabetically by county and city. **Sub-series 2** is arranged alphabetically by the company's district. A notation has been given if a project contains documentation from another city or district.

Series 2: Track Map Blueprints: This series includes rail line map blueprints that are not attached to specific projects. It is organized alphabetically by city.

Series 3: High Water Reports: This series includes collected data and correspondence in connection to high water levels on tracks. It is arranged chronologically.



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Series 4: Oil Spill Contamination Correspondences and Procedural Documents: This series includes correspondence related to the state of Illinois environmental agency complaints, collection system drawings, and treatment facilities plans. It is arranged chronologically.

Series 5: Instructions from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Civil Aeronautics Administration: This series contains a list of airfields with provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Civil Aeronautics Administration with instructions to provide notice if constructions or alterations to structures occur within 20 miles of an airfield. There is only one record in this series.

Related Material:

Researchers interested in this collection may also wish to consult the Illinois Central Railroad Company Archives held at the Newberry Library in Chicago, IL.

Name Terms:

Illinois Central Gulf Railroad Co.
Illinois Central Railroad Co.

Subject Terms:

Alvin (Ill.)
Amenia (Ill.)
Anchor (Ill.)
Arcola (Ill.)
Armstrong (Ill.)
Bradley (Ill.)
Bridges
Buckley (Ill.)
Cabery (Ill.)
Champaign (Ill.)
Champaign County (Ill.)
Chanute Field (Rantoul, Ill.)
Cisco (Ill.)
Clinton (Ill.)
Coles County (Ill.)
Del Rey (Ill.)
Dewey (Ill.)
Dillsburg (Ill.)
Douglas County (Ill.)
Effingham County (Ill.)
Fisher (Ill.)



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Ford County (Ill.)
Galton (Ill.)
Gibson City (Ill.)
Gifford (Ill.)
Griswold (Ill.)
Guthrie (Ill.)
Harpster (Ill.)
Hayes (Ill.)
Humboldt (Ill.)
Iroquois County (Ill.)
Jasper County (Ill.)
Kankakee County (Ill.)
Kempton (Ill.)
Laurette (Ill.)
Leverette (Ill.)
Loda (Ill.)
Lodge (Ill.)
Lotus (Ill.)
Ludlow (Ill.)
Mason (Ill.)
McLean County (Ill.)
Melvin (Ill.)
Monticello (Ill.)
Morgantown (Ind.)
Newton (Ill.)
Paxton (Ill.)
Penfield (Ill.)
Pesotum (Ill.)
Piatt County (Ill.)
Potomac (Ill.)
Prospect (Ill.)
Railroads
Railroad tracks
Railroad station
Rantoul (Ill.)
Rayville (Ill.)
Roberts (Ill.)
Savoy (Ill.)
Seymour (Ill.)
Staley (Ill.)



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Sullivan (Ill.)
Swygert (Ill.)
Thomasboro (Ill.)
Tolono (Ill.)
Tuscola (Ill.)
Unionville (Ind.)
White Heath (Ill.)

Container List:

Box 1

Series 1: Project Completion Reports

Sub-series 1: County and City

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- Folder 2: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1922
- Folder 3: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1922 (WA8475)
- Folder 4: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1922 (WA8475)
- Folder 5: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1923
- Folder 6: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1923
- Folder 7: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1924
- Folder 8: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1924 (Loose papers)
- Folder 9: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1925
- Folder 10: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1925
- Folder 11: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1925 (WA9965)
- Folder 12: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1925 (WA10000)
- Folder 13: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1926
- Folder 14: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1928
- Folder 15: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1928
- Folder 16: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1929
- Folder 17: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1930
- Folder 18: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1931
[Contains a record that includes Matton and Indianapolis]
- Folder 19: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1932
- Folder 20: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1933
- Folder 21: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1934
- Folder 22: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1935
- Folder 23: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1936
- Folder 24: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1937
[Contains a record that includes Matton and Edgewood]



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Box 2

Series 1: Project Completion Reports

Sub-series 1: County and City

Folder 25: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1938
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Folder 27: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1940
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Folder 38: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1956
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Folder 40: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1958
Folder 41: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1958
Folder 42: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1958 (AFE 4781)
Folder 43: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1958 (AFE 4285-2)
Folder 44: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1959
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Box 3

Series 1: Project Completion Reports

Sub-series 1: County and City

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Folder 55: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1963 (AFE 6761)
Folder 56: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1964 (AFE 8647)
Folder 57: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1964 (AFE 8209)



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- Folder 58: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1965
- Folder 59: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1965 (AFE 4285-2)
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- Folder 61: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1965 (AFE 4285-2)
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- Folder 63: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1966 (AFE 7911)
- Folder 64: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Champaign, 1966 (AFE 9331)
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- Folder 66: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Dewey, 1966
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Series 1: Project Completion Reports

Sub-series 1: County and City

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- Folder 74: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Pesotum, 1922-1925, 1931, 1935, 1940-1945, 1957-1960
- Folder 75: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Prospect, 1959, 1964
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- Folder 107: Project Completion Reports-Champaign Co., Staley, 1922, 1931, 1933, 1946, 1960
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Series 1: Project Completion Reports

Sub-series 1: County and City

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- Folder 194: Project Completion Reports-Morgan Co., Morgantown, 1943
- Folder 195: Project Completion Reports-Moultrie Co., Sullivan, 1931
- Folder 196: Project Completion Reports-Piatt Co., Amenia, 1957
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- Folder 198: Project Completion Reports-Piatt Co., Lodge, 1958-1959
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- Folder 201: Project Completion Reports-Piatt Co., White Heath, 1961
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Series 1: Project Completion Reports

Sub-series 2: District

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[Contains records that include Chicago District]
- Folder 207: Project Completion Reports-Champaign District, 1925 (Main Line Rail),
[Contains records that include Chicago District]
- Folder 208: Project Completion Reports-Champaign District, 1928 (Signal Work Illinois Division)
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- Folder 209: Project Completion Reports-Champaign District, 1937
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Folder 228: Project Completion Reports-Rantoul District, 1962
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Folder 230: Project Completion Reports-Variou Districts, 1940 (Retirement Details)
Folder 231: Project Completion Reports-Variou Districts, Undated (Loading Plans for C.W. Rail)

Box 8

Series 2: Track Map Blue Prints

Folder 232: Track Maps-Champaign, IL
Folder 233: Track Maps-Newton, IL
Folder 234: Track Maps-Palestine, IL
Folder 235: Track Maps-Wheeler, IL

Series 3: High Water Reports

Folder 236: High Water Data on Bridges and Culverts, 1928
Folder 237: High Water File, 1943
Folder 238: Assistant Engineer's High Water File, 1943
Folder 239: Correspondence Pertaining to High Water in Rantoul District

Series 4: Oil Spill Contamination Correspondences and Procedural Documents

Folder 240: Correspondence Pertaining to Pollution Complaints at Facilities in Champaign and Clinton, 1969-1970
Folder 241: Correspondence Pertaining to Diesel Fuel Oil Collection System for Champaign with Drawings, 1971
Folder 242: Emergency Oil Spill Containment and Treatment Facility for Mechanical Terminal and Yard Facilities, Champaign, IL, January 1972
Folder 243: Emergency Oil Spill Containment and Treatment Facility for Mechanical Terminal Facilities, Clinton, IL, January 1972

Series 5: Instructions from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Civil Aeronautics Administration

Folder 244: Instructions Covering Landing Fields from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Civil Aeronautics Administration, 1947

Former box IDs: 140, 141, 142, 278, 279, 280

Former bibliographic records: 489805