

# New York Central System Historical Society

2024 Convention / Indianapolis

Big Four Depots Tour / Departs 8:00 a.m.



[NYCSHS Collection WR44185]

***When New York Central photographer Ed Nowak focused his camera on this scene at the railroad's downtown Indianapolis freight house in 1949, change was evident in many aspects of the company's operations, from new F-unit diesels and motor trucks to colorful Pacemaker box cars. Nearby, elegant NYC streamliners called at Union Station each day, bringing modern passenger transportation to Indiana's capital. Dieselization and "Road to the Future" modernization would remove many storied elements of the Big Four in the Midwest. This tour examines Indiana remnants of the railroad from earlier times.***

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## **Buses depart from the hotel lobby at 8:00 a.m. Saturday**

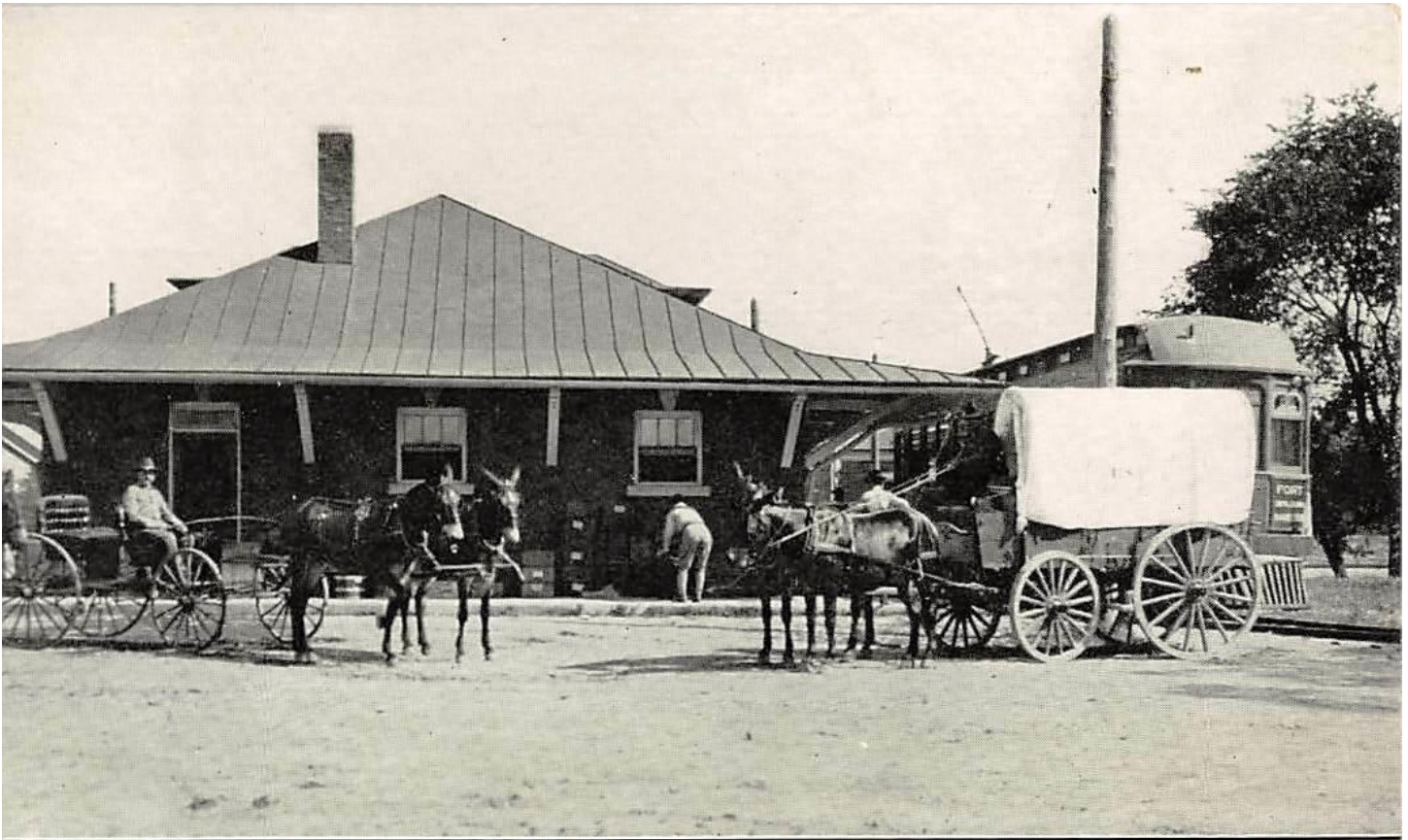
There will be two buses. Bus 1 will stop for lunch at Greenfield with options for McDonalds, KFC, Burger King, Taco Bell, or Wendy's. It will return directly to the hotel after the Franklin depot stop with an estimated arrival time of at 4:45 p.m.

Bus 2 will stop for lunch at Greenfield with options for Arby's, Penn Station Subs or Firehouse Subs. Following the Franklin depot stop, it will drive by NYC's Beech Grove Shops and remnants of NYC's Hill Yard before returning to the hotel with an estimated arrival time of 5:15 p.m.

## FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON / UNION TRACTION DEPOT

Arrival: 8:40 a.m. [10-minute photo stop]

Departure: 8:55 a.m.



Interurban Station—Fort Benjamin Harrison, near Indianapolis, Ind.

*Indiana News Co. publishers. 990*

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, the Big Four Railroad's "Bee Line" division was the preeminent transportation provider between Indianapolis and the county seat cities of Anderson and Muncie. But a new form of transportation, the electric interurban railway, would soon capitalize on the dynamic economic growth of these and other communities in Indiana's "Gas Belt" region. The largest of those enterprises, the Union Traction Company of Indiana, completed its Muncie-Anderson-Indianapolis main line in 1900, directly paralleling the Bee Line for most of its length.

In 1902, the United States Army began construction of a major new military reservation near the town of Lawrence. Named after the recently deceased United States President Benjamin Harrison, a citizen of Indianapolis, the post would serve as an important training and military finance center through two World Wars, the Cold War and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

To accommodate troop trains and freight traffic consigned to the facility, the Big Four and the Union Traction jointly constructed a half-mile spur westward from their paralleling mains, with five track yards to load and unload troop trains plus additional sidings to serve the Army's numerous warehouses and its coal-fired power plant.





*Part of the joint Big Four-Union Traction freight trackage at Fort Benjamin Harrison, newly constructed in 1908.*  
[Photos from NYCSHS Central Headlight Archives]

The Big Four constructed a long running track along the north side of its double-track main line and a five-track yard on the south, plus crossover tracks to move loads across the mains into the Fort. A characteristic Big Four stilt-mounted tower, logically named Post, was built to manage those switching moves. Crossing that multitude of steam and electric railroad tracks at Post Tower was a gravel county road which would eventually become East 56<sup>th</sup> Street in the metropolitan Indianapolis roadway grid.



*Indiana Railroad coach-baggage car No. 81 was operating two of the 32 daily Indianapolis-Fort Harrison runs when photographed at the depot in 1937. A railfan special had also arrived in a chartered fan trip car, coach-lounge No. 59, flying white flags as an extra train.*

Concurrently, Union Traction built a one-mile, north-south spur to the center of the Fort from a junction named Spring Valley, itself about one mile west of Post Tower. From an attractive brick station complementing the institutional architecture of surrounding military buildings, the UT began providing frequent, dedicated passenger service to downtown Indianapolis, ten miles away. Fort Benjamin Harrison thus became a busy workplace for steam and electric railroaders alike.

The attractive interurban station, completed in 1908, served passengers of the Union Traction and its 1930 successor, the Indiana Railroad, until abandonment of the interurban in January 1941. After serving as the Fort's post office over the following five decades, it was converted to a restaurant when the Army closed Fort Benjamin Harrison in 1996.

The site of the former Post Tower and the Big Four-Union Traction interchange tracks and sidings is now hidden beneath the East 56<sup>th</sup> Street overpass, built in 2000, which we will cross as we depart this area.





*One of Indiana Railroad's justly famous "highspeed" cars of 1931 was photographed from the top of a box car in a Big Four freight train. Post Tower was just out of the picture, to the right of the crossbuck at the road crossing; the jointly operated steam-electric spur to Fort Benjamin Harrison may be seen at left center. The IRR train was westbound to Indianapolis. Track conditions strongly – and correctly -- suggest the interurban was nearing the end of its life.*

## THE BEE LINE / FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON TO ANDERSON



Further underscoring this railroad's nickname, NYC H-5 Class Mikado No. 1576 scurried along the 27-mile tangent between downtown Indianapolis and Pendleton in 1955, bound for Anderson with the "Bee Line Switch Run." [Jeremy Taylor photo, NYCSHS Archives NG135006]

The Indianapolis & Bellefontaine Railroad was established in 1848 to connect with the Bellefontaine & Indiana, then building southwest from Galion, Ohio. In 1858 the two companies merged to form the Bellefontaine Railway, soon known as the Bee Line, a nickname still used by railroaders today, 146 years and six operating companies later. Merged again into the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis – the Big Four – in 1889, the Bee Line shared in the rapid economic development of its territory, with double tracking, block signals and other physical plant improvements marking its success. Controlling Vanderbilt investment in the Big Four was evident in the names of some of the Bee Line's passenger trains, such as the *Knickerbocker* and the *Hudson River Limited*. The line's best train was the *Southwestern Limited*, said to have equipment and service equal to the *20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited*.

In the 1920s, Bee Line employee timetables listed 16 daily first-class passenger trains, four second-class accommodation runs, nine scheduled freights and six switch-run locals. Troop trains to and from Fort Benjamin Harrison added to the total, as did other extra runs and work

trains. After diesels replaced the last steamers in the mid-1950s, the passenger trains gradually disappeared and innovations like Flexi-Van trains arrived. The last varnish run, the ghost of the *Southwestern*, was down to a single coach when discontinuance mercifully came in 1968. After suffering considerable degradation during the Penn Central years, the Bee Line enjoyed a thorough refurbishing under Conrail and maintains its important main line status today as part of CSX's through Cleveland-St. Louis corridor.

## **ANDERSON / BIG FOUR PASSENGER STATION**

*Arrival: 9:45 a.m. [10-minute photo stop]*

*Departure: 9:55 a.m.*



Anderson enjoyed great economic success during Indiana's natural gas boom era. Between 1880 and 1900 its population increased fivefold, and by 1892 38 new industrial firms had located in the young city. Good transportation facilities were key factors in the region's growth. The Bee Line shared in the city's prosperity, which grew exponentially with the later growth of the automobile industry; Anderson became one of General Motors' major manufacturing locations.



The handsome passenger station was constructed in 1887 on the original Bee Line, which spirals through the southern sector of the business district. As traffic ballooned, the Big Four built a second, arrow-straight route several blocks to the south. All passenger trains stayed on the original line to reach the depot, but eastbound freights typically used the new line and westbound freights the old.



*Waiting passengers filled both Anderson platforms in 1936; in the postwar years, a long, streamlined Southwestern slowed for its station stop. The two-car version of the same train in the mid-Sixties (below) told a different story.* [Photos courtesy of Roger Hensley, an NYCSHS member and officer of the Madison County Historical Society]



The Cleveland to Indianapolis main line was split through Anderson. South Anderson Yard was constructed along the new second track; its engine terminal featured a 16-stall roundhouse with a 110-foot turntable. In addition, Anderson was crossed by NYC's north-south Michigan Division and PRR's Chicago-Logansport-Cincinnati line. Coming onto town from the west was the jointly NYC-PRR owned Central Indiana Railroad, which once meandered for 117 miles across the middle of the state. Today, only an 11-mile segment remains between Anderson and Lapel.

With all those lines, Anderson hosted a total of eight interlocking towers at one time. Over time control of these were combined with adjacent towers, then with abandonment of lines many of the interlockings were removed altogether. Today the remaining interlockings are remote controlled from hundreds of miles away.



*On the east side of town, where the main line split, was Gridley (GI) Tower. [Charles W. Bohi photo, NYCSHS Archives PB711151]*

*KY tower was located near downtown, where the original main line and the Michigan Division ran together for about eight blocks. L-3a #3023 was working its way through the maze of trackage at KY. [Photo by Richard Baldwin]*





## THE MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Arrival: 10:05 a.m. [60-minute visit]  
Boarding: 11:05 a.m. Departure: 11:10 a.m.*

The Madison County Historical Society collects, preserves, and interprets objects, artifacts, documents, and photographs relating to local historical development, including transportation. Their railroad collection will be on display for our visit.

During our travel to the next stop, we will be paralleling the remnants of the Michigan Division. The track extends from South Anderson Yard six miles to Emporia, where a grain elevator is served. A former Santa Fe GP7, the grain elevator switcher, may be seen as we pass.

### SHIRLEY / PEORIA & EASTERN DEPOT

*Arrival: 11:40 a.m. [30-minute photo stop]  
Boarding: 12:10 p.m. Departure: 12:15 p.m.*

Shirley was not named for a prominent lady, wife or girlfriend, but rather for Joseph A. Shirley, an official of the Cincinnati, Wabash & Michigan Railway. In 1890, when the CW&M was closing a 40-mile gap in its line between Anderson and Rushville, it crossed the Indianapolis-Springfield line of the Indiana, Bloomington & Western (a Peoria & Eastern predecessor company, completed in 1882), creating a busy junction and a location for a village named for one of its leaders. The Big Four acquired stock control of both railroads the same year.

The former CW&M and connecting railroads were consolidated into the Big Four's Benton Harbor-North Vernon-Louisville Michigan Division, at 303 miles the longest of the company's passenger routes in Indiana. Befitting a railroad running the vertical length of Indiana, "the land of Indians," the two daily passenger trains between Anderson and Louisville were at one time named "The Cherokee" and "The Shawnee." North from Anderson, an Indianapolis-Elkhart through train was named "The Winona." At one time the Big Four operated 15 passenger trains daily on various segments of the Michigan Division, but in the depths of the Depression of the 1930s "The Winona" was reduced to a "motor train" (gas-electric combine) and passenger trains elsewhere on the division were taken off year by year. Passenger service to Shirley on this line had ended by 1942, and the final Michigan Division passenger train ran from Anderson to Elkhart on April 6, 1950.

In the complex history of the Indianapolis-Springfield line, which became part of a through route between Peoria, Indianapolis, Springfield and Columbus (Ohio), an 1899 foreclosure resulted in the Big Four purchasing the 139 miles east of Indianapolis and the Peoria & Eastern acquiring the western 202 miles. For some years the entire Peoria-Springfield operation was called the Peoria & Eastern, but over time that title reverted to only the Indianapolis-Peoria line. Through



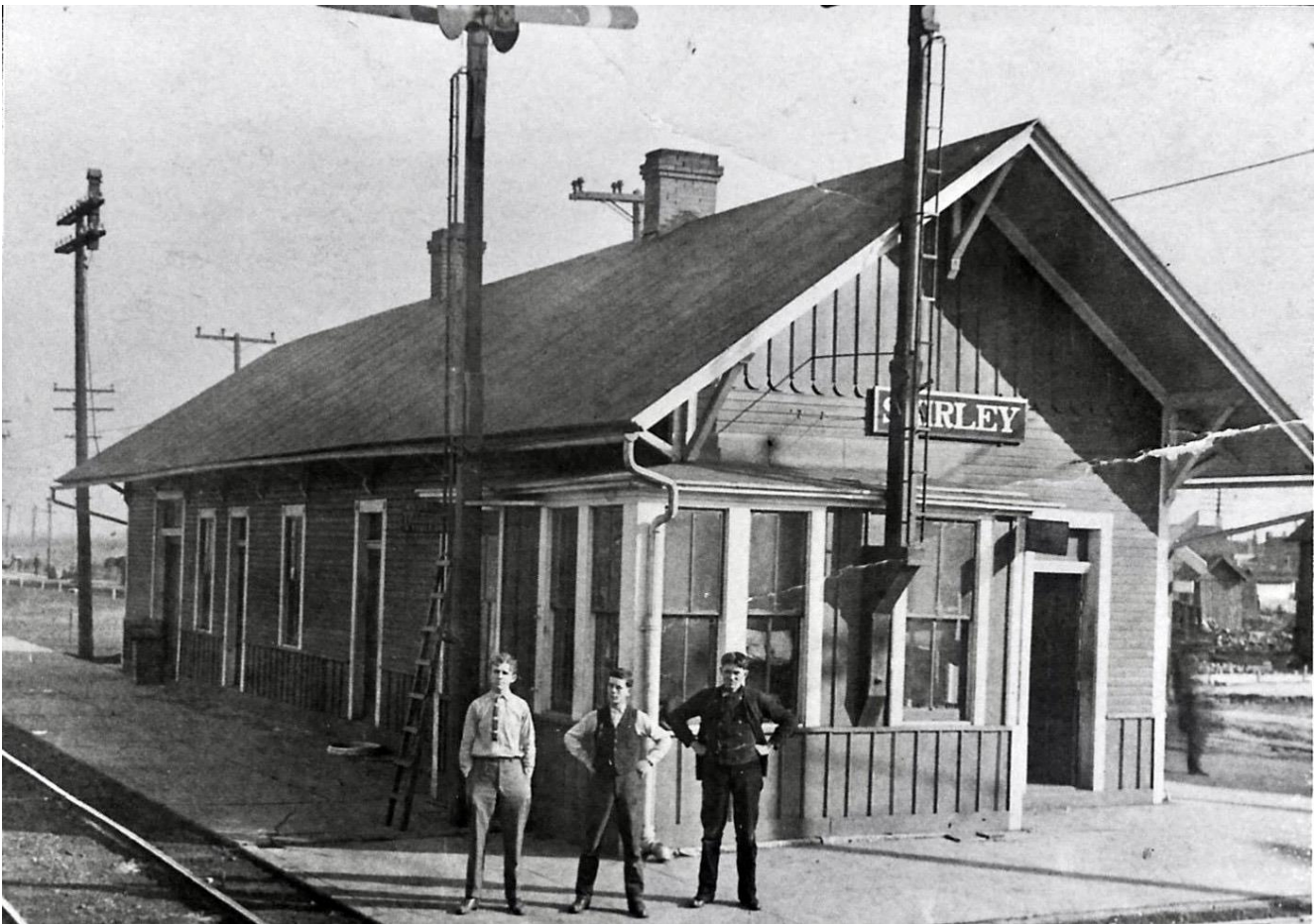
passenger trains operated from Indianapolis to Springfield and Columbus on the eastern segment through Shirley, but the line was not competitive with the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line service between Indianapolis and Columbus. Eventually, the only remaining passenger service on this line was an all-stops local in each direction, and that ended in January 1950. The Big Four did successfully operate through freight service from Indianapolis to Columbus, via Shirley and Springfield, for many years.

The abandonment of both of Shirley's railroads took place, incrementally, during the mid-1970s.

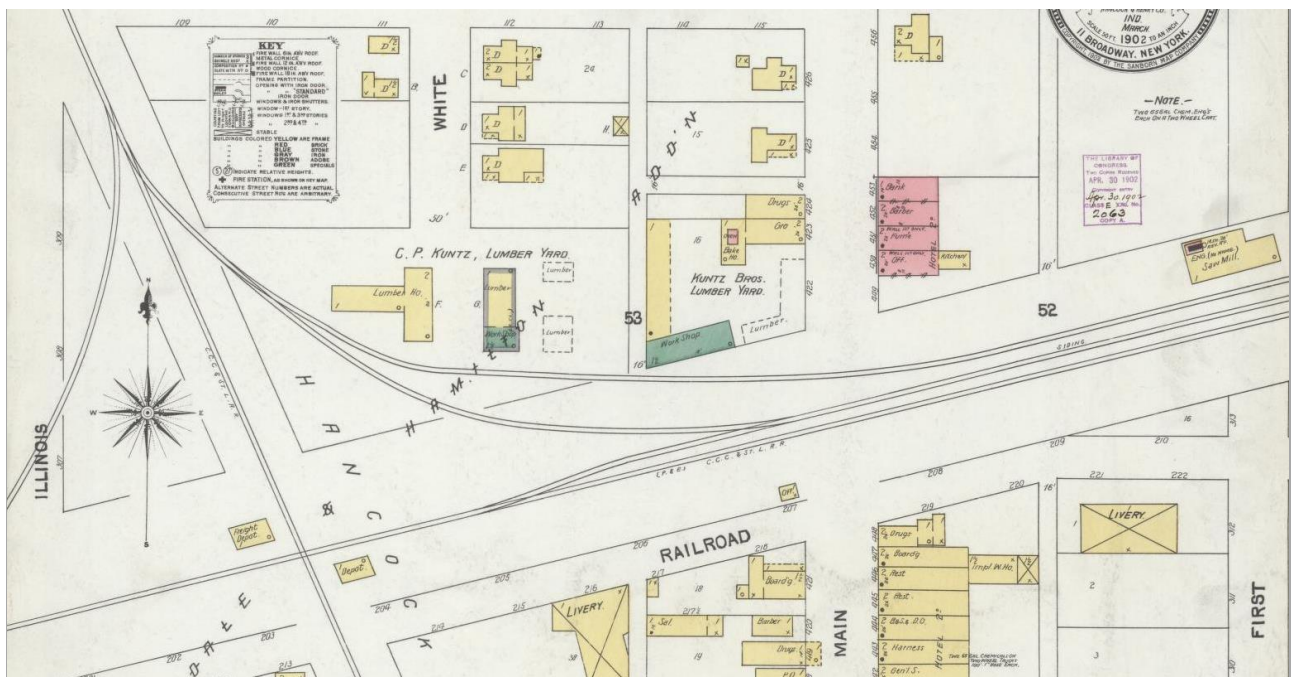
*In 1948, H-6a No. 1716 was participating in a test of radio equipment at the Shirley depot (right). [NYCSHS WR410120]*



*The same train heads east across into the interchange tracks to pick up some cars on the east side of Main Street. [NYCSHS PB578059]*



Posing for the camera, sometime after the 1912 completion of the Indianapolis New Castle & Toledo interurban line (visible in the background), which was bucolically known as “The Honey Bee Line” -- presumably for its tangent trackage paralleling the P&E from the east side of Indianapolis to New Castle. [Photo from the Greenfield Historic Landmarks website on Facebook, October 2023] Below, a Sanborn map of Shirley from 1902.





## **GREENFIELD / INTERMISSION FOR LUNCH**

*Arrival: 12:40 p.m. [60-minute lunch break]*

*Boarding: 1:35 p.m. Departure: 1:40 p.m.*

**Bus No. 1:** *West side of Indiana 9 (North State St.) for McDonalds, KFC, Burger King, Taco Bell and Wendy's*

**Bus No. 2:** *East Side of Indiana 9 for Arby's, Penn Station Subs and Firehouse Subs*



*In Greenfield, today a county seat city of more than 23,000 citizens, scarcely a trace remains of "that other railroad," the once-dynamic, double-track Pittsburgh-St. Louis main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The fabled route of the Spirit of St. Louis, the Penn Texas, the Jeffersonian, and other once-famous limiteds survived into the Amtrak era, hosting that carrier's National Limited until 1979, but abandonment followed in 1981. Disappearing even earlier was the handsome Greenfield depot, which succumbed to a freight train derailment in 1949. [Photo from the Greenfield Historic Landmarks website on Facebook]*



## ENROUTE TO FAIRLAND: CSX-B&O CROSSING



[Photo by Mike Leach, from the Railroads of Cincinnati website]

During our journey south from Greenfield, we will cross today's CSX main line connecting Indianapolis with Cincinnati via Rushville, Connersville and Hamilton, Ohio. This railroad traces its history to the Cincinnati & Indianapolis Junction, completed between its namesake cities in 1869. Renamed the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Indianapolis in 1872, it became part of the larger Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton in 1886. Successor Cincinnati, Indianapolis & Western was sold in 1902 to the Baltimore & Ohio, which eventually became part of the Chessie System in 1973 and CSX in 1980.

Until 1938, this line hosted daily through Chicago-Cincinnati passenger trains in cooperation with the Chicago Indianapolis & Louisville (Monon), in addition to its own daily passenger trains between Cincinnati and Indianapolis. Service had been reduced to a single daily train when passenger service ended in 1950. Ironically, this freight-only railroad became home to Amtrak's *Cardinal* in 1986, a service that continues today. The line was also known for being one of the last parts of the CSX system to use traditional semaphore block signals. Lasting into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they have since been replaced with modern color-light signals.

## FAIRLAND / BIG FOUR DEPOT

*Arrival: 2:10 p.m. [10-minute photo stop]*

*Boarding: 2:25 p.m. Departure: 2:30 p.m.*



*New met old at Fairland in the early 1950s as an eastbound freight sporting a modern NYC bay-window caboose passed a steam-powered westbound train. The snow-capped depot, visible in the distance, was surrounded by wye tracks leading to the branch to Franklin and, at the time, Trafalgar. [Photo by Richard Baldwin] The Fairland interurban bridge (below) was a local landmark for many years. [Photo courtesy of Roger Hensley]*

The significant railroad that became the Big Four's Indiana Division—East began as the state-chartered Lawrenceburg & Indianapolis Railroad in long-ago 1832. Following a series of false starts and reorganizations, the company, by then known as the Indianapolis & Cincinnati, opened between Indianapolis and Lawrenceburg on November 1, 1853. Ohio River steamboats provided a connection to Cincinnati for the next three years, until the I&C obtained trackage rights over the Ohio & Mississippi -- which required laying a third rail within the O&M's six-foot-gauge track. The I&C completed its own, paralleling route to Cincinnati in 1863.

Fairland, organized in 1852 and named for the surrounding "beautiful land," became a railroad junction with the arrival of the Cincinnati & Martinsville Railroad on June 14, 1866 (see the



following *Franklin* section for additional details). Between 1876 and 1880, the C&M was operated by I&C successor Indianapolis Cincinnati & Lafayette, which merged with the connecting Cincinnati, Lafayette & Chicago in 1880 to become the Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis & Chicago. The CIStL&C was to become a major component of the new Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis – the Big Four – in 1889.

Still another railroad came to Fairland with the arrival of the Indianapolis, Shelbyville & Southeastern interurban line. On September 15, 1902, the first car, filled with officials and regional dignitaries, passed through Fairland enroute to Shelbyville, where it was reported that “a sumptuous feast was spread to celebrate the occasion.” The line was later purchased by Indiana interurban pioneer Charles L. Henry, promoter of the Indianapolis & Cincinnati Traction Company, which had built its line from the state capital east to Rushville and Connersville. Henry feared the IS&SE might build a competing line to Cincinnati. He rebuilt the line with the same single-phase alternating current power system employed by the Connersville division. At Fairland, he replaced an at-grade crossing of the Big Four with a roller-coaster like, truss bridge-equipped flyover, passage over which was said to be a highlight of the journey for many riders.

Economic downturns and increasing skepticism regarding new interurban construction precluded extension of the I&C to Cincinnati. Following Henry’s death in 1927 the company was reorganized as the Indianapolis & Southeastern and reequipped with stylish Cincinnati Car Company curved-side lightweight cars, but it failed in the Depression. Abandonment occurred in 1932.





## SHELBYVILLE / BIG FOUR PASSENGER STATION AND FREIGHT HOUSE

Arrival: 2:50 p.m. [20-minute photo stop]

Boarding: 3:10 p.m. Departure: 3:15 p.m.



*J-1c Hudson No. 5266 presented a fine sight as it arrived at Shelbyville with the Carolina Special on May 23, 1954.*  
[NYCSHS PB502018]

Shelbyville figures prominently in Indiana railroad history, because it briefly hosted the first railroad to be built in the state. In 1834 the pioneering Lawrenceburg & Indianapolis built a horse-powered, 1.25-mile demonstration railroad with wooden rails on the east side of the town. Today a state historic marker honors its brief role in sparking railroad development in Indiana.

The first “real” railroad to reach the city evolved through four different companies to become a significant division of the new Big Four after 1889. As the preeminent railroad linking Cincinnati with Indianapolis and Chicago, the Indiana Division was a major provider of passenger service for many years. Interline connections at Cincinnati created a timetable filled with through trains to and from the Chesapeake & Ohio and the Southern. In 1929 the Big Four introduced the deluxe *Sycamore*, named for Indiana’s state tree and featuring coaches, a diner-lounge and an observation car. But Shelbyville residents could only wave to the engineer after the line’s first streamliner, the *James Whitcomb Riley*, began racing, nonstop, through the city in 1941.





*Shelbyville's new (1949) passenger station was a busy place in the postwar years; in this scene, passengers were assembling for an arriving train when a local freight chuffed through town. [NYCSHS NG547118]*



*As workers unloaded heavy materials from a baggage car during a station stop at Shelbyville, an impatient NYC conductor appeared to be saying, "How long is this going to take?" [Photo courtesy of Roger Hensley]*

Shelbyville was large enough to have separate freight and passenger stations. They are directly across the tracks from each other.

The long narrow design of the freight house is typical. Boxcars of would be spotted along one side while draymen with horse and wagon outfits, and later trucks, could pull up along the other side. It was built in 1903.



*Charles Major's 1901 coming-of-age story, "The Bears of Blue River" is a famous volume in Indiana literature, but students of the Big Four and the New York Central prefer to study the iron horses that once crossed the Big Blue River at Shelbyville each day – such as J-3a No. 5452, westbound with Train No. 405 in the summer of 1955. [NYCSHS NG508086]*

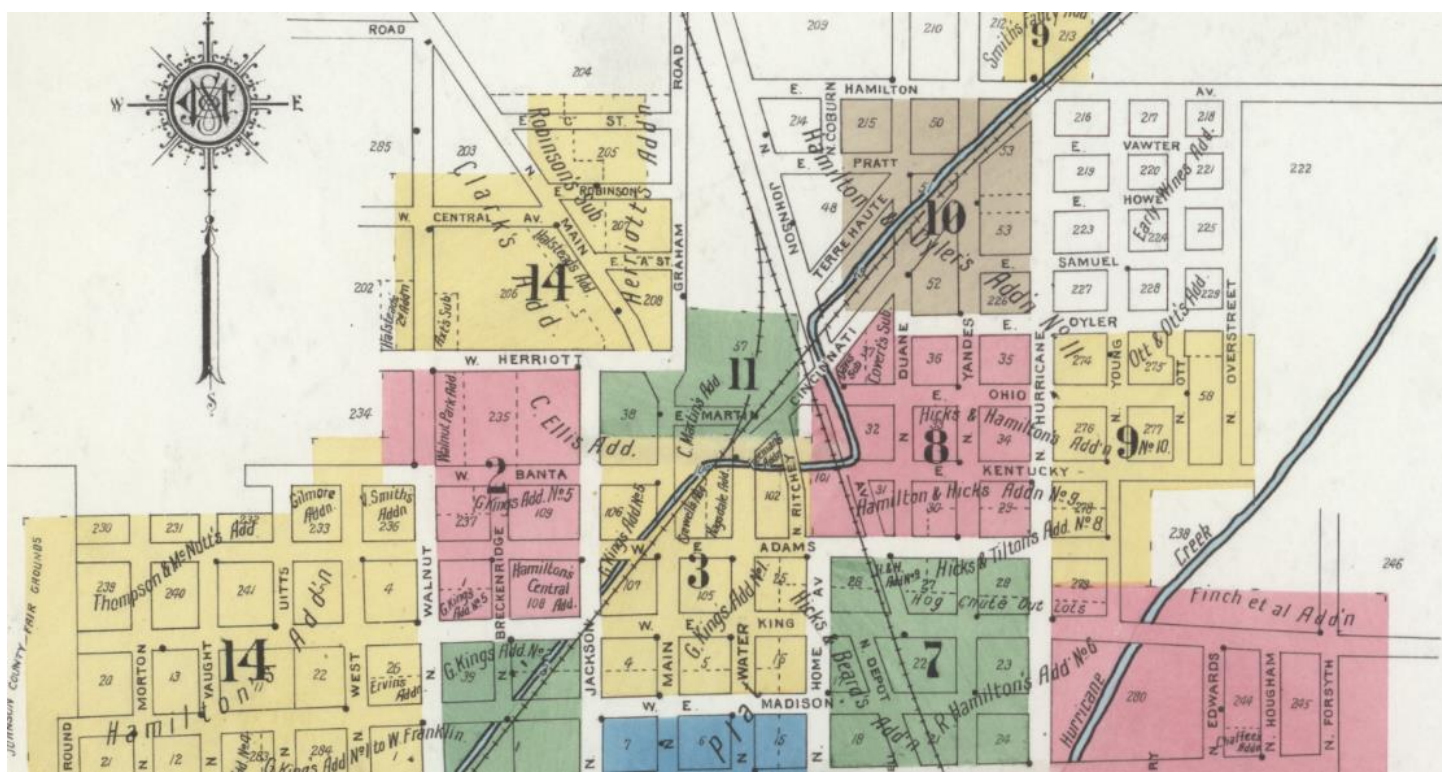


## FRANKLIN / BIG FOUR DEPOT

Arrival: 3:45 p.m. [25-minute photo stop]

Boarding: 4:10 p.m. Departure: 4:15 p.m.

Franklin's best-known railroad was the first in Indiana – the Madison & Indianapolis, completed from the Ohio River port city to the mid-state capital in 1847. Through subsequent iterations it became the Jeffersonville, Madison & Indianapolis and part of the Pennsylvania Railroad's "Panhandle" subsidiary. As the PRR's Indianapolis-Louisville main line, it hosted heavy freight traffic and a variety of passenger trains, most notably the Chicago-Miami *South Wind*. Recast as the Louisville & Indiana Railroad in 1994, the railroad was completely upgraded in 2018 through a Joint Use Operating Agreement with CSX.



In this 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, the Big Four depot occupies a triangular space between the Pennsylvania Railroad (shown at detail map 11) diamond, Cincinnati Street and Martin Street. The PRR depot was located at the Madison Street crossing, one block north of the current location of the Big Four station.

The second railroad to serve Franklin was known through most of its existence as a Big Four or New York Central branch line – but it was originally built in 1853 as a Martinsville connection to the M&I. That enterprise was unsuccessful, and the line closed in 1853. After the Civil War it was resuscitated by General Ambrose Burnside, rebuilt, renamed as the Cincinnati & Martinsville, and extended to Fairland in 1866. Ten years later it was renamed Fairland, Franklin & Martinsville, but eventual Big Four control brought the General's vision of connecting Martinsville with Cincinnati to fruition.

After 1928, all passenger service was provided by mixed trains until their discontinuance in 1941. The line was abandoned west of Trafalgar in 1942, then west of Franklin in 1961. The Fairland-Franklin segment remained in use until the Penn Central era. Remnants of the entire line are still visible most of the way to Martinsville.

Following abandonment, the 1909 Franklin depot was moved to a new location along the former PRR and served as office space for several community organizations. In 2016, Craig and Kim Smith purchased the building, renovated it, and reopened it as the Hoosier Cupboard Candy, Snacks & Ice Cream shop and the Franklin Depot Railroad Museum. Today the Big Four depot is a visual treat for railfans, filled inside with treats for all.



*The Franklin Big Four depot as it appears today, relocated along the Louisville & Indiana Railroad, the former PRR Indianapolis-Louisville main line in downtown Franklin. [Photo from Hoosier Cupboard Candy, Snacks & Ice Cream]*





*Across the tracks sits NYC caboose No. 21720, built by Despatch Shops in 1949 as NYC 20294. It was rebuilt at Beech Grove in August 1964 and renumbered 21720; later, it would serve Penn Central and Conrail. [Seth Lakin photo] Photographed at its original location in 1954 (below), the Franklin depot was a substantial structure for a light-traffic branch line. [Photo by Ron Stuckey]*



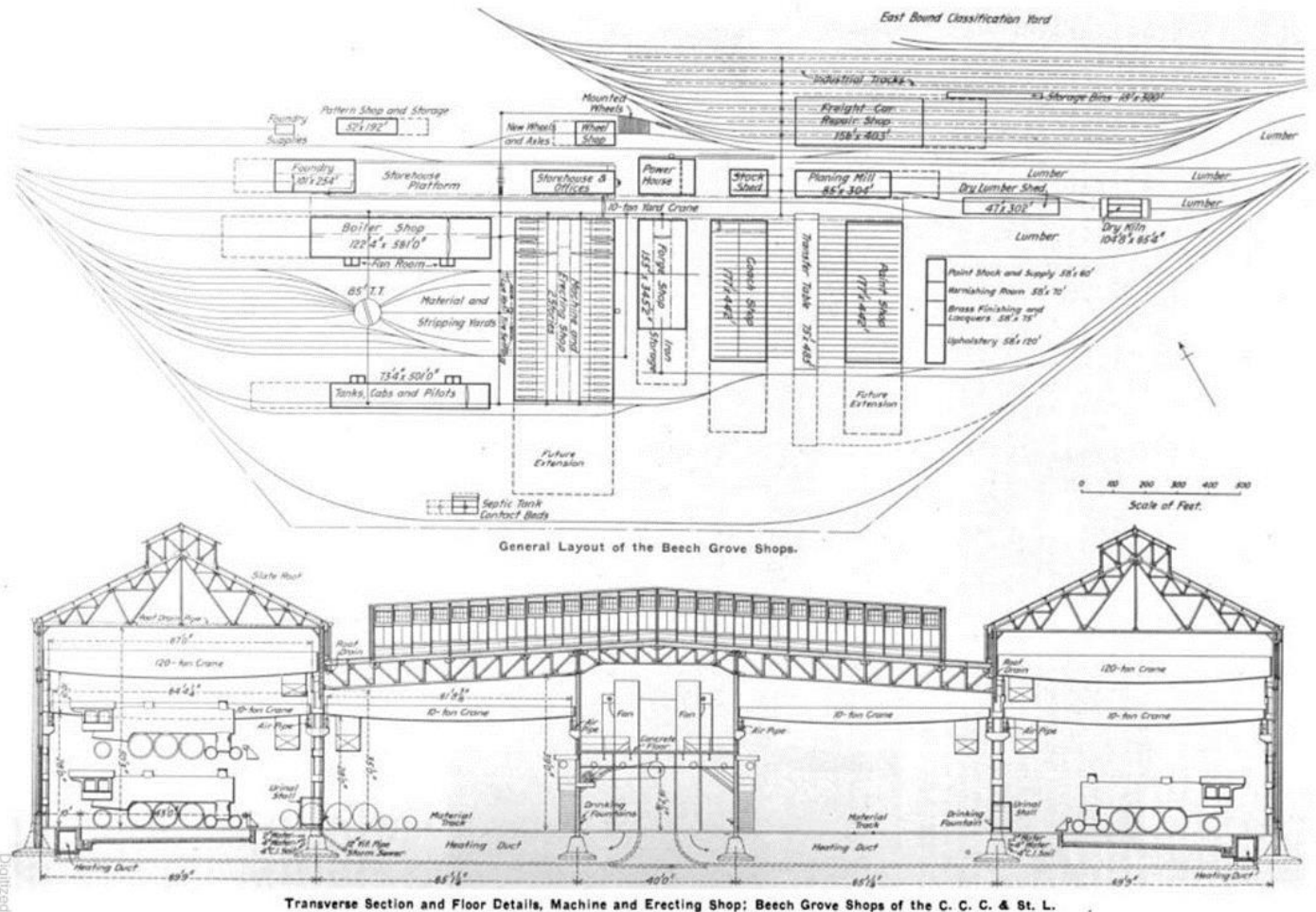
Following our stop in Franklin, Bus 1 will return to the hotel, with an estimated arrival at 4:45 p.m. Bus 2 will drive by Beech Grove Shops and remnants of Hill Yard, returning to the hotel at 5:15 p.m.



## BEECH GROVE SHOPS / Bus No. 2

Estimated arrival at Shops: 4:45 p.m. [10-minute drive-by]

Estimated arrival at hotel: 5:15 p.m.



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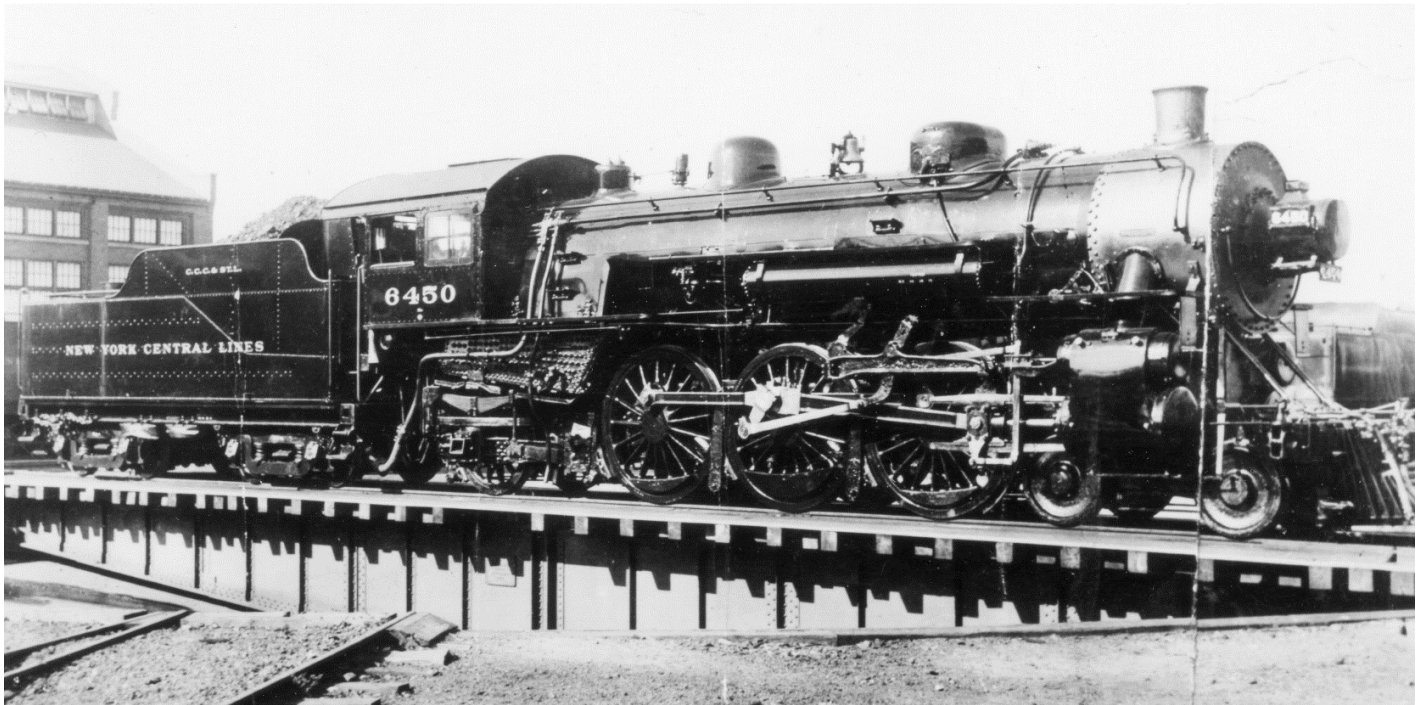
THE RAILROAD GAZETTE.

VOL. XLIII, No. 22.

A glimpse at a map of the Big Four quickly confirms that Indianapolis was the nexus of the system – and the logical place to construct its principal repair shops. In 1906, the company completed the purchase of 540 rural acres southeast of the city, adjoining its main line to Cincinnati. Over the next four years it spent five million dollars to construct a campus of large brick buildings for locomotive and car construction and repair, some of them containing over 200,000 feet of floor space. At time of its opening in 1910, the Shops employed 700 workers. During the hectic years of World War II, that number rose to 5,000.

Perhaps the Shops' most notable achievement was the construction of the prewar *Mercury* and *James Whitcomb Riley* streamliners, including the shrouds for their upgraded Pacific locomotives. In earlier years, Beech Grove also built new steam locomotives and freight and passenger cars from the ground up.

In 1964, Beech Grove “freshened” the consists of the *20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited* – but only seven years later the *Century’s* twin-unit dining cars and many other NYC passenger cars awaited scrapping in nearby yards. Amtrak acquired the complex in 1975 and continues to use it as a principal repair facility today.



Early products of the Beech Grove Shops included the five Ko class Pacifics of 1915 Nos. 6450-6454 and, in 1923, two steel Railway Post Office cars for the Peoria & Eastern, Nos. 901-902. [NYCSHS PB615168 and PB059050]







*In 1936, the Beech Grove Shops transformed Henry Dreyfuss's drawing and 1927 coach into the Mercury's remarkable parlor-observation car. [NYCSHS WR240216 and PB602139]*





*Car No. 52, a more straightforward design converted from a coach-observation in 1941 for the James Whitcomb Riley, nevertheless enjoyed a similarly luxurious interior. [NYCSHS WR280648 and WR280647*



A roster of skilled craftsmen from a broad spectrum of trades has provided the foundation for Beech Grove Shops' success over thirteen decades. Today's Amtrak shop employees continue to meet the challenges of adjusting to never-ending changes in the design, construction, and maintenance of contemporary railroad equipment.



*Even the pride of the fleet came to Beech Grove for mechanical upgrades. J-3a No. 5453 was basking in the Indiana sun during an April 1943 visit. [NYCSHS NG520156]*



*Crews were converting 1948-1949 offset-side, two-bay hoppers into lot 942-H ribbed-sided hoppers at Beech Grove in the mid-1960s. [NYCSHS NG525181 and NG525378]*



## HILL YARD REMNANTS / Bus No. 2



*Kankakee-Indianapolis train KI-2 enters Middle Hill behind L-2c Mohawk No. 2802. The Indianapolis "skyline" in the distance is the large Prospect Street plant of Citizens Gas and Coke Utility. [Jeremy Taylor photo, NYCSHS NG503034]*

The once-huge NYC Hill Yard switching complex on the southeast side of Indianapolis, known colloquially to railroaders as "The Hill," consisted of three interconnected yards – West Hill, Middle Hill and East Hill.

Built in conjunction with the development of the nearby Beech Grove Shops in the early 1900s, the three-mile-long Hill Yards complex was the largest of the Central's Indianapolis freight yards. Middle Hill, the nerve center of the facility, operated a rider-hump yard. East Hill contained sixteen tracks and a six-track receiving yard; it was the eastbound classification yard, dispatching trains to Cincinnati and, over the Peoria & Eastern east line, to Springfield, Ohio. West Hill, the westbound yard, held 22 tracks.

Classification work ended at the Hill yards -- and also at Brightwood and West Side yards -- when the new, 490-acre, electronically-controlled Avon hump yard opened on the western side of the city in 1960.



*L-4b No. 3127 has arrived at Middle Hill with Cincinnati-Chicago symbol freight CC-3 in April 1956. [Jeremy Taylor photo, NYCSHS NG503030]*



*Minutes later, No. 3127 is seen negotiating the crossover tracks to the westbound main as she heads toward the Shelby Street engine terminal. Caboosees congregate around the yard office in this April 1956 scene. [Jeremy Taylor photo, NYCSHS NG503033]*



*Below, L-2c 2802 brings the 44 cars of train KI-2 from Kankakee, Illinois, into Hill Yard. [Jeremy Taylor photo, NYCSHS NG503033]*

