

The  
**GREEN DIAMOND**



# All Concerned

Do you remember the Illinois Central Historical Society? Chances are that you mailed your membership fee in quite some time ago and haven't seen a whole lot to show for it. Membership cards and the first issue of the Green Diamond have been out for some time and over a year has transpired since the Society was organized. We thank all of you for your patience. Following is a short course in how not to set up a historical society.

In early July the ICHS Board of Directors met in Amboy, Illinois to sign the corporate charter and to collate the first issue of the Green Diamond. Our first problem surfaced about a month later when the Post Office notified us that they were still holding our entire mailing for insufficient postage. Despite the fact that two postal clerks had quoted us the same rate they held the mailing over a month and a half.

In the meantime our charter was hitting some snags. Denied on technical grounds, it was re-submitted by Boardmember Milton Winter, our registered agent. Unfortunately, so much time elapsed between submission and State approval that Mr. Winter had relocated to Virginia. We discovered much later that the Charter was approved October 11, however, it was lost in the mail and we never received a copy. The State will only correspond with an in-state registered agent so we had to appeal for a change of agent before we could get a copy of our charter. Membership Chairman Bob Perrin, one of the most active boardmembers also moved from the Chicago area and has been unable to continue his important work.

The result of all this suffling around is that this issue of The Green Diamond has been delayed. It also means that our treasury has been somewhat depleted through filing fees, fixed expenses, and tigher than anticipated postal expense (we can not get non-profit postal rates until we procure a copy of the state charter). We have therefore made adjustments to our membership policy. Charter membership is now closed.

Material for future issues of The Green Diamond is very much in need. Any CONTRIBUTIONS you make can make the difference between a passable magazine and an interesting and informative publication. Don't

underestimate your material. One of the features of our next issue was based on one photo submitted. Combined with another photo in our minimal files and with other information it makes a significant contribution to our coverage.

We particularly solicit material for several research projects to be published soon. They are:

1. The Green Diamond - photos and information on train operations, particularly later years, is needed.
2. IC on the Chicago Lakefront - Central Station photos, Congress yard, freight and fruit house information requested.
3. Joint NYC - IC train service to Indianapolis - particularly operating details.

Preference will be given to Illinois Central material rather than ICG information. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope with all correspondence requiring a reply.



## ILLINOIS CENTRAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 157 Des Plaines, Illinois 60016

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VOLUME 2

ISSUE 1

# Buried to the Stack

Originally published in the January 1942 issue of Railroad Magazine and reprinted by permission of Railroad and Railfan Magazine.

It was a strange contraption I OSed that clear, cold, January morning nearly six years ago; an American ditching machine pushed by the last Mikado engine and loaded with the last ton of coal this side of the home terminal. Now, as you know, ditchers were never made for winter service, and especially not to buck snowdrifts. This equipment is normally used in grading out channels beside the rails, to ensure better drainage from spring thaws and summer rains; but the outfit in question had been camouflaged to resemble a snowplow. Its two wings had been folded back to the sides and the space between the arms filled up and boarded over with grain-door boards to give solidity in pushing against masses of snow.

I was--and still am--a telegraph operator on the Illinois Central. The episode I'm relating occurred on that part of the system which runs through western Iowa, through broad rolling spaces where troublesome cuts were lined with fences to catch the drifts which swept across the prairies. These fences, usually effective, availed little in the great blizzard which began on the night of January 9th, 1936.

Shortly after midnight the storm got under way and soon was taking its toll. The calm that eventually followed this onslaught found, among other victims, two dead Mikado type engines buried to the stack one Russell snowplow, and a third Mike reasonably clear of the snow but in a badly battered condition. It took a triple-header to break through this Arctic barricade, after much strain to the nerves of brass hats and crews. But let's go back to the beginning.

A conductor called on the phone. "Hello, dispatcher!" he said. "This is the Bullet at Rockwell City. We're snowbound in the cut west of here."

His brief announcement started the ball a-rolling. Another engine was ordered out immediately from the terminal at Fort Dodge. To make matters safe and sure, as we then thought, a big Russell plow was coupled ahead of the Mike. By plowing out the line up to the Bullet and after pulling the forty cars back into the siding about a mile to the rear, we believed the helper engine could couple onto the stalled engine, thus extricating her. We figured on letting the

plow go ahead of the Bullet from there on.

In a couple of hours the plow reached Rockwell City. All the while the storm was raging with no let-up, packing in tighter and tighter around the Bullet's forty cars and engine. Smoke still could be seen curling from the stack--that is, if you wanted to crawl out on the running board to look for it. The hoghead was keeping her alive anyway; but he continued to glance around anxiously, first to the rear and then to the water gage as the level gradually sank lower and lower. He knew there was a water tank a mile back, and help was on its way.

The first pull on the caboose by the helper engine showed that the train was now too securely wedged for a locomotive to take the forty cars in one cut. Even though it meant an extra delay and additional work, ten of the cars were cut off and the rescue engine was coupled onto the other thirty. But those thirty stood like a mountain of granite. Another effort was made, this time with only twenty cars. Twenty might have been a million for all they budged. It was no go.

Ten more were dropped off then, and after a lot of straining and groaning the Mike broke them loose and dragged them back into the clear. In that manner, ten at a time, the entire forty-car train was yanked out of the frozen snow. Nothing remained stuck but the engine, and she was still helpless. The drift was jammed up close to her running board; the water gage revealed a meager foot in her tank.

The last cut of ten was virtually jerked from the drift. It's a wonder the drawbars held. By the time they could go back with the Russell plow, after putting the cut away, you couldn't see where the ten stood. The swirling tempest and the darkness had cut visibility to only a few yards ahead. It was risky business plowing into a drift that held somewhere a great Mikado engine.

But the hogger was a gallant fighter. He began easing off as he started into the cut. Landmarks were now blotted out; the exact location of the stalled engine was not easy to determine. Thus came the downfall of the second Mike. When she began to slip, everyone knew she was done for, as snow packed in around the caboose wheels like fine sand. Still slipping and snorting, the rescuer became trapped as ignominiously as the hog she'd been trying to release.



That was a nice pickle. At least three hours would be required for another engine to come from the terminal, and even then there was grave doubt that she'd get through. Day was breaking. The right-of-way to the east was now blanketed with swirling whiteness. Lacking a plow, nothing could be done by the crews on the spot.

Meanwhile, a gang of volunteers had been recruited from town. With the aid of section hands picked up along the way, equipped with shovels, they doggedly fought their way to the stalled engines. The first Mike was gasping for life. Her water no longer showed in the gage.

Men were desperately shoveling snow in the tank, hoping it wouldn't be necessary to put out her fire. But the saturation and melting point of the snow thrown in the tank was soon reached; no longer did the water melt the snow as it was tossed in.

"Well, boys," said the hogger, as he slid from the seatbox and took one last glance at the glass, "let's kill her and get the hell out of here before we freeze to death."

And with a wheeze the noble engine gave up the ghost. The other Mikado, however, stood a few hundred yards back bravely challenging the storm. With only a few feet of water gone from her tank and with over half of her coal left to be shoved into her maw, she still had plenty of fight in her.

Daylight hours brought no easing up. Fine snow pellets stung the faces of those who dared look out to watch the drifts creep higher and higher along the running boards. It was not a lack of water or coal that eventually prompted the order to kill the second engine, but the utter futility of struggle. Her crew obeyed the command with alacrity. Then, using the scoops of the gandy dancers, they fought and shoveled their exit to bare spots in the nearby fields, and then zigzagged wearily back to civilization--to the depot with its gloriously redhot, pot-bellied stove.

There was one small hotel in town. It had been filled to overflowing long before with marooned travelers and a few railroad men lucky enough to get in. The rest of the gang hovered around the stove in the waiting-room. That hard cold floor seemed like a feather bed to some of the boys who sought refuge there.

As darkness fell on the blizzard's second night, the wind gradually lessened and then--Oh, blessed relief!--word got around that the heavens were clearing. But the calm, cold, gray sky that greeted our eyes the following morning did not bring assurance that the two locomotives and the plow had been dug out of the frozen snow or that the line had been reopened. Nothing of the kind.

Two more crews had been ordered out of the Terminal, but even with a double-header they would have only a small wedge plow to break a path to the big cut. The wedge was not made for tackling deep drifts; its low sides filled with ballast could plow out small drifts, but none such as held the two dead Mikados. Nevertheless, there was no other equipment left to do the job; and so, with a double-header and a third engine under steam ready to be called, it had to be good enough.

Since we all knew that this expedition was taking a long chance, none of us were surprised to learn, as time wore on, that the wedge was stuck in a drift east of town. A slight moan came from officials and men; that was all. It began to look as if we'd have to wait for a spring thaw to clear the road and release the two dead engines, not to mention the other pair stalled in the east. We had a choice of waiting for spring to come or sending men with shovels to free the wedge plow. We sent out the men--with the crazy forlorn hope of a ditcher, as mentioned at the beginning of my story.

Hours later, smoke belching from the cut at the east proved that sturdy men with shovels could move a lot of snow and the wedge was breaking through.

Then, plowing its way, the wedge ripped open the line to the mouth of the cut where the two dead engines lay, interred almost completely, with only their short squat smokestacks showing. The double-header had now become a triple-header, for the third hog had been sent out. With all of this power, plus laborers armed with shovels, something had to give way. This time, snow that was pulled from under the wheels stayed out instead of whirling back to hold the Mikes fast; and, with white mounds still piled high on them, the dead engines were freed.

Thus we closed a chapter in the battle of King Winter against the iron rail. I cannot help but feel that struggles of this kind reveal the true spirit of railroad men--men not afraid to tackle desperately hard jobs; men who, after mechanical devices have failed, carry on with their two hands if need be. And I'm not forgetting a word of tribute to the camouflaged ditcher which pushed through to help in the rescue of a couple of engines buried to the stack.

# Snowbound

SNOWBOUND: 1856

January 9: The freight has not arrived. It is supposed to be frozen up between Calumet and Kankakee .... (James C.) Clarke telegraphed, "Stuck in snow last night one mile south of Mendota." Trains from south stuck north of LaSalle .... We are shoveling out the cuts.... Adams went to aid of engine and train stuck in snow at Forreston.. His engine froze up.

January 30: Clarke telegraphs from Amboy: "Train from north still stuck in snow. Got one engine out of drift sixteen feet deep....St. Louis train which left here at 9:30 this morning is in snow five miles south of Matteson.

December 1: Clarke is at Polo, snowbound. Engines 23, 26, and 36 are dead and road is as badly blocked as ever. Captain Wells left (Amboy) yesterday morning for Dixon; got into a snowdrift seven miles north of there. When we got two-thirds shoveled out we found we would be out of wood and water in a short time. I returned to Amboy to get the second engine when the men ceased operations and came home. Engine 20 and four cars ran off track in deep cut this side of Mendota, broke through ice, one side settled down to the axles. Other engine, attempting to come back last night, got snowbound and laid down.

December 3: Have had no freights from the south since night before last ... When the train arrived yesterday from the south, two engines were put on, one pushing an iron snowplow. They started north with a carload of wood. Nothing was heard of them until 11 o'clock today.... They were six miles north of Dixon...both engines dead.... Passenger train from south last night continued north; this morning a messenger came back saying they had run into a snow drift about eight feet deep and engine went dead, out of wood and water.... Men and shovels to the relief of train above Dixon...found Superintendent Jacobs with two freights, both engines dead.

## CURRENT ROSTER OF ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF RAILROAD SNOW REMOVAL EQUIPMENT

		<u>Date Purchased</u>
Snowplow - Russell		
X8030	1	1936
Gondola Car Snowplow		
X8031-X8037	6	1936, 1937
X8041-X8044	4	1947
X8045	1	1948
X8047-X8049	3	1949
X8050-X8053	4	1950
X8054-X8059	6	1951
	<u>25</u>	

All current ICG snow plows are of former Illinois Central origin. Information supplied by John R. Ferry.

### Electric Snow Plows?

The many Chicago commuters who were late to work after the record snow storms of 1977-78 should be happy about the construction of a unique new snowplow for suburban service operation. Two "lowliner" power cars which were recently made surplus by the delivery of new equipment have been converted to snow removal service. Besides the addition of plows at each end of the set, concrete ballast was poured to bring total weight up to 140 tons. Extensive battery and electrical work was performed including two pantographs per car. The units can also be separated so that diesel locomotives can be sandwiched between units for operation during power outages.

The units are not to be turned. The southern most car, formerly 1194, is now numbered 100481. Northbound, car number 100482, formerly 1224, leads the way. Cars are painted slate grey with safety yellow ends. Both plows push snow to the west side of the track and will only be used when snow stands three inches above the rail (nine inches total snowfall).



Photos by John Sz wajkart  
Text by Fred Ash

The name Blue Train conjures up in one's mind visions of ostentatious luxury. On the French National Railway's Blue Train, attendants in silk knee britches and powdered wigs, once dispensed four star meals to wealthy Parisians amid Louix XIV furnishings as the train rushed to the Cotè d'Azure. Korea's Blue Train is possibly the best in the Orient. South Africa's weekly Cape Town express to Johannesburg (also called the Blue Train) boasts wood-paneled suites complete with sitting room, bedroom and shower.

Unfortunately, a trainman would not expect luxury and sophistication from the Illinois Central's Blue Train. More than likely he would expect to kick empty beer cans out of his way as he walked down the aisle as The IC has used this venerable name for one of its annual football specials. Together with the Orange Train, the Red Train and other colorful extras, the Blue Train has carried faithful Illini fans from Chicago to University of Illinois home games in Champaign. But while train crews generally disliked the rowdy crowds, a view of these trains from trackside gives a completely different impression.

John Sz wajkart photographed one Saturday's convoy to Champaign; the ability of the Main-Line of Mid-America to put on impressive fleet of trains for special movements is apparent from these pictures. These passenger extras obviously were more than just an exercise in cleaning out the coach yard. Perhaps the large number of IC officials who were U of I alumni prompted a little special attention. Seen from the right-of-way these trains seem the rival of any of the great limiteds.

November 19, 1929 was the high point for IC football specials when forty-three extras, which averaged ten cars each, were needed for the Chicago-Champaign parade. It was also the busiest day recorded at Central Station since seventy-eight regularly scheduled trains also were handled. Four hundred and thirty coaches to the game seems like a monumental task. Just dreaming up the forty-three colors for the train names must have taken some effort.

The Illinois Central had other trains named, or nicknamed, with colors; the Green Diamond, the High Brown and the Yellow Dog come readily to mind. In the end though only the Orange, Red and Blue football specials remained. We see them here as they rolled through Chicago's southern suburbs on October 21, 1967.

Special thanks to Joe Zydlo for arranging for the publication of these fine photographs.



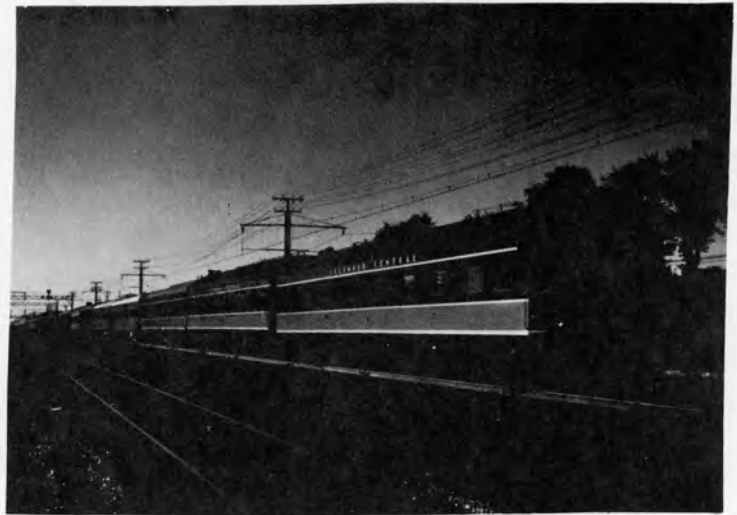
At a time when most Illinois Central E-Units had the split rail herald the Blue Train sported three in traditional garb.

The fourteen car Red Train treated its riders to comfort. Train length was determined by the Cham station tracks.

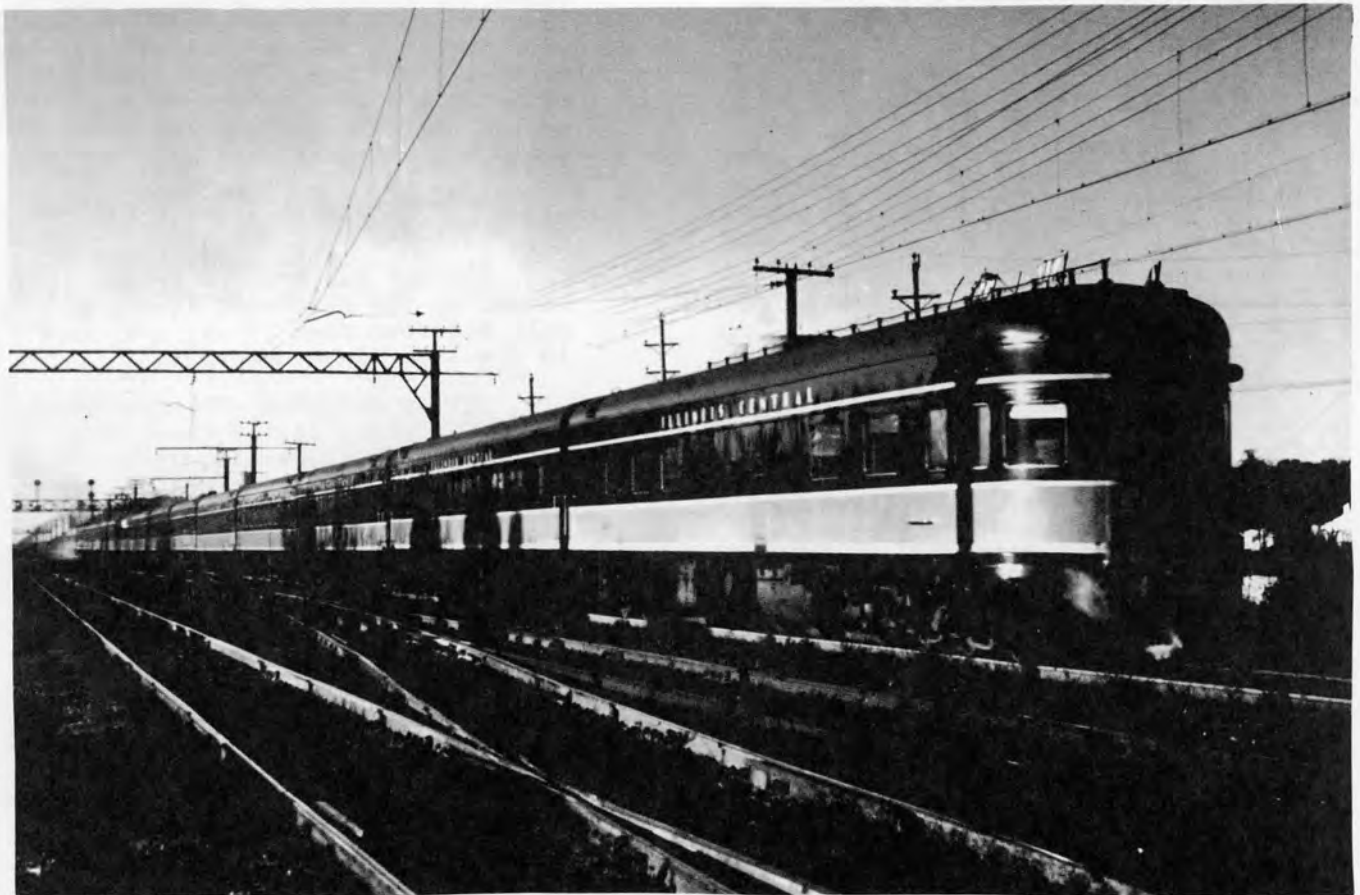


Extra movements required tight scheduling to keep from delaying regularly scheduled movements.

Business car number one carried the markers for the Blue Train as the fifteen car special heads south so let's assume the engineer was careful about the train's slack action.



## THE BLUE TRAIN



received  
cabs

speed and  
baign

Stewartsville-New Harmony, IN--Illinois Division, New Harmony District, order October 18, 1976. This seven-mile line was built in 1880 and 1881 by the Peoria, Decatur and Evansville Railroad which went bankrupt as a result of the depression of the Nineties. The PD&E was purchased at auction by the IC on February 6, 1900.

Cedar Rapids-Waterloo, IA--Waterloo Railroad, order February 13, 1977. The Waterloo Railroad originally was the Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Northern Railroad. In 1955, it was jointly purchased by the IC and the Rock Island. IC bought the Rock Island's share in 1968.

Washta-Anthon, IA--Iowa Division, order April 5, 1977. This line was built in 1887 and 1888 by the IC-owned Cherokee & Dakota Railroad.

Belzoni-Yazoo Jct., MS--Delta Division, Sunflower District, order April 22, 1977. This line was part of the old Y&MV.

Saxony-Pontiac, IL--Illinois Division, Pontiac District, order October 18, 1977. This line was built in 1878 and 1879 by the IC-owned Kankakee & Southwestern Railroad.

Ethel-Clinton, LA--Louisiana Division, Clinton District, order December 22, 1977. The Clinton & Port Hudson Railroad built this line between 1833 and 1840. The C&PH owned three locomotives--"Port Hudson," "Clinton," and "Jackson"--all of which were built by Matthias W. Baldwin of Philadelphia. Before the Civil War, the C&PH operated tri-weekly passenger service between Clinton and Port Hudson. The railroad operated for several years with horse power after its equipment was destroyed in the Civil War. The Louisville, New Orleans & Texas Railroad acquired the C&PH in 1889. LNO&T rebuilt the segment between Clinton and Ethel and abandoned the rest.

Onawa Jct.,--Washta, IA--Iowa Division, Onawa District, order February 22, 1978. The Cherokee & Dakota built this line in 1887 and 1888.

Gwin-Lexington, MS--Delta Division, Tchula District, order March 15, 1978. This line was once a part of the West & East Railroad which IC took over in 1882.

Silver Creek-Mendenhall, MS--Mississippi Division, Columbia District, order May 26, 1978. This line belonged to the Gulf & Ship Island Railroad which was acquired by IC in 1925.

Chicago Produce Terminal--closed June 15, 1978. The CPT, built jointly by the AT&SF and IC, was opened August 15, 1927. Eight million dollars were spent for the construction of the terminal buildings and yards which had a capacity of 1800 cars. ICG is now using the property for expansion of its intermodal IMX facility and for a major new Sears, Roebuck terminal operation.

Flanagan-Minonk Jct., IL--Illinois Division, Pontiac District, order July 21, 1978. The Kankakee & Southwestern built this line in 1878 and 1879.

Woodville, MS--Argue (Harwood), LA--Mississippi Division, Woodville District, order October 3, 1978. This line, built by the West Feliciana Railroad, was the oldest segment of the IC system. The West Feliciana received its Louisiana charter on March 25, 1831 and its Mississippi charter on December 31, 1831. The track originally was strap-iron rail intended for animal power. The railroad's first steam locomotive, the "Woodville," was outshopped by Matthias W. Baldwin on April 13, 1836. The Civil War took its toll on the railroad, forcing a return to animal power until 1875. In 1888 the West Feliciana was purchased by the LNO&T.

Danforth-Lula, MS--Delta Division, Helena District, order October 30, 1978. This was an ex-Y&MV line.

Elizabethtown-Hodgenville, KY--Kentucky Division, Hodgenville District, order December 7, 1978. The Elizabethtown & Paducah Ry. Co. was chartered on March 5, 1867. The track was first laid at Elizabethtown in 1869 and was completed past Hodgenville in 1870. The E&P was reorganized in 1876 as the Paducah & Elizabethtown Railroad which later became part of the Chesapeake, Ohio & Southwestern Railroad in 1881. In 1896, the CO&S was acquired by the IC system.

Soso-Laurel, MS--Mississippi Division, Laurel District, order February 27, 1979. This line became part of the IC system when the Gulf & Ship Island was purchased in 1925.

Fayette-Foster, MS--Mississippi Division, Natchez District, order April 6, 1979. The Natchez, Jackson & Columbus, Nicknamed "Little J," built this line in 3½-foot gauge between 1873 and 1876. The NJ&C was bought by the LNO&T in 1890 after it had been converted to standard gauge in 1889.

Hermanville-Harriston, MS--Mississippi Division, Natchez District, order August 29, 1979. Track on this part of the NJ&C was laid between 1876 and 1878. It was converted to standard gauge by the IC in 1894.



## RAILROAD HISTORY

It is a rare occurrence when a new book about Illinois Central Railroad is published. But it is an even greater rarity when a reference work on the IC is produced; in fact, to our knowledge only one previous reference book on the Railroad has even been published. That volume, Monarchs of Mid-America is long out of print. So it is especially pleasing to come across Railroad History, Number 140, which contains the complete all-time roster of Illinois Central motive power. The Spring 1979 issue of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, this issue was actually distributed in August of last year.

While Railroad History is technically a quarterly magazine, their works actually resemble soft cover books. In keeping with the R & LHS tradition, this roster is both complete and accurate. The rosters of small lines merged into the IC are fully covered and sufficient detail is given for each entry. Rosters generally make rather poor reading, so do not order this publication expecting entertainment. The photos included in the issue are well chosen, however, and, while this is not a picture book, it probably represents the largest collection of Illinois Central engine pictures published in some time.

A quick comparison with some old Railroad Magazine rosters confirmed the accuracy of the listings. The only inaccuracy spotted was a photo caption which stated that the IC's only streamlined steam engine was designed for the St. Louis section of the Pamama Limited. It was actually run in Louisville service. The diesel portion of the roster is a direct reprint of the July/August 1972 issue of Extra 2200 South with subsequent corrections. A special bonus of the issue is "The Mississippi-A Southern Foundling" by John H. White which outlines the sketch history of the locomotive now in Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.

Railway History Number 140 can be ordered from:

H. Arnold Wilder  
Treasurer R & LHS  
46 Lowell Road  
Westford, Massachusetts 01886

The price is \$3.00 for R & LHS members and \$5.00 for the public. Society membership is \$10.00 and the quarterly publications are consistently outstanding. Allow six weeks after ordering for delivery.

## MIDWEST FLORIDA SUNLINERS

Midwest Florida Sunliners is an intriguing book, both in concept and execution. R. Lyle Key, Jr. has traced the complete history of the many trains which competed for the lucrative passenger traffic from the frigid Midwest to sunny Florida. The idea of looking at competing trains in one volume is refreshing. At a time when railroad books seem to compete in minutia and narrowness of scope, this perspective offers great possibilities.

Mr. Key, fortunately, has provided more than a good concept. His coverage is exacting. For example, only one of the trains discussed, the Dixiana, is not represented by a photo. This train, however, ran for just twelve days in 1942. Illinois Central fans will particularly enjoy the full color City of Miami illustration on the cover and the detailed coverage of that train, the Seminole, the Floridian, and the Sunchaser.

Primarily a photographic work, there are about 270 pictures and illustrations, the chief drawback of this work is the quality of these reproductions. Photos are muddy and printed on high quality but glossless paper. Together with the soft cover binding, the effect reminds the reader of a publisher who wanted to keep within his budget above all else. The price of \$12.50 is certainly reasonable but the material could stand a higher quality presentation. As for material itself, the addition of sample menus, timetables or promotional materials would be welcome. The section on Amtrak could also use more substance. Mr. Key started this work as an article on the origins of the Floridian but there are only three photos of that train.

Midwest Florida Sunliners may be ordered from:

RPC Publications  
P. O. Box 296  
Godfrey, Illinois 62035

Illinois residents should add sales tax.

It could have been called the Beer Train to Champaign but engine 4031 is actually pulling the Red Train.



# Join the Illinois Central Historical Society

The Board of Directors meeting of April 19, 1980 established the 1980 membership dues for the Society. All current members will receive this issue, Volume 2, Issue 1. They will also become eligible for a reduced membership fee of \$5.00 in 1980. New members will receive all issues of Volume 2 for the regular fee of \$7.00. Contributing memberships are \$20.00 and life memberships are available for \$100.00. The next issue of The Green Diamond is almost ready for the printer and three or four issues are planned for 1980.



# Meeting Notice

Saturday, July 26, 1980 is a date to remember. On that date the first general meeting of the Illinois Central Historical Society will be held in Carbondale, Illinois. Arrangements are now being made for a program and luncheon to be held at the Ramada Inn and we hope you can join us for an interesting afternoon. Complete details will be mailed to all members as soon as they are finalized.

Important business, the election of the Society's officers and directors will take place at this meeting. The current board has served on an interim basis during organization, but the future of the ICHS depends upon full membership participation. There are several vacancies on the board. If you are interested in contributing your time toward the success of the ICHS, send your name, address and telephone number to:

Nominating Committee

Illinois Central Historical Society

Box 157

Des Plaines, Illinois 60016

