History of Linden Depot

Genealogical Society of Montgomery County

Crawfordsville Library – March 13, 2018

History of Linden Depot

Introduction

I realize that I probably do not appear to fit the profile of one who is interested in trains. However, I have always had a love of and a connection to trains.

Before she got married, my Grandmother worked as a clerk for the "B&O Railroad" in Baltimore. Later, the train ran behind my Grandparents' house; when I was a young child, I remember waving to the engineer as the train passed by and he would blow the whistle for me. My grandfather rode that train when he traveled from Baltimore to New York on business, and when I was visiting their house, he would sit on the side of the train where I could see him at the window and he would wave to me as he passed by.

Ellicott City Station (MD)

I was raised in Ellicott City, Maryland, the site of the oldest surviving train station in the United States and one of the oldest in the world. The town of Ellicott City, which was originally known as Ellicott Mills, is 13 miles west of Baltimore. Ellicott City Station was originally built to serve the horse-drawn "railroad" cars that traveled to and from the Baltimore Harbor. The original wooden rails were eventually replaced with durable iron rails. The station still stands and is now a branch of the B&O Railroad Museum.

Charles Carroll, Barrister

My name is Elizabeth **Carroll** Hendrickson; I am a direct descendent of Mary Clare Carroll, the sister of Charles Carroll, Barrister. His home, Mount Clare is named for their grandmother, Mary Clare Dunn Carroll, born in 1727, who is my great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandmother (that's 7 greats.)

Mount Clare, MD

In 1829, the heirs of the Barrister's estate, donated land from the estate to be used for the "B&O Railroad" right-of-way and for the depot known as Mount Clare Station.

Mount Clare Station

The building which was originally the Mount Clare Shops, as well as the Roundhouse added later, now house the "B&O Railroad" Museum, which sits next to the Barrister's home, Mount Clare, which is also now a museum.

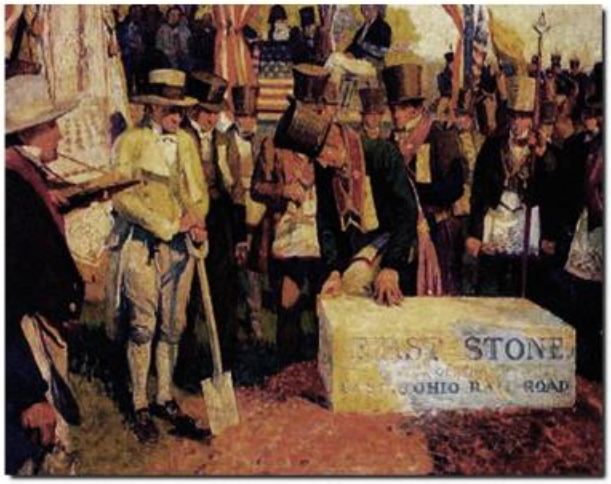
B & O Museum, MD

The B&O Railroad was the first commercial long-distance railroad track in the United States, and Mount Clare Station was the first passenger station. The already existing Ellicott City Station became the terminus of this first 13-mile long commercial track.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

I am also related to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and the leader of the Maryland Syndicate which founded the "B&O Railroad"; it was he who laid the "First Stone" or cornerstone on July 4, 1828 for the beginning of the railroad, his last documented public act.

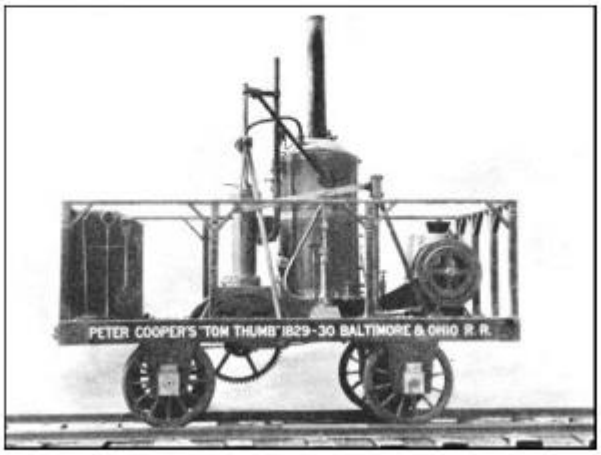
Charles Carroll of Carrollton 1928



The objective of the railroad was to connect Baltimore with the Ohio River and other points west. Initially it was thought that the railroad cars would continue to be pulled by horses. But many people

thought horses would not be strong enough to travel such long distances, and no match for the mountainous terrain that would have to be traversed. These same people believed that the answer was to use a new-fangled device called the steam engine, a locomotive engineered by Peter Cooper of New York.

B&O Railroad's Tom Thumb Locomotive 1829-30



By 1830, the "B&O Railroad" iron track had been extended the 13 miles to the west to the village of Ellicott's Mills. The members of the Maryland Syndicate gathered to see the test run of a diminutive locomotive, appropriately named the "Tom Thumb." The inventor, Peter Cooper, worked the controls, while the Syndicate members and friends rode along in an open car. It took less than an hour to make the journey to Ellicott's Mills with a top speed of 18 mph!

Tom Thumb Race 1830

On the return trip, an impromptu race with a horse-drawn car on the adjacent wooden rail track ensued. While it appeared that the locomotive would surely win, a belt broke on the steam engine, causing it to stop in order to be repaired. So the horse-drawn car won the "Tom Thumb" race, but the steam locomotive had proven its worth.

Calvin Stewart Brice

But enough on the Carrolls and the "B&O Railroad." I have another relative, Calvin Stewart Brice who was one of the founders of the "Nickel Plate Railroad," and a descendant of the Brice family of

Annapolis, Maryland. Calvin Stewart Brice started his work with Railroads as a lawyer for the "Lake Erie and Louisville Railroad," and eventually became President of the then-known "Lake Erie and Western Railroad." He became further involved with at least 10 different railroad lines, but his most important achievement was his role in the construction of the Nickel Plate Railroad in 1882, which he sold for great profit to William Henry Vanderbilt. His love of trains continued as he became involved with railroad projects in China at the end of the 19th century.

I, too, am a direct descendant of the Brice family of Annapolis, specifically my great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather John Brice I (that's 6 greats!) who was born in 1704. The Brice name appears in several generations of my family, including as the middle name of my middle son, Stephen **Brice** Hendrickson.

Gilbert HO Pennsylvania
Steam Locomotive and Tender

So when my father gave me my first Gilbert HO-scale model steam locomotive at the age of 4, the die was already cast. I dearly loved my first electric train: it smoked, had wonderful articulating action and still runs today. At the age of 9, I alone fully wired and assembled an entire 8 x 10 foot HO train layout with only verbal directions from my father who was confined to bed with a back injury. I have an extensive HO-gauge train collection of my own today. I have been the Vice President of the Linden Depot Museum since August of 2010.

But my real topic for this talk is the:

History of the Linden Depot

and the related History of the Nickel Plate and Monon Railroads

Before there were trains, people used animals for transportation, both of themselves, and of the goods that they were sending to market, or receiving from market. The speed on land was determined by how far a horse could travel in a day.

Horse-drawn Wagon Stuck in the Mud

Most roads were made of dirt, which became unusable after a heavy rain. There were many tales of horse-drawn wagons which got stuck in the mud. A 100-mile trip was considered a HUGE voyage at this time; so much so, that most people traveled that far only one or two times in their lifetime.

This led early settlers to try using boats on the rivers for transportation. While this was at times faster and less complicated than land travel, when rivers froze in the winter months, they became impassible. During periods of drought, there often was not enough water to enable the passing of sizeable boats, and during periods of flooding, the currents became too dangerous.

Early Canal Travel

Improvements to water transportation came in the form of creating canals which connected bodies of water together to make longer, more useable routes. It appeared to many that this mode of travel would ultimately be the best way to transport goods and people.

But there were other people with other ideas, one of which involved the use of horse drawn cars, with the cars riding on wooden rails. This solved the problem of the fluctuating condition of dirt roads, and seemed a logical way to at least get the goods and people from one town to another, or at least to another transportation source such as a canal.

In 1830, New Albany was the largest city in Indiana. Indianapolis was barely a village. Why? Because New Albany was situated on the Ohio River and had a relatively easy way to transfer the goods produced there to lucrative markets in the east. But the people of New Albany had heard of the now famous “Tom Thumb” race and were beginning to show some interest in this newest form of transportation. This early experiment had proved the worth of the steam locomotive, and opened up a whole new world of transportation possibilities.

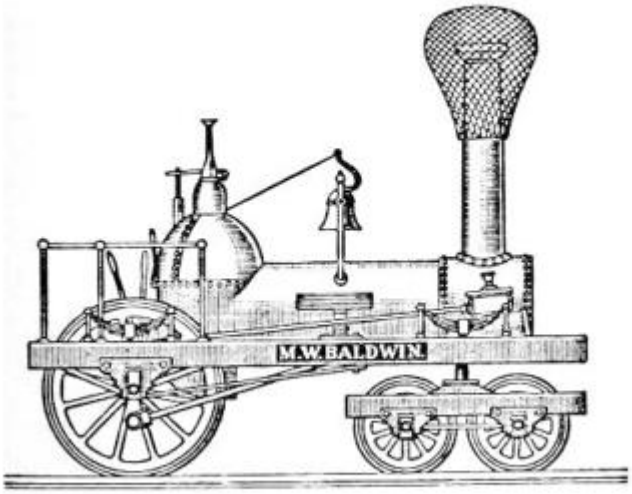
"Best Friend of Charleston"

Later that same year, the first American-built locomotive, the "Best Friend of Charleston" was successfully debuted on the "South Carolina Railroad," adding credence to the viability of steam-powered trains.

Two years later, in 1832, and in the wake of these eastern railroad successes, the Indiana legislature chartered 8 possible railroad lines through Indiana; "zero" of these were realized! This was because the Committee on Canals and Internal Improvements recommended that state funds instead be committed to the building of canals.

Four years later, in 1836, Governor Noah Noble signed "An Act to Provide for a General System of Internal Improvements" which authorized the borrowing of up to $10.5 million for projects which included not only extending and completing the Wabash and Erie Canal but a new railroad line to run from Madison on the Ohio River to Lafayette on the Wabash River, and going by way of Indianapolis. In 1838, Governor James Wallace along with legislators and other dignitaries rode on an inspection trip of the first leg of this new railroad which started at North Madison, Indiana and went to Graham's Ford, some 15 miles away. They traveled at the very fast speed of 8 mph on this new railroad that became known as the "Madison, Indianapolis and Lafayette Railroad."

4-2-0 Baldwin Locomotive



The first steam locomotive intended to be used for this new railroad was lost at sea on its way to New Orleans. The first one that made it to Indiana, was a 4-wheeled Elkhorn, a British-manufactured engine that proved to be unsuited to the demands of the landscape. This was replaced by a 4-2-0 engine made by the Baldwin Locomotive Company; the first one was named the "Madison" and the next one the "Indianapolis".

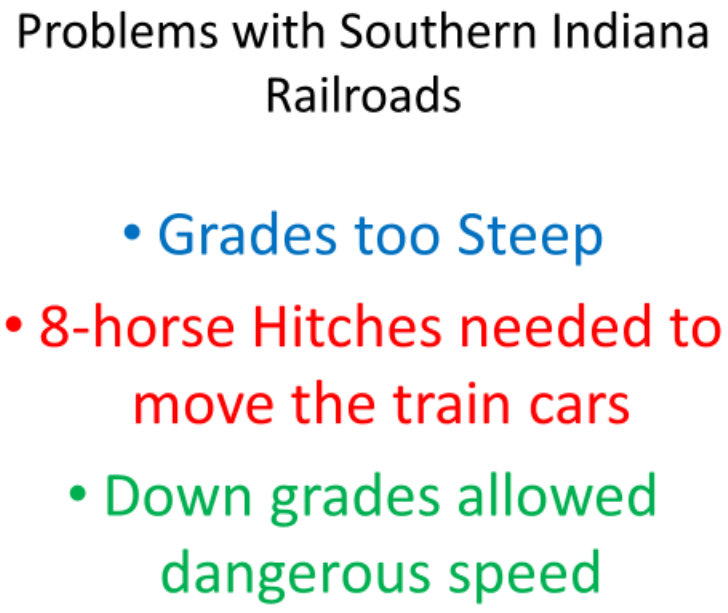
Growth of the railroads that were originally backed by the State Initiative were seen by most people as merely feeder lines to existing waterways to provide transportation of crops to eastern markets. This would make Indiana's interior farmland much more useful. The crops were destined to be shipped via the Ohio and Wabash Rivers to Lake Erie and the Erie Canal. But eventually it would become evident that railroads could serve a much larger purpose.

By 1840, there were 60 different railroad lines in the United States with 2800 miles of track. Indiana was way behind the times because they continued to stick to their view of railroads as existing only to facilitate water transportation. Even by the late 1840's there were barely 100 miles of railroad track in Indiana. Contrast this with the 1015 miles of canals that existed in 1848 which were used to connect Indiana to the eastern seaboard. Contrast this, also, with the 9000 miles of railroad track that existed in the country at the end of the decade, nearly all in states other than Indiana.

Economic problems experienced by the state caused there to be a lack of **public** funds available for further railroad development. By 1847, this lack of **public** funding caused an influx of money from **private** companies to begin to fund railroad lines. This was exactly what the railroads needed to begin to experience the growth envisioned by the railroad advocates.

By 1847, the "Madison & Indianapolis Railroad" finally reached Indianapolis and thus connected the state's new capital to the rest of the country. The newspaper of Indianapolis was named the

"Locomotive", and it advocated that Indianapolis come to be known as "The City of Railroads." By 1850, the population of Indianapolis had grown to the size of New Albany.



The completion of this new railroad provided some important lessons to the previously inexperienced Indiana railroad builders:

#1 – the grades in southern Indiana were too steep for standard locomotives – the steepest incline of any standard gauge railroad in the US was in Madison, which had an incline of 5.89% (412 foot rise in 7012 foot distance)

#2 – this necessitated the use of 8-horse hitches to haul cars up the grade – not quite what steam-engine advocates had envisioned

#3 – the down-grade trips were even more problematic as they allowed the dangerous build-up of speed, which often resulted in derailment, injury and death

Nevertheless, this was an important beginning to rail service throughout Indiana. Early locomotives averaged 15 mph for express passenger runs, and 10 mph for freight trains. A typical trip across the state took 16 to 35 hours, which easily beat the old time needed for wagons and canal boats.

In 1847, James Brook and six associates met in Providence, Indiana and formed the "New Albany & Salem Railroad" company, which many years later would become part of the "Monon." Its sole purpose was to become a mover of people and products from southern Indiana.

Indiana Limestone

This railroad enabled the success of the Salem limestone industry, for Indiana limestone, which has a unique quality in that it is always of uniform color, was used in many important buildings of the day. Any stone, no matter what its age, will always match any other stone from there.

Empire State Building, NY

The Pentagon, DC

Many of the historic buildings in Washington, DC and other eastern cities were built of Indiana limestone, for example: the Empire State building in New York City, the Pentagon, National Cathedral and Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.

National Cathedral, DC

Lincoln Memorial, DC

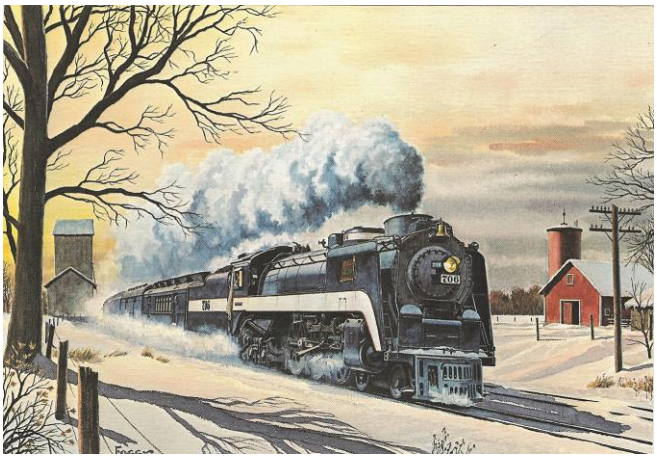
Every slab of limestone used in these buildings rode on a flat car from Salem, Indiana to get to its destination.

Another industry that thrived in southern Indiana due to the new railroad lines was the lumber industry; New Albany was once known as the key producer of hardwood plywood used in custom cabinetry. The Showers Brothers Furniture Company of Bloomington was once the largest furniture manufacturers in the United States. These are the sorts of towns and industries that started to grow throughout Indiana with the arrival of the railroad lines.

By March of 1851, however, there were still only 245 miles of track in Indiana. There were complaints, according to newspaper accounts of the day, that railroad growth was not continuing fast enough. But Indianapolis was already the hub of seven railroads, which contributed greatly to the success of the "Indianapolis Union Railway". Most new railroad lines were being constructed to connect to east-west routes, to facilitate getting people and goods to the east coast, or to provide ways to travel west by way of Chicago or St. Louis.

In 1852, a new 300-mile railroad that traveled on a north-south route was laid through Indiana connecting the Ohio River with Lake Michigan. This "Chicago, Indianapolis & Louisville Railroad" traveled through Montgomery County, and the first Linden Depot was located behind the Post Office on Walnut Street, one of the five 2-block long east-west streets that were originally platted. The wooden structure, with a frame of hand hewn timbers, was completed in 1852 to serve the new "CI&L Railroad."

Steam Locomotive Wabash Cannonball 1855



To accommodate the passengers wanting to travel east, many railroad companies built or purchased high-end passenger cars. One of the most famous was the Wabash Cannonball which ran on two railroad lines established by the "Wabash Railroad." In 1855 the southwestern leg of this railroad was built which traveled across Indiana. The "Cannonballs" were known as superior trains, and were equipped with smokers, parlor coaches and Pullman Palace sleeping cars. Thus began a wave of luxury train travel.

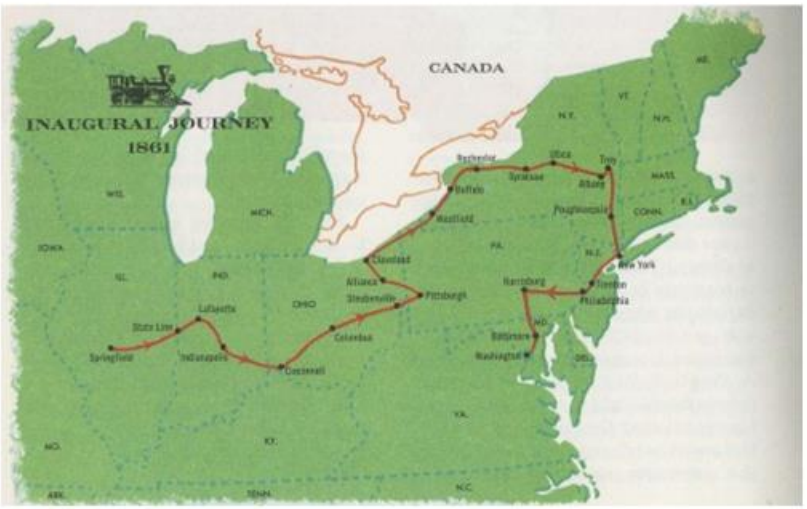
By 1856, Indianapolis was finally connected to St. Louis; in June of 1857 there was a grand excursion from Baltimore to St. Louis that traveled through Indianapolis, celebrating the linking of the two cities via the "America Central Route."

In 1859, the "New Albany & Salem Railroad" had grown to connect with other nearby lines, and combined with them to become the "Louisville, New Albany & Chicago Railroad." This important railroad that connected the Ohio River with Chicago carried coal from the Appalachian coal mines, in addition to other commodities, to points north. This particular line continued until it was acquired and closed by "CSX" in 1971.

Abraham Lincoln Inaugural Train 1861

By 1860 there were 30,000 miles of track in the United States. Railroads were now linked in Indiana to connect all parts of the state. In 1861, President-elect Abraham Lincoln left his home in Springfield, Illinois for a 13-day train trip to Washington, DC where he was to be sworn-in as the 16th President of the United States.

Route of Lincoln Inaugural Train 1861



The trip covered a long and circuitous route, and in Indiana traveled through Lafayette and Indianapolis on the way to Cincinnati. Lincoln celebrated his 52nd birthday on the train between Indianapolis and Cincinnati. There was no Secret Service force then, and there were three assassination attempts over the two week journey. In addition, the train was detoured once by flooding, there was a blizzard across New York and two salutatory cannons misfired during welcoming ceremonies. But the train persevered, and Lincoln arrived in Washington, DC in time for his inauguration.

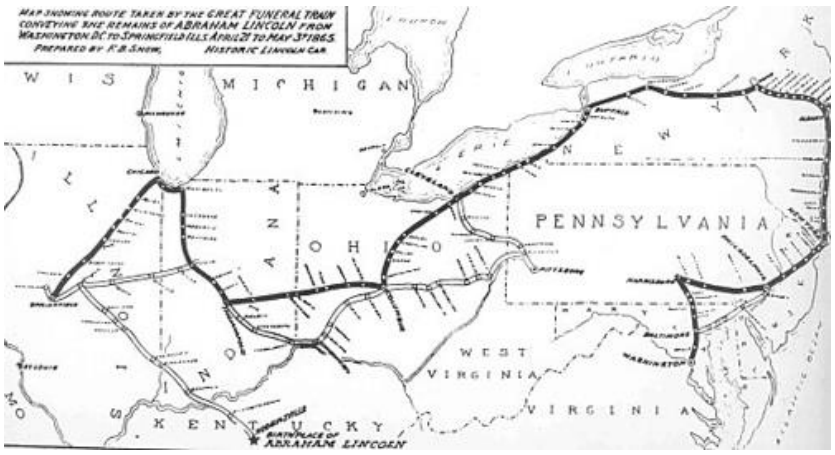
By 1863, 71 of Indiana's 92 counties had rail service.

During the Civil War, the railroads played an important role, both in Indiana as well as the rest of the country. Two of the north-south lines, the "CI&L" and the "Illinois Central" Railroads provided services to the Union forces in Indiana. The "CI&L" was the third largest carrier of military personnel from 1861-1865. It carried volunteers to mustering centers for free, it carried sick, wounded or discharged men home for half price and it carried troops, ammunition, food, fuel and medicine on contract with the Union. The "CI&L" railroad line was so important to the Union cause that Confederate John Morgan had his raiders from Kentucky tear out some of the "CI&L" tracks, pull over water tanks, and burn a trestle bridge and depot in Salem, Indiana.

Abraham Lincoln Funeral Train 1865

In 1865, when Lincoln was assassinated, his body traveled a similar route as had his Inaugural train on its 12-day journey from Washington, DC back to his hometown of Springfield, Illinois. The Lincoln funeral train traveled through Indiana from Cincinnati to Chicago, going through such cities as Indianapolis, Crawfordsville, Linden and Lafayette.

Route of Lincoln Funeral Train 1865



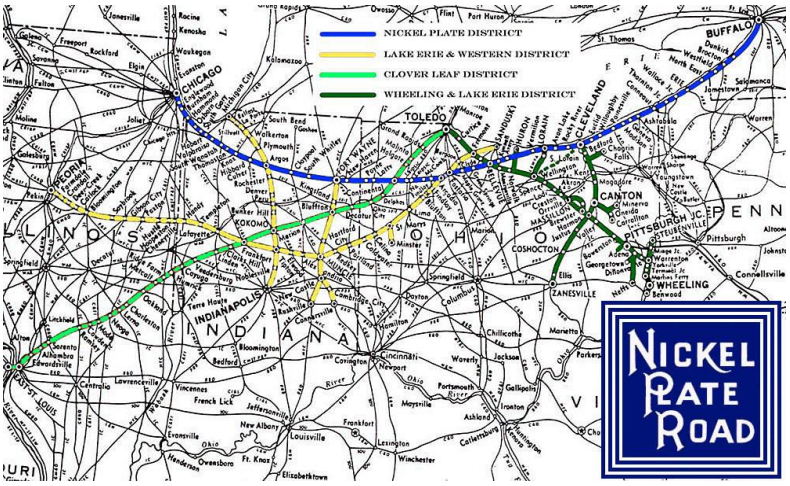
While in Lafayette, the train changed engines and a "CI&L" engine, in later years to be known as the "Monon," pulled the funeral train @5 mph, per orders, the 90 miles from Lafayette to Michigan City,

Indiana. Thus the "Monon" provided one of the 42 locomotives from 20 different railroad lines that participated in 1666-mile final trip for Lincoln.

After the Civil War, passenger train service increased across the state, and the railroad's ability to deliver fuel and raw materials supported Indiana's growing manufacturing businesses. Many of the smaller railroad lines merged into the larger lines.

All in all, between 1840 and 1880, Indiana managed to acquire over 4000 miles of track. Indiana had east-west lines accessing Chicago and Indianapolis in addition to major north-south routes such as the "Louisville and Nashville Railroad" and the "Illinois Central Railroad." Indiana had indeed become a center of railroad activity.

4 Branches of the Nickel Plate Railroad



In 1881, the "Toledo, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad" was formed as a consolidation of several Narrow Gauge railroad lines that connected Toledo and Cincinnati, Ohio with St. Louis, Missouri. This line ran into considerable financial troubles and by 1886 had dropped the Cincinnati leg. At this time it became part of the "Clover Leaf", or the "Toledo, St. Louis and Kansas City Railroad." It also incorporated three other small railroad lines, the "Toledo, Dupont and Western Railway of Ohio", the "Bluffton, Kokomo and Southwestern Railroad of Indiana" and the "Toledo, Charleston and St. Louis Railroad of Illinois."

Origin of the Nickel Plate Name

Ny from the New York
C from Chicago
L from St. Louis
Plate from "glittering prospects"

NyCL Plate = Nickel Plate

The term "Nickel Plate" was first used in 1881 by the editor of the Norwalk, Ohio Chronicle who used the term to describe the track of the railroad between New York and St. Louis. It was used to indicate the glittering prospects of such a railroad line, and the substantial financial backing received for its construction. The term was made up from the NY of New York, the C from Chicago and the L from St. Louis: the "NyCL plated railroad."

1882 marked the completion of the 450-mile narrow-gauge railroad known as the "Clover Leaf," which connected Toledo, OH to St. Louis, MO. It passed through Linden, IN, which was the halfway point between the two cities. It crossed the "CI&L" about a half mile north of the Linden Depot.

By 1882, the "CI&L" had started using the name "Monon" on its company maps and timetables, as well as on its rolling stock, so in 1882 it was correct to say the "Clover Leaf" crossed the "Monon" in Linden.

Origin of the Monon Name

from the Potawatomi Indian
words which sounded like:

"metamonong" or "monong"

meaning "tote" (or "carry") or
"swift running"

The word "Monon" was from the Potawatomi Indian words that sounded like "metamonong" or "monong" which meant "tote" or "carry", or "swift running". Unlike most of the Midwestern railroads built after the 1830's which connected Eastern cities with the newly settled west, this north-south railroad line was considered a larger business risk; over time, though, it became more and more important to the passengers and shippers looking for connections to existing east-west lines.

Representation of Narrow Gauge track crossing Standard Gauge track

As train lines increased in length and capacity, many improvements began to be made to better take advantage of this new business of train travel. One of the most important was the standardization of track gauge. Many train lines, such as the "Monon," were using Standard Gauge, meaning the distance between the track rails was 143.5 cm or 56.5 in. Others, including the "Clover Leaf," were using Narrow Gauge. Technically, Narrow Gauge track is any spacing less than Standard Gauge, but in the US, that distance is usually 36 in. If two train lines were trying to connect, and one was Standard Gauge, and the other was Narrow Gauge, the freight or passengers had to be transferred from one train to another, as neither train could ride on the other's rails. By standardizing all railroads to Standard Gauge, trains could ride on each other's rails; this was an obvious advantage, especially with regards to shipping or travel time.

In 1887, the "Clover Leaf" began widening its rail corridor to "Standard" gauge. By 1889, the widening of the Frankfort to St. Louis section (which passed through Linden) had been completed. Now the "Clover Leaf" was fully standardized and connected the entire 450 miles from Toledo, Ohio to East St. Louis, Missouri.

Original Linden Depot 1895

In 1895, the Old Linden Depot was moved to the crossing of the "Monon" and the "Clover Leaf" and quickly became a hotbed of freight and passenger transfer service.

Increased railroad traffic dictated that improvements be made to increase efficiency. In addition to the standardization of track width, one of the most important changes to be implemented by the railroads involved installing compatible wheels, couplers and brakes on train cars to facilitate the interchange of cars instead of having to unload and reload freight.

The plethora of railroads meant an abundance of jobs. The idea of traveling on the rails translated into a certain "romance of the rails" which beckoned many an unattached young man. Working

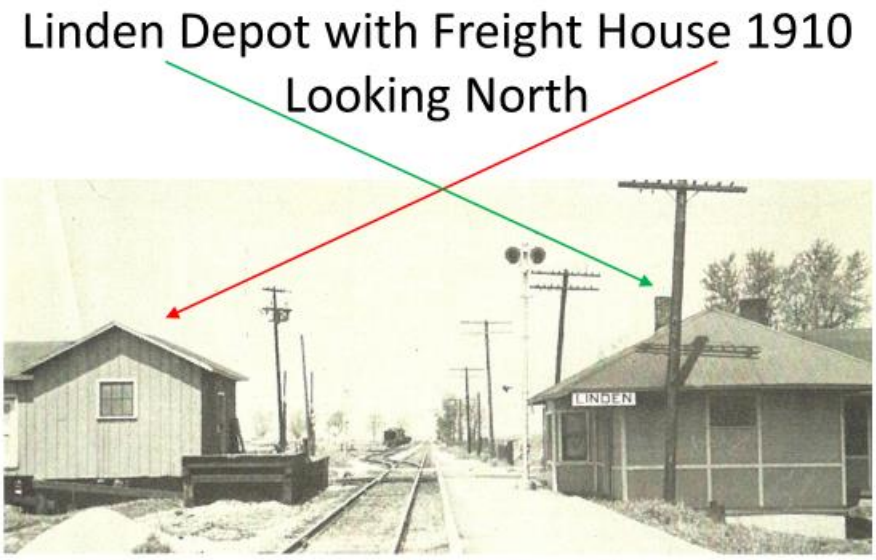
conditions were not ideal, and many workers struggled to make the railroads provide fair labor practices; when these were not forthcoming, strikes were not uncommon. Nevertheless, even though the work was hard, the "romance" part won out, and many men were employed by the railroads for their entire working life.

An old timer was once asked why he stayed working for the railroad as long as he had; he answered that he "hated the job, but had job security" that was unequalled in the other workplaces of the time.

Through a deliberate Board of Directors' decision, the "Monon" remained an Indiana-only railroad; it never went any farther north than its connections in Chicago, and no farther south than its connections in Louisville; the railroad line never took advantage of the connections to the coal mines of Kentucky. Its north-south routes, however, crossed many important east-west railroad lines so it offered many links to important east bound routes.

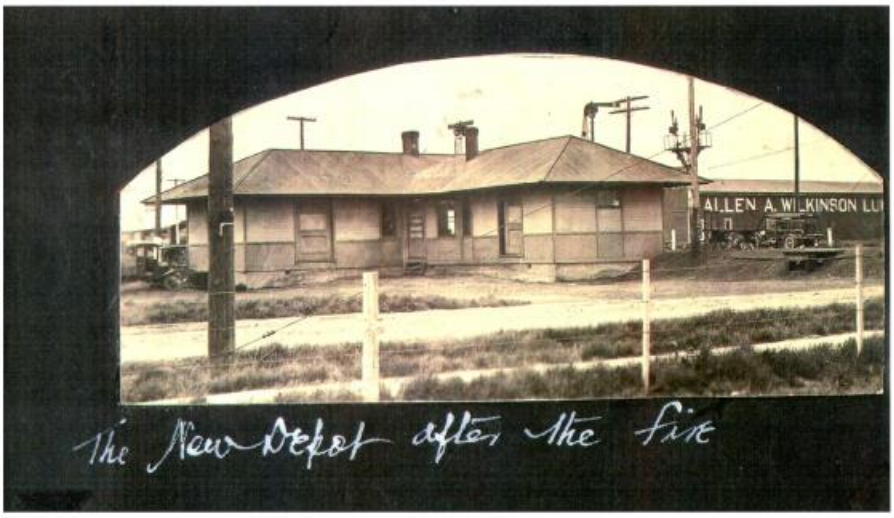
Train travel continued to increase during the early years of the 20th century. On January 9, 1907, the busy Linden Depot burned to the ground. Two "Clover Leaf" cabooses were quickly set up, one to serve as a temporary waiting station, and the other for working quarters.

A contract agreement between "CI&L" (or the "Monon") and the "Clover Leaf" was entered into on October 21, 1907 for construction of new joint station facilities for passengers and for freight at the crossing in Linden.



The freight station opened first in 1908, followed closely by the L-shaped passenger station, which bore the name of the "Linden Depot."

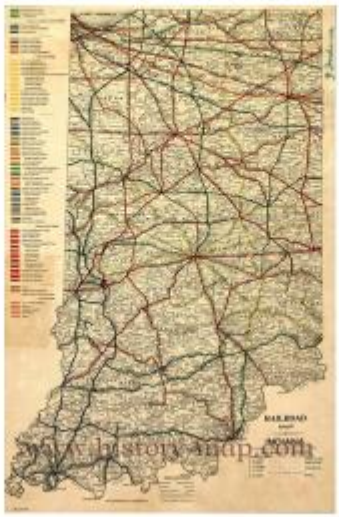
2nd Linden Depot 1909



Linden Depot and Freight Station
Looking Southwest

An interesting note about the Monon/Clover Leaf crossing diamond: the angle of the crossing is not 90 degrees, as might be expected. Rather, the angle is 87.5 degrees! This angle is exactly duplicated by the outer corner of the Depot, so that both boarding platforms were exactly parallel to the track. Consequently, the waiting room in the Depot has no 90 degree corners!

Map of Indiana Railroads ~ 1920



In the 1920's, the growth of the new automotive industry began to have an effect on railroads. People, especially wealthy people, began to own automobiles, and were quite proud to use them for travel. Trucks began to be used to deliver goods. Thus, cars and trucks began to take traffic away from the railroads; this caused even more of the smaller railroad lines to be bought out by the larger lines. In 1922, the "Clover Leaf" became part of the "Nickel Plate Railroad", also known as the "New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad." So in 1922, it was finally correct to refer to the "Monon/Nickel Plate Railroad" crossing in Linden.

Then in the 1930's, there was the Great Depression. This nearly destroyed railroad companies all across the country as moving freight by rail dropped precipitously. Passenger travel was at a prohibitive cost to all but the wealthiest travelers. Railroads started looking desperately to find ways to lower operating costs.

Monon/Nickel Plate Crossing
Linden, Indiana 1940

By the 1940s, diesel engines began to replace steam locomotives. Why? Because they were cheaper to operate.

Nickel Plate/Monon Crossing
Linden, Indiana 1940

One by one, the railroad lines began eliminating their steam locomotives in favor of the diesel engines and by 1960, 99% of all steam locomotives in the country had been replaced by diesel engines.

Linden Depot 1954

In 1957, passenger service on the “Nickel Plate Railroad” was discontinued. This marked the beginning of the end of the Linden Depot. The Freight House at the Linden Depot was removed in 1960 when truck transportation replaced train deliveries.

In 1964, passenger service to Linden on the “Monon Railroad” was discontinued. The last mail delivered to Linden by train was in 1966. This spelled the end of the Linden Depot. While the Depot remained open until the early 1970s, only a few freight trains stopped there, and by 1973, the Depot was closed.

From "Monon" to "CSX"

Monon Railroad
Louisville and Nashville
(L&N Railroad)
Seaboard Coast Line Railroad
Chessie System
CSX

In 1971, the Monon Railroad was merged into the "Louisville and Nashville Railroad," the "L&N Railroad." That same year, "Seaboard Coast Line Railroad" purchased the remainder of the "L&N" shares and by 1982, "Seaboard Coast Line" had absorbed all of the "L&N Railroad." When "Seaboard System" merged with the "C&O" and the "B&O" in 1986, the combined system became known as the "Chessie System." Shortly thereafter, the company became known as "CSX."

Origin of the name "CSX"

C from Chessie Railroad (formally, the "Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad")

S from "Seaboard Systems Railroad"

X from Expanded, referring to the absorption of 42% of Conrail

The name “CSX” comes from C from Chessie, S from Seaboard and X for Expanded. “CSX” is the largest eastern railroad in the United States, and travels in 23 states including Indiana, plus Washington, DC plus portions of Canada and controls 23,000 miles of track. The former “Monon” track that is adjacent to the Linden Depot Museum is controlled by “CSX;” both “CSX” freight trains and “Amtrak” passenger trains pass by daily.

Origin of the name
“Norfolk Southern Railroad”

“Norfolk & Western Railroad”
+
“Southern Railroad”
=
“Norfolk Southern Railroad”

Due to the continuing financial decline of American railroads in general, the “Nickel Plate” merged into the more profitable “Norfolk & Western Railroad” along with the “Wabash Railroad” and several smaller railroad lines, on October 16, 1964. Then in 1982, “Norfolk & Western” which was profitable, merged with the “Southern Railway”, also a profitable carrier, and formed “Norfolk Southern Corporation.” In 1999, “Norfolk Southern” absorbed the remaining 58% of “Conrail.” It serves 22 states including Indiana, plus Washington, DC plus portions of Canada, and with 21,600 miles of track is the second largest eastern railroad in the country.

Amtrak Passenger Train

In 1971, the government, in an attempt to correct previous wrongs, created Amtrak to take over the money-losing passenger service from the railways. Despite many naysayers, Amtrak became more successful than unsuccessful. Amtrak today continues to visit towns such as Lafayette and Crawfordsville.

By 1980, there were new government rules in place that would now allow the railroad business an opportunity to grow again. But the previous 50 years had taken its toll. The once busy "Union Station" in Indianapolis had been converted into a festival marketplace during the mid-1980s and operated that way for about 10 years. While still serving as a passenger station, its heyday of busy freight transfers had become only a memory.

"Amtrak" has continued to operate, though to say it is thriving would be an exaggeration. It owns 750 miles of track, but has rights to travel along an additional 23,750 miles of track throughout the country, including Indiana. "Amtrak" has trackage rights over many freight railroad lines such as the "CSX" track that passes through Linden.

Indiana now has one of the highest concentrations of rail service routes in the United States. 90 of the 92 counties of Indiana are served by at least one railroad. Today there are 4700 miles of track by 5 Class I railroads which travel in Indiana. There are also 3 regional railroads, and 36 short lines with a combined total of an additional 1100 miles. All in all, today's railroads carry 40% of all of the freight moved in this country; this is more than any other single mode of transportation. Also, there is more cargo moving on rail now than at any other time in history.

Abandoned Linden Depot 1973

The Linden Depot remained closed until the 1980s when a group of people from the town of Linden and from the surrounding Madison Township of Montgomery County assembled to discuss the future of the abandoned depot. In particular, it was debated whether to tear it down, as abandoned buildings do not improve with age, or to raise the necessary money to preserve this important part of Indiana history and renovate the Depot and open it as a Railroad Museum. Fortunately, the latter opinion prevailed, and in 1986 a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation was formed, called the Linden-Madison Township Historical Society with the sole purpose of preserving the Depot and maintaining it as a Museum.

The people who worked on the restoration put out a call to anyone listening to donate railroad artifacts, and photos and anything else pertinent to the Linden Depot. Many people generously donated items and money to help get the museum underway. There were also items that had been left in the depot when it had been in use that were able to be displayed.

That same year, the "Norfolk Southern Railroad" agreed to donate the depot to the Society, but wanted to require the group to move the depot away from the railroad's right-of-way. In 1988, "Norfolk Southern" and "CSX" Railroads agreed to allow the society to purchase the land upon which the depot stood. In 1989, the two railroads agreed to allow the depot to remain in its original location so long as a protective fence was erected between the depot and the current "CSX" track. The newly decommissioned Nickel Plate track was removed from Linden in the early 1990s.

National Register of Historic Places

In 1990, the depot was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. On April 13, 1993, after the expenditure of many hours and dollars in its restoration effort, the depot opened its doors to the public as a railroad museum. That same year, a model railroad club was formed to construct an HO-gauge model train layout to be placed in the "Monon" baggage room. In 1998, the family of Martin Levin, who had designed and constructed two very elaborate N-gauge layouts, donated both layouts to the museum. These were placed in the "Nickel Plate" baggage room along with an O-gauge model train layout.

Gary Vierk became President in 2007, and has worked tirelessly to increase the Museum's collection of railroad memorabilia and to raise awareness of this historic site. I was recruited in 2010 to assist as his Vice President, as I shared a similar view of the future path of the Museum.

Linden Depot Museum 2011

Over time, people have learned that the Linden Depot museum has a wonderful and ever-growing collection of railroad memorabilia. Nearly every weekend, someone donates to the museum some railroad treasure. This has helped the museum to build an extensive collection of historical railroad-related items. In 2013, the members of the Board of Directors determined that the Depot needed more space in which to properly display its ever-growing collection of railroad items. When the lease ran out for the additional building on the south side of the property, which was wholly owned by the museum, it was decided that the time had come to expand into this additional space, and the model railroads were removed from the depot, and an entirely new HO model railroad attraction was begun in the new building. This opened up the baggage room areas in the depot for new displays of the “real” train items.

Linden Depot Museum 2013

That year also saw the most recent renovation of the museum which culminated in the restoration of the original paint colors.

Damage Uncovered During Excavation

In the spring of 2013, a local farmer was recruited to remove the old asphalt platform so that it could be replaced with an era-correct brick platform using 6000 100-year old street pavers which had been generously and anonymously donated. When the asphalt material was removed, it was discovered that water had apparently for decades been flowing under the depot due to the absence of a drainage

system around the foundation. New siding was custom milled and installed, and scab floor joists were installed under the station to augment the original timbers which were rotting. An extensive French drainage system was installed around the building to fully divert all future water run-off, and the ground around the foundation, which had been slanted *towards* the building was re-contoured to slant *away* from the building. Gary laid the entire brick platform by hand that fall.

Linden Depot Museum 2013

The Museum has “Nickel Plate Railroad” memorabilia, “Monon Railroad” memorabilia and other railroad items on display, both inside and outside.

Original Linden Depot Indicator Panel

A highlight in the Nickel Plate operation room is the original Indicator Panel used at the station.

1912 Station Agent's Map Case

A highlight in the Monon operation room is a 1912 Station Agent's Map Case. This beautiful wooden cabinet has 24 removable drawers, each with maps on both sides showing all of the railroad lines for each state for a complete set of all 48 states.

The waiting room of the Depot was shared by both the “Monon” and “Nickel Plate” Railroad lines. Each had its own ticket window and a door leading to its respective boarding platform area as well as a window.

Working Crank Telephone in Waiting Room

We have installed in the waiting room a 1923 Crank telephone, which is fully operational. We have a similar Crank telephone in our HO building, and the two are wired to work together. This is how we communicate from one building to the other. Visitors to the museum are all fascinated to see us use this supposedly outdated technology!!

Nickel Plate Caboose and Original Nickel Plate-Monon Crossing Diamond

The original “Monon” / “Nickel Plate” crossing diamond is located in the commemorative brick patio on the north grounds in front of our “Nickel Plate” caboose, which is open to our visitors. The museum sells engraved bricks for this plaza for $40. Incidentally, Gary also laid all of these bricks!

Moving the model trains to the HO Building has enabled the museum to restore the baggage rooms to their original look. It also freed up a lot of additional space in which to display more railroad artifacts. By keeping the center of the Nickel Plate baggage room open, there is always a place for a special event or display to be protected from the weather.

HO Building

In the building on the south side of the property, our HO model railroad features four operating trains, a trolley, a blimp, a hot-air balloon and a monorail in addition to an animated circus and an animated carnival.

Animated Carnival with Monorail

The theme for the model railroad attraction is “Circus” to highlight the important part that Indiana has played in the history of circuses in the United States. There is a collection of circus memorabilia on display, including star-back seats, authentic circus posters, an elephant stand, a clown bicycle, a clown

car, a circus performer's trunk and a lion transfer cage. In a smaller room in this building we have the two N-gauge layouts from the Monon baggage room in addition to a large collection of model train engines and cars.

Signals, NKP Caboose and Chessie Inspection Car

Outside, we have a Nickel Plate caboose that is open to our visitors, as well as a Chessie Inspection car and many railroad signals and signs. Some of the most notable are four semaphores from the Linden-Crawfordsville area that are over 100 years old, and one of which is a two-bladed style, all still in working order.

Double-bladed Semaphore

We also have a 1978 “CSX” caboose in our south yard which is in the process of being renovated in preparation for being open to our visitors.

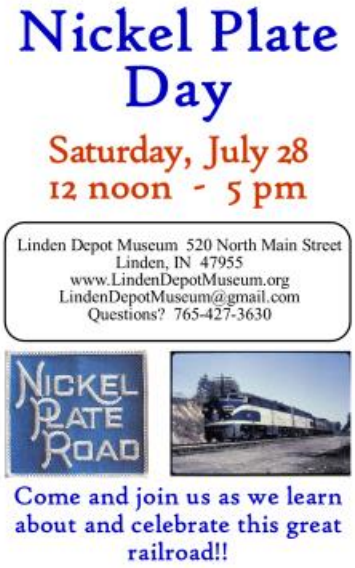
1978 CSX Caboose

South Yard Signals and CSX Caboose

The Museum is open from April through October on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 12 noon until 5 pm. Regular admission is $5 for adults and $1 for children 12 and under. The museum also offers annual Memberships for $10 for Singles and $25 for Families. The museum hosts a Christmas Open House for the weekends from before Thanksgiving to after New Year's. During the Open House, the museum offers a free Christmas ornament for a $10 donation.

We offer special events every month or so throughout the season. We will have our opening day on Friday, April 6, and will be celebrating our 25th Anniversary on Friday, April 13. Other events we have scheduled include "Nickel Plate Day" on July 28.

Nickel Plate Day - July 28



Members of the Nickel Plate Society will set up a display about their club and about the Nickel Plate Railroad.

"Depot Under the Stars"

Our newest annual event is "Depot Under the Stars." This is held every year on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend, from 8 to 10 pm (in other words, after it is dark!) to offer an opportunity for our visitors to see the depot with all of the lights on in our signals, cabooses, and on the model train attraction.

We will be making s'mores over our campfire for all to enjoy! Come see the Depot as you have never seen it before!

Purdue Boilermaker Special

One Sunday of each season, we have a visit by the Purdue Boilermaker Special. During this annual event we offer 15-minute narrated rides throughout Linden, citing places of historical interest. This year's event is tentatively planned for Sunday, October 7 from 1 – 4 pm.

As mentioned earlier, on April 13, the museum will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary! In honor of this special occasion, the museum is in the process of constructing a full-size replica of an 1837 Norris 4-2-0 steam engine!

This will be a truly exciting addition to the museum and a wonderful attraction for Montgomery County and the Midwest. Visitors to the museum and especially rail fans and historians will be excited to experience the nostalgia of this classic steam engine.

The Norris Locomotive Company was at one time the largest manufacturer of locomotives in the world. The design of this particular steam locomotive was considered the best in this period of railroad development. The company was based in Philadelphia and produced nearly 1000 locomotives between 1832 and 1861. It was the first major exporter of American Locomotives, selling its popular 4-2-0 engines to railways in Europe.

1837 Norris 4-2-0 Steam Engine

Norris built the original "LaFayette" in 1837 for the B&O Railroad. It was named after the Revolutionary War hero Marquis de LaFayette, as is the city of Lafayette. This new 4-2-0 engine was the B&O's first locomotive to feature a leading truck and may have been the first standardized production model locomotive in the entire world. Other distinct features of this model include the use of a horizontal boiler, a circular domed firebox, positioning of cylinders outside of the wheels and bar frame and ahead of the smokebox and the use of a bogie, or four-wheel swiveling pilot trucks. The "Lafayette" established the configuration that steam locomotives followed until the end of the steam era.

The Locomotive and tender will be built and displayed on the museum's display track nearest to US Highway 231. It will be easily viewed from the highway and will be lighted at night.

This project will require the talents and material contributions from many sources. The list of contributors has already begun to grow. The museum is inviting all of its visitors and especially people of the community to become a part of this historic event and make a generous donation to the museum to help fund this project.

Vertical Firebox

To date, we have the vertical firebox on site, and it has been cut in order to receive the horizontal boiler, which is being fabricated as we speak. The wheels are nearly completed and will be delivered soon. Once these three major components of the steam engine are assembled, it will actually begin to look like a steam engine!

48” Wheel

We have lots of ideas and plans to create a wonderful museum complex, but it all takes money, time and volunteers. There is a lot of potential to make this site a “Destination”, but it takes both financial donations and a lot of hours of work to affect the improvements we visualize.

CSX Freight Train Passes by

If any of you have any interest in trains, or railroad history, or history in general, and would be interested in helping, please let us know! I have volunteer forms here with me. We are in need of volunteers to greet our visitors, help with maintenance, renovate our new caboose, and to assist in implementing ideas for additional displays. Even if you can only donate one day or two a month, your help would be greatly appreciated.

If you are looking for a great charitable deduction, please note that as a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, all donations to the museum are fully tax deductible under current law. Our museum is operated by an all-volunteer staff; 100% of all museum donations goes directly towards the operation of the museum, or towards new acquisitions or displays, which is the steam engine for this year!

Linden Depot Museum 2013

We also always need people to come to visit the museum. We have been told we are one of the best railroad museums because nearly everything we have is original, including our building. It is the only surviving *junction* depot in Indiana. The Depot is definitely an asset to Linden and to Montgomery County and the surrounding area, including the Greater Lafayette area; it is listed as one of the "Gem" attractions of Montgomery County. The new addition of the new steam engine will only enhance our appeal. So please come and visit us sometime soon! Thank you!

We will now answer your questions.