



Railroad Stations of Chicago Part One

Neuse River Model Railroad Club

March 20, 2025

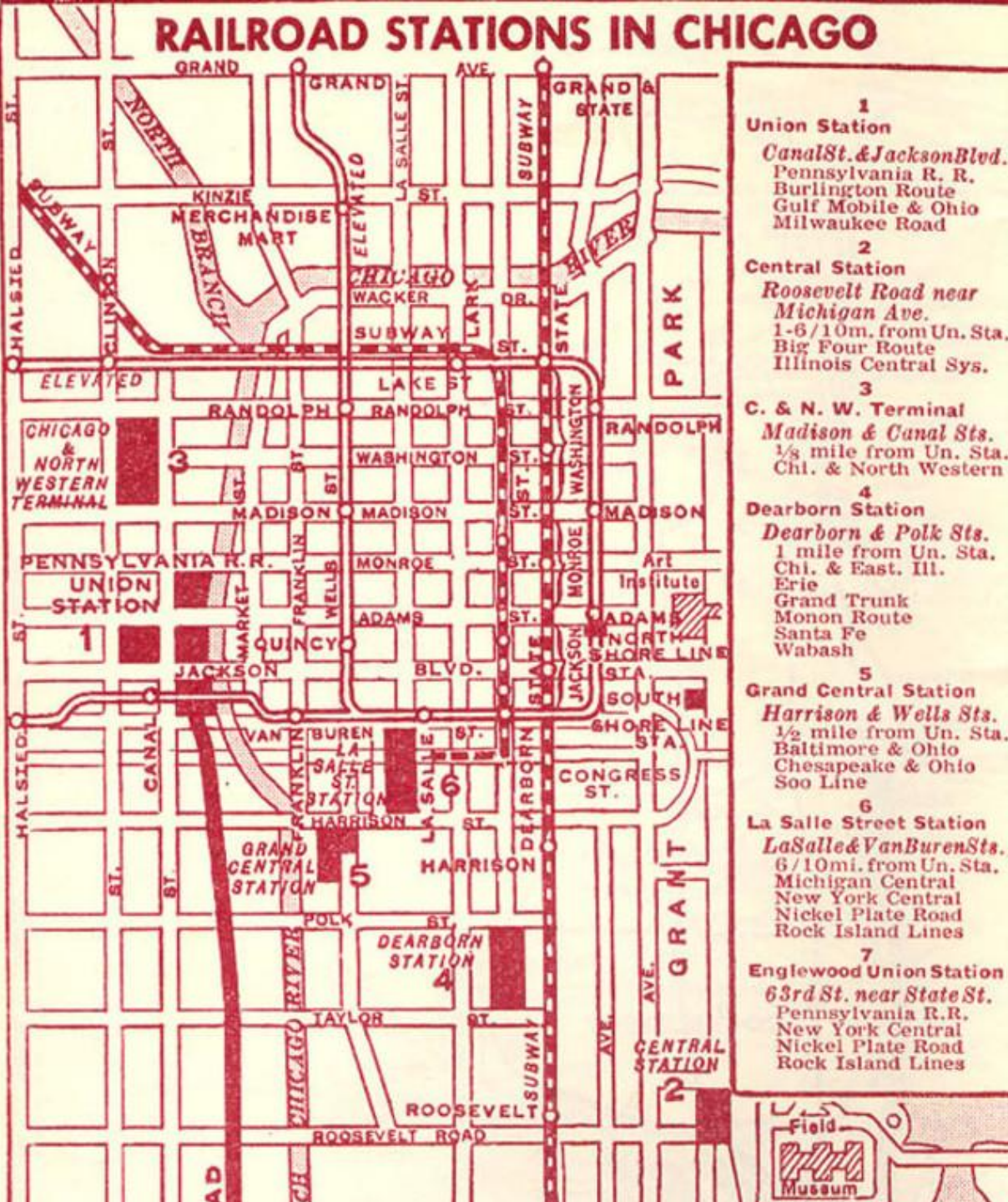
Why Should You Care About Railroad Stations in Chicago?

- Chicago was the railroad capital of the USA from the 1880's to the 2000's
 - Primary place where the East met the West from a traveler's perspective
 - Primary place where freight was interchanged
 - St. Louis, Memphis, and New Orleans were secondary to Chicago
 - Nearly all east-west name trains and nearly all Midwest-Southeast/Southwest name trains arrived or departed Chicago
 - Nearly all passenger trains in the USA connected with trains that traveled to and from Chicago

Intercity Passenger Stations of Chicago

- Primary stations that were the end of line for passenger trains
 - **Part One**
 - **Dearborn Station – 1885**
 - **Grand Central Station – 1890**
 - **Central Station – 1893**
 - **Part Two**
 - LaSalle Street Station – 1903
 - North Western Station – 1911
 - Union Station – 1925
 - **Minor Stations**
 - **Randolph Street Station – 1856**
 - Roosevelt Station – 1892
- Suburban Stations

Note: Only Dearborn Station and Union Station structures still exist



Why so Many Train Stations

- Original railroads/railways in the 1830's to 1850's establishing routes into city
 - No railroad originally chartered into city existed by the early 1900's
 - Railroads vying to be dominant in Chicago area
 - Would prevent crossing of existing tracks
 - Would charge exorbitant trackage rights fees
 - Would prevent perceived competitors from using track and structures
- City of Chicago began implementing restrictions on grade crossings
 - Both existing and new were to be above or below streets
 - Too expensive to change rights-of-way and routes to eliminate stations
- Great Chicago Fire of 1871 did not damage trackage; did damage structures



General Information on Train Stations

- All Chicago area train stations included commuter train operations
- Except for Roosevelt Station, trains stations were also office buildings
- All train stations hosted mail and express trains, except for Randolph Street and Roosevelt Stations
- All train stations had US Postal Service and Railway Express Agency offices or buildings in or nearby the station, except for Randolph Street and Roosevelt Stations
- Many stations had as many as 4 previous station structures on the same site



Coast to Coast Sleeping Cars

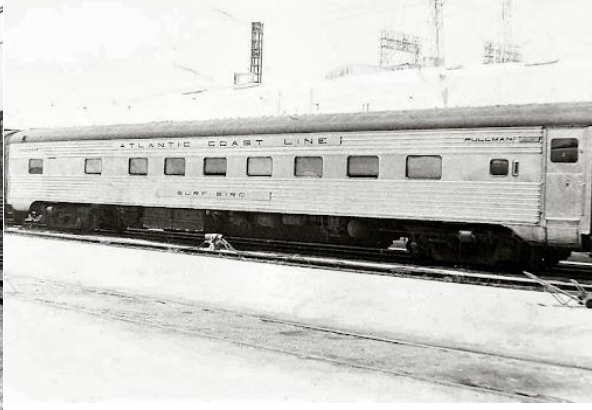


- Because of the influence of Robert R. Young, coast to coast sleeping car service as established in 1946 and lasted until 1958
- Participating railroads – B&O, NYC, PRR, CB&Q/D&RGW/WP (California Zephyr), ATSF, UP/C&NW (1946 to 1955), UP/MILW (1955 to 1958), UP/SP/C&NW (1946 to 1955), UP/SP/MILW (1955 to 1958), SP/CRI&P (1946 to 1951)
- ATSF Super Chief would arrive with a 4-4-2 and a 10-6 for NYC, a 4-4-2 for the PRR and a 10-6 for the B&O



Tour Groups

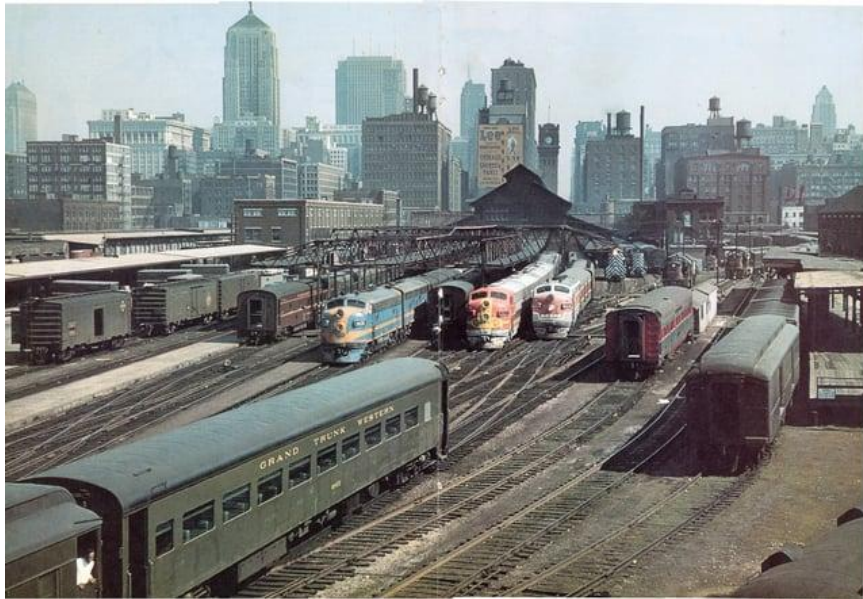
- Mostly sleeping cars, but sometimes chair cars
- Through the 1950's could be heavyweight or lightweight cars
- In 1960's would be lightweight cars
- From east coast – NKP, C&O, NYC, PRR, ACL, FEC, RF&P, L&N, Erie (EL)
- From west coast – ATSF, SP, UP, GN, NP, SP&S
- From Canada – CN, GTW
- Large tour groups – dedicated trains – Shriners, Boy Scouts, political groups – variety of equipment



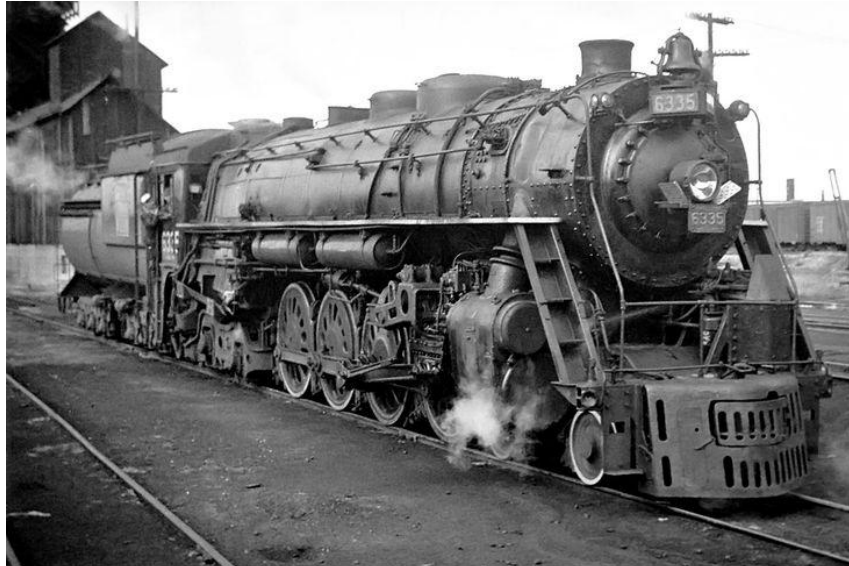
Dearborn Station



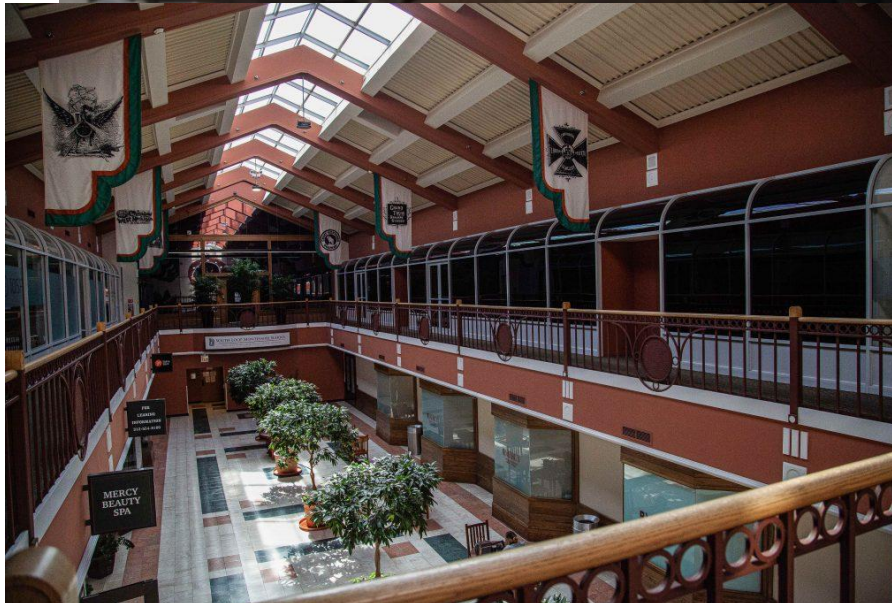
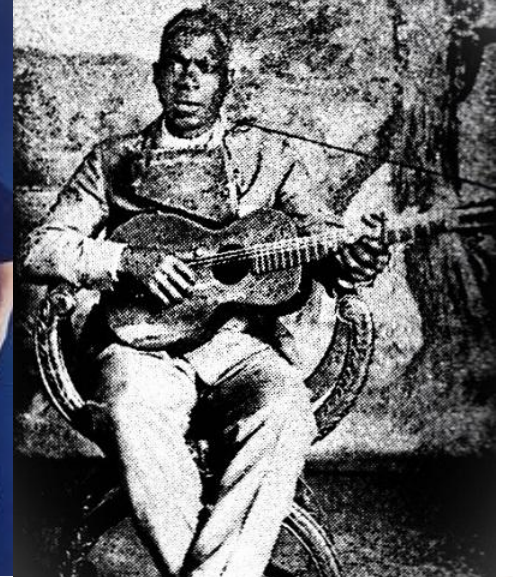
Dearborn Station Notable Trains & Operations



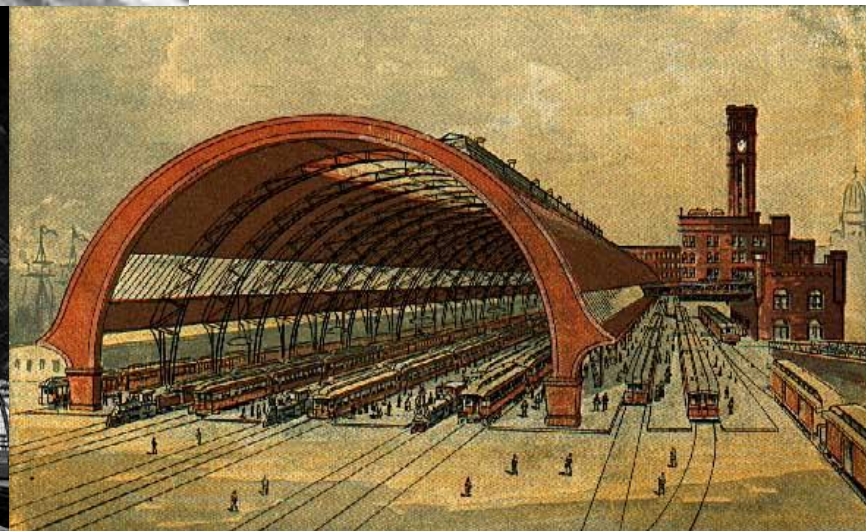
Dearborn Station Notable Trivia



Dearborn Station in Popular Culture & Preservation



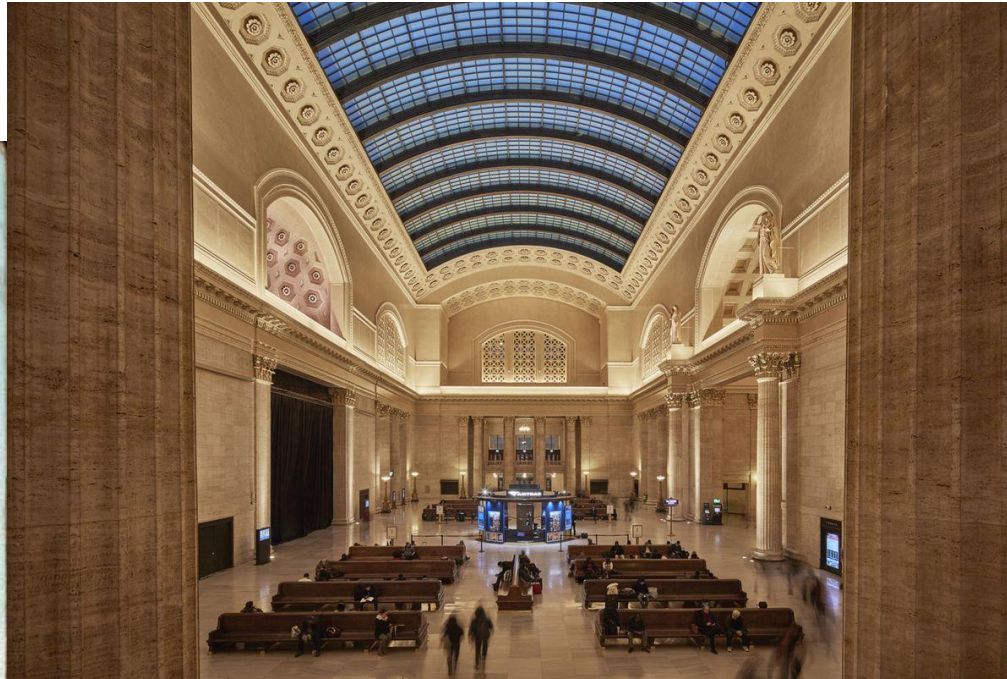
Grand Central Station



Grand Central Station Notable Trains & Operations



Grand Central Station Notable Trivia



Central Station



Central Station Notable Trains



Central Station Notable Trivia



Randolph Street Station



Randolph Street Station Notable Trivia



Suburban Stations

- Joliet – ATSF, CRIP, GM&O
- Chicago Heights – C&EI, MC(NYC)
- 63rd Street (Little Englewood) – B&O, C&O, GTW, MONO, WAB
- Woodlawn – IC, NYC (CCC&StL)
- Kensington – CSS&SB, Metra



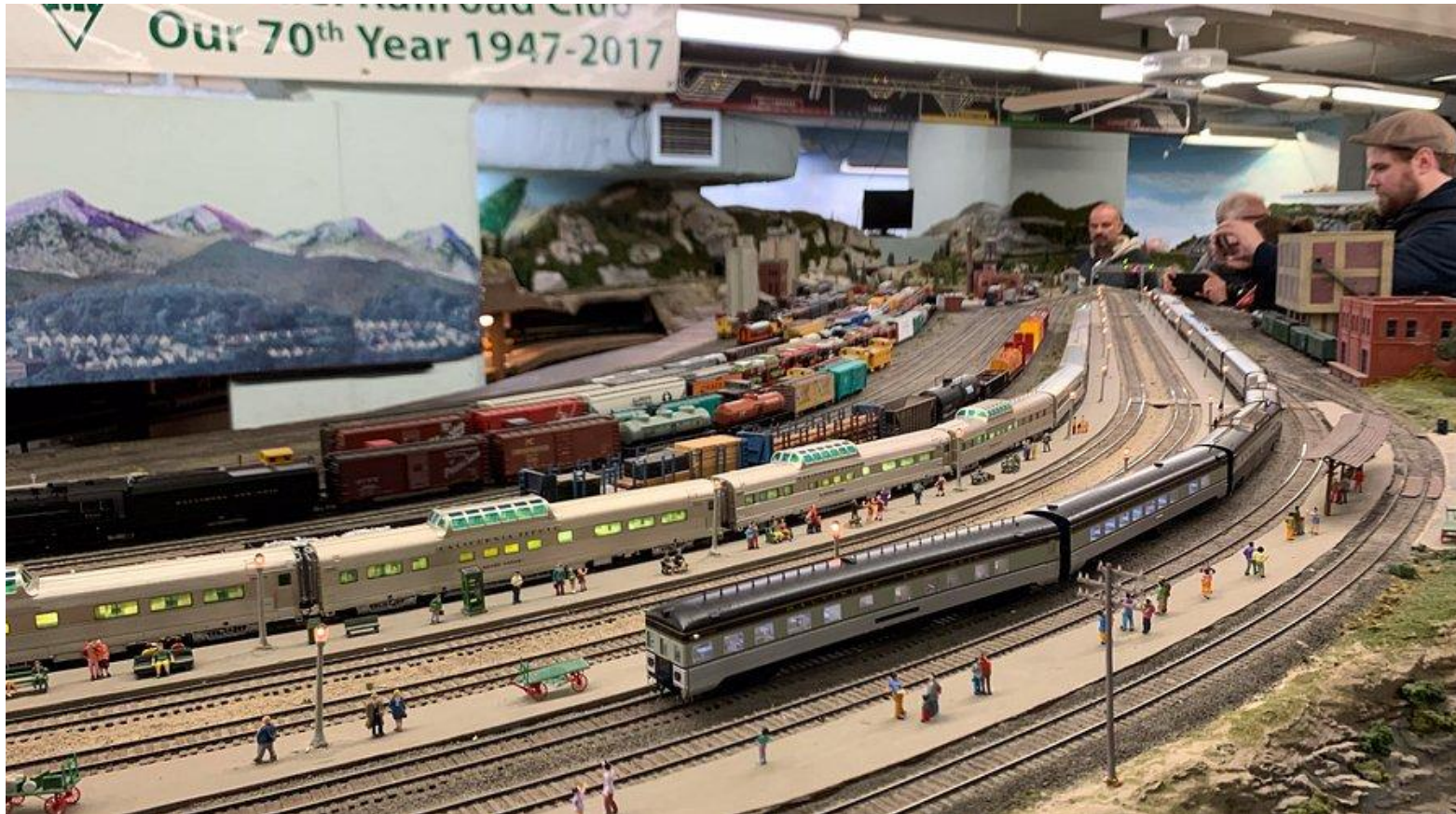
Modeling Chicago Train Stations

- Gary Hoover's HO Santa Fe



Modeling Chicago Train Stations

- Garfield-Claredon Model Railroad Club





Questions

Dearborn Station

- Built in 1883, opened in 1885, closed for operation on May 2, 1971
 - ATSF Grand Canyon and San Francisco Chief last trains to arrive
- Located at the intersection of Dearborn and Polk Streets south of the Loop
- Designed in the Romanesque Revival style
 - In today's dollars, cost of construction was \$17M
- Railroads: partial ownership – Chicago & Eastern Illinois (later Louisville & Nashville)(used LaSalle Street Station 1904-1913), Erie (later Erie Lackawanna)(until 1970), Grand Trunk Western, Monon (until 1967), Wabash (later Norfolk & Western); tenants – Santa Fe, Chesapeake & Ohio (1910-1925)
- Chicago & Western Indiana was actual owner

Dearborn Station cont.

- Notable trivia
 - At peak handled nearly 150 trains/day, with up to 44 trains/day in 1965
 - Bump Post was mile marker zero for all of the ATSF system until BNSF merger
 - Corporate headquarters for 3 railroads – ATSF, C&EI, and Monon
 - Previous station operations were in a Baptist church
 - C&WI did all of switching operations except of ATSF
 - L&N pooled power with C&EI starting in early 1960's
 - Station included a Fred Harvey House restaurant
 - Included its own power plant
 - GTW operated the last regularly scheduled steam passenger train into Chicago in March 1960.
 - More railroads operated PA's than any other station – ATSF, Erie (EL), and Wabash
 - For every departure, a lit drumhead with train name was mounted on bump post
 - When ordered to close building on May 2, 1971, building staff could not find the keys

Dearborn Station cont.

- Popular Culture
 - Dearborn Station is mentioned multiple times in the 1974 “Adam’s Rib” episode of *M*A*S*H*.
 - Subject of 2 songs – 1927 blues musician Henry Thomas and 1985 rock band *Fortune*
- Historic Preservation
 - In 1976, structure was added to the list of National Register of Historic Places
 - In 1982, designated a Chicago Landmark
 - In 1976, trainshed and station tracks demolished and area redeveloped as park and high-rise, high-end condos
 - In 1983, headhouse was converted and renewed for retail and office space

Grand Central Station

- Constructed by the Wisconsin Central and the Chicago & Northern Pacific in 1889, opened in 1890, bought by the Baltimore & Ohio in 1910, closed in 1969 and demolished in 1971
- Located at 201 West Harrison St., between Wells and Polk Streets south of the loop
- Designed in the Norman Castellated style with a unique glass/steel train shed (555'x156'x79')
 - In today's dollars, construction cost was \$35M
- Railroads: Owner – Baltimore & Ohio; tenants – Chicago & Great Western (until 1956), Pere Marquette (later Chesapeake & Ohio), Soo Line (1890-1899 & 1912-1963)
- NYC and CRIP used Grand Central Station from 1900 to 1903 as LaSalle Street Station was being rebuilt

Grand Central Station cont.

- Notable Trains
 - B&O – Capital Limited, Columbian, Shenandoah
 - C&O – George Washington
 - C&GW – Legionnaire, Minnesotan
 - PM – Pere Marquette, Resort Special
 - SOO – Laker
- B&O, C&GW and Chicago Terminal Transfer Railroad operated commuter service until 1915
- B&O operated mail and express trains

Grand Central Station cont.

- Notable trivia
 - At peak handled 40 trains/day, with 14 trains/day in 1965
 - Even though the station and tracks was demolished in 1971, the land remains empty
 - The clock face in the tower was the largest in the USA when station completed in 1890 at 13-feet diameter, and remained in continuous operation until station demolition in 1971
 - Station included marble floors, stained glass windows, marble fireplace, and 26-feet Corinthian columns
 - During early years of operation included a 5-star hotel on the floors above the station
 - B&O bought the station through foreclosure and paid pennies on the dollar
 - Neon-lit “B&O” lettering added to the tower above the clock in 1910

Central Station

- Constructed by the Illinois Central in 1891-1893, opened in 1893, closed in 1972, terminal and train shed demolished in 1974, commuter platforms retained until 2009 when replaced with a new commuter terminal and platforms, renamed Museum Campus/11th Street Station
 - Opening of April 17, 1893 was predicated on the opening of the *World's Columbian Exposition*
 - At completion the train shed was the largest in the world at 610' x 140'
 - Station was a run-through design to eliminate backing into and out of the station
 - 3 tracks went through the station to Randolph Street station – IC commuter lines and South Shore
- Located at the southern end of Grant Park near the intersection of Roosevelt Road and Michigan Avenue
- Designed in the Romanesque Revival style
 - In today's dollars, construction cost was \$42M
- Railroads: owner – Illinois Central; tenants – Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis (Big 4)(NYC)(until 1971), Michigan Central (NYC)(until 1957), Chesapeake & Ohio (1907-1910 & 1925-1933), Soo Line (1899-1912), Amtrak (1971 to 1972), Chicago South Shore and South Bend (from 1926)(renamed the South Shore Line when NITCD assumed operation)

Central Station cont.

- Notable trains
 - IC – Panama Limited, City of New Orleans, City of Miami (C of G, ACL, FEC), Green Diamond Special, Hawkeye, Land O’ Corn, Seminole (C of G, ACL), Shawnee
 - CCCStL (NYC) – James Whitcomb Riley, Carolina Special, Royal Palm (SOU, FEC), Ponce de Leon (SOU)
 - MC (NYC) – Canadian, Mercury, North Shore Limited, Motor City Special, Wolverine
 - C&O – George Washington
 - C&O terminated service to Chicago proper in 1933, but maintained service to the metropolitan area with service to Hammond, IN
 - Soo Line – Laker
 - Amtrak – Panama Limited, George Washington/James Whitcomb Riley, Floridian, Shawnee
- IC and South Shore operated extensive commuter train operations, IC sold the commuter lines and station property to Metra in 1988
- IC and NYC operated mail and express trains

Central Station cont.

- Notable trivia
 - At its peak, it is estimated that 370 train/day operated into or out of Central Station, in 1965, including South Shore trains, 84 trains/day operated into or out of the station
 - The current station is the 3rd busiest commuter train station in the USA
 - Central Station housed not only the corporate headquarters for the IC, but also the general offices, including engineering, accounting, legal, marketing and customer relations, operations, signals and maintenance departments
 - Commuter lines were electrified in 1926
 - There was a christening ceremony on April 17, 1893, but no bottle was broken, and the public was not invited, only officers of the IC were present, no speeches given and no special train was present
- Considered by many to be the most beautiful of all of the Chicago train stations
- The clock tower was purposely designed to be 13 stories, but no record can be found as to why
- Exterior was red brick and Illinois sandstone with red tile roof, the largest in Illinois when constructed
- Waiting room was 3-stories high, constructed mostly of marble, with an outdoor balcony overlooking Lake Michigan
- C of G diesels in IC paint scheme operated into the station as part of pool for the City of Miami and Seminole, on occasionally ACL diesels operated into the station as part of pool

Randolph Street Station

- Constructed by the Illinois Central in 1856 with major modifications in 1926 to include provision for electric trains, rebuilt in 2007 for Metra, is now known as Millennium Station
- Located at the intersection of Randolph Street and Michigan Avenue
- Design was a simple box style building with open platforms
- Railroads: owner – Illinois Central, tenant – Chicago, South Shore and South Bend (1926-1990)(now the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District-named the service the *South Shore Line*)
- No South Shore trains were named
- IC operated substantial commuter services until 1988 when station and trains sold to Metra

Randolph Street Station cont.

- Notable Trivia
 - South Shore operated 60 trains/day into and out of station; this remains constant to this day, traffic both ways (to steel mills, chemical plants, and refineries)(at its peak, 30,000 people worked at the US Steel's Gary Works)
 - When rebuilt station is two levels of tracks, with South Shore using the upper level and Metra using the lower level
 - Today, it is the 3rd busiest train station in Chicago
 - Originally known as the Great Central Depot
 - Today all tracks and ticketing are located under Millennium Park, which includes a concourse with shops and restaurants
 - Located at the south end of the Magnificent Mile (Michigan Avenue)