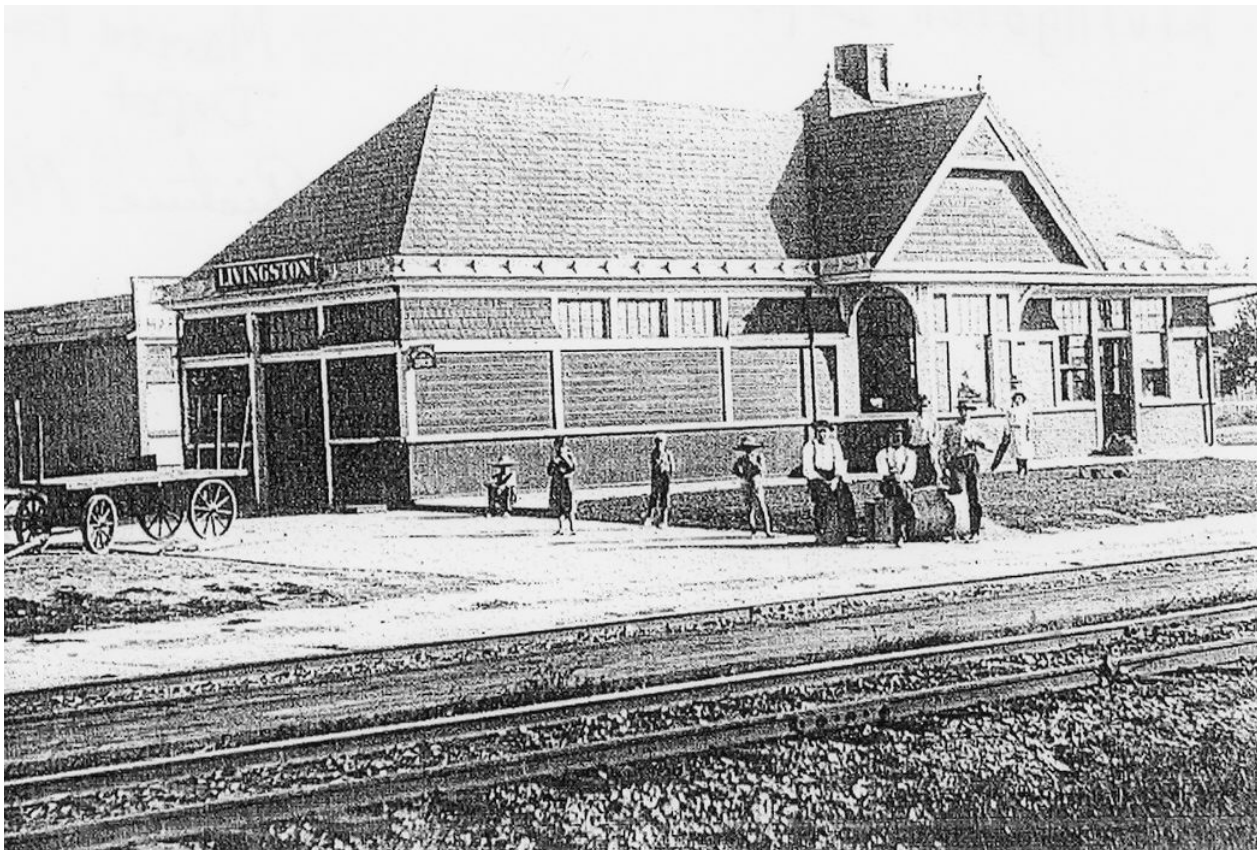


The Railroad

The original line of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad, better known as the “Big Four” went through Hillsboro, Litchfield, Bunker Hill, and Bethalto to St. Louis. Around 1903 a cut-off was made from Hillsboro via Livingston to St. Louis. This had two tracks, one westbound and one eastbound. It was called the “Big Four Cut-off”. It was finished in time for the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. The Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad paid a fee for using these tracks.

Previously in 1886 the Litchfield and Madison Railroad was built through Madison County. It extended from Litchfield to Madison and was forty-four miles long with thirty-two miles in Madison County. The L&M Railroad was known as the “coal road” because it transported coal from the mines to the market. When the New Staunton Coal Company and Mt. Olive and Staunton Coal Company #2 were sunk, the L&M put a spur in to these mines. This spur brought empty coal cars to the mines and hauled the loaded ones to market.

On June 24, 1905, there was a wreck on the “Big Four” in Livingston. It was caused by a “hot box” in the wheels of a freight car. A hot box was caused when the grease in a wheel axle was exhausted and the friction and sparks caused in the wheel by the constant grinding of metal caused sparks to fly and resulted in a fire. It could stop the action of a whole train sometimes causing a train to derail.



The depot (see photo above) was located west of the Main Street crossing. It was here that people purchased tickets and people who came from Europe arrived in Livingston from New York. At one time, Livingston had ten passenger trains in each direction daily. The C&EI had six passenger trains to and from Chicago daily. Depot agents were J.A. Depner, F.A. Hill, M.I. Ashmore, C.B. Rotsch, and Jack Frandsen. In March 1912, carpenters came from Mattoon to Livingston to remodel the depot to make better accommodations for the cashier, to build a new freight house, and to extend the platform an additional 150 feet.

In 1917, the railroad employees stationed in Livingston erected a thirty-three foot flagpole in the center of the depot lawn. To show their patriotism, they flew a 5 by 10 foot flag. On June 4, 1917, at 3:45 a.m. an

engine of the C & E I railroad left the track and turned over. The engineer and fireman were in the engine, but were able to escape, but not before both were severely scalded by the steam from the engine. The fireman was sent to the Granite City Hospital.

The only crossing in Livingston in 1917 was the Main Street crossing east of the depot. In July, J.M. Arkabauer, who was the city electrician, placed a red danger light on each side of the railroad tracks. In October, Mayor Joseph Healey, D.E. Alyward, and Vincent Cerne appeared before the Board of Public Utilities in Springfield to discuss the construction of another railroad crossing. The city wanted a crossing on Livingston Avenue but the railroad wanted it at Walnut Street. The Board of Public Utilities would take this under advisement and made a decision at a later date.

In January 1918, at a Village Board meeting, the clerk was advised to write to the Board of Public Utilities in Springfield to report that the only crossing in Livingston, the Main Street crossing, was blocked for 36 hours on January 11th and 12th.

During WW I, troop trains passed through Livingston almost daily going east. In May 1918, a troop train stopped and on the train was a Livingston lad, Clifford Finley. D.E. Alyward and Francis Thomure furnished the boys on the train with cigarettes.

In July 1918, the "Big Four" depot was burglarized and pennies stolen -- \$1.00 from the ticket drawer and 65 cents from the freight drawer.

In September 1930, C.R. Brewster, who was a telegraph operator at Livingston on the midnight shift, was coming to work on a hand-car traveling on the "Big Four" tracks six miles west of Livingston, when the hand-car was struck by an animal, throwing Brewster to the tracks. He was knocked unconscious and killed by an oncoming train.

In 1932, the New York Central purchased the "Big Four". In 1943, Raymond Libbra, Anton Perne, Anton Karnosky, and attorney Robert Tunnell attended a hearing before the Illinois Commerce Commission to testify for the Village of Livingston as to the advisability of installing flasher arm signals at the Livingston Avenue crossing.

In 1945, four men were killed at the Garde Station three miles north of Edwardsville. They were on a speeder riding to work when they were struck by a C & E I train. It was assumed that the victims did not hear the train. The men were William Andrews and Steve Papa of Livingston, Wilfred Row of Worden, and Calvin Shaul of Edwardsville. Andrews, Row and Shaul were section foremen and Papa was a signal maintenance man.

In August 1953, fifteen freight cars of a one hundred car, west bound New York Central train left the tracks and piled up at the Livingston Avenue crossing (pictured at right). Fortunately, an additional crossing was available and traffic was not held up. This wreck was caused by a "hot box" in one of the wheel bearings. The axle involved dropped out, tearing ties and rails out of the ground. The derailed cars



contained cheese, wheat, steel and other commodities. The estimated damage was \$200,000.00. No injuries or damage to nearby buildings occurred.

Prior to 1955, all engines were steam operated so trains frequently had to stop to take on water. A large elevated water tank was located on the southwest side of the Livingston Avenue crossing for this purpose. (pictured at left)



The water tank supplied water to the steam engines. In the winter when water over ran the sides, icicles formed that were as thick across as a man. In summer run-overs were fun to play under.

In 1965, the New York Central became the Penn Central Railroad but soon went bankrupt. In 1970, Penn Central became ConRail, and in 1989, Missouri Pacific Railroad purchased the tracks. Then in 1997, Southern Pacific Railroad purchased the tracks and continues to operate through Livingston along with the Burlington Northern.

The control tower was located east of Livingston Avenue next to the tracks. The tower operators were also the Western Union operators. In the early years all communication was by Morse code. Livingston's call letters were VI.

Some of the men who worked in the tower were C.R. Brewster, Andy Leitch, Joe Susanka, Ross Eyer, Ray Hutchins, Jack Frandsen, and Charles Stillabower.

Mail was received at the depot. In this era, Livingston had good mail service. A railroad post office car was on the head of the train. When there was mail going out, the bags were hung on a tall pole and hook awaiting pick-up. The mail delivered was thrown off the train. All this was done while the train was traveling eighty-five miles per hour.

Between the depot and the tower was a beautiful lawn. It was here that neighborhood children played softball in the summertime. During W.W. II troop trains would stop and servicemen would converse with the children and give them candy or gum.



Picture of the last passenger train stopping in Livingston. 1990



Control Tower pictured above.



Pictured at right is Ray Hutchins working in the control tower.