

## **The former Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad Depot 50 N. Fourth Avenue, Canton, Illinois**

The CB&Q Railroad Station had a dramatic impact on the development of Canton during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

The March 21, 1914 edition of the Canton Daily Register reported that the sale of Maple School cleared the way for the CB&Q Railroad Company to begin work on the new railroad station. It was stated in the article that "Canton will at last have a station to be proud of." Furthermore, it was said of the new station that "certainly it will be an improvement over that hideous structure that has given sore eyes to every loyal Canton man and woman for years past." The CB&Q Railroad Company appropriated \$100,000 for the improvements that were to be made in Canton and \$30,000 to \$40,000 would be used for the railroad station.

When the station was formally opened on September 20, 1914, a thousand people gathered there to see the new facility. It was stated in a local newspaper that "there will be few stations between Canton and Minneapolis or St. Louis that will make for a more impressive appearance." A well-known Canton man, E.M. Reynolds, who was in the furniture business, was the first person to step from an incoming train onto the new station platform. The general contractor was G.B. Swift Company of Chicago. M. Heckard & Sons of Canton constructed the pavement and platforms. Mason Hardware furnished the interior hardware.

When the CB&Q Railroad Station first opened in 1914, it was a busy place as railroads provided the primary means of transportation. Mike Gorman was the first station agent. His wife and daughter took such good care of the grounds that the grounds became known as Gorman's Park.

P & O Plow Works (later sold to International Harvester Company) was dependent upon rail transportation as was the area's coal mining industry. Several of the mines in Fulton County had a good export business.

In the 1920's, the demand for passenger service on railroad lines began to decline. However, Canton area residents continued to utilize passenger trains in the 1930's and 1940's. During WWII, many young men going off to war said their goodbyes at the CB&Q Railroad Station. In 1950, the two night passenger trains were eliminated and in 1961, the two remaining passenger trains were removed from the line. As highways were improved and trucks became more prevalent, the demand for freight service from the railroads declined. After the passenger trains were removed from the line, the station was used as a freight service until freight service was eliminated in the late 1970's.

In 1989, the City of Canton purchased the Railroad Station from the Burlington Northern Railroad Company for one dollar and leased the land. It wasn't until October 1996 that the City acquired the 1.72 acres of land at the Depot site for \$26,500. This purchase enabled the City to secure the needed grant funds to restore the Depot.

An Enhancement Grant for historic preservation was awarded in April 1994 to the City through the Illinois Department of Transportation in the amount of \$198,000 to be used in the restoration of this historic landmark. Additional funds were provided by the City. The local architect was Phillips & Associates and the construction contract was awarded to Leander Construction, Inc. of Canton. City employees as well as work crews from the Illinois River Correctional Center also contributed to the restoration project. The Historic Depot was then designated at the Canton City Council Chambers and also made available for public use.

A Re-Dedication Ceremony was held on September 20, 2000, exactly 86 years after its original opening in 1914. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Displayed on the north side of the property is a Dinky that was used at the local coal mine. It was donated to the City by Hitchcock Scrap yard of Canton. The cost of moving the Dinky to the Depot was funded in part by donations from friends of Bill Beardon in his memory. Mr. Beardon was a railroad enthusiast, employed by Graham Hospital.

\*notes by Linda Caudle