



## On the Bi-Level

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# Milwaukee West line started as Atlantic & Pacific Railroad

*Most of this information is from "The Chicago & Pacific Railroad: A Description of The New Railroad Line Across the State of Illinois" and articles that appeared in The Milwaukee Railroader, published by the Milwaukee Road Historical Association.*

The ancestor of today's Milwaukee West line was chartered as the "Atlantic & Pacific Railroad" on Feb. 16, 1865. Its name was more ambitious than its stated goal of crossing Illinois, by way of Chicago, to the town of Savanna on the Mississippi River just south of Galena.

By 1871, when the railroad was finally organized and the name was changed to the somewhat less ambitious "Chicago & Pacific Railroad," it was ready to join a growing list of railroads connecting Chicago to the rest of the continent. To head out of Chicago, it selected a route between two existing railroads, the ones now known as the UP West and UP Northwest lines.

In a description of the route that seems to have been written by the railroad to encourage investment, the author boasted about the towns that would be reached by the line, including Jefferson, Leyden, Addison, Bloomingdale, Hanover and Elgin.

"These towns are thickly settled by an intelligent, industrious and thrifty population. The land is cut up into small farms, which are not only well improved but fully stocked with everything which makes agriculture profitable; and nearly every acre of the ground is under a high state of cultivation."

The first tracks were laid on July 10, 1872, and by the time that description was published on May 1, 1873, the railroad had nearly reached Elgin. Subur-

ban service – in other words, a commuter train operation – was envisioned from the very beginning, along with freight.

"Arrangements are already making for building several suburban towns along the line of the road between Chicago and Elgin by the capitalists of Chicago, which will at once make a large business for the suburban trains which will be placed up the road and run regularly," the description said.

Included was a list of the stations or towns to be served and brief summaries. Those stops were Humboldt, Almira, Pacific, 46th St. crossing and Kelvyn Grove, Galewood, Mont Clare, Orison (Elmwood Park), River Park (River Grove), Roselle and Elgin. (It noted that Roselle would be only one of several stops between River Park and Elgin.) In its description of River Park, the railroad again boasted about its suburban trains.

"The company have [sic] determined to run hourly trains, equipped with all the modern improvements, from the city to River Park, stopping at every station and carrying passengers at low rates of fare. They are assured of a large and paying business for their suburban trains at once, from the fact that hundreds of families are preparing to move on to the line of the road to avail themselves of the advantages offered by the company, as it is understood that one of the specialties of the Chicago & Pacific Railroad will be the accommodation of the suburban travel..."

An 1874 timetable for the railroad shows that it was offering four round trips daily between its Chicago passenger terminal at Chicago and Larrabee and Elgin.

The one-way fare for the 34-mile trip was \$1.25.

In its original route out of Chicago, the line headed northwest from Chicago and Larrabee to Bloomingdale Ave, where it turned directly west. In 1879, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad acquired a controlling interest in the C&P and leased it in perpetuity a year later. That was the name adopted by the Milwaukee & St. Paul in 1874 after it entered the Chicago market by building what is now part of the Milwaukee North line. One result of the acquisition was that some Elgin trains were rerouted; at the crossing of the CM&StP and C&P five miles northwest of downtown they started using the CM&StP route downtown. That intersection is still where the Milwaukee West and North lines diverge.

The Bloomingdale segment east of the junction, which eventually was elevated, continued to be used for freight and some commuter trains but eventually fell into disuse. There are now plans to turn it into a linear park.

Commuter trains were added over the years, some of them originating from closer-in stations and some from Elgin. (There was even an express train from Elgin by 1915.) By 1930 there were 14 round-trip trains from Elgin. There are now 24 inbound and 25 outbound trains between Chicago and the Elgin Station.

The route was operated by the CM&StP, known as the Milwaukee Road, until 1982. That's when the RTA and later Metra assumed control of the route from the bankrupt Milwaukee Road.

*More information about the Milwaukee Road in Chicago and Milwaukee North line will appear in next month's issue.*