

Mattoon and Charleston Area Railroads (Images of Rail)

Craig Sanders



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Railroads were instrumental to the development of Mattoon and Charleston, twin cities located in Coles County in east-central Illinois. The railroads enabled both cities to become regional centers for agriculture, industry, and commerce. The Illinois Central Railroad and New York Central System maintained shops, yards, and offices in Mattoon, while the Nickel Plate Road had shops, offices, and a yard in Charleston. In the early 20th century, the railroads were the major source of employment in both cities. Dozens of passenger trains stopped at the local stations. The phasing out of steam locomotives following World War II led to the closing of the shops. Railroad consolidation that began in the 1960s would lead to abandonment of routes and greatly diminish the importance of the railroads to the economies of Mattoon and Charleston.



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