



The C&EI FLYER

Second Section

2025 Annual Meeting—April 12, 2025
Vermilion County Museum—116 North Gilbert St, (Ill Rt. 1)
Danville, Illinois

EVENT SCHEDULE

9:00 to 10:00 - Museum open and vendor/display setup (Free tables limited, contact Dave Forbes at altamontc_ei@yahoo.com or 217-251-8398)

10:00 to 12:00 - Vendors/displays/tour of museum/C&EI archives in basement open.

12:00 to 1:15 - Attendees lunch on their own (takedown vendor tables and setup chairs, display tables left in place)

1:15 to 1:45 - Annual Meeting

1:45 to 2:45 - C&EI Passenger Trains through Danville, By Dave Forbes

2:45 to 3:00 - Break

3:00 to 4:00 - Oaklawn Shops, Rick Schroeder

4:00 to 5:00 - Questions and answers - display takedown

5:30 to 7:30 - Dinner on your own at the Railroad Décor Pizza Inn, 1 mile north on the right at the corner of Gilbert and Williams Streets.

Events and Programs

Events

For the first time this event will be advertised to the public by the museum due to the programs we are presenting. We expect a larger crowd than normal. In addition, attendees will receive a free copy of the book, *The History and Romance of Danville Junction*.

Parking: Parking on museum grounds is limited. There is parking north of the museum or south across the street in the Carle facility parking lot.

Vendor and Display Setup: Setup is from 9 to 10 AM and vendors will be in the main first floor area. Displays will be in the back of the first floor area.

Tours: The museum is known for the collection of Lincoln and local historical material. On the second floor we will have a display of C&EI historical items along with C&EI model trains. The basement C&EI HS Archives will be open from 10 until noon with several of our photo archive books available for review.

Hotels: Best Western, 1/2 mile south. Holiday Inn Exp, Hampton Inn, Red Roof Inn, Quality Inn and others on the east side of town at Lynch Road and I-74.

Restaurants: There are eight various "fast food" restaurants 3/4 of a mile south of the museum across the Vermilion River bridge on south Gilbert St. (Ill Rt. 1)

Oaklawn Shops

In 1871 and 1872 two railroads, the Evansville, Terre Haute and Chicago and the Chicago, Danville and Vincennes Railroads entered Danville and created a locomotive facility in the area of Danville Junction, the end of the line for both railroads. In 1902 the controlling railroad, the Frisco Railroad, then under control of the Rock Island, started construction of a major locomotive shop area on the east side of Danville in the Oaklawn area.

Over the course of 5 years the shop area was expanded and the Danville Junction shop facility was closed with some facilities used by maintenance of way forces. The original office building was at the junction until a new building was constructed at Oaklawn.

At one time, up until around 1950, the shop area employed over 1,000 people. All locomotives were maintained or rebuilt at Danville along with freight car repair and construction. The large passenger car fleet was maintained at Danville to service the Dixie passenger trains.

In 1938 the first diesel locomotives were purchased by the railroad and the change in motive power had begun. The fire on the last steam was dropped on May 5, 1950. Within months the railroad began the process of

removing facilities that serviced the steam locomotives as the diesel fleet had grown. Oaklawn began to change with the cutting back of employees, converting some of the facility to diesel maintenance and freight car work.

In May 1967 the Missouri Pacific took control of the C&EI, in June 1968 the Louisville and Nashville acquired the segment through Danville, that sealed the fate of Oaklawn Shops. The Missouri Pacific sold part of the facility to Mervis Corporation, a scrap dealer, and the other part of Danville Industries, a car repair company. In 2008 they sold to Johnstown America to build coal hoppers, in 2018 they sold to the Anderson's for car repair and today Cathcart Rail is the owner, a major freight car repair business. About 90% of the facility remains today as Oaklawn Shops

The Passenger Trains Through Danville

The Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad served Danville as a north/south connection to local destinations such as Chicago, St. Louis, Evansville, southern Illinois and all points in-between. But the C&EI also began and ended passengers' travels to and from the south with warm weather destinations such as New Orleans, Atlanta, Jacksonville, and Miami. In 1946 the heavyweight *Dixie Flyer*, *Dixie Limited*, *Dixie Express* and *Dixie Flagler* served those southern locations.

By 1955 the railroad had upgraded the trains to streamline cars. The new trains and local streamliners including the *Georgian*, *Meadowlark* and the *Whipporwill*, the C&EI has a fascinating history of passenger travel. As air travel and highway travel increased the passenger business began to decline nationwide. By 1966 the passenger service on the C&EI was down to one train each way a day to Evansville and the southern cities. Danville retained one train each way to Chicago. By 1971 only the Danville to Chicago service remained and upon the start of Amtrak nationwide service the *Danville Flyer* was discontinued, thus passenger service to Danville ended.

This talk will briefly explore the trains, destinations and routes of C&EI passenger trains. We will also briefly cover passenger locomotives, types of equipment, and dining service of the Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad.

