The Terre Haute & Alton Railroad was chartered in 1852. The TH&A arrived in Mattoon a few days behind the ICRR in June of 1855. In 1865 with the extension of routes to Indianapolis and St. Louis it was renamed the Indianapolis & St. Louis Railroad. On June 30, 1889 the Indianapolis & St. Louis was merged into the Big Four Railroad. The Big Four became part of the New York Central System in February 1930 but continued to operate through Illinois as the Big Four.

In 1869 the City of Mattoon awarded the Big Four 30 acres between Richmond and Shelby and $60,000 to move their shops here from Litchfield. By 1913 the shops and roundhouse employed 782 people.

East bound passenger train with the Karl tower in background

Freight car with both names. They are loading Butter Boy Popcorn from the Redding Cannery in Mattoon.

Mattoon Refrigeration was located on the Big 4 tracks and held a contract to ice all trains between Indianapolis and Kansas City.

The NYC retired their last steam engine in 1957 and by that time the Mattoon shops had already seen a drastic decline in the work force. By 1964 the shops were all but shuttered and in 1968 the NYC terminal was closed. After Conrail took over the then bankrupt Penn Central, the route through Mattoon was abandoned in 1983.