MATTOON'S FOUNDING

By 1853 it became apparent that the Southbound Illinois Central Railroad and the Westbound Terre Haute & Alton Railroad both then still miles away would cross in Sections 13 and 14 of the yet unnamed township.

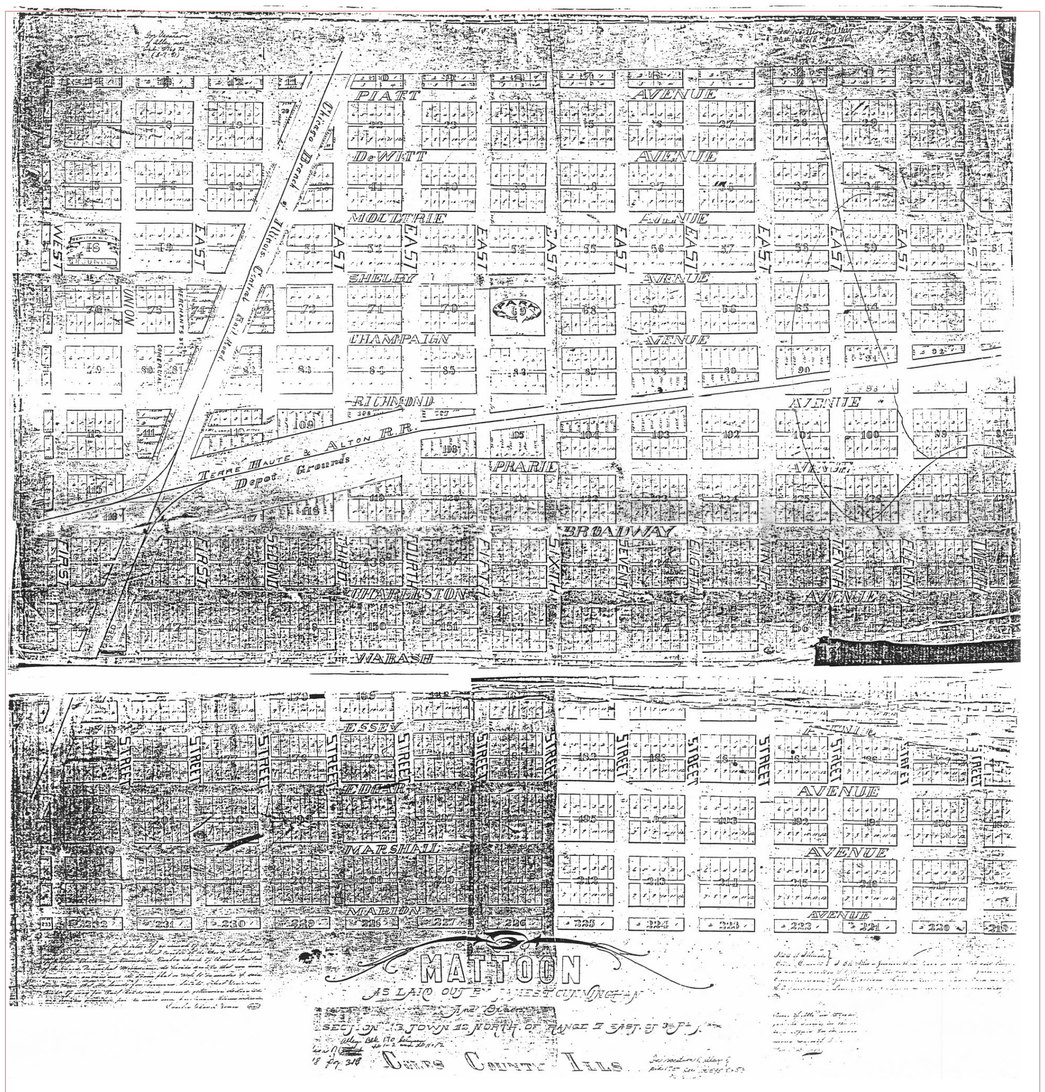
The original owners of Sections 13 & 14, Ebenezer Noyes, James T. Cunningham, John Cunningham, Elisha Linder, Samuel B. Richardson, George Curyea and Stephen Dole commissioned John Meadows the County Surveyor to map out the area and draw a plat. He completed the plat on December 12, 1854 and filed it in the courthouse on April 15, 1855.

Mr. Meadows had placed stakes or pegs marking the boundaries of the surveyed lots and for a considerable period of time after the fledgling town was called "Pegtown".

The town was formally named Mattoon on May 15, 1855 and on May 16th lots in the newly platted and named town were auctioned off. It is said that hundreds of people showed up and lots went from $25 to $200.

The Illinois Central crew reached the crossing that would come to be known in railroad parlance as the MX crossing first, on June 25, 1855.

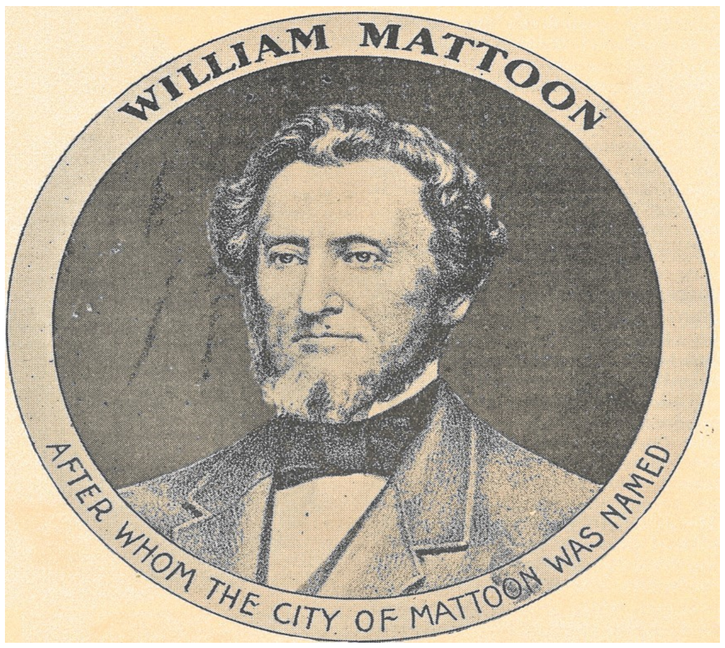
Mattoon sprang up almost overnight with the arrival of the railroads, by August there was a large hotel, the Pennsylvania House, a post office, a dry goods store and two groceries. By January of 1856 Mattoon had a population of 500 with 113 homes completed and many



Original map of Mattoon as drawn by James Cunningham in April of 1855.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

There are several competing legends involving the naming of Mattoon. Predominant among these are three that involve a back room deal, a winning hand at the card game Seven Up and a track laying contest.



Regardless of the actual circumstances of the naming it is indisputable that the new town was named in honor of William B. Mattoon

Mr. Mattoon was born in Vienna, New York in 1814. By 1843 he had made his permanent residence in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1850 he became a partner in the Springfield firm of Phelps, Mattoon and Barnes a railroad construction firm.

The firm built three major railroad systems in the East and Mid-West. A major newspaper called the firm "probably one of the largest railroad building firms in the country."

William B. Mattoon was the on-site supervising partner of the firm which was contracted to build the Terre Haute & Alton Railroad West from Paris.