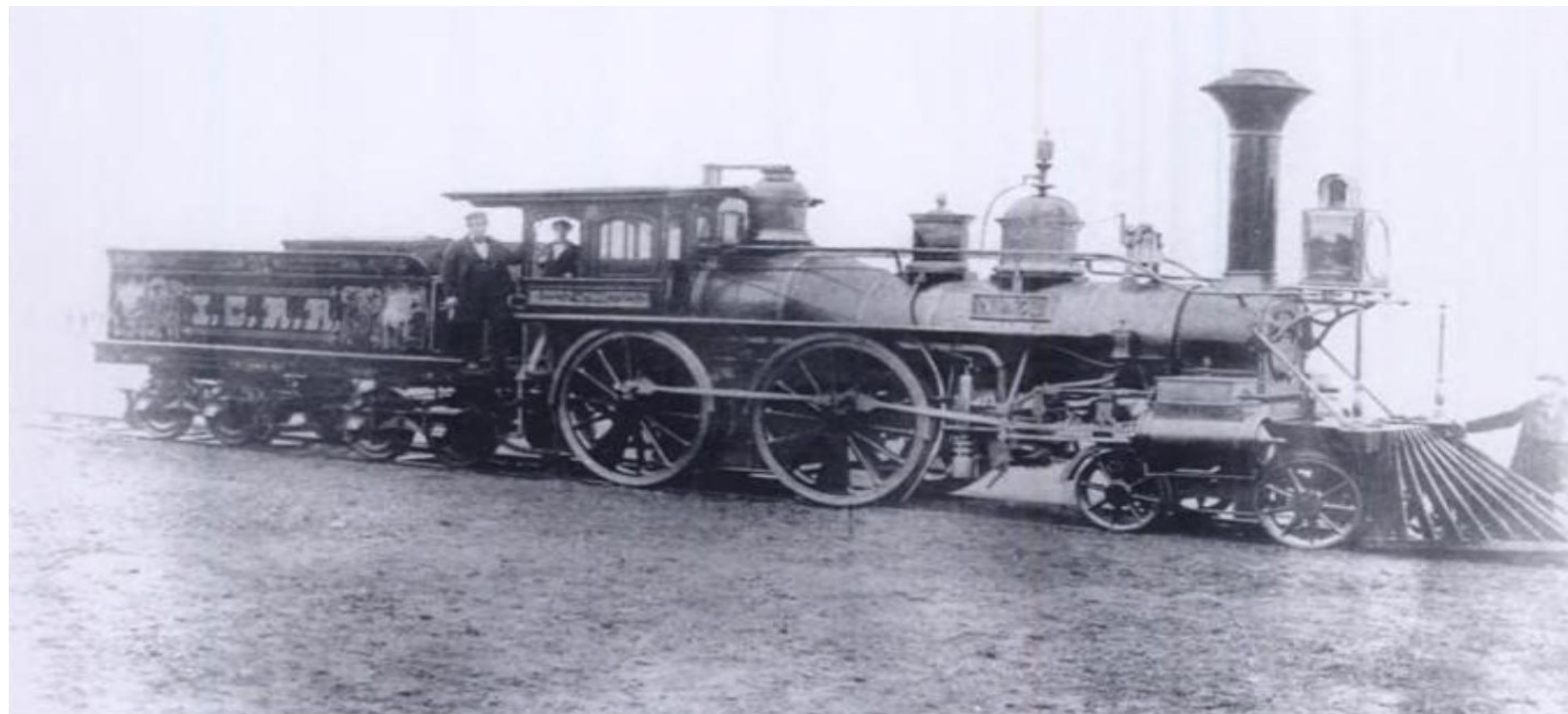


# THE HOMEFRONT

At the time the first group of volunteers left Mattoon for Union service, Mattoon was a bustling, growing town of about 1500 people. There were half-a-dozen doctors and a like number of dentists and attorneys who had hung out their shingles in Mattoon. The town also boasted several churches, and the assortment of businesses such as hardware stores, dry goods stores, druggists, clothing and shoe stores, grain mills, grocers, cafes and saloons, harness makers, blacksmiths and livery stables that make a town a viable mercantile center.

Much of this mercantile trade was a result of the two railroads that brought goods and people to Mattoon and provided access to outside markets for area farmers.



Time Tables.			
TERRE HAUTE, ALTON & ST. LOUIS.			
GOING EAST.		GOING WEST.	
Mail, . . . . .	12,30 P. M.	Mail, . . . . .	1,40 P. M.
Express, . . . . .	11,15 P. M.	Express, . . . . .	2,00 A. M.
Freight, . . . . .	8,20 P. M.	Freight, . . . . .	6,00 P. M.
	2,55 A. M.		9,25 A. M.
W. D. GRISWOLD, Pres't and Gen. Sup't.			
J. C. COSLOGUE, Sup't.			
H. W. HIBBARD, Agent.			
ILLINOIS CENTRAL—LEAVE MATTOON.			
GOING NORTH.		GOING SOUTH.	
Mail, . . . . .	12,35 P. M.	Mail, . . . . .	4,25 P. M.
Express, . . . . .	11,00 P. M.	Express, . . . . .	6,15 A. M.
Fr'ght, . . . . .	1,30 P. M.	Fr'ght, . . . . .	10,30 A. M.
W. R. ARTHUR, Gen. Sup't.			
J. D. HERRIKES, Sup't.			
W. S. MASON, Agent.			

With the advent of the Civil War, the railroads brought a new dimension to the way wars were fought, as the railroads could provide shipping of men, munitions, and supplies at a speed and capacity never before realized.

Mattoon became an important point in the strategic use of the railroads, as Mattoon sat astride the crossing of the Illinois Central Railroad's main line from Chicago to Cairo and the Terre Haute and Alton Railroad was a vital link in the route from St Louis to Indianapolis, all major points of shipping for the Union Army.

Besides the regularly scheduled daily trains of both railroads, specials thundered through Mattoon round the clock, and Mattoon was a major fueling and watering stop for most through trains.

Troops were constantly on the move through Mattoon, often disembarking during these stops and the Essex House restaurant kept barrels of coffee on the platform for the soldiers. It was not uncommon to see soldiers from other states in town and the list of convalescent soldiers in Mattoon's hospitals attests to that fact.

Many trains also came through the town carrying Confederate prisoners to the prison camps in Chicago and the East. In several instances the Mattoon Gazette alluded to the prison trains, for example:

**SECESS PRISONERS.**—For the past two days the railroads have been thronged with trains carrying the Fort Donelson prisoners to Chicago

Three long trains of prisoners from Grant's army went east on the Terre Haute road yesterday.—

The trains also brought a share of rowdy Union troops who frequented the saloons and stores along Broadway and Western. The May 4, 1864 Gazette reported that men from the "6<sup>th</sup> Michigan Heavy Artillery and 12<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry broke into McWhinney's grocery store and stole hams and shoulders from Maier's Meat Market" while disembarked.

The major rail crossing was also a key factor in the Army establishing a horse and mule depot here, as shipping of large numbers of horses and mules was greatly facilitated.

Many area farmers also found a ready market for corn, wheat and oats sold to the government and shipped by rail.

While the figures for Mattoon traffic are not available, during the war years the Illinois Central Railroad transported 626,518 soldiers on dedicated troop trains through Illinois.

When veterans returned to Mattoon at the end of the war, they found a thriving city of 4,000 people. Much of the wartime growth of Mattoon was directly attributable to the constant traffic and enterprise brought on by the two railroads.

The MATTOON RIFLES, a military company just organized for home defense, met for drill, &c., on last Tuesday evening. Ed. A. Thielens is Captain, Thos. McKee 1st Lieut., John Brown 2d, and W. B. Dunlap Orderly Sergeant.

As early as 17 August 1861, a Home Guard was formed. The Home Guard was formed largely to deal with suspected attacks of the southern sympathizers, known as Copperheads, and to be on alert for Confederate raiders and saboteurs.

In 1863, Mattoon also became a recruitment center for the Invalid Corps, men who had been wounded and could no longer serve in field duty. Their duties would be to act as Provost Guards, garrison duty and as guards for hospitals and public buildings. They were offered the same pay as the regular army.

Eli Ashbrook established a woolen mill at 2200 DeWitt, and one of the products of the mill was woolen blankets for the Union Army.

The basement of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at the corner of Broadway and E 4<sup>th</sup> Street, was made into a hospital to care for the sick and wounded. The women of the city organized into "coffee brigades" to render care to the men and the ladies of the church met weekly to prepare bandages.

A hospital was also established on the second floor of the newly constructed Fitzgerald Building at 1606 Western Avenue.

Convalescing soldiers were also quartered in private homes, among those homes owned by: T C Alexander, J B Hogue, F Davis, G W Horn, and T Davis.

Mattoon doctors who volunteered time to the care of the soldiers were: Morris, Wilcox, McFall, Symmes and Treat. Dr. Dubler was the Post Surgeon. Mrs Ellen Leadbetter served as the Matron of the hospital on Western Avenue.

W. H. DUBLER—Office with Dr. Dora, one door west of Drake's Broadway.

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DR. V. R. BRIDGES  
HAVING permanently located in Mattoon, for the Practice of Medicine, will attend promptly in all business entrusted to him. Office with Dr. Morris. 281-y.

Mattoon was a transfer point for troops moving by rail and men who were too sick or wounded to continue were often taken off in Mattoon for care. That is attested to by this list of units of men in hospital in Mattoon in June of 1864: 28<sup>th</sup> Connecticut, 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> NH, 47<sup>th</sup> & 53<sup>rd</sup> Mass, 21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> Maine, 67<sup>th</sup> & 69<sup>th</sup> Indiana, as well as multiple Illinois regiments.



The Mattoon Weekly Gazette was rabidly Republican and pro-Union. With the advent of the war, the paper devoted much of each issue to war news, featuring detailed information of ongoing campaigns and battles on the front page.

The paper also featured many letters sent to it by Mattoon soldiers in the field, including those from several senior Mattoon officers.

The paper was owned by William P Harding and Rufus W Houghton. At the outset of the war, Houghton enlisted and was the Sergeant Major of the 123<sup>rd</sup> Illinois Infantry. Houghton kept up a steady correspondence to the paper from the field and his letters were published regularly. Houghton was killed at the battle of Chickamauga on 19 September 1863. Upon his death, W P Harding published a sorrowful lament of the death of his "esteemed" partner.

Throughout the war, the paper kept up a constant stream of short articles about the military comings and goings in Mattoon, including which units were in camp here, which officers were on furlough home, how many men were being raised, the status of illness and deaths in the hospitals here as well as other local war related news.