

CRESTON MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

"In 1899 Creston was adorned with a magnificent new passenger station" --- these are direct words from the Union County Historical records. We would all agree that undoubtedly this building would have been quite magnificent.

The building is of concrete footing and rubble foundation--- (masonry of unsquared or rudely squared stones) which lends itself to sturdiness for many many years. The exterior walls are of cut stone to the windowsills and above are built of St. Louis pressed brick. A heavy copper cornice caps the exterior walls. The roof attracts special attention being of semi-glazed tile.

On the south and west large glass and steel canopies were attached to the main building...as well as over the 2 smaller north entrances were smaller ornamental canopies. The building was originally heated throughout with steam and lighted within by 233 electric incandescent jets. Today the building is heated with 9 forced air furnaces and facilitated throughout with all modern conveniences.

The present Memorial Room was originally the waiting room for those traveling on the railway as well as being quite a public meeting place. This room reveals the greatest amount of uniqueness as is visible of the original building. The Renaissance Revival movement of the 19th Century reflects in European and American architecture can be readily seen in this room in the arching window casements and entryways and the ceramic pillars. The Memorial Room today has two glass cases with some railroad items and a model train display by the Creston Model Railroad Club. The family of the late Leona Abbott has placed cabinets in the hallway that contain some of her doll collection. The collection is of the Presidents and the First Lady's in their Inaugural gowns.

The 19th Century Chicago firm of Burnham and Root designed Crestons' Depot. In the 1880's and 1890's this firm regularly received commissions from the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad to draw up plans for passenger stations and other structures.

Daniel Burnham and John Wellborn Root were among the nation's most distinguished architects with a long list of accomplishments to their credit.

Burnham is especially credited with creating the pattern for the great public mall in Washington, D.C.

The Creston Depot received recognition in 1974 when it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of three structures in Union County to be so honored.

Directly off the waiting room was the ticket office. In later years after closing down the 2nd floor facilities this particular area also housed telegraph and other communications of the railroad. Today these rooms are the offices of the Park and Recreation Department of the City of Creston.

The lunchroom on the south side of the corridor was many many years ago under the management of C.A. Allen of the Summit House; one of the first Hotel's in Creston. It was quite a popular eating place for both travelers and citizens. Small tables and chairs occupied the north side of the hallway and a 3-sided counter was also used to serve customers. J.J. Greer & Company owned a lot of lunch counters in the train depots along the Burlington line. Newel Juleg operated the lunch service for many years. After closing the 2nd floor operations, this area became the office of the yardmaster. Today it is occupied by the City Vault and restrooms.

Railroad officials occupied the rooms on the north side of the hallway. The road master occupied the western-most room. He was the head of all section crews along the line. It was also used for a small meeting room in later years. The Creston Municipal Water Works Manager occupied this office until moving to a new location in December 2004. At the present time this office is vacant and available for rent.

The next room to the east was housing for the Special Agent. Special Agents were in charge of security, special (valuable) merchandise and employees. He generally made sure all activities were on the Up and Up. This later became the office of the Trainmaster. Until December 2004, this was the Water Works office. At the present time this office is also vacant and available for rent.

The next room on the east end of the building was storage for baggage as well as mail. Mail was a very important part of the Railroad's business for many years. In the late 1960's the Railroad Postal Office Cars were

discontinued. According to railroad workers this was a turning point in the railroad's operations and services.

The express office occupied the eastern-most end of the building. Railway express was very important and was quite a large operation. They shipped all kinds of things---perishables, many parts from manufacturers, foods, fish...all kinds of things. There is no Railway Express at all today.

The former Baggage and Express office space is used today for the Congregate Meal Site for Senior Citizens.

2nd Floor

The Telegraph and Relay station was an integral part to communications for all stations under jurisdiction for this division point of the railroad. A wooden counter and a glass partition above it that rose to the ceiling divided the room. With hall communications in operation the glass partition helped keep the noise in just this area. A very complicated radio monitor board was in operation in the room. He was in charge of all repairs as well. At one time this board monitored pipelines for Iowa Southern Utilities as well as those of the Railroad. The monitor board help locate trouble spots along the lines. The glass partitions had sliding glass windows. This area was where all railroad employees came to receive their instructions. A switchboard for the railroads' own telephone system was housed in this room as well as Western Union Service. Today this area is used as City Council Chambers.

The offices on the south side of the 2nd floor may originally have been those of the Superintendent and his assistants or secretaries. The western-most room was at one time used for the "Trick Dispatcher." This man communicated with all other operators—telephone and telegraph between here and Omaha. He ordered trains; made them up, set destinations...he had great responsibility in the operation. Today Burlington Northern has only one dispatcher for a very large area on both sides of the Mississippi River. This dispatcher is centered in Cicero, Illinois and microwave and telephone now do all communications. This area is used as the Mayors' office.

The next office space was that of the Chief Dispatcher. This man would have been considered almost the top man of the division point. All decisions made by this man were considered "binding". Today this area is the City Administrator's Office.

The next office space was that of the Chief Clerk's sometimes referred to as the Superintendent's Clerk. He had control of employees---their sickness, lay-offs, hiring and firing. He was a good man to be a friend to---especially in time of lay-offs. Today this is the office of the City Clerk.

The Time Keeper occupied the next office. This man kept track of all daily time slips for all employees. Quite a tedious job. Today this room contains the copier and fax machine, file cabinets and some storage.

The Assistant Superintendent occupied the next office area for many years. He was "The Authority". Today's authority of our station rests on the "Trainmaster", which is a lesser position than that of the Assistant Superintendent. Today this is the office of the Accounting Manager.

The next rooms on the south side of the hallway are employee break room and employee restrooms.

In this hallway on the north side is a large plaque of the Lewis and Clark Expedition presented by the Creston eighth grade class of 1922.

On the north side of the corridor was a large meeting room. It was used mainly for instruction classes for Railroad employees, to keep them up to date with the code of operating rules. Today the office space is that of the Building Official, Building Inspector and Public Works Secretary.