

The Midlothian & Blue Island Railway

by Larry Plachno



The Midlothian & Blue Island Railway was built primarily to provide transportation to a country club. The entire railroad consisted of little more than two miles of track connecting with the Rock Island Railroad. This diminutive 0-4-4T Baldwin locomotive and these two conventional railroad passenger cars began service on the line in 1901 and continued as the only equipment on the line for a decade.

Golf, the national game of Scotland, was brought to the United States in the late 1800s by Charles Blair MacDonalld who organized the first American course in 1893. By the final years of the century, the golfing bug had bitten several prominent Chicago business leaders who became interested in establishing their own golfing clubs in the suburban countryside, in the manner of Scottish gentlemen. The third such country club in the Chicago area, and the first on the south side, was founded on January 22, 1898 on a plot of land in a remote area about 18 miles southwest of Chicago. It was named the Midlothian Country Club from the Sir Walter Scott book, *The Heart of Midlothian*.

Many of the initial country club founders and members were prominent businessmen from downtown Chicago. Included among the founders were George R. Thorne, then president of Montgomery Ward & Co., E.A. Potter, and John G. Shedd. Other

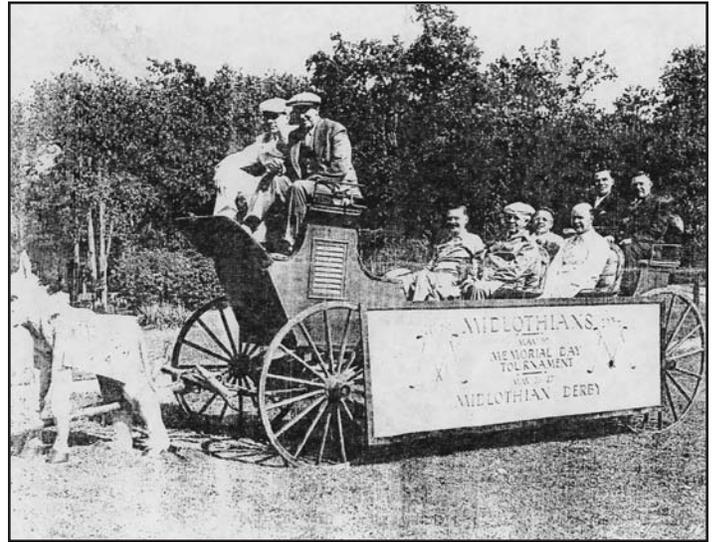
members who joined during the early years were Marshall Field, Ruben H. Donnelly and A. Montgomery Ward.

Some 240 acres of land located approximately three miles southwest of Blue Island was purchased from a local farmer, Wallace Gilson. In a brief time, this remote property became a major recreational complex. The original sod for the fairways was imported all the way from Midlothian, Scotland. Ten homes were built on the property for members and became known as "Cottage Row." A large Club House included 35 guest rooms for visiting members. Other members eventually built homes just outside the property. The original course had a total of 27 holes but the first nine were a practice or auxiliary course to qualify for playing the main course. The club also offered fox hunting and a polo field with a large stable of horses which were owned by the members.

A Need for Transportation

In spite of all this construction and activity, members of the new Midlothian Country Club faced serious transportation problems during the early years. Initial transportation in 1899 consisted of a ten-passenger tallyho carriage drawn by as many as six horses. It was less than satisfactory when traveling on the mud trails along fence lines that were the only "roads" of that period. Early records indicate that the caddies would cling to the outside of the wagon rather than walk through the mud.

The Rock Island Railroad had opened their line to Joliet in 1852 and their nearest stop was at Rexford's Crossing. This was nothing more than a flag stop located where the railroad line crossed Crawford Avenue, then the only true road in the area, at what would eventually be 149th Street. The stop was named for Stephen Rexford who in 1860 owned a 233-

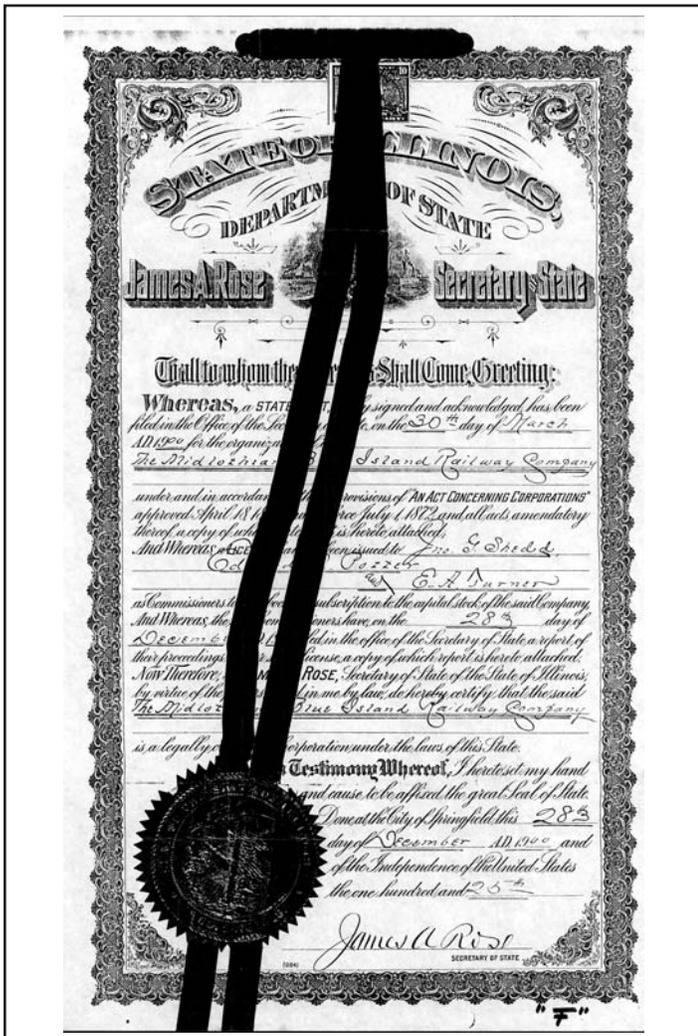


The original ten passenger tallyho carriage was photographed in 1934 at a special event. It proved to be less than desirable on mud trails in 1899 and prompted the founding of the Midlothian & Blue Island Railway.

acre tract of land in that area when the railroad came through. The Rexford family is also prominent in the early history of Blue Island.

The combination of the horse-drawn carriage, the lack of roads and the quality of service at Rexford's Crossing forced the members of the Midlothian Country Club to seek better transportation. After substantial discussion, some of the founding members decided to build a railroad to Blue Island, which represented the nearest substantial community and nearest railroad station with an agent. On March 30, 1900, John G. Shedd, Edward A. Potter and Edward A. Turner, all members of the Midlothian Country Club, petitioned the Illinois Secretary of State for permission to form the Midlothian & Blue Island Railway Company with an initial capitalization of \$50,000. The Secretary of State gave approval for them to open the books for subscriptions.

Although initial plans had been to build a railroad line from the Midlothian Country Club to Blue Island, the Rock Island Railroad met with the members and changed their mind. The Rock Island not only promised to provide satisfactory service to Rexford's Crossing for these prominent Chicagoans but also agreed to build the Midlothian Country Club's railroad line to Rexford's Crossing on a "cost plus" basis using their own track crews. Pleased with this arrangement, members of the Midlothian Country Club had a station built near the rail crossing of what would be 147th Street. This station was then given to the Rock Island Railroad. Considering the source of the building and the lack of other passengers in the area it is not surprising that this new station was given the name "Midlothian."



Papers to create the Midlothian and Blue Island Railway were signed on March 29, 1900 and submitted to the Illinois Secretary of State the following day. Official incorporation came on December 28, 1900.

Five individuals subscribed to the necessary 1,000 shares of stock at \$50 per share. These people included A.G. Pulver (500 shares), George R. Thorne (200 shares), and C.T. Atkinson, John G. Shedd and E.A. Turner for 100 shares each. As a result, the Midlothian & Blue Island Railway Company was officially incorporated on December 28, 1900. George R. Thorne was elected as the company's first president. In retrospect, it must be suggested that no other railroad had as many prominent businessmen and millionaire owners per mile of line as did the M&BI.

Shed was the president of Marshall Field & Co. and served as a director of Commonwealth Edison, an insurance company, a bank, and at least three railroads including the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific. He would donate the Shedd Aquarium to Chicago in 1924. Turner was president of the Link-Belt Co. and was involved with several other companies. Pulver was a member of the Illinois Bar and general attorney for the Chicago & Northwestern Railway. As mentioned earlier, Thorne was president of Montgomery Ward & Company.

Building the Line

The Rock Island had agreed to build the line for ten percent over cost and quoted a price of \$16,000. This figure covered grading, fencing, culverts, engineering as well as actual track construction, all manpower and even the engines used during construction. George R. Thorne signed a contract with the Rock Island on December 17, 1900 authorizing them to build the line and promising payment from "The Midlothian Country Club, or certain of the officers thereof."

Engineering work began immediately and, in spite of the winter weather, the Rock Island completed the project by April of 1901, only four months later. To start this project, the Rock Island put a switch into its westbound main just south of the new Midlothian station and put in approximately 200 feet of siding which crossed a new bridge. This trackage would remain Rock Island property and would serve as the interchange with the new line. Actual M&BI trackage began at the end of this siding, on Rock Island property, just south of the new station. Beyond this the M&BI line extended north along the alignment of what would later be Hamlin Avenue, then turned west along the alignment of what would be 143rd Street.

Upon reaching the golf course grounds, there were two switches from the tangent track. The first turned southwest towards the Club House and was called the "main line." Another 86.6 feet further, the

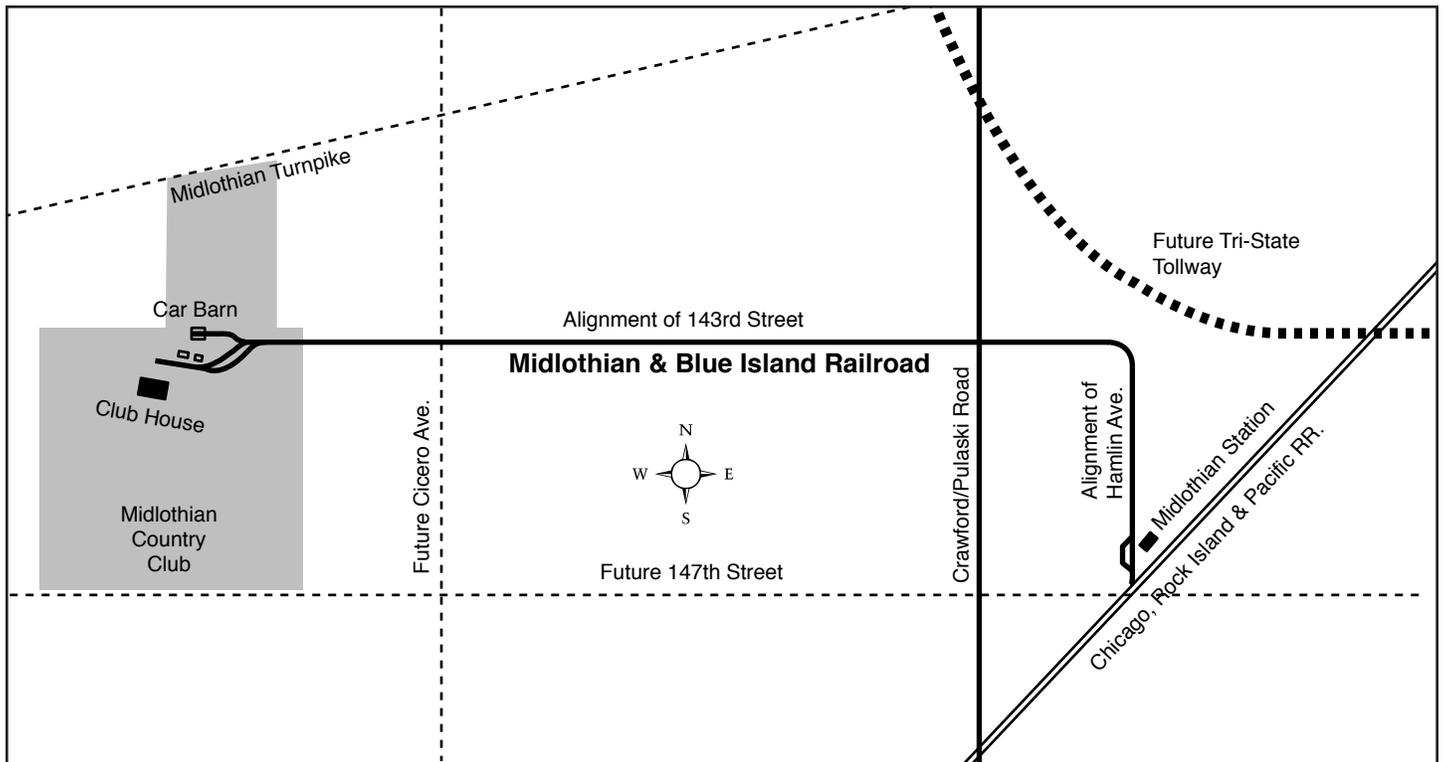


A stock certificate from the Midlothian & Blue Island Railway Company. Initial incorporation consisted of 1,000 shares of stock at \$50 per share.

second switch allowed a second track to turn southwest. This was a runaround track paralleling the "main line." The tangent track, on the approximate alignment of 143rd street, then jogged slightly north a few feet and continued straight west 320 feet to a single stall engine house.

In the early years it was obvious that the railroad was of major importance to the golfing club. Trains arrived and departed from a high level but uncovered platform. Elaborate wide stone steps, known as the "Grand Staircase," led up a small hill to Cottage Row and a drive leading to the Club House. Many members preferred to walk to the west end of the high level platform to the covered pedestrian walk, known as "The Passage," that led to the center of the Club House. A small building, 15 feet and three inches wide, known as the "Baggage House," was located on the north side of the track east of the platform near where the "main line" and runaround track rejoined at a switch.

According to Rock Island records, the actual main line of the M&BI was 11,484 feet long. Five switches were used in constructing the line. Two were used for a 553-foot double-ended siding at the Midlothian station (at least a portion of which was built on Rock Island property). This was used by the locomotive as a run-around track. Two switches were used on the County Club end to construct a 564-foot double-ended siding for the same purpose. The fifth and last switch led to a 320-foot track inside the Country Club property that ended in a single-track engine house that was 66 feet and two inches long. Hence, the total railroad amounted to 12,921 feet of track.



This map shows how the Midlothian & Blue Island Railroad looked upon completion in early 1901. Consisting of slightly more than two miles of track, the entire railroad was built in about four months by the Rock Island Railroad. With the exception of later electrification and the conversion of the engine house to a car barn, the railroad remained essentially unchanged until it was dismantled. The location is approximately 18 miles south of Chicago and approximately three miles southwest of Blue Island, Illinois.

The actual trackage was constructed from 60-pound second-hand rail laid on oak and cedar ties. Fencing of the line was completed at the same time, as was the construction of a few smaller bridges and culverts. The only bridge on the line worthy of the name was on Rock Island property on the interchange track.

Rock Island records indicated that 335 hours of engine use were required to build the line along with 7,300 ties and 229 tons of rail. It is interesting that only one pair of surface cattle guards were used, at Crawford Avenue (at approximately 14300 south), since it was the only road crossing at this early date.

As an interesting side note, the final invoice from the Rock Island for the line construction, engine fitting and engine house work came to \$23,855.42. The officers of the M&BI protested because this was considerably above the original estimate. As a result the Rock Island reduced the invoice to \$18,843.37. Later that year, on November 16, 1901, George R. Thorne signed a document (while on a trip to France) that reduced the authorized stock of the M&BI to \$30,000. By the end of the year some of the stock had been sold to County Club members other than the original incorporators.

First Locomotive and Cars

With the construction of trackage underway, the officers of the M&BI found it necessary to acquire equipment to run on the line. Since the Chicago & South Side Rapid Transit Railroad Company had just completed electrification of their line under the direction of Frank Sprague, it had several 0-4-4T Vauclain compound steam locomotives of the Forney type as surplus equipment. The M&BI selected number 36 which had been built by Baldwin in November of 1892. Considering their recent cooperation, it was not surprising that the Rock Island Railroad agreed to repair and outfit the locomotive prior to its being placed in service. After its arrival at the Country Club, the little locomotive was named the "Mule" by the staff and regular riders. The Rock Island was also asked to make a smoke jack for the M&BI engine house at this same time.

The M&BI also acquired two passenger coaches. Surviving records credit them as being second-hand steam railroad coaches but their origin is unknown. One was a straight coach while the other was a combine and both were of substantial size to the point of overshadowing the diminutive locomotive. They certainly were not former rapid transit cars nor were they mentioned in the Rock Island papers.

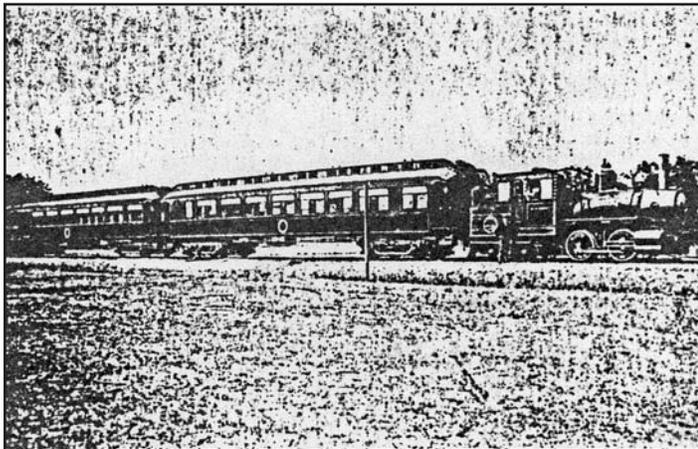
Regular Service Begins

Regular service on the line began in 1901. Fares were rather high for such a short trip. Round trip fares on the line were 25 cents while a 10-ride round trip ticket sold for \$2.00. Many of the caddies could not afford to pay this and it is known that several walked all the way from Blue Island. Arriving trains at the Country Club were met by caddies who helped turn the train around while greeting the incoming members and golfers.

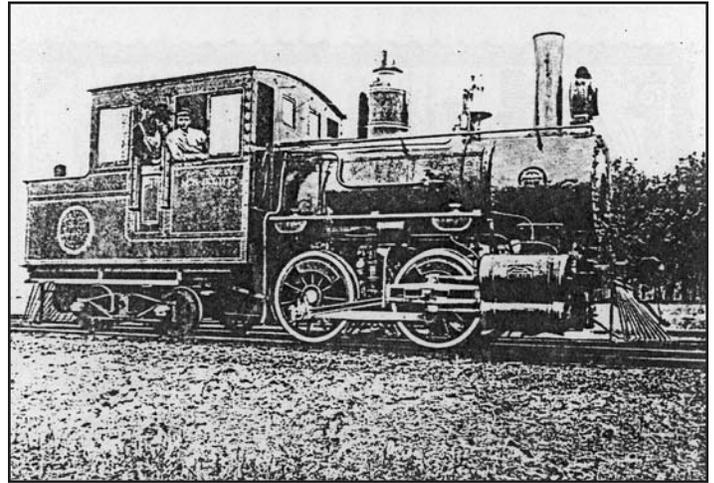
An interesting addition to the normal activity came in 1904 after some Country Club members visited the Kentucky Derby. They decided to host a similar annual event for golfing to be called the Midlothian Derby. Competition took place over two days and involved 36 holes of golf. In that era before casual golfing gear, the participants thought nothing of golfing in top hats and formal coats.

Since overnight accommodations at the Country Club were limited, additional housing for the Midlothian Derby was solved in the same way as at the Kentucky Derby, with private and Pullman sleeping cars. Presumably, the parking of several large Pullman cars on the main line of the M&BI disrupted regular operations but was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. This event continued annually for several years.

As the years progressed so did the reputation of the Midlothian Country Club, and other events were held on the grounds. One of the most prestigious came in 1914 when the Midlothian Country Club hosted the United States Open Championship, better known as the "U.S. Open."



Most of the trains on the Midlothian & Blue Island Railway consisted of the two passenger cars pulled by the little steam locomotive. The locomotive was up to the job since there were virtually no grades on the line.



The Midlothian & Blue Island Railroad started service with an 0-4-4T steam locomotive built by Baldwin in November of 1902. It had served on the Chicago South Side Rapid Transit Co. as their #36. Members of the Country Club nicknamed it the "Mule."

Surviving photographs and information suggest that the standard consist on most or all trains included both passenger cars with the little locomotive. While this might at first appear to be overcapacity, there are photos and documents indicating that the train did carry substantial number of people on occasion. It should be remembered that the Midlothian & Blue Island train was effectively the only convenient way into or out of the Country Club.

In those early years the Country Club was as much a resort as a golfing club. In addition to visiting family members, there were numerous employees because of overnight accommodations with 35 rooms, a restaurant, a golf pro, management and other staff. During special events the number of visitors increased substantially and they all came and left by way of the train.

Even on days when traffic was light, members preferred to have two cars on the train. Written accounts in those early years mention that a segregation of sorts was practiced with sedate members riding in one car and the noisy caddies in the other.

Other Traction Developments in the Area

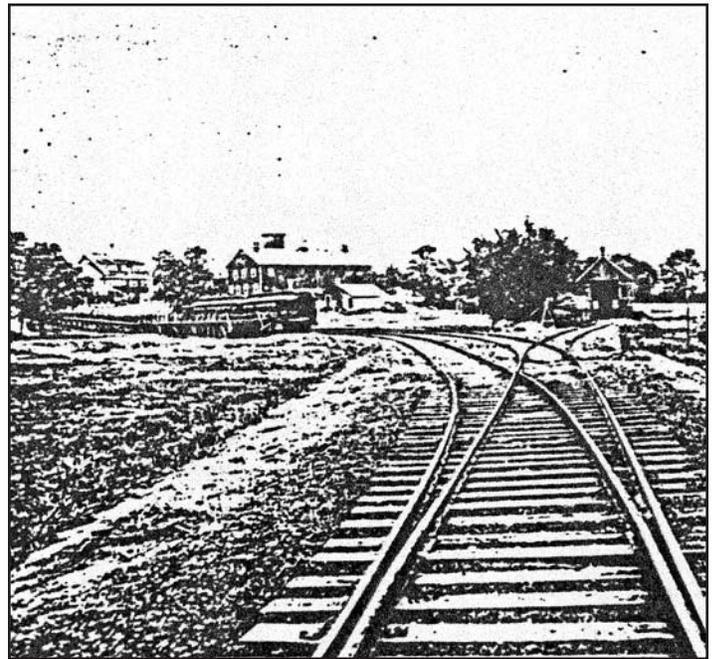
The future of the M&BI was influenced by a development at a nearby electric line. On July 5, 1899, the Chicago Electric Traction Co. extended their storage battery line into Harvey, giving the line a 13-mile run from 63rd Street in Chicago. Since this was beyond the normal range of storage battery operation, the company electrified their line with conventional trolley wire in 1901. The cost of this conversion put the company into receivership.

On November 17, 1904 the Chicago & Southern Traction Co. was incorporated to build an interurban line south from Chicago. The vice president of this company, W.H. Conrad, was also a member of the Midlothian Country Club and presumably was very familiar with the M&BI. In 1907, the C&STrCo bought the Chicago to Harvey line at a foreclosure sale. The C&STrCo had two subsidiaries. One was the Chicago, Kankakee, Lafayette & Southeastern Railway which intended to build south from Harvey to Kankakee and Lafayette. It did reach Kankakee in late 1907 and interurban service was extended to that point. However, it never did build south of Kankakee.

The second subsidiary was the Chicago, Blue Island & Joliet Traction Co. This company was to build southwest along the Rock Island Railroad to New Lenox where a connection into Joliet would be made with the new interurban line between Joliet and Chicago Heights that was being built in 1909. In January of that year, W.H. Conrad made an announcement in the trade press that the CBI&J would take over and electrify the Midlothian & Blue Island Railroad as part of its route.

In February of 1909, the CBI&J announced that it was ordering a rotary converter and would soon construct a substation. In March, the company announced that it was placing an order with McGuire-Cummings Car. Mfg. in Paris, Illinois for one car for June 1 delivery. The car was to be mounted on McGuire-Cummings 20A trucks.

Records indicate that this car was built but never delivered. Several people feel that this is the car that eventually found its way to the M&BI a few years later. By mid-year the Chicago & Southern Traction Co. had developed financial problems due to a combination of costs for the extension to Kankakee and

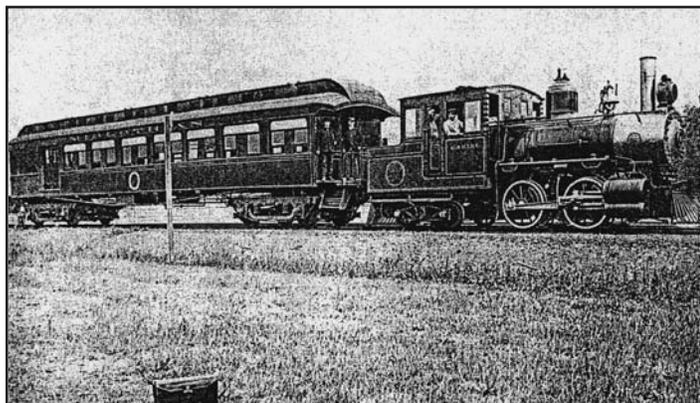


This view looks west from the approximate alignment of 143rd Street after the MB&I track entered County Club property. The first switch to the left is the "main line" going to the club house while the second switch to the left is the runaround track. The track continuing west goes to the train shed.

the lack of patronage along this rural route. In 1910, a bank stepped in to ask for receivership for the company and this was finally granted in 1911. The line was taken over in 1912 by a new company, the Chicago & Interurban Traction Co.

Country Club Ownership and Electrification

Details are unclear as to whether the M&BI and Country Club members were involved with the CBI&J's substation and car. It is somewhat more than coincidental that in 1911 the Midlothian Country Club itself acquired the stock of the M&BI from the members and then paid the money to have the line electrified. A small substation was built on the Country Club property just north of the track at the east end of the high level platform. Known as the Generator House, the building was 15 feet and five inches wide by 23 feet and three inches long, and located slightly west of the Baggage House. Arrangements were made to purchase power from the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois. Power came in at 2300 volts A.C. and the substation used a 100 KW induction motor-generator. Power was provided to the trolley wire at the standard 600 volts D.C.



The "Mule" makes another run on the M&BI Railway to the Country Club. The lack of a turntable on the property suggests that the "Mule" would have had to run backwards half of the time.

Acquisition of the railroad by the Country Club gave the railroad two separate eras and two unusual records. In its earlier days, the M&BI easily had more millionaire owners and passengers per mile of track than any other railroad. After 1911, it could claim to

be the only railroad owned by a country club. While other golf clubs could claim to have railroad or street-car service, none of the other country clubs actually owned the line.

At least a portion of the motivation for electrification may have been the economy of operation. The steam locomotive and cars had required a crew of four (engineer, fireman, conductor, and collector). Runaround tracks were provided at both ends of the line so that the locomotive could uncouple, run around the train, and then couple on the opposite end. Double-ended streetcars not only reduced the required crew but also had the advantage of reversing ends rather than having to run around a train.

To operate the line, three used streetcars were acquired from the Calumet & South Chicago Street Railway in late 1911. All three cars were originally built for the Calumet Electric Street Railway in 1896 and later went to the Calumet & South Chicago Street Railway in a 1908 merger. A ten-bench single truck trailer was acquired in August while a 10-bench single truck open motor car came in September. In October, a single truck closed motor car was added to the roster. These three cars initiated electric service over the line when the season started in 1912. It is presumed that the old locomotive shed was enlarged for the electric cars since there are records that the M&BI had a car house with a capacity of four cars.

Apparently, the M&BI had no obligation to report to the Interstate Commerce Commission. As a result, they did not bother to number their cars or equipment. While the steam engine retained the "36 spot" number on its nose, no records or photos show numbers on any of the other equipment. After the arrival of the electric cars, the old steam locomotive turned out to be a boomer. It was sold to a forestry company and later turned up working for a chemical company in New York. Disposition of the two steam passenger cars is unknown.

It is particularly interesting that the steam locomotive, variously known as the "Mule" or "Old 36," is credited with a possibly unique record. Having arrived at the Midlothian & Blue Island Railway after having been displaced by electrification of the South Side Rapid Transit, it was again displaced by the electrification of the M&BI. If this is not a unique record, it certainly would be rare.

The year 1912 also marked the appointment of R.K. Cumming as the first regular agent of the Rock Island at Midlothian. In spite of this, trains still only made flag stops at the Midlothian station and were flagged by the agent. Virtually all of the passengers using the Midlothian station at this time were on their

MIDLOTHIAN COUNTRY CLUB TRAIN SCHEDULES			
Time shown is DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME, one hour FASTER than Central Standard Time			
FROM CHICAGO TO MIDLOTHIAN COUNTRY CLUB:			
LEAVE LA SALLE STATION	Leave Englewood	Arrive Midlothian	Arrive Club House
8:00 AM Daily except Sunday.....	8:13 AM	8:50 AM	9:00 AM
8:15 AM Sunday only.....	8:28 AM	9:05 AM	
9:15 AM Daily.....	9:28 AM	10:10 AM	10:20 AM
11:45 AM Daily.....	11:58 AM	12:27 PM	12:36 PM
2:00 PM Daily.....	2:16 PM	2:49 PM	2:59 PM
* 2:33 PM Daily.....	2:46 PM	3:22 PM	3:32 PM
4:34 PM Daily except Sunday.....	4:47 PM	5:16 PM	5:26 PM
5:07 PM Daily except Sunday.....	5:20 PM	5:44 PM	5:54 PM
5:40 PM Daily except Sunday.....	5:53 PM	6:28 PM	6:38 PM
6:02 PM Daily except Sunday.....	6:15 PM	6:50 PM	7:00 PM
A* 8:10 PM Daily.....	8:23 PM	9:09 PM	9:20 PM
A 11:00 PM Daily.....	11:13 PM	11:56 PM	12:37 AM
FROM MIDLOTHIAN COUNTRY CLUB TO CHICAGO:			
LEAVE CLUB HOUSE	Leave Midlothian	Arrive Englewood	Arrive La Salle Sta.
6:50 AM Daily except Sunday.....	7:00 AM	7:38 AM	7:52 AM
7:20 AM Daily except Sunday.....	7:30 AM	8:08 AM	8:22 AM
8:35 AM Daily except Sunday.....	8:50 AM	9:36 AM	9:51 AM
9:55 AM Daily except Sunday.....	10:05 AM	10:35 AM	10:50 AM
10:24 AM Sunday only.....	10:34 AM	11:16 AM	11:30 AM
12:15 PM Daily.....	12:24 PM	1:01 PM	1:15 PM
2:19 PM Daily.....	2:29 PM	2:04 PM	2:20 PM
4:09 PM Saturday only.....	4:19 PM	4:51 PM	5:05 PM
4:40 PM Daily ex. Sat. and Sun.....	4:50 PM	5:21 PM	5:35 PM
5:25 PM Sunday only.....	5:35 PM	6:04 PM	6:20 PM
5:30 PM Daily except Sunday.....	5:39 PM	6:04 PM	6:19 PM
6:30 PM Daily.....	6:40 PM	7:14 PM	7:31 PM
B* 9:00 PM Daily except Sunday.....	9:10 PM	9:54 PM	10:10 PM
9:22 PM Sunday only.....	9:32 PM	10:04 PM	10:16 PM
B*10:00 PM Daily.....	10:10 PM	10:54 PM	11:10 PM

A Trains leaving Chicago at 8:10 p. m., and 11:00 p. m. will not be met unless arranged by telephoning Club Manager.
 B Passengers leaving Club House on 9:00 p. m. and 10:00 p. m. trains must notify the Club House office at least one hour in advance.
 *These trains go via the suburban line.

Trains left the Country Club 10 minutes before the connecting Rock Island train was due at Midlothian. Trains to the Country Club arrived 10 minutes after the connecting Rock Island train arrived at the Midlothian station. In the summer months, service ran from 6:50 a.m. to about 7:00 p.m., although later trains could be arranged on request. As many as 14 round trips were operated daily.

way to or from the Country Club. Rock Island records show that only one Rock Island employee and two monthly ticket customers lived in the vicinity and used the station. The first store in the area did not open until 1918.

There is evidence that the east end of the line at the Midlothian Rock Island station was also equipped with a high level platform when the trolleys took over, and it may have dated from earlier years. This may explain why the McGuire-Cummings car was not equipped with stepwells when delivered.

Schedules and Service

Schedules on the M&BI line varied by season. During the the heavy summer golfing season, the train or later electric cars would make as many as 14 round trips per day to the Midlothian station and return. The first morning trip would leave the Country Club end of the line as early as 6:50 a.m. and the last regular trip would leave the Country Club at about 6:30 p.m. However, by making arrangements with

the Club Manager, the trains would run as late as 10:00 p.m. During the less popular spring and fall season, the schedule was substantially reduced. No trains were normally scheduled during the winter months when golfing was impossible.

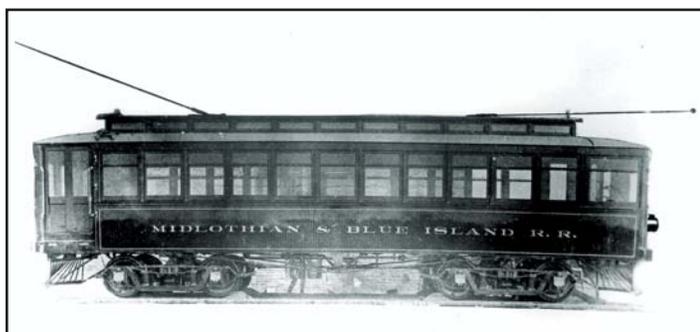
Running time between the Midlothian station and the Country Club was only about five minutes. From the Country Club end, trains would depart from the platform at the Grand Staircase ten minutes prior to Rock Island train time at the Midlothian station. Arrival times at the Country Club were scheduled exactly ten minutes after the arrival of the Rock Island train at the Midlothian station. Summer weekends were the busiest times for the little railroad with less business on summer weekdays. There were fewer passengers in the spring and fall.

There is no record of any stop on the line other than the two end terminals. This is not surprising since there were very few homes and residents in the area at that time. The only real road crossing on the line was at Crawford/Pulaski Road.

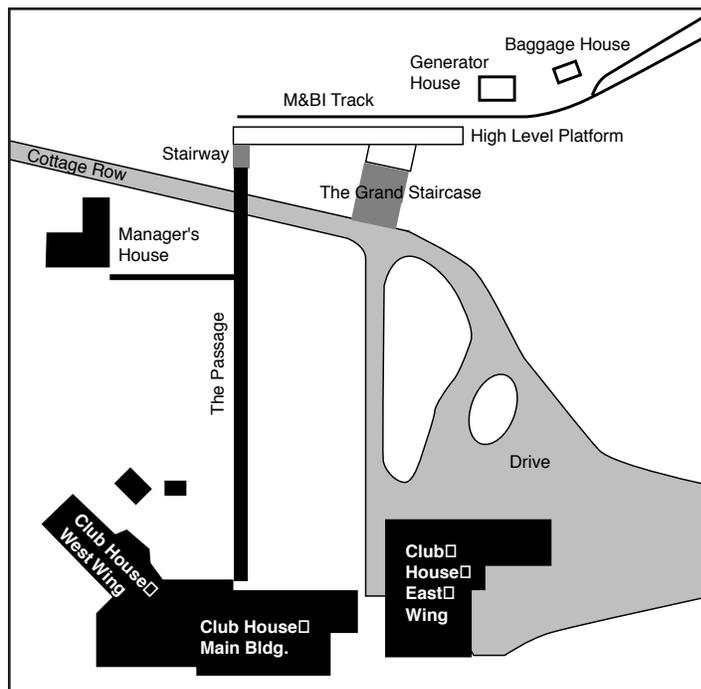
Two Additions to the Fleet

Two more pieces of equipment were added to the roster in the following years. These last two pieces of equipment appear to be the only new cars ever acquired by the line.

Apparently unhappy with the used single truck electric cars, the Country Club acquired a closed double truck car from McGuire-Cummings in about 1914. This rode on McGuire-Cummings 20A trucks and reportedly had been the car built in 1909 for the CBI&J and was held at the plant for several years before being sold. However, it was lettered Midlothian & Blue Island when delivered.



This builder's photo shows the heavy closed double truck streetcar built by McGuire-Cummings that arrived on the M&BI in about 1914. It was reportedly originally built for the Chicago, Blue Island & Joliet in 1909. Although this car used substantial electric power, it worked out well on the M&BI and was popular with passengers.



This map shows the relationship between the M&BI high level platform at the Country Club and the nearby Club House. The Grand Staircase down from the drive to the platform was very impressive but many members preferred to walk via "The Passage" which at least was covered overhead.

At about that same time, Chicago & West Towns Railways Co. acquired two cars from McGuire-Cummings that were rumored to have been originally built for the M&BI. These two cars, numbers 105 and 106, were typically streetcar in construction. C&WT was under the same ownership as McGuire-Cummings and getting cars diverted from other orders would not have been unusual.

While the heavier car rode better and passengers were better protected during inclement weather, it also was expensive to operate. A single round trip cost approximately \$3.50 in power. Hence, for the sake of economy, the substation was shut off when the car was not operating. When the car found it necessary to lay over at the Rock Island station for any period of time, the motorman would phone the Country Club to have the power shut off or put back on.

There was no regular substation attendant at the Country Club. If the circuit breaker went out, it would ring an alarm outside the club office. An office employee would then run out to the substation to turn the power back on.

While the power cost was acceptable on weekends when riding was high, it was unacceptable on weekdays when only six to 12 passengers rode to and from the Rock Island. As a result, the last

piece of equipment acquired by the line was a gasoline powered jitney railway bus. It was built on a standard one-ton International chassis but had flanged wheels instead of rubber tires and a stiff front axle to replace the regular front axle with steering knuckles. The steering gear was removed, leaving only the steering post with its spark and throttle control. The June, 1916 issue of *Motor Power* magazine felt that the rail bus was unusual enough to warrant an article.

The rail bus went into operation in 1916. In addition to operating on weekdays, it often ran on weekends in conjunction with the electric car. Members would ride in the rail bus while others rode the electric car. Since the rail bus was single-ended, one of the club members designed an inexpensive and ingenious turntable to turn it around. One of these turntables was placed at each end of the line.

Railroad Office Moves to Midlothian

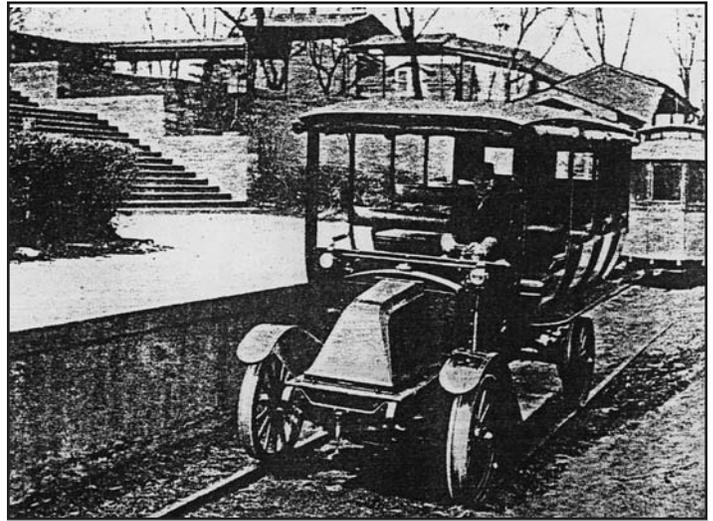
On December 15, 1925, the Country Club gave up the expense of maintaining a separate business office for the M&BI in Chicago. On that date the Midlothian Country Club replaced the office at 38 S. Dearborn in Chicago as the official principal business office for the railroad.

A little village eventually grew up around the Rock Island station. It was incorporated in 1927 and not unsurprisingly took the name of Midlothian. In retrospect it is interesting that the village took its name from the station which in turn took its name from the Country Club, which in turn took its name from a novel by Sir Walter Scott, which was named after an area in Scotland.

Paved Roads and Abandonment

Shortly after the village was incorporated, 147th Street was paved. For the first time there was a paved road leading to the Midlothian Country Club. Almost immediately the little M&BI railroad was superfluous. Operations continued through the summer of 1928 and then ended in the fall.

By September of 1928, a junk dealer was ripping out the track. Disposition of most of the electric cars is unknown although the big double truck car was shipped on a flat car, without trucks, to a junk yard at 67th Street and Cicero Avenue in Clearing where it was used as a yard office until 1940 when it was replaced by another car body. However, at least a small portion of the line survived for a time. In early 1929, the Rock Island purchased the first 670 feet of M&BI connecting track at the Midlothian station for use as a team track.



The M&BI's rail bus is awaiting passengers at the high level platform at the Country Club prior to departing on another run to the Midlothian station on the Rock Island. To the rear is one of the electric cars, presumably the McGuire-Cummings car. On the left you can see the bottom portion of the "Grand Staircase." Above and to the rear, "The Passage" is obvious with its overhead canopy.

The M&BI existed as a corporation many years after the rail line was gone, presumably because it had a 50-year life when incorporated. As late as 1946 there are records indicating that the M&BI still existed as a corporation and was using the Midlothian Country Club as its registered office.

As late as the 1970s, there were some early residents of the area that remembered the line. One lady mentioned that she had vivid memories of the M&BI. She said that it was fun to watch the big car going across the prairie when she was a youngster.

Today, nothing is left of the Midlothian & Blue Island Railroad. Since the right-of-way was built on the alignment of future streets, the building of streets and residential development has wiped out all traces of the line. Even at the Country Club, you would have to look very hard to find any remnants. The old Club House was torn down to make room for a new classical Club House completed in 1999.

Strangely, the one surviving piece of transportation equipment was the original tallyho carriage. It was discovered buried in a barn in the 1990s in a state of disrepair. The Country Club Board of Directors approved funds to restore the historic wagon and it was sent to an Amish body shop outside of Arcola, Illinois for restoration. It was later displayed at the country club.

Midlothian & Blue Island Railroad

Roster of Equipment

Unit	Built	Builder	Acquired	From	Notes
0-4-4T Locomotive	11/92	Baldwin	1901	Chicago South Side Rapid Transit	1
Railroad Coach	?	?	1901	Purchased Used	2
Railroad Combine	?	?	1901	Purchased Used	2
ST 10-Bench Trailer	1896	Pullman	8/4/11	C&SCRy #114	3
ST 10-Bench Motor	1896	Pullman	9/29/11	C&SCRy #307	4
ST Closed Motor	1896	Pullman	10/30/11	C&SCRy #408	5
DT Streetcar	1909	McGuire-Cum	1914?	McGuire-Cummings, Paris, IL	6
Rail Bus	1916?	Autocar	1916	Purchased new	7

Notes

Since the M&BI did not have to report to the ICC, there was no requirement to number the equipment. None of the surviving photos show any numbers on any of the cars other than the "36 Spot" on the nose of the locomotive.

- 1 - Baldwin #13026. Ex-Chicago South Side Rapid Transit #36. Sold 1911 to Emporium Forestry Co., became #8. In 1920s sold again to Tupper Lake Chemical Co. for the Grasse River Railroad in New York.
- 2 - Conventional steam railroad coach and combine purchased used.
- 3 - Built by Pullman for Calumet Electric Street Railway. Merged into Calumet & South Chicago Ry. Co., became #114.
- 4 - Pullman #871 built for Calumet Electric Street Railway as #307. Merged into Calumet & South Chicago Ry. Co., remained #307.
- 5 - Pullman #863 built for Calumet Electric Street Railway as #95. Merged in 1908 to Calumet & South Chicago Ry. Co., became #408.
- 6 - Built in 1909 by McGuire-Cummings Mfg. Co. for the Chicago, Blue Island & Joliet Traction Co. It was 39 feet and 8 inches long and had McGuire-Cummings 20A trucks. Photos do not show stepwells which suggests that the railroad had high level platforms at both terminals. After abandonment, this car was shipped on a flat car, without trucks, to a junk yard located at 67th Street and Cicero Avenue in Clearing where it was used as a yard office until 1948 when it was replaced with another car body.
- 7 - Built on an International one-ton truck chassis. May have been the only piece of rolling stock that the M&BI acquired new.

Midlothian & Blue Island

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