

A HISTORY OF THE RAIL LINE IN WINNETKA

Who Was Harold Ickes?

Harold Ickes's 14-year tenure as Secretary of the Interior makes him the longest-serving cabinet member in the history of the United States. He was appointed to the position by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, when the country was still mired in the Great Depression. Ickes helped to form and then direct the Public Works Administration (PWA), a massive New Deal construction program. During the six-year span of the PWA, he supervised almost 20,000 construction projects that included hundreds of schools, sewer systems, bridges, and hospitals.

Ickes and his wife had moved to Winnetka and built a large house on Private Road in 1916, and when he moved to Washington he did not forget his hometown. He was instrumental in providing federal funding for the two largest construction projects ever undertaken in our Village: the grade separation project, and the creation of the Skokie Lagoons. The latter project transformed an undesirable marshy swamp into a series of seven lagoons and five dams. It included the planting of over 100,000 trees, and was the largest Civilian Conservation Corps project in the nation.



Village Manager William Moulton and Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes on the steps of Village Hall

What Was the North Shore Line?



North Shore Line Indian Hill Station Car #400 loading New Trier High School Students, Motorman Mort Gilson

The Green Bay Trail that is now popular with runners and cyclists was originally the site of the North Shore Line train tracks. This electric, interurban train line operated from 1899 to 1955. The first trains operated between Church Street in Evanston and downtown Waukegan, stopping at closely-spaced stations (sometimes only several hundred yards apart) that had simple boarding platforms.

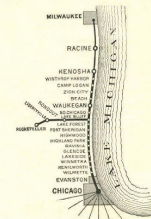
Service was extended north to Milwaukee in 1908.

That same year the railroad line went into receivership, and it was purchased in 1916 by traction magnate Samuel Insull. He made numerous improvements, and instituted direct service to Chicago (with no need to change trains) in 1919. In 1932 Insull's electrical empire collapsed, a casualty of the Depression, and the North Shore Line went into bankruptcy for the second time.

During World War II, everyone relied heavily upon the trains. Profits made during the War years permitted the North Shore Line to be reorganized and sold in 1946, but ridership soon declined. After the War, families began owning two cars. The Edens Expressway opened in 1951, and the Old Orchard and Edens Plaza shopping centers were built soon thereafter. The railroad petitioned to abandon the "Shore Line Route" through Winnetka in 1948 and again in 1954; the request was granted in 1955. Tracks were removed and the land was converted to a recreational trail later that year.

Chicago & Milwaukee Electric Railroad

An Ideal Line for a Delightful Day's Outing



HOW TO REACH THE NORTH SHORE

Take the Northwestern Elevated to its terminal, White Avenue, and then take the Evanston Electric to Church Street, Evanston.
Or, take the North Side Cable Car to the Lamb Barn, and then the Evanston Electric to Church Street, Evanston.
At Church Street, Evanston, direct connection is made with high speed buses on the Chicago & Milwaukee Electric Railroad to all points North.



Looking north from Indian Hill Station, October 1940