

New Albany and Salem (Monon) Railroad: Gosport Passenger and Freight Station
Gosport
Owen County
Indiana

HAER
IND,
60-GOSP,
2A-

Photographs and
Written and Historical data
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

10/10/85
FOUNDED

HAER
IND,
60-GOSP,
2A-

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

New Albany and Salem Railroad:
Gosport Passenger and Freight Station

HAER IN-4

Location: East end of North Street, Gosport
UTM: 16.529380.4355450
Quad: Gosport

Date of Construction: 1854

Present Owner:

Significance: One of the earliest railroad structures erected in Indiana, the Gosport Station is a representative example of a "train barn" station: a style of station architecture common only during the formative period of American railroading. It is the only surviving example of five train barns known to have been built in Indiana.

Historian:

It is understood that access to this material rests on the condition that should any of it be used in any form or by any means, the author of such material and the Historic American Engineering Record of the National Park Service at all times be given proper credit.

History of the New Albany and Salem Railroad

The New Albany and Salem Railroad was officially formed on July 31, 1847. The stated purpose of the company was to connect New Albany, located on the Ohio River and then the largest city in Indiana, with Salem, a town 35 miles to the north. Construction of the road began in New Albany on May 3, 1848.¹

Long before the track passed through Salem, James Brooks, President of the railroad, planned to continue the line to Lake Michigan.² He obtained an amendment to the original charter permitting the New Albany and Salem to extend its tracks to any point in the state of Indiana.³ The railroad, completed on June 24, 1854, connected Michigan City on Lake Michigan to New Albany on the Ohio with 288 miles of track.⁴ Major stations were located at New Albany, Orleans, Bedford, Bloomington, Gosport, Greencastle (where the line crossed the Indianapolis and St. Louis Railroad), Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Bradford (now Monon), and Michigan City.⁵

Even though the New Albany and Salem Railroad connected the Great Lakes and the Ohio River, the line was never a financial success. It passed through no important cities other than New Albany, and the small agrarian towns along the route failed to attract industry.⁶ The Panic of 1857 eventually led to receivership, foreclosure, and a transfer of the property on 24 October 1859 to the newly founded Louisville, New Albany, and Chicago Railroad Company. There was brief prosperity because of the north-south movement of troops and supplies during the Civil War, but between 1868 and December 27, 1872, there was a second receivership, and a new company emerged: the Louisville and Nashville and the Southern Railways purchased more than 87% of the stock in the company,⁷ and finally in 1971 the railroad merged with the Louisville and Nashville.⁸

Gosport Passenger and Freight Station

The Gosport Station, built by the New Albany and Salem Railroad in 1854, is one of the earliest railroad structures erected in Indiana. It is representative of a style of depot architecture that was popular during the earliest days of American Railroading, but which became obsolete long before the end of the 19th century. Charles Meeks has called it the "train barn, the stable for the iron horse."⁹

The train barns appear to be a clear case of the adaption of an earlier vernacular building to a new industrial situation. "Except for the presence of trains instead of wagons, a train barn was indistinguishable from a substantial farm barn,"¹⁰ Meeks explains. The earliest train barns, erected during the 1830's and early 1840's, were "simple and compact" wood structures with large doorways which enabled the trains to enter the depot, and load passengers and freight. During the early days of railroading when the train ran only during the day, the large wooden doors could be closed at night to keep the "iron horse" safe.

Experience forced adaption, however, and by the early 1850's the large wood doors were discarded when engineers discovered that the doors opened too slowly to accomodate the slow braking of the trains. Another modification of the early design was the abandonment of all wood construction after steam locomotives and wood depots proved to be a volatile combination.

The Gosport Station, built in 1854 at a cost of \$6,750¹¹ is a simple one-story structure, 58' x 123', with a gabled wood roof supported by Howe trusses. Except for a brick dentil along the cornice line, the building is unadorned and the principal features are the two large arched openings that allow trains to enter the station.

A railroad track runs along the front of the station between the buildings and the river, and a spur runs through the length of the station to rejoin the main track. The main track was for passenger trains, and a storage room, station office, passenger waiting room and small loading platform open along the east side of the depot. The interior track was for freight cars, and the entire rear half of the building, as well as the north half of the west side, contained large freight platforms. Since a large portion of the interior space is devoted to freight handling, it is likely that the Gosport station served as the transfer point for freight between the New Albany and Salem Railroad and the Indianapolis and Vincennes Railroad, as their tracks crossed a few hundred yards from the station.

The principal features of the exterior of the station are the two simple arched openings, one on each gable end, about 13 feet wide and 20 feet high at the crown through which the freight track enters and leaves the building. Three smaller segmentally arched openings in the west elevation allow the freight to be transferred from the large interior freight platform to wagons and carriages outside.

Though the New Albany and Salem Railroad brought a brief period of economic prosperity to Gosport, by the last quarter of the 19th century both the town and the railroad were in decline. The Gosport station has survived both fire and demolition. The insignificance of the line itself probably contributed to the station's survival since there was little need to demolish the train barn to build a larger structure. Of the five other train barns that were known to exist in Indiana, the Gosport station is the last example which remains intact.

Gosport Passenger and Freight Station

Notes

- 1 John W. Barriger, A Hoosier Centenarian, "The Monon."
New York: 1947, p. 12.
- 2 Barriger, p. 12.
- 3 Frank F. Hargrave. A Pioneer Indiana Railroad, Indianapolis:
1932, p. 28, quoted from a Law of February 11, 1848, Section 3.
- 4 Barriger, p. 16.
- 5 Hargrave, p. 180, quoted from the annual report of September 20, 1859.
- 6 Barriger, p. 16.
- 7 Barriger, pp. 17-19.
- 8 1970 annual report of the Monon Railroad.
- 9 Meeks, p. 50-51.
- 10 Ibid., p. 50.
- 11 Hargrave, p. 180, quoted form 1859 Annual Report.

Gosport Passenger and Freight Station

Bibliography

Annual Reports of the New Albany and Salem; Louisville, New Albany and Chicago; and Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railroads.

These are invaluable sources of the history of the Monon Line and the Gosport Station. They detail construction year by year. Large sets can be found at the Louisville and Nashville offices in Louisville, in the collection of Elmer G. Sulzer of Sarasota, Florida, and at the library of the American Association of American Railroads, Washington D.C.

Barriger, John Walker. "A Hoosier Centenarian, 'The Monon' ", Address to the Newcomen Society. New York: 1947.

A very short account, with many dates, of the Monon railroad, with emphasis on the history of the New Albany and Salem Railroad. There is no bibliography.

Blanchard, Charles Ed. Counties of Clay and Owen, Indiana. Chicago: 1884.

In a few pages, the author gives a history of the town of Gosport, lists the stores and factories there in 1884, and gives his opinions on the economic impact of the railroad on the town.

Hargrave, F.F. A Pioneer Indiana Railroad: The Origin and Development of the Monon. Indianapolis: 1932.

Hargrave gives a long, detailed, well-footnoted account of the New Albany and Salem Railroad, quoting many original sources no longer available. There are a few photos, none of them relative to Gosport.

Meeks, Carroll L.V. The Railroad Station: An Architectural History. New Haven: 1956.

Meeks invented the term "train barn" and discusses examples of the type. He has included in his book an extensive bibliography about railroad architecture, including a list of important nineteenth century railroad periodicals.

Official Directory of Industries and Shippers. (Undated, 19th century.)

Located in the files of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, Louisville and Nashville Office Building, Louisville, Kentucky, the directory lists the industries at Gosport.

Perring, Thomas C. "The New Albany and Salem Railroad: Incidents of Road and Men." Indiana Magazine of History, December 1919, p. 342-362.

An amusing, personal account.

Syoc, Leland S. "History and Significance of the Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railway Company.: Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1953.

ADDENDUM TO
NEW ALBANY AND SALEM RAILROAD
(GOSPORT PASSENGER AND FREIGHT COMPANY)
North Street
Gosport
Owen County
Indiana

HAER No. IN-4

HAER
IND,
60-GOSP,
2-A.

XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013

ADDENDUM TO:
NEW ALBANY & SALEM RAILROAD
(Gosport Passenger & Freight Company)
North Street
Gosport
Owen County
Indiana

HAER IN-4
HAER IND,60-GOSP,2A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001