

Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation

THE CURRENT

September 2023



A beautiful summer day for paddling the Pec from Winslow to McConnell with a bonus of eagle sightings! Around the halfway point, you will see the support pilings for a railroad bridge that once spanned the Pecatonica. This bridge was for the Dodgeville Branch of the Illinois Central, which ran from 1887 til 1942. It split off the Madison Branch in Red Oak and ran north through McConnell, paralleling the east side of the river. To avoid a big curve to cross the river at a right angle, the bridge was cleverly built at a spot where the Pec makes one of its famous loops, allowing the train to continue in a straight line, as seen in this 1937 aerial photograph.

This is the Bob Nickels edition of the newsletter. He gets credit for all the pictures in this month's newsletter. The Pecatonica River and the railroads were central in the development of Stephenson County. The movement of material from the source of material to manufacturing and then to the point of use has been the driving force of community development everywhere. Freeport prospered when manufacturing prospered.

Joe Ginger, president

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Everyone is invited. Bring your ideas!

Sept 14	RAFTERS 6:30 P.M.
Oct. 12	Next meeting.
Nov. 9 Dec. 14	FPRF meetings are the second Thursday of the month. See "ALL IN. Stephenson County" for area events.
Sept 23	Pretzel City Brewfest
Oct 7	Oakdale Fall Festival
Oct 7	Autumn Leaf Run 9 AM Oakedale
	Mistletoe Walk Nov. 18 & 19
	https://www.eventbrite.com/d/il-freeport/events/

Other Events & Activities

Freeport/Stephenson County

<https://greaterfreeport.com>



Watch Tom Lindblade's "Illinois' Friendliest Paddle"
<http://bit.ly/paddlethepec>



Freeport Park District
1122 S. Burchard Ave.
Freeport, IL 61032
1-815-235-6114

www.freeportparkdistrict.org

Lena Community Park District
609 N. Schuler St.
Lena, IL 61048
1-815-369-5351
www.lenaparks.org



Pecatonica River Scenes in Postcard - Book 2

Pecatonica River Scenes in Postcards \$12 +\$3 S&H
www.pecriver.org/projects

"Pecatonica River Scenes in Postcard - Book 2" \$12 + \$3 S&H

Available at: Convention & Visitors Bureau, 9 East and through the mail.

A limited number of "Pecatonica River Scenes in Postcard" are available at \$12 + \$3 S&H.

Freeport, IL: Railroad Hub

If you count the branches that fork off in the vicinity of Freeport, it used to have eight "spokes" and four railroad bridges. Now it has two spokes and two trail bridges.

Illinois Central was the first land grant charter created by the Federal government. Back then, Galena was a prosperous river town because of the lead mines in the area. Many considered Chicago a glorified trading post in a swamp. But some people had the vision to realize that Galena was stagnant and Chicago was enjoying vigorous growth, in part because of the I&M Canal. So a "branch" was also built from Centralia, IL to Chicago. In fact, IC created the town of Centralia. The land-grant route went north through the center of the state to Freeport, then turned west to Galena. The red line roughly indicates how the IC charter line went through town.

Another early railroad was the C&NW/Galena & Chicago Union. In fact, it was the first railroad in Chicago. It built from Chicago towards Galena. However, they never reached Galena. Freeport was the terminus because C&NW started building a more direct route to the transcontinental terminus in Omaha, NE from West Chicago. The original C&NW route now terminates in Rockford since the segment between Rockford and Freeport has been abandoned. It is easy to find the treelines and land scars of the route east of US-20. A former co-worker from Honeywell, Bob Nickels, provided the railroad information. Thanks, Bob!



If you are interested in improving river stewardship, promoting paddling, organizing river events, the history of the Pecatonica River and communities along the river, check our website and contact us.

Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation

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www.illinois paddling.org

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Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Dues are due in February. If you joined in July or later, you are good for 2024.

All donations are tax deductible and should be made payable to:

Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation.

