

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terminal Town

Introduction	2
I. DOWNTOWN TERMINALS	4
Downtown Railroad Terminals	6
Bus Terminals	58
Electric Interurban Railway Stations	94
Steamship Landings	110
II. OUTLYING STATIONS	118
Timesaving Connecting Points	120
Outlying Bus and Rail Terminals	150
III. AIR TRANSPORTATION	182
Airports	184
Air-Taxi Shuttle Destinations	236
IV. GOING FORWARD	254
The Future in Flux	256
Appendix I, Terminals of Tomorrow	266
Appendix II, Minor Endpoints and Air-Taxi Stops	276
Appendix III, Measuring Intercity Service	280
Notes and Bibliography	282
Index	292

INTRODUCTION

Terminal Town



Chicago's system of passenger transportation terminals, famously complex and constantly changing, has for more than a century been a defining feature of its cosmopolitan character. Whether serving those traveling by aircraft, boat, bus, or train, these places have given the "Windy City" its reputation as the epicenter of America's passenger transportation network.

Yet the full extent of this system has gone unappreciated and misunderstood by many observers. Some of the most remarkable terminals are ignored in publications about the city's

history and largely unknown to contemporary travelers and transportation professionals. To provide readers a grasp of the system's extraordinary proportions, this book highlights 48 places in the metropolitan region that have been termini or important connecting points for intercity passengers since 1939. The various chapters take readers to the nerve centers of a transportation system that shoulders an enormous burden: moving people across the continent.

Chicago deserves to be the focus of such a book, if for nothing else than its top ranking in key areas of passenger travel. From the beginning of the twentieth century through 1969, Chicago had *six* major downtown railroad stations—twice as many as any other large American city. Between the 1930s and 1998, Chicago was home to the world's busiest airport (initially Midway Airport and later O'Hare International Airport). Passengers boarding in Chicago could—and can still—fly directly to more major American cities than from any other city in the country. From 1953 to 1989, Chicago was home to the nation's largest independently operated bus depot—the Chicago Greyhound Station—a facility that offered direct bus service to more places than from any other American city.

Evaluating this ponderous system of terminals reveals both the flattering and less-than-flattering sides of Chicago's transportation heritage. For generations, travelers who simply want to go from Point A to Point B have looked at Chicago's terminal system with both a

sense of awe and a sense of dread. The city gives them innumerable travel alternatives while also requiring them to contend with some of the country’s most notorious bottlenecks. When the city’s population was near its peak in 1955, buses, trains, planes, and ships arriving in the metropolitan area terminated at a bewildering 20 different locations.¹ Another five transfer points, some on the region’s periphery, offered opportunities for timesaving connections for those passing through the region.

Readers may immediately be drawn to the chapters featuring the great icons of American transportation—Chicago Union Station, Midway, and O’Hare, to name only a few. Smaller and less-publicized locations, however, also deserve attention. Englewood Union Station on the South Side once had direct service to more of America’s 100 largest cities than was available from any other train depot in the United States. Sky Harbor Airport in Northbrook, was home to the world’s first “scheduled air taxi shuttle.” Tiny Meigs Field on the Chicago waterfront boasted six carriers operating 122 daily passenger flights—the most ever at any downtown airport in the country.

The chapters featuring each of the stations and terminals are intentionally brief and focus primarily on the *transportation* role of each facility, to allow readers to appreciate the gestalt of Chicago passenger transportation. The first part of the book describes the downtown bus, train, and steamship terminals, and is followed by a review of the region’s outlying termini and time-saving connecting points. Major airports and the smaller airfields used for short-hop air taxi flights are showcased in the latter part of the book, followed by an assessment of profound changes looming on the horizon.

Readers seeking detail on architecture or design, or more about the particular transportation services available, may wish to consult the bibliography at the end of this volume. Those interested in the many calculations presented in the pages that follow should consult the author’s companion paper summarized in Appendix III. By design, the volume excludes from consideration the region’s many local stations that were neither endpoints for intercity bus or train routes nor important transfer points for passengers traveling through the region.

As this book illustrates, the place so aptly described as the Windy City, the City of the Big Shoulders, and, as rhapsodized by Frank Sinatra, “that toddlin’ town,” is equally deserving of being called Terminal Town. ■

(Opposite) An illuminated sign evokes the memory of the Chicago & North Western Railway at the entrance to the footbridge over Canal St. leading to Ogilvie Station.
(Author’s photo)