

JOHN JACKMAN (1816-1896)

John Adams Jackman was born March 22, 1816 in Boscawen, New Hampshire, where his great-grandfather and grandfather—Deacon George Jackman and Squire George Jackman, Jr.—were two of the earliest settlers.¹ Jackman’s grandfather George Jr. served as town clerk for thirty-six years, was active in town councils during the course of the Revolutionary War, and was elected several times to the New Hampshire General Assembly.² Likewise, Jackman’s own résumé is reflective of a similar propensity for public service—along with his personal penchant for the stage.

Though formal education in the early nineteenth century was largely limited to eight to ten-week sessions of school in the summer and winter months, Jackman took advantage of the minimal amount of professional schooling he could attain in the winter while continuing to work a trade throughout the rest of the year.³ Jackman’s fervor for knowledge and public works was, as mentioned prior, likely inspired by the deeds of his early ancestors, but was also likely spurred on by the early death of his father.⁴ Having to rely on his own resources at a young age, Jackman was motivated to seek out opportunities by which he could further his status and security—this included continuing his winter schooling and maintaining a trade, but also refers to his regular pursuit of informal educational ventures, including extracurricular reading, attending lectures, and participating in debating societies.⁵ Jackman’s involvement in the latter assumedly aided him in his short stint as a classroom teacher, but also less obviously helped prepare him for a forty-two year career as a railroad man—during which he was readily promoted “from one position of responsibility to another.”⁶

Jackman began his career in railroading in 1837 when the industry was still in its infancy.⁷ Hired first as a station agent for Boston & Worcester Railroad (B&W) in West Newton, Massachusetts, Jackman was quickly reassigned to the machinery department as a locomotive engineer.⁸ Reputed as an “expert mechanic,” Jackman not only witnessed, but actively participated in “the establishment of the railroad from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi.”⁹

During his fifteen years with B&W, Jackman saw train cars that were akin to stagecoaches, with four wagon-type wheels rolling on bands of steel, carrying passengers distances often no

¹ *School Record of McLean County and Other Papers*, vol. 2 of *Transactions of the McLean County Historical Society* (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary, 1903), 640.

Boscawen, New Hampshire was settled circa 1734 by “a colony of Massachusetts people.” The first Jackman to move to the United States (James Jackman) arrived from Exeter, England around 1620. He settled in Newbury, Massachusetts, from where George, Sr., and his sons George Jr. and Robert, later moved to Boscawen in the year of the city’s founding. *Ibid.*, 639-640.

² *Ibid.*, 640.

³ *Ibid.*

It is unknown what trade Jackman maintained at that time.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 640-641.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 640.

⁸ *Ibid.*; “Sketch of John A. Jackman,” *The Pantagraph*, October 23, 1926.

The Boston & Worcester Railroad was chartered June 23, 1831 and construction began in August 1832. The first trip from Boston to Worcester took place on July 4, 1835. Twelve passenger cars carried 300 people in two locomotives. <http://patch.com/massachusetts/westborough/bp--building-of-the-boston-worcester-railroad>, Date accessed September 5, 2016.

⁹ *School Record of McLean County*, 640-641.

greater than ten miles one way.¹⁰ These “iron horses,” however, soon came to know few bounds. By the fall of 1852, the burgeoning national railroad system had already reached Ohio—and with it, Jackman too headed west.¹¹ Once in Ohio, Jackman became superintendent of machinery for the not yet fully constructed Cleveland & Toledo (C&T) Railroad.¹² In 1850, the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio all had sections of railroad running through them. However, it was not until 1852 that the major cities in these states were connected to one another by way of rail. In light of the construction of the Southern Michigan Railroad, which successfully networked the cities of Detroit, Chicago, and Toledo, among others, the C&T Railroad was built especially to “furnish a connection with the eastern country.”¹³ The C&T was completed, with shops erected at Norwalk, Ohio, under Jackman’s supervision.¹⁴

Before moving to Ohio, Jackman found time in the midst of railroad duties to marry his childhood sweetheart Sarah Farnum Sargent, also of Boscawen, New Hampshire, on November 22, 1843.¹⁵ The couple had seven children, five of whom survived to adulthood: John Jr., Frank, Fred, Caroline, and Georgia. The family remained in Massachusetts until the spring of 1853 before joining Jackman out west.¹⁶ Shortly after arriving in Ohio, Jackman himself was requested to move back east but refused, explaining his reasoning thusly, “I have embarked in an enterprise too important to abandon thus hastily. I have men who need my attention; that I am not willing to leave as long as they are willing to stick by me, under every circumstance and in every condition.”¹⁷ A review of Jackman’s other letters and individual musings seem to suggest that his informal educational pursuits were worthwhile, for—as in this case—his lexicon was rarely devoid of drama.

In 1859, despite his earlier resistance, Jackman left his position with the C&T to return to his work in Boston as superintendent of machinery with the Boston & Worcester—or what was by then the Boston & Albany (B&A)—Railroad.¹⁸ Within two years of his returning to Boston, the United States was in the midst of civil war, and the B&A was the “chief avenue of communication, between New England and the seat of war.”¹⁹ Consequently, Jackman found himself responsible for overseeing the transportation of troops and supplies across state lines. In so doing, Jackman demonstrated a notable allegiance to his occupation and the Union-cause when he volunteered to run an engine ahead of a troop train after a rumor had reached the war governor of Massachusetts, John Andrew, that the railroad had been mined.²⁰ If the road were mined, Jackman was willing to sacrifice his engine and himself in order to ensure that the troops

¹⁰ Ibid., 641.

In the beginning, the trains ran from Boston to Newton (a distance of ten miles), three times a day, for a fare of just over thirty-seven cents one way. Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 641.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sarah Farnum Sargent was born on December 18, 1816. Her ancestors were among the earliest settlers of New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Sargent’s father died when she was nine, leaving her mother to raise five children alone. In Bloomington, Sargent was a charter member of the Bloomington Benevolent Society (organized on October 12, 1868) and served on the Board of Directors of the Bloomington Library Association in 1867. Mrs. Foster Walk, *John Adams Jackman* (1966); “Mrs. Jackman is Dead,” *The Pantagraph*, December 17, 1900.

¹⁶ *School Record of McLean County*, 641.

¹⁷ Ibid.

It is unclear whether it was Jackman’s family, or a former employer, who requested that he move back east.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. 642.

²⁰ Ibid.

were unharmed. Fortunately, the rumor proved untrue and both trains arrived safely.²¹ Even so, Jackman received a military commendation for the act.²²

Such feats on the part of Jackman did not go unnoticed, and it was not long before he again drew the attention of employers in the west—this time, the Chicago & Alton (C&A) Railroad.²³ And so, it was in 1864 that Jackman moved to Bloomington, Illinois to work as superintendent of machinery for the C&A, located on the city’s west side, whereby he had “general charge of all the machine shops, and furnish[ed] the designs by which all locomotives, boilers, and articles of use in the shops are made.”²⁴ After only a few weeks on the job, it was said by some of his fellow railroad men that Jackman was “already very highly esteemed both by the employees and by such of our citizens that have become acquainted with him. He is a *citizen* in every sense of the word, and takes a lively interest in the welfare of our city.”²⁵ Jackman’s initial interest in the community and its affairs, and his eagerness to assume the mantle of citizenship, seems rarely, if ever, to have waned. In Jackman’s own words, “. . . I am among the good citizens of Bloomington to strike hands with them in any good cause whatever that shall enhance the prosperity of this good city, and accord honor to its generous people.”²⁶

A champion of civic engagement, Jackman was a man of “unusual intelligence, deeply interested in all public questions, and displaying a decided taste for intellectual pursuits.”²⁷ He was “always to be counted upon to further every scheme for the good of any community in which he lived.”²⁸ In short, he was no stranger amongst the people of Bloomington. In addition to his involvement in various community organizations, committees, and boards (including the Bloomington Board of Trade, the Bloomington Board of Education, the Bloomington Science Association, the Railway Master Mechanics’ Association, the American Bible Society, and the Bloomington Library Association, among others), Jackman regularly submitted articles to the daily newspaper—the *Pantagraph*—and was seemingly willing to lend his loquacious talents whenever and wherever an opportunity arose.²⁹ Thus, it would appear that wordsmithing and master engineering were not mutually exclusive—at least, not for Jackman.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. 642.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ E. Duis, *The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois* (Bloomington: The Leader Printing and Publishing House, 1874), 85.

²⁵ “Repairs &c.,” *The Pantagraph*, July 26, 1864.

²⁶ *School Record of McLean County*, 643.

²⁷ Ibid. 642.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Founded in 1870, the Bloomington Board of Trade (or Business Men’s Association) was organized to oversee certain interests of the city; including the construction of a water works, testing the C&A well, and determining the feasibility of installing a similar well for the city. The well in question was thirty feet in diameter and depth, and supplied by an “inexhaustible” underground stream. The Business Men’s Association would also later be responsible for establishing the improvement fund that successfully paid for the expansion of the C&A shops in 1910—fourteen years after Jackman’s death. “Sketch of John A. Jackman,” *The Pantagraph*, October 23, 1926; Duis, *Good Old Times*, 87; “Citizen’s Meeting,” *The Pantagraph*, December 23, 1870; Bill Kemp, “Fund drive kept C&A Shops in Bloomington,” *The Pantagraph*, March 6, 2016.

The Bloomington Science Association was founded in Illinois in 1871, “having for its object the diffusion and popularizing of science in that State.” “Alas! My Prophet Soul,” *The Pantagraph*, September 25, 1877.

“Board of Education,” *The Pantagraph*, April 9, 1872; *The Pantagraph*, September 20, 1870; *The History of McLean County, Illinois, Illustrated* (Chicago: Wm. LeBaron, Jr., 1879), 204-205.

Jackman was said to be a man of “strong religious convictions;” and he his wife Sarah attended the Presbyterian Church in Bloomington. *School Record of McLean County*, 643.

Perhaps one of the more encompassing examples of Jackman's community loyalties and his tendency to take advantage of the printed medium is a March 1867 letter to the editor of the *Pantagraph*, in which he defended the Ladies' Library Association and their guest lecturer—Ralph Waldo Emerson (or as the reporter put it, Ralph Cold-dough Simmerson)—in response to a biased transcript of the presentation that was published by the paper five days prior.³⁰ The commentary with which Jackman took issue was that of a *Pantagraph* reporter writing under the name of Boswell, whose casual review of Emerson's lecture served to suggest that the language of the lecture was recorded *verbatim*, but that it required the "style of delivery—something like the revolutions of a broken cogwheel—to render it powerfully effective."³¹ Jackman took this remark as an attack on the efforts of the "ladies who have labored so zealously to secure these lecturers," and the "thousands of citizens of this place who are capable to appreciate merit in every line."³² In the course of his accusations, Jackman proposed that,

"In the world of art, there are certain statues and certain paintings, which to criticize adversely would require a bold man indeed, if he considered his own reputation of any sort of consequence; but, undoubtedly, there are persons so obtuse in intellect, that to them the finest creations of a Canova, or a Michael Angelo would be considered tame as compared with some *flashy daub* on a *stage scene*, or some *grotesque picture* on a *tavern sign*; for he who is totally wanting in ability to appreciate, cannot see the merits of others, nor can he see his own defects; and to such, a *monkey show*, or a *dancing baboon* has merits far more appreciable than the finest renditions of Shakespeare, or the sweetest tones from the works of Hayden or Beethoven."³³

Jackman concluded his mild censure by stating, "by publishing the above, you [the *Pantagraph*] will simply render to the Lecturer and to the Ladies of the Library Association, an act of justice."³⁴

In response to Jackman's dramatic diatribe, the *Pantagraph* stated:

"We give the above a place for two reasons: First, to show the sublime height [*sic*] the impudence of man can reach, and second, to observe the proverbial jewel, 'fair play.' We protest against his gratuitous inference that Boswell's report was an insult to, or attack upon the Library Association. If Mr. Emerson's friends feel grieved at Boswell's criticism, (which we do not believe), they will certainly feel less flattered at Mr. Jackman's style of defense. An illiterate fellow was in the habit of regularly attending the debates of the Roman Senate. Being asked if he understood the language, he replied, 'No, but I always know who has the best argument, by noticing which party gets mad first.'

...If Mr. J. must need agitate himself about the matters of lectures, etc.—establish himself unasked as censor of the public and the press, we recommend

³⁰ "Communicated," *The Pantagraph*, March 13, 1867; "Men of the World: A Lecture By Ralph Cold-Dough Simmerson," *The Pantagraph*, March 8, 1867.

The Ladies' Library Association preceded the Bloomington Library Association by ten years. The library was opened by the Ladies' Library Association in 1857, and in 1867 the Association later incorporated as the Bloomington Library Association. http://www.bloomingtonlibrary.org/about_us/library_history/ Date accessed, September 19, 2016.

³¹ "Men of the World: A Lecture By Ralph Cold-dough Simmerson," *The Pantagraph*, March 8, 1867.

³² "Communicated," *The Pantagraph*, March 13, 1867.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

him in the future not to ‘slop over’ till he fairly ascertains the current opinion of the community.”³⁵

The *Pantagraph* also suggested that Jackman’s article was an “ungentlemanly attack upon a journal” that had “befriended the author from the period of his advent.”³⁶ As evidenced by this exchange, Jackman was not the only man in Bloomington with an affinity for drama; nor did Jackman’s general popularity always go unquestioned.

From 1869 to 1874, Jackman served on the Bloomington Board of Education—serving as president of the board from April 1872 to April 1874.³⁷ In May 1872, a motion was brought to the board regarding the sale of two vacant lots located north of the Fifth Ward school.³⁸ Jackman opposed the board’s sale of city land, saying that the lots were “needed as a breathing place, and in less than five years would be wanted for another school site.”³⁹ In Jackman’s opinion, it was “evidence of insanity to sell off the lots proposed,” and he threatened to resign should the motion carry.⁴⁰ After comments were made in support of the proposal by other board members including Kersey Fell and Cyrenius Wakefield, the motion was carried, and Jackman immediately resigned. Shortly thereafter, however—seemingly within the same meeting—Jackman withdrew his resignation “at the request of several gentlemen.”⁴¹ Though Jackman seemed to have the support of his fellow board members despite their disagreement, there were individuals outside the board who may have preferred that Jackman’s resignation was permanent. In a letter to the editor of the *Pantagraph* published soon before the Board of Education elections were to take place in April 1874, a “Friend of the Public Schools” wrote to convey their dissatisfaction with Jackman’s reign as Board president, accusing him of being a “man of a vacillating and inconsistent character” who did not act as a “champion of economy either in regard to the erection of buildings or the salary of Superintendent,” and thus submitted to “unnecessary taxation” and “endanger[ed] the interests of the schools by puerile and capricious humor.”⁴² According to the letter, Jackman had resigned from his position “upon the plea that his business affairs were of such a nature as to preclude the performance of his public duties in a satisfactory and sufficient manner,” but was attempting to run again despite having just resigned as a result of his “incapacity to justly perform his duties.”⁴³ Jackman did not win reelection.

That is not to say that Jackman’s favor amongst the majority of his fellow Bloomingtonians was ever truly at risk. In 1870, Jackman was voted “the most popular man in Bloomington” at the Catholic Fair. Up against competition the likes of General Asahel Gridley, O. Vaughn, George W. Parke, General John McNulta, Jesse A. Wilson, Robert E. Williams, and Robert McCart, Jackman won the contest by six votes.⁴⁴

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *School Record of McLean County*, 643, “Board of Education,” *The Pantagraph*, April 9, 1872.

³⁸ “Board of Education,” *The Pantagraph*, May 28, 1872.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.; “Public Schools,” 60.

It should be noted that one of Jackman’s duties as President of the Board was to address the graduating senior class at the commencement ceremony at Durley Hall, and to distribute their diplomas. “High School Commencement Exercises,” *The Pantagraph*, June 14, 1873.

⁴² “Regarding Our School Election To-Day,” *The Pantagraph*, April 6, 1874.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “The Catholic Fair,” *The Pantagraph*, December 28, 1870; *The Pantagraph*, December 31, 1870.

At the same time he was serving as Board of Education president, Jackman was actively involved as an officer of the newly established Bloomington Scientific Association.⁴⁵ As evidenced by his term as Board president, however, to everything there is a season. Once again exhibiting his inclination to wax poetic, in 1877 Jackman wrote a letter to the editor of the *Pantagraph* in which he bemoaned the dissolution of the association. The previous day's paper had reprinted an announcement first published by *Harper's Weekly* on March 30, 1872 about the organization of the Bloomington Scientific Association and their trust that the society would be of "greater permanence" than similar societies in the region that had preceded it.⁴⁶ To this Jackman replied in his letter,

"...it makes one feel a little sad to have such high hopes and noble aspirations abort in their infancy. But such is fate, and we poor mortals must abide its decrees. But how our little society even had the honor of appearing in *Harper's Weekly*, was always a mystery to me.

Probably a stray copy of the PANTAGRAPH carried the item, as the thistle down carries the seed to the four winds of the heavens. Had the society lived, it is not possible to divine what very great things it might have accomplished. But as it died in its infancy, and as its collapse burst no banks, we ought to thank God that it was no worse. Let us write, '*Requiescat in pace*' over its quiet resting place."

J.A. Jackman⁴⁷

Jackman was also known to contribute articles showcasing his more technical prose, on subjects ranging from the physical principles of centripetal force to the construction of steam injectors.⁴⁸

Jackman's performances were not relegated to paper, however. A number of his public appearances include the following. In November 1866, Jackman delivered a speech at a meeting of Irish Unionists at Hogan's Hall.⁴⁹ In September 1870, Jackman presented a speech at a meeting of the Railway Master Mechanics' Association in Philadelphia.⁵⁰ According to the *Philadelphia Press*, Jackman "made a most eloquent and feeling speech... He gave an interesting account of the locomotive, paying a high compliment to Philadelphia manufacturers."⁵¹ In April 1871, he delivered an address at the eighteenth anniversary of the American Bible Society.⁵² In July 1871, he delivered a "poem of welcome" before the State Medical Society.⁵³ In May 1872, Jackman hosted a group of students from Illinois State Normal University, along with the school's president, Richard Edwards, at the shops of the C&A. Jackman "escorted them through the different departments, explaining the *modus operandi* of the numerous machines then at

⁴⁵ "The Society Upon the Stanislaus," *The Pantagraph*, September 26, 1877.

⁴⁶ "Alas, My Prophetic Soul," *The Pantagraph*, September 25, 1877.

⁴⁷ "The Society Upon the Stanislaus," *The Pantagraph*, September 26, 1877.

Requiescat in pace translates in English to "Rest in Peace."

⁴⁸ "Centripetal: Some Ideas Upon this Novel Principle From a Scientific Mechanism," *The Pantagraph*, January 7, 1875; "The Underground Tank System: A Lucid Explanation of the Theory on Which the Steam Injector is Constructed," *The Pantagraph*, December 18, 1879.

⁴⁹ "Irish Union Rally: Hogan's Hall Crowded," *The Pantagraph*, November 5, 1866.

⁵⁰ *The Pantagraph*, September 20, 1870.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *The History of McLean County, Illinois, Illustrated*, 204-205.

⁵³ *School Record of McLean County*, 643.

work.”⁵⁴ The group was pleased with Jackman’s “polite attention” and “explanatory remarks.”⁵⁵ That said, Jackman’s time in the public eye extended beyond speeches and tours.

Described as “an admirer and student of Shakespeare” and “an amateur actor with no little ability,” under Jackman’s railroader exterior beat the heart of a thespian.⁵⁶ Jackman was an appreciator of poets the likes of Pope, Milton, Dryden, and Tennyson, and could recite passages by heart.⁵⁷ One instance in which Jackman’s true dramatic tendencies took center stage was at the dedication of Durley Hall in Bloomington on December 12-13, 1872, during which he “surprised and delighted his friends” with his portrayal of “Tobias” in the play *The Stranger* and in his role as the “Duke of Venice” in *The Merchant of Venice*.⁵⁸ With more than 500 tickets sold for the first evening’s event, it was said to be the largest audience ever to assemble for entertainment at the time.⁵⁹ Though the crowds undeniably gathered first and foremost to view the new venue, attendants were also treated to a visual display of “rich, elegant and beautiful” costumes constructed by members of the Bloomington Library Association, including Jackman’s wife Sarah—who, along with two other female members of the Library Board selected and cast the play.⁶⁰ A review of the second evening’s performance acknowledged the successful casting, saying, “The perfect conception of the respective parts which each evinced was such as to be fully recognized by the audience, and was really creditable to any amateur company.”⁶¹ Possibly due to his wife’s connections, Jackman often offered his services to the Bloomington Library, performing in a number of plays for its benefit.⁶²

Already known to perform on the job, in November 1873, Jackman led another tour of the shops, this time for the Natural Philosophy class from the city high school, along with their principal Sarah Raymond, to show the “young people the mysteries of the machines over which he presides.”⁶³ Despite his fondness for the written word, one must remember it was to these machines that Jackman devoted his professional life. As once stated, Jackman was, indeed, an “Alton servant.”⁶⁴

In the course of his so-called servitude, Jackman witnessed, and was responsible for, much of the C&A machinery department’s “great advancement.”⁶⁵ In 1867, within three years of Jackman moving to Bloomington and accepting the job of superintendent, the C&A shops burned in a fire. The fire began the evening of November 1 in the brass foundry.⁶⁶ The fire was discovered

⁵⁴ *The Pantagraph*, May 27, 1872.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *School Record of McLean County*, 642-643.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ “Sketch of John Jackman,” *The Pantagraph*, October 23, 1926; “Durley Hall—Dedication To-Night,” *The Pantagraph*, December 12, 1872.

Durley Hall was a leading live-theatre venue located on the northeast corner of Main and Jefferson Streets in Bloomington. Open from 1872-1891, Durley Hall hosted a variety of nationally known acts. The construction of the building, designed by Alfred E. Piquenard, was financed by Judge David Davis. The theatre was named for Davis’s friend William Durley who previously lived in a house situated on the site of the theatre. In 1891, the Grand Opera House opened on East Market Street and proceeded to dominate the theatre scene for the subsequent two decades. The Durley Hall building was destroyed in the Great Bloomington Fire of 1900. Bill Kemp, “Durley Hall once center stage of city’s theater scene,” *The Pantagraph*, August 8, 2009.

⁵⁹ “Durley Hall—Dedication To-Night,” *The Pantagraph*, December 12, 1872.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; “The Stranger,” *The Pantagraph*, December 14, 1872.

⁶¹ “The Library Entertainment—Durley Hall Last Evening,” *The Pantagraph*, December 14, 1872.

⁶² *School Record of McLean County*, 643.

⁶³ *The Pantagraph*, November 29, 1873.

⁶⁴ “Death of John A. Jackman,” *The Pantagraph*, July 30, 1896.

⁶⁵ *School Record of McLean County*, 642.

⁶⁶ “The Great Fire at the Railroad Shops and the Losses,” *The Pantagraph*, November 4, 1867.

around 11:00 p.m., about an hour after Jackman had checked in on the last of the employees to leave for the night.⁶⁷ As the fire continued to burn into the early morning of November 2, the *Pantagraph* reported that the entire shops were destroyed, and that there was only hope that the roundhouse would be saved.⁶⁸ However, two days after the incident, the *Pantagraph* reported that less property was lost than originally thought.⁶⁹ The old and new roundhouses were saved, as well as all of the engines, and all but two cars were undamaged.⁷⁰ The machine shops, car shops, foundry, lumber sheds, and dry houses, however, were a “total loss.”⁷¹ The estimated cost of the damage, in materials only, was \$125,000 to \$150,000.⁷² Immediately following the fire, there was concern among citizens that the company would choose to remove the shops from Bloomington.⁷³ On November 26, a meeting was held at Phoenix Hall in Bloomington, at which “every property-holder, both great and small, and every voter” were urged to attend in order to sign a guaranty proposing that the C&A not only rebuild, but expand, the shops in Bloomington.⁷⁴ The guaranty included a clear outline of the property the community desired the company to occupy, which encompassed portions of Major’s Grove, and Morgan, Lumber, and Chestnut Streets.⁷⁵ The guaranty promised that those 400-plus people who had signed the document did “jointly and severally guarantee to the Chicago & Alton Railroad Company, that the said city of Bloomington shall...repay to the Chicago & Alton Railroad Company, the entire purchase money for the ground so purchased, together with ten percent interest per annum thereon from the several times such moneys shall be so advanced.”⁷⁶

Rebuilding efforts began the following spring in accordance with plans that had been devised under Jackman’s supervision the previous winter.⁷⁷ At that time, hopeful reports of the expected construction predicted that the shops would be “rebuilt [of stone and iron] on a scale of magnitude and excellence which will at once make them the best shops this side of the Alleghanies [*sic*].”⁷⁸ The new “model” shop buildings were completed in 1870 and long stood as a testament to Jackman’s professional expertise, for it was claimed by locals that no other shops west of Altoona, Pennsylvania could rival them.⁷⁹

As the railroad continued to expand and the shops continued to grow, Jackman’s expertise remained reliable. In 1871, the C&A ordered fifteen new locomotives in addition to building two onsite. Those constructed onsite were built under the “direct control and management” of Jackman whose “well-known skill and scientific attainments” were a “full guarantee for the completeness in all the mechanical details of their construction.”⁸⁰ This careful attention to detail was imperative considering not only the value of cargo these locomotives would carry, but the value of the “rolling-stock” itself. In an article published by the *Pantagraph* in 1873 titled, “What Rolling Stock Costs”—referring to the powered and unpowered vehicles that move on a

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Tremendous Fire: R.R. Machine Shops Burned,” *The Pantagraph*, November 2, 1867.

⁶⁹ “The Great Fire at the Railroad Shops and the Losses,” *The Pantagraph*, November 4, 1867.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. The equivalent cost of damages in 2015 would be almost 2.5 million dollars.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Machine Shop Meeting!: Turn Out Citizens!,” *The Pantagraph*, November 26, 1867; “The Guaranty for the Re-building of the Railroad Machine Shops,” *The Pantagraph*, November 28, 1867.

⁷⁵ “The Guaranty for the Re-building of the Railroad Machine Shops,” *The Pantagraph*, November 28, 1867.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *School Record of McLean County*, 642; “Sketch of John A. Jackman,” *The Pantagraph*, October 23, 1926.

⁷⁸ “100 Years Ago: Jan. 15, 1868,” *The Pantagraph*, January 15, 1868.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 642; Ibid.

⁸⁰ “New Locomotives,” *The Pantagraph*, July 19, 1871.

railway (including locomotives, carriages, and wagons)—the material worth of locomotives averaged \$7,500; passenger cars averaged \$2,800, sleeping and dining cars averaged \$10,000, and cattle cars averaged \$475, to name a few.⁸¹

Considering the less than ideal working conditions Jackman often described in his letters home during his early railroading days in Ohio—such as his experience “crossing the Maumee river at Toledo in the winter time, wheeling a barrow with some necessary material and obliged to cross in his stocking feet, in order that he might keep his footing upon the icy timbers”—one could question whether Jackman foresaw a day in which he would supervise shops staffed by 600 to 900 men capable of producing “everything needed, from a locomotive of the heaviest class to a finely-finished and elegantly-upholstered sleeping-car,” while repairing “anything... be it a pump, an engine, a car or a wind-mill.”⁸²

In the early 1870s, the C&A shops were Bloomington’s “most worthy manufactories.”⁸³ Said to support one-fifth of the city’s business, the space occupied by the shops and the tracks amounted to forty acres equipped with fifteen buildings, all with unique uses and functions.⁸⁴ Generally speaking, the shops were situated between Morris Avenue and Allin Street, extending into the neighborhood of Major’s Grove.⁸⁵ Jackman occupied an office on the upper floor of the store house, which housed the offices of all of the various departments.⁸⁶ Other buildings of interest on the campus included the following. The car-shops, under the direct supervision of Rufus Reniff, were located in a steam-heated, stone building measuring sixty-three feet by eighty feet.⁸⁷ Half of the building was dedicated to the manufacture of passenger cars; half to the manufacture of freight cars.⁸⁸ The planing, iron, and car machine shops—where all of the individual parts for the cars were made—were located in another building. On the same floor as the iron shop was the hydraulic press used to attach train car wheels to their axels.⁸⁹ The 300-foot long locomotive transfer table, “from which fourteen tracks extended into the building,” was located in the machine shop where engines were taken for repair.⁹⁰ Also situated nearby were the brass foundry, the coppersmith shops, two roundhouses, the old machine and repair shops, the pattern shop, the wheel foundry, the rolling mill, the well, and a bulletin board that noted departure time of each train and the name of the engineer assigned to run it.⁹¹ As one of the men charged with managing the operation, Jackman was once described as a man “prominently identified with the material development of Bloomington.”⁹²

It should be noted that Jackman’s railroading career encompassed both the Panic of 1873 and the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. An article published in the *Pantagraph* in December 1873 speaks to early looming concerns over strikes within the industry.⁹³ The article reported that a

⁸¹ Ibid. The equivalent costs of these figures in 2015 are as follows: \$147,059; \$54,902; \$196,078; \$9,314.

⁸² *School Record of McLean County*, 641; *The History of McLean County, Illinois, Illustrated*, 389.

According to E. Duis in *The Good Old Times*, in 1870, the machine shops employed 280; and the car shops, 230. Eighty engineers and ninety firemen were employed by the railroad, as well. Duis, *The Good Old Times*, 88.

⁸³ *The History of McLean County, Illinois, Illustrated*, 389-390.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 389. On average, the shops paid out a total of \$30,000 to 700 workers per month. This would be the equivalent of \$714,286 in 2015.

⁸⁵ *Atlas of Mclean Co. and the State of Illinois* (Chicago: Warner and Beers, 1987), 54.

⁸⁶ Duis, *The Good Old Times*, 84-85.

⁸⁷ Duis, 85.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *The History of McLean County, Illinois, Illustrated*, 391.

⁹³ *The Pantagraph*, December 30, 1873.

number of engineers of the C&A met at the Phoenix Hotel in Bloomington to discuss “the situation.”⁹⁴ After lasting until almost midnight, the results of the meeting were that there would be no strike upon the C&A and that “no trouble [was] as yet seriously anticipated on any of the roads leading to [Bloomington].”⁹⁵ The engineers of the L. and the Boston & Maine Railroads, however, were “quite dissatisfied and may ‘knock off’ at short notice.”⁹⁶

Come 1878, however, even Jackman’s exemplary reputation was not enough to combat the state of the economy—though, it does seem to have bought the career railroader some time. In an effort to streamline operations and reduce overhead, the then newly appointed Superintendent of Maintenance of the C&A, Colonel Wood, ordered the abolition of the machinery department in the car shops.⁹⁷ In Wood’s opinion, “all that class of work should be done under the supervision of Mr. Jackman.”⁹⁸ This decision, announced in May and enacted in November, led to the elimination of twelve to fifteen jobs—one of which was the position of master car builder (or superintendent of the car shops) held by Rufus Reniff, a longtime employee of the shops.⁹⁹ The decision to consolidate the car shops and the machinery department proved to be only one in a series of changes that Wood came to impose. Within three months, on January 10, 1879, the *Pantagraph* reported on the ordered removal of Jackman from his recent joint-position as superintendent of machinery and master mechanic of the shops—in effect, ending his almost fifteen year career with the C&A.¹⁰⁰ In the same article, the *Pantagraph* stated,

“During Mr. Jackman’s time the Chicago & Alton has grown from comparatively insignificant dimensions into a grand railway system, with a vast amount of rolling stock and locomotive machinery. He has been an active and public spirited citizen, and has taken a lively interest in Bloomington and her affairs... For this reason and on account of his excellent and much esteemed family, it is hoped that this change will not result in his removal from Bloomington.”¹⁰¹

Assistant master mechanic of the C&A, Aaron A. Ackley, was appointed Jackman’s successor – though rumors circulated that his appointment would be temporary.¹⁰² In light of his father’s forced resignation, John Jackman, Jr. resigned from his position as foreman at the shops.¹⁰³

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ *The Pantagraph*, May 22, 1878.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.; “The Consolidation of Two Leading Departments of the C. & A. Shops,” *The Pantagraph*, November 2, 1878.

¹⁰⁰ “Another Head in the Basket: Removal of Mr. J.A. Jackman, Superintendent of Machinery C. & A. R.R.,” *The Pantagraph*, January 10, 1879.

The exact reason for Jackman’s removal is not known. However, an article published on January 17, 1879 (seven days after the announcement of Jackman’s said removal) reported rumor that Jackman’s removal “had not yet been consummated,” and insinuated that there was “some cross-firing going on at the headquarters of the Company in Chicago.” *The Pantagraph*, January 17, 1879.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Fifteen months later, on April 8, 1880, Ackley resigned from his position as master mechanic and superintendent, to be replaced by C.V. DeClereq from Peoria. Ackley had been associated with the C&A for twenty years. His resignation was reported to be “tendered by request.” “Good Bye, Ackley: A Change of Administration in the Chicago & Alton Shops,” *The Pantagraph*, April 9, 1880.

Ackley is listed as Aaron A. Ackerly in *Gould’s City Directory for 1878-79, Bloomington and Normal* (Bloomington: Leader Steam Printing House, 1878), 15; and as Ackerley in *Gould’s City Directory for 1880-81*,

Thus, Jackman involuntarily retired from railroading in January 1879.¹⁰⁴ Contrary to this statement, a brief article published in the *Pantagraph* in September of that year did report that Jackman was then employed with the Rhode Island Locomotive Works, and that it was thought that he was to be “permanently retained” with the company.¹⁰⁵ By November, however, Jackman is again mentioned in the press as living in Bloomington.¹⁰⁶

In his retirement, Jackman possibly tended to his farm near Normal for the first few years, but eventually he moved back to his home at 507 W. Locust Street in Bloomington to live out the rest of his days in the company of his wife, children, and grandchildren.¹⁰⁷

The Jackman family moved into the Locust Street house, the former residence of Judge William H. Holmes, in the spring of 1873.¹⁰⁸ Commissioned by the judge in 1866 and built with “bricks brought from Peoria by oxcart,” the house came to be known as the ‘Jackman Mansion’—and rightly so, as it housed five generations of Jackmans; six, if one counts the visiting grandchildren of Carolyn (Miller) Abbott, Jackman’s great granddaughter and the last family member to reside in the house.¹⁰⁹ Until the fall of 1963, up to four, and no less than two, generations of family members lived in the house simultaneously. Jackman’s son Frank, who was a doctor in town, lived there his entire life; and Jackman’s two daughters, Caroline and Georgia, both returned to live in the house after first establishing their respective family’s in Chicago.¹¹⁰ When Caroline and her husband’s business was destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, they and their four daughters moved back to Bloomington for less than one year before returning to city in an attempt to reestablish themselves.¹¹¹ Their stay in Chicago was brief, however; and the family moved back to Bloomington in 1873 to live with Caroline’s parents in the newly acquired mansion.¹¹²

Caroline’s sister Georgia (Jackman) Soper joined the family at the house in 1900, the year their mother died.¹¹³ Georgia was still living there when her great-niece Carolyn moved into the house with her husband and their two boys.¹¹⁴ At that time, four generations of Jackmans called 507 W. Locust Street home.¹¹⁵ When Carolyn Abbott moved from the house in 1963, numerous family belongings were given away or donated to interested parties. Of those items, the former Illinois State Normal University Museum received a selection of mid to late nineteenth century

Bloomington and Normal (Bloomington: Leader Steam Printing House, 1878), 13. Ackley is consistently listed as foreman of the C&A shops.

¹⁰³ “Another Head in the Basket: Removal of Mr. J.A. Jackman, Superintendent of Machinery C. & A. R.R.,” *The Pantagraph*, January 10, 1879; John Jr. followed in his father’s footsteps working as a foreman for the C&A shops before moving to Cincinnati in 1871 to be a foreman at a brass manufactory. Jackman’s nephew, E.H., also worked in the C&A machine shops for more than a decade. “Presentation,” *The Pantagraph*, January 4, 1871; *The Pantagraph*, March 25, 1881.

¹⁰⁴ *School Record of McLean County*, 642.

¹⁰⁵ *The Pantagraph*, September 18, 1879.

¹⁰⁶ “Investigating: The Holly Steam Heating—Important Meeting of Business Men—Bloomington Will Keep Up With the March of Improvement,” *The Pantagraph*, November 17, 1879.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 642; “Sketch of John A. Jackman,” *The Pantagraph*, October 23, 1926.

¹⁰⁸ Since their arrival in Bloomington in 1864, the Jackmans resided in a house on 713 West Mulberry Street before moving into the house on West Locust Street. “1866 Mansion: End of an Era,” *The Pantagraph*, November 10, 1963.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

clothing; and Withers Library (now Bloomington Public Library) received a collection of New Year's Day calling cards.¹¹⁶ The collection of the McLean County Museum of History possesses only one artifact once belonging to the Jackman family—a white and blue sequined dress that once belonged to Georgia.¹¹⁷

Over time, the family changed little about the house in terms of furnishings, going so far as to maintain gas chandeliers in the living room and sitting room.¹¹⁸ The rest of the fixtures in the house were electrified gradually. Up until 1933, when Abbott and her family moved in, kettles of hot water were used to fill the copper bathtub and individual washstands.¹¹⁹ The former Jackman Mansion is still standing; though a number of adjustments have been made to the house since, including an addition to the porch.

Jackman died at 507 W. Locust Street on July 29, 1896 at the age of eighty. He was ill for several months prior to his passing. His wife of almost fifty-three years and four of his children survived him. His oldest son John Jr., former foreman at the C&A shops, died on July 20, 1896—just nine days before his father.¹²⁰ Due to Jackman's condition, he was not told of his son's death.¹²¹

Sarah died four years after her husband, on December 17, 1900.¹²² Sarah shared her husband's appreciation for written works. Possibly possessing an even greater love of literature, Sarah was said to imbibe the "literary vivacity of Boston... and up to extreme old age retained a mental acumen which made her a delightful companion and pleasing conversationalist on every matter of past or present concern."¹²³ In regard to her own writing, it was said, "her gift of expression by word and pen was choice and concise."¹²⁴

In a letter Sarah once received from her husband, Jackman stated in his own choice words that it was, "Better to be honestly poor and carry a good conscience than to take any dishonest means for a living. I hope my course through life will always be an honest and honorable one, though wealth may never light on my shoulders. I am willing to work hard and fare hard which I sometimes do, but hope that nothing will tempt me to swerve from the path of honesty. If I maintain my integrity, it matters little what the rest may be, as my conscience will be at rest."¹²⁵

If not his conscience, Jackman's body—later to be accompanied by Sarah's—was laid to rest at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington.

By: Hannah E. Johnson, 2016

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ The dress is dated circa 1880. According to accession records, the dress was donated to the ISU Museum by Mary Kimball, daughter of Caroline (Jackman) Kimball and niece of Georgia (Mrs. H.W. Soper). The McLean County Museum of History received the dress as a donation in 1993.

¹¹⁸ "1866 Mansion: End of an Era," *The Pantagraph*, November 10, 1963.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ *School Record of McLean County*, 642.

¹²¹ "Death of John A. Jackman," *The Pantagraph*, July 30, 1896.

¹²² "Mrs. Jackman is Dead: One of Bloomington's Noble Women Passed Away at Midnight, Full of Years and Good Deeds," *The Pantagraph*, December 17, 1900.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ *School Record of McLean County*, 643.