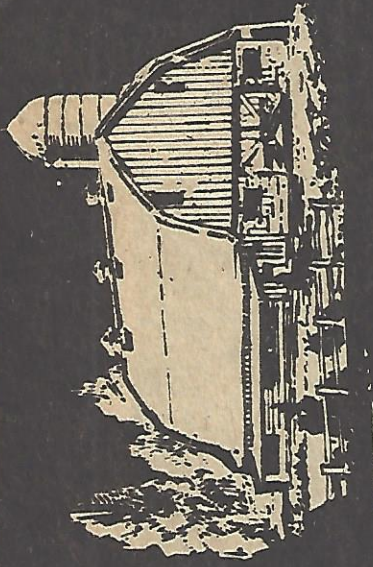


The AKRON NEWS



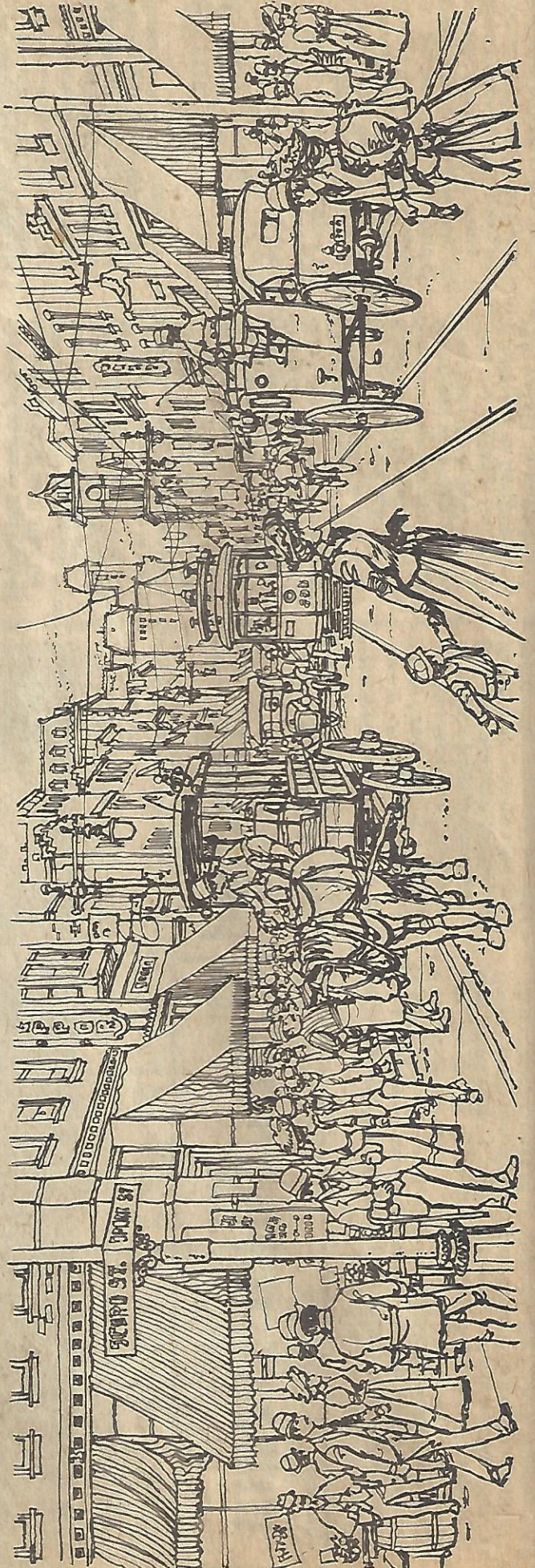
NEWS

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The Electric Railroad

by Diana Bucher Streebey

Last traces of Winona Interurban eradicated



Dear Editor:

The enclosed pictures give you a bird's-eye view of one of the latest of our many expansion projects here at Pike. We are removing the last remnants of the old Winona Railroad grade, returning the dirt to its original location in a five-acre field recently purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Ed Wideman. The purpose of this excavation is to prepare land for future construction and expansion which include the installation of a new high production band mill, additional planing mill and cut-up facilities, increased kiln drying facilities and air drying lumber yards.

There was much history to the old Winona Railroad Company, but I cannot quote the song and verse since I was quite young when it closed. I do, however, recall the trains running down through the middle of Akron when we were kids.

With the recent closing of the Erie Railroad and the removal of the last remnants of the Winona, it seems to me that a very important era in the history of our community has come to an end.

Sincerely yours,
Channing Utter

The Akron News, January 17, 1908: "With favorable conditions during the next few weeks, Warsaw and Peru will be linked together by an interurban railway much sooner than was thought possible two months ago." This was positive thinking on the part of S. N. Shesler, then editor of the Akron News, for it wasn't until January 15, 1910 that the first trains pulled into Akron, both from the north

February that year that the interurban was totally completed between Warsaw and Peru. Mr. Shesler, while faithfully reporting all progress on the interurban lines, wasn't able to complete his coverage of the historic opening of the electric train lines until February 13, 1910 when he made his first round trip from Warsaw to Peru. A guest of the Winona Interurban Railroad, he left Warsaw at 8:00 a.m., reached Akron by 9:00 and arrived in Peru in time for his Sunday dinner.

When we received the letter from Channing Utter about the Winona Interurban, our curiosity was aroused to discover more about the electric trains that played such a large part in the life of Akron residents. To our dismay, we found no one has compiled the information available about the trolleys that ran through the heart of Akron on Mishawaka Street.

For the past three weeks, we have hurriedly researched the interurban only to find many of the facts available about the trolleys contradict each other; it would take more thorough delving into old records than we were able to do to correctly assess all the information. However, from our limited studies, this is what we determined:

Citizens in Henry township held a special election on May 16, 1905, to decide whether or not to assist the Winona Interurban Company in their building of the electric line. The election resulted in \$25,000 being allotted to the company, with the stipulation the lines would be completed on or before May 1, 1907. The lines

eventually the Winona Interurban Railroad received \$10,000. The lines were totally finished (grading, lines and shanties by the stops) in early 1912.

Mr. Charlie Flagg was the first station master in Akron and worked for the company for several years. Each crossroad the trolley passed (every mile) was a stop (if the train was flagged down) and small shelters were built so passengers could partially escape the elements.

Confusion as to the dates trolley service began in Akron comes from a book published in 1959 by Jerry Marlette, entitled "Electric Railroads of Indiana." According to Marlette, the line between Chili and Akron was opened on January 7, 1908, while the line between Akron and Mentone was opened on February 4, 1910. After reading through newspaper reports written at the times in question, it appears Marlette is in error.

ing into Akron (and the lines ran right in front of the News office) until 1910, and this is corroborated by one of the town's oldest historians, Ruby Dawson. The train ran past her home when she was a child, and she said they didn't run as early as 1908. Further reports in the newspaper shows the lines between Chili and Akron commencing on June 25, 1909 and the finishing work both north and south of town taking place the week of January 7, 1910.

By the early twenties, timetables in the Mentone Gazette show trains ran north and south every two hours on a staggered schedule, making it easy to get to either Warsaw or Peru and back in one day. Service started before 6:00 a.m. and didn't stop until close to midnight.

On May 24, 1924, the Winona Interurban Railway was sold and the name changed to the Winona Service Company. Later, on

changed to the Winona Railroad Company. In spite of these changes, there were no interruptions of service or changes in the train schedules.

In 1937 the News reported that the last electric train went through town at 2:04 p.m. (we weren't able to pinpoint the date), and that cars were replaced by diesel propane gas. On the same day the last trolley went through town, the electric overhead lines were removed. Marlette's history agrees with our findings on this, and the freight lines were finally abandoned on April 30, 1947.

It seems a shame that no one in Henry township or in the Fulton County Historical Society has found the time to research this important phase of history and its effect on the town. Our hasty studies were confined to Akron's share of the Winona Interurban, but hopefully someone in Miami

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The crossroads of Akron, about 1910, looking north on Mishawaka street. On the left is the Ernahiser grocery which once stood on the corner where the Post Office is located today. The Interurban is in front of the old Akron NEWS office, and the Methodist Church steeple can be seen in the background.

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Mentone, Channing Utter