

Letters To The Editor

"Here shall the Press the People's right maintain, unawed by influence and unbribed by gain"
Joseph Story (1779-1845)

The Times-Union welcomes your opinions in Letters to the Editor. Letters must be in good taste and not libelous. Letters must have authentic signatures and telephone numbers and addresses for our files, but names and your identity will be withheld if requested.

July 22
1984

Winona Interurban Story Brings Back Memories

Editor, The Times-Union:

Not for many years have I read anything with more enjoyment than William Darr's splendid article on the Winona Interurban line, mainly because I was born and lived for 18 years only a block from the Winona as it went east-west through Akron, Ind., and have always been quite a buff of this line. Mr. Darr's article was not only well-written, but bears the marks of long and thorough research.

We could literally set our watches by the cars going through Akron, and I can almost remember the schedules, as they ran practically every hour. Customers and good will were important items then, and the pace was not as fast. We lived only

blocks from the business area, where my grandmother had an old-fashioned hotel, but many times my mother and I flagged a northbound car (running west at that point) to ride the six blocks for a nickel. I was under school age, and that first step was high, so the conductor, whom we usually knew, reached a friendly hand to pull me aboard.

Countless were advantages of the Winona line to Akron, but we could have done without that horrible screech as the wheels struggled to follow the tracks around the sharp curve about two blocks south of the main intersection in Akron. It was the scream of a tortured soul, and the only cure, besides re-laying the tracks, was to daub generous hunks of heavy black grease every morning on

the outside rail of the curve, and that remedy lasted only for the first few runs. Woe be to the motorman who took that curve too fast and derailed.

Many "pin scissors" were made when we laid common pins on the rails for cars to run over. We used shingle nails, too, and once dallied with the idea of crossing a pair of eight-penny spike nails, but worried they might derail the car. Always, we laid an ear on the track to listen for a coming car.

Once, as a boy, I gained the supreme thrill of standing beside the motorman up front and holding to the brake wheel on an over-crowded car for the whole trip from Peru to Akron.

As a little older lad, I and others played in the east end of town, where the tracks turned south for the run straight through to Gilead and Chili to Peru. We sometimes dared to walk across the bridge over the Erie R.R. tracks (Mother never knew of that.)

When one of the circuses that made Peru a winter home opened there prior to launching its summer tour, the Winona carried many persons from the northern stops to Peru for the Circus performance. Imagine, a ride on a "trolley car" and a circus, all in one day! It required less to thrill in those days.

Mentone and Akron had a running battle with their "independent" basketball teams, and in those days when automobiles were not so reliable or comfortable in the winter, an interurban car would be chartered to haul fans to the host town. It was always filled. The trip home was riotous or deathly silent, ruled the fortunes of the game. Competition was fierce!

Late in the 1920s, the main intersection in Akron became so busy with cars that the town fathers decided we needed one of the new-fangled "stop and go" lights. With the electric line's tracks smack in the center of the intersection, the light was set on a concrete base of probably two or three feet diameter on the west side of the tracks. It did take quite a bit of space out of the small in-

Praise For Writer's Research

Editor, The Times-Union:

I want to tell you how much I enjoyed William Darr's article about the Winona Railroad. I think it especially interested me because when we built our house on Center Street in 1950 there were still freight cars running down the middle of the street and out-of-town visitors thought this very unusual.

The article provided factual

details in an orderly yet interesting way and reflected much diligent research.

When the Goshen line turned north off Center Street I understand the tracks ran down the middle of Detroit Street for a distance. Can you imagine the congestion on North Detroit Street today if there were still train tracks in the middle of the street?

Alice McDowell
Warsaw, Ind.

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tersection, and many residents
did not like the signal.

One day, a prominent citizen of
pretty strong convictions declared
he was going to pay no heed to the
signal. One day, as he barrelled
into town from the south, the
signal did get in his way, and it
wasn't long until the city fathers
ordered its removal.

(I don't recall what effect the
traffic light had upon the electric
cars).

Many years later, and living in
Warsaw, I often utilized the bus
service that supposedly replaced
the city service of the old outdated
Winona line. I may have ridden
the final trip, driven then by Milo
Lightfoot, now a Warsaw
attorney.

Anyway, Mr. Darr's article was
pure nostalgia to me. Congratula-
tions to the author.

Charles "Chick" Lamoree
Warsaw