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Hometown History

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<div align="center">Track Back on the Interurban</div>

What was once a great town attraction is now just a memory. The interurban was a wooden car in a train shape used for transportation throughout many cities. It traveled throughout the states, and even through our little town of Winchester. Around the beginning of the 1900s, the interurban route was introduced in Randolph County. The name, interurban, was borrowed from an intramural at the Chicago World Fair, "It was an Indiana senator, Charles L. Henry which gave the interurban its name."[1] The intramural was an electric train along an elevated loop of train tracks, and Henry figured since electric mobiles would be running through urban centers, it would be a very suitable name for these newly invented transportation systems.

By 1916, the interurban had run 15,580 miles through the United States, and 1,825 miles through Indiana.[2] Nearby towns such as Farmland, Parker City, and Union City also had this transportation through their town. Although these close towns provided this sort of transportation as well, there was a way to spot the difference between the other towns cars. For example, Randolph County cars were painted olive green, with gold lettering. This would confirm any confusion between the county's when trying to board specific cars.

The first interubans were constructed out of wood, causing them to sag in the middle. As time grew, this problem was fixed when interurbans began to be structured by steel. They were usually operated by two men, a motorman, and a conductor. Due to the little amount of staff

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[1] The Historical & Genealogical Society of Randolph County, Indiana. *Randolph County Indiana 1818-1990.* Paducah: Turner, 1991.P. 242.
[2] Ibid. P. 249.

present in the cars, commuters would have to give a noticeable signal to the conductor that they wanted to board to which most people used lanterns or some type of light to signal that they wanted to board the interurban. Commuters would know that their signal has been acknowledged when they hear an air whistle and the car begins to decelerate.

Costing citizens about one to two pennies a mile, it became very efficient for them to take this type of transportation for vital trips, for they could be used by just about anyone for any sort of trip. These cars were used for long trips, short trips, business trips, and simply just trips for pleasure. These interurbans were so convenient that around 400 trains a day left from the Indianapolis Traction Terminal.

Randolph County has had an abundant amount of farmland for years, "Winchester naturally becomes a thriving market for the products of the farm".[3] The interurban created a much bigger opportunity for out-of-town citizens to come and buy fresh produce from local farms. Being able to travel from place to place, acquire your needs and wants, and be back by dinner was a big deal during this period of time; this could be accomplished when taking the interurban.

Although this was the town's "boom" at the time, the popularity of this car eventually came to an end. Cars soon became the much more efficient route and popular choice, "Tracks remained in most Hoosier communities until the 1930s as a reminder of the vast network of electric passenger cars that served thousands of people".[4] With new and better inventions, the interurbans soon started to lose fame.

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[3] Garrison, Lewis. *Randolph County:* Edited by R.K Armstrong. Anderson. Indiana Union Traction Company, 1911.
[4] Historical and Genalogical society of Randolph County, Indiana. *Randolph County Indiana 1880-1900.* Paducah: Turner, 1991.p250

The electric olive green train that ran through the city of Winchester was a great addition to this friendly town while it lasted. With its very low cost and efficient timely manners it is hard to believe something like this would fade away. Even though the interurban has now become history it was once a great source brought into our little city of Winchester. What was once served to aid businesses, farmers, salesmen, etc. is now just a memory.