

## THE ELECTRIC INTERURBAN RAILWAY

The right of way for the electric interurban railway had been obtained as far south as Fort Loramie, with farmers along the way donating their land so that the interurban would run alongside their properties, giving them access to town.

By November, 1901, workers had begun tearing up streets in New Bremen in preparation for the laying of the rails for the interurban. On March 25, 1902, work was begun on Monroe Street, with the ground being excavated from Main Street to the canal bridge, just past Schulenberg's Store.

On Monday, April 21, 1902, the St. Marys-New Bremen branch of the line between Lima and Sidney was opened to passengers, with the line ending at Schulenberg's. A special carload of N.B. citizens took a "junket" trip, leaving New Bremen at 8:03 a.m. and traveling through St. Marys, Wapakoneta, and Cridersville without making any unnecessary stops, arriving in Lima at 9:48 a.m. The trip, a treat of the Western Ohio Railway Co., was taken by members of the Board of Trade, the City Council, and businessmen. The group was greeted by F.D. Carpenter of Lima, President and General Manager of the Railway Co. The Honorable Walter B. Richie treated all the "boys" to lunch and liquid refreshments at the Hotel Norval bar until departure time at 12:00 noon.

They were also shown the immense brick power plant at St. Marys, where there was room for 6-7 boilers and steam engines, only 1 or 2 of which were yet in use.

Before the week had ended, nearly \$200 worth of tickets, including ten 500-mile books, had been sold at the ticket office in Schulenberg's Store.

"The Western Ohio Railway Co. put down a plank pavement at their stopping place in New Bremen. The landing in rainy weather has been miserable. The company did this at their own expense, having received the permission of the City Council. They deserve credit for it, as it is entirely an accommodation for their patrons."  
*(N.B. Sun - 10/31/1902)*

On June 1, 1902, the extension from New Bremen to Minster was opened, with the Minster ticket office being located in the Frank Fischer Store (now the Wooden Shoe Inn) and the freight house located behind it, both on the northeast corner of North Main St. and Fourth St. By this time, the branch between St. Marys and Celina had also been completed, with Celina's freight house being at the corner of East Market & Cherry Street.

In late 1902 and early 1903, four large buildings - a car barn, repair shop, cleaning shop, and paint house - were built in the southern section of Wapakoneta off Blackhoof Street (later the Auglaize Co. Highway Dept.). These were large enough to take care of all the cars used on the traction line and became the main repair and maintenance barns for the Western Ohio interurban system. Approximately 150-200 men were employed in the beginning, including conductors and motormen.

On January 10, 1905, traction lines between Lima and Findlay were completed, thereby connecting three states - Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. Four electric railroad lines were now connected with the Lima terminal, the business headquarters for the Western Ohio Electric Railway.

"The people of Loramie have new hopes for the extension of the Western Ohio to their town. Some assurances on this line are being held out by the company. This extension would certainly prove a blessing to the people of that lively little burg and perhaps be a stimulus to the business interests of New Bremen. We all hope that the extension may be made. The Western Ohio has great patronage from New Bremen and Minster and is steadily on the increase."  
*(N.B. Sun - 5/1/1903)*

Fort Loramie, also having a great desire for dependable and regular passenger and freight service, formed a corporation and built its own traction line north to Minster. The first car came into Fort Loramie on Wednesday, February 22, 1911 (Washington's birthday). On the west side of the canal, just off Water Street (at the Sherman Elevator, later Holthaus Elevator), a large building was constructed which had a turntable inside enabling the interurban cars to turn around and head back north towards St. Marys. This branch was later taken over by the Western Ohio Railway Co.

"The most important event in the history of Fort Loramie transpired Wednesday afternoon when the Western Ohio special car with a load of visitors from St. Marys, New Bremen, and Minster pulled into town on the Minster-Loramie tracks, an extension of the Western Ohio Railway from Minster to Fort Loramie - the first railroad car of any description that ever entered that prosperous little village. The delegation from New Bremen alone numbered about twenty of the town's businessmen who had gone down to congratulate the citizens of Fort Loramie and rejoice with them in the completion of an enterprising undertaking.

Mayor John Barhorst and School Principal Joe Notheis welcomed the throngs to the little city and the Honorable Theodore H. Tangeman of New Bremen, (prosecuting attorney of Auglaize County and solicitor of the village of Fort Loramie), spoke a few words of congratulations and well wishes. Because of the inclement weather, the exercises were brief and some spent the afternoon visiting the prosperous stores and shops and becoming acquainted. Others returned to New Bremen until 4:00, when the car returned.

The second special car brought in a load of friends from Sidney, along with Supt. E.F. Riddle and other officials of the Western Ohio Railway. Each succeeding car brought more visitors. A banquet was served at the Tecklenburg Hotel, and afterwards the doors to Brucken's Dance Hall were thrown open, where the revelers celebrated until midnight, when the hour for departing had arrived. Thus ended the railroad celebration at Fort Loramie."  
*(N.B. Sun - 2/24/1911)*

The Western Ohio Electric Railway was finally completed. It now served Findlay, Lima, Wapakoneta, Sidney, Piqua, St. Marys, Celina, New Bremen, Minster, Fort Loramie and many intermediate communities - a total of 114 miles of interurban lines. In addition to the designated stops in the towns, country stops were designated by numbers and names at intervals of every third or half mile. In 1900, 68 interurban lines were operating on 868 miles of track. By 1915-1916, the electric railway had reached its peak in the U.S. with 2,869 miles of track. By 1930 only 1,717 miles remained and in 1940, there were only 164 miles remaining.

The lines and tracks for the interurban system ran down the center of the streets in the towns and alongside the roads in the country. Many times the lines would parallel a major highway or steam railroad line since it was necessary to have a means to transport the materials originally needed to build the traction line. The interurban always had the right of way over other means of transportation.

Interurban service from Lima originated in Union Terminal east of the square on West Market Street. In cities, the interurban company was given the right to use the existing streetcar lines. From Lima, the interurban paralleled the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad through Wapakoneta, Sidney, and Piqua. Another line followed Blackhoof Street in Wapakoneta to the car barns south of town. The Wapakoneta lines also followed Auglaize Street, the city's main east-west street, west past the Auglaize County Fairgrounds, and from there ran alongside the old plank road (now County Road 33-A), through Moulton and on to St. Marys where it ran down the center of Spring Street. The line divided at the Wayne Street intersection and one line followed Wayne Street north to Jackson Street, then west to Celina, ending at Market and Main Streets. The southern route led to the car barns and freight house on Wayne Street and then followed the St. Marys Highway (now County Road 66-A) to New Bremen, Minster, and Fort Loramie.

The Minster-Loramie Railway Co. did not prove to be profitable and on June 24, 1913, was ordered into receivers' hands by Judge Mathers in Common Pleas Court. Named as receivers were Julius Boesel, President of the First National Bank in New Bremen and William J. Sherman, President of the Loramie Banking Co. They were ordered to continue to operate the railroad, collect debts and manage and control the property until further order of the court.

"The First National Bank of New Bremen this week won a victory in a court proceeding that had been fought through all the lower courts and was finally decided by the Supreme Court of the State of Ohio. The bank was represented in court by Attorneys J.H. Goeke of Wapakoneta and H.L. Mathers of Sidney.

When the Minster-Fort Loramie Railway was offered for sale by its receiver a number of years ago, the First National Bank purchased the property in order to enforce the collection of \$25,000 first mortgage bonds and

immediately instituted proceedings toward the discontinuance and eventual dismantling of the railroad. However, at that time the village of Fort Loramie secured an injunction in the lower courts preventing the bank from discontinuing the road. It was ruled that the bank was obliged to continue maintaining the road for a period of 17 years in accordance with the provisions of the original franchise. However, now the decision of the Supreme Court reverses the judgment of the lower court since the road was operated at a loss by the local bank. The bank will now cease the operation of cars, abandon the road and wind up its affairs. If Fort Loramie desires to have the road maintained, its only recourse is to acquire possession itself or find a buyer to insure continuance of service."  
*(N.B. Sun - 6/13/1919)*

Travel on the Western Ohio Railway did not become profitable until after some years of operation. Scarcely had the business picked up when, in 1917, under the direction of the State Highway Commission, the era of paved roads began in Auglaize County. The first section to be paved was the road between St. Marys and New Bremen. This nearly proved disastrous for the interurban lines, as they could not afford to pay for the paving between their rails and ties.

The pleasure automobile had appeared upon the scene and, in a very short time, virtually ruined the passenger business on the interurban. The government then deprived the electric roads of the express business, and finally motor trucks took away the freight business. In addition, the depression in the early 1930s brought the closing of many businesses resulting in the lack of freight.

On August 17, 1926, the Minster-Fort Loramie branch was taken over by the Western Ohio Railway Co. and operated thereafter as part of its system.

In 1928, the Lima-Findlay and Lima-Piqua branches of the Western Ohio Electric Railway Co., along with the spur lines running into Fort Loramie and Celina through Wapakoneta and St. Marys, were purchased by Cleveland capitalists and re-formed under the name Western Ohio Railway and Power Corp.

In March, 1929, Western Ohio Vice-President and General Manager, F.D. Carpenter, announced the sale of the Western Ohio Railway & Power Corp., along with the Toledo, Bowling Green & Southern Railway Co. to the Empire Public Service Co. of Chicago for approximately \$3,000,000. A program of rehabilitation and improvements was to be undertaken by the Chicago firm and the headquarters of the two companies were to stay in Lima.

In 1931, F.D. Carpenter sought appropriations for abandonment of the entire Western Ohio Interurban Railroad. Operating losses for the year had totaled \$60,000. The power business of the company had been purchased by the Central Ohio Light and Power Co. and the central power station in St. Marys continued to supply power and light to the surrounding northwestern Ohio communities until February 1, 1939, when operations were discontinued. The building was later torn down.

"Saturday, January 16, 1932, is the last day on which interurban cars will be operated over the Western Ohio Railway Company's lines. The Public Utilities Commission this week granted permission to the company to suspend operations at midnight of that day.

The Western Ohio Railway Company was organized in 1900. While confronted with a heavy pull financially from the very start, it was not until 1928, when the volume of business began to decline, that officials despaired of continuing operations."

*(N.B. Sun - 12/24/1931)*

F.D. Carpenter of Lima, President and General Manager of the railway company the entire 30 years of its existence, was the first to conceive the possibilities of an electric line in this area. Jacob Mandelbaum of Cleveland was the principal financier of the company. General offices for the railway were in Lima above the interurban station. The car barns were located in Wapakoneta, along with the dispatcher's office, which had its own independent telephone line. Mr. Carpenter came to New Bremen to handle the chaos after the July 17, 1909 accident at the corner of Main & Monroe.

The opening of the Western Ohio Electric Railway line afforded many new opportunities for businesses and merchants to conduct their trade. Bakers, wholesale grocers, farmers, creameries, and city newspaper publishers could market their products. Businessmen shipped household goods, furniture, and machinery to the outlying areas. Fair exhibitors sent their animals to area fairs. Hunters, fishermen, and tourists were able to take advantage of Lake St. Marys and its Gordon State Park, Indian Lake at Russells Point, and Lake Loramie. Even trolley baseball leagues were formed with the different towns connected by the interurban.

The early interurban cars were made of wood both inside and out - later they were made with metal on the outside and fine woods on the inside. Some later cars were built entirely of metal. The average car was 40'-50' long, 10' wide and 14'-15' high. The cost to build a wooden car was approximately \$4000-\$5000. When required by Toledo ordinance, the faster Limited cars were the first to have a fender or "cowcatcher" on the front of the car which kept animals and other objects from getting caught in the wheels. There were line cars that were used to go out and do repair work on the electric lines, and freight engines that were used as the lead car when heavy loads of freight were shipped. There were also open cars that were run during the summer months, much like today's shuttles in theme parks.

Power to run the Western Ohio Railway cars was generated at the huge brick power plant in St. Marys. A number of boilers and steam engines operated the 750 horsepower generators, producing alternating current which was then changed to direct current at substations along the line. The cars received their power from an overhead copper line by connecting the trolley to the line. The trolley was a pole fastened to the top of the car with a roller or slider which made contact with the line and

was movable so that the car could be turned around. Flanges on the wheels kept the car on the tracks which were laid 4' 8½" apart.

Each car had a motor capable of going 40-50 m.p.h., air brakes, air whistles, bells or horns, a large center headlight, toilet and lavatory facilities, baggage compartments, luggage racks, and smoking and non-smoking sections. The cars were well balanced and rode very smoothly. The interiors were roomy and comfortable and equipped with most conveniences. Windows could be opened in the summertime to cool the car, and in the winter a hot water heater in the baggage compartment provided warmth through the coils running along the inside of the cars in the passenger section. Pointed electric light bulbs furnished lighting and rubber runners or linoleum covered the wood floors. The non-smoking section had upholstered seats, while the tobacco enthusiasts were furnished with leather seats and cuspidors. There was also ice water and cups. Later cars might have individual bucket seats, libraries, parlor areas, buffet facilities, and sleeping compartments.

The first car to leave St. Marys on March 10, 1902, was maroon in color and highly polished. It was a combination passenger-baggage car with a seating capacity of approximately 40 people and a baggage compartment occupying nearly one-third the length of the car. The seats were arranged the same as an ordinary railroad coach, with double seats on either side of a center aisle.

When the first car left St. Marys, cannons boomed, bells were rung, and fireworks were set off, turning everything into a scene of "jollification." The car reached a speed of 50 miles per hour, and made the 26-mile distance from St. Marys through Wapakoneta to Lima in one hour and two minutes. Charles A. ("Chip") Koehl from Bradford was the motorman, and Frank Noble was the conductor. In the first days of travel, the bystanders would excitedly yell "Here she comes!" The horses and other animals did not share this excitement, however. They would become frightened at the sight of the huge machine with its whistles and electric lights. They often led their owners on a merry chase trying to escape.

The three cars first put into service were run on schedules giving them approximately one hour to make the trip one way. The passenger rate was 2¢ per mile and 1000-mile books were sold for \$8.00. Dispatchers along the line attempted to control the scheduling - not always too successfully, which sometimes resulted in head-on collisions due to lack of proper communication.

A motorman would start and stop the cars and control the speed, a conductor would collect the fares and aid the passengers (especially women and children) and unload the mail at the Post Offices. Freight cars would have a third man to load and unload the freight. If there was any trouble on the car, the conductor had the authority of a sheriff and would call ahead for an officer to meet the car at the next stop. One motorman & conductor, William Edward Kelley of Piqua, later became

the Sheriff of Auglaize County (1933-1937). At one time, during its peak years, the Western Ohio Electric Railway Co. had several hundred employees, 30-40 passenger cars, and much freight equipment.

The last cars out of Minster, New Bremen, Celina, and St. Marys on January 16, 1932 kept up a continuous "racket of noise" by blowing their sirens. The passengers took with them, as they left, practically everything movable - some even took seats. All those aboard experienced a bit of sadness with the interurban's passing out of existence.

On May 17, 1935, a court order was received by Sheriff W.E. Kelly of Auglaize County to sell the unoccupied car barns & property located in Wapakoneta. Most of the cars were scrapped for their valuable metals needed during W.W.II and the tracks were taken up by the Works Project Administration so that automobiles would no longer slide on the slick rails. The trolley wires and feed lines were taken down by company employees.

QUOTE: "It was almost like burying a very dear friend, to leave that car in the Wapakoneta car barns knowing that I could never again take it out."  
C.A. ("Chip") Koehl, Motorman on both the first and the last car to leave Wapakoneta

#### RALPH MAY REMEMBERS

"I recall so well when I was nine years old (1901-1902), the tracks for the electric interurban railway were first laid in New Bremen and the overhead copper trolley wires that carried the current to operate the cars were suspended from the poles all along the right-of-way. The only means of transportation we had at this time was the horse and buggy; a 10-passenger hack route to Botkins, 13 miles away, to connect with the C.H. & D. (Cincinnati-Hamilton-Dayton) Railroad; the Lake Erie & Western Railroad (L.E. & W.) which consisted of one train a day hauling freight, mail, & express shipments; and of course, the Miami-Erie canal. When the first car came to New Bremen on April 21, 1902, it stopped at Main and Monroe Streets and the townspeople gathered inside to get the first thrill of sitting in an interurban car.

Ohio and Indiana were the great interurban centers of the nation, with Indianapolis being the interurban capital. With a change of cars, you could go almost anywhere within the boundaries of these two states. One of the first interurban lines was started in 1887 (or 1892?) between Piqua and Troy. The Western Ohio, when completed, operated from Findlay on the north to Piqua on the south. At Findlay, you could connect with other lines to go to Toledo or Fort Wayne. At Piqua, it connected with the Troy-Dayton line, and later with the Piqua-Covington-Dayton line. From Dayton you could go to Cincinnati; Columbus; Richmond or Indianapolis, Indiana; or to points in between.

The Limited cars were painted bright yellow and traveled very fast for their day. These faster cars did not stop at the country stops, however you could board the local cars almost anywhere along the route.

A round-trip ticket from New Bremen to St. Marys

cost 25¢, to Wapakoneta cost 60¢, & to Piqua cost \$1.75. In the early days, the cars ran at hourly intervals from about 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. You could leave for Dayton or Fort Wayne on the first car in the morning and return on the last car at night. A whole car could be chartered for a picnic or an excursion to some distant point."

#### CHEAP RIDING

#### The Western Ohio Reduces Toledo And Dayton Rates

Commencing with next Sunday, August 4th, the Western Ohio will inaugurate a special Sunday Excursion rate to Dayton and Toledo. These tickets will be good on trains going and returning Sundays only, and will be on sale until further notice.

The fare from New Bremen to Dayton will be \$1.55 and to Toledo \$2.15 and good on the fast Limited trains which run every two hours in either direction.

The last Limited returning home leaves Toledo at 7:25 p.m. and Dayton at 7:10 p.m. and every two hours before that hour.  
(N.B. Sun - 8/3/1906)

"The ticket, freight, and express office in New Bremen was located in Schulenberg's Store. During my high school days, this is where I worked selling tickets, handling shipments & baggage, and loading and unloading the freight cars, along with clerking in the store. There were two freight cars a day out of New Bremen.

Al Boyd and Jake Sauers, who lived on Washington Ave. in Piqua (*the same street Ralph lived on*), were the two oldest motormen on the Western Ohio and I knew both of them from the time I worked at the local Pay Station in New Bremen. I would sometimes ride in the vestibule with them on the trip to Minster and help with the loading and unloading to pay for my passage. Charles A. ("Chip") Koehl, born in Bradford, operated the first and last cars out of Wapakoneta. William Edward Kelley, the motorman-conductor who later became Sheriff of Auglaize County, was reared on the site later owned by the Piqua Country Club. Kelley and Koehl were married to sisters, Margaret Ann and Emma Glynn. W.E. Kelley was the last of these four men to die in the spring of 1968 at 88.

Living in New Bremen, I made many trips to Piqua on the interurban to visit my paternal grandparents and other relatives. I had to change cars at St. Marys and Wapakoneta, and it took two hours to cover the 51 miles. To see the countryside from an open car window, with hollyhocks growing in almost every farmyard is one of the pleasant things I like to remember."

#### From The Piqua Daily Call - January 16, 1932:

"Tonight at 11:35 p.m., the last Western Ohio passenger car will arrive at the local station on the final scheduled run for the road. The car will then be taken back to the barns at Wapakoneta and power will be turned off. The Western Ohio will be no more."

## THE INTERURBAN

by Robert G. Heinfeld - Ada, Ohio

The interurban was the mass transportation system of the early 1900s. It had different names: trolley, streetcar, and the most common - traction line. I always called it the streetcar and only remember the tail end or demise of this way of traveling. The route through New Bremen was the Western Ohio Railway and Power Corporation - Lima route. The passenger cars were orange in color for the most part.

I don't recall that the interurban ever left the track when I was young, but the big event before my time was the wreck at Main and Monroe Streets on July 17, 1909. Marie (Schowe) Rabe told me that her mother was cutting her hair at the precise moment that the car went on its side. It made such a large and terrible bang that her mother accidentally nipped her neck with the scissors. There were many accidents between St. Marys and New Bremen. There were several fatal accidents when a motorist would not stop or did not see the car coming, even though the streetcar had a loud whistle and bell and a bright headlight. (FATALITIES: *Wilson Ahlers - 12/25/1908, Henry Wuebbenhorst & 5-year-old daughter, Marie - 3/5/1912; Jacob Poppe and his son, Henry, and Henry's wife, Mattie Poppe, 6/29/1919; Cornelius & Estelle Koop - 12/7/1929.*)

When he was the postmaster (1930-1934), Cade Schulenberg would take the mail pouches off the streetcar and put the outbound mail on the car. Next to Schulenberg's Store, the building where Roger Henkener used to have his attorney's office (the east side of the present Bicycle Museum) served as a freight depot. The box cars would be backed in there up to a loading dock to handle freight. Farmers also shipped from this loading dock - I remember seeing milk cans there and that always puzzled me because of the White Mountain Creamery being located on the west end of New Bremen.

My father, Otto Heinfeld, was a plumber and well driller in New Bremen. In checking over his old business books, I would find entries where he had gone to Fort Loramie or Minster for some item and paid 10¢ car fare. I got to ride the second last car to leave New Bremen before the interurban was discontinued. My mother, Ida (Gieseke) Heinfeld, took me to St. Marys so that I would know what it was like to ride the streetcar - we were the only two aboard. We both rode to St. Marys for 25¢ (See the ticket with my mother's note "Robert & I had last trip to St. Marys.") The date was January 15, 1932. (The very last run was made around 11:00 p.m. Saturday night, January 16, 1932.) [NOTE: *New Bremen historian, Ralph May, took his 6-year-old twin sons, Dick and Ted, on this final trip of the Western Ohio Railway interurban from Piqua to Sidney. See "Ralph May Remembers" - pages 72-76 for more of his memories of the interurban.*]

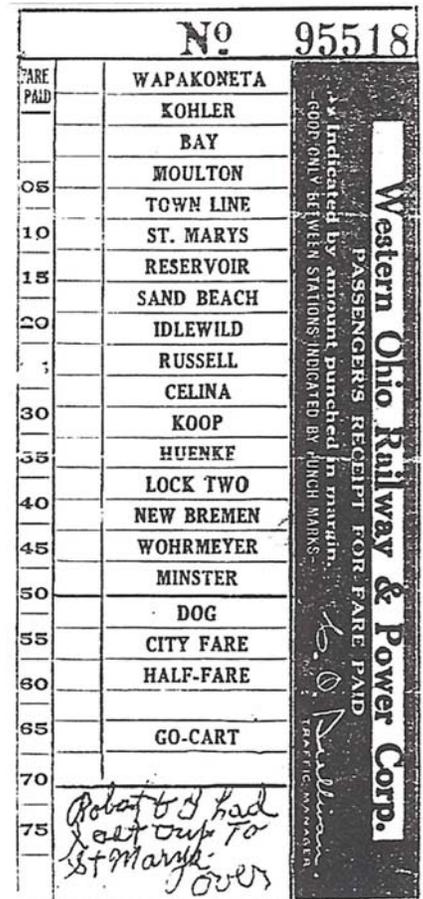
The coach was jam-packed on the last trip. Some were saddened, but for the most part there were a lot of

drunks riding from Minster to St. Marys. People drove to Minster, got on, and rode to St. Marys. How they returned was a mystery to me! The motorman blew his whistle the entire run. Perhaps the old streetcar was wailing its last mournful sound, never to be heard again (much like the steam whistle.) Some people relied very much on the interurban and were greatly disappointed when it quit, but the encroachment of the automobile made it impossible for them to make a profit.

The motormen knew their customers quite well and would sometimes wait for certain ones to board if they were somewhat late. Bessie Huenke, who used to visit my mother at her home at 215 West Monroe St. (then the second door from The Home Furniture Store - later demolished), would sometimes forget what time it was and would have to leave in a hurry when she heard the streetcar whistle at the corner of Washington and Monroe Streets. The motorman would laugh and say he wouldn't leave without her because he had brought her to town. The interurban stopped at the Huenke Schoolhouse and this made it convenient for her as she lived close by. It made another stop between St. Marys and New Bremen at the Koop Schoolhouse. There was also one stop between New Bremen and Minster at the Woehrmeyer farm, so people had many places to board and disembark from the streetcar.

The motorman and conductor would sometimes stop their car and walk over to the sidewalk at Gilberg and Hegemier's Radio Shop on South Washington St. to listen to the heavyweight boxing events. Earl Hegemier said they would put a large loudspeaker on. Naturally, people would gather at this free event, and the motorman and conductor would sometimes be part of the crowd, stopping long enough to find out how the fight was going and then returning to their route.

The interurban was good in its day, but by 1932 it had become part of the passing scene... [R.G.H.-10/13/1999]



## **INTERURBAN ACCIDENTS**

### **WILSON AHLERS – 12/25/1908**

On Christmas morning of 1908, 28-year-old Wilson Ahlers, a native of New Bremen, met his death after falling under the wheels of a moving train of electric cars while backing into a siding east of St. Marys. With motorman Charles Jeffries, Mr. Ahlers was hauling cinders for use along the line near Stop 30 east of St. Marys. It was their intention to suspend work at noon, and the last load of cinders, which were hauled in several small dump-cars, had been unloaded and the train began backing onto siding No. 38, near the Ohio Central derail to permit the passing of the eastbound Limited (interurban) leaving St. Marys at 10:45. Mr. Ahlers was seated on the rearmost car for the purpose of giving signals to the motorman. In some way his hold on the car was broken and he fell headlong to the track before the backing train. Two cars passed over him before they could be brought to a standstill.

The Limited car soon arrived and Mr. Ahlers' body was tenderly placed therein and brought to St. Marys. The car made no stops except at the Spring St. derail and Mr. Ahlers was carried into the office of Drs. Noble and Noble on West Spring St. a few minutes past 11:00 a.m. Three local physicians, along with a Wapakoneta practitioner who chanced to be on the car, did all within their power to relieve their patient until his death occurred at 1:00 p.m.

Mr. & Mrs. Dietrich C. Ahlers of North Main St., New Bremen, were notified by telephone and managed to get to St. Marys by horse and buggy in time to exchange a few words with their son before his death. His wife, the former Effie Dowty, whom he had married in March, 1908, had left Wapakoneta on the 10:30 car, laden with Christmas presents for their parents, but on her arrival in St. Marys, it was the sad duty of her friends to inform her of her husband's death.

(N.B. Sun – 1/1/1909)

### **HERMAN PORTRATZ GEORGE ALLENDORF**

### **SATURDAY – JULY 17, 1909**

On Saturday morning, July 17, 1909, Conductor Herman Portratz of Wapakoneta and George Allendorf, boiler inspector for the Hartford Steam Boiler Insurance Co. of Dayton, were both killed and a number of other passengers were injured when car no. 18 of the Western Ohio Railway jumped the curve at Main and Monroe Streets and rolled over on its side in front of the Charles Boesel property on the southeast corner of the intersection.

The 9:26 a.m. southbound car struck the curve at almost full speed, the body of the car being torn off the trucks and rolled over on its side against the curb. Portratz and Allendorf were in the rear vestibule of the car and both attempted to jump out the side doors to safety. Portratz, who attempted to jump out the north door, was thrown high up into the air and landed head first on the hard brick paving of the street. He was at once carried into the office of Dr. Fledderjohann across the street and all the other physicians in town were telephoned for, however the man never regained consciousness. Boiler inspector Allendorf, who had been called by H.C. Meyer of the Buckeye Handle & Lumber Co., was standing on the step on the south side of the car, ready to alight on the corner in order to attend to his mission in a hurry. He was caught by the falling car and dragged a distance of 12-15 feet where he was wedged between the car and the pavement. He lived long enough to give his name and address. Both men were taken to the Klanke undertaking establishment, also just across the street, on North Main. The other ten passengers who remained in the car were only slightly bruised or otherwise injured.

Motorman Henry Langley was only slightly injured on the wrist, having stuck to his post until the last. In coming up the curve he noticed that the air brake would not work right, and consequently he approached the curve with unusual

speed. Seeing that he could not control the car any other way, he threw off the controller and applied the emergency air, the brakes still remaining so after the accident occurred. Had it not been for the fact that the car struck the large telephone pole standing on the corner, breaking the momentum, it is possible that the huge structure would have gone on farther and bumped into the wall of the Boesel house. The pole was broken off at the ground and was held up only by the wires.

Eye witnesses to the accident were Val Briedewieser, F.W. Greber, Emil Schneider, and several employees of the *New Bremen Sun*, all of whom had businesses near the intersection. The *SUN* put out a special edition of the paper within four hours after the accident occurred, with newsboys disposing of the 400 copies in a couple of hours.

INCIDENTAL NOTE: Joseph W. Lanfersieck, local agent for the Hartford Insurance Co., took charge of Mr. Allendorf's grips and found within a receipt showing that Allendorf had just paid his accident insurance three days before.

"People are not needlessly cautioned about crossing the tracks before an approaching car or even to remain in a position where one might be caught in just such an accident like that of this morning. Little Dorothy Kunning and Bernice Laut had just crossed the track and were on the sidewalk in front of Mueller Brothers Store when the frightful accident occurred, and might just as innocently as the passengers have been parties to the fearful wreck."

◆◆◆

A copy of the *Kansas City Post* sent by August F. Isern describes a wreck on the Santa Fe R.R. on July 7, 1909, in which Mr. Isern and his 14-year-old son, Homer, were among the 380 passengers who narrowly escaped drowning in the waters which had washed away the foundation of the track, causing the train to be derailed.

(N.B. Sun-7/23/1909)



**July 17, 1909 – Interurban car overturned at corner of West Monroe & Main Streets**

**HENRY WUEBBENHORST, 47**  
**MARIE WUEBBENHORST, 5**

**March 5, 1912**

On Tuesday evening, March 5, 1912, one of the most horrible and heart-rending scenes happened at the Koop crossing two miles north of here when the Western Ohio passenger car due to leave here at 6:12 p.m. collided with Henry Wuebbenhorst's horse and buggy. Mr. Wuebbenhorst and his 5 year old daughter, Marie, were dragged with the car for a distance of 25 feet. Mr. Wuebbenhorst's death was instantaneous. His little daughter died about an hour after the accident. Mrs. Wuebbenhorst, the former Emma (Dicke) Kawell, was drug a few feet further and was also seriously injured.

Passengers on the car from New Bremen were Julius Boesel, J.H. Grothaus, A.C. Settlage, A.F. Isern, J. Quellhorst, and Bernice Koop.

The car was in charge of Motorman J.H. McFarland and Conductor Elmer Scheffler. Motorman McFarland saw the rig approaching and did his level best to check the speed of the car. Since the car had been about 10 minutes late, the unfortunates never expected its approach. Furthermore, a storm front seemed to play a part in the accident. Evidently the approaching car was not heard by Mr. Wuebbenhorst or if so, at a time when it was too late. The horse had passed the track but the buggy was struck broadside. Fragments of the buggy were scattered all along the track. The horse stood on the road and was first thought to be uninjured, but it was later found that the animal experienced pain when led to shelter.

The unfortunate trio were immediately taken on board the car and transferred to St. Marys, where Mrs. Wuebbenhorst and her daughter were hurried off to the office of Drs. Noble. Mr. Wuebbenhorst's body was taken to Linville's undertaking rooms. The bodies of Mr.

Wuebbenhorst and his daughter were brought to their home 1¼ miles north of here on Wednesday afternoon, where the grief-stricken step-daughters of Mr. Wuebbenhorst, Laura and Ona Kawell, aged 18 and 15, awaited them. Mrs. Wuebbenhorst did not regain consciousness until the following day and then for only short periods. She was later taken to the home of Samuel Sower on West High St. in St. Marys where she was under the constant care of a nurse.

The Wuebbenhorsts had spent the day with Mr. & Mrs. Fred Dicke on Clover Four Rd. and left in a jovial mood, never surmising the fate which would soon befall them.

#### **WESTERN OHIO WRECK**

**February 6, 1918**

The Western Ohio car from the south, due here at 6:58 p.m., was wrecked Wednesday evening, February 6, 1918, just south of the corporation limits at the siding between the Julius Hoeper and the Gust Schnelle properties. Going at a pretty good rate of speed, the hind axle of the car suddenly gave way, breaking almost in the middle, causing a near upset which was prevented by the fact that several freight cars were standing on the siding. The hind vestibule was torn off and the car damaged in other ways, however the passengers escaped mostly with a good scare. Broken glass flew in all directions, and one traveling man on the car suffered slight cuts. The balance of the passengers were mostly local girls returning home from the cigar factory in Minster. The wrecking crew was called out and worked nearly all night in clearing up the mess, and on Thursday regular service was resumed.

□□ — ♦ ♦ ♦ — □□

*NOTE: Emma Wuebbenhorst recovered from her injuries and later remarried, this time to Henry Kawell. Her first husband was Christian Kawell.*

## THE POPPE FAMILY

**Sunday - June 29, 1919**

On Sunday afternoon, June 29, 1919, Henry and Mattie (Seaborn) Poppe, along with Henry's father, Jacob Poppe, drove in their touring car to the residence of Charles & Minna (Moeller) Haeseker near the southeast bank of the St. Marys reservoir. Not finding the family at home, they returned along the New Bremen-St. Marys state highway, intending to spend the rest of the afternoon at the home of Jacob Poppe's deceased wife's sister, Mrs. John C. (Martha Moeller) Quellhorst, about 2 miles north of town between stop 42½ and stop 43.

At about 2:45 p.m., the Poppe auto and the interurban car were both proceeding south and, at the entrance to the Quellhorst premises, Henry Poppe turned the car to cross the Western Ohio track. He apparently did not see the oncoming Western Ohio car, in charge of Conductor Carl LaPole and Motorman Al Boyd, until the auto was near the crossing, when he stopped with the rear end of the auto almost clearing the west rail. In some manner the car was backed up instead of being sent ahead, and it was struck by the interurban car and carried 100 feet or more and practically demolished. Motorman Boyd did not see the auto until it was squarely on the track, and could not prevent hitting it.

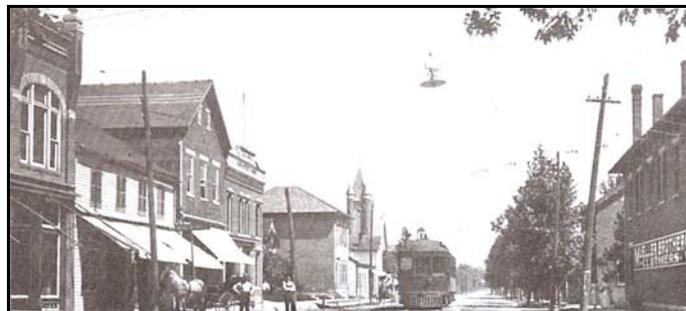
The auto with its occupants was dragged a distance of 125 feet before the electric car could be stopped. Jacob Poppe was killed instantly, his body lying west of the track. Mattie Poppe remained in the wreckage of the car and lived only a few minutes. Henry Poppe had evidently been thrown from the car immediately upon impact as he was found lying some distance away from the wreckage on the east side of the track, unconscious, but still breathing. He was hurriedly taken to the home of William Heinfeld nearby, where surgeons were summoned and everything possible was done to save his life. On Monday morning, it was deemed advisable to take him to Lima to a hospital, the Irvin Speckman ambulance furnishing conveyance.

Henry Poppe passed in and out of consciousness for two weeks, sometimes questioning visiting relatives about conditions on the farm and why his wife and father refrained from visiting him. Before he could be told about their deaths, however, he also died from his injuries.

Jacob Poppe and Mattie Poppe were taken to the Arcade undertaking parlors where their bodies were prepared for burial. Jacob Poppe's body was then taken to the home of his sister and brother-in-law, John D.H. & Katharine (Poppe) Quellhorst, where his mother, Katharine (Schlesselman) Poppe, also lived. Mattie (Seaborn) Poppe was taken back to Texas, her former home, by two of her brothers.

This accident goes down in the annals of New Bremen as one of the most horrible that ever took place here.  
( N.B. Sun - 7/4/1919)

"The next streetcar accident on the Western Ohio will be at the corner of Main & Monroe. It is a patent fact that autos as well as streetcars keep up too high speed at the Main-Monroe St. turn and when the prophesied accident occurs, very likely both parties will be found at fault." This was a comment made by a business man who sees most of the interurban cars come around the Main-Monroe St. curve from the north, and most of the autos turning from the east northward. (N.B. Sun - 7/4/1919)



The interurban coming south down North Main St. towards Monroe

## MR. & MRS. CORNELIUS KOOP December 7, 1929

Cornelius and Estelle (Homerick) Koop were killed almost instantly shortly after the noon hour Saturday, December 7, 1929, when the automobile in which they were riding was struck and crushed by a Western Ohio car in charge of Motorman Tobias Drexler and Conductor Ed Gross. The accident, attributed to poor visibility because of a heavy fog, occurred directly in front of the Koop home along the New Bremen-St. Marys road.

As had been their custom for years, Mr. & Mrs. Koop are believed to have planned to spend Saturday afternoon in New Bremen. Mrs. Koop was at the wheel of the automobile as they started to drive from their garage on the west side of the interurban tracks paralleling the highway. Known as a careful driver, she undoubtedly failed to see the southbound car because of the fog. Drexler, sensing the impending disaster as he saw the machine suddenly loom up out of the mist ahead of him, applied his brakes but was unable to bring the car to a stop in time to avoid the fatal crash.

The machine was struck squarely and carried a distance of 100 feet before it rolled free from the car. Mrs. Koop was dead when trainmen and passengers reached the hapless pair, but Mr. Koop lived a few minutes after the accident. The machine, placed at the service of Mr. & Mrs. Koop by W.J. Stappe while their car was being repaired at the Stappe garage, was wrecked completely.

Motorman Drexler was well acquainted with Mr. & Mrs. Koop, having waved to them almost daily as his car passed their home. He stated that although he sounded the whistle, Mrs. Koop failed to hear or see the interurban and was facing Mr. Koop as though in conversation with him as the automobile approached the tracks. His story was substantiated by Miss Lillian Grothaus, an eyewitness to the accident.