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Mr. Ira Barnes Interview

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This is Betty Turnell speaking for the Decatur Public Library. Our guest today is Mr. Ira Barnes.

Q. Mr. Barnes, could you tell us something of your family background?

A. This I will try to do. My family has been here since before the Civil War. My mother's father was a young attorney just outside of Cincinnati. The federal government took over the family farm for an army camp known as Camp Dennison. One of the lieutenants in the army told my grandfather as a young attorney to be sure to come to Decatur and not to go to Springfield because Springfield would never get out of the mud. So my grandfather and his bride came to Decatur, went up to the Johns' home up on Johns' Hill and went up in the top of the tower to look over the land. They made Decatur their home ever since. In fact, it was in their home where I was born.

My father's family came from Fairmount, New Hampshire. My grandfather's brother was W. A. Barnes. He came here to Decatur in the 1850's and started a drug store. My grandfather met him here and stayed until the late 1850's, when he went to Jackson, Mississippi. He taught school, but at the outbreak of the Civil War, he decided to come back to Decatur. He smuggled his money out between the pages of his textbooks and came back to Decatur. Then he went to Fairmount, New Hampshire, where he married my grandmother and brought her back to Decatur. That was the family background."

Q. Mr. Barnes, you certainly know a lot about the history of Decatur, and your family has played an important part. Let's go back to your childhood. What was it like to be a child in Decatur when you were growing up?

A. I think it was fun. We didn't have the same things that children have today, but we had fun. We roller skated down the mound there on West North, rode in wagons, and slid down the hills. Once in a while we'd get to go to a ball game out at Downey's field or go out to the circus. We used to ride the old open street cars, and that was a fun thing to do. The circuses were out there too - and the horse races. I never did get to go to a horse race, but we had horse races there.

I remember walking to school in a pair of rubber boots with red tops. The snow was almost up to my knees. But not anymore - we don't have that kind of snow. Of course, my knees are higher now.

Q. You walked to school all the time?

A. Oh, of course. We only lived a couple of blocks from Gastman School so it was real easy - but I was supposed to get home from school early and not loiter on the way home. I remember that my dad peeled a switch and stood me up on the front porch and whipped my knees. All the little kids went home and came back to school saying, "Ira got a lickin'."

Q. What games did you play?

A. Oh, baseball - a kind of baseball. That was about all there was. I remember that birthday celebrations used to be really fantastic. I'm not a big chicken eater, but my birthday came in July, and it was the time for the first fried chicken of the year - on my birthday. And we always sent up paper balloons, which are strictly forbidden now by our fire code, but we always sent them up on my birthday.

Q. It was a big celebration?

A. Oh, a big celebration. All the grandparents and everyone who was around.

Q. You mentioned fried chicken in July. You didn't have it all the year around?

A. No - we had to go out to the country and get the chickens.

Q. They had to be big enough?

A. They had to be big enough to fry by the second of July.

Q. You really had some good times.

A. We did. We thought it was fun.

Q. You told us something about your schooling - that you went to Gastman School. After Gastman?

A. Then we went to Central Junior High, which is now gone. At Central Junior High we always got out at ten minutes after 12. St. Patrick's bell always rang at 12 and to this day, like Pavlov's dogs, I always get hungry when I hear that bell.

They finished Roosevelt Junior High. They had started it before the war but during the war they discontinued. After the armistice in '18 they finished the building, and ours was the first class in and out. I was there only one year.

Q. Excuse me, when you talk about the war, that was the first world war?

A. Yes, that was W.W. I.

Q. Well, go on, please.

A. We were the ones who picked out the Blue and Gold Comet, the school paper, the school colors, and what not. Then we left.

After that, I went to Stephen Decatur for three years. That building has gone too now.

Q. That's where the civic center is now?

A. Yes. I went there for three years and then my father thought I was wasting my time and thought I should go somewhere else where I could learn something.

I've got to add something. My father always said he was going to give me an education - something no one could take away from me. That he intended to do, and I think he did.

Q. Then from Phillips Exeter?

A. From Phillips Exeter to Harvard for four years.

Q. Now maybe it's time to find out how you decided on a career?

A. That was rather strange. I leaned toward medicine. My father told me - and I think it was one of the bad pieces of advice he ever gave me - He always said there were better ways of starving to death than practicing medicine. He started to practice in 1900 and things were a little tough then. He used to say he would go to the end of the street car line and then carry his bag through mud that would pull his rubbers off. He didn't think that was a very fun thing. As he said, there were better ways of starving to death. So I went into industrial chemistry from that point on - and that's why.

Q. And you received your training at Harvard.

A. Yes.

Q. Then what kinds of jobs did you have?

A. I came back here in the 30's, when jobs were not too plentiful. They would always say, "We're shooting better men than you are." I did nothing for a little while. My father died shortly after that, and I spent a lot of time refurbishing some of the real estate he had until World War II broke out. Then I went to work for Atlas Powder Company in St. Louis making TNT. From then on it was Caterpillar Tractor Company and then Houdeille Hershey, and Borg-Warner and Millikin University. I taught there for two years.

Q. You've had a varied career.

A. I've had a checkered career. I've been around.

Q. You're retired now?

A. Yes. I've been retired for over ten years.

Q. What was your job just before you retired?

A. I was a metallurgist at Borg-Warner - in their nuclear division. We were making control rods to control nuclear speed of the reactor for nuclear vessels. When Borg-Warner decided to get out of that field, that closed the whole business as far as we were concerned. I think it's a mistake that the nuclear industry is still important and it's got to be, but Borg-Warner didn't see it that way. One of the thrills of my experience with Borg-Warner was being sent down to the Navy yard to work on the reactor of The Enterprise, the world's largest nuclear carrier at that time.

Q. Where was this?

A. At Norfolk, Virginia. It was in for refitting.

Q. That was part of your job?

A. Part of my job. I loved every minute of it.

Q. What about the history of Borg-Warner in Decatur?

A. They came here originally in the carburetor industry and then they went from that to automotive air conditioning. They've given up on carburetors. That was the division I worked in - the carburetor division - a sub-division known as EMPAC. It stood for Electro-Mechanical Power and Control.

Q. You were there when you retired?

A. Yes. I was there ten years. When they closed the plant, I was close to retirement and I thought I might as well take a little early retirement.

Q. What do you think about the future of industry in Decatur?

A. It looks bad right now, but I think it's coming. It's bound to come.

I like to quote my grandfather, who said when he was here in the 1850's that with the coal, water, lumber, and the agricultural soil we have here, Decatur should have been known as the "Queen City of the Prairie". I'm

inclined to go along with him. As bad as it looks, I think we're going to come out of this all right.

Q. Let's take a look at the changes that have come to Decatur in your lifetime.

A. Obviously, paved streets are the biggest change. My grandfather said that Decatur was an island in the springtime with Stevens Creek on the west and the Sangamon River on the south and east. Decatur was an island. The soil and the water made a beautiful mud. Decatur has been a mud capital.

Q. It's rather ironic that someone told your grandfather to come to Decatur to avoid the mud of Springfield.

A. This whole area is good for mud. In the early days even with a horse and buggy you didn't get out of town when there was a heavy rain. On Sunday afternoons we used to ride the street car out to the end of the line and turn around and come back - the whole family. You couldn't go anywhere else.

Q. In the winter?

A. You just holed up and stayed. I know the farmers couldn't deliver their crops until the ground froze.

Q. The roads made a big difference - and drainage.

A. I've heard it said - and I don't know who said it - that if it weren't for quinine, Illinois would still be a swamp. It kept the yellow fever and malaria down until they could get the roads in.

Q. And other changes?

A. Well, entertainment is considerably different. I was going to point out that in the old Powers Opera House we saw Maude Adams in Peter Pan and Helen Keller.

- Q. There were some great productions here.
- A. There really were. I remember seeing Harry Lauder. He was at the Lincoln Theatre. That was after the Lincoln Theatre was rebuilt.
- Q. A number of people have spoken about the fire at the Powers Opera House.
- A. That was in 1914. I remember that very vividly.
- Q. What interests do you have?
- A. Now? I had to give up reading for a while, but now I'm back to reading. I like to play golf. I enjoy my grandson and family and I just have a great time with my lawn and roses.
- Q. Let's talk about your grandchildren. Are you encouraged about their future?
- A. No, I'm worried about what they have to face. There isn't a darn thing I can do about it and probably it won't be as bad as we think it will be.
- Q. After all, we've come through some bad times in the past.
- A. I've got faith for them. I think they'll make it.
- Q. If they have as rich and full a life as you've had, they should do very well.
- A. I hope they do. I couldn't ask for more.
- Q. It certainly has been a pleasure to hear about your experiences and to hear about your family and the part they have played in Decatur. I thank you very much.
- A. It has been a pleasure.

You have been listening to the experiences of Mr. Ira Barnes. This is Betty Turnell for the Decatur Public Library.

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LOCAL HISTORY

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Mr. Ira Barnes Interview

June, 1983

This is Ira Barnes remembering Decatur as it was in the days of my youth. In a previous session you asked about the games we played. I said, "Baseball," but that was a little loose because baseball was never a full team. We made changes as we went along. I'm sure Abner Doubleday wouldn't have recognized the game, and it gave rise to many good arguments - not to fights - but just to good arguments.

Those were the days of the William S. Hart and the "Perils of Pauline" movies. Many of those scenes were reenacted in our yards as we played "Cowboys and Indians."

Then there was a game we called "Mumbelipeg". How you spell it, I don't know. It consisted of pitching or tossing a knife from various parts of your anatomy to the ground. The blade must stick in the ground and not decline from the perpendicular by more than 60°. This you measured by putting your two fingers under the handle of the knife.

Then there was a game called "Red Light." Another was "Statue." Then there was the old favorite of "Hide and Seek," and on many a summer evening you could hear the call of "All-ee All-ee Outs in Free."

Homes in those days were heated largely by coal stoves or fireplaces. So at the back of each yard was a little building called the "Coal House." The coal driver would come up the alley and scoop coal from his wagon into the coal house. Then the householder would come out and carry the coal into his house a bucket at a time to burn in his stoves. The ashes then were carried out to spread in the alley to fill the holes and ruts made by the coal wagon.

Water supplied to the homes - while city water was available - was largely from wells and cisterns. Many of the people preferred well water to city water to

drink. This probably accounts for the fact that in summer time we had numerous cases of typhoid fever since sterilization of water was not well understood. The water in the cisterns came from the roofs of the houses, which collected the rain water or snow water. While it was ultimately soft, it was to be used very very sparingly because we never knew when the Lord was going to replenish the supply. It was used only for shampooing of hair or for very delicate washing since it lathered readily and the well water just didn't.

Also at the back of many household lots there was a barn which served as home for the family horse and sometimes the family cow.

The horse, of course, spent his days delivering the people around the city by means of a buggy or saddle and the cow was milked in early morning and then was driven to pasture where she spent the day and then came back in the evening time for milking. The milk was always put through a strainer and then housed in a stone crock, where the cream was allowed to rise to the top. The cream was then skimmed off for table use, to pour over fruit or for coffee and so on. The rest of the milk was used as needed in the kitchen. Some of it was allowed to sour and from this was made home-made butter, which was, as I remember, very delicious.

Also, along with the family barn was the chicken coop, which sheltered the family flock. The flock provided the family with both chickens and eggs for their consumption. That was before the day of the giant hatcheries, where you bought baby chicks. In those days the mother hen sat on the eggs and hatched them, then tended them until they were big enough. They usually didn't reach frying age until around the first of July.

Homes were illuminated either by kerosene lamps or by illuminating gas. The coal oil lamps had to be cleaned every morning because the chimneys got smoked

up. They had to be filled to keep the oil supply plentiful. You went up to the neighborhood grocery, which was only a block or so away in most neighborhoods and there you obtained, in your own can, a half-gallon of kerosene. When you started home, the grocer always stuck a little potato on the spout to keep the oil from pouring out on the way home. The gas lights we mentioned were burned with a Welsbach mantel. The mantels were ever so delicate, but they were enclosed in a glass bowl to keep the wind from breaking them. Each home had a little gadget - a kind of 3 or 4 foot rod with a taper on one end and a little wrench for opening and closing the valves on the lights. So you turned on the gas and with the taper you lit the mantel. It gave a very beautiful light with only a slight hissing sound.

I forgot to mention that this gas was home-made, generated in a plant down on Broadway between Main and Wood - the site where the Illinois Power Transformer Plant now stands.

While thinking of the public utilities, in the early days Decatur had two phone companies. The old phone was an operator-assisted system, and the new phone which was a dial system. In spite of the two systems, not everybody in town had a phone. So in emergencies they used to blow whistles, especially on the Wabash. If there was a wreck somewhere on the line and they wanted the wrecker crew, they would blow the whistle on the round house. The wrecker crew would listen for it and knew when to go to clean up the wreck.

Another use of the whistle, although not that serious, was that Millikin always used to blow a whistle if they had won a ball game. They used to announce the score by long and short blasts. I think the long blast was Millikin's score and the short blast their opponents. It could have been the reverse, but that's the way I remember it.

There was another indication of a problem. Whenever there was a fire, the city water works raised the water pressure in the lines. You could tell by opening the water faucet if there was a fire. Of course, you couldn't tell where it was.

Whenever a childhood disease struck a family, the Board of Health immediately was out and tacked up a red sign on the door announcing the disease and warning to keep out. That sign stayed on the door until the patient was cured and was no longer contagious.

Transportation in and about the city was by horse or by a few motor cars or by street car. The local street car service was fairly fantastic. It ran from the old Transfer House at the intersection of the two Main Streets and extended out to all four corners of the city. It went north to what is now Memorial Hospital and there was another line that went over to St. Joseph's Hall, which was at that time the Pythian Home. Then there were two different lines going to Fairview Park, one on the south side and one on the north side and there was one going to Riverside on the southeast corner. And one went straight east to Staleys. We took that to go to ball games at Staley's field - at 22nd and Eldorado. So for 5¢ and a free transfer, you could ride clear across the city - for a nickel.

I failed to mention the cab service - horse-drawn cabs furnished by Byrd Davis' Livery Service which ran a whole fleet of hacks and delivery vans.

There was the cousin of the local street car and that was the interurban car. These ran every hour and every way - that is, they went to Springfield, Danville, Bloomington. The station for these cars was on Wood Street between Water and Main, opposite the present County Building.

These cars provided fantastic service in addition to transportation. The friendly motorman would stop every now and then to pick up a fresh can of milk to

bring to Decatur - to some dairy - and quite frequently he would deliver a container of ice cream from the Decatur Ice Cream Company.

For longer distance travel there were the four steam railroads - the Wabash, the Illinois Central, the C.I. & W. or the C.H. & D. (which is now the B. & O.), and the Pennsylvania. They crossed there at their local stations just east of the Amtrak station. There were trains continually. The Wabash, of course, ran to St. Louis and Kansas City and connected them to Chicago and to Detroit. The C. & I.W. or C.H. & D. or B. & O. connected Decatur to Indianapolis and then on to Cincinnati. The Illinois Central ran from Mattoon to Pana, a nice little branch, and the Pennsylvania went from Terre Haute to Peoria, with intermediate stops. The Wabash had really super-service to Chicago. They used to have a Pullman car that stood at Morgan Street on the Wabash. At 9 o'clock at night you could go down to the train and go to bed in your berth and wake up the next morning in Chicago. It was a fantastic trip. Coming back, you could have the same kind of service. You could get on in Chicago, go to bed, and wake up in Decatur.

As for road travel, there were the general roads as we know them today. West Main Street, however, ran up to Snake Hill, and if you wanted to sell an automobile, you proved to a prospective buyer that it would go up Snake Hill on high. If it didn't, your sale was nixed. Then on the east, there was the old Cowford Bridge. Originally there was a cow ford - and I never understood why England had an ox-ford and we had to have a cow-ford - but anyhow there was a bridge built there, somewhat downstream from the present Staley bridge. After you crossed that bridge, you went up another hill that looked like a 45° angle. I'm sure it wasn't, but it really put the old Ford to all its business getting up that hill. And on that road was the old Ocean-to-Ocean highway that was marked by red bands with two white bands. They were posted on telephone poles so that you could find your way along.

The main road north was known as the "Bloomington Road," - what else? And the road that went Southwest out of Decatur - now R. #48 - was known as the St. Louis Bridge Road."

I don't remember that there was any pet name for R. 51 south to Macon and Moweaqua.

While on the subject of automobile transportation, it is probably interesting and not a well-known fact that Hieronymus Mueller was the first man to die in an automobile accident. It wasn't an accident as we know it today, but he was replenishing the gasoline supply in his car and it caught fire. He was seriously burned and died as a result of burns. But he is known as the first automobile casualty in this country.

The number of motor cars that have come and gone in my day is tremendous. I remember the old Saxon and the Roamer and the Apperson, the Chalmers and many, many more. And of course, Decatur had two automobile factories here - the Comet and the Pan-American. I think Pan-American had something Ford copied a little later. Pan-American had a white radiator. Of course, Ford put a white radiator on the Edsel. It had a little different shape than the Pan-American had.

Then there was a machine made here in town called the Dual. It was the predecessor of the Jeep. It was high-wheeled and strong and made to use either on the farm or in the city.

You can't speak of early automobiles without speaking of the Model T Ford. It was as simple as anything in the world. I was thinking the other day instead of an automatic choke, there was just a hook of wire that came through the radiator. To choke the car, you pulled out on the hook. When you got through choking, you let it go. Also, though, with the Ford, if you didn't have the spark lever retracted far enough, the thing would fire in reverse and spin the crank back. Many and many a right arm has been broken by the Ford "kicking" them, as it was called in those days.

The early Fords were equipped with acetylene and kerosene lights - acetylene for your head lights and coal-oil for your side and tail lights.

I remember my father's disgust. He would go out at night and light all these lights and then when he came home, they had all been smoked up. He thought somebody had turned them up. Now, whether they did or not, they were smoked up and he had to clean the lenses after a night call.

Of course, the Model T Ford had the gas tank under the front seat and everybody had a yard stick or a meter stick to dip in the tank and see how much gas they had. Unfortunately, going up a steep hill, if you didn't have enough gas in the tank, the gas couldn't get to the engine because it was a gravity feed.

None of the cars of those days were enclosed. They were all touring cars and had ising-glass curtains. When it started to rain, it was a real task to get the curtains on before you got drowned. Many a time you would just as soon drown as fool with the curtains.

I almost failed to mention that in those days the nice ladies had electric cars. I remember particularly Miss Ella Race, who had one with flowered seat covers. She always had a rose in a vase in the car.

In our discussion of public transportation we forgot to mention some of the troubles that beset them. Sometimes the boys would get out and grease the tracks on the slopes so that the cars would have trouble getting up the hill.

Then down by Decatur High School where the trolleys went by on East North Street, the chemistry students used to concoct an explosive of a type and put it on the rails. As the cars went by, there was a bang! bang! bang!

Then when Springfield High came over here to play a game and started home on the inter-urban, it was quite a thing to pull the trolley off the interurban and stall it.

We have from time to time mentioned the grocery stores of the era. These were small, so-called "Mom and Pop" stores, but I don't recall seeing Mom in any of them. They were all located within a block and a half of each other. There was almost a choice as to which one you went to. They were small, but they did a nice neighborhood business. One of my vivid recollections is going to my neighborhood store and picking up a loaf of bread for a whole nickel.

The supermarket was not far away. I remember when the Piggly-Wiggly and the Handy-Dandy came to Decatur - one on North Main and another on North Monroe - right close to our favorite grocery - the Scruggs Grocery.

In the downtown there were the larger stores - the Snurleys and the Low Barby. They did a tremendous business. A little farther on came the George Slanker Grocery Store. He was on Church Street.

The larger stores had delivery service. You could call in and your groceries would be delivered to your door at no extra charge.

These grocery stores were not self-service. There was always a very willing clerk - willing to run around the store and get what you wanted and put it with your order.

There was another very nice older man who would put something in your basket and say, "And now, what else?"

Up to now, I have failed to mention anything about the entertainment facilities in the town. There were plenty of them. In one block on North Water Street, there were four movie houses. There was the Bijou and the Nickel Bijou, side by side on the west side of the street and on the southeast corner were two - the Gem and the Crystal.

These four movie houses were all on the 300 block of North Water. On the 400 block was the Empress. My first recollection of the Empress was that they showed the Birth of a Nation. My family all went, but I was refused permission to go.

There was another movie house on South Oakland, right where the "Lock, Stock, and Barrel" is now. I think that was known as the Oakland Avenue Theatre. Another movie house was located on East William, on the north side of the street, about opposite the locker plant out there.

Slightly later came the Lincoln Theatre with the twin organs, which was quite the thing when we had the sing-alongs. Then one time Miss Nita Clark, who was the Baptist Church organist and Miss Edna Bunn, who was the Presbyterian organist, put on a fabulous organ concert on those two organs.

The Lincoln, the Bijou, and the Empress used to have vaudeville acts in their programs. Then later on, the Empress brought in a stock company - the Jack Besse Stock Company - that used to put on a play for a week at a time.

The Alhambra movie house was another one that came to town. It was on Water Street, but a little farther north, around King Street and Green Street.

In the summer time there used to be a chatauqua on the back end of the Millikin campus. There's where I met the gal I finally married. I was taking tickets, and she was a regular attender, and it was love at first sight.

One cannot talk about the movie houses and theatres down town without remembering the fancy confectioneries. There was the Empress, and the Princess, and the Chocolate Shop all along on North Water Street - and did they make the most wonderful sodas and they had the best candies. It was really a treat - just to walk in and smell was fantastic. In addition to the ones I've just mentioned, there was Sam's - up on Lincoln Square, and that was just as good or better than the rest of them.

Trying to remember all of the shops in or around the central part of the city is a bit of a problem. I'm going to try to remember them. I may miss one, but it's not intentional if I do.

First, there was Linn and Scruggs. Then there was Osgood's and then Stuart's, H. S. Gebhart, and the William Gushard Company - all in the dry goods business. The William Gushard company had an interesting way of recording sales. When you made a purchase, you gave the clerk your money, and she would call a check girl, and the little girl in the white middy blouse would come and get the money and take it up to the office and pay for your item. In the line of men's clothing, there was Blakeney and Plum, Kaufman's and Neustadt's that I can remember real quickly.

H. S. Gebhart merged with the Gushard Company in the late 20's so it became Gebhart-Gushard. Then Newman took over the old building where the Gebhart's had been.

Linn and Scruggs occupied the space now occupied by the Millikin National Bank. Then they moved over to what was then the Bachman Brothers & Martin Company, which was where Quigle is now. Then Stauber Department Store took over that building and stayed there a good many years later when the Millikin Bank took over.

Bachman Brothers and Martin was a large department store. It's the building that Quigle (Furniture) now occupies. Farther north on Main Street was People's Department Store and then there was another People's Furniture Store and then there was a Peabody Furniture Store around on east North, where Black and Company is now.

In speaking of men's furnishings, I forgot the Bohon Store, which stood at Eldorado and Broadway and speaking of restaurants I certainly forgot a few. Over Blakeney & Plum, which is now K's Merchandise Mart, was the Canton Tea Garden. Then a block north on the east side of the street was Hedy's Cafe. On the west side of Lincoln Square was Hugh Singleton's restaurant. I also failed to mention Scovill's Furniture Store in talking of the various furniture stores in and around town.

One of the gourmet delights was to ride the Wabash and always to eat the Wabash apple pie for dessert. If you were real clever, you figured your trip to Chicago on the Banner Blue just before noon so you could have dinner in the diner and apple pie. Then you could come back in the evening and have apple pie again and dinner on the Bluebird.

Before Lake Decatur was built, when the Sangamon River was our one river here, there was a bend called Allen's Bend. I was always told, and I never knew just why, you could count on one or two drownings there every year. The stout swimmers were the ones who got caught - whether it was deep water or some people said underground springs that flowed into the river and injected cold water that gave swimmers cramps.

In the 20's there were the days of the flag pole sittings. I don't think Decatur ever did that, but we had a gal who set the rocking chair rocking record. In a little tavern somewhere off Lost Bridge Road, somewhere near where East Moreland is now. I think the name of the place was the "Nightingale."

To escape the city in the summer time, many people had homes out at Faries Park. I remember one of my school mates who used to be excused about ten minutes to twelve to catch an interurban, go out to Faries Park, eat lunch, and catch an interurban back by the time school started. That was the kind of service we had in those days.

One very famous night Clark Gable, the movie star, was passing through Decatur and couldn't get a room at the Orlando or the St. Nick. So he went out and stayed at the little motel southwest of town on Route 48. I think it was called "The Happy Hollow" in those days.

The 1920's were momentous years for Decatur. In the 20's the A. E. Staley Company threatened to leave Decatur and move to Springfield if they were not supplied

with more water. This immediately started the wheels rolling to build the new dam and lake. In the meantime Mr. Staley built his own dam, downstream from the present club house.

Not only was the building of the lake a great thing for Decatur. In the same general era the Staley Office building was completed, with the lights on the tower. After you watched the lights at Staleys, you drove downtown and watched the play of the lights on the M. L. Harry fountain in Central Park.

I think these were unique for Decatur at that time. Neither Chicago or any other place that I know had them at that early time.

Previously we discussed the chicken flock at the back of the lot. Not only did they supply chicken and eggs, but they also consumed the table scraps. We didn't have the fancy garbage service that we do today and so the chickens took care of all that.

The gas we mentioned for illumination was also used for cooking. Many a home had its own gas stove.

I don't want to fail to mention Dawson & Breeden as another grocery store. They were the ones who carried the de luxe brands, the super brands. You could call and they would deliver too. Perhaps you saved money at stores like that because you didn't have the impulse buying that you have now at a modern super market.

In the line of theatre, there is one I failed to mention. I don't think it lasted too long, but at the corner of Water and Eldorado on the northeast corner was a row of single-story buildings. On the roof they had an out-door movie theatre. I don't think it lasted too long, but I do remember going to see one film. The name of the film escapes me.

Because hair cuttings were hard to remove from towels, Mr. Norman developed his own system of washing and from that his business bloomed into laundry and from that to laundry and dry-cleaning as we know it today.

The Norman barber shop had compressed air to each chair - in a little hose. After cutting, the nice barber would blow all the little cuttings out of your head and then they would attach a perfume bottle and spray you well so that you smelled real sweet.

With the coming of radio, the Review put in its own private set in a back room at the office building and left it open to the public so that from time to time you could drop in and hear what was coming over the ether waves.

Not long after that a radio transmitter came to Decatur. It was known as WJBL. The towers and the transmitter were on top of what was then known as the Gushard Building. At that time they tried to get WGCO as their call letters but the Federal Communications Commission didn't see that so they were assigned WJBL, which eventually converted to WSOY.

I note that previously in referring to Bachman Brothers and Martin and Peoples, I referred to them as "department stores." They were not department stores. They were furniture stores, and I apologize.

I also referred to one of the ice companies as the "Consumer." It was originally the "Decatur Ice Company." Later on it became "Consumer's Ice."

On North Church Street, right across the alley from the Gastman School, stood the building - a temporary building - known as "The Tabernacle." That was the building in which Billy Sunday conducted his service when he was in Decatur.

One of the startling social events of Decatur was the wedding of Miss Elizabeth Parketo Harvey Firestone, Jr. Mr. Firestone, Sr. was a friend of both Henry Ford and Thomas Edison and they were expected to be here for the wedding. Mr. Edison did not show; Henry Ford was here. It was quite an affair.

World War I caused military barracks to be built at the back of the Millikin campus to serve the SATC - Students Army Training Corps. A lot of the fellows said it stood for "Stick Around Till Christmas." After the war, these were torn down and then re-built or new ones built in World War II.

Earlier on, I made reference to the family ice box. It was better than the old cool well where you put the food down over the water in the well, but there was another problem. The ice melted and there was a pan under the refrigerator to catch the water. You either forgot to empty it or if you did try to empty it, it spilled on your way to the sink and then when you put it back you didn't get it in the right spot. You always had a puddle on the floor from the ice box.

Then there were some people who were very, very smart and drilled a hole so that the water could drain into the basement into a pan. The only trouble was that a slime developed in those pipes, and it would overflow in spite of everything.

Previously I mentioned the Tabernacle and said it stood across the alley from the Gastman School, forgetting that the Gastman School is gone. It stood where the First Christian Church is now, in the 400 block North Church on the west side of the street.

In the earlier days the railroad crossings were not guarded by either gates or flashing signals, but by a watchman. The watchman had a little shanty with a stove inside to use in the winter time. He sat there so he could watch the tracks and when a train approached, he would run out either with a red flag or a stop sign and at night he had a red lantern to warn people not to cross the tracks.

There was a time too when down town traffic got so heavy that we had a cop at the intersections and then we had a semaphore signal and then we went so far as to have a little house like a phone booth built in the middle of the street and the officer sat in there and turned the semaphore to direct traffic either way along the intersection.

One cannot speak of vehicular traffic in Decatur in those early days without mentioning the creosote block pavement. The city fathers put down on all the main streets a concrete base covered by a 4" or 5" thick creosote-saturated wood blocks. To drive on they were fantastic - just like a roller rink. But in the summer time the creosote seeped out and you didn't dare walk across them. Then came hot weather and they would expand and blow up. In the rainy season they would float away. So it was a beautiful thing to ride on, but not a great success.

In discussing the men's shops in Decatur, I see that I left out one. That was Bachrach's on the square, sometimes known as "Cheap Charlie's."

Before the days of the super market, there were meat markets in addition to the grocery stores. There was the Parlor Market, the Cash Market, Borley's Market, and another one I think was called Eastern.

Previously I talked about whistle signals from the Wabash Railroad, etc. There was one I forgot. There was a curfew. In the winter time it was 8 and in the summer time it was 9. The Mueller Company blew their whistle at 8 or at 9 and all the juveniles were supposed to be in, off the streets. I never heard of anyone being picked up for curfew violation, but there was a curfew, nevertheless.

My memories of World War I are something like a bad dream. I remember very vividly that coal was short. We always burned candles at night instead of electric illumination to save on coal. Gasoline was in short supply and if you drove your car on Sunday, you would be called a "slacker" and that right loudly and orally to your face.

Sugar, of course, was very, very scarce. I remember going down town and coming home with a pound of sugar, which was a little treasure.

I remember the ladies all got together to pool their sugar supply to bake a birthday cake for one of the members of the group.

Along with the memories of World War I go the flu epidemic of 1917 and 18 when people died like flies. The Millikin Mansion was converted into an emergency hospital and volunteer nurses went up to take care of the people. The doctors and the undertakers were both run ragged. I should have said "doctors, ministers, and undertakers" were run ragged taking care of the sick and the dead and the dying.

Speaking of the Millikin Mansion as a nursing home or hospital, all the local people wondered what Anna B. Millikin would have thought or how she would have felt with all the disinfectant and what-not in her home.

This spring weather reminds me that we used to spend much of our time trying to fly kites. I said "trying" because we ran and ran and ran and more often than not, the kites fell or were broken, but we put them together and went back and tried again.

There were also marbles. I think I failed to mention that. They used to rule the squares of concrete. Instead of making a circle, we just played right there.

When the convent at St. Teresa was being built, it was quite an oddity - one of those things you took out-of-town friends to see because it was built on an angle, not on the compass as most buildings around here are. And it was done that way so sun would hit every window once during the day.

In the summertime children made little street cars out of shoe boxes. You'd cut square holes to represent the windows of a street car. Then you'd put a lighted candle inside and a string on the front and you pulled them down the side walk, looking like a small street car.

During World War I, between the two railroad stations, which is now the parking lot for Amtrak, there was a building for the canteen ladies - the ladies

who used to serve goodies to the troops as they came through on the troop trains in World War I. Behind that building was the WCTU water fountain. That, too, is gone, I've noticed.

On North Edward Street just west of Harrison were the Daut Brothers greenhouses. And down town was their retail store, about where Martin's Jewelry is now. In the store they had a macaw that they used to keep on a perch. It used to flutter around and make noises and scare all the kids.

Down on Greenwood Avenue at the entrance to the cemetery was the Bommersbach Greenhouse and Garden. On the west side of the street was John Bommersbach's garden. It was a beautiful thing in the summer time. Across the street was his greenhouse, which later became Bromley's Greenhouse.

Just south of the garden was the Monument Works, which again was very handy to the cemetery.

Up to now I have failed to mention the two coal mines over here. There was the Decatur Coal Company on Broadway between Prairie and Main. Then just off south Main Street was the M. and C. Coal Company.

South Main was not much of a thoroughfare in those days because there was the coal mine and then Danzeisen's Packing Company which is now the building occupied by Christy Folz. Then farther down was Young's Packing Company. Before the subway was built, the street went uphill and across the tracks, rather a dangerous crossing in those days.

Back again to street car traffic. In those days it was mandatory that before crossing a railroad track, the street car had to come to a complete stop and the conductor, if one was available, had to get out, walk across the tracks and motion the car on. When we went to one man cars, the one man had to get out, walk across the tracks, come back, and start the car again.

Folrath's Shoe Store had an animated model of a shoemaker. Try as I would, I never caught it operating, but I was always told that the man would sit there and hammer on a pair of shoes. As much as I wanted, I never did get to see it actually operating.

Back to the street cars again. There were two street car barns on East North. One of them, on the north side of the street, was adjacent to St. Patrick's school grounds and backs up to St. Patrick's church. The other one was across the street and served as Bowman Welding Company for years, and I just noticed today is gone.

The street cars were always stored there at night. There were pits where they could be serviced and cleaned up for the next day's use. The car barn on the north side of the street has been a foundry and a roller rink. I'm not sure now just what it is, but there it stands, in all its glory.

Across from the present Amtrak station, there was a drug store known as the Kraft Pharmacy. It was operated by a man affectionately known as "Doc Anderson." Doc had his own formula for chocolate syrup. He made it at home. From that syrup, Doc could make the most fabulous chocolate sundaes one ever tasted.

It's probably a little known fact that there were two or three brick yards here in Decatur at one time. One was out near Nelson Park, probably on the present golf course. Another was out West, probably near Fairlawn Cemetery. I think there was one up north. I can't pinpoint it, but I think there were two and maybe three brick yards in town.

On the east side of the 200 block of North Main was another confectionery, known as the Brodess confectionery. It had the first animated electric sign that I ever remember seeing. It was a model of a glass of ice cream soda. The flashing lights around the edge represented the carbonated water fizzing.

When the Transfer House stood at the intersection of Main Street, there used to be band concerts on the second floor of the Transfer House on warm, summer evenings.

The Transfer House was supposed to be unique, the only one of its kind. And yet, it was a noble idea because all street cars came there. On nice days you could sit outside on the stone benches and wait for your car. In inclement weather you could go inside. There were rest rooms if they were needed and a place to buy tickets and what not to use on the street car.

In my early days the library and the post office sat opposite each other on opposite sides of North Main Street at Eldorado. The library was on the west side and the post office on the east side.

It's obvious that I don't keep up with the times. I spoke glibly of St. Teresa convent being built on the bias so that the sun would hit every window every day. I drive by and it's now gone.

I talked about the street car barns on east North and one of them is gone.

Police protection was not as we have it today. There were no prowl cars. Occasionally a foot policeman would walk by and that was all we needed in those days. And the "paddy wagon" or the "Black Maria" was a horse-drawn vehicle. It had a gong on it so that when they had a prisoner on board they could go charging down the street ringing the bell for everyone to get out of their way.

Before the incandescent bulb became popular and cheap, street lighting was by an arc light at each intersection. The lamp was automatic, suspended at the intersection, but periodically the attendant would come by, lower the lamp, wipe the bulb, and put in a new carbon for the arc. It was not too unsatisfactory at all.

Small boys used to love to pick up the carbon they threw out. What we did with it, I don't know, but it was something to pick up, take home, and treasure.

Dairy products were delivered to homes by horse-drawn wagons. The horses soon knew the route as well as the man. At times he would load his carrier and stop at two or three houses without going back to the wagon. The horse would plod along and stop at the third house. He knew just where the man was going to be. This was

probably more efficient than the present motorized vehicle, which doesn't know where the man is going to be.

In discussing fire and police protection in those days, I forgot to mention that telephones were not universal. On telephone poles at various corners around the city were red fire alarm boxes. To summon the fire department, you broke the glass, turned the key and pulled a little hook on the inside. And you stayed at the box until the fire department arrived, so you could tell them where the fire was.

Since we did not have patrol cars in those days and radio was non-existent, throughout the neighborhoods were blue boxes where the policeman on beat could stop and phone to the office and get any instructions he needed at that time.

I think of the changes that have occurred in Fairview Park. In the early days the Lincoln cabin - the court house - stood on the hill at the west end of the park. To me it seemed as large as one of the Alps. We used to play on one of the Civil War cannons that were located there. There was also the bear pen where two black bears were on display. Near where the Lincoln cabin is now was a pond or a concrete pool with a fence around it and containing various kinds of water fowl. There were ducks and geese and swans and all those sorts of things.

Toward the end of school, obviously in May, there was a Maypole celebration in Fairview Park. All the grade school children from all over town met out there. Some of us just danced in circles and a few select got to wrap the Maypole, which was quite a thing.

The following is probably an exercise in association. As a small boy I remember when they built the tower on the First Methodist Church and installed the chimes or the carillon. Thinking of the Methodist Church, then, I think of the lighted cross on the top. The cross was at least endowed by the Clokey family so the cost of operating the cross is still defrayed by that fund.

Speaking of the Clokeys, they lived out in the east side of town, beyond 22nd Street. The home they had was known as the Pines. From that name came The Pines Shopping Center of today.