

March 13 Friday. This is our interview with George Hasten. The group is for our Technology report on transportation. The interviewers are Jammie Owen and Holly Garner.

How fast did the first trains go? Do you know that?

Oh, I don't know that I've ever run across, if, it depends on how far back your talking.

Let's see, 1918 about that time.

1918 okay let me think uh when if I can recall it I haven't thought for a long time. When President McKinley was shot he was shot at Buffalo, New York. They sent a special train from New York with some doctors to Buffalo. And that train set a speed record that stood for years. I mean clear up until they probably stood for forty years and that hit speed of 100 and I think 115 mph. I mean that this is was an exception you know but speeds like that were possible. Of course most of your trains don't run that fast. You know, I mean, I wouldn't even have guessed. I think they started out at 20 mph. Oh back in the beginning, yeah, they just plodded along. Yeah, at one time in the early days of railroads they thought that if you went above, oh, I don't recall the exact figure but say 30 mph, it took your breathe away and couldn't breath. Things like that.

Did early trains need a lot of fuel for getting from place to place?

Well the early trains burnt wood.

Yeah

And I don't know how many miles they'd go between that and stop for fuel. Now in later years it got to where the fuel wasn't the problem the water was. See the water is lost as it goes up the stack and is lost. The water's is lost so they have to replenish the water every so often. Ships and things like that condense it and reuse it. So a train, say in the 1930's, the limiting thing was the water and the Pennsylvania railroad. I don't recall just where it was but they had a trough built between the tracks. As they would drop a scoop down. And the forward motion of the train would throw the water up into the tender in the water tank. So they wouldn't have to stop.

That's neat.

And I did know at one time where this was. Seemed to me it was two, three miles long. This, this group and they had some fast passenger trains. See and they just had kept going.

What were some things trains loaded, you know besides passengers?

Well, back before the year of the automobile everything was hauled

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on trains. You know every kind of a product. Freight of all kinds. You, you order a cook stove from Chicago and it came on a train. And see when I was a boy in the '30's both railroads, the Conrail now, was the Pennsylvania then and the Big Four that ran north and south through town. They had a freight house and they had a train they called the Local. And that's just what it was. It would stop at every town and would carry this freight like I say if you ordered a cook stove from Sears and Roebuck from Chicago it would come on the train. And they would stop to unload this stuff at the freight house. And then people would call for it and pick it up. So everything before then was trucks, I mean was obviously moved by wagons or train in the early days you ought to see some maps of say Illinois in the early days of railroads. Almost every town was on a railroad. I mean the first time you look at a map like that you think you're looking at a road map of today. They go everywhere. And so everybody you know you ordered something it would, it would come into your local station.

What was the general type of train like when you were a kid?

Well, do you mean where I live?

I think.

On road 1800.

Yeah

Well we moved there in 1935. And I would have been 11 years old, I guess, around that. The Big Four that ran up and down there it, it Heavens. My wife and I live there in the same place now and three acres. Went back to the railroad right away. So I spent a lot of time while I was a boy looking at trains and stuff like that. And that was predominantly a coal, it hauled coal from southern Illinois. There was a lot of coal mines, coal mines in southern Illinois. And a lot of it went to Chicago up that route. They would be most of the train would be nothing but coal cars. Now the Pennsylvania, they would have hauled a, well tank cars that they hauled oil and gasoline just like they do today.

The stops were along the Marshall area and Martinsville and Casey. What were the main hubs for those areas? Where did they stop the most frequently?

When? You mean when the train came into town?

Yeah.

Well they would have a there would be a depot and the depot for the Pennsylvania was out where the Clarksville road cross Conrail at here it was on this part of the tracks and the right. And it if you were going to ride the train somewhere why you went there and the train stopped and you got on. And the one when I was a boy on

the Big Four was down where, where the building supply is on the north side of Archer, Steven or whatever they call it. The depot was there now you read that and you'll I talk about when the track came through town and uh of course the depot was somewhere else then. And of course I'm not that familiar with Martinsville and Casey but they had a depot. You know every town had a depot.

Do you know when the first train came to Marshall?

I'd have to refer to this. Ok uh I know there was a train through here in 1880 and came down Route 1, where Route 1 is. Uh I should know. You know railroads were built in sections, I mean, a railroad built between Terre Haute and Indianapolis, 73 miles, that was it. That was the Terre Haute and Indianapolis railroad. Well, then, then there was a train to Indianapolis to Richmond, Richmond, Indiana over on the east pretty well on the border, that was a railroad. Then um if you lived here at Marshall at that time to ride the train you had to get to Terre Haute to get on it. There was no train from here through and uh I thought I had this on here. Ok uh the north and south railroad what I always call the Big Four and everybody else did. It was actually the, I have a little trouble keeping these lined out. Well, there was four big cities it went to Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis and this where that was what it was officially called but everybody called it the Big Four because that was four big cities. See and there is a story that is uh in uh where in a brokerage from where they sell stock. And of course back then everything was written on a blackboard. We didn't have screens and all this sort of stuff like they do today. And this clerk got tired of writing Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis and he just wrote the Big Four. And that the story is that's how it got the nickname. Whether that is true or not I don't know. But I did read it in some of my research. But your doing this research. I could suggest, go down to the library and go in the old section go on the left. I think it's, I think it's on the south wall there's some pictures there and there's a picture of a drawing of Marshall. And I think it's 1880. Somewhere in here I've said this. It's a pencil drawing and it's kind of like a bird's-eye view. You're, your kind of looking down at the, the town. And it shows where the track goes through town on Route 1. And there's one train drawn on the track coming from the south the engine is about St. Mary's Church. And then there's one coming in from the north that's about Spruce Street. What would be Spruce Street and I don't think Spruce Street was on the drawing. But about there. And uh that is dated 1880. It would be worth your while to go in and look at it, at the picture. The streets are named and, and their names are entirely different than what they are now. And a naturally what we call Archer was called Cumberland, then because of the Cumberland Road, the National Road. And a, a of course, Archer was changed from Cumberland to Main Street some time down the line. When I was a boy it was Main Street, Archer was called Main. In 1935, when they had their centennial they changed it to Archer Avenue, that was when it made the change there. But this, maybe I'm getting off the subject here. I don't know, it depends how long the tape is.

Do you know a lot about some automobiles that were around here? We have all kinds of transportation that we're researching, too.

You mean early, some of the early models? Is that what you're talking about?

Generally anything. We tried to find when the first cars came to Marshall, but we couldn't. None of the newspapers on the microfilm that we looked at had the newspapers on it from back that far.

I can remember my mother telling me the first automobile she saw uh she was born in 1899. So how old she was I don't know. But uh I'd say probably at the time she was 8 or 10 years old probably there'd have been automobiles.

You guys moved here in '30's; you moved here in '35. Where did you live before that?

Well, uh I was born in Melrose, you know where that wide place in the road is. Uh, we lived up by McKeen a year and uh, uh I'll leave this copy with you. And, and I talk about living up there in this. I don't know whether you want it all on tape or not but I'll leave this with you.

We'll take anything.

OK uh but of course you got the cars that's in production today. Like a Ford, and General Motor products. and uh, oh, when I was a boy you had the Studebaker. You've surely heard of Studebaker people back then said yeah they made a good wagon. They originally made wagons. The Studebaker people built wagons. They built wagons for use in the Civil War. But, anyway, there was Studebakers, and uh Hudson which evolved into American Motors which is now defunct. And uh gosh, I don't know. That's all I can think of offhand to tell you the truth. Some models go back before my time. There's been a lot of cars built in the United States. It's amazing when you see the figure. But, uh, in the early days of automobiles they might last for a year. Some guy decides he's going to have an automobile factory. So he started to build automobiles and it didn't go, see? And he went out of business. And somebody else would try. So there was a lot of that going in the early days.

Do you know how popular model A's and model T's and car like that were?

Oh yeah, T's were the first vehicle I ever drove.

My grandpa has one.

Yeah, and uh oh yeah, they a boy there was quite a lot of them in everyday use. And model T's there was a lot of those.

How long did they usually last? Cars today can last fairly long.

Well, of course, people didn't put as many miles on a car back then as they do now. I mean you didn't jump in the car and go to Terre Haute to eat supper, you know? You, uh, you didn't go to Terre Haute unless you really had something you wanted to do over at Terre Haute and needed to do. And uh, it's probably hard for people your age to understand that you just didn't jump in the car just on a whim. You know? You just didn't do it. But uh, oh, people, people had a car for several years. And wouldn't really put a lot of miles on it. Cause they didn't use it that much. However cars today last longer they're, they're mechanically better built their, their, tolerances in the engine and stuff is better and all this and they naturally last longer. Besides a car that's used a lot your cars put more miles on it then a car that's used frequently. It's not good for a car to drive it just short distance.

We put on 300 miles a week.

Yeah, Well, I worked construction before I retired. And I worked a lot up in Tuscola. And I needed, course back then course you was supposed to change the oil every 1,000 miles. It seemed like every time I turned around I was changing oil. You know, Because it really added up. It's 65 miles and round trips 100, you know 130. But uh I don't remember much about cars. You know um before we moved here cause it was out in the country most of the time.

What were some of the items the trains hauled?

We already got that one. Um, well, like I said in the early days before there were cars and trucks. You had two ways to haul something you hauled it in a wagon or hauled on a train.

Was it mostly the stove or whatever you said or foods like they do now? I read that in here. Foods were iced down though.

Well, this was I'm talkin' about, about 1933. In this ice down though. The first trains that went through on the Pennsylvania from California. Uh course by then some of it was quite a bit of stuff on trucks by then. But farther back that, well the turn of the century uh. like I say you wither hauled it in a wagon or if you ordered something from you know 100 miles away where it come on the train. And food stuff, usually not permissible though there wasn't that much perishable stuff way back at the turn of the century. Uh, know people didn't have refrigeration.

They had those blocks of ice.

Yeah, you women in the big city women had to shop everyday they go to the meat market, they go this, they go that.

That's why they just used the one day supply of food, instead of having a week's worth.

Like I said they didn't have refrigeration uh, and I don't know

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when ice boxes came along and the man came around. If you needed, if you needed ice you had a card, now this is getting off the subject but anyway, had a card about that big, square that said 25, 50, 75, 100. And you would turn the number up of how much ice you wanted and like, he'd, he'd drive up and he'd see it in the window and he'd know what to bring in. But it still didn't keep things like a modern refrigerator, ya know.

Well then, some people keep it too long. They keep food in the refrigerator just a little bit too long.

Well, uh huh, mold starts creepin' out the door. That's time to clean it out.

When you were living here in Marshall with the trains, did they derail very often?

No, no I uh, when I don't recall when I was a boy and derailling any around close uh to tell you the truth I think the tracks were better kept up back then than they are now.

Probably.

They don't, they don't use the manpower they did back then. Of course, they got a lot of mechanical stuff now that they didn't have back then. And, and you read this you'll find out about the section gang, uh, there was a section gang here at Marshall and they were responsible for a certain mileage or section of track. And I don't know there might have been 8 or 10 people in, in a section. Maybe more. But they were responsible for maintaining the track in that you know. A gang here might be responsible half way to Paris and half way to West Union. And Paris might have one. And so forth. But uh it was all done by hand. There was very little mechanical stuff. Of course, today they've got you've seen the big mechanics. That do a lot of it so they don't use enough men power.

I've got a cousin that works on the railroads.

Yeah, but uh, I don't recall a big train wreck of so and so I just don't. Now I, somewhere, I've got a picture and I got that from somebody else, that shows a train wreck. But that probably would have been back who knows. Uh, I don't identify where it was actually at but sure it was locally or the guy wouldn't of had the picture. But uh, cause there was some fantastic train wrecks that you read about in the history books and things like that but uh, you know they didn't occur very often.

With regards to the types of trains, do you know who made them? Or what type they were? I know there were the steam engines, and then they progressed to electricity.

Well, yeah course you first that was your first locomotive was steam locomotive. Uh. there was, there was several factories in

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the United States that built locomotives. Uh, offhand I can't name them off cause I'm not that familiar with. But, uh, there was a company named Baldwin that built locomotives. Uh, that comes to mind. But, uh, there were several companies that built locomotives. And of course, uh, Pullman he, he built the first sleeping cars, uh there wasn't a sleeping car until he come up with the sleeping cars idea. Uh, about every railroad had their own yards maintenance and they worked on their own locomotive uh, the cars they did, they did the maintenance work theirselves. There was a car shop in Terre Haute I remember back in the '30's that did that. Uh, Centralia, Illinois, had great, big, enormous uh, prepare facilities. Because I've read about uh, there was a big tornado in about 1919 or somethin'. That's the longest track of a tornado in the state of Illinois. Track clear across the state of Illinois but all together I guess it's the longest track they know of. It started in Missouri somewhere and came all the way across Illinois. And ended up over about Princeton, Indiana, where it stopped. And story I was reading about it, it came through Centralia and these guys were working on a locomotive, of course, it was cooled off there in the shop. And they jumped in the firebox to escape getting hurt in the tornado when it went through the building. Now that's about the safest place you could be, I reckon. By uh, well, this is not about tornado's. So if ask another question maybe we could stick to the subject.

In your papers you, talk about your Amtrack ride and your Conrail, I think?

Well, Conrail is uh, the road that goes through here now. That is Conrail.

Did passenger trains ever compete with other companies to get more business?

Well, of course. there's not much competition now. Amtrack if you want to go somewhere on a passenger train, it's almost Amtrack. But yeah, there was, there was a time say in the '20's. Uh, let's see, the Pennsylvania went through here on what Conrail is now. And there was an east and west railroad through Paris that was the New York Central. And they were competitive. I mean, they, they uh, the passenger business they tried to have fastest schedules and the plushest train and everything else attract people. Because there was a lot of competition in the passenger service.

Do you know how much it cost to send things, or take a ride on train or does it...?

I can tell you last year going to New Orleans. I can tell you the cost on Amtrack but other than that I couldn't uh. My ship had a reunion had it a sixth reunion in New Orleans. So my wife and I had been talking about Amtrack. Going somewhere on Amtrack, never had. So we decided that was a good time. And you can get on uh, uh Illinois Central over at Mattoon. That's where we got on. You can go to Mattoon or Effingham. It stops at Matton and it stops at

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Effingham. and uh, we had a bedroom. And I think all together the round trip with bedroom and with the bedroom you got your meal, your meals were included. And by the way, they had scrumptious meals on that train. I think it was around \$440 for the round trip.

Per person?

For the pair. For the two of us.

I was going say that's a lot of money.

Yeah, but you stop and think you, you get in a car and you drive to New Orleans or at least the way we do we don't try to set any records. You'll stay on the road at least a night maybe two depending on how everything works out. You got a motel, you got more meals on the road. So when you think about it the main thing about it you don't have to drive. Especially in the New Orleans. I, I wanted no part of that, that's a terrible town to drive in. I looking at the map and after we got there I could see I was right. It's an old river town and every street is one way. You know and crooked. All that, and, and people down there. I never saw the like. They just walk across the street. They don't matter with the light's red or green or in the middle of the street. They, they it would be a terrible wear and tear on your nerves to drive.

I would hate to be a pedestrian.

I'd be afraid of hitting somebody, you know and all that. I never saw the like. But anyway that's, that's the only way the only thing I can in the way of price. And uh, I I'd like to take a train ride to Seattle. I, I've been across the northern two states on a train. My wife never has. I'd like to go out there some time. Get on the train at Mattoon and I understand that you never got off the car. Cause the cars go on clear on out to Seattle.

When trains had food cars and dining cars, did they have to stop in the evening? Did they have to replenish everyday or...?

Well, I don't know about that. You know, now they have refrigeration just like any place else. So uh, I would imagine they pretty well stock up and go, you know.

They probably had a food cart in the back.

On this that uh, we don't really need to talk about, I guess. You can get the information off of there. But, uh, maybe some of these uh, you know that haven't even traveled on there then get them on tape.

I don't know what else to ask. Just give me your general idea of what you have, what you know about the railroads.

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Well, I could talk about some of the that on here uh, I don't know that uh. Some where in here I saw. You asked about when the railroad came in town. Uh, but I would encourage you to look at that picture or that down at the library. You, you'll enjoy looking at that. It'll, it'll raise a lot of question. Uh, something about when a train came into Marshall. It's near uh, it say uh in 1876 the Paris and Danville had built tracks from Paris to Lawrenceville so that it came through here. Now that would be surely the Paris and Danville, I never did. I, I never did find that spelled out but, but obviously because when '69 there was one built from Paris to Danville. So you know the obviously Paris and Danville built tracks on down so that uh. lot of these dates I, you know, I don't try to remember. So that you'll look through here and correlate it with that and come up with whatever you want. Uh anything else?

I don't know. I think that's it.

Well, like I said before it's in here. Uh, train came. When they, when they built this originally in 1876 it came down Route 1. All the way through town, town, well, not all the way through. It went down to the St. Mary's Church and the United Baptist Church and it turned and goes down that anglin' street. You know if your aware of this or not but course, Route 1 is Michigan Avenue and where it makes that turn that's Michigan Avenue, turns and goes down that anglin' street. Michigan Avenue, don't go on down out of town on Route 1. Well, that's the reason Michigan Avenue follows the old train track. And if, if you go down, to drive down 11th Street between Vine and Sycamore if you look to the east in, there's a field that you can see some of the old rail. Drive down that way an, an, and take a look, I mean it's a little bit of history out there. Someday the bulldozer will derail that all out and the history will be gone and you can tell somebody, Oh yeah, I remember when that grate was out there.

I might go out and take some pictures of it.

And as I've said in here the depot was on what is now the northeast corner of the Red and White parking lot. That, I don't know if you're old enough to remember. Do you remember there used to be a little three corner place with the filling station on it?

That used to be the Hucks?

No, no, no, on down. Uh where the Red and White parking lot took that in.

Oh, ok.

Some years ago, but it there used to be a, a, the street it used to be the street went down what would the Red and White parking lot on to Route 1. And that made a little triangular spot there and for years there was a filling station in there. Uh, when I, I get to talking to young, I forget that they don't remember back as far as

I do. And I, I catch myself once in a while. But actually that I think that little three corner spot was actually where the depot was at. So you can say now it's in the northeast corner of the Red and White parking lot. It's where the depot was. Now if there was a water tower, for them to get their water out of. I've never run into anything to tell where it was at. Now there was uh, uh, two tracks down Michigan. There residing because when you look at the picture in the library you can tell that. My first thought when I looked out there, hey them trains ya know but, but, there's...

Double tracks

Double tracks there. But uh, it's a

That's different. Now it is so much different than what it was then.

Yeah, see the, when the track was changed from in town out to where the old is right now you can date that by going east on Vine. There's a railroad you drive under the railroad. There's a viaduct there. And 1908 is cast in the concrete. So that dates the time when that was built and uh, I mention in here years ago. They had nails with dates in the top. That they would put in the ties when they would put them down. So they would know how long the tie lasted. I guess and uh, when I was a boy, you could still find some of those through there that have '08 on the head of them. So '08 was the year they built it. Or at least when they started using it. '08 or '09 or whatever you know. But uh, um, and as I said the depot was down where the building supply is there and the freight house was north of the depot an like I said the local came in and anything from Marshall was floated then they'd go on to Paris. And so forth see you ordered and here's something. That maybe I should mention I didn't say anything about that. Uh, they had railway mail cars uh, they was people on these cars and they sorted the mail while the train was going. Uh, they'd pick up a bag, say the train was going north they would pick up a bag of mail at Marshall and they would sort it. And maybe by the time they got to Paris they'd have the Paris stuff sorted out. And they'd drop it off in Paris. I mean, in the days of railroad mail cars the postal service was better than it is today. I mean, you know.

Not much got lost?

Well, uh, you know it was from here to there. And then anything to Danville ended up in Danville when they got there. And these people they, they just ride, that was their job. They were called railroad, railway mail clerks.

That would be an easy job.

No, it really wasn't uh, there was a lot of heavy lifting a lot of heavy packages a lot you know, of parcel post. And sometime the train pick up the mail and didn't stop. They hung the bag on a

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arm. And there was an arm on the side of the car that snatched it. And the train I suppose it slowed down. I don't suppose it went through at 90 mph, you know, what I mean. But they never came to a stop. And that, that's something.

Especially when they didn't have anything to drop off there just keep going.

Well, if they had something to drop off they would kick the bag out the door.

Oh my!

Those bags were made out of real tough stuff and uh kicked the arm up and kick a bag out wouldn't even have to stop. Now I think here at Marshall I think, the train stopped but Pennsylvania I'm pretty sure had the setup. They had see they had some their coal trains that didn't stop here at Marshall some of their passenger trains. And uh, they'd grab the mail on the go, kick the bag out for Marshall. Didn't even stop. I know uh, in 1944 when I went, I was home, and I was going back, I was in the Navy, I had been home, and I was going to, to school in Brooklyn Navy Yard and I had to go to Terre Haute to catch a train. Cause, it didn't stop in Marshall. Now they had a, they had a train that did called a local passenger train. And they even had a what today you call a commuter train. I never did hear it called that then. Uh this, this we're talking about in the '30's. Uh, how far west it went, I don't know. But it come through here and it'd stop and people would ride to work in Terre Haute and then ride it back in the evening and it would be one or two cars. And then they sat in there and they called it the "Bob." I reckon, bobtail train or something. I reckon that's the way it got that nickname. But it was actually a commuter train cause ya know people didn't go to work in Terre Haute like they do today. It's amazing in the morning where I live, I can look up there and there's a steady stream of cars going to Terre Haute, ya know. But uh...

That's different.

I ya know, it's hard just off the top of my head to think about things that's one reason why I worked on this yesterday. Uh, if a you come up with another, some more questions heck, I'm as close as the telephone they say. uh, I got lots of time and uh...