

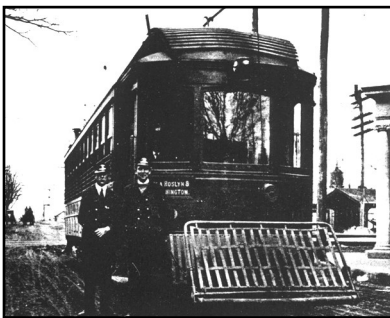


Anna District  
*Historical Society*  
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

# Skipping Village Gazette

## The Interurban Electric Railway...100 Years Ahead of Its Time?

*Written by Carol Wentz*



Interurban passenger car

Few Anna School District residents realize that electric passenger street cars passed regularly through Anna in the early 1900s on track

which ran down the

middle of today's County Road 25A. This interurban electric rail service was part of the Western Ohio Railway. This railway was then connected to other interurban rails from other companies which connected Lake Erie to the Ohio River. The Western Ohio Railway was the last and largest link on this river to lake interurban system.

*Welcome to our newest ADHS members...  
Scott and Gretchen (Koehler) Mote*

*Welcome and thanks for your generous support of the Anna District Historical Society! (Please let us know if we have inadvertently missed your name, and we will add it to our next newsletter list.)*

Grading for the railbed began in March 1901 between Lima and St. Marys. Eventually, the main route ran from Piqua to Findlay, passing through Lockington, Sidney, Anna, Botkins, Wapakoneta, and Cridersville. Another rail line ran from Wapakoneta to Celina, passing through Moulton. A branch line also ran from St. Marys (which was the city chosen as the site for a huge electric generating station) to Ft. Loramie, passing through New Bremen and Minster along the way.

Few people today realize the isolation felt by the residents of rural areas and small communities.



Anna interurban ticket office and café which was located just south of Saint Jacob Lutheran Church on 25A

These residents were excited to be connected to other communities via the interurban system. In 1902 when the first interurban cars began service there were no automobiles, no daily newspaper delivery, no telephones, no electricity, and no postal delivery. The electric railway line enabled rural residents to get to another village to buy a newspaper or deliver produce in a very short

amount of time or to go to the church of their choice. For the first time rural children could seek a high school education in a larger city. Lois Lenski was one of those children. She rode the interurban from Anna to attend high school in Sidney every day.

The interurban system also brought opportunities for social outings to its patrons. Baseball was very popular everywhere during the early 1900s. Semi-professional baseball teams were organized in many of the towns along the railway, like the Botkins Reds. Using the interurban service, it was easy for the rural passengers to attend these games and cheer for their favorite teams.

County fairs were also highlights of the year for folks living anywhere near the interurban. Both the Shelby County Fairgrounds in Sidney and the

Auglaize County Fairgrounds in Wapakoneta were near the electric railway. In addition to human passengers, the railway company also transformed some of their freight cars to accommodate and transport farm animals, as well as race horses and their sulkies to the fairs.

By the late 1920s, automobiles and trucks became much more affordable and popular which in the end caused the demise of the interurban. The last cars to make their runs on the Western Ohio Railway system marked January 16, 1932 as the last day of operations. Conductor Chip Koehl steered the last car to run from Lima to Wapakoneta. Koehl was a resident of St. Marys, so after he left the passenger car in the car barn at Wapakoneta he thumbed his way home along the very tracks that had carried him on his work for 30 years.



## HELP US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

Please consider becoming a member of the Anna District Historical Society.

Name of member \_\_\_\_\_

Name of spouse (family memberships) \_\_\_\_\_

Children under 18 (family memberships) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Milliette Level \_\_\_\_\_ (\$50 per month)

Anna Carey Thirkield Level \_\_\_\_\_ (\$25 per month)

Lois Lenski Level \_\_\_\_\_ (\$10 per month)

Single Membership - \$20 yearly \_\_\_\_\_

Family Membership - \$25 yearly \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime Membership - \$500 \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: ANNA DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. Box 133, Anna, OH 45302

The ADHS is a 501(c)3 charitable organization, and your donation may be tax deductible. Level giving may be automatically deducted each month from your checking account. Please ask Susie Bertsch (937.394.3072) for details.

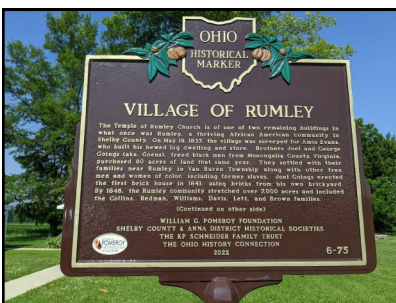
(Most of the information for this article was taken from Scott D. Trostel's book, *The Western Ohio Railway*, written in 1997. All pictures are from the collection of historical photos of the ADHS.)



Anna residents in front of interurban railway car

## A New Ohio Historical Marker for Rumley

An official Ohio Historical Marker for the village of Rumley was unveiled and dedicated on Thursday, May 19th next to the Temple of Rumley Church. The date coincided with the surveying by Amos Evans 185 years before on May 19, 1837. The marker notes that Rumley was “a thriving African American community that grew after freed black men from Monongalia County, Virginia, purchased 80 acres of land in 1837.” The only original village buildings that remain are the church and a school building.



This new historical marker was made possible with the generous support of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, Shelby County and Anna District Historical Societies, The KP Schneider Family Trust, and the Ohio History Connection.

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## 45th Anniversary of the Great Blizzard of 1978

The worst winter storm in Ohio history struck before dawn on Thursday, January 26, 1978. The *Blizzard of '78* continued through Thursday and into Friday. This coming January marks the 45th anniversary of that storm which so many of us experienced. If you have any memories or pictures you would be willing to share from the blizzard, please send them to [carolwentz53@gmail.com](mailto:carolwentz53@gmail.com). We hope to feature many of your pictures and remembrances in our January 2023 edition of the *Skipping Village Gazette*.

## Recent Restoration at the Packer Center

The leaded glass sidelight at the front door of the Packer Historical Center has been reinstalled after being beautifully restored by Classical Glass & Tile of Celina, Ohio. This project was primarily funded with a grant from the Troy Foundation.



## Naming Rights Opportunities

At this time, we have two first floor rooms still available for individuals or families to honor loved ones. Remaining rooms downstairs are the dining room and the west display room. Naming rights for each of these rooms is \$12,000. A plaque with wording of your choice will be installed by the Anna District Historical Society in the room.



**Anna District Historical Society**

112 West Main Street

P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

**POSTAL CUSTOMER**

**ANNA, OH 45302**

## Additional interurban photos from the ADHS collection...



Interurban substation north of Anna on 25A.  
Reportedly, it still contains the original tracks.



Interurban workers in Anna taking time out for a picture.

**Anna District Historical Society**

112 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

Phone: 937-646-0011

**Packer Historical Center Hours**

**Sundays 1-4pm**

**Or call 937.646.0011 to schedule a private tour.**



Interurban workers in Anna raising poles to carry electricity. Timber was cut from the forests adjacent to the right-of-way for the railway. Electric power was also sold to anyone living near the tracks as well as villages on the line. This provided cheap electricity to the rural areas along the 100 mile line.