

**Early transportation, business and recreations**  
*an Oral History*

James Housby, Interviewee  
Of LaSalle, Illinois

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Interviewer's Name: FLORENCE CLARKE  
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Q: This evening we are interviewing Mr. Jim Housby, labor historian for the Trades and Labor. Jim--and my name is Florence Clarke. The last time we interviewed you, we talked a little bit about transportation from Starved Rock, the Manleys, using a horse-drawn vehicle, and that brings to mind the horse and buggy days. Do you remember something about the horse and buggy days in LaSalle?

A: Yes, I do, Florence. I recall very vividly the horse and buggy days in LaSalle and as horse and buggies existed at that -- in that era, of course now we're in the motorized era. Now, horse and buggies as we recall were used for various modes of transportation; they were used for drayage, that is hauling material on all construction jobs. There was horse drawing buses. There were also -- horses were used naturally in all funeral processions [noise in background] and horses played a very vital part in the world during that era and period of time until steam and the automobiles became the chief mode of transportation.

Q: Do you recall their -- it seems to me that we talked one time about watering troughs.

A: Yes, Florence, speaking of watering troughs -- they were very essential wherever there were horses -- had to be watering troughs. Now, I recall distinctly that we had several in LaSalle. Now, we had one that was located on the southwest corner of Second and Joliet Street and that was -- and these watering troughs that we're discussing, Florence, they had continued flowage of water, and they had an overflow

that kept the water clear and clean for horses them days and then there was another watering trough located at First and LaHarpe Street; there was another one at First and Union Street; there was one on the north-west corner of Fifth and Crosat Street; one on Ninth and Crosat Street; another one up on Eleventh and Crosat Street; and then there was one on Ninth and Creve Coeur Street.

Q: Oh, they were located all over the city. Were they made of wood?

A: No, Florence, the ones that I seen, they were made of steel and in later years they got more modern with their water troughs. They made them out of concrete which was reinforced with steel. But the real realistic water tanks that we generallly talk about and which were the forerunners of all watering troughs were the steel troughs. And some of the water troughs had been converted from boilers from various steam engines so on and so forth which at -- during the period of time there had been factories, and various industrial plants had steam and naturally they had boilers and these watering troughs, some of them were cut down by blacksmiths and utilized into watering troughs.

Q: That's quite interesting. When we were talking about horse and buggy days -- were they used for delivery of groceries or milk? It seems to me that I remember milk being delivered.

A: Yes, Florence, that's a very good question. Horses were used, oh, they were the chief mode of transportation and for hauling groceries, for hauling coal -- they practically hauled everything in those days. Wagons -- they had regular dump wagons that they used for construction work. They had coaches and they had carriages and they had rigs that they used for transportaion for individuals and people. Funeral

processions had carriages and the carriages them days were made of the finest kind of wood. They were very expensive. And there were livery stables them days that done business in regards to people. Now, years ago they didn't -- they called them traveling men -- men that would come in from the bigger cities and representing various companies and groceries, and hardware, lumber, whatever their commercial mercantile was; they would come to LaSalle, for instance, and they would go to livery stable. They could rent a horse and they would visit the various suburban towns: Ladd, Dalzell, Cedar Point and they would perhaps stay a week around LaSalle and stay in our local hotels and they would use the livery stable and barn for -- that would be their headquarters \_\_\_\_\_ for transportation purposes. Now, years ago also, horses were used -- there were ice cream horse that they used horses for ice cream wagons. And back forty (Pause), oh, prior to forty years ago ice cream wagons were horse-drawn and they would mostly in the evenings -- they would operate during the summer months -- and there was Regus Brothers here in LaSalle and they. . .

Q: I remember them. And you know what I remember about Regus Brothers? Not only did they have a nickel cone --but this is really true -- they had a penny cone and we'd clutch those pennies and watch at night and listen for the sound -- they had little bells I think -- and then we would go out and get a penny cone -- strawberry or chocolate. How could they do it?

A: Well, it seems the economic value them days -- it seems that a penny had the worth of (laughter) perhaps fifty cents today, Florence. And getting back to Regus Brothers that you recall very distinctly, Florence.

I recall their wagons were one-horse wagon and they'd paint them different colors and the last color that I recall they had was yellow wagons. Now, also, we had Mr. Oddo, a LaSalle native, he had his own ice cream wagon and his was white and red. A Mr. Palmerry whom was also a Teamster during the summer months -- in the evenings he had an ice cream wagon and would hitch his -- one of his horses up. And then it went on to about 1925 and the state legislature passed laws and they said it, well, it wouldn't be sanitary for horses and ice cream, it was a . . . and so they enacted laws that just put the horse -- the horse -- and ice cream wagon out of existence in Illinois.

Q: Well, how about milk deliveries in the horse and buggy days?

A: Yes, Florence, milk deliveries were made strictly by horses and milk wagons and the wagons were made to accommodate and made it easy for the milkman to -- there was a step on each side. And milk routes were run, oh, they would start their job about three o'clock in the morning and they -- they would try to be off the street about -- between 11:00 a.m. and noon. And then there was the bread -- the bakeries -- our local bakeries.

Q: Oh, excuse me. Didn't the milkman have a bell to ring?

A: Yes, he did. And. . .

Q: I think we have one here.

A: Yes, we'd like to. . . [ringing of milk bell] Why that. . .

Q: That was a welcome sound.

A: That's -- that's really a welcome sound. And that's very realistic to the sound it brings back -- one back to nostalgia back to fifty years ago, Florence.

Q: Well, I think the milkmen I remember had tall cans and you ran out

with a pitcher and he had sort of a dipper and he'd fill the pitcher with milk and then you'd run back to the house.

A: Oh, yes, I'm glad you brought that up also, Florence. Now what I stated before -- I was in the modern age of the horse and buggy milkman, and now we're going to go in which I have also vivid recollection and memory. Milk, they didn't have regular milk wagons, they had -- they used a regular -- what they called a spring wagon. Some were light spring wagons, Florence, that had a team hitched to them; others \_\_\_\_\_ one horse. Now, Mr. Joe Segaert, one of our natives in our community, why, he drove a milk wagon and the way they dispensed the milk them days -- now I'm going back, oh, prior to 1920. They would have their regular milk cans and they would have a dipper and they would -- they would have a bell also to ring.

Q: Did they have the cows, too, each of these milkmen?

A: Yes, they did, Florence. It was customary procedure that cows were -- in other words, commercializing the milk retail -- they had their own stock of cattle and everything was done from a -- from a farm standpoint in them days. And then as I stated prior, laws were passed -- were not only with the ice cream people, where they had to pasteurize the milk and of course when pasteurization of milk become a necessity by law, naturally they outlawed the dipper and the open wagon and then they went to bottles and glass containers them days.

Q: Oh, that was it. \_\_\_\_\_ when we were talking about horses -- up on Seventh and Marquette Street there is an old hitching post. Are there very many old hitching posts around LaSalle? That's the only one I know of.

A: Well, that's the only one I know of. And I think, Florence, that

you're referring to the Littau family up on Seventh Street. And you know that is -- that's realistic now, I'd term that one a very fancy one. That's ornamental. Now, getting back to hitching posts, well, Florence, we -- they have a substitute for hitching posts but they're not as realistic -- that's the parking meters.

Q: (laughs) Oh, yes. That's right.

A: The old hitching post didn't require any coins but there was -- in all business districts in all cities the streets were -- every business house had a hitching post and they were a strong steel post with a ring in it and the horses, the halter of horses would -- all horses they would have a bridle, and whom the driver of the team or single horses they would have a halter and they would tie the team or the individual horse to the hitching post. And then there were many homes had their private hitching post and many of those were very fancy. Some were ornamental and some had a replica of a horse's head on them, and they become something of the past but they tell me they have a evaluated antique value.

Q: Oh, I imagine they would. Now, most -- so many things are collectable. You know, the -- talking about horses brings up the question of blacksmith shops. I remember one about First and Crosat Street that the Collins Brothers had. So first of all, why was it necessary to have blacksmith shops and why have they disappeared?

A: Well, Florence, yes. I was raised in the immediate shadow of Collins' Blacksmith Shop and the reason a blacksmith shops -- they were about as essential as the times in their day. The blacksmith would shoe horses. Blacksmith shop -- who the blacksmith -- he was also a wagon maker. And he would repair wagons and the wheels of the wagons

were something that needed a lot of attention those days. And the blacksmith he was a -- well, the modern name for the blacksmith today is the welder. But of course them days the blacksmith he not only -- he welded and he welded by a forge and -- but he was also a wagon builder and they done general farm --various different irons that were used. . .

Q: Oh, I forgot about the farm \_\_\_\_\_.

A: And, now, getting -- I'm glad also that you brought up the name Collins. Well there were two brothers that came here either in the 18\_\_ about 1840's or 1850's. It was James and Jerry Collins. They were brothers. Jerry was the wagon -- wagon maker and James Collins he was the blacksmith. But they were a combination and either could do the other's work. They were genuine blacksmiths. They could do anything. And I have heard -- I heard James Collins make the statement that, oh -- many's a wagon they repaired and many's a horse they shod for people that were going West -- oh, way back in the fifties and sixties.

Q: Oh, isn't that interesting. I hadn't known that about them.

A: Yes.

Q: That's an interesting phase, isn't it, of early days?

A: Well, may I also state that the Collins Brothers they hailed from the good old sod of Ireland.

Q: Oh, yes, that's an old family in LaSalle and an interesting one. We did talk about the livery barns, didn't we, where the horses were kept and apparently the salesmen rented them or if you wanted to go to a funeral you could rent a carriage because we didn't own cars in those days.



A: Well, yes, Florence, I'm glad you also restipulated that. Livery stables were very important. Now William Brennan, a long-time native of the city of LaSalle, had an up-to -- one of the most up-to-date livery stables anyone would find regardless of where they travel. Now of course, Mr. Brennan he had -- now I'm speaking naturally of horse and buggy days and he had horse-drawn vans, regular moving vans. Now these vans were made the same as they make truck vans today for furniture. Then he had dump wagons that were used in construction work and he had springboard wagons and Mr. Brennan also had water wagons.

Q: Oh?

A: Yes. The water wagons were used up until the early 1930's in LaSalle. During the summer months, Mr. Brennan would have a team hooked to a water wagon and everything was mechanical. They sat real high up on a seat and he had a lever that he worked with his foot and they worked the brake with the hand brake and they would -- they had a hose and they would drive up to a fire hydrant and this hose would be connected on to the water wagon and -- well let me state this to clarify it. There were -- downtown -- there were fire hydrants that had a special hook up where the pipe went up and then there was a hose that went over to the fire and just diagonally where the wagon would pull under this hose, and there was and then the driver would get down and turn the valve on and fill the wagon and then he would turn the valve off and he would go on to water the streets. And that was a customary procedure I presume also in foreign countries in cities.

Q: In other words it was washing the streets. I kept wondering. . .

A: Cool, yes.

Q: . . .what he was going to do with the water.

A: Well the -- I think their objective was, they stated, also to wash the street and it cooled -- there were mostly paven bricks them days and of course they had the presumptual idea that they were keeping the streets cool for the public.

Q: That's interesting. \_\_\_\_\_ you were talking about the horse and buggy -- there was a colorful character that I remember as a child who's called Perdy Keefe or O'Keefe. I think he sold kerosene.

A: Yes.

Q: \_\_\_\_\_ that what it was kerosene?

A: It was kerosene, Florence, and I also recall Perdy Keefe. Now he had a well, sometimes I recall that he had a white horse and sometimes he would use a dark -- mostly a black horse and his wagon was a light blue trimmed with red. He was a very jovial gentleman, known by all his townspeople and very much liked by everyone. Now, kerosene was -- it was just as important them days as gasoline is today. Now kerosene was used for kerosene lamps, and going back to the days when Perdy Keefe first started to sell kerosene by wagon, there were perhaps five percent of the homes in LaSalle had electricity. Well, he had a -- he had a very outstanding business and a very current business and kerosene was also used -- some people would use a kerosene stove. And that would burn the kerosene. And then kerosene was used to expedite and to ignite coal and wood in the old coal -- coal and wood-burning stoves.

Q: It seems to me that when they used cobs to start the coal fire in a cookstove, I remember, you sometimes poured kerosene on it but you were warned of the danger.

A: Oh, yes, and unfortunately there were a good many people received

severe burns and \_\_\_\_\_ explosions and there were a good many people met tragic deaths.

Q: There were -- I think Perdy Keefe had only one arm as I remember him, right?

A: Yes, you're right, Florence. . .

Q: But he certainly made his own living. . .

A: Oh, he was an aggressive man. . .

Q: A wonderful man.

A: And he worked. . .

Q: He was very religious, too.

A: Oh, yes, and an honest person and very religious and I had asked my dad when I was, oh, seven or eight years old how Mr. Perdy Keefe only had the one arm. Well, he stated that unfortunately he met with a mine accident in the mine and lost his arm up near the shoulder.

Q: I never knew what happened to him. Well, we've talked quite a bit about the horse and buggy days and all the fun they used to have. Let's talk a little bit about recreation at this turn of the century. I can remember seeing circus parades on First Street. Now there were circ -- I imagine it would be Ringling Brothers or Barnum and Bailey, and there used to be a racetrack in LaSalle. Is that where we had the circuses?

A: Yes, Florence, your memory, I know, is very vivid on those circuses. Now, LaSalle was -- now certain cities -- now LaSalle had the reputation and drawing power for circuses they said of a city two or three hundred thousand. And the circus people -- all of them made LaSalle at some time or another, and it was a beloved city for people in the entertainment world in all categories. Now, we recall the circuses they would

come in by train and unload and prior to the -- they would have an afternoon show and evening show. And about eleven o'clock in the morning they would parade, as you stated -- they would have a regular full-dress parade of the big circus wagons and the various animals in the wagons and you would see a girl, generally, sitting in with the lion, and the ponies then they would have -- coming up the rear of the parade would be the steam calliope.

Q: Oh, I had -- yes, now I remember that. Oh, yes. It was an entrancing thing.

A: Oh, it was -- the parade was a drawing card and the people would follow the parade and go right out -- now they would go to the show grounds, them days what they called the show grounds and LaSalle we were very fortunate. The old racetrack, as Florence stated, was the show grounds for the area. That was located which is now the -- the Lucy Duncan Cummings subdivision. Now, the area was west of St. Vincent's Avenue, south of O'Conor Avenue, and almost over to Bucklin Street. And it was -- them days LaSalle as I stated before was -- was very progressive. Not only that we were fortunate we had -- now the race-track up there -- they had a racetrack and they had a grandstand and there were ballgames played in the area; they'd sit in the grandstand and watch the game -- the way the terrain was layed out and I have heard people that understood horse racing say that the turf -- that is the ground where the racetrack was situated was some of the finest turf to be found anywhere in the country.

Q: Was there very much horse racing? I never heard of horse racing up there.

A: Yes, there was there was -- them days there was mostly what they called the sulky race, Florence, with the little. . . [motorcycle engine revving]

Q: Oh, that's right.

A: . . .sulky and the driver he would have a very -- his fancy clothes and his silk --silk coat and his silk trousers and with the various different colors it was -- it was just grand to just watch the spectacle of it.

Q: Yes, I think it was called sulky because one person alone could ride in it.

A: Right.

Q: Well, that was a wonderful era. I don't think children today can know the great joy we experienced. You know, I remember carnivals in LaSalle as a child just watching \_\_\_\_\_ we used to go see the sideshow and I particularly remember one was Lolla Coola, half man, half woman. And it was the most lurid picture in front. We were never allowed to go in and since then I often wondered about it. Where were the carnivals held here?

A: The carnivals, Florence, were held mostly on First Street in LaSalle and that was, oh, prior to the -- in the -- all during -- up until, well, the last carnival held on First Street in LaSalle was in 1935. They had Reuben Cherry which was considered at that time one of the big carnivals.

Q: Oh, it was!

A: I remember distinctly Hoola Coola, half man, half woman was situated just about down on First and Joliet Street. That's where they had the show. And, oh, they had some of the finest carnivals and they had

\_\_\_\_\_ Kennedy played in LaSalle way back in 1922 and they came back here in 1924. S. W. Brundage carnival played in LaSalle. . .

Q: I remember that.

A: . . .several times and, oh, as I stated prior that LaSalle -- well let's state -- what they called the "Billboard" and that's a periodical and a newspaper that is published by the circus and show people entertainment world mostly in carnivals, street fairs, and circuses. And that's how -- how show people keep in touch with one another is through the "Billboard."

Q: Oh, I didn't know that. Now, is the street fair -- would that be about the same as the carnival?

A: Yes, Florence, that. . .

Q: Would that be locally sponsored?

A: Yes, that was them days the street fairs from about 1910 to about 1918 and perhaps prior to 1910 -- the LaSalle fire -- firemen they always sponsored a street fair annually. And the street fair was a combination; it was a carnival and then our local merchants would display as exhibits their merchandise and it was something that the people of the entire area during that period of time, oh, they would come that knew about this -- they would come in by train mostly; they would travel two or three hundred miles to make LaSalle and their street fairs. They mostly had that around Labor Day. That was generally the climax of the summer season.

Q: Oh, that's interesting. We were talking about transportation. I think the boats, the Swains, are very interesting. I can remember going on an excursion once and it's very faint in my memory. There was Julia Belle Swain. What were the other Swains?

A: Yes, there was the "Julia Belle Swain" and that -- the "Julia Belle" was named after Mrs. -- Mrs. Swain. Now, her husband was David Swain and he had a boat named after him, and then they had two sons. Percy, the eldest son, they had a boat named after Percy. And then the younger son, his name was Verne Swain, and they had the "Verne Swain." Now, I did not see the "Verne" but I think you also seen the "Julia Belle," the "David," and the "Percy," but I can't recall personally of ever seeing the "Verne Swain." But there were four. Now the Swain boats, Florence, they were propelled by a stern wheel -- stern wheel -- a stern paddle wheel.

Q: Now, were they steam?

A: They were steam. And, oh, that was something that they -- and they used to pull up in to what we call our big basin and that was down here in the big basin at Lock 15. They would pull up and they would they -- all boats have a gangplank and that's operated off a winch on the -- on the boat and when they land they always lower the gangplank and that's how people would get to and fro the boat -- come and go -- and it would lock -- it all the boats -- all the excursion boats in general in which we had many during the teens and up until the twenties and we had a few in the thirties and occasionally we have them now, but them days -- prior to 1925, the boats all came -- docked at Lock 15, which is at the Cue Bridge that crosses the Lock right in that vicinity. They would pull up there and of course the excursion boats -- they would have their own orchestra.

Q: I was going to ask you about entertainment. It seems to me they sort of had a vaudeville on there, a dance, I think they had dancing as I remember it.

A: Yes, they did, Florence. They that was what they called moonlight excursions and that was the sell out for people.

Q: Now, how far south did they go -- to Hennepin?

A: They had a general run, all excursion boats would go down west of Spring Valley to what they call the Three-I Bridge. That's a railroad bridge west of Spring Valley. And that was the destination and then they would go down to the bridge and they -- the river is quite wide in that immediate vicinity and they would turn around. Say they would leave here, oh say about 7:00 to 7:30 in the evening and they would get back about midnight. Everything was so they could -- and naturally they always had a bar on the boats, which was an integral part of the dance pavillion.

Q: Yes, that was part of life then.

A: Yes.

Q: We had a lot of fun, didn't we? We were -- when we were talking about the river -- I was driving down on Water Street and saw the mine rescue station. Now that goes way back in our history, doesn't it?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Just where is that now? On Water Street?

A: Well now -- they have -- our present day -- they call it the rescue squad. They do practically all their work in various places but they specialize in river rescue so on and so forth. But speaking of the mine rescue that dates back -- that took place right after the Cherry Mine Disaster. They seen it was absolutely imperative that modern means must be enacted to safeguard the miners whom had and still have one of the most dangerous occupations in existence. So following the Cherry



Mine Disaster in 1909, they passed a law and they said -- they created three mine rescue stations. Now these were supported by the State of Illinois. One was located east of the Illinois Central tracks say about (Pause) Third Street in LaSalle. Now just within the past six months they had just raised the -- the old building that now -- that housed the superintendent -- they had a superintendent there. . .

Q: I think his name was Skelton.

A: Alex Skelton.

Q: Yes.

A: And Mr. Larry McGonigal succeeded Alex Skelton and then when Mr. McGonigal transferred over to become city engineer for the city of LaSalle he was succeeded by Mr. Peter Proctor. And of course Mr. Skelton and Mr. McGonigal and Peter Proctor they were all well-versed in mining; they were miners -- that was their part of life. They understood the mining situations, and that was their life's vocation and of course Mr. McGonigal he was a mining engineer also.

Q: Do they -- now if a miner needed help would they go to the mine down below and help him or how just. . .

A: Now the way -- they -- now one was -- as I stated -- one of the mine rescue stations supported by the state was situated in Springfield and there was another one located, if I'm not mistaken, at Benton. I may be wrong on the location of that one but it was in that immediate vicinity because there -- there were and there still are many mines in that vicinity of the state. Now, each mine rescue station had a superintendent that supervised it. And each mine rescue station had their own rescue crew -- what they called staff or crew and they would meet once a week and go through their -- they had rigid training and these

people that were members of this mine rescue crew -- they were all miners -- they would have to be because that was what their purpose would be in case of an emergency. Now, this big building they had also had a place where a railroad coach which was fully equipped with all the modern scientific equipment for mine safety emergency purposes. This railroad coach would be -- the engine would -- on a side track would take -- would push it right in the building and they had a big door and it would be closed and when emergency arose they'd just couple the engine on and they'd take it wherever they needed it. There was always an engine available in case of an emergency to take this coach.

Q: What is the pres -- is the present one just called rescue station and do they \_\_\_\_\_ saving people [telephone rings] that are drowning it seems.

A: Well, you see, Florence, them days what we're talking about -- the mine rescue was state supported. Now these people do a wonderful job today what I think they call them they have an Ottawa rescue squad and I. . .

Q: Yes, I see that's mostly for. . .

A: . . .they have one down in Peru. They do outstanding deeds and they're people that are dedicated people; they get nothing for their services. They have their dance once a year and they're really an asset to the community.

Q: \_\_\_\_\_ we were talking about mines that brings to mind what we used to have were company stores. It seems there was one down there near the bridge between LaSalle and Peru run by the Carbon Coal. Were there other company stores and just how did they get the name?

A: Well, company stores during that era and uh and uh company stores had their origination, Florence, in the -- in the mining fields. They -- they -- the railroads had company stores and there were other big construction groups where big project was going on that would last several years. They were just what we would call today the commissary system. Well, as you stated, the company store for the LaSalle mines was located, just as you stated, west of the bridge between LaSalle and Peru, adjacent to Westclox right in -- right on the south side of the street.

Q: Yes, I remember that.

A: And then there was one that took care of the mine over in the Oglesby area. There was a company store located southwest of the mine in a large wooden structure and the company store was there. And also this same structure it -- it housed a big hall for the various doings that the miners would have. And of course the company stores -- they were something -- the economic situation for working people them days was an acute situation. One had a hard time trying to make ends meet. Miners -- during the summer months the mines laid off and during the winter months there were slack days they wouldn't work and it was and company stores they always stated -- they always wanted two prices for everything. They weren't what they should be for the people that really needed them because they had a -- a minor stipend to operate with and especially for large families it was really hard for them to tide by. Now I recall some of the old time miners told me that where a family -- the economic situation -- they'd have large families and the economic situation was not good. Miners didn't receive a bare existence in wages and they would -- where they overstepped their -- their credit limits, why, the mother or

one of the girls or boys of the family would have to wait in the morning to see before whether their dad or their older brother would send up a car of coal which would give them credit to get some bread or meat for the daily menu.

Q: Did they operate on sort of a credit basis and it would be taken out of the miner's pay at the end of the month? Is that how they did it?

A: Yes, that's the way it was. It was deducted from their wages and here's the way that was, Florence, to a -- the younger generation. Now, there was a book the -- the miner that worked in the mine, course his children or his wife operated off that book. He had a book and the store had an identical book and if they got a pound of beans there was -- it was an itemized book. Every sale was itemized. If it was soap, if it was beans, very little meat, and of course you know they could get overalls or shoes. It was a general commissary system. And of course, too, Florence, something that -- them days the mines paid in silver or gold and they -- they would the miners what they would have coming they would receive in a brown envelope and they -- they would be paid in coins -- gold or silver.

Q: What a long way we have come since those days!

A: Oh and. . .

Q: I can see the advantage and the disadvantage of a company store. It was convenient for them when you didn't have transportation but on the other hand there was no competition. You paid the price the company store asked.

A: Correct you are, Florence.

Q: And that's the way it went. Do you recall anything else about entertainment in the early days, Jim?

A: Yes, Florence. The old timers had told me of -- of the very -- well them days entertainment was based on a -- on a public standpoint. There was no admission for a good many. Now, I'm speaking of balloon ascensionists. I'm speaking of tightrope walkers and so forth. Now on or about 1908, Mr. Segaert told me -- he was a young man at the time -- and down on First and Hennepin Street in LaSalle they were -- it was -- during the combination of a street fair and they had a lady; she had a national reputation as a balloonist and she was to go up this evening and during the interim of time the air got a little violent and course in balloon ascensions, they tell me, the current of the air must be in certain direction where they could land safety -- safely. And of course they decided they would postpone this ascension. Well, of course the public got a little uneasy so this -- the lady balloonist she said she would go up anyhow. So she did. And unfortunately the following day they recovered her body in the Illinois River between LaSalle and Peru. Her body was strapped to the parachute.

Q: Oh, what a sad ending.

A: Yes, Florence, I can recall also back in 1922 the -- they had a balloonist ascension program and that was at First and Hennepin Street but that was very successful. And of course the last balloon ascension we had in LaSalle was back in 1955 during our progressive LaSalle days. The balloonist took off -- he was -- from the bottom lands west of -- west of the LaSalle mine dump. And the wind got a little violent and when he took off he landed on the dump because if he would a went any farther east he would a went in the slough or the Illinois River and he landed safely. And of course I can recall way back in 1922 when they had a tightrope walker, and the tightrope was extended -- it's a wire

is actually what it is -- it was extended from the Herner Building on First and Gooding Street over to the McCloskey Building -- that used to also be a three story building. And this man had this tightrope, or tightwire I call them, walker he used naturally they all use them a balance pole and he had a red, tight gymnastic suit and it was very interesting to watch. And late years -- there are new entertainment modes that people go for and so on and so forth and -- but the nostalgia of the past is something that to some of us people that are a little older we have -- we think great of it and we have highly valuated ideals of it.

Q: Well, thank you, Jim. This was all very interesting.

A: Something else, Florence, that no doubt you and I and everyone else is interested: the automobiles in -- during their start from the horse and buggy days. We started with horse and buggies and now we make a small statement on automobiles. The Kinder Brothers had the first garage in the city of LaSalle, and that garage was located where the bowling alley is in the 1000 block in LaSalle. I believe they call it the Palace Bowling Alley today, well, that was on or about the location of Kinder Brothers' first garage. And of course what the old timers speak about in our immediate area is Billy Matthiessen's car way back around, oh, 1908, 1910 and even in those days his car -- he had certain custom features attached to his car. And of course coming out of the horse and buggy era, the automobile is what we would term a satellite today. And there were -- and then of course Mr. Faul he had the Packard agency in LaSalle during, oh, way back in 1914 \_\_\_\_\_

1918 and there were many features of cars. There was the Buick automobile. They tell me when Buick first made a car that a man would have to come from the factory if anything major had -- if they -- any motor trouble they had a man would be sent from the factory to fix these cars.

Q: Just imagine. . .

A: They were sealed in a certain manner that only the factory had access to the seal.

Q: Very interesting.

Janet Kankaala  
Transcriptionist

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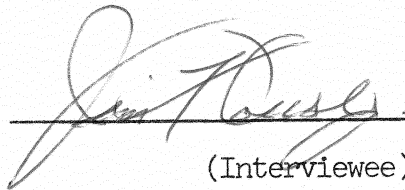
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