

**Interurban line**  
*an Oral History*

Stanley Kern, Interviewee  
Of Seatonville, Illinois

Interview Date: July 27, 1975

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NARRATOR: Stanley Kern  
TAPE # : 1  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: July 27, 1975  
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Seatonville, Ill.  
INTERVIEWER: Fritz Goodman  
FOR: Starved Rock Library System

I: My name is Fritz Goodman. We are doing an oral history report for American History class. The date is 27th of July, 1975, Sunday. We are talking here to Mr. Stanley Kern who will tell us a little bit about the Interurban.

N: The Interurban line as I knew it, know as the C.O.P., Chicago, Ottawa, and Peoria, ran from---ran from Ladd to OTTAWA. The branch office was in Spring Valley and went to Princeton down through and crossed under the New York Central tracks at \_\_\_\_\_ and proceeded on to Bureau and then all the to Princeton and that was the end of that line. As far as I know, I know it went to Ottawa and perhaps further East even to Chicago. I have a-I'm speaking about the time of 1911-12. And I have walked from Seatonville from here to the branch line going to Ladd to get on that car to go to LaSalle. And any points, Spring Valley Peru, LaSalle, Ottawa. To any point. Many people from here did the same thing. They'd walk up to the where they cross the line at the-going to Ladd, get on that car, sometimes ride the New York Central train or the Milwaukee train from Seatonville to Howerr where they could also get on that car, go to PRINCETON OR LaSalle. That was the way that I remember it. Fact is-that is fact. I went to LaSalle one time on that Interurban car. I \_\_\_\_\_ second-hand bicycle \_\_\_\_\_ and I brought it back on that Interurban car and road from Ladd road back into Seatonville. That's--that was one time that I remember in particular. Riding that car and they letting me bring that bicycle on, without charge. Now if there's any other questions that I haven't covered, you might tell me.

I: First, we want some history about you, yourself. Where were you born?

N: Well, I was born in Siverville, Indiana, July 28, 1896, and we came to this part of the country, that is came to Illinois, 1909. That's near Galesburg where we first came. Farming, was the line of work. (pause) But my Dad was a telegraph operator so he got work at this New York Central here at Seatonville. So we moved to this, you know-you know Galesburg if about 75 miles South and West of here. But we came here and he was worked all the rest of his life. I got started learning, you know, learning from him. Got started on railroad work. Got started about 1911. But I got my name on the seniority list October 12, 1912. Then I worked from that time-the same railraod- two railroads it was--joint stations, New York Central and the Milwaukee railroad, and worked the extra work for about--not much more than a year. \_\_\_\_\_ My Dad, he left Seatonville, went to Earlville as agent and I got the Seatonville job. I got the home job. Just that quick. And I was up here then, the home job, until 1933 and after that, things begin to do down, I was bumped there so I went to the Ladd Office and from 1933 and worked there until 1964 when I retired October 16, 1964.

I: Did you have much experience with the Interurban?

N: With the Interurban?

I: Yes.

N: I neve had any connection with the Interurban although I had the \_\_\_\_\_ in there. Ther Interurban line had abandoned and left Ladd before that. All the othere railroads on Ladd was a joint station. That was the New York Central, the Milwaukee, and the Burlington and the New York or Northwestern and LS&BC, LaSalle and Bureau County railroad serves the M&H company in IASalle. All these railroads were in Ladd. That's \_\_\_\_\_ but no connection with the C.O.P., the Interurban line.

I: Do you know why the Interurban had to leave Ladd?

N: They- Interurban abandoned the entire line because they lost business when automobiles began to get so plentiful. Nobody would ride the Interurban from Ladd to Spring Valley or LaSalle when they had a car. Got to be so those cars were running empty. Lot of times hardly anyone on there but the \_\_\_\_\_ So that was why they were gradually phased out of business. Just the same as the steam engine has been displaced by the deisel. You know everytime they get something better then the older machines lose out, You know how the Phonograph \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of business frome the-when the television came in. That's the same. They lost their business and they had to quit.

I: Was it more effecient to ride by car or Interurbam.

N: Well if had to ride ----if we had any public transportation left that any village starting in Ladd, I'd ride the Interurban anytime because they were running pretty near every hour and noone was going to run an automobile and have that service available. So I think that at that time when they were in business it was a good thing for people to ride them. If they had, they wouldn't have lost their urban line.

(pause)

I: Did you know how the Interurban trains operated?

N: Well, they operater by an overhead trolley. Like wire overhear that was contack by the trolley. That's the wheel that reaches from the car, from the motors on the car upt o that- and just rolls along on that cable. That's electrified. Well, I don't know if they still have them like in Chicago. That's when they ysed to have in Chicago. Operated by electric wire overhead. That was their means of power. Pretty simple.

I: How fast did those trains go? I mean using electicity and everything?

N: They went pretty good speed. I wouldn't know how-what they'd go- seem to me like they'd be going to fast for the track because they would look side by side. I would think they would go about 25 to 35 miles an hour, anyway. I've seen them roll along, I'd be afraid to ride them that fast. They'd drive them, anyway, 25-35 miles an hour.

I: Was that in town they did that?

N: No, they--not in town so much as that say from Ladd to Spring Valley is all sountry and from there--form Ladd then to Spring Valley why it was a straight ahead run. They had nothing to stop. They would stop all from-- or at the road crossins where anyone was there to flag them down to ride. You cold get on at any little crossing-if you were there \_\_\_\_\_ for a ride. Through town they'd abide by the laws and governing the speed of the village, of the town.

I: Is it a very pleasureable ride? I mean would it \_\_\_\_\_ fine details?

N: To me, it was an awfully nice ride. Yes that is--it could be opened up in the summertime. The windows could so you'd get fresh air just like a open car \_\_\_\_\_ but it was a nice ride. Of course, to me- you couldn't tell what it would mean to another person but I was--at that time about 16,17,18 hears old so then most any ride was good in my estimation.

I: Thank You.

N: Got It?

I: Yes it's pretty nuch what we wanted.

N: Well that's what I knew, all I know, back a was \_\_\_\_\_ in those days but where they would run from Ottawa I never knew and I can't locate any information to show. I think perhaps you could get it from Spring Valley or straight from Mr. Barron, you know at that Barron's Collum. I think he had a item on that. Lots of times he had historical items,

you know. I think he had it on that \_\_\_\_\_.

Anyone that would see that column where he is righting up some history, he usually goes into detail. Gets the information, then goes into detail and has a pretty correct column.

I: I would again like to thank you very much and I know people will enjoy listening to your tape.

N: That's all I--it was to be played so someone else can hear it?

I: Right.

N: I see. Well that's allright. The lady told us you were wanting information so I didn't have anything in the book to show. I have an official guide but it's dated 1961 \_\_\_\_\_ in the United States but it would have been dropped from that \_\_\_\_\_ a person had an old copy that would show. \_\_\_\_\_.

Beverly Black  
Transcriptionist

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Stanely M. Kern

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(Interviewee)

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