TRAGEDIES ON THE RAILS
In the late 1800s, the town of Carmel was little more than several blocks of wood-frame buildings centered on what is today the intersection of Main Street and Range Line Road. Range Line, which was called Main Street back then, was a corduroy road covered in gravel that connected Indianapolis to Peru. Travel was difficult as the gravel layer thinned and the logs sunk in the mud. When the Monon Railroad was built through town in 1882, it was an economic boon for the town. The Monon connected Carmel to the big cities, Indianapolis and Chicago, as well as the neighboring communities of Westfield, Sheridan and Lafayette. The depot also solidified Carmel as the center of commerce for Clay and west Delaware Township.

Rail travel in the late 19th century was an adventure. Before the Monon, travel for Carmel residents had been relegated to the pace of a slow-gaited horse, but now they watched the world speed past their window, dressed in their finest. By 1890 people across the country were enjoying the novel experience of a weekend getaway. A favorite for residents of Central Indiana was a trip to Chicago for shopping and sightseeing. Travelers often included a show on their itinerary and caught an 11:55pm express back to Indianapolis on Sunday night after the theaters closed. They either rested comfortably in the sleeper car or borrowed a neighbor's shoulder in the day car on the eight hour overnight, arriving in Indianapolis just before 8am.

On the night of January 26, 1890, forty-three passengers boarded the midnight express to Indianapolis after a weekend in Chicago. Seven passengers reclined in the Pullman sleeper car, thirty-six slept upright in the ladies’ car, and seven crew members kept the train at a steady twenty-five miles per hour.

Article continued on page 3

THE GREAT WAR - EXHIBIT OPENING

The Monon Depot opens to the public on April 14 from 1-4pm with our spring exhibit, The Great War. This exhibit commemorates the WWI Centennial and includes artifacts, stories and photographs from our collection along with traveling exhibits from the Indiana Historical Society and the Indiana State Museum. Members are invited to preview the exhibit April 13, 5-7pm.

More than 120 Carmel men and women joined the military during WWI. Some went to great lengths to serve. Fred Stratton was deemed too old for service, but he applied to several branches of the military anyway. After he was accepted into the tank corps, he leased his business, the Carmel Garage, and sailed for France. Others, like Herman Shaner, made great sacrifices. Shaner learned telegraphy in the Monon Depot in Carmel. When the U.S. declared war on Germany, Shaner enlisted in the Signal Corps and was the first Carmelite to reach France. He suffered from trench fever, was gassed, and lost a leg in battle. Elmer Arnold was one of several Carmel natives who returned home a decorated hero. Arnold was Chief Boatswain’s Mate on a merchant vessel that was attacked by a U-boat. He was awarded the Navy
Cross for commanding a gun crew that repelled the U-boat and saved the ship.

Explore the roots of World War I, America's entrance into the war, the role of Hoosier women both at home and abroad, and Carmel's contributions to the war effort!

**SPEAKER SERIES**
The CCHS is commemorating the WWI Centennial this spring. As a prelude to our first exhibit of the season, *The Great War*, our 2018 Speaker Series kicks off with “Honoring Indiana’s Special Role in World War I” on April 12 at 7pm at the Carmel Clay Public Library. This program will be presented by Jim Corridan, State Archivist and Chairperson of the Indiana World War I Centennial Committee. This presentation will be followed by “The Geology beneath Carmel” on May 15 at 7pm at the Carmel Clay Public Library. Geologist Dan Kelleher will share his findings from recent drilling in Carmel that uncovered Carmel’s geologic record of past glaciations. We will also host the debut of a new documentary in OMNI Centre for Public Media’s *Historical Farms of Clay Township* series this spring.

All our Speaker Series events are free! Visit our website for the full schedule of programs.

**ART FROM THE CARMEL CLAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY’S COLLECTION – EXHIBIT OPENING**
Carmel has been home to many accomplished artists! We are excited to showcase the work of these talented Carmelites with an exhibit of artwork from the CCHS collection that will be on display at the Children’s Art Gallery (40 W. Main St) from March 30 - April 29. All are invited to an open house for the exhibit on April 13 from 5-7pm. Refreshments will be provided.

**SPRING TEA**
We invite you to join us for our annual Spring Tea on April 15 from 1-3pm at the Woodland Terrace Community Room! Enjoy lunch and entertainment as you see old friends, make new ones, and share your love of local history! This year’s presentation will showcase men’s and women’s fashion throughout history. Those wishing to attend can register by visiting carmeclayhistory.org/spring-tea. Tickets are $30.
CONTINUED...

All was quiet as the train left the station and rumbled slowly away from the city. Soon the lights of Chicago gave way to the blackness of the countryside.

Twelve miles north of Frankfort, the passengers were suddenly awoken in the early dawn by the screech of the brakes and the lurch of the cars. Word traveled from row to row that the train had hit a deaf man as he crossed the tracks and sent him tumbling down an embankment. They were relieved to learn his injuries were not fatal but were nonetheless unsettled. The train was behind schedule and perhaps increased its speed to make up for it.

As the train neared the bridge over Wilkinson...
Creek, a branch of Cool Creek just north of what is now Smokey Row Road in Carmel, passengers once again felt the train lurch and heard the unnerving sound of the tender jumping the tracks. The engine dragged it across the bridge, which pulled the ties together and split the rails. About eighty feet south of the bridge, the tender and the baggage/smoking-car slid down the embankment on the west side of the tracks. As the ladies’ car reached the end of the bridge, the timbers broke and the car fell twenty feet to the creek below. The sleeper car followed and turned upside down. The weakened trestle then collapsed, raining timbers onto the cars below.

The sound of wreckage gave way to the cries of the passengers, many of whom were trapped beneath their shattered car and debris from the bridge. To make matters worse the stoves at both ends of the ladies’ car tipped over and engulfed it in flames. Those who could free themselves demonstrated immeasurable courage as they worked in the intense heat to help others escape.

The newspapers printed many first-hand accounts of the accident. George Stengell of Rossville was seated in the smoking car. He gave the following account of the wreck to Indianapolis Journal.

In the next coach to the front I saw a woman with two little children huddled in one corner. The next instant their coach went over, and I saw the children thrown back against the window panes, which were instantly shattered. Almost simultaneously with the sight I heard the mother give one of the most pitiful shrieks for help that I ever heard uttered by human lips. I did not have time to see what became of the trio, for in a second I saw the floor of our car literally ripped open by a tie that had become loosened. As the car went bumping along the tie was forced in further and a flying splinter grazed my head, cutting about two inches out of my hat. Then the final crash came. Seats were torn up, windows broken, and the end of the car caved in. The brakeman and I broke open a window and crawled out, but we were right in the midst of what seemed to be a general collapse of the car. I knew I was badly hurt.

Louis Naumann, a clerk at the Capitol House in Indianapolis, described his effort to rescue passengers despite his injuries.

When the shock came, I supposed I was stunned, for I knew nothing for some time. When I recovered I found that the coach was on fire, and that some lives were in danger. I was so excited that I forgot my own injuries and went to work with others to get the people out of the burning car. I helped to get out two women, a little girl, Gracie Hensley, one man and was assisting another man when I became so faint and weak from my wounds that I was forced to desert the work and crawl out myself. My greatest regret is that I could not save those two little children, but had to watch them burn to death. The poor mother besought us to save her children, but it was impossible. That end of the coach was then in a fierce blaze, and we could not reach them. We had to force the poor woman out of the coach to save her life. She would have stayed and burned with her children. That mother’s face is before me now, and I can see her look of despair as she saw her little ones burning to death. I shall never forget their poor little pathetic faces of suffering, as they looked appealingly toward us. Alas! Alas! If I could have saved them I would have less to regret.

The Indianapolis Journal also printed five-year old Gracie Hensley’s harrowing description of the accident.
I didn’t know what was the matter..., but I saw Aunt Hattie fall under a seat and I fell against the side of the car. Then the stove turned over and the coach caught fire. I screamed and called to Aunt Hattie, but she was caught under the seat and couldn’t move. Then I cried for mamma and papa, but they were not on the train. A gentleman came toward me, and I held out my arms. He caught me up and put me through a window, and another gentleman carried me away. As I was being handed through the window I looked back and saw Aunt Hattie’s face beneath the seat, looking up at me. She cried, ‘Oh, Gracie, Gracie,’ and that was the last time I saw her or heard her speak.⁷

Nicholas Quick and Will Hiatt were the first Carmel residents to arrive on the scene. They sent word about the wreck back to town, and before long hundreds of residents, including five doctors, worked to put out the flames, free the entrapped passengers and care for the wounded. Those helping in the rescue effort shared haunting stories about their experience with reporters. Several described the desperate cries of an inconsolable Octavia Oldham as she pleaded for someone to rescue her daughters Lola and Mattie, ages 6 and 8 respectively. The girls were pinned beneath their seat in the burning car. They along with Hattie Hensley, a 20 year-old from Cyclone, IN, were consumed by the flames. Three others died from crushing injuries.

At least twenty-three passengers suffered injuries of various degrees of severity.⁸

As the wreckage smoldered in three feet of freezing water, Carmel residents moved the injured to the home of Nicholas Quick to treat their wounds and wait for the relief train, which was delayed by another tragedy.⁹ Near Home Place, Henry Murton of Nora died after he attempted to board the moving relief train and fell onto the tracks. Several cars passed over his body.¹⁰ The relief train arrived in Carmel at 8:30am and returned to Indianapolis with the injured passengers three hours later.

At 2:30pm another train arrived at the scene of the wreck. This train carried representatives of the railroad, their attorney, a crew of one hundred to repair the tracks, the undertaker, and members of the press. Hamilton County Coroner Dr. S. C. Dove of Westfield arrived around the same time. He examined the bodies of the deceased and began an investigation into the cause of the wreck. The repair crew worked until sundown rebuilding the bridge and tracks. Trains traveled on their normal schedule the next morning.¹¹

In the days following the accident, the Indianapolis newspapers published their skepticism that a fair investigation could result, noting how quickly the railroad company removed all evidence of the cause of the accident in their haste to repair the track, and how it obstructed Coroner Dove’s ability to procure testimonies from victims and witnesses by dispersing them from the scene so quickly. The papers also speculated that Dr. Dove would be bribed or otherwise enticed to favor the railroad in his conclusion.

However, Carmel residents were eager to testify regarding the condition of the tracks, of which they had been concerned for much time. They claimed the tracks at this location were in poor condition with rotten ties and loose or missing spikes and that the timbers of the bridge had deteriorated. Others testified that they overheard the section foreman say that gravel and other materials had been requested to repair the track, but had not
been sent by the railroad company. The railroad company denied these claims and responded that cars jump the tracks in perfect conditions on occasion.\textsuperscript{12}

Dove focused his investigation on the use of shims. As the ties sunk into the mud, a frequent occurrence in the freeze and thaw of winter, pine blocks, or shims, were wedged under the rails to raise them. It was a temporary fix until the ties could be reset with new gravel in the spring. Though the railroad argued that shimming was standard practice across the industry, Dove concluded that the condition of the tracks and the use of shims caused the accident in his verdict, made public on February 9.\textsuperscript{13} Damage suits soon followed, and the railroad company settled them as quickly as possible.\textsuperscript{14}

The wreck had long-lasting effects on both the passengers and the residents who stood on the creek bed that winter morning. Many of the injured never fully recovered. One would think that after such a devastating accident, the railroad company and residents alike would become more safety conscious, but railroad accidents continued to wreak havoc in communities across the country with disconcerting regularity. The 1890 accident was far from the last to occur in Carmel.

**Union Traction Collision**

In 1903 a second railroad was laid through Clay Township. The Interurban was an electric passenger line that connected Carmel to Indianapolis and Noblesville. In the decades that followed, the Interurban ran as many as seventeen cars north and the same number south each day.\textsuperscript{15} The busy railway was the scene of several deadly accidents; the worst occurred in the 1919.

A storm in the spring of 1919 damaged the electric lines in Carmel. Because the signal blocks were inoperative, all communication between the conductors and the dispatchers was relayed at depots. The north and southbound cars shared the same track, so any logistical error would result in a deadly collision. On Friday, June 13, a dispatcher in Tipton gave an order for the northbound car to pass the southbound car in Noblesville. He told the southbound car that the two would meet at the Groves Crossing near Home Place. Just after 7pm, the two cars collided on a curve in the track south of 116th Street.

Fred Smith, motorman of the northbound car, told reporters his car was traveling about twenty miles per hour when he spotted the southbound car. He applied the brakes and leapt from the car just before the collision. Two men riding in the baggage compartment saw Smith run for the side door. They leapt from the car as well; one struck a telephone pole.\textsuperscript{16}

The wooden northbound car was at a near standstill when the steel southbound car struck it. The wooden car’s sides burst and fell on either side of the track. The steel car telescoped as it rammed fifteen feet into the smoking compartment of the wooden car. The collision drove Jacob Castetter and Ralph Kane, an attorney for the Union Traction Company, from the front seat of the smoking compartment to the back partition. Castetter died of crushing injuries minutes after he was placed in an ambulance.\textsuperscript{17}

Kane had his legs propped up on the seat in front of him when the cars collided. He suffered
compound fractures in both legs. The newspapers reported that Kane lit a cigar and told the bystanders working to free him to care for the other injured passengers first. For eighteen years he had fought accident suits on behalf the railroad company. Perhaps he empathized with the victims he had opposed in court from his position beneath the wreckage. Kane was hospitalized in Noblesville for two and a half months following the wreck. He left in a wheel chair in the hope of being able to walk by the end of the year.

Twenty-two people were injured and two were killed as a result of the collision. The second death occurred three days after the accident when Ossa Lancaster died of a crushed lung in the hospital. Three weeks prior, an Interurban car traveling at excessive speed left the tracks in the business district of Noblesville and plowed into ten automobiles. One small boy was killed and twenty-three people were injured.

The Interurban discontinued service in the fall of 1938 and the tracks were abandoned. Bus service and personal automobiles led to the passenger line’s obsolescence. Passenger service on the Monon ended in 1959, but the depot in Carmel remained active as a freight stop until 1974. Today the Monon Greenway continues to connect Carmel to Indianapolis and Westfield. It is a scenic trail through pleasant neighborhoods and the heart of a lively downtown. There is little left along the trail to remind users of the twenty deaths and more than fifty serious injuries that occurred on Carmel’s tracks decades ago.

Harry Morford
At 3am on January 30, 1899, Harry Morford, was crossing the Monon just north of the Depot when his buggy was struck by a passenger train. The horse was thrown fifty feet and died instantly. The teenager’s injuries were extensive. His skull was crushed and all his limbs were broken. Despite these and other internal injuries, Harry remained alive, though unconscious. He laid on the tracks until he was discovered after dawn. He died the following morning.

George W. Jones
On August 9, 1903, George W. Jones laid on the tracks in Carmel on his way home to Indianapolis from Chicago. He was killed in an apparent suicide.

Train Collision
On June 19, 1905, a work train backed onto the main track and collided with a Monon freight train. Three men on the work train were injured. They were treated by Dr. Hershey and sent home.

Frank Cook and Farley Ross
On February 15, 1906, Frank Cook and Farley Ross where hauling sassafras in a covered wagon. A sharp curve at the point of their crossing obscured their vision down the track, and they were struck by a northbound Interurban. The wagon was destroyed, and the two men were dragged three hundred feet. Both men died. Their mules were uninjured.

Henry and Avis Henley
Two week after Frank Cook and Farley Ross were struck by the Interurban, a couple was struck on the Monon. On the morning of March 2, 1906, Henry and Avis Henley were crossing the Monon on a trip to visit their son in Poplar Ridge. The southbound train struck their buggy and killed them and their horse instantly.

Jacob Whitesell
On July 13, 1907, Jacob Whitesell, a ninety-three year old pioneer settler, attempted to cross the Interurban tracks near the Marion County line on his horse and buggy. The train struck the back of his buggy, and Whitesell was thrown fifteen feet. He died later that day.

Frank Rutherford
On March 17, 1910, Frank Rutherford was struck by the Interurban in Carmel. Frank survived but both of his legs were cut off.

Waltz and Haworth
On September 10, 1911, William Waltz and Lorin Haworth and their wives were driving home to
Noblesville from the Indiana State Fair when they were struck by the Interurban just north of Carmel. The Waltz’s died on the scene. Mrs. Haworth died later that day; her husband was badly injured.31

Frank Ruhl
On March 30, 1913, fifty year old Frank Ruhl of Memphis, TN, laid on the tracks in Carmel. A Monon work train ended his life.32

Mrs. George Smith
On September 4, 1913, Mrs. George Smith planned to visit her son at the county jail in Noblesville. He had been arrested for writing bad checks. She was struck by the Interurban she intended to board and suffered injuries to her head, shoulder, and internal organs.33

Davis Family
On July 7, 1925, Rev. E. W. Davis of Waverly was laying on the tracks in Carmel. A freight train rumbled along, a drawbar from a coupling broke and fell onto the track. The trailing grain-filled car hit the debris and flipped, causing the 16 cars behind it to derail. About 300 feet of track was torn up. It took a crew twelve hours to repair the tracks.40

Will H. Latta
On June 12, 1929, Will H. Latta, an attorney for the Indianapolis Street Railway Company, parked his car on the track of the Monon at the Smokey Row Road crossing at 9:15 pm. A southbound train struck the vehicle and killed him. The corner was not able to return a verdict of accidental death but could not conclusively say it was suicide.35

Thomas A. Beasley
On August 4, 1933, Thomas Beasley was driving a truck with a fully loaded trailer from his farm in Decatur Township to Michigan. He attempted to stop at the Main Street crossing, but slid onto the Interurban tracks and was struck by the oncoming car.36 Initially he was believed to have only suffered a sprained back but died from his injuries twelve days later.37

Jack Raymond
On July 18, 1935, fourteen year old Jack Raymond was riding his bicycle home from an afternoon of swimming. He was struck and killed by the Interurban at a crossing in Carmel.38

Freight Train Derailed
The last wreck on the Monon tracks occurred at 6:30am on May 10, 1956, near what is now the Center for the Performing Arts complex.39 As the fully loaded freight train rumbled along, the trailing grain-filled car hit the debris and flipped, causing the 16 cars behind it to derail. About 300 feet of track was torn up. It took a crew twelve hours to repair the tracks.40
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 30, 5-7 pm
Exhibit Opening – Art from the Carmel Clay Historical Society’s Collection
▷ At the Children’s Art Gallery

April 12, 7 pm
Speaker Series – “Honoring Indiana’s Special Role in World War I” by Jim Corridan
▷ At the Carmel Clay Public Library

April 13, 5-7pm
Member Preview – The Great War
▷ At the Monon Depot Museum

April 13, 5-7pm
Exhibit Open House – Art from the Carmel Clay Historical Society’s Collection
▷ At the Children’s Art Gallery

April 14, 1-4pm
Exhibit Opening – The Great War
▷ At the Monon Depot Museum

April 15, 1-3pm
Spring Tea
▷ At Woodland Terrace

May 15, 7pm
Speaker Series – “The Geology Beneath Carmel” by Dan Kelleher
▷ At the Carmel Clay Public Library

May 18, 5-7pm
Member Preview – Cycling Through History
▷ At the Monon Depot Museum

May 19, 1-4pm
Exhibit Opening – Cycling Through History
▷ At the Monon Depot Museum

August 10, 5-7pm
Member Preview – History of WHJE
▷ At the Monon Depot Museum

August 11, 1-4pm
Exhibit Opening – History of WHJE
▷ At the Monon Depot Museum

November 30 – December 1
Holiday Home Tour
CARMEL CLAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY:
BY THE NUMBERS

37 donations to the CCHS collections

206 people attended lectures in our Speaker Series
20 new members
37 scouts learned about their community at the Depot

1,054 people participated in our programs and special events
1,465 students from 12 schools participated in our “Field Experience”

1,306 people visited the Monon Depot Museum
600 people attended our 21st annual HHT
GRANTS
We are grateful to the organizations who invested in the Carmel Clay Historical Society last year with generous grants totaling $11,700. Thank you to Clay Township for a $10,000 grant that was applied toward the purchase of a new office computer, the salaries of our staff, utilities for the Depot, and expenses related to our school tours and exhibits. We are also grateful for a $1,000 grant from Hamilton County Tourism for general operating support and a $700 Arts Grant from the City of Carmel, which will fund the foundation for a sculpture by artist Scott Osborne.

CORPORATE SPONSORS
Our corporate sponsors provide crucial funding to execute our projects and events, like the Springtime Tea and the Holiday Home Tour. Thank you to our sponsors for their continued support. If you would like to know more about how your organization can make a difference in the community by partnering with the Carmel Clay Historical Society, contact Emily at eehrgott@carmelclayhistory.org.

$1,500
Old Town Design Group

$1,000
Senior Home Companions
Encore Sotheby's International Realty – Joe Shoemaker
Sun King Brewery (in kind)

$500
Brown Day Mullins Dierdorf Architects
Soho Café & Gallery

$300
Bussell Family Funerals
Carmel Home Living – Angela Delise

ANNUAL INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS
Thank you to our Annual Contributors! Your contributions totaling $8,466 supported our effort to collect, preserve and interpret our local history. We are grateful for your generosity and your participation in our mission.

$700+
Jennifer Hershberger, in Memory of Hilda Hadley and Paul Osler

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Joan Wischmeyer
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Larry & Connie Kane
James Keller
Sharon Kibbe
Jack King in Memory of Lois Murden
Verda Klemm in Memory of Hilda Hadley
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Elnora Osler in Memory of Paul W. Osler
David Platt in Memory of Bev Platt
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Nicole Mastropietro
Meg Osborne
Nicole Aasen
Jim Pursel
Jill Reese
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HOLIDAY HOME TOUR
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Emily Ehrgott
Jo Ellen Flynn
Julie Kingston
Katherine Dill
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The Current in Carmel
M2 Productions
Ristorante Roma

VOLUNTEERS
Our dedicated volunteers made our programs, exhibits and events possible. Thank you to all who donated their energy and support in 2017 in the archives, at special events, with scouts, and on our "Field Experience" with Carmel Clay School students. The Monon Depot Museum was open for 172 hours due in part to the help of our volunteers.

Letters from the Front

Herbert Lamb had a taste of home thanks to a chance encounter with his brother Lewis in a war-torn French town 4,266 miles from home. The following is a portion of a letter Herbert sent his mother in January 1919.

Dear Mother: Have been trying to find time to write to you. I have just returned from a convoy trip. Eight men of my company took a trip beyond the “Verdun Front.” . . . We drove into a city, which was forty miles beyond what had been the front lines two weeks before. I saw there were some batteries there, and it was Lewis’ regiment. . . . After we had put away the truck for the night and had supper, I started out to hunt Lewis. I soon found him, but he did not know me, as it was dark. I had a short visit with him and he was just fine, and of course mighty glad to see me. . . . We all walked back to the building where we were staying. We built a fire in the old fireplace and spread our blankets out and had a good night’s rest. . . . Lewis came back to our building the next morning and we had another short visit. . . . I thought it was fortunate to meet him and to know where he was located. . . . With love to all, Herbert. (Noblesville Daily Ledger 8 Jan 1919: 4.)
SPECIAL THANKS IS EXTENDED TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS:

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Media Factory
Browning Day Mullins Dierdorf
BMO Harris Bank
Woodland Terrace of Carmel
Sun King Brewery
Current in Carmel
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CARMEL CLAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
317-846-7117 • www.carmelclayhistory.org
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