

History Transcript: Mr. Freeman Kennedy¹

Transcribed, Edited and Researched by Karin Page

Telford Walker² has asked me to write my history of Aurora, mainly to date postcards and just a general outline of events as I knew them. As I have never tried anything like this, it will probably be corny, but here goes my earliest recollections.

The 1913 flood - Dad took me on the B.S.O. Railroad bridge, or as most called it, the “Pig Shute.” The water was within a couple inches of the rails. Also, we went into a home on Sausage Road and the water was on the top step of the stairs. Sausage Road was so named because George Frank³ had a slaughter house and made sausage. I remember the building of the B.S.O. depot and laying brick streets on Second Street around 1915. The old cement bridge to West side was built about 1920-21, and 3rd Street was built in the early 30’s. When they tore up the old street, they found old railroad ties in the old road bed. They had been laid to serve the old shoe factory (side of P.O.) and the flour mill where Ullrich’s health services are now. Most of the old factory buildings have been torn down, Cochran Chair,⁴ Stedman’s Foundry,⁵ Wymond’s cooper shop, the old Wooden Shoe furniture factory.

The most memorable to me was the razing of the Crescent Brewery building. I was in the second or third grade and we watched them all we could. And when they pulled down the huge [missing word], they let us out of school to watch. It was quite a thrill.

Meet the Boat – Aurora had a wharf boat and lots of freight was handled there. We made it our hangout and had lots of fun. The older and bolder boys would climb on the boats and dive off. The excursion boats from Cincinnati came to Aurora on Sundays and the people had several hours for doing whatever they pleased. Some just bumming around, but some hiked up the hills. The boat went on to Split Rock⁶ for an hour or so, then back to Aurora. One lady was painting a scene when I came by, and, right off, she wanted to paint my picture, but I wouldn’t let her. I’ve always regretted

¹ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 24 Mar 2022); citing *Journal Press* 14 May 2002; entry for Freeman Holmes Kennedy died 13 May 2002.

² Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing *Journal Press* 7 Oct 1997 and *Register* 9 Oct 1997; entry for Telford C. Walker died 2 Oct 1997.

³ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing *Lawrenceburg Press* 26 Jul 1940; entry for George Frank d. 1 Jul 1940. Died at his home in Aurora. Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Frank, George, Sr., Res. 176 Conwell St. 120-R, n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

⁴ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Cochran Chair Co., 420 Indiana, n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

⁵ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Stedman’s Foundry & Machine Works, West Aurora, n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

⁶ “Split Rock,” website Petersburg, Boone Co. (www.nkyviews.com : accessed 31 Mar 2022); “Split Rock is a formation of conglomerate rock...The split rock was caused by erosion from the Ohio River. It was a popular trading place since the time of Native Americans and settlers. It was also a well-known picnic and camping location.” – Liza Marie Vance.

this. My attraction for her was my golden curls that reached below my shoulders. These were cut off on my fifth birthday or my emancipation day.

Playing Hooky – In the second grade, we had the kindest teacher a kid could want, but she had a sick spell and we had a sub come in. This sub was pretty strict and we were all scared of her. One day I was late and tip-toed up to the door but didn't have the nerve to go in. I sneaked back down the steps and down town and for about a week I had a big time. Of course, they caught up with me. Several boys suffered broken right arms and were the envy of all the class as they didn't have to write any assignments for a while. Imagine my distress when I broke my left arm.

Our Baseball Team – We had our own team, The Mill Street Tigers. We didn't have any civic clubs backing us, but Cocky Neaman of the Neaman House, Tom Ewing of the R[ail] R[oad] Express man and Harry Watts bought us balls and we scrounged the rest of our supplies. We played every day. Each section of town had a team and we would visit each other for games. We got beat most of the time. One day we played Cochran and beat them. They made us play a double header so they could say they beat us, which they did.

We used to go to Petersburg, Kentucky and play and had good times. One of the Petersburg players, Elmo Moreland, was a real person, the most complete person I ever knew. He [was] everybody's favorite and a good ball player. I lost track of him and for years wondered about him. One day, about 25 years after I first met him, I met a guy from Petersburg and asked him about Elmo. I was shocked when he said that he had died of cancer and was being buried that day.

1917 – The year of the hard winter. It was everything that has been said about it with a little more thrown in. The river froze over in December and people walked across the ice. I had a flexible flyer and one of the other guys pulled me across [the river] on it. The ice was smooth then, later it moved down the river and gorged. Some of this ice was still around in June. Of course, I was thrilled and went home and told the folks. I thought Dad would have a stroke. No more river. Also during this winter, Joe Cornforth was an old farmer from Cochran, and he drove a horse and buggy. He was real slim with chin whiskers and to us he seemed like an ogre. One day a pal and I hooked our sled to the back of his buggy and got a free ride. We went all over town and had a big time till he went around a curve and threw us off. We followed the tracks of the sled around town and into a livery stable. As we were scared of the old boy, we trembled a little in retrieving the sled, but we made it.

Charlie Hisey⁷ – Charlie Hisey was an inventor. He had a factory in or around Cincinnati and held a few inventions. Among his products were electric motors and the Indianapolis Chair Company had several in their plant, and it was said that Hisey sold a gun patent to Germany. This period in time was about 1920 and the wheel, gas buggy was just beginning to take over. As the roads hadn't seen much but horses and buggies they were full of metal objects that played hob with rubber tires.

Hisey put his invention to work. He had an old flatbed truck, an International. He rigged several cross bars just a few inches above road level – he suspended old magnets salvaged from telephone

⁷ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Hisey, Charles S., Res. 204 Fifth St. 503 n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

boxes. He drove this rig on all the roads and it was surprising to see how many nails and other objects he picked up. Hisey also had one of the first RV's [recreational vehicles] around. He fixed up an old truck with living quarters.

The River – In the old days, there were lots of shanty boats on the river and lots of people lived in them. One standout was Al Danger. He was a grubby old geezer with long whiskers. And some said he was a fugitive from the law. He would fish and sell his catch. Once he peddled fresh pork. Some claimed he caught a dead pig in the river cleaned it and sold it.

Neil Swango used to sell fish on the street. Many a time on Saturday night he could be heard yelling "Fresh fish!" He could be heard all over town. Gus Gerlach⁸ ran the wharf boat and built John boats and skiffs. Any one lucky enough to get one got the very best. Another house boat tale. An old timer used to tell me tales about Aurora and the river and his tales went way back. It seems that a lot of the house boats were used by shady ladies and one in particular must have been a witch. She had a man in one night, got him drunk, got his money and then wouldn't produce. The man got mad, procured a can of coal oil and soaked her boat with it and set fire to it. Needless to say, she departed this life.

There were lots of mussel fisher men on the river. Their boats with a harness-like device that would dip down to [the] bottom. The mussels would clamp to them and then be hauled in. The shells were sold to a button factory in Petersburg, Kentucky. There were lots of hoop nets in the river, too. There was a fine beach on the Kentucky side and lots of Aurorans crossed over for swimming. If there was pollution, we didn't worry about it.

The Hay Press – As kids, we didn't have TV or radio or all kinds of civic organizations providing for us. We had to devise our own entertainment and I must say we were pretty good at it. I've already mentioned our baseball team but the best was the Hay press swimming hole. So named as they used to process hay on the bank. We used to hang out on the bank of Hogan Creek just a short distance from town. On some days we would go in swimming eight to ten times a day. We had card games, crap games, just about anything ornery. I don't think it hurt anyone. One filthy practice we had that probably hurt some of us was hopping snipes (cigarette butts). We took turns at this. One kid would be delegated to go up town and pick up butts and bring them back.

We had a swing cable suspended from a big limb. We would swing way out over the creek (there was just a handhold, no seat) and it was quite scary. One day a boy lost his hold and fell face first in the mud. It was lucky that he hit in the mud. We had a cable that spanned the creek. It had a pulley that we held by hand and would travel across the creek. A rope on the pulley would pull it back. One day one boy that wasn't too well liked, started to cross and about halfway over and about in the middle of the creek someone grabbed the rope and left him suspended over the water about ten feet in the air and threatening, and to no avail. After about ten minutes he had to let go. He never came around the hay press again.

⁸ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Gerlach, August, Res. 210 Judiciary St. 159 n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

Wright's lumber yard was adjacent to our hangout and provided lots of material for shacks. We had lots of mudball fights. There was a ravine about twenty feet across, just about far enough to get in a good shot. One boy got one in the eye and couldn't see out of it for several hours. Man, were we scared. He came around OK, much to our relief. At this point in time, the Cincinnati Enquirer ran a story every Sunday about Seckatary Hawkins.⁹ We emulated him and had a club house almost like the story.

One time we got the idea to make a cave. We dug a hole about seven or eight feet square and six feet deep, laid cross ties across the top and had a real nice cave. Of course, it wasn't large enough so we built another a few feet away and connected them by a tunnel. This was the real thing. We had lanterns and chairs and tables, cards, dice and lots of nice things.

There was a lot of vicious older boys that like[d] to make things miserable for us and one day Grump Watts and I were in the annex when these nuts built a fire in the entrance. Some fun. We almost got overcome by the smoke. We were lucky to be able to dig out. I still marvel at our escape.

We used to have a crap game and one day Geo Goodpaster,¹⁰ town marshall, raided us. It really scared us. That was all.

The B & O Freight House - The freight house stood next to Aylor and Meyers mill (Acme Milling Co.), and we made it our hangout in mostly cold or bad weather. They had a nice potbellied stove and it really warmed your gizzard. We would help the caretaker (Bud Goble, father of Ed Goble – state representative). One day a barrel of cookies came in damaged; a stave had caved in. Of course, we helped ourselves, and by the time the adjuster came around, most were gone. Our only worry about hanging around the freight house was the railroad detective. This was Bob Bartley. Fortunately, Bud Goble nearly always knew when he was due so we more or less avoided him. This hanging around the freight house also encouraged hopping the train that switched the cars around. One day, I jumped off flat footed and tumbled head over heels. I was sure lucky not to be hurt. One boy, Cecil Horton, wasn't so lucky and lost both legs. I sure quit this practice real quick.

Turtle Park – The old shoe factory on the site of the Post Office was a good place to hang out. There was a liars bench and someone painted a large turtle on the wall. I never knew why they called it Turtle Park. The older guys that hung around there had a ball team and they made Turtle park and Zeff Mendel's joint a place to hang out. They played Hartford nearly every Sunday and always got beat. They always traveled in an old International truck with long benches in it for traveling. Zeff Mendel always razzed them about getting beat every week and one Sunday he told them if they won, he would set 'em up to all who went along. Of course, this paved the way for a little skull-duggery and they made it up to tell Zeff that they had won. After he had given everyone their drink, they told

⁹ Seckatary Hawkins, pseudonym for Robert Fanc Schulkers, published his first story "Johnny's Snow Fortress" on Feb. 3, 1918. The stories continued until 1942 and in 1930 a silent film, "Homerun Hawkins," was sponsored by The Enquirer and RKO. Reprints of the newspaper stories were published in 2016 as "Stoner's Boy" and "The Gray Ghost." [Source: Jeff Sues. "Our history: Fair and square 'Seckatary Hawkins' turns 100," Cincinnati Enquirer (www.cincinnati.com) : accessed 24 Mar 2022), pub. 6 June 2018.

¹⁰ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us) : accessed 24 Mar 2022); citing Register 2 Jan 1958; entry for George Goodpaster b 20 May 1981 d. 27 Dec 1957.

him the truth. He bit the ceiling. This [lie] was possible because the truck carried the whole bunch, team, fans – all. Hardly anyone had a car then, so when the truck got back that was it. As my older brother played on the team, I was allowed to tag along. Several years later he umpired at different places and I would go with him. One day he was having a bad time, getting razzed by the players and fans too. One guy asked me who that ump was (I think he knew he was my brother). Of course, I denied knowing who he was. My brother used to take me to Red's games – we had a big time. I don't remember whether I saw the 1919 team play but I at least saw the Reds in 1920.

Livery Stable – There were lots of livery stables. They boarded horses, rented horses, carriages, and nearly everyone had a black smith. We hung around these and if we were lucky, maybe the smithy would make us a horseshoe nail ring.

On Farmer's Fair day, farmers would put up their horses and, to make room for more horses, the carriages were parked on the street. They were backed in at angles to the curb and the shafts raised almost to right angle to the ground. It was an imposing sight to see these lined up from Importing Street to 4th [Street] and on other [streets] too. The Fair then was just a homecoming and agricultural event. No gambling booths.

More on livery stables – Cliff Dils¹¹ had a hay barn and feed business next to the wagon bridge. The scales were out front and sat rather high from the street and the said street slanted quite a bit away from the scales. A former brought a large load of hay and run along the slanted street and, bang, the load turned over in the street and blocked it for a while.

The Grand Theatre was built by Harry McIntire with dimes he saved in his saloon. I don't remember much about saloons as they were outlawed when I was about ten-eleven years old. I do remember Hug Kno. He had a saloon on Main [Street] and sat in front most of the time. He probably weighed 300 or more pounds. Some of the older boys felt pretty important as they reached the age when they could go in the saloon and I remember several of them that turned out to be alcoholics.

Political Rallies – I only remember one purely political rally and it took place in 1916 when Hughes ran against Wilson.¹² The rally gathered downtown and all us kids got in on it. They gave us a banner and red lights and we took out Conwell Street to Cochran. Although this was seventy-three years ago, I remember Mrs. Paul Siemental standing in her doorway and patting Hughes' picture on the head. So, it must have been a Republican rally.

War Rallies – During WW I, there was a rally of some sort going on all the time. Most of these were for the purpose of selling war bonds, but some rallied to get people to save on certain commodities, also to get women into the workforce.

¹¹ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing Register 31 Jan 1957; entry for Clifford Dils d. 17 Jan 1957.

¹² Richard Pallardy. "United States presidential election of 1916," online encyclopedia, *Britannica* (www.britannica.com : accessed 24 March 2022).

The area preachers did most of this as they were well experience[d] in public speaking.

[World] War I strained a lot of relations people had with each other especially with Germans. Old time Germans were mistreated mostly for no good reason.

As coal was scarce, drives were made to harvest wood and lots of places were denuded, especially the hill up from our house. Twenty years later, the same thing happened again during the depression. Also, during [World] War I a lot of troop trains stopped in Cochran and the gals really went gaga over the boys – got their names and corresponded with them during the war. Also, some troop trains didn't stop but the boys had a lot of slips of paper with their names and addresses on them that they would toss out the window. Of course, aimed at the girls. We boys would gather them up and tease the girls with them and finally give them to some girl we liked. One girl was very vain and boy struck and thought she should have them all. I don't remember giving her any of them. About this time another incident relative to the war occurred. Everyone was patriotic and one of our playmates showed his by carving a large spread eagle on a tree up on the hill. It was a real nice job and had his initials on it. It wasn't long after this that this boy died of a ruptured appendix. When the next year came around, the tree had grown new bark and had nearly covered the eagle. We got busy and carved the initials out again. We did this for several years and kept the boy's memory alive. The hillside was denuded during the Depression and the tree was destroyed.

Entertainment – I think I only went to one Showboat show and this was a washout. A storm hit during the show and the boat tossed around like crazy. This is probably the reason I only saw one show. There was a lot of itinerant entertainers that came to town, put on a show, passed the hat and passed on. One show was the human cork and the rock crush. They passed out bills saying they'd be on the river that p.m. Sure enough, they put on a show. The cork floated half out of the water and the crusher broke rocks with his hand. They then passed the hat.

Human Fly – The Fly came to town several times and always climbed the Old State bank building. He could scale it in nothing flat and always faked slipping.

Tight Wire Walker – This guy also came to town often. He would stretch a wire from the old Shulz store to across Second Street to Doc Martin's old place. He was real good.

Shooters – It seems there were more sharpshooters came to towns than any others. They put up at Cockney Neamans Hotel¹³ and would go over in the old foundry lot (Hwy 50 now) and shoot. They always had an accomplice who would toss coins, balls, light bulbs, etc. They always hit their target. They would then pass the hat. One guy once came in a card room and wanted to put on an exhibition eating light bulbs but they wouldn't let him.

Doyles' Tent Show would come to town every year and set up about where the Shell gas station is now. They put on real mellow-dramas. Once the villain was hiding behind a tree and about to jump on the hero. Just at the most suspenseful time, one old lady jumped up and yelled he's behind the

¹³ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Neaman house n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

tree. They had some good-looking girls and, of course, this was a challenge to the young bucks and they tried for three weeks to get dates. The gals relented on the last night and gave in to them. About a week later the boys all had a good dose. The medicine show came to town often and set up on Main Street. They had cowboy singers, magicians and medicine men. One young cowboy sang “When the works’ all done this fall.” It was about a young cowboy that promised his mother he’d see her when the works all done this fall. Of course, something happened and he didn’t get to see her. He had requests every night for this song and there wouldn’t be a dry eye in the crowd.

Crime – I never experienced much crime. Once a boy got cut up and killed. The next morning after Sunday School, a bunch of us boys went in Stier and Williams Funeral parlor¹⁴ and Earl Williams showed us the body. It had one slit across his back about eight inches long and three or four inches deep. Earl would spread the cut for us to see it. It looked like big pieces of liver.

Another time a guy came to town and went in on a guy he had known in another place and wanted to sell him watches he had stolen. This guy then came to Aurora looking for the police so they could nab the thief. A friend and I located the crook in the pool room getting a sandwich. He then went down Second Street with us following. In our dumbness, he made wise remarks like we wanted to buy a watch. Where can I buy a watch? He never let on like he heard us. By the way, he was carrying several loaves of bread and later events led us to believe he was going to rob a bank and use the bread for muffling the explosion, as he also had a bottle of nitro on him. After we followed a while, we left his trail and tried to find the police. We were on Third Street about in front of the fire house and walking toward the river when we saw three flashes of light and then there were three explosions. The Aurora cop had caught up with him and he drew on them and fired and they fired back and boy did they do a job on him. Like fools we ran down to the river and the guy was laying there going through the death rattles. I never heard such a racket and heaving. No movie death ever came close to this. He had a vial of TNT on him. This was about all the crime I witnessed unless you’d count the times we were run in for breaking windows and shooting crap.

I almost forgot about the hobos that came through. They mostly stayed at the Jungle in Cochrane but some of them hung out in Aurora. They would make a bed out of horse weeds and did real well. Once one of them, a real jolly sort, would tease us by reaching inside of his clothes and pick off lice and toss them at us. He’d then let out big guffaws. Another hobo said he knew a lot about Aurora. He had been all over the USA and when the bos went over the list of places to hit for a handout, they all knew about Stolls¹⁵ meat market and the nice liver sausage that Stolls would give them. By the way, these liver sausages sold for 5¢ then. Now they are \$2.95 and not near as good. Mom fed many of these bos. We had [a] cistern top where they sat and ate. It’s always been said that these guys would work for their grub but I don’t remember them every doing anything.

The flu epidemic of 1917-1918 was horrible. It seems as though nearly everyone on our street had it and several died. The doctor didn’t have office hours, only house calls. One day he was on our street

¹⁴ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; advertisement for Stier & Williams Undertakers Aurora and *Rising Sun* n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

¹⁵ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Stoll Meat Co., 320 2nd, n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

and as the word got around someone would run to the house he was in and have him come to their house. It was almost like a paper route. I remember the first corpse I ever saw. Our neighbor, Henry Licking,¹⁶ died and as the custom then, he was show at home. We kids all went to see him. It was sure leery.

Strunk Ireland was a little old man with a team of horses and a wagon that he used to do odd jobs. Garden work and so forth. The kids teased him by yelling at him. He retaliated by throwing rocks at them. Dan Gerard lived on Second Street and had a large flower garden that he fertilized with horse manure that he gleaned from the streets. He had a wheelbarrow and made the rounds of the streets and picked up said manure. The funsters would yell, “Get your shovel, Danny.”

John Flyberger was sort of a recluse. He ran the alleys and scrounged anything he could find. He would find empty whiskey bottles with maybe a few drops in them and put these in a bottle in his pocket. Some days he would fill the bottle and then have a tear. He always looked dirty and claimed he took one bath a year. He would go to the river with a big bar of soap wade in and scrub down. In spite of him seemingly poor, he owned a house or two.

Father Mache was a Catholic priest that was a swashbuckler. The kids all liked him as he seemed like a regular guy. He had a motorcycle that he rode everywhere but it proved to be his undoing. He had an accident and lost a leg. The leg was buried at River View [Cemetery]. It was said (at least among us kids) that he had phantom pains where his leg used to be. They dug up the leg and found a root had grown around it. They removed it and no more pain.

Kate Smith¹⁷ was a real old gal when I was a kid and she could sure shoot the bull. She had a big walnut tree on the back edge of her property. Each year it bore lots of nuts but she seldom got any of them. Some kid would always beat her to them. That would call for Kate to make the rounds. She would go to homes with small boys and demand to see their hands, any boy with walnut stain on his hands was accused of stealing her walnuts. I don't think she ever recovered any of them.

Liz McClelland – Often we live our lives close to someone and don't appreciate their qualities. Such was Liz McClellan. She was a neighbor lady like a lot of others. She liked to gad about the neighborhood and gossip, etc. In those days a body was prepared at home and shown at home. She always helped in this and was good. In those days a lot of people raised a hog in their back lot and also had a chicken house and raised a few chickens. Liz had her hob and occasionally it would get sick, off its feed, so to speak. When this happened Liz would get a few lumps of coal feed them to the hog and right away it got better. In the spring the baby chicks came along and they would get like “gaps” caused by a worm in their throat. Also in the spring a couple of farmers came and plowed Frank's field adjacent to Liz's place. Liz would send me to the field to burn hairs out of the horse's tails. She would take these, make a little loop stick down a chick's throat, twist it and lo, she

¹⁶ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing Press 9 Apr 1914; 16 Apr 1914; entry for Henry Jacob Licking b. 1850 d. 1914.

¹⁷ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing Register 7 Apr 1955; entry for Katherine C. Smith b. 1869 d. 1955 buried River View Cemetery, Aurora, IN.

would pull it out and there would be the worm. She performed this for all the neighbors and saved lots of chicks.

Charlie Sherman and Jake Stevens – Charlie ran a warehouse type store at the corner of Bridgeway and Third Streets. He had some regular run stuff but a lot of unclaimed freight too. We kids more or less had a free run in the place. One time he got a barrel of chocolate candy (unclaimed freight). We would dip into it once in a while. We stopped when we found it was full of worms. Jake Stevens was his clerk. If you wanted something he would always knock off a little on the price. He always said, “Don’t tell Charlie.” Charlie sold out to the Mayer brothers and they continued the business. During the changeover they hired a lot of us kids to help inventory and odd jobs. It was then that I had my only lucky sickness. I couldn’t work for several days, during which time the boys stole a lot of pocket knives. There was hell to pay. Mayer [?] didn’t have it long before they burned out. Although it wasn’t proven, it was suspected that it was arson. Charlie Sherman then went to Cincinnati, and opened a medicine business and posed as an Indian medicine man. He practiced for a long while until they shut him for not having a [medical] license. I saw him once at this stage. He had long black hair put up a pig tails. He sure looked like an Indian. Several years later the pocketknives were found at the hay press. They had been buried a rush of water washed them out of their hiding place.

Doc Parker – Lived with his family in a little cabin on the South Hogan Creek just below the Eddie Probst farm. He was what you would call an idiot, but if you didn’t know it, he could fool you. He always had his pockets full of pens, pencils, notebooks and acted real important. One of his fantasies was that he was a detective. He would strut around town and act real important. A lot of times he would act like a detective. He would go out Cochrane to the Hobo jungles and arrest the hobs and he was so convincing that the bos believed him. Several times he marched them down to the police station. The bos were really relieved when Geo. Goodpaster would let them go. His home was just about a mile from us and in the summertime, he would sit on the creek bank and sing for hours at a time, lots of [the] time. We could hear him at our house.

The Lawrenceburg Fair – We always anticipated the Fair. We didn’t have much money to go on but we climbed a lumber pile at the Veneer mill and slipped in. We went every day. We always talked about beating the Huronomoss game by doubling your bet when you lost. I had a few dollars on hand and played the game, winding up about \$25 to the good. After this bonanza I rode everything there, including my first airplane ride, a little one seater with two of us in it. It was quite a thrill.

I mentioned people having pigs in their back yard and forgot about the cows. Several had them. Joe Jehno family had one they pastured on the hill above Conwell Street and their boy would go after it and if his Dad wasn’t watching he would ride it home.

Another man, Jobby McKain lived where Tandy’s Grocery is now. He had a cow he kept out back of Cochrane. He had a horse and buggy and would go out there twice a day to milk. Another was Doc Arthur Rakes Dad. He was a typical Dutchman and always wore a little toboggan and wooden shoes. He had a mini farm on Sausage Road.

Writing something like this taxes ones’ memory and it’s hard to include everything. So, now I’m going to add a few things.

The River – I didn't do justice to the river and what it meant to us. Before the dams were built, the water would get low enough that in a few places one could wade across. This was fine for people on the river, as they could pick up coal that had fallen off boats. Most of this coal had rolled along the bottom and was real smooth and rounded like boulders. The river people also would collect drift wood and I remember seeing large piles in their back yards. All sawn and stacked for winter also. There was a beautiful bar across from Aurora and most of the sand and gravel used in Aurora came from it. The sandmen would set up a screen at about a 50° angle and shovel the sand on the screen. The sand went through and the gravel fell to the ground in front of the screen. They would then shovel it into big old wagons pulled by a team of horses. They then hauled it on to the ferry and then up into Aurora. What a way to make a living. The kids that lived on the river were always bringing things to school that they had found in the river.

The games we played – Run, Sheepy, Run; Sheep in the Yard; Boulder Off; Lame Soldier. Boulder off was played with two bases about twenty feet apart. Each player had a boulder and he would try to knock the "it" man's boulder off the base. One time I walked between bases and got conked on the head with a boulder. I saw all the stars that time.

The Peddlers – Almost anything was available at the door. Him Hill had a little oil wagon pulled by one horse. From this he sold coal oil. Bill Dierking used to peddle milk, eggs, butter, smear cheese. There were others that sold dairy products, too. Farmers sold garden stuff from door to door. One day an old woman beat a farmer down on the price of sugar corn and then didn't buy any. I guess she was just practicing. Sometimes a farmer would need a little money and would kill a hog, cut it up and peddle it. I used to see lots of hogs hanging on the farms around Thanksgiving time. There was a couple of old Italian women that used to make the rounds selling notions. They each had a telescoping trunk that they carried on their backs. They sold needles, pins, buttons, ribbons, etc. Quite a few people bought all these small items this way. They came around about every three months from Cincinnati.

More on play time – We played lots of ball games in the streets and never worried about cars. One of our teams was the Mill Street Tigers. We played on Bridgeway in front of the Star Mill, hence the name Mill Street Tigers. We also played in the mill. The old guy that run it was a tight wad. He let us play in the wheat. In so doing, we worked it down and he didn't have to hire it done. We did lots of sled riding from Fifth Street down Mechanic [Street] clear to Second [Street]. We would post a boy at each street, i.e. Fourth and Third, and when it was clear he would give the signal and we would come sliding down. The cars probably only averaged one an hour.

I just recalled something about the 1917-18 winter. The city didn't have the trucks to haul the snow away so it was pushed into huge piles. One pile on lower Second [Street] got huge – maybe fifteen feet high. Some of the boys hollowed it out and for a long while had a big igloo. Also, on sled riding after a hard days sliding the run got pretty thin and we would carry water and pour on it so it would freeze for the next day. One boy carried his up the hill from Third Street (two blocks). Some of the boys said there was enough on the track and we shouldn't put any more on it. This boy instead of pouring it in the gutter carried it all the way back home. We teased him about that for some time.

The Indianapolis Chair Company moved to Aurora in 1916. Bill Neukom¹⁸ was the manager and liked to tell about getting his tart stenciling “My Darling” on potty chairs. I hope this is what you want. A lot of it is just drivel.

Suttons Pond and Orchard – We used to play a lot on the hill and in winter Suttons Pond was a swell place for ice skating and in summer we could swim there. One time I got sick from this. I was red all over and Dr. J. M. Jackson¹⁹ called it Scarlet rash. We hung around the orchard, especially when the fruit was ripe. Hal Driver was a good orchard man and always gathered fruit to take to the state fair. One of the boys ran across him picking fruit for the fair and blurted out, “Gee, Mr. Driver, are you stealing apples, too?” One time Driver had sewn up first place in an apple show when a worm crawled out of an apple. The judge had to give him second.

Forgot about the glove factory.²⁰ It was on the top floor of the building where Meyers Auto Supply is now. Also there was a pants factory next to the auto supply place on the B & O Railroad. There used to be a stock yard close to them. I also failed to mention the Aurora Tool Works. It was in the tin clad building next to Aylor and Meyer. They made drill presses that were famous the world over. The Royer Wheel Works was in the present Jefferson Smurfit building. They made wagon and buggy wheels and supplied a lot to the government during [World] War I. They tried auto wheels after the war, but couldn’t cut it.

How could I ever forget Jakie Trulock and Billy Kyle? Trulocks ran a hotel on lower Second [Street] across from the Grand theatre and Jakie had a beautiful popcorn wagon all decked out in brass trim. On Saturday night he would roll it over in front of the Grand and sell popcorn and hot peanuts. He was a standby for years. Billy Kyle²¹ ran the Lyric Theatre and would stand in front with a megaphone and shout out the names of the show on that night. I doubt if he influenced anyone to attend as he couldn’t be heard 100 feet. Billy hired boys to pass bills advertising the week’s fare and it seems as though it was a mark of distinction to ditch the bills and not pass them. Buck Watts and I had the job once and did real good for a while but got tired of it and ditched them. Our pay was free admission for a week. We would go to the ticket seller, tell her we passed bills and she would let us in. After we ditched the bills we continued to get in. One night the lady at the door said we would have to wait till she got Mr. Kyle. When she got back, we were gone.

No story about Aurora would be complete without an account about Saturday in Aurora, especially Saturday night. There were so many people in town it was hard to walk up and down the street. Everybody was there. People would go down early to find a place to park their car in order to watch the people.

¹⁸ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing Press 1 Mar 1956; entry for William J. Neukom b. 1872 d. 1956; President of Indianapolis, IN Chair Company.

¹⁹ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing Press 3 July 1947; entry for Dr. John M. Jackson b. 1881 d. 1947; 66 yrs old. Aurora IN., country doctor.

²⁰ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Cin’ti Glove Co., 215 Bridgeway n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

²¹ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing Press 20 Jan 1927; entry for William Henry Kyle b. 1856 d. 1927; 70 yrs. Of age. Aurora, IN. Services held at the Palace Theater.

Knippenbergs²² was a real old ice cream and candy parlor and at Christmas they would have a large number of wooden candy bucket[s] with every kind you could think of.

Harry Abbot ran a homemade candy store on Second [Street] and made all kinds of candies. His specialty was fudge of all kinds. My uncle visited us once in a while and always took a big box home with him.

Sawdons Hardware (Thurmer bought out Sawdons) was a wonderful store – every hardware item possible. They had a harness [department] and a man named Oswald made the harness. They had a big old horse dummy that they fitted the harness on. When our kids were growing up we got their shoes at Neffs and had to have an appointment to get them there was so much business. Not so now.

Somerfield's²³ was THE five and ten. They carried everything in the small toy items and novelties. It was a real treat to just look in the window. One time when I was about four, I ran away from home and landed in front of Somerfields. I stood there looking in the window enjoying looking at all the goodies. I spied my sister coming down the street looking for me. Eddy had one of those folding signs on the sidewalk and I slipped inside of it till Sis went by and then resumed my watching. They finally caught me and did I get it.

Ralph Trulock was the manager of the baseball team. He was quite famous in the Tri-State. It was sort of a semi-pro team and they played at the ice pond. A long while ago, there was a pond in the bottoms about where Club Dalls is now. They cut ice there in the winter and played baseball and football in season. High school basketball. When I was about eight or nine, I started to clamor about going to a game. Dad gave me a dime for admission and away I went. Imagine my distress when I met my brother close to the gym. He told me that the game had been called off. The next week Aurora played Patriot and there was a big fight. Harvey Rullman and a Patriot boy shoved each other around. The Patriot boy wanted to go outside and have it out. Rullman said "Let's go at it right now." Cooler heads prevailed and it was called off. The games were played in the old high school gym. It was really small and about twelve foot ceilings. Years after he had played in Aurora and that they had beat Aurora and when they got ready to board the train to go home, the Aurora people rotten egged them.

One of my first jobs was on the ice wagon. This was before home refrigerators and nearly every one took ice. I knew who lived in every house in town. Now I hardly know my neighbors.

Cheeks Pond – There was a pond at the foot of Sunnyside where the sweeper repair shop is now. It was a filthy thing, good for nothing. A boy, the son of Jim Hill, either fell in or went in and swallowed a lot of the stagnant water. It sickened him and he died. As in the case of the horse

²² Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Knippenberg, Henry, Ice Cream Parlor, 407 Second St. n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

²³ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Notions Somerfield, Sam, 303-305 2nd n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

getting out of the stable, they then filled it. Chas Schumacer built a joint on the site which was later torn down, and the present building erected.

On Armistice Day, in 1918 there was a big celebration. Everyone was overjoyed. We boys were right in the thick of it. Dab Everett had a second hand shop on lower Second Street and he let the older men use his shotguns for celebrating. I can still see the flashes of light.

An old guy (Pelgen) had a grocery store where the gas station is now catty-corner from Tandy's grocery. He like[d] to fool you and one year he stored several watermelons in his basement. Along about Christmas, he caused a lot of excitement by putting them in his window.

I've already touched on the scarcity of cars in the old days and this is evident by the scenes at the B & O depot in the early twenties. A lot of Aurora people worked in Cincinnati and rode the train to work. Once in a while I would walk to the depot with my sister who sent to school in Cincinnati. There was always a large crowd waiting for the train. Probably at least a hundred. As the years went by and more people got cars, the crowd dwindled.

The Aurora Dump – Long before landfills and such, Aurora had a wonderful dump located where the Aurora American State Bank is now. Everything under the sun was discarded there and there was a lot of scavengers working it. One group of boys had a thing for solder and lead. They would round up all the eave troughs, down spouting and tin roofing they could find. Then they built a big pile of scrap wood and piled the tin articles on the pile and then they would set fire to the wood, melting the soft metal from the tin, which then settled in a low place on the ground. They made a little money doing this. There was always a little scrap iron to pick up.

My mother saved Wilson milk wrappers for premiums and one day I found several cans on the dump, peeled off the labels and then really started hunting them and took over 200 wrappers home. Mom was pleased with the wrappers but not with me running the dump.

In 1920 as the saloons closed due to the 18th amendment, many of them cleaned house and hauled all their stuff to the dump. Harve Armstrong was the garbage man and one day he called Dad over to his cart and it was full of the fanciest bottles every. Dad brought several of them home with him and the rest went over the bank. The dump would periodically catch fire and what an odor! When the river raised and invaded the dump, it would run the rats up the bank. This brought out the marksmen and they had a field day killing them. The dump was abandoned and later the Farm Bureau built on it.

Stedmans Foundry used to be across the railroad tracks from the depot and when I was little the buildings were torn down. The man that had the job lured kids to clean brick [for] 10¢ for a hundred stack. I cleaned one stack of 100 and quit. This lot had lots of scrap iron all over it and this brought in a little money.

Dolph Holler ran the junk yard along with a bootleg operation. John Brockwell was also in the junk business and he would take us. We would take him junk, he would look it over and say "Boys, I can't buy this cast iron steel." He would throw it aside, pay us a few cents for some of the junk. I'm

sure he put it all together when it came time to sell it. The next time he had rags John wouldn't pay him. He said, "We're even now."

Different localities had different names. (I guess you would call them nicknames.) West Aurora or Cochran was known as Dublin on account of the Irish that lived there. The street leading out of town to Lawrenceburg was known as Shiptown and the bottoms, where the river terminal is now, was known as Utah. Decatur Street toward Rising Sun was Texa. Market Street – Duth Hollow. The alley in back of Gambles was Happy Hollow and there was West Side and Hogback out of Aurora towards Wilmington. Sausage Road had a meat factory. The house we lived in from 1910 to 1912 still had meat hooks in the cellar that had been used in this occupation. I haven't written anything about the '37 flood as I feel like it's been thrashed about enough.

The Sectional Tourney – In the twenties, the tourney consisted of 16 [ty?] teams and it was quite a show. Transportation wasn't easy, that is, one couldn't attend a session and go home and come back. You just came for all day. People opened their homes for the players. The boys had a time of it. I was a pin boy at the bowling alley and tourney time was the busiest day of the year. Most of the boys had never seen a bowling alley and seldom hit anything. Most of the teams were from small schools such as Bright, New Alsace, Patriot, etc. and they never had a chance but they gave it their all and played their heart out. The games were played on the third floor of the old opera house and held about 800 people. A lot of people thought that was too many and it would bring the house down but it's still there. The big window on the first floor would bend a lot from the play. In order to win the sectional a team had to play four games in two days and three of them were on one day – Saturday. The State tourney was set up the same way.

Stores – Stores were different in the twenties. Groceries would handle mostly dry stuff and the butcher shop handled meat only. It seemed like a sacrilege when things changed. Once Stolls Meat Market had some canned goods on display and it seemed so strange. Scharfs Meats²⁴ started soon after this and from then on all the stores had both meats and miscellaneous. The chain store probably sparked this. Cy Conaway²⁵ had a grocery where Hastings is now. He carried all the loose stuff – soaps, dried fruit, etc. He had soap chips in one barrel and flake hominy in another and it was hard to see any difference in them. One old man came in one day, got a handful of soap chips, thinking it was hominy. He put them in his mouth to taste them. You can imagine the results.

Crackers were carried in barrels and weighted out according to order. Imagine the excitement when Cy installed a machine that dispensed them. It was about five feet square and six to seven feet tall. A recessed place held a sack and a crank was turned to release the crackers, which then poured into the bag. The crackers were poured into the top of the machine. Bananas came in large crates and were always a complete stalk with maybe 25-30 pounds of bananas on each. They were hung from a hook and were cut off to order. In rabbit season hunters brought in their bag to the store. They were then

²⁴ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Scharf, Adam F. Main Street Meat Market, 228 Main St. n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

²⁵ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Conaway, Clyde R. A., Res. Lower Dillsboro Pike; Conaway Grocery Co. 226 Main St. n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

hung just outside the door and sold. Lots of times I've seen them covered with flies. No wonder there was lots of rabbit fever. My Dad worked in a produce house down in Kentucky and he told tales about how they handled rabbits down there. A produce house would buy all kinds of farm produce and ship it to Cincinnati. A railroad car was engaged deep in Kentucky and routed to Cincinnati with each dealer loading his stuff in a car when it reached him. In the fall, each house would have an excess of rabbits that they shipped. As they had no refrigeration, one can imagine the result. He said lots of times they had bought eggs that were a little ripe and many's the time he would hear peeping in the crate and upon opening he would find baby chicks.

Another thought on the displays of goods in barrels. A favorite delicacy was dried apples and each fall barrels of them would be displayed. One time I was in the store and a dirty bum came in, dug down in the apples, got a handful, smelled them and threw them back in. Sickening.

The Shanty – Every boy has dreamed of his own hideaway and we were no exception. The cave I talked about previously was one phase. I remember at least four more at different times. When we got it in mind to build one, we scouted around for material and generally wound up at Wrights lumber yard late at night. However, one time, we raided the B & O's supply of grain doors. These were several pieces of lumber, nailed together to make a door-like structure. They were placed in boxcar doors horizontally to keep small grans from escaping. As they were about seven feet by two feet, they made perfect walls and roofs for a shanty. We played cards mostly. One time we saw the old year out with a party. Our Moms made chili and stuff for us.

Ford Cars by Rail – In the old days they didn't have nine car road rigs or big flat cars to deliver cars. One either went to the factory and drove his car home or they came in box cars and you got it from the dealer. The cars were positioned in the box cars in each end and then a car was placed on top of the car. It was held up by four-by-four pine boards. Two cars were placed the same way in the center of the car. They were removed and sent to the dealer. I don't know how many dealers got their cars at Aurora but Rising Sun and Aurora did. The lumber was much sought after and there was many a scuffle over it.

Also, before mechanical refrigeration, quite a few cars came in refrigerated with ice. After the contents were removed from the cars there was a raid for the ice.

The Brickyard – The Aurora brickyard was located where the marina is now or, to be more precise, where the Aurora Waterway Park is. It was a good place for a kid to get his first job and lots of us did. If one was fourteen or older and had working papers, he could get a job. There was what they called the pit and it was just about to the forks of the creek. Cars were loaded with clay and hauled to a building on higher ground and dumped into a large grinder that made it in[to] a uniform mixture. This was then poured into molds that made eighteen bricks that were dumped on a pallet. These pallets were placed on a buggy and hauled to the drying racks where they stayed for several weeks. When dry, they were stacked in a kiln and burned at high heat for twenty-one days. When cool, they were sold. Bill Weaver was the manager and was always flying off the handle and firing someone. The next day you could get your job back. One year we tried to open on the 23rd of May and it snowed us out. We tried the next day and we accumulated at least an inch and was soon gone.

Once when taking dry bricks to the kiln I found one brick that didn't look right. I broke it open and a small water glass fell out. The glass had gone through the whole process and didn't break.

I saw a picture today of the J. P. Coulter store and it brought back a lot of memories. The store was gone before my time but there was a delivery truck in front of the store with J. P. Coulters' name on it. The upper part of this truck used to be in Coulter's yard and was used for a doghouse. Coulters had a retarded boy and we used to play in his yard and house. The thing I remember most about that was the excellent collection of photographs, all of early Aurora views of the Farmer's Fair, street scenes, etc. I remember one of the old cooper shop with stoves stacked at least twenty feet high. Jimmy Coulter was quite a character. He didn't learn to well in school and was always doing something funny. One day he came to school with his shoes on the wrong feet. He acted like he didn't know it. When Jimmy got sixteen and could quit school, on his final day he couldn't contain himself. He was really grinning; so was R. N. Hargitt, the teacher. It was hard to tell who was happier.

I've mentioned the picture theaters and I should mention that in the '20s and 30s they were really popular. We lived on Conwell Street and could always tell when the show let out by the amount of people stringing along about 9:30 pm. The show was about the only entertainment for most people and they walked to or from.

Bootleg Days – I wasn't much on alcoholic beverages but there were a lot of people that made homebrew and sold it in their homes. We used to go to Hap Jennings house and get twelve big bottles of brew for a dollar. One guy that made a lot was Mose Christman and he thought he was the best but it was just in his own mind. He always left brew in his ice box for the ice man and to keep from hurting his feelings we would pour it down the drain. On some occasions the brew would blow up and scatter suds and glass over a whole cellar.

The Raffle – An old lady out Cochrane used to hold a raffle once in a while, most often a quilt or watch. Most of the time her husband would be the winner. If asked who won, she would say "George, the lucky devil."

Larkin Orders – Larkins was a business selling soaps and related items. They offered prizes for orders and the bigger the order the better the prize. Some of the ladies were always getting up a Larkin order. And the prizes were real substantial. They had their own furniture factory and I've repaired quite a few pieces of their furniture. They also started the buffalo pottery to make prizes.

Bun Schipper was a chiropodist with a hobby of building river boat models. He had quite a few of the old j[?]ackers. They were beautiful examples of handcraft.

I can't leave Bob Norris out of my story. He was a semi-pro at lots of things. A good baseball pitcher, a wonderful ice skater, a house painter, and he also made crooked dice. One day he showed me his dice making equipment. Charlie Sherman used to have crap games in a backroom of his store and lots of times all the players had some of Bob's dice that they would run into the game.

First Car Ride – Muncy Jarvis was a painter and paper hanger and lived in Cochrane. He could be seen almost every day in his Sears truck with his ladders and equipment. One day, Buck Watts and I were down town and bummed a ride home (1/2 mile). Were we thrilled (about 1918). This was the car that Ed Probst had. He bought it from Mrs. Jarvis.

Recollections of Aurora should include Taters Martin. He was a sort of handyman and only had one arm. He was quite a character and was always ready to trade knives. Trading knives was quite a pastime in the old days. A trader always had several in his pocket and it was always sight unseen. The traders would hold the knife in his hand and each would put his in the others hand sight unseen. A lot of skullduggery went on.

The Blue Lick Well – Located close to the west side bridge was, I think, a result of drilling for oil or maybe water. Anyhow, they didn't get what they wanted. A lot of people used to carry it home, notably Eddie Somerfield, he could be seen quite often with his jug.

The Circus – The circus came to town every year and sometimes there would be several. We always tried to get a job helping set up and for this we would get a ticket to the show. One time I worked real hard but my brother did, too, and as one of us had to carry Dad's dinner, as the youngest, I was elected and didn't get a ticket.

In those days there were no fast-food joints and if a worker wanted a hot lunch someone had to carry it. The first time I carried to the wheel works (Jefferson Smurfit), I couldn't find the old man for a while and it was after lunch time when I found him. One time on my way to Cincinnati, I went through Addyston, Ohio at lunchtime. And what a show! Most of the workers at the pipe foundry were black. There must have been 200 black women and children swarming toward the foundry each one with a lunch pail.

The Snow Plow – The city had several snow plows that they used to clean the sidewalks. These were big triangular shaped about six feet on each side and eighteen inches high. The city had horses for the fire trucks and garbage days and these were used to pull the plow. They only cleaned the sidewalks. For a while, it was a mystery as to how the walks were clear of snow in the morning.

The Umbrella Man – In the old days there were itinerant repair men going around mending things such as umbrellas, etc., also sharpening scissors. They would go along shouting their specialty such as “umbrellas to mend, any umbrellas to mend.” These guys were fair game for the boys and we always mocked them and teased them. One day one of them got too much and chased me and Bud Watts and for an old guy he could sure run. He chased us about three block when we cut up through an alley and up Suttons Hill. We were lucky to get away from him.

Early Radio – After [World] War I, there was a wave of radio. The first sets were crystal sets so called because there was a crystal of Galena used to make the set work. I don't know how this worked but you had to place a wire on the galena to get a point. Once this was attained you were in business. The mechanic magazines all had plans for making your own set. I never could get one to work but Alvin McDaniels and Cliff Miller were real good at it and we would gather at their homes at night to listen. It was a thrill to get a distant station such as KDKA in Pittsburg and Henderson

Street in Muscatine Iowa. Also, there was one in Louisiana. The big topic of the day was about the station one got the night before. Our first radio set consisted of four parts set in a row about three feet long and a big gooseneck speaker.

Newspapers – Today the news is out as soon as it happens but in early days one had to depend on newspapers. The baseball games then were all played in the daytime and each paper printed an extra edition with a complete summary of the games. These papers came down from Cincinnati at about 6 pm. Kids vied for the job of selling these and they scooted downtown crying “Extra. Extra.” The papers cost 2¢. The Times Star was printed with a green cover and the Post in pink.

Most bread was baked at home but some was shipped in from Cincinnati on the train. It came in big baskets that held about twenty-five loaves. There would be four to five baskets.

There was lots of interest in homing pigeons those days and the owners would ship them to Aurora and the station man would release them. These were racing pigeons and a lot of betting was done on them. The railroad needed constant attention. So, they had a track walker who would walk the track and mark anything that needed fixing. A crew came along later and fixed these. This crew at first traveled on a cart that rode the rails. The men furnished the power with an apparatus consisting of two bars one on each end of the cart. There were two men to each bar and the men would propel there up and down to make the cart up. I'd think they would be all worked out by the time they got to a work place. Later these were replaced with gas motors for power. There was also a small cart for just one man, almost like a kids pedal trike. This was a three-wheel job, two on the back and one in front, and a seat for the driver. He sat and unlike a trike, he pulled a handle back and forth with his arms. His job was inspection and filling all the signal lanterns with oil. As more and more lanterns were replaced by electricity, his job was soon eliminated. Also, at the Second Street crossing there was a watchman. He had a little shanty that couldn't have been more than six feet by six feet. It had a store – a few accommodations. When it was time for a train, the watchman would grab a stop sign and stop traffic till the train passed. These jobs were sort of like Social Security is today. Either men that had gotten too old for anything else or someone hurt on the job, got the watchman's job. Electric crossing signals finally did them in, too.

Also, the railroad had a turntable where they took an engine to turn it around. It was located close to the box factory. The railroad also gave us our first lesson about the speed of light and the speed of sound. We often played on the hill above Aurora where the water tank is located. We could see all the way to Lawrenceburg and could see the trains leaving Lawrenceburg. The locomotive would spout out a lot of steam in blowing the whistle. After a time, maybe a minute or two, we would hear the whistle.

Book #2

A few more items. When I wrote about the old swimming hole, I forgot about how the older boys treated the little kids. They just delighted in teasing us. They would mud our clothes, tie knots in them, and wet on the knots. Talk about a dirty trick. Also, when we would get ready to go out and get dressed they would mud us. Sometimes they would keep us till dark before they would let us out. One time the old man came down to get us. Did he give them hell!

We had a forerunner of what is known as a water park. Only our water slide was a trough in the mud. We would pour water in to it and then slide down. It was murder if you came in contact with a small rock.

Freddy Struck worked for Sol Vigran²⁶ as chief clerk. He was also known as the chief sidewalk superintendent. Anyone doing a job, no matter what, it was he [who] always tried to boss the job and make suggestions for doing it differently.

Minstrels²⁷ – I remember quite a few minstrel shows. I can't think now of who sponsored them, but they had them quite often. There was the interlocuter, Harry Smith most times, end men Hap Jennings, Earl Martin, Arch Voit, Sam Lewis, Bob Norris, Glen Ruble, Bubbles Manford. Bob Norris was a dancer too. They put on a real good show.

Aurora had a semi-pro football team for several years and played a lot of game with good Cincinnati teams. One year they were coached by Frank Lane who later became a general manager for several different big league ball teams. Socko Weithe also coached Aurora. It was through his friendship with Freddie Wunderlich²⁸ that he helped Aurora.

I suppose there are places today to hang out but it seems like there was a lot of them in the old days. I've mentioned all the places we kids hung out, but there were places where the older ones hung out, mainly the Greeks and then Fehlings. These were mostly high school. Another place we liked to hang out was a livery stable located where Meyers Auto parts is now. A man from across the river owned it and in the summer he would bring loads of watermelons to sell. We would flunk around the place for him and he would give us watermelons. He bought a barrel of coarse salt and I think we used most of it one summer.

What I remember about prices – About 1930, a group from the church went to Cincinnati, O[hio] for a meeting and afterwards we went to Shevlins for dinner. It was a cafeteria and we were supposed to get what we wanted. My check came to \$1.02. Was I mortified! This was for a whole lot of stuff. Hamburger was 10¢ large, candy bars 5¢, all drinks 5¢. I bought a suit for \$8.00 from Ben Schusterman and it lasted a good four years. (It had to.) Bought a new Ford in 1937 for \$570 and four years later (1941) I got another for \$640.

I've been asked to write about early days in Aurora as I remember them. As the factories are the lifeblood of a community, I'll write about them first.

²⁶ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Vigran, Sol, Dry Goods & Read-to-wear 226 Second St.; Vigran's Variety Store, 325 Second St. n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

²⁷ "Minstrel Show," online encyclopedia Britannica (www.britannica.com : accessed 31 Mar 2022). "Minstrel show, also called minstrelsy, an American theatrical form, popular from the early 19th to the early 20th century, that was found on the comic enactment of racial stereotypes."

²⁸ Dearborn County Obituaries, database *Lawrenceburg Public Library* (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 31 Mar 2022); citing Journal Press 25 Mar 2008; DC Register 3 Apr 2008; entry for Frederick "Fred" J. Wunderlich; Ball player for the American Legion and local organizations.

Aurora Tool Works – This was located on Exporting Street next to the Acme mill. They made different kinds of machine tools and their drill presses were known around the world.

Cochrane Chair was located in Cochrane and made fine chairs and tables.

Aurora Coffin Co. later Aurora Casket Co. was on Conwell Street. They made funeral supplies and was started by J. Backman. When we were kids, one of the boys had a paper route and J. J. took the paper. As my Dad worked there the boy with the route always let me deliver Backman's paper as he would give me a nickel and let me keep the 3 cents change.

Stedman's Foundry started in Rising Sun, moved to Aurora (across from the Railroad depot where U.S. 50 now runs) then to Cochrane. They made rock crushers and related items.

Indianapolis Chair Co. They moved to Aurora about 1916 from Indianapolis, hence the name. W. J. Neubom was the general manager and told that he got his start in the furniture business by painting "Our Darling" on the back of potty chairs. The company did real well and when the Aurora Furniture Co. ran into difficulty the two merged. I worked there for about thirty years. We made mostly occasional chairs and tables. During the war we made shell boxes for the war effort. Also, we made wooden springs as to save on steel. After the war, one of the first things we made was an order from Hugh Hefner and his Bunny Club. This consisted of a cheap chair with the profile of a bunny sewn on the back. We also made some fine French provincial furniture and sent a big order to Hollywood. I later seen some of it in movies. The company did all right as long as Big Bill lived, but after he died the company went to pot and failed.

Aurora had a pants factory and a glove factory. The spot last occupied by Jefferson Smurfit Co. has been occupied by several different companies, and I will list them backwards: Smurfit, Alton Box, Martin Bros Box, National Fibre Reed, Roger Wheel Works, Cobb Iron and Nail Co.

Smurfits, Altons and Martin box all made corrugated shipping boxes. National Fibre Reed made furniture with twisted fibre reeds made with tough paper. The Royer Wheel Co. made wagon and buggy wheels and when [World] War I came along, they made wheels for the government. After the war they tried automobile wheels but they couldn't make it. There also was a match factory there and a nail factory, too.

The Aurora brickyard was located where the waterways park is now. They would dig the clay from the creek bank where the forks of No[rth] and So[uth] Hogan met and haul it up to a big contraption where it was ground up and mixed and pressed into a mold to make a brick. These were hauled out to drying racks and left for about a week. They were then put in a kiln and fired for a week or more to make a real good brick. The brickyard was a good place for a kid to get his first job. We did the flunky jobs but had a good time at it. We got \$1.50 a day and averaged about six dollars a week. The weather had to be good before we could work and one year (1922 or 1923) we tried to open up on the 22nd of May and we got snowed out. We tried the next day and had the same luck. Bill Weber was the manager and wasn't bad to work for. He was cantankerous, though, and if something went wrong he would fire you. But the next day a person could get back.

H. W. Smith Chair Co. – They had a shop across from the Indianapolis Chair Co and dealt in knock down furniture. They only had a couple of men and they would put the chairs together and finish them. Several years ago, I was at a flea market and ran across four chairs from them and wanted to buy them but they were already sold.

The Aurora Gas Works belonged to Aurora. They burned coal to make the gas, and a by-product was coke and tar. Many's the time I went there to get a bucket of tar to coat a roof.

Concrete Block Co. – When they first started making concrete blocks, they were made by hand. They had a form to shape the block. The concrete was mixed by hand, then tamped in with a tamper and then placed on a pallet to dry. It was sure slow work but not for long as they soon improved the process.

The Acme Milling Co.²⁹ was located where Aylor and Meyer is now. The Star Milling Co. was where the Dearborn Mill is now and was run by an eccentric old man named Nolter. He was hard [of] hearing and would drop coins and not know it. They would roll under a big desk and when the place was cleaned up years later, this was a veritable gold mine. He used to buy wheat and run it in a big hopper in the basement. It would pile up in the corner. He would let us play in the wheat, thus getting it worked down for nothing.

Crescent Brewery – Of course, I don't remember anything about this business, but it must have been pretty good. I remember when they razed the buildings. There was a huge chimney they wanted to bring down and we were real interested in it and watched every day and when they got ready to bring it down, they let us out of school to watch. They undermined one corner of it, put timbers in the hole and undermined some more. They then hitched a team to the timbers and pulled them out and, socko, down it came. I have made it a hobby to collect Crescent items and have about twelve different items from them.

Aurora had a bakery once in the twenties and thirties. They made Honor loaf bread. As a promotion one time, they put silver coins into the bread. We never did find any in our bread.

No tale about the old days would be complete without mentioning the Ku Klux Klan. For a few years after [World] War I they flourished. They burned crosses on the hillsides and had big rallies. There was a lot of hatred bandied around. The Klan had a rally at Dillsboro and had a big crowd. Someone scattered carpet tacks on the roads and a lot of tires were punctured that night. The Baptist preacher was a Klansman and the men's class really increased. Some Sundays there would be 500 men in attendance. There wasn't room for all of them. Our Sunday School teacher predicted their downfall. She said anything founded on hate wouldn't last and, sure enough, in a few months the men's class was back to its 20 to 30 members.

Aurora's Industrial Baseball League – Right after [World] War I, a baseball league was formed consisting of teams from the factories in Aurora. Teams from the Indianapolis Chair, Aurora

²⁹ Telephone Directory, *Southern Indiana Telephone Co.*, Aurora, Indiana; August 1930; entry for Acme Milling Co., 524 Third St. n.p.; repository *Lawrenceburg Public Library*, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

Furniture Co., (Wooden Shoe), Aurora Tool Works, Stedmans Foundry, Cochrane Chair, Aurora Coffin Co., Royer Whell Works, Commercial Club. Each factory tried its best to field a team. A lot of old timers tried it and there was a lot of sore muscles. They played on Sat[urday] afternoon. This had been unheard of before the war as everyone had to work ten hours on Sat[urday] as well as other days. The league only lasted several years.

During World War II, I worked at a war plant quite a distance from my home town, Aurora, Indiana. One of my co-workers was an inveterate horseplayer. He perused every dope sheet and bet every day. I had never bet on a horse but I got to watching the entries in the different races and, lo and behold, there it was, a perfect hunch, Aurora Road was running. I urged my friend to bet on Aurora Road. He just laughed at me and said that horse would be lucky to get to the starting line and said that if I was so sure of him to bet on him. I gave him \$5.00 to bet on the nose but he said he'd save me money and bet across the board. Was he abashed when Aurora Road came in 1st and paid 22-1. He never did get over my pick and wanted me to pick again, but I let well enough alone and never picked another horse.

My Dad worked as a delivery man for several years – sort of a local UPS. He delivered groceries for a lot of stores. Salesmen would come to town by train and he would deliver their trunks to the stores and sometimes to Rising Sun. One time a shipment of money for the banks came in too late to deliver to the bank and the express man was in a dither about it. He worried about it and was sure someone would try to steal it. He hit on a scheme to hide it out back under a large bush. Sure enough, the office was broken into and the small change in the desk was all they got.

The Indianapolis Chair & Furniture – The company moved to Aurora about 1916. W. J. Neukom was president. He always said that he got his start printing “Our Darling” on the backs of potty chairs. It was a stock company and after a few years they merged with the Aurora Furniture Co. Some of the stockholders after the merger were Bill and Joe Hoskins and a Stiegerwalk. We made mostly dining room and living room furniture. Shortly after [World] War II, we made chairs for the first Bunny Club. They were the plainest and cheapest looking little chairs you ever saw. And they had an outline of a big bunny sewn in the back. We also made beautiful French provincial furniture. Some of it to Hollywood and I later saw some of it in the movies.

Written by Freeman Kennedy about 1989.