

The Culver Antiquarian & Historical Society Quarterly

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Upcoming Meeting:

November 5: Severns Residence at 2306 E. Shore.

Ice Cream Social:

Plans are being made to hold an old fashioned ice cream social on June 11, 1995. The event will be a re-enactment of a turn-of-the-century ice cream social, complete with turtle races, croquet, and other events. Participants will come in period costumes. The event will be held in the old Sea Beach Subdivision.

Railroads Topic of September 10 Meeting:

Three dozen individuals attended the September meeting at the old railroad station in Culver. Terry Hand gave a wonderful presentation concerning the railroads of the area, with particular emphasis on the Vandalia line that passed through Culver. On display were several railroad related photos taken by Terry Hand when he was a boy in Culver. He often skipped his Latin class after lunch to take pictures of the steam locomotives with a camera and film provided by Mr. Rector of Rector's Pharmacy. Mr. Hand has donated the photos to the railroad station and they will be put on permanent display in the near future. Mr. Hand is a dedicated railroad enthusiast who has an extensive collection of materials relating to the railroad. The highlight of his collection is the wonderful paintings of old steam engines painted by Mr. Hand. Mr. Hand is an accomplished artist as anyone who viewed the painting could tell. The presentation was well received by all present.

The Railroad In Culver (reprinted from A History of Culver & Lake Maxinkuckee by Mark A. Roeder):

The Vandalia Railroad was long an influence on Culver. For many years it brought hundreds, sometimes thousands, of visitors to Lake Maxinkuckee for weekend holidays. It brought cadets to the Academy and took the citizens of Culver far away to visit friends and relatives. The railroad is long gone now, only the station, the park, the old railroad bed, and a couple of wooden pavilions remain. The railroad may be gone, but it's influence on the development of Culver and Lake Maxinkuckee remain.

On June 20, 1883 the Vandalia rails reached Culver from Logansport. A few weeks later a passenger service of one train each way between the two towns was established. The train traveled to Logansport in the morning and back to Culver in the evening, carrying freight as well as passengers. A man named Arthur was the engineer and Bill Murphy was the conductor. Frank Huntsinger was the station agent and operator. The first station was a small shack on the west side of the track located somewhere near the current location of the Cove.

The lakeside park was established by the railroad in 1883. This park was much larger than the present day town park, it included the current park as well as Papa's and the area behind it up to Academy Road. The railroad owned everything in this area, including the Lakeview Hotel. At one time a wooden walkway ran from the Lakeview to the depot. In the early years the park had a big pond filled with fish, with a bridge across it. Crushed stones made a path around it and the pond was spring fed. All the walks in the park were of crushed stone. At the Round Stand ice cream was sold. The Square Stand sold souvenirs and was located near the current entrance to the park, across from Bennet's.

Interestingly enough the railroad was originally intended to travel along the east side of the lake and not come in contact with Culver at all. At that time the village of Maxinkuckee was the commercial center of the Lake Maxinkuckee area and an eastern route was considered preferable. However, land speculators purchased land on the west side of the lake and persuaded the railroad to run it's track there instead.

According to Mr. Bigley a large land owner on the east side was also unwilling to allow the railroad to come across his property. This effectively blocked that route. These two factors together placed the railroad on the west side of the lake.

As Culver became a popular resort town the number of trains increased. Hundreds of visitors came to Culver on the Vandalia during the weekends. For special events special trains were ran. As many as 5,000 people were brought into Culver during the weekend at the height of Culver's popularity as a resort town. The trip by train could be long. It took four or five hours to reach Culver by train from Terre Haute. In 1904 a pit for a 50 foot turntable was prepared north of the Lakeview Hotel (on the Indian Trails east of the town park). Each Sunday twenty boys were hired at 5 cents each to help turn the engines. Ten boys to an end was sufficient to turn the huge locomotives. The remains of the turntable are still to be found in the woods east of the town park.

Many visitors had fond memories of the Vandalia and Culver, years after their excursions. Clemmons O. Mueller described a visit in the early days of the railroad; "At the station pier stood two steamboats which met all trains. We took the Peerless, captained by Capt. Ed Morris. Others for the west and south side boarded Capt. Oliver Crook's Aubbeenaubee. Both boats were filled with passengers. Often the first stop we made was at the Lake View Hotel, next to the Palmer House, then the Culver residence and then the high bluff of our row of cottages. We were home at last; we had arrived and a three months vacation was at hand. Fond recollections indeed; the fondest of my early life."

George E. Nearpass, editor of the Citizen, responded to Mr. Mueller's recollections a short time later; "Yes, things were just as he said because I was the "Whistling Brakeman" on that train. The train in those days consisted of all open cars, no vestibules, and the windows all open with the cinders, smoke and dust coming in. There was a water cooler in one end of the car with a drinking cup chained to it, plus coal oil lamps, a stove in each end for winter use, and everybody shoveling in coal trying to keep warm. But everybody loved everybody! We did not know any different and thought the equipment was fine."

The Vandalia had a great influence upon Culver. One influence was the location of the business district. A.D. Toner acquired a considerable piece of land in the vicinity of the depot while buying the right of way for the Vandalia Railroad. Toner's addition was platted and lots were offered for sale. The price of the lots were so exhorbinant that most businesses could not afford to build there. John Osborn, who built the first business building on Main Street, found that a lot in Toner's Addition would cost him \$1,000, quite a sum for those days. As a result he built on what is now the main business district. Later businesses were established near the depot, but most sought cheaper real estate on Main Street. To this day Culver has two main business areas, the larger on Main Street and the smaller on Lake Shore Drive (once known as Toner Avenue) across from the depot.

In it's heyday the railroad brought thousands of visitors to Culver during the summer months. The Citizen noted one of the many excursions to the lake, this one of local historical significance, on May 21, 1914. At this time between three and four thousand people came to see the dedication of the Logansport Gate. Four special trains were required to bring this great crowd from Logansport. Special trains for such major events were not uncommon in those days. At the dedication cutter # 13, which had been prominent in the flood work, was placed in the gateway and served as the speakers stand. There was a volley salute from the battery of artillery, which was stationed on the lake front. The band played "On The Banks Of The Walbash" and everyone took a tour of the Academy. Events such as this, as well as the lure of Culver itself, could attract as many as five to six thousand visitors on a single weekend. Most of these visitors came in on the trains.

These great days did not last however. Slowly the crowds decreased in size and signs began to appear here and there pointing to the demise of the railroad excursion days. One of the signs appeared in May of 1915. At this time S.E. Medbourn and S.J. Lenon purchased nine acres of the Vandalia Park tract for about \$14,000 with plans of dividing it into about 40 lots. This track was located on the slope above the lake, where Papa's and the homes to the north are now. This location had been owned by the Vandalia Railroad for 20 years or more and had been used as a picnic ground. Since the end of the Sunday Excursion business a few years prior to this, much of the park went unused. The Lakeview property, which included the hotel and seven cottages to the east are also put on the market at this time. On January 1, 1917 the Vandalia Railroad was absorbed by the Panhandle and would be operated as a division of this railroad from that point on [145].

In January of 1920 the Vandalia Station Depot was completely destroyed in an early Monday morning blaze. It was believed that the fire started from coals that fell from the open door of the stove in the agents office. The structure was built in 1884. Plans were soon made for construction of a new station, but were not carried out for five years. In early September of 1925 the new railroad station finally opened. Everything was complete except the waiting room furniture and telegraphic wiring. Most of the work was performed by local people. The waiting room was painted a light yellow. The main room was 30 feet square, the floor was cement, and the side walls were finished with a light colored brick up to the windows. The furniture for the room would consist of three tiers of seats finished in a light oak. The Indiana Bell Telephone Company installed a long distance booth in the small hallway. This was the third railroad station in Culver and is the one currently in existence.

In February of 1935 the boat and bath house in Vandalia Park was destroyed by fire. The building was built in 1886 and was purchased by the Vandalia when it took over the park in 1894. It's location was where the Beach Lodge is now. A light house, built of concrete block was located near the Beach House. It was decorative only. It was torn down more than 60 years ago due to it's poor condition. On February 20, 1935 the town of Culver purchased the Vandalia Park from the Pennsylvania railroad for \$6,500. The park included 3.2 acres and it's buildings, with the exception of the depot and the adjacent land. It also included 2.2 acres of the site of the old water tower on Bunker Hill. On December 11, 1935 the WPA decided to build a new bath house at the park to replace the one destroyed by fire. The cost would be \$18,800. The new beach bath house was opened in May of 1937. The bath house was named The Culver Beach Lodge. The living quarters in the 3rd floor were to be rented out to the public by the day, week, or season.

Passenger train service to Culver was discontinued on November 27, 1947, Thanksgiving Day. The line was closed down due to lack of business. This marked the end of an era for Culver. The station sat empty for many years and was for some time used as a laundromat. On December 27, 1984 the Culver Town Board passed a resolution approving the purchase of the depot and the adjacent land for \$42,500. The actual purchase was carried out on April 10, 1985. Since that time the old depot has been renovated and serves as a public building. This is one historic site in Culver that has been rescued from decay.

The old railroad park remains as the 3.2 acre Culver Town Park. The Culver Lions Club has raised money and transformed the old railway station into a community center. Part of the old railway bed is now a path for walking on the edge of C.M.A. Two of the pavilions that once sheltered passengers outside the previous station are in use now as shelters in the park. The Arlington Hotel on Long Point had its own depot in it's heyday. After its usefulness was at an end, the depot was moved by Gene Beamer to his property. The old Arlington Depot is now part of the Beamer garage. These few physical remnants are all that is left of the great railroad days of Culver and Lake Maxinkuckee.

BIG WEEK DAY EXCURSION

TO

Lake Maxinkuckee

Thursday, August 10, '11

Via Pennsylvania Railway

SPECIAL TRAIN

Train Leaves—

Red Key	6:00 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.35;	Children 70c
Dunkirk	6:09 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.35;	Children 70c
Mill Grove	6:22 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.35;	Children 70c
Hartford City	6:34 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.35;	Children 70c
Kenner	6:41 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.35;	Children 70c
Upland	6:50 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.25;	Children 65c
Gas City	7:04 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.15;	Children 60c
Bethven	7:11 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.15;	Children 60c
Marion	7:17 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Sweetser	7:22 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Mier	7:30 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Converse	7:46 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Amboy	7:53 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
North Grove	7:57 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
McGrawville	8:03 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Loree	8:09 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Punker Hill	8:13 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Onward	8:23 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c
Anoka Jct.	8:33 a. m.	Fare, Adult, \$1.00;	Children 60c

Arrive at Lake Maxinkuckee 10:15 a. m.

Special train leaves Lake Maxinkuckee returning at 6:45 p. m.

Personally Conducted. Lunch Car in Charge of Ladies

This is the trip of the season. The after Harvest Outing for the Farmers, Sunday Schools, High Schools, Young People's Societies, Clubs, Orders, etc. Take a day of recreation from farm, factory and store and join a jolly, orderly party. No crowding. Coaches for 1,500 people will be furnished.

Maxinkuckee is the most beautiful Indiana lake.

Bring your lunch baskets and go with us.

Buy your tickets the day before of the committee at each place.

Culver Military Academy, the largest private Military Academy in the world, ranking next to West Point, is located here and free access to all parks and Academy grounds is extended.

Three steamboats make trips around the lake, a distance of 14 miles for 25c. One hour's ride. Boating, Fishing, Bathing. The lake is well supplied with bath houses, sail and row boats. Good fishing may be enjoyed.

A baggage car will be provided for lunch baskets, bicycles, go-carts, kodaks.

Livery stables of each town have made arrangements to handle your rigs.

For further information inquire of agents.

See the ball game at Culver.