

Indianapolis Literary Club

“There’s A Movement Afoot”

October 18, 2021

My first paper for the Indianapolis Literary Club was about my interest in the *Camino de Santiago*, a 500-mile pilgrimage across northern Spain. I was fortunate to do a 200-mile section in 2012 and another 200-mile section in 2016. Then in 2017, I served as a host for one of the pilgrim-hostels along the Camino.

My second paper was on the 1857 sinking of the gold-laden ship, the *SS: Central America*. This story was of particular interest to me because of attorney Rufus Allen Lockwood. He once lived in my hometown of Thorntown, Indiana, and he died at sea when his ship sank during a hurricane. It was transporting recently mined and minted gold worth millions of dollars from San Francisco to the financial markets of the East Coast by way of Panama. Both of these papers were about what one might call my interests or enthusiasms.

Following along the same line of writing about my interests, this paper’s subject is about “movement.” One particular activity I have been participating in for over 40 years is running. These days I continue to “run” 2 or 3 times a week

depending on the weather and my “To Do List.” My participation in this particular activity came about during what was called the “Running Boom” back in the mid 1970’s.

I recall watching Frank Shorter win the 1972 Olympic Marathon the week before the “Munich Massacre.” Some of you may recall that was when terrorists killed 11 Israeli athletes and coaches. On a brighter note, Shorter’s victory may have been responsible for planting the seed of a growing interest among many Americans in running, or as in my case it’s known as jogging. His performance resulted in America’s interest in physical fitness by way of exercise. A direct by-product of his success was the development of industries devoted to all types of running equipment such as apparel, shoes, energy bars and drinks, as well as magazines and books.

Literature on running was popularized with “*The Complete Book of Running*” by Jim Fixx in 1976. He promoted the health benefits of jogging. Ironically the running trend he helped to inspire was not diminished by his early death in 1985 at the young age 52. Even though he died while out jogging, the activity he promoted has continued to gain in popularity. “*Runner’s World*” is one of the many periodicals featuring stories pertaining to the general aspects of

running. There are many other magazines featuring exercise of one type or another, all of which promote health benefits of exercise or movement.

My personal interest in this topic of “movement,” or as I like to say “running” or “jogging” started in the late 1970’s when I was in my mid-thirties. Now I find myself in my late 70’s. This started for me when some friends from my church and I became interested in the running craze that was sweeping the country. This was similar to the scene in the movie “Forest Gump” when Tom Hanks was running all over the United States. Our small group was similarly inclined, signing up for every fun-run we could find with the goal of getting in shape to run the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Indianapolis 500 Festival Mini-Marathon in 1978. The first was in 1977.

The name “Mini-Marathon” was chosen because it was 13.1 miles or half the distance of the 26.2 miles of a regulation full marathon. This might be the only Mini-Marathon in the country as most are simply called “Half-Marathons.” In 2021 I ran my 42<sup>rd</sup> Mini. But our own Eugene Lausch is one (1) of only five (5) men who have run every Indianapolis 500 Festival Mini-Marathon since it commenced in 1977, all 44 of them. (Pause for a round of applause!)

Movement of one form or another is really just an essential activity for all living creatures. If there is no movement associated with us, we are probably dead. We seem to have an innate desire to move around, which is exhibited in the earliest signs of life such as from conception, gestation, birth and upon taking our first baby-steps until the eventual end which we commonly refer to as “death.” Perhaps one might even imagine there were similar signs of movement or of life in the primordial ooze (or soup) as it is sometimes known. Doesn’t the word “ooze” bring forth the image of some movement? Of course, it does and perhaps right there is where the whole thing started.

In the book, “*On Trails: An Exploration*” by Robert Moor, the author was through-hiking the Appalachian Trail when the idea of researching trails or pathways came to him. The book starts with that primordial ooze. There still exists evidence of this movement by some of the earth’s earliest living creatures in the sediment on the bottom of the ocean.

Moor goes on to explain that where the animals began traveling across the savannah and through the jungle, man eventually followed. Where those pathways were used by people, taking the route of least resistance, generally downhill and around natural barriers, roads were eventually established.

We don't have to go too far back in time to imagine when our fastest forms of travel outside of gravity, sailing ships and flowing rivers were provided by some sort of animal power. Examples of movement was achieved by the elephant, camel, oxen, donkey and horse. Eventually with the advent of the mechanical engine the option of traveling, not only faster, but also going where no road had gone before, eventually became a reality.

Similarly, it is not difficult to imagine that railroads would naturally use a "path of least resistance" in laying out their routes across America. In a recent flight across the United States (Indianapolis to Baltimore to San Diego and back again), the existence of railroads across the country was clearly discernable. They appeared as tree-lined corridors cutting diagonally across the checker board design of the Township and Range Lines west of the Alleghanies. These were initially established by surveys of the Northwest Territory going back to the time of the Thomas Jefferson administration.

For railroads to be constructed in Indiana, land would have to be made available but most of the land was already in the hands of private landowners, courtesy of the President of the United States as payment for services rendered

during the Revolutionary War. Some of our ancestors from England had previous experience with royalty owning all the real estate and they left all of that to England to deal with back in the day. Rights-of-Way were commonly used to build roads but these were usually along the boundary of the adjoining landowner. The acquisition of land for a public/private railroad cutting diagonally across a field brought forth all kinds of issues regarding land ownership.

Interestingly enough, my law office in Thorntown was adjacent to the former New York Central Railroad that ran diagonally across Boone County. It ran from Thorntown in the northwest corner south to Zionsville in the southeast corner. It passed through the middle of Lebanon, the geographical center of Boone County. This railroad was constructed as the “Lafayette & Indianapolis Railroad” and was the brainchild of some men from the Lafayette area we might call “entrepreneurs.”

Railroads in the United States began to appear in the late 1820’s. The first was the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, popularly known as the “B&O Railroad.” The Indiana legislature in 1832, first chartered railroads to provide freight and passenger service. Funding such an enterprise was at best tricky and occasionally fraught with get-rich schemes. Following the genealogy on railroads it appears to be a “Gordian Knot.” This was due to a succession of unsuccessful charters, re-

charters, time extensions in which the construction was to begin and to be finished and of course, bankruptcies and receiverships came along to be part of the deal. Some railroads even received assistance from the state and the local jurisdictions where it was to be built as there was a recognition of the economic benefit it would bring to the communities. Who was ever going to vote against “economic benefit?”

But back to this particular railroad in Boone County. In the late 1830's or early 1840's those above-mentioned entrepreneurs were travelling to Lafayette from Madison, Indiana on the Ohio River. Madison was the major commercial port for Southern Indiana. Then in order to return to Lafayette, they took the new train on the Madison & Indianapolis Railroad (M&I Railroad) which went as far north as Edinburgh just north of Columbus. Then to reach Lafayette they would have to ridden a horse or taken some type of primitive buckboard which pre-dated the stage coach lines that developed after the roads were improved.

With that trip these men must have been convinced they had experienced the future of travel for the State of Indiana. Perhaps a railroad such as they had just experienced could be built to connect the commercial interests of the Lafayette area (shipping crops and livestock) to the commercial port on the Ohio River and

eventually north to Chicago. They went on to plan, promote and build the railroad to Indianapolis to connect with the M&I Railroad. That M. & I. Railroad arrived in Indianapolis in October 1847. And just 5 years later in 1852 the Lafayette and Indianapolis Railroad would arrive on the banks of White River in Indianapolis.

These Lafayette “entrepreneurs” had gone on to obtain the charter from the State of Indiana to develop a railroad known as the “Lafayette and Indianapolis Railroad.” That was actually the progeny of the Madison, Indianapolis and Lafayette Railroad (M. I. & L. Railroad). But due to the failure to meet the required timelines established in the state charter the name “Lafayette” was eliminated from the M. I. & L. Railroad charter, making it the M. & I. Railroad leaving the name “Lafayette & Indianapolis Railroad” available for a new charter.

All along the proposed route local funds for the construction of the “Lafayette & Indianapolis Railroad” were raised by stock subscriptions as authorized by the Indiana charter. Announcements of meetings were published in the local and state newspapers notifying the public of the subscriptions for stock. The money raised would purchase the land, and prepare the roadbed and would eventually lay the tracks needed to carry the railroad cars and locomotives. I have found no evidence of financial sleight-of-hand being mentioned along this rail



line as this Boone County line was subscribed by the locals along the way. It too was seen as an economic incubator for commerce, although it would be a while before a phrase as “economic incubator” would be in vogue as it is today. For now, let’s note the railroad began construction in Lafayette in the late 1840’s and came to Thorntown in May 1852 and it reached White River at Indianapolis by December of that year. Cargo and people would be ferried across White River until a bridge could be constructed.

It should be noted that the locomotives and iron rails were brought over from England to Lafayette via the waterway of the Wabash and Erie Canal. Eventually this same railroad would make the then proposed Indiana Central Canal obsolete which was to connect the Wabash and Erie Canal to the Ohio River. However, a small section of that Indiana Central Canal is still in use in Indianapolis. It draws water from White River in Broad Ripple and flows into the Indianapolis Water Treatment Plant near 16<sup>th</sup> Street. This provides Indianapolis with 60% of it’s drinking water. One of the great advantages of this system is it is all gravity powered as opposed to many municipalities which require costly pumping stations from underground aquifers to supply their residents with water.

Because railroads in the United States cross various local and state jurisdictions they are governed by the National Surface Transportation Board (NSTB). To attempt to simplify the very complicated history of railroads, let's just say the NSTB is the successor of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) which operated from 1887-1995. The NSTB was established as an independent federal agency in 1995 to be in charge of railroads in the United States. All aspects of railroad business are now controlled by the NSTB. This would include both the creation and cessation of the business conducted by the railroad.

In the name of "progress" and not unlike the canal system being made obsolete by the railroads, some railroads have been similarly put out of business or at least "downsized" by trucks and cars. When a railroad ceases to be profitable, it usually goes out of business. This means the service that has been offered to be public is being abandoned with permission being granted by the NSTB.

The word "abandoned" as it pertains to railroads is a particular "term of art" meaning only the services of the railroad would no longer be offered to the public. This did not mean the railroad was releasing its "ownership interest" in the land that they owned and continued to pay taxes on after abandoning the rail services. It would take a deed to transfer title ownership just as in any other real estate

transaction. And “abandonment” is how the 1852 railroad that came through Thorntown ceased to offer service to the public in the 1960’s. The rails were not removed until the mid-1980’s. I sat in my office and watched this happen, never knowing that I would develop an interest in the history of this particular railroad. But I eventually has and it became one of my interests.

In the 1990’s a client entered my office to discuss converting the former rail line into a recreational rail-trail. Her children lived near established rail-trails in Goshen, Indiana and Zenia, Ohio. Both were communities with “rail-trails.” She wondered if something couldn’t be done like that on our former rail line so as not to continue to be a dumping ground for all sorts of trash. On the former railroad property trash had become a nuisance. Rumors of a potential lineal trailer park would cause some concern, being located at the beginning of the business district of the town. It would be the first thing people would see upon entering the town.

“Timing is everything” as the old saying goes and that was exactly the case with this encounter. I was able to connect with some knowledgeable people in the area a trail development at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and some private citizens already working on developing trails throughout Indiana. For

instance, the Zionsville community had already built part of their trail on the existing railroad corridor so we thought perhaps Thorntown could do the same.

Eventually there was a coming together of like-minded people interested in building a recreational rail-trail across Boone County. A Not-For-Profit corporation was formed titled the “Friends of Boone County Trails, Inc.” This turned out to be an entity which could apply for development grants such as the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants and Transportation Enhancement (TE) grants. These federally funded grants are administered by the states with funds collected as the tax on gasoline we purchase at the pump. We soon discovered our neighboring states had been using such federal funds for years to develop their recreational trails. Indiana however, didn’t seem to be interested in participating in any such program.

It was the administration of Governor Mitch Daniels that adopted a more progressive program of recreational trails with the goal of providing easy access to a trail for all Hoosiers. The Friends of Boone County Trails, Inc. just happened to be in the right place at the right time. As they say, “Timing Is Everything.”

Through a series of private and public fundraising along with the government grants, the communities of Zionsville, Whitestown, Lebanon and Thorntown have been able to build their portion of the rail-trail on this historic rail corridor. This is the same corridor used by both the Abraham Lincoln Inaugural Train in 1861 and the Lincoln Funeral Train in 1865. That might be another story for another time. Recently in continuing Governor Daniels Visionary Trails Project, Governor Holcomb's Next Level Trails has provided 4.3 million dollars to connect all the existing Boone County sections of the "Big 4 Trail" (formerly the "Farm Heritage Trail") into one continuous rail-trail by 2022.

For all this talk about "movement" and it appears we may have gone to great extremes to avoid the oldest form of human ambulation. We have very sophisticated modes of transportation of "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" to borrow another movie title. Dare one even ask if these modes of "movement" are sustainable? And "sustainability" is certainly a word in fashion today.

For a moment let's think about how amazing that simple act of walking can be, subject to certain impediments due to one's physical situation. Just consider the simple act of stepping up on a curb or walking up or down the stairs. Typically, we can do this without ever thinking much about it. As Nike suggests we "Just Do It."

Our libraries have been beneficiaries of some of well-known walkers such as Mahatma Gandhi, William James, Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, Henry David Thoreau, William Wordsworth and the list goes on. Perhaps one of the better outcomes resulting from our Covid pandemic will be for people to unplug from their digital devices and simply go out for a walk. What's the worst that could happen? Perhaps it would be the 1970 Kent State Peace Rally ending up with the Ohio National Guard 13 and Kent State 0. Or the Selma to Montgomery march where U.S. Representative John Lewis was severely beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge by the Alabama State Troopers who attacked the walkers. Last summer there was just such a walk in my Butler-Tarkington Neighborhood attempting to highlight the gun violence in our city, ending up at the Governor's residence as if he could do anything about this deplorable situation in Indianapolis. And I mustn't forget the "7 Point Coalition" from Indianapolis which is a model program of volunteers walking through high crime neighborhoods with recent gun murders in an attempt to highlight this issue. Perhaps as attributed to the 13<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Rumi stated, "**Solvitur Ambulando**" or "it is solved by walking" although I don't think he was speaking in Latin.

In conclusion as Rick Steves would say "Happy Traveling" or as Edward R. Morrow would say "Good Night and Good Luck."