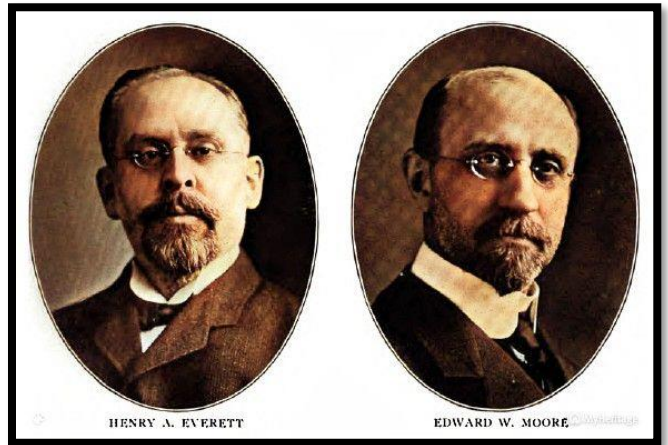


Artifacts Tell the Lake County Story 2: 1918 Bridge Collapse



Ordinary objects can tell their stories, connecting the past with the present. Historic remnants like this **window** bring forgotten events back to life. Here is the second of the tales behind three Lake County artifacts available for history buffs to see at local heritage sites.

#2: Cleveland Interurban History and Lake County, Ohio



At the end of the 19th century, Ohio became the heartland of the newfangled electric interurban railway. The roots of the interurban train era may be traced to the 1870s, when Zenobe Gramme developed the first commercial use generator, and the first electric locomotive appeared in Berlin, Germany. By the 1880s, the innovation migrated to America, landing at Thomas Edison's Menlo Park in New Jersey. Frank Sprague advanced the concept further with an elevated rail line in New York in 1886. Within 20 years, commuter lines multiplied. Cleveland was one of the foremost centers as gentle topography, dozens of nearby towns, and a mix of agricultural products provided all the elements for a boom. **Henry A. Everett** and **Edward W. Moore** were

two local developers who launched their interurban syndicate in 1895. It included a 35-mile line — the **Akron, Bedford &**





Cleveland Railroad and an 87-mile line further east. That included a **Cleveland to Painesville Line** of 58 miles, plus a 6-mile division into Fairport Harbor. The **CP&E**, the **CP&A**, plus the “**Shore Line Division**” that connected Cleveland to **Willoughbeach Park**, opened clean, convenient commuter travel and transport of goods. In time, another corporation, the **Eastern-Ohio Traction Co.**, connected to points in Erie,

Pennsylvania; Buffalo, New York; and New England.

Bridge Collapse!

On August 7, 1918, the weight of a Fairport-Painesville trolley caused the **St. Clair Street Bridge** over the Grand River to collapse. A car on the Fairport branch of the **CP&E** collided with a trailer from **The Highway Motors Company** hauled by horses. The bridge span collapsed, falling 25 ft. to the level of the river. The Plain Dealer reported:

**COLLISION ON SPAN
CAUSES ACCIDENT;
BOATMEN RESCUE
PASSENGERS**

“10 of the 15 people on the passenger car were injured, but all will live. The trolley car collided with the rear of the

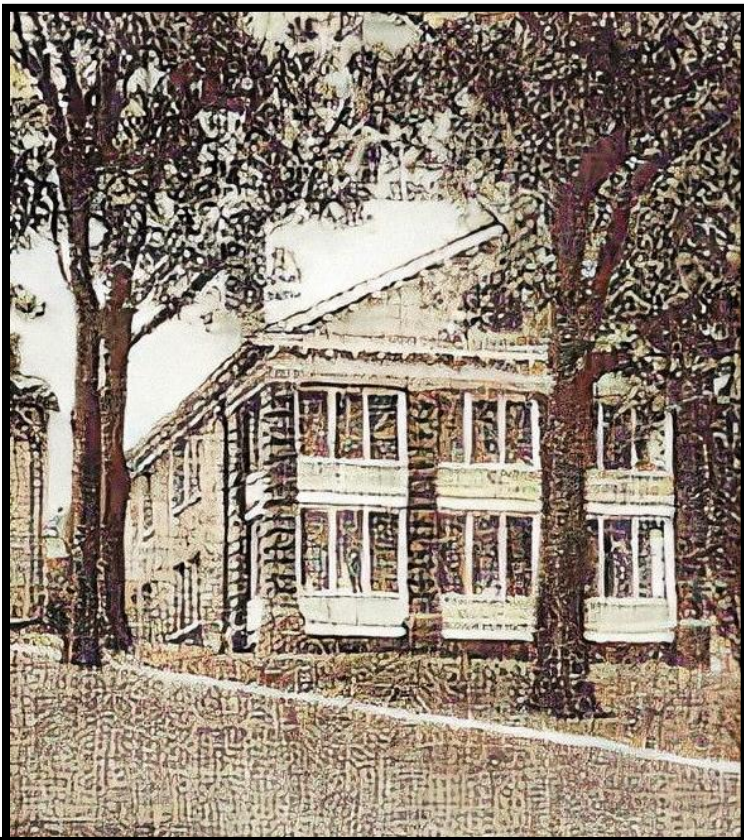


trailer, knocking it against a girder, which broke and weakened the bridge to such an extent that it fell to the level of the river. The bridge held at this point and prevented the car being plunged into 20 ft. of water. Eight of the injured were brought to the hospital here after



ambulances and physicians were sent to the scene of the accident. **Boy saves horses.** **Lionel Wilkins**, a boy, was thrown from the back platform of the car into the river and swam to the horses attached to the truck and cut the harness, thereby allowing them to swim ashore. **Jesse Sanders** of Painesville and **Harry Small** of Cleveland, who were on the truck, were thrown into the river, but were rescued. **Jack Sullivan** and **Tom Morgan** of Painesville took the people from the car in a rowboat. Hundreds of people were attracted to the scene. Several accidents have occurred on this bridge, but this one will shut off car communication with Fairport for weeks and inconvenience hundreds of people. The injured are **Mrs. Mary Davidson**, Painesville. Hip fractured and cut about the face. **Clint Covert**, Painesville, back wrenched. Internally injured was **Roy Johnson** of Painesville,





back injured. **Harry Small**, the Highway Motors driver, 1818 St. Clair Ave., Cleveland, back wrenched. **Ben Schnell**, 2213 Kinkel St., Cleveland, cut about face and hands. **Theodore Weiker**, Fremont, hands cut. **George Bleichmier**, Painesville, legs cut. **Grant G. Miller**, conductor, Painesville, bone in knee broken. **Alexander Glenn**, motorman, Painesville, back cut. **Lionel Wilkins**, slightly bruised.”

The Roaring Twenties

It wasn't a safety issue that killed the interurban in the mid-1920s. It was the rise of the automobile. Artifacts from this obsolete mode of transportation may be viewed at the **Painesville Railroad Depot, Lake County History Center** and the



Interurban Museum in Chesterland. Portions of the Interurban may be hiked in Chardon and Concord Township. The **Kirtland Country Club** and Lakeland's **Mooreland Mansion** remain as the residential legacy of these two transportation trailblazers, Henry Everett & Edward Moore.

Submitted by Dan Maxson Local Lore by Max, 2010-2016 - The News-Herald; Community Media Lab Volunteer Trustee; Curator - FHHS / Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum; Volunteer Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township. Additional research by **Virginia Jeschelnig**.