

The history of the

# **Interurban Railroads of Hancock County**

# What Is an Interurban?

- A type of railroad
- Electrically-powered inter-city railcars
- Designed for higher-speed and more comfort than city streetcars (trolleys)
- More lightly-built trackage and infrastructure than steam railroads
- Primarily hauled passengers rather than freight
- First Indiana interurban ran January 1898
- Last Indiana interurban is the South Shore (last downstate was 1941)

# What Is an Interurban?

1913



M0808\_BOX2

1935



# What an Interurban Is Not...

**RAILROAD MOTORCAR**



**STREETCAR**



**P0130\_95257-FP8**

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# How Were They Built?

- Used tracks within city streets in most cities
- Used private rights-of-way between cities
  - Paralleled steam railroads
  - Paralleled roads and highways
  - Separate rights-of-way
- Private rights-of-way were typically deeded (rather than easements)
- Cities granted franchises to use city streets

# How Were They Built?



# How Were They Built?



# How Were They Built?

- Depots fell into a few general types...
  - Purpose-built
    - Greenfield #2, Shirley, McCordsville
  - Store-front
    - Greenfield #1, Fortville #1, Knightstown
  - Converted houses
    - New Palestine, Fortville #2, Charlottesville, Cumberland?
  - Combination substation/depot
    - Maxwell, Mohawk?, Ingalls
  - Waiting shelters/platforms

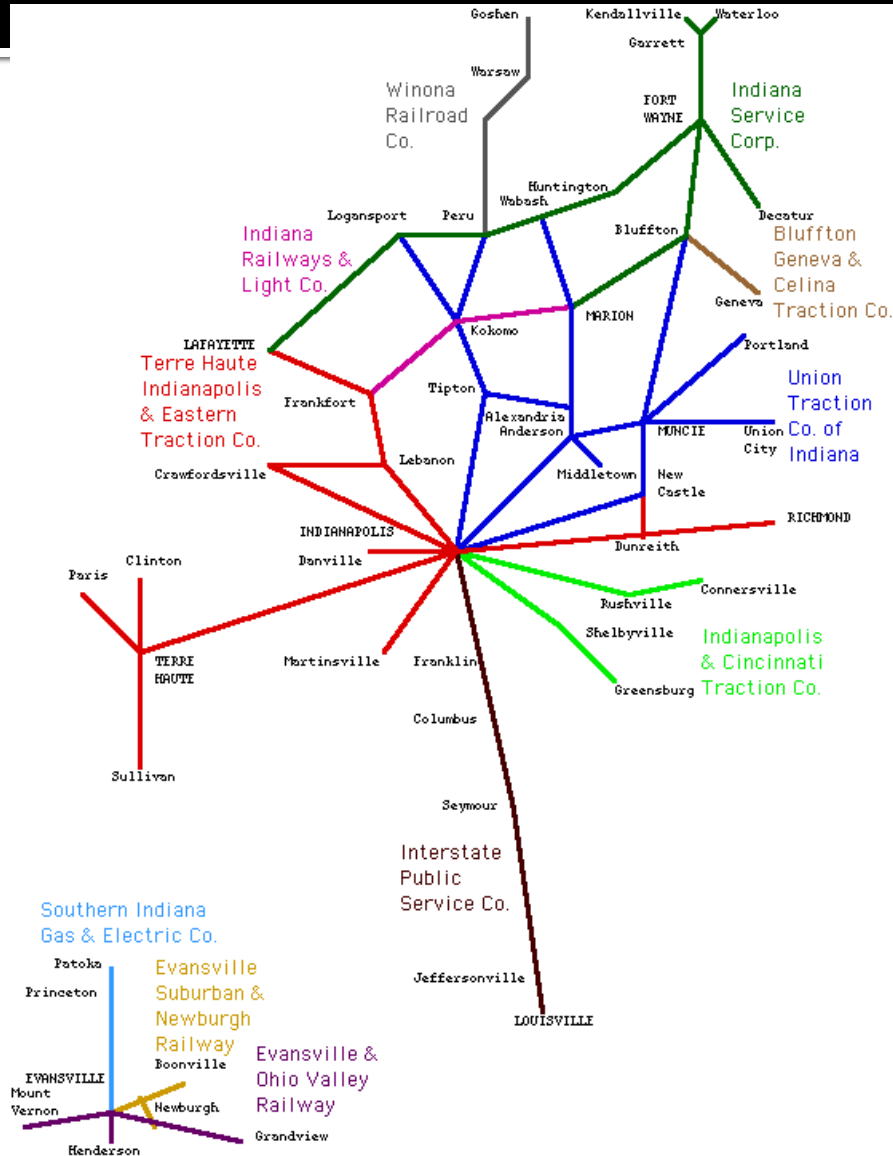
# Why Were They Built?

- To connect farm towns to big cities
  - Poor roads prevented convenient travel
  - Intercity networks developed
- As competition to the steam railroad monopolies
  - More frequent, cheaper, and convenient
- Just because
  - Financiers
  - Community rallying
  - Customers for electric utilities

# Why Did the Companies Fail?

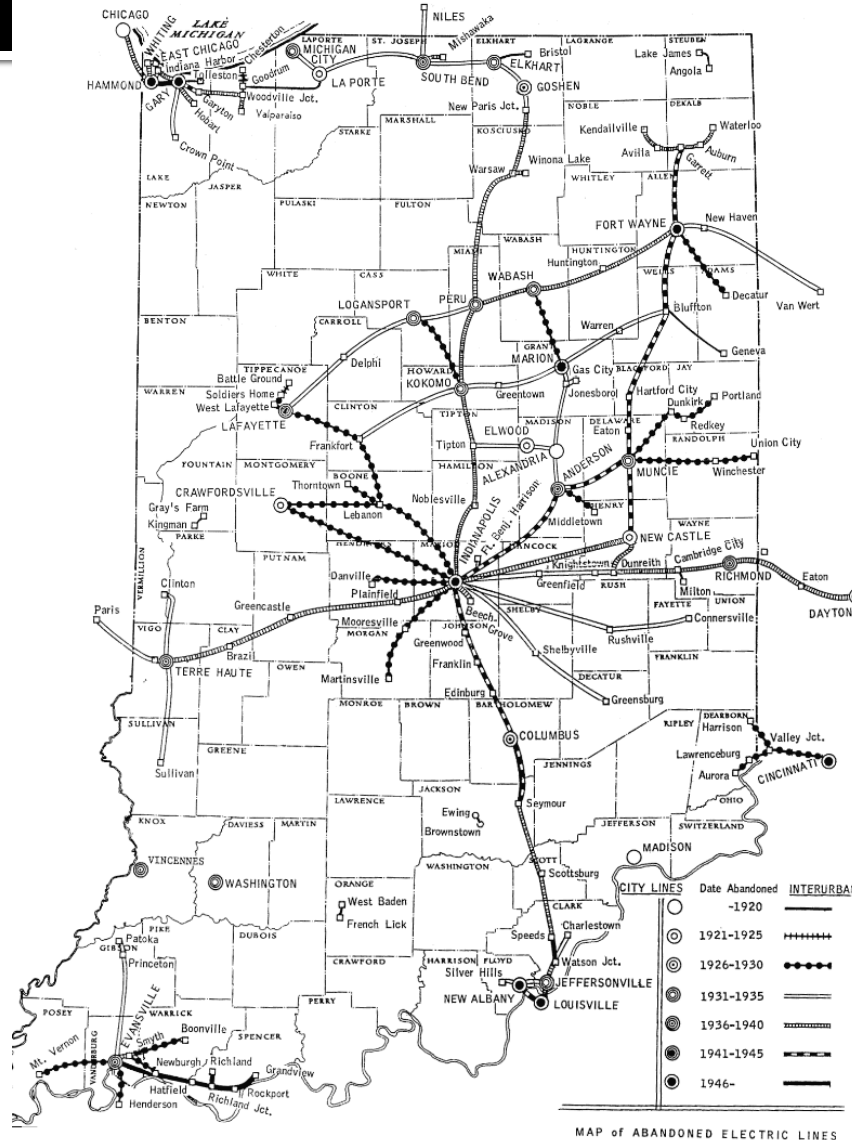
- Poorly financed
- Competition from automobiles and buses
- Aging equipment compared to buses
- Loss of subsidies from power utilities
  - By 1937, the SEC began enforcing anti-trust laws against holding companies
- Lawsuits/insurance claims
  - Significant wrecks bankrupted a few companies

# The Indiana Interurban System

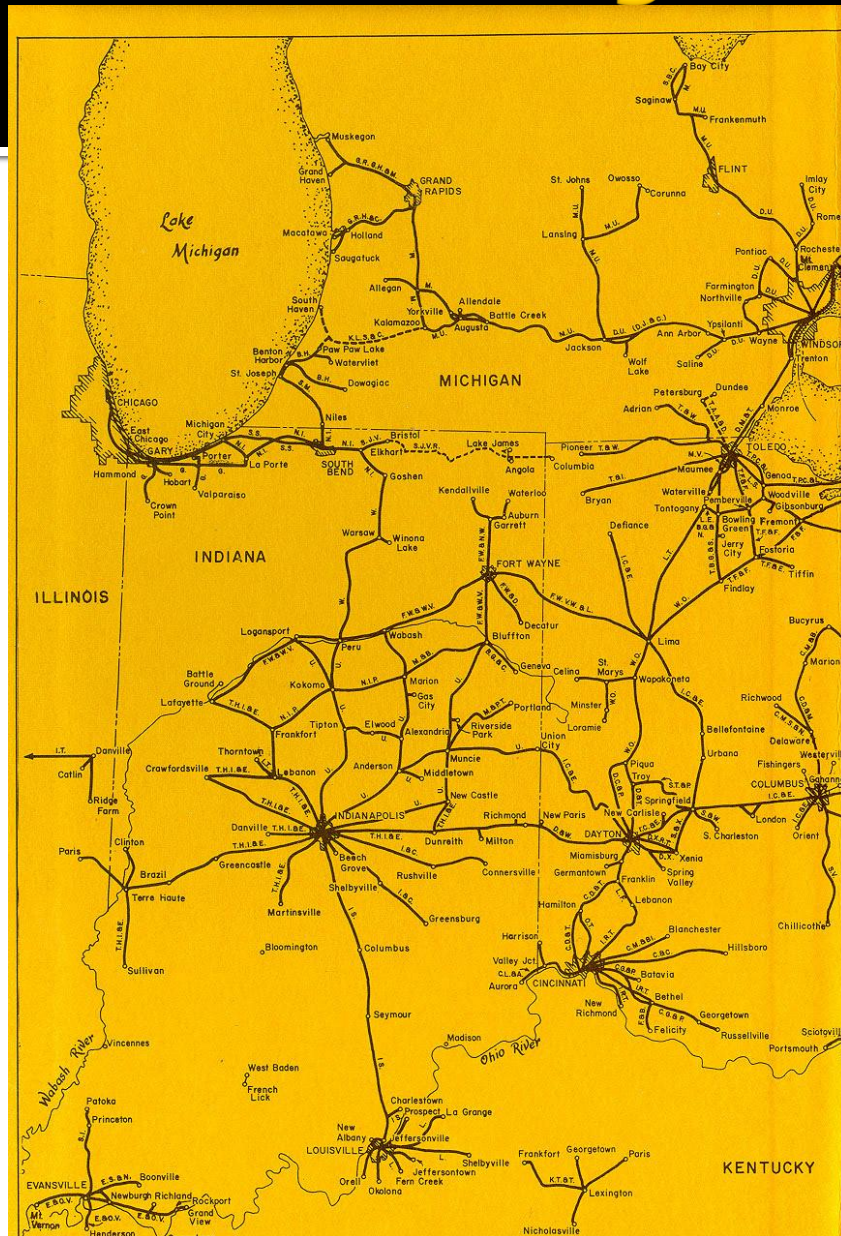




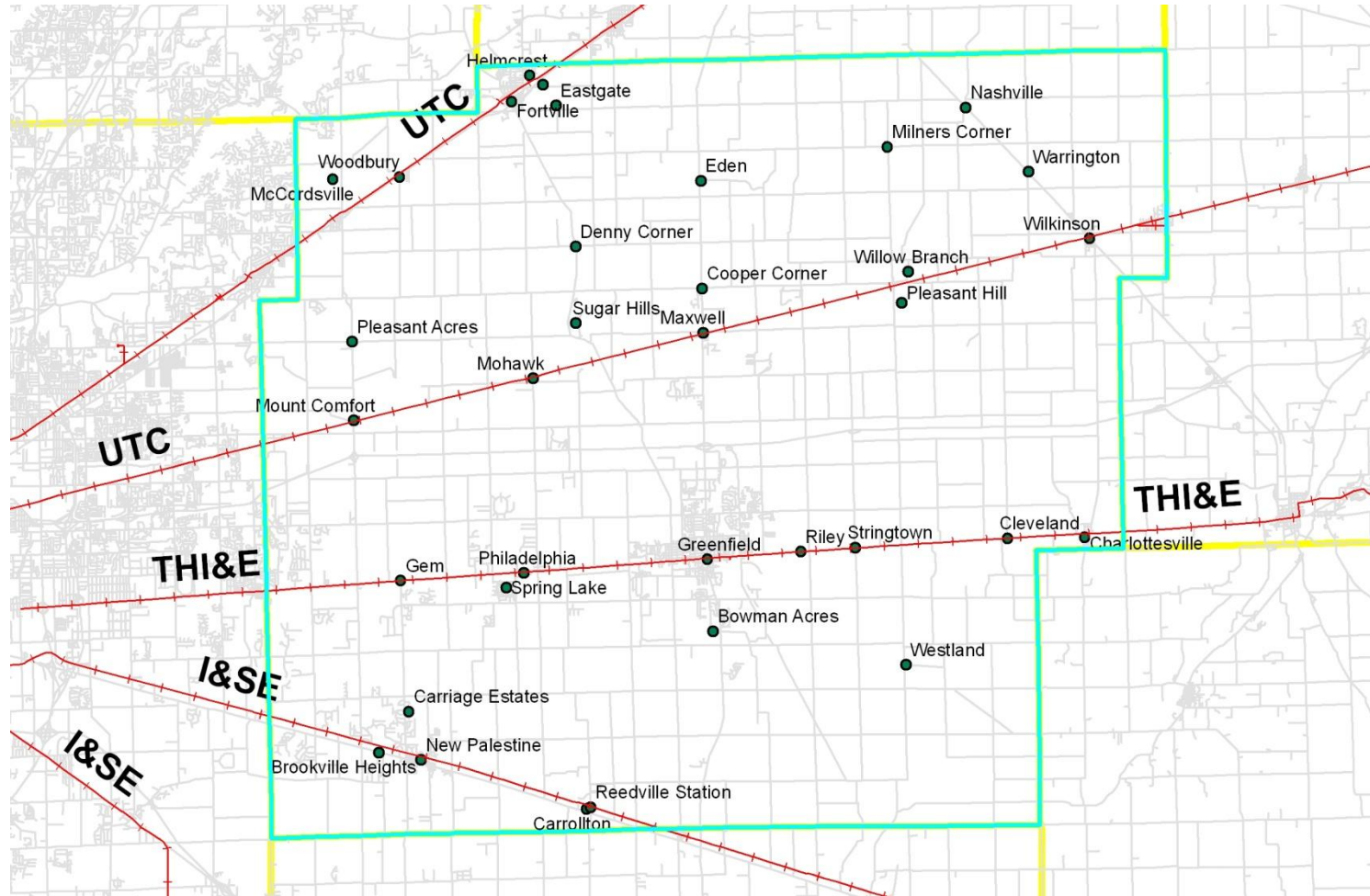
# The Indiana Interurban System



# The Indiana-Ohio-Michigan Systems



# The Hancock County Lines

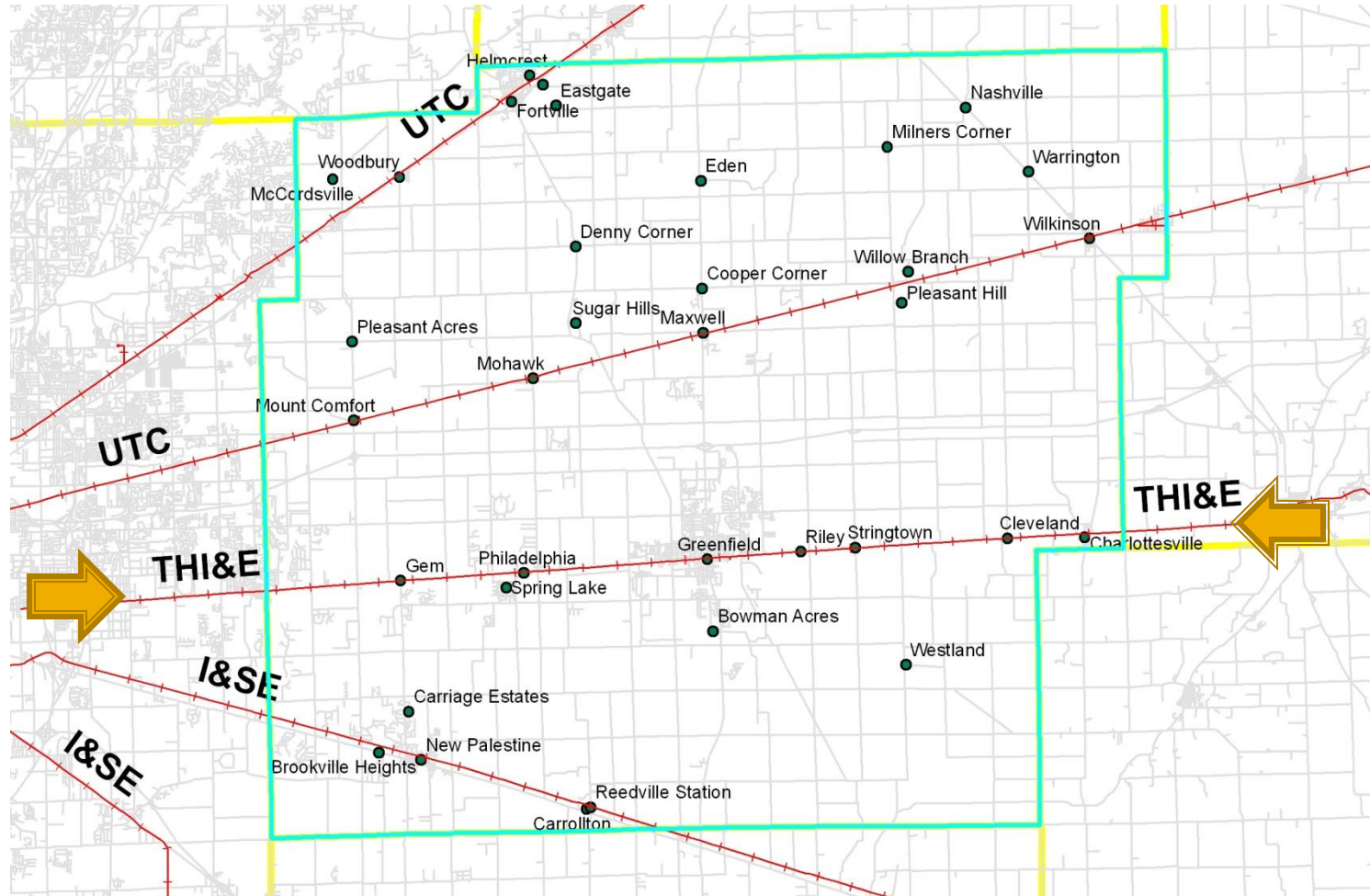


# The Hancock County Lines

- Indianapolis & Greenfield Rapid Transit
  - Cumberland, Greenfield, Charlottesville
- Union Traction Company
  - Fortville, McCordsville
- Indianapolis and Cincinnati
  - New Palestine, Carrollton
- Indianapolis, New Castle and Toledo
  - Mt. Comfort, Maxwell, Shirley
- Indiana Railroad



# I&GRT/I&E/THI&E



# Indianapolis & Greenfield Rapid Transit

- Organized February 1899
  - Principal investors were from Greenfield, including Elmer and Nathan Binford, Francis Banker, Lorenzo McDonald, and Christian Kirkpatrick
- Opened Indianapolis-Greenfield, June 19, 1900
  - 21 miles of track parallel to National Road
- Opened Greenfield-Charlottesville, May 12, 1902
  - 9 miles of track parallel to National Road
- Seven passenger cars provided hourly service to Indianapolis
- Merged into the Indianapolis and Eastern, July 1, 1902

# I&GRT: Greenfield Station





# I&GRT: Greenfield



**0391\_BOX2\_GREENFIELD\_002**

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# I&GRT: Greenfield



# I&GRT: Greenfield Shops



[illegible]



# I&GRT: Philadelphia Power Plant



# I&GRT: Spring Lake Resort



# I&GRT: Cumberland



**P0391\_BOX1\_CUMBERLAND\_001**

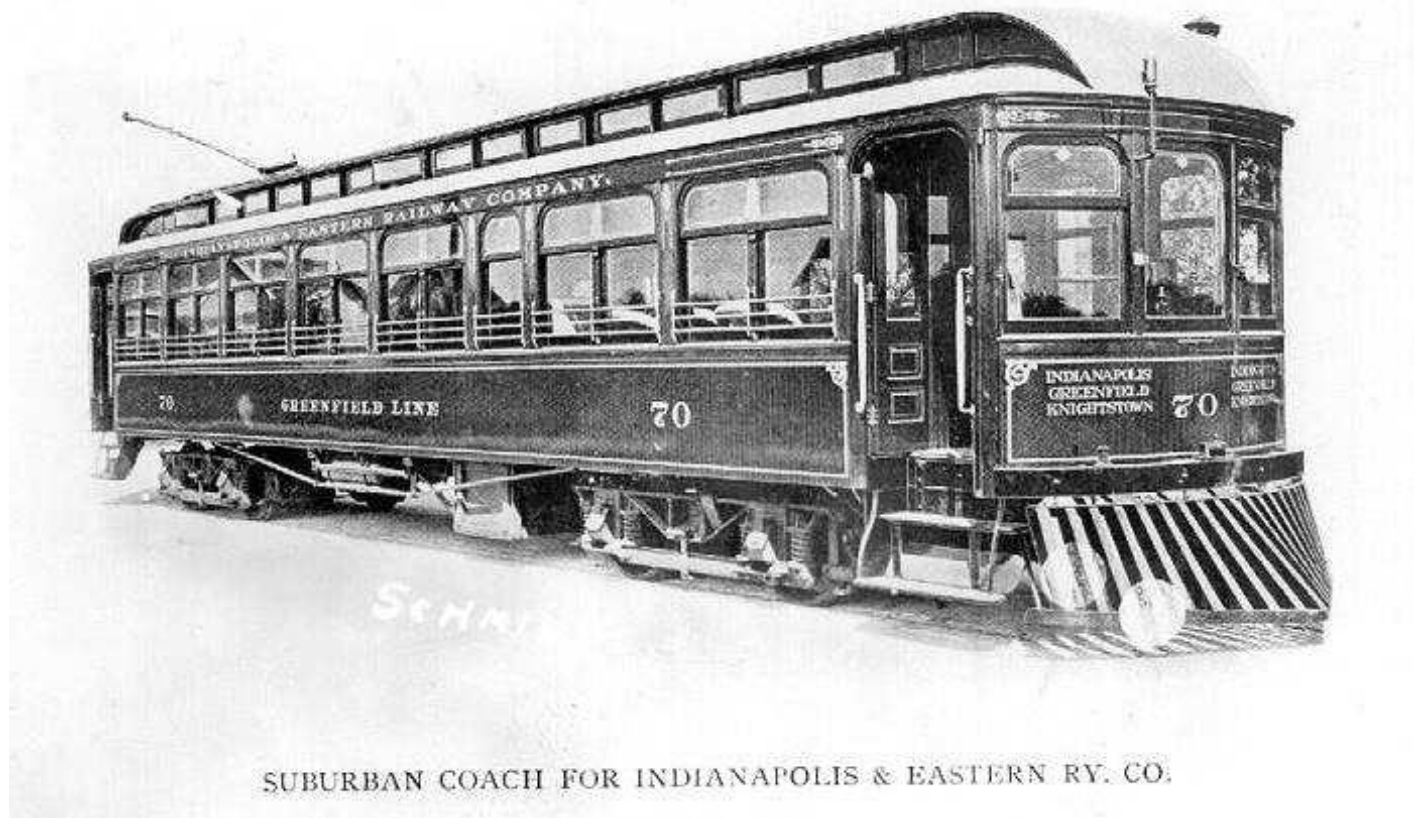
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# Indianapolis and Eastern

- Primarily Indianapolis investors looking to expand eastward
- Opened Charlottesville-Knightstown, July 1902 (4 miles)
  - Broke the Knightstown smallpox quarantine, August 1902
- Made connection to another interurban line from Richmond at Dublin, 1903
- Six trains per day, Richmond-Indianapolis
- Hourly service, Greenfield-Indianapolis

# I&E: Coach

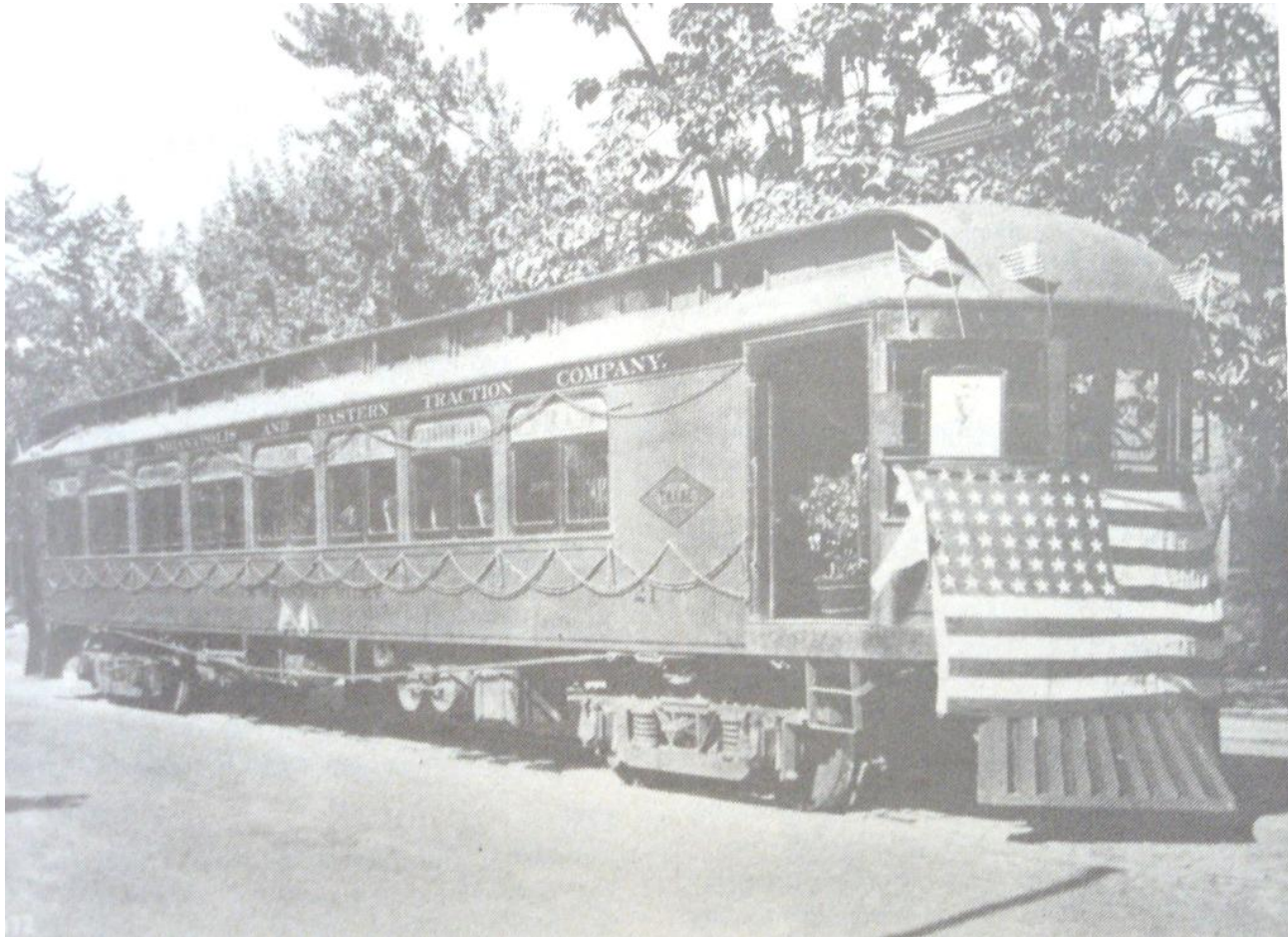


SUBURBAN COACH FOR INDIANAPOLIS & EASTERN RY. CO.

# Terre Haute, Indianapolis & Eastern

- Bought the I&E in 1907
- Created a continuous route under one company across Indiana
  - Terre Haute-Richmond
- Overextended
  - Branches to Lafayette, Martinsville, and elsewhere
- Underfinanced
  - Constantly in receivership
- Sold at auction, May 26, 1931
  - Became part of the Indiana Railroad System

# THI&E: James Whitcomb Riley



# THI&E: Cumberland





# THI&E: Greenfield Depot



15656  
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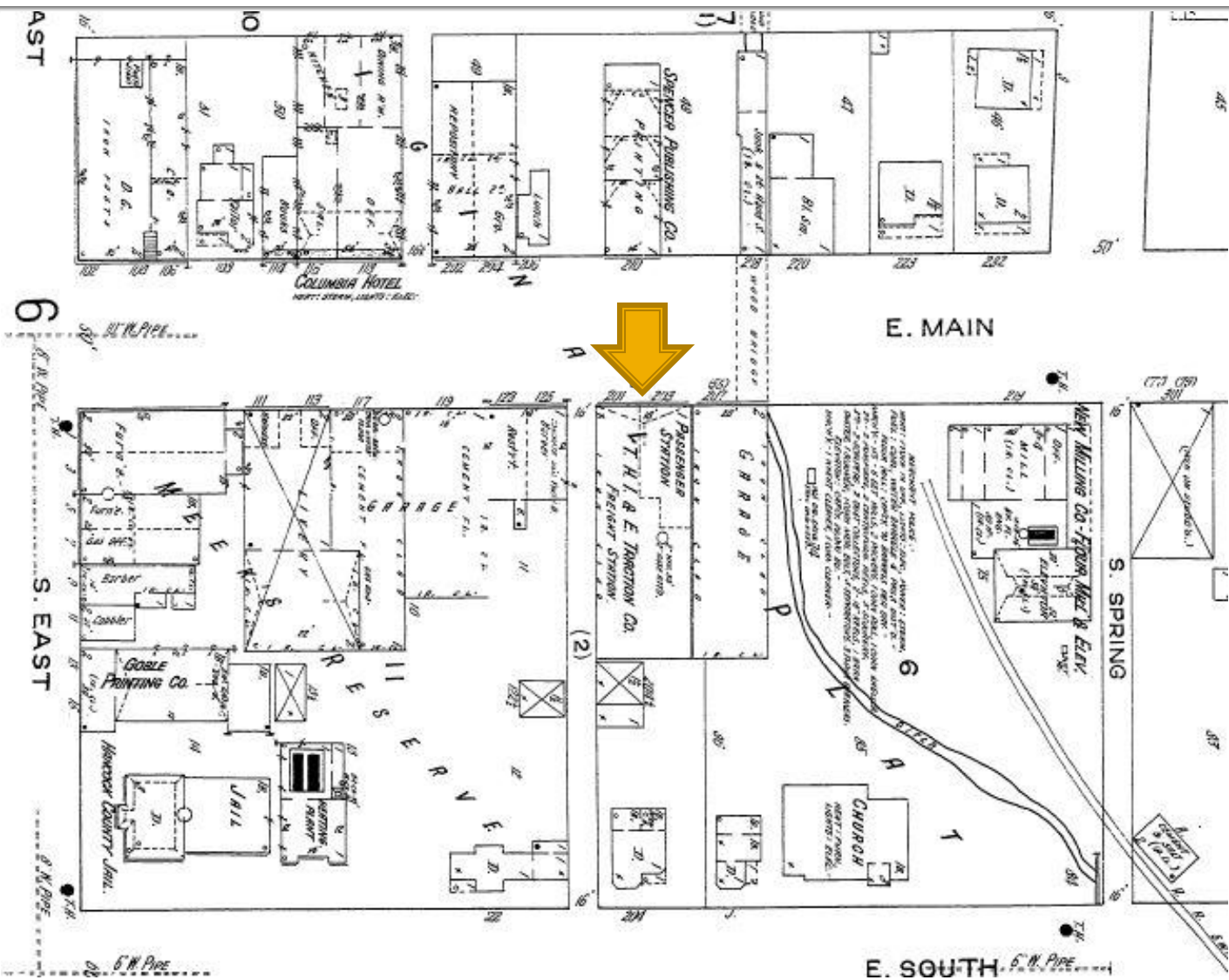
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# THI&E: Greenfield Depot





# THI&E: Greenfield Depot Map



# THI&E: Greenfield



**P0391\_BOX8\_GREENFIELD\_002**

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# THI&E: Knightstown Depot

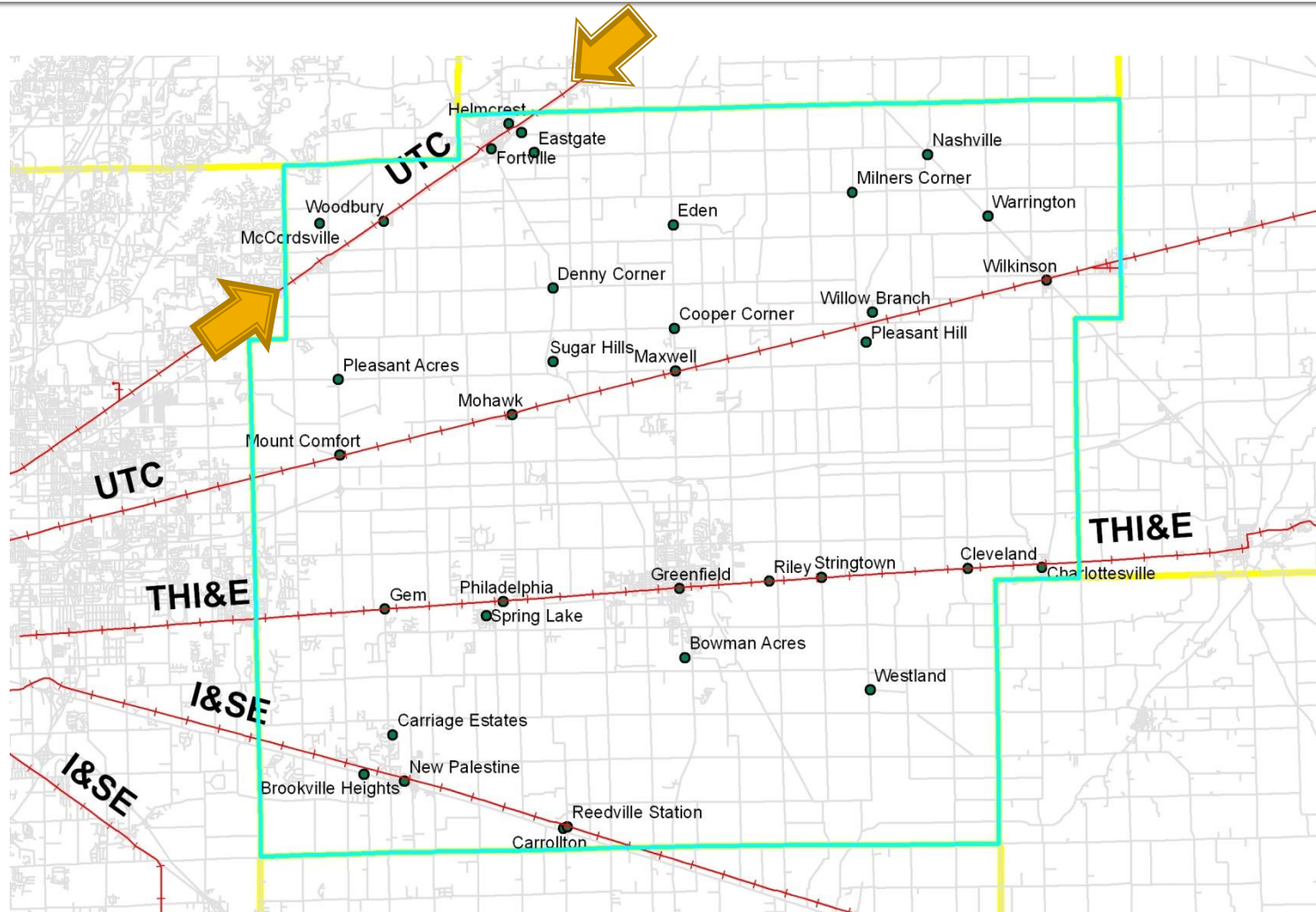


# THI&E: Knightstown





# Union Traction Company of Indiana

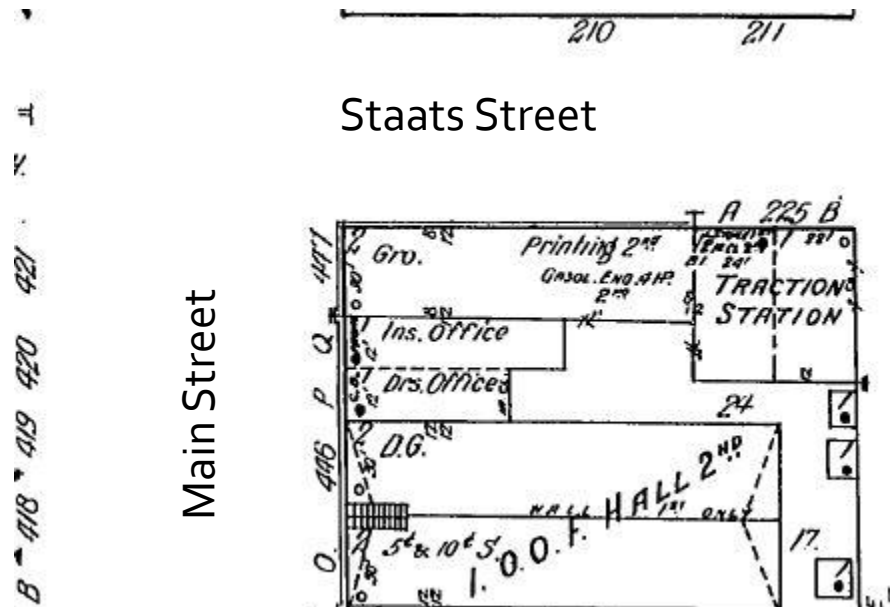




# Union Traction Company of Indiana

- Based in Anderson
- Earliest interurban and strongly financed
- Opened Anderson-Indianapolis line, January 4, 1901
  - Paralleled the Big Four railroad from Pendleton to Lawrence
- Sold at foreclosure sale to Indiana Railroad, July, 1930

# UTC: Fortville Depot Map 1914



# UTC: Fortville 1908



**P0391\_BOX2\_FORTVILLE**

# UTC: Fortville Depot Map 1928





# UTC: McCordsville Depot



# UTC: Sunnyside Sanatorium 1920



# UTC: Lawrence Depot



# Disaster at Alfont

- Alfont was/is just west of Ingalls at CR 750W
- February 2, 1924
- 21 people killed, 36 injured
  - Many burned in the post-accident fire
  - One of the worst interurban wrecks ever
- Head-on collision between two passenger trains caused by ignoring train orders and limited visibility
- One of the causes of the UTC bankruptcy



# Disaster at Alfont

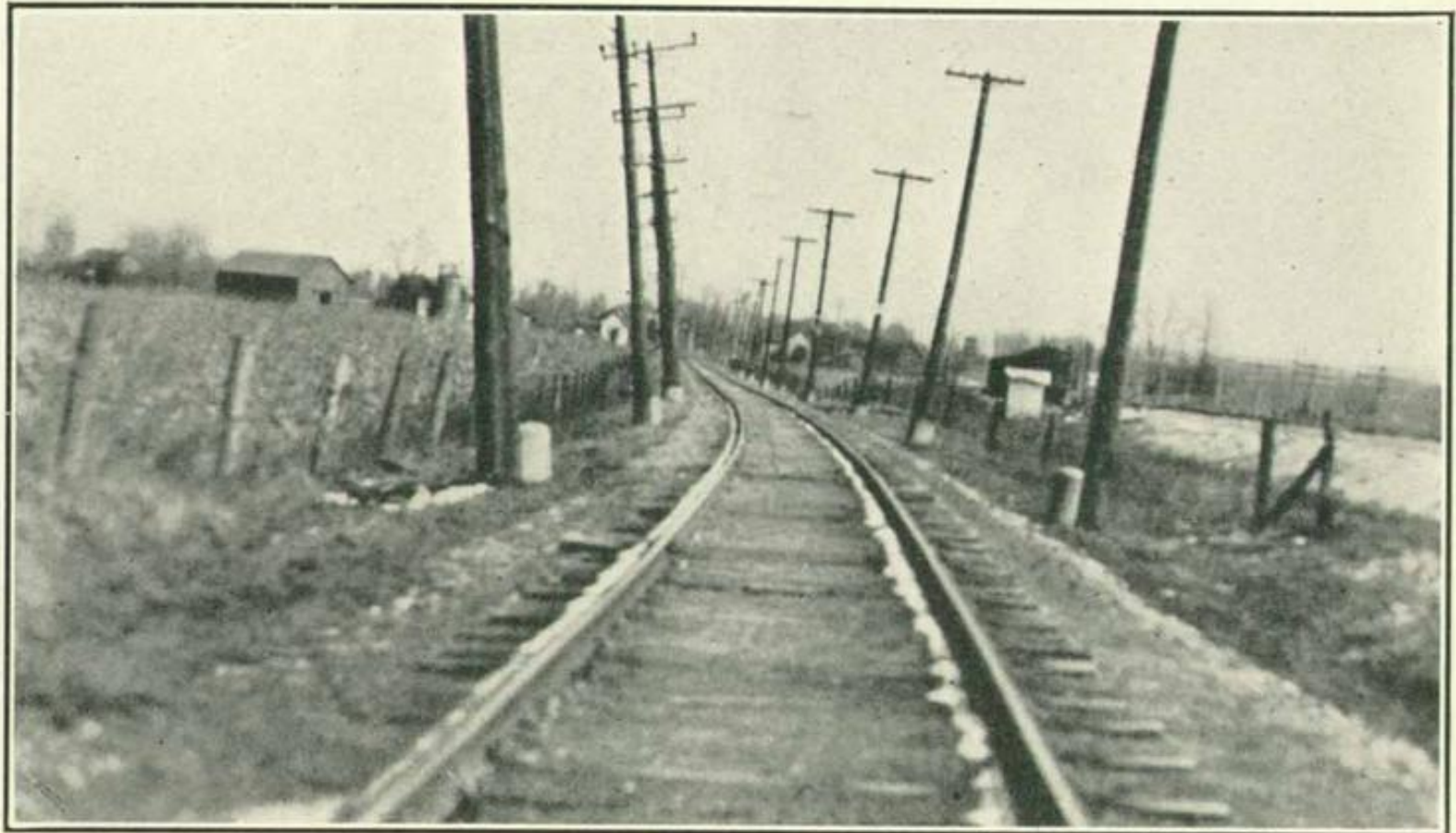


FIG. No. 1.—View of point of accident from first curve west thereof.

# Disaster at Alfont

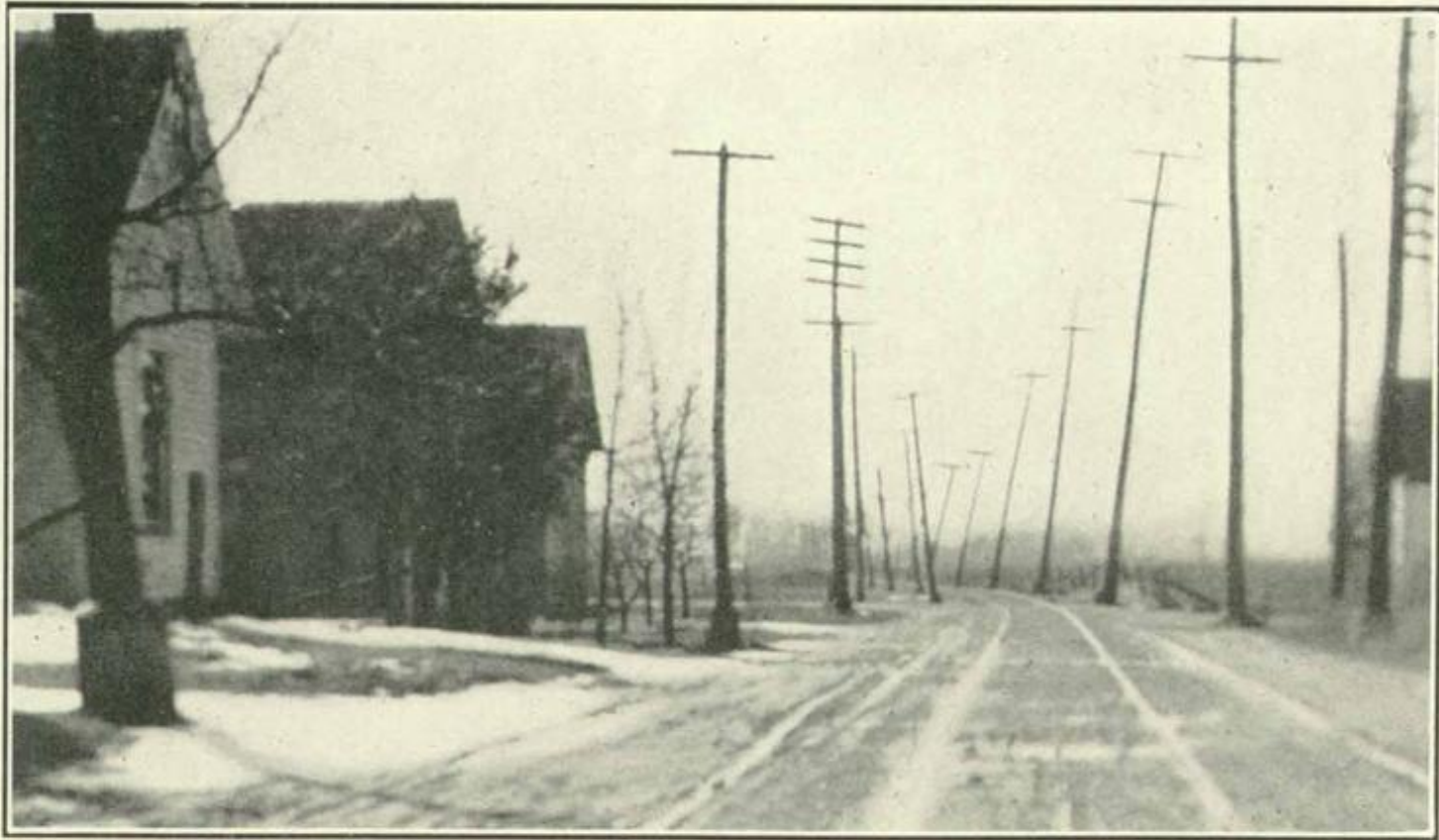


FIG. No. 2.—Approaching from east; point of accident just beyond curve; there is a one-car train a short distance beyond point of accident, obscured by pole line.

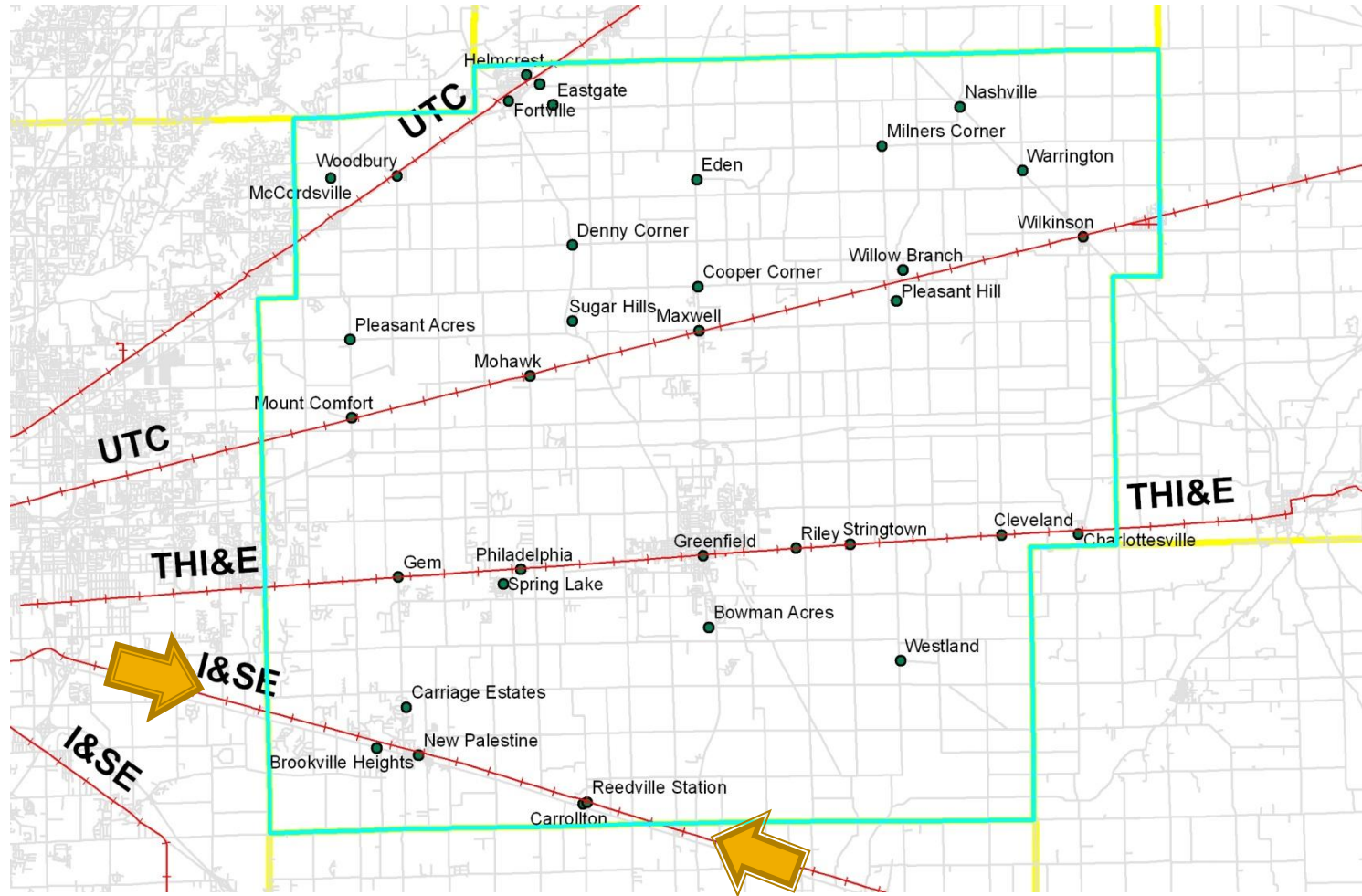
# Disaster at Alfont



FIG. No. 3.—Remains of two cars after removal to sidetrack.



# Indianapolis and Cincinnati





# Indianapolis and Cincinnati

- Opened Indianapolis-Rushville line, February 20, 1905
  - Rushville-Connersville, October 1906
- Experimented with AC power
- Half of double route to Cincinnati that was never finished
  - Other half went to Greensburg via Shelbyville
- Sold at receivership sale to Indianapolis and Southeastern Railroad, April 1928
- I&SE abandoned all service, June 20, 1932

# I&C: New Palestine Depot

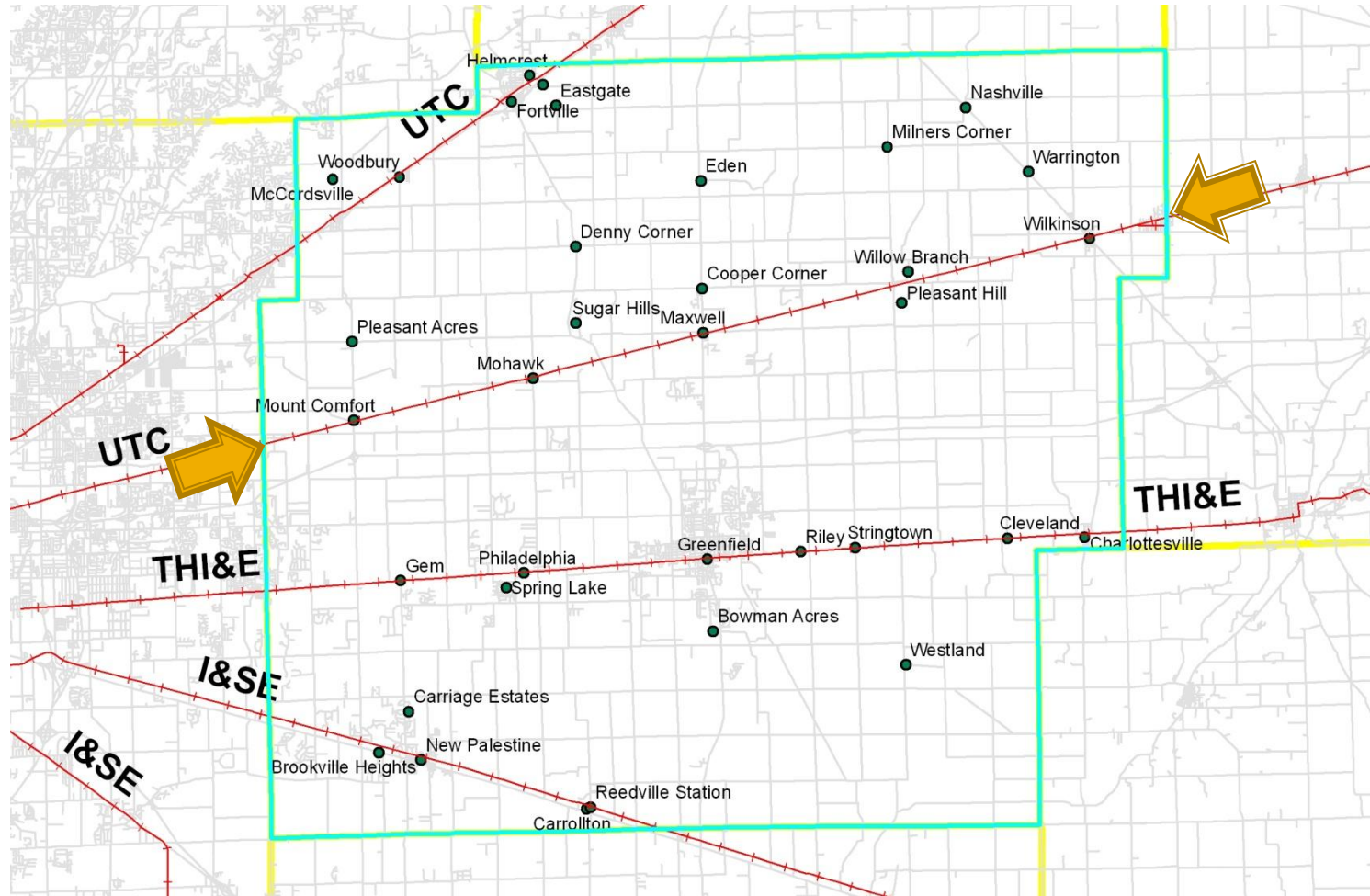


# I&C: Rushville Depot





# Indianapolis, New Castle & Toledo



# Indianapolis, New Castle & Toledo

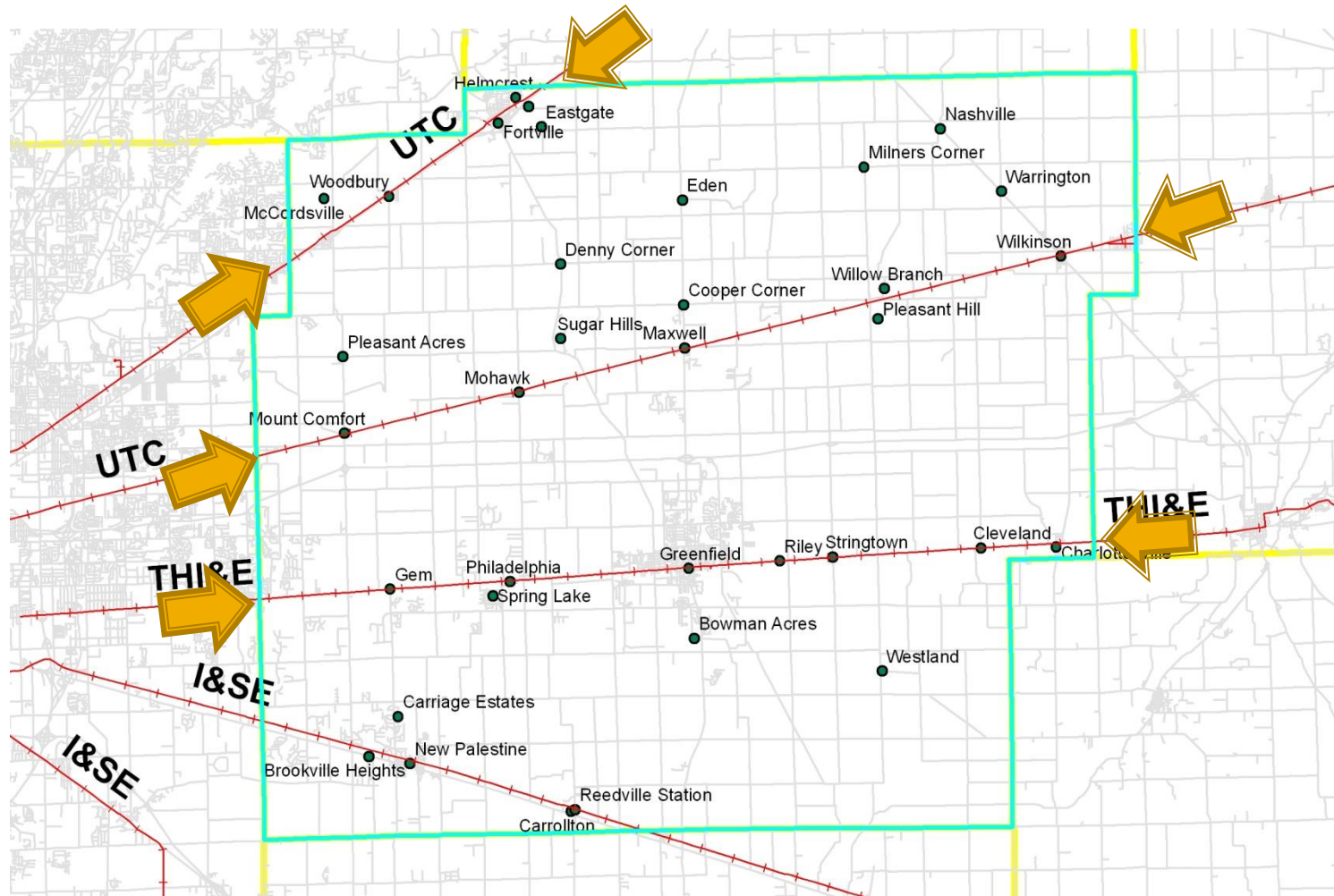
- Chartered November 1904
  - More substantial engineering (grades/bridges)
  - Funding was harder to obtain
- Opened New Castle-Shirley line, January 20, 1910
- Opened Shirley-Indianapolis line, June 29, 1910
- One of the later interurbans built in Indiana
- Sold at foreclosure sale to Indianapolis, New Castle & Eastern, June 1, 1912
- INC&E leased to Union Traction, October 1912



# INC&T: Shirley Depot



# Indiana Railroad



# Indiana Railroad

- Indiana Railroad was a company and a collaboration of the remaining downstate interurbans for their mutual benefit
  - Merged timetables
  - Operated as one company
  - Held by Midland United (a utility company)
- IRR was based on the Union Traction Company, bought in 1930, and the TH&E, in 1931.

# Indiana Railroad

- The Greenfield line was acquired June 29, 1931, and abandoned January 5, 1932
  - Competition with cars and buses on adjacent US 40 to Indianapolis, both for passengers and physical space
  - IRR buses were offered to connect with remaining interurban rail lines at Maxwell and Pendleton
  - Indianapolis-Richmond interurban trains were then routed via New Castle and Dunreith

# Indiana Railroad

- The UTC lines (including the INC&T) were acquired in 1930
  - INC&T line through Maxwell and Shirley was used as the Indianapolis-Richmond-Dayton routing after the Greenfield abandonment
    - Abandoned May 9, 1937
  - UTC main line through Fortville and McCordsville was part of the next to last major interurban route in downstate Indiana
    - Abandoned January 18, 1941



# IRR: Power Substation near Fortville



# What Remains Today

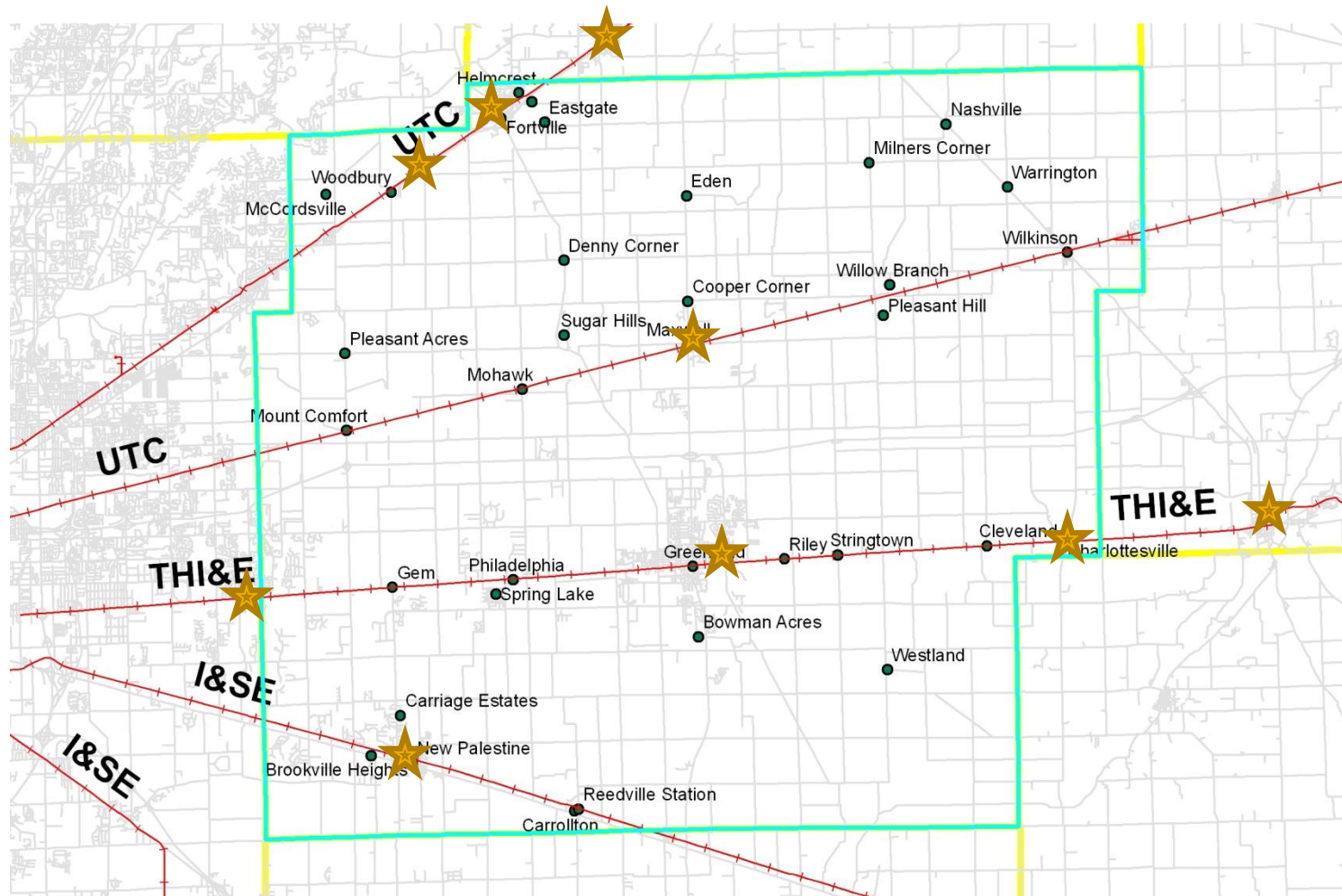
- Rights-of-way
  - Noticeable grades, cuts, fills
  - Tracks under the street pavement
- Power lines
  - High voltage power lines follow the routes of the I&C and INC&T interurbans
  - Power lines also follow the I&GRT route along the edge of US 40
- Buildings
  - Depots
  - Car barn/shops
- Bridges, bridge piers and abutments, culverts
- Preserved cars

# Remains: Power lines





# Interurban Buildings Remaining in Hancock County

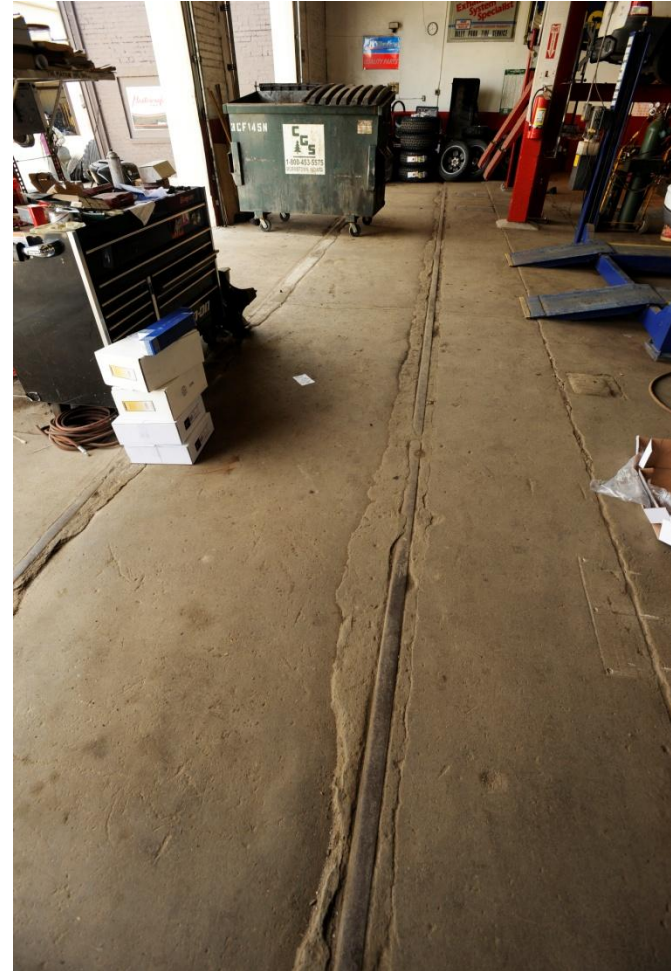


# Remains: New Palestine Depot





# Remains: Greenfield Car barn/Shops



# Remains: Greenfield Depot 1984 *(now gone)*



# Remains: Greenfield Tracks 2002





# Remains: Charlottesville Depot 1984



*Ronald Stuckey Collection*



# Remains: Cumberland Depot



# Remains: Maxwell Depot & Substation





# Remains: Fortville Substation



# Remains: Fortville Substation

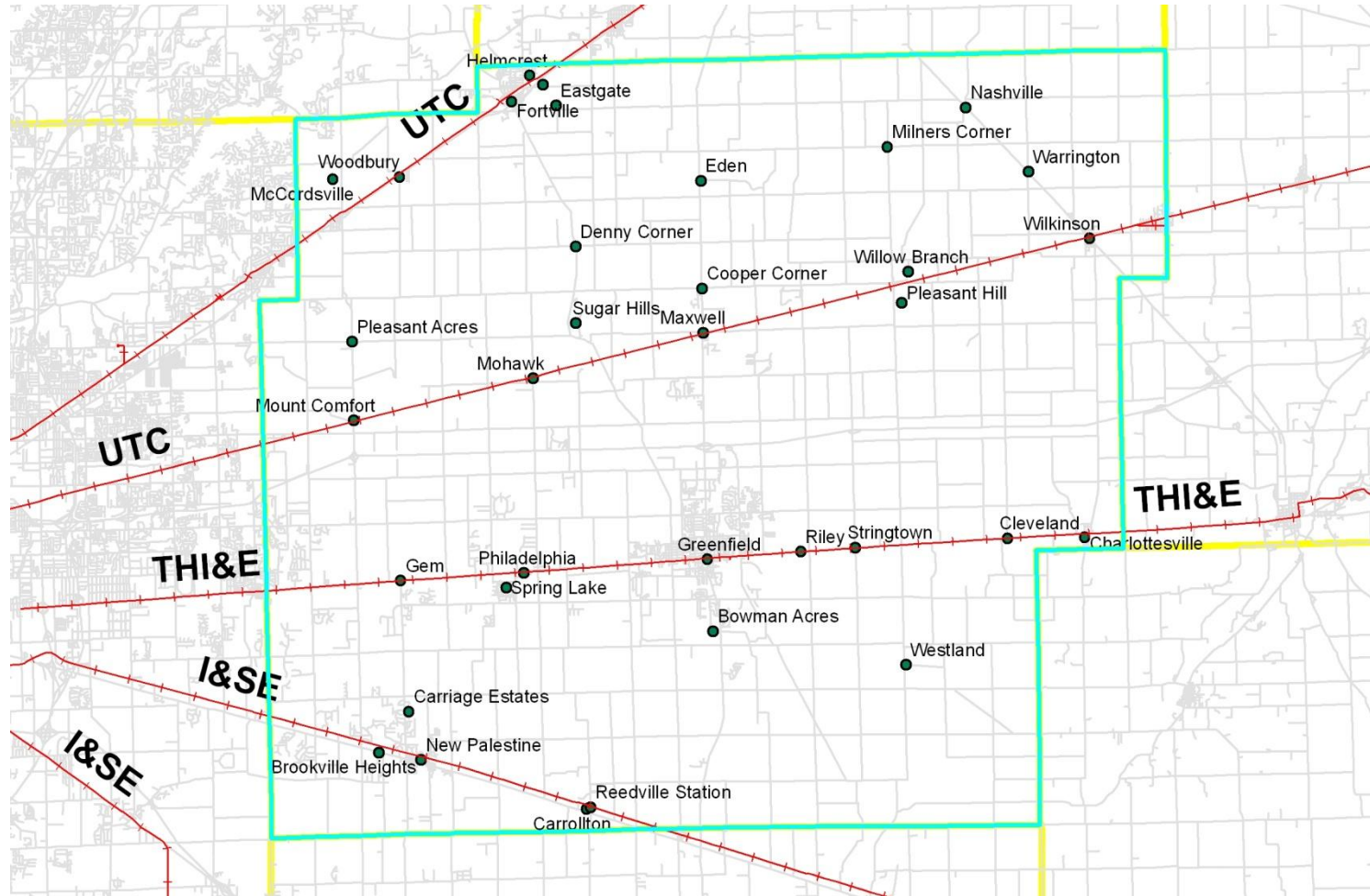




# Remains: Knightstown Depot



# Interurban Bridges Remaining in Hancock County





# Remains: Culvert





# Remains: Bridge near 400E





# Remains: Ingalls Memorial



# Remains: Preserved Cars





# Remains: Preserved Cars



# Remains...





# Questions? Comments?

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# Credits

- Photos
  - Greenfield Historic Landmarks
  - Hancock Co Historical Society
  - Indiana Historical Society, Bass photo collection
  - Sanborn Map Company
  - Ronald Stuckey
  - Jan Giradot
  - Gene Ingram
  - Tom Strickland
  - Tom Williams
  - Others I know I've forgotten

# Credits

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- Books

- Electric Railroads of Indiana, Jerry Marlette
- Indiana Railroad: The magic interurban, George Bradley

# Upcoming GHL Events

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- Walking tour of downtown Greenfield  
May 21, 10:30 a.m.



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