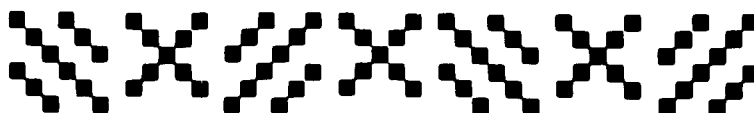


## Solsberry, Indiana, and the Coming of the Railroad

*Joseph C. Meredith\**



"The railroad was just . . . everything!"

Thus Bernard Glover summarizes his boyhood in Solsberry, Indiana, three quarters of a century ago when the railroad first came to that isolated community in the hills southwest of Indianapolis.<sup>1</sup> Those were heady times, particularly for him since his own father was a foreman on the project, and young Bernard managed to be in the middle of everything that went on.

The great days of railroading were almost over when in August of 1899 a group of Indianapolis businessmen organized the Indianapolis Southern Railway for the purpose of building a line from the Indiana capital, through Bloomington, to Switz City.<sup>2</sup> There it would link up with the Indiana and Illinois Southern and in turn with the mighty Illinois Central at Effingham, Illinois.<sup>3</sup> A direct line between Indianapolis and the

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Glover interview, July 21, 1981, in Joseph C. Meredith, *Solsberry, Indiana, and the Coming of the Railroad: An Oral History Project* (Park Forest South, Ill., 1982), 39. Interviews hereafter cited can be found in this source and are indicated merely by name of interviewee and page numbers.

<sup>2</sup> The organizers included W.E. Stevenson, David M. Parry, Eli Marvin, and Cortland Van Camp, and the project clearly enjoyed the blessing and financial support of the Illinois Central Railroad (ICRR). Robert W. O'Brien, director of corporate relations, ICRR, to author, April 2, 1982. Lot number I 7.3, Illinois Central Archives—as described by Carolyn C. Mohr, *Guide to the Illinois Central Archives in the Newberry Library* (Chicago, 1951), 117—includes articles of incorporation dated August 10, 1899; minutes of the board of directors from August 23, 1899, to March 16, 1905; and ordinances of Bloomfield, Indiana, granting franchises, September 15, 1902, and December 13, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> The line between Switz City and the Wabash River had been completed in 1880 by the Bloomfield Railroad Company (consolidated with the Bedford, Springfield, Owensburg & Bloomfield Railroad in 1875). The line from the Wabash to Effingham was built by the Cincinnati, Effingham & Quincy Construction Company in 1878. Both segments were consolidated as the Indiana

rich coal beds of western Greene County had long been needed but had somehow never materialized. Short lines were risky ventures at best, and the difficult terrain would make this one particularly costly. Such considerations, however, were not a concern of the local inhabitants around Solsberry. What mattered to them was the immediate effect of the railroad on their daily lives.

To understand the importance of the Indianapolis Southern to the Solsberry community one needs to know something about the origin of the town, how it prospered for a while, and how its isolation brought it into steep decline by the turn of the century.<sup>4</sup> The earliest settlers in the area came from Kentucky and North Carolina in the 1830s and 1840s; they apparently found the hills, ridges, and ravines more familiar and more to their liking than the flat lands beyond, in the western part of what was later carved out as Greene County.<sup>5</sup> Indeed it must have been beautiful, with giant trees, convenient Indian trails, and an abundant supply of game, but ironically the land that had served the Indians so well as a forest home proved sadly infertile. The corn and tobacco planted by the settlers quickly exhausted the soil of the clearings.<sup>6</sup> Some families moved on,

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and Illinois Southern on May 11, 1886. In 1899, the year in which the Indianapolis Southern was organized, the Indiana and Illinois Southern became the St. Louis, Indianapolis & Eastern Railroad. See Lloyd H. Steen, "Rail Transportation in Southern Indiana" (M.A. thesis, Department of Geography, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1950), 61; see also Mohr, *Guide to the Illinois Central Archives*, 95, 116, 117, 127. Later the St. Louis, Indianapolis & Eastern Railroad became known simply as the Effingham District of the Illinois Central Railroad. O'Brien to author, April 2, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> In a series of oral interviews conducted in 1981 the author attempted to assess the impact of the railroad on Solsberry. As a neighbor of but ten years' standing, he had reason to expect a degree of reticence on the part of the local residents. His first interviews, however, were with Wayne Sherrow and Avis Sherrow, who proved to be gatekeepers for their neighbors. The Sherrows provided names, reassured their friends that the interviewer could be trusted, and even helped arrange interviews that otherwise might have been declined. Principal among those interviewed were the Sherrows, July 22, 1981; Olive Raper, eighty-six, whose grandfather and great-grandfather had fought in the Civil War, August 1, 1981; Wallace Sullivan, seventy-six, who as a youth had worked on the railroad, August 7, 1981; and Bernard Glover, eighty-two, whose mass of clippings, photographs, and documents confirmed much of what was learned from the others, July 21, 1981. Transcripts of these interviews, which provide the basis for this article, are in Meredith, *Solsberry, Indiana*, 75-100, 11-28, 58-74, 29-57.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Baker, "Greene County Sixty-nine Years Ago," *Biographical Memoirs of Greene County, Indiana, with Reminiscences of Pioneer Days* (3 vols., Indianapolis, 1908), I, 40-53.

<sup>6</sup> W.E. Tharp and Charles J. Mann, "Soil Survey of Greene County, Indiana," in Edward Barrett, state geologist, ed., *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Department of Geology and Natural Resources of Indiana for the Calendar Year 1911* (Indianapolis, 1912), 430-32; see also Raymond A. Baumler, "Greene

others came in from the East, and gradually there evolved a society that preferred even a hard life in these hills to any other and chose to remain.

Solomon Wilkerson came from North Carolina in 1835, prospered moderately in the next few years, and in 1856 laid out a village site on a ridge overlooking long green meadows on either side, naming it "Sols-berry" after himself and after the juicy wild blackberries growing everywhere.<sup>7</sup> There was a Main Street, a Washington Street, and originally sixty lots, later increased to seventy-eight but never more.<sup>8</sup>

When the Civil War came in 1861, Indiana's commitment to the Union cause was strongly supported throughout the region, even though a few families were known to be "copperheads" and were suspected of aiding occasional raiders from the South. "We had plenty of them," Olive Raper says grimly. She tells how her great-uncle's wife was forced to watch in helpless silence while a party of "rebs" rode off with the horses, leaving their own "poor wore-out things."<sup>9</sup> In nearby Newark a soldier home on furlough killed a man in the street when the fellow shouted for Jeff Davis.<sup>10</sup> It was a deadly time, not soon forgotten.

Solsberry has always been an unincorporated place. Population figures are therefore lacking, but probably no more than a hundred people ever lived in the town at the same time.<sup>11</sup> Even so, it served as a trading center for the entire township of Beech Creek, which in 1870 numbered 2,059 inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> By then there were four grocery stores, a flour mill and feed store, two millinery shops, a saddlery, a blacksmith shop, a nursery, a carding and spinning establishment, a cabinet shop, a photographer's studio, a boarding house, two doctors, a grammar school, and a high school.<sup>13</sup> Beginning in 1874 there was also a

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County, Indiana: An Area of Declining Population" (M.A. thesis, Department of Geology, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1952), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Goodspeed Bros. & Co., pubs., *History of Greene and Sullivan Counties, State of Indiana, from the Earliest Times to the Present; together with Interesting Biographical Sketches, Reminiscences, Notes, etc.* (Chicago, 1884), 264-68.

<sup>8</sup> Avis Sherrow, "History of the Little Town of Solsberry and the First Church," mimeograph copy (Solsberry, n.d.), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Raper interview, 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> Goodspeed, *History of Greene and Sullivan Counties*, 270.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 268, 270.

<sup>12</sup> U.S., Ninth Census, Population Schedules for Greene County, Indiana, 1870, National Archives Microfilm Publications No. 593, Roll 318.

<sup>13</sup> The list of businesses and schools can be found in "Beech Creek Township Business Directory," in George H. Adams & Co., comps., *New Topographical Atlas and Gazetteer of Indiana . . .* (New York, 1871), n.p., supplemented by Avis Sherrow interview, 92, 94, 97, and by Wayne Sherrow interview, 78-79, 84-85.

normal school operated by "Professor" R. A. Ogg for the instruction of fledgling teachers.<sup>14</sup>

By all standards of the day the community flourished. Before long, however, a general population decline set in, and by 1900 the township had lost 27 percent of its inhabitants.<sup>15</sup> What with long hauls over bad roads only meager quantities of livestock, sawlogs, wagon-wheel spokes, barrel staves, and hoop poles made their way to market.<sup>16</sup> Solsberry simply could not compete with centers having ready access to rails or waterways. Many a lad took off for the coal fields and rich bottomlands in the western part of the county or continued farther afield to St. Louis, Chicago, and points west.<sup>17</sup> In the words of Bernard Glover, "Solsberry was in dire straits."<sup>18</sup>

Soon after the establishment of the Indiana and Illinois Southern in 1886, the Illinois Central, which controlled it, proceeded to upgrade the entire line from Switz City from narrow to standard gauge and to bridge the Wabash.<sup>19</sup> In the years that followed there was much talk of an extension to Indianapolis through the hill country of eastern Greene County, and people around Solsberry speculated that such a development would really "tear things up"; that is, it would work many changes.<sup>20</sup> At least it could not make things any worse. Work designed to exploit some deposits of coal and high grade iron ore around Cincinnati, Indiana, actually began along a line running somewhat south of present State Highway 45; but the

<sup>14</sup> Indiana University alumni records list a Robert Alexander Ogg as receiving a B.S. degree in 1872 and an M.A. in 1892. His death date is given as May 12, 1936. Indiana University alumni records, Office of Alumni Relations, Indiana University, Bloomington. Ogg's school is described in "Echoes of Solsberry Hills," Bloomfield *Evening World*, July 30, 1936.

<sup>15</sup> The population of Beech Creek Township was listed as 1,506 in 1900. U.S., *Thirteenth Census, 1910: Abstract of the Census, with Supplement for Indiana* (Washington, 1913), 578.

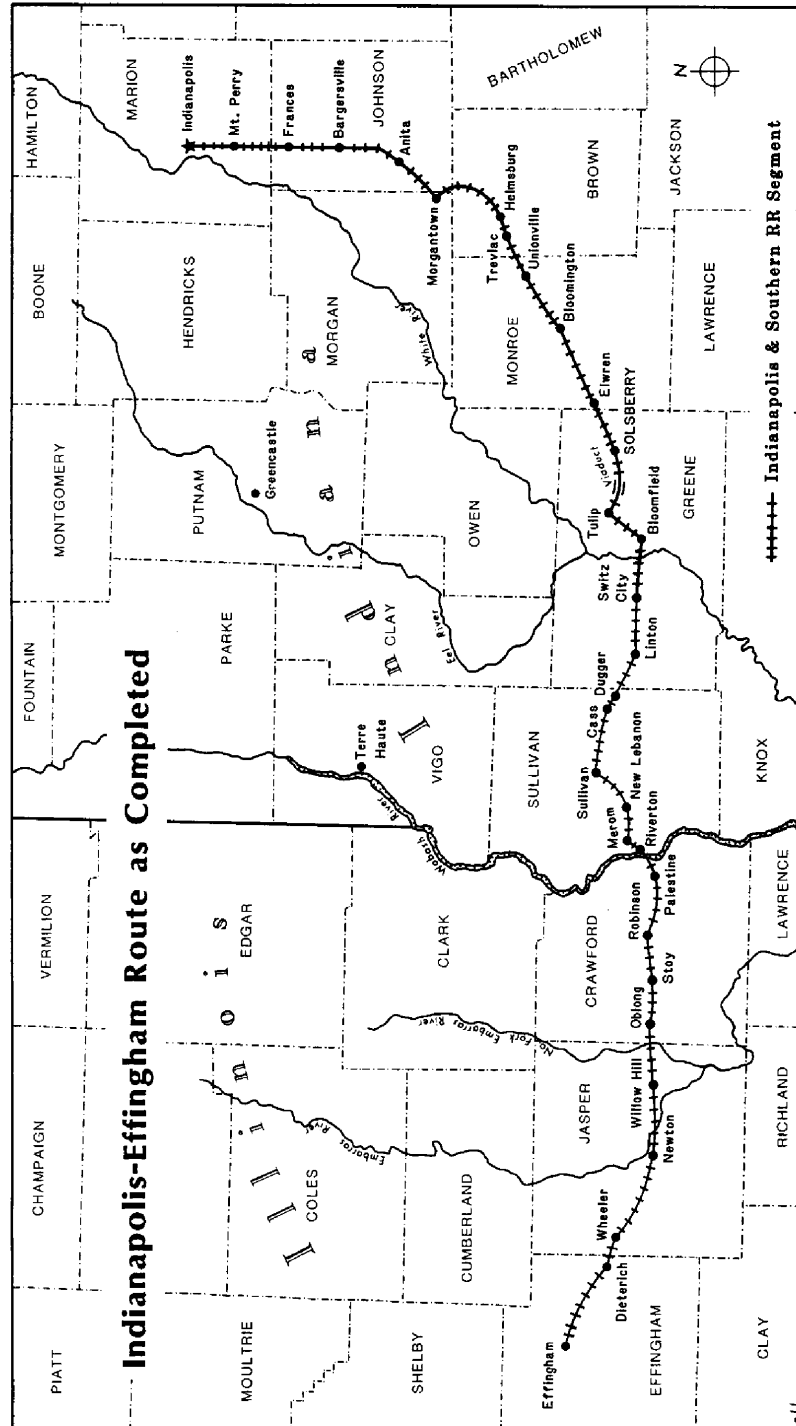
<sup>16</sup> Hoop-poles were lengths of hickory for splitting into thin strips used to bind barrels together. A 1906 citation in Mitford J. Mathews, ed., *Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles* (2 vols., Chicago, 1951), I, 830, indicates that Indiana at one time bore the nickname of "the hoop-pole state."

<sup>17</sup> Baumler, "Greene County, Indiana," *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> Glover interview, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Elmer G. Sulzer, *Ghost Railroads of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1970), chapter 8, gives an idea of the welter of small lines in the area. The Illinois Central's basic strategy for Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky was foreshadowed by its president, William F. Ackerman, in a paper read before the Chicago Historical Society on February 20, 1883. See William K. Ackerman, *Early Illinois Railroads* (Fergus Historical Series, no. 23; Chicago, 1884). See also Carlton J. Corliss, "Battle of the Titans," in *Main Line of Mid-America: The Story of the Illinois Central* (New York, 1950) 332-33; and John F. Stover, *History of the Illinois Central Railroad* (New York, 1975), 265.

<sup>20</sup> Raper interview, 12.



Map prepared by Cathryn L. Lombardi, based in part on material  
submitted by T. Owen Shreve.

project languished, leaving only a few embankments and an unfinished tunnel as mementos of the attempt.<sup>21</sup>

Finally the Indianapolis and Southern came forward with a new survey, promoted as "the high and dry route" because it favored a chain of ridges between Bloomington and Bloomfield rather than the winding creek beds below.<sup>22</sup> The route would go through Solsberry and involved one major problem—the crossing of a spacious valley three miles west of town at the confluence of Richland and Beech creeks. At this point trains would have to "take to the air" for almost a half-mile of track, a record span for an American railroad and surpassed only by the Gerabit viaduct in France.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the construction workers were imported: one gang from the South, all Negroes, and another from Italy. The blacks were assigned to the stretch beyond the west end of the viaduct, the Italians to the portion coming out of Bloomington, through Solsberry, to the east end. It was a convenient separation, and altogether necessary in view of the animosity which immediately erupted between the two groups.<sup>24</sup>

The Italians arrived in the charge of an interpreter called Tony James who had accompanied them all the way from their homeland.<sup>25</sup> They quickly set to work with pick, shovel, and dynamite, wielding all three with great abandon.<sup>26</sup> For lack of other entertainment they spent their evenings gambling, fighting, and drinking quantities of wine concocted at the campsites. No one can say how many were killed one way or another, but the local inhabitants still speak darkly of the roadbed's having been built on the bones of Italians.

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<sup>21</sup> Sullivan interview, 67-68. Sullivan's comments were generally confirmed by Charles W. Shannon, "Iron Ores of Greene County," in *Biographical Memoirs of Greene County*, 280-94. Shannon mentions a deposit of large blocks of siliceous ore and some outcropping ledges, estimated at 500,000 tons, just a mile south of Solsberry. He states, however, that this ore "has been greatly over-estimated . . . it is doubtful if this line of deposit will prove to be of any practical value." Shannon, "Iron Ores of Greene County," 294.

<sup>22</sup> According to Maxine Ramsey, "Echoes," *Bloomfield News*, August 30, 1978, the survey was filed in the office of the clerk of the circuit court, Bloomfield, Greene County, Indiana. Completion was scheduled for 1906.

<sup>23</sup> The Solsberry viaduct is described in Faye L. Flynn, "High, Wide, and Handsome (and Almost Forgotten)," *Indianapolis Star*, June 10, 1973; Lou Maravilla, "Solsberry's Viaduct Said 'Unique,'" *Bloomington Courier Tribune*, November 8, 1968; and unsigned articles in *Indianapolis News*, December 5, 1979, and *Bloomington Herald Times*, November 11, 1979.

<sup>24</sup> Raper interview, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Tony James's original name was not ascertained. Olive Raper believes he was Rumanian rather than Italian. Raper interview, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Olive Raper demonstrated to the author how one poor fellow shook the flesh from his hands after a dynamite accident at Head's Cut.

The community viewed these exotic visitors with detachment, amused by their strange ways but otherwise unconcerned. As the deadline for completion neared, gangs on both sides of the trestle worked around the clock, Sundays included. When asked if this aroused any disapproval among the good churchgoers of the township, one Solsberry resident replied: "No . . . I don't think there was ever a word said. They didn't complain about that, because it wasn't our people."<sup>27</sup> Local residents were equally tolerant of the drinking. For that matter, homemade whiskey ("darned good booze") had always been a dietary staple around Solsberry.<sup>28</sup> Once back in 1854 the Reverend George Richey had preached a series of fiery temperance sermons, and it is said that the locals got rid of him by the simple device of burning down his church, which they later rebuilt after he left town.<sup>29</sup>

In due course, through narrow cuts and over steep-sided fills, the rails came to the valley that was to be crossed by the viaduct. From old photographs it appears that the steel web was assembled from above, piece by piece, by a rail crane advancing over each section as it was completed.<sup>30</sup> Never before had there been such a grand spectacle around Solsberry. People came from miles away, by wagon and surrey, on horseback, and on foot, to see the giant structure take shape. Many came from log-hewn farmsteads deep in the forest, over roads little better than the Indian trails they traced. Whole families would bring Sunday dinner and spend the day gossiping, visiting the concession stands in the meadow below, watching the workmen, fascinated by the din and danger.<sup>31</sup> Rumor tells of many accidents, but only one fatality was actually reported.<sup>32</sup> Even that incident was converted (through the light-hearted disrespect for fact that still characterizes Solsberry humor) into the story of a man wearing gum boots who fell and kept bouncing until he had to be shot to keep him from starving to death.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Raper interview, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Wayne Sherrow interview, 24.

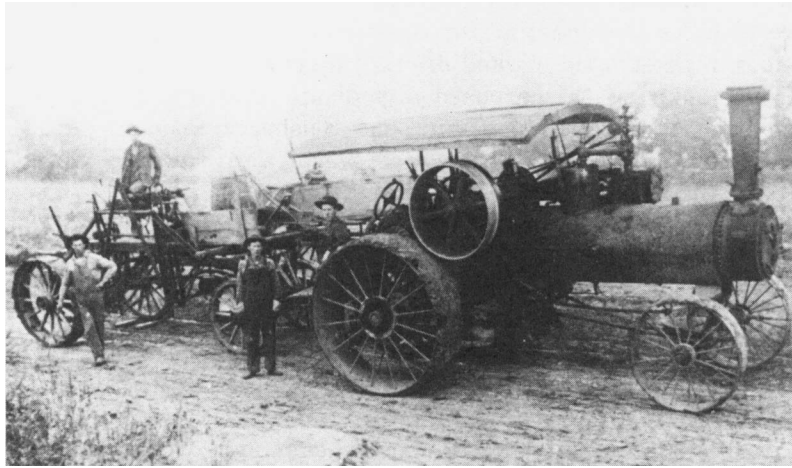
<sup>29</sup> Glover interview, 52; Mrs. Mathew Corwin, "Good to be Home," undated article (c. 1913) in possession of Avis Sherrow.

<sup>30</sup> Component girders for the towers and spans were fabricated by the American Bridge Company and erected by Strobel Steel Construction Company on concrete foundations provided by the Collier Bridge Company at a total cost of \$242,601 for 2,215 feet. O'Brien to author, April 2, 1982. Ramsey provides a colorful account of the building phase in "Echoes," *Bloomfield Evening World*, August 30, 1978.

<sup>31</sup> Raper interview, 16-17.

<sup>32</sup> Stan Sutton, "The Unknown Wonder of Greene County," *Bloomington Courier Tribune*, October 14, 1973.

<sup>33</sup> Maravilla, "Solsberry's Viaduct Said 'Unique.'"



STEAM ENGINE USED IN CONSTRUCTION, c. 1906

Courtesy Bernard Glover.

Somehow the viadict was completed by the time the last sections of track were laid. On December 14, 1906, the *Bloomfield News* exulted that "Bloomfield is at last 'on the map' of a big railroad system, and the people will rejoice to know that Supt. L.W. Baldwin has announced the opening of the new road for next Monday."<sup>34</sup> There would be two passenger trains daily each way, as well as a local freight that would also carry passengers each day except Sunday.

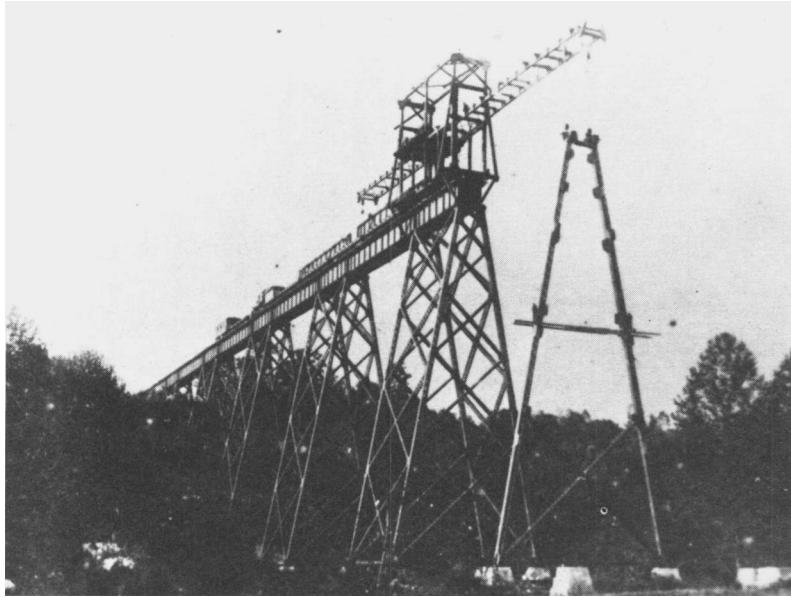
Solsberry had its own celebration, of course. A fine depot, flanked by a siding with cattle pens and a logyard, now dominated the town. The entire populace came to greet the first train, filled with dignitaries. School was let out, and small boys drunk with excitement held their ears to the rails to detect the approaching vibrations and were the first to swarm over the locomotive and cars on arrival. The dignitaries are long gone, but in the memories of a few of those children now grown old the event still lives on. For most of them the ensuing trips to Bloomfield or to Bloomington and Indianapolis beyond were their first views of the outside world.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "The man in overall charge of construction was Archibald Stuart Baldwin (usually referred to in railroad files as A.S. Baldwin), who was IC's engineer of construction from May 1903 to March 1905, when he was named chief engineer." O'Brien to author, April 2, 1982.

<sup>35</sup> Glover interview, 30-31.





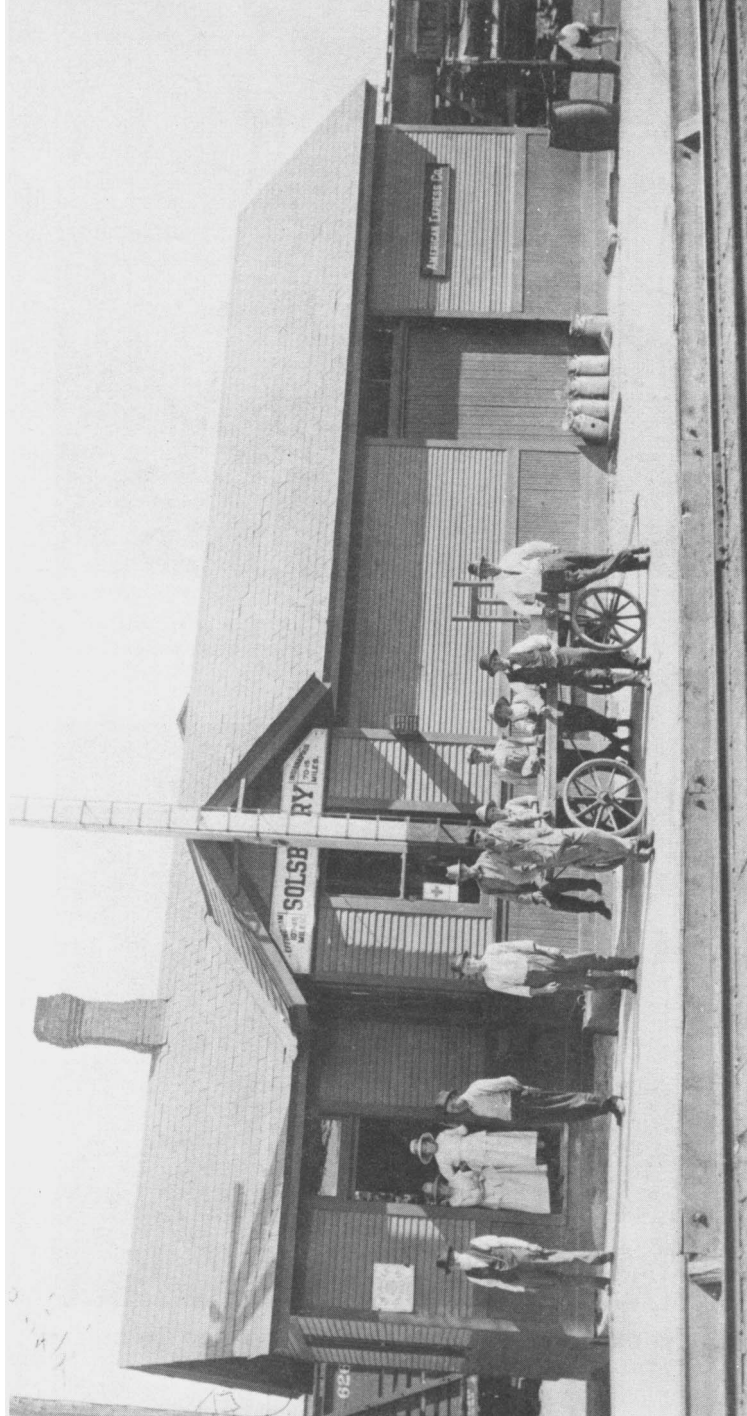
**BUILDING THE VIADUCT, 1906**

*Courtesy Wallace Sullivan.*



**RECENT PHOTOGRAPH OF VIADUCT LOOKING TOWARD TULIP  
FROM SOLSBERRY**

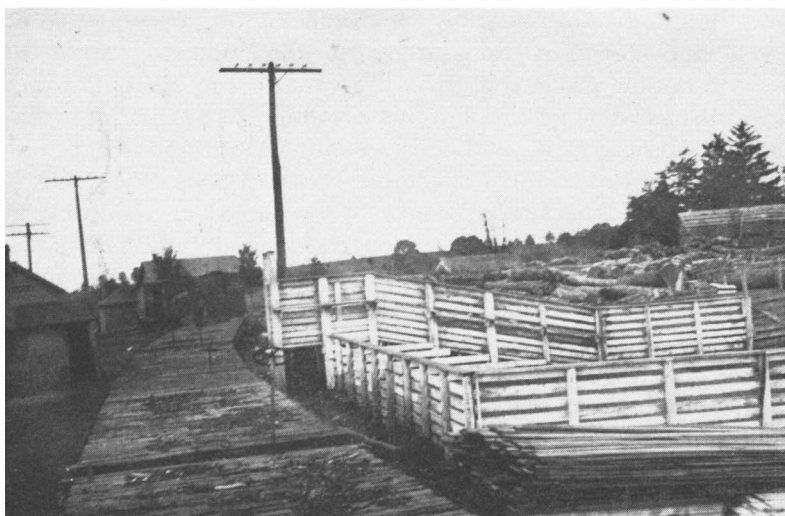
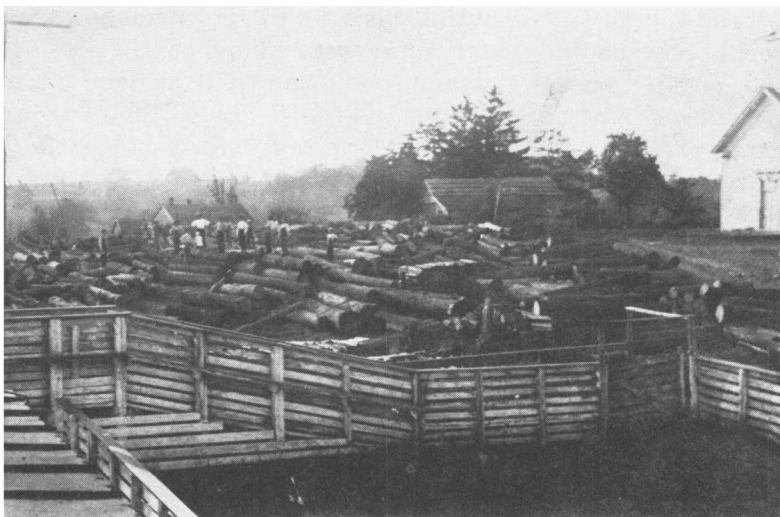
*Courtesy Bloomfield Evening World.*



### DEPOT AT SOLSBERRY, 1918

LEFT TO RIGHT: "DADDY" RUTH, RUBY BULLOCK, RUTH BULLOCK, CAL McDONALD, FRANK FODDRILL, BILL COOK, CHARLEY RAY, TROY SPARKS, FRANK CORWIN, MERLE HOSTETTLER, ROY MASON (ICRR AGENT, IN BOW TIE), HOWARD BRIDGES, DWIGHT YOHO (BOY, FAR RIGHT)

Courtesy Avis Sherrow.



LOG YARD AND STOCK CHUTE AT SOLSBERRY STATION

Courtesy Avis Sherrow.

The Italian laborers were shipped off to parts unknown, all except Tony the interpreter, who remained and bought a plot of land, married a local girl, and spent the rest of his long life in Solsberry. Maintenance crews were still needed, however, so there was plenty of employment for strong fellows like Wallace Sullivan, who likes to tell how they would raise long sections of track, restore the roadbed, insert new ties, and spike all in place "whangedy-whang" between trains.<sup>36</sup> The railroad also employed stationmasters, telegraph operators, agents, and full-time flagmen at the main crossings all up and down the line.

Almost overnight Solsberry became a railroad town, a shipping point for produce and livestock and for the great saw-logs from trees that would otherwise have aged, died, fallen, and rotted in the forest as in eons past. Showers Brothers furniture factory in Bloomington took much of this beautiful clear hardwood—oak, walnut, hickory, maple, elm, and tulip tree—and in summertime and fall loaded wagons drawn by "the prettiest horses you ever saw" converged on the town, usually helped up that last hill by a "snap team" of two or four additional horses.<sup>37</sup> During good weather the quantity of logs brought in far surpassed the number which could be loaded onto flatcars by the "gin-pole" operator, and the excess piled up everywhere—even in the churchyard—for shipment during the winter. Second-grade logs usually went to the steam-powered sawmill operated by the Jenkins brothers, to be cut into mine timbers—props, caps, and narrow-gauge ties—and shipped in the opposite direction to the mines beyond Switz City.<sup>38</sup>

Fresh blackberries in season were picked and shipped by the hundreds of gallons to Bloomington and Indianapolis for immediate consumption or for cordials. Local game became a cash crop, and boys like young Bernard made a nice income by snaring rabbits and selling them for five cents apiece to Frank Yoho, proprietor of one of the local stores, who packed them in sacks and barrels and sent them off to a fertilizer plant in Indianapolis. Once in a while a boy would be lucky enough to bag a "starred" skunk, prized for its pelt, for which he would be paid twenty-five cents.<sup>39</sup>

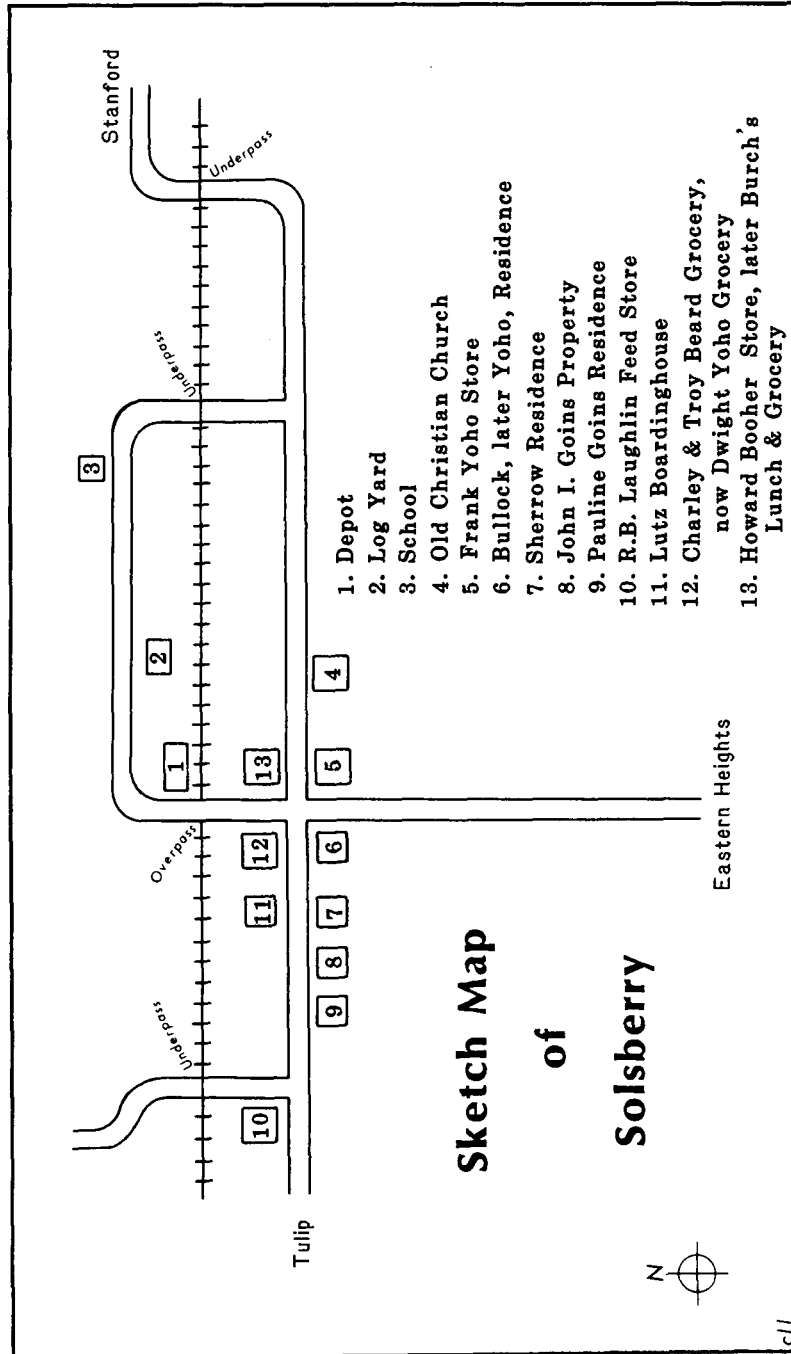
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<sup>36</sup> Sullivan interview, 61-62.

<sup>37</sup> Glover interview, 34; Wayne Sherrow interview, 77.

<sup>38</sup> Sullivan interview, 65. The Illinois Central preferred yellow pine ties from its own creosoting plant in the South. *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>39</sup> Glover interview, 42, 46; Wayne Sherrow interview, 80-81.



Map prepared by Cathryn L. Lombardi, based on information supplied by Avis Sherrow.

Before the rails came through, Yoho would bring the mail down from Freedom (the nearest station on the Indianapolis & Vincennes line), shouting his team all the way, waking the hills. When the rails made Solsberry a communication center for the entire area and Walter Alexander was appointed as the first postmaster, Yoho turned to other enterprises, such as buying and shipping produce, operating a "huckster wagon" delivery service out of his store, and organizing harvest crews and sending them off by camp car as far away as Illinois. He was a big man, by all accounts. He could carry a hundred-pound bag of feed under each arm and a man on his back at the same time, and he could sling a timber onto a load single-handed. When a man had drunk a little too much at Frank's store, he had better not argue when told to leave.<sup>40</sup>

Henry and Martha Lutz ran a popular boarding house, and Solsberry became a favorite way-station between Effingham and Indianapolis. Train crews could enjoy a hot meal at the boarding house or—if a relief crew were on hand—a congenial night's rest. The railroaders made pets of the children, taught them how to hop a train properly, and even slowed the Indianapolis-bound coal trains to a crawl so that the youngsters could climb up and throw off chunks all the way through town. "I used to have to cut up tree-tops to keep our stove going," says Bernard Glover, "but after the train came through I never chopped wood again. The whole town burned coal!"<sup>41</sup>

None of this was allowed to interfere with schooling, which even the pioneers supported so vigorously that hardly a child had to walk more than a mile or two to reach a local one-room schoolhouse, presided over by some poor soul in exchange for board and a pittance. Olive Raper taught in several such, including the one at Solsberry, but the most famous teacher at that place was a man named Charley Barnes, who was brought in for the express purpose of subduing Carl "Bonehead" Burch, the biggest, meanest kid in the school. "He whipped him, but it took a long time. He had to get him down on the floor first, but he whipped him, and Carl never caused any more trouble."<sup>42</sup> Before long, parents began sending their children, after grade school, to the high school in Bloomfield. Train fare was only twenty-five cents each way, and usually a student could find a place to stay for helping with the chores. The high school in

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<sup>40</sup> Wayne Sherrow interview, 81.

<sup>41</sup> Glover interview, 57; Wayne Sherrow interview, 85-86.

<sup>42</sup> Glover interview, 54-55.



R. A. OGG'S NORMAL SCHOOL CLASS, c. 1890

Courtesy Bernard Glover.

Solsberry fell vacant. Likewise Professor Ogg was forced to close his normal school because students aspiring to higher education could easily reach the campus of Indiana University at Bloomington. The professor moved away.

These and other changes cultural, economic, and political tumbled in on Solsberry as if to make restitution for the long years of inactivity. The town basked in sudden ascendancy over neighboring communities bypassed by the rails, such as Hendricksville, Newark, McVill (pronounced "Mac-vill"), and Stanford, whose citizens had to make do with a whistle-stop called "Elwren" two miles north of their town.<sup>43</sup> More than anything else, the community's love affair with the railroad arose from the simple comparison between its earlier stagnant condition and the benefits of a brand-new export economy. To a youngster growing up, the newly thriving town was a paradise of excitement, and by young and old alike the railroad was deemed a benefactor, free of the charges of oppression and exploitation of which great railroads in the West stood accused. For one thing, before there was time to consolidate any kind of monopoly, other forces were stirring. Already roads were being improved, foreshadowing the age of motor transport. Even as the first trains began rolling, the first automobile clattered into town.

The arrival of the first car was not altogether a happy event. It seems that the Beard brothers, who moved over from moribund Newark to operate a restaurant and general store in Solsberry, decided to invest in one of the new contraptions, and everyone turned out to see it arrive. Those who came from a distance hitched their horses to a long iron rack outside the Beards' store while they waited and swapped stories. "We heard that car coming," says Bernard Glover. "Oh, you could hear it! It made a racket like nothing ever heard before. And here he come over the hill, and everybody just standing and waiting. We never any of us seen a car before. And it made this terrific noise and the horses broke and pulled that big hitching rack out of the ground. They ran and just piled up at the bottom of the hill, rigs and all. Killed two or three of them."<sup>44</sup> The episode soured the citizenry on automobiles (and on the Beards) for a while.

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<sup>43</sup> According to Ronald L. Baker and Marvin Carmony, *Indiana Place Names* (Bloomington, 1975), 48, Elwren was derived from four family names: Eller, Whaley, Baker, Breeden.

<sup>44</sup> Glover interview, 44.



Rail traffic continued to increase. The roadbed was improved and the viaduct strengthened in 1916.<sup>45</sup> When war came, passenger traffic boomed, with constant comings and goings, separations and reunions. Some families ventured even beyond Indianapolis to see a son leave for France or to greet him on return. The war prolonged prosperity for an extra two or three years, but after the fighting was over the trains stopped less often in Solsberry. Fine hardwood logs were no longer plentiful, and anyway the market for them had dwindled. Frank Yoho, who would by then have been a wealthy man except for his habit of extending credit to one and all over the years, became infirm. When he died, it is said that the whole town died.<sup>46</sup> The younger generation in Solsberry moved away.

Passenger service on the Indianapolis Southern was finally discontinued altogether, and in the 1930s the depot where young and old used to watch the trains come and go was dismantled.<sup>47</sup> The siding is still used to accommodate occasional maintenance equipment, but the stock pens and the log racks are gone. The line is now part of the Indiana Division of the Illinois Central Railroad. The coal trains still rumble across the great viaduct, through Head's Cut, through Andy Combs' Cut, and through the heart of Solsberry—past the old Yoho Grocery Store, past a scattering of white houses, past the large cemetery east of town, and on to Indianapolis. The trains are never far from the consciousness of the people who remain, the few who would not dream of living anywhere else.

Solsberry is still a railroad town.

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<sup>45</sup> The length was increased from 2,215 feet to the present 2,306 feet. The total weight of steel in the structure as it now stands is 2,895 tons. O'Brien to author, April 2, 1982.

<sup>46</sup> Wayne Sherrow interview, 81.

<sup>47</sup> Larry Shute, Solsberry, provided information concerning the depot.