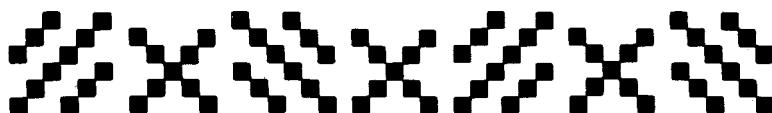


Locke, Indiana: The Making of a Ghost Village

*James Lamar Weygand**



In the golden age of the railroad builders during the last half of the nineteenth century, what happened to a village when the railroad passed it by? Exactly that predicament faced Locke Town, Indiana, in 1872-1873.¹ The only village in Locke Township, Elkhart County, Locke had been platted about 1867. In six years it had grown to nearly two hundred people. According to one source there were "three dry goods stores, one drug store, one grocery store, one hardware store, one tin shop, one furniture store, two shoe shops, two saw-mills, one shingle-mill, one wagon-making shop, one steam grist and flouring mill, three blacksmith shops, about forty dwellings, one hotel, one public school-house, one church (United Brethren), three physicians."² It was a pleasant, prosperous village with no place to go but forward. Alarming news, however, came in 1872-1873. In laying out its route to Chicago the Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Chicago Railroad, which later became the B&O, had bypassed Locke.³ Unless one flew like the crow, Locke would be no nearer the new rail line than two and one half miles. By the end of August,

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¹ The village was often called Locke Town, or Locketown, to distinguish it from Locke Township.

² Higgins, Belden & Co., pubs., *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Elkhart County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1874), 101; Anthony Deahl, *A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1905), 124.

³ For the proposed route of the B&O through Elkhart County see Higgins, Belden & Co., *Illustrated Historical Atlas*, 101; see also Edward Hungerford, *The Story of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, 1827-1897* (2 vols., New York, 1928), II, 108; and *Extracts From Diary Kept by Levi P. Ulery, Beginning January 1, 1865, October 24, 1872, September 11, 1873* (Nappanee Public Library Historical Room, Nappanee, Indiana).

1874, the work engine on the B&O had reached Bremen on the west, six miles away, and Milford crossing on the east, eight miles away. The road was rapidly nearing completion.⁴

There was an air of expectancy and uneasiness about Locke. Businessmen—for the most part young and energetic—recognized that access to the B&O was necessary if the town were to remain a viable entity. The merchants had goods to bring in; the producers had products to ship out. Their solution was to build a station—Locke Station, as it were—at the railroad's nearest access point. From Locke it was one half mile east to the Locke-Union Township road which led, chuckhole by chuckhole, two miles south to an intersecting east-west road, which was less than two blocks from the railroad right of way. Existing roads, such as they were, thus brought the town within several hundred feet of the action. At that point the Locke businessmen would build their station and set up a hack or carryall to transfer passengers and freight to their town.⁵

Agreement was quickly reached with the B&O. Locke would donate five acres on which the railroad could construct necessary buildings, and the town would grade the side tracks without charge. In return the railroad contracted to build a side track station and passenger house to be called Locke Station.⁶ Problems soon developed, however. The town could not fulfill all its part of the bargain. The five acres were not to be had. The owners, Daniel Metzler and John Culp, Jr., through whose farms the railroad ran, did not make the land available—not at least for the purpose Locke had in mind. Under circumstances that remain cloudy and mysterious, Locke (rather than the railroad) did put up a *private* passenger house or depot on railroad property or right of way. The new depot became Locke (Station) on the B&O time cards.⁷ At five o'clock on December 6, 1874, the new station's schedule went into effect. One train from each direction stopped daily, and passengers and freight were transferred by hack to Locke.⁸

⁴ Goshen *Times*, August 27, 1874.

⁵ Wakarusa *Sun*, November 12, 19, 1874.

⁶ *Ibid.*, November 12, 1874.

⁷ *Ibid.*, December 10, 1874.

⁸ Goshen *Times*, December 10, 1874. Hungerford, *The Story of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad*, II, 107-109, states that operations on the division commenced November 23. This may, of course, have referred to through trains or work trains or both.

Although on the surface it seemed that things had not worked out so badly after all, any euphoria was short lived. If trouble had not been suspected or known earlier, it was by the middle of December, 1874: Metzler and Culp, joined by Henry Stahly who owned land north of them, had platted and surveyed their own village, Nappanee, around Locke's station.⁹ Worse still, Metzler and Culp had donated two and three acres respectively to the railroad for one dollar each for "the location of a station."¹⁰ As matters stood by 1875, then, Locke had its depot—now almost surrounded by a new village plat—its own man in charge of the depot, its Locke Station on the B&O time cards, its daily hack service, and a passel of big problems. The rest of the story concerns Locke's attempts to remain a viable village and Nappanee's endeavors to become one.

Much of the abundance of infighting that followed the completion of the railroad was reported in the *Goshen Times*, the *Wakarusa Sun*, or, indeed, any other journal that would accept correspondence from the citizens of Locke or Nappanee. Nappanee residents claimed in the pages of the newspapers that from the beginning certain parties in Locke "played the wolf in sheeps clothing": "in the guise of friendship for the new village they [Locke residents] had misrepresented the town" and "had done their very best to put every obstacle in the way of the Nappaneese." Nappanee partisans also occasionally enumerated persons in Locke who had been "friends from the start."¹¹ Whether there was substance to any of these claims is not known since specific evidence was not cited. There is a possibility that some Locke parties, in their zeal to keep their own village alive, planned to purchase lots in Nappanee but never to build on them. Such action would, of course, have been disruptive and delayed development in the new town. But this is supposition based upon general claims plus certain "conditions" attached to a number of early lot sales in Nappanee: "Five or six other Locke

⁹ Elkhart County Deed Record Book, XLVIII, 280 (Recorder's Office, Elkhart County Courthouse, Goshen, Indiana). The origin of the name Nappanee is a long and interesting story in itself. The village is generally believed to have been named for Napanee (one "p"), Ontario, from which some of the pioneers of this area came. See James L. Weygand and Esther Hoover, *They Called it Nappanee* (Nappanee, 1974), 20-21.

¹⁰ Elkhart County Deed Record Book, XLVIII, 346-47.

¹¹ *Wakarusa Sun*, February 26, March 18, 1875; *Goshen Times*, March 18, May 6, 1875.

Baltimore and Ohio R. R.



The Great Route to the Seaboard.

ON AND AFTER JANUARY 10TH, 1875, PASS-
enger Trains on the above road will run as
follows:

GOING EAST.

	Express and Mail.	Baltimore Express.
Leave Chicago.....	8.20 a.m.	7.20 p.m.
" Mich. Cen. Junction.....	10.20 a.m.	9.20 p.m.
" Bremen.....	12.45 p.m.	11.48 p.m.
" Locke.....	1.11 p.m.	12.15 a.m.
" Milford Junction....	1.30 p.m.	12.34 a.m.
" Syracuse.....	1.43 p.m.	12.47 a.m.
" Albion.....	2.31 p.m.	1.35 a.m.
" Avilla.....	2.58 p.m.	2.05 a.m.
Arrive Garrett.....	3.15 p.m.	2.20 a.m.
Leave Garrett.....	3.35 p.m.	2.30 a.m.
" Auburn.....	3.50 p.m.	2.45 a.m.
" Defiance.....	5.30 p.m.	4.20 a.m.
" Fostoria.....	7.41 p.m.	7.04 a.m.
" Tiffin.....	8.08 p.m.	7.33 a.m.
" Republic.....	8.28 p.m.	7.56 a.m.
Arrive Chicago Junction	9.15 p.m.	8.45 a.m.

GOING WEST.

Leave Chicago Junction...	7.55 a.m.	7.40 a.m.
" Republic.....	8.44 a.m.	8.28 p.m.
" Tiffin.....	9.04 a.m.	8.50 p.m.
" Fostoria.....	9.34 a.m.	9.21 p.m.
" Defiance.....	11.35 a.m.	11.55 p.m.
" Auburn.....	1.10 p.m.	1.24 a.m.
Arrive Garrett.....	1.25 p.m.	1.40 a.m.
Leave Garrett.....	1.45 p.m.	1.45 a.m.
" Avilla.....	2.02 p.m.	2.05 a.m.
" Albion.....	2.31 p.m.	2.31 a.m.
" Syracuse.....	3.22 p.m.	3.17 a.m.
" Milford Junction...	3.35 p.m.	3.35 a.m.
" Locke.....	3.55 p.m.	3.55 a.m.
" Bremen.....	4.20 p.m.	4.20 a.m.
" Mich. Cen. Junction.	6.55 p.m.	6.43 p.m.
Arrive Chicago.....	9.00 p.m.	8.50 p.m.

Trains run on Columbus time.

W. C. QUINCY, General Manager.

B&O TIME CARD LISTING LOCKE RATHER THAN
NAPPANEE, MAY 13, 1875

men have bought lots, on condition of their putting up buildings, next summer"¹² There were also claims in Nappanee that Locke citizens, by word of mouth and by letters purporting to come from Nappanee, had spread "false and malicious information" about the new town. Again, however, the specifics were not outlined. Locke partisans probably made similar statements about their neighbors in Nappanee, but their correspondence with the newspapers is considerably less in quantity so fewer such claims have been found.¹³

In the competition between the two towns Locke had got off to a fast start. In the early newspaper debates Locke's correspondent, OCCASIONAL, naturally stressed the town's depot, owned and operated by the Eby brothers of Locke with Henry Eby as station agent; its daily hack; and, most important of all, its station. He also pointed out that business was "flourishing" in the town, and he tossed in a tongue in cheek query. Where was that magnificent place called Nappanee anyway? He had checked his atlas but could find no such town in it. He closed, though, by saying he "hoped to get a situation there."¹⁴

Meanwhile, Nappanee had also taken to the newspapers. On December 17, 1874, less than a week after the village had been platted and surveyed, the *Goshen Times* printed the first of Nappanee's blurbs: "NAPPANEE . . . Is the name of a town laid out in Elkhart County, Ind. on the B.P.&C. Railroad eight miles west of Milford, where a general station is located. Persons desiring to locate in business would do well to call there and get the advantage of inducements held out. Inquire of D. Metzler and Jno. Culp, Jr., Locke, Indiana."¹⁵ Shortly thereafter in correspondence also published in the *Goshen Times* a writer signing himself NAPPANEE covered much the same ground. He also commented on OCCASIONAL's problems in finding Nappanee:

. . . OCCASIONAL says that he consulted the County Atlas of Messrs. Higgins, Belden & Co. but that it [Nappanee] could not be found. He cannot surely pretend to be ignorant that Nappanee was never thought of until two or three years after the collection of the

¹² *Wakarusa Sun*, March 4, 1875.

¹³ *Ibid.*, February 26, March 18, 1875; *Goshen Times*, March 18, May 6, 1875.

¹⁴ *Goshen Times*, January 21, 1875.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, December 17, 1874.

manuscript for the publication of the County Atlas—and therefore that he might as well looked in Webster's Dictionary.

The station that he speaks of as our station on the B., P.&C.R.R. is just 2½ miles from Locke, at Nappanee, and the only railroad that the people of Locketown have got is a two-horse railroad between Nappanee and Locketown.

As to his "being in hopes of getting a situation there" the citizens of Nappanee no doubt feel highly flattered by his condescension, and Nappanee would probably rise at least one hundred percent in value on his advent.

But, what would Locketown do?¹⁶

The exact nature of the "inducements" which Nappanee was purportedly offering to businessmen was not explained in the newspapers, but with Nappanee offering such incentives could Locke do less? One prominent Locke businessman offered "up to \$250" to a "bending factory" to locate in his town rather than in Nappanee. His attempt at persuasion, however, was unsuccessful since shipping facilities were obviously superior in Nappanee.¹⁷ Residents of Locke also planned improvements within the town. The streets were to be widened and were to be lighted by a system of gas lamps, presumably one at each corner. Since the plan never got beyond installing a single gas lamp, it became a running joke with NAPPANEE at the expense of OCCASIONAL and Locke: "the latest move . . . [is] to embellish the classical shades of Locke with street lamps, the gentleman who originated the idea munificently heading the subscription with \$1.00. Truly such generous conduct ought to be remembered, and coming generations may well exclaim as they gaze with awe on such improvements, 'He was the father of Locke!'"¹⁸

In correspondence to the *Goshen Times* NAPPANEE reported, too, on momentous happenings in the new village:

Two stores have been opened here, one by Henry F. Eby, and the other by Jas. Lake, both from Locke town, and the prospects are that there will be more in a week. . . . There has been about 25 or 30 car loads of lumber and general freight shipped, mostly eastward bound. . . . Messrs. Peddycord, Truex & Hartman, of Locke, and Metzler of this place, intend putting up a store block having 88 feet frontage, and 50 feet in depth. . . . Two of our neighbors . . . were around among their friends collecting subscriptions for a United Brethren church, and

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, January 21, 1875.

¹⁷ *Wakarusa Sun*, March 4, 1875.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

we believe they have already succeeded in raising several hundred dollars . . .

The correspondent from Nappanee closed with some choice barbs for OCCASIONAL:

We would like to know what has become of "Occasional," we sincerely hope he has not overtaxed himself in his endeavors to find Nappanee, and made himself sick. He was seen in a cutter, recently, furiously driving northward from here, his hat pulled down o'er his brow and he looked neither to the right or left but straight ahead, and by the determined glare in his eyes it could plainly be seen that he meant to find Nappanee or die in the attempt. Whenever he arrives the citizens of good Nappanee intend treating him to a grand oyster supper and firing off anvils, and the day will be observed as a general holiday. We hope he will be around before all the lots are sold.

The lines below were found, written on a dry goods box by some enterprising youth, and will not be out of place:

Oh Sister Locke do not be cross
Though 'tis unto you a heavy loss,
Because ere long you may able be
To move the remainder to Nappanee.¹⁹

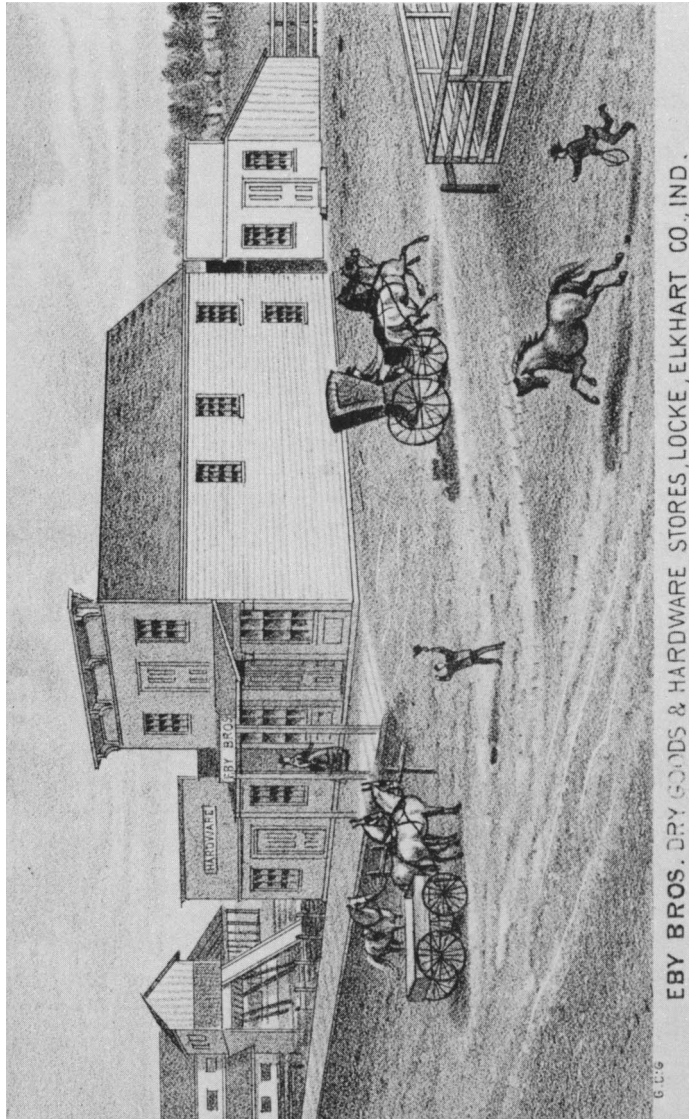
Without even allowing OCCASIONAL a reply NAPPANEE picked up the following week where he had left off:

Please step behind this stump, Mr. Editor, and I will tell you something,—but we must talk very low, as those Locke fellows are running back and forth all of the time and might overhear us: Locke is in our way, and we want to hide it as much as possible; and if we can only make a few capitalists think we are all right, and persuade them to come here, don't you see, we are all sound. To be plain, I have a few lots to sell; lots that a few years ago were covered with the mightiest oaks and elms—you can see the stumps now—and if I can only sell these lots at about four times their value, it will let me out of the woods—that is, I could afford to go out into the open country and buy a nice farm. All we want is men and money, and if all goes well I think we can get both.²⁰

OCCASIONAL presumably had had enough; no further correspondence from him was found. TRUMP, JR., however, took up the cudgels in Locke's behalf. What was apparently his first epistle in the newspaper wandered off in several directions but began by emphasizing Locke's continued prosperity in adversity: "The storekeepers are doing a lively winter's work. They have carried on a larger trade, by one-half during the 12 months just past than at any other period in our history, notwithstanding the almost universal prostra-

¹⁹ Goshen *Times*, March 4, 1875.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1875.



Reproduced from Higgins, Belden & Co., pubrs., *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Elkhart County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1874), 100.

tion of business, showing that our patronage is increasing. [George] Eby's and Hartman's boys know how to make trade lively, and how to use their customers." He added a bit of sarcasm of his own: "Was over south last week past Metzler's corners. Jim Lake and Hank [Henry] Eby [the station agent] are stopping at the corners running peanut stands. . . . The boys are old friends and fellow-townsmen of ours. . . ." ²¹ TRUMP, JR., concluded with an inventory of Locke's contributions to Nappanee's success and an appeal for a few kind words in return:

NAPPANEE is rather severe on us after all our efforts to help him build a town. Two of our merchants are already there with a fine stack of peanuts and bologna. Locke put up the depot, graded the side tracks, runs a hack for the accommodation of those who may stop at the station, yet he prophesies our utter annihilation. Makes sport of our best efforts to evert [*sic*] destruction; even denying us the poor privilege of street lamp . . . by the light of which we, the survivors of Locke's desolation, can gaze with bowed heads and aching hearts upon our "broken idols." Oh, charity, charity! have you departed from human breasts, that brethren should be treated thus? Nappanee, shake. We are your father. ²²

Within the week NAPPANEE replied:

A terrible tornado passed over this place . . . First comes our friend TRUMP, JR. who accuses us of the blackest ingratitude in our conduct towards the Lockites, who have made us what we are, and on whom we depend for our future support. . . . Oh Locke! Locke! Who can read such a touching account of your calamities without moistened eyes? We can not. But forgive us when we politely inform you that you were never asked to build the depot as the railroad company were under bonds to do that, and it was done thru purely interested motives; that Locke did not grade the sidetrack, and that the Locke Horse Car Co. is only for the benefit of Locke. . . .

We congratulate you upon the accession of that refulgent lamp, and so far from denying you the privilege of having one, we will give one cent towards another. But is it not in danger so near the gas factory? ²³

LOCKETOWN then took up the cause for Locke. He tried a tug at the heart strings approach. A candid evaluation of Locke's dim prospects was slightly overstated in an impassioned appeal for even a rival's natural sympathy for the feelings of the underdog:

Business dull. . . . Of course things are not as flourishing here as what we pretend they are; but we have a part to play. We see plainly that

²¹ *Wakarusa Sun*, March 11, 1875.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, March 18, 1875.

Nappanee is going to eclipse Locke, in spite of our utmost endeavors to prevent it. But still we must appear as if business is brisk here, for a little while longer.

The truth is, we own property here, that since the coming of Nappanee has been rapidly depreciating in value and if things go on the way they have been going, after a while we could make more by letting it out for a potato patch. But you see, Mr. Editor, if we can only induce a few people to believe that Nappanee is a part of Locke, as we have been trying, and succeed in roping in a few greenhorns to buy our real estate here, we can then move over to Nappanee and find a situation there. . . .

We have tried every expedient that we could hit upon for puffing Locke, in fact we played the "wolf in sheeps clothing," and have written from Nappanee, damaging it as much as we could. Of course we did not strictly confine ourselves to the truth; but then it was in a good cause. We have now a plan we think will do. It is to widen the streets here, and put lamps on the corners. We are doing nicely at present and if "Nappanee" will only keep his mouth shut, we think our plan will succeed. . . .

We have only one lamp at present, and we have ten times as much gas as it can consume, but even then, between you and me, we think we can work better in the dark, at all events, until our property is sold—and Locke looks better by night.²⁴

But was this genuine correspondence from Locke, or was it fabricated in Nappanee and planted in the press? While it has some ring of authenticity, it is suspect. The general tone and style are reminiscent of NAPPANEE. It is also the only correspondence signed LOCKETOWN. Moreover, the next correspondence again comes from TRUMP, JR., who makes a point which may have more significance than appears on the surface: "*today, were it not for the energy of the Eby Bros. the trains would go smoking thru your place as thru any other wilderness.* We do not propose donating anything in charity to Nappanee; nor will we permit her to pilfer from us. Send in your penny."²⁵ Did Locke's aborted "donation" of those five acres to the railroad perhaps trigger Metzler's and Culp's notions to plat a village, or had they come to that decision earlier, independently? The true story will probably never be known; yet, TRUMP, JR., raises a question upon which it might be profitable to speculate.

In the midst of this wrangling the Wakarusa *Sun* also offered some observations and a bit of advice which is not

²⁴ Goshen *Times*, March 18, 1875.

²⁵ Wakarusa *Sun*, March 25, 1875. Italics have been added by the author.

completely clear: "Our Nappanee correspondent writes a good article, but he should not try to disturb the 'old landmarks' of Locke, for they have the oldest title in law and will hold the 'balance of power.'"²⁶ At a later date the Wakarusa newspaper added: "Nappanee and Locke correspondents are having a little wrestling match. Who will win, is the question. They are too near together. Our mother told us long ago that children never got along as well when they settled down near the old folks."²⁷

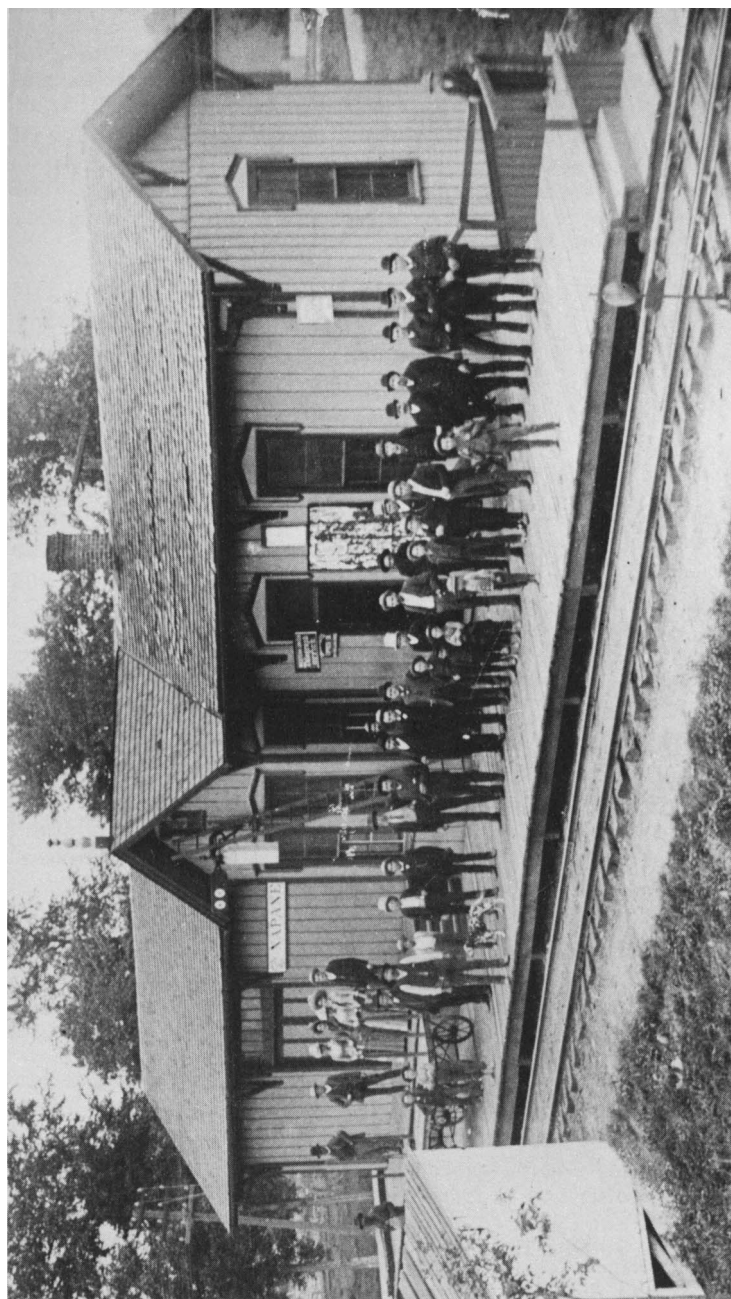
Still later NAPPANEE returned to the matter of the lamps and the penny: "That penny I laid in readiness at my bankers, made out to your order, and the only trouble now is how to send it, as you say that there are so many carpet baggers around Locke, I would be afraid to make my appearance there with so large amount of specie on my person. What has become of that other lamp? Did it explode already?" Worse for Locke than the sarcasm was a note that prefaced the foregoing: "There is some rumor, with what foundations we cannot say, that Henry F. Eby has received orders from the railroad company to remove his depot, so that the company can commence building their own station." As if that were not enough, NAPPANEE added that the postmaster at Nappanee had received his credentials and that the new postoffice — called Nappanee — had been established. Joe Strohm, he further reported, was moving his planing mill from Locke to Nappanee, and he charged: "Some malicious individual belonging to Locke inserted a pin with the point upward in the cushion of a buggy seat, belonging to a gentleman who went to Locke from this place the other day. . . . such deplicable [*sic*] tricks are a disgrace to any civilized community."²⁸

Meanwhile, if NAPPANEE's account can be believed (and his is the only report of the event), one Locke partisan personally carried the battle right to the streets of Nappanee. Supposedly he made the point that as a more advanced town Locke had certain advantages over an upstart, but his choice of words was poor, again assuming that NAPPANEE reported the story faithfully.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, March 4, 1875.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, March 18, 1875.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1875.



B&O DEPOT, 1875-1911

Courtesy Nappanee Public Library, Nappanee, Indiana.

Some Lockeite was blowing around here to-day that Locke has the advantage of Nappanee in being a *finished* town. Little did he think of the judgment he was pronouncing on Locke. It is now nearly time for that potato patch arrangement to come into operation. It is finished it is true. . . .

Locke has at length got that refulgent street lamp in operation, but the quality of the gas they burn there is so poor that the glass is nearly black—and there it stands and probably will stand, long after Locke has ceased to exist, to mark the spot where once stood the mighty rival of Nappanee.²⁹

Of course NAPPANEE could afford to pour it on. For him and his village the day had been won. New people, many from Locke, were moving in almost by the day, often bringing their dwellings or business houses with them. And the announcements of new buildings and businesses continued at a rapid clip.³⁰

With all the charges and countercharges, the hot air and horseplay, Nappanee people writing from Locke, and Locke people writing from Nappanee—with all this action—the source and true nature of some newspaper communications are in doubt as has been noted. The most bizarre affair, however, occurred in May, 1875. Presumably the new postmaster at Nappanee, as one of his first duties, had on May 10 written the B&O suggesting that since a postoffice had been established at Nappanee, the time was ripe to change the railroad station's name from Locke to Nappanee. The alleged reply was dated May 15. NAPPANEE quoted it as follows:

Office of the B&O RR
May 15, 1875

Mr. Postmaster of Nappanee:

Yours is at hand of the 10th inst. We cannot change the name of your station. Locke has already cost us four thousand dollars, and if your town can raise ten thousand dollars it might effect a change.

N. Guilford, M.D.³¹

NAPPANEE commented:

Probably you are not aware that the B.&O. R.R. has removed their headquarters to Locke. Our postmaster received a letter last Friday from that point, purporting to be from the head manager of the road. . . . If our Locke friends want to make any communications from the railroad in future, we hope they will do it thro' the medium of the *Times*.

²⁹ Goshen *Times*, May 6, 1875.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, June 10, 1875.

. . . And we advise our unknown friend before he undertakes to write again, to reflect that by using another man's name he lays himself open to serious charges. And again, when railroad companies write letters they generally have them signed by the Secretary and not by their physician. We excuse our Locke friend, as we know they have not much to do there at present, and must pass away the time; but if they cannot manufacture anything better than this, they had better quit letter writing and build some more street lamps.³²

There is an abundance of questions about this affair. Was such a letter actually received in Nappanee or was it concocted in Nappanee? On the other hand, if it was fabricated in Locke, as NAPPANEE implied, how did the Locke correspondent so quickly intercept a postmaster's letter to the B&O? Or a final question, was the letter a genuine communication from the B&O?

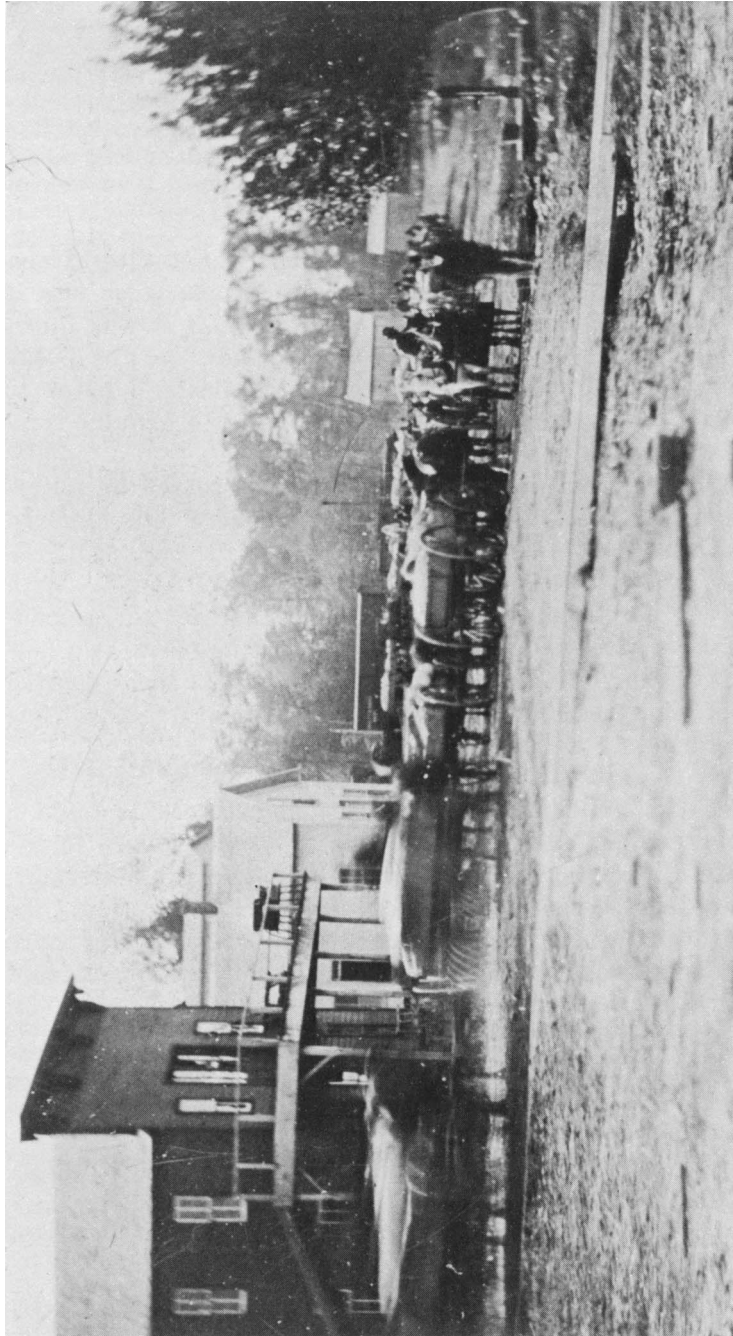
With this rhubarb NAPPANEE, too, ceased as a correspondent. All the original protagonists were thus removed from the scene: OCCASIONAL, TRUMP, JR., LOCKE-TOWN, and the hardiest of them all, NAPPANEE. With respect to the Locke-Nappanee tussle, no further correspondent of note arose in Locke. In Nappanee, however, two new writers appeared, KITTY and MINNIE. While each reported genuine and meaningful information, they also needled one another! But that is part of another story.

By August, 1875, KITTY was reporting momentous progress in Nappanee. The citizens had agreed to build a passenger depot and to donate one thousand dollars to the railroad. In return the B&O agreed to build a grain elevator, freight depot, lumber dock, and stockyards. In fact, the president of the B&O was reported to have been in Nappanee to locate them. In addition to this news, KITTY could not resist taking some potshots at Locke:

Messrs. Eby Bros., of Locke, have been given notice to remove their building that now answers the purposes of a depot, within 60 days, and when that is gone we suppose the claims of Locke of having been the benefactor of Nappanee, perishes. . . .

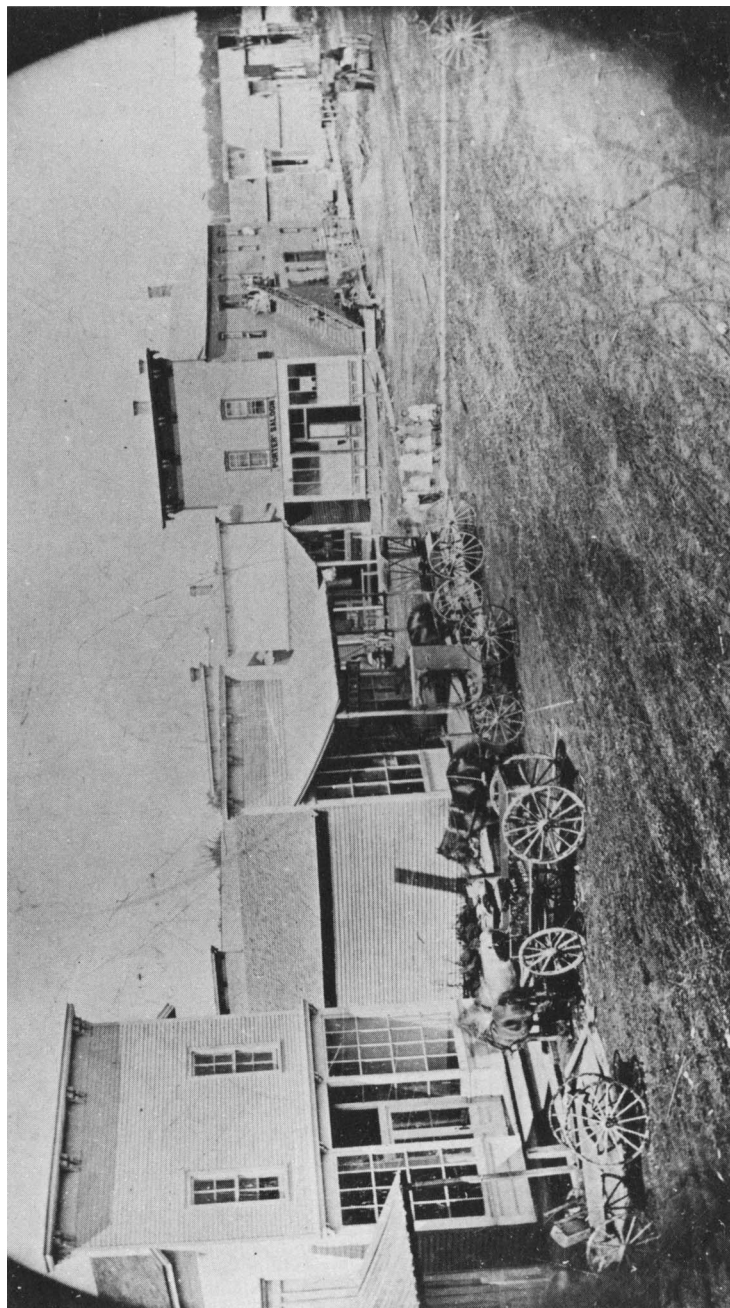
What has become of all the Locke correspondents, who were so busy last winter? We should like to hear how they are getting on over there. We know that they try to persuade themselves and others that they do as much business as formerly, but the fact that in one store where four men used to be kept busy attending to the wants of customers, one man can now easily attend to business. . . . 'Tis true they induced one man

³² *Ibid.*



MAIN STREET, NAPPANEE, INDIANA, LOOKING SOUTH (c. 1876-1877)

Courtesy James L. Weygand.



MAIN STREET, NAPPANEE, INDIANA, LOOKING NORTH (c. 1876-1877)

Courtesy James L. Weygand.

who intended building in Nappanee to go there. But if we can believe all that we hear, we hardly regret his absence.³³

By December KITTY too had faded away; a mild-mannered "N" took over:

Our town has grown to the astonishment of the R.R. officials, who frequently stop here. They say it is not equaled by any of the new villages on the line, except Garrett City.³⁴ The grain elevator is completed and is receiving wheat. . . . The passenger depot is nearly completed, and will be quite nice when done.³⁵ The U.B. church is also nearly completed.

Our Christmas present was a new time-card, changing the name of our station from Locke to Nappanee; (just as OCCASIONAL said it should not be.)³⁶

Even as Nappanee replaced Locke on the B&O time cards, the former had already equaled or surpassed its old rival in every respect. It was in fact in a period of rapid development that in a few years made it the third largest city in the county after Elkhart and Goshen.³⁷ So furious was the one way traffic to Nappanee that the *Wakarusa Sun* through its Nappanee correspondent, YOPPY, wrote: "Your Locke 'Buddhist' forgot to say 'We are shipping houses to Nappanee at the rate of two a week and if the good sleighing lasts a few weeks longer, we will run entirely out of stock.'" ³⁸

With just about everything going its way Nappanee was prepared to accept at face value almost any kind of good

³³ *Ibid.*, August 12, 26, 1875.

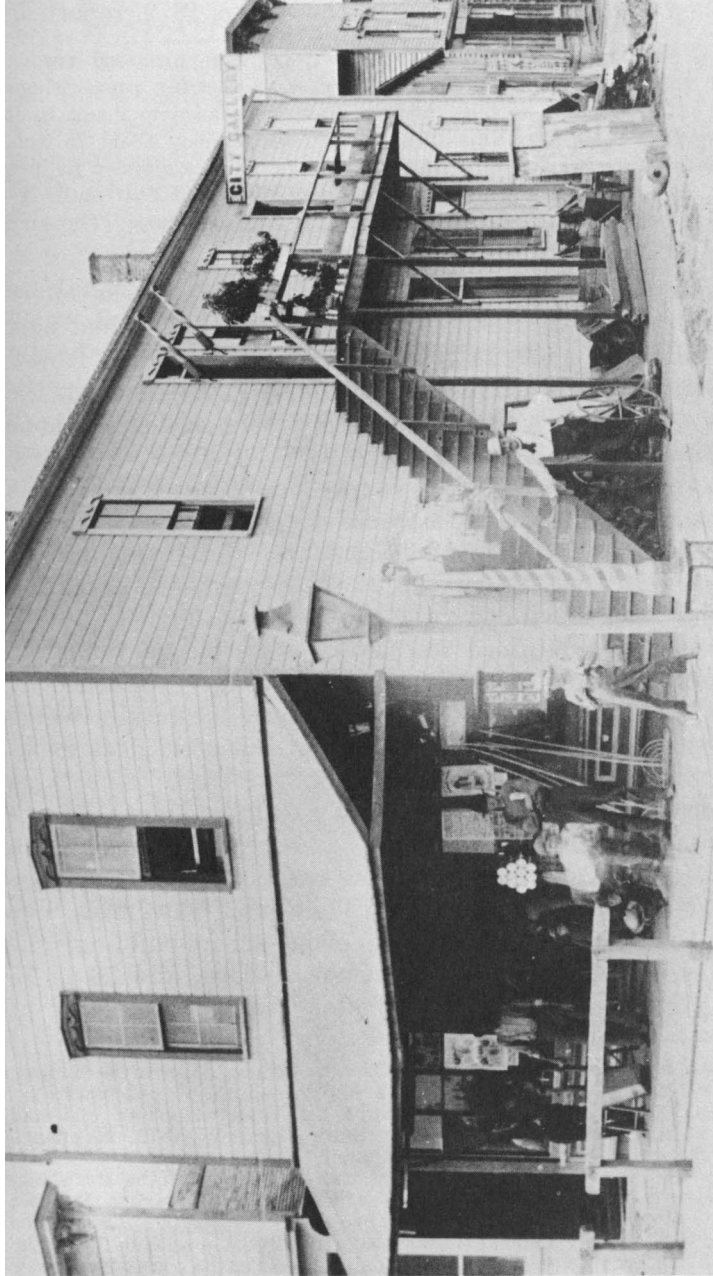
³⁴ Nappanee eventually overtook Garrett in producing revenues for the railroad and, until the rapid rise of Gary after 1906, was unequalled in generating money for the B&O between Chicago and Canton, Ohio. Even when surpassed by the steel city, Nappanee generated revenues far out of proportion to its size. This information was furnished to the author in the early 1950s by the Nappanee B&O freight agent.

³⁵ To make way for a new brick depot in 1911 the building mentioned here was moved two miles south of Nappanee for use as a barn. It was rediscovered there in 1973, still a barn, and in reasonably good condition even after nearly one hundred years.

³⁶ *Goshen Times*, December 30, 1875. "N" was not completely accurate. The B&O changed the name to Napanee—with only one "p." It was not until 1919 that the railroad got around to adding the second "p" to conform with town and postal usage. "Our records indicate . . . the spelling of the name was changed by the railroad [from 'Napanee'] to 'Nappanee' with two 'p's' in 1919." R. M. Van Sant, director of public relations, B&O Railroad, to James L. Weygand, September 22, 1943.

³⁷ In 1874 there were ten towns in the county offering town lots. By 1880 Nappanee's population was 592; by 1887, 1,500; by 1892, 2,025. *Nappanee News*, July 22, 1880, November 1, 1887, December 15, 1892.

³⁸ *Wakarusa Sun*, January 30, 1879.



GAS LIGHT IN NAPPANEE, INDIANA (LATE 1870s)

Courtesy Nappanee Public Library, Nappanee, Indiana.

news, or rumor thereof, about the village. It was not unusual then when the *Nappanee News* in November, 1879, reported:

We learn from a reliable source that the B&O has purchased ground opposite the passenger house for the purpose of erecting repair shops thereon: If the report is true, and we have no reason to doubt it, it will be quite a benefit to Nappanee, as they will employ about 75 men. The managers say that nearly all their 'breaks' on this division happen between Garrett and LaPaz, and as Nappanee is about the center between the two points, have decided to locate the shop here. The land was sold last week"

A red faced editor had to eat his words two weeks later: "A week or two ago we stated that the B&O road had purchased land here and was going to erect repair shops. It now seems that we were the victim of misplaced confidence, as the company has no idea of locating shops here at all. We hope the public will take note accordingly."³⁹

To the possible relief of county newspaper readers the press had by 1879 virtually ceased to publicize any further infighting between Locke and Nappanee. For Nappanee the day had been won. For Locke it was a matter of accepting what had been inevitable from the start.

Locke had continued its skid. Its people continued to drift to Nappanee. The history of the county published by Charles C. Chapman in 1881 was, in fact, the last in which Locke was considered a viable village. Inventoried as existing in the town were "one first-class drug store . . . a large dry goods and grocery store . . . a furniture store . . . one first-class grist and flouring mill . . . a large saw mill . . . a mill doing general wood work . . . one boarding house, two physicians and surgeons, [three additional] saw mills, one United Brethren Church, one excellent school-building, one carpenter, one jeweler, two blacksmith shops, and 50 to 75 dwelling houses"⁴⁰ The history was woefully out of

³⁹ *Nappanee News*, November 27, December 11, 1879. In November, 1879, the *Nappanee News* was in its eighth month of publication in Nappanee. Anson B. Smith had bought the *Wakarusa Sun* and had moved it to Nappanee for its first issue there, March 27, 1879. *Nappanee Weekly News*, March 27, 1879; *Nappanee News*, December 25, 1879, February 19, 1880, and others. For the complete story of the first year of the *Nappanee News* and Smith's years with the *Wakarusa Sun* see James L. Weyland [Weygand], "Nappanee's Pioneering, Two-Fisted News Editor," *South Bend Tribune* magazine section, March 14, 1976, pp. 3-5. The author plans to publish this article later in book form under the title *Written in the Stick*.

⁴⁰ Charles C. Chapman and Company, pubs., *History of Elkhart County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1881), 1046-47.

date, however, before it reached subscribers' hands. In June, 1881, even the "first class drug store" was moved to Nappanee where it remained a drug store until the 1940s.⁴¹ It is one of the few buildings yet to remain of those early ones; behind a new facade it is today a Sears catalog store. The Locke post office was discontinued in 1893.⁴² In 1905 Anthony Deahl's history of the county stated: "Now there are perhaps twenty-five or thirty people residing within the original limits of the village. . . . a small store building . . . [has] just been erected by E. J. Pippenger, who accordingly has the honor of being the sole representative of business activity in the place."⁴³ Even that commercial activity lasted only a short while. Three years later the *Nappanee News* reported: "Locke Town's Landmark Gone. John May is having the Locketown store building moved thru town to his place south of town for a barn. This is the last landmark of a once prosperous village absorbed by Nappanee."⁴⁴

To this day Locke exists in a sense, with perhaps thirty-five to forty residents. There has been no commercial activity of any kind for many years, however. Histories and articles usually lump the village with other "Towns that Never Grew Up," or "Ghost Towns." It has been most recently characterized as "just a little hamlet by the side of the road."⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Nappanee News*, June 16, 1881.

⁴² *Ibid.*, December 20, 1893.

⁴³ Deahl, *A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County*, 125.

⁴⁴ *Nappanee News*, December 23, 1908.

⁴⁵ Emil V. Anderson, *Taproots of Elkhart History* (Elkhart, 1949), 51.