

DEC 29 1989

Oral History - 2nd interview - Mr. Richard Rodgers

LOCAL HISTORY

Recorded at his home - 531 Dennis Street, Decatur, on December 12, 1988

Mr. Rodgers: In order to get away from brick pavement, the city had an innovation of using wood blocks. They were about the size of the Brazil pavement blocks that you see on the streets now. These had been treated with creosote. They would "bleed" in summer, and some of this creosote would run out and get "tacky" and get on your shoes.

It was a very good idea, with good thought behind it. It made a very quiet street for the shoes of the horses and the carriages. In other words, you wouldn't get that harsh, clanking sound you would normally get on the brick pavement. Now, this was before they started to use concrete as pavement, as we know it today. So the theory was great.

The one street I remember quite well was East Prairie Street. The downtown streets were paved with wood blocks, but East Prairie Street particularly.

If you can remember, you would find some very elegant homes east of North Main Street. In the first block West was the old YMCA, which was in the same location where the new one is. On the north side of the street was the Christian Science Church, quite an interesting little building. Some of these buildings were torn down when the Decatur Club was built.

Going back to the pavement, it had its advantage of quietness. But after a few years, after the creosote had worked its way out of the wood, about the only way to hold the blocks in was to use hot tar. That was good, except when a 2" or 3" rain would come with an accumulation of water, the blocks would become water-soaked and start floating around the street. They tried to put them back, but after a bad storm it would be miserable trying to ride down the street, even with a horse and buggy. The blocks would be all over the street.

It came to an end. I don't remember the year when they started to take the blocks up, but it wasn't a practical or a permanent venture.

The particular reason that I mentioned the 100 block of East Prairie is that west of there, in the block where the Presbyterian Church is located, is a very low spot. Actually, there is a huge drainage ditch or tubing that was put under the street because at one time there was a creek that ran through there. Even as late as the 1920's, over on Main Street, directly south of this area, there was a little shop occupied by the ? Shop. There was a bridge across the walkway there. It's the drainage that comes from the area around the Polar Ice Company. There was an open ditch there. Of course, as the city grew and occupied more land to the west, they started to fill that in. That is the reason for the large tunnels they have there. In that particular spot there was a prime target for the tile to float because the water many times filled the street. That was quite an experience and a wonderful time for the carriages in the early days when it was first put down.

Q. Do you remember the problems with the streets in winter?

A. Yes, about the only streets that would be actually cleared would be North Water Street, North Edward Street, West Main Street. Those streets had street car tracks. So, during the night if there was a snow storm, the street car company had a great, big brush on the front of a street car. It would be the width of the track. They would play up and down the streets that had car tracks. Then, of course, around North Main Street, around the old transfer house, south to Wood Street. The interurban station was located in the 100 block of East Wood Street so that area would be cleaned - and then South Water Street, then east of Wood Street would be the Riverside tracks so those streets would be cleaned.

If you were a pedestrian, and, of course, if you possessed a car in that period of time, you did not drive it in the winter. You jacked it up and put it on blocks. So you would depend on the street car for your local transportation. If you walked, the idea was to get over to a street where the car tracks would be.

Q. You walked in the car tracks?

A. You walked in the street, yes.

Q. So the city was a benefactor?

A. Oh, yes. In that same period of time, occasionally the city possessed a few plows. Sidewalks would be cleaned by a horse - drawn plow. The driver would go up and down the sidewalks in given areas.

In that time, Millikin University was in an area of modern homes. North of Grand Avenue there were some homes, but by the time you got north of the tracks, you were out in the country. So your area which would have plowed sidewalks was a limited area. It wasn't a great expanse, as we think of the town today.

Q. But there were a lot of horses then?

A. A lot of horses!

Q. And people could get through with horses?

A. Oh yes! And it was not unusual at all to hear sleigh bells going up and down the street and to see someone with a sled or a sleigh.

And, speaking of horses, one of the sad sights at that time was you see, the homes were heated by coal or wood - basically coal. Most of the coal was mined right here in Decatur - not all of it, but some, and my, what a dirty, dirty mess it was. You could tell any time anybody would fire up his furnace because black smoke would just roll out of the chimneys. In order to supplement the heat, the driver of the team would go to the coal mine, load up his wagon, and start out.

As I mentioned, one of the sad sights on a day when the snow became packed, was to see a horse fall when he was hitched to a wagon, especially if there was ice on the road. Occasionally you would see a driver whipping and beating a horse to try to get him to get up. It was one of the sad events of that time.

Q. Do you have any more memories of street cars?

A. Oh, yes! In the summer there were open street cars. If we had summers like the one we had this past year, which was terribly, terribly hot, and no air-conditioning, of course; you provided your own if you had a fan with you and that was about it. You would take your handkerchief and wipe your brow.

In order to relieve the intense heat, we did have open street cars. It was quite the thing, if the car was crowded, to see passengers standing on what we would call a "running board," a little platform that ran along the outside of the cars.

Then the conductor would go up and down to collect the fare. You had two people. You had the motorman, and you had the conductor. The conductor's business was to collect the fare.

The seats ran from side to side, basically benches, some of them were made so the backs were reversible. You may see them in the elevated cars in cities today. You would pull the back of the seat so you would face the direction you were going.

There was no way to turn the cars around. So the motorman would get out of the car, and pull the trolley down, walk around the car, and hitch it to the proper power line up above - for the reverse direction.

One of the devilish pranks at Halloween time was for boys - I don't think girls were involved at that time - to trip the trolley so the street car would lose its power. By the time the conductor got down to investigate, the boys would hide behind a tree so they couldn't be found. That was a stunt that a lot of them would pull.

Q. Do you remember anything about the first automobiles in town?

A. I remember the very early ones. Actually the first car that appeared was a little bit before my memory. The cars, in most cases, were touring cars or roadsters with a folding top. A little later they introduced the sedans. Most of those were rather luxurious cars, beautifully upholstered. You see, that was a carry-over from the days when they made carriages.

Studebaker, an automobile company up at South Bend, was originally a wagon works. Then they went into cabinet work in building coaches.

To backtrack just a bit, the earlier cars, of course, had tires that were at least 36" in diameter. They were very narrow, very thin, like

the shape of bicycle tires today. The advent of the soft-sided tires didn't come until after World War I.

Q. Were the new tires what they called "balloon tires?"

A. Yes! If you bought a set of those old tires, you might get 6,000 miles from them.

Q. Were they inflated?

A. Yes, they were inflated with inner tubes. You always carried in those early cars a tire-repair kit because, you see, when horses and wagons were in vogue, there was a lot of trash hauled down the street, and on country roads there would be a lot of nails left in debris. It was a carry-over from the horse and buggy days. It was very common in those early days, if you were driving to Springfield, to have one or two punctures on the way over.

Q. Then you would have to stop and repair the tires?

A. Yes, or if you did have a spare, you would change the tire. If not, you would repair the inner tube. There was no way of inflating it except by a hand pump. You take weather like we had last summer - in the 100's - and you have a flat tire and try to pump up one of those tires, which carried 40 or 50 pounds of pressure, so there was a lot of pressure. When a tire did go out, it make a tremendous noise because of the amount of air built up inside the inner tube.

Speaking of the early cars, the advent of the self-starter was a tremendous advantage. At that time the early cars were started with a crank, which was part of the equipment fastened into the front of the car, beneath the radiator. The cars had quite a kick-back of compression. It was very, very common to see a farmer, or a man on the street with his arm in a sling, usually the right arm. Basically, that was the arm he used to crank the car.

Also, coming out of the side of the radiator was a choke. When you were trying to start the car, you would probably pull the choke on a couple of times to start it.

One big advance came along, and of course this is very recent when you stop to think about it. We didn't have a winterized type of oil for cars. On days like today, when the temperature would drop down into the teens, the oil would get very thick. It was like very thick molasses. It was almost impossible to start the car unless you had some heat involved to warm the motor up a little to thin the oil. The advent of oil like 10-40 or 10-30 or whatever the mixture might be is rather recent. It does make cars much easier to start in the wintertime.

Q. As you mentioned, some people just gave up their cars in the winter and didn't bother.

- A. Yes, another thing about those early cars is that they didn't have electric lights on them. They used gas created by a little carbon contraption that was usually on the running board. They used gas to light the headlights. The taillight usually used kerosene. It was a little lamp.

When the electric storage battery came along, that was a great, great improvement. When the cars used carbon lights and would go over a chuck hole like those on Prairie Street, it would knock the flame out. In order to have lights, you would have to stop and restart your head. So we have made many changes from those early cars.

The one big change was that most of the early cars were touring cars. In the winter time, if you did have your car out, you would put side curtains on. They were made of a material very much like vinyl today. It was basically a heavy oil-cloth type of material. The curtains had little glassine strips in it to let light inside the car.

As I said, most of the early cars were open touring cars. Then there was a period when the hardtop came out. It was very much like hardtops for trucks today. You would mount this on top of your car to replace the soft, folding top that came equipped with the car. That was a big step towards a sedan or closed car.

- Q. Even so, the cars would be very cold in winter, wouldn't they?

- A. Very cold! About all the heat you had would be from the manifold. Many of the early cars had what they called a "manifold heater." You had no way of controlling it - except by opening a hole so the heat would come from a pipe attached to the manifold. It radiated the heat through the pipe to a place underneath the dashboard to the floorboard in the front. You could drive from here to Boody and still the car would hardly get warmed up. Once it did get warmed up, you had only one way of controlling it if it was too much heat. You just had to cut it off. The early cars were very, very hard to heat.

Back in about 1928 Borg-Warner came out with a new heater to put inside your car. It was a gasoline burner, very condense, probably dangerous since it burned gasoline, but it was very efficient heat and very quick heat. You could start your car, turn this heater on to ignite it and have heat almost immediately. It was like the heaters that are used as auxiliary heaters for the home today. It used the same theory.

- Q. Was it dangerous?

- A. It would be dangerous. The fumes would not get inside the car, but the fact that you had gasoline burning in this little furnace would be dangerous. Back in the period of World War I, there were some sedans or the glass-enclosed cars. One made quite an impression on me as a little boy. My father had a shoe store at 148 East Main Street, across the street, some of the buildings have been taken down since then, where the Mutual Home and Savings is located now, the Powers brothers had an

office. The brothers would come down to the office quite regularly mid-mornings. The picture was quite impressive. Each of them wore a very heavy coat with a fur collar. Many of them would have a fur hat. Their car was a form of limousine. They would have a chauffeur, when the car arrived in the middle of the block at 100 E. Main Street, the chauffeur would get out and open the door and four of the Powers brothers would exit. They were dressed as if they were going to an opera. They had one of the early limousines in town - with a chauffeur.

Also, I spoke of Mrs. Baldwin earlier. Her house is still standing in the 400 block of West Main Street - a little white house. She had a chauffeur. I think I referred to this before. You could always tell Mrs. Baldwin. She would be dressed in white. Her limousine would be either white or very little shade of gray - very delicate colors.

During that same period, people who could afford it would have a different type of coach. The ladies in the family would have an electric car.

They couldn't travel very far and they couldn't plow through snow. They had to drive on a flat dry surface. They could do their shopping, go visit Mrs. So and So, make some house calls, and come home. The car was limited on the distance it could go. These cars were rather boxy coaches. You have seen pictures of the carriages the very wealthy kings would have - to be carried on the shoulders of their servants. These electric cars were shaped very much like those except that they had four wheels, of course. The batteries, little box affairs, were on the front and the back. You had to charge them up before you could go to the grocery store or shopping.

This leads to something else about that period of time. It was quite the thing for families to order their groceries over the telephone. It was very common to see the wagons of grocery stores delivering the groceries. If you were a person of means who could afford it, that was the thing to do - to order your groceries by phone. We still have stories on television about men or boys playing the part of delivering groceries. It was very much the same as the delivery of dry-cleaning today.

In about 1914 or 1918, not many streets would be year-round streets. You could ride into a mud street very easily. For example, Grand Avenue is a main thoroughfare today. There was only one street north of Grand Avenue at that time that had any brick on it. So Grand Avenue was just as far north as any east-west street that would be paved. When Grand Avenue was paved, that made quite an improvement. Leafland Street was not paved. Packard Street was paved over to Van Dyke. Going West, we would find that West Main Street would be paved about as far as Linden Avenue. Then it became a clay road, maybe oiled.

One of the tests of buying a new car in 1914, or 16, or 18, was to take the car over Snake Hill, which is the bridge going over Stevens Creek. If you could go across the bridge and go up the hill on the other side

in high gear, you had a pretty good car. In most cases you would have to shift gears to go up the hill - in second or even in low in order to get up the hill.

Q. Of course, none of these cars had automatic transmission, did they?

A. No, you had to shift the gears. A number of them had the gear shift on the left hand side of the driver. It was actually exposed to the elements.

Q. Outside the car?

A. Yes, of course, Henry Ford made a big innovation when he enabled the driver to shift gears by using pedals on the inside. That, of course, was a great help.

Q. Do you mean that people would reach outside the car to shift gears?

A. Yes, they had levers - to the brakes as well as to the gears. By bringing the gears to the inside, that was a great innovation.

Possibly one of the simplest but one of the tools that best assisted the driver was the windshield wiper that could be operated by a vacuum. The windshield wipers were operated by a vacuum from the motor. In other words, you couldn't start the windshield wiper until you started the car.

The early wipers had to have a hole through the windshield or in the cabinet work above the windshield. There was a rod that came in over the windshield and back inside. You had to operate the windshield wiper by hand - pushing it back and forth by hand. Practically all the cars were operated that way until the pneumatic system was developed. Later on, little motors were put on. That was something - trying to drive in a snow storm, watching the intersections, and keeping the windshield clean at the same time.

Q. It would help to have someone sitting next to you to push the wipers?

A. Oh, my, yes!

Going back to the tires - six thousand miles would be the ultimate in distance from a tire. There was a business of trying to retread them. People thought they could save money by having the old tires retreaded instead of buying new tires. That was all right - except on a hot day the re-treading would come loose, and you would lose your re-tread.

Our family had an experience. We went down East one year, to New England. One day we had 12 punctures. So you did learn how to vulcanize your tires, how to change them, and how to pump them up. If you look at pictures of people traveling the old Pike's Peak Highway, you will notice that they would have a number of tires tied to the car.

It wasn't unusual to have four or five extra tires. The reason, of course, is that punctures were quite prevalent.

Q. So we have come a long way?

A. Oh, my yes! You spoke of the automatic transmission. That came later of course. It was quite an innovation. Many people didn't trust them because you didn't have a definite control over the ratio of your acceleration as to "feel." In other words, you were relying on a mechanical contraption there.

In the World War II period of time there was what was called "free-wheeling." Studebaker had it on their cars. It was quite a luxurious thing to have. You would be driving down the road and take your foot off the accelerator, and your car would react like putting your clutch in. It would disintegrate the motor against the wheels - in other words, the car would move on its own momentum. Of course, going down a hill, you had to watch it, because you had to depend entirely on your brakes to stop the car.

Q. Well, we certainly have come a long way in our automobiles.

What do you remember about entertainment in those days? Did you ever go to amusement parks in Decatur? Was there a place called "Dreamland?"

A. "Dreamland," yes! As a matter-of-fact there is a little reminiscence of Dreamland Park still remaining, the pond where the ducks are in Fairview Park. That was part of Dreamland Park.

Q. And that is all that's left?

A. As far as I know. I don't think any of the buildings are left, approximately where the tennis courts are located.

In order to get there, you took the West Main Streetcar, and you could go to the park out there. They had a roller coaster. And then they had, as I remember, a kind of boat where you scooted down into the water at the lake. In other words, you were inside the roller coaster contraption. That was quite a thrill.

As a matter of fact, there was another amusement park at Riverside, in the vicinity of St. Mary's Hospital today, approximately in that area. That was an amusement park on the river.

Q. Did you ever go to the corn carnival? Of course, you probably weren't the right age - I believe it was before your time, but they did revive it one time in 1914, when you were six years old. But you didn't go?

A. I went to some carnivals.

Q. This was an event where they made decorations with corn.



A. No, I didn't go.

Q. According to my reading, it was given from the 1890's to 1902. Then it was closed, but brought back one time in 1914. But it wasn't successful and was discontinued.

Do you remember the circuses?

A. I was going to mention that - the carnival. It was quite an event when the circus came to town. The name we remember today is Barnum and Bailey. We also knew Sells-Floto. A number of them wintered up in Indiana.

The circuses traveled by train. They used flat cars to pull their wagons on. Many of the early circus wagons were most ornate. You might have the privilege of seeing them yet up in Wisconsin - beautifully crafted, carved wagons. The ones for the lions and the tigers would have cages. I believe I'm correct in saying that when the circus arrived at the circus grounds, the animals would be kept in these wagons until they would be taken to the arena for their acts.

It seems as if, in my memory, we often had rains and storms when the circus came to town. Sometimes the circus would be stranded in Decatur, because the wagons would be bogged down by mud.

They always tried to have their show close to the railroad where their flat cars would be kept so they didn't have to go such a distance. Putting the tent up was quite a sight to see. Usually the circus train would get to town sometimes after midnight. They might be in Champaign or Urbana and come over to Decatur or in Bloomington and come down or in Springfield. So the runs many times would not be a great distance. Then they would hire many times - I won't say "bums" but people who were trying to pick up a quick dollar - to help put the tent up. It was quite a sight to see the mess kitchens and the cooking equipment to feed the people. Some of the actors and actresses, who would be the higher paid stars of the show, would have their own wagons or Pullman cars, where they would sleep. They would eat in the train dining car in those days.

The highlight of the circus, of course, was the parade. You could always tell when there was a circus in town. People from miles around would come to town to see the circus. They would come early in the day to see the parade. Then they would hang around, for the show that would begin about one o'clock and then for another show in the evening at seven or seven-thirty.

As far as business was concerned, you could usually tell when a circus was in town. There would be no one in the stores. Everyone would go to the circus.

Q. That was a time when it was really fun!

Did you ever hear an event called "the poor man's picnic" in Decatur? Someone mentioned such an event. Children would be given money - or tickets - to buy certain items. Have you ever heard of that?

A. No, I don't recall that.

Q. Did you ever hear of a "Polish picnic?"

A. I don't know what you're referring to, but I remember that this town was very definitely divided ethnically.

Q. In what way?

A. Well, there was a Gorman settlement, I think I referred to this earlier, and a very strong Irish settlement. There was a strong Polish group gathered together in their own little society.

Q. Then they probably did have their own Polish picnic?

A. Oh, yes - As a matter of fact, out on North Jasper Street around Condit Street, out in that area there were quite a few Polish families - very definitely.

Q. What about sports?

A. After Mr. Staley became wealthy enough that he could sponsor it, there was a ball park at the corner of 22nd and Eldorado Streets.

Q. Baseball?

A. Yes, baseball. When that happened, a flag on the transfer house, a pennant, would go up - "Baseball today!"

Q. Where did the teams come from?

A. Basically, the old Three-I League. Davenport was involved in it. Danville and Springfield were involved in the league.

Q. Didn't the 3 I's mean Illinois, Iowa, and Indiana?

A. Yes, so they did cover quite an area and baseball was quite the thing. Football in the early days was pretty much a rough and tumble game. It still is today, but the players then didn't have the protection they do today. They had very little padding. Actually, it was almost a game of brute strength so many of them would come out damaged.

We did not have many tennis courts. There were a few. The Y.M.C.A. had a tennis court.

Q. You mentioned in your first interviews your work with Linn and Scruggs. About the time 1914, where were they located? Do you know? You were just a boy then.

A. Linn's had several locations. After their fire in 1914.

Q. That was when the Opera House burned?

A. That is correct.

Q. Were they near or in the Opera House?

A. The Hotel Orlando was built after that fire, and the Opera House was located about where the entrance to the Millikin National Bank (the Magna Bank) is today. It was in that area where the Opera House was located. I remember that fire.

Q. Oh, you do? Tell me about it.

A. It was quite a sight.

Q. You weren't very old.

A. No, but I remember it very well. The buildings all around were scorched. The heat from it cracked windows in a half block radius. It was a very devastating fire.

After that fire, Linn's rebuilt, and they had a very, very elegant store.

Q. Where was that located?

A. That was located where the Millikin National Bank is at the present time. Linn's had a tea room in their building and a very nice dining room. Those were the days when the waitresses wore black dresses with little white aprons and very likely had little white caps which they wore. So it was a very elegant place.

Linn's stayed there until the depression, when they moved over to the location where the Quigle's Furniture Store is now.

Q. That was after the depression of the 1930's?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that when you worked for them?

A. I didn't go to work for them until a little later, but I worked in that store.

Q. Do you remember anything about the tabernacle?

A. We went to see Billy Sunday. The tabernacle was located, to my memory, on East Wood Street in the vicinity of St. Mary's Hospital, where the local police station is now. It had saw-dust on the floor, and benches

- not chairs or seats, but just benches. In order to get air into the place, they had to open the sides of the tenting.

Q. It wasn't a permanent building?

A. As I remember, it was constructed like a barn - very rough. I could be wrong, but I believe there were sides like a tent, with curtains that could be dropped down, to keep out the elements. You put 2,000 people inside a place like that on a hot, summer evening - it would get pretty warm.

Q. Especially with all that preaching!

A. Oh, my! Very highly emotional! Yes, I remember going to it.

I was trying to remember the name of his song leader. "Rodehever" I believe is correct. He had a beautiful voice. About that time Homer Rodehever would sing one of the songs we still have in the books "The Old Rugged Cross." It was quite a thrill to hear a crowd of people sing that song after he would sing a verse or so of it.

Q. So it really was a successful event?

A. Oh, my! It was a social event in the community. You asked about entertainment. A lot of people went to these for entertainment. You had your theatres - the Empress and the Bijou Theatre had Vaudeville. Later on, when the Lincoln Theatre was built about the same period of time when Linn and Scruggs had their fire in 1914. The Lincoln Theatre was built approximately that same time.

To go to one of these revival meetings was a social experience - to go and spend the evening.

Q. Do you recall when there were two telephone systems in Decatur?

A. Yes, the Home Telephone System was one and I believe the other was the "Automatic" - I believe that was the name. So if you subscribed to one, and I didn't have a subscription to it, I couldn't call you. You had your list of people who were on your phone line. When the two were put together - the merger must have happened about 1918 - about World War I time.

(Note: According to the book History of Macon County, published in 1976, the consolidation took place in 1917, when the Central Union Co. purchased the land of the Decatur Home Telephone Co. See p. 418.)

At that time another form of communication was Western Union. Another was Postal Telegraph. They were located in the 200 block of North Main Street. Western Union was located at the place where Field's Apparel Shop is now. The Postal Telegraph was across the street. The Morning Herald Newspaper was a little north of Western Union.

So that area in there was a source of communication. I believe on one of those buildings, probably where Good's Furniture is now, there is embossed in the stone - I believe it is there yet - "Home Telephone Company."

Speaking of the telegraph, in order to get a very speedy communication, you would send it by Western Union or Postal Telegraph. When your communication arrived at its destination, a delivery boy would deliver it to your home. It was quite the thing for a young boy to earn some money by working for Western Union on the Postal telegraph. The boys would ride their bicycles. In the winter time that would be quite something in the snow we were talking about. I imagine much of the time the boys would have to walk to deliver the messages. But the boys made fairly good money delivering telegrams. It was a scary thing to have a boy knock at your door after midnight. It was often a very serious message - in many times announcing a death in the family in another town.

Q. Eventually the two telephone systems merged into one?

A. Yes, they merged into one. That was a big, big help, of course. It benefited everybody.

Q. Except the phone company that went out of business?

A. Well, we fail to realize that utilities were small operations in the beginning. Speaking of that, we had the beginnings of the power company, the inter-urban, which was a privately operated business just like the railroads.

We had something in Decatur in relation to utilities which was unique. What we now know as the Illinois Power Company had a steam generating plant on North Edward Street at what is now the Norfolk and Western tracks (which used to be the Wabash tracks). They generated steam which was transmitted to the vicinity south of the tracks and as far west as North Street.

Q. To various businesses?

A. And homes. Of course, that eliminated the firing of furnaces.

Q. A great help!

A. Yes, the part that was bad was that if they had a breakdown, you were out of heat. Most people didn't have any other way of heating except by fireplaces and stoves.

The company wouldn't start their heat until, say November 1, and they cut it off April 1. So if you had chilly days in the spring, you were at mercy of having to have auxiliary heat - and the same way in the fall. But much of the downtown businesses were heated from the steam system.

Q. Can you think of other such businesses or enterprises?

A. Many of us hated to see the old Stephen Decatur High School torn down. I speak of that because the auditorium in the old Stephen Decatur High School was at one time about the largest auditorium we had for any public programs.

Then, later on, after the Lincoln Theatre was built, it was quite the thing to schedule your program at the Lincoln Theatre. Of course, that meant that you had to work many months in advance for them to cancel their vaudeville shows and their movies they had scheduled.

I can remember that the Lincoln Theatre would accommodate about 1,400 people, which was a pretty good sized auditorium, compared to the old high school. Millikin had an auditorium, which we think of now as Albert Taylor Hall. It was limited as to accommodations.

Going back to the Lincoln Theatre, such shows as Paul Whiteman came there. That was when he introduced the song known to all of us - "Rhapsody in Blue."

You have been listening to a second interview by Mr. Richard Rodgers in the series of Oral History, produced by Betty Turnell for the Decatur Public Library.