

NEWBURGH'S RAILROAD

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Two of the original depots still stand. One, on Water Street in **Newburgh**, is today the office of a local tax service. The other, on State Street in Chandler, is a private residence. Some of the original right of way can still be found through Wesselman Nature Preserve in **Evansville** and through Warrick County. The original line for the ES&N was put down in 1888. The 11-mile main line ran from downtown **Evansville** to downtown **Newburgh**. It ran past the state hospital east of **Evansville**, then known as the Woodmere Asylum.

There was a small amusement park near the asylum where no liquor was allowed, as well as Barnett's Grove further East where the liquor flowed more freely. Barnett's Grove was owned by F.W. Cook, who also owned a local brewery and was a major stockholder in the ES&N. From the start, the ES&N was a unique **railroad**. It did not use traditional steam locomotives; instead, it used what were known as "steam dummies."

These were small locomotives disguised as street cars. The idea, apparently, was that since horses were used to seeing street cars, they would not startle at the sight of a steam dummy. The locomotives were all built by the world renowned Baldwin Company.

The line reached **Newburgh** in 1889. Since many of the passengers were expected to be headed to vacation spots in and around **Newburgh**, eight of the 12 passenger coaches had open sides. The passenger car bodies were built in **Evansville** by the Hercules Buggy Company.

The **railroad** also served several local coal mines, and has 20 wooden cars built to haul the coal into **Evansville**. The steam dummies pulled both freight and passenger trains. By 1905, traffic on the line was so heavy that it was putting a strain on the **railroad's** capacity.

The first move was to upgrade to heavier rail and crossties. And the second was to electrify the entire line.

The catenary lines - popularly known as trolley wires - were ready for use in 1906. From that point on, passenger service was done with electric interurban cars. At the same time, the ES&N board of directors decided to take a gamble.

Even though Boonville was already served by the Southern Railway, the ES&N decided to build its own line to the town. The line branched from a junction in Stockwell Woods (now Wesselman Park) and paralleled the Southern line into Warrick County.

That created some tension between the two railroads, with workers for Southern Railway attempting to prevent the ES&N from building a crossing near Stockwell Woods.

The Boonville newspapers closely followed the **railroad's** construction for months, until it was complete in July of 1906. Passenger service to Boonville and **Newburgh** was busy.

Cars to Boonville ran every hour, and trips to and from **Newburgh** were spaced 80 minutes apart. Miners, businessmen and pleasure seekers filled the interurban cars and coal mines provided added revenue.

The passenger service was lucrative enough that a second interurban **railroad**, the **Evansville** and Ohio Valley, built its own line through **Newburgh**.

Today, Outer Gray Street runs on top of the old E&OV right of way.

But the interurban era didn't last. Highway construction in the 1920s signaled the end of the ES&N. In 1930, passenger service ended to both **Newburgh** and Boonville. The electrical wires were removed, and the remaining freight service continued with steam power. But in 1941, the last coal mine on the **Newburgh** line shut down and the **railroad** was abandoned.

In 1947, the last mine on the Boonville line ceased operations and the remaining ES&N rail was abandoned. Today, there are still several signs of the **railroad's** existence.

A strip of the right of way runs just south of the Chandler Sports Park and continues all the way to Boonville, just south of the Boonville airport. It crosses Indiana 261 near Eskew Road, where an open cut is still clearly visible.

Another piece of right of way is visible at the intersection of Covert Avenue and Old Indiana 662 near the Vanderburgh-Warrick County border, where it runs directly behind the Morningside Presbyterian Church. But the best pieces of remaining right of way are in the Wesselman Nature Preserve in **Evansville**.

The ES&N's lines to **Newburgh** and Boonville met just west of the preserve, and the roadbed is now used for walking trails. The original ES&N crossties are still visible on the **Newburgh** Trail. In the early 1900s, passenger service to Boonville and **Newburgh** was busy. Cars to Boonville ran every hour, and trips to and from **Newburgh** were spaced 80 minutes apart. Miners, businessmen and pleasure seekers filled the interurban cars and coal mines provided added revenue.

In 1947, the last remaining piece of the **Evansville, suburban** and **Newburgh** railroad was abandoned and sent to the scrap yard. but for those who know where to look, there are still signs of the **railroad** to be found.