



*By 1910, a network of interurban electric railways connected cities of the Midwest. This photo represents the January 1918 snowstorm that had passed through Barrington and headed East. Here, for the Chicago, Lake Shore, and South Bend Interurban Railroad in East Chicago, Indiana, volunteers and railroad employees clear snow from a crossover near the junction where streetcars and interurbans shared track. Equipment can be seen hopelessly stuck (between buildings) on the track. It was critical to free the line, as milk and other essentials were starting to run out.*

## SNOWSTORM MEMORIES

ON A WINTER MORNING IN 1985, over coffee, I was enjoying the reminiscences of two Barrington old-timers, Bill Klingenberg, Jr. then 81, and John Robertson, (nephew of the Barrington White House Robertsons), then 87. The question came up about the railroad. In service continuously since January 1, 1855, had it ever been shut down? Of course, still fresh in memories was the great snowstorm of 1967. But the historical view of these pioneer descendants was much longer, and Bill quickly recalled a day when the Chicago and Northwestern Railway trains, now Union Pacific, were stalled between Barrington and Palatine.

In January 1918, the snow had fallen so heavily and drifted so extensively that even with the high plows or “cowcatchers” on the front engine, plus two extra engines, the trains could not push the snow away and clear the tracks. The snowdrifts were several feet high at the viaduct south of town, and teams of men were called in by the Northwestern to shovel out the snow until one track was passable.

### SKIING TO SCHOOL

After almost two days, limited service could be resumed. No trains moved on the E.J. & E. (now CN) either. Bill said that it was a still, silent, and white world, a winter during which living on Oakdene

Road with his parents, he skied to school with the snow almost covering the fences.

The Barrington Review reported on the storm on January 10, 1918 with this headline: “Barrington in Grip of Big Snowstorm: Railroads Suffer Greatest Damage but Make Good Time in Clearing Right of Way”. The snow started on Saturday night, January 5, and “increased in fury through the night, and raged all day Sunday, letting up a little in the afternoon and started again in the evening”. The area remained at a standstill for three days, and every able-bodied person was engaged in shoveling the walks, especially to the railroad depot.

John Robertson listened intently to Bill, for that winter, he had been serving in the frozen trenches of France, as the First World War entered another cruel year. He returned to Barrington, and later moved to California. But throughout his life, he came back to catch up and reminisce with his old friend Bill Klingenberg. And one of those memories was when snow overwhelmed the trains. Otherwise, since January 1, 1855, the railroad has been a constant timekeeper in Barrington’s history. 