

Shelbyville Main Street Project

An Oral History Project of Shelbyville, Kentucky's Main Street

Interviewer: Mark Mefford

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Interviewee: Ted Iglehart

Running Time: 39 minutes

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TED IGLEHART

**Shelbyville Main Street
Oral History Project**

**Interview was conducted
by Mark Mefford
1995**

TED IGLEHEART

INTERVIEWED BY MARK MEFFORD

Q. Why don't you start by telling me your full name.

A. Ted Louis Igleheart born February 17, 1930 here in Shelbyville. Lived here all my life 65 and a half years. Senior citizen status finally!

Q. What were your parents names?

A. James Haydon Igleheart and Gladys Hutchens Igleheart. She was from Chaplain and he was from Elizabethtown. They moved here in 1926 from a house on the east end of town next to the fairgrounds. It was the first Sears and Roebuck pre-made, prefabricated house. Still standing out there. Stucco, Spanish architecture.

Q. What did your father do for a living?

A. He was an auctioneer and later started an antique business, primarily run by my mother. Sold the Sears Roebuck house out there in 1942 and moved up to where the present Hall-Taylor Funeral Home is at 1185 West Main. And lived there I guess 20 years or more and built a one floor house on the back half of the lot till my father died they lived there. Mother died in 1970 father died in 1982 I believe it was.

Q. Did your mother work?

A. She just ran that antique shop till they sold the house where Hall Taylor Funeral Home is. Then, they both sort of retired. But he was still doing auctions up in the 70's. He owned a tobacco warehouse in Lake City South Carolina and did contract engineering-auctioneering here in Shelbyville at the Growers Warehouse until he retired in the mid 70's.

Q. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

A. There are five boys no girls. The oldest brother is Haydon Igleheart Jr., he's 75 now. The next one is Elliott Igleheart he is retired and was a teacher for the Fosteen's School for the Deaf in Vadelburg (?) Vermont. I'm the middle boy and my next brother is Ward Igleheart who's a farmer right here south of town. And the youngest is Julian Igleheart and he is a construction superintendent.

Q. So, some of them stayed around here and some of them went off.

A. Just three of us, the youngest three and the other two were scattered out from there.

Q. Are you married?

A. Married, to the former Elizabeth Craig from Mt. Vernon, Kentucky. We have three children the oldest is Gladys Woods who is married and has three little daughters and then we had twins a girl and a boy Ted Louis Igleheart the second and Margaret Sparks Igleheart. She is not married, but he is married and has a little

son that is two years old.

Q. Is your wife from around here?

A. No, she's from Mt. Vernon.

Q. Where did you all meet?

A. Met while we were at the University of Kentucky and I was in law school there after I graduated from Center in 1951 went over to UK law school and she was enrolled as an undergraduate there. We were married in 1957 then I did a two year stint in the army in Korea and then came back and finished law school in 1957 at U of K.

Q. What are some of your early memories of Shelbyville the downtown area?

A. I can remember two way traffic on Main Street. Washington Street wasn't built all the way through at the time. SO Main Street was two way, the main artery through town, heavy traffic. And 10th Street was the end of Washington Street, so you couldn't go all the way through town. And, they built that in the 40's from out at the Fair Grounds they made Washington Street one way west and Main Street one way east. I remember the inner urban streetcar-vividly! When I was a child the inner urban was regular it would pass in front of the house both ways, I remember not only the inner urban there, but where it went underneath the fair grounds entrance for where there was a bridge. Fair grounds came all the way out to Main Street at that time and the inner urban went underneath the bridge that served as the entrance to the Fairgrounds. And that hill was cut down when the inner urban ceased to exist and which was I guess in the late 30's. And then they tore up the inner urban tracks in the 40's for scrap for the second World War effort. Along with a lot of the cast iron fences that were in the front yards of houses on Main Street they took those for scrap iron.

Q. Did they buy them up or were they donated?

A. Donated to the government turned into war materials.

Q. Do you know why the inner urban shut down?

A. I think less and less traffic, less and less business. Funny thing, the inner urban caused a lot of interesting things to happen on Halloween especially. Where it was a great prank to a teenage boys to light it and fill it up behind the inner urban and pull the cable puller off the wire on Main Street before you get up to the top of the hill at Magnolia and pull that cable pulley off and of course were losing power and coasting all the way back down the hill to Plainview. And on Halloween night they were always build a bonfire in the middle of the tracks and pull the cable pulley off too. and they'd have to stop and put the fire out, and I know the inner urban conductor was frustrated with the pranks the teenage boys in Shelbyville.

Q. Do you remember any of the names of any of the conductors?

A. No, I don't remember, I guess in the thirties I was only 5,6,7 or 8--8 years old, I just remember the boys talking about it. My brother being a model.

Q. I guess you all lived in town, you did all your shopping in town.

A. All of our shopping was done in town. Had a grocery there in between 10th and 11th Street called Mitches Grocery where...(phone rings-interrupts conversation). Then I remember we used to be sent to the grocery for bread and things we could carry...bread and milk primarily and in the middle of the depression I can remember the family was having a hard time, Dad was done in South Carolina at the tobacco warehouse and mother would send us to the grocery for the boys and we would get staples, milk or bread or something else and walk back home. That's about a mile to the grocery and back up to the house and we would charge it. And I remember that grocery bill running up for months at a time sometimes. Those were hard times. And I can remember also my Mother, we only had one car at that time and Dad had the car in South Carolina in the summer and fall so my Mother would walk to the grocery. And she would also lot of afternoons walk downtown here to what was called Hollanbacks which is where the present Hays Law Office is I think. That was a kind of afternoon soda fountain and restaurant gathering place. She'd walk a mile downtown to have a coca cola with other Mothers and walk back home in the afternoon. It was a daily ritual, social gathering.

Q. So she did that a couple days a week?

A. Oh, nearly every day...she'd walk downtown to Hollanbacks. There was a big social gathering place for everybody. A lot of the me played golf and a lot of fishing. I can remember my parents talking about it, the men would golf and

Q. Where did they play golf at?

A. They began out here at the Zaring Farm which is now the High Point development and about 1932 or 3, somewhere along in there in the early 30's, they built a golf course out here to the KY Utilities lake. Mary Ross Lake-and formed a Country Club out there and that's been the golf course for I'd say until recently they built a nine hole at Clear Creek Park and then they built the Weissinger golf course over here off I-64 on Mt. Eden Road. Now we've got four golf courses another one out in the northwest part of the County.

Q. So, even when you were growing up, people were playing golf?

A. It's always been a big golf community and bridge community. That was the main social activity I think when I was growing up.

Q. Did men and women play bridge?

A. Yes

QQ. Did men and women golf?

A. Yeah, most of the social set played golf and bridge and there were as I recall several master bridge players, so it was a big thing.

Q. I guess Clear Creek runs right through town, is that where the fishing went on or did you go out to the lake to fish?

A. No, I think they fished out here at Mary Ross Lake some and then they would go to Morris Dam down in Tennessee or to Dale Hollow and Harrington Lake...they were the three big fishing lakes when I was growing up. And, most of the men fished in those lakes primarily and there was a group that always went to Canada in June every year. Briggs Lawson used to get up a group that went to Canada and I think that Briggs headed a Canadian Fishing expedition for thirty seven or eight straight years I think. Briggs was a merchant here in town. He retired a good many years ago, he's still living. He was a big sportsman and civic leader. I can remember too that out of that age group...Mr. Robert Matthews was the Mayor for a good long time. Mr. Matthews had three sons two of whom became lawyers and the youngest one became a newspaper publisher and out of that age group also was a lawyer by the name of Bernard Davis. He became a Court of Appeals Commissioner before he retired and died. That age group was, they were active sportsmen, fishermen, dove hunters, golfers, bridge players.

Q. Did they have annual dove shoots?

A. Oh every opening day September 1st now, I don't when it was then opening day then or not, but a lot of men went out dove shooting on opening day and used to have big dove shoots here. Especially on opening day...there'd be a hundred or two hundred dove shooters on a farm and then cook the doves and have a dove dinner at the end of the day when the shooting stopped.

Q. What other kinds of things do you remember?

A. I think Briggs Lawson will be remembered by two or three generations of people. He's way up in his 80's now, but he was a boy scout leader and crippled children's society leader instrumental in any civic organization in town. He had a men's store here in the center of town along with another fellow a store called Dices' here...Bill Dice and the store where this law office is and he worked until he was up in his 80's. Those men are the source for a lot of fond memories. Briggs Lawson, Bill Dice and Canard Davis, Robert Matthews...Briggs Lawsons brother Jack Lawson who ran Lawsons department Store across the street that is now an antique Mall. A lot of those businesses closed when the shopping centers opened and Walmarts ran a lot of the competition downtown off and this caused a lot of buildings to be vacated. Ten cent stores they put out of business, the little variety stores the clothing stores, the department stores. Walmart I guess has done that all over the country put the sole proprietorship businesses small businesses out of business by undercutting their prices. Couldn't stand the competition.

Q. When did the business downtown start closing?

A. Oh, I'd say in the 50's with the shoppers...in the 60's and 70's they began to have vacant stores downtown in the 80's the Walmart store come in here and put the rest of them out of business. SO downtown has lost a lot of it's businesses like Smith McKinney Drug Store which had a soda fountain and was also a big gathering place. And, Begley's Drug Store on the corner of 6th and Main ...had a soda fountain, those were social gathering places and they eventually closed and went out of business. Begley's moved out to one of the Shopping centers and Smith Mckinney closed its soda fountain I guess back in the 70's and they moved out to one of the shopping centers. You don't see those soda fountains or lunch counters closed...I guess that's happened all over the country too, the shopping centers draw away from the downtown and kills the social gathering places.

Q. Has anything taken their role socially...what do people do now, in absence of a social center?

A. Not like it used to be. Sometimes they go to restaurants in the morning for coffee in the morning down at Southwind. Used to have coffee down here at Sarahs restaurant downtown, but that's about ceased. The main coffee gathering places are Southwinds or J.T.'s market out east of town.

Q. Do you think a lot of people just stay home?

A. Well, television and air conditioning has changed peoples habits drastically. People don't come out for social activities anymore. They don't sit out on their porches like they used to do on Main Street and other houses. Air conditioning changed all that. People don't want to go out to meetings anymore. Television changed that...you can stay home and watch television...it's changed the way of life. When I was growing up in the 30's 40's people set out on their porches or in the front yard in lawn chairs every night after supper. There was a lot of neighborliness and visiting around. That's all but ceased...television and air conditioning remains the main contributing factors to that I would guess. I can also remember in the 30's, of course the depression was going on, but we often would have hobos come to the back door and not just hobo's but people that were out of work would come to the back door and ask for dinner or would be glad to work for their supper. And, I remember often times my Mother fixing a plate of food and a stranger sitting at the table or on the back steps or on the back porch with a meal.

Q. Where did they come from?

A. Transients primarily...looking for work. You wont ever see that anymore. My Mother ran a tourist home there too in the 30's and the early 40's. To help make enough to make ends meet...you don't see tourist homes anymore. Hotels have taken that business I guess.

Q. What kind of things went on at the tourist homes? Was it

a...

A. Spend the night and have supper, and maybe breakfast the next morning. I can remember maybe 8 or 10 tourist homes

Q. So, did you do this right out of your house?

A. yeah.

Q. So you just kept a room for guests?

A. Yeah, there would be a sign out front "tourists" and salesmen passing through, or visitors in town would stay in a tourist home. And you have a guest room that you rented out to tourist, or salesmen, or transients on their way through. You'd rent a room out to them and fix supper and breakfast the next morning.

Q. How much per room did your Mother charge for something like that?

A. OH, seems to me like it was four or five dollars a night. From my recollection I guess that included the meals. But 4 or 5 dollars was what, 20 or 30, 40 dollars now.

Q. Wouldn't even get you the meal!

A. You'd spend that on dinner. There was one poor neighbor back in the ...I think neighborliness was more important to people. Slower pace of life...people thought nothing of walking downtown to Hollanbacks or to the soda fountains and waling back, which might be a half mile or mile walk...not everybody had two cars. The husband had the car and the wife was home raising children. But, all that changed in the 40's when women went to work in the factories and found out that that additional income with maybe the husband off in the service was necessary to keep going. And, then after the war, women continued to work and that additional income enabled them to buy washing machines, drying machines, televisions, and things that are now thought to be necessities. That extra income with the wife working produced to buy those things that maybe only the rich people had in the 30's and 40's. But of course that had a bad downside of it. It produced children who's parents were out of the home...the mother wasn't home after the 40's the children came home from school and nobody's home...juvenile delinquency increased drastically, and its been increasing ever since. Most homes now, both parents are working and that's made child rearing secondary, in my way of thinking. Its caused family problems, crime increases, juvenile delinquency...drastic change to family life. Its a big difference now from life in the 30's and 40's...drastic changes...

Q. What other kinds of changes went on?

A. Well, I think its changed our outlook towards making a living. It's increased the pressure for equal rights for women, cause for women to assert themselves to gain equal pay for equal work...which I think is fair and right. But it's made the home suffer in the process I think...my personal opinion. Now a lot of women are trying to have a career and be a mother and I think homemaking is a full time job. It was back in the 30's..very few women worked unless they were divorced or widowed and they were making a home for children. The men were out working...but now,

most homes have two breadwinners...(phone rings)

Q. We were talking about the breakdown of the family with two people working...

A. yeah, I think that's been the big change from the 30's and 40's.

Q. In the 30's and 40's were there any annual events fairs, anything like that?

A. Shelby County fair was a big social event of the year. In the thirties, people were still taking picnic lunches over there. Some people would come in from the country before that I understand on horse back, or horse and buggy and bring their food for the day and spend the whole day. Using underneath the old amphitheater which burned as a kind of lunch room, spend the whole day, everyday and drive back home or stay in a tourist home. Come back the next day and they'd show their horses their cattle and their calves and exhibit their vegetables and the tobacco and their crafts and compete for prizes in what was called Floral Hall at that time. That's been torn down and replaced.

Q. How did they get their livestock there?

A. They'd bring them in I suppose by pulling behind a buggy. I remember in the thirties a lot of people brought them in as they do now in trucks and some of them would ride their horses in and show them and compete in the horse show. That Shelby County Fair is over 120 years old was a big, big annual event and it was one of the biggest horse shows in the state. Traditionally the last county fair before the state fair. It gradually deteriorated especially after the amphitheater burned till the horsemen here got together and put on a special horse show which is now a big annual event.

I can remember too that dances from the Hunt Club which was a bachelors dance club was big things when I was growing up and even up into the 40's and 50's there was a mens dance club called the Hop Club and the women's dance club called the Cotillion Club and they would put dances on during the fair, during the summer, anytime you'd have a cotillion ball or Hop Club Dance and a lot of communities in central Kentucky also had Hop Clubs and Cotillion Clubs and you'd go around and especially during the summer and at Christmas time and visit the Hop club Dances or Cotillion Dances at Eminence, Danville, Harrodsburg, Campbellsville, Springfield, Frankfort, Lexington, Louisville, a lot of the same guys and gals would go to the different dances in the other surrounding communities during the year. But that died out I think in the 50's. Those were fond memories.

Q. Were there other annual events, festivals...

A. Tobacco festival was a big thing it was put on by the Chamber of Commerce and was an annual event in the fall in September and October. Thousands of people would come into town and would watch the coon drag races and the tobacco shows at the warehouse and a

big parade warehouses and the banks and civic clubs and high school band would participate in the parade and either the governor or Lt. Governor or United States Senator would be the grand marshal. And, they would talk downtown on the Court House steps. Back then when a politician came into town it was a big event...I can remember Happy Chandler coming into town and my father took him from one end of town and introduced him to the merchants and Happy Chandler had a phenomenal memory for names and I can remember my father telling me that he took Happy Chandler down one side of Main Street introducing him to everybody in the stores and there were lots of people in the stores in those days and times. Stores stayed open until 10:00 at night especially on Saturday when town was crowded and every parking place was filled. People came to town on Saturday to do their shopping then visit on the sidewalks or sat on their cars and hollered at their friends as they passed and didn't go home until 9 or 10 o'clock. Happy Chandler was introduced to people on one side of Main Street and then (tape runs out..)

Mark: So Happy runs into a fellow at Smith McKinney Drug Store
A. And he calls him by name as they walked in the door and had met him on the other side of the street, during that period of time he had met I know over 100 people but he called him by name, seeing him again on the other side of the street, seeing him in the drugstore. And, I thought that was impressive, but when I worked for him at the Governors office, he did the same thing..it was a chore for me to remember a fellows name from reception room to the Governors office to introduce him to the Governor and before I could introduce him the Governor would call him by name no matter where he was from out in the state and asked about his wife and call her name and ask about the children and what was going on in Princeton or Paducah or where ever ...I never ceased to be amazed at that kind of memory. But, it was interesting...politicians would have a speaking on the Court House steps or in the amphitheater out at the Fairgrounds. Thousands would come to those political speakings. Happy Chandler or Earl Clemments, or Senator Barkley or John Y. Brown, Senior, King Johnson, I can remember those rallys out there four or 5 thousand people would come...it was a big thing. Now a politician is lucky to draw ten people at the Court House steps and those days of stump speaking are gone except for Fancy Farm.

Q. When did stump speaking die out?

A. I'd say in the 50's (phone rings....)
The last big political rally I ever remember was out at the Fair Grounds amphitheater was Earl Clemments...and I remember one political rally, don't remember if it was his or not but part of the grandstand collapsed and injured several people for it was crowded...big political rally...grandstand collapsed and hurt several people. But, those days are gone. Now it's television and money... people are not going to come out and sit in an un-airconditioned amphitheater or even come to an air conditioned court room or air conditioned meeting room they'd rather stay home

and watch television...it's all changed.

Q. How long have you been an attorney here in Shelbyville?

A. oh, about 39 years started practice here in 1957.

Q. You have a private practice now?

A. Yeah.

Q. What kind of public positions have you held?

A. Well I started out in private practice in 57 and went to the Governors office in 57, stayed there through 59 when Burt Combs was elected Governor and Happy Chandler went out of office... I came back and started private practice again. And was elected City Judge and served about three years and with private practice and was elected County attorney in 1969 and served 8 years. Spent four years as a defense attorney and then was elected commonwealth Attorney that covers three counties...Shelby, Spencer and Anderson. Elected to that position in 1981 and served 12 years and started back into private law practice last year. I'm semi-retired now and drawing social security and KY retirement whatever I want to do in private practice. Been active in a lot of hobbies though with the Historic Society and done a lot of research on Squire Boone and other early Kentucky Pioneers, several in KY. And, play golf and tennis every week fish when I can and read a lot. Enjoy private practice.

Q. What do you think is unique about Shelbyville?

A. People and the land, and the location. It s a conservative community, primarily agriculturally related business until recently, becoming more and more industrialized as the big industries have moved in which has changed our population of the type of people. Industrial executives industrial workers have moved in a lot from out of town a lot from out of state. Which has increased traffic congestion here, put pressure on the schools, highways in the county, but the people are conservative, religious, majority belong to churches, attend churches its an active religious community. Primarily Baptist, but there are a lot of active Baptist, Methodist, Church of Christ, Christian Church and Pentecostal, active...and I think its' and agricultural community, spiritual community its a business community and I think we're warm and friendly to new comers...awful lot of newcomers have moved in the last 10 or 15 years.

Q. Industry?

A. Primarily industry...lot of our young people have moved out..from farms to urban areas and industrial executive jobs, law offices in the City...farmers are having a harder and harder time making it and providing jobs for their kids, so these people are getting an education and moving to other communities...Louisville, Lexington, Cincinnati or Washington D.C. or somewhere else.

Industries I think have helped provide jobs for some of these

people, but most of the young people have moved out to other business opportunities in the urban areas. So it's changed from agricultural community to agricultural and business industry. The tobacco growers in trouble which is the main agricultural staple in the county. We've been the third largest burley tobacco market in the world and now the tobacco growers are in such difficult circumstances that people are going to have to find some other products to raise. Which is just further distress for farmers.. a lot of these farmers have had to get other jobs, full time jobs at a plant or industry. There are a world of farmers and other people that leave town every day and go to state government in Frankfort

or jobs in Louisville at the Ford plant or GE some of these other big plants, International Harvester, that's closed, this involves thousands of people everyday leaving here. Come back home and tend their tobacco crop or corn crop or livestock and sleep here and leave the next morning early and go to their job in Louisville, Frankfort, or somewhere else. SO that's changed the town.

Got good fertile land here, just being gradually eaten up surrounding the town...because of developing the subdivisions. We've got some of the best land in the state for agriculture, but a lot of its getting covered up by residential development. But its a land of agriculture, good people, good location in the triangle between Louisville, Lexington and Cincinnati, for future growth and industry, I think the future is good for business here.

Q. Well, that's about all I have, is there anything else you'd like to add? That you've been wanting me to ask you and I haven't'?

A. Well, I haven't thought of anything else.