

Herbert Bowie talks with Bernie Loveless in 1980, explaining his job on a rail gang in 1930.

Mr. Bowie: No, they stand face-to-face, and one drive — you stand like this.

Mr. Loveless: Are you going to show me how? You going to show me how they do it?

Mr. Bowie: Yeah, one on that side.

Mr. Loveless: All right. You want me to stand over here?

Mr. Bowie: Yeah.

Mr. Loveless: Okay. Let me stand over here.

Mr. Bowie: See, one on that side of the rail and one over on this side.

Mr. Loveless: Yeah, on each side of the rails.

Mr. Bowie: That's right. And take a spike apiece.

Mr. Loveless: Oh, each man — you drove on one side of the rail and I'd drive on the other?

Mr. Bowie: That's right.

Mr. Loveless: And they'd drive the heck out of it.

Mr. Bowie: Yesiree.

Mr. Loveless: How many blows would it take to drive —

Mr. Bowie: Two.

Mr. Loveless: Two?

Mr. Bowie: Yeah, two or three. It wouldn't take Morsell three.

Mr. Loveless: Joe Morsell could really bang them in?

Mr. Bowie: Yesiree.

Mr. Loveless: That's really interesting.

And that's mostly what you did?

Mr. Bowie: Yes.

Mr. Loveless: And when you said you ground the rails or how did you describe that — like you were actually polishing the rail or —

Mr. Bowie: No, no, we lay the rail, you know, for the train.

Mr. Loveless: Yeah.

Mr. Bowie: Sometimes when the rail would get twisted or broke or something, you had to put a new rail in but not very often. But my job mostly was putting in ties, and spiking, and busting up the track. Once in awhile a rail would break and we'd put in a new rail.