

'A CENTURY OF MEMORIES'
OF VAN WERT, IOWA
1880 - 1890

IOWA
DECATUR COUNTY
LONG CREEK TOWNSHIP

IOWA'S FIRST CITIZENS, THE INDIANS, CALLED IOWA, "BEAUTIFUL LAND."

Louis Joliet and father, Jacques Marquette, Frenchmen, were the first white men to set foot on Iowa soil in 1673. In 1803, the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory, including the present Iowa, from France for \$15,000.00.

The Missouri Compromise in 1820 made the Iowa region free territory. In 1838 the territory of Iowa was established with Robert Lucas as the first governor over a population of 22,859. Iowa became the twenty-ninth state on December 28, 1846, with a population of 102,388.

The County of Decatur was not officially organized until April 1, 1850 and was named for a naval hero, Samuel Decatur of the War of 1812. In July 1850, the county which is the center of the southern tier of counties in the state, was divided into four townships, and later in 1856, Samuel Forrey, county attorney, organized and named Long Creek Township, last of seven townships.

Florence was settled in 1853 and on June 29, 1855 the town lots were sold at public auction. The original town contained fourteen blocks and additions have been added from time to time.

The name was afterward changed to Prairie City, Prairie Villa, and Prairie Ville, and on APRIL 1, 1880 to VAN WERT.

TO OUR PIONEERS

There were gently rolling prairie, small rivers, and creeks where trees grew. Here, too, along the streams were the hills and the bottom land. This was the territory our pioneers settled in as described by Himena Hoffman in her "History of Decatur County".

Much has been written by our historians of the hardships our early settlers faced as they traveled to reach their new promised land.

With this in mind, we will only briefly mention our pioneers and let your own imagination remember what our historians have written.

The following information on our pioneers that settled in Long Creek Township was taken from the "Biographical and Historical Record of Ringgold and Decatur Counties, 1887".

Wm. Cole, born in Tennessee, settled on Sec. 7, 1850; Geo. A. Hamilton in Ohio, Sec. 34, 1851, the third settler in Long Creek Twp.; Robert and Nancy McKee, Ohio, Sec. 17, 1856 where their son, James M. (Mattie and wife Paulona (Mahaffy), also reside, (Great grandparents of Nolan Foland). James Irving and Lambert Taylor, both on Sec. 13, 1853 or 54. Edward and Margaret J. (Materlee) Upfield, England and Michigan, Sec. 34, 1856 (Grandparents of Carl Upfield); E.P. and Martha (McKee) Woodard, Ohio, Sec. 30, 1857; Wm. and Elizabeth (Robinson) West, Ohio, Sec. 20, 1854; James and M. Louisa (Baker) Blair, Pennsylvania, Sec. 24, 1856; Stephen Strong, Sec. 35, 1855; Henry Barrickman, Maryland, Sec. 13, 1855; F.M. and Mary (McDaniel) Thompson, Ohio and Illinois, Sec. 13, 1859; E.W. and Mary (Criswell) Fierce, Ohio, Sec. 35, 1860; E.W. and Mary M. (Mcintire) Fierce, Ohio and Illinois, Sec. 34, 1860; Wm. E. and Ann (West) Fierce, Indiana and Ohio, Sec. 34, 1867; John A. Goin, first !

wife, Jane Haynes, second, Myra Cox, born Tennessee, Sec. 7, 1863; N.C. Spencer and second wife, Lucinda Eason, New York, Sec. 14, 1865; Peter and Mary E. (Birtt) Imhoff, Pennsylvania, Sec. 25, 1866; Elizah and Salina (Hiner) Tillotson, Sec. 24; Harrod and Mahala (Thompson) Leonard, Indiana and Illinois, Sec. 23 and 27, 1866; Umphrey Jones born 1848 in Montgomeryshire, North Wales, married Elizabeth (Parry) born in 1854 in Montgomeryshire, Sec. 13; and others.

A brief summary of some of our pioneers that has been found in the History of Decatur County (Volume II) 1915, and family information.

Ralph Hatfield settled and farmed in the Van Wert area around 1839, being one of the first voters in Decatur County. Ralph married Elizabeth Warrick and to this union four children were born: Thomas, Hannah, Sarah and Grant, Ulysses Grant Hatfield remained in the Van Wert area while the others moved to different parts of Decatur County. On September 5, 1894, Grant was united in marriage to Elizabeth Collins. To this union eleven children were born: Pearle (Schuldt), Dewey, Edith (Boles), Jessie (Lee), Merle (Davis, Alva, Nealy (Murphy), Wilbur, Burbank, Marie (Boles) and Irene (Neff). Many of the 108 direct Hatfield descendants still live in the Van Wert area, working and/or farming the land. Many remain skilled carpenters, a family tradition. These 108 direct descendants represent five generations.

James and Margaret Ramsey came to Iowa in 1850. their small son, Thomas B., born in Hancock County in eastern Tennessee, April 1, 1846, came with them. James and Margaret Ramsey came to Iowa with their parents, traveling by flat boat down the Tennessee River to the Ohio River, by steamboat down the Ohio and up the Mississippi to Keokuk, Iowa and from there overland to Davis County, Iowa, where they spent the winter of 1850 and 1851. In the spring of 1851, they moved to Decatur County, settling in the wilds, then roamed by Indians in the northwest part of Long Creek Township. They made their home in the unbroken country and became parents of W.A. Ramsey. Dr. Alexander, Mrs. A.J. (Becky Ann) Edwards, Mrs. J.E. (Isabell) Smith, as well as the older son, T.B. Ramsey. These children grew up in Long Creek and most had families that remained.

William E. Fierce, a prominent farmer of Long Creek Township, resided in Section 34. He was born March 10, 1843, in Hamilton County, Indiana. He enlisted and served in the Civil War. In 1867, he was united in marriage to Miss Anna West, a native of Ohio, now living in Decatur County. Their children are Charlie F., E.W., William W., Mertie, Edward, Nellie, Bertha and Dora.

The mail for the surrounding neighborhood was tossed from the train and each neighbor came for his mail at the Fierce home.

Mr. and Mrs. Fierce were members of the Van Wert Methodist Protestant Church. Following his death, Mrs. Fierce Moved to Van Wert and resided there until her death, May 15, 1935.

E.W. Fierce was raised in Long Creek Township. He attended district schools and also the Van Wert Schools. He began farming at an early age, his work involved farming and stockraising. In November, 1899, E.W. married Anna E. Stearns. Three children were born; Arthur, Beulah and Russell. He was a member of the Republican party, and served as township trustee. He was also a member of the Methodist Church.

Hon. Melbern F. Thompson, although not raised in Long Creek, moved to Van Wert at the age of 32. He was involved in farming and Real Estate. Also for ten years, he was in the grain and lumber business. In 1912, he was chosen as State Representative on the Democratic ticket. Other offices he held were township clerk, town clerk, and mayor. He was a member of the Christian Church.

Charles F. Fierce, attended the country schools in Long Creek Township. He grew up on a farm and helped with the farming. He was 20 years old when he rented some land and began farming for himself. Besides

farming his own, he also farmed other people's land. His work, like his brother's, E.W. Fierce, involved farming and stockraising. On May 10, 1891, Charles was married to Margaret Barrickman. Three children were born, Helene, Gerald and Lucille. Mr. Fierce was a member of the Republican Party. He also served as township trustee. For six years, he was director of School District No. 2 of Long Creek Township. He and his family were members of the Methodist Church.

Edmund J. Blair was raised in Long Creek Township. When he became of age, he began teaching school. He taught for 27 terms, teaching in Van Wert and Clarke County. During the summers he farmed, renting land until 1879, when he began purchasing land of his own. In addition to growing the usual crops, he raised high grade Duroc-Jersey hogs, feeding about 140 head per year. In April 1891, Mr. Blair married Magdaline Kemp. Five children were born, Harry J., Wilbur P., Arthur, Josephine and Edmund W. Mr. Blair was a Republican and also served as Justice of the Peace for Franklin Township. He served as trustee for Franklin and Long Creek Townships. He was also assessor for Franklin township. He and his family were members of the Methodist Church.

Zebedee Parmer and his wife, Angeletta Ward, along with their six children are known to have resided in Knox township about five miles northwest of Van Wert as early as 1856. (This is according to the Iowa census.)

The oldest son, Joseph Thomas Parmer, went into the Civil War from this vicinity in 1862. After the discharge of J.T. in 1865, he returned to Van Wert and married Mary Ann Guy on October 10, 1865. They were farmers. Eight children were born to this union.

Elijah Burton, the oldest son of Joseph and Mary, was born in Long Creek Township November 10, 1878 and married Della Sissel of Kellerton on May 24, 1903. They had thirteen children, all born in or near Van Wert. This family was also farmers. Elijah died in 1929 and is buried in the Van Wert Cemetery. Della, at the age of 93, lives with a daughter in Hartford, Iowa. the children of Elijah and Della are: Elsie, Blanche, Clifford, Ruby, James (Otis), Violet, Harold (Bud), Howard (Glen), Lawney (Don), Betty and Della. Audra Mae died at the age of four months. Clarence (Dick) died in 1971. Both are buried in Van Wert Cemetery. At the present time the Parmers in or near Van Wert make a total of seven generations in this vicinity.

George C. Redman was born April 17, 1873 on a farm south of Grand River. His parents, George Redman and Louisa (Fear) Redman, both came from southwest England. When he was a small boy, the family moved to the farm where Frank Binning lives today. The old homestead is still standing on the Binning farm.

George's schooling was attained at the Good Hope School. When he was thirteen, his father died, thus, his schooling was over, as he had to care for the farm and be responsible for his mother, an older sister, Cara Binning, and brothers, Bert and Ben.

Around the turn of the century, he spent two years working around Big Piney, Wyoming.

After his mother remarried, he and his two brothers batched, on the farm, where Roland Redman lives today.

On February 17, 1905, he was married to Carrie A. Smith. They continued to live on this same farm, and raised six children, Margaret Watson, George S., Louise Perry, Harry, Viola Chastain, and Roland. Hazel Virginia died in infancy.

Besides farming, George was in the cattle buying business with his brother, Ben, often taking car loads of cattle into Chicago. Around 1917 or 1918, he was en route to Chicago with cattle, when the train was wrecked, killing cattle, sheep and seven of the men. The wreck happened between Gailsburg and Chicago.

They were hit in the rear by a passenger train. Frank Manley of Osceola was killed. Henry Schmitt of Van Wert and Floyd Twombly of Osceola were also passengers. Manley's body was so mangled, he was identified by cuff links and tie, which George brought home to his wife, Mattie.

George and Ben were also hog buyers, having their office near the Van Wert Depot. After Ben's death in 1939, George continued the business until his death in December 1953. The family lived at their homestead until 1939, when they moved to the present Carrie Redman home. We believe that George's dad was the first to ship cattle from Delray and George was the last, as the North-South lines were done away with in 1936.

Temple and Elizabeth Gibson:

Elizabeth Gibson was born in North Carolina, December 27, 1816, and died in Van Wert, Iowa, April 3, 1909, aged 92. She married Temple Gibson in 1834 and moved to Indiana with other relatives in 1838. In 1854 they moved to a farm in the vicinity of what was to become Van Wert. Temple Gibson died June 22, 1896. They had nine children, most of whom died before Elizabeth's death. Her daughter, Martha Gibson, married John Gibson, a Civil War veteran. She is buried beside her husband in the Van Wert Cemetery. One of her descendants was Temple Craft, who operated a hotel in Van Wert for many years.

Malona Jane Gibson (Devore, Waterman):

Malona Gibson, a niece of Elizabeth Gibson, was born in 1834, and came to Van Wert with other relatives in 1854. She was married to William DeVore. Their children were: Eliza DeVore (Thompson), William DeVore, Thomas DeVore, and Elizabeth Devore (Wise). William DeVore Sr. enlisted in the Missouri Home Guard, where he was accidentally killed. Malona, who was married for a few years later to John Waterman, lived all the rest of her life in Van Wert. She died in November of 1920, at the age of 86 and is buried in Van Wert Cemetery.

Francis Marion Thompson:

Francis Marion Thompson was a volunteer in the Third Iowa Cavalry in the Civil War and was a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge. His wife was Nancy Thompson. the family home was located just southwest of the Van Wert Cemetery. Two of their children, who remained in Van Wert were Jack Thompson, who was the father of Loren Thompson and Henry Alexander Thompson. Francis Marion Thompson was also the half-brother of John Thompson and Jane Murray, life-long residents of Van Wert. He died in 1889 and is buried in Van Wert Cemetery.

Henry Alexander Thompson and Eliza (DeVore) Thompson:

Henry and Eliza Thompson (born in 1855) were the parents of Bessie Githens, Ray Thompson, Millie Baxter and two sons, Roy and Floyd, who died unmarried. Their daughter, Millie, was married to Joseph Baxter and had two daughters, Thelma Courtney and Hazel Green. She died February 13, 1913 at the age of 23. Her father died on the same day and they were buried side by side in Van Wert Cemetery. Eliza Thompson died September 15, 1935.

OUR PIONEERS WHO WERE BORN IN THIS COMMUNITY AND LIVE HERE PRESENTLY:

Carrie (Smith) Redman - December 12, 1880
William (Bill) Pelsor - May 16, 1882
Bessie (Young) Glen - July 13, 1887
Cecile Pelsor - August 13, 1890

Carrie Ann (Smith) Redman:

Peter Smith (Carrie's grandfather) was born in Yorkshire, England, May 13, 1795. He married Martha Ellison of Sutton January 26, 1819. In 1836 with the declining prospects of business, and large family, Peter decided to immigrate to the U.S.A. In April 1835, they left Liverpool, landing in New York, having several places in mind. Mr. Smith heard of the "Blackhawk Purchase" in Iowa, so they came by teams in August, 1835. They crossed the Mississippi River and settled southwest of Burlington. These times the Sac and Fox Indians were in large numbers and needed food. In the year 1839, Carrie's father, George Smith, was born, being the second white child to be born this side of the Mississippi River. Times were hard, not much food, and furniture was scarce. He married Margaret Jane Sharp May 3, 1855. Three children were born at Burlington. Mr. Smith decided he wanted to move on west and so he and two brothers, Jim and Ed, came by horseback to Decatur County and bought!

land around Van Wert, George buying south where Clifton Redman lives now. He later bought where his granddaughter, Margaret Watson, now lives. Later he bought the farm north of the east side of the road known as the Strong Farm. Mr. and Mrs. Smith had six more children of which Carrie was the seventh child. Carrie married George Redman and now lives in the Leisure Manor in Osceola. Carrie attended Hawkeye Country School and the Van Wert High School. At the time that Theodore Roosevelt came through Van Wert by train, stopping at the depot for a political speech, Carrie had the honor to wait on tables at the Raf Porter Hotel. In 1904, Carrie married George C. Redman who lived just west of her folks' home. George and two brothers lived on his farm. His home was a two-room home. In 1908, they built a new home, with seven rooms, this being where Roland now lives. Seven children were born to this couple, the youngest, Hazel Virginia, dying when three months old, Margar!

et Watson, George S. Redman, Louise Perry, Harry Redman, Viola Chastain and Roland Redman. George and Carrie had a happy life together. George passed away in December 1953. They traveled to many places and Carrie now can recall many things of the past. In 1939, they built a new home which was a short distance from their old home, where she lived alone until 1978. She raised cattle for several years with George J. (Jack) and Roland, farming the ground. When she was 10 years old, she went to Danville to live with her aunt, Allie Sharp, which was her mother's brother's wife, they not having any children. She attended the Danville School for 17 months. She, with her parents, made several trips by team and covered wagon from Van Wert to Danville to visit their parents, taking three days and nights to make the trip one way. They camped along the road. Carrie and friends went for eleven years on bus trips which she enjoyed and she has the honor of visiting all states exce!

pt Delaware, also going into Canada and Old Mexico. Carrie's mother lived to be 92 and her grandmother, 101. Her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Smith, celebrated their 50th anniversary in January, 1869. Carrie's parents, the George Smiths, celebrated theirs in May, 1915. Carrie's daughter, Margaret, and husband celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in February, 1974.

Will E. (Bill) Pelsor:

Will E. Pelsor, known to all as "Bill", was born in Ellsworth County, Kansas, on May 16, 1882 to George and Alice (Warner) Pelsor. Bill came to Van Wert when he was 8 years of age. Farming and carpenter work were his livelihood. On March 15, 1922 he was married to Cecile Irving, daughter of William and Alice Edmondson Irving. Cecile was born in Van Wert on August 13, 1890 and is the granddaughter of James Irving, a prominent pioneer of Van Wert. Cecile and Bill have two sons, Max and Merlin (resides with parents). Bill had one brother, Frank, and one sister, Carrie Ramsey. Cecile had one sister, Mae, and five brothers, Cordell, Ora, Fred, and twins, Vernie and Ernie.

Bessie (Young) Glenn:

Bessie was born on July 13, 1887 in Decatur County, near DeKalb. She was the youngest child of Andrew Jackson Young and Rachel Jane (Wilson) Young. They had nine children, with Bessie being the only one still living today. She married David Steward Glenn in Decatur County on December 25, 1903. To this

union four children were born, Emmett, Madge, Eldon and Lois (now a resident of Van Wert). Bessie's grandparents were both born in Kentucky, John Landis Young on May 9, 1775 and Judha (Goldsmith) Young on December 25, 1800. In 1829, they moved to Indiana, later to Missouri, and then to Iowa. Bessie now resides in the care center in Leon.

Lillie Corsbie - July 2, 1891
Flossie Ramsey - November 11, 1891
Mary Ellen Palmer - August 29, 1892
Clair Palmer - March 27, 1893
Dewey Hatfield - February 3, 1899
Carol Vern Palmer - March 17, 1899
Vernie Grimm - October 5, 1899
Clarence (Bud) Fry - July 28, 1900
Willie DeVore - September 25, 1900

Lillie (Fierce) Corsbie:

Lillie was born July 2, 1891 on a farm 2 1/2 miles southeast of Van Wert. Her parents, John C. and Emma Fierce, bought this farm and moved there on March 1, 1891. She attended school at Popcorn and has been a member of the Van Wert Methodist Church since childhood. Lillie married Ivan Corsbie on August 12, 1914. The newlyweds made their home on the farm where she was born and were partners in farming the 60 1/2 years they were married. Ivan passed away January 5, 1975. Lillie still lives here and loves to work in her flower garden. Their children are Mrs. Emmett (Mamie Gordon) Craig, Mrs. Bernard (Mildred) Adams, Mrs. James (Mabel) Horney, all living around the Popcorn corner, and Merlyn Corsbie of Des Moines.

William Dewey Hatfield:

Dewey was born February 3, 1899, Decatur County, son of Ulysses Grant Hatfield (family mentioned in other section of pioneers). Dewey married Beulah (Perks) Stanford, March 29, 1954. Dewey farmed and drove a school bus before retiring and moving to the town of Van Wert.

Vernie C. Grimm:

Vernie was the second son of George and Lula (Foland) Grimm, born October 5, 1899. His brothers and sisters are Elba, Opal, Orma and Clifford. Vernie married Nellie Reed, eldest daughter of W.E. and Effie (Fleharty) Reed on February 24, 1924. Nellie passed away Sept. 9, 1975. They had eleven children, two of which died in infancy, Ina and Nina, and Dale, Orvetta, Vernice, Clara, Orma, Merna, Dean, Carol and Estell.

Mary Ellen Palmer:

Mary Ellen (Collins) Palmer was born August 29, 1892. Her father, Luke Collins, and mother, Clarinda Jane (Hall) were married October 12, 1891. To this union besides Mary Ellen, were sisters, Maggillone, Jessie Millie, Dolly, Olive, Ivah, Myrie, and Beulah and brothers, Earl, Frank and Myron. On July 2, 1919, Mary Ellen married Robert Anderson Palmer, born October 24, 1860, son of Minus Palmer. When Robert was three weeks old, his mother passed away and his grandmother McJimsey raised him. His stepmother was Evie Palmer. Ellen and Robert had three girls, Waneta, Vondean and a twin who died at birth. Ellen was born west of Van Wert. At the age of one year she accompanied her parents to Hamilton County, Nebraska. When she was 9 years old, they returned to Van Wert. She has lived most of her life in Van Wert always busy with rug making, quilting, crocheting and gardening. Robert was a farmer and had a mill. Robert, being married previously to Sarah Palmer, had the f!

ollowing children still residing near or in Van Wert:

Flossie Ramsey:

Flossie Leath (Palmer) Ramsey was born November 11, 1891, daughter of Robert Anderson Palmer and Sarah Christine (Stout) Palmer. Flossie married Willie Marion Ramsey in 1918. Willie was born November, 1894. They had two daughters, Louise and Evelyn.

Clair Sherman Palmer:

Clair was born March 27, 1893. He married Hettie Ermal Euritt, daughter of William and Cora Euritt. They had three daughters, Atha, Ruth and Ermal and one son, Lawrence. Clair was a farmer.

Carroll Vern Palmer:

Vern was born March 17, 1899 and married Sarah Olive (Collins). Their children were Carroll, Robert, Raymond, Harold, Wayne and Christine. Vern was a farmer.

Clarence (Bud) Fry:

Bud was born July 28, 1900, Decatur County, son of William E. and Rebecca Mae Fry. He married Edna Young and to this marriage four children were born, Billie, Deloris, Eilene and Ricky. Bud worked on the railroad.

Willie Elwood DeVore:

Willie was the son of William Spencer and Sapharona Mae DeVore. He was born September 25, 1900 in Decatur County. Bill married Martha (Fry), born November 20, 1904, on March 28, 1923 and to this marriage two sons were born, Raymond and William. Willie had brothers, Harry, Clyde, Clair, John, Spencer, Ernest and Leo. Martha had three brothers, Charlie, David and Donald; three sisters, Ruby, Helen and Addie.

Not to be forgotten are our Senior Citizens living at the present time but are not pioneers of our community.

Mary E. (Bessie) Cochran - June 1, 1883
John Hildor - March 3, 1890

Mary E. (Bessie) Cochran:

Bessie was born June 1, 1883 on a farm northwest of Woodburn in Clarke County. She was the youngest of eight children of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Lee. She was in the first graduating class of Woodburn High School, teaching school the same year that she graduated.

She was married to Levi Cochran, November 23, 1902. Six children were born to this union: Leota (Johnson), Clayton, Hope (Paschall), twins Donald (deceased) and Doris (Douthitt), and Betty (Redman). They moved into the Van Wert area in 1936. Levi was engaged in farming and operating a portable mill. Mr. Cochran passed away in October 1972, just one month short of celebrating 70 years of marriage. A highlight of Bessie's golden years was her trip to Hawaii to visit her grandson and a niece at the age of 93 years.

John Hildor:

John was born in Montgomery County on March 3, 1890, near Red Oak, Iowa. On April 27, 1950, he married Neva Krouch of LeRoy. John and Neva have worked at various state hospitals before coming to Van Wert to live in April, 1955. John has farmed and also was a farm worker. Neva has two sisters, Lucille Slagg and Letha Krouch.

Alta DeVore - February 10, 1892
Sharon Twombly - September 14, 1895
Willard Wood - February 2, 1898
Mildred Hockmuth - July 20, 1898

Alta DeVore:

Alta was born February 10, 1892 near Lorimor, daughter of George and Abigail Holman. On June 11, 1911, she was married to Harrison (Harry) DeVore, born September 10, 1889, near Van Wert, the son of William and Sapharona Palmer. Harry and Alta had one son, Gene.

Sharon Dale Twombly:

Sharon was born in Clarke County, September 14, 1895. He was the son of Ulyses Grant Twombly and Sarah Ellen Watkins, both born in Clarke County. (English descent). His parents were farmers and he had one sister, Gurney. Sharon married Grace South April 18, 1931. They have one daughter, Virginia. Sharon was a farmer and worked as lineman for the Van Wert Telephone Company over 21 years.

Willard Wood:

Willard was born February 2, 1898 near Weldon in Decatur County. He was the son of William and Mary Wood. Willard married Cecil, daughter of Ed and Ollie Williams, on January 8, 1920 and had lived near Van Wert until a few years ago when they retired from farming and moved to Osceola.

Laura Mildred (Huffman) Hockmuth:

Mildred was born July 20, 1898, daughter of Delbert and Margaret Huffman. She married Samuel Herman Hockmuth. Mr. and Mrs. Hockmuth came to Van Wert where Mr. Hockmuth was the Assembly of God minister at that time.

Harriett (Hattie) Boatman:

Harriett (Hattie) Boatman was born in 1889. She married Leo Boatman, who was the rural mail carrier for Van Wert for many years. They had two children, Mary and Robert. Mr. Boatman passed away in 1948. Mrs. Boatman moved to Des Moines in the early 1960's where she still lives today.

Herman Tiedje:

Herman Tiedje was born in Gladbrook, Iowa, on February 3, 1893, the son of John and Margaretha Tiedje. Herman married Leila M. Clanton in August, 1915. Leila was born April 4, 1901, the daughter of Frank and Hester Clanton, Herman had two brothers, William and Henry, and one sister, Edith. Leila had one half-sister, Ola, and one half-brother, Bert West.

Herman and Leila were parents of four children: Franklin, Alpharetta, Ola Rogene and Mansell. Leila passed away in 1962 in Decatur County.

Carl Upfield:

Carl "Bob" Upfield was born June 4, 1899, the son of James C. and Louisa Belle Upfield. Edith Tiedje, daughter of John and Margaretha Tiedje, was born in Gladbrook, Iowa, on October 6, 1919. Carl and Edith were married December 4, 1919. Carl had one sister, Bessie. Edith had three brothers, William, Herman and Henry.

Carl and Edith were parents of James, Robert, Barbara, Murry, Betty, Worth and Richard. They were farmers until they retired to Osceola.

Welcome to 1980 -- New Generation

Mr. and Mrs. Duane Otto, a daughter, born January 2, 1980. Name: Miranda Leigh.

Mr. and Mrs. Rod Schuldt, a son, born January 2, 1980. Name: Trent Lynn.

Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Cullison, a son, born January 10, 1980. Name: Jared Phineas.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jackson, a son, born February 2, 1980. Name: Jason Lee.

Mr. and Mrs. Rick Schuldt, a daughter, born January 29, 1980. Name: Breann Lane.

'RAILROADS'

The possibility of railroads and trains was a dream that was on the verge of coming true. by 1868, no railroads had been built within the county, but talk and a deep interest was forming for the big Iron Horse and the promising great advantages it would make to the settlers' future. In the late 1870's, a stage line was running between Van Wert and Osceola, making connections with trains going out of there. The stage was operated by Ab Waggoner. Several projects for bringing rails to Van Wert were being considered. The western part of the county was working on the Iowa and Minnesota Railroad project, later called the Ft. Des Moines and Kansas City Railroad Company. They were confident of the success of the project. Another project was the Chillicothe, Leon and Des Moines Railroad. The Missouri counties to be served by the line, subscribed \$50,000 worth of stock toward its construction. About \$37,000 was subscribed in Decatur County. I.H. Sales of Leon served as president of the company. Contracts were let for the grading, bridging and tying for the fifty miles from Chillicothe to Princeton, Missouri, on February 10, 1868, and were ready for the iron by August 1, 1870. The excitement and fascination of the railroads and trains mounted in the 1870's as organizations and companies were being formed to help make the dreams become a reality -- and Van Wert was growing on the hopes of the railroad. The commercial possibilities of the train seemed to be never ending. Passenger travel had very good possibilities in this new frontier. The pioneers needed supplies from the east and they needed freight transportation to market livestock and grains. The farmers had cattle drivers, driving their hogs and cattle great distances to rail centers for shipment to markets. The need for the railroad was certainly there. With some financial problems in 1879 and 1880, the Missouri, Iowa, and Nebraska Railroad extended its road to Van Wert from the east, and then turned this line over to the Humeston and Shenandoah and Western Railroad, which built the line on to Shenandoah. Franklin and Long Creek Townships had voted aid in the form of taxes, with the understanding that the road should be built through the center of the township. However, the road extended along the northern border and townships which had voted the money, opposed the collection of such tax. Franklin won out, while Long Creek paid only enough to cover court costs. With the success of the Humeston and Shenandoah and Western Railroad east and west through Van Wert, it was evident a rail line north and south from Des Moines, Osceola and Van Wert to Kansas City would be both profitable and

beneficial. In this same year (1880), a company was organized in Osceola to build this railroad. The Des Moines, Osceola and Southern Railroad was formed. With the help of subscriptions along the way, the road was begun in the spring of 1881 and by 1882, the road was built from Osceola south through Van Wert to Decatur City. It was a "Narrow Gauge" road. There it stopped for some months, the officers of the company apparently undecided which way to go. Decatur Township contributed over \$20,000 in tax, besides the subscriptions. The following year, the road turned at a right angle and came to Leon, arriving October 1, 1883. Leon gave \$30,000 and also the right of way to the south line of Eden Township. In the spring of 1884, the line was started south again and completed to Cainsville, Missouri. Eden Township gave \$6,000 and Hamilton Township, \$11,000 and a right of way. Northeast of Van Wert, today the Pete Scadden pasture, the Humeston and Shenandoah and Western Railroad system had built a depot, coal chutes, two Stockyards with two separate sidings, engine house with turn table, water tower with a large lake, just north of complex for needed water for the steam engines and a large ice house for storage of ice for summer refrigeration in special freight cars, indeed, a rail center with a full compliment of crews and section men as early as 1895. Section crews were needed for track repair as well as bridge repair. A hotel and restaurant were built close by. Taxi and Dray service was readily available to the downtown area. In the early years, the old businesses depended entirely on the railroad, and when the oil business began to create the need, Standard Oil located a bulk plant north of the tracks and west. Shortly after that, Sinclair Oil built their bulk plant just west of the ice house. There were two livestock yards, one located near the depot and the other adjacent to a siding track west of the engine house nearer town. The Des Moines and Kansas City Railroad line, running through the middle of Van Wert, also had a depot located where the Community Building and fire house is today. A siding was just west of the depot that served the grain elevator and stockyards. Van Wert had grown with two hotels and several businesses. On the night of February 13, 1913, this downtown depot burned. The fire was of unknown origin. Because of the large amount of transfer business done in Van Wert, a string of boxcars was used for a depot until railroad officials arranged to have both railroads use the same depot at the northeast part of town. The Des Moines and Kansas City line was up-graded from narrow to standard rails. The new depot was built between the railroad tracks with easy access north and south and more convenience in handling passengers and freight from both lines. At the height of the railroad era in Van Wert, it was "A LITTLE CHICAGO". Four trains in at one time was not unusual. There were twelve trains daily, except Sundays -- eight passengers and four freights. The iron horse took Van Wert people and products to the outside world, and it brought the outside world to Van Wert. On Friday, May 1, 1903, it brought the "President's Train" to Van Wert, and thousands gathered to see and hear President Theodore Roosevelt. Aboard the Governor's train, which arrived fifteen minutes ahead of the "President's Train" was Lt. Governor John Herriott. President Roosevelt and the Lt. Governor both spoke to the crowd, estimated to be between five and ten thousand. The Van Wert Record of that date states that it was probably nearer five thousand, but nearly eighty years later, we would like to think it was probably nearer ten thousand. In the winter of 1936, the train from Van Wert derailed on the crossing on Highway 69. The snow along the highway had been pushed out, and the drifts were at least ten feet high. The V-blade snowplow had made many tries to clear the road. The snow became packed between the rails on the highway crossing, causing the train to derail. Two engines derailed, one turning over and the other tipped. The train was traveling west and the caboose had just crossed the highway. The big drive wheels went in as deep as the axle and froze in the ground. A huge derrick on a steam engine came in to right the train. The crew built a track from the engine back to the regular track and with a series of wedges pulled the engine back a bit at a time. Pupils at Hollingshead School were allowed to go to the track and watch as the train was righted, and it was something they did not forget. The following names were important in our railroad history: 1884-88, S.O. Campbell; 1895-96, E.G. Copeland; 1895-98, F.L. Hall; 1912-16, M.W. Wailes; 1916-23, L.G. Potter. 1897-98, "Adams" telegraph, American Express and Pacific, Alva Tuttle. Names of some of the engineers were Doc. Davis and Bill Powers. Bill Finkbone scooped coal and iced the refrigerator cars, with assistant Hoyle McConnell. Section crews and foremen were Harry Fisher, Frank Clanton, Tom Burgan, George Johnson, Bud Fry, Mike Fry, Ralph McBee, Herman Tiedje, Bill Fry, Ranard and Mel Palmer, Bill Burgan, Bert West and Harold Stubbs. Bill Snyder was a telegraph line repair man. Other familiar names in the "railroad complex" were cattle buyers, Edd Dunaway, Ben Redman, George Redman. Scale men, Dowel Kelly, Albert Simmerman; horse buyers, Henry Schmit and Ray O'Hair. Bill Fuller ran the restaurant west of the depot. Taxi service was provided by Jes Holt, Frank Rush, George Webb and Bill Fuller. The railroad story in Van Wert would not be complete without the mention of the name of Francis Maeberry Fry (1844-1895). He was one of the early pioneers to settle west of Van Wert, and one who played an important part in helping to promote the railroad. Mr. Fry purchased some

five hundred acres of land and opened a rock quarry on it, which is still in operation. He furnished rock, sand and limestone for the railroad. Foundation limestone for many buildings in the area came from his quarry as well as for the hospital at Clarinda. One of Francis Fry's sons, William Eureka Fry, began working on the railroad at the age of twelve years, and helped put in the railroad lines. William Fry worked for the railroad lines for a total of fifty-three years. He was one of few who worked for the railroad and lived longer than the railroad itself. The area where Francis Fry settled was called DeKalb and when he passed away in 1895, the railroad company sent a special train to DeKalb to pick up the body and bring relatives and friends who wished to attend the funeral services. It brought them to Van Wert and waited on a siding at the depot until the services were over, and then brought the relatives and friends back to their homes at DeKalb.

All Roads Lead to Van Wert

Prior to the year 1854, the territory on which the town of Van Wert now stands was in the midst of an almost limitless expanse of gently rolling prairie with a small amount of timber. Prior to the coming of the settlers, this section was claimed by the red man. In 1854, several emigrants began a settlement here in Long Creek Township. Lambert Taylor and Mr. J. Irving conceived the idea of adding materially to their wealth by locating a town on their lands. Thus, the first road running north and south between their lands was established. This has always been called Main Street.

There was an early post office called Patriot that was located in a private home two miles east of Van Wert. We can only presume that what is now a black top road No. 258, that goes to Highway 69, began as a wagon trail. On an automobile map of 1914, this road was called the Corn Belt Highway. It was marked on telephone poles with two yellow stripes painted with a black stripe between, later metal signs.

Records show that Highway 69 was once called "From Palm to Pines" but the 1914 map lists it as two highways. One was Jefferson Highway - marked telephone poles with two blue stripes and a white stripe between with a JH symbol on the white. At this same time this highway also had sign posts that read "St. Paul, Des Moines, St. Joe and Kansas City" Interstate Trail. This same highway was changed to number 65 and 69 running together at a later date. This road was graded in the 1920's with teams of horses and lots of hard work. It is now known as Highway 69.

Mud roads - how well many of us remember them! Soon after the paving of Highway 69, just east of Van Wert in 1930, Van Wert was given an all weather road. The first graveled road in Long Creek Township was along the south side in 1935. Just south of Van Wert, 1 1/2 miles of road was graded up by hand by the WPA workers and graveled in 1936. By the early 1950's, most all of our roads were graveled. December 17, 1969, marked the opening of Interstate 35 from Osceola on No. 34 and to Decatur on No. 2.

Interstate 35 runs through the west section of Van Wert's city limits. Interstate 35 gave Van Wert, formerly an end-of-the-road town, a "back-door" entrance.

Van Wert Farmers and Agri-Business

It all started on the land. Where the sod was broken, other commerce and industry followed. Some would say that in southern Iowa, the railroads paved the way, and this is true. In fact most early homestead purchases in Decatur County were from tracts of land owned by the railroad or the government.

In the Van Wert area 100 years ago, the Keokuk-Western and the Des Moines-Kansas City lines made up the rail service (including the Humeston-Shenandoah). But looking at our nation at that early date, we see

that a main function of railroads was to carry people, goods, and produce, and without the farmers, railroads and towns which sprang up along the way, would have had little to serve. conversely, farmers relied on the towns for tools, implements, seeds, and other goods to carry on their enterprises, and they relied on the railroads to bring these goods in. Without a big argument concerning the "chicken and egg" theory, it would suffice to say that to the coming of railroads and homesteading, towns owe their beginning. The same is true of Van Wert.

Of course, steam engines were well in use before the turn of the century. Owners of threshing rigs in the Van Wert area at an early date that people have mentioned were: Showers and Liggitt, Horney Bros., Jack Lee, Vern and Clair Parmer, Delbert and Bill Ramsey, Alva Foland, Sharon Twombly, Charley Davis, John Bill Bahr, Fred and Bill Beers.

Jack Lee worked with a Rumley separator threshing machine powered by a Russell engine. He had different partners in this enterprise. Jack later changed to a Case tractor. Sharon Twombly had a 22' Red River special threshing machine powered by a 15-30 International Tractor.

Alva Foland had a Rumley oil pull tractor on his threshing rig. Fred Beers had a Case separator pulled by a steam engine. Bill Beers and Fred also sawed wood with a Hart-Parr tractor at one time.

Merlin Oiler was well known for his ability to stack straw right as it came out of the blower. He always wore a pair of goggles and didn't want anyone else on the stack with him. Merlin usually went barefooted so he really practiced his boxing ability on that straw stack.

Nolan Foland and Jesse O'Hair were the first in the area to start farming with tractors as well as horses. They both had a B John Deere with steel wheels.

James A. O'Hair had a B Farmall. Floyd Boles had one of the first F12 International tractors on steel. Charlie Johnson and Levi Cochran had one of the first W.C. Allis Chalmers. Levi had a custom feed grinder mounted on a Model A truck. Harold Percy and Ray O'Hair did custom hay baling with the old square wire-tie balers pulled and powered by small farm tractors.

Harley Heckathorn did custom wood sawing. He had a 6-horse Whitte engine. He pulled it from one job to another with a team of horses.

Several sorghum mills were around the community. Some were operated by Lonnie Cowden, Erastus Wilson, Lou Green and Homer Ramsey.

MAKING SORGHUM

Each spring cane was planted in rows and cultivated. By the middle of August, it was ready to be stripped. This was done by someone walking each row with a sharpened lath to break off the leaves. When all of the leaves were off, the tops of the cane were cut off with a corn knife. Finally, the stalk was cut off and loaded on a hayrack to be taken to the mill. The cane was fed into the press and the juice put into large vats and cooked for five or six hours. It was then skimmed and put in 5 or 10 gallon cream cans to cool. After cooling, the sorghum was then transferred to gallon jars.

In the 1970's, Lonnie and Ruby Cowden made sorghum at the Walt King farm. (They usually made about 75 gallons a year.) In 1971, Pete Scadden helped haul in the cane. Others helping with stripping, topping and cutting cane were Charita Cox, Debby Fisher, Ted Cox, Randy Cowden, Teddy Scadden, Coy Cowden.

Elmer and Uriah Ramsey owned and operated a steam engine saw mill.

Joshua West marketed his hogs, one or two at a time by supplying Van Wert's store with fresh butchered pork every week.

Fred Wesley Gill, son of James Milton Gill and Blanche Burchett, who were married in 1916, lived on a farm 5 miles southwest of Van Wert, near DeKalb until 1939. The farm consisted of over 960 acres and was called the Hepburn farm. It was farmed with horses and mules and it was the first farm in the county to have Deer and Beavers released on it by the Conservation Commission. It was also the first farm to use poison bran to try to destroy the Cinch bugs. Donald Morris worked for Fred Gill for 20 years. Fred's three girls rode on horseback the five miles night and morning to attend school in Van Wert. Fred helped with the homecomings and ran the dances on Saturday nights.

It's always fun to compare farms, say in the rural Van Wert area of today, vs. 100 years ago. Think of an operation in 1880: one hundred sixty acres, 1/4 section, was a big farm. Many farm units were only eighties, forties or less. There was no electricity, no gas, no refrigeration. Butchering had to be done in the winter time, or if not the meat had to be readily salted away or cured. Transportation essentially was by horse and buggy; train, if you cared to venture far. Entertainment was simple and locally derived. Movies weren't known yet. Kerosene or coal oil lamps made up the lighting. Wood or coal heated the home and cooked the meals.

The farmer was basically subsistent. Some produce and livestock was sold in trade for the basic necessities; salt, sugar, coffee, seed, fencing, tack, hardware, and maybe some cloth goods for making clothing. Farms were still feeding few people besides their own families. Now 380 acres is just an average size farm. Farming is basically big business. One tractor replaces a team of draft horses easily, chemicals kill weeds, commercial fertilizers replace soil nutrients, and on several farms, crops go in the ground with little or no tillage at all. In some instances, plows are implements of the past.

MODERN DAY MACHINERY

Farmers feed several families besides their own and in many cases, raise more on 10 acres than 40 acres would produce in 1880. Of course, there are fewer farms now, although larger. O'Hairs, for example, now farm what used to support 6 1/2 families. The Cox Farms, Inc. now farm what used to support 20 or 21 families. It is interesting to note, though, that several farms have remained virtually intact over the years. Several century farms exist along with farmers of 50 years or more. A few of the farmers of 1892 were as follows: J.E. Adams, George Arball, R.E. Barackman, Samuel Barr, Oliver, Bassett, W.J. Blades, E.J. Blair, W.J. Branscomb, Thomas Coffey, R.F. Craft, A.A. Dickinson, M. Dunslee, B.J. Easter, B.F. Elston, E.M. Farrensworth, John Gemmill, F.L. Goin, William Goodman, Fredrick Gould, L. Gould, N. Gould. J.F. Hacker, Grant Hatfield, Lewis Holt, Peter Imhoff, W.A. Irving, J.H. Johnson, C.F. Keller, S.H. Lantz, Stephen Lentz, L.T. Lee, George McCarl, Joshua McCarl, McCartney, Mation Mace, A.C. Maxey, T.E. Owens, A.E. Pierce, G. Pierce, J.W. Pierce, John Powers, Thomas Price, Jesse Roberts, L.F. Roberts, W.T. Roberts, James Smith, J. Stearns, Isaiah Thompson.

Long Creek Township claims several Century Farms. George and Louisa J. (Fear) Redman purchased land in Section 35 from Stephen Strong in 1874. This land is owned now by the descendants of three of their children: (1) Frank and Cora (Redman) Binning to Bert and Elveta (Greenhalgh) Binning to Frank and Joyce (Andrew Binning.) (2) Benjamin F. and Jessie (Wilson) Redman to Horace and Wanda (Cole) Redman. (3) George and Carrie (Smith) Redman to Roland J. and Kathryn E. (Cochran) Redman.

Samuel Smith bought land in Section 36 in 1863. George and Margaret (Sharpe) Smith (parents of Mrs. George (Carrie) Redman) bought this land in the early 1870's. Next owners, Guy Smith to George Redman and since 1938, Clyde and Margaret (Redman) Watson have been the owners.

The farm now owned by Maurice H. and Leah F. Keeler in Greenbay Township was first purchased from the government in 1854 by William Steen and then sold to William McLlvaine the same year.

In 1860, McLlvaine sold the Southwest 1/4, Section 31, Township 71, North Range 25, West of the 5th P.M., containing 160.53 acres to Benjamin F. Hall for the sum of \$900.00.

In 1891, the Des Moines and Kansas City railroad purchased the right-of-way 75 feet wide through this section. Later across the road in Franklin Township in Decatur County, 120 acres was added. In Section 6, Twp. 70, Range 25, 80 acres was added. (The rest in Section 6, Twp. 70 Range 26 in 40 acres.)

In 1919 the farm was transferred to C.E. Hall, son of Benjamin F. Hall. Then in 1952, Maurice H. Keeler, a nephew of C.E. Hall inherited the farm and Maurice and wife, Leah, are still residing there today.

Still another farm which would qualify for the century farm listing is that now owned by Mrs. Jessie Lee and son Jimmie. Jack Lee's father, Harley, purchased the farm from his mother, Mrs. Augusta (Melcinda) Lee, in 1936. Melcinda Ramsey inherited the land from her parents, Frank and Lavana Ramsey, who homesteaded in 1851, thus, the land has been in the family for 129 years.

Another century farm in the Van Wert trade area is located in Knox township on the Clarke-Decatur County line. The farm was owned in about 1860 by Billa Brown. He was one of the early teachers in the Van Wert school. Mr. Brown was a great believer in conservation of soil and our natural resources. The farm was handed down to Uel Brown and then to Everett Brown and is still in the Brown family today.

Farms in the Van Wert trading area that have been in the same family for 50 years or more in 1980 are: Dr. C.L. Wing Estate, J.B. and J.C. O'Hair, Russell and Dennis Fierce, Gerald Johnson, Amos to Dale West, J.E. Smith - Arta Smith - Fred Smith Jr., Bobby and Carroll Tompkins. Vernon Binning, Eldon Binning, Harry Jr. and David Wilson, Lloyd and Agnes McCarl, Fred and Ed Beers, W.B. Redman to Al Redman, Bob Redman, Cliff Redman, Ivan and Lilly Corsbie.

Cox Farms, Inc. is a family farm corporation composed of Randal, Darlene, Ted and Bill Cox. Their home farm is the only farmland owned by the corporation but Randal does farm a total of 2,000 acres with the help of his sons. Corwin Cox, a brother to Randal, farms approximately 1,200 acres each year, but is not part of the aforementioned corporation. The primary crops of these two farmers are corn, beans and hay with cattle being their only livestock.

In 1964, Randal Cox built his initial dozer blades for farm tractors, and obtained his first U.S. Patent in 1965. As the business grew, it became necessary to form a corporation to keep the implement business separate from farming; thus, in 1966, Cox, Inc. was formed. In 1968, he built the Multi-Boom for tractors and the hay grabber for formed stack hay and loose hay. With the coming of the big bales, Randal made the trans-unroller to unroll along with the Hay Grabber to stack them. The "Hay Grabber" is Cox's U.S. Registered Trade Mark.

They also make swivel booms and truck booms. Increased use of the big round bales and the desire of the farmer to chore with his pickup created the need for the cox pickup truck hay stabber and the three point stabber for tractors. They also make pickup and tractor trans-unrollers and have received a multiple of U.S. Patents for all these products. Their equipment is marketed all over the U.S. and Canada as well as being exported to Japan.

At present, Cox's have a plant on their farm where they warehouse, assemble and ship their implements. Three to six men are employed at the plant. Cox's own designing and prototype is done at their plant and all products are tested on their farms before marketing. It is estimated that 25,000 to 103,000 units of the various implements have been made since 1964. Machinery reaches its destination by dealer pickup and Cox delivering. Some customers purchase and pick up equipment right from the plant. Each year they travel to the Iowa State Fair, where a lot of machinery is sold.

What of the importance of the farmer to the Van Wert community of now vs. 1880? That has not changed. The businesses, churches, and organizations of the town still rely on him to keep things going directly or indirectly. Granted, good roads now carry them to other towns to shop and do business, but a good size of their trade remains in Van Wert, just as the roads carry in some commerce from distant communities.

Farming and farm communities, which Van Wert is, have indeed changed. Evidence this in prices. In pioneer days, 10 cents/bushel corn would buy two good dinners in Van Wert. Now a bushel of corn could hardly buy one good meal. Below is a comparison of commodities and their price in 1880 and 1978 in Iowa:

Crops	Ave. Yield/Acre (bu.)
1880	1978
Corn	41.0 117.0
Soybeans	38.5
Oats	35.0 58.0
Wheat	14.3* 31.0
All Hay	1.32** 3.61

*1900 date

**Data - tons/acres and price/ton.

Crops	Price/bushel
1880	1978
Corn	\$.25 \$2.00
Soybeans	6.60
Oats	.23 1.20
Wheat	.60 2.65
All Hay	6.14/ton 42.50

1880:

Livestock	No. Head	Ave. Price/hd.*
Hogs	2,778,000	5.36
Cattle	2,095,000	21.10
Sheep	455,000	2.54
Horses	778,000	55.19
Mules	44,700	70.85
Dairy Cows	725,000	24.20

1978:

Hogs	12,339,000	108.10
Cattle	7,800,000	560.00
Sheep	370,000	60.30
Horses	----	----
Mules	----	----

*Assumes market animals - Hogs 230 lbs., Steers 1100 lbs., Sheep 100 lbs.

Sources: Basebook of Iowa - Agricultural Economic Facts.

April 1936 - Special Report No. 1, Iowa Agricultural Experiment. Iowa Agricultural Statistics, 1979 - Iowa Crop Livestock Reporting Service.

Over the years farmland values have sure changed:

State average 1880 - approximately \$20.00 (average of Story Co. values 1881) Value per acre in 1978 - \$1,646.

Decatur County Value - 1880 - \$16
Value per acre in 1978 - \$700.

The spirit of farm people hasn't changed that much though. Despite numerous hardships and uncertainty, they still hang on. If a neighbor becomes ill or injured, and has planting or harvesting to be done, friends and neighbors drop their own work to pitch in and get the job done. This is reminiscent for some people of the threshing crew days when several farmers got together to do the harvesting, each farm in turn, and the ladies pooled their resources and talents to cook big meals for these groups of hungry men. Some of that flavor is disappearing, but is never lost from a small town farming community such as Van Wert.

Agriculture is a complex pursuit for the families of America. Those farmers of the Van Wert area, just as in other farming communities, are no exception to this, but they continue to take on the challenges of adverse weather, diseases, insects, high costs, relatively low and fluctuating prices and the ever fickle political nature of government programs. Though he now has got more to work with, the farmer has essentially fought these same problems for the past 100 years.

Let us not forget as we celebrate the Van Wert centennial, the contributions the farmers have made to this community. Where the railroads laid their lines, the farmers came, and from their permanence on the land came the rise and growth of towns like Van Wert. Let us not forget the challenges the farmer faces: the analysis of trends and issues, high land prices, the high costs of borrowed capital and physical inputs, production alternatives, technology and its application, public policies, organization and transfer of the business, and marketing problems and strategies, just to name a few. It is not just as simple as climbing on the tractor. But these challenges our farmers will meet, just as they have for the past 100 years all across our land. So shall it be in our centennial community of Van Wert!

Since Van Wert was a farming community and the farmers had most of their money tied up in their farms, when the depression hit, many of the farmers had heavy loans on their farms and were to lose them since the bottom dropped out of all originally high prices they were getting for grain and cattle. E.O. Stearns worked diligently with the farm administration head offices to work out plans for the farmers to save their land. He was known to say, "Well, we got this through and ----- will not lose their farm and not have to move." Grandparents and Great Grandparents of this generation in Van Wert will remember the terribly trying times of the depression.

Do you recognize a sarvus tree when you see one? If you go west of Van Wert in the early spring before a green leaf appears, the sarvus trees are the ones you see with the beautiful white blossoms up on the hills near the McKee Cemetery and other places.

There is a legend told that the early pioneers transported these trees when they migrated from the State of Tennessee.

It is true, that the same trees are very numerous in the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee. Spring time in the Tennessee Mountains, one can barely distinguish between the multitude of blossoms and the "smoky" part of the mountains.

If you research these sarvus trees, you will find out that the name is really "service"; southern pronunciation turns the word to sarvus. History also states that they were the Indian's blueberry.

Have the sarvus trees always grown in Decatur County?
Is the transportation legend fact or fiction?

CHURCHES

"Why is it we have such a hard time in our religious experience? I believe it is because we are so spasmodic in our religious endeavors. If we use our plows in the field for a single day, then rest them upon the land the other six days -- what would be the result? Why, they would become rusty, of course. And the fact is, they wouldn't scour readily either, consequently, to attempt working with them would prove disheartening. Now, I think, the same principle applies to religion. If we harness our faith, then keep at work, we get on well. The moment we let go and do not execute our every duty, at once, we begin to grow listless and indifferent. I find that the only way to keep religiously strong, healthy and growing is to everlastingly keep at it."

-- A Layman --

"This is a fine putting of a great fact." (Taken from the April 13, 1916 Pathfinder.)

The following churches are those located both in the corporate limits of the Town of Van Wert as well as those in the nearby rural area. Please do not think one church is favored over another. They are listed in alphabetical order and if one church appears to have more written on it than another, it is simply because we were able to come up with more information on that particular church.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

In September 1916, a large tent meeting was held by Rev. George and Nellie Shepherd on ground where the schoolhouse was later built. Others who held meetings were Rev. and Mrs. Joe Burnett and Rev. and Mrs. William Burchett. Mr. William Branscomb donated land and in the fall of 1916, a small church was built directly north across the street from the present Assembly of God Church. Charter members included:

Mr. and Mrs. George Pelsor
Mr. and Mrs. James Harris
Mr. and Mrs. John Parmer
Mr. and Mrs. Ed Scadden
Mr. and Mrs. Elijah Parmer
Mr. and Mrs. George Fry
Mr. and Mrs. John Woods
Mr. and Mrs. Clair Parmer
Mrs. Flossie Ramsey
Dollie Parmer
Vern Parmer
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Branscomb
Mr. and Mrs. John Pierce
Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Fry
Mr. and Mrs. Dave Fry
Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Lee
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Fry
Mr. and Mrs. A.D. Stubbs
Mrs. Etta Fry
Fannie Fry
Ellen, Iva and Olive Collins
Albert and clarence (Bud) Fry

A new church was dedicated in June, 1952 on the lot south of the tabernacle. Georgia Cox, a dedicated member, was the primary promoter in getting the church built. Labor and material for the new church were mostly donated.

On September 22, 1958, the name Pentecostal Gospel Tabernacle was legally changed to simply, Assembly of God.

After tremendous growth in Sunday School attendance, the need for more and larger classrooms became evident. After much planning and taking of bids, it was finally decided that Duane Otto of Van Wert and Steve DeVore of Osceola, working together under D & O Builders, would contract the building of a new addition to the church.

Groundbreaking of the new addition was celebrated April 9, 1978 at 12:00 noon, with the Rev. Ulestead as speaker of the day. The new addition was finished the same year with an approximate cost of \$32,000. Rev. Steve Eastman was pastor at this time.

As nearly as can be recollected, the pastors of the church are as follows:

Bro. Law
Elmer Simbro
Ida Scadden (late 20's or early 30's)
Gus Neigh
Con Gumm and Louis Martin
Lawrence Spratt
Luke Brown
Roy Elliott
Charley Dobson
Bro. Atkinson
Bro. Derry
Walter Hockmuth (Brother-in-law of Mildred Hockmuth)
Etta Ray
Lloyd Hamilton
Vera Riley (pastored with Mildred Baker a few years)
Mildred Baker (1950-1965)
Cecil Hancock (1965-1971)
Keith Striley (1971-1977)
Steve Eastman (1977-1979)
Grant Wiley (Present)

In October 1977, forty-some young people from this church and Van Wert, assisted by Don and Gloria McClure, Terry Hainline and Pastor Steve Eastman, cleaned up litter and debris from the streets and ditches of the town. The Van Wert Lions Club then donated \$100.00 to the Youth for Progress Program for the cleanup campaign. A picnic was also held for the children's enjoyment to show appreciation for their efforts. This was sponsored by the Town of Van Wert.

The Young People, or Christ Ambassadors (C.A.'s) have done several things in the past to raise money for the church and their organization. Among the fund raising events of the past few years are (1) two or three rock-a-thons. Each teen finds sponsors, to pay them so much per hour, to sit in a rocking chair and rock around the clock without ceasing for twenty-four hours. It always produces tired young people as well as a little money for their treasury. (2) Car washes - for the very reasonable price of \$2.00, any vehicle that drove up was given a hand wash. Oftentimes, if the vehicle was larger or the owner more generous, they received a little more for their tasks. (3) Sales of various things - once in a great while, the youth went door to door selling various things such as light bulbs. (4) Spaghetti Supper - for a specified amount, you could have all the spaghetti you could eat. Various other things were done, as well, but the preceding lets one realize that this particular group of young people was an energetic one.

The ladies group of the church, Women's Ministry (W.M.'s) has also done a great deal of fund raising projects, especially in the last few years. For a time, as weather permitted, a weekly bakesale was held in the yard of the community hall. About the same time, Dean Houck generously donated a building for use as a rummage hall. Different ladies took turns keeping the rummage hall open until its closing in the fall of 1979.

Several bazaars, chili and oyster suppers, etc. have also been held. One big project was the making of a handsewn quilt. Scraps of material were cut, sewn and quilted into a lovely blanket and raffle tickets sold to the community.

Recently, various demonstrations, such as candy making, cake decorating, and straw and silk flower making and arrangements have been given. The possibility of starting a project for "padding the pews" might be part of the 1980 agenda.

The present officers are: Anne Wiley - president; Phyllis Foland, vice-president; Donna Hatfield - secretary/treasurer. An average of 15 members attend the meetings held twice a month, with more ladies becoming interested as time goes on.

The present weekly schedule for the church is as follows:

Sunday:

10:00 a.m. Sunday School

11:00 a.m. Morning Worship and Children's Church

7:00 p.m. Evening Worship

Thursday:

9:30 a.m. Every 2nd and 4th Thurs. of month - W.M.'s Meeting

7:00 p.m. Every week - Choir Practice

Monday:

7:00 p.m. Youth Meeting

Wednesday:

7:00 p.m. Prayer and Bible Study

CHRISTIAN

In January 1866, just after the Civil War, or about ten years after the first Methodist Church was founded, Josephus Porter held a meeting in a log cabin (the former home of Henry Branscomb) which stood approximately one mile south of town where Beardsley's Orchard now stands.

The log cabin later became too small for the congregation. In 1879, H.V. Dyer made a first visit. He left and returned in 1885 to find the membership had dropped to 36 for no accountable reason. Then Bro. Stater pastored and nine more were added to the roster. J.C. Porter occasionally preached and a few more joined the church. In September 1886, A.B. Cornell came one Sunday per month and the church barely kept alive this way. Only the faithful Sunday School saved it.

By 1888, 75 members attended the Christian Church. It was then reorganized with the following officers: Isaiah Thompson and Ebenezer Price as elders and Edmund Thompson and James Whitecar as deacons. They held these posts for many years. Bro. Price served as elder until his death in October 6, 1972. Bro.

Thompson was also with the church until he died in April 9, 1912, all but the two or three years when he resided at Leslie.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Continued).

When the undertaking of the erection of a new church was started, it was a big chore. Lumber was hauled by team and wagon from Ottumwa to the nearest railroad station. It was said, "Men with a will could undertake great things. Their course was just and right, their strength equal to the duty required."

Lot Four (4) in Block Two (2) of the Original Town of Van Wert was purchased on the southeast corner of Main Street, behind where the Post Office now stands.

Rev. Porter was still pastor when the church was built and continued to commute from Leon until the new building was done. He was asked to preach the dedication ceremony for the new church.

For ten to twelve years, rough benches served as seats. Bro. Porter continued to preach most of the time with Springer Harlan and his son or nephew, Reuben Harlan, preaching some as well.

In 1897, the first church building was moved and rebuilt south of where the brick church remains now stand, (The Duane Otto residence). In 1905, the church was refurnished with new seats, a pulpit set, and a light plant. Later the building was again moved and became the home of C.A. Walker. Mr. and Mrs. George South owned the property for a time, but it is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Terry Hainline and daughter, Jody.

Annual protracted meetings were held at the church. The following list of brethren has been compiled:

Frank Lemon 1888-1889
Bro. Shepherd 1890
Bro. Hopkins 1892
H.H. Guy and Edgar Price 1892-1894
R.W. Caster about three years
Bro. Garwick and other ministers
Bro. Crewdin 1900
J.B. Lemon, Bro. Bateman, C.F. Ward 1904
Bro. Simpson 1906
E. Youtz 1904
J.H. Ragan 1906 & 1910
Bro. Croyle 4 months in 1910
Bro. Preston 9 months in 1910-1911
Edwin Priest
George E. Moore 1st time minister Feb. to Sept. 1912
Clinton Thomas November 1912-April 1913

In December 1909, the young people of the church put on a Home Telen Play. "The Deacon" was under the direction of J.M. Davis and Roy Hawkins. Those who took part in the play were Raymond Storey, Chas. Allen, Gary Saylor, Loran Thompson, Orlan Hanks, Cliff Johnson, John Smith, Ray Lantz, Will Fuller, Arta Smith, Edith Lantz, Jesse Holt and Inez Seymour.

On May 28, 1914, a house was torn down and the makings of the present church was begun with Bro. A.B. Cornell assisting. It took six days for members and other workers to dig the basement. On June 10, 1914, the contractors began their work. After a delay of ten days caused by slow delivery of materials, the cornerstone was laid July 15, 1914. Later on November 29, 1914, the church was opened free of debt at the cost of \$16,000. J.V. Coombs of Danville, Illinois, gave the dedication. A communion table was then donated by the pastor and his wife, Rev. and Mrs. A.B. Cornell.

The Christian Church held some of the largest Bible Schools in the history of the community. The largest on record was held August 28, 1921 when 621 were present. Officers of the Bible School were:

Superintendent - A.E. Price
Secretary - Violet Bruner
Treasurer - Gilbert Edge
Chorister - Baalis Halstead
Asst. Superintendent - E.B. Saylor
Asst. Secretary - Mrs. Harold Hanks
Pianist - Mrs. Ray Easter

The ladies aid of the church was organized in October of 1911 as the Kings Daughters. The following officers served: president, Mrs. J.M. Halstead; vice-president, Mrs. Fred Hall; secretary, Mrs. Elsie Saylor; and treasurer, Mrs. Porter.

On May 15, 1943, a bad storm hit the church and caused considerable damage. Mattie Halstead, a long time Sunday School superintendent and teacher, was secretary of the Kings Daughters at the time of the storm and wrote the following in the record book:

Wed. May 12, 1943 - "Kings Daughters met at the church for their annual Guest Day. There were 75 ladies present."

Next entry -- "Since disaster has overtaken us in the demolition of our beautiful church, although our heads are figuratively bloody, they are not bowed in defeat. Steps have been taken to restore the building, if not to its priestly beauty, at least something approaching it. In the meantime, work of the church is going forward and we pray our misfortune may prove a blessing in disguise. It behooves each of us to don her working clothes and 'shake a leg' most vigorously."

The next services were held for the Christmas Program, December 24, 1943 after much rebuilding.

The younger ladies of the church had a club of their own, known as the Triangle Club. Recollections of former members tell us that once in a while the Triangle Club had parties and the members brought their boyfriends. A favorite refreshment at these parties was made when all the girls brought either canned or fresh fruit. This was combined together in a large dishpan and served with cookies. They once had a Halloween party at the schoolhouse and had to enter through the coal chute since there was no other entrance to the building unlocked and readily available.

Rev. Tom Helmick and wife, Nancy, were the last pastors. They had two children, Kelly and Tom, Jr.

On April 13, 1969, the last service of the church was held and the doors were closed due to the lack of attendance.

After the church closed, all records were turned over to the State Board. All memberships are on record at the state office.

They won't be sent to an individual, but if a member wishes to move his or her membership to another church, they can have the church write to the State Board and request membership transfer. Otherwise, they'll stay on the original record.

On March 12, 1975, some former members met at the Methodist Church basement for an enjoyable evening and a potluck supper.

(Picture) - Sunday School class of the late 1920's or early 1930's. Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Templar, Mrs. Traupel, Mrs. Clanton, Mrs. McMurtrey, Mrs. Moran, Mrs. George Johnson, Mrs. Jane Trisler, Mrs. Flora

Price, Mrs. Peckham, Mrs. Millie Fry, Mrs. Lenora Hedrich, Mrs. Margaret Gill, Mrs. Jennie Oliver, Jessie Fisher, Dora Barnett, Mollie Fry, Mrs. Githens (not pictured.)

FAIRVIEW METHODIST CHURCH

Fairview and Van Wert churches were once associated in the support of a pastor. It is on record that the little rural church reopened in March 1, 1914 after repairs. The church was said to be the center of activities in the life of the community and its enrollment numbered well over eighty, with a Sunday School and active Epworth League. For many years, before a church building was erected, the people of the community gathered for worship in the old brick schoolhouse, located across the road from the church. Ministers of various denominations conducted the services, with Methodism being the favorite denomination. In 1876, Rev. Hull of Leon held a successful meeting, lasting three weeks. As a result of this meeting and the work of the Sunday School, the Fairview church was organized with about forty members. Among charter members were: Arneys, Lewis, Green, Davis, Coslers, Machlans, Ledfords, and Kellers. Fairview was at first associated with Leon, but the name of the circuit was later Green Bay, and still later Weldon, while in 1898, Van Wert and Fairview, together, began the support of a pastor. In 1891, the church was built, the lot being donated by W. Riley Keller and his wife. In addition to the aforementioned names other members included Thompsons, Howells, Johns, Overholtzers, Burnetts, Lantz, Henrys and Flints. The cost of the church was \$1,300. The church had a number of pastors, all of whom did acceptable work. During the 1940's, Fairview Church was dropped from the Van Wert circuit.

COLLEGE SUNDAY SCHOOL

In June, 1911, the Hazel College rural school was the setting of a Sunday School with E.J. Blair as superintendent. Attendance rose to 83 in the afternoon services. Mrs. Charley (Julia) Fry remembers going to Sunday School there. The reason for the afternoon classes were that everyone could attend their own Sunday School and worship services in the morning and attend different classes after lunch to even further their Bible knowledge.

LITTLE TENNESSEE CHAPEL

The Little Tennessee Chapel, once known as the Mt. Zion Christian Church, is located in Richland Township in the Northwest part of Decatur County. It is believed that people from Tennessee built the little chapel around the turn of the 20th century. Perhaps the rolling hills and lay of the land in the area surrounding the church brought memories of their Tennessee homeland. A cemetery is located just north of the church and many relatives and friends of the community of Van Wert rest there. The little chapel no longer raises praises to the Father, but most certainly "made a joyful noise" in the days of its existence.

METHODIST CHURCH

The following information has been taken primarily from the History Sketch of the Methodist Episcopal Church printed for the Dedication Day on March 22, 1914. The reason it is for the most part copied directly from this book was because it included any and all information we could gather in the years prior to 1956 and then some besides. Obviously, it was impossible to include word for word everything contained in the book but we have done our best to include all facts and figures.

Later information has been obtained from church records and newspaper clippings and word of mouth. The Methodist Church of Van Wert was organized, as nearly as we can ascertain, in the year of 1856. For some

time previous to this, services were held in town by ministers of whatever denomination perchanced to come by. In those pioneer days, all were heard most gladly. Probably the fact that the Methodist Ministers itinerated so largely led to them being first on this field.

The following is a list as complete as we can make it of the charter members of the church: James Blair, Louise Blair, Carlos Clark, Mrs. Carlos Clark, Nathan Perdue, Mary Perdue, Newton Spencer, Lucinda Jane Spencer, William Warner, and Lovina Warner. Within a few years after the organization was effected, the dream of those faithful few was realized in a substantial church building. This building was erected amid sacrifice and joy in 1858. The site chosen for the church was just a little way south of the railroad on the west side of what is now Main Street, there being no railroad there at this time. Before its completion the little body of worshipers gathered for service in the old school building. The material used in the construction of the church was principally native lumber. Everybody seemed anxious for a church and so all hands contributed to its erection. Some hauled logs to the sawmill and had them sawed into 2x4's and other heavy building material; some hauled walnut logs and had them sawed for siding, while others made shingles. The work of construction as well as the material was chiefly donated. It is reported the Rev. Talmage, then pastor of the little congregation, donated much work. To understand the intensity of the enthusiasm we need only to be reminded that this faithful expounder of the word and pounder of the nail had only one arm and hand yet he drove the nails with accuracy and speed. In that early day of toil, sacrifice and want, we would expect that the furnishings of the church would be rather crude to our modern ideas. A donation of shingles kept the roof from being unfinished. For three years the walls were unplastered. The seats were of heavy planks laid across dry goods boxes. It was for ten or a dozen years before these were replaced by the carefully prepared walnut seats. A highly prized historic relic is found in these old walnut seats made in the sixties (one was secured and placed in the basement of the 1914 church for safekeeping). The church was more perfect in durability than comfort. The Reverend William Brown did the casing of the building in 1863. The founding fathers of the church were poor people come west to get a start in life. They brought Methodism because they loved the church and Methodism loved the poor. There were few farmers here then who had more than five to ten acres of prairie sod broken. Considering all things they did marvelously well to build at all. For their sacrifices we owe much, and to their labors of love, we ascribe the beginnings of Methodism here.

The following pastors have served the church, as near as can be ascertained in the order given:

Mr. Talmage, 1856
George Bennett
J.M. Baker, 1866-1870
J.W. Anderson
W.S. Hooker, 1870-1873
C.A. Gates, 1873-1874
W.H. Witter, 1874-1875
J.T. Hughes, 1875-1876
A. Hancox, 1876-1877
K.H. Burleigh, 1887-1879
W. Bretton, 1879-1880
D.O. Stuart, 1880-1882
W.W. Danner, 1882-1883
C. Huuver, 1883-1884
L.P. Newland, 1884-1886
C.D. Fewcett, 1886-1887
E.E. Willey, 1887-1888

For many years the church realized a good growth, and this growth so increased that it was found necessary in 1888 to build a larger and more commodious building. Through the foresight of the Rev. Seth Samson, a local elder, the present site was obtained. Mr. Samson found that these lots could be purchased for the reasonable amount of \$70.00. He consulted with the Board and he was advised to buy the lots. This he did by paying for them by himself, and leaving his purchase with the members to reimburse him as they saw

fit. In the final accounting, the church paid about one-half the total amount and Rev. Samson paid the balance. Rev. Samson also built the first Methodist Parsonage.

The lot and house owned by the church at this time was sold for \$150. For years, the building was used as a store building, and it was burned during the west side fire in September 1908.

During these two years the church membership rented the upper room of the public school building and they held regular services there. Within two years, the building was provided for and erected. It was dedicated Nov. 11, 1888, by the venerable presiding elder, Rev. W.C. Martin. The total cost of the property, including the lots was \$1,719.25. It was at the time of this signal victory that Rev. Samson wrote in the subscription book, "To God be all the Praise."

The building thus dedicated in 1888 was of the following dimensions: 28 feet by 45 feet. Some years later an eight-foot alcove, located back of the pulpit, was built on the north end. For twenty-six years this church building served the need of the congregation. During these years the Van Wert congregation had been associated with the following circuits: Decatur City, Hopeville, Green Bay and Weldon. In 1897 the Rev. F.P. Sigler organized the Van Wert Circuit, which was composed of Van Wert, Lacelle and Fairview. Lacelle was later dropped from the circuit and Fairview and Van Wert then supported a minister.

Pastors here given have been ministers of the church from 1888 to 1913:

E.E. Willey 1888
W.S. Wood 1889-1890
Wallace Dunn 1890-1891
E.B. Heaton 1891-1893
W.C. Smith 1893-1894
J.N. Hosier 1894-1896
S.L. Culmer 1896-1897
F.P. Sigler 1897-1898
D.S. Main 1898-1899
E.B. Heaton 1899-1900
J.W. Caldwell 1900-1901
M.H. Rambo 1901-1902
R.J. Tennant 1902-1905
J.C. Olsen 1905-1906
A.E. Flickinger 1906-1908
J.E. Nocoll 1908-1909
M.T. Butterfield 1909-1911
John Branson 1911-Dec. 1912
Martin H. Keast - March 1913

The parsonage located across the street to the south of the church, was made the property of the church during the pastorate of the Rev. J.W. Caldwell. It was remodeled during the pastorate of Rev. R.J. Tennant, at a cost of some \$600. The parsonage property consisted of one lot, on which there was a good house and other small buildings.

In May 1910, the Methodist choir presented a cantata, "Ruth the Gleaner", with Alma Garber, A. E. Blair, Mrs. Garber, Susie Davis, Forrest Allen and the Mourners, Reapers and Gleaners.

To follow the growth and demands of the congregation throughout the years would require more space than is here allotted. It is asking too much, also, to trace in detail the first movements and earliest demands for the new church building. For years the cry of the people most closely associated with the work of the church has been for better facilities afforded only by more room. The question whether to repair or remodel or build anew was debated through the months and even years. To remodel the old building, and, thus, obtain room for every need, would require hundreds of dollars; to build entirely new would demand thousands. Gradually the idea of an entirely new building gained favor.

By August 25, 1912, the new-church talk had taken on sufficient enthusiasm that Rev. J. Branson, Pastor, thought the time was ripe to begin the preparation for building. His idea seemed to have been to popularize the movement by enlisting the largest number possible, and especially the young people, in the enterprise. Accordingly, as the records show, he took the matter up in a regular Sunday service, and appointed a soliciting committee, also a building committee: The soliciting committee, composed of the following: A.E. Blair, E.N. Hampton, Mrs. Cora Belding, E.E. Walker, Izora Heather, Mrs. G.D. Tallman, Grace Keller, A. Standbrough, Mrs. D.E. Tuttle, Mrs. C.F. Fierce, and Mrs. S. Jennings, began the canvass of the community for funds to erect a new building. As the autumn months came on, the work of the committee ceased. We find no records of further meetings after Oct. 14, 1912.

The matter was taken up again in the early summer of 1913. On May 9, Rev. Martin H. Keast, whose pastorate began in March, called a meeting of the trustees, at which time the board was organized and the following officers were elected: president, E.E. Stearns; secretary, H.O. Tuttle, treasurer, J. Stearns. The attention of the board of trustees was called to the need of a new church. The question was thoroughly threshed out, and it was decided to at once begin plans for the erection of a new modern brick church building to cost from eight to ten thousand dollars. The soliciting committee had gathered \$2,000 before ceasing their work. Then again later took up the work and pushed it to completion. The building committee was A.E. Blair, E.J. Blair, F. Binning, J.C. Fierce, A.B. Riche, E.O. Stearns, H.O. Tuttle and C.C. Waters.

At a meeting on July 12, 1913, sealed bids for the erection of the new church were taken, with Teas Brothers of Chariton winning by a unanimous vote. At the same meeting it was decided to use dark colored pressed brick below the water table and a light gray colored pressed brick above the water table to be trimmed in Bedford Stone.

The work of excavating began in July of 1913. Teams of horses and workmen arrived at an early hour and president of the board of trustees, E.O. Stearns, steadied the first scraper and began the work of excavating.

A program celebrating the cornerstone laying was held October 3, 1913. Rev. Martin H. Keast placed items in a small metal box, those of which included such things as a Bible, church and Sunday School up to date information, and various county papers and Christian papers.

The cornerstone located on the Southwest corner bears the inscription: M.E. Church 1856-1913 and is also made of Bedford Stone.

The new building measured 46x62 feet. The roof was given a six-ply tar preparation roof with a coat of hot tar and gravel on top of that to serve as a weather protector of the entire tar preparation. The dome was constructed of heavy number one lumber and entirely covered with copper. Copper was chosen over tile because the same endurance could be obtained with less burdensome weight. The furnace was made by Campbell Furnace Co. of Des Moines, the lighting system installed by the same company that put lights in the old church, the Incandescent Light Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio. This lighting was a gas system but the church was wired for electricity as well.

The pews were made by the American Seating Co. of Chicago, Ill. from oak timber grown in Wisconsin. The art glass was purchased from Flanagan & Bienewil Co. of Chicago, Ill. with Mr. Geity as the efficient designer. The general conviction is that the beautiful windows in the west end, ("The Good Shepherd," John 10: 1-16) is unsurpassed by any ever seen in a building of equal cost and size.

The following memorials and gift windows appear in the church: In the main entrance of the auditorium the window bears the inscription "Saved for Service" and was donated by the women's Foreign Missionary Society of the local church.

The Sunday School window is half of the large window in the south wall of the building. Its appearance was made possible through funds contributed by the Adult Bible Class and the Sunday School. The

emblem design is the Sunday School flag surrounded by the red circle adopted as the badge of the Adult Bible Class movement.

Newton and Lucinda Jane Spencer's relatives donated a window for their memory. The Epworth League, located back of the pulpit, is the gift of the young people. Rev. Seth Samson gave both a gift and memorial window in memory of his wife, Margaret.

James and Louise Blair are listed among the names of this section although their specific gift was not mentioned.

The G.A.R. window is located in the vestibule at the northwest corner of the church and is the gift of the Old Soldiers of the local camp.

The Masonic window seems to place emphasis on the brotherly love idea taught in the Bible.

The bees buzzing around a beehive emblem is the Ladies Aid Society gift, and truly symbolizes the ladies work.

Mrs. Stearns' class of boys saved an offering, starting long before any visible evidence of a new church was seen, so that they could donate a window.

"Walter Hampton, 1904-1911" is the inscription on the window given by Mr. and Mrs. E.N. Hampton as a memorial to their dear son.

Mr. E.O. Stearns' Young Men's Bible class also saved money so that they might give a window. Besides their window, many personal gifts were given as well. The Branson-Keast window, located in the back end of the pastor's study was assigned as a gift to the former pastor and wife and incumbents in recognition of humble service rendered.

The window located on the north side of the pastor's study is a memorial of Jonathan and Carrie Stearns.

When the new church was built in 1914, 106 families were represented among the 218 members. Several clubs and organizations were a part of the church body then.

The Epworth League was active in both the spiritual and social life of the community and numerically, Van Wert's club led in the Chariton District.

The Junior League was reorganized in September 7, 1913 by Mrs. Keast, who was appointed superintendent, and the group met every Sunday at 2:30 p.m. for Bible study, and memory work. During that time, the group is said to have grown from 8 to over 50.

The Ladies Aid Society is composed of the ladies of the church and is the only group still active in the church today. They meet monthly and are responsible for most of the fund raising events.

The Women's Foreign Missionary Society met in monthly sessions, and donated approximately \$100 per month toward the support of missionaries when in existence.

The Young Women's Missionary organization was known as the Standard Bearers. They met monthly and were carefully "mothered" by the W.F.M.S. president.

Rev. O.W. Morrow was the first minister in the new church. Those following him were: J.A. Walls, Virgil Henderson, I.S. Selby, J.A. Walls, Murdock Neeves, Malcom Love, C. Horton Tally, A.J. Bissinger, James Buikema, Oliver Jensen, Myrtle Wolf (Cox), Lucius L. Smith, W.M. Harkin, William Miller, W.M. Andre, Laurence Garrett, Howard Adams, James Wilkins, Tom Murr, Harold Nichols, Paul Deny, Alan Ricks, Judy May, Lyle Dunham, Cecil Latta, Dan Neiningner and Bradley Waller. Today the pastors are Robert

Bell (the first two Sundays each month) and Leroy Perkins (the last two Sundays each month). Approximately 20 to 25 members attend the church today.

In May, 1943, the church windows were damaged quite badly by a windstorm. The large window on the south was completely damaged. Luckily, none of the memorial windows were damaged. The large dome on the church was removed on account of the weight and causing the roof to leak.

An article appearing in the Leon paper on March 24, 1949 tells us that the first boards of the old parsonage were torn off on September 21, 1948. Men donated labor and razed the old building salvaging lots of old lumber for the new parsonage. \$3,000 cash was donated toward the new parsonage as well as \$2,000 in labor. The little house was all modern with five rooms, a bath, and a full basement. The Ladies Aid purchased a new gas stove and installed venetian blinds throughout the house. (There is a slight discrepancy evident here wherein the article from Leon paper tells us a new gas stove was purchased and the historical book of the church says it was a new electric refrigerator.) The ladies held penny suppers and food sales and served at various auctions to get money to help with the new parsonage. Al Redman donated all the sand used. Elmer Kivett served as building chairman and the rest of the committee was made up of Ralph Lamoree, Al Redman and Mrs. Owen Bulkeley ! and Mrs. George Redman. Mrs. Jesse Redman was the secretary-treasurer. Virgil Simmerman (Weldon) was the head carpenter assisted by Wesley Goff (Weldon), Herman Brown (Van Wert) and Paul Simmerman (then of Van Wert); Kenneth Mitchell (Garden Grove) did all the plastering while Ivan Corsbie did all the wiring. On March 1, 1949 the pastor and his wife moved in.

In September 1956 the church celebrated Methodism's 100th birthday in our community. A great many turned out for the events that day.

In 1970 extensive remodeling was done in the basement. a new kitchen was built and new tables and chairs were purchased for the dining area.

On Easter Sunday, April 18, 1976, a worship service center was donated in memory of the late Ivan Corsbie. Items dedicated were an altar, drapes, a lighted cross and paraments for Corsbie. Vicki Adams, granddaughter, and friend, Ron Leeper, dedicated the song, "The Three Nails" in Ivan's memory. The Rev. Judith May presented Mrs. Corsbie with a certificate of dedication. Many family members and friends attended.

ROUND KNOLL CUMMUNITY CURCH

The Round Knoll Community Church was located in Section No. 4. Although no dates were available as to when the church was organized or discontinued, it is believed that the first services may have been held in a schoolhouse until the country church was built in September, 1910. Mrs. Lonnie Cowden has recalled that the church was located on the corner of her father, Lige Parmer's farm, and she went to Sunday School there.

WOODWARD SCHOOL

Another school which doubled as a place of worship in possibly as early as the years 1910 through 1919, was the Woodward School. H.O. Tuttle served as minister for several summers with Rev. E.C. Vanderpool and others also holding meetings.

Mrs. Fred (Lenna) Beers led in organizing the Sunday School and church here. For some time services were discontinued until 1950, when "Winifred and Mildred Macumbet of the Christian Union Faith, from Indianola, reorganized Sunday School and church here, taking quite an active part in the community and will be remembered by many."

* * * * *

Our community as with thousands of others in the midwest and the rest of the nation placed a high value on the worship of God and the houses of worship. Thus, the following poem by Ben Burroughs seems appropriate:

How we mortals look to Heaven
When the tides of life run low,
Reaching out for consolation
To help drive away our woe.

How we look to God for mercy
When there is impending pain,
Seeking strength to struggle onward
And to weather all the rain.

No one else but God in Heaven
Gives us courage to go on,
He gives help when faith is waning
And all worldly hope is gone.

If a mortal ever doubted
That there is a God above,
They should listen to the pleading
Of the ones who need His love.

How we pray when bad luck beckons
And our eyes are wet with tears,
Don't forget to keep on praying
When the trouble disappears.

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In the Leon Journal-Reporter, December 4, 1975, all county churches were binding together in a type of program they called, "Calling our Continent to Christ". In this article, the two Van Wert churches operating then and today, included their programs, the Assembly of God and the United Methodist Church.

It somehow seems appropriate now in 1980, as it did in 1975, and in pioneer days that we work to firstly call our Community to Christ, then let them, in turn, spread the Good News even farther. To do this we must create the enthusiasm and exuberance caused by genuine Christian love. If this is applied, fewer will have the problems of "growing listless and indifferent" as our Pathfinder Layman mentioned. The words of a song concerning the human being who loved more than any other says, "Jesus is the answer in the world today, above him there's no other. Jesus is the way." Perhaps if we all strive to be like this one perfect Man, lives would be better in our city, our community, our nation and our world. When it's time for your journey to Jordan, may you meet your Maker and hear Him say:

THY WORK IS WELL DONE,  
    THY RACE IS WELL RUN,  
        THY CROWN IS WELL WON.

(Closing three lines taken from the dedication prayer of the Christian Church of Van Wert, November 29, 1914

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CEMETERIES

As sure as there is life, there is death, and so it was with the community of Van Wert. Several cemeteries are located throughout the countryside surrounding Van Wert, the largest being, of course, the Van Wert Cemetery, located one mile south of town. An early person buried in Long Creek Township was Mrs. H.

Louthan. Brother Anderson helped to bury her. He said they went down on Long Creek, cut down a Lyn Tree, split out slabs as thin as they could with a broad axe and fastened them together with wooden pins to bury the lady's remains. This information was taken from a letter written by J.M. Palmer of Lawrence, Kansas, to his brother, W.W. Palmer of Conway, Iowa, in June, 1934. (Both gentlemen lived in north Richland Township, Decatur County, Iowa.)

Unfortunately, the letter did not tell where she was buried exactly or what she died from.

#### THE CLINTON CEMETERY

On top of a hill northeast of William Hall's present home in Section 15 of Decatur county, is a little graveyard near a large old tree where no fence surrounds it and no care is taken of it. There are at least ten stones in the ruins with possibly more buried beneath the soil. William S. DeVore, grandfather of William E. DeVore and Harry Devore (both of Van Wert), was buried here March 26, 1863 at the age of thirty-one years. He died shortly after returning home from the Civil War, from injuries incurred in action. Among the stones remaining are dates from 1858 to 1869 and most of those buried here were children.

#### THE MCKEE CEMETERY

The McKee Cemetery in Section 16 is located at the top of a big hill west of Long Creek. No record of early burials is available but Josiah Ramsey, who died in August, 1956, at the age of 92 is believed to be the last. Not much is available in regard to the last.

Not much is available in regard to the MUNYON CEMETERY, located in Section 31, except that it was once known as the WOODARD CEMETERY. A deed dated 1866 to Francis and Mary Varga for the sum of \$1.00 for a 3/4 acre of land shows the transaction was made so that a cemetery could be opened. The deed shows Stephen Varga as Notary Public and Robert Woodard's grandfather, E.P. Woodard, G.W. Wells and L. Madarasz as trustees. No other information was available to our knowledge.

The WEST CEMETERY is located in Section 20. It is a small family plot of only three graves (10' x 10') enclosed with a rusty iron fence and gate; overgrown with day lilies and weeds. The cemetery is very close to the road. On some county maps, two cemeteries are shown, one on the north side of the road and one on the south. As far as we know, there is only the one cemetery on the north side of the road, the discrepancy possibly being caused by the fact that the road was changed several years ago and may have been marked twice at that time. The ancestors of Russell Fierce of Van Wert, buried in this cemetery, are:

Row 1, stone 1, Elizabeth West, wife of William, who died July 13, 1893 at the age of 70 years, 6 mos. and 21 days. Row 1, stone 2, William West, husband of Elizabeth, who died June 11, 1861 at the age of 63 years, 2 mos. and 13 days. Stone 3 is Lincoln, son of William and Elizabeth West, who died January 27, 1865 at the age of 1 year and 6 days (his stone was found propped against his mother's). Since we have the history on this family, perhaps this is the place to remember them. William West was born in Ohio in 1817, the son of Daniel and Mary West, who were natives of the State of Virginia. He was raised on a farm and married Elizabeth Robinson (the daughter of Isaac and Ann Humms Robinson) in 1843 near Columbus, Ohio. Their living children, at the last report, are Charles of Decatur County; Hamilton, Allen and John, all three of Nebraska; Elmina Hubbard, also of Nebraska, and Jefferson N. and Isaac, and Mrs. Ann M. Fierce of Iowa. Deceased children, other than Lin!

coln, buried here are Daniel, Mary and Martin L. They came to Decatur County in 1854 starting out poor and building an estate of 900 acres. William was Republican and held the office of assessor and other school offices. He was also a member of the Granger Order. Very early in Van Wert's history, James Irving (grandfather of Cecil Pelsor) donated an acre of land from the southeast corner of his quarter section, for a public burying ground, when it became necessary to bury a baby that had died in the night. The baby belonged to an emigrant, Dr. Powell, who was camped near the roadside. This plot of ground became the original Van Wert Cemetery. An Indian woman was also buried in the original acre, but no record of where, is found.

No lots were ever sold on this ground, but everyone's right was respected where the lots were marked. Wilson and Smith was the first addition. It started with the George Pelsor grave. The second addition is known as the Pleasant View or Gould's Addition. It was 16 feet wide and ran the full length of the old

cemetery. King's Addition added in 1936 was the new cemetery. Louis Simmerman was the first buried here on December 20, 1936. The center part was opened first, then the front section and lastly the back part. (This addition was once part of the J.W. King farm in 1895. String sold to S.C. Moreland who then sold to Sidney W. Johnson in July, 1897 who in turn sold to Mann in 1898. Corbett later bought it from Mann. Walter King and Ethel King Blair, son and daughter, deeded a parcel of land to the trustees for cemetery expansion in 1936). Again in 1951, land was acquired from Paul and Mary Beardsley. Dennis Fierce is a present trustee of the cemetery; lots are sold at this time for \$40.00 (a full lot will bury four people).

Several relatives and friends of our community are buried in the TENNESSEE CEMETERY. A few of those are as follows: Susan Hall, daughter of Al and Nora Cain, Al Cain Hall, Nora (Warrick) Hall, parents of William, Arthur E. and Ira Hall and Dora Lewis; Dave Woods, Ellen (Boles) Woods, parents of Etta Fry; Grant Hatfield, Elizabeth (Collins) Hatfield, parents of Dewey, Bunk, Wilbur, Alva Hatfield, Pearl Schultz, Irene Neff, Edith Boles, Jesse Lee, Nealy Murphy, Marie Boles, Merle Davis; Pearl (Hatfield) Schuldt, Louis Schuldt, parents of Lane, Lyman, Boyd & Layton Schuldt, Darlyne Norman and Wanda Baughman; Fuel Collins, Sarah (Anderson) Collis, parents of Elizabeth Collins Hatfield; Wayne Schuldt, son of Pearl and Louis Schuldt.

In 1897-1898 F.W. Fay had a marble works whereby monuments and tombstones were made in this community.

#### POST OFFICE

At the time of the early settlers in the area, one of the necessary things needed was a place for the arrival and holding of the mail. In those early days when no rural routes were established, many small Post Offices were established in the homes of a local resident. Florence was the pioneer name of the present town of Van Wert, settled in 1853 but was soon changed to Prairie City and then to Prairieville and finally to Van Wert. Of the small Post Offices, Long Creek was in the southern part of Long Creek Township in the years of 1871-1875. Fierce was a Post Office in the southeastern part of Long Creek Township from 1885-1898, Spring Valley in north Long Creek Township in the years of 1856-1902. Patriot was an early Post Office just south of Van Wert corner in Franklin Township near the Ray Lantz farm located on Highway 69. The years for this Post Office were 1869-1884. Many similar small Post Offices were established over Decatur County in the early years of the settlers.

#### Postmasters:

Prior to 1880, James Irving  
Prior to 1880, John Gemmil  
12 March 1880, Adam J. Johnson  
10 December 1883, William H. Todd  
3 November 1885, John Corbett  
14 May 1889, Nelson G. Spencer  
23 April 1891, Pearl K. Hall  
3 February 1894, Thomas E. Owen  
16 February 1894, Mrs. Deborah Owen  
15 September 1897, Alvanus J. Rowe  
10 December 1912, Frank R. Porter  
9 November 1914, Margaret E. Edwards  
3 March 1923, Fred A. Hall  
28 February 1928, Fred A. Hall  
25 February 1931, Fred A. Hall  
31 October 1933, Alfred G. Smith  
1 December 1941, Miss Arta M. Smith  
16 July 1942, Mrs. Bondine T. Cisco  
9 February 1943, Paul E. Heckathorn

1974-1977, Warren (Pete) Hanthorn  
July 1978, Gerald Akes

Officers in Charge:

Larry Gegner, 1974  
Betty Savely, 1977  
Maelene Otto, 1978

Mail for the Post Offices in those early days was transported by stage. After the coming of the railroad and the railway mail cars, it arrived at the Van Wert depot and was transported to the Post Office by dray. After the railroad was discontinued, star routes were established and later the Highway Post Office, then when they were discontinued the mail was returned to delivery by star route. Some of the people who had a dray and brought mail and freight from the depot were, Johnny Fuller, Frank Rush, Bert West and Everett Saylor. As history says the first Post Office in Van Wert was established in the house known today as the Aaron Fry property. It later moved in a brick building on Main Street. Post Office clerks serving the Van Wert Office were Arta Smith, Pauline Fry, Belva Ramsey, Lois South, Louella Kelly, Duane Spidle, Wayne Heckathorn, Maxine Morris, Thelma Cole and Maelene Otto.

A sketchy history of the rural route is all that we have at hand. Rural carriers and substitute rural carriers known are Frank Young, Oscar (Leo) Boatman, Russell Reed, Elmer Hampton, John Cross, Russell Cox, Malcolm Tiedje, Robert Wickham and Joe Leeper. In those early rural route days when all roads were dirt it was a task to make the complete route.

The delivery of mail has progressed over the past one hundred years. From Pony Express, stage coach, trains, star routes, highway post offices and the airplane. We have seen the change from U.S. Post Office Department to what is now known as the U.S. Postal Service. In the past few years we have been using zip code for the speedier delivery of mail and over the last few years the number of pieces of mail delivered has grown immensely.

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## SCHOOLS

The first school house was built about one-fourth of a mile north of Van Wert in 1858. The land was donated by Mr. Steen. The building was a log structure, and was provided with puncheon slats long enough for eight or ten pupils to sit on for seats. An undressed board placed upon pegs driven into the wall served as a writing desk.

The second school house was located in about the same location as the first. It was built in 1872 at a cost of \$465 and was 22 by 28 feet in size.

The third school was built in 1855 by Lewis Holt. The land was given by A.J. Hawkins. The building stood where the present Assembly of God Church now stands. The building cost \$2,700. After a few years two more rooms were added to this building. Some years later this structure was torn down and the lumber was used to build a house in town, presently known as the Chet Reed home.

Van Wert's last school was built in 1918 at a cost of \$21,000. It was located across the road north and west of the third school house. The last bonds were paid off in 1936.

## SOME OF THE VAN WERT TEACHERS

Edmund Blair, Ethel Gard, Ollie Foxworthy, Nancie Kemp, Atha Briner, Mertie Edwards, Merle Stephens, Ralph McGee, Roy Howard, Evadeane Vanderburg, G.D. Stiles, Ray Allen, Howard Curry, Helen Haverson, Helen Kendall, Marjorie Barrickman, Mary Boatman, Evelyn White, Owen R. Bulkeley, Bruce Young, Myna Hughes, Eleanor Ketcham, Kenneth Ketcham, Delpha Linderer, James Linderer, Pat Thomas, Marjorie Johnson, Ada Tillotson, Clarice Stream, Pauline McDowell, Donald Fridley, Eldon

Cowles, Mae King, Ida Pollock, John Sinclair, Ella Reeder, Virgil Anderson, Melvin Stoner, Alice Chesworth, Iroline Chambers, Corrine Eischen, Gladys Wallace, Dean Houck, William Flockhart, Kathrine Havard, Lula Hogg, Rosaliea Fisk, Oren Elmore, Mrs. Mulkey, C.W. Evitts, Louva Hanner, Mrs. Day, Miss McKay, Mrs. H. Jenkins, Mrs. E.O. Stearns, Mr. Pruyne, Michael Crees, Thelma Bartlett, Ada Crees, Berdena Watson, Mrs. E.G. Elam, Mrs. Euritt, Mrs. Hodenfield, Jundemier Morris, Clayton Burton, Lorna Cable, Ina !

Garton, Sidwell, Darrell Swan, Merle Lowe, Mae Baker, Andy Cambell, Miss Mary Allard, Mr. Kempf, C. Edward Elam, Ethel (King) Blair, Miss Camillia Thompson, Mr. Davis, Mr. Spencer, Porteaux Halstead, Mrs. Leeper, Elsie (McMurtrey) Upfield, Clarice Stream, Dorothy Stream, Selma (Lipsett) Thompson, Glenn Campbell, Mrs. Carmichael, Arthur Brayton, Don Southard, Queen Bell, Mrs. Kruthers, Imogene Warren, Madge (Redman) Kernen, Gladys Chambers, Jane Sayre, Mildred Ballantyne, Inez Chambers, Hazel Christensen, Jetty Reynolds, Mrs. Hamond, Earl Prather, S.J. Plopper, Guy McCarty, Dorthea Dunaway, Miss Ethel Luce, Doris (Redman) Houck, Raymond Jensen, Shirli Blair, Boalis Halstead, Ethel Bulkeley, Cecil Brayton, Eleanor Schatz, Carma Thompson, Mildred McAfee, Mencie Prather, Henry Esch, Odessa Bone, H.B. Golden, Neva Kelley, Vera Dunaway, Mrs. Moon, Miss Lynch, Roland Simpson, Paul Reeves, Myra Murry, Willa Fisher, R. Rauhauser, Herbert Foust, August White, Mr. Hayworth, Mr. Gregor!

y, G.C. Goodwin, Charlie Brown, K.E. Steele, Mrs. Powell, Lewis Holt, James Blair, Newton Piercy, Belle (Burns) Harvey, Mr. Rhodes, V.R. McGinnis, A.A. Roy, Mr. McVey, F.P. Reed, O.H. Hollen, Blanch Bates, Loren Snooks, Niomi Bulkeley.

#### VAN WERT SCHOOL YELLS

The head, the head, the head of the mule is always ahead like Van Wert School. The tail, the tail, the tail of the mule is always behind like school \_\_\_\_\_ had a rooster. And they sat it on a fence. He crowed for Van Wert because he had some sense.

#### WILDCAT SONG

Wildcats will shine tonight  
Wildcats will shine  
Wildcats will shine tonight  
All down the line.  
Rah! Rah! Rah!

We're all dressed up tonight  
Don't we look fine  
In the black and red  
Black and red  
Wildcats will shine.  
Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah!

Yeah Van Wert!

Victory, Victory, Victory  
That's our cry  
v-i-c-t-o-r-y

Aren't we in it?  
Well I guess!  
Van Wert High School  
Yes! Yes! Yes!

#### VAN WERT SCHOOL SONG

Van Wert will shine tonight,



Van Wert will shine.  
She'll shine in beauty bright,  
All down the line.

Won't we look neat tonight,  
Dressed up so fine.  
When the sun goes down,  
And the moon goes up,  
Van Wert will shine.

A few interesting details found in the school board minutes in the 1920s:

"Motion was made by Adams and seconded by Pierce, to pay teachers and it is further agreed by both parties that if market prices of cattle and hogs are \$1.00 per hundred or higher at start of school, that teacher shall have a raise of 10 percent on salary and in case prices drop the teachers agree to a reduction of 10 percent.

"Motion by Wing to employ Chas. Holt to dig well at school house, 50 cents per hour dry digging and 75 cents per hour wet dirt digging."

Teachers' salaries in the 1920s and 1930s were \$65.00 to \$90.00 a month.

The Van Wert school was closed in September of 1922 because of diphtheria.

The board ordered a dozen turkish towels for the visiting athletics but the home team had to furnish their own towels.

In 1922, the board states the cost for each child to be \$12.00 a year. In 1978 the state budget estimates the cost to be \$1,614.00 per child per year.

One of the many memories that will be remembered in the Van Wert school will be Friday, March 13, 1959. A full scale emergency hit Van Wert when the majority of 210 pupils became ill. It was thought to be food poisoning transmitted by deviled eggs.

## GRADUATION CLASSES

1893:

R.W. Little, Harry Tuttle, Charles Hall.

1904:

Dora Barr Jenkins, Lucetta Matheny Gardinere, Earl Wise, Ethel King Blair, Fannie Blair Lamoree, Roy Hawkins, O. Ray Young.

1905:

Mabel Waters Simonds, Gordon Heather, Susie Tennant,  
Lulu Blades Luallen, Will, Elsie Hall Saylor.

1907:

Hazel Hawkins Hammer, Hazel Hall Barger, Poiteaux Halstead, Rose Lamoree.

1908:

Edd Kelley, Fay Myers, Emma Young Dunn, Cleveland Wolfe.

1909:

Leon Garber, Agnes Elliott Wolfe, Minnie Malhorn Young, Cornell Wis.

1910:

Izora heather Neff, Eugene Branaun, Zina Craft, Inez Skidmore, John Hoffman, Helen Blair Lamoree, Martin Boatman, Leon Boatman, Ralph Rumley.

1911:

Laura Hacker Thompson, Vern McGrew, Alma Garber Bridger, Josephine Blair McGee, Raymond Story, Clifford Johnson.

1912:

Ralph Lamoree, Walter King, Alpha Mulkey, Donald Price, Orbin Hanks, Beryl Myers, Frank Rush, Forest Allen, Boalis Halstead McMorris.

1913:

Martha Craft Hanks, Ruth Hacker Pocks, Clifford Barnes, Helen Rumley Young, Merle Johnson, Clyde Johnson, May Irving Lamoree, Edmund Blair, Lenore Price, Ada Ramsey Shutts.

1914:

Florence Heather Halstead, Grace Keller Mannasmith, Helen Fierce Aiken, Pearl West, Burbank Halstead.

1915:

Violet Briner O'Hair, Neva Kelly Jamison

1917:

Callie Johnson Schmidt, Loral Fierce, Earl Edwards.

1918:

Cora Tepfer Adams, Atha Briner Gill, Mabel Tepeer Bedier.

1919:

Vera Myers, Arthur Fierce, Ethel Bulkeley Leffler, Christi Lantz Mallatt, Eula Kelly Siefkas, Lucielle Fierce Matthews.

1920:

Marie Barnes Sandford, Ethel Webb Love.

1921:

Nellie Hastings, Phillip Blair, Ruth Bulkeley Kelso.

1922:

Ilene Hastings Pullman, Clara Davenport Ramsey, Mildred Pierce Brand, Grace Webb Young, Edith Hall Euritt.

1923:

Lorene Briner Sullivan, Willie Burgen, Darrell Bean, Twyla Johnson Russell, Lloyd Bulkeley, Eddis Downey Allen, Margaret Redman Watson, Lillian Houck Jones, Adrian Wilson Christensen.

1924:

Illa Davis Woodall, Jennie Edge Wood, Keith Murray, Alice Wick, Floyd Webb, Mildred Tepeer Leeper, Madge Redman Kernan, Willa Fisher Palmer.

1925:

Fred Glascock, Ralph Sink, Gladys Holt Meyer, George Redman, Jennie Watson Saffell, Olga Mallatt Glascock, James Curry, Wilden Tuttle, Emma Walker Hoy, Arthur Adams, Orville Gardner, Myra Murray Burchett, Elizabeth Houck Mallatt.

1926:

Owen Bulkeley, Berdena Watson Bulkeley, Lila Saffell Little, Myron Blades, Mildred Dougherty Paulson, Lowell Snider, John Haller, Lloyd Ramsey, Irma Finkbone Halterman, Eva Sink Webb, Beulah Fierce Fear, Mendall Cole, Dorothy Hall Byers, Laura Bell Saylor, Louis Fisher.

1927:

Mildred Githens Turk, Naomi Fuller Wheeler, Vera Lee Gardner, Leona Gardner Van Sant, Ruth Barnett Simmerman, Truman Burkey, Leone Poush, John Schmidt.

1928:

Esther Stearns Andrews, Louis Webb, Beryle Machlan, Ralph Finkbone, Dean Prather, Doris Blair Harris, Beulah Redman Olson, Mary Stubbs Sayers, Mabel Kelly Saddoris, Hazelle Baxter Greene, Charles Barton, Everett Saylor, Louise Redman Perry, Naomi Bulkeley Howery, Mary M. Schmidt.

1929:

Elmer Houck, Raymond Redman, Earl Murray, Harold Fuller, Arlene Cole Holmes, Francis Githens, Paul Machlan, Pauline Rinard Houck, Marjorie Redman Sturdavant.

1930:

Ralph Houck, Richard Currie, Mamie Trisler Diehl, Florence Snyder Dickson, Arthur Edge, Goldie Stark South, Harry Redman, Nadine Lantz Redman, Paul Reeves, Paul Ramsey, Bruce Finkbone.

1931:

Horace Redman, Louise Githens Edge, Marie Houck Chown, Lela Fry Cain, Ronald Hoadley, Irene Burgan, Ruby Hall Grim, Edward Lipsett.

1932:

Paul Heckathorn, Raymond Ellis, Doris Redman Sink, Neil Byerly, Wayne DeVore, Lloyd Fletcher, Orville Fry.

1933:

Wanda Cole Redman, Helen Redman King, Esther Lantz Watson, Arlene Bullard Diltz, Francis Stubbs, Mary Boatman Kull, Mary Hall Holder, Aubrey Ramsey, Orville Stearns, Lena Lee.

1934:

Russell Fierce, Roland Redman, Robert Ryan, Russell Stubbs, Francis Wing, Thelma Cole McDowell, Clarence Perkins, Lorene McConnell Gilbert, Mamie Corsbie Craig, Enid Murchison Updike, Marvin Gordon, Baalis Fuller.

1935:

Rilma Rogers Driskill, Mary Simmerman Hein, Opel Green Palmer, Howard Houck, Cletus Burgen, Effie Leigh, Inez Collins Harger, Louis Evans, Frank McMurtrey, Donald O'Neal, Evelyn Gill O'Neal.

1936:

Ruby Husted Kauzlarich, Blondine Githens Cisco, Margaret Erickson Herbert, Dorothy DeWild Fagan, Joan Jones Turner, Edwin Davis, Naomi Euritt, Robert Boatman.

1937:

Elsie McMurtrey Upfield, William Bahr, Sylvia South Hall, Max Traupen, Vondean McConnell Clark, Willard Baker, Robert Fry, Ellen Byerly Reynolds, Ruth Rogers Simms, Ralph Hein.

1938:

Mildred Corsbie Adams, Atha Palmer Thompson, Alvin DeWild, Rex Foland, Max Foland, Donald Kelly, Ronald Collins, Iris Jones Jimmerson, Alpharetta Tiedje Kock, Russell Reed, Van McConnell, Marion Morris, James Upfield, Margaret O'Neal Dannen, Lois Fitzpatrick Purcel.

1939:

Robert Upfield, Elva Race Distman, Richard Tompkins, Marcia McConnell Thompson, Harold Hopkins, Willard Fuller, Raymond Tompkins.

1940:

Mabel Corsbie Horney, Charles Copley, Max Pelsor, Harold Jones, Ruth Palmer Reynolds, Geraldine Scadden Reed, Fred Erickson, Harry Imhoff, Gwendolyn Simmerman Kelly, Alice Watson Parsons, Wayne Heckathorn, Charles Imhoff, Dwayne Mallatt, Marjorie Jones Updike, Hazel Race Crawford.

1941:

Betty Adams Reed, Merlin Pelsor, Betty Erickson, Barbara Upfield Spencer, Alice Jones Ogbourne, Cornie Ververs, Jimmy O'Hair, Mildred Burchett Anderson.

1942:

Dennis Baker, Roscoe Imhoff, Evelyn Copley Lynn, Dale Grimm, Lucielle Dean Morgan, Mildred Race Beals, Billy Tiedje, Malcolm Tiedje, Lowell Brown, Darlene Scadden Buntain, Ermal Palmer, Earl Erickson, Maurice Pace, Warren Jones.

1943:

Lowell Watson, Darlene Woodall Randolph, Dean McConnell, Murray Upfield, Junior Edwards, Dennis Anderson, Edwin Erickson, Kela Kivett.

1944:

Betty Upfield Potter, Ethel Woodall Chiles.

1946:

Wynette Jones Van Dyke, Donald McElwee, Randall Cox, Lawrence Palmer, Beverly Erickson, Worth Upfield, Donna Palmer, Ronald Pierce, Virginia Kirkpatrick.

1947:

Dean Houck, Jerrie Throckmorton Furtig, Billy Kirkpatrick, Winona Jones Crawford, Darlene Pettis Cox.

1948:

Joyce Edwards McDowell, Richard Upfield, Lavern Kelly McDowell, Delbert Woodall, Evelyn Woodall Shilman, Belva Ramsey.

1949:

Don Morris, Gene Boles, Don Pierce.

1950:

Beverly Houck Johnson, Alice Boles Arnold, Orland Bulkeley, Twyla DeVore McElwee, Luetta Cain Wakefield, Betty Shell Farris, Robert Throckmorton, Wanda Jones.

1951:

Joan McBee Evans, Mary Ann Mallatt Arnold, Wray Simmerman, Lois Cowden, Don Hall, Bonita Houck Edward.

1952:

Wanda simmerman Schuldt, Beverly Wilson Morris, Deloris South Heckathorn, David Boles, Virginia Twombly Mercer, Geraldine Larkins, Lloyd Stream, Lloyd Heckathorn, John Hall.

1953:

Wendell West, Sammy West, Billy DeVore, Jimmie Stottlemeyer, Forest Housh, Colleen McDowell West, Donald Houck, Milo McConnell, Jerry Redman, Lorraine Boles Johnson, Ronal Kindred.

1954:

Mardell Redman Shell, Ed Beers, Susie Boles Wood, Bonnie Hall, Don Foland, Richard Bethards, Betty Cain Mason, Roger Downard, Eldon South, Carol Shell Hall, Elaine Watson Fisher, Dwayne Spidle, Wayne West.

1955:

Reva Kindred Beers, Sydney Shell, Marna Hall Smith, Lois Jean Kernen, Don Mallatt, Marlene Redman Lukaszewski, Larry Spidle, Wendell Jones, Duane Houck, Janice Edwards Rhodes, Jon Jackson, Roy McConnell, Sharon Defenbaugh Dobson.

1956:

Orval McDowell, James McBee, Norma Fullerton Deere, Annetta Miller, Janice Miller Baughman, Sharon Woods Sinclair, Beverly Fry Row.

1957:

Nevallee Kindred McDowell, Randall Updike, Willard Parmer, Larry Defenbaugh, Barbara Houck Merrick, Gerald Fullerton, Bennie Redman, Karen Miller McBee, Shirley Rhodes Jackson, Jimmy Perry, Jennie Green Perry, Colleen Boles Kastler, Glen Gilbert, Larry Stream, Ann Boles Rieb.

1958:

Shirley Stream Gilbert, Dennis Fierce, Alan Heckathorn, Wayne Cowden, Corwin Cox, Darwin McDowell, Harvey Carter, Darel Foland, Donnie Larkins, Nancy Smith Vorchers, Lois Fullerton Alvarez, Bertha Boles Dugan, Evelyn King Morey, Jeanne Beardsley Boles, Eileen Ramsey Reynolds.

1959:

Bobby Tompkins, Sharon Spidle, Barbara Rhodes, Roberta King, Joan Kernen Boles, Willene Jones, Rosalie Holmes, Gloria Gilbert McClure, Rowland Updike, Danny Redman, Arthur Pritchard, Daryl Houck, Larry Fry, Larry Perry.

1960:

Ida Ann Baker West, Kathy Cowden Lillebridge, Mary Miller Stogdill, Patty Reed, Eldon Reed, Charles Stream, Robert Eischen, Jon Redman, Paul Stiles.

1961:

Kay Cox Fierce, Kay Jones, Kathleen Heckathorn, Petty Smith Boles, Lowell Fry, George South, Davey Redman.

1962:

Betty Green Kelleher, Connie Lewis Hagen, Doris Fullerton, Dixie Cox South, Sondra Hall Reed, Carolyn Reed Nelson, Norma Smith Exley, Ted Yost, Garry Fry, Jimmie Lee, Gary Holmes, Donald Fullerton, Larry Bethards, Dennis Houck, Dorman Reed, Ronnie Hein, Troy Updike, Robert DeVore, Bobby Pritchard.

Along with progressive education came the phasing out of many small local schools. Consolidation seemed the answer. The Van Wert School district is located between Leon and Osceola. The people of the community voted to see which school they would attend. The town people voted to go to Osceola, and the country people were given their choice of schools.

In the fall of 1962, the high school and junior high students from Van Wert were enrolled in Osceola. The grades, primary through sixth, remained in the Van Wert building. In 1966, the elementary children of Weldon and Van Wert were combined as part of the Clarke Community Schools.

After the many years of children's happy laughter, teachers instructive voices, the ringing of the noon bell, parents' proud faces on graduation day, and the cheering-on of our sports teams, our school building became silent, leaving only our cherished memories.

-- 1980 --

Four buses haul the Van Wert school children to school. Doris Clemens, Jerry Hatfield, and Bud Hood transport children to Weldon. Jerry Parmer hauls the high school and junior high students to Osceola.

Angie Jackson, Lowell Huer, Wesley Jones, Shad Cook, John Hobbs, Robbie Lewis, Tanya Reynolds, Deanna Akins, Andy Heckman, Brenda Rhodes, Tammy Miler, Tina Updike, Aaron Fry, Melanie Ramsey, Christy Hatfield, Jerry Parmer, Karen Reed, Mike Grim, Cheryl Boeckman, Jodi O'Hair, Jennifer Spencer, Lora Foland, Sherry Turpin, Ramona Houck, Jeremy Kelly, Paula Scadden, Raydean Boles, Brian Cox, Anna Marie Thayer, Sandy Scadden.

Kevin Schuldt, Richard Jones, Donna Cook, Brett Sickles, Deanna Cole, Sue Reynolds, Scott Cook, Donna Akins, Robert Chaney, Dan Rhodes, Vickie Miler, Brian Updike, Jim Snyder, Joy Poush, Bobby Grimm, Jennifer Parmer, Dhane Reed, Rosa Grim, Amanda Boeckman, Sara O'Hair, Richard Spidle, Ronda Foland, Michael Turpin, Lisa Cook, Diane McClure, Scott Hook, Jolene Boles, Chris Cox, Becky Scadden, Jody Chipp.

Clinton Huer, Melinda Jones, Doris Cook, Kimberly Collins, Cody Cole, Penny Reynolds, John Akins, Tim Heckman, Scott Crandell, Tammy Rhodes, Michelle Otto, Jeffrey Parmer, Penny Ramsey, Benny Hatfield, Patricia Parmer, Valorie Reed, Lisa Rowe, Jodi Hainline, Barbara Boeckman, Don Halterman, Heather Spidle, Michael Foland, Lorie Smith, Jeff Cook, Jill Chip, Ben Kosman, Penny Boles, John Thayer, Ronnie Scadden, Brenda Reed.

Evelyn Parmer, Sherry South, Larisa Houck, Rick Gunter, Maria Jones, Deleath McClure, Monica Bethards, Scott South, Bud McLaughlin, Everett Parmer, Annette Thorp, Dana McClure, Byron Bethards, Deann Snyder, Paul McLaughlin, Kim Parmer, Vincent Spidle, June Grim.

## RURAL SCHOOLS

At one time, Long Creek Twp. had nine independent school districts. With the decline in the rural population and the small town, it became necessary to reorganize the smaller districts into the larger one, Van Wert. Many of the older generation of today will have fond memories of their school days in the rural schools, which will be listed below, giving the names of a few of the teachers (not given in order of teaching) who taught at each school.

WOODARD SCHOOL, Section 31, was closed in 1953 with Evelyn Smith (Palmer) as teacher. A few teachers were Elizabeth Follmer, Mary Miller (Foland), Rose Smith, Lenna Cummins (Beers), Zora Cummins, Nora Johnson, Zora Overholtzer, Gladys Overholtzer, Edith McKee, Rosamond Ramsey, Beulah Foland, Eula Overholtzer, Betty Poore, Mary Lux, Nina Boswell, Irene Schwalbe and others. An account of this school is found in the October 9, 1975 issue of the Leon paper along with pictures. The schoolhouse was sold to Lloyd McCarl, moved to his farm and made into a garage.

GOOD HOPE SCHOOL, Section 26, was built in 1874 and closed in 1951 with Ruby Lee Peters as teacher.

A few other teachers were: Mary Sears, Ralph Rumley, Helen Rumley (Young), Leo Boatman, Rose Lamoree, Maude Hampton, Jessie Metler, Ada and Ruby Crees, Pearl Gittinger, Leo Price, Cora Tetfer, Mae Waddell, Virginia Crawford, Louise Wagner, Edith Ball, Lela Myers, and Merna Beers. The school was sold to Horace Redman, left standing and used as a corn crib.

WEST SCHOOL, Section 20. The first school was built of logs on the William West farm, thus, giving it the name of West. It closed in 1954 with Lucille Reed as teacher.

Other teachers were: Lois Sankey, Nora Johnson, Ella Doolittle, George O. Johnson, Maude Hampton, Edith Ball, Mike Crees, LaVonne Smith, Violet Hall, Dorothy Richardson (Lewis), Maxine Laird, Mary

Delk and Merna Beers. The school was sold to Owen Larkin, now the Darel Foland farm, and used as a hay barn. A violent windstorm struck the building May 1975, taking out the north end.

ROUND KNOLL SCHOOL, Section 4. The first school was built of brick and was located about one half mile north of present building. It closed in 1951 with Lois Davenport as the teacher.

Other teachers were: Oscar Weber, Ed and Effie Lipseit, Miss Hattie Boatman, Zora Glazebrook, Mary Strong, Ruby Crees, Hettie Euritt (Palmer), Madge Woodard, Elmer Houck, Louis South, Violet Hall, and Betty Fry. This school still stands on the Georgia Cox farm, now owned by LeRoy Allison of Lincoln, Illinois, used for storage.

HAWKEYE SCHOOL, Section 36, was built around 1873. It closed 1951 with Naomi Bowen as teacher.

Other teachers were: Lillian Eaton, 1874; Avis Strong, Martin Boatman, India and Lottie Daily, Emma Hacker, Lulu Rumley, Ann Conwell, Doris O'Hair, Miss Yost, Mrs. Sam Metier, Mabel Kelley, Letha Krouch, Madge Stedman, Kathryn Havard, Helen Stuteville and Clarice Stream. The schoolhouse was sold to Carroll Tompkins and used as a hay barn.

The HOLLINGSHEAD RURAL SCHOOL that was Franklin No. 3, received its name because a Mr. Hollingshead donated one acre of land for the purpose of a rural school. This was some time during the 1880s. This school still stands on land owned by O. & W. Ag. Enterprise, Inc., and the O'Hairs use it for storage. The school closed at the end of the first semester in January, 1959. The pupils and teacher, Mrs. Ruth McGahuey, were incorporated into the Weldon School at this time. Many memories remain of the fun times at box suppers and PTA meetings when even the adults entertained. The school was used for a home a short time when Mr. and Mrs. Jesse O'Hair lost their home (across the road from the school) to a fire. There were just a few students and only several weeks of the spring term remaining so school was held in the J.A. O'Hair home. By the time the fall term arrived, Jesse and Violet had their new home constructed so school went on as usual.

Some of the teachers at Hollingshead School were: Neva Kelley Jamison, 1917-1919; Lillian Houck Jones, 1923-1925; Ethel Bulkeley, 1920-1921; Ethel B. Leffler, 1925-1928; Mabel Stover Garton, 1921-1923; Mary Delk, 1928-1928; Delma Euritt, 1936-1937; Leona Gardner, 1930-1931; Betty Cochran Redman, 1937-1938; Harold Fuller, 1940-1941; Mrs. Louis G. Brolin, Corrine Hamaker, Virginia Bethards, Aletha Newman, Ruth McGahuey, Leota Johnson, Ruth Rodgers, Annabelle (Flynn) Ddiscoll. Hollingstead also shared the music teacher with Popcorn School.

#### POPCORN SCHOOL HISTORY 1874-1980

In 1874 the first Popcorn Schoolhouse was built of brick structure in Franklin Township on 3/4 acre of land located 1 1/2 miles east of Van Wert and one mile south. It was purchased of C.J. Barrackman for \$30.00. It was named Popcorn School because the children brought lots of popcorn to school. The second schoolhouse as pictured was built on the old foundation in the summer of 1897 by Penniwell Brothers. In 1924, it was voted to have eight month school terms. Over a period of years things were done to bring the school up to standardization. Some of them were moving the stove to the back of the schoolhouse, building a new chimney, putting in ventilation registers in the school foundation, buying a record player and records, new library books and maps, laying crushed brick walks to the outbuilding and coal house, putting new wooden lattice screens in front of the outhouses and some playground equipment. In the winter when Edna (Wood) Kelley taught the first time, the parents would take turns and furnish a hot dish for the entire school. This was brought about 11:30 and placed on top of the heating stove to keep warm until noon. This was really enjoyed by the pupils and teacher along with their lunches brought from home. In the spring of 1931, the school participated in a State Chorus which was held at the KRNT Theatre in Des Moines. there were 2,000 grade pupils in the State on the stage at one time. Naomi Bulkeley was teacher in 1937 to 1939, Doris (Redman) Houck had a school band. In 1948 a music teacher was hired by the Franklin School Board President, Marvin Gordan. This continued until the schools were closed. The annex was built onto the school in the summer of 1950 by Ivan Corsbie. This made more room for coats, caps, overshoes, water fountain, hot plate and lunch pails.



In 1954, all schools in Franklin Township went to the Weldon Gym and put on a musical program with makeup and costumes, directed by Mrs. Claire Faust, the music teacher. The PTA was very active all through the years. When the number of pupils dropped, the adults in the community would help put on the programs for the box and pie suppers. Old Popcorn was closed in the spring of 1959, and a farewell party was held for all teachers and pupils who had ever taught or gone to school there. There were 25 pupils who attended their first term here and six former teachers present at the party. Three generations of the Ira Price and John Fierce families, attended this school. Lillie (Fierce) Corsbie got all of her schooling here. All four of the children, Mrs. Mamie (Gordon) Craig, Mrs. Mildred Adams, Mrs. Mable Horney, and Merlyn Corsbie and nine of her 14 grandchildren, Meryle, Kenneth, Ronald, and Donald Gordon, Robert, Richard and Russell Horney, and Kathy and Michael Adams, all attended this school.

The schoolhouse was torn down in 1964 and the cement and foundation were buried. The trees were cut in 1964 or 1965 and the ground has been farmed every year since. Music teachers at Popcorn from 1948 to 1959:

Mrs. Selma (Lipsett) Thompson, Mrs. Claire Faust, Mrs. LaNelle Buckingham, Mrs. Joan Findley, Mrs. Flossie Gillham, and Mrs. Helen Flockhart.

Teachers from 1800 to 1959 were: Jessie E. Hacker, Lanie Meek, Dora Barrackman, Kate Curry, Anise Strong, Nettie Starr, India Dailey, Lotta Daily, Myrtle Miller, Harriet Kirkpatrick, Rafe Porter, Edna Moore, Ina Overholtzer, Daisy Ross, Helen Gardner, Lennie Gardner, Kate Lathrop, Hazel Hawkins, Verlie Price, Rose Lamoree, Jennie Ritter, W.R. Hines, Edmund Blair, Neva Curry, Gladys Chambers, Eunice Long, Jane Follmer, Berniece Ochlatree, Rose Lamoree, Annie Bunch, Nellie Percy, Margaret Jane Jones, Iva Garton, Louise Oldaker, Jennie Edge, Edna Wood, Naomi Bulkeley, Edna (Wood) Kelley, Helen Halverson, Letha Krouch, Doris (Redman) Houck, Berniece Fullerton, Robert Conwell, Beatrice Andrews, Gretchen Miller, Ethel Bunch, Florence Fulton, Josephine Shook, and Hazel Christensen. Selma (Lipsett) Thompson and Naomi Bowen filled in at the time Ethel Bunch passed away Christmas, 1950. Taken from the records of Lillie (Fierce) Corsbie.

#### TOWN GOVERNMENT

City Records for the early years of Van Wert could not be found. We did find some early Mayors and Councilmen as follows:

1903:

Ed Holt, Mayor; H.O. Tuttle, Recorder; W.F. Glair, Treasurer; R.E. Ball, Assessor; J.J. Wall, Marshall; Ed Murray, Street Commissioner; Councilmen - Marvin Brown, George Kane, John Powers, Mel Thompson, C.M. Crane and C.A. Walker.

1906:

Lewis Holt, Mayor; F.R. Porter, Recorder; E.O. Stearns, Treasurer; M.P. Garber, Assessor; Isaiah Fry, Street Commissioner; Councilmen -- T.M. Craft, J.D. Stickler, John Powers, B.F. Hall, Elmer Hampton, and A.L. Belding.

1908:

A.E. Price, Mayor; J.M. Halstead, Recorder; E.O. Stearns, Treasurer; S.C. McKee, Assessor; F.R. Fuller, Street Commissioner; Councilmen -- E.G. Murray, J.M. Allen, G.W. Johnson, J.D. Young, M.F. Thompson, and A.L. Belding.

Other Mayors of our time have been J.M. Allen, C.F. Mallatt, G.W. Johnson, I.M. Fry, O.B. Trisler, H.E. Hughes, W.C. Turk, Ray O'Hair, Raymond DeVore, Herman Brown, Dick Parmer, Larry Fry, Ronald Parmer, Don McClure, Ron Fry, Wendell Jones, Chett Reed and Garould Mills. Town Clerks mentioned in

minute books have been R.H. Lamoree, G.W. Johnson, L.G. Poller, C.M. Saylor, Harold Fuller, I.F. Price, Lillian Jones, Helene Woods, Paul Heckathorn, and Juanita Mills.  
City Treasurers have been J.B. Moon, O.L. Boatman, G.W. Johnson, Raymond Tompkins, Paul Heckathorn and Mary Fulton.

On July 25, 1932, an ordinance prohibiting electrical interference with radio reception and providing for punishment for the violation thereof was drawn up and read two times and approved on the above date. No record can be found of this ordinance being repealed. From the April 2, 1934 minutes we find that an election was held on March 26, 1934, with 182 ballots cast.

Judges for the election were Will Tiedje, S.G. Edge and Jim Hawkins. For Mayor, H.E. Hughes - 180 votes; Mrs. Frank Rush, 55 votes; J.M. Halstead, 1 vote; J.A. Hawkins, 1 vote; and G.W. Johnson, 2 votes.

For Treasurer: S.C. McKee, 53 votes and S.G. Edge, 110 votes.

For Councilmen: O.F. Foland, 82 votes; Isaiah Fry, 115 votes; F.A. Hall, 58 votes; David Jones, 104 votes; Elmer Houck, 47 votes; Len Scadden, 79 votes; W.H. Snider, 65 votes; Ben Collins, 75 votes; John O'Hair, 105 votes; Willis Turk, 121 votes.

April 16, 1934 minutes show the council approved and sent a letter to C.G. Eby of Leon that all street lights with the exception of the four on Main Street be discontinued as of May 1, 1934.

November 1, 1948 shows the town council opening bids for placing gravel on the streets according to voters which had been posted previously. As Elmer Gilbert had the low bid or 70 cents per ton for hauling the rock from Osceola it was agreed to have him haul at least 150 tons to 200 tons. The following streets were to be graveled:

1 Block south of the Methodist Church

1 Block west of Elmer Houck's

1 Block south of Mrs. Houck's

Also to connect up the rock by going north of Nelson

Rhoads and west to Gilberts

1 Block south of Roscoe Wilson

1 load rock in front of Will Simmerman's

In reading through the minute books, we find that the elections were held in March. However, a special town meeting was held October 8, 1951, due to the fact the General Assembly had passed a law requiring all city and town elections to be held the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November.

The first election held on Tuesday was on November 6, 1951 with 15 votes cast.

Mayor: Herman Brown, 14 votes.

Councilmen:

Will Simmerman, 14 votes.

Malcolm Tiedje, 15 votes.

Nelson Rhodes, 10 votes.

Will Pelsor, 15 votes.

D.V. Cox, 11 votes.

Will Spidle, 5 votes.

Bert West, 1 vote.

Treasurer:

Paul Heckathorn, 15 votes.

City Councilmen over the years have been:

John O'Hair, J.E. Prather, C.F. Mallatt, Alfred Smith, Harry DeVore, Isaiah Fry, Len Scadden, C.L. Wing, Herman Brown, Malcolm Tiedge, H.O. Tuttle, W.E. Pelsor, C.E. Burkey, E.N. Hampton, Willis Turk, J.A. Hawkins, Wray Randolph, Leo Boatman, Raymond Tompkins, Fred Robbins, Wm. Tiedje, M.F. Thompson, R.A. Palmer, Ben Collins, Ed Lipsett, David Jones, Orval Foland, Nelson Rhoades, Will Simmerman, D.V. Cox, Oren Fuller, Eddie Rood, Herb Scadden, Ron Fry, Merlin Pelsor, Jim Clemens, Gerald DeVore, Earl Fry, Don Morris, Don McClure, Larry Fry, Jim Clemens, Layton Schuldt, Garould Mills, Georgia Cox, Lonnie Cowden, Mary L. Schuldt, Chet Reed, Garry Fry, George South.

Town officers of 1980:

City Council:

Mrs. Dorman (Kathy) Reed  
Mrs. Lane (Mary L.) Schuldt  
Mrs. Bob (Donna) Hatfield  
Duane Otto  
Terry Hainlline

City Clerk and Treasurer:  
Gloria McClure

Mayor:  
Mike Rowe

The 1980 council face the same problems as our predecessors, however, in a larger prospective. A policeman is not needed, since Van Wert is in the county-wide Sheriff program. The Decatur County Sheriff is Steve Layton.

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**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

On February 1, 1954, Mayor Fred Jay told of a meeting he had recently attended concerning volunteer fire fighting. Discussion followed as to having a meeting in the near future. In May of the same year it was voted to buy fire equipment.

August 2, 1954, Bill Spidle accepted the position as Fire Chief. Our Fire Chief in 1980 is Terry Hainline.

The fire equipment was housed in Tiedje's Garage until a new fire station and community building were built in 1974.

Van Wert was the victim of several destructive fires. In 1903, all the businesses on the west side of Main Street north of the tracks were burned. They were rebuilt with an opera house, fraternity hall and six offices occupying the second floor of the three brick stores. This block burned again in February, 1915, but was soon rebuilt.

The building south of the track on the west side burned some time before August 1909 as they were being rebuilt at this time. The three hotels burned at different times.

Around 1917, the north side of the East-West road burned. This block included Sticklers General Store, Harpers Hardware, E. Jones and Sons Butcher Shop, Heroda's Rest., Charley Barry's Harness Shop and R.W. Pray's Cafe.

- 4-H -

4-H Club work is too great a movement to be claimed by any one person.

Club work is a voluntary and one of the most unique educational programs of our times.

Based on everyday farm living, club work engages enthusiastic club members numbering today two million, and two hundred thousand adult leaders.

4-H is guided jointly by the Agriculture Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and Land Grant Colleges.

4-H started in the early 1900s.

A member of one of the pioneer clubs in this area is Louise (Redman) Perry. Louise was a member in 1927 and 1928.

Madaline Schmidt and Louise won the county demonstration and attended the State Fair. Also, in 1928, Louise attended a 4-H short course on the campus at Ames.

In viewing the Decatur county Achievers historian books which can be found in the Decatur County Historical Building, we found that 100 pages would not hold all the information that should be written on the young people that belonged to this club and the outstanding work they did throughout the years.

Following are some of the members that have been active in the past years:

Leland Crees, Larry Crees, Glen Hembry, Willene Jones, Ray Jones, Wendell Jones, Jimmy Perry, Larry Perry, Tommy Tompkins, Jon Redman, Jim Redman, Davy Redman, Danny Jackson, Jon Jackson, Harriett Jackson, Ida Baker, Gayla Cherington, Dennis Fierce, Larry Jackson, John Van Syoc, Ronnie Gordon, Donnie Gordon, Kenny Gordon, Larry Bethards, Linda Beardsley, Bobby Horney, Kathy Adams, Wilda Jones, Kari J. Redman, Robert Redman, Roland Redman, Billy Rhodes, Russell Horney, Richard Horney, Mike Adams, Darrell Redman, Allen Binning, Ray Baker, Rick Gorsline, Ronal Gilbert, Cherly Imhoff, David Beers, Lisa Beers, Debbie Jones, Rick Beers, Owen Heckathorn, Brad Kinney, Steve Kinney, Diana Beers, Lori Beers, Kelly Beers, Mark Beers, Mark Wierenga, Teri Wierenga, Craig Wierenga, Charlotte Wierenga, Richard Perry, Rod Schuldt, Randy Schuldt, Wendell (Jr.) Jones, Billy Griffith, Allen Griffith, Melvin Warren, Renee Warren, Allen Binning, Becky Redman, Kevin Buckingham, Greg Kinney.

Some of the active leaders are: Don Beers, Don Redman, Nick Hembry, Hoyle Crees, Bob Redman, Leonard Redman, Raymond Redman, Jimmy Redman, James Horney, Bob Tompkins, Russell Fierce.

Warren Jones, oldest son of David Jones, started the 4-H championship string for his family in 1938, when he showed the Decatur County Grand Champion. He repeated this performance every year through 1942.

The two big years were 1939 and 1942. He had Champion Hereford and Reserve Champion Shorthorn at the Iowa State Fair in 1939 and the Grand Champion at the Interstate in 1942.

#### STRICTLY GIRLS ! ! ! !

The Girls' Decatur County Achievers Club was organized October 26, 1953, with 14 members. Officers elected were:

President, Elaine Catlett  
Vice-President, Juliann Eilts  
Secretary and Treasurer, Monica McMorris  
Historian, Linda Mercer

Other members through the years have been:

Kay Jones, Ida Baker, Susan Driskill, Sandra Perry, Judith Cole, Willene Jones, Sharon Adams, Kari Redman, Marjorie Catlett, Sharon Catlett.

We find that most girls in the girls club were also members of the boys club.

Leaders of the girls clubs have been: Mrs. Hoyle Crees, Mrs. Gerald Bethards, Mrs. A.D. Driskill, Margaret Watson and Louise Perry.

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## AMERICAN LEGION

American Legion Posts were organized in towns of the county after World War I. These were named for the first man from the town to die in action or as a result of wounds. Post No. 236, Van Wert, was Fuller Post. These posts were very active in a social way, and in concern for the welfare of veterans. No records can be found when Post No. 236 disbanded. Post No. 385, Van Wert, was organized in 1948. The following men were elected to fill officer positions:

Commander, Herman Brown  
Vice-Commander, Owen Bulkeley  
Adjutant, Raymond Tompkins  
Finance Officer, Ivan Corsbie  
Sargent at Arms, I.C. Jackson  
Chaplain, S.C. Johnson  
Historian, Elmer Houck.

We find the following members on roster in 1949:

Raymond Tompkins, Herman Brown, James Upfield, Paul Simmerman, Robert Boles, Warren Jones, Edmond Price, Clarence Jackson, Donald Kelley, Russell Reed, Ivan Corsbie, Elmer Houck, Malcolm Tiedje, William Tiedje, David Jones, James Gould, Donald Price, Owen Bulkeley, Robert Upfield, Nelson Rhoads, S.C. Johnson, Charles Eischen, Herb Scadden, Joshua Jackson, S.J. Edwards, Donald Bybee, John Zoffka, G.W. Wade, Bennie Stubbs, Jesse Logsdon, and Hoyle Anderson.

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## AUXILIARIES

Auxiliaries consisted of wives, widows, sisters and daughters of those in the Legion or of deceased servicemen. The first Auxiliary was organized along with Post No. 236. The Auxiliary now in existence was organized in January, 1950. Women elected officers were:

Lillian Jones, President; Helen Price, Secretary; Helen Tompkins, Treasurer. The Van Wert Auxiliary is still an active club in our community. Following are the officers in 1980: Elizabeth Carpenter, President; Nadine Redman, Vice-president; Edith Upfield, Secretary and Lucille Brown, Treasurer.

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## LIONS CLUB

The Van Wert Lions Club was organized in September of 1974. Harold Fullerton was a member of the Osceola Lions and was the main person in getting the Van Wert Club organized. The charter members were Harold Fullerton, President; Dean Houck, Secretary-Treasurer; Gerald Johnson, tail twister; Denny Schuldt, Layton Schuldt, Earl Stiles, Owen Heckathorn, Larry Gegner, Ron Fry, Larry Fry, Paul Heckathorn, Don Beers, Denny Webb, Troy Updike, Bill Tiedje, Malcolm Tiedje, George South, Chet Reed, Jimmy Perry, Don McClure, J.C. O'Hair, J.B. O'Hair, Howard Kastler, Dwaine Houck and Terry Hainline. The current members are J.C. O'Hair, President; Harold Fullerton, Vice-President; Bill Rhodes, Secretary-Treasurer; Bill Carroll, tail twister; Oral Boles, Dean Houck, Kenny Sickles, Bill Tiedje, Malcolm Tiedje, Gerald Akes, David Jones, Darwin Thayer, Don Beers, Lyman Schuldt, Mike Rowe, Merlin Pelsor, Denny Baker, J.B. O'Hair, Don McClure and Don Kennedy.

The Lions met at the community hall until 1978 when they purchased a building of their own. The main fund raisers the Lions have had over the years are the concession trailer and weekly wingo games in the winter.

Some of the projects in the past are: sponsoring several cleanup days in conjunction with the Assembly of God Church, sharing the cost of Christmas movies and treats, and placing trash barrels around town. Some of the other things included collecting glasses for Iowa Blind Commission and fund raising for the Kim Overton family after their house burned.

The Lions have remodeled their building, adding a kitchen and lowering the ceiling. The building is open to people or organizations to use.

Some things in the future include building up the membership and spending more money for community projects.

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#### THE COMMUNITY CLUB

The Community Club of Van Wert was organized in December of 1946, for the betterment of the community. Officers at that time were Wm. Spidle, secretary; and Wayne F. Thompson, treasurer.

The first project was the giving away of turkeys for Christmas. Also, the free show and candy bars for children. This project was yearly until the interest of the club was not sufficient enough to warrant a club.

Members in 1963-64 were: Conda Downard, Nolan Foland, Ralph Lamoree, Neal Sink, Kenneth Perry, Dean Houck, Wm. Tiedje, Bob Upfield, Malcolm Tiedje, Don Beers, Gerald Johnson, Clay Wellman, Wayne DeVore, Russell Fierce, Horace Redman, Paul Heckathorn and Jimmy Redman.

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#### MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT CLUB

The Mutual Improvement Club was organized in September, 1919, and federated in November, 1919, with 20 charter members.

Mrs. J.M. Halstead was installed as the first president. The charter members were: Mrs. J.M. Halstead, Mrs. J.A. Hawkins, Mrs. Myron Phelps, Miss Margaret Edwards, Miss Myrtle Edwards, Mrs. Harry Traupel, Mrs. Will Tiedje, Mrs. Clyde Gould, Mrs. E.O. Stearns, Mrs. J.E. Prather, Mrs. W.F. Briner, Mrs. W.F. Blair, Mrs. O.E. Burkey, Mrs. Harry Fisher, Mrs. C.G. Jones, Mrs. A.L. Belding, Mrs. George Tallman, Mrs. Charles Fierce, Miss Rose Lamoree and Miss Eva Galloway.

The club disbanded in 1970 after 50 years of being an active social and service organization for the women of Van Wert and vicinity. For many years the M.I. Club sponsored a library in Van Wert. The books were donated by members, and supplemented by the State Traveling library in Van Wert. Other projects were a Junior Club called "Treasure Seekers", career education, community club projects, and county and state federation programs. On three occasions, members of this club attended the national convention.

Three years after the club disbanded reunions were held for former members and their families. Mrs. E.O. Stearns of Los Angeles, California, is the only charter member still living.

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#### MODERN WOODMEN OF AMERICA

This is a beneficiary society founded in 1884. Its membership in the early 1950s was 434,000. The only information found on Van Wert Camp No. 4515 was the officers in the early 1900s: Harry Traupel, VC; W.R. Fuller, WA; J.M. Allen, Clerk; J.E. Price, Banker; C.A. Walker, W.M. Wailes, and I.M. Fry, Managers.

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## GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

An American Patriotic Organization, consisting of United States Armed forces Veterans of the Civil War, founded in Decatur, Illinois, during the winter of 1865-66. the organization, founded for the commemoration of dead comrades and the practice of fraternity and mutual assistance, held its first national "Encampment" in Indianapolis, on November 20, 1866; two years later the G.A.R. instituted Memorial Day (Note Comrad used in veterans section on names that the first names were not known.) Van Wert Post No. 205, G.A.R., was mustered in July 1883, with some thirty members. John Gimmel was the first commander. The officers in 1866 were Lewis Holt, commander; Nelson Spencer, senior vice-commander; J.N. Gibson, officer of the day; E.C. Wilson, adjutant. Meetings were held on Saturday evening on or after each full moon. Officers in 1914 were Lewis Holt, commander; Will Fuller, Secretary; officer of the day, J.N. McJimpsey; officer of guards, Martin Leffler; junior commander! , Harvey Wilson; junior vice-commander, J.E. Rushing; and chaplain, John Woods.

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## BROTHERHOOD OF AMERICAN YEOMEN

This organization was taken from the British. It is comprised of a veteran company, consisting of old soldiers employed on grand occasions in conjunction with the Gentlemen-At-Arms as the bodyguard of the British Sovereign. The only information on the Van Wert Brotherhood of American Yeomen was the officers in 1914: J.M. Halstead, hon. foreman; Frank C. Clanton, master of ceremonies; Frances Allen, correspondent; I.M. Fry, master of accounts; C.M. Belding, chaplain; Mary Fry, overseer; Hester Clanton, Lady Rowena, and Nettie McBee, Lady Rebecca.

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## THE GRANGE

We would have to believe that "The Grange" traditionally known as the "Order of the Patrons of Husbandry" was one of the first, if not the first, organization in this area. The Grange was established in 1868, in Iowa, Long Creek. Grange No. 619, was established on July 10, 1873. However, we do not have the records showing how long No. 619 was in existence. We do know that in Decatur County the Grange was still an educational impetus up until the 20th century in Iowa.

### 'The Granger's Ten Commandments'

- (1) Thou shalt love the Grange with all thy heart and with all thy soul and thou shalt love they brother Granger as thyself.
- (2) Thou shalt not suffer the name of the Grange to be spoken evil of, but shall severely chastise the wretch who speaks of it with contempt.
- (3) Remember that Saturday is Grange Day. On it thou shalt set aside thy hoe, and rake, and sewing machine, and wash thyself, and appear before the Master of the Grange with smiles, and hearty cheer. On the fourth week thou shalt not appear empty handed, but shalt thereby bring a pair of ducks, a turkey roasted by fire, a cake baked in the oven, and pies and fruits in abundance for the harvest feast. So shalt thou eat and be merry, and "Frights and Fears" shall be remembered no more.
- (4) Honor thy master, and all who sit in authority over thee, that the days of the Granges may be long in the land which Uncle Sam hath given thee.
- (5) Thou shalt not go to law. (Lawyers).
- (6) Thou shalt do no business on tick (Time).

(7) Thou shalt not leave straw but shalt surely stack it for the cattle in the winter.

(8) Thou shalt support the Granger's store for thus becometh thee to fulfill the laws of business.

(9) Thou shalt by all means have thy life insured in the Grange Life Insurance Company, that thy wife and little ones may have friends when thou art cremated and gathered unto thy Father.

(10) Thou shalt have no Jewish middlemen between thy farm and Liverpool to fatten on thy honest toil, but thou shalt surely charter thine own ships, and sell thine own produce, and use thine own brains. This is the last and best commandment. On this hand all the law, and profits, and if there be any others they are these.

Choke monopolies, break up rings, vote for honest men, fear God and make money. So shalt thou prosper and sorrow and hard times shall flee away.

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### SCOUTS IN VAN WERT

Scouting in Van Wert (both girls and boys) has lacked the cooperation and leadership of adults, consequently, Scouting has been started but always dropped.

Boy Scouts started in 1951 and 1952 with Paul Heckathorn and Kenneth Perry as leaders. Members were: Dennis Fierce, Jim McBee, Larry Stream, Ronald Updike, Alan Heckathorn, Jimmy Perry, Larry Perry, Danny McConnell, Roy McConnell, Darrell Foland, Gary McDowell and Larry Spidle.

Once again in 1961, Troop Charter No. 108 Boy Scouts was started with the cooperation of the community Club. Darwin Damewood was Scoutmaster. Members were: James C. O'Hair, Stanley Johnson, Stewart Johnson, Gale Kindred, Leon Reed, Gene King, Donnie Cox, Roy Heckathorn, Roger Cox, Dick DeVore, Ed Stream and Roger Pritchard. Later leaders were J.B. O'Hair and Dennis Fierce.

Cub Scouts was started with Weldon in the late 1960s. However, when the boys were old enough to go into Scouts, male leaders were not available and once again Scouting was dropped.

Mary Fulton and Norma Reed were Den Mothers. Members were: Ricky Fulton, Chuck Reed, Monti Reed, Brad Kinney, Doug Cook, Richard Perry and Wayne Jones.

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### GIRL SCOUTS

No records can be found of Girl Scout Troops being chartered in Van Wert. However, the Van Wert girls that have been in Brownies and Girl Scouts in the Weldon Troop are:

Brenda Reed, Valorie Reed, Sonya DeVore, Amanda Boeckman, Cheryl Boeckman, Barbara Boeckman, Lorie Smith, Bobbi Grimm, Terry Reed, Sherry Turpin, Ruth Halda, Marie Jones, Rosa Grim, Patty Kernick, Tina Kastler, Monica Bethards, Heather Spidle, Lora Foland, Jodi Hainline, Ronda Foland, Romona Houck, Joy Starnes.

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### I.O.O.F.

Van Wert Lodge No. 212 was organized and granted charter on October 5, 1887, with the following charter members: B.R. Walker, E.E. Garton, Marion Fuller, W.H. Todd, Jas. H. Johnson, E.J. Blair, Wm. A. Irving, J.I. Walker, N.J. Hyatt, G.W. Hall, G. Pierce, and J.D. Strong.

The first officers of the lodge were: E.E. Garton, Noble Grand; W.H. Todd, Vice Grand; E.J. Blair, Secretary; and G.W. Hall, Treasurer.



Membership in 1914 was 85 and with the following officers:

Martin Myers, Noble Grand  
Orbin Hanks, Vice Grand  
I.M. Fry, Secretary  
Joe Hampton, Treasurer  
E.J. Blair, Chaplain

In 1924, Weldon Lodge No. 441 was consolidated with Van Wert Lodge No. 212. An advertisement in the Van Wert Record September 3, 1908 read:

IOOF Meet Every Saturday Evening; Transient Members are invited to attend.

E.N. Hampton, V.G. Protem  
I.M. Fry, Secretary

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#### REBEKAHS

One of the main objects and purposes of the Rebekah Lodge is to visit and care for the sick, to relieve the distressed, to bury the dead, and in every way to assist their own members, and to assist subordinates and Sister Rebekah Lodges in kindly ministrations to the families of Odd Fellows when in trouble, sickness, or want.

Rebekah Lodge No. 158, Van Wert, was active in the early 1900s. Officers in 1914 were:

Leora Hedrick, Noble Grand  
Artie Smith, Vice Grand  
Mary Hampton, Secretary  
Mattie Walker, Treasurer

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#### PROFESSIONAL MEN

At Van Wert, there was a Dr. Darmeille in 1855 and 1856 and a Dr. Powell after him. Very early in the town's history there camped by the side of the road one night an emigrant by the name of Dr. Powell. The next morning the neighbors were shocked to learn that during the night his little baby had died. This raised the questions of a suitable place to bury not only this baby, but all others that death was sure to claim as time went on. At this time, Mr. Irving, ever in the forefront, gave one acre of land located in the southwest corner of his quarter section to be used as a public burying ground. Dr. B.R. Walker practiced at this point for over thirty-five years. Dr. Pugh came here from Green Bay Township, Clarke County, remained a short time and left in 1882. N.J. Hyatt came in 1882, also a Dr. W.H. Todd. Dr. Lindsay and Dr. Tallman came in 1885.

Ads in the Van Wert Record of 1906 through 1908 state "V.T. Lindsay, M.D., Physician and Surgeon. All calls answered day or night. Van Wert, Iowa. Phone office or home." Dr. Tallman's ad also of the years through 1906-1908 said "Dr. G.D. Tallman, M.D. Physician and Surgeon. All calls promptly attended. Van Wert, Iowa." Dr. George Tallman was born at Burlington, Iowa, April 7, 1862. He graduated from Marion Sims Medical College in April, 1898, St. Louis, Missouri. He first started his practice at Arispe, Iowa, coming soon after to Van Wert where he brought his bride Mary E. Barrett in 1909. Dr. Tallman made house calls with a horse and buggy. He finally did get a car, but his wife did not like to ride in the car.

Dr. Tallman assisted at the birth of a lot of the people still living in 1980. He was known by his "white shirt and suspenders" in about every group picture. Sometimes he stayed all night in the homes of expectant mothers, then went about his house calls and came back again the next night if the baby took that much time.

Dr. Tallman constructed a blacksmith shop for the town of Van Wert. Then rented it to Charlie Mallatt to help in the industry of our town.

Dr. Tallman's home, which he also built, is the house one block east of Main Street known in 1980 as Rosamond Ramsey house. His office that he built was part of the brick building that is now a Post Office. He died February 1, 1936 at Decatur County Hospital and is buried at Green Bay Cemetery in Clarke County.

Dr. Myron Phelps came to Van Wert in 1893. He attended the State University of Iowa and was graduated in the class of 1891. He began his medical practice at Harlan, where he stayed two years before coming to Van Wert. Dr. Phelps started practicing in the Van Wert area in the horse and buggy era. A clipping from the 1947 Journal-Reporter states Dr. Phelps related, "I used to know all the cow paths in this part of the country. I harnessed by horses three times in one night back in the early days of my practice."

Dr. Phelps used to pull a lot of teeth when he first started in practice in Van Wert, because there was only one dentist in the county.

Van Wert Community Club honored Dr. Phelps in February, 1947 on his 81st birthday that marked his fifty-fifth year as a physician. Within five minutes after arriving home from dinner held in his honor, he was called to the Wendell Turner home near Van Wert and it was the genuine pleasure he delivered twin daughters to Mr. and Mrs. Turner.

Dr. Myron Phelps passed away in 1952 at the age of eighty-six. Mrs. Phelps died in 1959. Dr. Phelps' office was the lower half of the Telephone Company building one-half block east of Main Street.

Dr. Enos Mitchell was in Van Wert in 1896. Ena Leffler Mahrenholtz Hoff was named after him.

"Van Wert has a Dentist - December 23, 1909" was the heading from the Van Wert Record: "It is with the greatest pleasure that we announce to the people of Van Wert that we have a new dentist. This is a business that we have needed for a long time as many hundreds of dollars have been spent elsewhere for dental work by our Van Wert people. Dr. and Mrs. Roush are young people of Carlisle and wish to make this their home but that will depend on you. While we have the greatest respect for the neighboring dentists, who we have had to patronize at different times, yet we do want a resident dentist who will be a Van Wert citizen and spend his money here. Dr. Roush will have his office at the Palace Hotel for the present, until better accommodations can be found. Take him your work today and show us that your heart is on the right side."

On January 13, 1910, "Mrs. Roush went to Carlisle Wednesday morning via Des Moines. She will immediately attend to have the doctor's office equipment shipped to Van Wert. The Doctor will equip the east room upstairs in the Barr Building, making it one of the best furnished offices in this section."

A September 15, 1910 ad in the paper said 'Dr. C.M. Roush, Resident Dentist, office upstairs with Dr. Tallman, Weldon-Tuesday and Saturday until 4 p.m. phone 31.'

Dr. C.L. Wing (1886-1965) lineage can be traced back ten generations to Matthew Wing (1584-1614) of Branbury, England. His first ancestor in America was Stephen Wing (1621-1710), one of the founders of the town of Sandwich Massachusetts. The Wing family home still stands in Massachusetts and is a restored historical site which can be toured today.

Dr. C.L. Wing was known to family and friends as "Doc Wing" or "Lee". He was a kind and caring man. His grandchildren have many happy memories of the house on the hill across from Davy Jones place. Lee spent most of his 79 years of life in Van Wert, Decatur County, and in Lucas County. As the country vet, "Doc Wing" was a familiar sight driving his Model-T and Model-A Ford in all kinds of weather on the dirt roads of Iowa, carrying his little black bag.

Lee's parents, C.W. (Casper Wistor) and Fannie (Allard) Wing moved to Derby in Lucas County, Iowa in 1869 and lived there for 41 years. Lee spent his childhood in Lucas County schools and went on to further education at the Chicago Veterinary College where he graduated on April 7, 1912. He began his veterinary practice at Derby and then came to Van Wert where he continued his practice for nearly fifty years. Lee married Alice (Lazear) Wing March 12, 1913. Their son, William F. Wing, grew up, going to Van Wert Schools and then on to further education at Drake Law School and University of Iowa Law School, graduating on June 5, 1942. "Doc Wing's" epitaph written by his son, William, in 1965 and felt deeply by his grandchildren as well, was very appropriate.

"He spent his life alleviating pain in his family and friends as well as in the animals he cared for. As a result he received the love and respect of his many relatives and friends.

He was a member of Jacinth Lodge No. 443 A.F. & A.M. of Weldon for over fifty years. Masonic graveside services were conducted at Derby, Iowa.

A few memories about the loveable Dr Wing, who truly loved his occupation and worked for the public were:

When Dr. Wing first started his practice, there were supposedly plenty of rough characters in the area. He once carried a gun on his trip west of Van Wert. His team ran away and Dr. Wing had to walk all the way home. He carried the gun home and put it away -- always said it was too heavy and didn't need it after that.

Even the children loved Dr. Wing. If he was passing by when the kids were walking to or from school, he always stopped and gave them a ride.

One time when the B.F. Redman family had a sick steer, Dr. Wing was called to come. The Redman family also had a lot of sheep. It was common to give the baby lambs some whiskey when they were first born and weak, so Dr. Wing asked if there was some whiskey available. They had about 1/2 pint of whiskey so when they gave the whiskey to Doc, he said, "That steer is just the same as dead so the whiskey won't help him a bit." Doc then uncorked the whiskey and drank it himself.

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## BUSINESSES

### GENERAL STORES

History differs with who started the first store, James Taylor, Paul Ord, Jehu Blades and George Bigford have been mentioned by history as being the first store owners.

The 1880s brought the railroads to Van Wert. The town started its most prosperous years in business. Some of these general stores were: W.E. Stone, who had a partner named Fletcher D. Thorp and Company, and Mark Sanyer. John Gemmill was one of the leading store owners at this time.

A well known merchant W.F. Blair, started his first store at the north end of the west side of Main Street presently known as Tiedje's Garage. Blair was in partnership with John Tallman for a short time. After the fire of 1915, Blair relocated across the street in the present Van Wert Enterprise building. At this location Blair went in partnership for a time with Earl Prather, who dealt in hardware.

In the early 1900s general store owners were numerous. Businesses changed hands and relocated frequently. O.V. Beck was located in the present day Lions Club building and he remained in business until the fire of 1903. Walter Briner and partner Mel Thompson, C.M. Grimm, John and Nora Stickler and J.M. Allen were located in the north row of buildings that is presently near the old blacksmith shop. Ray Easter and J.T. Price, Frank Manley and Elmer Hampton, George Britt, Ben Easter and Elmer Smith were located in the old theater building or presently known as Houck's apartments. J.N. Barger, A.S. Ramsey, William Gentle and R.W. Pray were in business but the location is unknown. Clyde Saylor and Charlie Houck were located on the east side of Main Street or north of today's Enterprise Store. Arthur Richie, in

the early 1920s, started his general store out in the country. The name of his store was Farmers Union, it was located where Cliff Redman lives today. In 1924, Rich! ie moved to town and started business in the old Vaught building presently known as Houck's office building. Later after the bank went out of Van Wert, Arthur Richie relocated in the bank building.

In the late 1920s and 1930s, we find Elmer Hampton relocating to the present Lions Club building. J.M. Allen relocated to the west side of Main Street and later to this building came a man named Vaught, whose name has stayed with this building many years.

After having a hardware store on the west side of Main Street, Cledwin and Marie Bulkeley in 1930 moved across the street into the Blair building.

Here three businesses pooled together, Ben Leffler with groceries, Alvin Saylor with meat market and Bulkeleys with hardware. In 1931, Bulkeleys' bought the entire stock from the other men and also added plumbing, heating, windmill supplies, feed, coal and seed to his store. Bulkeley continued in the general store business until 1954.

In the 1940s, following Vaught in the general store business, Doris (Redman) Houck had a variety shop. She later sold to Surbaugh and Spidle. Also in the 1940s, M.L. Jones had a few groceries in his drug store. Jones was located in the Elmer Houck building. Mel Parmer's grocery was located in the present Lions Club building. Parmer was in business for six months. He sold his stock to John Fulton. Fulton sold to John Dobbs. In March of 1946, Conda and Darlene Downard bought this same building from Mel Parmer and the grocery stock from John Dobbs. Downards operated the grocery store until May of 1964. In October of 1943, Bill and Carmen Spidle ran a grocery store for Surbaughs. They were located in the Vaught building or presently known as Houck's office building.

In December of 1954, Randall and Darlene Cox bought the building formerly known as the Bulkeley Store. After doing some remodeling, Cox's opened for business in 1955. Cox's stocked groceries, hardware, bag and bulk feed and also bought produce. Cox's sold the store in May of 1963.

By 1963, the railroads, high school and most of the businesses in Van Wert were gone or closed, and properties were unwanted. the large general store known as the Blair building was about to close. A group of people in and around Van Wert decided something needed to be done to keep the general store, otherwise, face the problem of expense and time to go elsewhere for our needs.

After a series of open meetings in early 1963, a small corporation was organized. It was called Van Wert Enterprise, incorporated under the laws of the State of Iowa. Certificates were issued March, 1963; there were 23 founders with a total of \$2,375.00 to start the business. During the next year there were about forty shareholders to join the organization. At present, the store is well stocked with the general needs of the community. A stipulation in the bylaws of the corporation is that it shall stand as long as any shareholder object to surrendering the certificate of incorporation. Lucille Brown is the manager and Darlene (Downard) Tiedje is the clerk. The following names are the original shareholders:

Paul Beardsley, Delbert Bethards, Orel Boles, James Cook, Ruby Cox, Boyd DeVore, Geneva DeVore, Loretta Duff, Cecil Goodman, Marie Lamoree, Raymond McGauhey, Mrs. Raymond McGauhey, R.M. Overholtzer, Dick Overholtzer, Dr. Thomas Viner, Mary Beardsley, Vernon Binning, Albert Hall, Norma Parmer, Garnett West, Randal Cox, J.C. Gould, Mary Beers, Jeanne Boles, Wallace Cain, L.A. Cowden, Donnie Cox, Clark Fierce, G.W. Wade, W.E. Pelsor.

Herman Brown, Richard Cook, Corwin Cox, Wayne DeVore, Herbert Duff, Elmer Gilbert, Harold Hayrer, Floyd Miller, Malcolm Tiedje, Willard Parmer, Jimmy Perry, A.C. Wellman, Dr. C.E. Tindle, Don Beers, Harry Blair, Lucille Brown, Marilyn Cook, Walter King, Bertha Tiedje, Robert Burdette, Reva Duff, Worth Jones, Lee Hewlett, Opal Parmer, Bill Tiedje, Grace Green, Matt Scott, Agatha Wellman, Raymond Redman.

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## THE VAN WERT RECORD

Communications in the late 1800s were slow. The first newspapers in the Van Wert area were printed in Des Moines with one sheet each for Van Wert, Weldon, Decatur City and Grand River.

Early days of the "Van Wert Enterprise" publication proved unsuccessful. By 1895, S.D. McKee published the "Van Wert Record", which continued for many years with several different publishers. Among those on record were C.S. Fullmer about 1905; C. Virgil Humphrey with Hattie Parish, associate, in 1906; Belding and Hollen in 1908, later published by H.O. Tuttle, in 1912; S.A. Craig bought the paper from W. Branaun and Son.

The newspaper "The Pathfinder" was established in May 1915 by Fred Jay was more the conventional paper -- usually two separate sheets folded in the center for four pages. The "Van Wert Record" was only one large sheet, folded two ways, the center usually carried a continued story and out-of-town ads with the four outside sheets carrying the local news and want ads.

Perhaps the first papers were printed in a private home just off the northeast corner of Main Street. "The Pathfinder" was published in the basement of the Fred Hall Building (entrance on south side, downstairs). The "Van Wert Record", the longer-lived publication with offices behind the Drug Store, (building Ruth Houck now owns).

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## BANKS OF VAN WERT

Van Wert had three banks or bank branches in its history. The first one, The Farmers and Merchants Bank was operated in 1898 by Mark M. Shaw. Mr. Shaw's bank was on the west side of the street, north of the drug store building.

In 1900 the Van Wert State Bank was organized with the purchase of Mr. Shaw's bank. This new bank was housed in a small brick building south of Van Wert Enterprise store on the corner, where the parking lot is located in 1980.

W.F. Blair was President, M.F. Thompson was vice-president, E.O. Stearns, cashier, and Mrs. Ida L. Stearns, assistant cashier. Elmer O. Stearns was reared in Decatur County and received his education in the district schools, but later attended Simpson College at Indianola, Iowa. In 1900, he organized the Bank of Van Wert, becoming its cashier and on the 4th of January, 1915, the institution was made a state bank. The directors of the bank were M.F. Thompson, Maurice Brown, and G.S. Barr. Mr. Stearns was treasurer of the Van Wert Rural Telephone Co., a director of the Iowa State Bank of Osceola. The State Savings Bank at Sharpsburg, Iowa, and a stockholder in the Weldon, Iowa, Savings Bank and Exchange Bank of LeRoy.

The following was published in the Van Wert Record in 1906, submitted by the Bank of Van Wert.

"You work for money, you plow for money, you harrow for money, you hoe for money. You work late at night to make money, you are doing your best to earn money. When you get money, be sure and put it where it will be safe, and put it in a bank that will help you and take care of you in every way."

In October, 1919, the bank was robbed of bonds and valuable papers but not much cash. At one time the Van Wert State Bank advertised with complimentary fans stating, "Our aim and effort is to be of such service to our customers that they may profit by our dealings and recommend us to their friends. Capital and surplus \$30,000.00 A general banking business, farm loans, insurance, notary public, safety deposit boxes for rent. Interest paid on time deposits."

In 1919, corn was valued at \$1.25 per bushel, oats at 50 cents per bushel. Single set of harness, \$10.00.

This Van Wert State Bank operated until September, 1930, when many banks were closed because of the depression of the 1930s. The White House Administration in Washington sent out a notice to the Federal

Reserve Bank in Chicago demanding that the bank examiners close all banks. The examiners told Mr. Stearns that they had their orders and even though the Van Wert State Bank was solvent, they had to close the doors. This happened to Tingley, Grand River and the Van Wert Bank at the same time. All three banks were in good shape and solvent but the examiners said they had to comply with orders. The bank had thirty years of serving the town and surrounding community. After the closing, the building was used by Ritchie's Store and later burned.

A branch office of a Leon bank was housed for a short time at the M.L. Jones drug store.

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## HOTELS AND ROOMING HOUSES

In searching for records of the early rooming houses of Van Wert, there are so many names and various stories of people that "boarded" teachers or railroad men, that we cannot mention them all. A.H. Simmerman, Mrs. Phelps, Mrs. Jesse Redman, E.L. Michael Hotel, 1887-88, Easter House, H.M. Hoadley prop. 1899 are some of the ones.

One of the early boarding houses was managed by Mrs. Weigel. She lived in the house now occupied by Thelma Parmer. For the most part, early pioneers of Van Wert recall three main hotel buildings that operated at the same time in Van Wert's early history.

The Palace Hotel was located on the east side of Main Street and operated by Mary Fuller in 1899 and later by Temp and Fannie Craft, so lots of people called it the Craft Hotel. An ad in a 1906 "Van Wert Record" called the Palace Hotel the traveling man's home. It said "Hack meets all trains, warm rooms, well ventilated. We lead, others follow. Livery established in 1888 in connection. First class turn-outs. Special attention to commercial trade."

After the Palace Hotel burned, Wayne Thompson moved a house to that location and added a room for a Barber Shop. After the Barber Shop closed in the forties, the house became a home.

Picture of hotel is included in the panoramic view of Main Street.

The Depot Hotel was located in the northwest section of Van Wert, south of the Depot. All that remains in 1980 to show us the location of the Depot is a concrete watering trough and pump that is in the Pete Scadden pasture. Operators of the Depot Hotel at different times were Lon Beam and later the Kennels. A picture of the hotel is faintly to the left in the big train picture of the Depot.

One of the early hotels of Van Wert was called Corbett House. It was located a block east of Main Street, being the first building across east from the Dr. Phelps' residence. Thompson Price was listed as proprietor of Corbett House in 1894. It was also operated in the early years by J.D. Young. A newspaper article states that in March, 1893, Van Wert had a bad fire which burned Holt & Co.'s store, the Enterprise Office, John Corbett's residence and Hotel and Harve Wilson Real Estate. (Taken from March 21, 1915 "25 Years Ago" column). This hotel was evidently rebuilt as we also find that 1906 and 1908 "Van Wert Record" advertises "Corbett House giving special attention to commercial trade. Bus to and from all trains. Livery in connection. J.D. Young, Prop."

Another account in 1913 and 1914 was that J.M. Gill family was operating the hotel east of Main Street. This family had the livery barn in connection with the Gill Hotel. Neil Briner and Willis (Babe) Mote drove the bus with team to meet all the trains. At one time, during the evenings, there were four passenger trains arriving at the depot at the same time.

One interesting factor recalled from the memories of Corbett House was that the dining room featured a large round table with a center part that turned. Thus you did not need a "Boarding House Reach". You just turned the lazy susan to get what you wanted. This hotel also was destroyed by fire in the early twenties.

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## FUNERAL HOMES AND PARLORS

Through the years there have been only two funeral homes and one funeral parlor or showroom in Van Wert. Tuttle Studio and Funeral Parlor was opened on November 8, 1919, and was owned and operated by Harry O. Tuttle. He was probably one of the more prominent businessmen and citizens of Van Wert, serving as Mayor for several years, publisher of the Van Wert Record and was also a professional photographer. The studio was located on the west side of what is now Main Street and through the years several different types of businesses have operated in the building. Tuttle's Studio and Funeral Parlor building is still standing at this time but is used only as a storeroom.

Mr. Tuttle's residence, located southeast of the town park where Jim Clemens has his home now, was where the funerals were conducted. Mr. Tuttle conducted funerals here for twenty-five years until fire destroyed the home and one of the early businesses of Van Wert in April of 1944.

Earl Lamoree was the owner and operator of Lamoree's Funeral Home. He operated from the house where Thelma Parmer resides now, conducting funerals from the 1930s to the early 1940s. Mr. Lamoree also had funeral homes in Osceola and Grand River, and traveled between here and there as the need arose. Mr. Lamoree closed his business in the early 1940s and lived here at Van Wert for several years.

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## JEWELRY

In January of 1910, Fred and Fanny Hall ran a jewelry and watch repair store, known as the Novelty Shop. They kept their business going well into the 1940s. The October 31, 1912 Van Wert Record stated this about the businessman, "Fred A. Hall, Van Wert's hustling jewelryman, made a business trip to Grand River the first of the week, and as usual, came home loaded with watch and jewelry repairing. Fred is a fine workman." The business was located on the west side of Main Street on the south end of the street. Layton Schuldt used this building to operate a garage in the late 50s and early 60s. Don McClure now uses the building as storage.

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## MILLINERIES

In the old days, often the most important part of a lady's attire was her hat. The fancier and fluffier the hat was, the better she looked. Each hat was usually unique in style so truly a prized possession. They were so important, shops called millineries were booming businesses. As early as 1884-85, Mrs. N.J. Johnson had such a shop. Downey and Black (Ida Downey and Ella Black) ran a dressmaker and millinery store in 1895 and 1896. The Grim and Anderson store operated by Mrs. E.M. Grim and Laura Anderson sold hats around this time also. Mrs. Mattie Blair seemed to have the longest lasting millinery, being in business at least five or six years (1895-1899). Van Wert had two other millineries which both opened in 1909. A.S. Ramsey's grand opening occurred on September 22nd and featured "a choice line of sailors and Fall walking hats." (Van Wert Record) J.M. Allen opened his store Saturday, September 18. Fred Hall also sold hats in his Novelty Shop and employed Fern Mallatt for a time.

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## PHARMACY AND DRUG STORES

An early historical book lists a W.H. Todd as a physician and druggist in Van Wert in 1887 and N.J. Hyatt in 1887-1888 as druggist.

A.L. Belding had the drug store on the west side of Main Street in 1895 and still in 1912-1913. This business was run later by Ora Burkey. In 1927, Marion and Irene Jones arrived in Van Wert to run the drug store. During the depression of the 1930s, the drug store expanded and changed into a grocery store and produce station in addition to the original drug store. After the war they dropped these additional services and returned to the original drug store items and soda fountain. M.L. Jones was a registered pharmacist,

graduated from Highland Park College in Des Moines. Irene (Cannam) Jones was a practical nurse and operating assistant for a Des Moines surgeon. For a time, the Jones' drug store even housed a branch office of a Leon Bank.

One of the memories of Jones' drug store during the forties was that they displayed graduating pictures of each class of the Van Wert High School.

Jones sold to Elmer and Ruth Houck who operated it as a drug store, then later turned it into a tavern and finally into a home. The second floor was at one time the Odd Fellows Hall and then later living quarters. The building is presently unoccupied.

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#### UPHOLSTERY SHOP

Donna's Upholstery Shop was started in April, 1979. Donna (Fry) Hatfield is the owner and operator and has redone such items as couches, rockers, occasional chairs, dinette sets and car and pickup seats in the past few months. In a matter of a few days an old chair can be made new. Car seats require from six to eighteen hours work to complete. Furniture repair and some wood refinishing is also done here. She has on hand several supplies and a series of swatch books so that the customer might receive an estimate and order fabric in a matter of minutes. With prices being what they are today, most of the time a recovered chair, etc., will cost less than a new one and "they don't make 'em now the way they used to."

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#### FURNITURE STORES

There have been a few furniture stores through the years located in Van Wert. Probably the very first one was open for business on April 11, 1895 and was owned by Dan E. Tuttle and Son. There is no information when this business closed but several other businesses through the years handled furniture along with hardware.

Harry DeVore operated a used furniture store with the help of his son, Gene, and with it being located where the Van Wert Tavern is now. He stored his furniture in the Tuttle Building and also in the house where Thelma Parmer lives now. He closed this business in 1966.

Roger Downard and Wendell Jones operated a used furniture store together from 1964 to 1966. They were located in the building where Jerry Parmer now has his garage.

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#### BARBERS AND BEAUTICIANS

Late in the 1800s, C.M. Grim was Van Wert's Tonsorial Artist. In a 1910 ad, Chestnuts Tonsorial Parlor, located in the Tallman Block, charged 25 cents for baths and 50 cents for a lady's shampoo. Tonsorial Parlors dealt in the following services: hair cuts, shampoos, laundry and baths. Another parlor was operated by W.H. Fletcher. He was also an agent for Centerville Steam Laundry. The "O.K. Barber Shop" did first class barber work and had a bathroom. You could bring your laundry to them. Walker and Wils were the proprietors.

There have been many barbers in Van Wert over the years. They are Jim Rosa, Art (Bud) Owens, Fred Elston, Rex Adams, Edwards Bros., Laurence Walker, W.E. Wheeler, Lester Stubbs, J.H. Parker, Ralph Mathews, Hale McConnell, Ora Irving, Ray Miller, Ralph Cisco, Leonard Hastings, Ed Randol, Harry DeVore, Fred Elwee, John DeVore and Wayne Thompson.

Mrs. Leonard (Christie) Mallatt had a beauty shop upstairs of the Enterprise store in the late 1920s. From December of 1946 until April of 1957, Mrs. Bernard (Mildred) Adams had a shop at her home one mile south of the Van Wert corner. Mrs. Adams has a shop located in Leon now. In August of 1978, Mrs. Bobby (JoAnn) Tompkins started a shop at her home three and one-half miles south of Van Wert. It is



under the name of "JoAnn's Beauty Shoppe". Beauticians from Van Wert also include Mrs. Gabriel (Jean) Boeckman, Mrs. Terry (Cheryl) Hainline and Mrs. Eddie (Ellen) Parmer.

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### PAINT AND PAPER HANGING

Interior decorating in a primitive form was started as far back as the years 1897 and 1898 when two firms had paint and paper hanging businesses, Holt and Kimekel, and Benjamin A. Hall. Jesse Holt was a painter in 1912 and 1913.

Ben Hall and Ora Irving started their paint and paper hanging business in 1921 (Ora Irving was a brother to Mrs. Cecil Pelsor). In later years Elsie (Fry) Reed and Margreet (Fry) Cain did quite a lot of paperhanging for people of the community and still operate on a small scale today.

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### HARNESS AND SHOE SHOPS

As early as April 11, 1895, harness and shoe shops were prospering businesses of the town of Van Wert. A man named Charley Berry once had a harness shop and was later bought out by Harl Booth. The location of this shop was the second building North of what is now the Van Wert blacktop on the street which runs behind the Enterprise store. (In other words, the second shop from the southeast corner of Thelma Parmer's lot.) As early as April 11, 1895, J.A. Roberts had a shoe repair shop. He was followed by J.M. Allen and C.E. Hill who both ran shoe stores in 1909. Mr. Dan Tuttle had a shoe repair shop in this home around 1910. Among the shoemakers on record are Jesse A. Roberts (1899), John R. Tate (1899), L.S. Thomas (1884-1885), Charles Hall (1899), and Imhoff and Son (1897-1898). The Van Wert Record ran an ad April 7, 1910 stating, "New style shoes - the high arch, the raised toe, and the buttons. Oh! they're just what you've been looking for. They are at Blairs." Ode Stubbs and John Burnett also repaired shoes.

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### FEED, GRAIN AND PRODUCE

The earliest grain buyer on record appears to be John Gemmill. This was about 1886. In the late 1800s, J.N. McJimpsey had a livery and seed business.

The early 1900s produced several business men who bought and sold grain, feed, coal, hay, cream, eggs, poultry. J.S. Sparks sold feed, grain and coal until March 1910. He then sold his business to L.D. Kelley. Mr. Kelley added the buying of iron and junk to his "Feed, Grain & Coal Store". In 1906, Elmer Smith purchased the Harper and Henry Store which bought grain. W.H. Ransom Feed and Grain Store was located just north of what is now known as the Van Wert Enterprise. He sold his business to C.F. Houck. Another businessman was M.F. Thompson.

Creamery and produce business in the early 1900s included the Beatrice Creamery Company managed by James Wagner until August, 1908, when M.P. Garber became manager. In 1911 this company opened their office at the C.E. Rushing Store. V.E. Beck and Co. bought produce as did the Clarinda P B & E Co. with I.E. Fox, manager. The City Poultry House was owned and operated by J.B. Hampton and his son Elmer. It was located on the east side of main street. His business handled cream, eggs, hides and poultry. At the same time E.S. Elliot ran the same type of store. He was located the first door south of the Palace Hotel. Mr. Elliot sold his business to J.D. Young on June 6, 1911. At one time a man by the name of W.F. Blair owned a panel truck and, for a short time, had a country route buying cream, eggs and chickens. Others who operated feed and produce businesses were J.L. Humphrey, J.N. Barger, Wm. Gentle, S.C. McKee, G.W. Johnson, Lew Hasting, R.W. Prey, and Sye Stanbrou!  
gh. C.G. Jones was a poultry breeder during the 1916s through 1919.

It is interesting to note that, according to the Local Markets listed in the Van Wert Record November 23, 1911, the Markets were: Hogs, \$5.50 per cwt.; cattle, \$4.00 per cwt.; poultry per lb. 7 cents to 8 cents; butter, 20 cents per pound; and eggs 25 cents per dozen. On February 16, 1980, the markets were: Hogs,

\$38.45 per cwt.; cattle, \$69.75 per cwt., poultry, 78 cents per pound, butter, 68 cents per lb. of butterfat and eggs 39 cents per dozen.

Davy Jones started in business in the mid 1920s. He was located on the east side of Main Street just south of the blacktop. Along with the produce business he sold gas. He sold his business to Ode Parmer in the 1950s. Earl Updike, Spidle Grocery, Buckley & Parmer (Mel) E.L. (Poken) Parmer, M.L. Jones Drug & Grocery and Ralph (Skinny) Houck also bought produce during the 20s thru the 50s.

Earl Updike started his business in 1941 selling feed and buying cream, eggs and poultry for Yorkshire Creamery of Ottumwa. He first was located in the first building south of Bud Owens' barber shop. A few months later he moved to a building just south of the Tuttle building. In 1944 in the building he originally started he had a hatchery. This place later burned destroying all his equipment, 2,000 baby chicks and 22,000 eggs. He did not rebuild.

>From July, 1948, to June 1957, Dean Stream operated a Feed, Produce and Hardware Store. It was located on the west side of the street, 4th door south of the blacktop. Leonard Mallatt had a feed store from 1963 to 1964. In 1963, James B. O'Hair started a feed business with Pillsbury and also buying beans. In 1964, J.B. O'Hair, Downard Grocery and the Van Wert Furniture and Feed had the feed business together and continued selling until 1966. Changing from Pillsbury to Nutrena, Mr. O'Hair continued to sell feed until 1970. He is still buying grain. He is in business with his son James C. O'Hair under the name of O'Hair Grain Company or O & W Ag. Enterprises, Inc. of Van Wert. In July, 1971, Bob Cutchall of Winterset started Tri More Sales, Inc. It was located at the old schoolhouse. They sold feed, chemicals, and machinery. They closed March 1, 1980.

Also selling feed, have been Elmer Gilbert and Cox's General Store. The Van Wert Enterprise is still selling feed.

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## BLACKSMITHS

A very necessary part of every pioneer town was the local blacksmith. The first was erected by an Irishman named Gallagher. It was located at the extreme south end of the row of surveyed lots. (This would be near where Hazel Fry lives today.) Gallagher was followed by a Mr. Medkiff. He in turn by Frank Manuel and still later by Steve Mills.

>From the Iowa Gazette we have in 1884-85 and 1887-88, W.E. Stiles and D.E. Tuttle. E.K. McPherson was also a blacksmith in 1895-96. In 1897-98, James Bower. Then in 1899, James Bower went into partnership with R.E. Ball. Also, Daniel Tuttle was still listed as a blacksmith in 1899. Other names that residents can remember in the blacksmith business was H.D. Bell, Christopher, Ward and C.D. McKee.

In 1921, Charles Mallatt rented a building from R. Ball starting a blacksmith shop. Then moved the shop in back of the building on the corner, formerly Jones Station. Dr. Tallman built a building for Mr. Mallatt which would be on the north side of Highway 248.

John Pettis bought the shop from Mr. Mallatt in the 1940s and was in business until the Van Wert School bought the shop and tools for the school shop in 1956.

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## FARRIER

As the Blacksmith Shop was sold in 1956, Lane Schuldt started his "Horse-shoeing" as a trade in 1956. Learning the trade from his father, Louis Schuldt, at the early age of twelve years.

In the start he would go to their place but as business increased, he remodeled an old garage at his home in the west part of Van Wert and the horses were brought here.

As Lane states: "It's hard work and back breaking, but I enjoy working with horses. Horses are my life." With the help of Lane's sons, Ricky, Rodney and Randy, they also break horses to ride and drive.

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## BAKERIES

An early baker mentioned in the Van Wert Record was on the north side managed by J.B. Allen. Doris O'Hair established a bakery in her home in the early sixties. She taught cake decorating to other students in her home. Jenny Perry being one that went on to establish her own business. Doris O'Hair, with the assistance of her daughter, Janis, also taught cake decorating at adult education for several years at Clarke Community Schools and later at Interstate 35 School. Most of the bakery business was made-to-order birthday, anniversary and wedding cakes. The wedding cakes had to be delivered and put together at the church. Some were as high as five tiers, others incorporated an electric water fountain, while others some times had four-leaf clover supplementary cakes. On special occasions people called in orders for rolls, cookies, popcorn balls, mints or Christmas wreath bread. Mrs. O'Hair sold her equipment and discontinued the bakery business in January 1978. Jenny !

Perry had a hobby of cake decorating for several years and it turned into a business when she started getting orders from family and friends to bake wedding and anniversary cakes. She started her business about 1968, working from her home. In 1979, Jenny purchased a cake shoppe inventory from a Mt. Ayr shop. The business is under the name of "Jenny's Cake Shoppe and Supplies". Along with cake decorating she also makes fancy molded chocolates and sells supplies for making them. In January, 1980, she taught adult cake decorating class through Southwestern Community College.

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## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Late in the 1800s, S.K. Dennis was a photographer in Van Wert. V.A. McGrew was here in the early 1900s. Others have been Isabelle Sink and H.O. Tuttle. Earl Clark is Van Wert's current amateur photographer. He has a dark room in his home and does excellent work.

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## REAL ESTATE, INSURANCE, INCOME TAX

During the early years of our community of Van Wert, real estate offices were quite common. Insurance and income tax service could be found at the local bank. In the year 1854, James Irving of New Jersey settled on the northeast quarter of Section 13. He paid the Federal Government \$125 per acre. Real estate on August 6, 1868, for unimproved land could be bought in Decatur County for prices ranging from \$300 to \$600 per acre, and some even as low as \$250. During the years 1887 and 1888, E.J. Blair sold insurance in this community for the Council Bluffs Insurance Company. Records show that Mr. Blair sold insurance in this area from 1887 through 1913. In 1897, P.K. Hall became a Notary for this area. The offices of Smith and Wilson Real Estate Agents was also opened that year. On September 16, 1909, E.S. Elliott and H.O. Tuttle formed the Blue Grass Farm Exchange. They later went their separate ways, but each continued in business. H.O. Tuttle selling insurance for !

Iowa State Insurance Company. I.N. Skidmore also sold insurance that year, he was an agent for Ancor Insurance Company. In 1912 and 1913, E.J. Blair, E.T. Owens, E.O. Stearns and H.O. Wilson were each involved in insurance. H.O. Wilson was also a real estate agent. Records show that in 1914 and 1915, E.O. Stearns sold insurance. H.O. Wilson was involved in real estate as well as insurance. In 1916, A.J. Owens opened a real estate office. He continued in business at least through 1923. Also in 1916, Price and Mote had an office. They continued in business for several years. Records show that E.O. Stearns was especially active in insurance affairs during the years of 1912 and 1923, as well as being cashier at the bank. During that same year of 1916, Thompson and Briner opened offices for real estate and were in business for several years. In 1919, the Van Wert State Bank put out an income tax and farm record book. The book was called "The Perfection Income Tax and !

Farm Record Book". During the late 1920s and early 1930s Harry DeVore and Joe Best were active in the insurance business, selling accident, fire and hail insurance. Harry DeVore continued selling insurance until the early 1960s. Harry was an agent for Ringgold Mutual. From 1945 until the early 1970s, Elmer

Houck did bookkeeping and income tax services for this community. He also drew the county atlases for several years. F. Dean Houck began doing bookkeeping and income tax from his home part time in 1961, and began full time in 1968. He moved his office uptown on the west side of Main Street in 1970. In May of 1973 he began selling insurance for MFA Insurance company, as well as continuing on in the bookkeeping and tax business. From 1965 to 1975, Paul Beardsley sold insurance. He was an agent for continental Western, he also sold Square Deal Hail Insurance, and Farmers Mutual Insurance. For a short time in 1970, Clarence Courtney sold Circle Key Life.

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#### BEARDSLEY'S ORCHARD

Just south of Van Wert the Beardsley Orchard is presently in full production. Paul Beardsley and his wife Mary, own and operate the orchard. There are about nine hundred apple trees on eleven acres. The semi-dwarf spur type fruit trees developed by Stark Brothers Nurseries were some of the first to be grown anywhere. Some of the trees were grown here for experimental purposes. At the present time the spray schedule is coordinated by Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Trees are sprayed about fifteen times each season to eliminate orchard pests. Harvesting is accomplished with the help of Lon Hess, Doris Clemens, Janie Hatfield, Enid Heckathorn and Vilna Kennedy, all from Van Wert. Apples are sorted, boxed and sold at the orchard. A facility for packing and storing apples was erected in 1979.

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#### ANTIQUES AND SPECIALTY SHOPS

What is an antique? What is a collectible? What is a Flea Market? What is an Antique Show? One definition of antique used by a law of Congress decrees that anything one hundred years or older could qualify as an antique. Then there's the dictionary that uses various terms such as old, old fashioned, by-gone style or time; and relic in its definition. In the antique world of today, there is a full time circuit of Antique Shows and Sales sponsored on a regular basis along with smaller Flea Markets that deal in what is called collectibles. Collectibles can be anything that happens to be of interest, so crafts and newer recycled items appear in flea markets. Antique dealers use the shows to sell and also to replenish their stock of merchandise. Dealers also attend estate and farm auctions and buy privately. Most dealers specialize in one field of antiques and become very well versed on their favorite specialty, while most every dealer keeps learning as the stock is con!

stantly changing. Antiques are like land, "they jsut aren't making any more". Thus, quality antiques are good investments. Trends in today's market are moving toward the less decorative art forms. We are experiencing a concern for the history of the average man, rather than a history of the elite society. Art, pottery, country furniture, primitives and Americana in any form are in demand and porcelains and Victorian furniture are good investments. O'Hair Junktiques was established on a small basis in the basement of Doris O'Hair's home in 1970 in rural Van Wert. This was in connection with a line of bakery items and decorated cakes. The bakers was sold in 1978. They now have three buildings of antiques and sell only at the premises. The Junktique Shop features primitives, toys, wooden wares, quilts, farm tools, and a general line. In the past ten years they have had registered buyers from eighteen states as well as a good local trade. George Manahan had a shop kn!

own as the "Trading Post" in the basement of the old schoolhouse for a year or two. He closed the shop in 1979. JoAnn Parmer started J & J Ornaments in December, 1978 in the old Tiedje Garage building at the north end of Main Street. She featured concrete and plaster-of-paris ornaments and tropical fish.

She moved her business to her home on the Van Wert blacktop in September, 1979. She discontinued the fish business and has added antiques, with her main feature being usable and used dishes. Mr. Clyde McVey has been in the business of making small authentic replicas of the old fashioned high-wheeled wagons for the past two years. He buys plastic horses and produces handmade harness and collars for them. He also buys a plastic man to drive "the team and wagon". He makes good use of a pocket knife and pleases many people with his offering.

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#### RESTAURANTS

Cafe business, as the grocery business, changed hands and moved locations frequently. The names of a few of the early restaurants were J.R. Harlow in 1884-85; N. Craig and E.S. Elliott in 1897-98; and S.J. Wilson in 1899.

In 1906, R.T. Downey operated a restaurant and sold it to I.E. Downey in 1908. The Iowa Gazetteer shows I.E. Downey in business in 1912. The latter part of 1912, Mr. Downey sold the business to C.E. Rushing. In 1914-15, J.E. Fielder and Co. and W.R. Fuller were also in the restaurant business.

Reproduction of advertisement: "CEMETERY DAY SPECIAL SATURDAY, APRIL 29.

Our special for next Saturday only will be one quart of regular 30 cent ice cream at 25 cents per quart. AVERY'S CAFE. 5 per cent of the day's sales will be given to the Van Wert Cemetery Improvement Association.

In 1916-17, R.D. Avery, W.H. Fletcher, I.E. Foland, C.O. Wood, and W.R.

Fuller were in the restaurant business, with Mr. Fuller staying in business until 1923. Other cafes during this period would have been "Ma" Rinard, Tiedje, and Hastings. Len Scadden and Frank Rush operated Cafes, also serving beer, in the 1930s. In the 1940s and 1950s there were Ralph and Beulah Munyon operating cafes. In 1946 Robert Fry operated a cafe and was contracted to feed the train crews. Hoyle and Ruth Simmerman rented the building where the present tavern is now and opened a cafe in December of 1947.

In the spring of 1950 they moved a building in across the street, to the present day Enterprise Store parking lot, and opened a cafe in connection with their Skelly Station. Hoyle and Ruth operated these businesses until the first day of May of 1954, when they sold to Gretchen and Floyd McDowell. Elmer and Dean Houck had a restaurant where the Drug Store was located and a Mr. Erlewine also operated a cafe in the 40s and 50s. During the 1950s, Pearl Stiles also operated a cafe with it being where the tavern is now located.

Marie Lamoree, Lela Flummer, Connie Grim, Marsha and Butch Stiles and Wayne DeVore operated cafes during the 1960s. Edna Anderson operated her cafe in a house that was located south of what is now Tiedje's Station. "Kastler's Kove Kafe" was located, on the south end of Main Street where Dean Houck presently has an apartment. Howard and Colleen Kastler operated their cafe in the early 1970s. Along with the help of Colleen's parents, Zell and Marie Boles, they employed Thelma Parmer, Christie Mallatt, Arlin Houck, Mary Van Syoc, Cindy McDowell, Diane DeVore, Pat Parmer, Betty Houck, Rhonda Parmer and Sandy Holmes, during the time they were in business. Wanda and Layton Schuldt operated the "School House Cafe" in the early 1970s. It was the first restaurant to be opened in the old school building. Wanda was known for the fish fries every Thursday evening. In June of 1974, the Schuldts sold their business to Judy Gunter. Judy Gunter operated it for a short time, selling to Clifford Jones and he in turn sold to Dennis Brown. As of 1980, the "School House Cafe" is closed.

## TAVERNS

Prohibition - a form of legislation which attempts to abolish the manufacture and sales of alcoholic liquors. In the United States one of the earliest forms of prohibition forbade the sale of liquor to Indians. A prohibition amendment adopted in Iowa in 1882 was promptly declared unconstitutional by the courts. A new prohibition law went into effect in 1884 and for some years proved fairly adequate. The Iowa Gazette of 1884-85 showed a saloon in Van Wert owned by a gentleman named Benefield. This would have been located south of the present Post Office two blocks. With the start of world War I, Congress passed a resolution for national prohibition. The adoption of nationwide prohibition was followed almost at once by widespread violation of the federal laws.

The following was taken from a newspaper clipping dated October 3, 1918: "Tuesday forenoon, a big Cadillac touring car stopped at a garage at Van Wert for gasoline, and Arthur Price noticed it looked like it was loaded with booze, so the driver was placed under arrest and Sheriff Fulton notified. The car and

occupants, a man and woman, were brought to Leon and it was found the car was loaded with about 600 pints of whiskey. Court was in session and the driver who gave his name as J.L. Foster of Des Moines, entered a plea of guilty, and Judge Fuller fined him \$200 and costs and the woman who gave her name as Mrs. J.L. Foster, also entered a plea of guilty and was fined \$50 and costs. Foster paid the costs in both cases, and left that evening for Des Moines to get money to pay fines, the Cadillac being held by the officers until the fine was paid in full. The phrase "home brew" became very common. Liquor raids and seizures by enforcement agents were daily occurrences. Liquor sold in "Speakeasies" and by bootleggers came from other sources, mainly foreign countries. About 1924, liquor made from diverted industrial alcohol assumed the place of chief importance.

Although alcohol released for industrial purposes was poisoned, bootleggers were able to extract most of the poisons. Repeal of prohibition started in 1925, and Congress voted to submit the repeal amendment in February 1933. The State of Iowa has the exclusive right for all forms of alcohol liquor or beer in the State. In 1933 and 1934 the State established State Liquor Stores and Taverns were allowed only to sell beer with a permit from the State. Taverns in Van Wert during this period were Frank Rush and Len Scadden. In 1963, the legislature legalized liquor by the drink in the taverns. Counties had the option of this and following counties decided to stay dry: Lucas, Lyon, Madison, Sioux, Ringgold, Wayne, Mahaska, Davis and Decatur County. Decatur County was a dry county until the citizens voted later to change this. Van Wert for many years did not have a tavern. Elmer Houck purchased the Jones Drug Store in 1958 and in 1963, had a closing out sale and re-opened as a tavern in 1964, and had to close in 1973 due to poor health. Elmer was born in Allerton, Iowa, in 1911 and moved to Van Wert in 1912. He attended Drake University and was a teacher before and after World War II. In 1929 Elmer married Ruth Jennings and to this union ten children were born. Elmer's youngest son, Dale, returned to Van Wert from teaching school in northern Iowa and opened a Recreation Center in 1976. The Center was one door north of Elmer's.

Beer and a cafe were also included in the center. Dale closed in 1977 to return to teaching school. Other taverns during the past few years have had numerous owners. A tavern was opened by Lyman Schuldt and Roger McCauley, two doors north of Elmer's. They sold the tavern to Boyd Schuldt. Boyd sold equipment to Ken Riley, step-son of Harry Mallatt. Mrs. Harry Mallatt operated the tavern for her son. Arvid Woolums purchased the equipment and also purchased the building from Boyd Schuldt. Terry Hainline and parents, Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Hainline, operated the tavern for Mr. Woolums, Larry Hainline purchased the equipment from Mr. Woolums and moved the tavern to a building owned by Boyd Schuldt (first building south of Tiedje Garage). Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Hainline operated the tavern until Larry sold it to Jackie and Bill Griffith. After purchasing the equipment from Larry Hainline and buying the building from Boyd Schuldt, Jackie and Bill remodeled and built on and was the first tavern in Van Wert to have liquor by the drink. In September of 1972, they applied and received a combination liquor and beer permit. "Griffs" sold the tavern to Odean Spencer in 1973. Odean Spencer operated the tavern and later sold to Jorita Gorman. Having to take the tavern back, Odean then leased it to Sandy Martin. The tavern was closed for a while and Mrs. Spencer reopened it. H.B. "Bud" Parmer purchased the tavern from Odean Spencer in 1977 and was in business until he sold to the present owner, Carol Gildea, in April of 1979.

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## MEAT MARKETS

Through the years there were several Meat Markets or Lockers operating in Van Wert. During the year 1909, there was a Van Wert Meat Market open for business on July 1. Also W.F. Briner's Meat Market and Guy Sutton's Meat Market were opened on September 15. W. Brannaum operated the "Red Front Butcher Shop" with it being located on the east side of Main Street, first door south of the Palace Hotel. G.W. Johnson was in charge of this market being under the tutorship of E.S. Elliott. In 1910, many of the Meat Markets or Lockers changed hands several times with some of the following persons being new owners or operators: Allen and Thompson were opened for business on September 1. Don Hacker and Bill Ransom opened a market in June of 1910, but sold their business in November of the same year. E.E. Delk and Son opened their business on June 23. Allen and Black in August, 1910, and Ben Conn on October 20th. In 1921, John Hawkins operated a Meat Market north of where the Post Office was located that year. I.S. Corsbie and father also had a meat market. In April of 1944, Shannon and Opha Edwards bought the former Tuttle building from Carl Bloom and remodeled it

into the "Edwards Locker". Together they operated the locker until the summer of 1955. the prices have increased over the years to process meat. In April of 1955 it cost from \$2.50 to butcher port, to \$3.00 to butcher beef. It was \$.03 for processing and \$.02 for grinding. Now days it will cost a person \$10.00 to butcher beef and \$5.00 to butcher pork. the processing and grinding have also gone up to \$.14 and \$.05 respectively.

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## TRUCKING

The first form of transportation was the dray line. The dray line was the means of transporting all freight and express from the depot to the business and individuals in downtown Van Wert. In this early day, everything was shipped by railroad and incoming freight was hauled by the dray man. The dray line had a large assortment of items to haul. There was gasoline to haul to the stations. This was in fifty gallon barrels, which were emptied into the underground tanks. The produce stations bought cream, eggs, and poultry from the farmers.

These were picked up by the dray lines and hauled to the depot. In a few days, the cans which the cream was in and the poultry coops were shipped back. These were to be hauled back to the produce station by the dray line. All grocery items came by rail at this time. Most items came in large wooden boxes, vinegar and oil came by the barrel. Bread came daily from Ottumwa, Iowa, in large wooden bread boxes which were 3 feet by 4 feet. The bread was unwrapped and layered with a sheet of paper between each layer. It was not uncommon for the bread to be warm when it arrived. The dray man hauled this daily from the depot. On his return trip, the empty bread boxes were hauled to the depot. All salesmen traveled by train and would call on the merchants in order to sell his product. The dry goods salesman carried a large sample of his goods. The samples would consist of four to five large trunks, which the dray man hauled from the train to the store. After the salesman spent the day showing his products and taking orders, he moved to the next store down the street. The dray man would then load the trunks and follow him to the next store. When the salesman finished in town, the dray man hauled the trunks back to the depot and they were shipped to another town by rail.

The dray was horse drawn and all streets were dirt. In the rainy season and winter it was a slow process as the ruts were axle deep and the loads were heavy. The dray man's work was heavy and with no enclosures to protect him, there was the weather element to overcome.

Oren C. Fuller (Johnnie) ran the dray line many years. He was not a large man, so he had to know his trade in order to load his heavy loads. There were no fork lifts or easy ways, just man power. Other known dray men were Fred Gould, A.A. Hox, and Frank Rush.

In later years, he purchased a truck. It was a chain drive with hard solid tires on the back. This he used in fair weather, but kept his team and dray wagon for the muddy times to keep the freight moving from rail station to downtown.

Time and progress brought larger trucks. For the dray line, more trucks meant less freight to haul and the dray line faded out.

After the railroad was discontinued in our town, the farmers and business became dependent on the truckers for transporting their products to market, for hauling coal to the community, and other things needed.

Some of the first pioneers in trucking were John Fuller, Delbert Ramsey and Frank Rush. Harry Mallatt Trucking was a familiar sign to see in the Van Wert area in the 1940s and 1950s. Another very familiar name to the trucking operation in our area has been that of Eddie Reed (William E. Reed, Jr.). He first began his business in 1945 when he and Earl Fry went together and bought a 13 1/2 ft. truck box on a 1945 Chevy. They were known as Reed & Fry Trucking. They hauled coal from the strip mines at Centerville, IA, sand and lumber for Charlie Richards' lumberyard in Weldon and livestock and grain for farmers.

In 1946, Eddie bought out Earl Fry and continued doing business for himself as Eddie Reed Trucking. Around 1947, he traded trucks and put on an 18 ft. box. With his new equipment, he was able to haul livestock to the major markets in the area such as St. Joseph, MO.; Omaha, NE.; and Ottumwa, IA.

In the late 1940s, Eddie started hauling feed to Harry and Roland Redman's feed lots. Here he loaded fat cattle to be taken to meat packing plants in Des Moines.

Through the years of being in business for himself, in 1972 he sold his truck, but continued driving for Warren Ready Mix.

Shelby and Gretchen Hagen moved to the Van Wert corner in 1949. He built his garage and started his own trucking operation. His first truck was a 1946 Chevy in which he began hauling lime and rock. Later he did transport grain as well.

For a short time, approximately 1963 and 1964, both Gretchen and Shelby drove trucks hauling gravel for Interstate 35 near New Virginia. About 1977, Gretchen hauled corn for Cox's but has since retired from truck driving. Shelby now hauls, for the most part, water in a 1500 gallon tank on his truck. He not only furnishes water to many households, but also transports water for Rick Jackson's spraying operation each spring. In the fall, he hauls grain for the farmers.

Ike Jackson and his family came to Van Wert in 1952. His trucking business, at this time, consisted of hauling road rock and lime. In 1955, he expanded his business by going into partners with Dwayne Mallatt on a corn sheller and hauling grain. He bought Dwayne's half of the business in 1956 and continued on his own. In 1958, he started trucking in conjunction with farming. Ike still operates his business today.

In 1936, Elmer Gilbert started his trucking business by trading his farm tractor for a truck. One of his first jobs was hauling the W.P.A. workers, who worked on the county roads. In the early 1940s, Elmer started his general trucking business. He hauled livestock, corn and other grain. At the same time Elmer started buying hogs for Swift and Co. and Armour Pack. The hogs were hauled in trucks to St Joseph, Omaha, Kansas City and St. Louis. Elmer, also, helped with the trucking when the railroad lines were taken up. In the middle of the 1940s, Elmer started hauling lime and gravel.

Elmer Gilbert employed many drivers over the years of trucking. He relates that someone told him that he ran an apprentice school for drivers! Most young men in the community, turning 17, usually tried their hand at driving a truck for Elmer.

Elmer stopped buying hogs in 1971 after 26 years in business. Since then his son Glen has taken over the business of hauling lime and gravel in the community.

Davey and Lillian Jones started in the trucking business with an old Model "T" car remodeled into a truck. They also had an old Dodge car fixed into a truck. One of these was called "Old Haldy". The Jones family remembers more than one broken arm resulted from cranking these vehicles. Later in his trucking business Davey owned a 1933 Chevrolet truck, a new 1935 chevy with mechanical brakes, and two new 1936 Chevys with hydraulic brakes. Davey's last truck was a 1940 with a hand two-speed axle.

The Jones Trucking handled grain, straw, hay, commercial feed, binder twine, seed corn, ice and coal. The ice was hauled from Des Moines to ice houses in and around this area. Grain, straw, and hay were hauled in from up north because southern Iowa had been in a drought.

Jones made many trips to St. Joseph, Missouri, with cattle and hogs.

Davey also worked hauling the ties from the railroad from Decatur to Van Wert.

When Van Wert was hit with chinch bugs, Davey hauled a lot of needed creosote to the area.



Other men known to have operated trucking businesses in our community are Neal Kelly, Don Robins, Hoyle Anderson, Paul Stiles, Willie Fry, Orval Foland, Boyd Schuldt, Warren Jones, Walter Jones, Lyman Schuldt, Dean Grimm, Levi Cochran, Bernard Adams and George South.

New marketing concepts and eighteen wheelers brought an end to an era of small town truckers. At present Van Wert still has truck drivers who commute to work and drive eighteen wheelers (semi-trucks) for large companies. Some of these drivers are Dean Grimm, Larry Hainline, Ted Hainline, Garry Hainline, Chet Reed and Dorman Reed.

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### ICE HOUSE

In the early days of electricity and those days before this energy was invented, folks used caves and ice boxes to keep their milk and perishables in. A square foot block of ice could keep the ice box cool for as long as four to seven days depending on the temperature of the day and the insulation of the particular box. Ice was purchased from several different ice houses through the years. One was located near the old railroad depot northeast of town. Still another was located downtown behind what was Fred Hall's Jewelry Store. It is a fairly large building and was there around 1921 and after. Horse and wagons brought ice from the reservoir to be unloaded at the dock. The Van Wert Meat Market also sold ice starting the latter part of 1909.

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### LUMBER YARD

Naturally, the early days were filled with times of building. For that reason, lumberyards were also among the booming businesses of our early community.

The railroad made lumber easily obtained but before the iron horse delivered the product, horse and wagon transferred it from place to place. Even after the railroad came through it was often necessary to transport lumber by team and wagon since the tracks could not possibly cover all necessary area needing the product. W.H. Fridley started the first known lumberyard in 1884 and 1885. Two known businesses sold lumber in 1895 and 1896. They were Ruffcorn, McCartney and Co., General Store and Lumber and Steer and Thompson (William Steer and M.L. Thompson), hardware and lumber. Later in 1897 or 1898, Thompson ran a lumber and grain business by himself. Possibly the most successful lumberyard in Van Wert was the large Halstead and Crawford business which began in 1897 or 1898. The yard was located southwest of our present Community Building near the tracks. Halstead and Crawford kept their machinery used for transporting and delivering lumber in the stucco building south of Tiedje's new station.

### CARPENTERS, ELECTRICIANS & HANDYMEN

Van Wert has seen many fine carpenters over the years. In the 1897-1898 Iowa Gazette, N.W. Holt and A. Ballard were listed as carpenters. Lewis Holt was one of the leading carpenters in the early 1900s. He built a two-story, three-room frame school building in 1895 in Van Wert. Other carpenters over the years have been Jesse Holt, C.A. Walker, Gilbert Edge, Samuel McKee, John Collier, Newton McJimpsey, Herb Scadden, Walter King, Paul Simmerman, John Bain, Homer Ramsey and Ralph Kinzie.

Dean Butler and Ronald Parmer owned and operated B and P Woodworking from October, 1978 to December, 1979. It was located in the Tiedje Garage. Dan Tuinstra, Duane Otto, Erwin (Bobby) Parmer, Scott Geer, Herman Brown, William Turpin Construction Company are the carpenters of today. John Spencer and Jerry Hatfield work together as carpenters and cement workers. Earlier brick masons and cement workers are Ed. Owens, Bob Craft, Vigo Rasmussen and Leo Bosstedder. The earliest electrician was Faye Eaton. He installed the first electrical lines in town. James Harvey sold electrical supplies also.

Findley Buntain was also an electrician. George Hanahan is an

electrician living here now. In the 1897-1898 Gazette, Holt, Kunkle, and Benjamin Hall were listed as painters and paperhangers. According to an ad in the Van Wert Record on August 4, 1910, W. Branaum would repair chimneys, repair plaster and do general remodeling. Another painter and paperhanger of the early 1900s was John Miner.

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### ELECTRICITY COMES TO VAN WERT

The first electrical lines were put in town November, 1915. The lines were installed on the streets by Faye Eaton. He also wired the first houses. A company by the name of Van Wert Electric Company was found registered in the 1916-17, 1918-19, and 1922-23 Iowa State Gazette. It is assumed that the Van Wert Electric Company purchased electricity from the Centerville Power and Transfer Company which was owned by George M. Bechtel. Van Wert and Weldon were supplied electricity, wholesale, by Mr. Bechtel's company. On August 1, 1921, Iowa Southern Utilities purchased the electric distribution systems from Mr. Bechtel. This also included approximately five and one-half miles of transmission lines connecting Van Wert and Weldon with the Leon district. At this time Van Wert had 113 meters. Found in the Van Wert School Board minutes, were bills paid to the Van Wert Electric Company. On June 23, 1919, the amount of \$840 and May 17, 1920 the amount of \$100. The minutes also show that on November 15, 1923 and March 17, 1924 payment for lights was made to the Van Wert Bank. The earliest payment shown to Iowa Southern Utilities was on October 6, 1924 for the amount of \$100. The rural homes along the Iowa Southern Utilities high lines had electricity as early as 1939. Through the establishment of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, rural America would receive electricity, with financing from REA, REC/Clark Electric Cooperative would be able to bring electricity to the rural area here. Clarke Electric Coop first started signing up rural residents for electricity in 1944. H.L. Redman was the first to sign up in September, 1944. The lines were built about 1946-1947. Seventy-five men worked to build the lines. Membership cost was \$500. By 1948, rural Van Wert had electricity.

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### AUCTIONEERS

Auctioneers of the early 1900s were the team of Smith and Gooding. Captain J.J. Gooding was from Kellerton and J.A. Smith was from Van Wert. Another auctioneer at this time was Guy Smith from Van Wert. In the August 10, 1911 issue of the Van Wert Record, E.O. Wills had this ad, "Auctioneer - If you want an auctioneer who is up-to-date and alive, we're one who will work for your sale. See me or leave dates at the Record Office in Van Wert, Iowa." From the sale bill for the T.J. Wolfe farm sale February 1, 1909, the terms of payment were: "9 months time will be given on all sums over \$5.00, purchaser giving note with approved security, without interest if paid when due. If not paid, to draw 8% interest from date. All sums of \$5.00 and under, cash 5% discount per annum for cash". These were the terms for other sales around 1909-10.

Other auctioneers from the Van Wert area have been Orville Parmer, Melvin Shell, Willard Parmer, Darrell Perry and Earl (Butch) Stiles.

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### GARAGES AND GAS STATIONS

In the early 1900s a new machine made its appearance, the automobile. As those gasoline powered machines became popular and the numbers grew, a new business was needed to supply the oil products and keep up maintenance for the automobiles and trucks.

By 1903, F.L. Collins had a small bulk plant on a siding just west of the depot. The first fuels, coal-oil or kerosene, and gasoline were shipped by rail in fifty-five gallon drums. O.C. (Johnny) Fuller was this area's first oil man, hauling these drums to the places of business where it was dispensed by quarts and gallons.

By 1908 the Van Wert Record reported "Messrs. E.O. Stearns and J. Stearns have purchased a new Mason touring car very similar in style to the one owned by R.C. Scheffler. The demonstrator of the company was in town a few days giving them lessons in the art of operating the machine." As far as can be ascertained, this was the first car in Van Wert.

Maxine Morris had commented that her dad, Ben Grimm, sold his horse and buggy. He and Jack Thompson then went to Des Moines and bought one of the early cars in Van Wert. It was a four door Ford and, of course, the women bought riding caps with veils so they could ride.

Between 1898 and 1908, 150,000 motor vehicles had been put into use in the United States. Production by 1909 meant one vehicle for every thousand people. There was a total of 253 auto manufacturers with 125 being makers of motor cars that were recognized as practical and of standard grade.

Other early auto owners of our area were Harry Tuttle, Bud Owens, Frank Rush and Dr. Tallman. In 1911, Lew Thompson, Loren Reed and Jim Downey had purchased a "Tin Lizzie" Model T-Ford. E.O. Stearns had a Hudson. With more automobiles, Decatur County began to boast of 155 1/4 miles of roads. These roads were maintained ones, however, they were still dirt roads.

1912 saw Van Wert near the crossroads of "Interstate Trail", a major dirt road running north and south across the state and the "Corn Belt Highway" now replaced by State Road 258 through town. Gasoline was sold by A.L. Belding at this time. Jim Smith and Fred Ramsey had a garage on the east side, near the north end of Main Street. This building has long since been removed.

In 1914, C.J. Price and Mote were selling Overland cars. It was at this time a young man just out of Sweeney Automobile School, William Tiedje, and his brother, Herman, purchased the garage formerly owned by Smith and Ramsey and opened the Van Wert Garage.

In 1917, Willy and Delbert Ramsey operated a garage near the present Phillips "66" location. Since 1917 and 1918 were both war years, Van Wert sacrificed both men and machines, but did continue to grow. The west side of town, north of the tracks had burned in 1915. By 1919, Will Tiedje had built a new single span garage on the north side.

With more automobiles, trucks and tractors in the area, Standard Oil saw the need to expand its Van Wert Plant. In late 1919, they contracted with John Randolph to operate the Leon plant. Wray Randolph, John's son, fresh out of auto mechanics school, helped his father until the Van Wert opening was available. Early in 1920, Wray signed with Standard Oil to form the Van Wert Oil Agency. Wray served the north half of Decatur County with its major petroleum needs. Most fuel was bucketed off the tan wagon in five gallon measured buckets. The work was hard and the roads were bad, especially in the rainy season, but Wray was determined to build the Van Wert Oil Agency into one of the best. With the help of his wife, Ethel, he did just that.

By 1923, more new cars found owners in the Van Wert area. The Durant and Studebaker were common makes. The Tiedje brothers were selling "STAR" cars at this time.

Hank Reed, father of Russell Reed, remodeled the former Van Wert Garage in 1927 and began his business on the east side of Main Street.

The first gas pumps were in barrels which had to be hand pumped. Then came the pumps with a five gallon glass reservoir on top. This was pumped full by hand before releasing gas to the vehicle. The cost was figured by the marked gauge on the glass reservoir since there were no meters on the pumps to tell exactly the number of gallons or parts of gallons or how much it was down to the cent.

Times change and so do engines and machines. The Van Wert Oil Agency had grown, but Wray Randolph felt he could better serve his customers with Sinclair. In 1928 he signed a contract with the Sinclair Oil Company and expanded his business even more to include rural service in the

northern half of the county and stations in Van Wert, Weldon, LeRoy, Garden Grove, DeKalb, Grand River and along Highway 69 at Fairview and Derr's corner.

The first all weather roads in this area were seen in 1928 and 1929.

U.S. Highway 69 was paved just one mile east of Van Wert city limits. The 1930s was the start of better roads in our area and people were traveling more often with less effort. Charlie Mallatt sold Shell gasoline. Orville Foland built a gas station south of Main Street on the west side. Elmer Hampton had gasoline on the southeast side of Main Street, about midway of the block. Davey Jones sold Sinclair on the east side at the north end. Will Tiedje's Sinclair Station was located across the street west of Jones's. In 1935, Bill Fry purchased the former Foland Station. Robert Fry built a Deep Rock Station in 1939 at the north end of Main Street, and the Tiedje Garage changed to Phillips products.

On April 6, 1915, Mrs. Bertha Tiedje started to work in the garage owned by her husband, the late William Tiedje, and his brother. For fifty years she was affiliated with this establishment. In her last years she ran the station and garage with her sons, William and Malcolm. The garage on the north end of Main Street was built in 1919.

In honor of her 50th anniversary at the garage, the entire community of Van Wert and friends from afar were present to wish her well, eat a piece of cake, drink a cup of coffee and just plain talk.

Mrs. Tiedje said, "This is a wonderful community to live in. We don't get rich, but we have a good place to live, plenty of good food and clothes to keep us warm and above all, the finest friends anywhere."

Bertha's life was full of experiences, so many one couldn't mention them all. In talking about the early days of the garage business, she told how they had the agency for the Durant and Star cars, "both mighty fine automobiles in those days. We sold a lot of them although cars were not very premium when we started in the garage business. Soon there were enough around that we had night storage in the garage. It took a lot of pushing of cars in those days to let someone in the back of the garage get his car out early. I expect I have pushed cars far enough to reach to Leon and back in the years I have been in the garage business."

Bertha and Davy Jones, both gone now, at one time worked for Mr. Tiedje. While reminiscing together, this story evolved -- Several of the fellows from Van Wert were in camp at Camp Dodge in Des Moines. They rode the rail to Osceola on Sunday morning, then came by car to Van Wert. They had to be back that night. A heavy rain set in and the then mud roads were almost impassable. Since they had to catch the train in Osceola, they called on Bertha and she took off in her car with the young men for Osceola. The mud was so deep and when they came up on a car stalled in the middle of the road, the fellows would jump out and practically slide the car around. Finally, the trip ended in time for the fellows to catch the train. She made it home with the help of a fellow who was traveling in her direction.

Bertha Tiedje was indeed a treasure to all who knew and loved her, a multitude which included every age. Her pleasant mannerisms and jolly disposition made life a little brighter for all who came in contact with her.

The "Big War" of 1942 to 1946 brought gas rationing, an average of three gallons a week on the A Books. The speed limit was 35 miles per hour. No new cars were sold, not even a new tire could be purchased unless extremely necessary. Conservation was indeed a forced way of life.

In the fall of 1946, a young and ambitious man, just out of the Navy, signed a contract with the Phillips Petroleum Oil Company. G.W. "Sport" Wade, always looking forward, built the "Sport Wade Oil Company" into an organization serving most of Decatur and surrounding counties with petroleum and similar products. The company was built with many long hours and lots of hard work. Sport's wife, the former Helen Gil, contributed greatly to the sacrifices and success of their company. After the death of Sport in 1979, the company still remains intact as "Sport Wade, Inc." with his oldest son, Jeff, as president.

The years after 1946 have seen many very capable mechanics and service station operators. The ones that come to mind are as follows:

S. Barrett - 1946  
Earl and Hazel Fry - 1945-50; D.X.  
"Cye" Barrett Garage - 1946-48  
Willie Ramsey - 1946-49; Standard Oil  
Fred Robins - 1949-50; Standard Oil  
Otis Parmer - 1949-51; Standard Oil  
Len Scadden - 1951; Sinclair  
Hoyle & Ruth Simmerman - 1950-54; Skelly Oil  
Floyd & Gretchen McDowell - 1954-56; Skelly Oil  
Earl Anderson - 1950-72; Standard Oil  
Layton Schuldt Garage - 1958-60; Skelly Oil  
Dave & Don Rosenberger - 1960s  
Lee Bernhardt - 1960s  
Don Rosenberger Garage & Salvage - 1965-68  
B & H Oil Co. - Bert & Harriet Grimm - 1971-78  
Blockton Oil  
Tiedje "66" - 1971-80; Phillips 66  
Parmer's Garage - Jerry Parmer - 1979-80  
Martin's Station - 1972-80; Farm Service.

#### BRICK KILNS

It is believed that there have been at least three brick kilns located in the surrounding community. One was located west of Bill Hall's present home in Section 16. Another was once on what was known for years as the old Spencer Farm in Section 15. This kiln was operated by Mr. Spencer and the Hedrick boys. Still another is believed to have been in the far southwest corner of town on the property now belonging to Ruth Simmerman. Unfortunately no more information is available.

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#### GRISTMILLS

The earliest gristmill on record was that of P.K. Hall in 1884 and 1885. Shortly following was H.M. Hoadley, who also ran a flour mill.

In 1875, a novel and unsuccessful attempt was made to operate a wind powered gristmill in Prairie City. Then later the mill was converted to steam power and became a success.

A mill operated and owned by John Palmer was built in 1912 just west of where a schoolhouse was later built. From the information gathered, this mill was the Yankee Mill. John Hanks owned and operated this mill before 1910.

In May of 1910, it was sold to W. Branaum. This was a gasoline powered mill and they ground every Saturday.

During World War II, those who had a bushel of corn ground into meal were given a certificate which could be taken to the store and entitled them to five pounds of flour. In 1918, this mill moved across the road where Mrs. Rob (Ellen) Parmer resides now. The reason for its relocation was the building of a new schoolhouse. The mill was sold in 1925 to Rob Palmer, who moved it to the south side of the lot. At one time the government shipped hundreds of bushels of wheat into Van Wert and Rob Palmer ground it into feed, graham flour and the breakfast food which was called "Georgie Porgie".

Another mill was built in 1883 one quarter of a mile north of the mill village of Van Wert. It was owned and operated by W.W. Morehaed. This mill was closed when the proprietor became "financially involved and discouraged and moved westward".

Still another water powered gristmill was located on Long Creek in Section 16 just south of the bridge. It was operated by Franklin Ramsey but unfortunately no dates are available concerning this mill.

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#### BOARDWALKS

At one time a boardwalk followed the east side of Main Street from town to the cemetery. In 1909 cement walks were being installed at various areas of town. Under personal items in the Van Wert Record on June 24, 1909, it said, "Ed Owens and Bob Craft are busily engaged in laying cement. They are at present putting a walk in front of the Gould and H.O. Tuttle properties south of the Corbett House." Again, on August 12, 1909, "Owens and Craft are putting in a new cement walk along the east side of L.D. Kelley's and Mrs. Anna Fierce's residence properties in west Van Wert, and also a new crossing of the same material, across the street north from this walk.

Boardwalks were to become something of the past when this amendment to Ordinance No. 6 came to pass on August 4, 1910, "Be it enacted by the town council of the incorporated town of Van Wert, Iowa, that sections five (5) and six (6) of ordinance number six (6) be repealed, and following substituted therefore. All sidewalks hereafter constructed, bordering on Main Street in front of blocks two (2), seven (7) and eight (8) and south 83 1/3 feet of block one (1) of the incorporated town of Van Wert and the west half of block fifteen (15) bordering on Line Street in the Barr's addition to the town of Van Wert, shall be constructed of material known as cement and shall be ten (10) feet in width. All other sidewalks constructed in the incorporated town of Van Wert shall be built of material known as cement and shall be four (4) feet in width. This ordinance shall be in full force on and after its passage and publication. J.M. Halstead, Clerk. Ed Holt, Mayor".

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#### THE VETERANS OF VAN WERT "WE SALUTE YOU"

Bernard Michael Adams; Hoyle Anderson; Comrade  
Allison; Leonard Alms; Dennis Baker; Edd Baker;  
Gerald Baker; Harold Baker; Willard Baker; Don Beers;  
Richard Beers; Ira Bergin; Eldon Binning; Michael Binning  
Ralph Binning, Vern Binning; Floyd Bishop; Jeff Blades;  
R.E. Blades; Edmund Blair; Thomas Bludsoe; Mary  
Boatman; Harvey Carter; Rex C. Cisco; Donald L.  
Collins; Fuel Collins; Ivan Corsbie; Merlin Corsbie;  
David Cowden; Charles Cox; David M. Cox; Harold  
Critchfield; Eugene Davenport; Glen H. Deemer; James  
R. Deemer; Gene DeVore; Leo L. DeVore; William A.  
DeVore; Alvin Roy DeWild; Art DeWild; Clarence Edge

Robert Edge; Shannon Edwards, Jr.; Charles Eischen;  
Less Flaggard; Darel Foland; Donald Fry; Dwight Fry;  
Earl Fry; Raymond E. Fry; Robert D. Fry; Roy Fry;  
Luther Fuller; Marion Fuller; Ronald Fuller; Willard  
Fuller; Carl Fullerton; Donald Fullerton; John Gibson;  
Frances E. Githens; Marvin K. Gordon; Meryle L.  
Gordon; Ronald I. Gordon; Jim Gould; Carroll E. Grimm;  
Dale E. Grimm; Robert Boatman; Everett A. Erb; Carl  
Bradshaw; Earl Erickson; Robert E. Brand; Edd Erickson  
Harry Brown; Fred Erickson; Herman Brown; Louis  
Evans; Owen Bulkeley; Max Evans; O. Richard Bulkeley;  
Raymond Evans; Albert Bullard; Err Fierce; Mott Buller;  
Bruce Finkbone; Comrade Hand; Harold E. Jones;  
Harold Harlan; James R. Jones; Lowell Harlan; John  
Jones; Orange V.L. Harper; Julian Jones; Leonard  
Hastings; Walter Jones; H. Burbank Hatfield; Donald  
D. Kelley; Alan Heckathorn; Earl E. Kempf; Loyd  
Heckathorn; A.O. Kennel; Guy A. Hess; Donald Keyser  
John Hildor; Gene King; Ronald E. Hoadley; Kenneth  
Kinney; Lewis Holt; Lynette D. Kinzie; Clyde Hall;  
Lawrence Hall; Ora Hall; Rolly Hall; Wilburn O. Hall;  
Con C. McDowell; Gary L. McDowell; Ray D.  
McDowell; Fred McElwee; Lyle McElwee; Carroll  
McKee; George M. McJimpsey; J.M. McJimpsey;  
Frank McMurtrey; Howard H. Mills; D. Norman Moren  
Joseph R. Moren; Carl M. Morris; Donald D. Morris;  
Robert J. Horney; Bill Kirkpatrick; Duane Houck;  
Kenneth Kirkpatrick; Elmer Houck; Robert E. Lee;

F. Dean Houck; Mart Leffler; Henry Houck; Dennis  
Lewis; Howard Houck; Russell Lewis; Ralph R. Houck;  
William Lewis; Forrest Housh; Jessie Logston; Charles  
Imhoff; Eldon Mallatt; Earnie Irving; Glen Mallatt; Vernie  
Irving; Harry Mallatt, Jr.; C.I. (Ike) Jackson; Max  
Mallatt; June Jackson; Wildan Kyle Mallatt; Clyde  
Johnson; William R. Matheny; Robert Johnson; Richard  
McCarl; Stan Johnson; Guy W. McCarty; Steve Johnson  
Dean McConnell; David Jones; Milo McConnell; Eugene  
H. Jones; Robert McConnell; Ebenezer Price; Frank  
South; Edmund Ira Price; Ira Paul South; Thomas Price;  
John Spencer; Paul O. Ramsey; Nelson Spencer; Melvin  
Ramsey; Duane Spidle; Vego Rasmussen; Don Stark;  
David Redman; Paul O. Stiles; Fredrick Redman; Larry  
Stream; Maurice C. Redman; Benjamin Stubbs; Morris  
Redman; John Thompson; Norman Redman; Marion  
Thompson; Leon Reed; Robert Throckmorton; Russell  
Reed; Henry Tiedje; Paul W. Reeves; Malcolm Tiedje;  
Frank Rush; William R. Tiedje; J.E. Rushing; Bobby  
Tompkins; Herb Scadden; Raymond Tompkins; Gale M.  
Schuldt; Howard Schuldt; Richard Tompkins; Louie  
Schuldt; Carrell O. Turner; Roscoe Scott; Wildan Tuttle;  
Mankin Rey Sink; Arbor Twitzel; Ralph Sink; Dorman  
Updike; Ray Sink; Randall Updike; Bert Simmerman;  
Rowland Updike; Paul Simmerman; Barbara Upfield;  
Wray Simmerman; James Upfield; Alfred Smith; Murray  
Upfield; Marion Morris; Butler Mote; Comrade Mote;  
Lewis K. Murray; Denny D. O'Hair; Dale O. Osenbaugh;



Jeff A. Osenbaugh; Howard Palmer; Lloyd Palmer; Paul  
Palmer; Lawney D. Parmer; Thomas Patterson; Irving  
Max Pelsor; Merlin E. Pelsor; Larry Perry; Warren Petty;  
Donald Pierce; Ronald Pierce; Donald Price; Avery T.  
West; Elba L. West; Ira West; Willard West; Orlando  
Whitticar; H.O. Wilson; William Wilson; Darryl Winn;  
Merlin D. Winn; Perry Winn; Cecil Young; Clifford  
Young; Frank Young; Rick Schuldt; and Hugh Reed;  
Fred Smith; Jack Smith; Harry Snider; Lowell M. Snider;  
Richard Upfield; Robert Upfield; Worth Upfield and  
Lowell Watson.

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## RECREATION

The people of our town were industrious and hardworking, but they had their times of fun, too, as they still do today. Several types of establishments have been opened from time to time with relaxation and enjoyment in mind. Then, too, many make out with what is around us every day, we make do with what we have and have a lot of fun while we're at it.

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## POOL HALLS

Pool halls have been housed in at least two places, each with several different operators. The earliest billiard parlor we could find record of was owned and operated by Roy black in 1921. It was located directly north of the Burkey Drug Store. Owners of the establishment following Roy Black include Ben Collins, Neil Sink, Burbank (Bunk) Hatfield (1938-39), Earl Clark (1939), Eddy Wilson, and in the 1950s, Ed Wynn. After Wynn's hall closed, Melvin and Thelma Palmer started a grocery store, later sold it to John Doff, who in turn sold out to Conda and Darlene Downard. Dale and Renee Houck ran a recreation center here during the summer in approximately 1976 and 1977. Today the building is owned and maintained by the Van Wert Lions Club. During the winter months, the community enjoys Bingo games each Saturday night sponsored by the Lions.

After Updike's Produce and Hatchery burned in 1943, a pool hall was built in its place. In the early 1950s, Ed Wynn moved his billiard parlor from north of the drug store here. Those later running the business in chronological order were Lefty Geist, Frances Hoham, Leonard Mallatt (1935), Lonnie Cowden (1954), Clay Wellman and Dennis Houck.

For a number of years (approximately 1974 to 1979) there have been men and women's pool tournaments in the local tavern. Each time contestants would play for approximately six weeks before a champion ruled. Both single and doubles tournaments were held. One double team winner was Jerry and Dorothy Parmer in 1977. Some of the singles champions and trophy winners are as follows: Don McClure, 1974; Gloria McClure, 1974; Janie Hatfield, 1975; Jerry Parmer, 1975, 1977 and 1979; Deanie Parmer, Erwin Parmer, Gayle Norman, Randal Cox, Darlene Cox, Rod Schuldt, Randy Schuldt, and Karen Schuldt.

## SKATING

Winter months of by-gone days often found the youth of our community at the Reservoir fondly called "the Rez", located northeast of town, engaged in the sport of ice skating. Apparently, no one made it to the Olympics, but they still had a good time.

For a short time roller skating tried to make its mark near where Barger's Hardware was located. A few skates were purchased but it failed to "catch-on" with the community.

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## CARD SHACKS

A gentleman by the name of Roll Balls had a shop in the early 1950s where the men went to play cards. Later Harry DeVore's old barber shop, located on the northeast corner of Main Street became the Card Shack for a number of years until the little building met its fate at the mercy of a bulldozer blade.

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## OPERA HOUSE

In the early days the Van Wert Opera House was the center of social life for our prominent citizens. Chatauquas, lectures, music recitals, high school entertainment, out-of-town entertainers and community programs were held there. An old Van Wert Record dated September 21, 1909, introduced a great society play to our town entitled "East Lynn". Ticket prices were 15 cents, 25 cents and 35 cents. Belding's Store was listed as the place to purchase advance reservations. Tuesday, October 12, 1909's Van Wert Record advertised "The Irish Senator" with admission prices of 25 cents, 35 cents and 50 cents. One wonders did inflation work that fast in those days, too? On December 23, 1909, a "home talent play" entitled "The Deacon", was performed at the Opera House. Those members of the cast were as follows;

Miss Ida Thompson; Fern Lantz; Miss Inez Seymour; Loran Thompson; Cliff Johnson; Ray Lantz; Arta Smith; Alice Leffler; Raymond Storey; Charles Allen; Gary Saylor; Orban Hanks; John Smith; Will Fuller; Miss Edith Lantz; Miss Clella Thompson.

Appearing in the Van Wert Record the following week, there appeared the following statement: "The Deacon" was a huge success. Proceeds were well over \$70.00. The cast is greatly enthused and will go on to play at the Decatur City Opera House on December 31, 1909."

In February, 1915, one whole block of Van Wert's businesses burned, including the booming Opera House. Before she died, Arta Smith recalled practicing a play in the Lodge Hall, located north of the Opera House when the basement fire broke out. Several folks congregated nearby in such places as on top of the old hotel porch to watch the row of buildings burn. In the "Good Old Days" Van Wert had no Fire Department or fire equipment to battle the fire, just a "bucket brigade" fought the blazes. It was a helpless feeling, indeed, and such a loss to the community.

Even though the Opera House burned, the spirit of drama still sprang up from time to time. Leonard Mallatt recollects an old dance platform in the city park where plays were often held.

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## PICADILLY PALACE

In 1976, the third floor of the schoolhouse was remodeled and opened June 6th as the "Picadilly Palace - Supper Club". Ray Russell, the elementary music teacher for the Clarke Community Schools, was the manager with Mike Rowe, our present mayor, as assistant.

The "Palace" idea originated one evening when Rowe and Russell were having dinner at the Van Wert Cafe. Both had an interest in theatre and nothing in particular to do for the summer, so they decided to

undertake the opening of the dinner club. They went to several auctions to obtain materials useful in their endeavor, held tryouts, made costumes and received others as donations. They wallpapered and rented the entire third floor of the old schoolhouse for \$1.00. Rent was low because the owner of the building felt the community needed this type of entertainment. Ray Russell acted as director and all players doubled as waitresses and waiters. The theatre was a huge success, booked solid every night it was open, with people coming from as far as Des Moines regularly. Channel 8 featured one of the rehearsals which helped spread the word of the club's existence. Due to the low admission cost (\$3.50, \$4.50 and \$5.50 for meal and performance), the operators had a net profit!

t of \$6.00 each all summer, but thoroughly enjoyed their service to the community. A list of all cast members is as follows: Ray Russell, Mike Rowe, Beth Rowe, Jeff Edwards, Linda Emary, Ruth Prochaska, Kent Christensen, Paul Henricks, Laura Lewis, Sue Glen and Clyde Alsbaugh.

In the fall school started and both men had to return to the duty of teaching school. There was no way of heating the building without great cost during the winter months and when spring came, the cafe had been closed, people had moved away, etc., so the "Palace" never reopened. Its' time of existence was short but sweet and its enjoyment will live on in our memory for years to come.

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### MOTION PICTURES

Motion pictures were once a source of entertainment in Van Wert. The July 8, 1909 Van Wert paper said this about moving pictures: "We hesitate to mention so delicate a subject but will say in brief: 'It was a failure.' Now we don't pretend to know anything about moving pictures so we'll not try to place the blame but wish to exonerate our committees who were assured that the pictures would be satisfactory. The committee thought they were giving Van Wert something extra in the way of an evening of entertainment, but were disappointed."

Occasionally in the early 1950s, an outdoor movie screen was put up near where the fire station now stands and those people coming to town on Wednesday night could view the show from their cars. These shows were put on by the Community Theatre. Billy and Malcolm Tiedje ran this theatre from 1942 through the early 1950s. They had what was known as a circuit theatre and showed the movies in different towns during the week. Their first show building was the stucco building south of the new Tiedje station. They moved later to the building where Dean Houck's office now is located. As with most things, progress took its toll and television began to replace the movies. Among the first owners of a T.V. set were Don and Jeanette Fry. They had a Crosley cabinet model which served them for several years. The decision was made to purchase a television when visiting the David Fry residence. Their daughter, Donna, about two at the time, thoroughly enjoyed the new wonderment. An! other early television owner was Randal Cox and his family.

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### TOWN BAND

The first known record of a town band in Van Wert was in 1895 and 1896. The name of the band was Van Wert's Cornet Band. Theodore L. Rowe was the leader.

Another town band was started in June of 1909. The Van Wert Record said the following in an article dated August 11, 1910: "Band Re-organized -- prospects are good for a 20-piece band. The maximum, 'history repeats itself', is fully demonstrated by the bands of small towns. They exist in a mysterious 'presto chango' now you see it and now you don't fashion and the small town hardly knows when they have a band. In the various exchanges that come to our desk, we frequently see headlines like the above, but we do not intend that these things shall affect our present organization that purports to be a much stronger band than we have ever had before.

"Since last week we have had two meetings. At the first meeting the following officers were elected: T.R. Storey, President; Eugene Branaum, Secretary and C.L. Wolfe, Treasurer; H.O. Tuttle, leader and bandmaster. New bylaws are in the hands of the committee and will be adopted soon.

"The instrumentation will be as follows when the present plans are perfected: H.O. Tuttle, lead cornet, C.L. Wolfe, A.E. Blair, V.T. Lindsay, M.E. Boatman and Don Price, cornets. Ed Kelly, clarinet, Mr. McGrew, solo alto, Frank Rush and Forrest Allen, first and second altos, Cliff Johnson and Charles Rushing, tenor, Gene Branaum and Loren Thompson, trombone, Chas. Fisher, baritone, Raymond Storey, tuba, G.W. Johnson and J.T. Holt, drummers.

"There are three or four other candidates who are on the fence for different reasons, then there are other boys who have not been solicited. Not a stone will be left unturned, however, before we get fully organized for we are determined to have a twenty piece band before we quit soliciting. Boys, young men and married men, not quite so young, are all invited and urgently requested to join our band; it may be that we have overlooked you in our soliciting. If we have, remember the invitation is open to all who will, to become members of Van Wert's new band. Some new instruments will be procured at once and then we will get down to business in earnest.

"The rehearsal on Monday was good and we feel proud of the interest taken by each member as well as the businessmen citizens.

"The band wishes to thank the businessmen who have already shown their appreciation by clearing up a portion of the indebtedness against our bass drum; we expect to redeem the balance just as soon as we can as we will also do with the tuba."

In the 1930s, the famous Hatcher Players were in Van Wert.

the Saints Band played for dances and benefit programs. They were together from July 1953 to May 1955. The band members were as follows: Don Foland, trombone; Marion Thompson, sax; Benny Woosley, trumpet; Carroll Fuller, drum; Dick McKern, guitar; Chuck McKern, bass fiddle.

Russell Kernen also got together a band which played from January 1952 until March of 1953. The members of this band were: Russell Kernen, trumpet; Jean kernen, accordion; Carroll Fuller, drum (Bing Corsbie played drums first); Marion Thompson, sax; Don Foland, trombone; Geraldine Larkins, piano; Shannon Edwards, banjo; Nolan Foland, and later Dewey Hatfield, on the fiddle.

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## HOMEcomings

Homecoming Celebrations held in Van Wert were yet another source of enjoyment for Van Wert's people. The three day celebrations served as a time for family reunions or just old plain get-togethers. For the people of the town, it was often a profitable time. Leonard and Christy Mallatt recalled that for three years straight Bass and Fern Mallatt, and they ran a small stand. It was hard work but they made a little money and had a lot of fun.

"One particular year, they purchased ice cream in Des Moines which was packed in dry ice. Leonard said it was 80 degrees or better that day and the container of ice cream was set out in the hot sun all day. The other stand operating that day had run out of ice cream so the Mallatts decided to serve ice cream even if it was soup. They opened the container and found the dry ice had kept the ice cream so hard they couldn't even dip it. He then recalled another time when he was sleeping on a cot inside the stand and a friend slipped up and tied his feet to the cot. He laughed and said, "He still won't let me forget it."

At one Homecoming, Davy Jones danced with the gypsies. He lost his billfold because his partner was a very good pick-pocket.

Huge crowds always attended the Homecomings. It was very similar to today's County Fair. Jim Watson, father of Clyde Watson, for many years was in charge of displaying fruit and vegetables in the large tent set up in town. In the late 1930s, due to failure of Van Wert to apply for grant money, the State help for the Homecomings was turned over to Leon and from that time on, such celebrations were held there.

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## TOWN PARK

As early as 1910, our fair city had a town park. The land was donated by a generous citizen, Mr. Corbett, and still remains there today. The town park has been the scene for many family reunions and town celebrations, such as the children's Fun Day which was held there in the 1970s. After the Van Wert school was closed, playground equipment was transferred from the school ground to the park. Later the town purchased the big barrel for the enjoyment of our youth.

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## FUN DAY

The first Van Wert Fun Day was held June 8, 1974. The idea originated with the Mayor and Town Council (Don McClure, Mayor; Colleen Kastler, Eddie Parmer, Ron Parmer, Gloria McClure and Bert Grimm, Council Members). The original idea was to set aside one day each summer for the kids of Van Wert to enjoy. The first such day is said to have been the best. An Antique car show, parade, games, contests and a special appearance by Floppy was enjoyed. Trophies were given to the youngest and oldest citizen in town, Bill Belsor being the oldest and Mandy Collins, the youngest. The trophies were purchased from raffle money and donations and were also given for contests such as the egg race, sack race, wheelbarrow race, etc. Contests were for any age who wanted to enter. Several young couples engaged in the activities as well as a score of kids.

Jerry's T.V. Shop donated the television set, which was raffled off. At 3:00 that day, it began to pour down rain, ending the first Fun Day. The following day, the Van Wert Saddle Club held a rodeo in the town arena.

From 1975 to 1978, the Fire Department and Lions Club continued the Fun Day festivities. None was held in 1979.

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## BALL TEAMS

From time to time through the years, Van Wert has had several ball teams, all of them being fairly good.

The first ball team on record was that in 1909 under the management of G.W. Johnson and C.L. Belding. (It may have been possible that each of these men managed a team, but for simplicity's sake, we are assuming that there was only one team.) Not much information is available about the earlier teams. They did, however, play the following teams in 1909: Grand River, Town vs. Farmers; Decatur City; Burchett Brothers (they lived in the Tennessee Church neighborhood near Grand River); LeRoy; Leslie; Weldon; Sunflower bloomers (they may have been from Decatur); Hopkins Brothers (a professional team from Des Moines); Humeston; Osceola; Tennessee Rats (a colored team - we don't know where they came from); Kellerton; Leon; Woodburn; Lucas; Cornbelt Whirlwinds (or businessmen); Garden Grove; Lamoni; and the Buxton Toughs. It is believed that the name of the Van Wert team then was the "Pickups".

The July 1, 1909 issue of the Van Wert Record said this of the new amphitheatre at the ball park: "Some of our enterprising citizens of the booster kind have erected a grand stand at the ball park which will add materially to the accommodations and convenience of our visitors on celebration days. It has already been used twice and found very satisfactory. When you attend the ball games at any time, you will find it more pleasant and satisfactory if you sit in the amphitheatre."

Later on, in about the 1950s, Worth Jones, John Jackson, Walter Jones, Wendell Jones, Warren Jones, Gene Jackson, etc., had a ball team.

Around 1967, baseball uniforms of red and white were purchased for the Van Wert "Wildcats". Players changed so often that uniforms were eventually discarded and street clothes were worn instead. Some of

the following people played around this time: Dave Redman, center; Marvin Snell, left field; Steve Smith, center; Dennis Fierce, 2nd base; Gary Fierce, shortstop and left field; Willard Parmer, catcher and pitcher; Garry Fry, 1st, 2nd and 3rd base, Ron Fry, 2nd and 3rd base; Bob Hatfield, pitcher and right field; Jerry Jones, left field and center; Martin South, 3rd and shortstop; Richard Kernen, centerfield; Duane Otto, shortstop; Rev. Tom Helmick, Shortstop. Terry Hainline and Dennis Houck were the managers.

For a short time, during the summer of 1978, the Assembly of God Church had a ball team which played other church teams including towns like Afton, Grand River, Davis City and Kellerton. Some of the players, both male and female, were Dorothy Parmer, Duane Otto, Rev. Steve Eastman, Elwin Gere, Julie Parmer, Chuck Reed, Perry Parmer, Deanie Parmer, Steve Tiller, Debbie Eastman, Cherri Hainline, Maelene Otto, Zona Tiller, Everett Parmer, Brenda Reed, LaRisa Houck, and Renee South. For a short time, Terry Hainline managed the team until his schedule as Deputy Sheriff caused him to resign as manager.

Although we have no town ball teams today, a great many of our "little guys" belong to the various little league teams from surrounding larger towns. Then, of course, a few play on the school ball teams as well.

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#### DANCES

Dancing has been a part of America's pastime for decades, so it was not unusual for Van Wert to join in this tradition. Street dances and barn dances were often held throughout the community with round and square dancing done as well as waltzes, polkas, etc. For a time after the Van Wert School was closed, several dances were held on Saturday night in the old gym. A good turnout from miles around always attended. In the early 1970s, KIOA radio station disc jockies contacted bands for rock and roll dances on Saturday nights as well. In 1970, a benefit dance was held in the old schoolhouse and the proceeds of \$1,000 went to the fund for a new Decatur County Hospital.

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#### GO CART RACING

In the early 1960s, a lot of folks spent their Sunday afternoons anjoying go cart races. Two tracks of dirt were located in town, one where Tiedje's new station stands and the other, most popular, behind the house now owned by Ray Holda, north of Main Street. Among the drivers racing were Roger Downard, Randal Cox, Wendell Jones, David Fry, Walter Jones, and Worth Jones. Others who made a lot of laps but seldom, if ever, raced were Larry Fry, Garry Fry, Ted Cox, Billy Jones and Bill Tiedje.

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#### FOURTH OF JULY

Old Van Wert Records and Pathfinders tell us that the early 1900s found our community celebrating the Fourth of July in a big way right in our own little town. On June 24, 1909, we learn there could be no fireworks. "Our Celebration Committee has secured a new feature for the crowning glory of 3rd of July night. Instead of the dangerous and monotonous fireworks they have secured an up-to-date moving picture show that lasts for an hour in the park and will be free to all. Don't miss this attraction but come early -- stay late". The festivities a week later were very detailed ones. Another celebration held on the 4th of July, 1911 was as follows: 8:00 AM, band concert, Kellerton and Weldon Martial Band; 9:00, Grand Parade; 9:30, May Pole Drill and music; 10:00 baby show -- free for babies 18 months and under. Girl, first place, gold locket, 2nd prize, gold ring; boy, first prize, silver cup, gold lined, 2nd, gold ring; 10:30 sunbonnet drill; 10:45 music by the Kellerton Band; 11:00 address by Hon. R.B. Hawkins, and music by Kellerton and Weldon Martial Band; 1:30 PM music, band concert by both bands; 2:00 address by Hon. Lewis Miles of Corydon; 3:00 music by band; 3:15 ladies' nail driving contest, 1st prize, \$1.00, 2nd prize, \$.50; 3:30 ring contest on horseback, prizes same as nail driving; 3:45 foot race, free for all, 14 years and under, same prizes; 5:00 sack race, same; 5:15 ladies' horseback drill on the ball ground, crowd led from the park by bands; 6:30 Yeoman drill, 7:45, Woodman drill, 8:00 May Pole drill, 8:15, music by band; Minstrel concert by Georgia Jubilee Singers. Two ball games were also scheduled that day as follows: 10:00 AM Van Wert

vs Leon Cadets; 3:00 PM Van Wert vs Grand River (Note: Ladies' restroom and free check stand in park") In 1915, the history of Decatur County tells us that the people of Prairie City celebrated the 4th of July 2 1/2 miles west of town in a grove. John Gemmell was the marshal of the day. The town folks formed a parade to the grove and the festivities were celebrated (Don Erpelding lives there now). Martha DeVore recalls that in early days, a 4th of July Celebration was never held within the city limits. A town picnic along a creek bank in a grove of trees was how the occasion was spent because it was cooler there.

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## HUNTING, FISHING AND TRAPPING

For many years, hunting, trapping and fishing were done as a way of life rather than sport, as it is today. Through the 1930s, a lot of men depended on fish and wildlife to provide meat for their families. Fur bearing animals furnished warm coats and blankets and sometimes extra money in hard times. Those early horse and buggy days often found animal hides as the main shelter against winter's freezing winds. Even the early cars were without windows and convenient heaters for the passenger comfort. And don't forget that rumble seat, punishment enough without winter weather!

Even though modern times do not necessitate these three livelihoods, a vast number of our men and boys, as well as some of the ladies, engage in one or all three of them. Some of the women feel "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" and after participation find they too really do enjoy the sports and find them relaxing.

Our county is one that has furnished a good habitat for a number of animals and fowls. The addition of the 1100 acre Game Reserve on the old DeKalb farm and surrounding land has increased the hunting grounds for our community and many traveling sportsmen as well.

The most common hunts are the quail, pheasant, rabbit, fox, coyote, deer and raccoon; while bass, channel cat, carp, blue gills and crappies are the most common fish.

The "Sky's the limit" as far as the amount of money spent or the number of guns, fishing rods, etc., one family might own. Pistols, muzzleloaders, rifles, shotguns and bow and arrows are the weapons used and each category has as many types as people to buy them.

In 1934, a good coon hide was worth \$8.00 while a coyote was \$10.00 to \$15.00. Gophers sold for 10 cents a foot back then. In 1978-79 hunting season, top price for coon was \$55.00 while coyote sold for as high as \$50.00 plus \$5.00 bounty.

Each December for approximately 15 years, hunters have awaited with great anticipation the opening of deer season. Parties from two people to 25 search for these graceful creatures and while several bag a prize trophy, others go home empty handed but ever enthusiastic for the next year. Perhaps the largest deer hunting party in our community gathers on the Cox property west of Van Wert. An average of 15 to 20 men hunt each season. Some of those who have participated in hunting with this group are: Randal, Corwin, Ted, Brian and Billy Cox, David, Randy, Garry, Larry and Ronnie Fry, Sam Rhodes and son, Bob Hatfield and Darwin Reed.

When snow is on the ground a favorite sport is coyote and/or fox hunting. Again, any number from one on up participate and unlike some of the other types of hunting, a whole family can go if they desire. A few of our coyote hunters are: Garry, David, Ronnie, Larry, Randy and T.J. Fry, Duane and Doyle Otto, Darwin Reed, Bob, Jerry and Bunk Hatfield, Shelby Hagen, Zell Boles, Wayne Cowden, Kim Overton, Ted, Bill and Randal Cox and Grant Wiley.

Fishing is an all year sport. Most is done in the summer when lakes, ponds, and streams are thawed, but ice fishing is also enjoyed by a few and usually produces pretty good catches.

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## SADDLE CLUB

The Van Wert Saddle Club, Inc. was formed in 1972. The first meeting was held on May 5, 1972 with a total of 67 members and Pete Scadden and family as honorary members because he furnished the ground to build the arena. All time and help was donated by members in building the rodeo arena. For a time rodeos were held nearly every Sunday afternoon much to the community's delight. The members participated in all events such as parades in different towns, fun horse shows in Van Wert, association horse shows, rodeos, trail rides, ice cream socials to raise money for the club, and also a rummage sale and roping shows. The last meeting was in August 1976 when it dissolved. The arena built is no longer used. Members who started out the club were as follows:

Ronald Parmer, Patty Bethards, Mary Schuldt, Keith Striley, Linda Clemens, Rodney Schuldt, Becky Redman, Doris Clemens, Randy Schuldt, Jim Clemens, Dave Beers, Rick Schuldt, Terry Hainline, Kelly Beers, Layton Schuldt, Joe Bethards, Larry McBroom, Howard Schuldt, Patty Clemens, Denny Schuldt, JoAnn Parmer, Lonnie Norman, Perry Parmer, Doyle Otto, Donna Norman, Lane Schuldt, Duane Otto, Bert Grim, Betty Williams, Larry Jackson, Harriet Grim, Virgil Williams, Vicki Parmer, Dallas Striley, Lyman Schuldt, John Van Syoc, Kathy Hill, Roland Redman, Mary Kelly, Gayle Norman, Lynn West, Wayne Kelly, Danny Heckathorn, Denny Green, Erroll Norman, Sheila Parmer, Susan Hall, Gerald Parmer, Wanda Schuldt, Erroll Parmer, Ronda Parmer, Butch Stiles, Lyle Schuldt, Brad Kinney, Cherri Hainline, Eddie Parmer, Charles Cosgrove, Sharon Schuldt, Glen Gilbert, Ronnie Fry, Monty Reed, Kevin Schuldt, Terry Lewis, John Fletchall, and Gary Hainline, with Honorary Members Pete Scadden and Family.

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#### BOXING AND WRESTLING

Merlin "Barefoot" Oiler, a resident of Van Wert for many years, started his boxing and wrestling training under Farmer Burns. His very first attempt in boxing occurred at the Ft. Des Moines Army Training Center. He took first place boxing and 2nd place wrestling about 1925.

Merlin purchased the restaurant from Bud Owens in 1932 and continued his fighting career. At one time he was known as "Lamoni's Iron Man". He followed carnivals and fairs with the slogan "meet all comers, winner take all". At one time he boxed and won by decision over Jack Dempsey's sparring partner. He was Welter Weight Champion of Southern Iowa and Northern Missouri, at one time and we are proud of the fact that he once lived in Van Wert. In 1934, Merlin got married and promised his bride he wouldn't fight any more. He did have a few matches after that only because he had some debts to pay. Billy and Davy Jones were also good wrestlers. When a carnival came to town, the wrestler usually took on anyone that would volunteer. Billy would place bets all over the crowd and when he had all he could get, he would give Davy the "high sign" -- Davy would pin his man and the Jones Brothers collected their bets!

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#### STOCK CAR RACING

Over the years, stock car racing has been the hobby of many of our gentlemen. In the early 1950s, those racing included Layton Schuldt, Buddy Price, Johnny McMorris, Walter Jones, Russell Cox, Russell Reed and Shelby Hagen.

Later some of the following participated in the sport: Dorman Reed, Roger Cox, Garry Fry, Jim Hagen, Jerry Hagen and Wendell Jones.

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#### IMPORTANT DATES

- 1876 - Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.
- 1877 - Thomas Edison invented the phonograph.
- 1903 - The Wright Brothers made the first successful airplane flight at Kitty Hawk, N.C.
- 1913 - The 16th Amendment gave federal government



- power to levy an income tax.
- 1914 - World War I began in Europe.
- 1930 - Depression: United States suffered through the Great Depression that followed the stock market crash in 1929 for more than 10 years. During the depression, millions of workers lost their jobs and large numbers of farmers were forced to abandon their farms. Poverty swept through the nation on a scale never before experienced. Thousands of banks failed during the depression and paralyzed. The Dust Bowl, the result of a terrible drought on western plains wiped out many families. Many people stood in "bread lines" and went to "Soup Kitchens" to get food.
- 1933 - President Franklin D. Roosevelt began the New Deal Program to try to end the depression.
- 1941-1945 - United States fought in World War II.
- 1945 - American airplane dropped the first atomic bomb used in warfare on Hiroshima, Japan.
- 1945 - United States became Charter Member of the United Nations.
- 1950 - Television became a part of most American homes.
- 1961 - Astronaut Alan E. Shepherd, Jr. became the first astronaut in space.
- 1969 - July 20, as Neil A. Armstrong took the historic step, he said, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

The first men on the moon were astronauts Neil A. Armstrong and Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. Their "Apollo" lunar module landed July 20, 1969. Armstrong, Aldrin, and command module pilot Michael Collins left earth on July 16 and returned July 24.

ERA Equal Rights Amendment is the proposed 27th amendment of the United States Constitution. The amendment reads "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex." ERA was first introduced into Congress in 1923 through efforts of national women's party. After years of controversy, Congress passed the ERA in 1972. To become law, a constitutional amendment must also be ratified and approved by legislatures of the states. Supporters of the ERA had until March 22, 1979 to obtain ratification by 38 states. By early 1978, 35 of the necessary 38 states ratified the amendment. The ERA would make several state and local laws unconstitutional. For example, it would outlaw restrictions of the types of jobs women may hold and the number of hours a week they may work. The amendment also would ban all laws that gives one sex different rights than the other.

#### TIDBITS

Anderson Edwards and Robert Warrick took an ox team and borrowed corn from the Hatfield settlement in 1851.

James Irving settled here in 1854. Lambert Taylor came about the same time. They located a town on their land and in order to play fair they opened up a road which is Main Street. They named the town Florence. In a few years it was changed to Prairie City, then Prairieville, or perhaps they were used interchangeably. Because of Post Office complications on April 1, 1880, it was named Van Wert in honor of Van Wert, Ohio.

Many events are mentioned in this book:

Civil War 1861-65, Abraham Lincoln elected 16th President 1860. Assassinated April 14, 1865. Postage rates July 3, 1885 were changed from 2 cents per 1/2 ounce to 2 cents per ounce. In 1978 it went to 15 cents with each additional ounce being 13 cents. 1885 - number of automobiles owned by Americans jumped from 8,000 in 1900 to almost 3,500,000 in 1916, World Book No. 20.

America's rich and varied resources played a key role in the rise of big business:

1900 Magneto type telephone with the large box at bottom for two wet batteries was later replaced with 2 dry cells. These had a dry crank, World Book No. 20.

There were gas street lights replaced with electric lights, mud roads replaced with blacktop. Cars did away with need for hitchracks, board walks on Main Street were eventually replaced with cement walks. 1912 - SOS accepted signal of distress. We have had many kinds of heating and cook stoves - cook stoves for a long time were heated with coal oil, then came pressure gas, then propane gas, then electric radar ovens are being widely used. Heating stoves used wood and coal, then to electric and propane. Now many furnaces have combinations of wood and oil.

Chinch bugs, potato bugs, army worms and others all had their day. They have been brought under control to be replaced by corn borers, root worms, alfalfa weevils and other pests.

Charles August Lindbergh flew "The Spirit of St. Louis" nonstop from New York to Paris in 33 1/2 hours, arriving May 20, 1917.

The stately elms were laid low by Dutch Elm disease. Dry years 1934 and '36 caused many problems. Crops were very poor yielding which meant scarcity of food. Many having to sell stock at very low prices. Many people lost their homes because they couldn't meet the payments.

Van Wert has had several storms including the tornado May 15, 1943. It especially did heavy damage to the churches. A bad hail on April 23, 1961 did much damage to cars and buildings. A bad hail in 1925 did much damage and L.D. Kelly, standing by cars and buildings, had the misfortune to lose an eye when hail broke the window and a piece of glass injured his eye.

We have had several heavy snowfalls but the one on Monday, April 9, 1973 will long be remembered. It definitely paralyzed traffic. Layton and Wanda Schuldt were operating a cafe in the old Van Wert Schoolhouse and there were 36 stranded at the cafe that night. Among them were two of the Great Wallendas.

It was a big change in our community when we lost our railroads. The main highway between Des Moines and Kansas City was paved. The 1 1/2 mile of road from our town is maintained as a State Highway. For a while after the trains were gone we had two passenger buses and three mail buses each day.

Consolidation of Schools State Organization 1959, led to school busing. Later to grade school to Weldon, Junior High and High School to Osceola.

Baseball, basketball, and wrestling have attracted many.

Good roads have brought bus service on Highway 35 and Highway 69. Railroads are in financial trouble in 1980. Subsidized by the Government. Many railroads are done away with. Big trucks carry many products. There is controversy over larger trucks. Gas and oil prices have increased steadily. Heat and energy a problem. Solar heat is progressing. There is ethenol and gasohol.

Big machinery and larger farms have meant an end of many family farms. Vaccination has put an end of many diseases including polio, measles, and small pox. Man landed on the moon, 1969. Electricity has brought many conveniences to the country. Security lights, radios, TV, refrigerators, freezers, washers and dryers.

Iowa, place to grow, has an emblem. We have: Rock and roll music, ERA Bill of Rights, Cut off jeans, and barefoot is a way of life. Restaurant doors have signs, "no shirts, no shoes, no service."

Watergate has been a big scandal. Pope John Paul II, visited Iowa, October 4, 1979. Bottle and can bill became law the summer of 1979. Talk of registration for 18-year-olds. Gold and Silver prices vary. High inflation has hit an all time high. Gov. Ray designates 1980, Plant Iowa Year.

Interest rates are very high. This affects many industries and employment, causing many layoffs because the companies are unable to sell their products. New Patrol Tower west of Interstate 35 was built May, 1976. Lighted May 20. Some mail boxes were located in Van Wert Nov., 1979. First mail delivery was Dec. 1, 1979. Several have found it convenient to move to small apartments in low housing areas. Nursing homes are important care for elderly.

Large trailers hitched to pickups used to haul stock took place of local trucking. 55-mile speed limit with threat of heavier fines for violation. Modern bathrooms have replaced the "john" out back. John F. Kennedy - 1917-'63, assassinated Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas. Metric system is coming to the United States, slow but inevitable.

Many people commute to other towns for employment. Van Wert Telephone Co. closed the office May 1, 1974. Grand River Mutual had installed dial. Coffee and sugar prices have had their ups and downs. Farmers and others have done much demonstrating. 1979-'80, mild winter. Talk of 5-day-a-week mail deliveries. James L. Carter - 39th President. Centennial Celebration being planned for June 21 and 22, 1980.

"TO AVOID CRITICISM YOU SAY NOTHING, DO NOTHING, AND BE NOTHING."

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#### WHAT MAKES A SMALL TOWN?

A small town is where you don't have to guess who your enemies are. Your friends will tell you. A small town is the only place on earth "where people past middle age are called by their first names when they saunter down the street". A small town is where everybody knows everybody else's car by sight -- and also where and when it goes. A small town is where few people can get away from lying about the year they were born. Too many people can remember them. A small town is where few people with various ailments can air them properly for sympathetic ears. A small town is where when you get the wrong number, you can talk for 15 minutes anyhow, if you want to. A small town is something like a big family -- ornery distant cousins, renegades and all. A small town is where city folks say there is nothing to do, but those who live there don't have enough nights in the week to make all the meetings and social functions. A small town is where everyone becomes a "neighbor" in!

time of need. A small town is where businessmen struggle for survival against city stores and shopping centers. A small town is where those same businessmen dig deep many times to help with countless fund-raising projects. A small town is where teenagers say there's nothing to do and then are surprised to learn that their big city peers are saying the same thing. A small town, when all is said and done, is a nice place in which to live. A small town knows all the news before it's published. They just read the hometown newspaper to see if the editor gets it right. A small town is where the ratio of good people to bad people is something like 100 to 1. That's nice to remember. A small town is where it is hard for anybody to walk to work for exercise because it takes too long to stop and explain to people in cars, who stop, honk, and offer a ride.

-- Leon Journal, Jan. 8, 1976 --

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#### 'ENDING'

The 100 years of Van Wert's history which has been partially recorded here, will bring to mind the many names of people and events which have not been mentioned. Let there be no doubts their efforts are not forgotten, and all are appreciated. As was stated in the beginning of this book, "it took courage, foresight, hard work, faith, and know-how to get this town where it is today.

Van Wert Pioneers of the Past and the Future,

WE SALUTE YOU!