

HISTORY OF FAIRFIELD



1872 - FAIRFIELD, NEBRASKA - 2022

Fairfield - The Early Years

SUBMITTED BY LYNN NEJEZCHLEB

Sources of information for this article include: "A Century of Memories" (1972); "A History of Hamilton and Clay Counties" (1921); "Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska—Clay Co." (1888); Clay County Clerk's record of deeds, State of Nebraska School Census Records, and numerous internet searches.

Preparing for Fairfield's 150-year celebration, one can't help but think about the good old days. There have been numerous conversations about the great celebrations we used to have 50,40, or 30 years ago, and how great things were back then.

I remember indulging my parents and others talking about the good old days, thinking, I hope I don't start talking about the good old days. And owning a bar, you often endure non-ending conversations about the good old days.

We've even developed subtle methods to relieve one another of the burden of a "good old days" conversation that goes on and on. It brought-to-mind Bruce Springsteen's 1995 song "Glory Days."

I found myself replaying the song in my head, somewhat annoyed that I couldn't seem to stop. Springsteen's last verse pretty much sums up the inevitable stage in one's life when we seem to latch on to the good old days.

"In fact I think I'm doing down to the well tonight

"And I'm gonna drink till I get my fill

"And I hope when I get old I don't sit around thinking about it

"But I probably will
"Yeah, just sitting back trying to recapture

"A little of the glory yeah
"Well time slips away and leaves you with nothing, mister, but

"Boring stories of: Glory Days...."
So maybe I'm there. I've started thinking about how great things were when I was growing up in Fairfield.

Our Summer celebrations were humongous events, highlighted by a band and dance at the Auditorium. Sometimes we were able to get a band called the "Fabulous Flippers," a show band out of Lawrence, KS. The band was well known throughout the Midwest and played at large venues throughout a four-state area.

The band advertised on a radio station with the call letters of KOMA out of Oklahoma City. The MIGHTY 50,000 watt KOMA was a rock station that teens throughout the Western states from New Mexico to the Dakotas tuned into after sunset, one of the few stations with the latest rock hits at the time.

And there it was, over the Mighty 1520 KOMA of Oklahoma, booming on every teenager's car radio in the world, the Fabulous Flippers are coming to Fairfield. Does it get any bigger than that?

As Springsteen's song suggests, every generation has its glory days. I was interested in Fairfield's earliest years

and, so, I did a little digging to see what I could find. I wanted to know: How did Fairfield come to be?; What were the earliest years like?; How fast did it grow?; What were the more significant developments and events?; and so on.

What follows is my best answer to some of those questions. I may miss some important items and I don't claim to be an expert on the subject. It was just a fun project that I probably got a little carried away with once I started. I welcome any feedback or corrections.

Fairfield's location, most likely, was the result of a decision by the railroads. In 1871, there were some businesses and a post office (I believe called White Elm.) in existence in the northeast quarter of section 4 of the Fairfield Township.

Section 4 is the section just west of what would become Fairfield. The St. Joseph and Denver City Railroad was a new railroad, with aspirations to complete a line from the St. Joseph/Kansas City area all the way to Denver, with the proposed route being close to the existing businesses.

The Pacific Railway Act of 1862 gave railroads every other section of land in a twenty-mile swath on either side of the track as an enticement to construct the new line. The railroads could then sell the land and generate some of the funds necessary to build the new line.

In 1872, having been granted Section 3 just to the east of the existing businesses, the company erected a depot

and section house, probably not far from where the current main street intersects the railroad track.

Initially, the existing businesses to the east were reluctant to move to the new town site, unsure of its permanence. However, between 1872 and 1874, some new businesses were established on the new town site—notably a lumber yard and carpenter shop.

After the town was surveyed and the new town plat laid out in 1874, the existing businesses to the east decided it was time to move to the new location established by the Railroad.

According to Andrea's History, by the end of 1874 the newly established town had a blacksmith shop, lumber yard, real estate and law office, drug store, and a grain elevator, with an estimated population of about 50.

Some sources indicate that the town was named after George Washington Fairfield, a civil engineer who surveyed the town for the railroad in 1874. However, I came across a little different version of how the name came about. The following is an excerpt from a University of Nebraska dissertation titled "Nebraska Place-Names" written in 1925.

"This town was originally named White Elm. Later the name was changed to Frankfort. When it was discovered that there already existed a town called Frankfort in the state, the name was changed to Fairfield.

FAIRFIELD: The early years

FROM PAGE 1C

The name Fairfield was given to the town by the railroad company in conformity with its alphabetical system of designating the sites along the road, probably after Fairfield in Illinois or Iowa. The name refers to the beauty of the surrounding fields."

I'm having a tough time locating Frankfurt But I like the story.

Then it was off to the races. The first surveyed area of Fairfield is called the Original Town in the County's plat book. It contains 23 blocks and 338 lots. Between 1874 and 1880, just over half of those lots were sold. By 1890, almost 300 of the 338 lots were sold.

The current downtown business area of Fairfield contains a four-block area. By 1880, 6 years after being surveyed, all but 8 of the 72 lots had been sold. In just six years, Fairfield had a main street that would have been bustling with business activity.

Below is a picture of Fairfield's Main Street in 1878 taken from "History of Hamilton and Clay Counties."

Additional areas of Fairfield were surveyed and offered for sale in 1879. This addition, together with the original surveyed area, makes up much of present-day Fairfield north of the railroad tracks. The additional surveyed area included 260 lots. By 1890, all but 23 had been sold.

Fairfield's rapid growth and its accessibility via the railroad put it in contention to become the county seat. The events that transpired to determine the county seat were contentious and convoluted. In 1871, the acting Nebraska governor authorized elections to determine county seats.

In that year, or soon thereafter, Sutton was selected as the county seat. However, beginning in 1875, there were a series of elections for the removal of Sutton as the county seat and to establish a new one. Places for consideration were Sutton, Harvard, Fairfield, and a hypothetical place called "the center of Clay County."

The election process was an elimination process where the town receiving the lowest votes would be eliminated and another election held on the remaining towns, and so on, until one town received three-fifths of the vote. The first vote in September of 1875 was thrown out over allegations that the Edgar vote in favor of Fairfield was fraudulent. Another election was held in October of that year.

The vote count was: Sutton, 606;



Harvard, 391; and Fairfield, 355. And so, Fairfield's quest to become the county seat ended. The controversy over the new county seat, however, did not end. More elections, allegations of fraud, the impeachment of the county judge, and a middle-of-the-night raid moving the county records from Sutton to Clay Center transpired before all was settled in 1879.

The population growth of Fairfield during the early years, like that of Clay County and surrounding rural areas, was phenomenal. The 1880 census listed Fairfield's population at 400. Andrea's "History of Nebraska" lists Fairfield's population at 600 around 1882. I could not find a published figure for Fairfield's population in 1890.

Unfortunately, much of the 1890 census records were destroyed in a 1921 fire. However, extrapolating from the county's population for that year, Fairfield's population was probably somewhere between 1,000 and 1,500. Moreover, at that point in time, the county's rural population exceeded that of its towns. Fairfield would have been busy place.

Fairfield's population, like that of the county, was a youthful one. The first one-room schoolhouse was built in 1874 and, in 1881, the town constructed a two-story four-room school. The town needed it—the school age population was growing rapidly.

The state has kept good historical records of those attending public schools and the county web site provides a listing going back to 1874. In 1874, the Fairfield roster included nine K-12 students; in 1880 it was 147 students; in 1885, it was 354; and by 1892, over 500 students were enrolled in the Fairfield Public School.

Clay County's school-age population mirrored that of Fairfield's. In that same year, 1892, the county had close to 6,000 K-12 students. Probably half of those were enrolled in rural one-room schoolhouses. When we include children under the age of 5, it's likely that over 40 percent of the county's population was under the age of 20.

The railroad was instrumental in the establishment of Fairfield, and it gave its residents access to materials and markets and the ability to travel coast to coast. At Grand Island, it connected with the transcontinental Union Pacific and at St. Joseph and Kansas City, it gave access to ag markets and other lines heading in all directions.

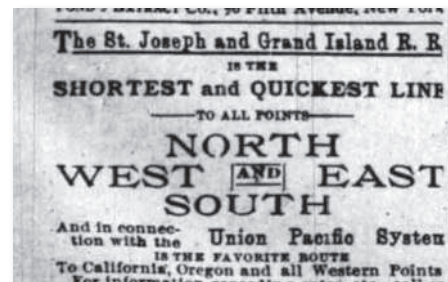
It's hard to find historical stats illustrating its importance, but in "Fairfield's Century of Memories" it notes that in 1905, 802 car loads of farm products were shipped out and 272 carloads of supplies were shipped into Fairfield.

In addition to its economic importance to the town, it provided ample opportunities for travel and leisure.

Below is an ad taken from the Fairfield News-Herald in 1896 telling

residents of the opportunities for travel.

Whether it was traveling to the east or west coasts or a day trip to Grand



Island to watch Hanover, KS, take on Grand Island in a baseball game, you only had to walk a few blocks to the station. None of this driving three hours, find a place to park, wait in a long line, strip down, wait another two hours, and hope your flight isn't cancelled.

One of the most notorious incidents of the local area was the Jones-Taylor lynching in 1885. Of course, everyone knows the lynching occurred on the Little Blue near Spring Ranch. However, in some of the newspaper articles at the time regarding the incident, Fairfield seemed to make the headline. The following is a front-page article in the "Omaha Evening Times-Dispatch," March 17, 1885:

I'm sure everyone in Fairfield was talking about it—I'm not sure "Great Excitement" would have been the proper description. You'll notice they also got the first name of Mrs. Taylor wrong.

In the first years of Fairfield's establishment, there were four active



Omaha Evening Time-Dispatch, March 1885 religious communities: Methodist, Congregational, Christian, and Catholic. In less than 10 years after the town was initially surveyed, all four had erected their own buildings of worship.

In 1887, the railroad constructed a new depot, which I believe would have been located just behind what is now the Fairfield Butcher Shop. The depot functioned as both a train station and hotel. This would have been the envy of any town. Unfortunately, the depot was destroyed by fire in 1937.

In a 1937 Fairfield Auxiliary newspaper article on the fire, the article describes how the Depot came about.

"The railroad officials offered the Fairfield citizens an imposing depot and hotel building, provided they would make a good will offering of \$500 which was promptly raised. The building was put up in the late fall and winter of 1887 and ready for occupancy in early January."

In that same article, Mr. Whitham, the station manager at the time the new depot was built, describes the importance of the railroad to Fairfield.

"No railroads were to be found in Deweese, Nelson, Spring Ranch, Lawrence, or Clay Center at that time." In 1886, the St. Joseph and Grand Island, backed by the Union Pacific, surveyed and built the K. C. & O. and Fairfield became quite an important railroad center."

By 1886, the Union Pacific had controlling interest in the St. Joe and Grand Island line as well as the Kansas City & Omaha line. The portion of the K.C. & O line from Fairfield traveled Southwest to Alma.

I must mention one other impressive structure that was built 20 years after the town was initially surveyed, a structure that I am more familiar with than I would like to be at times. In 1894, Fairfield constructed an opera house. It was called the Columbian Opera House.

I believe the building was named after the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, called the Columbian Exposition, so named to celebrate the 400-year anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World.

The Nebraska Historical Society tells me it was not uncommon for buildings built around that time to have the word Columbian in their name. The Opera House was upstairs and functioned as a venue for traveling performances, lectures, school functions and various town meetings. Here's a sampling of activities in the late 1800s at the Opera House:

- Bryan and the Free Silver Ticket Lecture, 1896;
- Wizard Oil Company, Medicine Show, 1897;
- Pond-Berlin Musical Comedy, 1897;
- King of Herbs Medicine Show, 1897;
- Blind Boone Piano Concert, 1898;
- Reno and His Educated Dogs, 1898;
- Magniscope, Moving Pictures, 1898.

An article in the Fairfield News-Herald tells of the opportunity for Fairfield residents to see the first moving picture, the Magniscope. It's billed as the greatest attraction that has ever been at Fairfield.

I'm sure I left out some important aspects of Fairfield's early days. It would have been an interesting time to live. Buildings being constructed everywhere and new things to experience, like the Magniscope at the Columbian Opera House.

If any were alive today, I bet they would have some great stories to tell and, since I'm getting to the point in life where I'm starting to think about the good-old-days, I would love to hear them.

They might tell me that the Magniscope was the most incredible thing that's ever come to Fairfield. But I still say, it doesn't get any bigger than hearing over MIGHTY 1520, KOMA of Oklahoma, that the Fabulous Flippers are coming to Fairfield.



Although Fairfield's number of businesses have declined a bit over the years, there are still several businesses open today, offering services to Fairfield and the surrounding area.

AGP Elevator - Grain Storage Facility is owned and operated by AG Processing Inc and consists of the main building near the railroad tracks, and the large grain storage facility on the southwest side of town.

Ken & Al's, owned by Todd and Jen Schiermeyer, operates as a gas station, convenience store, and service station. It's also a popular location for the early morning and afternoon coffee crowd to gather and talk.

Fairfield has one daycare—Boots and Bose Daycare—which moved to new ownership in 2020.

Originally a church, the building has been a daycare for several years.

The Butcher Shop came under new ownership in 2015 when Travis and Jennifer Rempe purchased the business. They currently offer a full-service butcher shop, offering custom butchering, processing, canning, curing, and deer processing. They are also famous for their beef jerky.

The Opera House Brewery and Grill operates out of the old opera house building in downtown Fairfield. In 2006, Lynn Nejezchleb restored the building, keeping much of its original character and charm.

The Opera House emphasizes a warm, casual dining atmosphere, and in 2014, a brewery opened on site and offers numerous beers unique to the Opera House, including the Ox Bow Brown Ale, the Little Blue Kolsch, and the Liberty Farm Pale Ale.

The Opera House building was constructed in 1894 and was home to Palmer's Groceries and Dry Goods downstairs, and the Columbian Opera House upstairs.

During its hay day, the Columbian Opera House was host to many performances. During the 1930's, the Columbian Opera House faded away, while the downstairs continued to host a variety of businesses.

The Lewis-Trobough Legion Post #256 was named after two men who lost their lives in World War I. It is located downtown and today it serves its members and others who come in for food and drinks. It is frequently used for graduation celebrations and other gatherings, as it has ample space and a good kitchen for preparing large meals.

The Fairfield Auditorium is a large

Fairfield's businesses today



Fairfield Auditorium.

part of Fairfield to this day. It began as a concrete slab where residents gathered to go roller skating. Then, the large brick auditorium was constructed and has served over the years as a roller skating rink, dance hall, graduation, and wedding reception building, and many other community activities.

The Fairfield Non-Stock Cooperative offers a variety of services. General Manager Bill Nejezchleb prides the co-op on providing the best customer service and great value to all customers. The co-op consists of the main building south of the railroad tracks and the new dry fertilizer plant south of town.

There are several other businesses Fairfield has to offer today, simply by just driving down Main Street.



Fairfield Opera House Brewery & Grill.



Fairfield's Library

The Fairfield Carnegie Library was constructed in 1913 with funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York City. It was dedicated on June 12, 1914.

The library has modernized in recent years, offering ebooks and audiobooks, in addition to traditional print materials such as books and magazines, as well as other services.



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Memories of Fairfield's past

SUBMITTED BY BARBARA SHUCK

I was born in Fairfield in a big house/hospital the doctor owned. It was across the street from my grandparent's home, a block away from my home and my grandfather's gas station. The house is no longer there. It is the other side of the block where the Opera House restaurant is.

Grandpa's gas station was serving farmers who couldn't pay (dust storms and failed banks meant no money). We stayed with dad, working at the station until I was 3 and we moved to Washington DC.

Dad got a job at the Smithsonian Institute as a guard. My mother's brother was working in the White House in the Map Room so we shared an apartment with him. Mom and I took the train to our new home.

From there we moved to Denver, CO, when I started kindergarten. We stayed there until I finished half of first grade, and then we moved back to Fairfield where they both had jobs at the Naval Ammunition Depot.

When my parents went to work from 4 p.m.-midnight each day, I did not know how risky their jobs were. Mom was sewing black powder in bags; any spark would cause a fire. She wore no jewelry, wore special clothes in her work cubicle, showered both before and after work. Dad's job was keeping big boilers burning.

After the war ended, mom learned to teach. She took a few courses at a time. They bought a farm eight miles south of Sutton and mom taught country schools. I continued school in Fairfield. They then bought a ranch at Ericson.

I continued staying with my grandparents. When I was a junior in high school they moved back to Fairfield. Mom continued to teach wherever they lived and she taught in the Fairfield grade school. (mostly fifth grade)

I taught a country school right after high school (1954-55) then went on to graduate from Hastings College in education, music, English in 1957. I taught grade school music in Superior a year and married Elmer E. (Jim) Shuck in June 1958.

FAIRFIELD EXPLOSION

This story happened in the early 1900s in Fairfield. My grandmother Daisy Shubert-Epley was surrounded by brothers who liked to joke.

On one Fourth of July, they felt particularly lively. Jack drove the dray wagon to deliver groceries around Fairfield. They decided to use this wagon. They drove to a warehouse surrounded by a 7 foot

picket fence.

After they climbed the fence, they found a barrel which they took to a machine shop to drill and 2 inch bung in it. After drilling the hole, they inserted a spark plug and poured high test oil over it. They then connected a string wire to a dry cell battery.

On the morning of the fourth, about 4 a.m., they placed the barrel in the intersection of the main road on Main Street in Fairfield. The bank was on the corner. They strung the wire up near the jail and then proceeded to light it.

BANG...The town woke with a start. Men rushed out with their guns because they thought the bank was being robbed. The barrel was stronger and the explosion harder than the boys figured. Store windows were knocked out.

The boys bought new store windows and their father was the most upset with them as he was the town marshal. He had to treat his sons fairly and arrest them. They were let off with good behavior and repairing the damages.

They were still teased about it as late as 1975 when they went back to Fairfield for a reunion and the local drug store owner said, "Board up your windows, here come the Shuberts."

THE SCHOOLHOUSE FIRE

January 1955 was blustery, snowy, cold in Clay County Nebraska near Fairfield. I was 18 years old and teaching at a little country school with 10 pupils. The oldest student was 13 and in the eighth grade.

On that Friday morning, I built a good fire in the wood stove and we were warm all day. It was the last hour of day and we were busy with relaxing art work when there was a wild knocking at the door. A man I knew opened the door and shouted, "Get out of here now, the school roof is on fire!"

I think I stood in shock a minute and he repeated himself. Then I came to my senses. "Pick up what is important to you and let's get out," I said, and we did, quickly.

Some children grabbed their coats and I picked up the new record player and a few of the latest books and followed them out the door.

By this time, our rescuer was hurrying to a neighboring farm house to have someone phone the fire department. We all rushed to a safe distance and watched the orange flames leaping from the top of the building we had just been inside.

I didn't try to rescue anything, just stayed with the children as I thought they were my first responsibility. The driver returned and tried

to drag some things out.

A parent turned in the driveway. She was the one who was supposed to be calling the fire department. She came to see how bad the fire was before she bothered them. She thought perhaps we could put it out ourselves. Then she hurried back and called.

It was a party line so soon there were others there trying to get things, but it was too dangerous and by the time the firemen arrived, the roof was collapsing and part of the building was gone. They tried valiantly with the water in their tank truck as the windmill only gave a limited amount of water.

By the time school would have been dismissed there was nothing left but ashes. But we did have school that next Monday. Those enterprising people found another school that had desks, books, a stove, a few miles away. It was in better condition than the one that burned.

What caused the fire? There were huge cracks in the chimney that the school board had known about for years, and although my fire that morning had been ordinary as fires go, the old chimney wasn't going to stand for any more heat and it had been smoldering all day.

MEMORIES GALORE

I remember the ice plant and the ice box we had on our back porch during WW2; we would get a big cube of ice delivered a couple times a week. No refrigerators were available as all went into the war effort.

There was also a big billboard on Main St. (near the post office) that listed all the names of people who had served in WW1 and were serving in WW2.

I always loved the newspaper office—Fairfield Auxiliary. The owners were friends of our family; the big printers were wonderful to these young eyes. Their names (if I remember right were Lester and Bernice Vaughan).

The big celebration of the Oregon Trail in Oak and then the Pony Express had a station in Spring Ranch that should bring some local stories in the limelight, too.

The people riding the trains during the depression (1936-39) stopping off in Fairfield. We lived near the tracks; mom fed many. Grandpa and grandma would hire one for the day, feed them, and once had a person stay with them for the winter. Grandpa Claude was so well liked by the farmers, particularly around Deweese, for his kindness during the depression that the church overflowed for his funeral

JOHN H. EPLEY'S OBIT & LIFE

JOHN H. EPLEY, wagon work, contractor and builder, was born in Freeport, IL, in 1842. He learned the trade of millwright and followed it for a livelihood in Illinois and Iowa, and during his residence in the latter State, took a course at the Iowa University.

He came to Nebraska in March, 1870; built the Crete Flouring Mills, and was employed in erecting other mills through the State for three years. Mr. E. came to Fairfield in 1873, and was engaged in the mercantile business until July, 1879.

He, in connection with this, built a grist-mill at Liberty Farm Ranch, this county, and conducted it until March, 1882. He established his present business in the spring of 1881. Mr. E. was married in the fall of 1875, in Clay County, to Emma Toms. They have four children—Victor F., Mattie, Claude and Blanche.

MORE ABOUT EPLEY

In 1866 he lived in a dugout with two others (Bill Fath, Bill Criss) that winter. The dugout was located near Spring Ranch.....in the Blue River, Oak Creek area. They killed prairie dogs and ate them to stay alive. He went back east in 1867 and came back the next year to stay.

His general store was two blocks from the railroad. He knew the land by the railroad would flood in the spring. Railroad officials wanted him closer and then realized he was right the next spring when their land flooded. So they moved the depot closer to the store.

When he was first married, there was a gang living in a dugout outside town. One night people saw a fire in the south. There was no lightning to start it so townspeople suspected the gang had started the fire. When people rushed out to stop the fire, they would come in and loot the town.

The people loaded water from three cisterns, took gunny sacks to put out the fire and loaded their guns. The men went out to put out the fire and the women stayed home with the guns to protect their property. When the gang came to town they were met with women with loaded guns.

Great grandpa had one store partner that was no good. When John was out of town, the partner mortgaged the store and moved west. John followed him to Washington state, then gave up and came back home where his mills and flour mills were doing well.

We want to thank all the businesses and people who have helped make this celebration possible!

FAIRFIELD



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150th Committee

Happy 150th Fairfield!

Fairfield hosts 7 hotels over the years

The first hotel opened for the accommodation of the traveling public by Mr. John Clancy, a railroad laborer. This continued until 1877, when Mr. W.W. Wattles erected the Exchange Hotel.

In 1879, Mrs. C.J. Yates built the Metropolitan Hotel, which later burned down.

In 1905, the Mills Hotel was built by the railroad company, and in the fall of 1908, Joseph Kyne erected a brick building known as the Nebraska Hotel.

For a time there were two nice brick hotels in Fairfield that sat next to a few rooming houses and cafes.

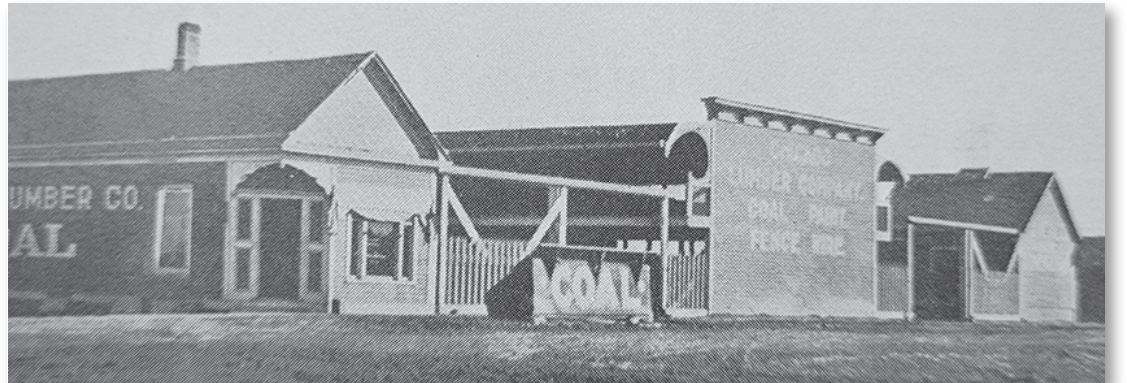
On Oct. 31, 1937, the Depot Hotel was burned, and at another time, the Arlington Hotel existed.



The Kyne Hotel.



Irwin & Pedley Store.



Chicago Lumber Co, 1910.

Some businesses in Fairfield's history

T.J. Fowler came to Fairfield in 1876 and owned the Harness Shop and Store. He repaired harness and made many sets of harness to order for his many customers. He and his wife, Miss Llewellen, built a home in Fairfield and raised a family.

Their son, George, eventually became one of Fairfield's postmasters, and their daughter, Emily, was the librarian for a time.

Meat Markets and Slaughter Houses were managed by S.S. Renie, Mr. Minge, Mr. Westcott, and Mrs. John H. Stephens and son.

Fairfield had many grocers, including Mr. W. D. Gates, Mr. F. Anawalt, Mr. W. T. Cornelison, Mr. Dell Williams, and later his son, Marley Williams, Albert Harr, Frank Wells, Mr. Garvin, Louis Seifert, Robert Grimes, Mr. Oliver Soucie, and Rolland Stephens. The Bauman Locker was an efficient plant helping supply meat.

There were millinery stores in town, as there were in other small towns. Mrs. Elizabeth Stevens and daughter, Ethel, had the last one in Fairfield.

Fairfield had a succession of druggists, but none more faithful or dependable than the late John V. Deines. Harry Wages and partners had one for several years. Miss Jessie Lindsay and Mrs. Grant Calkins had photograph studios in town and were kept busy by citizens.

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Congregation Church 1878

The Congregation Society may be said to date back to Jan. 21, 1872, when Mr. J.A. Jones, a missionary for the south part of Clay County, organized a society at the resident of H.J. Higgins of the Liberty Farm on the Little Blue.

In the fall of 1872, permanent headquarters were fixed in Fairfield. Rev. A.J. Jones was followed by Rev. Thomas Pugh, and he organized the first Congregational Church in Fairfield in 1873. It was organized with the following members: Alberta Willis, A.B. Palmer, Mary Palmer, H.J. Higgins, Elisha Harrington, and John Palmer, all of whom signed the Articles of Incorporation.

Services were held in the depot, school house, J.H. Epley's store, and, in 1877, in the Methodist Church every other Sunday.

The church building was erected in 1878 and completed in 1882. In 1890, the congregation numbered 160.

The Congregational Church continued to serve the community until the early 1940s when they united with the Methodist Church. A few years later, the church building was removed.



Congregational Church, 1878.



Methodist Church, 1878.

Methodist Church

The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized on Aug. 27, 1872 by F.A. Penny, with W. R. Stevens as leader of the class.

The class then belonged to the Little Blue Circuit of A.G. Stevens, A.P. Randall, Alma Batchelor, Mary J. Randal, Mrs. H. Hughs, R.N. Brown, Mrs. L.J. Pearson, Mrs. E. Hardy, G.B. Overhulse, William Randal, and Mary Randall.

It was decided in 1877 to erect a church building. J.D. Dodd was president and G.B.

Overhulse was secretary of the building committee. The building was completed and dedicated in the early summer of 1878; in 1882 there were 120 members.

From the time of the organization until the church was completed, services were held in the depot until the completion of the schoolhouse, when services were held there until the church building could be occupied.

The church building was a structure of Gothic Style and

was finished with stained glass windows. This same building down through the century had been remodeled several times.

The major remodeling projects were the addition of a choir loft on the east, and a Sunday school room on the west, in 1905.

In 1918, a basement was built and the outside entrance was changed to the south. Services continued in this church building until 1963, when the Methodist and Christian congregations united.

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A look at some of Fairfield's businesses

Fairfield had three grain elevators all doing business at one time. They were "The Updike Elevator;" in 1906, Mr. C.S. Borin was it's manager; "The W.J. Hynes Grain Company;" and the "Clay County Grain Company."

The Clay County Grain Company later became known as the Farmers Union elevator.

Mr. John Wyenberg was its manager for many years, and when he retired, Mr. Baum took his place. Mr. Charles J. Furer was a grain buyer for several years also.

Clay County was a poultry center at one time and Fairfield had a thriving business in its Incubator Factor. Mr. S.C. Thompson, who came to Fairfield in 1886, was associated with the First National Bank and had a controlling interest in the Incubator Factor.

C.J. Crawford had a big white livery barn. He did his own advertising by writing poetry. This was one advertisement/poem:

"Crawfords here with the goods in a livery way,

"Reliable service in night or in day,

"A line of conveyances, stylish and neat,

"With teams that are good looking, gentle and fleet,

"First in the favor of traveling men,

"Our White Barn's service brings them

again,

"Reliable drivers here will be found,

"Drivers that know the roads all around,

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"You will find here a service pleasing to all."



Citizens' Bank, after remodeling.



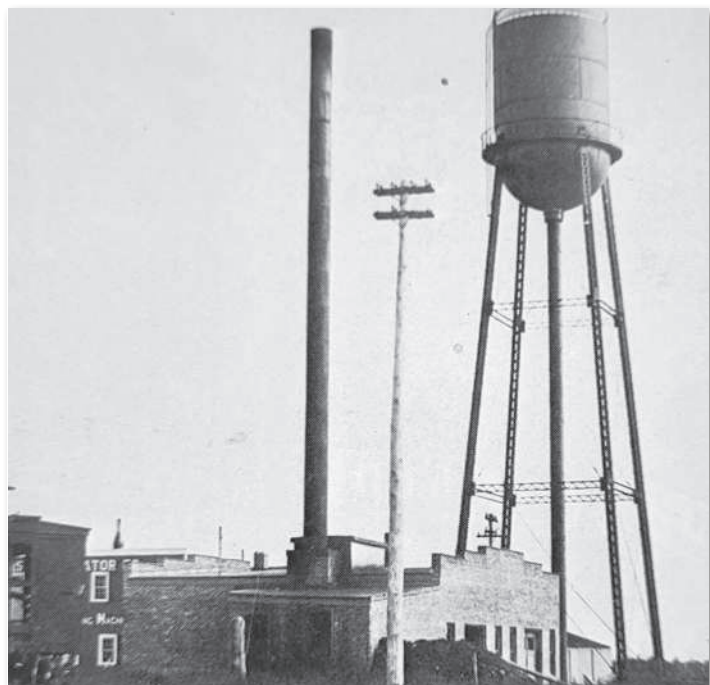
The Opera House.



Fairfield's Union Depot 1887.



A side view of the Farmers' & Merchants' Bank.



The Pumping Station.

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The more businesses the merrier

Fairfield had an array of businesses throughout the years, including a well diggers service, jewelry stores, clothing and dry goods, a sorghum mill, oil filling stations, blacksmiths, a laundrymat, car wash, and several barbers.

Additionally, there was a veterinarian who lived in Fairfield, often helping many farmers with livestock.

City banks included the first-ever established Fairfield bank on May 11, 1881, by W.S. Randall and J.W. Small under the name of the Fairfield Exchange Bank.

It was engaged in the general banking business with a captial of \$3,000 and deposits of about \$12,000. Five years later, it was sold and was then known as The Citizens Bank, with Mr C.L. Lewis serving as the cashier.

On May 14, 1881, another bank was established under the name Fairfield Bank, by a company composed of W.T. Newcomb, S.J. Anthony, and O.C. Hubbell.

A few years later, the bank was sold to a man by the name of Fowler, of Sutton, and was then called the First National.

In 1908, the Farmers and Merchants Bank was organized, with C.M. Prickett, president; Joe Kyne, vice president; and George W. Cobel, cashier.

The bank was eventually sold and purchased by C.W. Harvey of Superior, who served as president. Mr. E.H. Burnham was vice president, and C. Wayne Harvey was cashier. Roland Potter also worked in the bank.

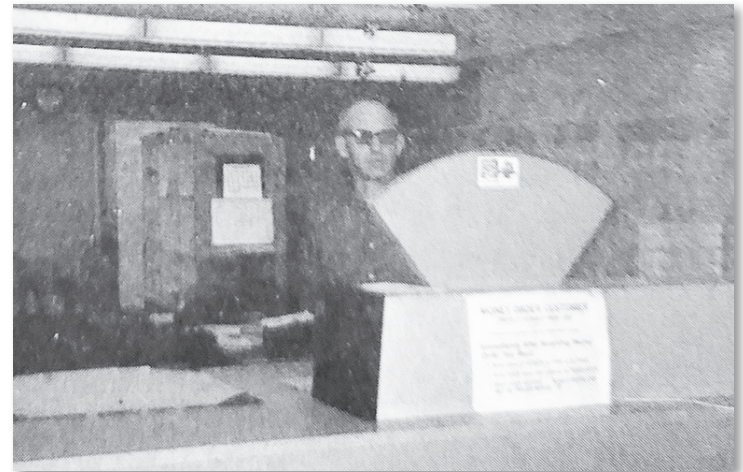
Eventually the Fairfield State Bank stood, with James Voorhees and James Engle as managers, with the help of Mrs. Fay Albrecht, Mrs. Rex Shubert Jr. and Mrs. Gordon Moon.



Fairfield Post Office.



The Telephone Building, 1972.



Bob Hoins, Postmaster, 1972.



Fairfield's City Council in 1972, from left to right: Dean Palmer; James Engel, mayor; LeRoy Glass; Jack Ridgway; Marie Fike; and Bess Patton, clerk-treasurer.

Fairfield's government

L. F. Frayr, D. Howe, J.R. Maltby, John Epley, and S.W. Prickett served on the first Board of Trustees with O.G. Maury, clerk; C.F. Shedd, treasurer; A.A. Kelsy, marshall; and W.S. Prickett, attorney.

The board passed the first ordinance on the 23rd day of July 1878.

The town grew rapidly and in the 1890s, Fairfield had a population of about 1,500.

The governing body reorganized from the Board of Trustees to mayor and council.

In April 1889, J.E. Hopper was elected mayor; J.H. Brooks, clerk; T.J. Loomis, treasurer; C.M. Prickett, engineer; Frank Phillips, A.R. Ray, S.H. Lewis, and C.W. Potter, councilmen.

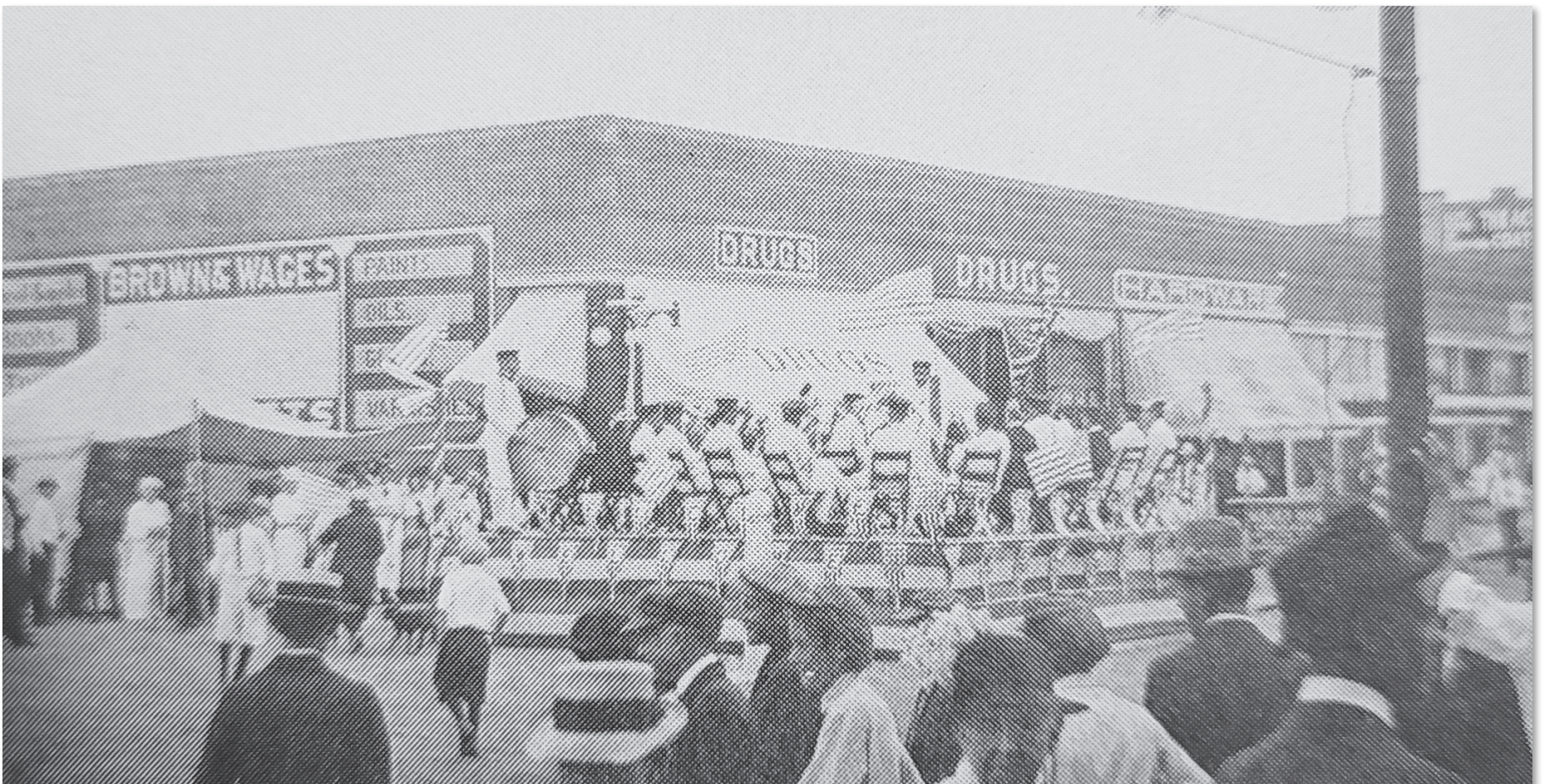
This form of government has continued even though the population has decreased.



ABOVE: Football team, 1902. BELOW: Volleyball team, 1966.

Sandy Creek Band, 1960s.

A look at Fairfield's Recreation and Culture



Street scene during a celebration in 1918.



High school chorus, 1966.

Activities are a community effort

The youth of the community also have their organizations. Many are active in 4-H Clubs, and both youth

and adult leaders in the community have received honors for their work. The town has both Boy and Girl Scout troops and they have their own Scout Building.

All of the organizations cooperate in community projects. A great deal of the community's recreation and cultural

entertainment has always centered around its schools. There have always been the athletic activities, football, basketball, volleyball, and track.

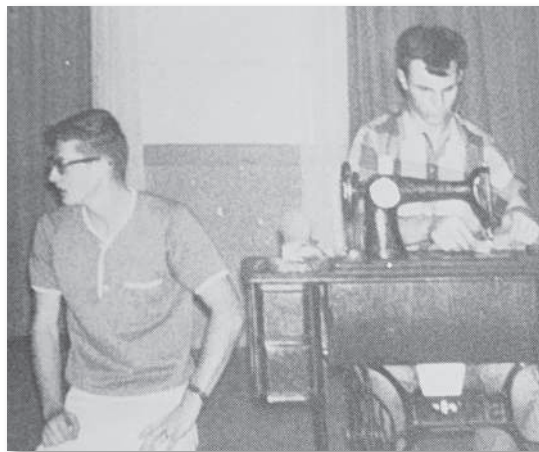
On the cultural side has been the presentations of the dramatic department, the school plays, still popular today and the oratorical contests of

years past.

Fairfield schools have always had active music departments, and the school has a case full of trophies to show for their performances. Band concerts and programs of vocal music are presented at various times throughout the year, and are much enjoyed by all.



High school band, 1966.



ABOVE: The high school Dramatics Club, 1965. LEFT: Scenes from the 1965 high school play.



Fairfield's start began with George W. Fairfield

George Washington Fairfield, a civil engineer and surveyor, was born in Buffalo, NY May 1, 1825.

Prior to laying out Fairfield, Geneva, and Araphoe between 1870-72, he migrated with his parents to Fort Wayne, ID, where he earned his early education, before entering a Presbyterian college at Fort Way, graduating as a civil engineer in June 1818.

He was employed as a civil engineer and surveyor for several different railroad companies in the east, before coming to Plattsmouth on Sept. 29, 1850.

He entered a claim of 120 acres of land adjoining Plattsmouth, where he resided until he moved into Plattsmouth in 1859.

After laying out towns in the early 1870s, he moved to Sidney Cheyenne County and built the first irrigation ditch in Scottsbluff County in 1887.

He continued his work in Nebraska until passing away in Lincoln on Sept. 29, 1904. He is buried in the Plattsmouth cemetery, which he laid out in 1862.

Fairfield's town site was entered

by Maxmillian Reed and sold to A.B. Smith, R.J. Higgins, R. Bayly, Cornelius Dunn, and six others who proposed establishing a town.

Fairfield was surveyed for the St. Joe and Denver Railroad Company on Sept. 11, 1874 by A. R. Buttolph.

The first sale of lots was on Sept. 18, 1874 by J.H. Epley; soon after, Smith and Spencer moved their stores from the old to the new town site.

John Clancy was the pioneer settler on the town site; he was manager of the boarding car and later of the section house during the construction of the railroad.

This section of housing also served as a hotel for the accommodation of travelers until a hotel was built in 1876-77 by W.W. Wattles.

D.P. Jaymes built the first dwelling house in the town in 1875.

The petition of J.H. Conrad and 25 others for the incorporation of Fairfield as a village was presented July 1, 1878; this was passed July 23, 1878. On Feb. 25, 1889, Fairfield became a city of second class.

Fairfield had several factories, including the A.A. Smith sorghum



George Washington Fairfield, a civil engineer and surveyor. factory, Fairfield Roller Mills, Iron Works, Brick Yards, Creamery, and Incubator Factor.

In 1955, an Anhydrous Ammonia

Plant was erected, known as the Fairfield Non-Stock Coop Fertilizer Association.

The Municipal Water Works and Electric Light plant were built in 1910, and in July of 1949, a franchise was granted to the Nebraska Natural Gas Company to furnish natural gas to the residents of Fairfield. A sewer plant was constructed in 1953.

A community building was constructed in the early 1930s and was used for community activities and served as the gymnasium for the Fairfield Public School, as well as other school activities, until the completion of the elementary school in 1961.

The first "community club" in Fairfield—the Retail Merchants Association—was organized in September 1889, which eventually changed to a community club, commercial club, and Lions club, before turning into the Fairfield Community Service Club in December 1960.

The club consisted of business men, farmers, and interested citizens in the progress of their community as members.

Fairfield Community Presbyterian Church

The Community Church, known as the Fairfield Community Presbyterian Church, was organized in 1963 by the merger of the two remaining churches in Fairfield, the Christian and Methodist. There were 234 charter members in the community church.

Rev. Henry W. Fawcett, who had served the Methodist Church since 1960 as pastor, was the first pastor of the Community Church. Rev. Fawcett was followed by Rev. R. Keith Roumpf in September 1968.

A new church building was the dream of the church's leaders and members, and on November 1969 the dream was realized when ground was broken.

Construction of the church building was begun in December 1969 on the Methodist Church lots.

Services of the Community Church were held in the Christian Church building from the time of organization in 1963 until the completion of the new church building.

The first service in the new church building was September 1970 and Dedication Services were held Oct. 10 and 11, 1970, with Rev. R. Keith Roumpf pastor.

The members of the building committee were: Robert L. Hoins, chairman; Mrs. Golden Ahlstrom, secretary; Mrs. Elsie Broderick, Mrs. Romana Dana, Marion Fike Jr., Frank C. Fisher, Jack Hubbell, Gerald Humbert, Mrs. Ruth Killion, Mrs. Bettie Kissinger, Mrs. June Kissinger, Gerald Palmer, Mrs. Deloris Schliep, Mrs. Darlene Schliep, Ed Schliep, LeVern Washburn, and Standley Woods.



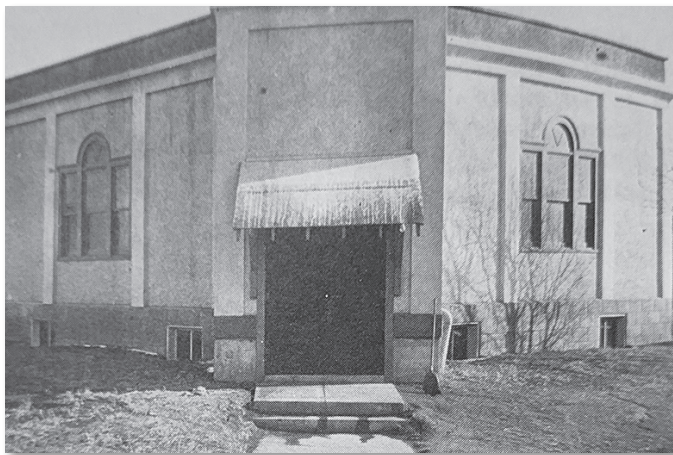
Fairfield Community Presbyterian Church.

Latter Day Saints Church

T.W. Chatburn of the Reorganized Church of the Latter Day Saints preached in the Hopper Hall in 1884. The membership of this society was quite limited but very active.

Ten years later in 1894, James Teeters, James Trask, and others met to organize a society to be known as the Latter Day Saints Church. They were the first members of the newly-organized church.

For a time the meetings were held in homes, the



Latter Day Saint Church, 1917. Lone Tree schoolhouse, and the basement of the Fairfield City Library.

In 1917, a church building was erected and was

used until 1940, when the congregation disbanded. A few years later the church building was removed.

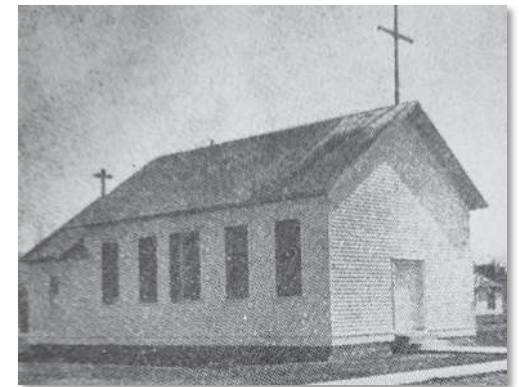
Catholic Church

The Catholic congregation was organized in October 1877 at the residence of R. Maltby. Father J.G. Glauber attended the mission every month, holding services of the church in Conrad Hall.

The original congregation was made up of seven families, but increased to 20 families in 1882.

In 1882, Father Simeon, then resident of Hastings, attended the mission. This mission continued to serve the community every Sunday and later once a month.

In the early 1930s the church building was moved to Deweese.



Catholic Church, 1878.

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Fairfield's education system began with a sod house

The first school taught in the vicinity of Fairfield was a subscription school taught by Mrs. Alma Bacheller, in a sod house located on the south half of the southeast quarter of Section 4, Township 4, Range 7, before the county school districts were laid out.

This school was taught in 1873, with a total of six pupils, including Mike Clancy, Annie Rennie, Maggie Rennie, Willie Rennie, Polly Hall, and Wester Hall.

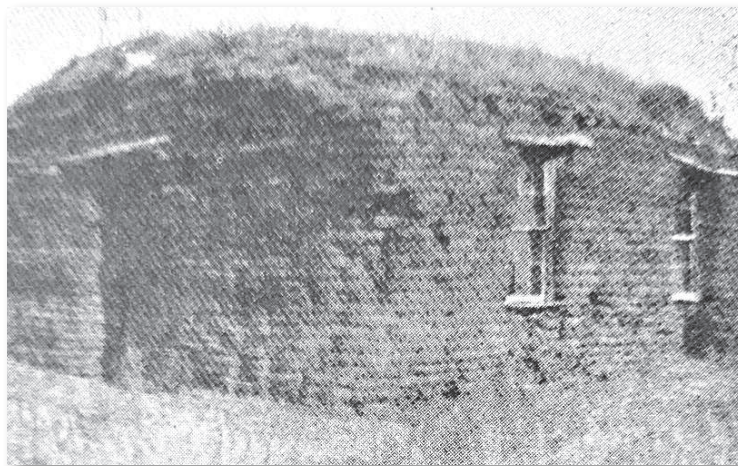
Mrs. Bacheller also conducted a school in 1874, receiving a compensation for three months of work for \$100, with an attendance of eight pupils.

The first public school taught in the town was in the winter of 1878, in a small frame building erected especially for this purpose.

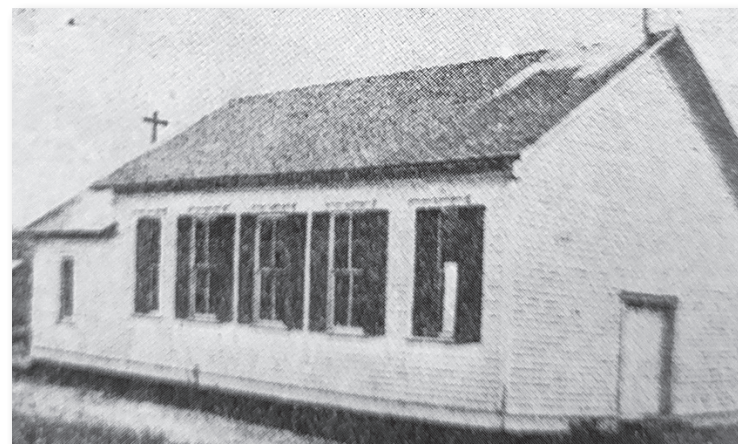
The house was a one-story building and at that time was considered the best in the country, being 26 feet wide by 40 feet in length, costing \$1,440.

It stood in the east part of the present town, near where the railway stockyards now stand. This building continued to be in use until becoming inadequate for the accommodation of the school.

A new building was erected in the summer of 1881. After the new school house was completed, the occupancy of the old build-



Fairfield's first school, 1873.



First frame schoolhouse, 1874. ing for school purposes was discontinued and it was sold to the Christian Church.

The new building, constructed in the summer of 1881, was a fine large two-story frame structure of tasteful

architecture, being constructed with appropriate and proportioned projects, and contained four large school rooms, with recitation and principals, cloak and ante rooms, and all other

necessary apartments.

The school rooms were fitted out with the most improved furniture, patent seats and desks, and all other needful apparatus.

The cost of the building when completed was \$5,000. The building stood where the present school now stands, on an eminence back of the town, which slopes off in all directions, and from which a view is had over the surrounding landscape for a distance of more than 20 miles.

The school was graded in the fall of 1881, being divided into the primary, intermediate, and grammar school departments, under the charge of A. A. Randall as principal, Miss Emma McKee and Mrs. Alice Cooper as teachers.

As the school continued to grow in the later years, it was necessary to again build another school building, to accommodate the large number of pupils, this time in a much larger size.

The new brick building was constructed in the fall and winter of 1905 and 1906. The old building was first offered for sale to the public by bids, but as \$500 was the highest bid obtained, it was decided by the school board that more money could be derived from the old building by tearing it down and adding it to the new building, which was done.

In the fall of 1905, work was started on the erection of the building, and from delays in receiving shipments of lumber and other materials, the building was not wholly completed until February of 1906.

School was then taught in the different churches of the town, there being classes in nearly every church. School continued to be kept in the different churches until the weather became so severe that it was necessary to occupy the new building for school purposes, before it was fully completed.

All the building had been completed with the exception of the floor and the lumber for this being delayed in the shipping. School was postponed one Friday upon its arrival, and every carpenter in the vicinity was hired to help lay the floor, which required the next three days, including Sunday, when the work was finished up.

The building consisted of 14 rooms—five grade rooms, high school, assembly room, four recitation rooms, office, manual training, and domestic science rooms, science laboratory, rest room, and numerous halls and cloak rooms.

SEE SCHOOLS, PAGE 16C

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SCHOOLS: Fairfield's education starts in sod house in 1873

FROM PAGE 14C

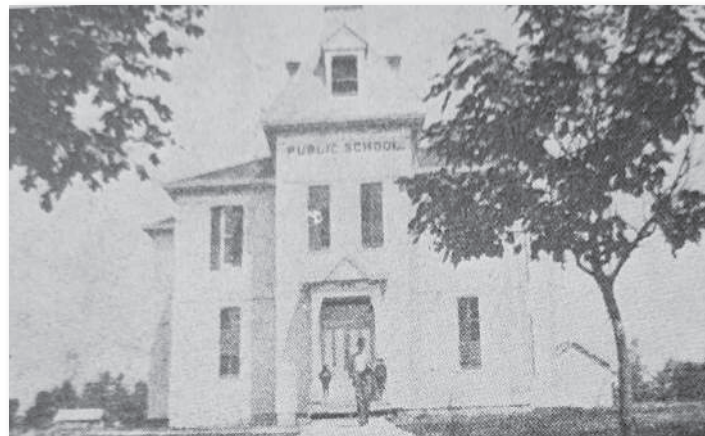
It was also equipped with steam heat, city water, and electric lights; when completed it cost \$23,000.

There were 12 grades in the school, the 12 being added in 1906. In the fall of 1907, the normal training course was added and as a result, Fairfield has turned out some of the best teachers in Clay County.

The music and agriculture departments were added in 1912, and manual training and domestic science were added in 1914.

Fairfield's school continued its success, but with time and new rules and regulations, changes were made. Due to larger enrollment, an addition for elementary grades was built in 1961. In 1966, consolidation with Glenvil brought an increase in the high school.

In 1967, more consolidation was passed, with Edgar, Glenvil, and Fairfield combining its high school and junior high schools. A new school was built in a central location and was called Sandy Creek School for junior and senior high students. They are the Cougars.



Fairfield's third schoolhouse, 1881.



Fairfield Public School, 1906.



Fairfield College, 1884.

A look at Fairfield College

In April 1884, the sum of \$17,000 was subscribed by 12 persons for the benefit of Fairfield College. The committee on collection was comprised of D. Howe, J.L. Epperson, and M.B. Gates.

In June 1884, Prof. Hubbell resigned his position as principal of the Hastings schools and moved to Fairfield.

On Sept. 24, the Normal Institute was opened in Fairfield by Hubbell. The college directory, published in November 1884, gives the names of T.P. Nixon, president of the board; W.T. Newcomb, financial agent and secretary; C.W. Henry, president of the faculty; and O.C. Hubbell, principal of the normal department.

The first-ever commencement exercises were on June 3, 1885. In October 1885, there were 70 students enrolled, where a year before, the register contained only 27 names.

In April 1886, the college board authorized the employment of an architect to draw plans for building, and in July the contract for the college building was let to W.B. Schumucker for \$9,675. Work began at once and within that year the large brick building was completed.

This school was later dropped after Cotner College got started in Bethany.

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Christian Church

The first meeting of the Christian Church was held June 16, 1878, with the following present (who later were known as the charter members): Worthy T. Newcomb, Mrs. De Ette Newcomb, Lorenzo Chapman, Selona Chapman, Joseph Webb, Hannah Webb, James H. Artrup, and Senes J. Anthony.

On Oct. 27, 1878, George L. Lobinger was called as the first pastor, serving both Fairfield and Clay Center. After three years of holding services in the schoolhouse, a meeting was called Nov. 1, 1881, to form a legal organization and voted that the name of the organization be the Christian Church of Fairfield.

At this meeting it was also voted to purchase the schoolhouse and move it on the church lots and remodel it to fit their needs.

In 1884, a church building was planned and erected. This building was dedicated on Jan. 4, 1885, with C.W. Hemry as pastor. At a later date, a church spire was added to the building



Christian Church, 1918.

and an annex to be used as a baptistery.

At the end of the century, the bell, which had been used by the Christian Church College, was brought down and used by the church until services were discontinued.

On Feb. 10, 1907, the remodeled church, the third building, was dedicated, and then on June 5, 1908, it was destroyed by a tornado.

On Feb. 21, 1909, the fourth church building was dedicated, this was used until 1970.



The remains of the Christian Church, which was remodeled in 1907 and destroyed by a tornado in 1908.



Ruins of the Congregational Church after the 1908 tornado.

Baptist Church

In 1884, I.D. Newell was the pastor for the Baptist Society. The Society was small in number and after the resignation of their pastor, Mr. Clapp in 1890, services were discontinued.

Miss E.T. Townsley and A.K. Myattway also served as pastors during these years.

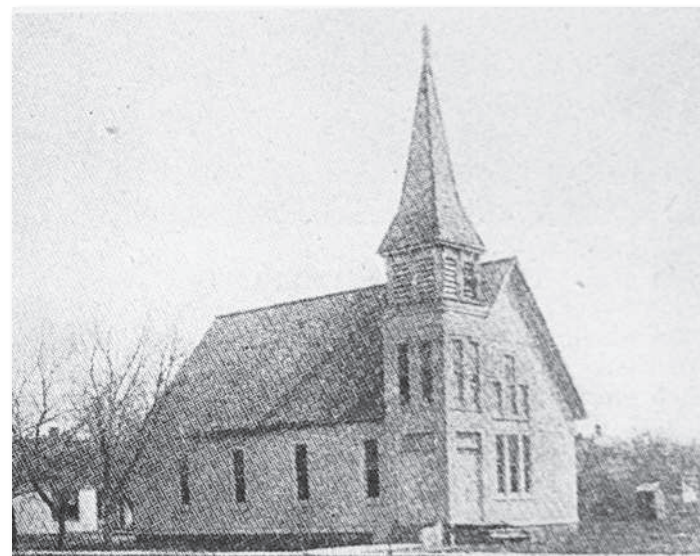
Among the names on the membership roll were Hancock and H.E. Potter. Both of these families related to C.F. Iliff, a resident of Fairfield at the present time.

In November 1883, the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational Mission Society was formed, with

Mrs. Worley, president; Mrs. Small, vice president; Mrs. Case, secretary; Mrs. Kershaw, treasurer; and Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. W.S. Randall, Mrs. Oliver, Mrs. Mason, Mrs. Willis, and Mrs. Madson members of the committee.

The Baptist church building was rented in the early 1900s to a group of the United Brethren Society. They worshipped in this building for a year or two and then again the church building was not used.

In 1908 the building was destroyed by a cyclone and never rebuilt.



Christian Church, 1918.



Remains of the Lewis Day home after the 1908 cyclone.

1908 tornado damage

On Friday, June 5, 1908, two heavy-looking black clouds formed a cyclone and started a path of destruction across the northwest corner of Fairfield.

It traveled slowly and the noise it made could be heard for a great distance. Although there were about 50 buildings destroyed and damaged, no one was killed and only one person was slightly injured.

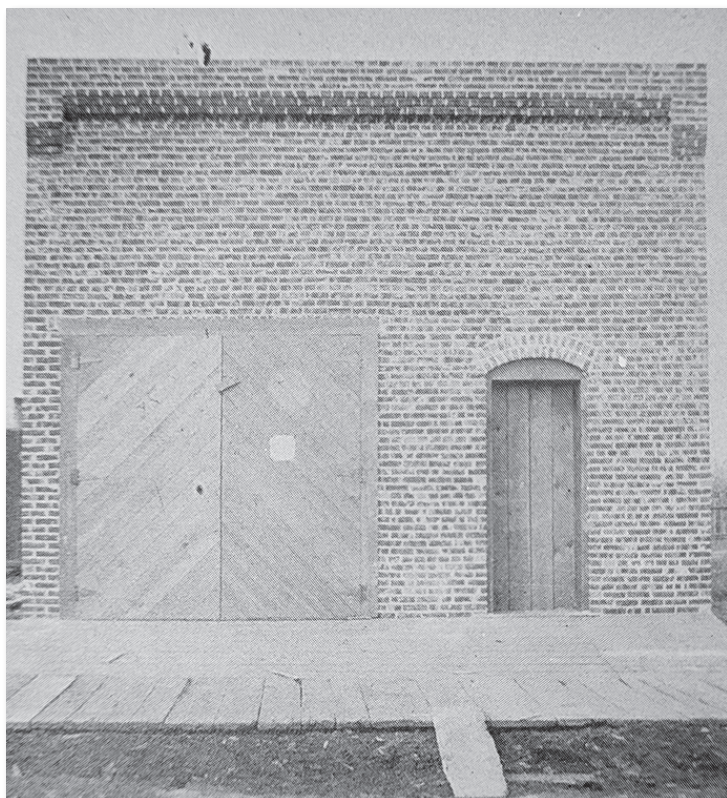
Mr. A.F. McReynolds, who was in his barn milking, was knocked unconscious by falling timbers when the barn was torn to pieces.

It was estimated that the loss of buildings and property will reach \$100,000.



The evolution of Fairfield's fire houses

ABOVE: The current fire and rescue house. BELOW LEFT: Fairfield's first firehouse. BELOW RIGHT: Fairfield Fire Station, 1972.



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Fairfield's agricultural landscape

Agriculture brought the pioneers to Fairfield and it has sustained them throughout the town's history.

The first settlement was the Pawnee Ranch west of Fairfield, on the Little Blue River. In 1857, John B. Weston built a log house here and became the first settler in Clay County.

Mr. Bainter, writing in the 1889 issue of the Fairfield News, gives the following sketches.

"I moved my family to a ranch in February of 1864. There was no settlement in Clay County except at Pawnee Ranch and a stage depot at Liberty Farm.

"During the fall of 1863, I hunted and tended the ranch. Emigration west was very heavy the entire year, principally men dodging the draft and going to Pike's Peak, or any place where they could escape the war.

"During the year there must have been an average of nearly 300 teams daily. The Pony Express had been discontinued and stages were running daily. There were plenty of buffalo, elk, antelope, and thousands of wild turkeys; but the latter nearly all disappeared after the big storm of April 1873.

"The profits of the ranch business were wonderfully good. Everything sold by the pound; potatoes sold for 5 cents. The same for hay and other things in proportion.

There were many Indians around during the summer, principally the Pawnee and the Omaha—all friendly.

"The winter of 1863-64 was rough and cold but the travel continued good. In the spring I planted 10 acres of corn, which promised well. On the morning of Aug. 9, 1864, I noticed the Sioux Indians, became suspicious in their actions.

"Later that day, my son and hired man returned from nearby Pawnee Ranch and reported with excitement that the Indians had attacked Pawnee Ranch and had killed and scalped Burke, a freighter.

"The morning before a man named Smith from St. Joe passed by place with a train loaded with provisions and two threshing machines. I suspect his party were either killed or captured.

"Knowing my ranch could not be successfully defended, I loaded my family in a wagon and made for the Pawnee Ranch. After some time, the U.S. troops came from Fort Kearny and went after the Indians. Nothing remained of my ranch. All my stock was killed except one poor team. My total loss was \$5,872.50 for which I have a claim before Congress.

"There were smoldering ruins of burned ranches and bodies of scalped men, women, and children all along the trail. Buffalo Ranch, at

the mouth of Buffalo Creek, southeast of Fairfield, escaped injury.

"This was later the Thomas Shaw farm. It was used afterwards as a stage station. Nearly 1,000 head of cattle were found and claimed by the Eagle Gold Company as belonging to their wagon train.

"We found horses and mules with harness bridles and saddles on, but they were so wild that it was almost impossible to get near them. This stock was all taken to Big Sandy, advertised and distributed among the surviving owners, my share for labor being \$90.

"Upon returning in 1870 I found my claim had been jumped by another man. I stopped and raised a crop while I defended my claim. I made it a business to locate people on claims up the Blue River. I could not induce any to settle on the upland till all the bottom lands were sold."

In 1871, John Scott was the solitary occupant of Lone Tree precinct and the only settler for some time between School Creek and Spring Ranche. The population of the county grew fast. In 1870, the population was 54; in 1875 it was 4,283; in 1880 it was 11,299; and in 1885, it was 14,157.

The Clay County Agricultural Society was organized on April 15, 1872 in the court house in Sutton. Annual

fairs were held after this until 1881 when the exhibition took place in Clay Center on the 40 acre plot of land.

Delegates from five Farmers' Alliances of Clay County met at east Fairfield on Nov. 23, 1889 to organize a County Alliance.

It was organized with L. McReynolds of Fairfield as president.

During the fall of 1875, there were 500 cars of grain shipped from Fairfield, Edgar, and Glenville. Wheat averaged 65 cents and the total yield of Clay County was worth \$600.

Grasshoppers have always been a menace to the farmer but they really made the headlines in 1874. The local story is that the grasshoppers settled so thick on the tracks that the train could not make the incline east of town.

Every crop except the wheat and barley, then harvested, was eaten, leaving the settlers in a condition almost approaching poverty.

Aid rendered by Congress and the state, as well as by the people poured in to alleviate the distress.

The 1880s also brought its share of sorrow, including a bout of diphtheria, which took some lives in Fairfield. Many recollections are also made of the famed blizzard of 1888. It was an unusually warm day for Jan. 12, before the blizzard hit, with its quick and cruel fury.

Farmers could reach their

livestock only by tying a rope to the doorknob and feeling their way to the barns. After two days and two nights of the raging snow, many farmers found that if the barn door was not closed tight, the horses would trample so much snow under their hoofs that their heads were hitting the top of the roof.

Human life, as well as livestock, was lost in the suffocation, swirling robe of white that swept down over the countryside without any warning.

Money was in scant supply in the early days; the price of hogs were 2 cents per pound.

A horse was worth \$60 to \$100; in 1893, there was a financial panic. The local banks would not loan money unless they had definite orders from the eastern banks.

Even a small loan took months to be processed and very often was refused. It was a day of celebration when the banker rode up in his livery rig with the news that the loan of a few hundred had been approved.

By the mid-1890s, corn crops were bountiful, selling at 8 to 10 cents a bushel.

By 1899, as stated in an issue of the Glenville Bee, necessities were selling at the following: "corn, 23 cents; wheat, 59 cents; oats, 20 cents; eggs, 10 cents; butter, 10 cents; and chickens, 7 cents a pound."

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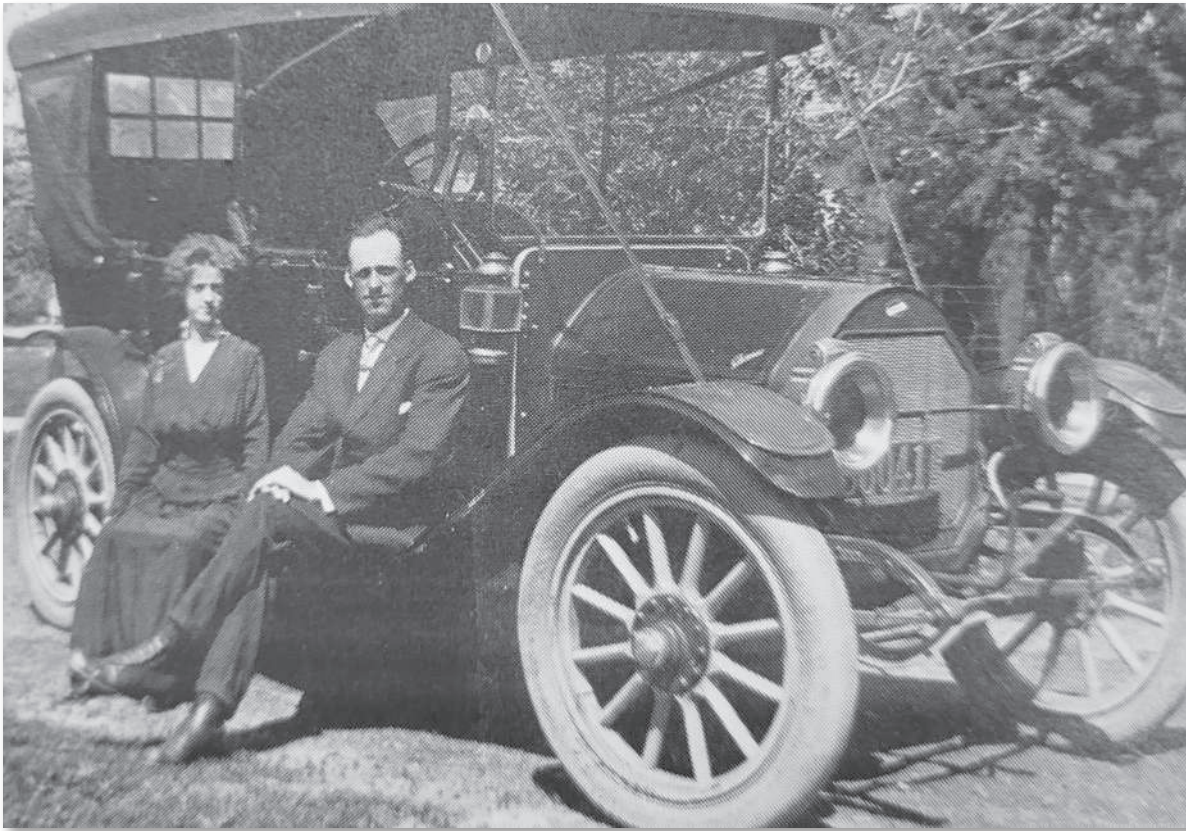
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A look at early 1900s transportation

Transportation in the early 1900s looked quite different than it does today. Above, a couple sits on their 1913 vehicle, taken in Fairfield.

Fun—Yesterday, today & always

Early residents of Fairfield believed as we do today that “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.”

Even the earliest records tell of community picnics, dances, ballgames, and celebrations complete with fireworks.

An article taken from the Fairfield Souvenir Edition of *The Voice of The Road*, published by the St. J. & G.I. Railroad in 1906 reads as follows:

“In the early days, when land was cheap, the municipal officers of Fairfield were wise enough to provide grounds for a public park. Trees were provided and planted in the park and now the city has as fine a park as can be found in the west.

“The park is now in charge of The Beautiful America Club, whose membership is composed of public spirited ladies. The ladies have provided a handsome band stand and comfortable seats for the

park and take a just pride in caring for the property.

“During the hot months of the summer, the churches of the community unite in holding outdoor services in the park. It is also used for many other large gatherings during the summer months.”

The town boasted an Opera House where traveling stock companies appeared and, of course, there was always the chautauqua.

A news item in the June 3, 1885 issue of the *Lincoln State Journal* states:

“Anna Argyle, with Gleason’s Theatre Company, will entertain the people of Fairfield and vicinity this week.”

There was a tennis court for fair weather enjoyment and an area around the water tower was flooded for ice skating in winter.

In 1890, a fair was well attended and everyone was fully and perfectly satisfied. The marching was greatly admired and the costumes appropriate.

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Happy 150th Birthday, Fairfield!

We're honored to serve the community we work and live in.

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