

An excerpt from
The History of Stacyville, Iowa: 1856-2006¹
By Cheryl Mullenbach, 2006

1900-1910

At 9 a.m. on April 2, 1900, a group of nine men met in the office of the implement shop owned by William Gardner. They had gathered to elect the first mayor and city council of the newly incorporated town called Stacyville. At that first city council meeting S. B. French, a notary public, administered the oaths of office to Nick Pitzen as mayor, Fred Bascombe as clerk, and councilmen W.H. Gardner, Mike Mauer, Andrew Weber, Alfred Penney, Edward Falk and Asa. I. Stacy (Homer's son).

Forty-five years had passed between the time the first European settlers arrived in the area known as Stacyville and the incorporation of the city government. The city fathers of the newly formed council got right to work. The first motion made and passed was a tax of "three mills on a dollar" for road purposes. Alfred Penney made the motion that the town "shall be known as Stacyville." (Homer Stacy, remember, had named the town after himself, several decades before.) Over the next few months the council issued many ordinances that helped establish order and stability in the new town. Ordinances were passed "to suppress and punish disorderly conduct" and authorizing the mayor to have a fence erected at the east side of the bridge on Broad Street. An ordinance to provide for the construction and repair of sidewalks was passed. Mayor Pitzen was appointed to "notify the Illinois Central Railroad to build a wagon crossing over their tracks on Jefferson Street." And the city fathers banned "swimming or bathing...between a point...sixty rods north of the iron bridge...and a point fifty rods south of said bridge except between the hours of 10 o'clock P.M. and 4 o'clock A.M." It was unlawful to operate a pool hall without a license. And for those who did acquire a license, they were bound to close on Sunday and at 11 p.m. on weeknights. Minors were not allowed in the pool halls. Anyone operating a "theater, exhibition, or public entertainment except lectures on scientific, historical, religious or literary subjects" were required to pay a license fee of "not less than one dollar nor more than five."

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The census records report the population of Stacyville in 1900 at 490. A few remaining copies of *The Herald*,* the newspaper published between 1900 and 1907, provide insight into the business and social lives of the residents. The earlier copies list N. B. Reynolds as the publisher, but by 1904 Fred Bascombe was "editor and proprietor." The paper was published every Thursday and a year's subscription cost \$1.25. In addition to publishing a weekly newspaper Mr. Bascombe and his sister, Tillie, provided the printing of "cards, circulars, envelopes and letterheads."

Two doctors, W.G. Brown and S.J. Torney, were physicians and surgeons. "Dr. Brown" advertised dental services. (This "Dr. Brown" was Esther Brown, sister of Dr. W.G. Brown.) W.O. Sanders and Co. operated a drug store. The citizens of Stacyville could rent safety deposit boxes in the bank vault at The Stacyville Bank for \$1 per year.

Mrs. Frank Offerman's millinery shop was "in the building east of Jennie Baldwin's grocery store." She displayed a "fine new stock of millinery goods" that "eclipses any former stock shown in Stacyville." F.X. Offerman was the proprietor of the Central Market, where the residents of Stacyville could purchase "fresh and salt meats." The Klondike Restaurant changed owners when F.F. Gerbig bought out Frank Lamb.

Visitors to Stacyville in 1900 could stay at "a first class" hotel. The French House was operated by S.B. French. While travelers enjoyed "hot and cold water on both floors" of the hotel, their horses were well cared for in the "good livery." Not only did S.B. French own the first class hotel and the livery, he also opened a new harness shop in December 1900. It was located the "first door south of the post office."

Stacyville residents in 1900 still relied heavily on their horses for transportation and farm work. A horse belonging to Peter Meyer was killed by lightning during a big rain storm, but he was insured by the Farmers' Mutual Insurance Company of Mitchell County. In July 1900 Joe Kottner and Frank Offerman made a trip to St. Paul to purchase a herd of western horses. Within the week they had sold all the horses at a two-day sale in Lyle. And on December 13, 1900 this accident was reported in the local newspaper: "Pete Fuller's team took a merry little run with a wagon from Alfred Penney's barn down to Main Street in

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front of the M.E. Church last Monday. An effort to go on both sides of Dr. Brown's sign resulted disastrously to both wagon and the sign post."

It's obvious from photos of Stacyville in the early 1900s that the streets were not paved. This caused problems for John Brumm, Peter Heimer and George Gordon as they took their threshing engines through Stacyville to Lyle for repairs one day. The three machines became stalled in the mud near the park.

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It seems there could never be enough ice houses to serve the needs of the Stacyville residents. J.B. Spensley & Co. and the Weber Brothers had "full ice houses." L.H. Gerbig was filling the McDougal house near the bridge, and Kottner and Hemann procured the old feed mill building near the bridge and converted it to an ice house. The ice on the river was reported to be about 20 inches thick, so there wasn't a shortage.

The children of Stacyville in 1904 weren't much different than children today. At the risk of being called a "crank," the publisher of *The Herald*, Mr. Bascombe, commented on the behavior of a group of children attending a bazaar and supper at the Opera House. He referred to the rabble rousers as "a pack of 'hoodlums' turned loose." Apparently they were causing quite a disturbance "running from gallery to basement and stage, pushing and crowding everyone, disregarding all efforts at restraint."

The Illinois Central Railroad was a key part of everyday life in Stacyville in the early 1900s. A freight train arrived daily at 5:30 a.m. with the exception of Mondays. The passenger train departed from Stacyville daily at 3:10 p.m. with the exception of Sundays.

The Stacyville Grain and Coal Company was formed in 1908 by Simon Hanson, Michael Mauer, W.F. Hartnell, F.N. Hambrecht and Hubert Hackenmiller. This group formed the first board of directors. The company was formed "for the purpose of buying, selling, and dealing in coal, grain, livestock, lumber and general farm supplies on a cooperative basis." The first manager was Ed Seaton. The "old Speltz elevator" was purchased for \$5,000 and became the home of the new company.

In May 1910 the Stacyville Invincibles baseball team defeated Little Cedar by a score of 13 to 6. The Little Cedar team had lost to Stacyville in a double header the previous week. Jack Faas was the "genial" umpire.

A letter was published in *The Stacyville Monitor* from former resident, Amy P.S. Stacy, who in 1910 was living in Tacoma, Washington. She expressed concern for a couple of Stacyville landmarks that were important to her when she lived in Stacyville. "I suppose I should not know Stacyville. It makes me sad to think the dear little church is closed. She hoped that "people have happy times in 'Neattowee Park.' I should not like to think of drinking and carousing there."

Stacyville was planning a "big lecture course" for the 1910 season at the Opera House, with a full and varied program. The Alabama Jubilee Quartette, a quartette of "real Southern colored gentlemen" who were first cousins of "the illustrious Doctor Booker T. Washington," offered "real jubilee music of the Southland." The Giddings Family offered a range from "the latest popular music to grand opera selections." The Brownie Girl, Miss Elsie Brown, "reveals a message from the stories she interprets and with a sincere desire to arouse noble and tender emotions seizes on the attention of her hearers and inspires them with her personality." The Nevin Concert Company provided musical entertainment in the form of a "flute soloist, soprano, violinist and reader." The fifth event featured a lecture by Henry Black Burns, a Scotchman who "knows somewhat of the life of a laboring man, business man and student."

As Stacyville's first decade as an incorporated town drew to a close, much had been accomplished. The city government was well established. A commercial club was flourishing. Cement walks and bridges were in place. Businesses thrived. Some of the early pioneers had died—Dexter Kelley and Catherine Dyer in 1901, C.B. Smith in 1903, Charles G. Rolfe in 1907. But the population stood at 407. The next decade

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would continue to bring changes to the community. Some families moved away. Others moved into the area. The little town of Stacyville was on the maps!

*A few copies of *The Herald* have survived. The State Historical Society of Iowa has some copies on film beginning with the July 19, 1900 edition. *The Stacyville Sentinel* was published before *The Herald*. Fred E. Zwickey was the publisher of *The Sentinel*, but apparently it was printed sporadically. According to the first city council meeting minutes in April 1900, the council planned to use *Osage News* for printing jobs “provided however that Fred E. Zwickey does not publish *The Stacyville Sentinel* regularly.” In 1934 while tearing down “the hotel building” Art and Will Thome found a copy of the first issue of *The Stacyville Sentinel*. The date on that issue was November 18, 1897.

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