

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

1921-1930

Stacyville residents entered the new decade with memories of the First World War fading. They welcomed a return to peacetime activities. The Opera House, baseball games, school and church activities replaced life in the trenches for returning veterans. Family and friends welcomed their veterans home and life settled down to normal.

The Opera House continued to offer Stacyville residents a source of entertainment. The stockholders elected officers and directors to deal with the business end of the enterprise. In 1921 J.P. Weber was president; H.H. Stehn, secretary; and Charles Gerbig, treasurer. Directors were Ed Tyler, W.F. Hartnell and George Kinney.

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Two businesses issued their annual reports in early 1921. The Stacyville Creamery Company held annual meetings at the City Hall. In 1921 Math Hemann was president; Fred Pitzen, vice president; Wm. A. Schrandt, secretary. Directors were Nick Theobald, J.P. Durben, and Nick Krebsbach. The sale of buttermilk took place and sold for about 40 cents a barrel to the following: Albert Mayer, Fred Pitzen, Mike Mauer, Sr., and Thomas Theobald. The secretary's report showed a gain of 7,000 pounds of butter manufactured over the previous year.

Early in 1921 one of Stacyville's pioneer settlers died. Phillip Blake, who had come to Mitchell County in 1855, was one of the first settlers in Stacyville. He farmed north of Stacyville until 1886. Before the Illinois Central Railroad built the branch to Stacyville, Blake carried the U.S. mail between Stacyville and Adams. Pallbearers at his funeral were six grandsons—Carl Blake, Albert Blake, Fred Blake, William Blake, Albert Mauer, and William Hemann.

Farmers in the Stacyville area continued to make improvements on their farms. Peter Halbach erected a new chicken house built according to the new model given out by the Iowa State College Agricultural Experiment Station. Peter was interested in raising purebred White Rocks. Anton Halbach, a "progressive farmer residing east of town," erected a "commodious residence" on the farm. Joseph Brumm, also residing east of town, reshingled his barn.

Visitation Church was the scene in May of 1921 of First Communion for 21 children. Some of the students included Adrian Brown, Wilfred Halbach, Edwin Schrandt, Irvin Mullenbach, Marvin Heimer, Cornelius Halbach, Alfred Pitzen, Dorothy Halbach, Leona Mayer, Evelyn Weber, Martha Brumm, Stella Theobald, Angela Krebsbach and Evangeline Heimer. Acolytes were Wilfred Theobald, Gervin Pitzen, Lawrence Schrandt, Lawrence Pitzen, Joseph Hofmeister, Leon Green, Delphin Brown, Vero Wolf, Leander Schrandt, Delphin Hemann, Sylvan Heimer, Gilbert Weber and Raymond Mauer.

A new ball park was built under the supervision of Gerald Ganser and "his famous Fordson tractor." It was located in Matt Loecher's field at the south edge of town. Joe Frein and Ren Anderson had rented about five acres of hay land and they sublet three acres to the ball team for the park.

In June 1921 the *Monitor* reported that an "immense throng" attended the funeral services for Corporal Hale P. Fuller, the Stacyville boy who died while serving in France during World War I. He died October 15, 1918 at a base hospital in Hericourt, France from influenza-pneumonia. He was buried in France at the time of his death. But three years later, on June 4, his remains arrived in Stacyville. The funeral was held the next day on the lawn of the Thomas Fuller residence with "a thousand" people in attendance. To the music of the Stacyville band, the procession led by the Legion formed about a mile in length and proceeded to the Stacyville cemetery. The Rev. H.W. Cannon, pastor of the Methodist Church, recited the burial service. Taps was sounded and the strains of the *Star Spangled Banner* concluded the services. The grave was covered with a "profusion of beautiful flowers."

In September of 1921 the body of Peter Gartner arrived in Stacyville from France. He had served with the

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Rainbow Division, was wounded at Chateau Thierry on July 15, 1918, and died July 18. A military funeral was held at the City Park in Stacyville on September 11. The paper reported that the American Legion, the city band and the pallbearers met at the City Hall and marched to the Catholic Church where they met the remains as they were carried from the church to the hearse. Then the Legion and the band accompanied the body to the park. On the way the band played several musical selections. Peter's body was interred at St. Mary's Cemetery next to that of his soldier brother, Frank Gartner. Mr. and Mrs. Gartner were given the flag that draped Peter's coffin.

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In early spring 1923 Jack's Colts, the Stacyville baseball team, defeated Meyer 6 to 5. "Practically the entire Meyer team" was made up of left-handers. The game was tied up to the start of the ninth inning. Reports were that the Colts "fought like tigers." The visitors reportedly kept the Colts in a "quandary." According to a statement published in the *Monitor*, the Meyer boys were "a set of real gentlemen."

The new school was a two-story building built "along modern lines" and 68 by 68 feet in size. There were six "large, light and airy rooms" on each floor, with a "spacious corridor running through the building from east to west." A full basement with a 12-foot ceiling ran underneath the structure. The cost for building the school was \$45,000.

In March 1924 a Mitchell County landmark was moved into town. The Penneyville schoolhouse, which was located a-mile-and-a-half southeast of town, was moved to Stacyville and located "one block east of the John Lorbeski garage, known by many as the Scheu property." The building was built in 1875 and plans were to remodel it as living quarters.

In the spring of 1924 a city band was being formed again. In addition to the regular group, a "beginner's band" was proposed. Former bandmaster, M. Clarence Arsers, met with citizens and proposed the formation of a band for young boys in the community. At the first meeting of the boys' band, 40 youths signed up. Clarence Adams, representative of the senior band, called the meeting to order. Some of the boys who signed up were E.P. Adams, Leon Green, Carl Adams, Vernon Brown, W.J. Schumacher, Reinhart Adams, Walter Weber, John May, Leo Simon, Elmer Clausen, N.J. Adams, Isidore Freund, Arthur A. Halbach and Paul Kinney.

In April 1925 the American Savings Bank caught fire. Minor damage was contained to the roof. Citizens were assured that had the vault caught fire, the contents would have been safe as it was "absolutely fire-proof."

In September 1925 *The Stacyville Monitor* featured an article about the Stacyville Grain & Coal Company. The "strong and well-conducted institution" dealt in the shipment of grain, livestock, flour, feeds and coal. The cooperative corporation listed 169 stockholders and 270 patrons. In the fiscal year ending in June 1925 the total amount of business transacted grossed \$316,752.08. Shipments of livestock ran to over 100 freight cars. The company owned "two complete elevators with a total capacity of 35,000 bushels; stockyards capable of caring for 10 carloads of stock at a time"; a warehouse which held three carloads of flour and feed; and bins of a capacity of 15 carloads of coal at a time. The management of the company was in the hands of two brothers: W.M. Pitzen, who was in charge of the elevator and retail, and Joe Pitzen, who conducted the livestock department.

The Literary Society of the Visitation Academy gave a debate "Never give money to a beggar" on January 29, 1926. The affirmative speakers were Delphin Brown, Stella Theobald, and Helen Falk. Taking the negative side were Sylvan Heimer, Christina Bawek and Olivia Diedrich. The negatives won by one point according to the newspaper report.

Visitation High School reported an enrollment of 37 students in the high school and 221 in grade school in

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1926. The public school opened in September with the following teachers: Miss Gaffey, primary; Miss Anna Salz, intermediate; Miss Lee, principal. Five Stacyville men were enrolled in Columbia College in Dubuque for the 1926-27 term: Arthur Halbach, Leon Green, Vero Wolf, Paul Kinney and Gervin Pitzen.

Some of the babies born in 1927 included: Mr. and Mrs. Art Wolf, a boy; Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Mayer, a son; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Falk, a boy on Easter Sunday; Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Heimer, a girl; Mr. and Mrs. Joe Michels, a girl; and Mr. and Mrs. Ben Adams, a girl.

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A special election was held in 1928 granting Peter Halbach a 25-year franchise to “construct, operate, maintain and extend a telephone exchange in town.” Only 24 votes were cast.

In November 1928 Dr. Fillenwarth sold his practice and dental equipment to Dr. Carl Staudt of Marble Rock.

Early in 1929 the American Savings Bank changed its name to the Stacyville Savings Bank. The reasons for the name change were stated as: 1) “Our bank is strictly a Stacyville institution so the name of the town should appear in the bank’s name.” 2) “The name is a combination of the names of the old Stacyville State Bank and the American Savings Bank.” Total liabilities were listed at \$281,590.06.

In early 1930 a new organization was formed. A group of 38 met at the Green’s Café to organize the Better Stacyville Association. Officers were C.E. Rex, president; George Kinney, vice president; A.J. Heimerman, secretary and treasurer. One of the first orders of business took place when the group pledged to revive the local band which had been defunct for two years. With a donation of \$365 from members, the future of the band was assured for the upcoming summer. The band was described as a musical organization that “gave Stacyville a certain cultural prestige”—something the Association must have hoped to encourage.

According to the 1930 census, Mitchell County’s population dropped in the previous decade. However, Stacyville’s population showed a gain of 16, for a total of 529. Mitchell County’s total population was 12,844 at the time.

Stacyville’s new street lighting system was installed in June 1930. Twelve light posts, six to a block, were placed in two business blocks. Although citizens must have been delighted with the system, the work interfered with the weekly band concert. Parking of cars on the west side of the two business blocks was difficult due to the trenches dug for the installation of the lights. But it must have been considered a temporary inconvenience that was well-worth the trouble. Residents were hopeful that before long “every block on Broad Street” would be lighted.

As 1930 drew to a close, Stacyville was a busy little community. Hard economic times had hit the entire country and Stacyville was not immune. But many of the businesses and surrounding farms managed to survive. Both the public and Catholic schools were active, as well as the Methodist and Catholic churches. Ball games were still a popular form of entertainment. The Opera House continued its popularity by providing plays and dances. A good day of fishing could still be had down at the river.

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