

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

1931-1940

The next few years were marked by the usual activities—school graduations, church socials, baseball games, city band concerts and plays at the Opera House. But a few milestones occurred during the decade too. A young Carl Theobald bought the implement shop. Mail service by rail came to an end. Boys' and girls' 4-H clubs were started. The dam was rebuilt. Several businesses in town were destroyed by fire. A bank robber was caught by a couple of local men. And Stacyville residents once again prepared to send their sons and daughters to war.

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In 1931 Stacyville gained new status on the state maps when the road south and west of Stacyville was designated a primary road and therefore "given consideration equal to primary roads 218 and 9 through the county." The road north out of town remained a secondary road.

Births recorded in 1931 included: Mr. and Mrs. Carl Brown, a girl; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Foy, a son; Mr. and Mrs. Ray Steiger, a son; Mr. and Mrs. Anton Bawek, a son; and Dr. and Mrs. Carl Staudt, a girl.

The Visitation High School basketball team was the recipient of a new basketball and ball carrier donated by Leo J. Simon. Mr. Simon and Delos Faas were coaches of the squad and had "turned out the best team that has been known in the history of V.H.S." Visitation girls had new school uniforms in 1932. They were "bright blue Indianhead with tan collars, cuffs, belts and ties." It was reported that the 24 girls in high school were "a pretty sight" in their new uniforms.

In March 1933 the Stacyville Savings Bank was closed as a result of a "bank holiday" issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A.J. Heimerman, cashier, said in a newspaper report that the bank was ready to re-open as soon as the word to do so arrived from the government. Citizens met the closing with "complete surprise" as conditions were "entirely normal" with the local bank. It was reported that news of the moratorium was received by Stacyville residents "with the characteristic calm" of the people of the community. Although panic did not occur in the town, a shortage of change was apparent within a short time. "Quarters, nickels and dimes were in great demand at practically all stores." However, "purchases were going on fairly good."

The Stacyville firemen held a meeting in the City Hall to elect officers. Art Wolf was elected president and Ren Anderson was named secretary-treasurer. John Simon was re-elected to the position of fire chief. The following "young men" were admitted to membership in the company: Sy Pitzen, John May, Loren Stehn, Reinhart Adams and Robert Shotliff.

It was reported that red rain fell in Stacyville on April 29, 1933. According to the reports in the newspaper, scientists explained the phenomenon as a result of strong winds from the "red-soiled states of the south." People with flat tin roofs in Stacyville noticed they were coated with a heavy red dust after the rain had dried. It was thought the dust came from Kansas.

In June 1934 the paper reported that a tornado caused damage in Stacyville when several trees were uprooted in the park and at various places in town. A barn was demolished at the Peter Adams residence; sheds were destroyed at the W.R. Brown home; and a chicken house at the George Faas residence was "neatly lifted over the fence and deposited in Roy Gilles' yard." Tony Wagner, who was farming "the Chas. Gerbig place a half mile south of Stacyville," was plowing corn when the storm came. He was picked up by the wind and was carried a "short distance" but was not injured. His horses ran away and one received a cut when it hit the fence. At the cemetery trees were uprooted and tombstones were blown over or broken.

For years Stacyville merchants worried about fire breaking out on the main business district. On a Friday morning in April 1935 their worst fears were realized when fire destroyed three buildings and damaged a fourth. Buildings that suffered complete losses were Louis May's poultry house, William Keonigs' café

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and H.H. Stehn's general store. Windows in buildings across the street were broken. The Stacyville Saving Bank, located on the corner, was slightly damaged. Residents living above each of the buildings managed to escape unharmed, even saving many of their belongings. The fire was thought to have originated from the chimney connected with a stove in Keonigs' restaurant. Firefighters from St. Ansgar helped fight the blaze and pumped water from the river two blocks away. Many firefighters were "minus eyebrows" and some had "badly scorched" faces.

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In December a "large crowd" attended the Farm Bureau meeting at the Henry May home. The program consisted of entertainment by Olivia May on the guitar and Al May at the piano.

A couple of Stacyville youths received special recognition in 1936. Irene Heimer won first place in the "oral contest" at the Mitchell County Spelling Contest in February. Donald Hatten won honors in an "amateur contest sponsored by Tilton & Guthrie Players." According to the newspaper report, "Little Donnie's flying feet tapped and jiggled to the fast music of Tiger Rag." Donnie was "still going strong but the piano player was winded at the end of the dance."

Opera House officers in 1937 were: B.T. Hartnell, president; E.B. Tyler, treasurer; and H.H. Stehn, secretary. Len Gerbig, Karl F. Gerhart, George Penney and Alvin Gerhart served on the board of directors.

As Stacyville prepared for the Christmas holidays in 1937, local merchants strung arches of holly lined with colored lights and big red balls across Broad Street. The Farm Bureau meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Anton Halbach on December 14. The program included a song by Kathleen Hemann, a piano solo of "Silent Night" by Leo Halbach, a reading of "Poor Santa Claus" by Melvin Hemann, a recitation of "The Perfect Background" by Betty Halbach, and a piano solo of "Paul Revere's Ride" by Aloys May.

The line-up for the Visitation High School baseball team for 1938 was announced: pitcher, Gregg Juenger; catcher, Sy Stolzenberg; first baseman, Cletus Hatten; second baseman, Vernon Gilles; third baseman, Eugene Blaser; short stop, Alfred Simon; right field, Urban Brumm; left field, Eugene Heimer; center field, Alfred Smith.

The Monitor reported these newsworthy events in early 1939: Lorraine Isaac had two stitches taken in her scalp when she fell while playing. Sy Stolzenberg, Florentine Brown and Ralph Mullenbach motored to Rochester. Valentine Brown was given a birthday party by friends and neighbors. Joe Thome accompanied a carload of "fat cattle" to Chicago. Mrs. John Stolzenberg held a quilting bee at her house.

In February 1940 Art Wolf purchased the grocery store owned and operated by his mother, Margaret, for 17 years. The name of the store changed from Wolf's Jack Sprat Food Store to Wolf's Grocery.

World events began to catch up with the everyday lives of Stacyville residents in 1940. In October it was announced that all men ages 21-35 were required to register with the Selective Service. One hundred and nine registered from Stacyville.

Just over 20 years had passed since Stacyville sent men to fight in a world war. As the new decade began it appeared that once again the little community would make a significant contribution to another war. And they didn't realize that they were to become known as "the greatest generation."

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