



Historical Society

Of Pottawattamie County

Spec.
Coll.
977.771
H629
Feb 2000

Newsletter

February 2000

Quick Takes

Mark Your Calendar

Topics have been announced for presentations at the February and March meetings of the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County.

The February meeting will be the 20th (see story at right); reserve March 19 as the meeting date for the following month.

Dr. James Knott will present "Trail Ails or Seeing the Elephant" at the March meeting.

Both meetings will be held at 2 p.m. at the community hall. You are welcome to bring interested friends to enjoy the presentations.

Was Your Uncle a Blockhead?

Ever have any relatives that were blockheads, ground hogs, or end men? Actually, in a railroad community like Council Bluffs, you probably did. Marcia Hastings provides us with an glimpse at some railroading slang terms on page 5.

"Amelia Bloomer, Original Bloomer Girl"

Topic of Next Meeting

R.H. Fanders will present a close-up look at one of Council Bluffs' famous longtime residents, Amelia Bloomer, the next meeting of the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County, Sunday, February 20, 2 p.m., at Community Hall.

Amelia Jenks was born May 27, 1818 in Homer, New York and married Dexter Bloomer in 1840. Dexter was an attorney, real estate broker, newspaper publisher, and was active in the politics of the Whig party.

Amelia wrote articles for her husband's newspaper, and some temperance journals. She achieved her

lasting notoriety when she became the editor and publisher of *The Lily* in 1849, a publication of the Ladies' Temperance Society and the first American journal of any kind published by a woman. The publication covered morality, temperance, and women's suffrage. Laws of the time prohibited women from owning property, making contracts, and when a husband died the wife received only one-third of her husband's property, with his heirs getting the rest.

The Bloomers moved to Council Bluffs in 1854 and lived in a log cabin on Fourth Street where the Harry C. Crowl company is now located.

Valentine Traditions

In modern times it's become customary for loved ones, close friends, and family members to exchange gifts on February 14th, known as St. Valentine's Day.

The traditions extend a long way before modern times, tracing roots back to the fourteenth century. Re-visit some of the customs on page 7.

Pottawattamie County Trivia

Answer is on page 6

What was the name of the former psychiatric hospital in Council Bluffs?

Thanks to Society member Gary Emenitove for identifying three more songs that fit last month's trivia question ("Mail Music") perfectly; these are also listed on page 6.

Mercy Hospital: A Legacy of Caring

Mercy Hospital's founders arrived in Council Bluffs and established St. Bernard's Hospital 15 years before Mercy Hospital was constructed. These two institutions coexisted in this community as separate hospitals for over 60 years, and both were operated and supervised by the Sisters of Mercy.

In 1887, at the request of Reverend Bernard P. McMenemy, then pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in Council Bluffs, two Sisters of Mercy from Minneapolis were invited to come to Council Bluffs and establish a hospital. They arrived in September of that year and with the help of some of the local citizens, rented a two-story dwelling on Fourth Street and Ninth Avenue.

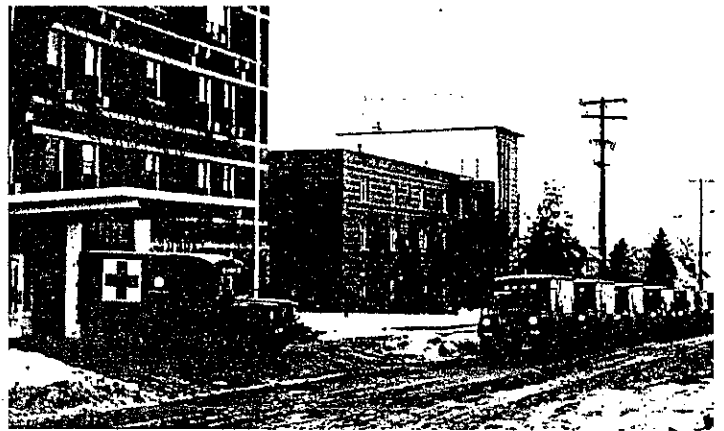
The Articles of Incorporation of the Sisters of Mercy of Council Bluffs were adopted and filed in May of 1888 and later that year, they purchased the Conrad Geise homestead at the corner of Frank and Harmony Streets. With frontage on Frank Street, the original purchase included a 17-room family dwelling located on a three-acre tract. After the death of the former owner the Sisters purchased the adjoining 15 acres belonging to the Geise estate.

This newly-acquired property, which was to become a general hospital and motherhouse, was named St. Bernard's in honor of Father Bernard P. McMenemy. The hospital grew rapidly and two years later an east wing containing 125 beds was erected.

A portion of this annex was set aside for mentally ill patients. Admissions were received from six Midwestern states. Another wing constructed on the west side of the main building was completed in 1896, adding 98 more beds. During the year that followed, a nursing school was established and the first class of six graduates completed the two-year course in 1899. The course of instruction was soon expanded to three years to correspond to the curriculum of other established nursing school programs. This educational unit (later known as Mercy Hospital School of Nursing) remained in operation for 68 years.

At the beginning of the new century, the demand for hospital rooms was so great that the Sisters searched for more land area to expand their hospital facilities and selected a site directly across Frank Street. A tract of land between Washington Avenue and Harmony Street was acquired and within two years construction of Mercy Hospital was underway. With an entrance on Harmony Street, this five-story brick structure contained 118 patient rooms and represented an expenditure of \$80,000. Also housed in this new hospital was a main operating

room, a maternity ward and nursery, and a special room area on the first floor for the admission of emergency cases. Mercy Hospital's medical staff consisted of six surgeons and four physicians specializing in general medicine.



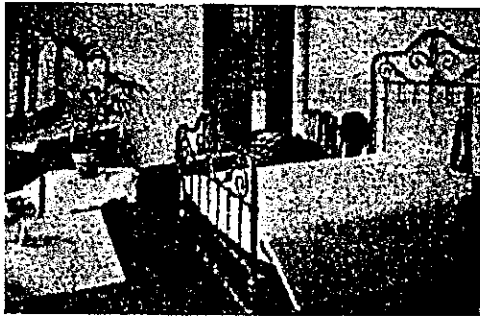
In 1902, when the doors of Mercy Hospital opened for the first time in Council Bluffs, Theodore Roosevelt was President and the Wright Brothers made their first airplane flight in Kittyhawk, North Carolina. A Council Bluffs Nonpareil issue of September 6, 1903 reports the following: "St. Bernard's Hospital, the parent institution, was established in 1887. The new Mercy Hospital was completed and began receiving patients soon after the first of 1902. These two hospitals constitute the largest institution of its character in the entire middle west".

"These institutions now have a population of some 250 and have facilities to care for over twice that number. All of this has come from the

Mercy Hospital, continued

earnest and faithful efforts of two Sisters of Mercy who first set foot in Council Bluffs less than a score of years ago without a penny to their name."

"No greater work has been accomplished by an half dozen or more industries in the city nor has any institution proven of greater benefit to Council Bluffs and its surrounding territory than has that founded here by the Sisters of Mercy."



Another acquisition in 1902 was St. Mary's Home. This three-story residential structure was located west of Mercy Hospital on the corner of Baughn and Harmony Streets. Under the administration of the Sisters of Mercy, it was operated as a boarding home for working girls.

By 1907, Sister Vincent McDermott and her assistant, Sister Magdalene Bennett, together with their faithful band of religious workers had accomplished miracles. Twenty years had passed since they came to Council Bluffs, and during this period, they had built and were operating two hospitals in the community.

A 1914 addition to St. Bernard's contained a chapel and a large Auditorium. It also housed the general kitchens, cafeteria, private dining room for patients, a hydrotherapy department, and an occupational therapy department. The total inpatient capacity at

this time was 300.

To accommodate the increased demand for health care services, Mercy Hospital expanded the facilities to fit the needs. In 1926, an addition was constructed to the east of the main hospital building which allowed an additional entrance on Washington Avenue. With this new wing, capacity reached a total of 250 beds.

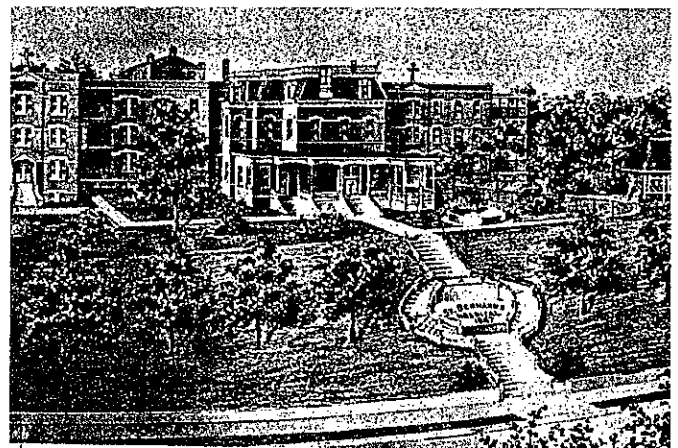
Before the end of World War II, construction of a new Nursing School building was completed and was occupied by student nurses in 1944. Erected parallel to Baughn Street on the southwest section of the Mercy Hospital tract, this U-shaped wing extended approximately 250 feet from Washington Avenue to Harmony Street, and was attached to the Main hospital on the Harmony Street side. The ground level consisted of classrooms, library, offices and a cafeteria. The second floor was primarily dormitory facilities for students, and the third floor housed the Sisters' convent. Attached to this structure on the Washington Avenue side was an auditorium and gymnasium. The facilities of St. Bernard's kept pace with a steady increase in patient admissions, and in 1952 a four-story

brick wing was added on the north side of the central structure. In addition to increasing the bed capacity of 100 beds, this wing also included first-floor offices and visiting area plus a combination auditorium and theater on the second level. Three years later,

a two-story freestanding building was constructed as a residence for the nursing personnel.

The last expansion to the old Mercy Hospital building was a two-story wing, added in 1956. This 12,000 square foot addition included the X-ray department, the admitting and business offices, a gift shop, a visitors' lobby area and several administrative offices on the ground floor. The second level contained four surgery suites, the autoclave area and a recovery room.

Through the years while St. Bernard's Hospital specialized in the care of psychiatric patients, Mercy was dedicated to the care of surgical and medical patients. Both of these hospitals served Council Bluffs and Southwest Iowa until they merged in July of 1965. In the spring of 1966 the oldest portion of St. Bernard's Hospital was razed leaving only the 1954 wing, Marian Wing, and the nurses's resi-



dence building.

In the spring of 1968 bids were awarded for the construction of the new Mercy Hospital bringing the facility to a total capacity of 350 beds. The facility opened in 1971.

(contributed by Darlene Vergamini)

The Spirit of Minden

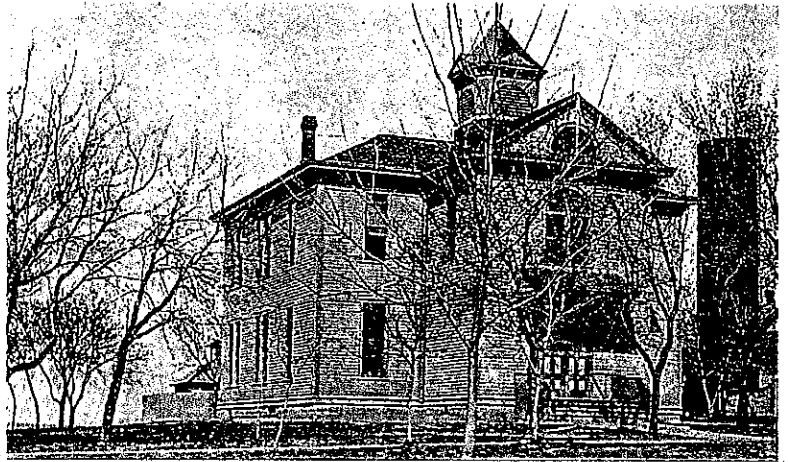
The town of Minden derives its name from the home of its first settlers who came from Minden, Germany. It was started in 1869 soon after the coming of the C.R.I. & P Railroad. Casper Foster of Davenport, Iowa purchased 10,000 acres of the Rock Island road and a condition was that the company should establish and maintain a station on this property. Minden was not incorporated until 1890.

The first residence was built by Hugo Priester and in 1870 Casper Foster and Peter Ehlers built homes. G. Diederich built the first store in 1875 and moved in a general stock of goods from Avoca. J.O. Jeffries built the next store and engaged in the grocery trade with a restaurant attached.

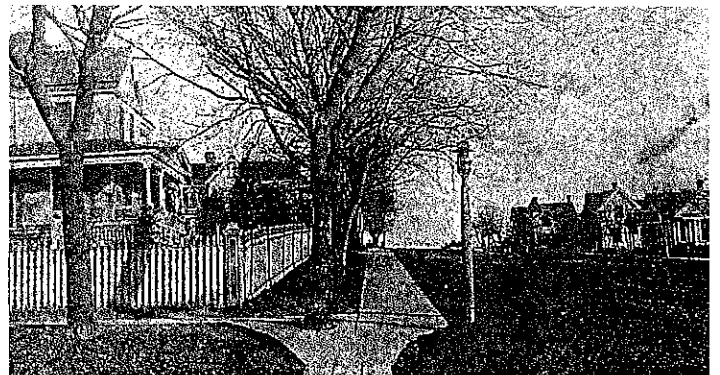
The first carpenters were Henry Urbans, August Kaven and Fred Kruganbery. The first blacksmith was Mr. Rodecker. The first lumber business was conducted by Messrs. Pria & Hornley, a Davenport firm. Peter Ehlers was the first to begin the train trade. Dr. McLeod was the first physician and James Crow the first land agent. The first school as taught by Mr. Kelsey in one room of Mr. Foster's residence. Later James Crow had a schoolhouse built.

In 1878 a German Lutheran church was organized. Rev. Julius Oehlert was the pastor and the original members were August Kaven, Adam Turk, John Stuhr, Jr., Jacob Wasser, Deidrich Rohlf, Peter Alleman, August Bock, Wilhelm Bolte, Wilhelm Geise, John Stuhr, Sr., August Geise and Carl Leitzke.

By 1880, Minden had a drugstore, hardware stores, agricultural implement dealers, dry goods and grocery merchants, lumber dealers, physician, harness dealer, blacksmith and a hotel. Later there was a German American Bank, saloons, grain elevators, a barbershop, a meat market, a livery barn, a creamery, and one of the largest canneries in western Iowa.



In June of 1976 at 6 p.m. during the annual Minden Carnival the town sirens sounded. Moments later, three tornadoes ripped through town. About two-thirds of the homes and buildings were either damaged or destroyed. The residents rolled up their sleeves and went to work. A new American Legion Hall was built. In 1977, a new community hall began to go up with volunteers working after hours or when rainy weather kept them from their field work. The building was ready for its grand opening dance on April 23, 1978. Minden is known for hosting



The Spirit of Minden, cont.

weekly Sunday night dances and other private and public get togethers.

The spirit of Minden is steeped in a heritage of small town neighborliness.

By Darlene Vergamini; taken from 1907 County History, S.W. Iowa Guide and miscellaneous newspaper articles.

A Leap Year Like This One Comes Once Every 400 Years

Enjoy this February. It's the kind month that comes along once every 400 years.

A mathematical oddity and the Earth's stubborn refusal to speed up its orbit are requiring astronomers and timekeepers to add a 29th day- a leap day- to this month.

Wait a minute, you say. We learned in school that any year divisible by four- like 2000- has a leap day in February, so what's the big deal?

This is the big deal: To keep everything in sync, century years- those that end in 00- generally are not leap years. There was no February 29 in 1700, 1800, or 1900. But once every four turns of the century we need a February 29, and here we are.

Leap years are required because the earth refuses to neatly obey our Gregorian calendar. It orbits the sun not every 365 days but every 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds.

But the "roughly" part of that sentence remains a problem. We're still off about 11 minutes per year, which can add up. So we skip three leap days every four hundred years.

Still with us? That pretty much fixes everything, though not entirely. Once every 4,000 years, we skip another leap day. Please try to remember that when it comes along.

(Contributed by Society member Fern Brown; from the Miami Herald, reprinted in the Omaha World Herald, February 2, 2000)

Railroad Slang Terms

Binders-	hand brakes
Black diamonds-	company coal
Blackie, Hoghead, Hogger, Pig Mauler, or Pig Jockey-	locomotive engineer
Blazer-	a journal box packing on fire
Bleed a car-	drain the air reservoir
Blockhead, Ground hog, Shack, End man, Squirrel-	brakeman
Board-	a fixed signal usually referred to a slow or order clear
Bookkeeper-	flagman
Boomer-	someone who worked for many railroads
Boxcar-	an all room Pullman
Brain-plate-	a trainman's hat badge
Breeze-	compressed air
Bridge money-	people who work on bridges
Brownie box-	superintendent's car
Buckle the Bolognies-	connect air hoses
Bug-	a telegraph instrument or also a lantern
Bug Torch-	a trainman's lantern
Bull cod-	a knuckle lock
Bullhead, Skipper, Captain, Brains, Corn Doctor-	conductor

(From "Trains Across the Continent" by Rudolph Daniels; contributed by Marcia Hastings)

Pioneer Biography - - - Irving M. Treynor

IRVING M. TREYNOR, former Postmaster of Council Bluffs, Iowa, was born in this city, on the 26th day of November, 1857, and is the second son of Thomas P. Treynor, now a prominent and successful farmer of Pottawattamie County.

Mr. Treynor's earlier years were spent in the old log cabin where he was born, his father having moved to this county at an early date, in fact, when the now thriving city of Council Bluffs was only a straggling village, known as Kanesville.

At the age of four years the subject of this sketch began his educational career in the public schools of this city, and remained until he had attained the age of fourteen, when he entered the Iowa State University, at Iowa City. There he remained for three years, and, returning home, assumed the position of assistant to his father, who was Postmaster of Council Bluffs, from March, 1869 to May, 1877. Here he remained for two years, when, having received a flattering offer from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway, he entered the service of that company as freight clerk. His recognized ability brought him rapidly to the front, and in a comparatively short space of time he had reached the responsible position of cashier and chief clerk at this point.

In 1884, desiring to embark in business for himself, he severed his connection with the railroad company, and with Messrs. Orcutt and French, organized the Council Bluffs Carpet Company. By common consent, he was made the financial manager of the concern, and the successful building up of a large and well-established business attests the wisdom of the choice, which the members of the firm made in this direction.

Mr. Treynor has always taken a lively interest in musical matters, and the reputation which Council Bluffs now enjoys in this line is in no small measure due to his

untiring energy and unselfish devotion, as well as to his generous contributions of time and money toward the development of a high order of musical culture. He has sung the leading tenor roles in a number of light operas and oratorios. At the present time, he is a member of the Apollo Club of Omaha, Nebraska; is a trustee of that organization, and holds the responsible position of chairman of the musical committee of that society.

Mr. Treynor is a prominent member of the Royal Arcanum; one of the founders and a trustee of the Council Bluffs and Omaha Chautauqua; and active member of the Rowing Association, and one of the leaders of the Board of Trade. Religiously he believes in the doctrines of the Episcopal Church, is a member of St. Paul's, and has served in the vestry of that religions' organization. Politically he is a Republican of the stalwart type, and has been a delegate to nearly every Republican State, Congressional and Judicial Convention, which has been held during the past twelve years.

In September, 1889, he was appointed Postmaster of Council Bluffs by President Harrison, succeeding Hon. Thomas Bowman.

Mr. Treynor was married on the 4th day of November, 1880, to Miss Kittie E. Oblinger, daughter of Captain H. G. P. Oblinger, of this city. Albert McKune Treynor, is the only issue of this union.

(Source: 1891 Biographical History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa; Contributed By: Cathy Danielson)

Trivia Answer

The former psychiatric hospital in Council Bluffs was named St. Bernard's.

Regarding last month's trivia question... Society member Gary Emenitove passes on these suggestions: "Take a Letter Maria" from R.B. Greaves, "With Pen in Hand", Bobby Goldsboro, and "Zip Code", the Five Americans.

In the Middle Ages, young men and women drew names from a bowl to see who their valentines would be. They would wear these names on their sleeves for one week. To wear your heart on your sleeve e now means that it is easy for other people to know how you are feeling.

In Wales wooden love spoons were carved and given gifts on February 14th. Hearts, keys and keyholes were favorite decorations on the spoons. The decoration meant "You unlock my heart!"

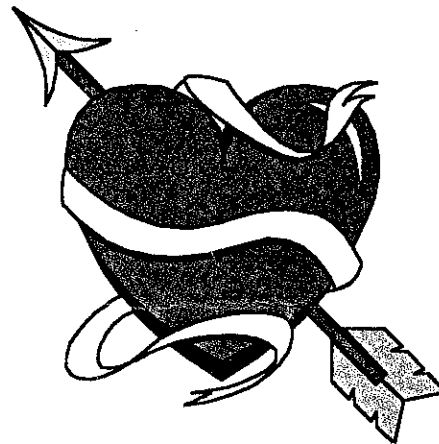
Some people used to believe that if a woman saw a robin flying overhead on Valentine's Day, it meant she would marry a sailor. If she saw a sparrow, she would marry a poor man and be very happy. If she saw a goldfinch, she would marry a millionaire.

In some countries, a young woman may received a gift of clothing from a young man. If she keeps the gift, it means she will marry him.

Valentine Traditions

A love seat is a wide chair. It was first made to seat one woman and her wide dress. Later, the love seat or courting seat had two sections, often in an S-shape. In this way, a couple could sit together-- but not too closely!

Hundreds of years ago in England, many children dressed up as adults on Valentine's Day. They went singing from home to home. One verse they sang was:



Pick a dandelion that has gone to seed. Take a deep breath and blow the seeds into the wind. Count the seeds that remain on the stem. That is the number of children you will have.

Good morning to you,
valentine;

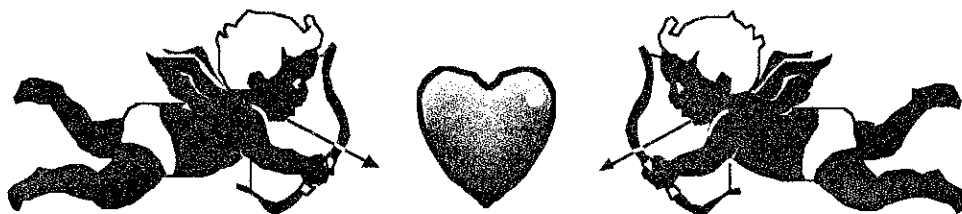
Curls your locks as I do mine---

Two before and three behind.

Good morning to you, valentine.

If you cut an apple in half and count how many seeds are inside you will also know how many children you will have.

Think of five or six names of boys or girls you might marry. As you twist the stem of an apple, recite the names until the stem comes off. You will marry the person whose name you were saying when the stem fell off.



*Historical Society of
Pottawattamie County Officers
and Board Members*

President- Gale Foutch
Vice president- Cathy Danielson
Treasurer- Joyce Glessman
Secretary- Robert Hastings

Board of Directors-

Ralph Wright
Dr. James Knott
Ken Milford
John Blake
Marvin Lausen
R. H. Fanders
Darlene Vergamini

Committee Chairmen-

Jail- Dennis Danielson
Depot- Marcia Hastings
Genealogical Committee- Alice Bentz

Newsletter Editor- Dr. Richard Warner

The Historical Society of Pottawattamie County is dedicated to the preservation of books, letters, sites, records, artifacts and buildings of historical significance in the county. The Society operates and is restoring the Historic Squirrel Cage Jail, Rock Island Depot, involved in the efforts to create a local museum, and is active in promoting historical and genealogical research.

Requests for information about Society projects, membership, and volunteer work are welcomed. Write the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County, Post Office Box 2, Council Bluffs, IA, 51502.

The Historical Society of Pottawattamie County Member Newsletter is printed eleven times a year and mailed to all members. The membership mailing list is maintained by the Society Secretary, Robert Hastings. Please direct any address corrections to Mr. Hastings at 322-0612 or to the Society post office box listed above.

Members are always welcome to attend a Board Meeting. Anyone desiring to speak at the meeting should send a letter or call either the Secretary or President to be placed on the agenda.

**Historical
Society**
Of Pottawattamie County
Post Office Box 2
Council Bluffs, IA 51502

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Council Bluffs, IA
Permit 180

Mr. Jim Godsey, Director
Council Bluffs Public Library
Main Street and Willow Ave.
Council Bluffs, IA 51503