

History of Hordville

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Now that the American Revolution Bicentennial has arrived, it is time to turn back the pages of time and see what has taken place in Hordville. The coming of the Union Pacific Railroad to this community was really the foundation for the establishment of the Village of Hordville. The federal government gave the Union Pacific Railroad every other section of land along the railroad. In turn the Union Pacific gave permission for the City Improvement Company of Stromsburg to plat two towns to be of equal distance $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles apart between Central City and Stromsburg. Land was purchased at \$100 an acre from John Litzenberg, John Larson, Andrew Person, Nels Bengtson, and Fridhem Lutheran Church to become the present townsite of Hordville. The City Improvement Company, a corporation, was operated by Wealsy, Nathan, and Victor Nelson of Stromsburg. O. T. Reedy, a civil engineer, made the plats of the new towns and personally headed the surveying. Ivan Bengtson was one of the four men doing the surveying and measuring. All lots, streets, and alleys were laid out and put for sale on September 12, 1906. The town was given the name Hordville in honor of T.B. Hord, a prosperous cattle feeder of Central City, who also erected the Hord elevator.

What did Hordville look like in 1906? At that time it was mostly corn fields. The first building on the site was Fridhem Lutheran Church erected in 1882. In 1886 the Lutheran parsonage was built. The old church later became the town hall. The day after the sale of lots H.M. Benson began the construction of a general store for Axel F. Johnson, the building now housing the northern part of Gil's Market. This early store sold fine china, clothing, as well as groceries. The store was then half its present size. Afterward the southern part was added. Other proprietors of the store were Oscar Branting, Willis and Wilson, Homer Branting, Victor Suntych, Mr. Pillar, Martin McConnell, and now Merlin Guilford. In 1946 a locker plant was added for frozen food storage.

Shortly after the Axel Johnson store began to take form, Cyrus Ramey started a general store on the south end of the same block. After 4 years of operation he sold to David Olson who in turn sold the store to John Ostbloom. Later it became a photography studio operated by Edgar Draper. This building served many purposes including a filling station and a shoe repair shop before being torn down.

Before Hordville was founded a trading post consisting of a general store, creamery, implement shop, blacksmith shop, and a post office was located at Stark which was north of Highway 66 on the southeast corner of the Lennart Johnson farm and the southwest corner of the Duane Blase farm. The general store was moved from here to Hordville near what is now the old barber shop building. This store was managed by Lucius Comstock. For a time the post office was in this building and Dr. Douglas had his office upstairs. Later the building burned in a spectacular fire. Joel Carlstrom, the town's only harness maker, had his establishment upstairs at the time of the fire.

The Stark Implement building was moved to Hordville with its location north of the Ramey Store, then moved to a half block east of the First State Bank and finally south east side of main street. M.A. Larson was the first operator of the implement business. He sold to H.M. Benson in 1910. Other owners of the business were Axel W. Johnson, Dick Thesing, Lloyd Benson, and R.L. Anderson.

The First State Bank was established almost as soon as the town started. Its charter is dated September 10, 1906. The building materials were all hauled from Stromsburg by team and wagon. While the building was in progress, the bank operations were transacted in the drug store building as was the post office. The bank was organized by Wesley, Nathan, and Victor Wilson with C. Victor Nelson as cashier. The bank was incorporated with capital of \$10,000. In 1910 it was sold to W.I. Farley and A.W. Hickman with P.J. Refshauge as cashier. In 1918 L.G. Crampton became cashier and R.C. Gustafson started as bank clerk later becoming cashier in 1922 and the bank's president in 1927. In 1957 Richard Anderson was hired as cashier, the position he holds today.

In the building next to the bank on the north was the office of the Hamilton County Telephone Company. Telephones were installed as soon as business places and residences were built. The first operator was Mrs. Baird. Mrs. Percy King succeeded her in 1911. After she married Isaac Lampshire the switchboard was moved to their home in west Hordville. She served in this capacity until 1941 when Mrs. Grover Coleman became operator and later Mrs. Gilbert Necker. In 1957 conversion to the dial system was made.

The first blacksmith shop with a planing mill was run by Thede Larson. He sold to Clark Towle who sold to H.M. Benson and P.J. Refshauge. John Veburg took over in 1911 and sold the business to Gust Seaquist in 1919. In 1939 Gust Seaquist moved to south Hordville. From this time the building has been used for storage.

The Mitchell and Cohagen Grocery and Hardware Store was located in what is now the Veburg Seed Store. After two years they sold to Albert Hahn who later sold to the Farmers Union. ^{Orchard} Later ~~Later~~ proprietors were Leonard Wallin, then Virgil and Milburn who sold groceries and bought poultry, cream and eggs. After the building became vacant R.L. Anderson used it until the seed store was established.

The post office has had various locations. Mr. Comstock had it in his store. C.T. Hill erected a small building for it south of the present seed store. Hulda Anderson Branting was the next postmaster followed by Cecil Smersh. Afterwards Mrs. Mae Slater filled the position until her retirement in 1950. During this time the post office was in conjunction with the T.G. Slater Drug Store. The present postmaster is Elmer Garner. For years Tom Montgomery was a familiar sight with his wheelbarrow as he picked up the mail at the post office, took it to the train, and carried ~~back the morning~~ mail. The train came early in the morning and returned in the early evening. After Tom retired Vic Ahl carried the mail. Art Bush was rural carrier for many years and was followed by E.B. Holmes who continued until his death. The present carrier is Maynard Johnson.

The Hoagland Lumber Company was the first lumber yard in town. It was sold to the Hordville Lumber Company that was managed by Aaron Blomquist and later by B.E. Bengtaon. When the business closed, the building was sold and dismantled.

Hordville had a hotel to accommodate salesmen and visitors. It was located west of the bank. Owners were F.I. Wallin and J.O. Wade. A grocery store and meat market were in the hotel. Mr. Jennings had the town's first meat market which he sold to F.I. Wallin. In later years Leonard Wallin operated the store and lived in the hotel.

At one time the town had three doctors. Doctors that practiced here were Moore, Jarmin, Douglas, Spannare, Lingenfelder, and Flippin. For a time a jewelry store was in operation.

The buildings north of the bank were used for many purposes. Time does not permit individual listings of all occupants. The north building was used as Dr. Jarmin's office, later as a produce station by Miles Duffy and then by Homer Branting. Grover Coleman used it as a cafe. Cafes were operated by McCarthy sisters, Frank Parker, Leo Bowlby, and in 1975, it was purchased by and is presently operated by Howard and Lorene Cox. The middle building was the location of the Albin Person and Jennings General Store. Later it served as a barber shop. Barbers included Don Shields, Grover Coleman, Burl Campbell, and Del Bratton. The south building was used for many purposes, including cafes run by Bill Erickson and by Albin Nelsons. Carlstrom used it as a harness shop which was later taken over by Frank Lingwall.

The cement block building now housing the fire department was started by Frank Mitchell who operated it for one year. He sold to Reuben Larson who had a garage there until his death in 1919, when his brother, Irl, took it over. Irl, in turn, sold to H. M. Benson in 1923. In 1926, Freeman Larson purchased the business which he later sold to R. L. Anderson in 1929. Other owners were Morris Johnson, Lowell Keyes, and Kenneth Person. In 1957 it was turned into the fire hall and also houses the school buses.

Other businesses included the Bush Livery Stable located back of the present fire hall, and facing south. Art Bush operated the stable for a long time. Earl and Dwight Bush had a dray line. They hauled incoming freight merchandise from the depot to the various business places. Drug stores were run by V. McFarland, Mr. Brown, Cecil Smersh, and T. G. Slater. Charley Larson had a large ice pond in west Hordville where people came to cut ice in the winter, and store in their icehouses for summer refrigeration.

Getting back to the railroad, its schedule included not only freight, but passenger trains as well. It was possible to board a train, or motor, in the morning, spend a few hours in Central City, and return on the afternoon train. Kids, and adults too, met the "Spookeye" as it was affectionately called, as it came from Lincoln in the early evening. This train, in its later years a motor car, made its last run January 27, 1952. Now a freight train goes through town daily. The depot was built as soon as the town started. A railroad work car served as depot until the building was completed. The first depot was destroyed by fire and was replaced with another which has since been torn down. Sam Briggs served as agent many years and was followed by Stambaugh. A. M. Patterson served as agent 22 years and was followed by Larry Killion in 1952.

A logical sequence was followed in the settlement of the community. First settlers built

their homes. Some of the first homes in town are now occupied by Mrs. Glenn Fowler, Mrs. Velma Smith, Marie Clayton, the school's house, the Lyman Lampshire, and the Jones-Parsons home. 126

Merlyn Fowler's present home was built as the first Lutheran parsonage.

As soon as possible the settlers built their churches. Fridhem Lutheran Church was organized in 1880. A church was built in 1882 on what is now the northeast corner of the Hordville Cemetery. Then, in 1908, the present church was erected. The old church was sold and moved to Main Street where it was enlarged and serves as the Town Hall. In 1930 the present parsonage was built.

The First Baptist Church was organized on Dec. 18, 1878, two miles east of Hordville. They held their meetings in a school house until 1886 when a church was built. In 1920 this building and the parsonage were moved into Hordville. The 75th anniversary of the church was fittingly observed December 6, 1953.

The members of the North Blue Methodist Church located 2 miles south and 1 mile east of the present site of Hordville, built a new church in Hordville in 1907. Members voted to disband in 1955. The church property was sold at auction July 16, 1955, the church being purchased by members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Polk and moved there.

Another important item in the community is the school. The first District 61 had a one room school located one half mile south of town on the east side of the road. Enrollment was large, going up to as many as 60 when farm work was slack. The school at times was so crowded that three children shared a double seat and desk. In 1911 it was decided to move to town, and construction of a new brick school building was started. On January 1, 1912 the new school was placed in use. Ray Peters was the first superintendent, followed in 1913 by Ivan Bengtson. The school at first had ten grades, later 11, and finally 12. In 1928 the building was enlarged. A PTA was organized in 1925 and has been active, sponsoring immunization of the children, purchasing kitchen equipment, planning Mother-Daughter and Father-Son banquets etc. The district consolidated with neighboring districts and has 2 buses to pick up the students.

The Town Hall is the oldest building in town. Although it is not pretentious in size it has well served its purpose. It was used for Lutheran Swedish summer school in the early days, and later used temporarily by the Baptists. It is a precinct polling place, was lodge hall for the Royal Neighbors and the Modern Woodmen. It is presently a meeting place for 4-H Clubs. Before the high school gym was built the Juniors and Seniors presented their class plays there. There were medicine shows. It was called the opera house. High school graduation exercises were

held there.

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The nearby water pumping station, water tower, and water system were put into use in 1922.

Hordville's streets received a coating of sand when all the farmers for miles around got together, took their teams and wagons to the Platte River, got sand, and took it back to town and spread it on the streets. The women served meals and a gala occasion was made of the two days it took to do the job. In 1972 <sup>Main Street +
other</sup> three streets were hard-surfaced.

Hordville was incorporated in 1916. Shortly after that electricity was brought to the village.

The Sewer system was put in in 1964.

The Hordville Band was long a part of the local life. John Lyon directed a group known as the Stark Cornet Band, organized in 1899. He boasted 17 young band men, none of them married. The band sometimes practiced in haymows before the advent of Hordville, and played at weddings, celebrations, and rallies. After John Lyon left a Mr. Isaac from Stromsburg came by team., later by train, to direct the band. Art Thompson of Central City was also a director. In time a Hordville band was organized and Leonard Nelson directed it, followed later by Chris Rasmussen. Band concerts were held weekly during the summers and were big events in the social life of the community. Later free movies were shown.

Later businesses included the starting of two filling stations along Highway #66, owned by Gus Seaquist, and by R. L. Anderson. Gus started in 1939 and later sold to Marwin Rogers. Bob and Andrew Bush took over the station established by Mr. Anderson in 1950. The Farmers' Cooperative Gas and Oil Station was started in 1961. For many years Paul Jones had a hog buying business along the railroad tracks. Mrs. Elmer Garner had a variety store in the postoffice building for some time.

Of outstanding service to the community is the Farmers' Co-op Association. This firm is the fourth oldest in Nebraska. First in grain business, starting in 1907, was the Lexington Elevator Company, which built the first elevator, which was torn down in 1976. T. B. Hord early built an elevator which was purchased by the Co-op as was the Lexington Elevator. It enlarged the latter building and tore down the Hord elevator. The firm now has an immense storage capacity in two concrete elevators and a large quonset. Modern fertilizer and grain-drying equipment has^e been added. Co-op managers through the years include George C. Grosvenor, H. G. Carpenter, Clarence Rodine for more ³² ~~than~~ 25 years, and Dwayne Hahn, the present manager.

25 years

For offenders of the law there was a stone block jail located between the hotel and the bank. The building was torn down some years ago.

You may think that life in this small town was dull but even in the horse and buggy days there was excitement. For many years once a week the band provided music in the band stand. During the summer Chautauquas were held under a tent south of the Baptist Church. This enterprise provided games and entertainment for the children in the mornings while in the afternoons and evenings some of the nation's best performers appeared on the stage. One time citizens gazed in amazement at a balloon ascension that took place near main street. Small circuses came with their elephants, monkeys and other animals. It was an exciting day when a wedding was held in the band stand. For a number of years corn shows attracted exhibitors who tried for prizes in corn, baked products, needle work, etc. There were celebrations too when water fights and tug of war were main attractions. Charley Larson's ice pond was used as an ice skating rink. Before the school had a gym, basketball games were played in the lumber yard. During World War I the Red Cross had an auction on main street. Patriotic citizens did their share of contributing to the cause. The train on which Abe Lincoln once rode made a stop at the depot. William Jennings Bryan came through on the train when he campaigned for the presidency. August 23, 1956, was Hordville Day when the town celebrated its fiftieth anniversary by having an all day celebration. During the bank's existence two robberies have taken place, the first one in the fall of 1928 and the second one December 26, 1974.