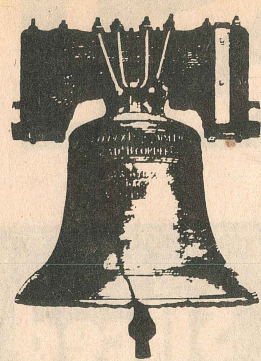
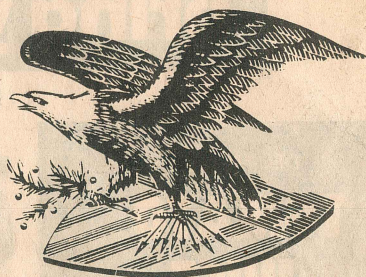


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"Remembrances of Days Gone By"

Polk City: A Town Rich with History

The community of Polk City will celebrate its 100th anniversary since its incorporation on March 25, 1875, and in conjunction with the event, a three day celebration has been planned by residents of the area. The annual Kiwanis Beef Barbecue is also being held during this memorable event.

The Polk City area is one rich in history since its settlement around 1846.

The early town was settled around the Big Creek stream which is located in the northwest corner and 2½ miles from the Dallas County line. The stream flows southeast and then empties into the Des Moines River 10 miles from the northern boundary of Polk County. Today, the Big Creek Lake and state park is located in this same area.

Belts of timber lined the banks with settlements dispersed all along. One of these grew into the eventual community of Big Creek, which flourished for several years.

The first settler into this area was George Beebe, who came to the northern Polk County district in 1846. He purchased the land described as west half of north-west four of section 1, Township 80, Range 25 of Polk County, Iowa. Between his cabin and the Minnesota state line, there was not a cabin or even a trace of civilization for many, many years. Those squatters who settled in this vacant land area waited with anticipation for the land office to open so they could register their land purchases at the going government price of \$1.25 per acre.

Mosquitoes were a constant pest of the early settlers as Mrs. Beebe was recorded to have stated that no one could even go out in the evening without the use of mittens and coats and often without veils because of the many insects. She would sit in the doorway of the cabin and more often than not had to wrap hands and protect her face from the mosquito attacks or be bled and tormented beyond endurance.

Polk City was laid out by George Beebe and on November 8, 1850, he became the first magistrate in the section. His home served as the official election center for many years. He erected a mill, bought a stock of goods and sold lots. He donated land to build the town and soon businesses were built on all sides of the town square. The town square was to be made permanently into a park according to the deed given to the community by Beebe.

The town of Big Creek was also laid out in 1850 with A. Van Dorn driving the first stake in the new community.

Henry Matter was the first physician of this area while Piper and Barnum were merchants. John DeMoss, Thompson Bird and D. C. Marts were the first preachers where they held their services in the cabins at the Saylorville and Big Creek settlements.

The first county road was laid out in 1847 by three men appointed by the county commissioners in Des Moines. These men were Conrad Stutzman, John McLane and Andrew Groschlose.

Beginning at the fork of the Des Moines river near the Meacham home on the east side of the river, the road was to connect the mills located to the north. The road was laid out to go by the homes of those early pioneers and today, Highway 415 follows this route almost exactly.

The pioneer stage route was operated by the Western Stage Company which was driven in this area by Martin Burke. Beebe's settlement was a common stop of the coach between Boone and Des Moines.

Horace Greeley was probably the most famous traveler ever traveling this route and it is understood that he stopped at Polk City for refreshments before venturing on the Swede Point where he spent the night.

Missed Being Capitol By One Vote

Back in 1855 when Des Moines was still known as Fort Des Moines, both it and Big Creek boasted a flour mill, five shoe shops, three general stores and five saloons, quite a lot for communities in those days. The Iowa state legislature appointed a committee to investigate the possibilities of moving the capitol from Iowa City to a more centrally located spot for the purpose of the new statehouse.

According to several older residents of that area, the final decision of the commission was to have the capitol either at Fort Des Moines or Big Creek. The committee consisted of three men and at their meeting in May of 1857, two voted to move it to Fort Des Moines while one commissioner favored Big Creek.

In 1863, a log school house was built by John Schaal from native walnut trees found in the area. It was used as a school house and also served as a church on Sunday. The first schoolmaster was John DeMoss and early teachers included Desire Mather, Mrs. Bristow, Mrs. Nutting, Miss Beech, Mr. Groom, Mr. Hall, Mr. Butt, Mr. Williams, C.J. Clark, Mr. Greene, Mr. Mosier and Robert Wilson.

Competition for the railroad took place in this area as it did in many other central Iowa communities. By 1865, only Boone and Des Moines were close to Polk City and this community was hoping for the railroad to pass through the town. With the completion of the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad to Boone in 1865 and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad to Des Moines in 1867, the future of the town was threatened.

In 1874, the Des Moines and Minneapolis narrow

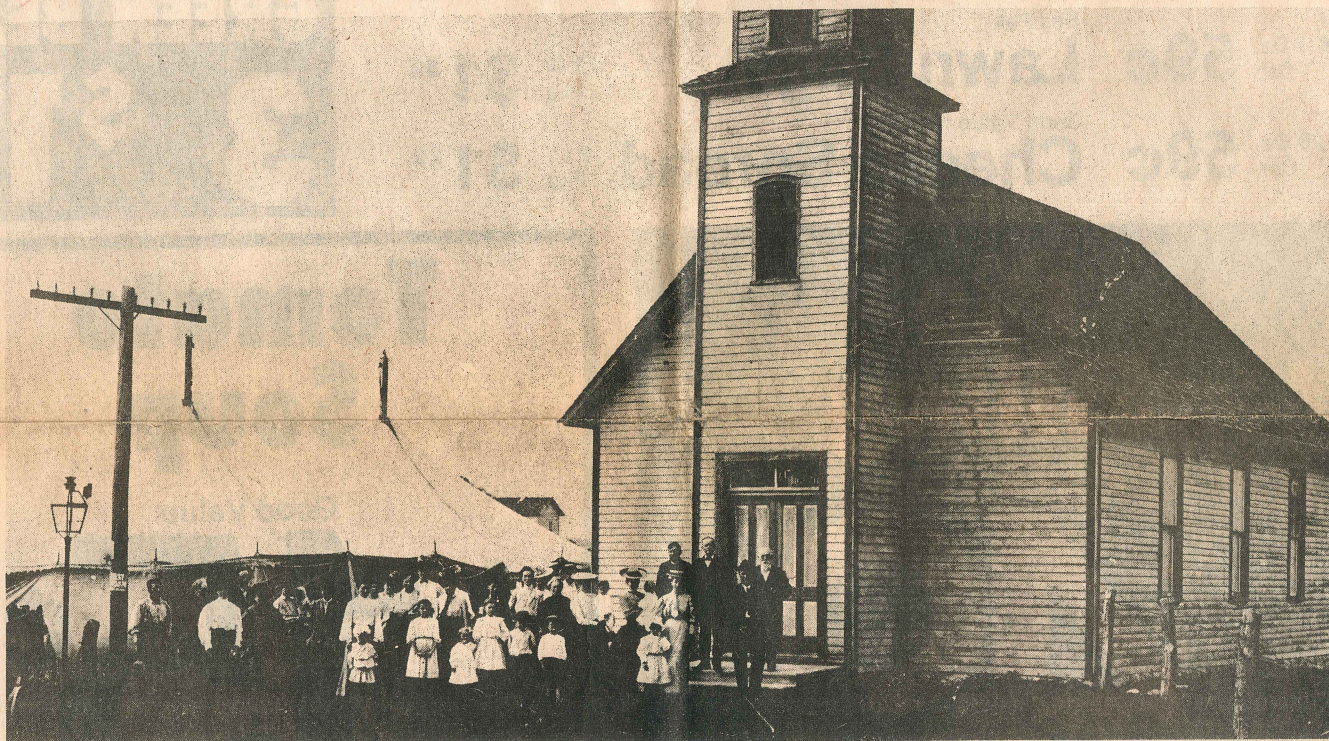
gauge road was opened from Des Moines to Ames passing through Polk City. However, this line was taken over by the Chicago, Northwestern Railroad in 1878 and they straightened out the route making it more direct and thus, left Polk City two miles west of the new line.

Protests from the irate citizens began to be heard and they went to court alledging their rights had been violated and eventually did get the spur line back to the town.

The county of Polk was organized into six townships in February of 1867 and the Town of Polk City was placed in Madison Township. The first election was held the following April with the purpose of electing township officials.

One of the earliest churches in the area and undoubtedly the entire state was the Methodist Episcopal organized with 12 members in 1848. The building was erected in 1866 and dedicated in 1867. The house now occupied by Walter A. Betz used to be the parsonage for this church.

A Baptist church was organized in 1868 with eight members and they had no regular house of worship. They would simply meet in the different members homes.



The Free Methodist Church, founded in 1894 is shown above. The church stood on the ground where the Big Creek Publishing office is now located. The tent to the left of the church housed the tent meetings usually held in August.

The Free Methodist Church was founded in 1894 and stood where the Big Creek Publishing office is now located.

It was in April 1858 that a Congregational Church was organized with five charter members. The first meetings were held in the member's homes but in 1863 an old school house was purchased and was reconditioned for the place of worship. A frame church building was erected for \$3,000 in 1868 and was dedicated the next year. Joseph W. Pickard was the builder of the church, then called the First Congregational Church of Polk City.

Lightning struck the church on July 13, 1904 and completely destroyed the structure. The following Sunday, a tent was erected for the services and within five months a new building was erected and dedicated.

This church is today, Polk City's only church, known as the Evangelical Free Church and its pastor is Rev. Chester Larson. Rev. W. C. Berggren served as pastor of the church for a period of 31 years from 1923-1954. Other recent pastors include Rev. Donald Mars, Rev. Isaac Anderson and Rev. Paul Thompson. There were three churches in town in 1913; Methodist, Free Methodist and Congregationalist.

Incorporation

The town of Polk City was officially born on March 25, 1875 with a population of 630 at the time. Fifty-three residents of the area wrote to the circuit commissioners for the purpose of incorporating the area of Big Creek to be known as Polk City, named after the eleventh president of the United States, James K. Polk.

Five commissioners were selected by the circuit court and five notices were placed in five different locations within the territory giving notice of the upcoming election. The vote was held on February 23 with 74 favoring incorporation and 21 opposing the move.

Events Throughout The Years

Throughout the 100 years, the town of Polk City had many memorable happening in their community. It was in 1883 that the bandstand in the town square was erected and this historic little cabin-like building

remains one of the oldest remnants of the early town.

The building of the schoolhouse came in 1893 with classes being held in it the following year. With the building of the new school, the old log house across from town square became the city hall.

Looking back over the years at prices of goods and products, one finds the cost of them almost as unbelievable as today. In 1885, hogs sold for 3 cents a pound while a 100 lb. bag of potatoes brought 60 cents on the open market.



This is the picture of the Polk City Bank when it opened up in 1903. John Harmon was the first president and Peter McKinnon was cashier of the new bank. This building still stands today diagonally from the bank. W. C. Miller is president of the bank today.

The Polk City Savings Bank was founded back in 1903 with incorporation taking place on Feb. 23. It didn't officially open, however, until March 1. G. E. McKinnon and father, Pete, of Des Moines were the first stockholders in the firm. John Harmon was the first bank president while Pete McKinnon was cashier. The Miller family has long been associated with Polk City banking as A. F. Miller worked for many years in the business beginning at age 19 and he was succeeded by his son, W. C., who is president today and grandson, Robert, who also is employed at the bank.

Chautauqua, as it was in Madrid, was a popular

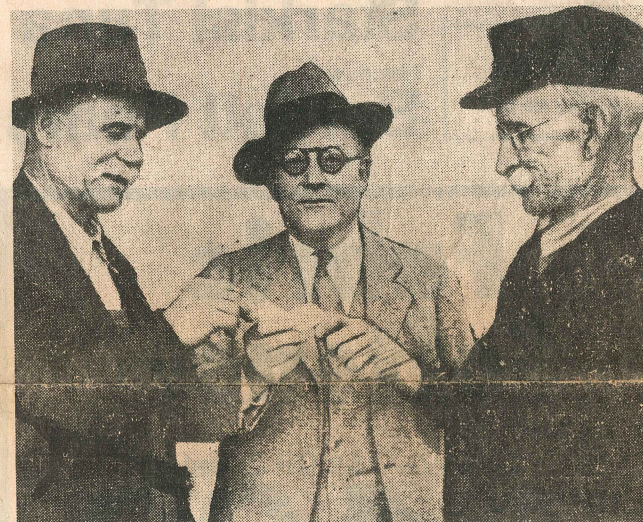
social event for the people of the town. It was held in the early 20's on the second floor of the I.O.O.F. Hall.

Paving of the streets took place in 1920 and the fire department came into being shortly after 1900. The first major fire in Polk City occurred in 1902 when the Odd Fellows Hall, Frank Mart's Store and Jake Brendel's Harness shop, located on the south half of the business district burned to the ground. The bucket brigade was the main source of fire fighting technique used by these early firemen. The new fire station in the community was built in the 1960's through the help of the Kiwanis organization.

Happenings Since 1923

Polk City undoubtedly is one of the few towns in this area that can boast of having six mayors, past or present, still residing in the community today. These six gentlemen are W.M. Crabtree (1941-43), Harold Waldo (1944-64), Joe Husak (1965-69), Verl Thornton (1970), Bob Vogt (1971-73) and Dennis McFall, the present mayor, (1974-).

The election of 1932 was an interesting one in the history of this small central Iowa town as all three candidates, T. L. Graeber, Earl A. Landis and the eventual winner, J. N. Stippich, all received 44



Electing the mayor by a straw vote is the basis for this photo. All three candidates, Earl A. Landis, T. L. Graeber and James N. Stippich received exactly 44 popular votes, but Stippich, the man on the far right won the election by drawing the longest straw. The election took place back in 1932.

popular votes. To break the tie, it was decided to draw straws to see who would be the new mayor and as mentioned, Stippich drew the longest straw.

Law Enforcement came to the town in 1902 with B. W. Fenner as the first marshal. Today, there are three police officers serving the community, Joe Johnston, Bruce Schuck and Larry Bode.

The independent telephone company came to Polk City in 1904 with the Blain daughters serving as operators for many years. Others who have worked the switchboard are Ann Gall and the Walter Applegarths. The new building for the telephone company was built by Northwestern Bell in 1961.

For many years the Soucek Cafe was a popular eating establishment in the community, but a January 24, 1948 fire completely destroyed the building even though three other fire fighting teams were called in to assist. It was one of the town's old landmarks, being built between 1885 and 1890. A new cafe was constructed in 1949 and remains open today.

Polk City made headlines on December 16, 1965 when the Polk City Bank was robbed of \$1,053 in an afternoon robbery occurring while president W. C. Miller was out of town. The escape car, a 1962 Rambler was found later driven over an embankment at Jester Park and had been stolen from Minburn.

The community of Polk City has become a steadily growing town in the past few years due mainly to the addition of the Big Creek Lake and Park to the area. In addition, the following businesses can be found in the Polk County community today: Denniston and Partridge Lumber Company; Johnnie's Texaco; Post Office; Polk City Cafe; Polk City Grain; Polk City Savings and Loan Bank; Redding Oil; Lil's Restaurant and Tap; Stancoe Grocery; Polk City Dairy Queen; Fur, Fin and Feather Sporting Goods; Polk City Quick-Clean Center; This 'N That Store; Stark Sales and Service; Melinda's Beauty Shop; Big Creek Publishing; Tom and Jerry's Bait Shop and Big Creek Bait Shop.

The centennial kick-off was held on May 31, when the king and queen, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Waldo, one of Polk City's oldest couples was officially crowned.

**Congratulations to Polk City
on Your Centennial Celebration!**