

HISTORY AND SETTLEMENT OF POLK TOWNSHIP

BY

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A Short Sketch of Bremer County

The years prior to any thought of the existence of a Bremer County or a Polk Township, this area was a great expanse of timber and prairie lands. It was also a portion of the Winnebago Indian Reservation.

There were approximately five hundred Indians living in the area. About three hundred of them were Winnebagoes, one hundred fifty were Musquaokees, and fifty Pottawntomies. The three chiefs of the tribes were Chief Winneshiek, Chief Honahaker, and chief Womanokaker. Chief Womanaker was a Great War chief who got his name from the fact that he had stolen a white woman.

In 1847 the United States Government purchased these lands from the Indians and moved them to the Crow Wing Reservation in Minnesota.

But this was not the last of the Indians, for each spring many of them would leave the reservation and come back to their old homeland. They gave the white settlers much trouble; mostly by theft of anything they could eat, wear, or trade. One reason for wanting to come back each

Spring was that for many years the government had furnished the Indians with copper kettles. These kettles were used to boil down the sap of the hard maple trees, which were found in the area into maple syrup. When the Indians were taken to the Minnesota reservation, they hid their kettles by burring them in the ground unto the time they could come back and get them again. I suppose that even now many of them lie buried in the Big Woods south east of Waverly.

Later in the year 1847 the government started the congressional survey of the boundaries of the townships. The townships were then open for settlement. But even then the White Man was in the county.

Charles McCoffee was the first settler in the fall of 1845. Within the next two or three years several more families were living in what was to be Jefferson Township.

My great grandfather, William Westervelt, and his family of ten children came to Jefferson Township in 1849 and bought four hundred acres of land in section fourteen.

The immigration to this territory was much faster than expected. Nearly every summer day people came to the area, some on horseback and some on foot. But most of the people came in covered wagons drawn by oxen.

Up to this time the territory that was to become Bremer County was attached to Bucannan County for civil and judicial

purposes. Most of the marriages during this time took place at Independence, as the couple had to go there to get their license anyway.

It was now believed by most people that there were enough voters in the territory to organize the county seat. Accordingly, in May 1853 James Wood, John T. Boerick, and O. H. P. Roszell, commissioners for that purpose, located the county seat in Waverly. In July a convention was held at the Red Cedar Stake, just north of the county seat. Candidates for the various offices were nominated, and in August of 1853 the organization of the county seat was made permanent by this election. The name Bremer County was bestowed upon this territory at the suggestion of Govener Hempsted in honor of Fredericka Bremer a noted Swedish authoress. Some years later the townships in Bremer County were surveyed into sections.

In 1855 Polk Township was being surveyed by H. S. Hover, Bremer County Surveyor. My grandfather Levi Smith, then sixteen years old, got the job of carrying the measuring chains for him. In later years Levi Smith's sister, Mary, later Mrs. Barney Thompson was the first White child born in Polk Township.

When these firstsettlers came and chose the tracts

of land they would like to own, they did not know they would be in Bremer County of Polk Township. Neither the township nor the county had been formed yet. The townships in what was to become Bremer County were labeled alphabetically starting with A at the north east corner of the county. Township D was later named as Polk.

D	C	B	A
E	F	G	H
M	L	K	J

First settlers had maps they had gotten at the United States Government land office at Dubuque. They were sure by these maps that they were in Township D, 93 North Range, 14 West. They thought they were almost in the middle of the township. But before they could make application and send the payment of \$1.25 per acre to the land office at Dubuque, they would have to have a description of the land.

They discussed the problem with Ezra Allen who was living with relatives in Township L which was later to become Jefferson Township. He was now cutting logs to build a cabin in section 21 almost on half mile of what was to be Horton. He wanted the description of the land where he was building his cabin.

As there was no surveyor closer than Independence and there was no telling when he would be available, Ezra Allen thought the settlers would have to do some measuring. So they

found the three-mile stake of the Congressional Survey on the south side of the township line. They then measured three miles north with the aid of a compass. Next they found the three-mile stake on the East Side of the township and measured three miles to the stake on the west. They found they were not too far apart. They had driven stakes as they measured, and after going back over the measured lines and making a few corrections, they drove the center stake of the township. Much to their surprise, they found that the southeast corner of the tract of land Lloyd Smith had chosen was at the corner stake. The building site Allen Smith had chosen was almost $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south on the north-south line. Where Ezra Allen planned to build his cabin was one mile south on the north-south line and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile east. When the section survey was made for Mr. Hoover in 1855, their stake was found to be less than two rods of being the exact center of the township.

The townships were named when there were enough resident voters to form a voting precinct. By the county judge Jefferson was the first to be named. Next to be named was Polk Township. Township C, later to become Douglas, was attached to Polk the first few years as voting precinct.

Ezra Allen moved his family into the little cabin in the spring of 1852. Large areas of timber surrounded his cabin. To provide for his family he did considerable hunting, and he was known as a good shot. He was also trying to provide

for his family by raising a few hogs to supply the family larder. One night in the fall of 1852 the family was awakened by the grunts and squeals from the little hog house. Grabbing his gun and making his way to the hog pen Ezra discovered a large bear was trying to devour one of his fat hogs. Although the night was dark, Ezra's aim was sure, and he killed the bear. As far as it is known this was the only bear killed by the white settlers.

Ezra received the deed to his land in 1855 from the land office at Dubuque. He sold his land in 1856 and moved to Missouri.

So ends the story of Bremer County.

POLK TOWNSHIP

In the 1840's many glowing reports were received, in the eastern states, of the rich lands west of the Mississippi River that could be purchased for \$1.25 per acre. Much of this land was open prairie where new settlers could get their hay and raise grain to feed their livestock. Along the rivers and smaller streams was timber for fuel and long, straight logs which could be used to build homes as well as barns to protect their livestock and rails to fence their crops.

So many of the more adventurous were preparing covered wagons and saying goodbye to relatives, friends, and neighbors as they started out to find a new home in a strange land.

And so it was with the Joseph Smith family. He and his wife, with sons Lloyd, Allen, and Joseph Jr. and their families, left Green County, Indiana early in the spring of 1851. They were several weeks crossing the state of Illinois, trading most of their horses for oxen along the way. They found that oxen could travel the muddy roads much better than their horses. Some of the children rode horseback all the distance from Indiana to Iowa.

At this time, there were no bridges across the Mississippi River, so they ferried across at Dubuque. After entering Iowa, they were rather disappointed at the hills they encountered.

The small group was further saddened by the death of Grand mother Smith, but after burying her at Epworth, they pushed on Westward. The hills became less steep and Iowa began to look very good, especially when they reached the Cedar River several miles below Janesville, Iowa and began to travel north, on through the small settlement of several families at Janesville. The first family had come there in 1845.

The group traveled on north through Bradford where there was a trading post, then on north to about where Floyd is now. It was here they camped for a few days. The women folk thought they were getting too far away from any settlement. It would be a long time before they would have any neighbors. Then the men folk decided that, in all their travels, they had not seen nothing to equal the upland timber they had passed through several miles south of Bradford. They returned and each chose a tract of land on which to build a home.

The Smith's like those who came after them were looking for timber close to a river or smaller creek with sandy, loam soil where cast iron moldboard plows would scour. About all the other tools brought, besides steering plows, was what they call a double shovel. It was a straight beam of wood with two shovels and handles attached, pulled by one horse to plow corn. You went up one side. They also used this plow to cover their oats and wheat. They drug the ground with a few

Jack Oak limbs tied together with a log chain.

The first steel moldboard plows that would scour in black soil was made of English steel, and was invented by John Deere, a young man in a small blacksmith shop in Grand Detour, Illinois, about 1847. To advertise and prove they would scour in all kinds of soil, Deere hired a man with a team to plow a furrow across the state of Illinois. The demand for these plows was so great they were not available to the Iowa pioneers for many years.

Of course there were many things to do before building the log house such as planting a garden. Close to where Allen Smith planned to build his home was a few acres of open prairie which they broke up and planted to garden. On the 20th day of June, they planted several acres of corn, and much to their surprise, it got ripe. They had only expected to raise corn for fodder this far north.

The summer and fall was spent building the log house and sheds for their livestock. The log house, built that summer of 1851, is now part of the historical display at Bradford.

All the new settlers in Polk Township got their mail at the trading post at Bradford the first few years, but they had the long haul to Dubuque with their produce which took a week each way by oxen.

Steven Jackson and Brother Alexis arrived later in the summer and settled in Section 9. By the next three or four years, the Smiths and the Jacksons had neighbors on all sides. Someone lived on almost every quarter section. They had also come and bought new and cheaper land. Now the education of their children became a problem to all these pioneer families. Before long a school district joined together to build the log schoolhouse. It was located just south of Cora Shipp's farm on the turn of the road. The first term of school was the winter of 1855 with forty-four pupils enrolled.

In a letter, dated February 28, 1855, to Allen Smith, the secretary of the newly organized Smith Grove school, John H. Marten, just appointed school fund Commissioner for Bremer County, set the boundary for the district as follows: from the northeast corner of section 25, then north to the Chickasaw County Line, west to the Butler County line, then south to the southwest corner of section 19, thence back to the beginning. This was the north two thirds of the township.

On June 2, 1855, the secretary received another letter from John H. Marten stating that a few new settlers on the west side of the Cedar River had filed a petition to set aside that part of the Smith Grove located on the west side of the river so they could form a school district of their own. He further

stated that if there was no protest, petition would be allowed. This became the Syracuse school. In just a few years, other school districts were formed from the original Smith Grove school district such as Jackson and Six Mile Grove. The latter got its name by being six miles from Bradford. Then there were Maple Grove, Horton, Terry, and Plainfield.

The first election of Township officers was held in April 1854 at the home of Lloyd Smith. Those elected were trustees, John S. Taylor, Allen Smith, Gideon G. Phelps and clerk, Addison Phelps. Justice of the peace was S. D. Jackson and constables were Lovenis Phelps and Spencer Jackson.

There were many religious faiths represented among these early settlers. Most parents thought their children should be in Sunday School, so on May 17, 1857 the Methodist Episcopal school was organized in the log school house. F. W. Gibson was elected Superintendent, Allan Smith, Librarian, and E. A. Jackson, Assistant. Church services were also held from time to time. A short while later the Methodist organized at Horton. But the first church building in the township was the Horton Baptist church, which still stands. Other early day churches were the Methodist, January 1869 and the Plainfield Baptist, February 1969. Also the Baptist Church at Six Mile Grove served that community for many years.

Some of the men and women coming to Polk Township were getting along in years. Many of the men were veterans of the

War of 1812. There were some widows of veterans. Some had served during the Seminole War in Florida and other Indian Wars. They received free land as a bounty for their service to the United States.

When the stage line from Cedar Falls to the northwest was started, it came up the West Side of the river. Because there was more open country on that side to accommodate travelers on this stage line, places had to be arranged such as Syracuse House, two miles north of the present town of Plainfield. The building was well constructed for it served as a farm home for many years.

After the coming of the railroad made the stage coach obsolete, many of the passengers on this line had seen the big timber along the Cedar River and the prairie land to the west and had visions of homes being built of lumber, also wood for heat and noted the rich open prairie land to farm. They saw the probability of a town being developed around the Syracuse House.

The first Post Office established in Polk Township was the farm home of S. D. Jackson. In his first quarterly report he stated he had received forty five cents and there was twenty seven cents postage unpaid. This was during the administration of President Buchanan. In 1855, the post office was moved to the West Side of the river to the home of Amos Head. In 1866, W. N. Ganes was postmaster. In 1857, Horton's postmaster was Lyman Nutting and in 1858 the postmaster

at Syracuse was Obed Ganes in 1858.

Some years later, C. R. Brown and O. H. Lesse purchased a saw mill with a fifteen horse steam engine. This was the beginning of frame building in the territory.

The first settlers in Bremer County were hopeful that, before many years, they could have a railroad. The movement of supplies and mail would be more sure and faster and the railroad would do away with the long trip to market their produce. Some of these early settlers, while crossing the state of Illinois, had seen road grades being built west of Chicago, later some had seen trains almost as far west as Galena, Illinois. When these pioneers, traveling in covered wagons, encountered the high hills and bluffs as they neared the Mississippi, they thought this must be the end of their hopes for a railroad. No one could possibly find a way through these hills, and after seeing the river, they figured it would be impossible to build a bridge across this mighty stream that would hold up a railroad train.

But, indeed later News came to the settlers that a bridge was being planned and construction would begin as soon as supplies could be gotten together. Building this railroad, that was to cross the new bridge at Dubuque, was very slow with plows and scrapers powered by mules and horses and many men with pick and shovel. Six to eight miles was all they could do in a year. Further west, as the land became more

level, expansion increased up to fifteen miles a year in Bremer County. They were sure it was headed straight west. The favorite conversation of the day was “Would there be a branch road up a general course of the Cedar River valley?” Most thought if it did, it would come up the East Side as, on that side, was Jefferson, now Denver, also Waverly and Bradford. C. H. Lease, thinking his farm was in direct line from Waverly to Bradford, plated the town of Horton.

All these towns have by 1867 a post office, general merchandise store and a blacksmith shop. Joseph Smith, who lived in the Smith Grove area, thought because of the hills south, north, and east of Horton, the railroad would come up the Cagley flats and miss Horton about a mile. So in 1856 he hired a surveyor from Bradford to plat a town which was called Monrow. The plat of this town is on an abstract of land belonging to Gene White. It had fifteen blocks with a town square and such streets as Iowa, State, Bradford, Green, South, Mississippi, and Lloyd. The plat was never filed with the state auditor and got neither Post Office nor Railroad.

When the railroad finally reached Waterloo and started westward through Cedar Falls, it did divide below Cedar Falls, and came up the east side of the river as far as Janesville. It was here, for some unknown reason; a bridge was built across the Cedar River. The railroad continued on north a mile west of Waverly. From there it went on northwest through

the village of Syracuse, just north of the present town of Plainfield, then a bridge was built to the East Side of the river at Nashua.

At the time the survey was made through Syracuse, those living in that area were elated because they thought it would be the site of a large town with all the boom that a depot and trade center would bring. But they were doomed for disappointment along with those on the East Side of the river as they soon learned that there would never be a depot there because of a twenty nine foot grade at that time. The surveyors let it be known that in their opinion, a much better place was two miles to the south where there was about three miles of level ground. This information prompted some of the folks living along the proposed right of way to start a town. Thus the town of Plainfield was platted on October 16th, 1866. At the request of Charles Folks, J. Dean, Riley Pierce, and George Ketchum, it was surveyed by H. S. Sover, Bremer County Surveyor.

The settlers in Polk Township were patiently awaiting the coming of the railroad. In the next few years, the long haul to Dubuque was reduced, as the railroad was built westward to Dyersville, on to Manchester and Independence. In 1866 there was a shorter haul to Cedar Falls, which took a day each way to market. Many thought that the railroad might get to Plainfield

that or, at least, early the next spring. However, the road bed south of town took a lot of time because of the big cuts through the hills and other difficulties. It was midsummer of 1868 before the first train got through. Most of the people in this area lived on the east side of the Cedar River so it was thought necessary to build a bridge so those living there could take full advantage of the facilities of the railroad. In the summer of 1868, the new bridge was built one fourth mile south of the present one east of town.

The road leading across the new bridge on the west to Plainfield came up the present roadway, past the government grainbins and by the Elmer Chester residence. The only store in town at that time was General Merchandise owned by Charles Folks and located where Howard Stevens' residence is. South of this road leading into town is the addition of Deanville. It was platted by the railroad surveyor in 1867. All the lots lying next to the railroad right of way belonged to the railroad and were to be used for home sites for the station agent, section hands and the men who pumped the water in the large water tank which was about thirty feet tall. All engineers coming through Plainfield took water at this tank. Water was pumped by horse power. The rest of the lots were used to store hundreds of cords of wood for the wood burning engine of that day.

There was another addition on the West Side of Main Street where the Roach homes are, known as Pike's Addition. The coming of the railroad and the new bridge made Plainfield the main trading center of Northeast Butler and Northwest Bremer counties. It had been open only seventeen years since the first settlers came. As they reflected on those years, they saw many accomplishments. All of these early pioneers have been gone many years; the names of most of them have not been mentioned in this brief sketch, but they were nevertheless important in the development of Polk Township.

The bridge was built just in time for the engines on these trains that soon would need vast amounts of wood to burn. Many of the pioneer farmers living on the East Side had the hardwood timber such as maple, ash and oak, which they sold. After the wood was cut by railroad hired cutters, they hauled it to market. Great piles of it could be seen along the right of way in Deanville. Selling of the timber allowed some of those pioneers, not fortunate enough to get some prairie land, to clear some of the timber land for crops.

The wood cutters, many with families, were furnished homes by the Illinois Central. Each home was a small wood frame building, 12 x 20 and covered with tar paper, also a cast iron combination cook and heating stove. Many times they built these tar paper shacks quite close together,

partly for companionship and often to share a common well.

They had contests of strength and dexterity in those days and a wood cutting bee was the source of fun and rivalry. Superb woodsmen of that day have descendents living in Plainfield today. They were paid sixty cents a cord for all the wood they cut. A cord of wood was 4x4x8 feet long. Even when the locomotives began to use coal in a few years there was still need for wood for fuel in the homes and in their construction.

To this day, sites of numerous cabins can be found on the old Calender farm now owned by Mrs. William Chandler. Back in the timber is a depression where one cabin stood. A hole was dug somewhat smaller than the finished size of the building; it was cribbed up with logs. In this underground area was room for a fruit and vegetable cellar, entered through a trap door from within. This served as a storm cellar as well for the settlers soon learned of the tornadoes of the prairie country. Most of these sites have been plowed under where land is in cultivation but where the land is still pasture, many of these are plainly visible.

Quite a number of the settlers, living in this area were from Plainfield, Illinois which influenced the choice of a name for the town. Charles Folks built the first frame building in town, 16x32, which was used for store with a dwelling upstairs. The post office was located here for many years, commencing in 1868.

Booram and Bement, anticipating the rapid growth of the town started a saw mill soon after it was platted, where Melvin Stokes now lives. Lumber from this mill was used to build the first homes and business places. It had barely

finished sawing the lumber to be used in the construction of the Baptist church when the boiler exploded, damaging the building and machinery to the extent that the mill had to be abandoned late in 1869. A short time later, a one armed man, name unknown, started a mill where the Roy Fox residence is now located. He also sawed many hardwood timbers for the railroad used in construction of bridges.

John Eddy was the first depot agent and acted as agent or buyer of livestock for a Chicago packing house. The first hotel was built by George Ketchum and was the first landlord and stayed in business for a number of years. It was located south of the Farmers State Bank. The building burned down April 26, 1894 and other buildings down to the Ford building. The Ford building was torn down several years ago. Some of the first business men to locate were Warren Conner, 1870 with a drugstore; A. A. Stewart, a attorney 1873-1878; S. P. Patterson, another attorney 1875; David Farnsworth moved his blacksmith shop from Syracuse in 1872; J. M. Boardman, general merchandise 1872, Joseph Emerson, barber shop and groceries 1880; Fulton Brothers, general merchandise and drugs, 1886. The Plainfield creamery was established by Kingsley in 1880 and afterwards produced butter for a number of years.

V. C. Newcomb had a harness shop on the corner where the bank is located. In 1878, Foster Flowers built a feed mill, which was run by a large wind mill. In 1876, John Roach bought livestock and grain and established a large business that today is run by his great-grandchildren. C. J. Walker owned the Hardware store in 1882; J. C. Garner owned the lumberyard and sold farm machinery in 1882 with C. P. Collins as superintendent. J. M. Roberts was the justice of the Peace and had insurance and collections in 1876, later was postmaster for a long time; A. J. Newcomb Groceries and Meat Market in 1881; August Gritzner Meat Market and export butcher in 1884.

The first school for the Plainfield area children was held in a house owned by George Ketchum, located about three-fourths of a mile north of Plainfield in 1886. The school was taught by H. M. Swan who was the local Methodist Minister. He also taught in 1876 in a room in the Charles Folks General Store. A new school house was built for the 1868 school year, located where Mr. and Mrs. Dose live. Reverend Swan was the teacher there. Plainfield bought a new schoolhouse in 1881 on the West Side of Main Street. It cost \$3,400.00. There was a new addition in 1915. All of these have been torn down in the construction of the fine, modern building we have today.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Plainfield on January 24, 1869 with ten members. The Methodists build their first church on Main Street about where the office of the lumberyard is now located. It was dedicated November 25, 1874.

The First Baptist Church was organized in February 1869 with seventeen members. Reverend C. O. Farnsworth preached until the first regular pastor, Reverend S. Sherman, came in February 1870. The Baptist first and only church was built in 1871. Reverend Sill was the first pastor in the new building.

Early day physicians in Plainfield were Dr. H. Nichols, 1869; Dr. L. S. Osborn, 1879; Dr. W. J. Moody, 1882; and Dr. T. Ford, 1884;

The town of Plainfield was incorporated September 17, 1895 with T. D. Ford as the first mayor and J. M. Roberts as clerk. Councilmen were O. G. Smith, August Gritzner, Dr. L. C. Kern, John Roach, Wm. Cranes and W. S. Hunter.

There early residents need a house to live in but almost as necessary was a barn to shelter their horses. Almost every family owned a cow; these cows, like the farmers roamed the countryside at will, each having a bell that each owner could recognize and knew where to look for them at milking time. By 1880 steel fence wire was available so Bremer County passed a Herd Law which required livestock to be herded by someone or be confined in a fenced area. From this time on, the boys around town would gather these cows and drive them to the river pasture in the morning and back at night. The passing of the Herd Law caused much confusion in rural areas; the roads, up to this time, had lead from one residence to another without regard to section lines. The fencing of their property forced all roads to be cleared and too, where the road was supposed to go,

wasn't a good place to ford the numerous creeks. Some sort of a bridge had to be constructed. Many farmers, the first year, hired someone to drive their cattle up Chickasaw County and heard them, as this county did not pass the Herd Law until 1881.

The pride and joy of a number of Plainfield folks were their driving horses; this led to much discussion and some arguments as to their individual speed. Some of the owners of these fine steeds were even willing to place bets now and then; considerable money changed hands on the side. These contests were usually settled on the straight road north of town with nearly all of the town's citizens and some from the country on hand to witness the results.

One of the main sporting events of every gathering such as the Fourth of July Woodman's Picnic, Inc. was the foot race. For many years, Plainfield was the foot race center of northeast Iowa. They were richly endowed with one hundred yard sprinters who were the fastest of among the very best any where in the state. They were such men at the top of their careers as Fred Magoon, 1882, Charles Farnsworth, 1886, Frank Smull and Willie Coffin of near Horton, 1895, Edwin Smith 1898 and after the turn of the century, Joe Roberts, Warren Fonton, John Brice, and Hugh Walker. Some years later, we recall Orle Smull, also our Harold Briggs who was very good in a foot race or the high jump.

Up to 1900, besides school plays and church programs and maybe a country dance now and then, people furnished most of their own entertainment; then came the Red Path Chautauqua

A large tent was pitched on the school grounds for a week's stay during the summer. The programs they furnished were both educational and entertaining. Then there were the medicine shows that came to town twice a year. They were really great to see; besides seeing a good show you could buy a bottle of medicine or pills that would cure almost any known disease of men or beast. With each sale one received many votes for the most popular lady, the most handsome man or the cutest or best baby. The old hall, above what was the Home Café and later the Legion Hall, could barely hold the crowds in attendance every night.

The first movies started about 1920 in Plainfield and brought large crowds to town every Saturday night. A regular show would be shown and two reels of a serial. People found it difficult to wait until the next week to see what was going to happen next. The first shows were held in the short street north of Mrs. Ziehe's home. Later when Carl Ziehe built the garage on the corner, they were moved to the City Park. Families, with several small children, would spread a blanket on the grass outside the seating area, as they went to sleep laying them in rows. There were always relatives or friends to awaken them and get the children to the Model T Ford and back home.

Baseball was a "pick up, choose up" affair in Plainfield until 1911 when a number of young men around town, fixed a good diamond three-fourths of a mile north of town. Earl Holms was

elected manager; players were Carl Gritzner, Legrand Holmes, Lawrence and Clifford Smith, Orle Smull, Frank Snyder, Galen Mellenger, Nathen Chester, John Burk, Howard Thompson and Arlie Smith. The efforts of this team marked the beginning of nearly forty years of very good baseball for the town and community. In 1930, Kittenball was all the rage and so it was in Plainfield. There was a town team, the West Side team, the East Side team and many others. They provided a lot of fun for old and young and drew large crowds and cheering fans.

The first big fire in town was April 26, 1894 when the large hotel on the corner south of the bank burned and with it all the business places down to the Ford building which was torn down just a few years ago. In the background of the pictures taken of the Hotel fire can be seen the large barns belonging to A. P. Griffith better known as Doc who was a horse buyer for the Eastern Market; he also shipped many carloads of horses to Canada. These barns burned one Sunday morning in 1905. It was just about Sunday school time at the Methodist Church which stood where the lumberyard is now. Needless to say, there wasn't any Sunday school or Church held, as there was a strong wind from the west. The congregation joined the town's people to put out the many roof fires on the main street started from flying embers from this huge fire.

Roaches Elevator burned in 1941. The elevator that was from the north edge of town, burned in 1944. Also in 1943 was the big fire on the East Side of Main Street, which burned

the Hotel, Tavern, Barber Shop, Jennie Cagley residence, Post Office and the Gritzner building which had been their home for many years with the meat market in the basement. The Methodist Church burned in 1948.

It is thought that the first automobile seen in the town of Plainfield was in the spring of 1906 when one came up Main Street and stopped on the East Side. The man who was driving it had on a tan, linen duster, leather cap with large goggles, and long, gauntlet gloves. He was known to all when he removed his goggles as he stepped from the car. It was Joe Roberts, a former Plainfield boy who had moved to Cedar Falls. He had driven up to see the old town and show his new car. As the crowd gathered, he told them of the tremendous size and power. It weighed a ton and would travel thirty-five miles an hour. He had to shift into a lower gear only three times between Waverly and Plainfield. He looked at his gold watch and said it had been just a little over one hour and twenty minutes since he had left home.

This has been rewritten from stories composed for the Centennial of the town of Plainfield, Iowa July 24, 1966 with a few subtractions and minor additions.

By Arlie Smith as of March 1, 1968.