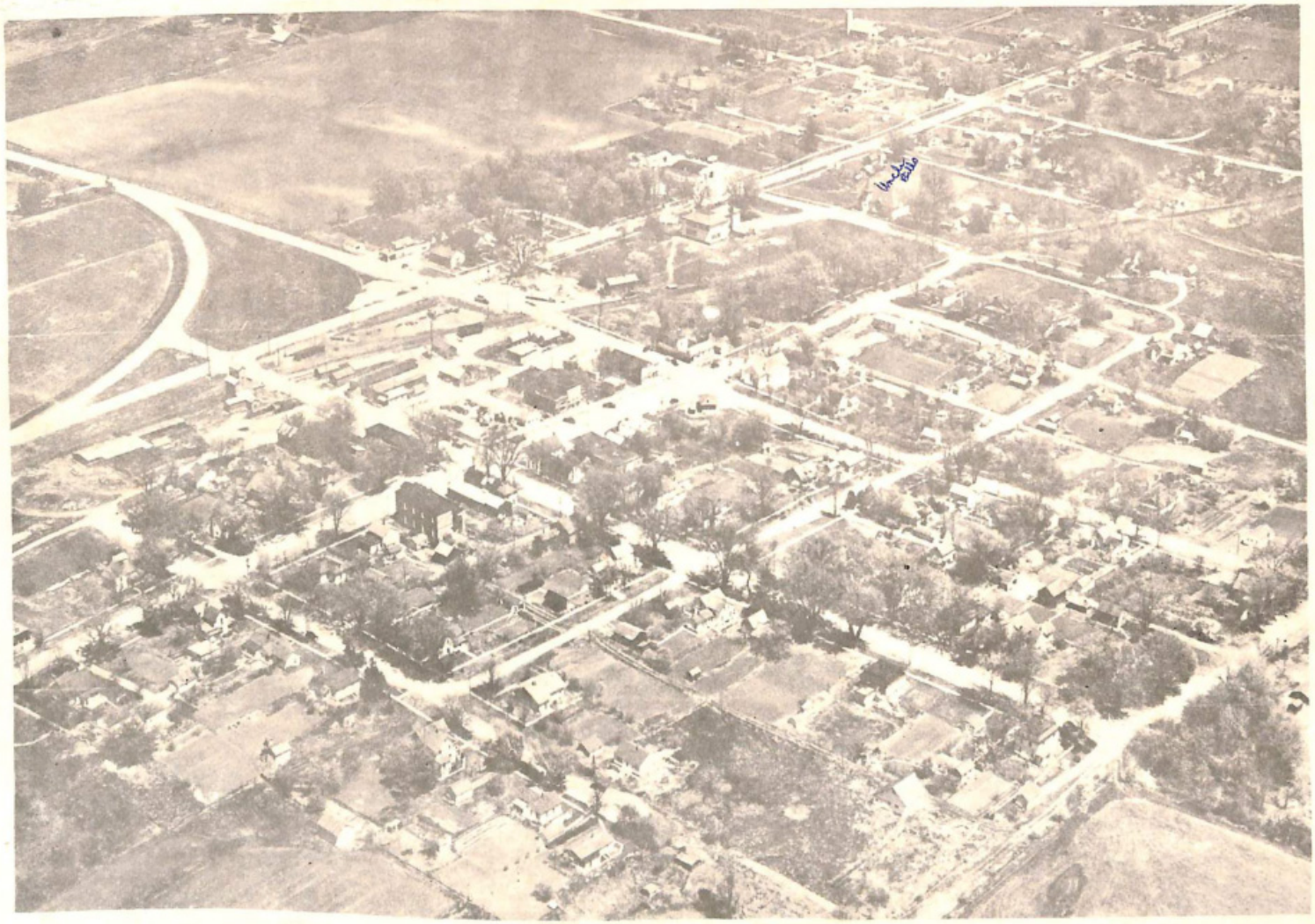
1976

Bicentennial Edition

South English Herald

Constructed by Will Smalley and Hugh McWilliams 1883



Aerial View of South English 1951

The People of South English

On April 15, 1976, the community of South English, Iowa, was notified by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration that it was a Bicentennial Community. People....working together....to accomplish the task, is what it is all about. I would like to thank the following people:

Dorothy Schumann, Secretary, David and Genevera Hillman, Bill and Doris Brock, Arlan and Evelyn Brower, Jim Morgan, Arland Wyant, Wayne Lemley, John and Gertrude Powell, Warren and Doris Howard, Dale Robison, Maryl and Agnes Grove, Harold Schumann, Marlene Leinenweaver, Lorene Wistey, Mildred Grove, Pete Grove, Hamill and Lillian Robison, Garrett and Bertha Bremer, Margaret Ruth, Mark Finch, Rev. Hawes, Harley Yates, Rev. Albright, Helen Kerkove, Elroy and Amy Heryey, John Eash, Richard Garrett, Art and Jerry Green, Charles and Carol Trier, Cathreen Coffman, Marvel Beckley, Arlene Bower, Louise Axmear, Verle and Bernice Brubaker, John and Linda Harris, Sheryl Axmear, Hazel Cox, Melvin and Ethel Dobbins, Charlotte and Charles Anderson, Rick Miller, Matt Brower, Todd Clubb, Steven and Susan Henke, Jeffrey Miller, Janie Miller, Phyllis J. Coffman, Howard White, Marian Brower, Lorea Bloomfield, Henry and Bessie Mumm, Paul and Mary Bouslog, Cecilia Herman, Daryl Baughman, Russell and Rachel Wehr, Eagle Tom Osweiler, Eagle Steve Rose, Eagle Alan Morgan, Scott Shifflett, Rick Lee, The V.F.W., Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, 4-H, Commercial Club, 20th Century, True Blue, Saddle Club, Pleasant Hill, CLSC Club, and the Fire Department.

A very Special thanks to Donald and Alta Garrett. It is through their knowledge, skills, and exhausting effort set out in this issue of the South English Herald that we have a lasting reminder of the History of South English, Iowa, in this Bicentennial year of America.

One last thought: In this year of 1976, some folks may get a little tired of buttons, flags, coin promotions, celebrations, parades, and the Red, White, and Blue. However, we must remind ourselves that our youth need to see the pride we have in our history, culture, traditions, and most of all—our freedom.

Wm. T. Axmear
S.E. Bicentennial
Chairman

Typical early Iowa home.

ROBERT D. RAY
GOVERNOR

Office of the Governor

STATE CAPITOL
DES MOINES, IOWA 50319

April 30, 1976

Mr. William Axmear
South English, Iowa 52335

Dear Mr. Axmear:

Congratulations to you and the City of South English for receiving the "Bicentennial Community" award.

I am sure you are proud of the people of South English who have seen the value of planning for our country's 200th anniversary.

This is an ideal time for all of us to recognize the events that have built this country into greatness and to be aware of the tremendous potential that lies ahead for our state and our nation. Your leadership is reflected in the making of this award.

Again, congratulations.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Ray
Governor

RDR/cd

PREFACE

It is a joy to most people to approach a task with enthusiasm and expectation. It is especially gratifying when your friends and neighbors share a vital interest in a project that seems worthwhile to all, regardless of the different generations of the people or the barriers of time itself.

This collection of memoirs has been made possible only by the sincere efforts of a great many people. Some have rummaged through their attics and storage closets. Some have been willing to risk their favorite photos or snapshots so that they could be shared with others. Others have spent much time and energy attempting to recall events and happenings in the earlier days of their lives; also, attempting to recall and record the stories handed down by word of mouth from our forebears.

In regard to the heritage of South English, we have a definite date (1844), when the first Caucasians settled in this immediate area. Beyond that, time was dateless, it simply flowed endlessly, marked by the

been here we know no more than they.

Because of limited time and space and to keep on schedule with our National Bicentennial observation, there will be many, many items of interest that will be missed in this collection.

Personally, I find that I am able to recall only a few of those intriguing stories I have heard related by Chet Mendenhall, Clark McLain, C.E. Brower, Elmer Roach, John Stansbury, Charles Cabler, Walter Robison, my grandfather C.L. Dillon, and many others. Unless someone has heard these tales and recorded them, they will be gone forever from our literary heritage.

In going over the various events related here, you may be somewhat confused by apparent contradictions. It has been our effort to put forth the stories as we have heard them and not to be the judge as to which was correct. Even the identification of characters in the older pictures is many times uncertain, and often impossible.

If your favorite aunt, uncle, or

please make the correction in your book, add your own collection of stories, and pass the volume on to your descendants, so that in the next 100 or 200 years, they will know how we lived in 1976.

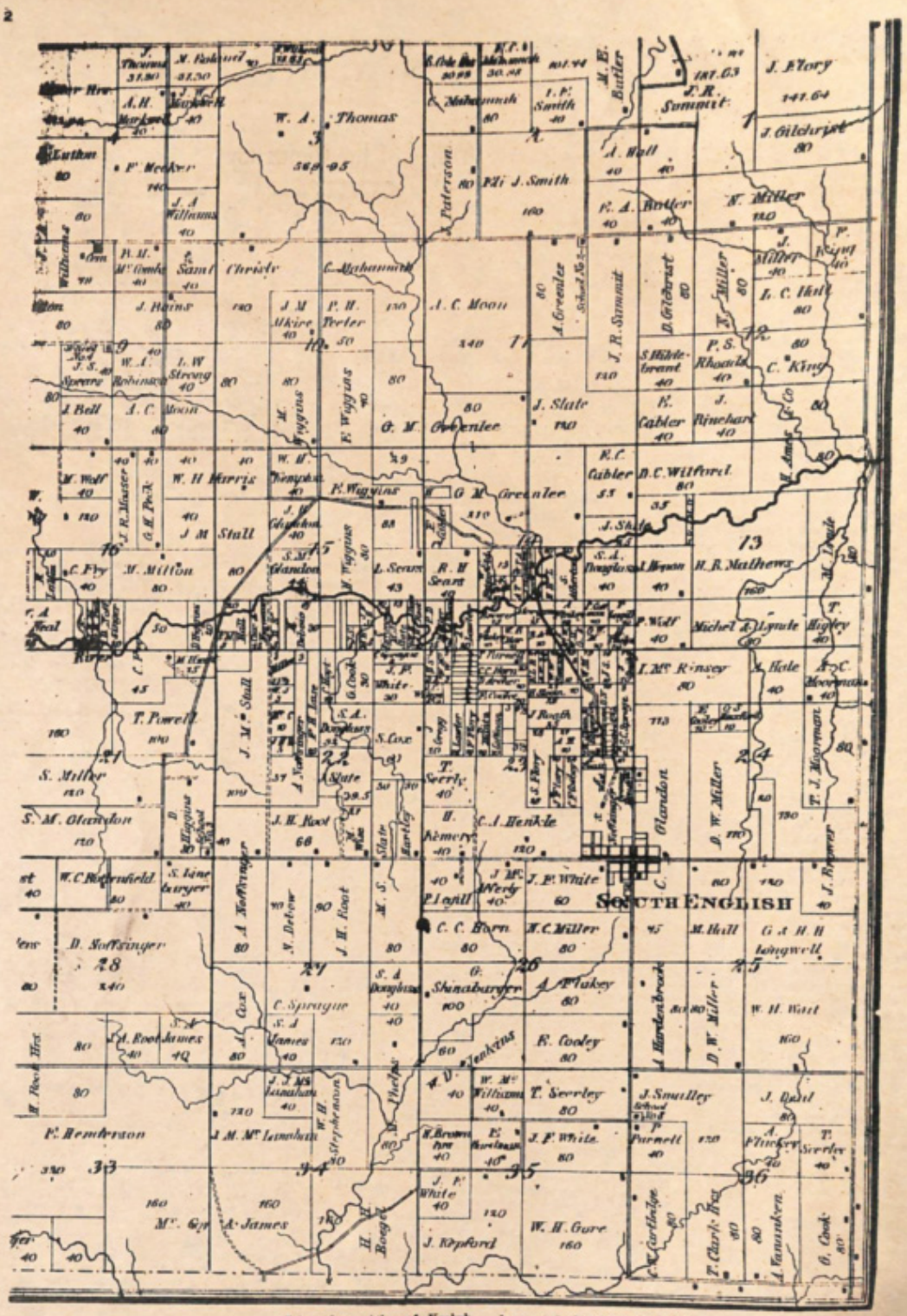
Although we are placing the emphasis on the past, we would like to insert enough of the present to make a record that will be of interest in the years to come.

Through the life-time of our town we have watched the pioneer plod into the wilderness 'on foot'—to the time when we sat comfortably in an easy chair, in our air-conditioned houses, watching by TV as man trod on the surface of the moon.

To keep in proper perspective and to realize and respect that great Power which has made these things possible, we feel that all of us should study our heritage. Life was here before we came. Our predecessors made it easier for us, so let us make it a still better place for those who follow.

We thank all who helped so much in preparing this work.

Alta and Donald Garrett


W. A. Thomas
A. C. Moon
J. R. Summit
SOUTH ENGLISH
T. Powell
S. Miller
S. M. Clendon
J. M. Stall
T. Sperry
C. J. Henkle
J. P. White
C. C. Born
N. C. Miller
G. A. H. Longwell
W. H. Watt
D. Hoffsinger
C. Sprague
J. M. Mc Limahan
W. H. Gore
J. Rayford
A. James
E. Henderson
J. Smedley
T. Sperry
R. Cooley
A. Haskey
D. W. Miller
B. W. Miller
T. J. Moorman
H. R. Mathews
R. H. Sears
L. Sears
J. Slate
G. M. Greenlee
P. Wiggins
W. H. Harris
M. Mitton
C. Fry
J. Bell
J. Hains
Saml Christy
C. Mahannah
P. Meeker
J. A. Williams
J. W. Strong
W. A. Robinson
J. S. Sperry
P. H. Peeler
J. M. Ulkire
Patterson
Eli J. Smith
I. P. Smith
A. Hall
E. A. Butler
N. Miller
J. Gilchrist
P. S. Rhoads
C. King
J. C. Hall
J. Miller
R. Cabler
D. C. Wilford
M. Wolf
Michel Lynde
Higley
I. Mc Rinsey
Hole
Mc Kenzie
T. Powell
S. Cox
J. Slate
J. H. Root
S. Iane
Sawyer
W. C. Butterfield
J. Hoffsinger
N. Debow
C. Cook
S. A. Douglass
J. Mc Werly
J. P. White
C. Skinabarger
A. Haskey
W. H. Watt
R. Cooley
T. Sperry
J. Smedley
J. Quail
J. F. White
W. H. Gore
J. P. White
T. Sperry
T. Clark
A. Vanauken
G. Cook
E. Henderson
J. M. Mc Limahan
C. Sprague
S. A. James
J. H. Root
S. A. Douglass
J. Slate
Hartley
Jenkins
Stephenson
Cox
Clendon
Wiggins
Greenlee
Sears
Douglass
Wolf
Rinsey
Hole
Moorman
Mathews
Lynde
Higley
Wilford
Cabler
Rinehart
Rhoads
King
Miller
Gilchrist
Hall
Butler
Summit
Patterson
Mahannah
Christy
Williams
Meeker
Thomas
Hains
Bell
Mitton
Harris
Stall
Powell
Miller
Clendon
Hoffsinger
Sprague
Henderson
Gore
Rayford
James
Watt
Cooley
Haskey
Skinabarger
Born
Miller
Longwell
Hall
Sperry
Smedley
Quail
Vanauken
Cook
Carthage
Clark
Purnell
Pinckney
Barkhurst
Brown
Williams
Mc Limahan
Root
Debow
Hoffsinger
Butterfield
Lane
Sawyer
Kemery
Slate
Hartley
Cox
Douglass
Sprague
James

History of the Town of South English

Information from "A Brief History of Keokuk County" by Walter S. Athearn, Principal of Public Schools, Delta, Iowa 1897.

Land Purchases

First Purchase--October 21, 1837 a treaty was signed with the Sax and Fox nations which gave to the whites a large tract of land west of the Mississippi river. Nearly all of Richland township and small portions of Clear Creek, Jackson and Lafayette townships were included in this purchase. This part of our country is still called the "Old Strip."

Second Purchase--On the eleventh day of October, 1842, the representatives of the government met in conference with the chiefs of the Sax and Fox Indians, among whom were Keokuk and Wapello, at Agency City, Wapello county. After much discussion, they agreed on a treaty by the provisions of which the whites were given the right to settle on a tract of land comprising the greater portion of Iowa. All of Keokuk county except the portion included in the purchase of 1837, was included in this second purchase. For the land included in this purchase the Indians received $800,000 in state stocks, which drew 5 per cent interest. By the various treaties made with the Sax and Fox Indians, the government paid them $80,000 per year. By the provisions of this treaty the Indians were to be given three years in which to leave the territory. When Keokuk signed the treaty, he remarked that if it was changed by even so much as the scratch of the pen it would not be observed by the Indians.

Treaty of 1842 Ratified--The treaty of 1842 was sent to the senate and that august body, being reminded of Keokuk's remark, ratified the treaty without changing it even by so much as "the scratch of the pen," and on March 23d, 1843, the president of the United States officially announced that the treaty had been ratified. This is said to be the only treaty made with the Indians which was never changed or broken by either party.

The New Agreement--It was finally arranged to have the Indians give possession of all the lands lying east of the Red Rock river in Marion county on May 1, 1843. This then, is the date when Keokuk county was finally thrown open to settlement. In commenting on this treaty and the New Agreement the "History of Keokuk County" says: As a result of this peaceable arrangement and the earnest efforts of the government to carry out, to the letter, the provisions of the treaty, the early settlers of Keokuk county experienced none of the hardships which fell to the lot of the early settlers in the other parts of the country, where misunderstanding about the ownership of the soil gave rise to frightful massacres and bloody wars. The Indians gave no serious difficulty and seldom, if ever, disturbed the early settlers of this county after they had rightfully come into possession of it.

In the General election held August 5, 1844, the voters of this area were assigned to the German precinct of Keokuk County, which comprised all area north of Skunk River in townships 75, 76, 77, Range 11, and the east halves of township 75, 76, 77, Range 12.

InApril, 1845, the township of English River was organized and comprised all of Liberty, English River and Adams. The three townships seem to have organized individually before 1850.

The first settlement was made near the present site of South English by James Mehaffee and Jacob Bowers, in the year 1844. The first family to arrive came in 1845, that of James Thomas, and located on the northwest quarter of section twenty-two. John Houston came that same year and located on section twenty-four, near the present site of South English, and this place was known as Houston's Point. James Chambers and H.H. Rodman settled soon after on section thirty. Thomas Morgan came in 1847.

March 27, 1846--First white child born in English River township, Martha Rodman, daughter of M.C. and Rebecca Rodman.

Billy Houston was the first baby boy born in English River township. The first death was a child of James Thomas.

First marriage, Lem Briner to Dinah Houston, June, 1852. First double wedding, George Huxford and Maria Rodman, and Peter Parnell and Louisa Trimble.

First frame house built in 1852 by S.M. Slate. The lumber was hauled from Washington by wagon.

First burial in South English Cemetery: Dorcas (Doscie) Downs, sister of Mrs. Wm. Sloan, 1861.

The township officers elected in April, 1852, were: Trustees - Joel Slate, H.H. Rodman and James Thomas; Clerk - Henry Fawel; Justice - W.S. Slate.

The first school we have any account of was taught by S.M. Glandon in 1851. There were no windows in the room used for the school.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was first organized in 1851.

The Baptist was organized in 1855.

The Christian was organized in 1856.

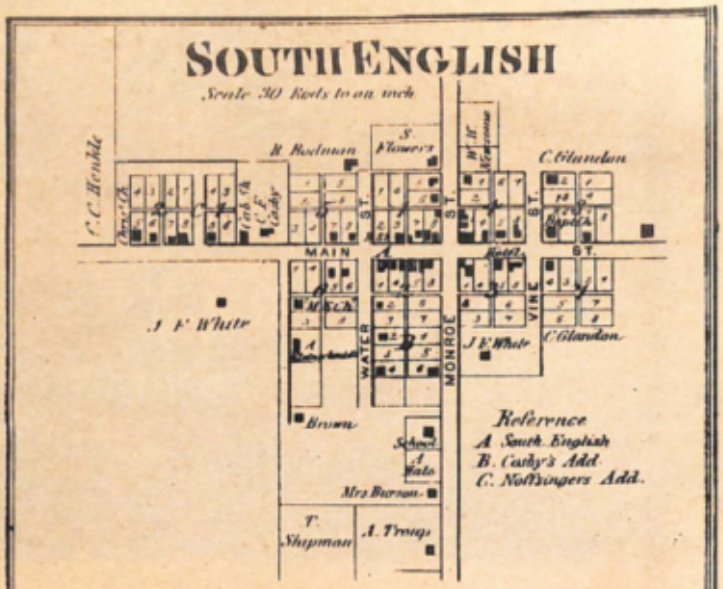
A union Sunday School was organized in the fall of 1857, by a Baptist preacher from Iowa City, with the following officers: superintendent, Joel Slate; secretary, M. Slate; librarian, S.M. Glandon. It had a library of two hundred volumes.

The town of South English was laid out in March, 1855. The first store was started shortly after it was laid out, kept by Ethan Post.

A South English Business Directory is shown on the plat of the town 1874.

We quote the following directory from the 1880 History of Keokuk County: J.F. White, dealer in dry goods, groceries and general merchandise; C.F. Crosby, dealer in groceries; W.T. Coffman & Co., drugs; W.T. Platt, drugs; W.M. Shepherd, hardware; Geisler & Garlick, lumber; J.F. Mead, blacksmith; J.Q. Lewis, saddlery; N.C. Miller & Son, livery. There is a first-class hotel kept by U. Younkin. The following are the leading physicians: W.W. Newsome, A. Hale and Dr. Cocklin. The Western Herald is a newspaper, J.F. White, proprietor and G.J. Brown, editor and publisher.

The town of South English was incorporated in 1892. The first election was held on August 22, 1892. Officers elected were; Mayor, W.W. White; Recorder, J.W. Newsome; Trustees, Newton Horn, J.M. Black, Wm.



South English Directory.

A. Hale, Physician and Surgeon.
M. C. Hildebrand, Physician and Surgeon.
W. W. Newsome, "
J. F. White, Notary Public, and Dealer in General Merchandise.
Coffman, Hildebrand & Co., Dealers in Drugs and Medicines, Paints, Oils, Glass, &c. Also, Wines and Liquors for medicinal purposes.
Shotts & Brown, Editors and Publishers of the Western Herald.
F. D. Miller & Co., Dealers in Hardware, Pumps, Wagons, Buggies, and First-class Farm Machinery.
C. D. Kimball, Dealer in Stoves and Tinware.
C. F. Cosby, Insurance Agent, and Carpenter and Joiner. Sec. 32.
C. Richmond, Farmer, and Proprietor of Maple House,
Watts & Son, Proprietors of Steam Sawmill; also, Carpenters and Joiners, Sec. 7.
A. Hall, Farmer and Stock Broker, Sec. 1.
D. W. Miller, Farmer, Dealer, and Breeder of Fine Stock, Sec. 24.
T. Morgan, Farmer and Stock Dealer, Sec. 30.
C. Reed, Farmer and Stock Grower, Sec. 29.

Town plat from 1874 Keokuk County Atlas.

FIRST MEETING

August 26, 1892--The parties elected to the offices of Mayor, Recorder and Trustees of *the Town of South English, Iowa* met and qualified for the several offices to which they were elected. A committee was appointed, composed of Horn, Van Aukin and Black, to report rules of order for the government of the council. Motion was made and carried to adjourn till 8:00 p.m., August 27.

S.E. Herald
Fri. Oct. 4, 1889

Only $5.50 will buy you a seven jeweled Elgin National Key Wind Watch, patent flat, extra heavy crystal, silverside watch case of B.F. Showalter.

Fencing was done by rail fences.

First Frame house built by M.S. Slate, on the Robert Hervey farm three-fourths mile west of South English. The addition in the back of the picture was attached in later years by A.F. Grove. Built in 1852, the structure still stands.

This building was a Livery Stable, owned by O.W. Sheaffer, later sold to John Cox, who moved it to his place ¼ mile north of town. This is the corner where the Baptist Church now stands. Two of the three men have been identified as O.W. Sheaffer and Frank Euler. The other unidentified.

Businessmen

1882 Business Directory of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railway.

South English, Keokuk County, Iowa, is one of the oldest towns on the line, having been settled sometime before the advent of the road. It is a quiet little village of about 450 population, with three churches: Methodist Episcopal, Christian, and Baptist; a good school of two departments; a hotel, and several business firms, as will be seen by the following directory. The shipments are principally stock, grain, and produce. Distance from Cedar Rapids, 74 miles; from Muscatine, 58 miles; from Montezuma, 30 miles.

South English Business and Professional Directory

A.F. & A.M. Naphtali Lodge No. 188; J.C. Wilson, W.M., Thomas Seerley, Secr'y.
Baker Z.T. General Merchandise
Berryhill Bros. Harnessmaker
Black A.C. Photographer
Boyd M.M. Milliner
Coffman D.N. agent B.C.R. & N. Ry.
Coffman H.C. drugs
Dillaway House, C. Rhoads, Prop.
Edwards J.A. Wagonmaker.
Evans J.C. Meatmarket.
Glenn J.M. Blacksmith
Henkle A.L. Jeweler.
Holder W.H. Postmaster and Grocer.
I.O.O.F. of South English Lodge No. 263; Wm. Harris, N.G.; A. Hale, Sec.
James J.A. Attorney at Law.
King M. Grain
Kleinsmidt A. Saloon.
Kleinsmidt L. Saloon.
Mead John. Blacksmith.
Nyswaner John, Wagonmaker.
Roberts Mrs. C.E. Milliner.
Lester, J.N., Hardware.
Sheaffer, O.W., Livery stable.
Shipman Ed, Shoemaker.
Sloan W.H. Furniture.
Snavely H.K. Lumber etc.
V.A.S. South English Collegium, no 56; R.F. Haal, Rector; D.N. Coffman, Scribe.
White Bros. General Merchandise
Whitson O.P. Grain.
Yonkin U. Hotel and Saloon.

Town Officials

Mayors of South English have been:
J.F. White, 1893-1894
C.G. Clark, 1894-1895
L.G. Kelly, 1895-1896
Wm. Sloan, 1896-1897
A.F. Parke, 1897-1898
W.W. Bowser, 1898 - 1900
C.S. Troutman, 1900-1902
Wm. Strong, 1902-1902
Wm. Sloan, 1902-1904
E.C. Wales, 1904-1906
O.K. Morrison, 1906-1910
W.N. Hotchkiss, 1910-1911
J.H. Gemmill, 1911-1912
B.W. Shanafelt, 1912 - 1912
O.K. Morrison, 1912-1914
W.B. Robison, 1914-1914
J.C. Good, 1914-1917
Ben Lee, 1917-1919
J.T. Claypool, 1919-1922
WM. Huxford, 1922-1922
J.T. Claypool, 1922-1924
Wm. Moore, 1924-1930
C.H. Claypool, 1930-1932
E.E. Cook, 1932-1934
Don Buchanan, 1934-1937
J.T. Claypool, 1937-1938
Don Buchanan, 1938-1940
G.E. Barnhart, 1940 - 1942
Elmer C. Evans, 1942-1944
Don Buchanan, 1944-1946
O.D. Brubaker, 1946-1956
Howard White, 1956-1960
J.A. Kurtz, 1961-1962
Wayne Lemley, 1962-1967
Ross Trusler, 1967-1974
Wm. Brock, 1974 - Hash Bill

Recorders (known as clerks as of 1902) have been:
Recorders:
M.A. Strock, 1893-1894
G.G. Shanafelt, 1894-1895
W.C. Miller, 1895 - 1895
W.N. Hotchkiss, 1896-1898
A.F. Parke, 1898-1902
George Horn, 1902-1902
Clerks:
R.H. Gemmill, 1902-1904
O.K. Morrison, 1904-1906
A.F. Parke, 1906-1909
Vic Safourek, 1909-1950
W.L. Axmear, 1950-1966
W. Wayne Edmundson, 1966-1968
Lorene Wistey, 1968-1974
Dorothy Schumann, 1974 -

Items taken from minutes of the town meetings:

Sept. 1893 - A levy of 6 mills for town tax of 1893 be made.
1894 - Some sidewalks were laid.
April 1894 - J.F. White donated lots 1, 2, and 3 in Block 1, White's addition to South English for park purposes, providing citizens set out trees at no expense to the city.
August, 1894 - tax levy 3 mills.
March, 1896 - John McAfferty was first Town Marshal during his pleasure.
July, 1896 - A building 4' x 6' x 6' built to hold fire extinguishers and other supplies.
The town council always approved bills turned in by the hotels for the meals and lodging of tramps.
1896 - The new opera house was opened for entertainment.
Sept, 1896 - The town jail 12' x 12' was constructed. It cost $90.00. Two pair of handcuffs, one pair anklets, and one billy were to be procured.
Sept., 1900 - The telephone lines were installed.
1904 - Some streets were graded and graveled.
1906 - The first ordinances were passed.
1906 - Speed of automobiles to be regulated not to exceed 5 M.P.H.
1913 - First billiard license issued to J.H. Hotchkiss to run a billiard hall.
March, 1917 - Iowa Electric Co. ordinance passed. 47 votes cast in the election to decide; 47 votes in favor, 0 against. It was a 25 year franchise. 10 street lamps were installed.
Aug. 1922 - Discussed - that the town donate the park and take up popular subscription if the town were interested in the park being used as a tourist camp.
Nov., 1923 - Town purchased dirt from J.W. Reed & Sons to fill the street north of the depot crossing at 36 cents per load.
June, 1924 - Permission was granted to Davis Oil Co. to install a filling station in front of S.B. Wenger seed house, providing they do not interfere with ditch and traffic.
Oct., 1925 - Ordinances sent to the League of Iowa Municipalities to be brought up to date at a fee of $100.00.
March, 1927 - A committee was appointed to look after repairing of city jail so as to keep people in.
Jan. 1930 - Highway 149 was graded, drained and surfaced.
1934 - Permission was granted to Otha Huber to install a filling station on his premises.
Feb., 1934 - Permission was granted to Homer Jacobs to install a skating rink.
Feb., 1934 - The council borrowed money to finance the buying of shale to surface the streets of South English, providing P.W.A. allowed funds for labor and trucks.
Mar., 1934 - Highway was graded and surfaced by Iowa State Highway Commission.
Aug., 1934 - Motion was made to have homecoming celebration on Sept. 14-15, 1934. Mayor was authorized to carry out plans for same.
May 13-20, 1935 - Declared clean-up week.
Sept. 1940 - Wheels and frame were purchased from Amos Weaver which were used to install the band stand on.
Sept., 1946 - Arrangements were made to purchase a fire engine.
Sept. 1947 - First Fire chief - N.O. Walk.
Assistant Fire chief - W.L. Axmear.
April, 1950 - Richards Construction Co. oiled the streets at 11 cents per gal. of oil.
May 1952 - The library committee consisting of Rachel Powell, Marian Brower, and Ellen Spivey met with the council to discuss the purchase of the old town hall to be used as a town library.
1952 - Town hall built.
1956 - Water system was installed.
Sept., 1958 - Modern Cooperative Telephone Co. installed the dial system. A 25 year franchise.
Nov., 1963 - A joint fire district was organized to west of Webster 1½ miles to east edge of Kinross, north to the Pigeon Road and south to approximately 4 miles south of South English.
1964 - Natural gas pipe lines were installed.
Mar., 1968 - First woman in local government.
July, 1973 - Local government went under Home Rule.

In earlier history the town council also acted as the Board of Review and as the Board of Health. A local doctor was appointed as town physician. The assessor was appointed by the council.

At some meetings the mayor and council would meet to discuss council business, adjourn and reconvene as Board of Health, discuss that business, adjourn and reconvene as Board of Review. This would all take place at one meeting.

The early council determined who paid what for taxes and who would be exempt because of poverty, disability or illness.

The Western Herald
February 5, 1880

Hotchkiss is again ready for business at his new boarding house and restaurant, corner of Ives and Davis Streets, where the weary may find rest and the hungry can be fed at low rates. Parties desiring to remain in town over night will find this a good place to stop at. Warm meals at all hours.

Fur muffs were once the style and helped to keep the ladies' hands warm. Unidentified.

From Ohio to Iowa

July 16, 1861, Uncle Edward Wiggins, Aunt Margaret Wiggins, uncle's son Henry and I left Martinsburg, Ohio for South English.

Henry and I were twelve years old. We rode in a covered wagon in which were many things, bedding, a walnut chest and stand and a copper kettle. These things I have now.

Behind the wagon was a two-seated top buggy and back of this a cow, which we soon sold as we found her too much trouble.

An extra horse and a good shepherd dog, used to help drive the 300 sheep, made up the caravan. These sheep were always ahead of the wagon and we had to drive the entire way in this dust.

While fording the White River in Indiana we met some soldiers home on furlough, who told us of the battle of "Bulls Run" at Manassa, Va., July 21, 1861. During the trip we were very careful not to express our views of the war as we met some Southern sympathizers. Our greatest fear was of robbers, for we were often warned of danger ahead, and as the trip called for considerable expense all the money was carried by uncle in cash.

The nights were spent in homes where there was pasture for the sheep and where Aunt Margaret and I could take our feather bed in and make a bed on the floor, while Uncle and Henry slept in the wagon.

Early in the evening Uncle would go ahead on horseback hunting for this lodging place and we would come to crossroads not knowing which way he had gone. The roads were mostly unfenced and unkept.

Most of the small streams we forded and I remember a long stretch of road through a swamp in Indiana which had what was called a corduroy bridge, made of large logs laid beside one another. This was very hard to drive over.

We crossed the Illinois River at Peoria, Ill. over a draw bridge where the toll was $8.00. In this town small boys scared the sheep and it was necessary for me to lead a "Bell Wether" that the other sheep would follow through the streets.

We had neighbors from Ohio, living near Bloomington, Ill. and we stopped here a week and rested. A boy from this family, Leander Clutter joined us for the remainder of the way.

When we arrived at Washington, Uncle and Mr. Clutter stayed with the sheep sending Aunt Margaret, Henry and I ahead as we could go faster. We came the first night to Uncle Wm. McWilliams' house south of town across the road from where Roy Saxton now lives. We spent the first winter in part of Uncle David Noffsinger's home and the next year on the late farm north of the Franklin school house, and the next year Uncle bought the farm where his grandson Edward Wiggins now lives. We arrived at South English, October 30, 1861, having spent two and one half months on the way.

Dictated by Mrs. Josephine Thompson, the little girl, on Mother's Day, May 10, 1931, at the home of her daughter, Mrs. J. W. Newsome, at the age of 82 years.

Written by her daughter Margaret Th[illegible]

The family of Henry and Sade Wiggins. Henry [picture frame on the wall] came from Ohio to Iowa in 1861. From left to right Edd, Bert, Cora [Mrs. Ray Dean], Bertha [Mrs. John Grove], Lillie [Mrs. John Ruth] and Mrs. Wiggins.

TRUE STORIES

Excerpts of a talk given by Mrs. Alice Mendenhall - Old Settler's Day, Oct. 1905, South English

The stories the old cottonwood (the tree that stood in the schoolyard) could tell, for it was an old settler, long before John Houston, or Hugh Rodman, or Moses Hall.

Buffalo lay dozing beneath its shade, when the swift arrow of the Indian sent all in a cloud of dust across the prairie.

It was here long before John Houston built in 1845, the first cabin on this side of the river, for years called "Houston's Point." Several years ago there were traces of that cabin yet on the Heald and Mendenhall farm east of town.

"Grannie" Houston herself told me some of her first experiences in Iowa:

A quilt hung at the entrance to the cabin for the door. Her husband had gone to Wassonville to the mill. He had been gone three days--she was uneasy--she had looked and looked for him in vain. It was growing colder, spitting snow. The meat was gone--the bread was gone--her six hungry children nestled close to their mother by the fireplace. She gently hushed them. "God will provide, He will take care of us."

As the storm rises the littlest toddler, Billy, looked up at his mother and says, "Dod's fordot us Muddie."

The wind swells the quilt at the door like the sail on a mast at sea. The wolves howl closer, and over yonder rings the cry of a wild cat.

Softly quakes the mother's voice: "Fast falls the eventide, the darkness deepens--Lord, with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, Lord, abide with me."

She sang and drew the little ones closer.

"Hello--hello-o-o" came a voice out of the storm and the darkness. A strange voice.

She pulled the quilt aside and peered out.

"Can you keep a stranger overnight? I am Evan Chandler, I live six miles across the river. I am on my way home from the mill and it is storming so I can't get any farther tonight."

"You are welcome to what we have, sir, but we've nothing to eat but some wild honey. John ain't back yet from the mill. I am so uneasy about him."

"Oh, he's allright. I saw him. He's waiting his turn. The mill is crowded. He'll be home tomorrow. I've got plenty of flour. Send out a bucket."

In half an hour they were eating a jolly supper of hot biscuits and wild honey.

(Little Billy, who thought that "God had forgot," was sitting with us on the platform the day of the Old Settler's meeting, he was the first boy born in English River Township.)

Over yonder in the edge of Slate's field, Chambers Rodman built the next cabin - very open - with stick chimney and puncheon floor. That winter a little baby came to that cabin, the first girl born in English River Township. A blizzard blew up, the father hung a quilt over the bed to protect the mother and baby. The snow sifted in until the quilt would sag down from the weight of it. Then he would take the quilt to the door and shake it, and suspend it over the bed again, while the mother would clasp the little one close and warm in her embrace.

*(Mrs. Martha Rodman Hennon was also present at that Old Settler's meeting. She told the story of the quilt and the snow as her mother had told her.)

The next to come to the community was Hugh Rodman in 1846, who unloaded his family one evening under the old cottonwood. Soon the blue smoke curled up lazily through the branches as hungry, weary but joyful, they cooked and ate their first supper in the midst of the wild crabapple grove.

A little later Hugh Rodman enlarged his cabin to keep travelers, and it was here that the Thomas Seerley family lived their first winter in Iowa. And here that Alex Moody 'fed and nooned' and changed the mail. He drove the first mail hack between Sigourney and Iowa City. (He was the father of Sandy Moody of Sigourney and St. Louis.)

Now the leaves of the old cottonwood rustle merrily to the laughter and gaiety of a wedding in the cabin of Hugh Rodman. A double wedding, the first in the new settlement. They had grape and elderberry pie for supper and biscuits baked in the Dutch oven before the fire. One couple was George Huxford from New York (who had sailed upon many seas) and Hugh Rodman's blue-eyed daughter, Maria. The other couple was Peter Parnell and Louisa Trimble.

Picture of an early home, taken by moonlight, time exposure.

3rd great grandma?
grandpa John
Sigfoose home.

Homer Seerley's Institute Talk

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PRES. SEERLEY'S INSTITUTE TALK

Auditorium crowded to hear his splendid address.

Tells of Pioneers

Was an Able Address Enjoyed By Many Teachers and Friends Over County.

It was a strong and vigorous people who dared to go into frontier life and endure the privations and hardships that such an environment required. Without strength and vigor that would permit endurance and self-reliance, men and women could not have sustained themselves in the unbroken and undeveloped wilderness. The financial poverty of such a population of pioneers can hardly be realized by the people of other kinds of civilizations and of more dependent classes such as modern civilization produces and develops.

Such a people as this had real characteristics that proved them, in a mass, to be intellectually more capable and individually more independent than the better trained and the better educated generations that followed them. They had little to guide or to help them than the opportunities of their environment and the initiative of their own mental faculties in order to work out effectively the problems that arose in everyday life, or to adjust the sundry difficulties that were continually to be met in their situations and for which there was neither experience nor knowledge to assist them. The true unusualness of such a people must be admitted before their efforts as founders can be reasonably recognized or their distinction as originators fairly realized. This necessity as an introductory fact explains why the census reports do not show any remarkable progress in population in two decades as the majority of those who came lacked sufficient resoluteness to remain in such a preliminary civilization and hence soon returned to what they considered "God's Country" where the hardships were fewer and where the so-called comforts of life were more readily procured. In this respect, the more adventurous, the more resolute, and more promising and the more self-reliant of the American people have constantly left behind their common, realized opportunities and have gone ahead to undiscovered and unknown parts of the continent in order to make their fortunes and to grow up with the new countries.

POVERTY AND HOSPITALITY-

Another remarkable characteristic of these frontier populations was that their poverty did not eliminate their disposition or their willingness to be hospitable to strangers who passed that way, to entertain immigrants who were seeking new homes farther West or to dispossess themselves of the places at the rude table where they dined or in the shuck beds where they slept in order that they could courteously provide for the minister and his family who came for over night or for the friends and neighbors who needed the common comforts during illness or other unfortunate troubles. They had no money even for charity, let alone to support the limited expense of the church but what they had they gave cheerfully to support of the minister's home or to meet the exigencies of neighbors who were in distress or helplessness, food and firewood and even clothing and bedding being their constant contribution to the personnel of progress and enlightenment. The units of civilization in such a people were the neighborhood.

When deaths occurred in the neighborhoods, the settlers looked after all matters for the welfare of the relatives. They constructed the plain lumber coffins, as a gift to the family, they prepared the graves which were uniformly assigned to the younger men to dig, the whole settlement came to the funeral, some of the more experienced conducted a prayer service at the house and at the grave, the pall-bearers lowered the remains into the open grave with great solemnity using the leather lines that drove the teams, the people stood around until the grave was filled by a committee of settlers, the civilities were all done in a sympathetic way, the head and foot boards were carefully placed in the ground, then they all silently and prayerfully retired from the country grave yard and in their farm wagons with their families with them, they returned to their own homes as genuine mourners of an appreciated citizen and neighbor that was gone hence. Until matters were adjusted in such a family, the widow and the orphans were kindly looked after that year. If a crop was in the field it was harvested and housed by these neighbors, if stock needed to be sold, milling needed to be done, or supplies needed to be secured, all these things were regarded and conscientiously cared for by all the people and other root crops were supplied for the oven, flour for the bread to support the family was delivered, shoes were made for the mother and the children, in fact all that was deemed equivalent to what others had and needed was provided abundantly for these families until a decision on the future was able to be made. It was not necessary even then that there be any hurry to complete the business in hand. The most interesting thing of all in these transactions was, such deeds were not considered charity or benevolence but as a matter of course, in such a pioneer country where every person was a partner in misfortune as well as a cooperator and participant in prosperity.

THE HOUSES AND THE SHELTERS---

These early settlers displayed their capacity for self support and self protection in the ways they provided houses for their families and shelters for their stock as these structures had to be constructed out of the resources of the country where they abode. The winter season in Iowa was very severe and some times very long. To meet these necessities they erected log houses of the plainest type out of small trees and used clay found in the locality to close the chinks. They built stick chimneys for their fire places out of the same materials and they used large amounts of wood fuel to keep them warm. These houses consisted of one large room curtained off to make such divisions as the taste of the wife and mother demanded. Bedsteads were high from the floor in order to give space for the trundle beds used by the smaller children and the attics were partially floored to give sleeping space for the older boys of the family. When the time came that portable saw mills appeared, driven by horse power, the temporary houses or shacks were built of lumber in which division into two or three rooms was secured. The cellars were of the so-called Iowa Type where there were excavations under the houses of less dimensions than the structure ...d as there were no foundations the protection obtained was secured by banking soil around the outside of the house a foot higher than the foundation sills of the house. When saw mills did not appear clap boards were provided for siding, shingles made with the frow and the drawing knife were provided by the settler for the roof and puncheon floors made with the broad axe completed the construction. When lime was able to be burned or could be purchased the settlers made lath by hand and plastered one coat upon the walls with their own efforts to make a warmer home. The large fireplace served for heating and cooking as civilization progressed.

The shelters for stock were improvised stables for the horses and sheds built with three sides closed for cattle and hogs. When sheep were kept in any number a low flat structure was provided that could be completely closed up during the night to protect these helpless animals from wolves and predatory dogs. Shelters for chickens, turkeys, geese and ducks were also a necessity for these settlers were connected with a variety of business of the purpose of the support and comfort of their families rather than providing products for a market that did not yet exist as distance from any real market was the condition that decided the question without any mental cerebration. These shelters were made by cutting forked posts out of the forest that were then firmly planted in the ground. These were added to by straight and strong poles that supported the cross poles and the brush that were placed above and then the construction was completed by the coarse heavy slough-grass that existed in great abundance. This slough-grass was of such a woody character that it was an admirable roofing material and had lasting qualities for several years so that a small amount of new covering from year to year made a very permanent kind of construction. The sides were covered with lumber of the roughest kind like slabs and defective boards and both sides of the upright posts being so covered permitted thatching to be put between. Plenty of bedding from straw or slough-grass completed what was deemed necessary for the protection given live stock. This system of construction required much labor from the proprietors for supplying food and water so that the winter months for stockmen were really more active in labor than the milder seasons of the year.

THE FAMILY LIFE---

The home was the chief center of all individual and family activity for everybody and here the father, the mother and the children were a unit in family business, enterprise, plans, and success. Everyone felt a kind of ownership that was personal and each spoke of the property, the undertakings and the developments as ours. They each had a part in the work that was done, in the outcome that was reached and in the success that was attained. The children gave their time, their efforts and their industry without hesitation or delay because of this common interest as they recognized that even father did not feel that he individually owned the farm, the home, the property or the business as he was working for the prosperity and the improvement of the entire family rather than for the progress of his own self-interest or his own personal fortune.

The results of this method of family management were that the parents and the children unitedly sought the common good rather than individual good. The children considered themselves as partners not as employees and they never counted the time when they would be emancipated from family service and become owners of their own destiny and income. Becoming of age did not make any change in their affairs as the family gave them support while they were in College acquiring the education of men and women and they contributed of their strength and ability in every way they could to maintain the developing prosperity of all. Neither was there any feeling on the part of the parents that they were entitled to the time and the service of the children up to a certain time in order to remunerate them for the maintenance, the board and the lodging that they had given them during their years of dependence. All this philosophy of the family unit gave the children a spirit of cooperation and partnership that trained them in a superior way to transact business wisely, to comprehend responsibility in business relationships intelligently and to appreciate the real value of permanent interests in all the work one does. This attitude gave the children of the pioneer a practical education and a real conception of reliability and usefulness that enabled them to conduct personal and public affairs of their generation far beyond the possibilities that young people of later generations could have under the system of wages and stock companies and salaries that modern education and modern management have produced. In the early days everybody became a manager and an executive while in the later times everybody has become an official or an employee.

NO NECESSITY FOR RICHES--

These early days have a history of accomplishment that shows that a living, cooperative, reliant civilization does not depend upon the cumulated riches of a people, upon systems of banking, mortgaging, loaning, interest collecting, investing of profits, speculating, buying and selling. The recent system of producing crops for sale, of manufacturing and mining, of merchandizing, of transporting persons and goods without end for profit, of developing corporations that pay dividends or interest to their stockholders and owners, of financial fictions that array one employment against all others, that cause workers to think that wages and incomes rather than thrift and economy of administration are desideratums to be reached by legislation, by government control or by government direction; complications that are exceedingly expensive, very uncertain of returns and subject to many interferences that are not governed by economic law, not universal in application nor dependent upon either judgment or experience. Success, prosperity, personal peace and contentment; individual prominence and recognition; actual outcome and marked attainment are all in these later days much more difficult to reach and much more doubtful of attainment by the great majority than they were when the early settlers managed affairs. This pioneer civilization was a system for all and needed all to become prominently individual and effective giving a character and a continuity that is wonderful to realize while the more recent development of education and training in a system for the few with a certain subordination for the many, with arbitrary values represented by money and credit rather than by property and homes owned and operated by men and women.

TIMES FLIES--

In October 1854, the Seerley Family came to Rodman's Point (South English) Keokuk County, Iowa, to open a pioneer prairie farm in English River Township on land purchased by Thomas Seerley, the father, of the United States Government. Schools had been authorized but the population was too sparse, the tax systems yet undeveloped and whatever schools there were dependent upon voluntary rate bills to pay the teacher. In 1855 the first free school was opened in Sub-District No. 1, English River township, at the present site of South English. It was before the days of certification of teachers and the school board decided to employ Manassa Flory at a dollar a day for a period of three months. There were then no county superintendents, no teachers' institutes, no teachers' meetings, no course of study, no adopted text books, no conception of school work except "reding" "riting" and "rithmetic" and not very much of these branches of scholarship beyond the fundamentals of the alphabet, the acquiring of the ability to spell words and pronounce them, the attempt to write the simplest sentences following the script of the teacher, the learning by singing of the multiplication table, the singing of the capitals of the states in order and the committing to memory chapters of the New Testament, the hymns commonly used by the people and the acquiring of the ability to study aloud without paying attention to equivalent endeavors of other pupils in the room. Good general order consisted of being fully occupied and industriously noisy and demonstrative rather than that of keeping absolutely quiet, studying silently and think of some mischief that would add to the amusement when the work assigned was not comprehended well enough to be effectively mastered by silent study.

After several terms of study at Sub-District No. 1 school house, the population so increased that more room and more teachers was recognized as necessary. In those days such school buildings were not enlarged and the school graded as consolidation would have permitted but another center was created nearer to the homes of the families living on the south side of the sub-district and new sub-district No. 8 was created and a new school organized. There was no benefit in this division except that it gave less money to pay teachers and the standard of teachers that were employed, despite the certificating of teachers, the expanding of the months of schools that were conducted, the adoption of a system of uniform text books and the organizing of classes of higher grade as the teachers able to be employed were not of the scholarship or the skill that made the schools such a success as the people hoped to have for their children. Hence the father and the mother, where they were at all qualified, had to

supplement the instruction of the school and see to it that actual progress was a fact. My own elementary algebra, natural philosophy, general history and German language depended almost entirely upon my own father's scholarship, ability as a teacher and knowledge of what a young man ought to know to give me the thoroughness of preparation that enabled me to pass the examination to enter preparatory school in March 1866 at the State University of Iowa at Iowa City.

BEGINNINGS AS A TEACHER--

After remaining at Iowa City until June 1867, my money being all expended and my doing something for myself being very prominent, I decided that I knew enough to teach a country school. At the age of 19, I applied to County Superintendent, Rev. D.V. Smock for a certificate. He offered me the privilege of a private examination if I was willing to meet him at Franklin school house, Sub-District No. 2 after the religious service that he was to conduct there that evening. This plan gave him $1.00 as a fee for the trouble and probably insured the candidate getting a certificate as the one dollar was paid for the certificate and not for the examination. I went to the service, listened attentively to the sermon on the text, "What hath God Wrought" and then went with him to a private home nearby where the congregation collected to visit and had my private examination in the parlor of J.H. Root in the midst of this company of friends and neighbors. He stated to the audience that he was well acquainted with me and my qualifications and that he considered me prepared to teach a public school but that the law said that it was the duty of the county superintendent to examine all applicants for teacher's certificates and that he would then proceed to fully perform his legal duty. He asked me three carefully selected questions with a good deal of authority. (1) "What is the difference between emphasis and accent?" (2) "What are the differences between common, decimal, continued and complex fractions?" (3) "Has Congress the right to interfere with slavery in the territories?" The first question I answered greatly to his satisfaction; the second, I discussed extensively in a very succinct, scholarly fashion as if giving information of a very difficult nature to my auditors, the reply being complimentarily endorsed and amplified by the examiner and the third, I announced, was not yet known as the Supreme Court of the United States had not yet taken that national problem out of politics. The examiner complimented me most highly on my acquaintance with current history, announced my examination as much more than satisfactory, turned to a table and wrote out a certificate in long hand, signed it officially, declared his duty performed, handed me the certificate, accepted my silver dollar as a donation to his official support, congratulated me on my high recognition as an authorized teacher and complimented the people of the county on having such a fine promising teacher added to the staff of workers conducting the common schools for the proper education of the children of the state.

In a few days, I was in charge of Sub-District No. 3, Liberty Township where there was over thirty pupils enrolled, eight of whom were older than the teacher and gave him experience faster than he was able to comply with all the work expected. That fall there was an election and my reputation and personality. This new officer visited and inspected my school as he had to visit schools to get his per diem. After conducting work in his presence for a half day, I asked him to address the pupils and introduced him as the county superintendent of schools. His presence and demeanor had completely paralyzed me so that I was hardly able to know whether I was doing well or ill. He arose, formally addressed me as teacher and began his speech as follows: "Pupils, order is the first law of heaven, etc." His voice was prominent, his language was oratorical, his effect upon me was stunning as he presented the ways that would make this school in every way what it ought to be. It was his custom to publish weekly in the Keokuk County News his observations on the schools he visited from week to week to show that he was on the job and was looking after the interests of the people. When the paper appeared it read as follows: "Union District, No. 3, Liberty Township, Homer H. Seerley, teacher. Salary $30.00 a month. Order poor, methods of instruction middling, general condition of the school bad."

This publicity was discouraging enough to stop the professional aspirations of any young teacher but being offered another school the next winter, Liberty Sub-District, No. 2, Liberty township, I went to the county seat on a public examination day, wrote on the examination for three hours and received a certificate for another year, every branch being marked 100%, a grade, so he said, that was obtained but by three teachers of the county. He congratulated me on my fine scholarship, said that he believed I could teach a good school, advised me that my school last winter was not quite what it ought to have been and urged me to take courage and do my best. This second school, he later visited, he spent a very agreeable helpful half day in inspecting and encouraging the work and when the Keokuk County News appeared he commended the work for its high quality, its excellent thoroughness and its admirable spirit. My career was determined and my ideals uplifted. I obtained a nomination as a free scholar to the University of Iowa, with the endorsement of Superintendent Kane and left for college freshman work in September of 1869.

Again in 1871, I was a country school teacher at Washington School, No. 8, English River township for four months. In this school I made a reputation for originality for special methods of instruction and for obtaining advancement of the studies of the pupils. Having too large a school, I not only taught school the regular six hour school day, five days to the week, but I also conducted school for the older pupils from 7:00 to 9:00 o'clock evenings for three days of the week, each pupil bringing his own half candle to stick on his desk in front of his work so that he had sufficient light to do the work assigned for slate and pencil and for writing with a pen on paper as the lessons and assignments required. This superior attention to my school work attracted not only parents and citizens to make an investigation but also brought to that humble school many people and teachers of other districts to see the work in progress, to marvel at the interest shown by the pupils and to study the desirability of trying such a plan elsewhere. For a salary of $33.00 a month, I learned more than the

The Franklin School, two miles west of town, where Homer Seerley received his first teacher's certificate.

Grandma Brock went to school here

doing more than fulfilling the contract and by not expecting to be paid fully for his service. The effect of this philosophy followed my work of the more than fifty years that followed as I have consistently given more and more all the time than the public has paid me for doing.

TEACHER'S INSTITUTES--

During my teaching service in Keokuk County, I attended two teacher's institutes conducted by (1) Dr. T.W. Milhern for County Superintendent Kane and (2) Jonathan Piper for County Superintendent McLain. In both of these the teachers were permitted to select other instructors from the teachers of the county in addition to the conductor selected by the county superintendent. Both of these men understood their business and the institutes of a week session were very helpful to me. The system of organization was that of having all the teachers in one class and outside of the lectures of the conductors, demonstrations of all kinds of class work were given by the more experienced and more prominent teachers. There were morning, afternoon and evening sessions, all directed by a committee of teachers, cooperating with the county superintendent. These programs were variable, were interesting and were practical. The evenings were usually devoted to debates on educational subjects in which outside of the leaders appointed anyone present could take a part. As there were lyceums and debating societies at that time in almost all school districts, the teachers in attendance readily participated and the success was notable so that the clergymen, the professional men and the citizens came cheerfully, took part and prolonged these discussions for full time, rarely ever adjourning before ten o'clock. There was some merit to these early day institutes that the later days in Iowa are unable to surpass as these pioneer teachers were largely men and women of affairs and extended experience in life and were not young men and women who represented scholarship and a little technical training and nothing else. The old days were wonderful in their relation to the people, to the homes and to society that is not likely to again be equaled under the more professional standards of the present day.

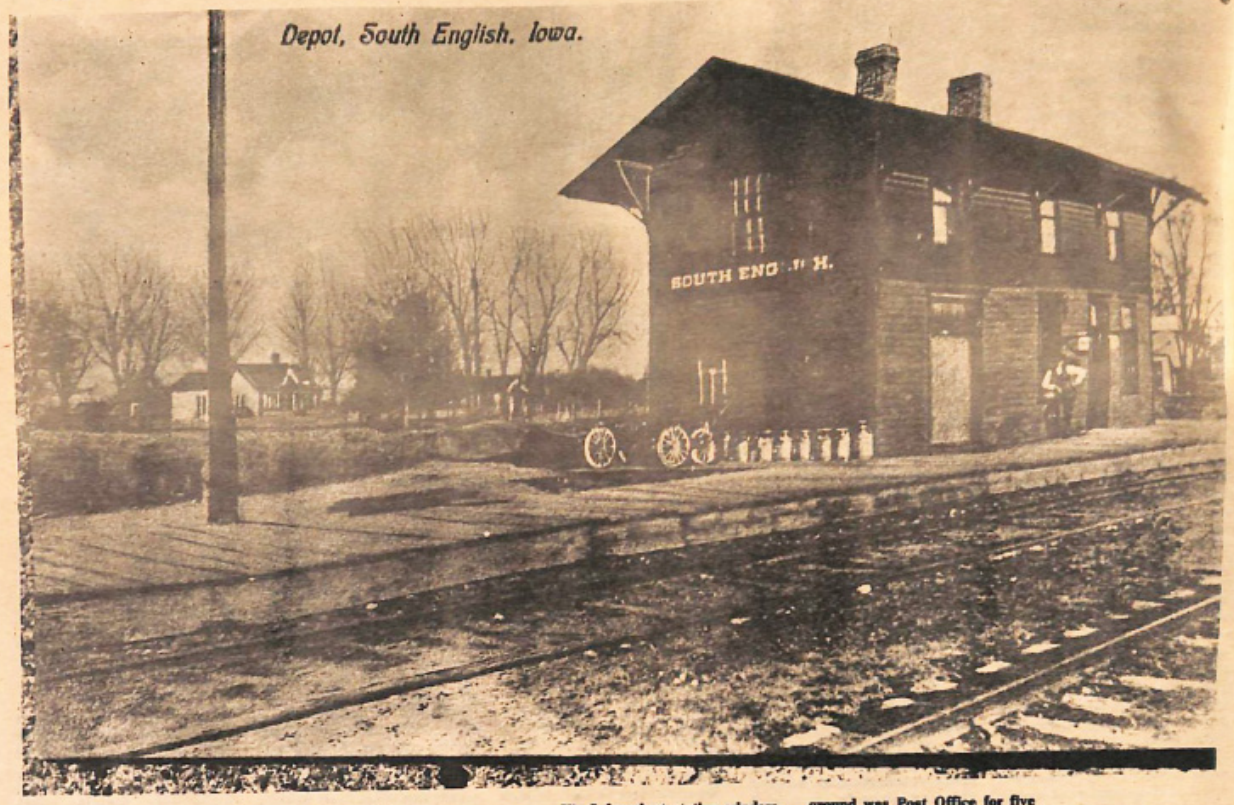
THE COMMUNITY - TEACHER'S MEETINGS

In these early days another educational force was common and popular. This was the Saturday meetings of teachers and people in the post office and business centers of the county. I was identified as a teacher with these weekly or biweekly meetings held at South English. This was a center easily reached Saturdays for both teachers and people because they generally came for their mail, for business and for an outing. These meetings were entirely educational. They were volunteer as to attendance and their programs were formulated and announced for the coming meeting. This brought together the school boards, the school patrons and the school teachers in a spirit that produced very remarkable results. They were not over organized, they did not have any money in the treasury, they led to other public meetings, conferences and discussions that were of decided influence of a nature that were decidedly productive in thought, in development and in public welfare. The outcome of these regular sessions of the people helped to build up a school system to a degree that could not be over-emphasized as there was the human touch, the helpful spirit and the friendly purpose that needs to be known and appreciated to be fully comprehended.

THE LYCEUM---

These were the days when the lyceum prospered, rendered a great service and had a large part in general education. During the winter season and other less pressing work seasons, these assemblages occurred in the school houses. There were addresses, debates, recitations, dialogues, readings, community music, solo singing and solo instrumental numbers. The interest in these programs was living and constructive, everybody had a part, so child was too young not to be honored by an opportunity, no man or woman was too inexperienced to not conduct a discussion on farm subjects, stock raising, stock feeding, etc., public health, good food for the family, problems of cookery, etc., all of which were uplifting, inspiring and developing to a high degree of excellence. At the end of the season a very prominent public exhibition was given in which every part of the program advertised the performer in that where his ability was the most creditable. These exhibitions were wonderful affairs when one remembers that everybody was represented and everybody was a part, if such person had had active membership in the lyceum. What a great service the community rendered in self education by all these regular and noted activities of personality and character is impossible to be told.

Nine early residents of South English. From the left: Mrs. Retta Lawler, Mrs. Mollie Boyd, Lester, Mrs. Kate Cosby Huxford or Mrs. Mary Jane Brown, Mrs. Mae Noffsinger,



Vic Safourek at station window, 1903. Small house in center back ground was Post Office for five years.

Railroad History of South English

When James Mehaffee and Jacob Bowers established the first settlement near South English in 1844(1(there were no plans for the building of a rail road to their settlement. But by 1875, following the Civil War and "railroad fever" in the East, the town of South English had been laid out on a projected line of railway following the South English river.(2(Precisely which railroad company the good citizens of South English anticipated building through their town is not known but it was likely either the Muscatine Western which had built from Muscatine to Riverside in 1872 and proposed to build further westward or one of the three railroads proposed south out of Iowa City: the Chicago, Clinton and Southwestern; the Iowa Southwestern; or the Iowa, Nebraska and Chicago.

During this time the people of southern Poweshiek County were insisting on having railroad facilities afforded their communities, particularly around Montezuma. Thornburg, in Keokuk County, was also outspoken in its demands for a railroad, and the residents of northern Washington County joined in these demands.(3)

And so it was. The Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern railroad, who owned a main line from Burlington north through Nichols and Cedar Rapids to Minnesota as well as the aforementioned Muscatine Western to Riverside, was unable to get coal for its locomotives without considerable trouble and expense. This company had proposed to build a line through Iowa City to the coal fields of Keokuk County near What Cheer. Several routes were surveyed in 1878 and the question of subsidies canvassed. A proposition was made to the northern tier of townships in Keokuk County to build a line of railroad through that part of the county if the required tax (subsidy) should be voted. Liberty township refused to vote [illegible] English River township voted favorably on the tax on August 20, 1878 as well as Adams on July 20, Prairie on August 29 and Washington on August 28.(4)

In order to build this railroad through South English to What Cheer the Iowa City and Western Railway Company (IC&W) was formed by the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern (BCR&N) on July 26, 1878. The BCR&N purchased the 9 miles of railroad from Elmira, on the BCR & N main line, to Iowa City from the Chicago, Clinton and Western (successor to the Chicago, Clinton, and Southwestern) on March 7, 1879.(5) In order to build south from Iowa City, the Iowa City and Western purchased the assets and charter of the defunct Iowa Southwestern Railroad for $1 on May 1, 1879.(6)

The work of grading the roadbed south from Iowa City to an Iowa Junction connection with the Muscatine Western near Riverside and westward from Riverside through South English to What Cheer began early in 1879. The grading and the task of laying the iron rails was completed in the winter of 1879-80 and the persistency of the people in obtaining a railroad was finally rewarded. The railroad station and siding were located somewhat west of what was then the town of South English. New businesses and houses were built near the railroad station resulting in the original settlement of South English being called the "old town". This new rail line followed the Iowa River to Iowa Junction and then the English River and Smith Creek to near South English.

Exactly when the first train ran through South English is not known but the first published timetable for the line, that of May 23, 1880, listed four passenger trains a day through South English. At 6:10 AM the train from What Cheer to Muscatine arrived and at 8:56 AM that from What Cheer to Cedar Rapids. In the afternoon there were trains from Muscatine and Cedar Rapids to What Cheer at 3:20 and 4:30 PM respectively. Later in 1880 a branch was built from Thornburg to Montezuma through Nassau and Barnes City.

By 1882 South English had grown to a quiet little village of 450 people. The railroad station agent then was D.N. Coffman.(7) The second agent was M.A. Strock. V. Safourek came to South English as agent in 1903. Two "new town" buildings now standing were here - the opera house and bank. A third, the elevator, was torn down in 1974. The lumber yard was then down near the depot site.

Although on a branch line of the BCR&N one station on the line, What Cheer, did more business in 1882 than any other station on(8) the railroad - $376,589.78. The coal cars of the day could haul 15 to 20 tons of coal and around 1500 to 2000 tons a day were loaded at What Cheer. At times, 200 cars a day moved out of What Cheer.(9) In 1882 South English was the third busiest station on the branch behind What Cheer and Keswick with $5160.14 in earnings. Figures for 1883-1886 were $4509.47; $2787.41; $3536.82 and $2225.96 in earnings respectively.(10)

On June 15, 1903 the entire BCR&N railroad was transferred to the Chicago and Rock Island Railway via a lease dated June 1, 1902 for a period of 999(11) years. (12)A second railroad company came to operate the railroad through South English. Under the Rock Island, four passenger trains a day (except Sunday) continued to operate through South English from Muscatine and Cedar Rapids to Montezuma with side trips to What Cheer. These were in addition to two freight trains a day and an every other day freight local for a total of 7 trains a day in all. On Sundays a livestock train ran from Montezuma.

One night in 1912 a double-headed freight carrying an immigrant car with a homesteader and his belongings left South English westbound around 10 PM. About two miles west of town, at the overhead bridge over the old Webster road, the immigrant car derailed with a truck, or wheelset, of the car falling onto and killing the car's occupant. The trainmen walked back to South English and solicited aid and local citizens responded by traveling to the site by sleigh to assist.

On March 19, 1916 the lines from Muscatine to Montezuma and What Cheer and from Iowa City to Iowa Junction were leased to the Muscatine and Iowa City Railway Company which became the third RR company to operate the line through South English. Nicknamed the Milk & Ice Cream by local residents there were the usual four passenger and three freight trains daily except Sunday plus two passenger trains on Sunday through South English. The Muscatine and Iowa City venture was short-lived and the lines were returned to the Rock Island on August 11, 1916.

Section crew with a pump handcar about 1913. Walter Furman at left.

After the passenger trains through South English were discontinued in the early 1930's (by then a doodlebug run) mixed train service, with passengers riding in the caboose, was provided until 1949 when the line went freight only. By this time the line east of Iowa Junction to Muscatine had been abandoned except for the Nichols-Lone Tree sector. In the late 1950's the original main line from Thornburg to What Cheer was abandoned along with the Nichols-Lone Tree section(13) as well as many depots including the one in South English.

On December 8, 1970, claiming losses of nearly $100,000 per year, the Rock Island posted abandonment notices for the 63.41 miles of track from Hills through South English to Montezuma. Local shippers along the line protested. The resulting legal hassles and several "last runs" by the Rock Island culminated in sale of the line to a railroad company formed by several of the shippers, the Central Iowa Railway Company, on Tuesday, March 20, 1973. Possessed of a line of railroad from the Rock Island, a locomotive and caboose from the Burlington Northern, a crew from the Milwaukee, and faith, the Central Iowa ran its first train westward through South English at 1:15 PM on Tuesday, November 13, 1973. The train was led by blue and white locomotive J33-3 (Verse 3, Chapter 33 of the Book of Jeremiah "Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.") - a part of the faith. A fourth company was now operating the railroad through South English.

But time and weather had taken their toll on the rail line along Smith Creek and the Central Iowa line from Wellman through South English to Montezuma was declared impassable to rail traffic and embargoed after January 1974. Today the Central Iowa runs a weekly freight only from Kalona to Hills and back to Kalona or Wellman with the portion of the line through South English fallen into disuse. Barring a resurgence in Iowa coal or the purchase of the Central Iowa by a company with financial wherewithal for rebuilding, the future of railroad service to South English appears bleak 97 years after the Railroads' first coming.

B.V. Safourek

V. Safourek inside depot, May 30, 1919. Other man unidentified.

S.E. Herald, Feb. 15, 1940

The Rock Island Railroad has been selected to bring into Des Moines the first solid trainload of new Ford tractors ever to come into this territory.

This trainload is one of 29 that will have left the Dearborn plant by March 1st, bound for distribution points in all parts of the United States.

"This makes agricultural history," said Mr. Ford. "This is the biggest shipment of its kind ever to leave the Rouge plant. These tractors are going out on the farm, where they will bring in an entirely new era of mechanized farming."

S.E. Herald, Feb. 22, 1940

An all-talking moving picture--"Ten Nights in a Bar Room" will be presented by the Iowa Anti-Saloon League, at the Methodist Church in South English on Friday evening, March 1st.

S.E. Herald, March 28, 1940

The question of levying a band tax carried favorably by a small margin, 47-40.

Railroad car on its side at west edge of city limits. The sign reads: 'South English, slow down to 12 miles.'

Bottom side of car.

References:

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3. NEVINS, Frank J. Seventy years of Service - A history of the Rock Island lines - 1922 Rock Island Lines, page 33.
4. History of Keokuk County, Iowa - Des Moines Union Historical Co. 1880, page 404.
5. NEVINS page 33.
6. History of Johnson County, Iowa City, Iowa 1883, page 244.
7. Business Directory of the Burlington-Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway 1882 - page 226.
8. B C R & N Annual Report 1882.
9. Rock Island Magazine September 1925, page 5.
10. B C R & N Annual Reports 1883-1886.
11. NEVINS page 34.
12. B C R & N 1903 Annual REPORT.
13. DONOVAN, F.P. "The Rock Island in Iowa" PALIMP. EAST September 1963 page

Above: A.P. Covey was section foreman on the Rock Island through South English for many years. He is at far right sitting on the motor handcar in this picture. The man in front of him

Note wood depot platform and small grain elevator.

South English is visible in background.

Moving eggs from store to station by dray wagon. Jack Simmons in back of wagon. May be Perry Fry driving.

Engine derailed by ice on crossing. Note modern elevator.

Blizzards were Common

The winter of 1880-81 was fine until about February 15, and then we had a blizzard regularly every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (three days) for six weeks. There are not many men now living in southern Iowa who have seen an old time blizzard where the strong wind from the northwest filled with ice and snow was impossible to face it or see any object, even a house or barn, 20 feet away. Persons have lost their way and perished trying to go from the house to the barn or vice versa. But storms of that feature will never come again. The country is too well settled up. Too many groves, buildings and corn fields. In those days there were very few wind breaks from a little ways north of Cedar Rapids to southern Minnesota. When the blizzard blew itself out, the sun would come out the following day and with no wind at all it was really pleasant to be outdoors. Then to open up the road took two to three days with two engines and 30 to 40 men. It was frequently the case that the north and south lines would not be blocked at all but the east and west lines got it bad. I have seen six engines on a four car train trying to break the way. I have known engines to be derailed on hard snow but do not recall anyone ever getting injured. To run into a snow drift was like jumping into a feather bed.

There are only a few of the old timers left, but it is always a pleasure to meet them and recall the days when railroading in Iowa was primitive. Talk about hard times. Some of the present day men don't know the meaning of the word. I have known the section foreman to bury the only emergency rail he had for fear the roadmaster would see it and order it sent to some other section.

from the Rock Island

The Western Herald
Nov. 13, 1879

HISTORY OF THE
NEW ADDITION

The tract of land on which the new addition and the future business of S.E. is located contains 60 acres and bears the following record:

It was entered by Charles H. Berryhill, Dec. 18, 1850, and sold to Hugh H. Rothman January 8, 1852 and sold by him to J.F.

The Western Herald
Feb. 13, 1879

Last Friday night during the temperance meeting at the M.E. Church some sneaking thieves cut the ivory rings from the harness on Abner Graham's team standing near the church. What pleasure or profit there is in such work is more than we can see. On Thursday night after the Odd Fellows and Mason's supper some parties went in and

White and O.P. Whitson April 3, 1858, and 50 acres conveyed to J.F. White by O.P. Whitson May 7, 1860; 10 acres was sold by O.P. Whitson to N.A. Miller September 30, 1862, N.A. Miller sold said 10 acres to Charles Maddox December 25, 1863 and Charles Maddox to J.F. White April 16, 1864, since which time the 60 acres has been owned by J.F. White.

stole about a dozen roasted chickens besides pie, cake, etc. Those fellows will not always escape unseen and when they are caught they will be made to feel the penalty.

On the same evening some scamp went to Melick's stable and cut the harness that belonged to some of the Harper folks. Murder will out, and justice will be done.

This is the dining room in the hotel operated by Mr. and Mrs. M.Radebaugh. The Radebaughs are standing behind the chairs in and Chester Mendenhall are seated at the right end of the table. Others are unidentified. The calendar on the wall is of