



JOHNSTON *Historical* SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

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PROGRAM Floods will be the general topic of the presentation. especially relating to '93. There will be maps and pictures earlier floods

Bring your mementos of your experience with the recent flood. We need to have serious preservation of this recent HISTORY.

At our January meeting, Ray Schliehs introduced the speaker Ron Sims who passed pictures around and made the following speech about the interurban Line. The line went from Des Moines to Perry and had a branch that ran to Woodward.

The line that operated through our Johnston was called the Inter-Urban Railway. Jefferson K Polk combined all the street car companies, the horse-car lines and others in the early 1890's. He was an interurban promoter. Polk articulated that the interurban was the way of the future. Inter-Urban Railway first started in 1898. Incorporated in April, 1898. Newspapers referred to the interurban, even after its incorporation, as the City Railway. It appeared they thought it was one system and not a separate entity.

Construction Crews that did grading work were followed closely by crews putting in poles for the overhead wire and the next phase was to string the overhead wire and the last phase was to lay the track. By this method of construction they were able to use electric equipment to lay the track rather than steam locomotives

Few companies in the east felt they needed freight service. Eastern companies did not build the track for cars of freight and the curves were too sharp for freight. Some went out of business when later they saw a need for freight service on the interurban and could not fill the need.

There were little stations all along the line. Basically they were just a platform. Farmers could put milk cans on the platform to ship them in to the Creamery. Farmers could receive small packages; it was considered express service and milk service. They developed carload freight service on which they had to have electric locomotives to pull cars right from the start. They negotiated interchange agreements with the steam lines from very early on. The Inter-Urban Company was one of the very first electric lines to do this.

One of the early projects was to go west to Adel to connect up with a line coming East from Audubon, IA. An agreement was made that the two lines would meet in Adel and the Audubon people would have rights to run on the Inter-urban line to their station at 6th and Mulberry Sts in downtown Des Moines. Inter-Urban started construction by going west from the old riverview park across the river to an area SE of the VA Hospital. Because of the terrain, they suffered difficultly with only mules and slips. By December they were at 70th and Roseland. The Aububon people were making no progress, so plans changed and the Inter-urban contemplated going to Woodward and then Boone. Difficulty in litigation and acquiring land north of what is now Urbandale brought a halt to this construction in the winter of 1904. The Inter-urban back-tracked to the west side of the river, having the bridge, they proceeded up the west side of the Des Moines River going alongside of Harding Road to the brickyard thence west on the south side of Beaver Creek. This line which ran along side of Lower Beaver Road crossed Beaver Creek north of the bluff of the Lovington area and diagonally headed for the town of Herrold which had a coal mine. Camp Dodge was later established as a stop on this line.

By the time they reached Granger, it was decided that Boone wasn't where they wanted to go, they would go to Perry. Perry to Grand Junction, Grand Junction to Jefferson, and they thought the Iowa Great Lakes would be their terminus. This would be the place! The Iowa Great Lakes was the vacation spot of the wealthy of Des Moines around the turn of the century. Many people that had money had houses on the lake. There was a lot of traffic between Des Moines and the Iowa Great Lakes. Construction crews worked thru all of 1905. It was February 1906 before they completed the line as far as Granger and started service to Granger. In the latter part of June of 1906 construction was finished to Woodward and service was started. Moran was the Junction of the Woodward line from Des Moines to Perry. The Inter-Urban Company laid out the town of Moran and had laid out the town of Herrold. The Inter-Urban was in debt to the tune of more than \$1,000,000 on the Perry line.

Primarily due to their foresight in being a freight carrier along with being a passenger service the Inter-urban company was in better condition than most of the other interurban companies. The Inter-Urban Company built to steam line standards, grades gentle, curvature shallow and 100 foot right-of-way. The Inter-urban line was built on private right-of-way for the most part. They built stockyards and served many coal mines. There was a coal mine at Herrold (*Norwood-White Coal Co #8--Shaft 210 feet deep, later employeed from 183 to 226 men*) that the Inter-urban Company served. There was a coal mine at Moran. The Inter-Urban line hauled many cars of coal. They also were close to gravel deposits being close to the Des Moines River and Beaver Creek and hauled much aggregate. Most of the building in the City of Des Moines was built with aggregate hauled on the Inter-Urban lines. The Inter-Urban controlled 95% of the Coal that moved into Des Moines, a great traffic base for the Inter-Urban Company.

In 1917 Camp Dodge came into its own as an Army Base; it had been a bivouac and summer training area for the National Guard from just after the Civil War. Another group of promoters went to Washington, D.C. to get the Army to locate at Camp Dodge during WWII. The Camp was a 'boon' to the Inter-urban and a good shot in the arm for the period. Double track was built to Camp Dodge. Single track could not handle the business generated by the Army Camp. Prosperity during the WWI was short-lived, and

the 1920's were not good to the interurban companies. The Inter-Urban changed its name to the Des Moines and Central Iowa Railroad Co. in 1922. The name Interurban lost its popularity with the public, with the advent of the automobile. Remember Ford got his great start on the Model T and the Model A.

In the 1930's the bottom dropped out for everyone, there was no money to repair the locomotives, track or overhead. Thousands of miles of interurbans were abandoned in the 1930's. Many in IL, IN, and OH were abandoned, but the line through Johnston survived. Freight service on the line through Johnston carried them through. City Railway controlled the interurban. By the end of the 1930's, they could scarcely provide passenger service. Of the 10 locomotives that the interurban had they probably only had three that could be used on a regular basis for passenger service, one on each line. The Iowa State liquor warehouse saved the Johnston line until it moved to Ankeny. That's when we heard the last train whistle in Johnston. The whistle could be heard throughout the valley, but is now an extinct sound. Silenced by the same fate that closed the coal mines. It may not be long until the sound st-r-r-i-i-i- -ke will not be heard.(baseball strike may determine the fate) We hope not!!

???RESIDENCE???

If a city limit, county, township or precinct line runs thru your house, what determines your residency? It is where you are when you sleep and if the line runs thru your bed, it is where your head is a resident. A few people in the U.S could change their residence and voting place by sleeping at the other end of the bed.

POST OFFICES

Abandoned, renamed or absorbed towns and villages, and discontinued Post Offices in or near Johnston

ANDREWS. A town laid out in 1857 in the eastern part of section 9, Jefferson Township about one mile west of the Des Moines River. The name of its post office was Lincoln(see below) and the town in later years went by that name. It was also sometimes called Dogtown.

AYER'S GROVE. Listed as a post office in Polk County from March 3, 1880 to December 14, 1882. First Postmaster was Elizabeth E. Finley.

CORYDON. A village in the southern part of section 12, Madison Township, one and one-half miles south of Polk City on the Des Moines River, appearing on maps of 1868 to 1880.

DOGTOWN. See Andrews, and Lincoln post office.

HERROLD. A post office from February 2, 1909 to November 12, 1944 after which mail was serviced through Grimes. First postmaster was Harry E. Gintzell. R.K. Stuart declined the original appointment on September 1, 1908.

HUNTSVILLE. A town in very early times in section 36, Jefferson Township, about one and one-half miles west of the Des Moines River, as stated in McVicker's Index Plat Directory to Towns, etc., in Polk County, 1884.

KIRKWOOD. A post office from August 24, 1858 to August 2, 1864 in the eastern part of Webster Township, between Beaver

Creek and the Des Moines River, and a mile or two northwest from their junction. First postmaster was Walter Oyler.

LINCOLN. (See Andrews above). A post office from July 5, 1861 to December 22, 1870; reestablished April 7, 1871 to June 10, 1886. First postmaster was John Runyan.

LOVINGTON. Laid out in 1854 in the southeastern part of section 18 Webster Township, near the mouth of Beaver Creek. It had great expectations, but was short-lived.

MCDEVITT. A post office from June 20, 1883 to December 15, 1884. Formerly called McDevitt's Grove (see below). First postmaster was Nancy McDevitt.

MCDEVITT'S GROVE. A post office from January 21, 1879 to June 20, 1883, located a short distance north of the present town of Urbandale. Name changed to McDevitt (see above). First postmaster was Mrs. Edna M. McMaster.

RIDER. a post office from May 29, 1900 to November 15, 1905. First postmaster was Theron J. Houghtaling

RIDGEDALE. A post office from June 17, 1858 to June 18, 1873; reestablished August 12, 1873 to December 10, 1874; reestablished July 26, 1875 to October 12, 1881; reestablished January 27 1882 to March 31, 1902, located about four miles southeast of Lincoln (see above), near the present site of Camp Dodge. First postmaster was John McClain.

TOWNER. A post office from June 21, 1879 to November 13, 1885. Formerly called Towner Lake (see below). First postmaster was Mary E. Towner.

TOWNER LAKE. A post office from January 21, 1879 to June 21, 1883 in the southwestern part of Jefferson Township. Changed to Towner (see above). First postmaster was Mrs. Mary E. Towner.

DODGE CITY. A line of businesses located on the east side of Beaver Ave across from the Camp Dodge Pool from 1915 to 1918 to accommodate soldiers. Foundations still exist. (*Just northwest of 1000 foot hill [water tank]*)

ACTIVE POST OFFICE

JOHNSTON. Post office established April 29, 1909 to November 30, 1912; reestablished May 9, 1923. First postmaster was John C. Hayes.

CEMETARIES

The inventory of cemeteries has been requested by the 150 year committee. If anyone is interested in working on any one of the four known cemeteries or any other graves in Johnston (i.e. McClain, Lawson/Kinsey, Ridgedale and Rittgers) please let Bob Otto know.