

# HUXLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 6 Issue 1

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1st half - 2013

## 2013 Officers

- **President**—Nels Nord
- **V.P.** — Don Duncan
- **Sec.**—Janet Stoll
- **Treasure**—Scott Petersen
- **Publishing**—Michele Kalsem

## 2013 Calendar:

**Annual Meeting April 13, 2013— New Safe Room Huxley Iowa.**

*Meetings are generally the 4th Monday of the month at 6:30 Pm in Council Chambers.*

Our home is located at 515 N. Main in the 3C's building call

515-231-9174 to view or consult.

## TRANSPORTATION

### As written in—The Huxonian Huxley Centennial 1882-1982

Access to services, to markets, to other communities depends on a system of roads, and there were many systems in Story County in the middle nineteenth century. Earliest roads, of course, were trails across the prairie, following the ridges and the most easily trod contours of the land. Later dirt roads required constant care to maintain, especially in wet seasons, and were often repaired or kept in usable condition by the use of logs and planks so horses and vehicles would not become mired. Many of the senior citizens recall highways around Huxley where there was always trouble in wet seasons due to mudholes. One spot was on the Sydnese hill north of Huxley, another was just south of Huxley. And many a farmer or anyone with a good team could earn a few dollars pulling motorists out of the mud.

Poll taxes were often worked off by our male citizens by their working on the roads for two days. If he provided a team, a man would get \$5 credit for the team and had to work only one day.

Streets in early Huxley were made of dirt. Horse drawn sprinklers were used to keep the dust down. Later, gravel and cinders were contributed to the town by the Milwaukee Railroad Company and the Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern Railway (interurban), hauled by local men and used on the streets.

Around 1920, three highways came through Huxley, more heavily traveled than the Lincoln Highway further north. The Jefferson Highway came in Huxley from the north on the road just east of the interurban tracks, to West Fifth Street, then to Main Street where it turned at the school corner to proceed to First Street thence east to exit town. When the road entering Huxley was completed to First Street, the highway went to that corner and through town on First Street. In the early 1920's, the highway was rerouted and paved so it curved around Huxley, the curve completely containing Huxley to the south and west of the highway.

One of our researchers found information at the Department of Transportation which indicates that a Wilson Highway came through Huxley. A letter from a registered Wilson Highway Association and dated in 1918 indicates that the intent of that association was to register a Wilson Highway through Iowa, and that it was to go from Des Moines, through Huxley, and on to St. Paul. Our researcher did find

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**MISSION STATEMENT** : *To engage the Community of Huxley, Iowa in the preservation, education, and celebration of our heritage and ancestry. To preserve for research and education, the artifacts, information, and verbal histories about the lives of the people of Huxley from its pioneer origins to the present day and into our future.*

that such a road was designated through Huxley, that it began in El Paso, Texas and went as far as Ely, Minnesota. It was marked by a red letter "W" on a white background, with a blue border at the top and bottom. It is apparent that the highway through Huxley was not popularly known as the Wilson.

Buses came through Huxley regularly beginning in the late 1920's. Veola Johnson recalls going to college in Northfield, Minnesota, in the late 1920's and taking a train from Cambridge; but when the bus started through Huxley, she took it so she would not have to drive to Cambridge. The bus depot was at a local service station, and for many years several through-buses stopped daily. As is the case with other modes of transportation, the bus usage gradually declined. With the completion of Interstate 35 a mile east of town, few buses came into Huxley.

Today, there is much local traffic on Highway 69 through Huxley, but Interstate 35 takes most of the long distance traffic away. In the town of Huxley, streets did improve gradually, and beginning in 1962, there was a program of paving projects. In 1962, First Street from Fifth Avenue to U.S. Highway 69 paved, with curb and gutter added for part of the way. Additional projects occurred in 1972, 1973, 1974, 1977 and 1979. Developers are required to construct curb, gutter and street paving in new subdivisions and dedicate the streets to the city. In 1981, there are approximately nineteen blocks of gravel-surface streets still existing in the city.

## RAILROADS

The railway systems in the state did more to develop Iowa than any other thing. Before 1864, there were only stage lines in Story County and it took days to get supplies from Iowa City to Keokuk. In 1864, railway tracks pushed into Story County giving impetus to greater production of agricultural products and other goods. It was not until 1881-1882 that a line was built east and west through the southern part of the county, and this was constructed by the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company. This company was an important and established rail system and was interested in making a connection from its Illinois line to the Union Pacific terminal in Omaha and in getting shipping business from the agricultural belt. They did not ask for the voting of public subsidies. Rather they were interested in town lot speculation. Land was purchased for the development of platted towns. Huxley was one of those towns. Building the railroads also brought more people into the township.



Ole Eide came to Huxley in 1882 to work on the section at 50 cents a day, and he stayed to become one of the town's most important businessmen. The railway line established shipping points, or towns, rather close together so no farmer would be more than six miles from a station where he could find good shipping accommodations, and also so that the farmer could go to market, conduct his business and return home all in one day. Thus, east of Huxley were Collins, Maxwell, Elwell, Cambridge, and west was Slater. Elwell did not develop and is nearly forgotten. Part of Sheldahl moved up to the station at Slater. Point Palestine which had been platted and where a few people lived was too far from the rail line and did not develop. Iowa Center, north of Maxwell, was another town which nearly faded away for the same reason. But Huxley prospered along with the railroad, and those producing goods for shipping prospered also.

Historians have called Huxley a considerable Norwegian shipping point and its shippers were described as "stock and grain raisers, farmers and others of energy" and included John V. Kalsem, S.V. Kalsem, A.K. Olson, John Johnson, J. Severid, A.G. Person, Lars Fravick, Ames Thompson, Thor Oleson, Peter Kjelsvig, H.O. Hendrickson, W.P. Viland, C. Person, John Severtson, R. Richardson, Eric Erickson, John Anfensen, K.B. Thompson, John Storing, Nels N. Syndes, A. Lande, J. Stenson, O.S. Heggen, Nels Highland, and J.W. Lyttal.

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Around 1910, the grade of the railway from Cambridge to Huxley was lowered. The old grade had been level with the streets in Huxley and engines had problems. Even so, the grade from Cambridge through Huxley has always been a long, hard pull. Four hundred laborers were imported to work on the road with horses and mules, many not conditioned for the heavy labor. Elmer Dobbe was a young boy at the time and he recalls that the labor camp was about a mile east of Huxley, and there were two railway cars used as the bakery and kitchen, and probably, the quarters for the men. Elmer and a friend or brother were always able to get food from the kitchen whenever they wished. Often there would be a fresh-baked pie thrust toward them, and they were invited to help themselves to all they could eat.

Elmer sold Des Moines newspapers to the road crew. He would sell as many as 50 Sunday papers, receiving up to 50 cents for the paper which normally sold for 10 cents at the time. Saturday night was a “big” night for the road gang, and Sunday morning they were still feeling the effects of the Saturday night binge.

As the railroad developed, Huxley became an important passenger station as well as a shipping point. Service between Chicago and Omaha was efficient and fast. The coal-fired steam engines of the early trains gave way to more modern diesel engines which were cleaner and more efficient. People living along the line, however, missed the familiar sound of the steam locomotive and its whistle. U.S. mail was carried by the line for many years. When the fast trains no longer stopped in Huxley, the mail was bagged and put on an elevated frame to be snagged by a rod from the train and the mail bag pulled into the speeding train. Mail dispatched to Huxley was tossed in its pouch from the speeding mail train to the feet of the waiting postmaster. On rare occasions, the tossed bag might be pulled under the trail wheels, mutilating the contents of the pouch. Most of the time it was received undamaged.

In 1920, Mr. George Hally came to Huxley to be the resident depot agent for the Milwaukee line. Until 1950, when he retired, he and his family lived in an apartment above the depot. He raised a family of one daughter and three sons. His daughter, Mary Hally, writes that part of her father’s responsibilities involved going out to visit the farmers in the area to persuade them to ship their stock and produce on the rail lines. She has other memories of her years in Huxley in the 1920s and 1930s which she sent to the editors: “I don’t remember much about Huxley until I started school. There is or was an incline just east of the depot. We called it a hill in those days and it made a good place to use our

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## MEMBERSHIPS CAN BE ACCEPTED AT ANNUAL MEETING OR CLIPPED AND MAILED FROM BACK PAGE

Do you know someone who would enjoy our newsletter? Let us know we will send them a complementary copy!

We also accept gift subscriptions—let us know who to send it to.



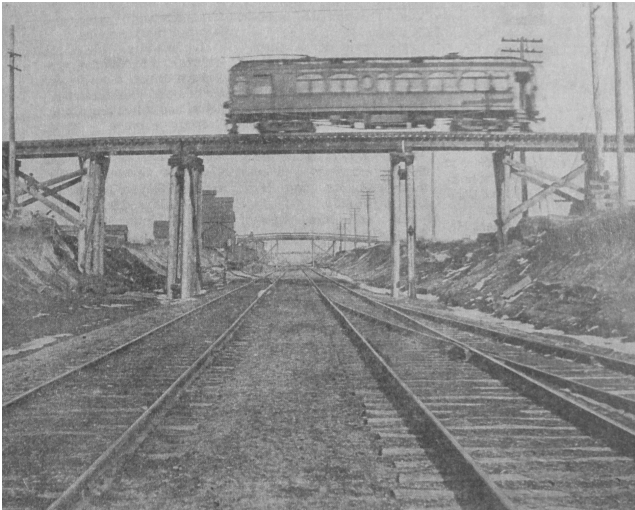
**Do you know someone that has Huxley  
Historical memorabilia?**

**How about photo’s or a great life story?**

**Let us know! Call Nels 515-231-9174**



sled in the winter months. We were supposed to turn our sleds before getting to the sidewalk and we were to stay off the tracks. Most of the time everyone who came to slide abided by the rules, but once in a while someone would try to see how far he could go. If one took a run at the top and then jumped on the sled, he could go across the tracks. "Of course, that was the time my dad just happened to be looking out the window." "The depot had a large window on three sides, east, south, and west. The dispatcher's phone and the telegraph were on the desk in front of the window so the agent had a good view of all trains coming and going and any kids playing on the tracks. I don't know if the bridge linking the town with the small farm just south of the depot is still there. That was just west of the depot and was an attraction for the youngsters (usually boys) to use it as a trapeze. That was not allowed, either. Sometimes, I think Dad must have spent as much time watching kids as he did railroading." "When we first went there a number of passenger trains and freights stopped in Huxley. The trains that were most attractive to me were the ones that went by in the evening hours and did not stop. They had diners and sleepers. I used to think how elegant it must be to be eating in a diner and have all the service." "In the summertime the freight trains going west had empty refrigerator cars. If there was any ice left in those cars, Dad would get it and Mom would make sherbet or ice cream. The ice was not fit to put in cold drinks so we had few of those, but the ice cream was a regular thing for us on Wednesdays." In 1950, Mr. Orval Byrd became the resident depot agent. The Byrds moved into the apartment above the depot but in a few years built a home in Huxley and moved into it. After nearly 21 years as the Huxley agent, Mr. Byrd became the agent in Perry, and served there until his retirement in 1978. He was followed in Huxley by Mr. Gene Burns who was the depot agent for two or three years.



The railroad through Huxley reached the peak of its prosperity and effectiveness probably in the 1940's. There were two fast passenger trains each direction daily and eight to ten freight trains, three of which were timed freights. However, business declined and shipping on the rails became less desirable. Trains were taken off. First the passenger business was removed in 1972, although they had not been stopping in Huxley for many years; then freight trains declined in number until in 1979 the last regularly scheduled train passed through Huxley. Today the ties have been removed from the roadbed, still rails lie askew. Another era has passed. The construction of the electric interurban line was another great aid in the development of business in Huxley as well as means of travel north and south. J.S. Polk made his fortune in Des Moines from electric trains. He was the principal backer of an electric train from Des Moines through Nevada to Eldora, and the grade for this line

was actually prepared between Des Moines and Ankeny. The project failed. Later a railroad was developed from Newton to Boone to Gowrie, going through Cambridge and Kelley. This line also failed. However, the western part was converted to an electric line and connections were made with Des Moines, using the grade from Des Moines to Ankeny which Mr. Polk had developed. This line then connected Des Moines, Ames, and Fort Dodge and it ran along the west edge of Huxley. The line was known as the Fort Dodge, Des Moines, and Southern Railway Company.

The first interurban train came into Huxley in 1906. Elmer Dobbe recalls the event and has a photograph showing the first car crossing the bridge over the Milwaukee line, with young boys standing under the bridge. The Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern Railway served patrons for a good many years, hauling coal among other commodities. The electric current for this line was manufactured by the company at its Fraser plant north of Boone, and electricity for Huxley was purchased from the company until about 1960. Again, as with other railway lines, business declined and costs increased. The interurban depot in Huxley closed in 1953. Business usually handled there was taken to the agent in Alleman for a time. In a few years the line went out of business and many lengths of track have by this time been removed. For many years, however, the interurban served the community well. Many recall riding the electric train to Des Moines to shop for the day and return. Fare was 75 cents round-trip, and trains ran every twenty or thirty minutes. Many years ago there was a small passenger station at Midvale from which passengers could ride into Huxley for 10 cents a trip. Rides on the interurban were somewhat less than smooth and quiet, but the electric train was a convenient mode of transportation.

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# The Huxonian Oct. 1938

## SPORTS

### Huxley Defeats Defeats Elkhart in Thriller

The Huxley nine blazed to its second victory of the season Friday, behind the superior pitching of Stoll. J. Tesdall and Helland starred defensively for Huxley, while Stoll and Hynd starred offensively, each getting two hits. Stoll had his fast ball working and under control, striking out nine Elkhart batters. D. Cory pitched a fine ball game for Elkhart, although he was replaced by R. Cory in the sixth inning. Fritz Ericson was the umpire. The score at the end of the game was 6-5 in favor of Huxley.

## SCHOOL

### Class Officers

The results of the recent class election in high school are:

#### Seniors

President.....Junior Thompson  
Vice-President.....Irene French  
Secretary-Treasurer.....Pauline Lee  
Class Sponsor.....Mr. Reng

#### Juniors

President.....Alvin Lantz  
Vice-President.....Orland Fjelland  
Secretary-Treasurer.....Edna Wenos  
Class Sponsors.....  
Miss Horvel and Mrs. Freese

#### Sophomores

President.....Marion Kalsem  
Vice-President...Marjorie Swenson  
Secretary-Treasurer.....Dorothy Larson  
Class Sponsor.....Mr. Hanke

#### Freshman

President.....Opal Tesdall  
Vice-President.....Cecil Lande  
Secretary.....Melba Ashbaugh  
Treasurer.....Morris Helland  
Class Sponsor.....Miss Qualhiem

## ADVERTISEMENTS

### Huxley Hardware & Plumbing

Electrical Service  
H.J. HEMMINGSON  
Phone 24 Huxley, Iowa

### MIDVALE GRAIN COMPANY

Grain, Tankage, Shorts,  
Bran, Salt, Posts, etc.

PHONE HUXLEY 55

### Dr. James B. Parks

Phone 82  
Huxley, Iowa

### Headquarters for Christmas GIFTS THAT LAST BIRKESTRAND & KALSEM

Jewelers  
Huxley, Iowa

### ELLIOTT SHELL STATION

Greasing, Washing  
Accessories, Polishing  
Goodyear Tires  
Highways No. 65 and No. 69  
HUXLEY, IOWA

For Notions, Groceries and Candy Go to  
**Albert Johnson**  
Huxley, Iowa

## Manners For Moderns

There is an old saying to the effect that the man who is said to be the best conversationalist always turns out to be the best listener! Ask leading questions, draw people into talking about themselves, their interests, ambitions and hobbies and your reputation as a brilliant conversationalist is secure.

Try to be amusing and interesting but don't try too hard if it's not in your line. If you are the quiet, old-fashioned type, then be a good listener and acquire a reputation for being "deep."

Gossip, swearing or out-moded slang are definitely out. Don't be clever at someone else's expense; and swearing doesn't mean that you know your way round, you should have outgrown that urge at the age of ten or thereabouts when you thought it sounded grown-up. Slang, or a "line" will get pretty tiresome if not renewed occasionally.

Kathleen Black, the well known etiquette authority, lists the following "Talk Tips" for the would-be conversationalist:

#### Do—

1. Try to find what interests the other fellow and let him talk about it.
2. Be a good listener.
3. Take your time when talking.
4. Introduce yourself when necessary.
5. Watch your language. Beware of swearing-and old slang.

#### Don't—

1. "Hog" the conversation.
2. Talk about yourself exclusively.
3. Interrupt or spoil anyone's story.
4. Try to be clever.
5. Talk about unpleasant things.
6. Gossip about anyone.

# HUXLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ' S ANNUAL MEETING

- April 13, 2013 -

Huxley's Safe Room

( adjacent to City Hall)

515 N. Main, Huxley, Iowa.



2013 Annual Meeting Theme

## ***“HUXLEY TRANSPORTATION” HORSES, TRAINS, AND AUTOMOBILES***

Doors open at 11:30

Norwegian lunch will be served at Noon ( free-will donation )

Meeting begins at 1 p.m.

Please RSVP by March 29th so we can plan for you!

- Call Nels Nord at 597-2201 or 515-231-9174

or

- Email Nels Nord at [nn4hawks@hotmail.com](mailto:nn4hawks@hotmail.com).

# Thank you for paying your dues. We appreciate it very much.

Please consider joining as a LIFETIME member and never have to worry about renewing again.

A LIFETIME membership is easy (\$500 one time) and it means so much to HHS as we need a safe space to store the heritage we have already acquired AND your input about how best to preserve it. The

HHS needs a building and archival quality storage to protect our items. Did you know we have a fire truck? And a 4' x 5' painting? Those are just two of the fabulous treasures we store but we have A LOT more much of which are delicate photo's, fabrics, and papers.

Feel free to use the membership form on the back of this newsletter.

Be sure and come to a meeting when you can because even as we need financial assistance we also need help making good plans for our future. NOT to mention the great stories we share!

The following are Lifetime members who agree with our mission.

John Berhow

Homer & Kay Kalsem

Laverne & Elaine Helland

Elizabeth & Javerna Maland

Darlene & Robert Hermann

Nels & Rowena Nord

Dave & Cheryl Kalsem

Harriett Sheldahl

John & Ann Kalsem

Janet & Gary Thompson

Dean & Diane Lande

David & Verda Tesdall

Paul & Florence Sandve

Omar & Valerie Brendeland

**Membership Form—Clip or Copy and Mail**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Circle those that apply please.**

Annual 2013 \$20

Family 2013 \$30

Lifetime Membership \$500

Gift Amount \$\_\_\_\_\_

2nd ed. DVD Purchase \$20

S&amp;H for DVD \$2.50

Total \$\_\_\_\_\_

RSVP TO ANNUAL MEETING # ATTENDING \_\_\_\_\_

Mail To:

***HHS-515 N. Main Ave-Huxley Iowa. 50124***

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE  
CONTACT US AT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

PHONE: NELS NORD 515-231-9174

EMAIL: HHS@HUXCOMM.NET

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WWW.HISTORY.HUXLEYIOWA.ORG

**HUXLEY****HISTORICAL****SOCIETY**

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