

HUXLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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2nd Half - 2012

2012 Officers

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

2012 Calendar:

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

2012 Calendar:

What Ever Happened To Palestine, Iowa?

Interview with Orland Berhow—By Roger Ryerson

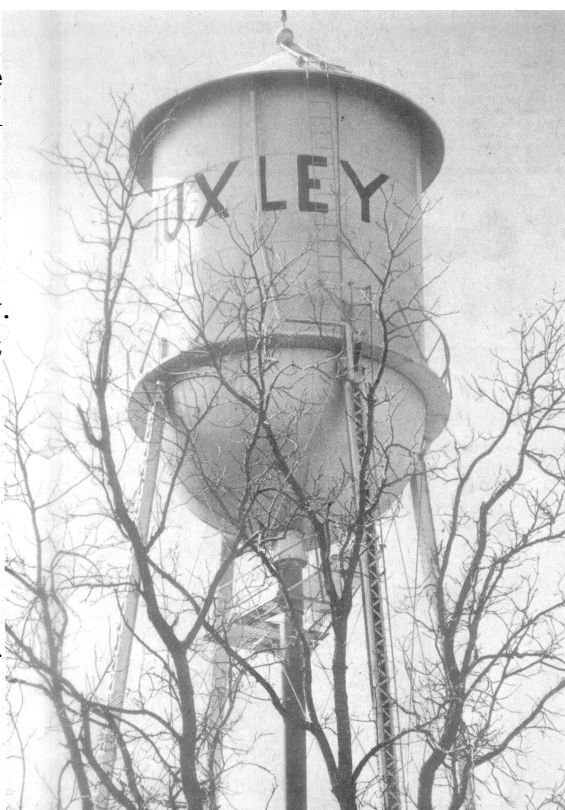
Tri-County Times April 1, 1976

When a group of sturdy Iowa pioneers laid out the small town of Palestine in October 1857, they probably had no idea that one day their town would be abandoned for a nearby settlement named Huxley. Palestine, Ia., located just one half mile west of the Ballard Golf and Country Club, eventually got a post office and a few stores, but the turn of the century the town was swallowed up by Huxley, (one mile away) and nothing remains of that early settlement today.

Orland Berhow of Huxley

was born on the site of that post office in Palestine in 1898. Of course the town was gone by then, and the land was owned by his father, Lewis Berhow. But Orland still refers to the spot as the "old Palestine Post Office."

"It was a town, but it never got any place, Orland said. "There may have been one little grocery store there. That name Palestine has been used quite a bit. I started to school in the...



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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.

Palestine School. That's part of the golf course today."

The house that Orland was born in burned to the ground in the winter of 1900, and in 1907 the Palestine School was abandoned because a new school house had been built in Huxley. Orland stayed in the country, living on the farm that is owned today by Fritz and Bonnie Erickson, but he went to the Huxley school and has remained active in that town till this day. When he was in his early 20's he moved into Huxley, and since that time has held just about every job imaginable, from a railroad freight distributor to the town marshal in the 1920's. "You name em and I've tried em. Just a little bit of everything," Orland said.

Railroad Named The Town

Orland Berhow remembers life around Huxley as early as 1905. But the town's history goes back to the year 1882. County records in Nevada state that on February 16, 1882, a survey was taken of the town by president, S.S. Merrill, who named the new town in honor of his relative, Thomas Henry Huxley, who was a noted English biologist in the 19th century.

The records also state that Huxley remained a village until February 12, 1902, when after many election attempts the town was incorporated. The final judgment was made six months later by Judge J. R. Whitaker. A United States census in 1900 shows that the town had a booming population of 199. Today that population is somewhere between 1500 and 1600.

Norwegian Background

Orland Berhow, like many of the other early residents in Huxley, has a Norwegian background. "My father and mother were born in Norway," Orland said. "My grandpa spelled his name a little different than we do – Ole Berhaug." Elsa Berhaug was Orland's grandmother.

Orland said that his mother's maiden name was Helland, and her side of the family were fisherman in Norway. His father's side of the family were carpenters in Norway, but farmed when they got to this country. "There was a lot of shipbuilding (in Norway) and I think at that time most of them made their own furniture," Orland said. "I have an old box, made by great-grandfather. We would call it a suitcase today. It has homemade hinges and a homemade lock."

Orland's parents Lewis and Ostrid Berhow, were married in the Fjeldberg Lutheran Church (then located one mile south of Huxley) in 1883. Lewis was a farmer all of his life, but when Orland was about 20 he moved to Huxley to try his hand at a variety of "city" jobs.

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By that time Huxley's population was over the 200 mark and the town was proud to have some of the earliest modern conveniences in central Iowa. The few but growing number of motorists in the area could have their automobiles serviced at Pete Brown's service station (built in 1904), Leena Egones was a busy telephone switchboard operator in her office above the old bank building (started in 1908), and the town saw its first basketball team play in 1910.

Orland remembers that Pete Brown not only had the first service station, but he also owned the town's first automobile and he gave Orland a ride in it. "Pete Brown probably had one of the first garages in this community," Orland said. "I would say that he probably put that in 1910 or 1911." Brown's gas pump was a crude contraption compared to today's standards. Instead of an underground tank, he had a metal tank sitting in front of his station. The tank had an opening under it big enough to set a one gallon can, and the motorist would fill his car by filling the can and emptying it into his car's tank (under the front seat) "one gallon at a time." Orland said that it didn't seem like a big bother at the time, because the average sale was only about three gallons, and Brown only had about three sales a day.

Leena Egones, the telephone operator, also had a relatively crude setup compared to today's standards, but the volume of calls that she handled in 1908 wasn't very large. Orland said that the young lady had one of the "old switchboards" and that her job was to handle the calls between the different party lines existing in the country around Huxley. "You'd call on a country line, and want to call somebody else on a different country line," Orland said, "and the operator would ring maybe two long and two short rings to get you on a line. There were maybe six or seven on a line."

The basketball team only had seven players in 1910, and they had to play all their games on an outside court. There were only one or maybe two other teams in the area for them to play, though, so their schedule wasn't complicated by adverse weather, Orland remembers that the bloomer-clad young girls from the 1910 team included Gladys Larson, Mable Dobbe, Adelia Brown, Martha Kalsem, Carrie Dueland, Madeelia Kalsem, and Ester Hol-land.

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Town Marshal and Vigilante Committee

Orland's first jobs when he move to Huxley as a young man included working with the Northwestern Railroad, working on the new school building and water tower and being town marshal. His first job was as a freight deliverer for the railroad, and from that job he went to work with a crew building the first brick school house in town.

"I helped dig the basement in the 1920 school house (the gymnasium of the Old Ballard Jr. High building) with a team of spotted horses," Orland said. "Print and Fred were their names. While we were getting about done with that, a man came down there and kept watching that spotted team. Pretty soon he too me aside and asked if I wanted to change jobs. He wanted me to hoist steel for the new water tower."

Orland went on to say that his new boss hired him away from the school because he "fell in love with that big spotted horse (Print). He would come down and the same as give him a kiss on the nose." Orland's job at the water tower consisted of hoisting steel up to workmen with his team. "What we did," Orland said, "was take the front axle of an ordinary farm wagon, left the reach in, and had a special iron made. I would put this reach pole in the ground so the horses wouldn't have to hold the steel after it got to a certain height."

Within the next few years Orland was also the town marshal in Huxley. He said that during the 1920's drinking was quite a problem in town. Huxley "wasn't really rough," Orland said, "but about that time there was a lot of stealing." What he and the town did was form a vigilante committee to stand watch on Main Street at night. "They called themselves a vigilante committee, but I would call it more of a night watch, to keep people from stealing and breaking into the stores," Orland said. A group of about 20 men made up the committee in 1923.

From that job Orland moved on to manage a poultry and egg shop on Main Street. That shop burned down in 1927, and later Orland managed the farmer's elevator for a number of years. During those years, around 1930, Orland said that Main Street was the social and business center of town. The business there included a barber shop, two hotels, a clothing store, a bank, a telephone office, a meat market with living quarters upstairs, a livery barn, an implement store, a grocery store, and a hardware store. O.J. Severeid also owned a building that was a drug store at one time and continued on to be called the "gossip center" on Main Street. Orland added that a skating rink, a doctor's office, and a cement block building were also on Main Street at one time.

Most of those business establishments are gone today, and many more are existing. The town no longer has every yard fenced in to protect houses from herds of cattle that were driven through and just about every street is blacktopped, instead of the mud surface that was common in Huxley and many other small towns 50 years ago.

But the biggest difference today goes deeper than the physical appearances, according to Orland, "One thing I've noticed an awful lot is that I used to know everybody. But now I can go to church and not know nearly half the people."



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!

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