

History of the Town of Kelley

Kelley is thought to have first been settled in the 1850's. Some of the early residents were R. Balldock, Washington Thomas, George Thomas, Robert and William Hawk, E. McKinzie, the Clevelands, the Rosenfelds, the Hutchinsons, the Fosters, the Etchers, the Gerberachts, the Sutters, the Stevens, the VanFleets, the Bullocks, the Mousers, the Harlow, and George Kelley, for whom the town was named. Mr. Kelley came here from McClean County, Illinois, first settling in eastern Boone County and finally making his home on section 1, Palestine Township, Story County. At the time the Kelleys came here, there was only one house upon the present site of Nevada. Mr. Kelley built some of the first buildings in Kelley, including the first school in 1854 and the first church in 1856. He also helped lay out the first road from Palestine Township to Nevada. It was practically only a trail made by sticking poles in the ground to guide the wagons over the prairie through the tall grass.

The first school was built of round logs and had a dirt floor. A Mr. G. Brown was the first teacher. In later years a brick schoolhouse was built which included the first thru the eighth grade. The building was divided in half, grades one thru four in one half and grades five thru eight in the other half. In 1916 the present brick school was built. Kelley had the best gym in the county and for several years all the tournament games were held there. This school had grades one thru twelve. The first class was graduated in 1922. In 1948 the high school was discontinued and students attended the Huxley High School. Tuition was paid by the Kelley District. In 1959 or 1960 Kelley joined

with Huxley, Slater, and Cambridge to form the Ballard Community School District. Elementary centers are in Slater, Cambridge, and Kelley, while the Junior High and the High School are located in Huxley.

In 1891 Kelley was larger than Ames or Slater. On main street there were three grocery stores including a very good general store, two restaraunts, a pool hall, two depots (one for the Inter-Urban and one for the Northwester Railway), two elevators, a hotel run by Mrs. Sutter, a creamery, a brick yard, a hardware store, a butcher shop, a drug store, a livery stable, an implement shop, a barber shop, a blacksmith shop, a town band, and a Baptist Church. There were also three doctors: Dr. Shane, Dr. Brody, and Dr. Adamson. Unoffical sources reported that the the first barbed wire was developed by a man who lived near Kelley, and the first shingle baler was invented by Joe Johnson of Kelley. Kelley might well have still had a bank if the banker, a prominent business man hadn't taken all the money, about forty thousand dollars, and ~~the~~ "run off". The money or the man were never seen again.

The first church in Palestine Township was built about 1856 and was a house of worship for the United Brethren congregation. Reverand Marks acted as the first pastor. The church was ~~started~~ started with the idea with the idea of making it a United Brethren school but sufficient aid was not received and they ~~converted~~ converted the building into a church. The first Congregational Church was organized March 21, 1876. The building of the church was begun at once. It went rather slowly as it was done by the members and those interested when they could spare the time. Reverand Parmenter had charge of ~~the~~ most

the building. He was a carpenter and did all the planning, managing and a greater part of the work. Rev. Parmenter was the soul of the new church at this time he was not only preacher and carpenter but also the organist and choir director. In 1908, the Baptist church in Kelley was disbanded and the few members that were left went to the Congregation Church where union services were held until 1915. These two churches were never definitely united. Though they held meetings together, they each kept their own minutes of the business meetings. In the year 1892 the Bethlehem Congregation in Slater decided to remodel the old Bethlehem Church, later called the Lincoln Church. It was also decided to build a new church located one mile south of Kelley on the land owned by Erick Cleveland. This church was called the North Bethlehem Church and was served by Pastors Holm, Pastor Thvedt, and Pastor Huus. On December 18, 1902, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a new congregation. Reverend T. T. Heimark presided at the meeting and was called to serve the congregation until a regular pastor could be secured. It was decided to call the congregation the Betania Norwegian Lutheran Church. Reverend H. Holman became the first regular pastor of the Bethany congregation and served from 1903 until 1911. Services were conducted in the Norwegian language until the year 1911 when it was decided to have 10 English services during the year. In 1916 the church building was moved to its present site in the town of Kelley.

Kelley has had three major fires, the worst of which was the drug store. The other two were at the livery stable and the Blacksmith Shop.

The Inter-Urban train was electric and first ran from Ft. Dodge

to Cambridge. Later it was changed to the Ft. Dodge, Des Moines and Southern Railway Company and instead of going to Cambridge, it went through Boone and then to Des Moines instead of Cambridge. A spur went from Kelley to Ames.

The exact date that the town was established or incorporated is not known, but it is known that A. Wortman was mayor of Kelley in 1900. One of the early ordinances on record was passed on May 6, 1901, to build a sidewalk four feet wide along blocks three and four of Giddings Street, to be built of boards or any other substantial material. Other early ordinances prohibited the playing of baseball on Giddings Street or on Hubbard Street between Giddings and Weber, the penalty not being less than \$2.50 or more than \$10.00. Also prohibited was the firing of cannons or other firearms without the permission of the mayor. Speed of any vehicle through the town was limited to not more than 1 mile per six minutes. The Kelley Water Works was originally constructed and has been owned by the and operated by the Town of Kelley. Original construction was started in the latter part of 1916 and was finished in early 1917. A new pump house and well was built in and a filtering system was added in 1964.

Telephone service was established in Kelley with the formation of the Farmline Telephone Company in 1902. This became the Kelley Co-operative Telephone Company in early 1943. Mrs. Grace Carroll gave faithful service as switchboard operator until the company switched to automatic dial service in January 12, 1963.

On April 21, 1968, Kelley's 240 residents were forced to evacuate their homes when a gaping hole was opened in an anhydrous ammonia tank in a train derailment here. 17 cars of an 80 car North Western Railway freight train left the tracks in the center of this Story County town about three a.m. but the smell of the ammonia fumes hung overhead all day. Two persons were taken to Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames where they were treated for ammonia poisoning, then released. In some cases, animals left behind succumbed to the fumes and blackbirds littered the streets where they had fallen after dying from the fumes, and grass and dandelions were dead all over town, and there were reports of grass being affected as much as four miles east of here. Nine boy scouts and their scout leader were out on their first overnight campout about two miles east of here when they smelled the fumes. In various stages of undress they rushed from their campsite in their leader's car and returned to town where they were evacuated with their families. Firefighters from Ames, Huxley, Slater and other nearby towns were called immediately. Gas masks and oxygen tanks were brought in and used early in the day, but they were removed later as the fumes wafted away. Women in the town prepared breakfast, lunch and coffee for the firemen all day Sunday and into the early morning hours of Monday. Also they provided coffee for the railroad workers for several days as Kelley has no restaurants. Services at Kelley's two churches, Bethany Lutheran Church and Kelley Congregational Church, were canceled because of the derailment.

Due to the rapid growth of other towns in the area, Kelley's business community has declined in recent years. We have an up-to-date Post Office and rural mail delivery. We also have an elevator, an anhydrous ammonia fertilizer plant, seven truck lines, a mineral plant and a small grocery store.

Two churches are flourishing and Bethany Lutheran Church recently built a new parsonage and now has the services of a resident pastor. Several new homes have been added in recent years.

The present mayor is Marvin Kennedy and the council members are Marvin Holland, James Mott, James Brendeland, Jack Morris, Thomas Shaeffer. The town clerk is G. Harold Starr. The treasurer is John Berrett.

Mayor
Marvin Kennedy