

72

MAXWELL, IOWA
APRIL 25, 1968

Charles B. French was a druggist in Maxwell, Iowa, for over 50 years.

Be it resolved by the Town Council of Maxwell, Iowa, that the history as prepared by Charles B. French, in 1960, be the official history to be placed in the cornerstone for the new Story County Courthouse in Nevada, Iowa.

Story County is favored by the fact that it is located in the center of the great Commonwealth of Iowa, the area of which is the richest agricultural center of the world, according to statistics.

Maxwell was founded in the summer and fall of 1881. The surveyors for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, who were surveying two miles north of town, decided the high ridge west of town was too much to overcome with the machinery they then operated. After careful study and investigations, it was found they could come south to the junction of the Calmus and Indian Creek valleys, and get a less steep grade. Consequently, they began to bridge Indian Creek with a big wooden structure and a very long trestle on each side, which was washed out two different times that winter. My Father, J. O. French, who had started a lumber yard down on the railroad tracks, told of how the Railroad Company gave up trying to get across the creek until early spring of 1882. By that time, they had found and commenced to dig gravel and had several pits of gravel with which to build their grades with a firm ballast.

As the railroad came down the hill east of town much activity was started. The late L. R. Shepherd, then living in Peoria, told me of walking over to the railroad where he obtained employment digging right of way for \$1.00 a day. The flourishing villages of Iowa Center and Peoria soon commenced to move some of their largest buildings to the new town of Maxwell. Mr. J. W. Maxwell, the progressive member of the firm of Baldwin & Maxwell, general merchants of Iowa Center, began moving their long 200 foot, one story building here and rebuilt it in the location of Coopers' Furniture Store. It then was decided to name the town after the popular J. W. Maxwell. The railroad company and Baldwin & Maxwell bought up much of the land around the town, as seen by the town Plats, viz -- Baldwin & Maxwell addition to the town and other additions as seen on the Plat. The railroad company gave us our beautiful park and was accepted by the Town Council of 1883, which were Dr. S. T. Goodman, Wm. Starr, and John O. French.

As the growth of the town progressed, the schoolhouse, several business houses, and the Methodist Church was in construction in the fall of 1882. Later on, the following county schools all came together to form the Maxwell Consolidated School District: Calmus School -- one mile west on the Bing Miller farm; Washington School -- one mile north on the Travis farm; Phillips School -- two miles northeast on the Paul Smith farm; White Chapel School -- two miles southeast on the M. D. Warner farm; and the Flickinger School on the Ross Link farm, two miles west. Washington School, one mile north, is where the youngsters walked to school in the fall of 1882, as our schoolhouse was not finished until 1883. It was a frame brick veneered building of six rooms and was on the location of the present old building. The spring term of 1883 school was held in a reconstructed wagon shop on the location of the Ness Brothers Implement building for the town pupils. The fall term was held in the new schoolhouse, up on the hill, as they called it. Davis Hankins was the first teacher and Superintendent, with Maggie Gamble, Miss Burzell, and Maude Bowen as teachers. In 1885 Clark McLain was the Principal with the same three lady teachers.

The first church was the Methodist Church, built in 1882, a frame brick veneered building with a tall steeple on the present church location. The Presbyterians organized a class and worshipped with the Methodists until 1889, when they built a frame building on their present location. This building was used by them until 1914, when they built their present church. The Christian Congregation built a large handsome wooden church on their present location in the early 1890's. This building was destroyed by fire in 1921. They immediately proceeded to erect their present building. The Brethren Church was built in 1911. They had a long wooden building four miles south of town, where they worshipped prior to 1911 before moving to town. The old wooden building that was just south of the Minear barber-shop was the first building moved up from Peoria. It served as a clothing, hardware, and shoe shop during its existence. The Larson and Hubbard Hardware buildings were the first business buildings to be built in 1882, together with the Depot and oldest elevator. In the early days, Maxwell supported two hotels and a large eating house which was built by the railroad company where the fast trains would stop to let their passengers get a bite to eat. There were no dining cars then. This building was moved by A. E. Harris and remodeled into a residence where he now lives. The hotels were the W. E. Van Hook residence and the big two and a half story building located on the Hines Welding Shop and south to the corner.

After prospecting, the railroad company located three fine quality gravel pits which they worked. They needed it badly for ballast for their heavy trains. The first pit extended from the Standard Oil tanks to their tool house under where the depot now stands. A spur was put in and a pit 50 X 1500 ft. was dug to get the "yellow gold". The next pit was worked across the creek on the Laughlin farm, but did not prove so profitable. The third and largest pit was worked up past the park to the Boitnott farm, now the Ted Peters' acreage, up to the Dale Pearson road and a little beyond into Ray Boyd's farm. Before modern equipment, the gravel was hauled on flat cars for 25 miles in each direction.

The first town officers were Dr. S. T. Goodman, Mayor; Wm. Starr, J. W. Maxwell, and J. O. French, Councilmen. This was in 1883 at which time the town was incorporated. In 1885 Wm. Starr was Mayor, and in 1887 J. O. French took the same office. However, he never finished his term as he was shot down in cold blood in his lumber office near the elevators by a drunken sot whom he had arrested. After threatening several others, he shot himself.

The first fire department came about 1890. They had a big two wheeled hose cart which was pulled and pushed by hand with one block of hose on it. The wooden water tank was up the hill on the Irve Hennick present lot on Main Street. The water mains were put in during the late 1880's, partly, more later. In 1883 a fine band called the Maxwell Cornet Band was formed.

The soldiers of the Civil War called themselves the G.A.R.'s or the Grand Army of the Republic, a national organization. They formed a Company and had a hall in a large two story building on the DX Service Station corner, which Ed Raff's hardware store occupied the first floor. The ex-soldiers pitched their tents and held their reunions every summer in the park. Some years it lasted two or three days, where they slept and spun their yarns. It was from this that the "Old Settlers Picnic" came into existence at the turn of the century. Many good times have been held in that fine park.

The first Postmaster was Albert H. McNall. A two story frame building was moved from Peoria, and his office was located on the Martin H. Troup Realty Corner in this building. Mrs. Celia Laughery was his assistant, also the second Postmistress. The rural free delivery routes were started in 1906 with Dayton Gardner as the first carrier. Later, A. E. Harris and Ed Ernst were appointed for the third rural routes.

As of the date this history of the town of Maxwell is being typed, which is April 25, 1968, we still have the four denominations of churches in town which are: Church of the Brethren, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Methodist, and the Presbyterian Churches are still on their original locations but have been changed over the years into newer brick buildings. The Church of the Brethren is still the original wooden building that was first erected. However, all of the churches have made improvements and remodeled some from time to time. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) built on a new educational center which was dedicated in 1966. The Methodist Church remodeled their basement and kitchen which was dedicated in 1968.

The Maxwell School was consolidated in 1917 and is now called the Maxwell Community School District. It is comprised, as of this date April 25, 1968, of 52 square miles. There is an enrollment of 420 pupils. The school board consists of five members and the faculty consists of one superintendent, two principals, and twenty-six teachers. Also, there are two janitors.

The "Old Settlers Picnic" mentioned in the earlier history is still observed annually. It was started in 1907 and has been celebrated continuously over the years except for two years when our country was at war. It is a two day celebration held in August of each year and still attracts a very large crowd of people to Maxwell for every "Old Settlers Picnic".

The Community Historical Society was formed in 1964. There is a large and very interesting museum at the south end of Main Street which houses many interesting antiques and historical items that draws many people to Maxwell from all over the state and some from out of state.

Haniel A. Lowe
Councilman

Ronald H. Woolhaker
Councilman

Jack C. Reese
Councilman

E. H. Reiser
Councilman

Fay V. Rupp
Councilman

Jimmy J. Weatherman
Mayor of Maxwell, Iowa

Attest W. E. Van Hook
Clerk of Maxwell, Iowa

(SEAL)