

## COLO, "CROSSROADS OF THE NATION"

Junction Highways 30 & 65

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By Eldon Schoonover

In compiling an early history of Colo, one must depend much upon the history written in 1890 by Goodspeed, one in 1911 written by M. C. Allen and one in 1922 by Henry Yeager, and as recorded in early day newspapers.

It was Mr. Yeager who learned from a conversation with Mrs. Joanna Elwood who was one of the earliest settlers in East Story County that her parents settled in New Albany township in 1852. John Lee, Al Dayton and George Waltz were among the early settlers.

### Village Platted

In 1856, the village of New Albany was platted on the farm of Mrs. Elwood's parents about two miles southwest of Colo. This village was vacated when the railroad came and Colo was established.

The railroad reached Colo in 1863 and it became the first railroad station in Story County. The first passenger train arrived the same year. The name of the railroad was the Cedar Rapids and Mississippi River Railroad, later called the Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad and finally the Chicago Northwestern Railroad.

The double tracks were laid in 1900. Now, we have the heavy steel rails and train control with stream-liners and diesel engines breezing along at 80 miles per hour and possibly faster and freight trains more than a mile in length are not uncommon.

A prominent Des Moines insurance man used to tell the story about coming to Colo from Des Moines in a horse drawn outfit to go to Chicago on his honeymoon. When they were more than two miles from town, the passenger train started east. This man stood up in the buggy and waved a lap robe in the air. The train crew sighted them as they reached the top of the hill east of Colo. They stopped the train, waited for the couple to board the train. One can hardly board a stream-liner unless he is in line on the platform when the train comes to a stop.

### Oldest Depot Building

Mr. Yeager was station agent at Colo for over 25 years and he mentions that in 1922 Colo had the oldest depot building on the Northwestern at that time.

Two bad fires, one in 1884 and another in 1914 destroyed the early records of the town and some of the fraternal organizations.

The original town was platted north of the track and west of Third Street by J. L. Dana of Nevada. John Blair owned the land south and east and he platted Blair's Addition on which most of the business district stands today.

Contrary to the belief of some school children in Colorado who wrote our postmaster for information as to the naming of our town, it has no connection with the abbreviation of the name of their state. It appears that Colo received its name following the death of a coal black dog, the pet of the man who established the town. One of the first trains struck and killed the dog. The town was incorporated in 1866 with a Mr. Freeman as mayor. A sub-division, and two additions were later added to our town to reach the present corporation coverage of 440 acres. Ross E. White, former mayor was a descendant of Dr. White, the first physician and surgeon.

#### First Post Office

The first post office was established in Colo on May 18, 1864. At one time, we had three rural mail routes out of Colo. Now, we have one route which covers nearly as much territory as did the three. Clayton Carmody is the present rural carrier.

Colo has two active churches, Catholic and United Methodist. The first church established here was in 1867 by the Church of God.

The Methodists built their original building in 1873 at a cost of \$2,000. The present church building was erected in 1902. Rev. Duane Manning is the present pastor of United Methodist.

The United Brethern Evangelical Church was organized in 1867 and built their first church in 1892. The building was remodeled in 1902. They are now part of the United Methodist congregation.

The Catholic people worshiped at Nevada until 1880 when they formed a congregation at Colo. They built a church in 1883 costing \$1,100. The present brick church house was erected in 1938. The Rev. Father Cassidy, pastor of the Colo parish serves the congregation.

The Masonic lodge was chartered in Colo in 1871. It was the first fraternal organization and is still active.

The G.A.R. was the next active organization. It was organized in 1883. The American Legion and Legion-Auxiliary now carry on.

Our first school was established in 1866. Since then much progress has been made. The present building was built in 1915, the gymnasium in 1936 and shower rooms, class rooms and a vocational agricultural shop were completed to connect those two buildings into one complete plant in 1952.

Recent additions to the area which forms our consolidated district have extended the district until it covers 41 sections and 54 sections are being served by the present school. A new High School building now stands on a 21 acre addition to the south part of Colo.

The present population of Colo is 574. This does not show the decrease which hit many of the smaller towns in Iowa.

In 1863, the end of the railroad was in swamp land. For many years, the skaters would follow the slough and creek south out of Colo to reach the junction of the east branch of Indian Creek, continue down to the junction of east and west branches of Indian Creek then skate up West Indian Creek to Nevada. The streets were impassable in the spring with sidewalks made of boards on stilts. The streets of Colo and New Albany Township have been graded and graveled so that they may be traveled throughout the whole year. Crushed rock is being used to do away with the remaining muddy places, along with blacktop.

Paved roads run along the north, east and south sides of Colo and intersect at the northeast and southeast corners of town. These cement ribbons reach from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico.

Transportation has advanced so that one may travel from Colo to Chicago and even longer distances in less time than it used to take to reach the County Seat of Story County, our neighboring city of Nevada.

Sanitary Sewer construction is close to being finished for the Colo Community.

May 1 - 1968 - Present Town Officials.

Wesley V. Sanders - Mayor  
Dora Jean Pfantz - Treasurer  
Eldon F. Schoonover - Clerk  
James Barrett - Councilman  
Kenneth Branon - Councilman  
Clayton Hopkins - Councilman  
Douglas Johns - Councilman  
Ray Weir - Councilman