



SHELDAHL HISTORY 1874-1968

The Town of Sheldahl, Iowa, incorporated on June 28, 1882, has its history dating back some twenty-five years earlier. This town is unique in several respects. It lies in three counties; Story, Polk, and Boone. It also lies in four townships; Palestine Township which lies in Story County, Garden Township in Boone County, and Lincoln and Union Townships which lie in Polk County.

Original founders of our town of Sheldahl are Norwegian immigrants who had established a colony in Illinois. Three men, Osmund and Eric Sheldahl, and Ole Apland, left this Illinois community to establish a new home in Iowa. They arrived in 1854, returned to Illinois, and in the summer of 1855 returned with twenty families. Some of this group went north toward Rolland, Iowa, while the remainder of the group settled here on farm land purchased for \$1.25 an acre.

The Town of Sheldahl was laid out by J. S. Polk of Des Moines in August, 1874 and became incorporated in 1882. Osmund Sheldahl donated twenty acres of land to the Original Town of Sheldahl, this deed being signed by Abraham Lincoln.

Sheldahl was a booming community in the early days and boasted a number of thriving business establishments. However two factors resulted in the town's loss of population and business.

The Town of Sheldahl is located on the Northwestern Railway. Later the Milwaukee Railway crossed the Northwestern Line at a junction one and a half miles north of Sheldahl. This resulted in business establishments moving from the original town to the railway site which was then called Sheldahl Crossing. This name was later changed and the town of Slater originated.

The following article is reprinted from the Boone Republican dated May 10, 1887.

Reports come from Sheldahl that there is strong talk of moving that town, which has enjoyed the unique notoriety of being situated in the three corners of Polk, Boone, and Story Counties, and relocating it a mile north of the present site at the crossing of the Northwestern and Milwaukee roads. Mr. Jenks, who owns the territory around the new locality, offers liberal inducements in lots to all householders of Sheldahl who will remove their buildings, with donations to churches, school houses, etc., and with the advantages a location with two great trunk lines would

give, it is said to be very likely that the present town will be taken up bodily and moved. The Northwestern opposes the transfer, but the Milwaukee promises to take good care of the new town's interests.

The second factor contributing to the decline of business in Sheldahl is a series of severe fires over a period of years. The first fire, reported in 1886, destroyed the local flour mill owned by S. W. Snyder. Loss was estimated at \$4,000, none of which was covered by insurance. On February 3, 1926 the Trumbull-Graeber Garage was destroyed by fire. Only two years later, on January 25, 1928, four business establishments were consumed by fire with an estimated loss of \$20,000 to \$25,000. Business establishments lost in this fire included the Sheldahl Savings Bank and Town Hall, the Gaines Building which housed Sheldahl Thrift and the Postoffice, and the Britt Viland Building where Marvilla's Barber Shop and home were located.

At one time Sheldahl had four churches, two Lutheran and two Methodist. These were located in the various corners of town, thus benefitting the population in each county. Osmund Sheldahl built the Norwegian Lutheran Church in 1883. He pastored and maintained the church at his own expense until 1900. This church still stands and has been kept in its original form by Osmund Sheldahl's son, Martin, who is one of the oldest residents of Sheldahl. The Sheldahl Methodist Church was organized in 1868, but the building was not erected until 1875. In 1915 the church was rebuilt and a basement dug. This church is the only active church in Sheldahl and has remained so for the past hundred years. Sheldahl Methodist will celebrate its centennial this year.

Sheldahl Consolidated School was established in 1916 when the present land site was purchased by the Consolidated Independent School District. The school graduated its first high school class on May 22, 1918. This class consisted of only two young people. The gymnasium was added in 1930 due to a large donation by Mrs. Herman Burkey, plus a number of generous contributions by other members of the community. The school continued to graduate high school students until 1957 when it became a part of the North Polk Community School. In 1958 North Polk graduated its first high school class. Starting with that school year the Sheldahl school building became an elementary center for North Polk Community Schools, housing classes from kindergarten through sixth grade. It continues to operate in this capacity today.

Sheldahl has maintained a town park through the years. This was originally located in the south part of town where a new residential section presently stands. This park had a race track as a special attraction and horse racing was held there. The present park has made numerous improvements since its beginning. A community cabin was built in 1958 and a band stand completed in 1966. Playground equipment provides ample entertainment for the younger set. Fourth of July celebrations, a semi-annual event in Sheldahl, are held in the park and draw a large attendance from around the state. Big parades and name speakers are features of the day. Each celebration is concluded with a fine fire-works display.

One of the first list of town officials dates back to March 1, 1886 when the following people were voted into office.

Mayor-----C. B. Owens
Recorder-----S. W. Shepherd
Treasurer----E. F. Miller
Assessor-----L. G. Johnson
Councilmen---Swert, Houge, and Gust Reinuer

Present officials of Sheldahl, serving since January 1, 1968 are as follows:

Mayor-----Richard D. Johnson
Clerk-----Arnold DeBie
Treasurer----Maurine Bryant
Councilmen---Marvin Harris, Carl Barnes, Paul Harley,
John Perrier, and Robert Webster

Throughout recent years Sheldahl has made improvements to the town. The present water system was installed in 1951, dial telephones replaced the local operator system in 1954, vapor lights on main street were installed in 1961, and natural gas was added in 1966.

Presently, establishment of a water tower is in progress and there are plans for further street improvements.

Sheldahl is not a rapidly progressive town, but it is the quiet home of over 279 residents, most of whom commute to Ames or Des Moines for employment. The Sheldahl Co-operative Co. is the largest business in town, being established in 1954. The residents of Sheldahl enjoy the peaceful atmosphere that a town of our size and structure affords, and are proud to be a part of Story County and the State of Iowa.

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Resolved that the preceding summary of the History of the Town of Sheldahl be and is hereby designated as the official report of the Town of Sheldahl to be included with other documents to be sealed in the cornerstone of the new Story County Court House at the dedication ceremony to be held at Nevada, Iowa on May 18, 1968.

Richard D. Johnson
Richard D. Johnson, Mayor

Marvin H. Harris
Marvin Harris, Councilman

Carl W. Barnes
Carl Barnes, Councilman

Paul Harley
Paul Harley, Councilman

John Perrier
John Perrier, Councilman

Robert Webster
Robert Webster, Councilman



Attest:

Arnold W. DeBie
Arnold DeBie, Town Clerk