**PART I**

(Editor’s Note: One of the official Bicentennial projects of Sterling is a history of the town, and the task of researching and writing that history has been assigned to Mrs. Alma Thompson by the Sterling Bicentennial Committee. As we start on our third century this week. The first installment of that history begins.) July 8, 1976

To try to visualize the world 200 years ahead staggers the imagination. To try to think back 200 years and move along with progress from that time to the present is truly awesome. The survival of the settlers through those early years, through times of extreme perils, hardships, illnesses and losses is a glowing example of faith, courage and determination.

Through the efforts of these homesteading pioneers, villages and towns were built, and the prairies were converted into productive farms. Our own village of Sterling was founded by such courageous and determined settlers and grew as the result of their hopes and efforts.

During the earliest years of pioneering, the trend was to settle and build towns along the larger streams, and to farm the land in the surrounding valleys. In this area, settlements were founded first along the Big Nemaha River, and the Yankee Creek.

State and county records show that around 1856 one of the more important westward trails was the Brownville-Beatrice Trail. This trail crossed Johnson County – east to west – directly through Sterling area, and joined the Oregon Trail in Jefferson County.

Other trails from Brownville west and from Kansas to the salt flats in Lancaster County, crossed near Sterling. These trails served as a supply line and later as a freighting line for shipping farm products out of the area.

The first white settler to come to what is now Sterling, was John Bentz. He came from New York State in 1857, with his wife Rachel. Records show that they settled as “squatters” on the NE ¼ of Section 26, Township 6, Range 9, and later homesteaded this land. Mr. Bentz also holds the distinction of being the first businessman in this settlement. He built a sawmill in 1866 to supply lumber for new settlers and homesteaders.

In 1857, William Freeburn, who was a native of Gallowayshire, Scotland, also came here to settle. He became a farmer, and worked as a carpenter. Later, when the town originated, he organized and became president of the Sterling Lumber Company. Still later, he platted and developed Kneeland’s Addition to the original town of Sterling.

In 1861, J. C. Kneeland came to Nebraska. In 1869 he homesteaded the SW ¼ of Section 26. An item of interest in later years states that William Kneeland married Jan Bentz, youngest daughter of John and Rachel Bentz, on July 4, 1866. A daughter, Hattie, was the first child born in the Sterling community. The grave of their infant son is said to have been the first in the Sterling cemetery.

(Note: I can clearly recall Mrs. Jane Kneeland’s occasional visits with my mother during the early 1920’s. Mrs. Kneeland’s home was in the present Gary Fritch property. Her daughter, Hattie Kneeland Hitchcock, lived next door, in what is now the Dwight Weiss residence. Mrs. Kneeland was deceased in the early 1920’s)

In 1865, Joseph Ray came to Sterling from New York and homesteaded the NW ¼ in the same section with Bentz and Kneeland. In 1867, John Hauck, his wife and two children (Laura and Albert), come from Pennsylvania. His occupation was farming.

In 1869, William Mann came from Illinois with his family and bought the land owned by John Ray. He also bought a few acres of the southwest corner of the Bentz land and several acres across the river from Mr. Kneeland. Here he built a dam and a gristmill in 1870. This mill was such a vital business for many years in the history of Sterling, that it might be interesting to review some history pertaining to it, especially since its replica occupies the place of honor on Sterling’s beautiful Bicentennial float.

Built in 1870, the main structure of this mill was two stories high, 24 ft. by 40 ft., and the capacity was “three run of stone.” It was purchased in 1872 by John Hauck, who operated it until 1885.

County Records of Deeds show M. H. Gartrell as proprietor in 1886 and 1887, and the business was then called “Sterling Mills”, and in 1890 a corporation was formed with G. M. Kaufman, president; H. Norcross, vice-president; and John Bridges, treasurer.

Records of ownership are vague from 1893-1899, but the mill seems to have been in operation continuously. From 1900-1924 the Sterling Milling Co., was the property of J. Jerabek and wife. New owners in 1924 were Frank Schaub Sr., and wife, in 1925 John C. Dillingham and wife, in 1926 John H. Miller and wife, and in 1930 E. J. Goins.

Recently John H. Eilers shared some additional information concerning the final disposition of the mill. In 1931, his father, the late John J. Eilers, purchased the building, complete except for its engines. (The dam no longer existed, either.) The mill was torn down and the lumber used to erect a café and service station in St. Mary. John says the men of the family did the work and their sister, the late Mrs. Hannah Wusk, operated the café.

Back to 1870 history – Mr. Mann advertised the advantages of this new community in the New York newspapers, and the result was the arrival of Charles and Martha Tripp a short time later. They started a small store a short distance south of the grist mill that year. They continued this business the rest of their lives, hauling their supplies from Nebraska City and Brownville until the railroad was built later. They also bought a small farm from Mr. Bentz.

Here I can’t resist telling about my pleasant surprise and special thrill of the past week. I was shown the original legal document of the plot showing the original town of Sterling in Section 26, Township 6, Range 9. With it was a letter of instructions from “Aunt Martha” Tripp to her attorney. Raymond Zink now owns these prized papers and I am grateful to him for having had a glimpse of that part of our town’s history.

The survey and location of the Atchison and Nebraska railroad was made in 1870 and the railroad was completed in 1873. (According to Johnson county records, this road was sold to the Burlington Lines in 1885.)

After the survey, the town of Sterling was platted with John Bentz and William Mann as sole proprietors. Surveying was done by W. L. Dunlap. Mr. Mann gave forty acres of his land to the railroad to encourage it to locate in the town.

With the building of the railroad, towns were built along the tracks instead of the streams, and farmers began to live in the open prairies.

In those years while Sterling was growing, other small towns had located along the larger streams in this area. In fact, at one time, there were nine post offices in Johnson County. One of these was Latrobe, six miles northwest of Sterling, whose population was listed as 100, and whose postmaster was John D. Watson. Benjamin Baker was Justice of the Peace. Seven places of business were located in Latrobe in 1879-1880.

Records show that Helena and Spring Creek were small villages with post offices about the same time period. It soon became evident that a railroad determined the survival of a town, and those not located on a railroad soon ceased to exist.

Sterling was showing a steady growth and increasing numbers of new homes and businesses continued to appear. In 1880 the town’s population was recorded in the Johnson County Atlas as 782. The 1880 census and business records also show twelve general stores as located here.

In 1884-1885 Sterling’s population was listed as 700. Among the many businesses listed for that period were two flour mills, five doctors, four millinery shops, a brick yard, and ice-shipping firm, two elevators, two newspapers and two banks. In 1890-1891 state census records show Sterling’s population to be 1,100.

# PART II

Bear in mind that the first settlers arrived in our area in 1857, and that by 1890 the census count had reached an impressive 1,100. This successful growth of a pioneer settlement from two people to more than a thousand, under extremely adverse conditions, in only three and one-half decades, seems incredible. What a record!

On July 8, 1876, Sterling was incorporated as a village. Members of the first village council – “Board of Trustees” was their official title then were: A. Shipman, a hardware merchant; W. Johnson, clerk in a general store; W. W. Borland, and iron worker and wagon maker; W. B. Rowell, “a painter of building”. J. M. Borland, Village clerk, was proprietor of the Sterling Lumber Company. State Historical Society records compiled in 1882 show that he was still the village clerk at that time.

It is interesting to note that relatives of several members of that first village council in 1876 are still residents of Sterling today. The late Mrs. E. A. Cox was the former Bertha Borland, a daughter of William W. Borland, and a niece of John M. Borland. Still residing here are two daughters, Ruth Cox Vermeer (Mrs. Orril), and Audrey Cox Tucker.

I am told that the large inlaid initials J. M. B. on the roof of a barn east of town were placed there when John M. Borland owned that land and lived there. This is the present John Daniels farm along Highway 41.

Considered of prime importance to the early growth and development of the entire community was the construction of a bridge across the river south on the Mill Road. This was in the early 1870’s.

An iron bridge was built in 1875 across the Big Nemaha River. In numerous places of the records, this bridge is always mentioned as “a fine iron bridge”. The county voted about $6,000 to help build it.

These bridges brought the village into contact with other farming districts in Johnson County and promoted general trade for the town. By this time Sterling was already recognized as an excellent cattle and grain shipping point. In 1878 over 30,000 head of cattle were shipped from here, 55 cars of

corn, 30 cars of wheat and 20 cars of oats. Johnson county tax lists show an 80-acre farm valued at $250 in 1875, and $400 in 1880.

To provide accommodations for the traveling public, Sterling offered several hotels. In 1879 there were the Sterling House, owned by A. B. Alford; the Tremont House, J. G. Alcorn, proprietor; and the Central Hotel, built by C. W. Moore.

In 1890 there was also a Mead Hotel, C. E. Snead, proprietor. In later years Brown’s Hotel was located on the corner of Broadway and Main Streets, where Jay Carpenter’s service station stands today. A smaller hotel owned by Blanche McAuliffe was located just east of it.

We should not fail to mention that in 1880 records list a woman doctor, Dr. Mrs. E. Grotigny Robbins, among the professionals.

A new business in 1880 was a brick factory built by George Potter, a native of New York. The first brick building was built by Fred Bartling in 1881. That same year another new business becoming established was that of ice shipping. Records show that 1,000 cars of ice had been shipped south in 1881.

The importance of religion, education and social life in a community was recognized among the early settlers. Before churches were built, religious services were held in private homes. On the Sabbath, everybody attended services. The four religious bodies represented then were the Methodist Episcopal, Rev. D. S. Morris; the Baptist, Rev. J. M. Campbell; the Lutheran, Rev. Mr. Berger, and the Presbyterian, Rev. A. S. Powell.

Fraternal societies which organized and were active by 1876 were the Masonic Lodge No. 70 A. F. & A. M. with Dr. A. Shipman as W. M. and Odd Fellows Lodge No. 63, organized in 1876, with Lou Winter, N. G. Membership of each was about forty. A literary Society was founded about 1882.

The first school building for Sterling was a sod building, built in the north part of town. There was no division by grades and the fourth grade Readers were the highest used. There seem to be variations of opinions about the location of the second schoolhouse. One account describes it on “J. C. Wilson’s land north of town, out on the bottom towards the hills”. Another account says it was built “south across the river, around the bend of the Mill Road”. This building was described as being built of sod with a thatched roof of native blue stem grass.

Schoolhouse No. 3 was in a log house on the Wilson place “across the river”. In 1872 a frame building was built in town near the present building. The lumber for this building was hauled by team and wagon from Nebraska City. Less than a dozen students were enrolled, and Silas Bryson was the teacher.

When this building was destroyed by a tornado several years later, classes were held in a private school with John Borland as instructor.

Another frame building was built on the same site, but by 1877 more space was needed. The City Hall, a two-room structure, was put to use. Teachers were Mr. Douglas and Mrs. Wilson, the latter teaching 96 pupils in this one room.

By 1891, a new two-story building was built. Fred Stinson being the carpenter. This building served the district adequately until 1917 when the present brick structure was erected. Necessary remodeling of the interior has been done during the past years to accommodate the marked increase in enrollment,

due largely to consolidation during the 1957-1961 period. The present gymnasium was completed in 1954. Classrooms for Kindergarten and Industrial Arts classes are currently located in the downtown business section. Total enrollment for the 1975-1976 school year was 263.

Newspapers were the principal source of information and communication with distant territories and cities in pioneer days. Oftentimes a village supported several newspapers, some being published weekly, others semi-weekly. Changes in ownership occurred frequently. Usually each political party was endorsed by a newspaper which supported and emphasized the party’s views on local, state or national issues.

Sterling seems to have a history of continuous support for its own newspaper – even more than one at times. Following is an account of all of Sterling’s newspapers, years of operation, owner, editors and publishers. Finding the necessary data for this list proved to be a challenge. I hope it provides some interesting information.

Year – Title – Owner:

1877 – The Sterling News – Borland & Robbins.

1879 – The Sterling Weekly News – J. Barnhardt.

1881-1885 – The Sterling Press – D. T. Sherman. (A descriptive comment found in the 1882 analysis: “It has changed from a five column quarto to a six column folio and discarded the patent outsides.” – from History of the State of Nebraska, Vol. II)

1885-1886 – The Sterling Press – E. C. Moore & W. Cassel.

1882-1887 – The Sterling News – C. W. Pool. (Our local editor, Mary Packwood, recalls that her father, the late R. B. Blythe, was taught the printing trade by C. W. Pool when he had a newspaper in Tecumseh.)

1888-1889 – The Sterling Press – Moore & Cassel.

1888-1889 – The Sterling Sun – L. A. Varner. (From 1882-1889 Sterling had two newspapers, The Sterling News, Democratic; The Sterling Press and the Sterling Sun Republican.)

1890-1891 – The Press-Sun – Varner & Cassel.

1891-1894 – The Sterling Sun – Varner.

1895-1902 – The Semi-Weekly Sun – L. A. Varner. (Published in two parts, Part I on Tuesday and Part 2 on Friday.)

1903-1907 – The Semi-Weekly Sun – L. A. Varner, owner; L. A. Varner and E. W. Varner publishers.

1908 – The Semi-Weekly Sun – L. A. Varner; Will A. Borland, Asst. publisher.

1909-1910 – The Sterling Sun – Allen Powell.

1911 – The Sterling Sun – J. E. Hanway.

1912-1927 – The Sterling Sun – L. E. Tobias.

1927-1945 – The Sterling Sun – Pickett & Pickett.

1945-1971 – The Johnson County Courier – Marion F. Packwood, publisher; Mary B. Packwood, editor.

1971 – The Johnson County Courier – Maverick Media, Inc., publisher; Mary B. Packwood, editor.

In several accounts written by individuals in previous years we read that F. W. Fitzgerald published the Sterling Gazette, and the McCoy Brothers published The Record. No dates were mentioned. I found no record of either in the research references used.

# PART III

To any thriving community, the services of a well-managed bank are invaluable to its citizens. That applied in the days of the pioneers as well as today. The pioneers of Sterling were no exception and realized early the importance of a local bank in developing a solid economy and maintaining continued growth.

As early as 1881 and for many years to follow, this community supported two banks. Until 1889, those banks were the Bank of Sterling and the Johnson County Bank. C. A. Holmes was the first president of the Bank of Sterling, William Freeburn was the vice-president, and W. S. Bowman was cashier. Later, J. D. Russell served as president and W. M. Rothell as cashier.

For Johnson County Bank, N. F. Hitchcock served as its first president and J. F. Townsend as cashier. Townsend was replaced early by H. F. Hitchcock.

In 1890 a reorganization took place. From that came the First National Bank, and the Farmers and Merchants Bank. Officers of the First National Bank were: W. M. Rothell, president; Wm. Freeburn, vice-president; J. P. Renshaw, cashier. The officers for the Farmers and Merchants Bank were: H. M. Childs, president; J. B. Fraser, vice-president; J. R. Rierson, cashier.

In the early 1900’s D. M. Boatsman became president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank and John Boatsman the cashier. In later years E. H. Johnson served as cashier.

Records show that for a period of several years during the late 1880’s and early 1900’s, only the Farmers and Merchants Bank was in operation. However, in 1903 the First State Bank was organized, and again the community had two active banks. Officers for the First State Bank were: J. H. Pierson, president; John Janssen, vice-president; Fred Catchpole, cashier.

For a period of twelve years (1932-1944) there was no commercial bank in Sterling. During that time, banking business was conducted by the Sterling Cooperative Credit Association.

In 1944 the Bank of Sterling began serving its patrons and is still offering its services to the public today. Officers in 1944 were: J. V. Johnson, president; H. W. Schepman, vice-president; Martin Dirks, cashier. Presently, Dalen Rathe is the cashier.

Usually, when a new settlement was being formed, the first business to start would be a sawmill. This was necessary in order to supply lumber for houses in the new village. Soon after would follow a lumberyard.

As stated previously, William Freeburn organized the Sterling Lumber Company soon after he came to the settlement. J. M. Borland was manager of the business until 1895, when W. F. Vincent became manager. In 1897 the firm became the Home Lumber Company, with J. E. Barrett, president. Early in the 1900’s J. H. Melville & Co., purchased the interests of that firm, and for the next fifteen years the ownership remained under their management.

Following the Melvilles, Koehler Lumber and Coal Company, D. A. Koehler, manager, owned the business for many years. In more recent years ownership has changed to the Kirtley Lumber Company, Howard Kirtley, manager; Sterling Lumber Company, H. Dale Park, owner-manager, and the present Sterling Lumber Company, which has been under the ownership and capable management of

Mr. And Mrs. John Goldenstein since 1966. That totals to almost a hundred years of continuity for one business in Sterling.

From about 1879 to 1893 another lumber company located in Sterling. This was the Chicago Lumber Company, managed in turn by J. C. Mann, E. M. Clark and H. A. Brower. In 1893 the Nebraska Lumber Company assumed ownership and continued business until 1896 under the management of E. M. Clark.

From 1896 to the late 1920’s there are recorded the A. H. Taylor Lumber Company – John Taylor, manager; Dierks Lumber Company – John Dierks, owner, and Walter Weare, manager; and the firm of Bucknell and Murty.

Returning to the subject of continuity, another example of longevity in Sterling is the present firm of Zink & Sons. Only recently did I discover that it is one of a series of continued ownerships, descending directly from Valentine Zink, a Sterling merchant in 1886 – one of the first 12 merchants in the original town.

The elder Mr. Zink owned a grocery store. Early records show that he was also a baker, and for a number of years he was also postmaster of Sterling.

Through the years, the business became known as Zink Brothers and was carried on by two sons, Loyal R. (Rollie) and Valentine W. (Val). The line of merchandise changed to hardware and furniture, with the mortuary business being added later. Rollie was the mortician then. In turn, the next generation of sons continued the work. First, Edward T. Zink associated as the mortician with his father, Rollie, and his uncle, Val. Later the firm became “Zink and Sons” when Val purchased his brother’s interest in the firm. By that time Raymond had become a licensed mortician. After the death of their father, Raymond and Walter continued the business for several more years.

The firm is now the “Zink Hardware”, with Raymond – and wife, Mabel – at the helm. The mortuary was sold in 1974 to the Fox Funeral Home of Beatrice and Adams, but Ray is still willing to help in an emergency.

One hundred years is a long time for a business to survive the wear and tear of daily competition. Maybe this should establish some kind of seniority rights on Main Street!!!

Another place of business in Sterling that has given continuous service to the public for a long time is Warnke’s Store, on the corner of Washington and Broadway, Gus Warnke, proprietor. Warnke’s has always been a general store, featuring both groceries and dry goods. In 1975, Gus observed his 50th year in business. Those 50 years take care of the first half of a century – now for the second half!

Lest we forget – there is a little business in town which has been around for seventy-two years, serving its patrons faithfully, and offering the young, the old, and the not-so-old a world of profit and pleasure through the stock on its shelves. The cost is minimal – a dime pays for a year’s privileges.

I’m referring, of course, to the Sterling Public Library. It was organized in July 1904. Mrs. Roda Rice was the first librarian and she served until 1917. Succeeding her was Mrs. Mary Hollenback, who served until November 1955 – a tenure of thirty-eight years. Next was Mrs. Minnie Rawson, who remained as librarian until March 1960. Following Mrs. Rawson was Mrs. Helen Benson, who served as librarian from March 1960 until June 1974. Since that date (June 1974), it has been my pleasure to serve in that capacity.

In response to a number of inquiries since Chapter I of this history, and to considerable interest shown in the early village of Latrobe, I am including in this chapter the information available for that period of Latrobe’s business places.

John Evans, harness maker.

Helem & Co., drugs.

Wm. Fraburn, attorney.

W. E. Starr, blacksmith.

W. L. Starr, dry goods, groceries, etc.

J. P. Swallow, hardware, implements.

Mrs. B. A. Swallow, Milliner.

John J. Watson, postmaster.

Benjamin J. Baker, Justice of the Peace.

In doing research, the small and unrelated articles are often most interesting. For example: The State Journal, (Nov. 1, 1895), reported that a slight earthquake was felt here at 5:00 a.m. Houses were shaken, and dishes rattled. The shock was a minute in duration.

Delivery of mail to farmers was being discussed, and the pros and cons of such a project were being considered. (A Sterling item, State Journal, Nov. 10, 1896.)

The Sterling community had received over 40 inches of snow by February of 1898. (State Journal, Febr. 9, 1898.)

Included in the next chapter of the history will be a panorama of familiar names of some early settlers, their professions and occupations. Interesting events of the past which offer special interest to the present will also be included, plus other facts of interest.

# PART IV

At this point, as we leave the 1890’s in our history, I will tell you about a news item, found in the September 23, 1894 issue of the Omaha Bee, which should interest all of us. It gives an account of the unveiling ceremonies of the soldiers Monument in our Sterling cemetery.

The article states that 3,500 patriotic citizens led by the Tecumseh band, 100 Grand Army of the Republic members, and 200 school children, marched from the city limits to the cemetery for the unveiling. This monument was the first public soldier’s monument in Nebraska. The Hon. Church Howe dedicated it in the name of Sill Post, G.A.R. No. 99. Miss Zellora Iden unveiled it, and State Supt. Goudy read the dedicatory ode.

In the afternoon addresses were given by the Rev. von Luternau of Cook, who spoke in German, and by Father Murphy of Tecumseh. The oration of the day was delivered by the Hon. John M. Thurston. There were three more addresses in the evening delivered by Messrs. Holcomb, Churchill and Thayer. The entire program was under the direction of the Women’s Relief Corps and Sill Post No. 99.

A somewhat detailed description of the monument was included, and I am here quoting verbatim from the aforementioned issue of the Omaha Bee:

The monument which stands in the center of the Sterling cemetery, one-half mile east of Sterling, represents the figure of a soldier six feet six inches in height, standing at parade rest fully equipped and holding a gun in his hand, placed on a triple pedestal which raises him over seven feet from the ground. The base of the pedestal is sixteen inches above the level of the ground. The first division of the

pedestal is four feet square and eighteen inches high, the second is three feet square and sixteen inches high, and the third is three feet high with sides sloping upwards and a top surface measuring twenty inches across. On this stands the figure of the soldier, which is made of fine Indian stone, and cost $700.

The money was raised by subscription, and it is due to the ladies of the Women’s Relief Corps that the movement was started and carried through to a success. The inscription on the monument reads as follows:

## Erected by Sill Post No. 99

G. A. R.

To the memory of

OUR DEAD HEROES.

Arriving now at the 1905-1907 period of our history, this community found the telephone service generally available to everyone. Local maintenance crews serviced both town and rural phones. Three telephone companies are on record as being in business here then. These were the Nebraska Telephone Co. – J. C. Caley, manager; the Western Telephone Co. and the Johnson County Telephone Co. – both under the management of W. L. Heilman and w. L. Morrill. Several years later, only the Nebraska Telephone Co. remained, being managed by Fred Colton.

By 1913, the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co. was in charge of all telephone service in the area, with J. E. Caley as manager. Mr. Caley continued as manager until his retirement after more than 35 years with the company. When the present dial system was adopted in 1947-1948, all service in Johnson County was centralized in Tecumseh by L. T. & T.

On June 19, 1907, a Sterling news item in the Omaha Bee stated that delegates representing the Lutheran Church of Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska had been in session here and had taken final action on locating their church college in Sterling. The main building of the college was to be constructed soon.

A later item in the State Journal dated October 4, 1909, spoke of the completion of this building and of its dedication ceremonies on October 3, 1909. It told of a special train being run by the Burlington from Auburn for the occasion, which brought about four hundred people from Auburn, Johnson and Tecumseh to Sterling for the dedication services. Others came “from miles around by team and automobile”. About 2,000-2,500 people attended.

The new college had been built and partially equipped at a cost of $25,000. The people of Sterling and vicinity had donated ten acres of land on the north edge of town, and $7,000 cash. Members of the District contributed the balance of the funds needed. The college would be opened for students immediately.

This was the Martin Luther College, which later became the Martin Luther Academy, and finally the Martin Luther Home. The facilities of the Home were moved to its present site in Beatrice in 1956, and the building in Sterling was sold and eventually razed.

On May 26, 1912 the new Methodist Episcopal Church in Sterling was dedicated. It was described in the State Journal of June 23, 1912 to be “of Grecian architecture, built of pressed brick, neat, commodious and convenient”. The “extreme dimensions” of the structure were 47 feet by 61 feet. Cost of the new edifice was stated “in round figures to be $11,000 and debt free”. Dr. Ilif of Denver had delivered the dedicatory sermon. The former church had been destroyed by fire on August 25, 1910.

Always fascinating in following any panorama of history are the names and occupation of the founders and the extent of their “lifelines” through succeeding generations.

One finds some names reaching far into later history of the town, often with one person being successful in several trades. Perhaps this is because it was necessary for early settlers to assist in professions other than their own. A man’s occupation might be farming, but if the community was in immediate need of a carpenter or a painter and the farmer had abilities in those trades, his services were made available.

Pioneer history reveals much of that willingness to respond to the need of others. Whatever the demands were for survival and growth they were willing to give generously and freely of their services and their talents.

Space does not permit a complete and detailed review of all of Sterling’s early merchants and their trades, but some of the very first families still own a niche in our memories today. For example, the North Fork of the Nemaha River, more commonly called the Baker Creek, received that name because Benjamin Baker owned the land along its banks. Mr. Baker was one of the very first settlers of the community. He and his wife Sarah J. came to Nebraska in 1856 from Pennsylvania and homesteaded in Section 17. They lived on what is now the Wilke Kelle farm.

The old rural school on the former John Houck land in Section 16 is now only a landmark of the past, but it is still identified as the “Houck” school. Many local residents must have been taught the basics of education in that one-room schoolhouse. I remember spending my week of “internship” (practice teaching) there in April 1926. Two days of observation and three days of planning and conducting classes were partial requirements for obtaining a third level teacher’s certificate in those days. Darrel Schneider was the teacher at Houck’s that year, and he was considered one of the best.

John J. Watson, who came to Sterling from Wheeling, West Virginia in 1856, settled on Section 8 on the land now belonging to Norman Dirks. The Latrobe post office is said to have been located in his house while he served as postmaster there.

The list of merchants operating a general store in pioneer times exceeded all the rest. This is understandable when one considers the varieties of merchandise such a store usually offered. Besides food, a general store sold clothing, yard goods, household supplies, boots, shoes, etc. Often an average size town would adequately support as many as three or four of these stores.

The list of those who were among the first to own a general store in Sterling includes Charles Tripp, C. Mohrman, J. P. Tyler, E. C. Ellis, T. C. Lee, A. C. Reed, H. Merrell and Valentine Zink.

Jacob Tyler and his family came from New York in 1866, and engaged in farming. In the early 1870’s he built a large frame building on the south side of Broadway and Lincoln streets, where Huls Transfer is located now. The building was known as the Tyler Opera House and was undoubtedly considered to be the cultural center of the town. Plays, pageants, medicine shows, political rallies, in fact all major public entertainments and performances took place at the Opera House. The first floor of the building was used for a retail store for groceries, drugs and notion. The second story was the “Opera” portion of the building.

Valentine Zink, a native of Baden, Germany came to Nebraska in 1866. He was married to Miss Leah Bales, daughter of M. E. Bales, a pioneer businessman in Sterling. They operated a store and a bakery.

Charles Tripp came to Nebraska in 1870 from New York, settled in Sterling and opened a general store. Assisted by his wife, Martha, they continued to operate the store the rest of their lives. Further information reveals that Mr. Tripp started in the mercantile business in his home state at age 12.

Others mentioned as operating general stores were Boatsman Bros., A. B. Noble, Boatsman and Janssen, T. F. Renshaw, Merrell and Tourtelot, M. Boatsman, C. W. Stuve. J. G. Rulla and Charles Catchpole.

C. W. Stuve was the father of Mrs. Hattie Zink of Sterling; Landis Rulla of Sterling is the son of J. G. Rulla.

H. W. Merrell of Maine came to Sterling in 1871. He farmed and homesteaded and in 1881 opened a general store. Alonzo Noble of New York came to Nebraska in 1871. A few years later he opened a store in Sterling. C. C. Ellis came from Maine and started a general store in 1871. Abner C. Reed opened his store in 1872.

In 1909 Tourtelot and Barber began their partnership in business. Their store occupied three buildings on the north side of the street, east of the corner of Washington and Broadway. It featured groceries, dry goods, clothing for men, women and children, shoes, hats – and probably more. Later this firm changed to J. C. Barber & Co., still later to Warnke & Eilers, and finally, to the present business of G. H. Warnke.

Other general stores before 1918 were Hevelone Bros., in 1913 and Ambler, Urback and Yeast in 1915.

# PART V

While arranging my sheets of copy for last week’s installment, one page did not get to the printers. It just plain got into the wrong stack of papers (It was probably a windy day!) By omitting that portion I also omitted some interesting information about another well-known pioneer whose direct descendents are still living in Sterling.

Here, in context, is the account given in the Nebraska History (Vol. II) of pioneer R. D. Swallow. He came to Nebraska from Luzerne County, Pennsylvania in 1856 and engaged in the surveying business for three years. He returned to Pennsylvania and was engaged in the farming industry there until 1871, when he and his wife returned to Nebraska. They settled on a piece of land in Section 8, northwest of Sterling, where they continued in farming and stockraising. Their family consisted of one son and two daughters – Harry, Maude and Mae.

Harry is well known to many Sterlingites. He graduated from our high school with the class of 1894. He also drafted the original constitution for the Sterling Public Library in 1904, which was adopted and is still in use today.

Maude Swallow is remembered by most of us as Mrs. R. G. Bowen. She and her husband lived for many years in the house on Washington street, the present home of the Russell Hansens.

Mae Swallow became Mrs. Samuel R. Haynes. They always lived in and around Sterling, and both were active in serving the interests of the community. A son, Harry, and a daughter, Helen Haynes Benson (Mrs. Keith) are still residents of Sterling.

In continuing our panorama of names and businesses in Sterling’s history we look at the millinery business. It must have been as essential to the pioneers as livery stables and blacksmith shops. In fact, the list exceeds that of the livery stables, and equals that of the blacksmith shops.

One or more millinery shops can be found listed in the town’s business census from 1879 to the mid-1920’s, and this does not include the hat shops operated in private homes.

The first of the shops I found listed was that of Mrs. Ida Roberts. She was the wife of T. J. Roberts and the mother of our own townsman, long-time businessman, and former postmaster, T. Glen Roberts.

The more familiar names on the list of milliners through the years (15) include: Mrs. N. M. Agnew, Mrs. L. Allison, Mrs. Elsie Bonner, Mrs. Fannie Ehmen, Mrs. Jessie Zink and Lola Miller.

Restaurant owners were also numerous through the years, as ownership’s changed frequently. The first restaurant owner on record was Allen Sanford, in 1886. This considers restaurants as such, and not the hotels and boarding houses where meals were served to the public before 1886.

Associated with the restaurant business are the names of H. Dollarhide, Reed D. Winters, W. Allison, G. Sangen, Case and Jones, J. Harris, and C. Wigginton. Again, this is not a complete list for the pre-1918 period, but the most familiar business people in our town’s history.

Apparently there must never have been a shortage of doctors in Sterling before the one we have been facing in recent years. As one reads the list of physicians and surgeons, it is difficult not to be impressed especially when you remember that many of those mentioned came at the beginning of their career and spent the remainder of their lives here.

The following list should be quite accurate and complete if records are without errors: Doctors A. Shipman, C. Moore, C. Skinkle, F. Moslander, G. Kraemer, T. Hall, E. Robbins, A. Truitt, J. Davis, C. Shoemaker, E. McGee, J. Sherman, C. Boggs, C. Williams, J. W. Turner, W. L. Heilman, J. Atha, W. L. Morrill. In more recent years, Doctors Miller and R. E. Paul served the community for a number of years.

In his advertisement in the local paper, the Sterling Sun, Dr. Kraemer identified himself as the “Deutcher Arzt”, (German Physician). Dr. Heilman indicated he was the “German and English” doctor. In those days, doctors responded to house calls night or day, and during the influenza epidemic of 1918 the doctors would find no time to sleep except in their vehicles – between house calls.

Transportation was by car or horse-drawn vehicles, depending on roads and weather. Each doctor usually employed his own driver, although livery stables offered rigs for hire with drivers.

In 1909 a “Sterling Sanitarium” was on record as being located here. It was owned by W. L. Heilman and W. L. Morrill. By 1913 it was no longer listed. No special location was mentioned while it was in operation.

The supply of local attorneys was also quite ample for many years. In that business were the four Moores – Jay E., E. J., K. A., and Jay C. – in that order. Also on record were three Hitchcocks – J. H., E. Ross, and E. Hall. Attorneys L. A. Varner, James Livingston, the firm of D. Kuhlman & M. Curtin, and D. Osgood, were all in business here by 1918.

The Borlands were originally farmers and stock-raisers, but later they became better known for their skills as blacksmiths, ironworkers and wagon makers. Each generation produced several blacksmiths in the Borland clan. William W., William H., and Archie J., were all well known in that trade. In a far different profession was Hal Borland, son of William H. and Sarah Borland, who has distinguished himself as a writer. His books are widely read and well received everywhere.

The Borlands didn’t have a monopoly on the blacksmith trade, however. Men such as A. B. Palmer, Louis Jicha, J. P. Hollenback, John Bonner, Carl Pederson and H. Zinsmaster worked in that trade also.

While some trades and professions in pioneer days proved attractive to more people for competition in business, there were also successful occupations which boasted only a few “specialists”. They were nevertheless essential to the development of a community, as well as profitable for the man in business.

It is interesting to know that with and abundance of lawyers, blacksmiths, doctors, etc., Sterling had only one tinsmith, one optician, one optometrist, one carpet weaver, one brickmaker, and one cigar manufacturer.

The tinsmith for many years was George N. Rotton; H. P. Lehrack was optician and optometrist; H. L. Watkins was the carpet weaver; L. Ensminger the brickmaker; and F. M. Hilgert the cigar manufacturer. Some years later, carpet weavers became more numerous. The cigar factory was operating in 1902.

Only two merchants were in business as plasterers, apiarists, and chiropractors. C. M. Rowe and H. I. Smack were plasterers, Henry Dietrich and T. J. Roberts were apiarists, and the chiropractors were Dr. R. L. Parks, in 1915, and later, Dr. A. L. Feterman. The C. M. Rowe firm later was known as Rowe & Sons. The Rowes continued in business here for many years and were considered masters in their trade. The apiarist J. J. Roberts was the father of T. Glen Roberts.

Three men were in the photography business. They were W. D. Wheeler, E. W. Agnew and E. T. Benson. In the tailoring business there were three also – A. S. Rogers, H. Dollarhide and Paul Hofer.

In only slightly larger numbers were the Draymen; Variety stores (known also as Racket Stores and Notions); Harnessmakers; Shoemakers; and Furniture and Undertaking establishments.

The draymen were J. McGrew, H. Eames, M. L. Loper, S. Taylor and Oliver Thompson. In time the general dray business was absorbed by individual business firms who delivered their own merchandise to patrons.

The first harness maker in Sterling was M. E. Bales. Others were S. Mohrman, D. S. Bales, W. Atkins, D. Catchpole and I. J. Tucker. The Variety stores were operated over a period of years by Mrs. M. Hoeger, Mrs. Alvina Bainteli, C. B. Scott, John Harris. In more recent years were Mrs. Freda Maxwell and L. S. Gaines.

The first boot and shoemaker in Sterling was F. Bartling. John Sangen Sr., was first listed in that business in the business records of 1882. The Sangen Shoe Shop was in business on Broadway, between Main and Lincoln streets, for over half a century. After John Sr., his son, John Sangen Jr., continued in the shoe repair business.

In the furniture and Undertaking business, T. J. Roberts and Brothers were perhaps the first in Sterling. This firm later became T. J. Roberts and Son, when T. Glen Roberts joined his father in business.

Still later, the undertaking business was sold to L. R. Zink and the Roberts and Son continued as a furniture store. R. B. Watson and J. P. Tyler were listed early as funeral directors.

Well drilling, farm implements and carriages, produce and creamery dealers, druggists, dentists, telegraphers and meat markets were other businesses which helped complete the picture of Sterling’s business district of former years.

We must not forget to mention our musical talents of long ago. The Gazetteer says that in 1907 we featured a hometown orchestra called “Pierson’s Solid Four”, Wm. Pierson, leader. There was also a Merchants Band, with Louis R. Israel, leader.

# PART VI

Included with the merchants of Sterling in 1907 was Phil Landon, Who was listed as a popcorn merchant. From 1909 to 1913 he was a confectioner. By 1917 he was known as a seedsman and was specializing in developing new strains of vegetables for seed. Along with a complete line of garden seeds, his statement in the local newspaper in 1921 told about his seeds for fifty varieties of beans. In 1922 he published a 12-page catalog.

Phil Landon not only sold his seeds – he also planted them in his own garden. He harvested large amounts of garden products from his “North Acre” each year. These he would sell from the two-wheeled cart that he pulled along the streets, calling out his wares as he went.

Each day he met every passenger train at the depot, hoping to sell popcorn to travelers aboard the trains. A favorite sales chant of his was “Buy your wares from Popcorn Phil, you can help him if you will. It’s fresh from the popper – only a nickel”.

He was active as an evangelist and was known as “Parson Bob”. With his shoulder-length hair, clad in sandals and a long flowing robe, and with his special gift of oratory and voice, he preached on the street or wherever he could assemble an audience.

A notice in the May 19, 1921 issue of the Sterling Sun announced that Parson Bob would speak and sing on the street in Sterling on May 27. On June 1, if the roads were in good condition, he would walk to Cook and speak on the street there that evening. Quoting that newspaper notice: “he will have with him the oldest book in the world, the Book of Enoch, - subject, ‘Restitution’.

This colorful individual was also quite a craftsman. He made many artifacts of metals and native woods and offered them for sale to the public. He claimed to have been an Indian Scout in his younger days, and also professed to be a Divine Healer.

While the supply of dentists in Sterling was never excessive through the years, neither was the town ever completely without one for very long. Perhaps they were not unlike the M. D.’s in that they came early in their professional careers and remained for many years.

Dr. C. H. Philpot is on record as being here in 1882. Research sources do not reveal the exact length of his stay in Sterling, but when Dr. J. G. Neff began his practice here in 1888, a news item at that time stated he had served his apprenticeship under Dr. C. H. Philpot of Tecumseh.

Another Sterling dentist, Dr. A. Gaiser, was listed only in the 1902-1903 business census.

Dr. Neff came to Nebraska with his parents in 1870, at the age of four years. They settled on a homestead in the Hopewell community and he attended the Sterling Public Schools. After completing his professional training in dental colleges at Kansas City and Chicago, he practiced dentistry in Sterling for more than 33 years. His death occurred at his home in Sterling in 1922.

Dr. Neff’s successor was Dr. D. B. James of Delphos , Kans. He came immediately after the death of Dr. Neff, his brother-in-law, and remained in Sterling for over twenty years, returning to Delphos, Kansas in the 1940’s.

In the mid-1930’s Dr. V. D. Arnold came as a young dentist from Lincoln and remained until September of 1946, when he removed his practice to North Platte.

For a number of years the town was without a dentist, but in 1957 the community was happy to welcome Dr. R. L. Albrecht of Lincoln. He was the first occupant of Sterling’s new Clinic and still maintains his office there. For these past nineteen and one-half years he has served the community faithfully and served it well.

The list of local dealers in real estate and insurance is indeed a lengthy one. Through the years these were popular lines of business to pursue, separately or in conjunction with another business.

One of the first names mentioned as associated with early real estate and insurance was O. Radinsky. A few of the others whose names are still familiar in Sterling were Walter Atkins, Kuhlman and Curtin, and M. H. Mockenhaupt. After that, the list of dealers continued to grow at a rapid rate.

The livery trade in its day was a thriving business in Sterling. Its functions and purpose compared to the car rental business of today. Some livery stables were in a position to supply drivers with their rented rigs, for an additional fee, of course. Rentals could be had by the hour or by the day. With the advent of cars and improved roads, the livery stables were soon out of business. Associated with the livery business were E. Sanford, J. Wood, George Wigginton, C. Reed, J. Carter, J. W. Johnson, W. Worthen and W. E. Miller.

As early as 1895, Sterling had a creamery where butter, cheese, and other dairy products were manufactured for resale or shipping. This creamery was operated by Boatsman, Janssen and Co.

By 1902 the Beatrice Creamery was in business here with Jos. Alcorn as manager, and from 1907-1912, the Fairmont Creamery Co. opened their place of business here. John Happel was their agent in 1907 and H. Moore from 1908-1912. The Harding Cream Co. was also in business here in 1907, Thomas Rusk, agent.

In 1907 John Happel was also listed as a dealer in farm implements and carriages, and in 1909 as a dealer in real estate. He later engaged in farming. Mrs. Nora Panko and Mrs. Dora Eilers of Sterling are daughters of Mr. Happel.

With an increasing amount of cream being shipped to the large companies in the cities where more attractive prices were offered, the small town creameries could no longer operate profitably and eventually disappeared from the business section of the town.

Before the creameries ceased operating, however, the cream and produce stations had already become a growing business in Sterling, and were steadily increasing in number. These stations served as a convenient shipping outlet for farmers and dairymen in selling their cream, butter, eggs and poultry. Most of the general stores operated their own produce department to accommodate their patrons, but the independent produce station operators enjoyed a growing and profitable business.

Saturday was “trading day” and the week’s accumulation of eggs and cream would be brought to town. Money realized from selling each was used to buy the groceries and household supplies needed for the following week. Eggs were packed for shipment in sturdy wooden cases equipped with sectioned layers of cardboard to prevent breakage. Cream was brought to the dealer in heavy five or ten gallon metal cans. After carefully testing a sample of each can for butterfat content, these would be shipped by rail (later by large trucks), to some metropolitan center – usually Omaha, Kansas City or St. Joseph – from this trade area.

There was never a lack of these Cream and Produce Stations in town while farmers kept herds of milk cows, separated the milk for cream to be sold, and kept flocks of chickens for eggs to be sold.

That picture has changed with the passing of time also. Those who still maintain dairy herds usually retail the whole milk in bulk quantities to dealers, and in turn buy their own needs from the dairy shelf at the local grocery store. Egg production still exists but on a very limited scale. More often it continues only to the extent of supplying the needs of the individual household.

Names of those who operated these produce stations through the years make an extremely long list. (One quick glance tells me the list could easily contain 50 names). Bowman and McCoy (in 1886) were the first mentioned in the Nebraska Gazetteer. Others were William J. Aden, Gandee and Berg, E. M. Fithian, and C. J. Aden. For many years Fred J. Wigginton operated his station just east of the theater building, on the corner of Broadway and Main Streets. Weyers Implement now owns that property and a new building houses the implement business.

Whether in pioneer days or at the present time, the well-drilling industry is very essential to a community. Those who engaged in this trade through the years comprise a comparatively brief list. Among those well-drillers of earlier years were J. C. Biggs, Fred Biesemeier, Francis Weinman, and L. L. Miller. From 1902-1903 I. M. Stevens and O. Miller also worked at this trade. John Francis and William Weiman sold and serviced pumps and windmills, although most well-drillers could usually supply those same services and supplies also.

For the past 50 years the local firm of Waymire Wells has been capably serving this community in well-drilling and servicing. For 10 years prior to operating out of their Sterling headquarters, the firm served this community as part of the five-county trade area of their business. Mrs. R. C. Waymire is owner of the firm.

During the past year, Boyd Reed has started his own firm in this line of work also, and operates out of Sterling.

# PART VII

From pioneer years to the present time, carpenters and contractors in Sterling were in great demand. This is understandable, considering the need for homes, business structures, farm buildings, and whatever else is needed to provide housing and shelter, and to promote expansion and progress. The needs for these services existed during the past years and still exist today.

John McIntyre was engaged in the carpenter trade by 1879 and continued until 1887. Around that time J. S. Allen and Squire Bonner are also listed in the business census, and by 1895 the names of John Frankenberger, Sam Nissley, Rowe Bros., and Jacob Welsh were added to the list. With these were G. C. Potter in 1902, and John Bridges in 1907. From 1915, the list of builders and contractors included F. D. Stinson, Harm Sinnen, F. Shadley, E. W. Rawson, Raymond Stinson, John Reutter, and T. F. Remmers.

Those who are presently active in the carpenter trade here are Alvie Bouwens and Raymond Bouwens, John Poppas, Charles White, John Epley. Rex Carmichael and Kenneth Gadeken, employees of Sterling Lumber Co., perform duties as carpenters according to the demands of their work.

In 1882, W. H. Wheeler opened a jewelry store in Sterling. It was the first business of that kind to be recorded in the town’s history. By 1884, A. Owen was the new owner and in 1886 T. J. Roberts & Co., added the jewelry line to their furniture business. From 1888-1894 R. R. Reid was the town’s jeweler. In 1893, J. H. Shepherd opened a jewelry store but operated it for only a brief period of time. In 1895 Jule Schneider was the only jeweler in town, and he continued in this business in Sterling the remainder of his live.

Painters and paperhangers were in business here by 1884. William Rowel was engaged as a painter that some year, listing himself as a carriage painter several years later. In 1895, the firm of Rowel and Miller worked as painters, and by 1902 J. W. Dollarhide, C. B. Moore and H. B. Powell were also engaged in the painting business.

In 1907 Jesse Grady and Martin McCullough were listed as painters. By that time painters were also offering their services as paperhangers. Well known for many years in that line of work were the Wigginton Brothers, Frank and William.

While most of the early dealers in the livestock business sold cattle, some specialized in stock other than cattle. There was L. F. Grimes, who was a dealer in hogs, J. L. Francis in horses, and G. N. Rotton in poultry. John Olmstead sold cattle and hogs. Dealing in cattle only were J. E. Barrett, C. F. Biesemeier, F. H. and M. M. Catchpole, Charles Lipps, John and G. L. Neely, M. Shea and John Powell. Later, Theodore Foss and William Buehler were both well known as dealers in purebred hogs.

The list of ownerships of pool halls, saloons and billiard parlors would fill a page. These were attractive lines of business to many merchants. Public patronage was usually adequate to regularly support several establishments of each. However, with few exceptions, ownership did change reasonably often. A few familiar names of owners through the years were W. W. Wilson, C. Boatsman, M. H. McAuliffe, Fred Endres, Ind Weber, H. M. Mockenhaupt, H. C. Seele, H. Steinkuhler, Charles Shandy, and William England.

Saloons, as such, passed out of existence in May 1917. The editor of the Sterling Sun at that time stated in his newspaper that the final day of saloons passed “in an orderly fashion and with dignity!”

Barbers were among the very early businessmen in town. This suggests that personal appearance ranked high on the list of priorities in those pioneer days. First in business as a barber was J. M. Rice, in 1882. The early times found these barber shops changing ownerships about every year or two, which explains in part why that list is so very long, too. Later that situation became more stable. For many years C. F. Chaney and W. T. Ramsey operated a barbershop. Others who followed were George Kally, Walter Borland, M. Goheen, J. R. Thompson, Stewart Griffen, Mr. and Mrs. Riley. At present Sterling has two barbers, George Broers and Rodney Breazile.

Auctioneering was a popular profession years ago, and is still a thriving business. Leslie Roberts was a pioneer in that field, being listed as an auctioneer in the census during 1884. John Harris came soon after. Both were active in that business for more than thirty years. Some auctioneers who came to Sterling when the town was young were I. L. Harris, W. R. Kirby, James Johnson, and J. W. Harris. William Christline, who operated a gas station in Sterling during the 1940’s, also worked in auctioneering.

Today there is the popular auctioneer father and son team of Shea and Shea – Dad Richard and son Paul – whose talents in their trade are well recognized and whose capable services are constantly in demand over a large area in the state.

Perhaps the first meat market in Sterling was owned by G. W. Schwartz in 1882. As records show, others were Risser and Hershey, 1882-1884; Hershey and Catchpole, and Muggy, Long and Co., in 1884-1888; N. Muggy 1888-1890; John G. Kiesel 1890-1893; Watson & Walker in 1893; William Alcorn and Catchpole and Case in 1893-1902; Frank Vonasek, 1902-1913; Vonasek (Chas.) & Ehmen (Menard), 1913-1915; Charles Vonasek, 1915-1918.

There was also Harry Falk who sold his business to A. C. Griffin in 1919. In 1924 Charles Vonasek opened a meat market here again and continued in business for a number of years longer. Later there were Eden and Poehler; Mack and Poehler: E. H. Poehler, who later operated as Poehler lockers.

All grocery stores in Sterling now retain their own departments for the retail of fresh meats. The local firm of Rathe Lockers-Orvin A. Rathe, owner-has provided locker service for meats since buying Poehler Lockers in 1963. It also provides the services of custom slaughtering and packaging of meats, as well as the sale of meats in bulk quantities.

Time was when the railroad depot was the hub of the town’s happenings, and certainly a popular information center. Before travel by car became the most common mode of transportation, the editor of the local newspaper was always there when the passenger trains arrived to see who was leaving town or who returned.

The “really big” news usually came in over the telegraph, and if a telegram were delivered to your door, you were sure the news it brought could only be bad news. Then there was the concerned soul who would call the depot agent to inquire what time the 2:30 train was due!

The Burlington road through Sterling was the main line from Kansas City, Missouri to Billings, Montana. Four passenger trains were scheduled through Sterling daily, two westbound and two eastbound stops. For a number of yours a local accommodation train was run daily between Table Rock and Lincoln. It was scheduled to arrive in Sterling at 8:30 a.m. (westbound) and on the return trip at 7:00 p.m. It was a combination passenger and freight train and served as a fine convenience for people who chose to spend a day in the city, or at any town along the way.

It was known as the “Irish Mail” until in 1920, when it was replaced by a faster train identified as No. 19 westbound and No. 20 eastbound.

Depot agents in Sterling, as in other small towns, served as telegraphers and express agents. The first agent on record for Sterling was W. A. Harris, who held that position from 1879-1881. The agents after 1881 and their service tenures are as follows, the source of information being the files of Sterling newspapers – past and present:

1882-1883 – John Nafe

1884-1891 – C. M. Wilson

1892-1898 – J. R. Forbes

1899 – J. J. Irwin

1900-1902 – H. A. Schumann

1903-1915 – W. F. Denton

1916-1918 – C. E. McIntyre

1919-1924 – H. S. Grimes

1924-1927 – W. F. Denton

1927-1958 – E. A. Cox

The immediate successor to E. A. Cox was Mrs. Lois Crews of Grand Island. Others over the past 17 years were E. Littrell, C. A. Paulson, W. H. Hobelman, and Dean Shuck.

As more modern types of transportation came into use, the volume of business for the railroads declined, train service was gradually curtailed, and on May 31, 1960, the last regular passenger train on the C. B. & Q. went through Sterling. Within the past year all depot service in Sterling was discontinued, and the community is now serviced by a Burlington Northern, Inc., Mobile Unit.

# PART VIII

Until about 1911, business dealerships in farm implements were usually combined with that of carriages. In 1902, R. G. Bowen had such a business, and in 1907 records show John Happel and William Weinman as dealers. Weinman continued by himself later that year, and by 1909 Pickrell and Co., had started their own business.

From 1911-1913 both John Christline and John Janssen were dealers, and by this time most dealerships for carriages were discontinued. Ulich Bros. and John Christline were the two remaining implement firms in town, the latter continuing in machinery and repairs for many years.

When tractors eventually began to replace horses for power in operating farm machinery, new types of implements were introduced to the market. Dealers representing the various lines being manufactured were soon supplied with the merchandise, ready to sell and to supply repair services for these products when needed.

E. J. Eilers, W. O. Thompson and Earl Wilson, Victor Schmidt, Clyde Richardson were dealers in farm implements during the 1940’s and 1950’s. The Schmidt Implement Co., Victor Schmidt, owner, continued in business through the 1960’s and then was purchased by Morris Weyers, who now owns and operates the firm of Weyers Implement. It is the only farm implement dealership and repair service in town.

While doing some further reading for research this past week, I found in the newspaper files an interesting item about former townsman, Phil Landon, who was introduced to these chapters of history in last week’s installment. This item concerned Phil’s story about “Old Snowball”, an old Cherokee Indian, the last of his tribe, who left to heritage the ancient history of a vanishing race.

This story was described as “a bit of unpublished history embracing northern Kansas, Wisconsin”. The author was writing this strictly from memory, since he had the misfortune of losing all the original notes and papers of his travels in a flood on the Nemaha River in Nebraska many years before. He said he had hired a man to take him across the high waters near Falls City in a lumber wagon, but the water came into the wagon box and his satchel containing the papers floated away.

Landon was a young man then, walking a missionary circuit in the territory of states mentioned, when he encountered this old Indian. Because of his youth and his friendly attitude toward the Indian, Phil’s life was spared by this Cherokee, who decided to become his trusted friend.

Through his saga, “Old Snowball” as Phil named him, revealed the true history of his tribe and urged Phil to preserve and promote it as a heritage to his people. In the story, a band of outlaws attacked the Cherokees under the guise of friendliness, and all were killed except the Cherokee chief and the leader of the band of outlaws. The chief was the victor of the final hand-to-hand battle between the two survivors.

Phil’s story was published in installments in the Sterling Sun in 1924, and was later put into book form. In his final supplement of the story “Old Snowball”, Phil revealed that the place where the attack by the outlaws occurred (this was also the burial ground of the slain Cherokees, and the place where Old Snowball finally returned to die among the remains of his own family), was along the Big Blue River in south central Nebraska.

In 1885 Phil Landon became a missionary to the Cherokee Indians. He preached under the auspices of World’s Faith Missionary Association. This statement is quoted from the pages of the Sterling Sun.

History proves that in the town where you find resident central Nebraska, Iowa and doctors, you will also find druggists. Sterling was no exception. A summary follows of former druggists and their years in business. This summary was also gleaned from the files of Sterling’s newspapers.

1879 – J. P. Tyler (retailer in drugs); Ford and Pearson.

1882 – M. Christy; J. P. Tyler.

1893 – J. B. Shepherd; M. Christy; J. P. Tyler.

1895 – M. Christy; Laflin Bros.; J. P. Tyler.

1899 – George L. Endres, Corner Drug Store.

1902 – W. L. Heilman, Paul Lehrack, manager; Central Drug Store, M. M. Daugherty, owner, W. Sandifer, manager.

In 1902 J. P. Tyler was not listed in the Gazetteer as an active merchant, but by 1909 he was back as manager of Tyler’s Opera House.

1907 – Sterling Drug Co., Heilman and Morrill, owners; Turner and Atha; Sterling Drug Co.

1909 – Turner and Wiebke; Sterling Drug Co.

1911 – Turner and Wiebke; E. M. Fithian; Sterling Drug Co.

1913 – George F. Dorsch; W. L. Morrill.

1915 – Ward Yeast; W. L. Morrill.

1917-1918 – Ward Yeast; H. P. Lehrack.

1919 – R. A. Campbell Drug Co.; H. P. Lehrack. Campbell Drug Co., was destroyed by fire in 1921.

The Sterling Drug Store, H. P. Lehrack, owner, continued in business until the death of the owner in 1939. The business in drug sundries was carried on by Charlotte Lehrack from 1939 to 1948 when it again became a drug store under the ownership and management of Ward Merritt, pharmacist.

In 1950 the place of business was purchased by Charles P. Gordon and again operated as a drug sundries store. In 1957 Jesse Arter came to Sterling as a pharmacist, and for the next six years the business operated as a drug store. Since then, Gordon’s Store operated in a business of drug sundries until August 1976, when the building and contents was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Scott.

Grain dealers always were considered an essential enterprise toward the growth of our town, especially since it is located in a productive agricultural area. The buying and selling of grains, plus storage facilities, provide a ready market for the producer.

As early as 1879, the names of William Chambers, P. Hurd, and C. B. Sprague of Sterling were recognized in the area as reliable grain dealers. Between 1882 and 1892 the names of J. Dillon, F. A. Harris, T. W. Lowry, P. S. Heacock and F. P. Halsey became equally well known in the grain business. From 1893 to 1911 there were O. A. Cooper, J. W. Worl and H. E. Gooch.

The Sterling Grain & Stock Co. was formed in 1907, with E. Kopplin, president; S. R. Haynes, secretary; William Kershaw, treasurer. These same officers continued serving the organization for many years, and in 1915 H. R. Gordon was added to the staff as manager. These same four gentlemen served in their individual capacities until 1924, when Mr. Gordon moved to his farm.

Probably one of the most popular sources of entertainment in our town, before the advent of television, was the local theater. I am unable to find records of a movie theater operating in Sterling before the year of 1912. Then the Folly Theater was located on the corner of Broadway and Main streets, and on four nights a week the silent movies delighted the patrons.

The picture and actions were flashed on the screen, followed (in print) by details of the scene or the conversation of the actors. “Live” music – local talent at the piano down front – accompanied the film for proper sound effects, and the mood and tempo of the music would correspond with actions and expressions on the screen.

The invention of sound in films in the late 1920’s revolutionized the entire notion picture industry. In 1928 a theater in Lincoln announced the coming of pictures with sound as “the greatest miracle in the history of motion pictures. Motion pictures that actually talk and sing to you from the screen. Natural as life it self”.

However, with that giant step of progress came problems, too. That beautiful actress must now also possess a beautiful speaking voice to qualify for a role, and one would scarcely expect the voice of the rugged, handsome hero to be a high tenor. (It also put the local sound effects man and his piano out of business!)

The Folly Theater was under the management of E. W. Riffle until 1920, when C. R. Shandy took charge. In 1921 William Ehmen owned it for several month, selling the business that same year to E. F. Rathe and Brunke G. Schmidt. In 1926, the Folly changed in name and ownership when F. M. Honey bought it and named it the Isis. In later years it became known as the Gem Theatre for the rest of its operation.

In succeeding years other owners and managers were W. Birdsell, Mr. Shoemaker, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Hintz, Ernest Grundmann and Paul Benson.

Eventually with television, progress again set the stage for ending another of the older businesses in town. The movie theater had contributed generously in its time toward the pleasures and entertainment of the community. Television brought pictures and sound into the home. Watching a movie in comfort from that favorite easy chair at home, discouraged going to the theater for the same entertainment.

Then, too, the ever-increasing number of activities in the community and a variety of entertainment, helped alter the pace and pattern of living in the average small town. These factors, along with faster

transportation and a vastly improved and modernized road system were instrumental in bringing about the demise of the small town theater. Long distances between towns were reduced from hours to minutes in travel time.

Sterling’s “picture show” no longer enjoyed the popularity and the patronage it once had, and further operation was neither practical nor profitable. After several unsuccessful attempts were made to reopen the theater, it finally ceased operating in 1957.

A valuable service provided in our town through the years which should be recognized, is that of its postmasters. Because the political party in power directly controlled postmaster appointments for many years, it was possible for one person to receive a number of appointments intermittently. This occurred here in several instances during the years in which that ruling prevailed.

Following is a list of Sterling’s postmasters from 1879 to the present: C. Mohrman, C. C. Wilson, C. C. Ellis, Valentine Zink I, John H. Shepherd, John M. Hershey, Charles E. Zink, D. H. Kuhlman, George Sandusky, Henry Pickett, T. Glen Roberts, J. L. Chiles, Alma M. Thompson, N. A. Woltemath.

We have now completed a detailed review of the history of Sterling’s early business firms and the people who were associated with them. From here the history will continue with a slight change in style, and will be more of a running account of the important happenings and changes, with occasional accents on items of special interest whenever they appear in the records.

In 1911, Tourtelot-Barber & Co.’s new modern steam heating plant had been installed and was performing beautifully. There was even an up-to-date foot warmer, where those who came to the store could get their feet warm in a hurry.

Also in 1911, the cry was for more land better hitchracks on Main Street, so farmers would have more places to hitch their teams. Existing facilities were inadequate, especially on Saturdays and Sundays.

By 1912 and 1913 attention was turned to interests other than hitchracks. The merchandise and advertising were taking on a “new look”. Blacksmiths expanded to automobile dealers, garages began to appear, and shelves were being stocked with car repairs and supplies. One firm’s announcement states their “Automobile livery a specialty”. Besides repairing and painting carriages and cars, one blacksmith also dealt in Studebaker wagons, as well as the new Saxon cars.

The automotive world had arrived in Sterling.

Replacing the customary livery stables on the business street, were the garages. There a business usually included a dealership for a line of cars, automotive supplies and repair service. Where previously a common topic of conversation might have concerned a team of trotters, or carriages and surreys, you now heard talk about tires, mufflers and radiators.

Before long the makes of cars to look for were the Dort, Elcar, Hudson, Harroun, Paterson, Studebaker, Maxwell, Allen, Paige, Briscoe, Overland, Geronimo, Reo, Willys-Knight, Jewett – besides the more commonly known Ford, Buick, Dodge, and Chevrolet. Of course, not all of those makes were represented by dealers in Sterling, but a surprising number of them were.

Most of the cars listed above are unfamiliar on today’s market. The logical explanation for that is the fact that those did not survive the competition of others.

# PART IX

About the first firm to enter the garage business was the Curtin Garage. M. Curtin, Fred Benson and Wesley Rogge were partners, but by November 1914, Curtin retired from the firm, and Benson and Rogge took charge. The business then became known as the Benson and Rogge Garage. Their advertisement described them as being automobile dealers and repairers, specializing in supplies and automobile livery.

Getting into the sales and services of the automotive field was then the most attractive business venture, and during the period immediately following 1914 and 1915, we find new firms and dealerships appearing frequently in Sterling’s business directory. Some remained in business only briefly, so that changes were also frequent, and at times, quite numerous. We will review the accounts of these as they occur.

In 1914, at City Hall, the Sterling Commercial Club was organized. Every businessman in town became a member. Officers were L. A. Varner, president; and R. F. Frerichs, secretary-treasurer. Others elected to serve on the board of directors were J. E. Johnson, D. H. Kuhlmann, and J. C. Barber. They were hoping to have no less than forty members by the following month.

The organization was instrumental in contracting for a summer Chautauqua program with the Brett Lyceum and Chautauqua System for a six-day program. This was to be presented Aug. 3-8 inclusive. Editor L. E. Tobias’s comment on that in the Sterling Sun was “When Sterling starts out to do anything it lands there with both feet”.

In 1914 the Sterling Acetylene Gas Plant was serving Sterling, but at their January meeting, the Village trustees discussed the prospects of getting an electric light plant. Through the efforts of the Commercial Club, a franchise was agreed upon with an electric company to install a lighting system.

By March 1914, an enclosed building was ready to receive the machinery of the town’s new light and power plant. Many homes had been wired, and people were anxiously awaiting this new service.

Ward Marks, the superintendent, organized and completed the work for this project. Citizens of the town also approved his proposition to install streetlights. The contract for the street lights provided that Mr. Marks would furnish all the equipment, including the posts, and the town would pay one dollar per month for each light.

Early in 1914 the Sterling Store started in business as a general store, succeeding Hevelone Brothers. L. E. Yeast was manager of the new store; Scott Hallett, owner.

Tourtelot-Barber Co., who owned stores at Sterling, Adams and St. Mary, sold the store at St. Mary to the Farmers Mercantile Co., there. This company was comprised of the Schumann brothers, the Gorackes and “other prominent men of that spry little city”, as quoted from the Sterling Sun.

Ward Yeast purchased the Dorsch Drug Store at a bankruptcy sale. Transaction was approved by Judge Munger of the U. S. Courts.

In February 1914, Fred Wigginton opened the cream station in the Sangen Building.

With today’s telephone rates in mind, it is interesting to compare them with those in 1914. In a January 1914 issue of the Sterling Sun, L. T. & T. announced its new yearly rates in gross and net prices as follows: Individual business, Gross $33.00, Net $30.00; Two-party business, Gross $27.00, Net

$24.00; Individual residence, Gross $24.00, Net $21.00; Two-party residence, Gross $21.00, Net $18.00; Farm residence, Gross $21.00, Net $18.00. To get net prices, payment was to be made in advance during the first 30 days of the quarter.

The question of road conditions came before the Commercial Club. It was definitely decided by the members to take two miles each on six roads leading into Sterling and to keep the same in good condition. The hope was that this beginning would inspire others to carry on, resulting in having good roads into town from all directions.

Another matter considered by the organization was the dividing of the two voting precincts to equalize the voting population. At that time the south precinct contained 90 votes and the north precinct 400 votes.

For future consideration the Club was urged to lend it efforts toward getting a good park for Sterling.

Early in 1915 a news item stated that Sterling was going to have a band. About 25 young men had joined. William England was to be the leader.

In May 1915, engineers were presenting facts and figures to the public about the cost of a water works system. The project was being urged for approval. In the June election the people voted on the water bonds issue and the measure was defeated.

A number of new business places were opened in 1916. L. C. Westwood opened his law office here, and the Sterling Auto Co., was in business with a Ford dealership, and also featured Allen cars. W. F. Hitchcock and Menard Ehmen were owners of the firm. Ford car prices being advertised then were: Runabouts at $345.00, Touring cars at $360.00, Sedans at $645.00 and the Coupelet at $550.00.

The year 1917 in Sterling was filled with action.

The Benson and Rogge Garage had become the Benson Auto Co., with Fred Benson, Wesley Rogge land Charles R. Shandy as owners.

The Sterling Store ended its business operations. L. E. Yeast bought the interests of the store and continued in business as a general merchandise store.

C. J. Aden had started a dealership for Paige cars.

Dr. W. L. Morrill sold his drug store to H. P. Lehrack. The name “Sterling Drug Store” was retained.

W. H. Borland had sold his blacksmith shop to Mel Yoder.

The Sterling Commercial Club was being urged by progressive minded citizens, to promote plans for establishing a canning factory here. George Sandusky was president of the organization then, and R. F. Frerichs was the secretary-treasurer.

Chautauqua programs were in town August 18 to August 23. A variety of excellent entertainment was again offered.

C. J. Aden and Pete Jones became the new owners of Sterling Auto Co., succeeding W. F. Hitchcock. They would sell Ford, Paige and Harroun cars. Later in the year, Jones bought Aden’s interest in the firm, and sold Paige, Briscoe and Maxwell cars. Jerry Jones was salesman for this new firm.

Herman Steinkuhler was now operating the Farmers Hardware Store.

The high cost of living was stressed in 1917, when hogs were reported to be “almost worth their weight in gold”. A farmer had realized the sum of $75.75 for a 500-lb. Hog at the market.

The Maulis Auto Co., was in business in 1917, and owners were R. D. Maulis and D. M. Humphrey.

In September the Sterling Light and Power Co., announced that on Saturday, Oct. 27, they would “leave the current on” from 10:00 a. m., through the rest of that day. This was done for the benefit of those ladies who might wish to clean house. The company offered the services of their vacuum cleaners and men to run them!!

The Sterling Boosters were promoting the big opening baseball game of the 1917 season. The Lincoln Western League team was coming here to play the home team. John Christline was the manager of the Sterling team, and the players were known as “John’s Grizzlies”. Names on the roster included O. Stuve, Damme, Moumau, W. Christline, Edw. T. Zink, W. J. Ehmen, R. Aden, C. J. Aden, G. Berg, B. Schmidt, Julifs. (We lost the game 11-0).

All business houses closed on the opening games of the baseball season. It became apparent in following games that losing was not a habit of the “grizzlies”. They had themselves quite a season in 1917!

The school board accepted the plans of Berlinghof & Davis of Lincoln for the construction of the new schoolhouse. The plans selected would give Sterling “a magnificent building”, according to the Sun’s editorial comment. Total cost would be $28,000.00.

In April 1917, the senior class of Sterling High School presented the play, “Cupid at Vassar” at the Tyler Opera House. Just for memories sake, let’s list the names of those in the play. The cast included: Otto Panko, Henry Rogers, Ford Pharaoh, Seattle Stowater, Merle Ostrander, Lola Pharaoh, Margaret Hartwell, Ruby Ostrander, Estella Stowater, Louise Finkner, Ethel Powell, Freda Werner and Ruby Rogers.

Emphatic criticisms were being published about the need for some sort of waterworks system in Sterling. The need for better protection against fire losses was stressed.

By mid-1917 the nation was at war in Germany, and “Food Conservation” was the watchword of the day. Women of this community joined others in sewing and knitting for the Red Cross. In one month the ladies had finished 77 pair of socks, 21 sweaters, 14 mufflers, 11 wristlets, 4 helmets and 9 washcloths.

After the Army Draft Bill was passed by Congress, about twenty young adults of Sterling and vicinity organized into a company of Home Guards. The purpose of these was to learn the rudiments of drill, so that when you were called for service you would be ready to join without the necessary drill training. The group elected D. A. Koehler, president; W. H. McIntyre, secretary. D. A. Koehler, Fritz Johnson and J. C. Barber were selected as drill master.

Early in 1919 C. J. Aden and Conrad Immelman opened a large general store.

W. A. Churchill’s Garage was open for business and Hupmobile, Overland, Geronimo, Reo and Willys-

Knight cars were available there.

About that time merchants were also advertising McGraw tires, Columbia and Brunswick Grafonolas – and those adorable Buster Brown Blue Ribbon Shoes for kids. (The red and black patent ones with six side buttons and the red silk tassels at the top, were the delight of my young life then!)

G. A. Walrath took over H. P. Hollenback’s business of auto repairing, general blacksmithing, machine work, brass casting and lathe work.

The scourge of the local businessmen then was the mail order house business. In a newspaper ad, one of the storeowners said, “Some of the mail order grafters make Jesse James look like a gentlemen”. (Wow!!)

R. A. Campbell opened a drug store in Sterling in 1919.

The Ehmen Auto Co. (M. Ehmen) was advertising Paige cars.

After peace was declared in 1918, and the boys were returning from Europe, plans were discussed for forming an American Legion Post in Sterling. In November 1919 definite steps were taken to form a local Post. About 100 young men from this community had served in the armed forces during World War I, and the people felt that the formation of this Post was in keeping with other localities throughout the country.

The local Post was temporarily organized late in November 1919 with Harry Baker serving as Acting Commander. Forrest Rowe as Acting Finance Officer, and W. A. Tobias as Acting Post Adjutant.

Jan. 7, 1920 a meeting was held and the name decided upon for the local Post was “Harm Sangen Post No. 140”. Harm Sangen was one of the first to enlist from this community, and the first from Sterling to give his life in the service of his country. This honor was bestowed as a fitting tribute to his memory.

The January 8, 1920 issue of the Sterling Sun reported 26 charter members, with many more veterans expected to enroll. There are now two living charter members and both are still residents of Sterling. These two are G. H. Warnke and John Reutter.

The date of the official charter for Harm Sangen Post No. 140 at present reports 111 members, and is a most active organization. Current officers are: James Zuhlke, vice-commander; Floyd Hestermann, adjutant; Alvin Bray, treasurer; Ervin Berg, chaplain.

# PART X

After the big coal strike of 1920 was settled, the public was considering the possibility of using oil as a fuel substitute for coal.

Early in 1920 a severe flu epidemic struck this vicinity again, which lasted for many weeks. In some cases it was necessary to place the homes affected under a period of quarantine.

Dr. A. L. Fetterman, chiropractor, opened his office in the Endres building early in 1920.

The death of Dr. A. Shipman occurred at age 79 in April 1920. You will recall that he was the first doctor to practice medicine in Sterling, as early as 1879.

H. H. Leacock had his grand opening for the Fairmont Cream and Produce Co. Those who brought their produce to him that day would receive enough free ice cream for the entire family.

At the annual meeting of School District 33 in June 1920, the total budget of $16,800 was approved. Two items included in that budget would rarely be found in today’s budget. They were allowing $800 for coal, and $400 for a new coal bin.

In an issue of the Sterling Sun for 1920, the editor wondered where all the people came from on a Saturday night. He claimed it to be nothing unusual to count more than 300 cars on the streets of Sterling, with “other conveyances thrown in for good measure”. The reasons for this, he explained, were good merchants and a good picture show. (We don’t have a picture show today, but we jolly-well have the good merchants!)

The Shadley-Rawson Construction Co. was in operation in 1921.

The deaths of three more of Sterling’s pioneers occurred in 1921. D. M. Boatsman was deceased in January, William Kneeland in August, and L. A. Varner in November.

The Ladies Cemetery Association sponsored the construction of the new cement sidewalk to the cemetery.

In September of 1921, a disastrous fire occurred in the business section of Sterling. The building and entire stock of the Aden-Immelman store was destroyed by the blaze, and with it the Campbell Drug Store. All contents of the W. F. Hitchcock law office above the Aden-Immelman store were lost. All effects of Dr. W. L. Morrill’s office above the Campbell Drug Store were destroyed. Also lost in the fire were all properties and records of the Masonic Lodge, the Royal Neighbors and the Modern Woodmen, whose lodge rooms were located on the second floor.

The public was again reminded of the vital need for a city water system. The editor of the Sun commented that only a “steady stream of water from the bucket brigade” kept the fire from spreading across the entire block.

Fred Benson, who had been working at the Churchhill Garage the previous year, had taken a lease on the Curtin Garage, which had been occupied by the Maulis Auto Co. Rudolph Maulis moved to the former Jicha shop, where he and his brother Albert would engage principally in machine repair work.

In the summer of 1921, the people of Sterling were informed that there would be a city park. Max Warnke had purchased fifteen acres of ground from William Kneeland in the northeast part of town. There he built a dance pavilion, its dimensions being 100 ft. by 50 ft.

Plans for the park included a swimming pool, playgrounds, swings, tennis courts and croquet links, with a ball diamond across the river.

The pavilion was completed, and on August 31, the first public dance was held in this new building.

That same year, on October 13, fire of unknown origin destroyed the new pavilion and everything in it was a total loss. It was never rebuilt.

Today, Sterling supports a beautiful park just south of the original park grounds. Maintained within the park we find a football field, a ball diamond, a tennis court, and a playground and picnic area with adequate facilities. Additional bleachers and a new, modern scoreboard, were installed during the past year. The scoreboard, an attractive addition to the athletic field facilities, was purchased at a cost of nearly $3,000.00. It was paid for by personal contributions, donations from local business places, and a variety of fund-raising activities by different organizations in the community. Funds came from the school Activity Fund, the firemen, the Sterling Jaycees, and numerous other sources.

George Weegar operated a restaurant in 1921 and John Harris bought the Variety Store in December of that year.

The grand opening of the new Fair Store took place early in 1922. The firm included two new places of business located in the Charles Tyler double store building. Scott Hallett of the Adams Mercantile Co., sold groceries and dry goods in one section of the building, and Mr. Whitlock of Lincoln occupied the other side with men’s furnishings, shoes, etc.

A merchant’s band was organized and Supt. F. H. McVay was its leader. The first performance of the group took place at an evening concert on July 4, 1922. Following that concert, the Commercial Club sponsored the summer band concerts on Thursday evenings. Stores remained open to especially accommodate the farmers with evening shopping hours during their busy planting and harvesting seasons.

Summers and Roe sold their lumberyard to the Community Lumber and Coal Co. – A. N. Thurber, manager. Later H. M. Miller assumed management of the business.

On Memorial Day, 1922, the ladies of the Sterling Cemetery Association decided to serve a dinner and supper to the public. This was to be their fund-raising project to pay the remaining debt on the new cement sidewalk to the cemetery. The meals were to be served in the basement of the Methodist church that year.

The history of this organization and its special service begins in 1905, although they served as an auxiliary to the G. A. R. before then. With special permission, I will at this point repeat a written history of the Sterling Cemetery Association which was composed by the late Mrs. Minnie Rawson.

The special occasion which warranted this report was the fiftieth anniversary of the organization, observed in 1955. It was read to the audience by the president of the association during the afternoon program. It reads as follows:

“Years ago, the Women’s Relief Corps, auxiliary to the G. A. R., had charge of the activities on Memorial Day. As time went on they found it too much for them to carry on – as their ranks were rapidly thinning.

“Ladies of the Sterling vicinity, wishing to see our ‘Silent City’ improved and Sterling Ladies Cemetery Association. This was organized in May 1905. Its purpose was to raise money to finance the improvements needed to make our cemetery a place we could all cherish.

“The method chosen was to serve dinner and supper on Memorial Day and charge a reasonable fee for the some. Years previous the day had been appropriately observed and families would meet together having picnics or home gatherings, so our ‘Homecoming Day’ was really started years ago.

The first officers elected to this new organization were: President, Mrs. Norma Toole; secretary, Mrs. Amelia Boatsman; treasurer, Mrs. Agatha Harris. Under the leadership of these capable officers, a sidewalk to the cemetery was deemed a must. At this time there were no cars, plenty of mud, and had it not been for the sidewalk, many could not have attended the exercises held there.

“However, there was much controversy over the building of the sidewalk, but by the perseverance of the ladies in charge, it was completed and used for many years. As the herd law was in effect, it was thought that our cemetery should be fenced. This was done.

The main drive from the gate to the Soldier’s Monument was laid of concrete, which was a great improvement. Flowers – mostly peonies – were planted in large beds to beautify the grounds. This caused a need for water, so they installed an aboveground water system, running over the entire cemetery. This is added to when new grounds are opened up. Sprinkling cans are furnished for your convenience.

“Several chairs were placed there, so one could rest after the long walk from town. As many of the monuments were old and had not been too well placed, the ladies had all of them straightened, and all unmarked graves were given metal markers with cards inserted with proper data. This caused much research to be done, but no task was too much for this untiring organization.

“Down through the years they have carried on under different leadership, but always with the one fine motive in view – improvement.

“Those who have served faithfully through their terms of office – just to mention a few besides the first officers – were; Mary Rogers, Fannie Ehmen, Mae Evans, Jessie Zink, Elizabeth Wilson, Ura Zink, Carrie Johnson, Mary Bee Reutter, Arlie Reese, Elsie Kritner, Minnie Rawson, Doris Weber, Alice Janssen, and many others, who with our present officers, Orvene Wilson, president; Evelyn Klepper, secretary, and Ida Buss, treasurer, have carried on the traditions.

“Many costly improvements and minor repair work have been done. A new entrance of brick construction and iron gates was installed, also a new fence across the front. A new house was built to be used as a waiting room, also a storage room at the back for the necessary tools and equipment.

“Crushed rock was placed on all main drives, and now trellises for rose bushes on the main drive were placed. Landscaping is being done in the new part to the west, drives are rocked and shrubbery and evergreens have been planted. Much more is yet to be done to complete this part which will take time and money.

“These later years, Memorial Day has become a ‘Home-Coming Day’, for our community. We all appreciate the wonderful meals provided for us, and it’s such a satisfaction to know our loved ones ‘gone on’ have such a beautiful resting place. We are glad of the labor, time and money we have put into it. We could not have accomplished so much but for the wonderful workers of our community. Every citizen of Sterling and vicinity can consider himself a member of this organization, as all are interested in the wonderful work being done.”

Since the completion of the Sterling auditorium in 1954, these meals have been prepared and served there on Memorial Day. Attendance has increased steadily through the years. This year’s attendance was 950.

When the auditorium was built, the ladies donated two years’ proceeds of meals served, toward the purchase of kitchen furnishings, such as dishes, silver, etc.

Mrs. Orvene Wilson is still president of the Association. She has served continuously since 1951. Other officers are Mrs. Harvey Giesmann, vice-president; Mrs. Orvin Rathe, secretary; and Mrs. Herman J. Behrens, treasurer.

# PART XI

At the city election in April 1922, the issue of a water system for Sterling was put before the voters again. This time the measure carried, and bonds were issued. It was the third time in ten years that this issue had been brought to the people for a vote. That election brought out the largest vote ever polled in Sterling to that date – 283 votes.

Plans were to have the water system installed by September.

In 1922 Darrel Schneider built an amateur radio station in his father’s jewelry store, and would receive market reports and news of weather conditions. These were posted in the lobby of the post office for all interested persons to see. Darrel later installed a radio receiving set in the home of E. T. Benson.

Fred Benson had installed the newest in gas pumps at his garage. It was called the Clear Vision pump, and had a 10-gallon glass jar in clear view of the customers with each gallon marked.

In 1922 Frank Cerveny and Dave Wishnow each opened a store, and J. H. Coffin owned the local bakery called the City Bakery.

Our girls’ high school basketball team won the state tournament in 1923. Games were played at Havelock, Nebr. On March 8, 9, and 10, and the Havelock Business Men’s Club presented the trophy to the champions.

Players on Sterling’s championship team were: Gertrude Miller, Ruby Nealy, Marjorie McVay, Polly Dorsch, Edna Churchill, Clara Schroeder, Viva Thompson and Mary Harms. Bayard G. Alps was the coach and F. H. McVay was superintendent.

This state high school basketball tournament for girls was the first to be held in Nebraska. The large silver trophy awarded was the first to grace the shelf of the trophy case in our school.

Merchants sponsored free picture shows one night a week, and band concerts were presented each week also during the summer months of 1924. F. H. McVay was again directing the band.

In 1924 the boys’ high school basketball team wan the Class B championship at the Southeast Nebraska basketball tournament held in Peru. Players on that winning team were Dale Thompson, Victor Steinkuhler, George Podtburg, Myron Reese, Joy Barrett, Louis Boden and Clifford Doran.

This championship was the first found on record for boys’ basketball team in our high school.

Deep tragedy came to the community in August 1924 when a family of six, the Chris Hoehne family, was killed in a car-train crash two miles west of Sterling. Their home was on a farm northwest of town.

In the summer of 1924, fire destroyed the Sterling Poultry and Egg business belonging to E. M. Fithian. A large loss was incurred.

Fred Effken became manager of the Community Lumber and Coal Co.; H. M. Miller had resigned from that position.

W. E. Barnes became the new manager of the Farmers Union Store in 1924. He succeeded Chris Baker who had managed the store since February 1922.

Late in 1924 Frank Cerveny closed his store, and Charles Vonasek opened a combination restaurant and meat market in the Cerveny building.

Dave Wishnow also discontinued his store, and J. H. Coffin closed his bakery.

In 1925 the Fairmont Company started a poultry and egg business in Sterling. Clifford Jones was manager. Later in the year the management changed to Cawley and Jones.

E. M. Fithian discontinued his business here and moved to Broken Bow, Nebraska.

In 1925 the sewerage question and the necessity for planning a sewerage system for Sterling was under consideration. It was debated rather heatedly at the beginning of the year, and reports had been heard by the village council in January. In February a “remonstrance” was filed with the council, the petition was granted, and the sewer question was dismissed for the time.

The new Home Oil Company’s service station on the corner of Broadway and Main Streets was opened for business in June 1925. H. W. Wiens and D. R. Wiens were owners and operators of the firm. The Wiens firm was credited for being the first business place in Sterling to adopt the practice of serving free coffee to customers. At the Home Oil Co. service station, hot coffee was on tap at all times.

Mrs. George Brown, owner of Brown’s Hotel, discontinued the hotel dining room service in 1925. Not enough help was available.

The Tourtelot-Barber Co. store, after having been placed in the hands of trustees, was sold in June 1925. The sealed bids received for their stores in Sterling and Adams revealed that the accepted bids for the grocery and dry goods department had been submitted by G. H. Warnke and E. J. Eilers. Mr. Feinburg of Grand Island bought the men'’ furnishings and ladies' ready-to-wear merchandise.

In December 1925, W. F. Porter of Clarks, Nebr., outlined a proposition to the Community Club for possibilities of establishing a butter factory in Sterling. An appointed committee was to investigate the matter and report their findings.

For the first time in the history of the Sterling schools, a school annual was published. Its title was “Maroon and White”. It was published in 1926, and a staff selected from the high school student body edited the book, under the supervising of Supt. D. H. Weber. The staff at Benson’s Studio, (E. T. Benson, owner), was in charge of all photography, and the printing was done by the staff at the Sterling Sun newspaper office. The engraving work was done by a firm in Omaha. A number of years later, when these school annuals were being published regularly, the “Maroon and White” became the “Jet Streak”, as we know it today.

An event, which took place in Sterling in January 1926 and should be mentioned, was the basketball game between the Sterling Nighthawks and the Havelock Boiler Makers. The high-flying Nighthawks, Sterling’s town team, were fast, accurate and undefeated. The powerful Boiler Makers were generally considered invincible, and were the former state champions.

The clash between these two teams drew a full capacity crowd, spectators coming from a wide area. The game was described in the press as “one of the fastest exhibitions of basketball ever staged in the corporate limits of Sterling”. The final score was 25-23 in favor of the Hawks.

Playing for Sterling were the following: Bill Thompson, Dale Thompson, Vic Steinkuhler, Bud Nealy and Darrel Schneider, with F. H. Kuhlman as substitute player. Burt James was the referee.

In March 1926 the Isis theatre hosted an Old Fiddlers Contest. The contestants in this event were Vic Peterson, E. T. Benson and F. C. Chaney of Sterling; Ora Benson of Auburn; and Henry Kline of Adams. First place winner was Vic Peterson; Ora Benson and E. T. Benson tied for second place; and Henry Kline place third.

A group of men was selected by the Community Club to find a location for a bandstand for summer concerts. John Janssen, Bus Warnke and Ernest Rawson were in charge of this, as well as determining the cost of building the bandstand.

In April 1926, a Harmonica Contest was held at the Isis theater. Contestants were Frank Bonasek, Ed. T. Benson, Otto Rosenthal and W. H. Wilson of Sterling; Ora Benson of Auburn; Henry Harms and Frank Moore of Tecumseh. The winner of the contest was Otto Rosenthal; Ed Benson placed second, and W. H. (Holly) Wilson was third.

Sterling would soon be on a “through” highway and local citizens began to discuss curbs, gutters and gravel for out streets.

A local store was advertising the price of sugar at 15 lbs. For $1.00; 25 bars of soap for 95 cents; 6 cans of salmon for $1.00; and 3 lbs. of coffee for 98 cents. (As Ripley would say – Believe it or not!)

L. E. Tobias, editor of the Sterling Sun, had completed 50 years in the printing trade in 1926.

W. H. Borland bought Louis Jicha’s blacksmith shop.

The new Community Orchestra was under the direction of John Janssen.

A fire siren was purchased to replace the old fire bell.

Fred Benson had installed a new type machine for recharging batteries.

C. A. Radmacher became director of the Sterling band in 1926. Through a joint effort of the local merchants, summer band concerts would again take place in Sterling. The band now had 29 members. Concerts were first presented at City Hall and later at Brown’s Hotel. In October a concert of sacred music presented on a Sunday afternoon pleased a large audience.

Old Company F of World War I had a reunion in August 1926. Wesley Rogge and H. Ottjes were in charge of the event. Twenty-five members attended.

In 1926 it was decided to curb, gutter and gravel three and one-half blocks of street as a trial beginning for future street improvement.

The work would extend from Curtin’s garage to Brown’s Hotel on Broadway, then south to the alley. Also south on Washington street from Broadway to the depot. This was achieved in October of that year, and with that improvement project Sterling suddenly came to life again (according to the editor of the Sun).

Broadway had been graveled, and every store building was occupied again. Some optimistic citizens were predicting that every street in town would be graveled immediately.

Mrs. W. E. Riffle had opened a restaurant in the Varner building.

The Jerpe-Sterling Company was formed late in 1926. Incorporated were J. L. Jerpe and C. A. Swanson of Omaha, C. F. Humphrey of Tecumseh, and C. R. Cawley of Sterling. The object of the corporation was to buy, sell and transport butter, eggs and poultry, and to deal generally in and with food products. Plans for future operations included cold storage facilities and handling dressed poultry. If Sterling could obtain ground for trackage purposes, the plant would be located here.

J. W. Harrah opened his meat market in the Tyler building in 1926. He purchased the equipment of the Vonasek meat market.

In October 1926 the leaders of the schools of this section of Nebraska formed an organization to promote music, declamatory work and track meets. Supt. D. H. Weber of the Sterling schools was named president of the organization.

It was voted that the association should be called Mudecas – MU for music, DEC for declamatory work, and AS for athletics. Schools in Johnson, Gage, Cass, Nemaha, Lancaster and Otoe counties were eligible to membership.

After a fiddling contest and a harmonica contest, the Isis theater was making plans for having a hog-calling contest in the near future.

In December 1926, the Burlington railroad installed a new signal at the City Hall crossing. It was equipped with a gong and a swinging pendulum showing a red light.

Early in 1927 Mrs. Freda Hadden purchased the Variety Store from J. W. Harris.

Miss Augusta Joekel traveled to Honolulu in June, where she would obtain a position and remain for at least a year.

Also in June 1927, H. A. Schmitt opened a bakery in the Tyler building. It would be known as “The Sterling Bakery”.

In June the Isis theater had the first showing in this area of Lindbergh’s arrival in Paris.

It was decided to have a two-day picnic late in the summer of 1927. The festivities were to be held on the business street with a baseball tournament as an added feature.

The State Banking Board took over the Farmers and Merchants Bank in July 1927.

In July, H. A. Schmitt closed his bakery. He claimed public support was not sufficient to warrant his continuing the business. Immediately afterward, G. W. Rouse of Lincoln became owner of the bakery.

E. A. Cox moved to Sterling from Syracuse, Nebr., in 1927, when he assumed his duties as depot agent here. He succeeded W. F. Denton, long time agent for the Burlington, who transferred to Council Bluffs, Iowa at that time.

The firm of Janssen Brothers (John and Herman) was dissolved in 1927. They had been in the implement business together since the death of their father. John was retiring, and Herman would continue in the business.

W. H. Borland moved back to Sterling in 1927, after spending some time in Iowa. He was planning to build a blacksmith shop.

L. E. Tobias retired from the newspaper business after more than 16 years as editor of the Sterling Sun. He sold the “Sun” to Henry Pickett of Wahoo, Nebr., who would assume possession on Oct. 15, 1927. Mr. land Mrs. Pickett and children, Anne and Thomas, moved to Sterling at that time.

# PART XII

In 1927 a Dramatic Club was organized in Sterling under the sponsorship of the Sterling Woman’s Club, and was known as the Community Dramatic Club. It was organized for the purpose of studying, and presenting a number of plays each year with home talent. Money realized from the plays was to be deposited in a community building fund. It was felt that such a building was a direct need in Sterling to accommodate large gatherings.

Officers elected for the club were: Mrs. Edna Warnke, president; Ed. Rathe, vice-president; J. R. Thompson, secretary; Mrs. Theodore Foss, treasurer. F. H. Kuhlman was elected as director.

After being in the Janssen building about a year, Fred Benson moved his battery equipment and supplies back to the Curtin garage building. He formerly occupied this same building.

Koehler Lumber and Coal Co., purchased the Community Lumber and coal Co., in 1927. This consolidation eliminated the operations of the Community Lumberyard. Koehler owned yards at Sterling and St. Mary.

A “Womanless Wedding” was presented by local talent at the Isis theater late in 1927 under the sponsorship of the Sterling Woman’s Club. About 70 local men took part in the play. Three performances were required to accommodate the large audiences. The theater was filled to capacity on three successive nights.

In 1927 the Community Club sponsored a direct appeal to the governor of Nebraska and the State Engineer for a graveled state highway from Lancaster county east, on Highways No. 41 and 42. Early in 1928 reports from the State Engineer’s office stated that the graveling would begin by summer and plans were to have all work on this road completed by fall. That would “get Sterling out of the mud”, said the Sun’s editor.

Final results of this appeal were that a contract was awarded to the Koehler Construction Co. of Sterling for graveling the Sterling-Adams road and work on this was started by mid-November 1928.

With this road work in progress, the village trustees approved the graveling of additional streets in town also. The first streets to be graveled were Washington, Broadway, Main and their tributaries. Later, streets in the remaining sections of town were scheduled for graveling.

Max Shoemaker of Malvern, Ia., purchased the Isis theater in 1927.

In October 1927 the village trustees met with representatives of the Iowa-Nebraska Light and Power

Co., to draw up a contract for transferring to that company for city power. The transfer included the selling of the existing power transmission line, which had been constructed in 1918 when the town had connected with a line from Tecumseh. (This Line was the first to provide 24-hour service to the town).

The provisions of the new contract made possible a 30 percent reduction from the old rates on lights for residences and stores, a 25 percent reduction on power, and a $300.00 per year saving on rates for street lighting.

The new electric service became effective on Nov. 30, 1927. Lines in Sterling were rebuilt and the company'’ office was located in the Varner building north of the depot. C. R. Shandy, who had been superintendent of the light plant for a number of years, remained to serve in that capacity for the new service.

The newspaper office of the Sterling Sun moved from the Varner building on the corner of Washington and Broadway streets to the Janssen building on the south side of Broadway between Washington and Main streets. The paper had been located in the Varner building for more than 30 years.

Dr. A. L. Fetterman, D. C., ended his business here in December 1927, and moved to Wymore, Nebraska.

The bakery changed ownership again. A. C. Paulick of Atchison, Kans., became the new proprietor of the Sterling Bakery in December 1927.

Among the newest in home entertainment about this time was the radio. One of the first business places in town to sell radios was the F. J. Roberts and Son store, which featured the Atwater-Kent radios.

In March 1928, J. L. Fellers of Rushville, Nebr., purchased the Sterling Bakery.

1. L. Mobley succeeded C. R. Cawley in the Jerpe-Sterling corporation.

### In May 1928 the Steinkuhler building east of Main Street on Broadway was being

repaired to house the new cheese factory which would come to Sterling soon. The manager, A. Zivney of Dunbar, Nebr., had taken a year’s lease on the building, and expected to conduct a modern and up-to-date cheese factory. The factory was in operation by the following month and was known as the Zivney Cheese Co.

In 1928 a new dance pavilion was built at the site of the former Community Lumber Co., yard on the corner of Main and Locust streets. The new pavilion, a 36x80 foot structure, would also be available for other large gatherings. Construction of the building was under the direction of Koehler Lumber and Coal Co.

The first dance in the new pavilion was an Old Time dance and was held on Sept. 1, 1928. The “Gold Medal Five” orchestra provided the music.

After the opening event, weekly dances were held. At one of the first of these, a contest was held for naming the new building. Mrs. Jerry Conkel had submitted the name “Green Lantern”, and the judges decided to select that title from all other contest entries.

The Chiles Auto Co. had taken the agent for Chevrolet cars in September of 1928. L. R. Chiles and W. O. Thompson were owners of this firm for many years.

The Lincoln Oil Co. became the new owners of the Home Oil Co. of Sterling, and took charge of operations in August 1928, with Mr. Cornell as manager. David and Henry Wiens of the Home Oil Co. had been in business here since 1925. The Wiens families later moved to Ohio.

O. J. Shaw, who was president of the Lincoln Oil Co. then, was a native of Vesta, Nebr. He was a son of J. M. Shaw, an early pioneer in that vicinity.

The play, “Aunt Lucia”, presented at the Isis theater, was sponsored by the Sterling Woman’s Club. The play was a comedy and the cast was comprised of the women of the school faculty.

Besides the play, the evening’s entertainment also included a Baby Pageant with 75 local children participation, a dramatic reading, the men’s glee club, the Flapper chorus comprised of 28 local business men, the girls’ chorus consisting of 12 local girls, tap dance numbers and a vocal solo. The affair was declared both enjoyable and successful.

Max Shoemaker had installed a new Harlaphone in the Isis theater. This was a musical instrument run by electricity which produced music sounding like a pipe organ, and like an orchestra.

W. J. Kirkendall of Beattie, Kans., purchased the Seele Smoke House and Pool Hall late in 1928. The Kirkendall family moved to Sterling at that time, and were active in community affairs during their years of residence here.

Mack and Poehler established their meat market in the Fass building after purchasing the fixtures of the Fass Meat Market.

In the winter of 1928, Phil (Parson Bob) Landon accepted the pastorate of the Community church, south of Fairbury, Neb., and conducted an old-fashioned Revival Festival there. The community served by this church included Harbine, Powell and Thompson.

Earlier in the year, a newspaper item gave an interesting account of a visit of “Zach” Cody of Elk Creek, Nebr., at Parson Bob’s house. Zacharias T. Cody was a cousin of Parson Bob. In retirement he lived with a daughter in Elk Creek.

The news item in the Sterling Sun described the visit as follows: “Old time memories were revived, and Zach and Bob had a great time telling of buffalo hunts and Indian skirmishes. The reunion closed with a ‘peace-pipe’ smoke. Zach wore his large medallion bronze portrait given to him by Buffalo Bill. Zach was in Johnson County when Dave McCandless killed a man by the name of Cartwright, on Lost Branch, and he says he can show us the grave of Cartwright. McCandless finally ran up against Wild Bill’s guns, and the curtain ran down on the last act of Dave’s career.”

When Parson Bob would frequent the county fairs in the area, his favorite topic for a public speech was “When the West Was Young”. He encouraged the public to ask questions about the old west, “between the Rocky Mountains and Missouri River, and the Arkansas River and the Canadian line.” He challenged anyone to try to ask a question he was unable to answer.

This former resident of Sterling was indeed a legend in his time.

In 1929, E. R. Eilers was operating the Sterling Cream and Produce Co. His brother, D. M. Eilers, was proprietor and former operator of the business.

William Churchill established a dry cleaning business in Sterling in 1929. He was located in the rooms above the Heilman Grocery.

Sterling hosted the third annual Declamatory contest in February 1929. The ladies of the P. T. A. served the noon meal to the 250 people present for the event.

Eleven schools were represented in the oratorical division, twelve entries were in the humorous reading division, and eleven contestants entered the musical reading division. Other divisions for competition were the extemporaneous speaking, dramatic readings, and spelling contest.

# PART XIII

Late in 1928 Charles Vonasek moved to Wymore, Nebr., where he had employment in a meat market and butchering business.

The construction of a new entrance to the Sterling cemetery was in progress. The material used was a hard red brick. There would be four large pillars and a retaining wall on either side of the entrance. This improvement was sponsored by the Ladies’ Cemetery Association. The firm of Rowe and Son did the work.

In 1929 the new dry cleaning business belonging to William Churchill was moved from the rooms above the Heilman Grocery to the building west of Benson’s Garage. This building had been remodeled and equipped to do laundry work besides the regular cleaning and pressing. The business was called “The Churchill Pressitorium”.

Attracting considerable attention in the community was the art collection on exhibit at the Masonic Temple. All works displayed were done by local talent.

Those who contributed their paintings to this display were: Mrs. David Foster, Sr., whose exhibits included both oil and water color; Lloyd Tucker, who at that time was employed by an outdoor display firm in Indianapolis, Ind.; C. R. Shandy; Weert Dieken; Mark Frankeberger; L. Frankeberger; E. T. Benson displayed some tinted photography.

By 1929 a new type of freight service had begun and was steadily growing into a more extensive business. Local truckers were making regularly scheduled trips for hauling freight to and from Lincoln and Omaha, Nebr., St. Joseph and Kansas City, Missouri, and Sioux City, Iowa. Some scheduled daily trips to Lincoln, and others three trips weekly, plus one trip per week scheduled to Omaha.

This scheduled freight service gave special advantages to local merchants since they were now able to obtain merchandise with prompt delivery. Perishables could also be shipped with less delay and without loss from spoilage in shipping.

Names of those first to engage in this new service of commercial trucking can be found in advertising columns of the local newspaper of that period. We find Thompson Transfer (Alfred), William Reed, Frank Siegel and S. L. Brandt. Many others were to follow later.

In May 1929 a new song, “Sweet Little Mother”, was being sold at the music stores in Lincoln. The song was of special interest to the Sterling community because the lyrics had been written by F. H. Kuhlman, and the music composed by Herman Janssen.

The Wolfe Motor Co., had located in the Koehler Building east of the Isis theater. Sales and services of Durant cars were featured, as well as general auto repairing.

**New Church Planned**

Early in 1929 members of St. John Lutheran church in town decided to make plans for erecting a new and modern church building. Choice of style in architecture was to be considered by a committee selected for that purpose.

Rural mail routes No. 2 and No. 3 had been extended to give better service to farm families. Route 2 was extended two miles and would serve eight additional farm families. Rout 3, northeast of town, added ten families. This was at the time when four rural routes emanated from the Sterling post office.

After 34 years in the barber trade, F. C. Chaney retired from business in June 1929. He had come to Sterling from Iowa in 1890, and soon after his arrival took the required training for becoming a licensed barber. Except for one and one-half years in Kansas, he was in business all of those years in Sterling.

The village council of Sterling purchased the 14 acres of land at the east edge of town known as the Hitchcock property. It was to be used as a town park, after completion of the necessary improvements. The ground would then also be used for school activities, and the ball grounds would be transferred to this new location in the near future. Purchase of the property was authorized on July 25, 1929.

The July 25, 1929 issue of the “Sterling Sun” carried the announcement from the “Cook Courier” of the marriage of Miss Mary Blythe to Marion F. Packwood of Tecumseh, Nebr. In quote, the “Sun” stated; “Mrs. Packwood is a well known newspaper woman because of her youth and ability. She is a member of the Tecumseh Military Band, and a very popular young lady in Cook and Tecumseh. She plans to continue publishing the ‘Courier’, which was owned many years by her father and under whom she learned her trade”.

Fifteen years after this article appeared in print, Mary and Mike moved to Sterling to begin publishing, the “Johnson County Courier”. Much can be said of the many additional talents “our Mary” possesses, and the numerous services she still gives freely to our community today.

**Bus Service Begins**

A bus service between Sterling and Lincoln was initiated by the Lincoln-Sterling Coach Lines. A schedule of two round trips to Lincoln daily was a fine accommodation to the people of the community.

Western Poultry and Egg Co., was located just north of the Warnke-Eilers store. Jerry Conkel was manager.

O. H. Miller was the proprietor of the City Meat Market in 1929. Later in the year Louis (Sparky) and Jim Krantz assumed management of the business.

In July 1929 the Riffle Café was sold to Mrs. Clara Curtis.

The firm of Mack and Poehler bought the Kruger Meat Market. The two shops would be combined as one business. Mack and Poehler had been in business here several years prior to this, and also owned the market in Adams.

In August 1929, the death of another Sterling’s early pioneers occurred. He was William Benson, who reached the age of 93 years. He had homesteaded on Saunders Creek, six miles northeast of Sterling, in 1863.

The Pioneer Garage added the agency for Pontiac Oakland cars to its business of accessories and repair work. Ed Rathe was manager and B. G. B. Schmidt was in charge of repairs. William Rosenthal did the welding and brazing.

The village council had installed red and yellow traffic buttons at the intersections adjacent to Broadway to regulate both incoming and outgoing traffic on that street.

In October 1929 Brunke Schmidt assumed the managership of Sterling Grain and Stock Co.

Mac Shoemaker had purchased a “Vitaphone” for the Isis theater. The patrons could now enjoy the movies with sound at the Isis.

Irene Steinkuhler, graduate of the Sterling High School and a rural teacher in 1929, performed during a broadcast over radio station KMA in Shenandoah, Iowa. Her performance included piano and vocal numbers.

In January 1930, Charles E. Zink, postmaster of Sterling for five and one-half years, died at age 57. Henry Pickett, editor of the “Sterling Sun”, was appointed Acting Postmaster to fill the vacancy incurred by Mr. Zink’s death.

Philip Meisinger had purchased the Curtis Café early in 1930. M. Ehmen and L. A. Brown would operate the café until March 1, when the Meisingers would take charge. The new business place would be known as “The Northside Café”.

Keith Varner of Adams and Charles Lenker of Sterling were new members of the “Sun” staff.

L. E. Yeast, proprietor of the Sterling Store, discontinued its operations due to lack of patronage.

L. Foaster had become manager of the local office of the Iowa-Nebraska Light and

Power Co.

An icehouse would be built soon on Broadway just west of the Varner building. Lloyd Kershaw would have charge of the ice delivery business.

At a meeting in February 1930, the members of St. John Lutheran church voted to carry out the plans adopted previously in regard to erecting a new church edifice. The Nelson Construction Co. of Omaha received the contract for the new building, and work was to begin very soon. Completion date was estimated to be October 1, 1930.

The building would be constructed of Brazil brick and would occupy the site of the present church. However, it would be facing south.

Lyndon Blakely of Tecumseh had purchased the cleaning and pressing equipment of William Churchill in April 1930, and would soon open his business in the Tyler building, formerly occupied by the Sterling Store.

A group of ladies of this community met to organize a Home Nursing Course. Mrs. Victoria Mayer, county nurse, was the instructor.

The village council met with representatives of the United Gas Service Co., to discuss bringing natural gas service to Sterling, and passed an ordinance permitting this company to come in. Although action would not be immediately forthcoming, the council was assured that natural gas would be brought to Sterling. C. R. Shandy was the local representative.

**Auditorium Proposed**

The Men’s Community Club discussed the need of a school auditorium at their regular meeting. They voted to bring the matter before the people of the town, letting them express their wishes.

A sketch of the proposed addition was put on display in the “Sun” office. The size of the addition was expected to be 82x60 ft. at an estimated cost of $16,500.00. Seating capacity would be 800 for programs and 400 for basketball games, and other floor games. The community would also have a place for larger gatherings.

The plan suggested was to authorize the board of education to set aside part of the tuition money received from outside pupils each year to meet the yearly payments on the cost of the new addition.

Every parent, patron and friend of the school was asked to study the matter seriously, and the Community Club was endorsing the proposition of voting on it later.

Henry Snell of Weeping Water had become manager of the Farmers Union Elevator. The position was vacated by Brunke B. Schmidt.

In May 1930, members of the Luther Memorial church met and decided to disband the congregation. The Rev. E. A. Bischoff had resigned early in the year to accept a pastorate at Greene, Iowa.

The population of Sterling on April 1, 1930, as shown by a preliminary census count, was 702 as compared with 804 on January 1, 1920.

In June 1930, B. G. B. Schmidt rented the building just east of the theater and would open his business in car repairing, and retailing oil and gasoline. He had been with the Pioneer Garage recently.

A new gas and oil station was built and opened for business at the A. W. Case corner on the highway.

The Chiles Auto Co. had purchased the Pioneer Garage in July 1930 and had taken possession. The new proprietors would continue the sales and service of Chevrolet cars, do repair work and provide storage services for cars.

# PART XIV

Appointment of Acting Postmaster Henry Pickett to the position of postmaster had been confirmed by the U. S. Senate in July 1930. Mr. Pickett had been serving in the capacity of acting postmaster since the death in January of former postmaster, C. E. Zink.

Early in August 1930, pipes for gas lines were unloaded in Sterling for the line running from Panama to Falls City. Laying of pipes began, and in a short time the line was completed. In September 1930, ditching and pipe laying began for a natural gas system in Sterling, and gas would be available for heating by the end of that month.

In August 1930, W. S. Birdsall of Ashland purchased the Isis theatre. With that change in ownership came a change in name also. The Isis was renamed the “Gem Theatre”. A Grand Opening Night was held at the theater a few weeks later, and a capacity crowd was present for the event.

It was estimated by the management that about 700 people were unable to get inside for the two shows that evening. A musical trio entertained the crowd outside the theater on guitar, mandolin and banjo. Complimentary gifts from the merchants of Sterling were distributed at the intermission period.

Mr. Birdsall had installed an attractive outdoor sign, one of the very newest flashing neon electric signs available.

Bob Heilman had purchased the Northside Café from Philip Meisinger.

The Sterling High School was issuing a semi-monthly school paper called “The Magnet”.

Death came to Oscar J. Cox in October 1930. A Civil War veteran, he was a resident of Sterling for over 60 years.

John Frankeberger, the only remaining Civil War veteran living in Sterling, had completed 52 years of residency here.

The “Sun” office was moved in 1930 from the Janssen building on Broadway to the old Baptist church building on the corner of Iowa and Washington Streets.

W. J. Kirkendall had installed an indoor miniature golf course in the Tyler Opera House. In a contest which was conducted for naming this new place of business, George Boden had submitted the name “Gloom Chaser”, and won the $5.00 first prize of the contest.

1. M. Curtin had opened a Cash Grocery store here in December 1930.

#### Church Dedicated

#### Dedication services for the newly erected St. John Lutheran church in Sterling took

place Oct. 12, 1930. Speakers for the occasion were Rev. Taubert, of Gothenburg, Rev.

Stricker of Denver, Colorado, Rev. Niederwimmer of Coleridge, and Dr. Richter of Clinton, Iowa.

The church dedication was also held in connection with the first meeting of the newly formed Central District of the American Lutheran Church, which included Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Missouri and Wyoming. At this convention of the new Central District the Rev. J. H. Moehl, pastor of St. John Lutheran church in Sterling then, was elected to serve as the first president of that body.

This new responsibility would demand all of Pastor Moehl’s time, and he would be unable to continue serving as pastor of the St. John congregation after taking office in January 1931.

In December 1930, the former editor of the “Sterling Sun”, L. E. Tobias, died at his home in Grand Island at age 71. He had been a resident of Sterling for nearly 20 years, and for 17 years had published the “Sun”. He moved to Grand Island in 1927 after selling the “Sun” and retiring.

The Sterling Mattress Shop had located in the first house south of the Tyler Opera House. Old mattresses were reprocessed, and feather beds were made into roll mattresses at this place of business.

In January 1931, Lida Jane Curtin left on a cruise around the world. From San Francisco the cruise would include stops in Hawaii, the Philippines, the Orient, India, Egypt, and European countries. The tour would end at New York in April.

The Rev. C. Aug. Decker of Peoria, Ill., had accepted the call to succeed the Rev. J. H. Moehl at St. John American Lutheran church. He was installed during the January 11, 1931 services at the church. Rev. Moehl presided at the installation service.

One of the early settlers of Sterling, T. J. Roberts, had died in January 1931 at age 84. He was the father of T. Glen Roberts.

The death of Mrs. Fred Bartling, another pioneer, occurred at this time. The Bartlings had built and occupied the large brick house directly east of the Methodist church, which was later to become the home of the John Christlines and then the home of the R. C. Waymires. The present home of Mrs. Wilma Waymire is located at the same site. It will be recalled that Fred Bartling was the first of the early settlers to build with brick after the brick factory located in Sterling.

Fred J. Schutz had added a flour and feed dealership to his business. He also operated the Fairmont Creamery business and was located in the Eilers building.

**Bandstand Built**

A new bandstand had been completed in May and was placed on wheels. This would make it a portable unit movable to any place in town, where the band needed to play for special occasions. It would be placed in the center of downtown Broadway each Thursday evening for the regular weekly concerts.

Phil “Parson Bob” Landon had been to Edgar, where he had dedicated and Oregon Trail marker at Comp Kane on the Little Blue, a camp for Boy Scouts. A monument was also built by the scouts to honor Parson Bob. All scouts supplied a stone carved with their initials, and these stones were used to build the monument. A bronze plaque bearing the likeness of Parson Bob was also fastened to the monument. Parson Bob was recognized throughout the state for his deep interest and strong support of the Boy Scouts of America.

Delonville Winter, a resident of Sterling since 1869, died in 1931 at age 77. He was the father of Dale and John Winter, former Sterling men.

In July 1931, A. C. Johnson became the manager of the Farmers Union Store.

The Gem Theatre had installed a new cooling system providing greater comfort during the summer months for its patrons.

An outdoor drinking fountain was donated to the town by Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Benson, and was installed in front of what was then the Post Office building. This is the present Beetem building on the north side of downtown Broadway. For a long time the public enjoyed the convenience of the water fountain.

Dr. C. N. House, a dentist in Sterling since 1928, had moved to College View, and would continue his practice there. Later in 1931 a young dentist, Dr. V. D. Arnold, came to Sterling and opened his office here.

George Rotton, pioneer and resident of Sterling for 43 years, died in August 1931. He was engaged in the tinner’s trade, and was Sterling’s first and only tinsmith.

Arch Borland had purchased the blacksmith shop of the late W. H. Borland.

The Pep Club of the Sterling High School was organized in September 1931. The first officers were Anne Pickett as president and Dorothy Brugmann as secretary. Cheerleader’s chosen were Mildred Brunke, Verae Lenker, Thelma Pearson, Bethene Barnell and Jessamine Brugmann. The organization had 30 members that first year. It was decided that the club members would be attired in maroon and white at games to correspond with the school colors.

**Takes Over Newspaper**

F. M. Learned and Son, former editor and publisher of the “Douglas Enterprise” of Douglas, Nebr., had leased the “Sterling Sun” from the Picketts and had taken charge of the paper with the Oct. 22, 1931 issue.

Mr. and Mrs. L. W. Dummond had opened a coffee shop in the Janssen building on the south side of Broadway. It would be called “Louie’s Coffee Shop”.

In November 1931, G. H. Warnke acquired the business interest of his partner, E. J. Eilers, and that was the beginning of the "Warnke’s Store” which is still in business today, 45 years later.

L. W. Dummond purchased the stock and equipment of the Lincoln Oil Company’s service station. William Christline became manager of the station.

In December 1931, Santa came to Sterling in an airplane!

Early in 1932, the Sterling schools qualified for membership in the Association of College and Secondary Schools.

The lease of the “Sterling Sun” to F. M. Learned and Son had expired in May 1932, and Rhea Pickett again took charge of the paper. The Learneds returned to Douglas.

A new cream station was opened for business by the David Cole Creamery. It was located in the Varner building and Herman Steinkuhler was manager of the station.

The Sterling Grain and Stock Company’s elevator was sold to M. Ehmen in June 1932. F. H. Kuhlman was serving as president of the group.

**New Flood Lights**

In September 1932, dedication ceremonies of the newly installed flood lights at the Sterling park were held. According to an account in the "Sterling Sun” nearly a thousand people from this community and neighboring towns of Adams, Burr, Cook and Douglas attended the dedication.

As the Sterling band played a “stirring selection”, the lights were turned on. Car horns sounded and people cheered as a new era for Kitten Ball was ushered in for Sterling. Four games of Kitten Ball were played under the new lights between teams of the towns present.

The Sterling Cleaners had relocated at the Poehler building east of Kirkendall’s on Broadway.

An election bet was recorded in October 1932 between Ira Rhoten and Simon Brandt. If Mr. Hoover was re-elected as president, Brandt would wheel Rhoten to St. Mary in a wheelbarrow. If Roosevelt was elected, Rhoten was to wheel the empty wheelbarrow to St. Mary. The band volunteered to follow the “show” in a truck, regardless of who was elected.

The survival of the Sterling Bake Shop was at stake. All local merchants met to decide what could be done to keep the bakery in Sterling, and how to improve its business. They all agreed to sell only Sterling made bread. They also appealed to the public to buy only bread that was made at the Sterling bakery.

**PART XV**

In 1932, the Iowa-Nebraska Power Co. had built a new transmission line from Adams, where their main lines terminated. The company would now supply our electric power directly over this new line, which was a major improvement over the capacity of the old transmission lines being used.

In November 1932, the E-Z System grocery store located in the Tyler building on Broadway. It opened for business with a week-long Grand Opening Sale. Owner of the new store was Frank Zink, who had been in business in Council Bluffs, Ia., before coming to Sterling. He was the father of Mrs. Alfred Thompson of Sterling.

In November 1932, while making an arrest for a disturbance at the dance hall, Night Marshal E. F. Rathe was stabbed. I’ll just quote from the editorial of the November 17, 1932 issue of the “Sterling Sun”, to describe the affair: “Our Night Marshal, while in the performance of his duty, was stabbed in the side and back by a stranger who was lit up with corn juice. The affair happened between the dance hall and the jail. The marshal had made the arrest in the dance hall and was taking the party to the city hall jail, when the young man’s partner attacked Rathe with a knife and then ran away…Even a rattlesnake would stay and fight after striking, and he probably wouldn’t strike from behind, either”.

Later information stated that the two men were vagrant corn pickers from a neighboring town, and also that the marshal’s wounds were not too severe, since his heavy outer clothing had protected him.

In December 1932, R. F. Frerichs, president of the First State Bank of Sterling, had died at his home. His age was 47 years.

**Bank Closes**

On Jan. 3, 1933, Sterling found itself without the services of a local bank. A notice of closing had been placed on the door of the First State Bank by the board of directors, announcing the suspension of business until reorganization could be effected. Mr. Hadley of the State Department would be in charge during this interim.

Death had claimed three of Sterling’s pioneer residents – Mrs. T. J. Roberts, Mrs. John (Elsie) Bonner, and W. S. Bowman. Mrs. Roberts (mother of T. Glen Roberts), was the first to operate a millinery shop in town, and Mrs. Bonner taught school in and near Sterling for many years. Mr. Bowman was one of the first bankers in town.

The Sterling Bake Shop moved to the east half of the Eilers Building, which had been occupied by the Warnke-Eilers store. (Today this building belongs to the Sterling school and is the shop and classroom of the Industrial Arts Department).

K. W. Oakley came to Sterling from Palmyra in 1933 as the new representative of the Farmers Mutual Insurance co. He succeeded L. J. Kritner, who had transferred to Tecumseh.

The depositors committee for the local First State Bank requested that the State Banking Department appoint a receiver and that the bank be liquidated. Attempts had been made to reorganize the bank since the death of R. F. Frerichs, president, but conditions had not been favorable.

Early in 1933, the Sterling business men met to compare opinions and ideas of the NRA (National Reemployment Agreement) and to discuss its merits and effectiveness in the community. It was voted to organize a local group, and Sterling was the first town in Johnson County to organize. Preparations were soon completed to implement the provisions of the Agreement as soon as instructions would arrive from Washington, D. C.

D. A. Koehler was elected president of the organization, and Otto Stuve as secretary. Koehler was also the first employer to sign the President’s Agreement. Forty-four merchants signed to pledge their support of the Agreement. Later, Henry Pickett was appointed as chairman of the entire county in operations of the NRA.

Henry Schnackenberg, Jr. had purchased the Borland Blacksmith Shop in February 1933.

**Civic Boosters Formed**

In February 1933, the business men of Sterling met to form an organization “for the welfare of the community”. The naming of the new club was the responsibility of the “Name-the-Club” committee. This committee decided to hold a contest for this purpose, and all school children would be eligible to submit a name of their choice. Prize to the winner would be $3.00.

At the end of the contest period, the judges selected the name “Civic Boosters” from all entries. Joyce Stuve had submitted the winning entry and was awarded the $3.00.

The Peoples Natural Gas Co. had installed equipment to give the gas a distinctive odor. This would be a help for residents to detect any possible leakage in the houses.

Rev. J. H. Moehl of Beatrice, former pastor of St. John Lutheran church in Sterling for eight years, had died in a Beatrice hospital. He had been taken to the hospital the previous Sunday, following a collapse while delivering a sermon at St. John’s Lutheran church in Beatrice.

Does anybody remember the “lean” years of the 30’s? Local market prices read like this: Wheat .57; Corn .30; Oats .17; Cream .19; Hens .08; Eggs .07.

Herman Steinkuhler, who had been managing the local Dole Creamery, was operator of the new Jerpe Creamery in 1933. It was located in the Varner building.

Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Barnes were moving to Adams in June 1933 to make their home. They had been residents of Sterling since 1924. From 1924-1932 Mr. Barnes had been manager of the Farmers Union Store.

Dr. Von Arnold, dentist, had moved his office to the property formerly occupied by W. E. Barnes and owned by Mrs. Jessie Zink. (This is the present Joe Rathe residence).

The men of the Sterling band gave a surprise concert to shoppers on a Saturday evening in the summer of 1933, to advertise an ice cream social which they were to sponsor. The object of the social was to raise enough money to buy caps for the band members.

The Ehmen Grain Co. sold its elevator to B. G. and John Schmidt in August 1933. The Schmidts would conduct a grain and feed business. The name of the new firm would be known as “Schmidt Brothers”.

The John Briar building on the north side of downtown Broadway, which housed the post office for many years, had been sold in 1933 to K. W. and Paul Oakley. The post office facilities were to remain in the building at that time. (J. L. Beetem is the present owner of this building).

The subject of a sewage system for Sterling was again being discussed, in the hopes of creating interest by the town’s people. A petition was circulated by some of the businessmen in the interest of percent supplied by the government and the balance to be on loan 20 years at four percent interest. The purpose of such a plan was to provide jobs and to lower the percentage of unemployment.

The petition was presented to the village council, and in September the council placed on file a detailed resolution to construct such a system.

The Sterling Fire Department, who had sponsored a Kitten Ball Tournament at the park, applied the proceeds of the tournament toward having a tubular well installed at the park.

In August 1933, Raymond Zink had passed his State Exams in Omaha, and was now a full-fledged mortician.

**Parson Bob**

Phil “Parson Bob” Landon had died Nov. 22, 1933, his obituary being given in the Nov. 30, 1933 issue of the “Sterling Sun”. His lifeless body had been found in his room at Dana College in Blair, death having been caused by heart failure.

In his pocket was found the key to a gate in the iron fence which enclosed his personal memorial plot near Edgar. The memorial statue of himself in this plot of ground had been made and placed there by the Boy Scouts. He was buried there on Nov. 24, with Boy Scouts and American Legion members in charge of interment.

To the Hastings Museum he had bequested a mass of historical documents, letters and newspaper clippings, associating him with the “Old West”.

It was said that through some arrangement with Gen. Colby, Parson Bob had entered Johnson County, some 40 years previous, riding a beautiful white horse belonging to Gen. Colby. This arrangement was thought to have been made when “The Parson” was on some Indian expedition with Colby.

Soon after coming to Sterling, Parson Bob was married to Narcissa Suzanna Case. Their main source of a livelihood was the selling of garden products and seeds in the summer seasons. At intervals he would leave for his missionary lecture tours in surrounding areas. In this way he would get enough money to provide for the necessities of life during the winter months.

Parson Bob was deeply concerned about the welfare of the young boys of the community, and long before the Boy Scout movement began, he had an organization of his own known as “The Boys’ Club of America”.

After the death of his wife in 1931, he spent much time roaming the old trails. At Dana College he was studying the Indian Mounds and lecturing to the student on pioneer life in Nebraska.

It was especially interesting to read an excerpt from another newspaper about Parson Bob. This from the New York Mirror in the Jan. 10, 1934 issue: “As chief of the U. S. Scouts, he was the friend of Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill, and others of note. Scouting for Custer he crept into an Indian village and found out the number of braves, the number of horses, even the number of guns they had. To settle a dispute, he fought a Sioux Chief in a knife battle in the presence of his tribe, the winner to get a scalp. Landon won. – The Indians so admired his courage, they let him go unmolested. He was the last of the Old Scouts”.

In November 1933, W. H. (Holly) Wilson retired, after completing 30 years of service as a rural mail carrier on Route 2. The report of his retirement in the “Sterling Sun” noted that the 25 miles of his first trip thirty years earlier had been made with a “Buckskin team of horses”, and had taken a full day of travel. The last trip, a distance of 30 miles, was made in a late model Ford, and the trip was completed in about two hours.

Upon the retirement of Holly, a consolidation of local mail routes took place. Routes one and two were merged to form the new Route 1. Carrier on old Route 1, Harry Haynes, would serve the newly formed Route 1. Route 4 served by Ervin Bentzinger, and Route 2, served by Henry Rogers; would merge, with Henry Rogers serving the new Route 2. Ervin Bentzinger transferred to Liberty.

The new routes would cover a distance of 55 miles each. Route 1 included the areas northwest and southwest of town, and Route 2 served patrons to the southeast and northeast.

**PART XVI**

There was a picture of Sterling’s depot building and under it was written: “Remember when….you walked through this door to buy your ticket for a train ride, maybe to Tecumseh, or perhaps to Lincoln, or maybe it was the start of a long trip. Those days are gone forever but the Burlington Northern is giving the old depot to the people of Sterling, with Sterling Area Jaycees assuming responsibility for moving and relocating it. For old timers there is great nostalgia in this picture. (Courier photo by Mary Packwood)

In 1933 the American Legion and the Omaha World-Herald newspaper sponsored a citizenship contest for high school students. The contest was held in Omaha. From our school Charles Haynes, a junior, was one of the participants, and he remained in competition throughout the entire period of elimination. He was one of five contestants chosen as finalists.

A park improvement project had been started in November 1933, designed to straighten out Pratt’s Branch Creek, more commonly known as Tickle Tail Creek, and which passed through the park. This was one of the Federal projects at that time for providing work to the unemployed. All work was done by hand labor and required about six weeks to complete.

J. H. Brown, who had been the village marshal for more than a year, had resigned at the end of 1933 and would be engaged in the plumbing, heating and well business.

1. C. Johnson, who had been manager of the Farmers Union store for several years,

Had resigned his position in March 1934. His successor on May 1 was Fred Rogers, who had been a former employee of the store. Mr. Johnson would go to Fremont.

Early in 1934 a meeting had been called to organize the county to support and assure the protection of the pheasant, which would soon be introduced to this area to establish its habitat. I had been reported that southeast Nebraska would receive 35,000 of these birds for distribution, and people were anxious to help get these flocks and others established.

County officials chosen for this group were L. C. Kuster, Tecumseh, president; E. T. Zink, Sterling, vice-president; and Oscar Douglas, Tecumseh, secretary-treasurer. Fred Kelle was elected chairman of the Sterling Precinct committee, and Val Zink was elected secretary-treasurer.

March 6, 1934, 17 crates of pheasants arrived in Sterling. Each crate contained 24 birds, making a total of 408 birds which were freed in the Sterling area. Representatives of the Pheasant Committee distributed the birds, with assistance and transportation provided by Al Thompson of Thompson Transfer.

The village board had joined the League of Municipalities in May 1934. It was felt that much good would result from this affiliation.

John Barnhart, a former newspaper editor in Sterling, had died in Omaha at age 77. He had been editor of the "Sterling News” from 1877-1878.

The Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co. announced the retirement in July 1934 of J. E. Caley, and the appointment of Herman Studier of Milford as his successor. Mr. Studier would be in charge of both the Sterling and the Adams exchanges.

**First Zephyr Arrives**

The first of the new Burlington Zephyrs would pass through Sterling at 6:45 a.m., on July 8, 1934. For that momentous occasion, a large group of local people were on hand at the depot to see this new wonder which could travel at the rate of more than 100 miles per hour.

An entire new front of brick and glass plate had been installed at the Sterling Bake Shop. Henry Eilers owned the building. Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Fellers were owners of the bake shop.

To begin its 49th year of publication, the “Sterling Sun” appeared with a new and original heading which had been designed by Lloyd Wilson, Sterling’s commercial artist.

Mention was made in that issue that the only other business firm in town which had been in business here as long as the Sun, under the same name, was the J. J. Roberts Furniture Store.

The death of Dr. W. L. Heilman occurred in July 1934. He had practiced medicine in Sterling since 1904.

In 1934, throughout the month on July, this community had suffered from severe drought conditions and extreme heat. The paper stated that for 25 days, the thermometer had registered no less than 100 degrees, with temperatures of 113 and 114 degrees being recorded on several occasions during that

period. Lawns, fields and crops were dried up. By order of the village council, watering lawns was prohibited at that time to preserve the water supply for protection against possible fire hazards.

Scarcity of feed in this drought area had prompted the owner of the local dairy to reduce the herd of milk cows, and to discontinue daily milk delivery to residences.

After serving four and one-half years as the postmaster of Sterling, Henry Pickett retired from that position in July 1934. T. Glen Roberts was appointed Acting Postmaster, effective Aug. 1, 1934.

The death of Michael Curtin, prominent business man and resident of Sterling for many years, occurred in August 1934. He had reached the age of 76 years. Coming to Sterling with his parents at an early age, he had continued to live here the rest of his life.

In September 1934, Roy Tutty of Lincoln had purchased the pool hall owned by O. W. Kirkendall. He had also purchased the Tyler building just west of the Lincoln Oil Co. Station on Broadway, and would move the newly purchased business into it.

Louie’s Coffee Shop would vacate the Tyler building and move into the former Farmers and Merchants Bank building directly across the street to the north. After residing in Sterling for two years, the Kirkendalls would return to Beattie, Kansas.

Late in September 1934, Joe Puett was arrested on a farm near Dix, Nebr., was returned to Johnson County by Sheriff Liphardt, and sentenced by Judge Campbell to 60 days in the county jail for the knifing of Night Marshal Ed Rathe the year before.

In October 1934, Al Bentzinger became manager of the produce station north of Warnke’s store.

Frank Vonasek, resident and business man of Sterling for many years, died at his home in November 1934, at age 76. He had lived in Sterling for 33 years and operated a local meat market during that time.

The Sterling Bake Shop had decided to cease operations in Sterling by December 1934, and would locate in Lincoln. Lack of sufficient business here prompted the owners to locate elsewhere.

Mrs. E. J. Eilers took charge of the Bake Shop and sold the “Aunt Betty” bakery products, then.

Miss Ferne McGrew had started to make her products called “Magic Cheese Chips” and “Magic Fruit Chips” early in 1935. They were for sale at the Bake Shop, and later at her home.

**Depression Closes Store**

In January 1935, the Farmers Union store and elevator ceased business operations. The board of directors had applied for voluntary bankruptcy. The Depression Years were generally blamed for its financial difficulties, according to newspaper items.

At a meeting in Lincoln of the creditors of the association, Mr. Horn of Omaha was appointed trustee. C. W. Stuve, Frank Zink and Henry Pickett were appointed appraisers of the property.

After several months of discussions and deliberations on establishing a Bank Exchange in Sterling, steps had been taken to organize a Credit Association.

Early in 1935 a committee of the charter members went to Lincoln to apply to the State Banking Department for a charter and soon after the structuring of the Cooperative Credit Association had been completed and was in operation. It was felt that this banking service would greatly benefit the town’s economy.

A tragic car accident southwest of town in February 1935 claimed the life of Byron Brunsdon, and injured his brother Jacques and Clarence Buehler. The boys were enroute to school when icy conditions caused their car to skid off the bridge to the bed of the channel 18 feet below.

In February 1935, a bankruptcy auction sale was announced for the assets of the Farmers Union Cooperative Association in Sterling. Reports of the sale stated that a firm in Seneca, Kansas purchased the stock of store merchandise and fixtures; Fred Wohlers purchased the store buildings, and Fred Panko purchased the elevator properties.

Death came to F. C. Chaney in February 1935 at age 79. He had been a resident of Sterling since 1908, and was engaged in business as a barber for nearly 40 years.

The appointment of T. Glen Roberts as postmaster of Sterling had been confirmed in February 1935. He had served as acting postmaster since August 1, 1934.

**Earthquake**

Two severe earthquakes recorded in a four-minute period at 5:00 a.m., on March 1, 1935, had occurred in the four mid-western states of Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas. Tremors were said to have lasted for two seconds. The quakes were described in the “Sterling Sun” as follows: “A roar, which died into a rumbling like distant thunder, was heard before the earth began to rock and more rumblings were heard before the second shock”.

Later, on March 22, residents experienced the return of the earthquake in a mild form. The State Journal had reported that this tremor was local in the Nemaha Valley area and had not been felt in Omaha, Lincoln, or Beatrice. While the first quake occurred early in the day, this last one came at 4:45 p.m.

Late in March 1935, Herman Effken announced that he would re-open the cream and produce station, and the feed business in the former Farmers Union store building. The following week he announced the opening of his new general store, offering groceries, fresh fruits and vegetables, hardware, farm supplies and wearing apparel. The store would be known as The Effken Store, Lottie Finkner would assist in the store.

The Jerpe Commission Co. had changed the location of its produce station to the Varner building, formerly occupied by Dr. W. L. Heilman. Al Bentzinger was manager of the station.

Still another new store had come to Sterling and had started its business in the Eilers building just east of Warnke’s store. Dick and Paul Oakley opened a clothing store there and offered apparel and shoes for men, women and children. The Oakley’s had been associated with the clothing business for 66 years.

In April 1935, George Weegar sold “The Sterling Café” to George F. Aden. Mr. Aden purchased the equipment at the Bake Shop from Mrs. E. J. Eilers and would sell the complete line of “Aunt Betty” bread and pastries at the café.

A group of local musicians had organized their own eight-piece dance orchestra. The group was known as “Stein and His Seven Mugs”.

The orchestra was composed of Arnold Steinkuhler at the piano; Dr. Von D. Arnold, saxophone; L. L. Blakely, banjo; Kenneth Janssen, bass horn; Art Thompson, trumpet; Gilbert Floerke, saxophone; and Harold Pearson, drums. According to the “Sun”, these boys were excellent musicians and were in constant demand for playing at the public dances in this part of the state.

**PART XVII**

By 1935 Fred Benson had discontinued his garage and machine repair business, and had built a service station near the elevator on west Broadway. An attractive feature of the exterior of the building was the use of large native rocks embedded in concrete.

The Crystal Ice Co. had moved a three-ton capacity ice house on the Varner lot west of the Dr. Heilman Office. This lot had been vacated by the Rawlings Ice Co. The Jones boys (Pete and Jerry) would be in charge of the business.

The Rawlings Ice Co. had moved their ice storage house to the property owned by the Lincoln Oil Co., near that station.

The first D. A. R. marker in the Sterling cemetery was placed on the grave of Mrs. Dan Catchpole. The marker, supplied by the chapter in Scottsbluff, was placed by the members of the local Ephraim Polk III Chapter. The local chapter had been organized a number of years previous. Its name was selected to honor an ancestor of Mrs. Jessie Polk Zink, a charter member of the local chapter.

The newly organized Farmers Union State Exchange in Sterling had opened a store in June 1935, with Herman Effken as manager. This general store was located in the building where the Effken store had been.

The July 4, 1935 issue of the “Sterling Sun” was it Golden Anniversary issue. The cover page was printed on gold tinted paper and editor shared with the Sun’s readers some letters of congratulation from a number of former Sterlingites.

One letter was that of C. M. Wilson of Alpine, Tex., who had been the local agent for the Burlington railroad from 1882-1891. It was noted that he had subscribed to the paper continuously since the first issue.

Mrs. L. A. Varner, wife of the first editor of the “Sterling Sun” was still a resident here at that time and had lived for more than 50 years in the same house which she and her husband had built.

Another letter in this paper was from Hattie Kneeland Hitchcock of Lincoln. She was the first child born in Sterling, and her infant brother was the first to be laid to rest in the Sterling Cemetery.

On July 28, 1935 death had come to John Sangen Sr., at age 81. He was one of Sterling’s early pioneers and business men and was the town’s first cobbler. He came to Sterling in 1881 and lived here the rest of his life.

In July 1935 John H. Eilers began operating the Eilers Transfer Service. He had purchased the William Reed trucking line and would make regular trips to Lincoln and Omaha.

**Projects Considered**

August 1935 found the village council considering a PWA project. If Federal funds were granted, the money would be applied to repairing the city hall.

About that time the Sterling Fire Department was supporting a project for the construction of a swimming pool for Sterling.

The old Burlington steel water tank had been taken down. The tank supplied the steam locomotives with water, and the advent of the diesel engines eliminated the need for the water supply tanks.

Dale (Ted) Winter was manager of the Jerpe Commission Co. produce station here in 1935.

On Sept. 27, 1935 Oakley’s store had begun an eight-day closing out sale. The business would be discontinued at the end of the sale period.

The death of E. T. Benson occurred on Oct. 1, 1935. He had reached the age of 65 years, and for many years had been a resident and businessman in Sterling. Since 1897 he had been engaged in photography, owning and operating Benson’s Studio, and well known for his outstanding ability and talent in that profession.

In the fall of 1935, L. F. Broman became the new manager of Sterling for the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co., coming here from Table Rock. He succeeded Herman Studier, who had held that position the previous year.

In October 1935, Henry H. Dietrich of Lincoln had purchased the Sterling Café from George F. Aden. It would be known as “Heinie’s Coffee Shop”.

Charles F. Williams had located his cream and produce station north of Warnke’s store. He was manager of the station for the Beatrice Creamery Co.

Aden’s Liquor Store, located on downtown Broadway, was also in operation by late 1935.

In November 1935, John Frankeberger, the last Civil War veteran in Sterling, had died at age 90. He had enlisted for military duty in 1863 and had served for nearly two and one-half years. While serving in General Sherman’s army, he was wounded in the battle of Atlanta. He had come to Sterling in 1878, and had lived here since. Before his retirement, he was in business as a carpenter and contractor.

In 1935, Sterling had four milk delivery services. In this business were Lloyd Harris, E. R. Eilers, John Sangen and Louis Boeve. All announced that on Dec. 1, the price of milk would increase to 10 cents per quart, cream would be 10 cents per half-pint or 40 cents per quart.

J. P. Hollenback, pioneer resident and businessman of Sterling, died in December 1935, at age 78. During his lifetime he had been a wagon maker, a dealer in buggies and wagons, and a blacksmith. Later he also did general machine repair work. He had lived in Sterling since 1899.

A news item in the “Sun” stated that George Leahy of Tecumseh had rented the east half of the Henry Eilers building and would soon open a grocery store and meat market there. This was early in 1936.

Due to failing health, Mrs. Mary Rogers would discontinue her cleaning and pressing establishment. This business had been in operation since about 1912 or 1913 (according to the Nebraska Gazette). At first her husband, Fred Rogers, operated the business. After his death, Mrs. Rogers continued with the work.

In January 1936, the Jerpe Commission Co. announced that Harold Truscott would be the new manager of their produce station in Sterling, located in the Varner building.

Charles M. Catchpole, pioneer farmer and merchant, had died in January 1936 at Waverly. He had reached the age of 82. From 1874-1892 he farmed near Sterling, and from 1982-1907 he had operated a general store here.

Early in 1936 the Robinson Elevator Co. acquired the former Schmidt Bros. elevator. B. G. Schmidt was retained as manager of the new firm.

An accident claimed the life of Forrest Rowe of Sterling in February 1936. He was crushed to death by a falling tree while assisting others in cutting down some large trees nearby.

In April 1936 the Sterling Cemetery Association had purchased two and one-half acres of additional ground to the west of the cemetery. The acres were purchased from Mrs. Cook, owner of the farm adjoining the west side of the cemetery.

The chairman of the village park committee had reported that new bleachers would be built at the park for the baseball team. The old grandstand had become unsafe and had been torn down several years earlier.

Dan Catchpole, former Sterling resident and businessman, had died in May 1936 at Long Beach, Calif. He was 84. From 1902 to 1916 he owned a hardware store here. He later moved to Morrill, where he and his son Ernest owned a hardware store.

Supt. E. Parminter was supervising a children’s play period at the park during the summer of 1936. Any student in our school was eligible to attend. This seems to have been the beginning of the present local summer youth program.

Van Zink had purchased the Hartmen Funeral Home in Fremont. Raymond was in charge and Walter was assisting. The family would move to Fremont. Edward T. Zink assumed management of the Zink Hardware store and undertaking business in Sterling.

The Stewart Griffin family would move to Corvallis, Oregon to reside. Mr. Griffin had been with the J. R. (Nick) Thompson Barber and Beauty Shop in Sterling for 16 years. Arthur Thompson of Douglas succeeded him.

The death of H. R. Gordon occurred in August 1936. His age was 77 years, and he had been a resident of the community for many years. Besides being engaged in farming, he served as manager of the Sterling Grain and Stock Co. for about 15 years.

In August 1936, Kenneth Beaver was manager of “Kenny’s Pool Hall” on Broadway. This place had formerly been occupied by Roy Tutty’s pool hall and tavern.

Other firms opening a business at this time were “Stein’s Buffet”, H. Steinkuhler, owner, and “Kruger’s Place”, Herman Kruger, owner.

Edmund (Doc) Juilfs was operating a service station and tank wagon service at the corner of East Broadway and Highway 41.

In August 1936, John Fortune had leased the blacksmith shop from Mrs. Hollenback and would be engaged in the blacksmithing, welding and wood working trade.

W. F. Denton, former Burlington agent here, had retired after completing 50 years of service with the Burlington railroad. He was stationed at Pawnee City at the time of his retirement.

**Begins Business**

The R. C. Waymires moved in town in September 1936. Mr. Waymire would be in business here in “well, windmill and pipe-fitting service”, as stated in the “Sun”. (Forty years later, the firm of “Waymire Wells” is still in business here. Not many windmills left to maintain, but plenty of well and plumbing business.)

In September 1936, H. P. Lehrack had been in the drug and pharmacy business for 50 years. He had been in Sterling since 1897, and became owner of his own drug store in 1917. Besides being a pharmacist, he was also a licensed optometrist and a talented musician.

J. K. Moore, who had come to Sterling in the early 1870’s, had died at age 65 in Chicago. As a young man he was engaged in banking in Sterling.

A ceremony had been held at Tecumseh in October 1936 to mark the setting of the first pole of the Southeast Nebraska’s rural electrification line. The REA would soon reach across the Sterling area and others in this section of the state.

Ralph Hintz of Tecumseh purchased the Gem Theatre in October 1936 from W. S. Birdsall. The Birdsalls, who had been in Sterling since 1930, would move to Ashland.

The deaths of two more Sterling residents were recorded in October 1936. John Happel was deceased at age 70 and William Kershaw at age 77. Both were residents here for many years, and besides being engaged in farming both were former businessmen in Sterling.

John Schmidt, who had previously been associated with the Schmidt Bros. elevator, moved to St. Mary late in 1936 to become manager of the elevator there.

Early in December 1936, the Eilers Transfer and Feed Co. announced the opening of their cream station and feed store in the former Rotton building. Charles F. Williams was manager of the station.

In December 1936 the Farmers Cooperative Association bought the elevator in Sterling from Fred Panko of Cook. The association had been conducting a grain business for several years and would continue as before. Improvements to the building were included in future plans. Louis E. Boden was manager.

Late in December 1936, E. J. Eilers had acquired the John Deere contract for the Sterling territory. The business would be listed as the Eilers Implement Co.

**PART XVIII**

Late in December 1936, I. J. Tucker announced that he would soon sell at auction all of the equipment and stock of his shoe and harness shop. The termination of the Tucker Harness Shop marked the end of a business which had been in Sterling for 30 years. Failing health prompted Mr. Tucker to retire at that time.

In reviewing the years of Sterling’s growth and development, we find changes occurring frequently in the ownership of various business places. It should be interesting, then, to review at this point the names of those merchants who were in business here about 40 years ago.

In the pages of the Dec. 24, 1936 issue of the “Sterling Sun”, the following merchants were listed: Sterling Cleaners – L. Blakely; E-Z System – F. Zink; Benson Service Station – F. Benson; Sterling Sun – H. Pickett; L. Chiles and W. O. Thompson – Garage; K. W. Oakley – Insurance; F. Hadden’s Variety Store; H. Steinkuhler’s Buffet; Farmers Union State Exchange – H. Effken; Robinson Elevator Co. – F. Rabas; Juice Schneider – Jeweler; Benson’s Studio – Mrs. E. T. Benson; Farmers Union Co-op Association – L. E. Boden; Curtin’s Store – C. M. Curtin; Eilers Transfer and Feed – J. H. Eilers; Kruger’s Place – H. Kruger; Kenny’s Pool Hall – K. Beaver; Warnke’s Store – G. H. Warnke; Heinie’s Coffee Shop – H. Diedrich; Curtin Garage – C. M. Curtin; Jerpe Commission Co. – H. Truscott; Thompson Transfer – A. Thompson; Agnes Aden Beauty Shop; Roberts Furniture Store – T. G. Roberts; Wm. Christline – Auctioneer; Linford Garage – Glen Linford; Wm. Christline – Service Station; Louie’s Coffee Shop – L. Dummond; H. Mack and E. Poehler Meats; Koehler Lumber Co. – D. A. Koehler; Tucker Harness Shop – I. J. Tucker; Dr. D. B. James – Dentist; Dr. V. D. Arnold – Dentist; Dr. J. W. Turner – Physician; Dr. W. L. Morrill – Physician; John Fortune – Blacksmith; Aden’s Liquor Store – G. F. Aden; Jerry Jones Real Estate; R. C. Waymire – Wells; Aden’s Cash Grocery – C. J. Aden; Juilfs Oil – Ed (Doc) Juilfs; Case Service Station – Mark Case; E. W. Rawson – Contractor; W. T. Ramsey – Barber; James Poultry Co. – F. Wigginton; G. J. Wehmer – Implements; J. R. Heilman Café; J. R. Thompson Barber and Beauty Shop; Iowa-Nebraska Light and Power Co. – C. F. Foster; John Christline – Repair; Sterling Co-op Credit Association; E. T. Zink – Hardware and Undertaking; Sangen Shoe Shop – J. Sangen.

Early in 1937, Kenneth Beaver had purchased the Thomas Lipps farm southwest of Sterling and would locate there soon. The Lipps family would move to Tekamah.

The death of John Briar had occurred at his home in Santa Ana, Calif. in April 1937. The Briars had been early residents here, having at one tome owned a farm northwest of town, the present Wilke Kelle farm. Later their town residence was the home presently owned by Mrs. M. Eckert.

William Reents of the Pickrell community had become assistant to E. T. Zink at the mortuary and hardware store.

On a Saturday in April 1937, Lyle DeMoss of radio station KFAB was in Sterling with a mobile broadcasting unit and conducted a live broadcast from downtown Broadway. With him was the “Kentucky Club” quartet, which presented several musical selections. A large crowd witnessed the broadcast and some of the local citizens were interviewed while it was in progress.

DeMoss was appointed Honorary Mayor for the day. The Kentucky Club represented a brand of tobacco, and some free samples of that merchandise were given to adult spectators.

The Falls City-Lincoln Stage Lines began operations through Sterling in April 1937. The station stop here was at the Sterling Drug Store, and one return trip per day was scheduled.

**Rural Electricity**

The power for R. E. A. subscribers in southeast Nebraska was turned on in April 1937. As stated in the “Sun”, Senator George W. Norris pressed a button in Washington, D. C. and put America’s largest rural electrification district into operation. It was estimated at that time that 5,000 farm homes in nine eastern Nebraska counties would benefit from R. E. A.

One of Sterling’s oldest settlers, Lafayette F. Grimes, had passed away in May 1937 at age 84. He had resided in Sterling and the community since 1882.

Harry J. Johnson was operating the pool hall which had been under the management of Kenneth Beaver. The new business was called “Harry’s Pool Hall”.

Frank L. Rabas became the new manager of the Robinson Elevator Co., succeeding B. G. Schmidt, who had retired from that position.

In July 1937, it was announced that the Sterling school district was “completely debt free”. The last of the indebtedness on the school building had been paid. The building had been completed in 1917.

**Hybrid Seed Arrives**

Hybrid seed corn was a new commodity in this area in 1937. While most people had read and heard about it, only a few farmers had planted any of this new seed. According to comments in newspapers, it was being considered favorably as a “dry weather seed”.

In September 1937 the Zink Funeral Home, located on Main Street between Greenwood Avenue and Highway 41, had been completed. Edward T. Zink had purchased the former George Sandusky residence, which was remodeled and converted into this modern and attractive mortuary.

Late in September 1937 J. R. (Nick) Thompson disposed of his business in Sterling. The Thompson Barber and Beauty Shop was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Riley of Lincoln. The Thompsons would move to Corvallis, Ore.

The “Sterling Sun” had returned to its “old home” in the Varner building. Under the caption, “The Prodigal Sun”, the editor’s comments were: “The Prodigal Sun, after ten long years of roaming, returned home to the old Sun building”.

Val Zink, Kenneth Oakley and Paul Oakley leased the Janssen Implement building in October 1937 and would remodel it for a public sales pavilion. The auctioneers for these community sales would be Bill Christline of Sterling and Col. Guthrie of Syracuse. The first sale took place in November. Sales would continue and were scheduled for Tuesday of each week.

A public skating rink had been built in the park in November 1937.

In December 1937, death claimed C. R. Shandy at age 66. He had been a resident of Sterling for many years. At the time of his death he was serving the town as police magistrate and as chairman of the library board.

In December 1937, the village council authorized its chairman to sign an application for a Federal WPA grant toward the construction of a sewer system and disposal plant for Sterling.

Walter Borland had opened a barbershop in his home, two and one-half blocks north of the lumberyard.

The new library board selected by the village council in December 1937 consisted of the following: Mrs. Charles Shandy, Mrs. E. W. Rawson, K. W. Oakley, G. H. Warnke and E. A. Cox.

Louie’s Coffee Shop had been sold to Mrs. Lizzie Schmidt in February 1938. The Dummonds had been operating their café in Sterling since 1931.

The Roberts Furniture Store, the oldest established business in Sterling, had discontinued business operations in March 1938.

Mrs. Carrie Brown, an early resident of Sterling and owner of Brown’s Hotel, had passed away in March 1938. She had lived in Sterling since 1892 when she and her husband had purchased the Moore Hotel on the corner of Broadway and Main Streets.

**Hotel Sold**

In June 1938, The Brown Hotel, pioneer landmark and long time business establishment in Sterling, was advertised for sale by the administrator of the estate of the late Carrie Brown.

The 22-room hotel had been built in 1877. The George Browns had been the proprietors for 47 years, Mrs. Brown having continued its operation after husband’s death. Since Mrs. Brown’s death early in 1938, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Meisinger had been in charge of the place.

The hotel at one time was crowded with business, often with all its beds occupied. It was once the hub of community life, and one of the most important structures in town. The sale of the hotel furnishings in September 1938, marked the end of an era in small towns when hotels could be supported.

By September 1938 farmers in this area were eagerly signing up for the Rural Electrification Service.

Dr. B. Charles Peace, a physician of Lincoln, had completed plans in October 1938 to locate in Sterling, and was reported to have made arrangements to rent the Koehler building formerly occupied by Dr. C. N. House.

In October 1938, Edward T. Zink’s hardware store and undertaking establishment was purchased by Val Zink and sons, Raymond and Walter. The property purchased included the store, the mortuary and ambulance service. The E. T. Zinks would locate in Chadron.

In November 1938, Sterling was represented at the annual Christmas parade in Lincoln by Donald Warnke as Junior Lord Mayor, and Joyce Kruger as his Lady. These kiddie parades had been held each year as a pre-Christmas trade attraction by the business clubs of Lincoln.

The Nov. 24, 1938 issue of the “Sterling Sun” featured a new column, temporarily called “Pot Shots”. A one dollar prize was offered to subscribers of the paper for a suitable name for the new column which advertised the “super specials” in merchandise offered by local merchants.

**PART XIX**

Early in 1939 the old bridge spanning the Nemaha River on the south edge of town was removed by county workmen. It was replaced by a pipe culvert described as “six feet in diameter”. The bridge was considered a landmark of this area, and had been built about 1900 or 1901, following the destruction of the dam.

Referring to the “bridge history” as related in the “Sterling Sun”, the first bridge across the old Nemaha at this site was a pontoon bridge. This was followed by a steel bridge, and later by the one removed in 1939.

M. M. Catchpole, pioneer settler of Sterling, had died in January 1939 at age 93. He came here when the town was a settlement of only 50 people and lived here for 40 years. By trade he had been a farmer, cattle raiser, owner-operator of a general store, and later a meat market.

After moving to Colorado in 1910, he had formed the Eckley Land Co. with his son, Mark, and nephew, H. C. Catchpole. The firm later purchased and platted the townsite of Eckley.

**Basketball Champions**

In January 1939, Sterling’s High School basketball team won the Class B championship in the Mudecas tournament held at Adams. The game for the championship was played between Sterling and Roca, and final score was 17-16.

Sterling’s team was pictured on the front page of the Febr. 16, 1939 issue of the “Sun”, and following are the names of that very youthful looking groups of champions:

First Team: Eldon Reutter and Everett Parminter at forward; Clarence Brinkman and Ervin Berg at guard; Marvin Eden at center. Second Team: Dick Shea, Walter Wohlers and Earl Dughman at forward; Dalen Rathe, Richard Peterson and Walter Panko at guard; Darrell Powell at center. Their coach was L. L. Schuman.

In February 1939, Jack Johnson retired from 23 years of service with the Koehler Lumber Co. Prior to his association with Koehler, he worked for the Melville Lumber Co. for two years.

Rieke Ottjes, who had managed the Koehler yard at Vesta since 1935, succeeded Mr. Johnson of Sterling.

For the sake of the “unusual” I am passing along an item from the “Sun’s” chronicles of February 1939. I quote: “Hap Wehmer hauled in some wood Monday to his grandmother’s house. After unloading the wood he unhitched the team and tied it to the cistern that was covered with planks. One of the horses went through the planks and sat right down in the bottom of the cistern, with its head sticking out.

“A large crowd gathered to watch the men pull the horse free, in fact, it looked like a one-ring circus had come to town. After a rope had been placed around the animal it was soon pulled out. No one was hurt and the boss came through in fine shape”.

A new dress shop, owned by Mrs. John Boden, had located in the building east of Hadden’s Variety store. The shop was called “Everybody’s Shop”. Mrs. Boden had formerly owned a dress shop in Brighton, Iowa.

Febr. 17, 1939, Jule Schneider had been in the jewelry business in Sterling for 48 years. He was a well-known watchmaker, and the remarks accompanying his picture in the “Sterling Sun” stated that he received watches for repairing from many points in the United States.

During his 48 years of being in business, he had taken only a few days of vacation.

In 1939, John Christline was operating his automobile repair shop at the site of his residence, just north of the school house.

Walter Borland and Dale Runnels had opened a barbershop in the Iowa-Nebr. Light and Power Co.’s building on Broadway. It was called the “O. K. Barber Shop”.

Management of the Robinson Elevator had changed in May 1939. Joe Reid had succeeded F. L. Rabas, former manager.

In July 1939 H. Paul Lehrack had died at age 71. He had been a long time resident and businessman in Sterling, having been a pharmacist since 1890 and a licensed optometrist since 1906. In 1917 he had become owner of his own drug store, purchasing the business from Dr. W. L. Morrill.

At an auction sale, the Brown Hotel building was purchased by M. Ehmen. The Janssen Implement building was purchased by Pete Jones.

**‘First’ For School**

A “first” for the new school year in September 1939 was told in pictures. The “Sterling Sun” revealed the evidence on page one with a picture of the two students who were first to arrive (7:45 a. m.) for the first day of school. The eager students were Lorin Harms of the sophomore class and Dale Rathe of the junior class. (A note by the editor explained that you were stuck with the same seat in the assembly hall for first day of school got first choice of seats!)

Fifteen young ladies of school age had been nominated as candidates for the Sunflower Queen contest which was being sponsored by a group of Sterling merchants. For every dollar spent at their stores the purchaser was entitled to cast 25 votes for his favorite candidate. The candidate receiving the greatest number of votes would be the sinner and would receive five dollars in cash and other gifts in merchandise from the sponsors of the contest, Lorena Woltemath, a sophomore in school, proved to be the winner with 8,000 votes.

The following month a similar contest was again sponsored by Sterling merchants. This one was called Harvest King contest and was held for the young men of school age. John Goldenstein was the winner of this contest with 14,710 votes.

Edmund Juilfs had purchased the lots on the corner of Broadway and Main streets from M. Ehmen, which was the former site of the old Brown Hotel.

L. L. Miller was dead at age 70. He was a farmer and businessman, and was known as the tubular well man. He was a pioneer in that trade.

In October 1939, after 49 years of service in Sterling as a jeweler, Jule Schneider would sell the entire stock of merchandise, furniture and fixtures of his jewelry store at auction, and would retire from business. Failing health prompted his decision.

**First Lady Visits**

Early in November 1939, people of this community had the privilege of seeing the First Lady of this country in person. Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, appeared on the platform of her private railroad car and waved her hand in greeting until the train left the depot. A large group of school children and others from this area were at the depot.

Mrs. Roosevelt was enroute to Lincoln at that time, where she had a speaking engagement at the University of Nebraska Coliseum. Henry Pickett, editor of the “Sun”, had sent a wire to Mrs. Roosevelt, requesting her to appear on the platform long enough for a picture. The First Lady complied.

The new shelter house in the Sterling cemetery was completed late in 1939. E. W. Rawson was the contractor, and the Ladies Cemetery Association (Mrs. John Janssen, president) paid for the construction of the building. The original plans of the shelter provided that the east section of the building would house a tool shed and the larger room facing west would be reserved and equipped for a rest area for out-of-town guests who brought deceased relatives here for burial.

Another Christmas season was approaching and with it the time for another Kiddie Parade in Lincoln. Sterling’s representatives at the parade in 1939 were Donald L. Doran as Junior Mayor and Beverly Waymire as the First Lady.

Roller-skating was being provided for young and old to enjoy at the Green Lantern. The management of the Turner Skating Rink was supervising these events each Saturday evening.

The Poehler Market had moved into the recently redecorated Schneider building in December 1939. The Schneiders had built this structure in 1909, and had occupied it with their jewelry store since that time.

**Opera House Razed**

Late in December, another landmark in Sterling was being razed. The old opera house was being torn down and one more remnant of the past would be gone. Part of the east side of the building had been remodeled and would remain as a produce station. It was occupied by the James Poultry Co.

The Sterling High School basketball team continued its winning ways in January 1940, and captured the Class A championship of the Mudecas basketball tournament. The team that year included: Darrell Powell, Dalen Rathe, Alfred Eilers, Eldon Reutter, Everett Parminter, Clarence Brinkman, Earl Dughman and Walter Panko. E. E. Parminter was superintendent of schools, and L. L. Schuman was the coach.

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n March 1940, the Sterling Public Service Club was organized at a meeting in City Hall. Officers elected were Walter Zink, president, and Dr. V. D. Arnold, secretary. Twenty-five interested businessmen attended, and the group would meet once a month at the city hall.

In May 1940, Fred Probst purchased Aden’s Liquor Store.

In the June 6, 1940 issue of the “Sun” was a picture of those members of Co. F Infantry of World War I, who had come for a special reunion to hear their former captain, F. E. Crewford, deliver the main address at the Memorial Day celebration. The members pictured were: Hobart Miller, Lincoln; Ray Rabel, Adams; Ray Porter, Crab Orchard; C. L. Foster, Sterling; Rieke Ottjes, Sterling; Byron Gell,

Adams; Chase Burrows, Adams; Fred Heinrichs, Lincoln; Hans Heinrichs, Lincoln; F. E. Crawford, Wymore; E. W. Rawson, Sterling.

That same issue of the “Sun” also contained an interesting account of a “first” by a lady of 88 years who had experienced her first plane trip. The flight was from Moline, Ill. To Seattle, Wash. And the traveler was Mrs. T. M. Ehmen, mother of Mrs. John Christline, William Ehmen and Menard Ehmen.

I repeat, in part, the “Sun’s” quote from a Seattle newspaper as follows: “Eighty-eight year old Mrs. Tjede Ehmen, who crossed the Atlantic ocean in a sailing ship in 1870, and traveled unmarked Nebraska prairies in a covered wagon in 1871, stepped from a United Air Lines Mainliner and said, ‘I know they’d find ways to go faster!’. She said she wished the American pioneers could have had these ‘flying machines’.

“A two-hour section of her trip by air took Mrs. Ehmen along the route that required three months by wagon in 1871. Mrs. Ehmen said it was a nice trip, but nothing to be frightened about. “There’s not the danger in the air that here was in fording a stream in a covered wagon in the old days’, she said”.

Mrs. Ehmen was given the title of the “flying grandmother”. The paper also stated to Bob Ripley of “Believe It or Not” fame, had invited her to fly to New York with all expenses paid, to appear on his program.

The offer was declined.

The Koehler Lumber Co. was sold in the summer of 1940 to the Kirtley Lumber and Supply Co. of Nebraska City. The Koehler firm had owned the lumberyard since 1914, having purchased it at that time from J. H. Melville. The Koehler had been residing in Lincoln for several years. The new firm would be known as the Kirtley Lumber and Supply Co.

**PART XX**

An item of special interest in the June 20, 1939 issue of the “Sterling Sun” was the letter sent by Buy Cox of California. In the “Sun’s” account of the Memorial Day activities, a picture of the Soldiers Monument in the cemetery accompanied the story. This prompted Cox to write what he remembered of the day when the monument was erected in 1894. In part this is what he wrote:

“I was a boy of 14 years of age at the time and my father, Oscar J. Cox, hauled the monument from Tecumseh with team and wagon. I was with him on the trip and was at the cemetery when it was erected. John Frankeberger and two or three other Civil War veterans were there. They all took a piece of paper, wrote their names and the date, and placed the papers in a small hole in the monument just at the first joint under the soldier. I am sure that after 45 years these papers are still OK”.

In September 1940, Pete Jones bought the Green Lantern from D. A. Koehler. He would continue to operate the hall as it had been in past years.

The Sterling Public Service Club was sponsoring a project of free drawings in the town every Saturday afternoon. Numerous prizes were given. A group of Sterling merchants were supporting the project.

A New-and-Used furniture store was opened in the Curtin building and Jerry Jones was the owner-manager of that business.

In July 1940 the Consumers Public Power District was formed and began serving the public. It replaced the Iowa-Nebraska Light and Power Co., in supplying electric power to the Sterling area. Headquarters for C. P. P. D. were located in Beatrice and C. L. Foster continued as manager in the local office.

In 1940, H. Steinkuhler discontinued business at Stein’s Buffet on the north side of Broadway, and the E-Z System Store moved its facilities into that building.

A new pool hall and soft drink parlor opened in the building vacated by Frank Zink’s E-Z System Store, and Joe Phillips was manager. Later, Louis Boeve managed that business, and still later Jim Boeve was manager for a brief period.

Selective Service Draft registrations were held Oct. 16, 1940 in the 16 voting precincts of Johnson County. This included men of ages 21-35. Richard Rosenthal and Elmer Norton were first to enlist from the Sterling area for military service.

Business ended at Everybody’s Shop late in 1940. This dress shop had been managed by Mrs. John Boden since early in 1939.

The McAuliffe Hotel property was sold in 1940 to Fred Probst.

After residing in Sterling for 18 years, Dr. and Mrs. D. B. James moved to Lincoln in December 1940. Their home had been destroyed by fire several months earlier. After a short stay in Lincoln, they returned to their former home at Delphos, Kans.

Late in 1940 Ralph W. Taylor announced that he would open the Sterling Bowling Alley “in the Tutty building”, according to his announcement in the “Sun”.

**Oil Wells**

Work had started on the first oil well in Johnson County in December 1940. This was taking place on the J. G. Rulla farm south of Sterling. W. H. Skelton of Wichita, Kans. leased the land for drilling. This well was located in the center of 4,000-acre block leased for testing plots, according to information released in the “Sterling Sun” at that time.

In February 1941, one more of the old landmarks in Sterling left the business scene. The McAuliffe Hotel was being razed by Fred Probst, who had purchased the property several months previously.

The McAuliffe Hotel was formerly the Sterling House owned by A. B. Alford, and was built in 1872. In its day it was considered the principal hotel in town, and was the center of much activity.

One interesting characteristic of the way business was conducted before the days of public address systems and intercoms, was the routine of announcing meals. It is said that the proprietor would walk in front of his hotel building ringing a hand-bell. Like a barker at a circus he would chant, “Dinner is now being served. Come one, come all”. Those who wished to eat would file into the dining room to enjoy a bounteous home-cooked meal.

Early in 1941 the village council voted to move the jail from the basement of the city hall to the small brick building just west of it. (The little brick building is no more, either. The city storage barn now occupies that space.)

The Public Service Club appeared at the offices of Gov. Griswold and State Engineer Scott to inquire about the possibilities of obtaining a hard-surfaced road from Lincoln to Sterling. The following week a delegation of 40 people representing Sterling, St. Mary and Tecumseh visited the offices of the governor and the State Highway Department to stress the need for a hard-surfaced road from Lincoln through Johnson County.

W. T. Ramsey, resident and businessman of Sterling for many years, died in April 1941 at age 82. For nearly 45 years he had operated a barbershop in Sterling, at the same location. He had bought the business in May 1896 from L. H. Scuber.

By May 1941, Fred Probst was constructing a new building between Main and Lincoln Streets, site of the former McAuliffe Hotel. The building was a 20 by 30 foot structure, and when completed would house the Probst Liquor Store.

In the spring of 1941, Bob Rawson, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Rawson, was chosen by the Harm Sangen Post American Legion and Auxiliary to be the youth representative from Sterling at the fourth annual session of the Cornhusker Boys’ State. Bob was a junior in high school, and was the first youth to represent Sterling at any Boys’ State conference.

The Blakely cleaning equipment had been moved to Tecumseh for temporary storage. L. L. Blakely had found employment in California and his family would join him at Huntington Park to reside.

Dale Runnels had opened his own barbershop at his residence on the corner of Illinois and Main Streets.

A change in management took place at the Robinson Elevator in May 1941. Henry Schimmels succeeded Joe Reid in that position. The Schimmels came from Franklin, Kans. The Reids returned to Sylvan Grove, Kans.

**Pheasant Project**

Members of the Sterling Volunteer Fire Department had undertaken an unusual project in the spring of 1941. They had built a shelter house and bird pen west of the James Poultry station. Here they were to feed and care for some young pheasants placed by the State Fish and Game Commission. The local men would continue caring for the chicks until they would be large enough to be set free in open country.

In May 1941 the P. T. A. of the Sterling school had started a fund-raising drive for new high school band uniforms. The 28-member band had been under the direction of C. A. Radmacher since 1939. Mrs. L. R. Chiles was chairman of the drive.

Death had come to J. C. Barber in May 1941 in Lincoln at age 62. During his 17 years of residency in Sterling, he was co-owner of the Tourtelot-Barber stores. After moving to Lincoln, he was associated with the Rudge and Guenzel store and later with Ben Simon’s.

After several years of failing health, Jule Schneider had passed away in late June 1941. He came to Sterling in 1890 and had been in the jewelry and watch repair business here for nearly 50 years.

By June 1941, Ralph Wusk has entered military training and was stationed at Camp Forrest, Tenn. An item in the “Sun” related his delight when opening a case of eggs he found a handling slip showing the eggs had been processed by Harold Truscott of the Jerpe Commission Co. station at Sterling.

In the opinion of the editor, the flavor of those eggs would have been superb to Ralph, since the “hens from home” had furnished them.

**PART XXI**

A flood, which was described as the worst in many years, caused much damage as it swept through Sterling in September 1941. A dike had broken at Weber’s west of town, allowing the floodwaters to enter the town from the west. Several families were forced to leave their homes. Tickletail Creek in the east section of town was out of its banks, causing basements to be filled with the floodwater. All roads leading out of Sterling were under water except the Douglas road. No mail was received for two days. Trains could not travel because of damage to the tracks and flooding in the low-lying areas.

The homes of C. J. Aden and C. M. Curtin, west of Curtin’s Garage, were surrounded by water, as was the Dick Meyer residence in the south section of town. Eight inches of rain at Bennet, five and one-half inches at Adams, five inches at Sterling and seven inches at Burr caused all creeks in the area to overflow.

A concert presented at the Veterans hospital in Lincoln by the Sterling band, was greatly enjoyed and appreciated by everyone at the hospital.

The community was saddened in September 1941 when word was received that Elwin Sugden had been killed in a vehicle accident while in the line of duty near Camp Roberts, Calif. He was 26 years of age, and was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Sugden of Sterling.

Elwin was the first young man from our community to give his life while serving in the Emergency Military Training Action of 1941.

The Consumers Public Power District announced its intention to broadcast by radio all of the University of Nebraska football games played away from home. Station KFAB would carry the play-by-play broadcast to the fans at home.

Those pheasant chicks, which had become the wards of the local fire department in April, weighed one pound each by August and were pronounced ready for transfer to open country. Raymond Zink and a representative of the State Fish and Game Department took 72 of the birds to the Herman Heusman farm, northwest of town.

Later in the month, an additional 65 pheasants were transferred to the Zink farm north of town. About 140 birds remained to be released a few weeks later.

In October 1941 the Jones brothers had moved the Masur service station from St. Mary to the property on the corner of Broadway and Main Streets in Sterling. The station and property had been purchased by Juilfs Oil Co., and would be the future business location of that firm.

In 1941 John Christline was engaged in well digging and repair, with sales and service of new windmills.

In November 1941 the Sterling High School band presented a concert for parents and friends and appeared in their new uniforms. The purchase of these uniforms had been made possible by contributions from individuals and organizations of the community. Membership of the band had increased to 35, and this was the first appearance of the group in uniform.

The death of I. J. Tucker occurred in December 1941. His age was 77 years. He had been a resident of Sterling since 1902. He was in the harness business for 35 years, having purchased it from D. S. Bales. After World War I he added a shoe sales and repair business to the harness shop.

The attack by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 stunned the entire nation and plunged us into World War II. Immediate concern was felt in this community for the safety and welfare of several local boys who were stationed with the Navy in the Pearl Harbor area.

With the entry of the United States in World War II in 1941, people at home were again called upon to adjust to the rationing of food and all essential commodities. Sugar and flour were rationed almost immediately, and gasoline, tires and cars were attached to the list soon. There were meatless days, and no film for cameras. Clocks were turned ahead an hour to “Wartime”, citizens were growing Victory Gardens, and government regulations required a 72-hour work week.

The Sterling branch of the Red Cross was organized, and Henry Pickett was elected chairman.

The death of Fred Stinson, resident of Sterling since 1888, occurred in March 1942, at age 85. He had been the town’s leading contractor and carpenter for more than 50 years.

Early in 1942 another of the first business structures on Broadway was torn down. The building removed from the south side of the street and owned by the F. Vonasek heirs had been sold to M. Ehmen. This building had at one time housed the J. G. Rulla mercantile store, and for many years later the Vonasek butcher shop.

Mrs. E. W. Rawson had been elected chairman of the 1942 Victory Book campaign. The purpose of this campaign was to solicit books for service men in the Army and Navy. As a result of the local campaign, more than 200 volumes were contributed toward the support of this nationwide effort.

After being in the service station and tank-wagon delivery business in Sterling for 14 years, William Christline left in May 1942 to report for guard duty at the U. S. bomb-loading plant at Mead. Herman Schmidt became manager of the service station.

**Flooding Hits Area Again**

Another flood sweeping through Sterling on May 11, 1942 caused thousands of dollars in damage to crops and buildings through this area. A cloudburst northwest of town plus a heavy rain in town caused damages all along the Nemaha valley. Ten miles of Burlington track were washed out between Sterling and Lincoln.

Broadway Street and nearby grounds were under water from the west edge of town to Washington Street. Near the elevator, a large storage tank belonging to the Standard Oil Supply was moved to the field south of the railroad tracks.

A trailer house floated in the street, and the occupants were forced to wade to safety through water two feet deep. Fred Benson’s service station on west Broadway was inundated, and gas, oil and supplies were lost.

Nine inches of water entered the Chris Aden residence, and the Chiles and Thompson garage, the Sun office, and the Jerpe Produce Station were left with a thick layer of mud on the floors when floodwater receded.

Crops along the lowland areas were destroyed. C. M. Curtin suffered a considerable loss of merchandise and damage to equipment in his garage. He also lost several hundred dollars worth of bees, according to the Sun.

With the washed out tracks causing disruption in train service, no mail was received in town for four days.

In May 1942, Mrs. Doris Weber purchased the Schmidt Café. The café would be called “Ma Weber’s Café”. Mrs. Lizzie Schmidt, who had been owner of the business since 1938, would move to Omaha.

W. F. Denton, who had been depot agent for the Burlington for 50 years, passed away in Pawnee City in July 1942.

A change had taken place in local telephone operations. On Oct. 1, 1942, Sterling no longer had its own local manager. L. F. Broman, who had been serving in that capacity, was issued transfer orders to the Tecumseh area and would be assigned a service with that office. This change in operations was the initial step toward the future automatic dial system service.

In September 1942, death had claimed Mrs. T. M. Ehmen at age 90. She was a former resident of Sterling and was well known here. She was also remembered as one of the early Nebraska pioneers.

**Scrap Metal Drive**

The scarcity of metal in essential war industries had been stressed by government officials. Sterling and community responded to these appeals with a local scrap metal drive in October 1942, and between 75 to 100 tons of metal were collected for shipment to strategic locations. Henry Dietrich was chairman of the drive.

A Home Nursing Class, sponsored by the local P. T. A. was organized in November 1942, with an enrollment of 20 members. The course required 24 hours of classwork given in two-hour periods on two evenings per week. Mrs. Fred Probst, R. N., conducted the class.

Mrs. H. P. Lehrack died at her home in December 1942. She had reached the age of 70, and had been a resident of Sterling for 45 years.

The first young lady from Sterling to enlist in the military service of our country was Miss Helen Rulla, who joined the SPARS – the women’s branch of the Coast Guard. She was the daughter of J. G. Rulla of Sterling.

In 1943 “something new” had been added. The Roberts Dairy Co. had introduced a paper milk carton to its patrons, and had begun using it in its city deliveries.

L. F. Broman purchased the dairy equipment of Lloyd Harris in 1943, and would conduct a dairy business with delivery service. Harris had been engaged in selling dairy products and operating a town delivery route for almost 20 years.

In February 1943, Herman Effken resigned from his position as manager of the local Farmers Union store to accept work on the Alcan Highway. Kenneth Tyler succeeded him as manager of the store.

Three Sterling men had decided to work on the Alcan – Heinie Dietrich, Delmar Bargman and Herman Effken.

In April 1943, Doris Weber discontinued business at her café, and sold the equipment and unrationed stock at public auction. The Webers moved to their farm northwest of town.

In the summer of 1943, the Louis Boeve Construction firm was digging a drainage ditch south of town from the Burlington right-of-way to the Channel. This was a defensive measure for future floods in the area, in that floodwaters could escape from the lowlands more readily. The dike west of town was rebuilt at this time also.

Among many other young men and women from Sterling and community, Dr. Van D. Arnold, the town’s dentist and the village clerk, was called for military duty in September 1943.

Walter Zink was appointed by the town board to replace Dr. Arnold as Village clerk.

The old Baptist church building on the corner of Iowa and Washington Streets was torn down in the fall of 1943. This, too, was one of the few remaining landmarks in Sterling. The building was one of the oldest structures in town. The north section of the building was moved to the church site from the lot west of the former Janssen Implement building. Later a wing was added to it on the south.

**Missing In Action**

The entire community was deeply saddened early in November 1943 with the news that Lt. Walter R. Harris was missing in action. Lt. Harris was a fighter pilot with the Marines in the South Pacific. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Harris.

While serving in Squadron 214, Lt. Harris was awarded the Air Medal for Meritorious Achievement in aerial combat during the Sept. 12, 1943 to Sept. 17, 1943 period.

John Christline had purchased the former Aden’s Cash Store near the Green Lantern. Plans were to move his supply and repair shop to this property in the future.

Former resident and postmaster of Sterling, George M. Sandusky, died in December 1943 at Tecumseh. His age was 79.

The season’s work on the Alcan Highway had ended in December 1943, and Sterlingites who had been employed on this project had returned home. Their work had taken them to points at Skagway and Dawson in Alaska.

An item (and picture) in the column “Strange As It Seems” in a December 1943 issue of the Lincoln Star stated the following: “Capt. John Miller got his inspiration to fly from watching the crows while he was cultivating corn. It gave him the 20,000 flying hours to his credit. He is the only flyer having credit for so many hours of flying.” Captain Miller is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Miller, residents of Sterling for many years before retiring and moving to Lincoln. John grew up in Sterling and got his early training and experience in flying in this general area. Later he was associated for a long time with

Pan American Airways as a commercial pilot. Much of that time his flight headquarters were in Peru, South America.

**Paper Drive**

The local schools had participated in the Paper Salvage campaign, and Harold Truscott, chairman of the local committee on collection, reported that the rural schools had deposited 3,860 pounds of waste paper, the high school and grade pupils contributed nearly three tons, and the St. John Ladies Aid had collected over a ton. The paper would be taken to the Lincoln paper mills.

On February 6, 1944, a special praise service was held at St. John American Lutheran Church to celebrate the paying of the last indebtedness on the new church. On the evening of Febr. 8, a large gathering assembled in the Sunday School rooms of the church to witness the burning of the cancelled mortgages.

James Smith, local manager for Consumers Public Power District for several months, had been transferred to the office at Tobias. He came to Sterling early in 1944 when former manager, C. L. Foster, transferred to Blue Springs. Succeeding Mr. Smith was Gene Lambert of Pawnee City, who would be in charge of the local office.

Excitement reigned in town when a jeep was seen on the street – the first time for most of the local public. The editor of the paper commented on it being “a curiosity of sorts”.

In June 1944 Henry Dietrich took charge of the tank wagon service of Standard Oil Co., in Sterling, until the regular agent, Richard Rathe, would return from serving in the armed forces.

Herman Effken purchased the contents of the E-Z System store from Frank Zink in June 1944. Mr. Zink had been in business here for 12 years.

Jerry Jones bought the former Farmers and Merchants Bank building from M. Ehmen. He planned to keep some of the retail stock of furniture there.

Harry Schnackenberg had purchased the property of E. Brandt on East Broadway.

An item of interest in an August 1944 issue of the “Sun” concerned the 34-year-old Regal car, once the property of T. J. Roberts. It had been “resting in retirement’ in the old barn at the Roberts residence for a number of years. It was a 1910 model and a car in 1910 was quite a creation to behold. To own one must have been something of a status symbol, not doubt.

This 1910 Regal had a right hand drive, “Old timers”, according to the “Sun”, said it was “graceful as a swan and the envy of the community”. It appears that was being tested on this day in August 1944 by Lee Chiles and Bill Thompson and was found to still be in fine running order – but it had no tires, of course!

**PART XXII**

In July 1944 the board of directors of the Sterling Cooperative Credit Association voted to dissolve the Association in favor of the newly organized commercial bank, the Bank of Sterling. Through proper procedures, the Association was legally dissolved on Aug. 31, 1944. On the following day, Sept. 1, 1944, the Bank of Sterling opened for business and the town and community once again had access locally to the advantage of commercial banking facilities.

Incorporators of the new bank were J. V. Johnson of Tecumseh, president; H. W. Schepman of Tecumseh, vice-president; Martin Dirks of Sterling, cashier. Both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Schepman were officials of the Johnson County Bank of Tecumseh.

In August 1944, death came to Mrs. Julia Turner, wife of one of Sterling’s pioneer physicians, Dr. J. W. Turner. She had lived here since early in 1896.

John H. Eilers purchased the Green Lantern in 1944 from Jerry Jones. Mr. Eilers later converted the building into a truck terminal.

After purchasing the Tutty building in 1944, Henry Dietrich remodeled and redecorated the interior of the double building. He also added a modern and attractive new front to the building.

In October 1944, the Gem Theater was purchased by Ernest Grundmann of Cook.

The Riley Barber and Beauty Shop was sold late in 1944 to Mr. and Mrs. George Broers of Burr. The L. A. Rileys moved to Maryville, Mo.

In December 1944, the Johnson County Courier moved its newspaper office and equipment from Cook to Sterling and located in the building just east of the Hadden Variety Store.

Mr. and Mrs. M. F. Packwood were owners of the paper, Marion F. Packwood being publisher and Mary B. Packwood, editor. While in Cook the newspaper operated as the Cook Weekly Courier.

A new cream station opened for business here in January 1945. Miss Minnie Johnson of Beatrice located in the old Eilers building and operated as an independent cream and produce station. Miss Johnson had been employed at the Martin Luther Home in Sterling at one time.

Another new business to appear in Sterling early in 1945 was Thelma’s Beauty Shop. Mrs. Thelma (Sugden) Showalter was the operator of the salon.

The R. C. Waymire home located north of the schoolhouse had been destroyed by fire early in 1945. This house was one of the oldest housed in Sterling, having been built by Fred Bartling in the late 1870’s. It was the first brick building to be erected in Sterling and the bricks used in the structure had been manufactured at the local brickyards.

On March 1945, Harry Haynes had completed 27 years of service as rural mail carrier on Route 1 out of the Sterling post office.

The death of John Andrew (Pete) Jones occurred in March 1945 at age 67. He had been a resident and businessman of Sterling for almost 35 years.

Another death recorded early in 1945 was that of Mrs. Alma G. Varner, who passed away in April of that year at age 87. She was the wife of L. A. Varner, long time publisher and editor of the “Sterling Sun”, and had been a resident of Sterling since 1882.

After serving as superintendent of the Sterling schools for 13 years, E. E. Parminter was leaving in 1945 to accept a position as administrator of the Shelton schools. His successor was S. M. Leger, who came here from Burchard.

It was noted in the “Sun” that five members of one Sterling family were serving in the Armed Forces by April 1945. They were the four sons and one son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. John Schuster. The brothers were Arthur, Richard and David Schuster and Isidore Walczyk. Noyle Kramer was the son-in-law.

On May 8, 1945, V-E Day arrived. In compliance with a proclamation issued earlier by Mayor H. M. Miller, the fire siren sounded at 8:20 a.m. to announce officially the surrender of Germany, church bells rang, merchants placed the flag in front of their places of business, and stores were closed for the day.

In his proclamation the mayor had also requested the public to attend a special service of thanksgiving one-hour after the ringing of the church bells, at one of the churches in town. This service was held at the Methodist church. Faculty and students attended in a body, and members and friends of the church were in attendance also.

The Rev. W. H. Merrill conducted a brief scriptural service. Mrs. Lloyd Wilson offered musical selections, and the audience joined in the singing of hymns.

The rural churches of the community conducted similar services of praise and thanksgiving at their individual churches.

In June 1945, Sterling’s oldest citizen, Christian Buehler, died at the age of 95. He had lived in this community since 1878, and in town since 1910. A remarkable talent of his was the ability to write the Lord’s Prayer in English or German within a circle the size of a dime or a postage stamp. This talent was once featured by Bob Ripley in his “Believe It Or Not” column.

Mr. Buehler was a charter member of the Hopewell Methodist Church southwest of Sterling.

A change of business was effected in Sterling in June 1945 when the Poehler Market was sold to L. F. Broman. This store was located in the Schneider building in the central business block of Broadway. Mr. Broman had been employed at the Poehler Market for some time, following his resignation from the Lincoln Telephone Co.

Elmer Poehler would now operate the Poehler Locker System in the adjoining building, which he had purchased some time previously from the late Mrs. Alma Varner. The building would be remodeled and modernized before installing the locker equipment. This included the construction of an attractive brick front.

In July 1945, the Rev. C. Aug. Decker, pastor of St. John American Lutheran Church, submitted his resignation to the congregation. Pastor Decker had served St. John’s since January 1931. He would accept a call to serve at Zion Lutheran Church in Clay Center. He would remain, however, to assist the local church in the celebration of its Golden Jubilee, honoring the 50th year of its organization.

This event was observed July 29, 1945. Four services were conducted on that Sunday, and capacity crowds were in attendance at each service. The messages were delivered by three sons of the congregation who were members of the clergy. These were the Rev. August Hoeger of Fargo, N. D., who spoke at the early morning service; Chaplain Paul B. Eilers of the U. S. Armed Forces, who spoke

at the afternoon service; and the Rev. John R. Keiser of Johnson Creek, Wisc., who spoke in the evening.

Another son of the congregation, the Rev. Paul Schroeder of St. Francis, Kans., was unable to be present and was represented by his father, and former pastor for 14 years, the Rev. E. Schroeder of Colorado.

It was estimated that between 500 and 600 people were in attendance at each service.

On Aug. 15, 1945, President Truman announced in Washington that Japan had surrendered and the war had ended. At 6:04 p.m., Central War Time, the Sterling siren again was sounded to announce the news as on V-E Day. Again, church bells were rung, and services were held in both churches in town and in neighboring churches. Later in the evening a huge bonfire was built in the intersection of Main and Broadway and the sounding of car horns and other noisemakers could be heard everywhere in celebration of the great news.

Stores and churches were closed the following day, and the post office was closed on two days after 10:00 a. m. The rural carriers took two days as holidays by presidential sanction. The news from the state papers was that our service men were on their way home.

The opening of Whitey’s Café, a new business in Sterling, was announced in September 1945. The café was the property of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick (Whitey) Salmons. Mrs. Salmons was the former Adelaide Schmidt of Sterling. The business was located on the corner of Broadway and Main streets, the former location of Ma Weber’s Café.

Ernest Grundman had purchased the Gem Theater building in 1945 from George Endres of Crab Orchard.

In giving the total list of service men from this community, the “Sterling Sun” featured the Honor Rolls from each of the five churches in the community. This included Sterling Methodist Episcopal, St. John Lutheran (town), St. John Lutheran (south), Hopewell Methodist, and Immanuel Lutheran (west). A total of 149 names of those who served were listed.

The garage building belonging to C. Curtin was sold in September 1945 to L. R. Chiles and W. O. Thompson, who operated a garage across the street from the Curtin building. A complete line of electrical appliances and farm machinery would be stocked in this new addition to the company.

Miss Helen Wehmer had resigned as chief operator for the Sterling office of the Lincoln Telephone Co. Ruth Probst would succeed her as chief operator, and Barbara Benson would become her assistant.

At the meeting of the village council, Henry Pickett was appointed to succeed Walter Zink as Village clerk.

In September 1945, Alton Vanlaningham of Tecumseh had leased the Jerry Jones building on downtown Broadway to establish a drug store here. Mr. Vanlaningham had been operating the Dafoe and Vanlaningham drug store in Tecumseh.

On October 11, 1945, the editors of the “Sterling Sun” announced that the paper had been sold to Mr. and Mrs. M. F. Packwood, publishers of the Johnson County Courier in Sterling. The new owners would take possession on October 18.

On June 21, 1945 the “Sun” had announced the beginning of its 60th year of publication as a community newspaper. Mr. and Mrs. Pickett had owned the paper since Oct. 15, 1927.

**PART XXIII**

The death of Charles C. Wilson late in 1945 marked the passing of another of Sterling’s pioneers. He opened the general store here in 1877, and from 1880 to 1890 served as postmaster. He had reached the age of 90.

In November 1945 the business partnership of Chiles and Thompson was dissolved. Lee Chiles and W. O. Thompson had been partners in the garage business for 18 years. Lee continued in business at the garage, while Bill entered the farm implement business in the former Curtin garage building. This new firm was called the Sterling Implement Co.

The following year Earl Wilson joined Sterling Implement as a business partner, and James Chiles joined his father at the Chiles Garage.

The corner building on Broadway and Main streets, location of Whitey’s Café, was purchased in 1946 from Jerry Jones by Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Salmons.

Rev. John Voelk came to Sterling in 1945 to serve as pastor of St. John American Lutheran church. The Voelks arrived in November from Meriden, Minn.

For the second consecutive year, the Sterling High School basketball team had won the Mudecas tournament in January 1946, in Class A. This was the largest tournament in the state at that time, outside of the State tournament.

Supt. S. M. Leger was the coach, and James Benson, Arlan Woltemath, Ralph Haynes, John Goldenstein and Donald Harms were the players on the first team. On the second team were Marlin Brinkman, Donald Rowe, John Spradley, Paul Benson and Jack Scott.

A change in telephone service had been effected in February 1946. Six additional farm lines were put into service from the local exchange of the L. T. and T. Co. Not more than eight patrons were to be assigned to one line.

In February 1946, Herman Zuhlke purchased the controlling interest of the Probst and Co. liquor store, and took charge of operating the store.

The Skelly Service Station was reopened for business in February 1946 by Paul R. Jeffrey of Tecumseh. The former operator of the station, William Christline, had moved away in 1942 and the company had closed the station soon afterward.

After completing his service with the armed forces in 1946, Richard Rosenthal leased the Juilfs Oil Co. service station, Edmund Juilfs, owner.

The American Legion Harm Sangen Post No. 140 had rented the second floor of the Gem Theater building. After extensive remodeling and repairing, the place would be used for future meeting and entertainment’s.

Tyler Ryan of Beatrice succeeded Charles Meshier in 1946 as area manager for the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co. Meshier had been manager since 1934 and transferred to Beatrice at this time.

Henry F. Eilers, at age 74, died in Aril 1946. He was associated in business at one time with the Farmers and Merchants bank, and had lived in the Sterling community his entire life. Death was the result of injuries received in a fall.

The Voelk Radio Electric Shop located in the former office building of the “Sterling Sun” in June 1946. This was a new business in town, and Edgar J. Voelk was operator of it.

In August 1946 a change in business occurred here when C. R. Richardson of Tecumseh acquired the stock and John Deere franchise of the Eilers Implement Co. E. J. Eilers had operated the business since 1937.

The Case Gas Station was reopened for service by owner Mark Case. The station had been closed while he was in military service.

Mrs. Freda Hadden Maxwell sold the Hadden Variety Store to Floyd Meyer of Hastings in August 1946. Mrs. Maxwell had owned and operated the store since 1927. The business under the new ownership would be the Floyd Meyer Variety Store. The Maxwells would reside in Cook.

Another of the numerous changes in Sterling’s business section in 1946 was the sale of the Kirtley Lumber and Supply Co. to H. Dale Park of Omaha. The new owner named his place of business the Sterling Lumber Co. The Kirtleys had been in business here since 1940.

The long awaited return of Dr. V. D. Arnold from military service occurred on September 1946. However, soon after his return, Dr. Arnold announced his plans to locate in North Platte later in the year.

A month after purchasing the variety store, Floyd Meyer was forced to dispose of his business because of ill health. The store was sold to L. H. Gaines of Omaha, who took charge immediately. The name of the business was changed to the Sterling Variety Store.

Another senior citizen of Sterling, Ephraim Zuhlke, died in September 1946, at age 80. He had been a resident of this town and community for nearly 50 years.

In October 1946, Henry and Louise Dietrich marked the twelfth anniversary of operating “Heinie’s Café” in Sterling. The Courier featured an attractive picture of the interior of the café and its modern equipment.

A November 1946 issue of the Johnson County Courier noted the retirement of E. J. Barstler from 23 years of employment in public road maintenance work. He had worked one year for the county and the other 22 years for the state. He had progressed from the use of horse-drawn equipment, to a tractor, to a truck and finally to the duplex motor grader pictured in the paper, which he called “Old Faithful”.

**Blacksmith Shop Closes**

John Fortune, Sterling’s blacksmith since 1936, discontinued his business here in 1946 and moved to Omaha.

In December 1946, death came to a well-known resident, Mrs. Mary Rogers. She had lived here since the early 1900’s and for more than 30 years had been engaged in the cleaning and pressing business.

An especially elaborate and inspiring Christmas pageant had been presented at the Methodist church in 1946. The pageant was directed by Mrs. R. Rush, wife of the pastor. Mrs. Lloyd Wilson and Mrs. S. M. Leger directed vocal and instrumental music for the pageant.

Special mention was made of the beautiful costumes, scenery and lighting, plus the fine performance of the participants. In future years those pageants would become regular productions at Christmas and Easter, and the special abilities of Mrs. Rush became well-known throughout the area.

Some new names and changes in ownerships and businesses were noted in Sterling’s 1945 and 1946 business directories. This was evidenced in the Courier by the Christmas greetings offered by the merchants.

There were Zuhlke’s Liquor Store; Thelma’s Beauty Shop; Johnson Produce Station; Lee Chiles and Son; Theodor Kuhlmann for Watkins; Meyer’s Garage and Trucking Service; Ernest Grundmann; J. G. Huls Trucking; Shelling and Soil Conservation; George Christline, Insurance; Voelk Radio Electric; Whitey’s Café; Broman’s Market; Boeve Construction Co.; Sterling Lumber Co.; Sterling Variety Store; Poehler Lockers; and Sterling Implement Co.

The building belonging to Mrs. Freda Maxwell was sold to Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Gaines early in 1947. The west side of the building was occupied then by the Sterling Variety Store, and east portion by the Johnson County Courier.

In February 1947, Heinie’s Coffee Shop was sold to Harry Ruth and John Dietl of Plattsmouth, who took possession, and the new place of business became “Harry and Johnny’s Café”.

Barbara Ann Benson had succeeded Mrs. Ruth Aden as chief operator at the local telephone office, following the resignation of Mrs. Aden. Esther Fritz would assist as evening chief, Mrs. Minnie Christline became night operator and Mrs. Hannah Happel worked as relief operator.

Mrs. Mae Schneider of Sterling published a book of poems in 1947, representing her original writings over a period of years.

**State Champions**

Pictured in a March 1947 issue of the Courier were four handsome young men from Sterling, who with their canine friends had established a state championship record in a different kind of contest. Shown were Ed and Harold Weyers, Edmund (Doc) Juilfs and Harry friends, Dick, Spot and Sam, the coon dogs.

With this crew of seven were pictured the 104 coon pelts, representing the catch of the season, and the state record that year. The cutlines in the paper noted that Spot was state champion line dog, and Sam was credited with having treed more than 400 coons in his lifetime.

An unusual and impressive ceremony took place in June 1947 at a Sunday service in St. John Lutheran church, when the stars from the military service flag of the church were returned to the persons each represented. Mrs. Ella Rathe and Mrs. Henry Christline presented Service Star wallets to those of the 47 veterans in attendance. Those who were absent received their wallets and stars later. Two who

were absent were Lt. Harris and Eugene Juilfs. Lt. Harris was reported missing in action, and Eugene Juilfs was still in the service at that time.

Those represented on the service flag were in the service of their country on or before V-J Day.

In August 1947, another business change took place in Sterling when Harry and Johnny’s Café was sold to the Layton brothers, Cliff and Carl, of Lincoln. The new owners took charge immediately after purchase, and the business was then called Cliff and Carl’s Café.

Jacob Zinsmaster came to Sterling from Lincoln and opened a general car and tractor repair shop in September 1947.

Terry’s Barber Shop – E. C. Terhune of Humboldt – operator- was in business briefly in the east section of the Consumer’s building. After two weeks, the business was discontinued and the Voelk Radio Electric shop moved into the building vacated by Mr. Terhune.

**Dial System Installed**

On Dec. 2, 1947, the Sterling exchange of the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co., was officially converted to the dial system service. Local manager, Ivan C. Haith, who had come here in November from Seward, had charge of plant maintenance in Sterling and at Adams, and would also be responsible for other phases of operation.

Of the local office personnel, chief operator Barbara Benson was transferred to the Lincoln office and Esther Fritz transferred to the Beatrice office.

With the change to dial system, the method of operating the town’s fire siren would be affected, and the location of the siren was changed from the telephone office to a site near the city hall.

Late in 1947 the major issue confronting the citizens of Sterling concerned the possible installation of a sewage disposal plant. A consulting engineer from Omaha had net with the village council and presented plans and estimates on the construction of a project of this nature.

It was estimated that the total cost of the entire system would be $116,000.00. The town’s bonded indebtedness would be payable over a period of 20 years.

In December 1947 Louis Boeve purchased the double brick building on the south side of Broadway from Henry Dietrich. Cliff and Carl’s Café occupied the west side of the building and Heinie’s Liquor Store and Pool Hall were located in the east half.

At the end of 1947, changes and additions to Sterling’s business directory included the Rowe Auto Shop, Cliff and Carl’s Café, Zinsmaster Garage, and Rodenbeck’s Service Station.

**PART XXIV**

After the change to the automatic dial system, some changes in telephone service initiated early in 1948 were not too popular with the subscribers. The Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co. raised the rates, discontinued discounts for prompt payments, and discontinued the free county service.

The termination of this county service probably created the greatest amount of displeasure since this privilege had existed for many years. Each town in the county could, however, call toll free to Tecumseh. By the end of February 1948, all of Johnson County had converted to the dial system service.

Ed’s Welding and Blacksmith Shop was located for a short time in the Hollenback building in 1948. E. F. Dutton was the owner.

Ivan Haith, local manager L. T. & T. Co. since December 1947, was transferred to Humboldt in February 1948. This left Sterling temporarily without a resident manager for the company.

The business building on the south side of Broadway belonging to Jerry Jones, was purchased by C. R. Richardson in April 1948. Consumer’s Public Power and Voelk Radio Electric would vacate the building and the Sterling Supply firm operated by Mr. Richardson would occupy it.

The Sterling Booster Club conducted a survey in 1948 on the people’s preference of public improvement projects. Result on the survey sheets revealed that the public chose to support the construction of a public restroom.

Within two weeks adequate funds had been contributed and construction work had started on the building on Main Street one-half block north of the business section. The building was completed and in use by the end of May 1948.

Harold Rodenbeck, who had been manager of Rodenbeck’s Service for the Skelly Oil Co., for a number of months, was forced to retire from that position because of ill health.

Sterling had lost one of its well-known citizens in the death of C. M. (Con) Curtin in May 1948. He had lived here all of his life and was largely in the retail business. His age was 57 years.

In the summer of 1948, J. L. Tomashek, blacksmith and welder, had located his shop in the Zinsmaster Garage. J. Zinsmaster discontinued his business because of ill health.

Dalen Rathe was a new employee at the Bank of Sterling in 1948.

The hot lunch program in the Sterling schools was initiated in September 1948. Mrs. Della Wigginton was appointed manager of this new project.

Jerry Jones purchased the double brick building on Broadway from Louis Boeve in September 1948. Cliff and Carl’s Café was located in the west building of the structure, and the east side had been occupied by Heinie’s Pool Hall.

In October 1948, the newest business building in town was the newly constructed Meyer Garage on the east end of the business district. The quonset type building measured 44 by 66 feet. Edwin Meyer was owner of the building and business.

A new business firm had begun operations in Sterling in November 1948. The Schmidt Implement Co., owned by Victor Schmidt, was the new dealership for the Massey-Harris line of farm machinery. The business was located in the east portion of the Jones building, vacated by Heinie’s Pool Hall.

Lehrack’s Store, formerly the Sterling Drug Store, was sold by Charlotte Lehrack to Ward Merritt of Humboldt in November 1948. Miss Lehrack, who had operated the store since 1939, was retiring from business. Under the new management, the store was called the Sterling Store.

Mrs. Mae Schneider died in November 1948, at age 80. She had lived in Sterling since 1905, and for many years assisted her husband in the jewelry store.

At the end of 1948, the directory listed four merchants who had opened a business here during that year. These were J. Tomashek, blacksmith; W. Walters, Walter’s Used Cars; Victor Schmidt, Schmidt Implement; and Ward Merritt, Sterling Store.

Early in 1949, another business change took place when Alton Vanlaningham sold his drug store to Ward Merritt of the Sterling Store. Mr. Vanlaningham would locate in Denver, Colo.

In March 1949, the business building downtown belonging to Jerry Jones, formerly the second-hand store, was purchased by Edward Lempka of Omaha. Mr. Lempka would remodel the building before opening his new Gamble Store there in June 1949.

W. H. Husing was appointed manager of Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co. at Sterling in May 1949. He also had charge of the company’s exchanges at Adams, Burr and Cook. He had been with the L. T. and T. Co. at Tecumseh since 1946.

The Sterling Booster Club sponsored “Kids’ Day” in May 1949, and a fishing contest was held at Otto Weber’s farm west of town. The pond had been stocked with fish for the contest by the State Fish and Game Commission. Prizes were awarded by the Boosters. Dale Weber and Bill Wilson won the big prizes, but all the kids there received a whistle and a badge.

A committee comprised of representatives from the village council (L. H. Gaines), the Booster Club (H. Dale Park), the firemen (J. G. Huls), and the school board (E. J. Eilers), was carefully planning the proposed park improvement projects. Considered in depth were plans for picnic grounds, athletic fields, parking, lighting, landscaping, and complete equipment.

By August, floodlights had been installed and the athletic field was completed. Dedication ceremonies were held on August 18, 1949.

The Eilers Dairy, in business here for 20 years, discontinued operations in July 1949. New ownership went to Lorin Wusk. The retiring Eilers personnel included Mr. and Mrs. Edes Eilers, and sons Henry and Roger. Thelma’s Beauty Shop closed in July 1949. Mrs. Showalter, owner, moved to Colorado.

Ed Lempka’s Gamble Store created much public interest in the first television set to be installed in Sterling. Whitey’s Café was the next business place to show television to its patrons.

Louis Boden of the Farmers Elevator, purchased the coal retail business from the Sterling Lumber Co., in 1949.

Dr. W. R. Miller, physician, came to Sterling from Anthony, Kans., in September 1949. He established his office in the former Eilers Transfer office building, just south of the Gem Theater.

At a meeting of the Martin Luther Home Society in September 1949, it was voted to relocate the Home, which had been in Sterling for 24 years. The new location was not determined at that meeting.

Ernest Grundman had installed a new Starke cycloramic screen at his Gem Theater late in 1949. It was considered a major movie screen improvement by the industry.

Public interest in Sterling was increasing in the possibility of installing a sewer system. The village council had inquired further into over-all expenses of the project, and a new cost estimate of $70,000.00 was received early in 1950.

Mayor Edmund Juilfs and his staff announced that initial individual costs involved a $25.00 hook-up charge and a residence service charge of $2.00 per month. It had been decided that a five-mill levy would be assessed on all personal property and real estate, plus a $2 monthly residence service charge to all subscribers. It was also announced that not less than 100 signatures of property owners were needed in order to proceed with the sewer project.

Early in March more than the required number of signatures had been received, and plans for completion could proceed. Later, at a meeting set for filing objections to the proposed system, not one dissenting vote was offered.

In late April 1950, the sewer contract was given to Goosic and Boeve Construction Co., and work started in May 1950.

By mid-October 1950, hook-ups to the new sewer began, after the Henningsen Engineering Co. of Omaha had declared the sewage treatment plant and the system complete and satisfactory.

The members of the village council were credited with working tirelessly in preparing and completing final plans for getting the sewer system for the town. The council consisted of Edmund Juilfs, mayor, and George Buss, Herman Floerke, H. Dale Park and Victor Schmidt, trustees.

In March 1950 death had taken Jerry Jones, one of Sterling’s best known citizens and businessmen, at age 70. He had spent most of his life in Sterling, and had always been active in civic and political events in the community.

The Sterling Store, property of Ward Merritt, was purchased in May 1950 by Charles P. Gordon. The new name of the business was “Gordon’s Store”.

The downtown business building, former property of the late Jerry Jones, was purchased in June 1950 by Harry Schnackenberg. After extensive remodeling, the new owner opened a recreation parlor at this location in September 1950 called “Harry’s Recreation”.

Charles M. Rowe, a resident of Sterling for 70 years, died in July 1950, at the age of 83. He was stonemason and plasterer by profession, and remained active until his retirement at age 75.

In August 1950, Richard Rathe assumed his duties as the new custodian of the Sterling schools. He was succeeded in his former job with Standard Oil Co., by Paul Rathbun of Tecumseh, who would continue in the tank wagon delivery service.

By August 1950, the Korean conflict was prominent in world news, and again war was becoming ominous and threatening. Ivan Lamb was the first man from Sterling to be called back for military service since the end of World War II. He was an active member of the Naval Reserves and would report at San Diego, Calif., for further assignment.

As nearly as can be determined by the columns of the newspapers, Landis Agena and Elmer Norton of the Army Reserves, were the next local men to be recalled for active duty.

The sudden death of Mrs. Della Wiggington in August 1950 saddened the hearts of many friends and relatives. Since the beginning of the hot lunch program in the Sterling schools in 1948, she had been supervisor of the program.

People of Sterling regretted the departure of Dr. W. R. Miller. He had come to Sterling in September 1949, and would now locate in Oklahoma.

Late in 1950 Edmund Juilfs built a new service station on his corner property at Main street and Broadway, to replace the old station building.

Mrs. Orvene Wilson became manager of the school’s hot lunch program in 1950. A vacancy in that position had existed since the death of Della Wigginton, former manager.

Schmidt Implement moved from the Jones building to its new location on Broadway, east of the Gem Theater. Victor Schmidt, owner of the firm, had a new building constructed at that site.

George Christline purchased the John H. Eilers business property on Main Street, south of the Gem Theater. He would remodel the place for living quarters, and office space for his insurance business.

Another change of business took place when the Truscott Produce station was purchased in October 1950 by Norman L. Jury of Tecumseh. Harold Truscott had owned this business for 15 years. He moved to Syracuse at this time.

The St. John Lutheran church in town received a donation of tower chimes in October 1950 from Miss Louise Panko. Concerts of sacred music were played several evenings each week.

Ernest Grundman remodeled the second floor of the Gem Theater building and added new flooring. With these improvements the place could accommodate a public roller skating rink. The formal opening of the rink would take place in 1951.

**PART XXV**

Another fine improvement in Sterling was the completion of a new lighting system for the business section of town early in 1951. Fifteen bracket-type light fixtures were installed by Consumers Public Power on new poles. These were placed on three blocks of the business section between Maple and Lincoln Streets, on Broadway. Lights were added at the alleys, and new fixtures were installed on Washington and Main Streets. The switch control of the new light system was described in the Courier as “automatically controlled by photo-electric cell control”.

In late February 1951, death claimed Henry Rogers. He was a well-known citizen and rural mail carrier, and had been a resident of Sterling more than 40 years. He had completed 32 years of service as rural mail carrier out of the Sterling post office.

In March 1951, Sterling’s High School volleyball team had won the Johnson County Tournament for the fourth consecutive year. Equal rights go to the girl athletes as well as the boys, so we list here the names of all players on the 1951 championship volleyball squad: Marilyn Epley, Bette Lee Thompson, Jean Woltemath, Dorothy Juilfs, Marjorie Wehmer, Colleen Points, Mavis Vermeer, Mary Ellen Shea,

Leora Michel, Marilyn Zuhlke, Lola Kuhlmann, Regina Points, Valorie Kopplin, Marlene Happel and Janet Meyer. The coaches during the four years were Mrs. John Goldenstein, Mrs. Donna Mae Hansen, Patricia Louden and LeRoy Marks.

The community was saddened in June 1951 when word was received that Sgt. Elmer Norton was missing in action in Korea. Several months later the report came that he had been killed in action, and his remains were brought to Tecumseh for burial in November 1951.

In July 1951, Edwin Meyer passed away at age 41. He was one of Sterling’s youngest businessmen, and was the owner of Meyer’s Garage.

In the summer of 1951, Eilers Transfer erected a new building south of Broadway on Main Street, for their feed and supply business.

The Jury Produce Station was sold to Harvey Haeffner in 1951. The new management would operate as “Sterling Produce and Feed”.

At a special meeting in September 1951 of the Martin Luther Home board, it was voted to authorize construction of the new building for the Home in Beatrice.

Frank A. Zink, resident and retired merchant, had passed away in September 1951, at age 74. He had come to Sterling in 1932 and operated the E-Z System grocery store for 19 years.

After leaving Sterling in August 1950 to practice medicine in Oklahoma, Dr. W. R. Miller had decided to return to Sterling in October 1951 to resume his practice here. His office was located in the rooms above the Variety Store.

In October 1951, a mattress factory was opened in the old Sun building on Broadway and Washington, by Mr. and Mrs. L. S. Wanek of Talmage. By the end of the year, however, they decided that the volume of business did not justify continued operation for them, and they returned to Talmage.

Mrs. Lina Stuve, one of Sterling’s pioneer citizens, died in October 1951, at age 88. Sterling had been her home for 67 years. She and her husband, C. W. Stuve, had operated a general store in Sterling for many years. She was the mother of Mrs. Hattie Zink of Sterling.

In January 1952, word was received of the death in New Mexico of Henry Pickett, former Sterling resident, and publisher of the “Sterling Sun” from 1927 to 1945. He had attained the age of 71 years.

Another longtime resident and businessman of Sterling, John E. (Jack) Caley, died in February 1952 at age 81. He had lived here since 1880. He became manager of the Sterling Exchange of the Telephone Company in 1902, and continued in that position for 32 years, retiring in 1934. Over a period of years he had served on the village council, was mayor of Sterling, and was a chairman of the cemetery board.

In April 1952, Victor Hotovy of David City purchased Whitey’s Café from F. M. Salmon. The name of the new business was “Vic’s Café”.

Mayor Edmund Juilfs announced that a new city well would be located at the north end of the village park. The site had been approved by the State Department of Health. This second well would serve as a standby in the event of an emergence.

The campaign was on in Sterling for a proposed community auditorium. The ladies of the Sterling Cemetery Association started the drive by contributing the proceeds from the 1952 Memorial Day dinner to a fund for kitchen equipment in the new building.

The location of the Sterling Post Office was changed in July 1952, from the Christline building on the north side of downtown Broadway, to the Harry Schnackenberg building on the south side of the street. T. Glen Roberts was postmaster. Harry’s Recreation Parlor had vacated the building and ceased operations.

Mrs. Hattie Kneeland Hitchcock, the first child born in Sterling (1867) died in September 1952 at age 85. Her parents were William and Jane Bentz Kneeland, both from the first pioneer families to homestead in Sterling.

In October 1952, death cam suddenly to Valentine Zink II, at age 71. He had lived in Sterling nearly all of his life, and had been in the hardware business here since 1905.

The Eilers truck terminal was torn down in 1952. Before its conversion to the terminal the building had been the old Green Lantern dance pavilion.

Cliff’s and Carl’s Café was wold at auction in November 1952, and was purchased by Alfred Thompson of Sterling, and named the Sterling Café.

The Thanksgiving blizzard of 1952 which swept Nebraska, was a devastating one. The heavy snow was accompanied by extremely high winds, causing all roads to be blocked. Sterling was isolated from the rest of the world except for train service. No telephone or electric service was available for three days. Many stranded vehicles along the roads were covered with snow, and farm animals were buried in huge snowdrifts.

The Sterling Café was sold late in December 1952, to Mr. and Mrs. Dale Eden of Lincoln. Under the new management the place of business was called “Dale and Tootie’s Bar and Grill”.

Early in 1953 the Thompson Feed Store had opened for business, with Alfred Thompson as owner.

A business which was re-opened in January 1953 was the Sterling Produce Station on the corner of Washington and Broadway streets. Henry Holthus was the new manager.

In March 1953, death came to Dr. J. W. Turner, Sterling’s prominent physician and resident for 57 years. He had reached the age of 83.

Renewed interest was being shown in the proposed new auditorium for Sterling. Early in 1953, an architect’s sketch and detailed description of the building were displayed by architect Lyle Lydick of Omaha. The bond issue to be voted on was for $27,000.00. A 55 percent majority vote was necessary to carry the measure.

In the April 1953 voting, the measure was defeated. Public requests for another election on the issue prompted the second voting on May 19. In that voting a bond issue for $35,000.00 was approved by a strong majority.

In April 1953, C. R. Richardson sold his interest in the John Deere Plow Co. to Edmund Juilfs. Mr. Richardson had been in business here since 1947. The business would continue as the Johnson County Implement Co.

A new repair shop was opened in April 1953 by Shannon Hazen. The shop was located in the building east of Dale and Tootie’s Café, and would be known as Hazen’s Repair.

Another new business place was “Mimi’s Drive-Inn” located on the filling station corner of Broadway and Main streets. Miriam Eden was manager of the place.

Vic’s Café was purchased by Herman Pluta of Tecumseh, and was then called Herm’s Tavern.

After operating the Gamble Store in Sterling since 1949, Ed Lempka terminated his business in the summer of 1953. All stock and business property was sold.

The death of S. R. Haynes occurred in August 1953 at the age of 88. He had been a resident of the Sterling community since 1889. He served as treasurer of the school board for a number of years and also served on the village council in various offices.

Early in September 1953, the contract for the construction of the auditorium-gymnasium had been signed by members of the school board and work had begun. The contraction firm was the Paul Anderson Construction Co. of Tecumseh.

The Sterling group of the Ground Observer Corps in the U. S. Civil Defense program was organized late in 1953. The group consisted of 25 volunteers from the town and community. Chief Observer, Edmund Juilfs, was assisted by Marion Packwood as supervisor. Sgt. Harold Middleton of Beatrice would conduct the class, and sky watching was the major assignment.

After completing 40 years of teaching, Supt. S. M. Leger elected to retire in 1954. He had been superintendent of the Sterling schools since 1945.

Friends of L. R. (Rollie) Zink were saddened to learn of his death in February 1954. His age was 84 years. He was one of Sterling’s early day residents and had lived here all of his life until his retirement from the hardware and mortuary business.

The program for laying the cornerstone of the new auditorium-gymnasium took place March 10, 1954. In the March 11, 1954 issue of the Johnson County Courier were listed the 19 contributed articles placed in a box before it was sealed and placed in the cornerstone. One of the 29 items listed was “Sophomore Blood”. Each sophomore had made a blot on paper with his own blood and then attached his signature to it.

In April 1954 Dr. W. R. Miller again left Sterling and located in Axtell, Kans.

Tragedy occurred near Valentine in April 1954 when Marvin Hansen, 29, of the State Patrol, was killed at a roadblock by gunfire from car thieves. Patrolman Hansen was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lee Hansen of Sterling.

William W. Rowe discontinued his auto repair shop in April 1954. All stock and property were sold at auction.

In 1954 the Johnson County Courier received the Ak-Sar-Ben Community Service Award. A plaque and $200.00 in cash were awarded for the Courier’s efforts in the campaign for the new auditorium. The $200.00 cash award was designated by the Packwoods for an electric scoreboard in the new gymnasium.

Paul Benson became the new owner of the Gem Theater in May 1954. He purchased the Gem as well as the theaters in Table Rock and Cook from Ernest Grundman of Cook.

F. J. Hromek of David City purchased Herm’s Tavern from Herman Pluta, who had owned and operated the tavern the past year. The new firm was called “Frank’s Tavern”.

Orval VanEperen of Beatrice purchased the Fred Wigginton Produce station on east Broadway in July 1954. The new firm would operate as VanEperen Produce. Mr. Wigginton’s station was one of the oldest businesses in town at that time.

A new blacksmithing business moved to Sterling in December 1954. John F. Safarik came here from Waco, and established his shop in the west end of town where Rowe’s Auto Shop had been.

Word was received here in May 1955 that Edward T. Zink of Chadron had died. He was the son of L. R. and Ura Hitchcock Zink and had formerly been associated with his father in the hardware and mortuary business in Sterling.

Rev. E. B. Stewart, who had been serving the Sterling Methodist Church for four years, had been assigned to the Methodist Church at Beaver Crossing in June 1955. Both Rev. and Mrs. Stewart had been active in the affairs and interests of the community as well as in the work of the church. Mrs. Stewart had taught in the Sterling schools and Rev. Stewart successfully initiated the Lord’s Acre Day programs in Sterling. Originally planned as a project for his congregation, these harvest festivals developed into a joint community program of good will and fellowship.

A special farewell get-together was sponsored by the Sterling Community Club in honor of the Stewarts and in appreciation of their efforts in behalf of the community.

An outdoor fireplace was built in the picnic area of the Sterling park in 1955. Under the leadership of Mrs. Otto Diedrichs and Mrs. Delmar Bargman, members of the Sterling Hustlers 4-H Club used money earned from a food sale to buy the materials for the fireplace. John Goldenstein donated his time and labor to construct it.

Members of the Hustlers who “hustled” for this project were Dr. Darrell Schmidt, Gerry Eden, Richard Packwood, Donald Schmidt, Lynn Gaines, Darrel Diedrichs, Bill Rosenthal, Doane Bargman, Marvin Kress and Bernard Walters. Dennis Bargman was considered “mascot” of the club.

Sterling’s oldest resident in 1955, Henry Kruger, Sr., died at age 95.

An all-out campaign was launched in 1955 for the “Doctor for Sterling” project. A new corporation, the Sterling Improvement Association, had been formed. To raise funds for a new clinic building, Doctor-For-Sterling-Fund participation certificates were sold at $50.00 each. It was estimated the $25,000 would be needed for the project. The first officers of the corporation were Raymond Zink, president; H. Dale Park, vice-president; Mary B. Packwood, secretary; Henry G. Woltemath, treasurer.

After 48 years of faithful service as Sterling’s librarian, Mrs. Mary Hollenbeck retired from her duties in December 1955. Her successor was Mrs. E. W. Rawson.

In December 1955, the first irrigation well in Johnson County was completed on the Kenneth Beaver farm near Sterling. It attracted many spectators from a large area.

**PART XXVI**

In January 1956, Raymond Zink, president of the Sterling Improvement Association, announced that the $25,000 goal for the new clinic building had been exceeded by almost $1,000.00.

The firm of Arter and Speece of Lincoln was hired by the Improvement Association as the architects to draw up plans for the new clinic, and to evaluate each of the locations available for the building site. After considering each report, the local board voted to use the lots located two and one-half blocks north of Broadway on Main Street. These were the lots offered for sale by Harry Reutter. Several weeks later the association approved the architect’s plans, and construction was begun in July 1956.

By September 1957, the structure was completed and open house was held for the public Sept. 15.

Dr. R. L. Albrecht, dentist, came to Sterling from Lincoln, and was the first to occupy the new building. In July 1958, Dr. R. E. Paul, physician, located here also. After more than 19 years of practicing dentistry in Sterling, Dr. Albrecht still occupies the clinic today. Dr. Paul remained only until 1962, when he chose to leave for further study.

Early in 1956, Dale and Tootie’s Café was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ratcliffe of Fullerton. The new owners would call it the Sterling Café. The Edens had owned the café since 1952.

In 1956 Louis Thiesfeld was first in the area to install an irrigation sprinkler system on his land south of town, using water from the Nemaha River.

In 1956 the Rev. A. Langholz became pastor of St. John American Lutheran Church in Sterling. He succeeded Rev. H. Damm, who had come in 1954 following the resignation of Rev. John Voelk in 1953.

The oiling of streets in Sterling began in August 1956. Harry Schnackenberg and Edwin Schmidt were on that first street surfacing crew. The central block of downtown Broadway was first to be surfaced, and Washington Street was next.

In August 1956, Dr. W. L. Morrill, physician and resident of Sterling for 50 years, passed away at the age of 83 years.

Another well-known citizen and businessman of Sterling, George Christline, died in November 1956, at age 64. He had lived in Sterling and the community for 62 years.

Francis Van Groningen purchased the VanEperen Produce Station late in 1956.

In December 1956, Richard Shea bought the insurance and real estate business of the late George Christline.

An observer had commented that for a town its size, Sterling was an example of community progress. During a ten-year period the achievements named were the athletic park, the public rest room, the sewer system. The auditorium-gymnasium, street surfacing and the clinic.

In 1957, W. O. Thompson bought the business interest of Earl Wilson in the Sterling Implement Co., and discontinued the implement business. He continued with the seed corn sales and delivery. The partnership had begun in 1946.

The death of Kenneth Tyler, Sterling resident and merchant, occurred in April 1957. He had been manager of the Farmers Union Store for a number of years.

Charles Buss of Omaha came to Sterling to take charge of the Farmers Union Store following the death of Mr. Tyler.

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Harms bought the Sterling Café from Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ratcliffe in May 1957.

Paul Benson, owner of the Gem Theatre, moved to New Mexico in 1957.

A new grocery store opened in Sterling in June 1957. This new business was the Sterling Cash Shopping Center. Virgil and Jessie Shields, formerly of Syracuse, managed the store. It was located in the George Leahy building, just east of the Sterling Café – formerly the Jerry Jones property.

In July 1957, Frank Hromek sold his tavern to Roy J. Bowling of Omaha, who would operate it as the Bowling Tavern. The Hromeks had owned the tavern since 1954.

Alfred Thompson closed his feed and produce station in September 1957 to work for the Nebraska State Railway Commission as an inspector.

Since early in 1956, speakers from the State Education Department were submitting vital information and data to local school officials on school redistricting. The subject of reorganization had become one of paramount interest and concern to our people and much study had been given to details of such a project.

Consolidation with neighboring rural districts was effected during the years of 1957 through 1961, and 16 rural schools joined District No. 33. After reorganization, the district measured a distance of 18 miles in diameter.

In 1958, changes were rapidly taking place in a period of a few months. Early in the year John Christline purchased the Main street property of the late George Christline. Richard Scott bought the pool hall, Kruger's Place, from Herman Kruger. The new name was “Scott’s Place”. Mr. Kruger had owned the business for 22 years.

E. J. Eilers became the local representative of the Farmers Mutual Insurance Co., in April 1958, when K. W. Oakley retired from that position – one he had held in this area for 25 years.

Dick Shea bought the building on the filling station corner of Broadway and Main Streets, belonging to the Lincoln Oil Co. It would be remodeled into a business office.

In June 1958, work began on the re-building of Highway 41 between Sterling and Adams. This was in preparation of the blacktop surfacing to follow.

J. E. Arter, pharmacist, came to Sterling from Lincoln as the new druggist, and located in Gordon’s Pharmacy.

In July 1958, Herman Kruger opened a produce station, Kruger’s Produce, at the former location of Thompson’s Feed and Produce.

In August 1958, two escaped convicts from the state penitentiary at Lincoln were found in the west section of town by Paul Rathbun, and were held at gunpoint by town Marshall Harry Schnackenberg until state patrolmen came to get them.

The Bowling Tavern was sold to Don L. Woody of Wahoo in August 1958. It then became “Woody’s Café and Tavern”.

The death of Mrs. Mary Hollenback occurred in September 1958, at the age of 92. She was one of Sterling’s early pioneers.

A new business for Sterling opened in October 1958 when the Sterling Grain Co. began operations in grain drying. Victor Schmidt and Edmund Juilfs owned the new business and the new 62-ft. by 100 ft. quarter million bushel capacity building. John Schmidt of St. Mary was manager.

After working for the Burlington Railroad for 55 years, E. A. Cox retired as station agent in Sterling in October 1958. He was succeeded as agent by W. H. Hobelman of Elk Creek.

The former Gamble store building on Broadway was purchased in 1958 by Raymond Morrissey of Tecumseh.

The death of Mrs. John Christline occurred in January 1959 at the age of 76 years. She had been a resident of Sterling for 62 years.

Sterling’s first new business to open in January 1959 was the Anderson Shoe Shop, owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. John Anderson. This was located in the office of the later Dr. J. W. Turner.

The Martin Luther Home building sold to Louis Boeve in January 1959 was torn down. Another landmark in Sterling was removed.

In 1959, Clarence Rademacher retired after 33 years of directing the summer band in Sterling.

Death claimed Fred Wigginton in March 1959. His age was 71 years. He had been in business here for over 30 years before retiring in 1955.

By August 1959, Highway 41 from Sterling to Adams had been blacktopped and was open to traffic that month. This was the first hard surfaced road leading into Sterling.

After serving for 25 years as postmaster of Sterling, T. Glen Roberts retired from that position in August 1959. Alma Thompson assumed the duties of Acting Postmaster until April 1961, when James L. Chiles became postmaster.

Wentz Transfer and Feed Co. was another new business here in 1959. It was located in the Kruger building on Broadway.

Lloyd Engstrom opened a television and radio shop in the Morrissey building.

Hazen’s Repair moved to its new location on Main Street, east of the city hall. Mr. Hazen had purchased this property from W. E. Eilers.

Late in 1959, Richard Pope became the new manager of the Farmers Union store.

The W. E. Eilers Transfer was sold late in 1959 to Bill Wilson, who would operate “Wilson’s Transfer”.

In December 1959, death claimed John Sangen, at the age of 76 years. He had been a Sterling businessman for many years.

Mrs. E. W. Rawson retired as city librarian in April 1960, and was succeeded by Mrs. Keith Benson. Mrs. Benson continued as librarian for 14 years. Upon her retirement she was succeeded by Mrs. Alma Thompson, the present librarian.

The Johnson County Implement of Sterling was sold in 1960 to the Harms Implement Co. of Tecumseh. The Tecumseh firm was the John Deere dealer there.

The 35-member Sterling High School band under the direction of Mrs. Faye Brinkman, made its first appearance in Lincoln as a marching band, during Band Day 1960.

Late in 1960, the Parrish Car Repair Shop was opened for business in Sterling. It was located in the former Eilers building on west Broadway.

Dalen Rathe became cashier of the Bank of Sterling in January 1961, after being assistant cashier for a number of years. He succeeded Martin Dirks, who had retired after being the bank’s cashier since 1944.

In January 1961, one of Sterling’s oldest residents, J. G. Rulla, died at the age of 92 years. For many years he was a merchant in Sterling, operating a general store.

A business change in Sterling early in 1961 was the purchase of the W. E. Eilers filling station along Highway 41, by the Sterling Farmers Union State Exchange.

In 1961 Wentz Transfer and Feed Co. purchased the Boeve building located on West Broadway, to provide additional room for their expanding business.

Rev. Kenneth Rust of Galesburg, N. D., was installed as pastor of St. John American Lutheran Church in August 1961. He succeeded Rev. A. G. Langholz, who went to Pocahontas, IA. in November 1960.

Less than a year after retiring from business, Martin Dirks passed away in September 1961. He had been in the banking business for 53 years, cashier of the Bank of Sterling for 16 years and for 25 years treasurer of the Village of Sterling.

New and modern streetlights were installed by Consumers Public Power Co. on the streets of Sterling in 1961. Upsweep bracket fixtures were equipped with reflector type globes.

Another pioneer of Sterling, Mrs. May L. Haynes, had passed away in March 1962, at the age of 91 years. Her parents were the R. D. Swallows of early pioneer days.

Mrs. Iva Beetem, a lifetime resident of Sterling, died in March 1962, at the age of 81. She was the daughter of John and Elsie Bonner, pioneer residents and merchants of Sterling.

A new business in Sterling in April 1962 was the Sterling Fertilizer Co., Inc. John Schmidt and Edmund Juilfs were owners.

The Blue Star Café was opened for business in June 1962, under the management of Mrs. Doris Weber. It was located near Highway 41 in the north section of town. Later in the year W. E. Eilers purchased the Blue Star, and in 1963 it was sold to Robert Wentz.

In September 1962, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Beetem purchased the Sterling Café from Donald Harms.

Sterling’s first coin laundry was opened in October 1962. Vernon Riensche of Burr installed the new laundromat and operated it.

In the first week of November 1962, the last bond of the sewer system was paid, eight years earlier than the required payment date. The $69,000.00 project was paid for in 12 years. Like other of Sterling’s major improvement projects, it was done without Federal Aid.

Late in 1962, John Safarik closed his blacksmith shop and moved to Crete.

In January 1963, one of Sterling’s well-known merchants, Elmer Poehler, passed away at the age of 61 years. He was owner of Poehler’s Locker, and over a period of years had owned a grocery store and meat market.

In March 1963, Orvin Rathe purchased the Poehler locker plant, and still owns and operates it today.

A new and modern screen-line was installed by G. S. A. in the Sterling Post Office in 1963, and new tile flooring, additional fluorescent lighting and interior redecorating was added by Harry Schnackenberg, owner of the building.

The use of Zip Code on all U. S. Mail began on July 1, 1963.

In July 1963 the Sterling Rural Fire District was organized with 24 local men present. Five districts comprised the new fire district, and one officer was chosen from each district. The new district covered an area eleven and one-half miles east and west, and eleven and one-half miles north and south.

In 1963, Lloyd Schmidt was operating his repair shop.

Robin Heilman, former resident and merchant of Sterling, died at age 78.

By December 1963, the blacktopping of Highway 41 from Sterling east to Highway 50 was completed, and citizens of this community were happy with a hard surfaced road leading into town from the east also.

After more than 45 years of carrying mail to patrons on Rural Route 1, Harry Haynes retired in October 1963. The length of the original route was 27 and a half miles. By the time he retired it had become a 66-mile trip. First type of transportation was a horse and cart. Later came the Model T, Jeeps, and more modern vehicles. The community honored Harry with a retirement dinner at the auditorium.

In 1963, Paul Conradt had opened his repair shop in Sterling.

In December 1963, Mrs. T. Glen Roberts passed away at the age of 72 years. She had been a resident of Sterling for 47 years.

**PART XXVII**

The Raymond Morrissey building on Broadway was purchased by J. L. Beetem early in February 1964.

Sunday afternoon, April 12, 1964 will be remembered as “the day the hail came”. Large, destructive hail, seven to eight inches in circumference, fell without warning. It was described by many residents as the worst they had ever experienced here. There was scarcely a building in town without extensive roof and window damage caused by the hail.

Robert Benson became manager of the local Farmers Union Cooperative Exchange store in 1964. He succeeded Richard Pope.

In August 1965, Wilson Transfer, Bill Wilson owner, was purchased by Wentz Transfer and Feed Co. Bill would attend Technical School at Milford.

The Blue Star Café changed ownership in 1964. Karen Dietrick of Haigler was the buyer.

Richard Rosenthal, who operated the Rosenthal Service Station, was appointed in September 1964 as mail carrier on Rural Route 1. He succeeded Harry Haynes, who had retired in 1963.

The death of R. C. Waymire, well-known Sterling businessman, occurred in October 1964. He had been a resident here for 28 years.

The community was saddened in November 1964 when well-known young farmer, Lowell Schmidt, was killed in a tractor accident near his home. He was 46. He had served as a member of the Sterling school board.

A new traffic flasher light was installed in the center of the street in front of the school building. All north and south traffic was (still is) required to stop for the flashing red signal, which is in operation each day while school is in session.

E. R. Rengstorf purchased the H. A. Zuhlke Liquor Store in 1964.

Late in 1964, LeRoy’s Mobil Service, LeRoy Schmidt, owner, began operations in the former Rosenthal Service Station.

In March 1965, death cam suddenly to William O. Thompson, lifelong resident of Sterling, and in business here more than 35 years. He was also employed as custodian and driver for the Sterling school. He was 61.

An interesting article in a March 1965 issue of the Courier related an experience of George Wilson. Since he had occasion to be in the Lincoln post office one day, he remarked to an employee there that he had hung a particular door in that office. When no one believed him, he suggested that someone look at the top of the door and find his name and the date, April 1910 there. They looked and were convinced. According to the article, payment for labor to hang this door in 1910 was 30 cents per door.

Mr. Wilson was a carpenter. He was the father of Mrs. Richard Rathe and Mrs. Orville Wusk.

In 1965 the Menninga brothers, Gene and Darrell, had achieved the unusual. They had built a reflector type telescope through which one could view the craters on the moon, the ring around Saturn, the planet Jupiter and the four largest Jupiter’s moons. Scientific projects, such as the telescope, were hobbies of the Menninga brothers.

Again in 1965, a well-known businessman of Sterling, Otto R. Weber, passed away suddenly. For more than 25 years he was a Pioneer Seed Corn dealer in this area. He was 56.

Robert Benson purchased a grocery store in Johnson and took charge of his new business late in 1965. Fred Warner of Lincoln succeeded him as manager of the local Farmers Union Cooperative.

Chuck Jewell of Percival, IA, opened his barbershop in Sterling in December 1965. He located in the basement room under Woody’s tavern.

In February 1966, the Sterling Lumber Co. was purchased by John Goldenstein. Former owner, H. Dale Park, had operated the business since 1946, and John had been employed at the lumberyard since 1945.

In 1966 the Rural Fire District was proud owner of a new fire truck. The truck had been built to specifications.

In 1966 the hybrid seed corn industry came to the Sterling community. It was estimated that more than 500 acres were involved under a specific planting program at that time.

In July 1966 a barbershop was opened by Rod Breazile below Woody’s Tavern where Chuck’s Barber Shop had been.

St. John American Lutheran Church broke ground in August 1966 for the new Educational Building Annex to the church. The annex was completed early in 1967.

L. H. Gaines disposed of the Variety Store inventory and building at public auction late in 1966. The building was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Marion Packwood.

In April 1967, Robert Kempkes, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Kempkes, received the Nebraska Hero’s Award for saving the life of a passenger on a wrecked bus in Minnesota in 1966.

Ted M. Walters of Beatrice became superintendent of the local Consumers Public Power office in 1967. He succeeded E. R. Lambert, who retired from that position.

The Outside Inn was opened in June 1967 by Mr. and Mrs. John Belt. It was located along Highway 41 on Maple St.

A business change took place in June 1967 when Robert Benson of Johnson returned to Sterling and bought the Farmers Union Store. He had been manager there.

In July 1967 people of Sterling were pleased to hear that Maj. J. E. Kruger had been appointed to the position of Chief of the Nebraska State Safety Patrol. Major Kruger lived here until he entered the Patrol in 1940.

1967 was Nebraska’s Centennial year and much preparation and activity took place in its celebration in Sterling. There were beard contests for men, dress contests for the ladies, prizes by the merchants, antique displays, an old fashioned box supper, horseshoe pitching contests, special combined worship services by all local churches, and an outstanding parade and band concert on July 25, Centennial Day.

Deep sorrow and sadness came to the community when the war in Vietnam claimed the lives of Pfc. Gary Schmidt in 1967, Sgt. Larry Rieken in 1969, and Maj. Francis Stewart in 1969. All three were young men from Sterling. A fourth, Sp.4 Dwight Wilson was wounded in action.

Lawrence F. Broman, resident and former merchant of Sterling, died in October 1967. He was 64.

Mr. and Mrs. Neal Roach of Panama opened “Elaine’s Variety Store” on Broadway in the Eilers building.

Early in 1968, Dick Shea purchased the Farmers Mutual of Nebraska insurance agency from E. J. Eilers.

In 1968 a summer school session for all grades was offered in Sterling. The session was under the direction of Melvin Parde, with Mrs. Melvin Meints and Mrs. Lorin Harms assisting.

The death of E. J. Eilers, well-known resident of Sterling and a retired businessman, occurred in July 1968. He had served the community on the school board, town board, and the clinic board. He was 65.

Up to this point attention has been given to deaths of individual townspeople as they occurred. With some exceptions, the deaths recorded in these pages have represented the complete life spans of most of the early settlers as they were announced on the pages of the local newspapers. In the panorama of Sterling’s history, the lives of these citizens had come “full circle”.

With the town reaching its one hundredth birth anniversary in 1970, it would be safe to assume that few, if any, of these early settlers would be alive beyond this point in the records.

Early in 1969, the Hazen’s repair shop moved to a new location in the north section of town along Highway 41. At the new place, the business added a service station and assumed the name of “Hazen’s APCO”. The station building had been purchased from the Farmers Union Cooperative.

The year 1969 was a great one for the Sterling Jets’ basketball team. For the fifth consecutive year it won the Homesteader championship, and then was the winner in both District and State Tournaments in Class D. This championship team consisted of such stalwarts as Paul Goldenstein, Cal Christline, Galen Boldt, Bob Harms, David Meints, Larry Harms, Duane Rathe, Dean Hoehne, Randy Aden and Dennis Heusman.

In 1969 the town built a fine new firehouse. This structure would house both the village and rural fire equipment, and was located just south of Broadway on Main Street.

Additional changes on the business scene in Sterling during 1969 were Carpenter Oil Co., (Jan and Irene), who succeeded LeRoy’s Mobil Service; Pella’s Liquor (Don), who replaced Rengstorf’s Liquor Store; Marv’s Inn (Marvin Kress), replacing Woody’s Tavern; Doris’ Hobby Shop was a new business, Mrs. Doris Weber, owner.

In January 1970, Consumers Public Power started the new year with a new name. It was now Nebraska Public Power District. Only the name was changed.

In February 1970, Galen L. Miller of Aurora became superintendent of Nebraska Public Power’s Sterling office. He succeeded Ted Walters, who transferred to Scribner.

The year 1970 marked Sterling’s Centennial and preparations were made for a variety of activities on July 25 and 26, the days of the celebration. Besides a big parade on both days, activities included such contests as an archery shoot, horseshoe pitching, a tractor pull, a threshing bee, a beard contest, a style show, a muzzleloader shoot and a chicken barbecue. On July 26 a community church service was conducted with all the churches of the community meeting to worship together.

The congregation of the St. John American Lutheran observed its Diamond Jubilee August 9, 1970 with morning and afternoon worship services. A membership reunion was held at the Sterling Auditorium with about 400 in attendance.

After 19 years with the State Roads Department, Bud Nealy retired in December 1970.

The Kress Repair Shop opened in 1970 in the Chiles building. Don Kress was owner.

The deaths of two former businessmen of Sterling were recorded in 1970. The death of E. A. Cox occurred in May 1970 at the age of 85 years, and Fred Benson passed away in October 1970 at the age of 94.

The 30-hour blizzard, which swept Nebraska and other states in the midwest in January 1971, was reported as the worst in a quarter of a century. The heavy snowfall, which continued all night and all day, was accompanied by 50-65 miles per hour winds. The results were blocked roads and highways, and heavy damage to the telephone and power lines.

Hundreds of people who were driving on the highways were marooned, and were forced to seek shelter at places along the roads. Two days later temperatures dropped to 10 and 20 degrees below zero. In this community, “Operation Snow Removal” after the storm was a joint effort of many local citizens.

In March 1971, Johnson County Ambulance Unit No. 2 was based at Sterling. After completing a period of intensive training in regular and advanced courses, 19 people from the community were qualified to serve on the ambulance rescue unit. Mrs. Marion Packwood would handle the ambulance calls.

In March 1971 the Sterling Café was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Herman Rademacher of Tecumseh. The J. L. Beetems had owned the café since 1962.

In June the café was sold to John Wolff of Sterling.

James L. Chiles resigned as postmaster in March 1971. Mrs. Alma Thompson was assigned as officer-in-charge, and later was appointed as postmaster.

Buss purchased the business of John H. Eilers in March 1971. John had been in business in and around Sterling for 40 years.

Morris Weyers purchased the business and buildings of Schmidt Implement Co., in March 1971. Victor Schmidt had founded the business in 1948 and had operated it since then.

Rev. Wendell R. Debner of Omaha accepted a letter of call to St. John American Lutheran Church and was installed during the services May 21, 1971. He succeeded Rev. Kenneth Rust who had moved to Minnesota.

Bob’s Market, the new Cash and Carry Market, had its grand opening in a beautiful new building in July 1971.

Sterling School District 33 purchased the Alvie Bouwens building in the business district on Broadway for the Industrial arts department’s classrooms.

Marv’s Inn was almost destroyed by fire in 1971. It was the first major business fire in town for many years. The damaged building was rebuilt and remodeled.

A U. S. A. Jet plane, “in retirement”, was loaned to the people of Sterling for display and was placed in the north section of town along Highway 41. It was to remind one and all that this is the home of the Sterling Jets, athletes of Sterling High School.

In April 1971, Sterling’s local newspaper, the Johnson County Courier, had received the General Excellence Award in Class I from the Nebraska Press Association. The judging was based on mechanical workmanship, general appearance, make-up, news content and editorial content.

In December 1971, Maverick Media, Inc. of Syracuse purchased the Johnson County Courier, Inc. The Courier firm included Mr. and Mrs. Marion Packwood and Richard Packwood.

Mr. and Mrs. Nanco Nieveen became the new owners of Sterling Grain Co., in the beginning of 1972, after purchasing that business from Edmund Juilfs and Victor Schmidt.

Effective April 14, 1973, the Crab Orchard mail route was consolidated with the two Sterling routes, and many changes were made in local service. Charles Curtin and Richard Rosenthal were carriers, with Curtin serving the newly revised Rural Route 1, and Rosenthal being assigned to the new Sterling Route 2 and Crab Orchard route.

Wesley Keebler and David Wentz bought Wentz Feed Co., and the new firm, Keebler and Wentz Feed Co., Inc., began business in June 1973.

Mrs. Alma Thompson, postmaster, retired June 27, 1973, after 17 years in the postal service, and since 1971 as postmaster of Sterling. She was succeeded by Norval W. Woltemath, as officer-in-charge, and later as postmaster.

The Sterling Café had once again changed ownership. New owners in December 1973 were Harold and Mary Parrish of Auburn. The name of the café changed to “The Kozy Kitchen”.

The Rescue Squad had responded to 51 calls in 1973, clocking 126 hours out, and traveling 1,807 miles for these service calls.

Through the efforts of the community, the Plectron Drive was a success, and the Emergency Radio was installed and went into use in February 1974.

The Zink Mortuary was sold in June 1974 to the Fox Funeral Home of Beatrice and Adams. The Zink Mortuary had been in operation here since 1908. Raymond Zink had been in that business for 41 years. The new firm would continue to be called the Zink Mortuary, and would continue to operate in Sterling.

Three new businesses came to Sterling in December 1974. Linda’s Beauty Salon, owned by Mrs. Linda Johnson; Susie’s Salon, owned by Mrs. Susan Christline, and The Firing Pin, owned by Steven Lambert of Lincoln, and managed by Cal Christline of Sterling.

George Wusk opened his Maytag Laundromat in January 1975.

February 18, 1975 was Charter Night for the Sterling Area Jaycees, and a banquet made it a gala occasion.

On March 1, Harlan F. Rengstorf assumed his new duties as Associate County Judge.

Richard Klepper of Pawnee City succeeded Galen Miller as N. P. P. D. local manger on March 17, 1975. Mr. Miller had transferred to Bassett.

On June 21, Julie Salomons was named the Johnson County American Revolution Bicentennial Queen.

On June 25, Gus Warnke celebrated his 50th year of being in business in Sterling.

On July 4, 1975, Sterling had received its Bicentennial flag.

The new scoreboard was installed and in operation at the football field for the seasons games. Its completion was the result of a two-year fund raising drive.

On November 4, 1975, Shari Fischer of Sterling was crowned Nebraska Pork Queen at Columbus.

On November 11, the town dedicated a new flagpole.

In January 1976, Mrs. LaVerne Vermeer of Sterling designed a tapestry of Johnson County to go into the Nebraska Bicentennial Tapestry, representing all the counties in the state.

Jan Zink of Sterling, a student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, was honored at a banquet in March 1976 in Lincoln. She was recognized as the Outstanding Woman Athlete of the Year at the University.

In April 1976, the seniors of Sterling High School completed a Bicentennial Mural on one of the Sterling Lumber Company’s buildings. Much favorable comment was received for the young people’s efforts in this colorful and artistic project. The project was supervised by Mrs. Landis Rulla, art instructor.

The Sterling Woman’s Club made a Bicentennial quilt for a fund raising project.

May 11, 1976 was Richard Rathe Night in the school gymnasium, when the Sterling School Association honored Richard Rathe, who had retired after more than 25 years as Sterling school custodian.

The first installment of the History of Sterling appeared in the July 8, 1976 issue of the Johnson County Courier. This was an official Bicentennial project.

Sterling’s July 4th Religious Heritage Festival was a memorable day for the hundreds who attended this Bicentennial activity.

The annual Sterling Firemen’s Picnic July 13 and 14 centered on the Nation’s Bicentennial. The float parade was especially outstanding.

Starting on August 10, 1976, business changes came rapidly in Sterling. On that day Charles P. Gordon, who had been in business here for more than 26 years, sold Gordon’s Store to Richard and Joyce Scott. On August 11, 1976, Mrs. Doris Weber bought the Shields Grocery Store from Virgil and Jessie Shields, who had been owners of the store since 1968. Mrs. Weber would locate a ceramics, gift and flower shop at that location.

On August 12, 1976, Robert Benson purchased the Beauty and Barber Shop belonging to Mr. and Mrs. George Broers. The Broers had been owners and operators of their place of business for nearly 32 years. After some remodeling Mr. Benson would establish a Variety Store at that location. On August 23, 1976, James C. Young of Beatrice bought Marv’s Inn from Marvin and Carolyn Kress. The new business would operate as “Young’s Corner”.

On August 28, 1976, Dick Shea set a record as an auctioneer. The event was Dick Scott’s auction, and for 11 consecutive hours Shea and three assistants “cried” the sale, which offered principally the contents of the former Gordon’s Store. The assistants were Dick’s son, Paul Shea, also Jerry Kelley of Tecumseh and Don Vandertook of Panama.

On September 15, 1976, Mr. and Mrs. Gene Neely bought the Kozy Kitchen from Harold and Mary Parrish.

The Burlington Northern Depot was to be moved by the Jaycees and plans were made to us it as a future meeting place for the Jaycees, and for public gatherings.

In December 1976, Beverly Boden, age 4, of Nebraska City, received the Nebraska Hero Award for saving the life of her father, Arlyn Boden, son of Mr. and Mrs. August Boden of Sterling.

Author’s Note: This is the final installment of The History of Sterling which I wrote from my findings in existing files and records. I hope the history has brought a degree of pleasure to its readers. It has been my personal pleasure to share this interesting, fascinating and sometimes astonishing success story of a handful of pioneer people with much ambition and courage, great determination, and an abundance of faith.

Perhaps some parts of the history were overlooked and omitted. It would be difficult to avoid this in so many pages of research material. My thanks to everyone who helped in any way. – Mrs. Alma Thompson