

February 1984

# Fertile Reminder



## THE LITTLE TOWN OF FERTILE

By E. E. Brown

Oh! the little town of Fertile isn't boasting of her wealth,  
Isn't boasting of her boulevards or her crowded thoroughfares,  
But I want to tell you, now I've started,  
That her people are big hearted,  
And their bounty with the stranger freely shares.

Yes, there's grander towns than Fertile  
We're not denying that,  
And there's towns that boast a million souls or more.  
But if it's decent folks you're after,  
Who's souls are filled with laughter,  
You will find them here in Fertile  
And they're honest to the core.

Oh! the little town of Fertile isn't putting on no airs,  
Isn't striving for position, isn't striving for renown,  
But our people are straightforward  
And there's neither knave nor coward  
Living within the borders of our matchless little town.

Should your footsteps ever lead you to the little town of Fertile  
Situating in the valley where the classic Lime Creek flows,  
Where the sunshine and the shadows  
Lightly play upon the meadows  
And the dewdrops linger longest on the petal of the rose.

Where the spreading oak invites you,  
Where the cooling shade delights you,  
When the minnows in the sparkling waters play,  
Where the lasses and the laddies  
And their mammas and their daddies  
Will give you such a welcome that you'll always want to stay.

*Fertile Public Library*  
*Fertile*  
*La*





# HISTORY OF FERTILE, IOWA

The first settler in Fertile Township was William Rhodes who came to Iowa in 1856 at the age of nineteen and after stopping in Charles City for a short time, came to Fertile Township. While he was in Mason City he became acquainted with a man, who in conversation, told him of the existence of a mill site in this locality and he started out on a voyage of discovery. When he arrived at the spot which was at or near the present site of the village of Fertile, he admired the location. He had no measuring rod to determine how much back water he would have, so using his height as a guide, he tied sticks together and sighted the distance, placing them an equal distance apart. Through this procedure he found he could back the water around the curve three-fourths of a mile and this would take care of a 10-foot dam.

Late that evening he was preparing his supper over a crude fireplace he had made by digging a hole and placing stones in and around it. His coffee was boiling and his potatoes frying in the pan when he looked up and saw two Indians watching him. He became frightened but managed by his motions to show them he was cooking his meal. They nodded their heads and left. He was very uneasy and spent a restless night rolled up in his blanket among some bushes. The next morning he was up with the sun and left the locality.

He returned to Charles City, and making the necessary arrangements, purchased tools, supplies, etc., loaded up a wagon drawn by oxen and started back to the location and arrived August 6, 1856.

His first labor was to build a grindstone frame to grind his scythe that he might cut grass for his oxen.

Here he erected a humble log cabin, going to Owens Grove in Cerro Gordo County for lumber to roof it in. His home was 14x18 feet in size with a Dutch fireplace at one end. When he

had occasion to be absent from home it was his custom to chalk upon the door, "Walk in and help yourself." This fall deer were plentiful, wild fruits of all kinds were abundant, and he lived "in clover" as the saying is.

Mr. Rhodes was at this time a single man. The grateful wayfarers that often took advantage of his hospitality and used his cabin when he was absent would, in return for this accommodation, leave a note with their name and a gift of bacon or venison. He had the names of many people he never saw or knew.

Soon after completing his house he commenced to put in a dam across the creek for his mill, which was the first saw mill in the county. He had this completed and his saw mill ready for operation by the next July. He ran this mill until the spring of 1858 with quite a degree of success, when high water cut around the south end of the dam. Business was compelled to halt for a short time while this was repaired. He had obtained the order to saw the lumber for the new Court House in Mason City, and when the dam had again been cut away by high

water he had to cancel this large order. This year of 1858 was known to all the old settlers as the "wet season" and Lime Creek was not fordable at any time during that summer, so repairs had to wait until the following winter. In the latter part of February, 1859, he got some help, cut out the ice in the creek and extended his mill dam 50 feet. This dam held until 1929 when high water washed it out.

He was married on July 5, 1859, to Hannah Pence. August 22, 1862, he enlisted in Co. B, 32nd Iowa, Infantry. He was discharged in 1865 and returned to his home in Fertile, Iowa, where his wife and baby, John Fenton, had remained with her parents. John Fenton was the first white child born here.

In 1868 he erected a grist mill to replace the saw mill. This building was 34x42 feet and 2½ stories high and had the capacity of turning out some 50 barrels of first class flour a day. The key to the first mill is a prized possession of Mr. and Mrs. James Ouverson.

The next to arrive and settle near here were William K. Fankell and his brother-in-law E. S. Winans in 1857.

These were all the settlers until 1865 when Henry and Charles Platts settled here.

An early incident in Mr. Rhodes' life was a funeral attended by 12 people in all. Andrew Peter Nelson died and his coffin was the wagon box he built for the covered wagon, in which his family arrived. His grave was the cellar he dug for the cabin he intended to build for his family. A cemetery was started here and a church established later on.

## "COLOMA PETE"

The old timers of Fertile have discussed this old character many times while sitting around on cracker barrels at Andrew Grove's store. His real name has vanished but he was known as Coloma Pete because he told of being in the California Gold Rush and of panning gold in Coloma County. He came to Fertile as a teamster on a freight outfit shortly after the Civil War and decided to stay. He was tall and erect with iron gray hair hanging down over his shoulders and had a bushy beard. He lived in a cabin North of the mill and supported himself by trapping and fishing. One day he paid for his supplies with gold dust. He had approximately \$80 in gold and



did not tell where he found it. Soon people followed him and found that he walked three miles east of Fertile to Willow Creek which runs into the Winnebago River. He soon discovered the people watching him and was much amused as he watched them try to find gold. The excitement soon died down as young and old tried their skill and failed to find gold. He told them that there was so little gold there that only an expert like himself could find it.

He died in his cabin one night in 1877 or 1878. His rifle is still in the community and is a muzzle loading, percussion Kentucky type.

CORRECTION--CORRECTION--CORRECTION

In last month's issue of the REMINDER, in the article concerning the amount of money walking out of local communities instead of being spent at home, the figure given was \$18,615. It should have read: "Did you know that 40.3% of the money Worth County residents have available for retail purchases is spent outside of the county? In 1982, that was \$18,615,000."

We want to thank each one of you for your prayers, cards and visits while my mother, Ethel Deuel, was in the Manly Care Center and the hospital. After her death, we want to thank you for your messages of sympathy, memorials, flowers and for food brought to our house. A special thanks to Pastor and Mrs. Ganz for their visit. May God bless all of you for demonstrating to us His meaning of Love.

Vera, Roger Humphrey & family

FERTILE LUMBER AND HARDWARE 797-2437  
Rent the Rug Doctor

FERTILE FEED SERVICE 797-2242  
Complete Livestock Feed Needs  
Softner Salt, Dog & Cat Food

RAY JENNINGS 454-2707  
Complete Auction Service

PETAL SHOPPE 357-5030 or 357-5026  
Flowers for all Occasions  
1714 7th Ave. N, Clear Lake  
Free daily hospital delivery

LARSON PLUMBING AND HEATING 797-2219

OLD MILL ANTIQUES 797-2490

PRIVATE NOTICES, INCLUDING THANK YOUS AND advertisements, are \$1 for the first 15 words and 5¢ for each additional word, including each digit of the telephone number. If news of different organizations that you are accustomed to seeing in the REMINDER is missing in any issue, it is because the information has not been turned in before publication. The REMINDER is published the second week of each month. If you have anything you want in an issue, please give it to Ruth B. Oувerson by the last day of the month preceding publication.

A COMMUNITY YOUTH CANTATA is being planned for Sunday, May 6th. It will involve the youth of the community, grades 3-8, and will be presented at the Church of Christ. A free-will offering will be taken to pay for the books and the accompaniment tape. Please call Mrs. Dean Oувerson, 797-2716, or Mrs. Dan Miller, 797-2704 by Feb. 18th, if you would like to be a part of this fun group.

I take this means to thank all the dear friends and relatives who remembered me while in the hospital, with cards, gifts, flowers, telephone calls and prayers. The Lord answered your prayers in my behalf for which I praise Him.

Gratefully yours, Mabel I. Elthon

DO YOU NEED HELP? CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES are offered to the people of North Central Iowa who are victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse or rape. Services are also extended to others in need of help through a cooperative information and referral network with other area agencies and services. PHONE 424-9133, 24 hours.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to everyone in our community for sending cards, gifts and flowers and for their prayers, for the visits and prayers of Pastor and Mrs. Max Wilhelm and Pastor and Mrs. Dennis Ganz, and from my prayer partners since returning home from surgery at NIMC.

Maxine Rye

LOTS OF GOOD CLOTHING AVAILABLE at the Community Clothes Closet in the Community Center. Open every afternoon.

IF YOU ARE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, and not registered to vot, cards are available from the Postmaster or the City Clerk.

GRANT LIVEWIRE LASSIES met on Jan. 16 at the Community Center with 12 members present. The hostesses were Lori Buchanan and Alisa Suby. A talk about drugs was being held in the lunch room, so we decided to go to that instead of holding our regular meeting.

We had our Christmas Party on Dec. 30 with 11 members present. The hostesses were the leaders. We had a short meeting, played games, had lunch and opened gifts.

Reporter - Kris Kirschbaum

FERTILE FUN FLICKS--films will be shown at the Community Center, Sat., Feb. 18 at 7 p.m.

JORDAN'S MIDLAND SERVICE 797-2677  
Complete Automotive Service

TOM'S SALES--RAY SANDIFER 797-2681

FIRST STATE BANK 896-2265  
Serving North Central Iowa  
Offices--Manly, Hanlontown,  
Kensett and Plymouth

HOFFMAN CRAFTS 797-2714  
701 West Main, Fertile

#### CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWS

We have just started a new Bible study class for all adults in the congregation and community. The class meets at 7:30 Thursday evenings and will run through the month of May. The first five lessons are entitled "The Bible", in which we will be discussing origin, divisions and books. The second section consists of Old Testament geography and history. The third section covers Old Testament institutions. Study books will be available for \$3 and are recommended, but not required. We will study the New Testament in the Fall sessions beginning in September. The class will meet in the Fellowship Hall in the church building and lasts for one hour, with babysitting provided. Contact Jean VanDenBosch for further information.

The church will participate in a Fifth Sunday Singpiration at the Mason City Church of Christ on Feb. 26 at 7 p.m.

Christian Workers will be held on Feb. 27 at the home of Bonnie Kuns. The lesson will be given by Mary Petersen.

High School Bible study will be meeting at

the parsonage on Wednesday evenings at 7.

A new supply of Good News Bibles, New International Bibles and concordances will be arriving shortly from the American Bible Society. These inexpensive Bibles and study helps are available through the church.

Every Sunday: Bible School 9:30 a.m.  
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.  
Evening Adult & 6:30 p.m.  
Youth Groups

#### LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWS

Every Sunday: Fertile worship 9:00 a.m.  
Christian Ed. 10:15 a.m.  
Pilot Knob wor. 10:30 a.m.  
Christian Ed. 9:15 a.m.

#### CIRCLE MEETINGS

Ruth, 2/21, 7:30 pm, Naomi Pederson  
Esther, 2/15, 1:30 pm, Reva Anderson  
Mary, 2/23, 9:30 am, Delores Suby at church  
Reb., 2/23, 2:00 pm, Betty W. at church  
Ruth, 2/20, 7:30 pm, Myrtle Gudmonson  
Sarah, 2/20, 7:30 pm, Ruth Oakland

Sunday, Feb. 19, at 7:30 p.m. there will be a program on "Planning for Success" at the Fertile Church, led by Scott Lux of Northern Trails Area Ed. Agency. All High School Youth are invited to participate.

#### SPECIAL SERVICES

Mini-Bible Conference to feature "CHURCH GROWTH SEMINAR". Our 1984 mid-winter Bible Conference will feature Pastor Paul Gunderson of the LEM who will lead us in a special "Church Growth Seminar" Sunday, Feb. 26-Wed., Feb. 29. Services and meetings will be as follows (at Fertile Luth.): Feb. 26: WORSHIP: Fertile-9:00 am; Pilot Knob-10:30 am, Pastor Gunderson preaching with special emphasis for the children. YOUTH SUPPER MEETING: 5:30 pm at Fertile, Pastor Gunderson sharing. CHURCH GROWTH SEMINAR: 7:00 pm in Fertile basement. Feb. 27-29: 9:30 am Bible hour; 7:00 pm Church Growth Seminar. Each session will follow this format: 7-7:45 - Our Parish Evaluation; 7:45-8:15 - Coffee Fellowship; 8:15-9 - Using Your Gifts, Inner Healing, Dying to Self, The Power of the Holy Spirit. WELCOME! PLAN TO COME AND GROW!