



Jones County

Historical Review

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A silo company is remembered

Editor's note: The following memoir was written by Esther Gray of Anamosa.

Seeing some pictures of the fall harvest on television last night, started a train of thought that could reach from here to Timbuktu — everybody knows where that place is: The place where dreams wind up. Sure, I thought you knew!

Once, long ago, Anamosa had a big fair, "a really big show," every fall, at harvest time. (This piece of "history" concerns a bit of nostalgia, some 70 or 75 years ago)

It was held just north of town, about one and one-half miles on what is now Highway 151, but then it was just a dirt road to Monticello. (They also had a fair, but this is our story.)

There were four men in Anamosa "who had a dream," like Martin Luther King and though they are all dead long ago, they didn't die like Martin.

These four men formed a company to

make and sell silos! Not the tall, haughty blue glass ones, but squat, round ones, made of cement blocks, in our own place along the Milwaukee Railroad tracks.

Three C.W.s

The men were three C.W.s and one D.W.: Charles W. Gray, Charles W. Jimmers, Charles W. McMahon and Dave W. Russell. The "W"s all stood for William!

But wait 'til you hear the "rest of the story." (I sound like Paul Harvey, but I'm telling you "the facts!")

These men really believed in their product, and also in advertising! The "rest of the story" proves that.

That year, the year I'm chronicling, they erected a real cement stave silo on about a 12-foot piece of fairground land. It was 10 feet wide and 8 feet long, from the front door to the back of the silo, and it was 8 feet high. The "door" was a heavy curtain.

It was furnished inside with an armless rocking chair. The boys had laid boards for a floor. I had sent out a rug (rag), and a kerosene lamp for light. And that was all just for the ladies who had no other place to go to nurse their babies!

Girls didn't just flip 'em out in any company in THOSE days. If they just had to feed them, there was usually an ample-skirted grandma around with an open umbrella held to properly shield mother and baby! There were very few bottles and no pacifiers.

I do not remember, but I think that was the only year the "little silo" played its role so well. Times were already beginning to "harden up!"

But to get back to the "company," which I do with a relish — "generic," no brand names! The boys had divided the state of Iowa into four quadrants, and could build silos for any farmer who bought one, and there were a few bought as far away as 75 miles.

They were so well built, that many of them are still standing and being filled with silage. In those days, it was just chopped corn, stalks and all!

"Thumbnail" sketches

Now, for a few "thumbnail" sketches of the "boys," beginning in reverse order.

D. W. Russell had come from "the East" — New York, I think, with his sister Lizzie, who was his housekeeper. They decided to "ride the train" until they saw something they would like to build a home on, or in.

So, they "detrained" in Anamosa and lived in the only Hotel in town while D. W. got lumber and a crew, and built a beautiful home on S. Booth Street.

It (the house) even had a porch that went clear across the front of it! But they had found what they wanted — a place to live where they could look out and see farmland, unlimited!

Wonder what they would say if they could see it now. Still a lovely home; porch is screened-in now, of course, and Lizzie would delight in the flowers around it!

But they never had any company from "the East," and did not "mingle" here, though Lizzie was a friendly, kind-hearted

(cont. on page 2)



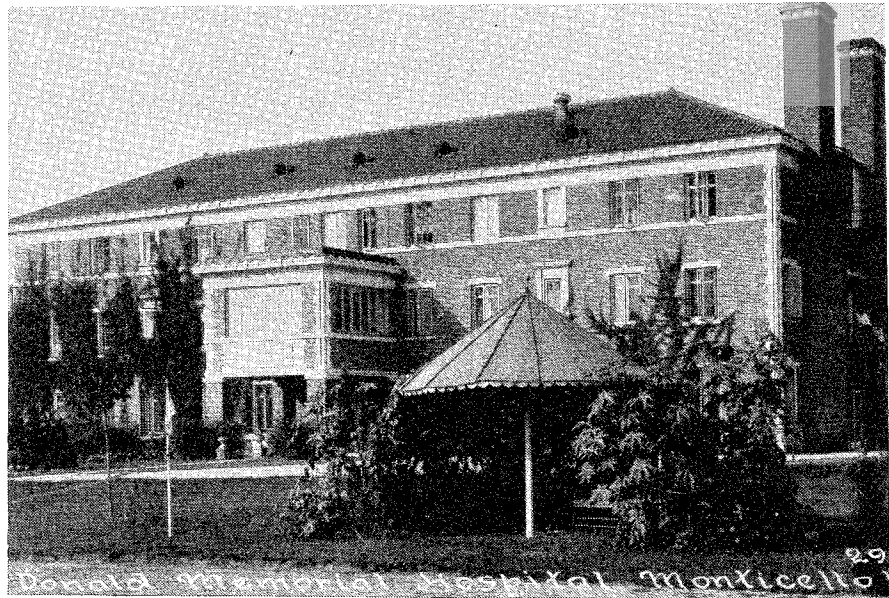
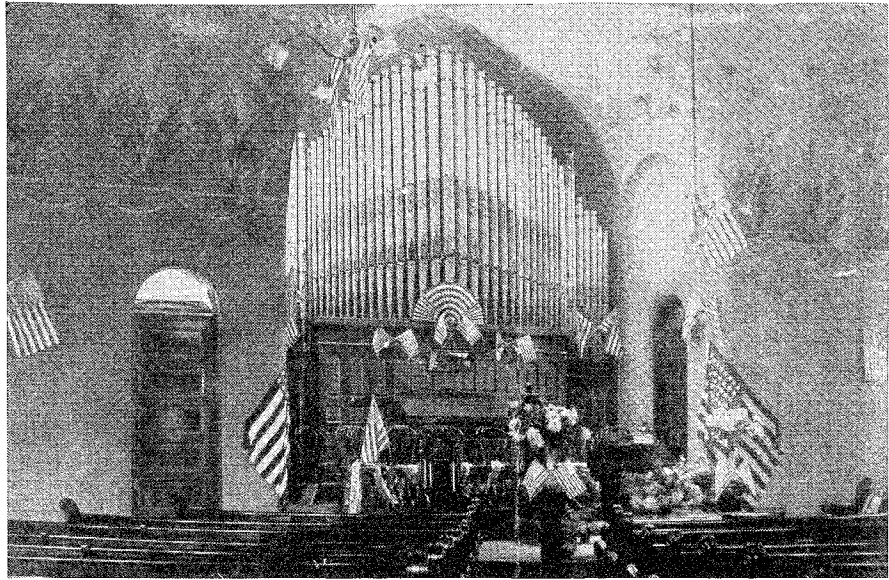
THE ABOVE is an early photo of the corner of West Third Street and Chestnut Street in Monticello. It is one of several early photos included in this issue of The Review for the enjoyment of Society members.

A look at some society photographs

EDITOR'S NOTES: The photos which appear on this page and the following two pages are courtesy of the Historical Society or Historical Society members.

Some of the photos are identified, others are not. All are intended for the enjoyment of Historical Society members.

Members who can provide information, or additional information about the photos should contact Society President C. L. "Gus" Norlin.



A silo company is remembered—

(cont. from page 1)

person. She kept "The Company" books for D. W.

"Thumbnail" number two: C. W. McMahon and his wife were sort of "loners," too, though they had lived fairly close — I think from Chicago. They bought a nice little home higher up the hill on S. Booth, about a block from the Russells', and one and one-half blocks from Main Street. That house, too, is still standing, and is kept looking so nice.

C. W. was the company treasurer. They had an occasional visitor or two — not many.

"Thumbnail" number three: C. W. Jimmers lived only two or three houses from Main Street, also on S. Booth. He was

a good helper when he could be away from home, but he had an invalid wife who died of cancer after bearing him one son. I don't know anything about the son, except that he did live to grow up.

C. W.'s second wife, who lives in the original home on S. Booth, is a good friend of mine, and partly the inspiration for this article, as I knew so much more about C. W. in his early life than she did.

"Thumbnail" number four: Charles W. Gray will be the hardest to do, as the memories crowd in faster than I can write them down! I could never have spent my time "so foolishly" as "scribbling," when I could be doing something productive.

He was President (self-elected I'm sure) and General Manager of the Silo Com-

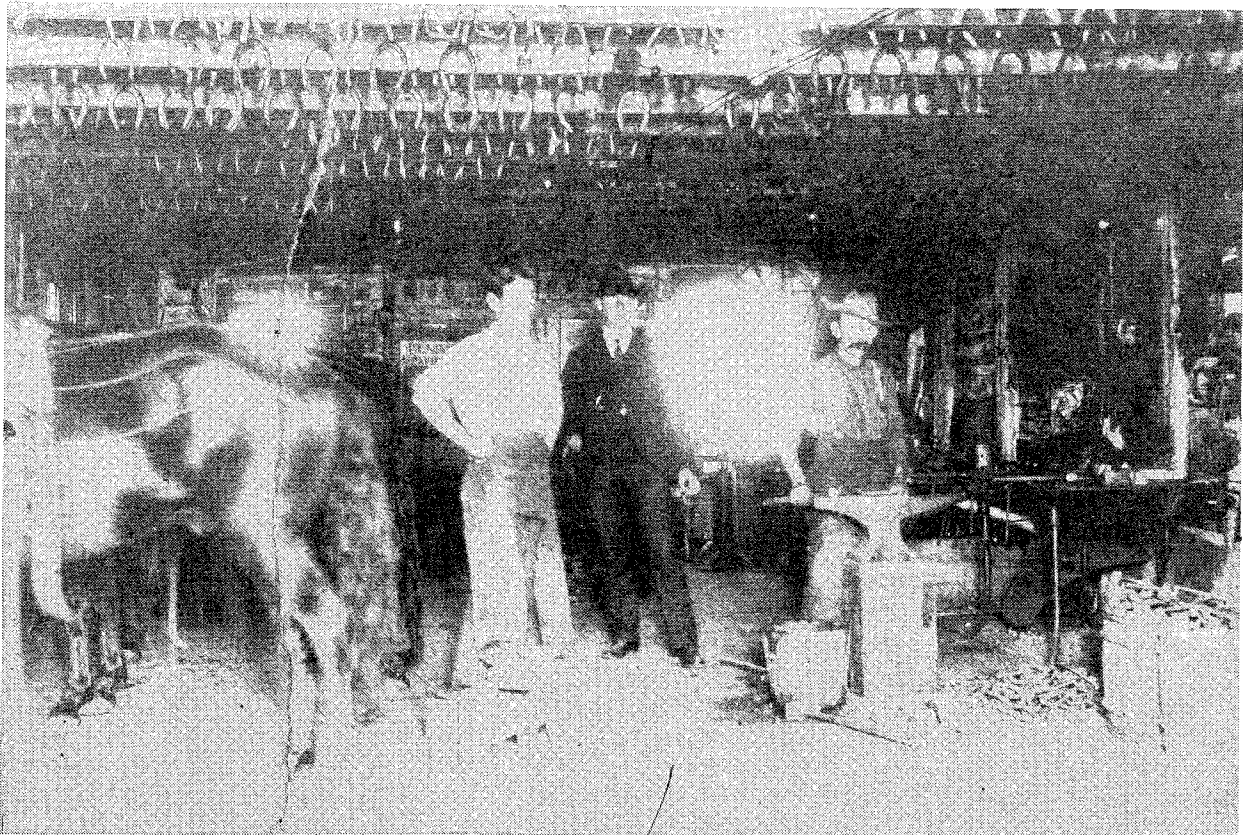
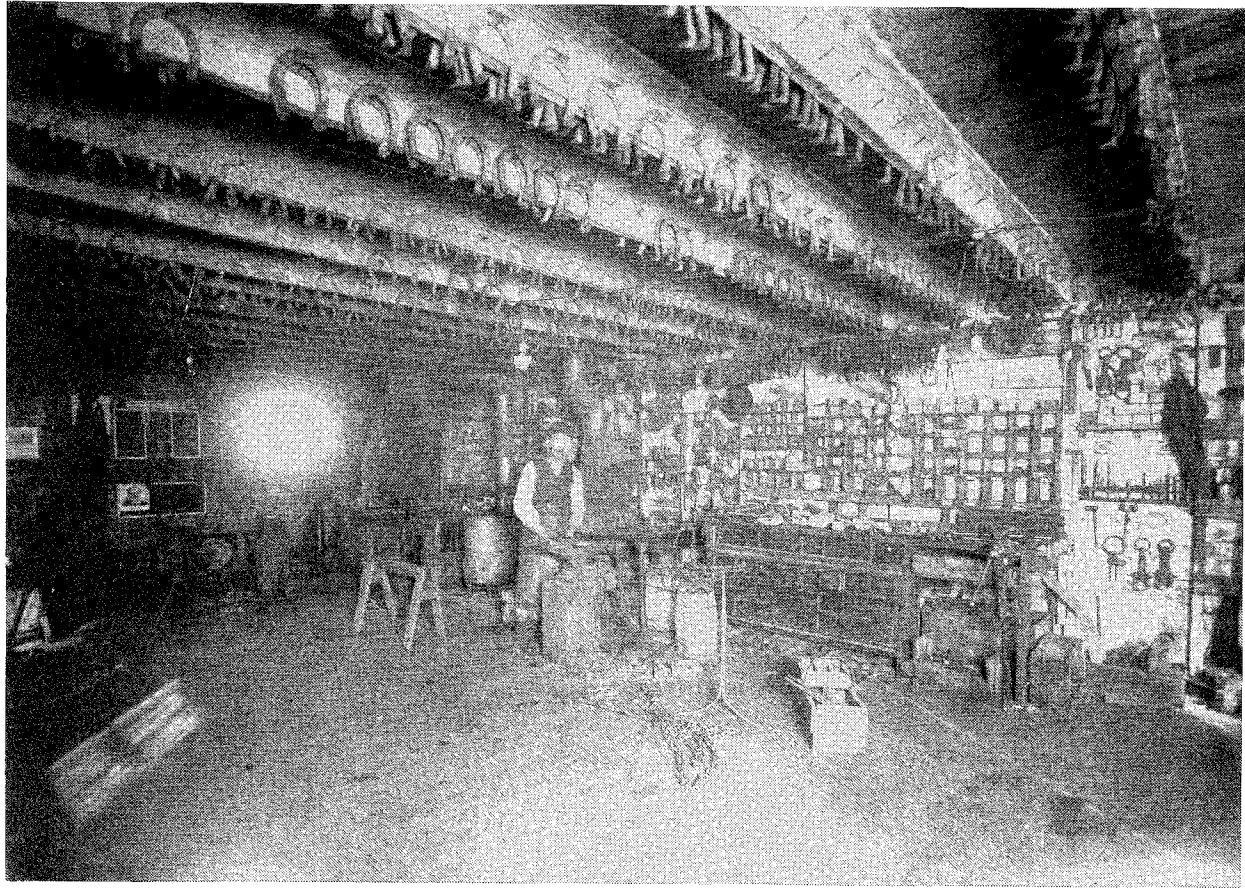
pany, and so full of ideas for other people to carry out!

One time he parked his car too close to the railroad tracks while he was inspecting a carload of grain. (Forgot to mention that he was a grain, hog and cattle buyer, years after the silo business.)

When the train pulled out, the overhang caught his car and pulled it one-quarter of a mile before it "let loose." And C. W. ran after it and threatened to sue the Northwestern Railroad for letting its car jump the track and wreck his car!

Needless to say, he didn't sue, and his family teased him about it for years!

But he's been gone now 16 years, and I HATE widowhood! But I don't want anyone else. He was mine!



THE ABOVE PHOTOS are of Meyer Blacksmith Shop, 327 East 1st St., Monticello, 1902-1904. Photos courtesy of Mildred Meyer, Monticello.

President's message

Sorry that issue four followed so closely on the heels of issue three. Most of the material had been ready for issue three, however, due to a tremendously heavy schedule in just my every-day work, and additional work at the museum — there just wasn't enough time to get all of the jobs done.

The Society has just received a deed to the five-plus acres of prime ground located east of the Monticello Oakwood cemetery, which ground was donated to the people of Jones County by Mrs. LaVon Pasker as a memorial to her late husband and son, Jerry and Gary Pasker. This plot of ground will be designated as an "AGELESS PRAIRIE TRACT," i.e., it will be planted to the grasses and flowers native to this area, and which were here at the time of the first settlers, and before the virgin sod was turned.

REMEMBER: THIS ISSUE OF THE "HISTORICAL REVIEW" is the last issue of Volume 7, which means that the subscription for most people (about 95 percent) runs out. As mentioned many times before, we don't send out reminders — we just can't afford to. The subscription rates are based on the actual cost of having the issues printed, which leaves no margin for postage and printing to send out expired notices.

You will be wise to immediately send in your renewal. Every year we have a number who have forgotten, and then when it is remembered, we get requests for the back issues that have been missed.

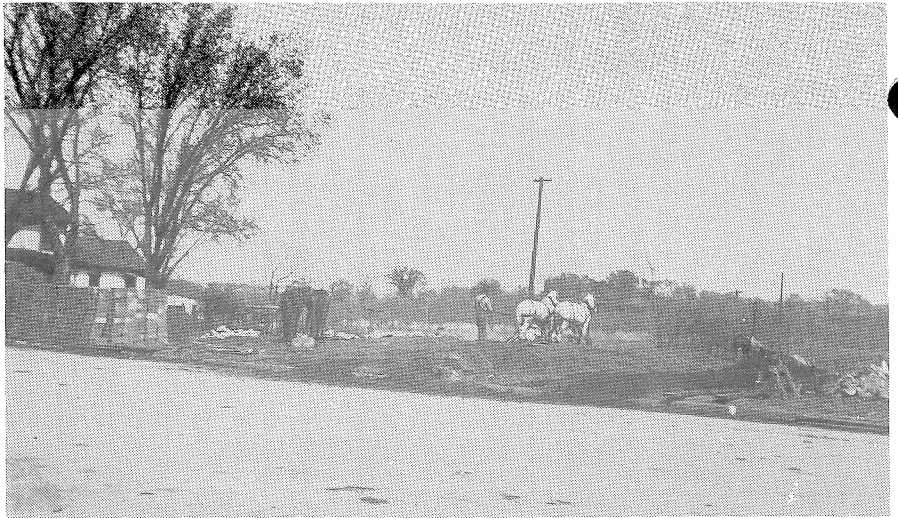
USUALLY there are none. We only have printed enough to fill subscribers needs with just a few additional. Again, it is a case of not being able to afford to have many extras printed.

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There are some extremely interesting stories coming out in Volume 8.

Have a good year.

Sincerely
C. L. "Gus" Norlin, president



THE ABOVE photo shows the late John Rickels preparing the foundation and building site in the area just north of the present Energy Manufacturing Plant. Year unknown. Photo courtesy of Society member Bob Helgens.

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