



A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW of Dresden probably was taken from the top of the East Elevator. On the left, looking north: McIntyre Meat Market, Joseph Boeger home, the Caswell Hotel (later Bainter Hotel), Rhodes and Boardman Store, Still Brothers building, the Steel building, Muirhead Bank on corner,

Leonard Hardware, the Buggy Shop, Yeakle General Merchandise, a harness store, Dr. Funk's office and Ira Jennings house. The building on right is the Yeakle Hotel.

— Photos, collection of Dalene Gawith

## Mini-city part of past in Dresden

The Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission will offer its annual local history tour on Sunday, visiting Dresden, Clayton and Jennings. This is the third of a series of stories about the three towns. For details, call Ella Betts, (785) 475-3557 or Mary Henzel, (785) 470-0218.

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"What do you think of when you hear anything said about the town of Dresden? You probably think quiet, boring, small or peaceful," said Lori (Vahling) Kollman, who wrote those words for an Academic Fair when she was in high school at Jennings.

"Those may be what the town is like today, but imagine a mini-city where there are lots of businesses, stagecoaches delivering people to hotels, kids playing in the school yard, the blacksmith fitting horse-shoes and a shoemaker trying to make the perfect shoes to fit his customer.

"The town of Dresden was established on May 23, 1888 at exactly 10 a.m. Archie McIntire built the first house in Dresden and the first postmaster was Ernest G. Bacon. Journey Rhodes was the first man to carry and deliver the mail."

The Dresden Star, Mrs. Kollman wrote, was the earliest newspaper and the last to be printed was the Dresden Beacon back in the 1930s. At one time, there were over 60 occupations throughout the year to support as many as 375 people.

Phyllis (Sewell) May, still a resident of Dresden, said she was born on a farm south of Dresden, and when she was growing up, she often accompanied her mother, Hazel (Derby) Sewell, to town to trade at the People's Store.

"When Mom bought chicken feed, I got to go along and pick out the sacks, and when the sacks were empty, I would get a new dress."

Lillian (Skubal) Sulzman grew up in the town and later moved back.

"After moving away, I returned to Dresden after I was widowed in 1958," she said, "and lived in a trailer house on my parents' farm with my two small boys until I remarried and moved to a farm southeast of Selden.

"We lived there 17 years before moving to Dresden in February 1977, when five of our sons were still at home. I have called Dresden home for 31 years. I love living here; it is the best of two worlds, like living in the country but with wonderful, helping and caring neighbors nearby. I plan to live here as long as I am able to live alone."

"Roller skating was one of the

kids' fun times," recalled Mildred (Karls) Welter, who was born in Dresden in 1923. "I have lived here for over 84 years and have seen the population go from over 300 to the present 41 persons.

"Fourth of July was an all-day event held in town. The farm folks came, bringing their produce to sell, then the fireworks started with the usual firecrackers. Some sparklers and a few other fireworks were set off, followed by free movies for all.

"Memorial Day was a day so many former Dresdenites came to decorate family graves. We always had outstanding programs, lots of home talent singers and musicians and speakers. The school band led the procession to the cemetery for the military rites by our Legionnaires.

"The most famous event for Dresden, which brought people from far and near many years ago, was at Christmas time when the school and playground were transformed into a colorful wonderland with thousands of lights and images on display.

Dolores (Soderlund) Depperschmidt, who now lives in Oberlin, said, "In all the time I lived in Dresden, I liked it and felt safe."

Dalene (Sewell) Gawith of Dresden wrote a book in 2004, which includes memories of many present and former residents.

"Dresden has always been my home," she wrote. "I have lived on four different farms around Dresden, and then in 1972, we moved into Dresden. I like the open spaces between homes and the fact that one can look out and see the area fields, pastures and cattle.... I am too much of a farm girl to enjoy city life."

Paul Welter recalled growing up as one of 14 children.

"We all attended the Dresden School," he said, "and during the dust storms, my dad, Peter Welter, would walk in to the school so he could see that all of us arrived home safely. He would have us hold hands, as sometimes we could not see where we were."

He recalled Saturday nights in the '30s when the main event was free silent movies sponsored by Karls Grocery with free popcorn. Cattle drives came into town from all directions, and the animals were herded into the stockyard pens before loading into cars on the siding of the Rock Island Railroad. Cattle were driven from as far away as Oberlin, he said, so they could be shipped to the stockyards in Kansas City, Omaha or Denver. He also said he remembers when Dresden boasted 40 businesses and has even

made of list of them.

"I was quite a tomboy," said Arlee Smith Stegeman Williams, of Westminster, Colo., "always going with my dad and helping him. When I was about 6, he would take me to the field with him so I could drive the Model T back home. He would set the lever on the steering wheel and start me on my way. It was a half mile home, and when I got to the corner of our yard, I would turn off the switch key, the motor would die and I would park by the windmill."

She says she still thinks of Dresden as being her home and comes back several times a year and stays in the house where her mother lived.

"Thinking of my Bainter grandparents brings back some very special memories to me," said Gayle Bainter. "Grandpa and I would go out the back door, cut across the block to the Bowman Bank, cross the intersection and walk down to Spaun's Drug Store.

"I would get an ice-cream cone and grandpa a cigar. One evening as the train was going through, it really blew its whistle. We wondered why. The next morning when we reached the drug store, we heard that the mule belonging to Elf Foster had been hit and killed by the train.

"One of Dresden's most colorful residents was Col. Glenn Jones, who died in 1966 at age 88 after many years as an auctioneer, editor, poet, newspaper correspondent, farmer and cobbler. He was correspondent for a little weekly newspaper, The Dresden Sunflower, writing under the name of 'Smiling Ikey.' The Jones family tradition as auctioneers was carried on by his sons, Pete and Jesse and a grandson, Bob Jones."

A lifelong resident of Dresden, Keith Muirhead said, "Dresden had a good pinochle den, which was in a building about 12 feet square, owned by Col. Glenn Jones. They had one table of cards and 25 to 30 players. The first four players to arrive would start playing.

"The two that won the game out of three kept on playing. The other two gave their places to new players and this went on all evening long. They all wanted to win the game but the main emphasis was to ram your opponent. When you got rammed, it cost you five cents, and that was the way they paid the light bill."

Russell Rhodes added, "The most outstanding feature I like about Dresden is the good well water, without the addition of chlorine. We have goats sheep, chickens, also wild rabbits in Dresden and an



DRESDEN'S BASEBALL TEAM in the summer of 1911 includes (front row, from left) Hugh Campbell, Ed Campbell, Alf Foster, George Fisher, Bill Fulton, Glenn "Ikey" Jones, and (back row) Wes Metzler, Elf Foster, Ab Harold, Harry Bates, Tobe Harold, Jess Harold, and Bill Roughton.

occasional deer or coyote comes through; along with the traveling salesmen. The soil is good, so I can garden organically and people take pride in their yards."

### DRESDEN HISTORY

Mrs. Gawith told the early history of Dresden in her book. The town grew from the visions and dreams of settlers who felt it was the place where they wanted to make their home, she wrote.

The site was on the grassy rolling plains about two miles south of the Prairie Dog Creek and along the surveyed line of the Rock Island Railroad. With assurance from the railroad that this would be the main line between Chicago and Denver, a group of eastern Kansas land promoters came and surveyed and plotted the town even before a post office was established.

Dresden had all the makings of a boom town, she wrote. The Rock Island provided passengers, mail, freight and shipping services for a large area, with even people from Oberlin using these services.

In 1901, Xavier Dempewolf traded for property in Dresden that included a livery stable, horses, harness, buggies, surreys and spring wagons. After he had been in business a short time, he saw the need for a stage line to carry passengers between Oberlin and Dresden, and he obtained a government contract to carry mail on the stage.

The town continued to grow and by 1910 boasted of 300 residents and some 35 businesses. Dresden became a section headquarters for the railroad track crews.

"It was fun to watch the trains go through Dresden and wave at the people riding on the train," recalled Donna Gawith Lamm. "We would also wave at the engineers and the men riding in the cabooses."

Jeanette Gawith Bosch added, "Life was carefree and there was always time to visit with our neighbors or walk around town. One of the jobs Jennie Muirhead gave me when I was 6 or 7, was to be a candlelighter at the church. Community activities were always a



THE PEOPLES STORE in Dresden was one of the most popular businesses in town. It was owned by Florian "Flory" Karls from 1920 to 1974, when Mr. Karls (above) had a quitting-business sale.

big part of my life, which included Easter, May Day, Bible School, and Santa at the People's Store with bags of goodies.

Joan Betts wrote in a history of the town in the 1979 Centennial Edition of The Oberlin Herald, "Records show the town ... was given the name 'Dresden' by the organizers. It is believed the town was named after Dresden, Germany, since large numbers of German settlers moved to the Dresden-Leoville area in the late 1800s.

An illustrated brochure of Decatur County compiled in 1900 by E.M. Coldren, editor of The Oberlin Herald, described Dresden:

"This little town of 175 people is one of the liveliest places in the county for its size. It is on the Rock Island railroad, situated on the high divide between the Prairie Dog and the Solomon rivers....

"Frugal and industrious, the people have been more than successful,

and the majority of them today are well off, have fine buildings, good horses, plenty of hogs and cattle, and are contented and happy people. A large Catholic church a short distance from the town gives a majority of these people a chance to worship with the denomination of their choice. A good public school is also sustained."

Eunice (Bainter) Wenger, a native of Dresden, who moved back to Oberlin with her husband Clifford to retire, summed up thoughts of many:

"The memories of the people and events when I lived in Dresden are good ones, and they certainly influenced choices I made in my later life. Ah, what a blessing it was to have been a small child surrounded by family and friends in the mid-1930s in the town of Dresden, Kan."