



A Trip Down a Lane Filled with Herb Elrod's Memories

By Don Daniel

The following story comes from a taped interview given by Herb Elrod during a monthly meeting of the Denton Community Historical Society. The text is not Herb's exact wording, but every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible as to his meaning. This transcript has been compiled by Don Daniel along with a personal interview with James Herb Elrod who passed away on December 13, 2007.



Photo courtesy of Elrod Family. Herb Elrod on his 90th birthday.

The timeline for Herb's parents started with John D. Elrod being born in Sparta, Tennessee. He moved to Ashland, Nebraska, then to North Dakota, and then seven miles south of Pleasant Dale, Nebraska which is in Seward County and then to Lancaster County. John D.'s father was killed while working in the timber. At the age of 13, John

was sent to Ashland, Nebraska, to live with friends of John's parents. Those friends were Leon and Sadie Barber Mays. John worked for Levi Mays, a carpenter, and met Florence Elizabeth Mays in Ashland where she was born.

The Fuller people, who lived west of Ashland, Nebraska, were friends of Sadie Barber Mays. John D. Elrod and Florence Elizabeth Mays wed in 1907. She was 22 years old. Herb was born in 1909. Two years later, 1911, Les was born and Bernard was born in 1914.

John D. and Florence Elizabeth took a ten-year lease on the Fuller land, but farmed it for only 6 years. At that time Mrs. Fuller died and her daughter, who Herb said was "a little devil" wanted the Elrod family off of the farm and offered them the cattle, horses and machinery if they would move. The attorney said that was a good deal and so they moved. They searched the "Nebraska Farmer" magazine for land for sale in Nebraska but found none that they wanted.

Herb was born in Ashland, Nebraska, and was 6 years old when the family moved to North Dakota. His family took their livestock and moved to Ambacrombie N.D. They were renting the land. The family lived in a caboose. They moved their gang

plow, 3 cows, 6 horses, 6-foot disc plow, 6-foot binder.

In North Dakota they planted 320 acres of wheat with a 6 foot drill and harvested with a 6 foot binder. They also raised flax, barley, and oats. . They hauled water from the town of Kent, Minnesota, which was across the Red River from the farm. They went once a week to get the water. There was a cistern under the kitchen to store the precious water. The livestock drank their water from the river, and there was an artesian well by the barn that flowed into the stock tank for the livestock. "But it was not good for drinking."

This was a Norwegian community and many did not speak English. Winters froze them out. Mom said, "We will move if it's the last thing we do." The winter temperatures ran from -40 to -50 degrees (below zero).

In 1918 the family moved. They sold the wheat for \$6 a bushel (it was during World War I). They moved the machinery on a flat railroad car (\$75 a car), and the cattle in a cattle car, an immigrant car for a family for \$14. along with the household goods from Ambacrombie to Township P, Seward County Nebraska.

They moved to the Christian/Herman land 7 miles south of Pleasant Dale, Nebraska. The land was near District 76 school house then 3/4 west and 1/4 south into the field. They paid \$20 per acre for Seward County land.

"We had neighbors!" Herb said. Folks we got acquainted with first were Albert and Millie Petsch, the Novak's, the Melichar's, Bert Haist. We unloaded the immigrant railroad cars and took up residence in Seward County, Nebraska.

It took 10-15 wagons to help move. We only lived in Seward County for 3-4 years. . Florence Elizabeth's father (Herb's grandfather) built the house in Seward County. Herb was 11-years old and hauled lumber from Crete, 5 miles with a team and a wagon running gear He hauled 20-foot lengths of 2 x 4's for a two-story house in 1921-22.

In the spring Herb's dad would put him on the cultivator. He would cultivate on Mrs. Vaverka's place. Mrs. Vaverka lived alone southwest of Elrods. She would bring coffee and kolaches out to Herb.

Herb remembers District 76 school had double desks and that he and Tony Patak sat together District 76 had 28 children in school and there was a bench that went all the way around the wall in that classroom and there was a recitation bench that was in the front of the teacher. Some of the teachers were: Carmen Brady, Helen Bromwell, Myrtle Haist, and Walter Bottrell.

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He usually carried beef sandwiches or bread and syrup in his lunch pail.

When asked if Herb was a good student; he said, "he didn't want to talk about it" but then went on to

A big change in life came next. Two sections of land became available in Lancaster County, section 33 in Denton precinct and section 4 in Highland precinct, known as Olaf Berggren land. The land agent told John Elrod, "Opportunity knocks just once", and

Report of Treasurer to Annual Meeting

Of Receipts and Expenditures of District Funds, for the Year Ending July 23
 Wencil B. Brachak Treasurer

DATE			ITEMS - FROM WHOM AND FOR WHAT RECEIVED OR PAID	RECEIPTS	
Month	Day	Year		Dollars	Cts.
			On Hand from last year	113	59
Sept 22	1922		Thos. Daniel		74
Sept 22	1922		Mrs. Carmen Brady Teach. 1 mo		75
Sept 22	1922		University Pub. Co		73
Oct. 28	1922		Mrs. Carmen Brady Teaching 1 mo.		76
"	"	"	Corbett Lumber Co. Coal.		77
Dec 22	"	"	Mrs. Carmen Brady Teaching 1 mo		78
Sept. 22	"	"	County Treas.	200	16
"	"	"	App. Fund.	48	15
Dec 22	"	"	Dr. A. O. Skinner ^{Sup. School}		79
Dec 29	"	"	Mrs. Carmen Brady Teaching 1 mo		80
Jan 30	1923	"	" " " " " "		81
"	"	"	Jon. Hodejs' cobr.		82
Febr	1923	"	County Treas.	200	17
"	"	"	App. Fund	26	91 18
"	27	"	Mrs. Carmen Brady Teach. 1 mo		83
Mar. 2	"	"	Nbr. School Sup. Co. sup.		84
Mar. 19	"	"	School Inv. City Nat. Bank.		85
Mar 30	"	"	County Treas.	250	19
May 16	"	"	Mrs. Carmen Brady teaching 3 mo		86
June 8	"	"	N. B. Brachak Board Salary.		87
"	"	"	Thos. Daniel repair - Wilwork. mileage 72 sup. 88		88
				839	18
Receipts				839	18
Expnd.				794	31
On hand				44	67
June 11, 1923					

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Document courtesy of Elrod Family. Records from District 76.

tell that he and Tony Patak switched wheels on the teacher's buggy. (They switched the large wheels on the back to the front and the small wheels to the rear.). But Les told on Herb and Herb said, "it wasn't so funny when we got home."

On May 1st the Seward County Superintendent of Schools came to Pleasant Dale and gave eighth grade tests and held the graduation ceremony and handed out report cards.

Herb graduated from the eighth grade. He drove a horse and buggy 7 miles to Pleasant Dale and graduated and he said "he could not drive the team home fast enough to tell Mom that he did not have to go to school anymore".

Herb related one story when they lived in Seward County. John D. Elrod and Herb took a load of wheat to the Denton Elevator and sold it and then Mr. Elrod bought a Liberty Car from Bert Bunnell who also sold Whippets. Homer Davis then taught Mr. Elrod to drive. Homer Davis ran the garage. Herb took the team and empty wagon home with the admonition not to drive too fast. As Herb neared the District 76 school, he heard a "toot-toot" and his Dad passed him. By the time Herb got home, all the rest of the family had had a ride in the new car.

"you have these young sons growing up to help you". So they bought the 2 sections. The land they bought in Lancaster County sold for \$27 an acre for 1300 acres. It was the 2nd or 3rd day in February. Herb stayed alone at the new farm with the livestock. His dad helped Herb set up a little stove in the wash house, and he slept on a pile of gunny sacks. Herb is now 17 years old. Herb milked the cows. It started to snow hard and got very deep. Herb said, "He was scared to death". However, the former tenants, the Hedvalls took him under their wing and fed him well. Herb said "Later they ran as many as 100 head of Hereford and 100 head of Angus with 400 acres of pasture for each."

Another major event that Herb recalled was the Denton fire in 1930. There was a long ring on the phone on the wall telling everyone about the big fire, calling people to come and help. Les and Herb parked their cloth-top car by the school house, and went up to Main street and the Shaw's Store and the bank were on fire. Someone suggested that they had better move the cloth top car farther away so it wouldn't burn. The Peshek's needed help and Les and Herb poured water on Peshek's horse barn and their hotel.

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Another incident that Herb remembered was the time that Les, Bernard and he were home alone and decided to tie the barn rope to the windmill tower. Then they slid down the rope. "Somehow" Herb said, "the wind blew the tower down, at least that is what they told their folks."

The CCC camp was near the Elrod ranch. In conversation with someone at the camp, they mentioned that they could use some horses and Herb said that they had "four head of mules". Bring them over the guy said. "Made some money" Herb recalled. Bernard Elrod remembers that Rufus Markle's pond was where he learned to swim as well as many of the neighbor boys, and he remembers riding a mule to the pond.

Herb married Lydia Wickenkamp in May, 1939. She was an artist from Crete, who painted his mother's picture. Herb explains, "She was an artist, but not like by Mother. Mother, she was a real painter." Lydia worked with Florence Eliza-



Photo courtesy of Elrod Family. L to R, back row: Herbert Elrod, Leslie Elrod, Joe Elrod Bernard Elrod. Front row: Sadie Elrod Juricek, John D. Elrod, Florence Mays Elrod, George Elrod.

beth. Herb and Lydia had 4 children; Patricia Ann, Jim, Janice, and Carol. Lydia passed away in 1981.

Some information on the Elrod family:

- John D. Elrod was born in 1885 and died in 1969
- Herb, oldest of the children—born 1909 died 2007.
- Leslie, 2 years later—born in western North Dakota, died May 2004 in Kimball, Nebraska
- Bernard, born in North Dakota
- Joe, born in Seward County, Nebraska; died in 1982.
- Sadie Elrod Juricek, born in Seward County, Nebraska.
- George, born in Seward County, Nebraska

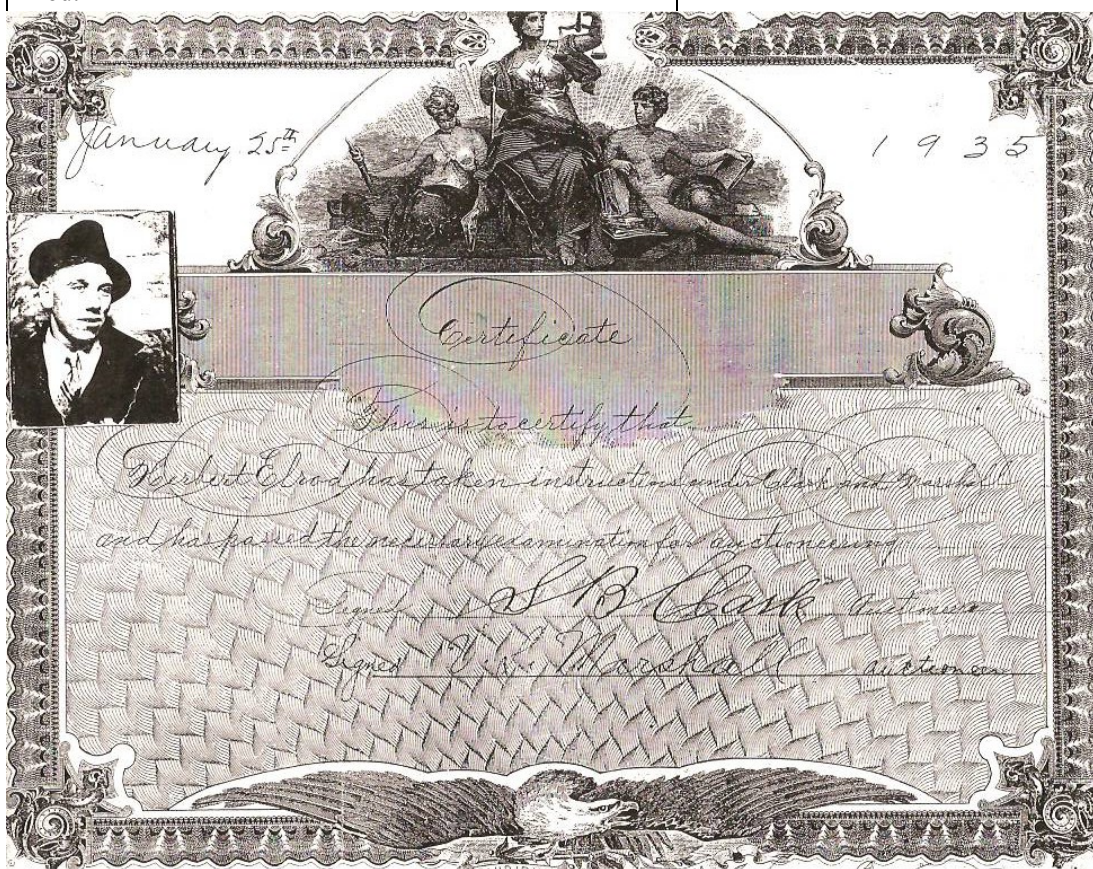
Herb continued his talk with remembrances about the Oregon Trail, the Elrod's, and the O'Brien's. Also about when Edna Rapp showed maps depicting the Big Rock on the Oregon Pass. The Oregon Trail went through the north section of the Elrod land. The Oregon Pass and the Mormon Trail went through the south section.

Herb remembers hauling grain to the Berks' Elevator, Berks, Nebraska. He recalls times with Ray Giles, Vancel Skalak, Joseph Kraus. Another memorable event was when the Burlington Zephyr first came through Denton in 1936. "It would go 60 miles per hour."

He met Irma Flickinger in 1936. D. A. Jones and Herb hunted deer, red fox, and squirrels on Keller's west of Gilbert's. Henry Melichar and Herb hunted coyotes, got \$2 each.

He spoke of Annabelle Peshek, Georgia Taylor Weathers, Joe Sullivan, Leona Melichar Kunz, Teresa Sullivan, and many other Sullivan's.

Another of Herb's accomplishments was to study and pass the test to become an auctioneer on January 25, 1935.



The above information was taken mainly from the presentation by Herb Elrod at a DCHS meeting and a personal interview with collaboration by Bernard Elrod and Sadie Juricek.

Certificate courtesy of Elrod Family. Herb Elrod's picture is inserted beside his auctioneering certificate.

My Neighbor, Mary Gannon

By John Bredenberg, Denton, Nebraska,
with comments by his daughter, Jane Reinkordt

This preface to Mary Gannon's story is written by Jane Reinkordt.

My father, John Bredenberg, wrote the following account in 1982, for the Writing and Storytelling Festival for Older Nebraskans sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Division of Continuing Studies and the Nebraska Commission on Aging.

My father was a keen observer who appreciated the local "characters." We grew up listening to him exchanging stories with our uncle Ernest Smith, our cousin, Jim Rosekrans, and our neighbor, Lyle Mayer, who with time rightly and proudly claimed to have become one of those "characters" himself. They told stories during big dinners around the dining room table, over coffee at the kitchen table, and lunch in the field. These stories live on, especially in my sister, Ann Bredenberg's memory and telling of-ten only in the form of the punch lines. I am glad

Dad wrote this down, and that I rediscovered it recently.

Much of what I know about Mary Gannon comes from Dad's stories. I have an early memory of going to the Gannon farm house in the car with my sister along, we kids staying in the car in the drive while the adults carried out whatever their errand was. My sister was afraid of Mary and we were never inside the farmhouse. When Mary lived in the new house in Denton, I visited her and played hymns on her pump organ. The organ was a big attraction to me, and Mary was appreciative. She was using her wheelchair then, and no longer the scary figure of our young childhood.

Dad's portrait rounds out her character for me and shows a smart, strong, independent, competent and also kindhearted woman.



A Flowering: A Festival

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

JOHN BREDEBERG

made a significant contribution to the

Writing and Storytelling Festival for Older Nebraskans

Sponsored by

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Division of Continuing Studies

and

Nebraska Commission on Aging

Presented this twenty-second day of May, 1982 at Lincoln, Nebraska

Ruth Thane

Nebraska Author

Joy Pickle

Co-Chairperson

Shirley S. Daniels

Co-Chairperson

Al Hunt

Co-Chairperson

Major funding for this program is provided by a grant from the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities.

Mary lived on the farm adjoining my father-in-law's. My wife's childhood recollection of Mary is seeing her working in the fields with her brother, Johnny. They were then in their middle thirties. Still living at home with "Paw" and "Maw," their Irish immigrant parents. When the old folks passed on, Mary assumed full charge of the farm. She was a few years older than Johnny, and he was perfectly content to let Mary shoulder the responsibility. He had implicit faith in her business ability. When she was talking, he listened with an air of respect that bordered on worship. Neither ever married, and the brother and sister team prospered by Mary's masterful farm management.

Mary was truly the rough and ready type. In the summer she wore a man's denim jacket and a man's

straw hat. In the winter she would be seen wearing a man's heavy sheep-skin coat, heavy boots, and brightly colored stocking cap which did not quite conceal her flaming red hair. In this attire she would attend the farm auctions, and no one was a better judge of livestock than Mary.

Mary's rich Irish brogue always fascinated me. She seldom had anyone's name right, and despite being corrected time and again, she had her own pronunciation and stuck to it. For instance, when I moved into the neighborhood named John Bredenberg, she called me Johnny Bredenberger, and I was Johnny Bredenberger to Mary and Johnny to the end

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of their days. One day Mary phoned my wife to report the marriage of a mutual friend. She said, "That there feller Lucy married ain't no Irishman, ner an Englishman, ner a German naither, so guess he's some furriner."

Johnny's colorful language was also priceless. During World War II we were discussing the merits of his tractor tires. We both agreed that goods purchased before the war were superior to war-time materials. I observed, "Those are pre-war tires, aren't they, Johnny?"

"Pre-war, hell!" he replied. "I got them before the war."

Mary had no confidence in banks and never had a checking account. She was never without her "reticule," as she called it, a large worn leather handbag in which she carried large sums of cash. She paid cash for everything. The local car dealer reported that when he delivered her new car, she took the cash from her "reticule" and paid him. Whenever she received a check for grain or livestock, she and Johnny would go to the bank on which the check was drawn and cash it. Many lively arguments ensued when she was asked for proper identification, but she always got the money.

Mary took a lively interest in our children and was always ready to give us the benefit of her vast knowledge of home remedies. Although she never said so, I felt that she took a dim view of modern pediatrics. When our third child passed away suddenly, we received many expressions of sympathy, but Mary's words were different from the rest: "Parents who lose children have something special to look forward to in going to Heaven."

In the 1950's Mary and Johnny rented their farm and built a fine new house in the village not far from the farm. It was equipped with all the modern conveniences and was the finest house in all the town. She told me how the "swells" of the town came to call and of their envious glances at where she had stored several sacks of chicken feed. Also at the large spikes she had driven into the living room wall from which hung large portraits in antique frames of Paw, Maw, and Johnny when a teenager. Her old Irish eyes gleamed wickedly in telling about it.

As Mary grew older, she became crippled with arthritis which necessitated surgery on her knee. She submitted grudgingly and afterwards when relating her experience to me said, "I didn't think they could do me any good, and I told them so just before the operation. I told them that after they'd get me all cut up I'd probably have to go to Heaven in a basket, but this was a hell of a place to be leaving from! Then I heard somebody say, 'Give that old fool a shot to shut her up!'"

Mary was partly right, for she never walked again. For some years she directed the farm business from her wheelchair. Johnny, well into his seventies, took his orders from her as always. He kept his eye on the tenants operating the farm and woe betide the one who did not follow Mary's orders.

Mary was a remarkable person.

Obituaries

Elsie Fern Sieck passed away at her home in Crook, Colorado, on January 5 at age 90. She was a sister of Mark Steinhausen and Hilda Steinhausen Jacobsen who are both DCHS members. She and her husband Truman attended the 2007 Rokeby School Alumni Reunion.

Ruby Russell, long time resident of the Yankee Hill area, died on January 27 at age 95. Area survivors include her son Vernon and four grandchildren in Lincoln. She was born in Justiceburg, Texas. Burial was in Yankee Hill Cemetery.

Rita M. Albin formerly from Columbus, Nebraska, died at age 79. She had lived in rural Denton for a number of years and was a member of St. Mary's church Denton.

Clyde Clarence Reddish, son of Clarence and Mary Grimm Reddish, passed away on February 4. Clyde lived for many years in Yankee Hill precinct. His wife, Dorothy, preceded him in death on March 22, 2006. His brother, Orville, and sister-in-law, Mary, are DCHS members. Deceased members of his family are Don, Earl, Irvin and Pearl.

Raymond "Scott" Long, age 52, passed away suddenly on February 14. His parents were Orval (deceased) and Alyce Long. Scott attended Yankee Hill elementary school and graduated from Lincoln High in 1974. Wife, Donna, and son, Matt, also survive.

Velma Fraas age 85, widow of Joseph Fraas, passed away on February 16. Originally from the Centerville/Martell area, she had lived in the Denton area for many years since her marriage. Joe preceded her in death on April 28, 2007.

Irene (Stich) Rocker, age 88 died February 16. Services were at Crete with burial in the Centerville cemetery.

Lloyd Wayne Sittler, age 89, passed away in Crete on February 23. He graduated from Central High school in 1937. Lloyd had a very active life, being in the military for 30 years. His parents were J. Carl and Ella (Mack) Sittler.

Dorothy V. Sturdy passed away in Goddard, Kansas, on February 22. She was preceded in death by her husband, Dale Sturdy, on March 16, 2007. She was a graduate of Rokeby High School and her parents were Edward and Virginia (Phillips) Kleager. One sister, Irma Davis, of Klamath Falls, Oregon, survives.

Lois Boden of Crete, age 86, the mother of Arlen Boden passed away on February 25. Arlen and wife Emmy are DCHS members. Lois's parents were George and Elizabeth (Wielage) Wells.

Lyle Judson, age 69, who grew up in the Rokeby area passed away on March 16. His parents were Lyle and Evelyn Campbell Judson. Area survivors include his brother and sister-in-law Garold and Carolyn Judson of Sprague. Burial in Wesley Chapel Cemetery.

Patricia Tindall, widow of Robert Tindall, passed away on March 17. Her parents were Earl and Emma Berg Deinert. She was born in Emerald, Nebraska, and was 77 years old. Area survivors include her brother Ken Deinert who lives in Lincoln.

Ruth Elaine Sexton age 71 passed away on March 19. Ruth was active in the Denton Methodist Church. She was a retired accountant and earned her Masters Degree at the University of Houston. Her husband Jack Sexton survives her. Burial in Sunnyside Cemetery in Denton.

Remembrances by a Former Rokeby Resident

By Marie Searcy Austin

The following is a letter received recently from Marie Searcy Austin of Chesapeake, Virginia. We have Marie's permission to print it.

Dear Friends of Denton Historical Society and Rokeby Alumni.

I enjoy reading the news about surrounding areas, especially "Rokeby". The article Mark Steinhausen wrote re: Rock Island Railroad and the Grain elevator, hit close to home.

My father, Orlo Searcy spent all of his working years on the Rock Island. He was a laborer until the last few years, and then transferred to Kansas where he was supervisor until his retirement.

We moved from Martell to Rokeby when I was in the third grade.

The railroad tracks ran north and south. On the east side was a depot. On the west was a lane that led to the section foreman house and farther east was the tool shed and one room house and boxcar, used for our residence. The one room house was later moved behind the boxcar and doors cut to give up more room.

Mr. Lee and family lived there in the section family residence. There were three boys and three girls (girls were Dewitt's). When Mr. Lee retired, the house was occupied by the Miller family.

Families that lived on the hill above the tracks were the White's. He owned and ran the blacksmith shop. He shod horses and repaired farm equipment. Family was his wife and grandson who later moved elsewhere. The Robinsons moved into that residence.

Across from the blacksmith shop was where the Munns lived, had a grocery store and post office. He had the grain elevator as well. They had a few chickens and pigs for their own use. Then a family house sat on the hill in back close to the road, a fence separated the gym and school playground.

The Petersons lived in back of the church or across the road from the gym.

My mother, Vinnetta Searcy, later became custodian at the depot. She would call Lincoln whenever Mr. Munn needed extra cars for shipping grain. She also called to stop the passenger train when someone wanted to go to Lincoln for the weekend.

All High School activities, choral, band concerts, school plays, basketball and volleyball games, etc. were held in the gym. Voting and any church dinners were held there. About twice a month on Saturday evening, square dances were held. Piano, violin, and accordion music was played. Great time had by all.

I have enclosed some pictures to be placed in Rokeby album. Hope to see you next year. Blessings to all.

Sincerely,
Marie Searcy Austin
Class of '41

Thank You—From a DCHS Member

Thank you for making my 90th birthday a memorable one.

Whether you came to share it with me or brought or sent a card or a gift or a call—you helped make a fond memory for me which I will always cherish.

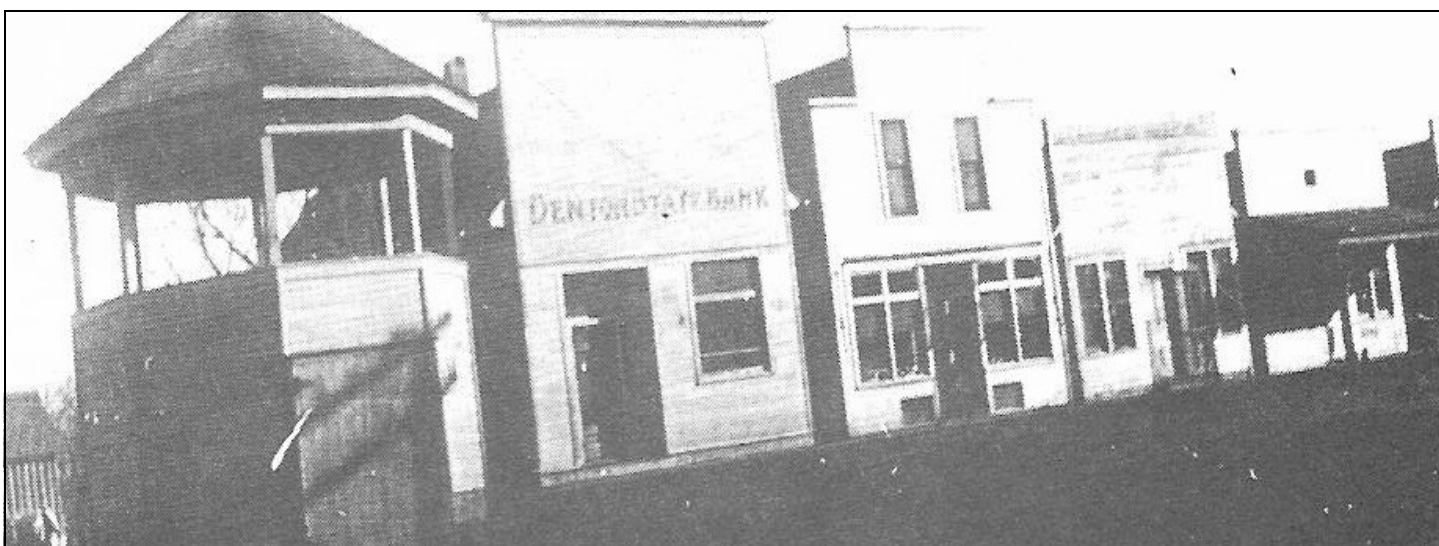
Please accept my humble appreciation and thanks,

Fondly,
Anna Smith, Emerald, Nebraska

PENNY POSTCARDS

Over and over, we are amazed at the number of postcards with area pictures that have surfaced as we collect memorabilia and pictures. Some of them are of people; other are of events. In this age of technology, e-mails are received and deleted in minutes with no thought of the future. But those of us who were of generations before e-mails, etc. know the thrill of the mailman bringing us letters and postcards.

For the Denton centennial many years ago, the community took 12 pictures from the archives and made postcards of the scenes or people. They are authentic in all details. There are 12 postcards with these scenes: community hall, Denton depot, both the Methodist and Catholic churches, Denton state bank, street scene looking toward the Clegg store, main street of Denton in early 1900, street scene showing old elementary school and the Denton mansion, street scene with old cars as well as a wagon on the street, and the Barber elevator and the Austin elevator and the picture shown here.



Above is a picture of Denton, east side of main street north end, prior to the 1930 fire. L to R: bandstand, Denton State Bank, Shaw's Mercantile & Grocery, Shaw's home, and J.R.C. Miller's Ice Cream Parlor, and his Hardware Store and Implement Store. This is just one picture in the set of post cards.

These are great alternatives to that e-mail that you may be sending to a fellow, former Dentonite . They make great small gifts to tuck into that birthday present for a sister or brother that have Denton connections. I will guarantee that it will be kept and not deleted like an e-mail would.

And the amazing price is only \$5.00 for the set of 12. Practically as cheap as the old penny postcard. (Unfortunately, they will need postage supplied by you.) The tax is 28 cents and the shipping is \$1.00, so they are a real bargain for a total of \$6.28. For ordering, send to DCHS , PO Box 405, Denton, Ne 68339, with your check.

For our members not from the Denton area, these are still great little gifts.

Newsletter Staff

Cathy Sullivan
Lee Gray
Teresa Sullivan
Sue Williams

DCHS is Online

Our DCHS webmaster, Kathie Harrison, is working very hard to add interesting features to our website. Please send an Email or note to five people who have ties to this area. They may not know about all the articles and pictures Kathy is putting on the site.

*Our web address is:
<http://denton.ancestralwhispers.com>
Then bookmark the site to your "favorites" and check back often.*



DCHS Memberships & Gift Items

There will be a new flat fee of \$10 for all memberships except life memberships.

Centennial books, T-shirts, sweatshirts, bags, cups, and historical-picture postcards will all be on sale for \$5. each plus .28 cents tax. If you want the item mailed to you enclose an additional \$1 per item.



Denton Community Historical Society
P. O. Box 405
Denton, NE 68339