



THE DRESDEN 1911 BALL TEAM included (from left) row 1: Hugh “Ikey” Jones. Row 2: Wes Metzler, Elf Foster, Albert Harold, Harry Bates, Campbell, Ed Campbell, Alf Foster, George Fisher, Billie Fuller and Glen Walter “Tobe” Harold, Jess Harold and Bill Roughton.

Book describes Dresden lifestyle

Author writes about day-to-day experiences

By MARY LOU OLSON

The dream of sharing the history and memories of families who lived in the Dresden area became a reality when Dalene (Sewell) Gawith published “Dresden, Kansas, A Town on the Prairie — 1888-2004.” The 416-page book brings to readers the day-to-day life experienced by residents of the tiny town over the past 117 years.

The author said that the seed for her book was planted in the summer of 1994 when she was staying with her mother, Hazel (Derby) Sewell. She said that her mother started to tell her about the old buildings and the people who had lived in Dresden and she realized that this story needed to be written down. She wrote a story entitled “Buildings in Dresden, Kansas.”

“I was so thrilled with the results that I showed it to Kenneth Foster, a longtime Dresden resident,” she said, “and after taking a quick look at it, he went home and returned to show me drawings he had done of all the blocks in Dresden, showing the improvements and ownerships.”

“A little later I wrote, ‘My Memories of Dresden,’ but it was not until I took a local history class with Linda Davis Stephens in the spring of 1999 and Paul Welter showed us the material that he had collected on Dresden that I realized the store of information we had and that it needed to be shared with others.”

Mrs. Gawith was born on a farm northeast of Dresden on Sept. 19, 1932, the daughter of Murrell and Hazel (Derby) Sewell. The family later moved south of Dresden on the North Fork of the Solomon River, where they lived for 20 years. She attended Prairie Center school, went to seventh and eighth grade in Dresden and graduated in May 1950 from Jennings High School.

After earning a Bachelor of Science in home economics and a minor in physical education from Fort Hays Kansas State Teachers College in 1954, she began a teaching career that spanned 42 years, most of it in Jennings.

The book includes personal stories of families and information on businesses of Dresden, which at one time boasted over 300 residents. It also includes information on the railroad, cemetery, churches, schools and entertainment during the past century.

Col. Glenn “Ikey” Jones was a well-known auctioneer and humorist in Dresden and wrote by the pen name “Smiling Ikey” for the *Dresden Sunflower*, mostly in poetry. He

began auctioneering in 1912 and continued until his death at the age of 84.

Gayle Bainter tells in his story that he remembers one time when Mr. Jones was crying a sale. A lady came up to him and asked if he could sell just one cup out of a box that was ready to be sold.

“If I sold every item in that box,” he said, “it would take forever. Why don’t you buy the whole box and then you would have the cup.”

“If you were my husband,” she said, “I would shoot you.”

“Lady, if I were your husband,” he replied, “I would shoot myself.”

The book includes Mr. Foster’s free-hand drawings of all the Dresden blocks in the late 1980s, identifying locations of homes and businesses. Mrs. Sewell identified homes and occupants over the years. Photographs of many of the early businesses are included. One shows Main Street flooded in 1907 after the town had a downpour.

Some wild geese were flying overhead looking for a place to land and some were injured when trying to set down, some were caught and others shot, but several families had goose to eat.

The Methodist Church, which has been remodeled several times, was the first in Dresden and is still open.

The Rock Island Railroad tracks were laid through Dresden by June 1888. After people were told that this was to be a main line from Chicago to Denver, businesses started to appear on the streets of Dresden and it became a boom town. The town became the section headquarters for the railroad and many homes were rented or owned by the track workers. At that time, Dresden had two businesses of most every kind.

Xavier Dempewolf started a stage line from Dresden to Oberlin in 1901 which carried passengers and the U.S. Mail. Cost for one passenger was \$1.50 one way, and \$2.50 round trip.

The Peoples Store, which was opened in 1920 by Mike and Florian Karls, was one of the last businesses to close. The two brothers purchased it together and moved it to a new building, the site of the old livery stable. Mike later sold his interest to his brother, who continued to operate it until retiring in 1974. The store survived the crash of 1929 and the Depression. Mr. Karls’ daughter, Mary Catherine, said he was known to give credit from one harvest to another harvest, but later changed to 30-days credit. Nellie Derby worked as a clerk in the store for 27

years. At the time the Karls brothers purchased the store, Dresden was a booming little town with the Rock Island Railroad the center of attraction, three general stores, two hotels, two restaurants, two barber shops, a hardware store, a Foster Lumber Co. yard, two creameries and two strong banks.

When Florian Karls retired, he was asked what he had enjoyed most over the years, to which he answered, “the people.”

Paul Welter shares in his “Highlights of Dresden” about being one of 14 children of Peter and Mathilda Welter. The family lived 1 1/2 miles east of Dresden and he said his father would walk to the school, have all of the children hold hands, then he would lead them home during the dust-storm years of the “Dirty 30s.”

“When Dad would get to the railroad, he would lie down and put his ear on the rail to see if it was safe for us to cross since the dirt was so thick he couldn’t see if there was a train coming.”

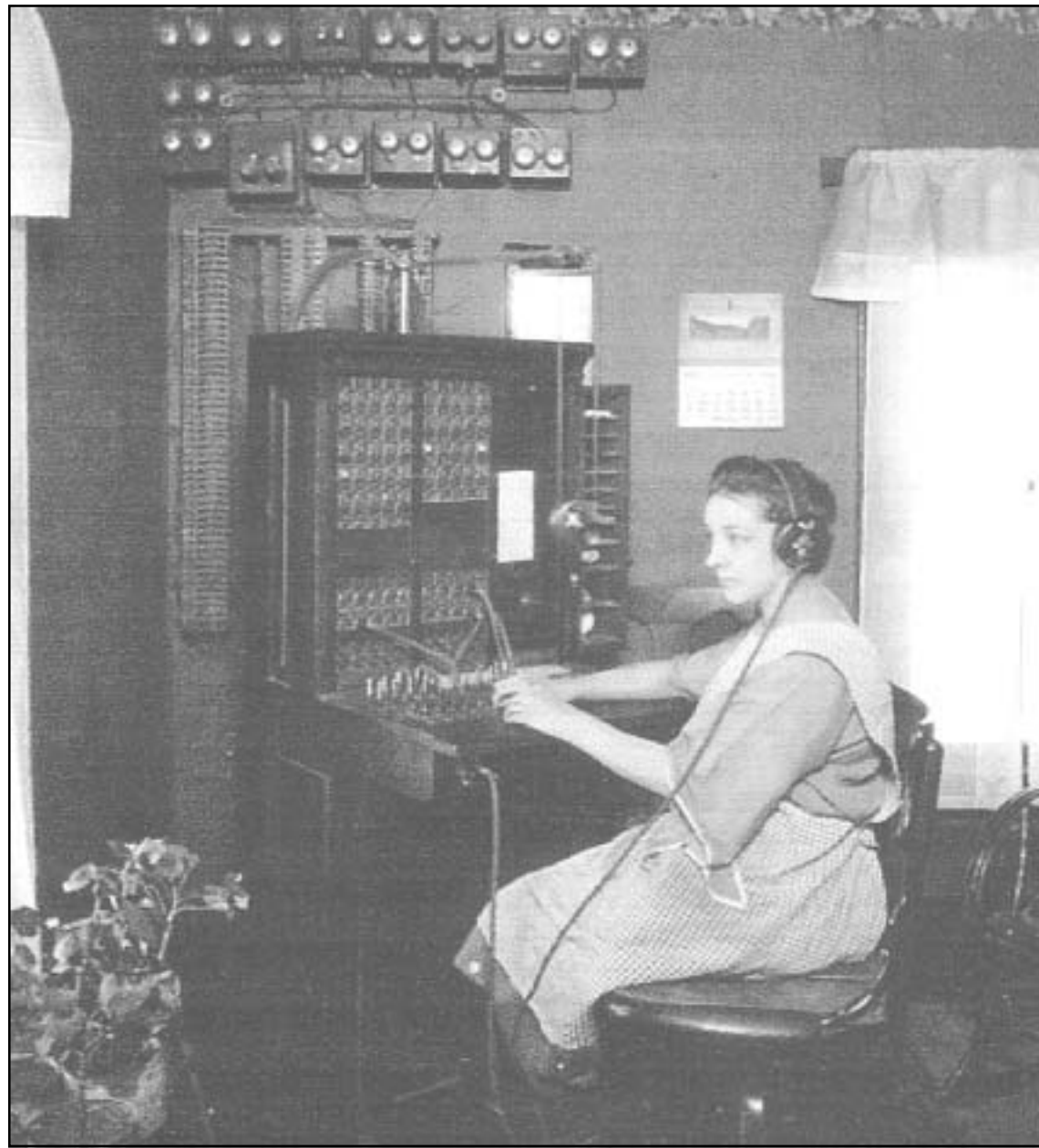
Mr. Welter said he also remembers the cattle drives coming into town. The cattle were driven in from all directions, even as far away as Oberlin, to the stockyards located across the street south of the Peoples Store. They were herded into the stockyard pens before they were reloaded into cattle cars on the siding of the Rock Island Railroad, then were shipped to Kansas City, Omaha or Denver.

“Saturday night in the ’30s, the big event was the free silent movies, sponsored by Karls Grocery with free popcorn. A circus coming to town was also a big event when big-top tents housed the shows of trained horses and animals,” he said.

Family stories and pictures in the book include the names Amlong, Depperschmidt, Derby, Deu Pree, Bremer, Muirhead, Foster, Gawith, Harold, Jones, Karls, Launchbaugh, Law, Leonard, Bainter, Pankaskie, Rhodes, Ritter, Sawyer, Sewell, Skubal, Spreser, Taylor, Wernette, Welter, Diederich, and Schiefrecke.

Mrs. Gawith said that she dedicated the book “To all who called Dresden, Kan., home.”

She has sold the 107 copies from the first printing, but plans to have more printed, which will be available the latter part of August. She said that anyone interested in a book can call her by June 30 at (785) 475-3679, write her at Box 174, Dresden, Kan., 67635, or e-mail wdgawith@netscape.net



THE TELEPHONE SWITCHBOARD for Dresden was in the home of Mae Derby Griffith, the operator, in 1924, since someone had to be nearby 24 hours a day. The office was in the front room and the family lived in the rest of the two-story house.



JOE’S HARDWARE STORE, owned by Flavius Josephis “Joe” Foster, was well-stocked for customers in the Dresden area during the 1930’s.

—Dalene Gawith collection