

Historical Society Of Pottawattamie County

Member Journal

Winter 2015/2016

1960s Council Bluffs to be Remembered

The 1960s was an outta sight, groovy, boss era of beautiful people... and the time when decisions were made that would change Council Bluffs more that it had ever been changed before.

The interstate highway system arrived, putting a ring around the city redefining its outskirts at the same time a bold plan was advanced to decimate downtown and rebuild it anew. Indications were the "sleeping giant" of the 1950s was poised to awaken.

Tuesday evening, March 22, the Historical Society teams with the Council Bluffs Public Library and The Historic General Dodge House to present *1960s Council Bluffs Remembered*. The program will be held at the library, 400 Willow Avenue, at 6:30 pm. Admission is free and the public is invited.

Presenters Marlys Lien, Danelle Hein-Snyder, Kori Nelson, Ryan Roenfeld, and Richard Warner will trace the history of the city through the decade including the culture, entertainment, food (odds are you had your first pizza in the 1960s) and the thinking that led to the ambitious urban renewal project of the following decade. The program will examine the last years of the "Squirrel Cage" as the county jail, the demise of Playland Park, and the soundtrack of the 60s— AM radio.

Inspired by this program the Historical Society will host *60s Scrapbook*, a temporary exhibit featuring photos and other artifacts of Council Bluffs in the 1960s. The exhibit will be on the fourth floor of the Society's "Squirrel Cage" jail museum, 226 Pearl Street in Council Bluffs. HSPC president Mariel Wagner explains this is the first of a series of temporary exhibits at the museum designed to bring parts of the collections that normally are not on display out of storage and into public view. It is anticipated the 1960s exhibit will run through mid summer.

The program at the library March 22 is free; admission to the exhibit at the "Squirrel Cage" is the usual museum admission fee of \$7 for adults, \$6 for seniors, and \$5 ages 5-12. Society members are always admitted free.

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A Cowboy's Attire

A working cowboy seldom wore a coat. It impeded the free action of his shoulders in roping as well as in many other activities, so he settled for a vest, usually worn open. The vest pockets carried his tobacco sack and such odds and ends as he believed necessary. Later, when there were pockets in shirts, the tobacco sack was relegated to a breast pocket with the paper tag hanging out, easy to the hand.

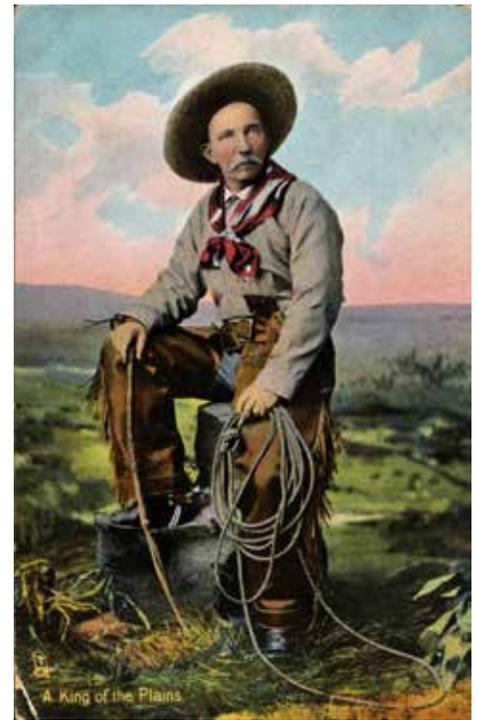
Shirts in the early days were without pockets and without collars. When a man "dressed up" he wore a starched collar or one made of celluloid. Although the latter was easy to clean it had to be kept from contact with heat, particularly from cigars, cigarettes, or even warm ashes. A celluloid collar had a way of vanishing in a burst of flame, often followed by everything in the vicinity.

The bandanna, worn loosely about the neck, usually with the full part hanging in front, was not worn for decoration. It was probably the most useful item a cowboy wore. Over a hundred uses have been found. Usually it was pulled up to cover the nose and mostly when riding "drag" in the dust behind a moving herd of cattle or horses. It could be used as a bandage, a sling for a broken arm, to strain water for drinking, to protect the back of the neck from sun, and so on.

Bandannas were nearly always red. This was not a matter of choice, as other colors were not to be found. Later, blue bandannas with polka dots were made and sold largely to railroad men for whom blue seemed a uniform color. Occasionally, of course, a cowboy could wear a silk neckerchief, which might be of any color.

Shirt collars, whether starched or celluloid, were attached to the shirt by the collar buttons, one behind and one in front. Collar buttons were one of the most refractory, obstinate, and just downright ornery objects a human ever had to deal with and probably were the cause of more profanity than anything men invented until the arrival of the Model-T Ford. Invariably, in the course of a man's struggle with a collar button it would slip from the fingers and roll into the most inaccessible place in the room. It was never possible to dimply stoop down and pick up a collar button. One always had to get down on one's knees and reach around for the missing object. It has been reliably reported that even ministers of the gospel used unseemingly language on such occasions.

At first cowboys, as was the case with any working man, wore whatever old clothing they possessed. Pieces of uniforms from the Civil War were often seen,



and especially the overcoats, in both gray and blue. These were warm, highly efficient garments and their presence on the frontier was obvious for at least forty years after the war's end. They were superseded in many cases by the buffalo coat. One of these was still around the house when I was a youngster, and nothing warmer ever existed, or heavier, I might add.

As cowboying became a trade it developed a costume of its own, and if easterners thought it picturesque it was not intentionally so. Cowboy clothing was chosen for the job it had to do, chosen strictly for efficiency. Many of the horses cowboys rode in the beginning were only half broken, so the cowboy wanted a boot with a pointed toe that could easily slip into the stirrup, and a high heel so it would not slip too far.

“Cowboy Attire”, continued...

Chaps were invented for riders in brush country where thorns or broken branches might rip the clothes from a man aboard a horse following a steer into thick brush. Riders in other parts of the country adopted the chaps as protective of clothing as well as the legs themselves. The woolly chaps, rarely seen these days, were worn in Wyoming or Montana. These were often made of cowhide with the hair left on or of sheepskin or goatskin. When King Fisher was leading his boys down near Uvalde in Texas he held up a circus and killed the tiger to make himself a pair of tiger-skin chaps. But the King liked colorful clothes and none of the movie cowboys could touch him in that respect.

As a matter of fact, many cowboys liked colorful clothes but could rarely afford them. They went to work wearing the most efficient garments they could acquire. Another type of garment rarely seen anymore was the leather cuff. They were often seen in movies of the silent era when there were more working cowboys around.

The most important items to a cowboy were his hat, his boots, and his saddle. The first well-made cowboy hats to become known by a brand name were Stetsons, a name which soon became synonymous with "hat." Any hat might be called a Stetson, just as any pistol might be called a Colt, regardless of its manufacturer's name. In the same way many westerners referred to any rifle as a Winchester.

*(Contributed by HSPC member
Dr. James Knott. Dr. Knott is a past member
of the Society board of directors and a frequent
contributor to the “Member Journal.”)*

*Stay current with Society
happenings by regularly checking
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www.TheHistoricalSociety.org*

So, How Cold Was It? So Cold the Engine Froze to the Tracks!

Year 1912: CGW Engine Frozen to Rails

During the cold snap last week a passenger engineer on the Chicago Great Western, had an unusual experience. He stopped to take water at Reinbeck, fearing the nearly empty tank contained not sufficient water to last to Des Moines. The fireman pulled down the spout and filled the tank, but when he tried to shut it off he was unable to do so, and before this could be done the water, pouring into the tank, overflowing the track, froze the engine solidly to the rails. Two hours were lost in getting the engine free, and the train did not arrive in Des Moines until noon. Here it was consolidated with No. 5 and sent south with a double header.

*From the “NEW HAMPTON GAZETTE,” New
Hampton, Iowa, January 18, 1912. Reprinted
here from THE BRASS SWITCHKEY, a weekly
electronic update of rail activity edited by HSPC
member Dick Wilson. The newsletter is free; if you
would like to be added to the mailing list contact
Mr. Wilson at Wilgramps@aol.com*

Get Involved as a Volunteer

The Society is in need of volunteers to serve as tour guides for the "Squirrel Cage" jail and Rails-West museums. Even if you have only a limited amount of time each week or prefer to be on call for occasional tours we would love to hear from you.

This is a great opportunity to learn more about the rich railroad history of Council Bluffs and the remarkable rare oddity that is the rotary cell jail and to interact with the thousands of interesting and enthusiastic visitors that come through each year. Training will be provided.

If you would like to volunteer or learn more please email "information@TheHistoricalSociety.org" or phone (712) 323-2509.

Intercity Bus Lines Provided Council Bluffs Another Travel Option

In the middle part of the 20th century the railroads began facing a new source of competition for passengers. Improved roadways made long distance bus service practical and several companies served Council Bluffs.

With the exception of hardy souls willing to travel long distances by automobile, by this point the railroads had dominated intercity traffic for a hundred years. The stagecoach lines of the early 19th century had given way to the railroads in most of the country by the 1840s.

The concept of the motor coach originated when automobile dealer Carl Earl Wickman was unable to sell the eight passenger Hupmobile he had on his showroom floor. In an effort to find some use for it he started hauling miners between Hibing and Alice, Minnesota in 1913, and invented an entirely new industry in the process.

The government began getting serious about creating and maintaining highways in the 1920s and by the 1930s intercity bus service began to boom. Buses had a huge advantage over the railroad; taxpayers picked up the tab for maintenance and snow removal on their routes. At the train companies those services came out of the profits. Initially the railroads jumped on this fact, promoting the assertion that bus companies were ruining the nation's roads and not paying a commensurate amount in taxes. In 1925 Great Northern Railroad president Ralph Budd changed his thinking, realizing that rather than looking at buses as competition they could use them to their advantage, replacing money losing short line trains to small towns with buses that in turn fed into the nationwide rail network. The Great Northern bought eighty percent of Carl Wickman's struggling regional company and transformed it into a well financed national operation initially called Northland Transportation and later changed to

Greyhound. Ralph Budd's plan remains in use today. National intercity rail service operator Amtrak contracts with bus companies, still primarily Greyhound, for their thruway bus service which feeds into the rail network and brings passenger service to communities that would otherwise not have it.

Union Pacific created its bus subsidiary, Union Pacific Stage Lines, in 1925 and by 1929 was op-



(Top) A Great Northern bus is pristinely preserved and on display in testament to Ralph Budd's great idea alongside the Great Northern (now BNSF) mainline just outside the railroad station in Whitefish, Montana. Passenger service is provided to Whitefish today by Amtrak's Empire Builder, trains #7 and #8.

*(Below) A somewhat less glorious end was in store for a Union Pacific bus, captured in this 2005 photo at a salvage yard along Second Avenue in Council Bluffs.
(Both photos by Barb Warner.)*

“Intercity Bus Lines”, continued...

erating 200 buses. Expanding beyond just transportation, the railroad began offering bus tours to Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks, the north rim of Grand Canyon National Park, and Cedar Breaks National Monument. Passengers arrived on the train and continued right into the parks on a bus, the driver becoming the tour guide. This continued until Union Pacific ceased operating passenger trains to articulate with the buses in May, 1971 and Amtrak opted to retain the routes of AT&SF and Burlington Northern rather than that of the Union Pacific streamliners. Union Pacific donated their extensive property in the parks and the buses to the National Park Service in 1972.

The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad likewise jumped on the bus bandwagon starting the Burlington Transportation Company in 1929 with one bus providing service between Burlington and Galesburg. The company became Burlington Trailways following a 1945 merger with the National Trailways Bus System.

In Council Bluffs the bus terminals clustered around the center of the city, and it wasn't unusual for lines to share space. In 1933 the Burlington bus depot was at the Hotel Chieftain; CRANDIC Stage Lines and Interstate shared a station at 169 West Broadway; Chicago and Northwestern Stage Lines' office was 521 West Broadway, the same address as the Union Bus Station. Later Burlington moved across First Avenue from Interstate and around 1940 to just west of the postal loading dock between 6th and 7th Streets on the west side of Broadway. CRANDIC started as the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway in 1903 and added bus services in 1929; the railroad is still in operation today. Interstate Stage Lines started in 1923 with a single route providing service between Omaha and Nebraska City. Interstate was acquired by Union Pacific and later by Greyhound.

(Continued next page)



Council Bluffs intercity bus depot in 1978 was in the 700 block of West Broadway just west of the post office. Nothing in this photo remains standing today.

Bus Line Connected North Broadway to Streetcars

The symbiotic relationship between buses and rails didn't apply only to transportation between cities. Nels "Burry" Jensen created the North Broadway Bus Line in the 1930s providing a link to residents of Council Bluffs' north end to the trolley system which went only as far north as Oak Street. The North Broadway Bus Line made round trips between the city limit at Mud Hollow Road and downtown allowing access to trolleys.

Riders recall the bus as usually being fairly busy and informal. Mud Hollow resident Ray Payne's dog Sport frequented the bus to the delight of passengers as they conversed with Mr. Jensen, who became the established source of neighborhood news.

Burry Jensen was a north end resident himself, residing with his parents, Danish immigrants Chris and Petrea Jensen, at 138 Hunter. After he married he and his wife Matilda rented a home in Lake Township north of town.

The end of Burry's bus line was coincident with the demise of streetcars in Council Bluffs.

The fifty year franchise of the Omaha and Council Bluffs Railway and Bridge Company (O&CBR&B) expired in December, 1947. The ensuing battle between three companies and the intense ad campaign to sway voters is an interesting story in itself; the result was the buses of the

(Continued next page)

“Intercity Bus Lines,” continued...

By the 1960s intercity bus service had started to decline. To counter reduced revenue Greyhound acquired and invested in a variety of unrelated companies, including Burger King, Armour meats, and Dial soap. Critics hold this emphasis caused the company to take its concentration away from their core mission, and the subsequent deterioration of services and stations contributed to even further declines in business. In 1987 Greyhound acquired long time competitor Trailways. As recently as 1976 a half dozen intercity bus routes were available to a Council Bluffs traveler; three operated by Greyhound, three Trailways, and a route to Harlan offered by Reid bus line. Today intercity bus lines still operate out of Omaha.

(Information for this article contributed by Joel Boucher. Mr. Boucher is a member of the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County and frequent contributor to the “Member Journal”).

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“North Broadway Line,” continued...

Council Bluffs Transit company won and streetcars quit operating in Council Bluffs in 1948. The new bus service extending its reach to the northern city limits, eliminating the niche of Burry Jensen’s bus line.

The end of the Council Bluffs’ streetcars couldn’t have been much less glamorous. For nine days the trolleys and buses both operated in competition. The streetcar company lost its final court appeal at noon September 25. Mayor Sparks advised police chief Frank Altrock to give the company until 3 o’clock to get their equipment off the streets and arrest any streetcar operator for unlawful use of the streets after that. In what was supposed to be the last run in Council Bluffs car 875 left Omaha bound for downtown Council Bluffs the afternoon of September 25. Instead of completing the run the car turned north at 28th and West Broadway at 3:40 pm and ended its trip at the car barn. The eighteen passengers were given their money back and told to walk the block to Broadway and catch a bus to complete their journey. Streetcars continued to operate in Omaha for another six and a half years.

(Information for this article contributed by HSPC members Joel Boucher, Robert Warner, Sr., and “Streetcars of Omaha and Council Bluffs” by Richard Orr. The Society has copies of this book in our gift shops; this 345 page hard back book with lots of photos is priced at just \$20.)



A bus and streetcar sit together on First Avenue just east of the Chieftain Hotel ready to start their competing runs in this 1948 photo. For a nine day period residents in some parts of the city had three choices; two bus lines and the streetcar. Few chose the trolley.

The “Squirrel Cage” Jail of Pueblo County, Colorado

Population growth and the General Assembly’s establishment of county, criminal, and district courts in Pueblo, Colorado during the late 1870’s meant an increased number of prisoners to deal with.

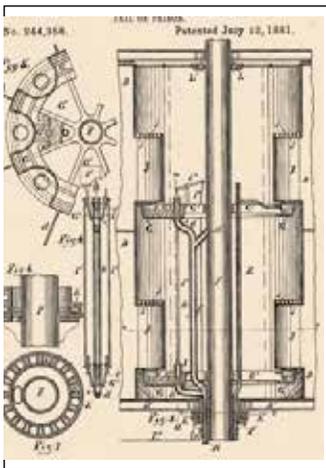
The Pueblo County Commissioners joined a number of other cities and counties in considering a new type of facility— a rotary cell jail, an advancement that had just been patented in 1881.

The technology was being primarily offered by two companies, the Haugh, Ketcham and Company Iron Works of Indianapolis (manufacturer of Pottawattamie County’s “Squirrel Cage” jail) and the Pauly Jail Building and manufacturing Company of St. Louis. Pueblo County chose the latter. The county commissioners accepted the plans in July of 1888.

two and a half feet wide at the rear. At the center of the circle was an eight foot diameter ventilating shaft which contained the water supply and sewer drainage.

In 1927 a Pueblo Grand Jury condemned the rotary unit. Due to lack of finances it was continued in use, but the end was near. Less than four years later the Pueblo Chieftain reported, “Remodeling of the Pueblo County Jail will begin within a short period of time, the rotary, archaic torture chamber used in the early days, will pass into oblivion after more than a quarter century of idleness.” The rotary portion was dismantled in 1931 and the rest of the building razed in 1969.

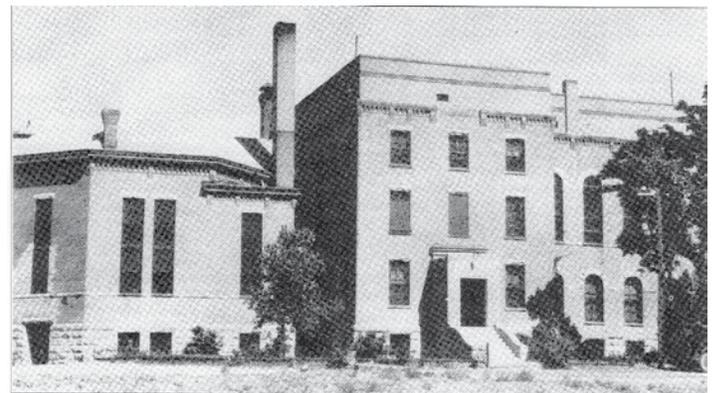
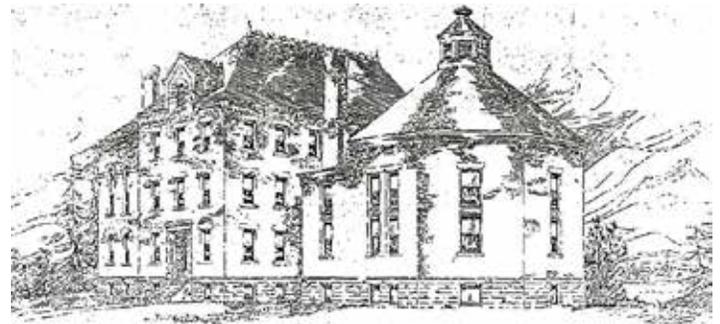
(The story above was taken from an article published in the “Pueblo Lore” and written by Ken Clark. Research for the story was by LaJean Chance and Ken Clark; the article was contributed to the HSPC by LaJean Chance.)



The rotary cells were to be only a wing of a conventional jail building with no identifying features of the cylinder visible from the outside.

In announcing the project Pueblo newspapers reported that the new building would be three stories in height. Cells from the old jail would be used along with the new rotating cells which would extend two floors. The third floor was planned to contain cells and a hospital for females, juveniles, and those convicted of misdemeanors while the basement would contain “the dungeon or cells for the lunatics.” Total price for the new jail and rotary was approximately \$80,000.

The rotary unit of the Pueblo jail was two tiers, each divided into ten eight foot long pie-shaped cells measuring seven feet wide at the front and



Images of the Pueblo, County Jail with rotary cell unit. Upper drawing is from an 1880’s jail catalogue from the Pauly Company, contributed by Nancy Parish.

Lower photo of the Pueblo County Jail taken from the “Pueblo Lore,” a publication of the Pueblo County Historical Society.

As It Was...



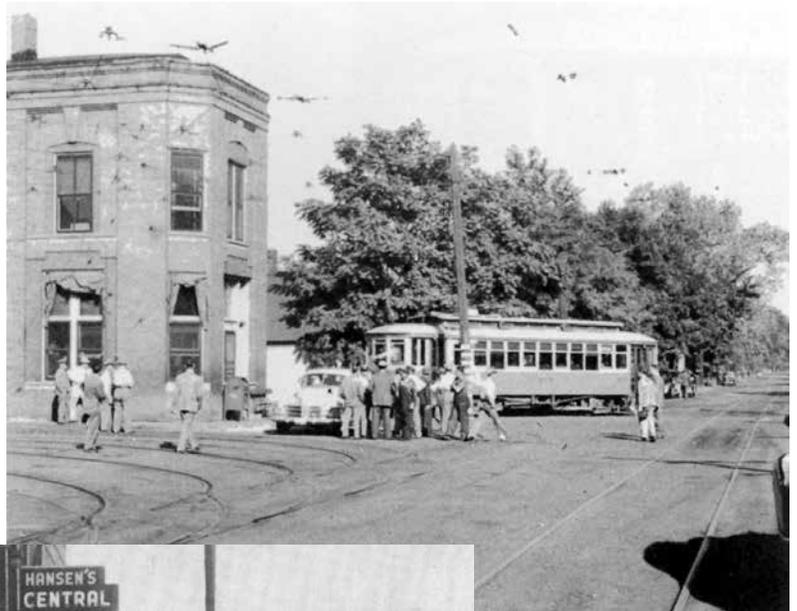
(Top) The northwest corner of West Broadway and North 7th Street as it appeared in 1954.

(Left and lower left) Aftermath of a January snowstorm in 1971.

(Below right) Chicago and NorthWestern locomotive engineer Johan Norgaard (second from left) aside his engine. Mr. Norgaard's usual route was between Council Bluffs and Boone, Iowa.



(Above left) Chicago, Burlington and Quincy streamlined engine popular with the railroad's Zephyr service from the mid 1930s into the 1940s. (Above right) Dairy Queen at North 17th Street and West Broadway in 2003. (Right) End of the line for Council Bluffs' streetcar service, September 25, 1948 as the last operating car, #875, is backed into the garage on Avenue A.



(Left) Sandbags protect downtown stores of the 500 block of West Broadway in April, 1952. Heroic efforts by thousands of volunteers at the river's banks prevented the flood from inundating the city.

Historical Society of Pottawattamie County

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Inside...

Cowboys didn't dress the way they did just to look cool in Western movies. Their attire was intended to be functional. Find the details in the story on page 2.

Taxpayers pick up the tab for the creation of the route, repairs, and even snow removal... what's not to like? Great Northern Railroad president Ralph Budd jumped on the idea of intercity busses to augment his rail network with Union Pacific and the CB&Q right behind. See more in the story on page 4.



Pueblo County, Colorado needed a new jail in 1881 so they opted for the latest technology-- one with a rotating cell block. Learn more about it on page 7.