

The General Store

The general store was a one-stop center for travelers. The original store building was built in 1882 and owned by Alfred and Mary Albrecht.



Albrechts sold the store to J.C. Cords. In 1902 George Feller purchased the store from Cords after working for the firm since sometime in the 1890's. That same year Carrie Hieden, another Cords employee, became Mrs. George Feller.

Under Feller ownership the store offered groceries, livestock, and farm supplies, patent medicine, wearing apparel, household goods, building materials and coal. As the local post office, the Fellers dispensed stamps and war certificates.

In 1913, fire destroyed the store when an acetylene light plant exploded. During a reconstruction period, the store was operated from a small storeroom known as the "little store."

The new building stands today on Osborne's Main Street. It is the large white building at the west end of the Pioneer Village. The outer metal siding is said to have been selected by the Fellers because of their experiences with the fire.

The School House

Built in 1908, this school was a catechism classroom for children at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Garnavillo. It was moved to private property in 1952 and donated to Osborne by the Andrew Puelz family in 1989.



The Log Cabin

The log cabin was built in the 1840's at Giard, Iowa. The one-room cabin was constructed of logs and motar. Several families lived in the cabin until 1959. The cabin was then disassembled, moved to Osborne and reconstructed on its current site in 1976. The pump in the Pioneer Village once stood on Osborne's Main Street.



The Hotel

The original Osborne Hotel was two and one-half stories tall. Travelers overtaken by nightfall often visited the Osborne Hotel. It burned in the 1920's and was never rebuilt. Only the hotel façade is included in the village to represent the original.



Clayton County Conservation

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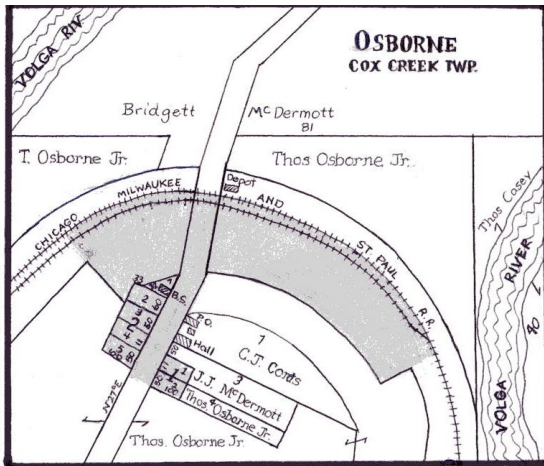
Pioneer
Village
Of
Osborne

It's a walk into the past!



Osborne's Heritage

Thomas Osborne was a man of vision. When he subdivided this 80-acre farm in 1878, he dreamed of a commercial center to compete with the likes of Strawberry Point and Elkader.



Born in England in 1818, Osborne immigrated to Canada in 1845 and engaged in farming. There, he met and married, Elizabeth Riddle also of England, in 1851. The couple moved to Clayton County in 1865 and purchased a farm in Cox Creek Township where they raised nine children.

Commercial life in Osborne had its beginnings when the Volga Branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad laid tracks through the Osborne homestead. An official survey of the area was completed November 11, 1879.

Osborne's first Post Office opened in 1878 with J.J. McDermott as Postmaster. Original businesses included a blacksmith shop, general store and a wagon shop.

For a period of time, Osborne continued to grow and prosper. In 1882 an elevator, depot, and stockyards were built along the railroad tracks. A two-and-one half story hotel was constructed. Shipping picked up while Elkader experienced problems with Iowa Eastern Railroad. During this time the population peaked at 50 inhabitants .

The commercial success of the village was short lived. In a letter dated 1884, Osborne told of low food prices affecting business. Wheat dropped to a low of 60 cents a bushel, corn dipped to 30 cents and pork, \$3.50 per hundred. The "best" sugar was just one-dollar.

Osborne's letter also told of yet another fire claiming the railroad depot. "Hence, most of the businesses have left town," he wrote.

During the 1920's the hotel burned causing the railroad to tear up the tracks. Demolition of the grain elevator and storehouse followed and Tom Osborne's dreams continued to go up in smoke. Business activity in the tiny town virtually ended when the Osborne General Store was closed in 1952. Only a repair shop remained.

But Osborne was not to be a ghost town and disappear from the maps forever. In 1961, the Clayton County Conservation Board began developing a "Children's Forest," which has grown to a 300-acre Welcome and Nature Center, attracting more than 20,000 visitors annually.

The Pioneer Village

The Osborne Pioneer Village currently consists of six buildings which replicate a typical small Iowa town in the late 1800's.

The village is the site of the popular Heritage Days, an event that takes you back to the true pioneer days with its crafts, foods and other activities. The event is held the second weekend in October during the peak of the colored leaf season.

The Depot

The railroad depot is the only original building in the pioneer village. The first depot was destroyed by a fire in 1880 and replaced by the existing structure.



Typical items found in the depots of the era included a wooden desk, a telegraph key, wooden benches, and a time table. Trains traveled through Osborne twice daily, heading South at 7 a.m. and North at 8 p.m. The cars on display today are reminiscent of the late 1950's.

The Blacksmith Shop

The skills of the blacksmith were essential to the survival and prosperity of every settlement.

When working at the forge and anvil they crafted everything made from iron such as locks, keys, plows, cowbells, and horseshoes. Peter Schmitz was the blacksmith and the Postmaster in 1882.

