

The Sesquicentennial History of State Center, Iowa 1867 - 2017



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The Sesquicentennial History of State Center, Iowa 1867 - 2017



Written by Harlan Quick • Edited by Marcia Quick

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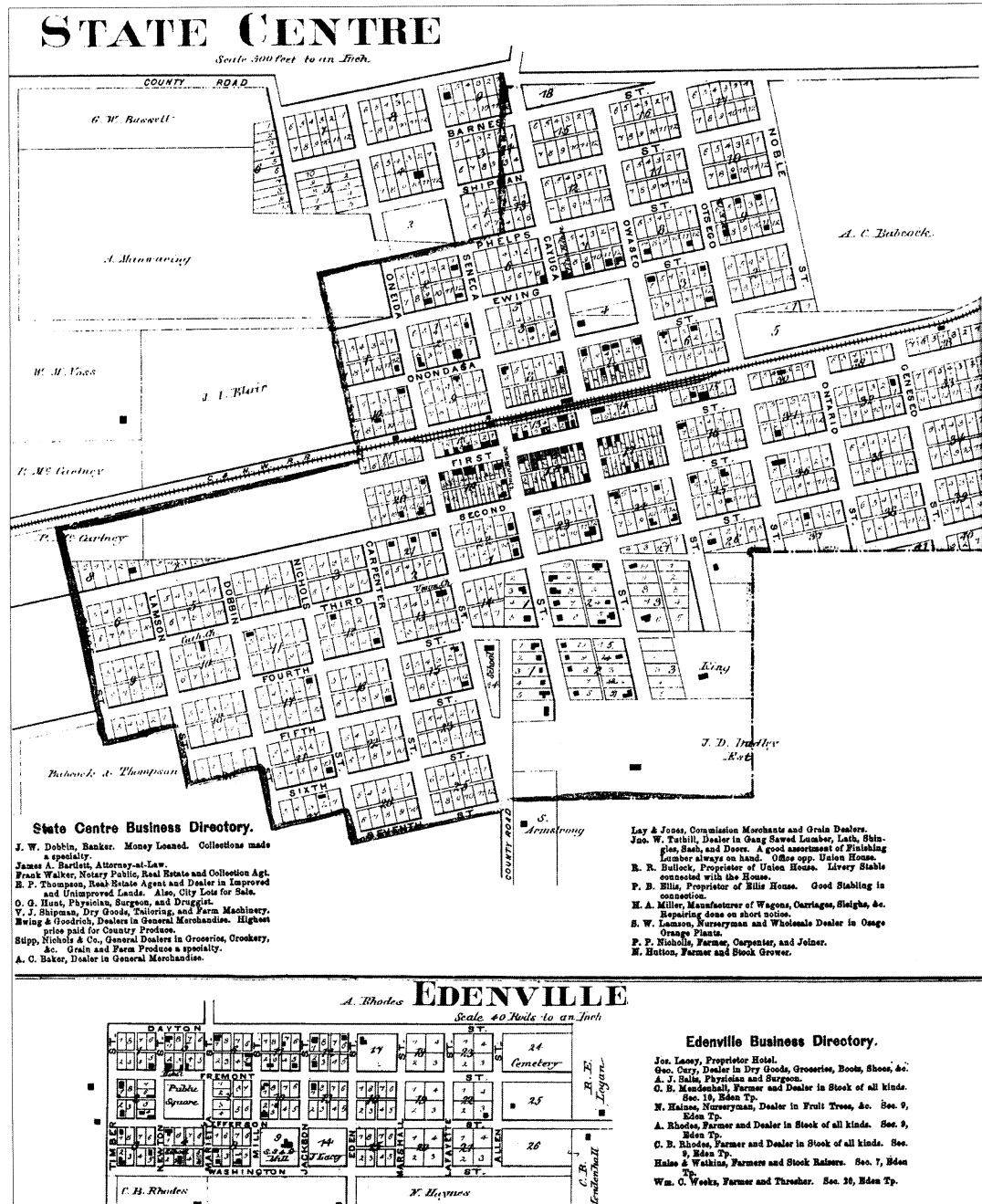
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STATE CENTER HISTORY 2017

Early Settlement and Development

Marshall County was established in 1848. The first settler to this area was Greene Allen in 1849. He made a claim on 600 acres and built a cabin. He brought his family, livestock, and provisions for 6 months from Illinois. The closest mill at that time was in Oskaloosa. This forced the family to live on a diet that depended heavily on parched corn and beans. A second settler arrived in 1850 and a third in 1852. Eight more settlers and their families arrived in 1854. Notable among them were C. B. Rhodes and H. Robb. Mr. Robb was the first to file a claim on land in what became State Center Township.



1871 map of State Center, from *Atlas of Marshall County, Iowa*, 1871

Originally, the State Center area was a part of Eden Township, which was established in 1855. Conway Rhodes laid out the town of Edenville in 1857. A post office was set up that year, with weekly mail service to Marietta. Marietta was, at that time, the designated county seat. C. B. Rhodes later became a leading businessman and developer in State Center, as well.

The 1850s saw the development of a significant German settlement called French Grove in the area north of State Center. Some of its earliest settlers were from the Alsace region of France, which was German-speaking. Anselme, Wantz, Pfantz, and Eckhardt were the family names of some of the earliest settlers in the French Grove area. John Anselme was one of the first two residents of State Center.

The reason the early settlements were in Eden Township and French Grove was the availability of timber for building material and for fuel. This advantage was short-lived as the coming of the railroad provided building materials, fuel, and other supplies to the towns it served. In addition, the railroad provided a market for farmers' products. State Center was created to serve as a trade center for the first railroad built across Iowa.

In 1861, the Cedar Rapids and Missouri Railroad surveyed a route across Marshall County. This determined the location of the community that became State Center. In 1863, the rail line that operated as the Chicago and Northwestern Railway was completed to that location. At this point, the only services that were available were those provided by a traveling caravan of railcars operated by an entrepreneur named Alexander Crow, who furnished meals and other necessities for track-layers and other travelers. This operation was referred to as the "Crows Nest" and moved westward with the advancement of the rail line.

In 1864, the railroad bought 80 acres and platted a town, which was called Centre Station. The first station agent was William Barnes, who constructed a shed and began buying wheat from local farmers. He is credited with changing the name of the town to State Center due to its location near the center of the state. The post office was established in 1864 and was located in the depot. The first postmaster was C. F. Culver; J. W. Dobbin, postmaster from 1865 to 1871, succeeded him.

William Barnes and John Anselme are identified as the first two residents of State Center. John Anselme moved an 18'x20' building from Marietta to State Center, using it as a hotel. William Barnes built the first house, which was also a hotel called the *Union House*; this was part of his agreement with the Railroad. 1865 saw the rapid expansion of State Center's business offerings. J. W. Dobbin and V. J. Shipman arrived in January and opened a store offering groceries, boots, and shoes. Mr. Dobbin recounted that there were only six buildings in State Center when he first arrived in 1865. The Carpenter Brothers opened a general store, and John King opened a dry goods store that same year. Mr. King became the first attorney in town. The first doctor in State Center, Dr. O.G. Hunt, came in 1866. The first drug store was opened by J. H. Post. Jacob Fisher became the first blacksmith. The Walker Brothers started their store in 1866, as well. In 1867, C. B. Rhodes built the first brick building. The total population was now estimated to be around 600. Due to its railroad connection to a growing and expanding nation and the fertile farmland surrounding it, State Center rapidly grew into a thriving and prosperous community. The rapid population growth of State Center was similar to that of Marshall County and the State of Iowa.

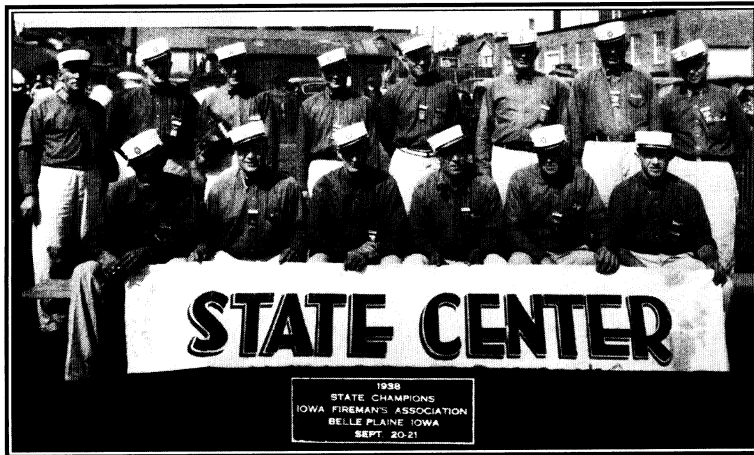
Population	Iowa	Marshall County	State Center
1850	192,214	338	0
1860	674,913	6,015	0
1870	1,194,020	17,576	559
1880	1,624,615	23,752	880

State Center's petition for incorporation was granted on August 26, 1867. This recognized a Mayor and City Council, who were empowered to organize the government and to establish the ordinances that would govern the City. Committees were formed, and ordinances for the election of city officials and for maintaining order were passed. Rules governing sidewalks, streets, disposal of garbage, and livestock were established. On March 1, 1869, the first municipal election for the Corporation was held. One early ordinance required that all able-bodied men assist in fighting fires, under the direction of the Mayor and other City officials.

Expanding City Services

Volunteer Fire Department

In 1875, an ordinance creating the State Center Volunteer Fire Department was passed. An engine and 800 feet of hose were purchased, and about 45 volunteers were recruited. A separate bucket unit was also established. The State Center Fire Department members have continued their long tradition of outstanding community service. They have shown their expertise by winning numerous State Championships at the State Volunteer Fire Department Conventions; State Center finished first at every State Fire Convention held from 1938 to 1948. A new fire station was built in 1950 as part of the new City Hall and Community Building. A new, larger station was completed in 1978, accommodating the



ABOVE: Iowa Fireman's Association, State Champions, 1938 Members are: Bottom row-"Griz" Gray, Art Oehlsen, Beryl Nason, "Rags" Mehlich, Roy Meier, Kenneth Poling. Top row-Harvey (Pat) Hilleman, Bernard Malloy, Bill Watson, Jim Westphal, "Corn" Wilkening, Walter Eckhardt, Henry Wilkening and "Spec" Houghton. (City of State Center)

BELOW: State Center Fire Department, established 1875 (State Center Historical Society)



ever-increasing amount of equipment that needed to be housed. A First Responders Emergency Medical Services unit was created in 1982. At first, a separate unit, the First Responders were later incorporated into the Fire Department.

Today, the Volunteer Fire Department provides, not only essential services to our community, but also provides a source of civic pride. Membership in the department is, for some families, a tradition. Jim Eckhardt has been Fire Chief since 1995. His father, Ed Eckhardt, served as Fire Chief for 18 years; his grandfather, Walter Eckhardt, served as Fire Chief for 34 years.

Water Utility

In 1877, the effectiveness of the fire department was greatly increased when the City built a water works system. It included a well, 1000 feet of water mains, a water tower, six hydrants, and a pump. A new well was dug in 1887. The wooden tank on the water tower was replaced with a steel tank in 1906. The increasing demand for water led to digging a new, deeper well in 1912, but problems with the new well delayed its beginning of operation until 1914.

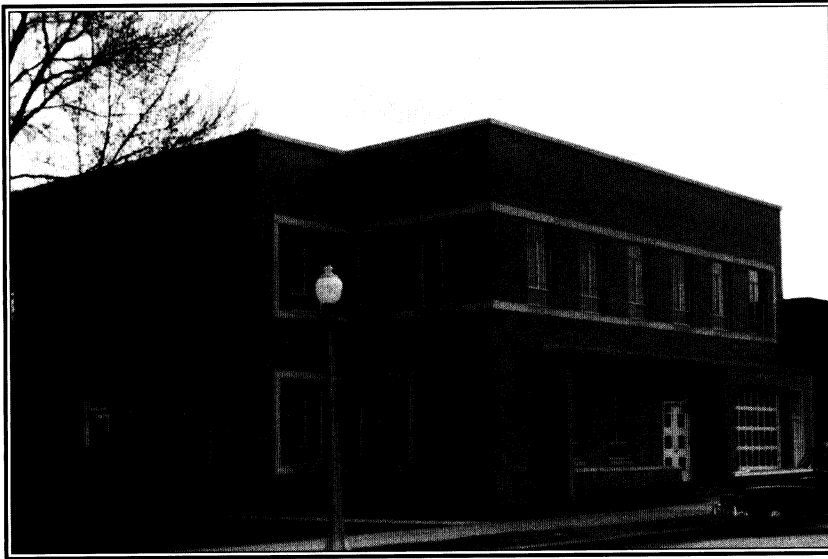
By 1925, problems with the water supply and water quality led the City to again look at improving the water system. That year, voters approved a bond issue to extend the water system and to drill a new well north of town. A new water tower was constructed in 1929, increasing water pressure and improving the water reserve for fire protection. Poor water quality led to the addition of an iron removal plant in 1935. Water shortages were the cause of the decision to drill a deeper well in 1957 that would meet the City's needs; this well has been relined twice and is still in use today. The 1879 stone water tower was torn down in 1959. A new water treatment plant was built in 1978, and a new water tower was constructed in 1986. The 1929 tower was torn down once the new tower was in operation.

In 2016, the well was relined and repairs were made to the water treatment system. Plans for a new reverse osmosis treatment plant were put on hold because of the cost. Improving water quality remains a goal of the State Center Water Utility.

Electric Utility

The next major expansion of City services came in 1899 when the citizens approved an appropriation of \$5,000 for the construction of a municipal electric plant. Two earlier efforts to franchise a private company had been voted down. At first, service was only from sundown to midnight. In 1909, service included one forenoon a week for ironing. In 1913, service was extended to rural lines. Generation of electricity was from 7:00 a.m. to midnight, except on Sundays. In 1916, twenty-four hour service was provided.

Steam engines were used to generate electricity until 1927 and 1928, when diesel engines were installed and the generating equipment was upgraded. The ever-increasing demand for electricity led to adding a new and more powerful engine and generator about every five years. Six new engines were added, and the three smallest engines were retired. In 1963, a new light plant was built to house what was now a five-engine facility; at this point, the utility was supplying the City and 58 miles of rural lines.



ABOVE: New City Hall/Fire Station, dedicated 1950 (Ed Eckhardt Family)

BELOW: Municipal Light Plant, Water Works, Fire Department and jail in about 1950 (City of State Center)



The 1970s brought major changes to the Electric Utility. A new dual-fuel engine, with twice the capacity of any previous engine, was added, and the increasing cost of fuel led to the City buying power from larger power plants and generating only during peak usage, thus reducing the price paid for power. In 1979, voters rejected a proposal to sell the rural lines and to lease the electric plant to a larger power company.

In the 1980s, the City began putting power lines underground. This reduced the chance of power loss due to storm damage.

In 1992, the City began planning a major upgrade to its electric light plant facilities; the need for this upgrade had first been identified in 1973. This project was completed in 1995. Upgrades and improvements have continued to be made on a regular basis to maintain a first class generating and distribution system. New power lines, transformer, and controls were installed in 2014.

Sewer Utility

At the same time the City was expanding electrical service to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the City Council decided to also build a sewage collection and treatment system. Before this, the City had built some individual sewer lines, but there was no treatment system. In March of 1915, the Council passed a resolution to proceed with the construction of a sewer system, despite a petition and letters opposing it. The cost was about \$20,000, with 24,213 feet of sewer lines installed. The system was completed in April of 1916. The Council cited the progress being made in other communities and the expectations of current and future residents as reasons for this project.

In 1943, the State Board of Health condemned the sewer plant as inadequate, outdated, and out of commission. World War II delayed its replacement until 1948, when the City extended the sewer system and constructed a new treatment plant.

In 1993, a new lagoon treatment plant was completed. Meeting water quality standards remains a goal and a challenge for the City of State Center.

Communication Services

Electronic communications linked State Center to the rest of the world from the City's beginning; with the railroad, came the telegraph. What was happening in the rest of the country and the world was known in State Center in a matter of hours. Western Union telegrams and the U.S. Postal Service were the main means of communication over vast distances until the advent of the telephone. The first telephones in State Center came in the 1880s, connecting residences and downtown stores. A small exchange was established in 1897, with only a few subscribers. In 1900, a partnership formed by G. I. Van Pelt, Dr. P. W. Coe, and T. T. Swift became the State Center Telephone Company.

In 1912, farmers, representing eighteen rural lines, demanded continual 24-hour service; they threatened to start their own exchange if it became necessary. As a result, continual phone service began in March of 1912. This exchange was sold to the Central Iowa Telephone Company in 1928. Automated dial service replaced human operators in 1959, eliminating nine of the eleven phone operators. In 1967, the Central Iowa Telephone Company consolidated with General Telephone Company of Iowa, a subsidiary of GTE, putting State Center subscribers under the management of its Nevada Office. In 2000, GTE sold the telephone exchange in State Center to Iowa Telecom. In 2006, Iowa Telecom sold the State Center exchange to Partner Communications Cooperative in Gilman.



Last day for switchboard operators, July 29, 1959, replaced by automated switchboard (Bertha Myers Estate)

Local cable TV service began in State Center in 1982. Partner Communications in Gilman purchased the cable TV service in State Center in 2003.

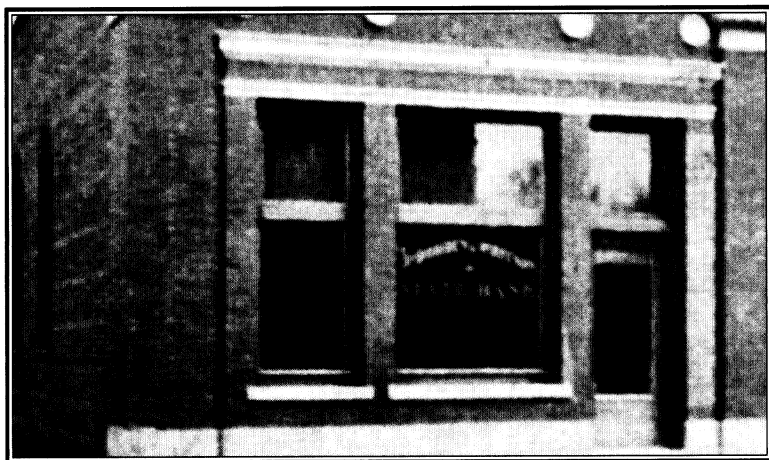
That same year, Iowa Telecom began offering high-speed Internet services in State Center. Partner Communications purchased the State Center exchange from Iowa Telecom in 2006. In 2008, Partner Communications opened a sales and service office on State Center's West Main Street. Partner Communications continues to make improvements in Internet services by increasing capacity and speed. Today, the State Center office has 1-GIGABYTE connections available to users, onsite. Being connected to the Communication Superhighway remains essential to State Center's future.

Early Community Leaders

J. W. Dobbin

As State Center grew, the need for financial services led J. W. Dobbin to establish its first bank, The Exchange Bank of State Centre, in 1869. The financial strength of the bank was shown when it survived the nationwide financial Panic of 1873. O. J. Whitson became a partner in the bank in 1877, and the bank's name changed to J. W. Dobbin and Company. In 1902, it was incorporated under the name of Dobbin and Whitson Bank. After Mr. Whitson died in 1906, the bank's name was changed to First National Bank in 1907. After the death of J. W. Dobbin in 1912, his son, Fred Dobbin, became president of the bank, serving until he retired, selling the bank to W. L. (Bill) Haesemeyer and A. M. Seih in 1936. In 1942, Bill Haesemeyer bought the Central State Bank from Fred

Gilbert. Bill Haesemeyer bought out his partners in First National Bank and merged the two banks. He retained the name Central State Bank, but moved the operation into the First National Bank building on the north side of Main Street. The Haesemeyer family continues to own and operate the bank in 2017.



ABOVE: First National Bank, 1907. J. W. Dobbin started this bank as the Exchange Bank of State Centre in 1869. It became the Central State Bank in 1942 when the two banks merged. (1907 Marshall County Atlas)

RIGHT: Central State Bank started in 1901 as the Bank of State Center. It became Central State Bank in 1912 and merged with First National Bank in 1942. (Jim Jorgensen)



S. M. Brimhall

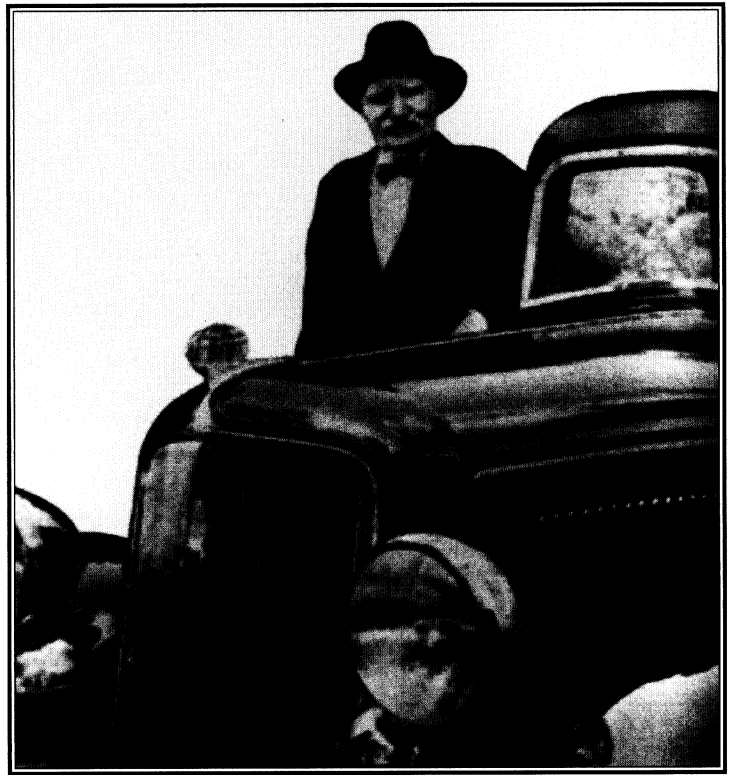
One of the most interesting and successful of State Center's early businessmen was S. M. (Sam) Brimhall. When Sam was born in 1838, railroads were just beginning to be built. In an article published in the *Iowa Automotive Merchants Bulletin* in November, 1934, Sam told of traveling west by train after the Civil War. After the train wrecked, Sam walked to a settlement nearby to look around. He liked what he saw and decided to settle there. The settlement was State Center, and Sam would live there the rest of his life.

When Sam Brimhall retired in 1907, many considered automobiles a novelty and luxury; but not Sam Brimhall. By 1934, this veteran, who was wounded three times during the Civil War, had embraced the new Automobile Age. Sam Brimhall, then 96 years old, traded in his 1929 Plymouth with 80,000 miles on it. He praised the comfort and enjoyment of traveling by motorcar. He said he appreciated the steel frame on his new car after having been in a wooden railroad coach, which had "folded up", when the train hit a herd of cattle as he traveled west after the Civil War.

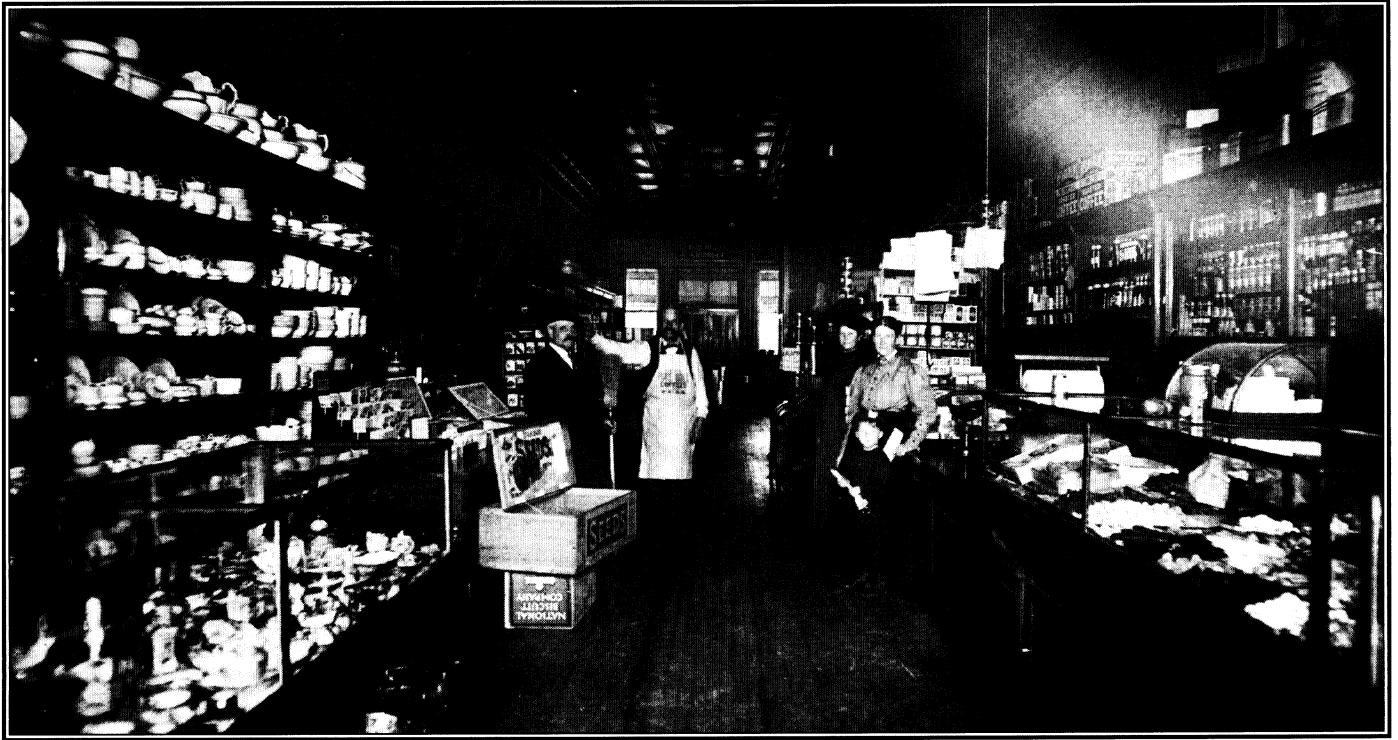
Sam Brimhall arrived in State Center between 1865 and 1867. He had trained as a doctor but never practiced medicine to any great extent. He had served as a surgeon's assistant during the Civil War. Sam began operating a drug store in 1869; his success as a druggist took most of his time. In 1878, he opened a new drug and bookstore in partnership with his brother C. W. Brimhall.

In 1885, the Brimhall Brothers acquired the local furniture business from Hinshaw and Gulic. By 1890, Sam Brimhall was the sole owner of S. M. Brimhall Co., and his brother, C. W. Brimhall, had become a druggist in Schaller, Iowa. Sam's nephews, C. Howard and Walter F. Brimhall, both druggists, took over the operation of the business when Sam Brimhall retired in 1907. Walter had joined the firm in 1890 and Howard in 1899. The brothers purchased the business from Sam in 1912, and it was, once again, Brimhall Bros.

In 1932, Clifford West joined Brimhall Brothers. Cliff was married to Walter's niece, Marian, who had been raised by Walter and his wife. In 1935, Cliff West purchased Walter's interest in the furniture store and funeral home businesses and the businesses' name became Brimhall-West. Walter retained his interest in the drug store. Howard remained a partner in the furniture and funeral business, as well as operating the drugstore, until his sudden death in 1943. The drugstore business was then sold to Brush Van Pelt, a longtime employee. Cliff West continued to own and operate the Brimhall-West Furniture Store and Funeral Home until his death in 1987. For part of that time, his son, Jim West, worked with him.



Sam Brimhall, age 96,
with new 1934 Plymouth
(Iowa Automotive
Merchants Bulletin)



Interior of Watson's grocery in 1905, "Billy" Watson in apron (State Center Historical Society)

W. E. Watson

Another longtime businessman was W. E. Watson, who came to State Center in 1869. "Billy" Watson was 16 years old and, most likely, went to work for S. W. Morgan, who ran a grocery and general merchandise store. By 1881, the two were partners in the business, and by 1885, Billy became sole proprietor of the business when Mr. Morgan moved to Marshalltown. The business became Watson's Grocery Store. A new, brick building was constructed in 1895 to house Watson's Grocery after a fire destroyed the old wooden building that it had occupied. The new building was a "sister building" to the new building, housing Tummel's Clothing Store, next door. Pauline Tummel Watson, Billy's wife, was a sister to J. W. Tummel. Billy Watson retired from the business in 1920. Watson's Grocery continued to operate, first under sons Ralph and Bill, and then later under Ralph and his wife, Florence. The store remained in business until shortly after Ralph's death in 1981. A little over a year later, Florence simply locked the door one day and did not return. Grocery products sat on the shelves until the building was sold following Florence's death in 1989. The store had been maintained in its original state, with much of its oak shelving and fixtures dating back for over a century to the original construction of the store in 1895. For this reason, there was a community-wide effort to purchase the building with as much of its contents as possible at an auction, held by the Watson heirs. The community's successful effort led to the creation of the historic Watson's Grocery Store Museum in 1989.

W. N. Gilbert

William Northrup Gilbert came to State Center in 1878. He, along with his brother, H.M. Gilbert, opened a dry goods store, naming it Gilbert Brothers. The store was operated by this partnership until the retirement of H.M. Gilbert in 1896. William Gilbert continued running the dry goods store until 1901, when he took a leadership role in

establishing and operating a new bank, called the Bank of State Center, which later changed its name to Central State Bank. William sold his interest in the store to his niece, Amy Gilbert, and to Elmer Benson, a 15-year employee of the store. It was renamed Benson and Gilbert until Elmer Benson became the sole owner five years later.

William Gilbert served as president of the Central State Bank until his death in 1921. He was a prominent leader in the community and served two terms in the Iowa Legislature. His son, F. B. (Fred) Gilbert, an attorney in Marshalltown, succeeded him as

president of the bank, holding that position until he sold the bank to Bill Haesemeyer in 1942. Fred commanded a U. S. Army Air Corp Squadron during World War I. Like his father before him, Fred played an active role in State politics, serving two terms in the Iowa Legislature, serving as Chair of the Iowa Republican Party from 1941-1943, and serving as Chair of the Iowa Highway Commission from 1945-1951.

William's former employee, Elmer Benson, owned and operated the dry goods business until his retirement in 1957. Elmer was a fixture in State Center's business community for 71 years, beginning when he operated a small bakery after first coming to State Center in 1885. Amazingly, there was a second longtime businessman active on State Center's Main Street during this time, Robert Holsworth. Robert operated a jewelry business for 69 years, from about 1870 till his death in 1939.



Benson's Dry Goods in 1914, located at 104 West Main Street (State Center Historical Society)

John Gutekunst

Another prominent State Center businessman was John Gutekunst. John arrived in the area in 1864 and began purchasing farmland. At the time of his death in 1910, he was identified as, possibly, the wealthiest man in Marshall County. John left the bulk of his estate to his only son, J. Giffert Gutekunst. Giffert was a local attorney and, like his father, a former Mayor of State Center. He was a Lieutenant in the U. S. Army Air Corp during World War I. Having no direct decedents when he died in 1971, Giffert left the farmland he had inherited to the City of State Center for the purpose of supporting the Public Library. His former home now houses the Gutekunst Public Library.

Dr. Ira D. Kauffman

Dr. Ira D. Kauffman had a lasting impact on State Center. He began practicing medicine in State Center in 1901. At first, he was in practice with Dr. Center, a Civil War veteran. He practiced on his own from 1902 until he partnered with Dr. Engle and Dr. Woods in 1911. Dr. Kauffman practiced on his own, once again, from 1915 to 1927, when Dr. Biersborn became his partner. Dr. Kauffman retired in 1932, moving to California in 1935.

Dr. Kauffman is credited with having the first automobile in State Center. He served as president of the local auto club, working to bring the historic Lincoln Highway down State Center's Main Street. When he died in 1953, he left several farms to the City of State Center. The City gained possession of the farms in 1991, after the death of Dr. Kauffman's daughter. Proceeds from the sale of the land were used to establish the Ira D. Kauffman Charitable Trust, which distributes \$50,000 to \$70,000 annually to projects in the State Center community.

Development and Changes in Transportation

State Center, like many towns in Iowa and the nation, was created by the railroad. Early settlements worked to bring the railroad to their communities, or they were forced to move their community to the railroad lines. Incorporation of the towns usually coincided with the arrival of the railroad. For example, Rhodes, then known as Edenville, was settled before State Center but was not incorporated until the railroad arrived in 1880. The value of the rail connection to local businesses was evident when C. B. Rhodes, a prominent State Center and area businessman, donated funds to build the depot in Edenville; at first only the depot was named after him. The closer the land was to the rail line, the more valuable the land. Local businesses supplied the farmers and bought their products. More settlers and immigrants meant more farmers and products. That meant more business for the towns and railroads. In 1872, the Chicago and Northwestern Railway built a new, larger depot in State Center.

In 1881, State Center acquired a second rail line; the Grinnell and Montezuma Railroad built a branch line connecting State Center to the Central Iowa Railroad's main line in Grinnell. It became part of the Central Iowa Railroad in 1882, and its

State Center's Chicago North
Western Depot in 1913
(Mike Riemenschneider)





State Center Iowa Central Depot in 1910. It became part of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway in 1912. This line was abandoned in 1925. (Mike Riemenschneider)

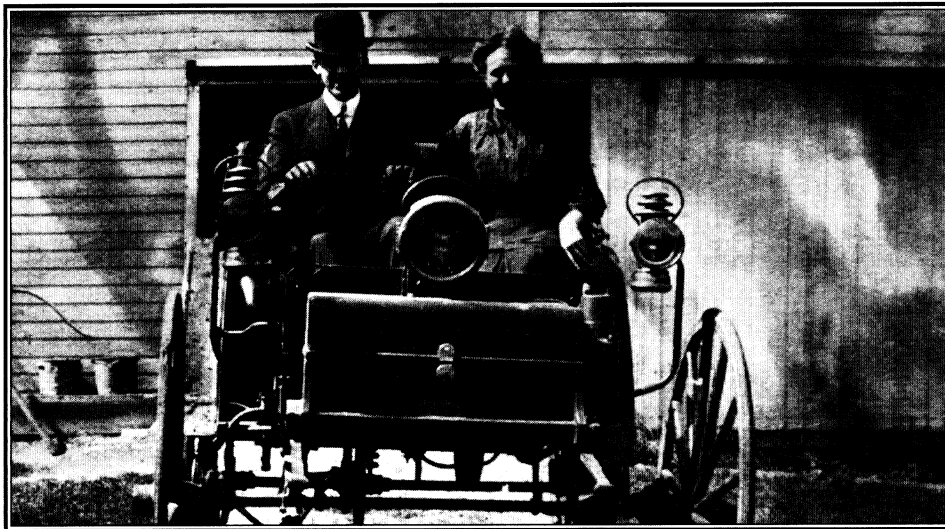
name was later changed to the Iowa Central Railroad. It was, later, leased and operated by the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway, who purchased the line in 1912. The northern end of this branch line ended in State Center, using the wye junction yard to turn its engines around. Their depot and railroad yard were located where Schilling Field, West Marshall's baseball field, is today. The Minneapolis & St. Louis Depot and rail line through State Center were abandoned and sold in 1925. The Centre Station Depot Museum, which sits along the railroad tracks on State Center's East Main Street, was an 1880s Iowa Central/Minneapolis & St. Louis depot in Zearing, similar to the one that sat along West Main Street in State Center.

By 1900, a rail line was located in every Iowa town of 100 or more people, and no farm was more than 5 miles from a train station, about a 15-minute automobile ride. By the early 1900s, prominent retired merchants, such as Sam Brimhall, were traveling by train to California or Florida for the winter months. One local attorney, Fred Gilbert, was commuting daily by train to his law office in Marshalltown.

But a new form of transportation was about to revolutionize life in America and around the world. The internal-combustion engine, and the automobiles and trucks it powered, transformed life in America, especially in small towns and rural areas. This reduced isolation and increased individual freedom and independence. It resulted in an explosion in demand for automobiles and in the need for products and services to support them.

Automobile Dealers

Dr. Kauffman, who came to State Center in 1901, was credited with owning the first car in town. It was most likely a 1901 or 1902 Holsman, a high-wheeled, buggy-like open car with a tiller for steering. By 1908, the public's newfound interest in owning automobiles resulted in three State Center businesses becoming automobile agencies. Schilling Brothers sold Cadillacs, T. S. Wood sold Buicks, and the State Center Auto



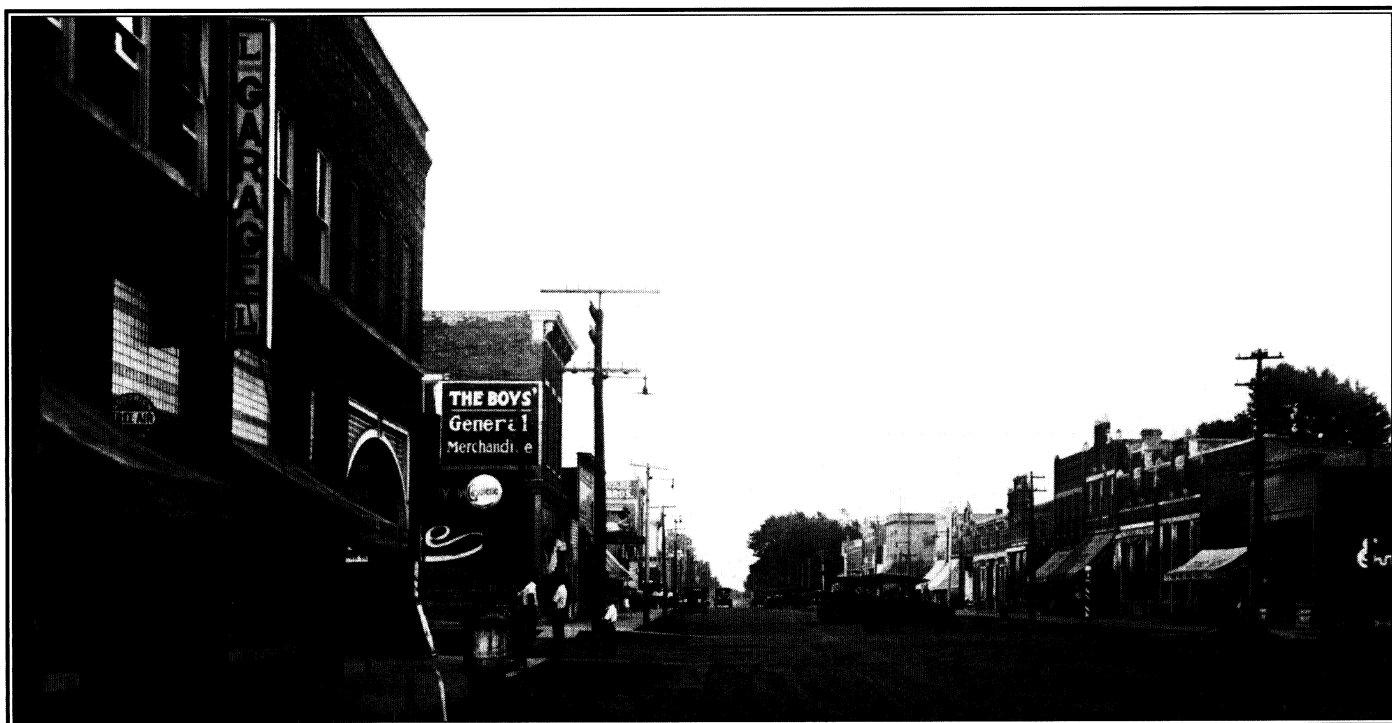
Dr. Ira D. Kauffman owned the first automobile in State Center. It was probably a 1901 or 1902 Holsman. (State Center Historical Society)

Company sold Macons. Car rentals were also in business; in 1908, the Corbett Livery bought a Buick to rent to its customers. Other makes of automobiles soon became available; in 1911, Giffert Gutekunst bought a REO, and Alice Dobbin bought a Ford.

The number of State Center dealerships expanded. C. H. McMahon and E. H. Schilling took over the name State Center Auto Co. from J. W. Banks, who

retired from the auto business in 1910. Auto sales were increasing; in 1912, the State Center Auto Co. sold 14 Model T Fords in the month of May alone.

In 1915, Edward Eckhardt and E. H. Hilleman opened the Lincoln Highway Auto Company. While operating as the Lincoln Highway Auto Company, the business sold Velie, Maxwell, and Studebaker cars and Sampson tractors. The dealership was housed in a large, multifunction building, which the business partners constructed along State Center's West Main Street. Besides the garage, the building housed a movie theater on its street corner. On the second floor were offices and a large room that, at various times, was used for billiards, roller-skating, and a bowling alley. Ed Eckhardt bought out Eugene Hilleman in 1917. After 1925, the garage was leased to other auto dealers. The building is still owned by the Eckhardt family.



The Lincoln Highway Auto Co. building, on the left, was built in 1915. It was an auto dealership and filling station. This building also housed a movie theater, pool hall, and doctor's office. (State Center Historical Society)

The auto boom was on, and it was changing America as can be seen in the graph below.

Iowa Motor Vehicles Registrations

Year	Total Vehicles	No. of People Per Vehicle
1905	799	2,766
1910	10,422	215
1915	147,078	16
1920	437,378	5.5

If these ratios held for State Center, there would have been 1 car in State Center in 1905, 5 cars in 1910, 60 cars in 1915, and 180 cars in 1920.

Automobile dealerships, which had begun as add-on operations for local hardware stores and farm machinery dealers, grew into separate businesses. Following the Second World War, State Center had three automobile dealerships: the C. V. Marten Chrysler-Plymouth Garage, the Houghton Motor Company, and the Miller Chevrolet Company.

C. V. Marten Chrysler-Plymouth Garage was open for business in several locations at different times in State Center. In 1944, the business, then called the Martin & Son Garage, was located in the Baie Building on Second Ave. South. The business later became Martin Chrysler-Plymouth. The business moved to the former Ford dealership building on the north side of East Main Street, close to where the Fire Station sits today. The dealership moved east, once again, when it built a new building at 211 East Main Street in 1949. The dealership closed in 1958.

S. J. (Spec) Houghton managed the Standard Motor Company's Ford dealership for 18 months before taking it over in 1937. His new Houghton Motor Company was located in the Eckhardt Building at 201 W. Main Street. Spec operated Houghton Motor Company for about 40 years before selling his dealership to Joe Long in 1977. Joe sold the dealership in 1980, and the dealership closed shortly thereafter.

C. C. (Clinton) Miller came to State Center in 1926 and began a Buick dealership in the former Sweet Garage building, located east of the Opera House on East Main Street.

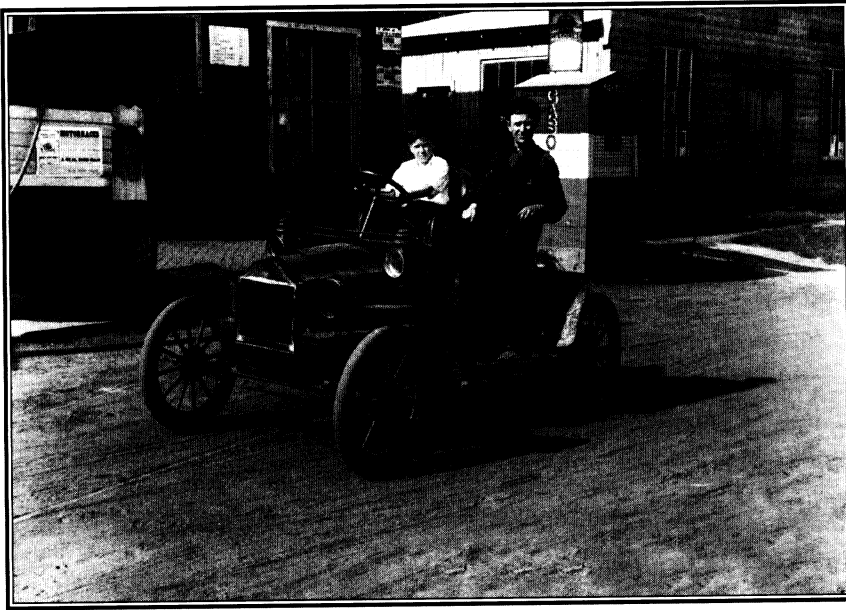
He became a Chevrolet dealer three years later. Clinton eventually moved his dealership into the Baie Building, east of the old high school. A lack of any new cars to sell during the Second World War forced him to move into the Shell Gas Station on Highway 30 in 1942. After Clinton's death in 1943, K. C. Miller, his son, took over the business, and the dealership moved back into the Baie Building.



Miller Chevrolet in 1947 (Bob & Darlene Miller)

K. C. 's younger brother, Bob Miller, bought the business in 1952 and moved the dealership into what was formerly the Marten Garage Building at 211 E. Main Street in 1958. Clayton Miller's nephews, Gordon and Roger Yeager, bought the Chevrolet dealership in 1963. The new dealership, Yeager Chevrolet, built a new building along "New" Highway 30 in 1974. Mike Clemens bought the Chevrolet dealership in 1981. Don Henze purchased the dealership in 1986. Ron Wiley operated the dealership from 1988 to 1993, when the dealership closed. The consolidation of dealerships into larger, high volume franchises resulted in most small town dealerships closing. By the time the Chevrolet dealership closed in the early 90s, State Center no longer had a car dealership or a full-service gas station.

Filling Stations



Billie Banks filling station. Billie Banks, seated to the right, operated the State Center Auto Co. from 1908 to 1910. (State Center Historical Society)

The first gas stations in State Center were little more than gas pumps placed in front of businesses such as J. W. Banks Repair Shop or the Lincoln Highway Auto Company. The original Lincoln Highway, which ran down State Center's Main Street, had filling stations in at least six different locations, but not at the same time. There were at least seven service station sites along the Fourth Street route of Highway 30 on the south side of State Center. The first two stations to open along the new 1931 route of Highway 30, the "Lincoln Highway," were the last two full-service stations to close in State Center.

U. S. Dusher opened a Standard Oil Station on the corner of 4th Street and 7th Avenue SE in 1931. Later, it was owned and operated by his son-in-law, Arnold Westphal, who bought the service station in 1941. Rodney Westphal, Arnold's son, took the station over in 1972 and operated it until discontinuing the sale of gasoline in 1993. This was the last full-service gas station in State Center. As a result, gas could only be purchased at convenience stores and self-serve pumps.

The Home Oil Station was built in 1933 as a Diamond D-X Station. The Home Oil Corporation acquired it in 1934. One of the partners, Ray Wilkening, operated the tank wagon, while the station was leased to different operators for many years. A cafe was built next door in 1949; it was also leased. The operation remained successful until Highway 30 was moved south to the four-lane interchange, and the technological improvements to motor vehicles reduced the vehicles' servicing needs. In 1990, Ray's son, Paul Wilkening, removed the underground tanks and closed the station. The tank wagon operation was also sold. The City of State Center now owns the original Home Oil Station. The building and its site have been restored and remodeled to serve as the State Center Police Department.

The Lincoln Highway

By 1920, America's love affair with the automobile was in full swing. This led to a new focus on building and improving its roads and highways. In State Center, an early emphasis was on making sure the new transcontinental highway, later called the Lincoln Highway, went down its Main Street.

In 1913, there were two different routes proposed for this highway. One was called the "north" route; it ran along the northern edge of State Center, out along the Chicago Northwestern Railroad tracks, and across a wooden overpass northeast of State Center. The second route, called the "south" route, went south for a half-mile, just east of LaMoille, and then turned west, heading into the heart of State Center and down its Main Street. Local leaders quickly organized to make sure the "south" route, which went down Main Street, would remain the official route for the highway. W. N. Gilbert was selected to represent State Center in presenting its case for use of this "south" route to the County and State officials. The State Center Auto Club, headed by Dr. Kauffman, was formed to support this effort. Their efforts were successful, and the County, State and Lincoln Highway Association all designated the "south" route as the official route. But, A. A. Moore, the Marshall County Consul for the Lincoln Highway Association at the time, had advocated for the "north" route and was able to have the "north" route marked temporarily as the route of the Lincoln Highway. This was because much of this route had been improved and graveled, and the railroad's highway overpass already existed on this route.

The City of State Center and Marshall County worked to improve the "south" route. In 1917, State Center installed curb and gutter on Main Street and approved graveling the route through the City. The County made curve and grade improvements and graveled their portion of the highway in 1918. In 1922, the signage for the Lincoln Highway was moved to the "South" route going down State Center's Main Street. The Chicago Northwestern Railway agreed to construct a new underpass for the highway. In 1921, the railroad asked for a time extension to complete its construction; the overpass



Picture of Lincoln Highway running down Main Street in 1929. C. C. Miller operated a Buick Dealership in the Sweet Garage building, on the right, starting in 1926. Miller opened a Chevrolet dealership in 1929. (Susan Van Pelt Sams)

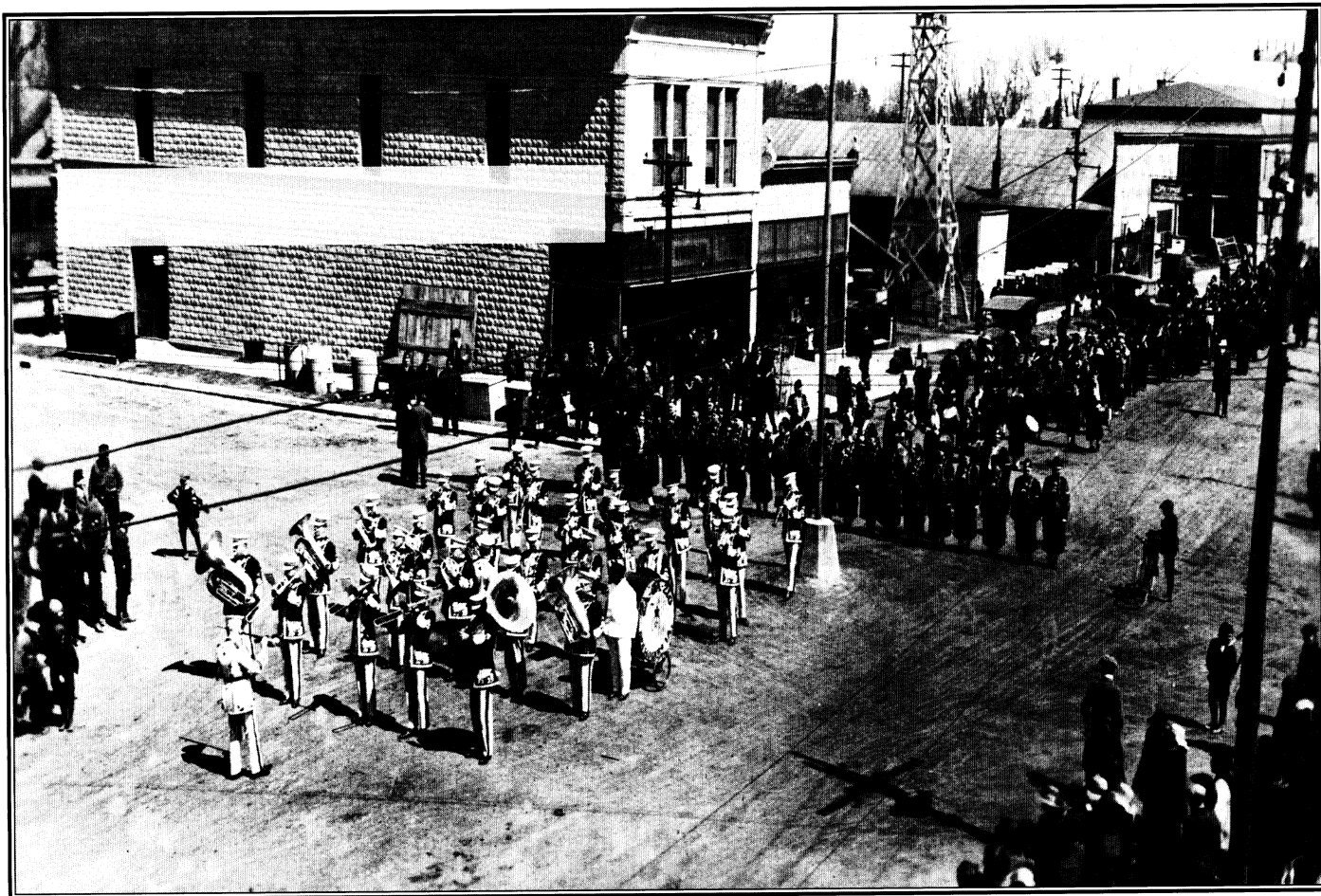
was completed in 1930. In 1923 the City constructed a tourist park with restrooms, water and outdoor ovens for campers traveling along the Lincoln Highway, which ran down 3rd Street NW. Today this site is Kauffman City Park. The Lincoln Highway through Marshall County and State Center was paved in 1925.

State Center had succeeded in keeping another main transportation route going through the center of the town and its business district. In 1930-1931, a new route for the Lincoln Highway, now identified as U.S. Highway 30, was constructed along a route that followed 4th Street and 9th Avenue NW. This route bypassed Main Street and took advantage of the underpass the railroad had constructed. New service stations, restaurants, and tourist cabins were opened along the new route. State Center continued to adapt to changing times.

Hardware Stores and Implement Dealerships

Many of the early farm implement dealerships were operated as part of hardware store businesses. In 1901, both Schilling Brothers Hardware Company and J. L. McMahon Hardware Company advertized their hardware and farm implements.

Joseph Schilling started the family's hardware store in State Center in 1875. His sons, Edward and George, took over the business in 1887. The Schilling brothers constructed a new, two-story building in 1901.



McMahon & Sons Hardware and Implement Co. on the corner. In 1914, they built another building two doors to the east to house their Ford dealership. (Iowa Department of Transportation)



Wells Implement Co. in the early 1950s. In 1952, Ray Wells purchased the Central Implement Co. from L. C. Hilleman, who had operated the company since 1918. (John Wells)

B. S. West moved to State Center and established a hardware business in 1868. When J. L. McMahon came to State Center in 1876, he went to work for Mr. West. In 1887, the two men became partners. The partnership lasted until 1901 when J. L. McMahon bought out B. S. West; the firm now carried the McMahon name. Mr. McMahon's sons joined him as partners in 1912. The hardware store became McMahon and Sons, incorporating in 1918.

The specialization of business firms was seen in the formation of separate automobile and farm implement businesses. The Schillings and McMahons formed an automobile company in 1910; the business took the name State Center Auto Company. In 1918, Center Implement Company was started when J. L. McMahon and C. H. McMahon partnered with L. C. Hilleman. This new firm was located on the first floor of the Opera House Building. The company began selling Hart-Parr tractors in 1919 and John Deere tractors around 1928. L. C. Hilleman continued running the business until selling out to Wells Implement Company in 1952. Wells Implement closed its doors around 1970.

Leo (Bud) Kielly and Charles Wood established a second implement dealership in 1925. Their dealership was located in a building T. S. Wood had built in 1919 to house his Buick dealership. The business carried International Harvester farm equipment. In 1932, Bud Kielly bought out Charles Wood and became the sole owner. Bud operated Kielly Implement until his death in 1952. Rosella Kielly, Bud's widow, operated the dealership until 1955; she sold the business to D. W. Bates, and it became Bates Implement.

Kielly Implement Co. was located in the former Buick Dealership building, built by T. S. Wood in 1919. (State Center Historical Society)



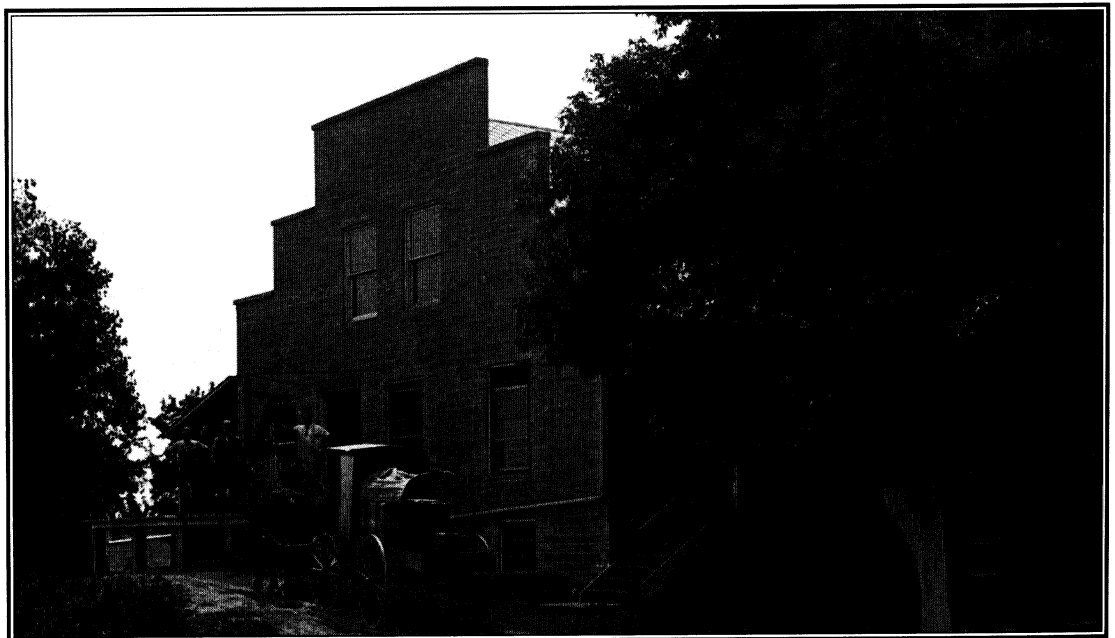
A new brick front was put on the building in 1961. He ran the business until 1962, when he sold it to Weuve and Hanson Farm Implement Company from Nevada. The Weuve and Hanson dealership in State Center closed in 1970. This building at 106-108 East Main Street is now home to Frickeville Antiques.

Farren Farm Equipment Company opened a Case Dealership at the Shell Service Station in 1947; the station was located on the northeast corner of 4th Street SE and 5th Avenue SE, where the Lincoln Highway came in from the east and curved its way northward toward Main Street. A new building was constructed to house the Case Dealership, while they continued to operate the Shell Service Station. Ed Davis bought the business in 1951. The Farm Equipment and Motor Company had contracts to sell Case, GMC, Firestone, Goodyear, and Shell products. A new building was constructed in 1960. The business operated into the 1970s; toward the end, the business handled mainly recreational equipment and lawnmowers.

State Center Creamery

For many years, the largest business in State Center was the Farmers' Cooperative Creamery. The Coop was formed in 1891 when a group of businessmen and farmers bought the C. W. Sibley Company, a small privately owned creamery that had been operating for a number of years. In 1949, production exceeded two million pounds of butter a year. The cream was collected from over 1800 farms scattered over eight counties in Central Iowa. Changing dietary habits and farming practices contributed to the creamery closing in 1982.

Technology and consolidation have changed farming, and those changes in farming are changing small towns across Iowa. The Blood Dairy, located just outside of State Center, milks 2,800 cows a day and has 22 full-time employees. Mid-State Milling, Inc., located on NW 3rd Street, has over 30 employees and supplies livestock feed for livestock operations across Central Iowa. Today's farming operations can cover several thousand acres of land.



State Center Farmer's Cooperative Creamery in 1914. The Coop was formed in 1891 and closed in 1982. (Mike Riemenschneider)



First Presbyterian Church, dedicated in 1922, the oldest church in State Center (State Center Historical Society)

Churches

Except for territorial governments, the first institutions established by the settlers were the churches and schools. The first church services were often conducted in the settlers' homes by traveling preachers. Since the first public buildings were schools, church services were often held in the local school building until a church could be built.

The first church in the State Center area was St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, established in 1865. The church was also known as the French Grove Lutheran Church. They held services in a schoolhouse until land was acquired and a church was built. A Christian Day School was operated by the Church from its beginning. The Day School was held in the parsonage and church annex until a separate school building was constructed in 1880; this day school closed in 1962. All services were conducted in German until around 1900, when English services began. German services were discontinued entirely in 1941. The current church building was completed in 1950 after a fire destroyed the previous church in 1945.

After the fire in 1945, part of the congregation wished to rebuild in State Center. When an agreement could not be reached, part of the congregation separated and founded a new church in State Center. This new church, Trinity Lutheran Church, first held their church services on April 11, 1945, in the Methodist Church in State Center. The decision to build a new church was made in 1948; the current church was dedicated in 1949. Both St. John's Lutheran and Trinity Lutheran Churches are affiliated with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

The first church established in the town of State Center was the Presbyterian Church. On August 20, 1866, the first meeting of the Presbyterian Church was held in the one-room schoolhouse. The first church building was constructed in 1869 as a joint project of the Presbyterian and Methodist congregations. They shared the building until 1871. At that time, the Presbyterians bought the Methodists' share of the building, and the Methodists built a new building of their own. When the wooden Presbyterian Church burned in 1920, a new brick building was constructed. The new building was dedicated in 1922 and serves as the current church.

The Methodist Church in State Center was organized in 1868. They first met in one of the town's business buildings. They shared a building with the Presbyterians until 1871 when they built a church in the northeast part of town. This church burned in 1887 and a new building was built south of Main Street on a site where the present church is located. The Methodist and Presbyterian congregations federated from 1929 to 1935 and services were held in the Presbyterian Church building. In 1936, the Methodists reconditioned their building and separated from the Presbyterians. A new building was constructed on this site in 1966 and serves as the current church.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church was established in 1870, when a church building was begun and land for a cemetery was secured. A Catholic Parochial School operated from 1893 to 1901. The original church burned in 1930 and a new, brick church replaced it in 1931. In 1997, the 1931 church was demolished, and the current church was constructed. The parish size has grown as churches in St. Anthony and Rhodes have closed.

The earliest records indicate that in the 1870s Lutheran services were held in the Adventist Church in State Center. This Adventist Church disappeared in the 1880s, when most of its parishioners left State Center.

The earliest records of an organized congregation at St. Paul Lutheran Church in State Center began in 1884. The first church building was constructed in 1894. The current church was constructed in 1966. St. Paul's Lutheran Church is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

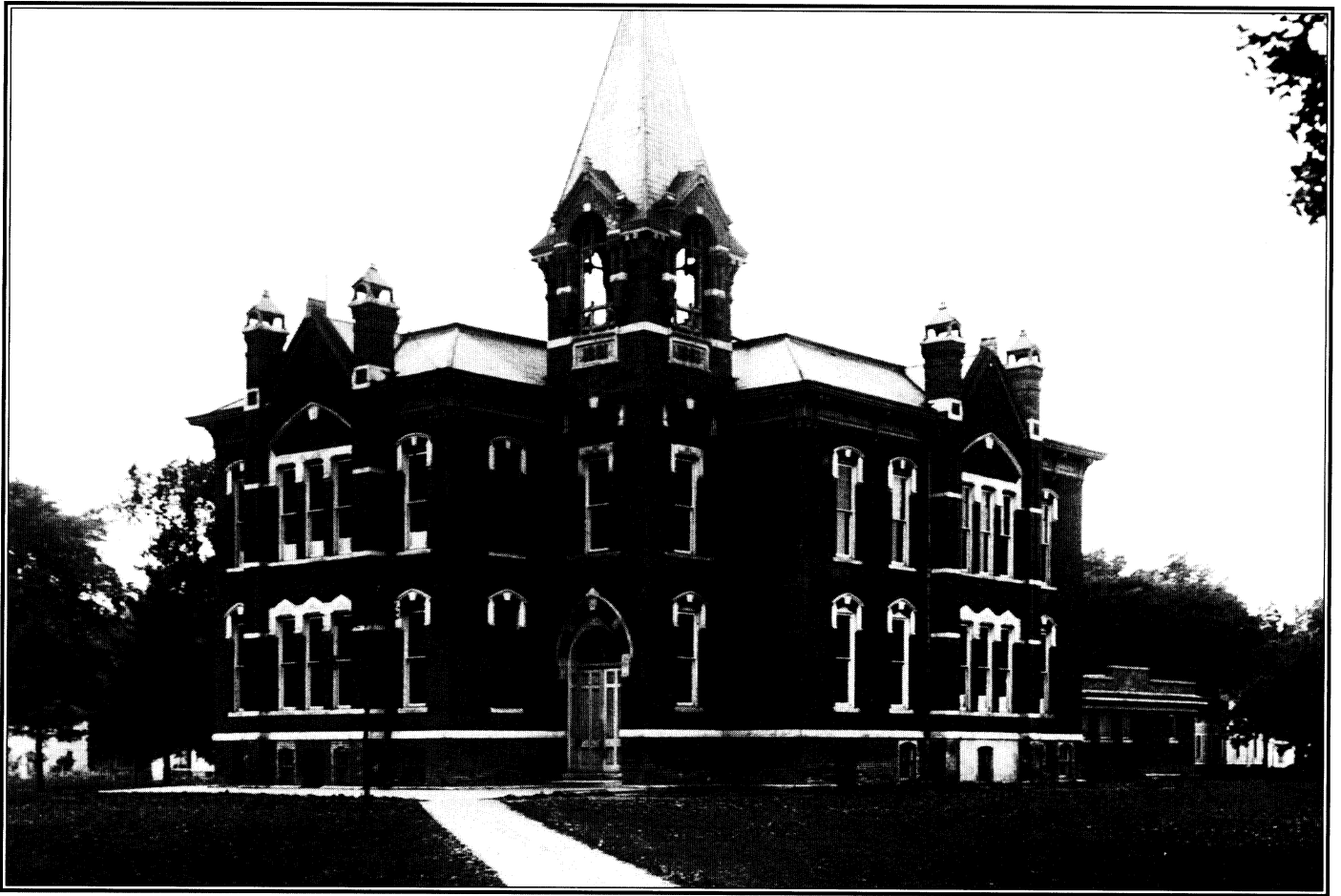
These churches have played, and continue to play, a vital role in building and maintaining the character and values of our community.

Schools

Settlers coming to State Center, whether immigrants from Europe or Americans migrating from the northeastern states, placed a high value on education. They established the first school in 1865. It was a one-room building, and the teacher, Jennie Bradbury, was paid \$20 per month. In 1868, the school moved to the second floor of a Main Street business building. A year later, an independent school district was formed, and a two-story school building was built. In 1875, the building was expanded as the town grew.

In 1877, land was purchased on which to build a new school. In 1881, voters approved a bond issue of \$15,000 for the construction of a new, three-floor brick school building. The building was to be completed by November 1, 1881; construction delays prevented using the building until the spring term of 1882. Total enrollment that year was 233 students. Following the completion of the building, the school system was reorganized into three departments: primary, intermediate, and secondary. The secondary included a two-year high school program. The first graduating class was in 1884. In 1906, total enrollment was down to 227 students.

In 1909, a four-year course of study was implemented at the high school, with the first graduates of this four-year program in 1910. That year, a new building, housing a boiler room and restrooms, was constructed; this building allowed for the elimination of the outhouses and increased safety by removing the boiler and coal from the school building. Because changes in society were increasing the demand for vocational education and training, the old boiler and coal rooms were remodeled to house vocational training classrooms in 1914.



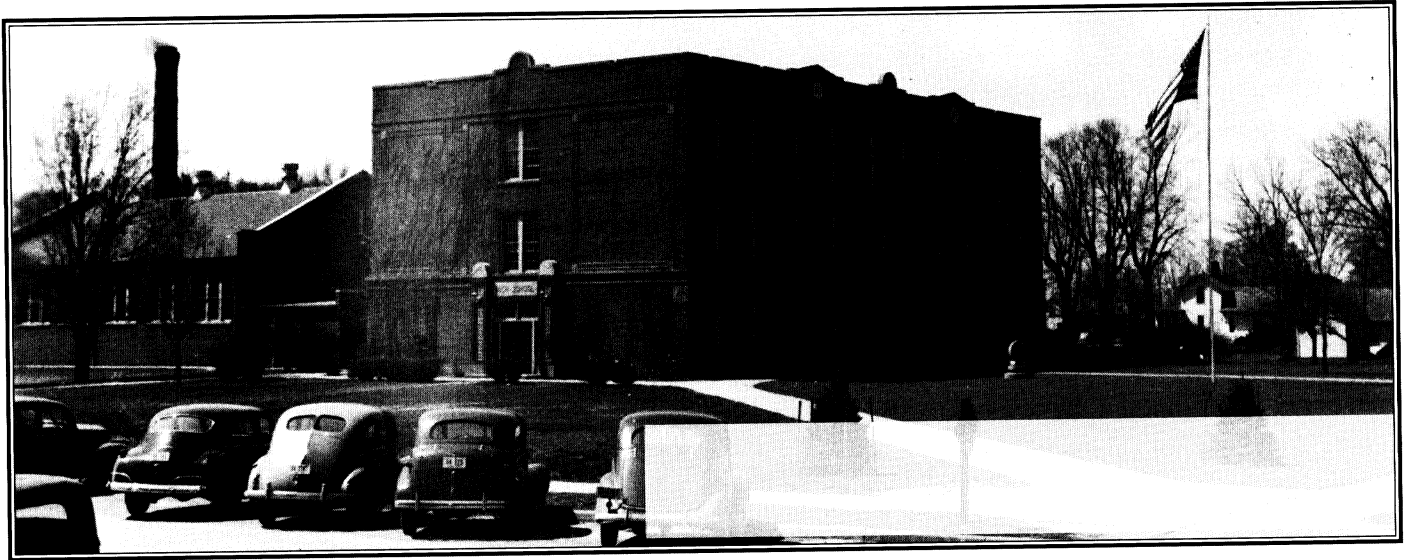
State Center School building, built in 1881, included a high school. It was often referred to as "State Center's Pride". The first graduating class was in 1884. The building on the right was added in 1909, and contained restrooms, a boiler room, and a coal room. (Mike Riemenschneider)

Demand for better teacher training, state support for free transportation, and the increased need for secondary education led to a movement for school consolidation in Iowa. State Center became a consolidated school district in 1920. The district added horse-drawn busses and brought in four one-room school buildings from surrounding rural areas to house the increased enrollment. Plans for building a new school building began once again.

In 1922, a \$100,000 bond issue was passed to build a new high school and gymnasium. The buildings were completed and occupied in 1924. The total enrollment for the State Center Consolidated School District in 1924 was 375 students: 96 in the high school, 75 in the newly-created junior high school, and 204 in the elementary school.

Consolidation continued to be a major reason for growth in the State Center School District. In 1945, the Minerva Consolidated School District merged with the State Center School District. State Center added two more buses, and Minerva auctioned off five one-room schools.

In 1947, voters approved a bond issue for the construction of a new, single-story elementary building after the State declared the 1881 elementary school building unfit. The old building was demolished and replaced by the new Elementary School Building, which opened in the fall of 1949. A hot lunch program was started in December of 1949;



New State Center High School and gym, built in 1923. The public library was located in the north hallway on the first floor from 1938 to 1950. (State Center Historical Society)

a kitchen was installed in the High School Building. The post-war baby boom caused the district to add a second story to the Elementary Building. It was ready by the fall of 1953.

In 1954, a reorganization of school district boundaries added about twelve sections and 125 students to the State Center School District. This reduced the tax levee for all areas involved because the present facilities accommodated the increased enrollment. The need to expand program offerings was one reason for the consolidation. In 1955, a bond issue to build a new vocational education and industrial arts building was passed. This facility made possible the addition of Vocational Agriculture and Homemaking Programs. This building, most commonly referred to as the Annex Building, now houses the West Marshall Pre-school and High School woodworking classes.

Consolidation accelerated in the 50s and 60s as pressure from the post-war baby boom hit, first, in the elementary, and then in the high school facilities. State Center merged with the Lamoille School District in 1955, the St. Anthony School District in 1957, and the Rhodes School District in 1961. The biggest change came in 1962 when the new West Marshall School District was created. This district included the communities of St. Anthony, Clemons, Rhodes, Melbourne, Lamoille, and State Center. The first school year for the new district was 1962-1963.

In 1966, a bond issue for a new High School Building was passed. The first three attempts to pass the bond issue failed, before it finally passed on the fourth attempt. The new West Marshall High School building opened in September of 1968. Total enrollment for the West Marshall Community School District was 1,379 students in 1968. The High School and Junior High School buildings were located in State Center and the Elementary Schools were located in State Center, Melbourne, and Clemons. Declining enrollment, which started in the mid 1970's, eventually forced the closure of attendance centers. The Clemons Elementary Center closed in 1979 and the Melbourne Elementary Center closed in 1983. All attendance centers were now located in State Center. The enrollment by 1990 was under 800 students, representing more than a 40% decline in students from the 1,379 students enrolled in 1968.

The closing of buildings and declining enrollment required the realignment of programs to fit the remaining space. The ninth grade moved to the High School Building. The fifth and sixth grades moved to the Junior High School Building, which became the Middle School. By 1993, it was apparent that the aging 1924 high school, gymnasium, and elementary buildings were in need of major remodeling or replacement. Also, more space was needed for classrooms and expanding programs. In 1994, voters approved a bond issue to construct a new building, shared by the Elementary and Middle Schools. The old gymnasium was demolished, and a new building was constructed. The new building included a gymnasium, cafeteria, library, computer labs, art room, band and vocal rooms, and general classrooms. The elementary building received a new roof, central air conditioning, and a major remodel. The new building opened for the fall semester of 1996.

By 2007, rebounding enrollment, expanding programs, changing technology, and aging facilities resulted in a proposal to build a new Middle School Building west of the High School Building. The first effort to pass a bond issue for a new Middle School failed in 2008, in part, because it did not address what to do with the 1924 building on State Center's Main Street. A second bond issue to build a new Middle School passed in 2009, when costs were scaled back and a plan to remodel the 1924 Middle School Building as a fourth and fifth grade facility was added. The new West Marshall Middle School opened for the new school year in the fall of 2011. State Center and the West Marshall community continue a long tradition of valuing education and learning.

Public Library

Efforts to create a public library in State Center can be traced back to the early 1900s. A 1906 newspaper article in the *State Center Enterprise* described the efforts of a Chautauqua ladies group in forming a book-lending association using, in part, the books of a then-inactive State Center Library Association. An early, privately sponsored lending library was located in the Sparks Photography Gallery. Later, a group of businessmen created a magazine-lending library in Bishops General Store at 132 West Main Street. In 1926, a branch of the Marshalltown Public Library was set up in the boardroom of the public high school building. The library was supported by private donations and the local school district. The School Board ended this arrangement in 1932 as a cost-saving measure in the midst of the Great Depression.

In 1938, the State Center Lions Club and the Margaret Stoddard Study Club co-sponsored a new effort to organize a public library. They had learned of funding available from the W.P.A., the Works Progress Administration, and a government recovery agency. A board of trustees from local service clubs was organized to operate the library. A public library was once again established in the State Center High School building; private donations and government funding supported the library. When the federal government funding ended in 1943, Cliff West and Bill Haesemeyer went to the City Council on behalf of the trustees, asking that a proposal for establishing a tax-supported library be put to the voters of State Center. A majority of voters supported the establishment of a free, public library; an ordinance was passed, creating the State Center Public Library. Mayor J. G. Gutekunst appointed the first Library Board. The library continued to be housed in the State Center High School building; it was located in the north hallway on the first floor.

In 1950, the library moved to a room in the newly built City Hall / Community Building. It remained there until moving to its present location in 1974. The present library building is the former home of J. Giffert Gutekunst. After the death of Giffert's wife, Angie, in 1972, the home, along with 781 acres of farmland, were left to the City of State Center in a trust for the purpose of supporting the public library. The house was remodeled to serve as the State Center Public Library, renamed the Gutekunst Public Library, and opened in April of 1974. A major addition is being constructed in 2017. This addition will double the size of the library and will make all three floors of the original library handicap accessible.

Rose Festival and Other Celebrations

Not surprisingly, some of the earliest celebrations were Fourth of July observances. Another event, described in an 1882 *State Center Enterprise* article, was the Firemen's Festival, which was held to raise funds for a new fire hose. How elaborate these events were, what they included, and how frequently they were held, depended on the efforts of the groups sponsoring the events. For example, in 1904, the Fourth of July celebration included a Firemen's Parade and fireworks; in 1908, an auto race was held.

Another celebration was the State Center Chautauqua Assembly, held annually from 1907 to 1921, except during the First World War. The term Chautauqua referred to an adult education movement, which took its name from Chautauqua Lake, New York, where it began in 1874. These Chautauqua Assemblies became a popular form of entertainment in this country during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. State Center's Chautauqua Assemblies featured a weeklong series of events, usually held in tents set up in Allison's Grove, located northeast of the present-day St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The assemblies featured entertainment, motivational speakers, and educational lecturers. The 1917 schedule in State Center included 11 different programs. Although individual events continued to be held, State Center's last annual Chautauqua Assembly was held in 1921. The advent of motion pictures and the growing popularity of radio contributed to the decline of the Chautauqua movement.

A Chautauqua Circle existed in State Center from 1897 till the 1940s. Some of their activities included sponsoring lecturers at Opera Hall, donating books to different projects, and working to create a public library.

The next effort at creating an annual event came in 1933 when the Commercial Club, the American Legion, and the State Center Lions Club sponsored a Fall Festival. The festival included a Corn Show and a Domestic Arts Exhibit. In 1935, the Fall Festival was a three-day event with a baby beef show, a baseball tournament, and live entertainment; Governor Herring was a featured speaker. In 1939, the event was called the Firemen's Fall Festival because the Fire Department replaced the Commercial Club as its main sponsor. In 1942, a Fall Festival was not held because State Center's 75th Anniversary Celebration replaced it. No Fall Festivals were held from 1943 to 1946 because of the Second World War. Fall Festival returned in 1947 with a parade and rides having been added. The Firemen and the American Legion co-sponsored the festival in 1949. In 1950, the Firemen decided to no longer sponsor the festival, and it was discontinued; the Firemen sponsored a one-day Fourth of July Celebration from 1951 to 1953 instead. Following a poor turnout in 1953, this 4th of July Celebration was discontinued. That left



Early parade before 1895. The Bishop Building, the only original building on the block, which is still in existence, sits on the southeast corner of the intersection. Fires in 1895, 1917, and 1924 destroyed all other buildings on the south side of Main Street. (Susan Van Pelt Sams)

an opportunity for State Center to become the Rose Capital of Iowa because the town no longer had an annual celebration.

In 1958, State Center seized the opportunity to become the Rose Capital of Iowa. The idea of designating a town as the State's Rose Capital originated with Mrs. W. A. Norcross, a former president of the Iowa Rose Society. Mrs. Norcross visited State Center and several other towns in Central Iowa. She was looking for a town that was centrally located and was willing to cover itself in roses. State Center citizens became aware of this opportunity when the local paper ran a story about the idea and asked local residents to back the idea of State Center becoming the Rose Capital of Iowa. The community responded enthusiastically, with local organizations sending petitions and letters to the Iowa Rose Society. Also, State Center had a new park that had not yet been landscaped; it would be ideal for a formal rose garden. Mrs. Norcross recommended that State Center be designated the Rose Capital of Iowa.

On November 23, 1958, the Iowa Rose Society conferred the title on State Center. On June 27, 1959, the State Center Rose Garden was dedicated, and Chris Gamble was crowned the first State Center Rose Queen. The first parade was held on June 18, 1960, at the 2nd Annual Rose Festival; it was a one-day event. By the mid-60s, it had evolved into a three-day celebration. In 2017, State Center celebrated the 59th annual Rose Festival and its Sesquicentennial.

Veterans Organizations

The first veterans group formed in State Center was, most likely, the O. G. Hunt Post No. 266, of the Grand Army of the Republic; the Post was named for Dr. Oliver Hunt. A picture of the 48 members of the O. G. Hunt Post hangs in Watson's Grocery Store

Museum. Former Union soldiers created the G. A. R. in 1866 following the Civil War. This fraternal organization promoted patriotic education and stressed the observance of Memorial Day. The G.A.R. was the first large advocacy group formed to influence government; it advocated for veterans welfare and pensions.

Age took its toll on the local G. A. R. post. The last reference found in the *State Center Enterprise* for the O. G. Hunt Post 266 of the G. A. R., referred to their roll call at the Memorial Day services in 1915. The Daughters of the American Revolution had replaced the G. A. R. as organizers of the Memorial Day event. The last surviving member of the G. A. R. in State Center was Alex Dobbin, who died in 1938.

The second veterans group was the American Legion, formed in 1919, following the First World War, with 49 charter members. The State Center chapter was originally called the Central Post but was renamed the Harland G. Pfantz Post after Harland Pfantz who was killed in action by a shell blast in the Verdun Region of France in 1918. Harland Pfantz was buried in France.

The American Legion Auxiliary post in State Center was also formed in 1919. They are a support group of the American Legion made up primarily of the wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of veterans.

The American Legion took charge of Memorial Day Services in 1920 and has been in charge of those services since then. In the late 1920s, the State Center American Legion formed a Drum and Bugle Corp that became nationally recognized and competed at the National Convention.

During the Second World War, the local American Legion post was actively involved in civil defense programs. In State Center, the local post was invigorated with the addition of World War II veterans. They played a major role in promoting the building of a new City Hall / Community Building, with a fire station, library, Community Hall, and public restrooms. The building was completed in 1950.

In 2008, the State Center American Legion raised funds to construct the Veterans Memorial in the former roadside park, which is adjacent to the Municipal Rose Garden.

Clubs: Social, Fraternal, and Service

Through their membership in churches, service clubs, volunteer organizations, and other social groups, individuals have participated in their local community. Individuals have supported each other, while working to make improvements in the larger State Center community.

The Firemen's Association is the oldest service organization; it was established in 1875. The clarity of its core mission has kept the State Center Volunteer Fire Department popular and successful through to the present time.

Fraternal organizations were an important support group for early residents, offering friendship and support to people moving into communities. By engaging in charitable activities in the community, residents offered assistance during this age of rugged individualism. Three early fraternal groups in State Center were: the Masons, established in 1870; the Knights of Pythias, established in 1871; and the Odd Fellows, established in 1873. Nationally, membership in these fraternal organizations peaked in the 1920s. The State Center Odd Fellows Lodge disbanded in the mid 1920s. The last newspaper article about the Knights of Pythias appeared in 1941.

The Masonic Lodge chapter for men in State Center was joined by an affiliated organization in 1901. An Order of the Eastern Star chapter was formed and opened membership to both men and women. Both organizations were active until 2003. At that time, the Masons donated their Opera House Building, which they had owned since 1921, to the West Marshall School District.

Two other fraternal organizations with long histories in State Center were the Royal Neighbors of America and the Modern Woodmen of America; both were fraternal benefit insurance societies. Dr. Theo and Carrie Engle were active in establishing both groups. The organizations started out by offering life and disability insurance to their members. The national organizations continue as active insurance companies today.

The Modern Woodmen, Engle Camp was founded in 1894. In State Center, the Woodmen were active into the 1950s.

The Royal Neighbors, Englewood Camp was founded in 1897 and remained active into the 1970s. The Royal Neighbors was run by women and specialized in providing insurance to women. However, the group accepted both men and women as members.

The earliest women's social circle of record in State Center was the Ladies Reading Circle, organized in 1890. The next circle was the Chautauqua Literary and Science Circle, established in 1893. This group was actively involved in organizing Chautauqua events into the 1920s. In 1943, the Chautauqua Circle donated the remainder of their treasury funds to the State Center Public Library, as the circle was no longer active.

Other women's clubs, which were formed but have since disbanded, were the Margaret Stoddard Study Club, founded in 1935, the State Center Women's Club, founded in 1940, and the Questers Women's Club, founded in 1956. Historical links connect various women's clubs. For example, the first women's group, the Ladies Reading Circle, sponsored the Margaret Stoddard Study Club; Margaret Stoddard Study Club, in turn, sponsored the Delta Nu Study Club, which continues to be active today.

Women's clubs still active in 2017 are: the Delta Nu Study Club, founded in 1951; Nu Beta Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi, founded in 1988; and the Rho Alpha Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi, founded in 2010. They, like their predecessors, promote educational, charitable, and community improvement activities and projects.

An early fraternal organization for women, the P. E. O. chapter, was established in 1901 and remains active in the State Center area today. This philanthropic organization celebrates, educates, and motivates women.

The State Center Garden Club was formed in 1930. The group was heavily involved in establishing a roadside park along Highway 30. This is now the site of the Veterans Memorial. They were also instrumental in creating the Municipal Rose Garden. This group disbanded in 1990.

State Center has had at least three organizations that would be identified as primarily service clubs. They are the Central Iowa Jaycees, the State Center Kiwanis Club, and the State Center Lions Club. The Central Iowa Jaycees were formed in 1970 and remained active through 1996. They were instrumental in building the Lincoln Valley Golf Course and Clubhouse. The State Center Kiwanis Club was active from 1981 to 1990. The State Center Lions Club was founded in 1930 and continues to be active today. The Lions worked with other community groups to establish the State Center Public Library and, along with the American Legion and State Center Volunteer Firemen, promoted the building of the present-day City Hall / Community Building.

These clubs and organization have worked to help build and improve the State Center community by promoting the personal growth of their members and by supporting local projects such as parks, schools, and libraries.

Business and Development Associations

According to public record, the first business group formed was the State Center Business Men's Association. The men supported the building of a new high school and endorsed candidates for County offices. In 1926, concerns over inactivity and what some believed was a failure to include all area businesses, led to the formation of a new business group, the Commercial Club of State Center. The Commercial Club's goal was to promote civic, commercial, industrial, and agricultural interest in State Center and the surrounding area. Membership was open to all area residents. In 1947, this group was reorganized into the State Center Community Club. Changes to the club's organization included extending membership to wives and encouraging people from the surrounding area to join. This organization is no longer active.

In 1961, the State Center Development Corporation was formed. Stock was sold with the funds going to support business growth and development. The corporation is currently inactive.

In 1978, the State Center Commerce Club was formed. The State Center Economic Development Association was formed in 1988. Its primary purpose was to promote local business and economic growth and development in the community. In 2000, the State Center Economic Development Association and the State Center Commerce Club co-sponsored an effort to make State Center a Main Street Community under the Iowa Main Street Project.

State Center became a Main Street Community in October of 2000. A sustained effort at preserving and restoring the businesses on Main Street began. The City of State



Prominent early business leaders in State Center
- Top Row (L-R): W.E. Watson, Ed Thompson, Jim Allison, W.H. Stipp.
Middle Row: Hiram Peckham, O.B. West, O.J. Whitson, Perry Woolston.
Front Row: L.B. Goodrich, Sam Brimhall, J.W. Dobbin, John Fairhead.
(State Center Historical Society)

Center resurfaced its Main Street and replaced the sidewalks; the City installed new historical streetlights. Buildings were restored to their original style and character. In 2006, the local Main Street program was reorganized under what was now called the State Center Development Association. The State Center Historical Society, which was formed in 1989 to run the Watson's Grocery Store Museum, became part of the State Center Development Association. The Association built a new grocery store, which opened in 2007. The S.C.D.A. is currently restoring Main Street buildings and sponsoring community celebrations. State Center remains an Iowa Main Street Community.

Golf Courses

Sunnybrook was the first golf course in the State Center area; Conrad Schaper built it from 1928 - 1929. The course was located 4 miles north of State Center on the road to Clemons and then a half-mile west on the Heartland Road. It was a nine-hole, par 34, golf course, owned and operated by Mr. Schaper from 1929 to 1940. The last newspaper advertisement for this course appeared in 1940; no further references to it have been found, except in "looking back" newspaper columns in the local paper. This was not the only golf course Conrad Schaper built, however.

Dr. A. D. Woods and Conrad Schaper installed a small, chip and putt golf course on Dr. Woods's property on the southern side of State Center. Dr. Woods proudly reported on the popularity of his golf course at a State Center Lions Club meeting in 1953. Today, the Municipal Rose Garden is located on the site of their golf course.

Lincoln Valley Golf Course was the next golf course in the State Center area; it opened in 1978. The course gets its name from the original route of the Lincoln Highway, which runs along the north side of the golf course. This nine-hole golf course and its clubhouse were the result of a large community effort, spearheaded by the Central Iowa Jaycees. Working with other community organizations, such as the Lions Club and the State Center Development Corporation, the West Marshall Golf Course Association was formed.

The Association sold memberships and bonds and held a variety of fund-raising events. They also received a \$25,000 gift from the Fred Gilbert estate. The Association was able to arrange a long-term lease from the Gutekunst Trust for the land on which to build the course. Construction of the golf course and its clubhouse were accomplished with volunteer labor and with donated equipment from area farmers and businesses.

In 1992, members of the West Marshall Golf Course Association voted to build an additional nine-holes, creating an 18-hole golf course; this addition was built due to growth in membership and the increased use of the original nine-hole course. Additional land was leased from the Gutekunst Trust, a new 99-year lease was signed, and work began on the second nine holes. In April of 1994, high winds of over 50 mph severely damaged the newly seeded course; the greens had to be rebuilt and the fairways reseeded. Because of this delay, the second nine holes did not open until 1995. Lincoln Valley was then up and running as a highly regarded 18-hole golf course.

Over time, problems were once again developing for the Lincoln Valley Golf Course Association. The number of people golfing was declining; this was true nationally, as well. At the same time, the number of golf courses in the area was increasing. Membership was declining and the rent payments, which were tied to agricultural

land lease rates, were increasing. Borrowing money to meet these obligations became a problem. By 2008, the West Marshall Golf Course Association was facing a financial crisis. It was behind in rent payments and could not meet its financial obligations. Key to the survival of the golf course and the Golf Association was the purchase of the golf course land from the Gutekunst Trust. Harlan and Jeanette Kloppenborg purchased the land, and the Association no longer had to pay rent. Arrangements were made to pay back rent and other debts. The Kloppenborgs made numerous donations to support and improve the golf course and clubhouse. Generous help from the Kloppenborgs and from many others put Lincoln Valley Golf Course and the clubhouse back on a solid financial footing.

In 2014, as a gesture of community support, Harlan and Jeanette Kloppenborg donated Lincoln Valley Golf Course and its Clubhouse to the City of State Center. The Kloppenborgs wanted to ensure the continuation of the golf course and clubhouse as community assets.

State Center Newspaper

One of the oldest institutions in State Center is its newspaper, *The Mid Iowa Enterprise*. Although it's changed its name, somewhat, it's always been the *Enterprise*. The paper dates back to 1871, when David Lacey, postmaster in State Centre, established the *State Centre Enterprise*. J. W. Merrill, manager of the newspaper, became its owner in 1872. He published the paper for 31 years, retiring in 1903 and passing it on to his son, Bert Merrill.

After publishing the paper for 13 years, Bert sold the paper to F. W. Beckman in 1916. Beckman was a professor of journalism at Iowa State College. He wanted to use the newspaper to help train his journalism students. H. L. Sunderlin operated the paper for Beckman until 1935. That year, Sunderlin and a partner purchased the *Enterprise*. In 1937, Sunderlin bought out his partner. After publishing the paper for 23 years, Sunderlin sold the paper to Marshall Watson in 1939.

Marshall Watson and his wife, Lora, ran the newspaper for 29 years before retiring and selling the paper to Joe Long in 1968. Joe and his wife, Bonnie, ran the *Enterprise* until selling it to Bob and Kristie Wernsmann in 1977. The Wernsmanns operated the paper until 1981, when Roxanne Goecke and Inne Taylor purchased it. In 1990, the ladies sold the newspaper to Duane and Pat Holub, who, in turn, sold it to John Strawn in 1993. John owned the paper for 15 years before selling to Terry Holub in 2008; Terry is the younger brother of Duane Holub, former owner from 1990 to 1993.

In 2010, Terry Holub sold the *Enterprise* to Greg Gilgen. Under Greg's ownership, Chris Davis became Managing Editor, and Jamie Burdorf became Editor. Chris Davis bought the *Enterprise* from Greg in 2013 and is currently Owner-Manager of the *Mid Iowa Enterprise*.

The State Center Enterprise / Mid Iowa Enterprise has played an important role in establishing and maintaining State Center's identity as a community. The newspaper has maintained records of people and events that have helped make the assembling of this historical account possible. If you would like to investigate further into State Center's history, the newspaper's archives are available online on the Gutekunst Public Library's website.

The sesquicentennial history of Sta
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Gutekunst Public Library

