

PART TWO: COMING OF THE RAILROAD

by Vera Babcock

Through the first 15 years of its existence Mt. Horeb was an inland town with Black Earth as its nearest railroad point. All supplies needed by the business men and farmers were hauled from Black Earth, and it was there that they disposed of their products. The road was a rough and winding one, and the steep Beatty Hill a short distance north of Mt. Horeb added to the hazards of the trip. Today the trip by car is a matter of minutes, while by horse-drawn lumber wagons, buggies, bobsleds and cutters an hour or more was needed to make the same jaunt. Passenger service was furnished by a stage coach from Madison to Dodgeville.

Early in 1876 rumors were rife of a railroad line to be built west from Madison to Galena, Illinois, which might come near Mt. Horeb. The Chicago and Tomah Railroad officials were the first to look into the possibility of extending a line through this part of Dane County. They proposed to build a narrow-gauge railroad. But when the farmers along the suggested route refused to co-operate with the bonus plan which the company demanded, the project was dropped.

A year later the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Co. became interested in building a line west from Madison to Lancaster. When it became a certainty that train service would be brought to, or near, Mt. Horeb, there was a great deal of excitement, and many were the heated arguments between farmers who objected to the railroad crossing their farms and business men who saw the advantages of closer railroad service. However, agreements and adjustments were finally made, and construction was started. Since the engineers could not find a

suitable location in the old town for the station grounds, they selected the site where the station and switch yard stands today.

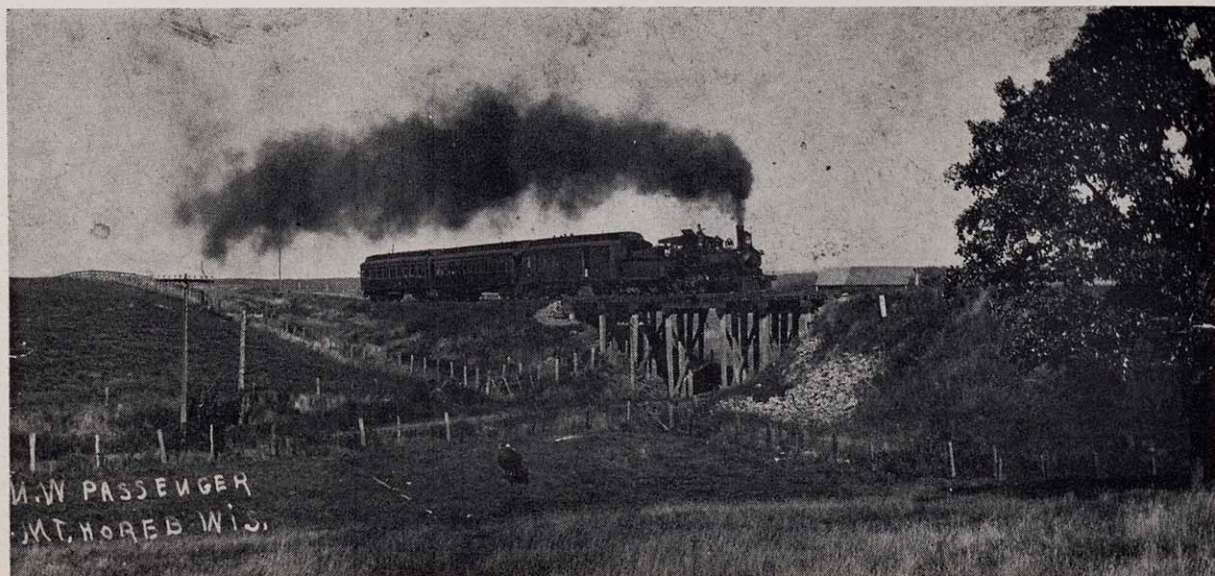
It was a great day in the history of Mt. Horeb when in the fall of 1881 the first railroad train, with its small wood-burning engine and oversized smoke stack emitting puffs of smoke, came through our little village.

The first station agent at Mt. Horeb was A. W. Gordon from 1881 to 1905; followed by A. A. Babcock, from 1905 to 1932; Fred Wagner, from 1932 to 1954; and Arthur Sorenson, from 1954 to 1959. George Lund is the present station agent. The section foremen in order were Ole Nelson, Conrad Wagner, Sr., Conrad Wagner, Jr., Carl Lehmann and Maurice Fell.

In the afternoon of December 31, 1951, the last passenger train passed through Mt. Horeb, buses having taken over most of the passenger traffic. Rail mail service was also discontinued, January 1, 1951, with the motorized Star Routes taking over the carrying of the mail.

THE CANNON BALL

The older citizens of Mt. Horeb will remember well the familiar chugs each evening as the old "Cannon Ball", a freight train pulling one coach, struggled to climb the steep grade east of the village. The chugs would grow slower and slower, seeming to say, "Think . . . I . . . can! Think . . . I . . . can!" If there was a last agonizing slipping of wheels, then silence, the villagers knew that the train would have to "double the hill" (divide into two sections), leaving the passenger coach with the second half sitting at the bottom of the grade to await the return of



A view of the Chicago & Northwestern train crossing the original railroad overpass in the Old Town.

the engine. But if the "Cannon Ball" managed to make the hill, the listeners would hear accelerated chugs which seemed to brag, "Thought I could, thought I could, thought I could!"

The service of this famous train was always anything but what its name might indicate, but in February, 1924, after some 15 patrons had waited three and a half hours for it to leave the Madison station and had filed a complaint with the superintendent of the railroad and the Railroad Commission, the service was somewhat improved.

A NEW TOWN SPRINGS UP

When the old town business men learned that the depot would not be located in their neighborhood, they realized the necessity of moving their businesses to lots nearer the station. Most of them moved their buildings, but Ole Nuubson, Andrew Thompson, and Curry and Ruste decided to erect new buildings instead. News of the coming of the railroad through Mt. Horeb spread quickly throughout other localities, especially around Middleton, Black Earth and Mazomanie, the result being that several men from those areas came here to settle. So by the time the old town business men were moving to "new town", fourteen or fifteen new places of business had already been erected there, most of them with living quarters on the second floor.

Let us take a look at "new town" Mt. Horeb about the year 1882. Southwest of and across the tracks from the railroad station was a small stone jail which was used until a "cage" was purchased in 1902 to be used as a lock-up in the fire engine house on North Second Street. The office and north lumber yard of Eggum and Johnson were in use, built in 1881 by Lovejoy and Richards Co., a large lumber firm of Janesville, and across the street stood the grain elevator erected and run by Rowland and Blied, and still standing as a part of the Home Town Feed and Fuel Co. property.

Where Walter Hopkins' barbershop is located today, three Cowie brothers had a store, which was sold in 1886 and remodeled and enlarged into a hotel and tavern, the present site of the National Hotel. Charley Lowe's jewelry store stood next, and beyond that on part of the site of our present post office Lange's harness shop, moved up from old town and later bought and run by his apprentice, Will Britt, who added a one-story building to the south side.

The Anderson grocery store was in 1882 a saloon and dance hall built by Halvor Nelson of Springdale. On the site of the State Bank of Mt. Horeb Ole Nuubson had built his new store. As Nuubson was postmaster at that time, it was in this store that the Mt. Horeb Post Office was first located in the new part of town. Across



Moulton & Elliott Store. This was the George Barrows Store which he erected in the "Old Town" and later sold. It was moved up town in 1881 and placed on a lot where Hoff's Store is today.



These three buildings were moved up from Old Town to lots on the east side of South First Street, and remodeled. Hoff's Store (originally the one-story store of George Barrows — later Moulton & Elliott). Paul Sletto shop. Farmer Store (a small Presbyterian Church erected in 1848 on Springdale St. — later sold and used as a store on Springdale Street.)



These two buildings were moved up from the Old Town in 1881. Here they are seen at the corner of E. Main Street and S. Second St. They were moved to lots in the 200 block on E. Main St. when the Opera House Building was erected in 1895. Bert Hinrichs is the owner today of the shop at the right (the original George Bunnell "Old Town" shop — later Sam Thompson). Men in picture are Gus Schneider & Sam Thompson.

the street on the now A. Hoff Co. corner Mr. Moulton and his partner, Howard Elliott, placed their store, moved from old town. This was remodeled into a two-story building and later became the nucleus of the Andrew Hoff store.

Paul Sletto had also had his old town store moved to a lot on the east side of South First Street, where he continued on in the boot and shoe business for several years. This, too, was remodeled into a two-story building. A few years before Mr. Sletto's death Andrew Hoff purchased the building, after which it was used for a millinery shop until 1954 and stood until 1960, when it was razed to make room for a parking lot for the A. Hoff Co. employees and customers.

If old buildings could talk, what interesting stories many of them would have to tell. For example, part of the old Dusterud store, which was moved up from old town, was originally a Presbyterian church, erected in 1884, but in new town it became a saloon on the corner of Front and First Streets. In 1913 it was replaced by a white brick building which is now the Farmers' Super Market.

Main Street in 1882 could boast of only a few buildings. Where the Municipal Building stands today, stood a small wagon shop owned by Henry Eggers from near Middleton. Andrew Thompson's furniture and undertaking business stood west of this. A few years later Mr. Thompson added an addition to his store with a public hall and lodge rooms on the second floor. This property now houses the Ben Franklin store and Phip's Bar and Bowling Alley. And next was the blacksmith shop which Torgrim Fjeld (Field) had moved up from old town and which later became Hans Hoff's meat market and is now the City Food Market.

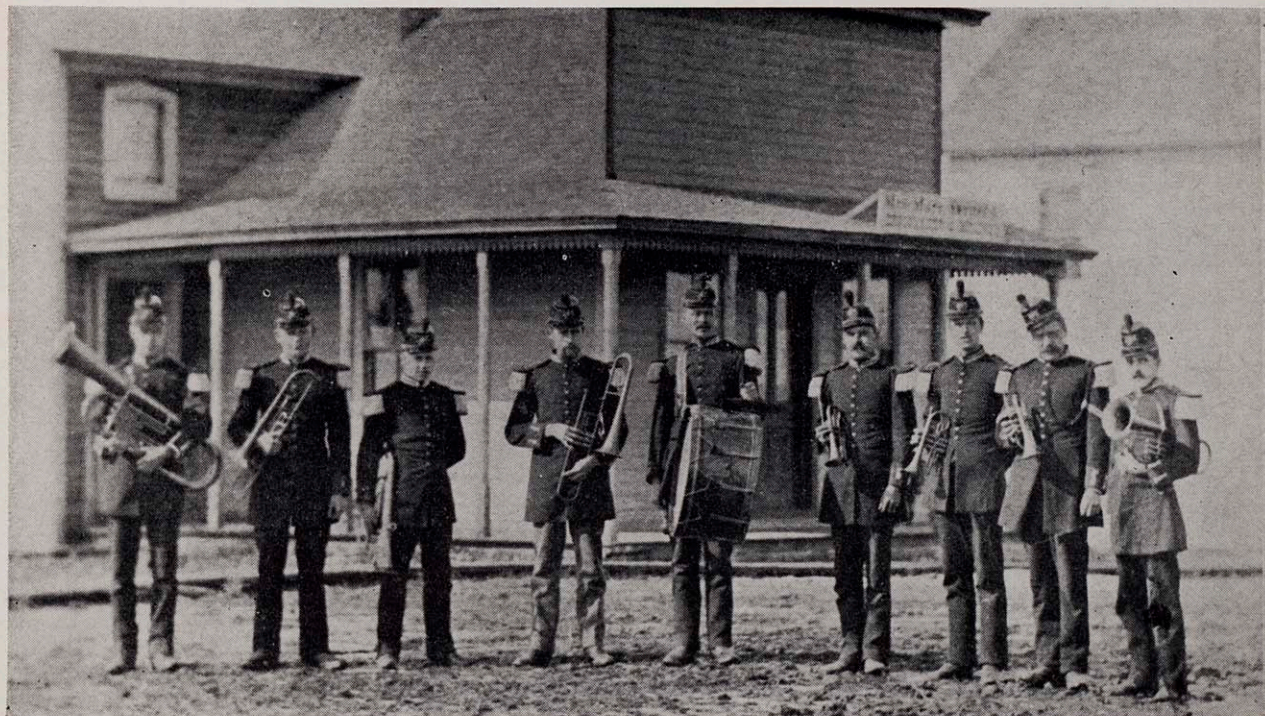
The bar and office of Christopher Brager's old town hotel had also been moved and placed where the Thousand Tavern is today. Its use is not known until about 1889, when Lewis Bergh became its owner and ran a grocery store and barbershop in it. Six years later the building was moved to a lot on North Second Street and remodeled into a dwelling for the Bergh family, (now the home of the Orin Bakers), and Mr. Bergh replaced it on Main Street with a large two-story brick store. West of this was a big gap, partly filled in by 1885 with L. H. Lewis'



July 4, 1895, celebration in Mount Horeb, sponsored by the M. W. A. Lodge. The girls "represented the 44 States in our Union," the boys carried business banners, and J. P. Moe's Band furnished music for the event. Picture was taken in front of Andrew Thompson's Furniture Store (north side of Main Street) now owned by Raphael Vasen.



A Sunday scene on the north side of Main Street about 1893. Note Post Office sign near door to first building on left (Dorothy's Food Store in 1961). Also seen are the Evans Drug Store, L. H. Lewis Tailor Shop, and Part of L. J. Bergh's Grocery Store.



An early Band on Perry Street in front of Mrs. Mary Freeman's Dressmaking and Millinery Shop. First man to left not identified, Tom Field, not identified, Andrew Thompson, Peter Lanning, Oscar Larson, Adolph Elver, J. P. Moe, leader, and H. G. Elliott.

tailor shop (now housing Yapp's tailor shop and Joe's Bar) and Evans' drug store (now Bert's drug store), built by Dr. N. C. Evans and run for many years by Dr. Evans and his son, Milo. Instead of moving their hardware store from old town Mr. Curry and Allan Ruste built a new and larger store where the Mt. Horeb Hardware now stands.

A new business venture in 1881 was a meat market operated by its owner, John Pieh, in a small two-story building erected about where the east part of the Mt. Horeb Motors' display room is located today. About 1888 Mr. Pieh built a large two-story addition to his shop. Several years later he constructed a large two-story brick building on the south side of East Main Street, where he continued in the meat market business. The building was later sold to Andrew Hoff, who had it annexed to his store where it became the store's grocery department, now the shoe department of the A. Hoff Co.

Only two other buildings stood on Main Street in 1882. On the corner where the Opera House

Building would later be erected Sam Thompson set his wagon shop, moved up from the old town. He also had a blacksmith shop on East Main where Zwald's appliance store is located at the present. In 1890 this lot was sold to Herman Dahle, who wanted it for a bank building site, and the wagon shop was then moved to where the Post Cafe stands now. In 1895, when plans were made to erect the Opera House Building, the two Thompson shops were moved a block east on Main Street to where the Mt. Horeb Mail office and Bert Hinrichs' shop are today. The larger building was torn down when the Mail office was erected, but the smaller building, with a brick veneer front added, is Hinrichs' present shop.

There were other marked differences between Main Street as we know it today and Main Street in 1882. One, of course, was the board sidewalks. Woe to the child who dropped a penny on the sidewalk in those days! It would slip through the cracks and disappear. Another difference was the unpaved street, which, when it rained,



McCormick Day in Mount Horeb. This display is on S. Second St. and Front Street. Note the railroad car, also large square building with "McCormick" signs on it. Sever Martinson is the present owner of this building and also the building to the right. Note the variety of farm machinery and vehicles.



Circus day in Mount Horeb about 1906. This gives a good view of the business places on the north side of East Main Street from Grove St. to N. Second St.



Lewis Bergh's brick store and barber shop erected in 1895 replaced an old building brought up from Old Town in 1881. Mr. Bergh and son, Orville, are seen here. Note the barber pole and board walk. Thousand's Bar at 210 East Main Street is located today in this building.

became so deep with mud that wagons bogged down. On one occasion Golmar Bros. Circus had to cancel their parade because of the mud. There were also large holes in the street which filled with water on rainy days. Imagine the surprise of the villagers when one morning after a heavy rain they found a sign posted by the largest hole, reading, "No Fishing!"

Another business place in 1882 was the Larson Brothers' hotel and tavern on the corner of South Second and Front Streets. This later became the Mt. Horeb House and is now an apartment house owned by Sever Martinson. As was the custom at the time, there was a large livery stable behind the hotel. Across the street, where Ryser Bros. creamery is now located, stood Herman Dahle's ice house, used as a cold storage plant for the three rural butter and egg routes which Mr. Dahle operated. There was no business place east of Second Street until 1887 when H. B. Dahle erected his store at the corner of East Main and Second Streets.

Only one more section of the town was settled by 1882; that was Perry Street. On the east corner of Perry and Main Peter Moe built and ran a blacksmith shop, and south of the blacksmith shop, where part of the school bus garage stands today, stood Erick Gesme's two-story building with living rooms on the first floor and A. F. Gramm's first Mt. Horeb photo gallery on the second. On the west corner of Perry and Main was Abbie Gossert's saloon and south of it a small cottage with the following sign above its front porch: "Mary Freeman—Dressmaker and Milliner". In 1898 the Gossert saloon building (by then a dwelling house), the Freeman cottage, and the blacksmith shop across the street were all destroyed by fire. However, the Mennes hotel and tavern next to the cottage and near the corner of Front and Perry was not burned and stands today, having been remodeled into a duplex and presently owned by Nortie Espeseth.

There remains only one more building visible in 1882 to be mentioned—the Milton Faye saloon, no doubt the first building erected in the new part of Mt. Horeb, standing at that time near the present stockyard at the corner of Washington and Front Streets. After the work of building the railroad was completed, it was closed, but was used for school classes during the 1883-84

term while a school building was under construction. And old records show that the teacher holding classes in the old saloon was a minister's daughter.

Last Years of the Century

Through the remainder of the nineteenth century some of the businesses already established changed hands and new businesses continued to come into existence.

During 1883 P. G. Krogh became owner of the Curry-Ruste hardware business and succeeded Allen Ruste as postmaster, in which capacity he served until 1885 when John Dahlen, a clerk at that time in the H. G. Elliott store, received the postal appointment, and the office was moved to his place of employment. When Mr. Elliott sold his business to Hoff and Elver, the post office and Mr. Dahlen moved to the Dahle store, and in 1889 Herman Dahle became Mr. Dahlen's successor as postmaster.

About 1883 Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Bergh became proprietors of the Larson brothers' hotel and tavern, and in 1890 it was purchased by Thomas Locke, who operated it for some time.

John Vilberg, Isaac Kittleson, and Tom Syvrud formed a partnership in a hardware company whose store was on South Second Street, now the hardware store of Otto Gilbertson.

A boom in Superior in the late '80's took away several of the first business men and their families from Mt. Horeb. Among those who left were the three Cowie brothers, who had disposed of their store to Frank Brackenwagon who had it enlarged into a hotel and tavern building. Its proprietors were his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Frank (Pat) Woodbury. Charley Lange and family left after selling his harness shop to his apprentice, Will Britt. The O. C. Nuubson family also moved to Superior after Sever Swiggum bought the Nuubson store.

Kleven Brothers, Knut and Gilbert, ran a lumber business with office and yard on South Second Street, the property now owned by Ben Mavis and Eric Skinrud. The Kleven brothers, with their large crew of carpenters, were kept busy erecting new business places and homes for the town's growing population. In later years they expanded into the making of silos and became the Wisconsin Silo and Tank Co. with an



Sunday crowd leaving the Depot



Meat Market and Residence of John Pieh

office where the new Henze cheese storage building stands today and lumber yards and a saw mill on the block of railroad property back of the office.

With the coming of Mr. and Mrs. Jul Mithus to our village another cobbler was added to our list of business men. Mr. Mithus erected a two-story home at the corner of East Main and North Second, and his shoe maker's shop was located in its basement. The large boot which hung outside his shop was Mt. Horeb's first business sign and is still preserved at "Little Norway" along with many of his cobbler's tools. The lot where this property stood now belongs to Clarence Gonstead. Many still remember the town pump at this corner, where thirsty villagers stopped for a cold drink of water.

At least three more businesses important to the growth of Mt. Horeb sprang up in the latter part of the eighteen hundreds.

In 1887 Andrew Hoff, a young man from Norway who had clerked in Nuubson's store for several years, and his brother-in-law, Adolph Elver, formed a partnership and bought the H. C. Elliott store and merchandise. So in a small building, 24 by 30 feet, the store which we now know as the A. Hoff Co. had its beginning. Within a short while Mr. Hoff bought out his partner. The present company was incorporated

in 1908, with the original stockholders Andrew Hoff, president and general manager, his brother James Hoff, treasurer, and J. B. Johnson, vice president and secretary. One of the first improvements to be made on the store building was the removal of the small front porch which covered the entrance, at that time on First Street. A few years later Mr. Pieh's meat market was bought and annexed to the building on the east end. The building went through several remodeling and enlarging operations, the new brick building being constructed over the old in 1917 with no cessation of business. And thus the A. Hoff Co. store grew to what is now the largest store in Mt. Horeb.

Also in the year 1887 Herman Dahle, coming to Mt. Horeb from Mt. Vernon where he had operated a store for several years, established the Dahle Brothers' Department Store with his brother J. T. (Ted) Dahle. This was the first business building east of Second Street. It was enlarged in 1904 and grew to include what now houses the Kahl and Nygard Grocery, Mt. Horeb Produce, La Mode Apparel Shop, Nortie's Shoe Service, and the Gamble store. There were three entrances on Main Street to Dahle's store. Soon after the store was started, the first creamery up town was added to the basement. The first electric light plant in Mt. Horeb was located



STREET PARADE, GOLLMAR BROS. SHOWS,
MT. HOREB, WIS. AUGUST 17, 1909.

Golmar Brothers Circus parade, with its steam caliope music, turning south at Dahle's Store corner, while band wagon at left is headed east. Part of Jul Mithus home is at the left. Second building site is where the Gonstead Building is today.

Statement of Taxes and Indebtedness.

COUNTY OF Dane
Village of Mount Stork } SS.

I, O.M. Eidsmore, Clerk of the Village of Mount Stork do hereby certify, pursuant to the provisions of Section 1004, Chapter 46, Wisconsin Statutes of 1898, that the following is a correct statement of all taxes levied in and by said Village during the year ending on the thirty-first day of December, 1900, and the purposes for which the same were levied; and a full and complete statement of all outstanding bonded and other indebtedness of said Village, and the purposes for which the same was incurred:

STATEMENT OF TAXES.		STATEMENT OF INDEBTEDNESS.	
For Current Expenses, ¹ - - -	\$ <u>265.00</u>	For Railroad Aid, (bonded debt), -	\$ -
School Purposes, ^{1 and 2} - - -	<u>906.45</u>	Bridges, (bonded debt), - - -	-
Support of Poor, - - -	-	Other Purposes, (bonded debt),	-
Roads and Bridges, ³ - - -	<u>553.72</u>	Accrued interest unpaid, -	-
Other Purposes, - - -	<u>935.00</u>	School District and School Purposes, - - -	<u>1500</u>
Total Taxes levied, - - -	<u>2660.17</u>	All other indebtedness, - - -	<u>900</u>
Assessed Valuation of all property,	<u>317533</u>	Total indebtedness, - - -	<u>2400</u>

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name, at Mount Stork this 24th day of December, 1900.

O.M. Eidsmore
Village Clerk.

1. Including principal and interest on loans from the State.
2. Including school district taxes and all moneys appropriated for school purposes.
3. Including highway, street, sidewalk and poll taxes.

there, too, and at one time the basement was used as the grocery store department, with steps descending from Second Street. In 1929 Dahle Bros. sold their entire stock, excepting the grocery, to the A. Hoff Co., and in 1931 sold the grocery to Jacob Lingard, thus terminating one of the largest and finest department stores of Mt. Horeb.

With the growth of business Mt. Horeb needed banking facilities. Accordingly, the Mt. Horeb Bank, the first bank of the village, was founded in 1891 with H. B. Dahle as president, T. G. Lingard as cashier, and O. B. Dahle the third stockholder. The bank building was constructed where Zwald's appliance store stands today. In 1925 the Mt. Horeb Bank moved to its new building, now the Municipal Building.

In 1894 a stock company was formed to build the Opera House Building, a place meant to serve as an entertainment center, and also to house a number of stores on its first floor. This was constructed in 1895. (See special feature on the Opera House Building).

Another milestone in the history of Mt. Horeb was its incorporation from a part of Blue Mounds township into a village in 1899. Andrew Arneson served as the first village president.

For purposes of comparison we append the assessed value of the village in 1899, as against the 1961 figures. Also, see photo of the 1900 tax statement.

1899

Assessed Value:	
P. P. -----	\$ 93,051.00
R. E. -----	132,623.00
Total -----	225,674.00
Tax -----	1,940.80
Rate -----	.0086
Indebtedness:	
School -----	1,500.00
Other -----	900.00
Total -----	\$ 2,400.00

1961

Assessed Value:	
P. P. -----	\$1,006,272.00
R. E. -----	5,371,517.00
Total -----	6,377,789.00
Tax -----	150,919.88
Rate -----	.0390
Indebtedness:	
Bonded -----	207,000.00
Other loans -----	37,776.66
Total -----	\$ 244,776.66



West Main St. looking east shows us the steeple of the Lutheran Church in the distance, part of Dahle Brothers Store, Opera House Building, Mt. Horeb Bank Building, A. Hoff Store, Sever Swiggum Store, Jewelry Store and home of H. O. Brager.



This view along the south side of East Main Street shows the steeples of the Lutheran and Catholic Churches in the distance, and Dahle Brothers Store. Seen also are the Opera House Building, Mount Horeb Bank Building, John Pich Meat Market, our first public telephone booth, and the A. Hoff Store. Note the row of hitching posts and variety of horsedrawn vehicles.

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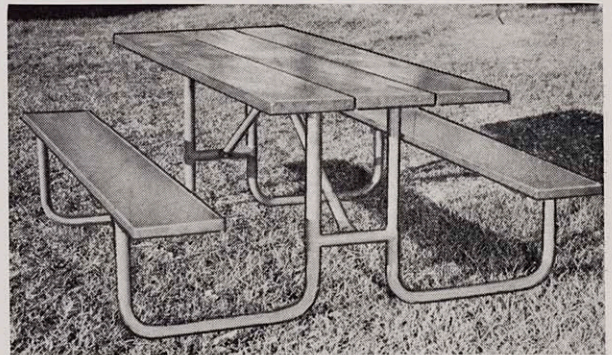
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