

Hawarden.... Raiders from the east

In 1872, Calliope was a prospering settlement complete with homes and businesses. Controversy arose however when in the eastern part of Sioux country there was a Dutch settlement called "Orange City." The residents of Orange City felt that the county seat should be moved there – much to the irritation of the people of Calliope.

On January 21, 1872, Henry Hospers, A.J. Betten, J. Pellemulder, and Judge Pendleton tried to persuade the officials of Calliope to relinquish their status as county seat. Their proposal was rejected, so on the next day 55 men with horses and sleighs converged on Calliope intending to "procure" the county books, the safe containing the county money, and the county seal. They were aided by men in 25 sleighs from the Rock Valley-Hull area.

The "raiders" threatened violence unless their demands were met, and were well armed with guns and revolvers. Eventually they got their hands on what they thought was the key to the courthouse, but it turned out to be the wrong key.

It was at that point that the raiders resorted to "drastic measures" and chopped open the lean-to where the safe was kept, backed a sleigh up to the opening, and loaded the safe and the record books onto it. On the way back to Orange City, the sleigh went through the ice on the Floyd River and had to be pulled out by a team of mules so it could be delivered to officials in Orange City.

Ironically, this very incident was referred to this week in an online CNBC article entitled "Sioux County, Iowa: Ground zero for farm boom." While trying to explain the high land prices in Sioux County, Iowa, the article mentioned fertile land, weather patterns, and demand for grain. However, other factors were also mentioned – emotion and competitiveness.

The following is a quote from the article: "Dutch immigrants flocked to Sioux County in the mid-to-late 1800s, in search of cheaper land to carry on their farming heritage. They brought with them a culture of faith and frugality that exists today, with farmers flush with cash and deep emotional roots to their land."

"But they also carried with them an intense enmity between neighbors and outsiders. Such rivalries were so intense that, back in 1872, a fight over where to set up the county seat reportedly prompted farmers and townsfolk in Hull and Orange City to raid the log courthouse in Calliope, Iowa, and steal a safe with all the county property records in it."

Finally, in January 1873, the Sioux County government was officially transferred to Orange City through a legal process including petitions and an election.

In spite of the loss of the county seat, the town of Calliope kept growing, and in 1878 the Milwaukee Railroad established a station there. In the same year Calliope was platted and placed among the established towns of Iowa.

At the time, the Northwestern Railroad was looking to extend its line from Maurice through Calliope and the Dakotas, and planned to build a station in Calliope. Unfortunately they were unable to obtain a grant of land from the government, so they decided to build the station a mile south of Calliope.

A new settlement sprang up around the railroad station, called "Hawarden."