

## **HAWARDEN...HOW IT ALL BEGAN**

### **THE ENGLISH ARE COMING ! ..... BY TRAIN !**

#### Chapter 13

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A new town....Hawarden, Iowa, no longer a part of Calliope, but a city or town on its own, confirmed by a decision of the Sioux County Courts, and definitely **created** by the necessity of the Northwestern Railroad to by-pass its original route from Eagle Grove, Iowa to the Big Sioux River, forcing it to curve a mile to the south, thus leaving Calliope with its dreams shattered and Hawarden, a town to be reckoned with.

This week we need to spend a little time learning how much the railroad really contributed to this town we call home.

There are at least two theories on how Hawarden got its name. Both of them relate to the railroads.

In the 1870's and '80s the railroads were steadily making their way west. At this time according to G. Nelson Nieuwenhuis in his book SIOUXLAND: A HISTORY OF SIOUX COUNTY, IOWA, the story circulated that some of the young men working on the construction crews of the Northwestern Railroad were young Englishmen who were the sons of wealthy English Lords. The story goes that these fathers sent their strong, energetic sons to America with the hopes that the rough life on the American frontier would somehow teach these unruly young men to become more responsible members of society. Another story states that the 1<sup>st</sup> sons of the English Lords would inherit the land in England, so the 2<sup>nd</sup> sons were sent to America, "The new frontier", to claim their fortunes. Many of these young men came from the rural district in England containing the small town of Hawarden, in Flint County, Wales. The town is linked closely with the Prime Minister William Gladstone, whose home is located near this English town. This was during the reign of Queen Victoria. It is told that these young Englishmen, homesick as they were, suggested to the railroad that the new town along the Big Sioux be named after their hometown in England, and so it was.

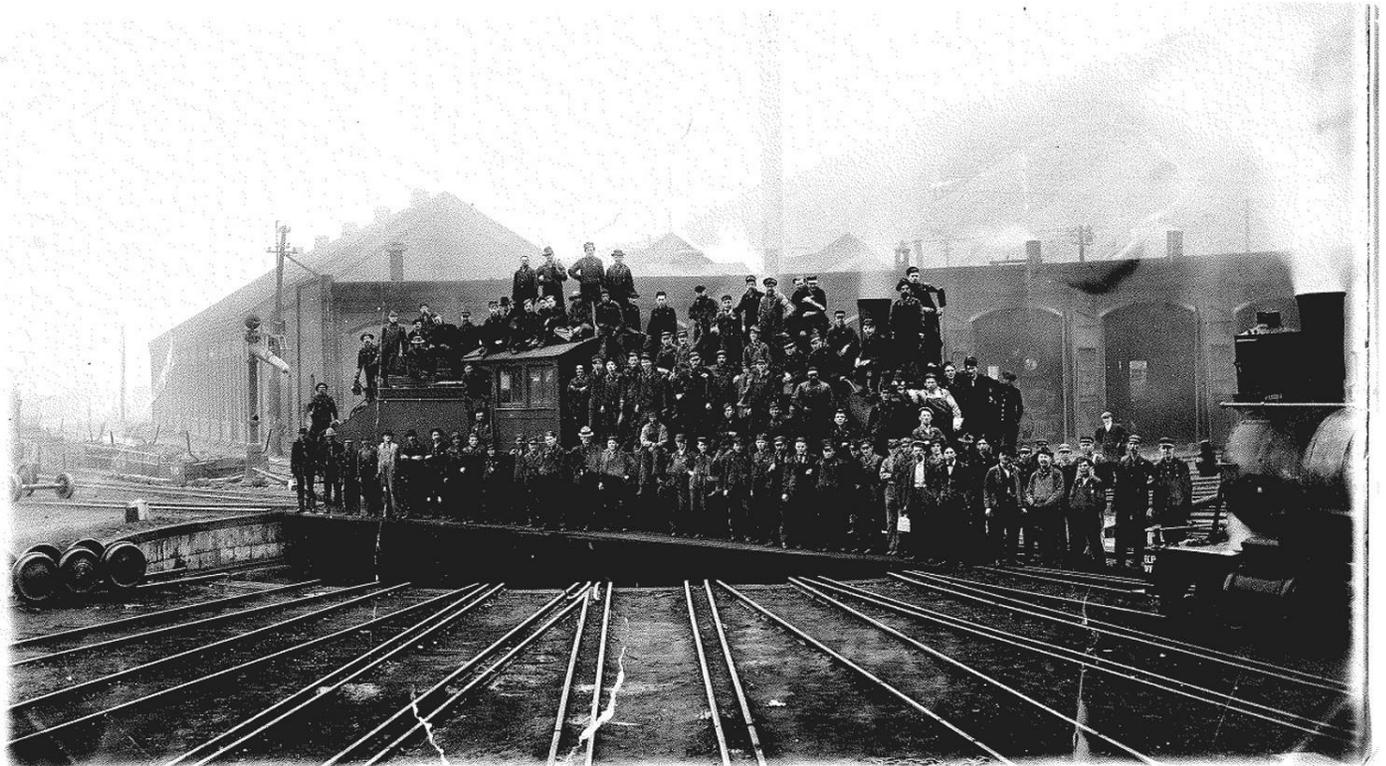
The other theory provided by Mr. Nieuwenhuis in his book stated that English capitalists who were providing the Northwestern Railroad Company with money were members of William Gladstone's Liberal political party. The railroad obviously thought it was prudent to name some of the new towns on the route English names as a tribute to Prime Minister Gladstone, and an incentive to the capitalists to continue their investments in this new land.

An Iowa historian during the 1920's wrote: "Hawarden...is one of the outstanding evidences of the force of English colonization of the early 1880's in Northwestern Iowa." The New England influence continued to shape the early days of Hawarden. Someone made the remark that, "Congregationalism rode into Hawarden on the cowcatcher of the first train into town. A church building and a round house were going up at the same time." When the Congregational Church was organized in the fall of 1882, the ladies arranged for a New England Supper which was attended by about 100 people.

The new railroad immediately started building a large repair yard and a roundhouse which could house up to nineteen engines. The base of this structure can still be found south of the former Northwestern Depot at the end of Main Street. To keep up with this activity, the Western Town Lot company was busy acquiring land and laying out town lots adjacent to the northwestern tracks. English money again was helping to shape the town of Hawarden. A bridge was constructed over the Big Sioux River allowing the rail lines to keep moving ever westward, allowing passenger and freight trains to pass through Hawarden on their way to new towns of Alcester, Beresford and Centerville in Dakota Territory...always moving west.

By 1887 when Hawarden legally became a town, the Hawarden Independent listed a total of fourteen arrivals and departures on the Northwestern line and four arrivals and departures on the Milwaukee line daily. Added to this figure could be anywhere from three to five "extras" each day as well. It is hard to believe that the activity on the railroads 125 years ago could be this intense. In the 1930's it was reported that twenty trains were running daily on the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad and six daily on the Milwaukee rail line through Hawarden. All these trains were scheduled. Add three to five unscheduled trains as well, and it is easy to understand why Hawarden was aptly referred to as a "Railroad town" in its early days.

Next week: Roundhouses & more trains



Circa 1910 – Modern round house built to accommodate the largest type of engines in the Northwestern Rail Road system. The Round House of concrete construction includes an 80 foot turntable (the biggest in the state) .This completes a Quarter Million Dollar investment in Railway improvements at the Hawarden yard, as reported in the February 3, 1910 edition of the Hawarden Independent. Also constructed were new coaling sheds of the latest mechanical design which takes the place of the old “shovel and wheel barrel” sheds previously in use. The Hawarden railroad yards cover 40 acres to accommodate both storage and switching.

**Photo Courtesy of Dennis Anderson**